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THE

WORKS

OF THE

REV. JOHN HOWE, M. A

WITH

MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE,

BY EDMUND CALAMY, D. D.

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

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A Sermon directing what we are to do, after a strict Inquiry, whether or no we truly love God.—John v. 42. *But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.* 922

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A Funeral Sermon for that faithful and laborious Servant of Christ, Mr. Richard Fairclough, who deceased July 4, 1682, in the 61st year of his age.—Matt. xxv. 21. *His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.* 965

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A Funeral Sermon for that excellent Minister of Christ, the truly Rev. William Bates, D. D. who deceased July 14, 1699.—John xi. 16. *Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.* 978

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A Discourse relating to the much-lamented Death and solemn Funeral of Queen Mary.—Heb. xii. 23. *And to the spirits of just men made perfect.* 1012

A Funeral Sermon on the Death of Mrs. Margaret Baxter.—2 Cor. v. 8. *We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.* 1021

A Funeral Sermon on the Death of Mrs. Judith Hammond.—1 Cor. xv. 54. *Death is swallowed up in victory.* 1030

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The Principles of the Oracles of God. In Two Parts.

Part I. containing,

I. An Introduction, proving the Necessity of their being taught, in Two Lectures, on Heb. v. 12. *Ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God.* . . . 1049

II. The Existence of God, manifest from the Creation, in Four Lectures, on Rom. i. 20. *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.* . . 1056

III. The Divine Authority of the Scriptures, in Four Lectures, on 2 Tim. iii. 16. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.* 1069

IV. The Unity of the Godhead, in Two Lectures, on James ii. 19. *Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.* 1085

V. The Trinity of Persons in the Divine Essence, in Four Lectures, on 1 John v. 7. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.* 1091

VI. The Attributes and Perfections of the Divine Being, in Nine Lectures, on Matt. v. 48. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* 1103

Part II. containing,

I. The Decrees or Counsels of God, in Eight Lectures, on Ephes. i. 11. *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.* . . . 1133

II. God's Work of Creation, in Seven Lectures, on Heb. xi. 3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.* 1158

III. God's Creation of Man, in Three Lectures, on Gen. i. 27. *So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him.* . 1177

IV. The Fall of the First Man, and the Fallen State of Man, with the Death and Misery consequent on each of them, in Fourteen Lectures, on Rom. v. 12. *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* . 1192

V. The Justice and Righteousness of God vindicated, as to all Men's coming into the World with depraved Natures, in Eight Lectures, on Psalm li. 4, 5. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* . . . 1233

VI. The General and Special Grace of God, in order to the Recovery of Apostate Souls, in Three Lectures, on Luke ii. 14. *Good will towards men.* 1255

THE LIFE

OF

MR. JOHN HOWE.

The lives of persons of worth and eminence, when drawn up with faithfulness and care, have been ever thought very entertaining and improving; and where there has been no hope of recovering any exact account of one of a distinguished character, most people have rather chosen to have some short memorials of him, than that such particulars as might be retrieved, should be altogether buried in oblivion.

It may be questioned whether any one now living is capable of doing complete justice to the memory of the truly reverend Mr. John Howe; though there is good reason to believe, that the number of those who would set a value upon an exact account of his significant life (could such a thing be compassed) is far from being small. The history of it could not have been drawn up to advantage by any but himself, or one that had his personal direction and assistance; or at least to whom he had given the free use of his papers, with a liberty of transcribing and inserting what might be likely to give entertainment to the curious and inquisitive: whereas it has unhappily fallen out, that he has been so far from leaving behind him any directions for such a purpose, or narrative of the most material passages of his life, or hints of what occurred in his general and extensive conversation, or even committing his papers to the care of one that was fit to make use of them for the benefit of the public, that before his death he (as we shall hereafter see in the course of these memorials of him) destroyed a number of writings, that might have afforded good materials towards the giving a true historical account of him to after ages. 'Tis not easy for us to judge what particular reasons he might have for this part of his conduct, and therefore it becomes us to be sparing in our censures: and yet I must own I cannot see why we that are yet living should hereupon slight or throw away, or they that come after us should be deprived of, what is still preserved, and may be recovered.

Most people, I doubt not, will readily conclude, that the world has this way lost what might have been of no small use. But after all, partly from the memories of some to whom he was well known, and whom he admitted to freedom in conversation; and partly from some letters and papers, copies whereof were carefully preserved in the hands of his relations, friends, and acquaintance; and partly also from such hints and passages as he has left behind him in the many writings he has published, such fragments may be gathered up, as cannot, I think, but be agreeable to those to whom his memory is precious. And though in the memorials of him that are thus recovered, there will appear several gaps which could not be filled up; yet are some of the papers and things preserved so significant and worthy of notice, that I cannot help expecting to have a good number concurring with me in opinion, that it would be unhappy for them not to be put together, and preserved.

It is no difficult thing to foresee that it will occasion no small regret, in some whose respect for the deceased rises high, to find the account given of one that was so eminent in his profession, and who would indeed have shined bright in any station, is so very defective and imperfect: and if it may contribute any thing to their satisfaction, the compiler of this life is free to own, he should have been heartily glad to have been in a capacity of drawing it up in such a manner as the subject deserved. He himself had that knowledge of Mr. Howe, that he can readily say of him, as he did of the celebrated Mr. Newcome of Manchester, that "they that knew him best, could know but a small part of his true and great worth, and might always apprehend when they knew most of him, there was still much more that they knew not."[a] He laments he could not be better furnished with materials in this undertaking, to which he was encouraged, and in which he was assisted by many. And yet having been at considerable pains, in collecting and putting together what is here offered to public view, thinks he may be allowed to hope, that such defects as are observed will be easily overlooked, because he can with safety say, it would have been no small pleasure to him to have been able to have supplied them; and that any mistakes he may have run into will be readily pardoned, because he

[a] Preface to Mr. Chorlton's Funeral Sermon for Mr Henry Newcome.

would gladly have avoided them, had he but known how. And if it should so happen, that any into whose hands these papers fall, should find some things represented in a manner that may not be suited to their particular gust, they are desired to consider, that the compiler acted but the part of an historian, upon the best informations he could get, which he would not have regarded, if he had not thought them fairly credible; but if any are furnished with better accounts, and better vouchers, he not only can readily submit, but shall be glad to be favoured with their intelligence.

To begin, then, with the first appearance of this great man upon this earthly stage, our Mr. John Howe was born May 17, 1630, the 29th day of which month was remarkable for the nativity of king Charles II. and which very year, a few months after, gave birth to that excellent person, Archbishop Tillotson, with whom Mr. Howe, in his after-life, had a particular intimacy, and uncommon freedom. The place of his birth was Loughborough, a noted market town, in the county of Leicester; of which town his father was for some time the worthy minister. I have heard his father commended as a person of singular piety and probity; and his mother as a woman of distinguished sense. The father and this son of his, were not the only ministers of the family. For there was one Mr. Obadiah Howe, vicar of Boston, in Lincolnshire, who upon several occasions appeared in print, and died in 1682,[b] who was our Mr. John Howe's uncle. There was also one Mr. William Howe, of Gedney, in the same county, that was (I suppose) of the family, though I cannot be positive how related to him.

As to the father of our Mr. Howe, he was settled in the parish of Loughborough by Archbishop Laud, and afterwards thrust out by the same hand, on the account of his siding with the puritans, contrary to the expectation of his promoter. He was one of those who could not be satisfied to give in to that nice and punctilious conformity, upon which that prelate laid so great a stress; and therefore it was not thought fit to suffer him to continue in the exercise of his ministry in that populous town. Great was the rigour that was at that time used in the ecclesiastical courts, by which, as several were driven into America, and others into Holland, and other foreign parts, so was this worthy person from whom Mr. John Howe immediately descended, driven into Ireland, whither he took this his son (then very young) along with him. While they continued in that country, that execrable rebellion broke out, in which so many thousands of the poor protestants, who were altogether unprovided, were so miserably butchered; and a great number of flourishing families ruined and undone, by the enraged papists, whose very tenderest mercies were found to be cruelty. Both father and son were at that time exposed to very threatening danger, the place to which they had retired being for several weeks together besieged and assaulted by the rebels, though without success. A very special providence did upon this occasion guard that life, which was afterwards made so serviceable to great and considerable purposes. Being driven from thence by the war, which continued for some years, the father returned back into his native country, and settled in the county palatine of Lancaster; and there it was that our Mr. Howe went through the first rudiments of learning, and was trained up in the knowledge of the tongues, though I have not been able to get any certain information who were his particular instructors, nor any further notices relating to his infancy and childhood.

He was sent pretty early (I cannot say exactly in what year) to Christ College, in Cambridge, where falling among such persons as Dr. Henry More, and Dr. Cudworth, of both whom he was a great admirer, I think it is not to be wondered at, that in his early days he received that Platonic tincture, which so remarkably runs through the writings which he drew up and published in his advanced years. As for Dr. More, there was an intimacy between him and Mr. Howe, that continued till the Doctor's death; which being known to Dr. Davis of Heyden, (who had the most profound veneration imaginable for the Doctor,) he the more respected Mr. Howe upon that account.

He continued at Cambridge till he took the degree of B. A. and then removed to Oxford. Mr. Wood, the antiquary, says that he was of Brazen-nose College, in Oxon, and Bible Clerk there in Michaelmas term, 1648,[c] and that he there took his Bachelor's degree, Jan. 18, 1649.[d] It was a common thing then to take the same degree in both universities, and I suppose it is so to this day.

He followed his studies close, and his great attainments in learning, joined with his exemplary piety, so recommended him, that he was at length duly elected Fellow of Magdalen College, (of which famous society he was a bright ornament,) after he had been made Demy by the parliament visitors. Mr. Wood mentioning this of the visitors, intends it I suppose as a reflection; but I must own that may have been the ease, and yet there may be no just matter of reflection in it either on them or on him. Not on them, supposing the person in whose room he succeeded deserved to be ejected; nor on him, supposing he did nothing unbecoming to get into his place when he was ejected.

He had several contemporaries in this college, that afterwards proved nonconformists, as Mr. Theophilus Gale, Mr. Thomas Danson, Mr. Samuel Blower, and Mr. John Spilsbury. Of the two first, Mr. Wood has given some account,[e] among the Oxford Writers; as I also have done, in my memoirs of those who were ejected for nonconformity:[f] but the two latter are wholly omitted by Mr. Wood, though they were both of them Oxonians, and both of them graduates, because they were not writers. Mr. Blower, who died pastor of a congregation of dissenters, in the town of Abingdon, in the county of Berks,[g] was often used to say with pleasure, when Mr. Howe was at any time spoken of in his

b Wood's Athen. Oxon. vol. ii. p. 718.
c Ath. Oxon vol. ii. p. 1014. d Fasti Oxon. p. 750.
e Athen. Oxon. vol. ii. p. 608, 1016.
f Abridg. vol. ii. p. 64, 648. g Abridg. vol. ii. p. 842.

company, that they two were born in the same town, went to the same school, and were of the same college in the university. And Mr. Spilsbury, who was ejected for nonconformity from Bromsgrove in Worcestershire,[h] was one with whom Mr. Howe kept up a most intimate and endearing correspondence by letter to his dying day.

I might also mention two others, who were Fellows of the same college, who were ejected in 1662, whom Mr. Wood wholly overlooks, *viz.* Mr. George Porter and Mr. James Ashhurst,[k] who died at Newington Green, near London. It is true that they were neither of them writers, and yet they were both graduates, the former being B. D. and the latter M. A. and therefore some notice ought to have been taken of them in his *Fasti*. Such things as these make me apprehend that that author designedly omitted several of the nonconformists, for fear their number should have appeared too large and considerable.

The famous Dr. Thomas Goodwin was President of the college, at the same time that Mr. Howe and the others whom I have now mentioned were Fellows. He had a gathered church among the scholars of that house, and finding Mr. Howe, who had an established reputation among them, did not offer himself to join with them, he took an occasion to speak to him about it, when they two were by themselves, without any other company with them; and signified his surprise that one of his character for serious piety should not embrace such an opportunity of Christian fellowship, which might be likely to have many good consequences attending it. Mr. Howe, with great frankness, told him that the true and only reason why he had been so silent about that matter, was because he understood they laid a considerable stress among them, upon some distinguishing peculiarities, of which he had no fondness, though he could give others their liberty to take their own way, without censuring them, or having any unkind thoughts of them; but that if they would admit him into their society upon catholic terms, he would readily become one of them. The Doctor embraced him, and told him he would do it with all his heart; and that, to his knowledge, it would be much to the satisfaction and edification of all that were concerned: and he thereupon became a member of that society. It is with no small pleasure that I relate this passage, which is a proof that Dr. Goodwin was not so narrow and confined in his temper and principles as some people have represented him.

Mr. Howe's promotion and reputation in the college, and through the university, added new spurs to his diligence and application, which was so great, that he furnished himself with a large fund of rational and theological learning, the fruits whereof were very conspicuous in his following life. He took the degree of M. A. July 9, 1652;[l] Mr. Theophilus Gale, his fellow-collegiate, whom I was mentioning but now, having taken the very same degree but the month before. And by this time he had not only gone through a course of philosophy, conversed closely with the heathen moralists, read over the accounts we have remaining of pagan theology, the writings of the school-men, and several systems and common-places of the reformers, and the divines that succeeded them, but (as he himself signified to one from whom I had it) had thoroughly studied the sacred Scriptures, and from thence drawn up a body of divinity for himself and his own use, which he saw very little occasion afterwards to vary from, in compliance with the schemes of others.

After his taking his last degree, Mr. Howe became a preacher, and was ordained by Mr. Charles Herle at his church of Winwick in Lancashire, which Mr. Wood says is one of the richest churches in the kingdom. This Mr. Herle was a very noted man in those times; and upon the death of Dr. Twiss, was chosen prolocutor of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster. In his parish there were several chapelries, and the ministers that officiated in them assisted at Mr. Howe's ordination. And he would often say that this Mr. Herle was a primitive bishop, and the assistants in his several chapels were his clergy; and they joining in laying on hands upon him, he thought few in modern times had so truly primitive an ordination as he. And Mr. Howe always spoke of this Mr. Herle with a very great and particular respect.

Some time after, by an unexpected conduct of Divine Providence, he was called to the stated exercise of his ministry in the town of Great Torrington, in the county of Devon. Dr. Walker[m] tells us that this place is a sort of donative or curacy, belonging to Christ Church in Oxford, but deemed equivalent to one held by institution. He says that Mr. Theophilus Powel was turned out here about 1646, and was succeeded by the famous independent Mr. Lewis Stukely; and after him came Mr. Howe.

He was but young at the time of his first settlement in that town, and yet even there did he wonderfully fulfil his ministry, and his labours were blessed with great success. When he first came thither, several of the inhabitants were members of the congregational church at Biddeford, of which Mr. William Bartlet[n] was pastor, who had been Mr. Howe's particular acquaintance at Oxford. Being weary of the fatigue of going five or six miles every sacrament day, and disposed to sit down under Mr. Howe's ministry, these people desired a dismission from the church at Biddeford, and Mr. Bartlet readily resigned them to Mr. Howe, in whom there was a general concurrence; and he had a numerous auditory, and a very flourishing Christian society under his pastoral care, and thought of no other than of living and dying with them.

I shall not easily forget the account he once gave me in private conversation, of the great pains he took among them, without any help or assistance, on the public fasts, which in those days returned pretty frequently, and were generally kept with very great solemnity. He told me it was upon those occasions his common way to begin about nine in the morning, with

h Abridg. vol. ii. p. 772. i Ib. p. 70. k Ib. p. 71. l Fasti Oxon. p. 99.

m Attempt, part ii. p. 329. n See Abridg. vol. ii. p. 868.

a prayer for about a quarter of an hour, in which he begged a blessing on the work of the day; and afterwards read and expounded a chapter or psalm, in which he spent about three quarters; then prayed for about an hour, preached for another hour, and prayed for about half an hour. After this, he retired and took some little refreshment for about a quarter of an hour or more, (the people singing all the while,) and then came again into the pulpit, and prayed for another hour, and gave them another sermon of about an hour's length; and so concluded the service of the day, at about four o'clock in the evening, with about half an hour or more in prayer: a sort of service that few could have gone through without inexpressible weariness both to themselves and their auditories! But he had a strong head, a warm heart, and a good bodily constitution: and the more he spent himself in his Master's service, the more was he beloved by the inhabitants of his parish.

While he continued his painful labours in this town, he kept up a good correspondence with the ministers in the neighbourhood, and all over the country, and was greatly esteemed: but there was a particular intimacy between him and the famous Mr. George Hughes of Plymouth,[o] who made a greater figure, and had a greater interest and influence, than most of the ministers in those parts; and he was married to his daughter March 1, 1654. These two kept up a weekly mutual correspondence by Latin letters, and I have a memorable passage to relate as to one of them. Mr. Howe happened to have a fire in his house at Torrington, which might have been ruinous to his family, if a violent rain which fell just at that time had not contributed greatly to extinguish it. On that very day it so fell out that he received a letter from his father Hughes, which concluded with this prayer; *Sit ros cæli super habitaculum vestrum:* Let the dew of heaven be upon your dwelling: which was a prayer, the seasonableness of which for his children in the letter of it, the good man could not apprehend at the time of writing; but they could not but affectionately remark it at the receipt of it.

Some time after (I cannot with certainty say how long) Mr. Howe having occasion to take a journey to London, was detained there longer than he intended. He had the curiosity to go one Lord's day (and it was on the last that he designed to continue in town) to be an auditor at the chapel at Whitehall; but I cannot meet with any one that can with certainty recollect who was to be that day the preacher. Cromwell, who generally had his eyes every where, spied out Mr. Howe in the auditory, and knew him by his garb to be a country minister, and thought he discerned something more than ordinary in his countenance, and sent a messenger to him to desire to speak with him when the worship of God was over. Upon his coming to him, Cromwell requested him to preach before him the Lord's day following. Mr. Howe was surprised with the unexpected motion, and modestly desired to be excused. Cromwell told him it was a vain thing to attempt to excuse himself, for that he would take no denial. Mr. Howe pleaded, that having despatched what business he had in town, he was tending homewards, and could not be absent any longer without inconvenience. Cromwell inquired what great damage he was liable to sustain, by tarrying a little longer? Mr. Howe replied, that his people, that were very kind to him, would be uneasy, and think he neglected them, and slighted their respect. Cromwell promised to write to them himself, and to send down one to supply his place, and actually did so; and Mr. Howe staid and preached as he was desired; and when he had given him one sermon, Cromwell still pressed for a second and a third; and at last, after a great deal of free conversation in private, nothing would serve him (who could not bear to be contradicted, after he had once got the power into his hands) but he must have him to be his household chaplain, and he would take care his place should be supplied at Torrington, to the full satisfaction of the people. Mr. Howe did all that lay in his power to excuse himself and get off; but no denial would be admitted. And at length (though not without great reluctance) he was prevailed with to comply, and remove with his family to Whitehall, where several of his children were born: and in this difficult station he endeavoured to be faithful, and to keep a good conscience. And this I suppose is the time when, as Mr. Wood informs us,[p] he became Lecturer of St. Margaret's church in Westminster. Certain it is, that he was then a celebrated preacher, and generally respected; and it has been observed by several, that there was hardly any man that was in an eminent public station in those critical times, and that was admitted to the knowledge of so many secrets as he, that was so free from censure in the changes that afterwards succeeded. A plain argument of uncommon conduct and caution!

Never can I find him so much as charged, even by those that have been most forward to inveigh against a number of his contemporaries, with improving his interest in those who then had the management of affairs in their hands, either to the enriching himself, or the doing ill offices to others, though of known differing sentiments. He readily embraced every occasion that offered, of serving the interest of religion and learning, and opposing the errors and designs which at that time threatened both. Among many instances of his generous temper, I shall mention one, which was his seasonable service to Dr. Seth Ward, who was afterwards Bishop of Exeter, and Sarum, successively. The case in short was this. In 1657, that gentleman, who had succeeded Mr. John Greaves some time before as Astronomy professor in the university of Oxon, stood candidate for the principalship of Jesus college in the same university, upon the resignation of Dr. Michael Roberts. Dr. Ward had the majority of the Fellows for him; but Mr. Francis Howell of Exeter college made an interest in the Protector Cromwell, and obtained

o See Abridg. vol. ii. p. 222.

p Athen. Oxon. vol. ii. p. 1014.

his promise for the filling up that vacancy. Dr. Ward not knowing that matters had gone so far, was for making an interest in the Protector too, and in order to it applied to Mr. Howe, who, without making great promises as to success, readily offered to introduce him to the Protector, and do him what service he was able. Having obtained an audience, and they three being together, Mr. Howe gave Cromwell a great character of Dr. Ward, with respect to his learning, and signified how ill it would sound, if a man of his known merit should be discountenanced; especially when he had the majority of the Fellows on his side. Cromwell replied, that Dr. Roberts having resigned his principalship into his hands, he had been informed that it was his right to fill up the vacancy; and he had given his promise to Mr. Howell, and could not draw back. But immediately taking Mr. Howe aside, and discoursing him freely about Dr. Ward, and he telling him that in his apprehension it would be much for his honour to do something for the Doctor, and that he would thereby encourage men of merit and learning, he returned to Dr. Ward, who continued waiting, and told him that he found Mr. Howe to be much his friend, and was upon his report of him disposed to give him some tokens of his regard: and thereupon he pleasantly asked him what he thought the principalship of Jesus College might be worth? The Doctor freely told him what was the value of it according to common computation. And thereupon he gave the Doctor a promise, that he would allow him the sum that he mentioned annually. This was at that time reckoned a seasonable kindness: and the Doctor expressed his grateful sense of it to Mr. Howe some time after, when upon the change of the times he became a greater man.

There were many others to whom Mr. Howe was very serviceable while he continued at Whitehall: and never was he known to be backward to assist any of the royalists or episcopalians in distress, if they were but persons of real merit. He befriended several with his advice and interest upon their being obliged to appear before the Triers, in order to the having their approbation before their being allowed to officiate in public as ministers. Among the rest that applied to him for advice upon that occasion, the celebrated Dr. Thomas Fuller, who is so well known by his punning writings, was one. That gentleman, who was generally upon the merry pin, being to take his turn before these Triers, of whom he had a very formidable notion, thus accosted Mr. Howe, when he applied to him for advice. Sir, said he, you may observe I am a pretty corpulent man, and I am to go through a passage that is very straight, I beg you would be so kind as to give me a shove, and help me through. He freely gave him his advice, and he promised to follow it; and when he appeared before them, and they proposed to him the usual question, Whether he had ever had any experience of a work of grace upon his heart? he gave this in for answer, that he could appeal to the Searcher of hearts, that he made conscience of his very thoughts; with which answer they were satisfied, as indeed they well might.

In short, so generous was Mr. Howe, in using his interest on the behalf of persons of any worth that applied to him, that I have been informed Cromwell once freely told him, that he had obtained many favours for others; but, says he, I wonder when the time is to come that you will move for any thing for yourself, or your family. A plain argument that he took him for a very disinterested person, and as free from selfishness as he was from partiality.

And here I know not how to forbear mentioning a passage that I had from Mr. Howe's own mouth, when I had the happiness of some hours' free conversation with him, without any interruption. I had heard from several, (and it had been confirmed to me by Mr. Jeremy White, who lived at Whitehall at the very same time with Mr. Howe,) that the notion of a particular faith in prayer prevailed much in Cromwell's court; and that it was a common opinion among them, that such as were in a special manner favoured of God, when they offered up prayers and supplications to him for his mercies, either for themselves or others, often had such impressions made upon their minds and spirits by a divine hand, as signified to them, not only in the general that their prayers would be heard, and graciously answered, but that the particular mercies that were sought for would be certainly bestowed; nay, and sometimes also intimated to them in what way and manner they would be afforded, and pointed out to them future events beforehand, which in reality is the same with inspiration. Having heard of mischief done by the prevalence of this notion, I took the opportunity that offered, when there was nothing to hinder the utmost freedom, to inquire of Mr. Howe what he had known about this matter, and what were his apprehensions concerning it? He told me the prevalence of the notion that I mentioned at Whitehall, at the time when he lived there, was too notorious to be called in question; and that not a little pains was taken to cultivate and support it; and that he once heard a sermon there, (from a person of note,) the avowed design of which was to maintain and defend it. He said, he was so fully convinced of the ill tendency of such a principle, that after the hearing this sermon, he thought himself bound in conscience, when it came next to his turn to preach before Cromwell, to set himself industriously to oppose it, and to beat down that spiritual pride and confidence, which such fancied impulses and impressions were apt to produce and cherish. He told me, he observed that while he was in the pulpit Cromwell heard him with great attention, but would sometimes knit his brows, and discover great uneasiness. When the sermon was over, he told me a person of distinction came to him, and asked him if he knew what he had done; and signified it to him as his apprehension that Cromwell would be so incensed upon that discourse, that he would find it very difficult ever to make his peace with him, or secure his favour for the future. Mr. Howe replied, that he had but discharged his conscience, and could leave the event with God. He told me that he afterwards observed Cromwell was

cooler in his carriage to him than before; and sometimes he thought he would have spoken to him of the matter, but he never did, and rather chose to forbear. He added, that he had a great deal of satisfaction in what he did in this case, both in the time of doing it, and ever afterwards, to the time of our conversing together upon this subject.

I well remember, that upon this occasion I begged of Mr. Howe a sight of the notes of this sermon of his upon a particular faith in prayer, if ever he could recover them, and he gave me a promise; and when I reminded him of it some time after, he told me he had looked for the notes, but could not find them. And not long since I desired a search might be made for it, among the few notes of his that remain. And what could be found, though it is but a fragment, shall be added in the close of this account.

Whilst he continued in Cromwell's family, he was often put upon secret services; but they were always honourable, and such as, according to the best of his judgment, might be to the benefit either of the public, or of particular persons. And when he was once engaged he used all the diligence, and secrecy, and despatch, he was able. Once particularly I have been informed, he was sent by Oliver in haste, upon a certain occasion, to Oxford, to a meeting of ministers there, and he made such despatch, that though he rode by St. Giles's Church at twelve o'clock, he arrived at Oxford by a quarter after five. In short, he so behaved himself in this station, that he had the ill will of as few as any man, and the particular friendship of the great Dr. Wilkins, who was afterwards Bishop of Chester, and several others, who were great supports of real piety and goodness in those times, and afterwards eminent under the legal establishment.

When Oliver died, his son Richard succeeded him as Protector, and Mr. Howe stood in the same relation to the son, as he had done to the father. He was still chaplain at court, when in October, 1658, he met with the congregational brethren at the Savoy, at the time of their drawing up their Confession of faith, &c.[q] And though he meddled not with state affairs neither then nor afterwards, yet he has often been heard to say, that he was in his judgment very much against Richard's parting with his parliament, which he easily foresaw would issue in his own ruin. I have been told by a friend, that discoursing once freely with Mr. Howe, about the setting Richard aside, he intimated to him, that it was but a parenthesis in a public paper, that was the occasion of the great ill-will of the officers to him which rose at length to that height, that nothing would satisfy, but the pulling him down. And when the same person signified in a way of free discourse to Mr. Howe, that he had heard Richard reflected on as a weak man, he with some warmth made this return; How could he be a weak man, when upon the remonstrance that was brought from the army by his brother Fleetwood, he stood it out all night against his whole council, and continued the debate till four o'clock in the morning, having none but Thurlow to abet him; maintaining that the dissolving that parliament would be both his ruin and theirs! Upon some further discourse on the same subject, Mr. Howe told my friend, that Fleetwood undertook with great solemnity, that if Richard would but comply with the proposal that was made him, the army should not do him the least damage. And he added, that when Fleetwood was afterwards put in mind of this, all the answer he returned was, that he thought he had had more interest in the army than he found he had. And Mr. Howe further added, that accidentally meeting with Major-General Berry, who was in those times so active and busy, some time after the restoration, when he was but in very mean circumstances, he very freely told him, with tears running down his cheeks, that if Richard had but at that time hanged up him, and nine or ten more, the nation might have been happy. But without applauding what was weak, or vindicating what was blameable, it becomes us to be sensible, that the great and infinitely wise God had purposes to serve, that were out of the reach of human foresight.

When the army had got their will, and set Richard aside, they, as it was foreseen they would, soon fell themselves; and a way was made by Monk to bring things back into the old channel. Mr. Howe returned to his people at Torrington, and continued his labours among them till the restoration: at which time there was such a madness attending the universal joy, that it is a perfect wonder the nation ever in any measure recovered it. The king being restored, made for some time more use than was usual of the lords-lieutenants and their deputies to keep the several counties of the kingdom in awe: many were made offenders for a word, and the most cautious preachers were accused and censured, if they were not intoxicated to the same degree with their neighbours. Among the rest, Mr. Howe, though as cautious as most men of giving disturbance to any, yet met with some trouble, in the year 1660, a few months after the restoration, which appears to have been given him by persons that were desirous to do a pleasure to those who then had the ascendant.

He was informed against by John Evans and William Morgan, as delivering somewhat that was seditious and even treasonable, in two sermons preached from Gal. vi. 7, 8. on Sep. 30, and Oct. 14. The information was given before Mr. Wellington the mayor, who took an engagement from Mr. Howe, and others on his behalf, for his appearance at the next sessions, to answer to that matter. Before that time, some of the deputy-lieutenants of the county (who were not willing the magistrates of the several corporations should be too powerful) sent word to the mayor that they could not be present at the appointed session, but desired to hear the matter at some other time, and prefixed a day for that purpose, to which the mayor accordingly adjourned the sessions in compliance with their desire. And whereas Mr. Howe in open court demanded the benefit of the statute of 1 Edw. VI. and 1 Eliz. to

q See Memoirs of the Life of Dr. J. Owen, prefixed to the complete collection of his Sermons, p. 21.

purge himself by more evidences than the informers, the mayor administered an oath to one and twenty witnesses, who were judicious men, enjoining them on his majesty's behalf to declare the truth of the matter; and they all cleared Mr. Howe from the guilt in the accusation, and the court accordingly discharged him.

Some time after this, on November 24th, one of the constables of the town summoned the mayor to appear before the deputy-lieutenant, by a warrant, dated the 14th, which he had kept ten days by him; and the same being signed by four gentlemen who had been in town the day that the warrant bore date, (which was the very day of the hearing,) and the sheriff's hand, who was not then in town, being also to the warrant, the mayor doubted whether the warrant was made by the gentlemen or not; and thereupon wrote to the sheriff, that in case he might not be excused from appearing, he would prepare for it, as far as would consist with his office and place: but the messenger not returning soon enough, (the summons being for Saturday, and the appearance the Wednesday morning after,) the mayor gave another letter to the deputy-lieutenants to the same purpose, and they presently sent a party of horse for him, who carried him to Exon; where appearing before the said deputy-lieutenants, they told him he had acted unwarrantably in the case of Mr. Howe, and committed him to the Marshalsea, where he paid three pounds for fees, and afterwards was bound over to appear at the next assizes; and when they came, this affair of Mr. Howe was heard at large before the judge, and the notes that were taken in short-hand by a hearer were read before him; and having heard them out, he said the charge was wholly bottomed upon a mistake, and cleared him. One of the accusers soon left the town, and was seen there no more; and the other cut his own throat, and was buried at a cross road.

It is observable that there were many things of this kind at that time in several parts of England, which seem to have been managed in concert, on purpose to make way for the celebrated Act of Uniformity; as in the case of Mr. Andrew Parsons, of Wem, in Shropshire,[r] Mr. John Sacheverel, of Wincaunton, in Somersetshire,[s] and divers others.

When things were thought sufficiently prepared for it, at length, in 1662, the Act of Uniformity passed the two houses of parliament, though, as it was observed, (and it ought not to this day to be forgotten,) with a very small majority in the House of Commons; and it took place on August 24th, this year. Mr. Howe on that day preached two very affecting sermons to his people at Torrington, and his auditory were all in tears. He consulted his conscience, and could not be satisfied with the terms of conformity fixed by the law, some account of which he gave in his farewell sermons. He hereupon quitted his public station in the church, and became a silenced nonconformist: though how that church from which he was excluded, can be that truly primitive and apostolic church that it is represented, and yet exclude one of his latitude, remains to many to this day a mystery. I shall not easily forget what he himself has told me, viz. that the first time he accidentally fell into the company of his much valued friend Dr. Wilkins, after the affecting change which that act produced, (under the sad effects whereof many worthy persons are still groaning,) the Doctor in his usual way entering into a free and pleasant conversation with him, told him that that act had had such consequences as a little surprised him. Some, he said, that he should have thought much too stiff and rigid ever to have fallen in with the establishment, had complied and conformed, while others that he thought had a sufficient latitude to have conformed, had stood out and continued nonconformists: and he intimated to Mr. Howe that he took him for one of the latter sort, and should therefore be glad to know the reasons of his conduct. Mr. Howe very frankly told him, that he had weighed that matter with all the impartiality he was able, and had not so slender a concern for his own usefulness and comfort, as not to have been willing and desirous to have been under the establishment, could he but have compassed it with satisfaction to his conscience: but that the giving him a particular account of the workings of his mind upon that occasion, (which he was free to do without any reserve, when a convenient opportunity offered,) would take up much more time than they then had to spend together; and that so many things were necessarily to be touched upon in a discourse on that subject, that it was not possible for it to be crowded into a transient conversation, and therefore he should reserve it to a season, when having more time, he might have more scope for enlarging: but one thing, he added, he could tell him with assurance, which was this, that that *latitude* of his, which he was pleased to take notice of, was so far from inducing him to conformity, that it was the very thing that made and kept him a nonconformist. The Doctor asked him whether it was the *discipline* of the church, that was the thing from whence he drew his chief objection? To which Mr. Howe replied, that he could not by any means be lord of a church, that in reality had no *discipline* at all, and that he thought that a very considerable objection against the establishment. The Doctor told him, that though he was sensible there might not then be room for coming to a variety of particulars, yet he should be glad of a general hint from him, about what was his great hinderance in the case, leaving the enlargement to a further opportunity, which he should readily embrace. Mr. Howe then went on, and intimated to him, that he took the public exercise of his ministry to be like a habitation or dwelling; and that when he was put upon consulting about a dwelling, he could not tell how to reconcile it with common prudence, to enter into a habitation that he was apprehensive had so weak a foundation, as that it was not likely to stand very long. I could not, says he, by any means be for going into a falling house, for fear of its falling about my ears. Of this nature (said he) I take the present constitution to be, compared with that

[r] See Conformist's Fourth Plea for the Nonconformists, p. 30, &c.

[s] See Abridgment, vol. ii. p. 567—9.

flonrishiag state of real vital religion which I think I have sufficient warrant from the word of God to expect and look for. To which the Doctor made this reply: I understand you well, and if that be your sense, take this advice from a friend; don't think to gain any thing by sneaking or crouching, but bear up against us boldly and bravely; stand to your principle, and sooner or later you may hope to carry your point.

This Dr. Wilkins was ever a great enemy to rigour and severity. When he was made a bishop by king Charles II. (which was not compassed without considerable difficulty,) I have been credibly informed he waited on the famous Dr. Cosins, Bishop of Durham, among other spiritual lords, and desired his company at his consecration dinner. Upon this occasion Bishop Cosins entered into a free discourse with him, about moderation on the one hand, and a vigorous supporting the ecclesiastieal constitution on the other. Bishop Wilkins frankly told his lordship, that for his part, it was his apprehension, that he who was by many (with ill nature enough) reflected on for his moderation, was in reality a better friend to the church than his lordship, who was for rigorously supporting the constitution. Bishop Cosins seeming surprised, Bishop Wilkins added this as the reason of his assertion: For while you, my lord, said he, are for setting the top on the piqued end, downwards, you won't be able to keep it up any longer than you continue whipping and scourging; whereas I, says he, am for setting the broad end downward, and so it will stand of itself. 'Tis a pity this good bishop died so soon as 1672, and did not live till the revolution in 1688.

What I have just been mentioning, of Mr. Howe's intimating to Dr. Wilkins, that he thought he had a scriptural warrant to expect and look for a more flourishing state of real vital religion than we were yet arrived at, very naturally reminds me of a passage I have heard of in conversation, at some other time, between him and another great friend of his, *viz.* Dr. Henry More. That Doctor when he came to town, usually paid a visit to Mr. Howe, to whom he was always welcome. Calling once at his house, soon after his coming into the city, and not finding him at home, he left word he would come and dine with him the next day, which was Tuesday. Mr. Howe became that day an auditor at the lecture at St. Laurence's, hoping there to meet with his friend Dr. More, and bring him home along with him. It so fell out that Dr. More being at that lecture, sat in the same seat with Dr. Sharp, who was afterwards Archbishop of York, who when sermon was over, asked him where he intended that day to dine. He told him he had promised to dine that day with Mr. Howe, whom he saw there present in another pew. Dr. Sharp invited himself to dine with him too; and the company of two such persons was highly pleasing to Mr. Howe, who was in his element when in the company of men of letters. After dinner, among other things that were freely discoursed of, they at length came to talk of the Revelation of St. John, which was one of the Doctor's most common and favourite subjects. The Doctor, who was very fond of the notion, that the epistles to the seven Asian churches, which we meet with in that book, were prophetical, said, and repeated it over and over again, that he thought he had very good evidence to prove that we were now in the Sardian state; with which Mr. Howe was not displeased, though Dr. Sharp seemed not much to relish it, thinking it no great compliment on the present ecclesiastical constitution. Being informed of this conversation, I took the pains to turn to Dr. More's works, to see what account he gives of the Sardian church; and I find in him these words, when he is giving a particular description of it: 'Though the Sardian church be well rid of the foul idolatries and gross trumperies of the papal church, yet her state as yet is but carnal. It is not the dispensation of the spirit of life, but the main stir is about external opinion and ceremony.'[t] And he adds a little after: 'As mischievous a mark as any of her carnality, is her dissension and schismaticalness, even to mutual persecution; as also the unnatural and unchristian wars of one part of reformed Christendom against the other.' So that Mr. Howe was not singular in his sentiments, in firmly expecting that a much more flourishing state of religion would in time take place, than that which was brought in by the Act of Uniformity, in which so many were for acquiescing, without advancing so much as a step further, for fear of I know not what ill consequences that might ensue. But as to him, he had a large soul, and could not bear the thoughts of being cramped and pinioned. He was for the 'union and communion of all visible Christians; and for making nothing necessary to Christian communion, but what Christ hath made necessary, or what is indeed necessary to one's being a Christian.' And he was convinced that 'such an union must be effected, not by mere human endeavour, but by an almighty Spirit poured forth, which (says he) after we have suffered awhile, shall *καταρτίσαι*, put us into joint, and make every joint know its place in the body, (1 Pet. v. 10.) shall conquer private interests and inclinations, and overawe men's hearts, by the authority of the divine law, which now, how express soever it is, little availeth against such prepossessions. Till then (he says) Christianity will be among us a languishing, withering thing. When the season comes of such an effusion of the Spirit from on high, there will be no parties. And amidst the wilderness desolation that cannot but be till that season comes, it matters little, and signifies to me (says he) scarce one straw, what party of us is uppermost. The most righteous, as they may be vogued, will be but as briars and scratching thorns; and it is better to suffer by such, than be of them.'[u] I cannot help saying, that it could never be for the credit of any church, to exclude one of such a make and spirit out of its enclosure.

However, being ejected and silenced, Mr. Howe

t See Dr. More's Prophetical Exhibition of the seven Epistles, sent to the seven Churches. chap. 7.

u See Mr. Howe's Funeral Sermon for Mr. Mead. p. 994, 995.

continued for some time in the county of Devon, preaching in private houses, among his friends and acquaintance, as he had opportunity. Having preached at the house of a certain gentleman in those parts, and spent some few days with him, he at his return home, was told that an officer belonging to the Bishop's court had been to inquire after him, and left word that there was a citation out, both against him, and the gentleman at whose house he had preached. Hereupon, he the very next morning took his horse, and rode to Exeter, and lighting at the inn there which he usually called at, he stood awhile at the gate, considering which way he had best to steer his course. While he stood musing, a certain dignified clergyman, with whom he was well acquainted, happening to pass by, looked on him with some surprise, and saluted him with this question, Mr. Howe, what do you do here? to whom he replied, with another question; Pray, sir, what have I done, that I may not be here? Upon which he told him that there was a process out against him, and that being so well known as he was, he did not at all question but that if he did not take care of himself, he would be taken up in a very little time. Among other discourse that passed, he asked him whether he would not go and wait upon the bishop? He said, he thought not to do it, unless his lordship hearing of his being in that city, should think fit to invite him. Upon this, he advised him to call for a room, and wait there a little, and told him he would go to the bishop, and let him know that he was there, and return to him again, and give him an account, what his lordship said to it. He accordingly left him, and soon returned, and brought him an invitation from the bishop, who signified he would be glad to see him. Waiting on his lordship, he received him with great civility, as his old acquaintance. The bishop presently fell to expostulating with him about his nonconformity. Mr. Howe told his lordship, he could not have time, without greatly trespassing upon his patience, to go through the several objections which he had to make against the terms of conformity. The bishop pressed him to name any one that he reckoned to be of weight. He thereupon instanced in the point of re-ordination. Why, pray sir, said the bishop to him, what hurt is there in being twice ordained? Hurt, my lord, says Mr. Howe to him; the thought is shocking; it hurts my understanding; it is an absurdity: for nothing can have two beginnings. I am sure, said he, I am a minister of Christ, and am ready to debate that matter with your lordship, if you please; and I can't begin again to be a minister. The bishop then dropping that matter, told Mr. Howe, as he had done at other times, that if he would come in amongst them, he might have considerable preferments, and at length dismissed him in a very friendly manner. And as his lordship did not take the least notice to him of the process that was issued out against him, so neither did he say any thing of it to his lordship: but taking his leave, he mounted his horse and rode home, and heard no more of that matter, either with respect to the gentleman, or himself.

In 1665, when the dissenting ministers had been three years silenced, they were not a little perplexed in all parts of the kingdom, by the act that passed in the parliament at Oxford, by which they were obliged (under the penalty of not being allowed, unless upon the road, to come within five miles of any city, or corporation, or any place that sent burgesses to parliament, or any place where they had been ministers, or had preached after the Act of Oblivion) to swear, 'that it was not lawful, *upon any pretence whatsoever*,[w] to take arms against the king, and that they abhorred the traitorous position, of taking arms by his authority against his person, or against those commissionated by him, in pursuance of such commission: and that they would not at any time endeavour any alteration of the government either in church or state.' They were much divided in their sentiments upon this occasion. There were several among them, who reckoned this oath so insnaring, that they durst not take it: but it was at length taken in London by Dr. Bates, and others to the number of twenty.[x] It was also taken in Devonshire by Mr. Howe and others, to the number of twelve; and by some few in Dorsetshire.

The twelve who took this oath in Devonshire, were (as I am informed from a manuscript of Mr. Quick's) Mr. Humphrey Saunders, Mr. John Howe, Mr. Gunnery, Mr. Mortimer, Mr. Parre, Mr. Francis Whiddon, Mr. Fairant, Mr. Wilkins, Mr. Binmore, Mr. Berry, Mr. Cleveland, and Mr. Bayly. The two last took it voluntarily, before it came in force. The other ten took it at the county sessions, after the taking place of the act. At their appearance for that purpose, one of the company (I find not who) made a declaration in open court, in these words:

'I confess I have had some doubts concerning this oath; but understanding, partly by discourse about it with some who concurred in making of the law, and partly by consideration of the law itself, and other laws, that the oath hath no other meaning or end, than to secure the person of the king's majesty, and his authority, whether in his person or commissioners, and the government in church and state, from being shaken or subverted, by any unpeaceable or seditious endeavours out of our place and calling, I am abundantly satisfied to tender myself to this honourable court, for the taking of it.'

This declaration being candidly accepted by the court, the ten before mentioned immediately took the oath. Only Mr. Fairant and Mr. Wilkins took it with this addition, 'so far as the laws of man are agreeable to the word of God.'

But as to Mr. Howe, he upon this occasion drew up the following paper, which gives an account of the principles upon which he took the oath that was then imposed; and at the same time states the matter of oaths in general, as judiciously and fully, as can

w This matter was strenuously and solemnly argued upon, a great many years after, by the managers for the House of Commons, in the trial of Dr. Henry Sacheverel.

x See Abridgment of Mr Baxter's Life, vol. i. p. 313.

well be supposed or imagined in so narrow a compass.

'1. My swearing is my act. 2. The obligation I hereby contract is voluntary. 3. Swearing in a form of words prescribed by another, I adopt those words, and make them my own. 4. Being now so adopted, their first use is to express the true sense of my heart, touching the matter about which I swear. 5. Their next use, as they have now the form of an oath, is to assure him or them who duly require it from me, that what I express by them is the true sense of my heart. 6. 'Tis repugnant to both those ends, that they should be construed (as now used by me) to signify another thing than what I sincerely intend to make known by them. 7. If the words be of dubious signification, capable of more senses than one, I ought not to hide the sense in which I take them, but declare it, lest I deceive them whom I should satisfy. 8. That declaration I ought to make, if I have opportunity, to them whose satisfaction is primarily intended by the oath; if not, to them whom they intrust and employ. 9. This declared sense must be such as the words will fairly bear, without force or violence.'

I have been told, that in this year 1665, Mr. Howe was imprisoned for two months in the Isle of St. Nicolas, which was the place where his father-in-law Mr. George Hughes, and his brother Mr. Obadiah Hughes, had been confined for a longer time: but the occasion of this imprisonment, what was alleged to justify it, and how he obtained deliverance, I have not been able to discover.

In a letter he wrote to his brother-in-law Mr. Obadiah Hughes, after they were set at liberty, he expressed himself thus:

'Blessed be God, that we can have, and hear of, each other's occasions of thanksgiving, that we may join praises as well as prayers, which I hope is done daily for one another. Nearer approaches, and constant adherence to God, with the improvement of our interest in each other's heart, must compensate (and I hope will abundantly) the unkindness and instability of a surly treacherous world, that we see still retains its wayward temper, and grows more peevish as it grows older, and more ingenious in inventing ways to torment whom it disaffects. It was, it seems, not enough to kill by one single death, but when that was almost done, to give leave and time to respire, to live again, at least in hope, that it might have the renewed pleasure of putting us to a further pain and torture in dying once more. Spite is natural to her. All her kindness is an artificial disguise; a deviee to promote and serve the design of the former with the more efficacious and piercing malignity. But patience will elude the design, and blunt its sharpest edge. It is perfectly defeated when nothing is expected from it but mischief; for then the worst it can threaten finds us provided, and the best it can promise incredulous, and not apt to be imposed upon. This will make it at last despair and grow hopeless, when it finds that the more it goes about to mock and vex us, the more it teaches and instructs us; and that as it is wickeder, we are wiser. If we cannot, God will outwit it, and carry us, I trust, safe through, to a better world, upon which we may terminate hopes that will never make us ashamed,' &c.

He continued still in those western counties, and went much from one gentleman's house to another, and was ready wherever he came to do any service he was able; and at length, in the year 1668, he was prevailed with to print a book which met with wonderful acceptance in the world, and not undeservedly, if either the subject be considered, or the happy management of it. I remember it was a usual saying of Dr. Henry More, who has been already mentioned once and again, that 'if any man had but written, his works would best show to all intelligent readers what he was.'[y] Perhaps this is as true of Mr. Howe as of most men that ever appeared in print. For in some of his writings he has drawn his own very picture, without any disguise or artifice.

The first thing of his that was published, was a sermon from Eccles. vii. 29. upon 'Man's Creation in an holy, but mutable State.' It is to be met with in the 'Morning Exercise methodized,' printed in 1660. But he at this time published a discourse entitled, The Blessedness of the Righteous, from Psal. xvii. 15. being, as I am informed, sermons preached while he was at Torrington: and this is a treatise that has been well received and greatly valued, by the most serious and judicious of all persuasions.

There is something in the preface to this work, that I take to be extremely fine, and that should not be passed over lightly, according to the usual way for the generality of common readers. He there says of that discourse of his,

'That the design of it is wholly practical, and it hath little or nothing to do with disputation. If (says he) there be any whose business it is to promote a private divided interest, or who place the sum of their religion in an inconsiderable and doubtful opinion, it doth not unhallow their altars, nor offer any affront to their idol. It intends no quarrel to any contending angry party; but deals upon things, in the substance whereof Christians are at a professed agreement: and hath therefore the greater probability of doing good to some, without the offence of any. 'Tis indeed equally matter of complaint and wonder, that men can find so much leisure, to avert from such things wherein there is so much both of delight and pleasure, unto what one would think should have little of temptation or allurement in it, contentious jangling. It might rather be thought, its visible fruits and tendencies should render it the most dreadful thing to every serious beholder. What tragedies hath it wrought in the Christian church! Into how weak and languishing a condition hath it brought the religion of professed Christians! Hence have risen the intemperate preternatural heats and angers that have spent its strength and spirits; and make it look with so meagre and pale a face. We have had a greater mind to dispute than live, and to contend

[y] See Dr. More's Life, by Mr. Rich. Ward, p. 21.

about what we know not, than to practise the far greater things we know, and which more directly tend to nourish and maintain the divine life. The author of that ingenious sentence, Pruritus disputandi scabies ecclesiæ, whoever he were, hath fitly expressed what is the noisome product of the itch of disputing. It hath begot the ulcerous tumours, which beside their own offensive soreness, drain the body, and turn what should nourish that into nutriment to themselves. And its effects are not more grievous, than the pleasures which it affects and pursues are uncouth and unnatural. The rough touch of an ingentle hand; that only pleases which exasperates; (as Seneca the moralist aptly expresses some like disaffection of diseased minds;) toil and vexation is their only delight; and what to a sound spirit would be a pain, is to these a pleasure.

'Which is indeed the triumph of the disease, that it adds unto torment, reproach and mockery, and imposes upon men by so ridiculous a delusion, (while they are made to take pleasure in punishing themselves,) that even the most sober can scarcely look on in a fitter posture than with a compassionate smile. All which were yet somewhat more tolerable, if that imagined vanishing pleasure were not the whole of their gain; or if it were to be hoped that so great a present real pain and smart, should be recompensed with as real a consequent fruit and advantage. But we know that generally, by how much any thing is more disputable, the less it is necessary or conducible to the Christian life. God hath graciously provided, that what we are to live by, should not cost us so dear. And possibly as there is the less occasion of disputing about the more momentous things of religion, so there may be somewhat more of modesty and awe, in reference to what is so confessedly venerable and sacred, (though too many are over-bold even here also,) than so foolishly trifle with such things. Therefore more commonly, where that humour prevails, men divert from those plainer things, with some slighter and more superficial reverence to them, but more heartily esteeming them insipid and jejune, because they have less in them to gratify their appetite, and betake themselves to such things about which they may more plausibly contend. And then what pitiful trifles often take up their time and thoughts! questions and problems of like weighty importance (very often) with those which Seneca tells us this disease among the Greeks prompted them to trouble themselves about! as, what number of rowers Ulysses had? which was written first, the Iliad or the Odysses? so that (as he saith) they spend their lives very operosely doing nothing: their conceits being such, that if they kept them to themselves they could yield them no fruit, and if they published them to others, they should not seem thereby the more learned, but the more troublesome. And is it not (says he) to be resented, that men should sell away the solid strength and vital joy, which a serious soul would find in substantial religion, for such toys? yea, and not only famish themselves, but trouble the world, and embroil the church with impertinencies? If a man be drawn forth, to defend an important truth against an injurious assault, it were treacherous self-love to purchase his own peace by declining it. Or if he did sometimes turn his thoughts to some of our petite questions, that with many are so hotly agitated, for recreation sake, or to try his wit, and exercise his reason without stirring his passions, to the disturbance of others or himself; here an innocent divertisement is the best purpose that things of that nature are capable of serving. But when contention becomes a man's element, and he cannot live out of that fire; strains his wit, and racks his invention to find matter of quarrel; is resolved nothing said or done by others shall please him, only because he means to please himself in dissenting; disputes only that he may dispute, and loves dissension for itself; this is the unnatural humour that hath so unspeakably troubled the church, and debased religion, and filled men's souls with wind and vanity, yea with fire and fury. This hath made Christians gladiators, and the Christian world a clamorous theatre, while men have equally affected to contend, and to make ostentation of their ability to do so,' &c.

Some time after this, he was earnestly invited by a person of considerable quality into Ireland, and had generous offers made him. He accepted the motion with the greater readiness, and looked upon it as the more providential, because by this time he was reduced to straits, and his circumstances were but low; which is not at all to be wondered at, considering that he had for some years been out of any settled employment, and had but a small income, several in family, and a generous spirit of his own, which inclined him upon all occasions to make the best figure he was able. He set sail for Dublin (as I am informed) in the beginning of April, 1671. And here I have a memorable passage to relate, which I have from such hands, that I cannot question the truth of it. When he went for Ireland, taking his eldest son along with him, he was for embarking at a town in Wales, the name of which my informant has forgotten, but I suppose it was Holy-head. The wind not serving to carry them off, they continued there a Lord's day, and found a large parish church, in which prayers only were to be read as usually, but no preaching was expected. The company that was with Mr. Howe and waited for a wind, were pretty numerous, and they were desirous to find out some private place by the sea-side, where he might preach to them. As they were walking along the sands in search of some such place, they met two men on horseback riding towards the town, who proved to be the parson of the parish and his clerk. The clerk was asked by one in the company whether his master preached that day? No, said he, my master does not use to preach, he only reads prayers. Upon which it was farther inquired whether he thought his master would be willing to give leave to a minister that was in their company, who was going for Ireland, but waiting for a wind, to make use of his pulpit that day in his room? He answered he believed very willingly,

and they found it so, when the clerk had once made the motion to him. Hereupon Mr. Howe and the rest of them returned back to the town, and he preached that day twice to them in the church; and in the afternoon the auditory was very large, and seemed to be not a little affected with what was delivered. The wind not serving all the week following, the country all round those parts took notice that neither the vessel nor the minister were gone; and therefore on the Lord's day after, they came flocking into the town, expecting he would preach that day also. There was a prodigious multitude gathered together; and the parson, who had had no thoughts about the matter, nor made the least motion for any further assistance from the stranger, observing it, was in no small consternation. Preach himself he could not; for he had not of a long time been used to it, and he was altogether unprovided; and if he did not employ the stranger, it would lessen his reputation greatly: but then he did not know, whether as things stood, he could be able to prevail with him. However he sent his clerk to Mr. Howe, and begged he would come and preach again, for that otherwise he knew not what to do, the country being come in from several miles round, in hope of hearing him. Mr. Howe having been much indisposed, was in bed, and in a great sweat, when he received the message, and that made him at first doubtful whether he had best venture to comply. But considering with himself that here was a plain call of Providence, and not knowing but much good might be done in such a place, where preaching was so uncommon a thing, and the people seemed so desirous of the word of God, he sent word he would do it; and cooled himself with as much speed as he was able with safety, and cast himself upon God, and went and preached with great life and freedom: and he told my informant, that he never in all his life saw people more moved, or receive the word with greater pleasure. And he at the same time added these words, 'if my ministry was ever of any use, I think it must be then.' Very soon after, the vessel went off, and he found no ill effects or consequences at all, of the pains he took in such circumstances.

At length he had his whole family with him in Ireland, where he lived as chaplain to the Lord Massarene in the parish of Antrim, and was received and treated with all imaginable respect. His great learning and Christian temper, (together with that lord's interest and influence,) procured him the particular friendship of the bishop of that diocese, who, (together with his metropolitan,) without demanding any conformity, gave him free liberty to preach in the public church in that town, every Lord's day in the afternoon. and I have been informed that the archbishop in a pretty full meeting of the clergy, told them frankly, that he would have Mr. Howe have every pulpit (where he had any concern) open to him, in which he at any time was free to preach. And he manifested his truly peaceable and Christian spirit, both in his preaching and conversation, and was useful to many.

In the very year in which he settled here, he published a noble discourse upon 'The Vanity of this mortal Life, or of Man considered only in this present mortal State,' from Psal. lxxxi. 47, 48. which discourse is usually bound up with his 'Blessedness of the Righteous.' There is an epistle before this sermon dated from Antrim in 1671, to John Upton, of Lupton in Devon, Esq. his kinsman, signifying that it was composed upon occasion of the death of Anthony Upton, son of the said John, who had lived between twenty and thirty years in Spain, and had promised to return home; and being earnestly expected, a sudden disease in so few days landed him in another world, that the first notice his friends had of his death or sickness, was by the arrival of that vessel (clad in mourning attire) which brought over the deserted body to its native place of Lupton; which providence was therefore the more affecting, because a meeting of the several branches of the family, who lived at distant places, having been appointed, the place and occasion and design of it was this way altered; and no less than twenty, the brothers and sisters of the deceased, or their consorts, besides many nephews and nieces, and other relations, were brought together to the mournful solemnity of the interment. It has been the judgment of many, that this discourse is as noble a piece of true theological oratory, as can be easily met with.

In 1674 he published his treatise of 'Delighting in God,' which was the substance of some sermons he had preached twenty years before to the people of Torrington, with some additions and enlargements. He dedicated them to his old friends, the inhabitants of that town, by a masculine, but at the same time most tender and affectionate, epistle to them from Antrim, in which he gives such an account of himself, as may very well heighten our idea of him. Speaking of the sermons which he then published, he expresses himself in this glorious manner.

'They aim (says he) at the promoting of the same end, which the course of my poor labours among you did, (as he that knoweth all things knoweth,) the serious practice of the great things of religion, which are known, and least liable to question; without designing to engage you to or against any party of them that differ about circumstantial matters. They tend to let you see, that formality in any way of religion, unaccompanied with life, will not serve your turn, (as it will no man's,) than which there is nothing more empty, sapless, and void both of profit and delight. I have reflected and considered with some satisfaction, that this hath been my way, and the temper of my mind among you. Great reason I have to repent, that I have not with greater earnestness pressed upon you the known and important things wherein serious Christians do generally agree: but I repent not I have been so little engaged in the hot contests of our age, about the things wherein they differ. For as I pretend to little light in these things, (whence I could not have much confidence to fortify me to such an undertaking,) so I must profess to have little inclination to contend about matters of that kind. Nor yet

am I indifferent as to these smaller things, that I cannot discern to be in their own nature so. But though I cannot avoid to think that course right which I have deliberately chosen therein, I do yet esteem that but a small thing upon which to ground an opinion of my exceeding them that think otherwise, as if I knew more than they. For I have often recounted thus seriously with myself, that of every differing party (in those circumstantial matters) I do particularly know some persons by whom I find myself much excelled, in much greater things than is the matter of that difference. I cannot ('tis true) thereupon say and think every thing that they do; which is impossible, since they differ from one another as well as me; and I understand well there are other measures of truth, than this or that excellent person's opinion: but I thereupon reckon I have little reason to be conceited of any advantage I have of such in point of knowledge; (even as little as he would have, that can sing or play well on a lute, of him that knows how to command armies or govern a kingdom;) and can with the less confidence differ from them, or contend with them. Being thereby, though I cannot find that I err in these matters, constrained to have some suspicion lest I do; and to admit it possible enough, that some of them who differ from me, having much more light in greater matters, may have so in these also. Besides that I most seriously think, humility, charity, and patience would more contribute to the composing of these lesser differences, or to the good estate of the Christian interest under them, than the most fervent disputes and contestations. I have upon such considerations little concerned myself in contending for one way or another, while I was among you; or in censuring such as have differed from me, in such notions and practices as might consist with our common great end; or as imported not manifest hostility thereto: contenting myself to follow the course that to my preponderating judgment seemed best, without stepping out of my way to jostle others. But I cannot be so patient of their practical disagreement (not only with all serious Christians, but even their own judgments and consciences also) who have no delight in God, and who take no pleasure in the very substance of religion,' &c. We may from hence take our measures of him both as a minister and a divine; and can hardly forbear making this reflection, that it would be an unspeakable happiness, did but such a spirit as this prevail more among all the parties into which we are divided.

In 1675, upon the death of Dr. Lazarus Seaman, he had an invitation given him to come and fix in London, by a part of his congregation, and was earnestly pressed to accept of their call. There was some difference among them about the person in whom they should centre. Some were for Mr. Charnock, and others for Mr. Howe: and though they that wrote to him urged a variety of arguments and inducements, yet he could not so well judge of the matters alleged at a distance; and was thereupon prevailed with to take a voyage into England, and make a visit at London, that he might view and judge of things upon the spot. He upon this occasion, which created him a great many thoughts, and in which he looked seriously upwards for conduct, committed some hints to writing, which have been preserved, and are here faithfully transcribed from an authentic copy.

The paper is inscribed after this manner.

Considerations and Communings with myself concerning my present Journey, Dec. 20, 75. *By Night on my Bed.*

'1. Quære; *Have I not an undue design or self-respect in it?*

'1. I know well I ought not to have any design for myself, which admits not of subordination to the interest and honour of the great God, and my Redeemer, and which is not actually so subordinated.

'2. I understand the fearful evil and sinfulness of having such an undue design; that it is idolatry, the taking another god, and making myself that god.

'3. I find (through God's mercy) some sensible stirrings of hatred and detestation, in my breast, of that wickedness, and a great apprehension of the loveliness and beauty of a state of pure entire devotedness to God in Christ, and of acting accordingly.

'4. I have insisted on this chiefly in prayer to God, in reference to this business, ever since it was set on foot, that I might be sincere in it: and though I have earnestly begged light to guide me therein, so as that I might do that herein which in the substance of the thing is agreeable to the holy will of God, yet I have much more importunately prayed that I might be sincere in what I do, not only because I know God will pardon ignorance (unremedied by utmost endeavours) where he beholds sincerity, whereas he will never accept the knowledge of our duty, nor the doing what is in substance our duty, if that right manner of doing it, or principle whence it is done, be wanting; but, also, from the higher esteem I have of sincerity, above all light and knowledge without it, and the greater excellence of the thing itself.

'5. I have carefully examined what selfish respects I can have in this matter. Is it worldly emolument? In this my heart acquits me in the sight of God. Is it that I affect to be upon a public stage, to be popular and applauded by men? To this I say, (1.) That I do verily believe, that I shall be lower in the eye and esteem of the people in London, when I come under their nearer view. I know myself incapable of pleasing their genius. I cannot contrive nor endure to preach with elaborate artifice. They will soon be weary, when they hear nothing but plain discourses of such matters as are not new to them. Yea, and ministers that now judge of me by what I have written, (when matter and words were in some measure weighed,) will find me, when I converse with them, slow to apprehend things, slow to express my own apprehensions, unready, entangled, and obscure in my apprehensions and expressions: so that all will soon say, this is not the man

we took him for. (2.) It displeases me not, that they should find and say this. I hope I should digest it well. (3.) I have found (blessed be God) that the applauses some have prudently given me in letters, (as I have received many of that strain, very many long before this business, and that had no relation unto any such, that no eye hath ever since seen but my own,) an occasion and means to me of deep humiliation, when my own heart hath witnessed to me, my miserable penury, and that I am thought to be what I am not. (4.) So far as I can find, I do not deliberately covet or desire esteem but for my work's sake, and the success of my work. Of applause I have often found an inward abhorrence. I both know I have nothing but what I have received, and that I have received a great deal less than many think I have: which I say with reflection on myself; not to diminish the bounty of the Free-giver, from whom I know I might have received much more, if I had sought and used his gifts aright. All the design I can more vehemently suspect myself of that looks like self-interest any way, is, (1.) The improvement of my own knowledge, which I know there may be great opportunities for, if this journey should issue in my settlement at London. (2.) The disposal of my children. Yet I hope these things are eyed in subordination, and indifferently, so as not to sway with me against my duty.

'II. Quære; *Have I not a previous resolution of settling at London before I go up?*

'1. I have a resolution to do what I shall conceive shall make most to the usefulness of the rest of my life, which resolution I ought never to be without.

'2. I am seriously yet at a loss as to judging this case, whether in this country or there.

'3. If I can find clearly it is my duty to return in order to continuance at Antrim, I shall do it with high complacency.

'III. Quære; *Am I not afraid of miscarrying in this undertaken voyage, by shipwreck, &c.?*

'1. I find little of that fear, I bless God.

'2. Nor is it that I think I have attained any eminent degree of grace, that I am not afflicted with that fear: nay more than that, I acknowledge, to be delivered from such fear is itself a great mercy, and gracious vouchsafement.

'3. I hope I am in a state of favour and acceptance with God, which I apprehend I owe to infinite rich mercy in the Redeemer's blood. Great forgiveness I need, for I am a miserable sinful wretch: this I trust I have upon gospel terms.

'4. It is pleasant to me hereupon to think of going into eternity; of laying down the body of flesh and sin and death together; and of being perfectly holy, and associated with them that are so, in holy work and enjoyment.

'5. To put off this tabernacle so easily, I reckon would to me be a merciful dispensation, who am more afraid of sharp pains than of death. I think I should joyfully embrace those waves that should cast me on an undesigned shore, and when I intended Liverpool, should land me in heaven.

'6. Yet I bless God I have no weariness of life, nor of his work in this world, if he shall yet please further to employ me here.

'IV. Quære; *But am I not solicitous, lest if this should prove the event, it will be judged a testimony against me, as to this present undertaking?*

'1. It is an honest design I go upon. I have, as I said, no selfish design that oversways me in it. I have no design to prejudice Mr. C——. I believe I shall do him no actual prejudice. Wherein I can justly befriend him, I go resolved to do it. If I can do any thing for the holding of the remainder together, without the neglect of greater work, I do apprehend I shall do a just and needful thing: but should do nothing if I had opportunity, till I knew more. But,

'2. To judge of the justice of a cause by the success, is a most unjust way of judging. Many a just business has miscarried. If I get well into the other world, such censures will be a small matter in my eye; and they are not great now.

'3. God will accept my sincere intentions, though I effect nothing.

'4. My journey was to me absolutely necessary, who could without it neither grant nor deny.

'*Consolations to my wife and other relations, supposing they hear of my death.*

'1. Whom or what have you lost? A poor creature that could never be of much use to you.

'2. You are to consider me, not as lost in my prime, but as now I am sensibly under great decays, and not likely to continue long, except some means hitherto not thought on should have been tried. What a summer had I of the last! seldom able to walk the streets; and not only often disabled by pain, but weakness. And what great advantage to you would it have been to see me die? I know not when I have had so much ease and health as in this journey.

'3. God not only hath determined the thing, we must die, but all circumstances, when and where, and after what manner, and all wisely and well. Why should you be grieved, that he hath done well? not only well in itself, but well for you, if you love him?

'4. You must ere long follow, and shall not be always in this world without me.

'5. What there is of evil in this case, admits of remedy. Draw so much nearer to God, and cease from man: mind heaven more, and your loss is made up.

'6. I have, through the grace of God, preached immortal truth, which will survive, and may be to your advantage.

'7. As to you who have dependance upon me for worldly concernments: I was never a good projector for the world; so the loss is not great. How many, dear to God, make a shift, in a worse condition! Forget not the motto, God will provide. He that feeds ravens.

and takes care of sparrows, will he not take care of you? are you of his family, and will he not take care of his own? instead of distrust and repining, give thanks. O bless him with all your soul, that he hath revealed and given himself to you for an everlasting portion; and whose covenant is to be your God, and the God of yours.

'8. Let it be some satisfaction to you, that I go willingly, under no dread, with no regret, but with some comfortable knowledge of my way and end.'

With such thoughts and workings of mind as these, did he undertake and pursue his voyage and journey, and he arrived safe at London after having been five years in Ireland: and upon mature consideration, he accepted of the call that had been given him, and settled there, and made a quiet and peaceable use of King Charles's indulgence, preaching to a considerable and judicious auditory, by whom he was singularly respected; and he was much esteemed, not only by his brethren in the ministry among the dissenters, but also by several eminent divines of the church of England, as Dr. Whitchcot, Dr. Kidder, Dr. Fowler, Dr. Lucas, and others, whom he often conversed with, and that with great freedom and familiarity.

He was no sooner settled here, than he printed the first part of his 'Living Temple,' by which it was his design to improve that notion, that a good man is the Temple of God. This first part is upon God's existence, and his conversableness with man; and against Atheism, or the Epicurean deism. 'Tis dedicated to the Lord Viscount Massarene, governor of the county of London-Derry, and one of the lords of his majesty's most honourable privy-council in the kingdom of Ireland: and he signifies to his lordship, that this tract was conceived under his roof, and born out of his house; and that he therefore thought it decent and just, that it should openly own the relation which it thereby had, and the author's great obligations, to his lordship.

In the year 1677, he published a tract, entitled, 'The Reconcileableness of God's Prescience of the Sins of Men with the Wisdom and Sincerity of his Counsels and Exhortations, and whatever other Means he uses to prevent them:' written by way of Letter to the Honourable Robert Boyle, Esq. This treatise was exceedingly admired by some, and as much opposed by others. Mr. Theophilus Gale, in particular, his old fellow-collegiate, publishing about this time his fourth part of 'The Court of the Gentiles,' made some animadversions upon it.[a] Whereupon Mr. Howe added a Postscript, in defence of the said Letter, in which he makes a return to Mr. Gale's remarks. Mr. Danson also wrote against this tract, but I know not that Mr. Howe took any notice of him; though the ingenious Andrew Marvel, Esq. made a very witty and entertaining reply to him. Upon the account of this performance of his, Mr. Wood represents Mr. Howe as a great and strict Arminian;[a] but very wrongfully. For that which he mainly asserts in that discourse, is no more than this, that 'it is inconceivable, that the holy and good God should irresistibly determine the wills of men to and punish the same thing; that he should irresistibly determine the will of a man to the hatred of his own most blessed self, and then exact severest punishments for the offence done,' which the strictest Calvinist has not the least occasion (as far as I can perceive) to scruple to acknowledge. This notion widely differs from asserting the blessed God universally to have left his reasonable creatures an indetermined power, with respect to all actions, good as well as evil, to the utter exclusion of efficacious grace, in reference even to the best actions that are. 'Tis that that is the true Arminian principle, if we may be allowed to pass a judgment, from the works of the most eminent writers that are in that scheme. If all are great and strict Arminians, who cannot allow themselves to suppose the blessed God, by internal influence, to have a hand even in the worst and wickedest actions, as far as in the best, I am persuaded there will be very few remaining but what are such, either here at home, or in any of the reformed churches abroad. As to Mr. Howe, he was so well satisfied in the firmness of the grounds he went upon, that at last he did not stick to declare, that 'if he found himself any way obliged further to intermeddle in this matter, he should reckon the time he had to spend in this world could never be spent to better purpose, than in discovering the fearful consequences of the opposite opinion, the vanity of the subterfuges whereby its assertors think to hide the malignity of it, and the inefficacy of the arguments brought for it.'[b]

But this was what he had no occasion for, God had cut out other work for him. He went on quietly in a course of practical preaching in his stated ministry, and was very useful in forwarding many in their way to heaven.

In the time of the popish plot, when things took a quite different turn from what they had done from the restoration till then, and the city and whole body of the nation was full of terror and melancholy apprehensions, he made it his endeavour among those with whom he had to do, to make the awful impressions which people were at that time under, serviceable to the purposes of serious religion: and in his conversation with the clergy of the established church, or with persons of quality and distinction, which was not unfrequent, he upon all occasions discovered a very peaceable and healing spirit, often giving it as his sense, that an accommodation of matters between the church and the dissenters, would be the most effectual way to keep out popery. And it has been the opinion of many, that a fitter season for a union could not well occur, than did then present itself. The House of Commons who sat at Westminster in 1680, seem to have been of that mind, and therefore they brought in a bill for uniting his majesty's protestant subjects, and nothing was more commonly talked of at that time. And not being able to go through with it, they, before they rose, came to a resolution, 'that the acts of parliament made in the

z See Court of the Gentiles, part 4. page 252.

a Athen. Oxon. vol. 2. page 1014.

b Postscript, page 131.

reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James, against popish recusants, ought not to be extended against protestant dissenters: and that the prosecution of protestant dissenters, upon the penal laws, is at this time grievous to the subject, a weakening the protestant interest, an encouragement to popery, and dangerous to the peace of the kingdom.'

Mr. Howe had about this time an invitation from Bishop Lloyd, to come and dine with him the next day. He was apprehensive it could not be without some particular design, that a bishop whom he had not seen, or at least with whom he had no acquaintance, should send to desire him to come and dine with him. He sent his lordship word, that he was engaged that day for dinner, (as he really was before the receipt of the message sent him,) but would not fail of waiting upon him afterwards. Hereupon the Bishop sent again, to let him know, that since he could not dine with him, he would not give him the trouble to come so far as his house, but would meet him at Dr. Tillotson's, the dean of Canterbury. They met there accordingly, and the Bishop told him that the reason why he desired a meeting with him, was to know of him, what he thought would satisfy the nonconformists, that so they might be taken into the church.[c] Mr. Howe answered, that he could not pretend to say what would satisfy any besides himself; for that all had not an equal latitude in such matters. The Bishop hereupon pressed him to give his judgment, what he thought would satisfy the most; for, says he, I would have the terms so large as to comprehend the most of them. Mr. Howe told him, that he thought it would go a considerable way towards it, if the law was but so framed, as that ministers might be enabled to promote parochial reformation. Why, says the Bishop, for that reason, I am for taking the lay chancellors quite away, as being the great hinderance of reformation. At length, they agreed upon a meeting the next night, at seven o'clock, at Dr. Stillingfleet's, the dean of St. Paul's. Mr. Howe proposed to bring Mr. Baxter along with him; but the Bishop would by no means allow of it. Then he proposed to bring Dr. Bates, and was answered, that no man could be more proper. Accordingly Dr. Bates and Mr. Howe went at seven in the evening to Dean Stillingfleet's, as had been appointed the day before. The Dean had provided a very handsome treat, but they found not the company they expected. They waited till eight, till nine, till near ten o'clock; but the Bishop neither came, nor sent, nor took any notice of the matter afterwards. And that very night, as they heard the next morning, the bill of exclusion was thrown out of the House of Peers, by a majority of thirty voices, fourteen of which were bishops. And after this, there was no further occasion for any talk about a comprehension.

For upon this turn of affairs, it is observed by a celebrated writer on the church side, that 'the clergy struck up with zeal for the duke's succession: as if a popish king had been a special blessing from heaven, to be much longed for by the protestant church. They likewise gave themselves such a loose against the nonconformists, as if nothing was so formidable as that party. So that in all their sermons, popery was quite forgot, and the force of their zeal was turned almost wholly against the dissenters.'[d] Amongst the rest, Dean Stillingfleet, from whom it was little expected, on the first day of Easter term, 1680, in a sermon before the lord mayor and aldermen of the city, the judges and serjeants, from Phil. iii. 16. (which sermon he entitled, 'The Mischief of Separation,') took occasion to represent all the nonconformists as schismaticks, and inveigh against them as enemies to peace, and dangerous to the church, &c. This sermon was answered by Dr. Owen, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Alsop, Mr. Barret, and others; and among the rest Mr. Howe made some remarks upon it, in a pamphlet, entitled, 'A Letter written out of the Country to a Person of quality in the City, who took offence at the late Sermon of Dr. Stillingfleet, Dean of St. Paul's, before the Lord Mayor;' which Letter was drawn up with great clearness and strength of reasoning. He therein shows how unreasonably the Doctor endeavours to keep the dissenters, who after the utmost search could not be satisfied to conform, in a state of damnation, for scrupling the ceremonies; at least in a neglect of the necessary means of salvation. He shows his arguments, both *ad rem* and *ad hominem* too, to be unconcluding; reflects freely on the Doctor for his too great acrimony, and too little seriousness in his way of management; and yet closes with a very genteel and handsome address to such as were offended with the Doctor's sermon, to abate their indignation, and moderate their censures, and stir them up to turn their reflections upon him, into serious prayers for him, for which he shows there was very just occasion.

The Doctor himself sticks not to own, that in this Letter he discourses gravely and piously, without bitterness and rancour, or any sharp reflections, and sometimes with a great mixture of kindness towards him, for which, and his prayers for him, he heartily thanks him.[e] This warm sermon of the Doctor's was generally reckoned very ill-timed, to which it's not unlikely but Bishop Burnet may have a reference, when he says of the great man, that 'he went into the humours of the high sort of people, beyond what became him; perhaps beyond his own sense of things.'[f]

Nor can I forbear to take notice of another sermon, that was preached this year (1680) at court, by Dean Tillotson, from Josh. xxiv. 15. entitled, 'The Protestant Religion vindicated from the charge of Singularity and Novelty.' In this sermon there is this notion; that no man is obliged to preach against the religion of a country, though a false one, unless he has a power of working miracles. King Charles slept most part of the time while the sermon was delivered; and a certain nobleman stepped to him as soon as it was over, and said, 'Tis a pity your majesty slept; for we had the

c A copy of the 'Heads of a Bill for uniting his Majesty Protestant Subjects,' which was agreed upon at a committee of the House of Commons, Nov. 18, 1680, may be met with, Abridgment of Mr. Baxter's Life, vol. i. p. 350.

d Bishop Burnet's History of his own Times, vol. i. p. 501.

e Preface to his 'Unreasonableness of Separation,' p. lxi lxii.

f History of his own Times, vol. i. p. 489.

rarest piece of Hobbism that ever you heard in your life. Ods fish, he shall print it then, says the king; and immediately called the lord chamberlain, and gave him his command to the Dean to print his sermon. When it came from the press, the Dean sent it as a present to Mr. Howe, as he usually did most of the things he printed. Mr. Howe immediately perused it, and was not a little troubled, to find a notion there, that had so ill a tendency as that forementioned. Whereupon he drew up a long letter, in which he freely expostulated with the Dean, for giving such a wound to the Reformation; signifying to him, that Luther and Calvin, and the rest of our blessed reformers, were (thanks be to God) of another mind. The Christian religion, (said he,) both as to its precepts and promises, is already confirmed by miracles; and must it be repealed, every time a wicked governor thinks fit to establish a false religion? must no one stand up for the true religion, till he can work a miracle? He signified to him, how much he was grieved, that in a sermon against popery, he should plead the popish cause against all the reformers; and insisted upon it, that we had incontestable evidence of the miracles wrought by the apostles, and that we are bound to believe them, and take religion to be established by them, without any further expectations, &c. Mr. Howe carried the letter himself, and delivered it into the Dean's own hands; and he taking a general and cursory view of it, signified his willingness to talk that whole matter freely over; but said, they could not be together where they were, without interruption, and therefore moved for a little journey into the country, that so they might have freedom of discourse. They accordingly agreed to go and dine that day with the Lady Falconbridge at Sutton-Court, and Mr. Howe re d over the letter to the Dean, and enlarged upon the contents of it, as they were travelling along together in his chariot. The good man at length fell to weeping freely, and said that this was the most unhappy thing that had of a long time befallen him. I see (says he) what I have offered is not to be maintained. But he told him, that it was not his turn to preach as on that day. He that should have been the preacher being sick, the Dean said, he was sent to by the lord chamberlain to supply his place: and he added, that he had but little notice, and so considered the general fears of popery, and this text offered itself, and he thought the notion resulted from it; and, says he, immediately after preaching, I received a command from the king, to print the sermon, and then it was not in my power to alter it. I am the better satisfied that there is no mistake as to the substance of this passage, because he from whom I had it, did not trust to his bare memory, but committed it to writing, presently after he received the account from Mr. Howe himself. And though such a story as this may make us sensible that the very best of men have their slips, yet am I far from thinking it a dishonour to this great man, to be open to conviction.

In 1681 the dissenters were prosecuted with great violence both in city and country, and the severe laws that had been made against them some years before, as well as some that were made against the papists in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, were rigorously put in execution against them, without any favour. Several of the bishops concurred, and by influence from court, were prevailed with to do their endeavour to push forward the civil magistrate, and to sharpen the rigour of the ecclesiastical courts, and that in defiance of the votes of the House of Commons in their favour. And as Bishop Burnet observes, 'such of the clergy as would not engage in the common fury, were cried out upon as the betrayers of the church, and as secret favourers of the dissenters.'[g] The author of 'the Complete History of England,'[h] says, that 'this year there was a vigorous prosecution of the protestant dissenters, which was generally thought a piece of court-artifice, to play the church of England against the dissenters, and enrage the dissenters against the church of England, that they might not unite and see their common danger, but rather by destroying one another, might make room for a third party, that lay behind the curtain, and watched an opportunity of the duke's succession.' And at this juncture, Mr. Howe published a discourse of 'Thoughtfulness for the Morrow, with an Appendix, concerning the immoderate Desire of foreknowing Things to come,' in 8vo. It is dedicated to the Lady Anne Wharton, of Upper Winchingdon in the county of Bucks, who had expressed a desire of seeing somewhat written on that subject. To which is added, 'A Discourse of Charity, in reference to other Men's Sins, from 1 Cor. xiii. 6.' He this year also published 'A Funeral Sermon on the Decease of Mrs. Margaret Baxter, who died June 28th, from 2 Cor. v. 8.'

In 1682 things were much in the same state as the year before. This year also Mr. Howe published several little things; as, 'A Discourse on the right Use of that Argument in Prayer, from the Name of God, on behalf of a People that profess it, from Jer. xiv. 21.' 8vo. 'A Discourse on Self-Dedication, at the Anniversary Thanksgiving of the Earl of Kildare, for a great Deliverance,' in 12mo, and 'A Funeral Sermon for Mr. Richard Fairclough, who deceased July 4th, from Matt. xxv. 21.' And he now drew up those Annotations on the three Epistles of St. John, which are to be met with in the second volume, or continuation, of Mr. Pool.

In 1683 there was a most cruel order made by the justices of peace at their quarter-sessions at Exon, against all nonconforming ministers, allowing a reward of forty shillings to any person that apprehended any one of them, and declaring their resolution to put in execution against them the severest laws, and particularly that of the 35th of Elizabeth, the penalties whereof are imprisonment, abjuration of the realm, or death. And Bishop Lamplugh (who was afterwards archbishop of York) required the order to be read by all the clergy on the next Sunday after it should be tendered to them, on purpose (as was said) 'that the care of the justices of Devon, for the preservation of

g History of his own Times, vol. i. page 501.

h Vol. iii. page 403.

the public peace, might be fuller known, and have a better effect.'

The same year there was published in the 'Continuation of the Morning Exercise,' an excellent sermon of Mr. Howe's, from Col. ii. 2. upon this question, 'What may most hopefully be attempted, to allay animosities among protestants, that our divisions may not be our ruin?'

'In order to this, he earnestly recommends to all the professors of religion, the maintaining of a sincere love to one another, and the improving of their faith to greater measures of clearness, certainty, and efficacy, in reference to the substantials of Christianity. A generous love, not to Christians of this or that party or denomination only, but to all in whom the true essentials of Christianity are found, would (he says) greatly contribute to the vigour of the Christian life. It would inspire Christians generally with a sacred courage and fortitude, when they should know and even feel themselves knit together in love. It would on the contrary extinguish or abate the unhallowed fire of our anger and wrath towards one another. It would oblige us to all acts of mutual kindness and friendship. Prejudices would cease, and jealousies concerning each other, and a mutual confidence would be produced. It would make us earnestly covet an entire union in all the things wherein we differ, and contribute greatly to it. It would make us much more apt to yield to one another, and abate all that ever we can, in order to as full an accommodation as is any way possible; that if we cannot agree upon either extreme, we might at last meet in the middle. It would make us abstain from mutual censures of one another as insincere for our remaining differences; and convince us that such censures are very unreasonable, because all have not the same understanding, nor the same gust and relish of things. It would oblige us, after competent endeavours of mutual satisfaction, about the matters wherein we differ, to forbear further urging of one another concerning them: and it would make us forbear reviling and exposing one another, and the industrious seeking one another's ruin. And then if, at the same time, we did but endeavour to have our souls possessed with a more clear, efficacious, practical faith of the Gospel, and our hearts so overcome, as practically and vitally to receive it, we should apprehend the things to be truly great wherein we are to unite, and should, in comparison, apprehend all things else to be little; and so should be more strongly inclined to hold together by the things wherein we agree, than to contend with one another about the things wherein we differ. Thus our religion would revive, and become a vital powerful thing; and consequently more grateful to God, and awful to men. And if we in our several particular stations are but herein careful, if we but do our own part, we may be able to say it was not our fault, but Christians had been combined, and entirely one with each other; but they had been more thoroughly Christian, and more entirely united with God in Christ; and that Christianity had been a more lively, powerful, awful, amiable thing. If the Christian community moulder, decay, be enfeebled, broken, dispirited, and ruined in great part, this ruin shall not rest under our hands.'

On July 20th this year, that noble patriot, William Lord Russel, was beheaded in Lincolns-Inn-Fields, to the no small terror and consternation of the true lovers of their country, and friends of the protestant religion. This was a severe stroke upon the Bedford family, and an unspeakable loss to the excellent lady, who was left a mournful widow, and continued so to the year 1723, when she went to her grave full of years. Mr. Howe upon this melancholy occasion wrote a consolatory letter to her, which very well deserves to be preserved, and transmitted to posterity; an authentic copy of which having been kept safe in his family, here follows.

'Madam,

'It can avail you nothing, to let your honour know from what hand this paper comes; and my own design in it is abundantly answered, if what it contains proves useful to you. Your affliction hath been great, unspeakably beyond what it is in my power or design to represent; and your supports (in the paroxysm of your affliction) have been very extraordinary; and such as wherein all that have observed or heard, could not but acknowledge a divine hand.

'But your affliction was not limited and enclosed within the limits of one black day, nor is like those more common ones, the sense whereof abates and wears off by time; but is continued, and probably more felt, as time runs on: which therefore makes you need continued help from Heaven every day.

'Yet there is here a great difference between what expectations we may have of divine assistance, in the beginning or first violence of some great affliction, and in the continued course of it afterwards. At first we are apt to be astonished, a consternation seizes our thinking faculty, especially as to that exercise of it, whereby it should minister to our relief. In this case the merciful God doth more extraordinarily assist such as sincerely trust and resign themselves to him; unto these, as his more peculiar favourites, his sustaining influences are more immediate, and more efficacious, so as even (in the present exigency) to prevent and supersede any endeavour of theirs, whereof they are, then, less capable. And of the largeness and bounty of his goodness, in such a case, few have had greater experience than your ladyship; which was eminently seen, in that magnanimity, that composure and presentness of mind, much admired by your friends, and no doubt by the special favour of Heaven afforded you in the needful season: so that while that amazing calamity was approaching, and stood in nearer view, nothing that was fit or wise or great was omitted, nothing indecent done. Which is not now said, God knows, to flatter your ladyship, (whereof the progress will further vindicate me,) for I ascribe it to God, as I trust your ladyship, with unfeigned gratitude, will also do. And I mention it, as that whereby you are under

obligation to endeavour, your continued temper and deportment may be agreeable to such beginnings.

'For now (which is the other thing, whereof a distinct observation ought to be had) in the continuance and settled state of the affliction, when the fury of the first assault is over, and we have had leisure to recollect ourselves, and recover our dissipated spirits, though we are then more sensible of pain and smart, yet also the power of using our own thoughts is restored. And being so, although we are too apt to use them to our greater hurt and prejudice, we are really put again into a capacity of using them to our advantage, which our good God doth in much wisdom and righteousness require we should do. Whereupon we are to expect his continual assistance for our support under continued affliction, in the way of concurrence and co-operation with our due use of our own thoughts, aptly chosen, as much as in us is, and designed by ourselves, for our own comfort and support.

'Now as for thoughts suitable to your honour's case, I have reason to be conscious that what I shall write can make but little accession, I will not say to a closet, but to a mind so well furnished, as you are owner of: yet I know it is remote from you to slight a well-intended offer and essay, that really proceeds only from a very compassionate sense of your sorrows, and unfeigned desire to contribute something (if the Father of mercies, and the God of all comforts and consolations, will please to favour the endeavour) to your relief.

'And the thoughts which I shall most humbly offer, will have that first and more immediate design, but to persuade your making use of your own; that is, that you would please to turn and apply them to subjects more apt to serve this purpose, the moderating your own grief, and the attaining an habitual well-tempered cheerfulness, for your remaining time in this world. For I consider how incident it is to the afflicted, to indulge to themselves an unlimited liberty in their sorrows, to give themselves up to them, to make them meat and drink, to justify them in all their excesses, as that (otherwise) good and holy man of God did his anger, and say, they do well to be sorrowful even to the death, and (as another) to refuse to be comforted. And I also consider that our own thoughts must and will always be the immediate ministers either of our trouble or comfort, though as to the latter, God only is the supreme Author; and we altogether insufficient to think any thing that good is, as of ourselves. It is God that comforts those that are cast down, but by our own thoughts employed to that purpose, not without them.

'I do not doubt, madam, but if you once fixedly apprehend that there is sin in an over-abounding sorrow, you will soon endeavour its restraint: for I cannot think you would more earnestly set yourself to avoid any thing, than what you apprehend will offend God, especially the doing that in a continued course. Is there any time when joy in God is a duty? 'tis very plain the sorrow that excludes it is a sin. How the former may appear to be a duty, and how far, let it be considered.

'It is not to be doubted but that he that made us hath a right to rule us; he that gave us being, to give us law: nor again, that the divine government reaches our minds, and that they are the prime and first seat of his empire. His kingdom is within us. We are not then to exercise our thoughts, desires, love, joy, or sorrow, according to our own will, but his; not as we please, or find ourselves inclined, but suitably to his precepts and purposes, his rules and ends.

''Tis evident that withal the earthly state is mixed, intermediate between the perfect felicity of heaven, and the total misery of hell: and further, that the temper of our spirits ought to have in it a mixture of joy and sorrow, proportionable to our state, or what there is in it of the just occasions or causes of both.

'Where Christianity obtains, and the Gospel of our Saviour is preached, there is much greater cause of joy than elsewhere. The visible aspect of it imports a design to form men's minds to gladness, inasmuch as, wheresoever it comes, it proclaims peace to the world, and represents the offended Majesty of heaven willing to be reconciled to his offending creatures on earth. So the angel prefaced the Gospel, when our Lord was born into the world, Luke ii. I tell you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. And so the multitude of accompanying angels sum it up; Glory be to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will towards men.

'To them that truly receive the Gospel, and with whom it hath its effect, the cause of rejoicing riseth much higher. For if the offer and hope of reconciliation be a just ground of joy, how much more actual agreement with God, upon the terms of the Gospel, and reconciliation itself! We rejoice in God through Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement, Rom. v. 11. To such there are express precepts given to rejoice in the Lord always, Phil. iv. 4. And lest that should be thought to have been spoken hastily, and that it might have its full weight, that great apostle immediately adds, And again I say to you, rejoice. And elsewhere, Rejoice evermore, I Thess. v. 16.

'Hence therefore the genuine right temper and frame of a truly Christian mind and spirit may be evidently concluded to be this, (for such precepts do not signify nothing, nor can they be understood to signify less,) *viz.* an habitual joyfulness, prevailing over all the temporary occasions of sorrow, that occur to them. For none can be thought of that can preponderate, or be equal to the just and great causes of their joy. This is the true frame, model, and constitution of the kingdom of God, which ought to have place in us; herein it consists, *viz.* in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. xiv. 17.

'Nor is this a theory only, or the idea and notion of an excellent temper of spirit, which we may contemplate indeed, but can never attain to. For we find it also to have been the attainment, and usual temper of

Christians heretofore, that being justified by faith, and having peace with God, they have rejoiced in hope of the glory of God, unto that degree, as even to glory in their tribulations also, Rom. v. 1—3. And that in the confidence they should be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, they have hereupon greatly rejoiced, though with some mixture of heaviness (whereof there was need) from their manifold trials. But that their joy did surmount and prevail over their heaviness is manifest; for this is spoken of with much diminution, whereas they are said to rejoice greatly, and with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 5, 6, 8.

'Yea, and such care hath the great God taken for the preserving of this temper of spirit among his people more anciently, that even their sorrow for sin itself (the most justifiable of all other) hath had restraints put upon it, lest it should too long exclude or intermit the exercise of this joy. For when a great assembly of them were universally in tears, upon hearing the law read, and the sense given, they were forbidden to weep or mourn, or be sorry, because the joy of the Lord was their strength, Neh. viii. 8—10. That most just sorrow had been unjust, had it been continued, so as to exclude the seasonable turn and alternation of this joy. For even such sorrow itself is not required, or necessary for itself. 'Tis remote from the goodness and benignity of God's ever-blessed nature, to take pleasure in the sorrows of his people, as they are such, or that they should sorrow for sorrow's sake; but only as a means and preparative to their following joy. And nothing can be more unreasonable, than that the means should exclude the end, or be used against the purpose they should serve.

'It is then upon the whole most manifest, that no temporary affliction whatsoever, upon one who stands in special relation to God, as a reconciled (and which is consequent, an adopted) person, though attended with the most aggravating circumstances, can justify such a sorrow, (so deep or so continued,) as shall prevail against and shut out a religious holy joy, or hinder it from being the prevailing principle in such a one. What can make that sorrow allowable or innocent, (what event of Providence, that can, whatever it is, be no other than an accident to our Christian state,) that shall resist the most natural design and end of Christianity itself? that shall deprave and debase the truly Christian temper, and disobey and violate most express Christian precepts? subvert the constitution of Christ's kingdom among men? and turn this earth (the place of God's treaty with the inhabitants of it, in order to their reconciliation to himself, and to the reconciled the portal and gate of heaven, yea, and where the state of the very worst and most miserable has some mixture of good in it, that makes the evil of it less than that of hell) into a mere hell to themselves, of sorrow without mixture, and wherein shall be nothing but weeping and wailing.

'The cause of your sorrow, madam, is exceeding great. The causes of your joy are inexpressibly greater. You have infinitely more left than you have lost. Doth it need to be disputed whether God be better and greater than man? or more to be valued, loved, and delighted in? and whether an eternal relation be more considerable than a temporary one? Was it not your constant sense in your best outward state, Whom have I in heaven but thee, O God, and whom can I desire on earth, in comparison of thee! Psal. lxxiii. 25. Herein the state of your ladyship's case is still the same (if you cannot rather with greater clearness and with less hesitation pronounce those latter words.) The principal causes of your joy are immutable, such as no supervening thing can alter. You have lost a most pleasant, delectable, earthly relative. Doth the blessed God hereby cease to be the best and most excellent good? Is his nature changed? his everlasting covenant reversed and annulled? which is ordered in all things and sure, and is to be all your salvation and all your desire, whether he make your house on earth to grow or not to grow, 2 Sam. xxiii. 4. That sorrow which exceeds the proportion of its cause, compared with the remaining true and real causes of rejoicing, is in that excess causeless; *i. e.* that excess of it wants a cause, such as can justify or afford defence unto it.

'We are required, in reference to our nearest relations in this world, (when we lose them,) to weep as if we wept not, as well as (when we enjoy them) to rejoice as if we rejoiced not, because our time here is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away, 1 Cor. vii. 29—31. We are finite beings, and so are they. Our passions in reference to them must not be infinite, and without limit, or be limited only by the limited capacity of our nature, so as to work to the utmost extent of that, as the fire burns, and the winds blow, as much as they can: but they are to be limited by the power, design, and endeavour of our reason and grace (not only by the mere impotency of our nature) in reference to all created objects. Whereas in reference to the infinite uncreated Good, towards which there is no danger or possibility of exceeding in our affection, we are never to design to ourselves any limits at all; for that would suppose we had loved God enough, or as much as he deserved, which were not only to limit ourselves, but him too; and were a constructive denial of his infinite immense goodness, and consequently of his very Godhead. Of so great concernment it is to us, that in the liberty we give our affections, we observe the just difference which ought to be in their exercise, towards God, and towards creatures.

'It is also to be considered, that the great God is pleased so to condescend, as himself to bear the name and sustain the capacity of our nearest earthly relations; which implies that what they were to us, in this or that kind, he will be in a transcendent and far more noble kind. I doubt not but your ladyship hath good right to apply to yourself those words of the prophet, Isa. lvi. 5. Thy Maker is thy husband, &c. Whereupon, as he infinitely transcends all that is delectable in the most excellent earthly relation, it ought to be endeavoured, that the affection placed on him should proportionably excel. I cannot think any person in the world would be a more severe or impartial judge of a

criminal affection than your ladyship: or that it would look worse unto any eye, if any one should so deeply take to heart the death of an unrelated person, as never to take pleasure more, in the life, presence, and conversation of one most nearly related. And you do well know that such an height (or that supremacy) of affection, as is due to the ever-blessed God, cannot without great injury be placed any where else. As we are to have none other God before him; so him alone we are to love with all our heart and soul, and might and mind.

'And it ought further to be remembered, that whatsoever interest we have or had in any the nearest relative on earth, his interest who made both is far superior. He made us and all things primarily for himself, to serve great and important ends of his own; so that our satisfaction in any creature, is but secondary and collateral to the principal design of its creation.

'Which consideration would prevent a practical error and mistake that is too usual with pious persons, afflicted with the loss of any near relation, that they think the chief intention of such a providence is their punishment. And hereupon they are apt to justify the utmost excesses of their sorrow, upon such an occasion, accounting they can never be sensible enough of the divine displeasure appearing in it; and make it their whole business (or employ their time and thoughts beyond a due proportion) to find out and fasten upon some particular sin of theirs, which they may judge God was offended with them for, and designed now to punish upon them. It is indeed the part of filial ingenuity, deeply to apprehend the displeasure of our father; and an argument of great sincerity, to be very inquisitive after any sin for which we may suppose him displeased with us, and apt to charge ourselves severely with it, though perhaps upon utmost inquiry, there is nothing particularly to be reflected on, other than common infirmity incident to the best, (and it is well when at length we can make that judgment, because there really is no more, not for that we did not inquire,) and perhaps also God intended no more in such a dispensation, (as to what concerned us in it,) than only, in the general, to take off our minds and hearts more from this world, and draw them more entirely to himself. For if we were never so innocent, must therefore such a relative of ours have been immortal? But the error in practice as to this case, lies here: not that our thoughts are *much* exercised this way, but *too much*. We ought to consider in every case, principally, that which is principal. God did not create this or that excellent person, and place him for a while in the world, principally to please us; nor therefore doth he take him away, principally to displease or punish us; but for much nobler and greater ends which he hath proposed to himself concerning him. Nor are we to reckon ourselves so little interested in the great and sovereign Lord of all, whom we have taken to be our God, and to whom we have absolutely resigned and devoted ourselves, as not to be obliged to consider and satisfy ourselves, in his pleasure, purposes, and ends, more than our own, apart from his.

'Such as he hath pardoned, accepted and prepared for himself, are to serve and glorify him in a higher and more excellent capacity, than they ever could in this wretched world of ours, and wherein they have themselves the highest satisfaction. When the blessed God is pleased in having attained and accomplished the end and intendments of his own boundless love, (too great to be satisfied with the conferring of only temporary favours in this imperfect state,) and they are pleased in partaking the full effects of that love; who are we, that we should be displeased? or that we should oppose our satisfaction, to that of the glorious God, and his glorified creature? Therefore, madam, whereas you cannot avoid to think much on this subject, and to have the removal of that incomparable person for a great theme of your thoughts, I do only propose most humbly to your honour, that you would not confine them to the sadder and darker part of that theme. It hath also a bright side; and it equally belongs to it, to consider whither he is gone, and to whom, as whence, and from whom. Let, I beseech you, your mind be more exercised in contemplating the glories of that state your blessed consort is translated unto, which will mingle pleasure and sweetness with the bitterness of your afflicting loss, by giving you a daily intellectual participation (through the exercise of faith and hope) in his enjoyments. He cannot descend to share with you in your sorrows; you may thus every day ascend and partake with him in his joys. He is a pleasant subject to consider. A prepared spirit made meet for an inheritance with them that are sanctified, and with the saints in light, now entered into a state so connatural, and wherein it finds every thing most agreeable to itself. How highly grateful is it to be united with the true centre, and come home to the Father of spirits! To consider how pleasant a welcome, how joyful an entertainment he hath met with above! how delighted an associate he is with the general assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect! how joyful an homage he continually pays to the throne of the celestial King!

'Will your ladyship think that a hard saying of our departing Lord to his mournful disciples, If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, that I said I go to the Father; for my Father is greater than I? As if he had said, he sits enthroned in higher glory than you can frame any conception of, by beholding me in so mean a condition on earth. We are as remote, and as much short in our thoughts as to the conceiving the glory of the Supreme King, as a peasant, who never saw any thing better than his own cottage, from conceiving the splendour of the most glorious prince's court. But if that faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, be much accustomed to its proper work and business, the daily delightful visiting and viewing the glorious invisible regions; if it be often conversant in those vast and spacious tracts of pure and brightest light, and amongst the holy inhabitants that replenish them; if it frequently employ itself in contemplating their comely order, perfect harmony,

sublime wisdom, unspotted purity, most fervent mutual love, delicious conversation with one another, and perpetual pleasant consent in their adoration and observance of their eternal King! who is there to whom it would not be a solace to think, I have such and such friends and relatives (some perhaps as dear as my own life) perfectly well pleased, and happy among them? How can your love, madam, (so generous a love towards so deserving an object!) how can it but more fervently sparkle in joy, for his sake, than dissolve in tears for your own?

'Nor should such thoughts excite over-hasty impatient desires of following presently into heaven, but to the endeavours of serving God more cheerfully on earth, for our appointed time: which I earnestly desire your ladyship would apply yourself to, as you would not displease God, who it your only hope, nor be cruel to yourself, nor dishonour the religion of Christians, as if they had no other consolations than this earth can give, and earthly power take from them. Your ladyship (if any one) would be loth to do any thing unworthy your family and parentage. Your highest alliance is to that Father and family above, whose dignity and honour are I doubt not of highest account with you.

'I multiply words, being loth to lose my designs. And shall only add that consideration, which cannot but be valuable with you, upon his first proposal, who had all the advantages imaginable to give it its full weight; I mean, that of those dear pledges left behind: my own heart even bleeds to think of the case of those sweet babes, should they be bereaved of their other parent too. And even your continued visible dejection would be their unspeakable disadvantage. You will always naturally create in them a reverence of you; and I cannot but apprehend how the constant mean aspect and deportment of such a parent will insensibly influence the temper of dutiful children; and (if that be sad and despondent) depress their spirits, blunt and take off the edge and quickness, upon which their future usefulness and comfort will much depend. Were it possible their (now glorious) father should visit and inspect you, would you not be troubled to behold a frown in that bright serene face? You are to please a more penetrating eye, which you will best do, by putting on a temper and deportment suitable to your weighty charge and duty, and to the great purposes for which God continues you in the world, by giving over unnecessary solitude and retirement, which (though it pleases) doth really prejudice you, and is more than you can bear. Nor can any rules of decency require more. Nothing that is necessary and truly Christian, ought to be reckoned unbecoming. David's example, 2 Sam. xii. 20. is of too great authority to be counted a pattern of indecency. The God of heaven lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and thereby put gladness into your heart; and give you to apprehend him saying to you, Arise and walk in the light of the Lord.

'That I have used so much freedom in this paper, I make no apology for; but do therefore hide myself in the dark, not judging it consistent with that plainness which I thought the case might require, to give any other account of myself, than that I am one deeply sensible of your and your noble relatives' great affliction, and who scarce ever bow the knee before the mercy-seat without remembering it: and who shall ever be,

Madam,
Your ladyship's
Most sincere honourer, and
Most humble devoted servant.'

Though Mr. Howe did not put his name to this his consolatory epistle, yet the style, and several particularities in it, soon discovered who was the author. The lady sent him a letter of thanks, and told him that he must not expect to remain concealed. She promised to endeavour to follow the advice he had given her, and often wrote to him afterwards, some of which letters I have seen and read, and they show that his freedom was taken kindly, and his pains well bestowed.

'Tis observed by Bishop Burnet,[i] concerning this excellent person the Lord Russell, who died a martyr for the liberties of his country, that he was a man of great candour, and of a general reputation, universally beloved and trusted, of a generous and obliging temper. He had given such proofs of an undaunted courage, and of an unshaken firmness, that the Bishop says, he never knew any man have so entire a credit in the nation as he had. He adds, that he had from his first education an inclination to favour the nonconformists, and wished the laws could have been made easier to them. On the other hand, the high party represented him as one that had no very favourable opinion of the English clergy in general, as thinking them for the most part a set of men too much bigoted to slavish principles, and not zealous enough for the protestant religion, or the common interest of a free nation.[k] 'Tis hoped, that the remaining branches of that noble family will adhere to his principles, and imitate his glorious example.

I go on to the year 1684, in which Mr. Howe published a treatise, on Luke xix. 41, 42. entitled, 'The Redeemer's Tears wept over Lost Souls; with an Appendix, where somewhat is occasionally discoursed, concerning the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and how God is said to will the salvation of them that perish.'

Bishop Burnet owns, that the prosecution of the dissenters was carried very high all this year. They were not only proceeded against for going to conventicles, as he is pleased to call their private meetings for the worship of God, but for not going to church, and for not receiving the sacrament. The laws made against papists, with relation to those particulars, being now applied to them. Many were excommunicated and ruined by these prosecutions.[l]

i History of his own Times, vol. i. page 388.
k See the Life of Mr. Kettlewell, in 8vo. page 58.

l Bishop Burnet's History of his own Times, vol. i. page 591.

Among other warm things which at that time came from the press, there was a letter published by Bishop Barlow of Lincoln, for the putting in execution the laws against the dissenters: and this was written in concurrence with that which was drawn up by the justices of the peace of the county of Bedford, bearing date Jan. 14th, 1684. In answer to this warm and angry printed letter of the Bishop of Lincoln, Mr. Howe sent his lordship a free letter by the post, a copy whereof has been preserved, and here follows.

'Right Reverend,

'As I must confess myself surprised by your late published directions to your clergy of the county of Bedford, so nor will I dissemble, that I did read them with some trouble of mind, which I sincerely profess was more upon your lordship's account than my own, (who for myself am little concerned,) or any other particular person's whatsoever. It was such as it had not been very difficult for me to have concealed in my own breast, or only to have expressed it to God in my prayers for you, (which through his grace I have not altogether omitted to do,) if I had not apprehended it not utterly impossible, (as I trust I might, without arrogating unduly to myself,) that some or other of those thoughts, which I have revolved in my own mind upon this occasion, being only hinted to your lordship, might appear to your very sagacious judgment (for which I have had long, and have still, a continuing veneration) some way capable of being cultivated by your own mature and second thoughts, so as not to be wholly unuseful to your lordship.

'My own judgment, such as it is, inclines me not to oppose any thing, either, 1. To the lawfulness of the things themselves which you so much desire should obtain in the practice of the people under your lordship's pastoral inspection: or, 2. To the desirable comeliness of an uniformity in the public and solemn worship of God: or, 3. To the fitness of making laws for the effecting of such uniformity: or, 4. To the execution of such laws, upon some such person as may possibly be found among so numerous a people as are under your lordship's care.

'But the things which I humbly conceive are to be deliberated on, are, 1. Whether *all* the laws that are in being about matters of that nature, ought now to be executed upon *all* the persons which any way transgress them, without distinction of either? 2. Whether it was so well, that your lordship should advise and press that indistinct execution, which the order (to which the subjoined directions of your lordship do succcnturiate) seems to intend; supposing that designed execution were fit in itself.

'I shall not need to speak severally to these heads: your lordship will sufficiently distinguish what is applicable the one way or the other. But I humbly offer to your lordship's further consideration, whether it be not a supposable thing, that some persons found in the faith, strictly orthodox in all the articles of it taught by our Lord Jesus or his apostles, resolvedly loyal, and subject to the authority of their governors in church and state, of pious, sober, peaceable, just, charitable dispositions and deportments, may yet (while they agree with your lordship in that evident principle, both by the law of nature and Scripture, that their prince and inferior rulers ought to be actively obeyed in all lawful things) have a formed fixed judgment (for what were to be done in the case of a mere doubt, that hath not arrived to a settled preponderation this way or that, is not hard to determine) of the unlawfulness of some or other of the rites and modes of worship enjoined to be observed in this church? For my own part, though perhaps I should not be found to differ much from your lordship in most of the things here referred unto, I do yet think that few metaphysical questions are disputed with nicer subtlety, than the matter of the ceremonies has been by Archbishop Whitgift, Cartwright, Hooker, Parker, Dr. Burgess, Dr. Ames, Gillespy, Jeanes, Calderwood, Dr. Owen, Baxter, &c. Now, is it impossible that a sincere and sober Christian may, with an honest heart, have so weak intellectuals, as not to be able to understand all the punctilios upon which a right judgment of such a matter may depend? And is it not possible there may be such a thing, as a mental as well as a merely sensitive antipathy, not vincible by ordinary methods? Is there no difference to be put between things essential to our religion, and things confessed indifferent on the one hand, and on the other judged unlawful; on both hands but accidental? (though they that think them unlawful, dare not allow themselves a liberty of sinning, even in accidentals.) If your lordship were the paterfamilias to a numerous family of children and servants, among whom one or other very dutiful child takes offence, not at the sort of food you have thought fit should be provided, but somewhat in the sauce or way of dressing, which thereupon he forbears; you try all the means which your paternal wisdom and severity thinks fit, to overcome that aversion, but in vain; would you finally famish this child, rather than yield to his inclination in so small a thing?

'My lord, your lordship well knows the severity of some of those laws which you press for the execution of is such, as being executed, they must infer the utter ruin of them who observe them not, in their temporal concernment; and not that only, but their deprivation of the comfortable advantages appointed by our blessed Lord, for promoting their spiritual and eternal well-being. I cannot but be well persuaded not only of the mere sincerity, but eminent sanctity of divers, upon my own knowledge and experience of them, who would sooner die at a stake, than I or any man can prevail with them (notwithstanding our rubric, or whatever can be said to facilitate the matter) to kneel before the consecrated elements at the Lord's table. Would your lordship necessitate such, *perdere substantiam propter accidentia?* What if there be considerable numbers of such in your lordship's vastly numerous flock; will it

be comfortable to you, when an account is demanded of your lordship by the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls concerning them, only to be able to say, Though, Lord, I did believe the provisions of thine house purchased for them, necessary and highly useful for their salvation, I drove them away as dogs and swine from thy table, and stirred up such other agents as I could influence against them, by whose means I reduced many of them to beggary, ruined many families, banished them into strange countries, where they might (for me) serve other gods; and this not for disobeying any immediate ordinance or law of thine, but because for fear of offending thee, they did not in every thing comport with my own appointments, or which I was directed to urge and impose upon them? How well would this practice agree with that apostolical precept, Him that is weak in the faith receive, but not to doubtful disputations? I know not how your lordship would relieve yourself in this case, but by saying they were not weak, nor conscientious, but wilful and humoursome. But what shall then be said to the subjoined expostulation, Who art thou that judgest thy brother? we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. What if they have appeared conscientious, and of a very unblameable conversation in all things else? What if better qualified for Christian communion in all other respects, than thousands you admitted? If you say you know of none such under your charge so severely dealt with, it will be said, Why did you use such severity toward them you did not know? or urge and animate them to use it, whom you knew never likely to distinguish? A very noted divine of the Church of England said to me in discourse not very long ago, upon mention of the ceremonies, Come, come, the Christian church and religion is in a consumption; and it ought to be done as in the case of consumptive persons, shave off the hair to save the life. Another (a dignified person) present, replied, I doubt not it will be so, in the Philadelphian state. I long thought few had been in the temper of their minds nearer it than your lordship, and am grieved, not that I so judged, but that I am mistaken; and to see your lordship the first public example to the rest of your order in such a course. Blessed Lord! how strange is it that so long experience will not let us see, that little, and so very disputable matters, can never be the terms of union so much to be desired in the Christian church; and that in such a case as ours is, nothing will satisfy, but the destruction of them, whose union upon so nice terms we cannot obtain; and then to call *solitudinem, pacem!* But we must, it seems, understand all this rigour your lordship shows, to proceed from love, and that you are for destroying the dissenters, only to mend their understandings, and because *afflictio dat intellectum.* I hope indeed God will sanctify the affliction which you give and procure them, to blessed purposes; and perhaps *periissent nisi periissent:* but for the purposes your lordship seems to aim at, I wonder what you can expect. Can you, by undoing men, change the judgment of their consciences? or if they should tell you, We do indeed in our consciences judge, we shall greatly offend God by complying with your injunctions, but yet to save being undone, we will do it; will this qualify them for your communion? If your lordship think still, you have judged and advised well in this matter, you have the judgment of our sovereign, upon twelve years' experience, lying against you: you have as to one of the laws you would have executed, the judgment of both houses of parliament against you, who passed a bill (to which perhaps you consented) for taking it away.[m] You have (as to all of them) the judgment of the last House of Commons sitting at Westminster, so far as to the season then, of executing those laws. It may be your lordship thinks it now a fitter season: but if you have misjudged, or misdone against your judgment, I pray God to rectify your error by gentler methods, and by less affliction, than you have designed to your brethren: and do not for all this doubt, (any more for your part than my own,) to meet you there one day, where Luther and Zuinglius are well agreed. If I did think that would contribute any thing to the honest and truly charitable design of this letter, I should freely and at large tell you my name: and do however tell you, I am,

A sincere honourer of your lordship,
And your very faithful, humble servant.'

What effects this letter might have I know not, but I must confess I think it to have been very strong and moving, and likely to make impression.

In 1685, the dissenters were run down universally, and hardly any one durst speak or write in their favour; and the prospects people had with respect to the public, grew every day more and more gloomy. Mr. Howe therefore having an invitation given him by the Lord Wharton to travel with him abroad, into foreign parts, accepted it readily. He had so little time given him to prepare for his voyage, which he entered upon in the month of August this year, that he had not an opportunity of taking leave of his friends, but sent a letter to them from the other side the water, which was thus directed.

'*To such in and about London, among whom I have laboured in the work of the Gospel.*' It here follows.

'*My most dearly beloved in our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, grace, mercy, and peace be through him multiplied unto you.*

'That I am at this time at this distance from you, is, I am persuaded, (upon the experience I have had of your great love and value of my poor labours,) not pleasant to you, and I do assure you it is grievous to me, though

m The Complete History of England, vol. iii. page 393, tells us, that the Commons, in 1689, prepared a bill for exempting his majesty's protestant subjects, dissenting from the church of England, from the penalties imposed upon the papists, by repealing the act of 35 Eliz. This bill passed the Commons, and was agreed to by the Lords, and lay ready for his majesty's assent. But when his majesty came to the throne, to pass this among other bills, this was taken from the table, and never heard of after. Which no man durst have done, without the king's command, or at least his privity and connivance at it. The loss of this bill was complained of in the next parliament at Oxford, but without satisfaction or redress.

I murmur not at the wise and holy Providence that hath ordered things thus, in reference to you and me: but it added to my trouble, that I could not so much as oid farewell to persons to whom I had so great endearments, the solemnity whereof you know our circumstances would not admit. Nor could I have opportunity to communicate to you the grounds of my taking this long journey, being under promise while the matter was under consideration, not to speak of it to any one that was not concerned immediately about it: neither could I think that imprudent in itself, where acquaintance was so numerous; silence towards dearest friends in such cases usually being designed for an apology to all others. And after the resolution was taken, my motion depending on another, I had not time for that, or any such purposes. And should I yet communicate them, as they lie particularly in my own thoughts, it would lose time that I may more profitably employ, for both you and myself, while I do it not. You will, I may be confident, be more prudent and equal, than to judge of what you do not know: but so much I shall in the general say, that the providence of God gave me the prospect of a present quiet abode, with some opportunity of being serviceable; (and I hope, as it may prove through his help and blessing, unto you, if I have life and health to finish what I have been much pressed by some of yourselves to go on with;) which opportunity I could not hope to have nearer you, at least without being unreasonably burdensome to some, while I was designing service as much as in me lay to all. It much satisfies me that I have a record above, I am not designing for myself; that he who knoweth all things, knows I love not this present world, and I covet not an abode in it, (nor have I when it was most friendly to me,) upon any other account, than upon doing some service to him, and the souls of men. It therefore has been my settled habitual sense and sentiment a long time, to value and desire (with submission to sovereign good pleasure) peace and quiet, with some tolerable health, more than life. Nor have I found any thing more destructive to my health, than confinement to a room a few days in the city air, which was much better and more healthful to me formerly, than since the anger and jealousies of such as I never had a disposition to offend, have of later times occasioned persons of my circumstances very seldom to walk the streets.

'But my hope is, God will in his good time incline the hearts of rulers more to favour such as cannot be satisfied with the public constitutions in the matters of God's worship, and that are innocent and peaceable in the land; and that my absence from you will be for no long time, it being my design, with dependence upon his gracious providence and pleasure, in whose hands our times are, if I hear of any door open for service with you, to spend the health and strength which God shall vouchsafe me, (and which I find through his mercy much improved since I left you,) in his work with and among you. In the mean time, I believe it will not be unacceptable to you, that I offer you some of my thoughts and counsels, for your present help, such as are not new to me, nor as you will find to yourselves, who are my witnesses, that I have often inculcated such things to you; but they may be useful to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance.

'1. I beseech you, more earnestly endeavour to reduce the things you know (and have been by many hands instructed in out of the Gospel of our Lord) to practice. Nothing can be more absurd than to content ourselves with only a notional knowledge of practical matters. We should think so in other cases. As if any man should satisfy himself to know the use of food, but famish himself by never eating any, when he hath it at hand: or that he understands the virtues of this or that cordial, but languishes away to death in the neglect of using it, when it might cheer his spirits, and save his life. And the neglect of applying the great things of the Gospel to the proper uses and purposes of the Christian life, is not more foolish, (only as the concernments they serve for are more important,) but much more sinful and provoking to God. For we are to consider whence the revelation comes. They are things which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken; uttered by the breath of the eternal God, as all Scriptures are said to be. God breathed, as that expression may be literally rendered, 2 Tim. iii. 16. And how high a contempt and provocation is it of the great God, so totally to pervert and disappoint the whole design of that revelation he hath made to us, to know the great things contained therein, only for knowing sake, which he hath made known that we might live by them. And oh what holy and pleasant lives should we lead in this world, if the temper and complexion of our souls did answer and correspond to the things we know. The design of preaching has been greatly mistaken, when it has been thought, it must still acquaint them who live (and especially who have long lived) under it, with some new thing. Its much greater and more important design is the impressing of known things (but too little considered) upon the hearts of hearers, that they may be delivered up into the mould and form of the doctrine taught them, as Rom. vi. 12.: and may so learn Christ as more and more to be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put off the old man and put on the new, Eph. iv. 20. The digesting our food is what God now eminently calls for.

'11. More particularly labour to have your apprehensions of the future state of the unseen world, and eternal things, made more lively and efficacious daily, and that your faith of them may be such as may truly admit to be called the very substance and evidence of those things. Shall that glorious everlasting state of things be always as a dark shadow with us, or as the images we have of things in a dream, ineffectual and vanishing, only because we have not seen with our eyes, where God himself hath by his express word made the representations of them to us, who never deceived us, as our own eyes and treacherous senses have done? Why do we not live as just now entering into the eternal state, and as if we now beheld the glorious

appearing of the great God our Saviour, when we are as much assured of them as if we beheld them? Why do we not oftener view the representation of the heavens vanishing, the elements melting, the earth flaming, the angels every where dispersed to gather the elect, and them ascending, caught up to meet the Redeemer in the air, ever to be with the Lord? What a trifle will the world be to us then!

'III. Let the doctrine of the Redeemer be more studied, and of his mighty undertaking, with the immediate design of it, not merely to satisfy for sin by the sacrifice he once for all made of himself, and so to procure our pardon and justification, without effecting any thing upon us, but to redeem us from all iniquity, to purify us to himself, &c. and to form us after his own holy likeness, and for such purposes to give his Holy Spirit to us. Consider that our Redeemer is mighty, who hath such kind designs upon us; and that as they shall not therefore finally fail of accomplishment, so will they be carried on without interruption, and with discernible success, if we fail not as to what part in subordination to him belongs to us. How cheerfully should the redeemed of the Lord go on in their course, under such conduct!

'IV. Endeavour your faith may be stronger, more efficacious and practical, concerning the doctrine of Providence, and that the workings and events of it lie all under the management and in the hand of the Redeemer, who is head over all things to the church: that therefore how grievous and bitter soever be his people's lot and portion at any time, there cannot but be kindness at the bottom; and that not only designing the best end, but taking the fittest way to it. For can love itself be unkind, so as not to design well! or wisdom itself err so, as to take an improper course in order thereto! Hereupon let not your spirits be imbittered by the present dispensation of Providence you are under, whereby you are in so great a part deprived of the helps and means of your spiritual advantage, which you like and relish most. And to this purpose consider,

'1. Our wise and merciful Lord (though perhaps such means might be in some measure useful to us) doth for the present judge, that his rebuking our undue use of them will be more useful; either overvaluing or undervaluing his instruments, turning his ordinances into mere formalities, preferring the means of grace (as they are fitly called) before the end, grace itself.

'2. Consider whether there be no disposition of Spirit, to treat others as you are treated. The inward temper of our minds and spirits is so much the more narrowly to be inspected, by how much the less there is opportunity to discover it by outward acts. As to such as differ from us about the forms and ceremonies that are now required in the worship of God, would we not be glad if they were as much restrained from using them in their worship, as we from worshipping without them? And do not we think that that would as much grieve them, as our restraint doth us? And why should we suppose that their way should not as much suit their spirits, and be as grateful to them, as ours to us? But we are in the right way, some will say, and they in the wrong: and why cannot any man say the same thing with as much confidence as we? Or do we think there is no difference to be put between controversies about matter of circumstance, and about the essentials of Christianity? Undoubtedly till those that affect the name of the reformed, and count it more their glory to be called protestants than to be good Christians, have learnt to mingle more justice with their religion, and how better to apply that great adviee of our Lord's, Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do that to them, &c. and till they become studious of excelling other men, in substantial goodness, abstractedness from the world, meekness humility, sobriety, self-denial, and charity, and to lay a greater stress hereon, than on being of one or other denomination, God's controversy will not cease.

'I reckon it much to be considered, and I pray you consider it deeply, that after that great precept, Eph. iv. 30. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, it immediately follows, ver. 31. Let all bitterness, and anger, and wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice: plainly implying that the Spirit of God, that Spirit of all love, goodness, sweetness, and benignity, is grieved by nothing more than by our bitterness, wrathfulness, &c. And it appears that the discernible restraint and departure of that blessed Spirit from the Church of Christ in so great a measure, for many foregoing generations, in comparison of the plentiful effusion of it in the first age, hath ensued upon the growth of that wrathful contentious Spirit which showed itself early in the Gnostick, but much more in the after-Arian persecution, which was not in some places less bloody than the pagan persecution had been before. Oh the gentleness, kindness, tenderness, and compassionateness of the evangelical truly Christian spirit, as it most eminently appeared in our Lord Jesus Christ himself! And we are told, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, Rom. viii. 9. And how easy and pleasant is it to one's own self, to be void of all wrathfulness, and vindictive designs or inclinations towards any other man! For my own part, I should not have that peace and consolation in a suffering condition, (as my being so many years under restraint from that pleasant work of pleading with sinners that they might be saved, is the greatest suffering I was liable to in this world,) as through the goodness of God I have found, and do find, in being conscious to myself of no other than kind and benign thoughts towards them I have suffered by, and that my heart tells me I desire not the least hurt to them that would do me the greatest; and that I feel within myself an unfeigned love and high estimation of divers, accounting them pious worthy persons, and hoping to meet them in the all-reconciling world, that are yet (through some mistake) too harsh towards us who dissent from them: and in things of this nature I pray that you and I may abound more and more.

But again, as I would not have your spirits imbittered, so I would not have your spirits discourneed, or sunk

in dejection. The Lord will not cast off his people, because it hath pleased him to make them his people, 1 Sam. xii. 22. I do not mean those of this or that party, but who fear God and work righteousness, be they of what party soever. As I often think of that saying of an ancient, (*Clem. Alex.*) that he counted not that philosophy, which was peculiar to this or that sect, but whatsoever of truth was to be found in any of them; so I say of Christianity, 'tis not that which is appropriate to this or that party, but whatsoever of sincere religion shall be found common to them all. Such will value and love his favour and presence, and shall have it; and he will yet have such a people in the world, and, I doubt not, more numerous than ever. And as the bitterness of Christians one towards another chased away his Spirit, his Spirit shall vanquish and drive away all that bitterness, and consume our other dross. And as the apostacy long ago foretold, and of so long continuance in the Christian church, hath been begun and continued by constant war against the Spirit of Christ; the restitution and recovery of the church, and the reduction of Christianity to its ancient self, and primitive state, will be by the victory of the Spirit of Christ over that so contrary spirit. Then shall all the enmity, pride, wrathfulness, and cruelty, which have rent the church of Christ and made it so little itself, be melted down; and with all their great impurities besides, earthliness, carnality, love of this present world, and prevaleace of sensual lusts, be purged more generally away, and his repairing work be done in a way grievous to no one, whereby those that are most absolutely conquered will be most highly pleased: not by might or by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.

'In the mean time let us draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to us. Let us more study the exercising ourselves to godliness, and take heed of turning the religion of our closets into spiritless uncomfortable formalities. Their hearts shall live that seek God.

'To that blessed, and faithful, and covenant-keeping God I commit you; and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up further, and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

'And as I hope I shall without ceasing remember you in mine, so I hope you will remember too in your prayers,

Your sincerely affectionate,
Though too unprofitable,
Servant in Christ,
JOHN HOWE.'

In the course of his travels with this noble lord, Mr. Howe had the satisfaction of seeing divers noted places, and conversing freely, not only with a number of learned papists, but several protestant divines, both Lutherans and Calvinists, and making a variety of remarks for his own use: and in the mean time, he was often not a little affected with the melancholy tidings of the swift advances they were making in England towards popery and slavery, which he most heartily lamented, as well as the hardships and severities which his nonconforming brethren met with in particular. And not having any encouragement from the posture of affairs to return home, he at length, in the year 1686, settled in the pleasant city of Utrecht, which is the capital of one of the seven United Provinces. He took a house, and resided there for some time, and had the Earl of Sutherland and his countess, and some English gentlemen, together with his two nephews, Mr. George and Mr. John Hughes, boarding with him. He took his turn of preaching at the English church in that city, with Mr. Matthew Mead, Mr. Woodcock, and Mr. Cross, who were there at the same time. They kept frequent days of solemn prayer together, on the account of the threatening state of affairs in their own country: and Mr. Howe generally preached on the Lord's-days in the evening in his own family. And there being several English students then at that university, in order to their being fitted for future usefulness, Mr. Howe was pleased to favour some of them with hearing their orations and disputations in private, and giving them his particular instructions and advice as they were prosecuting their studies, which some have owned to have been of no small advantage to them. There were also several other worthy persons of the English nation at that time there, and in other parts of the United Provinces, that they might shelter themselves from prosecutions in their own country; such as Sir John Thompson, (afterwards Lord Haversham,) Sir John Guise, Sir Patience Ward, and Mr. Papillon; and there was a good harmony and correspondence among them; and Mr. Howe received much respect from them, as well as from the professors in that academy.

Among others by whom he was visited while he continued at Utrecht, one was Dr. Gilbert Burnet, afterward Bishop of Sarum, who also preached in the English church there, and very frankly declared for occasional communion with those of different sentiments. He and Mr. Howe had a great deal of free conversation, upon a variety of subjects: and once discoursing of nonconformity, the Doctor told him, he was apprehensive that it could not subsist long; but that when Mr. Baxter, and Dr. Bates, and he, and a few more, were once laid in their graves, it would sink, and die, and come to nothing. Mr. Howe replied, that that must be left to God; though he at the same time intimated that he had different apprehensions; and did not reckon it to depend upon persons, but upon principle, which when taken up upon grounds approved upon search, could not be laid aside by men of conscience. The best way, he said, to put an end to nonconformity, would be by giving due liberty under the national settlement, and laying aside needless clogs that would give occasion to endless debates. Were this once done, there would be no room for a conscientious nonconformity: but that without it, they could expect no other than that as some passed off the stage others would rise up and fill their places, who would act upon the same principles as they had done before them; though he hoped with a due moderation and

temper towards those of different sentiments. And the event has showed, that he was herein in the right.

Several years after this, I myself having occasion to wait upon Dr. Burnet, after he had been some time Bishop of Sarum, at his palace in that city, where I was treated with great frankness and civility, his lordship signified how well he was pleased with the temper discovered by the rising generation of ministers among the dissenters; though at the same time he intimated, that it was the common apprehension of the great men of their church, that nonconformity would have been *res unius atatis* only, and not have been continued to another generation, but have drawn to an end, when they that were ejected out of the public churches were once laid in their graves. Upon this occasion, I declared to his lordship, that which, having so fair an opportunity, I shall not now be shy of signifying more publicly; *viz.* that after the closest search into this matter of which I have been capable, I cannot perceive that while and as long as the spirit of imposition continues, any other can reasonably be expected, than that there will be some who will think themselves obliged to stand up for a generous liberty, the doing of which may be very consistent with all that charity and brotherly love that is required, either by reason or Scripture. And this liberty has, since the death of the greatest part of the ejected ministers, (though with the full approbation of such of them as were then living, and of Mr. Howe in particular,) been defended by some among the dissenters, upon a bottom so truly large and noble, that the sagacious Mr. Locke himself, whom I believe most people will own to have been a pretty good judge, has more than once (as I have been credibly informed) freely owned, that as long as they kept to that bottom, they need not question being able to stand their ground. And the number of their friends and abettors so increased, partly on the account of the largeness of the foundations they went upon, and partly also upon their steady zeal for the government after the revolution, while the established church was miserably divided, about the oaths, and a great many other things that were very distasteful to men of sense and thought;[n] that in all probability their interest must before this time have had a considerable accession of strength, had it not been for their unaccountable heats in the reign of King William, and also in the reign of his present majesty King George; by which they have been sadly exposed and weakened. But of all persons, those that are zealous for the established church, have little reason upon this account to insult them, because of the shameful differences they have had amongst themselves, which in a great measure continue to this day. We may here say very safely, *Iliacos intra muros peccatur et extra.*

While Mr. Howe continued in Holland, the late King William, (of glorious and immortal memory,) who was at that time Prince of Orange, did him the honour to admit him several times into his presence, and discoursed with him with great freedom; and he ever after retained a particular respect for him. I well remember also, that he himself once informed me of some very private conversation he had with that prince, upon his sending for him, not long before his death. Among other things, the king then asked him a great many questions, about his old master Oliver, as he called him, and seemed not a little pleased with the answers that were returned to some of his questions.

In 1687, King James published his declaration for liberty of conscience, upon which the dissenters were freed from their fetters and shackles, and were allowed the freedom of worshipping God in public, in their own way, without any molestation. Mr. Howe's flock in London earnestly pressed for his return to them according to his promise, and he readily complied. But before he left Holland, he thought it proper to wait on the Prince of Orange, who in his usual way received him very graciously. He signified to his royal highness, that he was returning for England, at the earnest solicitation of his friends there, who were impatient of his absence, now that he was in a capacity of public service among them. The prince wished him a good voyage, and advised him, though he and his brethren made use of the liberty granted by King James, yet to be very cautious in addressing; and not to be prevailed with upon any terms, to fall in with the measures of the court, as to taking off the penal laws and test, which was the thing intended, but which would have fatal consequences; and to use his utmost influence in order to the restraining others: which he readily promised; and he was as good as his word.

Upon his return into his own country, which was in May this year, he was gladly received by his old friends and brethren, and with joy (though not without an aching heart, considering the apparent danger of the public) returned to the free exercise of his ministry. He was thankful for a little breathing time afforded, and endeavoured to improve it to the best purposes, and to preserve himself and others from the snares that were laid for them.

The author of the life of a celebrated nonjuror, casts some most invidious reflections upon the body of the dissenters, and their conduct in this reign. He insinuates, that when that inconsistent people had long cried out against the members of the church of England as inclinable to popery, they themselves were the first to join hands with this popery, against the church of England, and to favour the designs thereof, which they had but just before so loudly exclaimed against.[o] And it must be owned, that they would have been an inconsistent people indeed, had the body of them acted in that manner: but the best of it is, that this is a suggestion that is as void of truth as it is of charity. If some among the dissenters did charge those of the church of England with favouring popery in King Charles's reign, it was because of their appearing so zealous for his brother, who was well known to be a

n The miserable confusion the high-church party were in after the revolution, about the oaths, and about their prayers, and about communion, &c. is most admirably illustrated, by the account given in the Life of Mr. John Kettlewell, Part III.

o Life of Mr. Kettlewell, in 8vo. p. 141.

papist, and from whom no other could be expected than that he would, if he came to the crown, do his utmost to bring in popery, in opposition to all the laws and securities against it; and they evidently hazarded the loss of our liberty and religion too, by making the dangerous experiment: and they would boldly venture upon this, though they were freely warned beforehand what the consequence would be. But as for joining hands with this popery, none were more free from that than the dissenters. Bishop Burnet owns, that how much soever a few weak persons might be intoxicated by the caresses of the court, and elevated by an appearance of favour shown them, yet the 'wiser men among them saw through all this, and perceived the design of the papists was now to set on the dissenters against the church, as much as they had formerly set the church against them: and therefore, though they returned to their conventicles, (as he is pleased to call them, though not a jot the better thought of upon that account by his warmer brethren,) yet they had a just jealousy of the ill designs that lay hid under all this sudden and unexpected show of grace and kindness.'[p]

In confirmation of this, I can upon good grounds assure the reader, that whereas there were about this time great endeavours used to draw in the dissenting ministers to approve the measures of the court, and frequent meetings among them to consider of their own behaviour, at which times Mr. Howe was seldom absent, he always declared against approving the dispensing power, or any thing that could give the papists any assistance in the carrying on their designs; and he therein had the full concurrence of the generality of his brethren. I have had a particular account of one meeting at Mr. Howe's own house, in order to consider of the advisableness of drawing up a writing to signify their concurrence with the king, as to the ends of his declaration; at which time there were two persons present that came from court, and intimated that his majesty waited in his closet, and would not stir from thence till an account was brought him of their proceedings. I have heard that one in the company did intimate that he thought it but reasonable they should comply with his majesty's desire. To which another immediately replied, that he was fully convinced that the sufferings they had met with, had been all along on the account of their firm adherence to the civil interest of the nation, in opposition to tory schemes, rather than on the account of their religious principles: and therefore if the king expected they should join in approving such a conduct as would give the papists their liberty, and establish a dispensing power, he had rather he should take their liberty again. Mr. Howe, in summing up the matter, signified they were generally of that brother's sentiments, and could by no means encourage the dispensing power; and it was left to those who came down to them from court, to report that as their common sense to those that sent them. Several of their ministers were, it must be confessed, afterwards privately closeted by King James; and I won't say but some few of them, who had personal and particular favours shown them, might be drawn too far into the snare, and use their interest in order to the taking off all penal laws and tests: but they were but very few, and as soon as it was known, their interest and significance was lessened; the far greater number stood it out; and Mr. Howe particularly, when the king discoursed with him alone, told his majesty that he was a minister of the Gospel, and it was his province to preach, and endeavour to do good to the souls of men; but that as for meddling with state affairs, he was as little inclined as he was called to it, and begged to be excused.

The same author also observes, 'that upon King James's famous declaration to all his loving subjects for liberty, there followed a vast crowd of congratulatory addresses and acknowledgments, from all sorts of dissenters, complimenting the king in the highest manner, and protesting what mighty returns of loyalty they would make his majesty, for such his favour and indulgence to them.'[q] And he adds, 'only the members of the church of England generally were hereat very uneasy.' But Bishop Burnet, who I am apt to think will be most likely to be regarded in the case, gives a quite different representation of the matter. He, speaking of the dissenters, says, 'It was visible to all men, that the courting them at this time was not from any kindness, or good opinion that the king had of them. They needed not to be told, that all the favour expected from popery was once to bring it in, under the colour of a general toleration, till it should be strong enough to set on a general persecution: and therefore, as they could not engage themselves to support such an arbitrary prerogative as was now made use of, so neither could they go into any engagements for popery. They did believe that the indignation against the church party, and the kindness to them, were things too unnatural to last long. So the more considerable among them resolved not to stand at too great a distance from the court, nor to provoke the king so far, as to give him cause to think they were irreconcilable to him, lest they should provoke him to make up matters on any terms with the church party. On the other hand, they resolved not to provoke the church party, or by any ill behaviour of theirs drive them into a reconciliation with the court.'[r]

As to the addresses of the dissenters upon this occasion, though some of them ran high, yet the church party had set them the pattern, and therefore it was the less decent in them to make complaints of them. Those of the establishment had in a most luxuriant manner thanked King Charles for dissolving one of the best of parliaments, and as the Earl of Warrington declared in his speech, were mighty 'forward in the surrender of charters; and in their fulsome addresses and abhorrences, made no other claim to their liberties and

p Bishop Burnet's History of his own Times, vol. 1. page 673.
q Life of Mr John Kettlewell, page 147.

r Bp. Burnet's History of his own Times, vol. 1. page 702.

civil rights, than as concessions from the crown: telling the king, every one of his commands was stamped with God's authority,' &c. And the university of Oxford in particular, had in one of their public addresses promised King James, that 'they would obey him without limitations or restrictions:'[a] which was not to be equalled by any thing that came even from the most incautious or the most transported dissenters. And if they did not now preach so much against popery as the churchmen, they may the more easily be excused, because their people did not so much need it. They had little reason to fear that any of their persuasion would be perverted, for that the adhering to their distinguishing principle of the sufficiency of Scripture, would not fail of securing them; while many of the bishops and doctors of the church of England, had instilled into their followers such odd notions, about the power of the church in matters of faith, the apostolical succession and power of bishops, their right to judge of fitness and decency in the worship of God, to which all others must submit, and the binding force of old canons and councils, that it highly concerned them to do all that they were able to deliver them from the consequences which they might easily foresee the Romanists would put them upon drawing from such principles. And the truth of it is, though I han't the least word to say, to the lessening that glorious defence of the protestant cause that was at this time made by the writings of the divines of the church party, yet the dissenters may be very well allowed to have taken no small pleasure, in seeing those gentlemen baffle the papists, upon such principles as they might easily discern would help to set the authors themselves more upright than some of them had been before: and in such a case to have offered to take the work out of their hands, had been over-officious, and an indecent intermeddling.

However, the king went on with his design, and nothing would satisfy him, but his declaration for liberty must be read in all the churches. The bishops meeting together for consultation, were convinced that their concurring in this step, and sending the declaration to all their clergy, and requiring their reading it publicly to the people, would be an owning the dispensing power: and therefore they drew up a petition to his majesty, in which they desired to be excused. This petition was called a libel, and they were sent to the Tower for presenting it.

Mr. Howe being at this time invited to dinner by Dr. Sherlock, the Master of the Temple, accepted the invitation, and was very civilly treated; and there were two or three other clergymen at the table. After dinner, the discourse ran mostly upon the danger the church was at that time in, of being entirely ruined. The Doctor, freely, but pretty abruptly, asked Mr. Howe, what he thought the dissenters would do, supposing the preferments of the church should be made vacant, and an offer should be made of filling them up out of their number? Mr. Howe was so surprised with such a question as this, which he little expected, that he was at first at a loss for an answer. Whereupon the Doctor drew out his dark and melancholy scheme very distinctly, with all imaginable marks of concern. He told him he thought that the bishops would be as certainly cast, as they were at that time imprisoned in the Tower: that the rest of the clergy, who had so generally refused reading the king's declaration, would follow after them: that it was not a thing to be supposed that their places should be suffered to continue vacant: and that no way could be thought of for the filling them up again, but from among the dissenters: and who knows, said he, but Mr. Howe may be offered to be Master of the Temple? And therefore he intimated he was very desirous to know how they would be inclined to behave, upon such a supposition; of which he believed him to be as capable of giving an account as any man whatsoever. Mr. Howe told the Doctor, that these were things that were altogether uncertain: but that if it should so happen that matters should fall out according to his fears, he could not pretend to answer for the conduct of the dissenters, among whom there were several parties, that acted upon different principles; and that therefore it was most reasonable to suppose, their conduct might be different. He signified to him, that he could answer for none but himself: and that he thought for his part, if things should ever come to the pass he mentioned, he should not baulk an opportunity of more public service, (which he was not aware he had done any thing to forfeit,) provided it was offered him upon such terms as he had no just reason to except against: but then he added, that as for the emolument thence accruing, he should not be for meddling with that, any otherwise than as a hand to convey it to the legal proprietor. Whereupon the Doctor rose up from his seat, and embraced him, and said that he had always taken him for that ingenuous honest man that he now found him to be, and seemed not a little transported with joy. Mr. Howe afterwards telling this passage to a certain great man in the church, to whom the Doctor was well known, and signifying how much he was on a sudden to seek for an answer to a question he so little expected, which was bottomed upon a supposition, that had not so much as once entered into his thoughts before, he immediately made him this reply: Sir, you say you had not once thought of the case, or so much as supposed any thing like it; but you must give me leave to tell you, if you had studied the case seven years together, you could not have said any thing that had been more to the purpose, or more to the Doctor's satisfaction.

When these fears were all blown over, and a happy revolution brought about in 1688, and the Prince of Orange was come to St. James's Palace, the dissenting ministers waited on him in a body, and were introduced by the Lords Devonshire, Wharton, and Wiltshire; at which time, Mr. Howe, in the name of the rest, made a handsome speech, signifying,

[a] Bishop Burnet's History of his own Times, vol. I. p. 620.

'That they professed their grateful sense of his highness's hazardous and heroical expedition, which the favour of Heaven had made so surprisingly prosperous.

'That they esteemed it a common felicity, that the worthy patriots of the nobility and gentry of this kingdom, had unanimously concurred unto his highness's design, by whose most prudent advice, the administration of public affairs was devolved in this difficult conjuncture, into hands which the nation and the world knew to be apt for the greatest undertakings, and so suitable to the present exigence of our case.

'That they promised the utmost endeavours, which in their stations they were capable of affording, for promoting the excellent and most desirable ends for which his highness had declared.

'That they added their continual and fervent prayers to the Almighty, for the preservation of his highness's person, and the success of his future endeavours, for the defence and propagation of the protestant interest throughout the Christian world.

'That they should all most willingly have chosen that for the season of paying this duty to his highness, when the lord bishop and the clergy of London attended his highness for the same purpose, (which some of them did, and which his lordship was pleased condescendingly to make mention of to his highness,) had their notice of that intended application been so early, as to make their more general attendance possible to them at that time.

'And that therefore, though they did now appear in a distinct company, they did it not on a distinct account, but on that only which was common to them and to all protestants.

'That there were some of eminent note, whom age or present infirmities hindered from coming with them; yet they concurred in the same grateful sense of our common deliverance.'

The prince in answer, assured them, 'that he came on purpose to defend the protestant religion, and that it was his own religion, in which he was born and bred; the religion of his country, and of his ancestors: and that he was resolved, by the grace of God, always to adhere to it, and to do his utmost endeavours for the defence of it, and the promoting a firm union among protestants.'

In this year 1688, Mr. Howe published a few practical discourses: as, 'A Sermon on John v. 42. directing what we are to do after strict Inquiry, whether or no we truly love God:' and 'Two Sermons preached at Thurlow in Suffolk, on those words, Rom. vi. 13. Yield yourselves to God.'

In 1689, he wrote a short letter about the case of the French protestants, which I shall here add, leaving it to the reader to guess (and I cannot myself do more) to whom it was addressed. 'Twas in these words:

'Sir,

'But that I am learning as much as I can to count nothing strange among the occurrences of the present time, I should be greatly surprised to find, that divers French protestant ministers, fled hither for their consciences and religion, who have latitude enough to conform to the rites of the church of England, do accuse others of their brethren, who are fled hither on the same account, but have not that latitude, as schismatics, only for practising according to the principles and usages of their own church, which at home were common to them both; and, as schismatics, judge them unworthy of any relief here. Their common enemy never yet passed so severe a judgment on any of them, that they should be famished. This is put into the hands of the appellants from this sentence, unto your more equal judgment. And it needs do no more than thus briefly to represent their case, and me,

Most honoured Sir,
Your most obliged,
and most humble Servant,
JOHN HOWE.'

Walbrook, April 5, 1689.

This year there were many and warm debates in the two houses of Lords and Commons, about a comprehension, and an indulgence; for bills were brought in for both, and both were canvassed. Some were so narrow-spirited and so ungenerous, as, forgetting their promises and repeated declarations in the time of their distress, from which they were just so wonderfully delivered, to be for still keeping the dissenters under a brand. Mr. Howe therefore at this time fairly represented their case, and strenuously argued upon it, in a single sheet of paper, which was printed, and is very fit to be transmitted to posterity.

The case of the Protestant Dissenters represented and argued.

'They are under one common obligation with the rest of mankind, by the universal law of nature, to worship God in assemblies.

'Men of all sorts of religions, that have ever obtained in the world, Jews, Pagans, Mahometans, Christians, have in their practice acknowledged this obligation. Nor can it be understood, how such a practice should be so universal, otherwise than from the dictate and impression of the universal law.

'Whereas the religion professed in England is that of reformed Christianity, some things are annexed to the allowed public worship, which are acknowledged to be no parts thereof, nor in themselves necessary; but which the dissenters judge to be in some part sinful.

'They cannot therefore, with good conscience towards God, attend wholly and solely upon the public worship which the laws do appoint.

'The same laws do strictly forbid their assembling to worship God otherwise.

'Which is in effect the same thing, as if they who made, or shall continue such laws, should plainly say, If you will not consent with us in our superadded rites and modes against your consciences, you shall not

† This referred to Mr. Baxter and Dr. Bates.

worship God; or if you will not accept of our additions to the Christian religion, you shall not be Christians: and manifestly tends to reduce to paganism a great part of a Christian nation.

'They have been wont therefore to meet however in distinct assemblies, and to worship God in a way which their consciences could approve; and have many years continued so to do, otherwise than as they have been hindered by violence.

'It is therefore upon the whole fit to inquire,

'*Qu.* 1. Whether they are to be blamed for their holding distinct meetings for the worship of God?

'For answer to this, it cannot be expected that all the controversies should be here determined, which have been agitated about the lawfulness of each of those things which have been added to the Christian religion and worship, by the present constitution of the church of England.

'But supposing they were none of them simply unlawful, while yet the misinformed minds of the dissenters could not judge them lawful, though they have made it much their business to inquire and search; being urged also by severe sufferings, which through a long tract of time they have undergone, not to refuse any means that might tend to their satisfaction; they could have nothing else left them to do, than to meet and worship distinctly as they have.

'For they could not but esteem the obligation of the universal, natural, divine law, by which they were bound solemnly to worship God, less questionable than that of a law, which was only positive, topical, and human, requiring such and such additaments to their worship, and prohibiting their worship without them.

'The church of England, (as that part affects to be called,) distinguished from the rest by those additionals to Christian religion, (pretended to be indifferent, and so confessed unnecessary,) hath not only sought to engross to itself the ordinances of divine worship, but all civil power. So that the privileges that belong either to Christian or human society are enclosed, and made peculiar to such as are distinguished by things that in themselves can signify nothing to the making of persons either better Christians, or better men.

'*Qu.* 2. Whether the laws enjoining such additions to our religion, as the exclusive terms of Christian worship and communion, ought to have been made, when it is acknowledged on all hands, the things to be added were before not necessary; and when it is known a great number judge them sinful, and must thereby be restrained from worshipping the true and living God?

'*Ans.* The question to any of common sense, answers itself. For it is not put concerning such as dissent from any part of the substance of worship which God hath commanded, but concerning such additions as he never commanded. And there are sufficient tests to distinguish such dissenters from those that deny any substantial part of religion, or assert any thing contrary thereto. Wherefore to forbid such to worship that God that made them, because they can't receive your devised additions, is to exclude that which is necessary, for the mere want of that which is unnecessary.

'And where is that man that will adventure to stand forth, and avow the hindering of such persons from paying their homage to the God that made them, if we thus expostulate the matter on God's behalf and their own? Will you cut off from God his right in the creatures he hath made? Will you cut off from them the means of their salvation upon these terms? What reply can the matter admit?

''Tis commonly alleged that great deference is to be paid to the laws, and that we ought to have forborne our assemblies, till the public authority recalled the laws against them: and we will say the same thing, when it is well proved, that they who made such laws, made the world too.

'And by whose authority were such laws made? Is there any that is not from God? and hath God given any man authority to make laws against himself, and to deprive him of his just rights from his own creatures?

'Nor if the matter be well searched into, could there be so much as a pretence of authority derived for such purposes from the people, whom every one now acknowledges the first receptacle of derived governing power. God can, 'tis true, lay indisputable obligations by his known laws, upon every conscience of man about religion, or any thing else. And such as represent any people, can, according to the constitution of the government, make laws for them, about the things they intrust them with: but if the people of England be asked man by man, will they say they did intrust to their representatives, their religion, and their consciences, to do with them what they please? When it is your own turn to be represented by others, is this part of the trust you commit? What Dr. Sherlock[u] worthily says concerning a bishop, he might (and particularly after, doth) say concerning every other man, He can be no more represented in a council, than at the day of judgment: every man's soul and conscience must be in his own keeping; and can be represented by no man.

'It ought to be considered that Christianity, wherein it superadds to the law of nature, is all matter of revelation. And 'tis well known that even among pagans, in the settling rites and institutes of religion,[w] revelation was pretended at least, upon an implied principle, that in such matters human power could not oblige the people's consciences.

'We must be excused therefore, if we have in our practice expressed less reverence for laws made by no authority received either from God or man.

'We are therefore injuriously reflected on, when it is imputed to us, that we have by the use of our liberty acknowledged an illegal dispensing power. We have

u Vindication of some Protestant Principles, &c. p. 52.

w As by Numa from his Egeria. And their priests, to whom the regulation of such matters was left, were generally believed to be inspired.

done no other thing herein, than we did when no dispensation was given or pretended, in conscience of duty to him that gave us our breath: nor did therefore practise otherwise, because we thought those laws dispensed with, but because we thought them not laws. Whereupon little need remains of inquiring further.

'*Qu.* 3. Whether such laws should be continued? Against which, besides what may be collected from that which hath been said, it is to be considered, that what is most principally grievons to us, was enacted by that parliament, that, as we have too much reason to believe, suffered itself to be dealt with to enslave the nation, in other respects as well as this; and which (to his immortal honour) the noble Earl of Danby procured to be dissolved, as the first step towards our national deliverance.

'And let the tenour be considered of that horrid law, by which our Magna Charta was torn in pieces; the worst and most infamous of mankind, at our own expense, hired to accuse us; multitudes of perjuries committed, convictions made without a jury, and without any hearing of the persons accused; penalties inflicted, goods rifled, estates seized and embezzled, houses broken up, families disturbed, often at unseasonable hours of the night, without any cause, or shadow of a cause, if only a malicious villain would pretend to suspect a meeting there! No law in any other case like this! As if to worship God without those additions, which were confessed unnecessary, were a greater crime than theft, felony, murder, or treason! Is it for our reputation to posterity, that the memory of such a law should be continued?

'And are we not yet awakened, and our eyes opened enough to see, that the making and execution of the laws, by which we have suffered so deeply for many by-past years, was only, that protestants might destroy protestants, and the easier work be made for the introduction of popery, that was to destroy the residue?

'Nor can any malice deny, or ignorance of observing Englishmen overlook, this plain matter of fact. After the dissolution of that before-mentioned parliament, dissenters were much caressed, and endeavoured to be drawn into a subserviency to the court designs, especially in the election of after-parliaments. Notwithstanding which, they every where so entirely and unanimously fell in with the sober part of the nation, in the choice of such persons for the three parliaments that next succeeded, (two held at Westminster, and that at Oxford,) as it was known would, and who did, most generously assert the liberties of the nation, and the protestant religion. Which alone (and not our mere dissent from the church of England in matters of religion, wherein Charles II. was suffieiently known to be a prince of great indifferency) drew upon us, soon after the dissolution of the last of those parliaments, that dreadful storm of persecution, that destroyed not a small number of lives in gaols, and ruined multitudes of families.

'Let English freemen remember, what they cannot but know, that it was for our firm adherence to the civil interests of the nation, (not for our different modes of religion from the legal way, though the laws gave that advantage against us, which they did not against others,) that we endured the calamities of so many years.

'When by the late king some relaxation was given us, what arts and insinuations have been used with us, to draw us into a concurrence to designs tending to the prejudice of the nation! And with how little effect upon the generality of us, it must be great ignorance not to know, and great injustice to deny.

'But he that knoweth all things, knoweth that though, in such circumstances, there was no opportunity for our receiving public and authorized promises, when we were all under the eye of watchful jealousy; yet as great assurances as were possible, were given us by some that we hope will now remember it, of a future established security from our former pressures. We were told over and over, when the excellent Heer Fagel's letter came to be privately communicated from hand to hand, how easily better things would be had for us, than that encouraged papists to expect, if ever that happy change should be brought about, which none have now beheld with greater joy than we.

'We are loth to injure those who have made us hope for better, by admitting a suspicion that we shall now be disappointed and deceived, (as we have formerly been, and we know by whom,) or that we shall suffer from them a *religious slavery*, for whose sakes we have suffered so grievous things, rather than do the least thing that might tend to the bringing upon them a *civil slavery*.

'We cannot but expect from Englishmen that they be just and true. We hope not to be the only instances whereby the *Anglica fides* and the *Punica* shall be thought all one.

'But if we, who have constantly desired, and as we have had opportunity endeavoured the saving of the nation, must however be ruined, not to greaten (one hair) the wealth and dignity of it, but only to gratify the humour of them who would yet destroy it; we, who are competently inured to sufferings, shall through God's mercy be again enabled to endure: but he that sits in the heavens, will in his own time judge our cause, and we will wait his pleasure; and we hope suffer all that can be inflicted, rather than betray the cause of reformed Christianity in the world.

'But our affairs are in the hands of men of worth and honour, who apprehend how little grateful a name they should leave to posterity, or obtain now with good men of any persuasion, if, under a pretence of kindness to us, they should now repeat the arts of ill men, in an ill time. Great minds will think it beneath them to sport themselves with their own cunning, in deceiving other men; which were really in the present case too thin not to be seen through, and may be the easy attainment of any man, that hath enough of opportunity, and integrity little enough for such purposes. And 'tis as much too gross to endeavour to abuse the authority of a nation, by going about to make that stoop

to so mean a thing, as to make a show of intending what they resolve to their utmost shall never be.

'But some may think, by concessions to us, the church of England will be ruined, and a great advantage given to the bringing in of popery.

'To which we say, the generality of the dissenters differ from the church of England, in no substantials of doctrine and worship, no nor of government, provided it be so managed, as to attain its true acknowledged end: the favouring of us therefore will as much ruin the church, as its enlargement and additional strength will signify to its ruin.

'And doth not the world know, that wherein we differ from them, we differ from the papists too? And that for the most part, wherein they differ from us, they seem to agree with them?

'We acknowledge their strong, brave, and prosperous opposition to popery: but they have opposed it by the things wherein they agree with us. Their differences from us are no more a fence against popery, than an enclosure of straw is against a flame of fire.

'But 'tis wont to be said, we agree not among ourselves, and know not what we would have.

'And do all that go under the name of the church of England agree among themselves? We can show more considerable disagreements among them, than any can between the most of us and a considerable part of them. They all agree, 'tis true, in conformity; and we all agree in non-conformity. And is not this merely accidental to Christianity and protestantism? and herein is it not well known that the far greater part of reformed Christendom do more agree with us?

'An arbitrary line of uniformity in some little accidents, severs a small part of the Christian world from all the rest. How unreasonably is it expected that therefore all the rest must in every thing else agree among themselves! Suppose any imaginary line to cut off a little segment from any part of the terrestrial globe; 'tis as justly expected that all the rest should be of one mind. If one part of England be tailors, they might as well expect that all the people besides should agree to be of one profession.

'Perhaps some imagine it dishonourable to such as have gone before them in the same ecclesiastical stations and dignities, if now any thing should be altered, which their judgment did before approve and think fit.

'But we hope that temptation will not prove invincible, *viz.* of so excessive a modesty as to be afraid of seeming wiser, or better natured, or of a more Christian temper than their predecessors.

'But the most of us do agree not only with one another, but, in the great things above mentioned, with the church of England too: and in short, that the reproach may cease for ever with those that count it one, they will find with us, when they please to try, a very extensive agreement on the terms of King Charles II.'s declaration about ecclesinstical affairs, in 1660.

'*Qu.* 4. Whether it be reasonable to exclude all that in every thing conform not to the church of England, from any part or share of the civil power?

'*Ans.* The difference or nonconformity of many is so minute, that it would be as reasonable to exclude all whose hair is not of this or that colour. And what if we should make a distermination, by the decision this way or that of any other disputed question, that may be of as small concernment to religion? suppose it be that of eating blood, for the decision whereof one way, there is more pretence from God's word, than for any point of the disputed conformity: would it not be a wise constitution, that whosoever thinks it lawful to eat black-pudding, shall be capable of no office, &c.

'But we tremble to think of the exclusive sacramental test, brought down as low as to the keeper of an alehouse. Are all fit to approach the sacred table, whom the fear of ruin or hope of gain may bring thither? We cannot but often remember with horror, what happened three or four years ago. A man that led an ill life, but frequented the church, was observed not to come to the sacrament, and pressed by the officers to come; he yet declined, knowing himself unfit; at length, being threatened and terrified, he came; but said to some present at the time of the solemn action, that he came only to avoid being undone, and took them to witness that what he there received, he took only as common bread and wine, not daring to receive them as the body and blood of Christ. 'Tis amazing, that among Christians, so venerable an institution should be prostituted to the serving of so mean purposes, and so foreign to its true end! and that doing it after the manner of the church of England must be the qualification! as if England were another Christendom; or it were a greater thing to conform in every punctilio to the rules of this church, than of Christ himself!

'But we would fain know whose is that holy table? is it the table of this or that party, or the Lord's table? if the Lord's, are not persons to be admitted or excluded upon his terms? Never can there be union or peace in the Christian world till we take down our arbitrary enclosures, and content ourselves with those which our common Lord hath set. If he falls under a curse that alters a man's landmark, to alter God's is not likely to infer a blessing.

'The matter is clear as the light of the sun, that as many persons of excellent worth, sobriety, and godliness, are entirely in the communion of the church of England, so there are too many of a worse character, that are of it too; and divers prudent, pious, and sober-minded persons that are not of it. Let common reason be consulted in this case. Suppose the tables turned, and that the rule were to be made the contrary way, *viz.* that to do this thing, but not by any means after the manner of the church of England, were to be the qualification: and now suppose one of meaner endowments, as a man and a Christian, do what is required, and not in the way of the church of England; and another that is of much better, does the same thing in that way; were it suitable to prudence or justice, that because it is done after the way of the church of England, a fitter man should be reckoned unqualified? and one of less value be taken for qualified, because he

does it a different way? Then is all that solid weight of wisdom, diligence, sobriety, and goodness, to be weighed down by a feather.

'It must surely be thought the prudence of any government, to comprehend as many useful persons as it can, and no more to deprive itself of the service of such, for any thing less considerable than those qualifications are, by which they are useful, than a man would tear off from himself the limbs of his body, for a spot on the skin.

'And really if, in our circumstances, we thus narrow our interest, all the rest of the world will say, that they who would destroy us, do yet find a way to be our instructors, and our common enemies do teach us our politics.

'P. S. The names of Mr. Hale, of Eton college, and of a later most renowned bishop of the church of England, who asserted this principle, that "if things be imposed under the notion of indifferent, which many think sinful, and a schism follow thereupon, the imposers are the schismatics," will be great in England, as long as their writings shall live, and good sense can be understood in them.'

About this time, some had great expectations from the meetings of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners who were to prepare matters for the convocation.[x] Mr. Howe was well acquainted, and had free and frequent conversation with several of them, but found such a spirit had got the ascendant among the dignified clergy, of whom the convocation is made up, that there was no room for any thing like an accommodation of the matters in difference, which he often afterwards lamented, where he could use freedom.

At length, on May 24th, this year, the 'Act for exempting their Majesties' Protestant Subjects, dissenting from the Church of England, from the Penalties of certain Laws,' received the royal assent. The dissenters were hereupon contented and thankful; but the high-flown clergy generally regretted the passing of this act. The author of the Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Robert South, owns in so many words, that that Doctor by no means liked it.[y] And it was the same as to a great many others of his temper and principles. Several years after, Dr. Henry Sacheverel being impeached by the Commons of England, the second article of the charge against him alleged, that he had 'suggested and maintained, that this toleration granted by law, was unreasonable, and the allowance of it unwarrantable.' (1.) Upon which occasion, Sir Peter King (one of the managers for the Commons) publicly declared 'this toleration to be one of the principal consequences of the revolution.' (2.) And the Lord Lechmere (who was another) declared, 'that the Commons esteemed the toleration of protestant dissenters to be one of the earliest and happiest effects of the revolution, wisely calculated for the support and strengthening the protestant interest, the great end of the revolution itself.' (3.) And Mr. Cowper (who was also another) owned, that 'this indulgence was required from the legislators, as they were Christians, and as they were men professing humanity and good-will towards one another.' (4.) And the attorney-general said, that this was 'one of the most necessary acts for the good of the kingdom.' (5.) And hereupon, Dr. Sacheverel's doctrine of wholesome severities was publicly branded.[z]

In order to the preventing (if it might be) flights of this kind, or any thing that might be extravagant in the opposite extreme, Mr. Howe very prudently, soon after the toleration act passed, published another sheet of paper, which he intituled, 'Humble Requests both to Conformists and Dissenters touching their Temper and Behaviour toward each other, upon the lately passed Indulgence.'[a] And this also deserves to be preserved to posterity.

It is there moved,

'1. That we do not over-magnify our differences, or count them greater than they really are. I speak now (says Mr. Howe) of the proper differences which the rule itself makes, to which the one sort conforms, and the other conforms not. Remember that there are differences on both parts, among themselves, incomparably greater than these, by which the one sort differs from the other. There are differences in doctrinal sentiments that are much greater. How inconceivably greater is the difference between good men and bad! between being a lover of the blessed God, the Lord of heaven and earth, and an enemy! a real subject of Christ, and of the devil! Have we not reason to apprehend there are of both these, on each side? Let us take heed of having our minds tinctured with a wrong notion of this matter, as if this indulgence divided England into two Christendoms, or distinguished rather between Christians and Mahometans, as some men's Cyclopic fancies have an unlucky art to represent things; creating ordinary men and things into monsters and prodigious shapes at their own pleasure. It has been a usual saying on both sides, that they were (in comparison) but little things we differed about, or circumstantial things. Let us not unsay it, or suffer a habit of mind to slide into us, that consists not with it. Though we must not go against a judgment of conscience in the least thing, yet let us not confound the true differences of things, but what are really lesser things, let them go for such.

'2. Let us hereupon carefully abstain from judging each other's state God-ward upon these differences: for hereby we shall both contradict our common rule, and ourselves. When men make conscience of small and doubtful things on the one hand, and the other, about which they differ, blessed God, how little conscience

x See a particular account of the proceedings of these commissioners, in the Abridgment of Mr. Baxter's Life, vol. i. p. 432.

y Page 116.

z (1.) Trial of Dr. Henry Sacheverel, p. 4. (2.) Trial, p. 77. (3.) Trial, p. 24. (4.) Trial, p. 91. (5.) Trial, p. 49.

a Mr. Matthew Henry, in his short account of the Life of Mr. Richard Stretton, that is subjoined to his Funeral Sermon for him, ascribes this paper to Mr. Stretton, and intimates that he had it from a near relation of his, that he was the author of it: but this I have good reason to believe to have been a mistake. Few that have any taste of styles, can question it to have been Mr. Howe's, when once they have read it. But I can add in this case, that I have had full assurance from Mr. Howe's family, that he was the real author of it.

is made of the plainest and most important rule, not to judge one another for such differences, Rom. xiv. 3, 13.! Why of all the parts of that holy book, is this chapter only thought no part of God's word? or this precept, so variously enforced in this chapter, and so awfully, ver. 10, 11. 'But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to me! Is it a light matter to usurp the throne of Christ, the judgment-seat of God? Yet how common has it been to say, Such a one conforms, he hath nothing of God in him! such a one conforms not; 'tis not conscience, but humour! God forgive both. Had they blotted Rom. xiv. out of their Bibles? 'Tis plain by the whole series of discourse, that it is the judging of men's states, and that by such small matters of difference, that is the thing here forbidden. Some few things contained in this chapter. as, to receive one another, (as Christians, or such whom God receives,) notwithstanding remaining doubts about small matters, and not determining such doubted things in bar to the doubter, ver. 1, 2, 3. and not to lay stumbling blocks in each other's way, ver. 13. not to do the doubted thing with a mind still unsatisfied, ver. 5, 23. not to censure, either him that does or forbears; not admitting a hard thought of him, or less favourable, than that what such an one does, he does to the Lord, and what the other forbears, he forbears to the Lord, ver. 6. These few things, I say, put in practice, had taken away all differences, (that we are now considering,) or the inconvenience of them, long ago. And we shall still need them as much as ever.

'3. Let us not value ourselves upon being of this or that side of the severing line. 'Tis Jewish, yea, pharisaical, to be conceited, and boast ourselves upon externals, and small matters, especially if arbitrarily taken up; and is itself an argument of a light mind, and incomprehensive of true worth. Though I cannot sincerely be of this or that way, but I must think myself in the right and others in the wrong that differ from me, yet I ought to consider, this is but a small minute thing, a point compared with the vast orb of knowables, and of things needful, and that ought to be known. Perhaps divers that differ from me, are men of greater and more comprehensive minds, and have been more employed about greater matters; and many in things of more importance, have much more of valuable and useful knowledge than I. Yea; and since these are not matters of salvation we differ about, so that any on either side dare considerately say, he cannot be saved, that is not in these respects of my mind and way; he may have more of sanctifying savoury knowledge, more of solid goodness, more of grace and real sanctity than I; the course of his thoughts and studies having been by converse and other accidents led more off from these things, and perhaps by a good principle been more deeply engaged about higher matters: for no man's mind is able equally to consider all things fit to be considered; and greater things are of themselves more apt to beget holy and good impressions upon our spirits, than the minuter and more circumstantial things, though relating to religion, can be.

'4. Let us not despise one another for our differing in these lesser matters. This is too common, and most natural to that temper that offends against the foregoing caution. Little-spirited creatures valuing themselves for small matters, must consequently have them in contempt that want what they count their own only excellency. He that hath nothing wherein he places worth belonging to him, besides a flaunting peruke and a laced suit, must at all adventures think very meanly of one in a plain garb. Where we are taught not to judge, we are forbidden to despise or set at nought one another upon these little differences.

'5. Nor let us wonder that we differ. Unto this we are too apt, *i. e.* to think it strange, (especially upon some arguing of the difference,) that such a man should conform, or such a one not conform. There is some fault in this, but which proceeds from more faulty causes. Pride, too often, and an opinion that we understand so well, that a wrong is done us if our judgment be not made a standard and measure to another man's. And again, ignorance of human nature, or inconsiderateness rather, how mysterious it is, and how little can be known of it; how secret and latent little springs there are that move this engine to our own mind this way or that; and what bars (which perhaps he discerns not himself) may obstruct and shut up towards us another man's. Have we not frequent instances in other common cases, how difficult it is to speak to another man's understanding? Speech is too penurious, not expressive enough. Frequently, between men of sense, much more time is taken up in explaining each other's notions, than in proving or disproving them. Nature and our present state, have in some respects left us open to God only, and made us inaccessible to one another. Why then should it be strange to me, that I cannot convey my thought into another's mind? 'Tis unchristian to censure, as before, and say, Such a one has not my conscience, therefore he has no conscience at all: and it is also unreasonable and rude to say, Such a one sees not with my eyes, therefore he is stark blind. Besides, the real obscurity of the matter is not enough considered. I am very confident an impartial and competent judge, upon the view of books, later and more ancient, upon such subjects, would say, there are few metaphysical questions disputed with more subtlety, than the controversies about conformity and nonconformity. Blessed be God that things necessary to the salvation of souls, and that are of true necessity even to the peace and order of the Christian church, are in comparison so very plain.

'Moreover there is, besides understanding and judgment, and diverse from that heavenly gift which in the Scriptures is called grace, such a thing as gust and relish belonging to the mind of man, and I doubt not, to all men, if they observe themselves; and this is as unaccountable and as various as the relishes and disgusts of sense. This they only wonder at, that either

understand not themselves, or will consider nobody but themselves. To bring it down to the present case. As to those parts of worship which are of most frequent use in our assemblies, (whether conforming or nonconforming,) prayer, and preaching, and hearing God's word, our differences about them cannot but in part arise from the diversity of this principle, both on the one hand and the other. One sort do more savour prayer by a foreknown form; another that which hath more of surprise, by a grateful variety of unexpected expressions. And it can neither be universally said, it is a better judgment, or more grace, that determines men the one way or the other; but somewhat in the temper of their minds distinct from both, which I know not how better to express than by mental taste, the acts whereof (as the objects are suitable or unsuitable) are relishing or disrelishing, liking or disliking: and this hath no more of mystery in it, than that there is such a thing belonging to our natures, as complacency or displicency in reference to the objects of the mind. And this, in the kind of it, is as common to men, as human nature, but as much diversified in individuals, as men's other inclinations are, that are most fixed, and least apt to admit of change. Now in the mentioned case, men cannot be universally determined either way, by their having better judgment; for no sober man can be so little modest, as not to acknowledge, that there are some of each sentiment, that are less judicious, than some that are of the contrary sentiment in this thing. And to say that to be more determined this way or that, is the certain sign or effect of a greater measure of grace and sanctity, were a great violation both of modesty and charity. I have not met with any that have appeared to live in more entire communion with God, in higher admiration of him, in a pleasanter sense of his love, or in a more joyful expectation of eternal life, than some that have been wont with great delight publicly to worship God in the use of our Common Prayer: and others I have known, as highly excelling in the same respects, that could by no means relish it, but have always counted it insipid and nauseous. The like may be said of relishing or disrelishing sermons preached in a digested set of words, or with a more flowing freedom of speech. It were endless and odious to vie either better judgments, or more pious inclinations, that should universally determine men either the one way or the other in these matters. And we are no more to wonder at these peculiarities in the temper of men's minds, than at their different tastes of meats and drinks; much less to fall out with them, that their minds and notions are not just formed as ours are: for we should remember, they no more differ from us, than we do from them; and if we think we have the clearer light, 'tis like they also think they have clearer. And 'tis in vain to say, Who shall be judge? for every man will at length judge of his own notions for himself, and cannot help it: for no man's judgment (or relish of things, which influences his judgment, though he know it not) is at the command of his will; and much less of another man's. And therefore,

'6. Let us not be offended mutually with one another, for our different choice of this or that way, wherein we find most of real advantage and edification. Our greatest concern in this world, and which is common to us all, is the bettering of our spirits, and preparing them for a better world. Let no man be displeased, (especially of those who agree in all the substantials of the same holy religion,) that another uses the same liberty, in choosing the way most conducing in his experience to his great end, that he himself also uses, expecting to do it without another man's offence.

'7. But above all, let us, with sincere minds, more earnestly endeavour the promoting the interest of religion itself, of true reformed Christianity, than of this or that party. Let us long to see the religion of Christians become simple, primitive, agreeable to its lovely original state, and again itself; and each in our own stations contribute thereto all that we are able, labouring that the internal principle of it may live and flourish in our own souls, and be to our utmost diffused and spread unto other men's. And for its externals, as the ductare of our rule will guide us, so gradually bend towards one common course, that there may at length cease to be any divided parties at all.

'In the mean time, while there are, let it be remembered, that the difference lies among Christians and protestants, not between such and pagans. Let us therefore carry it accordingly towards each other; and consider our assemblies are all Christian and protestant assemblies, differing in their administrations, for the most part, not in the things prayed for or depreeated, or taught, but in certain modes of expression; and differing really, and in the substance of things, less by mere conformity or nonconformity to the public rule of the law, than many of them that are under it do from one another, and than divers that are not under it. For instance, go into one congregation that is a conforming one, and you have the public prayers read in the desk, and afterwards a form of prayer perhaps used by the preacher in the pulpit, of his own composure, before he begins his sermon. Go into another congregation, and prayer is performed without either sort of form; and perhaps the difference in this is not so great. It may be the conformist uses no preconceived form of his own, and the nonconformist may. Both instruct the people out of the same holy book of God's word. But now suppose one of the former sort reads the public prayers gravely, with the appearance of great reverence, fervency, and pious devotion; and one of the latter sort that uses them not, does however pray for the same things, with judgment and with like gravity and affection, and they both instruct their hearers fully and profitably; nothing is more evident than that the worship in these two assemblies doth much less considerably differ to a pious and judicious mind, than if in the latter the prayers were also read, but carelessly, sleepily, or scenically, flauntingly, and with manifest irreverence, and the sermon like the rest; or than if in the former, all the performance were inept, rude, or very offensively drowsy or sluggish.

'Now, let us show ourselves men, and manly Christians, not swayed by trifles and little things, as children by this or that dress or mode, or form of our religion, which may perhaps please some the more for its real indecency: but know, that if while we continue picquering about forms, the life be lost, and we come to bear the character of that church, 'thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead,' we may e'er long (after all the wonders God hath wrought for us) expect to hear of our candlestick's being removed, and that our sun shall go down at noon-day.

'The true serious spirit and power of religion and godliness, will act no man against his conscience, or his rule understood, but will oblige him in all acts of worship (as well as of his whole conversation) to keep close to Gospel prescription, so far as he can discern it. And that he will find requires, that in subordination to the divine glory, he seriously design the working out the salvation of his own soul, and take that course in order thereto, put himself under such a ministry, and such a way of using God's ordinances, as he finds most profitable and conducing to that great end, and that doth his soul most real good. If you are religious, or of this or that mode or way of religion, to serve a carnal design for yourself or your party, not to save your soul, you commit the most detestable sacrilege, and alienate the most sacred thing in the world, religion, from its true end; which will not only lose that end, but infer a heavy vengeance. Yea, and 'tis too possible to transgress dangerously, by preferring that which is less, though never so confidently thought to be divine, before that which is greater, or separately from its true end. You greatly prevaricate, if you are more zealously intent to promote independency than Christianity, presbytery than Christianity, prelacy than Christianity, as any of these are the interest of a party, and not considered in subserviency to the Christian interest, nor designed for promoting the edification and salvation of your own soul. But that being your design, living religion will keep your eye upon your end, and make you steady, and constantly true to that, and to your rule, without which you can never hope to reach your end.

'Now hereupon such as conform to the public establishment, and they that dissent from it, may differ from each other upon a two-fold account: either, (1.) as judging the contrary way to be simply unlawful; or, (2.) as judging it to be only less edifying. 'Tis not the business of this paper to discuss, who herein judge aright, and who wrong; but supposing their judgment to remain as it is, (which they themselves however should examine, and if it be wrong rectify,) I shall say somewhat to each of these cases.

'To the former, while your judgment continues as it is, 'tis true you cannot join in worship with the contrary minded: but nothing forbids, but you can be kind, conversable, courteous towards them; and your common Christian profession (besides the rules of humanity) obliges you so to be; yea, and even to converse with them, as occasion invites, more intimately as Christians, the visible marks of serious Christianity appearing in them.

'To the latter sort it is acknowledged, you cannot constantly join in worship with those of the contrary way, because you ought ordinarily to worship God in that way which you judge to be best, and most agreeable to the divine rule; (though you are not obliged utterly to abandon any for its imperfections or corruptions, that is not corrupt in the very essentials;) and you ought most frequently to attend on that which you find to be most edifying to your own soul; as that should be your more ordinary diet that best agrees with you. That way therefore you must most constantly adhere to, which is most grateful and savoury to you; because you cannot so much edify by what you less relish. But your judgment and latitude will well allow you sometimes to frequent the assemblies with which you hold not constant communion. And if it will allow, it will also direct you thereto for a valuable end; as that you may signify, you ordinarily decline them not as no Christians, or their worship as no worship, but as more defective, or less edifying, and that you may maintain love, and both express and beget a disposition to nearer union. And if our rulers shall judge such intercourses conducing to so desirable an end, they may perhaps in due time think it reasonable to put things into that state, that ministers of both sorts may be capable of inviting one another occasionally to the brotherly offices of mutual assistance in each other's congregations. For which, and all things that tend to make us a happy people, we must wait upon him in whose hands their hearts are.'

Having brought down my history thus far, I shall not, in what remains, confine myself to relate things just as they passed year by year, but shall for brevity sake rather choose to give an account in the general, of Mr. Howe's conduct in the warm debates that arose among the dissenting ministers, some time after the revolution and toleration; in the controversy upon the doctrine of the Trinity; and the dispute about occasional conformity; and then shall add some account of his works not yet mentioned, and of his last sickness, death and burial, and his exemplary character; and subjoin in the close of my narrative (which I hope cannot disgust by its length, when it entertains with so great variety) such letters of his, as I have been able to recover.

I shall begin with the differences among the dissenting ministers soon after the revolution, and when they had obtained a toleration. These were very unhappy; and the more so, because they gave too much occasion to those to insult, who had often said, Do but let these people alone, and you'll see, they'll soon fall out among themselves. We may date the rise of them, from the Heads of Agreement, assented to by the body of the united ministers[b] in and about the city, and in the several parts of the country, which were published

[b] See those Heads of Agreement at large, Abridgment of Mr. Baxter's Life, vol. i. p. 476.

in 1691. Mr. Howe had a considerable hand in drawing them up. The design of them was to bring those that were presbyterian and those that were congregational in their judgments to a coalition, that so their difference might for the future be buried in oblivion: but it so fell out, that some few of those who were in their judgment strictly congregational, standing out, and refusing to approve these heads of agreement, and concur in the designed union, plied their brethren who were of the same sentiments with him, who had consented to the union, so close, that they gave them no rest, till they broke off from those to whom it was intended they should for the future have been more strictly united. It was observed in Germany, that that which they called the Book of Concord, was the occasion of great discord:[c] so also, this designed union among us, was the occasion of new divisions and quarrels. It was indeed at first much applauded, and the Heads of Agreement were generally approved and subscribed, and they who styled themselves the united brethren acted very harmoniously, and had weekly meetings, in which matters of common concernment were managed and adjusted with great unanimity. They, by consent, published a declaration against Mr. Richard Davis, of Rothwel, in the county of Northampton,[d] and did several other things that might have contributed to the keeping up order and regularity, and the making the dissenters appear a compacted body: but at length they had separate weekly meetings, and such feuds and jealousies arose amongst them, as issued in a rupture that had affecting consequences, in which it was apprehended that they who never were of the union, had no small hand. One great occasion of the debates now on foot, was the reprinting of the works of Dr. Crisp, (who was noted for his antinomian notions, though reputed a very pious man,) with some sermons added; to which a paper was prefixed, subscribed by several; for which a sort of an apology was afterwards published, which was prefixed to Mr. John Flavel's discourse, intituled, 'A Blow at the Root; or the Causes and Cures of mental Errors.' Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Daniel Williams wrote against the errors of these sermons a book intituled, 'Gospel Truth stated and vindicated,' to which also there were several names subscribed; and Mr. Lorimer wrote a large apology for those subscribers; and a great variety of pamphlets were published on both sides, which made a great noise and stir. And at length, there came out in 1692 a paper intituled, 'The Agreement in Doctrine among the Dissenting Ministers in London,' which was subscribed by Mr. Howe among the rest, but it answered not the end; for the debates were still continued.[e]

One party suspected (or at least pretended to suspect) the other of verging too much towards Arminianism, and even Socinianism; and they on the other side charged them with encouraging antinomianism. Several papers were hereupon drawn up, and subscribed, in order to an accommodation; there was a first, a second, and a third paper, of this sort: and these very papers created new altercations and debates, that were carried on with no small heat and pettishness; and a number that stood by, could hardly tell what it was they contended about. Several new creeds were framed, and still objected against by some or other, either as too large or too strait, too full or too empty. The world was wearied out with pamphlets and creed-making, and the Bishop of Worcester and Dr. Edwards were appealed to, and gave their judgment; and yet the jealousies that were on foot were so strong, that they did not of a long time abate or decrease: and the only peace there was to be found, was among a few standers-by, who, without meddling with debates, amicably persuaded the contenders, since they could not agree to unite, to agree to differ, to lay aside their heat, and speak as well of each other as they could. And such were the effects of these brangles at that time, upon the most common conversation, and so odd do the controversies that were then managed appear, if reviewed at a distance, as to convince considerate observers, that 'there is no such enemy to peace as jealousy encouraged; and that indulged suspicion is an endless fund of contention.'

I cannot help here inserting a passage out of Bishop Stillingfleet in his answer to Mr. Lobb's Appeal. 'There is (says he) a remarkable story in the history of the synod of Dort, which may not be improper in this place. There were in one of the universities of that country two professors, both very warm and extremely zealous for that which they accounted the most orthodox doctrine; but it happened that one of these accused the other before the synod for no fewer than fifty errors, tending to Socinianism, Pelagianism, &c. and wonderful heat there was on both sides. At last a committee was appointed to examine this dreadful charge, and upon examination they found no ground for the charge of Socinianism, or any other heresy, but only that he had asserted too much the use of ambiguous and scholastic terms, and endeavoured to bring in the way of the schoolmen in his writings; and therefore the synod dismissed him with that prudent advice, rather to keep to the language of the Scripture, than of the schools.'[f]

But as to Mr. Howe, he had sufficiently declared his judgment with respect to the matters which were now so eagerly disputed on, in the writings which he had published; and it was his great aim to keep things from running to extremity. In order to it, he published 'The Carnality of Christian Contention,' in two sermons preached at the Merchant's Lecture in Broad-street, in 1693. The preface to these discourses 'breathes so heavenly a charity and concern for the truly Christian interest, that (as Mr. Spademan observes) a very eminent divine of the established church did profess a willingness to lay down his own life, if

c See Brandt's History of the Reformation, in and about the Low Countries, vol. i. book 12. p. 364.
d See this Declaration, Abridgement of Mr. Baxter's Life, vol. i. page 512.
e He that would see this controversy among the dissenters represented at large, would do well to consult Mr. Nelson's life of Bishop Bull, p. 259. 260. 261. &c.
f Bishop Stillingfleet's Works, vol. iii. p. 405, 406.
g Funeral Sermon for Mr. Howe, p. 1044.

such a state of things as is there described, might obtain among Christians.'

I shall be at the pains to transcribe from thence a few remarkable passages. He observes, 'that when in one place Christians are exhorted to contend earnestly for the faith, and are told in another that the servant of the Lord must not strive, 'tis plain there is a contention for religion which is a duty, and a contention even concerning religion which is a sin. The servant of the Lord must not strive, so as to exclude gentleness, aptness to instruct, and patience: and we are to contend earnestly for the faith, but with a sedate mind, full of charity, candour, kindness, and benignity, towards them we strive with. There is a great difference between the church's contention with enemies without it, and contentions within itself. The former unite it, and increase its strength and vigour; the latter divide and enfeeble it. As to those of this latter kind, nothing is more evident, or deserves to be more considered, than that as the Christian church has grown more carnal, it hath grown more contentious; and as more contentious, still more and more carnal. The savour hath been lost of the great things of the Gospel, which only afford proper nutriment to the life of godliness; and it hath diverted to lesser things, about which the contentious disputative genius might employ itself. Thereby hath it grown strong and vigorous, and acquired the power to transform the church from a spiritual society, enlivened, acted, and governed by the spirit of Christ, into a mere carnal thing like the rest of the world. Carnality hath become its governing principle, and torn it into fragments and parties, each of which will be the church, enclose itself within its own peculiar limits, exclusive of all the rest, claim and appropriate to itself the rights and privileges which belong to the Christian church in common, yea, and Christ himself, as if he were to be so enclosed or confined. Hence it is said, Lo here is Christ, and there he is, till he is scarce to be found any where. And how manifest are the tokens of his displeasure and retirement!' Hereupon he offers it to consideration,

'1. Whether for any party of Christians to make unto itself other limits of communion than Christ hath made, and hedge up itself within those limits, excluding those whom Christ would admit, and admitting those whom he would exclude, be not in itself a real sin? The holy table is the symbol of communion; and if it be the Lord's, it ought to be free to his guests, and appropriate to them. Who should dare to invite others, or forbid these?

'2. If it be a sin, is it not a heinous one? Christianity itself should measure the communion of Christians as such; and visible Christianity their visible communion. Christianity must be estimated principally by its end, which refers not to this world, but to the world to come, and a happy state there. Christians are a sort of men tending to God and blessedness, under the conduct of Christ, to whom they have by covenant devoted themselves, and to God in him. If any society of men professedly Christian, make limits of their communion, admitting those that Christ's rule excludes, and excluding them whom it would admit, they break Christ's constitution, and set up another.—If they be little things only that we add; the less they are, the greater the sin to make them necessary, and hang so great things upon them; break the church's peace and unity by them, and of them to make a new Gospel, new terms of life and death, a new way to heaven! And is in effect to say, If you will not take Christianity with these additions of ours, you shall not be Christians; you shall have no Christian ordinances, no Christian worship: we will, as far as in us is, exclude you heaven itself, and all means of salvation! If this be sinful, it is a sin of the deepest dye. But,

'3. If we suppose this a sin, and a heinous one, how far doth the guilt of it spread! How few are they that lay their communions open to visible Christianity as such, excluding none of whatsoever denomination, nor receiving any that by Christian rational estimate cannot be judged such!

'4. How few that consider this as the provoking cause of Christ's being so much a stranger to the Christian church! and how little is it to be hoped we shall ever see good days, till this wasting evil is redressed! Carnal interest is the thing every where designed by one party and another. The church for 13 or 1400 years hath been gradually growing a multiform, mangled, shattered, and most deformed thing; broken and parcelled into nobody knows how many several sorts of communions. Not only things most alien from real Christianity are added to it, but substituted in the room of it, and preferred before it; yea, and things most destructive of it, indulged and magnified in opposition to it. Never were there more fervent contentions among all sorts, whose notions, opinions, modes, and forms are to be preferred. The word of God tells us, that to be carnally minded is death. These contests seem therefore to express great solicitude how most neatly to adorn a carcass; or at best how with greatest art and curiosity to trim and apparel gorgeously a languishing man in the feared approaches of death, instead of endeavouring to save his life.

'It were a happy omen, if good men could once agree what in particular to pray for. One would think it should not be difficult to men of sincere minds, upon serious consideration of the present sad state of things, to agree to pray that the church of Christ may be more entirely one, and that unity might be preserved in the bond of peace, and this in order to its growth to the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ: for who sees not, that the Christian interest is naturally obstructed in its extensive growth by the visible disunion of the Christian community? and penally too, by the offence given to the spirit of Christ, who thereupon in great degrees withdraws itself? That only which the present state of things admits of, is, that we keep ourselves united in mind and spirit with all serious Christians, in the plain and necessary things wherein they all agree; and preserve a resolved unaddictedness to any party in the things wherein they

differ. That for actual local communion, we join with them that we judge come nearest to our common rule; and labour to centre in some such scheme of doctrinals, as may be of use distinctly to inform others concerning our sentiments; provided it be avowed to be looked upon but as a *mensura mensurata*, reserving unto the Scriptures the honour of being the only *mensura mensurans*, and so that we only own it as agreeable to the Scriptures: declaring we take it to be agreeable thereto in the main, and for substance, without attributing a sacredness to the very words of a mere human composition, which indeed we cannot attribute to the words used in the translation of the Bible itself,' &c.

In the two discourses that follow, he shows that much of a very blameable carnality may show itself in and about spiritual matters, and particularly even in defending the truths of the Gospel, and that this may be discovered by several indications.

And he declares this to be the case, 'when Christians, who are very far agreed in the most important things, make little of the things wherein they are agreed, though ever so great, in comparison of the much less things wherein they differ: and, when there is too much aptness to lay greater stress than is needful upon such unscriptural words, in delivering Scripture doctrine; when we consider with too little indulgence one another's mistakes and misapplications in the use even of Scripture words, placing them (as some may do) upon things to which they do not properly belong, when yet they agree about the things themselves; when there is an agreement about the main and principal things that the Scripture revelation contains and carries in it, but there is not that agreement about their mutual respects and references unto one another; and when we are overintent to mould and square Gospel truths and doctrines by human measures and models, and too earnestly strive to make them correspond.'

He adds, 'that carnality also appears, when there is a discernible proneness to oppose the great things of the Gospel to one another, and to exalt or magnify one, above or against another: when any do with great zeal contend for this or that opinion or notion as very sacred and highly spiritual, with no other design than that under that pretence they may indulge their own carnal inclination with the greater liberty: when in maintaining any doctrine of the Gospel in opposition to others, we industriously set ourselves to pervert their meaning, and impute things to them that they never say; or if we charge their opinions whom we oppose, with consequences which they disclaim: when disputes arise at length to wrath, to angry strife, yea, and even to fixed enmity: when any adventure to judge of the consciences and states of them whom they oppose, or from whom they differ: when we over-magnify our own understandings, and assume too much to ourselves: and then, finally, carnality greatly shows itself, in an affectation and desire of having such disputes still kept afoot, and the contests continued, without either limit or rational design.'

He illustrates each article by suitable instances; and then cries out, 'Can none remember when the disputative humour had even eaten out the power and spirit of practical religion and godliness? Thither things are again tending, if, either by severity or mercy, God do not prevent and repress that tendency. As yet I fear the humour is violent, when the fervour of men's spirits is such, as to carry them over all Scripture directions and animadversions, that they may signify nothing with them; only make it their business each one to animate the more vogued champions of their own party into the highest ferments. Let us consider we are professedly going to heaven. We shall carry truth and the knowledge of God thither with us; we shall carry purity thither, devotedness of soul to God and our Redeemer, divine love and joy, with whatever else of real permanent excellency hath a fixed seat and place in our souls. But do we think we shall carry strife to heaven? Shall we carry anger to heaven? Envyings, heart-burnings, animosities, enmities, hatred of our brethren and fellow-christians, shall we carry these to heaven with us? Let us labour to divert ourselves, and strike off from our spirits every thing that shall not go with us to heaven, or is equally unsuitable to our end and way, that there may be nothing to obstruct and hinder our abundant entrance at length into the everlasting kingdom.'

But no reasonings, expostulations, or complaints would avail to extinguish the flame that was kindled. At length there was a design formed in 1694, to exclude Mr. Williams out of the lecture at Pinners-Hall; and then there was a new Tuesday lecture set up at Salters-Hall, and Dr. Bates, Mr. Howe, and Mr. Alsop bore Mr. Williams company in this new lecture; and the other two who continued at Pinners-Hall, *viz.* Mr. Mead and Mr. Cole, had four more joined to them. Mr. Howe in his first turn at the new lecture in Salters-Hall, preached a very affecting sermon, from Isa. lxiv. 7. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us because of our iniquities. And after this, no further attempts (as I know of) were made for a coalition, but the heat and strangeness abated by degrees, and they learnt to keep up a friendly correspondence with each other, making allowance for a diversity of sentiments, but acting in concert in all matters of common concernment; which was by experience found to be much more comfortable than the continuance of strife and contention, which tends to confusion, and every evil work.

However, having obtained a copy of a letter, written by Mr. Howe to his dear and intimate friend, Mr. Spilsbury, (at his desire,) upon occasion of the setting up another Tuesday lecture, I shall here insert it, because it may help to give some light into this matter.

London, April 20, 95.

'My dear Brother,

'You strangely forgot yourself, when you say I gave

you on account of the Pinners-Hall business, of which I sent you a large narrative, when the business was recent; which if it miscarried, tell me so, and I promise you I will never do the like again: for it is a very discouraging thing, when it is so hard a matter to get time to write such long letters, to have them lost by the way; or it is not better, if when they are received they are taken *pro non scriptis*. God knows how I strove against that division. Almost all my friends that called me to bear a part in that lecture, perceiving the violence of the other party, agreed to remove to a much more convenient place; and they were, so far as I can learn, the greatest part of the ancient subscribers, who were grave, sober citizens. They invited Mr. Mead as well as me. If he would not go, I could not help that. His acquaintance lay more among the other, as mine did with these. He and they all knew the many meetings we have had to prevent the breach; he and I with divers of them on both sides. And they (who are now of Pinners-Hall) ran against his advice and mine, when they had desired us to meet purposely to advise them. He hath been since as weary of them as others, as he hath owned to me. They avowed it for a principle before we parted, they would lay any of us aside at their pleasure, without giving a reason: and were told thereupon, we would lay down without giving them a reason; though I think that itself was a sufficient reason. They knew too, how often, since the lecture was broken into two, and it appeared now there were two congregations, which no one place could receive, I have urged, both publicly and privately, that the same lecturers might alternate in both places, which would take away all appearance of disunion; and who they were only that opposed it. Upon these terms I have preached with them still; but I will not be tied to them, nor any party, so as to abandon all others. My frequent insisting in sermons among them, when I saw whither things tended, that these were tokens of what was coming, (just as thou writest,) will be thought on, it may be, hereafter, though then it was not. Above all, that which determined me was, that when I solemnly proposed to them in a sermon, the keeping a fast, before they went on to that fatal rupture; and it was as solemnly promised by the chief of them, there should be no step further made without a fast; it should be declined afterwards. Hereupon I told them in my last sermon there, I should be afraid of confining myself to such as were afraid of fasting and prayer in so important a case, (repeating their own good resolution to that purpose,) and began my course in the other place with a fast, to lament what we could not prevent. These things will be recollected another day.

'In the mean time there never was greater intimacy or endearedness between Mr. Mead and me, than now. Last week he desired me only, without any other, to join with him in keeping a fast at his house, about some private affairs of his own, which we did. I was to have preached at his place to-morrow, after my own work at home; but present indisposition prevents me as to both. We have however agreed to exchange some times: but this cannot last long. The things that threaten us make haste. Only let us be found among the mourners in Zion; comforts will come, in this or the better world. I just now heard from Mr. Porter out of Sussex, who inquires after thee.

In the Lord, farewell:
To thee and thine,
from me and mine,
with most entire and
undecaying affection,
J. H.'

Great also were the debates that were at this time on foot about the doctrine of the Trinity. Different explications of that doctrine had been published by Dr. Wallis, Dr. Sherlock, Dr. South, and Dr. Cudworth, and others; and a certain writer published considerations on these explications, which occasioned Mr. Howe, in 1691, to publish a tract, intituled, 'A calm and sober Inquiry concerning the Possibility of a Trinity in the Godhead, in a Letter to a Person of worth.' To which were added, some letters formerly written to Dr. Wallis, on the same subject.

In this discourse he waves the question about three persons in the Deity, though he declares the use of that term neither blameable, nor indefensible; and only inquires whether the Father, the Son or Word, and the Holy Ghost, cannot possibly admit of sufficient distinction from one another, to answer the parts and purposes severally assigned them by the Scripture, in the Christian economy, and yet be each of them God, consistently with this indubitable truth, that there can be but one God. This he asserts to be no absurdity or contradiction.

He promises, that he undertakes not to show that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three and but one in the same respect: and that he only designs to represent this matter as possible to be some way, though not as definitely certain to be this way or that. This being done, he,

1. Acknowledges, that whereas we do with greatest certainty and clearness conceive of the Deity, as an intellectual being, comprehensive of infinite and universal perfection, so do we conclude it a being necessarily existent. He is the I am: and whatsoever intellectual being is necessarily existent is divine; whereas whatsoever being is contingent, is a creature.

2. He affirms, that whatsoever simplicity the ever-blessed God hath by any express revelation claimed to himself, or can by evident and irrefragable reason be demonstrated to belong to him as a perfection, ought to be ascribed to him: but such simplicity as he has not claimed, such as can never be proved to belong to him, or to be any real perfection, such as would prove an imperfection and a blemish, &c. we ought not to ascribe to him.

3. He declares, that such as have thought themselves obliged by the plain word of God to acknowledge a trinity in the Godhead, of Father, Son, and Holy

Ghost, but withal to diminish the distinction of the one from the other, so as even to make it next to nothing, by reason of the straits into which unexamined maxims concerning the divine simplicity have cast their minds, have yet not thought that to be absolute or omnimodous.

4. Since we may offend very highly by an arrogant pretence to the knowledge we have not, but shall not offend by confessing the ignorance which we cannot remedy, he infers, we should abstain from confident conclusions in the dark, especially concerning the nature of God; and from saying, we clearly see a sufficient distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit in the Godhead cannot be, or is impossible.

5. Waving the many artificial unions of distinct things, that united and continuing distinct make one thing, under one name, he proposes only to consider what is natural, and instances in what is nearest to us in our very selves. Now we find, as to ourselves, that we are made up of a mind and a body; somewhat that can think, and somewhat that cannot; sufficiently distinct, yet so united as to make up one man. He adds,

6. That the making up two things of so different natures into one thing, was possible to be done, since it is actually done; 'twas what God could do, for he hath done it. And if it be possible to him to unite two things of so very different natures into one thing, 'twould be hard to assign a colourable reason, why it should not be as possible to him to unite two things of a like nature. He argues,

7. That if such a union of three things, so as that they shall be truly one thing, and yet remain distinct, though united, can be affected, then it is not intrinsically, or in itself, impossible.

8. If such a union with such distinction be not in itself impossible, 'tis offered to consideration, whether we shall have a conception in our own mind any thing more incongruous, if we conceive such a union, with such distinction, unmade and eternal, in an unmade or uncreated being.

9. Supposing it possible that three spiritual beings might be in a state of so near union with continuing distinction, as to admit of becoming one spiritual being, as well as that a spiritual being and a corporeal being may be in a state of so near union, with continuing distinction, so as to become one spiritual eorporeal being: he queries, whether supposing the former of these to be as possible to be done as the latter, which is done already, we may not as well suppose somewhat like it, but infinitely more perfect, in the uncreated being?

10. He affirms, that the union of the two natures, the human with the divine, in one person of the Son of God, cannot appear to considerate persons more conceivable or possible, than the supposed union of three distinct essences in the one Godhead.

11. He affirms, there is nothing in all this repugnant to such simplicity as God any where claims to his own being, or that plain reason will constrain us to ascribe to him, or that is really in itself any perfection.

12. He adds, that if we should suppose three spiritual necessary beings, the one whereof were mere power, destitute of either wisdom or goodness; another mere wisdom, destitute of either goodness or power; and a third mere goodness, destitute of either power or wisdom; existing separately and apart from each other; this triple conception would overthrow itself, and could allow little ease to a considerate mind; for no one of these could be God: but conceiving essential power, wisdom, and goodness concurring, in one spiritual necessarily existent being, and not only permeating each other, but really and vitally united, in the most perfect and intimate manner, there is nothing of repugnancy, contradiction, or absurdity in the matter. But then 'tis added,

13. That this is only a possible supposition, of what for ought we know may be. This (he says) argues no composition in the being of God; nor are we under the precise notions of power, wisdom, and goodness, to conceive of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

14. This (he says) does not make three Gods, it only asserts so much distinction between the Father, Son, and Spirit, as is necessary to the founding the distinct attributions which in the Scriptures are severally given them, without affirming they are three distinct substances, three infinite minds or spirits.

15. The main thing (he says) we are searching for, is what the most sacred Godhead may be, to which a oneness is ascribed with a threefold distinction; and finding there are in the creation made unions, with sufficient remaining distinction, particularly in ourselves, that we are a soul and a body, that the soul is called the man, and the body too; we are led to apprehend it more easily possible there might be two spirits so united as to be one thing, yet continuing distinct; and if two there might be three. And if such a made union, with continuing distinction, be possible in created being, it may not be impossible in the uncreated, that there may be such an eternal unmade union, with continued distinction.

16. The unity of the Godhead is declared to be salved, because the supposition takes in the natural, eternal, necessary union of all the three: nor is the Godhead supposed more necessarily to exist, than these three are to co-exist in the nearest and most intimate union with each other therein.

17. But an hypothesis in this affair, which leaves out the very nexus, that natural, eternal union, or leaves it out of its proper place, and insists upon mutual consciousness, which is but a consequence thereof, wants the principal thing requisite to the salving the unity of the Godhead.

18. The order of priority and posteriority, which the names Father, Son, and Spirit, do more than intimate, is declared to be this way preserved and complied with.

19. If it is urged, that one individual necessarily existent spiritual being alone is God, and is all that is signified by the name of God; 'tis answered, that if by one individual necessarily existent spiritual being, either the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost is meant, taken sejunctly, it is denied; for both the other are truly signified by the name of God too, as well as that one.

20. If it is further objected, that the notion of God is this way made to comprehend Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and a Godhead besides common to these three: 'tis answered, that the notion of God imports not any thing more of real being than is contained in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, taken together, and most intimately, naturally, and vitally, by eternal necessity, united with one another. 'Tis added,

21. That let such a union be conceived in the being of God, with such distinction, and the absolute perfection of the Deity, and the perfect felicity thereof will be the more apprehensible with us.

22. And yet as to delight in society, 'tis owned we are not strictly to measure God by ourselves, further than as he himself prompts and leads us.

23. However, 'tis declared, that thus conceiving, the sacred Triunity will be so remote from any shadow of inconsistency or repugnancy, that no necessity can remain upon us, of torturing wit, and racking invention, to do a laboured and artificial violence to numerous and plain texts of Scripture, only to undeify our glorious Redeemer, and do the utmost despite to the Spirit of grace, &c.

This inquiry of Mr. Howe's was reflected on in a 'Postscript to the Defence of Dr. Sherlock's Notion of the Trinity in Unity;' and thereupon he, in the same year, published a 'Letter to a Friend, concerning that Postscript.'

In this Letter Mr. Howe inquires, whether in his printed Inquiry he had said more than Dean Sherlock, or more than is defensible, of the distinction of the sacred Three in the Godhead; and also, whether the Dean had said so much as he had done, or so much as was requisite, of their union.

He shows that the Dean must be judged, by every one that understands common sense, to have heightened the distinction of the three persons, at least as much as he had done in his Inquiry: and that the Dean said not enough in his book to salve the unity of the Godhead, but ought to have insisted upon somewhat prior to mutual consciousness, as constituent of that unity. He shows that he wrongs him, and wounds himself; and concludes, that since the difference between the sacred Three, which only proceeds from their natural eternal order, is conjecturable only, but is really unknown, unrevealed, and inscrutable, it is better herein to confess the imperfection of that knowledge which we have, than to boast of that which we have not, or aspire to that which we cannot have.

After this, there came out 'Some Considerations on the Explications of the Doctrine of the Trinity, in a Letter to H. H.' And Mr. Howe being therein concerned, in 1695, published 'A View of those Considerations, in a Letter to the former Friend.' Wherein he gives it as his judgment, that much service might be done to the common interest of religion, by a free mutual communication of even more doubtful thoughts, if such disquisitions were pursued with more candour, and with less confidence and prepossession of mind, or addictedness, to the interest of any party whatsoever. If it were rather endeavoured to reason one another into, or out of, this or that opinion, than either by sophistical collusions to cheat, or to hector by great words, one that is not of our mind. Or if the design were less to expose an adversary, than to clear the matter in controversy. Besides, that if such equanimity did more generally appear and govern in transactions of this nature, it would produce a greater liberty in communicating our thoughts about some of the more vogued and fashionable opinions, by exempting each other from the fear of ill treatment in the most sensible kind. It being too manifest that the same confident insulting genius, which makes a man think himself competent to be a standard to mankind, would also make him impatient of dissent, and tempt him to do worse, than reproach one that differs from him, if it were in his power. And the club or faggot arguments must be expected to take place, where what he thinks rational ones did not do the business.

He declares, that the perusal of these very considerations, gave him more confidence about his hypothesis, than he allowed himself before, finding that the sagacious author of them, of whose abilities and industry together he really had that opinion, as to count him the most likely to confute it of all the modern anti-trinitarians, had no other way to deal with it, than first both partially and invidiously to represent it, and then rather to trifle than argue against it. And after freely discoursing about the delicious society the divine hypostases are supposed to have with each other; about the union of the sensitive, vegetative, and intellectual natures in man, and the union also of soul and body; about the union of intelligent beings; about heresy, infinite and infinitude, essential and substantial unions, &c. he declares he did not find that that writer had any thing of argument in his discourse, which had not been before considered in the discourse he had had with the considerator; and therefore he takes his leave, and wrote no more upon the argument.

Mr. Howe, as well as others, in this case, met with very different treatment from several persons, according to their different notions. He was the more respected by some, upon the account of what he published on this subject, while others that greatly valued his other writings, wished he had left this argument untouched, and kept his thoughts to himself: and some, out of the abundance of their zeal for orthodoxy, could scarce forbear charging him, as well as Dean Sherlock, with downright heresy. To whom I shall make no other return, than in the words of Bishop Stillingfleet, in his preface to his 'Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity.'[h] 'There is a kind of bitter zeal, which is so fierce and violent, that it rather inflames than heals any wounds that are made; and is of so malignant a nature, that it spreads and eats like a cancer, and if a stop were not given to it, it might endanger the whole body.' May such a zeal as this never prevail among us: and if it has already got any footing, the good

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Lord grant it may be heartily and speedily repented of, and shaken off, and laid aside. Amen.'

But it seems necessary I should add somewhat upon another subject, which also made a great noise in the latter part of this good man's life, and that is the business of occasional conformity.

Mr. Howe had all along from his first quitting his church, upon the taking place of the Act of Uniformity, carried himself with great calmness and moderation, and had openly declared for this occasional conformity, before communicating with the established church was a necessary qualification for a place in the magistracy; and it was the same also as to a number of his brethren: and yet when the chief magistrate in the city of London had carried the regalia to a dissenting congregation, it occasioned no small clamour; and when a little after Sir Thomas Abney, who was a worthy member of Mr. Howe's congregation, (than whom none ever filled the chair of the city with greater honour,) went publicly to worship God, (in 1701, which was the year of his mayoralty) sometimes in the established church, and sometimes among the dissenters, a pamphlet was published, intituled, 'An Inquiry into the Occasional Conformity of Dissenters;' in which this practice was represented as very scandalous, and a preface was prefixed to Mr. Howe, in which he was called on either to vindicate it, or declare against it. Mr. Howe did not much care to enter upon an argument of that nature with one of so warm a temper as the author of that Inquiry, and contented himself with a short return to him in a small pamphlet, that was intituled 'Some Consideration of a Preface to an Inquiry concerning the Occasional Conformity of Dissenters:' in which he tells the prefacer, that he for a long time had had an habitual aversion in his own mind, from perplexing himself, or disturbing others, by being concerned in agitating the controversies that have been on foot about the circumstantials of religion. That he had contented himself, by the best means he could be furnished with, and the best use God enabled him to make of them, so far to form and settle his own judgment, as was necessary to his own practice. That he had faithfully followed his judgment, and abstained in the mean time from censuring others, who took a different way from him. That he was sensible every one must give account of himself to God: and that it is a great consolation to such as sincerely fear God, that if with upright minds they principally study to approve themselves to him, and if they mistake, do only err for fear of erring; he will not with severity animadvert upon the infirmity of a weak and merely misguided judgment: and that it is a sure truth, worth all this world, that to an honest unbiassed heart, 'tis a far easier thing to please God, than men. That they that contend fervently and conclude positively concerning church-power, &c. often discover more confidence than knowledge or solid judgment; and much oftener little of the spirit of Christ and the Gospel.

He further tells the prefacer, that before he had offered at engaging him in this quarrel, he ought to have been well assured, that he did really concern himself to advise one way or other, as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of that occasional conformity, about which he contended; or at least that he ought to have done so: but that not being able to make either of these appear, he had been guilty of an affectation of intermeddling beyond any call he had, that could lead him to it. That he had pretended to judge in a matter he had nothing to do with; and that he had taken upon him to invade the throne of the Most High, in charging the worthy person referred to with acting against his conscience. He tells him that before he concluded that with so rash confidence, he ought to have been able to prove the act in its circumstances unlawful. And his making use of that text, about following God or Baal, as if the God of the dissenters and of the established church differed as the living God and Baal, he tells him was profane and impious wit. And he at last adds, that the person by him criminated, might, notwithstanding any thing he had said, be in the right; but if the prefacer's judgment upon the case was true, he conceived that the truth, accompanied with his temper of spirit, was much worse than the other's error. And some time after, he drew up, and there was found among his remaining papers,

'*A Letter to a Person of Honour, partly representing the Rise of Occasional Conformity, and partly the Sense of the present Nonconformists, about their yet continuing Differences from the Established Church.*'

'My Lord,

'Tis well known to such as have understood the state of religion in this kingdom, since the beginning of the reformation, that there have been very different sentiments about the degrees of that reformation itself. Some have judged the church with us so insufficiently reformed, as to want as yet the very being of a true Christian church; and wherewith they therefore thought it unlawful to have any communion at all. Of whom many thereupon in the several successive reigns, withdrew themselves into foreign parts, for the enjoyment of the liberty of such worship as they judged more agreeable to the word of God.

'There have been also no inconsiderable numbers, in former and later times, that though not entirely satisfied with our reformation, were less severe in their judgment concerning the constitution and practice of the established church; that is, did not judge its reformation so defective, that they might not communicate at all with it, nor so complete, but that they ought to covet a communion more strictly agreeable to the Holy Scripture; and accordingly apprehended themselves to lie under a two-fold obligation of conscience in reference hereto.

'1. Not, by any means, totally to cut themselves off on the one hand from the communion of the established church, in which they found greater and more momentous things to be approved of and embraced with great reverence and complacency, (*viz.* all the true

noble essentials of Christian religion, not subverted as among the Romanists by any contrary doctrines or practices,) than could be pretended to remain the matter of their disapprobation and dislike.

'2. Nor, on the other hand, to decline other communion, which to the judgment of their conscience appeared, in some considerable circumstances, more agreeable to the Christian rule, and to their experience more conducing to their spiritual advantage and edification.

'Which latter judgment of theirs (whether itself justifiable or no we are not now considering) hath been with many so fixed and inflexible, that in several successive reigns, great numbers of such persons, who we had no reason to apprehend had any thought totally to abandon the established church, yet thought themselves obliged besides, to seek and procure opportunities for such other communions, even with extreme peril, not only to their estates and liberties, but to their very lives themselves.

'They could not therefore but think both these sorts of communions lawful, *viz.* whereto they might adjoin, but not confine themselves.

'And though to that former sort of communion, there hath for many years by-past, been superadded the accidental consideration of a place or office attainable hereby, no man can allow himself to think, that what he before counted lawful, is by this supervening consideration become unlawful: especially if the office were such, as was in no manner of way to be an emolument, but rather an occasion of greater expense to the undertaker of it; that is, only enabled him to serve God, the government, and his country, being regularly called hereto, in the condition of a justice of peace, or otherwise. In which capacity it is notorious that divers persons of eminent note of this persuasion (and some in higher stations) have, within the space of forty years past and upwards, been serviceable to the public in divers parts of the nation.

'It is not indeed to be thought that the judgment and practice of such men can be throughout approved by our reverend fathers and brethren of the established church, as neither can we pretend it to be so universally by ourselves. But we are remote from any the least suspicion, that persons of so excellent worth and Christian temper, as now preside over the established church, can suffer themselves to judge or censure men of this sentiment, as being for this single reason men of hypocritical and insincere minds; but that they will rather think it possible their understandings may be imposed upon, so as this may be the judgment, in the whole, of a sincere though misinformed conscience.

'For when they apprehend this church, having all the essential parts of Christian religion, has not, by adding some much disputed things, that are not pretended to be any parts thereof, (but that are become as necessary to communion with it, as any of the most essential part,) thereby unchurched itself, but that they may hold communion with it; yet they do not see that they ought to appropriate their communion to it, so as to refuse all other communion, where the same essentials of Christian religion are to be found without those additions which really belong not to it; they are apt to think such sentiments of theirs not to be altogether destitute of some plausible ground.

'However, among those that are not entirely in every punctilio of this church, it hath not any so firm friends, or that are so nearly united in judgment and affection with it, as men of this sentiment.

'We for our parts (who because in some things we conform not, are called nonconformists, whereas no man conforms in every thing) are not allowed to be counted members of this church, by those that take denominations, not from the intimate essentials of things, (as sameness of doctrine, and the institutions of Christian worship,) but from loose and very separable accidents; yet, thanks be to God, we are not so stupid, as not to apprehend we are under stricter and much more sacred obligations, than can be carried under the sound of a name, to adhere to those our reverend fathers and brethren of the established church, who are most united among themselves, in duty to God and our Redeemer, in loyalty to our sovereign, and in fidelity to the protestant religion, as with whom in this dubious state of things we are to run all hazards, and to live and die together. Whether they can have the same assurance, both from interest and inclination of mind, concerning all that are of the same external denomination with themselves, they need not us to advise with.

'We have our yet depending lesser differences, about which we have (notwithstanding whatsoever provocation) been generally and for the most part silent; and see not in reference to them, what can further remain, than that we, for our part, do consider, that all minds are not turned the same way; that such from whom we dissent, no further differ from us than we do from them; and we are therefore no more to wonder at them, than ourselves.

'And we cannot disallow ourselves to hope, that our reverend fathers and brethren will conceive of us as humbly dissenting from them, without diminution of that great reverence which their real worth claims from us, and without arrogating any thing unduly to ourselves on that account. For though we cannot avoid thinking we are in the right, in those particular things wherein we differ, yet at the same time we know ourselves to be far excelled by them, in much greater and more important things.

My honoured Lord,
your Lordship's
most obedient
humble servant,
J. H.'

But after this, some gave themselves a strange liberty of inveighing against this practice of occasional communion, as irrational, unchristian, and altogether unaccountable and self-condemning. And it at length became a question, whether they that could at all and in any case worship God with the church of England,

should not be obliged to do it for a constancy, or else be incapacitated from holding any place either of profit or trust? And when things were come to this pass, and the Occasional Bill was first brought into the House of Commons in 1702, Mr. Howe committed his thoughts to writing in the following paper.

A CASE.

'Two sorts of Christian assemblies are wont to meet, severally, for the worship of God, which both hold all the same articles of doctrine taught by Christ or his apostles; and use the same institutions of worship appointed by them: only they differ in this, that the one sort use also some rites, not so appointed, which the other use not.

'Two gentlemen, Sir T—— and Sir J——, are of equal estates: but Sir T—— lives not so regularly, more seldom comes to the worship of God in any Christian assembly; yet when he doth, resorts only to one of the former sort.

'Sir J—— is a sober, virtuous person, of approven piety, prudence, justice, fortitude, and who publicly worships God, sometimes in the one sort of assembly, and sometimes in the other.

'The question is not, whether some lewd and vicious persons may not frequent both sorts of assemblies; nor whether some sober and pious persons may not frequent those of the former sort only.

'But whether Sir J—— ought to be rendered incapable of serving the government (to which he hath constantly expressed himself well affected) in any station, civil or military, for this single reason, because he sometimes worships God in assemblies of the latter sort; (whether it be his infelicity, ill humour, or mistake, whereof yet he is not convinced;) while Sir T—— (who is as little convinced of his ill life) is left capable? At least if the one be incapable, should not both?

'But if the question be determined the other way, monstrous! How will that determination of an English parliament stand in the annals of future time? How will wiser posterity blush they had such progenitors! For can it be supposed a nation will be always drunk? Or if ever it be sober, will it not be amazed there ever was a time, when a few ceremonies, of which the best thing that ever was said was that they were indifferent, have enough in them to outweigh all religion, all morality, all intellectual endowments, natural or acquired, which may happen in some instances to be on the wrong side, (as it must now be reckoned,) when on the other, is the height of profaneness, and scorn at religion; the depth of debauchery and brutality, with half a wit, hanging between sense and nonsense: only to cast the balance the more creditable way, there is the skill to make a leg, to dance to a fiddle, nimbly to change gestures, and give a loud response, which contain the answer for the villanies of an impure life!

'If those little pieces of church-modishness have so much in them of real value, in all these are they not well enough paid by the whole church revenues of England, without stigmatizing every body that so much admires them not?

'And while divers of real worth live upon charity, some with difficulty getting, others (educated to modesty) with greater difficulty begging, their bread!

'But do those who are not contented to engross all the legal emoluments, think there is no God in heaven, that knows their large promises, at the beginning of this revolution, of great abatements in their church constitution; when now, without abating one hair, they must have all conform to it in every punctilio, or be (as much as in them is) made infamous, and the scorn of the nation?'

But I draw a veil, and am not for dilating upon this matter.

I shall only add, that as the dissenters have been considerable losers, as to their interest as a party, by this occasional conformity, and might easily from the first foresee that they should be so, they appear to me to have acted a very generous part in practising and defending it: and yet they have met with most unbrotherly treatment on this account from those to whom they were willing to approach as near as they could, while some have run them down upon this account as perfect hypocrites; and others have represented this occasional conformity as no commendable charity, as long as they did not come up to constant conformity, and yield the cause to them entirely. If this is doing as men would be done unto, it is very strange! Posterity 'tis to be hoped will judge more favourably. However, after such treatment, so oft repeated, and so long continued, if the dissenters should for the future be more sparing in this way of showing their charity, which they to whom they would express it, seem so resolved to misinterpret, I think it cannot be very surprising: and if it should be attended with any ill consequences, I doubt these gentlemen will find they must lie at their doors, at last.

But by this time, when that little charity that we had remaining among us was just expiring, Mr. Howe began to be weary of living. He had seen enough of the world, to discern how unfit a place it was to continue to dwell in. He wanted to breathe in nobler air, and inhabit better regions. And we shall soon see how he fled thither, when we have touched on those works of his, that have been hitherto unmentioned, the account of which stands thus.

In 1690, he published 'A Funeral Sermon for Mrs. Esther Sampson, late wife of Henry Sampson, Dr. of Physic, who died Nov. 24, 1689, from Luke xiii. 16.'

In 1695, 'A Discourse relating to the much lamented Death, and solemn Funeral, of our incomparable and most gracious Queen Mary, of most blessed memory; dedicated to the Right Honourable Rachel Lady Russel.'

In 1698, 'A Sermon on the much lamented Death of that reverend and worthy Servant of Christ, Mr. Richard Adams, M. A. sometime Fellow of Brazen-nose College in Oxon; afterwards Minister of St. Mil-

dred's, Bread-street, London: more lately Pastor of a Congregation in Southwark, who deceased Feb. 7, 1698.'

The same year also he printed 'A Sermon preached on the Day of Thanksgiving, Dec. 2. 1697,' and another 'to the Societies for Reformation of Manners, from Rom. xiii. 4.'

In 1699 he printed 'A Funeral Sermon for that reverend and most laborious Servant of Christ in the Work of the Ministry, Mr. Matthew Mead,' who deceased October 16th, this year, which is dedicated to the Lord and Lady Haversham. The same year also came out another discourse of his, concerning the 'Redeemer's Dominion over the invisible World, and the Entrance thereinto by Death: Preached on the Occasion of the Death of John Hoghton, Esq. eldest Son of Sir Charles Hoghton, of Hoghton Tower, in the County of Lancaster, Bart.' And soon after, came out the 'Funeral Sermon of the Reverend Dr. William Bates,' dedicated to his Grace the Duke of Bedford.

In 1701 he printed 'A Two-fold Discourse, of Man's Enmity against God, and Reconciliation between God and Man, from Col. i. 21.'

In 1702 he published the 'Second Part of the Living Temple, containing Animadversions on Spinosa, and a French Writer pretending to confute him; with a Recapitulation of the Former Part, and an Account of the Destitution and Restitution of God's Temple amongst Men;' which is dedicated to William, Lord Pagett, Baron of Beaudesert in the county of Stafford. The same year he also published 'A Sermon at the Funeral of Mr. Peter Viak, B. D.'

On November 5, 1703, he preached a sermon on Col. i. 13. which he afterwards printed.

And the last thing he published, was 'A Discourse of Patience, relating to the Expectation of Future Blessedness,' to which there was afterwards added an Appendix, which came out in 1705. And this was what he now had particular occasion for. For having employed his time, strength, and interest in the most valuable services, he by this time was wasted with several diseases, which he bore with great patience, and a resigned submission to the will of his heavenly Father. He discovered no fear of dying, but even when his end drew near, was very serene and calm. He seemed indeed sometimes to have been got to heaven, even before he had laid aside that mortality, which he had been long expecting to have swallowed up of life. It was observed, and is I believe to this day remembered, by some of his flock, that in his last illness, and when he had been declining for some time, he was once in a most affecting, melting, heavenly frame at the communion, and carried out into such a ravishing and transporting celebration of the love of Christ, that both he himself, and they who communicated with him, were apprehensive he would have expired in that very service. And though nature was considerably spent in him, yet was there somewhat even in the manner of his dying that was remarkable, and worthy of observation.

He would be very pleasant sometimes in his last sickness, and converse freely with such as came to visit him; and they were many of all ranks. Among the rest Richard Cromwell, (who was now grown old, and had lived many years retired from the world, since the time when Mr. Howe was his domestic chaplain,) hearing that he was going off the stage, came to make him a respectful visit, and take his farewell of him before he died. There was a great deal of serious discourse between them. Tears were freely shed on both sides, and the parting was very solemn, as I have been informed by one that was present upon the occasion. Many elder and younger ministers also frequently visited him, and he was very free in discourse with them, and talked like one of another world, and that had raised and uncommon hopes of that blessedness there, which his heart had long been set upon.

Having been very bad one evening, and being by the next morning unexpectedly recruited, he was visibly cheerful: which being taken notice of by those that were about him, he said he was for feeling that he was alive; and yet he was most willing to die, and lay that clog (as he called his body) aside. Of this there is a plain proof, that he once told his wife that though he loved her as well as it was fit for one creature to love another, yet if it were put to his choice, whether to die that moment, or to live that night, and the living that night would secure the continuance of his life for seven years to come, he declared he would choose to die that moment. Being at last quite worn out, he finished his course with joy, April 2, 1705, and was translated into the calm and peaceable regions of the blessed above, where nothing but perfect charity and serenity reign for ever.

He was interred in the parish church of St. Allhallows, Bread-street: and his Funeral Sermon was preached April 8, by his great admirer, and most respectful fellow-labourer, Mr. John Spademan, from 2 Tim. iii. 14.

Some time after his decease, my good friend Mr. George Hughes of Canterbury wrote to Dr. George Howe, the eldest son of his deceased uncle, desiring an account from him of what manuscripts Mr. Howe had left behind him, or any particularities that were fit to be communicated to one so nearly related to him, and that had so great respect and value for his memory. The Doctor returned him an answer in the following words:

'Sir,

'I am extremely concerned that some time before my honoured father's decease, I was utterly disabled to reap the advantage myself, and communicate it to friends, of the large memorials he had collected, of the material passages of his own life, and of the times wherein he lived, which he most industriously concealed, till his last illness, when having lost his speech, which I thought he would not recover, he surprisingly called me to him, and gave me a key, and ordered me to bring all the papers, (which were stitched up in a

multitude of small volumes) and made me solemnly promise him, notwithstanding all my reluctance, immediately to destroy them, which accordingly I did; and have left me no other of his writings, but his short sermon notes, excepting some passages in the frontispiece of the Bible he used in his study, which I here transmit to you, and know it will be very acceptable. I am sorry I can give no further account, but that is a *magnum in parvo*, &c.

I am,
Your sincerely affectionate kinsman,
and humble servant,
GEORGE HOWE.'

The transcript from the blank page in Mr. Howe's Bible, which the foregoing letter refers to, was in these words following, which were written with his own hand; and they yet remain there.

'Dec. 26, 89. Quum diu apud me seriò recogitarem, præter certum et indubium assensum rebus fidei adhibendum, necessarium insuper esse vivificum quendam earundem gustum et saporem, ut majori cum vi et efficaciâ in ipsissima cordis penetralia sese inserererent; ibidemque altiùs infixæ, vitam eo potentiùs regerent; neque aliter de bono Deum versus statu conclusum iri, sive sanum judicium posse ratum haberi; eumque pro concione, 2 Cor. i. 12. fusiùs tractâssem, hoc ipso mane ex hujus modi somnio dulcissimo, primò evigilavi: mirum scilicet à superno Divinæ Majestatis, solio cœlestium radiorum profluvium in apertum meum hiansque pectus, infusum esse videbatur.

'Sæpiùs ab illo insigni die, memorabile illud Pignus divini Favoris, grato animo recolui, atque dulcedinem ejusdem iterum atque iterum degustavi.

'Quæ autem Octob. 22, 1704. in genus mirandâ Dei mei benignitate, et suavissimâ Spiritus Sancti operatione percepi, omnium verborum quæ mihi suppetit copiam, plane superant! Perquam jucundam cordis emollitionem expertus sum, fusis præ gaudio lachrymis, quod amor Dei per corda diffunderetur, mihique speciatim donato in hunc finem Spiritu suo. Rom. v. 5.'

For the sake of such readers as understand not the Latin tongue, I shall add a translation of these memorable passages, made by Mr. John Spademan, than whom none ever more esteemed and valued the author of them.

'Dec. 26, 89. After that I had long, seriously, and repeatedly thought with myself, that besides a full and undoubted assent to the objects of faith, a vivifying, savory taste and relish of them was also necessary, that with stronger force and more powerful energy, they might penetrate into the most inward centre of my heart, and there being most deeply fixed and rooted, govern my life; and that there could be no other sure ground whereon to conclude and pass a sound judgment, on my good estate God-ward; and after I had in my course of preaching been largely insisting on 2 Cor. i. 12. This is my rejoicing, the testimony of a good conscience, &c. This very morning I awoke out of a most ravishing and delightful dream, that a wonderful and copious stream of celestial rays, from the lofty throne of the Divine Majesty, did seem to dart into my open and expanded breast. I have often since with great complacency reflected on that very signal pledge of special divine favour vouchsafed to me on that noted memorable day; and have with repeated fresh pleasure tasted the delights thereof. But what of the same kind I sensibly felt through the admirable bounty of my God, and the most pleasant comforting influence of the Holy Spirit, on Oct. 22, 1704, far surpassed the most expressive words my thoughts can suggest. I then experienced an inexpressibly pleasant melting of heart, tears gushing out of mine eyes, for joy that God should shed abroad his love abundantly through the hearts of men, and that for this very purpose mine own should be so signally possessed of and by his blessed Spirit. Rom. v. 5.'

His introduction or preface to his last will and testament is peculiarly solemn, and a noble confession of his faith. It runs thus:

'I John Howe, minister of the Gospel of Christ, in serious consideration (though through God's mercy in present health) of my frail and mortal state, and cheerfully waiting (blessed be God) for a seasonable unfeared dissolution of this my earthly tabernacle, and translation of the inhabiting spirit into the merciful hands of the great God, Creator, Lord of heaven and earth, whom I have taken to be my God, in and with his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who is also over all, God blessed for ever, and my dear and glorious Redeemer and Lord; with and by the Holy Spirit of grace, my light, life, and joy; relying entirely and alone upon the free and rich mercy of the Father vouchsafed on the account of the most invaluable sacrifice and perfect righteousness of the Son, applied unto me, according to the Gospel-covenant, by the Spirit, for the pardon of the many seriously-repented sins of a very faulty fruitless life, and the acceptance of my person, with my sincere though weak desires and endeavours to do him service in this world, especially as my calling, wherewith he graciously honoured me, did more particularly require, in promoting the welfare and salvation of the precious souls of men.'

Besides his forementioned works, he wrote also several prefaces to the works of others; as to Mr. Chorlton's Funeral Sermon for Mr. Henry Newcome of Manchester; to the third volume of Dr. Manton's Sermons, by way of Dedication to King William, in 1689, to Mr. Flavel's Discourse of Mental Errors, &c.

But I know not how to close my account of this excellent person without adding somewhat as to his character, though I am very sensible it cannot easily be given. It must have something in it that is very great and peculiar, or it will not be just. For my part, I am far from thinking good Mr. Spademan at all exceeded, when he represented him as one, who had 'received from the Father of lights so great a variety of both natural and Christian perfection, that he was not only a shining light and ornament of his age, but an

inviting example of universal goodness.'[i] That 'God gave him an uncommon skill in the word of righteousness;' and that 'he had peculiar advantages for understanding the Oracles of God; a large fund of natural endowments, improved by superadded preparatives unto the study of the scriptures; a rich treasure of human learning, particularly a thorough knowledge of pagan theology, by which he was enabled to descry the shortness and mistakes of human reason, which faculty he well understood to use in subordination unto Christian faith, whose mysteries he was able to free from the objections of cavillers.'[k] 'He took care to wash the vessel, that it might be receptive of Divine communications. And to these he added unwearied diligence, humility, and prayer, which was the delight and solace of his whole life. He unfeignedly sought God's glory, and the good of the souls of men. He was impartial and faithful in reproving of sin, without respect of persons; easy of access, and condescending to the lowest; and indeed became all things to all, that he might gain the more. And ready to assist all the necessitous and distressed, that he had opportunity of doing good unto. He was furnished with fortitude of mind, able to encounter the most grievous sufferings; and an eminent example of a truly Christian patience under very sharp afflictions. And he finished his course with uncommon joy: and few ever more experienced a divine peace and serenity of mind, at the nearest approaches of death.'

As to his person, he was very tall, and exceeding graceful. He had a good presence, and a piercing but pleasant eye; and there was that in his looks and carriage, that discovered he had something within that was uncommonly great, and tended to excite veneration. His intellectual accomplishments were eminent. He was one of great abstractedness of thought, a strong reasoner, and one that had a very penetrating judgment, which carried him as deep into a subject, as most men ever went that handled it. He had bright natural parts, and they were greatly improved by study and experience. He had an admirable way of thinking upon any subject that offered; and many times very surprising turns in discoursing upon it.

Even Mr. Wood the Oxonian himself, who very seldom has a word to say in favour of a nonconformist, when he comes to Mr. Howe is so unusually complaisant to him, as to own that he was 'a person of neat and polite parts,'[l] and 'moderate and calm in the smaller matters that were under debate between the church and his party.' I'm afraid, if he had seen some of the things here published, he would have retracted the latter part at least of this fair character he gave him. Nay, and he goes so far as to commend his style too, which he says is 'fine, smooth, and natural.' But here I doubt many will think his good humour has carried him too far, and tempted him to strain a point; his style (as great a man as he was) being very commonly objected against, and thought the most liable to exception of any thing in his performances. Nor is this his case alone; for Bishop Fell in his Life of Dr. Hammond, who was certainly a very great man, says that that learned doctor's style was 'encumbered with parentheses, which made it difficult to vulgar understandings.' Several have been of the same opinion with respect to the style of Mr. Howe, which Mr. Wood mentions with so particular an encomium. We may bear with such a commendation of one of his character, it being a thing so uncommon with that author. But methinks it looks a little ill-natured, immediately upon his speaking so favourably of one, to pour such contempt on the rest of his persuasion, who he says are 'most of them of sour and unpleasant converse.' It may be they were not to his gust: which is the less to be wondered at, since he was so little to theirs. But this might well enough have been spared, seeing it was not thus with Mr. Howe, of whom he was now writing; for he was generally cheerful, and inoffensively pleasant.

His ministerial qualifications were singular. He could preach off-hand with as great exactness, as many others upon the closest study. He delivered his sermons without notes; though he did not impose that method upon others. He had great copiousness and fluency in prayer; and the hearing him discharge that duty upon particular sudden emergencies, would have been apt to have made the greatest admirer of stinted forms ashamed of the common cavils and objections against that which is usually called extemporary prayer. He was an excellent casuist, and would clearly solve the greatest difficulties that practice was concerned in. And though in his sermons there was often an uncommon depth, especially at the beginning, yet he took care to become plainer in the sequel; and before he concluded, generally came with great pungency home to the consciences of his hearers; so that they must be greatly faulty, if they did not come away from hearing him both wiser and better.

He was one of remarkable prudence himself, and much valued and commended it in others. It was a common saying with him, that he was so far from questioning whether prudence was a virtue, that he reckoned imprudence to be a great vice and immorality. He was not apt to be swayed by interest, nor could any thing bias his judgment. And it may be said of him, as is usually said of those of the strongest reason, the greatest sagacity, and the noblest accomplishments, that he was one of great civility, candour, and ingenuity.

He was very courteous to strangers, or others that came to visit him, and received them with great decency: and never could be of the mind of those that reckon religion and piety inconsistent with good breeding.

He knew how to address himself suitably to the greatest persons, without the least mixture of what was mean or servile; and yet was able to condescend to inferiors: and was very affable to younger ministers, whom he would use with an easy freedom, offering them as there was occasion the kindest advice.

[i] Dedication of his Funeral Sermon for him, p. 1040.
[k] Funeral Sermon, page 1043, &c.

[l] Ath. Oxon. vol. ii page 1014.

He was very like that eminent German divine Martin Bucer, in the peaceableness of his temper, and a willingness to accommodate differences. He had a truly great soul, and at the same time a very cool and moderate spirit; and was an utter enemy to that uncharitable and censorious humour that is visible in so many. He did not (as appears from all his writings) look upon religion as a system of opinions, or a set of forms, so much as a divine discipline to reform the heart and life. In lesser matters he could freely give others the liberty of their own sentiments; and was as unwilling to impose, as to be imposed upon.

He seems to have been born into this world, to support generous principles, a truly catholic spirit, and an extensive charity. He was for carefully concealing or lessening the failings and imperfections of others; and in that respect has admirably exemplified his own temper in his printed discourse with reference to 'Charity for other Men's Sins.' But whenever he found men impetuous in asserting their own opinions, and peremptory in rejecting the judgment of others, when they had taken care to set things in a due light, and add a suitable evidence, 'twas his way to answer with silence; not at all caring to argue with those, who instead of soberly and modestly inquiring into truth, were always for the last word, for which (for his part) he was for giving them full leave.

He was for having nothing remain as a test or boundary of Christian communion, but what has its foundation as such, in plain reason or express revelation. And to him may those very words be justly applied, which he used in his character of Dr. Bates, in his funeral sermon for him. 'He was for entire union of all visible Christians, (or saints or believers, which in Scripture are equivalent terms,) meaning by Christianity what is essential thereto, whether doctrinal or practical; as by humanity we mean what is essential to man, severing accidents, as not being of the essence: and by visibility, the probable appearance thereof: and for free communion of all such, of whatsoever persuasion in extra-essential matters, if they pleased. And this design he vigorously pursued as long as there was any hope; desisting when it appeared hopeless; and resolving to wait till God should give a spirit suitable hereto, from an apprehension that when principles on all hands were so easily accommodable, and yet that there was with too many a remaining insuperable reluctancy to the thing itself, God must work the cure, and not man. Accounting also, in the mean time, that notwithstanding misrepresentations, it was better to cast a mantle over the failings of brethren, than be concerned to detect and expose them. Knowing that if we are principally solicitous for the name of God, he will in his own way and time take care of ours.'[m] And as Mr. Howe says in Dr. Bates's case, so may I also say in his, 'in this sentiment he was not alone.'

In many cases he discovered uncommon sagacity; I shall particularly mention one instance, the truth of which may be depended on. In King Charles's reign he had it signified to him by several, that a certain nobleman that was at that time great at court, was desirous to see him. Taking an opportunity to wait upon him, and being easily admitted, the great man signified that his visit was very acceptable, and seemed to be willing to enter into particular freedoms with him. Among a great many other things, he told him that he was very sensible that the dissenters were a considerable body of people, that deserved regard: and that it was his apprehension that if they had a person that was near the king, and had a good interest at court, that would give them hints by way of advice for their conduct, upon critical emergencies, and that was able and ready to convey their requests to his majesty, as occasions might require, it would be much for their advantage. And he was pleased to express himself in such a manner, that Mr. Howe thought he could easily gather, that the maker of the motion had no aversion from being the person pitched upon, for the purpose mentioned. After a pause, he made this reply; that the dissenters being a religious people, he thought it highly concerned them, if they fixed upon any particular person for that purpose, to make choice of one that would not be ashamed of them, and whom at the same time they might have no occasion to be ashamed of: and that a person in whom there was a concurrence of these two qualifications was very difficult to find. And he heard no more of him. And it is with me past doubt, that they that were admitted to the knowledge of the secret history of his life, could have recollected several such instances, had the communicating memoirs concerning him been sooner thought of, and attempted.

In common conversation he was many times very pleasant and facetious. Some of his sudden repartees were very remarkable, and deserve to be preserved. Being at dinner with some persons of good fashion, there was one gentleman in the company that expatiated with great freedom in praise of King Charles the First, and made some indecent reflections upon others, that were not at all agreeable to several at the table. Mr. Howe observing he intermixed a great many horrid oaths with his discourse, took the freedom to tell him, that in his humble opinion he had wholly omitted one very great excellency which the prince he had so much extolled was so generally owned to have belonging to him, that he had not known of any one that had the face to contest it. The gentleman seemed not a little pleased to have Mr. Howe come in as a voucher for the prince he applauded, and was impatient to know what that particular excellence was that he referred to. And when he had pressed for it with importunity, he at length told him it was this; that he was never heard to swear an oath in his common conversation. The gentleman took the reproof, and promised to forbear swearing for the future.

At another time, as Mr. Howe was walking along he passed by two persons of quality, who were talking freely together, and with great eagerness; and when he came near them, he heard them damn each other

[m] See his Funeral Sermon on Dr. William Bates, p. 864.

most abominably: whereupon pulling off his hat, and saluting them with great civility, he cried out, I pray God *save* you both; which so took with them, that it for the present diverted the humour they were in, and they joined in returning him thanks.

I shall mention yet one passage more, which I think may be depended on as related. It is this; that during the continuance of the debates in parliament about the bill against occasional conformity, Mr. Howe walking in St. James's Park, passed by a certain noble lord in a chair, who sent his footman to call him to him, for that he desired to speak with him. Coming up to him, the said lord very respectfully saluted him, signified he was glad to see him, and entered into discourse with him upon the matter depending, reckoning it a thing of no small consequence, which he intimated he had opposed to his utmost. Among other passages upon that occasion, he so far forgot himself, as to express himself thus: Damn these wretches, for they are mad; and are for bringing us all into confusion. Mr. Howe, who was no stranger to the lord who thus entertained him with discourse, considering his character, made this reply to him: My lord, 'tis a great satisfaction to us, who in all affairs of this nature desire to look upwards, that there is a God that governs the world, to whom we can leave the issues and events of things: and we are satisfied (and may thereupon be easy) that he will not fail in due time of making a suitable retribution to all, according to their present carriage. And this great Ruler of the world, my lord, said he, has among other things also declared, he will make a difference between him that sweareth, and him that feareth an oath. My lord was struck with his last hint, and presently replied, Sir, I thank you for your freedom, and take your meaning, and shall endeavour to make a good use of it. Mr. Howe in return said, My lord, I have a great deal more reason to thank your lordship, for saving me the most difficult part of a discourse, which is the application.

'Twould be well if more of his letters could be recovered.

[Here are subjoined in the original Life, several of Mr. Howe's letters, which are inserted in the present edition at page 1036.]

THE

LIVING TEMPLE;

OR, A

DESIGNED IMPROVEMENT OF THAT NOTION,

THAT

A GOOD MAN IS THE TEMPLE OF GOD.

PART I.

CONCERNING GOD'S EXISTENCE, AND HIS CONVERSABLENESS WITH MAN

AGAINST ATHEISM, OR THE EPICUREAN DEISM.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM LORD PAGETT,

BARON OF BEAUDESERT, IN THE COUNTY OF STAFFORD.

My honoured Lord,

I HAVE not the opportunity of begging your Lordship's foregoing leave to prefix your name to these papers; but despair not of your following pardon. Your name must be acknowledged great, through two potent empires, Christian and Mahometan; and the services greater which you have done to many that may perhaps not have heard the sound of your name. Your prudent and prosperous negociations in the Austrian and Ottoman courts, have obliged multitudes, whose better genius hath taught them more to value themselves, than to think they were born to slavery; from which you have found means, in great part, to save Europe: *somewhere*, by charming great power, so as to conquer the inclination to use it to so ill a purpose; *elsewhere*, by preventing its increase, where that inclination was invincible. And hereby you have dignified England, in letting it be seen what it can signify in the world, when it is so happy as to have its interest managed by a fit and able hand.

Yet that knowledge your Lordship hath heretofore allowed me to have of you, cannot suffer me to think you will account your name too great to patronize the cause asserted in the following discourse. That it is unpolished, will not affect your Lordship; let that rest where it ought: the subject and design will, I doubt not, have your Lordship's countenance. And the rather, that it is not the temple of this or that party that is here defended, which would little agree to the amplitude of your Lordship's large mind, and your great knowledge of the world, but that wherein mankind have a common concern. A temple that is the seat of serious, living religion, is the more venerable, and the more extensive, the more defensible, and the more worthy to be defended, by how much it is the less appropriate to this or that sect and sort of men, or distinguished by this or that affected, modifying form; that which according to its primitive designation may be hoped, and ought to be the resort of all nations: which it is vain to imagine any one, of this or that external form, not prescribed by God himself, can ever be; unless we should suppose it possible, that one and the same human prince, or power, could ever come to govern the world. Such uniformity must certainly suppose such a universal monarchy as never was, and we easily apprehend can never be. Therefore, the belief that the Christian religion shall ever become the religion of the world, and the Christian church become the common universal temple of mankind: that "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and all nations flow to it;" (as, besides that, many other texts of holy Scripture do plainly speak;) and an intemperate contentious zeal for one *external, human form of God's temple* on earth, are downright inconsistencies. That belief, and this zeal, must destroy one another; especially, that which makes particular temples engines to batter down each other; because they agree not in some human additionals, though all may be charitably supposed to have somewhat of divine life in them. Therefore we plainly see, that this universal, Christian, living temple, must be formed and finished, not by human might or power, but by the Spirit of the living God; which Spirit, poured forth, shall instruct princes, and the potentates of the world, to receive and cherish among their subjects the great essentials of Christian religion, and whatsoever is of plain divine revelation, wherein all may agree, rejecting, or leaving arbitrary, the little human additaments about which there is so much disagreement.

Heaven did favour us with such a king: and thanks be to God, that he hath given us such a queen, who is not for destroying any temples that may have true vital religion in them, because they neither all have, or have not, the same pinnacles, or other pieces of ornature alike. God grant all Christian princes and powers may herein equally imitate them both; as many do seriously lament the loss of the former.

It has been long the honour of your family to have had great esteem and reverence for such a temple. And I doubt not, but its having spread its branches into divers other worthy families of the Hampdens, Foleys, Ashhursts, Hunts, has given your Lordship much the more grateful and complacential view, for the affinity to your own in this respect. A temple so truly (and even only) august and great, spreads a glory over the families, kingdoms, and nations where it can have place. What is here written is a mean oblation, for the service of this temple; but acceptable, as even goats' hair was, by being consecrated, with a sincere mind, for the use of the tabernacle of old.

The First Part betakes itself to your Lordship as an orphan, upon the decease of its former patron, in hope of some sort of a postliminary reception. And for the Second Part, it is (as your Lordship shall vouchsafe to receive it) originally and entirely yours.

The former, your Lordship will see, had a former dedication: and I cannot think it will be displeasing to your Lordship, that I let it stand. For though it may seem somewhat uncouth and unusual to have two such epistles come so near one another, yet the unfashionableness hereof, I conceive, will, in your Lordship's judgment, be over-balanced by considerations of a preponderating weight, that are suggested to the reader. While, in the mean time, I cannot suppose it unacceptable to your Lordship, that a person of true worth in his time, related to the same county in which your Lordship hath so considerable concerns, and not altogether unrelated to yourself, should have had a participation with you in the same sort of patronage; with whom your Lordship hath also a true participation, in all the honour, esteem, and sincere prayers that ever were conceived for him, by

Your Lordship's most obedient,
And most devoted, humble servant,
JOHN HOWE.

ADVERTISEMENT.

Reader

Be pleased to take notice, that the former part of this work was heretofore inscribed to that worthy person, Sir John Skeffington, of Fisherwick, in Staffordshire, Baronet: and who was at that time, also, Viscount Lord Masserene, governor of the county of Londonderry, and one of the Lords of his Majesty Charles the Second's most honourable privy council in the kingdom of Ireland; and now, since, deceased.

I have, however, thought fit to let it be reprinted, (the incongruity being, by this advertisement, avoided, of making an address anew, in this new impression, to one no longer in our world,) that the memory of a person so truly valuable may, so far as this can contribute thereto, be preserved; and because, also, many things in this epistle may be useful, as a preface, to show the design of the following discourse. And as this purpose may be equally served by it as it is, the other purpose being also, thus, better served, I have not judged it necessary, though that had been easy, to alter the form; which was as follow:

Although I am not, my Lord, without the apprehension that a temple ought to have another sort of dedication, yet I have no such pique at the custom of former days, but that I can think it decent and just that a discourse concerning one conceived under your roof, though born out of your house, should openly own the relation which it thereby hath, and the author's great obligations to your Lordship; and upon this account I can easily persuade myself (though that custom hath much given place to this latter one) not to be so fashionable, as even to write in masquerade.

It were indeed most unbecoming, in the service of so noble a cause, to act in disguise, or decline to tell one's name. And as the prefixing of one so obscure as that which the title-page bears, will be without suspicion of a design to recompense, by the authority of a name, any feared weakness of the cause itself; so were it very unworthy, having nothing better, to grudge the bringing even of so mean a thing, as a sacrifice to the door of the temple.

And although your Lordship's is of so incomparably greater value, yet also is it (as the equity of the case requires) exposed with less hazard; since in common account, the vouchsafement of pardon (whereof I cannot despair) for such assumed liberty, can with no justice be understood to import more than only a favourable aspect on the design, without any interest or participation in the disrepute of its ill management. So that your honour is in no more jeopardy than the main cause itself, which is but little concerned in the successfulness or miscarriage of this or that effort, which is made on behalf of it; and which, you are secure, can receive no real damage. For the foundations of this temple are more stable than those of heaven and earth, it being built upon that Rock against which the gates of hell can never prevail.

And if, in any unforeseen state of things, you should ever receive prejudice, or incur danger by any real service you should design unto the temple of God, your adventure would be the more honourable, by how much it were more hazardous. The order of Templars, your Lordship well knows, was not, in former days, reckoned inglorious.

But as this temple is quite of another constitution and make, than that of Jerusalem, and (to use those words of the sacred writer) *ἀχειροποίητος, τουτέστιν οὐ ταύτης τῆς κτίσεως—not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;* (Heb. ix. 11.) so what is requisite to the interest and service of it, is much of another nature. Entire devotedness to God, sincerity, humility, charity, refinedness from the dross and baseness of the earth, strict sobriety, dominion of one's self, mastery over impotent and ignominious passions, love of justice, a steady propension to do good, delight in doing it, have contributed more to the security and beauty of God's temple on earth, conferred on it more majesty and lustre, done more to procure it room and reverence among men, than the most prosperous violence ever did: the building up of this temple, even to the laying on the top-stone, (to be followed with the acclamations of Grace, grace,) being that which must be done, not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. Which, inasmuch as the structure is spiritual, and to be situated and raised up in the mind or spirit of man, works, in order to it, in a way suitable thereto. That is, very much by soft and gentle insinuations, unto which are subservient the self-recommending amiableness and comely aspect of religion; the discernible gracefulness and uniform course of such in whom it bears rule, and is a settled, living law. Hereby the hearts of others are captivated and won to look towards it: made not only desirous to taste its delights, but, in order thereto, patient also of its rigours, and the rougher severities which their drowsy security and unmortified lusts do require should accompany it; the more deeply and thoroughly to attemper and form them to it. Merely notional discourses about the temple of God, and the external forms belonging to it, (how useful soever they be in their own kind and order,) being unaccompanied with the life and power whereto they should be adjoined, either as subservient helps, or comely expressions thereof, do gain but little to it in the estimation of discerning men.

Much more have the apparently useless and unintelligible notions, with the empty formalities too arbitrarily affixed to it, by a very great, namely, the unreformed, part of the Christian world, even there exposed it to contempt, where the professed (but most irrational and hopeless) design hath been to draw to it respect and veneration.

And when these have become matter of strife, and filled the world with noise and clamour, through the imperious violence of some, and the factious turbulency of others; it hath made it look with a frightful aspect, and rendered the divine presence, so represented, an undesired, dreadful thing. This may make that the language of fear with some, (which is of enmity with the most,) "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

Most of all; when a glorying in these things, and contention about them, are joined with gross immoralities; either manifest impiety, sensual debaucheries, acts of open injustice, or the no less criminal evil of a proud, wrathful, ungovernable temper of spirit; *this* hath made it a most hateful thing in the eyes of God and men, and turned that which should be the house of prayer unto all nations, into a den of robbers: hath cast the most opprobrious contumely upon him whom they would entitle the owner of it. That is, when men will steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow; and yet cry, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, &c.; it is as if they would make the world believe, that the holy God, the great lover and patron of purity and peace, had erected on purpose, a house on earth, to be the common harbour and sanctuary of the vilest of men, the very pests of human society, and disturbers of mankind.

And if they were not the very worst, yet how absurd and senseless a thing were it, that he should be thought to appropriate a people to himself, have them solemnly baptized into his name, and trained up in a professed belief of those his more peculiar revelations, which are without the common notice of the most; and in the use of certain (somewhat different) external institutes, being yet content that, in all things else, they be but just like the rest of the world.

Though he may be, for some time, patient of this indignity, and connive at such a state and posture of things, (as he did a great while towards the Jews of old,) yet, that this should be thought the top of his design, and the thing he lastly aimed at, and would acquiesce in, supposes such a notion of God, as than which worshipping a stock were not more foolish and impious, and professed atheism as rational and innocent.

This hath spoiled and slurred the glory of the Christian temple, the most august and magnificent the world hath, (and which, indeed, only hath right to the name,) made the religion of Christians look like an empty vanity, and appear, for many ages, but as an external badge of civil distinction between them and another sort of men, that are only contending for enlarging of empire, and who shall grasp most power into their hands; both having also their sub-distinguishing marks besides, under which too probably divers of those who have adjoined themselves to the so differenced parties, furiously drive at the same design. And these zealously pretend for religion and the temple of God; when, in the mean time, it were a thing perfectly indifferent (even in itself, as well as in the opinion of the persons concerned) what religion or way they were of, true or false, right or wrong, Paganish, Mahometan, Jewish, Christian, Popish, Protestant, Lutheran, Calvinistical, Episcopal, Presbyterial, Independent, &c.: supposing there be any of each of these denominations that place their religion in nothing else but a mere assent to the peculiar opinions, and an observation of the external formalities, of their own party; and that they never go further, but remain finally alienated from the life of God, and utter strangers to the soul-refining, governing power of true religion. Only, that their case is the worse, the nearer they approach, in profession, to the truth.

And really, if we abstract from the design and end, the spirit and life, the tranquillity and pleasure, of religion, one would heartily wonder what men can see in all the rest, for which they can think it worth the while to contend, to the disquieting themselves and the world. Nobody can believe they regard the authority of God, in this doctrine or institution, rather than another, who neglect and resist the substance and main scope of religion, recommended to them by the same authority. And as to the matters themselves which will then remain to be disputed, we have first the distinguishing name; and if we run over all those before recited, is it a matter of that consequence, as to cut throats, and lay towns and countries desolate, only upon this quarrel, which of these hath the handsomer sound? The different rites of this or that way, to them who have no respect to the authority enjoining them, must, in themselves, signify as little. And for the peculiar opinions of one or another sect, it may be soberly said, that a very great part understand no more of the distinguishing principles of their own, than he that was yet to learn how many legs a sectary had. Only they have learned to pronounce the word which is the *Shibboleth* of their party, to follow the common cry, and run with the rest, that have agreed to do so to.

But if they all understood the notions ever so well, (not to speak of only those which are peculiar to their way, but,) which are most necessary to true religion itself; were it not, in them, a strange frenzy, to contend with clubs and swords about a mere notion, which has no influence on their practice, and they intend never shall? If any should profess to be of opinion that a triangle is a figure that hath four corners, sober men would think it enough to say they were mad, but would let them quietly enjoy their humour, and never think it fit to levy armies against them, or embroil the world upon so slender a quarrel. And wherein can the notions belonging to religion be rationally of higher account, with them, who never purpose to make any use of them, and against which it is impossible for any to fight so mischievously by the most vehement, verbal opposition, as themselves do, by their opposite practice, most directly assaulting, and striking at, even what is most principally fundamental to religion and the temple of God? Not that these great things are unworthy to be contended for. All that I mean is, what have these men to do with them? or how irrationally and inconsistently with themselves do they seem so concerned about them?

For even lesser things, the appendages to this sacred frame, are not without their just value, to them who understand their intent and use. Nor am I designing to tempt your Lordship to the neglect or disesteem of any, the least, thing appertaining to religion. And if any other should, I rejoice daily to behold in you that resolute adherence to whatsoever apparently divine truth and institution, to common order, decency, peace, and unity, (which so greatly contribute both to the beauty and stability of God's house,) that may even defy and dismay the attempt; and gives ground, however, to be confident it would be labour bestowed as vainly, as it were impiously designed. So much greater assurance do you give of your constant fidelity and devotedness to the substance of practical religion itself.

Only how deeply it is to be resented, that while it should be so with all others, so few understand wherein that substance doth consist. I shall not now take notice of men's very different (which must infer some men's mistaken) apprehensions concerning the things necessary to be believed. But, besides that, though some religious sentiments be most deeply natural to men, (and, for aught we certainly know, as far extended as the true notion of humanity can be,) yet in all times, there has been a too general mistake (not peculiar to the Paganish world only) of the true design, and proportionably of the genuine principle of it.

That is, it has not been understood as a thing designed to purify and refine men's spirits, to reconcile and join them to God, associate them with him, and make them finally blessed in him. But only to avert or pacify his wrath, procure his favourable aspect on their secular affairs, (how unjust soever,) while, in the mean time, they have thought of nothing less than becoming like to him, acquainted with him, and happy in him. A reconciliation hath only been dreamed of on one side, namely, on his, not their own; on which, they are not so much as inclined to any thing else, than the continuance of the former distance and disaffection.

Consonantly whereto, it is plainly to be seen, that the great principle which hath mostly animated religion in the world hath not been a generous love, but a basely servile fear and dread. Whence the custom of sacrificing hath so generally prevailed (whencesoever it took its rise) in the Pagan world. And with so deep an apprehension of its absolute necessity, that men of even so vile and barbarous manners* as the Gaul's of old, chose, in matters of controversy, to submit their greatest concernments to the pleasure and arbitrement of their Druids, (those sacred persons, as they reckoned them,) rather than be interdicted the sacrifices (the only punishment they could inflict) in

* See the character given of them by Cicero. Orat. pro. Marc. Fon.

ease of their refusal: which punishment (as is testified by Julius Cæsar*) they accounted the most grievous imaginable. And it needs not be said in what part of the world the same engine hath had the same power with men, even since they obtained to be called *Christian*. Which, while it hath been of such force with them, who, notwithstanding, persisted in courses of the most profligate wickedness; whence could their religion, such as it was, proceed, save only from a dread of divine revenge? What else could it design (though that most vainly) but the averting it, without even altering their own vile course?

Now let this be the account and estimate of religion; only to propitiate the Deity towards flagitious men, still remaining so; and how monstrous a notion doth it give us of God, that he is one that by such things can ever be rendered favourable to such men! Let it not be so, (while you sever its true and proper end also,) how most despicably inept and foolish a thing doth it make religion! A compages and frame of merely scenical observances and actions, intended to no end at all.

In a word, their religion is nothing but foolery, which is not taken up and prosecuted with a sincere aim to the bettering their spirits; the making them holy, peaceful, meek, humble, merciful, studious of doing good, and the composing them into temples, some way meet for the residence of the blessed God; with design and expectation to have his intimate, vital presence, settled and made permanent there.

The materials and preparation of which temple are no where entirely contained and directed, but in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: as, hereafter, we may with divine assistance labour to evince. The greater is the ignominy done to the temple of God, and the Christian name, by only titular and nick-named Christianity. Will they pretend themselves the temple of God, partakers in the high privilege and dignity of the Emmanuel, (in whom most eminently the Deity inhabiteth,) who are discernibly, to all that know them, as great strangers to God, and of a temper of spirit as disagreeing to him, of as worldly spirits, as unmortified passions, as proud, wrathful, vain-glorious, envious, morose, merciless, disinclined to do good, as any other men? When God cleanses his house, and purges his floor, where will these be found?

And for this temple itself, it is a structure whereto there is a concurrence of truth and holiness; the former letting in (it were otherwise a darksome, disorderly, uncomfortable house) a vital, directive, formative light, to a heavenly, calm, God-like frame of spirit, composed and made up of the latter.

It is this temple, my Lord, which I would invite you both to continue your respect unto in others, and, more and more, to prepare and beautify in yourself.

You will find little, in this part, offered to your view, more than only its *vestibulum*, or rather a very plain (if not rude) frontispiece; with the more principal pillars that must support the whole frame. Nor, whereas (by way of introduction to the discourse of this temple, and as most fundamental to the being of it) the existence of the great Inhabitant is so largely insisted on, that I think that altogether a needless labour. Of all the sects and parties in the world, (though there are few that avow it, and fewer, if any, that are so, by any formed judgment, unshaken by a suspicion and dread of the contrary,) that of atheists we have reason enough to suppose the most numerous, as having diffused and spread itself through all the rest. And though, with the most, under disguise, yet uncovering, with too many, its ugly face: and scarce ever more than in our own days. Wherefore, though it hath never been in any age more strongly impugned; yet, because the opposition can never be too common, to so common an enemy, this additional endeavour may prove not wholly out of season. And the Epicurean atheist is chiefly designed against in this discourse; that being the atheism most in fashion.

Nor is any thing more pertinent to the design of the discourse intended concerning God's temple; which, importing worship to be done to him, requires, first, a belief that he is.

And surely the [Ei] inscribed of old, as Plutarch tells us, on the Delphic Temple; signifying, (as, after divers other conjectures, he concludes it to do,) *Thou dost exist*, is an inscription much more fitly set in view, at our entrance into the temple of the living God, whose name is, *I AM*.

Amidst the pleasant entertainments of which temple, (made more intimate to you than human discourse can make it,) may you spend many happy days in this world, as a preparative and introduction to a happier eternity in the other. Whereto he is under many and deep obligations, by any means, to contribute to his uttermost, who must (especially in the offices relating to this temple) profess himself,

My honoured Lord,

Your Lordship's most humble,

Devoted Servant,

JOHN HOWE.

* Comment. lib. 6.

THE

LIVING TEMPLE.

PART I.

CONCERNING GOD'S EXISTENCE, AND HIS CONVERSABLENESS WITH MAN.

CHAPTER I.

THIS NOTION COMMON. AUTHORITIES NEEDLESS. INSIGNIFICANT WITH THE ATHEISTICAL, WHO HAVE MADE IT MORE NECESSARY TO DEFEND RELIGION, AND A TEMPLE IN GENERAL, THAN THIS, OR THAT. BETTER DEFENDED AGAINST THEM BY PRACTICE AND USE, THAN ARGUMENT, WHEREOF THEY ARE INCAPABLE. OFTEN DISPUTES OF ITS PRINCIPLES NOT NECESSARY TO THE PRACTICE OF RELIGION. SOME CONSIDERATION OF THOSE SUPPOSED IN THE GENERAL NOTION OF A TEMPLE, PERTINENT (HOWEVER) TO THIS DISCOURSE.

I. It is so well known that this notion hath long obtained in the world, that we need not quote sayings to avouch it; wherewith not the sacred writings only, but others, even of pagans themselves, would plentifully furnish us.

But as authorities are, in a plain case, needless to unprejudiced minds; so will they be useless to the prejudiced, be the case never so plain. Nor is any prejudice deeper, or less vincible, than that of profane minds against religion. With such, it would in the present argument signify little, to tell them what hath been said or thought before by any others. Not because it is their general course to be so very circumspect and wary, as never to approve or assent to any thing, unless upon the clearest and most convincing demonstration: but from their peculiar dislike of those things only, that are of this special import and tendency. Discourse to them what you will of *a temple*, and it will be nauseous and unsavoury: not as being cross to their reason, (which they are as little curious to gratify as any other sort of men,) but to their ill humour, and the disaffected temper of their mind; whence also (though they cannot soon or easily get that mastery over their understandings herein, yet because they would fain have it so) they do what they can to believe *religion* nothing else but the effect of timorous fancy, and *a temple*, consequently, one of the most idle impertinences in the world.

To these, the discussion of the notion we have proposed to consider, will be thought a beating the air, an endeavour to give consistency to a shadow. And if their reason and power could as well serve their purpose as their anger and scorn, they would soon tear up the holy ground on which a temple is set, and wholly subvert the sacred frame.

I speak of such as deny the existence of the ever-blessed Deity; or (if they are not arrived to that express and formed misbelief) whose hearts are inclined, and ready to determine, even against their misgiving and more suspicious minds, there is no God: who, if they cannot as yet believe, do wish there were none; and so strongly, as in a great degree to prepare them for that belief. That would fain banish him not only out of all their thoughts, but the world too; and to whom it is so far from being a grateful sound, that the tabernacle of God is with men on earth, that they grudge to allow him a place in heaven. At least, if they are willing to admit the existence of any God at all, do say to him, Depart from us; and would have him so confined to heaven, that he and they may have nothing to do with one another: and do therefore rack their impious wits to serve their hypothesis either way; that under its protection they may securely indulge themselves in a course, upon which they find the apprehension of a God, interesting himself in human affairs, would have a very unfavourable and threatening aspect.

They are therefore constrained to take great pains with themselves, to discipline and chastise their minds and understandings to that tameness and patience, as contentedly to suffer the rasing out of their most natural impressions and sentiments. And they reckon they have arrived to a very heroical perfection, when they can pass a scoff upon any thing, that carries the least signification with it of the fear of God; and can be able to laugh at the weak and squeamish folly of those softer and effeminate minds, that will trouble themselves with any thoughts or cares, how to please and propitiate *a Deity*: and doubt not but they have made all safe, and effectually done their business, when they have learned to put the ignominious titles of frenzy, and folly, upon devotion, in whatsoever dress or garb; to cry *canting*, to any serious mention of the name of God, and break a bold adventurous jest upon any the most sacred mysteries, or decent and awful solemnities, of religion.

II. These content not themselves to encounter this or that *sect*, but *mankind*; and reckon it too mean and inglorious an achievement to overturn one sort of temple or another; but would down with them all, even to the ground.

And they are bound, in reason and justice, to pardon the emulation which they provoke, of vying with them as to the universality of their design; and not to regret it, if they find there be any that think it their duty to wave a while serving the temple of this or that party, as less considerable, to defend that *one* wherein all men have a common interest and concernment; since matters are brought to that exigency and hazard, that it seems less necessary to contend about this or that *mode* of religion, as whether there ought to be any at all. What was said of a former age, could never better agree to any, than our own, "that none was ever more fruitful of religions, and barren of religion or true piety." It concerns us to consider, whether the fertility of those many doth not as well cause as accompany a barrenness in this one. And since the iniquity of the world hath made that too suitable, which were otherwise unseemly in itself, to speak of a temple as a fortified place, whose own sacredness ought ever to have been its sufficient fortification, it is time to be aware lest our forgetful heat and zeal in the defence of this or that *out-work*, do expose (not to say betray) the *main fortress* to assault and danger. Whilst it hath long been, by this

means, a neglected, forsaken thing; and is more decayed by vacancy and disuse, than it could ever have been by the most forcible battery; so as even to promise the rude assailant an easy victory. Who fears to insult over an empty, dispirited, dead religion? which alive and shining in its native glory, (as that temple doth, which is compacted of lively stones united to the living corner stone,) bears with it a magnificence and state that would check a profane look, and dazzle the presumptuous eye that durst venture to glance at it obliquely, or with disrespect. The temple of the living God, manifestly animated by his vital presence, would not only dismay opposition, but command veneration also; and be both its own ornament and defence. Nor can it be destitute of that presence, if we ourselves render it not inhospitable, and make not its proper inhabitant become a stranger at home. If we preserve in ourselves a capacity of the divine presence, and keep the temple of God in a posture fit to receive him, he would then no more forsake it, than the soul a sound and healthy body, not violated in any vital part. But if he forsake it once, it then becomes an exposed and despised thing. And as the most impotent, inconsiderable enemy can securely trample on the dead body of the greatest hero, that alive carried awfulness and terror in his looks; so is the weak-spirited atheist become as bold now, as he was willing before, to make rude attempts upon the temple of God, when *He* hath been provoked to leave it, who is its life, strength, and glory.

III. Therefore as they who will not be treacherous to the interest of God and man, must own an obligation and necessity to apply themselves to the serious endeavour of restoring the life and honour of religion; so will the case itself be found to point out to us the proper course in order hereto. That is, that it must rather be endenvoured by practice, than by disputation; by contending, every one with himself, to excite the love of God in his own breast, rather than with the profane adversary to kindle his anger, more aiming to foment and cherish the domestic, continual fire of God's temple and altar, than transmit a flame into the enemies' camp. For what can this signify? And it seldom fails to be the event of disputing against prejudice, (especially of disputing for the sum of religion at once against the prepossession of a sensual profane temper, and a violent inclination and resolvedness to be wicked,) to beget more wrath than conviction, and sooner to incense the impatient wretch than enlighten him. And by how much the more cogent and enforcing reasonings are used, and the less is left the confounded, baffled creatures to say, on behalf of a cause so equally deplorate and vile; the more he finds himself concerned to fortify his obstinate will; and supply his want of reason with resolution; to find out the most expedite ways of diverting, from what he hath no mind to consider; to entertain himself with the most stupifying pleasures, (that must serve the same turn that opium is wont to do in the case of broken, unquiet sleep,) or whatsoever may most effectually serve to mortify any divine principle, and destroy all sense of God out of his soul.

And how grateful herein, and meritorious often, are the assistant railleries of servile, and it may be mercenary, wits! How highly shall he oblige them, that can furnish out a libel against religion, and help them with more artificial spite to blaspheme what they cannot disprove! And now shall the scurrilous pasquil and a few bottles, work a more effectual confutation of religion, than all the reason and argument in the world shall be able to countervail. This proves too often the unhappy issue of misapplying what is most excellent in its own kind and place, to improper and incapable subjects.

IV. And who sees not this to be the case with the modern atheist, who hath been pursued with that strength and vigour of argument, even in our own days, that would have baffled persons of any other temper than their own, into shame and silence? And so as no other support hath been left to irreligion, than a senseless stupidity, an obstinate resolvedness not to consider, a faculty to stifle an argument with a jest, to charm their reason by sensual softnesses into a dead sleep; with a strict and circumspect care that it may never awake into any exercise above the condition of dozed and half-witted persons; or if it do, by the next debauch, presently to lay it fast again. So that the very principle fails in this sort of men, whereto, in reasoning, we should appeal, and apply ourselves. And it were almost the same thing, to offer arguments to the senseless images, or forsaken carcasses of men. It belongs to the grandeur of religion to neglect the impotent assaults of these men: as it is a piece of glory, and bespeaks a worthy person's right understanding, and just value of himself, to disdain the combat with an incompetent or a foiled enemy. It is becoming and seemly, that the grand, ancient, and received truth, which tends to, and is the reason of, the godly life, do sometimes keep state; and no more descend to perpetual, repeated janglings with every scurrilous and impertinent trifler, than a great and redonbted prince would think it fit to dispute the rights of his crown with a drunken, distracted fool, or a madman.

Men of atheistical persuasions having abandoned their reason, need what will more powerfully strike their sense—storms and whirlwinds, flames and thunderbolts; things not so apt immediately to work upon their understanding, as their fear, and that will astonish, that they may convince, that the great God makes himself known by the judgments which he executes. Stripes are for the back of fools (as they are justly styled, that say in their hearts, There is no God.) But if it may be hoped any gentler method may prove effectual with any of them, we are rather to expect the good effect from the steady, uniform course of *their* actions and conversation, who profess reverence and devotedness to an eternal Being; and the correspondence of their *way*, to their avowed *principle*, that acts them on agreeably to itself, and may also incur the sense of the beholder, and gradually invite and draw his observation; than from the most severe and necessitating argumentation that exacts a sudden assent.

V. At least, in a matter of so clear and commanding evidence, reasoning many times looks like trifling; and out of a hearty concernedness and jealousy for the honour of religion, one would rather it should march on with an heroical neglect of bold and malapert cavillers, and only demonstrate and recommend itself by its own vigorous, comely, coherent course, than make itself cheap by discussing at every turn its principles: as that philosopher who thought it the fittest way to confute the sophisms against motion, only by walking.

But we have nothing so considerable objected against practical religion, as well to deserve the name of a *sophism*; at least, no sophism so perplexing in the case of *religious*, as of *natural*, motion; jeers and sarcasms are the most weighty, convincing arguments; and let the deplorate crew mock on. There are those in the world, that will think they have, however, reason enough to persist in the way of godliness; and that have already laid the foundation of that reverence which they bear to a Deity, more strongly than to be shaken and beaten off from it by a jest; and therefore will not think it necessary to have the principles of their religion vindicated afresh, every time they are called to the practice of it. For surely they would be religious upon very uncertain terms, that will think themselves concerned to suspend or discontinue their course as oft as they are encountered in it with a wry mouth or a distorted look; or that are apt to be put out of conceit with their religion by the laughter of a fool; or by their cavils and taunts against the rules and principles of it, whom only their own sensual temper, and impatience of serious thoughts, have made willing to have them false. That any indeed should commence religious, and persist with blind zeal in this or that discriminating profession, without ever considering why they should do so, is unmanly and absurd; especially when a gross ignorance of the true reasons and grounds of religion shall be shadowed over with a pretended awe and scrupulousness to inquire about things *so sacred*. And an inquisitive temper shall have an ill character put upon it, as if *rational* and *profane* were words of the same signification. Or, as if reason and judgment were utterly execrated, and an unaccountable, enthusiastic fury, baptized and hallowed, the only principle of religion. But when the matter hath undergone already a severe inquisition, and been searched to the bottom; principles have been examined; the strength and firmness hath been tried of its deepest and

most fundamental grounds, and an approving judgment been past in the case, and a resolution thereupon taken up, of a suitable and correspondent practice; after all this, it were a vain and unwarrantable curiosity, to be perpetually perplexing one's easy path with new and suspicious researches into the most acknowledged things. Nor were this course a little prejudicial to the design and end of religion, (if we will allow it any at all,) the refining of our minds, and the fitting us for a happy eternity. For when shall that building be finished, the foundations whereof must be every day torn up anew, upon pretence of further caution, and for more diligent search? Or when will he reach his journey's end, that is continually vexed (and often occasioned to go back from whence he came) by causeless anxieties about his way; and whether ever he began a right course, yea or no?

Many go securely on in a course most ignominiously wicked and vile, without ever debating the matter with themselves, or inquiring if there be any rational principle to justify or bear them out. Much more may they, with a cheerful confidence, persist in their well-chosen way, that have once settled their resolutions about it upon firm and assured grounds and principles, without running over the same course of reasonings with themselves in reference to each single, devotional act; or thinking it necessary every time they are to pray, to have it proved to them, there is a God. And because yet many of these do need excitation; and though they are not destitute of pious sentiments and inclinations, and have somewhat in them of the ancient foundations and frame of a temple, have yet, by neglect, suffered it to grow into decay. It is therefore the principal intendment of this discourse, not to assert the principles of religion against those with whom they have no place, but to propound what may some way tend to reinforce and strengthen them, where they visibly languish; and awaken such as profess a devotedness to God, to the speedy and vigorous endeavour of repairing the ruins of his temple in their own breasts; that they may thence hold forth a visible representation of an indwelling Deity, in effects and actions of life worthy of such a presence, and render his enshrined glory transparent to the view and conviction of the irreligious and profane. Which hath more of hope in it, and is likely to be to better purpose, than disputing with them that more know how to jest, than reason; and better understand the relishes of meat and drink, than the strength of an argument.

VI. But though it would be both an ungrateful and insignificant labour, and as talking to the wind, to discourse of religion with persons that have abjured all seriousness, and that cannot endure to think; and would be like fighting with a storm, to contend against the blasphemy and outrage of insolent mockers at whatever is sacred and divine; and were too much a debasing of religion, to retort sarcasms with men not capable of being talked with in any other than such (that is, their own) language: yet it wants neither its use nor pleasure, to the most composed minds, and that are most exempt from wavering herein, to view the frame of their religion, as it aptly and even naturally rises and grows up from its very foundations; and to contemplate its first principles, which they may in the mean time find no present cause or inclination to dispute. They will know how to consider its most fundamental grounds, not with doubt or suspicion, but with admiration and delight; and can with a calm and silent pleasure enjoy the repose and rest of a quiet and well-assured mind, rejoicing and contented to know to themselves, (when others refuse to partake with them in this joy,) and feel all firm and stable under them, whereupon either the practice or the hopes of their religion do depend.

And there may be also many others of good and pious inclinations, that have never yet applied themselves to consider the principal and most fundamental grounds of religion, so as to be able to give or discern any tolerable reason of them. For either the sluggishness of their own temper may have indisposed them to any more painful and laborious exercise of their minds, and made them to be content with the easier course of taking every thing upon trust, and imitating the example of others; or they have been unhappily misinformed, that it consists not with the reverence due to religion, to search into the grounds of it. Yea, and may have laid this for one of its main grounds, that no exercise of reason may have any place about it. Or perhaps having never tried, they apprehend a greater difficulty in coming to a clear and certain resolution herein, than indeed there is. Now such need to be excited to set their own thoughts a-work this way, and to be assisted herein. They should therefore consider who gave them the understandings which they fear to use. And can they use them to better purpose, or with more gratitude to him who made them *intelligent*, and not *brute* creatures, than in labouring to know, that they may also by a reasonable service worship and adore their Maker? Are they not to use their very senses about the matters of religion? For the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and godhead, are clearly seen, &c. And their faith comes by hearing. But what? are these more sacred and divine, and more akin to religion, than their reason and judgment, without which also their sense can be of no use to them herein? Or is it the best way of making use of what God has revealed of himself, by whatsoever means, not to understand what he hath revealed? It is most true indeed, that when we once come clearly to be informed that God hath revealed this or that thing, we are then readily to subject (and not oppose) our feeble reasonings to his plain revelation. And it were a most insolent and uncreaturely arrogance, to contend or not yield him the cause, though things have to us seemed otherwise. But it were as inexcusable negligence, not to make use of our understandings to the best advantage; that we may both know that such a revelation is divine, and what it signifies, after we know whence it is. And any one that considers, will soon see it were very unseasonable, at least, to allege the written, divine revelation, as the ground of his religion, till he have gone lower, and fore-known some things (by and by to be insisted on) as preparatory and fundamental to the knowledge of this.

And because it is obvious to suppose how great an increase of strength and vigour pious minds may receive hence, how much it may animate them to the service of the temple and contribute to their more cheerful progress in a religious course; it will therefore not be besides our present purpose, but very pursuant to it, to consider awhile, not in the contentious way of brawling and captious disputation, (the noise whereof is as unsuitable to the temple, as that of axes and hammers,) but of calm and sober discourse, the more principal and lowermost grounds upon which the frame of religion rests, and to the supposal whereof, the notion and use of any such thing as a temple in the world, do owe themselves.

CHAPTER II.

The two more principal grounds which a temple supposes. 1. The existence of God. 2. His conversableness with men: both argued from common consent. The former doubtful if ever wholly denied in former days. The latter also implied in the known general practice of some or other religion. Evidenced in that some, no strangers to the world, have thought it the difference of man. The immodesty and rashness of the persons from whom any opposition can be expected. These two grounds proposed to be more strictly considered apart. And, first. The existence of God, where first the *notion* of God is assumed. The parts whereof are proposed to be evinced severally of some existent being. 1. Eternity. 2. Self-origination. 3. Independency. 4. Necessity of existence. 5. Self-activity. (The impossibility this world should be this necessary self-active being. The inconsistency of necessary alterable matter, more largely deduced in a marginal digression.) 6. Life. 7. Vast and mighty power. A corollary.

1. Now the grounds more necessary to be laid down, and which are supposed in the most general notion of a temple, are especially these two? The existence of God, and his conversableness with men. For no notion of a temple can more easily occur to any one's thoughts, or is more agreeable to common acceptation, than that it is a habitation wherein God is pleased to dwell among men.

Therefore to the designation and use of it, or (which is all one) to the intention and exercise of religion, the belief or persuasion is necessary of those two things, (the same which we find made necessary on the same account,) "That God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" Heb. xi. 6. as will appear when the

manner and design of that his abode with men shall be considered.

These are the grounds upon which the sacred frame of a temple ought to stand, and without which it must be acknowledged an unsupported, airy fabric. And since it were vain to discourse what a temple is, or whereto the notion of it may be applied, unless it be well resolved that there is, or ought to be, any such thing; the strength and firmness of this its double ground should be tried and searched, and of its pretensions thereto.

II. And though it be not necessary in a matter that is so plain, and wherein so much is to be said otherwise; yet it will not be impertinent to consider, first, what prescription (which in clearing of titles is not wont to signify nothing) will signify in the present case. And,

First, For the existence of God, we need not labour much to show how constantly and generally it hath been acknowledged through the whole world; it being so difficult to produce an uncontroverted instance, of any that ever denied it in more ancient times. For as for them whose names have been infamous amongst[a] men heretofore upon that account, there hath been that said, that at least wants not probability for the clearing them of so foul an imputation. That is, that they were maliciously represented as having denied the existence of a Deity, because they impugned and derided the vulgar conceits and poetical fictions of those days, concerning the multitude and the ridiculous attributes of their imaginary deities. Of which sort Cicero[b] mentions not a few; their being inflamed with anger, and mad with lust; their wars, fights, wounds; their hatreds, discords; their births and deaths, &c.: who though he speak less favourably of some of these men, and mentions one[c] as doubting whether there were any gods or no, (for which cause his book in the beginning whereof he had intimated that doubt, (as Cotta is brought in, informing us,) was publicly burnt at Athens, and himself banished his country,) and two others[d] as expressly denying them; yet the more generally decried patron[e] of atheism (as he has been accounted) he makes Velleius highly vindicate from this imputation, and say of him, that he was the first that took notice that even nature itself had impressed the notion of God upon the minds of all men: who also gives us these as his words; "What nation is there or sort of men that hath not, without teaching, a certain anticipation of the gods, which he calls a prolepsis, a certain preventive, or fore-conceived information of a thing in the mind, without which nothing can be understood, or sought, or disputed of?" Unto which purpose the same author[f] (as is commonly observed) elsewhere speaks; that there is no nation so barbarous, no one of all men so savage, as that some apprehension of the gods hath not tinctured his mind; that many do think indeed corruptly of them, which is (saith he) the effect of vicious custom; but all do believe there is a divine power and nature. Nor (as he there proceeds) hath men's talking and agreeing together effected this. It is not an opinion settled in men's minds by public constitutions and sanctions; but in every matter the consent of all nations is to be reckoned a law of nature.

And whatever the apprehensions of those few (and some others that are wont to be mentioned under the same vile character) were in this matter, yet so inconsiderable hath the dissent been, that as another most ingenious pagan author[g] writes, "In so great a contention and variety of opinions, (that is, concerning what God is,) herein you shall see the[h] law and reason of every country to be harmonious and one; that there is one God, the King and Father of all; that the many are but the servants and —*co-rulers* unto God; that herein the Greek and the barbarian say the same thing, the islander and the inhabitant of the continent, the wise and the foolish: go to the utmost bounds of the ocean, and you find God there. But if (says he) in all times, there have been two or three,[k] an atheistical, vile, senseless sort of persons, whose own eyes and ears deceive them, and who are maimed in their very soul, an irrational and steril sort, as monstrous creatures, as a lion without courage, an ox without horns, or a bird without wings; yet, out of those, you shall understand somewhat of God; for they know and confess him, whether they will or no."

III. Yea, and the use of a temple, and the exercise of religion, (which suppose the second ground also, as well as the first,) have been so very common, (though not altogether equally common with the former,) that it is the observation of that famed moralist,[l] "That if one travel the world, it is possible to find cities without walls, without letters, without kings, without wealth, without coin, without schools and theatres. But a city without a temple, or that useth no worship, prayers, &c. no one ever saw." And he believes a city may more easily be built[m] without a foundation, or ground to set it on, than any community of men have or keep a consistency without religion.

IV. And it is no mean argument of the commonness of religion, that there have been some in the world, and those no idiots neither, that have accounted it the most constituent and distinguishing thing in human nature. So that Platonic Jew[n] judgeth invocation "of God, with hope towards him, to be, if we will speak the truth, the only genuine property of man, and saith that *only he who is acted by such a hope*, is a *man*, and he that is *destitute of this hope*, is *no man*;"[o] preferring this account to the common definition, (which he says is only of the concrete of man,) that he is a reasonable, and mortal, living creature. And yet he extends not reason further, that is, to the inferior creatures; for he had expressly said above, "That they who have no hope towards God, have no part or share in the rational nature." And a noble person[p] of our own says, "That upon accurate search, religion and faith appear the only ultimate differences of man; whereof neither *divine perfection* is capable, nor *brutal imperfection*;" reason, in his account, descending low among the inferior creatures. But *these* agreeing more peculiarly to man, and so universally, that he affirms, "There is no man well and entirely in his wits, that doth not worship some deity." Who therefore accounted it a less absurdity to admit such a thing as a rational beast, than an irreligious man. Now if these have taken notice of any instances that seemed to claim an exemption from this notion of man, they have rather thought fit to let them pass as an anomalous sort of creatures, reducible to no certain rank or order in the creation, than that any should be admitted into the account, or be acknowledged of the society of men, that were found destitute of an inclination to worship the common Author of our beings. And according to this opinion, by whatsoever steps any should advance in the denial of a Deity, they should proceed by the same, to the abandoning their own humanity; and by saying there is *no God*, should proclaim themselves *no men*.

However, it discovers (which is all that is at present intended by it) the commonness, not to say absolute universality, of religion, in the observation of these persons, whom we must suppose no strangers to the world, in their own and former times. And if it afford any less ground for such an observation in our present time, we only see that as the world grows older it grows worse, and sinks into a deeper oblivion of its original, as it recedes further from it.

And (notwithstanding) this so common a consent is yet not without its weight and significancy to our present purpose; if we consider how impossible it is to give or imagine any tolerable account of its original, if we do not confess it natural, and refer it to that common Author of all nature whom we are inquiring about: of which so much is said by divers others,[q] that nothing more needs here to be said about it.

V. And at least so much is gained by it to a temple,

a Parker Tentam. b De Natura Deorum, lib. 1.
c Protag. Abderites.
d Diagoras and Theodorus Cyrenaicus, who (as Diogenes Laertius, in Arist. reports) was surnamed *ἄθεος*, afterwards *θεός*.
e Epicurus, whom also his own Epistle to Menoeceus in Diogenes Laertius acquits of atheism, but not of irreligion; as hereafter may be observed.
f Cicero Tuscul. Quæst. l. 1.
g Maxim. Tyr. diss. 1. h ὁμοφώνον νομον και λογον.
i συναρχοντες θεων. k ἀθεον και τυπλον, και ανοσιους γενος.
l Plutarch adversus Colotem. m εὐαδους χωρις.
n Philo. libr. de eo quod deterius potiori insid.
o μονος ευλαβις, ἀνθρωπος ὁ ἐυελπις ανευ ανθρωπος.
p Herbert de Vent.
q See Cicero in sundry places. *Grotius de Veritate Christianæ Religi.*

that unless some very plain and ungainsayable demonstration be brought against the grounds of it, (which will be time enough to consider when we see it pretended to,) no opposition, fit to be regarded, can ever be made to it. That is, none at all can possibly be made, but what shall proceed from the most *immodest* and *rash* confidence, animated and borne up only by a design of being most licentiously wicked, and of making the world become so. *Immodest* confidence it must be, for it is not a man, or a nation, or an age, that such have to oppose, but mankind; upon which they shall cast, not some lighter reflection, but the vilest and most opprobrious contumely and scorn that can be imagined. That is, the imputation of so egregious folly and dotage, as all this while to have worshipped a *shadow*, as the *author of their being*; and a *figment*, for their *common parent*. And this not the ruder only, and uninquisitive vulgar, but the wisest and most considering persons in all times. Surely less than clear and pregnant demonstration (at least not wild, incoherent, self-confounding suppositions and surmises, of which more hereafter) will never be thought sufficient to justify the boldness of an attempt that shall carry this signification with it. And it will be a confidence equally *rash*, as immodest. For what can be the undertakers' hope, either of success or reward? Do they think it an easy enterprise, and that a few quirks of malapert wit will serve the turn to baffle the Deity into nothing, and unteach the world religion, and rase out impressions renewed and transmitted through so many ages, and persuade the race of men to descend a peg lower, and believe they ought to live, and shall die, like the perishing beast? Or, do they expect to find men indifferent in a matter that concerns their common practice and hope? add wherein their zeal hath been wont to be such as that it hath obtained to be proverbial: to strive as for the very altars. And what should their reward be, when the natural tendency of their undertaking is to exclude themselves from the expectation of any in another world? And what will they expect in this, from them whose temples and altars they go about to subvert? Besides, that if they be not hurried by a blind impetuous rashness, they would consider their danger, and apprehend themselves concerned to strike very sure. For if there remain but the least possibility that the matter is otherwise, and that *the Being* doth exist, whose honour and worship they contend against, they must understand his favour to be of some concernment to them; which they take but an ill course to entitle themselves unto. Much more have they reason to be solicitous, when their horrid cause not only wants evidence, nor hath hitherto pretended to more than a bare possibility of truth on their side, but hath so clear (and as yet altogether unrefuted) evidence lying against it, that quite takes away that very possibility, and all ground for that miserable languishing hope, that it could have ever afforded them. Therefore is it left also wholly unimaginable, what principle can animate their design, other than a sensual humour, impatient of restraints, or of any obligation to be sober, just, and honest, beyond what their own inclination, and (much-mistaken) interest, or convenience, would lead them to.

By all which we have a sufficient measure of the persons from whom any opposition unto religion can be expected, and how much their authority, their example, or their scorn, ought to signify with us. And that a more valuable opposition can never be made, our experience, both that hitherto it hath not been, and that it would have been if it could, might render us tolerably secure. For surely it may well be supposed, that in a world so many ages lost in wickedness, all imaginable trials would have been made to disburthen it of religion; and somewhat that had been specious at least, to that purpose, had been hit upon, if the matter had been any ways possible. And the more wicked the world hath been, so directly contrary and so continually assaulted n principle, not yet vanquished, appears the more plainly invincible. And that the assaults have been from the lusts of men, rather than their reason, shows the more evidently, that their reason hath only wanted a ground to work upon, which if it could have been found, their lusts had certainly pressed it to their service in this warfare, and not have endured, rather, the molestation of continual checks and rebukes from it.

Nor need we yet to let our minds hang in suspense, or be in a dubious expectation, that possibly some or other great wit may arise, that shall perform some great thing in this matter, and discover the groundlessness and folly of religion, by plain and undeniable reasons that have not as yet been thought on; but betake ourselves to a stricter and closer consideration of our own grounds, which if we can once find to be certainly true, we may be sure they are of eternal truth, and no possible contrivance or device can ever make them false.

VI. Having therefore seen what *common consent* may contribute to the establishing of them jointly; we may now apply ourselves to consider and search into each of them (so far as they are capable of a distinct consideration) severally and apart. Having still his mark in our eye, our own confirmation and excitation in reference to what is the proper work and business of a temple, religion and conversation with God: how little soever any endeavour in this kind may be apt to signify with the otherwise-minded.

VII. And, first, for the existence of God; that we may regularly and with evidence make it out to ourselves, *that he is*, or *doth exist*, and may withal see what the belief of his existence will contribute towards the evincing of the reasonableness of erecting a temple to him. It is requisite that we first settle a true *notion* of him in our minds; or be at an agreement with ourselves, what it is that we mean, or would have to be signified by the name of God: otherwise we know not what we seek, nor when we have found him.

And though we must beforehand professedly avow, that we take him to be such a one as we can never comprehend in our thoughts; that this knowledge is too excellent for us, or he is more excellent than that we can perfectly know him; yet it will be sufficient to guide us in our search after his existence, if we can give such a description, or assign such certain characters of his being, as will severally or together distinguish him from all things else. For then we shall be able to call him by his own name, and say, This is God; whatever his being may contain more, or whatsoever other properties may belong to it, beyond what we can as yet compass in our present thoughts of him.

VIII. And such an account we shall have of what we are inquiring after, if we have the conception in our minds of an eternal, uncaused, independent, necessary Being, that hath active power, life, wisdom, goodness, and whatsoever other supposable excellency, in the highest perfection originally, in and of itself.

Such a being we would with common consent express by the name of *God*. Even they that would profess to deny or doubt of his existence, yet must acknowledge this to be the notion of that which they deny or doubt of. Or if they should say this is not it, or (which is all one) that they do not deny or doubt of the existence of such a Being as this; they on the other hand that would argue for his existence, may conclude the cause is yielded them; *this* being that which they designed to contend for.

It must indeed be acknowledged, that some things belonging to the *notion* of God might have been more expressly named. But it was not necessary they should, being sufficiently included here, as will afterwards appear: nor perhaps so convenient; some things, the express mention whereof is omitted, being such as more captious persons might be apt at first to startle at; who yet may possibly, as they are insinuated under other expressions, become by degrees more inclinable to receive them afterwards. And however if this be not a *full* and *adequate notion*, (as who can ever tell when we have an express, distinct, particular notion of God, which we are sure is adequate and full?) it may however suffice, that it is a *true one*, as far as it goes, and such as cannot be mistaken for the notion of any thing else. And it will be more especially sufficient to our present purpose, if enough be comprehended in it to recommend him to us as a fit and worthy object of religion; and whereto a temple ought to be designed: as

Du Pierr same subject and title. *Calvin Instit.* *Episcopius* his *Instit. Theol.* who has written nervously on this subject; with many more: but especially Dr. Stillingfleet, in his *Orig. Sacr.*

it will appear there is, when also we shall have added what is intended, concerning his conversableness with men; the ground whereof is also in great part included in this account of him; so that the consideration of it cannot be wholly severed from that of his existence; as hath been intimated above. That is, that if such a Being exist, unto which this notion belongs, it will sufficiently appear, he is such as that *he can* converse with men, though it doth not thence certainly follow that *he will*. For it were a rash and bold adventure, to say he could not be God, if he did not condescend to such terms of reconciliation and converse with apostate creatures. Whereof, therefore, more is to be said, than the mere manifesting his existence, in its own place.

And as to this, we shall endeavour to proceed gradually, and in the most familiar and intelligible way we can.

I am not unapprehensive that I might here indeed, following great examples, have proceeded in another method than that which I now choose. And because we can have no true, appropriate, or distinguishing idea or conception of Deity, which doth not include necessity of existence in it, have gone that shorter way, immediately to have concluded the existence of God, from his idea itself. And I see not, but treading those wary steps which the incomparable Dr. Cudworth (in his Intell. System) hath done, that argument admits, in spite of cavil, of being managed, with demonstrative evidence. Yet since some most pertinaciously insist that it is at the bottom but a mere sophism; therefore (without detracting any thing from the force of it as it stands in that excellent work, and the writings of some other noted authors) I have chosen to go this other way, as plainer and less liable to exception, though further about. And beginning lower, to evince from the certain present existence of things not existing necessarily, or of themselves, their manifest dependence on what doth exist necessarily or of itself; and how manifestly impossible it was that any thing should exist now, or hereafter to all eternity, if somewhat had not existed necessarily and of itself, from all eternity. And I trust, not only this will appear with competent evidence in the sequel of this discourse, but also that this necessary self-existent Being, is God, a Being absolutely perfect, such to whom the rest of his idea must belong; and to whom religion or the honour of a temple is due.

And because that was the point at which this discourse principally aims, and wherein it finally terminates, not merely the discovering of atheism, but irreligion; from an apprehension that as to use and practice, it was all one to acknowledge no God at all, as only such a one to whom no temple or religion could belong: it was therefore besides my purpose, to consider the several *forms* or *schemes* of atheism, that have been devised in any age, as that excellent person hath done; and enough for my purpose, to refute the *Epicurean* atheism, or theism, (it is indifferent which you call it,) because that sect-master, while he was liberal in granting there were deities, yet was so impious as to deny worship to any, accounting they were such, as between whom and man there could be no conversation; on *their part* by *providence*, or on *man's* by *religion*. Therefore, if we shall have made it evident in the issue, that God is, and is conversable with men, both the *Epicurean* atheism vanishes from off the stage, and with it *all* atheism besides, and irreligion.

IX. We therefore begin with God's existence. For the evincing whereof we may, 1. Be most assured, that there hath been somewhat or other from all eternity, or that looking backward, somewhat of real being must be confessed eternal. Let such as have not been used to think of any thing more than what they could see with their eyes, and to whom reasoning only seems difficult, because they have not tried what they can do in it, but use their thoughts a little, and by moving them a few easy steps, they will soon find themselves as sure of this, as that they see, or hear, or understand, or are any thing.

For being sure that something now is, (that you see, for instance, or are something,) you must then acknowledge, that certainly either something always was, and hath ever been, or been from all eternity; or else you must say, that sometime, nothing was; or that all being once was not. And so, since you find that something *now* is, that there was a time when any thing of being did *begin* to be, that is, that till that time, there was nothing; but now, at that time, somewhat first began to be. For what can be plainer than that, if all being *sometime* was not, and *now* some being is, every thing of being had a beginning? And thence it would follow that some being, that is, the first that ever began to be, did of itself start up out of nothing, or made itself to be, when before nothing was.

But now, do you not plainly see that it is altogether impossible any thing should do so; that is, when it was as yet nothing, and when nothing at all as yet was, that it should make itself, or come into being of itself? For surely making itself is doing something. But can that which is nothing do any thing? Unto all doing there must be some doer. Wherefore a thing must be, before it can do any thing; and therefore it would follow that it was before it was; or *was* and *was not*, was *something* and *nothing*, at the same time. Yea, and it was diverse from itself. For a cause must be a distinct thing from that which is caused by it. Wherefore it is most apparent that some being hath *ever* been, or did *never begin* to be. Whence further,

X. It is also evident, 2. that some being was uncaused, or was ever of itself without any cause. For what never was from another had never any cause, since nothing could be its own cause. And somewhat, as appears from what hath been said, never was from another. Or it may be plainly argued thus; that either some being was uncaused, or all being was caused. But if all being were caused, then some one, at least, was the cause of itself: which hath been already shown impossible. Therefore the expression commonly used concerning the first Being, that it was of itself, is only to be taken *negatively*, that is, that it was not of another, not *positively*, as if it did sometime make itself. Or, what there is positive, signified by that form of speech, is only to be taken thus, that it was a being of that nature, as that it was impossible it should ever not have been. Not that it did ever of itself step out of not being into being: of which more hereafter.

XI. And now it is hence further evident, 3. that some being is independent upon any other, that is, whereas it already appears that some being did never depend on any other, as a productive cause; or was not beholden to any other, that it might come into being. It is thereupon equally evident that it is simply independent, or cannot be beholden to any for its continued being. For what did never need a productive cause, doth as little need a sustaining or conserving cause. And to make this more plain, either some being is independent, or all being is dependent. But there is nothing without the compass of all being, whereon it may depend. Wherefore to say, that all being doth depend, is to say it depends on nothing, that is, that it depends not. For to depend on nothing, is not to depend. It is therefore a manifest contradiction, to say that all being doth depend: against which it is no relief to say, that all beings do circularly depend on one another. For so, however, the whole circle or sphere of being should depend on nothing, or one at last depend on itself; which negatively taken, as before, is true, and the thing we contend for; that one, the common support of all the rest, depends not on any thing without itself. Whence also it is plainly consequent,

XII. That, 4. such a being is necessary, or doth necessarily exist; that is, that it is of such a nature as that it could not or cannot but be. For what is in being neither by its own choice, or any other's, is necessarily. But what was not made by itself (which hath been shown impossible that any thing should) nor by any other, (as it hath been proved something was not,) it is manifest, it neither depended on its own choice, nor any other's, that it is. And therefore its existence is not owing to choice at all, but to the necessity of its own nature. Wherefore it is always by a simple, absolute, natural necessity; being of such a nature, to which it is altogether repugnant, and impossible ever not to have been, or ever to cease from being. And now having gone thus far, and being assured that hitherto we feel the ground firm under us; that is, having gained a full certainty that there is an eternal, uncaused, independent,

necessary Being, and therefore actually and everlasting existing; we may advance one step further, and with equal assurance add,

XIII. 5. That this eternal, independent, uncaused, necessary Being, is self-active, that is, (which is at present meant,) not such as acts upon itself, but that hath the power of acting upon other things, in and of itself, without deriving it from any other. Or at least that there is such a Being as is eternal, uncaused, &c. having the power of action in and of itself. For either such a Being as hath been already evinced is of itself active, or unactive, or either hath the power of action of itself, or not. If we will say the latter, let it be considered what we say, and to what purpose we say it.

First, we are to weigh what it is we affirm, when we speak of an eternal, uncaused, independent, necessary Being, that is of itself totally unactive, or destitute of any active power. If we will say there is some such thing, we will confess, when we have called it something, it is a very silly, despicable, idle something, and a something (if we look upon it alone) as good as nothing. For there is but little odds between being nothing, and being able to do nothing. We will again confess, eternity, self-origination, independency, necessity of existence, to be very great and highly dignifying attributes; and that import a most inconceivable excellency. For what higher glory can we ascribe to any being, than to acknowledge it to have been from eternity of itself,[r] without being beholden to any other, and to be such as that it can be, and cannot but be in the same state, self-subsisting, and self-sufficient to all eternity? And what inconceivable myriads of little senseless deities must we upon that supposition admit! (as would appear if it were fit to trouble the reader with an explication of the nature and true notion of matter, which the being now supposed, must be found to be!) but what can our reason either direct or endure, that we should so incongruously misplace so magnificent attributes as these, and ascribe the prime glory of the most excellent Being, unto that which is next to nothing? What might further be said to demonstrate the impossibility of a self-subsisting and self-original, unactive Being, will be here unseasonable and pre-occupying. But if any in the mean time will be so sullen as to say such a thing,

Let it, secondly, be considered to what purpose they say it. Is it to exclude a necessary self-active being? But it can signify nothing to that purpose. For such a being they will be forced to acknowledge, let them do what they can (besides putting out their own eyes) notwithstanding. For why will they acknowledge any necessary being at all, that was ever of itself? Is it not because they cannot, otherwise, for their hearts tell how it was ever possible that any thing at all could come into being? But finding that something is, they are compelled to acknowledge that something hath ever been, necessarily and of itself. No other account could be given how other things came to be. But what! doth it signify any thing towards the giving an account of, the original of all other things, to suppose only an eternal, self-subsisting, unactive being? Did that cause other things to be? Will not their own breath choke them if they attempt to utter the self-contradicting words, an unactive cause (*i. e.* efficient or author) of any thing. And do they not see they are as far from their mark; or do no more towards the assigning the original of all other things, by supposing an eternal, unactive being only, than if they supposed none at all. That which can *do nothing*, can no more be the productive cause of another, than that which *is nothing*. Wherefore by the same reason that hath constrained us to acknowledge an eternal, uncaused, independent, necessary being, we are also unavoidably led to acknowledge this being to be self-active, or such as hath the power of action in and of itself; or that there is certainly such a being, that is the cause of all the things which our sense tells us are, besides, existent in the world.

XIV. For what else is left us to say or think? Will we think fit to say, that all things we behold, were, as they are, necessarily existent from all eternity? That were to speak against our own eyes, which continually behold the rise and fall of living things, of whatsoever sort or kind, that can come under their notice. And it were to speak against the thing itself, that we say, and to say and unsay the same thing in the same breath. For all the things we behold are in some respect or other (internal or external) continually changing, and therefore could never long be beheld as they are. And to say then, they have been continually changing from eternity, and yet have been necessarily, is unintelligible, and flat nonsense. For what is necessarily, is always the same; and what is in this or that posture necessarily, (that is, by an intrinsic, simple, and absolute necessity, which must be here meant,) must be ever so. Wherefore to suppose the world in this or that state necessarily; and yet that such a state is changeable, is an impossible and self-contradicting supposition.[s]

And to say any thing is changing from eternity, signifies it is always undergoing a change which is never past over, that is, that it is eternally unchanged, and is ever the same. For the least imaginable degree of change is some change. What is in any the least respect changed, is not in every respect the same. Suppose then any thing in this present state or posture, and that it is eternally changing in it; either a new state and posture is acquired, or not. If it be, the former was temporary, and hath an end; and therefore the just and adequate measure of it was not eternity, which hath no end; much less of the change of it, or the transition from the one state to the other. But if no new state or posture be acquired, (which any the least gradual alteration would make,) then it is eternally unchanged in any the least degree. Therefore eternal changing is a manifest contradiction.

r We will acknowledge no impropriety in this word, and its conjuncte, *self-originate*, sometimes hereafter used: which yet is recompensed by their conveniency; as they may perhaps find who shall make trial how to express the sense intended by them in other words. And they are used without suspicion, that it can be thought they are meant to signify as if ever God gave original to himself; but in the negative sense, that he never received it from any other; yea, and that he is, what is more then equivalent to his being, self-caused; namely, a Being of himself so excellent as not to need or be capable to admit any cause. Vid. c. 4. Sect. 3. And with the expectation of the same allowance which hath been given to αὐταίτιος, or other like words. We also take it for granted, (which it may suffice to hint here once for all,) that when we use here the word *self-subsistent*, it will be understood we intend by it, (without logical or metaphysical nicety,) not the mere exclusion of dependence on a subject, but on a cause.

s And whether by the way this will not afford us (though that be none of our present business) plain evidence that there can be no such thing as necessary, alterable matter, may be examined by such as think fit to give themselves the diversion. For let it be considered, if every part and particle that makes up the matter of this universe were itself a necessary being, and of itself from all eternity, it must have not only its simple being, but its being such or such, of itself necessarily; or rather every thing of it, or any way belonging to it, must be its very simple being itself. For whence should it receive any accession to itself, when it is supposed equally independent upon its fellows, as any of them upon it? Suppose then only their various intercurrent motion among themselves, requisite to prepare them to, and unite them in, the composition of particular bodies, and no other change of any other individual particle needful thereto, but only of their figure, place, and situation, till they shall come aptly to be disposed in the now attempted composition. How is even this change possible? For suppose one of these particles from eternity of such or such a figure, as triangular, hooked, &c. how can it lose any thing from itself, or suffer any alteration of its figure which essentially and necessarily belonged to it from eternity? That to which it is necessary to be such it is impossible to it not to be such. Or suppose no alteration of figure (which Epicurus admits not) were necessary; but of situation and motion till it become conveniently situate. Even this change also will be simply impossible. Because you can frame no imagination of the existence of this or that particle, but you must suppose it in some or other *ubi*, or point of space, and if it be necessarily, it is here necessarily; for what is simply no where is nothing. But if it be here necessarily, (that is, in this or that point of space, for in some or other it must be, and it cannot be here and there at once,) it must be here eternally, and can never not be here. Therefore we can have no notion of necessarily alterable or moveable matter, which is not inconsistent and repugnant to itself. Therefore also motion must proceed from an immoveable mover, as hath been (though upon another ground) concluded of old. But how action *ad extra* stands with the immutability of the Deity, must be fetched from the consideration of other perfections belonging thereto. Of which metaphysicians and schoolmen may be consulted, discoursing at large. See *Suarez*, *Ledesma de divina perfectione*, with many more, at leisure. Whatsoever difficulty we may apprehend in this case, or if we cannot so easily conceive how an eternal mind foreseeing perfectly all futurity, together with an eternal efficacious determination of will concerning the existence of such and such things to such an instant or point of time, can suffice to their production without a super-added efflux of power at that instant; which would seem to infer somewhat of mutation yet as the former of these cannot be demonstrated insufficient, (nor shall we ever reckon ourselves pinched in this matter till we see that plainly and fully done,) so they are very obstinately blind that cannot see upon the addition of the latter the vast difference of these two cases: viz. the facile silent egress of a sufficient power, in pursuance to a calm, complacential, eternal purpose; for the production of this creation, by which the agent acts not upon itself, but upon its own creature made by its own action; and the eternal, blind, ungoverned action of matter upon itself, by which it is perpetually changing itself, while yet it is supposed necessarily what it was before. And how much more easily conceivable that is, than this; how also liberty of action consists with necessity of existence, divers have shown: to which purpose somewhat not inconsiderable may be seen, *Ficin. lib. 2. cap. 12. de immortal. &c.* But in this there can be little pretence to imagine a difficulty. For our own being, though not simply, yet as to us is necessary, *i. e.* it is imposed upon us: for we come not into being by our own choice: and yet are conscious to ourselves of no prejudice hereby to our liberty of acting. Yea, and not only doth the former consist with this latter, but is inferred by it. Of which see *Gibieuf de libert. Dei, & creat.*

But if it be said, though eternity be not the measure of one change, it may be of infinite changes, endlessly succeeding one another; even this also will be found contradictious and impossible. For, (not to trouble the reader with the more intricate controversy of the possibility or impossibility of infinite or eternal succession, about which they who have a mind may consult others,[t]) if this signify any thing to the present purpose, it must mean the infinite or eternal changes of a necessary being. And how these very terms do clash with one another, methinks any sound mind might apprehend at the first mention of them; and how manifestly repugnant the things are, may be collected from what hath been said; and especially from what was thought more fit to be annexed in the margin.

But now since we find that the present state of things is changeable, and actually changing, and that what is changeable is not necessarily, and of itself; and since it is evident that there is some necessary being; (otherwise nothing could ever have been, and that without action nothing could be from it;) since also all change imports somewhat of passion, and all passion supposes action, and all action active power, and active power an original seat or subject, that is self-active, or that hath the power of action in and of itself; (for there could be no derivation of it from that which hath it not, and no first derivation, but from that which hath it originally of itself; and a first derivation there must be, since all things that are, or ever have been, furnished with it, and not of themselves, must either mediately or immediately have derived it from that which had it of itself;) it is therefore manifest that there is a necessary, self-active Being, the Cause and Author of this perpetually variable state and frame of things. And hence,

XV. 6. Since we can frame no notion of life which self-active power doth not, at least, comprehend, (as upon trial we shall find that we cannot,) it is consequent, that this Being is also originally vital, and the root of all vitality, such as hath life in or of itself, and from whence it is propagated to every other living thing.[u]

And so as we plainly see that this sensible world did sometime begin to be, it is also evident that it took its beginning from a Being essentially vital and active, that had itself no beginning. Nor can we make a difficulty to conclude, that this Being (which now we have shown is active, and all action implies some power) is,

XVI. 7. Of vast and mighty power, (we will not say infinite, lest we should step too far at once; not minding now to discuss whether creation require infinite power,) when we consider and contemplate the vastness of the work performed by it. Unto which (if we were to make our estimate by nothing else) we must, at least, judge this power to be proportionable. For when our eyes behold an effect exceeding the power of any cause which they can behold, our mind must step in and supply the defect of our feebler sense; so as to make a judgment that there is a cause we see not, equal to this effect. As when we behold a great and magnificent fabric, and entering in we see not the master, or any living thing, (which was Cicero's observation[w] in reference to this present purpose,) besides mice and weasels, we will not think that mice or weasels built it. Nor need we in a matter so obvious, insist further. But only when our severer reason hath made us confess, our further contemplation should make us admire, a power which is at once both so apparent and so stupendous.

COROLLARY. And now, from what hath been hitherto discoursed, it seems a plain and necessary consectary, that this world had a cause diverse from the matter whereof it is composed.

For otherwise matter that hath been more generally taken to be of itself altogether unactive, must be stated the only cause and fountain of all the action and motion that is now to be found in the whole universe: which is a conceit, wild and absurd enough; not only as it opposes the common judgment of such as have with the greatest diligence inquired into things of this nature, but as being in itself manifestly impossible to be true; as would easily appear, if it were needful to press further Dr. More's[x] reasonings to this purpose; which he hath done sufficiently for himself.

And also that otherwise all the great and undeniable changes which continually happen in it must proceed from its own constant and eternal action upon itself, while it is yet feigned to be a necessary being; with the notion whereof they are notoriously inconsistent. Which therefore we taking to be most clear, may now the more securely proceed to what follow.

CHAPTER III.

Wisdom asserted to belong to this Being. The production of this world by a mighty agent destitute of wisdom impossible. On consideration of, 1. What would be adverse to this production. 2. What would be wanting; some effects to which a designing cause will, on all hands, be confessed necessary, having manifest characters of skill and design upon them. Absurd here to accept the works of nature; wherein at least equal characters of wisdom and design are to be seen, as in any the most confessed pieces of art, instanced in the frame and motion of heavenly bodies. A mean, unphilosophical temper, to be more taken with novelties, than common things of greater importance. Further instances, in the composition of the bodies of animals. Two contrery causes of men's not acknowledging the wisdom of their Maker herein. Progress is made from the consideration of the parts and frame, to the powers and functions, of terrestrial creatures. Growth, nutrition, propagation of kind. Spontaneous motion, sensation. The prudence considered, that the bodies of animals are machines. 1. How improbable it is. 2. How little to the purpose. The powers of the human soul. It appears, *notwithstanding them*, it had a cause; *by them*, a wise and intelligent cause. It is not matter. *That* not capable of reason. They not here reflected on who think reasonable souls made of refined matter, by the Creator. Not being matter, nor arising from thence, it must have a cause that is intelligent. Goodness belonging to this Being.

I. WE therefore add, that this Being is wise and intelligent, as well as powerful; upon the very view of this world, it will appear so vast power was guided by equal wisdom in the framing of it. Though this is wont to be the principal labour in evincing the existence of a Deity, namely, the proving that this universe owes its rise to a wise and designing cause; (as may be seen in Cicero's excellent performance in this kind, and in divers later writers;) yet the placing so much of their endeavour herein, seems in great part to have proceeded hence, that this hath been chosen for the great medium to prove that it had a cause diverse from itself. But if that once be done a shorter way, and it fully appear that this world is not itself a necessary being, having the power of all the action and motion to be found in it, of itself; (which already seems plain enough;) and it do most evidently thence also appear to have had a cause foreign to, or distinct from, itself; though we shall not therefore the more carelessly consider this subject; yet no place of doubt seems to remain, but that this was an *intelligent cause*, and that this world was the product of wisdom and counsel, and not of mere power alone. For what imagination can be more grossly absurd, than to suppose this orderly frame of things to have been the result of so mighty power, not accompanied or guided by wisdom and counsel? that is, (as the case must now unavoidably be understood,) that there is some being necessarily existent, of an essentially active nature, of inconceivably vast and mighty power and vigour, destitute of all understanding and knowledge, and consequently of any self-moderating principle, but acting always by the necessity of its own nature, and therefore to its very uttermost, that raised up all the alterable matter of the universe (to whose nature it is plainly repugnant to be of itself, or exist

t Parker Tentam. Physico-Theol. Derodon. Philos. cont. Dr. More's Enchind. Metaphys.

u Which will also prove it to be a *Spirit*; unto which order of beings essential vitality, or that life be essential to them, seems as distinguishing a property between it and a body, as any other we can fasten upon; that is, that though a body may be truly said to live, yet it lives by a life that is accidental, and separable from it, so as that it may cease to live, and yet be a body still; whereas a spirit lives by its own essence; so that it can no more cease to live than to be. And as where that essence is borrowed and derived only, as it is with all created spirits, so its life must needs be therewithal: so the eternal, self-subsisting Spirit, lives necessarily, and of itself, according as necessarily and of itself it is, or hath its being.

Which is only annexed, with a design not to trouble this discourse with any disquisition concerning the nature and other properties of a spiritual Being. Of which enough hath been, with great evidence, said, by the incomparable Dr. More.

w De Natura Deorum

x Both in his *Immortality of the Soul*; and *Enchirid. Metaphys.*

necessarily) out of nothing; and by the utmost exertion of that ungoverned power, put all the parts and particles of that matter into a wild hurry of impetuous motion, by which they have been compacted and digested into particular beings, in that variety and order which we now behold. And surely to give this account of the world's original, is, as Cicero speaks, not to consider, but to cast lots what to say; and were as mad a supposition, "as if one should suppose the one-and-twenty letters, formed (as the same author elsewhere speaks) in great numbers, of gold, or what you please else, and cast of any careless fashion together, and that of these loosely shaken out upon the ground, *Ennius's Annals* should result, so as to be distinctly legible as now we see them." Nay, it were the supposition of a thing a thousand-fold more manifestly impossible.

II. For before we consider the gross absurdity of such a supposed production, that is, that a thing should be brought to pass by so mere a casualty, that so evidently requires an exquisitely-formed and continued design, even though there were nothing positively to resist or hinder it, let it be considered what there will be that cannot but most certainly hinder any such production. To this purpose we are to consider, that it is a vast power which so generally moves the diffused matter of the universe.

Hereof make an estimate, by considering what is requisite to the continual whirling about of such huge bulks as this whole massy globe of earth; (according to some;) or, which is much more strange, the sun, (according to others,) with that inconceivably swift motion which this supposition makes necessary, together with the other planets, and the innumerable heavenly bodies besides, that are subject to the laws of a continual motion. Adding hereto how mighty a power it is which must be sufficient to all the productions, motions, and actions, of all other things.

Again, consider that all this motion, and motive power, must have some source and fountain diverse from the dull and sluggish matter moved thereby, unto which it already hath appeared impossible it should originally and essentially belong.

Next, that the *mighty, active Being*, which hath been proved necessarily existent, and whereto it must *first* belong, if we suppose it destitute of the self-moderating principle of wisdom and counsel, cannot but be always exerting its motive power, invariably and to the same degree: that is, to its very utmost, and can never cease or fail to do so. For its act knows no limit but that of its power; (if this can have any;) and its power is essential to it, and its essence is necessary.

Further, that the motion impressed upon the matter of the universe must hereupon necessarily have received a continual increase, ever since it came into being.

That supposing this motive power to have been exerted from eternity, it must have been increased long ago to an infinite excess.

That hence the coalition of the particles of matter for the forming of any thing had been altogether impossible. For let us suppose this exerted, motive power to have been, any instant, but barely sufficient for such a formation, because that could not be despatched in an instant, it would by its continual, momently increase, be grown so over-sufficient, as, in the next instant, to dissipate the particles, but now beginning to unite.

At least, it would be most apparent, that if ever such a frame of things as we now behold could have been produced, that motive power, increased to so infinite an excess, must have shattered the whole frame in pieces, many an age ago; or rather, never have permitted that such a thing, as we call an age, could possibly have been.

Our experience gives us not to observe any so destructive or remarkable changes in the course of nature: and this (as was long ago foretold) is the great argument of the atheistical scoffers in these latter days, that things are as they were from the beginning of the creation to this day. But let it be soberly weighed, how it is possible the general consistency, which we observe things are at throughout the universe, and their steady, orderly posture, can stand with this momently increase of motion.

And that such an increase could not, upon the supposition we are now opposing, but have been, is most evident. For, not to insist that nothing of impressed motion is ever lost, but only imparted to other things, (which they that suppose it, do not *therefore* suppose, as if they thought, being once impressed, it could continue of itself, but that there is a constant, equal supply from the first mover,) we will admit that there is a continual decrease, or loss, but never to the degree of its continual increase. For we see when we throw a stone out of our hand, whatever of the impressed force it do impart to the air, through which it makes its way, or not being received, vanishes of itself, it yet retains a part a considerable time, that carries it all the length of its journey, and all does not vanish and die away on the sudden. Therefore, when we here consider the continual, momently renewal of the same force, always necessarily going forth from the same mighty Agent, without any moderation or restraint; every following *impetus* doth so immediately overtake the former, that whatever we can suppose lost, is yet so abundantly over-supplied, that, upon the whole, it cannot fail to be ever growing, and to have grown to that all-destroying excess before mentioned. Whence, therefore, that famed restorer and improver of some principles of the ancient philosophy, hath seen a necessity to acknowledge it, as a manifest thing, "That God himself is the universal and primary cause of all the motions that are in the world, who in the beginning created matter, together with motion and rest; and doth now, by his ordinary concourse only, continue so much of motion and rest in it, as he first put into it.—For (saith he) we understand it as a perfection in God, not only that he is unchangeable in himself, but that he works after a most constant and unchangeable manner. So that, excepting those changes which either evident experience or divine revelation renders certain, and which we know or believe to be without change in the Creator, we ought to suppose none in his works, lest thereby any inconstancy should be argued in himself."[a] Whereupon he grounds the laws and rules concerning motion, which he afterwards lays down, whereof we referred to one, a little above.

It is therefore evident, that as without the supposition of a *self-active* Being there could be no such thing as *motion*; so without the supposition of an *intelligent* Being, (that is, that the same Being be both *self-active* and *intelligent*,) there could be no *regular* motion; such as is absolutely necessary to the forming and continuing of any the compacted, bodily substances, which our eyes behold every day: yea, or of any whatsoever, suppose we their figures, or shapes, to be as rude, deformed, and useless, as we can imagine; much less, such as the exquisite compositions, and the exact order of things, in the universe, do evidently require and discover.

III. And if there were no such thing carried in this supposition, as is positively adverse to what is supposed, so as most certainly to hinder it, (as we see plainly there is,) yet the mere want of what is necessary to such a production, is enough to render it impossible, and the supposition of it absurd. For it is not only absurd to suppose a production which somewhat shall certainly resist and hinder, but which wants a cause to effect it; and it is not less absurd, to suppose it affected by a manifestly insufficient and unproportionable cause, than by none at all. For as nothing can be produced without a cause, so no cause can work above or beyond its own capacity and natural aptitude. Whatsoever therefore is ascribed to any cause, above and beyond its ability, all that surplusage is ascribed to no cause at all: and so an effect, in that part at least, were supposed without a cause. And if then it follow when an effect is produced, that it had a cause; why doth it not equally follow, when an effect is produced, having manifest characters of wisdom and design upon it, that it had a wise and designing cause? If it be said, there be some fortuitous or casual (at least undesigned) productions, that look like the effects of wisdom and contrivance, but indeed are not, as the birds so orderly and seasonably making their nests, the bees their comb, and the spider its web, which are capable of no design: that exception needs to be well proved before it be admitted; and that it be plainly demonstrated, both that these creatures are not capable of design, and that there is not a universal, designing cause,

[a] D. Cartes Princip. Philosoph. part 2.

from whose directive as well as operative influence, no imaginable effect or event can be exempted; (in which case it will no more be necessary, that every creature that is observed steadily to work towards an end, should itself design and know it, than that an artificer's tools should know what he is doing with them; but if they do not, it is plain he must;) and surely it lies upon them who so except, to prove in this case what they say, and not be so precarious as to beg or think us so easy, as to grant so much, only because they have thought fit to say it, or would fain have it so. That is, that this or that strange event happened without any designing cause.

IV. But, however, I would demand of such as make this exception, whether they think there be any effect at all, to which a designing cause was necessary, or which they will judge impossible to have been otherwise produced, than by the direction and contrivance of wisdom and counsel? I little doubt but there are thousands of things, laboured and wrought by the hand of man, concerning which they would presently, upon first sight, pronounce they were the effects of skill, and not of chance; yea, if they only considered their frame and shape, though they yet understood not their use and end. They would surely think (at least) some effects or other sufficient to argue to us a designing cause. And would they but soberly consider and resolve what characters or footsteps of wisdom and design might be reckoned sufficient to put us out of doubt, would they not, upon comparing, be brought to acknowledge there are no where *any* more conspicuous and manifest, than in the things daily in view, that go ordinarily, with us, under the name of *the works of nature*? Whence it is plainly consequent, that what men commonly call *universal nature*, if they would be content no longer to lurk in the darkness of an obscure and unminterpreted word, they must confess is nothing else but *common providence*, that is, the *universal power* which is every where active in the world, in conjunction with the *unerring wisdom* which guides and moderates all its exertions and operations; or the wisdom which directs and governs that power. Otherwise, when they see cause to acknowledge that such an exact order and disposition of parts, in very neat and elegant compositions, doth plainly argue wisdom and skill in the contrivance; only they will distinguish, and say, It is so in the effects of *art*, but not of *nature*. What is this, but to deny in particular what they granted in general? to make what they have said signify nothing more than if they had said, Such exquisite order of parts is the effect of wisdom, where it is the effect of wisdom, but it is not the effect of wisdom, where it is not the effect of wisdom? and to trifle, instead of giving a reason why things are so and so? And whence take they their advantage for this trifling, or do hope to hide their folly in it, but that they think, while what is meant by art is known, what is meant by nature cannot be known? But if it be not known, how can they tell but their distinguishing members are co-incident, and run into one? Yea, and if they would allow the thing itself to speak, and the effect to confess and dictate the name of its own cause, how plain is it that they do run into one, and that the expression imports no impropriety which we somewhere find in Cicero; *The art of nature*; or rather, that nature is nothing else but divine art, at least in as near an analogy as there can be, between any things divine and human. For, that this matter (even the thing itself, waving for the present the consideration of names) may be a little more narrowly discussed and searched into, let some curious piece of workmanship be offered to such a sceptic's view, the making whereof he did not see, nor of any thing like it; and we will suppose him not told that this was made by the hand of any man, nor that he hath any thing to guide his judgment about the way of its becoming what it is, but only his own view of the thing itself; and yet he shall presently, without hesitation, pronounce, This was the effect of much skill. I would here inquire, Why do you so pronounce? Or, What is the reason of this your judgment? Surely he would not say he hath no reason at all for this so confident and unwavering determination; for then he would not be determined, but speak by chance, and be indifferent to say that, or any thing else. Somewhat or other there must be, that, when he is asked, Is this the effect of skill? shall so suddenly and irresistibly captivate him into an assent that it is, that he cannot think otherwise. Nay, if a thousand men were asked the same question, they would as undoubtedly say the same thing; and then, since there is a reason for this judgment, what can be devised to be the reason, but that there are so manifest characters and evidences of skill in the composure, as are not attributable to any thing else? Now here I would further demand, Is there any thing in this reason, yea, or no? Doth it signify any thing, or is it of any value to the purpose for which it is alleged? Surely it is of very great, inasmuch as, when it is considered, it leaves it not in a man's power to think any thing else; and what can be said more potently and efficaciously to demonstrate? But now, if this reason signify any thing, it signifies thus much; that wheresoever there are equal characters, and evidences of skill, (at least where there are equal,) a skilful agent must be acknowledged. And so it will (in spite of cavil) conclude universally, and abstractedly from what we can suppose distinctly signified by the terms of *art*, and *nature*, that whatsoever effect hath such or equal characters of skill upon it, did proceed from a skilful cause. That is, that if this effect be said to be from a skilful cause, as such, (*viz.* as having manifest characters of skill upon it,) then, every such effect, (*viz.* that hath equally manifest characters of skill upon it,) must be, with equal reason, concluded to be from a skilful cause.

We will acknowledge skill to act, and wit to contrive, very distinguishable things, and in reference to some works, (as the making some curious *automaton*, or self-moving engine,) are commonly lodged in divers subjects; that is, the contrivance exercises the wit and invention of one, and the making, the manual dexterity and skill of others: but the manifest characters of both will be seen in the effect. That is, the curious elaborateness of each several part shows the latter; and the order and dependence of parts, and their conspiracy to one common end, the former. Each betokens design; or at least the smith or carpenter must be understood to design his own part, that is, to do as he was directed: both together, do plainly bespeak an agent, that knew what he did; and that the thing was not done by chance, or was not the casual product of only being busy at random, or making a careless stir, without aiming at any thing. And this, no man that is in his wits, would, upon sight of the whole frame, more doubt to assent unto, than that two and two make four. And he would certainly be thought mad, that should profess to think that only by some one's making a blustering stir among several small fragments of brass, iron, and wood, these parts happened to be thus curiously formed, and came together into this frame, of their own accord.

Or lest this should be thought to intimate too rude a representation of their conceit, who think this world to have fallen into this frame and order, wherein it is, by the agitation of the moving parts, or particles of matter, without the direction of a wise mover; and that we may also make the case as plain as is possible to the most ordinary capacity, we will suppose (for instance) that one who had never before seen a watch, or any thing of that sort, hath now this little engine first offered to his view; can we doubt, but he would upon the mere sight of its figure, structure, and the very curious workmanship which we will suppose appearing in it, presently acknowledge the artificer's hand? But if he were also made to understand the use and purpose for which it serves, and it were distinctly shown him how each thing contributes, and all things in this little fabric concur to this purpose, the exact measuring and dividing of time by minutes, hours, and months, he would certainly both confess and praise the great ingenuity of the first inventor. But now if a by-stander, beholding him in this admiration, would undertake to show a profounder reach and strain of wit, and should say, Sir, you are mistaken concerning the composition of this so much admired piece; it was not made or designed by the hand or skill of any one; there were only an innumerable company of little atoms or very small bodies, much too small to be perceived by your sense, that were busily frisking and plying to and fro about the place of its nativity; and by a strange chance (or a stranger fate, and the necessary

laws of that motion which they were unavoidably put into, by a certain boisterous, undesigning mover) they fell together into this small bulk, so as to compose it into this very shape and figure, and with this same number and order of parts which you now behold: one squadron of these busy particles (little thinking what they were about) agreeing to make up one wheel, and another some other, in that proportion which you see: others of them also falling, and becoming fixed in so happy a posture and situation, as to describe the several figures by which the little moving fingers point out the hour of the day, and day of the month: and all conspired to fall together, each into its own place, in so lucky a juncture, as that the regular motion failed not to ensue which we see is now observed in it,—what man is either so wise or so foolish (for it is hard to determine whether the excess or defect should best qualify him to be of this faith) as to be capable of being made believe this piece of natural history? And if one should give this account of the production of such a trifle, would he not be thought in jest? But if he persist, and solemnly profess that thus he takes it to have been, would he not be thought in good earnest mad? And let but any sober person judge whether we have not unspeakably more manifest madness to contend against in such as suppose this world, and the bodies of living creatures, to have fallen into this frame and orderly disposition of parts wherein they are, without the direction of a wise and designing cause? And whether there be not an incomparably greater number of most wild and arbitrary suppositions in *their fiction* than *in this?* Besides the innumerable supposed repetitions of the same strange chances all the world over; even as numberless, not only as productions, but as the changes that continually happen to all the things produced. And if the concourse of atoms could make this world, why not (for it is but little to mention such a thing as this) a porch, or a temple, or a house, or a city, (as Tully speaks in the before-recited place,) which were less operose and much more easy performances?

V. It is not to be supposed that all should be astronomers, anatomists, or natural philosophers, that shall read these lines; and therefore it is intended not to insist upon particulars, and to make as little use as is possible of terms that would only be agreeable to that supposition. But surely such general, easy reflections on the frame of the universe, and the order of parts in the bodies of all sorts of living creatures, as the meanest ordinary understanding is capable of, would soon discover incomparably greater evidence of wisdom and design in the contrivance of these, than in that of a watch or a clock. And if there were any whose understandings are but of that size and measure as to suppose that the whole frame of the heavens serves to no other purpose than to be of some such use as that, to us mortals here on earth; if they would but allow themselves leisure to think and consider, might discern the most convincing and amazing discoveries of wise contrivance and design (as well as of vastest might and power) in disposing things into so apt a subserviency to that meaner end. And that so exact a knowledge is had thereby of times and seasons, days and years, as that the simplest idiot in a country may be able to tell you, when the light of the sun is withdrawn from his eyes, at what time it will return, and when it will look in at such a window, and when at the other; and by what degrees his days and nights shall either increase or be diminished; and what proportion of time he shall have for his labours in this season of the year, and what in that; without the least suspicion or fear that it shall ever fall out otherwise.

But that some in later days whose more enlarged minds have by diligent search and artificial helps, got clearer notices (even than most of the more learned of former times) concerning the true frame and vastness of the universe, the matter, nature, and condition of the heavenly bodies, their situation, order, and laws of motion; and the great probability of their serving to nobler purposes, than the greater part of learned men have ever dreamed of before; that, I say, any of these should have chosen it for the employment of their great intellects, to devise ways of excluding intellectual power from the contrivance of this frame of things, having so great advantages beyond the most of mankind besides to contemplate and adore the great Author and Lord of all, is one of the greatest wonders that comes under our notice; and might tempt even a sober mind to prefer vulgar and popular ignorance, before their learned, philosophical deliration.

VI. Though yet, indeed, not their philosophy by which they would be distinguished from the common sort, but what they have in common with them, ought in justice to bear the blame. For it is not evident, how much soever they reckon themselves exalted above the vulgar sort, that their miserable shifting in this matter proceeds only from what is most meanly so; *i. e.* their labouring under the most vulgar and meanest diseases of the mind, disregard of what is common, and an aptness to place more in the strangeness of new, unexpected, and surprising events, than in things unspeakably more considerable, that are of every day's observation? Than which nothing argues a more abject, unphilosophical temper.

For let us but suppose (what no man can pretend is more impossible, and what any man must confess is less considerable, than what our eyes daily see) that in some part of the air near this earth, and within such limits as that the whole scene might be conveniently beheld at one view, there should suddenly appear a little globe of pure flaming light resembling that of the sun; and suppose it fixed as a centre to another body, or moving about that other as its centre, (as this or that hypothesis best pleases us,) which we could plainly perceive to be a proportionably-little earth, beautified with little trees and woods, flowery fields, and flowing rivulets with larger lakes into which these discharge themselves; and suppose we the other planets all of proportionable bigness to the narrow limits assigned them, placed at their due distances, and playing about this supposed earth or sun, so as to measure their shorter and soon absolved days, months, and years, or two, twelve, or thirty years, according to their supposed lesser circuits;—would they not presently, and with great amazement, confess an intelligent contriver and maker of this whole frame, above a Posidonius or any mortal? And have we not in the present frame of things a demonstration of wisdom and counsel, as far exceeding that which is now supposed, as the making some toy or bauble to please a child is less an argument of wisdom than the contrivance of somewhat that is of apparent and universal use? Or, if we could suppose this present state of things to have but newly begun, and ourselves pre-existent, so that we could take notice of the very passing of things out of horrid confusion into the comely order they are now in, would not this put the matter out of doubt? And that this state had once a beginning needs not be proved over again. But might what would yesterday have been the effect of wisdom, better have been brought about by chance five or six thousand years, or any longer time ago? It speaks not want of evidence in the thing, but want of consideration, and of exercising our understandings, if what were *new* would not only convince but astonish, and what is *old*, of the same importance, doth not so much as convince?

VII. And let them that understand any thing of the composition of a human body (or indeed of any living creature) but bethink themselves whether there be not equal contrivance at least, appearing in the composure of that admirable fabric, as of any the most admired machine or engine devised and made by human wit and skill. If we pitch upon any thing of known and common use, as suppose again a clock or watch, which is no sooner seen than it is acknowledged (as hath been said) the effect of a designing cause; will we not confess as much of the body of a man? Yea, what comparison is there, when in the structure of some one single member, as a hand, a foot, an eye, or ear, there appears upon a diligent search, unspeakably greater curiosity, whether we consider the variety of parts, their exquisite figuration, or their apt disposition to the distinct uses and ends these members serve for, than is to be seen in any clock or watch? Concerning which uses of the several parts in man's body, Galen,[b] so largely discoursing in seventeen books, inserts on the by, this epiphonema, upon the mention of one particular instance of our most wise

[b] *Lib.* 3. De usu part. ex Lacun. Epit.

Maker's provident care; "Unto whom (saith he) I compose these commentaries," (meaning his present work of unfolding the useful figuration of the human body,) "as certain hymns, or songs of praise, esteeming true piety more to consist in this, that I first may know, and then declare to others, his wisdom, power, providence, and goodness, than in sacrificing to him many hecatombs: and in the ignorance whereof there is greatest impiety, rather than in abstaining from sacrifice.[c] Nor" (as he adds in the close of that excellent work) "is the most perfect natural artifice to be seen in man only; but you may find the like industrious design and wisdom of the Author, in any living creature which you shall please to dissect: and by how much the less it is, so much the greater admiration shall it raise in you; which those artists show, that describe some great thing (contractedly) in a very small space: as that person (saith he) who lately engraved Phaeton carried in his chariot with his four horses upon a little ring—a most incredible sight! But there is nothing in matters of this nature, more strange than in the structure of the leg of a flea." How much more might it be said of all its inward parts! "Therefore (as he adds) the greatest commodity of such a work accrues not to physicians, but to them who are studious of nature, *viz.* the knowledge of our Maker's perfection, and that (as he had said a little above) it establishes the principle of the most perfect theology, which theology (saith he) is much more excellent than all medicine."

It were too great an undertaking, and beyond the designed limits of this discourse, (though it would be to excellent purpose, if it could be done without amusing terms, and in that easy, familiar way as to be capable of common use,) to pursue and trace distinctly the prints and footsteps of the admirable wisdom which appears in the structure and frame of this outer temple. For even our bodies themselves are said to be the temples of the Holy Ghost, I Cor. vi. 19. And to dwell a while in the contemplation and discovery of those numerous instances of most apparent, ungainsayable sagacity and providence which offer themselves to view in every part and particle of this fabric; how most commodiously all things are ordered in it! With how strangely cautious circumspection and foresight, not only destructive, but even (perpetually) vexatious and afflicting, incongruities are avoided and provided against, to pose ourselves upon the sundry obvious questions that might be put for the evincing of such provident foresight. As for instance, how comes it to pass that the several parts which we find to be *double* in our bodies, are not *single* only? Is this altogether by chance? That there are two eyes, ears, nostrils, hands, feet, &c. what a miserable, shiftless creature had man been, if there had only been allowed him one foot? a seeing, hearing, talking, unmoving statue. That the hand is divided into fingers? those so conveniently situate, one in so fitly opposite a posture to the rest?

And what if some one pair or other of these parts had been universally wanting? The hands, the feet, the eyes, the ears. How great a misery had it inferred upon mankind! and is it only a casuality that it is not so? That the back-bone is composed of so many joints, (twenty-four, besides those of that which is the basis and sustainer of the whole,) and is not all of a piece, by which stooping, or any motion of the head or neck, diverse from that of the whole body, had been altogether impossible; that there is such variety and curiosity in the ways of joining the bones together in that, and other parts of the body; that in some parts, they are joined by mere adherence of one to another,[d] either with or without an intervening medium, and both these ways, so diversely; that others are fastened together by proper jointing, so as to suit and be accompanied with motion, either more obscure or more manifest, and this, either by a deeper or more superficial insertion of one bone into another, or by a mutual insertion, and that so different ways; and that all these should be exactly accommodated to the several parts and uses to which they belong and serve:—was all this without design? Who, that views the curious and apt texture of the eye, can think it was not made on purpose to see with,[e] and the ear, upon the like view, for hearing, when so many things most concur that these actions might be performed by these organs, and are found to do so? Or who can think that the sundry little engines belonging to the eye were not made with design to move it upwards, downwards, to this side or that, or whirl it about as there should be occasion; without which instruments and their appendages, no such motion could have been? Who, that is not stupidly perverse, can think that the sundry inward parts (which it would require a volume distinctly to speak of, and but to mention them and their uses would too unproportionably swell this part of this discourse) were not made purposely by a designing Agent, for the ends they so aptly and constantly serve for? The want of some one among divers whereof, or but a little misplacing, or if things had been but a little otherwise than they are, had inferred an impossibility that such a creature as man could have subsisted, or been propagated upon the face of the earth. As what if there had not been such a receptacle prepared as the stomach is, and so formed, and placed as it is, to receive and digest necessary nutriment? Had not the whole frame of man besides been in vain? Or what if the passage from it downward had not been somewhat a little way ascending, so as to detain a convenient time what is received, but that what was taken in were suddenly transmitted? It is evident the whole structure had been ruined as soon as made. What (to instance in what seems so small a matter) if that little cover had been wanting at the entrance of that passage through which we breathe; (the depression whereof by the weight of what we eat or drink, shuts it and prevents meat and drink from going down that way;) had not unavoidable suffocation ensued? And who can number the instances that might be given besides? Now when there is a concurrence of so many things absolutely necessary, (concerning which the common saying is as applicable, more frequently wont to be applied to matters of morality, "Goodness is from the concurrence of all causes; evil from any defect,") *each* so aptly and opportunely serving its own proper use, and *all* one common end, certainly to say that so manifold, so regular, and stated a subserviency to that end, and the end itself, were undesigned, and things casually fell out thus, is to say we know or care not what.

We will only, before we close this consideration, concerning the mere frame of a human body, (which hath been so hastily and superficially proposed,) offer a supposition which is no more strange (excluding the vulgar notion by which nothing is strange, but what is not common) than the thing itself, as it actually is; *viz.* That the whole more external covering of the body of a man were made, instead of skin and flesh, of some very transparent substance, flexible, but clear as very crystal; through which, and the other more inward (and as transparent) integuments or enfoldings, we could plainly perceive the situation and order of all the internal parts, and how they each of them perform their distinct offices: if we could discern the contiaual motion of the blood, how it is conveyed by its proper conduits, from its first source and fountain, partly downwards to the lower entrails, (if rather it ascend not from thence, as at least what afterwards becomes blood doth,) partly upwards, to its admirable elaboratory, the heart; where it is refined and furnished with fresh vital spirits, and so transmitted thence by the distinct vessels prepared for this purpose: could we perceive the curious contrivance of those little doors, by which it is let in and out, on this side and on that; the order and course of its circulation, its most commodious distribution by two social channels, or conduit-pipes, that every where accompany one another throughout the body: could we discern the curious artifice of the brain, its ways of purgation; and were it possible to pry into the secret chambers and receptacles of the less or more pure spirits there; perceive their manifold conveyances, and the rare texture of that net, commonly called the *wonderful one*: could we behold the veins, arteries, and nerves, all of them arising from their

c Sub. fin. l. 17.
d Bartholin. Riolanus.
e How foolish to think that art intended an end in making a window to see through, and that nature intended none in making an eye to see with; as Campanella in that rapturous discourse of his Atheismus triumphatus.
f Non prodest cibus nisi corpori accedit, qui statim sumptus emittitur. Seneca (on another occasion.)

proper and distinct originals! and their orderly dispersion for the most part, by pairs and conjugations, on this side and that, from the middle of the back; with the curiously wrought branches, which, supposing these to appear duly diversified, as so many more duskish strokes in this transparent frame, they would be found to make throughout the whole of it; were every smaller fibre thus made at once discernible; especially those innumerable threads into which the spinal marrow is distributed at the bottom of the back: and could we, through the some medium, perceive those numerous little machines made to serve unto voluntary motions, (which in the whole body are computed, by some,[g] to the number of four hundred and thirty, or thereabouts, or so many of them as according to the present supposition could possibly come in view,) and discern their composition; their various and elegant figures—round, square, long, triangular, &c. and behold them do their offices, and see how they ply to and fro, and work in their respective places, as any motion is to be performed by them: were all these things, I say, thus made linble to an easy and distinct view, who would not admiringly cry out, *How fearfully and wonderfully am I made?* And sure there is no man sober, who would not, upon such a sight, pronounce that man mad, that should suppose such a production to have been a mere *undesigned casualty*. At least, if there be any thing in the world that may be thought to carry *sufficiently* convincing evidences in it, of its having been made industriously, and on purpose, not by chance, would not this composition, thus offered to view, be esteemed to do so much more? Yea, and if it did only bear upon it *characters equally evidential*, of wisdom and design, with *what doth certainly* so, though in the lowest degree, it were sufficient to evince our present purpose. For if *one* such instance as this would bring the matter no higher than to a *bare equality*, that would at least argue a maker of man's body, as wise, and as properly designing, as the artificer of any such slighter piece of workmanship, that may yet, certainly, be concluded the effect of skill and design. And then, enough might be said, from other instances, to manifest him unspeakably superior. And that the matter would be brought, at least, to an equality, upon the supposition now made, there can be no doubt, if any one be judge that hath not abjured his understanding and his eyes together. And what then, if we lay aside that supposition, (which only somewhat gratifies fancy and imagination,) doth that alter the case? Or is there the less of wisdom and contrivance expressed in this work of forming man's body, only for that it is not so easily and suddenly obvious to our sight? Then we might with the same reason say, concerning some curious piece of carved work, that is thought fit to be kept locked up in a cabinet, when we see it, that there was admirable workmanship shown in doing it; but as soon as it is again shut up in its repository, that there was none at all. Inasmuch as we speak of the objective characters of wisdom and design, that are in the thing itself, (though they must some way or other come under our notice, otherwise we can be capable of arguing nothing from them, yet,) since we have sufficient assurance that there really are such characters in the structure of the body of man as have been mentioned, and a thousand more than have been thought necessary to be mentioned here; it is plain that the greater or less facility of finding them out, so that we be at a certainty that they are, (whether by the slower and more gradual search of our own eyes, or by relying upon the testimony of such as have purchased themselves that satisfaction by their own labour and diligence,) is merely accidental to the thing itself we are discoursing of; and neither adds to, nor detracts from, the rational evidence of the present argument. Or if it do either, the more abstruse paths of divine wisdom in this, as in other things, do rather recommend it the more to our adoration and reverence, than if every thing were obvious, and lay open to the first glance of a more careless eye. The things which we are sure (or may be, if we do not shut our eyes) the wise Maker of this world hath done, do sufficiently serve to assure us that he could have done this also; that is, have made every thing in the frame and shape of our bodies conspicuous in the way but now supposed, if he had thought it fit. He hath done greater things. And since he hath not thought *that* fit, we may be bold to say, the doing of it would signify more trifling, and less design. It gives us a more amiable and comely representation of the Being we are treating of, that his works are less for ostentation than use; and that his wisdom and other attributes appear in them rather to the instruction of sober, than the gratification of vain minds.

We may therefore confidently conclude, that the figuration of the human body carries with it as manifest, unquestionable evidences of design, as any piece of human artifice, that most confessedly, in the judgment of any man, doth so; and therefore had as certainly a designing cause. We may challenge the world to show a disparity, unless it be that the advantage is unconceivably great on our side. For would not any one that hath not abandoned at once both his reason and his modesty, be ashamed to confess and admire the skill that is shown in making a statue, or the picture of a man, that (as one ingeniously says) is but the shadow of his skin, and deny the wisdom that appears in the composure of his body itself, that contains so numerous and so various engines and instruments for sundry purposes in it, as that it is become an art, and a very laudable one, but to discover and find out the art and skill that are shown in the contrivance and formation of them?

VIII. It is in the mean time strange to consider from how different and contrary causes it proceeds, that the wise Contriver of this fabric hath not his due acknowledgments on the account of it. For with some, it proceeds from their supine and drowsy ignorance, and that they little know or think what prints and footsteps of a Deity they carry about them, in their bone and flesh, in every part and vein and limb. With others, (as if too much learning had made them mad, or an excess of light had struck them into mopish blindness,) these things are so well known and seen, so common and obvious, that they are the less regarded. And because they can give a very punctual account *that things are so*, they think it, now, not worth the considering, *how they come to be so*. They can trace all these hidden paths and footsteps, and therefore all seems very easy, and they give over wondering. As they that would detract from Columbus's acquists of glory by the discovery he had made of America, by pretending the achievement was easy; whom he ingeniously rebuked, by challenging them to make an egg stand erect, alone, upon a plain table; which when none of them could do, he only by a gentle bruising of one end of it makes it stand on the table without other support, and then tells them this was more easy than his voyage to America, now they had seen it done; before, they knew not how to go about it. Some may think the contrivance of the body of a man, or other animal, easy, now they know it; but had they been to project such a model without a pattern, or any thing leading thereto, how miserable a loss had they been at! How easy a confession had been drawn from them of the finger of God, and how silent a submission to his just triumph over their and all human wit, when the most admired performances in this kind, by any mortal, have been only faint and infinitely distant imitations of the works of God! As is to he seen in the so much celebrated exploits of Posidonius, Regiomontanus, and others of this sort.

IX. And now if any should be either so incurably blind as not to perceive, or so perversely wilful as not to acknowledge an appearance of wisdom in the frame and figuration of the body of an animal (peculiarly of man) more than equal to what appears in any the most exquisite piece of human artifice, and which no wit of man can ever fully imitate; although, as hath been said, an acknowledged equality would suffice to evince a wise maker thereof, yet because it is the existence of God we are now speaking of, and that it is therefore not enough to evince, but to magnify, the wisdom we would ascribe to him; we shall pass from the parts and frame, to the consideration of the more principal powers and functions of terrestrial creatures; ascending from such as agree to the less perfect orders of these, to those of the more perfect, viz. of man himself.

g Riolanus h Parker Tentam. Physico-Theol. i Archbishop Abbot's Geog.

And surely to have been the Author of faculties that shall enable to such functions, will evidence a wisdom that defies our imitation, and will dismay the attempt of it.

We begin with that of *growth*. Many sorts of rare engines we acknowledge contrived by the wit of man, but who hath ever made one that could grow, or that had in it a self-improving power? A tree, an herb, a pile of grass, may upon this account challenge all the world to make such a thing. That is, to implant the power of growing into any thing to which it *doth not* natively belong, or to make a thing to which *it doth*.

By what art would they make a seed? And which way would they inspire it with a seminal form? And they that think this whole globe of the earth was compacted by the casual (or fatal) coalition of particles of matter, by what magic would they conjure so many to come together as should make one clod? We vainly hunt with a lingering mind after miracles; if we did not more vainly mean by them nothing else but novelties, we are compassed about with such. And the greatest miracle is, that we see them not. You with whom the daily productions of nature (as you call it) are so cheap, see if you can do the like. Try your skill upon a rose. Yea, but you must have pre-existent matter? But can you ever prove the Maker of the world had so, or even defend the possibility of uncreated matter? And suppose they had the free grant of all the matter between the crown of their head and the moon, could they tell what to do with it, or how to manage it, so as to make it yield them one single flower, that they might glory in, as their own production?

And what mortal man, that hath reason enough about him to be serious, and to think awhile, would not even be amazed at the miracle of *nutrition*? Or that there are things in the world capable of nourishment? Or who would attempt an imitation here, or not despair to perform any thing like it? That is, to make any nourishable thing. Are we not here infinitely out-done? Do not we see ourselves compassed about with wonders, and are we not ourselves such, in that we see, and are creatures, from all whose parts there is a continual defluxion, and yet that receive a constant gradual supply and renovation, by which they are continued in the same state? As the bush burning, but not consumed. It is easy to give an artificial frame to a thing that shall gradually decay and waste till it quite be gone, and disappear. You can raise a structure of snow, that would soon do that. But can your manual skill compose a thing that, like our bodies, shall be continually melting away, and be continually repaired, through so long a tract of time? Nay, but you can tell how it is done; you know in what method, and by what instruments, food is received, concocted, separated, and so much as must serve for nourishment, turned into chyle, and that into blood, first grosser, and then more refined, and that distributed into all parts for this purpose. Yea, and what then? Therefore you are as wise as your Maker. Could you have made such a thing as the stomach, a liver, a heart, a vein, an artery? Or are you so very sure what the digestive quality is? Or if you are, and know what things best serve to maintain, to repair, or strengthen it; who implanted that quality? both where it is so immediately useful, or in the other things you would use for the service of that? Or how, if such things had not been prepared to your hand, would you have devised to persuade the particles of matter into so useful and happy a conjuncture, as that such a quality might result? Or, (to speak more suitably to the most,) how, if you had not been shown the way, would you have thought it were to be done, or which way would you have gone to work, to turn meat and drink into flesh and blood?

Nor is *propagation of their own kind*, by the creatures that have that faculty implanted in them, less admirable, or more possible to be imitated by any human device. Such productions stay in their first descent. Who can, by his own contrivance, find out a way of making any thing that can produce another like itself. What machine did ever man invent, that had this power? And the ways and means by which it is done, are such (though he that can do all things well knew how to compass his ends by them) as do exceed not our understanding only, but our wonder.

And what shall we say of *spontaneous motion*, wherewith we find also creatures endowed that are so mean and despicable in our eyes, (as well as ourselves,) that is, that so silly a thing as a fly, a gnat, &c. should have a power in it to move itself, or stop its own motion, at its own pleasure? How far have all attempted imitations in this kind fallen short of this perfection? And how much more excellent a thing is the smallest and most contemptible insect, than the most admired machine we ever heard or read of; (as Archytas Tarentinus's dove, so anciently celebrated; or more lately, Regiomontanus's fly, or his eagle, or any the like;) not only as having this *peculiar power*, above any thing of this sort, but as having the *sundry other powers*, besides, meeting in it, whereof these are wholly destitute?

And should we go on to instance further in the several powers of *sensation*, both external and internal, the various instincts, appetitions, passions, sympathies, antipathies, the powers of memory, (and we might add, of speech,) that we find the inferior orders of creatures either generally furnished with, or some of them, as to this last, disposed unto. How should we even over-do the present business; and too needlessly insult over human wit, (which we must suppose to have already yielded the cause,) in challenging it to produce and offer to view a hearing, seeing engine, that can imagine, talk, is capable of hunger, thirst, of desire, anger, fear, grief, &c. as its own creature, concerning which it may glory and say, I have done this?

Is it so admirable a performance, and so ungainsayable an evidence of skill and wisdom, with much labour and long travail of mind, a busy, restless agitation of working thoughts, the often renewal of frustrated attempts, the varying of defeated trials; this way and that at length to hit upon, and by much pains, and with a slow, gradual progress, by the use of who can tell how many sundry sorts of instruments or tools, managed by more (possibly) than a few hands, by long hewing, hammering, turning, filing, to compose one only single machine of such a frame and structure, as that by the frequent reinforcement of a skilful hand, it may be capable of some (and that, otherwise, but a very short-lived) motion? And is it no argument, or effect of wisdom, so easily and certainly, without labour, error, or disappointment, to frame both so infinite a variety of kinds, and so innumerable individuals of every such kind of living creatures, that cannot only, with the greatest facility, move themselves with so many sorts of motion, downwards, upwards, to and fro, this way or that, with a progressive or circular, a swifter or a slower, motion, at their own pleasure; but can also grow, propagate, see, hear, desire, joy, &c.? Is this no work of wisdom, but only blind either fate or chance? Of how strangely perverse and odd a complexion is that understanding, (if yet it may be called an understanding,) that can make this judgment!

X. And they think they have found out a rare knack, and that gives a great relief to their diseased minds, who have learned to call the bodies of living creatures, (even the human not excepted,) by way of diminution, *machines*, or a sort of automatous engines.

But how little cause there is to hug or be fond of this fancy, would plainly appear, if, *first*, we would allow ourselves leisure to examine with *how small pretence* this appellation is so placed and applied: and, *next*, if it be applied rightly, to *how little purpose* it is alleged; or that it signifies nothing to the exclusion of divine wisdom from the formation of them.

And for the *first*, because we know not a better, let it be considered how defective and unsatisfying the account is, which the great and justly admired master in this faculty gives, how divers of those things, which he would have to be so, are performed only in the mechanical way.

For though his ingenuity must be acknowledged, in his modest exception of some noble operations belonging to ourselves from coming under those rigid necessitating laws, yet certainly, to the severe inquiry of one not partially addicted to the sentiments of so great a wit, because they were his, it would appear there are great defects, and many

k Des Cartes de passionibus animæ, part 1. atque alibi.

things yet wanting, in the account which is given us of some of the meaner of those functions, which he would attribute only to organized matter, or (to use his own expression) to the conformation of the members of the body, and the course of the spirits, excited by the heat of the heart, &c.

For howsoever accurately he describes the instruments and the way, his account seems very little satisfying of the principle, either of spontaneous motion, or of sensation.

As to the former, though it be very apparent that the muscles, seated in that opposite posture wherein they are mostly found paired throughout the body, the nerves and the animal spirits in the brain, and (suppose we) that *glandule* seated in the inmost part of it, are the instruments of the motion of the limbs and the whole body; yet, what are all these to the prime causation, or much more, to the spontaneity of this motion? And whereas, with us, (who are acknowledged to have such a faculty independent on the body,) an act of will doth so manifestly contribute, so that, when we will, our body is moved with so admirable facility, and we feel not the cumbersome weight of an arm to be lifted up, or of our whole coporeal bulk, to be moved this way or that, by a slower or swifter motion. Yea, and when as also, if we will, we can, on the sudden, in a very instant, start np out of the most composed, sedentary posture, and put ourselves, upon occasion, into the most violent course of motion or action. But if we have no such will, though we have the same agile spirits about us, we find no difficulty to keep in a posture of rest; and are, for the most part, not sensible of any endeavour or urgency of those active particles, as if they were hardly to be restrained from putting us into motion; and against a reluctant act of our will, we are not moved but with great difficulty to them, and that will give themselves, and us, the trouble. This being, I say, the case with us; and it being also obvious to our observation, that it is so very much alike, in these mentioned respects, with brute creatures, how inconceivable is it, that the directive principle of their motions, and ours, should be so vastly and altogether unlike? (whatsoever greater perfection is required, with us, as to those more noble and perfect functions and operations which are found to belong to us.) That is, that *in us*, an act of will should signify so very much, and be for the most part necessary to the beginning, the continuing, the stopping, or the varying of our motions; and *in them*, nothing like it, nor any thing else besides, only that corporeal principlet which he assigns as common to them and us, the continual heat in the heart, (which he calls a sort of fire,) nourished by the blood of the veins; the instruments of motion already mentioned, and the various representations and impressions of external objects, as there and elsewhere[m] he expresses himself! Upon which last, (though much is undoubtedly to be attributed to it,) that so main a stress should be laid, as to the diversifying of motion, seems strange; when we may observe so various motions of some silly creatures, as of a fly in our window, while we cannot perceive, and can scarce imagine, any change in external objects about them: yea, a swarm of flies, so variously frisking and plying to and fro, some this way, others that, with a thousand diversities and interferings in their motion, and some resting; while things are in the same state, externally, to them all. So that what should cause, or cease, or so strangely vary such motions, is from thence, or any thing else he hath said, left unimaginable. As it is much more, how, in creatures of much strength, as a bear or a lion, a paw should be moved sometimes so gently, and sometimes with so mighty force, only by mere mechanism, without any directive principle, that is not altogether corporeal. But most of all, how the strange regularity of motion in some creatures, as of the spider in making its web, and the like, should be owing to no other than such causes as he hath assigned of the motions in general of brute creatures. And what though some motions of our own seem wholly involuntary, (as that of our eyelids, in the case which he supposes,) doth it therefore follow they must proceed from a principle[n] only corporeal, as if our soul had no other act belonging to it, but that of willing? Which he doth not downright say; but that it is its only, or its chief act: and if it be its chief act only, what hinders but that such a motion may proceed from an act that is not chief? Or that it may have a power that may, sometimes, step forth into act (and in greater matters than that) without any formal deliberated command or direction of our will? So little reason is there to conclude, that all our motions[o] common to us with beasts, or even their motions themselves, depend on nothing else than the conformation of the members, and the course which the spirits, excited by the heat of the heart, do naturally follow, in the brain, the nerves, and the muscles, after the same manner with the motion of an automaton, &c.

But as to the matter of *sensation*, his account seems much more defective and unintelligible, that is, how it should be performed (as he supposes every thing common to us with beasts may be) without a soul. For, admit that it be (as who doubts but it is) by the instruments which he assigns, we are still to seek what is the sentient, or what useth these instruments, and doth sentire or exercise sense by them. That is, suppose it be performed in the brain,[p] and that (as he says) by the help of the nerves, which from thence, like small strings,[q] are stretched forth unto all the other members; suppose we have the three things to consider in the nerves, which he recites—their interior substance, which extends itself like very slender threads from the brain to the extremities of all the other members into which they are knit; the very thin little skins which enclose these, and which, being continued with those that inwrap the brain, do compose the little pipes which contain these threads; and lastly, the animal spirits which are conveyed down from the brain through these pipes—yet which of these is most subservient unto sense? That he undertakes elsewhere[r] to declare, *viz.* that we are not to think (which we also suppose) some nerves to serve for sense, others for motion only, as some have thought, but that the enclosed spirits serve for the motion of the members, and those little threads (also enclosed) for sense. Are we yet any nearer our purpose? Do these small threads sentire? Are these the things that ultimately receive and discern the various impressions of objects? And since they are all of one sort of substance, how comes it to pass that some of them are seeing threads, others hearing threads, others tasting, &c. Is it from the diverse and commodious figuration of the organs unto which these descend from the brain? But though we acknowledge and admire the curious and exquisite formation of those organs, and their most apt usefulness (as organs, or instruments) to the purposes for which they are designed, yet what do they signify, without a proportionably apt and able agent to use them, or percipient to entertain and judge of the several notices, which by them are only transmitted from external things? That is, suppose we a drop of ever so pure and transparent liquor, or let there be three, diversely tinctured or coloured, and (lest they mingle) kept asunder by their distinct, infolding coats; let these encompass one the other, and together compose one little shining globe: are we satisfied that now this curious, pretty ball can see? Nay, suppose we it ever so conveniently situate; suppose we the fore-mentioned strings fastened to it, and these, being hollow, well replenished with as pure air or wind or gentle flame as you can imagine; yea, and all the before-described little threads to boot; can it yet do the feat? Nay, suppose we all things else to concur that we can suppose, except a living principle, (call that by what name you will,) and is it not still as incapable of the act of seeing, as a ball of clay or a pebble stone? Or can the substance of the brain itself perform that or any other act of sense, (for it is superfluous to speak distinctly of the rest,) any more than the pulp of an apple or a dish of curds? So that, trace this matter whither you will, within the compass of yonr assigned limits, and you are still at the same loss: range through the whole body, and what can you find but flesh and bones, marrow and blood, strings and threads, humour and vapour; and which of these is capable of sense? These are your materials and such like; order them as you will, put them into what method you can devise, and except

l De Passion. part. 1. art. 8.
m Princip. Philosoph. Dioptric. c. 4. Dissert. de method.
n De Pass. art. 13.
o As art. 16.
q De Passion. art. 11.
r Dioptr. c. 4. S. 4, 5.
p Princip. Philosoph. Sect. 189.

you can make it *live*, you cannot make it so much as *feel*, much less perform all other acts of sense besides, unto which these tools alone seem as unproportionable, as a plough-share to the most curious sculpture, or a pair of tongs to the most melodious music.

But how much more inconceivable it is, that the figuration and concurrence of the fore-mentioned organs can alone suffice to produce the several passions of love, fear, anger, &c. whereof we find so evident indications in brute creatures, it is enough but to hint. And (but that all persons do not read the same books) it were altogether unnecessary to have said so much, after so plain demonstration[s] already extant, that matter, howsoever modified, any of the mentioned ways is incapable of sense.

Nor would it seem necessary to attempt any thing in this kind, in particular and direct opposition to the very peculiar sentiments of this most ingenious author, (as he will undoubtedly be reckoned in all succeeding time,) who, when he undertakes to show what *sense* is, and how it is performed, makes it the proper business of the soul, comprehends it under the name of *cogitation*;[t] naming himself a thinking thing, adds by way of question, What is that? and answers, A thing doubting, understanding, affirming, denying, willing, nilling, and also imagining, and exercising sense; says[u] expressly it is evident to all that it is the soul that exercises sense, not the body,[w] in as direct words as the so much celebrated poet of old. The only wonder is, that under this general name of cogitation he denies it unto brutes; under which name, he may be thought less fitly to have included it, than to have affirmed them incapable of any thing to which that name ought to be applied; as he doth not only affirm, but esteems himself by most firm reasons to have proved.[x]

And yet that particular reason seems a great deal more pious than it is cogent, which he gives for his choosing his particular way of differencing brutes from human creatures, *viz.* lest any prejudice should be done to the doctrine of the human soul's immortality; there being nothing, as he truly says, that doth more easily turn off weak minds from the path of virtue, than if they should think the souls of brutes to be of the same nature with our own; and therefore that nothing remains to be hoped or feared after this life, more by us than by flies or pismires. For surely there were other ways of providing against that danger, besides that of denying them so much as sense, (other than merely organical,[y] as he somewhere allevintes the harshness of that position, but without telling us what useth these organs,) and the making them nothing else but well-formed machines.

But yet if we should admit the propriety of this appellation, and acknowledge (the thing itself intended to be signified by it) that all the powers belonging to mere brutal nature are purely mechanical, and no more; to what purpose is it here alleged, or what can it be understood to signify? What is lost from our cause by it? And what have atheists whereof to glory? For was the contrivance of these machines theirs? Were they the authors of this rare invention, or of any thing like it? Or can they show any product of human device and wit, that shall be capable of vying with the strange powers of those machines? Or can they imagine what so highly exceeds all human skill, to have fallen by chance, and without any contrivance or design at all, into a frame capable of such powers and operations?

If they be machines, they are (as that free-spirited author speaks) to be considered as a sort of machine[z] made by the hand of God, which is by infinite degrees better ordered, and hath in it more admirable motions, than any that could ever have been formed by the art of man. Yea, and we might add, so little disadvantage would accrue to the present cause (whatever might to some other) by this concession, that rather (if it were not a wrong to the cause, which justly disdains we should allege any thing false or uncertain for its support) this would add much, we will not say to its victory, but to its triumph, that we did acknowledge them nothing else than mere mechanical contrivances. For, since they must certainly either be such, or have each of them a soul to animate, and enable them to their several functions; it seems a much more easy performance, and is more conceivable, and within the nearer reach of human apprehension, that they should be furnished with such a one, than he made capable of so admirable operations without it; and the former (though it were not a surer) were a more amazing, unsearchable, and less comprehensible discovery of the most transcendent wisdom, than the latter.

XI. But because whatsoever comes under the name of cogitation, properly taken, is assigned to some higher cause than mechanism; and that there are operations belonging to man, which lay claim to a reasonable soul, as the immediate principle and author of them; we have yet this further step to advance, that is, to consider the most apparent evidence we have of a wise, designing agent, in the powers and nature of this more excellent, and, among things more obvious to our notice, the noblest of his productions.

And were it not for the slothful neglect of the most to study themselves, we should not here need to recount unto men the common and well-known abilities and excellences which peculiarly belong to their own nature. They might take notice, without being told, that first, as to their *intellectual faculty*, they have somewhat about them, that can think, understand, frame notions of things; that can rectify or supply the false or defective representations which are made to them by their external senses and fancies; that can conceive of things far above the reach and sphere of sense, the moral good or evil of actions or inclinations, what there is in them of rectitude or pravity; whereby they can animadvert, and cast their eye inward upon themselves; observe the good or evil acts or inclinations, the knowledge, ignornnce, dulness, vigour, tranquillity, trouble, and, generally, the perfections or imperfections, of their own minds; that can apprehend the general natures of things, the future existence of what, yet, is not, with the future appearance of that to us, which, as yet, appears not.

Of which last sort of power, the confident assertion, "No man can have a conception of the future,"[a] needs not, against our experience, make us doubt; especially being enforced by no better, than that *pleasant* reason there subjoined, *for the future is not yet*; that is to say, because it is future; and so (which is all this reason amounts to) we *cannot conceive it*, because *we cannot*. For though our conceptions of former things guide us in forming notions of what is future, yet sure our conception of any thing as future, is much another sort of conception from what we have of the same thing as past, as appears from its different effects; for if an object be apprehended good, we conceive of it as past with sorrow, as future with hope and joy; if evil, with joy as past, with fear and sorrow as future. And (which above all the rest discovers and magnifies the intellectual power of the human soul) that they can form a conception, howsoever imperfect, of this absolutely perfect Being, whereof we are discoursing. Which even they that acknowledge not its existence, cannot deny; except they will profess themselves blindly, and at a venture, to deny they know not what, or what they have not so much as thought of.

They may take notice of their *power of comparing things*, of discerning and making a judgment of their agreements and disagreements, their proportions and disproportions to one another; of affirming or denying this or that, concerning such or such things; and of pronouncing, with more or less confidence, concerning the truth or falsehood of such affirmations or negations.

And moreover, of their *power of arguing*, and inferring one thing from another, so as from one plain and evident principle, to draw forth a long chain of consequences, that may be discerned to be linked therewith.

They have withal to consider the liberty and the large capacity of *the human will*, which, when it is itself, rejects the dominion of any other than the supreme Lord, and refuses satisfaction in any other than the supreme and most comprehensive good.

And upon even so hasty and transient a view of a thing furnished with such powers and faculties, we have suf-

s In Dr. More's Immortality of the Soul.
t Princip. Phil. part 4. 189.
u Medit. 2.
w Dioptr. c. 4.
x Resp. sextæ. Dissert. de Method. c. 5.
y Resp. sextæ.
a Dissert. de Method. sect. 5.
z Hobbes's Human Nature.

ficient occasion to bethink ourselves. How came such a thing as this into being? whence did it spring, or to what original doth it owe itself? More particularly we have here two things to be discoursed.—First, That, notwithstanding so high excellences, the soul of man doth yet appear to be a caused being, that sometime had a beginning. —Secondly, That, by them, it is sufficiently evident, that it owes itself to a wise and intelligent cause.

As to the *former* of these, we need say the less, because *that sort* of atheists with whom we have chiefly now to do, deny not human souls to have had a beginning, as supposing them to be produced by the bodies they animate, by the same generation, and that such generation did sometimes begin; that only rude and wildly moving matter was from eternity; and that by infinite alterations and commixtures in that eternity, it fell at last into this orderly frame and state wherein things now are, and became prolific, so as to give beginning to the several sorts of living things which do now continue to propagate themselves; the mad folly of which random fancy we have been so largely contending against hitherto. The *other sort*, who were for an eternal succession of generations, have been sufficiently refuted by divers others, and partly by what hath been already said in this discourse; and we may further meet with them ere it be long. We in the meantime find not any professing atheism, to make human souls, as such, necessary and self-originate beings.

Yet it is requisite to consider not only what persons of atheistical persuasions *have said*, but what also they possibly *may say*. And moreover, some that have been remote from atheism, have been prone, upon the contemplation of the excellences of the human soul, to overmagnify, yea and even no less than deify, it. It is therefore needful to say somewhat in this matter. For if nothing of direct and downright atheism had been designed, the rash hyperboles, as we will charitably call them, and unwarrantable rhetorications of these latter, should they obtain to be looked upon and received as severe and strict assertions of truth, were equally destructive of religion, as the others' more strangely bold and avowed opposition to it.

Such, I mean, as have spoken of the souls of men as parts of God,[b] one thing with him; a particle of divine breath; *an extract or derivation of himself*; that have not feared to apply to them his most peculiar attributes, or say that of them, which is most appropriate and incommunicably belonging to him alone. Nay, to give them his very name, and say in plain words they were God.[c]

Now it would render a *temple* alike insignificant, to suppose no worshipper, as to suppose none who should be worshipped. And what should be the worshipper, when our souls are thought the same thing with what should be the object of our worship? But methinks, when we consider their necessitous, indigent state, their wants and cravings, their pressures and groans, their grievances and complaints, we should find enough to convince us they are not the self-originate or self-sufficient being; and might even despair any thing should be plain and easy to them, with whom it is a difficulty to distinguish themselves from God. Why are they in a state which they dislike? Wherefore are they not full and satisfied? Why do they wish and complain? Is this Godlike? But if any have a doubt hanging in their minds concerning the unity of souls with one another, or with the soul of the world, let them read what is already extant: and supposing them, thereupon, distinct beings, there needs no more to prove them not to be necessary, independent, uncaused ones, than their subjection to so frequent changes; their ignorance, doubts, irresolution, and gradual progress to knowledge, certainty, and stability in their purposes; their very being united with these bodies in which they have been but a little while, as we all know; whereby they undergo no small change, (admitting them to have been pre-existent,) and wherein they experience so many. Yea, whether those changes import any immutation of their very essence or no, the repugnancy being so plainly manifest of the very terms, *necessary* and *changeable*. And inasmuch as it is so evident that a necessary being can receive no accession to itself; that it must always have, or keep itself, after the same manner, and in the same state; that if it be necessarily such, or such, (as we cannot conceive it to be, but we must, in our own thoughts, affix to it some determinate state or other,) it must be eternally such, and ever in that particular unchanged state.

Therefore be the perfection of our souls as great as our most certain knowledge of them can possibly allow us to suppose it, it is not yet *so great*, but that we must be constrained to confess them no necessary, self-originate beings, and, by consequence, dependent ones, that owe themselves to some cause.

XII. Nor yet (that we may pass over to the other strangely distant extreme) is the perfection of our souls so *little*, as to require less than an intelligent cause, endowed with the wisdom which we assert and challenge unto the truly necessary, uncaused Being. Which, because he hath no other rival or competitor for the glory of this production, than only the fortuitous jumble of the blindly-moving particles of matter, directs our inquiry to this single point: Whose image the thing produced bears? Or which it more resembles? *stupid, senseless, unactive matter*, (or at the best only supposed moving, though no man, upon the atheists' terms, can imagine how it came to be so,) or the *active, intelligent Being*, whom we affirm the cause of all things, and who hath peculiarly entitled himself, *the Father of spirits*.

That is, we are to consider whether the powers and operations belonging to the reasonable soul do not plainly argue—1. That it neither rises from, nor is, mere matter; whence it will be consequent, it must have an efficient, diverse from matter—2. That it owes itself to an intelligible efficient.

As to the former, we need not deal distinctly and severally concerning their original and their nature. For if they are not mere matter, it will be evident enough they do not arise from thence.

So that all will be summed up in this inquiry. Whether reason can agree to matter considered alone, or by itself?

But here the case requires closer discourse. For, in order to this inquiry, it is requisite the subject be determined we inquire about. It hath been commonly taken for granted, that all substance is either *matter* or *mind*; when yet it hath not been agreed what is the distinct notion of the one or the other. And for the stating their difference, there is herein both an apparent difficulty and necessity.

A *difficulty*; for the ancient difference, that the former is extended, having parts lying without each other, the latter unextended, having no parts, is now commonly exploded, and, as it seems, reasonably enough; both because we scarce know how to impose it upon ourselves, to conceive of a mind or spirit that is unextended, or that hath no parts; and that, on the other hand, the atoms of matter, strictly taken, must also be unextended, and be without parts. And the difficulty of assigning the proper difference between these two, is further evident, from what we experience how difficult it is to form any clear distinct notion of substance itself, so to be divided into matter and mind, stripped of all its attributes.[e] Though, as that celebrated author also speaks, we can be surer of nothing, than that there is a real somewhat, that sustains those attributes.

Yet also, who sees not a *necessity* of assigning a difference? For how absurd is it, to affirm, deny, or inquire, of what belongs, or belongs not, to matter, or mind, if it be altogether unagreed, what we mean by the one, or the other.

b Sen. Ep. 92. Hor. Serm. M. Anton. ἀποσπασμα ἑαυτου.

c The Pythagoreans, concerning whom it is said, they were wont to admonish one another to take heed, *lest they should rent God in themselves*.—Μὴ διασπαν τον ἐν ἑαυτοις θεον. Jamblich. de vit. Pythag. Plato, who undertakes to prove the immortality of the soul by such arguments as, if they did conclude any thing, would conclude it to be God; that it is the fountain, the principle (ἀρχη, και ἀρχη) of motion; and adds, that the principle is unbegotten, &c. in Phædone. Makes it the cause of all things, and the ruler of all, De Leg. l. 10. though his words there seem meant of the soul of the world. Concerning which soul, afterwards, inquiring whether all ought not to account it God, he answers, Yes certainly, except any one be come to extreme madness. And whether an identity were not imagined of our souls, with that of the world, or with God, is too much left in doubt, both as to him and some of his followers; to say nothing of modern enthusiasts.

d Dr. More's Poem. Antimonopsuchia. His Immortality of the Soul. Mr. Baxter's Appendix to the Reasons of Christian Religion, &c.

e As is to be seen in that accurate discourse of Mr. Locke. His Essay of Human Understanding, published since this was first written.

That the former, speaking of any continued portion of matter, hath parts actually separable; the other being admitted to have parts too, but that cannot be actually separated; with the power of self-contraction, and self-dilatation, ascribed to this latter, denied of the former, seem as intelligible differences, and as little liable to exception, as any we can think of. Besides what we observe of dulness, inactivity, insensibility, in one sort of substance; and of vigour, activity, capacity of sensation, and spontaneous motion, with what we can conceive of self-vitality, in this latter sort; *i. e.* that whereas matter is only capable of having life imparted to it, from somewhat that lives of itself, created mind or spirit, though depending for its being on the supreme cause, hath life essentially included in that being, so that it is inseparable from it, and it is the same thing to it, to live, and to be. But a merely materiate being, if it live, borrows its life, as a thing foreign to it, and separable from it.

But if, instead of such distinction, we should shortly and at the next have pronounced, that as mind is a cogitant substance, matter is incogitant; how would this have squared with our present inquiry? What antagonist would have agreed with us upon this state of the question? *i. e.* in effect, whether *that* can reason or think, that is incapable of reason or thought? Such, indeed, as have studied more to hide a bad meaning, than express a good, have confounded the terms *matter* or *body*, and *substance*. But take we matter as contradistinguished to mind and spirit, as above described: and it is concerning *this* that we intend this inquiry.

And here we shall therefore wave the consideration of their conceits, concerning the manner of the first origination of men, who thought their whole being was only a production of the earth. Whereof the philosophical account deserves as much laughter, instead of confutation, as any the most fabulously poetical: that is, how they were formed (as also the other animals) in certain little bags, or wombs of the earth, out of which when they grew ripe, they broke forth,[f] &c.

And only consider what is said of the constitution and nature of the human soul itself; which is said to be composed of very well polished, the *smoothest* and the *roundest* atoms;[g] and which are of the neatest fashion, and every way, you must suppose, the best conditioned the whole country could afford; of a more excellent make, as there is added, than those of the fire itself. And these are the things you must know, which think, study, contemplate, frame syllogisms, make theorems, lay plots, contrive business, act the philosopher, the logician, the mathematician, statesman, and every thing else; only you may except the priest, for of him there was no need.

This therefore is our present theme, whether such things as these be capable of such, or any acts of reason, yea or no? And if such a subject may admit of serious discourse; in this way it may be convenient to proceed, *viz.* either any such small particle, or atom (for our business is not now with Des Cartes, but Epicurus) alone, is rational, or a good convenient number of them assembled, and most happily met together. It is much to be feared the former way will not do. For we have nothing to consider in any of these atoms, in its solitary condition, besides its magnitude, its figure, and its weight, and you may add also its motion, if you could devise how it should come by it.

And now, because it is not to be thought that all atoms are rational, (for then the stump of a tree or a bundle of straw might serve to make a soul of, for aught we know, as good as the best,) it is to be considered by which of those properties an atom shall be entitled to the privilege of being rational, and the rational atoms be distinguished from the rest. Is it their peculiar magnitude or size that so far ennobles them? Epicurus would here have us believe, that the *least* are the fittest for this turn. Now if you consider how little we must suppose them generally to be, according to his account of them; (that is, that looking upon any of those little motes a stream whereof you may perceive when the sun shines in at a window, and he dombts not but many myriads of even ordinary atoms, go to the composition of any one of these scarcely discernible motes;) how sportful a contemplation were it, to suppose one of those furnished with all the powers of a reasonable soul! Though it is likely they would not laugh at the jest, that think thousands of souls might be conveniently placed upon the point of a needle. And yet, which makes the matter more admirable, that very few, except they are very carefully picked and chosen, can be found among those many myriads, but will be *too big* to be capable of rationality. Here sure the fate is very hard, of those that come nearest the size, but only, by a very little too much corpulency, happen to be excluded, as unworthy to be counted among the rational atoms. But sure if all sober reason be not utterly lost and squandered away among these little entities, it must needs be judged altogether incomprehensible, why, if upon the account of mere littleness, any atom should be capable of reason, all should not be so: and then we could not but have a very rational world. At least, the difference in this point being so very small among them, and they being all so very little, methinks they should all be capable of some reason, and have only less or more of it, according as they are bigger or less. But there is little doubt, that single property of less magnitude, will not be stood upon as the characteristical difference of rational and irrational atoms; and because their more or less gravity is reckoned necessarily and so immediately to depend on that, (for those atoms cannot be thought porous, but very closely compacted each one within itself,) this, it is likely, will as little be depended on.[h] And so their peculiar figure must be the more trusted to, as the differencing thing. And because there is in this respect so great a variety among this little sort of people, or *nation*, as this author somewhere calls them, (whereof he gives so punctual an account,[i] as if he had been the generalissimo of all their armies, and were wont to view them at their rendezvous, to form them into regiments and squadrons, and appoint them to the distinct services he found them aptest for,) no doubt it was a difficulty to determine which sort of figure was to be pitched on to make up the rational regiment. But since his power was absolute, and there was none to gainsay or contradict, the round figure was judged best, and most deserving this honour. Otherwise, a reason might have been asked (and it might have been a greater difficulty to have given a good one) why some other figure might not have done as well; unless respect were had to fellow-atoms, and that it was thought, they of this figure could better associate for the present purpose; and *that* we shall consider of by and by. We now proceed on the supposition that possibly a single atom, by the advantage of this figure, might be judged capable of this high achievement. And in that case, it would not be impertinent to inquire whether, if an atom were perfectly round, and so very rational, but by an unexpected misadventure, it comes to have one little corner somewhere clapped on, it be hereby quite spoiled of its rationality? And again, whether one that comes somewhat near that figure, only it hath some little protuberances upon it, might not by a little filing, or the friendly rubs of other atoms, become rational? And yet, now we think on it, of this improvement he leaves no hopes, because he tells us, though they have parts, yet they are so solidly compacted that they are by no force capable of dissolution. And so whatever their fate is in this particular, they must abide it without expectation of change. And yet, though we cannot really alter it for the better with any of them, yet we may think as favourably of the matter as we please; and for any thing that yet appears, whatever peculiar claim the round ones lay to rationality, we may judge as well; and shall not easily be disproved of any of the rest.

Upon the whole, no one of these properties alone is likely to make a rational atom: what they will all do,

f Gassend. Epicur. Syntag.

g As may be seen in the same Syntag. and in Epicurus's Epist. to Herodot. in Laert. Ἐξ ἀτόμων αὐτὴν συγκεῖσθαι λειοτάτων, καὶ στρογγυλωτάτων, &c.

h Where yet it falls out somewhat crossly, that the least (and consequently the lightest) should be thought fittest to be the matter of the rational soul, because they are aptest for motion, when yet no other cause is assigned of their motion besides their gravity, which cannot but be more, as they are bigger; (for no doubt if you should try them in a pair of scales, the biggest would be found to out-weigh;) whence also it should seem to follow, that the heaviest having most in them of that which is the cause of motion, should be the most moveable, and so by consequence the biggest.

i That they are round, oblong, oval, plain, hooked, rough, smooth, bunch-backed, &c.

meeting together, may yet seem a doubt. That is, supposing we could hit upon one single atom that is at once of a very little size, and consequently very light and nimble, and most perfectly smooth, and unexceptionably round, (and possibly there may be found a good many such,) will not this do the business? May we not now hope to have a rational sort of people among them, that is, those of this peculiar family or tribe? And yet still the matter will be found to go very hard; for if we cannot imagine or devise how any one of these properties should contribute any thing (as upon our utmost disquisition we certainly cannot) towards the power of reasoning, it is left us altogether unimaginable how all these properties together should make a rational atom! There is only one relief remaining, that is, what if we add to these other properties some peculiarly brisk sort of actual motion: (for to be barely moveable will not serve, inasmuch as all are so:) but will not actual motion, added to its being irreprehensibly little, light, and round, especially if it be a very freakish one, and made up of many odd, unexpected windings, and turns, effect the business? Possibly it might do something to actual reasoning, supposing the power were there before: for who can tell but the little thing was fallen asleep, and by this means its power might be awakened into some exercise? But that it should give the power itself, is above all comprehension; and there is nothing else to give it. These that have been mentioned, being all the prime qualities that are assigned to atoms singly considered; all others that can be supposed, belonging to concrete bodies, what are composed of many of them meeting together. And therefore hither in the next place our inquiry must be directed, whether any number of atoms, definite or indefinite, being in themselves severally irrational, can become rational by association, or compose and make up a rational soul?

Hitherto it must be acknowledged we have not fought with any adversary; not having met with any that have asserted the rationality of single, corporeal atoms; yet because we know not what time may produce, and whither the distress and exigency of a desperate cause may drive the maintainers of it, it was not therefore fit to say nothing to that supposable or possible assertion, I mean possible to be asserted, howsoever impossible it is to be true. Nor yet could it well admit of any thing to be said to it, but in that ludicrous and sportful way. If we will suppose any to be so foolish, they are to be dealt with according to their folly.

But now as to this other conceit, that atoms, provided they be of the right stamp or kind, may, a competent number of them assembled together, compose a reasonable soul, is an express article of the Epicurean creed. And therefore, here, we are to deal more cautiously; not that this is any whit a wiser fancy than the other, but that the truth in this matter is surer to meet with opposition in the minds of some persons, already formed unto that wild apprehension, and tinctured with it.

Wherefore such must be desired to consider in the first place, if they will be true disciples of Epicurus throughout, what he affirms of all atoms universally, that they must be simple, uncompounded bodies, (or, if you will, corpuscles,) not capable of division or section, by no force dissoluble, and therefore immutable, or in themselves void of any mutation.

Hereupon let it be next considered, if there were in them, those that are of the right size, shape, and weight, severally, some certain sparks or seeds of reason, (that we may make the supposition as advantageous as we can,) or dispositions thereto, yet how shall it be possible to them to communicate, or have that communion with one another, as *together* to constitute an actually and completely rational or thinking thing? If every one could bring somewhat to a common stock that might be serviceable to that purpose; how shall each one's proportion or share be imparted? They can none of them emit any thing, there can possibly be no such thing as an *effluvium* from any of them, inasmuch as they are incapable of diminution; and are themselves each of them as little as the least imaginable *effluvium* that we would suppose to proceed from this or that particular atom. They can at the most but touch one another; penetrate, or get into one another they cannot; insomuch as if any one have a treasure in it, which is in readiness for the making up an intellective faculty or power among them that should be common to them all, yet each one remains so locked up within itself, and is so reserved and incommunicative, that no other, much less the whole body of them, can be any jot the wiser. So that this is like to be a very dull assembly.

But then, if there be nothing of reason to be communicated, we are yet at a greater loss; for if it be said, having nothing else to communicate, they communicate themselves, what is that self? Is it a rational self? Or is every single atom that enters this composition reason? Or is it a principle of reason? Is it a seed? Or is it a part? Is it a thought? What shall we suppose? Or what is there in the properties assigned to this sort of atoms that can bespeak it any of these? And if none of these can be supposed, what doth their association signify towards ratiocination? They are little, what doth that contribute? Therefore there may need the more of them to make a good large soul; but why must a *little thing*, devoid of reason, contribute more towards it, than another somewhat bigger? They are *light*, doth that mend the matter? They are the sooner blown away, they can the less cohere, or keep together; they are the more easily capable of dissipation, the less of keeping their places in solemn counsel. They are *round*, and exactly *smooth*. But why do they the more conveniently associate upon that account for this purpose? They cannot therefore come so close together as they might have done, had they been of various figures. They cannot, indeed, give or receive so rude touches. This signifies somewhat towards the keeping of state, but what doth it to the exercise of reason? Their being so perfectly and smoothly round, makes them the more incapable of keeping a steady station, they are the more in danger of rolling away from one another; they can upon this account lay no hold of each other. Their counsels and resolves are likely to be the more lubricous, and liable to an uncertain volubility. It is not to be imagined what a collection of individuals, only thus qualified, can do when they are come together, an assembly thus constituted. Are we hence to expect oracles, philosophical determinations, maxims of state? And since they are supposed to be so much alike, how are the mathematical atoms to be distinguished from the moral? those from the political? the contemplative from the active? Or when the assembly thinks fit to entertain itself with matters of this or that kind, what must be its different composure or posture? Into what mould or figure must it cast itself for one purpose, and into what, for another? It is hard to imagine that these little globular bodies, that we may well suppose to be as like as one egg can be to another, should by the mere alteration of their situation, in respect of one another, (and no alteration besides can be so much as imagined among them,) make so great a change in the complexion of this assembly; so that now, it shall be disposed to seriousness, and by some transposition of the spherical particles, to mirth; now to business, and by and by to pleasure. And seeing all human souls are supposed made of the same sort of material, how are the atoms modelled in one man, and how in another? What atoms are there to dispose to this sect more, and what to another? Or if a good reason can be assigned for their difference, what shall be given for their agreement? Whence is it that there are so many, so unquestionable, common notions every where received? Why are not all things transposed in some minds, when such a posture of the atoms as might infer it, is as supposable as any other? Yea, and since men are found not always to be of one mind with themselves, it is strange and incomprehensible, that such a situation of these atoms, that constitute his soul, should dispose him to be of one opinion, and another of another How are they to be ranged when for the affirmative? how for the negative? And yet a great deal more strange, that since their situation is so soon changed, and so continually changing, (the very substance of the soul being supposed nothing else than a thing very like, but a little finer than a busy and continually moving flame of fire,) any man should ever continue to be of the same opinion with himself, one quarter of an hour together; that all notions are not confounded and jumbled; that the same thing is not thought and un-

thought, resolved and unresolved, a thousand times in a day. That is, if any thing could be thought or resolved at all, or, if this were a subject capable of framing or receiving any sort of notion.

But still that is the greatest difficulty, how there can be such a thing as thinking, or forming of notions. The case is plain of such notions as have no relation to matter, or dependence upon external sense. For what doth contribute to my contemplation of my own mind, and its acts and powers; to my animadversion, or knowing that I think, or will, this or that?

But besides, and more generally, what proportion is there between a thought and the motion of an atom? Will we appeal to our faculties, to our reason itself? And whither else will we? Is there any cognation or kindred between the ideas we have of these things, the casual agitation of a small particle of matter, (be it as little or as round as we please to imagine,) and an act of intellection or judgment? And what if there be divers of them together? What can they do more towards the composing an intelligent thing, than many ciphers to the arithmetical composition of a number? It would be as rational to suppose a heap of dust, by long lying together, might at last become rational. Yes, these are things that have, some way or other, the power of motion; and what can they effect by that? They can frisk about, and ply to and fro, and interfere among themselves, and hit, and justle, and tumble over one another, and that will contribute a great deal; about as much, we may suppose, as the shaking of such dust well in a bag, by which means it might possibly become finer and smaller something; and by continuing that action, at length rational! No; but these atoms, of which the soul is made, have a greater advantage by their being disposed into a so well-contrived and fitly organized receptacle as the body is. It is indeed true, and admirable, that the body is, as hath been before observed, so fitly framed for the purposes whereto the whole of it, and its several parts, are designed. But how unfitly is that commodious structure of it so much as mentioned, by such as will not allow themselves to own and adore the wisdom and power of its great Architect.

And what if the composure of the body be so apt and useful; so excellent in its own kind; is it so in every kind, or to all imaginable purposes? Or what purpose can we possibly imagine more remote or foreign to the composition of the body, than that the power of ratiocination should be derived thence? It might as well be said it was so made, to whirl about the sun, or to govern the motions of the moon and stars, as to confer the power of reason, or enable the soul to think, to understand, to deliberate, to will, &c. Yea, its organs, some of them, are much more proportionable to those actions, than any of them unto these. Which, though a well-habited body, while the soul remains in this imprisoned state, do less hinder, yet how doth it help? And that it might perform these acts without bodily organs, is much more apprehensible than how they can properly be said to be performed by them. And that, though they are done in the body, they would be done much better out of it.

But shall it be granted that these soul-constituting atoms, till they be (or otherwise than as they are) united with a duly organized body, are utterly destitute of any reasoning or intelligent power? Or are they, by themselves, apart from this grosser body, irrational? If this be not granted, the thing we intend must be argued out. Either, then, they are, or they are not. If the *latter* be said, then they have it of themselves, without dependence on the organized body; and so we are fairly agreed to quit that pretence, without more ado, of their partaking reason from thence. And are only left to weigh over again what hath been already said to evince the contrary, that is, how manifestly absurd it is, to imagine that particles of matter, by their peculiar size, or weight, or shape, or motion, or all of these together: and that, whether single or associated, should be capable of reasoning. If the former be the thing which is resolved to be stuck to, that is, that they are of themselves irrational, but they become reasonable by their being united in such a prepared and organized body, this requires to be a little further considered. And to this purpose it is necessary to obviate a pitiful shift that it is possible some may think fit to use, for the avoiding the force of this dilemma; and may rely upon as a ground, why they may judge this choice the more secure; that is, that they say they are rational by dependence on the body they animate; because they are only found so united with one another there; that there they have the first coalition; there they are severed from such as serve not this turn; there they are pent in, and held together as long as its due temperament lasts; which, when it fails, they are dissipated, and so lose their great advantage for the acts of reason, which they had in such a body. What pleasure soever this may yield, it will soon appear it does them little service. For it only implies, that they have their rationality of themselves, so be it that they were together; and not immediately from the body; or any otherwise, than that they are somewhat beholden to it, for a fair occasion of being together; as it it were, else, an unlawful assembly; or that they knew not, otherwise, how to meet and hold together. They will not say that the body gives them being, for they are eternal, and self-subsisting, as they will have it. Yea, and of themselves (though the case be otherwise with the Cartesian particles) undiminishable, as to their size, and, as to their figure and weight, unalterable; so that they have neither their littleness, their roundness, nor their lightness, from the body, but only their so happy meeting. Admit this, and only suppose them to be met out of the body. And why may not this be thought supposable? If they be not rational till they be met, they cannot have wit enough to scruple meeting, at least somewhere else, than in the body. And who knows but such a change may happen? As great as this, are by these persons supposed to have happened, before the world could have come to this pass it is now at; who can tell but such a number of the same sort of atoms (it being natural for things so much of a complexion and temper to associate and find out one another) might ignorantly, and thinking no harm, come together? And having done so, why might they not keep together? Do they need to be pent in? How are they pent in, whils in the body? If they be disposed, they have ways enough to get out. And if they must needs be inclined to scatter when the crasis of the body fails, surely a way might be found to hem them in, if that be all, at the time of expiration, more tightly and closely, than they could be in the body. And what reason can be devised, why, being become rational, by their having been assembled in the body, they may not agree to hold together, and do so in spite of fate, or maugre all ordinary accidents, when they find it convenient to leave it? And then upon these no-way impossible suppositions, (according to their principles, so far as can be understood, with whom we have to do,) will they now be rational out of the body? Being still endowed (as they cannot but be) with the same high privileges of being little, round, and light, and being still also together; and somewhat more, it may be, at liberty, to roll and tumble, and mingle with one another, than in the body? If it be now affirmed, they will, in this case, be rational, at least as long as they hold together, then we are but where we were. And this shift hath but diverted us a little; but so, as it was easy to bring the matter, again, about, to the same point we were at before. Wherefore the shelter of the body being thus quite again forsaken, this poor expulsed crew of dislodging atoms are exposed to fight in the open air, for their rationality, against all that was said before.

But if this refuge and sanctuary of the body be not merely pretended to, but really and plainly trusted in, and stuck to, then are we sincerely and honestly to consider what a body so variously organized can do, to make such a party of atoms (that of themselves are not so, singly, nor together) become rational. And surely, if the cause were not saved before, it is now deplorate, and lost without remedy. For what do they find here that can thus, beyond all expectation, improve them to so high an excellency? Is it flesh, or blood, or bones, that puts this stamp upon them? Think, what is the substance of the nobler parts, the liver, or heart, or brain, that they should turn these, before, irrational atoms, when they fall into them, into rational, any more than if they were well soaked in a quagmire, or did insinuate themselves into a piece of soft dough? But here they meet with a benign and kindly

heat and warmth, which comfortably fosters and cherishes them, till at length it hath hatched them into rational. But methinks they should be warm enough of themselves, since they are supposed so much to resemble fire. And, however, wherein do we find a flame of fire more rational, than a piece of ice? Yea, but here they find a due temper of moisture as well as heat. And that surely doth not signify much; for if the common maxim be true, that the dry soul is the wisest, they might have been much wiser, if they had kept themselves out of the body. And since it is necessary the soul should consist of that peculiar sort of atoms before described; and the organical body (which must be said for distinction sake, the soul being all this while supposed a body also) consists of atoms too, that are of a much coarser alloy, methinks a mixture should not be necessary, but a hinderance, and great debasement, rather, to this rational composition. Besides, that it cannot be understood, if it were necessary these atoms should receive any tincture from the body, in order to their being rational, what they can receive, or how they can receive any thing. They have not pores that can admit an adventitious moisture, though it were of the divinest nectar, and the body could never so plentifully furnish them with it. Wherein then lies the great advantage these atoms have by being in the body, to their commencing rational? If there be such advantage, why can it not be understood? Why is it not assigned? Why should we further spend our guesses what may possibly be said? But yet, may not much be attributed to the convenient and well-feneed cavity of the brain's receptacle, or the more secret chambers within that, where the studious atoms may be very private and free from disturbance? Yet sure it is hard to say, why they that are wont to do it *here*, might not as well philosophize in some well-chosen cavern, or hole of a rock; nor were it impossible to provide them *there*, with as soft a bed. And yet would it not be some relief to speak of the fine slender pipes, winding to and fro, wherein they may be conveyed so conveniently from place to place, that if they do not fall into a reasoning humour in one place, they may in another? Why, what can this do? It seems somewhat like Balaam's project, to get into a vein of incantation, by changing stations. And transplace them as you will, it requires more magic than ever he was master of, to make those innocent, harmless things, masters of reason.

For do but consider, what if you had a large phial capable of as great a quantity as you can think needful, of very fine particles, and replenished with them, closely stopped, and well luted; suppose these as pure and fit for the purpose as you can imagine, only not yet rational; will their jaring to and fro, through very close and staunch tubes, from one such receptacle to another, make them at last become so? It seems then, do what you will with them, toss and tumble them hither and thither, rack them from vessel to vessel, try what methods you can devise of sublimation or improvement, every thing looks like a vain and hopeless essay. For indeed, do what you please or can think of, they are such immutable entities, you can never make them less, or finer, than they originally were: and rational they were not, before their meeting in the body; wherefore it were a strange wonder, if that should so far alter the case with them, that they should become rational by it.

XIII. And now I must, upon the whole, profess not to be well pleased with the strain of this discourse; not that I think it unsuitable to its subject, (for I see not how it is fitly to be dealt with in a more serious way,) but that I dislike the subject. And were it not that it is too obvious, how prone the minds of some are to run themselves into any the grossest absurdities rather than admit the plain and easy sentiments of religion; it were miserable trifling to talk at this rate, and a loss of time not to be endured. But when an unaccountable aversion to the acknowledgment and adoration of the ever-blessed Deity, hurries away men, affrighted and offended at the lustre of his so manifest appearances, to take a bad, but the only shelter the case can admit, under the wings of any the most silly, foolish figment; though the ill temper and dangerous state of the persons is to be thought on with much pity, yet the things which they pretend being in themselves ridiculous, if we will entertain them into our thoughts at all, cannot fitly be entertained but with derision. Nor doth it more unbecome a serious person to laugh at what is ridiculous, than gravely to weigh and ponder what is weighty and considerable; provided he do not seek occasion of that former sort, on purpose to gratify a vain humour; but only allow himself to discourse suitably to them, when they occur. And their dotage who would fain serve themselves of so wildly extravagant and impossible suppositions, for the fostering their horrid misbelief, that they have no God to worship, would certainly justify as sharp ironies, as the prophet Elijah bestows upon them who worshipped Baal, instead of the true God.

XIV. Nor is any thing here said intended as a reflection on such as, being unfurnished with a notion of created, intelligent spirits, that might distinguish their substance from the most subtile matter, have therefore thought that their mind or thinking power might have some such *substratum*, unto which it is superadded, or impressed thereon by a divine hand; in the meantime not doubting their immortality, much less the existence of a Deity, the Author and former of them, and all things. For they are no way guilty of that blasphemous nonsense, to make them consist of necessary, self-subsistent matter, every minute particle whereof is judged eternal and immutable, and in themselves, for aught we can find asserted, destitute of reason; and which yet acquire it by no one knows what coalition, without the help of a wise effieient, that shall direct and order it to so unimaginable an improvement. These persons do only think more refined matter capable of that impression and stamp; or of having such a power put into it, by the Creator's all-disposing hand. Wherein, to do them right, though they should impose somewhat hardly upon themselves, if they will make this estimate of the natural capacity of matter; or if they think the acts and power of reason in man, altogether unnatural to him; yet they do, in effect, the more befriend the cause we are pleading for; (as much as it can be befriended by a misapprehension; which yet is a thing of that untoward genius, and doth so ill consort with truth, that it is never admitted as a friend, in any one respect, but it repays it with a mischievous revenge, in some other; as might many ways be shown in this instance, if it were within the compass of our present design;) it being evident, that if any portion of matter shall indeed be certainly found the actual subject of such powers, and to have such operations belonging to it, there is the plainer and more undeniable necessity and demonstration of his power and wisdom, who can make any thing of any thing; of stones raise up children to Abraham! and who shall then have done that which is so altogether impossible, except him to whom all things are possible? There is the more manifest need of his hand to heighten dull matter, to a qualifiedness for performances so much above its nature; to make the loose and independent parts of so fluid matter cohere and hold together; that, if it were once made capable of knowledge, and the actual subject of it, whatsoever notions were impressed thereon, might not be, in a moment, confounded and lost: as indeed they could not but be, if the particles of matter were the immediate sent of reason; and so steady a hand did not hold them, in a settled composure, that they be not disordered, and men have, thence, the necessity of beginning afresh, to know any thing, every hour of the day. Though yet it seems a great deal more reasonable to suppose the souls of men to be of a substance in itself more consistent, and more agreeable to our experience; who find a continual ebbing and flowing of spirits, without being sensible of any so notable and sudden changes in our knowledge, as we could not but, thereupon, observe in ourselves; if they, or any as fluid finer matter, were the immediate subjects of it. It is therefore however sufficiently evident, and out of question, that the human soul (be its own substance what it will) must have an efficient diverse from matter; which it was our present intendment to evince. And so our way is clear to proceed to,

XV. The second inquiry, whether it be not also manifest, from the powers and operations which belong to it as it is reasonable, that it must have had an intelligent efficient? That is, since we find, and are assured, that there is a sort of being in the world (yea somewhat of ourselves,

and that hath best right, of any thing else about us, to be called ourselves) that can think, understand, deliberate, argue, &c. and which we can most certainly assure ourselves (whether it were pre-existent in any former state, or no) is not an independent or uncaused being, and hath therefore been the effect of some cause; whether it be not apparently the effect of a wise cause?

And this, upon supposition of what hath been before proved, seems not liable to any the least rational doubt. For it is already apparent, that it is not itself matter; and if it were, it is however the more apparent, that its cause is not matter; inasmuch, as if it be itself matter, its powers and operations are so much above the natural capacity of matter, as that it must have had a cause, so much more noble and of a more perfect nature than that, as to be able to raise and improve it, beyond the natural capacity of matter: which it was impossible for that, itself, to do. Whence it is plain, it must have a cause diverse from matter.

Wherefore this its immaterial cause must either be wise and intelligent, or not so. But is it possible any man should ever be guilty of a greater absurdity than to acknowledge some certain immaterial agent, destitute of wisdom, the only cause and fountain of all that wisdom, that *is*, or hath ever been, in the whole race of mankind. That is as much as to say, that all the wisdom of mankind hath been caused without a cause. For it is the same thing, after we have acknowledged any thing to be caused, to say it was caused by no cause, as to say it was caused by such a cause as hath nothing of that in it, whereof we find somewhat to be in the effect. Nor can it avail any thing, to speak of the disproportion or superior excellency in some effects to their second, or to their only partial causes. As that there are sometimes learned children of unlearned parents. For who did ever in that case say the parents were the productive causes of that learning? or of them, as they were learned? Sure that learning comes from some other cause. But shall it then be said, the souls of men have received their being from some such immaterial agent destitute of wisdom; and afterward, their wisdom and intellectual ability came some other way; by their own observation, or by institution and precept, from others? Whence then came their capacity of observing, or of receiving such instruction? Can any thing naturally destitute even of seminal reason, (as we may call it,) or of any aptitude or capacity tending thereto, ever be able to make observations, or receive instructions, whereby at length it may become rational? And is not that capacity of the soul of man a real something? Or is there no difference between being capable of reason and incapable? What, then, did this real something proceed from nothing? Or was the soul itself caused, and this its capacity uncaused? Or was its cause, only, capable of intellectual perfection, but not actually furnished therewith? But if it were only capable, surely its advantages for the actual attainment thereof have been much greater than ours. Whence it were strange if that capacity should never have come into act. And more strange, that we should know, or have any ground to pretend, that it hath not. But that there was an actual exercise of wisdom in the production of the reasonable soul is most evident. For is it a necessary being? That we have proved it is not. It is therefore a contingent, and its being depended on a free cause, into whose pleasure, only, it was resolvable, that it should be or not be; and which therefore had a dominion over its own acts. If this bespeak not an intelligent agent, what doth?

And though this might also be said concerning every thing else which is not necessarily, and so might yield a more general argument to evince a free designing cause; yet it concludes with greater evidence concerning the reasonable soul, whose powers and operations it is so manifestly impossible should have proceeded from matter. And therefore even that vain and refuted pretence itself, that other things might, by the necessary laws of its motion, become what they are, can have less place here. Whence it is more apparent that the reasonable soul must have had a free and intelligent cause, that used liberty and counsel, in determining that it should be, and especially that it should be such a sort of thing as we find it is. For when we see how aptly its powers and faculties serve for their proper and peculiar operations, who that is not beside himself can think that such a thing was made by one that knew not what he was doing? or that such powers were not given on purpose for such operations? And what is the capacity, but a power that should sometime be reduced into act, and arrive to the exercise of reason itself?

Now was it possible any thing should give that power that had it not any way? That is, in the same kind, or in some more excellent and noble kind? For we contend not that this Agent whereof we speak is in the strict and proper sense rational, taking that term to import an ability or faculty of inferring what is less known from what is more. For we suppose all things equally known to him, (which, so far as is requisite to our present design, that is, the representing him the proper object of religion, or of that honour which the dedication of a *temple* to him imports, we may in due time come more expressly to assert,) and that the knowledge which is with us the *end* of reasoning, is in *him* in its highest perfection, without being at all beholden to that *means;* that all the connexion of things with one another lie open to one comprehensive view, and are known to be connected, but not because they are so. We say, is it conceivable that man's knowing power should proceed from a cause that hath it not, in the same, or this more perfect kind? And may use those words to this purpose, not for their authority, (which we expect not should be here significant,) but the convincing evidence they carry with them, "He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?" That we may drive this matter to an issue, it is evident the soul of man is not a necessary, self-originate thing; and had therefore some cause. We find it to have knowledge, or the power of knowing, belonging to it. Therefore we say, So had its cause. We rely not here upon the credit of vulgar maxims, (whereof divers might be mentioned,) but the reason of them, or of the thing itself we allege. And do now speak of the whole, entire cause of this being, the human soul, or of whatsoever is casual of it; or of any perfection naturally appertaining to it. It is of an intelligent nature. Did this intelligent nature proceed from an unintelligent, as the whole and only cause of it? That were to speak against our own eyes, and most natural, common sentiments; and were the same thing as to say that something came of nothing. For it is all one to say so, and to say that any thing communicated what it had not to communicate. Or (which is alike madly absurd) to say that the same thing was such, and not such, intelligent, and not intelligent, able to communicate an intelligent nature, (for sure what it doth it is able to do,) and not able, (for it is not able to communicate what it hath not,) at the same time.

It is hardly here worth the while to spend time in countermining that contemptible refuge, (which is as inexpable of offending us, as of being defended,) that human souls may perhaps only have proceeded in the ordinary course of generation from one another. For that none have ever said any thing to that purpose deserving a confutation, except that some sober and pious persons, for the avoiding of some other difficulties, have thought it more safe to assert the traduction of human souls, who yet were far enough from imagining that they could be total, or first causes to one another: and doubted not, but they had the constant necessary assistance of that same Being we are pleading for, acting in his own sphere, as the first cause in *all such*, as well as *any other*, productions. Wherein they nothing oppose the main design of this discourse; and therefore it is not in our way, to offer at any opposition unto them.

But if any have a mind to indulge themselves the liberty of so much dotage, as to say the souls of men were first and only causes to one another; either they must suppose them to be *material* beings; and then we refer them to what hath been already said, showing that their powers and operations cannot belong to matter, nor arise from it; or *immaterial*, and then they cannot produce one another in the way of generation. For of what pre-existent substance are they made? Theirs who beget them? Of that they can part with nothing; separability, at least, of parts being a most confessed property of matter. Or some other? Where will they find that other spiritual substance, that belonged not inseparably to some individual being

before? And besides, if it were pre-existent, as it must be if a soul be generated out of it, then they were not the first and only causes of this production. And in another way than that of generation, how will any form the notion of making a soul? Let experience and the making of trial convince the speculators. By what power, or by what art, will they make a reasonable soul spring up out of nothing?

It might be hoped that thus, without disputing the possibility of an eternal, successive production of souls, this shift may appear vain. But if any will persist, and say, that how, or in what way soever they are produced, it is strange if they need any nobler cause than themselves; for may not any living thing well enough be thought capable of producing another of the same kind, of no more than equal perfection with itself? To this we say, besides that no one living thing is the only cause of another such, yet if that were admitted possible, what will it avail? For hath every soul that hath ever existed, or been in being, been produced, in this way, by another? This it were ridiculous to say, for if every one were so produced, there was then *some one*, before *every one*; inasmuch as that which produces, must surely have been before that which is produced by it. But how can *every one* have *one* before it? A manifest contradiction in the very terms! For then there will be one without the compass of every one. And how is it then said to be every one? There is then it seems one besides, or more than all. And so all is not all. And if this be thought a sophism, let the matter be soberly considered thus: The soul of man is either a thing of that nature universally (and consequently every individual soul) as that it doth exist of itself, necessarily and independently, or not. If it be, then we have, however, a wise intelligent being necessarily existing, the thing we have been proving all this while. Yet this concession we will not accept, for though it is most certain there is such a being, we have also proved the human soul is not it. Whence it is evidently a dependent being, in its own nature, that could never have been of itself, and consequently not at all, had it not been put into being by somewhat else. And being so in its own nature, it must be thus with every one that partakes of this nature. And consequently it must be somewhat of another nature that did put the souls of men into being. Otherwise, the whole stock and lineage of human souls is said to have been dependent on a productive cause, and yet had nothing whereon to depend: and so is both caused by another, and not caused. And therefore since it is hereby evident it was somewhat else, and of another nature, than a human soul, by which all human souls were produced into being: we again say, that distinct being either was a dependent, caused being, or not. If not, it being proved that the soul of man cannot but have had an intelligent or wise cause, we have now what we seek—an independent, necessary, intelligent being, if it do depend, or any will be so idle to say so; that, however, will infallibly and very speedily lead us to the same mark. For though some have been pleased to dream of an infinite succession of individuals of this or that kind, I suppose we have no dream as yet, ready formed, to come under confutation, of infinite kinds or orders of beings, gradually superior, one above another; the inferior still depending on the superior, and all upon nothing. And therefore, I conceive, we may fairly take leave of this argument from the human soul, as having gained from it sufficient evidence of the existence of a necessary being, that is intelligent, and designedly active, or guided by wisdom and counsel, in what it doth.

We might also, if it were needful, further argue the same thing from a power or ability manifestly superior to, and that exceeds the utmost perfection of, human nature, *viz.* that of prophecy, or the prediction of future contingencies; yea, and from another that exceeds the whole sphere of all created nature, and which crosses and countermands the known and stated laws thereof, *viz.* that of working miracles; both of them exercised with manifest design; as might evidently be made appear, by manifold instances, to as many as can believe any thing to be true, more than what they have seen with their own eyes; and that do not take present sense, yea, and their own only, to be the alone measure of all reality. But it is not necessary we insist upon every thing that may be said, so that enough be said to serve our present purpose.

XVI. And that our purpose may yet be more fully served, and such a being evidenced to exist as we may with satisfaction esteem to merit a *temple* with us, and the *religion* of it, it is necessary that we add somewhat concerning,

9. The *divine goodness*; for unto that eternal Being, whose existence we have hitherto asserted, goodness also cannot but appertain; together with those his other attributes we have spoken of.

It is not needful here to be curious about the usual scholastical notions of goodness, or what it imports, as it is wont to be attributed to being in the general, what, as it belongs in a peculiar sense to intellectual beings, or what more special import it may have, in reference to *this*. That which we at present chiefly intend by it, is a propension to do good with delight; or most freely, without other inducement than the agreeableness of it to his nature who doth it; and a certain delectation and complacency, which, hence, is taken in so doing. The name of goodness (though thus it more peculiarly signifies the particular virtue of liberality) is of a significancy large enough, even in the moral acceptation, to comprehend all other perfections or virtues, that belong to, or may any way commend, the will of a free agent. These therefore we exclude not; and particularly whatsoever is wont to be signified, as attributable unto God, by the names of *holiness*, as a steady inclination unto what is intellectually pure and comely, with an aversion to the contrary; *justice*, as that signifies an inclination to deal equally, which is included in the former, yet as more expressly denoting what is more proper to a governor over others, *viz.* a resolution not to let the transgressions of laws, made for the preservation of common order, pass without due animadversion and punishment; *truth*, whose signification also may be wholly contained under those former more general terms, but more directly contains sincerity, unaptness to deceive, and constancy to one's word: for these may properly be styled good things in a moral sense; as many other things might, in another notion of goodness, which it belongs not to our present design to make mention of. But these are mentioned as more directly tending to represent to us an amiable object of religion; and are referred hither, as they fitly enough may, out of an unwillingness to multiply, without necessity, particular heads or subjects of discourse.

In the meantime, as was said, what we principally intend, is, That the Being whose existence we have been endeavouring to evince, is *good*, as that imports a ready inclination of will to communicate unto others what may be good to them; creating, first, its own object, and then issuing forth to it, in acts of free beneficence, suitable to the nature of every thing created by it. Which, though it be the primary or first thing carried in the notion of this goodness, yet because that inclination is not otherwise good than as it consists with holiness, justice, and truth, these therefore may be esteemed, secondarily at least, to belong to it, as inseparable qualifications thereof.

Wherefore it is not a merely natural and necessary emanation we here intend, that prevents any act or exercise of counsel or design; which would no way consist with the liberty of the divine will, and would make the Deity as well a necessary Agent, as a necessary Being; yea, and would therefore make all the creatures merely natural and necessary emanations, and so destroy the distinction of necessary and contingent beings: and, by consequence, bid fair to the making all things God. It would infer not only the eternity of the world, but would seem to infer either the absolute infinity of it, or the perfection of it, and of every creature in it, to that degree, as that nothing could be more perfect in its own kind, than it is; or would infer the finiteness of the divine Being. For it would make what he *hath done* the adequate measure of what he *can do*, and would make all his administrations necessary, yea, and all the actions of men, and consequently take away all law and government out of the world, and all measures of right and wrong, and make all punitive justice, barbarous cruelty: and consequently, give us a notion of goodness, at length, plainly inconsistent with itself.

All this is provided against, by our having first asserted

the *wisdom* of that Being, whereunto we also attribute *goodness*; which guides all the issues of it, according to those measures or rules which the essential rectitude of the divine will gives, or rather is, unto it: whereby also a foundation is laid of answering such cavils against the *divine goodness*, as they are apt to raise to themselves, who are wont to magnify this attribute to the suppression of others; which is, indeed, in the end, to magnify it to nothing. And such goodness needs no other demonstration, than the visible instances and effects we have of it in the creation and conservation of this world; and particularly, in his large, munificeat bounty and kindness towards man, whereof his designing him for his temple and residence, will be a full and manifest proof.

And of all this, his own self-sufficieat fulness leaves it impossible to us to imagine another reason, than the delight he takes in dispensing his own free and large communications. Besides, that when we see some semblances and imitations of this goodness in the natures of some mea, which we are sure are not nothing, they must needs proceed from something, and have some fountain and original, which can be no other than the commoa Cause and Author of all things. In whom, therefore, this goodness doth firstly and most perfectly reside.

CHAPTER IV.

Generally all supposable perfection asserted of this Being; where, *First*, A being absolutely perfect is endeavoured to be evinced from the (already proved) necessary being; which is shown to import, in the general, the utmost fulness of being. Also divers things in particular that tend to evince that general. As that it is at the remotest distance from no being. Most purely actual. Most abstracted being. The productive and conserving cause of all things else. Undiminishable. Incapable of addition. *Secondly*, Hence is more expressly deduced, the infiniteness of this being. An inquiry whether it be possible the creature can be actually infinite? Difficulties concerning the absolute fulness and infiniteness of God considered. 2. The oniiness of this being. The Trinity not thereby excluded.

I. SOME account has been thus far given of that *Being*, whereunto we have been designing to assert the honour of a *temple*. Each of the particulars having been severally insisted on, that concur to make up that notion of this beiag, which was at first laid down. And more largely, what hath been more opposed, by persons of an atheistical or irreligious temper. But because, in that fore-mentioned account of God, there was added to the particulars there enumerated, (out of a just consciousness of human inability to comprehead every thing that may possibly belong to him,) this general supplement, "That all other supposable excellences whatsoever, do in the highest perfection appertain also originally unto this Being," it is requisite that somewhat be said concerning this addition. Especially in as much as it comprehends in it, or may infer, some things (not yet expressly mentioned) which may be thought necessary to the evincing the reasonableness of religion, or our self-dedication as a temple to him.

For instance, it may possibly be alleged, that if it were admitted there is somewhat that is eternal, uncaused, independent, neeessarily existent, that is self-active, living, powerful, wise, and good; yet all this will not infer upon us a universal obligation to religion, unless it can also be evinced, 1. That this Being is every way sufficient to supply and satisfy all our real wants and just desires. And, 2. That this Being is but *one*, and so that all be at a certainty where their religion ought to terminate; and that the worship of *every* temple must conecntre and meet in the *same* object. Now the eviction of an absolutely perfect Being would include each of these; and answer both the purposes which may seem hitherto not so fully satisfied. It is therefore requisite that we endeavour,

First, To show that the Being hitherto described is absolutely or every way perfect.

Secondly, To deduce, from the same grounds, the absolute *infinity*, and the *unity* or the onliness thereof.

II. And for the former part of this undertaking, it must be acknowledged absolute or universal perfection cannot be pretended to have been expressed in any, or in all the works of God together. Neither in *number*, for aught we know, (for as we cannot conceive, nor consequently speak, of divine perfections, but under the notion of many, whatsoever their real identity may be, so we do not know, but that within the compass of universal perfection there may be some particular oaes, of which there is no footstep in the creation, and whereot we have never formed any thought,) nor (more certainly) in *degree*; for surely the world, and the particular creatures in it, are not so perfect in correspondence to those attributes of its great Architect, which we have mentioned, *viz.* his power, wisdom, and goodness, as he might have made them, if he had pleased. And indeed, to say the world were absolutely and universally perfect, were to make *that* God.

Wherefore it must also be acknowledged that an absolutely perfect being cannot be immediately demonstrated from its effects, as whereto they neither do, nor is it within the capacity of created nature that they can, adequately correspond. Whence, therefore, all that can be done for the evincing of the absolute and universal perfection of God, must be in some other way or method of discourse.

And though it be acknowledged that it eannot be immediately evidenced from the creation, yet it is to be hoped that mediately it may. For from thence (as we have seen) a necessary self-originate being, such as hath been described, is, with the greatest certainty, to be concluded; and, from thence, if we attentively consider, we shall be led to an absolutely perfect one. That is, since we have the same certainty of such a necessary self-originate being, as we have that there is any thing existent at all; if we seriously weigh what kind of being this must needs be, or what its notion must import, above what hath been already evinced; we shall not be found, in this way, much to fall short of our present aim, though we have also other evidence that may be produced in its own fitter place.

Here therefore let us awhile make a stand, and more distinctly consider how far we are already advanced, that we may with the better order and advantage make our further progress.

These two things, then, are already evident: 1. That there is a necessary being that hath been eternally of itself, without dependence upon any thing, either as a productive or conserving cause; and, of itself, full of activity and vital energy, so as to be a productive and sustaining cause to other things. Of this any the most confused and indistinct view of this world, or a mere taking notice that there is any thing in being that lives and moves, and withal that alters and changes, (which it is impossible the necessary being itself should do,) cannot but put us out of doubt. 2. That this necessary, self-originate, vital, active being, hath very vast power, admirable wisdom, and most free and large goodness belonging to it. And of this, our nearer and more deliberate view and contemplation of the world do equally ascertain us. For of these things we find the manifest prints and footsteps in it. Yea, we find the derived things themselves, power, wisdom, goodness, in the creatures: and we are most assured they have not sprung from nothing; nor from any thing that had them not. And that which originally had them, or was their first fountain, must have them necessarily and essentially, (together with whatsoever else belongs to its being,) in and of itself. So that the asserting of any other necessary being, that is in itself destitute of these things, signifies no more towards the giving any aecount how these things came to be in the world, than if no being, necessarily existing, were asserted at all. We are therefore, by the exigeney of the case itself, constrained to acknowledge, not only that there is a necessary beiag, but that there is such a one as could be, and was, the fountain and cause of all those several kinds and degrees of being and perfection that we take notice of in the world besides. Another sort of neeessary being should not only be asserted to no purpose, there being nothing to be gained by it, no imaginable use to be made of it, as a principle that can serve any valuable end; (for suppose such a thing as neeessary matter, it will, as hath been shown, be unalterable; and therefore another sort of matter must be supposed besides it, that may be the matter of the universe, raised up out of nothing for that purpose, unto which this so unwieldy and unmanageable an entity can never serve;) but also it will be impossible to be proved. No man can be able with any plausible show of reason to make it out.

Yea, and much may be said, I conceive with convincing evidence, against it. As may perhaps be seen in the sequel of this discourse.

In the meantime, that there is, however, a necessary being, unto which all the perfections whereof we have any footsteps or resemblances in the creation do originally and essentially belong, is undeniably evident.

Now, that we may proceed, what can self-essentiate, underived power, wisdom, goodness, be, but most perfect power, wisdom, goodness? Or such, as than which there can never be more perfect? For since there can be no wisdom, power, or goodness, which is not either original and self-essentiate, or derived and participated from thence; who sees not that the former must be the more perfect? Yea, and that it comprehends all the other (as what was from it) in itself, and consequently that it is simply the most perfect? And the reason will be the same, concerning any other perfection, the stamps and characters whereof we find signed upon the creatures.

But that the being unto which these belong is absolutely and universally perfect in every kind, must be further evidenced by considering more at large the notion and import of such a self-originate necessary being.

Some indeed, both more anciently,[a] and of late, have inverted this course; and from the supposition of absolute perfection, have gone about to infer necessity of existence, as being contained in the idea of the former. But of this latter we are otherwise assured upon clearer and less exceptionable terms. And being so, are to consider what improvement may be made of it to our present purpose.

And in the general, this seems manifestly imported in the notion of the necessary being we have already evinced, that it have in it (some way or other, in what way there will be occasion to consider hereafter) the entire sum and utmost fulness of being, beyond which or without the compass whereof no perfection is conceivable, or indeed (which is of the same import) nothing.

Let it be observed, that we pretend not to argue this from the bare terms *necessary being* only, but from hence, that it is such as we have found it; though indeed these very terms import not a little to this purpose. For that which is necessarily of itself, without being beholden to any thing, seems as good as all things, and to contain in itself an immense fulness, being indigent of nothing. Nor by indigence is here meant cravingness, or a sense of want only; in opposition whereto, every good and virtuous man hath or may attain a sort of αὐτάρκεια or self-fulness, and be satisfied from himself: (which yet is a stamp of divinity, and a part of the image of God, or such a participation of the divine nature, as is agreeable to the state and condition of a creature:) but we understand by it (what is naturally before that) want itself really, and not in opinion, as the covetous is said to be poor. On the other hand, we here intend not a merely rational, (much less an imaginary,) but a real self-fulness. And so we say, what is of that nature, that it is, and subsists wholly and only of itself, without depending on any other, must owe this absoluteness to so peculiar an excellency of its own nature, as we cannot well conceive to be less than whereby it comprehends in itself the most boundless and unlimited fulness of being, life, power, or whatsoever can be conceived under the name of a perfection. For taking notice of the existence of any thing whatsoever, some reason must be assignable, whence it is that this particular being doth exist, and hath such and such powers and properties belonging to it, as do occur to our notice therein. When we can now resolve its existence into some cause that put it into being, and made it what it is, we cense so much to admire the thing, how excellent soever it be, and turn our admiration upon its cause, concluding that to have all the perfection in it which we discern in the effect, whatsoever unknown perfection (which we may suppose is very great) it may have besides. And upon this ground we are led, when we behold the manifold excellences that lie dispersed among particular beings in this universe, with the glory of the whole resulting thence, to resolve their existence into a common cause, which we design by the name of *God*. And now considering him as a wise Agent, (which hath been proved,) and consequently a free one, that acted not from any necessity of nature, but his mere good pleasure herein, we will not only conclude him to have all that perfection and excellency in him which we find him to have displayed in so vast and glorious a work, but will readily believe him (supposing we have admitted a conviction concerning what hath been discoursed before) to have a most inconceivable treasure of hidden excellency and perfection in him, that is not represented to our view in this work of his: and account, that he who could do all this which we see is done, could do unspeakably more. For though, speaking of natural and necessitated agents, which always act to their uttermost, it would be absurd to argue from their having done some lesser thing, to their power of doing somewhat that is much greater; yet as to free agents, that can choose their own act, and guide themselves by wisdom and judgment therein, the matter is not so. As when some great prince bestows a rich largess upon some mean person, especially that deserved nothing from him, or was recommended by nothing to his royal favour, besides his poverty and misery; we justly take it for a very significant demonstration of that princely munificence and bounty, which would incline him to do much greater things, when he should see a proportionable cause.

But now, if taking notice of the excellences that appear in created beings, and inquiring how they come to exist and be what they are, we resolve all into their cause; which, considering as perfectly free and arbitrary in all his communications, we do thence rationally conclude, that if he had thought fit, he could have made a much more pompous display of himself; and that there is in him, besides what appears, a vast and most abundant store of undiscovered perfection.

When next we turn our inquiry and contemplation more entirely upon the cause, and be think ourselves, But how came he to exist and be what he is? Finding this cannot be refunded upon any superiur cause; and our utmost inquiry can admit of no other result but this, that he is of himself what he is, we will surely say then, He is all in all. And that perfection which before we judged vastly great, we will now conclude altogether absolute, and such beyond which no greater can be thought.

Adding, I say, to what pre-conceptions we had of his greatness, from the works which we see have been done by him, (for why should we lose any gronnd we might have esteemed ourselves to have gained before?) the consideration of his necessary self-subsistence: and that no other reason is assignable of his being what he is, but the peculiar and incommunicable excellency of his own nature; whereby he was not only able to make such a world, but did possess eternally and invariably in himself all that he is, and hath: we cannot conceive that *all* to be less than absolutely universal, and comprehensive of whatsoever can lie within the whole compass of being.

For when we find that among all other beings, (which is most certainly true not only of actual, but all possible beings also,) how perfect soever they are or may be in their own kinds, none of them, nor all of them together, are or ever can be of that perfection, as to be of themselves without dependence on somewhat else as their productive, yea and sustaining, cause; we see besides, that their cause hath all the perfection, some way, in it that is to be found in them all: there is also that appropriate perfection belonging thereto, that it could be; and eternally is (yea and could not but be) only of itself, by the underived and incommunicable excellency of its own being. And surely, what includes in it all the perfection of all actual and possible beings, besides its own, (for there is nothing possible which some cause, yea and even this, cannot produce,) and inconceivably more, must needs be absolutely and every way perfect. Of all which perfections this is the radical one, that belongs to this common Cause and Author of all things, that he is necessarily and only self-subsisting.

a So that whatever there is of strength in that way of arguing, the glory of it cannot be without injury appropriated to the present age, much less to any particular person therein: it having, since Anselm, been ventilated by divers others heretofore. D. Scot. dist. 2. Q. 2. Th. Aquin. P. 1. Q. 2. art. 1. contra Gentil. l. 1. c. 10. Bradwardin. l. 1. c. 1. And by divers of late, as is sufficiently known, some rejecting, others much combining in it, both of these former, and of modern writers.

For if this high prerogative in point of being had been wanting, nothing at all had ever been. Therefore we attribute to God the greatest thing that can be said or thought, (and not what is wholly diverse from all other perfection, but which contains all others in it,) when we affirm of him that he is necessarily of himself. For though when we have bewildered and lost ourselves (as we soon may) in the contemplation of this amazing subject, we readily indulge our wearied minds the ease and liberty of resolving this high excellency of self or necessary existence into a mere negation, and say that we mean by it nothing else than that he was not from another; yet surely, if we would take some pains with ourselves, and keep our slothful shifting thoughts to some exercise in this matter, though we can never comprehend that vast fulness of perfection which is imported in it, (for it were not what we plead for, if we could comprehend it,) yet we should soon see and confess that it contains unspeakably more than a negation, even some great thing that is so much beyond our thoughts, that we shall reckon we have said but a little in saying we cannot conceive it. And when we have stretched our understandings to the utmost of their line and measure, though we may suppose ourselves to have conceived a great deal, there is infinitely more that we conceive not.

Wherefore that is a sober and most important truth which is occasionally drawn forth (as is supposed) from the so admired Des Cartes by the urgent objections of his very acute, friendly adversary,[b] that the inexhaustible power of God is the reason for which he needed no cause; and that since that unexhausted power, or the immensity of his essence, is most highly positive, therefore he may be said to be of himself positively, *i. e.* not as if he did ever by any positive efficiency cause himself (which is most manifestly impossible) but that the positive excellency of his own being was such, as could never need, nor admit of, being caused.

And that seems highly rational, (which is so largely insisted on by Doctor Jackson,[c] and divers others,) that what is without cause must also be without limit of being; because all limitation proceeds from the cause of a thing, which imparted to it so much and no more; which argument, though it seems neglected by Des Cartes, and is opposed by his antagonist; yet I cannot but judge that the longer one meditates, the less he shall understand, how any thing can be limited *ad intra*, or from itself, &c. As the author of the *Tentam. Phys. Theol.* speaks.

But that we may entertain ourselves with some more particular considerations of this necessary being, which may evince that general assertion of its absolute plenitude or fulness of essence: it appears to be such,

III. As is first, at the greatest imaginable distance from non-entity. For what can be at a greater, than that which is necessarily, which signifies as much as whereto not to be is utterly impossible? Now an utter impossibility not to be, or the uttermost distance from *no* being, seems plainly to imply the absolute plenitude of *all* being. And, if here it be said that to be necessarily and of itself needs be understood to import no more than a firm possession of that being which a thing hath, be it never so scant or minute a portion of being; I answer, it seems indeed so, if we measure the signification of this expression by its first and more obvious appearance. But if you consider the matter more narrowly, you will find here is also signified the nature and kind of the being possessed, as well as the manner of possession, *viz.* that it is a being of so excellent and noble a kind, as that it can subsist alone without being beholden: which is so great an excellency, as that it manifestly comprehends all other, or is the foundation of all that can be conceived besides. Which, they that fondly dream of necessary matter, not considering, unwaringly make one single atom a more excellent thing than the whole frame of heaven and earth: *that* being supposed simply necessary, *this* the merest piece of hap-hazard, the strangest chance imaginable, and beyond what any but themselves could ever have imagined. And which, being considered, would give us to understand that no minute or finite being can be necessarily.

And hence we may see what it is to be nearer, or at a further distance from not-being.

For these things that came contingently into being, or at the pleasure of a free cause, have all but a finite and limited being, whereof some, having a smaller portion of being than others, approach so much the nearer to not-being. Proportionably, what hath its being necessarily and of itself, is at the furthest distance from no-being, as comprehending all being in itself. Or, to borrow the expressions of an elegant writer, translated into our own language,[d] "We have much more non-essence than essence; if we have the essence of a man, yet not of the heavens, or of angels." "We are confined and limited within a particular essence, but God, who is what he is, comprehendeth all possible essences."

Nor is this precariously spoken, or as what may be hoped to be granted upon courtesy. But let the matter be rigidly examined and discussed, and the certain truth of it will most evidently appear. For if any thing be, in this sense, remoter than other from no-being, it must either be, what is necessarily of itself, or what is contingently at the pleasure of the other. But since nothing is, besides that self-originate necessary being, but what was from it; and nothing from it but what was within its productive power; it is plain all that, with its own being, was contained in it. And therefore, even in that sense, it is at the greatest distance from no-being; as comprehending the utmost fulness of being in itself, and consequently absolute perfection. Which will yet further appear, in what follows. We therefore add,

IV. That necessary being is most unmixed or purest being, without allay. That is pure which is full of itself. Purity is not here meant in a corporeal sense, (which few will think,) nor in the moral; but as, with metaphysicians, it signifies simplicity of essence. And in its present use is more especially intended to signify that simplicity which is opposed to the composition of act and possibility. We say then, that necessary being imports purest actuality; which is the ultimate and highest perfection of being. For it signifies no remaining possibility, yet unreplete or not filled up, and consequently the fullest exuberancy and entire confluence of all being, as in its fountain and original source. We need not here look further to evince this, than the native import of the very terms themselves; *necessity* and *possibility*; the latter whereof is not so fitly said to be excluded the former, as contingency is, but to be swallowed up of it; as fulness takes up all the space which were otherwise nothing but vacuity or emptiness. It is plain then that necessary being engrosses all possible being, both that is, and (for the same reason) that ever was so. For nothing can be, or ever was, in possibility to come into being, but what either must spring, or hath sprung, from the necessary self-subsisting being.

So that unto all that vast possibility, a proportionable actuality of this being must be understood to correspond. Else the other were not possible. For nothing is possible to be produced which is not within the actual productive power of the necessary being: I say within *its* actual productive power; for if its power for such production were not already actual, it could never become so, and so were none at all: inasmuch as necessary being can never alter, and consequently can never come actually to be what it already is not; upon which account it is truly said, *In æternis posse et esse sunt idem.* Wherefore in it, is nothing else but pure actuality, as profound and vast as is the utmost possibility of all created or producible being; *i. e.* it can be nothing other than it is, but can do all things, of which more hereafter. It therefore stands opposed, not only, more directly, to impossibility of being, which is the most proper notion of no-being, but some way, even to possibility also. That is, the possibility of being any thing but what it is; as being every way complete and perfectly full already.

V. Again, we might further add, that it is the most abstracted being, or is being in the very abstract. A thing much insisted on by some of the schoolmen. And the notion which with much obscurity they pursue after their manner, may carry some such sense as this, (if it may,

b Ad ob. in Med. resp. quartæ.

c Of the Essence and Attributes of God.

d Cauin.

throughout, be called sense,) that whereas no created nature is capable of any other than mere mental abstraction, but exists always in concretion with some subject, that, be it never so refined, is grosser and less perfect than itself; so that we can distinguish the mentally abstracted essence, and the thing which hath that essence; by which concretion, essence is limited, and is only the particular essence of this or that thing, which hath or possesses that essence. The necessary being is, in strict propriety, not so truly said to have essence, as to be it, and exist separately by itself; not as limited to this or that thing. Whence it is, in itself, universal essence, containing therefore, not formally, but eminently, the being of all things in perfect simplicity. Whence all its own attributes are capable of being affirmed of it in the abstract,[e] that it is wisdom, power, goodness; and not only hath these, and that upon this account it is a being, which is necessarily and of itself. For that which is necessarily and of itself, is not whatsoever it is by the accession of any thing to itself, whereof necessary being is incapable; but by its own simple and unvariable essence. Other being is upon such terms powerful, wise, yea, and existent, as that it may cease to be so. Whereas to necessary being, it is manifestly repugnant, and impossible either simply not to be, or to be any thing else but what and as it is. And though other things may have properties belonging to their essence not separable from it, yet they are not their very essence itself. And, whereas they are in a possibility to lose their very existence, the knot and ligament of whatsoever is most intimate to their actual being, all then falls from them together. Here, essence, properties, and existence, are all one simple thing that can never cease, decay, or change, because the whole being is necessary. Now, all this being supposed, of the force of that form of speech, when we affirm any thing in the abstract of another, we may admit the common sense of men to be the interpreter. For every body can tell, though they do not know the meaning of the word *abstract*, what we intend when we use that phrase or manner of speaking. As when we say, by way of hyperbolical commendation, Such a man is not only learned, but learning itself; or he not only hath much of virtue, justice, and goodness in him, but he is virtue, justice, and goodness itself, (as was once said of an excellent pagan *virtuoso*, that I may borrow leave to use that word in the moral sense,) every one knows the phrase intends the appropriating all learning, virtue, justice, goodness, to such a one. Which, because they know unappropriable to any man, they easily understand it to be, in such a case, a rhetorical strain and form of speech. And yet could not know that, if also they did not understand its proper and native import. And so it may as well be understood what is meant by saying of God, He is being itself. With which sense may be reconciled that of (the so named) Dionysius the Areopagite;[f] that God is not so properly said to be of, or be in, or to have, or partake, of being, as that it is of him, &c. Inasmuch as he is the pre-existent Being to all being; *i. e.* if we understand him to mean all besides his own. In which sense taking being for that which is communicated and imparted, he may truly be said, (as this author and the Platonists generally speak,[g]) to be super-essential or super-substantial. But how fitly being is taken in that restrained sense, we may say more hereafter.

In the meantime, what hath been said concerning this abstractedness of the necessary being, hath in it some things so unintelligible, and is accompanied with so great (unmentioned) difficulties, (which it would give us, perhaps, more labour than profit to discuss,) and the absolute perfection of God appears so evidenceable otherwise, by what hath been and may be further said, that we are no way concerned to lay the stress of the cause on this matter only.

VI. Moreover, necessary being is the cause and author of all being besides. Whatsoever is not necessary, is caused; for not having being of itself, it must be put into being by somewhat else. And inasmuch as there is no middle sort of being betwixt necessary and not necessary, and all that is not necessary is caused, it is plain that which is necessary must be the cause of all the rest. And surely what is the cause of all being besides its own, must needs, one way or other, contain its own and all other in itself, and is consequently comprehensive of the utmost fulness of being; or is the absolutely perfect being, (as must equally be acknowledged,) unless any one would imagine himself to have got the notice of some perfection that lies without the compass of all being.

Nor is it an exception worth the mentioning, that there may be a conception of possible being or perfection, which the necessary being hath not caused. For it is, manifestly, as well the possible cause of all possible being and perfection, as the actual cause of what is actual. And what it is possible to it to produce, it hath within its productive power, as hath been said before.

And if the matter did require it, we might say further, that the same necessary being which hath been the productive cause, is also the continual root and basis of all being, which is not necessary. For what is of itself, and cannot, by the special privilege of its own being, but be, needs nothing to sustain it, or needs not trust to any thing besides its own eternal stability. But what is not so, seems to need a continual reproduction every moment, and to be no more capable of continuing in being by itself, than it was, by itself, of coming into being. For (as is frequently alleged by that so often mentioned author) since there is no connexion betwixt the present and future time, but what is easily capable of rupture, it is no way consequent that, because I am now, I shall therefore be the next moment, further than as the free Author of my being shall be pleased to continue his own most arbitrary influence, for my support. This seems highly probable to be true, whether that reason signify any thing or nothing. And that thence, also, continual conservation differs not from creation. Which, whether (as is said by the same author) it be one of the things that are manifest by natural light, or whether a positive act be needless to the annihilation of created things, but only the withholding of influence, let them examine that apprehend the cause to need it. And if, upon inquiry, they judge it at least evidenceable by natural light to be so, (as I doubt not they will,) they will have this further ground upon which thus to reason: that, inasmuch as the necessary being subsists wholly by itself, and is that whereon all other doth totally depend, it hereupon follows, that it must, some way, contain in itself all being. We may yet further add,

That the necessary being we have evinced, though it have caused and do continually sustain all things, yet doth not itself in the meantime suffer any diminution. It is not possible, nor consistent with the very terms *necessary being*, that it can. It is true, that if such a thing as a necessary atom were admitted, that would be also undiminishable, it were not else an atom. But as nothing then can flow from it, as from a perfect parvitude nothing can, so it can effect nothing. And the reason is the same of many as of one. Nor would undiminishableness, upon such terms, signify any thing to the magnifying the value of such a trifle.

But this is none of the present case: for our eyes tell us here is a world in being, which we are sure is not itself necessarily; and was therefore made by him that is. And that, without mutation or change in him; against which the very notion of a necessary being is most irreconcilably reluctant; and therefore without diminution, which cannot be conceived without change.[h]

Wherefore how inexhaustible a fountain of life, being, and all perfection, have we here represented to our thoughts! from whence this vast universe is sprung, and is continually springing, and that in the meantime receiving no recruits or foreign supplies, yet suffers no impairment or lessening of itself! What is this but absolute all-fulness? And it is

e To which purpose we may take notice of the words of one, not the less worthy to be named, for not being reckoned of that fore-mentioned order, Si enim denominativè de eo quippiam prædicaretur, abstractum esset tum aliud ab ipso, tum ipso prius. Quod sane impium est, quare neque ens est sed essentia, neque bonus sed bonitas est. *Jul. Scal. Exerc.* 365.

f Και αυτο δε το ειναι εκ του προοντος, και αυτου εστι δε το ειναι, και ουκ αυτος του ειναι, και εν αυτωι εστι το ειναι, και ουκ αυτος εν τωι ειναι, και αυτον εχει το ειναι, και ουκ αυτος εχει το ειναι. *De Divinis nomin.* Ca. 5.

g Proclus in Plat. Theol. l. 2. c. 4.

h Εν δε ταυτης της χορεια, καθορα, πηγην μεν ζωης, πηγην δε νου, αρχην οντος, αγαθου αιτιαν ριζαν ψυχης ουκ εκ χεομενων απ' αυτου ειτ' εκεινον ελαττουντων. *Plotinus Enn.* 6. l. 9. c. 9.

so far from arguing any deficiency or mutability in his nature, that there is this continual issue of power and virtue from him, that it demonstrates its high excellency that this can be without decay or mutation. For of all this, we are as certain as we can be of any thing: that many things are not necessarily, that the being must be necessary from whence all things else proceed, and that with necessary being change is inconsistent. It is therefore unreasonable to entertain any doubt that things *are so*, which most evidently appear to be so, only because it is beyond our measure and compass to apprehend *how they are so*. And it would be to doubt, against our own eyes, whether there be any such thing as motion in the world, or composition of bodies, because we cannot give a clear account, so as to avoid all difficulties, and the entanglement of the common sophisms about them, how these things are performed. In the present case, we have no difficulty but what is to be resolved into the perfection of the divine nature, and the imperfection of our own. And how easily conceivable is it, that somewhat may be more perfect, than that we can conceive it. If we cannot conceive the manner of God's causation of things, or the nature of his causative influence, it only shows their high excellency, and gives us the more ground (since this is that into which both his own revelation and the reason of things most naturally lead us to resolve all) to admire the mighty efficacy of his all-creating and all-sustaining will and word; that in that easy unexpensive way, by his mere fiat, so great things should be performed.

VII. We only say further, that this necessary Being is such to which nothing can be added; so as that it should be really greater, or better, or more perfect, than it was before. And this not only signifies, that nothing can be joined to it, so as to become a part of it, (which necessary being, by its natural immutability, manifestly refuses,) but we also intend by it, that all things else, with it, contain not more of real perfection than it doth alone. Which, though it carries a difficulty with it that we intend not wholly to overlook when it shall be seasonable to consider it, is a most apparent and demonstrable truth. For it is plain that all being and perfection which is not necessary, proceeds from that which is, as the cause of it; and that no cause could communicate any thing to another which it had not, some way, in itself. Wherefore it is manifestly consequent that all other being was wholly before comprehended in that which is necessary, as having been wholly produced by it. And what is wholly comprehended of another, *i. e.* within its productive power, before it be produced, can be no real addition to it, when it is.

Now what can be supposed to import fulness of being and perfection, more than this impossibility of addition, or that there can be nothing greater or more perfect?

And now these considerations are mentioned, without solicitude whether they be so many exactly distinct heads. For admit that they be not all distinct, but some are involved with others of them, yet the same truth may more powerfully strike some understandings in one form of representation, others in another. And it suffices, that (though not severally) they do together plainly evidence that the necessary being includes the absolute, entire fulness, of all being and perfection actual and possible within itself.

Having therefore thus despatched that former part of this undertaking, the eviction of an every-way perfect being, we shall now need to labour little in the other, *viz.*

VIII. Secondly, The more express deduction of the infiniteness and onliness thereof.

For as to the former of these, it is in effect the same thing that hath been already proved; since to the fullest notion of infiniteness, absolute perfection seems every way most fully to correspond. For absolute perfection includes all conceivable perfection, leaves nothing excluded. And what doth most simple infiniteness import, but to have nothing for a boundary, or, which is the same, not to be bounded at all?

We intend not now, principally, infiniteness *extrinsically* considered, with respect to time and place, as to be *eternal* and *immense* do import; but *intrinsically*, as importing bottomless profundity of essence, and the full confluence of all kinds and degrees of perfection, without bound or limit. This is the same with absolute perfection: which yet, if any should suspect not to be so, they might, however, easily and expressly prove it of the necessary being, upon the same grounds that have been already alleged for proof of that:—as that the necessary being hath actuality answerable to the utmost possibility of the creature; that it is the only root and cause of all other being, the actual cause of whatsoever is actually; the possible cause of whatsoever is possible to be: which is most apparently true, and hath been evidenced to be so, by what hath been said, so lately, as that it needs not be repeated. That is, in short, that nothing that is not necessarily, and of itself, could ever have been or can be, but as it hath been or shall be put into being by that which is necessarily, and of itself. So that this is as apparent as that any thing is, or can be.

But now let sober reason judge, whether there can be any bounds or limits set to the possibility of producible being; either in respect of kinds, numbers, or degrees of perfection? Who can say or think, when there can be so many sorts of creatures produced, (or at least individuals of those sorts,) that there can be no more? Or that any creature is so perfect as that none can be made more perfect? Which indeed, to suppose, were to suppose an actual infiniteness in the creature. And then it being, however, still but somewhat that is created or made, how can its maker but be infinite? For surely nobody will be so absurd as to imagine an infinite effect of a finite cause.

Either therefore the creature is, or some time may be actually made, so perfect that it cannot be more perfect, or not. If not, we have our purpose; that there is an infinite possibility on the part of the creature, always unreplete; and consequently, a proportionable infinite actuality of power on the Creator's part. Infinite power, I say; otherwise there were not that acknowledged infinite possibility of producible being. For nothing is producible that no power can produce, be the intrinsic possibility of it (or its not-implying in itself a contradiction that it should exist) what it will. And I say, infinite actual power, because the Creator, being what he is necessarily, what power he hath not actually, he can never have, as was argued before. But if it be said, the creature either is, or may some time be, actually so perfect as that it cannot be more perfect; that, as was said, will suppose it then actually infinite; and therefore much more that its cause is so. And therefore in this way our present purpose would be gained also. But we have no mind to gain it this latter way, as we have no need. It is in itself plain, to any one that considers, that this possibility on the creature's part can never actually be filled up; that it is a bottomless abyss, in which our thoughts may still gradually go down deeper and deeper, without end: that is, that still more might be produced, or more perfect creatures, and still more, everlastingly, without any bound; which sufficiently infers what we aim at, that the Creator's actual power is proportionable. And indeed the supposition of the former can neither consist with the Creator's perfection, nor with the imperfection of the creature; it would infer that the Creator's productive power might be exhausted; that he could do no more, and so place an actual boundary to him, and make him finite. It were to make the creature actually full of being, that it could receive no more, and so would make that infinite. But it may be said, since all power is in order to act, and the very notion of possibility imports that such a thing, of which it is said, may, some time, be actual; it seems very unreasonable to say, that the infinite power of a cause cannot produce an infinite effect; or that infinite possibility can never become infinite actuality. For that were to say and unsay the same thing, of the same; to affirm omnipotency and impotency of the same cause; possibility and impossibility of the same effect.

How urgent soever this difficulty may seem, there needs nothing but patience and attentive consideration to disentangle ourselves and get through it. For if we will but allow ourselves the leisure to consider, we shall find that *power* and *possibility* must here be taken not simply and abstractedly, but as each of them is in conjunction with *infinite*. And what is infinite, but that which can never be travelled through, or whereof no end can be ever arrived unto? Now suppose infinite power had produced all that

it could produce, it were no longer infinite, there were an and of it: *i. e.* it had found limits and a boundary beyond which it could not go. If infinite possibility were filled up, there were an end of that also; and so neither were infinite.

It may then be further urged, that there is therefore no such thing as infinite power or possibility. For how is that cause said to have infinite power, which can never produce its proportionable effect, or that effect have infinite possibility, which can never be produced? It would follow then, that power and possibility, which are said to be infinite, are neither power nor possibility; and that *infinite* must be rejected as a notion either repugnant to itself, or to any thing unto which we shall go about to affix it.

I answer, It only follows, they are neither power nor possibility, whereof there is any bound or end; or that can ever be gone through. And how absurd is it that they shall be said, as they cannot but be, to be both very vast, if they were finite; and none at all, for no other reason but their being infinite! And for the pretended repugnancy of the very notion of infinite, it is plain, that though it cannot be to us distinctly comprehensible, yet it is no more repugnant than the notion of finiteness. Nor when we have conceived of power, in the general, and in our own thoughts set bounds to it, and made it finite, is it a greater difficulty (nay, they that try will find it much easier) again to think away these bounds, and make it infinite? And let them that judge the notion of infiniteness inconsistent, therefore reject it if they can. They will feel it reimposing itself upon them, whether they will or no, and sticking as close to their minds as their very thinking power itself. And who was therefore ever heard of, that did not acknowledge some or other infinite? Even the Epicureans themselves, though they confined their gods, they did not the universe. Which, also, though some *Peripatetic* atheists made finite in respect of place, yet in duration they made it infinite. Though the notion of an eternal world is encumbered with such absurdities and impossibilities, as whereof there is not the least shadow, in that, of an every way infinite Deity.

Briefly, it consists not with the nature of a contingent being, to be infinite. For what is upon such terms, only, in being, is reducible to nothing, at the will and pleasure of its maker; but it is a manifest repugnancy, that what is at the utmost distance from nothing (as infinite fulness of being cannot but be) should be reducible thither. Therefore actual infinity cannot but be the peculiar privilege of that which is necessarily.

Yet may we not say, that it is not within the compass of infinite power to make a creature that may be infinite. For it argues not want of power that this is never to be done, but a still infinitely abounding surplusage of it, that can never be drained or drawn dry. Nor, that the thing itself is simply impossible. It may be, as is compendiously expressed by that most succinct and polite writer, Dr. Boyle,[i] *in fieri*, not *in facto esse*. That is, it might be a thing always *in doing*, but *never done*. Because it belongs to the infinite perfection of God, that his power be never actually exhausted; and to the infinite imperfection of the creature, that its possibility or capacity be never filled up: to the necessary self-subsisting being, to be always full and communicative; to the communicated contingent being, to be ever empty and craving. One may be said to have that, some way, in his power, not only which he can do presently, all at once, but which he can do by degrees, and supposing he have sufficient time. So a man may be reckoned able to do that, as the uttermost, adequate effect of his whole power, which it is only possible to him to have effected, with the expiration of his life's-time. God's measure is eternity. What if we say then, this is a work possible to be accomplished, even as the ultimate, proportionable issue of *divine power*, (if it were his will, upon which all contingent being depends,) that the creature should be ever growing in the mean while, and be absolutely perfect at the expiration of eternity? If then you be good at suppositions, suppose that expired, and this work finished, both together. Wherefore if you ask, Why can the work of making created being infinite, never be done? The answer will be, Because eternity (in every imaginable instant whereof, the inexhaustible power of God can, if he will, be still adding either more creatures, or more perfection to a creature) can never be at an end.

We might further argue the infinity of the necessary being, from what hath been said of its *undiminishableness*, by all its vast communications. Its impossibility to receive any *accession* to itself, by any its so great productions, both which are plainly demonstrable, as we have seen, of the necessary being, even as it is such, and do clearly, as any thing can, bespeak *infinity*. But we have thence argued its absolute perfection, which so evidently includes the same thing, that all this latter labour might have been spared; were it not that it is the genius of some persons not to be content that they have the substance of a thing said, unless it be also said in their own terms. And that the express asserting of God's simple infiniteness, in those very terms, is, in that respect, the more requisite, as it is a form of expression more known and usual.

IX. There are yet some remaining difficulties in the matter we have been discoursing of; which partly through the debility of our own minds we cannot but find, and which partly the subtilty of sophistical wits doth create to us. It will be requisite we have some consideration of at least some of them, which we will labour to despatch with all possible brevity; leaving those that delight in the sport of tying and loosing knots, or of weaving snares wherein cunningly to entangle themselves, to be entertained by the *school-men*; among whom they may find enough, upon this subject, to give them exercise unto *weariness*; and, if their minds have any relish of what is more savory, I may venture to say, unto *loathing*.

It may possibly be here said, in short, But what have we all this while been doing? We have been labouring to prove that necessary being comprehends the absolute fulness of all being: and what doth this signify, but that all being is necessary? That God is all things, and so that every thing is God; that we hereby confound the being of a man, yea, of a stone, or whatever we can think of, with one another, and all with the being of God.

And again, how is it possible there should be an infinite self-subsisting being? For then how can there be any finite, since such infinite being includes all being, and there can be nothing beyond all?

Here therefore it is requisite, having hitherto only asserted, and endeavoured to evince that, some way, necessary being doth include all being, to show in what way. And it is plain it doth not include all, in the same way. It doth not so include that which is created by it, and depends on it, as it doth its own, which is uncreated and independent.

The one it includes as its own, or rather as itself; the other, as what it is, and ever was, within its power to produce. If any better like the terms *formally* and *virtually*, they may serve themselves of them at their own pleasure, which yet, as to many, will but more darkly speak the same sense.

We must here know, the productive power of God terminates not upon himself, as if he were, by it, capable of adding any thing to his own appropriate being, which is (as hath been evinced already) infinitely full, and incapable of addition, and is therefore all pure act; but on the creature, where there is still a perpetual possibility, never filled up; because *divine power* can never be exhausted. And thus all that of being is virtually in him, which, either having produced, he doth totally sustain, or not being produced, he can produce.

Whereupon it is easy to understand, how necessary being may comprehend all being, and yet all being not be necessary. It comprehends all being, besides what itself is, as having had, within the compass of its productive power, whatsoever hath actually sprung from it, and having within the compass of the same power, whatsoever is still possible to be produced. Which no more confounds such produced or producible being with that necessary being which is its cause, than it confounds all the effects of human power with one another, and with the being of a man, to say, that he virtually comprehended them (so far as they

i Now Bishop of Cloyher, in his Contemplat. Metaphys.

k For howsoever disputable it may be, whether whatsoever is infinite can have nothing added to it; yet it is without dispute, that whatsoever is so full as that nothing can be added to it, is infinite.

were producible by him) within his power. And it is no wiser an inference from the former, than it would be from this latter, that a house, a book, and a child, are the same thing with one another, and with the person that produced them; because, so far as they were produced by him, he had it in his power to produce them. And that the effects of *divine power* are produced thereby *totally*, whereas those of human power are produced by it but in *part only*, doth, as to the strength and reasonableness of the argument, nothing alter the case.

And as to the next, That infinite being should seem to exclude all finite; I confess that such as are so disposed, might here even wrangle continually, as they might do about any thing in which infiniteness is concerned; and yet therein show themselves (as Seneca I remember speaks in another case) not a wit the more learned, but the more troublesome. But if one would make short work of it, and barely deny that infinite being excludes finite, (as Scotus doth little else;[l] besides denying the consequence of the argument, by which it was before enforced, *viz.* [that an infinite body would exclude a finite; for where should the finite be, when the infinite should fill up all space? And therefore by parity of reason, why should not infinite being exclude finite?] showing the disparity of the two cases,) it would perhaps give them some trouble also to prove it. For which way would they go to work? Infinite self-subsisting being includes all being, very true; and therefore, we say, it includes finite. And what then? Doth it, because it includes it, therefore exclude it? And let the matter be soberly considered; somewhat of finite being and power, we say, (and apprehend no knot or difficulty in the matter,) can extend so far as to produce some proportionable effect, or can do such and such things. And what, doth it seem likely then, that infinite being and power can therefore do just nothing? Is it not a reason of mighty force, and confoundingly demonstrative, that an agent can do nothing, or cannot possibly produce any the least thing, only because he is of infinite power?

For if there be a simple inconsistency between an infinite being and a finite, that will be the case; that, because the former is infinite, therefore it can produce nothing. For what it should produce cannot consist with it, *i. e.* even not being *finite;* and then certainly if we could suppose the effect *infinite*, much less. But what, therefore, is power the less for being infinite? or can infinite power, even because it is infinite, do nothing? What can be said or thought more absurd, or void of sense? Or shall it be said that the infiniteness of power is no hinderance, but the infiniteness of being? But how wild an imagination were that of a finite being, that were of infinite power! And besides, is that power somewhat, or nothing? Surely it will not be said it is nothing. Then it is some being; and if some power be some being, what then is infinite power? is not that infinite being? And now, therefore, if this infinite can produce any thing, which it were a strange madness to deny, it can at least produce some finite thing. Wherefore there is no inconsistency between the infinite and finite beings, unless we say the effect produced, even by being produced, must destroy, or even infinitely impair, its cause, so as to make it cease at least to be infinite. But that also cannot possibly be said of that which is infinite and necessary; which, as hath been shown, cannot, by whatsoever productions, suffer any diminution or decay. If here it be further urged, But here is an infinite being now supposed; let, next, be supposed the production of a finite: this is not the same with the other; for surely infinite, and finite, are distinguishable enough, and do even infinitely differ. The finite is either something or nothing: nothing it cannot be said; for it was supposed a being, and produced; but the production of nothing is no production. It is somewhat then; here is therefore an infinite being, and a finite now besides. The infinite, it was said, cannot be dimnished; the finite, a real something, is added. Is there therefore nothing more of existent being than there was before this production? It is answered, Nothing more than virtually was before; for when we suppose an infinite being, and afterwards a finite; this finite is not to be looked upon as emerging or springing up of itself out of nothing, or as proceeding from some third thing as its cause, but as produced by that infinite, or springing out of that, which it could not do, but as being before virtually contained in it. For the infinite produces nothing, which it could not produce. And what it could produce, was before contained in it, as in the power of its cause. And to any one that attends, and is not disposed to be quarrelsome, this is as plain and easy to be understood, as how any finite thing may produce another, or rather, more plain and easy, because a finite agent doth not entirely contain its effect within itself, or in its own power, as an infinite doth. If yet it be again said, that which is limited is not infinite, but suppose any finite thing produced into being after a pre-existent infinite, this infinite becomes now limited; for the being of the finite is not that of the infinite, each hath its own distinct being. And it cannot be said of the one, it is the other; therefore each is limited to itself. I answer; that which was infinite becomes not hereby less than it was, for it hath produced nothing but what was before virtually contained in it, and still is, for it still totally sustains the other.—But whatsoever it actually doth, it can do, or hath within its power: therefore if it were infinite before, and is not now become less, it is still infinite.

Wherefore the true reason why the position of a finite thing after a supposed all-comprehending infinite, doth no way intrench upon or detract from the other's all-comprehensive infinity, is, that it was formerly contained, and still is, within the virtue and power of the other.

It is true, that if we should suppose any thing besides that supposed infinite to be of itself, that would infer a limitation of the former. Infer I say, not cause it; that is, it would not make it cease to be all-comprehendingly infinite, but it would argue it not to have been so before; and that the supposition of its infinity was a false supposition, because it would then appear that the former did not comprehend all being any way in itself. Somewhat being now found to be in being, which hath no dependence thereon; whence it would be evident neither can be so. Of which, some good use may be made to a further purpose by and by.

Here only we may by the way annex, as a just corollary, from the foregoing discourse, that as the supposition of a necessary self-subsisting matter was before shown to be a *vain*, it now also appears plainly to be altogether an *impossible*, supposition. For since the necessary self-subsisting being is infinite and all-comprehensive; and if matter were supposed necessary, we must have another necessary being to form the world, inasmuch as matter is not self-active, much less intelligent, as it hath both been proved it cannot be, and that the Former of this world must be. It is therefore out of question, that because both cannot be all-comprehensive, they cannot both be necessary. Nor can the vastly different kinds or natures of these things salve the business; for be they of what kinds they will, they are still beings. Besides, if matter were necessary and self-subsisting, every particle of it must be so. And then we shall have not only two, but an infinite number of such infinities, and all of the same kind. But being, only of this or that sort, (as is apparent where more sorts do exist than one,) could not be simply infinite, except as the other depends thereon; and as this one is radically comprehensive of all the rest, that can come under the general and most common notion of being. For that there is some general notion wherein all being agrees, and by which it differs from no being, is, I think, little to be doubted; how unequally soever, and dependently the one upon the other, the distinct sorts do partake therein. Whereupon the expression, *super-essential*, and others like it, spoken of God, must be understood as rhetorical strains, importing more reverence than rigid truth. Except by essence, as was formerly said, only that which is created be meant. And that only a purer and more noble kind of essence were intended to be asserted to him,[m] which yet seems also unwarrantable and injurious, that a word of that import should be so misapplied and transferred from the substance, to signify

[l] Distinct. 2 Q. 2. Q. 1.

[m] And we must suppose somewhat agreeable to this, to be Plotinus's meaning, when he denies knowledge to be in God, and yet also denies that there is in him any ignorance; that is, that he means his intelligence is of an infinitely distinct and more excellent sort from that which he causes in us, as appears by his annexed reason, τὸ δὲ πάντων ὕστερον, οὐδὲν ἔστιν ἐκείνων, Enn. 6. l. 9. c. 6.

nothing but the shadow, rather, of being. And that they who would seem zealously concerned to appropriate all being unto God, should, in the height of their transport, so far forget themselves as to set him above all being, and so deny him any at all. For surely that which simply is above all being is no being.

X. And as to the unity, or oniiness rather, of this being, or of the God-head, the deduction thereof seems plain and easy from what hath been already proved; that is, from the absolute perfection thereof. For though some do toil themselves much about this matter, and others plainly conclude that it is not to be proved at all in a rational way, but only by divine revelation; yet I conceive, they that follow the method (having proved some necessary self-subsisting being the root and original spring of all being and perfection, actual and possible, which is as plain as any thing can be) of deducing from thence the absolute, all-comprehending perfection of such necessary being, will find their work as good as done. For nothing seems more evident, than that there cannot be two (much less more) such beings, inasmuch as one comprehends in itself all being and perfection; for there can be but one all, without which is nothing. So that, one such being supposed, another can have nothing remaining to it. Yea, so far is it therefore, if we suppose one infinite and absolutely perfect being, that there can be another, independent thereon, (and of a depending infinity, we need not say more than we have, which if any such could be, cannot possibly be a distinct God,) that there cannot be the minutest finite thing imaginable, which that supposed infinity doth not comprehend, or that can stand apart from it, on any distinct basis of its own. And that this matter may be left as plain as we can make it; supposing it already most evident, That there is, actually existing, an absolute, entire fulness of wisdom, power, and so of all other perfection—That such absolute entire fulness of perfection is infinite—That this infinite perfection must have its primary seat somewhere—That its primary, original seat can be no where, but in necessary self-subsisting being. We hereupon add, that if we suppose multitude, or any plurality of necessary self-originate beings, concurring to make up the seat or subject of this infinite perfection; each one must either be of finite and partial perfection, or infinite and absolute. Infinite and absolute it cannot be, because one self-originate, infinitely and absolutely perfect being, will necessarily comprehend all perfection, and leave nothing to the rest. Nor finite, because many finites can never make one infinite; much less can many broken pareels or fragments of perfection ever make infinite and absolute perfection; even though their number, if that were possible, were infinite. For the perfection of unity would still be wanting, and their communication and concurrence to any work (even such as we see is done) be infinitely imperfect and impossible.

We might, more at large, and with a much more pompous number and apparatus of arguments, have shown that there can be no more gods than one. But to such as had rather be informed, than bewildered and lost, clear proof that is shorter, and more comprehensive, will be more grateful.

Nor doth this proof of the *unity* of the God-head any way impugn the *trinity*, which is by Christians believed, therein, (and whereof some heathens, as is known, have not been wholly without some apprehension, however they came by it,) or exclude a sufficient, uncreated ground of trinal distinction. As would be seen, if that great difference of beings, *necessary* and *contingent*, be well stated, and what is by eternal, necessary emanation of the divine nature, be duly distinguished from the arbitrary products of the divine will; and the matter be thoroughly examined, whether herein be not a sufficient distinction of that which is increated, and that which is created. In this way it is possible it might be cleared, how a *trinity* in the God-head may be very consistently with the *unity* thereof. But that it is, we cannot know, but by his telling us so. It being among the many things of God, which are not to be known, but by the Spirit of God revealing and testifying them, in and according to the Holy Scriptures: as the things of a man are not known but by the spirit of a man. And what further evidence we may justly and reasonably take from those Scriptures, even in reference to some of the things hitherto discoursed, may be hereafter shown.

CHAPTER V.

Demends in reference to what hath been hitherto discoursed, with some reasonings thereupon: 1, is it possible that, upon supposition of *this being's* existence, it may be, in any way suitable to our present state, made known to us that it doth exist? Proved, 1. That it may. 2. That, since any other fit way that can be thought on is as much liable to exception as that we have already, *this* must be, therefore, sufficient. Strong impressions. Glorious apparitions. Terrible voices. Surprising transformation. If these are necessary, is it needful they be universal? frequent? If not, more rare things of this sort not wanting. 2. Demand. Can subjects, remote from their prince, sufficiently be assured of his existence? 3. Demand. Can we be sure there are men on earth?

I. And if any should in the meantime still remain either doubtful, or apt to cavil, after all that hath been said for proof of *that being's* existence which we have described, I would only add these few things, by way of inquiry or demand: *viz.*

First, Do they believe, upon supposition of the existence of such a Being, that it is possible it may be made known to us, in our present state and circumstances, by means not unsuitable thereto, or inconvenient to the order and government of the world, that it doth exist? It were strange to say or suppose, that a Being of so high perfection as this we have hitherto given an account of, *if he is*, cannot in any fit way make it known that *he is*, to an intelligent and apprehensive sort of creatures.

If indeed *he is*, and be the common Cause, Author, and Lord of us and all things, (which we do now but suppose: and we may defy cavil to allege any thing that is so much as colourable against the possibility of the supposition,) surely he hath done greater things than the making of it known that he is. It is no unapprehensible thing. There hath been no inconsistent notion hitherto given of him; nothing said concerning him, but will well admit that it is possible such a Being may be now existent. Yea, we not only can conceive, but we actually have, and cannot but have, some conception of the several attributes we have ascribed to him: so as to apply them, severally, to somewhat else, if we will not apply them, jointly, to him. We cannot but admit there is some eternal, necessary being; somewhat that is of itself active; somewhat that is powerful, wise, and good. And these notions have in them no repugnancy to one another; wherefore it is not impossible they may meet, and agree together, in full perfection to one and the same existent being. And hence it is manifestly no unapprehensible thing, that such a Being doth exist. Now supposing that it doth exist, and hath been to us the Cause and Author of our being; hath given us the reasonable, intelligent nature which we find ourselves possessors of; and that very power whereby we apprehend the existence of such a Being as he is to be possible, (all which we for the present do still but suppose,) while also his actual existence is not unapprehensible; were it not the greatest madness imaginable to say, that if he do exist, he cannot also make our apprehensive nature understand this apprehensible thing that he doth exist? We will therefore take it for granted, and as a thing which no man well in his wits will deny, that upon supposition such a Being, the Cause and Author of all things, do exist, he might, in some convenient way or other, with sufficient evidence, make it known to such creatures as we, so as to beget in us a rational certainty that he doth exist.

Upon which presumed ground we will only reason thus, or assume to it; That there is no possible and fit way of doing it which is not liable to as much exception as the evidence we already have. Whence it will be consequent, that if the thing be possible to be fitly done, it is done already. That is, that if we can apprehend how it may be possible such a Being, actually existent, might give us that evidence of his existence that should be suitable to our present state, and sufficient to out-weigh all objections to the contrary; (without which it were not rationally sufficient;) and that we can apprehend no possible way of doing this, which will not be liable to the same, or equal objections, as may be made against the present means we have for the begetting of this certainty in us, then we have already sufficient evidence of this Being's existence. That is, such as ought to prevail against all objections, and obtain our assent that it doth exist.

Here it is only needful to be considered what ways can

be thought of, which we will say might assure us in this matter, that we already have not. And what might be objected against them, equally, as against the means we now have.

II. Will we say such a Being, if he did actually exist, might ascertain us of his existence, by some *powerful impression* of that truth upon our minds? We will not insist what there is of this already. Let them consider, who gainsay what they can find of it in their own minds; and whether they are not engaged by their atheistical inclinations in a contention against themselves, and their more natural sentiments, from which they find it a matter of no small difficulty to be delivered? It was not for nothing, that even Epicurus himself calls this of an existing deity, a *proleptical notion*. But you may say, the impression might have been simply universal, and so irresistible as to prevent or overbear all doubt, or inclination to doubt.

And, first, for the *universality* of it, why may we not suppose it already *sufficiently universal?* as hath been heretofore alleged. With what confidence can the few dissenting atheists, that have professed to be of another persuasion, put that value upon themselves, as to reckon their dissent considerable enough to implead the universality of this impression? Or what doth it signify more to that purpose, than some few instances may do, of persons so stupidly foolish, as to give much less discovery of any rational faculty than some beasts, to the impugning the universal rationality of mankind?

Besides that, your contrary profession is no sufficient argument of your contrary persuasion, much less, that you never had any stamp or impression of a Deity upon your minds, or that you have quite rased it out. It is much to be suspected that you hold not your contrary persuasion with that unshaken confidence, and freedom from all fearful and suspicious misgivings, as that you have much more reason to brag of your disbelief for the strength, than you have for the goodness, of it. And that you have those qualmish fits, which bewray the impression, (at least to your own notice and reflection, if you would but allow yourselves the liberty of so much converse with yourselves,) that you will not confess, and yet cannot utterly deface. But if in this you had quite won the day, and were masters of your design, were it not pretty to suppose that the common consent of mankind would be a good argument of the existence of a Deity, except only that it wants your concurrence? If it were *so universal* as to include your vote and suffrage, it would then be a firm and solid argument; (as no doubt it is, without you, a stronger one than you can answer;) but when you have made a hard shift to withdraw your assent, you have undone the Deity, and religion! Doth this cause stand and fall with you, unto which you can contribute about as much as the fly to the triumph? Was that true before, which now your hard-laboured dissent hath made false? But if this impression were simply universal, so as also to include you, it matters not what men would say or object against it; (it is to be supposed they would be in no disposition to object any thing;) but what were to be said, or what the case itself, objectively considered, would admit. And though it would not (as now it doth not) admit of any thing to be said to any purpose, yet the same thing were still to be said, that you now say. And if we should but again unsuppose so much of the former supposition, as to imagine that some few should have made their escape, and disburthened themselves of all apprehensions of God, would they not, with the same impudence as you now do, say that all religion were nothing else but enthusiastical fanaticism; and that all mankind, besides themselves, were enslaved fools?

And for the mere *irresistibleness* of this impression; it is true, it would take away all disposition to oppose, but it may be presumed this is none of the rational evidence which we suppose you to mean; when you admit (if you do admit) that, some way or other, the existence of such a being might be possibly made so evident, as to induce a rational certainty thereof. For to believe such a thing to be true only upon a strong impulse, (how certain soever the thing be,) is not to assent to it upon a foregoing reason. Nor can any, in that case, tell *why* they believe it, but *that* they believe it. You will not sure think any thing the truer for this, only, that such and such believe it with a sturdy confidence. It is true, that the universality and naturalness of such a persuasion, as pointing us to a common cause thereof, affords the matter of an argument, or is a medium not contemptible nor capable of answer, as hath been said before. But to be *irresistibly* captivated into an assent, is no medium at all; but an immediate persuasion of the thing itself, without a reason.

III. Therefore must it yet be demanded of atheistical persons, what means, that you yet have not, would you think sufficient to put this matter out of doubt? Will you say, some kind of very *glorious apparitions*, becoming the majesty of such a one as this Being is represented, would have satisfied? But if you know how to fancy, that such a thing as the sun, and other luminaries, might have been compacted of a certain peculiar sort of atoms, coming together of their own accord, without the direction of a wise agent; yea, and consist so long, and hold so strangely regular motions; how easy would it be to object that, with much advantage, against what any temporary apparition, be it as glorious as you can imagine, might seem to signify to this purpose!

Would *dreadful loud voices* proclaiming him to be, of whose existence you doubt, have served the turn? It is likely, if your fear would have permitted you to use your wit, you would have had some subtle invention how, by some odd rencounter of angry atoms, the air or clouds might become thus terribly vocal. And when you know already, that they do sometimes salute your ears with very loud sounds, (as when it thunders,) there is little doubt but your great wit can devise a way how possibly such sounds might become articulate. And for the sense and coherent import of what were spoken; you that are so good at conjecturing how things might casually happen, would not be long in making a guess that might serve that turn also; except you were grown very dull and barren, and that fancy that served you to imagine how the whole frame of the universe, and the rare structure of the bodies of animals, yea, and even the rensonable soul itself, might be all casual productions, cannot now devise how, by chance, a few words (for you do not say you expect long orations) might fall out to be sense though there were no intelligent speaker.

But would *strange and wonderful effects* that might surprise and amaze you do the business? We may challenge you to try your faculty, and stretch it to the uttermost; and then tell us what imagination you have formed of any thing more strange and wonderful, than the already extant frame of nature, in the whole, and the several parts of it. Will he that hath awhile considered the composition of the world; the exact and orderly motions of the sun, moon, and stars; the fabric of his own body, and the powers of his soul, expect yet a wonder, to prove to him there is a God? But if that be the complexion of your minds, that it is not the greatness of any work, but the novelty and surprisingness of it, that will convince you, it is not rational evidence you seek: nor is it your reason, but your idle curiosity, you would have gratified; which deserves no more satisfaction than that fond wish, that one might come from the dead to warn men on earth, lest they should come into the place of torment.

And if such means as these that have been mentioned should be thought necessary, I would ask, Are they necessary to *every individual person*, so as that no man shall be esteemed to have had sufficient means of conviction, who hath not with his own eyes beheld some such *glorious apparition;* or himself heard some such *terrible voice;* or been the immediate witness or subject of some *prodigious wonderful work?* Or will the *once* seeing, hearing, or feeling them suffice? It is not necessary there should be a *frequent repetition* and renewal of these amazing things, lest the impression wearing off, there be a relapse, and a gradual sliding into an oblivion, and unapprehensiveness of that Being's existence, whereof they had, sometime, received a conviction. Now if such a continual iteration of these strange things were thought necessary, would they not hereby soon cease to be strange? And then if their strangeness was necessary, by that very thing, wherein their sufficiency for conviction is said to consist, they should become useless. Or if by their frequent variations

(which it is possible to suppose) a perpetual amusement be still kept up in the minds of men, and they be always full of consternation and wonder, doth this temper so much befriend the exercise of reason, or contribute to the sober consideration of things? As if men could not be rational, without being half mad! And indeed they might soon become altogether so, by being but awhile beset with objects so full of terror, as are by this supposition made the necessary means to convince them of a Deity.[a] And were this a fit means of ruling the world, of preserving order among mankind? What business could then be followed? Who could attend the affairs of their callings? Who could either be capable of governing, or of being governed, while all men's minds should be wholly taken up, either in the amazed view or the suspenseful expectation, of nought else but strange things? To which purpose much hath been of late, with so excellent reason, discoursed by a noted author,[b] that it is needless here to say more. And the aspect and influence of this state of things would be most pernicious upon religion, that should be most served thereby, and which requires the greatest severity and most peaceful composure of mind to the due managing the exercises of it. How little would that contribute to pious and devout converses with God, that should certainly keep men's minds in a continual commotion and hurry! This course, as our present condition is, what could it do but craze men's understandings, as a too bright and dazzling light causeth blindness, or any over-excelling sensible object destroys the sense; so that we should soon have cause to apply the Erpen. proverb, "Shut the windows that the house may be light." And might learn to put a sense, not intolerable, upon those passages of some mystical writers,[c] that God is to be seen, —*in a divine cloud or darkness*, as one;[d] and with closed eyes[e] as another, speaks; though what was their very sense I will not pretend to tell.

Besides that, by this means, there would naturally ensue the continual excitation of so vexatious and enthralling passions, so servile and tormenting fears and amazements, as could not but hold the souls of men under a constant and comfortless restraint from any free and ingenuous access to God, or conversation with him; wherein the very life of religion consists. And then, to what purpose doth the discovery and acknowledgment of the Deity serve? Inasmuch as it is never to be thought that the existence of God is a thing to be known, only that it may be known; but that the end it serves for, is religion; a complacential and cheerful adoration of him, and application of ourselves with at once both dutiful and pleasant affections towards him. That were a strange means of coming to know that he is, that should only tend to destroy or hinder the very end itself of that knowledge. Wherefore all this being considered, it is likely it would not be insisted upon as necessary to our being persuaded of God's existence, that he should so multiply strange and astonishing things, as that every man might be a daily, amazed beholder and witness of them.

IV. And if their frequency and constant iteration be acknowledged not necessary, but shall indeed be judged wholly inconvenient, more *rare* discoveries of him, in the very ways we have been speaking of, have not been wanting. What would we think of such an appearance of God as that was upon mount Sinni, when he came down (or caused a sensible glory to descend) in the sight of all that great people: wherein the several things concurred that were above mentioned? Let us but suppose such an appearance, in all the concurrent circumstances of it, as that is said to have been. That is we will suppose an equally great assembly or multitude of people is gathered together, and solemn forewarning is given and proclaimed among them, by appointed heralds or officers of state, that, on such a prefixed day, now very nigh at hand, the divine majesty and glory (even his glory set in majesty) will visibly appear, and show itself to them. They are most severely enjoined to prepare themselves, and be in readiness against that day. Great care is taken to sanctify the people, and the place; bounds are set about the designed theatre of this great appearance: all are strictly required to observe their due and awful distances, and abstain from more audacious approaches and gazings; lest that terrible glory break out upon them, and they perish: an irreverent or disrespectful look, they are told, will be mortal to them, or a very touch of any part of this sacred enclosure. In the morning of the appointed day, there are thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the hallowed mount. The exceeding loud sound of trumpet proclaims the Lord's descent. He descends in fire, the flames whereof envelop the trembling mount, (now floored with a sapphire pavement, clear as the body of heaven,) and ascend into the middle region, or, as it is expressed, into the midst or heart of the heavens. The voice of words, (a loud and dreadful voice,) audible to all that mighty assembly, in which were six hundred thousand men, (probably more than a million of persons,) issues forth from amidst that terrible glory, pronouncing to them that *I am Jehovah thy God*. And thence proceeding to give them precepts so plain and clear, so comprehensive and full, so unexceptionably just and righteous, so agreeable to the nature of man, and subservient to his good, that nothing could be more worthy the great Creator, or more aptly suitable to such a sort of creatures.

It is very likely, indeed, that such a demonstration would leave no spectator in doubt concerning the existence of God; and would puzzle the philosophy of the most sceptical atheist to give an account, otherwise, of the phenomenon. And if such could devise to say any thing that should seem plausible to some very ensy half-witted persons, that were not present, they would have a hard task of it to quiet the minds of those that were; or make them believe this was nothing else but some odd conjuncture of certain fiery atoms, that, by some strange accident happened into this occursion and conflict with one another; or some illusion of fancy, by which so great a multitude were all at once imposed upon; so as that they only seemed to themselves to bear and see, what they heard and saw not. Nor is it likely they would be very confident of the truth of their own conjecture, or be apt to venture much upon it themselves; having been the eye and ear-witnesses of these things.

But is it necessary this course shall be taken to make the world know there is a God? Such an appearance, indeed, would more powerfully strike sense; but unto sober and considerate reason were it a greater thing than the making such a world as this, and the disposing this great variety of particular beings in it, into so exact and elegant an order; and the sustaining and preserving it in the same state, through so many ages? Let the vast and unknown extent of the whole, the admirable variety, the elegant shapes, the regular motions, the excellent faculties and powers of that inconceivable number of creatures contained in it, be considered. And is there any comparison between that temporary, transient, occasional, and this steady, permanent, and universal discovery of God? Nor (supposing the truth of the history) can it be thought the design of this appearance to these Hebrews was to convince them of the existence of a Deity, to be worshipped; when both they had so convincing evidence thereof many ways before; and the other nations, that which they left, and those whither they went, were not without their religion and worship, such as it was: but to engage them, by so majestic a representation thereof, to a more exact observance of his will, now made known. Though, had there been any doubt of the former, (as we can hardly suppose they could before have more doubted of the being of a God, than that there were men on earth,) this might collaterally, and besides its chief intention, be a means to confirm them concerning that also: but that it was necessary for that end, we have no pretence to imagine. The like may be said, concerning other miracles heretofore wrought, that the intent of them was to justify the divine authority of him who wrought them, to prove him sent by God, and so countenance the doctrine or message delivered by him.

a Now were not that a most improper course, and unsuitable to the nature of man, that should rather tend to destroy his reason or judgment, than convince it?

b Dr. Spencer, of *Prodigies*. A discourse, which, though it disproves not the reality or true significancy of such portents, yet aptly tends to prevent or correct the ill use of them.

c D. Areop. l. de myster. Theol. c. 1. d Τις ο θειος γνοφος.

e Procl. in Plat. Theol. μυσαντας εν ιδρυεσθαι τη αγνωστω και κρυφιω των οντων ενωσει.

Not that they tended (otherwise than on the by) to prove God's existence: much less, was this so amazing an appearance needful, or intended for that end; and least of all, was it necessary that this should be God's ordinary way of making it known to men that he doth exist: so as that for this purpose he should often repeat so terrible representations of himself. And how inconvenient it were to mortal men, as well as unnecessary, the astonishment wherewith it possessed that people, is an evidence; and their passionate affrighted wish thereupon, "Let not God any more speak to us, lest we die." They apprehended it impossible for them to outlive such another sight!

And if that so amazing an appearance of the Divine Majesty (sometime afforded) were not necessary, but some way, on the by, useful, for the confirming that people in the persuasion of God's existence, why may it not be useful also, for the same purpose even now, to us? Is it that we think that can be less true now, which was so gloriously evident to he true four thousand years ago? Or is it that we can disbelieve or doubt the truth of the history? What should be the ground or pretence of doubt? If it were a fiction, it is manifest it was feigned by some person that had the use of his understanding, and was not beside himself, as the cohereoce and contexture of parts doth plainly show. But would any man not beside himself, designing to gain credit to a forged report of a matter of fact, ever say there were six hundred thousand persons present at the doing of it? Would it not rather have been pretended done in a corner? Or is it imaginable it should never have met with contradiction? That none of the pretended bystanders should disclaim the avouchment of it, and say they knew of no such matter? Especially if it be considered that the laws said to be given at that time, chiefly those which were reported to have been written in the two tables, were not so favourable to vicious inclinations, nor that people so strict and scrupulous observers of them; but that they would have been glad to have had any thing to pretend, against the authority of the legislature, if the case could have admitted it. When they discovered, in that and succeeding time, so violently prone and unretractable a propension to idolatry and other wickednesses, directly against the very letter of that law, how welcome and covetable a plea had it been, in their frequent, and, sometimes, almost universal apostacies, could they have had such a thing to pretend, that the law itself that curbed them was a cheat! But we always find, that though they laboured, in some of their degeneracies, and when they were lapsed into a more corrupted state, to render it more easy to themselves by favourable glosses and interpretations; yet, even in the most corrupt, they never went about to deny or implead its divine original, whereof they were ever so religious assertors, as no people under heaven could be more; and the awful apprehension whereof prevailed so far with them, as that care was taken (as is notoriously known) by those appointed to that charge, that the very letters should be numbered of the sacred writings, lest there should happen any the minutest alteration in them. Much more might be said, if it were needful, for the evincing the truth of this particular piece of history: and it's little to be doubted but any man who, with sober and impartial reason, considers the circumstances relating to it; the easily evidenceable antiquity of the records whereof this a part; the certain nearness of the time of writing them, to the time when this thing is said to have been done; the great reputation of the writer even among pagans; the great multitude of the alleged witnesses and spectators; the no-contradiction ever heard of; the universal consent and suffrage of that nation through all times to this day, even when their practice hath been most contrary to the laws then given; the securely confident and unsuspicious reference of later pieces of sacred Scripture thereto, (even some parts of the New Testament,) as a most known and undoubted thing; the long series and tract of time through which that people are said to have had extraordinary and sensible indications of the divine presence; (which, if it had been false, could not, in so long a time, but have been evicted of falsehood;) their miraculous and wonderful eduction out of Egypt, not denied by any, and more obscurely acknowledged by some heathen writers; their conduct through the wilderness, and settlement in Canaan; their constitution and form of polity, known for many ages to have been a theocracy; their usual ways of consulting God, upon all more important occasions:—whosoever, I say, shall soberly consider these things, (and many more might easily occur to such as would think fit to let their thoughts dwell awhile upon this subject,) will not only, from some of them, think it highly improbable, but from others of them, plainly impossible, that the history of this appearance should have been a contrived piece of falsehood. Yea, and though, as was said, the view of such a thing with one's own eyes would make a more powerful impression upon our fancy, or imagination, yet, if we speak of rational evidence (which is quite another thing) of the truth of a matter of fact that were of this astonishing nature, I should think it were as much (at least if I were credibly told that so many hundred thousand persons saw it at once) as if I had been the single unaccompanied spectator of it myself. Not to say that it were apparently, in some respect, much greater; could we but obtain of ourselves to distinguish between the pleasing of our curiosity, and the satisfying of our reason. So that, upon the whole, I see not why it may not be concluded, with the greatest confidence, that both the (supposed) existence of a Deity is possible to be certainly known to men on earth, in some way that is suitable to their present state; that there are no means fitter to be ordinary, than those we already have, and that more extraordinary, additional confirmations are partly, therefore, not necessary, and partly not wanting.

V. Again, it may be further demanded, (as that which may both immediately serve our main purpose, and may also show the reasonableness of what was last said,) Is it sufficiently evident to such subjects of some great prince as live remote from the royal residence, that there is such a one now ruling over them?

To say No, is to raze the foundation of civil government, and reduce it wholly to domestical, by such a ruler as may ever be in present view. Which yet is upon such terms never possible to be preserved also. It is plain many do firmly enough believe that there is a king reigning over them, who not only never saw the king, but never heard any distinct account of the splendour of his court, the pomp of his attendance, or, it may be, never saw the man that had seen the king. And is not all dutiful and loyal obedience wont to be challenged and paid as such, as well as his other subjects? Or would it be thought a reasonable excuse of disloyalty, that any such persons should say they had never seen the king, or his court? Or a reasonable demand, as the condition of required subjection, that the court be kept, sometime, in their village, that they might have the opportunity of beholding at least some of the insignia of regality, or more splendid appearances of that majesty, which claims subjection from them? Much more would it be deemed unreasonable and insolent, that every subject should expect to see the face of the prince every day, otherwise they will not obey, nor believe there is any such person. Whereas it hath been judged rather more expedient and serviceable to the continuing the veneration of majesty, (and in a monarchy of no mean reputation for wisdom and greatness,) that the prince did very rarely offer himself to the view of the people. Surely more ordinary and remote discoveries of an existing prince and ruler over them, (the effects of his power, and the influences of his government,) will be reckoned sufficient, even as to many parts of his dominions that possibly through many succeeding generations never had other. And yet how unspeakably less sensible, less immediate, less constant, less necessary, less numerous, are the effects and instances of regal human power and wisdom, than of the divine; which latter we behold which way soever we look, and feel in every thing we touch, or have any sense of, and may reflect upon in our very senses themselves, and in all the parts and powers that belong to us; and so certainly, that if we would allow ourselves the liberty of serious thoughts, we might soon find it were utterly impossible such effects should ever have been without that only cause: that without its influence, it had never been possible that we could hear, or see, or speak, or think, or live, or be any thing, nor that any other thing could ever have

been, when as the effects that serve so justly to endear and recommend to us civil government, (as peace, safety, order, quiet possession of our rights,) we cannot but know, are not inseparably and incommunicably approriate, or to be attributed to the person of this or that particular and mortal governor, but may also proceed from another: yea, and the same benefits may (for some short time at least) be continued without any such government at all. Nor is this intended merely as a rhetorical scheme of speech, to beguile or amuse the unwary reader; but, without arrogating any thing, or attributing more to it, than that it is an altogether inartificial and very defective, but true and naked, representation of the very case itself as it is. It is professedly propounded, as having somewhat solidly argumentative in it. That is, that (whereas there is most confessedly sufficient, yet) there is unspeakably less evidence to most people in the world, under civil government; that there actually is such a government existent over them; and that they are under obligation to be subject to it; than there is of the existence of a Deity, and the consequent reasonableness of religion. If therefore the ordinary effects and indications of the former be sufficient, which have so contingent and uncertain a connexion with their causes, (while those which are more extraordinary are so exceeding rare with the most,) why shall not the more certain ordinary discoveries of the latter be judged sufficient, though the most have not the immediate notice of any such extraordinary appearances as those are which have been before mentioned?

VI. Moreover, I yet demand further, whether it may be thought possible for any one to have a full rational certainty that another person is a reasonable creature, and hath in him a rational soul, so as to judge he hath sufficient ground and obligation to converse with him, and carry towards him as a man? Without the supposition of this, the foundation of all human society and civil conversation is taken away. And what evidence have we of it, whereunto that which we have of the being of God (as the foundation of religions and godly conversation) will not at least be found equivalent.

Will we say that mere human shape is enough to prove such a one a man? A philosopher would deride us, as the Stagyrite's disciples are said to have done the Platonic man. But we will not be so nice. We acknowledge it is, if no circumstances concur (as sudden appearing, vanishing, transformation, or the like) that plainly evince the contrary; so far as to infer upon us an obligation not to be rude and uncivil; that we use no violence, nor carry ourselves abusively towards one that only thus appears a human creature. Yea, and to perform any duty of justice or charity towards him within our power, which we owe to a man as a man. As suppose we see him wronged or in necessity, and can presently right or relieve him; though he do not or cannot represent to us more of his case than our own eyes inform us of. And should an act of murder be committed upon one whose true humanity was not otherwise evident, would not the offender be justly liable to the known and common punishment of that event? Nor could he acquit himself of transgressing the laws of humanity, if he should only neglect any seasonable act of justice or mercy towards him, whereof he beholds the present occasion. But if any one were disposed to cavil, or play the sophist, how much more might be said, even by infinite degrees, to oppose this single evidence of any one's true humanity, than ever was or can be brought against the entire concurreat evidence we have of the existence of God. It is, here, most manifestly just and equal, thus to state the case, and compare the whole evidence we have of the latter, with that one of the former; inasmuch as that one alone is apparently enough to oblige us to carry towards such a one as a man. And if that alone be sufficient to oblige us to acts of justice or charity towards man, he is strangely blind that cannot see infinitely more to oblige him to acts of piety towards God.

But if we would take a nearer and more strict view of this parallel, we would state the general and more obvious aspect of this world on the one hand, and the external aspect and shape of a man on the other; and should then see the former doth evidence to us an in-dwelling Deity diffused through the whole, and actuating every part with incomparably greater certainty, than the latter doth an in-dwelling reasonable soul. In which way we shall find what will aptly serve our present purpose, though we are far from apprehending any such union of the blessed God with this world, as is between the soul and body of a man. It is manifestly possible to our understandings, that there may be, and (if any history or testimony of others be worthy to be believed) certain to experience and sense, that there often hath been, the appearance of human shape and of agreeable actions without a real man. But it is no way possible such a world as this should have ever been without God. That there is a world, proves that eternal Being to exist, whom we take to be God, (suppose we it as rude a heap as at first it was, or as we can suppose it,) as external appearance represents to us that creature which we take to be a man: but *that* as a certain infallible discovery, necessarily true; *this* but as a probable and conjectural one, and (though highly probable) not impossible to be false.

And if we will yet descend to a more particular inquiry into this matter, which way will we fully be ascertained that this supposed man is truly and really what he seems to be? This we know not how to go about, without recollecting what is the differencing notion we have of a man; that he is, *viz.* a reasonable, living creature, or a reasonable soul, inhabiting, and united with a body. And how do we think to descry that, here, which may answer this common notion we have of a man? Have we any way besides that discovery which the acts and effects of reason do make of a rational or intelligent being? We will look more narrowly, *i. e.* unto somewhat else than his external appearance; and observe the actions that proceed from a more distinguishing principle in him, that he reasons, discourses, doth business, pursues designs; in short, he talks and acts as a reasonable creature: and hence we conclude him to be one, or to have a reasonable soul in him.

And have we not the same way of procedure in the other case? Our first view or taking notice of a world full of life and motion, assures us of an eternal active Being, besides it, which we take to be God, having now before our eyes a darker shadow of him only, as the external bulk of the human body is only the shadow of a man. Which, when we behold it stirring and moving, assures us there is somewhat besides that grosser bulk, (that of itself could not so move,) which we take to be the soul of a man. Yet, as a principle that can move the body makes not up the entire notion of this soul, so an eternal active being, that moves the matter of the universe, makes not up the full notion of God. We are thus far sure in both cases, *i. e.* of some mover distinct from what is moved. But we are not yet sure, by what we hitherto see, what the one or the other is. But as when we have upon the first sight thought it was a reasonable soul that was acting in the former, or a man, (if we will speak according to their sense who make the soul the man,) in order to being sure, (as sure as the case can admit,) we have no other way, but to consider what belongs more distinguishingly to the notion of a man, or of a reasonable soul; and observe how actions and effects, which we have opportunity to take notice of, do answer thereto, or serve to discover that. So when we would be sure what that eternal active Being is (which that it is, we are already sure, and) which we have taken to be God, that, I say, we may be sure of that also, we have the same thing to do. That is, to consider what more peculiarly belongs to the entire notion of God, (and would even in the judgment of opposers be acknowledged to belong to it,) and see whether his works, more narrowly inspected, do not bear as manifest correspondency to that notion of God, as the works and actions of a man do to the notion we have of him. And certainly we cannot but find they do correspond as much. And that upon a serious and considerate view of the works and appearances of God in the world; having diligently observed and pondered the vastness and beauty of this universe, the variety, the multitude, the order, the exquisite shapes and numerous parts, the admirable and useful composure, of particular creatures; and especially the constitution and powers of the reasonable soul of man itself; we cannot, surely, if we be not under the possession of a very voluntary and obstinate blindness, and the power of a most vicious pre-

judice, but acknowledge the making, sustaining, and governing such a world, is as god-like, as worthy of God, and as much becoming him, according to the notion that hath been assigned of him, as at least the common actions of ordinary men, are of a man; or evidence the doer of them to be a human creature. Yea, and with this advantageous difference, that the actions of a man do evidence a human creature more uncertainly, and so as it is possible the matter may be otherwise. But these works of God do with so plain and demonstrative evidence discover him the Author of them, that it is altogether impossible they could ever otherwise have been done.

Now therefore, if we have as clear evidence of a Deity, as we can have, in a way not unsuitable to the nature and present state of man; (and we can have in a suitable way, that which is sufficient;) if we have clearer and more certain evidence of God's government over the world, than most men have or can have, of the existence of their secular rulers; yea, more sure than that there are men on earth, and that thence (as far as the existence of God will make towards it) there is a less disputable ground for religious than for civil conversation; we may reckon ourselves competently well ascertained, and have no longer reason to delay the dedication of a temple to him, upon any pretence of doubt, whether we have an object of worship existing, yea or no.

Wherefore we may also by the way take notice how impudent a thing is atheism, that by the same fulsome and poisonous breath whereby it would blast religion, would despoil man of his reason and apprehensive power, even in reference to the most apprehensible thing; would blow away the rights of princes, and all foundations of policy and government, and destroy all civil commerce and conversation out of the world, and yet blushes not at the attempt of so foul things.

VII. And here it may perhaps prove worth our while (though it can be no pleasant contemplation) to pause a little, and make some short *reflections* upon the atheistical temper and genius, so as therein to remark some few more obvious characters of atheism itself.

And *first*, such as have not been themselves seized by the infatuation, cannot but judge it a most unreasonable thing, a perverse and cross-grained humour, that so oddly writhes and warps the mind of a man, as that it never makes any effort or offer at any thing against the Deity; but it therein doth (by a certain sort of serpentine involution and retortion) seem to design a quarrel with itself: that is, with (what one would think should be most intimate and natural to the mind of man) his very reasoning power, and the operations thereof. So near indeed was the ancient alliance between God and man, (his own Son, his likeness and living image,) and consequently between reason and religion, that no man can ever be engaged in an opposition to God and his interest, but he must be equally so to himself and his own. And any one that takes notice how the business is carried by an atheist, must think, in order to his becoming one, his first plot was upon himself: to assassine his own intellectual faculty, by a sturdy resolution, and violent imposing on himself, not to consider, or use his thoughts, at least with any indifferency, but with a treacherous predetermination to the part resolved on before-hand. Otherwise, it is hard to be imagined how it should ever have been possible that so plain and evident proofs of a Deity as every where offer themselves unto observation, even such as have been here proposed, (that do even lie open, for the most part, to common apprehension, and needed little search to find them out; so that it was harder to determine what not to say, than what to say,) could be overlooked.

For what could be more easy and obvious, than taking notice that there is somewhat in being, to conclude that somewhat must be of itself, from whence whatever is not so must have sprung? That, since there is somewhat effected or made, (as is plain, in that some things are alterable, and daily altered, which nothing can be that is of itself, and therefore a necessary being,) those effects have then had an active being for their cause? That since these effects are partly such as bear the manifest characters of wisdom and design upon them, and are partly, themselves, wise and designing; therefore they must have had a wisely active and designing cause? So much would plainly conclude the sum of what we have been pleading for; and what can be plainer or doth require a shorter turn of thoughts? At this easy expense might any one that had a disposition to use his understanding to such a purpose, save himself from being an atheist. And where is the flaw? What joint is not firm and strong in this little frame of discourse? which yet arrogates nothing to the contriver; for there is nothing in it worthy to be called contrivance; but things do themselves lie thus. And what hath been further said concerning the perfection and oneness of this Cause of all things, (though somewhat more remote from common apprehension,) is what it is likely would appear plain and natural to such as would allow themselves the leisure to look more narrowly into such things.

Atheism therefore seems to import a direct and open hostility against the most native, genuine, and facile dictates of common reason. And being so manifest an enemy to it, we cannot suppose it should be at all befriended by it. For that will be always true and constant to itself, whatsoever false shows of it a bad cause doth sometimes put on; that having yet somewhat a more creditable name, and being of a little more reputation in the world, than plain downright madness and folly. And it will appear how little it is befriended, by any thing that can justly bear that name, if we consider the pitiful shifts the atheist makes for his forlorn cause; and what infirm tottering supports the whole frame of atheism rests upon. For what is there to be said for their hypothesis, or against the existence of God, and the dueness of religion? For it, there is directly nothing at all. Only a possibility is alleged, things might be as they are, though God did not exist. And if this were barely possible, how little doth that signify? Where reason is not injuriously dealt with, it is permitted the liberty of balancing things equally, and of considering which scale hath most weight. And is he not perfectly blind, that sees not what violence is done to free reason in this matter? Are there not thousands of things, not altogether impossible, which yet he would be concluded altogether out of his wits, that should profess to be of the opinion they are, or were actually so? And as to the present case, how facile and unexceptionable, how plain and intelligible, is the account that is given of the original of this world, and the things contained in it, by resolving all into a Deity, the Author and Maker of them? Whereas the wild, extravagant suppositions of atheists, if they were admitted possible, are the most unlikely that could be devised. So that if there had been any to have laid wagers, when things were taking their beginning, there is nobody that would not have ventured thousands to one, that no such frame of things (no not so much as one single mouse or flea) would ever have hit. And how desperate hazards the atheist runs, upon this mere supposed possibility, it will be more in our way to take notice by and by. But besides, that pretended possibility plainly appears none at all. It is impossible any thing should spring up of itself out of nothing; that any thing that is alterable, should have been necessarily of itself, such as it now is; that what is of itself unactive, should be the maker of other things; that the Author of all the wisdom in the world, should be, himself, unwise. These cannot but be judged most absolute impossibilities, to such as do not violence to their own minds; or with whom reason can be allowed any the least exercise. Wherefore the atheistical spirit is most grossly unreasonable, in withholding a seat, where the most ungainsayable reason plainly exacts it.

And are not the atheist's cavils as despicably silly against the Deity, and (consequently) religion? Whosoever shall consider their exceptions against some things in the notion of God, eternity, infinity, &c. which themselves, in the meantime, are forced to place elsewhere, will he not see they talk idly? And as for such other impeachments of his wisdom, justice, and goodness, as they take their ground for, from the state of affairs, in some respects, in this present world, (many of which may be seen in Lucretius, and answered by Dr. More in his *Dialogues*,) how inconsiderable will they be, to any one that bethinks himself, with how perfect and generous a liberty this world was made, by one that needed it not; who had no design, nor could have inclination to a fond, self-indulgent glorying

and vaunting of his own work; who did it with the greatest facility, and by an easy, unexpensive vouchsafement of his good pleasure; not with an operose curiosity, studious to approve itself to the peevish eye of every froward *Momus*, or to the nauseous, squeamish gust of every sensual *Epicure*. And to such as shall not confine their mean thoughts to that very clod or ball of earth on which they live; which, as it is a very small part, may, for aught we know, but be the worst or most abject part of God's creation; which yet is full of his goodness, and hath most manifest prints of his other excellences besides, as hath been observed; or that shall not look upon the present state of things as the eternal state, but upon *this world* only as an antechamber to *another*, which shall abide in most unexceptionable perfection for ever:—how fond and idle, I say, will all such cavils appear to one that shall but thus use his thoughts, and not think himself bound to measure his conceptions of God by the uncertain, rash dictates of men born in the dark, and that talk at random; nor shall affix any thing to him, which plain reason doth not dictate, or which he doth not manifestly assume, or challenge to himself. But that because a straw lies in my way, I would attempt to overturn heaven and earth, what raging phrensy is this!

Again, it is a base, abject temper, speaks a mind sunk and lost in carnality, and that having dethroned and abjured reason, hath abandoned itself to the hurry of vile appetite, and sold its liberty and sovereignty for the insipid, gustless pleasures of sense; an unmanly thing—a degrading of oneself. For if there be no God, what am I? A piece of moving, thinking clay, whose ill-compacted parts will shortly fly asunder, and leave no other remains of me than what shall become the prey and triumph of worms!

It is a sad, mopish, disconsolate temper; cuts off and quite banishes all manly, rational joy; all that might spring from the contemplation of the divine excellences and glory, shining in the works of his hands. Atheism clothes the world in black, draws a dark and duskish cloud over all things; doth more to damp and stifle all relishes of intellectual pleasure, than it would of sensible, to extinguish the sun. What is this world (if we should suppose it still to subsist) without God? How grateful an entertainment is it to a pious mind to behold his glory stamped on every creature, sparkling in every providence; and by a firm and rational faith to believe (when we cannot see) how all events are conspiring to bring about the most happy and blissful state of things! The atheist may make the most of this world; he knows no pleasure, but what can be drawn out of its dry breasts, or found in its cold embraces; which yields as little satisfaction, as he finds, whose arms, aiming to enclose a dear friend, do only clasp a stiff and clammy carcass. How uncomfortable a thing is it to him, that having neither power nor wit to order things to his own advantage or content, but finds himself liable to continual disappointments, and the rencounter of many an unsuspected, cross accident, hath none to repose on that is wiser and mightier than himself! But when he finds he cannot command his own affairs, to have the settled apprehension of an Almighty Ruler, that can with the greatest certainty do it for us the best way, and will, if we trust him—how satisfying and peaceful a repose doth this yield! And how much the rather, inasmuch as that filial, unsuspicious confidence and trust, which naturally tends to and begets that calm and quiet rest, is the very condition required on my part; and that the chief thing I have to do, to have my affairs brought to a good pass, is to commit them to his management; and my only care, to be careful in nothing. The atheist hath nothing to mitigate the greatness of this loss, but that he knows not what he loses; which is an allay that will serve but a little while. And when the most unsupportable, pressing miseries befall him, he must in bitter agonies groan out his wretched soul without hope, and sooner die under his burden, than say, Where is my God and Maker? At the best, he exchanges all the pleasure and composure of mind which certainly accompanies a dutiful, son-like trust, submission, and resignation of ourselves, and all our concernments, to the disposal of fatherly wisdom and love, for a sour and sullen succumbency to an irresistible fate or hard necessity, against which he sees it is vain to contend. So that at the best he not only rages, but tastes nothing of consolation; whereof his spirit is as incapable, as his desperate affairs are of redress. And if he have arrived to that measure of fortitude, as not to be much discomposed with the lighter crosses which he meets with in this short time of life, what a dreadful cross is it that he must die! How dismal a thing is a certain, never to be avoided death! Against which as atheism hath not surely the advantage of religion in giving protection; so it hath greatly the disadvantage, in affording no relief. What would the joy be worth in that hour, that arises from the hope of the glory to be revealed? And is the want of that, the total sum of the atheist's misery at this hour? What heart can conceive the horror of that one thought, if darted in upon him at that time, (as it is strange, and more sad, if it be not,) What becomes now of me, if there prove to be a God? Where are my mighty demonstrations, upon which one may venture, and which may cut off all fear and danger of future calamity in this dark, unknown state I am going into? Shall I be the next hour nothing, or miserable? Or if I had opportunity, shall I not have sufficient cause to proclaim, (as once one of the same fraternity did, by way of warning to a surviving companion)—A great and a terrible God! A great and a terrible God! A great and a terrible God.

I only add, 'tis a most strangely mysterious and unaccountable temper; such as is hardly reducible to its proper causes: so that it would puzzle any man's inquiry to find out or even give but probable conjectures, how so odd and preternatural a disaffection as atheism should ever come to have place in a human mind. It must be concluded a very complicated disease, and yet, when our thoughts have fastened upon several things that have an aspect that way, as none of them alone could infer it, so it is hard to imagine, how all of them together should ever come to deprave reasonable nature to such a degree.

'Tis, *first*, most astonishingly marvellous, (though it is apparent this distemper hath its rise from an ill will,) that any should so much as *will* that which the atheist hath obtained of himself to believe; or affect to be, what he is.

The commonness of this vile disposition of will, doth but sorrily shift off the wonder, and only with those slight and trifling minds that have resigned the office of judging things to their (more active) senses, and have learned the easy way of waving all inquiries about common things, or resolving the account into this only, that they are to be seen every day. But if we allowed ourselves to consider this matter soberly, we would soon find, that howsoever it must plainly appear a very common plague upon the spirits of men (and universal till a cure be wrought) to say, by way of *wish*, No God, or I would there were none: yet by the good leave of them who would thus easily excuse the thing, the commonness of this horrid evil doth so little diminish, that it increases the wonder. Things are more strange, as their causes are more hardly assignable. What should the reason be, that a being of so incomparable excellency, so amiable and allluring glory, purity, love, and goodness, is become undesirable and hateful to his own creatures! that such creatures, his more immediate, peculiar offspring, stamped with his likeness, the so vivid resemblances of his own spiritual immortal nature, are become so wickedly unnatural towards their common and most indulgent parent! what, to wish him dead! to envy life and being, to him from whom they have received their own! 'Tis as strange as it is without a cause. But they have offended him, are in a revolt, and sharply conscious of fearful demerits. And who would not wish to live, and to escape so unsupportable revenge? 'Tis still strange we would ever offend such a one! Wherein were his laws unequal, his government grievous? But since we have, this only is pertinent to be said by them that have no hope of forgiveness, that are left

† Which story I confidently refer to, being of late date, and having had a certain and circumstantial account of it, by one (a very sober and intelligent person) who had the relation from him to whom that dreadful warning was given, by his then lately deceased associate. But I shall not by a particular relation gratify the scorn of this sort of men, who, taking advantage from the (sometime deceived) credulity of well-meaning people have but that way of answering all such things, by the one word which served so learnedly to confute Bellarmine.

to despair of reconciliation—Why do we sort ourselves with devils? We profess not to be such.

Yea, but we have no hope to be forgiven the sin we do not leave, nor power to leave the sin which now we love. This, instead of lessening, makes the wonder a miracle. O wretched, forlorn creature! Wouldst thou have God out of being for this? (I speak to thee who dost not yet profess to believe there is no God, but dost only wish it.) The sustainer of the world! the common basis of all being! Dost thou know what thou sayest? Art thou not wishing thyself and all things into nothing? This, rather than humble thyself, and beg forgiveness! This, rather than become again a holy, pure, obedient creature, and again blessed in him, who first made thee so! It can never cease, I say, to be a wonder, we never ought to cease wondering, that ever this befell the nature of man, to be prone to *wish* such a thing, that there were no God!

But this is, 'tis true, the too common case; and if we will only have what is more a rarity go for a wonder, how amazing then is it, That if any man *would*, even never so fain, he ever *can* make himself *believe* there is no God! and shape his horrid course according to that most horrid misbelief! By what fatal train of causes is this ever brought to pass? Into what can we devise to resolve it?

Why such as have arrived to this pitch are much addicted to the pleasing of their senses; and this they make their business; so as that, for a long time, they have given themselves no leisure to mind objects of another nature; especially that should any way tend to disturb them in their easy course; till they are gradually fallen into a forgetful sleep, and the images of things are worn out with them, that had only more slightly touched their minds before. And being much used to go by the suggestions of sense, they believe not what they neither see nor feel.

This is somewhat, but does not reach the mark; for there are many very great sensualists, (as great as they at least,) who never arrive hither, but firmly avow it that they believe a Deity, whatsoever mistaken notion they have of him; whereupon they imagine to themselves impunity in their vicious course.

But these, it may be said, have so disaccustomed themselves to the exercise of their reason, that they have no disposition to use their thoughts about any thing above the sphere of sense; and have contracted so dull and sluggish a temper, that they are no fitter to mind or employ themselves in any speculations that tend to beget in them the knowledge of God, than any man is for discourse or business when he is fast asleep.

So indeed, in reason, one would expect to find it; but the case is so much otherwise, when we consider particular instances, that we are the more perplexed and entangled in this inquiry, by considering how agreeable it is, that the matter should be thus; and observing that it proves, oftimes, not to be so; insomuch that reason and experience seem herein not to agree, and hence we are put again upon new conjectures what the immediate cause of this strange malady should be. For did it proceed purely from a sluggish temper of mind, unapt to reasoning and discourse; the more any were so, the more disposed they should be to atheism: whereas, every one knows that multitudes of persons of dull and slow minds, to any thing of ratiocination, would rather you should burn their houses, than tell them they did not believe in God: and would presently tell you, it were pity he should live, that should but intimate a doubt whether there were a God or no. Yea, and many, somewhat more intelligent, yet in this matter are shy of using their reason, and think it unsafe, it not profane, to go about to prove that there *is* a God, lest they should move a doubt, or seem hereby to make a question of it. And in the mean time, while they offer not at reasoning, they more meanly supply that want, after a sorry fashion, from their education, the tradition of their forefathers, common example, and the universal profession and practice of some religion round about them; and it may be only take the matter for granted, because they never heard such a thing was ever doubted of or called in question in all their lives.

Whereas, on the other hand, they who incline to atheism are, perhaps, some of them the greatest pretenders to reason. They rely little upon authority of former times and ages, upon vulgar principles and maxims, but are vogued great masters of reason, diligent searchers into the mysteries of nature, and can philosophize (as sufficiently appears) beyond all imagination. But 'tis hoped it may be truly said, for the vindication of philosophy and them that profess it, that modern atheists have little of that to glory in; and that their chief endowments are only their skill to please their senses, and a faculty with a pitiful sort of drollery to tincture their cups, and add a grace to their otherwise dull and flat conversation. Yet all this howsoever being considered, there is here but little advance made to the finding out whence atheism should proceed. For, that want of reason shall be thought the cause, what hath been already said seems to forbid; that many ignorant persons seem possessed with a great awe of a Deity, from which divers, more knowing, have delivered themselves. And yet neither doth the former signify any thing (in just interpretation) to the disrepute of religion. For truth is not the less true, for that some hold it they know not how or why. Nor doth the latter make to the reputation of atheism, inasmuch as men, otherwise rational, may sometimes learnedly dote. But it confirms us that atheism is a strange thing, when its extraction and pedigree are so hardly found out, and it seems to be directly of the lineage, neither of knowledge nor ignorance, neither sound reason nor perfect dotage.

Nor doth it at all urge to say, And why may we not as well stand wondering, whence the apprehension of a God, and an addictedness to religion, should come, when we find them peculiar neither to the more knowing nor the more ignorant? For they are apparently and congruously enough to be derived from somewhat common to them both—the impression of a Deity, universally put upon the minds of all men, (which atheists have made a shift to rase out, or obliterate to that degree, as to render it illegible,) and that cultivated by the exercise of reason, in some, and in others, less capable of that help, somewhat confirmed by education, and the other accessaries mentioned above.

Therefore is this matter still most mysteriously intricate, that there should be *one temper* and *persuasion*, agreeing to *two* so vastly different sorts of persons, while yet we are to seek for a cause (except what is most tremendous to think of) from whence it should proceed, that is common to them both. And here is, in short, the sum of the wonder, that any, not appearing very grossly unreasonable in other matters, (which cannot be denied even of some of the more sensual and lewder sort of atheists,) should, in so plain and important a case, be so, beyond all expression, absurd; that they without scruple are pleased to think like other men in matters that concern and relate to common practice, and wherein they might more colourably, and with less hazard, go out of the common road; and are here only so dangerously and madly extravagant. Theirs is therefore *a particular madness*; the *dementia quoad hoc*; so much the stranger thing, because they whom it possesses do only in this one case put off themselves, and are like themselves and other men in all things else. If they reckoned it a glory to be singular, they might (as hath been plainly shown) more plausibly profess it as a principle, that they are not bound to believe the existence of any secular ruler (and consequently not be subject to any) longer than they see him, and so subvert all policy and government; or pretend an exemption from all obligation to any act of justice, or to forbear the most injurious violence towards any man, because they are not infallibly certain any one they see is a human wight, and so abjure all morality, as they have already so great a part; than offer with so fearful hazard to assault the Deity, (of whose existence, if they would but think a while, they might be most infallibly assured,) or go about to subvert the foundations of religion. Or, if they would get themselves glory by great adventures, or show themselves brave men by expressing a fearless contempt of divine power and justice; this fortitude is not human. These are without the compass of its object;[g] as inundations, earthquakes, &c., are

[g] Anat. Eth. l. 3.

said to be, unto which, that any one should fearlessly expose himself, can bring no profit to others, nor therefore glory to him.

In all this harangue of discourse, the design hath not been to fix upon any true cause of atheism, but to represent it a strange thing; and an atheist, a prodigy, a monster, amongst mankind; a dreadful spectacle, forsaken of the common aids afforded to other men; hung up in chains to warn others, and let them see what a horrid creature man may make himself by voluntary aversion from God that made him.

In the meantime, they upon whom this dreadful plague is not fallen, may plainly see before them the object of that worship which is imported by a temple—an existing Deity, a God to be worshipped. Unto whom we shall yet see further reason to design and consecrate a temple for that end, and even ourselves to become such, when we have considered what comes next to be spoken of: his *conversableness with men*.

CHAPTER VI.

What is intended by God's conversableness with men, considered only as fundamental and presupposed to a temple. An account of the Epicurean deity. Its existence impossible any way to be proved, if it did exist. Nor can be affirmed to any good intent. That such a being is not God. That the absolute perfection proved of God represents him a fit object of religion. From thence more particularly deduced to this purpose. His omniscience, omnipotency, unlimited goodness, immensity. Curcellæus's arguments against this last considered.

I. NOR is the thing here intended less necessary to a temple and religion than what we have hitherto been discoursing of. For such a sort of deity as should shut up itself, and be reclused from all converse with men, would leave us as disfurnished of an object of religion, and would render a temple on earth as vain a thing, as if there were none at all. It were a being not to be worshipped, nor with any propriety to be called God, more (in some respect less) than an image or statue. We might with as rational design worship for a god what were scarce worthy to be called the shadow of a man, as dedicate temples to a wholly unconversable deity. That is, such a one as not only *will not* vouchsafe to converse with men, but that *cannot* admit it; or whose nature were altogether incapable of such converse.

For that measure and latitude of sense must be allowed unto the expression, [conversableness with men,] as that it signify both capacity and propension to such converse: that God is both by his nature capable of it, and hath a gracious inclination of will thereunto. Yea and we will add, (what is also not without the compass of our present theme, nor the import of this word whereby we generally express it,) that he is not only inclined to converse with men, but that he actually doth it. As we call him a conversable person that upon all befitting occasions doth freely converse with such as have any concern with him. It will indeed be necessary to distinguish God's converse with men, into That which he hath in common with *all men*, so as to sustain them in their beings, and some way influence their actions; (in which kind he is also conversant with all his creatures;) and That which he more peculiarly hath with *good men*.

And though the consideration of the latter of these will belong to the discourse concerning his temple itself which he hath with and in them; yet it is the former only we have now to consider as presupposed thereto, and as the ground thereof; together with his gracious propension to the latter also.

As the great apostle, in his discourse at Athens, lays the same ground for acquaintance with God, (which he intimates should be set afoot and continued in another sort of temple than is made with hands,) that he hath given to all breath and being and all things, and that he is near and ready, (whence they should therefore seek him, if haply they might feel after him, and find him out,) in order to further converse. And here, our business will have the less in it of labour and difficulty; for that we shall have little else to do, besides only the applying of principles already asserted (or possibly the more express adding of some or other that were implied in what hath been said) to this purpose. From which principles it will appear, that he not only can, but that in the former sense he doth, converse with men, and is graciously inclined thereto in the latter. And yet because the former is more deeply fundamental, as whereon all depends, and that the act of it is not denied for any other reason than an imagined impossibility; that is, it is not said he doth not sustain and govern the world upon any other pretence, but that he cannot, as being inconsistent with his nature and felicity. This we shall therefore more directly apply ourselves to evince, That his nature doth not disallow it, but necessarily includes an aptitude thereto.

Nor yet, though it may be a less laborious work than the former that we have despatched, is it altogether needless to deal somewhat more expressly in this matter; inasmuch as what opposition hath been made to religion in the world, hath for the most part been more expressly directed against this ground of it. I say more expressly; for indeed by plain and manifest consequence it impugns that also of God's existence: that is, through this it strikes at the other. For surely (howsoever any may arbitrarily, and with what impropriety and latitude of speech they please, bestow titles and eulogies here or there) that being is not God, that cannot converse with men, supposing them such as what purely and peculiarly belongs to the nature of man would bespeak them. So that they who have imagined such a being, and been pleased to call it God, have at once said and unsaid the same thing. That deity was but a creature, and that only of their own fancy; and they have by the same breath blown up and blasted their own bubble, made it seem something and signify nothing: have courted it into being, and rioted it again quite out of it. In their conceit, created it a god; in their practice, a mere nullity. And it equally served their turn, and as much favoured the design of being wicked, to acknowledge only a god they could imagine and dis-imagine at their own pleasure, as to have acknowledged none at all. It could do no prejudice to their affairs to admit of this fictitious deity, that they could make be what or where they pleased; that should affect ease and pleasure, and (lest his pleasure and theirs should interfere) that they could confine to remote territories, and oblige to keep at an obedient and untroublesome distance. Nor, though no imagination could be more madly extravagant than that of a God no way concerned in the forming and governing of the world; and notwithstanding whom, men might take their liberty to do what they listed; yet (as hath been observed long ago, that no opinion was ever so monstrously absurd, as not to be owned by some of the philosophers) hath not this wanted patronage, and even among them who have obtained to be esteemed (not to say idolized) under that name. Which would be seen, if it were worth the while to trouble the reader with an account of the *Epicurean deity*. As it can only be with this design, that the representation may render it (as it cannot but do) ridiculous to sober men; and discover to the rest the vanity of their groundless and self-contradicting hope, (still too much fostered in the breasts of not a few,) who promise themselves impunity in the most licentious course of wickedness, upon the security only of this their own idle dream. That is, if there be a God, (which they reckon it not so plausible flatly to deny,) he is a being of either so dull and phlegmatic a temper that he cannot be concerned in the actions and affairs of men, or so soft and easy that he will not. But because his good will alone was not so safely to be relied on, it was thought the securer way not to let it be in his power to intermeddle with their concernments. And therefore being to frame their own God, to their own turn, thus the matter was of old contrived.

First, Great care was taken, That he be set at a distance remote enough; that he be complimented out of this world, as a place too mean for his reception, and unworthy such a presence; they being indeed unconcerned where he had his residence, so it were not too near them.

a Ac designare quidem non licet quibus in locis Dii degant. Cum ne poster quidem hic mundus, digna sit illorum sedes.—Phil. Epicur. Syntag.

So that a confinement of him somewhere, was thought altogether necessary.

Secondly, And then, with the same pretence of great observance and respect, it is judged too great a trouble to him, and inconsistent with the felicity of his nature and being, that he should have given himself any diversion or disturbance, by making the world; from the care and labour whereof he is with all ceremony to be excused, it being too painful and laborious an undertaking for an immortal and a happy being. Besides that he was altogether destitute of instruments and utensils requisite to so great a performance.[b]

Whence also, *Thirdly*,[c] He was with the same reason to be excused of all the care and encumbrance of government; as indeed, what right or pretence could he have to the government of a world that chose him not, which is not his inheritance, and which he never made? But all is very plausibly shadowed over with a great appearance of reverence and veneration, with magnificent elogies of his never-interrupted felicity; whence also it is made a very great crime not to free even the divine nature itself from business: though yet the true ground and root of this Epicurean faith doth sometime more apparently discover itself, even an impatiency of the divine government, and a regret of that irksome bondage which the acknowledgment of a Deity, that were to be feared by men, would infer upon them.

And therefore, *Fourthly*, He is further expressly asserted to be such as need not be feared, as cares not to be worshipped, as with whom neither anger nor favour hath any place. So that nothing more of duty is owing to him than a certain kind of arbitrary veneration, which we give to any thing or person that we apprehend to excel us, and to be in some respect better than ourselves: an observance merely upon courtesy. But obedience and subjection to his government, fear of his displeasure, expectation of his favour and benefits, have no place left them. We are not obliged to worship him as one with whom we have any concern, and do owe him no more homage than we have to the Great Mogul, or the Cham of Tartary, and indeed are less liable to his severity, or capable of his favours, than theirs; for of theirs, we are in some remote possibility, of his, in none at all. In one word, all converse between him and man, on his part by providence, and on ours by religion, is quite cut off. Which evidently appears (from what hath been already collected out of his own words, and theirs who pretended to speak that so admired author's mind and sense) to be the scope and sum of the Epicurean doctrine, in this matter; and was indeed observed to be so long ago, by one that we suppose to have had better opportunity and advantages to know it, than we: who, discoursing that a man cannot live pleasantly, according to the principles of Epicurus; and that according to his doctrine beasts are more happy than men; plainly gives this[d] reason why he says so, *viz.* that the Epicureans took away providence, and that the design of their discoursing concerning God was, that we might not fear him.

Unto which purpose also much more may be seen in the same author elsewhere, when he more directly pleads (among divers more philosophical subjects) on behalf of religion against the Epicurean doctrine, which[e] he saith they leave to us in word and show, but by their principles take away indeed, as they do nature and the soul, &c.

It is then out of question, that the doctrine of Epicurus utterly takes away all intercourse between God and man. Which yet were little worth our notice or consideration, nor would it answer any valuable end or purpose to revive the mention of such horrid opinions, or tell the world what such a one said or thought two thousand years ago; if their grave had been faithful to its trust, and had retained their filthy poisonous savour within its own unhallowed cell.

But since (against what were so much to have been desired, that their womb might have been their grave) their grave becomes their womb, where they are conceived, and formed anew, and whence by a second birth they spring forth afresh, to the great annoyance of the world, the debauching and endangering of mankind; and that it is necessary some remedy be endeavoured of so mortal an evil, it was also convenient to run it up to its original, and contend against it as in its primitive state and vigour.

Wherefore this being a true (though it be a very short) account of the Epicurean god, resulting all into this shorter sum, That he is altogether unconversable with men, (and such therefore as cannot inhabit their temple, and for whom they can have no obligation or rational design to provide any,) it will be requisite in reference hereto, and suitable to our present scope and purpose, severally to evince these things:—1. That the existence of such a being as this were impossible ever to be proved unto men, if it did exist—2. That being supposed without any good ground, it is equally unimaginable that the supposition of it can intend any valuable or good end—3. That this supposed being cannot be God, and is most absurdly so called; as hereby, the true God, the Cause and Author of all things, is intended to be excluded—4. That it belongs to, and may be deduced from, the true notion of God which hath been given, (and proved by parts of a really existent Being,) that he is such as can converse with men.

For the first, That there is no way to prove the existence of such a being, is evident. For what ways of proving it can be thought of, which the supposition itself doth not forbid and reject? Is it to be proved by revelation? But that supposes converse with men, and destroys what it should prove, that such a being, having no converse with men, doth exist. And where is that revelation? Is it written or unwritten; or who are its vouchers? Upon what authority doth it rest? Who was appointed to inform the world in this matter? Was Epicurus himself the common oracle? Why did he never tell men so? Did he ever pretend to have seen any of these his vogued gods? No, they are confessed not to be liable to our sense, any more than the inane itself. And what miracles did he ever work to confirm the truth of his doctrine in this matter? Which sure was reasonably to be expected from one who would gain credit to dictates so contrary to the common sentiments of the rest of mankind, and that were not to be proved any other way. And what other way can be devised? Can it admit of rational demonstration? What shall be the medium? Shall it be from the cause? But what cause can (or ever did) he or his followers assign of God? Or from effects? And what shall they be, when the matter of the whole universe is supposed ever to have been of itself, and the particular frame of every thing made thereof, to have resulted only of the casual coalition of the parts of that matter, and no real being is supposed besides? Or shall it be that their idea, which they have of God, includes existence, as so belonging to him that he cannot but exist? But by what right do they affix such an idea to their petite and fictitious deities? How will they prove their idea true? Or are we bound to take their words for it? Yea it is easily proved false, and repugnant

b —η θεια φυσις προς ταυτα ηδιστη προσαγεσθω, αλλα αλειτουργητος διατηρεισθω, και εν τη παση μακαριοτητι. *Lactius, l.* 10.

Quæ molitio, quæ ferramenta, qui vectes, quæ machinæ, qui ministri tanti muneris fuerunt? *Vell. apud Cicer. de Natura Deorum.*

c Nihil beatius, nihil omnino bonis omnibus affluentius excogitari potest. Nihil enim agit, nullis occupationibus est implicatus, &c. *Id Oταν, την θειαν φυσιν μη λειτουργικον απολιωσιν. Laert. Ibid.* Itaque imponunitis cervicibus nostris sempiternum dominum, quem, dies et noctes, timeremus. Quis enim non timeat omnia providentem, et cogitantem, et animadvertentem, et omnia ad se pertinere putantem, curiosum et plenum negotii Deum *Vell. ubi supra.* Humana ante oculos fœde cum vita jaceret. In terris oppressa gravi sub religione Primum Graius homo (*meaning Epicurus, the first champion of irreligion.*) *Lucret. To which purpose besides what we have in Laert* Το μακαριον και αφθαρτον, ουτε αυτο πραγματα εχει, ουτε αλλοις παρεχει ωστε ουτε οργαις, ουτε χαρισι συνεγεται· εν ασθενει γαρ παν το τοιουτον, *l.* 10. *Much more is collected in the Syntagm.* Nam et præstitus Deorum naturn hominum pietate coleretur, cum æterna esset et beatissima. Inhibt enim veneratiouem justam quæquid excellit. Et metus omnis, a vi atque ira Deorum pulsus caret. Intelligitur enim a beata immortalique natura, et iram et gratiam segregat. Quibus remotis, nullos a superis impendere malos, &c. *Sect.* 1. *cap* 3. An et mundum fecit, et in mundo homines ut ab hominibus colerentur? Ai quid Deo cultus hominum confert, beato, et nulle re indigenti. *Sect.* 2. *cap.* 3.

d Και τοιει μεν εν τη προληψει του θεου την προνοιαν απελειτον, εφαινοντο δι ελαττοι χρησεις πλαν εχοντες οι φρονιμοι των θηριων προς το ηδεως ζην· επει δε τελος ην παν περι θεων λογου, το μη φοβεισθαι θεους, αλλα παυασθαι πραττομενους, βεβαιοτερον αιρει τουτο, &c. *Plut.*

e Αδεντως Colotem. Πως ουν απολειπουσι φυσιν και ζωην και ζωον; ως ορεων, ως ειγην, ως θειαν, ως προσκυνησιν, ρημασι και λογοις, και τοις φοναις και προσποιεισθαι και ανωμαζειν, ο ταις αρχαις και τοις δογμασιν αναιρουσιν. Unto which purpose is that also in Tully.

Atetiam de sanctitate, de pietate adversus Deos libros scripsit Epicurus. Ad quemodo in his loquitur? ut Coruncanium aut Scævolam Pontifices maximos tenuidre dicas non eum, qui subtiliter omnem funditus religionem: Nec manibus at Xerxes, sed rationibus Templa Deorum et aras everteret. *De Natura Deorum*

to itself, while they would have that to be necessarily existent (as they must if they will have it existent at all, unto which, in the meantime, they deny the other perfections which necessary existence hath been proved to include. But how vain and idle trifling is it, arbitrarily and by a random fancy to imagine any thing what we please, and attributing of our own special grace and favour necessary existence to it,-thence to conclude that it doth exist, only because we have been pleased to make that belong to the notion of it? What so odd and uncouth composition can we form any conception of, which we may not make exist, at this rate?

But the notion of God is not arbitrary, but is natural, proleptical, and common to men, impressed upon the minds of all: whence they say it ought not to be drawn into controversy. What! the Epicurean notion of him? We shall inquire further into that anon. And in the meantime need not doubt to say, any man might with as good pretence imagine the ridiculous sort of gods described in Cicero's ironical supposition, and affirm them to exist, as they those they have thought fit to feign, and would impose upon the belief of men. And when they have fancied these to exist, is not that a mighty proof that they indeed do so? But that which for the present we allege, is, that supposing their notion were ever so absolutely universal and agreeing with the common sentiments of all other men, they have yet precluded themselves of any right to argue, from its commonness, to the existence of the thing itself. Nor can they upon their principles form an argument hence, that shall conclude or signify any thing to this purpose. None can be drawn hence, that will conclude immediately, and itself reach the mark, without the addition of some further thing, which so ill sorts with the rest of their doctrine, that it would subvert the whole frame. That is, it follows not, that because men generally hold that there is a God, that therefore there is one; otherwise than as that consequence can be justified by this plain and irrefragable proof—That no reason can be devised of so general an agreement, or of that so common an impression upon the minds of men, but this only; that it must have proceeded from one common cause, *viz.* God himself; who having made man so prime a part of his creation, hath stamped with his own signature this nobler piece of his workmanship, and purposely made and framed him to the acknowledgment and adoration of his Maker.

But how shall they argue so, who, while they acknowledge n God, deny man to be his creature, and will have him and all things to be by chance, or without dependence on any Maker? What can an impression infer to this purpose, that comes no one can tell whence or how; but is plainly denied to be from him, whose being they would argue from it?

The observation of so common an apprehension in the minds of men, might (upon their supposition) beget much wonder, but no knowledge; and may perplex men much, how such a thing should come to pass, without making them any thing the wiser; and would infer astonishment, sooner than a good conclusion, or than it would solidly prove any important truth. And do they think they have salved the business, and given us a satisfying account of this matter, by telling us, This impression is from nature, as they speak? It were to be wished some of them had told us, or could yet tell us, what they meant by nature. Is it any intelligent principle, or was it guided by any such? If yea, whence came this impression, but from God himself? For surely an intelligent Being, that could have this universal influence upon the minds of all men, is much liker to be God than the imaginary entities they talk of, that are bodies, and no bodies, have blood, and no blood, members, and no members, are some where, and no where; or if they be any where, are confined to some certain places remote enough from our world; with the affairs whereof, or any other, they cannot any way concern themselves, without quite undoing and spoiling their felicity. If they say No, and that nature, which put this stamp upon the minds of men, is an utterly unintelligent thing, nor was ever governed by any thing wiser than itself—strange! that blind and undesigning nature should, without being prompted, become thus ignorantly officious to these idle, voluptuary godlings; and should so effectually take course they might be known to the world, who no way ever obliged it, nor were ever like to do! But to regress a little, fain I would know what is this thing they call nature? Is it any thing else than the course and inclination of conspiring atoms, which singly are not pretended to bear any such impression; but as they luckily club and hit together, in the composition of a human soul, by the merest and strangest chance that ever happened? But would we ever regard what they say whom we believe to speak by chance? Were it to be supposed that characters and words serving to make up some proposition or other, were by some strange agitation of wind and waves impressed and figured on the sand; would we, if we really believed the matter came to pass only by such an odd casualty, think that proposition any whit the truer for being there, or take this for a demonstration of its truth, any more than if we had seen it in a ballad? Because men have casually come to think so, therefore there are such beings, (to be called gods,) between whom and them there never was or shall be any intercourse or mutual concern. It follows as well, as that because the staff stands in the corner, the morrow will be a rainy day. The dictates of nature are indeed most regardable things taken as expressions of his mind, or emanations from him, who is the Author and God of nature: but abstracted from him, they are and signify as much as a beam cut off from the body of the sun; or a person that pretends himself an ambassador, without credentials.

Indeed, (as is imported in the words noted from that grave[e] pagan a little before,) the principles of these men destroy quite nature itself, as well as every thing of religion; and leave us the names and show of them, but take away the things themselves. In sum, though there be no such impression upon the minds of men as that which they talk of, yet if there were, no such thing can be inferred from it, as they would infer; their principles taking away all connexion between the argument, and what they would argue by it.

2. We have also too much reason to add, That as the supposition of such a being, or sort of beings, can have no sufficient ground; so it is equally unconceivable that it can be intended for any good end. Not that we think the last assertion a sufficient sole proof of this; for we easily acknowledge that it is possible enough, men may harmlessly and with innocent intentions attempt the building very weighty and important truths upon weak and insufficient foundations; hoping they have offered that as a support unto truth, which proves only a useless cumber. Nor were it just to impute treachery, where there is ground for the more charitable censure, that the misadventure proceeded only from want of judgment and shortness of discourse. But it is neither needful nor seemly, that charity which can willingly wink in some cases, should therefore be quite blind; or that no difference should be made of well-meant mistakes, and mischief thinly hid and covered over with specious pretences. And let it be soberly considered, what can the design be, after the cashiering of all solid grounds for the proving of a Deity, at length to acknowledge it upon none at all? As if their acknowledgment must owe itself not to their reason, but their courtesy. And when they have done what they can to make the rest of men believe they have no need to own any God at all, and they can tell how all that concerns the making and governing the world may well enough be despatched without any, yet at last they will be so generous as to be content there shall be one, however. What, I say, can the design of this be, that they who have contended with all imaginable obstinacy against the most plain and convincing evidences, that do even defy cavil; have quite fought themselves blind, and lost their eyes in the encounter; so that they are ready to swear the sun is a clod of dirt, and noon-day light is to them the very blackness of darkness? They cannot see a Deity encircling them with the brightest beams, and shining upon them with the most conspicuous glory through every thing that occurs, and all things that encompass them on every side. And

f Deos. Strabones, patulos, nævum habentes, silos, flaccos, frontones, capitones.—*De Natura Deorum*, l. i.

g Plutarch.

yet when all is done, and their thunder-struck eyes make them fancy they have put out the sun; they have won the day, have cleared the field, and are absolute victors; they have vanquished the whole power of their most dreaded enemy, the light that reveals God in his works—after all this, without any inducement at all, and having triumphed over every thing that looked like an argument to prove it, they vouchsafe to say however, of their own accord, There is a God. Surely if this have any design at all, it must be a very bad one. And see whither it tends. They have now a god of their own making; and all the being he hath, depends upon their grace and favour. They are not his creatures, but he is theirs; a precarious deity, that shall be as long, and what, and where, they please to have him. And if he displease them, they can think him back into nothing. Here seems the depth of the design. For see with what cautions and limitations they admit him into being. There shall be a god, provided he be not meddlesome, nor concern himself in their affairs to the crossing of any inclinations of humours which they are pleased shall command and govern their lives; being conscious that if they admit of any at all that shall have to do with their concernments, he cannot but be such as the ways they resolve on will displease. Their very shame will not permit them to call that God, which if he take any cognizance at all of their course will not dislike it. And herein that they may be the more secure, they judge it the most prudent course, not to allow him any part or interest in the affairs of the world at all.

Yet all this while they court him at a great rate, and all religion is taken away under pretence of great piety: worship they believe he cares not for, because he is full and needs nothiag. In this world he must not be, for it is a place unworthy of him. He must have had no hand in framing, nor can they think fit he should have any in the government of it. For it would be a great disturbance to him, and interrupt his pleasures. The same thing as if certain licentious courtiers, impatient of being governed, should address themselves to their prince in such a form of speech, that it is beneath him to receive any homage from them, it would too much debase majesty; that his dominions afford no place fit for his residence, and therefore it would be convenient for him to betake himself into some other country, that hath better air and accommodation for delight; that diadems and sceptres are burthensome things, which therefore if he will quit to them, he may wholly give up himself to ease and pleasure.

Yea, and whatsoever would any way tend to evince his necessary existence, is with the same courtship laid aside; (although if he do not exist necessarily and of himself, he cannot have any existence at all); for as they do not allow him to be the cause of any thing, so they assiga nothing to be the cause of him;) that is, with pretence there is no need it should be demonstrated, because all men believe it without a reason, nature having impressed this belief upon the minds of all; or (which is all one) they having agreed to believe it because they believe. But though they have no reason to believe a Deity, they have a very good one why they would seem to do so, that they may expiate with the people their irreligion by a collusive pretending against atheism. And because they think it less plausible plainly to deny there is a God, they therefore grant one to please the vulgar, yet take care it shall be one as good as none, lest otherwise they should displease themselves: and so their credit and their liberty are both cared for together.

V. But this covering is too short, and the art by which they would fit it to their design, when it should cheat others, deceives themselves. For it is most evident,

3. That the being with the pretended belief whereof they would mock the world, is no God; and that consequently, while they would seem to acknowledge a deity, they really acknowledge none at all. Our contest hath not, all this while, been a strife about words, or concerning the name, but the thing itself. And not whether there be such a thing in being to which that name may, with whatsoever impropriety, be given, but whether there be such a being as whereto it properly belongs: supposing, and taking for granted as a matter out of question, that (even in their own sease) if such a being as we have described do exist, it is most properly God; and that they will not go about to call it by another name; or that they will not pretend this name agrees to any other thing so fitly as to him. And because we have already proved this Being doth exist, and that there can be but one such, it plainly follows theirs is in propriety of speech (even though he did exist) no God; and that much less should he appropriate the name, and exclude the only true God. For since the high and dignifying eulogies, which they are wont to bestow upon their feigned deity, do plainly show they would have it thought they esteem him the most excellent of all existent beiags; if we have proved a really existent Being to be more excellent than he, it is evident, even upon their own grounds, that this is God. Hither the Deity must be deferred, and theirs must yield, and give out; inasmuch as we cannot suppose them so void of common sense, as to say the less exeellent being is God, and the more excellent is no God. But if they should be so, (whereas the controversy is not about the name,) we have our main purpose, in having proved there is a Being actually existent, that hath all the real excellences which they ascribe to their deities, and infinitely more. And as concerning the name, who made them dictators to all the world, and the sole judges of the propriety of words? or with what right or pretence will they assume so much to themselves, so as, against the rest of the world, to name that *God*, from which they cut off the principal perfections wont to be signified by that name? And if we speak of such perfections as tend to infer and establish religion and providence, who but themselves, did ever call that God in the eminent sense, that they supposed could not hear prayers, and thereupon dispense favours, relieve the afflicted, supply the indigent, and receive suitable acknowledgments? *They indeed* (saith a famed writer[h] of Roman history) *that exercise themselves in the atheistical sorts of philosophy, (if we may call that philosophy,) as they are wont to jeer at all appearances of the gods, whether among the Greeks or the Barbarians, will make themselves matter of laughter of our histories, not thinking that any God takes care of any man.*—Let the story he there tells shift for itself; in the meantime it appears they escaped not the infamy of atheists, who (whatever deities they might imagine besides) did deny God's presence, and regard to men. Which sort of persons he elsewhere of ten animadverts upon. But do we need to insist, that all the rest of the world acknowledged no gods, whom they did not also worship? What meant their temples and altars, their prayers and sacrifices? Or did they take him for God, whom they believed to take no care of them, or from whom they expected no advantage? Even the barbarous Scythians themselves understood it most inseparable to belong to a deity, to be beneficent; when they upbraidingly tell Alexander,[i] That if he were a god, (as they it seems had heard he vogued himself,) he should bestow benefits upon men, and not take from them what was their own.

And by the way, it is observable how contradictious and repugnant the Epicurean sentiments are in this, even to themselves: thnt speaking of friendship,[k] (of which they say many generous and brave things,) they gallantly profess (as Plutarch testifies of them) that it is a more pleasant thing to benefit others than to receive benefits oneself. They yet, while they seem so greatly concerned[l] that their gods be every way most perfectly happy, deny to them this highest and most excellent part of felicity. That a virtuous man may a great deal more benefit the world than they, and consequently have more pure and lively relishes of a genuine and refined pleasure.

Upon the whole, it is manifest they so maim the notion of God, as to make it quite another thing. And if they think to wipe off any thing of the foul and odious blot wherewith their avowed irreligion hath stained their name and memory, by the acknowledgment of such a God; they effect the like thing by it, and gain as much to the reputation of their piety as he should of his loyalty, who being

h Οσοι μεν ουν τας αθεους ασκουσι φιλοσοφιας, &c. D. Halicarnass. Ant. Rom. I.

i See their ambassador's oration, in Q. Curtius.

k Lib. non posse suaviter vivi, &c.

l Vid. et lib. maxime cum princip. viris Phil. & c.

accused of treason against his prince, shall think to vindicate himself by professing solemnly to own the king; provided you only mean by it the king of clubs, or any such painted one the pack affords. But here it may be demanded, Is every misapprehension of God to be understood as a denial of his being? If so, whom can we undertake to assoil of atheism? Or who can certainly acquit himself? For how impossible is it to be sure we have no untrue conception of a Being so infinitely, by our own confession, above all our thoughts? Or how is it to be avoided, in somewhat or other, to think amiss of so unknown and incompreheasibly excellent a Being, either by detracting somewhat that belongs to it, or attributing somewhat that belongs not? And since many, we are sure, have thought and spoken unworthily of God, besides Epicureans, are all these to go into the account of atheists? Or whereas it is commonly wont to be said, Whatsoever is in God, is God: how can they who deny any thing of him, which is really in him, be excused of denying his whole being? Or where will we fix the bounds of our censure?

Many things should be said (if we will speak at all) to so manifold an inquiry: but it belongs not to the design of this discourse to examine and discuss all men's sentiments of God that have been exposed to the view of the world, or arbitrate among the dissenting parties; much less to explain or abet every school-maxim that hath reference to this theme; the authors or lovers whereof will be sufficiently prompted by their own genius to do at least as much as can be requisite herein. But whatever the real sameness is supposed to be, of the things attributed to God, it is acknowledged we cannot but conceive of them as divers; and so that our conception of any one is not adequate to the entire object, which is confessed incomprehensible. Yet any one attribute gives a true notion of the object, so far as it reaches, though not a full. As I may be said truly to see a man, when I only see his face, and view not every part and limb; or to know him, while yet I have not had opportunity to discern every quality in his temper, and what his dispositions and inclinations, in all respects, are. Moreover, it's one thing to deny any divine perfection, another, only not to know it.

And such mere nescience is so far from being guilty of the horrid crime of atheism, that it's not so much as culpable, further than as it is obstinately persisted in, against sufficient evidence: for we are not obliged to know every thing, but what is to us knowable, and what we are concerned to know. Again, (and which is most considerable to our purpose,) we are not concerned to know what God is in himself, otherwise than as we may thereby know what he is in relation to us, *viz.* as he is the Author of our beings, the Governor of our lives and actions, and thereupon the object of our religion; for a religious respect unto him is the very end of that knowledge. Now, if any other than that sort of persons we oppose have taken up apprehensions of him not so suitable to that end, it were to be wished they saw it, and would unthink all those thoughts. But surely, they who must professedly contend against the very notions themselves which directly influence all our practice toward God, so considered, would suggest such as are wholly inconsistent therewith; who oppose the knowledge of God to the end of that knowledge, and do not merely mistake the way to that end while they are aiming at it, but most avowedly resist and disclaim the end itself; are to be distinguished from them who professedly intend that same end, only see not wherein their misapprehension are prejudical and repugnant to it; otherwise are ready to reject them. And the former are therefore most justly to be singled out, and designed the objects of our direct opposition. Nor are they so fitly to be opposed under any other notion, as that of atheists. For since our knowledge of God ought chiefly to respect him in that fore-mentioned relative consideration, and the inquiry, What is God? signifies, as it concerns us, What is the object of religion? they denying any such thing, deny there is a God. Nor do they deny him in that relative consideration only; but (as every relation is founded in somewhat that is absolute) the very reason of their denying him so, is, that they deny in him those absolute and positive perfections that render him such; as certain of those do, that have been proved to belong to him. Which is that we have next to consider, *viz.*

VI. That it may evidently be deduced from what hath been said, tending to prove those things of God which are included in the notion of him, and from that notion itself, that he is such as can converse with men. That is, having proved—That there is an eternal, self-subsisting, independent, necessary Being, of so great activity, life, power, wisdom, and goodness, as to have been the Maker of this world: and by this medium—That we see this world is in being, which otherwise could never have been, much less such as we see it is: it therefore follows, that this great Creator can have influence upon the creatures he hath made, in a way suitable to their natures. It follows, I say, from the same medium, (the present visible existence of this world, which could not otherwise be now in being,) that he can thus have influence upon his creatures: for it is hence manifest that he hath; they depend on him, and are sustained by him; nor could more subsist by themselves, than they could make themselves, or of themselves have sprung out of nothing. And if it were possible they could, being raised up into being, continue in being of themselves; yet since our present question is not concerning what they need, but what God can do; and our adversaries in the present cause do not (as hath been noted) upon any other pretence deny that he doth concern himself in the affairs of the universe, but that he cannot; (that is, that it consists not with his felicity, and he cannot be happy;) is it not plain that he can with the same facility continue the influence which he at first gave forth, and with as little prejudice to his felicity? For if it be necessary to him to be happy, or impossible not to be so, he must be ever so. His happiness was not capable of being discontinued, so long as while he made the world, settled the several orders and kinds, and formed the first individuals of every kind of creatures. Therefore having done this, and without diminution to his happiness, was it a more toilsome and less tolerable labour to keep things as they were, than to make them so? If it was, (which no man that understands common sense would say,) surely that blind thing which they more blindly call *nature*, (not understanding or being able to tell what they mean by it,) and would have be the only cause of all things, acting at first to the uttermost, and having no way to recruit its vigour and reinforce itself, its labour and business being so much increased, and jaded and grown weary; had given out, and patiently suffered all things to dissolve and relapse into the old chaos long ago. But if the labour was not greater, to continue things in the state wherein they were made, than to make them; surely a wise, intelligent Deity, which we have proved made them, could as well sustain them, being made, as their brutal (and as unintelligible as unintelligent) nature do both.

So much then of intercourse God could have with his creatures, as his continual communication of his influence to be received by them amounts to. And then man, not being excluded their number, must share in this possible privilege according to the capacity of his nature. And inasmuch as we have also proved more particularly concerning man, that he immediately owes the peculiar excellences of his intelligent nature, as it's such, to God only; it is apparently consequent, that having formed this his more excellent creature, according to his own more express likeness, stamped it with the glorious characters of his living image, given it a nature suitable to his own, and thereby made it capable of rational and intelligent converse with him; he hath it ever in his power to maintain a continual converse with this creature, by agreeable communications; by letting in upon it the vital beams and influences of his own light and love, and receiving back the return of its grateful acknowledgments and praises. Wherein it's manifest he should do no greater thing than he hath done: for who sees not, that it is a matter of no greater difficulty to converse with, than to make a reasonable creature? Or who would not be ashamed to deny, that he who hath been the only Author of the soul of man, and of the excellent powers and faculties belonging to it, can more easily sustain what he hath made, and converse with that his creature, suitably to the way wherein he hath made it capable of his converse? Whereto the consider-

ation being added of his gracious nature, (manifested in this creation itself,) it is further evident, that he is (as things are now ordered, whereof more hereafter) not only able, but apt and ready, to converse with men, in such a way as shall tend to the improving of their being unto that blessedness whereof he hath made them naturally capable; if their own voluntary alienation and aversion to him (yet not overcome) do not obstruct the way of that intercourse. And even this were sufficient to give foundation to a temple, and both afford encouragement and infer an obligation to religion; although no other perfection had been, or could be, demonstrated of the Divine Being, than what is immediately to be collected from his works, and the things whereof he hath been the sole and most arbitrary Author. For what if no more were possible to be proved, have we not, even by thus much, a representation of an object sufficiently worthy of our homage and adoration? He that could make and sustain such a world as this, how inexpressibly doth he surpass in greatness the most excellent of all mortal creatures! to some or other of whom, upon some (merely accidental) dignifying circumstances, we justly esteem ourselves to owe a dutiful observance and subjection.

If he did not comprehend within his own being simply all perfection; if there were many gods and worlds besides, and he only the Creator and absolute Lord of our vortex; were not that enough to entitle him to all the obedience and service we could give him, and enable him sufficiently to reward it, and render his presence and cherishing influences (which he could every where diffuse within this circle, and limited portion of the universe) even infinitely covetable and desirable to us? Yea, if he were the only entire Author of our own particular being, how much more is that, than the partial, subordinate interest of a human parent, to whom (as even an Epicurean would confess) nature itself urges and exacts a duty, the refusal whereof even barbarian ingenuity would abhor, yea and brutal instinct condemn? How much greater and more absolute is the right which the parentage of our whole being challenges? If every man were created by a several god, whose creative power were confined to only one such creature, and each one were the solitary product and the charge of an appropriate deity, whose dominion the state of things would allow to be extended so far only, and no further; were there therefore no place left for religion, or no tie unto love, reverence, obedience, and adoration, because the author of my being comprehended not in himself all perfection, when as yet he comprehended so much as to be the sole cause of all that is in me; and his power over me, and his goodness to me, are hereby supposed the same which the only one God truly hath and exerciseth towards all? If all that I am and have be for him, I cannot surely owe to him less than all.

Such as have either had, or supposed themselves to have, their particular tutelary *genii*, (of whom there will be more occasion to take notice hereafter,) though they reckoned them but a sort of deputed or vicarious deities, underling gods, whom they never accounted the causes of their being; yet how have they coveted and gloried to open their breasts to become their temples, and entertain the converse of those supposed divine inhabitants! If they had taken one of these to be their alone creator, how much greater had their veneration and their homage been! This, it may be hoped, will be thought sufficiently proved in this discourse, (at least to have been so by some or other,) that we are not of ourselves; and that our extraction is to be fetched higher than from matter, or from only human progenitors. Nothing that is terrene and mortal could be the author of such powers as we find in ourselves; we are most certainly the offspring of some or other deity. And he that made us, knows us thoroughly, can apply himself inwardly to us, receive our addresses and application, our acknowledgments and adoration; whereunto we should have, even upon these terms, great and manifest obligation, although nothing more of the excellency and perfection of our Creator were certainly known to us.

VII. But it hath been further shown, That the necessary Being from whence we sprang, is also an absolutely and infinitely perfect Being:—That necessary Being cannot be less perfect, than to include the entire and inexhaustible fulness of all being and perfection:—That therefore the God to whom this notion belongs, must consequently be every way sufficient to all, and be himself but one; the only Source and Fountain of all life and being; the common Basis and Support of the universe; the absolute Lord of this great creation, and the central Object of the common concurrent trust, fear, love, and other worship of his intelligent and reasonable creatures. And therefore there remains no greater or other difficulty, in apprehending how he can, without disturbance to himself or interruption of his own felicity, intend all the concernments of his creatures, apply himself to them according to their several exigences, satisfy their desires and cravings, inspect and govern their actions and affairs; than we have to apprehend a Being absolutely and every way perfect. Whereof if we cannot have a distinct apprehension all at once, *i. e.* though we cannot comprehend every particular perfection of God in the same thought, (as our eye cannot behold, at one view, every part of an over-large object, unto which, however, part by part, it may be successively applied,) we can yet in the general apprehend him absolutely perfect; or such to whom, we are sure, no perfection is wanting: and can successively contemplate this or that, as we are occasionally led to consider them: and can answer to ourselves difficulties that occur to us, with this easy, sure, and ever ready solution; That he can do all things; that nothing is too hard for him; that he is full, all-sufficient, and every way perfect. Whereof we are the more confirmed, that we find we cannot, by the utmost range of our most enlarged thoughts, ever reach any bound or end of that perfection, which yet we must conclude is necessarily to be attributed to an absolutely perfect Being. And this we have reason to take for a very sufficient answer to any doubt that can arise, concerning the possibility of his converse with us; unless we will be so unreasonable as to pretend, that what is brought for *solution* hath greater difficulty in it than the *doubt*; or that because we cannot apprehend at once infinite perfection, therefore it cannot be; which were as much as to say, that it cannot be because it is infinite; for it were not infinite, if we could distinctly apprehend it. And so were to make it a reason against itself, which is most injuriously and with no pretence attempted, except we could show an inconsistency in the terms; which it is plain we can never do, and should most idly attempt. And it were to make our present apprehension the measure of all reality, against our experience; which (if our indulgence to that self-magnifying conceit do not suspend our further inquiries and researches) would daily bring to our notice things we had no apprehension of before. It were (instead of that just and laudable ambition of becoming ourselves like God, in his imitable perfections) to make him like ourselves; the true model of the Epicurean deity.

Nor can any thing be more easy, than that wherein we pretend so great a difficulty; that is, to apprehend somewhat may be more perfect than we can apprehend. What else but proud ignorance can hinder us from seeing, that the more we know, the more there is that we know not? How often are we outdone by creatures of our own order in the creation! How many men are there whom we are daily constrained to admire, as unspeakably excelling us, and whom we cannot but acknowledge to be far more knowing, discerning, apprehensive of things, of more composed minds, of more penetrating judgments, of more quick and nimble wits, easily turning themselves to great variety of objects and affairs without distraction and confusion, of more equal and dispassionate tempers, less liable to commotion and disturbance, than ourselves.

How absurd and senseless a pretence is it against the thing itself, that we cannot apprehend an infinite perfection in one common fountain of all perfection; or because we cannot go through a multitude of businesses without distraction, that therefore he that made us and all thing cannot. If we would make ourselves the measure, it is likely we should confess we are outstripped, when we are told that Julius Cæsar could dictate letters, when he was intent upon the greatest affairs, to four (and if he had nothing else to divert him, to seven) secretaries at once; that

Cyrus[m] could call by name all the soldiers in his numerous army: with divers other strange instances of like nature. And since the perfections of *some* so far exceed the measure of the *most*, why is it then unconceivable that divine perfection should so far surpass *all*, as that God may intend the affairs of the world, according to the several exigences of his creatures, without any ungrateful diversion to himself, or diminution to his felicity? And since they who partake of some, and but a small portion of perfection only, can be concerned in many affairs, with little trouble; why cannot he that comprehends all perfection, be concerned in all, without any? For though we have, in what hath been last said, endeavoured to represent it as not so unapprehensible as is pretended, that it may be also; we take it, in the meantime, as formerly sufficiently proved, that so it is; that God is a being absolutely perfect, or that includes eminently all perfection in himself.

VIII. Which general perfection of his being, as it modifies all his attributes, so we shall particularly take notice that it doth so as to those that have a more direct influence upon, and tend more fully to evince, his conversableness with men. As, *first*, his wisdom and knowledge (for we need not to be so curious as at present to distinguish them) must be omniscient. About which, if any place were left for rational doubt, it would be obvious to them to allege it who are of slower inclinations towards religion; and object, (against all applications to, or expectations from, him,) that if we be not sure he knows simply all things, so as wisely to consider them and resolve fitly about them, it will be no little difficulty to determine which he doth, and which not; or to be at a certainty, that this or that concernment of theirs, about which they might address themselves to him, be not among the unknown things. At least, we shall the less need to be curious in distinguishing, or to consider what things may be supposed rather than other, to be without the compass of his knowledge; if it appear that it universally encompasses all things, or that nothing can be without its reach. And because we suppose it already out of doubt, that the true notion of God imports a Being absolutely or every way perfect; nothing else can be doubted in this matter, but whether the knowledge of all things be a perfection.

The greatest difficulty that hath troubled some in this matter, hath been, How it is possible there should be any certain knowledge of events yet to come, that depend upon a free and self-determining cause? But methinks we should not make a difficulty to acknowledge, that to know these things, imports greater perfection than not to know them; and then it would be very unreasonable, because we cannot show how this or that thing was performed which manifestly is done, therefore to deny that it is done at all. It would be so highly unreasonable to conclude against any act of God, from our ignorance of the manner of it, that we should reckon it very absurd to conclude so, concerning any act of our own, or our ability thereto. What if it were hitherto an unknown thing, and impossible to be determined, how the act of vision is performed by us; were it a wise conclusion, that therefore we neither do nor can see? How much more rash and presuming a confidence were it to reason thus concerning the divine acts and perfections! Would we not in any such case be determined rather by that which is more evident, than by what is more obscure? As in the assigned instance, we should have but these two propositions to compare—That I do (or have such a perfection belonging to me that I can) see, and,—That whatsoever act I do or can do, I am able to understand the course and method of nature's operations therein—and thereupon to judge which of these two is more evident. Wherein it may be supposed there is no man in his wits, to whom the determination would not be easy. Accordingly, in the present case we have only these two assertions that can be in competition, in point of evidence, between which we are to make a comparison, and a consequent judgment; *viz.*—Whatsoever perfection belongs to a being absolutely perfect, enabling it to do this or that, the wit of man can comprehend the distinct way and manner of doing it; and,—It imports greater perfection to know all things, than to be ignorant of some—and here surely whosoever shall think the determination difficult, accounts the wit of man so exceeding great, that he discovers his own to be very little. For what can the pretence of evidence be in the former assertion? Was it necessary that he, in whose choice it was whether we should ever know any thing or no, should make us capable of knowing every thing belonging to his own being? Or will we adventure to be so assuming, as while we deny it to God that he knows all things, to attribute to ourselves that we do? But if we will think it not altogether unworthy of us to be ignorant of something, what is there of which we may with more probability, or with less disparagement be thought so, than the manner of God's knowing things? And what place is there for complaint of inevidence in the latter? Is not that knowledge more perfect, which so fully already comprehends all things, as upon that account to admit of no increase; than that which shall be every day growing, and have a continual succession of new objects emerging and coming into view before altogether unknown? And will not that be the case, if we suppose future contingencies to lie concealed from the penetrating eye of God? For whatsoever is future, will some time be present, and then we will allow such contingencies to be known to him. That is, that God may know them, when we ourselves can; and that nothing of that kind is known to him, which is not knowable some way or other to ourselves, at least successively, and one thing after another. We will perhaps allow *that* prerogative to God, in point of this knowledge, that *he* can know these things now fallen out, all at once; *we*, but by degrees; while yet there is not any one that is absolutely unknowable to us. But why should it be thought unreasonable, to attribute an excellency to the knowledge of God above ours; as well in respect of the manner of knowing, as the multitude of objects at once known? We will readily confess, in some creatures, an excellency of their visive faculty above our own; that they can see things in that darkness, wherein they are to us invisible. And will we not allow that to the eye of God, which is *as a flame of fire*, to be able to penetrate into the abstrusest darkness of futurity, though we know not the way how it is done; when yet we know that whatsoever belongs to the most perfect being, must belong to his? And that knowledge of all things imports more perfection, than if it were lessened by the ignorance of any thing.

Some, who have thought the certain foreknowledge of future contingencies not attributable to God, have reckoned the matter sufficiently excused by *this*, That it no more detracts from the divine omniscience, to state without the object of it things not possible, or that imply a contradiction (as they suppose these do) to be known; than it doth from his omnipotency, that it cannot do what is impossible, or that implies a contradiction to be done. But against this there seems to lie this reasonable exception, that the two cases appear not sufficiently alike; inasmuch as the supposition of the former will be found not to leave the blessed God equally entitled to omniscience, as the latter to omnipotency. For all things should not be alike the object of both; and why should not *that* be understood to signify the *knowledge* of simply all things, as well as *this* the *power of doing* simply all things? Or why should *all things*, included in these two words, signify so very diversely; that is, *there* properly all things, *here* some things only? And why must we so difference the object of omniscience and omnipotency, as to make that so much narrower than this? And then how is it all things, when so great a number of things will be left excluded? Whereas from the object of omnipotency (that we may prevent what would be replied) there will be no exclusion of any thing: not of the things which are actually already made; for they are still momently reproduced by the same power: not of the actions and effects of free causes yet future; for, when they become actual, God doth certainly perform the part of the first cause, (even by common consent,) in order to their becoming so; which is certainly doing somewhat, though all be not agreed what that part

[m] Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. 7. c. 25. Id. l. 7. c. 24. vid. et Xenoph. de Cyr. Paed. l. 8. Who, though he expressly says he knew all the soldiers' names, but seems rather to mean it of their officers, (for, saith he, he reckoned it an absurd thing a mechanic should know the names of all his tools, &c. and a general not know the names of his captains under him, &c.) yet he saith the soldiers wondered πως ουνοιοιζων εκεινλατο.

is. Therefore they are, in the meantime, to be esteemed within the object of omnipotency, or to be of the things which God can do; *viz.* as the first cause virtually including the power of the second. But more strictly; all impossibility is either natural and absolute, or moral and conditional. What is absolutely or naturally impossible, or repugnant in itself, is not properly any thing. Whatsoever simple being, not yet existent, we can form any conception of, is producible, and so within the compass of omnipotency; for there is no repugnancy in simplicity. That wherein therefore we place natural impossibility, is the inconsistency of being this thing, whose notion is such; and another, wholly and entirely, whose notion is diverse, at the same time, that which (more barbarously than insignificantly) hath been wont to be called *incompossibility*. But surely all things are properly enough said to be naturally possible to God, while all simple beings are producible by him, of which any notion can be formed; yea, and compounded, so as by their composition to result into a third thing. So that it is not an exception, to say that it is naturally impossible this thing should be another thing, and yet be wholly itself still at once; that it should be and not be, or be without itself. There is not within the compass of actual or conceivable being, such a thing. Nor is it reasonable to except such actions as are naturally possible to other agents, but not to him; as to walk, for instance, or the like. Inasmuch as, though the excellency of his nature permits not they should be done by him, yet since their power of doing them proceeds wholly from him, he hath it virtually and eminently in himself: as was formerly said of the infiniteness of his being. And for moral impossibility, as to lie, to do an unjust act; that God never does them, proceeds not from want of power, but an eternal aversion of will. It cannot be said he is not able to do such a thing, if he would; but so is his will qualified and conditioned, by its own unchangeable rectitude, that he most certainly never will; or such things as are in themselves evil are never done by him, not through the defect of natural power, but from the permanent stability and fulness of all moral perfection. And it is not without the compass of absolute omnipotency to do what is but conditionally impossible, that absence of which restrictive condition would rather bespeak impotency and imperfection, than omnipotency. Therefore the object of omnipotence is simply all things; why not of omniscience as well? It may be said, all things, as it signifies the object of omniscience, is only restrained by the act or faculty, signified therewith in the same word, so as to denote the formal object of that faculty or act, *viz.* all knowable things. But surely that act must suppose some agent, whereto that knowable hath reference. Knowable! To whom? To others, or to God himself? If we say the former, it is indeed a great honour we put upon God, to say he can know as much as others; if the latter, we speak absurdly, and only say he can know all that he can know. It were fairer to deny omniscience than so interpret it. But if it be denied, what shall the pretence be? Why, that it implies a contradiction future contingents should be certainly known; for they are uncertain, and nothing can be otherwise truly known than as it is.[n]

And it must be acknowledged, that to whom any thing is uncertain, it is a contradiction that to him it should be certainly known. But that such things are uncertain to God, needs other proof than I have met with, in what follows in that cited author, or elsewhere: all which will amount to no more than this, that such things as we cannot tell how God knows them, must needs be unknown to him. But since we are sure many such things have been certainly foretold by God, (and of them such as we may be also sure he never intended to effect,) we have reason enough to be confident that such things are not unknowable to him. And for the manner of his knowing them, it is better to profess ignorance about it, than attempt the explication thereof, either unintelligibly, as some have to *no purpose*, or dangerously and impiously, as others have adventured to do to very *bad purpose*. And it well becomes us to suppose an infinite understanding may have ways of knowing things which we know nothing of. To my apprehension, that last-mentioned author doth with ill success attempt an explication of God's manner of knowing this sort of things, by the far less intelligible notion of the indivisibility of eternity, comprehending (as he says) all the parts of time, not successively, but together. And though he truly say that the Scotists' way of expressing how future contingents are present to God, *i. e.* according to their objective and intentional being only, affords us no account why God knows them, (for which cause he rejects it, and follows that of the Thomists, who will have them to be present according to their real and actual existence,) I should yet prefer the deficiency of the former way, before the contradictionsness and repugnancy of the latter; and conceive those words in the *Divine Dialogues*,[o] as good an explication of the manner of his knowledge, as the case can admit, (which yet is but the Scotists' sense,) "That the whole evolution of times and ages is so collectedly and presentificly represented to God at once, as if all things and actions which ever were, are, or shall be, were at this very instant, and so always really present and existent before him." Which is no wonder the animadversion and intellectual comprehension of God being absolutely infinite, according to the truth of his idea. I do therefore think upon a sober resolution in this matter, "That it seems more safe to allow this privilege to the infinite understanding of God,[p] than to venture at all to circumscribe his omniscience: for though it may safely be said that he knows not any thing that really implies a contradiction to be known, yet we are not assured but that may seem a contradiction to us, that is not so really in itself." And when we have only human wit to contest with in the case, reverence of this or that man, though both in great vogue in that kind, needs not restrain us from distinguishing between a mere seeming latent contradiction, and a flat, downright, open one. Only as to that instance of the commensurableness of the diagonal line of a quadrate to one of the sides; whereas though there are great difficulties on both sides, *viz.* that these are commensurable, and that they are not; yet any man's judgment would rather incline to the latter, as the easier part: I should therefore also think it more safe to make choice of that, as the parallel of the present difficulty. Upon the whole, we may conclude that the knowledge of God is every way perfect; and being so, extends to all our concernments: and that nothing remains, upon that account, to make us decline applying ourselves to religious converses with him, or deny him the honour and entertainment of a temple: for which we shall yet see further cause, when we consider, next,

IX. That his power is also omnipotent. Which (though the discourse of it have been occasionally somewhat mingled with that of the last) might be directly spoken of for the fuller eviction of that his conversableness with men, which religion and a temple do suppose. Nor indeed is it enough that he knows our concernments, except he can also provide effectually about them, and dispose of them to our advantage. And we cannot doubt but he, who could create us and such a world as this, can do so, even though he were supposed not omnipotent. But even that itself seems a very unreasonable supposition, that less than infinite power should suffice to the creation of any thing. For however liable it may be to controversy, what a second cause might do herein, being assisted by the infinite power of the first; it seems altogether unimaginable to us, how, though the power of all men were met in one, (which we can easily suppose to be a very vast power,) it could alone be sufficient to make the minutest atom arise into being out of nothing. And that all the matter of the universe hath been so produced, *viz.* out of nothing, it will be no great presumption to suppose already fully proved; in that though any such thing as necessary matter were admitted, yet its essential unalterableness would render it impossible it should be the matter of the universe. Therefore when we cannot devise what finite power can ever suffice (suppose it were never so much increased, but still finite) to the doing of that which we are sure is done, what is left

n Qualis res est talis est rei cognitio. Si itaque res sit incerta (puta incertum est hoc ne sit futurum, an non) non datur ulla certa ejus notitia. Quomodo enim fieri potest ut certo sciatur adfore, quod certo futurum non est, &c. —*Strangius de Voluntate et Actionibus Dei, &c. l. 3. c. 8. as he there objects to himself.*

o Dr. More.

p Of Bathymus, in the same Dialogues.

us to suppose, but that the power which did it is simply infinite: much more when we consider, not only that something is actually produced out of nothing, but do also seriously contemplate the nature of the production! Which carries so much of amazing wonder in it, every where, that even the least and most minute things might serve for sufficient instances of the unlimited greatness of that power which made them; as would be seen if we did industriously set ourselves to compare the effects of *divine power* with those of *human art* and skill. As is the ingenious and pious observation of the most worthy Mr. Hook,[q] who upon his viewing with his microscope the point of a small and very sharp needle, (than which we cannot conceive a smaller thing laboured by the hand of man,) takes notice of sundry sorts of natural things, "that have points many thousand times sharper: those of the hairs of insects, &c. *that* appearing broad, irregular, and uneven, having marks upon it of the rudeness and bungling of art. So unaccurate (saith he) it is in all its productions, even in those that seem most neat, that if examined truly with an organ more acute than that by which they were made, the more we see of their shape the less appearance will there be of their beauty. Whereas in the works of nature the deepest discoveries show us the greatest excellences; an evident argument that he that was the Author of these things, was no other than omnipotent, being able to include as great a variety of parts, in the yet smallest discernible point, as in the vaster bodies, (which comparatively are called also points,) such as the earth, sun, or planets." And I may add, when those appear but points, in comparison of his so much vaster work, how plainly doth that also argue to us the same thing? And let us strictly consider the matter. Omnipotency, as hath been said, imports a power of doing all things possible to be done, or indeed, simply all things; unto which passive power, an active one must necessarily correspond. That is, there is nothing in itself possible to be done, but it is also possible to some one or other to do it. If we should therefore suppose God not omnipotent, it would follow some one or other were able to do more than God. For though possibility do import a non-repugnancy in the thing to be done; yet it also connotes an ability in some agent to do it. Wherefore there is nothing possible which some agent cannot do. And if so, that agent must either be God, or some other. To say it is God, is what we intend. That is, there is nothing possible which God cannot do; or he can do all things. But to say it is some other, and not God, were to open the door to the above-mentioned horrid consequence; which no one that acknowledges a God (and we are not now discoursing with them who simply deny his being) would not both blush and tremble to avow.

Some indeed have so over-done the business here as to deny any intrinsical possibility of any thing, and say that things are only said to be possible, because God can do them; which is the same thing as thus to explain God's omnipotency; *i. e.* that he can do all things which he can do: and makes a *chimæra* no more impossible in itself to be produced, than a not yet existent man. And the reason of the denial is, that what is only possible is nothing, and therefore can have nothing intrinsical to it; as if it were not sufficient to the intrinsical possibility of a thing, that its idea have no repugnancy in it. Yet entire and full possibility connotes a reference to the productive power of an agent; so that it is equally absurd to say that things are only possible, because there is no repugnancy in their ideas, as it is to say they are only possible, because some agent can do them; inasmuch as the entire possibility of their existence imports both that there is no repugnancy in their ideas, which if therebe, they are every way nothing, (as hath been said before,) and also that there is a sufficient power to produce them. Therefore, whereas we might believe him sufficient every way for us, though we did not believe him simply omnipotent; how much more fully are we assured, when we consider that he is! Whereof also no place of doubt can remain, this being a most unquestionable perfection, necessarily included in the notion of an absolutely perfect Being. But here we need not further insist, having no peculiar adversary (in this matter singly) to contend with, as indeed he would have had a hard province, who should have undertaken to contend against omnipotency.

And now join herewith again, the boundlessness of his goodness, which upon the same ground of his absolute perfection, must be infinite also, and which it is of equal concernment to us to consider, that we may understand he not only can effectually provide about our concernments, but is most graciously inclined so to do. And then, what rational inducement is wanting to religion, and the dedication of a temple; if we consider the joint encouragement that arises from so unlimited power and goodness? Or what man would not become entirely devoted to him, who, by the one of these, we are assured, *can do all things*, and by the other, *will do what is best?*[r] Nor therefore is there any thing immediately needful to our present purpose, the eviction of *God's conversableness with men*, more than hath been already said. That is, there is nothing else to be thought on, that hath any nearer influence thereon; the things that can be supposed to have such influence, being none else than his power, knowledge, and goodness, which have been particularly evinced from the creation of the world, both to have been in some former subject, and to have all originally met in a necessary being, that alone could be the Creator of it. Which necessary being, as it is such, appearing also to be infinite, and absolutely perfect; the influence of these cannot but the more abundantly appear to be such as can and may most sufficiently and fully correspond, both in general to the several exigencies of all creatures, and more especially to all the real necessities and reasonable desires of man: so that our main purpose seems already gained. Yet because it may be grateful when we are persuaded that things are so, to fortify (as much as we can) that persuasion, and because our persuasion concerning these attributes of God will be still liable to assault unless we acknowledge him every where present; (nor can it well be conceivable otherwise, how the influence of his knowledge, power, and goodness, can be so universal, as will be thought necessary to infer a universal obligation to religion;) it will be therefore requisite to add somewhat concerning his omnipresence, or because some, that love to be very strictly critical, will be apt to think that term restrictive of his presence to the universe, (as supposing to be present is relative to somewhat one may be said present unto, whereas they will say without the universe, is nothing,) we will rather choose to call it *immensity*. For though it would sufficiently answer our purpose, that his presence be universal to all his creatures; yet even this is to be proved by such arguments as will conclude him simply immense; which therefore will with the greater advantage infer the thing we intend. This part of divine perfection we will acknowledge to have been impugned, by some that have professed much devotedness to a Deity and religion: we will therefore charitably suppose that opposition to have been joined with inadvertency of the ill tendency of it; that is, how unwarrantably it would maim the notion of the former, and shake the foundations of the latter. Nor therefore ought that charity to be any allay to a just zeal for so great concerns.

It seems then, *first*, manifestly repugnant to the notion of an infinitely perfect Being, to suppose it less than simply immense. For, upon that supposition it must either be limited to some certain place, or excluded out of all. The latter of those would be most openly to deny it; as hath with irrefragable evidence been abundantly manifested by the most learned Dr. More,[s] whereto it would be needless and vain to attempt to add any thing. Nor is that the thing pretended to by the sort of persons I now chiefly intend.

And for the *former*, I would inquire, Is amplitude of essence no perfection? Or were the confining of this Being to the very minutest space we can imagine, no detraction from the perfection of it? What if the amplitude of that glorious and ever-blessed Essence were said to be only of that extent (may it be spoken with all reverence, and resentment of the unhappy necessity we have of ma-

[q] In his Micrographia.

[r] Δυναμενοι μεν παντα, βουλομενοι δε τα αριστα. Phil. Jud. de Abr.

[s] Both in his Dialogues and Enchiridion Metaphys.

king so mean a supposition) as to have been confined unto that one temple to which of old he chose to confine his more solemn worship; that he could be essentially present, only here at once, and no where else; were this no detraction? They that think him only to replenish and be present by his essence in the highest heaven, (as some are wont to speak,) would they not confess it were a meaner and much lower thought to suppose that presence circumscribed within the so unconceivably narrower limits as the walls of a house? If they would pretend to ascribe to him some perfection beyond this, by supposing his essential presence commensurable to the vaster territory of the highest heavens; even by the same supposition, should they deny to him greater perfection than they ascribe. For the perfection which in this kind they should *ascribe*, were *finite* only; but that which they should *deny*, were *infinite*.

Again, they will however acknowledge omnipotency a perfection included in the notion of an absolutely perfect Being; therefore they will grant, he can create another world (for they do not pretend to believe this infinite; and if they did, by their supposition, they should give away their cause) at any the greatest distance we can conceive from this; therefore so far his power can extend itself. But what, his power without his being? What then is his power? something, or nothing? Nothing can do nothing; therefore not make a world. It is then some being; and whose being is it but his own? Is it a created being? That is to suppose him, first, impotent, and then to have created omnipotency, when he could do nothing. Whence by the way we may see to how little purpose that distinction can be applied in the present case of essential and virtual contact, where the essence and virtue cannot but be the same. But shall it be said, he must, in order to the creating such another world, locally move thither where he designs it? I ask then, But can he not at the same time create thousands of worlds at any distance from this round about it? No man can imagine this to be impossible to him that can do all things. Wherefore of such extent is his power, and consequently his being. Will they therefore say he can immensely, if he please, diffuse his being, but he voluntarily contracts it?

It is answered, That is altogether impossible to a being, that is whatsoever it is by a simple and absolute necessity, for whatsoever it is necessarily, it is unalterably and eternally, or is pure act, and in a possibility to be nothing which it already is not. Therefore since God can every where exert his power, he is necessarily, already, every where: and hence, God's immensity is the true reason of his immobility; there being no imaginable space, which he doth not necessarily replenish. Whence also, the supposition of his being so confined (as was said) is immediately repugnant to the notion of a necessary being, as well as of an absolutely perfect, which hath been argued from it. We might moreover add, that upon the same supposition God might truly be said to have made a creature greater than himself, (for such this universe apparently were,) and that he can make one (as they must confess who deny him not to be omnipotent) most unconceivably greater than this universe now is. Nothing therefore seems more manifest than that God is immense, or (as we may express it) *extrinsically* infinite, with respect to place; as well as *intrinsically*, in respect to the plenitude of his perfection. Only it may be requisite to consider briefly what is said against it by the otherwise minded, that pretend not to deny his infinity in that other sense. Wherein that this discourse swell not beyond just bounds, their strength of argument, (for it will not be so seasonable here to discuss with them the texts of Scripture wont to be insisted on in this matter,) shall be viewed as it is collected and gathered up in one of them. And that shall be, Curcellæus,[s] who gives it as succinctly and fully as any I have met with of that sort of men.

The *doctrine* itself we may take from him thus, First, On the negative part, by way of denial of what we have been hitherto asserting, he says, "The foundation," (that is, of a distinction of Maresius's to which he is replying, for so occasionally comes in the discourse,) "*viz.* the infinity of the divine essence, is not so firm as is commonly thought." And that therefore it may be thought less firm, he thinks fit to cast a slur upon it, by making it the doctrine of the Stoics, exprest by Virgil, *Jovis omnia plena*; (as if it must needs be false, because Virgil said it. though I could tell, if it were worth the while, where Virgil speaks more agreeably to his sense than ours, according to which he might as well have interpreted this passage, as divers texts of Scripture; and then his authority might have been of some value;) and by Lucan, who helps, it seems, to disgrace and spoil it; *Jupiter est quodcunque vides, quocunque moveris.* He might, if he had a mind to make it thought paganish, have quoted a good many more, but then there might have been some danger it should pass for a common notion. Next, he quotes some passages of the fathers that import dislike of it, about which we need not concern ourselves; for the question is not what this or that man thought. And then, for the positive account of his own judgment in the case, having recited divers texts out of the Bible that seemed as he apprehended to make against him, he would have us believe, that these all speak rather of God's providence and power, by which he concerns himself in all our works, words, and thoughts, wheresoever we live, than of the absolute infinity of his essence.[t] And afterwards, That God is by his essence in the supreme heaven, where he inhabits the inaccessible light, but thence he sends out from himself a spirit, or a certain force, whither he pleases, by which he is truly present, and works there.

But proceed we to his *reasons*, which he saith are not to be contemned. We shall therefore not contemn them so far, as not to take notice of them; which trouble also the reader may please to be at, and afterward do as he thinks fit.

1. That no difference can be conceived between God and creatures, if God, as they commonly speak, be wholly, in every point, or do fill all the points of the universe with his whole essence: for so whatsoever at all is, will be God himself.

Answ. And that is most marvellous, that the in-being or one thing in another must needs take away all their difference, and confound them each with other; which sure would much rather argue them distinct. For certainly it cannot, without great impropriety, be said that any thing is in itself; and is both the container and contained. How were these thoughts in his mind? And these very notions which he opposes to each other, so as not to be confounded with his mind, and consequently with one another? So that it is a great wonder he was not of both opinions at once. And how did he think his soul to be in his body, which, though substantially united with it, (and that is somewhat more, as we will suppose he knew was commonly held, than to be intimately present,) was not yet the same thing? However, himself acknowledges the power and providence of God to be every where: and then at least every thing must, it seems, be the very power and providence of God. But he thought, it may be, only of confuting the words of Lucan, and chastising his poetic liberty. And if he would have been at the pains to turn all their strains and raptures into propositions, and so have gravely fallen to confuting them, he might perhaps have found as proper an exercise for his logic as this. As for his talk of *a whole*, whereof we acknowledge *no parts*, (as if he imagined the divine essence to be compounded of such, he should have said so, and have proved it,) it is an absurd scheme of speech, which may be left to him, and them that use it, to make their best of.

2. No idolatry can be committed, if there be not the least point to be found, that is not wholly full of whole God: for whithersoever worship shall be directed, it shall be directed to God himself, who will be no less there than in heaven.

Answ. This proceeds upon the supposition that the former would be granted as soon as it should be heard, as

s De Vocibus Trinit. Ac.

t *Unto which purpose speaks at large Volkelius de vera Relig.* Quia enim Dei et potentia et sapientia ad res omnes extenditur, uti et potestas sive imperium; ideo ubique presens, omniaque numine sua complens dicitur, &c. *l.* 1. *c.* 27. *Stichtingius Artic. de Alio Dei. Ad. Pe.* 139. 6, 7. Nec leguntur David de Spiritu Sancto, qui peculiaris quidem Dei Spiritus est, sed de Spiritu Dei simpliciter. Nec dicit Spiritum istum ubique *re esse* sed tantum docet nullum esse locum, ad quem is nequeat pertingere. &c. *So also F. Socin. Smalcius.* *And though not altogether so expressly as the rest) Vorstius, Crellius, &c.*

a self-evident principle, that whatsoever is in another, is that in which it is; and so his consequence were most undeniable. But though we acknowledge God to be in every thing, yet so to worship him in any thing, as if his essential presence were confined thereto, while it ought to be conceived of as immense, this is idolatry: and therefore they who so conceive of it, as confined, (or tied in any respect, wherein he hath not so tied it himself,) are concerned to beware of running upon this rock.

3. Nor can the opinion of fanatics be solidly refuted, who call themselves spiritual, when they determine God to be all in all; to do not only good but evil things, because he is to be accounted to be essentially in all the atoms of the world, in whole; and as a common soul, by which all parts of the universe do act.

Answ. We may in time make trial whether they can be refuted or no, or whether any solid ground will be left for it; at this time it will suffice to say, that though he be present every where as a necessary being, yet he acts as a free cause, and according as his wisdom, his good pleasure, his holiness and justice do guide his action.

4. So God will be equally present with the wicked, and with the holy and godly, with the damned in hell, and devils, as with the blessed in heaven, or Christ himself.

Answ. So he will, in respect of his essential presence. How he is otherwise (distinguishingly enough) present in his temple, we shall have occasion hereafter to show.

5. That I say not how shameful it is to think, that the most pure and holy God should be as much in the most nasty places as in heaven, &c. (I forbear to recite the rest of this uncleanly argument, which is strong in nothing but ill savour.) But for

Answ. How strange a notion was this of holiness, by which it is set in opposition to corporeal filthiness! As if a holy man should lose or very much blemish his sanctity, by a casual fall into a puddle. Indeed, if *sense* must give us measures of God, and every thing must be reckoned an offence to him that is so to it, we shall soon frame to ourselves a God altogether such a one as ourselves. The Epicureans themselves would have been ashamed to reason or conceive thus of God, who tell us the Divine Being is as little capable of receiving a stroke, as the inane; and surely (in proportion) of any sensible offence. We might as well suppose him in danger, as Dr. More[u] fitly expresses it, to be hurt with a thorn, as offended with an ill smell.

We have then enough to assure us of God's absolute immensity and omnipresence, and nothing of that value against it as ought to shake our belief herein. And surely the consideration of this, added to the other of his perfections, (and which tends so directly to facilitate and strengthen our persuasion concerning the rest,) may render us assuredly certain, that we shall find him a conversable Being; if we seriously apply ourselves to converse with him, and will but allow him the liberty of that temple within us, whereof we are hereafter (with his leave and help) to treat more distinctly and at large.

[u] In his Dialogues.

THE

LIVING TEMPLE.

PART II.

CONTAINING ANIMADVERSIONS ON SPINOSA, AND A FRENCH WRITER PRETENDING TO CONFUTE HIM.

WITH

A RECAPITULATION OF THE FORMER PART, AND AN ACCOUNT OF THE DESTITUTION AND RESTITUTION OF GOD'S TEMPLE AMONG MEN.

A PREFACE,

SHOWING THE INDUCEMENT AND GENERAL CONTENTS OF THIS SECOND PART. THE OCCASION OF CONSIDERING SPINOSA, AND A FRENCH WRITER WHO PRETENDS TO CONFUTE HIM. A SPECIMEN OF THE WAY AND STRENGTH OF THE FORMER'S REASONING, AS AN INTRODUCTION TO A MORE DISTINCT EXAMINATION OF SUCH OF HIS POSITIONS, AS THE DESIGN OF THIS DISCOURSE WAS MORE DIRECTLY CONCERNED IN.

It is not worth the while to trouble the reader with an account why the progress of this work (begun many years ago, in a former part) hath been so long delayed; or why it is now resumed. There are cases wherein things too little for public notice, may be sufficient reasons to oneself: and such self-satisfaction is all that can be requisite, in a matter of no more importance than that circumstance only, of the time of sending abroad a discourse, of such a nature and subject, as that if it can be useful at any time, will be so at all times. The business of the present discourse, is religion; which is not the concern of an age only, or of this or that time, but of all times; and which, in respect of its grounds and basis, is eternal, and can never cease or vary. But if in its use and exercise it do at any time more visibly languish, by attempts against its foundations, an endeavour to establish them, if it be not altogether unfit to serve that purpose, will not be liable to be blamed as unseasonable. Every one will understand, that a design further to establish the grounds of religion, can have no other meaning, than only to represent their stability unshaken by any attempts upon them; that being all that is either possible in this case, or needful. Nothing more is possible: for if there be not already, in the nature of things, a sufficient foundation of religion, it is now too late; for their course and order cannot begin again. Nor is any thing, besides such a representation, needful: for have the adventures of daring wits (as they are fond of being thought) altered the nature of things? Or hath their mere breath thrown the world off from its ancient basis, and new-moulded the universe, so as to make things be after the way of their own hearts? Or have they prevailed upon themselves, firmly to believe things are as they would wish?

One would be ashamed to be of that sort of creature, called *Man*, and count it an unsufferable reproach to be long unresolved, Whether there ought to be such a thing in the world as religion, yea, or no. Whatever came on't, or whatsoever I did or did not besides, I would drive this business to an issue; I would never endure to be long in suspense about so weighty and important a question. But if I inclined to the negative, I would rest in nothing short of the plainest demonstration: for I am to dispute against mankind; and eternity hangs upon it. If I misjudge, I run counter to the common sentiments of all the world, and am lost for ever. The opposers of it have nothing but inclination to oppose it, with a bold jest now and then. But if I consider the unrefuted demonstrations brought for it, with the consequences, religion is the last thing in all the world upon which I would adventure to break a jest. And I would ask such as have attempted to argue against it, Have their strongest arguments conquered their fear? Have they no suspicion left, that the other side of the question may prove true? They have done all they can, by often repeating their faint despairing wishes, and the mutterings of their hearts, "No God! no God!" to make themselves believe there is none; when yet the restless tossings to and fro of their uneasy minds; their tasking and torturing that little residue of wit and common sense, which their riot hath left them, (the excess of which latter, as well shows as causes the defect of the former,) to try every new method and scheme of atheism they hear of, implies their distrust of all; and their suspicion, that do what they can, things will still be as they were, *i.e.* most adverse and unfavourable to that way of living, which however at a venture, they had before resolved on. Therefore, they find it necessary to continue their contrivances, how more effectually to disburden themselves of any obligation to be religious; and hope, at least, some or other great wit may reach further than their own; and that either by some new model of thoughts, or by not thinking, it may be possible at length to argue or wink the Deity into nothing, and all religion out of the world.

And we are really to do the age that right, as to acknowledge, the genius of it aims at more consistency and agreement with itself, and more cleverly to reconcile notions with common practice than heretofore. Men seem to be grown weary of the old dull way of practising all manner of lewdness, and pretending to repent of them; to sin, and say they are sorry for it. The running this long-beaten circular tract of doing and repenting the same things, looks ridiculously, and they begin to be ashamed on't. A less interrupted and more progressive course in their licentious ways, looks braver; and they count it more plausible to disbelieve this world to have any ruler at all, than to suppose it to have

such a one as they can cheat and mock with so easy and ludicrous a repentance, or reconcile to their wickedness, only by calling themselves wicked, while they still mean to continue so. And perhaps of any other repentance they have not heard much; or if they have, they count it a more heroical, or feel it an easier thing to laugh away the fear of any future account or punishment, than to endure the severities of a serious repentance, and a regular life. Nor can they, however, think the torments of any hell so little tolerable as those of a sober and pious life upon earth. And for their happening to prove everlasting, they think they may run the hazard of that. For as they can make a sufficient shift to secure themselves from the latter sort of torments, so they believe the champions of their cause have taken sufficient care to secure them from the former.

As religion hath its gospel and evangelists, so hath atheism and irreligion too. There are tidings of peace sent to such as shall repent and turn to God; and there have been those appointed, whose business it should be to publish and expound them to the world. This also is the method for carrying on the design of irreligion. Doctrines are invented to make men fearless, and believe they need no repentance. And some have taken the part to assert and defend such doctrines, to evangelize the world, and cry "Peace, peace," to men, upon these horrid terms. And these undertake for the common herd, encourage them to indulge themselves in all manner of liberty, while they watch for them, and guard the coasts: and no faith was ever more implicit or resigned, than the infidelity and disbelief of the more unthinking sort of these men. They reckon it is not every one's part to think. It is enough for the most to be boldly wicked, and credit their common cause, by an open contempt of God and religion. The other warrant them safe, and confidently tell them they may securely disbelieve all that ever hath been said, to make a religious regular life be thought necessary; as only invented frauds of sour and ill-natured men, that envy to mankind the felicity whereof their nature hath made them capable, and which their own odd preternatural humour makes them neglect and censure.

And for these defenders of the atheistical cause, it being their part and province to cut off the aids of reason from religion, to make it seem an irrational and a ridiculous thing, and to warrant and justify the disuse and contempt of it, and as it were, to cover the siege, wherewith the common rout have begirt the temple of God; they have had less leisure themselves, to debauch and wallow in more grossly sensual impurities. Herewith the thinking part did less agree: and they might perhaps count it a greater thing to make debauchees than to be such, and reckon it was glory enough to them to head and lead on the numerous throng, and pleasure enough to see them they had so thoroughly disciplined to the service, throw dirt and squibs at the sacred pile, the dwelling of God among men on earth, and cry, "Down with it even to the ground." Nor for this sort of men, whose business was only to be done by noise and clamour, or by jest and laughter, we could think them no more fit to be discoursed with than a whirlwind, or an *ignis fatuus*. But for such as have assumed to themselves the confidence to pretend to reason, it was not fit they should have cause to think themselves neglected. Considering therefore, that if the existence of a Deity were fully proved, (*i. e.* such as must be the fit object of religion, or of the honour of a temple,) all the little cavils against it must signify nothing, (because the same thing cannot be both true and false,) we have in the former part of this discourse, endeavoured to assert so much in an argumentative way. And therefore first laid down such a notion of God, as even atheists themselves, while they deny him to exist, cannot but grant to be the true notion of the thing they deny; *viz.* summarily that he can be no other than a being absolutely perfect. And thereupon next proceed to evince the existence of such a being. And whereas this might have been attempted in another method, as was noted *Part* 1. *Ch.* 1. by concluding the existence of such a being first from the idea of it, which (as a fundamental perfection) involves existence; yea, and necessity of existence, most apparently in it. Because that was clamoured at as sophistical and captious, (though very firm unsliding steps might, with caution, be taken in that way,*) yet we rather chose the other as plainer, more upon the square, more easily intelligible and convictive, and less liable to exception in any kind; *i. e.* rather to begin at the bottom, and rise from necessity of existence, to absolute perfection, than to begin at the top, and prove downward, from absolute perfection, necessity of existence.

Now, if it do appear from what hath been said concerning the nature of necessary, self-existing being, that it cannot but be absolutely perfect, even as it is such, since nothing is more evident than that some being or other doth exist necessarily, or of itself, our point is gained without more ado; *i. e.* we have an object of religion, or one to whom a temple duly belongs. We thereupon used some endeavour to make that good, and secure that more compendious way to our end; as may be seen in the former Part. Which was endeavoured as it was a nearer and more expeditious course; not that the main cause of religion did depend upon the immediate and self-evident reciprocal connexion of the terms *necessary existence*, and *absolute perfection*, as we shall see hereafter in the following discourse; but because there are other hypotheses, that proceed either upon the denial of any necessary being that is absolutely perfect, or upon the assertion of some necessary being that is not absolutely perfect; it hence appears requisite, to undertake the examination of what is said to either of these purposes, and to show with how little pretence a necessary most perfect being is denied, or any such imperfect necessary being, is either asserted or imagined.

We shall therefore in this Second Part, first, take into consideration what is (with equal absurdity and impiety) asserted by one author, of the identity of all substance, of the impossibility of one substance being produced by another, and consequently of one necessary self-existing being, pretended with gross self-repugnancy, to be endued with infinite perfections, but really represented the common receptacle of all imaginable imperfection and confusion.—Next, what is asserted by another in avowed opposition to him, of a necessary self-existent being, that is at the same time said to be essentially imperfect.—Then we shall recapitulate what had been discoursed in the former Part, for proof of such a necessarily existent and absolutely perfect being, as is there asserted.—Thence we shall proceed to show how reasonably Scripture testimony is to be relied upon, in reference to some things concerning God, and the religion of his temple, which either are not so clearly demonstrable, or not at all discoverable the rational way.—And shall lastly show how it hath come to pass, if God be such as he hath been represented, so capable of a temple with man, so apt and inclined to inhabit such a one, that he should ever not do so; or how such a temple should ever cease, or be uninhabited and desolate, that the known way of its restitution may be the more regardable and marvellous in our eyes.

The authors against whom we are to be concerned, are Benedictus Spinosa, a Jew, and an anonymous French writer, who pretends to confute him. And the better to prepare our way, we shall go on to preface something concerning the former, *viz.* Spinosa, whose scheme,† though, with great pretence of devotion, it acknowledges a Deity, yet so confounds this his fictitious deity with every substantial being in the world besides, that upon the whole it appears altogether inconsistent with any rational exercise or sentiment of religion at all. And indeed, the mere pointing with the finger at the most discernible and absurd weakness of some of his principal supports, might be sufficient to overturn his whole fabric; though perhaps he thought the fraudulent artifice of contriving it geometrically must confound all the world, and make men think it not liable to be attacked in any part.

But whether it can, or no, we shall make some present trial; and for a previous essay, (to show that he is not invulnerable, and that his scales do not more closely cohere, than those of his brother-leviathan,) do but compare his definition of an attribute,‡ "That which the understanding perceives of substance; as constituting the essence thereof,"

* As by the excellent Dr. Cudworth, in his *Intellectual System*, we find is done.

† As is laid down in his *Posthumous Ethics*.

‡ Ethic. Part 1. Def. 4.

with his fifth Proposition, "There cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute;" which is as much as to say that two substances cannot be one and the same substance. For the attribute of any substance (saith he) constitutes its essence; whereas the essence therefore of one thing, cannot be the essence of another thing, if such an attribute be the essence of one substance, it cannot be the essence of another substance. A rare discovery! and which needed mathematical demonstration! Well, and what now? Nothing, it is true, can be plainer, if by the same attribute or nature, he means numerically the same; it only signifies one thing is not another thing. But if he mean there cannot be two things or substances, of the same special or general nature, he hath his whole business yet to do; which how he does, we shall see in time.

But now compare herewith his definition of what he thinks fit to dignify with the sacred name of God: "By God (saith he*) I understand a being absolutely infinite; *i. e.* a substance consisting of infinite attributes, every one whereof expresses an infinite essence." And behold the admirable agreement! how amicably his definition of an attribute, and that mentioned proposition, accord with this definition (as he calls it) of God! There cannot be two substances, he saith, that have the same attribute, *i. e.* the same essence. But now it seems the same substance may have infinite attributes, *i. e.* infinite essences! O yes, very conveniently: for he tells† you that two attributes really distinct, we cannot conclude do constitute two divers substances. And why do they not? Because it belongs to the nature of substance, that each of its attributes be conceived by itself, &c. Let us consider his assertion, and his reason for it. He determines, you see, two really distinct attributes do not constitute two divers substances. You must not here take any other man's notion of an attribute, according to which, there may be accidental attributes, that, we are sure, would not infer diversity of substances for their subjects; or, there may be also essential ones, that only flow from the essence of the thing to which they belong; so, too, nobody doubts one thing may have many properties. But we must take his own notion of an attribute, according whereto it constitutes, or (which is all one) is, that very essence. Now will not such attributes as these, being really distinct, make divers substances? Surely what things are essentially diverse, must be concluded to be most diverse. But these attributes are by himself supposed to be really distinct, and to constitute (which is to be) the essence of the substance. And how is that one thing, or one substance, which hath many essences? If the essence of a thing be that, by which it is what it is, surely the plurality of essences must make a plurality of things.

But it may be said, Cannot one thing be compounded of two or more things essential diverse, as the soul and body of a man; whence therefore, the same thing, *viz.* a man, will have two essences? This is true, but impertinent. For the very notion of composition signifies these are two things united, not identified, that are capable of being again separated; and that the third thing, which results from them both united, contains them still distinct from one another, not the same.

But it may be said, though these attributes are acknowledged and asserted to be distinct from one another, they are yet found in one and the same substance common to them all. And this no more ought to be reckoned repugnant to common reason, than the philosophy heretofore in credit, which taught that the vast diversity of forms throughout the universe, which were counted so many distinct essences, do yet all reside in the same first matter, as the common receptacle of them all.

Nor yet doth this salve the business, were that philosophy never so sure and sacred. For you must consider he asserts an attribute is that which constitutes the essence of the substance in which it is. But that philosophy never taught the forms lodged in the same common matter were its essence, though they were supposed to essentiate the *composita*, which resulted from their union therewith. Yea, it did teach they were so little the essence of that common matter, that they might be expelled out of it, and succeeded by new ones, and yet the matter which received them still remain the same. But that an attribute should be supposed to be the essence of the substance to which it belongs; and that another superadded attribute, which is also the essence of substance, should not make another substance essentially distinct, is an assertion as repugnant to common sense, as two and two make not four. But that which completes the jest, (though a tremendous one upon so awful a subject,) is, that this author‡ should so gravely tell the world, they who are not of his sentiment, being ignorant of the causes of things, confound all things; imagine trees and men speaking alike, confound the divine nature with the human, &c. Who would imagine this to be the complaining voice of one so industriously labouring to mingle heaven and earth! and to make God, and men, and beasts, and stones, and trees, all one and the same individual substance!

And now let us consider the reason of that assertion of his; why two attributes really distinct, do not constitute two beings, or two distinct substances; because, saith he,§ it is of the nature of substance that each of its attributes be conceived by itself, &c. A marvellous reason! Divers attributes, each whereof, as before, constitutes the essence of substance, do not make divers substances; because those attributes may be conceived apart from each other, and are not produced by one another. It was too plain to need a proof, (as was observed before,) that there cannot be two substances of one attribute, or of one essence, (as his notion of an attribute is,) *i. e.* two are not one. But that two attributes or essences of substance, cannot make two substances, because they are diverse, is very surprisingly strange. This was (as Cicero upon as good an occasion speaks) not to consider, but to cast lots what to say. And it deserves observation too, how well this assertion, "That two distinct attributes do not constitute two distinct substances," agrees with that,‖ "Two substances having divers attributes, have nothing common between them." This must certainly suppose the diversity of attributes to make the greatest diversity of substances imaginable; when they admit not there should be any thing (not the least thing) common between them! And yet they make not distinct substances!

But this was only to make way for what was to follow, the overthrow of the creation. A thing he was so overintent upon, that in the heat of his zeal and haste, he makes all fly asunder before him, and overturns even his own batteries as fast as he raises them; says and unsays, does and undoes, at all adventures. Here two substances are supposed having distinct attributes, that is, distinct essences, to have therefore nothing common between them; and yet presently after, the two, or never so many distinct attributes, give unto substance two, or never so many distinct essences, yet they shall not be so much as two, but one only. For to the query put by himself, By what sign one may discern the diversity of substances? he roundly answers,¶ The following propositions would show there was no other substance but one, and that one infinite, and therefore how substances were to be diversified would be inquired in vain. Indeed, it would be in vain, if knowing them to have different essences, we must not yet call them different substances. But how the following propositions do show there can be no more than one substance, we shall see in time. We shall for the present take leave of him, till we meet him again in the following discourse.

* Definit. 6. † Schol. in Prop 10. ‡ Schol. 2 in Prop. 8. Part 1. § Schol. in Prop. 10. ‖ Prop. 2. ¶ Schol. in Prop. 10.

THE LIVING TEMPLE.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

WHEREIN IS SHOWN, THE DESTRUCTIVENESS OF SPINOSA'S SCHEME AND DESIGN TO RELIGION AND THE TEMPLE OF GOD. THE REPUGNANCY OF HIS DOCTRINE TO THIS ASSERTION—THAT WHATSOEVER EXISTS NECESSARILY AND OF ITSELF, IS ABSOLUTELY PERFECT; WHICH IS THEREFORE FURTHER WEIGHED. HIS VAIN ATTEMPT TO PROVE WHAT HE DESIGNS. HIS SECOND PROPOSITION CONSIDERED. HIS DEFINITION OF A SUBSTANCE DEFECTIVE. PROVES NOT HIS PURPOSE. HIS THIRD, FOURTH, AND FIFTH PROPOSITION. HIS EIGHTH SCHOLIA. *THE MANUDUCTIO AD PANTOSOPHIAM.*

HITHERTO we have discoursed only of the Owner of this temple, and shown to whom it rightfully belongs; *viz.* That there is one only necessary, self-existing, and most absolutely-perfect being, the glorious and ever-blessed God—who is capable of our converse, and inclined thereto; whom we are to conceive as justly claiming a temple with us, and ready, upon our willing surrender, to erect in us, or repair such a one, make it habitable, to inhabit and replenish it with his holy and most delectable presence, and converse with us therein suitably to himself and us; *i. e.* to his own excellency and fulness, and to our indigency and wretchedness. And now the order of discourse would lead us to behold the sacred structure rising, and view the surprising methods by which it is brought about, that any such thing should have place in such a world as this. But we must yield to stay, and be detained a little by some things of greater importance than merely the more even shape and order of a discourse; that is, looking back upon what hath been much insisted on in the former Part—That some being or other doth exist necessarily and of itself, which is of absolute or universal perfection—and taking notice of the opposite sentiments of some hereto; because the whole design of evincing an object of religion would manifestly be much served hereby, we could not but reckon it of great importance to consider what is said against it. We have observed in the Preface a two-fold opposite hypothesis, which therefore, before we go further in the discourse of this temple of God, require to be discussed.

I. The first is that of Spinosa, which he hath more expressly stated, and undertaken with great pomp and boast to demonstrate, in his *Posthumous Ethics;* which we shall therefore so far consider, as doth concern our present design. He there, as hath been noted in the preface, asserts all "substance to be self-existent, and to be infinite; that one substance is improducible by another; that there is but one, and this one he calls God, &c." Now this horrid scheme of his, though he and his followers would cheat the world with names, and with a specious show of piety, is as directly levelled against all religion, as any the most avowed atheism: for, as to religion, it is all one whether we make nothing to be God, or every thing; whether we allow of no God to be worshipped, or leave none to worship him. His portentous attempt to identify and deify all substance, attended with that strange pair of attributes, *extension* and *thought*, (and an infinite number of others besides,) hath a manifest design to throw religion out of the world that way.

II. And it most directly opposes the notion of a self-existent Being, which is absolutely perfect: for such a being must be a substance, if it be any thing; and he allows no substance but one, and therefore none to be perfect, unless all be so. And since we are sure some is imperfect, it will be consequent there is none absolutely perfect; for that the same should be imperfect, and absolutely perfect, is impossible. Besides, that he makes it no way possible to one substance to produce another, and what is so impotent must be very imperfect: yea, and whatsoever is not omnipotent, is evidently not absolutely perfect. We are therefore cast upon reconsidering this proposition—Whatsoever being exists necessarily and of itself, is absolutely perfect. It is true that if any being be evinced to exist necessarily and of itself, which is absolutely perfect, this gives us an object of religion, and throws Spinosa's farrago, his confused heap and jumble of self-existent being, into nothing. But if we carry the universal proposition as it is laid down, though that will oblige us afterwards as well to confute his French confuter, as him; it carries the cause of religion with much the greater clearness, and with evident, unexceptionable self-consistency. For indeed that being cannot be understood to be absolutely perfect, which doth not eminently comprehend the entire fulness of all being in itself; as that must be a heap of imperfection, an everlasting chaos, an impossible, self-repugnant medley, that should be pretended to contain all the varieties, the diversifications, compositions, and mixtures of things in itself formally. And for the universal proposition: the matter itself requires not an immediate, self-evident, reciprocal connexion of the terms—necessarily self-existent, and absolutely perfect. It is enough that it however be brought about by gradual steps, in a way that at length cannot fail; and I conceive hath been in the method that was followed in the former Part.

For, to bring the business now within as narrow a compass as is possible: nothing is more evident than that some being exists necessarily, or of itself; otherwise nothing at all could now exist. Again, for the same reason, there is some necessary or self-existent being that is the cause of whatsoever being exists not of itself; otherwise nothing of that kind could ever come into being. Now that necessary being, which is the cause of all other being, will most manifestly appear to be absolutely perfect. For, if it be universally causative of all other being, it must both have been the actual cause of all being that doth actually exist, and can only be the possible cause of all that is possible to exist. Now so universal a cause can be no other than an absolutely or universally perfect being. For it could be the cause of nothing, which it did not virtually or formally comprehend in itself. And that being which comprehends in itself all perfection, both actual and possible, must be absolutely or universally perfect. And such a being, as hath also further more particularly been made apparent, must be an intelligent and a designing agent, or cause; because, upon the whole universe of produced beings, there are most manifest characters of design, in the passive sense. They are designed to serve ends to which they have so direct and constant an aptitude, as that the attempt to make it be believed they were forced or fell in that posture of subserviency to such and such ends, by any pretended necessity upon their principal cause or causes, or by mere casualty, looks like the most ludicrous trifling to any man of sense. And because that among produced beings there are found to be many, that are them-

selves actively designing, and that do understandingly intend and pursue ends; and consequently that they themselves must partake of an intelligent, spiritual nature, since mere matter is most manifestly incapable of thought or design. And further, by the most evident consequence, that their productive cause, (*viz.* the necessary, self-existing Being, whereto all other things owe themselves,) must be a mind or spirit, inasmuch as to suppose any effect to have any thing more of excellency in it than the cause from whence it proceeded, is to suppose all that excellency to be effected without a cause, or to have arisen of itself out of nothing. See *former Part, Chap.* III. *Sect.* XII. &c.

Therefore if it did not immediately appear that necessary being, as such, is absolutely perfect being; yet, by this series of discourse, it appears that the main cause of religion is still safe; inasmuch as that necessary Being which is the cause of all things else, is however evinced to be an absolutely perfect Being, and particularly a necessary self-existent Mind or Spirit, which is therefore a most apparently fit and most deserving object of religion, or of the honour of a temple; which is the sum of what we were concerned for. Nor needed we be solicitous, but that the unity or oniness of the necessary Being, would afterwards be made appear, as also we think it was. For since the whole universe of produced being must arise out of that which was necessary self-existent Being, it must therefore comprehend all being in itself, its own formally, and eminently all other; *i. e.* what was its own, being formally its own, must be eminently also all being else, contained in all possible simplicity, within the productive power of its own. This Being therefore containing in itself all that exists necessarily, with the power of producing all the rest, which together make up all being, can primarily be but *one*, inasmuch as there can be but one *all*. Upon the whole therefore, our general proposition is sufficiently evident, and out of question—That whatever exists necessarily, and of itself, is absolutely perfect. Nor is it at all incongruous that this matter should be thus argued out, by such a train and deduction of consequences, drawn from effects, that come under our present notice; for how come we to know that there is any self-existing Being at all, but that we find there is somewhat in being that is subject to continual mutation, and which therefore exists not necessarily, (for whatsoever is what it is necessarily, can never change, or be other than what it is,) but must be caused by that which is necessary and self-existent. Nothing could be more reasonable or more certain than the deduction from what appears of excellency and perfection in such being as it is caused; of the correspondent and far-transcendent excellency and perfection of its cause. But yet, after all this, if one set himself attentively to consider, there must appear so near a connexion between the very things themselves, *self-existence* and *absolute perfection*, that it can be no easy matter to conceive them separately.

Self-existence! Into how profound an abyss is a man cast at the thought of it! How doth it overwhelm and swallow up his mind and whole soul! With what satisfaction and delight must he see himself comprehended, of what he finds he can never comprehend! For contemplating the self-existent Being, he finds it eternally, necessarily, never not existing! He can have no thought of the self-existing Being,[a] as such, but as always existing, as having existed always, as always certain to exist. Inquiring into the spring and source of this Being's existence, whence it is that it doth exist; his own notion of a self-existing Being, which is not arbitrarily taken up, but which the reason of things hath imposed upon him, gives him his answer; and it can be no other, in that it is a self-existing Being, it hath it of itself, that it doth exist. It is an eternal, everlasting spring and fountain of perpetually-existent being to itself. What a glorious excellency of being is this! What can this mean, but the greatest remoteness from nothing that is possible; *i. e.* the most absolute fulness and plenitude of all being and perfection? And whereas all caused being, as such, is, to every man's understanding, confined within certain limits; what can the uncaused self-existent Being be, but most unlimited, infinite, all-comprehending, and most absolutely perfect? Nothing therefore can be more evident, than that the self-existent Being must be the absolutely perfect Being.

And again, if you simply convert the terms, and let this be the proposition,—That the absolutely-perfect Being is the self-existent Being—it is most obvious to every one, that the very notion of an absolutely-perfect Being carries necessity of existence, or self-existence, in it; which the notion of nothing else doth. And indeed one great master[b] of this argument for the existence of God, hath himself told me, "That though when he had puzzled divers atheists with it they had been wont to quarrel at it, as sophistical and fallacious, he could never meet with any that could detect the sophism, or tell where any fallacy in it lay; and that, upon the whole, he relied upon it as most solid and firm." And I doubt not but it may be managed with that advantage as to be very clearly concluding; yet, because I reckoned the way I have taken more clear, I chose it rather. But finding that so near cognation and reciprocal connexion between the terms both ways, I reckoned this short representation hereof, annexed to the larger course of evincing the same thing, might add no unuseful strength to it; and doubt not to conclude, upon the whole, that—whatsoever Being exists necessarily, and of itself, is absolutely perfect—and can, therefore, be no other than an intelligent Being; *i. e.* an infinite, eternal Mind, and so a most fit, and the only fit, deserving object of religion, or of the honour of a temple.

III. But now, be all this never so plain, it will, by some, be thought all false, if they find any man to have contrivance enough to devise some contrary scheme of things, and confidence enough to pretend to prove it; till that proof be detected of weakness and vanity, which must first be our further business with Spinosa. And not intending to examine particularly the several parts and junctures of his model, inasmuch as I find his whole design is lost, if he fail of evincing these things,—That it belongs to all substance, as such, to exist of itself, and be infinite—And, (which will be sufficiently consequent hereupon,) That substance is but one, and that it is impossible for one substance to produce another. I shall only attend to what he more directly says to this effect, and shall particularly apply myself to consider such of his propositions as more immediately respect this his main design: for they will bring us back to the definitions and axioms, or other parts of his discourse, whereon those are grounded, and even into all the darker and more pernicious recesses of his labyrinth; so as every thing of importance to the mentioned purpose will be drawn under our consideration, as this thread shall lead us.

His first proposition we let pass; "That a substance is, in order of nature, before its affections;" having nothing applicable to his purpose in it, which we shall not otherwise meet with.

His second, "That two substances, having divers attributes, have nothing common between them; or, which must be all one, do *agree in nothing*, I conceive it will be no great presumption to deny. And since he is pleased herein to be divided from himself, it is a civility to his later and wiser self to do so, who will afterwards have substance, having a multitude of distinct attributes, *i. e.* essences,[c] and which therefore cannot but be manifold, to have every thing common. So little hath he common with himself.

And it will increase the contention upon him, to deliver him from the entanglement of his demonstration, as he calls it, of this proposition; as I hope we shall also of the other too, for no doubt they are both false. Of this proposition his demonstration is fetched from his third definition, *viz.* of a substance, "That which is in itself, and conceived by itself; *i. e.* whose conception needs the conception of nothing else, whereby it ought to be formed;" so is his definition defined over and over.

We are here to inquire:—1. Into his definition of a substance. 2. Whether it sufficiently prove his proposition.

IV. *First*, For his definition of a substance. He himself tells us,[d] "A definition ought to express nothing

a Des Cartes. b Dr. More. c Schol. in Prop. 10. d Schol. in Prop. 8

but the simple nature of the thing defined;" and we may as well expect it distinctly to express that. Doth this definition express the simple nature of a substance, "That which is in itself," when it is left to divination what is meant by *is*, whether *essence*, or *existence*, or *subsistence?* And when we are to be at as random a guess, what is intended by being *in itself?* Whether being only contained, or being also sustained in, and by, or of itself? And supposing this latter to be meant, whether that self-subsistence exclude dependence only on another, *as a subject*, which we acknowledge true of all substance; or dependence *as on an efficient*, which if he will have to be taken for true of all, he was in reason to expect it should be so taken from his effectual proof, not from the reverence of his authority only: for what he adds, "And that is conceived by itself; and whose conception needs not the conception of any other thing by which it ought to be formed;"—would he have us believe this to be true, when afterward his tenth proposition is, "That every attribute of substance ought to be conceived by itself?" Whereupon then so many attributes, so many substances, it being the nature of a substance to be conceived by itself.

V. But passing from his notion of a substance, let us consider, *secondly*, How it proves his proposition, that "Two substances, having different attributes, have nothing common between them." According to him, every attribute of substance is to be conceived by itself; and yet have one and the same substance common to them all: therefore the distinct conception of things is, even with him, no reason why they should have nothing common between them. But as to the thing itself, he must have somewhat more enforcing than his definition of a substance, to prove that two (or many) individual substances may not have the same special nature common to them, and yet be conceived by themselves; having different individual natures or attributes, or different special natures, having the same general nature. Yea, and an equal dependence on the same common cause, which is a less ingredient in the conception of a thing, than the general or special nature is. And I doubt not, we shall find he hath not disproved, but that there is somewhat, in a true sense, common to them and their cause, that is of a conception much more vastly different from them both.

Whereupon, it is necessary to take distinct notice of his third proposition, "What things have nothing common between them, of them the one cannot be the cause of the other." In which nothing is to be peculiarly animadverted on, besides the contradiction in the very terms wherein it is proposed, *What things have nothing common between them.* How can they be things, and have nothing common between them? If they be things, they have sure the general notion of things common to them; there can therefore be no such things, that have nothing common. And let this be supposed to have been absurdly set down on purpose; yet now, for his demonstration hereof, it rests upon a palpable falsehood—that causes and effects must be mutually understood by one another; as we shall see more hereafter.

His fourth we let pass; what it hath regardable in it, being as fitly to be considered under the

VI. Fifth; "There cannot be two or more substances, in the whole universe, of the same nature or attribute;" unto which, besides what hath been said already, we need only here to add, that (whereas he hath told us, by the *attribute* of a substance, he means the *essence* of it) if he here speak of the same numerical essence or attribute, it is ridiculously true; and is no more than if he had said, One thing is but one thing. If he speak of the same special or general attribute or essence, it is as absurdly false; and for the proof of it, in the latter sense his demonstration signifies nothing. There may be more than one (as a stone, a tree, an animal) that agree in the same general attribute of corporeity, and are diversified by their special attributes; and there may be many of the same special attribute, (*viz.* of rationality,) as John, Peter, Thomas, &c. that are distinguished by their individual ones. He might as well prove, by the same method, the identity of his *modi*, as of substances; as that there can be but one individual triangle in all the world, of one attribute or property, as but one substance. Let (for instance) one at Paris, another at Vienna, a third at Rome, a fourth at London, describe each an equilateral triangle of the same dimensions, or in a thousand places besides; each one of these do only make one and the same numerical triangle, because they have each the same attribute. But how are the attributes of these several triangles the same? What! the same numerically? Then indeed they are all the same numerical triangle; for one and the same numerical essence makes but one and the same numerical thing. But who that is in his right wits would say so? And if it be only said they have all attributes of one and the same kind, what then is consequent, but that they are all triangles of one kind? Which who in his right wits will deny? And if the attribute of a substance be that which constitutes its essence, the attribute of any thing else is that which constitutes its essence. See then how far Spinosa hath advanced with his demonstration of the identity of substance! If he prove not all substance to be numerically the same, he hath done nothing to his purpose. And it is now obvious to every eye how effectually he hath done that.

Whence also it is further equally evident, his demonstration dwindles into nothing; and gives no support to

VII. His sixth proposition, which contains the malignity of his whole design, *viz.* "That one substance cannot be produced by another substance," which rests (as you see) partly upon the fifth, "That there cannot be two substances of the same attribute," which in his sense is, as hath been shown, most absurdly false, and the attempt of proving it as absurd; partly upon his second, "That two substances, of different attributes, have nothing common between them," which might be said of whatsoever else, as truly as of substances; but which is also most evidently untrue; and partly, upon his third, "That such things as have nothing common between them, the one of them cannot be the cause of the other," which depends upon two false suppositions,—1. "That there can be two things, which have nothing common between them;" which, as hath been noted, contradicts itself, and needs not be further stood upon. 2. "That whatsoever things are cause and effect, the one to the other, must be mutually understood by one another," which we shall here more distinctly consider, it being also his second demonstration of the corollary of this his sixth proposition, (which nothing but a disposition to trifle, or having nothing to say, could have made him mention, as a corollary from this proposition, it being in effect but a repetition of the same thing,) *viz.* "That if one substance can be produced by another, (agent, or substance, which you please,) the knowledge of it must depend upon the knowledge of its cause, (by the fourth axiom,) and thereupon (by definition third) it should not be a substance." We are here to consider,

1. This his fourth axiom, "That the knowledge of an effect depends upon the knowledge of its cause, and doth involve it." An effect may be considered two ways; absolutely, as it is in itself, or relatively, as it is the effect of an efficient cause. It cannot, it is true, be understood to be the effect of such an efficient, but the knowledge that this was its efficient, is involved therein; for it is the same thing, and so much may be known, without knowing any thing of the nature of either the efficient or effect. But this signifies nothing to his purpose. He must therefore mean, that the knowledge of an effect absolutely considered, and in its own nature, depends upon and involves the knowledge of the nature of its efficient. Surely, the nature of a thing may be competently known by its true definition. But is the efficient cause wont to be universally put into definitions? He tells us himself, (Schol. 2. upon Proposition 8.) "A true definition contains, or expresses, nothing, besides the mere nature of the thing defined." And let any man that thinks it worth it, be at the pains to examine his own definition in the several parts of this ethico-geometrical tract, and see whether he always puts the efficient cause into every definition. And (no doubt) he thought himself to define accurately. If all other men, who have so generally reckoned the efficient and end, external causes, and only matter and form internal, and ingredient into the nature of things, and therefore only fit to be put into definitions, were thought by him mistaken and out in their reckoning, it was, however, neither modest nor wise, to lay down for an axiom a thing so contrary to the

common sentiments of mankind; and without the least attempt to prove it, go about to demonstrate by it, in so portentous a cause; and lay the whole weight of his horrid cause upon it; expecting all the world should be awed into an assent, by the authority of his bare word; and not presume to disbelieve or doubt it, only because he is pleased to stamp the magisterial name of an axiom upon it. If therefore any man assume the boldness to deny his axiom, what is become of his demonstration? And whereas it is commonly apprehended, that definitions are not of individual things, but of special kinds, and is acknowledged by himself,[e] "That the essence of things produced by God, involves not existence, and the production of a thing is nothing else but the putting it into actual existence;" why may not the abstract essence, or nature of things, be well enough conceived and defined, without involving the conception of their productive cause? And this enough shows, 2dly, That his definition of a substance proves not, that one substance cannot be produced by another, *viz.* "That which can be conceived by itself," for so it may, without involving the conception of that which produces it; and so be a substance sufficiently accordiog to his definition. Though there can be no inconvenience in admitting, that things understood apart, by themselves, may be afterwards further and more clearly understood, by considering and comparing them in the habitude and references which they bear as causes and effects (or otherwise) to one another. And now is his,

VIII. Seventh proposition, "That it belongs to the nature of substance to exist," which is so great a pillar, left itself without support; and being understood of substance as such, as his terms and design require it to be, it is manifestly impious, communicating the most fundamental attribute of the Deity to all substance. And is as little befriended by reason, as it befriends religion; for it rests upon nothing but the foregoing baffled proposition: and this definition,[f] of that which is its own cause; which is, "That whose essence involves existence, or which cannot be conceived otherwise than as existing;" whereas, it is sufficiently plain we have a conception clear enough of the general nature of a substance as such, abstracted from existence, or non-existence, conceiving it only to be such, as if it exist, doth subsist in and by itself, *i. e.* without having a subject to support it; though it may be such as to have needed a productive, and continually to need a sustaining, efficient cause. Nor is there less clearness in this abstract conception of a substance, than there is in that of a modus, or accident, which we may conceive in an equal abstraction, from actual existence, or non-existence; understanding it to be such, as that if it exist, it doth inexist, or exist only in another. And now is our way sufficiently prepared to the consideration of his eighth proposition; "That all substance is necessarily infinite." And how is it demonstrated? Why, by his fifth proposition,—"That there can be but one substance, of one and the same attribute,"—which hath been sufficiently unravelled and exposed, so as not to be left capable of signifying any thing here, as the reader will see by looking back to what has been said upon it. And now it must quite sink; its next reliance failing it, *viz.* the foregoing seventh proposition,—"That it belongs to it, to exist necessarily." I grant the consequence to be good, and reckon it a truth of great evidence and concernment, "That whatsoever exists necessarily, is infinite." I heartily congratulate Spinosa's acknowledgment of so very clear and important an assertion; and do hope, as in the foregoing discourse I have made some, to make further, good use of it. But for what he assumes, that all "substance necessarily exists;" you see it rests upon nothing, and so consequently doth what he would conclude from it, that all substance is infinite. And his further proof of it avails as little, *viz.* that it cannot be finite; because (by his second definition) if it be so, it must be limited by something of the same nature, &c. Which would be absurd by proposition fifth,—"That there cannot be two substances of the same attribute:" for that there be two, of the same individual attribute, to bound one another is unnecessary, (as well as impossible,) and absurdly supposed for this purpose. For if there were two of the same individual nature and attribute, they would not bound one another, but run into one; inasmuch as having but one attribute, they should, according to him, have but one and the same essence; and so be most entirely one, and that there cannot be two, or many times two, of the same special or general nature, is unproved; and the contrary most evident, as may be seen, in what hath been said upon that fifth proposition.

IX. No man needs wish an easier task, than it would be to show the falsehood or impertinency of his *Scholia* upon this proposition, and of his following discourse, to the purpose above mentioned. But I reckon it unnecessary, his principal supports being (I will not say overthrown, but) discovered to be none at all. I shall therefore follow his footsteps no further, only take notice of some few things that have a more direct aspect upon his main design, and make all the haste I can to take leave of him, that I may be at liberty to pursue my own. What is in his first Scholium follows, he says, only upon his seventh proposition, which itself follows upon nothing; and therefore I further regard it not. His second Schol. would have his seventh proposition pass for a common notion; and so it will, when he hath inspired all mankind with his sentiments. But why must it do so? Because substance is that which is in itself, and is conceived by itself? Now compare that with his tenth proposition, —"Every attribute of substance ought to be conceived by itself." There the definition of substance is given to every attribute of substance; therefore, every attribute of substance is a substance, since the definition[g] of substance to which he refers us in the demonstration of that proposition, agrees to it; therefore, so many attributes, so many substances. What can be plainer? We have then his one substance multiplied into an infinite number of substances. By his sixth definition, we shall see his own confession of this consequence, by and by.

And whereas in this Schol. he would make us believe, that modifications men may conceive as not existing, but substances they cannot. Let the reason of this assigned difference be considered; "That by substance they must understand that which is in itself, and is conceived by itself, its knowledge not needing the knowledge of another thing. But by modifications they are to understand that which is in another, and whose conception is formed by the conception of that thing in which they are: wherefore, we can have true ideas of not-existing modifications, inasmuch as though they may not actually exist, otherwise than in the understanding, yet their essence is so comprehended in another, that they may be conceived by the same. But the truth of substances is not otherwise without the understanding, than in themselves, because they are conceived by themselves," &c. Which reason is evidently no reason. For with the same clearness, wherewith I conceive a substance, whensoever it exists, as existing in itself; I conceive a modification, whensoever it exists, as existing in another. If therefore any thing existing in another, be as truly existing, as existing in itself, the existence of a substance is no more necessary than the existence of a modification. And if we can have true ideas of not-existing modifications, we may have as true, of not-existing substances: especially since (according to him) we cannot conceive a substance, without conceiving in it some or other modifications. For he tells us, "The essence of modifications is so comprehended in another, that they may be conceived by the same." Now, what means he by the essence of modifications being comprehended in another? By that other, he must mean substance: for modifications do modify substances, or nothing; and if the essences of modifications be contained in substances, they must (according to him) be contained in the essence of substances.

For there is, saith he, nothing in nature, besides substances and their affections or modifications (demonstration of prop. fourth, and def. fifth.) Therefore, since nothing can be conceived in substance, antecedent to these modifications, besides its own naked essence, they must be contained immediately in the very essence of substance,

[e] Prop. 24. [f] Def. 5. [g] Def 3.

or in substance itself; wherefore if all substance be necessarily existent, they must be necessarily inexistent. And if the essence of substance contains the inexisting *modi*, the essence of the *modi* doth equally contain their inexistence in substance. Whereupon, by consequence also, the essence of these modifications doth as much involve existence (since no one can affirm inexistence to be existence) as the essence of substance doth, in direct contradiction to prop. twenty-fourth, which expressly (and most truly) says, "The essence of things produced by God" (which he, as untruly, inteads of these modifications alone) "do not involve existence."

And now for his *notanda* in this Schol. by which he would conclude, that there is no other than this one infinite[k] substance in being. It is true indeed, that the definition of a thing (which we have before said is of specific nature, not of individuals) expresses not any certain number of existing individuals, (be it man, or triangle, or what else you please,) nor any at all. For surely the definition of man, or triangle, would be the same, if every individual of each should be abolished and cease. But that, if any do exist, some cause must be assignable why they exist, and why so many only. What is to be inferred from this? That the reason being the same, as to every substance whose essence involves not existence in it, (which that the essence of every substance doth, or of substance as such, he hath not proved, nor ever can) when any such substance is found to exist, the cause of its existence, not being in its own nature, must be external. And therefore, so many only do exist, because a free agent, able to produce them, (for the very substance of created beings itself, owes not its production to a merely natural, undesigning, or to any subordinate agent only,) was pleased to produce so many, and no more. And so hath this unhappy author himself, with great pains and sweat, reasoned out for us the very thing we assert.

But that it may be further seen, how incurious a writer this man of demonstration is, and how fatally, while he is designing the overthrow of religion, he overthrows his own design, I shall not let pass what he says, in demonstrating his twelfth prop.—"That no attribute of substance can be truly conceived, from which it may follow, that substance can be divided." How he proves it by prop. eighth, and after by the sixth, I shall not regard, till I see those propositions better proved. But that which I at present remark, is his argument from prop. fifth,—"That if substance could be divided, each part must consist of a different attribute; and so of one substance many might be constituted." A fair confession, that many attributes will constitute many substances. And himself acknowledges many attributes of substance, (def. sixth, and prop. eleventh.) And therefore, though he here call this an absurdity, it is an absurdity which he hath inevitably now fastened upon himself, having here allowed, plainly, the consequence (as was above promised to be shown) that if there be diversity of attributes, they will constitute a diversity of substances, which it was before impossible to him to disallow, having defined an attribute (as was formerly noted) to be that which constitutes the essence of substance. Therefore, his whole cause is here fairly given away; for his one substance is now scattered into many, and the pretended impossibility of the creation of any substantial being, quite vanished into thin and empty air. The many inconsistencies to be noted also in his annexed letters, with several parts of his discourse, it is not my business particularly to reflect on. It is enough, to *my purpose*, to have shown he comes short of *his*.

X. Upon the whole, little more seems needful for the refutation of this his horrid doctrine of the unity, self-existence, and infinity of all substance, than only to oppose Spinosa to Spinosa. Nor have I ever met with a discourse so equally inconsistent with all principles of reason and religion, and with itself. And so frequently doth he overthrow his own ill design, in this very discourse, that it is altogether unnecessary to insist on the inconsistencies of this, with his demonstrations of Des Cartes's principles, written divers years before. Against which, every one that hath compared, knows these his later sentiments to import so manifest hostility, that I may well spare that vain and useless labour, it being sufficient only to note the more principal, in the margin.[k]

His following propositions (and among them those most surprising ones, the sixteenth and twenty-eighth) tend to evince the onliness of substance, and the absolute necessity of all actions; but upon grounds so plainly already discovered to be vain and false, that we need follow him no further. Nor is it necessary to disprove his hypothesis, or charge it with the many absurdities that belong to it; they are so horrid and notorious, that to any one who is not in love with absurdity for itself, it will abundantly suffice to have shown he hath not proved it.

XI. I cannot but, in the meantime, take some notice of the genius, which seems to have inspired both him and his devotees. A fraudulent pretence to religion, while they conspire against it. Whereof many instances might be given; as the prefixing that text of Holy Scripture to so impure a volume, on the title-page, 1 John iv. 13. "By this we know that we dwell in God, and God dwelleth in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." That the preface to his posthumous works is filled up with quotations out of the Bible; which it is their whole design to make signify nothing. The divine authority whereof, an anonymous defender of his, in that part of his work which he entitles, *Specimen artis ratiocinandi, naturalis et artificialis ad pantosophiæ principia manuducens*, undertakes to demonstrate (because, as he says, all religion depends upon the word of God) by an argument, which, he says, he can glory, that after many years meditation, the divine grace favouring him, he hath found out, by which he tell us,[l] he is able (to do what, that he knows, no man hath ever done before him) to demonstrate naturally the truth of the sacred Scripture, that is, That it is the word of God. An argument, he says, able to convince the most pertinacious pagan, &c. And it is taken from the idea of God, compared with that divine saying, Exod. iii. 14. "I am that I am." Whereupon what he says will to any one who attentively reads show his design, *viz.* at once to expose religion, and hide himself. And so doth his collusion sufficiently appear in making the soul philosophically mortal, and Christianly immortal, p. 70, &c. But if the philosopher perish for ever, what will become of the Christian?

This author also finds great fault with the instances usually given to exemplify the common definition of substance, *That is, a being subsisting by itself, or in itself*,[m] because he thought them not agreeable enough to his master Spinosa's notion of the unity and identity of all substances, and consequently of the improductibility of any. And he fancies them to contradict themselves, that while they call the sun, the moon, the earth, this or that tree, or stone, substances, they yet admit them to be produced by another. For how can it be, saith he, that they should be in or by themselves, and yet depend on another, as on a subject, or as an efficient cause? He is very angry, and says they by it do but crucify and mock their readers, only because it crosses and disappoints his and his master's impious purpose of deifying every substance. And therefore, to serve that purpose as he fancies the better, he would more aptly model all things, and reduce them to two distinct kinds only, *viz.* Of things that may be conceived primarily and in themselves, without involving the conception of another; and again, of things that we conceive not primarily and in themselves, but secondarily and by another, whose conception is involved in their conception. But all the while, what is there in this, more than what is common and acknowledged on all hands? as the sense of the trivial distich he takes the pains to recite,

Summus Aristoteles, &c.

But when all this is granted, what is he nearer his mark? Of that former sort, still some are from another; and one other only of and from itself. But then (says he)

h P. 31. i Def. 4.

k As his asserting God to be a most simple being, and that his attributes do only differ, *ratione* Wherens, now, he makes his attributes as divers, as extension and thought, and says, they ought to be conceived as really distinct. Schol. in Prop. 10. There he asserts all things to be created by God, here, nothing. There he makes corporeal substance divisible; here, all substance indivisible, &c. And yet in this work (vide Schol. in Prop. 19.) refers us to the former, a if, when the one destroys the other, both were firm.

l P. 94, &c.

m Manuduct. p. 11, 12.

how are those former conceived in and by themselves? Well enough, say I; for they are to be conceived, as they are to be defined; but the definition of a thing is to express only its own nature and essence (as Spinosa himself says, Schol. 2. in Prop. 8.) considered apart by itself, into which (as hath been said) the efficient cause, which is extrinsical to it, enters not; and without considering whether it exist or exist not. Because definitions are of special kinds, or common natures, that exist not as such; not of existing individuals, except the one only self-subsisting, original Being, of whose essence existence is; which Spinosa himself acknowledges, and makes his twentieth proposition; as on the other hand, that "The essence of things produced by God involves not existence," is his twenty-fourth.

XII. But that the substance of things, whose essence involves existence, and whose essence involves it not, should be one and the same, exceeds all wonder! One would think, so vastly different essences of substance should at least make different substances; and that when Spinosa hath told us so expressly, that an "attribute of substance constitutes the essence of substance; and that all the attributes of substance are distinctly conceived; the conception of the one, not involving the conception of another;" and so do most really differ from each other, and make so many essences therefore, of substance really distinct, (though he once thought otherwise of the divine attributes, that they did only differ from each other *ratione*, and that God was a most simple Being, which he also takes pains to prove, R. D. Cartes. Princip. Philos. Append. part 2d. cap. 5. p. 117, 118,) one would surely hereupon think, that so vastly different attributes, as necessary existence, and contingent, should constitute the most different substances imaginable. For what is an attribute? *Id quod intellectus de substantia percipit, tanquam ejus essentiam constituens.* (Def. 4.) Now the essence of some substance the understanding most clearly perceives as involving existence in it. Existence therefore constitutes the essence of such substance, and is therefore an attribute of it. Some other essence it as clearly perceives, that involves not existence. Now this sort of essence is the attribute of somewhat. And of what is it the attribute? Why, he hath told us, "An attribute is what the understanding perceives of substance as constituting its essence;" therefore, some substance hath such an essence as involves not existence.

Now let it hereupon be considered (albeit that I affect not to give high titles to any reasonings of mine) whether this amount not to a demonstration against the hypothesis of Spinosa, and the rest of his way, that all substance is self-existent; and that, even upon their own principles and concessions, so frequently acknowledging the world to be produced, and not self-existent, that even the substance of it is produced also; which they deny, *viz.*[n] That whose essence, this unnamed author says, includes not existence, either hath some substance belonging to its essence, or it hath not. If not, it may exist without substance; and then unto what is it an attribute, or what doth it modify? If yea, there is then some substance, and particularly that of this world, in whose essence existence is not included; and that by consequence, the substance of this world is produced. But if any make a difficulty of it to understand, how all being and perfection should be included in the Divine Being, and not be very God; so much is already said to this in the former Part of this discourse, (*viz.* Chap. 4. Sect. XII. &c.) that as I shall not here repeat what hath been said, so I think it unnecessary to say more.

And it is what Spinosa himself had once such sobriety of mind as to apprehend, when (Princip. R. D. Cart. Philosoph. more Geometr. demonstrat. Append. part 1. cap. 2.) he says thus of God, or of increate substance, that God doth eminently contain that which is found formally in created things, *i. e.* God hath that in his own nature, in which all created things are contained in a more eminent manner; and that there is some attribute in God, wherein all the perfections, even of matter, are after a more excellent manner themselves contained. Having before told us, (Princip. Part I. Axiom 8.) That by eminently, he understood when a cause did contain all the reality of its effect more perfectly than the effect itself; by formally, when it contained it in equal perfection. And so he might have told himself of somewhat sufficiently common (though not univocally) to the substance of the Divine Nature, and that of creatures; whereon to found the causality of the former, in reference to the latter, as effected thereby. But as he grew older, his understanding either became less clear, or was more perverted by ill design.

[n] Manuduct. p. 107.

CHAPTER II.

Animadversions from a French writer, nameless. His pretence to confute Spinosa. The opinion of the world's being made of independent self-existing matter; chosen by him and asserted against two other opinions. That of matter's being created out of nothing rejected, and falsely charged with novelty. Moses, and the author to the Hebrews misalleged, vindicated. Self-originate, independent matter disproved: asserted by this author with evident self-contradiction; and without necessity.

I. But having here done with him and that sort of men, I shall now very briefly consider the fore-mentioned Monsieur's way of confuting him. The conceit, that there must be such a thing as necessary self-subsisting matter, hath I confess seemed to be favoured by some or other name among the Ethnics of that value, as to have given some countenance to a better cause; besides some others, who with greater incongruity, and more injury to it, have professed the Christian name. It hath been of late espoused, and asserted more expressly, by this French gentleman, who hath not thought fit to dignify it with his name, doubting perhaps whether the acquainting the world with it, might not more discredit his cause, than his cause (in this part of it) could better the reputation of his name. However it be, though my inquiry and credible information hath not left me ignorant, I shall not give him occasion to think himself uncivilly treated, by divulging what he seems willing should be a secret. For though it was not intrusted to me as such, I shall be loth to disoblige him by that, whereby that I know I can oblige nobody else. It is enough that his book may be known by its title, *L'Impie convaincu.* It is professedly written against the atheism of Spinosa. And when I first looked into it, I could not refrain thinking of Plato's repartee to Diogenes, when the latter undertook to reprehend the other's pride, that he did it with greater pride. Although I think not the application is to be made in the strictest terms. For I will neither be so indulgent to Spinosa, as to reckon that any man's atheism can be greater than his; nor so severe to this his adversary, as positively to conclude he designed the service of any atheism at all. But I think him at least, unwarily and without any necessity, to have quitted one of the principal supports of the doctrine of a Deity; and that he hath undertaken the confutation of atheism, upon a ground that leads to atheism.

II. He thinks, it seems, Spinosa not otherwise confutable, than upon the hypothesis of eternal, independent matter, which he thus explains in his preface, it being the second of the three distinct hypotheses whereof he there gives an account.

The second,[a] he says, is theirs who assert two beings or two substances increate, eternal, independent, as to their simple existence, though very differently; the former whereof is God, the infinitely perfect Being, almighty, the principle of all perfection; and the second, matter, a being essentially imperfect, without power, without life, without knowledge; but capable nevertheless of all these perfections, by impression from God, and his operations upon it. This he pretends to have been the hypothesis of the ancient philosophers and divines (after he had acknowledged the former hypothesis—"That the world, and the matter of it, were drawn out of nothing by the infinite power of the first and supreme Being, which itself alone was eternal and independent,"—was the hypothesis of the greater part of Christian divines and philosophers.) And this second, he says, is the hypothesis which he shall fol-

[a] La seconde est celle de ceux qui, &c. Avertissement.

low, rejecting the first, but now mentioned; and in opposition to the third, which makes the world and its production to be nothing else than an emanation of the Divine Substance, whereby a part of itself is formed into a world. And this, he says, was the opinion of the ancient Gnostics and Priscillianists, and is for the most part of the Cabbalists, of the new Adamites or the illuminated, and of an infinite number of Asiatic and Indian philosophers.

III. To qualify the ill savour of that second opinion which he follows, he would have us believe it to be the more creditable, than the (rejected) first, which he says is a new thing in the world, and that it was not born till some ages after Christ; which is *gratis dictum*. And whereas he tells us, he takes notice, that Tertullian was the first that maintained it against a Christian philosopher, who defended the eternal existence of matter; he had only reason to take notice, That the philosopher he mentions, was the first, that calling himself a Christian, had the confidence to assert an opinion so repugnant to Christianity and to all religion, and who therefore first gave so considerable an occasion to one who was a Christian indeed, to confute it. Nor was Hermogenes a much more creditable name with the orthodox, ancient Christians, than those wherewith he graces the third opinion, besides the other ill company which might be assigned it, if that were a convictive way of fighting, by names.

IV. And for what he adds, That Moses was, he dares say, of his opinion; because he only gives such an account of the creation, as that it was made of an unformed pre-existent matter; and the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews, saying, God drew these visible things out of those that were not visible. He shows, indeed, more daringness than solid judgment, in venturing to say the one or the other upon so slender a ground. As if every thing were false, which Moses and Paul did not say. But it appears rather from his way of quoting, (who, it is like, did not much concern himself to turn over the leaves of the Bible, that he might be sure to quote right,) that God did create that unformed matter, as he calls it. For it is expressly said, God created heaven, and earth, and that this earth (not matter) was without form, and void, Gen. i. 1, 2. And if this unformed earth and matter be, as with him it seems, all one, then the unformed matter is said to have been created. For God is said to have created that unformed earth; which must indeed pre-exist, unformed, to its being brought into form, not unto all creation. And the same thing must be understood of the unformed heaven too, though Moses's design was to give us a more distinct account of what was nearer us, and wherein we were more concerned. And indeed, is seems most agreeable to the letter of the text, and to the following history, so to understand those words, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth," *viz.* That in the beginning he created that which afterwards became heaven and earth, *i. e.* unformed matter. For heaven and earth as now they are, or as they were in their formed state, were not created in a moment, in the very beginning; but in several successive days, as the following history shows. And so much Tertullian aptly enough intimates to that Pseudo-Christian Hermogenes, *Terræ nomen redigit in materiam, &c.* Nor is Heb. xi. 3. capable of being tortured into any sense more favourable to his gross fancy, which (as the Greek text, if any will consult it, shows) says not, The things that are seen were made of things not appearing, but were not made of things appearing. As to what he adds touching the word *créer*, &c. I let it pass, not liking to contend about words often promiscuously used, but shall apply myself to the consideration of the thing in question, and show—1. How inconsistently this author asserts independent matter, both with the truth and with himself—2. How unnecessarily he doth it, and that the defence of the common cause against Spinosa did no way oblige him to it.

V. *First*, How inconsistently he asserts it, I. With the *truth* of the thing; for,

(1.) Whatsoever exists independently and necessarily, is infinite. And herein I must do Spinosa that right, as to acknowledge he hath, in asserting it, done right to truth; though the grounds upon which he asserts it, are most perniciously false. But I conceive it is capable of being clearly proved (and hath been proved, Part 1st) otherwise, *viz.* that necessary, self-originate being, is the root and fountain of all being, whether actual or possible; since there is nothing actual brought into being, which is not actually from it, and nothing possible, but whose possibility depends upon it. And what virtually comprehends all being, actual and possible, cannot but be infinite. For without the compass of such all-comprehending being, there is nothing to bound it. And what is bounded by nothing, is unbounded or infinite. Whereupon also, matter plainly appears not to be of itself. For if it were, for the same reason it must be infinite and all comprehending. But nothing were more apparently contradictious and self-repugnant, than the assertion of two all-comprehending beings; and if there be but one, that matter is not that one. But that it must be a necessary, self-originate, intelligent Being, which is the root of all being, I conceive already sufficiently proved in the former part of this discourse. Wherein it is also shown, that finite created beings, arising from that infinite self-originate one, limit it not, nor do detract any thing from its infinity, but concur to evidence its infinity rather; inasmuch as they could never have been, had they not been before contained within the productive power of that increate self-originate Being. It is, by the way, to be noted that the notion of infinity we now intend, doth not merely import unconfinedness to this or that certain space, (though it include that too,) for that, alone, were a very maimed, defective notion of infiniteness. But we understand by it the absolute all-comprehending profundity and plenitude of essence and perfection. Whereupon, it signifies nothing to the preserving entire the infinity of the self-originate, intelligent Being, only to suppose it such, as that it can permeate all the space that can be taken up by another (supposed) self-originate being. For still, since its essence were of itself, it were not virtually contained in the other. Which therefore would evince that other not to be in the true sense infinite. Whereupon we,

(2.) Prove the impossibility of independent, self-originate matter, from the known, agreed notion of God, *viz.* That he is a *Being absolutely perfect*, or *comprehensive of all perfection*. Even they that deny his existence, confess (though to the contradiction of themselves) this to be the notion of the thing they deny. Now, though this assertor of independent matter acknowledges it a being essentially imperfect, he can only mean by that, less perfect; not that it hath, simply, no perfection at all. 'Tis idle trifling to brangle about words. Perfection hath been wont to go for an attribute of being. He calls it a being; it must therefore have some perfection, some goodness, be of some value. Is it not better than nothing? Then, that perfection must be eminently contained in God; otherwise, how is he a Being comprehensive of all perfection? The imperfections of matter belong not to him; nor of any thing else. For imperfection is nothing; nor do the perfections of any creature belong to him formally, or in the same special kind, but eminently, and in a higher and more noble kind. And so, to have all being and perfection, either for his own, or within his productive power, cannot, without contradiction, be denied of him, who is confessed to be God. And again, to be able to create, is surely a perfection. Omnipotency, more a perfection than partial impotency. Wherefore to assert matter could not be created by God, is to assert an impotent, imperfect God. Or since God can be conceived under no other notion than of a Being absolutely perfect) to assert none at all.

(3.) This supposition not only denies to God all perfection, but it ascribes to matter, which he himself confesses the meanest sort of being, (as shortly it will be fitter to take further notice,) the high excellency of self-subsistence, the first and most fundamental of all divine perfections.

(4.) If matter be, as such, an independent, self-originate thing, then every part or particle of matter must be so. And then, let such matter be supposed to fill up infinite space, we shall have an infinite number of independent entities, co-existing for ever; for a finite number cannot replenish infinite space: or let it be supposed (more agreeably to the pretended sentiments of this author) confined within the limits of the formed universe; and how un-

reasonably is such a thing as independent matter, supposed to be of itself, limited to one spot of immense space! For let the universe be supposed finite, though ever so vast, it must yet be conceived but as a minute spot, to the infinite unbounded vacuity that lies without it; and which yet he seems to acknowledge replenished with the Divine Being. Now let a man set himself to consider, and try how easy it will be to his thoughts to conceive one little portion of boundless space, taken up with a mean being, next to nothing, that is of itself there, and cannot but be there, and no where else, imposed upon the infinitely perfect Being; the all-wise and almighty God, who fills up all space unavoidably and from all eternity, so that he could not, if he thought it a cumber, disencumber or rid himself of it; and rather seemed of necessity, than of choice, to have made a world of it, as not knowing else what to do with it; with which imagination also the youth of the world so ill agrees, for why then was it so lately made?

(5.) But it further seems very evident, and more fully evidential of the absurdity of this conceit, that if there were such matter, the world could never have been made of it. For how great alterations must such rude, undigested, unformed matter have undergone, in forming of such a world as this? But what greater inconsistency can we imagine, than that what exists necessarily, or of itself, should be alterable? What is of itself what it is, must be eternally and without change what it is. So absurd, as well as profane, it will be to ascribe to dull and senseless matter, or to any thing else, so peculiar and appropriate an attribute and name as that of the Deity, *I am that I am*. For, hereupon, such matter were not only supposed vainly and to no purpose, being never possible to be the matter of the world, but destructively, and against the very purpose that should be served by it. For such matter being supposed to occupy the space of the formed world, must exclude thence any other matter of which it could be formed; and make it, consequently, impossible there should ever have been any such world as this, where the supposition itself makes it be. This see discoursed more at large, Part I. Chap. 2.

(6.) And whereas his great reason for such self-originate, independent matter, *viz.* the imagined impossibility of creation, or that any thing can be produced out of nothing, (which so far as is needful, we partly have and further shall consider, in its proper place,) doth as much oppose the creation of any spiritual being, as material. If all that hath been said in the former part of this discourse, and by many authors besides, do sufficiently prove there are such spiritual or immaterial beings that are created, or are not of themselves; and that, of the property of thought, which is found belonging to them, matter is not capable, (which I shall think to have been done till I see the contrary evinced,) we must judge him very absurdly to have asserted such self-originate, independent matter. And as he hath asserted it very inconsistently with the *truth* of the thing; so,

VI. 2. It will appear he hath done it as little consistently with himself. For,

(1.) He acknowledges God to be *L'etre infiniment parfait, tout puissant, et le principe de toute perfection—a Being infinitely perfect, almighty, and the principle of all perfection.* Now how is he infinitely perfect, if his being include not all perfection? How is he almighty, if he cannot create? How is he the fountain or principle of all perfection, if the perfection of matter (which, as hath been said, though he make it essentially imperfect, must have some perfection belonging to it, since it is not mere nothing) be not eminently comprehended in his being?

Besides that here acknowledging God to be omnipotent, and having denied the necessary, eternal, independent matter, which he imagines to be infinite, but limited and confined to the created universe only; I would hereupon demand of him, Cannot the blessed God, if he please, create many worlds? If he say, No, then how is he omnipotent?—If Yea, of what matter must they be made? Not of his (imagined) necessary, independent matter, for of that really none could: but according to him the present universe is made: it is already taken up, and pre-engaged therein, and it is limited thereto. Therefore the matter is yet to be created, of which the other worlds are to be made: and it can be so, otherwise no more worlds can be made: and thereupon the great God is, not without blasphemy, said to have gone to the utmost of his power, to have done in this kind all that he can. And this must be said, by this author, in express contradiction to the truth of the thing, to the most common and agreed idea or notion of the Divine Being; and now, most apparently, to himself. And therefore his high rant against Spinosa,[b] (in this point more orthodox than himself,) That he confounds in his philosophy being and perfection, *Pretendant que, ce qui est, et ne renferme aucune negation d'etre, est une perfection, &c.—Pretending that whatsoever is, and includes not in its notion any negation of being, is a perfection, &c.* is vain, and as much without cause, as what he afterwards says about it is without sense. For he adds, That for his part he finds nothing more false or extravagant; and why so? Because then pain and sorrow must be reckoned among perfections, and such real perfections as are worthy of God, or a Being infinitely perfect. And upon this, he triumphs over such men, as supplanters of the Deity, instead of defenders of so great a Being, and as having lost their senses and their reason, &c. But if he had not lost his own, and abandoned himself to that fury and rage of insolence which he there imputes to his opposers, he might have been capable of so much calm and sober consideration, as to have bethought himself, that among creatures, a sense of pain, real grief and sorrow, correspondent to their present, true causes, import more perfection, than stupidity, insensibleness, and apathy; and if so, though pain and grief cannot formally agree to the most perfect being of God, to whom their causes cannot agree, that the life and percipiency do eminently agree to him, by which he can apprehend an injury, though not a real hurt, (which he can therefore only not apprehend, not because the perceptive principle is wanting, but the object,) and by the power of imparting whereof, he is able to make a creature capable of pain and grief, where the objects shall (as they may deservedly) occur, and meet the perceptive principle; and that the power of making such a creature, is a greater perfection than an impotency of doing it. Which perfection therefore, he could not, consistently with himself, deny to God, having acknowledged him a Being infinitely perfect, or comprehensive of all perfection. Nor,

(2.) Doth he assert necessary increate matter, consistently with his own reasonings for the possibility of a vacuum,[c] where he takes it for granted, that God can *aneantir une petite partie de la matiere, &c.—annihilate some small particle of matter*, one stone, for example, or one grain of sand. Which how ridiculously is it supposed, by one who supposes such matter necessarily self-existent! For who sees not that necessity of existence, and impossibility of non-existence, do infer one another, or signify rather the same thing. Therefore, no man, except Spinosa, could be at once more daring and more unhappy than this author. And as it hath thus appeared, that he hath asserted such self-originate, independent matter, very inconsistently both with the truth of the thing and himself; so,

VII. *Secondly*, It will also appear he hath done it very unnecessarily; and particularly, without that necessity which he pretends of answering Spinosa. For there is no necessity of it so much as pretended, upon any account besides that of the common maxim, that nothing can come out of nothing; the sense whereof must first be inquired before it can be understood, how far it will serve his purpose, or infer the necessity of independent matter. The sense of it must either be this—That a being could never arise out of no-being, of itself, without a pre-existent, creative cause; which is most evidently true, but as evidently not to his purpose: or this—That what once was not, could never be produced into being by a pre-existent, omnipotent Cause: which were to his purpose, but is evidently, and by apparent self-contradiction, untrue.[d] And what can make it have so much as the least semblance of truth? Either the authority of the maxim, or some plausible reason. For its *authority*; though that

b P. 47, 48. c P. 110.

d Of this see at large Dr. Cudworth's Intellectual System.

which he claims to it of the ancient philosophers were little considerable, if ever so truly claimed, we have no ground to think it otherwise claimed than most untruly. Its authority, as he represents it, depends upon a worse authority. He is so modest as to expect it to be believed, upon his bare word, that this was the opinion of all the ancient philosophers before Christ's time; while yet he thinks not fit to tell us his name. But if their *reasonings* from it be considered, that generations are out of matter, and corruptions are into matter, we have no cause to apprehend they understood it otherwise than that natural agents did neither create nor annihilate any thing. Besides that, there is positive ground enough to conclude, that the more instructed and wiser pagans, long before Christ's time, did believe all things to have sprung from one intelligent, self-subsisting original, matter itself not being excepted. As, with the Egyptians, the inscription of the temple at Sais shows, "I am all that is, or was, or shall be," &c. and with the Grecians, their worshipping God, under the name of *Pan:* which could mean no other thing, than that they thought the Deity to comprehend eminently or virtually all beings besides, in its creative or productive power. And we have reason to think that pagan philosophers since Christ, such as Hierocles, Jamblichus, Porphyry, Plotinus, &c. who (as others have observed) were manifestly of this sentiment, understood the minds of the more ancient philosophers as well as this Monsieur; nor do they pretend to contradict them herein.

And for the reason of the thing itself, he hath not the least appearance of any on his part, but that, because the finite power of a creature cannot bring a thing out of nothing, therefore omnipoteney cannot; which is so far from concluding for him, that (as hath been intimated) it manifestly contradicts itself, and concludes the contrary. For how is that omnipotency, which cannot do every thing that implies not a contradiction? And how is that a contradiction, that what once was not, should afterwards come to be? there being no objective impossibility or intrinsic repugnancy in the thing itself to exist, but that it were truly *ens possibile*[e]; (and we are out of doubt concerning matter for instance, or whatsoever else we are sure doth exist, that it could exist;) and supposing also that there be a sufficient, causative power, to make it exist, or produce it into being: and what cause can be more sufficient than an omnipotent one, such as our author confesses God to be? Nor doth he deny that there are intelligent spirits, that were not of themselves; only he would have us think them but finer matter, impressed with intellectual power. But what akin is a mind to matter, except his own? And supposing a mind or intellect be stamped upon matter, it is then but added to it, not drawn out of it, as if matter had before contained it. And even thus, since mind or intellect is not nothing, (unless he will say, himself differs by nothing from unthinking clay,) we have something out of nothing. And who can think it more impossible to Omnipotency, to create matter, than a mind?

But if he reckon thought, or intellect, is contained in matter, or included in the notion of it, then matter, as such, must be intelligent, and consequently all matter; and this will be absurdity enough, to give him as good a title to the privilege of not being reasoned against, as, from his magisterial way of writing, we may count Spinosa thought himself to have. Nor indeed will it leave any man so much as a conjecture at the reason why he should pretend to differ from him. For who can imagine, why his matter, endued with the attributes of extension and thought, might not do as well as Spinosa's substance?

Or if he think matter, as such, to have only seminal reason or intellect in it, antecedently to his supposed divine impress upon it, how will that agree with his making it *essentiellement imparfait*,[e]—*essentially imperfect*? Or what means his added *capable neanmoins*, its being *nevertheless capable* of all such perfections by the impression of God upon it? Is that capacity something, or nothing? Or what sense is it to make it capable of having those perfections, which it is essential to it not to have?

And surely, as he will attribute to matter more perfection than he intended, so he will attribute less to God. For he will, at this rate, attribute no more to him, than hath been generally ascribed to ordinary natural agents; *i.e.* to produce into actual being, out of matter, that whereto there was in it some seminal disposition before.

And here, indeed, is the source of his error, his reducing infinite power to the measures of finite; an insolent presuming to circumscribe Omnipotency, and making that simply impossible even to Almightiness itself, which is only so to created agents. And to this purpose, I find some reasonings in Sextus Empiricus, who tells us how the sceptics attempted to prove (besides their disputing against the other three sorts of causation) that *ἀσώματον—an incorporeal thing*, cannot be *ἄιτιον σώματος—the cause of any thing corporeal*; arguing (and slightly enough) from the common methods of subordinate agents, to the operations of the Supreme Cause. Nor is it apprehensible, how one can find a medium; or while they make matter independent, how not to make God dependent.

And when the Monsieur we are concerned with took a friendly notice of Hermogenes's consent with him upon this subject, he might as well have been at the pains to consider somewhat of what Tertullian wrote anainst him, that hereby, in some respect, God is made *inferior and subject to matter, when without it he could not have made a world. Materia superior inveniter, quæ illi copiam operandi subministravit, et Deus subjectus materiæ videtur, cujus substantiæ eguit; nemo non subjicitur ei cujus eget, &c.*[f]—*Every one is subject to what he stands in need of.*

CHAPTER III.

The reason of what next follows. Directions to readers not wont to inquire into the grounds of their religion. A summary and plainer proposal unto such, of what hath been said in the former Part, concerning God's existence and conversableness with men. The reasonableness (so much being already evinced) of alleging, and relying upon the testimony of the Holy Scriptures. The expressness of that testimony concerning the unity of the Godhead, the trinity therein. The absolute perfection of the Divine Nature. The infiniteness of God's knowledge, power, goodness, and presence. His propensions towards men, and aptness (supposing there were no obstruction) to human converse. Matters of doubt herein resolved.

I. And having thus far established and vindicated so principal a ground-work in this important cause,—That what is necessarily, or of itself, is an absolutely perfect Being, distinct from all things else; and a proper Object of religion, or whereto a temple, and all the worship thereof, duly belong, I shall now only suffer myself to be a little further diverted from my intended course, apprehending that their case is also to be considered, who have been less accustomed to this course, of reasoning out to themselves the principles of their religion: unto whom therefore what hath been hitherto attempted may seem, if not obscure in its parts, yet so tiresome in the whole, as not to meet with patience enough to trace the design that hath been driven on, to its issue and period; it being very incident to unexercised and less attentive readers, to lose their thread, and forget the scope of a discourse, and so still have the truth to seek even in the midst of it. And if what hath been hitherto said, prove unsatisfying to any, that justice must be done to the cause itself and to them, as to avow it must rather proceed either from this infirmity in the reader, or from the unskilfulness of the writer to propound things happily and to advantage; than either from the inevidence of the things themselves, or from want of capacity, even in an ordinary understanding. Nor doth any undertaking seem more feasible, or less to be despaired of, than plainly and satisfyingly to evince, to an unprejudiced understanding that shall attend, these first foundations of a religion and a temple, *viz.* That God is; and—That he is conversable with men, or is such as is capable and apt to receive worship from men, and impart blessedness to them. We shall therefore so far interrupt the current of this discourse, as to endeavour this, by giving a brief and plain sum of the more principal things that have been said to this purpose already. And to pre-

[e] Preface.

[f] Tertull. contra Hermog.

pare for it, must desire you that have not been, as yet, wont to employ your minds this way, to observe the following directions:

First, That you would not give place to discouragement, nor think too meanly of the understanding whereby God hath distinguished you from the inferior creatures. There is that mind and spirit in man, which doth compass many things of far greater difficulty than it is here to be employed about; though it can be exercised about nothing of so great consequence. That apprehensive power that can take in the orderly frame of such notions as are requisite to the exact skill of numbering or of measuring things, of navigation, of trade, of managing the common affairs of human life; that can lay down to itself such prudent maxims and rules whereby the inconveniences may in great part be avoided which are incident to common conversation, and the advantages gained which may serve one's own private and secular interests; that understanding which can do all this, would far more easily comprehend as much as is needful to the certain knowledge of God's existence, and that he is such as we ought to worship, and may enjoy, if it apply itself hereto. Do not so despair as not to make an attempt; you know not the strength of your own mind till you have tried it.

Secondly, That you indulge not, or do not suffer yourselves to be insensibly seized by, a mean and sordid sloth. Set your thoughts a-work with vigorous diligence. Give not out before you have well begun. Resolve, since you have a thinking power about you, you will use it to this most necessary purpose; and hold your thoughts to it. See that your minds do not presently tire and flag; that you be rationally peremptory, and soberly obstinate, in this pursuit: yield not to be diverted. Disdain, having minds that can reach up to the great Original and Author of all things, that they should be confined to this dirty earth, or only to things low and mean.

Thirdly, Look on the things that are rationally evident to your understandings, as equally certain with what you see with your eyes. Are you not as sure that two and two make four (which judgment is the act of your mind) as that this thing which you look upon is black or white, or of this or that shape or figure? Do not so debase your own understandings, as to think nothing certain that comes under their judgment. It is true, they are apt enough to be deceived in many things, and so is your sense too; but if your sense could make you certain of nothing, what would become of justice and government among men? Who could take an oath before a magistrate? What would become of the common actions and affairs of life? How could you eat or drink, or buy or sell, if you could not certainly distinguish one thing from another? Some things are so plain as that you can be in no doubt about them, as that this is bread, not a stone; that a horse, not a sheep; otherwise all the world must stand still, and all commerce and action cease. And if there were not some things sure to your minds, that you may certainly say, in some plain cases at least, this is true and that false, this right and that wrong, you would be at as great a loss. Otherwise, you might be apt to think a part of a thing greater than the whole, or that the same man might be at London and at Rome at the same time; and you might be as ready to kill your own father as to do him reverence, or to commit robbery upon your rich neighbour as relieve the poor, and judge the one as good an action as the other.

Fourthly, As any particular thing is offered to you, for the purpose we are here aiming at, consider it well by itself, before you go further; and think thus, Is this plain and certain, yea or no? If at the first sight you think it not so, observe diligently what is brought for the proof of it, and see whether now it be not manifestly certain; and when you once find it is, fix it in your mind as a certainty; say, Thus far I am sure. Let not your thoughts run back to this as a doubtful thing any more, or unravel their own work; but make use of it as a certainty, to your further purpose.

II. Being thus prepared, take this brief account of what hath before been discoursed more at large. And,

First, As to this first and great principle,—That there is a God. Be but patient of being led by the hand a few easy steps in a way that is in some part sufficiently beaten, however, that is sufficiently plain, and it is to be hoped you will soon see that matter put out of all doubt. Let this then be your first step:

1. That somewhat or other there is, that hath been from all eternity necessarily and of itself, without dependence upon any thing else. If this be not at the first view evident to you, or if it seem too large a step, we will divide it into parts; and consider well what is said for the proof of it, by these degrees.

(1.) Somewhat or other must *ever* have been; for otherwise, how could any thing come to be at all? Do you think it was possible, if ever there was nothing at all in being, of one sort or other, that any thing should have come into being? No surely, for which way should it be? It could not be made by another, there being no other to make it; and it could not make itself, itself being as yet nothing. But sure you can easily apprehend, that to make a thing be, is to do something; and as easily, that what is nothing, can do nothing. Therefore, when your eyes tell you that something now is, you may be as sure, as of what you see with your eyes, that somewhat or other hath ever been. Say with yourself, *Somewhat now is*, therefore *somewhat hath ever been.* If you discern not the clearness of this consequence, take the opposite to it: *Nothing now is*, therefore *nothing will ever be;* it is as broad as long.

(2.) You may next proceed thus, that something or other hath been of *itself;* that is, without depending upon any thing else, or being beholden to any other thing for its being. Now here pause awhile, and consider what is said to make this plain to you. Either you must acknowledge something hath ever been of *itself*, or you must say that all things that are, or ever have been, were from *another*, without any exception. But mark now, if you say that all things that are, or ever have been, without excepting any, were from another, you contradict yourself; for besides all things that are, or ever have been, without excepting any, there is not another from whom they could be. Therefore it is impossible that all things without exception should have been from another; whence then it is plain that something must have been of itself, without depending for its being upon any thing else: for it will come to the same contradiction, if you say all things depend upon some other; since there is nothing beyond all things: therefore, to say that all things depend, is to say they depend on nothing, that is, they do not depend. And to say they have all depended on one another for their being, or made one another, is altogether as absurd; for it will make the whole compass or circle of all being to depend upon nothing, or come at length to this, that some one made itself, or even (which is more gross) made its own maker; unless you will rest in some one that made all the other, and was itself not made by any of them. If you do not apprehend this yourself, desire any one that hath a better understanding to explain it to you, and you will soon see the matter intended by it to be as evident as your heart can wish. And so this will be out of question with you—That somewhat was of *itself;* which added to what was proved before, comes to this—That somewhat was *ever* of itself. And both these thus conjoined, plainly appear from what hath been said. For we have seen that nothing could possibly make itself, (which would absurdly imply, that before, it both was and was not,) and therefore, whatsoever was of itself, must *ever* have been, or never had beginning of being. So much, then, I suppose you take to be most certain, that something hath ever been of itself. Whereupon you may further add,

(3.) That what was *ever* of *itself*, was *necessarily*. I hope you understand what is meant by being necessarily, that is, being so as that it could not possibly but be. You may perceive that some things are so as that it was possible they might not have been, as a house, a town, a garment, or whatsoever was made by such makers as might have chosen whether they would have made it, or no. Yea, or whatsoever is any way made to be, having before not been; for what once was not, it is manifest it was then possible for it not to be. But to be necessarily, is to be so as that it could never possibly but have been; that is, what is necessarily, is somewhat of so excellent a nature, as that it could never be out of being. Now what was

ever of itself, it was in this sense necessarily; *viz.* so as that the excellency of its nature was such, as could never permit that it should not be; whence the name I AM agrees peculiarly and always thereunto. Nothing can otherwise be of itself, (not by making itself, which you have seen is impossible,) but by an everlasting possession of that excellency of being, which excludes all possibility of not being. It depends upon no one's choice or power, whether that which is of itself shall be or not be.

(4.) What hath thus *ever been necessarily, still is,* and will *ever be;* which is plain upon the same ground. What *could* never but be, *can* never but be; for its nature is such, as whereto not to be is impossible. Otherwise, if its nature had not been such, there being nothing else by which it should be made, it could never have been. Wherefore thus far you have firm footing in this first step; no part of the ground which it measures shakes under you. You may say you are sure of this—That somewhat there now is, that hath been from all eternity necessarily and of itself, without dependence upon any thing else, and that can never cease to be.—Set this down therefore for a certainty, and then add to it,

2. That whatsoever is not necessarily and of itself, is from and by that which is necessarily and of itself, as the first Author and Cause thereof. This is so certain, that nothing needs to be said for the proof of it more than hath been said alrendy, so that you do but understand the meaning of it; which you cannot but do, if you consider that all things that are, or ever were, must be of one of these two sorts, *viz.* what was of itself, and what was not of itself, but from another: therefore, what is not of the first sort, must be of the second; that is, what was not of itself, must be from another; and then, what other must it be from? Surely from what was of itself, as its first and chief cause, whatsoever inferior or secondary causes it may have had besides, that were before it, caused by that first. So that you have now plainly before you, and in view, some or other eternal, necessary Being, not only to be considered as it is in itself, but as the original and root of all besides. Then go forward a little, and further add,

3. Neither this visible world, nor any thing of it, is necessarily, or of itself, without depending upon any thing else; and was therefore created and made by some more excellent Being that was so, and is quite distinct and diverse from it. That this may be evident to you, consider,

(1.) That whatsoever is changeable or imperfect, and capable of becoming more perfect, is not necessarily, and of itself, without dependence on any thing else. For what is of itself necessarily, and without dependence on any other, must have whatsoever belongs to it, all at once; for from whence should any addition or change happen any way to it? Not from any other, for it no more depends on another for addition, than it is liable to diminution by another, being what it is necessarily, or from itself: for nothing can impart or add what it hath not; and what it hath was in it before, and was in it necessarily, and therefore unalterably, and without possibility of any change. Now you know this visible world is continually changing, and in an imperfect state; and we may add, that there is somewhat invisible, of whose present being we are certain, that was not of itself, and that did not make this world. For instance, we are certain of the present being of our own mind and spirit, which we cannot see with our eyes, but by self-reflection we are sure we have somewhat in us that can think. Nor is there any thing that comes under our immediate, certain observation, more excellent than man himself, especially his mind and soul. And do you not yourself know, and find how changeable, indigent, and imperfect that is? Therefore you may be sure it is not of itself, or the maker of this visible world. If all the men in the world should join all their wit and power together, which way would they go to work to make such a world as this? yea, or even to make one single pile of grass, or grain of sand? Which way can you devise, then, they should make the sun or stars, or such an earth as this? It is plain, then, that all this world had a maker, distinct from itself.

(2.) Whatsoever being is of itself, is more excellent than what is not of itself. This you cannot but assent to at the first sight: for besides that you must needs acknowledge it better to live of oneself, than to be beholden to another, you must also know that whatever being is not of itself, hath no excellency in it, but what was in that being that was of itself before; and therefore it had in it all the excellency that is in such things as proceeded from it, (unabated because in it necessarily,) together with the proper excellency of its own being, whereas the other sort of beings have but their own derived excellency only. Wherefore this also is most evident, that this world had a maker distinct from and more excellent than itself, that changes not, and whereto that name most properly agrees, I AM THAT I AM. Being sure of this, you may proceed, and conclude,

4. That the things which are manifestly not of themselves, but created and made, do plainly show that the Maker of them doth excel in power, wisdom, and goodness. The greatness of his works shows his mighty power; the nature, exactness, and order of them, his admirable wisdom; and his own self-sufficiency, and independency on the things made, show his rich and vast goodness in making them, as you may see more at large in *Part I.* Now therefore, if you have attended, you cannot but find you are sure and at a plain certainty concerning these four things: (1.) That somewhat was ever, and is necessarily. (2.) That what was not so did arise from that which was. (3.) That this world being not so, did therefore spring from that eternal, necessary, self-subsisting Being. (4.) And that this Being hath those particular excellences, whereof there are the manifest appearances and footsteps in the works that are made by him, (*viz.* especially power, wisdom, and goodness,) in himself. And thus the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they who see them not are without excuse. Rom. i. 20. If you be sure that any thing is, you may be sure somewhat was ever of itself: if you be sure any thing that was not of itself hath appearances of power, wisdom, and goodness in the frame of it, you may be sure that Being which was of itself is the powerful, wise, and good Creator and Maker of it. It is to be hoped, then, you are at a certainty,—That *God is.*

III. *Secondly,* And now as to the second principle, that hath been insisted on also in the former Part,—That this God is conversable with men. You cannot surely doubt, but that he that made you, and gave you all that any way belongs to your being, can apply himself to you, or any of his creatures, in a way suitable to the natures which he hath put into you and them; nor that he is ready to converse with you, in a way suitable to the nature he hath given you, if you be such towards him, and so apply yourself to him, as you ought. For it is not a greater thing to do so, nor more exceeding or going beyond the reach of his power, wisdom, and goodness, as you cannot but see, than to have given being to you, and all things.

But now if what is further discoursed in that former Part, concerning the oneness of the Divine Being, and the infiniteness thereof, or concerning any other perfections there particularly asserted unto it, seem not so plain to you as is requisite to guide and facilitate your applications to him; what hath been more plainly said in this, is however sufficient, as more primarily fundamental and pre-requisite to that further knowledge of his nature and will towards you, which in another way is to be had and sought after.

A cloud and darkness are now drawn over the world of mankind; and though it be still very easily discernible that *God is,* it is yet more difficult to attain to so distinct apprehensions *what* he is, as are necessary to our conversing with him. Against this difficulty, he hath afforded a gracious relief; that is, he hath provided there should be a more express discovery of him extant among men, than can be collected by their making observations upon this world. The case was such with man, (grown now so great a stranger to God,) as to require a written revelation of his nature and will; and we have it in those scriptures which bear with us the name of the word of God. It were indeed very unseasonable and absurd, to urge their authority in the inquiry, whether there be a God or no? For what

authority have they more than other writings, but as they are God's word? Therefore to expect or give assent to them as such, while yet it remains an undecided controversy, whether there be any such one, or no, for whose sake the assent should be given, were to expose our religion, not to prove it. These holy writings were not intended, by their affirmation of it, to inform us of God's existence, which they suppose, and do not prove, as a thing we may otherwise be certain of; but to teach us our duty towards him, and what our expectations may be from him; and do therefore give us a true representation and discovery of his nature, (so far as it was needful for us preparatively first to know it,) and then next, of the present state of things between him and us, that we might be directed how to apply ourselves to him suitably to both the one and the other. It is true, that we can never know that there is a God, without knowing somewhat of his nature, or what a one he is. We cannot so much as inquire whether he be or no, but we must have some notion in our minds of the thing we inquire about; and so much as is necessary to this purpose, may be plainly gathered in the way we have gone hitherto. For if we understand the difference between something and nothing, between being and no being, and find that something is, or that there is some being; and again, if we understand the difference between a thing's being of itself, and being of or from another, and find the former must be the original of the latter, we cannot but understand ourselves, when we say there is an Original Being. And having some understanding what is meant by power, wisdom, and goodness; withal finding that not only the effects of these, but these very things themselves, are in the world, we cannot but be sure (because these things come not of nothing) that the Original Being is powerful, wise, and good. And now when we have thus found out an Original Being, that is of wisdom, power, and goodness sufficient to be the Author of such a world as this, we at once know both what God is, (sufficiently to distinguish him from all things else,) and are at a certainty that he is.

When we perceive that he hath given to all breath and being and all things; we have sought, and even felt and found him out, and found that he is not far from any one of us, since in him we live and move and have our being; that he is every where present, in this his creation, as the great Sustainer and the Life of the universe; and forasmuch especially as we are his offspring, (as even the light of a heathen poet could reach to discover, a sort of intelligent, designing, active beings,) that therefore the Godhead is not like silver, or gold, &c., but of a nature more nearly resembling that of our own souls, and the higher excellences of the best of his creatures, although eminently containing in himself also all the real perfections, virtues, and powers of all the rest. When we understand so much of God, (as we may by the light of our own reason,) we understand enough to give a foundation to religion, and to let us see he ought to have a temple, and worship; and another sort of temple than is made by men's hands, other worship than can be performed by the hands of men; as is there clearly argued, and inferred by the apostle, upon those plain grounds. Now when we are arrived thus far, it is seasonable to make use of the further help which we may observe the great, and wise, and good God to have most condescendingly, most aptly, and most mercifully afforded us, for our more distinct understanding of his nature, and our own state; and how we are to behave ourselves towards him thereupon.

IV. Taking notice therefore that there is a written revelation of him extant in the world, that bears his name, and gives itself out to be from him; if now we look into it, observe the import and design of it, compare it with what we before knew of his nature and our own; consider what is most obvious to an easy self-reflection in our own state and case, and how exactly this written revelation agrees and corresponds to those our former notices; taking in withal the many considerations that concur besides, to evidence to us the divine original and authority thereof: we cannot but have much rational inducement and obligation to receive, with all reverence and gratitude, this revelation, as from God; and to rely upon it, as a sure and sacred light sent down from heaven, to direct us in all our concernments God-ward. For finding our own great need of such additional light, and apprehending it sufficiently agreeable to the divine goodness to afford it, and expecting it to be such, in its scope and design, as we find it is: if we further consider it must have had some author, and perceiving it not easy, with any plausible pretence, to affix it to any other than to God himself: if we consider that it was impossible it could be invented by men, without some design of self-advantage, either in this world or in the other; and how absurd any such expectation must be, either from men here, (the contents thereof being so repugnant to the common inclinations of men, as to oblige those that owned them to the severest sufferings on that account,) or from God hereafter, who could not be expected to reward forgery, falsehood, and the usurpation of his name: if, again, we further observe the positive attestations whereby he hath challenged and owned it as his own, and wherein the divine power hath borne witness to the divine truth contained in it: if the matters of fact on which all depends appear not less certain than that there were men and nations in the world, that we have not seen, and before we were born; if we see it not only improbable, but even next to impossible, that the records of those miraculous attestations should have been forged, and nations imposed upon thereby; and amongst them, many of the wisest of men in those very times when the things recorded were alleged to have been done, and in a matter wherein their eternal hope was concerned;[a] we shall upon the whole see cause to judge, That as it were most absurd to suppose such a revelation given by God, and no sufficient rational evidence withal given that it is from him, (without which it cannot serve its end, and so would signify nothing,) so that there is nothing wanting, in divine estimate itself, to make up such a sufficient, rational evidence; nor in our own, unless we would suppose it necessary that every man should have a Bible reached him down by an immediate hand from heaven, or make some other supposition as fond and vain as that; or that we count not that sufficient evidence, which ought to satisfy our reason, if it do not gratify our fancy and curiosity too. It is not fit, here, to say more of the divine original of those holy writings, nor needful; so much being written already,[b] with so great clearness, on that subject, by many. That therefore being out of question what you cannot reason out yourselves, or apprehend from the reasonings of others, concerning God's nature, tending to represent him worthy of a temple with you, and capable of receiving and rewarding your sincere and spiritual worship, fetch out from that divine volume; for you may be sure, though you cannot search him out unto perfection, he perfectly understands himself, and is certainly such, as he there tells you he is: and he there reveals himself to be such, as to whom the temple and worship we here intend, cannot be doubted (as he hath ordered things) to be both due and grateful. Whatever might be otherwise matter of doubt, is, by his express discovery of himself, taken away.

V. If it were still a doubt, after all that hath been formerly said for the reasoning out of these things, whether the Deity be one only, or manifold; whether the world had but one, or had not many makers; and so, whether there be no danger of misapplying our religion, or of mistaking the object of our worship. This word plainly tells us, There is but *one* God, the Father, of whom are all things. 1 Cor. viii. 6. That he is God, and there is none else. Isa. xiv. 21, 22. And that however there be three that bear witness in heaven, and the stamp of whose name is, in our baptism, distinctly and solemnly put upon us; Matt. xxviii. 1 John v. yet (as in many other instances, that may be in some respect three, which in some other respect is but one) without the unnecessary, punctual declaration, how these are three, and how but one, it expressly tells us, *these three are one.*

And if it be yet a doubt with us (in which the reasonings of some may be too short to determine and resolve them)

a If we take notice that in some parts of this volume there are very ancient predictions, of the strongest and most unlikely events, that we see exactly fulfilled in the other parts.

b Dr. Stillingfleet, in his Origines Sacræ, Grotius de Verit. Chr. Relig. Huet. Demonstr. Evangel. &c. Mr. Baxter's Reasons of Christian Religion. With many more.

whether this one God be so absolutely and every way perfect as to be sufficient for us all; whether he can understand all our concernments, relieve us in all our necessities, hear our prayers, satisfy our desires, receive our acknowledgments and thanksgivings, and take notice with what love and sincerity they are tendered unto him; or, if he can do for us according to our necessities, and reasonable desires; whether we have any ground to believe that he will; this word of his plainly assures us, That he is God all-sufficient, Gen. xvii. 1.; that he hath all fulness in him. It often represents him to us, under the name of the Lord God Almighty; tells us that he can do every thing, and that he doth whatsoever it pleaseth him. It tells us his understanding is infinite, and particularly assures that he searches the hearts of men, and tries their reins; that they cannot think a thought, or speak a word, but he understands them afar off, and knows them altogether: that his eyes are upon all the ways of men; that he knows all things, and therefore knows if they love him.

And that we may be the more fully put out of doubt how easy it is to him to do so, we are assured, That he is every where present, that he fills heaven and earth, that the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain him; that there is no going from his Spirit, or flying from his presence; that if one go up to heaven, he is there; lie down in hell, he is there; go to the uttermost part of the sea, yet there his hand shall lead, and his right hand hold him.

VI. And that all doubt may vanish, concerning his will and gracious inclination, how expressly doth he make himself known by his name? *viz.* That he is the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, &c. Exod. xxxiv. 7. And by the same blessed and inspired penman of a part of these holy writings, (the beloved disciple, who lay in the bosom of his only-begotten Son; who also is in the bosom of the Father, and hath declared him,) we are not only told that God is Light, whereby the knowledge, purity, simplicity, and glory of the Divine Being are represented; but also, once and again, that God is Love, that we might understand him as a Being not of more glorious excellency in himself, than of gracious propensions towards his creatures. And lest it should be thought our meanness should exempt us, and put us beneath his regard, we are told, He taketh care for sparrows, he heareth the ravens when they cry; and generally, that the eyes of all wait upon him, and he gives them their meat in season, Psal. cxlv. (which even the brute creatures are emphatically said to seek of God,) and that he opens his hand, and satisfies the desires of every living thing. Psal. civ. And besides what he hath so expressly testified concerning his own nature, his favourable inclinations towards men might sufficiently be collected from that very nature which he hath given to man, considered in comparison and reference to his own; that he made him in his own image; and that he being the Father of spirits, hath placed a spirit in man, so agreeable to his own spiritual nature; and by his own inspiration given him that understanding, that the mind begotten corresponds, by its most natural frame and constitution, to the mind that begot, the νοῦς πατρικὸς,[c] (as it was anciently called,) *his own Eternal Mind;* and that if its own original be remembered, it turns itself towards him, seeks his acquaintance by an instinct he hath himself implanted in it, and cannot rest till he have such a temple erected in it, where both he and it may cohabit together. By all this, his aptness to that converse with men, which is imported in the notion of a temple, doth so far appear, that at least it is evident such converse cannot fail to ensue, supposing that there were nothing in the way that might be a present obstruction thereto. And it will more appear, when we have considered (since there is somewhat that obstructs this converse) what he hath done to remove the obstruction, and how he hath provided that the intercourse may be restored, and his temple be resettled with men, upon everlasting foundations.

c Hieroc.

CHAPTER IV.

That there is an obstruction to this intercourse. The method of the following discourse. Man's apostacy from God, and the vitiated state of his nature; not only represented in the sacred writings, but also acknowledged and lamented by pagans;—very mistakenly, in some respects; wherein perhaps some of them not justly understood. This not the primitive state of man; therefore not to be imputed to the Author of nature. The temple of God hereby became unfit for the divine presence. Unsuitable. Disaffected. Hereupon forsaken, and most justly.

I. But so far it is, that there should want probability of a very inward commerce between God and man, that we have reason to think it rather strange, considering his nature and our own, it should not have been continual; and that his unbounded and self-communicative fulness was not by him always afforded, and always imbibed and drawn in by so capable and indigent a creature. One would wonder what should have discontinued this intercourse! What can be so apt to give and flow out, as fulness? What should be so apt to receive and take in, as want and emptiness? Such a commerce then as can be supposed between one[a] that is rich and full, and them that are poor and necessitous, one would think should have never failed. So a fabulous dream may be significant, and not uninstructive, touching the reason and way of commerce between God and creature. We are therefore put upon a new inquiry, and need no longer spend ourselves in anxious thoughts, Can there be any converse between God and men? That we may rather say, How can it not be? or, How strange is it there is not more! that he hath not a temple in every human breast, replenished with his vital presence! that there are nothing but ruins and desolation to be found, where one would expect a fabric worthy of God, and an in-dwelling Deity! This must therefore be the sad subject of our thoughts awhile, What hath rendered the blessed God so much a stranger on earth, and occasioned him in so great part to forsake his terrestrial dwelling? Whence we shall have the advantage (seeing how just cause there was, on his part, for this deplorable distance) to adore the grace that returns him to us, and inclined him to take that strange course, which we find he did, to repair his forlorn temple, and fill this desolate, forsaken world with the joyful sound of those glad tidings, "The tabernacle of God is with men."

II. We shall find he is no further a stranger in this world, than as we have made and continued him so: no further a home-dweller in it, than as by an admirable contrivance of wisdom and love, that will be the eternal wonder of the other world, he hath made way for himself: whereby his propensions towards men, prevailing against so great an obstruction, do even now appear at once both evident and marvellous, and ought to be not only the matter of our belief, but admiration.

Wherefore our discourse must here proceed by these steps, to show—1. That mankind hath universally revolted, and been in a state of apostacy from God;—2. That hereby the temple of God in man hath been generally made waste and desolate;—3. That he hath laid both the new foundations and the platform of his present temple in Immanuel, God with us, his own incarnate Son, who rebuilds, beautifies, furnishes, inhabits it, and orders all the concernments of it.

III. 1. The *first* we do little need to labour in—every man's own reflection upon the vitiated powers of his own soul, would soon, as to himself, put the matter out of doubt; whence each one's testimony concerning his own case, would amount to a universal testimony. No man that takes a view of his own dark and blinded mind, his slow and dull apprehension, his uncertain staggering judgment, roving conjectures, feeble and mistaken reasonings about matters that concern him most; ill inclinations, propension to what is unlawful to him and destructive, aversion to his truest interest and best good, irresolution, drowsy sloth, exorbitant and ravenous appetites and desires, impotent and self-vexing passions—can think human nature, in him, is in its primitive integrity, and so pure as when it first issued from its high and most pure original. By such reflection, every man may perceive his own ill

a Penus and Penia.

b Plat. Sympos.

case, in these and many more such respects; and by observing the complaints of the most serious, and such as have seemed most to study themselves, collect it is generally so with others also.

IV. They that have read the sacred volume, cannot be ignorant that [c] all flesh have corrupted their way; that the great God, looking [d] down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God, hath only the unpleasing prospect before his eyes even of a universal depravation and defection; that every one of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not one; that all have sinned,[e] and come short of the glory of God; that this world lieth in wickedness;[f] and that this was not the first state of man, but that he is degenerated into it from a former and better state; that [g] "God made him upright," but that he is become otherwise, by his own "many inventions:" that by trying conclusions to better a state already truly good, he brought himself into this woful plight; and by aiming at somewhat above, sunk so far beneath himself into that gulf of impurity and misery, that is now become to him as his own element and natural state.

Yea and the matter hath that evidence, that even many of them who, for ought we know, never conversed with those sacred records, have no less clearly discovered their sense of the present evil state of man, than their ignorance of the original of that evil,[h] though some of them carefully acquit God of it. We find their complaints *of the malignity of ignorance*,[i] surrounding all the earth, and that corrupts the soul shut up in the body; that, as a garment and web, inwraps the minds of men, that they cannot look to him whose pleasure it is to be known, and who is not to be heard with ears, nor seen with eyes, nor expressed by words. That till it be rent in pieces, they have upon them *the bond of corruption*,[k] the dark coverture, the living death, the sensible carcass, a moving sepulchre, which they carry about with them.

We find complaints, that *by bonds and chains* [l] *our mind is held, from our infancy:* of certain "mean and debasing passions, that do fasten and even nail the soul to the body:" of *much greater evils*,[m] *and more grievous, than the most painful bodily diseases, gouts, stranguries, dysenteries, and myriads of the like; viz. all manner of sins, wickednesses, transgressions, ungodlinesses, which we have to lament as the maladies or disaffections of our soul.*

Of certain *old or inveterate spots*,[n] that are by all means to be washed and purged out: that there are certain *principles of viciousness*,[o] as pleasures, griefs, lusts, fears, enkindled from the body, but mixed with the soul, and that absurdly bear rule over it.

And the naturalness [p] of these is more than intimated, while they are said to be *rather from parents and our first elements than ourselves:* or, *rather to be imputed*, as is elsewhere [q] said, *to those that plant, than those that are planted.*

Whence also, *vice is said to be involuntary:*[r] (being rooted in our natures:) that whosoever are vicious, *become* so from such things as do even prevent our choice. And that *all men do more evil than good*,[s] *beginning even from their very childhood.*

And (as another expresses it [t]) we offend from certain *involuntary passions*, in which the pravity of the soul is made to consist: or *that we here partake a certain mundane* [u] *nature*, which, he says, is mixed of *mind and necessity.*

And even from hence that *virtue is voluntary; vice is, by another, concluded to be involuntary.*[w] "For," says that author, "who can willingly, in the most lovely and most noble part of himself, choose that which is the greatest of all evils?" esteeming vicious inclination the most repugnant thing to liberty, (as it is indeed in the moral sense,) and the greatest slavery. Whereupon, another inquiring,[x] since God doth nothing but what is good, whence evils should come, resolves that whatsoever is good is from heaven, but *all evil* from our *self-natural vileness.* And [y] another speaks of an evil adhering to our being, and not only acquired, but *even connatural to us; yea, and this evil is said to be the very death of the soul.* The sadness of the common case of man in this respect, hath been therefore emblematically represented by *a* [z] *potion of error* and *ignorance, presented to every one at their first coming into the world, and whereof it is said all do drink, more or less;* a woman called Imposture, accompanied by other harlots, Opinion, Lust, Pleasure, &c. seizing and leading away every one. [a] And hence are *bitter complaints and accusations poured forth even against nature itself, as being a mere force and war, and having nothing pure or sincere in it*, but having its course amidst many unrighteous passions; yea, and its rise and first production are lamented, as founded in unrighteousness. The discontentful resentments whereof have made some not spare to censure our very make and frame, [b] the uniting *of an immortal thing to a mortal* in the composition of man, as a kind of distortion of nature, that the thing produced, should be made to delight in having parts so unnaturally pulled and drawn together.

VI. So that some of the ethnick philosophers have been so far from denying a corruption and depravation of nature in man, that they have overstrained the matter, and thought vicious inclination more deeply natural than indeed it is; and so taxed and blamed nature, in the case of man, as to be too liable to implied reflections even on the blessed Author of nature himself.[c] Whereto the known principles of the sect of the Stoics do too plainly tend, who give in so vast a catalogue of the diseases and distempers of the mind of man: taking every thing into the account that hath the least of perturbation in it, without excepting so much as mercy itself, or pity towards them that suffer unjustly; and yet seem to subject all things to fate and natural necessity, whereby all these evils in the mind of man would be rejected upon the holy God, as their original cause.[d] Whence therefore some that were more sober have made it their business to vindicate God from so horrid an imputation; and one of much note animadverts upon the mistakes of such as seemed so to charge him, sharply blaming them for such an intimation; but more sharply (quarrelling others in his own dubious twilight) for the excuse they give of it, *viz.*

c Gen. vi. d Psal. xiv. and liii. e Rom. iii. f 1 John v.
g Eccl. ix. h Max. Tyr. Diss. 25.
i The so controverted Merc. Trismeg. c. 7. Secund. M. Ficin. Interpret. *η της αγνωσιας κακια.*
k *της φθορας δεσμον.*
l *ειργμων και συνδεσεων τον κατεχομενον, εκ βρεφων, νουν.* Iamb. de vit Pythag.
m *περι το σωμα πλευριτιδες, περιπλευμονιαι, φρενιτιδες, ποδαγραι, στραγγουριαι, δυσεντεριαι, &c. περι δε την ψυχην πολλωι μειζονα και χαλεπωτερα, αθεσμα, κακα, παρανομιαι, ασεβηματα.* Idem.
n —*εγκατεσκιρρωμεναι κηλιδες*, p. 256, Hippar. Pythag.
o *αρχαι κακιας.*
p *εκ των γενετορων και στοιχειων, μαλλον η εξ αμεων.* Plat. Tim. Locr.
q *αιτιατεον μεν τους φυτευοντας αει, των φυτευομενων μαλλον.* Idem. Timæus.
r *κακοι δι ακουσιωτατα γιγνομεθα.* Ibid.
s *αρξαμενοι εκ παιδων, και εξ αμαρτανουσιν ακοντες.* Idem. Hipp. Major. p. 296.
t *ακουσια παθηματα.* Plotin. Enne. 1. lib. 8.
u *μεμιγμενη γαρ ουν δη η του κοσμου φυσις εκ τε νου, και αναγκης.* Idem. p. 77.
w *τωι δε την αρετην εκουσιον ειναι επεται το την κακιαν ακουσιον υπαρχειν*, &c. Alcinous, Cap. 30.
x *εξ αυτοφυους μοχθηριας.* Max. Tyr. Dissert. 25.
y *το παρεπομενον τη ουσιαι ημων κακον.* Hiero in Carm. Pythag.
z *τους εισπορευομενους εις τον βιον ποτιζει, παντες πινουσιν, αλλα οι μεν πλειον, οι δε ηττον.* Tab. Cebetis.
a Empedocles and Heraclitus represented as *πολλακις οδυρομενοι και λοιδορουντες την φυσιν ως αναγκην και πολεμον ουσαν, αμιγες δε μηδεν μηδε ειλικρινες εχουσαν*

b *τωι θνητωι συνερχομενον αθανατον.* Plut. de Solert. Anim. p. 964.
c D. Laert. L. 7. But perhaps they have been somewhat misunderstood by their prejudiced opposers, or some unwary expression of theirs been stretched beyond what was meant. For though they reckon *ελεος* among the distempers of the mind; yet so afterwards they do *ανελεημοσυνη* too Whence it is probable they intended to place *ελεος* among the evils of man's nature no otherwise than as it should include undue perturbation in it, or as it might urge those who are more apt to be passionate upon such occasions, than just and wise, to the doing of unfit or unseasonable things for the afflicted person's relief: than which nothing is more supposable. which occasioned that famous general Agesilaus, when his sick friend importuned him with tears, to stop the (then necessary) march of his army for his sake, (looking sadly back upon him,) to say, *ως χαλεπον εστιν ελεειν και φρονειν*, How hard is it to be pitiful and wise! Plutar. Apophtheg. Lacon. And that afterwards making *ανελεημοσυνη* vicious too, their meaning was, that a calm and sedate will or propension to relieve persons in distress was the virtue, both the other the opposite vices. Which seems more likely than Menagius's way of salving the *εναντιοφωνες*, by supposing *ανελεημοσυνη* here to have been misprinted for *ελεημοσυνη*, by some very assuming transcribers, that were willing rather to express their own mind than their author's. Observ. in Locum.
d And though in what follows they are sharply taxed, as laying all the evils of the world (moral as well as other) upon God and nature, this seems to have proceeded from some lavish speeches of Chrysippus, that justly fell under the reprehension of Plutarch's severer and more sound judgment. Yet surely they did suppose another and purer state of nature, out of which man was lapsed; otherwise, how come they, when they assign the common notion of vicious perturbation or passion, to call it an irrational and [*παρα φυσιν κινησις*] preternatural motion? What nature is that, which it is supposed to swerve from? Besides that, they constantly call these diseases of the soul, therefore they understood them not to be its very nature: for then what were the diseased subject? Nor

[e]That God doth what they attribute to him in this matter, for the punishment of wicked men; [f]alleging it were a grievous matter that God should will and revenge the same thing, that wickedness should both be, and be punished, according to the mind of God. [g]Some do, with great reverence of the divine majesty, confess the rise of all this evil to be from man himself, *viz.* even that sort of evil which is called by the name of wickedness, is said to be from an innate principle, which the arbitrary power of a man's own soul hatcheth and fosters, and the fault is his who admits it; but God is faultless: [h]that God did place the soul over a terrene body, as a charioteer over a chariot, which it might govern or neglect, &c.

So another says, *that whatsoever things come into this world from God, are good; but evils proceed from a certain ancient nature, &c.* By which what could he mean, but the hereditary pravity which hath in a long series descended from depraved progenitors, so as no longer to be a new thing; but of a forgotten original, and from of old reigning in the world?

They of this famous sect, the Platonists, seem often to attribute vicious inclination to the soul's being united with the body; (as supposing it to have existed pure and sinless before;) yet even they appear also not to have thought it impossible a human soul should sometime have been in an earthly body without sin. For their renowned leader discourses at large of a former incorrupt state of man in the body, (a golden age, as others also call it,) and of a defection or apostacy from it; which state, though his Egyptian tradition misinformed him about the continuance of it, he excellently describes, (as also man's declining from it,) telling us, that "then God familiarly conversed with men, taking care of them, as a shepherd of his flock: [k]that he was chiefly intent upon the ducture and government of their minds; [l]that (as he afterward says in another part of that unfinished discourse) while *the godlike nature continued in sufficient vigour with them*, they were obedient to laws, and behaved themselves friendly towards that [m]*divine thing that was akin to them.* Then they possessed thoughts that were true, and altogether great; using meekness and prudence in reference to their own conditions and one another; that they disregarded all things in comparison of virtue. They easily bore a prosperous condition, esteeming all outward things little. They were not intoxicated or drunken with sensual delights; but sober and quick-sighted, and all things increased upon them through their mutual love and virtue. But they growing at length into a too great esteem and love of terrene things —[n] *and that participation which they had of God* decaying, (whereas all was well while the Divine nature remained with them,) and being variously intermingled with *much deadly* [o]*evil*, and a kind of human custom or course of living," as elsewhere he so expresses sinful corruption, "prevailing among them, and they not able to bear a prosperous condition, came to shame, and ruin with it; having lost the loveliest of their most precious things." Agreeably whereto, another, discoursing of the nature and original of evil, places it in our being plunged and sunk into matter and corporeity: and commenting upon a noted [p]passage of his master, *viz.* "That our recovery must be by a speedy flight to God," &c. says, that *this flight is not to depart from the earth,* [q]*but that we become, even while we are on earth, righteous, and holy, and wise.*

Therefore also have we with this sort of men, so frequent discourses of the purgative virtues, [r]which suppose a lapse into great impurities; yet not so inseparable from our natures, but that by divine help (which they also sometimes speak of as necessary) a cure and redress may be wrought.

VII. Nor, if we consider, can it be so much as imaginable to us, that the present state of man is his *primitive* state, or that he is *now* such as he was at first made. For neither is it conceivable, the blessed God should have made a creature with an aversion to the only important ends, whereof it is naturally capable; or, particularly, that he created man with a disaffection to himself; or that ever he at first designed a being of so high excellency as the spirit of man, to drudge so meanly, and be so basely servile to terrene inclinations; or, that since there are manifestly powers in him of a superior and inferior sort and order, the meaner should have been, by original institution, framed to command, and the more noble and excellent, only to obey and serve; as now, every one that observes may see the common case with man is. And how far he is swerved from what he was, is easily conjecturable, by comparing him with the measures which show what he should be. For it cannot be conceived for what end laws were ever given him, if, at least, we allow them not the measures of his primitive capacity, or deny him ever to have been in a possibility to obey. Could they be intended for his government, if conformity to them were against or above his nature? or were they only for his condemnation? or for that, if he was never capable of obeying them? How inconsistent were it with the goodness of the blessed God, that the condemnation of his creatures should be the first design of his giving them laws; and with his justice, to make his laws the rule of punishment, to whom they could never be the rule of obedience and duty; or with his wisdom, to frame a system and body of laws, that should never serve for either purpose, and so be upon the whole useful for nothing! The common reason of mankind teacheth us, to estimate the wisdom and equity of lawgivers, by the suitableness of their constitutions to the genius and temper of the people for whom they are made; and we commonly reckon nothing can more slur and expose government, than the imposing of constitutions most probably impracticable, and which are never likely to obtain. How much more incongruous must it be esteemed to enjoin such as never possibly could! Prudent legislators, and studious of the common good, would be shy to impose upon men under their power, against their genius and common usages, neither alterable easily, nor to any advantage. Much more absurd were it, with great solemnity and weighty sanctions to enact statutes for brute creatures! And wherein were it more to purpose to prescribe unto men strict rules of piety and virtue, than to beasts or trees, if the former had not been capable of observing them as the latter were not? We insist not on the written precepts in the sacred volume, (where we have also the history of man's creation and fall,) but let the law be considered which is written in men's hearts; the νόμος δημιουργικὸς, the τάξις ἔννομος, or the *lex nata*,[s] (in the ethnick language,) *which the eternal, lawgiving mind hath created in our souls.* And how evidently doth that law convince, that we neither are nor do what we should! How gross and numerous deformities do we daily behold by that shattered and broken glass! how many things which we disapprove, or certainly would, if we discussed the matter with ourselves! How frequent buffetings are many, when they reflect, constrained to suffer at their own hands; even wherein (not having another law) they are only "a law to themselves," Rom. ii. and have only their own thoughts, either their excusers, or accusers! And what doth that signify, but a lapse and recess from their original state? the broken imperfect memorials whereof, are a standing testimony against their present course; their notions of right and wrong, comely and uncomely, remonstrating against their vicious inclinations and ways. For would they ever reprove themselves for what was not possible to be otherwise? Or was man created a mere piece of self-contradiction; or with a nature made up of repugnancies, and perpetually at war with

could it agree with that known dogma of theirs, that virtue is διδακτόν τι, a thing to be taught, if they should suppose vice in that sense natural. And indeed, that Plutarch entitles that book he hath against them, περὶ στωϊκῶν ἐναντιωμάτων, argues, they intended not the gross things he refutes, for no man intends contradiction to himself. And since no man can hold both parts of a contradiction, it is candid to suppose they would have chose rather to let go the worser part.

e Αλλα μεν τον θεον κολαζειν φησι την κακιαν και πολλα ποιειν επι κολασει των πονηρων.

f Εστι μεν ουν τουτο δεινον τε και γινεσθαι την κακιαν και κολαζεσθαι κατα τον του Διος λογον. Plutar. de Repugnan. Stoicorum.

g αρχην την αυτοφυη, η ψυχης εξουσια κυισκει τε και τελεσφορει ηι ονομα μοχθηρια αυτου του ελομενου αιτιαι· Θεος αναιτιος. Max. Tyr. ubi supra.

h As he there proceeds.

i οσα παρα θεου αγαθα, ταδε κακα εκ της αρχαιας φυσεως. Plot. Ennead. 1. lib. 8. p. 77.

k Theætet.

l η του θεου φυσις αυτοις εξηρκει.

m προς το συγγενες θειον.

n η του θεου μοιρα.

o πολλωι τωι θνητωι.

p In Theætet.

q ου το εκ γης απελθειν αλλα, &c. Plot. Enne. 1. lib. 1.

r Marin. Procl.

s ταυτα ο νομοθετης νους διαθεσμοθετα ταις ψυχαις. Hierocl. p. 19 and 210.

itself? This I should do, but that which is clean contrary I have a mind to. Were these ever like to be impressions, both signed upon him by the same hand? Nothing is plainer, therefore, than that he is corrupted from his primitive integrity, and become a depraved and a degenerate thing.

VIII. 2. We go on then, in the next place, to show,—That by this degeneracy, the temple of the living God among men became waste and desolate: *viz.* both uninhabitable or unfit for his blessed presence; and, thereupon, deserted and forsaken of it. And (because in breaches and disagreements man hath the first hand and part) we shall therefore treat, *First*, Of the unaptness of man, in his state of apostacy, to entertain the divine presence, or be any longer God's temple; *Second*, Of the blessed God's absenting himself, and estrangement from him hereupon.

1. That the spirit of man, by his having apostatized, became *unfit* to answer the purposes of a temple, will too plainly appear, by considering the nature of that apostacy; which, what was it but a severing himself from God; a recess and separation? Not in respect of place, (which was impossible,) but the temper of his mind and spirit; or not by a local removal, but by unsuitableness and disaffection, departing in heart from the living God. 'Tis true indeed, that by this his revolt, he became indisposed to all other converse which belonged to him as a creature intelligent and virtuous, but chiefly to divine: the blessed God being the chief term of this defection and revolt. For man, by his original rectitude, was principally determined towards God: and by the same due bent and frame of spirit by which he stood rightly postured towards him, he was in a right disposition to every thing besides wherewith he had any concern. And adhering to him as his centre and prime object, he kept his due order towards all other things: whence by forcing and relaxing the bonds that held him united to God, and by changing his posture towards him, he came to stand right no way. Turning to him the back, and not the face, all things are inverted to him. He is now become most directly opposite to God, and unduly disposed towards other things only by means of that opposition. As then he is unfit for every other good use, so most of all for that of a temple; and that upon both the above-mentioned accounts, as being first unsuitable to the blessed God, and then thereupon disaffected.

1st. Man was become most *unsuitable* to him; the divine image (which where should it be but in his temple) being now defaced and torn down. We speak not now of the natural image of God in man, or the representation the soul of man hath of its Maker in the spiritual, intelligent, vital, and immortal nature thereof, which image we know cannot be lost; but its resemblance of him in the excellences which appear to be lost, and which were his duty, a *debitum inesse*, and could not be lost but by his own great default. And those are both such as wherein the soul of man did imitate and resemble God, as knowledge, purity, justice, benignity, &c. and such as wherein though it could not imitate him, yet was to bear itself correspondently towards him; as he being the absolute Sovereign, to be subject to him, obey and serve him: and he being the all-sufficient Good, to trust in him, depend upon him, know, love, and delight in him, unite with him, and expect blessedness only in and from him. How unlike and disagreeable to God in all these respects is apostate man! That whereas the notion given us of God, is, that he is Light, and with him is no darkness at all; (1 John i.) it is said of such as have been involved in the common apostacy, in reference to that their former state, "Ye were darkness;" as if that were the fittest and truest account that could be given of this revolted creature: not that he is in darkness, or there is much darkness in him, but, "He is darkness," Ephes. v. He and darkness may define one another—That is he; and he is that. A dismal horrid cloud hath inwrapped his soul, that resists and yields not easily to the most piercing beams, excludes light, wheresoever it would insinuate itself. This hath made the soul of man a most unmeet receptacle for the divine presence, and more like a dungeon than a temple. And as he is now sunk into carnality, and a low, abject, earthly spirit, how unfit is he for divine converse! How unapt to savour the things of God! How unlike the Father of Spirits! And whereas he was of a middle nature, partaking somewhat of the angelical, somewhat of the animal life, how is he swallowed up of the latter, and become like the beasts that perish; as the horse and mule without understanding, as the dog and swine both for fierceness and impurity; as the one is both apt to bite and devour, and return to his own vomit, and the other both to rend such as stand in his way, and wallow in the mire. We might add the sundry other Scripture resemblances of wolves, bears, lions, serpents, adders, vipers, &c. whereby many brutes seem to meet in one man; and to have made a collection, and contributed their worst qualities, and all the venom of their natures, to the making up of one mischievous composition in him. So that instead of a temple, he is a cage of every unclean and hurtful thing: he is, in short, of a reprobate mind, full of all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, &c. How repugnant, in all respects, to the holy, pure, benign, merciful nature of God! How remote from the imitation of his Maker, wherein he hath offered himself as his most imitable pattern! And wherein he is not imitable, but requires a proportionable and correspondent deportment or conformity; as by trust to his all-sufficiency, by subjection to his sovereign power and government. How dismal is the case, and how horrid the effects, of the apostacy in these regards! How preposterous and perverse are his dispositions and the course he hath run! For wherein it was permitted to him to imitate and affect likeness to a Deity; where he was put under no restraints, and his highest aspirings had been not only innocent, but most worthy of praise, (as to imitate God in wisdom, righteousness, sincerity, goodness, purity, &c.) here nothing would please but utmost dissimilitude, and to be as unlike God as he could devise. But in those things that were within the enclosure, and appropriate most peculiarly to the Godhead; to be the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega; the only one on whom all must depend, and to whom all must be subject and obey: these sacred regalia, the highest rights and flowers of the eternal crown, these are thought fine things, and beheld with a libidinous devouring eye, caught at by a profane sacrilegious hand. Nothing would satisfy but to be Godlike in this most disallowed and impossible sense. Man, when he hath reduced himself to the lowest pitch of vileness, misery, and penury, now will be self-sufficient; and when he is become the most abject slave to ignominious lusts and passions, now he will be supreme: that is, having made himself viler than the meanest creature, and worse than nothing, he will be a god, even his own, a god to himself. Having severed and cut himself off from God, he will supply the room, and live only within himself: be to himself what God was, and should ever be. He now moves wholly in his own sphere, disjoined from that of the whole world, and is his own centre. All he does is from himself, and for himself. Thus is the true image of God torn down from his own temple, and that alienated, and become the temple of a false god, dedicate to that abominable idol, self.

IX. *2nd.* Whence it comes to pass, that man is most *disaffected* to God, and full of enmity. So Scripture testifies concerning the carnal mind, Rom. viii. 8. And whom it had before represented (ch. ii.) full of all malignity, it afterwards speaks of as directing it (most horrid to think) against this blessed object; "Haters of God, despiteful," &c. Nor is any thing more natural; for, in part, the contrariety of their nature to his, more immediately begets this enmity, which always rises out of dissimilitude; and partly it is fomented and increased to a great degree, by a secret consciousness of that dissimilitude, and the misgivings of their own guilty fears thereupon; which must tell them, whensoever they have so much communication with themselves, that they are unlike, and cannot but be unpleasing to him; and this infers some kind of dread; whence (as hath been commonly observed) the passage is short and easy unto hatred. And though the more positive workings of this enmity do not (perhaps with the most) so ordinarily discover themselves; and they do not see or suspect that they hate him, while they are not urged to self-reflection; and when they are, hardly admit a conviction that they do:

yet the matter carries its own evidence with it, and would soon be put beyond a question, if men were willing to understand the truth of their own case. For whence else do they so slowly entertain the knowledge of God, when the whole earth is full of his glory? When so manifest prints and footsteps of his wisdom, power, and goodness, do offer themselves to view in every creature, whence can it be, but that they like not to retain him in their knowledge? Rom. i. And that their very hearts say to him, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways? Job xxi. Why is so bright a light not observed, but that it shines amidst a malignant darkness, that, resisting, comprehends it not? Why are the thoughts of God so unpleasant to men, and unfrequent, that when one would suppose no thoughts should be so obvious, none so welcome, yet it is become the character of an unrenewed man to forget God, (Psal. ix.) or not to have him in all his thoughts? Psal. x. Why do men decline his acquaintance, live voluntary strangers to him all their days, and as without him in the world? Ephes. ii. Why are men so averse to trust him, and turn to him, even upon so mighty assurances? What makes them shy to take his word, but rather count him a liar, though they know it inconsistent with his nature; and can form no notion of God, without including this conception therein, that he cannot lie; when as yet they can ordinarily trust one another, though there be so much colour to say, "All men are liars?" Why do they resist his authority, against which they cannot dispute, and disobey his commands, unto which they cannot devise to frame an exception? What, but the spirit of enmity, can make them regret so easy a yoke, reject so light a burthen, shun and fly off from so peaceful and pleasant paths; yea, and take ways that so manifestly take hold of hell, and lead down to the chambers of death, rather choosing to perish than obey? Is not this the very height of enmity? What further proof would we seek of a disaffected and implacable heart? Yet to all this, we may cast in that fearful addition, their saying in their heart, No God; (Ps. xiv.) *q. d.* O that there were none! This is enmity, not only to the highest pitch of wickedness, (to wish their common Parent extinct, the Author of their being,) but even unto madness itself. For in the forgetful heat of this transport, it is not thought on that they wish the most absolute impossibility, and that, if it were possible, they wish, with his, the extinction of their own, and of all being; and that the sense of their hearts, put into words, would amount to no less than a direful and most horrid execration and curse upon God, and the whole creation of God at once! as if by the blasphemy of their poisonous breath, they would wither all nature, blast the whole universe of being, and make it fade, languish, and drop into nothing. This is to set their mouth against heaven and earth, themselves, and all things at once, as if they thought their feeble breath should overpower the omnipotent word, shake and shiver the adamantine pillars of heaven and earth, and the almighty *fiat* be defeated by their *nay*: striking at the root of all! So fitly is it said, The *fool* hath in his heart muttered thus! Nor are there few such fools: but this is plainly given us as the common character of apostate man, the whole revolted race; of whom it is said in very general terms, "They are all gone back, there is none that doeth good." This is their sense, one and all; *i. e.* comparatively; and the true state of the case being laid before them, it is more their temper and sense to say *no God*, than to repent, and turn to him. What mad enmity is this! Nor can we devise into what else to resolve it.

This enmity, indeed, more plainly shows itself where the Divine glory (especially that of his grace, and goodwill towards men, a thing not less evident, than strange) more brightly shines: yet there are so manifest appearances of it every where, and he hath so little left himself "without witness" unto any, that the universal strangeness of men towards him apparently owes itself more to enmity than ignorance; and even where there is much darkness, there is more ill-will. For their ignorance by which they are alienated from the life of God, is called blindness of heart; *i. e.* voluntary, affected blindness, Eph. iv. 18. It can be imputed to nothing else, that they who have God so near to every one of them, who live and move, and have their being in him, do not yet seek after him, and labour to feel and find him out; *i. e.* that they can miss of God so nigh at hand, when they have even palpable demonstrations of his nearness, and kind propensions towards them. Now this being the case, whatever this degenerate vile creature might serve for else, he was plainly most unfit for the use of a temple, or to be the dwelling-place of God.

2. Nor can it now be a wonder that the divine presence should be hereupon withdrawn; that the blessed God absents himself, and is become a stranger to this his once beloved mansion. We shall here take notice how apparent it is—1. That he hath done so,—2. That he was most highly justifiable herein.

And, *First*, That he hath withdrawn himself, and left this his temple desolate, we have many sad and plain proofs before us. The stately ruins are visible to every eye, that bear in their front (yet extant) this doleful inscription—*Here God once dwelt.* Enough appears of the admirable frame and structure of the soul of man, to show the divine presence did sometimes reside in it; more than enough of vicious deformity, to proclaim he is now retired and gone. The lamps are extinct, the altar overturned; the light and love are now vanished, which did the one shine with so heavenly brightness, the other burn with so pious fervour; the golden candlestick is displaced, and thrown away as a useless thing, to make room for the throne of the prince of darkness; the sacred incense, which sent rolling up in clouds its rich perfumes, is exchanged for a poisonous, hellish vapour, and here is, "instead of a sweet savour, a stench." The comely order of this house is turned all into confusion; "the beauties of holiness" into noisome impurities; the "house of prayer to a den of thieves," and that the worst and most horrid kind; for every lust is a thief, and every theft sacrilege: continual rapine and robbery is committed upon holy things. The noble powers which were designed and dedicated to divine contemplation and delight, are alienated to the service of the most despicable idols, and employed unto vilest intuitions and embraces; to behold and admire lying vanities, to indulge and cherish lust and wickedness. What have not the enemies done wickedly in the sanctuary! How have they broken down the carved work thereof, and that too with axes and hammers, the noise whereof was not to be heard in building, much less in the demolishing this sacred frame! Look upon the fragments of that curious sculpture which once adorned the palace of that great king; the relics of common notions; the lively prints of some undefaced truth; the fair ideas of things; the yet legible precepts that relate to practice. Behold! with what accuracy the broken pieces show these to have been engraven by the finger of God, and how they now lie torn and scattered, one in this dark corner, another in that, buried in heaps of dirt and rubbish! There is not now a system, an entire table of coherent truths to be found, or a frame of holiness, but some shivered parcels. And if any, with great toil and labour, apply themselves to draw out here one piece, and there another, and set them together, they serve rather to show how exquisite the divine workmanship was in the original composition, than for present use to the excellent purposes for which the whole was first designed. Some pieces agree, and own one another; but how soon are our inquiries and endeavours non-plussed and superseded! How many attempts have been made, since that fearful fall and ruin of this fabric, to compose again the truths of so many several kinds into their distinct orders, and make up frames of science, or useful knowledge; and after so many ages, nothing is finished in any one kind! Sometimes truths are misplaced, and what belongs to one kind is transferred to another, where it will not fitly match: sometimes falsehood inserted, which shatters or disturbs the whole frame. And what is with much fruitless pains done by one hand, is dashed in pieces by another: and it is the work of a following age to sweep away the fine-spun cobwebs of a former. And those truths which are of greatest use, though not most out of sight, are least regarded: their tendency and design are overlooked; or they are so loosened and torn off, that they cannot be wrought in, so as to take hold of the soul, but hover as faint ineffectual no-

tions, that signify nothing. Its very fundamental powers are shaken and disjointed, and their order towards one another confounded and broken: so that what is judged considerable is not considered, what is recommended as eligible and lovely is not loved and chosen. Yea, the truth which is after godliness is not so much disbelieved, as hated, held in unrighteousness; and shines as too feeble a light in that malignant darkness which comprehends it not. You come amidst all this confusion, as into the ruined palace of some great prince, in which you see here the fragments of a noble pillar, there the shattered pieces of some curious imagery, and all lying neglected and useless among heaps of dirt. He that invites you to take a view of the soul of man, gives you but such another prospect, and doth but say to you,—"Behold the desolation;" all things rude and waste. So that should there be any pretence to the Divine presence, it might be said, If God be here, why is it thus? The laded glory, the darkness, the disorder, the impurity, the decayed state in all respects of this temple, too plainly show the great inhabitant is gone.

X. 2. And what was so manifest a sign of God's absence, was also a most righteous cause: for who have committed these great wastes, and made this temple uninhabitable, but men themselves? And what could be more injurious to the holy God, than to invade and profane his temple? Or for what could we suppose him to show more jealousy and concern? Whoever were a God, one would expect he should plead for himself, when men have cast down his altar. No words can express the greatness of the indignity! For do but take the following state of the case, thus: Man was his own creature, raised out of nothing by his mighty and most arbitrary hand; it was in his power and choice, whether ever he should have being, any, or none, another, or this, of so noble an order and kind. The designation was most apt, of so excellent a creature to this office and use, to be immediately sacred to himself, and his own converse; his temple and habitation, the mansion and residence of his presence and indwelling glory! There was nothing whereto he was herein designed, whereof his nature was not capable. His soul was, after the required manner, receptive of a deity; its powers were competent to their appointed work and employment; it could entertain God by knowledge and contemplation of his glorious excellences, by reverence and love, by adoration and praise. This was the highest kind of dignity whereto created nature could be raised, the most honourable state. How high and quick an advance! This moment, nothing, the next, a being capable and full of God!

It was a most delectable and pleasant state, to be separated to the entertainment of the Divine presence; that as soon as man could first open his eyes, and behold the light and glory of this new-made world, the great Lord and Author of it should present himself, and say, "Thou shalt be mine." How grateful a welcome into being! "Thee, above all my works, which thou beholdest, I choose out for myself. Thine employment shall be no laborious, painful drudgery; unless it can be painful to receive the large communications of immense goodness, light, life, and love, that shall, of their own accord, be perpetually flowing in upon thee! Whatsoever thou espiest besides, that is even most excellent and pleasant to thy sense, is yet inferior to thee, and insufficient for thy satisfaction and highest delight, and but the faint shadow of that substantial fulness, which I myself will be unto thee."

There was, in all this, the freest and most condescending vouchsafement; no necessity could urge the self-sufficient Good to affect union and familiarity with its own creature. Man's alienation of himself from God, was as entirely voluntary, nothing could force him to it; he could have no inducement, which it was not easy to resist; heaven and earth could not afford the matter of a regardable temptation, to withdraw him from what did so infinitely excel. But how mean things have become the tempting and prevailing objects! the momentary relishes of a merely sensual delight, that might have been had innocent and pure, without breaking the enclosure. Ravenous appetite, lust after forbidden pleasure, is impatient of restraint: reason, that should have restrained it, resigns its office, falls into a treacherous combination with usurping sense, chooses rather to obey than rule, to rebel than obey; for not to rule, being thereto enjoined by the supreme Ruler, was to rebel. The empire of rebellious appetite was reckoned more tolerable than God's: thus are his authority affronted and his goodness despised both at once. He is rejected both as ruler and benefactor, with equal disrespect to his majesty and grace, to his governing and his heart-delighting presence. And how ignominious, hereupon, is the rejection, when so vile things are chosen and preferred! The tyranny of lust, before his holy, reasonable, orderly government; the pleasures of sin, rather than those of the divine presence: this being the practical, decisive judgment given in the case, that these are better. 'Tis better be the meanest drudge and slave than his servant, and feed upon husks or ashes than his pure and most satisfying communications. And what he chose to be, he is; *i. e.* with the indignity done to God, he hath joined the vilest debasement of himself. For hence, also, how loathsome a creature is he now become! How perverted in all his powers! How full of darkness, confusion, impurity, malignity, and venom! How universally and horridly deformed! And hereof an estimate may be made, from his unaptness to self-reflection; which how notorious is it! What doth he not rather choose to do with his thoughts, than turn them inward? And how unfit is he for divine converse, that cannot endure his own; or to associate with God, that is become too foul a creature to have any satisfying converse with himself! Now what could be expected to ensue upon all this, but that he should be forsaken of God; that the blessed presence be withdrawn, that had been so despitefully slighted, to return no more? No more, till at least a recompense should be made him for the wrong done, and a capacity be recovered for his future converse: *viz.* till both his honour should be repaired, and his temple; till he might again honourably return, and be fitly received. But who could have thought in what way these things should ever be brought to pass? *i. e.* neither could his departure but be expected, nor his return but be above all expectation. To depart was what became him; a thing, as the case was, most God-like, or worthy of God, and what he owed to himself. It was meet so great a Majesty, having been so condescendingly gracious, should not be also cheap, to appear unapprehensive of being neglected and set at nought. It became him, as the self-sufficient Being, to let it be seen he designed not man his temple for want of a house; that having of old inhabited his own eternity, and having now the heavens for his throne, the earth his footstool, he could dwell alone, or where he pleased else, in all his great creation; and did not need, where he was not desired. That of the Cynic was thought a brave saying, when his malcontented servant turned fugitive, and left him—"It were an unworthy thing that Manes should think he can live without Diogenes, and that Diogenes cannot without Manes." How much better would it suit with the real self-fulness of a Deity, where nothing of this kind can look like an empty, hollow boast! It was becoming of his pure and glorious holiness, not to dwell amidst impurities, or let it be thought he was a God that took pleasure in wickedness; and most suitable to his equal justice to let them who said to him, "Depart from us," feel they spake that word against their own life and soul; and that what was their rash and wilful choice, is their heaviest doom and punishment. It was only strange, that when he left his temple he did not consume it; and that not leaving it without being basely expulsed, he hath thought of returning without being invited back again. Yea, and that whatsoever was necessary thereto, is designed by his own so strange contrivance, and done at his own so dear expense: his only-begotten Son most freely consenting with him, and in sundry capacities sustaining the weight and burthen of this great undertaking.

t Senec. de Tranquill.

CHAPTER V.

The restitution of this temple undertaken by the Emmanuel; First, more darkly prefigured; afterward, more clearly manifested. This constitution of Emmanuel sufficient. Necessary for this purpose. That he was himself to be the platform, the foundation, and the founder of it. The original Temple. And was, in order hereto, also a sacrifice; to procure that God might honourably, and without wrong to his governing justice, return, and have his abode with men. And that they might become prepared to receive his returning presence. For which purpose he hath in him the power of giving the Holy Spirit, on the account of this sacrifice. That when God is, for the sake of it, willing; we might no longer remain unwilling. That unwillingness to be overcome by the power and spirit of Emmanuel: as hereafter to be more fully shown. But working (suitably to an intelligent subject) in a rational way. To which a great accommodateness, in the constitution of Emmanuel. As demonstrating divine love, and holiness. In its loveliness. Possibility of being attained.

AND indeed, what was to be designed and done, did every way call for so great an undertaker.—The indignity offered to the majesty of the most high God, in his so ignominious expulsion from his own temple, was to be recompensed;—and the ruin must be repaired which had befallen his temple itself.

I. In reference to both these performances, it was determined Emmanuel, *i. e.* his own Son, his substantial Image, the Brightness of his glory, the eternal Word, should become incarnate; and being so, should undertake several parts, and in distinct capacities, and be at once a single Temple himself, and that this temple should be also a sacrifice, and thereby give rise to a manifold temple conformed to that original one, of each whereof, in the virtue of that sacrifice, he was himself to be the glorious Pattern, the firm Foundation, the magnificent Founder, and the most curious Architect and Former, by his own various and most peculiar influence.

This hath been the result of the divine counsel, and the Lord's own doing, most justly marvellous in our eyes, *viz.* (which we are next to consider.)

II. That the blessed God hath laid the platform and the foundations of his temple, as it was to be restored and set up again among men, in and by that great Emmanuel, his own Son made flesh. It is to be considered that (as hath been shown) the world had a long time lain deluged with wickedness, sunk in sensuality, and a deep oblivion of God; his memorial was even lost among men, and nothing less thought of than a temple in the true design and meaning of it; the notices of God, and any inclination to religion that remained, (too deeply infixed into the mind and nature of men to be quite extinct,) were yet so faint and weak, carnal and terrene propensions so strong, that the vital religion which was the proper business of a living temple, could have no place. It was not only so in the pagan worlds, from which God had further withdrawn himself, but even with that select people to whom he vouchsafed more peculiar manifestations and symbols of his mind and presence.

They had a *figurative temple* by his own appointment, erected in much glory among them, that might have instructed them, and by degrees the rest of the world, if they would have understood its true meaning and signification, that God was yet willing to dwell with men on earth, and that it should be a "house of prayer for all nations," who ought, upon those glorious appearances of God among that people, to have gradually proselyted themselves unto them. It prefigured what he intended, *viz.* in his appointed season, by his own Son to descend and inhabit, make and constitute him a much more glorious temple than could be built of wood or stone, or by the hands of men: that in after-time "Shiloh should come, unto whom the gathering of the people should be," and by whom he would reconcile and re-collect the apostate world back again to himself. But all this was an unintelligible mystery on all hands; entered not into the minds of men of either sort, but much less into their hearts; and the Jews did much more affect to paganize, and go further off from God, than the pagans (which in this they ought) to judaize, and draw nearer to him. The natural sentiments of religion, which were common to all men, did run out only into mere external observances and empty (though somewhat different) formalities, that might well enough agree with a sensual life, transacted in habitual estrangement from God, and as without him in the world; so as not only not to answer the true intent and use of a temple, but to frustrate and elude it.

III. When this was the state of things with this world, and the fulness of time was now come, wherein God intended, with more vigour and efficacy, to renew and reinforce his mighty and merciful work of setting up his temple, and to make it rise in splendour and glory in the world, he at length sends down his Son: he puts on man; becomes Emmanuel; an incarnate God among men; and a Man inhabited by all the fulness of God. This Man was, therefore, a most perfect Temple; the *original one: i. e.* not only a single one himself, but an exemplary Temple, to which all other were to be conformed; the advantage whereof to the forming of more we shall see hereafter: whereby he was also a *virtual one*, from which life and influence was to be transfused to raise and form all others. But in order to its being so, this very temple must become a sacrifice; and by dying, multiply: a seminal temple, as we shall hereafter show, and as he himself represents the matter. John xii. 24. And which is in the full sense of it said, I Pet. ii. where, when we were first told, (*v.* 4, 5.) we must come to him as unto a living stone, and as lively stones be built up a spiritual house; we are further told, (*v.* 24.) that he himself bare our sins is his own body on the tree, (where he was offered as a sacrifice,) that we might die to sin, and live to righteousness. For now, a temple being, in its proper use and design, intended for divine honour, could not have its foundation in the ruin thereof, or be built upon his unremedied dishonour: the Son of God, by tendering himself for a valuable recompense, must be the Corner-stone of this new building. The wrong that man had done to the divine majesty should be expiated by none but man, and could be by none but God. Behold then the wonderful conjunction of both in the one Emmanuel! who was, by his very constitution, an *actual Temple*; "God with us;" the habitation of the Deity returned, and resettling itself with men; and fitted to be (what it must be also) a most acceptable sacrifice. For here were met together man that could die, and God that could overcome death; man, that might suffer, and God, that could give sufficient value to those sufferings; sufficient to atone the offended Majesty, and procure that life might be diffused, and spread itself to all that should unite with him; whereby they might become living stones, joined to that living Corner-stone; a spiritual temple, again capable of that divine presence which they had forfeited, and whereof they were forsaken.

That all this may be the better understood, we shall endeavour to show, more distinctly, 1. The *sufficiency* and aptness of the constitution and appointment of Emmanuel, (considering what he was, and what was undertaken to be suffered and performed by him,) as the most proper and adequate means for the restoring of God's temple with men. 2. The *necessity* of this course for this end.

1. And for the former, the aptness and *sufficiency* of this course, or what the setting up of Emmanuel might do for this purpose, may be seen in the suitableness hereof to the foregoing state of the case, and by comparing therewith what he is, and hath done and suffered in order hereto We have seen that the former desolate state of this temple was occasioned and inferred by man's apostacy, (whereby he became incapable of serving any longer the purposes of a temple, and God's departure thereupon. There was therefore the concurrence of somewhat on man's part, and somewhat on God's, unto this desolation; on man's, what was unjust, leading, and casual; on God's what was most just, consequent, and caused thereby; man's unrighteous and ill-deserving aversion from God, and God's most righteous and deserved aversion hereupon from him: the one caused by the other, but both causing in different kinds the vacancy and deserted state of this temple which ensued; the former as a sinning cause, the latter as a punishing. Now what we have considerable in the Emmanuel towards the restoration of this temple, and that it might become again habitable and replenished by the Divine presence as before, is answerable to this state of the case; and directly tending to compose things between the distanced parties, both on the one part and the other. And because God was to have the first and leading part in reconciliations, as man hath in disagreements, we have

enough in him, whereupon—God might express himself willing to rebuild and return to his former dwelling;—and man be willing to render it back to him, and admit the operation of the fashioning hand whereby it is to be prepared and refitted for its proper use.

IV. 1. The former is effected; and a foundation is laid for the effecting of the other too, in his becoming *a sacrifice* to justice; a sacrifice so rich and fragrant, so full of value and grateful savour, as that abundant recompense is made by it for the wrong man had done to the Majesty of heaven, by profaning and polluting this temple, and expelling so contumeliously its great Inhabitant:—an injury, to which the creation, consuming in a universal flame, had been an unproportionable sacrifice: but the sacrifice of himself, the Emmanuel, God-man, could be defective in nothing; was both suitable and equal to the exigency of the case. For the sacrifice of him who was man, was suitable to the offence of man; and of him who was God, was equal to the wrong done to God. Long before this sacrifice was offered, the expectation of it, and since, the remembrance have been precious. It was of sufficient virtue to work and diffuse its influence at the greatest distance; and not of time only, but of place too; to perfume the world, and scatter blessings through all the parts and nations of it, as well as through all the ages. When no other sacrifice or offerings could avail any thing, (Psal. xl. Heb. x.) lo! He comes into a body prepared on purpose: which, though it was not formed and assumed until the fulness of time, (Gal. iv. 4,) was yet reckoned as slain from the beginning of it, Rev. xiii. 8. This was the seed in which, though it sprung up only in Judea, yet all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, Gen. xxii. 18. Long was this body in preparing, and the seed transmitted through many generations, whence it was at length to arise; into which, as its last preparation, the Deity descended; and that it might be a sufficiently costly sacrifice, filled it with the divine fulness; for in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, Col. ii. 9. When we read Abel's sacrifice to have been more excellent than Cain's (Heb. xi. 4.) the Greek word is, it was *fuller*. How full a one was this! That was filled by faith with a derivative fulness; this, immediately by God himself, with his own self-fulness, which filleth all in all, and whence all must receive.

Being so filled, it was a temple, and must now further be a sacrifice. Both are signified in that one short passage, which himself let fall, (John ii. 19.) "Destroy this temple:" *i. e.* that he was a Temple, and was to be destroyed; which is carried in the notion of a sacrifice. This he said of his body, *v.* 21. Strange mystery! The very temple itself a consuming oblation, self-devoted even to destruction, and out of that again self-raised! The Divine justice could not hereby but be well satisfied, and say, It was enough, when the whole temple became all propitiatory, and the profanation of the former temple was expiated by the immolation of the new: so that, in point of honour and justice, no exception could now lie against the return of the Divine presence to its wasted and forsaken temple.

V. Only his return could not, as yet, be presently to dwell there, (for it was most unfit,) but to refit and prepare it for his future dwelling. It had been long desolate, and hereby was become decayed and ruinous, full of noisome impurities; yea, the habitation of dragons, and devils of Ziim, and Jiim, and Ochim. Many an abominable idol was set up here, that filled up the room of the one God that had forsaken and left it. It was wholly in the possession of false gods, for whose use it was the more fit, by how much it was the less fit for his; for amidst darkness, confusion, and filthiness, was the chosen seat of the principalities and powers that now did dwell and rule here. Here was the throne of the prince of darkness, the resort of his associates, the altars of as many lusts as the heart of man, now wholly given up to all manner of wickedness, could multiply unto itself; by whose consent and choice, this horrid alienation had been made and continued. Upon such terms the "strong man armed kept the house."

The blessed God might now return, but he must build before he dwell, and conquer ere he build. He might return, but not upon other terms than the expiatory value, and actual or ascertained oblation of that above-mentioned sacrifice: for when he forsook this his temple, he left it with just resentment, and his most righteous curse upon it—a curse that was of this import, "Never any thing holy or pure any more come here, or any thing good and pleasant. The light of the sun never shine any more at all on thee: the voice of joy and gladness never be heard any more at all in thee." The powerful horror of this curse held it doomed to all the desolation and misery that were upon it; confirmed it in the power of him that ruled here, at his will. Hence, had the magic and charms of the evil one, their permitted, unresisted efficacy, rendered it an enchanted place; related and adjoined it to the nether world, the infernal region; made it the next neighbourhood, even of the very suburbs of hell; barred out all divine light and grace, all heavenly beams and influences from it. So that, had it not been for this Sacrifice, this temple had been and remained, even in the same kind, an accursed place, as hell itself: the Spirit of God should have had no more to do here, than there; for so the sentence and curse of his violated law had determined: "Thou shalt die the death," did say no less.

VI. But now, (Gal. iii.) Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. He was made a curse for us; not the same in kind which we had incurred, (which it were horrid to think,) but such as his state could admit, and ours could require. For that a person so immutably pure and holy should become an impure thing, was what his state could not admit; and that one of so high dignity should willingly suffer to that degree which he did for us, was a thing of so great merit and value, as to answer the uttermost of our ill-deservings; than which the exigency of our case could not, in that respect, call for more. And the end or design of his becoming to that degree a curse for us, being expressly said to be this, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit, (or the promised Spirit,) implies that the curse upon us had intercepted and cut off from us all influence of that holy blessed Spirit; for the fresh emission whereof, in God's own stated method, he had now again opened the way. That this blessing is hereby said to become the portion of the Gentiles, was enough to the apostle's present purpose, writing to the Galatians; the Jews having, upon the same terms, had the same privilege formerly from age to age: "Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them;" (Neh. ix. 20.) which also is implied in their being charged with vexing and rejecting this blessed Spirit, one generation after another, Isa. lxiii. 10. Acts vii. 51. And they had now the same gospel, and are here also included, in that it is said to be the blessing of Abraham; into the communion whereof the Gentiles are now declared to have been admitted, about which so great a doubt had been in those days. That therefore the Spirit might be given for the mentioned purpose, on the account of the Son of God's oblation of himself, is out of question. The *necessity* that he should be *only* given on *these terms*, will be seen hereafter, in its proper place, in ch. ix.

But whereas it hath been designed in all this discourse to represent the constitution of Immanuel (being first made a personal Temple, then a Sacrifice) as an apt and fit means to multiply this one temple into many, and bring it about, that upon just and honourable terms God might again return to inhabit the souls of men: it may perhaps be alleged, by some,—That it seems an unrighteous thing God should appoint his own innocent Son to be punished for the sins of offending creatures, and let them escape. And then how could an unjust act make for the honour of his justice, or that which was in itself unfit, be a fit means to any good end?—The loud clamours wherewith some later contenders have filled the Christian world upon this subject, make it fit to say somewhat of it; and the thing itself needs not that we say much. We do know that the innocent Son of God was crucified; we know it was by God's determinate counsel; we know it was for the sins of men; (which the adversaries, in a laxer and less significant sense, deny not, though it must by no means be understood, say they, as a punishment of those sins;) we

know many of those sinners do finally escape deserved punishment. The truth of these things, in fact, is disputed on neither side: all these then are acknowledged reconcilable and consistent with the justice of God. What then is to be inferred? Not that these things are not so, for that they are, is acknowledged on all hands. What then? That God is unjust? Will their zeal for the reputation of God's justice admit of this? No; but it is only unjust to count this suffering of his Son a punishment: that is, 'tis unjust he should suffer for a valuable and necessary purpose; not that he should suffer needlessly, or for no purpose that might not have been served without it! But why may not the sufferings of Christ be looked on as a punishment! Because they will have it be essential to punishment, that it be inflicted on the person that offended; and then inconsistent with its notion and essence, that it be inflicted on an innocent person. But if so, the pretence for the cry of injustice vanishes, unless they will be so absurd as to say, It is very just to afflict an innocent person, but not to punish him; when the punishment hath no more in it of real evil to him that suffers it, than the admitted affliction. And when they say, The very notion of punishment carries in it an essential respect to that personal guilt of him that bears it, it implies that in the present case punishment hath no place, not because it is unjust, but because it is impossible. In the meantime, how vain and ludicrous is that pretence, that all the real evil which God determined should befall his Son he should let come upon him with acknowledged justice, but that the injustice must lie only in a notion; *i. e.* if he look upon it as a punishment. Yet also the punishing of one for another's offence is forbidden to men, as themselves allege from Deut. xxiv. 16. (as it is not strange God should disallow men that dominion over one another, which he may claim to himself, and which he is in no such possibility to abuse as they,) which therefore shows their notion of punishment is false, by which they would make it impossible for one man to be punished for another's faults, (as the [a]learned Grotius acutely argues,) inasmuch as it were absurd to forbid a thing that is impossible. And that God himself doth often punish the sins of some upon others is evident enough from many places of holy Scripture; particularly the second commandment, (Exod. xx. 5.) "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children," &c. 2 Sam. xxiv. 15, &c. 1 Kings xiv. Lam. v. 7. Whereas therefore they are wont, on the contrary, to allege that of Ezek. xviii. "Ye shall no more use this proverb, The fathers have eaten the sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," v. 2, 3. and 19, 20, &c. It is plain, in that it is said, Ye shall no more, &c. that the blessed God speaks here of what, in merciful indulgence, he for the future would not do, not of what in strict justice he might not; for can it be supposed he owns himself to have dealt unjustly with them before.

It is evidently therefore neither impossible nor unjust to punish one for another's offence; and the matter only seems harsh, to such as have misshapen to themselves the notion of punishment, and make it only correspond to the appetite of private revenge: whereas it only answers to a just will of vindicating the rights and honour of government; which may most fitly be done, upon another than the offender, not at random, or in an undistinguishing promiscuous hurry, but upon the two suppositions mentioned by the above-recited author. 1. If there be a near conjunction between the person punished, and the person offending. 2. If there be a consent and voluntary susception of the former on behalf of the other. And we add, as a 3. Especially if there be thereupon a legal substitution, the supreme ruler upon that consent also agreeing, providing, by a special law made in the case, for such transferring of the guilt and punishment. All which have so eminently concurred in the present case, that it can proceed from nothing but a disposition to cavil, further to insist and contend about it. And we know that such translations have among men not only been esteemed just, but laudable; as in the known story of Zaleucus, who having ordained that adultery among his Locrians should be punished with the loss of both eyes, and his own son afterwards being found guilty of that crime, was content to lose one of his own eyes, that justice might be done to the public constitution, and mercy be shown to his son in saving one of his: and that of the Pythagoreans, Damon and Pythias, the one of whom pawned his own life to the tyrant, to procure time for the other (condemned to die) wherein to settle some affairs abroad before his death; who returning within the limited time to save his faith and his friend's life, by surrendering his own, so moved the tyrant that he spared both. The common case of man, forsaken of the divine presence, and not to be restored without recompense, was the most deplorable and the most important that could be thought. And it may now be compassionately cared for; this having been obtained by this great sacrifice, that the divine justice is so well satisfied, and his majesty and honour so fully asserted and vindicated, as that he now may, without wrong to himself, (his justice and the dignity of his government not reclaiming against it,) cast a compassionate and favourable eye upon the desolations of his temple; take up kind thoughts towards it; send forth his mightier Spirit to dispossess the "strong man armed," to vanquish the combined enemy-powers, to build and cleanse and beautify the habitation of his holiness, and then inhabit and dwell in it: upon which account it is now called, the temple of the Holy Ghost; the Spirit which the Father sends, in the name of the Son, upon this errand; he having obtained that it should be sent. By which Spirit also the Emmanuel was sufficiently enabled to gain our consent unto all this; for his dying on the cross was not that he might have the Spirit in himself, but that he might have the power of communicating it: and so (as was before intimated) might the foundation be laid for what is to be done on our part, by the offering of this sacrifice: of which we are next further to treat.

VII. Wherefore, *2dly*, That which was to be done on *our* part, in order to the restoring of God's temple in us, was, that we be made *willing* of his return, and that there be wrought in us whatsoever might tend to make us fitly capable of so great a presence. More needs not to be said (but much more easily might) to show that we were most *unwilling*. And that our becoming willing was requisite, is sufficiently evident. For what sort of a temple are we to be? Not of wood and stone; but as our worship must be all reasonable service, of the same constitution must the temple be whence it is to proceed. We are to be temples, by self-dedication, separating ourselves unto that purpose; and are to be the voluntary under-labourers in the work that is to be done for the preparing of this temple for its proper use: and the use which is to be made of it, that there the blessed God and we might amicably and with delight converse together, supposes our continual willingness, which therefore must be once obtained. Now unto this purpose also, the constitution of Emmanuel was most suitable; or the setting up of this one eminent temple first, *God in Christ*. This was a leading case, and had a further design: it was never meant that the Divine presence should be confined to that one single Person, or only that God should have a temple on earth as long as the Man Christ should reside there; but he was to be the *primary original Temple*; and his being so, did contribute to the making us willing to become his temples also.

1st. As here was the fulness of that Spirit, by whose power and influence that, and all the subsequent work, was to be wrought in us: which fulness is by that blessed name EMMANUEL, signified to be in him on purpose to be *communicated*, or as what must be some way common unto God with us. Our aversion was not easily vincible: the people, it was said, (speaking of the reign of Emmanuel,) should be willing in the day of his power; (Ps. cx. 3.) and as it follows, in the beauties of holiness, 1 Chr. xvi. 29. This was a known name of God's temple, for the building whereof David was now preparing, and whereto the passages agree, Ps. xxvii. 4. Ps. xcvi. 8, 9. And that spiritual one whereof we speak must be here chiefly meant, whereof the Christian world, in its exterior frame, is but the outer court; or is subordinate to the interior

[a] De Satisfact.

frame, and to the work thereof, but as scaffolds to the building which they enclose. The people shall be *willing*, but not otherwise than being made so by *his power;* and that not always put forth, but in the *day* of his power; on a noted memorable day; a day intended for the demonstration and magnifying of his power; *i. e.* the season when Emmanuel (the Lord, to whom the speech was addressed) would apply and set himself, even with his might, to the great work of restoring and raising up the temple of God: a work not to be done by might and power, (according to the common, vulgar notion thereof, by which nothing is reckoned might and power but a visible arm of flesh, hosts and armies, horses and chariots,) but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts, Zech. iv. Then, though the spirits of men swell as mountains, in proud enmity and opposition, (which must be levelled where this building is designed,) those mountains shall appear bubbles: what are they before this great undertaker? They shall become a plain, when the Head-stone is brought forth with shoutings, unto which the cry shall be, Grace, grace. [b]This is the Stone laid in Zion for a foundation, sure and tried, elect and [c]precious; disallowed by men, but chosen of God; the [d]chief Stone of the corner; a living, spirituous Stone, from which is a mighty effluence of life and spirit, all to attract and animate other stones, and draw them into union with itself, so as to compact and raise up this admirable fabric, a spiritual house for "spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ:" a Stone that shall spread life through the whole frame; called therefore a [e]Branch, as well as a Stone, whereto is attributed the work and the glory of building God's temple. "Behold the Man whose name is the Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory," &c. chap. vi. A plain indication, that the prophecies of that book did not ultimately terminate in the restoration of the temple at Jerusalem; but, more mystically, intended the great comprehensive temple of the living God, which the Messiah should extend and diffuse, by a mighty communication of his Spirit, through the world; when (as is afterwards said, *v.* 15.) "they that are afar off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord; "and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I will go also. Many people and strong nations," &c. chap. viii. 20, 21, 22. Ten men out of all languages to one Jew, that shall say, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you. Mic. iv. 2. This, 'tis said, shall be at Jerusalem, but it must be principally meant of the New Jerusalem, that cometh down from heaven, that is from above, that is free with her children, and is the mother of us all. And how plentiful an effusion of Spirit! how mighty and general an attraction, by it, is signified in all this, by which so deeply rooted an aversion to God and serious living religion, as is known to be common to men, is overcome, and turned into willingness and inclination towards him! And whereby that great primary temple, CHRIST, replenished with the divine fulness, multiplies itself into so many, or enlarges itself into that one, his church; called also his body, (as both his very body and that church are called his temple,) the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Nor needs it scruple us, or give us any trouble, that we find this name of a temple placed upon a good man singly and alone, sometimes upon the whole community of such together. Each one bears a double habitude—direct towards God, by which he is capable of being his private mansion; collateral towards our fellow Christians, whereby he is a part of his more enlarged dwelling. Whensoever then any accession is made to this spiritual temple, begun in Christ himself, it is done by a further diffusion of that Spirit, whereof that *original Temple* is the first receptacle.

VIII. But moreover, because it was a *rational subject* that was to be wrought upon, it is also to be expected that the work itself be done in a *rational way.* These that must be made living, and that were before intelligent stones, were not to be hewed, squared, polished, and moved to and fro by a violent hand; but being to be readered willing, must be dealt with in a way suitable to the effect to be wrought. They are themselves to come as lively stones, to the living Corner-stone, by a vital act of their own will; which, we know, is not to be moved by force, but rational allurement. Wherefore this being the thing to be brought about, it is not enough to inquire or understand by what power, but one would also covet to know by what motive or inducement, is this willingness and vital co-operation brought to pass; and we shall find this *original Temple*, the Emmanuel, had not only in it a spring of sufficient power, but also,

2dly, Carried with it enough of argument and rational inducement, whereby to persuade and overcome our wills into a cheerful compliance and consent. And that,

IX. 1. As it was itself the most significant demonstration of *divine love*, than which nothing is more apt to move and work upon the spirit of man. The bonds of love are the cords of a man, (Hos. xi. 4.) of an attractive power, most peculiarly suitable to human nature: We love him, because he first loved us, 1 John iv. This is rational magnetism. When in the whole sphere of beings we have so numerous instances of things that propagate themselves, and beget their like, can we suppose the divine love to be only barren and destitute of this power? And we find, among those that are born of God, there is nothing more eminently conspicuous, in this production, than love. This new creature were otherwise a dead creature. This is its very heart, life, and soul; that which acts and moves it towards God, and is the spring of all holy operations. Since then love is found in it, and is so eminent a part of its composition, what should be the parent of this love, but love? Nor is this a blind or unintelligent production, in respect of the manner of it, either on the part of that which begets, or of that which is begotten: not only he who is propagating his own love, designs it, and knows what he is about, but he that is hereby made to love, knows whereto he is to be formed, and receives, through an enlightened mind, the very principle, power, and spirit of love. Is his love the cause of ours; or do we love him, because he loved us first? And what sort of cause is it? or how doth it work its effect, otherwise than as his love, testified and expressing itself, lets us see how reasonable and congruous it is, that we should love back again? As is more than intimated, by the same sacred writer, in that epistle: "Hereby perceive we the love of God," &c. chap. iii. 16. Somewhat or other must first render his love perceivable to us, that thereby we may be induced to love him for his own, and our brother for his sake. And again, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love," &c. After which it shortly follows, "We love him, because he first loved us;" *q. d.* The way of God's bringing us to that love-union with himself, that we by love dwell in him, and he in us, is, by his representing himself a Being of love. Till he beget in us that apprehension of himself, and we be brought to know and believe the love that he hath towards us, this is not done. But where have we that representation of God's love toward us, save in Emmanuel? This is the sum of the ministry of reconciliation, or which is all one, of making men love God, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, &c. 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. This was the very make and frame, the *constitution* and *design*, of the *original Temple*, to be the "Tabernacle of witness;" a visible testimony of the love of God, and of his kind and gracious propensions towards the race of men, however they were become an apostate and degenerous race; to let them see how inclined and willing he was to become acquainted again with them, and that the old intimacy and friendship, long since out-worn, might be renewed. And this gracious inclination was testified, partly by Christ's taking up his abode on earth; or by the erecting of this *original Temple*, by the Word's being made flesh, (John iv.) wherein (as the Greek expresses it) he did *tabernacle* among us. That whereas we did dwell here in earthly tabernacles, (only now destitute and devoid of the divine presence,) he most kindly comes and pitches his tent amongst our tents; sets up his tabernacle by ours, replenished and full of God; so that here the

b Isa. xxviii. c Psalm cxviii. d 1 Peter ii. e Zech. iii. 8, 9. f εσκηνωσεν.

divine glory was familiarly visible, the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, shining with mild and gentle rays, such as should allure, not affright us, nor their terror make us afraid. A vail is most condescendingly put on, lest majesty should too potently strike disaccustomed and misgiving minds; and what is more terrible of this glory, is allayed by being interwoven with "graee and truth." Upon this account might it now truly be proclaimed, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men!" That is performed which once seemed hardly credible, and (when that temple was raised that was intended but for a type and shadow of this) was spoken of with wondering expostulation: "In very deed will God dwell with men on earth!" Whereas it might have been reasonably thought this world should have been for ever forsaken of God, and no appearance of him ever have been seen here, unless with a design of taking vengeance; how unexpected and surprising a thing was this, that in a state of so comfortless darkness and desolation, the "day-spring from on high should visit it," and that God should come down and settle himself in so mean a dwelling, on purpose to seek the acquaintance of his offending, disaffected creature! But chiefly and more eminently this his gracious inclination was testified,—

By the manner and design of his leaving this his earthly abode, and yielding that his temple to destruction: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up." This being an animated living temple, could not be destroyed without sense of pain, unto which it could not willingly become subject, but upon design; and that could be no other than a design of love. When he could have commanded twelve legions of angels to have been the guardians of this temple, to expose it to the violence of profane and barbarous hands! this could proceed from nothing but love; and greater love could none show, especially if we consider what was the designed event. This temple was to fall but single, that it might be raised manifold: it was intended (as it came to pass) to be multiplied by being destroyed; as himself elegantly illustrates the matter: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit;" (John xii.) which he afterwards expresses without a metaphor. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth," signifying, as it follows, the death he should die, "will draw all men unto me."

We will not here insist on what was said before, that hereby the way was opened for the emission of the Spirit, which, when it came forth, performed such wonders in this kind, creating and forming into temples many a disaffected unwilling heart. Whence it may be seen, that he forsook that his present dwelling; not that he might dwell here no longer, but only to change the manner of his dwelling, and that he might dwell here more to common advantage: the thing he intended, when he came down. He came down, that by dying, and descending low into the lower parts of the earth, he might make way for a glorious ascent; and ascended, that he might fill all things; (Eph. iv.) that he might give gifts to men, even the rebellious also, that he might dwell among them, Ps. lxviii. Not, I say, to insist on this, which shows the power by which those great effects were wrought, we may also here consider the way wherein they were wrought; *i. e.* by way of representation and demonstration of the divine love to men. How brightly did this shine, in the glorious ruin and fall of this temple! Herein, how did redeeming love triumph! how mightily did it conquer, and slay the enmity that wrought in the minds of men before! Here he overcame by dying, and slew by being slain. Now were his arrows sharp in the hearts of enemies, by which they became subject, Ps. xlv. What wounded him, did, by a strong reverberation, wound them back again. How inwardly were thousands of them pierced by the sight of him whom they had pierced! How sharp a sting was in those words, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ!" Acts ii. For it immediately follows, "When they heard this, they were pricked to the heart." They that crucified him, are crucified with him; are now in agonies, and willing to yield to any thing they are required: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" He may have temples now, for taking them; the most obdurate hearts are overcome: and what could be so potent an argument? what so accommodate to the nature of man; so irresistible by it? To behold this live-temple of the living God, the sacred habitation of a Deity, full of pure and holy life and vigour, by vital union with the eternal Godhead, voluntarily devoted and made subject to the most painful and ignominious suffering, purposely to make atonement for the offence done by revolted creatures against their rightful Lord! What rocks would not rent at this spectacle? Enough to put the creation (as it did) into a paroxysm, and bring upon it travailing pangs! And how strange if the hearts of men, only next and most closely concerned, should alone be unmoved, and without the sense of such pangs! Well might it be said, "I, if I be lift up, will draw all men," without any such diminishing sense as to mean by that *all* a very few only; not intending so much by it the effect wrought, (though that also be not inconsiderable,) as the power, or natural aptitude of the cause, *q. d.* This were enough to vanquish and subdue the world, to mollify every heart of man; and to leave the character upon them of most inhuman creatures, and unworthy to be called men, that shall not be drawn. It might be expected, that every one that hath not abandoned humanity, or hath the spirit of a man in him, should be wrought upon by this means: and they cannot but incur most fearful guilt, even all men, who once having notice of this matter, are not effectually wrought upon by it.

Upon which account, the apostle asks the Galatians, (who had not otherwise seen this sight than as the gospel-narrative had represented it to them,) who had bewitched them that they should not obey, before whose eyes Christ had been set forth crucified among them; intimating, that he could not account them less than bewitched, whom the representation of Christ crucified did not captivate into his obedience. And since, in his crucifixion, he was a sacrifice, *i. e.* placatory and reconciling, and that reconciliations are always mutual, of both the contending parties to one another, it must have the proper influence of a sacrifice immediately upon both, and as well mollify men's hearts towards God, as procure that he should express favourable inclinations towards them. That is, that all enmity should cease, and be abolished for ever; that wrongs be forgotten, rights restored, and entire friendship, amity, and free converse, be renewed, and be made perpetual. All which signifies, that by this means the spirits of men be so wrought upon that they render back to God his own temple, most willingly, not merely from an apprehension of his right, but as overcome by his love; and valuing his presence more than their own life. Guilt is very apt to be always jealous. No wonder if the spirits of men, conscious of so great wrong done to God, (and a secret consciousness there may be even where there are not very distinct and explicit reflections upon the case,) be not very easily induced to think God reconcilable. And while he is not thought so, what can be expected but obstinate aversion on their part? For what so hardens as despair? Much indeed might be collected, by deeply-considering minds, of a propension, on God's part, to peace and friendship, from the course of his providence, and present dispensation towards the world; his clemency, long-suffering, and most of all his bounty, towards them. These lead to repentance in their own natural tendency: yet are they but dull insipid gospel in themselves, to men drowned in sensuality, buried in earthliness, in whom the Divine Spirit breathes not, and who have provoked the B. Spirit to keep at a distance, by having stupified and laid asleep the considering power of their own spirit. Nor are these the usual means, apart and by themselves, which the Spirit of God is wont to work by upon the hearts of men, as experience and observation of the common state of the pagan world doth sadly testify, and without the concurrence of that blessed Spirit, even the most apt and suitable means avail nothing.

But now where this is so express a testification, as we find in the gospel of Christ, of God's willingness to be reconciled; a proclamation distinctly made, that imports no other thing but glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men; (for confirmation whereof, the Son of God incarnate is represented slain.

and offered up a bloody sacrifice; and that we might see at once both that God is reconcilable, by the highest demonstration imaginable, and how or upon what terms he comes to be so;) no place for reasonable doubt any longer remains. We have before our eyes what, by the wonderful strangeness of it, should engage the most stupid minds to consider the matter; what ought to assure the most misgiving doubtful mind, that God is in good earnest, and intends no mockery or deceit in his offer of peace; and what ought to melt, mollify, and overcome the most obdurate heart. Yea, not only what is in its own nature most apt to work towards the producing these happy effects is here to be found, but wherewith also the Spirit of grace is ready to concur and co-work; it being his pleasure, and most fit and comely in itself, that he should choose to unite and fall in with the aptest means, and apply himself to the spirits of men in a way most suitable to their own natures, and most likely to take and prevail with them: whereupon the Gospel is called the "ministration of spirit and life, and the power of God to salvation." But that this gospel, animated by that mighty and good Spirit, hath not universally spread itself over all the world, only its own resolved and resisting wickedness is the faulty cause; otherwise there had been gospel, and temples raised by it, every where.

IX. 2. This *original primary temple* hath matter of rational inducement in it; as it gives us a plain representation of *divine holiness*, brightly shining in human nature. For here was to be seen a most pure, serene, dispassionate mind, unpolluted by any earthly tincture, inhabiting an earthly tabernacle, like our own. A mind adorned with the most amiable, lovely virtues, faith, patience, temperance, godliness; full of all righteousness, goodness, meekness, mercifulness, sincerity, humility; most abstracted from this world, unmoveably intent upon what had reference to a future state of things, and the affairs of another country; inflexible by the blandishments of sense; not apt to judge by the sight of the eye, or be charmed by what were most grateful to a voluptuous ear; full of pity towards a wretched, sinful world, compassionate to its calamities, unprovoked by its sharpest injuries; bent upon doing the greatest good, and prepared to the suffering of whatsoever evil. Here was presented to common view a life transacted agreeably to such a temper of mind; of one invariable tenor: equal, uniform, never unlike itself, or disagreeing with the exactest or most strict rules. Men might see a God was come down to dwell among them; "The Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express Image of his person;" a Deity inhabiting human flesh; for such purposes as he came for, could not be supposed to carry any more becoming appearance than he did. Here was, therefore, an *exemplary temple*, the fair and lovely pattern of what we were each of us to be composed and formed unto: imitating us (for sweeter insinuation and allurement) in what was merely natural, and inviting us to imitate him in what was (in a communicable sort) supernatural and divine. Every one knows how great is the power of example, and may collect how apt a method this was to move and draw the spirits of men. Had only precepts and instructions been given men, how they were to prepare and adorn in themselves a temple for the living God, it had, indeed, been a great vouchsafement; but how much had it fallen short of what the present state of man did, in point of means, need, and call for! How great a defalcation were it from the gospel, if we did want the history of the life of Christ! But not only to have been told of what materials the temple of God must consist, but to have seen them composed and put together; to have opportunity of viewing the benutiful frame in every part, and of beholding the lovely, imitable glory of the whole, and which we are to follow, though we cannot with equal steps; how merciful condescension, and how great an advantage is this unto us! We have here a state of entire devotedness to God (the principal thing in the constitution of his temple) exemplified before our eyes, together with what was most suitable besides to such state. Do we not see how, in a body of flesh, one may be subject to the will of God; to count the doing of it our meat and drink? When it imposes any thing grievous to be suffered, to say, "Not my will, but thine be done?" How in all things to seek not our own glory, but his? and not to please ourselves, but him? How hereby to keep his blessed presence with us, and live in his constant converse and fellowship, never to be left alone; but to have him ever with us, as always aiming to do the things that please him? Do we not know how to be tempted, and abstain; injured, and forgive; disobliged, and do good; to live in a tumultuous world, and be at peace within; to dwell on earth, and have our conversation in heaven? We see all this hath been done, and much more than we can here mention: and by so lively a representation of the brightest divine excellences, beautifying this *original exemplary temple*, we have a twofold most considerable advantage towards our becoming such; *viz.* that hereby both the *possibility* and the *loveliness* of a temple (the thing we are now ourselves to design) is here represented to our view; by the former whereof we might be encouraged, by the latter allured, unto imitation; *that* working upon our hope, *this* upon our desire and love, in order hereto.

1. The *possibility*. I mean it not in the strict sense only, as signifying no more than that the thing, simply considered, implies no repugnance in itself, nor is without the reach of absolute omnipotence; for as no one needs to be told that such a thing is (in this sense) possible, so to be told it, would signify little to his encouragement. There are many things in this sense not impossible, whereof no man can, however, have the least rational hope; as, that another world may shortly be made; that he may be a prince, or a great man, therein; with a thousand the like. But I mean it of what is possible to divine power, (*i. e.* to the grace and Spirit of God,) now ready to go forth in a way and method of operation already stated and pitched upon for such purposes. For having the representation before our eyes of this *original Temple*, *i. e.* God inhabiting human flesh on earth, we are not merely to consider it as it is in itself, and to look upon it as a strange thing, or as a glorious spectacle, wherein we are no further concerned, than only to look upon it, and take notice that there is or hath been seen such a thing; but we are to consider how it came to pass, and with what design it was that such a thing should be, and become obvious to our view. Why have we such a sight offered us? or what imports it unto us? And when we have informed ourselves, by taking the account the gospel gives us of this matter, and viewed the inscription of that great name, *Emmanuel*, by wonderful contrivance, inwrought into the very constitution of this temple, we will then find this to be intended for a leading case; and that this temple was meant for a model and platform of that which we ourselves are to become; or, after which the temple of God in us must be composed and formed; and so, that this matter is possible to an ordinate, divine power, even to that mighty Spirit that resides eminently in this temple, on purpose to be transmitted thence to us, for the framing of us to the likeness of it; and so that the thing is not merely possible, but designed also, *viz.* that as he was, so we might be in this world: (1 John iv.) unto which is necessary our believing intuition towards him, or a fiducial acknowledgment that this Jesus is the Son of God, come down on purpose into human flesh, to bring about a union between God and us whereupon that union itself ensues: the matter is brought about, we come to dwell in God, and he in us, *v.* 15. And this we collect and conclude from hence, that we find the same Spirit working and breathing in us, which did in him; "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit," *v.* 13. And though it was an unmeasured fulness of this Spirit which dwelt in this *primary temple*, yet we are taught and encouraged hence to expect that a sufficient and proportionable measure be imparted to us, that we may appear not altogether unlike or unworthy of him; that this temple and ours are of the same make, and "both he that sanctificth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one;" that we so far agree with our original, that he may not be ashamed to call us brethren, Heb. ii. And how aptly doth this tend to excite and raise our hope of some great thing to be effected in this kind in us, when we have the matter thus exemplified already before our eyes, and do behold the exact and perfect model according whereto we ourselves are to be framed. Nor doth that signify a little to the

drawing of our wills, or the engaging us to a consent and co-operation, as the under-builders, in the work of this temple. A design that in itself appears advantageous, needs no more to set it on foot, than that it be represented hopeful. No one, that understands any thing of the nature of man, is ignorant of the power of hope. This one engine moves the world, and keeps all men busy. Every one soon finds his present state not perfectly good, and hopes some way to make it better; otherwise, the world were a dull scene. Endeavour would languish, or rather be none at all: for there were no room left for design, or a rational enterprising of any thing; but a lazy unconcerned trifling, without care which end goes forward, and with an utter indifferency whether to stir or sit still. Men are not, in their other designs, without hope, but their hope is placed upon things of no value; and when they have gained the next thing they hoped for and pursued, they are as far still as they were from what they meant that for. They have obtained their nearer end, but therein have mistook their way; which they designed by it, to their further end. When they have attained to be rich, yet they are not happy; perhaps much further from it than before. When they have preyed upon the pleasure they had in chase, they are still unsatisfied; it may be, guilty reflections turn it all to gall and wormwood. Many such disappointments might make them consider, at length, they have been out all this while, and mistaken the whole nature and kind of the good that must make them happy. They may come to think with themselves, Somewhat is surely lacking, not only to our present enjoyment, but to our very design; somewhat it must be without the compass of all our former thoughts, wherein our satisfying good must lie. God may come into their minds; and they may cry out, Oh! that is it; here it was I mistook, and had forgot myself. Man once had a God! and that God had his temple, wherein he resided, and did converse with man: hither he must be invited back. Yea, but his temple lies all in ruin, long ago deserted and disused, forsaken upon provocation, and with just resentment; the ruin to be repaired by no mortal hand; the wrong done to be expatiated by no ordinary sacrifice. All this imports nothing but despair. But let now the Emmanuel be brought in; this *original Temple* be offered to view, and the design and intent of it be unfolded and laid open; and what a spring of hope is here! Or what can now be wanting to persuade a wretched soul of God's willingness to return? Or, being now sensible of his misery by his absence, to make it willing of his return; yea, and to contribute the utmost endeavour that all things may be prepared and put into due order for his reception? Or if any thing should be still wanting, it is but what may more work upon desire, as well as beget hope: and to this purpose, a narrower view of this *original Temple* also serves; that is, it not only shows the possibility, but gives us opportunity to contemplate,

2. The *loveliness* too of such a temple. For here is the fairest representation that ever this world had, or that could be had, of this most delectable object. The Divine holiness incarnate did never shine so bright. And we may easily apprehend the great advantage of having so lively and perfect a model set before us of what we are to design and aim at. Rules and precepts could never have afforded so full a description, or have furnished us with so perfect an idea. He that goes to build a house, must have the project formed in his mind before; and (as hath been said) he is to make a material house of an immaterial. So here, we may say the real house is to be built out of the mental or notional one. It is true indeed, when we have got into our minds the true and full idea or model of this temple, our greatest difficulty is not yet over: how happy were it, if the rest of our work would as soon be done! And our hearts would presently obey our light. If they were ductile, and easy to yield, and receive the stamp and impression that would correspond to a well enlightened mind; if we could presently become conform and like to the notions we have of what we should be: what excellent creatures should we appear, if on the sudden our spirits did admit the habitual, fixed frame of holiness, whereof we sometimes have the idea framed in our minds! But though to have that model truly formed in our understandings be not sufficient, it is however necessary: and although our main work is not immediately done by it, it can never be done without it. Truth is the means of holiness: "Sanctify them through thy truth." John xvii. 17. God hath chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, 2 Thess. ii. 3. Therefore it is our great advantage to have the most entire and full notion that may be, of that temper and frame of spirit we should be of. When the charge was given Moses of composing the tabernacle, (that moveable temple,) he had the perfect pattern of it shown him in the mount. And to receive the very notion aright of this spiritual living temple, requires a some-way prepared mind, purged from vicious prejudice and perverse thoughts, possessed with dislike of our former pollutions and deformities; antecedent whereto is a more general view of that frame whereunto we are to be composed, and then a more distinct representation is consequent thereon. As we find the prophet is directed first to show the people the house, that they might be ashamed: whereupon it follows, if they be ashamed of that they have done, then he must show them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, Ezek. xliii. 10, 11. How much would it conduce to the work and service of God's temple in us, if upon our having had some general intimation of his gracious propensions towards us, to repair our ruins, and restore our forlorn, decayed state, we begin to lament after him, and conceive inward resentments of the impurities and desolations of our souls: and shall now have the distinct representation set before our eyes, of that glorious workmanship which he means to express in our renovation! How taking and transporting a sight will this be to a soul that is become vile and loathsome in its own eyes, and weary of being as without God in the world! But now, wherein shall he be understood to give us so exact an account of his merciful intendments and design in this matter, as by letting us see how his glory shone in his own incarnate Son, his express Image; and then signifying his pleasure and purpose to have us conformed to the same image. This is his most apt and efficacious method, when he goes about to raise his new creation, and erect his inner temple; (as it was, in some respect, his way, when he made his first great outer temple of the world;) "God, that commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. That glory shines with greatest advantage to our transformation, in the face or aspect of Emmanuel. When we set our faces that way, and our eye meets his, we put ourselves into a purposed posture of intuition, and do stedily look to Jesus; "when we, with open face, behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. His very Spirit enters with those vital beams; enters at our eye, and is thence transfused through our whole soul.

The seed and generative principle of the new creature is truth; "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, the word of God," 1 Peter i. 23. We must understand it of practical truth, or that which serves to show what we are to be and do, (*ch.* ii. 1, 2, 3, 4.) in our new and regenerate state. Hereby souls are begotten to God, hereby they live and grow, hereby they come and join as living stones to the living Corner-stone, in the composition of this spiritual house: as we see the series of discourse runs in this context. Now we have this practical truth, not only exhibited in aphorisms and maxims in the word, but we have it exemplified in the life of Christ. And when the great renovating work is to be done, the old man to be put off, the new man to be put on, the spirit of our mind to be renewed, our business is to learn Christ, and the truth as it is in Jesus: (Eph. iv. 20, 21, 23, 24.) so is accomplished the formation of that new man that is after God. And when we become his (second) workmanship, we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works; caught into union with that Spirit which showed itself in the whole course of his conversation on earth, and is gradually to work and form us to an imitation of him. Whereunto we are not formed by mere looking on, or by our own contemplation only of his life and actions, on the one hand; (our rigid hardness and stiff aversion to such a temper and

course as his was, is not so easily altered and overcome:) nor, on the other hand, is our looking on useless and in vain, as if we were to be formed, like mere stones, into dead unmoving statues, rather than living temples; or as if his Spirit were to do that work upon us, by a violent hand, while we know nothing of the matter, nor any way comply to the design. But the work must be done by the holding up the representation of this *primary temple* before our eyes, animated and replenished with divine life and glory, as our pattern, and the type by which we are to be formed, till our hearts be captivated and won to the love and liking of such a state; *i. e.* to be so united with God, so devoted to him, so stamped and impressed with all imitable Godlike excellences, as he was: we are to be so enamoured herewith, as to be impatient of remaining what we were before. And such a view contributed directly hereto, and in a way suitable to our natures. Mere transient discourses of virtue and goodness, seem cold and unsavoury things to a soul drenched in sensuality, sunk into deep forgetfulness of God, and filled with aversion to holiness: but the tract and course of a life evenly transacted, in the power of the Holy Ghost, and that is throughout uniform, and constantly agreeable to itself, is apt, by often repeated insinuations, (as drops wear stones,) insensibly to recommend itself as amiable, and gain a liking even with them that were most opposite and disaffected. For the nature of man, in its most degenerate state, is not wholly destitute of the notions of virtue and goodness, nor of some faint approbation of them. The names of sincerity, humility, sobriety, meekness, are of better sound and import, even with the worst of men, than of deceit, pride, riot, and wrathfulness: nor are they wont to accuse any for those former things, under their own names. Only when they see the broken and more imperfect appearances of them, and that they are rather offered at than truly and constantly represented in practice; this begets a prejudice, and the pretenders to them become suspected of hypocrisy, or a conceited singularity, and are not censured as not being grossly evil, but rather that they are not thoroughly good. But when so unexceptionable a course is in constant view as our Saviour's was, this procures, even from the ruder vulgar, an acknowledgment he doth all things well, and carries that lustre and awful majesty, as to command a veneration and respect; yea, is apt to allure those that more narrowly observe into a real love both of him and his way; especially when it hath such a close and issue, as appears no way unworthy of himself, or his former pretensions. But all being taken together, resolves into the plainest demonstration of most sincere devotedness to God, and good-will to men; upon which the great stress is laid: "And I, if I be lift up, will draw all men unto me." And how great a thing is done towards our entire compliance with the Redeemer's design of making us temples to the living God, as he himself was, when he, under that very notion, appears amiable in our eyes! How natural and easy is imitation unto love! All the powers of the soul are now, in the most natural way, excited and set on work; and we shall not easily be induced to satisfy ourselves, or admit of being at rest, till we attain a state, with the loveliness whereof our hearts are once taken and possessed beforehand. But nothing of all this is said with design, nor hath any tendency, to diminish or detract from that mighty power of the blessed Spirit of God, by whom men become willing of the return of the Divine presence into its ancient residence, and, in subordination, active towards it; but rather to magnify the excellency of that wisdom, which conducts all the exertions and operations of that power so suitably to the subject to be wrought upon, and the ends and purposes to be effected thereby.

Upon the whole, the setting up of this *original temple*, inscribed with the great *Emmanuel*, or the whole constitution of *Christ* the mediator, hath, we see, set a very apparent aptitude and rich sufficiency in its kind, to the composing of things between God and men; the replenishing this desolate world with temples again every where, and those with the Divine presence; both as there was enough in it to procure remission of sin, enough to procure the emission of the Holy Spirit: an immense fulness both of righteousness and Spirit; of righteousness for the former purpose, and of Spirit for the latter, and both of these, in distinct ways, capable of being imparted; because the power of imparting them was upon such terms obtained, as did satisfy the malediction and curse of the violated law, which must otherwise have everlastingly withheld both from apostate, offending creatures. It is not the righteousness of God, *as such*, that can make a guilty creature guiltless, (which must rather oblige him still to hold him guilty,) or the Spirit of God, *as such*, that can make him holy. Here is a full fountain, but sealed and shut up; and what are we the better for that? But it is the righteousness and Spirit of *Emmanuel, God with us;* of him who was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; and who was made a curse for us, that we might have the blessing of the promised Spirit: otherwise, there were not in him a sufficiency to answer the exigency of the case; but as the matter is, here is abundant sufficiency in both respects, as we have already seen. And therefore, the only thing that remains to be shown herein,—is the *necessity* and requisiteness of such means as this, unto this end. For when we take notice of so great and so rare a thing as an Emmanuel, set up in the world; and find by this solemn constitution of him, by the condition of his person, his accomplishments, performances, sufferings, acquisitions, the powers and virtues belonging to him, that every thing hath so apt an aspect, and is so accommodate to the restitution of lost man, and of God's temple in and with him; we cannot but confess, here is a contrivance worthy of God, sufficient for its end. So that the work needs not fail of being done, if in this way it prove not to be overdone; or if the apparatus be not greater than was needful for the intended end; or that the same purposes might not have been effected at an easier rate. I design therefore to speak distinctly and severally of the *necessity* of this course, in reference, 1. To the remission of sin. 2. To the emission or communication of the Spirit: and do purposely reserve several things concerning this latter, to be discoursed under this head: after the *necessity* of this same course for the former purpose (wherein the latter also hath its foundation) hath been considered.

CHAPTER VI.

The *necessity* of this constitution of Emmanuel to the erecting God's temple in the world. The discoursing of this matter, proper on this occasion. As to God's part herein, first, proposed to show, both that a recompense was necessary to be made, and that it could be made no other way. Towards the evincing the former, sundry things gradually laid down. The point itself argued, by considering the injury done to the *divine*, with what we may suppose done to a *human* government; where repentance not constantly thought a sufficient recompence; otherwise, a penitent delinquent was never to be punished. Difference between God's pardon and man's in most usual cases. Recompense for wrong done to government, quite another thing from what answers the appetite of private revenge. Expressions that seem to import it in God, how to be understood. Shown that they import no more than a constant will so far to punish offences, as is necessary for the asserting and preserving the rights and dignity of his government. So much must agreeable, and necessarily belonging to the perfection of the divine nature. And if the justice of a human government requires it, of the divine much more.

It may here perhaps be said, Why might not the matter have been otherwise brought about? Or, might not God of his mere sovereignty have remitted the wrong done to him, without any such atonement; and, upon the same account, have sent forth his Spirit to turn men's hearts? And if that must work by arguments and rational persuasives, were there not others to have been used, sufficient to this purpose, though the Son of God had never become man, or died upon this account? To use means exceeding the value of the end, may seem as unsuitable to the divine wisdom, as not to have used sufficient. And who can think the concernments of silly worms impossible to be managed, and brought to a fair and happy issue, without so great things as the incarnation and death of God's own Son?

Wherefore we proceed to show, as was promised,

2. The *necessity*, as the case stood, that this course should be taken for this end. No man can here think we mean that the end itself was otherwise necessary, than as the freest love and good-will made it so; but *that* supposed, we are only to evince that this course was the

necessary means to attain it. And as to this, if indeed that modesty and reverence were every where to be found, wherewith it would become dim-sighted man to judge of the ways of God, any inquiry of this kind might be forborne; and it would be enough to put us out of doubt, that this was the most equal and fittest way, that we see it is the way which God hath taken. But that cross temper hath found much place in the world, rather to dispute God's methods, than comport with them, in an obedient thankful compliance and subserviency to their intended ends. And how deeply is it to be resented, that so momentous a thing in the religion of Christians, and that above all other should be the subject and incentive of admiring, devout thoughts and affections, should ever have been made intricate and perplexed by disputation! That the food of life should have been filled with thorns and gravel! And what was most apt to beget good blood, and turn all to strength, vigour, and spirit, should be rendered the matter of a disease! This can never enough be taken to heart. What complaints might the tortured, famished church of Christ send up against the ill instruments of so great a mischief! "Lord! we asked bread, and they gave us a stone. They have spoiled the provisions of thy house. Our pleasantest fare, most delicious and strengthening viands, they have made tasteless and unsavoury." What expostulations might it use with them! "Will you not let us live? Can nothing in our religion be so sacred, so important, as to escape your perverting hands?"

The urgency of the case itself permits not that this matter be silently passed over: a living temple needs the apt means of nourishment and growth; and it must be nourished and grow, by what is suitable to its constitution: unto which nothing is more inward, than the laying this "living Corner-stone."

We will acknowledge the reasons of divers things in God's determinations and appointments may be very deeply hidden, not only from our more easy view, but our most diligent search: where they are, his telling us the matter is so, or so, is reason enough to us to believe with reverence. But when they offer themselves, we need not be afraid to see them; and when the matter they concern is brought in question, should be afraid of being so treacherous as not to produce them.

Now that it was requisite this temple should be so founded as hath been said, is a matter not only not repugnant to the common reason of man, but which fairly approves itself thereunto: that is, so far as that though it exceed all human thought, the great Lord of heaven and earth, infinitely injured by the sin of man, should so wonderfully condescend; yet when his good pleasure is plainly expressed, touching the end, that nothing could be so apparently congruous, so worthy of himself, so accommodate to his design, as the way which he hath avowedly taken to bring it about. That it might be brought about, (as in all reconciliations, and as hath been said concerning this,) a compliance was necessary, and a mutual yielding of both the distanced parties; *i. e.* that God consent to return to his desolate temple, and that man consent or be willing he should.

We have shown that the constitution and use of the original temple, whereof the account hath been given, was sufficient, and aptly conducing unto both. Now being to show wherein they were also requisite or necessary to the one and the other, we must acknowledge them not alike immediately necessary to each of these; and must therefore divide the things in order whereto this course was taken, and speak of them severally. Nor are they to be so divided, as though the procurement of God's return for his part, and of man's admitting thereof for his part, were throughout to be severally considered; for God's part is larger than man's, and some way runs into it: he is not only to give his own consent, but to gain man's; and besides his own willing return to repossess this his temple, he is to make man willing also: or rather that return or repossession, rightly understood, will be found to include the making of man willing; *i. e.* in that very return and repossession, he is to put forth that measure of power and influence, by which he may be made so. All this is God's part, which he doth graciously undertake, and without which nothing could be effected in this matter. But then because man is to be wrought upon in a way suitable to his reasonable nature, he is to have such things offered to his consideration, as in their own nature tend to persuade him; and which that power and spirit, to be put forth, may use as proper means to that purpose. Now it is man's part to consider such things, and consent thereupon. Our business here, therefore, is to show how *necessary* the constitution of Emmanuel was, chiefly and principally as to what now appears to be God's part: and afterward, to say somewhat as to our own.—To the former, it was requisite that the *original Temple, Emmanuel*, should be set up, and be used to such immediate purposes as have been expressed; to the latter, was requisite the declaration hereof.—To the one, that such a constitution should be; to the other, that it be made known to man.

II. First, then, in reference to the former, this constitution was necessary, that so there might be a sufficient means for the previous expiation of the offence done to the majesty of God; or that the injurious violation of his sacred rights might be sufficiently recompensed. And here, more particularly, two things are to be cleared; *First*, That in order to God's return, it was necessary such a full recompense should be made him; *secondly*, That it could not be full any other way than this, by Emmanuel.[a] In discoursing of which things, it is not intended to go in the usual way of controversy, to heap up a great number of arguments, and discuss particularly every little cavil that may be raised on the contrary part; but plainly to offer such considerations as may tend to clear the truth, and rather prevent than formally answer objections against it.

Wherefore we say, (1.) it was necessary God's return and vouchsafement of his gracious restored presence to man, as his temple, should be upon terms of *recompense* made him (or as certain to be made) for the indignity and wrong done in the former violation thereof.

We do not here need to be curious in inquiring, whether the consideration of this recompense to be made had influence on the gracious purpose of God in this matter, or only on the execution thereof. Nor indeed hath the doubt any proper ground in the present case, which, where it hath disquieted the minds of any, seems to have proceeded from our too great aptness to measure God by ourselves, and prescribe to him the same methods we ourselves are wont to observe. That is, we find it is our way, when we have a design to bring about, upon which we are intent, first to propound the end to ourselves which we would have effected, then to deliberate and consult by what means to effect it: whereupon, we assign to the blessed God the same course. But to him, all his works are known from the beginning of the world; and he ever beheld, at one view, the whole tract and course of means whereby any thing is to be done, which he intends with the intended end itself. So that we have no reason to affix to him any thought or purpose of favour towards the sinful sons of men, anecenter or more early than his prospect of the way wherein that favourable purpose was to be accomplished.

Nor again can any act or purpose of his towards his creatures be otherwise necessary to him, than from the essential rectitude of the counsels of his own will; the determinations whereof are such as might not have been, or might have been otherwise, where the thing determined was, by those measures, a matter of indifferency. Where it was not so, they are (however necessary, yet also) in that sense most free; as they are directed and approved by his infinite wisdom, and attended with that complacency which naturally accompanies any act or purpose that is in itself most exceptionably congruous, just, and good.

It may furthermore be truly said, that nothing ought to be reckoned possible to him, upon the agreement only which it holds to some one attribute of his, considered singly and apart from all the rest: as, for instance, in what is next our present case, to forgive all the sins that ever were committed against him, without insisting upon any compensation, were vainly alleged to be correspondent to boundless sovereign mercy, if it will not as well accord

[a] This 2d head comes to be discoursed Chap. viii. Sect. 1, &c.

with infinite wisdom, justice, and holiness; as it would be unreasonably said to be agreeable enough to him, to throw all the creatures that never offended him into an endless nothingness, in consideration only of the absoluteness of his power and dominion. But whatsoever he can do, must be understood to be agreeable to a Being absolutely and every way perfect.

Moreover we add, that whatsoever is most congruous and fit for him to do, that is truly necessary to him: he cannot swerve in the least tittle, we will not only say from what strict and rigorous justice doth exact and challenge, but also not from what is requisite, under the notion of most comely and decent. Hath it been said of a mortal man, that it was as easy to alter the course of the sun, as to turn him from the path of righteousness? We must suppose it of the eternal God equally impossible that he should be diverted from, or ever omit to do, what is most seemly, becoming, and worthy of himself. In such things wherein he is pleased to be our pattern, what we know to be our own duty, we must conclude is his nature: we ought to be found neither in an unjust act or omission, nor undecent one; and he cannot. And if it belong to us to do what is good, it more necessarily belongs to him to do what is best; *i. e.* in all things that are any way capable of coming under a moral consideration: for as in other matters it is permitted to us to act arbitrarily, so there is nothing hinders but he may much more. Wherefore it is not hence to be thought that therefore it was necessary this universe and every thing in it should have been made as perfect as they could be; as if we ourselves will make any thing for our own use, nothing obliges us to be so very curious about it, as that it may be as neat and accurate as we can devise to make it; it will suffice if it be such as will serve our turn. And indeed, in the works of nature, it would have been less worthy of God to have expressed a scrupulous curiosity that nothing might ever fall out besides one fixed rule, (especially in a state of things designed for no long continuance,) that should extend to all imaginable particularities; as that all men should be of the comeliest stature, all faces of the most graceful aspect, with a thousand the like. But in matters wherein there can be better and worse, in a moral sense, it seems a principle of the plainest evidence, that the blessed God cannot but do that which is simply the best; yea, while a necessity is upon us not only to mind things that are true, and just, and pure, but also that are lovely and of good report, we have no cause to doubt, but whatsoever is comely, and beseeming his most perfect excellences, is an eternal, indispensable law to him: wherefore it is not enough to consider, in the present case, what it were strictly not unjust for him to do, but what is fit and becoming so excellent and glorious a majesty as his.

Nor now can it be a doubt, but that he only is the competent Judge of what is becoming and worthy of himself; or what is most congruous and fit in itself to be done; (Isa. xl.) "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath instructed him!" &c. Surely the best reason we can exercise in this case, is to think that course reasonable which we find God hath chosen, although we had no insight at all into the matter. There are many constitutions which we have occasion to observe in the course of God's government over the world, which, by the constancy of them, we have ground to think founded in indispensable necessity; though the reasons whercupon they are necessary, are most deeply latent and hidden from us. Not to speak of the abstruser paths and methods of nature, wherein while we observe a constancy, yet perhaps we apprehend it might have been some other way as well: perhaps it might, but it is more than we know. And though, as hath been said, we have reason to suppose that the ways God hath taken, in matters of this sort, may be more absolutely arbitrary; yet the constant iteration of the same thing, or continuation of the ancient settled course, shows the peremptoriness of the Creator's counsel; and seems to carry with it an implied rebuke of our ignorant rashness, in thinking it might as well be otherwise; and a stiff asserting of his determinations against us. There are none so well studied naturalists, as to be able to give a rational account why it is so, and so, in many instances; wherein they may yet discern the inflexibleness of nature, and perceive her methods to be as unalterable, as they are unaccountable. 'Tis true, this is obvious to be seen by any eye, that where things are well, as they are, constancy doth better than innovation, or change; but it very much becomes human modesty to suppose, that there may, in many cases, be other reasons to justify the present course, which we see not. But we may, with more advantage, consider the fixedness of that order which God hath set, unto the course of his dispensation, towards his intelligent creatures: wherein we shall only instance in some few particulars.

As first, that there is so little discernible commerce, in the present state, between the superior rank of these creatures, and the inferior. That whereas we are well assured there are intelligent creatures, which inhabit not earthly bodies like ours, but hold an agreement with us in greater things; they yet so rarely converse with us. When we consider that such of them as remain innocent, and such of us as are, by Divine mercy, recovered out of a state of apostacy, are all subject to the same common Lord; observe the more substantial things of the same law; have all the same common end; are acted by the same principle of love, devotedness, and zeal for the interest and honour of the great Maker, and Lord of all things. We are all to make up one community with them, and be associates in the same future blessed state; yet, they have little intercourse with us, they shun our sight. If sometimes they appear, it is by transient, hasty glances; they are strangely shy and reserved towards us, they check our inquiries, put us, and appear to be themselves in reference thereto, under awful restraints. We know not the reason of all this, sometimes we may think with ourselves, those pure and holy spirits cannot but be full of kindness, benignity, and love, and concerned for us poor mortals, whom they see put to tug and conflict with many difficulties and calamities; abused by the cunning malice of their and our enemy; imposed upon by the illusions of our own senses. How easily might they make many useful discoveries to us, relieve our ignorance in many things, acquaint us, more expressly, with the state of things in the other world, rectify our dark or mistaken apprehensions, concerning many both religious and philosophical matters! But they refrain, and we know not why.

Again, that in the days of our Saviour's converse on earth, there should be so strange a connexion as to them, on whom he wrought miraculous cures, between the Divine power, and their faith; so that, sometimes, we find it expressly said, He could do no mighty work, because of their unbelief.

And we, lastly, instance in the fixedness of that course, which God hath set, for making known to the world the contents of the gospel of Christ: so that little is ever done therein, immediately, or by extraordinary means. The apostle Paul is stopped in the career of his persecution, by an amazing voice, and vision; but he is left for instruction, as to his future course, to Ananias. Unto Cornelius an angel is sent, not to preach the gospel, but to direct him to send for Peter, for that purpose. The Lord doth not immediately himself instruct the Eunuch in the faith of Christ, but directs Philip to do it; and experience shows, that (according to the rule set in that case, Rom. x.) where they have no preachers, they have no gospel.

Now as to all these cases, and many more that might be thought on, can it be said it would have been unjust, if God had ordered the matter otherwise than he hath? That we cannot so much as imagine, nor are we to think the matter determined as it is, in all such cases, by mere will and pleasure, without a reason; which were an imagination altogether unworthy the Supreme wisdom; but that there are reasons of mighty force and weight, or certain congruities, in the natures of things themselves, obvious to the Divine understanding, which do either wholly escape ours, or whereof we have but very shallow, dark, conjectural apprehensions; as he that saw men as trees, or as some creatures, of very acute sight, perceive what to us seems invisible. And yet those occult and hidden reasons and congruities have been the foundation of constitutions and laws, that hold things more steadily than adamantine bands; and are of more stability than the foundations of heaven and earth.

Furthermore it is to be considered, that the rights of the Divine government, the quality and measure of offences committed against it, and when or upon what terms they may be remitted, or in what case, it may be congruous to the dignity of that government to recede from such rights; are matters of so high a nature, that it becomes us to be very sparing in making an estimate about them; especially a more diminishing one than the general strain of Scripture seems to hold forth. Even among men, how sacred things are majesty, and the rights of government! And how much above the reach of a vulgar judgment! Suppose a company of peasants, that understand little more than what is within the compass of their mattock, plough, and shovel, should take upon them to judge of the rights of their prince, and make an estimate of the measure of offences, committed against the majesty and dignity of government; how competent judges would we think them? And will we not acknowledge the most refined human understanding as incompetent to judge of the rights of the Divine government, or measure the injuriousness of an offence done against it; as the meanest peasant to make an estimate of these matters, in a human government? If only the reputation be wronged of a person of better quality, how strictly is it insisted on to have the matter tried by peers, or persons of equal rank! such as are capable of understanding honour and reputation! How would it be resented, if an affront, put upon a nobleman, should be committed to the judgment of smiths, and cobblers; especially if they were *participes criminis*, and as well parties, as judges?

When the regalia of the great Ruler and Lord of heaven and earth are invaded, his temple violated, his presence despised, his image torn down thence and defaced; who among the sons of men are either great, or knowing, or innocent enough to judge of the offence and wrong? or how fit it is that it be remitted, without recompense? or what recompense would be proportionable? How supposable is it, that there may be congruities in this matter, obvious to the Divine understanding, which infinitely exceed the measure of ours?

III. And yet, because God speaks to us about these matters, and they are our own concernments, as being of the offending parties; it is necessary we apply our minds to understand them, and possible to us to attain to a true, though not to a full, understanding of them. And though we can never fully comprehend in our own thoughts the horror of the case, that reasonable creatures, made after God's image, so highly favoured by him, capable of blessedness in him, incapable of it any other way, should have arrived to that pitch of wickedness towards him, and unnaturalness towards themselves, as to say to him, Depart from us, and cut themselves off from him: though we may sooner lose ourselves in the contemplation, and be overwhelmed by our own thoughts, than ever see through the monstrous evil of this defection: yet we may soon see it incomparably to transcend the measure of any offence, that can ever be done by one creature against another; or of the most scandalous affront the meanest, the vilest, the most ungrateful, ill-natured wretch could have devised to put upon the greatest, the most benign, and best deserving prince the world ever knew. And if we can suppose an offence, of that kind, may be of so heinous a nature, and so circumstanced as that it cannot be congruous it should be remitted, without some reparation made to the majesty of the prince, and compensation for the scandal done to government; it is easy to suppose it much more incongruous it should be so in the present case.

Yea, and as it can never be thought congruous, that such an offence, against any human governor, should be pardoned without the intervening repentance of the delinquent; so we may easily apprehend also the case to be such, as that it cannot be fit it should be pardoned upon that alone, without other recompense. Whereof if any should doubt, I would demand, is it in any case fit that a penitent delinquent, against human laws and government, should be punished, or a proportionable recompense be exacted for his offence, notwithstanding? Surely it will be acknowledged ordinarily fit, and who would take upon him to be the censor of the common justice of the world, in all such cases? or to damn the proceedings of all times, and nations, wheresoever a penitent offender hath been made to suffer the legal punishment of his offences, notwithstanding his repentance? How strange a maxim of government would that be: that it is never fit an offender, of whatsoever kind, should be punished, if he repent himself of his offence! And surely if ever, in any case, somewhat else than repentance be fitly insisted on, as a recompense for the violation of the sacred rights of government; it may well be supposed to be so, in the case of man's common delinquency and revolt from God, much more.

Unto which purpose it is further to be considered, that in this case the matter is much otherwise between God and man, than, for the most part, between a secular prince and a delinquent subject: that is, that pardon, be it never so plenary, doth (as pardon) no more than restore the delinquent into as good a condition as he was in before. But what was, for the most part, the case before of delinquent subjects? There are very few that were before the prince's favourites, his intimate associates and friends, with whom he was wont familiarly to converse. Very often the condition of the offender was such before, that his pardon only saves him from the gallows; lets him live, and enjoy only the poor advantages of his former mean condition; and not always that neither: yea, or if he were one whose higher rank and other circumstances had entitled him to a nearest attendance on the person of the prince, and a daily, inward conversation with him; it is possible he might be pardoned with limitation as to his life, or it may be, further, to his estate, without being restored to the honours and offices about the person of the prince, which he held only by royal favour: for though princely compassion might extend so far as to let his offence be expiated by less than his utter ruin, yet also his prudent respect to the dignity of his government might not admit that a person under public infamy should have the liberty of his presence, intermingle with his councils, or be dignified with more special marks of his favour and kindness. Whereas in the restitution of man, inasmuch as before he was the temple and residence of the great King, where he afforded his most inward, gracious presence, the design is to restore him into the same capacity, and to as good condition as he was in before in these respects: yea, and not only so, but unspeakably to better his case, to take him much nearer to himself than ever, and into a more exalted state. In order whereto, it was the more highly congruous that his offence be done away by a most perfect, unexceptionable expiation; that so high and great an advancement of the most heinous offenders, might not be brought about upon other terms than should well accord with the majesty of his government over the world.

IV. Here, therefore, let a comparative view be taken of the fearful malediction and curse of God's law upon the transgressors of it, and of the copious blessing of the gospel: that thereupon we may the more clearly judge how improbable it was there should be so vast a difference and translation between two so distant states, without atonement made for transgression of so high demerit, and so deeply resented.

1. As to the former, we are in the general told, (Gal. iii.) that "cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." Astonishing thing! That he should curse me who made me! That my being, and a curse upon me, should proceed from the word and breath of the same sacred mouth! Of how terrible import is his curse! To be made an anathema, separate and cut off from God, and from all the dutiful and loyal part of his creation! Driven forth from his delightful presence! In the same breath, it is said to the loathed wretch, Depart—accursed! To be reduced to the condition of a vagabond on the earth, not knowing whither to go! Naked of Divine protection from any violent hand; yea, marked out for the butt of the sharpest arrows of his own indignation! How voluminous and extensive is his curse! reaching to all one's concernments in both worlds, temporal and eternal, of outward and inward man. To be cursed in one's basket and store, in the city and field, in going out and coming in! Especially to have all God's curses and plagues meeting and centring in one's very heart, to be there smitten with

blindness, madness, and astonishment! How efficacious is this curse! Not a faint, impotent wishing ill to a man, but under which he really wastes, and which certainly blasts, withers, and consumes him, and even turns his very blessings into curses! How closely adhering, as a garment wherewith he is clothed, and as a girdle with which he is girt continually! How secretly and subtly insinuating, as water into his bowels, and oil into his bones! And how deservedly doth it befall! The curse canseless shall not come; this can never be without a cause. If another curse me, it shows he hates me; if the righteous God do so, it signifies me to be in myself a hateful creature, a son and heir, not of peace, but of wrath and a curse. And the effect must be of equal permanency with its cause; so as that God is angry with the wicked every day, and rains upon them fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, as the portion of their cup; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil, and continually growing into a treasure, against the day of wrath.

2. View, on the other hand, the copious, abundant blessing contained and conveyed in the gospel. It is a call to blessing, that we may inherit a blessing: it discovers a state begun with the blessedness of having iniquity forgiven; a course, under a continued blessing, of meditating on the word of God with delight, day and night; of being undefiled in the way: gives characters of the subjects of blessings showered down from the month of Christ on the poor in spirit, pure in heart, the meek, merciful, &c.: aims at making them nigh, that were afar off; taking them into God's own family and household; making them friends, favourites, domestics, sons, and daughters; engaging them in a fellowship with the Father and Son: yet were all these the children of wrath, by nature. Whence is this change? A regression became not the majesty of heaven. God's original constitution, that connected sin and the curse, was just; he abides by it, reverses it not. To have reversed it, was not to have judged the offenders, but himself; but having a mind to show men mercy, he provides for the expiation of sin, and salving the rights of his government, another way—by *transferring* guilt and the curse, not *nulling* them.

V. Whereupon, we may also see what made atonement for sin so fundamental to a design of grace; the magnifying the divine law; (Isa. xlii. 41.) the asserting the equity and righteousness of the supreme government; not, as some odiously suggest, the gratifying of what, with us, is wont to go for a private appetite of revenge, from which the support of the honour and the dignity of the government is most remote: yea, it were horrid to suppose that any such thing can have place with the blessed God, which is one of the most odious things in the disposition of lapsed, degenerate man—an aptness to take complacency in the pains and anguish of such as have offended us; unto which purpose, how feelingly would a malicious, ill-minded man, oftentimes utter the sense of his heart, and say, O the sweetness of revenge! So black a thought of God will be most remote from every pious breast, or that is capable of savouring real goodness. Nor doth any precept within the whole compass of that revelation which he hath given us, express more fully, at once, both our duty and his own nature, than that of loving our enemies, or of forgiving men their trespasses. There is, perhaps, somewhere (but O how rarely?) to be found among men, that benign, generous temper of mind, as when an enemy is perfectly within one's power, to be able to take a real solace in showing mercy; when he is in a fearful, trembling expectation, and hath even yielded himself a prey to revenge, to take pleasure in surprising him by acts of kindness and compassion: one that can avow the contrary sentiment to the spirit of the world, and to them who so emphatically say, How sweet is revenge! and can with greater *πάθος* oppose to it *that*, as the undisguised sense of his soul, O but how much sweeter is it to forgive! Than this, there is no where to be seen a more lively resemblance of God; a truer and more real part of His living image, who hath commanded us to love our enemies; if they hunger, to feed them; to bless them that curse us; to pray for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us; that we may be his children, that we may show ourselves born of him, and to have received from him a new, even a divine, nature, one truly agreeable to and resembling his own; and unto him, the acts and operations that naturally proceed from this temper of spirit, are more grateful and savoury than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. So are we to frame our conceptions of the ever blessed God, if either we will take the rationally coherent and self-consistent idea of an absolutely perfect Being, or his own frequent affirmations who best understands his own nature, or the course of his actual dispensations towards a sinful world, for our measure of him.

VI. But is it a difficulty to us to reconcile with all this such frequent expressions in the sacred volume, as import a steady purpose that all the sins of men shall be answered with an exactly proportionable measure of punishment? That every transgression shall have a just recompense of reward? That death is the stated wages of sin! Or do we find ourselves more perplexed how to understand, consistently with such declarations of his merciful nature, those passages which sometimes also occur, that seem to intimate a complacential vindictiveness, and delight taken in punishing—the Lord is "jealous, the Lord revengeth:" yea, he seems to appropriate it as peculiar to himself—"Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it:" "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil." We meet with passages that speak of his laying up sin, sealing it among his treasures; of his waiting for a day of recompenses; of his whetting his glittering sword, his making his bow ready, and preparing his arrows on the string; of his being refreshed by acts of vengeance, his satiating of his fury, and causing it hereupon to rest, as having highly pleased and satisfied himself therewith. If any thing alien to the Divine nature, and disagreeable to the other so amiable discoveries of it, be thought imported in such expressions, let it only be considered, first, what must be allowed to be their import; and next, how well so much will agree with a right conception of God.

For the former, it is not necessary that such expressions be understood to intend more, and it seems necessary they be not understood to import less, than a constant, calm, dispassionate, complacential will, so far to punish sin as shall be necessary to the ends of his government. That they do import a will to punish, is evident; for they are manifest expression of anger, whereof we can say nothing more gentle, than that it is a will to punish. It cannot signify punishment, without that will; for though the word anger, or wrath, be sometimes used in Scripture for the punishment itself, yet even then that will is supposed; otherwise what is said to be punishment, were an unintended accident; and then how were it a punishment? Much less can it signify only God's declaration of his will to punish, excluding that will itself; for then what is it a declaration of? Or what doth it declare? Surely we will acknowledge it a true declaration; then it cannot be the declaration of nothing, but must have somewhat in God correspondent to it; *viz.* the will which it declares. Which being plain, that it be also a dispassionate will, accompanied with nothing of perturbation; that it be a constant will, in reference to all such occasions, wherein the sacredness of the divine government, violated, requires such reparation; and without any change, (other than what we may conceive imported in the different aspects of the same object, conceived as future, present, or past, and beheld before, with purpose, afterwards with continual approbation,) the most acknowledged perfection on the divine nature doth manifestly not admit only, but require. For that such a calm, sedate, steady, fixed temper of mind in a magistrate is an excellency, even common reason apprehends: therefore is it said, by a noted pagan, that judges ought to be *legum similes—like the laws themselves;* which are moved by no passion, yet inflexible: and then where can such an excellency have place in highest perfection, but in the blessed God himself? Yea, and that it be also a complacential will, as some of the expressions above recited seem to import, may very well be admitted, if we right conceive and state in our own minds the thing willed by it; *i. e.* the preserving the honour and dignity of the supreme government. Indeed, simply to take pleasure in the pain and misery of another, is so odd and unnatural a disaffection, that it is strange how it can have place any where;

and where it seems to have place among men, though too often it really hath so in more monstrously vicious tempers, yet, with many others, (who herein are sufficiently blameable also,) the matter may, perhaps, be somewhat mistaken; pleasure may possibly not be taken in the afflicted person's mere suffering, for itself, but only as it is an argument or evidence of the other's superiority, wherein he prides himself, especially if he before misdoubted his own power, and that there hath been a dispute about it, which is now only thus decided. In this case a secret joy may arise unto the prevailing party, upon his being delivered from an afflicting fear of being so used himself; and whereas he took it for a disparagement that the other did so far lessen and diminish him in his own thoughts, as to suppose or hope he should prove the stronger; a pleasure is now taken in letting him feel and have so sensible a demonstration of his error.

VII. But that wherewith we must suppose the blessed God to be pleased, in the matter of punishing, is the congruity of the thing itself, that the sacred rights of his government over the world be vindicated; and that it be understood how ill his nature can comport with any thing that is impure: and what is in itself so highly congruous, cannot but be the matter of his delectation. He takes eternal pleasure in the reasonableness and fitness of his own determinations and actions, and rejoices in the works of his own hands, as agreeing with the apt, eternal schemes and models which he hath conceived in his most wise and all-comprehending mind: so that though he desireth not the death of sinners, and hath no delight in the sufferings of his afflicted creatures, which his immense goodness rather inclines him to behold with compassion, yet the true ends of punishment are so much a greater good than their ease, and exemption from the suffering they had deserved, that they must rather be chosen, and cannot be eligible for any reason, but for which also they are to be delighted in; *i. e.* a real goodness, and conducibleness to a valuable end, inherent in them. Upon which account, the just execution of the Divine pleasure in the punishment of insolent offenders is sometimes spoken of under the notion of a solemn festival, a season of joy, yea even of a sacrifice, as having a fragrancy or delectable savour in it. But whereas some of the above-mentioned expressions do seem to intimate a delight in satisfying a furious, vindictive appetite; we are to consider, that what is spoken for the warning and terror of stupid besotted men, was necessarily to be spoken with some accommodation to their dull apprehension of the things which they yet see and feel not. For which purpose the person is put on, sometimes, of an enraged, mighty man; the terror of which representation is more apprehensible to vulgar minds, than the calm, deliberate proceedings of magistratical justice; it being many times more requisite, that expressions be rather suited to the person spoken to, though they somewhat less exactly square with the thing itself intended to be spoken.

VIII. Wherefore this being all that we have any reason to understand imported in such texts of Scripture as we before mentioned, viz. a calm and constant will of preserving the divine government from contempt, by a due punishment of such as do offer injurious affronts to it; and that takes pleasure in itself, or is satisfied with the congruity and fitness of its own determination; what can there be in this unworthy of God? what that disagrees with his other perfections? or that the notion of a Being, every way perfect, doth not exact and claim as necessarily belonging to it? For to cut off this from it, were certainly a very great maim to the notion of such a Being, if we consider it as invested with the right and office of supreme rector, or ruler of the world. For if you frame such an idea of a prince as should exclude a disposition to punish offenders, who would not presently observe in it an intolerable defect? Suppose Xenophon to have given this character of his Cyrus—That he was a person of so sweet a nature, that he permitted every one to do what was good in his own eyes; if any one put indignities upon him, he took no offence at it; he dispensed favours alike to all; even they that despised his authority, invaded his rights, attempted the subversion of his government, with the disturbance and confusion of all that lived under it, had equal countenance and kindness from him, as they that were most observant of his laws, and faithful to his interest; and it were as safe for any one to be his sworn enemy, as his most loyal and devoted subject:—who would take this for a commendation, or think such a one fit to have swayed a sceptre? Can there be no such thing as goodness, without the exclusion and banishment of wisdom, righteousness, and truth? Yea, it is plain they not only consist with it, but that it is a manifest inconsistency it should be without them. The several virtues of a well-instructed mind, as they all concur to make up one entire frame, so they do each of them cast a mutual lustre upon one another; much more is it so with the several excellences of the Divine Being. But how much too low are our highest and most raised thoughts of the Supreme Majesty! How do we falter when we most earnestly strive to speak and think most worthily of God, and suitably to his excellent greatness!

CHAPTER VII.

The notion of justice in the divine government, and in a human, not altogether the same. A thing said to be just, in a negative and a positive sense. The question discussed, Whether God's will to punish sin were, antecedently to his legal constitution to that purpose, just, not only in the former sense, but in the latter also? *Volenti non fit injuria*, as to man needs limitation. Holy Scripture speaks of God's punishing sin, not merely as a concomitant of justice, but an effect. His will to punish it must proceed from justice; not, primarily, according to the common notion of justice, as it respects the rights of another: therefore another notion of it (as to him) to be sought. God's rights so unalienable, that he cannot quit them to his own wrong as man can. Secondarily, according to the other notion, his right to punish depends not on his legal constitution, but that on it. That he cannot altogether quit it, no detraction from him. Justice, in a larger notion, doth further oblige to insist upon recompense: viz. universal justice, as especially it comprehends his *holiness*, his *wisdom*. The fitness of God's methods herein not to be only contemplated by men, but angels. In what sense punishments to be reckoned debts. This matter summed up.

I. We must also acknowledge a very vast difference between God's government over his intelligent creatures, and that of a secular prince over his subjects; and are thereupon to inquire, whether the notion of justice, as it is applied to the one government and the other, can be the same. A secular ruler is set up and established purposely for the good of the community, as the more principal end of his constitution. The people are not formed for him, but he for them; whence the administration of justice is a public and common right, wherewith he is intrusted by the Supreme Ruler for them, in order to the common good. Well, therefore, may his decrees and edicts go in this form, and have this for their chief scope and end: *Ne quid detrimenti respublica capiat.* And hence the neglect duly and seasonably to animadvert upon offenders, is a violation of the public justice committed to his management, for which he is accountable to him that intrusted him: it is a wrong done to the community, of whose rights he is the appointed guardian. And whereas such offences as more directly strike at his crown, and dignity, as treason or rebellion, seem more principally levelled against himself and his own rights, so is the legal punishment of them to be more at his arbitrement, whether to inflict or not inflict it; because it may seem in any one's power to dispense with or recede from his own rights. Yet indeed if the matter be more narrowly scanned, the relaxation of these should be, in reason, less in his power than of any other; because they more directly affront that Supreme Ruler whom he represents, and threaten the dissolution of the government, which is the principal civil good of the whole community, and the benefits whereof are their highest right. If violence be done to a private subject, the impunity of the offender would be a public wrong; because it remotely tends, by the badness of the example, to the hurt of the whole community. But in this case, without any such circulation, all the rights of the community are immediately struck at together, in their central knot and juncture; wherefore here, most of all, the prince is debtor to the community. But now, the great Lord and Ruler of the world owes his own creatures nothing: he is, by his goodness, inclined to take care of them, and preserve common order among them; but not owing them any thing, (except by his own word he makes himself a debtor,) he cannot be said to

wrong the community, by not providing that punishments be inflicted upon delinquents, according to demerit. What he can be understood, originally, to owe herein, he owes only to himself; whence also the notion of justice which we herein attribute to him, seems very different from that which belongs to human governments; which, though it allows not the disposal of another's right, to his prejudice, forbids not the remitting of one's own.

II. Whereas, therefore, a thing may be said *just*, in a two-fold sense; either *negative*, as it is that which justice does not disapprove, or *positive*, as that whereto also justice doth oblige: it is hereupon a question of great moment, Whether God's will to punish sinners, antecedent to his legal constitution to that purpose, were just in the former sense only, or also in the latter? Can we say, God had been unjust, in not so determining? Whose rights had he violated in willing otherwise? Not man's, to whom he did owe nothing. Will we say, His own? But *volenti non fit injuria*—which maxim doth not set us at liberty absolutely to do whatsoever we will with ourselves, and what is ours; because of others, whose rights are complicated with ours, the chief Ruler and Lord of all especially, who hath principal interest in us, and all that we have. Yet it holds even as to us: for though we may injure others, God especially, by an undue disposition of our properties, which he intrusts us with; (not for ourselves only, but for himself chiefly, and for other men, whom therefore, in the second place, we may wrong, by disabling ourselves to do them that good which we ought;) and though we may also prejudice ourselves, yet, ourselves apart, we cannot be said so far to wrong, by our own consent, as to be able to resume our right; because, by that consent, (supposing it imprudent, or any way undue,) we have quitted and even forfeited the right, which, for ourselves, we had. But as to God, who has no superior, nor owes any thing to any one, whom can he be thought to wrong, by departing from any of his own rights?

Inasmuch therefore as justice, in the common and most general notion of it, is ever wont to be reckoned conversant about ἀλλότριον ἀγαθον—*the good of others*, even that whereto they have a right; it seems not intelligible, how justice, according to this usual notion of it, could primarily oblige God to inflict deserved punishment upon transgressors, if he had not settled a legal constitution to this purpose, and declared that should be the measure of his proceedings herein; both because it is so little conceivable how the punishments of the other state (which we are chiefly to consider) can be a good to them who do not suffer them, (as we are sure they can be none to them that do,) and also that it is not to be understood how, if they were, they could otherwise have any right thereto, than by that constitution by which (as, before, God's dominion was that of an absolute, sovereign Lord) he now undertakes the part of a governor, ruling according to known and established laws.

III. Yet very plain it is, that for the actual infliction of such punishments, holy Scripture speaks of it not merely as a concomitant of justice, or as that which may consist with it, but as an effect; which the ἀνταπόδοσις, mentioned by the apostle, plainly signifies, (2 Thess. i. 9.) when he tells us it is with God *a righteous thing*,—δίκαιον (that must be not only what justice doth admit, but exact,) *to recompense*—ἀνταποδοῦναι, tribulation to the troublers of his people, &c. And when we are told, (Rom. ii. 6.) that God *will render* (or recompense—ἀποδώσει) to every one according to his works, even in the day above mentioned, (v. 5.) which is called, ἡμέρα ὀργῆς, καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας,—*the day of wrath, and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*; and that 'tis said, the world was to become ὑπόδικος—*guilty*, (we read,) *liable to be impleaded* before God, Rom. iii. 19. And again, (*ch.* xii. 19.) that ἐκδίκησις—*vengeance* is said to belong to him, and he will repay; with many more passages of the like import.

But to carry the matter higher: it being evident it is that which justice doth require, to punish sin, according to such a constitution once made; yet all this while, how the constitution was any necessary effect of justice, appears not. Nor are we helped by the common notion of justice herein, and are therefore cast upon the inquiry, Whether any other notion of justice be fitly assignable, according whereto it may be understood to have required the making that constitution itself?

IV. It is here to be considered, whence, or from what fountain, any man, or community of men, come to have right to any thing. It cannot be, but that the Fountain of all being must be the Fountain of all rights. From whence things, absolutely considered, descend, all the relations that result must also descend. There can therefore be no pretence of right to any thing, among creatures, but from God; He, as the sovereign Proprietor and Lord of all, settles such and such rights in creatures, which they hold and retain dependently on him, upon terms and according to rules which he hath prescribed; so as that by transgression men may forfeit such rights, or by consent and mutual contracts transfer them to one another. Whereupon they have no unalienable rights, none whereof they may not be divested, either by their default or consent; sometimes by both together, as by a faulty consent. And indeed if it be by the former, it must be by the latter; because no man is supposed to commit a fault against his will. But it may be by the latter without the former, as none can doubt but one may innocently divest himself, in many cases, of his own present right; otherwise, there could be no such thing in the world as either gift or sale. And hence it comes to pass, that the justice which is inherent in any man, comes to be conversant about the rights of another, not his own; so far as to oblige him not to intrench upon the rights of another, while yet it forbids him not to dispose of his own, as they are merely his. And there is no such thing as justice towards a man's self, so inhibiting him, as (though perhaps such an act ought not to have been done) to make his act in that kind invalid, when he hath done it, only because he hath thereby wronged himself; or which he can, afterwards, allege against his own act or deed. For he hath no other rights in any thing, than what are derived, borrowed, dependent on the Supreme Proprietor, measurable by his rules, by which they are not unalienable; yea, justice obliges, if he swear to his own hurt, not to change, Ps. xv.

V. But now, with the Supreme Proprietor, there cannot but be unalienable rights, inseparably and everlastingly inherent in him: for it cannot be, but that He that is the Fountain of all rights, must have them primarily and originally in himself; and can no more so quit them, as to make the creature absolute and independent, than he can make the creature God. Wherefore, though with man there can be no such thing as justice towards one's self, disenabling him to forego his own rights, the case cannot but be quite otherwise as to God, and for the same reason for which it cannot agree to man; because man hath none but borrowed and alienable rights, which he can forego to his own prejudice, and God hath none that he can so part with. Hereupon, therefore, God did owe it to himself, *primarily*, as the absolute Sovereign and Lord of all, not to suffer indignities to be offered to him, without animadverting upon them, and therefore to determine he would do so.

VI. But withal, he having undertaken the part of a legal Governor, and to rule by established laws, which should be the stated measures of sin and duty, of punishments and rewards; hereby common order was to be preserved in the governed community: and having published his constitution in his word, and otherwise sufficiently to that purpose, he hath hereby, *secondarily*, made himself Debtor to the community, and by his constitution given men some right to the benefit of that order which was to be maintained among them by these means: which benefit they do here, in this present state, actually partake in some measure; and might in a greater measure, if they were more governable, or would regard and be awed more by the laws (with their sanctions) of their great and rightful Ruler and Lord. Wherefore, though men have no benefit by the punishments of the future state, they have, or might have, by the feared commination of them, which, neglected, made the actual infliction of them necessary. Nor had they only the probable benefit of present order hereby, but of a future well-being; it being the design of that, as of all the comminations of wise and good rulers, to prevent the desert of the threatened punishment, and consequently the punishment itself. And though men could have no right

to any such benefit, before the constitution; yet it is not inconceivable, that by it they might have some; *viz.* an inferior and secondary right.

VII. Wherefore the blessed God, by making the legal constitution, that he will have stand as the measure of his government, hath not added to his own right to govern and punish as there is cause; for it was natural, and needed nothing to support it. The constitution rather limits than causes his right, which depends not on it, but gives rise to it rather. He gives assurance, by it, of his equal dealing, and that he will not lay upon man more than is right, that he should enter into judgment with God, Job xxxiv. 12, 23. And whereas he hath been pleased to publish his constitution, in the form of a covenant, variously attempered to the different states of men, nothing accrues to him by their stipulating with him thereupon. He is their Governor, as he is their Maker; not at their choice, which in propriety the case admits not, there being no competitor that pretends against him; but is only a loyal, dutiful consent, or recognising his former right. They that consent to it, do therefore more deeply oblige themselves to their own duty, and entitle themselves to his covenanted favours; but can entitle him to nothing, for their all was his before: his contract shows his condescension, not defective title. And this his antecedent, original right, that peculiar excellency of his nature, his justice to himself inviolably preserves, as the faithful guardian of all his sacred rights. So that when he undertakes the part of a legal Governor, it indispensably necessitates his doing whatsoever is requisite for supporting the honour and dignity of his government; and can permit nothing that shall detract from it, or render it less august and awful.

Yet need we not here over scrupulously defend the common notion of justice, in the utmost strictness of it, that makes it conversant only about another's right, and seems therefore to imply that a man can owe nothing to himself. That love to others, which comprehends all our duty to them, is to be measured by love to ourselves, which seems equally comprehensive of duty which we are supposed to owe to ourselves. Nor shall we dispute whether in no sense one can be both creditor and debtor; or whether insobriety be not properly unrighteousness, and sobriety justice, even towards oneself; subordination to God being still preserved, under whom, and for whom, only we can owe any thing to ourselves or others. Only supposing, among men, such a thing as self-justice, it is with them a weaker and more debile principle, that may betray and lose their rights, which then no justice can reclaim. Whereas, with God, it is, as all other excellencies are, in highest perfection, and hath always the force with him of an eternal and immutable law.

VIII. And if any should imagine this to detract from the absoluteness of God's dominion and sovereignty, and set him in this respect beneath his own creatures, that whereas *they* can quit their rights, it should be supposed *he* cannot forego his; 'tis answered, It hath not been said, that God can forego none of his own rights; it is plain he doth when having the right to punish a sinner, he by pardon confers upon him right to impunity: but he cannot do it to the prejudice and dishonour of his glorious excellences, and the dignity of his government. And therefore, if some preparation were requisite to his doing it, consistently with the due honour and reputation thereof, justice towards himself required he should insist upon it; which is no more a detraction from his absoluteness, than that he cannot lie, or do any thing unworthy of himself. He is so *absolute*, that he can do whatever he pleases; but so *just*, that he cannot be pleased to do an unrighteous thing.

IX. But besides that stricter notion of God's justice, as it is conversant about, and conservative of, his own rights; we may also consider it in a larger and more comprehensive notion, as it includes his several moral attributes and excellences, and answers to that which among men is called *universal justice*, and reckoned to contain in it all virtues.[a] For so taken, it comprehends his *holiness*, and perfect detestation of all impurity, in respect whereof he cannot be perpetually inclined to animadvert with severity upon sin; both because of its irreconcilable contrariety to his holy nature, and the insolent affront which it therefore directly offers him; and because of the implicit, most injurious misrepresentation of him, which it contains in it, as if he were either kindly or more indifferently affected towards it: upon which accounts, we may well suppose him to esteem it necessary for him, both to constitute a rule for punishing it, and to punish it accordingly; that he may both truly *act* his own nature, and truly *represent* it.

X. And again, if we take the notion of his justice in this latitude, it will comprehend his governing *wisdom*; the part of which attribute it is, to determine and direct the doing whatsoever is fit to be determined and done; as it is the part of his righteousness (taken in the strictest sense) to resolve upon and execute whatever the rules of justice do require and call for. 'Tis the judge of decencies, or what is meet and becoming him, as the Lord and Ruler of the world, to do or not do. And a very reasonable account might be given of this matter, that we may renew and somewhat further insist on what was said above, chap. vi. s. 5, &c. There are many just laws made by human legislators, to the making whereof, though justice (in the strictest sense) did not rigidly oblige them, so that they had been unjust if they had not made them, yet this other principle, of equal importance to government, and which also doth not altogether refuse the name of justice, might require the making them, and would not be well comported with by omitting to make them.

Hereupon therefore if it should be inquired, Was it, antecedently to the making of this constitution, an indifferent thing with God, whether to determine sin should be punished, or not? I answer, even upon this ground, No; it was not indifferent, but most indispensably necessary. Any thing is with him necessary, as he is the Supreme Governor, that is upon a prudential account most fit and conducible to the ends of government. An antecedent necessity we might therefore assert, such as not only arises from his justice, most strictly taken, but his wisdom also; whose part it is to judge of congruities, as it is the part of strict justice to determine matters of right. Nor is it unfit to say, Wisdom is the chief principle exercised in making laws, justice in governing according to laws already made. I say, the *chief*; for justice hath that part in legislation too, which hath been assigned it, as wisdom hath also its part in the consequent administration. And what can be more necessary to the great God, than to do ever what is most becoming and worthy of himself? And what could have been so becoming of him, as to let it appear to the world how sacred the rights of his empire over it are? how horrid a thing the defection of a reasonable creature is, from the great Author and Lord of its life and being? how costly an expiation it did require? how solemn rights were to be performed? how great and awful transactions, that sin might become pardonable? What could so tend to exalt majesty, to magnify the reputation of his government, to possess his reasonable creatures with awful apprehensions, and make them dread to offend? In a prudent government, how great a thing is reason of state! Even where there is the greatest inclination imaginable to be in all things most strictly and unexceptionably just, yet is that the only care with prudent governors, that they may be able to approve the justice of their administrations? There are many things which, without transgressing particular rules of justice, might have been omitted, from which yet, upon mere reason of state, you can no more make them swerve one nee, than you can remove the earth from its centre, or change the ordinances of day and night: and whereas that hath place in all things that tend to the keeping up the reputation and grandeur of government, where can it claim to have place with equal right as here? Whereupon we may, with greatest assurance, assert, that in things which have this reference, 'tis equally impossible to the absolute perfection of the divine nature, that God should do an inept or unfit thing, as an unjust. And whereas his righteousness is the directive principle, in respect of equity or iniquity; so is his wisdom, of congruity and incongruity, decency and indecency; and that 'tis equally necessary to him to do what is most worthy of

[a] Ἓν δὲ δικαιοσυνῃ συλληβδὴν πας αρετ' εστι.

himself, and most becoming his excellent greatness, as what is most strictly just. Therefore that when his most transcendant greatness is represented in terms as high and great as could come under human conception, (Heb. ii. 10.) *He*, viz. *for whom are all things*, and *by whom are all things*; (and what could sound higher?) As such it is considered what was most becoming of him; and determined that it became Him, for and by whom all things were, since there was one (though so great a one) that had undertaken for sinners, to be the Prince or Prefect[b] over the great affair of their salvation, especially being to make them, of rebels, sons, and as such, bring them to glory, out of the meanest and most abject state; that he should not be made perfect, (not be duly initiated into his great office, or not be complete master of his design,) otherwise than by his own intervening suffering. Meaner persons might do as became their meaner condition; but He, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, must do as best became the most glorious greatness of Him, who is the First and the Last, the Author and End of all things?

XI. We are prone to confine our apprehensions of things to our own narrow sphere, that have reference also to another besides, and greater than ours. If God had no creatures but man, capable of government by laws, the case had been much other than it is; for considering that men have all been in one common case of apostacy and condemnation, they who should be restored to favour and a happy state, should have no reason to look strangely upon one another, whatsoever the way and terms were of their restitution, being all dealt with alike. But we are to design a larger field and scene for our thoughts, and to consider, that besides men, that shall be restored from a fallen and lapsed state, there are numberless myriads of pure and loyal spirits, that never fell, and with whom restored men are to make one entire, happy community, for ever. Now we are to consider what aspect the matter would have in their eyes, if not a single person, or two, but so vast a multitude, (and not guilty of some light, transient offence only, but of insolent, malicious enmity and rebellion against the divine government, propagated and transmitted from age to age, through all the successions of time,) should be brought in upon them, to partake in the dignities and blessedness of their state, without any reparation made of so great and continuing an injury! Though their perfect subjection in all things to the good pleasure of God would not allow them to be exceptious, and apt to censure his doings or determinations, yet also his most perfect wisdom and exact judgment, and knowledge of what is in itself most fit, could much less admit he should do any thing liable to be censured by his creatures, as less fit. And no doubt so large and capacious intellects may well be supposed to penetrate far into the reason and wisdom of his dispensations; and so not only to exercise submission, in an implicit acquiescence in the unseen and only believed fitness of them, but also to take an inexpressible complacency and satisfaction in what they manifestly discern thereof, and to be able to resolve their delectation in the ways and works of God into a higher cause and reason than the mere general belief that he doth all things well; *viz.* their immediate, delightful view of the congruity and fitness of what he does. When they behold the apostacy and revolt of the sons of men expiated not by one of themselves, but with whom the Divine Nature, in his own Son, was so intimately united, that the atonement made was both fit, as from them, and adequate, as to him: this they cannot but behold with complacential approbation and admiration; for, no doubt, he made creatures of such a capacity, with a design to gratify the understandings he gave them, by approving and recommending the exactness and accuracy of his methods thereto; otherwise, a far lower measure of intellectual ability, in these creatures, had answered the Creator's purpose as well. They certainly cannot but approve that way he hath taken, for itself; and do doubtless stoop down to look into it, not with less complacency than wonder; it being, in the congruity of it, as suitable to their bright and clear intellects, being revealed, as for the strange contrivance thereof it had been altogether above them, if it had not been revealed. They cannot, when they behold a full, glorious vindication of the offence and wrong done to their common Lord, and the dignity of his government, by his revolted creatures, untecedent to the reception of any of them into grace and favour, but highly admire the lovely comeliness and congruity of this whole dispensation, and express their pleasant resentments, by bearing a part with the redeemed society in such strains of praise, such admirations and applauses, as these: "Holy and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy judgments, thou King of nations and of saints!"

XII. Upon the whole, there appears sufficient reason to conclude, not only upon the account of justice more strictly taken, but also of congruity and fitness, or according to such a larger notion of justice as imports an inflexible propension to do what is fit and congruous to be done, it was indispensably necessary the holy God should, in order to his return to his temple among men, insist to have a recompense made for the wrong that was done him by the violation of it. Nor let this be understood to detract from, but add to, what hath been above discoursed of justice, taken in a most strict sense, and most appropriate to God, as it is, primarily and in the first place, conservative of his own most sacred rights; which must be, by consequence, vindictive of the violation of them: and this is the original justice, (as his are the original rights, and the fountain of all other,) and must have had place, though he had settled no express constitution of government. And also as, secondarily, it is conservative of the rights of the governed community, which, by the constitution, once settled, accrue to it.

Whereupon also it may be understood, in what sense punishments, passively taken, are to be accounted *debts*. And it is fitter to distinguish, and thereupon to explain, how they are or are not so, than at random to deny they are so at all, when our Lord hath taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts;" and when it is so plain in itself, that he who by delinquency hath forfeited his life, is most truly said to owe it to justice. Yea, and when, though the *creditor pœnæ* is said not to be so easily assignable, yet no doubt at all is made concerning the debtor; for how absurdly should he be said to be a debtor, that owes no debt! Therefore punishments are not of the nature of those debts, that according to the rules of communicative justice, arise by contract between man and man; and which, as they arise by consent between the two covenanting parties, may as well cease by consent. But nothing hinders, but they may be such debts as are to be estimated by the distributive justice of rulers, whereof we must either say, that of some, justice doth oblige human and secular rulers to exact the punishment; or else, that magistratical justice would allow the remitting of all, and that no offences of any kind be ever at all punished. But if the justice of any secular rulers oblige them to punish some offenders, then most of all that of the supreme and most absolute Ruler and Lord of all, whose rights are natural, and depend not on our consent, or any contract with us, no more than our consent was previous to our coming into being, or our becoming his creatures; and whose justice must be more concerned to protect and vindicate his rights, than that of any earthly governor can be to preserve the rights of even the most considerable community: no community, nor all taken together, nor even the whole creation, being of any comparable value with the interest of the supreme and universal Ruler, himself alone; in respect of whom all nations are as the "drop of the bucket," &c. especially if we add, (though that be but of secondary consideration,) that the rights of the greatest, even the universal community of all mankind, are involved with his own, and that their common peace and order are to be preserved by punishments, even eternal ones, not as executed, but as threatened; which, as hath been said, made the execution necessary, where the terms and method of remission are not complied with.

And whereas it is reckoned difficult to assign the *creditor pœnæ*, the reason of that is not difficult to be assigned, if we consider what the true notion of a creditor is. And

[b] ἀρχηγὸν.

it is not taken *passively*, for him who is intrusted with another's rights, at least is not so to be limited; inasmuch as a man may be more properly creditor of what is his own than of what is another's; but *actively*, for one who trusts another. But the *debitor pœnæ* is not intrusted with any thing, but is only to be punished when he can be met with, and duly brought thereto; and therefore is not bound to offer himself to punishment, as another debtor is to pay what he owes; who is to be active in the solution; the delinquent, passive only: whence *dare pœnas* is rightly interpreted to *suffer punishment*. And that this is all he is obliged to, is plain, if we consider that it is not the precept of the law that in this case obliges him, which only obliges to the doing of duty, but the annexed commination, which can only oblige to undergo punishment.

Creditor indeed is chosen as a fit word to express the correlative unto *debitor pœnæ*; but by it we are to understand no more than only the object of this solution: so in human governments, the *governor* is improperly, *viz.* as he is intrusted with the rights of the community. But in the divine government, God himself, originally and radically, as he is Maker and Lord of all; immediately and formally, as he is the supreme Ruler, and such a one therefore as governs principally, *suo jure*, and for himself, not for others. For he cannot but be his own supreme end; that he also doth undertake the care of the concernments and good of others, is of mere vouchsafement and condescension, not from any antecedent obligation so to do.

The sum of all therefore is, that whether we take Divine justice in the larger sense, as it comprehends all the moral excellences that relate to the government of God over man, especially his wisdom and his holiness, or whether we take it in a stricter sense, for a principle inclining him to maintain and vindicate the rights and dignity of his government, it did direct as well his making a constitution for the punishing of affronts and offences committed against it, as to proceed accordiug to it, so as not to remit such injuries to the offender without most sufficient recompense.

CHAPTER VIII.

The first head thus far insisted on, that a sufficient recompense was necessary: the second succeeds, that no less was sufficient than that made by Emmanuel. Dishonour to less. What the divine estimate in this matter was, his own word shows. His love to offenders otherwise under restraint. Proposed to consideration. 1. How great things were to be remitted, the sins of all times, and ages. Not from insufficiency unapplicable to all sinners. Remission to be granted, by a universal law. 2. How great to be vouchsafed. Which follows.

I. 2. AND so much being clear, there is less need to insist copiously in showing what comes next to be considered; that[a] no recompense could be sufficient for expiating the wrong done by the violation of God's temple among men, and the laying its foundations anew, besides that which hath been made by the Son of God, Emmanuel, God with us: becoming himself first an original Temple, a Man, inhabited with all the fulness of God, and then made also a Sacrifice to the offended majesty and justice of Heaven, for those great and high purposes, the expiating the indignity of violating God's former temple, and the raising, forming, and beautifying it anew, in conformity to its present pattern and original; and then possessing, inhabiting, and restoring the Divine presence in it.

II. For as it hath been shown already, that this recompense could not but be full, and apt to answer these purposes; so it is in itself evident, that whatsoever should be tendered in the name of a recompence, ought to be *full*, and proportionable to the wrong done, and to the favours afterwards to be shown to the transgressors.

For it were manifestly more honourable and worthy of God not to have exacted any recompense at all, than to have accepted, in the name of a sacrifice, such as were unproportionable, and beneath the value of what was to be remitted and conferred. What had been lower must have been infinitely lower; let any thing be supposed less than God, and it falls immensely short of him. Such is the distance between created being and uncreated, that the former is as nothing to the latter; and therefore, bring the honour and majesty of the Deity to any thing less than an equal value, and you bring it to nothing. And this had been quite to lose the design of insisting upon a recompense; it had been to make the majesty of Heaven cheap, and depreciate the dignity of the divine government, instead of rendering it august and great. Therefore the whole constitution of Emmanuel, his undertaking, performances, and acquisitions, appear to have been not only apt, suitable, and sufficient to the intended purposes, (which was first proposed to be shown,) but also requisite and necessary thereto.

III. And for the evincing hereof, let us apply our minds to meditate silently and intently awhile on those words of our Lord, (John x. 17.) "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life:" and let us consider them with that reverence which we cannot but conceive due to words we esteem most sacred and divine; *i. e.* that they could not be rashly or lightly spoken: whereupon, let us bethink ourselves, Have those words a meaning? *This*, our awful regard to the venerable greatness of Him that spoke them, cannot suffer us to doubt. And if they mean any thing, it is impossible they should not mean somewhat most profound and great; somewhat that implies a reference to a peculiar θεωρετὸν, *i. e.* a *divine decorum*, that as an eternal law perpetually conducts all the propensions and determinations of God's most perfect will, that could by no means suffer any violation: what was most becoming of God; *viz.* what might best "become him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things;" (Heb. ii. 10.) worthy of the great, all-comprehending, central, original Being, from whence all things sprang, and wherein all terminate. Here is some gradual retection (if we consider what immediately follows, "in bringing many sons to glory," &c.) of the veiled *arcana* of the Divine Being: if we may, on so fit occasion, allude to the inscription in the Egyptian temple, elsewhere mentioned in this discourse—"I am all that was, and is, and shall be, and who is he that shall draw aside my veil?" Here is, in some part, a withdrawing of that sacred veil, by Him to whom by prerogative it belonged, and of whom it is said, "No man hath seen God at any time, but the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. Here is some disclosure of the mystery of God, of the Father, (Col. ii. 2.) in whom the Divine nature was primarily, and as in that first fountain; and of Christ, the mystery of the Mediator, of whom Christ was the distinguishing name. The agreement, hitherto inconceivable and most mysterious, of the absolute purity and perfection of the Divine nature, with the admirable mercifulness of the constitution of Emmanuel, of God and man united in one, in order to the reconciliation of the holy, blessed God, with unholy, miserable man. How was it to be brought about, in a way becoming him for whom and by whom all things were, so great, so august a Majesty! that He should admit that so despicable and rebellious a race should not only be saved, but be made sons? This could never be, though his immense and boundless love most strongly inclined him to it, but by their having one of highest dignity, his own Son, set as a Prince or Prefect over the whole affair of their salvation; nor by him but upon his own intervening suffering! This was according to fixed rule indispensably necessary; *i. e.* by the inviolable maxims of the Divine government. But because, through the inconceivable riches of his own goodness, this was a thing he was most propense unto, and intent upon; yet because the death of his own Son in their stead could neither be meritorious nor just, without his own free consent, therefore, says our Lord, doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life—What conceivable reason can there be of this connexion, ("He therefore loves me, because I lay down my life,") without the concurrence of these two things to be considered conjunctly? A most intense, vehement love to a perishing world. An inflexible regard to the eternal, immutable measures of right and wrong, fit and unfit, decent and indecent, that had their fixed, everlasting seat in the mind of God.

a Which is the second head proposed to be discoursed, ch. vi. s. 2.

IV. The former made the *end* necessary, the preventing the total, eternal ruin of a lost world; the latter made the Son of God's *death*, and his *own consent* thereto, the necessary means to this end. The former, *viz.* the *end*, was not otherwise necessary than upon supposition; it was not so absolutely necessary, that by any means, right or wrong, fit or unfit, such a ruin (even most deserved) must be prevented. But it was so far necessary, as that if, by any rightful and decorous means, this ruin could be prevented as to many, and a contrary blessed state of perpetual life be attained by them, this must be effected and brought about for them. Not, 'tis true, for all offenders, but as many as the like eternal, indispensable means and measures of equal and unequal, fit and unfit, capable and incapable, should not exclude.

All this we have in that most admirable text of Scripture, (John iii. 16.) "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." *So loved!* The matter is signified in such a way, as to leave all men amazed! and by their astonishment to supply their most defective conception of so stupendous a love. The *world* is an indefinite term, that contains the special and the afterwards specified object of this love; not a single person, but a whole race of intelligent creatures, a world inhabited by such, that were not to be left, and finally all swallowed up together in one common ruin; that upon this account he gave his only-begotten Son to *death*, as the event and known design showed. And how inconceivable must his love be to his only-begotten Son! "The Brightness of his glory, the express Image of his person!" always his delight! Yet rather than all this world should be lost for ever, He is thus given up! "That whosoever believe on him, should not perish," &c. which expresses the certain, specified, declared object of this love: leaving *them* certainly excluded, who, after sufficient proposal, refuse their homage to the throne of Emmanuel; choose rather their forlorn souls should be for ever forsaken of the Divine presence, than unite with him, and surrender themselves to him, by whom alone they might be refitted, animated again, and inhabited as his living temples. Their exclusion is necessary, by such measures as those, by which such means were necessary to the salvation and blessedness of the others. But who can doubt hereupon, but that this course was indispensably necessary to this end? Especially if (reviewing that first-mentioned text) we consider, that our Lord represents his laying down his life as an unexpressible additional endearment of him to the Father: *q. d.* "O thou Son of my delights, thou hast now set my love to lost souls at liberty, that hath been ever pregnant with great and godlike designs towards them, and that must otherwise have been under perpetual restraint:" which is most evidently implied.

V. But it may be said, Could the love of God be under restraint? And I say no, it could not; therefore, to the all-comprehending Mind, where ends and means lie connected together under one permaneat, eternal view, this course presented itself, as peculiarly accommodate to this end; and was therefore eternally determined by easy concert between the Father and the Son, not to remedy, but prevent any such restraint. Yet it may be further urged, Cannot the absoluteness and omnipotency of a God enable him to satisfy his own propensions, if it were to save never so many thousand worlds of offending creatures, without taking such a circuit as this? It was once said to a human mortal king, that had about him but a thin shadow of sovereignty, Dost thou now govern Israel, and not make thy will any way take place? Much more might it here be said, Dost thou govern the world? Art thou not God? Yes! and may freely say, I can the less, for that I am God, do what is not Godlike; *i. e.* can therefore the less break through established, eternal measures, and counteract myself. I must do as becomes Him, for whom and by whom are all things. Others may assume to themselves an imagined, unhallowed liberty of pursuing, at the next, their own inclinations; but it is beneath divine greatness to do so. Yet in this case (it may be further said) why did not love to his Son preponderate? Which our Lord himself in great part obviates by what is subjoined—"because I lay down my life." How? With a power and design to take it again, as *v.* 18. "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. *q. d.* This is a matter agreed, I am not to lie under a perpetual death; that could neither be grateful to my Father, nor is in itself possible. But as things are stated, I am prepared to endure the cross, and despise the shame, for the joy set before me; which joy will be everlastingly common to him and me, and to the whole redeemed community, according to their measure." But was all this unnecessary trifling? What serious man's reverence of Deity can let him endure to harbour so profane a thought? Therefore take we now the entire state of this matter, as it lies plainly in view before us, in these texts of Scripture. 1. Here is an unexpressible love of God to undone, lost sinners. 2. Here is a plain intimation that this love must have been under a suspension and a restraint, if God's own Son had not laid down his life for them. 3. It is as plainly signified, that the Son of God's laying down his life for them, was, in divine estimate, a sufficient expedient to prevent this restraint upon his love to sinners. 4. That this expedient was reckoned by the blessed God more eligible, than that his love to sinners should be under perpetual, everlasting restraint. 5. That it was only reckoned more eligible, as there was a conjunct consideration had of his laying it down, with a power and design of resuming and taking it again. 6. That therefore, as the eternal God had a most constant, unquestionable love to his only-begotten Son, his love to him hath a peculiar and most complacential exercise, on the account of his concurring with him upon this expedient; choosing rather to endure all the dolours of that "one hour, and power of darkness," that was to come upon him, than that a whole world of reasonable creatures, his own offspring, and bearing his own image, should all perish together everlastingly. But who now sees not that this was the determinate judgment of the great God, *viz.* that his gracious designs towards guilty creatures were not otherwise to be effected, than in this way? And yet, for the further clearing of this matter, taking Heb. x. 4. that the blood of the Lord Christ, and of bulls and goats, are put in direct opposition to each other; and hereupon, that it is said of the latter, "It is not possible it should take away sin;" what can that imply less, than that the former was necessary to the taking it away? Let us but appeal to ourselves, what else can it mean? Will we say, though sin could not be taken away by the blood of bulls and goats, it might by some nobler sacrifice of an intermediate value? But is not this manifestly precluded, and barred by the immediateness of the opposition? These two only are in competition, and it is said, not *this*, but *that*. Other sacrifices God would not; (Psal. xl. 6, 7.) then, saith our Lord, "Lo! I come." *These* are rejected, *this* is chosen; he taketh away the first, that he may establish the second, Heb. x. 9. When it is said, (Mic. vi. 6, 7.) not thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil; if one should say, Yea, but eleven thousand might serve; were not this trifling, not reasoning? Is it not plain all other were refusable, for the same reason?

I shall now somewhat enlarge (as was formerly designed) upon the two things already intimated under the foregoing head of Emmanuel's sufficiency, &c. as having acquired the two-fold power of *forgiving sin*, and *giving the Spirit*. And shall now show, further, the *necessity* of his engaging in this affair (the restoring of God's temple) with reference to both these things, requisite thereto.

And to this purpose, let it be considered—What was to be *remitted*, and what was to be *conferred*, by the procurement.

1. What was to be *remitted*. It was not the single trespass of one or a few delinquent persons, but the revolt and rebellion of a vast community; a universal hostility and enmity, continued and propagated through many successive agents, that was now, once for all, to be atoned for. It is hereupon to be considered—How great the offence was that must be remitted. The way and manner in which the grant was to be made of this remission.

1. How great was the offence to be remitted! A whole race and order of creatures had been in a conspiracy against their rightful Lord, to deface his temple, tear down his image, invade his rights, withhold and incapacitate them-

selves for his worship, substitute, instead of that, highest contempt, banish his presence, and as much as in them lay raze out his memorial, that he might be no more known, feared, or served upon earth! How horrid a prospect had the Lord from heaven, when, from the throne of his glory there, he beheld the state of things below! (Ps. xiv. 2, 3.) "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if any did understand, and seek after God; they are all gone back, none that does good, no not one." All were become such mischievous, wicked fools, as to say, with one consent, in their hearts,—No God! And though, it is true, this wickedness was not in event to be actually remitted to all, the case was to be so stated, that remission might be universally offered; and that it be left to lie upon men's own score if it were not accepted; and therefore, that a sacrifice must be offered up, of no less value than if every single transgressor was to have his actual, sealed pardon.

VI. For let it be considered what sort of transgressors are excluded the benefit of remission, on the account of that great Sacrifice that once for all was offered up; and we find it not difficult to apprehend other most important reasons why they are excluded; but no colour of a reason that it should be for want of sufficient value in this Sacrifice.

1. As for the *angels that fell*, though their case comes not directly under our present consideration, yet occasionally, and as (*à fortiori*) we may argue from it, some thoughts may usefully be employed about it. The Divine pleasure herein is indeed intimated, in the Son of God's not taking *their* nature, but *ours*; and his known measure of showing mercy is, that he will show mercy, because he will show mercy. Yet, whereas we find that the most sovereign act of grace, the predestinating of some to the adoption of children, is ascribed to the good pleasure, (Eph. i. 5.) the same act is ascribed also to the counsel of his will, *v.* 11. And when we see the apostle in that holy transport, (Rom. xi. 33.) crying out, in contemplation of distinguishing mercy, ὦ βάθος—*O the depth!* he doth not say of the *sovereign power*, but of the *wisdom and knowledge* of God; and admires the unsearchableness, not of his arbitrary determinations, but of his judgments and ways, or judicial proceedings towards them that believed, or believed not: (Ps. xxx. 31, 32.) implying he had reasons to himself, though past our finding out, of his different proceedings towards some, and others. And as for the angels that fell, and whom he thought fit not to spare, (2 Pet. ii. 4, 5. Jude 6.) he threw them into chains of darkness, resolving to deal with them, not upon terms of absolute sovereignty, but of justice, therefore reserving them to the judgment of the great day; not in the meantime affording them a second trial, in order to their recovery, as he hath to us, even of mere mercy; for no justice could oblige him to offer us new terms. Yet their case and ours so differed, that there are reasons obvious to view, and which must lie open to all, in the public, final judgment, why he might judge it fitter to design the objects of mercy among men, than the apostate angels. As,

1. That we must suppose them (*viz.* the angels) created, each of them, in *perfect maturity*, unto which we (our first parents exeepted) grow up gradually and by slow degrees. *They* had their intellectual ability fit for present exercise, when they first existed, and did all then at once co-exist; (as we generally reckon, having nothing to induce us to think otherwise;) *we* come into being successively, and exist *here* but in a suecession.

2. Whereas they therefore must be understood to have been originally under a sort of covenant of works, (as we were,) or were some way or other made to understand what, by the law of their creation, was their duty towards the Author of their beings, and what their expectations might be from him; we have no reason therefore to apprehend that they were treated with, in one common head of their own order, in whom they should stand or fall, as we were; our case not admitting it to be otherwise, because we were not co-existent with him. But we must conceive them to have been, every individual of them, personal covenanters, each one in his own person receiving the signification of their Maker's will; and if there were reason or need of solemn restipulation, each one in his own person as it were plighting his faith, and vowing his allegiance to the celestial crown and throne. They therefore, from a self-contracted malignity, rebelled with open eyes; and though an obligation by a common head were binding, theirs, by their own act and deed, must be more strongly binding, and their revolt more deeply and more heinously criminal.

3. The posterity of our apostate first parents have but a limited time, in this state of probation, wherein to understand the present altered state of things between them and their offended Lord: within which time, though he foresaw the malignity of very many would never be overcome by his goodness, in the ordinary methods wherein he reckoned it became him to discover and exercise it towards them, yet according to the course and law of nature he had now settled for this apostate sinful world, their course would soon be run out, and they would not have opportunity long to continue their rebellion, and obstruct his interest and designs on earth. And also, having all things ever present to his all-comprehending view, he foreknew and foredetermined that great numbers should become the captives of his grace, and that the love and blood of an Emmanuel should not be lost and thrown away upon them. He should make them "willing in the day of his power" to fall in with gracious intendments, and their Redeemer should see his seed, and the travail of his soul, and be satisfied therein: whereas he beheld the apostate spirits of that higher order fixed in enmity, not vincible by any ordinary methods. Nor was it to be expected he should exert (in this case) his absolute power, and act *ad ultimum*, as a natural agent doth, to its very uttermost. (Had he thought fit, he could as well have prevented their revolt.) Or that he should have appointed a Redeemer for their recovery, who were irrecoverable: their case at first being (probably) very parallel to theirs among men, who sin "that sin against the Holy Ghost." And as things lay in divine prospect, their malicious opposition to God's designs in this world was not bounded within the narrow limits of a short human life, their natures not being subject to a law of mortality, as it is with every sinner among men; but they were beheld as continually filling this world with mischiefs, with wickednesses and miseries, and counterworking all God's glorious and merciful designs in it; even every one of them, from his first apostacy, as long as the world shall last.

4. Man sinned at first, being seduced, tempted, and deceived by the devil. The devils, as being their own tempters, sin had in and from them its original and first rise in the creation of God. In all *agency*, whether of good or evil, much is wont to be attributed to *this*, Who was *first* in it? In point of *good*, the blessed God hath no competitor; he is the undoubted first Fountain of all good, and is therefore acknowledged the supreme Good. In point of *evil*, (*viz.* moral,) there is none prior to the devil, who is therefore eminently called *the evil, or wicked one*. And as the devils were first in sin, so they led us into it, by deceiving us; the malignity of it was therefore the greater on their parts, and proportionably the less on ours. The more knowing are the more deeply guilty, the deceiver than the deceived, and deserve the more stripes. 'Tis true that none can deserve mercy, for then it were justice, and not mercy; but though none can deserve to have mercy shown them, they may deserve not to have it. The more a ruler is above us, and the less he needs us, the less possible it is for us to oblige him, and the more possible to disoblige and offend him, and the more heinous will the offence be: therefore, though none can *claim* mercy, they may *forfeit* it; and will, by the deeper guilt, incur such a forfeiture, by how much the more and clearer the light and knowledge is against which they offend. And this we find to have been a measure with the blessed God, in the exercise of his mercy, even in some of the highest instances hereof that we meet with in holy Scripture; "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief," 1 Tim. i. Not that this could specify a more deserving object of mercy; for where there can be no desert at all, there can be no *more*, or *less*.

VII. But it represents the occasion and season of showing mercy more fitly, in the estimate of the Divine wisdom, which conducts the acts of sovereignty; and judges of

congruities, as justice doth of right and wrong. Where indeed, among the objects of mercy, there is an absolute parity, there (as to them) mere sovereignty determines; as it may be ordinarily, in God's electing among men the objects of his free favour. Where there is no objective reason of eligibility in one more than another, especially if there be such as would rather persuade the contrary way, wisdom hath no proper exercise. But occasions are of greater latitude, and comprehend all considerable circumstances and consequences; and many things lie open to the Divine eye, that are hid to ours.

But now, whereas we cannot doubt, that besides such considerations as occur to us, the blessed God saw superabundant ground of not making such provision for the recovery of fallen angels, as of lost men; we can have none, whereupon to imagine the former partake not of the benefit with the latter, for want of value in the sacrifice of Emmanuel. For when the blood of his cross is intimated to extend to all things both in heaven and earth; (Col. i. 20.) to diffuse an influence through the universe; to be the cement of the creation, in what part and for what time it shall continue, subordinately to the Creator's pleasure and purposes; and that by Him, who shed it even as such, all things are said to consist: and that besides his natural right, he hath acquired by the superabundant value of this sacrifice, (the odours whereof are spread through all worlds,) a universal dominion; and particularly, to be Head of all principalities and powers; to establish the faithful and loyal, to judge and punish the disloyal, over whom he so gloriously triumphed on the cross; (Col. ii. 15.) to have every knee bow to him, &c. (Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.) it cannot be, doubtless, but the value of the same sacrifice had sufficed to obtain a power as well as to govern and judge all, to establish and reward the good, to punish the bad; to have obtained that, upon terms, pardon and mercy might have reached down into the infernal regions, if they that inhabit them could upon other accounts have been thought a pardonable or tractable sort of delinquents. And if we cannot apprehend this great Sacrifice to want value even to make atonement for devils, we can as little think it should want value to save.

VIII. 2. *The impenitent and unbelieving among men, under the gospel;* and that it must therefore also be for some other reason, that such perish.

As, (1.) If there be any thing of reason in what hath been discoursed concerning the state of the lapsed angels, their continuance in wilful impenitency and infidelity partly *supposes*, partly *makes*, the state of things with them the same.

1. Partly *supposes* it so. For it implies they have been applied to and treated with personally, upon the terms of the second covenant; *i. e.* the covenant of God in Christ, as the apostate angels were upon the first. And if the guilt of the former apostates was so horridly great upon this account, the guilt of the latter must be proportionably so on the same account.

2. Partly *makes* it the same. For hereby, as they were violators first and immediately in their own persons of the *first* covenant, so are these of the *second*. For, generally, they that live under the gospel are professed covenanters; and if they were not, they could not but have become obliged to have been so, by the very proposal and tender thereof unto them; or, as soon as the mind of Him who made them, concerning this matter, was known. They were not obliged by their own consent, but they were obliged to it; and by an incomparably greater and deeper obligation; not by their *own* act and deed, but by *His* who gave them breath. What is their authority over themselves, compared with that of the Supreme Lawgiver? A mere borrowed subordinate thing, without and apart from him, without whom their being itself were mere nothing! An argument *ad hominem*, is convictive, in disputation, between one man and another; but how much more overpowering means of conviction will there be in the judgment of the great day! And the parity of cases between the angels that fell, and insolent sinners under the gospel, is intimated as monitory to the latter, in those texts of Scripture that speak of God's most just and terrible severity to the former; *viz.* the sin of both was apostacy, according to the different covenants or laws under which they stood. For as the one sort were apostates from God, so the others were from Christ, denying the Lord that bought them, 2 Pet. ii. 1. And again, "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ," Jude 4. Whereupon, this example of God's vengeance upon the angels that fell is subjoined in both places. Besides what was *common* to them with the apostate angels, there were some things *peculiar* to these wilful refusers of the grace of the gospel, and violaters of the gospel-covenant. As,

1. That the guilt of wilful sinners under the gospel admits of *this* aggravation above that of the rebelling angels, that they offend against the grace of the remedy, never offered to the other; treading underfoot the Son of God, profaning the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, as an unholy thing, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace, Heb. x. 29. And,

2. That the *offer itself*, made to them, carried in it a manifest signification of their (remote) claimable right to the benefits of the gospel-covenant, on supposition of their compliance with the terms of it, (unto which the fallen angels could have no pretence,) barred only by their non-acceptance or refusal, which appears in the general tenor of the gospel-covenant itself: "Ho, every one that thirsts" —"Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life freely"—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish."—And it is here to be noted, that a secret intention gives not a claimable right, but some overt-act or deed; and it must be claimable, before it ought to be claimed or accepted. This is the case then with the wilfully impenitent and rebellious under the gospel, that it may be truly said of them, "You might have had pardon and eternal life, if you had not rejected the kindest offers." It is not therefore want of value in this sacrifice, but their rejection, whence it is unavailable to them. As for them that could never have the gospel, or infants incapable of receiving it, we must consider the Holy Scriptures were written for those that could use them, not for those that could not; therefore to have inserted into them an account of God's methods of dispensation towards such, had only served to gratify the curious and unconcerned, not to instruct or benefit such as were concerned. And it well became hereupon the accurate wisdom of God, not herein to indulge the vanity and folly of man.

IX. 2. Now let it hereupon be considered, in what way was this to be done; not otherwise than by enacting and publishing a *universal law*, that whosoever should comply with such and such terms, expressed in that law, (as, for instance, repentance towards God, and faith in Jesus Christ,) should be actually and finally pardoned and saved. And this being now the plain state of the case, let any sober unprejudiced mind make a judgment of it, what this matter would come to, if there had not been a compensation made, as a foundation to this law, and the publication of it. They that exalt one Divine perfection, to the diminution of several others; that, for instance, so plead for the absoluteness and sovereignty of God's mercy, as not to adjust therewith the determinations of his wisdom, purity, righteousness, forget that they hereby make any satisfaction by a Redeemer unnecessary, (and by consequence make Christ, whom they cannot deny to have suffered and died, being innocent, to have died in vain,) nor do allow in their own thoughts its just weight to this state of the case,—that the method in which God was to exercise his pardoning mercy, was by publishing an edict for that purpose, that was to extend all the world over, and through all the successions of time. They know this is the course the wisdom of God hath pitched upon, and yet, taking the case as it is, would have this large, universal tenor of the gospel to proceed upon no foregoing compensation. The great God requires it should be proclaimed to all the world, "Ho, every one that thirsts, come to the waters"—"Whosoever believes shall not perish, but have life everlasting"—"If the wicked turn from all the sins he hath committed, he shall not die: all his transgressions shall not be mentioned"—"Repent, so your iniquities shall not be your ruin"—"Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—"Go preach the gospel to every creature; whoso-

ever believes shall be saved." This is the known tenor of the gospel, directed without limitation to all the ends of the earth; "Look to me, and be saved; all sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men." That gospel which determines whosoever believes shall be saved, is directed to be preached to all nations. He did first, by his angels from heaven, indefinitely proclaim, "Peace on earth, and good-will towards men:" and pursuant hereto was the commission given by our ascending Lord to his apostles and ministers that should succeed to the end of the world. Now suppose that without reference to, or mention any where made of, this compensation to the justice of God, there must be an offer made of such mercy, not to present delinquents only, but to all, in all future times and ages!

X. With what methods of government would such a course as this agree? I the rather insist upon this, both as apprehending it to have its own great weight, and that perhaps it hath escaped the consideration of the most, in treating of this important subject; yet, what is more obvious? It is one thing for a prince, by a private act of grace, to pardon a particular person that hath offended him without insisting upon any recompense; another thing to do it to a multitude, not only that had now transgressed, but that should do so in any future time. Lighter minds may perhaps at first sight reckon this would only so much the more magnify the mercy of God above that of man, "whose ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts." And so indeed doth the way he hath taken for the pardoning of sin infinitely exceed all human thought, Isa. lv. 6, 7, 8. But we must take heed of being so inconsiderately officious, as to prescribe him ways of exalting one attribute, to the depressing of another; and so to set him above men in one respect, as to throw him in another below himself, yea, and below men too: *i. e.* not more to set him above them in point of mercy, than beneath them in point of governing wisdom and righteousness. And if any would be so insolent to prescribe to him, they might have thought the inconvenience of such a universal edict might have been avoided, by his sending an angel, or affording some particular revelation, to every man he would have turn to him, and repent. But were it dutiful so to correct his way of dispensation? And consider how this way he hath chosen would square with the ordinary measures of government, without the foundation laid which we are asserting. That prince would certainly never be so much magnified for his clemency and mercy, as he would be despised by all the world for most remarkable defects of government, that should not only pardon whosoever of his subjects had offended him, upon their being sorry for it, but go about to provide a law that should obtain in his dominions, through all after-time, that whosoever should offend against the government, with whatsoever insolency, malignity, and frequency, if they repented, they should never be punished, but be taken forthwith into highest favour. Admit that it had been congruous to the wisdom and righteousness of God, as well as his goodness, to have pardoned a particular sinner, upon repentance, without satisfaction; yet nothing could have been more apparently unbecoming him, than to settle a universal law, for all future time, to that purpose; that let as many as would in any age, to the world's end, affront him never so highly, invade his rights, trample his authority, tear the constitution of his government, they should, upon their repentance, be forgiven, and not only not be punished, but be most highly advanced and dignified.

XI. And though he hath, upon the recompense made him by his Son for all this injury, declared he will do all this; they accepting their Redeemer and Saviour for their Ruler and Lord, and returning to their state of subjection and duty to himself, in him; yet it were enough to make the world tremble and fall astonished at his foot-stool, to have peace and reconciliation offered them only upon such terms; and to behold God's own Son made a sacrifice to his justice, and a public spectacle to angels and men, for the expiation of the wrong done; and enough to make all men despair of ever finding such another sacrifice, if they should reject the terms upon which only the value and meritoriousness of this can be available for them. They can never, after this, have pretence to think it a light matter to offend God, or to think that he looks with indifferency upon sin, or counts it a small matter. And suppose it possible a single delinquent might have been pardoned, without such atonement made for his offence; the design of God's unbounded mercy not being so narrow, but so vastly comprehensive as to require the settling of a stated course for the reducing and saving of lost souls, in all times and ages; since a Redeemer of so high dignity was to be constituted for this purpose: it had been an unexpressible injury to him, a detraction from the kindness of his undertaking and the authority of his office, that any thing of mercy should be shown in this kind, but in him and by him alone.

But that it may be further understood how requisite it was such atonement should be made, such a sacrifice offered, for the sins of men, in order to God's settling his temple and presence with them; we were to consider, not only what was to be remitted, which we have done, but also what was to be communicated, *viz.* his blessed Spirit, in pursuance of the same gracious purpose; which remains to be done in what follows.

CHAPTER IX.

Concerning the gift or communication of the Spirit. The gospel the means of it. The inseparable connexion hereof with the *former*, the imparting of righteousness, for removing the guilt of sin. In what sense the Holy Spirit of God is said to be given, or communicated. What personal union signifies. How personal presence, vital union, communicated influences, concern the inquiry. In what respect the necessity asserted of this communication. Since such fulness of Spirit in Emmanuel, purposely for communication; how comes it to pass he, thereby, raises no more such temples? The necessity of this communication, for this purpose, represented two ways; by showing, 1. That the Holy Scripture teaches that God doth give his Spirit, though under distinct notions, only through Christ. 2. That it was most reasonable, and therefore necessary it should be so. The doctrine of Scripture herein proposed under six heads.

1. Whereas there could be no restoration of this temple of God with men (as hath been shown) without the concurrence of these two things: remission of sin—emission of the Holy Spirit—and that it was undertaken to show, that these were so great things, as that the wisdom of God judged it not meet to vouchsafe them in another way, than by constituting the Emmanuel invested with a full power, by his own acquisition, in an unexceptionable, legal way, to dispense, and effect both of them; whereupon, as we have seen, this constitution was abundantly sufficient, so it now also must appear necessary, for this purpose. Having endeavoured to evince this necessity concerning the former of these, *remission of sin*, upon consideration of the vast amplitude and the peculiar way of this remission; we are now to show it concerning the latter, *viz.* the emission or communication of the Holy Spirit.

The rich sufficiency of Emmanuel, so constituted, as to be furnished with this power of giving the Spirit, hath been already seen, and that in a two-fold respect; *viz.* both in respect of the end of its communication, that the indisposed, unwilling heart of man might be prepared and made willing again to receive the Divine presence; and in respect of the way wherein it was to be communicated; *viz.* in a way suitable to man's intelligent nature, by representation of the glorious object by which his soul was to be impressed. Emmanuel himself, represented as the *original, exemplary temple;* and also represented as *made a sacrifice:* as was discoursed chap. v. Whereby the two purposes are answered, mentioned chap. vi. s. 1. For which it was requisite this constitution of Emmanuel should be, and should be declared and made known to us: that the blessed God might, upon terms not injurious to himself, give his own consent; and might, in a way not unsuitable to us, gain ours. Both which he is graciously pleased to assume to himself, for his part, in his transactions with us about this matter; leaving it for our part, being so assisted, to consider what is represented to us: and thereupon, actually to give our own consent.

Whereupon we are not to look upon the gospel of the Son of God as a useless or unnecessary thing. It is the ministration of spirit and life, (2 Cor. iii. 6.) and the power

of God to salvation to every one that believes; (Rom. i. 16.) an apt instrument of such impressions upon the spirits of men as are necessary to their being formed into living temples; the sword of the Spirit. Not that any good work is wrought by the inanimate gospel: the letter kills; but it is the Spirit that gives life, 2 Cor. iii. An instrument comes under the general notion of means, which signify somewhat middle between the efficient and the effect. And suppose an agent able effectually to use them; a sword is a fit instrument for its proper use, supposing a hand able to wield it.

The communication therefore of the Spirit, is *that* we are principally now to consider. And as the constitution of Emmanuel was sufficient, in its own kind, and for its own proper purpose, in this restoration; so we are to show the necessity of it, for this same purpose.

There ought to be a concurrence of these two, in the Cause, the Restorer, of this temple; *viz.* A fulness of righteousness, to be so imparted as that it may be a ground upon which sin may be forgiven: and, A fulness of Spirit, from whence vital influence may be communicated and transfused.

Inasmuch, as it is most evident, there cannot but be a connexion of what is correspondent thereto in the effect, *viz.* the temple itself restored, it must be full of life, 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5. For can it be thought the righteousness of the Son of God should ever be the clothing of a carcass? Without union with Christ, no man can have either: neither his righteousness nor his indwelling Spirit. Nor can they be separable, with reference to the designed end. It is an unsupposable thing, that one should be God's temple enlivened, and animated by his own Spirit, and yet be under remaining guilt, and liable every moment to his consuming wrath; or that he could be any whit the better, to have all his former guilt taken off, and be still "dead in trespasses and sins!" Wherefore this latter is of equal necessity. Hither therefore we have reserved the larger discourse we intended of the gift or communication of the Spirit, as the most proper place for it. And by way of preparation hereto, two things are not unfit to be briefly opened.

I. How or in what sense the Spirit is said to be given at all, or communicated. 2. In what respect we assert a necessity in reference to this communication.

II. 1. It will not be inconvenient to say somewhat of the true import of the phrase *giving the Spirit*. It is evident, that whereas giving imports some sort of communication, there is yet a sense wherein that blessed Spirit is, to any creature, simply incommunicable. There is a περιχωρησις, or mutual *in-being*, of the sacred Persons in the Godhead, which is most peculiar to themselves, not communicable to creatures with them; and which is natural and necessary, not gratuitous, and whereto therefore the notion of *gift* no way agrees. We cannot yet be ignorant, that because the Holy Spirit is sometimes called the *Spirit of God*, sometimes the *Spirit of Christ*, some bold, assuming enthusiasts, upon pretence of being possessed of this Spirit, have taken the liberty of uttering "great swelling words of vanity," and to talk of being godded with God, and christed with Christ. Yet, because the expressions of giving the Spirit, of receiving, of having the Spirit, of our being in the Spirit, and of his being and dwelling or abiding in us, are phrases of known and frequent use in Scripture; whether in relation to extraordinary purposes and operations, peculiar to some, or to ordinary, common to all that are sincere in the Christian church: such expressions are therefore by no means to be rejected or disused; but cautiously used, and understood in a sound and sober sense. We find no difficulty in apprehending how God is said to give any thing diverse or distinct from himself; as houses, lands, riches, &c. when in the meantime we will confess it not so easy to conceive of his giving what is within the verge of Deity, or that is of and belonging to himself. *Some* have thought, that by the Spirit given, we are to understand the operations and effects of the Spirit, *extraordinary*, as of prophecy, working miracles, &c. and *ordinary*, (which concern our present purpose,) the graces, habits, acts, and influences of the Spirit. *Others*, finding it so expressly said of the Spirit himself, spoken of as a person, that he shall be given, he shall abide with, and shall or doth dwell with or in you; (John xiv. 15, 16. Rom. viii. in divers verses of those chapters;) have thought it too diminishing, and beneath the sense of those places, to understand them of any thing less than the very person of the Spirit. And *some*, reckoning the particle *in* to import union, have therefore incogitantly spoken of a personal union between the Holy Spirit and believers. *Others*, more cautiously, of his indwelling, personal presence in them: as a greater thing, and more answerable to the letter of such texts, than their only having in them his graces or gracious influences.

III. If one may adventure to give a censure and judgment upon all this, I conceive,

1. That if any will make use of metaphysical terms, they should take them in the sense wherein metaphysicians use them; which they do not, who speak of a *personal union* between Christ, or the Spirit of Christ, and believers. For by personal union is never wont to be meant a union of one person with another, but a union of the singular nature with this peculiar manner of subsistence, whereby is constituted one person; *i. e.* that by personal union is meant, not the subjects of union, as if it only signified that several persons remaining distinct were yet some way or other united with one another; which, so taken, were a very lax expression, and which, according to various capacities persons may admit of, would be of vast extent, and may reach to domestical, political, and I know not how many more unions; which cannot but be much beneath what such men must be understood to intend: but that expression, *personal union*, means the result of union, whereby the mentioned two become one person. And therefore they that speak in this stricter and more proper sense of personal union of the Spirit and believers, do most unwarily assert a nearer union between the Spirit and believers than that of the sacred persons in the Godhead with each other. For they who acknowledge them one in Godhead, do yet as commonly deny them to be one person, and assert them to be ever three distinct persons: and this must be as much above what such men will avow and stand by. Therefore that expression can, in this case, admit no tolerable sense at all, distinctly expressive of any thing that can be truly meant by it.

2. *That*, of a *personal indwelling presence*, can by no means be denied. The plain import of many texts of Scripture is so full to this purpose, that to take them otherwise, exclusively of this, is not to *interpret* Scripture, but *deny* it.

3. Yet this expression of a *personal indwelling presence*, taken alone, doth not signify any peculiar distinguishing privilege of believers from others; but what is common to all men and creatures. For can we acknowledge God to be omnipresent, and deny it of any person of the Godhead? Therefore, the Spirit's personal presence alone doth not distinguish believers from others, even though we suppose that presence to be never so intimate: God is all, and in all, more inward or intimate to us than we are to ourselves; an assertion carrying its own evidence so fully in itself, as easily to be transferred from the pagan academy to the Christian church, so as generally to obtain in it.

4. That therefore such as speak of the Spirit's being present, by his gracious influences, operations, and effects, suppose his personal presence, from which they can no more be severed, than the beams from the body of the sun. The way of Divine operation being also by an immediateness both *virtutis et suppositi*, of both *power and person*, as it is commonly, and fitly enough, wont to be spoken.

If any therefore should speak of the Spirit's personal presence, as secluding gracious effects wrought thereby, they do not herein say a greater thing than the others, but much less. For though there can't be any gracious effects without the present person of the Spirit, yet we all know he may be personally present where he produces no such effects: it is therefore his being so present, as to be the productive cause of such blessed effects, that is any one's peculiar advantage. It is very possible to have the personal presence of some great and munificent personage, and be nothing the better for it, if his favour be shut up towards me. It is only his communicative presence that I can be the better for, which depends upon free good-will.

5. It is therefore only the free, gracious presence of the

Spirit, that can be the matter of gift and of promise; not that which is necessary, or impossible not to be, which is peculiar and distinguishing. Mere personal presence, as the Divine essence itself, is every where, by necessity of nature, not by vouchsafement of grace; and therefore no way comports with the notion of giving, or of promise.

6. Therefore giving the Spirit imports, in the full sense of it, two things:

(1.) Somewhat real, when he vouchsafes to be in us, as the spring and fountain of gracious communications, influences, and effects, which are most distinct from himself. For the cause is uncreated: the effect is the new creature, with whatsoever was requisite to produce, sustain, improve, and perfect it; though so like its cause, in nature, as to bear its name. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit," John iii. 6. And because he is said to be in Christians, who are truly such, and they in him; which are words very expressive of union; that union is most properly vital, as whereof holy life is the immediate result: "I live, yet not I, but Christ" (*i. e.* by his Spirit) "liveth in me." Nor, otherwise, could such be living temples, animated from Emmanuel.

(2.) Somewhat relative, the collation of a right to such a presence, for such purposes; which hath no difficulty. We easily conceive how the meanest persons may, by vouchsafement, have relation to, and interest in, the greatest; so God gives Himself, his Son, his Spirit, to them that covenant with him, as we also take the Father, Son, and Spirit, to be our God; as the baptismal form signifies. And when we so covenant, then hath this *giving* its full and complete sense. And now, having thus far seen in what sense the blessed Spirit of God may be said to be given or communicated, we come next briefly to show, as the other intended premise,

IV. 2. In what respect we are here, pursuantly to the drift and design of the present discourse, to affirm a *necessity*, in reference to this communication. It may admit a twofold reference: backward, to the constitution of Emmanuel, on which it depends;—forward, to the restoration of God's temple, which depends on it. There was a consequent, moral necessity of this communication; upon what the Emmanuel was, did, suffered, and acquired. There was an antecedent, natural necessity of it, in order to what was to be effected, and done by it. In the former respect, it was necessary in point of *right*, as it stood related to its meriting cause. In the latter respect, it was necessity *in fact*, as it stood related to its proper designed effect, which could only be brought about by it. In short; the communication of the Spirit was necessary to the restoring of this temple. The constitution of Emmaauel was necessary to the communication of the Spirit.

This *former necessity* hath, in great part, been erinced already, in representing the ruinous state of God's temple among men, when Emmanuel undertook the reparation of it; and in treating of his abundant rich *sufficiency* for this undertaking. Yet, there will be further occasion to say more of it in the progress of the following discourse; the other will more directly come under our consideration in what follows; wherein, however, we must have reference to both promiscuonsly, pursuant to what hath been said.

For as we have shown, that the immense fulness of both righteousness and Spirit, treasured up in Emmanuel, could not but be abundantly sufficient for the purpose of restoring God's temple; and have also shown, that his fulness of righteousness was in order to the remission of sin, as well necessary, as sufficient, to the same purpose; so it remains further to be shown, that his fulness of Spirit, as it was sufficient, so is the emission or immission of it also necessary, for that part it was to have in this restoration. And that the whole course of Divine dispensation, in restoring of this temple, imports a steady comportment with this necessity in both the mentioned kinds of it. Therefore, the Emmanuel being the procurer of this restoration, as this may fitly be styled the temple of Christ, or of God in him; so the Spirit being the immediate actor herein, is also styled the temple of the Holy Ghost, as we find in many texts of Scripture, Eph. ii. 20, 21. 1 Cor. iii. 16. and vi. 19. 2 Cor. vi. 18, 19. 1 Peter ii. 4, 5. which the reader may consult at leisure. And they all show, how important and necessary a part the blessed Spirit hath in this merciful and glorious work. As withal, it being considered what relation the Spirit bears to Christ, as he is Emmanuel and Mediator between God and man; it evidently shows the necessity of his being constituted and made such, in order to the Spirit's part herein.

V. God's own judgment is the surest measure to direct ours of what was necessary, in this case. And so far as the ground of his judgment is, by himself, made visible to us, we are neither to put out our own eyes, nor turn them away from beholding it. We are to reckon it always safe and modest to follow him, by an obsequious, ductile judgment of things apparent, and which he offers to our view, or appeals to us about them. To go before him by a preventive judgment of the secret things that belong to him, or pretend to give reasons, or an account of his matters, where he gives none himself, argues rashness, arrogance, and self-confidence, whereof we can give no account. But our judgment may be truly said to follow his, when he having in his word declared his choice of such a course, which he steadily pursues in his consequent dispensations; we thereupon conclude that course to be most fit, and that what he judged most fit, was to him (as formerly we have insisted) necessary. Therefore may we with just confidence undertake to show,

That his declared, chosen, constant course of giving the Spirit, for restoring his temple with men, is to do it in and by Christ, or Emmanuel, the constituted Mediator between God and man. And that it was apparently reasonable and becoming of himself so to do.

Whereby the necessity will appear, both of his giving the Spirit, for the restoring of his temple; and of his settling the constitution of Emmanuel, or such a Mediator in order to the giving his Spirit.

Only, before we proceed more distinctly to discourse these things, it seems requisite to consider and discuss a difficulty, which may give great amusement to the minds of many, *viz.*

That since, by the drift and tendency of this discourse, it would appear, that the Son of God, Emmanuel, God with us, hath by his own dear purchase, a fulness of Spirit in him for this blessed work; and now hath it in his power to raise temples every where at his pleasure, That yet so great a part of the world is still desolate, full of idols' temples: yea, the visible temple of God full of idols, destitute of the Divine Spirit, under the poisonous influence of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works in the hearts of the children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 2. and *by an efficacious energy*,[a] as the word there used emphatically signifies. For what hath that accursed spirit more power to destroy, than the Son of God manifested to dissolve and destroy the works of the devil, and his blessed Spirit hath to save?

Some considerations tending to disamuse men's minds about this matter, may make way for our clearer and less interrupted progress in the following discourse. Therefore consider,

VI. 1. That the raising up of temples to God in the souls of men, with the dispossessing of that wicked one, must by no means be understood to be the work of mere power; as if no other excellency of the Divine Being were concerned in it. Nor is it fit to say (as elsewhere is insisted) that God can do every thing that almighty power can do. Almighty power gives us not an adequate notion of God. He is every other excellency as well as power; and can do nothing but what agrees with every other perfection of his nature, wisdom, justice, holiness, truth, &c. as well as his power.

2. The Son of God, Emmanuel, having obtained an infinite fulness of power to reside in himself, cannot be expected to exert it to the utmost, as natural, unintelligent agents do; but so far as is suitable to the proper ends of his undertaking, and the office which he bears.

3. It ought to be deeply considered, as a truth both of clearest evidence and great importance, (though perhaps it may have escaped the thoughts of many,) that the principal end of our Lord's undertaking and office, was not the salvation of men, but the glory of God. This is that whereupon his design did ultimately terminate. The

[a] ἐνεργουντος.

other he could only intend secondarily, and as a means to this; otherwise he should make the creature his chief end, and place upon it a most appropriate Divine prerogative, to be the last, as he is the first, to all things; which is said of the great God, in reference to this very case, the saving of some, and rejecting of others. In contemplation whereof, the apostle, crying out, O the depth! asserts God's absolute liberty, as debtor to no man, (Rom. xi. 33, 34, 35.) and subjoins the true reason hereof, That of him, and by him, and to him, are all things, that to him might be glory, &c. This is the avowed design of our Lord Christ's office, in both his lowest humiliation, and highest exaltation. The desire of being saved from the (approaching) hour and power of darkness vanishes, and gives place to this,—Father, glorify thy name, John xii. 27, 28. When, for his obedience to death, that of the cross, he is highly exalted—all are to confess him Lord, to the praise and glory of God, Phil. ii. 8, 11. He, who is the most competent and most rightful Judge, determines when it will be more for the glory of God, to dispossess the strong man armed, being himself the stronger, and erect that house into a temple: and when it will most serve this his great end, to leave the strong man armed still in his possession, and finally to doom the possessor and the possessed to take their lot together. In the *former* case, there are vessels unto honour, framed by his own hand, to the praise of the glory of grace, Eph. i. 6. In the *latter*, vessels unto dishonour, to glorify his power, by making known his wrath and just resentments. For that honourable purpose, none are of themselves fit; but he makes them meet for that glorious state, Col. i. 12. before he makes them partakers of it; but none serve the dishonourable use, but who are, of themselves, vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, Rom. ix. 22. Our Lord was faithful as a Son; and was therefore content to die upon a cross, that he might, in a way against which the strictest justice should not reclaim, obtain to himself a power of giving an apostate world a time of trial; and as men should acquit themselves, by complying or not complying with his methods, glorify the Father, whose glory he sought as being sent by him, and vindicate the rights of the Divine government, both in them that are "saved, and in them that perish."

VII. 4. But it may gain us further advantage, to consider the great God doth not pursue ends, as we are wont to do, who commonly apprehend ourselves to stand in need of the things we pursue as our ends. But he acts agreeably to his self-sufficient fulness, who dwells not in temples made with hands, nor in any human temple, "as if he needed any thing, seeing he gives to all life and breath, and all things;" Acts xvii. 25. and expects hereupon, men should seek after him:—as nothing is more fit, than that indigency and necessity should crave and supplicate unto rich and abounding fulness. Princes glory in their acquisitions, and the increased multitude of their subjects, from whom they have an increase of power, and the ampler revenues; they glory in receiving; He in giving, in making diffusive goodness flow among his creatures. Nor hath he any cause to be anxious about the event, or how his communications are received; beholding always, with infinitely higher complacency, the perfect rectitude of his own dispensations, than their felicity, though he take a secondary pleasure in that too, when it is the result of the former. He glories, as he requires us to do, (Jer. ix. 24.) that he excerciseth loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, because in those he delighteth.

5. Though the goodness and loving-kindness of God be immense, and without limit; yet, the exercise of it is within certain limits, which annexed judgment or the most exquisite wisdom prescribes to it. He waits to be gracious—and because he is the God of judgment, they are blessed that wait for him, Isa. xxx. 18. There is a critical season and nick of time, which men are concerned to wait for; and because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore is the misery of men great, Eccl. viii. 6. For man also knows not his time, *ch.* ix. 12. The most perfect wisdom hath drawn out a certain verge, within which the most special goodness confines, ordinarily, its communications: otherwise, what means that,—if thou continue in his goodness? Rom. xi. 22. with that of Jude 21. Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. While we converse with the ever Blessed One, within the region of his own love and goodness, imbibing and taking in his free and gracious communications, and still craving and expecting more, we keep within the sacred vital circle and enclosure; without which, is darkness and the shadow of death. We breathe in the element of life, by grateful aspirations, and respirations, that cannot be unpleasant to ourselves, but must be infinitely more pleasant to him; who reckons it a more blessed thing to give than to receive. We are always to remember, that our state is that of expectants: that we keep ourselves in the love of God, looking, waiting, always onward, till we attain eternal life. Our waiting hath the annexed promise of blessedness, as above, Isa. xxx. 18. and Prov. viii. 34. And is most becomingly required, as a just homage unto sovereign goodness.

6. That admirable goodness of God, which shows itself in raising up temples in this vile world by the Spirit of Emmanuel, claims our subordinate co-operation as underbuilders in this structure; We are to work, because he works, of his good pleasure, Phil. ii. 12, 13. Which signifies both his liberty and delight in working. It is said, I Cor. iii. 9. Ye are God's building; yet, it is also said, *v.* 14. If any man's work abide, which he hath built, &c.

One of great note in the ancient Christian church, discoursing of this passage, says,[b] *The building is not the artist's*, or workman's, but the Lord's, that owns it; and who is to be, (as a little after he speaks,) the[c] *inhabitant of it*. And inasmuch as we are to be living, intelligent temples, we are also to be ourselves labourers and workmen (as well as they who are to be so by special office) in this building. But if our work be pulling down, stifling convictions, suppressing desires, fear, &c. do we provoke the Lord to jealousy, by keeping up the service of the idols' temple, and profaning his own, I Cor. x. 22? or have we forgot who hath said, Vengeance is mine, even for treading under-foot the Son Emmanuel, and despiting his Spirit of grace, Heb. x. 29, 30? The high pleasure the blessed God takes in his own gracious communications, gratefully received, and his just resentment and displeasure for the contemptuous refusal of them, may be understood some way to measure one another. Both may be conjectured from this text of Scripture, after such sort, as the great things of God can be conceived of, by such mean mortals. The Spirit of grace, of all kindness, love, goodness, benignity, sweetness; O the ineffable delight that blessed Spirit must take in its own effusions, tending to the recovery, the healing and saving, of a lost soul, when there is an agreeable comportment therewith! But the despiting of such a Spirit, who can conceive or apprehend, deeply enough, the horror of this crime! the thwarting the design of so compassionate goodness! Or of severity, or sorencss of punishment, it shall be thought worthy of!

The whole work of faith, *i. e.* that entire work, necessary to be wrought upon the soul of a man in order to his future felicity, and that by God's own power is called the fulfilling, or satisfying, the good pleasure of his goodness, 2 Thess. i. 11. O the plentitude of satisfaction which our blessed Lord takes in the fulfilling the good pleasure of his goodness, when the methods are complied with, according whereto he puts forth his power for effecting such a work! But if we can apprehend what it is to cross a man of power in his pleasures; what is it to withstand the great God in his pleasures! even the pleasures of his goodness! his most connatural, delightful pleasures! Some estimate we can make, by supposing a wealthy, potent, wise, and good man, intent upon reclaiming a poor, wretched, undone, perverse neighbour; if his supplies and counsels be gratefully received, how pleasant is it to his benefactor! if often repeated, they are scornfully rejected, how vexing is the disappointment!

7. We must know, there are vincible operations of that Spirit, leading on to those that are victorious, being complied with; otherwise, to the most terrible vengeance. When it was charged upon the Jews, Acts vii. 51. that they did always resist the Holy Ghost, as their fathers did;

b η οικοδομη ου του τεχνιτου, αλλα του δεσποτου.

c ναος ημεις, αυτος ενοικος. Chrysost. in 2 ad Cor.

it's implied, he was always striving, though more rarely, to victory. But when it is said, Prov. i. 23. Turn at my reproof, could any essay to turn be without some influence of the Spirit? But that complied with, tends to pouring forth a copious effusion, not to be withstood. The less sensible *adminicula*, the gentler *aids* and insinuations of grace, lead to what shall overcome.

8. Without such an overpowering effusion, man's impotency will be acknowledged, by those that understand either the Scriptures or themselves. But how perverse is the inference, that therefore they are to sit still! No; therefore to pray, cry, strive, wait, more than they that wait for the morning, till he be gracious, and show mercy.

9. Therefore, for men to be destitute of the Spirit is criminal; as much not to be filled with the Spirit, as to be drunk with wine: the same authority that forbids the one, enjoins the other, Eph. v. 18.

10. But though it be God's ordinary method, to proceed gradually in raising temples to himself in this world, he never so binds his own hands, as not to do extraordinary acts of grace and favour, when he thinks fit; and without any danger of forcing men's wills, or offering violence to human nature: than which imagination nothing is more absurd; both because,

(1.) The forcing of a man's will, implies a contradiction in the terms; for we have no other notion of force, than the making one do a thing against his will. But it is impossible a man should will or be willing against his will. He that hath made a man's soul and all its powers, well enough knows how to govern him without violence, and by (though never so sudden) an immission of his light and grace, effectually to change a man's will without forcing it. And also because,

(2.) No man that has the present use of his own faculties, will think they can be injured by Divine light and grace; or that they hurt the nature of man, which they manifestly tend to restore, improve, and perfect. Yet no man is to expect, that because the blessed God vouchsafes to make some rarer instances of dealing by way of sudden surprise with the spirits of men, that this should be his ordinary method; but, more usually, to awaken them into some consideration of that forlorn state, while they are destitute of the Divine presence, and their souls the haunts and residence of devils, instead of temples of the Holy Ghost. And to make them know, that he counts the gift of his Son, and Spirit, too great things to be despised, or not earnestly sought, after he hath given hope of their being attained; or that the neglect thereof should not have a very terrible vindication: letting men feel that the despising the richness of his goodness, which gently leads to repentance, is nothing else but "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath," and the revelation of his righteous judgment. Inasmuch as he owes it to himself, to let them know that the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, needs not seek to them for a house, Isa. lxvi. 1, 2. And as to what, in ordinary course, he judges necessary, (lest men should in all this be thought justly querulous,) he appeals to themselves, Isa. v. 4. What could I have done more? Are not my ways equal? Ezek. xviii.

Whereupon we now proceed to show the two things, before intimated.

1. That the Holy Spirit is not otherwise given, than in or by Emmanuel, or for Christ's sake.—2. How necessary, or (which comes fully to the same) how highly reasonable, it was in itself, and may appear to us, that so mighty a gift, and of this peculiar nature and kind, should not be vouchsafed unto men, upon other terms, or in any other way, than this.[d]

VIII. 1. For the former of these; That the Spirit of God is actually given, upon this account only, his own word sufficiently assures us. And who can so truly inform us, upon what consideration he doth this, or that, as he himself? Let us, then, with equal, unbiassed minds, consider the tenor and import of what we find spoken in the Holy Scriptures about this matter, which I conceive may be truly summed up thus, viz.

(1.) That the Holy Spirit is given to this purpose of restoring the temple of God with men, with the worship and fruitions thereof, under a twofold notion,—As a Builder, and an Inhabitant.

(2.) That it is given under both notions, or for both these purposes, for Christ's sake, and in consideration of his death and sufferings; though they have not influence to the obtaining of this gift, for both these purposes, in the same way, but with some difference, to be afterwards explained in what follows.

(3.) That it was not the immediate effect of his suffering, that this blessed Spirit should be forthwith given to this or that particular person; but that all the fulness of it be given into Christ's power, and the right of dispensing it annexed to this office, as he is the Redeemer of sinners, and Mediator between God and them, for the accomplishing the end of his office, the ceasing of controversies, enmities, and dissaffections on our part, Godward.

(4.) That hereupon, its actual communication for both the mentioned purposes, is immediately from Christ, or by and through him.

(5.) That it is given by Christ, under the former notion, or for the former purpose of rebuilding God's temple, as a sovereign, or an absolute plenipotentiary in the affairs of lost souls, in a more arbitrary way, so as not to be claimable upon any foregoing right.

(6.) That he gives it, under the latter notion, and in order to a continued abode and inhabitation, as an *oeconomus*, or the steward of the household of God, proceeding herein by fixed rule, published in the gospel, according whereto the subjects of this following communication, being qualified for it, by the former, may, with certainty, expect it upon the prescribed terms, and claim it as a right; he having, by the merit of his blood, obtained that they might do so.

CHAPTER X.

The first of the mentioned six heads insisted on—That the Spirit is given both as a Builder, and as an Inhabitant of this temple. Scripture testimony concerning the former of those, and the latter. And for the sake of his death and sufferings. Anciently, the blessing of Abraham, and his seed from age to age, upon this account. More copiously and to other nations, when the fulness of time was come. Christ's death hath influence for these two purposes with much difference, to be afterwards explained. Colossians i. 19, 20, 21. largely opened. A digression relating thereto. The principal import of that text, to show the dependence Christ's whole work of reconciliation, both of God to us, and of us to God, had upon his sacrifice on the cross. The latter whereof is effected by his Spirit, obtained by that sacrifice. Other texts to the same purpose. Further noted, that the Spirit is expressly said to be given by Christ, or in his name, &c. Given for building or preparing a temple, by a less certain, known rule.

I. Now let us see, as to each of these, whether this be not the plain doctrine of the Scriptures in this matter.

1. For the first of these, it hath been sufficiently shown already, and the common experience of all the world shows, that till this blessed Spirit be given, the temple of God is every where all in ruin: that therefore he cannot dwell till he build, and that he builds that he may dwell, (the ease and his known design being considered,) are things, hereupon, plain in themselves, and are plainly enough spoken in Scripture. When the apostle had told the Christians of Corinth, (1 Cor. iii. 9.) "Ye are God's building," he shortly after adds, (in the same chapter, *v.* 16.) "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" This temple, being a living thing, (as 1 Pet. ii. 7. represents it,) the very building and formation of it is, in the more peculiar sense, generating; and because it is to be again raised up out of a former ruinous state, wherein it lay dead, and buried in its own ruins, this new production is regeneration. And do we need to be put in mind whose work that is? that "it is the Spirit that quickeneth?" (John vi.) or of what is so industriously inculcated by our Lord, (*ch.* iii. *v.* 3, 5, 6, &c.) and testified under the seal of his fourfold *amen*, that this new birth must be by the Spirit? And we have both notions again conjoined, Eph. ii. For having been told, (*v.* 18.) that both Jews and Gentiles have by one Spirit access to the Father, so as to be no

[d] This 3d comes to be considered chap. xi.

longer strangers and at a distance, but made nigh to God; (*v.* 19. compared with *v.* 13.) 'tis said, (*v.* 20.) We "are built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone;" and again added, (*v.* 21.) "In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth (as a living thing) unto an holy temple in the Lord." After all which, the end and use of this building (implied in the name of a temple) is more expressly subjoined, (*v.* 22.) "In whom also ye are builded together an habitation of God, through the Spirit." 'Tis therefore sufficiently evident, that the Spirit is given under these distinct notions, and for these several purposes, the one subordinated to the other, *viz.* both as a builder and a dweller.

II. 2. That it is given for Christ's sake, whether for the one purpose or the other, is as expressly signified as any thing in the whole gospel. For what means it, that it is said to be given *in his name?* John xiv. 26. and xv. 26. That the work it does, being given, is said to be done in his name? 1 Cor. vi. 11. "Ye are sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God."

Yea, and that it is given in consideration of his sufferings and death, is not less plainly spoken: for not only are the immediate and most peculiar operations of this Spirit ascribed to his death, (1 Pet. ii. 24.) "He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, might live to righteousness;" but the imparting of the Spirit itself, is represented as the design and end of those sufferings, Gal. iii. 14. "He was made a curse for us; for cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit," &c.

III. It was the same way, and on the same terms, upon the largeness and certainty of the Divine prospect and foresight touching Christ's future sufferings, that this was the blessing of Abraham and his posterity, long before he suffered: that God gave them, of old, his Spirit to instruct them; (Neh. ix. 20.) which is not obscurely implied, when, looking back upon the days of old, they are said to have "rebelled, and vexed his Spirit;" (Isa. lxiii. 9, 10.) and when Stephen tells them, (Acts vii. 51.) "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye;" it is implied that even from age to age that blessed Spirit was striving with them; (children and fathers;) for there could be no resistance, where there was no striving: and that, in those former ages, that Holy Spirit was active among them upon Christ's account, and by the procurement of his future sacrifice, (presignified by their many sacrifices,) is also sufficiently intimated, in that, when it is said, That under Moses, they did eat and drink spiritual meat and drink, they are said to have drank of the rock that followed them; and 'tis added, that rock was Christ. And by what provocations could they be supposed more to resist and vex the Holy Spirit, than by those wherewith, in the day of provocation and temptation, they are said to have lusted in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert, (Ps. cvi. 14. Ps. lxxviii. Ps. xcv. Heb. iii.) by which they are expressly said to have tempted Christ, 1 Cor. x. 9. And certainly the privilege was inestimably great, (though they too generally little esteemed it, and made little advantage of it,) that when the most of the world besides was nothing else but waste, neglected wilderness, they should be an enclosed vineyard, under the long-continued droppings and dews of heavenly influence. For it was not but upon high and long provocation, that at last God commands his clouds to rain no more rain upon it, Isa. v. 6. How singular a favour was it to be the appropriate plantation, vineyard, and garden of God, taken in from so vast and wild a desert! and that the God of Abraham would so long continue the relation, and be their God; to bless them with the choice of his blessings, those whereof his own Spirit was the peculiar source and spring!

IV. But when the fulness of time, and the season for the actual immolation of that Sacrifice, (once for all, to be offered up,) was now come, that the immense fulness of its value and virtue might be duly demonstrated and glorified; down goes the enclosure, which the amplitude and extensiveness of God's kind design could no longer endure: and as some time the great prophetic oracle given to Abraham, must take effect, In thy seed (and 'tis said, not of seeds, as of many, but of seed, as of one, *viz.* Christ, Gal. iii. 16.) shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; this is the time. Now must the blessing of Abraham come upon the Gentiles. Nor could any time have been more fitly chosen, that the copiousness and vast diffusion of the effect might demonstrate and magnify the power and fulness of the cause, and even lead the eyes of all unto it. The drawing, so generally of all men, was that which must dignify the cross, and incite all eyes to behold and adore the Son of man lift up, John xii. 32. and in the midst of death, even with his dying breath, sending forth so copious and far-spreading a diffusion of spirit and life! And now had it only been said loosely and at large, that this was brought about by his dying, that might admit a great latitude of sense, and give some room for sinister interpretation. The intendment of the expression might be thought sufficiently answered, if, any way, his dying did occasion good impressions upon the minds of men. But when the effect is expressly ascribed to his dying so, as the cause, *i. e.* to his being lift up, to his being made a curse in dying, by hanging on a tree, and a curse for us, to redeem us thereby from the legal curse which lay upon us before; the curse of the law, the doom which the violated law laid upon us, of having (as is apparently meant) the Spirit withheld from us, that thereupon the great and rich blessing might come upon us, of having that Holy Spirit freely, and without further restraint, communicated to us; this puts the matter out of all dispute, that it was in consideration of his dying, that God now gives his Spirit, and leaves no place for contending against it unto any, who have not more mind to object, than they can have pretence for it.

It is, then, the plain doctrine of the Scriptures, that the Spirit is given for the restoring of God's temple with men, for the sake of Christ's death and sufferings, who was Emmanuel, and, in his own person, the *original temple*, out of which each single temple was to arise and spring up, as well as he was the *exemplary temple*, unto which they were all to be conformed.

V. But whereas his sufferings and death have their influence *differently*, to the Spirit's *building* of any such particular secondary temple, and to his *replenishing* and *inhabiting* it: that difference we shall find is not inexplicable or very difficult to be represented according to the tenor of the Scriptures also. In order whereto it will be of use to add,

3. That, as the immediate effect of his sufferings and death, the Spirit in all the fulness thereof, is first given into his power, and the right of communicating it annexed to his office, as he is the Emmanuel, the Redeemer of sinners, and Mediator between God and them; that it might implant what was necessary, root out what should be finally repugnant, either to their duty towards him or their felicity in him.

That this was the end of his office, the very notion of a mediator between God and men doth plainly intimate; (1 Peter iii. 18.) "For Jesus Christ himself suffered once, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." Which must signify not only that he was to render God accessible, expiating by his blood our guilt; but also, to make us willing to come to him, vanquishing by his Spirit our enmity, procured also by his suffering, the just for the unjust, without both we could not be brought to God, which was, we see, the end of his suffering.

That all fulness did, upon his suffering, reside in him, for this purpose is as plainly signified by that remarkable connexion, Col. i. 19, 20. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell—and, having made peace by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself." *The Father* is not in the original text, (the verb being left impersonal,) but is fitly and necessarily understood; for whose pleasure can this be supposed to be, but the Father's? And so the current of discourse doth thus run smooth. "The Father was pleased that all fulness should dwell in him, having made peace by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself; even by him: for that is inculcated a second time. It was judged necessary to this reconciling design, that all fulness should dwell in him. But who did thus judge? The Father was pleased it should be so; but upon

what consideration? "having made peace by the blood of his cross." The same *He*, that was pleased all fulness should dwell in him, was so pleased, as having made peace by the blood of the cross; for the syntax cannot admit that εἰρηνοποιήσας should be spoken of the Son; but the Father (as agent, agreeably to that 2 Cor. v. 18. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself, by Jesus Christ") having made peace; or pitched upon this method, and laid this foundation of making peace, (for 'tis usual to speak of a thing as done, when it is put into a sure way of being so) by the blood of his Son's cross, was now content that all fulness should dwell in him, to be diffused by him, through the world, in order to his having temples prepared, inhabited, replenished with Divine glory every where; not in heaven only, which was already full of them, or where it was easy to suppose he might find such temples ready prepared in all quarters; but even on earth also, where all was waste and desolate, nothing to be seen but forlorn ruins.

VI. And, by the way, (that we may make some, not unuseful, *digression*,) it is very ordinary in Scripture, to join things in the same period, as if they were of equal concernment, when, though they are mentioned together, their concernment is very different, and the main stress is intended to be laid but on the one of them; the other being placed there, either as an opposite, the more to illustrate and set off that with which it is joined; or as an introduction, a thing supposed, and which had place already, unto which the other is more principally necessary to be added; and then is the form of speech, manifestly, elliptical, but so, as that to considering readers 'tis easy to apprehend what is to be supplied. As when the apostle speaks thus, (Rom. vi. 17.) "God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you;" doth the apostle intend to thank God for their having been the servants of sin? No man can think so. But that, whereas, or notwithstanding, they had been so, (which was the thing to be supplied,) they did now obey, &c. So that (John iii. 5.) "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It was certainly none of our Saviour's design to assert the absolute, universal necessity of washing with water, equally, with being born of the Spirit; but whereas it was the known manner among the Jews to admit proselytes to their religion, by baptism, (which was then reckoned as a new birth,) his design was, without rejecting that as useless, (which he intended to continue in the Christian church,) to represent the greater and most indispensable necessity, of being born of the Spirit, added to the other, and that without this the other alone would avail nothing. When again it is said, (James i. 9, 10.) "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich, in that he is made low;" it cannot be thought that both these were equally intended to be enjoined; but the former is supposed, as a thing that would be naturally, and of course; *Let him, q. d.* admit he do, or he may, or it is taken for granted that he will, rejoice, who, being of low degree, is exalted. But the principal design is to show, what it is less obvious to apprehend or imagine, that the rich hath a truer cause and greater reason to rejoice when he is made low; because he was, otherwise, apt to please himself, or be mocked with a shadow. Many more such instances might be given of two things thus joined together in the same assertion, or sometimes, in the same precept, where the intendment is to make us of the one, either by way of opposition, or comparison, the more to magnify, or to lay the greater weight on, the other.

The matter may well be so understood in the place under our present consideration; "by him to reconcile all things to himself," (things being put for persons, as elsewhere in Holy Scripture, Luke xix. 10. 1 John v. 4. and commonly in other writers,) "whether things on earth, or things in heaven;" *i. e.* even as well men on earth, where the difficulty was greater, and where enmity against God did rage, where he was set at greatest distance and highest defiance; as those in heaven, where all was pacate already, and therefore a word was chosen more suitable to the state of their ease, who were principally intended, *viz.* of reconciling; meaning that, by reconciliation, he would make the state of things on earth, now so filled with enmity against God, suitable to their state above, among whom there was none: and yet a word not wholly incongruous to the heavenly state also; for ἀποκαταλλάττειν doth not always suppose a *foregoing enmity*, as καταλλάττειν (used 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.) doth not always; nor doth the decompound here more limit the sense; but doth sometimes signify to *conciliate*, or draw into society, and may, in reference to that state above, have reference to the continuation of amity and accord there; that no more any such rapture, as once there was, should have place in those bright regions for ever. And it seems designed for the Redeemer's more consummate glory, that the perpetual stability of the heavenly state should be owing to him, and to the most inestimable value of his oblation on the cross; that it should be put upon his account, and be ascribed to the high merit of his pacificatory sacrifice, that they continue in obedience and favour for ever! For why, else, is the mention of the "blood of his cross" so carefully inserted, and that, rather than be omitted, it is even thrust into a parenthesis: "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and (having made peace by the blood of his cross) to reconcile all things to himself—on earth—in heaven!" This is the more remarkably designed, though yet, the principal import of the word *reconciled* (as any word that is to be applied to divers matters, is differently to be understood, according to the diversity of the matter) is accommodated to their case, who were principally intended, *viz.* those on earth, who were in enmity with God. And the following words show these to have been here principally intended: "And you, who were sometime alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled," &c. (v. 21.) *q. d.* He hath not only conciliated to himself, or made sure of the everlasting amity of those, who were always dutiful in heaven; but he hath also recovered the good-will and loyal affection of such on earth, as were at enmity, in an apostacy, alienated, and enemies in their minds; and all, by the same means, the virtue and fragrancy of a sacrifice, sufficient to fill heaven and earth with its grateful odour, and whose efficacy can never decrease to all eternity. Nor, therefore, is it consequent, that the direct intention of this his sacrifice, should bear reference to the concernments of angels, whose nature he took not, but from the redundancy of its merit, this inestimable advantage, *viz.* the permanent stability of their state, may well be supposed to accrue to them; and, for the greater honour of the Redeemer, they made debtors to him for it.

And why should it seem incongruous, that those most constantly pure and holy creatures above, who are, in this same context, (v. 16.) made to owe whatever excellencies they have, within the sphere of nature, to the Son of God, should owe to him also, whatsoever they have, within the sphere of Grace? Yea, how aptly do things correspond, that, whereas it had been said above, (v. 16.) "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are on earth," &c. it should also be after said, "by him are all things reconciled," either recovered into, or continued in, everlasting amity with him, *i. e.* That whosoever partake of special Divine favour, whether they be of the things on the earth, or the things in heaven, shall for the future be debtors to him for it. And whereas it is expressly said in Scripture, that "when God raised him from the dead, he set him far above all principality and power," &c. Eph. i. 20, 21. (which words ἐκάθισεν ἐπιρώω, *set him above*, not only signify constitution, a thing diverse from natural priority, but also, being conjunct with his raising him from the dead, import a reference to his dying, and conquest over death, as the reason of it,) and that "being gone into heaven—angels, and authorities, and powers are made subject to him;" (1 Pet. iii. 22.) and that he being said to be "the head of all principalities and powers;" he might, by themselves, be understood not to be a useless or unbeneficial Head to them. Though it also is not to be forgotten, that at the time when the apostle wrote these words, a considerable part of that holy blessed society, then in heaven, were sometime on earth, in a state of enmity against God, and so who needed reconciliation in the strict and proper sense; as they did who were still on earth, and to whom he now more particularly directs his

speech, (*v.* 21.) "And you also, who were sometime alienated—yet now hath he reconciled," &c.

VII. But, though I could not think it an impertinency, to use some endeavour for clearing the whole of this (somewhat obscure) context, it coming, as it did, in my way, yet the principal thing, with reference to my present scope and purpose, which I consider in it, is that it was upon the account of the blood of our Redeemer shed on the cross, that the Father was pleased all fulness should dwell in him, as an *original Temple*, to serve the purposes of that great reconciling work, undertaken by him, the raising up of multitudes of temples, all sprung from this one, in this world of ours, That God might dwell with men on earth! that amazing thing! 2 Chron. vi. 18. And that ascending (in order whereto he was first, dying, to descend) that he might fill all things, give gifts, that of his Spirit especially; and that to such as were enemies in their minds, by wicked works, even the rebellious also, that the Lord God might have his temple, and dwell with them, Psal. lxviii. 18. And whereas that work must comprehend the working out of enmity from the hearts of men against God, (and not only the propitiating of God to them, which the word εἱρηνοποιήσας seems more principally to intend,) and that a great communication of influence from the Divine Spirit, was necessary for the overcoming that enmity; that therefore this fulness must include (among other things, being τῶν πλήρωμα, *all fulness*) an immense treasure and abundance of Spirit, (which is elsewhere said to be given him, not by measure, John iii. 34.) and that therefore his sufferings did obtain this plenitude of Spirit to be first seated in him, as the receptacle and fountain, whence it must be derived, and that the power and right of dispensing it should belong to his office, as he was the great Reconciler and Mediator between God and man. Which also many other texts of Scripture do evidently imply, as when he is represented as a universal Plenipotentiary, able to quicken whom he will, John v. 21. And "all power is said to be given him, both in heaven and earth;" (Matt. xxviii. 18.) and that "the Father had given all things into his hands," (John xiii. 3.) which must comprehend the power of giving the Spirit, and which the end of giving him that plenitude of power plainly requires. "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him;" (John xvii. 2.) the Spirit given being the root of that life, (Gal. vi. 8.) they that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And that he is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance, (which equally implies the gift of the Spirit,) as well as remission of sins, Acts v. 31. Nor is the consideration of his sufferings and death less plainly signified to be the ground, upon which this fulness of power is given him; when it is said, "Christ both died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord of the living and the dead," Rom. xiv. 8. And when, after mention of his being obedient to death, &c. it is said, "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him," &c. that all "should confess Christ is Lord," &c. Phil. ii. 5, 6, 7, 8, 11.

We further note,

VIII. 4. That hereupon, the Spirit (whether it be for the one or the other of the mentioned purposes) is actually and immediately given by Christ, or by the authority of that office which he bears; than which nothing can be plainer, in that he is called the Spirit of Christ, Rom. viii. 9. And when our Lord himself uses the expressions about this matter, with such indifferency, and as equivalent; either "I will send him," John xvi. 7. or, "I will send him from my Father," John xv. 26. or, "My Father will send him in my name," John xiv. 26. Which what can it signify less, than that, as the Father was the first Fountain of this communication, so the established way and method of it was in and by Christ, from which there was to be no departure? as is also signified in that of the apostle, Eph. i. 3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (or things) in Christ."

And when we consider, how exact care is taken in well-ordered secular governments, not only that things be done which the affairs of the government required, but that they be done regularly, and in the way which is prescribed and set; so as that every one knows and attends the business of his own place and station; and that no one may expect that from the treasurer, which is to be done by the chancellor, or that from him, which belongs to the secretary of state. If there be any beauty and comeliness in order, where should we more expect to find it, than in the Divine government, and in the conduct and management of the affairs of the supreme and celestial kingdom; wherein only the remoteness of those things from our sense, makes every thing seem little and inconsiderable? But did we allow ourselves to retire more frequently out of this world of shadows, and ascend into those glorious regions above; there to contemplate the bright orders of holy, loyal spirits, all employed in the services of the celestial throne, and to behold Jesus the Head of all principalities and powers, the Restorer of what was sunk and decayed, and the Upholder of the whole sliding universe, even of the noblest parts of it, that were liable to the same lapse and decay; by whom all things consist; we should not think it strange that such deference and honour should belong to his office; that it should be rendered every way so august and great, that he should be so gloriously enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on high; and that, when his administrations are manageable with so much ease and pleasure, to one of so immense wisdom, power, and goodness, all acts of grace and favour should, more especially, pass through his hands. And if we understand any thing of the distinction of persons in the ever blessed Deity, (whereof if we understand nothing, how do we adventure to affirm any thing?) it is not more difficult to apprehend distinct employments, wherein, yet, all can never fail to have their most complacential consent. And when that kind of office was so freely undertaken by the Son, the susception and management whereof hath, no doubt, filled the supreme court, at first, and from age to age, with his highest celebrations and praises, and for the execution whereof, when he made his first descent into this world of ours, and was to appear an incarnate God on earth, a proclamation was published in heaven, "Now let all the angels of God worship him;" and in his execution whereof, they had, from time to time afterwards, spontaneously stooped down to behold, with pleased wonder, his surprisingly strange and prosperous methods and performances; who can think it unsuitable to the dignity and authority of so great and so highly magnified an office, unto which all the power of heaven and earth was annexed, that it should by consent belong to it, to employ the whole agency of the Holy Ghost, in pursuance of its high and great ends?

But now, he having by his blood obtained, that this immense plenitude of Spirit should reside in him, not for himself, personally considered, (for so he had it by natural, eternal necessity, without capitulation or procurement,) but as he was invested with such an office, and in order to its being, by the power of that office, communicated to others; it is easy to be conceived, and may be collected from the tenor of Holy Scripture, in what different methods it was to be communicated, for the (already mentioned) different ends of that communication, *viz.* the rebuilding of God's temple on earth, and the constant inhabiting and replenishing it afterwards. Therefore,

IX. 5. For the former of these purposes, it is given more arbitrarily, and of more absolute sovereignty, not limited by any certain, published, or known rule; or other than what lay concealed in secret purpose. Here the first principle is given of that life which springs out, and exerts itself, in the generating and forming of a *living temple;* which grows up into everlasting life, and makes it an eternally living thing. Now whereas he hath so vast a power given him by the Father over all flesh, (which giving, we again note, must signify this not to be the power he had by natural inherence, but by later constitution,) we do know to whom, or to what sort of persons, this eternal life, in the consummate state of it, is to be given, for that is sufficiently declared in Scripture; but we are not told to whom it shall be given in the very initial state, or in the first and seminal principle of it; that is reserved among the *Arcana Imperii, the secret resolves,* or *placita* of the divine government. And so, taking the whole of it together, (as here we must,) we are only told,

He will give it to as many as the Father hath given him, John xvii. 2. We do find a connexion, (Rom. viii. 30.) of predestination, calling, justification, and glorification: but not of a sinner, as such, with any of these. So observable was that of a noted [a] ancient, "He that hath promised pardon to a penitent, hath not (except with very great latitude) promised repentance to a sinner." To speak here more distinctly,

X. Ever since the apostacy, even upon the first declared constitution of a Redeemer, and in the shining forth of that first cheering ray of gospel light and grace, "the seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head;" a promise was implied of the communication of the Spirit; that curse, which made the nature of man, as the accursed ground, improductive of any thing but briers and thorns; and whereby all holy, vital influences were shut up from men, as in an enclosed, sealed fountain, being now so far reversed, for the Redeemer's sake, as that all communication of the Spirit should no longer remain impossible. And hereupon, some communication of it, in such a degree, as might infer some previous dispositions and tendencies to holy life, seems to have been general; (and is therefore fitly enough wont to be called common grace:) but then, in that lower degree, it is not only resistible, but too generally resisted with mortal efficacy; so as that it builds no living temples; but retiring, leaves men under the most uncomfortable and hopeless (but chosen) shades of death.

When it was said concerning the old world before the flood, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," it is implied, it had been constantly and generally striving, until then; but that it was now time, by the holy, wise, and righteous judgment of Heaven, to surcease, and give them over to the destruction which ensued. Which text, 'tis true, some interpret otherwise; but if we will allow that of the 1 Pet. iii. 18, 19, 20, to mean that, while Noah, that preacher of righteousness, did it externally, Christ was, by his Spirit, inwardly preaching to that generation, who were now since in the infernal prison: not while they were so, (which the text says not,) but in their former days of disobedience on earth; this place will then much agree with the sense, wherein we (with the generality of our interpreters) take the other. Nor are we therefore to think there is no stated rule at all, in reference to this case of God's more general (but less efficacious) striving with men, by his Spirit. For we here see, that before God took any people to be peculiar to him, from the rest of men, the reason which he gives, why his Spirit should not always strive with man, in common (after an intimation of his contemptible meanness, and his own indulgence towards him notwithstanding, and instance given of his abounding wickedness in those days) was, because all "the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually;" (Gen. vi. 3, 4, 5) i. e. that in opposition to the dictates of the blessed Spirit, he gave himself up to the power and government of sensual inclination, his mind, or thinking, considering power and faculty, falling in with the imaginations of sense, and taking part therewith, against the Spirit of God; which imported nothing less than a continual rebelling against that Holy Spirit. Now if we consider this, as the declared reason, why God's Spirit should not always strive, and compare therewith other passages of Scripture; we may collect and perceive, there is some rule of God's proceeding, in this matter, not only settled in heaven, but sufficiently notified on earth also: i. e. concerning the extent, not concerning the limitation, of this gift; how far God would certainly go, in affording it, not how far he would not go. As far as it is sought, complied with, and improved; not how far he would not, in some instances, proceed beyond that. He hath bound us to pray, strive, endeavour, but not tied his own hands from doing surprising acts of favour, above and beyond his promise.

'Tis plain, man had by his apostacy cut off all intercourse between God and him; not only was become regardless of it, but disentitled. It was his inclination not to converse with God; it was his doom that he should not. We have but short and dark hints of God's first transactions with men, but what was written and done afterwards, much enlightens and explains them. There was, no doubt, a much more comprehensive and substantial law, or rule of duty given to Adam, than that positive statute, "Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat;" that was fundamental to it, and transgressed in the violation of it, and therefore some way implied in it; and if all that *more* were only given by internal, mental impression, or was only to be collected from the thorough consideration of God's nature and his own, and of the state of things between God and him; that must have been as intelligible to his yet undepraved mind, as written tables or volumes. There must also, accordingly, be much more implied in the subjoined enforcing sanction, or rule of punishment, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death;" than the vulgar apprehension of dying comes to; for these were the words of the commination or curse upon man, if he should transgress. And are we not plainly told, (Gal. iii. 13, 14.) "Christ hath redeemed us from that curse—that this blessing might come upon us, that we might receive—the Spirit?" Therefore, this curse did shut up the Spirit from us; and this death must signify a suspension of all vital, holy influence, a continual languishment under the stupifying power of a carnal mind, which (Rom. viii. 6.) we are expressly told is death. And when that first evangelical promise was collaterally and implicitly given, wrapt up in the threatening to the serpent, That the woman's seed should break his head; it could mean no less, than that he, that should afterwards, in the fulness of time, become her seed, and be born of a woman, should redeem us from under that curse, and turn it, in all the consequent horrors of it, upon himself. It was therefore further plain also, that no breath of holy divine influence was ever more to touch the spirit of man, had it not been for the Redeemer's interposition, and undertaking.

But he having interposed, undertaken, and performed, as he hath; what is the effect of it? What! that the Spirit should now go forth with irresistible almighty power to convert all the world? That, the event too plainly shows, was not the design. Or that it should immediately supply men with sufficient grace and power to convert themselves? That, no scripture speaks, and it were strange, if such sufficient grace were actually given to all, it should prove effectual with so very few. But the manifest effect is, that the Spirit may now go forth, (the justice, and malediction of the law not reclaiming against it,) and make gentle trials upon the spirits of men, inject some beams of light, and some good thoughts, with which if they comply, they have no cause to despair of more; and so, that which is wont to be called common grace, may gradually lend and tend to that of a higher kind, which is special, and finally saving. That light, and those motions, which have only this tendency, must be ascribed to the Spirit of God, co-operating with men's natural faculties; and not to their own unassisted, natural power alone; for we are not sufficient of ourselves to think one right thought. And now if they rebel against such light and motions violently opposing their sensual imaginations and desires, to their light, and the secret promptings of God's Holy Spirit; they hereby vex his Spirit, provoke him to leave them, and do forfeit even those assistances they have had, and might further have expected, upon the Redeemer's account. All which seems to be summed up, as a stated rule, in that of our Saviour—"To him that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not" (where having manifestly includes use and improvement) "shall be taken away that which he had." Which latter words must be taken not for a prediction, expressive of the certain event, or what shall be; but a commination, expressing what is deserved, or most justly may be. The true meaning or design of a commination, being, that it may never be executed. And to the same sense is that of Prov. i. 23, 24, &c. "Turn at my reproof—I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you: but I called, and they refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way," &c. v. 31.

XI. So far then we are not without a stated rule, as to those previous and superable operations of the Spirit of

[a] S. Jerom.

God; according whereto we may expect them to be continued and increased, or fear they shall be withheld. But now, because all do more or less resist, and thereby deserve they should cease, or commit a forfeiture of them: and sometimes this forfeiture is taken, sometimes it is not; but the grieved Spirit returns and re-enforces his holy motions, even unto victory; where or when he shall do so, we have no certain published rule, whereby to conclude this way, or that. The Son of God (by consent with the Father) here acts as a Plenipotentiary, and Sovereign, quickening whom he will. The Spirit (by consent with him) breathes, in order to the vital production of temples, as the wind—where it listeth; or for regeneration, which is the thing there discoursed of in all that context, and even in the next following words, which apply that similitude; "so is every one that is born of the Spirit," John iii. 8. And we are therefore, elsewhere, warned to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," (Phil. ii. 12, 13.) because God worketh in us, to will, and to do, of his own good pleasure; being under no tie, not quite to desist, and forsake us, at the next opposition he meets with. At least, they that are not within the compass of his covenant (once sincerely entered) can lay no claim, in such a case, to his continuance, or return.

CHAPTER VII.

The sixth head proposed before, now insisted on. That for the purpose of inhabiting this temple, already formed, the Spirit is given by the Emmanuel, as a trustee. The *Oeconomus*, or *chief Steward* of God's household. And by a certain known rule. Giving them, that are to partake therein, the ground of a rightful claim unto this great and most comprehensive gift. Wherewith to be considered, The dueness, amplitude, or comprehensiveness thereof. (1.) The dueness of it. 1. By promise. 2. By this promise, its having the form of a covenant, restipulated on their part. 3. From their state of sonship, as regenerate. Adopted. 4. From their being to receive it by faith. (2.) Its ample extent, measured by the covenant, considered partly in *actu signato*. In *actu exercito*. Infers reconciliation, relation. The summary of the covenant refers to it. The conclusion.

I. FOR the other purpose of inhabiting this temple, when by regeneration it is thus built and prepared, the Redeemer gives the Spirit upon other terms, *viz.* according to the tenure of a certain rule declared and published to the world, and whereby a right thereto accrues unto these regenerate ones. The unregenerate world, especially such as by frequent resistances had often forfeited all gracious communications of that blessed Spirit, have nothing to assure them he will ever regenerate them. But, being now regenerate, and thereby formed into living temples, they may, upon known and certain terms, expect him to inhabit them as such, and to be statedly their Emmanuel; and that as God, even their own God, (Psal. lxvii.) he will bless them, and abide with them, and in them, for that gracious purpose. Why else hath he conquered all their reluctancy, and made them his temples? It was against their (former) will, but according to his own. He at first herein, by rough hewings, might displease them, but he pleased himself, and fulfilled, hereby, "the good pleasure of his own goodness," 2 Thess. i. 11. Nor will now leave his people, because it pleased him to make them his people, 1 Sam. xii. Neither is he now the less pleased that he is under bonds, for he put himself under them, most freely, and his "gifts and callings are without repentance," Rom. xi. But being under bonds, he now puts on a distinct capacity, and treats these his regenerate ones under a differeot notion from that under which he acted towards other men, or themselves before; not as an absolute, uoobliged Sovereign, that might do or not do for them as he would; but as a trustee, managing a trust committed to him by the Eternal Father; as the *Oeconomus*, the *great Steward* of his family; the prime Minister, and Curator of all the affairs of his house and temple, which they are, (1 Cor. iii. 17.) all and every one. [a] For as vast as this temple is, where it is made up of all; and as manifold as it is, when every one is to him a single temple; neither is above the comprehension, nor beneath the condescension, of his large and humble mind. Neither larger diffusion, nor more particular distribution, signifying him to be greater or less, in all, in every one.

He so takes care of all as of every one, and of every one as if he were the only one under his care. *Id.* He is the first-born among many brethren; and as that imports dignity, so it doth employment; it being his part as such to provide for the good state of the family: which is all named from him, both that part in heaven, and that on earth, Eph. iii. 15. Yea, and he may in a true sense be styled the *Pater-familiás, the Father of the family*: though to the *first* in Godhead he is the *Son*, to *us* he is styled the everlasting Father, Isa. ix. 6. Therefore he is under obligation hereto, by his Father's appointment, and his own undertaking.

And that which he hath obliged himself to, is to give the Holy Spirit, or take continual care that it be communicated from time to time, as particular exigencies and occasions shall require. It was a thing full of wonder, that ever he should be so far concerned in our affairs! But being concerned so deeply as we know he hath been; to be incarnate for us; to be made a sacrifice to God for us, that he might have it in his power to give the Spirit, having become a curse for us, that he might be capable of conferring upon us this blessing; 'tis now no wonder he should oblige himself to a continual constant care that his own great and kind design should now not be lost or miscarry. After he had engaged himself so deeply in this design for his redeemed, could he decline further obligation?

And his obligation creates their right, entitles them to this mighty gift of his own Spirit; concerning which we shall consider—The *dueness*, and the *greatness*, or amplitude, of this Gift: or show, that, as their case is now stated, upon their regeneration, they have a pleadable right to this high privilege, the continued communication of the Spirit. And next show, of how large extent this privilege is, and how great things are contained in it. I scruple not to call it a *Gift*, and yet at the same time to assert *their right* to it, to whom it is given; not doubting but every one will see, a right accruing by free-promise (as we shall show this doth) detracts nothing from the freeness of the gift. When the promise only, with what we shall see is directly consequent, produces or creates this right, it is unconceivable that this creature, by resulting naturally, should injure its own parent or productive cause. We shall therefore say somewhat briefly,

II. 1. Of the *dueness* of this continued indwelling presence of the blessed Spirit to the regenerate: (intending to speak more largely of the amplitude and extensiveness of it, on the account afterwards to be given:) And,

(1.) It is due (as hath been intimated) by promise. It is expressly said to be the promise of the Spirit, Gal. iii. 14. But to whom? To the regenerate, to them who are born after the Spirit, as may be seen at large, *chap.* iv. These (as it after follows) are the children and heirs of the promise, which must principally mean this promise, as it is eminently called, Acts ii. 38. "Repent," (which connotes regeneration,) "and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost; for the promise is to you, &c. and to as many as the Lord shall call:" which calling, when effectual, includes regeneration. When (Eph. i. 13.) this blessed Spirit is called the Spirit of promise, what can that mean but the promised Spirit?

(2.) Their right is the more evident; and what is promised the more apparently due, in that the promise hath received the form of a covenant, whereby the covenanters have a more strongly pleadable right and claim; to which the rest of men have no such pretence.

It is true that we must distinguish of the covenant,—as proposed, and entered.

The *proposal* of it is in very general terms, "Ho, every one that thirsts"—Isa. lv. 1. "Incline your ear—and I will make an everlasting covenant with you"—*v.* 3. And so it gives a remote, future right to such as shall enter into it. But only they have a present actual right to what it contains, that have entered into it: and their plea is strong, having this to say; "I have not only an indefinite, or less determinate, promise to rely upon; but a promise upon

[a] Hujus enim Templum, simul omnes, et singuli. Templa sumus.—Omnium Concordiam, et singulus inhabitare dignatur, non in omnibus, quam in singulis major. Quoniam nec mole distenditur, nec partitione minuitur. Aug. de Civ. Dei, lib. 18. cap. 45.

terms expressed, which I have agreed to; and there is now a mutual stipulation between God and me: He offered himself, and demanded me; I have accepted him, and given myself. And hereupon I humbly expect and claim all further needful communications of his Spirit, as the principal promised blessings of this covenant." Such a one may therefore say, as the Psalmist hath taught him, Remember thy word to thy servant, in which thou hast caused me to hope, Psal. cxix. 49. I had never looked for such quickening influences, if thou hadst not caused me, and been the Author to me of such an expectation. Now as thou hast quickened me by thy word, *v.* 50. so quickening me according to thy word. "I will put my Spirit within you," is a principal article of this covenant, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. And this expression of putting the Spirit within, must signify not a light touch upon the soul of a man, but to settle it as in the innermost centre of the soul, in order to a fixed abode.

And how sacred is the bond of this covenant! it is founded in the blood of the Mediator of it. This is, as he himself speaks, the new testament (or covenant) in my blood, Luke xxii. 20. Therefore is this, in a varied phrase, said to be the "blood of the covenant;" and therefore is this covenant said to be everlasting, Heb. xiii. 20. referring to a known maxim among the Hebrews: Pacts, *confirmed by blood*, (*sanguine sancita*,) can never be abolished. "The God of peace—by the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work;" which must imply a continual communication of the Spirit; for it is also added, to do always what is well-pleasing in his sight; which, who can do without such continual aids? "Coming to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, we come to the blood of sprinkling," Heb. xii. 24. He could not mediate for us upon other terms; and upon those, obtains for us the better promises, "spiritual blessings in heavenly things," Eph. i. 3.

And further, this covenant is ratified by his oath who formed and made it. "My covenant will I not break—Once have I sworn," Ps. lxxxix. 34, 35. By these two immutable things, (even to our apprehension,) 'tis impossible for God to lie, Heb. vi. 17, 18. Regeneration is the building of this temple; covenanting on our part contains the dedication of it; and what then can follow but constant possession and use?

(3.) The regenerate, as such, are sons, both by receiving a new nature, even a divine, 2 Pet. i. 4. in their regeneration; and a new title, in (what is always conjunct) their adoption. Now, hereupon the continual supplies of the Spirit in this house (or temple) of his are the children's bread, Luke xi. 13. Because they are sons, therefore God sends the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, Gal. iv. 6. and he is styled the Spirit of adoption, Rom. viii. 14, 15. Therefore have a right to the provisions of their Father's house.

(1.) The Spirit is given unto these children of God upon their faith; which must certainly suppose their previous title for the ground of it. They receive "the promise of the Spirit by faith," (Gal. iii. 14.) as by faith they are God's children, *v.* 26. Receiving the Son, who was eminently so, and to whom the sonship did primarily or originally belong; and believing in his name, they thereupon have *power* or right to become the sons of God, John i. 12. being herein also regenerate, born not of flesh and blood,—but of God. And thus, by faith receiving him, by faith they retain him, or have him abiding in them, as he abides in them: for the union is intimate and mutual, John xv. 5. They *first* receive him upon the gospel offer, which, as was said, gave them a remote right, and now retain him, as having an actual right. He dwells in the heart by faith, Eph. iii. 17. But what he doth, in this respect, his Spirit doth; so he explains himself, when, in those valedictory chapters of St. John's gospel, xiv. xv. xvi. he promises his disconsolate disciples, he would come to them, he would see them, he would manifest himself to them, he would abide with them, within a little while they should see him, &c. intimates to them, that he principally meant all this of a presence to be vouchsafed them by his Spirit, *ch.* xiv. *v.* 16, 17, 18, 19. And he concerns the Father also with himself in the same sort of commerce; (*v.* 20.) "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you;" as also *v.* 21, and 23. Thus in another place, we find the Spirit promiscuously spoken of as the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ; and the inbeing or indwelling of Christ, and of the Spirit, used as expressions signifying the same thing; when also the operation of God is spoken of by the same indwelling Spirit, Rom. viii. 9, 10, 11. Which an eminent father observing, [a] takes occasion to speak of the joint presence of the several persons of the Trinity, with such with whom any one is present, because each bears itself inseparably towards the other, and is united most intimately therewith, *wheresoever one hypostasis* (or persons, as by the Latins we are taught to speak) *is present, there the whole Trinity is present*—Amazing thing! that the glorious Subsistents in the eternal Godhead, should so concentre in kind design, influence, and operation towards a despicable impure worm!

But this conjunction infers no confusion; breaks not the order, wherein each severally acts towards one end. But that, notwithstanding, we may conceive from whom, through whom, and by whom, what was lately a ruinous heap is become an animated temple, inhabited by the Divine presence, wherein we ought not to forget, how eminent and conspicuous the part is of our Lord Christ, and upon how costly terms he obtained, that the blessed Spirit should so statedly, and upon a right claimable by faith, employ his mighty agency in this most gracious and wonderful undertaking! being (as hath been observed) made a curse for us, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit by faith, Gal. iii. 13, 14. Whence also it is said, that after our believing we are sealed with the Spirit of promise; (Eph. i. 13.) *i. e.* by that seal, by which God knows, or owns, or acknowledges, them that are his, (2 Tim. ii. 19.) though they may not always know it themselves. Hereupon also our Lord hath assured us, from them that believe in him, shall flow (as out of the belly of a conduit) rivers of living water, which it is said he spoke of the Spirit, which they that believed should receive, John vii. 37.

Much more might be alleged from many texts of the Old and New Testament to evince the right which believers, or they who are God's more peculiar people, have to the abiding indwelling presence of his Spirit, as the inhabitant of that temple which they are now become.

III. But that matter being plain, we shall proceed to what was next proposed; to show,

(2.) The ample extent and comprehensiveness of this privilege, which I shall the rather enlarge upon, that from thence we may have the clearer ground upon which afterwards to argue;—how highly reasonable and congruous was it, that so great a thing, and of so manifest importance to God's having a temple and residence among men, should not be otherwise communicated than in and by Emmanuel, the Founder and Restorer of this temple.

And we cannot have a truer or surer measure of the amplitude and extensiveness of this gift, than the extent and comprehensiveness of the covenant itself, to which it belongs. To which purpose, let it be considered that this covenant of God in Christ, of which we are now speaking, may be looked upon two ways; *i. e.*

We may view it abstractedly, taking the frame and model of it, as it were *in actu signato*, to be collected and gathered out of the Holy Scriptures. Or we may look upon it as *in actu exercito*, *viz.* as it is *now transacted* and entered into by the blessed God, and this or that awakened, considering, predisposed soul. Now here,

1. Take it the *former way*, and you find this article, concerning the gift or communication of the Holy Ghost; standing there as one great grant contained in the gospel-covenant. And it is obvious to observe, as it is placed there, what aspect it hath upon both the parts of the covenant, I will be your God—you shall be my People. Which will be seen, if,

2. You consider this covenant as *actually entered into*, or as the covenanting parties are treating, the one to draw, the other to enter, this covenant. And so we shall see that

b εξαυσιαν.

a Οταν γαρ η μια της τριαδος υποστασις παρη τοτε παρεστιν η τριας, Christ. in Epist. ad Roman.

our consent, both that God shall be our God, and that we will be his people, with all previous inclinations thereto, and what immediately results from our covenanting, do all depend upon this communication of the Spirit; and otherwise, neither can he do the part of a God to us, nor we, the part that belongs to his people towards him. By all which we shall see the vast extent of the gift. It is the Mediator's part to bring the covenanting parties together. He is therefore said to be the Mediator of the new covenant, Heb. xii. 24. He rendered it possible, by the merit of his blood, that the offended Majesty of heaven might, without injury to himself, consent; and that the Spirit might be given to procure our consent, which, as Mediator or Emmanuel, he gives. When he gives it in so copious an effusion, as to be victorious, to conquer our aversion, and make us cease to be rebellious, then he enters to dwell, Ps. lxviii. 18. Till then, there is no actual covenanting; no plenary consent on our part to what is proposed in the covenant, in either respect: we neither agree that God shall be our God, nor that we will be of his people. This speaks this gift a great thing and of vast extent, looking for the present upon the two parts of the covenant summarily; and afterwards considering what each part more particularly contains in it. But if in practice it be so far done as is requisite to a judicious and preponderating determination of will, (which may yet afterwards admit of higher degrees,) how great a thing is now done! Their state is distinguished from theirs who are strangers to the covenant, who are without Christ, and without God in the world. From hence results,

1. An express reconciliation between God and thee; for this is a league of friendship, enmity ceasing.

2. A fixed special relation: (Ezek. xvi. 8.) "I entered into covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." How great and high a privilege! Relations are said to be of minute entity, but great efficacy. All the Divine Being related to me a worm!

IV. And that all this may be the plainer, let us but consider, more distinctly, what the great *summary* of God's part of this covenant contains; what is the most principal promise of it; the dependence of our part thereon; upon what terms that which is distinct is promised; how far what is distinctly promised, is coincident with this gift of the indwelling Spirit, both in respect of this present, and the future eternal state.

1. The known and usual summary of this covenant, on God's part, is, "I will be their God;" as it is set down in many places of both Testaments. Now, what can be meant, more principally, by his being their God, than giving them his indwelling Spirit? Wherein without it can he do the part of a God to them? By it he both governs and satisfies them: is both their supreme and sovereign Lord, in the one regard, and their supreme and sovereign good, in the other. Doth being their God intend no more than an empty title? or, what would be their so great advantage, in having only a nominal God? Yea, and he is pleased himself to expound it of his continued gracious presence, (2 Cor. vi. 16.) "I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God;" alluding to his continuing his tabernacle among them, as is promised. Lev. xxvi. 11. 12. "I will set my tabernacle among you, and my soul shall not abhor you; and I will walk among you, and I will be your God," &c. And what did that tabernacle signify but this *living temple*, whereof we speak, as a certain type and shadow of it? Agreeably whereto his covenant is expressed, with evident reference to the days of the gospel, and the time of the Messiah's kingdom, (plainly meant by David's being their king and prince for ever,) Ezek. xxxvii. 24, 25, 26, 27. "David, my servant, shall be king over them," (spoken many an age after he was dead and gone,)—"and their prince for ever. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them, it shall be an everlasting covenant with them, and I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God." That *yea*, the exegetical note, is observable, "my sanctuary and tabernacle shall be with them." (i. e. "I will dwell in them," as it is expounded before, 2 Cor. vi. 16. And could it be meant of an uninhabited, desolate sanctuary or tabernacle, that should be with them for evermore?) And why is this his constant inhabiting presence to be with them? The emphatical *yea*, with what follows, informs us: Yea, I will be their God: *q. d.* I have undertaken to be their God, which I cannot make good unto them, if I afford them not my indwelling presence. To be to them a distant God, a God afar off, can neither answer my covenant, nor the exigency of their case. They will but have a God, and no God, if they have not with them, and in them, a divine, vital, inspiriting, inactuating presence, to govern, quicken, support, and satisfy them, and fill them with an all-sufficient fulness. They would soon, otherwise, be an habitation for Ziim and Ochim, or be the temple but of idol gods.

It is therefore evident that this summary of God's part of his covenant, I will be their God, very principally intends his dwelling in them by his Spirit.

V. And the restipulation, on their part, to be his people, (which is generally added in all the places, wherein the other part is expressed,) signifies their faith, by which they take hold of his covenant, accept him to be their God, dedicate themselves to be his people, his peculiar, his mansion, his temple, wherein he may dwell. Now this their self-resigning faith, taken in its just latitude, carries with it a twofold reference to Him, as their sovereign Lord, as their sovereign Good; whom, above all other, they are to obey and enjoy. But can they obey him, if he do not put his Spirit into them, to write his law in their hearts, and "cause them to walk in his statutes?" Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Jer. li. 35. Or can they enjoy him, if they love him not as their best good? which love is the known fruit of his Spirit. Whereupon, after such self-resignation and dedication, what remains, but that "the house of the Lord be filled with the glory of the Lord?" as 2 Chron. vii. 2.

2. Let us consider what is the express, more peculiar kind of the promises of this covenant, in the Christian contradistinct to the Mosaical administration of it. It is evident, in the general, that the promises of the gospel covenant are in their nature and kind, compared with those that belonged to the Mosaical dispensation, more spiritual; therefore called better promises, Heb. viii. 6. They are not promises of secular felicity, of external prosperity, peace, and plenty, as those other most expressly were. It is true indeed that the covenant with Israel, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their seed, was not exclusive of spiritual good things. For the communication of the Spirit was (as hath been noted) the blessing of Abraham, (Gal. iii. 14.) and that, as he was the father of that people, the head of a community, now to be much more extended, and take in the Gentiles, the time being come, when all nations were to be blessed in him, which is said to be the gospel that was preached to Abraham, Gal. iii. 8. But in the mean time, the Spirit was given less generally, and in a much lower measure: wherefore, in that purposed comparison, 2 Cor. iii. between the legal and the evangelical dispensation; though a certain glory did attend the former, yet that glory is said to be no glory, in respect of the so much excelling glory of this latter, v. 10. And the thing wherein it so highly excelled, was the much more copious effusion of the Spirit. That whereas, under the former dispensation, Moses was read for many ages, with little efficacy, a veil being upon the people's hearts, signified by the (mystical) veil wherewith, when he conversed with them, he was wont to cover his face; that comparative inefficacy proceeding from hence, that little of the light, life, and power of the Spirit accompanied that dispensation: now, under the gospel dispensation, the glory of the Lord was to be beheld as in a glass, with unveiled face, so as that, beholding it, we might be changed (so great an efficacy and power went with it) into the same likeness, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord; which is the scope of the latter part of that chapter, from v. 10 to 18. d How great was the splendour and magnificence of Solomon's temple, yet how much more glorious is that which is built of living stones! And as the whole frame of that former economy was always less spiritual, a lower measure of the Spirit always accom-

d Templum Dei edificatum per Testamentum Novum lapidibus vivis gloriosius quam illud quod a Rege Solomone constructum est, &c. Aug de Civ. Dei, l. 18. c. 45.

panying it; so when it stood in competition, as corrival to the Christian dispensation, being hereupon quite deserted by the Spirit, it is spoken of as weak, worldly, carnal, and beggarly, Gal. iv. 9. Col. ii. 20. Heb. ix. 2, 10. Therefore the apostle expostulates with the Galatian Christians, verging towards Judaism; "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?" Gal. iii. 2, 3, and *ch.* iv. from *v.* 22 to 32. Speaking of the two covenants, under allegorical representation, he makes the former, given upon Mount Sinai, to be signified by Agar the bondwoman, and by the terrestrial Jerusalem, which was then in bondage, with her children, as productive but of a servile race, born after the flesh only, as Ishmael was, destitute of the Divine Spirit: (which where it is, there is liberty, 2 Cor. iii. 17.) the other by Sarah, a freewoman, and by the celestial Jerusalem, which is free, with her children, all born from above, of the Divine Spirit; (John iii. 3, 5, as ἄνωθεν there signifies;) which spiritual seed, signified by Isaac, are said at once to be born after the Spirit, and by promise, *v.* 23, 28, 29. And this can import no less than, that the ancient promise, (given long before the law, upon Mount Sinai, *viz.* four hundred and thirty years, Gal. iv. 17, and expressly called the covenant of God, in Christ: most eminently to be made good in the days of the gospel; after the cessation of the Mosaical institution, as it was made before it,) must principally mean the promise of the Spirit. Which is most plain from that of the apostle Peter to his convinced, heart-wounded hearers, Acts ii. 38, 39. "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the *promise* is unto you, and your children, and to all that are afar off," (this promise not being to be confined to them and their children, but to reach the Gentiles also, as Gal. iii. 14.) "even as many as the Lord our God shall call." And surely that which is, by way of excellency, called *the promise*, must be the more principal promise of this covenant; which it is also signified to be, in that account given of it by the prophets, Isa. xliv. 3. and lix. 20, 21. Jer. xxxi. 33. quoted Heb. viii. 10. (where though the Spirit be not expressly named, yet those effects of it are, which manifestly suppose it,) and Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 27. Joel ii. 28. This new covenant is distinguished from the former, by the more certain, more general, and more efficacious communication of the Spirit promised in it, as is plainly implied, Jer. xxxi. and (which refers thereto) Heb. viii. 9, 10, 11.

VI. 3. It will further tend to evidence, that the Spirit is given as a settled Inhabitant, upon the known terms of this covenant: if we consider upon what terms it is promised, what is distinctly but however most conjunctly promised therewith, *viz.* all the relative graces of justification, pardon of sin, and adoption. These are promised, as is apparent, in the same covenant, and upon faith, which is our taking hold of and entering into the covenant, our accepting God in Christ to be our God, and giving up ourselves to be his people; and is (according to that latitude, wherein faith is commonly taken) inclusive of repentance. For a sinner, one before in a state of apostacy from God, cannot take him to be his God, but in so doing he must exercise repentance towards God. His very act of taking him, in Christ, is turning to him through Christ, from the sin by which he had departed and apostatized from him before. Therefore must the indwelling Spirit be given, upon the same certain and known terms as is also expressed in (the before-mentioned) Gal. iii. 14. Eph. i. 13, &c. Acts ii. 38, 39.

4. Now faith and repentance being first given in forming God's temple, consider, how coincident the gift of the Spirit, is an Inhabitant, is with remission of sin, or with whatsoever relative grace as such, is distinct from that which is inherent, subjected in the soul itself, and really transmutative of its subject. But we are to consider withal, how manifestly the latter of these is involved in the former. Giving the Spirit (the root and original of subjective grace) implies two things: 1. Conferring a right to it: 2. Actual communication. The former belongs to relative grace, the latter to real; (as they commonly distinguish:) but the former is in order to the latter, and the latter most certainly follows upon the former. Both are signified by one name of *giving*; and do both, in a sort, make one entire legal act, (though there are distinct physical ones,) which the former (usually) begins, and the latter consummates. Divers things are not herein given, but only a title to, and the possession of, the same thing: nor by divers donations; but by the concurrence of such things as are requisite to make up one and the same.

VII. And let it now be considered, What there is promised in the gospel-covenant, besides what may be comprehended in the gift of the Spirit. We will first set aside what is manifestly not promised in it besides; and then, more closely inquire about what may seem distinctly promised, and see in how great part that residue will be reducible hither.

1. As to what is manifestly not promised besides; it is plain, there is not promised in it a part and portion in a particular land or country on earth, as there was in the old covenant (contra-distinguished to this new one) to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their seed, which land was, we know, called the "land of promise;" and unto which the body of that people had so certain a title, upon the condition of their continued obedience, that they were sure never to be removed out of it; or if they had made a general defection, and were thereupon forsaken of God, and given up to invading enemies, that should dispossess them, they were as sure, upon their general repentance, to be restored, and settled there again; as may be seen in Solomon's prayer, at the dedication of the temple, and God's most gracious and particular answer thereto, and in divers places of the Old Testament besides.

If particular persons brake this covenant, by grosser transgressions, they were to be cut off from this good land, and, by Moses's law, at the mouth of two or three witnesses, to die without mercy; and so, by such execution of justice, the body of the people was kept safe from Divine displeasure; the land was not defiled, so as to spew out its inhabitants.

But if the people did generally revolt, so as that the ordinary methods of punitive justice could have no place, God took the matter into his own hands, and did justice upon them himself, by casting them out. This is the covenant which, it is said, they brake, Jer. xxxi. and Heb. viii. The new gospel covenant is apparently of no such import, or hath no such addutament to the spiritual blessings of it.

Nor again doth it promise, more indefinitely, temporal blessings of any kind, with certainty, upon any condition whatsoever, even of the highest faith, the most fervent love to God, or the most accurate obedience, and irreprehensible sanctity, attainable on earth; as if the best and holiest men should therefore be any whit the more assured of constant health, ease, opulency, or peace in this world. We know the ordinary course of providence (which cannot justly be understood to be a misinterpreter of God's covenant) runs much otherwise; and that such things as concern the good estate of our spirits, and inward man, are the only things we can, upon any terms, be sure of, by this covenant; the tenor of it not warranting us to look upon external good things, as otherwise promised, than so far as they may be subservient to these, and to our better serving the interest and honour of God and the Redeemer; of which things he reserves the judgment to himself. And unto Him, by this covenant, we absolutely devote ourselves to serve and glorify him in his own way, and in whatsoever external circumstances his wisdom and good pleasure shall order for us; being ourselves only assured of this in the general, That all things shall work together for good to us, if we love him, &c. but still esteeming it our highest good (as we cannot but do, if we love him as we ought) to be most serviceable to his glory, and conformable, in our habitual temper, to his will. Spiritual good things, then, are by the tenor of this covenant our only certainties. Other things indeed cannot be the matter of absolute universal promise. Their nature refuses it and makes them incapable. They are but of a mutable goodness; may be sometimes, in reference to our great end, good for us; and sometimes, or in some circumstances, evil and prejudicial. And being in a possibility to become

evil in that relative sense, (as what hinders a greater good, is then an evil,) if they ever be actually so; they are then no longer matter of a promise. The promise would in that case cease to be a promise; for can there be a promise of an evil? It would then necessarily degenerate, and turn into a threatening.

VIII. But it may be said of those good things that are of a higher kind and nature, that respect our souls and our states Godward, there seem to be some vastly different from this of giving the Spirit. Therefore,

2. We are next to inquire what they are, and how far they may be found to fall into this.

Remission of sin is most obvious, and comes first in view, upon this account. And let us bethink ourselves what it is. We will take it for granted, that it is not a mere concealed will or purpose to pardon, on the one hand, (for no one in common speech takes it so; a purpose to do a thing signifies it not yet to be done,) nor mere not punishing, on the other. If one should be never so long only forborne, and not punished, he may yet be still punishable, and will be always so, if he be yet guilty. It is therefore such an act as doth, in law, take away guilt, *i.e.* the *reatum pœnæ*, or dissolve the *obligation to suffer punishment.*

It is therefore to be considered, what punishment a sinner was, by the violated law of works and nature, liable to in this world, or in the world to come; and then what of this, is, by virtue of the Redeemer's sacrifice and covenant, remitted. He was liable to whatsoever miseries in this life God should please to inflict; to temporal death, and to a state of misery hereafter, all comprehended in this threatening, "Thou shalt die the death;" if we will take following scriptures and providences for a commentary upon it.

Now the miseries to which the sinner was liable in this world, were either external, or internal. Those of the former sort, the best men still remain liable to. Those of the inner man were certainly the greater, both in themselves, and in their tendency and consequence; especially such as stand in the ill dispositions of men's minds and spirits Godward, unapprehensiveness of him, alienation from him, willingness to be as without him in the world. For that the spirits of men should be thus disaffected, and in this averse posture towards God, in whom only it could be possible for them to be happy, how could it but be most pernicious to them, and virtually comprehensive of the worst miseries? And whence came these evils to fall into the reasonable, intelligent spirit of man? Was it by God's infusion? Abhorred be that black thought! Nor could it be, if they were not forsaken of God, and the holy light and influence of his Spirit were not withheld. But is more evil inflicted upon men than either the threatening or the sentence of the law contained? That were to say, he is punished above legal desert, and beyond what it duly belonged to him to suffer. Experience shows this to be the common case of men. And had that threatening and sentence concerned Adam only, and not his posterity, how come they to be mortal, and otherwise externally miserable in this world, as well as he? But how plainly is the matter put out of doubt, that the suspension of the Spirit is part (and it cannot but be the most eminent part) of the curse of the law, by that of the apostle, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that this blessing—might come upon us," (even the Gentiles, as well as Abraham's seed,) "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit," Gal. iii. 13, 14.

But now what is there of all the misery duly incumbent upon man in this world, by the constitution of that law of works and nature, remitted and taken off by virtue of the covenant or law of grace or faith, from them that have taken hold of it, or entered into it? Who dare say, God doth not keep covenant with them? And we find they die as well as other men; and are as much subject to the many inconveniences and grievances of human life. And it is not worth the while to talk of the mere notion, under which they suffer them. It is evident that God doth them no wrong, in letting them be their lot; and therefore that as they were, by the law of nature, deserved, so God hath not obliged himself, by the covenant or law of grace, to take or keep them off; for then surely he had kept his word. That he hath obliged himself to do that which is more, and a greater thing, to bless and sanctify them to their advantage and gain, in higher respects, is plain and out of question; which serves our present purpose, and crosses it not.

For upon the whole, that which remains the actual matter of remission, in this world, is whatsoever of those spiritual evils would be necessarily consequent upon the total restraint, and withholding of the Spirit.

And that this is the remission of sin in this life, which the Scripture intends, is plain from divers express places, Acts ii. 37, 38. When the apostle Peter's heart-pierced hearers cry out, in their distress, "What shall we do?" he directs them thus: "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of sins, and ye shall (he adds) receive the Holy Ghost; for the promise is to you, and your children;" *q. d.* "The great promise of the gospel-covenant, is that of the gift of the Holy Ghost. It doth not promise you worldly wealth, or ease, or riches, or honours; but it promises you that God will be no longer a stranger to you, refuse your converse, withhold his Spirit from you; your souls shall lie no longer waste and desolate. But as he hath mercifully approached your spirits, to make them habitable, and fit to receive so great and so holy an intimate, and to your reception whereof, nothing but unremitted sin could be any obstruction; as, upon your closing with the terms of the gospel-covenant, by a sincere believing intuition towards him whom you have pierced, and resolving to become Christians, whereof your being baptized, and therein taking on Christ's badge and cognizance, will be the fit and enjoined sign and token, and by which federal rite, remission of sin shall be openly confirmed, and solemnly sealed unto you; so by that remission of sin the bar is removed, and nothing can hinder the Holy Ghost from entering to take possession of your souls as his own temple and dwelling-place."

We are by the way to take notice, that this fulfilling of the terms of the gospel-covenant is aptly enough, in great part, here expressed by the word *repentance;* most commonly it is by that of *faith.* It might as fitly be signified by the former in this place, if you consider the tenor of the foregoing discourse, *viz.* that it remonstrated to them their great wickedness in crucifying Christ as a malefactor and impostor, whom they ought to have believed in as a Saviour; now to repent of this, was *to believe*, which yet is more fully expressed by that which follows; and be baptized in (or rather into) the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is in the whole plain, that their reception of the Holy Ghost, as a Dweller, stands in close connexion, as an immediate consequent, with their having their sins actually remitted, and that, with their repenting their former refusing of Christ as the Messiah, their now becoming Christians, or taking on Christ's name, whereof their being baptized was to be only the sign, and the solemnization of their entrance into the Christian state, and by consequence, a visible confirmation of remission of sin to them. They are therefore directed to be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι, or unto a covenant-surrender of themselves to Christ, whereof their baptism was, it is true, to be the signifying token for the remission of sins; which remission therefore must be understood connected, not with the sign but with the thing which it signified. And it was only a more explicit repentance of their former infidelity, and a more explicit faith, which the apostle now exhorts them to, the inchoation whereof he might already perceive, by their concerned question, "What shall we do?" intimating their willingness to do any thing that they ought; that their hearts were already overcome and won; and that the Holy Ghost had consequently began to enter upon them: the manifestation of whose entrance is elsewhere, as to persons adult, found to be an antecedent requisite to baptism, and made the argument why it should not be withheld, as Acts x. 47. "Can any man forbid that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we?"

Remission of sin, therefore, as it signifies giving a right to future impunity, signifies giving a right to the participation of the Spirit; the withholding whereof was the principal punishment to be taken off. And as it signifies the actual taking off of that punishment, it must connote the

actual communication of the Spirit. Therefore, upon that faith which is our entrance into the gospel-covenant, the curse which withheld the Spirit is removed, and so we receive the promise of the Spirit (or the promised Spirit) by faith; as is plain in that before mentioned, Gal. iii. 13, 14.

The same reference of giving (or continuing) the Spirit unto forgiveness of sin, we may observe in that of the Psalmist: "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right Spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me;" (Ps. li. 9, 10, 11.) which it is plain was dreaded and deprecated as the worst of evils; but which would be kept off, if iniquity were blotted out. And as to this, there was no more difference in the case, than between one whose state was to be renewed, and one with whom God was first to begin. And that summary of spiritual blessings promised in the new covenant, Jer. xxxi. 31, 32, &c. and Heb. viii. which all suppose the promised gift of the Spirit itself, as the root of them all—"I will put my law in their inward parts, and will write it in their hearts," &c. is all grounded upon this: "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." When therefore the punishment of sin is remitted, *quoad jus*, or a right is granted to impunity, the Spirit is, *de jure*, given; or a right is conferred unto this sacred gift. When actually (upon that right granted) the punishment is taken off, the Spirit is actually given; the withholding whereof was the principal punishment we were liable to, in this present state.

IX. And as to *justification*, the case cannot differ, which itself so little differs from pardon, that the same act is pardon, being done by God as a sovereign Ruler acting above law, *viz.* the law of works; and justification, being done by him as sustaining the person of a judge according to law, *viz.* the law of grace.

Adoption also imports the privilege conferred of being the sons of God. And what is that privilege? (for it is more than a name;) that such are led by the Spirit of God: (Rom. viii. 14.) which Spirit is therefore, as the peculiar cognizance of the state, called the Spirit of adoption, (*v.* 15.) and forms theirs suitably thereto: for it was not fit the sons of God should have the spirits of slaves. 'Tis not the spirit of bondage that is given them, as there it is expressed, but a free generous spirit; not of fear, as there, and 2 Tim. i. 7. but of love and power, and of a sound mind. Most express is that parallel text, Gal. iv. Because they are sons, he hath sent the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, that enables them (as also Rom. viii. 16. speaks) to say, Abba, Father, makes them understand their state, whose sons they are, and who is their Father, and really implants in them all filial dispositions and affections.

Wherefore it is most evident that the relative grace of the covenant only gives a right to the real grace of it; and that the real grace communicated in this life, is all comprehended in the gift of the Spirit, even that which flows in the external dispensations of Providence, not excepted. For as outward good things, or immunity from outward afflictions, are not promised in this new covenant, further than as they shall be truly and spiritually good for us; but we are, by the tenor of it, left to the suffering of very sharp afflictions, and the loss or want of all worldly comforts, with assurance that will turn to our greater spiritual advantage; so the grace and sanctifying influence, that shall make them do so, is all from the same Fountain, the issue of the same blessed Spirit. We only add, that eternal life in the close of all depends upon it, not only as the many things already mentioned do so, that are necessary to it, but as it signified to be itself the immediate perpetual spring thereof. They that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, Gal. vi. 8. And how plainly hath our blessed Lord signified the vast extent of this gift, when by good things in general, Matt. vii. 11. he lets us know he means the Holy Spirit, Luke xi. 13.

We therefore see, that this great gift of the Holy Ghost is vouchsafed entirely upon the Redeemer's account, and by the authority of his office, for the *building* and *inhabiting* the desolated temple of God with men: for the *rebuilding* of it; by that plenipotency, or absolute fulness of power, which, by the sacrifice of himself, he hath obtained should be in him: for the *re-inhabiting* of it, by virtue, and according to the tenor, of that covenant, now solemnly entered; and which was established and ratified in the blood of that same Sacrifice. Wherein appears the dueness of it to the regenernte; or that they have a real right to it, who are born of the Spirit; and have also seen the large amplitude and vast comprehensiveness of this gift. We therefore proceed to what was, in the next place, promised, and wherein, after what hath been said, there will need little enlargement, *i. e.*

X. 2. To give an account, (as was proposed in ch. ix sect. vii.) How highly reasonable it was the Holy Spirit of God should not be vouchsafed for these purposes, upon other terms. And this we shall see,

1. By mentioning briefly, what we have been showing all this while—The *vast extent* and *amplitude* of this gift. Let it be remembered that the most considerable part of the penalty and curse incurred by the apostacy, was the withholding of the Spirit; from which curse in the whole of it Christ was to redeem us, by being made a curse for us. By the same curse, also, our title to many other benefits ceased and was lost, and many other miseries were inferred upon it. But this *one* of being *deprived of the Spirit* did so far surmount all the rest, that nothing else was thought worth the naming with it, when the curse of the law, and Christ's redemption of us from it, are so designedly spoken of together. If only lesser penalties were to have been remitted, or favours conferred of an inferior kind, a recompense to the violated law and justice of God, and the affronted majesty of his government, had been less necessarily insisted on. But that the greatest thing imaginable should be vouchsafed upon so easy terms; and without a testified resentment of the injury done by ruining his former temple, was never to be expected. Nothing was more becoming or worthy of God, than when man's revolt from him so manifestly implied an insolent conceit of his self-sufficiency, and that he could subsist and be happy alone, he should presently withhold his Spirit, and leave him to sink into that carnality which involved the fulness of death and misery in it. ("To be carnally minded is death.") It belonged to the majesty and grandeur of the Deity, it was a part of Godlike state and greatness, to retire and become reserved, to reclude himself, and shut up his holy cheering influences and communications from a haughty miscreant; that it might try and feel what a sort of god it could be to itself: but to return; the state of the case being unaltered and every way the same as when he withdrew, no reparation being made, no atonement offered, had been, instead of judging his offending creature, to have judged himself, to reseind his own sentence as if it had been unjust; to tear his act and deed as if it had been the product of a rash and hasty passion, not of mature and wise counsel and judgment; the indecency and unbecomingness whereof had been the greater and the more conspicuous, by how much the greater and more peculiar favour it was to restore his gracious presence, or (which is all one) the influences of his Holy Spirit. Further consider,

2. That since nothing was more necessary for the restitution of God's temple, it had been strange if, in the constitution of Emmanuel for this purpose, this had been omitted: for it is plain that without it things could never have come to any better state and posture between God and man; God must have let him be at the same distance, without giving him his Spirit. Neither could he honourably converse with man; nor man possibly converse with him. Man would ever have borne towards God an implacable heart. And whereas it is acknowledged, on all hands, his *repentance* at least was necessary both on God's account and his own, that God might be reconciled to him, who without intolerable diminution to himself, could never otherwise have shown him favour. He had always carried about him the *καρδιαν ἀμεταμέλητον*, *the heart that could not repent*. The "carnal mind," which is "enmity against God," is neither subject to him nor can be, had remained in full power; there had never been any stooping or yielding on man's part. And there had remained, besides, all manner of impurities: fleshly lusts had retained the throne; the soul of man had continued a cage of every noisome and hateful thing, the most unfit in all the world

to have been the temple of the holy blessed God. It had neither stood with his majesty to have favoured an impenitent, nor with his holiness to have favoured so impure, a creature. Therefore, without the giving of his Spirit to mollify and purify the spirits of men, his honour in such a reconciliation had never been salved.

And take the case as it must stand on man's part, his happiness had remained impossible. He could never have conversed with God, or taken complacency in him, to whom he had continued everlastingly unsuitable and disaffected. No valuable end could have been attained, that it was either fit God should have designed for himself, or was necessary to have been effected for man. In short, there could have been no temple: God could never have dwelt with man; man would never have received him to dwell.

3. But it is evident this was not omitted in the constitution of Emmanuel. It being provided and procured by his dear expense, that he should have in him a fulness of Spirit: not merely as God; for so in reference to offending creatures it had been enclosed: but as Emmanuel, as a Mediator, a dying Redeemer; for only by such a one, or by him as such, it could be communicated; so was there a sufficiency for this purpose of restoring God's temple. And why was he in this way to become sufficient, if afterwards he might have been waived, neglected, and the same work have been done another way?

4. It could only be done this way, in and by Emmanuel. As such, he had both the natural and moral power in conjunction, which were necessary to effect it.

(1.) The *natural power* of Deity which was in him, was only competent for this purpose. Herein had he the advantage infinitely of all human power and greatness. If an offended secular prince had never so great a mind to save and restore a condemned favourite, who besides that he is of so haughty a pride, and so hardened in his enmity, that he had rather die than supplicate, hath contracted all other vicious inclinations, is become infinitely immoral, debauched, unjust, dishonest, false, and we will suppose stupid, and bereft of the sprightly wit that graced his former conversation; his merciful prince would fain preserve and enjoy him as before; but he cannot change his qualities, and cannot but be ashamed to converse familiarly with him, while they remain unchanged. Now the blessed Emmanuel, as he is God, can, by giving his Spirit, do all his pleasure in such a case. And he hath as such too,

(2.) The *moral power* of doing it most righteously and becomingly of God, *i. e.* upon consideration of that great and noble sacrifice, which as such he offered up. He is now enabled to give the Spirit: he might otherwise do any thing for man rather than this: for it imports the greatest intimacy imaginable. All external overtures and expressions of kindness, were nothing in comparison of it. And no previous disposition towards it, nothing of compliance on the sinner's part, no self-purifying, no self-loathing for former impurities, no smiting on the thigh, or saying, "What have I done," could be supposed antecedent to this communication of the Spirit. The universe can afford no like case, between an offending wretch, and an affronted ruler. If the greatest prince on earth had been never so contumeliously abused by the most abject peasant; the distances are infinitely less, than between the injured glorious Majesty of heaven, and the guilty sinner; the injury done this majesty incomprehensibly greater.

And besides all other differences in the two cases, there is this most important one, as may be collected from what hath been so largely discoursed, that the principal thing in the sentence and curse upon apostate man, was, That God's Spirit should retire and be withheld, so that he should converse with him, by it, no more. The condemning sentence upon a criminal, doth in secular governments extend to life and estate; such a one might be pardoned as to both, and held ever at a distance. If before he were a favourite, he may still remain discourted. Familiar converse with his prince, was ever a thing to which he could lay no legal claim, but was always a thing of free and arbitrary favour. But suppose, in this case of delinquency, the law and his sentence did forbid it for ever; and suppose we that vile insolent peasant, before under obligation to his prince, for his daily livelihood and subsistence, now under condemnation for most opprobrious affronts and malicious attempts against him; he relents not, scorns mercy, defies justice; his compassionate prince rushes, notwithstanding, into his embraces, takes him into his cabinet, shuts himself up with him in secret: but all this while, though by what he does he debases himself, beyond all expectation of decency; the principal thing is still wanting, he cannot alter his disposition. If he could give him a truly right mind, it were better than all the riches of the Indies. This greatest instance of condescension he cannot reach, if he never so gladly would. It is not in his power, even when he joins bosoms, to mingle spirits with him; and so must leave him as incapable of his most valuable end, as he found him.

In the present case, what was in itself so necessary to the intended end, was only possible to Emmanuel; who herein becomes most intimate to us, and in the fullest sense admits to be so called; and was therefore necessary to be done by him: unless his so rich sufficiency, and the end itself, should be lost together.

XI. Thus far we have been considering the temple of God individually taken as each man, once become sincerely good and pious, renewed, united with Emmanuel, *i. e.* with God in Christ, and animated by the Spirit, may be himself a single temple to the most high God.

I might now pass on to treat of the external state of the Christian church, and of the whole community of Christians, who collectively taken, and built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone, in whom fitly framed and builded together, they grow unto an holy temple in the Lord; and are in this compacted state a habitation of God, through the Spirit. Eph. ii. 20. But this larger subject, the outer-court of this temple, is, I find, beset and overspread with scratching briers and thorns. And for the sacred structure itself, though other foundation none can lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. iii. 11, &c. yet some are for superstructing one thing, some another; some gold, silver, precious stones; others wood, hay, stubble. I am, for my part, content, that every man's work be made manifest, when the day shall declare it.

Great differences there have long been, and still are, about setting up (the πτερύγια) the pinnacles, and adjoining certain appendicles, which some have thought may innocently and becomingly belong to it. And very different sentiments there have been about modifying the services of it. Some too are for garnishing and adorning it one way, some another. And too many agitate these little differences, with so contentious heats and angers, as to evaporate the inward spirit and life, and hazard the consumption of the holy fabric itself. Ill-willers look on with pleasure, and do hope the violent convulsions which they behold, will tear the whole frame in pieces, and say in their hearts, "Down with it even to the ground." But it is built on a rock, against which the gates of hell can never prevail!

It ought not to be doubted, but that there yet will be a time of so copious an effusion of the Holy Spirit, as will invigorate it afresh, and make it spring up out of its maclent withered state, into its primitive liveliness and beauty; when it shall, according to the intended spiritual meaning, resemble the external splendour of its ancient figure, Sion, the perfection of beauty; and arise and shine, the glory of the Lord being risen upon it. But if before that time there be a day that shall burn as an oven and make the hemisphere as one fiery vault; a day wherein the jealous God shall plead against the Christian church for its lukewarmness and scandalous coldness in the matter of serious substantial religion; and no less scandalous heats and fervours about trivial formalities, with just indignation, and flames of consuming fire, then will the straw and stubble be burnt up; and such as were sincere, though too intent upon such little trifles, be saved, yet so as through fire.

A twofold effusion we may expect, of the *wrath*, and of the *Spirit* of God. The former to vindicate himself; the other to reform us. Then will this temple no more be termed forsaken; it will be actually, and in fact, what in

right it is always, "Bethel, The house of God, and the gate of heaven." Till then, little prosperity is to be hoped for in the Christian church; *spiritual*, without a large communication of the Spirit, it cannot *have*; *external* (without it) it cannot *bear*. It was a noted [e] pagan's observation and experiment, *How incapable a weak mind is of a prosperous state*. In heaven there will be no need of afflictions: on earth, the distempers of men's minds do both need and cause them. The pride, avarice, envyings, self-conceitedness, abounding each in their own sense, minding every one their own things, without regard to those of another, a haughty confidence of being always in the right, with contempt and hard censures of them that differ, spurning at the royal law of doing as one would be done to, of bearing with others as one would be borne with; evil surmisings, the imperiousness of some, and peevishness of others, to be found among them that bear the Christian name, will not let the church, the house of God, be in peace, and deserve that it should not; but that he should let them alone to punish themselves and one another.

But the nearer we approach, on earth, to the heavenly state, which only a more copious and general pouring forth of the blessed Spirit will infer, the more capable we shall be of *inward* and *outward* prosperity both together. Then will our differences vanish of course. The external pompousness of the church will be less studied, the life and spirit of it much more; and if I may express my own sense, as to this matter, it should be in the words of that r worthy ancient, *viz.* That supposing the option or choice were left me, I would choose to have lived in a time when the temples were less adorned with all sorts of marbles, the church not being destitute of spiritual graces. In the mean time, till those happier days come, wherein Christians shall be of one heart and one way, happy are they that can attain so far to bear one another's yet remaining differences. And since it is impossible for all to worship together within the walls of the same material temple, that they choose ordinarily to do it, where they observe the nearest approach to God's own rule and pattern; and where, upon experience, they find most of spiritual advantage and edification, not despising, much less paganizing, those that are built with them upon the same foundation, because of circumstantial disagreements; nor making mere circumstances, not prescribed by Christ himself, the measures and boundaries of Christian communion, or any thing else that Christ hath not made so: that abhor to say (exclusively) Christ is here, or there, so as to deny him to be any where else; or to confine his presence to this or that party; or to a temple so or so modified, by no direction from himself. Or if any, through mistake, or the prejudices of education and converse, be of narrower minds, and will refuse our communion, unless we will embrace theirs upon such terms as to abandon the communion of all other Christians, that are upon the same bottom with ourselves and them; that even as to them we retain a charitable hope, that our blessed Lord will not therefore exclude them; because, through their too intense zeal for the little things, whereof they have made their partition-wall, they exclude us. If again, we be not too positive, or too prone to dispute about those minute matters that have been controverted by the most judicious and sincere servants of our Lord, on the one hand, and the other, in former days, and with little effect; as if we understood more than any of them, had engrossed all knowledge, and wisdom were to die with us! and that with our bolt, too suddenly shot, we could out-shoot all others that ever had gone before us: if our minds be well furnished with humility, meekness, modesty, sincerity, love to God, and his Christ, and our brethren, no otherwise distinguished, than by their visible avowed relation to him, this will constitute us such temples, as whereunto the blessed God will never refuse his presence. And do more to keep the Christian church in a tolerable good state, till the παλιγγενεσία, the *times of restitution*, come, than the most fervent disputations ever can.

And so I shall take leave of this subject, in hope that, through the blessing of God, it may be of use to some that shall allow themselves to read and consider it; requesting only such as are weary of living as without God in the world, that they defer not to invite, and admit the Divine presence, till they see all agreed about every little thing that belongs to his temple, or that may be thought to belong to it, but resolve upon what is plain and great, and which all that are serious, that have any regard to God, or their own everlasting well-being, cannot but agree in, *i. e.* forthwith to "lift up the everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in." Do it without delay, or disputation. Let others dispute little punctilios with one another as they please; but do not you dispute this grand point with him. Look to Emmanuel; consider him in the several capacities, and in all the accomplishments, performances, acquisitions, by which he is so admirably fitted to bring it about, that God may have his temple in your breast. Will you defeat so kind and so glorious a design? Behold, or listen, doth he not stand at the door, and knock? Rev. iii. 20.

Consider, as exemplary, the temper of the royal Psalmist, how he sware—how he vowed—I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eye-lids, till I have found out a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God! Ps. cxxxii. Yours is a business of less inquisition, less expense! His temple is to be within you. Lament, O bitterly lament the common case, that he may look through a whole world of intelligent creatures, and find every breast, till he open, shut up against him! All agreeing to exclude their most gracious rightful Lord, choosing rather to live desolate without him!

The preparation, or prepared mansion, is a penitent, purged, willing heart! Fall down and adore this most admirable and condescending grace; that the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, who having made a world, and surveying the work of his own hands, inquires, "Where shall be my house, and the place of my rest?" and thus resolves it himself: "The humble, broken, contrite heart! there, there I will dwell!"

If you have such a temple for him, *dedicate it*. Make haste to do so: doubt not its suitableness. 'Tis his own choice, his own workmanship; the regenerate new creature. He himself, as Emmanuel, hath procured and prepared it, knowing what would be most grateful, most agreeable to him: to the most exalted Majesty; the most profound, humble self-abasement. Upon this consummative act, the dedicating of this temple, I might here fitly enlarge; but having published a discourse already some years ago, under the title of *Self-dedication*; (which you may either find annexed to this, or have apart by itself, at your own choice;) thither I refer you. And because this must be a living temple; there is also another extant, upon these words: *Yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead*. That also, such as are inclined may, through God's gracious assisting influence, with eyes lift up to heaven, peruse unto some advantage.

[e] Infirmi est animi, non posse pati divitias. Sen.

[f] αιρεσις μοι. Isidor. Pelus. L. 2. Ep. 236.

THE RECONCILEABLENESS OF

GOD'S PRESCIENCE

OF THE SINS OF MEN,

WITH THE

WISDOM AND SINCERITY OF HIS COUNSELS, EXHORTATIONS, AND WHATSOEVER MEANS HE USES TO PREVENT THEM.

IN A LETTER TO THE HON. ROBERT BOYLE, Esq.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A POSTSCRIPT IN DEFENCE OF THE SAID LETTER.

Sir,

The veneration I have long had for your name, could not permit me to apprehend less obligation than that of a law, in your recommending to me this subject. For within the whole compass of intellectual employment and affairs, none but who are so unhappy as not at all to know you, would dispute your right to prescribe, and give law. And taking a nearer view of the province you have assigned me, I must esteem it alike both disingenuous and undutiful, wholly to have refused it. For the less you could think it possible to me to perform in it, the more I might perceive of kindness allaying the authority of the imposition; and have the apprehension the more obvious to me that you rather designed in it mine own advantage, than that you reckoned the cause could receive any, by my undertaking it.

The doubt, I well know, was mentioned by you as other men's, and not your own; whose clear mind, and diligent inquiry, leave you little liable to be encumbered with greater difficulties. Wherefore that I so soon divert from you, and no more allow these papers to express any regard unto you, till the shutting of the discourse, is only a seeming disrespect or indecorum, put in the stead of a real one. For after you have given them the countenance, as to let it be understood you gave the first rise and occasion to the business and design of them; I had little reason to slur that stamp put upon them, by adding to their (enough other) faults, that of making them guilty of so great a misdemeanor and impertinency, as to continue a discourse of this length, to one that hath so little leisure or occasion to attend to any thing can be said by them.

Sect. I. What there is of difficulty in this matter I cannot pretend to set down in those most apt expressions wherein it was represented to me, and must therefore endeavour to supply a bad memory out of a worse invention. So much appears very obvious, that ascribing to the ever blessed God, among the other attributes which we take to belong to an every way perfect Being, a knowledge so perfect as shall admit of no possible accession or increase; and consequently the prescience of all future events, as whereof we doubt him not to have the distinct knowledge when they shall have actually come to pass. Since many of those events are the sinful actions or omissions of men, which he earnestly counsels and warns them against; this matter of doubt cannot but arise hereupon, *viz.* "How it can stand with the wisdom and sincerity which our own thoughts do by the earliest anticipation challenge to that ever happy Being, to use these (or any other means) with a visible design to prevent that, which in the mean time appears to that all-seeing eye sure to come to pass." So that, by this representation of the case, there seem to be committed together,—either, first, God's wisdom with this part of his knowledge, for we judge it not to consist with the wisdom of a man, to design and pursue an end, which he foreknows he shall never attain:—or secondly, the same foreknowledge with his sincerity and uprightness, that he seems intent upon an end, which indeed he intends not. The matter then comes shortly to this sum. Either the holy God seriously intends the prevention of such foreseen sinful actions and omissions, or he doth not intend it. If he do, his wisdom seems liable to be impleaded, as above. If he do not, his uprightness and truth.

My purpose is not, in treating of this affair, to move a dispute concerning the fitness of the words prescience or foreknowledge, or to trouble this discourse with notions I understand not, of the indivisibility and unsuccessiveness of eternal duration, whence it would be collected there can be no such thing as first or second, fore or after, knowledge in that duration; but be contented to speak as I can understand, and be understood. That is, to call that foreknowledge which is the knowledge of somewhat that as yet is not, but that shall sometime come to pass. For it were a mere piece of legerdemain, only to amuse inquirers whom one would pretend to satisfy; or to fly to a cloud for refuge from the force of an argument, and avoid an occurring difficulty by the present reliefless shift of involving oneself in greater. Nor shall I design to myself so large a field as a tractate concerning the Divine prescience: so as to be obliged to discourse particularly whatsoever may be thought to belong to that theological topic. But confine the discourse to my enjoined subject. And offer only such considerations as may some way tend to expedite or alleviate the present difficulty.

Sect. II. It were one of the greatest injuries to religion, a subversion indeed of its very foundations, and than by doing which, we could not more highly gratify atheistical minds, instead, and under pretence of ascribing perfections to the nature of God, to ascribe to it inconsistencies, or to give a self-repugnant notion of that adorable Being, the parts whereof should justle and not accord with one another. And yet equal care is to be taken, lest while we endeavour to frame a consistent notion of God, we reject from it any thing that is truly a perfection, and so give a maimed one. Whereby we should undo our own design, and by our over-much caution to make our conception of him agree with itself, make it disagree to him. For to an absolutely perfect being, no other can agree than that, which not only is not made up of contradictions; but which also comprehends in it all real perfections either explicitly, or which leaves room for all, by not positively excluding any of them. Which to do, and afterwards to assign that as the proper notion of God, were itself the greatest contradiction. We need therefore to be very wary, lest we pronounce too hastily concerning any thing, which to our most sedate thoughts, appears simply a perfection in itself, that it carries with it a repugnancy to somewhat else, necessary to be ascribed to him.

We are first to suspect (as there is greatest cause) and inquire whether the ail be not wholly in our own minds. Which in this and such like cases, we certainly shall, upon due reflection, find labouring under the natural defect of that incomprehensive narrowness that is, in some degree, unavoidably followed with confusion and indistinctness of thoughts. And may perhaps find cause to accuse them of the more culpable evils, both of slothfulness, that withholds them from doing what they can, and self-conceit, by which they imagine to themselves an ability of doing what they cannot. It cannot be unobserved by them that have made themselves any part of their own study, that it is very incident to our minds, to grasp at more than they can compass; and then, through their own scantiness, (like the little hand of a child,) to throw away one thing that hath pleased us, to make room for another, because we cannot comprehend both together. It is not strange, that our so straitly limited understandings should not be able to lodge commodiously the immense perfections of a Deity; so as to allow them liberty to spread themselves in our thoughts in their entire proportions. And because we cannot, we complain, when we feel ourselves a little pinched that the things will not consist; when the matter is, that we have unduly crowded and huddled them up together, in our incomprehensive minds, that have not distinctly conceived them.

And though this consideration should not be used for the protection of an usurped liberty of fastening upon God, arbitrarily and at random, what we plense; (as indeed what so gross absurdity might not any one give shelter to by such a misapplication of it?) we ought yet to think it seasonably applied, when we find ourselves urged with difficulties on one hand and the other; and apprehend it hard, with clearness and satisfaction, to ascribe to God, what we also find it not easy not to ascribe. Nor would it be less unfit to apply it for the patronage of that slothfulness wherein our discouraged minds are sometimes too prone to indulge themselves. To which purpose I remember somewhat very apposite in Minucius Felix, that many, through the mere tediousness of finding out the truth, do rather, by a mean succumbency, yield to the first specious show of any opinion whatsoever, than be at the trouble, by a pertinacious diligence, of applying themselves to a thorough search. Though the comprehension of our minds be not infinite, it might be extended much further than usually it is, if we would allow ourselves with patient diligence to consider things at leisure, and so as gradually to stretch and enlarge our own understandings. Many things have carried the appearance of contradiction and inconsistency, to the first view of our straitened minds, which afterwards we have, upon repeated consideration and endeavour, found room for, and been able to make fairly accord, and lodge together.

Especially we should take heed lest it be excluded by over-much conceitedness, and a self-arrogating pride, that disdains to be thought not able to see through every thing, by the first and slightest glance of a haughty eye; and peremptorily determines that to be unintelligible, that an arrogant and uninstructed mind, hath only not humility enough to acknowledge difficult to be understood. Whence it is too possible some may be over-prone to detract from God what really belongs to him, lest any thing should seem detracted from themselves, and impute imperfections to him rather than confess their own. And may be so overascribing to themselves, as to reckon it a disparagement not to be endured, to seem a little puzzled for the present, to be put to pause, and draw breath awhile, and look into the matter again and again; which if their humility and patience would enable them to do, it is not likely that the Author of our faculties would be unassisting to them, in those our inquiries which concern our duty towards himself. For though in matters of mere speculation, we may be encountered with difficulties, whereof perhaps no mortal can ever be able to find out the solution, (which is no great prejudice, and may be gainful and instructive to us,) yet as to what concerns the object of our religion, it is to be hoped we are not left in unextricable entanglements; nor should think we are till we have made our utmost trial. The design being not to gratify our curiosity, but to relieve ourselves of uncomfortable doubtfulness in the matter of our worship, and (in a dutiful zeal towards the blessed object thereof) to vindicate it against the cavils of ill-minded men.

Sect. III. But if the unsuccessfulness of often repeated endeavours make us despair of being able, with so full satisfaction, to reconcile some things which we have thought were to be attributed to God; it will be some relief to us, if we find the things about which the doubt lies, are not of the same order, nor such as with equal evidence and necessity are to be affirmed of him. And when we make a comparison, we may find ourselves at a certainty concerning those his attributes which most commonly, and at the first view, approve themselves to every man's understanding. Among which we little hesitate, (as we are most concerned not to do,) about those which carry with them the import of moral goodness; and which render the object of our religion, at once, both most venerable and lovely. For none do more naturally obtain for common notions concerning him; so as even to prevent ratiocination or argument, with whomsoever the apprehension of his existence hath place.

Every man's mind, it being once acknowledged that there is a God, refuses to conceive otherwise of him, than that he is holy, just, merciful, true, &c. and rejects with abhorrence the notion of an impure, unrighteous, cruel, deceitful Deity. As for those that, by a long train of our own more uncertain and lubricous reasonings, we endeavour to deduce; if we find ourselves constrained any where to admit a diffidence, it were rather to be placed here. For it is at first sight evident, since God is most certainly willing to be known of them that are sincerely willing to know him; that what is a natural impression stamped by his own hand on every man's mind, hath more of absolute certainty, than what depends on metaphysical subtlety; whereof so very few are capable, and whereby divers pretenders thereto, do so frequently (and perhaps very dangerously) insnare themselves. And it is of far greater importance, such a notion of God be entertained, as whereby he may be rendered amiable, and an inviting object of love, (the very life and soul of all religion,) than such as shall be the result, and entertainment, only of scholastic wit.

Yet also, since it is very manifest that man is now become a degenerate creature, and in an apostacy from God, he is very little to be trusted with the framing his own idea of him; being certainly most unapt to allow any thing a place in it, that would have an unfavourable aspect upon his vicious inclinations and his guilty state. And the contagion of man's sinfulness having spread itself as far as he hath propagated his own nature; so as no notion in his mind can be more common than the perversion and distemper of his mind itself; the possibility and danger is very obvious, of mistaking a dictate of depraved nature for an authentic common notion. And though these are not impossible to be distinguished, and in some cases very easy, as when men find it imposed unavoidably,

upon them, to apprehend and acknowledge some things which they are very unwilling should be true, (in which case their sentiments have the same right to be believed as the testimony of an enemy on the opposite party's behalf,) we have yet no reason to neglect any other means, whereby we may be more certainly directed how to conceive of God, or what we are to attribute to him, and what not.

SECT. IV. Nor can we be at a greater certainty, than in admitting such things to belong to the blessed God as he plainly affirms of himself; or any way, by his word, evidently discovers to belong to him. For as none knows the things of man, but the spirit of man that is in him, so the things of God are known to none but the Spirit of God.[a] Taking therefore his own word for our measure in the present case, (which I will suppose the reader not to think it unreasonable to appeal to; and what is here said, is intended only for those that have that estimate of the writings wont to go under that name,) what it says of him (much more what it proves) will no doubt be admitted for certain truth. Though, if it say such things, as, to us, seem not so manifestly to agree with one another, our endeavour must be the more earnest and solicitous (as also it ought to be the more modest) to discuss, and remove the ἐναντιοφανὲς or whatsoever semblance of disagreement. And whosoever concern themselves to peruse that venerable book, will find every where, on the one hand, proclaimed and magnified in it, (what our own minds cannot but have been pre-possessed of,) the most exquisite wisdom of God, whereby he forms and contrives the methods of all his dispensations, and disposes them in the aptest subserviency to his own great and most importaat ends: that "all his ways are judgment,"[b] and that he "worketh all things according to the counsel of his will."[c] In sum, that all wisdom is appropriated to him, that he is celebrated in the style of "God, only wise."[d] Nor are we therefore to think it straage, if, many times, we are not able to trace him out, or understand the reason of every thing he thinks fit to do. For the paths of the more perfect wisdom, must therefore be expected to be the more abstruse, and remoter from common apprehension.

How often do we find ourselves so far outgone by wise and designing men, as that we are sometimes constrained to confess and admire their great prudence and conduct (when they have effected their purposes) in those managements, which we have before beheld, either with silent ignoraace, or perhaps, not without censure. How much less should the wisest of men regret it, to find all their conjectures exceeded by the infinite wisdom: in the contemplation whereof, we find the great apostle (notwithstanding the vast capacity of his divinely enlightened understanding) exclaiming in a transport, O the depths![e] And when our eyes tell us, from so manifest stupendous effects, how far we are exceeded by him in power, it were reasonable to expect he should surpass us proportionably in the contrivances of his wisdom also. And whereas the conjunction is rare, among men, of deep political wisdom with integrity and strict righteousness; this proceeds from the imperfection and insufficiency of the former in great part, that they know not how to compass their designs, unless often, by supplying their want of wisdom, out of the spoil and violation of their justice and honesty. Otherwise, these are things not altogether so out of credit in the world, but that men would rather accomplish their purposes by fair and unexceptionable means, if they could tell how. Only the respect and deference they have for them is less, than what they bear to their own interests and ends.

But besides the natural, inflexible rectitude of the Divine will, we are secured, from his all-sufficiency, that we shall never be fraudulently imposed upon by any of his declarations unto the children of men. For there is nothing to be gained by it: and we cannot conceive what inducement he should have, to make use of any so mean and pitiful shifts for the governing of his creatures, whom he spontaneously raised out of nothing, and hath so perfectly within his power. Unless we should be so most intolerably injurious to him, as to imagine a worse thing of him than we would of the worst of men, that he loved falsehood for its own sake. And that against his so constantly professed detestation of it, the declared repugnancy of it to his nature, and the even tenor of his word (every where agreeing with itself herein) so often describing him by that property, "God that cannot lie." And, with the same positiveness, avowing his own uprightness, and requiring it, expressing his great love to it, and the high delight he takes to find it, in his intelligent creatures. The righteous God loveth righteousness, and with his countenance doth he behold the upright.[f] Nor is his testimony the less to be regarded for that it is laudatory, and of himself. For we are to consider the prerogative of him that testifies, and that if he were not ἀνρώπινος he were not God. Besides that his giving us this or any representation of himself (to whom it were enough to enjoy his own perfections) is a vouchsafement, and done of mere grace and favour to us, that we may by it be induced to place with satisfaction our unsuspicious trust and confidence in him. As also, that he says in all this, no other thing of himself, than what our own minds, considering him as God, must acknowledge most worthy of him, and agreeing to him with the most apparent necessity. This part, therefore, of the idea of God hath so firm a foundation, both in the natural complexion of our own minds, and the report which his word makes of him, that on this hand we are hemmed in as by a wall of adamant: and cannot have the thought of defending his prescience, by intrenching upon his wisdom and truth, without offering the highest violence both to him and ourselves.

SECT. V. On the other hand also, as it cannot but seem to us a higher perfection to know all things at once, than gradually to arrive to the knowledge of one thing after another; and so proceed from the ignorance of some things to the knowledge of them; and that nothing is more certain, than that all possible perfection must agree to God; so we find his own word asserting to him that most perfect knowledge which seems to exclude the possibility of increase; or that any thing should succeed into his knowledge. For how plainly is it affirmed of him that he knows all things. And even concerning such future things as about which our present inquiry is conversant, the affirmation is express and positive. I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.[g] Nor is the affirmation naked, and unfortified. For in the same sacred records, we have the same thing both affirmed, and proved: inasmuch as we find, in a great part thereof, are contained things foretold by most express prophecy, unto which the events recorded in other parts (and many of them in other unquestioned writings besides) have so punctually corresponded, as to leave no place for doubt or cavil. Instances are so plain and well known that they need not be mentioned. And surely what was so expressly foretold could not but have been foreknown. It seems then an attempt also equally hopeless and unrelieving, as it were adventurous and bold, to offer at the protection of his wisdom and sincerity, by assaulting his prescience or certain foreknowledge of whatsoever shall come to pass. And that their defence is not to be attempted this way, will further most evidently appear from hence, that it is not impossible to assign particular instances of some or other most confessedly wicked actions; against which God had directed those ordinary means of counselling and dehorting men, and which yet it is most certain he did foreknow they would do. As though it was so punctually determined even[h] to a day, and was (though not so punctually[i]) foretold unto Abraham, how long, from that time, his seed should be strangers in a land that was not theirs; yet how frequent are the counsels and warnings sent to Pharaoh to dismiss them sooner; yea, how often are Moses and Aaron directed to claim their liberty, and exhort Pharaoh to let them go, and at the same time told,[l] he should not hearken to them. Nor indeed is it more seldom said that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, lest he should. Though it may be a doubt whether those passages be truly

a 1 Cor. ii. 11. b Deut. xxxii. 4. c Eph. i. 11.
d Rom. xvi. ult. e Rom. xi. 33. f Psal. xi. 7.
g Isa. xlvi. 9, 10. with chap. xl. 22 23.

h Exod. xi. 4, 1. i Gen. xv. 3.
k What there is of difficulty or doubt about this prophecy, see fully cleared in the late letter to the Dean. l Exod. iv. &c.

translated; for the gentler meaning of the Hebrew idiom being well known, it would seem more agreeable to the text, to have expressed only the intended sense, than to have strained a word to the very utmost of its literal import, and manifestly beyond what was intended. After the like manner is the prophet Ezekiel sent to the revolted Israelites. And directed to speak to them with God's own words, the sum and purport whereof was to warn and dehort them from their wicked ways lest they should die; when as yet it is plainly told him, but the house of Israel will not hearken to thee, for they will not hearken to me.[m] Unto which same purpose it is more pertinent, than necessary to be added, that our Saviour's own plain assertions that he was the Son of God, the many miracles by which he confirmed it, and his frequent exhortations to the Jews to believe in him thereupon, had a manifest tendency to make him be known and believed to be so, and consequently to prevent that most horrid act of his crucifixion; for it is said, and the matter speaks itself, that, if they had known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory:[n] notwithstanding that it was a thing which God's hand and counsel had determined before to be done.[o] That is, foreseeing wicked hands would be prompted and ready for this tragic enterprise, his sovereign power and wise counsel concurred with his foreknowledge so only, and not with less latitude, to define or determine the bounds and limits of that malignity, than to let it proceed unto this execution. And to deliver him up (not by any formal resignation, or surrender, as we well know, but permitting him) thereunto. Though the same phrase of delivering him hath, elsewhere, another notion, of assigning or appointing him to be a propitiation for the sins of men, by dying; which was done by mutual agreement between both the parties, him that was to propitiate, and him who was to be propitiated. In which respect our Saviour is also said to have given himself for the same purpose;[p] which purpose it was determined not to hinder prepared hands to execute in this way.

Now if it did appear but in one single instance only, that the blessed God did foreknow, and dehort from the same act, it will be plainly consequent, that his warnings, and dehortations from wicked actions in the general, can with no pretence be alleged as a proof against his universal prescience. For if the argument, he dehorted from the doing such an action, therefore he did not foreknow it, would be able to conclude any thing, it must be of sufficient force to conclude universally; which it cannot do, if but a single instance can be given, wherein it is apparent he did both dehort and foreknow. It can only pretend to raise the doubt which we have in hand to discuss, how fitly, and with what wisdom and sincerity, he can be understood to interpose his counsels and monitions in such a case.

Sect. VI. Wherefore nothing remains but to consider how these may be reconciled, and made appear to be no way inconsistent with one another. Nor are we to apprehend herein so great a difficulty, as it were to reconcile his irresistible pre-determinative concurrence to all actions of the creature, even those that are in themselves most malignantly wicked, with the wisdom and righteousness of his laws against them, and severest punishments of them according to those laws. Which sentiments must, I conceive, to any impartial understanding, leave it no way sufficiently explicable, how the influence and concurrence, the holy God hath to the worst of actions, is to be distinguished from that which he affords to the best; wherein such inherently evil actions are less to be imputed to him who forbids them, than to the malicious tempter who prompts to them, or the actor that does them; or wherein not a great deal more. And leave it undeniable, that the matter of all his laws, in reference to all such actions that ever have been done in the world, was a simple and most natural impossibility. Nothing being more apparently so, than either not to do an action whereto the agent is determined by an infinite power; or to separate the malignity thereof, from an intrinsically evil action; and that this natural impossibility of not sinning was the ineluctable fate of his (at first) innocent creatures. Who also (as the case is to be conceived of with the angels that kept not their first station) must be understood irreversibly condemned to the suffering of eternal punishment, for the doing of what it was (upon these terms) so absolutely impossible to them to avoid.

Sect. VII. This too hard province the present design pretends not to intermeddle in, as being neither apprehended manageable, for those briefly mentioned considerations, and many more that are wont to be insisted on in this argument.

Nor indeed at all necessary; for though many considerations have been, with great subtlety, alleged and urged to this purpose, by former and some modern writers, (which it is besides the design of these papers severally to discuss,) these two, which seem the most importunate and enforcing, will, I conceive, be found of little force; and then, the less strength which is in others, will be nothing formidable: *viz.* that it necessarily belongs to the Original and Fountain Being, to be the first Cause of whatsoever being; and consequently that what there is of positive being in any the most wicked action, must principally owe itself to the determinative productive influence of this first and sovereign Cause. Otherwise it would seem there were some being that were neither *primum*, nor *a primo*.

And again, (which we are more concerned to consider, because it more concerns our present subject,) that it were otherwise impossible God should foreknow the sinful actions of men, (many whereof, as hath been observed, he hath foretold,) if their futurition were a mere contingency, and depended on the uncertain will of the subordinate agent, not determined by the supreme. But neither of these seem able to infer the dismal conclusion of God's concurring by a determinative influence unto wicked actions. Not the former: for it may well be thought sufficiently to salve the rights and privileges of the first Cause, to assert that no action can be done but by a power derived from it; which in reference to forbidden actions, intelligent creatures may use or not use as they please, without over-asserting, that they must be irresistibly determined also, even to the worst of actions done by them. Besides that it seems infinitely to detract from the perfection of the ever-blessed God, to affirm he was not able to make a creature, of such a nature, as, being continually sustained by him, and supplied with power every moment suitable to its nature, should be capable of acting unless whatsoever he thus enables, he determine (that is, for it can mean no less thing, impel it to do also. And except it were affirmed impossible to God to have made such a creature, (that is, that it implied a contradiction, which certainly can never be proved,) there is no imaginable pretence why it should not be admitted he hath done it; rather than so fatally expose the wisdom, goodness, and righteousness of God, by supposing him to have made laws for his reasonable creatures, impossible, through his own irresistible counter-action, to be observed; and afterwards to express himself displeased, and adjudge his creatures to eternal punishments, for not observing them.

I am not altogether ignorant what attempts have been made to prove it impossible, nor again, what hath been done to manifest the vanity of those attempts. But I must confess a greater disposition to wonder, that ever such a thing should be disputed, than dispute so plain a case. And that a matter whereupon all moral government depends, both human and divine, should not have been determined at the first sight. 'Tis not hard for a good wit to have somewhat to say for any thing. But to dispute against the common sense of mankind, we know beforehand, is but to trifle; as the essay to prove the impossibility of local motion. The notion of the goodness and righteousness of God, methinks, should stick so close to our minds, and create such a sense in our souls, as should be infinitely dearer to us than all our senses and powers. And that we should rather choose to have our sight, hearing, and motive power, or what not besides disputed, or even torn away from us, than ever suffer ourselves to be disputed into a belief, that the holy and good God should irresistibly determine the wills of men to, and punish, the same thing. Nor is it difficult to urge more puzzling sophisms against the former, than for this latter. But the efforts of a sophistical wit against sense, and more against the sense of our souls, and most of all against the entire

m Ezek. iii. 4. n 1 Cor. ii. o Acts iv. 28. p Tit. ii. 14.

sum and substance of all morality and religion, at once, are but like the attempt to batter a wall of brass with straws and feathers. Nor is the assault, on this part, more feeble and impotent, than the defence is wont to be of the other. For I would appeal to the quick refined sense of any sober and pious mind, after serious, inward consultation with itself; being closely urged, with the horror of so black a conception of God, that he should be supposed irresistibly to determine the will of a man to the hatred of his own most blessed self, and then to exact severest punishments for the offence done, what relief it would now be to it, to be only taught to reply, that man is under the law, and God above it. A defence that doubles the force of the assault. What! that God should make a law, and necessitate the violation of it! and yet also punish that violation! And this be thought a sufficient salvo, that himself is not subject to any law! Will a quick-scented, tender spirit, wounded by so unsufferable indignity, offered to the holy God, be any whit eased or relieved, by the thin sophistry of only a collusive ambiguity in the word law? which sometimes signifies the declared pleasure of a ruler to a subject, in which sense any eye can see God can be under no law, having no superior. But not seldom, also, an habitual fixed principle and rule of acting after one steady tenor. In which sense how manifest is it, that the perfect rectitude of God's own holy gracious nature is an eternal law to him, infinitely more stable, and immutable, than the ordinances of day and night! Or what relief is there in that dream of the supposed possibility of God's making a reasonable creature with an innocent aversion to himself? For what can be supposed more repugnant? or what more impertinent? If innocent, how were it punishable? A law already made in the case, how can it be innocent?

But whatsoever strength there may be in arguments, and replies, to and fro, in this matter; that which hath too apparently had greatest actual efficacy, with many, hath been the authority and name of this or that man of reputation, and the force of that art of imputing a doctrine, already under a prejudicial doom, to some or other ill-reputed former writer. I profess not to be skilled in the use of that sort of weapons. And what reputation ought to be of so great value with us, as that of God and religion? Though if one would take that invidious course, it were easy to evince, that such a predeterminative influx to the production of all whatsoever actions, is the dearly espoused notion of one, of as deservedly an ill character, as ever had the name of a Christian writer. And whether he would not take that name for a dishonour to him, I pretend not to know. But let us take this sober account of the present case, that in this temporary state of trial, the efficacious grace of God is necessary to actions sincerely good and holy; which therefore all ought undespairingly to seek and pray for. But that in reference to other actions, he doth only supply men with such a power, as whereby they are enabled, either to act, or, in many instances, (and especially when they attempt any thing that is evil,) to suspend their own action. And surely it carries so unexceptionable a face and aspect with it, that no man that is himself sober, will think the worst name, of whosoever shall have said the same thing, were a prejudice to it; or should more oblige him to reject it, than we would think ourselves obliged to throw away gold, or diamonds, because an impure hand hath touched them; or to deny Christ, because the devils confessed him. Though also, if any should impute the so stating of this matter to any author, that hath been wont to go under an ill name and character, in the Christian church; there were a great oversight committed; to say no harder thing of it. For the writers whose names would be supposed a prejudice, have neither said the same thing, nor with the same design. They would have this indetermination of the power afforded to the creature, to be so universal, as to extend equally to evil actions and to good. And have asserted it with a manifest design to exclude efficacious grace, in reference to the best actions. Whereas this account would make it not of so large extent: (as it were very unreasonable any should:) for though it may well be supposed extendible to many actions, besides those that are intrinsically evil, or to any that are not spiritually good, yet nothing enforces (nor can it be admitted) that it should actually and always extend so far. For who can doubt but God can overrule the inclinations and actions of his creature, when he pleases; and, as shall best consist with his wisdom, and the purity of his nature, either lay on or take off his determining hand. Nor is it here asserted with any other design, than to exempt the blessed God, as far as is possible, from a participation in the evil actions of his creatures; in the meantime entitling him most entirely to those that are sincerely good. Though it must be left imputable to men themselves (it being through their own great default) if they have not the grace which might effectually enable them to do such also. And as for the latter. This supposed indetermination of the human will, in reference, especially, to wicked actions, is far from being capable of inferring, that God cannot therefore foreknow them; or any thing more, than that we are left ignorant of the way, how he foreknows them. And how small is the inconvenience of acknowledging that, yea, and how manifest the absurdity of not acknowledging the like, in many cases! since nothing is more certain, than that God doth many things besides, whereof the manner how he does them, we can neither explicate nor understand! For neither is it difficult to assign instances more than enough of actions done by ourselves of the manners whereof we can give no distinct account, as those of vision, intellection, with sundry others.

Some have been at great pains we well know to explain the manner of God's foreknowledge of these futurities, otherwise than by laying the foundation thereof in his supposed efficacious will or decree of them. They that can satisfy themselves with what Thomas and Scotus have attempted, and the followers of them both; that can understand what it is, with the one, for all things to be eternally present to the Divine intellect in *esse reali*, and not understand by it, the world to have been eternal. Or, what with the other, that they be all present only in *esse representativo*, and not understand by it barely that they are all known, and no more, (which seems like the explication of the word invasion by invasion,) let them enjoy their own satisfaction. For my own part, I can more easily be satisfied to be ignorant of the modus or medium of his knowledge, while I am sure of the thing; and I know not why any sober-minded man might not be so too. While we must all be content to be ignorant of the manner, yea, and nature too, of a thousand things besides, when that such things there are, we have no doubt. And when there are few things, about which we can, with less disadvantage, suffer our being ignorant; or with less disreputation, profess to be so. It cannot therefore be so affrightful a thing, to suppose God's foreknowledge of the most contingent future actions, well to consist with our ignorance how he foreknows them, as that we should think it necessary to overturn and mingle heaven and earth, rather than admit it.

Sect. VIII. Wherefore waving that unfeasible, unnecessary, and unenjoined task, of defending God's predeterminative concourse unto sinful actions; our encounter must only be of the more superable difficulty, to reconcile his prescience of them with his provisions against them, *i. s.* how fitly the wise and holy God can have interposed his precautions and dissuasions, in their own nature, aptly tending to withhold and divert men from those evil actions, which he yet foresees they will do. And it is, in the first place, evident, there can be no pretence to allege that there is any such repugnancy in the matter, as shall amount to a contradiction, so much as virtual, or which the things signified, on the one part and the other, can be understood any way to import, that indeed there should be a direct and explicit contradiction between foreknowing and dehorting, we may, at first sight, perceive the terms cannot admit; for there is nothing enunciated (affirmed or denied) in either. But let the sense of both be resolved into propositions, capable of being confronted to one another, and all that can be made of the former, will only come to this, "You will do such a thing," and of the latter, no more but this, "You ought not to do it:" these are at as great distance, as can be imagined, from grating upon, or jarring with, one another. And wherein is the indecorum of it, that both these *effata* should proceed from the same mouth, *viz.* of a governor, or one that hath authority over others.

We will, for discourse sake, suppose a prince endowed with the gift or spirit of prophecy. This most will acknowledge a great perfection, added to whatsoever other his accomplishments. And suppose we this his prophetic ability so large, as to extend to most events that shall fall out within his dominions. Is it hereby become unfit for him to govern his subjects by laws, or any way admonish them of their duty? Hath this perfection so much diminished him as to depose him from his government? It is not indeed to be dissembled, that it were a difficulty to determine, whether such foresight were, *for himself*, better or worse. Boundless knowledge seems only in a fit conjunction with as unbounded power. But it is altogether unimaginable that it should destroy his relation to his subjects. As what of it were left, if it should despoil him of his legislative power, and capacity of governing according to laws made by it? And to bring back the matter to the supreme Ruler: Let it for the present be supposed only, that the blessed God hath, belonging to his nature, the universal prescience whereof we are discoursing; we will, surely, upon that supposition, acknowledge it to belong to him as a perfection. And were it reasonable to affirm that by a perfection he is disabled for government; or were it a good consequence, "He foreknows all things, he is therefore unfit to govern the world."

Sect. IX. And, that we may consider the matter more narrowly, would the supposition of such foreknowledge in God, make that cease to be man's duty, which had otherwise been so? and take away the differences of good and evil? Would it nullify the obligation of God's law, and make man's own inclination his only rule? or, if it be said, because it is foreknown, man will do such a thing, therefore he may, where is the connexion? For what influence can foreknowledge have, to alter or effect any way, either the nature of the thing foreknown, or the temper of the person that shall do it; any more than the present knowledge of the same thing, now in doing? which knowledge none would deny to God; and which, when it occurs to a man, is no more understood to make an evil action innocent, than the action makes the eye guilty, of him that beholds it only, and detests it at once. Surely what is, in its own nature, whether good or evil, can never not be so, be it foreknown or not foreknown.

But if what was otherwise man's duty, be still his duty, what can make it unfit that it be declared, and made known to him to be so? and how is that otherwise to be done, than by these disputed means? yea (for this is the case) what can make it less fit, than it would be that God should cease to rule over the world; and quit the right of his government to his revolted creatures, upon no other reason, than only that he foresees they have a mind to invade it? It may now perhaps be said, all this reasoning tends indeed to establish the contrary assertion, that notwithstanding God do foreknow man's sin, it is however necessary he forewarn him of it—but it answers not the objected difficulty, *viz.* how reasonably any such means are used for an unattainable end. As it is manifest, the end, man's obedience, cannot be attained when it is foreknown he will not obey.

Sect. X. It may here, before we proceed further, not be unseasonable to consider, (a matter, as is known, wont to be much vexed in the schools,) how God may be said to act for any end at all. And it appears very certain, that he who is so every way absolutely perfect and happy, cannot be thought to intend and pursue an end, after the same manner as we are wont to do. We being conscious to ourselves of indigency, or, at the best, of obligation to the Author of our beings, are wont to design this or that end for the relieving of ourselves, or the approving ourselves to him. And, our satisfaction depending upon the attainment of it, we solicitously deliberate about the fittest means to attain it; and are tossed with various passions, of desire, and hope, and fear, and joy, and grief, according as the end is apprehended more or less excellent, or likely to be attained; varying often our course upon new emergencies, as this or that may probably promote or hinder the success of our pursuit. In short, we pursue ends, as being both impatient of disappointment, and uncertain of their attainment.

The blessed God, being indigent of nothing, nor under obligation to any one, cannot be supposed to propound an end to himself as that whereupon his satisfaction depends, which were inconsistent with his already complete felicity, and would argue him but potentially happy. But acting always from an immense self-sufficient fulness of life, and of all perfections, doth ever satisfy himself in himself, and take highest complacency in the perfect goodness, congruity, and rectitude of his own most holy will and way. And again, as he doth not seek a yet unattained satisfaction, in any end he can be supposed to propound to himself; so nor can he be thought to deliberate, as we are wont to do, concerning the means of effecting any. For deliberation would imply doubtfulness and uncertainty, which his absolute perfection cannot admit; nor doth need, the whole frame and compass of things intended by him, in their distinct references and tendencies, being, at once, present to his all-comprehending view; so that there can be no place for any intermediate knowledge with him, or for any new resolves thereupon. Known to the Lord are all his works from the beginning of the world.[q]

Sect. XI. This being premised; it is now further to be considered, that howsoever one end oftentimes is not attained, unto which the publicly extant declarations of the Divine will have a visible aptitude, *viz.* the obedient compliance of men with them; another more noble end was, however, attainable, not unbecoming the designment of the Divine wisdom, and which it was every way most worthy of God to be more principally intent upon. It is fit the mention of this be prefaced with an obvious remark;—that the misapprehension of the state of things between God and man doth, in great part, owe itself to our aptness to compare unduly the Divine government with that of secular rulers; and our expectation to find them in all things agreeing with each other. Whereas there cannot but be a vast difference, between the constitution and end of God's government over his creatures, and more especially mankind, and that of man over his fellow-creatures of the same kind. The government of secular, human rulers, can never be, in the constitution of it, altogether absolute, nor ought, in the design of it, primarily to intend the personal advantage of the ruler himself, who as much depends upon his subjects, and hath (at least) as great need of them, as they can be understood to have of him. But as to the blessed God the matter is apparent, and hath its own triumphant evidence, that since he is the original and root of all being, that all things are mere dependencies upon his absolute pleasure, and entirely of him, and by him, all ought to be to him, that he alone might have the glory.[r]

Wherefore, it must be asserted, and cannot fail of obtaining to be acknowledged, by every impartial and sober considerer of things, that there is a much more noble and important end, that all God's public edicts and declarations to men, (the instruments of his government over them,) do more principally aim at, than their advantage, *viz.* the dignity and decorum of his government itself; and that he may be found in every thing to have done as became him, and was most worthy of himself. And what could be more so, than that he should testify the aversion of his own pure and holy nature, to whatsoever was unholy and impure, his love of righteousness and complacency to be imitated herein, together with his steady, gracious propension to receive all them into the communion of his own felicity or blessedness (for the Redeemer's sake) who should herein comply with him? Nor are we to understand that he herein so designs the reputation of his government, as men are often wont to do things out of design for their interest in that kind, that are, otherwise, against their overruled inclination. But we are to account these his declarations (although they are acts of an intelligent Agent, and the products of wisdom and counsel, yet also) the spontaneous emanations of his own holy and gracious nature, such as wherein he most fully agrees, and consents with himself. And is it now to be expected, that because he foresees men will be wicked, and do what shall be unworthy of them, he must therefore lay aside his nature, and omit to do what shall be worthy of himself?

q Acts xv. 18.

r Rom. ii.

Sect. XII. And hereupon it may be expected, the more ingenuous and candid will allow themselves to think the matter tolerably clear, in reference to the former part of the proposed difficulty; *i. e.* will apprehend this way of dealing with men not imprudent, or inconsistent with the Divine wisdom, since, though one end, in a great part, fail, yet another, more valuable, is attained. But yet, as to the latter part, the difficulty may still urge, *viz.* how it can stand with sincerity; whereas that end also which fails, seems to have been most directly intended, that the blessed God should seem so earnestly intent upon it: since it is hardly conceivable, that the same thing should be, at once, seriously intended as an end, and yet, at the same time, give the eye, which seems to design it, no other prospect than of a thing never to be brought to pass.

Wherefore we are next to consider, that we may proceed gradually, and not omit to say what is in itself considerable; though it is not all (which cannot be said at once) that is to be said;—that the public declarations of the Divine will, touching man's duty, do attain that very end, his obedient compliance therewith, in great part, and as to many (although it be foreknown they will prove ineffectual with the most) are the no less successful, than the apt, means of attaining it. Nor, certainly, if it were foreknown the world would be so divided, as that some would obey, and others not obey, was it therefore the fittest course, that these two sorts should, by some extraordinary act of providence, be carefully severed from each other; and those be dealt withal apart from the rest. But rather, that the Divine edicts should be of a universal tenor, and be directed to all as they are; the matter of them being of universal concernment, and equally suitable to the common case of all men.

Sect. XIII. Neither yet was it necessary, that effectual care should be taken, they should actually reach all, and be applied to every individual person. Since it is apparently to be resolved into the wickedness of the world, that they do not so; and that there is not a universal diffusion of the gospel into every part. For it being evident to any one's reflection, that men are in a state of apostacy and defection from their Maker and common Lord, and therefore subject to his displeasure; whereas the merciful God hath done his own part, and so much beyond what was to be expected from him; issued out his proclamations of peace and pardon, upon so easy and indulgent terms, as are expressed in his gospel; if, hereupon, men also did their part, behaved themselves suitably to the exigency of their case, and as did become reasonable creatures, fallen under the displeasure of their Maker, (whereof their common condition affords so innumerable, so pregnant proofs,) the gospel, wheresoever it should arrive, would have been entertained with so great a transport of joy, and so ready and universal acceptance, as very soon to have made a great noise in the world; and being found to be of a universal tenor and concernment, and that what it says to one nation, it equally says the same to every one; it could not but be, that messengers would interchangeably have run from nation to nation; some to communicate, others to inquire after, those strange tidings of great joy unto all people, lately sent from heaven; concerning the Emmanuel, God with us; God, again upon his return to man, and now in Christ reconciling the world to himself. And thus how easily, and even naturally, would the gospel soon have spread itself through the world! especially the merciful God having so provided, that there should be an office constituted, and set up; a sort of men, whose whole business it should be, to propagate and publish those happy tidings. But that men should so indulge their sensual, terrene inclination, as not at all to use their understandings and considering power, about other matters than only what are within the sight of their eye, when by so easy and quick a turn of thoughts they might feel and find out who made them, and was the Original of their life and being, and that things are not right, and as they should be, between him and them; and so by what is within the compass of natural revelation, he prepared for what is supernatural. And not that only, but to that stupidity, by which they are unapt to inquire after and receive, to add that obstinate malignity by which they are apt to reject and oppose the merciful discoveries and overtures of their offended, reconcileable Creator and Lord. How manifestly doth this devolve the whole business of the little, slow progress of the gospel in the world, upon themselves only! As suppose we a prince of the greatest clemency, benignity, and goodness, from whom a whole country of his subjects have made a most causeless defection; hereupon to send to the whole body of the rebels a gracious proclamation of free pardon upon their return to their allegiance and duty; and it only from hence comes to pass, that every individual person of them distinctly understands not what the message from their prince did import; because, they that heard it would not, many of them, allow themselves to consider and regard it; and others of them, with despiteful violence, fell upon the heralds, barbarously butchering some of them, and ignominiously repulsing the rest: who would not say, that prince had fully done his part, and acquitted himself answerably to the best character, though he should send to the rebels no further overtures? Much more, if through a long tract of time, he continue the same amicable endeavours for their reducement; notwithstanding the constant experience of the same ill success; who would not cast the whole business of the continued ill understanding, between him and the revolters, upon themselves? and reckon it impossible, any should be ignorant, of his kind and benign inclinations and intentions, if an implacable enmity, and disaffection to him and his government, were not their common temper?

Though so infinitely do the mercies of God exceed those of the most merciful prince on earth, as well as his knowledge and power; that wheresoever there are any exempt cases, we must conceive him equally able and inclined to consider them distinctly. And so vastly different may we well suppose the degrees of happiness and misery to be, in the other world; as that there may be latitude enough, of punishing and rewarding men, proportionably to the degrees of light they have had, and the more or less malignity, or propension to reconciliation, was found with them thereupon.

Sect. XIV. Nor again was it at all incongruous, or unbecoming, that the blessed God, this being the common temper and disposition of all men, to reject his gracious tenders, should provide, by some extraordinary means, that they might not be finally rejected by all. For what can be more appropriate to sovereignty (even where it is infinitely less absolute) than arbitrarily to design the objects of special favour? Who blames a prince, for placing special marks of his royal bounty, or clemency, here and there as he thinks fit? or that he hath some peculiar favourites, with whom he familiarly converses, whom he hath won, by some or other not common inducements, and assured their loyal affection; though there be thousands of persons in his dominions besides, of as good parts, dispositions, and deserts as they? It belongs to sovereignty, only so to be favourable to some, as, in the mean time, to be just towards all. Yea, and it must be acknowledged, such are the dispensations of the holy God towards the whole community of mankind, as import not only strict righteousness, but great clemency and mercy also. Though they might easily understand themselves to be offenders, and liable to the severities of his justice, they are spared by his patience, sustained by his bounty, protected by his power; their lives and properties are fenced by his own laws. And whereas they are become very dangerous enemies to one another; and each one his own greatest enemy; it is provided by those laws, even for the worst of men, that none shall injure them, that all love them, and seek their good. He interposes his authority on their behalf; and, if any wrong them, he takes it for an affront done to himself. By the same laws they are directed to industry, frugality, sobriety, temperance, to exercise a government over themselves, to bridle and subdue their own exorbitant lusts and passions, their more immediate tormentors, and the sources of all the calamities and miseries which befall them in this world. By all which evidences of his great care, and concern for their welfare, they might understand him to have favourable propensions towards them, and that though they have offended him, he is not their implacable enemy; and might, by his goodness, be led to repentance.

Yea and moreover; he hath sent them a Redeemer, his own Son, an incarnate Deity, who came down into this world, full of grace and truth, upon the most merciful errand. And they have some of them been in transports, when they have but fancied such a descent, for the doing them only some lighter good turn; as upon the cure of the cripple. The gods (say they) are come down in the likeness of men![s] He being filled with the glorious fulness of the Godhead, hath been a voluntary sacrifice for the sins of men; and if they would believe and obey him, they would find that sacrifice is accepted, and availnble for them. And though they are disabled to do so only by their own wicked inclination, even against that also they have no cause to despair of being relieved, if they would (which they might) admit the thoughts of their impotency, and the exigency of their case, and did seriously implore Divine help.

Sect. XV. Now with whom these methods succeed well, there is no suspicion of insincerity. Let us see what pretence there can be for it, with the rest. It is to be considered, that, as to them he doth not apply himself to every, or to any, person immediately, and severally, after some such tenor of speech as this, "I know thee to be a profligate, hopeless wretch, and that thou wilt finally disregard whatsoever I say to thee, and consequently perish and become miserable. But however (though I foresee most certainly thou wilt not, yet) I entreat thee to hear, and obey, and live." Indeed, sending a prophet to a promiscuous people, he foretells him of such ill success.[t] But it is not told him he should succeed so ill universally, and it is implied, he should not.[u]

But the course the great God takes, is only to apply himself to these (as bath been said) in common with the rest. For if it be said he also applies himself to them by the private dictates of his Spirit; he does not, by it, make formed speeches to men. But as to those its common motions, whereby it applies itself unto them, doth only solicit, in a stated manner of operation, in and by their own reason and cosciences, (as he concurs with our inferior faculties, and with the inferior creatures, suitable to their natures and capacities,) speaking no other than their own language, as they are instructed out of his word, or by other means. Which he usually continues to do, till by their resistances, they have sealed up their own consciences, and consequently (according to its more ordinary fixed course, and laws of necess and recess) shut out the Holy Spirit both at once. Nor is it more to be expected he should universally alter that course; than that he should alter the courses of the sun, moon, and stars, and innovate upon universal nature. So that what is endeavoured for the reduement of such, as finally refuse to return, by particular applications to this or that person, and beyond what is contained in the public declnrations of his written word, is by substituted ministers and inferior agents, that know no more of the event, than they do themselves. And that this was the fittest way of dealing with reasonable creatures, who, that will use his own reason, sees not?

Sect. XVI. That our disquisition may be here a little more strict we shall inquire both,—What may be supposed possible to be alleged out of God's word, in reference to them that persist in wickedness till they finally perish, which it can be thought not consistent with sincerity, to have inserted, upon the supposed foresight of so dismal an issue. And what more convenient course we can think of, which sincerity (as we apprehend) would have required.

As to the former. It may, perhaps, be alleged, that he professes to will the salvation of all men.[x] Not to desire the death of him that dieth.[y] Yea, and professes himself grieved that any perish.[z] Now these things, compared with his public declarations and tenders, directed, in a universal tenor, to all men, carry that appearance and show with them, as if he would have it believed, his end were to save all. Wherewith his foresight of the perdition of so many seems ill to agree. For how can that end be seriously intended which it is foreseen will not be brought about? And how can it be thought to consist with sincerity, that there should be an appearance of his having such an end, unto which, a serious real intention of it doth not correspond? Wherefore we shall here examine, what appearance such expressions as those above recited, can, by just interpretation, be understood to amount unto. And then show that there is really with the blessed God, what doth truly and fully correspond to that appearance; and very agreeably too, with the hypothesis of his foreseeing how things will finally issue, with very many.

And first, that we may understand the true import of the expressions which we have mentioned, and others of like sound and meaning. We are to consider, that though being taken severally and apart, they are not capable of a sense, prejudical to the cause, the defence whereof we have undertaken, which we shall afterwards more distinctly evince, yet, it were very injurious, to go about to affix a sense unto a single expression, without weighing the general design of the writings, whereof it is a part. It were quite to frustrate the use of words, when a matter is to be represented, that is copious, and consists of many parts and branches, which cannot be comprehended in one or a few sentences; if we will pretend to estimate and make a judgment of the speaker's full meaning, by this or that single passage only, because we have not patience or leisure to hear the rest; or perhaps have a greater disposition to cavil at his words, than understand his meaning. If a course resembling this should be taken, in interpreting the edicts or laws of princes and states, (suppose it were a proclamation of pardon to delinquent subjects,) and only this or that favourable clause be fastened upon, without regard to the inserted provisos and conditions; the (concerned) interpreters might do a slight, temporary, and easily remediable wrong to the prince, but are in danger, more fatally, to wrong themselves.

The edicts of the great God, that are publicly extant to mankind, (the universal publication whereof they partly withstand, and which they too commonly deprave, and perversely misinterpret, where they do obtain,) carry no such appearance with them, as if he had ever proposed it to himself, for his end, to save all men, or any man, let them do what they please, or how destructive a course soever they take, and shall finally persist in. If that were supposed his design, his so seemingly serious counsels and exhortations were as ludicrous, as they could be thought, if it were as peremptorily determined all should perish. For what God will, by almighty power, immediately work, without the subordinate concurrence of any second cause, must be necessarily. And it is equally vain, solicitously to endeavour the engaging of subordinate agents, to do that which without them is absolutely necessary, as it were to endeavour that, by them, which is absolutely impossible.

Sect. XVII. That which his declarations to men do amount unto, is, in sum, thus much,—that, whereas they have, by their defection and revolt from him, made themselves liable to his justice, and very great consequent miseries; he is willing to pardon, save, and restore them to a blessed state, upon such terms as shall be agreeable (the recompense due to his injured law being otherwise provided for, at no expense of theirs) to the nature of that blessedness they are to enjoy, the purity of his own nature, and the order and dignity of his government. That is, that they seriously repent and turn to him, love him as the Lord their God, with all their heart and soul, and might and mind; and one another as themselves; (being to make together one happy community, in the participation of the same blessedness;) commit themselves by entire trust, subjection, and devotedness to their great and merciful Redeemer, according to the measure of light wherewith he shall have been revealed and made known to them; submit to the motions and dictates of his blessed Spirit, whereby the impression of his own holy image is to be renewed in them, and a divine nature imparted to them: and carefully attend to his word as the means, the impressive instrument or seal, by which, understood and considered, that impression shall be made, and the very seeds out of which that holy nature, and the entire frame of the new creature, shall result and spring up in them; so as to make them apt unto the obedience that is expected from them, and capable of the blessedness they are to expect; that if they negleet to attend to these external discoveries

s Acts xiv. t Ezek. iii. 7. u Ver. 21. x 1 Tim. ii. 4. y Ezek. xviii. 32. z Ps. lxxxi. 12, 13.

and refuse the ordinary aids and assistances of his good Spirit, and offer violence to their own consciences, they are not to expect he should overpower them, by a strong hand, and save them against the continuing disinclination of their own wills. Nor (whatsoever extraordinary acts he may do upon some, to make them willing) is there any universal promise in his word, or other encouragement, upon which any may reasonably promise themselves that, in the neglect and disuse of all ordinary means, such power shall be used with them, as shall finally overcome their averse, disaffected hearts.

Sect. XVIII. 'Tis true that he frequently uses much importunity with men, and enforces his laws with that earnestness, as if it were his own great interest to have them obeyed; wherein, having to do with men, he doth like a man, solicitously intent upon an end which he cannot be satisfied till he attain. Yet withal, he hath interspersed, every where in his word, so frequent, Godlike expressions of his own greatness, all-sufficiency, and independency upon his creatures, as that if we attend to these his public declarations, and manifests of himself entirely, so as to compare one thing with another, we shall find the matter not at all dissembled; but might collect this to be the state of things between him and us, that he makes no overtures to us, as thinking us considerable, or as if any thing were to accrue to him from us. But that, as he takes pleasure in the diffusion of his own goodness, so it is our interest to behave ourselves suitably thereunto, and, according as we comply with it, and continue in it, or do not, so we may expect the delectable communications of it, or taste, otherwise, his just severity. That, therefore, when he exhorts, obtests, entreats, beseeches that we would obey and live; speaks as if he were grieved at our disobedience, and what is like to ensue to us therefrom; these are mereiful condeseensions, and the efforts of that goodness, which chooseth the fittest ways of moving us, rather than that he is moved himself, by any such passions as we are wont to feel in ourselves, when we are pursuing our own designs. And that he vouchsafeth to speak in such a way as is less suitable to himself, that it may be more suitable to us, and might teach us, while he so far complies with us, how becoming it is that we answerably bend ourselves to a compliance with him. He speaks, sometimes, as if he did suffer somewhat human, as an apt means (and which to many proves effectual) to bring us to enjoy, at length, what is truly divine. We may, if we consider, and lay things together, understand these to be gracious insinuations; whereby, as he hath not left the matter liable to be so misunderstood, as if he were really affected with solicitude, or any perturbation concerning us, (which he hath sufficiently given us to understand his blessed nature cannot admit of,) so nor can they be thought to be disguises of himself, or misrepresentations, that have nothing in him corresponding to them. For they really signify the obedience and blessedness of those his creatures that are capable thereof, to be more pleasing and agreeable to his nature and will, than that they should disobey and perish; (which is the utmost that can be understood meant by those words, God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth;) but withal, that he so apprehends the indignity done to his government, by their disobedience, that if they obey not (as the indulgent constitution and temper of his law and government now are, in and by the Redeemer) they must perish. And that he hath also such respect to the congruity and order of things, as that it shall not be the ordinary method of his government over reasonable creatures, to overpower them into that obedience, by which it may come to pass that they perish not. All which may be collected from those his own plain words, in that other recited text, and many besides of like import. When, with so awful solemnity, he professes, that as he lives he takes no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they may turn and live; and adds, Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die?[a] That is, that their repentance, and consequent welfare, would be more grateful to him than their perdition, upon their persevering in destructive ways; but yet, that if they were not moved to repent, by these his pleadings and expostulations used with them, they should die, and were therefore concerned to attend and hearken to such his reasonings and warnings, as the apt means to work their good; not expecting he should take extraordinary courses with them, in order to it. And that the real respect he had thereunto, should never induce him to use any indecorous course to bring it about; but that he had a more principal respect to the rules of justice, and the order of his government, than to their concernments. And that he, notwithstanding, expresses himself aggrieved that any finally perish. If we consider and recollect, what notices he hath furnished our minds with, of the perfections of a Deity, and what he hath remonstrated to us of his own nature, so plainly in his word; we cannot understand more by it, than the calm dispassionate resentment and dislike, which most perfect purity and goodness have, of the sinfulness and miserable ruin of his own creatures.

In all which we have a most unexceptionable idea of God, and may behold the comely conjuncture of his large goodness, strict righteousness, and most accurate wisdom altogether: as we are also concerned, in making our estimate of his ways, to consider them: and not to take our measure of what is suitable to God, by considering him according to one single attribute only; but as they all are united, in his most perfect being. And in that blessed harmony, as not to infer with him a difficulty what to do, or what not. Which sometimes falls out with men, where there is an imperfect resemblance of those divine excellencies, not so exactly contempered together. As it was with that Spartan prince and general in Plutarch, when finding a necessity to march his army, and taking notice of one, for whom he had a peculiar kindness, that through extreme weakness was not possibly to be removed, he looked back upon him, expressing his sense of that exigency, in those emphatical words, How hard a matter is it at once ἐλεεῖν καὶ φρονεῖν, *to exercise pity and be wise!* God's own word misrepresents him not, but gives a true account of him, if we allow ourselves to confer it with itself, one part of it with another. Nor doth any part of it, taken alone, import him so to have willed the happiness of men, for any end of his, that he resolved he would, by whatsoever means, certainly effect it: as we are wont, many times, with such eagerness to pursue ends upon which we are intent, as not to consider of right or wrong, fit or unfit, in our pursuit of them, and so let the cost of our means, not seldom, eat up our end. Nor did that belong to him, or was his part as our most benign, wise, and righteous Governor, to provide that we should certainly not transgress, or not suffer prejudice thereby; but that we should not do so, through his omission of any thing, which it became him to do to prevent it.

Sect. XIX. It may therefore be of some use further to take notice, that a very diverse consideration must be had, of the ends which shall be effected by God's own action only, and of those which are to be brought about (in concurrence and subordination to his own) by the intervenient action of his creatures. Especially (which is more to our purpose) such of them as are intelligent, and capable of being governed by laws. As to the former sort of these ends, we may be confident they were all most absolutely intended, and can never fail of being accomplished. For the latter, it cannot be universally said so. For these being not entirely his ends; but partly his, and partly prescribed by him, to his reasonable creatures, to be theirs. We are to conceive he always, most absolutely, intends to do, what he righteously esteems congruous should be his own part; which he extends and limits as seems good unto him. And sometimes, of his own good pleasure, assumes to himself the doing of so much, as shall ascertain the end, effectually procuring, that his creature shall do his part also. That is, not only enacts his laws, and adds exhortations, warnings, promises, to enforce it, but also emits that effectual influence, whereby the inferior wheels shall be put into motion, the powers and faculties of his governed creature excited and assisted, and (by a spirit in the wheels) made as the chariots of a willing people. At other times, and in other instances, he doth less, and meeting with resistance, sooner retires; follows not his external edicts and declarations, with so potent and determinative an influence:

[a] Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

but that the creature, through his own great default, may omit to do his part, and so that end be not effected.

That the course of his economy towards men on earth is, *de facto*, ordered with this diversity, seems out of question. Manifest experience shows it. Some do sensibly perceive that motive influence, which others do not. The same persons, at some times, find not that, which at other times they do. His own word plainly asserts it. "He works in us to will and to do, of his own good pleasure." Where he will, he, in this respect, shows mercy; where he will, he hardeneth, or doth not prevent but that men be hardened. And indeed, we should be constrained to rase out a great part of the Sacred Volume, if we should not admit it to be so. And as the equity and fitness of his making such difference (when it appears he doth make it) cannot without profaneness be doubted, so it is evident, from what was before said, they are far removed from the reach and confines of any reasonable doubt; since he forsakes none, but being first forsaken. Nor have men any pretence to complain of subdolous dealing, or that they are surprisingly disappointed, and lurched of such help, as they might have expected; inasmuch as this is so plainly extant in God's open manifests to the world, that he uses a certain arbitrariness, especially in the more exuberant dispensation of his grace; and is inserted to that purpose, that they may be cautioned not to neglect lower assistances; and warned, because he works to will and to do of his own pleasure, therefore to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.[b] Whereupon, elsewhere, after the most persuasive alluring invitations: Turn ye at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit to you, I will make known my words to you, it is presently subjoined, Because I called and ye refused, I stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.[c]

From all which it is plainly to be understood, that the general strain and drift of God's external revelation of his mind to man, in his word, and the aspect of even those passages, that can, with most colour, be thought to signify any thing further, do amount to nothing more than this, that he doth so far really will the salvation of all, as not to omit the doing that which may effect it, if they be not neglectful of themselves; but not so as to effect it by that extraordinary exertion of power, which he thinks fit to employ upon some others.

Nor is it reasonably to be doubted, (such a will being all that can be pretended to be the visible meaning of the passages before noted,) whether there be such a will in God or no: and so somewhat really corresponding (the next thing promised to be discoursed) to the aspect and appearance hereof, which is offered to our view. For what should be the reason of the doubt? He, who best understands his own nature, having said of himself what imports no less; why should we make a difficulty to believe him? Nor indeed can any notices we have of the perfections of the Divine nature be less liable to doubt, than what we have of his unchangeable veracity; whence, as it is impossible to him to lie, it must be necessary, that he be really willing of what he hath represented himself so to be. I must here profess my dislike of the terms of that common distinction, the *voluntas beneplaciti, et signi*, in this present case. Under which, such as coined, and those that have much used it, have only rather, I doubt not, concealed a good meaning, than expressed by it an ill one. It seems, I confess, by its more obvious aspect, too much to countenance the ignominious slander, which profane and atheistical dispositions would fasten upon God, and the course of his procedure towards men; and which it is the design of these papers to evince of as much absurdity and folly, as it is guilty of impiety and wickedness: as though he only intended to seem willing of what he really was not; that there was an appearance to which nothing did *subesse*. And then why is the latter called *voluntas?* unless the meaning be he did only will the sign, which is false and impious; and if it were true, did he not will it with the will of good pleasure? And then the members of the distinction are confounded. Or, as if the evil actions of men were more truly the objects of his good pleasure, than their forbearance of them. And of these faults the application of the distinction of God's secret will, and revealed, unto this case, though it be useful in many, is as guilty.

Sect. XXI. The truth is, (unto which we must esteem ourselves obliged to adhere, both by our assent and defence,) that God doth really and complacentially will (and therefore doth with most unexceptionable sincerity declare himself to will) that to be done and enjoyed by many men, which he doth not, universally, will to make them do, or irresistibly procure that they shall enjoy. Which is no harder assertion, than that the impure will of degenerate, sinful man is opposite to the holy will of God; and the malignity of man's will to the benignity of his. No harder than that there is sin and misery in the world, which how can we conceive otherwise, than as a repugnancy to the good and acceptable will of God? Methinks it should not be difficult to us to acknowledge, that God doth truly, and with complacency, will whatsoever is the holy, righteous matter of his own laws. And if it should be with any difficulty, I would only make this supposition, What if all the world were yet in innocency, yielding entire universal obedience to all the now extant laws of God, which have not reference to man as now fallen, (as those of repentance, faith in a Mediator, &c.) would it now be a doubt with any, whether God did truly and really will, and were pleased with, the holiness and righteousness which were every where to be found in the world? Surely we would not, in this case, imagine the creature's will more pure and holy than the Divine; or that he were displeased with men for their being righteous and holy. Now again, suppose the world revolted, what then is that holy will of God changed? will we not say it remains the same holy will still? and stands the same rule of righteousness and duty that it was? Doth the change of his rebel creatures infer any with him? or do only the declarations of his former will remain to be their rule, and keep them still obliged, his will itself being become another from what it was? Surely he might as easily have changed his laws.

And if we say his will is changed, how should we know it to be so? If we know it not, surely such a thing should not be said or thought. If we know it, how should those yet extant laws and declarations continue to oblige, against the Lawgiver's known will? And then the easy expedient to nullify the obligation of a law, that were thought too restrictive, were to disobey it. And men might, by sinning once, license themselves to do the same thing (though then we could not call it sinning) always. And so the creature's should be the supreme and ruling will. Nor had it been a false suggestion, but a real truth that man, by becoming a sinner, might make himself a god. Or, if it shall be thought fit to say, that the Divine will would not, in that supposed case, be said to be changed; but only, that now the event makes it appear not to have been what we thought it was; that were to impute both impurity and dissimulation to the holy, blessed God, as his fixed attributes. And what we thought unfit, and should abhor, to imagine might have place with him one moment, to affix to him for perpetuity.

Sect. XXII. And whereas it may be thought to follow hence, that hereby we ascribe to God a liableness to frustration, and disappointment. That is without pretence. The resolve of the Divine will, in this matter, being not concerning the event what man shall do, but concerning his duty what he should, and concerning the connexion between his duty and his happiness. Which we say he doth not only seem to will, but wills it really and truly. Nor would his prescience of the event, which we all this while assert, let frustration be so much as possible to him. Especially, it being at once foreseen, that his will, being crossed in this, would be fulfilled in so important a thing, as the preserving the decorum of his own government. Which had been most apparently blemished, beyond what could consist with the perfections of the Deity, if either his will concerning men's duty, or the declarations of that will, had not been substantially the same that they are. We are, therefore, in assigning the object of this or that act of the Divine will, to do it entirely, and to take the whole object together, without dividing it, as if the will of

b Phil. ii. 12, 13.

c Prov. i.

God did wholly terminate upon what indeed is but a part (and especially if that be but a less considerable part) of the thing willed. In the present case, we are not to conceive that God, only, wills either man's duty or felicity, or that herein his will doth solely and ultimately terminate. But, in the whole, the determination of God's will is, that man shall be duly governed, that is, congruously both to himself, and him. That such and such things, most congruous to both, shall be man's duty, by his doing whereof, the dignity and honour of God's own government might be preserved, which was the thing principally to be designed, and in the first place. And, as what was secondary thereto, that hereby man's felicity should be provided for. Therefore it being foreseen a violation would be done to the sacred rights of the Divine government, by man's disobedience, it is resolved, they shall be repaired and maintained by other means. So that the Divine will hath its effect; as to what was its more noble and principal design, the other part failing only by his default, whose is the loss.

And if yet it should be insisted, that in asserting God to will what by his laws he hath made become man's duty, even where it is not done we shall herein ascribe to him, at least, an ineffectual and an imperfect will, as which doth not bring to pass the thing willed. It is answered, that imperfection were with no pretence imputable to the Divine will, merely for its not effecting every thing, whereto it may have a real propension. But it would be more liable to that imputation, if it should effect any thing, which it were less fit for him to effect, than not to effect it. The absolute perfection of his will stands in the proportion, which every act of it bears, to the importance of the things about which it is conversant. Even as, with men, the perfection of any act of will is to be estimated, not by the mere peremptory sturdiness of it, but by its proportion to the goodness of the thing willed. Upon which account, a mere velleity (as many love to speak) when the degree of goodness in the object claims no more, hath unconceivably greater perfection in it, than the most obstinate volition. And since the event forbids us to admit that God did ever will the obedience and felicity of all, with such a will as should be effective thereof; if yet his plain word shall be acknowledged the measure of our belief, in this matter, which so plainly asserts him someway to will the salvation of all men, 'tis strange if, hereupon, we shall not admit rather of a will not-effective of the thing willed, than none at all.

The will of God is sufficiently to be vindicated from all imperfection, if we have sufficient reason for all the propensions and determinations of it, whether from the value of the things willed, or from his own sovereignty who wills them. In the present case, we need not doubt to affirm, that the obedience and felicity of all men, is of that value, as whereunto a propension of will, by only simple complacency, is proportionable. Yet that his not procuring, as to all, (by such courses as he more extraordinarily takes with some,) that they shall, in event, obey and be happy, is upon so much more valuable reasons (as there will be further occasion to show ere long) as that, not to do it was more eligible, with the higher complacency of a determinative will. And since the public declarations of his good will, towards all men, import no more than the former, and do plainly import so much; their correspondency to the matter declared is sufficiently apparent. And so is the congruity of both with his prescience of the event. For though, when God urges and incites men, by exhortations, promises, and threats, to the doing of their own part, (which it is most agreeable to his holy, gracious nature to do,) he foresee many will not be moved thereby; but persist in wilful neglect and rebellions till they perish: he, at the same time, sees that they might do otherwise, and that, if they would comply with his methods, things would otherwise issue with them. His prescience, no way, imposing upon them a necessity to transgress. For they do it not because he foreknew it, but he only foreknew it because they would do so. And hence he had, as it was necessary he should have, not only this for the object of his foreknowledge that they would do amiss and perish; but the whole case in its circumstances, that they would do so, not through his omission, but their own. And there had been no place left for this state of the case, if the public edicts and manifests had not gone forth, in this tenor, as they have. So that the consideration of his prescience being taken in, gives us only, in the whole, this state of the case, that he foresaw men would not take that course which he truly declared himself willing they should (and was graciously ready to assist them in it) in order to their own well-being. Whence all complaint of insincere dealing is left without pretence.

Sect. XXIII. Nor (as we also undertook to show) could any course (within our prospect) have been taken, that was fit, in itself, and more agreeable to sincerity. There are only these two ways to be thought on besides; either, that God should wholly have forborne to make overtures to men in common; or, that he should efficaciously have overpowered all into a compliance with them. And there is little doubt, but upon sober consideration, both of these will be judged altogether unfit. The *former*; inasmuch as it had been most disagreeable—to the exact measures of his government, to let a race of sinful creatures persist, through many successive ages, in apostacy and rebellion, when the characters of that law, first written in man's heart, were in so great a measure outworn, and become illegible; without renewing the impression, in another way, and re-asserting his right and authority, as their Ruler and Lord;—to the holiness of his nature, not to send into the world such a declaration of his will, as might be a standing testimony against the impurity whereinto it was lapsed;—to the goodness of it, not to make known upon what terms, and for whose sake, he was reconcileable; and—to the truth of the thing, since he really had such kind propensions towards men in common, not to make them known:—that it had, itself, been more liable to the charge of insincerity, to have concealed from men what was real truth, and of so much concernment to them. And he did, in revealing them, but act his own nature; the goodness whereof is no more lessened, by man's refusal of its offers, than his truth can be made of none effect by their disbelief of its assertions: besides the great use such an extant revelation of the way of recovery was to be of, to those that should obediently comply with it, even after they should be won so to do.

Sect. XXIV. And the *latter* we may also apprehend very unfit too; though, because that is less obvious, it requires to be more largely insisted on. For it would seem that if we do not effect any thing which we have a real will unto, it must proceed from impotency, and that we cannot do it, which, who would say of the great God? Herein, therefore, we shall proceed by steps. And gradually offer the things that follow to consideration.

As, that it were indeed most repugnant to the notion of a Deity, to suppose any thing, which includes in it no contradiction impossible to God, considered according to that single attribute of power only. But yet we must add, that this were a very unequal way of estimating what God can do, that is, to consider him as a mere Being of power. For the notion of God so conceived, were very inadequate to him, which taken entirely, imports the comprehension of all perfections. So that they are two very distant questions,—What the power of God alone could do? and—What God can do? And whereas to the former the answer would be,—whatsoever is not in itself repugnant to be done. To the latter, it must only be,—whatsoever it becomes or is agreeable to a Being every way perfect to do. And so it is to be attributed to the excellency of his nature, if amongst all things not simply impossible, there be any, which it may be truly said he cannot do. Or, it proceeds not from the imperfection of his power, but from the concurrence of all other perfections in him. Hence his own word plainly affirms of him that he cannot lie. And by common consent it will be acknowledged, that he cannot do any unjust act whatsoever.

To this I doubt not we may with as common suffrage (when the matter is considered) subjoin, that his wisdom doth as much limit the exercise of his power, as his righteousness or his truth doth. And that it may with as much confidence, and clearness, be said and understood, that he cannot do an unwise or imprudent act as an unjust. Further, that as his righteousness corresponds to the justice of things, to be done or not done, so doth his wisdom to the congruity or fitness. So that he cannot do what it

is unfit for him to do, because he is wise; and because he is most perfectly and infinitely wise, therefore nothing that is less fit. But whatsoever is fittest, when a comparison is made between doing this or that, or between doing and not doing, that the perfection of his nature renders necessary to him, and the opposite part impossible. Again, that this measure must be understood to have a very large and most general extent unto all the affairs of his government, the object it concerns being so very large. We, in our observation, may take notice, that fewer questions can occur concerning what is right or wrong, than what is fit or unfit. And whereas any man may in a moment be honest, if he have a mind to it; very few (and that by long experience) can ever attain to be wise. The things about which justice is conversant being reducible to certain rules, but wisdom supposes very general knowledge of things scarce capable of such reduction. And is, besides, the primary requisite, in any one that bears rule over others: and must therefore most eminently influence all the managements of the Supreme Ruler.

Sect. XXV. It is moreover to be considered, that innumerable congruities lie open to the Infinite Wisdom, which are never obvious to our view or thought. As to a well-studied scholar, thousands of coherent notions, which an illiterate person never thought of; to a practised courtier, or well-educated gentleman, many decencies and indecencies, in the matter of civil behaviour and conversation, which an unbred rustic knows nothing of; and to an experienced statesman, those importancies, which never occur to the thoughts of him who daily follows the plough. What government is there that hath not its arcana, profound mysteries, and reasons of state, that a vulgar wit cannot dive into? And from whence, the account to be given, why this or that is done or not done, is not, always, that it would have been unjust it should be otherwise, but it had been imprudent. And many things are, hereupon, judged necessary not from the exigency of justice, but reason of state. Whereupon men of modest and sober minds, that have had experience of the wisdom of their governors and their happy conduct, through a considerable tract of time; when they see things done by them, the leading reasons whereof they do not understand, and the effect and success comes not yet in view, suspend their censure; while as yet all seems to them obscure, and wrapt up in clouds and darkness. Yea though the course that is taken have, to their apprehension, an ill aspect. Accounting it becomes them not, to make a judgment of things so far above their reach, and confiding in the tried wisdom of their rulers, who, they believe, see reasons for what they do, into which they find themselves unable to penetrate. With how much more submiss and humble veneration, ought the methods of the Divine government to be beheld and adored, upon the certain assurance we have, that all things therein are managed by that wisdom, which could never in any thing mistake its way! Whereas, there was never any continued administration of human government, so accurate and exact, but that after some tract of time, some or other errors might be reflected on therein.

Again, it may further be said, without presuming beyond due bounds, that though infinite congruities must be supposed to lie open to the divine understanding, which are concealed from ours, yet that these two things in the general are very manifestly congruous to any sober attentive mind, that directly concern, or may be applied to the case under our present consideration, *viz.* That the course of God's government over the world, be, for the most part, steady, and uniform: not interrupted by very frequent, extraordinary, and anomalous actions. And again, That he use a royal liberty, of stepping out of his usual course, sometimes, as he sees meet.

It cannot but appear to such as attend, highly incongruous, should we affirm the antithesis to either of these; or lay down counter-positions to them, and suppose the course of the Divine government to be managed agreeably thereunto.

Sect. XXVI. For, *as to the former*; what confusion would it make in the world, if there should be perpetual innovations upon nature; continual or exceeding frequent impeditions, and restraints of second causes. In the sphere of nature, the virtues and proper qualities of things, being never certain, could never be understood, or known. In that of policy, no measures, so much as probable, could ever be taken. How much better is it, in both, that second causes ordinarily follow their inclinations! And why is it not to be thought congruous, that, in some degree, things should be proportionably so, in the sphere of grace? whereto by and by we shall speak more directly. We pray, when our friends are sick, for their recovery. What can be the sober meaning and design of such prayers? Not that God would work a miracle for their restitution, (for then we might as well pray for their revival after death,) but, that God would be pleased so to co-operate, in the still and silent way of nature, with second causes, and so bless means, that they may be recovered, if he see good. Otherwise that they and we may be prepared to undergo his pleasure. And agreeable hereto ought to be the intent of our prayers, in reference to the public affairs, and better posture of the world. And we may take notice, the Divine wisdom lays a very great stress upon this matter, the preserving of this common order of things; and cannot but observe a certain inflexibleness of Providence herein. And that it is very little apt to divert from its wonted course. At which weak minds are apt to take offence: to wonder, that against so many prayers and tears God will let a good man die; or one whom they love; or that a miracle is not wrought to prevent their own being wronged at any time; or, that the earth doth not open and swallow up the person that hath done them wrong: are apt to call for fire from heaven, upon them that are otherwise minded, and do otherwise than they would have them. But a judicious person would consider, if it be so highly reasonable that my desires should be complied with so extraordinarily, then why not all men's? And then were the world filled with prodigies and confusion. The inconveniencies would soon be to all equally discernible and intoleruble; (as the heathen poet takes notice, should Jupiter's ear be over-easy;) yea, and the impossibility were obvious of gratifying all, because of their many counter-desires.

And *for the other*, it were no less incongruous, if the Supreme Power should so tie its own hands, and be so astricted to rules and methods, as never to do any thing extraordinary, upon never so important occasion. How ill could the world have wanted such an effort of omnipotency, as the restriction upon the flames from destroying Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! or the miracles wrought in our Saviour's and the next following days! Such things are never done, but when the all-comprehending wisdom sees it most congruous; and that the cause will over-recompense the deflection from the common course. If no such thing did ever fall out, what a temptation were it to mankind, to introduce into their belief an unintelligent fate instead of a Deity! Besides that the convincing testimony were wanting, which we see is so necessary for the confirmation of any particular revelation from God, which comes not within the compass of nature's discovery, (upon which account also, it is as apparently necessary such extraordinary works should not be overfrequent, for then they become ordinary, and useless to that special end,) so that here the exertions both of the ordinate and absolute power of God (as some distinguish) have their so appropriate, and so visibly apt and congruous, uses, that they are discernible to a very ordinary understanding, how much more to the infinite wisdom of God!

Sect. XXVII. Now hereupon we say further, there is the like congruity, upon as valuable (though not altogether the same) reasons that, in the affairs of grace, there be somewhat correspondent: that, ordinarily, it be sought and expected, in the use of ordinary means. And that, sometimes, its sovereignty show itself in preventing exertions; and in working so heroically, as none have, beforehand, in the neglect of its ordinary methods, any reason to expect. And we may fitly add, that where sovereignty is pleased thus to have its exercise and demonstrate itself, it is sufficient that there be a general congruity, that it do so sometimes, as an antecedent reason to the doing of some such extraordinary things, but that there should be a particular, leading congruity or antecedent reason, to invite those extraordinary operations of grace, to one person more

than another, is not necessary. But it is most congruous, that, herein, it be most arbitrary; most agreeable to the supremacy of God; to the state of sinful man, who hath infinitely disobliged him, and can deserve nothing from him; yea, and even to the nature of the thing. For, where there is a parity, in any objects of our own choice, there can be no leading reason to this, rather than that. The most prudent man, that is wont to guide himself by never so exquisite wisdom, in his daily actions, where there is a perfect indifferency, between doing this thing or that, is not liable to censure, that he is not able to give a reason why he did that, not the other. Wisdom hath no exercise in that case.

But that the blessed God doth ordinarily proceed in these affairs, by a steady rule, and sometimes show his liberty of departing from it, is to be resolved into his infinite wisdom, it being, in itself, most fit he should do both the one and the other; and therefore to him most necessary. Whereupon, the great apostle Saint Paul, discoursing upon the subject, doth not resolve the matter into strict justice, nor absolute sovereignty; (both which have their place too, in his proceedings with men, as the sacred writings do abundantly testify;) but we find him in a transport, in the contemplation of the Divine wisdom, that herein so eminently shines forth. O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out![d]

Sect. XXVIII. To sum up all, we conclude it obvious to the apprehension of such as consider, that it was more congruous the general course of God's government over man should be by moral instruments. And howsoever it were very unreasonable to imagine, that God cannot in any case extraordinarily oversway the inclinations, and determine the will of such a creature, in a way agreeable enough to its nature, (though we particularly know not, as we are not concerned to know, or curiously to inquire in what way,) and highly reasonable to admit that in many cases he doth. It is notwithstanding manifest, to any sober reason, that it were very incongruous, this should be the ordinary course of his conduct towards mankind, or the same persons at all times. That is, that a whole order of intelligent creatures should be moved only by inward impulses; that God's precepts, promises, and comminations, whereof their nature is capable, should be all made impertinencies, through his constant overpowering those that should neglect them; that the faculties, whereby men are capable of moral government, should be rendered, to this purpose, useless and vain; and that they should be tempted to expect to be constantly managed as mere machines, that know not their own use.

Nor is it less apprehensible, how incongruous it were also, on the other hand, to suppose that the exterior frame of God's government should be totally unaccompanied with an internal vital energy; or exclude the inward motions, operations, and influences, whereof such a creature is also fitly capable; or that God should have barred out himself from all inward access to the spirits of men, or commerce, with them: that the supreme, universal, paternal Mind (as a heathen called it) should have no way for efficacious communications to his own offspring, when he pleases; that so (unsuitably to sovereignty) he should have no objects of special favour, or no peculiar ways of expressing it. It is manifestly congruous that the Divine government over man, should be (as it is) mixed or composed of an external frame of laws, with their proper sanctions and inforcements, and an internal effusion of power and vital influence, correspondent to the several parts of that frame; and which might animate the whole, and use it, as instrumental, to the begetting of correspondent impressions on men's spirits:—that this power be put forth, not like that of a natural agent, *ad ultimum*, (which if we would suppose the Divine power to be, new worlds must be springing up every moment,) but gradually, and with an apt contemperation to the subject, upon which it is designed; to have its operations and withal arbitrarily, as is becoming the great Agent from whom it proceeds, and to whom it therefore belongs to measure its exertions, as seems meet unto him:—that it be constantly put forth (though most gratuitously, especially the disobligation of the apostacy being considered) upon all to that degree, as that they be enabled to do much good, to which they are not impelled by it:—that it be ever ready (since it is the power of grace) to go forth in a further degree than it had yet done, wheresoever any former issues of it have been duly complied with. Though it be so little supposable that man should hereby have obliged God thereto, that he hath not any way obliged himself, otherwise, than that he hath implied a readiness to impart unto man what shall be necessary to enable him to obey, so far as, upon the apostacy, is requisite to his relief: if he seriously endeavour to do his own part, by *the power he already hath received*. Agreeably to the common saying, *homini facienti quod in se est, &c.* That, according to the royal liberty wherewith it works it go forth, as to some, with that efficacy, as notwithstanding whatever resistance, yet to overcome, and make them captives to the authority and love of Christ.

Sect. XXIX. The universal, continued rectitude of all intelligent creatures had, we may be sure, been willed with a peremptory, efficacious will, if it had been best. That is, if it had not been less congruous than to keep them sometime (under the expectation of future confirmation and reward) upon trial of their fidelity, and in a state wherein it might not be impossible to them to make a defection. And so it had easily been prevented, that ever there should have been an apostacy from God, or any sin in the world. Nor was it either less easy, by a mighty irresistible hand, universally to expel sin, than prevent it; or more necessary or more to be expected from him. But if God's taking no such course, tended to render his government over the world more august and awful for the present, and the result and final issue of all things more glorious at length, and were consequently more congruous; that could not be so willed, as to be effectually procured by him. For whatsoever obligation strict justice hath upon us, that congruity cannot but have upon him. And whereas it would be concluded, that whatsoever any one truly wills, they would effect if they could, we admit it for true, and to be applied in the present case. But add, That as we righly esteem that impossible to us, which we cannot justly do, so is that to him, not only which he cannot do justly, but which, upon the whole matter, he cannot do most wisely also. That is, which his infinite wisdom doth not dictate is most congruous and fit to be done.

Things cohere and are held together, in the course of his dispensation, by congruities as by adamantine bands, and cannot be otherwise. That is, comparing and taking things together, especially the most important. For otherwise, to have been nicely curious about every minute thing, singly considered, that it might not possibly have been better, (as in the frame of this or that individual animal or the like,) had been needlessly to interrupt the course of nature, and therefore, itself, to him an incongruity. And doth, in them that expect it, import more of a trifling disposition than of true wisdom. But to him whose being is most absolutely perfect, to do that which, all things considered, would be simply best, *i. e.* most becoming him, most honourable and Godlike, is absolutely necessary. And consequently, it is to be attributed to his infinite perfection, that, unto him, to do otherwise, is absolutely impossible. And if we yet see not all these congruities which, to him, are more than a law; it is enough that they are obvious to his own eye, who is the only competent Judge. Yet, moreover, it is finally to be considered, that the methods of the Divine government are, besides his, to be exposed to the view and judgment of other intellects than our own, and we expect they should to our own, in another state. What conception thereof is, already, received and formed in our minds, is but an embryo, no less imperfect than our present state is.

It were very unreasonable to expect, since this world shall continue but a little while, that all God's managements, and ways of procedure, in ordering the great affairs of it, should be attempered and fitted to the judgment that shall be made of them in this temporary state, that

[d] Rom. xi. 33. See to the same purpose, ch. xvi. 25, 26, 27. and Eph. i. 5, 6, 7 with the 8th.

will so soon be over; and to the present apprehension and capacity of our now so muddied and distempered minds. A vast and stable eternity remains, wherein the whole celestial chorus shall entertain themselves with the grateful contemplation and applause of his deep counsels. Such things as now seem perplex and intricate to us, will appear most irreprehensibly fair and comely to angelical minds, and our own, when we shall be vouchsafed a place amongst that happy community. What discovery God affords of his own glorious excellencies and perfections, is principally intended to recommend him in that state wherein he, and all his ways and works, are to be beheld with everlasting and most complacential approbation. Therefore though now we should covet the clearest and most satisfying account of things that can be had, we are yet to exercise patience, and not precipitate our judgment of them before the time: as knowing our present conceptions will differ more from what they will be hereafter, than those of a child from the maturer thoughts of the wisest man. And that many of our conceits, which we thought wise, we shall then see cause to put away as childish things.

The disorder, Sir, of this heap rather than frame of thoughts and discourse, as it cannot be thought more unsuitable to the subject, than suitable to the author; and the less displease, by how much it could less be expected to be otherwise, from him, even in the best circumstances; so it may lay some claim to your easier pardon, as having been, mostly, huddled up in the intervals of a troublesome, long journey. Wherein he was rather willing to take what opportunity the inconveniences and hurry of it could allow him, than neglect any, of using the earliest endeavour to approve himself, as he is your great admirer,

Most honoured Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

H. W.

A POSTSCRIPT

TO THE LATE LETTER

OF THE RECONCILEABLENESS OF GOD'S PRESCIENCE, &c.

Finding that this discourse of the *reconcileableness of God's prescience of the sins of men, with the wisdom and sincerity of his counsels, exhortations, &c.* hath been misunderstood and misrepresented; I think it requisite to say somewhat briefly in reference thereto. I wrote it upon the motion of that honourable gentleman to whom it is inscribed; who apprehended somewhat of that kind might be of use to render our religion less exceptionable to some persons of an inquiring disposition, that might perhaps be too sceptical and pendulous, if not prejudiced. Having finished it, I thought it best the author's name should pass under some disguise, supposing it might so better serve its end: for knowing my name could not give the cause an advantage, I was not willing it should be in a possibility of making it incur any disadvantage. And therefore, as I have observed some, in such cases, to make use only of the two last letters, I imitated some other, in the choice of the *penultimate*. But perceiving that discourse now to fall under animadversion, I reckon it becoming to be no longer concealed. It was unavoidable to me, if I would, upon reasonable terms, apply myself to the consideration of the matter I had undertaken, of showing the consistency of God's prescience of the sins of men, with the preventive methods we find him to have used against them, to express somewhat of my sense of (what I well knew to have been asserted by divers schoolmen) God's predeterminative concurrence to the sins of men also. For it had been (any one may see) very idle and ludicrous trifling, to offer at reconciling those methods with God's prescience, and have waived that manifestly greater difficulty of reconciling them with his predeterminative concourse, if I had thought there had been such a thing. And were a like case, as if a chirurgeon, undertaking a wounded person, should apply himself, with a great deal of diligence and address, to the cure of a finger slightly scratched; and totally neglect a wound feared to be mortal in his breast.

And whereas I reckoned God's prescience of all whatsoever futurities, and consequently of the sins of men, most certain and demonstrable, (though it was not the business of this discourse to demonstrate it, but, supposing it, to show its reconcileableness with what it seemed not so well to agree,) if I had believed his predeterminative concurrence to the sins of men to be as certain; perfect despair of being able to say any thing to purpose in this case, had made me resolve to say nothing in either. For, to show how it might stand with the wisdom and sincerity of the blessed God, to counsel men not to sin, to profess his hatred and detestation of it, to remonstrate to men the great danger they should incur by it; with so great appearance of seriousness to exhort, warn, expostulate with them concerning it, express his great displeasure and grief for their sinning, and consequent miseries; and yet all the while act them on thereto, by a secret, but mighty and irresistible, influence, seemed to me an utterly hopeless and impossible undertaking. The other, without this, (supposing, as to this, the case to have been as some have thought it,) a very vain one. But being well assured, that what seemed the greater difficulty, and to carry most of terror and affright in the face of it, was only a chimera; I reckoned the other very superable, and therefore directed my discourse thither, according to the first design of it, which was in effect but to justify God's making such a creature as man, and governing him agreeably to his nature.

Now judging it requisite, that he who should read that discourse concerning this designed subject, with any advantage, should have the same thoughts of the other, which was waived, that I had; I apprehended it necessary to communicate those thoughts concerning that, as I did. Not operosely, and as my business, but only on the bye, and as was fit in reference to a thing that was to be waived, and not insisted on. Now I perceive that some persons, who had formerly entertained that strange opinion of God's predeterminative concurrence to the wickedest actions, and not purged their minds of it, have been offended with that letter, for not expressing more respect unto it. And yet offered nothing themselves, (which to me seems exceeding strange,) for the solving of that great difficulty and encumbrance, which it infers upon our religion. Nor do I much wonder, that this opinion of predeterminative concourse, to sinful actions, should have some stiff adherents among ourselves. For having been entertained by certain Dominicans, that were apprehended in some things to approach nearer us, than others of the Roman church: it came to receive favour and countenance from some of our own, of considerable note for piety and learning, whose

name and authority cannot but be expected to have much influence on the minds of many. But I somewhat wonder, that they who have had no kindness for this letter, upon the account of its dissent from them, in this particular, should not allow it common justice. For because it hath not said every thing they would have had it say, and that would have been grateful to themselves, they impute to it the having said what it said not, and what they apprehended would be most ungrateful to all pious and sober men. The sum is, they give out concerning it, that it denies the providence of God about sin, which all good men ought to abhor from; and insinuate that it falls in with the sentiments of Durandus, which they know many think not well of.

All that I intend to do, for the present, upon this occasion, shall be to show wherein the letter is misrepresented, and charged with what it hath not in it. To remark what is said against that supposed sense of it, and give the true sense of what it says touching this matter; with a further account of the author's mind herein than it was thought fit to insert into so transient and occasional a discourse as that part of the letter was. Whereby it may be seen, wherein he agrees with those of that opposite persuasion, and what the very point of difference is. Further than this, I yet intend not to go, till I see further need. There have two discourses come to my view that have referred to that letter. The one in manuscript only; which, because it is uncertain to me whether the reputed author of it will own it or no, and because it says little or nothing, by way of argument, against the true sense of the letter, I shall take no further present notice of. The other is printed, and offers at somewhat of argument, which therefore I shall more attentively consider. It doth this letter an honour, whereof its author never had the least ambition or expectation, to insert the mention of it into the close of a very learned, elaborate work;[a] with which it might, yet, easily be imagined, its simplicity, and remoteness from any pretence to learning, would so ill agree, that a quarrel could not but ensue. It is from one, who having spent a great part of his time in travelling through some regions of literature, and been peaceable, as far as I have understood, in his travels; it might have been hoped would have let this pamphlet alone, when, for what I can observe, he finds no fault with it but what he makes, and is fain to accuse it of what is no where to be found in it, lest it should be innocent.

It is an unaccountable pleasure which men of some humours take, in depraving what is done by others, when there is nothing attempted that doth interfere with them; nothing that can, righteously, be understood to cross any good end, which they more openly pretend to, nor the more concealed end (if they have any such) of their own glory. Common edification seems less designed, when every thing must be thrown down, which is not built by their own hands, or by their own line and measure. I plead nothing of merit in this little essay, only I say for it, that I know not what it can be guilty of towards this learned man, that can have occasioned this assault upon it by his pen. By how much the less it keeps his road, the more I might have thought it out of the way of his notice. I am sure it meant him no harm, nor had any design to pilfer from him any part of his collections. But he says, he may not let it pass. Then there is no remedy. But I wonder what he should mean by he may not. It must either mean, that he thought it unlawful to let it pass, or that he had a mighty strong and irresistible inclination to squabble a little with it. The former cannot be imagined. For then, for the same reason, he would have attempted sundry others of former and later days, that have said much to the purpose, which this letter doth but touch obiter, and on the bye, in its way to another design. But those were giants, whom it was not so safe to meddle with. Therefore he could very wisely let them pass, though they have wounded his beloved cause, beyond all that it is in the power of his (or any) art to cure. Whence it is consequent, that the whole business must be resolved into the latter. And this inclination cannot but owe itself to some peculiar aspect and reference he had to the author. Whom, though he was *incognito*, yet (as I have been informed) he professes to have discoursed with upon the same subject many times. And so, therefore, he might once more before this public rencounter, if he had thought fit, and nature could have been repelled awhile.

It is true, he hath found me not facile to entertain his sentiments in this matter. And indeed I have deeply dreaded the portentous imaginations which I found had more lightly tinctured his mind, as to this thing, concerning the blessed God. Than which, upon deliberation, I do believe, no human wit can ever devise worse. As I have often freely told divers of my friends, and it is very likely, among them, himself. Though I do not suspect the contagion to have infected his vitals; by a privilege, vouchsafed to some, that they may possibly drink some deadly thing that shall not hurt them. But why must an impatiency of this dissent break out into so vindictive an hostility? I will not say I expected more friendly dealing. For, as I do well know it was very possible such a public contest might have been managed with that candour and fairness, as not at all to intrench upon friendship; so, as it is, I need not own so much weakness, as upon many years' experience, not to be able to distinguish and understand there are some tempers less capable of the ingenuities that belong to that pleasant relation. But it was only a charitable error, of which I repent not, that I expected a more righteous dealing.

He pretends to give my sense in other words, and then gravely falls to combating his own man of straw, which he will have represent me, and so I am to be tortured in effigy. It can never be proved, that it implies a contradiction, for God to make a creature, which should be capable of acting without immediate concourse. This he puts in a different character, as if I had said so much. And why might not my own words be allowed to speak my own sense, but that his understanding and eyes must then have conspired to tell him, that the sense would have been quite another? It is only a predeterminative concurrence to all actions, even those that are most malignantly wicked, (*p.* 117.) and again, God's concurring by a determinative influence unto wicked actions, (*Ibid.*) which is the only thing I speak of; as what I cannot reconcile with the wisdom and sincerity of his councils and exhortations, against such actions. And if he had designed to serve any common good end, in this undertaking of his, why did he not attempt to reconcile them himself? But the wisdom and sincerity of God are thought fit (as it would seem) to be sacrificed to the reputation of his more peculiarly admired schoolmen. If there be such a universal determination, by an irresistible Divine influence, to all even the wickedest actions, (which God forbid!) methinks such a difficulty should not be so easily past over. And surely the reconciling such a determinative influence, with the Divine wisdom and sincerity, had been a performance worth all his learned labours besides, and of greater service to the Christian name and honour.

But it seems the denying concurrence by such predetermining influence, is the denying of all immediate concurrence. And I am sent to the Thomists, Scotists, Jesuits, and Suarez, more especially to be taught otherwise. As if all these were for determinative concourse. Which is very pleasant, when the very heads of the two first-mentioned sects were against it, as we shall see further anon, the third generally, and Suarez particularly, whom he names, have so industriously and strongly opposed it. Yea and because I assent not to the doctrine of predeterminative concourse, I am represented (which was the last spite that was to be done me) as a favourer of the hypotheses of Durandus. And he might as truly have said of Henry Nicholas, but not so prudently, because he knows whose opinions have a nearer alliance to that family. Now I heartily wish I had a ground for so much charity towards him, as to suppose him ignorant that immediate concourse, and determinative, are not wont to be used by the schoolmen, in this controversy, as terms of the same signification. If he do himself think them to be all one, what warrant is that to him to give the same for my sense? When 'tis so well known they are not commonly so taken, and that determinative concourse is so voluminously written against, where immediate is expressly asserted

[a] Court of the Gentiles, part 2, page 322.

Let him but soberly tell me, what his design was, to dash out the word *determining* from what he recites of that letter, and put in *immediate*, which he knows is not to be found in any of the places he refers to in it. Or what was the spring of that confidence that made him intimate the Scotists, Thomists, the Jesuists, and particularly Suarez, to be against what is said in the letter, in this thing? If he could procure all the books in the world to be burnt, besides those in his own library, he would yet have a hard task to make it be believed in the next age, that all these were for God's efficacious determination of the wills of men unto wicked actions.

I need not, after all this, concern myself as to what he says about the *no medium* between the extremes of his disjunctive proposition. Either the human will must depend upon the divine independent will of God, &c. (as he phrases it in the excess of his caution, lest any should think the will of God was not a divine will,) or God must depend on the human will, &c. Unless he can show that the human will cannot be said to depend on the divine, as being enabled by it, except it be also determined and impelled by it, to every wicked action. A created being that was entirely from God, with all the powers and faculties which belong to it; that hath its continual subsistence in him, and all those powers continued, and maintained by his influence every moment; that hath those powers made habile, and apt for whatsoever its most natural motions and operations, by a suitable influence whensoever it moves or operates: can this creature be said not to depend, as to all its motions and operations, unless it be also unavoidably impelled to do every thing to which it is thus sufficiently enabled?

I again say, was it impossible to God to make such a creature that can, in this case, act or not act? It is here oddly enough said, that the author gives no demonstration hereof. Of what? Why that it can never be proved (as the reference to the foregoing words shows) that it implies a contradiction, &c. It seems it was expected that author should have proved by demonstration, that it can never be proved, that it implies a contradiction for God to make a creature, which should be capable of acting (as he feigns him to have said) without immediate concourse. By what rule of reasoning was he obliged to do so? But if the proving there is such a creature, as in the case before expressed can act without determinative concourse, will serve turn to prove, that it cannot be proved, it implies a contradiction there should be such a one; I may think the thing was done. And may think it sufficiently proved, that there is such a creature; if it appear (whereof there is too much proof) that there are such actions done by creatures, as for the reasons that were before alleged, it could stand with the nature of God to determine them unto. And was nothing said tending to prove this, that it could not consist with the nature of God, to determine men unto all the wicked actions they commit? It seems unless it were put into mood and figure, 'tis no proof. Nor was it the design of those papers to insist upon that subject; but there are things suggested *in transitu*, as such a discourse could admit, that whether they are demonstrative or no, would puzzle a considering person. That God should have as much influence and concurrence to the worst actions, as to the best. As much or more than the sinner or the tempter. That the matter of his laws to Adam, and his posterity, should be a natural impossibility. And I now add, the irreconcilenbleness of that determination, with God's wisdom and sincerity, &c. These I shall reckon demonstrations, till I see them well answered.

However, if mine were a bad opinion, why was it not as confutable without the mention of Durandus? But that was, with him, an odious name; and fit, therefore, to impress the brand, which he desired I should wear for his sake. This is a likely way to clear the truth! Yet if it serve not one design, it will another, he thinks, upon which he was more intent. Are all for Durandus's way that are against a predeterminative influence to wicked actions? I could tell him who have shown more strength in arguing against Durandus, than I find in all his arguments: who yet have written, too, against determinative concourse to such actions, more than ever he will be able to answer, or any man. The truth is, when I wrote that letter, I had never seen Durandus. Nor indeed did I consult any book for the writing of it, (as I had not opportunity, if I had been so inclined,) except, upon some occasions, the Bible. Not apprehending it necessary to number votes, and consider how many men's thoughts were one way, and of how many the other, before I would adventure to think any of my own. But I have this day, upon the view of his animadversions, taken a view of Durandus too: and really cannot yet guess what should tempt him to parallel my conceptions with Durandus's, but that he took his for somewhat an ill-favoured name. Durandus flatly, in several places, denies God's immediate concourse to the actions of the creatures.[b] Which I never said nor thought; but do really believe his immediate concourse, to all actions of his creatures both *immediatione virtutis*, and *supposit*, (that I may more comply with his scholastic humour, in the use of such terms, than gratify my own,) yet not determinative unto wicked actions.

Again, Durandus denies immediate concourse, universally, and upon such a ground, as whereupon, the denial must equally extend to good actions as to bad; *viz.* that 'tis impossible the same numerical action should be from two or more agents immediately and perfectly, except the same numerical virtue should be in each. But he says the same numerical virtue cannot be in God and in the creature, &c.[c] Whereas he well knows the concourse or influence (for I here affect not the curiosity to distinguish these two terms, as some do) which I deny not to be immediate to any actions, I only deny to be determinative, as to those which are wicked. Yea, and the authors he quotes, (sec. 11.) Aquinas and Scotus, though every body may know they are against what was the notion of Durandus, yet are as much against himself, if he will directly oppose that letter, and assert determinative concourse, to wicked actions. They held immediate concourse not determinative. The former, though he supposes Divine help in reference to the elections of the human will, yet asserts the elections themselves to be in man's own power, and only says that in the executions of those elections men can be hindered. That (whatsoever influence he asserts of the first cause) men still, *habent se indifferenter ad benè vel malè eligendum*.[d] The other, though he also excludes not the immediate efficacy of God in reference to the actions of men, yet is so far from making it determinative, that the reason he gives why, in evil actions, man sins, and God does not, is that the one of those causes *posset rectitudinem dare actui quam tenetur dare: et tamen non dat.* Alia *autem, licèt non teneatur eam dare: tamen quantum est ex se daret, si voluntas creata co-operaretur*;[e] in the very place which himself refers to. Wherein they differ from this author *toto cœlo*, and from me, in that they make not determinative influence necessary in reference to good actions, which I expressly do.

Thus far it may be seen what pretence or colour he had to make my opinions the same with Durandus's, or his own the same with that of Thomas and Scotus. But if he knew in what esteem I have the schoolmen, he would hardly believe me likely to step one foot out of my way, either to gain the reputation of any of their names, or avoid the disreputation. He, notwithstanding, supposed his own reputation to be so good (and I know no reason why he might not suppose so) as to make it be believed I was any thing he pleased to call me, by such as had not opportunity to be otherwise informed. And thus I would take leave of him, and permit him to use his own reflections upon his usage of me, at his own leisure; but that civility bids me (since he is pleased to be at the pains of catechising me) first to give some answer to the questions wherein he thus expostulates with me.

Q. I. Whether there be any action of man on earth so good, which hath not some mixture of sin in it? And if God concur to the substrate matter of it as good, must he not necessarily concur to the substrate matter as sinful? For is not the substrate matter of the act, both as good and sinful, the same?

A. 1. It seems then, that God doth concur to the matter of an action as sinful. Which is honestly acknowledged, since by his principles it cannot be denied; though most

b L. 2. Dist. 1. Q. 5. D. 37. Q. 1. c Dist. 1. 2. 5. ut supr. d 1[2] Q. 63. e L. 2. Dist. 37. Q. 2.

of his way mince the business, and say the concurrence is only to the action which is sinful, not as sinful.

2. This I am to consider as an argument for God's predeterminative concurrence to wicked actions. And thus it must be conceived: That if God concur by determinative influence to the imperfectly good actions of faith, repentance, love to himself, prayer; therefore to the acts of enmity against himself, cursing, idolatry, blasphemy, &c. And is it not a mighty consequence? If to actions that are good *quoad substantiam*, therefore to such as are in the substance of them evil? We ourselves can, in a remoter kind, concur to the actions of others: because you may afford, yourself, your leading concurrence to actions imperfectly good, therefore may you to them that are downright evil? because to prayer, therefore to cursing and swearing? and then ruin men for the actions you induced them to? You will say, God may rather, but sure he can much less do so than you. How could you be serious in the proposal of this question?

We are at a loss how it should consist with the Divine wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth, to design the punishing man, yet innocent, with everlasting torments, for actions which God, himself, would irresistibly move him to; whereas his making a covenant with Adam in reference to himself and his posterity, implied there was a possibility it might be kept; at least that he would not make the keeping of it, by his own positive influence, impossible. And you say, if he might concur to the substrate matter of an action as good, (which tends to man's salvation and blessedness,) he must necessarily concur (and that by an irresistible determinative influence, else you say nothing to me) to the substrate matter of all their evil actions, as evil, which tend to their ruin and misery, brought upon them by the actions which God makes them do. I suppose St. Luke vi. 9. with Hos. xiii. 9. show a difference. If you therefore ask me, why I should not admit this consequence? I say it needs no other answer, than that I take wisdom, righteousness, goodness, and truth, to belong more to the idea of God, than their contraries.

Q. 2. Is there any action so sinful that hath not some natural good as the substrate matter thereof?

A. True. And what shall be inferred? That therefore God must by a determinative influence produce every such action whatsoever reason there be against it? You might better argue thence the necessity of his producing, every hour, a new world; in which there would be a great deal more of positive entity, and natural goodness. Certainly the natural goodness that is in the entity of an action, is no such invitation to the holy God by determinative influence to produce it, as that he should offer violence to his own nature, and stain the justice and honour of his government, by making it be done, and then punish it being done.

Q. 3. Do we not cut off the most illustrious part of Divine Providence in governing the lower world, &c.?

A. What? by denying that 'tis the stated way of God's government, to urge men, irresistibly, to all that wickedness, for which he will afterwards punish them with everlasting torments? I should least of all ever have expected such a question to this purpose, and am ashamed further to answer it. Only name any act of providence, I hereby deny, if you can. In the next place, that my sense may appear in my own words; and that I may show how far I am of the same mind with those that apprehend me at so vast a distance from them; and where, if they go further, our parting point must be; I shall set down the particulars of my agreement with them, and do it in no other heads than they might have collected, if they had pleased, out of that letter. As,

1. That God exerciseth a universal providence about all his creatures, both in sustaining and governing them.

2. That, more particularly, he exerciseth such a providence about man.

3. That this providence about man extends to all the actions of all men.

4. That it consists not alone in beholding the actions of men, as if he were a mere spectator of them only, but is positively active about them.

5. That this active providence of God about all the actions of men consists not merely in giving them the natural powers, whereby they can work of themselves, but in a real influence upon those powers.

6. That this influence is in reference to holy and spiritual actions (whereto since the apostacy the nature of man is become viciously disinclined) necessary to be efficaciously determinative; such as shall overcome that disinclination, and reduce those powers into act.

7. That the ordinary, appointed way for the communication of this determinative influence, is by our intervening consideration of the inducements which God represents to us in his word, *viz.* the precepts, promises, and comminations, which are the moral instruments of his government. No doubt but he may (as is intimated in the letter) extraordinarily act men in some rarer cases, by inward impulse, without the help of such external means, as he did prophets or inspired persons; and when he hath done so, we were not to think he treated them unagreeably to their natures, or so as their natures could not, without violence, admit. But it hath been the care and designment of the Divine wisdom, so to order the way of dispensation towards the several sorts of creatures, as not only not, ordinarily, to impose upon them what they could not conveniently be patient of, but so as that their powers and facultics might be put upon the exercises whereof they were capable, and to provide that neither their passive capacity should be overcharged, nor their active be unemployed. And whereas the reasonable nature of man renders him not only susceptible of unexpected internal impressions, but also capable of being governed by laws, which requires the use of his own endeavour to understand and obey them; and whereas we also find such laws are actually made for him, and propounded to him with their proper enforcements. If it should be the fixed course of God's government over him, only to guide him by inward impulses; this (as is said in that letter) would render those laws and their sanctions impertinencies, his faculties whereby he is capable of moral government so far, and to this purpose, useless and vain: and would be an occasion, which the depraved nature of man would be very apt to abuse into a temptation to them, never to bind their powers to the endeavour of doing any thing that were of a holy and spiritual tendency, (from which their aversion would be always prompting them to devise excuses,) more than a mere machine would apply itself to the uses which it was made for and doth not understand.

Therefore, lest any should be so unreasonable, as to expect God should only surprise them, while they resolvedly sit still and sleep; he hath, in his infinite wisdom, withheld from them the occasion hereof; and left them destitute of any encouragement (whatsoever his extraordinary dealings may have been with some) to expect his influences, in the neglect of his ordinary methods, as is discoursed p. 121. and at large in the following pages. And which is the plain sense of that admonition, Phil. ii. 12, 13. Yea, and though there be never so many instances of merciful surprisals, preventive of all our own consideration and care, yet those are still to be accounted the ordinary methods which are so *de jure*, which would actually be so, if men did their duty, and which God hath obliged us to observe and attend unto as such.

8. That in reference to all other actions which are no sinful, though there be not a sinful disinclination to them, yet because there may be a sluggishness and ineptitude to some purposes God intends to serve by them, this influence is also always determinative thereunto; whensoever to the immense wisdom of God shall seem meet, and conducing to his own great and holy ends.

9. That, in reference to sinful actions, by this influence God doth not only sustain men who do them, and continue to them their natural faculties and powers, whereby they are done, but also, as the first mover, so far excite and actuate those powers, as that they are apt and habile for any congenerous action, to which they have a natural designation; and whereto they are not sinfully disinclined.

10. That, if men do then employ them to the doing of any sinful action; by that same influence, he doth, as to him seems meet, limit, moderate, and, against the inclination and design of the sinful agent, overrule and dispose it to good. But now if, besides all this, they will also

assert; that God doth, by an efficacious influence, move and determine men to wicked actions. This is that which I most resolvedly deny. That is, in this I shall differ with them, that I do not suppose God to have, by internal influence, as far a hand in the worst and wickedest actions, as in the best. I assert more to be necessary to actions to which men are wickedly disinclined; but that less will suffice for their doing of actions to which they have inclination more than enough. I reckon it sufficient to the production of this latter sort of actions, that their powers be actually habile, and apt for any such action, in the general, as is connatural to them; supposing there be not a peccant aversion, as there is to all those actions that are holy and spiritual; which aversion a more potent (even a determinative) influence is necessary to overcome. I explain myself by instance.

A man hath from God the powers belonging to his nature, by which he is capable of loving or hating an apprehended good or evil. These powers being, by a present Divine influence, rendered habile, and apt for action; he can now love a good name, health, ease, life, and hate disgrace, sickness, pain, death: but he doth also by these powers, thus habilitated for action, love wickedness, and hate God. I say, now, that to those former acts God should over and besides determine him, is not absolutely and always necessary; and to the latter, is impossible. But that, to hate wickedness universally, and as such, and to love God, the depravedness of his nature, by the apostacy, hath made the determinative influence of efficacious grace necessary. Which, therefore, he hath indispensable obligation (nor is destitute of encouragement) earnestly to implore and pray for. My meaning is now plain to such as have a mind to understand it.

Having thus given an account wherein I agree with them, and wherein, if they please, I must differ. It may perhaps be expected I should add further reasons of that difference on my part. But I shall for the present forbear to do it. I know it may be alleged, that some very pious as well as learned men have been of their opinion. And I seriously believe it. But that signifies nothing to the goodness of the opinion. Nor doth the badness of it extinguish my charity nor reverence towards the men. For I consider, that as many hold the most important truths, and which most directly tend to impress the image of God upon their souls, that yet are never stamped with any such impression thereby; so, it is not impossible some may have held very dangerous opinions, with a notional judgment, the pernicious influence whereof hath never distilled upon their hearts. Neither shall I be willing without necessity to detect other men's infirmities. Yet if I find myself any way obliged further to intermeddle in this matter, I reckon the time I have to spend in this world, can never be spent to better purpose, than in discovering the fearful consequences of that rejected opinion, the vanity of the subterfuges whereby its assertors think to hide the malignity of it; and the inefficacy of the arguments brought for it. Especially those two which the letter takes notice of. For as so ill-coloured an opinion ought never to be admitted without the most apparent necessity, so do I think it most apparent there is no necessity it should be admitted upon those grounds or any other. And doubt not but that both the governing providence of God in reference to all events whatsoever, and his most certain foreknowledge of them all, may be defended, against all opposers, without it. But I had rather my preparations to these purposes should be buried in dust and silence; than I should ever see the occasion which should carry the signification with it of their being at all needful. And I shall take it for a just and most deplorable occasion, if I shall find any to assert against me the contradictory to this proposition:—That doth not by an efficacious influence, universally move and determine men to all their actions; even those that are most wicked.—Which is the only true and plain meaning of what was said, about this business, in the before-mentioned letter.

MAN'S CREATION

IN

A HOLY BUT MUTABLE STATE.

ECCLES. VII. 29.

LO, THIS ONLY HAVE I FOUND, THAT GOD HATH MADE MAN UPRIGHT.; BUT THEY HAVE SOUGHT OUT MANY INVENTIONS.

In these words you have the result of a serious inquiry into the state of mankind. In the verse immediately foregoing, the preacher speaks his own experience, touching each sex distributively; how rare it was to meet with a wise and good man, how much rarer with a prudent and virtuous woman; (so he must be understood, though these qualities are not expressed;) then in the text gives this verdict touching both collectively, tending to acquit their Maker of their universal depravation, and convict them. "Lo, this only have I found," &c.

The words contain two propositions.—The first touching man's perfection by his creation, "God made," &c. The second touching his defection by sin, "But they have sought," &c. Together with a solemn preface introducing both, and recommending them as well-weighed truths, "Lo, this only have I found," &c. *q. d.* "I do not now speak at random, and by guess; no, but I solemnly pronounce it, as that which I have found out by serious study and diligent exploration, that God made man upright," &c. The terms are not obscure, and are fitly rendered. I find no considerable variety of readings, and cannot needlessly spend time about words. Only in short,—By *man* you must understand man collectively, so as to comprehend the whole species.—*Making him upright*, you must understand so as to refer *making* not to the adjunct only, supposing the subject pre-existent, but to both subject and adjunct together; and so 'tis man's concreate and original righteousness that is here meant.—By *inventions* understand (as the antithesis doth direct) such as are alien from this rectitude. Nor is it altogether improbable that in this expression, some reference may be had to that curious desire of knowing much that tempted Adam and Eve into the first transgression.—*Many inventions*, seems to be spoken in opposition to that simplicity and singleness of heart which this original rectitude did include; truth is but one; falsehood, manifold. God made man upright, *i. e.* simple, plain-hearted, free from all tortuous windings, and involutions. (So the word rendered upright in the text doth signify; and Jeshurun derived therefrom, which God thought a fit name for his people Israel, the seed of plain-hearted Jacob, to be known by; answerably whereto Nathanael is said to be a true Israelite,[a] in whom was no guile.) Such man was at first; now, in the room of this simplicity, you find a multiplicity: he was of one constant, uniform frame and tenor of spirit, held one straight, direct, and even course; now he is become full of inventions, grown vafrous, multiform as to the frame of his spirit, uncertain, intricate, perplexed in all his ways.—*Sought out*, this notes the voluntariness, and perfect spontaneity of his defection; 'twas his own doing. God made him upright; he hath sought out means to deform and undo himself.—The words thus opened afford us two great gospel truths.

Doct. 1. That God endued the nature of man, in his creation, with a perfect and universal rectitude.

2. That man's defection from his primitive state was purely voluntary, and from the unconstrained choice of his own mutable and self-determining will.

(Though the latter part of the text would afford a sufficient ground to treat of the state of man now fallen; yet that being by agreement left to another hand, I observe no more from it than what concerns the manner of his fall, and that only as it depended on a mutable will.) In handling these truths, I shall,

1. Open them in certain explicatory theses. 2. Improve them in some few practical and applicatory inferences.

1. About the former—that God endued, &c.—take these propositions for explication.

Prop. 1. All created rectitude consists in conformity to some rule or law. Rectitude is a mere relative thing, and its relation is to a rule. By a rule, I here mean a law strictly taken; and therefore I speak this only of created rectitude. A law, is a rule of duty given by a superior to an inferior; nothing can be in that sense a rule to God, or the measure of increated rectitude.

Prop. 2. The highest rule of all created rectitude, is the will of God, considered as including most intrinsically an eternal and immutable reason, justice, and goodness. 'Tis certain, there can be no higher rule to creatures than the Divine will;[b] and as certain that the government of God over his creatures, is always reasonable, and just, and gracious; and that this reasonableness, justice, and goodness, by which it is so, should be subjected any where but in God himself, none that know what God is, according to our more obvious notions of him, can possibly think.

Prop. 3. Any sufficient signification of this will, touching the reasonable creature's duty, is a law, indispensably obliging such a creature. A law is a constitution *de debito*, and 'tis the legislator's will (not concealed in his own breast, but) duly expressed that makes this constitution, and infers an obligation on the subject.

Prop. 4. The law given to Adam at his creation was partly natural, given by way of internal impression upon his soul; partly positive, given (as is probable) by some more external discovery or revelation. That the main body of law, whereby man was to be governed, should be at first given no other way than by stamping them upon his mind and heart, was a thing congruous enough to his innocent state; (as it is to angels and saints in glory;) it being then exactly contempered to his nature, highly approvable to his reason, (as is evident, in that being fallen, his reason ceases not to approve it, Rom. ii. 18.) fully suitable to the inclination and tendency of his will, and not at all regretted by any reluctant principle that might in the least oppose or render him doubtful about his duty.

a John i. 47.

b Rom. vii. 12. xii 1, 2. Ezek. xviii. 25. chap. xxxiii.

Yet was it most reasonable also, that some positive commands should be superadded, that God's right of dominion and government over him as Creator, might be more expressly asserted, and he might more fully apprehend his own obligation as a creature to do some things, because it was his Maker's will, as well as others, because they appeared to him in their own nature reasonable and fit to be done; for so the whole of what God requires of man, is fitly distinguished into some things which he commands because they are just, and some things that are just because he commands them.

Prop. 5. Adam was endued in his creation with a sufficient ability and habitude to conform to this whole law, both natural and positive; in which ability and habitude his original recitude did consist. This proposition carries in it the main truth we have now in hand, therefore requires to be more distinctly insisted on. There are two things in it to be considered—the thing itself he was endued with—the manner of the endowment.

1. The thing itself wherewith he was endued. That was uprightness, rectitude, (otherwise called the image of God, though that expression comprehends more than we now speak of, as his immortality, dominion over the inferior creatures, &c.) which uprightness or rectitude consisted in the habitual conformity, or conformability, of all his natural powers to this whole law of God; and is therefore considerable two ways, *viz.* in relation to its subject, and its rule.

1. In relation to its subject; that was the whole soul, (in some sense it may be said the whole man,) even the several powers of it. And here we are led to consider the parts of this rectitude, for 'tis co-extended (if that phrase may be allowed) with its subject, and lies spread out into the several powers of the soul; for had any power been left destitute of it, such is the frame of man, and the dependence of his natural powers on each other, in order to action, that it had disabled him to obey, and had destroyed his rectitude; for *bonum non oritur nisi ex causis integris, malum vero ex quovis defectu.* And hence (as Davenant[e] well observes) according to the parts (if I may so speak) of the subject wherein it was, man's original rectitude must be understood to consist of,

1. A perfect illumination of mind to understand and know the will of God. 2. A compliance of heart and will therewith. 3. An obedient subordination of the sensitive appetite, and other inferior powers, that in nothing they might resist the former. That it comprehends all these, appears by comparing Col. iii. 10. where the image of God, wherein man was created, is said to consist in knowledge, that hath its seat and subject in the mind, with Eph. iv. 24. where righteousness and holiness are also mentioned; the one whereof consists in equity towards men, the other in loyalty and devotedness to God; both which necessarily suppose the due framing of the other powers of the soul, to the ducture of an enlightened mind. And besides, that work of sanctification (which in these scriptures is expressly called a renovation of man according to the image of God wherein he was created) doth in other scriptures appear (as the forementioned author also observes) to consist of parts proportionable to these I mention, *viz.* illumination of mind, Ephes. i. 18. conversion of heart, Ps. li. 10. victory over concupiscence, Rom. vi. 7, throughout.

2. Consider this recitude in relation to its rule; that is, the will of God revealed,[d] or the law of God. Sin is the transgression of the law; and accordingly righteousness must needs be conformity to the law; *viz.* actual righteousness consists in actual conformity to the law; that habitual rectitude which Adam was furnished with in his creation, (of which we are speaking,) in an habitual conformity, or an ability to conform to the same law. This habitual conformity was, as of the whole soul, so to the whole law, *i. e.* to both the parts or kinds of it, natural and positive. He was furnished with particular principles, inclining him to comply with whatsoever the law of nature had laid before him; and with a general principle, disposing him to yield to whatsoever any positive law should lay before him as the will of God. And if it be said,

e Davenant de justitia habituali, &c.
d 1 John iii. 4.
e Aquin. Summ.
f Aug. de civitate Dei.
g 1 Kings viii. 46. Psal. xiv. 1. Rom. iii. 12, &c. cap. v. 12, 13, &c. 1 John v. 19, &c.

(in reference to the former of these,) that this law of nature impressed upon Adam's soul, was his very rectitude; therefore how can this rectitude be a conformity to this law? I answer, 1. A law is twofold, *regulans, regulata.*[e] 2. The law of nature impressed upon the soul of Adam, must be considered;—1. as subjected in his mind; so it consisted of certain practical notions about good and evil, right and wrong, &c.—2. as subjected in his heart, so it consisted in certain habitual inclinations to conform to those principles. Now these inclinations of the heart, though they are a rule to actions, they are yet something ruled in reference to those notions in the mind; and their conformity thereto makes one part of original rectitude. And those notions, though they are a rule to these inclinations, yet they are something ruled in reference to the will of God signified by them; and in the conformity thereto, consists another part of this original rectitude.

2. We have to consider the manner of this endowment. And as to this, 'tis much disputed among the schoolmen, whether it were natural or supernatural. I shall only lay down, in few words, what I conceive to be clear and indisputable.

1. If by natural, you mean essential, (whether constitutively, or consecutively,) so original righteousness was not natural to man; for then he could never have lost it, without the loss of his being.

2. If by natural, you mean connatural, *i. e.* concreate with the nature of man, and consonant thereto, so I doubt not but it was natural to him.

Prop. 6. This rectitude of man's nature, could not but infer and include his actual blessedness, while he should act according to it. According to the tenor of the covenant, it could not but infer it. And consider this rectitude in itself, it must needs include it: the rectitude of his understanding including his knowledge of the highest good; and the rectitude of his will and affections, the acceptance and enjoyment thereof; as Augustine[f] in this case, *nullum bonum abesset homini quod recta voluntas optare posset, &c.* Thus far of the holiness and blessedness of man's first state. It follows to speak of the mutability of it, and of his fall as depending thereon.

Doct. 2. That man's defection from his primitive state was merely voluntary, and from the unconstrained choice of his own mutable and self-determining will. For the asserting of this truth, take the following propositions:

Prop. 1. That the nature of man is now become universally depraved and sinful. This, Scripture is full of,[g] and experience and common observation puts it beyond dispute. 'Tis left then that sin must have had some original among men.

Prop. 2. The pure and holy nature of God could never be the original of man's sin. This is evident in itself. God[h] disclaims it; nor can any affirm it of him without denying his very Being. He could not be the cause of unholiness, but by ceasing to be holy, which would suppose him mutably holy; and if either God or man must be confessed mutable, 'tis no difficulty where to lay it; whatever he is, he is essentially; and necessity of existence, of being always what he is,[i] remains everlastingly the fundamental attribute of his Being.

3. 'Tis blasphemous and absurd to talk of two principles, (as the Manichees of old,) the one good *per se*, and the cause of all good; the other evil *per se*, and the cause of all evil.

Bradwardine's[k] two arguments, 1. that this would suppose two gods, two independent beings, 2. that it would suppose an evil god, do sufficiently convince this to be full both of blasphemy and contradiction.

4. It was not possible that either external objects, or the temptation of the devil, should necessitate the will of man to sin. External objects could not; for that were to reject all upon God; for if he create objects with such an allective power in them, and create such an appetite in man as cannot but work inordinately and sinfully towards those objects, it must needs infer his efficacious necessitation of sin, being it would destroy the truth already established, that God created man with such a rectitude as that

h Deut. xxvii. 4. Psal. v. 4. 3 John 11.
i James i. 17.
k Bradwardine de causa Dei.

there was a sufficient ability in his superior powers for the cohibition and restraint of the inferior, that they should not work inordinately towards their objects. The devil could not do it for the same reason, having no way to move the will of man but by the proposal of objects; yet that by this means (which he could in many respects manage most advantagcously) he did much help forward the first sin, Scripture leaves us not to doubt.

5. The whole nature of sin consisting only in a defect, no other cause need be designed of it than a defective; *i. e.* an understanding, will, and inferior powers, however originally good, yet mutably and defeetively so. I shall not insist to prove that sin is no positive being; but I take the argument to be irrefragable, (notwithstanding the cavils made against it,) that is drawn from that common maxim, that *omne ens positivum est vel primum, vel à primo.*[l] And that of Dionysius the Areopagite is an ingenious one: he argues that no being can be evil *per se;* for then it must be immutably, to which no evil can be, for to be always the same, is a certain property of goodness; 'tis so even of the highest goodness. And hence sin being supposed only a defect, a soul that is only defectibly holy, might well enough be the cause of it; *i. c.* the deficient eause. Nor is it in the least strange that man should be at first created with a defectible holiness; for if he were immutably holy, either it must be *ex naturâ*, or *ex gratiâ: ex naturâ* it could not be, for that would suppose him God; if it were *ex gratiâ*, then it must be free; then it might be, or might not be; therefore there was no incongruity in it that it should not be. And indeed it was most congruous that God having newly made such a creature, furnished with such powers, so capable of government by a law, of being moved by promises and threats, he should for some time hold him as a *viator*, in a state of trial unconfirmed, (as he did also the innocent angels,) that it might be seen how he would behave himself towards his Maker, and that he should be rewardable and punishable accordingly, in a state that should be everlasting and unchangeable: the liberty therefore of the viators and the comprehensors, [m] Gibieuf well distinguishes into *inchoata* or *consummabilis*, and *perfecta* or *consummata*; the former such as Adam's was at his creation; the latter such as is the state of angels and saints in glory; and as his would have been had he held out and persisted innocent through the intended time of trial.

It was therefore no strange thing that man should be created defectible; it was as little strange that a defectible creature should *deficere*. For the manner of that defeetion, (whether error of the understanding preceded, or inconsideration only, and a neglect of its office,) with the great difficulties some imagine herein, I waive discourse about them; judging that advice good and sober, for to consider more how sin may be gotten out of the world, than how it came in. Though 'tis most probable there was in the instant of temptation a mere suspension of the understanding's act, (not as previous to the sin, but as a part of it,) and thereupon a sudden precipitation of will, as Estius doth well determine.

6. Man being created mutable as to his holiness, must needs be so as to his happiness too. And that both upon a legal account, (for the law had determined that if he did sin he must die,) and also upon a natural; for it was not possible that his soul being once depraved by sin, the powers of it vitiated, their order each to other, and towards their objects, broken and interrupted, there should remain a disposition and aptitude to converse with the highest good.

The use follows, which shall be only in certain practical inferences that will issue from these truths, partly considered singly and severally, partly together and in conjunction.

From the First. 1. Did God create man upright as hath been shown? then how little reason had man to sin! how little reason had he to desert God! to be weary of his first estate! Could God's making him, his making him upright, be a reason why he should sin against him? was his directing his heart, and the natural course of his affections towards himself, a reason why he should forsake him? What was there in his state that should make it grievous to him? Was his duty too much for him? God made him upright, so that every part of it was connatural to him. Was his privilege too little? He knew, and loved, and enjoyed the highest and infinite good. O think then how unreasonable and disingenuous a thing sin was! that a creature that was nothing but a few hours ago, now a reasonable being, capable of God, should yet sin! Urge your hearts with this, we are too apt to think ourselves unconcerned in Adam's sin; we look upon ourselves too abstractly, we should remember we are members of a community, and it should be grievous to us to think that our species hath dealt so unkindly and unworthily with God: and besides, do not we sin daily after the similitude of Adam's transgression? and is not sin as unreasonable and unjust a thing as ever?

2. Was our primitive state so good and happy, how justly may we refleet and look back towards our first state! how fitly might we take up Job's words! O that I were as in months past;—as in the days of my youth;—when the Almighty was yet with me;—when I put on righteousness and it clothed me;—when my glory was fresh in me, &c.[n] With what sadness may we call to mind the things that are past, and the beginnings of ancient time! when there was no stain upon our natures, no cloud upon our minds, no pollution upon our hearts; when with pure and undefiled souls we could embrace and rest, and rejoice in the eternal and incomprehensible good! When we remember these things, do not our bowels turn? are not our souls poured out within us?

From the Second. 1. Did man so voluntarily ruin himself; how unlikely is he now to be his own saviour! He that was a self-destroyer from the beginning, that ruined himself as soon as God had made him, is he likely now to save himself? Is it easier for him to recover his station than to have kept it? or hath he improved himself by sinning, and gained strength by his fall for a more difficult undertaking? Is he grown better natured towards himself and his God, than he was at first?

2. How little reason hath he to blame God, though he finally perish! What would he have had God to have done more to prevent it; he gave his law to direct him, his threatening to warn him; his promise for his encouragement was evidently implied; his nature was sufficiently disposed to improve and comport with all these: yet he sins! Is God to be charged with this? Sins upon no neeessity, with no pretence; but that he must be seeking out inventions, trying experiments, assaying to better his state, as plainly despising the law, suspecting the truth, envying the greatness, asserting and aspiring to the sovereignty and Godhead of his Maker. Had we (any of us) a mind to contend with God about this matter, how would we order our cause? how would we state our quarrel? If we complain that we should be condemned and ruined all in one man; that is to complain that we are Adam's children. A child might as well complain that he is the son of a beggar or a traitor, and charge it as injustice upon the prince or law of the land that he is not born to a patrimony; this is a misery to him, but no man will say it is a wrong. And can it be said we are wronged by the common Ruler of the world, that we do not inherit from our father the righteousness and felicity he had wilfully lost long before we were his children? If we think it hard we should be tied to terms we never consented to, might not an heir as well quarrel with the magistrate, that he suffers him to become liable to his father's debts, and to lie in prison if he have not to pay?

But besides, who can imagine but we should have consented, had all mankind been at that time existent in innocency together? *i. e.* let the ease be stated thus: Suppose Adam, our common parent, to have had all his children together with him before the Lord, while the covenant of works was not as yet made, and while as yet God was not under any engagement to the children of men. Let it be supposed, that he did propound it to the whole race of mankind together, that he would capitulate with their common parent on their behalf, according to the terms of that first covenant; if he stood, they should stand, if he fall, they must all fall with him. Let it be considered, that if this had not been consented to, God might

l Dion de Div. nom. m Gibieuf de libertate Dei et creaturæ. n Job xxix. 2, 4, 5 14, 20

without the least colour of exception, being as yet under no engagement to the contrary) have annihilated the whole species; for wherein can it seem hard, that what was nothing but the last moment, should the next moment be suffered to relapse into nothing again? Let it also be considered, that Adam's own personal interest, and a mighty natural affection towards so vast a progeny, might well be thought certainly to engage him to the uttermost care and circumspection on his own and their behalf. It must also be remembered, that all being now in perfect innocency, no defect of reason, no frowardness or perverseness of will can be supposed in any, to hinder their right judgment, and choice of what might appear to be most for their own advantage, and the glory of their Maker.

Can it now possibly be thought (the case being thus stated) that any man should rather choose presently to lose his being, and the pleasures and hopes of such a state, than to have consented to such terms? It cannot be thought.

For consider the utmost that might be objected; and suppose one thus to reason the matter with himself: "Why? 'tis a mighty hazard for me to suspend my everlasting happiness or misery upon the uncertain determinations of another man's mutable will; shall I trust my eternal concernments to such a peradventure, and put my life and hopes into the hands of a fellow-creature?"

It were obvious to him to answer himself, "Aye, but he is my father; he bears a natural affection to me, his own concernment is included, he hath power over his own will, his obedience for us all will be no more difficult than each man's for himself; there is nothing required of him but what his nature inclines him to, and what his reason (if he use it) will guide him to comply with; and though the hazard of an eternal misery be greatly tremendous, yet are not the hopes of an everlasting blessedness as greatly consolatory and encouraging? and besides, the hazard will be but for a time, which if we pass safely, we shall shortly receive a full and glorious confirmation and advancement." Certainly no reasonable man, all this considered, (though there had been no mention made of a means of recovery in case of falling, the consideration whereof is yet also to be taken in by us,) would have refused to consent. And then what reasonable man but will confess this to be mere cavil, that we did not personally consent; for if it be certain we should have consented, and our own hearts tell us we should, doth the power of a Creator over his creatures signify so little that he might not take this for an actual consent? for is it not all one, whether you did consent, or certainly would have done it, if you had been treated with? Covenants betwixt superiors and inferiors, differ much from those betwixt equals; for they are laws as well as covenants, and therefore do suppose consent, (the terms being *in se* reasonable,) as that which not only our interest but duty would oblige us to. 'Tis not the same thing to covenant with the great God, and with a fellow-creature. God's prescience of the event, (besides that no man knows what it is, yet,) whatever it is, 'tis wholly immanent in himself, (as also his decrees,) therefore could have no influence into the event, or be any cause of it; all depended, as hath been shown, on man's own will; and therefore if God did foresee that man would fall, yet he knew also, that if he would he might stand.

From both jointly. 1. Were we once so happy, and have we now undone ourselves? how acceptable should this render the means of our recovery to us! That 'tis a recovery we are to endeavour, (which implies the former truth,) that supposes us once happy, who would not be taken with such an overture for the regaining of a happiness, which he hath lost and fallen from? 'Tis a double misery to become from a happy estate miserable; 'tis yet as a double happiness to become happy from such misery; and proportionably valuable should all means appear to us that tend thereto. Yea, and 'tis a recovery after self-destruction, (which asserts the former truth,) such a destruction as might reduce us to an utter despair of remedies, as rendering us incapable to help ourselves, or to expect help or pity from others. O how welcome should the tidings of deliverance now be to us! how joyful an entertainment should our hearts give them upon both these accounts! How greatly doth Scripture[o] commend the love and grace of Christ, under the notion of redeeming! a word that doth not signify deliverance from simple misery only, but also connote a precedent better state, as they expound it who take the phrase, as Scripture uses it, to allude to the buying out of captives from their bondage. And how should it ravish the heart of any man to have mercy and help offered him by another hand, who hath perished by his own! how taking should gospel-grace be upon this account! how should this consideration engage souls to value and embrace it! It is urged (we see) to that purpose, Hos. xiii. 9. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help; and, *v.* 10. it follows, I will be thy King; where is any other that will save thee? &c. And *ch.* xiv. 1. O Israel, return unto the Lord, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Now (friends) do but seriously consider this. If you believe the truths you have heard, how precious should Christ be to you! how precious should the gospel, the ordinances, and ministry of it be! Do you complain that formerly you were not treated with? By all these God now treats with you. Now your own personal consent is called for; not to any thing that hath the least of hazard in it, but what shall make you certainly happy, as miserable as you have made yourselves; and there is nothing but your consent wanting, the price of your redemption is already paid; 'tis but taking Christ for your Saviour and your Lord, and living a life of dependence and holiness for a few days, and you are as safe as if you were in glory. Will you now stick at this? O do not destroy yourselves a second time, and make yourselves doubly guilty of your own ruin.

2. Was our state so good, but mutable? What cause have we to admire the grace of God, through Christ, that whom it recovers it confirms! It was a blessed state, that by our own free will we fell from; but how much better (even upon this account) is this, which by God's free grace we are invited and recalled to!

[o] Rom. iii. 24 &c. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. Eph. i. 6, 7. Tit. ii. 11—14.

A CALM AND SOBER INQUIRY

CONCERNING THE POSSIBILITY OF

A TRINITY IN THE GODHEAD,

IN A LETTER TO A PERSON OF WORTH;

OCCASIONED BY THE LATELY PUBLISHED CONSIDERATIONS ON THE EXPLICATIONS ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY, BY DR. WALLIS, DR. SHERLOCK, DR. S—TH, DR. CUDWORTH, &C.

TOGETHER WITH CERTAIN LETTERS,

FORMERLY WRITTEN TO THE REVEREND DR. WALLIS, ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

SIR,

I INTEND not this discourse shall be concerned in what this author hath said of the several explications given by the persons named on his title-page. The only thing it is designed for, is the discoursing with him that single point which he refers to, in his twenty-ninth and thirtieth pages, and which, in this controversy, is on all hands confessed to be the cardinal one, *viz.* Whether a trinity in the Godhead be possible or no?

I put not the question about three persons; both because I will not, in so short a discourse as I intend to make this, be engaged in discussing the unagreed notion of a person; and because the Scripture lays not that necessity upon me, though I do not think the use of that term, in this affair, either blameable or indefensible. But I shall inquire whether the Father, the Son, or Word, and the Holy Ghost, cannot possibly admit of sufficient distinction from one another to answer the parts and purposes severally assigned them by the Scripture, in the Christian economy, and yet be each of them God, consistently with this most inviolable and indubitable truth, that there can be but one God.

This author concludes it to be impossible in the mentioned pages of his discourse, and thereupon seems to judge it necessary that two of them be excluded the Godhead, as many others, some going the Arian, some the Photinian, more lately called the Socinian way, have done before him. He acknowledges, page 30, col. 1. there may be "some secret revealed by God, because it was above human capacity to discover it; and sometimes also to comprehend how it can be;" but adds, "there is a vast difference between my not being able to conceive how a thing should be, and a clear apprehension and sight that it cannot be." What he says thus far is unexceptionable, and I heartily concur with him in it. But for what he subjoins, (wherein he might have spoken his mind of the matter in controversy with as much advantage to his cause, without reflecting upon his adversaries, as if they considered these things either with no intention, or with no sincerity, not allowing them even the never so little of the one or the other,) that "three distinct Almighty and All-knowing persons, should be but one Almighty, or but one All-knowing, or but one God, a man, who considers with never so little intention and sincerity, clearly sees that it cannot be. In short, that it is not a mystery, but, as Dr. South speaks, an absurdity and a contradiction." This is that I would consider with him, if he will affix these words of his, "a man who considers, &c. clearly sees it cannot be, and it is an absurdity and a contradiction," to the question as I have set it down above. In the meantime he cannot be ignorant that, as he hath represented the matter, he hath here either not truly, or at least not fairly, given the sense of any of them whom he pretended to oppose.

For when by those words, "But that three Divine persons, or that three distinct Almighty and All-knowing persons, should be but one Almighty, but one All-knowing, or but one God," he would slily insinuate to his unwary and less attentive reader, that the same men held three Almighties, and but one; he well knows, and elsewhere confesses, (though he might suppose that some readers would not be at leisure to compare one place of his writings with another, but hastily run away with the apprehension, that such as were not of his mind spake nothing but nonsense and contradictions,) that not only his later opposers since P. Lumbard, as he speaks, but divers much more ancient, as Athanasius, and the rest of the Nicene fathers, &c. denied three Almighties, though they affirmed each of the persons to be Almighty, understanding omnipotency, as they do omnisciency, to be an attribute not of the person, as such, but of the essence, as such, which they affirm to be but one, *i. e.* that they are each of them Almighty, by communication in one and the same almighty essence. And if their sentiment be so very absurd, he needed the less to fear representing it as it is.

And the other who seems to grant three Almighties, doth never say there is but one Almighty; though such say too there is but one God, placing the *unity of the Godhead* in somewhat else, as he hath himself taken notice; which is remote from express self-contradiction also. But I shall concern myself no further about the one or the other of these ways of explaining the doctrine of the three persons. Only shall inquire concerning the possibility of such a trinity in the Godhead as was above expressed, requiting the uncharitableness of this author, in imputing carelessness or insincerity to all that think it possible, with so much charity, as to believe he would not (against the plain tenor of Scripture) have rejected the doctrine of the trinity, as he professes to do that of the incarnation, if he had not thought it every way impossible. And here I premise,

I. That the present undertaking is not to show that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three, and but one, in the same respect; which I would adventure, in this author's words, to say, no man that considers with never so little intention and sincerity would offer at. But when they are supposed to be but one, in respect of Deity, they are thought to be three in some other respect.

2. That what I now design is only to represent this

matter as possible to be some way, and in the way here proposed for ought we know, not as definitely certain to be this way or that. The former is enough to our present purpose, *i. e.* if any way it can be conceived, without absurdity or contradiction, that these may be three with sufficient distinction to found the distinct attributes which the Scriptures do severally give them, so as some things may be affirmed of some one, and not be affirmed of the other of them, and yet their *unity in Godhead* be conserved; our point is gained, and the clamour of this and every other opposer ought to cease, for our asserting what every one, that considers, clearly sees cannot be.

Now, so much being forelaid, that we may proceed with clearness and satisfaction of mind—If we would understand whether it be possible that these three may be sufficiently distinguished for the mentioned purpose, and yet be one in Godhead, or in divine being; we are to recollect ourselves, and consider what we are wont, and find ourselves indispensably obliged, to conceive of that ever blessed Being, and what is with less certainty or evidence said or thought of it. Therefore,

I. We cannot but acknowledge, that whereas we do with greatest certainty and clearness conceive of it as an intellectual Being, comprehensive, with that, of infinite and universal perfection; so we do, most expressly, though this be implied in universal perfection, conclude it a Being most necessarily existent: which God hath himself been pleased to signify to us by the appropriated name, I am, or I am what I am.

Hereby is this most excellent of beings infinitely distinguished from all creatures, or from the whole creation. All created being is merely contingent, *i. e.* (according to the true notion of contingency) dependent upon will and pleasure. So he hath himself taught us to distinguish; and with such distinction to conceive of the creation, Rev. iv. 11. Thou hast made all things, and for (*or* by, *διὰ*) thy pleasure (or will, *θελημα σου*) they are, or were created. Whatsoever being is necessarily existent, the excellency of its nature being such, as that it was necessary to it to exist, or impossible not to exist, is God, or is divine being. Notwithstanding what some have imagined of necessary matter, we might adventure to affirm this universally of all necessary being, that it is divine, taking it to be plainly demonstrable, and to have been demonstrated beyond all contradiction, by the learned Dr. Cudworth, and many others long before him. And doubt not to evince, (though that is not the present business,) that supposing the imagination of necessary matter were true, this sensible world could never possibly have been made of it, by any power whatsoever; the only pretence for which it is imagined. But if any have a mind to make this a dispute, to avoid being unseasonably involved in it at this time, it will serve my present purpose to assert only, whatsoever intellectual being is necessarily existent is divine.

And on the other hand, whatsoever being is contingent, *i. e.* such as that it depended on a mere intervening act of will (*viz.* even the sovereign and supreme will) whether it should be or not be, is created, or is creature.

II. Whatsoever simplicity the ever blessed God hath by any express revelation claimed to himself, or can by evident and irrefragable reason be demonstrated to belong to him, as a perfection, we ought humbly, and with all possible reverence and adoration, to ascribe to him. But such simplicity as he hath not claimed, as is arbitrarily ascribed to him by over-bold and adventurous intruders into the deep and most profound arcana of the Divine nature, such as can never be proved to belong to him, or to be any real perfection, such as would prove an imperfection, and a blemish, would render the Divine nature less intelligible, more impossible to be so far conceived as is requisite, as would discompose and disturb our minds, confound our conceptions, make our apprehensions of his other known perfections less distinct or inconsistent, render him less adorable, or less an object of religion, or such as is manifestly unreconcilenble with his plain affirmations concerning himself, we ought not to impose it upon ourselves, or be so far imposed upon, as to ascribe to him such simplicity.

It would be an over-officious and too meanly servile religiousness, to be awed by the sophistry of presumptuous scholastic wits, into a subscription to their confident determinations concerning the being of God, that such and such things are necessary or impossible thereto, beyond what the plain undisguised reason of things, or his own express word, do evince: to imagine a sacredness in their rash conclusions, so as to be afraid of searching into them, or of examining whether they have any firm and solid ground or bottom; to allow the schools the making of our Bible, or the forming of our creed, who license (and even sport) themselves to philosophize upon the nature of God, with as petulant and irreverent a liberty, as they would upon a worm, or any the meanest insect, while yet they can pronounce little with certainty even concerning that; hath nothing in it either of the Christian or the man. It will become as well as concern us, to disencumber our minds, and release them from the entanglements of their unproved dictates; whatsoever authority they may have acquired, only by having been long, and commonly, taken for granted. The more reverence we have of God, the less we are to have for such men, as have themselves expressed little.

III. Such as have thought themselves obliged by the plain word of God to acknowledge a *trinity* in the Godhead, *viz.* of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but withal to diminish the distinction of the one from the other, so as even to make it next to nothing, by reason of the straits into which unexamined maxims have cast their minds, concerning the Divine simplicity; have yet not thought that to be *absolute* or *omnimodous*. For the allowing of *three somewhats* in the Divine nature (and what less could have been said?) cannot consist with absolute simplicity in all respects, inasmuch as they cannot be *three* without differing, in *some respect*, from one another.

Since therefore there is a necessity apprehended of acknowledging three such *somewhats* in the Godhead, both because the word of God (who best understands his own nature) doth speak of three in it so plainly, that, without notorious violence, it cannot be understood otherwise, and because it affirms some things of one or other of them, which it affirms not of the rest; it will therefore be *necessary* to admit a true distinction between them, otherwise they cannot be three; and *safe* to say there is so much, as is requisite to found the distinct affirmations, which we find in God's word, concerning this or that, apart from the other, otherwise we shall, in effect, deny what God affirms; and *modest* to confess that how great the distinction is, with precise and particular limitation, we do not know nor dare be curious to determine or inquire: only that as it cannot be less, than is sufficient to sustain distinct predicates or attributions; so it cannot be so great, as to intrench upon the unity of the Godhead. Which limits, on the one hand, and the other, God hath himself plainly set us.

IV. Therefore since we may offend very highly by an arrogant pretence to the knowledge we have not, but shall not offend by confessing the ignorance which we cannot (and therefore need not) remedy, we should abstain from confident conclusions in the dark, and at random, especially concerning the nature of God; and for instance, from saying, We clearly see a sufficient distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit, in the Godhead cannot be, or is impossible. It expresses too little reverence of God, as if his being had any, or so narrow, limits as to be presently seen through; an over-magnifying opinion of ourselves, as if our eye could penetrate that vast and sacred darkness, or the glorious light, (equally impervious to us,) wherein God dwells; too great rudeness to the rest of men, more than implicitly representing all mankind besides as stark blind, who can discern nothing of what we pretend clearly to see.

And it is manifest this cannot be said to be impossible, upon any other pretence, but that it consists not with the *unity of the Godhead*, in opposition to the multiplication thereof, or with *that simplicity* which stands in opposition to the concurrence in all perfections therein, with distinction greater than hath been commonly thought to belong to divine nature. For the former, we are at a certainty: but for the latter, how do we know what the original, natural state of the Divine Being is, in this respect? or what simplicity belongs to it? or what it may contain or comprehend in it, consistently with the unity thereof? or so,

but that it may still be but one Divine Being? What distinction and unity (conserved together) we can have, otherwise, an idea of without any apprehended inconsistency, absurdity, or contradiction, we shall rashly pronounce to be impossible (or somewhat imperfectly resembled thereby) in the Divine Being, unless we understood it better than we do. Some prints and characters of that most perfect Being may be apprehended in the creatures, especially that are intelligent; such being expressly said to have been made in the image of God. And if here we find *oneness*, with *distinction*, meeting together in the same created intelligent being, this may assist our understandings in conceiving what is possible to be, (in much higher perfection,) though not to the concluding what certainly is, in the uncreated.

V. Waving the many artificial unions of distinct things, that united, and continuing distinct, make one thing under one name, I shall only consider what is *natural*, and give instance in what is nearest us, *our very selves*; though the truth is, we know so little of our own nature, that it is a strange assuming when we confidently determine what is impossible to be in the Divine nature, besides what he hath told us, or made our own faculties plainly tell us, is so; and what he hath made any man's facultics to tell him, he hath made all men's that can use them.

But so much we manifestly find in ourselves, that we have three natures in us very sufficiently distinguishable, and that are intimately united, the *vegetative*, *sensitive*, and the *intellective*. So that notwithstanding their manifest distinction, no one scruples, when they are united, to call the whole *the human nature*. Or if any make a difficulty, or would raise a dispute about the distinction of these three natures, I for the present content myself with what is more obvious, not doubting to reach any mark by degrees, *viz.* that we are made up of a mind, and a body, somewhat that can think, and somewhat that cannot; sufficiently distinct, yet so united, that not only every one, without hesitation, calls that thing made up of them, one man; but also every one that considers deeply, will be transported with wonder by what more than magical knot or tie, two things, so little akin, should be so held together, that the one that hath the power of will and choice cannot sever itself, and return into the same union with the other, at pleasure. But,

VI. Since we find this is a thing actually done, the making up of two things of so different natures into one thing, that puts the matter out of doubt that this was a thing possible to be done, 'twas what God could do, for he hath done it. And if that were possible to him, to unite two things of so very different natures iato one thing; let any colourable reason be assigned me, why it should not be as possible to him, to unite two things of a like nature; *i. e.* if it were possible to him, to unite a *spirit* and *a body*, why is it less possible to him to have united *two spirits?* And then I further inquire, if it were possible to him to unite *two*, would it not be as possible to unite *three?* Let reason here be put upon its utmost stretch, and tell me what in all this is less possible than what we see is actually done! Will any man say two or three spirits united, being of the same nature, will mingle, be confounded, run into one another, and lose their distinction? I ask, supposing them to pre-exist apart, antecedently to their union, are they not now distinguished by their own individual essences; let them be as much united as our souls and bodies are, why should they not as much remain distinct by their singular essences? There is no more hazard of their losing their distinction, by the similitude of their natures, than of our soul and body transmuting one another by their dissimilitude.

I know not but the dictates of so vogued an author with many in this age, as Spinosa, may signify somewhat with some into whose hands this may fall; who, with design bad enough, says, that from whence one might collect the remaining distinction of two things of the same nature in such a supposed union, were the more easily conceivable of the two, *i. e.* than of two things of different natures. For in his Posthumous Ethics, de Deo, he lays this down in explication of his second definition, *Cogitatio alia cogitatione terminatur. At corpus non terminatur cogitatione, nec cogitatio corpore.* Some may regard him in this, and it would do our business. For my part, I care not to be so much beholden to him; for it would, at the long run, overdo it; and I know his meaning. But I see not but two congenerous natures are equally capable of being united, retaining their distinction, as two of a different kind; and that sufficiently serves the present purpose.

However, let any man tell me, why it should be impossible to God so to unite three spirits, as by his own power to fix their limits also, and by a perpetual law inwrought in their distinct beings, to keep them distinct, so that they shall remain everlastingly united, but not identified; and by virtue of that union, be some one thing, which must, yet, want a name, as much, and as truly, as our soul and body united do constitute one man. Nor is it now the question, whether such a union would be convenient or inconvenient, apt or inapt; but all the question is, whether it be possible or impossible; which is as much as we are concerned in at this time. But you will say, Suppose it be possible, to what purpose is all this? how remote is it from the supposed trinity in the Godhead! You will see to what purpose it is by and by. I therefore add,

VII. That if such a union of three things, whether of like or of different natures, so as that they shall be truly one thing, and yet remain distinct, though united, can be effected, as one may with certainty pronounce, there is nothing more impossible or unconceivable in it, than we find is actually done, then it is not intrinsically impossible, or objectively; it is not impossible in itself. No power can effect what is simply and in itself impossible. There is therefore no contradiction, no repugnancy, or inconsistency, as to the thing, nor consequently any shadow of absurdity in the conception hereof. Whereupon,

VIII. If such a union with such distinction be not impossible in itself, so that by a competent power it is sufficiently possible to be effected, or made; we are to consider whether it will appear more impossible, or whether I shall have a conception in my own mind any thing more incongruous, if I conceive such a union, with such distinction, unmade, or that is original and eternal in an unmade or uncreated being. For we are first to consider the thing in itself, abstractly from made or unmade, created or uncreated, being. And if it pass clear of contradiction or absurdity, in its abstract notion, we are so far safe, and are not liable to be charged as having the conception in our minds of an impossible, absurd, or self-repugnant thing. So that clamour and cry of the adversary must cease, or be itself absurd, and without pretence. This now supposed, union with such distinction, must if it be judged impossible, as it is in our thoughts introduced into unmade being, can no longer be judged impossible as it is *a union* of distinct things, but only as it is *unmade*, or is supposed to have place in the unmade eternal Being.

IX. This is that then we have further to consider, whether, supposing it possible that three spiritual beings might as well be made or created in a state of so near union with continuing distinction, as to admit of becoming *one spiritual being*, to be called by some fit *name*, which might easily be found out, if the thing were produced, as that a spiritual being and a corporeal being may be made and created in a state of so near union with continuing distinction, as to become one spiritual-corporeal being, called by the name of *man*; I say, whether, supposing the former of these to be as possible to be done, or created, as the latter, which we see done already, we may not as well suppose somewhat like it, but infinitely more perfect, to be original and eternal in the uncreated Being? If the first be possible, the next actual, what pretence is there to think the last impossible?

X. I might add, as that which may be expected to be significant with such as do seriously believe the doctrines both of the incarnation and the trinity, though I know it will signify nothing with them who with equal contempt reject both, that the union of the two natures, the human, made up of a human body and a human soul, which are two exceedingly different natures, with the divine, which is a third, and infinitely more different from both the other in one person, *viz.* of the Son of God, cannot certainly appear to any considering person more conceivable or possible, than that which we now suppose, but assert not, of

three distinct essences united in the *one Godhead*, upon any account, but this only, that this is supposed to be an unmade, eternal union, the other made and temporal; which renders not the one less conceivable than the other, as it is union, but only as in the several terms of this union it is supposed eternally to have place in the being of God; whereas that other union, in respect of one of its terms, is acknowledged *de novo* to have place there.

In short, here is a spiritual created being, a human soul, setting aside for the present the consideration of the human body, which united therewith made up the man, Christ, confessed to be in hypostatical union with the uncreated spiritual being of God; not as that being is in the person of the Father, nor as in the person of the Holy Ghost, for then they should have become man too; but as it was in the person of the Son only. Why shall it be thought less possible that three uncreated spiritual beings may be in so near a union with each other as to be *one God*, as that a created spirit, and body too, should be in so near a union with one of the persons in the Godhead only, as therewith to be *one person*? Will it not hereby be much more easily apprehensible how *one* of the persons (as the common way of speaking is) should be incarnate, and not the other two? Will not the notion of person itself be much more unexceptionable, when it shall be supposed to have its own individual nature? And why is a natural, eternal union of uncreated natures, with continual distinction, or without confusion, sufficient unto the unity of the Godhead, less supposable, than a temporal contracted union with created natures, without confusion too, that shall be sufficient to the *unity* of a person? Will it be any thing more contrary to *such simplicity* of the Divine nature as is necessarily to be ascribed thereto? or will it be *trithcism*, and inconsistent with the acknowledged inviolable *unity* of the Godhead?

XI. That we may proceed to speak to both, let these things be considered with seriousness and sobriety of mind, as to ourselves; with all possible reverence towards the blessed God; and with just candour and equanimity towards other men. And first, we must leave it to any one's future representation (not being hitherto able to discern any thing) what there is in all this that is here supposed any way repugnant to such simplicity, as God any where claims to his own being, or that plain reason will constrain us to ascribe to him, or that is really in itself any perfection. We are sure God hath not by his word taught us to ascribe to him universal absolute simplicity; or suggested to us any such notices as directly and evidently infer it to belong to him; nor hath seemed at all intent upon cautioning of us lest we should not ascribe it. The *word* we find not among his *attributes* mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. The *thing*, so far as it signifies any general perfection, we are sure belongs to him; but the Scriptures are not written with visible design to obviate any danger of our misconceiving his nature, by not apprehending it to be in every respect most absolutely simple. It doth teach us to conceive of him as most powerful, most wise, most gracious; and doth not teach us to conceive all these in the abstract, *viz.* power, wisdom, and goodness, to be the same thing. Yet we easily apprehend, by reflecting upon ourselves, that, without multiplying the subject, these may all reside together in the same man. But our difficulty is greater to conceive what is commonly taught, that these, without real distinction, or with formal only, as contradistinguished to the difference of thing from thing, are in the abstract affirmable of God, that he is power, wisdom, goodness: that to his being belongs so absolute simplicity, that we must not look upon these as things really distinguishable, *there*, from one another, but as different conceptions of the same thing. We must conceive of things as we can, not as we cannot: and are only concerned to take heed of unrevealed, and undemonstrable, and peremptory conceptions concerning that glorious, most incomprehensible, and ever blessed Being; to beware of too curious prying into the nature of God, when it was so penal to look unduly into, or even to touch, that only-hallowed symbol of his presence, his ark, beyond what he hath revealed expressly, or we can most clearly, by generally received light, apprehend. When we know there is a knowledge of him so reserved from us, whereof our minds are so little receptive, that it seemed all one, whether he told us he did dwell in thick darkness, or in inaccessible light. 'Twill be a reproach to us, if we shall need to be taught reverence of him by pagans; or that such a document should need to be given us for our admonition, as that very ancient inscription in one of their temples imported, "I am whatsoever was, is, or shall be, and who is he that shall draw aside my veil?"

XII. If we should suppose three spiritual necessary beings, the one whereof were mere power (or furious might) destitute of either wisdom or goodness; another mere wisdom (or craft rather) destitute of either goodness or power; a third mere goodness (or fond and fruitless kindness) destitute of either power or wisdom; existing separately and apart from each other; this triple conception would overthrow itself, and must certainly allow little ease to any considering mind. Nor could any of these be God. But if we conceive essential power, wisdom, and goodness concurring in one spiritual necessarily existent Being, in which are each of these, not only, by the περιχωρησις usually acknowledged in the three persons, totally *permeating* one another, (which signifying but mere presence, as we may express it, is, in comparison, a small thing,) but really and vitally united, by so much a nearer and more perfect union than hath ever come under our notice among created beings, of partly corporeal, partly incorporeal, natures, by how much beings of *purest spirituality* may be apter to the most intimate union, than when one is quite of a different nature from the other, and as whatsoever union is supposable to be, originally, eternally, and by natural necessity, in the most *perfect being*, may be thought inexpressibly *more perfect* than any other. And if, hereupon, we further conceive the most entire, perpetual, everlasting intercourse and communion of these three, so originally united, that what is conceivable of perfection or excellency in any one of these, is as much the others, for whatsoever exercises or operations, as his own; I cannot apprehend what there is of repugnancy, contradiction, or absurdity in this supposition; nor any thing that, by any measures he hath given us to govern our conceptions of him, appears unbecoming or unworthy of God. There is, 'tis true, less simplicity, but more perfection, ascribed hereby to the Divine Being, entirely considered: and more intelligibly, than if you go about to impose upon yourself the notion of most absolute omnimodous simplicity therein. There would be yet more absolute simplicity ascribed unto an eternal Being, if you should conceive in it mere power exclusive of wisdom, and goodness—and so of the rest; but infinitely less perfection. And, if that would avail any thing, I could easily produce more schoolmen than one, of no small note, concurring in this sentiment, that *simplicitas, si sumatur in totâ suâ amplitudine, non dicit perfectionem simpliciter.* But I count it not worth the while.

XIII. And let it be here again observed, I speak not of this, as any certain determination, that thus things are done in the Deity; but as a possible supposition of what, for ought we know, may be. If any say this gives us the notion of a compounded Deity, or of a composition in it; I only say the term, *composition*, seems to imply a pre-existing *component* that brings such things together, and supposes such and such more simple things to have pre-existed apart or separate, and to be brought afterwards together into a *united state*. Whereupon I peremptorily deny any composition in the being of God. And let any man from what hath been hitherto said, or supposed, infer it, if he can. Imagine this of the Godhead, and you shall, we acknowledge, conceive most untruly, most unworthily, most injuriously of God; and what is most absolutely impossible to agree to the Divine Being. And for this reason only, that I know of, that carries any shadow of importance in it, many have been so apt, without the least warrant from any revelation God hath given of himself, to ascribe to him an unintelligible *simplicity*; apprehending they must otherwise admit a *composition* in his most sacred essence, *i. e.* the putting of things together that were separate, to make it up; which must suppose it a new production, that once was not, and from an imperfect state by the coalition of things once severed, to have arrived to the perfection we ascribe to the Divine Being; which sort of being cannot, without the most absurd and blasphemous

contradiction, ever admit to be called God. But if we suppose most perfect, essential power, wisdom, love, by original, eternal, and most natural necessity, to have co-existed in that being most intimately *united*, though *distinct*; that seemingly important reason will appear but a shadow, and accordingly vanish as such.

And indeed this is no more than what, in effect, such as discourse upon this subject do commonly say (though perhaps some may less consider the ducture and sequel of their own professed sentiments) when they speak of the incomprehensibleness of God's essence, and how impossible it is a finite mind should form or receive a full and complete idea of it; or when they therefore say, that any conceptions we can have of the wisdom, goodness, or any other attribute of the Divine Being, are still but inadequate conceptions; whereby they must mean, when we consider for instance the wisdom of God, that we not only fall infinitely short of conceiving all that belong to the Divine Being, in that kind, but there is also infinitely more belonging thereto, in other kinds, than it is possible that conception can contain or express. And when we have the conception in our minds of the Divine wisdom, do we not apprehend there is really somewhat else in the Divine Being, whereof that term hath no signification? or will we say his wisdom and his power are really the same thing? as they must either be the same or divers things. If we say they are the same, we must, I doubt, confess ourselves to say what we do not understand, especially when, in the abstract, we affirm them of one another, and of God; and accordingly say that wisdom is power, and power is wisdom, and the one of these is God, and the other, God. I know a formal distinction is commonly admitted, *i. e.* that the conception of the one is not included in the conception of the other. But are these different conceptions true or false? If false, why are they admitted? If true, there must be somewhat in the nature of the thing corresponding to them. But if we say they are distinct, but most intimately and eternally united in the Divine Being, by a necessary natural union, or that it is not impossible so to be, what we say will, I think, agree with itself, and not disagree with any other conception we are obliged to have concerning the blessed God.

In the meantime, I profess not to judge, we are under the precise notions of power, wisdom, and goodness, to conceive of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: nor that the notions we have of those or any other divine perfections, do exactly correspond to what, in God, is signified by these names; but I reckon, that what relief and ease is given our minds by their being disentangled from any apprehended necessity of thinking these to be the very same things, may facilitate to us our apprehending the Father, Son, and Spirit to be sufficiently distinct, for our affirming, or understanding the affirmation, of some things concerning some one, without including the other of them.

XIV. But some perhaps will say, while we thus amplify the distinction of these glorious three, we shall seem to have too friendly a look towards, or shall say in effect, what Dr. Sherlock is so highly blamed for saying, and make three Gods. I answer, that if with sincere minds we inquire after truth, for its own sake, we shall little regard the friendship or enmity, honour or dishonour, of this or that man. If this were indeed so, doth what was true become false, because such a man hath said it? But it is remote from being so. There is no more here positively asserted, than generally so much distinction between the Father, Son, and Spirit, as is in itself necessary to the founding the distinct attributions, which in the Scriptures are severally given them—that when the Word or Wisdom was said to be with God (understanding it, as the case requires, with God the Father) in the creation of all things, we may not think, nothing more is said than that he was with himself; that when the Word is said to be made flesh, 'tis equally said the Father was made flesh, or the Holy Ghost; that when the Holy Ghost is said to have proceeded from, or have been sent, by the Father, or the Son, he is said to have proceeded from himself, or have sent himself.—But, in the meantime, this is offered, without determining precisely how great distinction is necessary to this purpose. It is not here positively said these three are three distinct substances, three infinite minds or spirits. We again and again insist, and inculcate, how becoming and necessary it is to abstain from over-bold inquiries, or positive determinations, concerning the limits, or the extent of this distinction, beyond what the Scriptures have, in general, made necessary to the mentioned purpose; that we may not throw ourselves into guilt, nor cast our minds into unnecessary straits, by affirming this or that to be necessary, or impossible in these matters.

XV. The case is only thus, that since we are plainly led by the express revelation God hath made of himself to us in his word, to admit a *trinal conception* of him, or to conceive this threefold distinction in his being, of Father, Son, and Spirit; since we have so much to greaten that distinction, divers things being said of each of these, that must not be understood of either of the other; since we have nothing to limit it on the other hand, but the *unity* of the Godhead, which we are sure can be but One, both from the plain word of God, and the nature of the thing itself; since we are assured both these may consist, *viz.* this *trinity*, and this *unity*, by being told [a] there are three, and these three (*i. e.* plainly continuing three) are *ev, one thing*; which one thing can mean nothing else but Godhead; as is also said concerning two of them, elsewhere, (there being no occasion, then, to mention the third,[b]) I and my Father are one thing. We are hereupon unavoidably put upon it to cast in our own minds (and are concerned to do it with the most religious reverence and profoundest humility) what sort of thing this most sacred Godhead may be, unto which this *oneness* is ascribed, with *threefold distinction*. And manifestly finding there are in the creation *made unions*, with sufficient remaining *distinction*, particularly in ourselves, that we are a soul and a body, (things of so very different natures,) that often the soul is called the man, (not excluding the body,) and the body, or our flesh, called the man, (not excluding the soul,) we are plainly led to apprehend, that it is rather more easily possible there might be *two spirits* (so much more agreeing in nature) so united, as to be *one thing*, and yet continuing distinct; and if *two*, there might as well be *three*, if the Creator pleased. And hence are led further to apprehend, that if such a made union, with continuing distinction, be possible in created being, it is, for ought we know, not impossible in the uncreated; that there may be such an eternal *unmade union*, with *continuing distinction*. And all this being only represented as *possible* to be thus, without concluding that *thus* it *certainly is*, sufficiently serves our purpose, that no pretence might remain of excluding the eternal Word, and the eternal Spirit, the Godhead, as if a *trinity* therein were contradictions and impossible, repugnant to reason and common sense. Where now is the coincidency?

XVI. Nor is there, hereupon, so great a remaining difficulty to salve the unity of the Godhead, when the supposition is taken in, of the natural, eternal, necessary union of these three that hath been mentioned.

And it shall be considered, that the Godhead is not supposed more necessary to exist, than these three are to co-exist in the nearest and most intimate union with each other therein. That Spiritual Being which exists necessarily, and is every way absolutely perfect, whether it consist of three in one, or of only one, is God. We could never have known, 'tis true, that there are such three coexisting in this one God, if he himself had not told us.[c] What man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him? Even so the things of God none knoweth, but the Spirit of God. In telling us this he hath told us no impossible, no inconceivable, thing. It is absurd and very irreligious presumption, to say this cannot be. If a worm were so far capable of thought, as to determine this or that concerning our nature; and that such a thing were impossible to belong to it, which we find to be in it, we should trample upon it! More admirable Divine patience spares us! He hath only let us know that this is the state of his essence, whereof we should have been otherwise ignorant. This is its constitution, (*q. d. ita se habet comparatam*) *thus it is in and of itself*, that there are *three* in it to be conceived, under the distinct notions of Father, Son, and Spirit, without telling us expressly how far they are distinct, in terms of art, or in scholastic forms of speech.

[a] 1 John v. [b] John x. [c] 1 Cor. ii. 11.

But he considered us as men, reasonable creatures; and that when he tells us there are *three* existing in his being, of each of which some things are said that must not be understood spoken of the other, and yet that there is but one God: we are not incapable of understanding, that these *three* must agree *in Godhead;* and yet that they must be *sufficiently distinct*, unto this purpose, that we may distinctly conceive of, apply ourselves to, and expect from, the one and the other of them. And the frame of our religion is therefore ordered for us accordingly, *i. e.* for us to whom he hath revealed so much. Others, to whom such notices are not given, he expects should deport themselves towards him, according to the light which they have, not which they have not.

XVII. But an hypothesis in this affair, which leaves out the *very nexus*, that *natural, eternal union*, or leaves it out of its proper place, and insists upon *mutual consciousness*, which, at the most, is but a consequence thereof, wants the principal thing requisite to the salving the unity of the Godhead. If two or three created spirits had never so perfect a mutual perspection of one another, that would not constitute them one thing, though it *probably* argue them to be so; and but *probably;* for God might, no doubt, give them a mutual insight into one another, without making them one; but if he should create them in as near a union, as our soul and body are in with one another, (and it is very apprehensible they might be created in a much nearer and more permanent one, both being of the same nature, and neither subject to decay,) they would as truly admit to be called *one something*, (as such a creature might well enough be called, till a fitter name were found out,) notwithstanding their supposed continuing distinction, as our soul and body *united*, are, notwithstanding their continuing distinction, called *one man*. And I do sincerely profess such a union, with perpetual distinction, seems to me every whit as conceivable, being supposed unmade, uncreated, and eternal, as any union is among creatures, that must therefore be a made thing, or a temporal production.

And whereas necessity of existence (most unquestionably of an intellectual being) is a most certain and fundamental attribute of Deity; the Father, Son, and Spirit being supposed necessarily existent, in this *united state*, they cannot but be God; and the Godhead by reason of this necessary union cannot but be one; yet so, as that when you predicate Godhead, or the name of God, of any one of them, you herein express a true but an inadequate conception of God: *i. e.* the Father is God, not excluding the Son and Holy Ghost; the Son is God, not excluding the Father and the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost is God, not excluding the Father and the Son. Thus our body is the man, not excluding the soul; our soul is the man, not excluding the body. Therefore their union in Godhead being so strict and close, notwithstanding their distinction, to say that any one of them is God, in exclusion of the other two, would not be a true predication. 'Tis indeed said,[d] the Father is the only true God; but that neither excludes the Son nor the Holy Ghost from being the true God also; each of them communicating in that Godhead which only is true. It had been quite another thing, if it had been said, Thou, Father, only, art the true God.

XVIII. The order, moreover, is this way also very clearly preserved and fitly complied with, of priority and posteriority, (not of time, as every one sees, but nature,) which the names Father, Son, and Spirit, do more than intimate. For the Father (usually called by the divines *Fons trinitatis*) being by this appellation plainly signified to be first in this sacred triad; the Son, as that title imports, to be of the Father; and the Spirit to be of, or from, both the other: let these two latter be considered as being of or from the first, not by any intervening act of will, by which it might have been possible they should not have been so; but by natural, necessary, eternal *promanation;* so as that necessity of existence is hereby made as truly to agree to them as to the first, which is acknowledged the most fundamental attribute of Deity. This *promanation* is hereby sufficiently distinguished from creation; and these two set infinitely above all creatures, or the whole universe of created beings. Nor is there hereby any place left for that unapt application of a son and a grandson deriving themselves from the grandfather, or two brothers from one father.

And although it be also true, and readily acknowledged, that there are numerous instances of involuntary productions among the creatures, and which are therefore to be deemed a sort of natural and necessary productions; yet that necessity not being absolute, but *ex hypothesi* only, i. e. upon supposition of their productive causes, and all things requisite to those productions, being so, and so, aptly posited in order thereto, all which depended upon one sovereign will at first, so that all might have been otherwise, this signifies nothing to exempt them out of the state and rank of creatures, or invalidate this most unalterable distinction between created being and uncreated.

XIX. But if here it shall be urged to me that one individual, necessarily existent, spiritual Being alone is God, and is all that is signified by the name of God; and therefore that three distinct individual, necessarily existent, spiritual Beings must unavoidably be three distinct Gods:

I would say, if by one individual, necessarily existent, spiritual Being, you mean one such Being, comprehending Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, taken together, I grant it. But if by one individual, necessarily existent, spiritual Being, you mean either the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, taken sejunctly, I deny it; for both the other are truly signified by the name of God too, as well as that one.

I therefore say, the term individual must in this case now supposed (as possible, not as certain) admit of a twofold application; either to the distinct essence of the Father, or of the Son, or of the Holy Ghost; or to the entire essence of the Godhead, in which these three do concur. Each of these conceived by itself are (according to this supposition) individual essences; but conceived together, they are the entire individual essence of God. For there is but one such essence, and no more; and it can never be multiplied, nor divided into more of the same name and nature: as the body and soul of a man, are one individual body, and one individual soul, but both together are but one individual man: and the case would be the same, if a man did consist of two, or three spirits so (or more nearly) united together, as his soul and body are. Especially if you should suppose, which is the supposition of no impossible or unconceivable thing, that these three spirits which together, as we now do suppose, do constitute a man, were created with an aptitude to this united co-existence, but with an impossibility of existing separately, except to the Divine power which created them conjunct, and might separate them so as to make them exist apart: which yet cannot be the case in respect of three such uncreated spiritual Beings, whose union is supposed to be by natural, eternal necessity, as their essences are; and are therefore most absolutely inseparable.

XX. Or if it should be said, I make the notion of God to comprehend Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and a Godhead besides common to these three:

I answer; nothing I have said or supposed, implies any such thing; or that the notion of God imports any thing more of real being, than is contained in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, taken together, and most intimately, naturally, and vitally, by eternal necessity, united with one another. As in a created being, consisting of more things than one, taken together and united, a man for instance, there is nothing more of real entity, besides what is contained in his body and his soul *united* and taken together. 'Tis true that this term, a man, speaks somewhat very diverse from a human body taken alone, or a human soul taken alone, or from both, separately taken; but nothing diverse from both united, and taken together. And for what this may be unjustly collected to imply of composition, repugnant to Divine perfection, it is before obviated. Sect. 13.

If therefore it be asked, "What do we conceive under the notion of God, but a necessary, spiritual Being?" I answer, that this is a *true* notion of God, and may be passable enough, among pagans, for a *full* one. But we Christians are taught to conceive under the notion of God, a necessary, spiritual Being, in which Father, Son, and Spirit do so necessarily co-exist, as to constitute that Being; and

d John xvii. 3.

e P. 138. of these considerations.

that when we conceive any one of them to be God, that is but an inadequate, not an entire and full, conception of the Godhead. Nor will any place remain for that trivial cavil, that if each of these have Godhead in him, *he* therefore hath a *trinity* in him; but that he is one of the three who together are the One God, by necessary, natural, eternal union.

Which union is also quite of another kind than that of *three men* (as for instance, of Peter, James, and John) partaking in the same kind of nature; who, notwithstanding, exist separately, and apart from each other. These three are supposed to co-exist in natural, necessary, eternal, and most intimate union, so as to be one Divine Being.

Nor is it any prejudice against our thus stating the notion of the Godhead, that we know of no such union in all the creation, that may assist our conception of this union. What incongruity is there in supposing, in this respect, as well as in many others, somewhat most peculiarly appropriate to the being of God? If there be no such actual union in the creation, 'tis enough to our purpose, if such a one were possible to have been. And we do know of the actual union of two things of very different natures so as to be one thing, and have no reason to think the union of two or more things of the same sort of nature, with sufficient remaining distinction, less possible or less intelligible.

XXI. Upon the whole, let such a union be conceived in the being of God, with such distinction, and one would think (though the complexions of men's minds do strangely and unaccountably differ) the absolute perfection of the Deity, and especially the perfect felicity thereof, should be much the more apprehensible with us. When we consider the most delicious society which would hence ensue, among the so entirely consentient Father, Son, and Spirit, with whom there is so perfect rectitude, everlasting harmony, mutual complacency, unto highest delectation; according to our way of conceiving things, who are taught by our own nature (which also hath in it the Divine image) to reckon no enjoyment pleasant, without the consociation of some other with us therein; we for our parts cannot but hereby have in our minds a more gustful idea of a blessed state, than we can conceive in mere eternal solitude.

God speaks to us as men, and will not blame us for conceiving things, so infinitely above us, according to the capacity of our natures; provided we do not assume to ourselves to be a measure for our conceptions of him, further than as he is himself pleased to warrant, and direct us herein. Some likeness we may (taught by himself) apprehend between him and us, but with infinite (not inequality only, but) unlikeness. And for this case of delectation in society, we must suppose an immense difference between him, an all-sufficient, self-sufficient Being, comprehending in himself the infinite fulness of whatsoever is most excellent and delectable, and ourselves, who have in us but a very minute portion of being, goodness, or felicity, and whom he hath made to stand much in need of one another, and most of all of him.

But when, looking into ourselves, we find there is in us a disposition, often upon no necessity, but sometimes from some sort of benignity of temper, unto conversation with others; we have no reason, when other things concur, and do fairly induce, and lead our thoughts this way, to apprehend any incongruity in supposing he may have some distinct object of the same sort of propension in his own most perfect being too, and therewith such a propension itself also.

XXII. As to what concerns ourselves, the observation is not altogether unapposite, what Cicero, treating of friendship, discourses of perpetual solitude, "that the affectation of it must signify the worst of ill humour, and the most savage nature in the world. And supposing one of so sour and morose a humour, as to shun and hate the conversation of men, he would not endure it, to be without some one or other to whom he might disgorge the virulency of that his malignant humour. Or that supposing such a thing could happen, that God should take a man quite out of the society of men, and place him in absolute solitude, supplied with the abundance of whatsoever nature could covet besides; who, saith he, is so made of iron, as to endure that kind of life?" And he introduces Architas Tarentinus reported to speak to this purpose,—"that if one could ascend into heaven, behold the frame of the world, and the beauty of every star, his admiration would be unpleasant to him alone; which would be most delicious, if he had some one to whom to express his sense of the whole."

We are not, I say, strictly to measure God by ourselves in this, further than as he himself prompts and leads us. But if we so form our conception of Divine bliss, as not to exclude from it somewhat, whereof that delight in society which we find in ourselves may be an imperfect faint resemblance; it seems not altogether disagreeable to what the Scriptures also teach us to conceive concerning him, when they bring in the eternal Wisdom, saying, as one distinct from the prime Author and Parent of all things,[q] Then was I by him, as one brought up with him, and daily his delight.

XXIII. However, let the whole of what hath been hitherto proposed be taken together, and to me, it appears our conception of the *sacred trinunity* will be so remote from any shadow of inconsistency or repugnancy, that no necessity can remain upon us of torturing wit, and racking invention to the uttermost, to do a laboured and artificial violence (by I know not what screws and engines) to so numerous plain texts of Scripture, only to undeify our glorious Redeemer, and do the utmost despite to the Spirit of grace. We may be content to let the word of God (or what we pretend to own for a Divine revelation) stand as it is, and undistorted speak its own sense. And when we find the[r] Former of things speaking as *We* or *Us*, when we find another[s] *I*, possessed by the Lord, in the beginning of his way, before his works of old; so as that he says of himself (as distinct from the other) I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was—and, When he prepared the heavens I was there, &c. When we find[t] the Child born for us, the Son given to us, called also the mighty God, and (as in reference to us he fitly might) the everlasting Father. When we are told[u] of the Ruler that was to come out of Bethlehem-Ephrata, that his goings forth were from everlasting: that, The Word was in the beginning with God, and was God—[v] that all things were made by him, and without him nothing was made that was made—that this Word was made flesh—that his glory was beheld as the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth; even that same *he* that above was said to have been in the beginning with God, and to be God:—that when he who was said[w] to have come down from heaven, was, even while he was on earth, at that time, said to be in heaven:—that we are told by himself,[x] he and his Father are *one* thing:—that he is not only said[o] to know the heart, but to know all things:—that even he who[p] according to the flesh came of the Israelites, is yet expressly said to be over all, God blessed for ever:—that when he was[q] in the form of God, he humbled himself to the taking on him the form of a servant, and to be found in fashion as a man:—that 'tis said,[r] all things were created by him, that are in heaven, and on earth, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers,—and that all things were created by him, and for him; than which nothing could have been said more peculiar or appropriate to Deity:—that even of the Son of God it is said,[s] he is the true God and eternal life:—that we are so plainly told, he is[t] Alpha and Omega, the first and the last,[u] he that was, and is, and is to come,[x] the Lord Almighty, the beginning of the creation of God: the searcher of hearts:—that the Spirit of God is said[y] to search all things, even the deep things of God:—that lying to him is said[z] to be lying to God:—that the great Christian solemnity, baptism, is directed to be in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:—that it is so distinctly said,[a] there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and that these three are one thing.

I cannot imagine what should oblige us so studiously to wiredraw all this to quite other meanings.

XXIV. And for the leaving out of the last mentioned

f Prov. viii. g Gen. i. h Prov. viii. i Isa. ix. k Mic. v.
l John i. m John iii. n John x. o John xxi. p Rom. ix.
q Phil. ii. r Col. i. s 1 John v. t Rev. i. u Chap. ii.
x Chap. iii. y 1 Cor. ii. z Acts v. a 1 John v.

text in some copies, what hath been said (not to mention divers others) by the famously learned Dr. Hammond upon that place, is so reasonable, so moderate, so charitable to the opposite party, and so apt to satisfy impartial and unprejudiced minds, that one would scarce think, after the reading of it, any real doubt can remain concerning the authenticness of that 7th verse in 1 John v.

Wherefore now taking all these texts together; with many more that might have been mentioned, I must indeed profess to wonder, that with men of so good sense, as our Socinian adversaries are accounted, this consideration should not have more place and weight, That it being so obvious to any reader of the Scriptures to apprehend from so numerous texts, that Deity must belong to the Son of God, and that there wants not sufficient inducement to conceive so of the Holy Ghost also; there should be no more caution given in the Scriptures themselves to prevent mistake (if there were any) in apprehending the matter accordingly: and to obviate the unspeakable consequent danger of erring in a case of so vast importance. How unagreeable it is to all our notions of God, and to his usual procedure in cases of less consequence! How little doth it consist with his being so wise and so compassionate a lover of the souls of men, to let them be so fatally exposed unto so inevitable and so destructive a delusion! that the whole Christian church should through so many centuries of years, be even trained into so horrid and continued idolatry by himself who so severely forbids it! I cannot allow myself to think men of that persuasion insincere in their professing to believe the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, when the leader and head of their party wrote a book, that is not without nerves, in defence of it. But I confess I cannot devise, with what design they can think those Scriptures were written! or why they should count it a thing worthy of infinite wisdom to vouchsafe such a revelation to men, allowing them to treat and use it as they do! And that till some great Socinian wits should arise fifteen hundred years after, to rectify their notions in these things, men should generally be in so great hazard of being deceived into damnation by those very Scriptures, which were professedly writ to make them wise to salvation!

XXV. Nor is it of so weighty importance in this controversy, to cast the balance the other way, that a noted critic (upon what introducement needs not be determined) changed his judgment, or that his posthumous interpretations of some texts (if they were his interpretations) carry an appearance of his having changed it; because he thought such texts might possibly admit to be interpreted otherwise, than they usually were, by such as alleged them for the *trinity*, or the (disputed) Deity of the Son or Spirit, or that the cause must be lost, upon his deserting it, or that he was still to be reckoned of the opposite party, (as this author calls it,) and that such texts as we most relied upon, were therefore given up by some of our own.

And it is really a great assuming, when a man shall adventure to pronounce so peremptorily, against the so common judgment of the Christian church, without any colour of proof, that our copies are false copies, our translations, our explications false, and the generality of the wisest, the most inquisitive, most pious, and most judicious assertors of the Christian cause, for so many continued ages, fools, or cheats, for owning and avowing them; for no other imaginable reason, but only because they make against him! How will he prove any copies we rely upon to be false? Is it because he is pleased to suspect them? And is an interpretation false, because the words can possibly be tortured unto some other sense? Let him name me the text, wherein any doctrine is supposed to be delivered that is of merely supernatural revelation, of which it is not possible to devise some other meaning, nor more remote, alien, or unimaginable, than theirs, of most of the disputed texts.

Nor indeed do we need to expect that natural sentiment in itself, that there is but one God, (which this author takes such pains to prove, as if he thought, or would make other men think, we denied it.) For though it is so generally acknowledged, doth he not know it is not so generally understood in the same sense? Against whom doth he write? Doth he not know they understand this *oneness* in one sense, he in another? *they* in such a sense as admits a *trinity*, *he* in a sense that excludes it?

But (for such things as did need a superadded verbal revelation) how easy is it to an inventive, pervicacious wit, to wrest words this way, or that.

XXVI. The Scriptures were writ for the instruction of sober learners; not for the pastime of contentious wits, that affect only to play tricks upon them. At their rate of interpreting, among whom he ranks himself, 'tis impossible any doctrine can with certainty be founded upon them. Take the first chapter of St. John's Gospel, for instance, and what doctrine can be asserted in plainer words, than the Deity of Christ, in the three first verses of that chapter? Set any man of an ordinary, unprepossessed understanding, to read them, and when he finds that by the Word is meant Jesus Christ, (which themselves admit,) see if he will not judge it plainly taught, that Jesus Christ is God, in the most eminent, known sense; especially when he shall take notice of so many other texts, that, according to their most obvious appearance, carry the same sense. But it is first, through mere shortness of discourse, taken for granted, and rashly concluded on, that it is absolutely impossible, if the Father be God, the Son can be God too, (or the Holy Ghost,) upon a presumption, that we can know every thing that belongs to the Divine nature; and what is possible to be in it, and what not; and next, there is hereupon not only a license imagined, but an obligation, and necessity, to shake heaven and earth, or tear that divine word that is more stable into a thousand pieces, or expound it to nothing, to make it comply with that forelaid presumptuous determination. Whereas if we could but bend our minds so far to comply with the plain ducture of that revelation God hath made unto us of himself; as to apprehend that in the most only Godhead there may be distinctions, which we particularly understand not, sufficient to found the doctrine of a trinity therein, and very consistent with the *unity* of it; we should save the Divine word, and our own minds, from unjust torture, both at once. And our task, herein, will be the easier, that we are neither concerned nor allowed to determine, that things are precisely so, or so; but only to suppose it possible that so they may be, for ought that we know. Which will I am certain not be so hard nor so bold an undertaking, as his, who shall take upon him to prove, that any thing here supposed is impossible.

Indeed if any one would run the discourse into the abyss of infinity, he may soon create such difficulties to himself, as it ought not to be thought strange, if they be greater than any human understanding can expedite. But not greater than any man will be entangled in, that shall set himself to consider infinity upon other accounts; which yet he will find it imposed upon him unavoidably to admit, whether he will or no: not greater than this author will be equally concerned in, upon his doing that right to truth, in opposition to the former leaders of his own party, as to acknowledge the omnipresence of the Divine essence, (p. 32.) which he will find, let him try it when he will: nor yet so great, nor accompanied with so gross, so palpable and horrid absurdities, as he will soon be encountered with, should he retract his grant, or entertain the monstrously maimed, and most deformed, impious conceit of a finite, or limited Deity.

XXVII. Yet also in this present case, the impossibility to our narrow minds of comprehending infinity, is most rationally improveable to our very just advantage. It ought to be upbraided to none as a pretext, or a cover to sloth, or dulness. 'Tis no reproach to us that we are creatures, and have not infinite capacities. And it ought to quiet our minds, that they may so certainly know they have limits; within which, we are to content ourselves with such notions, about indemonstrable and unrevealed things, as they can, with great ease to themselves, find room for.

I can reflect upon nothing in what is here proposed, but what is intelligible without much toil, or much metaphysics. As matters, of so common concernment, ought, to our uttermost, to be represented in such a way that they may be so; we need not be concerned in scholastic disquisitions about union; or by what peculiar name to call that which is here supposed. It's enough for us to know there may be a real, natural, vital, and very intimate union, of

things that shall, notwithstanding it, continue distinct, and that shall, by it, be truly one. Nor do we need to be anxiously curious in stating the notions of *person* or *personality*, of *suppositum* and *suppositality*, though I think not the term person disallowable in the present case. Nor will I say what that noted man (so noted that I need not name him, and who was as much acquainted with metaphysics as most in his age) published to the world above twenty years ago, that he counted the notion of the schools about *suppositum* a foolery. For I do well know, the thing itself, which our Christian metaphysicians intended, to be of no small importance in our religion, and especially to the doctrine of redemption, and of our Redeemer.

XXVIII. But I reckon they that go the more metaphysical way, and content themselves with the *modal* distinction of three persons in the Godhead, say nothing herein that can be proved absurd or contradictious. As to what is commonly urged, that if there be three persons in the Deity, each person must have its distinct *individual essence*, as well as its distinct *personality*, I would deny the consequence, and say, that though this be true in *created* persons (taking person in the strict metaphysical sense) it is not necessary to be so in *uncreated*: that the reason is not the same between finite things and infinite; and would put them to prove, if they can, that the same infinite essence cannot be whole and undivided in three several persons; knowing there can be nothing more difficult urged in the case, than may against the Divine omnipresence; which irrefragable reasons, as well as the plainest testimony of Scripture, will oblige us to acknowledge.

But I think, though this hypothesis, abstractedly considered, and by itself, is not indefensible, it doth not altogether so well square with the Christian economy, nor so easily allow that distinction to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which seems requisite to found the distinct attributions that are severally given them in the Holy Scriptures.

XXIX. To conclude, I only wish these things might be considered, and discoursed with less confidence, and peremptory determination; with a greater awe of what is divine and sacred; and that we may more confine ourselves to the plain words of Scripture in this matter, and be content therewith. I generally blame it in the Socinians, (who appear otherwise rational and considering men,) that they seem to have formed their belief of things, not possible to be known but by the Scriptures, without them; and then think they are by all imaginable arts, and they care not what violence, (as Socinus himself hath in effect confessed,) to mould and form them according to their preconceived sense. Common modesty, and civility, one would have thought, should have made Schlictingius abstain from prefixing, and continuing that as a ruuning title to a long chapter: *Articulus Evangelicorum de Trinitate jum sensu communi pugnat*; engrossing common sense to himself and his party, and reproaching the generality of Christians, as not understanding common sense. They should take upon them less, and not vaunt, as if they were the men, and wisdom must die with them.

For this author, I congratulate his nearer approach to us, from those who were formerly leaders of his party, in the doctrines of God's omnipresence, and the perceptiveness and activity of separate souls. He writes with sprightliness and vigour, and, I doubt not, believes really, what he writes with so little seeming doubt. And because his spirit appears to be of a more generous, exalted pitch, than to comport with any thing against his judgment, for secular interest and advantage, I reckon it the greater pity it should want the addition of what would be very ornamental to it, and which he wishes to two of the persons, to whom he makes himself an antagonist, more of the tenderness and catholic charity of genuine Christianity, (p. 19. col. 2.) to accompany those his abilities and learning, which would not thereby be the lesser (as he speaks) nor the less conspicuous.

I believe few would have thought, viz. to see the less clearly, if he had been content to see for himself, not for mankind. And if he had not talked at that rate, as if he carried the eyes of all the world in his pocket, they would have been less apt to think he carried his own there. Nor had his performance, in this writing of his, lost any thing of real value, if in a discourse upon so grave a subject, some *lepidities* had been left out, as that of *Dulcinea del Toboso, &c.*

And to allude to what he says of Dr. Cudworth, his displeasure will not hurt so rough an author as Arnobius, so many ages after he is dead, if he should happen to offend him, by having once said, *Dissoluti—est pectoris in rebus seriis quærere voluptatem—&c.*

But for all of us, I hope we may say without offence to any, common human frailty should be more considered, and that we know but in part, and in how small a part! We should, hereupon, be more equal to one another. And when it is obvious to every one, how we are strained in this matter, and that we ought to suppose one another intently aiming to reconcile the Scripture discovery with natural sentiments, should not uncharitably censure, or labour to expose one another, that any seem more satisfied with their own method than with ours. What an odd and almost ludicrous spectacle do we give to the blessed angels that supervise us, (if their benignity did not more prompt them to compassion,) when they behold us fighting in the dark, about things we so little understand; or, when we all labour under a gradual blindness, objecting it to one another, and one accusing another, that he abandons not his own too weak sight, to see only by his (perhaps) blinder eye.

Thus, Sir, you have my sense what I think safe and enough to be said in this weighty matter. To you, these thoughts are not new, with whom they have been communicated and discoursed heretofore, long ago. And I believe you may so far recollect yourself, as to remember the principal ground was suggested to you, upon which this discourse now rests,—*viz.* necessity of existence, and contingency; emanations absolutely independent upon any will at all, and the arbitrary productions of the Divine will,—as the sufficient and most fundamental difference between what is uncreated and what is created; and upon this very account, as that which might give scope and room to our thoughts, to conceive the doctrine of the *trinity*, consistently with the *unity* of the Godhead; and so, as that the Son, though truly from the Father, and the Holy Ghost, though truly from both, shall yet appear infinitely distinguished from all created beings whatsoever.

So much you know was under consideration with us above twenty years ago; and was afterwards imparted to many more; long before there was any mention or forethought, within our notice, of such a revival of former controversies, upon this subject, as we have lately seen.

This occasion, now given, hath put me upon revolving anew these former thoughts; and upon digesting them into some order, such as it is, for public view. If they shall prove to be of any use, it appears they will not be out of season; and it will be grateful to me to be any way serviceable to so worthy a cause. If they should be found altogether useless, being evicted either of impertinency, or untruth, I shall not be ungrateful; for I thank God, I find not a disposition in my mind to be fond of any notions of mine, as they are such; nor to be more adventurous, or confident, in determining of things hid, not only in so profound, but in most sacred darkness, than I have all along expressed myself. I ought indeed to be the more cautious of offending in this kind, that being the thing I blame, the positive asserting this or that to be impossible, or not possibly competent, to the nature of God, which by his own word, or the manifest reason of things, doth not plainly appear to be so: much more which his word doth, as plainly as it is possible any thing can be expressed by words, ascribe to him. The only thing I assert is, that a trinity in the Godhead may be possible, for ought we know, in the way that I have proposed: at least it is so, for any thing that I do as yet know. And so confident I am of the truth, and true meaning of his word, reverencing a trinity in his eternal Godhead, that I strongly hope, if ever it shall be proved to be impossible upon these terms that I have here set down, by the same, or by equal light, the possibility of it some other way will appear too; *i. e.* that not only a *trinity* in the *unity* of the Godhead is a possible thing, but that it is also possible that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost may be sufficiently distinguished to answer the frame and design of Christianity: and that will equally serve my purpose. For so, however, will the scandal be

removed, that may seem to lie upon our holy religion, through the industrious misrepresentation which is made of it, by sceptics, deists, or atheists, as if it were made up of inconsistencies and absurdities, and were fitter to be entertained with laughter than faith: and being effectually vindicated, it will be the more successfully propagated, and more cheerfully practised: which is all that is coveted and sought by,

Sir,

Your very respectful,
humble servant, &c.

POSTSCRIPT.

HAVING the copies of some letters by me, which I wrote to Dr. Wallis between two and three years ago, upon this subject; I think, Sir, it is not improper, and perhaps it may be some way useful, to let them accompany this to yourself. And here I shall freely tell you my principal inducements (taking notice in some of the Doctor's printed letters of others to him, contained in them) to send him *incognito* one also; but with that reason against printing it, which you find towards the end of the first letter.

It was rarely the apprehension, which had long remained with me, that the *simplicity*, which (if the notion of it were stretched too far) not the Scriptures, but the schools, have taught us to ascribe to the being of God, was that alone which hath given us difficulty, in conceiving a trinity in the only one God.

It is not the *unity* or *oneliness* of the Godhead, but the *simplicity* of it, as the school-men have stated it, that hath created the matter of dispute. Unity, you know, denies more of the same; simplicity denies more in it. Concerning the former, that there could be no more gods that one, we are at a point; the reason of the thing itself, and the Holy Scriptures so expressly asserting it, leave it out of dispute.

All the doubt is about the latter. Not whether such a thing belong to the nature of God; but concerning the just explication of it. As it is a real excellency, not a blemish; and not merely a moral, but a natural excellency, there can be no doubt of its belonging to the Divine nature; but if you understand it as exclusive of all variety therein, you find not any express mention of such an attribute of God in the Scriptures. They are silent in the matter. It hath no authority, but of the schools. That and the reason that can be brought for it must give it its whole and only support. It is the only thing that must open, and give way, to admit the doctrine of the trinity; and it is the only thing that needs to do so. For we none of us assert a trinity of Gods; but a trinity in the Godhead. It is the only thing that can to the adversaries of the trinity, with any colourable pretence, seem opposite to it. And which therefore I thought the only thing that remained to be sifted and examined, if they will state it in opposition thereto. And consider, what so mighty and invincible strength of reason it had, whence alone either to shock the authority, or prevent the plain meaning, of the Holy Scriptures, discompose the whole frame of Christian religion, disturb the peace of the church, perplex very thinking minds, subvert the faith of some, and turn it into ridicule with too many.

I reckoned the Dr. (as I still do, notwithstanding the contempt this author hath of him) a person of a very clear, unmuddied understanding. I found him, by what he expressed in his first letter of the trinity, not apt to be awed by the authority of the schools, nor any bigot to them, as having declined their notion of a person, and fixing upon another, (less answering, as I apprehend, the scheme and design of Christianity,) I thought it easy, and reputable enough to him to add, what might be requisite in this matter, without contradicting (directly or discernibly) any thing he had said. I gave him the opportunity of doing it, as from himself, without seeming to have the least thing to that purpose suggested to him by any other. I had myself, I think, seen and considered the main strength of the schoolmen's reasonings concerning that *simplicity*, which they will have to be divine; and, for ought I do yet know, have competently occurred to it in this foregoing letter, and partly in what you will now find I wrote to him. But what there is of real infirmity, or impertinency to this ease (as it is, and ought to be represented) in their arguings, I reckoned he would both see and evince more clearly than I.

Therefore I greatly desired to have engaged him upon this point; but I could not prevail. And am therefore willing that what I writ then with design of the greatest privacy, should now become public. Not that I think it hath so great value in itself; but that perhaps it may further serve to excite some others more able and more at leisure to search and inquire into this matter; and either to improve or disprove what I have essayed. And which of the two it is, 'tis all one to me; for I have no interest or design, but that of truth, and the service of the Christian cause.

I was so little apprehensive of any such future use to be made of these letters, that I kept no account of the dates, except that one of the two latter (which both only refer to the first) I find, by the copy I have in my hands, to have been sent December 19th, 1691. I remember it was a long time, and guess it might be six or eight weeks ere I heard any thing of the first, after I had sent it. Probably it might have been sent in October, or the beginning of November, before. I at length heard of it very casually, being in a house in London, whither the Doctor's eighth letter was newly arrived (then no secret) in order to impression. I then found this my first letter was lightly touched, but mistaken; which occasioned (it being a post night) my second. That was followed by the third, the next post after, when I had a little more time wherein to express my mind, though I still concealed my name, as it is yet fittest to do, my main business in my letter to you lying with a person, who (blamelessly enough) conceals his.

These two latter of my letters to the Dr. produced some alteration in that paragraph of his eighth letter, which relates to my first. But yet no way answering the design for which I writ it. You have them now together exactly according to the copies I have by me, excepting one or two circumstantial things fitly enough left out, or somewhat altered. And they had all slept long enough, if this occasion had not brought them to light.

But before I give them to you, let me suggest some things further to you concerning the foregoing letter to yourself. You may apprehend that some will think it strange (if not an inconsistency) that I should suppose it possible an absolute omnimodous simplicity may not belong to the Divine Being, when yet I absolutely deny all composition in it.

And I apprehend too some may think so, at least awhile; but such as have considered well, will not think so, and such as shall, I presume will not long. For,

1. If I had denied the simplicity of the Divine nature, had the inference been just, that therefore I must grant a composition? How many instances might be given of one opposite not agreeing to this or that thing, when also the other doth as little agree! And most of all doth the transcendent excellency of the Divine nature exempt it from the limiting by partitions to which creatures are subject.

Take reason in the proper sense for arriving gradually by argumentation from the knowledge of more evident, to the knowledge of obscurer things, and so we cannot say the Divine nature is rational. But is it therefore to be called irrational. Faith and hope agree not to it. Are we therefore to think infidelity or despair do not disagree?

It is indeed more generally apprehended, we can scarce have the notion of any thing that strictly, or otherwise than by some very defective analogy, agrees to him, and to us. Some pagans, and some Christians from them, (not in derogation, but) in great reverence to the high excellency of the Deity, not excepting the most common notion of all other, even that of being itself, make his being and substance to be superessential, and supersubstantial. 'Tis out of doubt that whatsoever perfection is in us, is not the same thing in him formally, but in an unconceivable transcendent eminency only. Do therefore their contraries agree to him?

2. I am far from denying the simplicity of the blessed nature of God, which I ascribe to him in the highest perfection which it is capable of signifying. I most peremptorily affirm not only all the simplicity which he expressly affirms of himself; but all that can by just consequence be inferred from any affirmation of his; or that can by plain reason be evinced any other way. Whatsoever is any real perfection, &c. Sect. XI.

'Tis true, while I affirm such a simplicity as excludes all composition, in the sense already given, I affirm not such as excludes all variety: not such as excludes a trinity, which he so plainly affirms, and with such distinction, as his affirmations concerning it imply, and make requisite.

I further judge, that though the Scriptures do not expressly ascribe simplicity to the being of God, as a natural excellency, they say that which implies it, as such, to belong to him; as when they bring him in saying of himself, "I am what I am." This must imply his nature to exclude every thing that is alien from itself. I take it, as it signifies (besides a moral) a mere natural excellency, to import a most perfect purity of essence. And I understand that to be *purum*, which is *plenum sui*, and *quod nihil habet alieni*. I do therefore take the natural simplicity of the Divine Being to exclude the ingrediency of any thing that can infer in it conflict, decay, chance, disturbance, or infelicity in the least degree; and to include whatsoever infers the contraries of all these; serenity, tranquillity, harmony, stability, delight, and joy, in highest perfection; as necessity of existence also doth; and that for all this, it by no means needs to exclude a trinity, but to include it rather.

But I judge human (and even all created) minds very incompetent judges of the Divine simplicity. We know not what the Divine nature may include consistently with its own perfection, not what it must, as necessary thereto. Our eye is no judge of corporeal simplicity. In darkness it discerns nothing but simplicity, without distinction of things: in more dusky light the whole horizon appears most simple, and every where like itself: in brighter light, we perceive great varieties, and much greater if a microscope assist our eye. But of all the aerial people that replenish the region (expect rare appearances to very few) we see none. Here want not objects, but a finer eye.

'Tis much at this rate with our minds in beholding the spiritual sphere of beings, most of all the uncreated, which is remotest, and furthest above, out of our sight. We behold simplicity! and what do we make of that? vast undistinguished vacuity! sad, immense solitude! only this at first view. If we draw nearer, and fix our eye, we think we apprehend somewhat, but dubiously hallucinate, as the half-cured blind man did, when he thought he saw men like trees.

But if a voice which we acknowledge Divine, speak to us out of the profound abyss, and tell us of grateful varieties and distinctions in it; Good God! shall we not believe it? Or shall we say we clearly see *that* is not, which *only we* do not see? This seems like somewhat worse than blindness!

Now follow the Letters.

LETTERS TO DR. WALLIS.

SENT IN 1691.

LETTER I.

SIR,

I COULD much please myself in revolving in my own own mind the very respectful thoughts and veneration I have long had for you, and in conversing with the grateful and entertaining idea which I have not arbitrarily, but by your irresistible imposition, received, and retained of you many years, on the account of your former most useful and acceptable performances, and which is both renewed and heightened greatly by your late clear, prudent, and piously modest discourses, (both letters and sermons,) of that awful mystery, the trinity in the Godhead. But as I can neither satisfy myself of the fitness of making an encomium of you the matter of a letter to yourself; so nor can I hope to please you by doing a thing in itself so inept, and so insignificant to you. I shall better do both, if I shall offer any thing to you concerning this mentioned subject, your further consideration whereof may prove a further benefit to the world.

In what you have already said concerning it, you have used that great caution, and so well guarded yourself, as not, so far as I can apprehend, to give an adversary, in this single point, the least advantage. That which I would in the general humbly offer, is, whether you have said so much as with safety might be said, and as the case may require, for the gaining of a just advantage to the common Christian cause.

We design, in fight, not only to keep ourselves safe, but to overcome; and not in *prælio* only, but *in bello*. In wars indeed of this sort, both our own safety and victory are less to be valued than truth. Which, being of a piece, can be injured in no part, without some damage to the whole frame of congenerous truth. And as it is very possible, while an enemy is withstood attacking some one fort, a greater loss may not be provided against elsewhere; it may so fall out in affairs of this kind too, that the care of defending some one truth may be accompanied with a present not attending to the jeopardy of divers others. The nearer we approach an adversary (within just limits) in these rational decertations, the less he can have to say against us. But being well resolved ourselves about the main point of disagreement, we then take care not to come so near, as to fall in with him, pass into his tents, and give away our main cause.

I am, worthiest Sir, far from assuming so much to myself, or detracting so much from you, as to give a judgment that this really is done in your discourses about the trinity. I only submit to your own most penetrating judgment, what may be further requisite and possible in this matter, to take away any appearances hereof, and prevent ill consequences that may too easily ensue. I have, for my own part, long imposed it upon myself to abstain from any positive conceptions concerning the Godhead, beyond what I find expressly contained in the divine revelation, or what the reason of things, either antecedently thereto, or consequentially thereupon, doth most evidently persuade and require; and do greatly approve the same caution, which I cannot but observe with you: but desire it may be weighed whether such measures may not and must not lead us further.

As for the word *person*, you prudently profess not to be fond of it, the thing being agreed, though you also truly judge it a good word, and sufficiently warranted. For the *notion* signified by it, you all along seem to decline that of the schools, or the metaphysical one, which, you know, makes it to be a rational, or intelligent, *suppositum*; and to take up with (what I think I may, wanting a fitter, *i. e.* a more comprehensive word, call) the *civil notion* of it; which will allow the same man to be capable of sustaining three or more persons, supposing his circumstances or qualifications to be such or such, as to that purpose you speak both in your letters and sermons.

Now whereas you have also told us, Letter I. that by *personality* you mean that distinction (whatever it be) by which the three persons are distinguished from each other; that which, with great submission, and most profound respect to you, I propose to your further consideration, will be capable of being resolved into these two inquiries.

I. Whether only such a distinction of the Divine persons, as this amounts to, will be sufficient to found the several attributions which the Holy Scriptures give distinctly and severally to them, and to preserve the scheme of Christian religion entire, which is wont to be deduced from these sacred writings.

II. Whether some further distinction may not be admitted as possible, consistently with the solved unity of the Godhead.

As to the former, 1. Whereas, you think the word person to be a good word, and sufficiently warranted by Scripture, Heb. i. 3. where the son is called the express image of his Father's person; alleging that so we render the word *hypostasis* which is there used, and do mean by it what you think to be there meant; I desire you would please to consider whether the word *hypostasis*, according to the common use of it, will admit to be so taken, as you explain yourself to mean by the word person. For though the Latin word *persona*, as you say, according to the true and ancient sense, may well enough admit to be so taken, as that the *same man* might sustain *three persons*, I offer it to your re-consideration, whether ever you have observed the word *hypostasis*, in any sort of authors, when it signifies any person at all, (for I know that it frequently signifies somewhat else than a person,) to be taken in that sense. And whether one *hypostasis* so taken as it uses to be when it signifies a person, may not be capable of sustaining three of those persons which you here describe. And whether, according to this sense, you mean not God to be only *one* such *hypostasis*.

2. Be pleased further hereupon to consider how well it agrees with this supposition of God's being but one *hypostasis* or intelligent *suppositum*, so frequently to speak, as the Holy Scriptures do, of the Father, Son or Word, the Spirit or Holy Ghost, as three distinct I's or He's. The Lord possessed me (as the Divine Word or Wisdom is brought in speaking) in the beginning of his way—I was set up from everlasting, Prov. viii. 22, 23. When he prepared the heavens I was there, ver. 27.——Then was I by him, ver. 30, &c. The Word—was with God, John i. 1. He was in the world, ver. 10. We beheld his glory, ver. 14. And of the Spirit. He dwelleth with you, John xiv. 17. The Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, ver. 26. And whom I will send you from the Father, he shall testify of me, chap. xv. 26. And when he is come, he will reprove the world——chap. xvi. 8. And the observation seems to me as weighty, as it is usual, that, in some of the mentioned chapters, the somewhat hard *synthesis* of constructing ἐκεῖνος with πνεῦμα, (even where παράκλητος is not the nearer *supposition*, but, in one place, a very remote one, and one would think too remote to be referred to, ver. 13, 14.) is rather chosen to be used than that the Spirit should not be spoken of as a distinct *he*, or rather than he should be called *it*, which could not so fitly notify a person. If the same man were a king, a general, and a father, I doubt whether that would give sufficient ground to his being called *he*, and *he*, and *he*.

2. But the distinct predicates spoken of the three sacred persons in the Godhead seem much more to challenge a greater distinction of the persons than your notion of a *person* doth seem to admit; that of *sending* and being *sent*, spoken so often of the *first* in reference to the *second*, and of the *first* and *second* in reference to the *third*, as not to need the quoting of places. If the same man were a king, a general, and a judge, methinks it would not well square with the usual forms of speaking among men (and God speaks to men as men) to say, that, as the first, he sends the two latter, that is, himself.

And one would think our being required to be baptized in the distinct names of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, should signify some greater distinction.

As also that three are said to bear witness in heaven. I doubt that in a cause wherein our law reouires two or more witnesses, the same man that should be a father, a brother, and a son, would scarce thereupon be admitted for three witnesses.

And how the *incarnation* of the Son can be understood according to your notion of person, without the Father's and Holy Ghost's incarnation also, I confess I cannot apprehend. Your notion of a *person* contradistinct to the scholastic notion, as was said before, seems to leave the Godhead to be but *one hypostasis*, or *person*, in the latter sense. How then are we to conceive of the hypostatical union? The assumed nature will be as much hypostatically united with the Father, or the Spirit, as with the Son.

3. And doth not this civil, or merely respective, notion of a person, the other being left, fall in with the Antitrinitarian? Will it not make us Unitarians only, as they affect to call themselves? Would any of them (as you are pleased to take notice, Letter 6. p. 1, 2.) say, none but a mad-man would deny there may be three persons in one God, have been so mad (not yet professing themselves converts) as to say so, if they had not supposed their cause not hurt by this notion of a person? For, (as you well say, Letter I.) we need not be fond of words, so the thing be agreed; so have they equal reason to say, we need not be afraid of words, if in the sense you agree with us. And with one sort of them I only desire you to consider how great an appearance the asserting only of three persons, in the one sense, quitting the other, will carry off an agreement.

And have they not all the advantage left them which they seek in arguing against the satisfaction made by our Saviour, from the necessity of an *alterity*, that in the business of making satisfaction there must be *alter atque alter, one who satisfies, and another who is satisfied*. I do very well know, what instances are brought of human rulers making satisfaction for delinquents, but there is no parity in the cases, they being themselves debtors to the governed community, as God is not, who hath with most undoubted righteousness made all things for himself.

4. And consider whether by your notion of a person you forsake not the generality of them, who have gone, as to this point, under the repute of orthodox? who no doubt, have understood by three persons, three intelligent *hypostasis*; though they have differed in thinking, some of them, that only a τρόπος ὑπάρξεως was the *genitum* or *spiratum* as to the two latter: a notion that is either too fine, or too little solid, for some minds to grasp, or take any hold of: others that the Divine nature might itself be some way said to be communicated to them. But I pass to the

II. Inquiry, Whether some further distinction may not be admitted as possible? The only thing that straitens us here, is the most unquestionable *unity* or *unicity* (as we may call it) of the Godhead. Which, if it cannot be otherwise defended, I must yet for my part, notwithstanding these hardships (and I know no man with whom I could do it with more inclination) fall in with you. But I must crave it of you, so far to fall in with you know not who, as to apply your clearer mind, as I do my more cloudy one, to consider whether it can or no. You will here say, Further than what? and what would I have further?

To the former of these, I only say, further than the asserting, in very deed, but one *hypostasis*, in the Godhead, distinguished no otherwise into three, than by certain relative capacities, like those which may among men be sustained by one and the same man; and which distinction, as you after add, is analogous to what, in created beings, is called *distinctio modalis*.

To the latter, I desire you to observe what I generally propose, not that we may positively assert any further determinate distinction as certain and known; but only whether we may not admit some further distinction to be possible, in consistency with the unity of the Godhead. I do equally detest and dread to speak with rash and peremptory confidence about things both so mysterious and so sacred. But may we not modestly say, that if to that economy which God hath represented himself in his word, to bear, and keep afoot, towards his creatures, any further distinction than hath been assigned is *necessary*, it is also *possible*, and may be, for ought we know: if indeed we know nothing to the contrary. What is *impossible* we are sure cannot be *necessary*. But God himself best and only

knows his own nature, and what his own meaning is in the representation he hath made to us. If we sincerely aim to understand his meaning, that we may bear ourselves towards him accordingly, he will with merciful indulgence consider our short, or mis-apprehensions. But we need not say there is not this or that distinction, if really we do not know there is not. While we know so little of natures inferior to our own, and even of our own nature, and how things are distinguished that belong to ourselves, we have little reason to be shy of confessing ignorance about the nature of God.

Therefore I most entirely agree to the two conclusions of the ingenious W. J. wherewith he concludes his letter. But in the meantime (and pursuantly enough thereto) cannot but doubt the concludingness of his very acute reasonings against, at least, some of the expressions of that learned person, (Dr. Sherlock,) which he animadverts upon as I perceive you also do, p. 16. of your seventh letter. And even W. J. himself, for with a pious modesty he tells us—concerning infinite natures he presumes not to determine. Letter, p. 8.

What he objects against that author's having said the Divine persons are three beings really distinct, (wherein I instance, not intending to run through that elaborate letter,) that then there must be three distinct essences—seems to me a *πάρεργον*. I doubt not the author will easily admit it. But what will be the consequence? That therefore there are three Deities? That cannot be his meaning, nor be consequent from it, if he only means that the Deity comprehends in it three such essences. If indeed he think those three beings are as distinct as Peter, James, and John; what is said by W. J. against him, I think irrefragable, that then they are no otherwise one, than Peter, James, and John; and by him against himself; for Peter, James, and John, are not mutually self-conscious, as they are asserted to be: which mutual self-consciousness, since it is supposed to make the three Divine persons one, cannot be supposed to leave them so distinct, as they are with whom it is not found.

As to what is observed of the defective expression of this unitive principle by the word consciousness, that bare consciousness, without consent, is no more than bare omniscience; sure it is not so much, for consciousness doth not signify omniscience. We are conscious to ourselves, yet are not omniscient. But I reckon, (as I find he also doth,) that even consent added to consciousness, would yet leave the expression defective, and still want the unifying power which is sought after. For it would infer no more than a sort of moral union, which, in the kind of it, may be found among men, between whom there is so little of natural union (speaking of the numerical nature) that they are actually separate.

But now may we not suppose (as that which is possible, and actually is, for ought we know) what may be fundamental to both consciousness and consent, a natural union even of the numerical natures? Such a union would not infer a unity, or identity of these natures, essences, substances, or beings themselves. For, as W. J. hath well urged, (Letter, p. 5, 6.) "Substances upon union are not confounded or identified, or brought to unity of substance, but continuing numerically distinct substances, acquire some mutual community or communication of operations, &c. And deferring the consideration awhile what this would signify towards the unity, notwithstanding, of the Godhead, we shall take notice how accommodatingly to our present purpose W. J. speaks in what follows, where instancing in the chief unions that are known to us, he says, "Our soul and body are two substances really distinct, and in close union with one another. But notwithstanding this, they continue distinct substances under that union. In like manner the human soul of Christ is in union with the *Logos*, or second person of the trinity, which we call an hypostatical union. But neither doth this union make a unity of substance. For the two substances of the Divine and human natures continue distinct under that union." 'Tis true, he adds, "which must not be allowed in the unity of the Godhead, where there can be no plurality or multiplicity of substances." Nor do I say that it must, I only say, Do we know, or are we sure, there is no sort of plurality?

But if we are sure that there are temporal unions, (*i. e.* begun in time,) as in ourselves, for instance, of two substances that make but one man, and in our Saviour a human nature and divine that make but one Emmanuel; how do we know but that there may be three in the Godhead that make but one God? And the rather, because this being supposed, it must also be supposed that they are necessarily and eternally united, and with a conjunct natural impossibility of ever being, or having been, otherwise, whereof the absolute immutability of God must upon that supposition most certainly assure us. And such a supposed union will be most remote from making the Deity an aggregate. And for any thing of composition, I reckon we are most strictly bound to believe every thing of the most perfect simplicity of the Divine Being which his word informs us of, and to assent to every thing that is with plain evidence demonstrable of it. But not every thing which the schools would impose upon us, without such testimony or evidence. For as none can "know the things of a man, but the spirit of man which is in him; so nor can any know the things of God, but the Spirit of God." Nor can I think the argument concluding from the imperfection of a being, in which distinct things concur that were separate, or are *de novo* united, to the imperfection of a being, in which things some way distinct are necessarily and eternally self-united. Nor can therefore agree with W. J. that we are to look (universally) upon real distinction as a mark of superability; or that clear and distinct conception is to us the rule of partibility. For though I will not affirm that to be the state of all created spirits; yet I cannot deny it to be possible that God might have created such a being, as should have in it distinct, (assignable) parts, all of them essential to it, and not separable from it without the cessation of the whole. But now, as the accession of the human nature to the Divine in the hypostatical union infer no imperfection to the Divine, so much less would what things we may suppose naturally, necessarily, and eternally united in the Godhead, infer any imperfection therein.

I easily admit what is said by W. J., Letter, page 8, That we have no better definition of God, than that he is —a Spirit infinitely perfect. But then, being so far taught by himself my conception of him, I must include in it, this trinal distinction, or a triple somewhat which he affirms of himself, and without which, or any one whereof, he were not infinitely perfect and consequently not God, and that all together do make one God. As you most aptly say of your resemblance of him, a cube, there are in it three dimensions truly distinct from each other, yet all these are but one cube, and if any one of the three were wanting, it were not a cube.

Set this down then for the notion of God, that he is a Spirit infinitely perfect, comprehending in that omnimodous perfection a trinal distinction, or three persons truly distinct, each whereof is God. What will be the consequence? that therefore there are three Gods? Not at all, but that each of these partaking divine nature give us an inadequate, and altogether a most perfectly adequate and entire, notion of God. Nor would the language of this hypothesis being pressed to speak out (as he says in his letter) be this—these are not fit to be called three Gods; but not possible (with any truth) to be so called.

And whereas he after tells us, these three beings united by similitude of nature, mutual consciousness, consent, co-operation under the greatest union possible; and in that state of union do constitute the *τὸ θεῖον*, the entire all-comprehensive Godhead, and adds, this looks somewhat like a conceivable thing. To this I note two things:

1. That he makes it not look like so conceivable a thing, as it really may do. For he leaves out the most important thing, that was as supposable as any of the rest, and prior to a mere similitude, *viz.* a natural union of these (supposed) distinct essences, without which they are not under the greatest union possible; and which, being supposed necessary, and eternal, cannot admit these should be more than one God.

2. I note, that what he opposes to it (so defectively represented) is as defective, that the Christian trinity doth not use to be represented thus, &c. What hurt is there in it, if it can be more intelligibly represented than hath been

used? But his gentle treatment of this hypothesis, which he thought, as he represents it, not altogether unintelligible, and which with some help may be more intelligible, became one inquiring what might most safely, and with least torture to our own minds, be said or thought in so awful a mystery. It however seems not proper to call this an hypostatical union—much less to say it amounts to no more. It amounts not to so much. For an hypostatical or personal union would make the terms united (the *unita*, the things or somewhats under this union) become by it one hypostasis or person; whereas this union must leave them distinct persons or hypostases, but makes them one God. In the use of the phrase *hypostatical* or personal union the denomination is not taken from the subject of the union, as if the design were to signify that to be divers *hypostases*, or persons, but from the effect or result of the mentioned union, to signify that which results to be one person or *hypostasis*. As the matter is plain in the instance wherein it is of most noted use, the ease of the two natures united in the one person of the Son of God; where the things united are not supposed to be two persons, but two natures so conjoined, as yet to make but one person, which therefore is the negative result or effect of the union, *viz.* that the person is not multiplied by the accession of another nature, but remains still only one. But this were a union quite of another kind, *viz.* of the three *hypostases*, still remaining distinct, and concurring in one Godhead. And may not this be supposed without prejudice to its perfection.

For the schools themselves suppose themselves not to admit a composition prejudicial to the perfection of the Godhead, when they admit three modes of subsistence, which are distinct from one another, and from the Godhead, which they must admit. For if each of them were the very Godhead, each of them (as is urged against us by you know who) must have three persons belonging to it, as the Godhead hath. And yourself acknowledge three somewhats in the Godhead distinct, or else they could not be three. I will not here urge that if they be three somewhats, they must be three things, not three nothings; for however uneasy it is to assign a medium between something and nothing, I shall waive that metaphysical contest. But yet collect, that *simplicity* in the very strictest sense that can be conceived, is not, in your account, to be ascribed to God, either according to his own word, or the reason of things.

It may here be urged, How can we conceive this natural union (as I have adventured to phrase it) of the three persons, supposing them distinct things, substances, or spirits? Is such a union conceivable, as shall make them be but one God, and not be such, as shall make them cease to be three distinct things, substances, or spirits? We find indeed the mentioned unions of soul and body in ourselves, and of the two natures in Christ, consistent enough with manifest distinction; but then the things united are in themselves of most different natures. But if things of congenerous a nature be united, will not their distinction be lost in their union?

I answer, 1. That a spirit and a spirit are numerically as distinct, as a body and a spirit. And, 2. That we may certainly conceive it as possible to God to have united two or three created spirits, and by as strict union as is between our souls and bodies, without confounding them; and I reckon the union between our souls and bodies much more wonderful than that would have been. Why then is an unmade, uncreated union of three spirits less conceivable as that which is to be pre-supposed to their mutual consciousness?

I shall not move, or meddle with, any controversy about the infinity of these three supposed substances or spirits, it being acknowledged on all hands that contemplations of that kind cannot but be above our measure. And well knowing how much easier it is to puzzle oneself upon that question, *An possit dari infinitum infinito infinitius*, than to speak satisfyingly and unexceptionably about it to another.

And though I will not use the expressions, as signifying my formed judgment, that there are three things, substances, or spirits in the Godhead, (as you that there are three somewhats,) yet, as I have many years thought, I do still think, that what the learned W. J. doth but more lightly touch of the Son and the Holy Ghost being produced (which term I use, but reciting it, as he doth) not by a voluntary external, but by an internal, necessary, and emanative act, hath great weight in it.

In short, my sense hath long lain thus, and I submit it to your searching and candid judgment, *viz.* That though we need not have determinate thoughts, how far the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are distinguished; yet we must conceive them in the general to be so far distinguished, as is really necessary to the founding the distinct attributions which the Scriptures do distinctly give them. And that whatever distinction is truly necessary to that purpose, will yet not hinder the two latter's participation with the *first* in the Godhead, which can be but one; because that though we are led by plain Scripture, and the very import of that word, to conceive of the Father as the Fountain, yet the Son being from him, and the Holy Ghost from them both, not contingently, or dependently on will and pleasure, but by eternal, natural, necessary promanation, these two latter are infinitely distinguished from the whole creation; inasmuch as all creatures are contingent beings, or dependent upon will and pleasure, as the character is given us of created things, Rev. iv. 11. Thou hast made all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. But that whatever is what it is necessarily, is God. For I have no doubt but the dreams of some, more anciently, and of late, concerning necessary matter, and the sophisms of Spinosa and some others, tending to prove the necessity and identity of all substance, are (with what they aim to evince) demonstrably false. The sum of all will be this,

1. That we can be more certain of nothing than that there is but one God.

2. We are most sure the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are sufficiently distinguished to give a just ground to the distinct attributions, which are in the Scripture severally given to them.

3. We are not sure what that sufficient distinction is; (wherein I find you saying with me over and over) but whereas you rightly make the word *person* applicable to God, but in a sense analogous to that which obtains of it with men; why may it not be said it may be fitly applicable, for ought we know, in a sense analogous to that notion of it among men, which makes a *person* signify an intelligent *hypostasis*, and so three distinct intelligent *hypostases*.

4. But if that sufficient distinction can be no less, than that there be in the Godhead three distinct intelligent *hypostases*, each having its own distinct singular intelligent nature, with its proper personality belonging to it, we know nothing to the contrary, but that the necessary eternal nature of the Godhead may admit thereof. If any can from plain Scripture testimony, or cogent reason, evince the contrary, let the evidence be produced. In the meantime we need not impose upon ourselves any formal denial of it.

5. If the contrary can be evidenced, and that hereupon it be designed to conclude that there can be but one intelligent hypostasis in the Godhead, and therefore that the Son and the Holy Ghost are but creatures, the last refuge must be to deny the former consequence, and to allege that though the same finite singular nature cannot well be understood to remain entirely to one, and be communicated entirely to another, and another, the case will not be the same, speaking of an infinite nature.

Sir,

If what is here said shall occasion to you any new thoughts that you shall judge may be of common use, I conceive there will be no need of publishing my letter, but only that you be pleased to communicate your own sentiments, as from yourself, which will have so much the more of authority and usefulness with them. The most considerable thing that I have hinted, is the necessary promanation of the Son, and Holy Ghost, that must distinguish them from contingent beings, and so from creatures; which if you think improveable to any good purpose, as it hath been with me a thought many years old, so I suppose it not new to you, and being now resumed by you, upon

this occasion, you will easily cultivate it to better advantage than any words of mine can give it.

But if you think it advisable that any part of my letter be published, if you please to signify your mind to that purpose in one line to——marked——it will come sealed to my view, and will give opportunity of offering my thoughts to you, what parts I would have suppressed, which will be such only, as shall leave the rest the fuller testimony of my being,

Sir,

Your most sincere honourer, and most respectful humble servant,

Anonym.

Poiret's method of proving a trinity in the Godhead, though it call itself mathematical or geometrical, is with me much less convictive, than the plain scriptural way.

LETTER II.

Sir,

Your eighth letter happening to come to my view before it was printed off, I have the opportunity of taking notice to you that it quite misrepresents the intent of the letter to you subscribed Anonymous, which it makes to be the defending or excusing some expressions of Dr. Sherlock's; which indeed was the least considerable thing, if it were any thing at all, in the design of that letter, and not altogether accidental to it. The true design of it was, that there might be a clearer foundation asserted (as possible at least) to the doctrine of the incarnation and satisfaction of the Son of God. Nor can the *fortè quod sic* here be solved by the *fortè quod non*, the exigency of the case being such, as that *if more be possible* it will be *highly requisite*; and that it cannot well be avoided to assert more, unless it can be clearly evinced that more is impossible. Nor yet is it necessary to determine how much more is necessary. But not only the commonly received frame of Christian doctrine doth seem to require somewhat beyond what the mere civil or respective notion of the word *person* imports; but also the plain letter of Scripture, which says, Heb. i. 3, that the Son of God is the express image of the Father's *hypostasis*, which seems to signify there are two *hypostases*, and other Scriptures seem to say enough, whence we may with parity of reason collect a third. Now that letter intimates, I think, sufficient matter of doubt, whether *hypostasis* doth not signify much more than *person*, in your sense.

The principal thing that letter humbly offered to consideration—*i. e.* whether supposing a greater distinction than you have assigned be necessary, it may not be defended, by the just supposal that the promanation of the second or third persons (or *hypostases* rather) howsoever diverse they are, is by natural eternal necessity, not contingent, or depending upon will and pleasure, as all created beings is and doth—is altogether waived. That letter was written with design of giving you the occasion of considering what might be further requisite and possible to be asserted for the serving of the truth, and with that sincerity and plenitude of respect to you that it might be wholly in your own power to do it in such a way, as wherein not at all to disserve yourself. Which temper of mind is still the same with

Rev. Sir,

Your most unfeigned honourer, and humble servant,

Anonym.

Decemb. 91.

LETTER III.

Worthy Sir,

I am very loath troublesomely to importune you. But the very little time I had for the view of your eighth letter, before I wrote mine by the last post, not allowing me fully to write my sense as to that part which concerned my former letter, I take leave now to add, that my design in it (as well as the professed design of the letter itself) was to offer you the occasion of employing that clear understanding, wherewith God hath blest you, above most, in considering whether a greater latitude cannot be allowed us in conceiving the *distinction* of the three in the Godhead consistently with the *unity* thereof, than your notion of a *person* will extend to. And if it can, whether it ought not to be represented (at least as possible) to give a less exceptionable ground to the doctrines of the incarnation and satisfaction of the second person, in order whereto it seems to me highly requisite. This was that I really intended, and not the vindicating the sentiments of that author, which you might observe that letter animadverts upon. The Scripture seems to allow a greater latitude, by the ground it gives us to apprehend *three hypostases*; which so much differ from the notion you give of *persons*, that one *hypostasis* may sustain three such persons as you describe. The only thing that seems to straiten us in this matter, is the usual doctrine of the schools about the Divine *simplicity*. I confess I greatly coveted to have had your thoughts engaged in sifting and examining that doctrine; so far as to consider whether there be really any thing in it cogent and demonstrable, that will be repugnant to what is overturned in that letter. And I the rather desired more room might be gained in this matter, apprehending the unitarians (as they more lately affect to call themselves) might upon the whole, think you more theirs than ours; and while they agree with you concerning the possibility of such a trinity as you assert, may judge their advantage against the other mentioned doctrines, no less than it was.

My desiring that letter of mine might not be printed, was most agreeable to what I intended in writing it; that was, only to suggest to you somewhat (very loosely) that I reckoned you more capable than any man I knew, to cultivate, and improve, to the great service of the common Christian cause. And that you might seem to say, what you might, upon your own search, find safe and fit to be said, as merely from yourself, without taking notice what occasion was given you by any such letter at all. Had I designed it for public view, it should have been writ with more care, and with more (expressed) respect to you. But if, upon the whole, you judge there is nothing in it considerable to the purposes it mentions, my further request is, you will please rather to suppress that part of your letter which concerns it, (for which I suppose there is yet opportunity,) and take no notice any such letter came to your hands. I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your most respectful, humble servant,

Anonym.

December 19, 91.

SUMMARY PROPOSITIONS.

Collected out of the foregoing discourses, more briefly offering to view the substance of what is contained in them.

1. Of the *unity* of the Godhead there can be no doubt, it being in reason demonstrable, and most expressly often asserted in Scripture.

2. That there is a *trinity* in the Godhead, of Father, Son, or Word, and Holy Ghost, is the plain, obvious sense of so many scriptures, that it apparently tends to frustrate the design of the whole Scripture revelation, and to make it useless, not to admit this *trinity*, or otherwise to understand such scriptures.

3. That therefore the devising any other sense of such scriptures ought by no means to be attempted, unless this *trinity* in the Godhead can be evidently demonstrated to be impossible.

4. That the impossibility of it can never be demonstra-

ted from the mere *unity* of the Godhead, which may be such, as to admit these distinctions in it, for aught we know.

5. Nothing is more appropriate to the Godhead than to be a necessarily existent, intelligent Being: since all creatures, whether intelligent or unintelligent, are contingent, depending upon the will of the necessary, intelligent Being.

6. If therefore the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost do coexist in the Godhead necessarily, they cannot but be God.

7. And if the first be conceived as the *fountain*, the second as by natural, necessary (not voluntary, promanation from the first, the third by natural, necessary (not voluntary) spiration, so as that neither of these latter could have been otherwise; this aptly agrees with the notions of Father, Son, and Spirit distinctly put upon them, and infinitely distinguishes the two latter from all creatures that depend upon will and pleasure.

8. Whatever distinction there be of these three among themselves, yet the first being the original, the second being by that promanation necessarily and eternally united with the first, the third by such spiration united necessarily and eternally with both the other, inasmuch as eternity and necessity of existence admit no change, this union must be inviolable and everlasting, and thereupon the Godhead which they constitute can be but one.

9. We have among the creatures, and even in ourselves, instances of very different natures, continuing distinct, but so united as to be one thing; and it were more easily supposable of congenerous natures.

10. If such union with distinction be impossible in the Godhead, it must not be from any repugnancy in the thing itself, since very intimate union, with continuing distinction, is in itself no impossible thing; but from somewhat peculiar to the Divine Being.

11. That peculiarity, since it cannot be unity (which because it may admit distinctions in one and the same thing, we are not sure it cannot be so in the Godhead) must be that simplicity commonly wont to be ascribed to the Divine nature.

12. Such simplicity as shall exclude that distinction, which shall appear necessary in the present case, is not by express Scripture any where ascribed to God; and therefore must be rationally demonstrated of him, if it shall be judged to belong at all to him.

13. Absolute simplicity is not a perfection, nor is by any ascribed to God. Not by the Socinians themselves, who ascribe to him the several intellectual and moral excellencies, that are attributed to him in the Scriptures, of which they give very different definitions, as may be seen in their own Volkelius at large, which should signify them not to be counted, in all respects, the same thing.

14. That is not a just consequence, which is the most plausible one that seems capable of being alleged for such absolute simplicity, that otherwise there would be a composition admitted in the Divine nature, which would import an imperfection inconsistent with Deity. For the several excellencies that concur in it, howsoever distinguished, being never put together, nor having ever existed apart, but in eternal, necessary union, though they may make some sort of variety, import no proper composition, and carry with them more apparent perfection, than absolute omnimodous simplicity can be conceived to do.

15. Such a supposed possible variety even of individual natures in the Deity, some way differing from each other, infers not an unbounded liberty of conceiving what pluralities therein we please or can imagine. The divine revelation, which could only justify, doth also limit us, herein, mentioning three distinct I's or He's, and no more.

16. The several attributes which are common to these three, do to our apprehension, and way of conceiving things, require less distinction; no more, for ought we know, than may arise from their being variously modified, according to the distinction of objects, or other extrinsical things, to which they may be referred.

We that so little know how our own souls, and the powers and principles that belong to them, do differ from one another, and from them, must be supposed more ignorant, and should be less curious, in this.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND,

CONCERNING A POSTSCRIPT,

TO THE DEFENCE OF DR. SHERLOCK'S NOTION OF THE TRINITY IN UNITY, RELATING TO THE CALM AND SOBER INQUIRY UPON THE SAME SUBJECT.

Sir,

I find a postscript to the newly published defence of Dr. Sherlock's notion of the *Trinity in Unity*, takes notice of the inquiry concerning the possibility of a trinity in the Godhead. He that writes it seems somewhat out of humour, or not in such as it is decent to hope is more usual with him: and I can't guess for what, unless that one, whom he imagines a dissenter, hath adventured to cast his eyes that way that he did his. But for that imagination he may have as little ground, as I to think the dean's defender is the dean; and as little as he had to say the inquirer took great care that no man should suspect that he favours the dean in his notion. Here he is quite out in his guess; for the inquirer took no such care at all, but nakedly to represent his own sentiments as they were, whether they agreed with the dean's, or wherein they differed: and really cares not who knows that he hath not so little kindness either for truth or for him, as to abandon or decline what he thinks to be true for his sake, or (as he expressed himself, p. 29. of that discourse) because he said it.

But the defender represents the dean as much of another temper, and that he will thank him for not favouring him in his notions. But yet he says, that though the inquirer doth not in every particular say what the dean says, yet he says what will justify him against the charge of tritheism. And is there any hurt to him in that? What a strange man doth he make the dean! as if he could not be pleased unless he alone did engross truth! Will he thank a man for not favouring his notions, and yet would blame him for not saying in every particular what he says, though he say what will justify him against the heaviest charge framed against him? may one neither be allowed to agree with him, nor disagree?

But, Sir, the defender's discourse hath no design (nor I believe he himself) to disprove the possibility of a trinity in the ever blessed Godhead. Therefore the inquirer is safe from him as to the principal design he is concerned for, it is all one to him if it still appear possible in what way it be so represented, that is intelligible, consistent with itself, and with other truth; so that it is hardly worth the while to him, further to inquire whether the dean's hypostasis or his be better, if either be found unexceptionably safe and good. But because the defender hath, to give preference to the one, misrepresented both with some appearing disadvantage to the cause itself, what he says ought to be considered. And the whole matter will be reduced to this twofold inquiry:

1. Whether the inquirer hath said more than the dean, or more than is defensible, of the distinction of the sacred three in the Godhead.

2. Whether the dean hath said so much as the inquirer, or so much as was requisite of their union.

1. For the former, the defender, p. 103. mentions the dean's notion of three infinite minds or spirits; and makes the inquirer to have been proving three spirits, three distinct essences, three individual natures, in the Godhead; and then adds, "for my part, I cannot tell where the difference is, unless it be in the term infinite." 'Tis indeed strange the inquirer should have said more than the dean, if there were no difference, unless in the term infinite, wherein he must have said infinitely less.

But he at length apprehends another difference, though he after labours to make it none, viz. that the inquirer disputes, but asserts nothing, and he fancies he doth so to shelter himself from the animadverter, of whom he says he seems to be terribly afraid. Here he puts the dean into a fit of kindness and good nature, allowing the inquirer to partake with him in his fears, though not in his notions, as more sacred. But he herein understands not the inquirer, who if he had been so terribly afraid, could very easily have said nothing; and who was really afraid of a greater animadverter, thinking it too great boldness, under his

eye, to speak confidently of his own peculiarities, and that lay folded up in so venerable darkness. He thought it enough, in opposition to the daring person (whoever he was) with whom he was concerned, that so peremptorily pronounced the trinity an absurdity, a contradiction, nonsense, and an impossibility, to represent what he proposed as possible for ought he knew.

And now the defender will have the dean to have done no more. And with all my heart let him have done no more, if he and his animadverter, and the rest of the world, will so agree it: but he will have the inquirer to have done more, and to be much more exposed to the charge of tritheism, by asserting three distinct essences, three individual natures, and three spiritual beings in the Godhead. This is indeed very marvellous, that the inquirer should expose himself to the charge of tritheism by asserting all this, when but a few lines before, upon the same page, he is said to have asserted nothing! But he may as well make the inquirer in asserting nothing to have asserted all this, as the dean in asserting all this to have asserted nothing.

And where the inquirer hath said in express words that the sacred three are three distinct substances I can't find. And we must in great part alter the common notion of substance to make it affirmable of God at all, *viz.* that it doth *substare accidentibus*, which I believe the dean will no more than the inquirer suppose the Divine Being to admit. But 'tis true, that there is somewhat more considerable in the notion of substance, according whereto, if the dean can make a shift to avoid the having of any inconvenient thing proved upon him by consequence, I hope the inquirer may find a way to escape as well.

But whereas he says, the dean allows but one divine essence, and one individual nature, in the Godhead repeated in three persons, but without multiplication, as he says he had already explained it; this hath occasioned me to look back to that explanation, and if he thinks the allowing but one divine essence, and one individual nature, in the Godhead, will agree with what the dean hath said in his vindication, I shall not envy him, nor *now* go about to disprove it. But I confess I see not how it can agree with what the defender says in this his explanation itself, when, p. 23. he tells us, the Son is the living subsisting image of the Father, and the image and the prototype cannot be the same, but must be two. No man is his own image, nor is an image the image of itself. And he adds, this is so self-evident, &c. But whereas the distinction all this while might be understood to be but modal, and that appears to be the defender's present (whatever was the dean's former) meaning, that the three subsistences differ only in their different manner of subsisting; yet with this meaning his other words do little agree, for he plainly asserts a real distinction of three in the same individual numerical nature. And who did ever make a real distinction to be but modal? More expressly he had said before, (p. 18.) the Divine nature is one individual nature, but not one single nature, for one single nature can be but one person whether in God or man.

I shall not here discuss with him the criticism upon which he lays so mighty stress, of one individual nature and one single nature, but take the terms he chooses, and if the Divine nature be not one single nature, it must be double, it must be triple. And what doth this come to less than three natures? unless all ordinary forms of speech must be quite abandoned and forsaken. And wherein doth it come short of what is said by the inquirer? p. 141. "This term *individual* must (in the case now supposed, as *possible* not as *certain*) admit of a twofold application, either to the distinct essence of the Father, or of the Son, or of the Holy Ghost; or to the entire essence of the Godhead, in which these three do concur. Each of these conceived by itself, are (according to this supposition) individual essences, but conceived together they are the entire individual essence of God, for there is but one such essence and no more, and it can never be multiplied nor divided into more of the same name and nature." Duplicity, triplicity, are admitted; simplicity rejected. If simple and single be of the same signification, where is the difference, but that the one thinks absolute omnimodous simplicity is not to be affirmed of the Divine nature, as he often speaks: the other says downright, it is not single or simple without limitation. The one denies multiplication of it, so doth the other. The one indeed speaks positively, the other doth but suppose what he says as possible, not certain. And there is indeed some difference between supposing a thing as possible for ought one knows; and affirming it so positively, as to impute heresy, and nonsense, to all gainsayers. But both bring for proof, the same thing, the incarnation; as in the postscript, the defender takes notice the inquirer doth, p. 102. And so doth he himself in his letter, p. 102.—"The Divine nature was incarnate in Christ, he was perfect God and perfect man; and if there was but one single Divine nature in all three persons, this one single Divine nature was incarnate, and therefore the Father and the Holy Ghost, who are this single Divine nature, as well as the Son, must be as much incarnate as the Son was." He makes the contrary absurd, and brings in (fitly enough) Victorinus After teaching, that we ought not to say, nor is it lawful to say, that there is but one substance, *i. e.* as he paraphrases it, one single subsisting nature (therefore there must be three single subsisting natures) and three persons. For if this same substance did and suffered all (*patri-passiani et nos*) we must be Patripassians, which God forbid.

And what the defender alleges from the ancients, against the Sabellians, allowing only [a] a trinity of names, and his taking the τρόποι ὑπάρξεως in the *concrete* not in *abstract*, fully enough speaks the inquirer's sense, his accounting the contrary too fine and metaphysical for him, was what was writ to Dr. Wallis, (Calm Discourse, p. 147.) too fine or too little solid, &c.

In short, till it can be effectually proved, that mind and spirit do not signify somewhat as absolute as nature or essence, (or rather more than the former, which signifies the principle of operation as the other of being,) and till it can be as well proved, that asserting a thing as certain, so as to pronounce it heresy and nonsense to think otherwise, is less than only to propose it as possible, or inquire whether it be so or no, the dean must be judged by every one that understands common sense, to have heightened the distinction of three persons at least as much as the inquirer. And whether the inquirer have supposed more than is defensible against the defender's objections, will be considered by and by in its proper place. In the meantime let it,

2. Be examined whether the dean has said as much for salving the unity of the Godhead as the inquirer, or as much as is requisite to that purpose. And here our business will be short, for it all turns upon that one single point, whether mutual consciousness be that union which must be acknowledged, or suppose it only. For which we need only appeal to common reason, whether being do not in the natural order precede even the power of working; and consequently whether being united vitally, precede not the possibility of acting agreeably to that united state: whereupon the inquiry is not concerning actual conscience only, but (as he speaks) consciousness. Is it possible any three persons or intelligent subsistences, should naturally have vital perception of each other's internal motions and sensations, without being vitally preunited? I say *naturally*, for that God might give to three created spirits a *temporary perception* of each other without bringing them into a *stated union* each with other, is little to be doubted; as a spirit may assume a body and animate it *pro tempore* without being substantially united with it. And if that body were also a spirit, they might *pro tempore*, for ought we know, by extraordinary divine disposition (for within the ordinary course of nature we know of no such intimacy of created spirits to another) be *quasi animæ* to one another. But if naturally they were so to mingle and transfuse sensations mutually into each other, they must be naturally, first, in vital union with one another. Nor therefore did the inquirer mistake the dean's notion as the defender fancies in the passage he quotes, p. 104, as if he took mutual consciousness for mere mutual perspection. For though *scire* abstractedly taken, doth not signify more than *perspicere*, yet the inquirer in that passage, speaking of a never so perfect mutual perspection, properly enough expressed thereby as great a feeling such spirits were supposed to have of each other, in themselves, as mutual consciousness is apt

[a] Letter, p. 24, 25.

to signify, or as the dean can yet be supposed to have meant, that perspection being more perfect which produces gusts and relishes suitable to the object, than that which stays in mere speculation only.

And upon the whole, it seems very strange the defender should say, "If such an internal, vital sensation, be not an essential union, he believes no man can tell what it is." For how can such *actual sensation* be imagined to be *union?* As well might the use of sense itself (speaking of any thing singly to which it belongs) be said to be constituent form, or (consequently) the doing any thing that proceeds from reason, to be the form of a man. So the writing a book, should be the author. And whereas he says, "it is certain the dean took it to be so, and therefore he did not leave out a natural eternal union;" it follows, indeed, that he did not leave it out, in his mind and design, but he nevertheless left it out of his book, and therefore said not enough there to salve the unity of the Godhead, but ought to have insisted upon somewhat prior to mutual consciousness, as constituent of that unity, and which might make the three one, and not merely argue them to be so.

But now (p. 105) he comes to find as great fault with the inquirer's way of maintaining this unity, and because he is resolved to dislike it, if he can't find it faulty, sets himself to make it so. The temper of mind wherewith he writes to this purpose what follows, (p. 105.) and onwards to the end, so soon and so constantly shows itself, that no man whose mind is not in the same disorder will upon trial apprehend any thing in it, but such heat as dwells in darkness. And he himself hath given the document, which may be a measure to any apprehensive reader: [b] "True divine wisdom rests not on an illnatured and perverse spirit;" I understand it, "while the ill fit lasts." But 'tis strange he could write those words without any self-reflection.

The thing to be revenged is, that the inquirer did freely speak his thoughts, wherein he judged the dean's *hypothesis* defective, his not taking notice of what he reckoned naturally antecedent and fundamental to mutual consciousness: a most intimate, natural, necessary, eternal union of the sacred three. If the inquirer spake sincerely, as he understood the matter, and him, and it evidently appear the defender did not so, I only say the wronged person hath much the advantage, and wishes him no other harm, than such gentle regrets, as are necessary to set him right with himself, and his higher Judge. He says, he (the inquirer) represents this *unity* by the union of soul and body, and by the union of the Divine and human nature, &c.

'Tis true, he partly doth so, but more fully by the (supposed union of) three created spirits; (to which he that will may see, he only makes them a lower step;) and he says, (with respect especially to the former of these,) "That a union supposable to be originally, eternally, and by natural necessity in the most perfect Being, is to be thought unexpressibly more perfect than any other." But (he adds) "these are personal unions, and therefore cannot be the union of the Godhead." And he very well knew (for he had but little before cited the passage) that the inquirer never intended them so, but only to represent that the union of the three in the Godhead, could not be reasonably thought less possible.

What he further adds is much stranger, (and yet herein I am resolved to put charity towards him to the utmost stretch, as he professes to have done his understanding,) for he says—as far as he can possibly understand, and that he should be glad to be better informed, though there is some reason to apprehend that former displeasure darkened his understanding, (and even dimmed his eye-sight,) which yet I hope hath its more lucid intervals, and that this distemper is not a fixed habit with him. And what is it now that he cannot possibly understand otherwise?—that no other union will satisfy him (*viz.* the inquirer) but such a union of three spiritual beings and individual natures as by their composition constitute the Godhead, as the composition of soul and body do the man; *i. e.* he cannot understand but he means what he expressly denies. Who can help so cross an understanding? If he had not had his very finger upon the place where the inquirer says[c] in express words, "I peremptorily deny all composition in the being of God," this had been more excusable; besides much said to the same purpose[d] elsewhere. It had been ingenuous in any man not to impute that to another, as his meaning, which in the plainest terms he disavows, as none of his meaning: and it had been prudent in the dean (or of his defender) of all mankind not to have done so in the present case, as will further be seen in due time. But he takes it for an affront, when he fancies a man to come too near him.

He adds, "for this reason he disputes earnestly against the universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity of the Divine nature, and will not allow that wisdom, power, and goodness, are the same thing in God, and distinguished into different conceptions by us, only through the weakness of our understandings, which cannot comprehend an infinite Being in one thought, and therefore must, as well as we can, contemplate him by parts." I know not what he means by earnestly, the matter was weighty, and it is true. He was in writing about it in no disposition to jest. But it's said, "he disputed against the universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity of the Divine nature." I hope the defender in this means honestly, but he speaks very improperly, for it supposes him to think that the universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity, so earnestly disputed against, did really belong to the Divine nature; but I can scarce believe him to think so, and therefore he should have said, his disputation tended to prove it not to belong. If he (*viz.* the defender, or the dean) did really think it did, *they*, or *he*, must be very singular in that sentiment, I would have them name me the man that ever laid down and asserted such a position. Some I know have said of that sacred Being, that it is *summè simplex*, or more simple than any thing else; but that imports not universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity, which is impossible to be a perfection, or therefore to belong to the Divine nature. No man that ever acknowledged a trinity of persons even modally distinguished, could ever pretend it, for such simplicity excludes all modes. Nay, the antitrinitarians themselves can never be for it, as the Calm Discourse hath shown. And if the dean be, he is gone into the remotest extreme from what he held (and plainly enough seems still to hold) that ever man of sense did.

But for what is added, that he "will not allow that wisdom, power, and goodness, are the same thing in God:" this is not fairly said, civility allows me not to say, untruly. There is no word in the place he cites, nor any where in that book, that signifies not allowing; 'tis intimated we are not instructed "by the Scripture to conceive of the Divine nature, as, in every respect, most absolutely simple," or that power, wisdom, goodness in the abstract, are the same thing, and that our difficulty is great to apprehend them really undistinguishable. And let me seriously ask himself, doth he in good earnest think it is only through the weakness of our understandings that we distinguish the notions of the Divine wisdom, power, and goodness? Certainly it were great weakness of understanding to define them alike. I believe he never met with the writer yet that distinguished them less, than *ratione ratiocinata* in contradistinction to *ratiocinante*, which implies somewhat corresponding to our distinct notions of them (eminently and not formally) in *naturâ rei*.

And whereas he further says, "This prepared his way to make goodness, wisdom, power,—a natural trinity in unity," herein the defender is mistaken. This is not the *trinity* which the inquirer's discourse was ever intended to terminate in, as he himself hath expressly said, and the defender takes notice of it; which makes me wonder how he could think it was so intended, citing the very passage,[e] where the inquirer "professes not to judge, that we are under the precise notions of power, wisdom, and goodness, to conceive of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." But why then were these three so much discoursed of before? They are three most celebrated divine attributes, wherein we have our most immediate and very principal concern. And some have thought the trinity was most fitly to be conceived by them. The inquirer did not think so; but he thought, first, it would be requisite to have our minds disentangled from any apprehended necessity of conceiving them to be in all respects the very same things; nor are they the very same, if they be so distinguished, as is ex-

[b] See his Letter, p. 1. [c] Calm Discourse. [d] Calm Discourse. [e] Calm Discourse.

pressed in the sixteenth of the summary propositions;[f] where also they are each of them said to be common to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whence therefore it is impossible they should be thought to distinguish Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But that some distinction being admitted even of them, this might facilitate to us our conception of the greater distinction which must be, of Father, Son, and Spirit, as is expressed p. 140. Indeed he did not think fit to interrupt his discourse by staying to show reasons why he did not rest in that account alone of the trinity, though it might seem plausible, or not absurd, but proceeded further to what was more satisfying to himself, and might be so to other men. And (as the intervening series of his discourse leads thereto) this is more directly done, &c. especially where he comes to speak of the necessary coexistence, and the (as necessary and natural) order of the Father, Son, and Spirit, towards each other. The second being, not by any intervening act of will, but by necessary eternal promanation, from the first, and the third from both. And the true reason why power, wisdom, and goodness, were not thought expressive of the distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit, but common to each of them (as is said, Summary Prop. 16.) was, that the two latter cannot but be necessary emanations, most connatural to their original, as is truly suggested by the defender, p. 111.

If you object, (as the defender brings in the inquirer saying,) That this gives us the notion of a compounded Deity, &c. this, *i. e.* the supposition that absolute omnimodous simplicity belongs not to it, is the thing which may be thought to give us this notion. And he tells us, he (the inquirer) answers this difficulty, by giving us a new notion of a *compositum*. And what's that which he calls a new notion? That a *compositum* seems to imply pre-existing component, that brings such things together; and supposes such and such more simple things to have pre-existed apart, or separate, and to be brought afterwards together into a united state.

And indeed is this a new notion? as new as the creation? Let him show me an instance through the whole created universe of beings, (and for the uncreated being the defender (now at this time) disputes against any composition there, and the inquirer denies any,) first, where there hath been a *compositum* without a pre-existing component, or next, the compounded parts whereof, if substantial, did not in order of nature pre-exist separate; *i. e.* whether *esse simplicitêr*, do not naturally precede *esse tale*, or which is all one, to our present purpose, whether they were not capable hereof if the Creator pleased. Let any man, I say, tell me where was there ever a *compositum* made by substantial union that did not consist of once separate or of separable parts.

But note his admirable following supposition, that is to say, That if a man, suppose, who consists of body and soul, had been from eternity, without a maker, and his soul and body had never subsisted apart, he could not have been said to have been a compounded creature? This is said with design most groundlessly (as we shall see) to fasten an absurd consequence upon the inquirer, and see how it lucks. Did ever any man undertake to reprove an absurdity with greater absurdity? A creature without a maker! what sort of creature must this be? We have a pretty saying quoted in the defender's letter; He that writes lies down; and we are apt enough too, when we write, to trip and fall down, and ought in such cases to be merciful to one another, even though he that falls should be in no danger of hurting his forehead, much more if he be. What was another man's turn now, may be mine next.

But let the supposition proceed, and put we being instead of creature, which no doubt was the defender's meaning, for creature he must needs know it could not be that had no maker. And what then? "Why he should not" (says he) "have been said to be compounded, though he would have had the same parts that he has now." We have here a self-confounding supposition, which having done that first, cannot hurt him whom it was designed to confound, being taken in season. Grant one, and you grant a thousand. A being made up of a soul and a body, is so imperfect an entity, as could not be of itself. Nothing is of itself which is not absolutely perfect. If he mind to disprove this, let him try his faculty when he pleases against it, and (which I sincerely believe he never intends) together with it, against all religion. But besides, he hath destroyed his own supposition himself (to put us out of that danger) by saying in plain words, p. 10. "We have no notion of an eternal and necessary existence, but in an absolute perfect and infinite nature."[g] Now say I, what is so perfect, and hath whatever belongs to it necessarily, though distinguishable things belong to it, hath no parts; for what are parts, but such things as can be parted? Such things as never were parted, and never can be, (as 'tis nonsense to talk of those things being parted that are united necessarily, and of themselves,) are no parts, if *partiri*, whence they are so called, must not (and herein he cannot so fool the whole Christian world, as to make it concur with him) lose its signification to serve a turn. Though the things be real, their partibility is not real. If any indeed will call them *parts*, because they may be conceived or contemplated apart, as *parts* merely conceptible are no prejudice to the perfection of the Divine Being, so are such conceivable parts acknowledged by this author himself in express words;[f] "we cannot comprehend an infinite Being in one thought, and therefore must as well as we can contemplate him by parts." God can as little admit to be a part of any thing, as to have any thing a part of him. And yet 'tis no prejudice to the dignity and perfection of his being, to conceive of him conjunctly with other things, as when we make him a *part* (subject or predicate) of a proposition. All his disputation therefore against parts and composition in the Deity, is against a figment, or no present adversary. For my part I am of his mind, and I should be obliged to thank him that this once he vouchsafes to let me be on his side, when he knows I am, if he did not take so vast pains to make others not know it. How hard a thing is it for an angry man (especially when he knows not why) to write with a sincere mind.

But hath he in all this fervent bluster a present concern at this time for the honour of the Divine Being, (as God forbid I should think he never hath,) what is that he supposes injurious to it? Is it the words, parts and compounds? or is it the things supposed to be united in the Divine Being? The words he knows to be his own, and let him dispose of them more ineptly if he can tell how: parts that were never put together, never parted, nor ever shall be the one or other; *i. e.* that never were or will be parts, and a compound of such parts! But now for the things upon which he would obtrude these words,—three essences, natures, (or if you please, infinite minds or spirits,) signified by the names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in eternal union, but distinct in the being of God.—Let us consider his disputation against them united, or in union, according to its double aspect: First, upon the hypothesis or supposition of them: Secondly, upon himself.

First, Consider his disputation as levelled against the hypothesis or supposition of such distinct essences, natures, minds, spirits, in necessary, eternal union in the Divine Being. And one of his arguments against it is in those words of his: One principal argument against it (here put out parts and composition which are his own, and we have no more to do with them) is, that God is eternal and unmade, and whatsoever hath parts, (says he,) hath such essences in it, must have a maker. And here let him prove his consequence, and his business is done, *viz.* both ways, as will be seen by and by. But let him show the inconsistency between a thing's having such distinct essences naturally and necessarily united in it, (as the supposition to be argued against is, and before ought to have been justly stated,) and it's being eternal and unmade. But how that is to be evinced I cannot so much as guess; confident affirmation, against the most obvious tenor of God's own word, is of little account. Who shall ascend into the heavens? or fathom the depths? or can have that perspection of God's incomprehensible nature, as without (and visibly against) his own revelation to be able, without great rashness, to pronounce so concerning him? But so to yish an argument as here follows, is worse than the position; *i. e.* when one shall say, that for ought we know there may be three distinct essences by an eternal unmade union, united into one, in the being of God; any man should say, and be so vain as to expect to be regarded, that because they

[f] Calm Discourse.

[g] His Letter, p. 10.

are united by an eternal and unmade union, therefore they are not united by an eternal and natural union! If there be not a contradiction in the terms to disprove a thing, by itself, is to say nothing, or is all one with proving a thing by itself. He proceeds, to what hath nothing in it like an argument, but against its own conceit of parts, and that very trifling too: "There can be but one eternal nature in God; but if there be three—there must be three." This 'tis now come to, proving his point by itself. Here he makes sure work to have nothing denied, but then nothing is proved, no advance is made; if there be three, there must be three. But if there be three what? eternal *parts?* there must be three different natures, or else they ——— would be the same. (What! though distinct?) But this supposes somebody said the first: and who? himself; therefore he is disproving himself. If I had said so, I would have denied his consequence, for there may be similar parts; whereas by different, he seems to mean dissimilar. He says, "not only distinct, but different natures." Now you have that wonderful thing talked of sometimes, but never brought to view before, a distinction without a difference. 'Tis strange how any things should be distinct, and no way different. What distinguishes them if they differ by nothing? This different, applied to this present case, is his own word, coined to introduce a notion that is not new to Christians only, but to all mankind. If by different natures he means (as he seems) of a different kind, who thought of such a difference? But I trow, things that differ in number, do as truly differ, (however essentially coheriog,) though not so widely.

His next is, that though we have a natural notion of an eternal Being, we have no notion of three eternal essences (which again I put instead of his parts) which necessarily coexist in an eternal union. Doth he mean we are to disbelieve every thing of God whereof we have not a natural notion? Then to what purpose is a divine revelation? Is this notion of God pretended to be natural? 'Tis enough, if such a notion be most favoured by his own revelation, who best understands his own nature, and there be not evident natural notion against it. He forgot that he had said, (Defence, p. 5.) "If every thing which we have no positive idea of must be allowed to contradict reason, we shall find contradictions enough;" adding, "We must confess a great many things to be true, which we have no idea of," &c. He adds, "Once more, we have no notion of an eternal and necessary existence, but in an absolutely perfect and infinite nature, but if there be" (I here again leave out his three parts, because I design to consider if there be any thing of strength brought against what was supposed possible by the inquirer, not against his fiction, which I trouble not myself any further with) "three spiritual beings —neither of them can be absolutely perfect and infinite," (I would rather have said none, or no one, than neither, since the discourse is of more than two. I thought the meaning of *uter* and *neuter* had being agreed long ago,) "though we could suppose their union to make such a perfect Being, because they are not the same, and (neither) no one of them is the whole," &c.

This is the only thing that ever came under my notice among the school-men, that hath any appearing strength in it, against the hypothesis which I have proposed as possible for ought I knew. They generally dispute against many sorts of compositions in the being of God, which I am not concerned in: that of matter and form, which is alien from this affair; of quantitative parts, which is as alien: of subject and accident, which touches us not; of act and power, which doth it as little: each subsistent, being eternally in utmost actuality. And by sundry sorts and methods of argument, whereof only this can seem to signify any thing against the present supposition. And it wholly resolves into the notion of infinity, about which I generally spoke my sense in that first[h] Letter to Dr. Wallis. And as I there intimated how much easier it is to puzzle another upon that subject than to satisfy oneself, so I here say, that I doubt not to give any man as much trouble about it in respect of quantitative extension, as he can me, in this. I think it demonstrable, that one Infinite can never be from another by voluntary production, that it cannot by necessary emanation, I think not so. In the meantime, when we are told so plainly by the divine oracles, of a *sacred three*, that are each of them God, and of some one whereof some things are spoken that are not nor can be of the others; I think it easier to count three than to determine of infiniteness: and accordingly to form one's belief. But of this more when we come to compare him with himself.[i] And for what he discourses of the aspect this supposition hath upon the Trinity, and the Homoousion; it all proceeds still upon his own fiction of parts, and upon the invidious straining of that similitude of the union of soul and body, as he himself doth *tantum non* confess; except that he lessens it by saying most untruly that he (the inquirer) doth expressly own the consequence. Therefore if he do not own the consequence, then the defender confesses himself to have invidiously devised it. And what is it? That if all three by this composition are but one God, neither of them by himself is true and perfect God. The divinity is like the English; but both his own. The inquirer denies both antecedent (which he knows) and consequent too. Leave out, by this composition, (his own figment,) and his argument as much disproves any trinity at all as it doth the present *hypothesis*.

But wherein doth the inquirer own it? because such a similitude is used (as 'tis often in that discourse) of the union between soul and body, (declared elsewhere to be unexpressly defective,) that therefore the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are each of them by himself no more truly Lord or God, according to the Athanasian creed, or otherwise than in as improper a sense, as the body of a man, excluding the soul, is a man, or a human person. Or as if Deity were no more in one of the persons, than humanity in a carcass! Who that looks upon all this with equal eyes, but will rather choose as doubtful a notion, than so apparently ill a spirit? Are similitudes ever wont to be alike throughout, to what they are brought to illustrate? It might as well be said, because he mentions with approbation such as illustrate the doctrine of the trinity by a tree and its branches, that, therefore, there we are to expect leaves and blossoms. Is it strange the created universe should not afford us an exact representation of uncreated Being? How could he but think of that; "To whom do ye liken me?" At least one would have thought he should not have forgot what he had so lately said himself.[k] We must grant we have no perfect example of any such union in nature. What appetite in him is it, that now seeks what nature doth not afford? A very unnatural one, we may conclude. 'Twere trifling to repeat what was said, and was so plain, before, that the union between soul and body was never brought to illustrate personal union but essential. The former is here imagined without pretence, there being no mention or occasion for the mentioning of *persons* in the place he alleges.[l] But to make out his violent consequence he foists in a supposition, that never came into any man's imagination but a Socinian's and his own:—(which I say, contradistinguishing him to them, that the matter may (as it ought) appear the more strange.[m]) If God be a person, he can be but one. Is God the appropriate name of a person? then indeed there will be but one person; but who here says so but himself? The name of God is the name of the essence, not the distinguishing name of a person. But if three intelligent natures be united in one Deity, each will be persons, and each will be God, and all will be one God; not by parts, other than conceptible, undivided, and inseparable, as the soul and body of a man are not. Which sufficiently conserves the Christian trinity from such furious and impotent attacks as these. And the *homo-ousiotes* is most entirely conserved too: for what are three spiritual natures no more the same, than (as he grossly speaks) the soul and body are? no more than an intelligent mind, and a piece of clay? By what consequence is this said, from any thing in the inquirer's hypothesis? Whereas also he expressly insists,[n] that the Father, as *Fons trinitatis*, is first, the Son of the Father, the Holy Ghost from both. Is not the water in the streams the same that was in the fountain? and are not the[o] several attributes expressly spoken of as common to these three? Essential power, wisdom, goodness, (which are denied to be the precise notions of Father, Son, and Spirit,) said by more than a περιώρησις, as that may be

h See Calm Discourse. i Ibid. k His Letter, p. 5. l Calm Disc. m His Letter, p. 110. n Calm Disc. o Ibid.

understood to signify, mere presence, (how intimate soever,) but by real vital union, as much as each one's, as any one's? and all other conceivable perfections besides? Why were these words read with eyes refusing their office, to let them into the reader's mind? whence also how fabulous is the talk of[p] power begetting wisdom, &c. against what is so plainly said[q] of the order of *priority* and *posteriority*, &c.

There had been some prudence seen in all this conduct, if the defender could have taken effectual care, that every thing should have been blotted out of all the copies of that discourse, but what he would have thought fit to be permitted to the view of other eyes than his own. For then, though in so gross prevarication he had not preserved his innocency, he might have saved in some degree his reputation. Yet also he should have taken some heed that anger might not so have discoloured his eye, as to make so injudicious a choice what to confess and what to conceal. For had he not himself blabbed, that it was said, we are not under the precise notions of power, wisdom and goodness, to conceive of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; he might more plausibly have formed his odd births, and fathered them where he doth. But wrath indulged will show its governing power. And all this fury and vengeance (upon the inquirer, and the dean too) he reckoned was due, only because it was so presumptuously thought, that somewhat in his hypothesis (or which he defends) might have been better, and that he (probably) sees it might; so much a greater thing (in some ill fits) is the gratifying a humour than the Christian cause!

2. But let us now see how all this turns upon himself. And how directly his ill polished (not to say envenomed) darts, missing their designed mark, strike into that very breast which he undertakes to defend. Whereas there are two things, principally, to be designed in a discourse of this subject, *viz.*

1. The explaining the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so as that though they are some way three, they may yet be concluded to be in Godhead but one;

2. The evincing, notwithstanding that unity, the possibility of their sufficient distinction, to admit the distinct predicates that are severally spoken of them in the Holy Scriptures:

The inquirer's discourse chiefly insists upon these two things.

1. That necessity of existence is the most fundamental attribute of Deity. And that therefore the Father, as the Fountain, being necessarily of himself, the Son necessarily of the father, the Holy Ghost necessarily from them both; each cannot but be God, and the same one God. (In reference to the former purpose.)

2. That absolute omnimodous simplicity, is never asserted, in Scripture, of the Divine Being, nor capable of being, otherwise, demonstrated of it; and that it is impossible, either from Scripture, or rational evidence, accurately to assign the limits thereof, and determine what simplicity belongs to that ever blessed Being, and what not: if it be necessary to our apprehending how such distinct *predicates* and *attributions* may severally belong to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that we conceive three distinct essences necessarily coexisting, in an eternal, vital, inseparable union in the Divine Being; the thing may be in itself possible for ought we know. And this is propounded to serve the latter purpose.

The defender of the dean seems to think otherwise of these two things, *viz.* of necessity of existence, common to the sacred three, which will prove each of them to be God, and, belonging to them in the mentioned order, as Father, Son, and Spirit, will prove them necessary to be one God.

And of what is said of simplicity, which might admit their sufficient distinction; of both these, I say, he seems to think otherwise by neglecting both, lest that discourse should be thought any way pertinent, or useful to its end; and disputes vehemently against the latter. How strongly and successfully he does it, in respect of the truth of the thing, we have seen. But whether weakly or strongly, that his disputation tends to wound the dean's cause, all that it can, shall now be made appear.

[p] Postscript to his Letter, p. 111. [q] Calm Disc.
[r] Ibid.

It is notorious the dean hath asserted, so positively, three infinite Minds or Spirits, that the benign interpretation wherewith this defender would salve the matter, (a new vocabulary being to be made for him on purpose, and the reason of things quite altered,) will to any man of sense seem rather ludicrous, than sufficient, without express retractation. For which the inquirer thinks he is upon somewhat better terms, than he, if there were occasion for it, both by the tenor of his whole discourse, and by what he hath particularly said[r] in the 28th sect. But after the interpretation offered, see whether such things are not said over and over in the defence, as make the defender (and the dean if he speak his sense) most obnoxious to the whole argumentation in the postscript. So as, if a part was acted, it was carried so untowardly, that it seemed to be quite forgotten what part it was, and all the blows (for it was come now to offending instead of defending) fall directly upon him, whom the actor had undertaken to defend.

It hath been noted already, that the defender says expressly,[s] "the Divine nature is one individual nature," (and so says the inquirer,[t])—but not one single nature; (then it must be double and triple, not absolutely simple, as also the inquirer says;) to which he (*viz.* the defender) adds, "one single nature can be but one person, whether in God or man." Now let any man judge whether all his reasonings are not most directly applicable against him, (if they signify any thing,) which are contained in his postscript, p. 106, 107, 108, &c.

How furiously doth he exagitate that saying,[u] "When you predicate Godhead, or the name of God, of any one of them, (*viz.* Father, Son, or Holy Ghost,) you herein express a true but inadequate conception of God," &c. insisting that the whole "undivided Divine nature" (no doubt it is everlastingly undivided wherever it is) "subsists entirely in three distinct persons." This the inquirer never denied, though he charges it upon him, that he makes no one of the persons to be[v] true and perfect God. But how well doth that agree with what he had himself said, (Defence, p. 26.) Though God be the most absolute, complete, independent Being, yet neither the Son, nor the Holy Ghost, can be said to be an absolute, complete, independent God. He falsely charges it upon the inquirer that he makes the persons severally not perfect God, and he denies two of them to be complete God. To say not perfect is criminal, (as indeed it is,) to say not complete is innocent! But his saying the Son and Holy Ghost are not complete God; how doth it consist with what is said, Postscript, p. 109. "The same whole entire divinity distinctly and inseparably subsists in the person of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." What is wanting to make him complete God, in whom "the whole, entire divinity subsists?" No wonder if he quarrel with all the world who so little agrees with him whose defence he undertakes, or with himself. In the meantime the inquirer hath the less reason to complain, when he manifestly treats himself as ill as him.

I only add, that for his Discourse concerning "the one Divinity, or one Divine Nature, subsisting wholly and entirely, three times," (whereas I had thought three persons had subsisted at all times, and all at once,) and the persons of the Son and Holy Spirit, not being emanations; Not the Son, because he is the Father's image; and an image is not an emanation, but a reflection; (but how should there be a reflected image without an emanation?) "nor the Holy Ghost, being προβολη, not in the sense of *emanation*, but of the *mysterious procession*;" I shall make no guesses about it, (for it concerns not the inquirer,) only I think it very secure against the formidable objection which he mentions, p. 35. of its being too intelligible.

Upon the whole matter, I see not what service it can do him, to put intelligent persons instead of mind; for I thought every person had been intelligent. Boethius his definition, which he alleges, plainly implies so much, and one would think he must know that it is the usual notion of a person to understand by it *suppositum rationale* or *intelligens*. Therefore methinks he should not reckon it necessary to distinguish persons (as he doth by this addition of intelligent) into such as are persons and such as are no persons.

[s] Defence, p. 16. p. 18. [t] Calm Discourse.
[u] Postscript. [v] Ibid.

But since he expressly says, (and I think for the most part truly,) "that w the three persons or subsistences, in the ever blessed trinity, are three real, substantial subsistences, each of which hath entirely, all the perfections of the Divine nature, divine wisdom, power, and goodness; and therefore each of them is eternal, infinite mind, as distinct from each other as any other three persons; and this he believes the Dean will no more recant, than he will renounce a trinity; for all the wit of man cannot find a medium between a substantial trinity and a trinity of names, or a trinity of mere modes, respects, and relations in the same single essence, which is no trinity at all." As also he had said much to the same purpose before, "that to talk of three subsistences in the abstract, without three that subsist, or of one single nature which hath three subsistences, when it's impossible that in singularity there can be more than one subsistence," &c. I believe he will find no small difficulty to name what it is, that with the peculiar distinct manner of subsistence makes a person; not the very same common nature, for the persons cannot be distinguished from each other by that which is common to them all. Therefore the divine nature which is common to the three, must according to him comprehend three single natures, and not be absolutely simple. Hither must he his resort at last, after all his earnest disputation against it. And these he will have to be parts, which because they are undivided, impartible, inseparable, everlastingly and necessarily united, I do reckon the inquirer did with very sufficient reason, and with just decency, and doth still continue very peremptorily to deny.

And whereas he contends that the whole divine nature is entirely in each subsistence, (as he does again and again,) I think the term whole improper, where there are no proper parts. And I doubt not, when he gives place to cooler thoughts, he will see cause to qualify that assertion For if he strictly mean that every thing that belongs to the Godhead is in each person; I see not how he will fetch himself from the Socinian consequence, that then each person must have a trinity subsisting in it, and be Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. For I doubt not he will acknowledge that the entire divinity includes in it the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And therefore he must be beholden to an inadequate notion in this very case, when all is done, how much soever he hath contended against it. I do however think it safe and free from any other difficulty, that we unavoidably have in conceiving infinites, to say, That all perfection is in each subsistent (which I like better than subsistence, as more expressive of the concrete) as far as their natural, necessary, eternal order, towards one another, as the first is the fountain or radix, the second from that, and the third from both, can possibly admit. All must be originally in the Father, with whom the other two have that intimate, vital, eternal union, that what is in him the other communicate therein, in as full perfection as is inconceivable, and more than it is possible for us or for any finite mind to conceive. Therefore since that difference which only proceeds from that natural, eternal order, is conjecturable only, but is really unknown, unrevealed, and inscrutable; it is better herein to confess the imperfection of that knowledge which we have, than to boast that which we have not, or aspire to that which we cannot have.

A VIEW

OF THAT PART OF

THE LATE CONSIDERATIONS

ADDRESSED TO H. H. ABOUT THE TRINITY. WHICH CONCERNS THE SOBER INQUIRY ON THAT SUBJECT.

IN A LETTER TO THE FORMER FRIEND.

You see, Sir, I make no haste to tell you my thoughts of what hath been published since my last to you, against my sentiments touching the Holy Trinity. I saw the matter less required my time and thoughts, than my other affairs; and so little, that I was almost indifferent whether I took any notice thereof or no. There is really nothing of argument in what I have seen, but what I had suggested before, and objected to myself, in those very discourses of mine, now animadverted on; which not having prevented, with me, the opinion I am of, can as little alter it, and should as little any man's else. But a little leisure, as it can, without extortion, be gained from other occasions, I do not much grudge to bestow on this.

I find myself concerned in the late considerations on the explications of the doctrine of the trinity—in a letter to H. H. The author is pleased to give me the honour of a name, a lank, unvocal one. It is so contrived, that one may easily guess whom he means; but the reason of his doing so I cannot guess; it is because he knew himself, what he would have others believe.

But I suppose he as well knew his own name. If he knew not the former, he ran the hazard of injuring either the supposed author, or the true, or both. I could, I believe, make as shrewd a guess at his name, and express it as plainly. But I think it not civil to do so; because I apprehend he hath some reason to conceal it, whereof I think he hath a right to be the judge. But I will not prescribe to him rules of civility, of which that he is a great judge, I will not allow myself to doubt.

Yet I will not suppose him to have so very diminishing thoughts of our Saviour, as not to acknowledge and reverence the authority of that great rule of his, which he knows gained reverence with some who called not themselves Christians, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you—&c." Nor can divine what greater reason he should have to hide his own name, than to expose mine, or make the person he indigitates be thought the author of the discourse he intended to expose; since no man can imagine how, as the Christian world is constituted, any one can be more obnoxious for denying three persons, than for asserting three Gods: which latter his impotent attempt aims to make that author do.

For his censures of that author's style, and difficulty to be understood, they offend me not. But so I have known some pretend deafness, to what they were unwilling to hear. There is indeed one place, Sober Inquiry, in the end of sect. 8. where *must* should have been left out, upon the adding afterwards of *can*, that might give one some trouble. In which yet, the supposal of an (not unusual) asyndeton, would, without the help of magic, have relieved a considering reader. And for his compliments, as they do me no real good, so, I thank God, they hurt me not. I dwell at home, and better know my own furniture than another can. For himself, I discern and readily acknowledge in him, those excellent accomplishments, for which I most heartily wish him an advocate in a better cause, without despair he will yet prove so; when I take notice of some passages which look like indications of a serious temper of mind, as of choosing God, and the honour of his name, for our portion and design: and that he lives in vain, who knows not his Maker, and his God: with the like.

But on the other hand, I was as heartily sorry to meet with an expression of so different a strain, on so awful a subject, of "making a coat for the moon." That precept which[a] Josephus inserts among those given the Jews, doth for the reason it hath in it, abstracting from its authority, deserve to be considered. It seems to import a decency to the rest of mankind, whose notions of a Deity did not argue them sunk into the lowest degrees of sottishness and stupidity. Good Sir, what needed (think you) so adventurous boldness, in so lubricous a case? It gains nothing to a man's cause either of strength or reputation with wise and good men. A sound argument will be as sound without it. Nor should I much value having them on my side, whom I can hope to make laugh at so hazardous a jest. I can never indeed have any great veneration for a morose sourness, whatsoever affected appearance it may have with it, of a simulated sanctimony or religiousness; but I should think it no hardship upon me to repress that levity, as to attempt dancing upon the brink of so tremendous a precipice. And would always express

w Defence, p. 90.

a Βλασφημειτο δε μηδεις Θεους ους πολεις αλλαι νομιζουσι. Lib. 4. Jud. Antiq.

myself with suspicion, and a supposed possibility of being mistaken, in a case wherein I find many of noted judgment and integrity, in the succession of several ages, differing from me. But go we on to the cause itself, where he pretends,

1. First to give a view of the sober inquirer's hypothesis;

2. And then to argue against it.

As to the former. He doth it, I am loath to say, with less fairness than from a person of his (otherwise) appearing ingenuity, one would expect. For he really makes me to have said more than I ever did, in divers instances; and much less than I have expressly said; and that he cannot have so little understanding as not to know was most material to the cause in hand.

He represents me, p. 40. col. 1. saying: The persons are distinct essences, numerical natures, beings, substances; and col. 2. That I hold them to be three spirits; when in the close of one of those paragraphs, I recite the words of W. J. "In the unity of the Godhead 'there must be no plurality or multiplicity of substances allowed; and do add, Nor do I say that there must.' And I do not positively say there are three distinct substances, minds, or spirits." I would ask this my learned antagonist, Have *saying* and *not saying* the same signification? And again, when my words are: I will not use the expressions, as signifying my formed judgment, that there are three things, substances, or spirits in the Godhead, how could he say, I hold the three persons to be three spirits? Is any man, according to the ordinary way of speaking, said to hold what is not his formed judgment? If he only propose things whereof he doubts, to be considered and discussed by others, in order to the forming of it, and by gentle ventilation to sift out truth, it the rather argues him not to hold this or that.

And I think much service might be done to the common interest of religion, by such a free mutual communication of even more doubtful thoughts, if such disquisitions were pursued with more candour, and with less confidence and prepossession of mind, or addictedness to the interest of any party whatsoever. If it were rather endeavoured, to reason one another into, or out of, this or that opinion, than either by sophistical collusions to cheat, or to hector by great words, one that is not of my mind. Or if the design were less to expose an adversary, than to clear the matter in controversy.

Besides, that if such equanimity did more generally appear, and govern, in transactions of this nature, it would produce a greater liberty in communicating our thoughts, about some of the more vogued and fashionable opinions, by exempting each other from the fear of ill treatment in the most sensible kind. It being too manifest, that the same confident insulting genius, which makes a man think himself competent to be a standard to mankind, would also make him impatient of dissent, and tempt him to do worse, than reproach one that differs from him, if it were in his power. And the club or faggot arguments must be expected to take place, where what he thinks rational ones, did not do the business. This only on the by.

In the meantime, that there is a trinity in the Godhead is no matter of doubt with me; but only whether this be the best way of explaining and defending it. If this be not the best, or sufficient, some other will, I believe, or hath been found out by some other. Of which I have spoken my sense not only indefinitely, but particularly of the more common way; not that I did then, or have yet thought it the best, but not indefensible.

And I must now sincerely profess, that the perusal of these very considerations gives me more confidence about this hypothesis, than I allowed myself before; finding that the very sagacious author of them, of whose abilities and industry together, I really have that opinion, as to count him the most likely to confute it of all the modern antitrinitarians, hath no other way to deal with it, than first, both partially and invidiously to represent it, and then, rather to trifle than argue against it. He first paints it out in false and ugly colours, before he comes to reasoning; and then, when he should reason, he says nothing that hath so much as a colour. It seems to me an argument of a suspected ill cause on his side, that he thought it needful to prepossess the reader with the imagination of I know not (and I believe he knows not) what gross ideas, as he romances, belonging to this hypothesis. Because from those words, Prov. viii. Then was I by him, as one brought up with him, and daily his delight; the author speaks of the delicious society, which these words intimate, the eternal Wisdom, and the prime Author and Parent of all things, to have each with other.

For my part, I have little doubt but this ingenious writer is so well acquainted with the gust and relish of intellectual delight, that he chose to expose his adversary by using that odd expression of gross idea so causelessly, in accommodation only to the genius of some other men, whom he thought fit to humour, rather than his own. Nor can he be so little acquainted with the paganish theology, as not to apprehend a vast disagreement between this and that, and a much greater agreement between the paganish notion of the Deity, and his own.

For the questions which he supposes me to put, and makes me answer as he thinks fit, by misapplied passages of that discourse, I hope it will appear they were either prevented, or answered at another rate. At length he says, "The butt-end of this hypothesis," &c. I like not that phrase the worse for the author's sake, of whom it seems borrowed, whose memory greater things will make live, when we are forgot. But let him proceed—The butt-end of this hypothesis is the true strength of it. But that true strength he hath either had the hap not to observe, or taken the care not to represent, *i. e.* from what is so often inculcated in that discourse, the necessary existence of two *hypostases* of, and in the first, and of an omnimodous simplicity groundlessly supposed in the Divine Being, he hath kept himself at a wary cautious distance, when he might apprehend there was its strength. Therefore I cannot also but observe, that as he hath marked this hypothesis, with (most undue) ill characters; so he hath maimed it too, of what was most considerable belonging to it, that he might expose it by the former means, so as to make it need much defence; and that by the latter it might seem quite destitute of any defence at all.

And now when (not without some untoward disfigurations) it hath thus far escaped his hands, and is (in none of the best shapes) set up only to be beaten down; the argument he first attacks it with, is the inartificial one of authority. And yet his argument from this topic, is only negative, that the opinion he would confute wants authority, "that the inquirer was the first that ever dreamt of it, and that no learned divine of any persuasion will subscribe to it:" *q. d.* 'Tis false, and impossible to be true. The inquirer only proposing what he offered, as possible for ought we know, is not otherwise opposed than by asserting it to be impossible. This therefore he must say, or he saith nothing to the purpose. And why now is it impossible? Because no body said it before. So, then, was every thing that any man first said; but afterwards, by being often spoken, it might, it seems, at length become true. For any learned divines subscribing to it, I suppose he intends that in the strict sense. And so the inquirer never said he would subscribe it himself, otherwise than that his judgment did more incline to it, as liable to less exception than other ways of defending the doctrine of the trinity, or than denying it, which he thought least defensible of all.

But now supposing one should find learned divines of the same mind, (and perhaps some may be found more confident than he,) I would ask the considerator, whether he will therefore confess a trinity a possible thing? If not, he deals not fairly, to put the inquirer upon quoting authorities to no purpose; or that he would have them conclude him, by whom he will not be concluded himself.

He seems indeed himself to have forgot the question (with which afterwards he charges the inquirer) as it is set down, Whether a trinity in the Godhead be a possible thing? This was the question, not what John, or Thomas, or James such a one thought? But while he pretends to think no body else is of the inquirer's mind in the particular point he is now speaking to, *i. e.* the delicious society the divine *hypostases* are supposed to have with each other; give me leave freely to discourse this matter. I would know what it is, wherein he supposes the inquirer to have over-shot his mark; or of what makes he here so mighty a wonderment? It can be but one of these two things:—

either that there are three divine persons in the Godhead really distinct; or,—that they have (if there be) a delicious society or conversation with each other. Will he say the former is a singular opinion? or, that 'tis novel? Was there never a real trinitarian in the world before? Doth he not, in his own express words, sort the inquirer with one, whom he will not deny to be a learned divine, p. 43. of these his present considerations, col. 1. "The author of the 28 propositions, and Mr. H—w," as he calls the inquirer, "are honest men, and real trinitarians." By which former character he hath, I dare say, ten thousand times more gratified his ambition, than by calling him learned too. And I believe he will as little think this a novel opinion, as a singular one. Nor shall I thank him for acknowledging it to have been the opinion of the fathers, generally, not only *Ante Nicene* and *Nicene*, but *Post-Nicene* too, for some following ages, unto that of P. Lombard, so obvious it is to every one that will but more slightly search.

For my part, I will not except Justin Martyr himself, whom I the rather mention, both as he was one of the more ancient of the fathers, and as I may also call him, the father of the modalists; nor his notion even about the [b] Homoousian-Trinity, as he expressly styles it. For though it will require more time than I now intend to bestow, to give a distinct account of every passage throughout that discourse of his, yet his expression of the τρόποι ὑπάρξεως must not be so taken, as if it were to be torn away from its coherence, and from itself. When therefore he says the τὸ μὲν ἀγέννητον, καὶ γεννητόν, καὶ ἐκπορευτον, *the being unbegotten, begotten, and having proceeded*, are not the names of the essence, but (τρόποι ὑπάρξεως) *modes of subsistence;* he must mean they are not immediately names of the essence, but mediately they cannot but be so. For what do they modify? not nothing. When they are said to be modes of subsistence, what is it that subsists? We cannot pluck away these modes of subsistence from that which subsists, and whereof they are the modes. And what is that? You will say the μία οὐσία, the *one essence*, which he had mentioned before; and that one essence is, 'tis true, as perfectly one as 'tis possible; for what is of itself, and what are from that, to be with each other, *i. e.* that they are congenerous, as the sun and its rays, (according to that, Heb. i. 3. ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης, *the effulgency of glory*,) or as mind, and (where there is nothing else but substance) consubstantial thought or word. Therefore this oneness of essence must be taken in so large and extensive a sense, as that it may admit of these differences. For so he afterwards plainly speaks, if "ὁ μὲν, ἀγεννήτως ἔχει; *if the one* (the Father) hath his existence without being begotten, ὁ γεννητὸς, *another* (the Son) by being begotten, τὸ δὲ, ἐκπορευτὸς, but *that* (the Holy Ghost) by having proceeded, here it befalls us to behold differences (τὰ τῆς διαφορᾶς) or the things that import difference." There must be a sense, therefore, wherein he understood this essence to be most truly one; and a sense wherein he also understood it to have its differences, and those too not important ones, as being unbegotten, and being begotten, signify no light differences.

And in what latitude of sense he understood the oneness of essence, whereof he had before spoken, may be seen in his following explication, when what he said he would have be σαφέστερον, *more manifest;* he makes Adam's peculiar mode of subsistence to be that he was ὁ γεννητὸς, ἀλλὰ διαπλασθεὶς, *not begotten*, but *made* by God's own hand; but for them that were from him, he intimates theirs to be, they were begotten, not made. If then you inquire concerning the same essence that was common to him and them, you still find that man is the ὑποκείμενον, *the subject*, whether of formation, as to him, or of generation, as to them. And who apprehends not in what latitude of sense the human nature is one, which is common to Adam and his posterity? Though the Divine nature is incomparably more one, which is common to the Father, Son, and Spirit; as we have formerly insisted, and shall further show it cannot but be, in all necessary, and continually depending, emanations.

Yet I might, if there were need, again (as to this part) quote the considerator to himself. For I suppose he will not disown the considerations in 1693, in which, page 15. col. 1. are these words, "Dr. Cudworth, by a great number of very pertinent and home quotations, hath proved that his explication (I mean that part of it which makes the three persons to be so many distinct essences, or substances) is the doctrine of the principal if not of all the fathers, as well as of the Platonists." And 'tis added, "and I, for my part, do grant it." Upon the whole, then, I reckon that as to this first part, we stand clear not only to the rest of the world, but with this author himself, that to be a real trinitarian is not so unheard of a thing, or what no learned divine of any persuasion ever dreamt of before the inquirer. But now for the

Second part. The delicious society supposed to be between (or rather among) the three persons. Is this a dream? and so strange a one? Why, good Sir! can you suppose three persons, *i. e.* three intellectual subsistences, perfectly wise, holy, and good, coexisting with, inexisting in, one another to have no society? or that society not to be delicious? He says, How can it be? I say, How can it but be? Herein I am sure the inquirer hath far more company than in the former. For whether the three persons have all the same numerical essence, or three distinct, all agree they most delightfully converse. Will he pretend never to have read any that make love (as it were in tercurrent between the two first) the character of the third? In short, is it the thing he quarrels with as singular, or the word? At the thing, supposing three persons, he can have no quarrel, without quarrelling with the common sense of mankind. For the word, he hath more wit and knowledge of language than to pretend to find fault with that. For let him consult expositors (even the known critics) upon the mentioned place, Prov. viii. (whom, in so plain a case, I will not be at the pains to quote and transcribe,) and take notice whether none read those words *fui in deliciis*. Therefore I believe the considerator will be so ingenuous, as to perceive he hath, in this part of his discourse, grossly overshot, or undershot, or shot wide of, his own mark, if indeed he had any, or did not (letting his bolt fly too soon) shoot at rovers, before he had taken steady aim at any thing. In short, all this dust could be raised but with design only, because he could not enlighten his readers, to blind them.

But now, when he should come by solid argument to disprove the hypothesis, by showing that three individual divine natures, or essences, can possibly have no *nexus*, so as to become one entire divine nature, and, at the same time, (which this hypothesis supposes,) remain still three individual divine natures and essences, he thinks fit to leave it to another to do it for him, who, he says, if he cannot prove this, can prove nothing. And when we see that proof, it will be time enough to consider it.

In the meantime, I cannot here but note what I will neither, in charity, call forgery in the considerator, nor, in civility, ignorance, but it cannot be less than great oversight; his talk of *these three*, so united as to *become one*. The inquirer never spake (nor dreamt) of their *becoming one*, but of their being naturally, necessarily, and eternally so.

Then he comes to put the question, as (he says) it is between the inquirer and the Socinians. And he puts it thus: How three distinct, several, individual divine beings, essences, or substances, should remain three several individual substances, and yet, at the same time, be united into *one* divine substance called God? One would have thought, when he had so newly waived the former question, as wherein he meant not to be concerned, he should presently have put a new one, upon which he intended to engage himself. But we have the same over again, even with the same ill look of an equivalent phrase unto *becoming united into one*, to insinuate to his reader, as if his antagonist thought these three were *de novo* united, not *in* but *into* one. Which he knew must have a harsh sound, and as well knew it to be most repugnant to the inquirer's most declared sentiment. Nor will it be any presumption, if I take the liberty to set down the question according to the inquirer's mind, who hath as much reason to know it as he; and I am sure it will be more agreeable to the tenor of his discourse now referred to, "Whether the τὸ θεῖον, or the Divine Being, may not possibly, for ought we know, contain three natures, or essences, under the names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so far distinct, as

[b] Εκθ. πίς.

is necessary to found the distinct predications or attributes severally given them in the Holy Scriptures, and yet be eternally, necessarily, naturally, vitally so united, as notwithstanding that remaining distinction, to be one God." And let us now see what he hath to say, *first*, to the inquirer's illustrations of it, as possible: *secondly*, what he brings to prove it impossible.

As to the former part, he first falls upon what the inquirer hath said concerning the vegetative, sensitive, and intellective natures in ourselves. And upon this he insists so operously, as if the whole weight of the cause had been laid upon it, and seems to think the inquirer had forgot the question, when he mentioned it; because he says, those are only distinct faculties, not persons, or substances, (though persons were not in his question,) without ever taking any notice of the inquirer's waiving it, with these words, "that he would content himself with what was more obvious." But this is all art: to raise a mighty *posse*, and labour to seem to those that he believed would read what he writ only, not what the other did, most effectually to expunge what he saw was neglected, though not altogether useless; as we shall see anon.

In the meantime, it is observable how needlessly he slurs himself in this his first brisk onset. He says, "No man ever pretended—that the vegetative, sensitive, and intellective faculties (or powers) are so many distinct, individual persons, substances, or essences, we grant," &c.

What, did no man ever pretend that these three distinct natures, the vegetative, sensitive, intellective, were in man, three distinct substances, or souls, concurring by a certain subordination in him? What necessity was there, that to heighten his triumph, in the opinion of his credulous followers, he should, with so glorious a confidence, put on the vain and false show of having all the world on his side; and herein either dissemble his knowledge, or grossly bewray his ignorance in the mere history of philosophy; and most imprudently suppose all his readers as ignorant, as he would seem? What, did he never hear of an Averroes in the world? Doth he not know that physician and philosopher, and his followers, earnestly contended for what he says no man ever pretended to? Or that divers other commentators upon Aristotle, have some abetted, others as vehemently opposed, them in it? Not to insist also that some thought the *Intellectus Agens*, and *Patiens*, to be distinct substances, belonging to the nature of man, as others had also other conceits about the former? And if he look some hundreds of years back, as far as the time and extant work of Nemesius, bishop and philosopher, (as he writes himself,) of the nature of man, (who lived in the time of Gregory Nazianzen, as appears by an epistle of his writ to him, and prefixed to that little book of his,) he will find that author takes notice there were divers that took man to consist of mind, soul, and body, and that some did doubt[c] *whether the mind supervening to the soul as one to the other, did not make the latter intelligent.* And in several other parts of that work, easy, if it were necessary, to be recited, he speaks it as the judgment of some,[d] *that the unreasonable nature in man did exist by itself, as being of itself an unreasonable soul, not a part of the reasonable*;[e] *accounting it one of the greatest absurdities, that the unreasonable soul should be a part of that which is reasonable.*

And he carries us yet much further back, referring us to Plotinus, in whom any that will, may read much more to that purpose in many places. It matters not whether this opinion be true or false, but a great mistake (or misrepresentation) it was, to say no man ever pretended to it. And be that as it will; if all the readers will suspend their judgments, that a trinity in the Godhead is impossible, till the considerator shall have proved, by plain demonstration, the concurrence of three such spirits (a vegetative, sensitive, and intellective) vitally united in the constitution of man, is a thing simply impossible, I believe he will not, in haste, have many proselytes.

I, for my part, as his own eyes might have told him, laid no stress upon it; but only mentioned it in *transitu*, as I was going on to what is obvious, and in view to every man, the union between our soul and body. Nor was I solicitous to find this an exact parallel, as he fancies I was obliged to do. What if there be no exact parallel? Will any man of a sober mind, or that is master of his own thoughts, conclude every thing impossible in the uncreated Being, whereof there is not an exact parallel in the creation? If any man will stand upon this, come make an argument of it, let us see it in form, and try its strength.—Whatsoever hath not its exact parallel in the creation, is impossible in God, &c.—He will sooner prove himself ridiculous, than prove his point by such a medium.

'Tis enough for a sober man's purpose, in such a case as we are now considering, if we find such things actually are (or might as easily be, as what we see actually is) among the creatures, that are of as difficult conception, and explication, as what appears represented in the inquirer's hypothesis concerning a trinity. 'Tis trifling to attempt to give, or to ask, a parallel exact *per omnia*. It abundantly serves any reasonable purpose, if there be a parallel *quoad hoc, viz.* in respect of the facility or difficulty of conception. And though the vegetative, sensitive, and intellective natures be not so many distinct substances, a trinity is not less conceivable in the Divine Being, than three such natures, or natural powers, in the one human nature.

And whoever they be that will not simplify the Divine Being into nothing, (as the excellent author of the 28 propositions speaks,) must also acknowledge the most real perfections in the Divine Being, though not univocal, but infinitely transcendent to any thing in us. And are they no way distinct? Let any sober understanding judge, will the same nothing agree to them all? Is his knowledge, throughout, the same with his effective power? Then he must make himself. For who can doubt he knows himself? And is his will the self-same undistinguishable perfection, in him, with his knowledge? Then the purposes of his will must be to effect all that he can. For doth he not know all that he can do? And the complacencies of his will must be as much in what is evil, as good, even in the most odious turpitude of the vilest, and most immoral evils! For he knows both alike. I know what is commonly said of extrinsical denominations: but are such denominations true, or false? Have they any thing *in re* correspondent to them, or have they not? Then some distinction there must be of these perfections themselves. If so, how are they distinguished?

And there appears great reason, from God's own word, to conceive greater distinction of the three *hypostases* in his being, than of the attributes which are common to them, as is said, Sober Inquiry, page 151. In reference whereto, it is not improper or impertinent to mention such differences, as we find in our own being, though they be not distinct substances. Less distinction in ourselves may lead us to conceive the possibility of greater in him, in whom we are wont to apprehend nothing but substance.

What he adds concerning the union of soul and body in ourselves, (which he cannot deny to be distinct substances,) is, from a man of so good sense, so surprisingly strange, and remote from the purpose, that one would scarce think it from the same man; but that he left this part to some other of the club, and afterwards wrote on, himself, without reading it over; or this was with him (what we are all liable to) some drowsy interval.

For when he had himself recited as the inquirer's words, or sense, "If there be this union between two so contrary natures and substances, as the soul and body, why may there not be a like union between two or three created spirits?" he, without shadow of a pretence, feigns the inquirer again to have forgot the question, because soul and body are not both intelligent substances. And why, Sir, doth this argue him to have forgot the question? 'Tis as if he expected a man to be at the top of the stairs, as soon as he touched the first step. In a series of discourse, must the beginning touch the end, leaving out what is to come between, and connect both parts? What then serve mediums for? And so farewell to all reasonings, since nothing can be proved by itself. He expected, it seems, I should have proved "three intelligent natures might be united, because three intelligent natures might be united."

But say I (and so he repeats) if there be so near union

c Πoτερον προσελθων, ο νους τη Ψυχη ως αλλος αλλη νοεραν αυτην εποιησεν, &c. cap. 1.

d Καθ' εαυτην ειναι ως λογον Ψυχην.

e Των αγενοτατων, cap. 16.

f Enn. 6. lib. 7. cap. 5, 6, 7, &c.

between things of so contrary natures as soul and body, why not between two or three created spirits? The question is, as he now states it himself, why may not three intelligent substances be united? And hither he (with palpable violence) immediately refers, the mention of the union of soul and body; and, says he, "Why, Sir, are body and soul intelligent substances?" And, say I, But why, Sir, are not the three (supposed) created spirits intelligent substances? And now, thinks he, will my easy admiring readers, that read me only, and not him, say, What a baffle hath he given the inquirer! What an ignorant man is this Mr. ——, to talk of soul and body, as both intelligent substances! But if any of them happen upon the inquirer's book too, then must they say, How scurvily doth this matter turn upon himself! how inconsiderate a prevaricator was he that took upon him the present part of a considerer, so to represent him! And I myself would say, had I the opportunity of free discourse with him in a corner, (which because I have not, I say it here,) Sir, is this sincere writing? Is this the way to sift out truth? And I must further say, this looks like a man stung by the pungency of the present question. "If soul and body, things of so contrary natures, that is, of an intelligent and unintelligent nature, can be united into one (human) nature, why may not three created spirits, all intelligent natures, be as well united into some one thing? It appears you knew not what to say to it; and would fain seem to say something, when you really had nothing to say, and therefore so egregiously tergiversate, and feign yourself not to understand it, or that your antagonist did not understand himself. The inquirer's scope was manifest. Nothing was to be got by so grossly perverting it. Is there no argument but *à pari?* Might you not plainly see, he here argued *à fortiori?* If contrary natures might be so united, why not much rather like natures?

When you ask me this question, "Do not body and soul remain two substances, a bodily and a spiritual, notwithstanding their concurrence to the constitution of a man?" I answer, Yes. And I thank you, Sir, for this kind look towards my hypothesis. If they were not so, the mention of this union had no way served it. You know 'tis only union, with continuing distinction, that is for my purpose. I doubt you nodded a little, when you asked me that question; and I do *annuere*.

But when the discourse was only of a natural union, what, in the name of wonder, made you dream of a Christmas-pie? Had you writ it at the same time of year I am now writing, I should have wondered less. But either you had some particular, preternatural appetite to that sort of delicate; or you gave your fancy a random liberty, to make your pen write whatever came to your fingers' end, and that whirled you unaware into a pastry, and so, by mere chance, you came to have your finger in the pie. Or you thought to try whether this wild ramble might not issue as luckily for you, as Dr. Echard's jargon of words fortuitously put together (to ridicule Hobbes's fatal chain of thoughts) at length ending in a napkin; which was mightily for your turn, in your present case.

But upon the whole matter, when you let your mind so unwarily be *in patinis*, your cookery quite spoiled your philosophy. Otherwise, when you had newly read those words in the Sober Inquiry, as I find you had, page 138. "Waiving the many artificial unions of distinct things, that united, and continuing distinct, make one thing under one name, I shall only consider what is natural," you would never let it (your mind, I mean so fine a thing) be huddled up, and sopped, with meat, plums, sugar, wine, in a Christmas-pie; or have thought that the union of a human soul with a human body was like such a jumble as this. I believe when some among the ancients made use of this union of soul and body, (as I find they have,) to represent a very sacred, *viz.* the hypostatical one, they little thought it would be so debased; or that any thing would be said of it so extravagant as this. And, if we design doing any body good by writing, let us give over this way of talk, lest people think, what I remember Cicero once said of the Epicureans arguing, that they do not so much consider, as *sortiri*, *cast lots* what to say. But now 'tis like we may come to some closer discourse. We see what is said to the inquirer's elucidation of his hypothesis to represent it possible, which by mere oversight and incogitance (as I hope now appears) was too hastily pronounced an oversight, or incogitancy.

2. We are next to consider what he says to prove it impossible. And so far as I can apprehend the drift of the discourse, what he alleges will be reduced to these two heads of argument, *viz.*—that three such *hypostases* (or *subsistents*, as I have chosen to call them) can have no possible nexus, by which to be one God: (1.) Because they are all supposed intelligent: (2.) Because they can neither be said to be finite, nor infinite. He should not therefore have said the hypothesis was mere incogitance and oversight; for he knows I saw, and considered them both; (in the Sober Inquiry itself: the former, page 138, the latter, page 143, with page 149,) and thought them unconcluding then, as I still think. Nor do I find the considerer hath now added any strength to either of them. But I shall, since he is importune, go to the reconsideration of them with him. And,

(1.) As to the former, I cannot so much as imagine what should make him, confessing (which he could not help) the actual union of an intelligent and unintelligent being, deny the possible union of intelligent beings. He seems to apprehend many dangerous things in it, that if he cannot reason he may fright, a man out of it, and out of his wits too. It will infer associating, discoursing, solacing. But where lies the danger of all this? or to whom is it dangerous? He says it introduces three omniscient, almighty Beings, as I expressly call them, associating, &c. But he cites no place where, and I challenge him to name any persons among whom, I so expressly called them. He may indeed tell where I blamed him for representing some of his adversaries, as affirming three Almighties, and denying more than one; but that is not expressly calling them so myself. And he may know in time 'tis one thing expressly to call them so, and another to put him (as he is concerned) to disprove it.

Aye, but it will further infer tritheism. It will make three Gods. And if this be not to make three Gods, it can never be made appear that the pagans held more gods. Yes, if there be no natural, vital *nexus*, if they be united in one, of which the pagans never talked: or, if they be coordinate, not subordinate, as Dr. Cudworth speaks. And I add, if that subordination be, not arbitrary, but by necessary, natural, continual emanation of the second from the first, and of the third from both the other; so as that their goings forth may be truly from everlasting, as is said of the one, and may as well be conceived of another of them.

I would have the trinitarians be content with the reproach of falling in, *quoad hoc*, with Plato; and not envy their antagonists the honour of more closely following Mahomet. And, Sir, there is more paganism in denying this, and the divine revelation upon which it is grounded, than in supposing it.

No. But there can be no such *nexus*. Conversation, consociation, mutual harmony, agreement, and delectation—cannot be conceived, but between beings so distinct and diverse, that they can be one in no natural respect, but only in a civil, or economical. This is loud, and earnest. But why can there not? Setting aside noise and clamour, I want to know a reason, why intelligent beings may not be as intimately and naturally united with one another, as unintelligent and intelligent? and if so, why such union should spoil mutual conversation and delight? Perhaps his mind and mine might not do well together; for he cannot conceive, and I, for my part, cannot but conceive, that most perfect intelligent natures, vitally united, must have the most delightful conversation, harmony, and agreement together; and so much the more, by how much the more perfect they are, and by how much more perfect their union is.

Whereas then I expect a reason, why intelligent beings cannot be capable of natural union, and no other is given me, but because they are intelligent. And again, why such beings naturally united cannot converse, and no other is given me, but because they are naturally united, *i. e.* such things cannot be, because they cannot be. By how much the less such reasons have to convince, they have the more to confirm me, that the hypothesis I have proposed is not

capable of being disproved. And for my increased confidence I must profess myself so far beholden to the considerator.

This, in the mean time, I do here declare, that I see not so much as the shadow of a reason from him, why three spiritual or intelligent beings cannot be naturally and vitally united with each other, with continuing distinction, so as to be really and truly one thing. If they cannot, I would know why? *i. e.* Why they cannot as well, or much rather than the soul and body, so as to be one entire man. If they can, such a created union is acknowledged possible; which is all that part of our discourse contends for. And 'tis enough for our present purpose; for this will be a union of ὁμοούσια, *i. e.* of things of the same nature, the soul and body are ἑτερούσια, *i. e.* things of very different natures. And it sufficiently prepared our way, as was intended, to advance further, and add,

That if such a created or made union be possible, it cannot be understood why a like uncreated or unmade union should be thought impossible.

And if it be possible, the noisy clamour, that a trinity in the Godhead is impossible, or that it will infer tritheism, must cease, and be hushed into everlasting silence. Or if it shall still be resolved to be kept up, to carry on the begun humour, can only serve to fright children, or unthinking people; but can never be made articulate enough, to have any signification with men of sense. For when the Father is acknowledged on all hands to be the original, or fountain-being, existing necessarily and eternally of himself; the Son existing by eternal promanation necessarily of, and from, and in the Father; the Holy Ghost of and in them both; these, because they all exist necessarily, cannot but be each of them God, and, because they exist in necessary, natural, eternal union, cannot but be one God.

And he that shall attempt to make tritheism of this, will sooner prove himself not a third part of a wise man, than from hence prove three Gods. We may truly and fitly say, the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God; but that form of speech, the Father is a God, the Son is a God, the Holy Ghost is a God, I think unjustifiable. The former way of speaking well agrees with the *homo-ousiotes* of the Deity, the substance whereof is congenerous. You may fitly say of three drops of the same water, they are each of them water. But if you should say they are each of them a water, one would understand you to mean they were all drops of so many different sorts of water. I do upon the whole judge the substance or essence of the three *hypostases* to be as perfectly *one*, as can possibly consist with the emanation of some from other of them. But now next,

(2.) In his way to his second topic of argumentation, he is guilty of a strange sort of omission, *i. e.* he twice over says he will omit, what he greatly insists upon, as a mighty matter, that this (meaning the inquirer's hypothesis) is heresy among those of his own party, whether they be the nominal or the real trinitarians; who all agree, that each of the divine persons is perfect God, in the most adequate and perfect sense; and this too, as such person is considered sejunctly, or, as the Athanasian creed speaks, by himself, &c.

To this I only say, in the first place, that if this weigh any thing, it ought in reason to be as heavy upon him, as me; for I believe the same people that will call this account of the trinity heresy, will call his denial of it heresy much more. But if he be not concerned at that, I am the more obliged to him, that he hath a kinder concern for me than himself. And if he really have, let it ease his mind to know, that let the opinion be heresy never so much, I, for my part, am however resolved to be no heretic, as he and they may well enough see, by the whole tenor of that discourse.

But yet I humbly crave leave to differ from him in this, as well as in greater matters. I am apt enough, indeed, to think that the *nominal* trinitarians will judge the opinion of the *real* trinitarians to want truth; and the *real* will, perhaps, more truly judge *theirs* to want sense. But neither the one nor the other will say that each of the divine persons is perfect God, in the most adequate and perfect sense. For both cannot but agree that God, in the most adequate and perfect sense, includes Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; but they will none of them say that each, or any, of the persons is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And I am very confident, he that shall so represent them, will betray them by it into such inconveniences, and so much against their mind and intent, that if ever they did trust him as I believe they never did this considerator, to express their sense for them, they never will do it more. As for Athanasius himself, whose creed he mentions, though he often speaks of an equality of the persons in point of Godhead: (tom. 2. p. 576.) yet he most expressly excepts the differences (which I take to be very important) of being unbegotten, begotten, and proceeding. And, which is a difference with a witness, in his questions and answers, he asks, "How many causes are there in God?" (p. 11. πόσα αἴτια,) and answers, "one only, and that is the Father." And then asks, (Q. 12. πόσα αἰτιατά) "How many effects, or things caused?" And answers, "two, the Son and the Spirit." And adds, "the Father is called a cause, because he begets the Son, and sends out the Spirit; the Son and Spirit are said to be caused, because the Son is begotten, and doth not beget; the Spirit is sent forth, and doth not send." Now can he be thought all this while to mean an absolute equality? And whereas he uses the term μοναδικῶς, which our author renders *sejunctly*, or *by himself*, that he may make it seem opposite to what is said by the inquirer, page 156. I, for my part, say, as Athanasius doth, that each of these persons is μοναδικῶς, *singly God*, and Lord; but I say not, as he doth not, (and he denies what the Sober Inquiry denies, in the mentioned place,) "that any one of the persons sejunctly, is all that is signified by the name of God;" which words this author slily leaves out, for what purpose he best knows. But his purpose, be it what it will, can no longer be served by it, than till the reader shall take the pains to cast back his eye upon the Sober Inquiry, vide page 141. And I must here put the considerator in mind of what I will not suppose him ignorant, but inadvertent only, at this time; That one may be sejoined or abstracted from another two ways, or by a twofold abstraction, precisive or negative: that we may truly say of the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, that the one of them is or is not God, abstracting from both the other, accordingly as you differently abstract. If you abstract any one of the persons from both the other by precisive abstraction, and each of them is God or Lord, μοναδικῶς or singly considered; but if by negative abstraction, you sever any one from the other, so as to say the one is God, and not the other, or any one is all that is signified by the name of God, I deny it, as before I did; for so you would exclude the other two the Godhead; which is but what was expressly enough said, Sober Inquiry, page 141. The Father is God, but not excluding the Son and the Holy Ghost; the Son is God, but not excluding—&c.

And if (as this author quotes) we are compelled by the Christian verity so to speak, I wonder it should not compel him, as it is Christian verity, or at least as it is verity, as well as the rest of Christians, or mankind. Why hath he only the privilege of exemption from being compelled by truth? Athanasius's word is ἀναγκαζόμεθα, *we are necessitated*; and if the considerator's own translation grieve him, he might relieve himself by considering that all necessity is not compulsive. And because he hath brought me to Athanasius, I shall take the occasion to say, I cannot apprehend him to have any sentiment contrary to this hypothesis. His business was against the Arians, or the Arionanites (as he often called them, as symbolizing also with Manes.) And because with them the controversy was, "whether the Son and Spirit were creatures?" in opposition hereto he constantly asserts their consubstantiality with the Father, never intending (for aught that appears) that their being was numerically the same with his; but of the same kind, uncreated, coessential, coeternal with his own. For so he expressly speaks in his [g] *other or additional questions*, *i. e.* asking (quest. 6.) "How many essences πόσας οὐσίας, *i. e.* how many sorts of essence (as the answer will direct us to understand it) do you acknowledge in God?"

[g] Quæstiones aliæ.

The answer is, I say, "one essence, one nature, one form," (μορφὴν,) and adds, "one kind," (ἓν γένος,) which sufficiently expounds all the rest. He acknowledged no different kinds of essence or nature in the Godhead, but that one only, which was eternal and uncreated; agreeably to what he elsewhere says[h] against the followers of Sabellius. "'Tis impossible things not eternal beings, not partaking Godhead, should be ranked or put in the same order with the Godhead." Afterwards speaking of the Father and the Son, he says, τοιοῦτος ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς κακεῖνος, the *one* is such (not the same) as the *other*, the other such as he. And that the Son was not to be conceived under another species, (καθ' ἕτερον εἶδος,) not under a strange and foreign character, (ξένον χαρακτῆρα,) but was God as the Father. And I appeal to any man's understanding and conscience, if that great author believed a numerical sameness of essence, common to the three persons, what should make him blame the Sabellians for[i] making the Son μουσούσιον, not ὁμοούσιον, when by the latter, in that case, he must mean the same thing as by the former?

In the forecited questions, he expressly says we were to acknowledge in the Deity τρια ἄτομα, *three individuals*. Answer to question 7. *ubi prius*. And elsewhere he as distinctly asserts τρία πράγματα, *three things*. And what could he mean by three things, not three deities, (as he often inculcates,) but he must certainly mean three entities, three essences; for by three things, he could not possibly mean three non-entities, or three nothings. His great care plainly was to assert the true Deity of the Son and Spirit, or their pre-eternity, or that it could never be said (ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν) there was a time when they were not, which he inculcates in a hundred places, still insisting that one deity, one essence was common to them, but still with distinction; and as warmly inveighs against Sabellius and P. Samosatensis, as against Arius, every whit.

And that which puts his meaning quite out of doubt,[k] speaking how the Father, Son, and Spirit, though of one and the same sort of essence, are three *hypostases*, he plainly says the nature wherein they partake is so one, as the human nature is one in all men. We men, saith he, consisting of a body and a soul, are all μίας φύσεως, καὶ οὐσίας, *of one nature and substance, or essence*; but we are many *hypostases*. And to the same purpose (Dial. 2. de Trinitate) his *anomœos* comparing the Father, Son, and Spirit, to a bishop, presbyter, and deacon, he brings in the orthodox saying, they have all the same nature, being each of them man; as an angel, a man, and a horse, have different natures.

In the mean time, because men are not inseparably and vitally united with one another, as the Divine Persons are, and cannot but be, by reason of the necessary, eternal, perpetual emanation of the two latter from the first, they cannot admit to be called one man, as the three persons in the Godhead are, and cannot but be one God. Insomuch as these three Divine Persons partake real Godhead (as existing necessarily each of them) they are each truly God; but because they partake it in necessary, eternal, vital union; and so that the first is the *radix*, the second perpetually springing from the first, and the third from both the other, they are therefore together one God as branches, though really distinct from each other, and the root, are altogether notwithstanding but one tree, and all *homoousial*, or *consubstantial* to one another: which is an illustration familiar with the ancients. And if there be any, now-a-days, that will call this heresy, (though as I said, I will be no heretic however,) yet if I must make a choice, I had rather be a heretic with the Ante-Nicene and Nicene fathers, and Post Nicene, for ought appears to the contrary, through some following centuries, than be reputed orthodox with P. Lombard, &c. whom a German divine, not of meanest account, calls "one of the four evangelists of antichrist."

But having now done with what he said he would omit, but did not, (though he might to every whit as good purpose,) we come to what he overlooks not, because (he intimates) he cannot. And let us see whether he looks into it, to any better purpose than if he had quite overlooked it. He is indeed the more excusable that he overlooks it not, because (he says) he could not. In that case there is no remedy. Nor do I see how he well could, when the sober inquirer had once and again so directly put it in his view, and, as was said, objected it to himself. But he thinks, however, to make an irrefragable battering ram of it, wherewith to shiver this doctrine of the trinity all to pieces; and he brings it into play with the two horns before mentioned. The Father, he says, for instance, is either infinite in his substance, his wisdom, his power, his goodness, or he is not. With the like pompous apparatus, and even in the same terms,[l] I find a series of argumentation is by a noted sceptic adorned, and set forth against the being of any God at all. *If there be any Divine Being, 'tis either finite or infinite, &c.* And he reasons upon each head, as the matter could admit, and probably thought as well of the performance as our author doth of his.

But let us see how much to the purpose our author uses it in the present case. The inquirer had represented three really distinct subsistents in the Godhead as possible, for ought we know, not presuming to determine herein, this way or that, beyond what is plain in itself, or plainly revealed. And so still he thinks it may be, for ought he knows; for he professes not to know any thing to the contrary. Yes, saith the considerator, but I do. No doubt, if any man. But say I, How know you? I know, saith he, they can neither be finite nor infinite, therefore there can be no such thing at all. But, say I, do you know what infinite is, or can you comprehend it?[m] Yes, very well, says he, for I have an infinite, all-comprehending mind. What a cyclopic understanding is this! Nay, and he pretends he can comprehend the very being of God (otherwise all religion must cease) after he had granted, "we (including himself) cannot comprehend the least spire of grass." And yet that being of God is nothing else with him, but existence, (*i. e.* not to be nothing,) which he there vafrously inserts, but very imprudently; for every one sees he said it only to avoid the purpose he was to speak to, and so said it not to any present good purpose at all; as if it had been the bishop's word, and all one with God's being. 'Tis true that his being includes his existence: but hath he therefore a clear, distinct, and adequate conception what God is, because he, indistinctly, conceives a being, vulgarly signified by the name of God, doth exist? Bring the matter to creatures, and because he knows, as he may by the sight of his eye, that such a creature exists, doth he therefore understand its nature? Existence is to be *extra causas*, and this is common to all creatures; as to be necessarily, and without a cause, is peculiar to God. If therefore existence and their being be all one, all creatures are the same, and differ not from one another; for to be *extra causas* is that wherein they all agree. And extend it further, as existence is to be, *in rerum natura*, abstracting from being caused, or uncaused; and so God and creatures will be all one. And see whether this will not make all religion cease too?

But if he say, though existence abstractly taken distinguishes not God from creatures; yet his existence doth distinguish him. Very true; but that leads us back to the consideration of his being, of what sort that is. Which, therefore, if he had pleased, he might as well have let stand before as it was; and might have considered that existence, and that which doth exist, are not of the same import. Or that it is not all one, to say that God doth exist, and what he is that doth exist.

But it will be worth the while to examine a little further this author's comprehension of infinites. He says it is to have a clear, distinct, and adequate conception of them; so he comprehends the infinite attributes of God. His eternity, *i. e.* that duration by which he is without all beginning and end. This tells us what it is not. But doth it tell us what it is? *q. d.* An infinite duration is a boundless duration: a grammatical definition! or rather a mere translation of Latin into English. And so he might teach a mere Latinist what boundless is, by turning the English back again into Latin. And greatly hath he edified his disciple! As much as he should, without such change of language, by saying invasion is invasion. And doth he

h Contra Sabellii Gregales.
i Εκθ. πιστ. Tom. 1. p. 941. Edit. Paris.
k Tractat. de Definitionibus, Tom. 2. 45. ubi. vid. plura.

l ει εστι τι θειον, ητοι πεπερασμενον ἡ απειρον, &c. Sext. Empir. adversus Mathematicos, Lib. 8.
m Considerations on the Lord Bishop of Worcester's Sermon, p. 7, 8.

give any better account of infinite wisdom and power? Are his conceptions of them clear and distinct? 'Tis possible to know much, and not be very wise. I do not think *that* therefore, which he gives, a very good account of wisdom. Again, knowing is doing somewhat. He speaks not now of making this or that, but more generally of doing any thing. Nor doth any one know any thing, but what he can know. Therefore his wisdom is power; for so is an ability to know, power, as truly as an ability to do any thing else. Here is confusion, therefore, instead of distinction. And to the comprehending any thing, I should think it as requisite a man's conception be true as distinct. Now when he pretends to have distinct conceptions of God's infinite wisdom and power, and if also his conceptions be true, those infinite attributes are distinct. I am sure he comprehends them not, if, whereas, he clearly conceives them distinct, they are not so. But if they are distinct, they are distinct, what? Substances? or accidents? If the former, according to him, distinct divine substances must be distinct Gods. If the latter, let him weather the difficulties as he can of admitting accidents in the Divine Being. Either way, he must as little pretend to believe an omnimodous simplicity there, as the inquirer. But would he then have him give better and fuller conceptions of these infinite attributes, or rather of the infinity of them, which is his present business? No, no, that is none of the inquirer's part. He pretends not to comprehend infiniteness. 'Tis enough for *one*, among mortals, to offer at that *ingens ausum, so great a thing!*

When again he says his conception of the infinite divine wisdom, power, &c. is adequate, telling us they are those properties whereby God knows, and can do, whatsoever implies not a contradiction to be known, and done. I ask, but doth he comprehend in his mind all those things which it implies not a contradiction for him to know and do? If not, what is become of his adequate conception? He may so comprehend all that the most learned book contains, because he knows the title, or something of its cover; and he hath a very adequate conception of all that is contained in the universe, because he has some general notion of what is signified by the word world. Let him then pretend as long as he please to comprehend infiniteness, no sober man will believe him, and the less because he pretends it. If he put his mind upon the trial, and deal justly and truly when he hath tried, I would ask him, let him put the notion of infiniteness upon what he pleases, space, for instance, whether, as he thinks away any whatsoever bounds of it, new ones do not immediately succeed; and let him think away those, whether still he doth not presently conceive new? Yes, but he can divert and think no more of it, *i. e.* he can think what infinite is, by not thinking! And yet, if he did understand infinites never so well, it would be no small spite to him if a man did but assert the infiniteness of one of the persons, (the Father,) and only ἐπέχειν as to the other two, as knowing their intimate union with him, makes his wisdom, power, &c. as truly theirs, as if it first resided in themselves; his argument is quite undone by it to all intents and purposes.

But I shall, however, further state and weigh this case of—knowing, or not knowing, three such hypostases cannot be infinite; and,

1. Show what might cast a thinking man upon supposing they may be all infinite for ought one knows:

2. Then consider the difficulty that is in it.

1. As to the former. That the Father virtually (or eminently rather) comprehends all being, created and uncreated, there is no doubt. Nor again, that what is from him, by perpetual, natural, necessary emanation, cannot but be *homoousial* to himself, the Athanasian differences only supposed, of being unbegotten, and begotten, &c. But how to understand these is the difficulty; *i. e.* how the same numerical nature is both begotten and not begotten; nor will I determine it. Let them do it that can better. I for my part, as I have said, assert nothing in this matter, only have proposed to be considered what may be thought possible herein.

But if any would set themselves to consider this matter, I would have them take the difficulty they are to consider, entirely, and as it truly is in itself; that they may not be short in their reckoning. And to that purpose to bethink themselves what is the proper character (as Athanasius, and before him Justin Martyr, phrase it) or modus of the Son (for instance) that 'tis to be begotten. This, methinks, should bear very hard upon the mere modalists, who hereupon must say, that to be begotten is the only thing begotten; and so, consequently, that to be begotten, is the thing that is peculiarly said to be incarnate, and that suffered, &c. For they must assign that which distinguishes the Son from the Father, otherwise they will make the Father be begotten, which is somewhat harder than to be *Patripassians*, or to make him to have suffered.

But it must also be upon the matter even the same difficulty, to say, "the same numerical nature, with the modus, is begotten." For then the same numerical nature must still be both unbegotten, and begotten, which is very hard. And if they reply, Yes, but under a distinct *modus:* Well; but what is that distinct *modus?* And when they find it is but to be begotten, they must be hugely abashed, as one of less deep thought than they would think. For so, the nature being common both to the Father and the Son, all that is peculiar to the begotten from the begetter, will still be but to be begotten; *i. e.* when the question is asked, What only is begotten? the answer will be but as above, To be begotten. It hath hitherto, therefore, been only inquired, whether it will not seem easier to suppose each subsistent to have its own singular nature, though *homoousial*, as the two latter being by emanation from the first, it cannot but be? Which hath been often inculcated, and is plain in itself. Mere arbitrary productions may be very diverse from their original; but purely natural, especially emanative, cannot be so. And then the only considerable difficulty which remains is this now before us, *viz.* the finiteness or infiniteness, of these three *hypostases.* 'Tis plain they cannot all be finite. But here our present adversary places his principal pains and labour, to prove, what he knows nobody will deny, that they cannot be so. And hence he carries away glorious trophies, that three, or three thousand finites, will never make one infinite.—*Spolia ampla.*——

But how knows he they are not all infinite? That, in short, which he hath here to say, is but this, and can be no more than this, till his thoughts have run through and compassed the never-utmost range of infiniteness, *viz.* That he knows they are not he knows not what! But how can he soberly say that? How can he either affirm or deny of another what he doth not understand? Is this his demonstration of the impossibility of a trinity in the Godhead? Suppose the Father infinite, cannot the other two be infinite also, for ought he knows? How doth he know they cannot? By the same medium, by which he knows it, he may make other mortals know it too, if he think fit to communicate it. Which, from so mighty confidence, especially when he pretends it to be so easy, I have hitherto expected, but in vain. Is it because the first is infinite, therefore the two other cannot be so? I am sure he ought not to say so, whatever others may, or whatsoever the truth of the thing is, (which we shall inquire into by and by,) for he hath over and over acknowledged more infinites than one; as when he ascribes infinite comprehension to the mind of man, (as hath been noted,) page 8. of these Considerations. He doth not indeed say the mind is simply in itself infinite, but it is so in respect of its comprehension, which comprehension must therefore be infinite. How agreeable or consistent these terms are, the infinite comprehension of a finite mind, we are not to consider; let him take care for that, who can easily make light of such trivial difficulties as these. But in the meantime this infinite comprehension is an infinite something, not an infinite nothing; and then so many minds, so many comprehensions, and so many infinites. No doubt he includes his own mind; and 'tis possible he may think some other minds as comprehensive as his own. And ought not to think it impossible, supposing an uncreated eternal Word, and Spirit, in the Deity, that they may be infinite, as well as the comprehension of his own and some other minds. [n] Besides what he seems to grant of infinite guilts, and punishments due, though he doth not grant the Sacrifice of Christ to be an equivalent for them. All show he thinks there may be many infinites, and even in the same kind.

n These Considerations, p. 31, 32.

But though to him, to whom it is not easy to guess what would be difficult, this would seem a very vincible difficulty; it is of much greater importance, that we may do right to truth, to consider it as it is in itself. And I acknowledge it (as I have said over and over) to be in itself a great difficulty, as all sober men have been wont to do, that have had any occasion to employ their thoughts that way.

But my part herein hath less of difficulty in it; which is only to expect, and examine, what another will attempt to prove from this topic, not to assert any thing myself. My opponent takes upon him boldly to pronounce, "there cannot be three distinct *hypostases* in the Deity." Why? say I. Because, saith he, that will suppose each of them infinite, which cannot be. I say, Why can it not be? He perhaps may tell me, If any one be infinite, nothing can be added thereto, or be without its compass, much less can there be another infinite added to the former. I only now say, you talk confidently in the dark, you know not what: and so as to involve yourself in contradictions, do what you can:

1. In saying nothing can be added to what is infinite.

2. In pretending to know, if any thing can be added, how much or how little can.

1. In saying nothing can be added to, or be without the compass of, what is infinite. For then there could be no creation, which I cannot doubt him to grant. Before there was any, was there not an infinitude of being in the eternal Godhead? And hath the creation nothing in it of real being? Or will you say the being of the creature is the being of God? I know what may be said (and is elsewhere said) to this, and 'twill better serve my purpose than his.

2. In pretending to know what can or cannot be added. Or that, in the way of necessary eternal emanation, there cannot be an infinite addition; though not in the way of voluntary, or arbitrary and temporary, production. The reason of the difference is too obvious to need elucidation to them that can consider. But for your part (I must tell my antagonist) you have concluded yourself, even as to that which carries the greatest appearance of impossibility: come off as you can. You say,[o] "a body of an inch square, is not only not infinite in extension, but is a very small body; yet it hath this infinite power, to be divisible to infinity." So, I suppose you must say of half that inch, or a quarter, or the thousandth part of it, much more of two, or twenty, or a thousand inches. You say, indeed, "this body itself is not infinite." Nor will I insist upon the trite and common objection against you: "How can any thing be divisible into parts which it hath not in it?" Which yet men have not talked away, by talking it often over. Still *hæret lateri*. —Nor of an infinite power's being lodged in a finite (and so minute a) subject. But, in the meantime, here are infinites upon infinites, an infinite power upon an infinite power, multiplied infinitely; and still these infinite powers greater and less than other, as either the inch is augmented or diminished. And he saith,[p] "the mind of man hath the property of infinite or eternal duration." Therefore so many minds, so many infinities. And he must suppose the infinite duration of some minds to be greater than of others, unless he think his own mind to be as old as Adam's; or do not only hold their pre-existence, but that they were all created in the same moment. Which if he do, I am sure he can never prove. And so, for ought he knows, there may not only be many infinites, but one greater than another.

What therefore exceeds all limits that are assignable, or any way conceivable by us, as we are sure the Divine Being doth, it is impossible for us to know what differences that vast infinitude contains. And we shall, therefore, but talk at random, and with much more presumption than knowledge, when we take upon us to pronounce it impossible there should be three infinite *hypostases* in the Godhead. Especially considering that most intimate vital union that they are supposed to have each with other, in respect whereof, the Son is said to be ἐν τῷ πατρί, existing in the Father (as Athanasius's phrase is) agreeably to the language of Scripture, John xiv. 11. and elsewhere. And which, by parity of reason, is to be conceived of the Holy Ghost too, who is also said to search all things, even the deep things of God, I Cor. ii. 10. In respect of which union, and the ἐμπεριχώρησις, which may thence be collected, whatever of real perfection, wisdom, power, goodness, &c. is in any one, is each one's as truly as any one's, all being originally in the Father, as the first and everliving Fountain of all. As was said, Sober Inquiry, p. 139.

But whereas the considerator urges, "If the Father be infinite in his substance, in his wisdom, his power, his goodness, he is God in the most adequate and perfect sense of the word." I say, Well, and what then? If therefore he mean the Son and the Holy Ghost must be excluded the Godhead, let him prove his consequence if he can. And he may find the answer to it, Sober Inquiry, page 141. I shall not transcribe, nor love, when I have writ a book, to write it over again. His notion may fit pagans well enough, or those who are not otherwise taught. Christians are directed to understand that the Deity includes Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Their equality I acknowledge with the mentioned Athanasian exception; notwithstanding which, that they equally communicate in the most characteristic difference, of the Deity, from all creatures, *viz.* necessity of existence, is conceivable enough.

To sum up all, the considerator I understand, even by the whole management of his discourse, and especially by the conclusion of that part wherein the inquirer is concerned, to have most entirely given up this cause, as ever did man. The inquirer's only undertaking was to maintain "the possibility of a trinity in the Godhead," in opposition to his former daring assertion, of its being impossible, and nonsense.

He now, in conclusion, says, the inquirer saw there must be a *nexus*; intimating, if there can, that he hath gained his point; but, 'tis added, "he durst not venture to say what it was." To which I must say,

That this is most uncautiously said; I will not say, deceitfully, though I know 'tis said untruly; and he might have known (or remembered) too, that he, (the inquirer) often spoke of it, as a necessary, natural, eternal, vital, and most intimate union. He further says, he only explains it by the union of soul and body. Which again,

1. Is so great a misrepresentation, that I wonder he would say it here, when he himself but two or three pages off recites as the inquirer's words, "If God could unite into one, two such contrary natures, let any man give me a reason why he might not (much more) first make, and then unite two, and if two, why not three, spirits," &c. Is this only to explain it by the union of soul and body?

But by the way, that "first make, and then unite," was none of the inquirer's, but appears thrust in to make what was manifestly possible, seem impossible. *Sic notus*—let two substances be created entire, with no natural propension to each other, they are capable of no natural union, without change of their natures. Who sees not, it were a contradiction to suppose them still the same, and not the same? But suppose them created with mutual aptitudes to union, and united, what should hinder but they may continue united, without being confounded?

2. And 'tis said impertinently, as well as untruly; for what if he had not explained it at all, is it therefore impossible, which it belonged to him to prove, or he did nothing; and he hath done nothing towards it. I have asked him before, and now I put it again seriously to him, whether he do in his conscience believe this a good argument: "such a union, *i. e.* natural, necessary, &c. hath no pattern or parallel in the creation; therefore it is impossible in the nature of God?"

For what he adds, "That the soul and body in a man are not united into one substance or essence, nor possibly can be;" the cause indeed depends not on it, but lies remote from it. Methinks however it is very feat, and shows him pinched, that he can be brought to this! Hath a man no substance? Is he a shadow? Or hath he no essence? Is he a non-entity? or is his essence a body? Then a body is a man. Or his essence a spirit? Then, a spirit is a man. If he say either of these, I wish he would tell us the quantity of those propositions, that we may know whether he means that every body is a man, or every spirit is a man? I am sure where the essence is, there must be

o Considerations, page 8.

p Considerations, p. 8.

the *essentiatum*. Or whether soul and body united, make nothing different from either, or both disunited? Or whether a man be only such a thing as a pie? Or why might not a pudding serve as well, if made up of several ingredients? He hath greatly indeed obliged mankind for such an honour done them! If indeed the cause depended on it, he would have good store of philosophers to confute, and all that have any concern for their own kind, before he could disprove the possibility of the supposed union in the Deity; and you have nothing for it but his bare word, which (at least, without the addition of his name) will not do the business. Nor, if he could also bring us a demonstration against the union of soul and body, can he thereby prove such a union as we suppose in the Godhead impossible. The case is quite another. The union of the soul and body was never by me called essential; for I well know, if they were essentially united, in the strict sense, they could never be disunited. But 'tis commonly called a substantial union, and I called it natural in respect of the principle, *nature*, in contradistinction to *art*. As for the supposed union we speak of in the Deity, that, being necessary, original, eternal, it must be essential, or none: but with such distinction as before was supposed. For it was union, not identity, that was meant, which union, with such distinction, till they be proved impossible, the inquirer's cause is untouched. And is certainly to any such purpose, not in the least touched by the considerator. Whether there be any such union that may admit to be called essential among the creatures, doth neither make nor mar. We have never said there was, nor doth the stress of the cause lie upon it.

I find indeed an ingenious, merry gentleman, animadverts upon a postscript writ against the Sober Inquiry, and upon a letter in answer to it, who at a venture calls all essential union, essential contradiction, and substantial nonsense. Who this is, I will not pretend to guess, only I guess him not to be the same with the considerator, for this, besides other reasons, that he calls the author of the considerations a great man; and I scarce think he would call himself so. His wit and sportful humour, I should have liked better in a less serious affair. For *this* he boldly pronounces, in immediate reference to the trinity itself, (that the world might know he hath a confidence, at least equal to his wit,) I can easily abstain from asserting that any created unions are to be called strictly essential, because then they must be simply indissoluble. And I see not but whatsoever things the Creator hath united, he may disunite, if he be so pleased. Yet one might have expected this author to have been a little more civil to him whom he styles the late famous Dr. More, who hath published to the world his express sentiments in this matter, that created spirits have real amplitude, made up of indiscerptible parts, essentially united, so as not to be separable, without annihilation of the whole. One would think he should not have treated him so, as to make his essential union substantial nonsense. But there are those left in the world, who have that veneration for the Doctor, as to think it no indecent rudeness to this gentleman, not to put his judgment in the balance against the Doctor's, or to distinguish between his calling it nonsense, and proving it so.

But if any wonder that they who think there is no such thing as an essential union among creatures, do yet think there may be in the uncreated Being, they will show themselves mighty wise in their wonder, *i. e.* in wondering that the creatures are not God. And if they further hereupon inquire, why we will then make use of unions not essential, among creatures, to illustrate that which is supposed essential in the uncreated being, and expect very particular, distinct accounts of every thing so represented; they will show themselves as wise in their expectations, *i. e.* that they think nothing can serve to illustrate, unless it be like in all respects.

That question still returns. Is every thing to be judged by any man of sense impossible in God, whereof he hath not given distinct and explicit accounts, and illustrations from somewhat in the creatures? And another will be added, Is there any thing originally in God, not essential to him? But when the world is so full of instances of substantial unions, without confusion, or identification, that he cannot so much as name me a created substance, that he can be sure exists absolutely simple, I am sure it can be no contradiction to suppose that there may be uncreated, necessary, eternal union, without confusion or identification; and that it would be, as he phrases it, essential contradiction, or substantial nonsense, to say that things united necessarily (though distinct) can possibly ever admit of separation. And if our modern anti-trinitarians (for I will not call them by the inept name of unitarians, which as rightfully belongs to them whose adversaries they are pleased to be, as to themselves, and therefore cannot distinguish the one from the other) would allow it to be their method to understand the doctrine of the orthodox ancients, before they decry and hoot at it, they would find that as they allow sufficient distinction of the sacred *hypostases*; so the union they assert, is not such as identifies them, but only signifies them to be inseparable. So speaks Athanasius himself, "we think not, as the Sabellians, that the Son is of one and the same essence with the Father, but consubstantial—nor do we assert[p] three *hypostases* separated as with men, bodily, lest with the Gentiles, we should admit polytheism," &c.

So do Liberius and he agree in sentiment. The one says,[r] "The Son is not separated from the Father's hypostasis." The other,[s] "We hold not the Son divided from the Father," &c.

And upon the most impartial, faithful, and diligent search and consideration, I do solemnly declare there needed not more of rationality or intelligibleness in this doctrine, to keep it from being ridiculed, as contradictious, and nonsense; but only less prejudice, and more modesty, in the opposers of it, with more reverence of the Divine Majesty, upon this (obvious) apprehension, that if it be true, it must be sacred, divine truth.

This author would fain have me with him to the playhouse, whither really I have no leisure to accompany him, nor much temptation; for I perceive it hath filled his mind with ideas not useful to my purpose; nor, I think, to any good one of his own. If there he learned to jest away that which should be the best part of himself; and of which Socrates, dying, told his friends it would be gone far enough out of their hands, and for that which was left behind, they might bury, or do with it what they pleased; if there he was taught to ridicule the holy apostle's distinction of an ὁ ἔσω, and ὁ ἔξω, *an inner and an outer man*; and when he hath thrown the former of these out of his notion of himself; for my part, I must think of that which is left, that the silly Indian is the less silly creature of the two.

And besides as he is too much given to play, to mind any thing of serious discourse, so I find he is not throughout honest in his play neither; but that even when he pretends to sit out, and be but a spectator, only taking care that there be fair play, he falls in himself, and plays booty. Nor do I find he hath any thing of argument in his discourse, which hath not been considered already in the discourse I have had with the considerator. I therefore take leave of them both together, and of you too, Sir, being in great sincerity,

Your affectionate humble servant,
The Inquirer.

p Μεμερισμενος Εκθ. πιϛ. r Liber. Epist. ad Athan. συ μεριζεται.
s Rescript. Ath. ad Liberum. συ διακεχωρισμενων.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE "Letter to the Clergy of both Universities," came not to my sight, or notice, till some hours after the last sheet of this discourse was brought to me from the press; I have not time therefore to say much to it, nor yet should say more than I do had I never so much. The author seems to think what he was now doing, as to the inquiry, superfluous, because he said it was so fully done by an abler hand, &c. In the meantime, he was in ill case, that he was neither able to write to any purpose, nor be silent: a most deplorable double impotency! But he hath, notwithstanding his modesty, shown a double ability, to invent and make an hypothesis of his own fingers' ends, and then most dexterously to combat that shadow. Three inadequate Gods is indeed (to use his own phrase) his own invention, constantly disavowed by the inquirer, who with the generality of trinitarians, calls the three subsistents in the Godhead, God; being each of them necessarily existent, but none of them alone, exclusively, a God.

What art he hath, is shown in fighting this his own figment. As also that of parts of the Deity, other than conceptible, which no man can avoid. So we have his dream of a third part of a God, about which he so learnedly raves in his dream, as to disprove, as effectually, any God at all. For I appeal to what sense he hath left himself, whether power alone be God, exclusive of wisdom and goodness? Then 'tis an inadequate, or a not complete, notion of God; then, by his profound reasoning, not eternal. No more are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost parts, unless you be enamoured of the bull, impartible parts, that never were parted, nor ever can be. As what are necessarily united (though unconfounded) cannot, without nonsense and contradiction, be said to be parted. His fiction, that what is from the eternal Father by necessary emanation, cannot be eternal, but must have a beginning, is of the same stamp. He did not need when he writ, to have abandoned all logic and common sense, that would have told him *relata sunt simul naturâ*. His so confidently taking it for granted on all hands, that all infinites are equal, shows his little compass of thought, and how unacquainted he is with the difficulties of a controversy, wherein yet he will be so over-meddlesome. *Qui pauca respicit, &c.* But who so bold as——? I leave him to compound that difference with his abler considerator, whether one inch and two inches be equal? and so bid him good night.

A LETTER

WRITTEN OUT OF THE COUNTRY TO A PERSON OF QUALITY IN THE CITY, WHO TOOK OFFENCE AT THE LATE

SERMON OF DR. STILLINGFLEET,

(DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S,) BEFORE THE LORD MAYOR.

CONSIDERING THYSELF LEST THOU ALSO BE TEMPTED. GAL. VI. 1.

JOHANNES COLETUS, DECANUS QUEM DICUNT, DIVI PAULI,—APUD SUOS ANGLOS ALTER PENE APOSTOLUS PAULUS HABITUS EST. POLYD. VIRGIL.

Sir,

I perceive your mind is disturbed, which my friendship with you can no more let me be unconcerned for, than if I heard you were sick; nor less to study your relief. Such may be the cause and measure of your passion, and such the disproportion between the one and the other, as to need it a great deal more, though yet perhaps to deserve it less. For your sickness might be your infelicity only, but a perturbation that exceeds its cause, cannot but be your fault. Which kind of evil, though it be much greater, and therefore needs no application for the removing of it; yet it can challenge less help from another, because you are your own afflicter, and may, by dependence on Divine help, when you please, cure yourself, which no man else can do for you. But if another may contribute towards it, by laying before you apt considerations which you are yourself to apply, you know you are to expect it from no man's good will more than mine. If indeed you expect much from my ability, that is another fault, entirely your own, and whereto you could have no temptation.

Thus much I freely profess to you, that I have a great value of an equal temper and composure of mind, not apt to be unduly moved, or entertain any thing that occurs with indecent perturbation, or other resentment than is due and suitable to the occasion: and desire it more than either to be in the best external circumstances, or not to be in the worst. As I wish for myself, I wish for you; and therefore am willing to place my endeavour accordingly, where it may be in a possibility of effecting somewhat to your advantage, and where it is most desirable it should.

In the present case, the fault I find with you is, that your resentment of the matter you complain of is undue, and not proportionable to the occasion. And whereas you seem to labour under the distemper and excess of a two-fold passion; of fear, lest a just and good cause (as you and I do both account) should suffer some great prejudice, by this opposition of Dr. Stillingfleet; and of anger, that he from whom better things might have been expected, should attempt any thing in this kind. I shall hereupon endeavour to represent to you the causelessness both of your fear, and (in great part) of your anger. And first defend the cause against Dr. Stillingfleet, and then add somewhat in defence of Dr. Stillingfleet against you.

I. As to the former we are,

I. To give the plain state of it, with the Doctor's judgment against us in it.

II. To discuss the matter with the Doctor, and show; 1. The indefensibleness of that judgment; 2. The inefficacy of the Doctor's attempt to defend it.

I. It is first necessary that we have a true state of the cause itself before our eyes; which is plainly this,—That as there are very great numbers of people, beyond what the ministers of parishes, in divers places, can possibly perform ministerial duty unto; so there are withal very many that cannot be satisfied in conscience, to intrust their souls and their spiritual concernments to the pastoral care and conduct of the parochial ministry only; though they generally have a reverend esteem of divers who are of it, do, many of them, very frequently partake of some part of their labours, and rejoice in them as great ornaments and real blessings of the Christian church. But these are very unproportionable in number to the necessities of the people, and are by legal restraints tied up one way, as they by conscientious are another, in respect of some principal parts of Christian worship; without which they should be visibly in the condition of pagans.

There are also many persons who have been devoted to the service of God and his church in the ministerial function; some of them in the way which now obtains, others in a way which this reverend author did not disapprove, who are not satisfied in conscience about the terms upon which they might have continued, or may be admitted, parochial incumbents. So that here are numerous flocks scattered without pastors, here are many pastors without flocks.

The people, it is true, on whose behalf these papers are more especially written, are in this destitute condition by their own scruples. Nor is it the present design to justify all those scruples. But they are, with many, of long continuance, and, for ought appears, unremovable. If they should be deferred, and bidden to use patience, while such further endeavours are used with them as this sermon contains, yet death will have no patience, nor be deferred. So that there are multitudes passing into eternity out of a Christian nation, having no benefit of Christian ordinances; no means of instruction in the truth and doctrines of the Christian religion, in order to their salvation. The cause which is *de facto* taken in this distress for their relief, is that which the reverend author bends himself against in this sermon. And there are two sorts of persons concerned in it. The people; who, rather than return to the state of paganism, implore the help of these unemployed ministers, desiring them to perform the duty of Christian ministers towards them. And the ministers; who, rather than they

should cease to be Christians, or themselves always cease from the work of ministers, comply with their desires, and, as they can, allow them their desired help.

This author doth more directly and professedly speak to the case of the people; to that of the ministers, only by way of oblique reflection. You and I who (among the former) do often partake in the worship and ordinances of God, in the separate assemblies, (though we are not so squeamish as to balk the public, nor so unjust and ungrateful, as not to thank God for the excellent advantages that are sometimes to be met with there,) are both concerned, and led by the Doctor's discourse, to consider what is said as to this case of ours. Which yet I would have us consider not so appropriately, as to exclude them our very compassionate consideration, that are more pinched and confined to narrower limits, by their own scruples, than we are; and whose number you cannot but apprehend to be so great, as to call for a very large compassion in considering their case.

It is indeed a case of far-prospect, and which looks down upon after-times. You know how easily it may be deduced all along from the beginning of the English reformation, when some very eminent among our reformers were not well satisfied with the ceremonial part of the constitution settled at that time; how an unsatisfied party hath gradually increased from age to age among the common people also. They are now grown very numerous. And unless some very overpowering impression upon men's minds (not reasonably to be expected according to common measures) should alter the case, it is still likely to increase in succeeding ages. You are ignorant that no one thing is more commonly scrupled by this unsatisfied party, than the addition of that federal rite in the dedicating of their children to God, the signing them with the sign of the cross; which many (how justly or unjustly I am not now to discuss) esteem so sinful a practice, that, rather than admit it, they will choose not to offer their children to baptism. Nor is it itself of less weight (perhaps 'tis of much greater) that, in this solemn dedication, they have no opportunity of performing the parental duty, of covenanting with God on behalf of their own children; but that part (with the exclusion of themselves) is to be done by others whom God hath not concerned in the business; and who, after the solemnity is over, are never like to concern themselves. And there are divers other scruples besides, in reference to this and other parts of worship, that, with multitudes, are in no great probability to admit of cure.

Now let us see what the reverend Doctor's judgment is upon this state of our case, who dissent from the established way, whether the people, or their ministers; and that both concerning what they do, and what, by consequence from his judgment upon their case, they are to suffer. For the practice of the people in this case (at least the negative part of it) he hath some charity in his censure, for in their declining to join in the public assemblies, he believes them generally to practice according to their judgment, as he professes, page 37 of his sermon. For the ministers, most of them, none at all, who, as he says in the same place, he believes go against theirs. His words are, "I dare say, if most of the preachers at this day in the separate meetings, were soberly asked their judgments, whether it were lawful for the people to join with us in the public assemblies, they would not deny it; and yet the people that frequent them, generally judge otherwise. For it is not to be supposed, that faction among them should so commonly prevail beyond interest."

But his judgment concerning what both are to undergo is eventually, and in the sequel, as he states their case, much more hard in respect of the people, who cannot relieve themselves; whereas the ministers, according to the notion he hath of them, presently may.

We are to attend chiefly to what he says in reference to the lay people, and shall consider, 1. How severe he is towards them; and, 2. How well consistent he is therein with himself.

1. His severity towards those of us in respect of what we practise, who put ourselves under the pastoral care of other than the parochial ministers, is to be seen in what he proposes to himself to evince, page 20. *viz.* That our proceeding to the forming of separate congregations, *i. e.* under other teachers, and by other rules, than what the established religion allows, is the present case of separation which he intends to consider, and to make the sinfulness and mischief of it appear. He doth, you see, in short, absolutely pronounce our practice in this case to be sinful and mischievous.

Now it is hence also to be collected, how hard things he would have us suffer upon supposition of our only remaining unsatisfied to join ourselves into the parochial communion. He doth not indeed bespeak for us gibbets, whipping-posts, or dungeons; nor (directly) any thing grievous to our flesh. But to such as consider themselves to have souls made for an everlasting state, the doom which his words imply, in the mentioned place, cannot be thought gentle. Which that you may apprehend the more distinctly; observe that he hath nothing to say against our bare suspending communion in some particular rites which we modestly scruple, while we use it in what we judge lawful, page 20. (whereas, page 37. he supposes us generally to judge it unlawful to join in the public assemblies,) to which purpose he also speaks in his late dialogues, page 171. and 172. (giving his antagonist an account of what he had said in his *Irenicum* to the matter now in discourse,) *viz.* That some scrupulous and conscientious men, after all endeavours used to satisfy themselves, may remain unsatisfied as to the lawfulness of some imposed rites, but dare not proceed to positive separation from the church, but are willing to comply in all other things save in those rites which they still scruple: and concerning these he puts the question, whether such bare nonconformity do involve such men in the guilt of schism. And this he confesses he resolved negatively (approving or not disavowing that resolution.) Thus far indeed he well agrees with himself; and seems to have no quarrel with us.

But consider the fatal consequence. He well knows that if we suspend communion in the rite of the cross, (upon our never so modest scruple,) we cannot have our children ministerially dedicated to God in the ordinance of baptism, nor be so ourselves, if being adult, we remain any of us unbaptized; (as he may well apprehend many among us are;) nor if we decline the use of sponsors as to what we conceive should be performed by parents for their children, and by adult persons for themselves. And that if we kneel not before the consecrated elements at the Lord's table, we are not to partake of his holy supper. Yea, and what if we scruple somewhat that is more than ritual, to sit under the ministry of a noted drunkard, or open enemy to godliness, as our teacher and guide, when we might enjoy the fruitful labours of one that hath not his qualifications every Lord's day? No, by no means, without limitation, or the supposition of any possible case wherein it may be otherwise, a meeting never so little besides the established course, he will make appear is sinful and mischievous, and not tolerable upon any terms.

What then would he have us do? He directs us indeed afterward to the endeavour of satisfaction. But what shall we do if after our utmost endeavours our dissatisfaction remain? What, while we are endeavouring? which may be all our days in vain. What if we can never be satisfied concerning the established way of baptism for ourselves and our children, and of partaking the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour? Nor to hear or give countenance to such a one pretending to preach the glorious gospel of the blessed God, who either substantially perverts and depraves it, or whose profligate life proclaims him an opposer and enemy to the holy rules and design of it? Nor to commit ourselves to the pastoral care and charge of a less exceptionable person, yea though otherwise never so deserving, that hath tied his own hands, and is under such restraints that he cannot, or so disinclined that he will not, dispense the ordinances of Christ in such a way, as wherein with satisfaction to our consciences we may enjoy them.

Read over the Doctor's sermon again and again, and you will find no course is prescribed us, but to sit still without any enjoyment of Christian ordinances at all. And with how great numbers must this be the case! for himself professes to believe, that the people that frequent the separate meetings (who you know are not a few) do gene-

rally judge it to be unlawful to join in the public assemblies. And are we always to sit still thus? That is to exchange visible Christianity for visible (at least negative) paganism! This, if you take the whole compass of it, is a thing of awful importance that so great a limb of a Christian nation, they and their posterity, should be paganized from age to age, and cut of from the whole body of the Christian community, only because they scruple some things, the least exceptionable whereof are no part of the Christian institution, (as himself, and they whose advocate he is, will freely confess,) nor do necessarily belong to it, being (as they contend) but indifferent things. He seems rather contented we should not be Christians at all, than not to be Christians of this particular mode: that we should rather want the substance of Christ's gospel and sacraments, than not have them accompanied with confessedly needless additions, and which we fear to be forbidden us by their Lord and ours.

We do sincerely profess wherein we decline the communion he invites us to, we only displease him, and those of his way and mind, out of a real fear of otherwise displeasing God. We agree with them in far greater things than we can differ in. We are of that one body which they themselves profess to be of, so far as mere Christianity is the distinction, and collective bond of it, and desire to be under the conduct and government of that one Spirit. We are called with them in that one hope of our calling, and earnestly expect (whatever hard thoughts they have of us) to meet many a one of them in the participation of the blessed hoped end of that calling. We acknowledge that one Lord, that one faith, that one baptism, (or covenant which the baptism of our Lord's appointment seals,) and that one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all. Yet because we cannot, we dare not consent with them to the additions which belong not (and which we fear are unduly affixed) to the religion of Christians, we are adjudged to be (as much as in them is) cut off from Christ, deprived of the dear pledges of his love, and acquisitions of his blood, are driven out from the inheritance of the Lord, and it is effect said to us, Go and serve other gods. Thus far the severity of this reverend author towards us extends. Which while we thus truly represent and recount, let us also,

2. Consider what agreement it holds with what we elsewhere observe from him. We have already taken notice, that for our bare nonconformity he acquits us of the guilt of schism. And, page 20. of this sermon, he says, he doth "not confound bare suspending communion in some particular rites, which persons do modestly scruple, and using it in what they judge to be lawful, with either total, or at least ordinary forbearance of communion in what they judge to be lawful; and proceeding to the forming separate congregations," &c. 'Tis this latter he severs and singles out for his opposition. Against our suspending communion in some particular rites, (which we judge unlawful,) if we use it in what we judge lawful, (which I, with him, presume the lay-dissenters in England generally do,) he hath nothing to say: yea, and undertaking to show what error of conscience doth excuse a man from sin, in following the dictates of it; he tells us, page 44. that "if the error be wholly involuntary, *i. e.* if it be caused by invincible ignorance," (which he thus explains in the following words,) "or after using the best means for due information of his conscience; though the act may be a fault in itself, yet it shall not be imputed to him for a sin, because it wanted the consent of the mind by which the will is determined." And now, Sir, I beseech you consider,

(1.) When he confesses if we be willing to be satisfied, and our error be involuntary, it shall not be imputed to us for a sin; why are we so severely dealt with for what is not to be imputed to us for a sin? If it were any, methinks it should not deserve such rigour at the hands of men, that are themselves also liable to mistakes and errors. Is it so very criminal, if every poor illiterate dissenter in England (man or woman) cannot in all their days attain to a better and more settled judgment in such dubious matters, than this reverend person had himself arrived to twenty years ago? Especially that never had, or were capable of having, those peculiar helps and inducements, to temper and reform their judgments, that he hath enjoyed. 'Tis a long time that his own judgment has been ripening to that maturity, as, at length, to think it fit and seasonable to say so much as he hath, for the reforming of ours, even in this sermon. Methinks he should not be so very quick and hard towards us, upon so slender a cause, as our scrupling some particular rites, to adjudge us and ours to be totally deprived of baptism, which themselves count necessary to our salvation, and of the other ordinances of Christ, which they do not think unnecessary. And consider,

(2.) Whereas he says, that if a man err after using the best means for due information of his conscience,—it shall not be imputed to him as a sin. What if we err this error (as he counts it) after using the best means for due information; that we ought rather than to return to the state of paganism, to bear our part in the forming of such meetings for the worship of God, as wherein we may, with the satisfaction of our own consciences, enjoy all his holy ordinances? It will surely be within the compass of this his general position, and not be imputable as a sin. Then it is to be hoped we should rather choose to do so, than paganize ourselves, or live in the wilful neglect of his institutions: which to do by our own choice, when we might do otherwise, we cannot but think a very great sin.

If here the Doctor should assume to himself to tell us not only that we err herein, (whereof we are to regard his proof, as it shall be considered by and by, more than his affirmation,) but also that our error is wilful, we shall appeal from him to one that better knows, how willingly, how gladly we should receive information, and admit the belief, that we ought to content ourselves entirely and only with such provisions as the established religion (to use the Doctor's phrase) allows us, if the evidence of the thing itself did not seem irresistibly and unavoidably to persuade us otherwise. And for him to say so, were but to suppose men wilful, only for not being of his mind, who can as easily think him so, for not being of theirs. But this cannot be a question between the Doctor and us; whom, as we have taken notice above, he hath so far obliged, as to admit, (page 37.) "that we generally judge as we practise, and that it is not to be supposed that faction among us should so commonly prevail beyond interest." But since this appears to be his determination concerning us, and that his assertion seems positive and peremptory, page 20. "That in this our case, to proceed to the forming of congregations under other teachers, and by other rules than what the established religion allows, were a sinful and mischievous separation,"—we are in the next place,

II. To discuss the matter with the Doctor; wherein we shall endeavour to show,—1. The indefensibleness of the judgment the Doctor hath given in this case; which will both infer (and in some part excuse) what we are afterwards to discover; *viz.*—2. The infirmity of what is alleged by him in this attempt of his to defend it.

1. For the former, it being obvious to common observation, that a natural self-indulgence and aptness to decline and waive what is of more terrible import to themselves, doth usually insinuate and influence men's minds in their judging of such cases; we are the more concerned (because a favourable false judgment will do us no good) with an impartial strictness to hold ourselves to the thing itself. And when we most strictly do so, methinks the doctor should have somewhat a hard province of it. For his determination amounts to thus much, (that we ought to be kept in a state of damnation for scrupling the ceremonies,) *i. e.* to be deprived of the necessary means of our salvation. And that, while he accounts our scruple (after the use of due means for our information) not imputable to us as a sin: and not that only, but that we ought to consent to our own damnation for this no sin of ours; inasmuch as it would be sinful and mischievous to procure to ourselves the necessary means of our salvation in another way, while we apprehend that, without our sin, we cannot have them in the way which he allows us.

We are indeed satisfied, that our sin one way or other would contribute little to our salvation. But when also we are satisfied that we cannot enjoy the means of salvation in his way without sin; and he tells us, we cannot without sin enjoy them in our own: we hope every door is not shut up against us, and cannot think the merciful and holy God hath so stated our case, as to reduce us to

a necessity of sinning to get out of a state of damnation. And therefore this reverend author having already determined that our remedy cannot lie (as our consciences are hitherto informed) in coming over to him and his way; for he believes we generally judge it unlawful to join with them in the public assemblies, page 37. and says, page 43. "that no man that hath any conscience will speak against the power of it, and he that will speak against it, hath no reason to be regarded in what he says;" (as no question he expected to be, otherwise he had not given himself so much trouble;) and concludes, page 44. "that we should sin in going against it." As he also thinks we should in acting with it, which (as is necessarily implied) we as yet see not. Our great hope upon the whole matter is, that our relief must lie in taking the way which we do take; and that it cannot be proved to be sinful.

We reckon it is not, and that the Doctor's judgment herein is simply indefensible, because whatsoever is sinful must transgress some law immediately divine, or that obliges by virtue of the divine law. And we cannot find that God hath made any law, or enabled any made by others, to oblige us so far, in our present circumstances, as that we should be involved in the guilt of sin, by some variation from the letter of it. For any divine law that can be supposed to oblige us to the use of the things we scruple, or else to live without the worship and ordinances of God, not knowing any such ourselves, we must wait till we be informed of it.

And that his law doth give an obliging force so far to any other, we as yet understand not. Wheresoever he hath been pleased to lodge and intrust the keys of the church, we do not find he hath appointed them to that use, to admit us into the communion of his worship and ordinances, or totally to exclude us, upon such terms. And herein we suppose we have the Doctor consenting with us; who, in his Irenicum, (page 216.) plainly asserts, "that the office which the power of the keys implies is ministerial, and not authoritative; declarative, and not juridical." And says in the preface to the same book, that "he that came to take away the unsupportable yoke of the Jewish ceremonies, did never intend to gall the disciples' necks with another instead of it." Whereto he immediately adds in the same preface: "And it would be strange the church should require more than Christ himself did; and make other conditions of her communion, than our Saviour did of discipleship. What possible reason can be assigned or given why such things should not be sufficient for communion with a church, which are sufficient for eternal salvation? And certainly those things are sufficient for that, which are laid down by our Lord and Saviour in his word. What ground can there be why Christians should not stand upon the same terms now, which they did in the time of Christ and his apostles? Was not religion sufficiently guarded and fenced in them? Was there ever more true and cordial reverence in the worship of God? What charter hath Christ given the church to bind men up to more than himself hath done, or to exclude those from her society, who may be admitted into heaven? Will Christ ever thank men at the great day for keeping such out from communion with his church, whom he will vouchsafe not only crowns of glory to, but it may be *aureolæ* too, if there be any such things there? The grand commission the apostles were sent out with, was only to teach what Christ had commanded them. Not the least intimation of any power given them to impose or require any thing beyond what himself had spoken to them, or they were directed to by the immediate guidance of the Spirit of God. It is not whether the things commanded and required be lawful or no; it is not whether indifferences may be determined or no; it is not how far Christians are bound to submit to a restraint of their Christian liberty, which I now inquire after; (of those things in the treatise itself;) but whether they do consult for the church's peace and unity who suspend it upon such things? how far either the example of our Saviour or his apostles doth warrant such rigorous impositions! We never read the apostles making laws but of things supposed necessary. When the council of apostles met at Jerusalem for deciding a case that disturbed the church's peace, we see they will lay no other burden πλὴν τῶν ἐπάναγκες; τούτων besides these necessary things. Acts xv. 29. It was not enough with them that the things would be necessary when they had required them, but they looked on an antecedent necessity either absolute or for the present state, which was the only ground of their imposing those commands upon the Gentile Christians. There were, after this, great diversities of practice and varieties of observations among Christians, but the Holy Ghost never thought those things fit to be made matters of laws, to which all parties should conform; all that the apostles required as to these, was mutual forbearance and condescension towards each other in them. The apostles valued not differences at all, and those things it is evident they accounted such, which whether men did them or not, was not of concernment to salvation. And what reason is there why men should be so strictly tied up to such things, which they may do or let alone, and yet be very good Christians still? Without all controversy the main inlet of all the distractions, confusions, and divisions of the Christian world, hath been by adding other conditions of church-communion than Christ hath done."

Nor am I now inquiring whether the things commanded be lawful or no; nor whether indifferences may be determined or no; nor how far Christians are bound to submit to a restraint of their Christian liberty? But only inquiring (as he there doth) concerning the charter given by Christ for the binding men up more than himself hath done. And I further inquire, by what power they can be bound which Christ hath not given? And if there be no such power to bind them, suppose the things required were all lawful, (which if it can be evinced, I should rejoice to see done,) yet while they cannot in conscience think they are, how can they apprehend themselves bound to be without the means of salvation, which Christ's charter entitles them to? I readily grant it is fit a man do many things for peace and common order's sake which, otherwise, no law doth formally oblige him to, *i. e.* supposing he can do those things without intolerable prejudice to himself. And so it is commonly determined in the matter of scandals. But can it be thought a man is to put himself out of the state or way of salvation in the compliment to such as will otherwise take offence? and be so courteous as to perish for ever, rather than they shall be displeased?

Yea, and it may be moreover added, that our course being accounted lawful, must also (as the Doctor speaks, in another case) he thought a duty: for the things that are as means necessary to our salvation, are also necessary by divine precept. We are commanded to hear God's word, to devote ourselves and our children to God in baptism; and, at the Lord's own table, to remember him, and show forth his death till he come. And if we compare together certain positions of this reverend author, we cannot see but he must, as our case is, acknowledge our obligation to the practice which he here seems to blame. For in his Irenicum (page 109.) he asserts, that every Christian is under an obligation to join in church society with others; because it is his duty to profess himself a Christian, and to own his religion publicly, and to partake of the ordinances and sacraments of the gospel, which cannot be without society with some church or other. And he after adds, on the same page, "It had been a cause, disputed of by some, (particularly by Grotius, the supposed author of a little tract, *An semper sit communicandum per symbola?* when he designed the syncretism with the church of Rome,) whether in a time when churches are divided, it be a Christian's duty to communicate with any of those parties which divide the church, and not rather to suspend communion from all of them." A case not hard to be decided; for either the person questioning it doth suppose the churches divided to remain true churches, but some to be more pure than other; in which case, by virtue of his general obligation to communion, he is bound to adhere to that church which appears most to retain its evangelical purity. To which purpose he further tells us, page 110. "he knows not whether Chrysostom's act were to be commended, who after being made a deacon in the church of Antioch by Meletius, upon his death, because Flavianus came in irregularly as bishop of the church, would neither communicate with him, nor with Paulinus, another

bishop at that time in the city, nor with the Meletians; but for three years' time withdrew himself from communion with any of them." And, page 113. "Where any church is guilty of corruptions both in doctrine and practice, which it avoweth and professeth, and requireth the owning them as necessary conditions of communion with her, there a non-communion with that church is necessary, and a total and positive separation is lawful and convenient." What he discourses page 111, 112. upon the question, "Whether it is a sin to communicate with churches true as to essentials, but supposed corrupt in the exercise of discipline?" many of us will no doubt heartily concur with him in. But it touches not the case of many more, who do not so much fear upon the account of the neglect of discipline, to be involved in the guilt of other men's sin; (as there seems to be little cause, that part being not incumbent upon us:) nor, if that be his meaning, when he speaks of separating on a pretence of great purity, is it the case with most of us: but we justly fear (and therefore avoid) to be made to sin ourselves, by having such things as we judge to be sinful imposed on us, as the conditions of our communion. And as to this case, this reverend author speaks our sense in this last cited proposition, and pleads our present cause. Nor need we more to be said on behalf of it than what is reducible to that general proposition; or particularly, to that second thing, compared with the third, which (page 115.) he says "makes separation and withdrawment of communion lawful and neeessary; *viz.* corruption of practice, where we say as he doth, we speak not of practice, as relating to the civil conversation of men, but as it takes in the *agenda* of religion; when unlawful things of that kind are not only crept into a church, but are the prescribed devotion of it: those being required (which he adds as an accession to the foregoing) as necessary conditions of communion from all the members of their church, which makes our withdrawing from them unavoidably necessary, as long as we judge them to be such corruptions as indeed they are." And whereas he instances only in such things as belong to the head of idolatrous customs, (suppressing what might be instanced under the other head, which he also there mentions, *viz.* superstitious practice,) yet we doubt not if other things also, that appear to be sinful, besides idolatrous customs, be required as necessary conditions of communions, the case will be the same, unless we will distinguish sins into such as be lawful, and such as be unlawful. Or there be any that may be committed, that we may be admitted to the communion of this or that church.

Now, to reduce things to the method which suits the present case; if this reverend author do still judge,—that where sinful conditions of communion are imposed, there non-communion is necessary, (and those things be sinful to us which our consciences judge to be so,) as he hath acknowledged:—and again, if he still judge,—that we are under an obligation to join in church-society, so as to own our religion publicly, and to partake of the ordinances and sacraments of the gopsel;—he must certainly account that our duty, which he taxes in this sermon as our fault, at least till our consciences be otherwise informed, whereof many of us have no great hope.

We are indeed not so stupid, as not to apprehend there are laws, the letter whereof seems adverse to us. Nor are we so ungrateful, as not to acknowledge his majesty's clemency in not subjecting us to the utmost rigour of those laws; whom we cannot, without deep regret, so much as seem not, in every thing, exactly to obey. Nor can it enter into our minds to imagine, that he expects to be obeyed by us at the expense of our salvation. Or that it would be at all grateful to him, that being, as we are, unsatisfied in some things that are by the law made necessary to our partaking the privileges of the Christian church, we should become pagans in duty to him. His majesty was once pleased to give an ample testimony, by his never to be forgotten gracious declaration of March 15, 1672, how remote any such thought was from his royal breast; and though we humbly submit to the exigency of those reasons of state from whence it proceeded, that we enjoy not the continued positive favour which his majesty was then pleased to express towards us; yet we have no reason to doubt, but his pretensions are equally benign as they were.

Nor, though it be uncertain to us what laws they are, the authority whereof this reverend person relies upon to make our practice sinful, yet we hope he doth not mean to urge us herein with the laws of the civil government, because those as much forbid our non-communion, (and under as severe penalty,) for which, he acquits us from the guilt of schism, or, if we endeavour satisfaction, from any sin imputable to us.

But if that should be his meaning, we desire it may be considered how unreasonable it seems, that the design of the law relating to that part of our practice, which the Doctor in this sermon condemns, being declaredly to prevent sedition; they should take themselves to be meant who are conscious of no such design or disposition.

And again, that it is not with any reason, charity, or justice, to be supposed, that when that and other restrictive laws were made, either the temporal ruin of so great a part of the nation, as are now found to be dissenters, was intended by the legislators, or the reducing them to the condition of heathens. But a uniformity in the worship of God, being in itself a thing really desirable, this means was thought fit to be tried, in order to that end. And so are human laws, about such mutable matters, generally designed to be probationary; the event and success being unforeknown. Whereupon, after a competent time of trial, as his majesty was graciously pleased to declare his own favourable sense and intention, so it is very commonly known, that the like propensions were by common suffrage expressed in parliament, *viz.* to grant a relaxation. So that the law, being in its own nature nothing else but an indication of the legislator's will, we may account the thing was in substance done, so far as may satisfy a man's private reason and conscience concerning the lawgiver's intention and pleasure; though it were not done with that formality as uses (and is generally needful) to be stood upon, by them who are the ministers of the law. And that it was not done with that formality also, seemed rather to be from a disagreement about the manner or method of doing it, than about the thing to be done. And how usual is it for laws, without formal repeal, gently and gradually to expire, grow old, and vanish away, not being longer useful, as the ritual part of the Mosaical law did become an ineffectual and unprofitable thing! And how easy were it to instance in many other laws, the letter of which, they that urge these against the dissenters, do without scruple transgress! and from which no such weighty reasons do urge to borrow now and then a point. How many dispense with themselves in many parts of their required conformity, that have obliged themselves to it! The priests in the temple transgress the law, and are blameless. Yea, and he that knows all things, and who is Judge of all, knows how little scruple is made of transgressing the laws by gross immoralities and debaucheries. Men learn to judge of the sacredness of laws by their own inclinations. Any that can be wire-drawn, and made by torture to speak against religion not modified their way, must be most binding. Such as prohibit the vilest and most open wickedness, bind as the withs did Samson.

The sum of all is, that whereas we are under the obligation of the divine law to worship God in the use of those his ordinances which require to be dispensed and attended in society, and that we apprehend we cannot do it without sin in the way this reverend author invites us to. Whereas also we do, with this author, deliberate, whether Christ hath given any power to men to oblige us to the things we scruple, or disoblige us from the things we practise, and judge it unproved. We cannot but reckon the judgment the Doctor hath given in our case (that our practice is sinful) is erroneous and indefensible by any man, but least fitly, of most other men, attempted to be defended by himself. From whom it would little have been expected that he should so earnestly recommend that very thing to us, as the only foundation of union, which he had so publicly told us in his preface to the Irenicum, "was, without controversy, the main inlet of all the distractions, confusions, and divisions of the Christian world, *viz.* the adding other conditions of church-communion than Christ hath done."

And though he hath lately told the world, there are some passages in that book that show only the inconsiderateness

of youth, and that he seems to wish unsaid, yet he hath not, that we know, declared that these are some of them. However, since this present determination and judgment of his against us is so peremptory and positive, as well as severe, let us, in the next place,

2. Consider, and carefully examine, as we are concerned, what he hath performed in defence of it; and, it is to be hoped, the inefficacy and weakness of his attempt therein will sufficiently appear. What I can find in his sermon hath any aspect or design that way, is either *ad rem*, or *ad hominem*. And, to my apprehension, his reasonings, of the one kind or the other, are altogether unconcluding.

(1.) As to what may be supposed to be *ad rem*, if you look narrowly, you will find, that the principal things alleged by him, that can, under that notion, give support to his cause, are only affirmed, but not proved. For instance, page 9. when he tells us, that the "apostle supposed the necessity of one fixed and certain rule," &c. This had been very material to his purpose; if, 1. He had told us, and had proved, the apostle meant some rule or other superadded to the sacred Scriptures; for then he might, it is to be presumed, as easily have let us know what that rule was, which, most probably, would have ended all our controversy; it being little to be doubted, we should all most readily have agreed to obey it: or, secondly, If he had proved, that, because the apostle had power to make such a rule, and oblige the churches to observe it, that therefore such church-guides as they, whose cause the Doctor pleads, have an equal power to make other rules divers from his, containing many new things, which he never enjoined, and to enforce them upon the church (though manifestly tending to its destruction, rather than edification.) But these things he doth but suppose himself, without colour of proof.

Again, for his notion of churches, page 16, 17, 18, 19. examine as strictly as you will what he says about it; and see whether it come to any thing more than only to represent a national church a possible thing? And whereto the name church may without absurdity be given. His own words seem to him no higher. "Why may there not be one national church from the consent in the same articles of religion, and the same order of worship?" page 18. "The word was used in the first ages of the Christian church, as it comprehended the ecclesiastical governors, and the people of whole cities. And why many of these cities being united together under one civil government and the same rules of religion, should not be called one national church, I cannot understand," page 19.

But can it now be inferred thence, that therefore God hath actually constituted every Christian kingdom or nation such a church? Can it further be inferred, that he hath invested the guides of this church, not chosen by the people (according to Scripture, and primitive practice for some ages) with a power to make laws and decrees, prescribing not only thing necessary for common order and decency, but new fedcral rites, and teaching signs and symbols, superadded to the whole Christian institution; with many more dubious and unnecessary things besides? And to exclude sober and pious Christians from the privileges that are proper to the Christian church, as such, merely for that out of conscience towards God, they dare not admit into their worship those additions to the Christian religion? To take order they shall have no pastors, no sacraments, no assemblies for worship? And because they will not be so much more than Christians, that they shall not be Christians at all?

He that would go about to make these inferences merely from the forementioned ground, would gain to be laughed at by all sober men, instead of a conclusion; whatsoever better success he should have, who should undertake to prove the same things any other way.

This reverend author was so wise as not to attempt either of these. But then, in the meantime, what doth the mere possible notion of such a church advantage his cause? Because it is possible, there might have been such a Macedonian, or such a Lydian church, is such a one therefore necessary? and any other constitution of a Christian church impossible, or unlawful? Or because the general meeting of magistrates of the whole city and people together in pagan Athens was called Ἐκκλησια, therefore such must be the constitution of a Christian church? and therefore such a church hath such powers from Christ as were above mentioned?

Here howsoever we make our stand, and say that till the Doctor hath proved these two things;

[1.] That such a church as he hath given us the notion of, as of a thing merely possible, is actually a divine institution; and,

[2.] That God hath given to the ecclesiastical governors in it never chosen by the Christian community, or to any other power, to superadd institutions of the nature above mentioned, and to enforce them under the mentioned penalties: all his reasonings that pretend to be *ad rem*, are to no purpose, and do nothing at all advantage his cause.

Yet there are some passages in this part of his discourse, that though they signify nothing to his main purpose, are yet very remarkable, and which 'tis fit we should take some notice of.

As when, page 16. he tells us what he means by whole churches; *viz.* "The churches of such nations, which upon the decay of the Roman empire, resumed their just power of government to themselves; and upon their owning Christianity, incorporated into one Christian society, under the same common ties and rules of order and government." As if there could be no whole churches in the world that had not been of the Roman empire, or as if those of the Roman empire could not have been whole churches without resumption of the civil government; as we suppose he means.

Or, as if (which he intimates, page 19.) we needed this (so dearly espoused notion as a ground) to acquit us from the imputation of schism, in our separating from the church of Rome. Which certainly it were not for the advantage of the protestant cause to admit; for then all that remain within the empire, were bound to continue in the communion of the Roman church. And in the other kingdoms, where princes have not resumed their just right of reforming errors in doctrine and corruptions in worship, all should be schismatics that should separate from the church of Rome.

Again, when, page 17. he would confute that great mistake, the making the notion of a church barely to relate to acts of worship; (a mistake whereof I never knew any man guilty;) he surely runs into as great an opposite mistake, in making the notion of a church to be no more than of a society of men united together, for their order and government, according to the rules of the Christian religion. Now faith and worship are quite exclnded the notion of a church; and order and government, and the rules of the Christian religion, but as they refer to these, only included. Whence it will come to pass, that we can have no notion of one catholic church, from which yet he argues at the bottom of the same page.

Nor, though I dislike the thing, do I understand the strength of the Doctor's argument, against making the notion of the church barely to relate to acts of worship; *viz.* That if this held true, the church must be dissolved as soon as the congregation is broken up. For will it not also follow as well, that if the notion of a church relate only to order and government, every time any meeting for affairs of order and government is broken up, the church is dissolved? And that an assembly of the states in any kingdom or nation cannot break up without a dissolution of the government? A parliament (at least) not adjourn or be prorogued without being dissolved? And whereas he adds, But if they retain the nature of a church, when they do not meet together for worship, then there is some other bond that unites them, and whatever that is, it constitutes the church. Is it not possible there may be such a bond for worship, as well as for government? an obligation to meet at stated times for that purpose, when they are not met? And then (if this were all that were to be said to the contrary) why might not that bond as well serve to constitute the church? But,

(2.) For his reasonings *ad hominem*, they need not detain us long; he argues from the judgment of the assembly of divines and others. All which arguing must suppose, if it concern us, that we are bound to be of the same judgment with the ministers that are and have been so and so minded; which I for my part understand not. But I per-

ceive here his intention is, having endeavoured to draw us off from our ministers; now to move another stone, and try if he can draw them off from us.

For the assembly, I think it fit those that survive of them should be as much concluded by what they then determined, as this reverend author by the Irenicum. But I know no reason that such as they represented, nor who ever pretended to be of their party, should be concluded to the world's end. Nor do understand why even the same party may not be as well supposed in a possibility to vary from itself in forty years, as the same man from himself in less than twenty. If they did incline to deal too hardly with their brethren, that will not justify them who deal more hardly. 'Tis hoped such as have been so inclined, have been smitten, and suffered the rebukes of the Almighty, repented it, and are become wiser: and when some think themselves grown wiser by prosperity, others by adversity, there is less reason to suspect the latter.

Yet also this reverend author ought to have considered the great disparity of the cases he would parallel. For when one sort of men are considering of having only such a frame of things settled, as are imposed by Christ himself, whether they judge rightly or no, that he hath imposed every part of that frame, yet while they think and judge that he hath, and consequently that nothing is to be abated of it: 'twere very unfitly argued, that therefore another sort professing to impose many things never imposed by Christ, should abate nothing of their unnecessary impositions.

For such as the Doctor quotes besides of the nonconformists, acknowledging the parish churches true churches, and the lawfulness of holding, sometimes, communion with some of them; it is not to be thought but among so many parties as come all under one common notion of dissenters from the public rule, (and whom that rule did not find one, but made them so in that common notion,) there must be great diversity of opinions, and proportionably differing practices in these matters. I heartily prefer the most moderate, as I believe you do. But here this reverend author takes occasion for so ignominious reflections upon our preachers, as insincere, dishonest, and unconscientious, as I doubt not, in one twenty years more, his ingenuity will oblige him to repent more heartily, than ever it permitted him to do of his Irenicum. Because he can allege a very few persons that have spoken to this purpose, therefore, first, it must be represented to the world as their common judgment; next they are charged with concealing this judgment; (why is this kept up as such a mighty secret in the breasts of their teachers? page 37.) and then it is endeavoured to make men think they practise against their own judgments, in preaching to separate congregations.

Surely you and I are concerned, as we have occasion, to say what we truly can, for the just vindication of our ministers. I doubt not but you believe, and you have, for some, particular reason to be confident; it is for our sakes they expose themselves to the displeasure of such men as Dr. St. I must, for my part, say,

[1.] That I believe it to be the judgment of very few, that every parish is, as such, a true Christian church. I am sorry I have such a ground to fear it of one kind, *viz.* that some may not be so, as not having among them any tolerable understanding of the most confessedly fundamental principles of Christian religion. What say you to such, where the minister is grossly ignorant of the principles of religion, or habitually vicious, and of a profligate life? Do mere orders make him a minister, who (perhaps since he received them) is become destitute of the most essential qualifications? any more than the habit, a monk? or a beard, a philosopher? Can a Mercury be made of every log? Not to insist that this reverend author can scarce think they are, from a ground of another kind, because they assemble only for worship, and not for government.

[2.] And surely, a church may be unfit to be communicated with, although it be a true church; (those words of the reverend and worthy dean of Canterbury carry their own light with them to this purpose;[a]) as a man may be truly and really a man, though he have the plague upon him, and for that reason be fit to be avoided by all that wish well to themselves. 'Tis true, there are vastly different degrees of that unfitness. But I see not how they can apprehend there is the fitness which is simply necessary, who judge there are conditions of communion imposed that are sinful.

And I believe this reverend author will think it possible a true church may impose some sinful conditions of her communion; in which case, he hath determined a non-communion with her necessary and unavoidable.

[3.] For those that are of that judgment, the parochial assemblies ought to be communicated with so far as is alleged was declared. As I know none of the dissenting ministers, that thought they ought always and only to be communicated with, so I see not with what pretence it can be said they keep up their judgment herein, as a mighty secret. If it be so, how came this author to have it revealed to him? Is printing it to the world keeping it secret? Some have published it in that way, as we see is known to the Doctor. Others, by their frequent discourses, and their own practice. And, to my observation, divers of them have in their sermons made it much their business to dispose the minds of their hearers to a truly catholic Christian union, as I have been much pleased to take notice, some of the conforming clergy do also. But if this be the Doctor's quarrel with any of our ministers, (who think such communion lawful) that they do not constantly, in every sermon, inculcate the business of communicating in the ceremonial way, for my part, I shall blame them as much as he, when once he hath made it very evident, that the ceremonies are more profitable, and likely to do more good to the souls of men, than repentance, the faith of the gospel, the fear of God, a good life in this world, and eternal life in the other; which I confess are the more usual subjects, so far as I have had the opportunity to observe, of their preaching.

And, let me add, that I can tell you of a secret, which some might be apt to think (as it is really so) is industriously and much more unrighteously kept up in one man's breast, that may be conscious of a great design in it. The author of the book, entitled, The Weapon Salve, or Irenicum, seems to have found it some inconveniency to him, to have been the author of so good a book; whereupon, in a certain soliloquy, (though he is pleased to represent it as a tripartite dialogue,) he asks himself his own opinion of it, and gives himself this answer: I will tell you freely (as you know men use great liberty in talking with themselves, though prudence would direct that to be done in some cases with great caution, and not to talk inconvenient things too loud, lest they be too much overheard) I believe there are many things in it, which if Dr. St. were to write now, he would not have said; for there are some things which show his youth, and want of due consideration; others, in which he yielded too far, &c. Now here (though I believe he had begun to be inclined to throw away his salve, and use only the weapon for the wounding of sound parts, not the cutting off the incurable, yet) I conceive one may safely enough take it for granted, his intention was not to retract the whole book. But whereas he tells us not what he doth: how would the Doctor take it if one should ask, Why is this kept up as such a mighty secret in his own breast? Or, say the tenderness of his mind might, 'tis likely, out of mere shamefacedness, keep him from declaring against what his own conscience tells him is truth; however, this retractation cannot make that which was true become false. The reason of things is sullen, and will not alter to serve men's conveniences. Perhaps, indeed, his judgment is really altered. If therefore he would acquit himself like an honest and conscientious man, let him tell the world plainly, which be the pernicious principles of that book, that honest and conscientious men, who have thought well of many things in it, (and perhaps the same things which he now disapproves,) may not always be deceived by the shows of reason that deceived himself, and by which he deceived them. The same justice that obliges not to lay a stumbling-block in the way of the blind, doth also oblige him to remove it who hath laid it: which is to be done, not by professing another opinion, for we depend not on his authority, which he hath himself so much diminished; but on the reasons he alleged, which if they were

[a] Sermon on Josh. xxiv. 15.

fallacious, let him show wherein, and answer his own reasons. To say the truth, the gravity and seriousness wherewith that book was written, appears to have so little of the youth in it, in comparison of the jocularity and sportful humour of some of his latter writings, when he hath been discussing the most weighty and important cases of conscience, that it seems as a prodigy in nature, and that he began his life at the wrong end; that he was old in his youth, and reserved his puerility to his more grown age. But we hope there is a great residue behind, wherein he may have opportunity and inclination to show the world, that he did not repent the pious design of that book; or, at least, with a repentance that (can as well as that) ought to be repented of.

[4.] And whereas such of the dissenting ministers, as have most openly declared for communicating at some times with some of the parochial churches, have also declared their judgment of the lawfulness and necessity of preaching and hearing, and doing other religious duties, in other congregations also: if now either the Doctor discern not the inconsistency of these things, or they discern not their inconsistency; is there nothing to be said or thought, but that they acquit not themselves like honest and conscientious men? Must it be taken for a demonstration of a man's want of honesty and conscience, not to be presently of the Doctor's opinion in every thing? or not to see every consequence which he sees, or thinks he sees?

But let us consider the goodness of this consequence, which it must be so great a piece of dishonesty not to discern. If it be the duty of some to communicate sometimes with some parish churches, (for this is the most the Doctor could make of that relator's concession, whom he cites page 21, 22. of his sermon,) therefore it is the duty of every one to communicate with any parish church where his abode is, so constantly and entirely as never to have any communion with any otherwise constituted congregation.

This is the thing must be to his purpose inferred; yea, and he would have it be from somewhat a lower premise. For he tells us, page 37. "that he dare say, if most of the preachers at this day in the separate meetings were soberly asked their judgments, whether it were lawful (only) for the people to join with us in the public assemblies, they would not deny it." He surely dares not say that their meaning was, that it was lawful constantly to join with them in all their parochial assemblies, unless he dares say, what he hath not, from any of them, the least ground to think. Now hereupon he collects, page 38. that our ministers cannot declare so much in a separate congregation, but this truth must fly in their faces; because he supposeth it repugnant to it, to preach at all in a separate congregation; and yet afterwards, on the same page, he so well agrees with himself, as to bid them, if they would acquit themselves like honest and conscientious men, tell the people plainly that they look on our churches as true churches, and that they may lawfully communicate with us in prayers and sacraments. And where are they to tell them so, but in the separate congregations? Singly and severally he knows it were impossible. Nor do I think he would reckon honesty and conscience obliged them to come and tell the people so in their congregations.

Now I am afraid there are but a very few honest and conscientious men in the world at this day, if none are to go for such, but who can perceive the strength and reasonableness of the above-mentioned consequence.

And that you may farther see what reasons our ministers may have, notwithstanding all the alleged concessions, to administer in the worship of God in our assemblies; though it were never so much their common universal judgment, that they and we might sometimes communicate in some of the parochial; let us consider, that in the more populous and frequented places, as with you at London for instance, the churches cannot receive, some not a tenth part, some not half the people belonging to them, few can receive all. Methinks good men should not be offended that multitudes do in this distress relieve themselves by resorting to other places for necessary instruction. And though they be the inclinations of the people that divide them this way, and that (as it can be nothing else) though places for their resort be not every where most conveniently situate for their resort, where there is most need, (which must be taken not always where it were most desirable, but where they can be had,) yet they that have a mind, had better go to places at a more inconvenient distance, than have no whither to go; and it is better the necessities of many should be provided for in such an exigency, than of none. In the meantime, the churches of worthy conforming ministers in such populous places are generally filled, as I have been informed, and have sometimes had occasion to observe.

Do not necessities of a much lower nature oblige us to recede from stated human rules? It is well known there is a law against relieving such as beg out of their own parishes. But if one find upon the road such a poor wretch ready to perish, am I not bound, notwithstanding, if I can, to relieve him? And who would think, in such a case, I transgressed the true intention of the law?

Yea, and God's own laws respecting rituals, common order, and the external part of religion, were by his own direction to yield to far less urgent necessities; to the plucking an ass or an ox out of a ditch; how much more the souls of men! Have we not read what David did when he was an hungered, and they that were with him, how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? How expressly is it alleged by our blessed Saviour, against those nice and punctilious observers and urgers of the letter of the law, the Pharisees, I will have mercy and not sacrifice. And if he were willing to abate a sacrifice to himself, that there might be room for the exercise of mercy towards men's bodies, how monitory and reprehensive should that be to such merciless persons, as would have the very souls of men themselves be sacrificed to their stiff and unyielding humours! Positive laws cease to bind when, by accident, they thwart the law of nature. Which binds to nothing more deeply than the endeavour of saving one's own soul, and (within the bounds of his calling) his neighbour's as his own.

What if many of our ministers think it lawful, and, at some times, a duty, to join in some of the public assemblies? It is not then their duty, when an inviting opportunity, and so urging necessities, lay before them greater duty. This reverend author tells us, very pertinently to this purpose, when he was declaiming against us and our ministers, page 31. of his sermon: "It is a great fault among some who pretend to great niceness in some positive duties, that they have some little regard to comparative duties; for that which may be a duty in one case, when it comes to thwart a greater duty, may be none." This doctrine we learn from our blessed Saviour in the case of the obligation of the Sabbath; which he makes to yield to duties of mercy. And can we think that a duty lying upon us, which, in our circumstances, makes a far greater duty impracticable? We acknowledge order and unity very lovely and desirable things, but we think it of greater importance that the ministers with whom such fault is found, conduct men, though not in so accurate order, (which they cannot help,) to heaven, than let them go in the best order, yea (and as the case is) without any at all, to hell.

And what though the necessity of many of us arise from our own scruples, and what though those scruples were without ground, doth it therefore follow we must be abandoned to perish? when our very error, if we be willing to admit conviction, (as we sincerely are, could the matter admit it,) is not imputable to us for a sin. This author was once pleased to make it one of his proposals for accommodation, page 64. of his Irenicum; "That no sanctions be made, nor mulcts nor penalties be inflicted on such, who only dissent from the use of some things, whose lawfulness they at present scruple, till sufficient time and means he used for their information of the nature and indifferency of the things; that it may be seen whether it be out of wilful contempt, and obstinacy of spirit, or only weakness of conscience, and dissatisfaction concerning the things themselves, that they disobey. And if it be made evident to be out of contempt, that only such penalties he inflicted as answer to the nature of the offence." Where he adds, "I am sure it is contrary to the primitive practice,

and the moderation then used, to suspend and deprive men of their ministerial function for not conforming in habits, gestures, or the like." Which he makes good by following instances beyond his own present contradictions. It is strange that for such like things, now, it is thought so highly just, that our ministers are totally to be kept out of the ministry, and we out of the church, and way of salvation! Are these unproportionable penalties even where contempt appears? And what are they when, through God's mercy, there appears not the least colour of it?

Is mere scrupling a human device in the worship of God, an inability to see with other men's eyes, and to mould and form our judgment and consciences as some other men can do theirs, a crime so inexpiable, that nothing less than our eternal ruin can satisfy for it? They know, who have read the Turkish history, that mere scruple brought that necessity upon the garrison of Sfetigrade in Scanderbeg's days, that rather than drink of water which they thought polluted, they must either surrender or perish. If another possible way could have been found to supply them, was it fit they and the town should rather be lost, than their unreasonable scruple be borne with? Or should they, in that exigency, be still held to it, to drink of that very water or none? We think we have greater reason to urge for our scruples, we think our necessity is greater, the case more important, and God deliver us from such pastors, as will not think so too, and value souls at a higher rate.

Our case being thus, we apply ourselves to ministers, bound by their calling and office to attend the affairs of the souls of men. They are at leisure, have nothing else to do; they may not live idle and useless in the world. This is their proper business. Whatever their opinion is about the things we scruple, (and we believe it is mostly the same with ours,) we see not how they can, or dare, deny us the help of their ministerial labours: we thank God that they dare not. And should they daily spend their pains upon us to urge us to the ceremonial way, as we believe they would do it very heartlessly; (wishing things to be, in that respect, otherwise in the Christian church, as well as we:) so would their labour in that kind be unprofitable, and therefore ungrateful to us. Nor do we think it needs any sort of mortifiedness in them (as we find they are jeered under that notion) not to send us away unedified and grieved from their congregations; so much as a mortifiedness in their love of souls, and their sense of eternal concernments; wherein too many others have attained to a great degree of mortification.

But now, my honoured friend, what think you of our cause? Let us seriously consider it, not according to the appearance which it will have to a captious sophistical wit, but as you will apprehend it to look in the eyes of our supreme and final Judge; considering also the same blessed Jesus, as that mighty Redeemer and Lover of souls, who once suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring them to God. Bring the matter before him, with whom you are to expect no tricks, but most plain and equal dealing. And bethink yourself, whether of these two things he will be more likely to have regard unto,—the saving of souls, which he bought with his blood; or the preserving inviolate certain human institutions and rules, confessed by the devisers of them not to be necessary to the being of the church, which common reason sees unnecessary to its well-being, to its external order and decency, (evidently as great without them,) which this author makes foreign thereto, when he tells us, that matters of order and decency are allowable and fitting, but ceremonies properly taken for actions significative, and therefore appointed because significative, their lawfulness may with better ground be scrupled, Iren. page 68. and which experience shows to be destructive; as whereby so great numbers, not only of his labourers, are to be discarded, but of living, flourishing plants to be torn up by the roots, and all thrown out of his vineyard together?

For my own part, I must profess not to have the least doubt concerning the thing itself which we and our ministers do, and practise; it is only our common great concern, to be very careful with what temper of spirit, and with what design we do it. It should to the uttermost be endeavoured to be done with all meekness and humility, with all possible reverence to authority, abhorrence of the least real contempt, and unfeigned regret there should be any appearance of it, though never so unavoidable; with a design only to glorify God, and promote the common salvation: not to make or serve a party, or advance any other interest than that of mere substantial Christianity and godliness. Let us covet this temper of mind; and where we see persons of real worth, and of a true latitude and largeness of spirit, commensuratc to the Christian interest, that fall in with the public constitution, value and love them nothing the less, than if their judgments about these lesser things were never so exactly squared with our own, and so much more, by how much they may excel us in far greater and more valuable things. And if it be our lot to suffer under the notion of evil-doers for doing what we take to be our duty, let it be according to the Doctor's wholesome counsel, with an unrepining patience, and with much thankfulness both to God and our rulers, that we have enjoyed so much tranquillity; and with that cheerfulness that becomes those that expect a blessed eternity, and to be translated ere long into a pure and peaceful region, where we are to serve God, in society even with many of them who have been offended with us, without scruple or trouble to ourselves or them. If with such dispositions and aims we persist in our course, while our case is attended with such circumstances as now it is; I have no fear, I sincerely profess to you, of our acceptance with God, and, sooner or later, with all good men.

Upon the whole matter, I conceive the honest cause you were so deeply concerned for, is really unharmed, and I hope you apprehend it too; and that therefore your fear and despondency was causeless, as if it could not outlive this attempt against it by Dr. St. As you therefore see how capable it is of defence against him, I shall not forget the other part of my undertaking: but shall,

Secondly, Say somewhat (as yours sufficiently lets me see there is cause) in his just defence against you. And really, Sir, though that be an untoward thing to dispute against, I find it needful to defend him only against your anger, *i. e.* the excess of it: which, although it can no more harm him, than he hath done the cause, and consequently the blunting and breaking its edge (which is the thing I aim at) cannot advantage him, yet it will do him right: and (which was the thing I first intended) 'twill be an advantage and kindness to you.

I must here indeed tell you, that I cannot blame you for being in some measure offended, as I can excuse the Doctor but in part. I do dislike, as well as you, two things especially in his way of managing this business; *viz.* his too great acrimony, and too little seriousness.

For the former, it is too evident, and I heartily pity him for it, that he should so forget, and suffer himself to be transported beyond, the rules of Christianity and prudence; neither of which would allow him, (and I am sure within the compass of the former, his text would not,) so as to make himself a standard to all other men, as to suppose no man can be honest or conscientious that is not of his mind in the matters he then undertook to controvert, or that should not judge of the connexions of things as he did. I cannot think it hath added to his reputation to reflect so grossly before such an assembly, upon a whole party of men that are, many of them, well known in the world; and who, in point of integrity, are so little liable to be suspected, that an attempt to blemish them upon so slight a pretence, and, in matter of fact, so untrue, could not but recoil upon himself; especially with them that shall impartially compare their inducements to prevaricate with what he hath.

And for the other, it were indeed to have been wished, that upon so grave and solemn an occasion he had forborne jests, especially of that nature; as for instance, such mortified and conscientious men, and the most godly—can least endure to be told of their faults, &c. Which expressions, any one that considers his scope, will understand to be ironical; and that considers the matter, to be somewhat bold ironies; and the occasion, to be causeless ones. Inasmuch as it is not impossible, that truly mortified and conscientious men may desire opportunities to do God service in the world, in a way that he dislikes. And it may consist with real godliness not to count all those

things faults which he takes to be such. And indeed, in his dedication, his way of averting the report of those ill men, that he intended to stir up the magistrates and judges to a persecution of the dissenters, is to any considering man, sportful and ludicrous; *viz.* offering them only such a way of escaping persecution, as whereupon a man may shun suffering, if he please, from any party of men in the world, as such, by being in every thing of their mind and way: but which in effect grants the charge which he would avoid, that if we will not be so united to his party, we were to expect nothing but utmost rigour. One would rather have thought he should have bedewed that discourse with tears, which had in itself, most manifestly, so awful and tremendous a design, as not only the devoting of so great numbers, that might possibly not be convinced and persuaded by him, to a temporal ruin; but the depriving them of the ordinary means of their salvation. And that, if he thought it necessary for the preserving of order in the church, they should be so dealt with; he should have spoken of their case with the greatest compassion and tenderness, not with derision and contempt.

Yet I would have you use lenitives with yourself, and calm your own spirit; and I wish you were capable of contributing any thing to the moderating and pacifying his too. That though he have been angry unprovoked, and with a sort of men that have ever respected and honoured him, as if he had been of themselves; his anger that hath been without cause, (as you know perhaps who in a like expression blames the exorbitancy of another passion,) may not also be without end. At least, I pray you, take heed you do not deserve the like sharp repartee, which the cynic met with from that noble philosopher, that he taxed his pride with greater pride; that you exceed not the heats whereof you complain. If he will still retain his fervour, let him be angry alone; and his displeasure have its continuance with as little influence or concomitancy of yours, (and I could wish of any other man's,) as (for aught I know) it had its beginning. And that since he thinks of being a sacrifice, he may only burn gently in his own flame, which he may moderate as he please, and I hope will seasonably extinguish, before he hath suffered much harm by it.

For the qualifying of your own too great resentment and offence; I would have you consider how great reason you have to believe, that this blow came only from the (somewhat misgoverned) hand of a pious and good man. Be it far from you to imagine otherwise. If you think he was to blame for intimating suspicions of their sincerity whom he opposes, make not yourself equally blameable, by admitting hereupon any concerning his. Which would argue a mean narrow spirit, and a most unwarrantable fondness of a party, as if all true religion and godliness were bound up in it.

And if it look unlovely in your eyes to see one of so much avowed latitude and enlargedness of mind, and capable upon that account of being the more universally serviceable to the Christian church, forsaking that comprehensive interest, so far as to be ingulfed into a party upon a private and distinct basis, consider what aspect the same thing would have in yourself. And never make his difference with you in this matter, a reason to yourself of a hard judgment concerning him; who can, you must consider, differ no more from us, than we do from him.

Believe him, in the substance of what he said, to speak according to his present judgment. Think how gradually and insensibly men's judgments alter, and are formed by their converse; that his circumstances have made it necessary to him to converse most for a long time, with those who are fully of that mind which he here discovers; that his own real worth must have drawn into his acquaintance the best and most valuable of them, and such for whom he might not only have a kindness, but a reverence; and who therefore must have the more power and influence upon him, to conform his sentiments to their own.

We ourselves do not know, had we been, by our circumstances, led to associate and converse mostly with men of another judgment, what our own would have been. And they that are wont to discover most confidence of themselves, do usually but discover most ignorance of the nature of man; and how little they consider the power of external objects and inducements to draw men's minds this way or that. Nor, indeed, as to matters of this nature, can any man be confident that the grace of God shall certainly incline him to be of this or another opinion or practice in these matters; because we find those that we have no reason to believe have greater assistances of divine grace are divided about them, and go not all one way.

We may indeed be confident that had the same considerations occurred to us which have, we should have been of the same mind and judgment that we are. But it is very supposable that some accidental occasions might possibly have happened, that might hinder our actual taking up such considerations, though the things to be considered were not unknown to us. And not that only, but that might prevent our knowing even matters of fact, that have signified not a little to the determining our judgments that way which they now incline to.

And I do particularly believe, (as I doubt not but God is graciously present with those that in the sincerity of their hearts have chosen to serve him in the way which the law prescribes, so,) that if Dr. St. had known what proofs there are of that same gracious presence, in these so much censured meetings, his thoughts would have been very different of them from that they are. I do not speak of proselyting men to a party, which I heartily despise as a mean and inconsiderable thing: but have known some, and heard of many, instances of very ignorant and profane persons that have been led, perhaps by their own curiosity, or, it may be, by the persuasion of some neighbour or friend, to hear and see what was done in such meetings, that have (through God's blessing upon so despised means) become very much reformed men, and (for aught that could be judged) serious and sincere Christians. And whereas some, that have very prejudicial thoughts of all that frequent such meetings, may be apt to suspect all effects of that kind, to be nothing else but illusions of fancy, or a disposition (at least) to enthusiasm, or an artificial and industrious hypocrisy; I am very confident that if the Doctor had had the opportunity, frequently to observe and converse with such, as we have had, and heard the sobriety and consistency of their discourse, and seen the unaffected simplicity, humility, and heavenliness of their conversation, he could not have allowed himself the liberty of such hard censures, but would have judged of many such persons as you and I do.

Upon supposition of all which, I make little question but it would have been very remote from him to wish that so many persons had rather lived in sin, and perished for ever; than have been brought to repentance and a good life, by being now and then at a separate meeting.

So that for the substance of what he hath said against such meetings, we have reason to impute it to his judgment; and his judgment to such circumstances, very much, as I have mentioned, that have led him the way he hath taken; and not given him opportunity to know what might have begot a better opinion in him of the way which he opposes.

But for the manner of his treating this subject, that I impute to the prevalency of some present temptation; and hope he did not express in that sermon his habitual temper. And am highly confident, notwithstanding what he hath said in it; if it were in his power, we might even safely trust him to prescribe us terms, and should receive no hard ones from him.

Somewhat it is likely he was expected (and might be urged) to say to this business. And his own thoughts being set a work, fermented into an intemperate heat, which, it is to be hoped, will in time evaporate.

If I may freely speak to you my own thoughts, he seems to deal in this business, as one that forced himself to say somewhat. For though I apprehend he speaks his judgment, yet the expressing it in this time and manner he might regret. And because it might appear a becoming thing to him to seem earnest, the temptation prevailed with him, against his habitual inclination,) to supply with sharpness the defect of reason; which the poverty of the cause afforded not. For really his reasonings are faint, unconcluding, and unlike Dr. Stillingfleet. So that if any expected this performance from him, one may think (and this ought in some part to excuse him) that, besides some

little flourishes of his reading and wit, he seems only to have lent them his name. Which, however, I pray you, let still be of great value with you. And turn your displeasure into serious earnest praying for him, and that his spirit may not be further harmed; that amidst his many temptations, he may be delivered and preserved from being at all puffed up, or any way imbittered; and that so valuable a person be not lost, or in the least degree rendered less useful, to the church of God. And that all that know his more inward conversation, may discern in his frequent savoury discourses, in his continued serious calling upon God in his family, in his readiness to do good, especially to the souls of men, in his aptness to condescend to those that are much beneath him, how great the efficacy is of divine grace. And that, through the power of it, a great measure of wit, learning, applause, and secular advantages, may not only consist with vivid godliness, and sincere devotedness to the interest of religion, but contribute abundantly to the service and diffusion thereof in the world. I am very serious in this advice to you. Nor, thanks be to God, have so low or profane thoughts of prayer, (which hath ever borne so great a part in the religion of all times, nations, and sorts of men,) as to think it will signify nothing, especially when the design of it is not mean and private, but such wherein all good men will unite.

I little doubt, but if ever there shall be good days, and a happy state of things, on earth, a factious zeal for parties will become a contemptible thing: and all the discriminative accretions to religion, which are severally scandalous to all other parties except their own, who embrace any sort of them, (too probably for the sake of some secular interest or other, which is hoped to be gratified and engaged thereby,) will be spontaneously quitted and abandoned by all parties, from an overpowering sense and grateful relish of substantial religion itself; *i. e.* entire devotedness to God and the Redeemer, with the joyful expectation of the blessedness of the other world: and so all become one.

But is this to be done while we sleep and do nothing? Or, have we in our circumstances any thing to do, by which we may hope to contribute so much towards it, as by prayer? By this means (if men of sincere and pious minds, did with universal and abstracted aims, apply themselves to this great duty) we are to reckon the blessed spirit of holiness, love, and peace, would be more and more drawn into consent. Do you your own part herein; you will find your own present advantage by it; it will fill you with good thoughts, hopes, and expectations. The kindly benign influences whereof, will pleasantly qualify and temper your spirit, and make you know how much more grateful an inhabitant that charity is, which thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, than frowardness, discontent, vexation, and anger, at any one that thinks and speaks otherwise than you did expect or wish. Insist upon such things in prayer, as wherein it may reasonably be expected good men shall generally agree with you. You have the more reason to expect being heard; yea, and ought to hope the spirit of this person, whom you have taken such offence at, will be rescued out of temptation, and be drawn into full consent with you. For you have no cause to doubt, but that he hath those principles wrought into the temper of his mind, which need only resuscitation, that they may dispose him to union with the whole body of sober and serious Christians of his own way, or of others, (whensoever that can be seasonably endeavoured for,) upon more probable and hopeful terms than he hath proposed in this sermon. Therefore be you serious and fervent in requests to this purpose, as you have that love to God and his church, which you profess; and that value for this worthy person, which I reckon you still ought to have: or (if that can be fit to be added) any kindness for,

Sir,

Your affectionate servant, &c.

Since my writing these pages, I hear of answers to the dean's sermon; which, in so remote a corner, I have had no opportunity to see: what is here written may therefore (upon comparing) be communicated, or suppressed, as shall be thought fit.

And so I should take leave of you, but that it may be needful, whereas I have principally considered in these papers, the case of such as think it unlawful to join in the public assemblies; to add somewhat (whomsoever it may serve) in reference to their case that think otherwise. For to say the truth, this is here the more common case. And though the Doctor believes they that frequent the separate meetings, do generally judge it unlawful to join in the public; howsoever it is with you, (and it is likely the Doctor speaks of what is more within the compass of his own knowledge, or theirs who inform him,) it is with us in this part of the country quite contrary. And I may truly say, that in this place (and others where I have sometimes occasionally been) the generality of them who come to the other meetings do also attend the public.

Now these may perhaps think themselves left under blame, and may apprehend the Doctor's consequence is strong against them, (that if occasional communion be lawful, constant communion must be a duty,) which he, no doubt, understands exclusively of any distinct way of communion.

And if indeed they judge that consequence strong, I would fain know what hurt they can think it doth them? Why should any man be afraid of his duty? or of the truth which makes it known? And if hereupon they can, with the satisfaction of their own consciences, waive all other opportunities of worshipping God with others of his people, they have the less to do: and why should they complain who are satisfied?

But in short, either they apprehend such other additional means a real necessary help and advantage to them, or they do not. If they do not, they have no cause to trouble themselves, nor to grudge that so much is said for others; whose, for ought I know, may, as the Doctor thinks, (for I cannot make an estimate from this or that little spot,) be the much more common case. If they do, they have little reason to be concerned about the Doctor's consequence: which I must wonder if he himself can think strong. It hath not, you see, been altogether overlooked in the foregoing discourse: and if any feel themselves wounded by it, he is so great an Achilles, that they may have their wound and healing from the same hands.

For, as hath been noted from him in his preface to the Irenicum, he seems plainly to intimate, that men have no charter, or grant of divine power, to make other conditions of church communion than Christ hath made. If so, then the conditions by which this way of communion is distinguished from the other, (supposing they be lawful,) are still, in themselves, matter of liberty, not of duty: and so 'tis left to the prudence of a Christian to determine him (as in all like cases) this way or that; as will make most for the common good, consistently with that of his own soul. That is sin or duty, which in this or that case, will do more hurt or good. There being no particular rule to guide a man's practice, he must have recourse to that general one: by which it may be my duty, upon some great reason, to do that, at one time, which, for as great reason, I ought not to do in a continued course. And it is highly commendable, when a Christian understands the latitude which the law of Christ hath left him; is, in his own spirit, exempt from servile restraints, by other imagined bonds; and can with a generous liberty (pure from base self-respects) turn himself this way or that, as shall make most for the service of the ends he lives for. And when any accordingly use that liberty, 'tis a fancy of none but half-witted persons, to think they must therefore addict themselves to this or that party.

If a man's case come to be so stated, that he hath reason to apprehend it will do more good than hurt to others, that he own a sort of Christians, who have particularly modified themselves, otherwise than they needed, by any divine injunction, (or by any that God hath empowered men to put them under,) by communicating with them under the common notion of Christians, only, not as so modified: he doth but express the genuine complexion of a truly Christian spirit. But he is not to do so in a continued course, if he find it will be a real damage to his own soul, in comparison of another way that he finds more

edifying. Perhaps if he will be religious only, after the mode of this or that party, his fare may be either too fine or too coarse for his constant diet. I may, besides my own inclination, drink a single glass of wine out of civility to one person, or of water, to another, when I am not, for any man's pleasure, to destroy my health by tying myself to drink nothing else. And whatever Christian condescendingness and goodness of temper may prompt a man to, who makes not what others do, but what they ought to do, his rule and measure; they have least reason to expect much compliance from others, who bind themselves up within their own party, are enwrapped as leviathan in his scales, call themselves the church, (as many say, Here is Christ and there is Christ,) and call all men separatists that will not be of their church. And perhaps they assume and appropriate the name with no more pretence or colour, and with no better sense, than if a humoursome company of men should distinguish themselves from others, by wearing a blue or a yellow girdle, and call themselves mankind! Do not too many in our days distinguish their church and Christian communion, by things no more belonging to a church, or to Christianity, than a girdle of this or that colour to human nature? And which no more qualify for Christian society, than that doth for human? If, however, an ingenuous, free-spirited man, out of respect to his present company, or for any other valuable reason, should in such a case put on the blue girdle, I shall find no fault with him. But if any should go about to pinch him too close with it, so as would be inconvenient to his ease and health, or oblige him to protest against the true humanity of all that neglect it, I doubt not he would throw it away with scorn. Much less would he be a confederate with them that use it, if they professedly combine for the destruction of the rest of mankind that use it not, when many of them that refuse it apprehend it a real grievance. Especially, when they that would impose it, live with many of the rest under the government of a just and sovereign prince, from whom they have no charter for their imposition, but who hath declared he will not have his subjects so imposed upon.

In sum, we are all indispensably obliged by our Lord Jesus Christ, the sovereign Prince and Ruler of his church, to the substance of all Christian ordinances. As to uninstituted modes thereof, we are free. And they that understand their liberty, may use or not use them as is more for their own and the common good. They that understand it not, and think themselves under an obligation from Christ not to admit questionable, devised additions, into their worship; they are not therefore to deprive themselves of the substantial ordinances of the Christian religion, whereof there is no question.

I shut up all with the words of the great apostle, Rom. xiv. 2, 3. One believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, for God hath received him. Verse 13. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.

SOME CONSIDERATION

OF A

PREFACE TO AN INQUIRY CONCERNING THE

OCCASIONAL CONFORMITY OF DISSENTERS, &c.

I HOPE your public challenge, Mr. Prefacer, (as you only allow me to call you,) was given with an honest intention. Yet with what kindness, or equity, you could make your first onset in the view of the world; by hiding your own name, and exposing mine, designing yourself to fight in the dark, and expecting me to do it in open light, I leave to your own (perhaps calmer) second thoughts. I might hereupon, as I promise myself, be justified in the opinion of competent and impartial judges, if I had disappointed you in not writing; but I am apt to think I shall disappoint you more, in what I shall write upon this occasion. Yet not at all for this reason: for I thank God, I hold no opinion which I am ashamed to own to the world; but for what is with me of far greater weight. I have, for a long time, had an habitual aversion in my own mind, from perplexing myself, or disturbing others, by being concerned in agitating the controversies that have been on foot, about the circumstantials of our religion. I hope it will offend nobody, if I recite somewhat of what I wrote almost thirty years ago, in the epistle prefixed to a treatise of delighting in God, *viz.* thus;

"I have reflected and considered with some satisfaction, that this hath been my way, and the temper of my mind, among you,[a] *viz.* to recommend the serious practice of the great things of religion, which are known, and least liable to question, without designing to engage you to, or against, any party of them that differ about circumstantial matters. Great reason I have to repent, that I have not with greater earnestness pressed upon you, the known and important things wherein serious Christians do generally agree; but I repent not, that I have so little engaged in the hot contests of our age, about the things wherein they differ: for as I pretend to little light in these things, (whence I could not have much confidence to fortify me unto such an undertaking,) so I must profess have little inclination to contend about matters of that kind. Nor yet am I indifferent as to those smaller things, that I cannot discern to be in their own nature so. But though I cannot avoid to think that course right, which I have deliberately chosen therein, I do yet esteem that but a small thing, upon which to ground an opinion of my excelling them that think otherwise, as if I knew more than they. For I have often recounted thus seriously with myself, that of every differing party (in those circumstantial matters) I do particularly know some persons, by whom I find myself much excelled in far greater things than is the matter of that difference. I cannot ('tis true) thereupon say and think every thing that they do; which is impossible, since they differ from one another as well as me. And I understand well, there are other measures of truth, than this or that excellent person's opinion. But I thereupon reckon, I have little reason to be conceited of any advantage I have of such, in point of knowledge, (even as little as he should have, that can sing, or play well on a lute, of him that knows how to command armies, or govern a kingdom,) and can with the less confidence differ from them, or contend with them. Being thereby, though I cannot find that I err in these matters, constrained to have some suspicion lest I do; and to admit it possible enough, that some of them who differ from me, having much more light in great matters, may have so, in these also. Besides, that I most seriously think, humility, charity, and patience would more contribute to the composing of these lesser differences, or to the good estate of the Christian interest under them, than the most fervent disputes and contestations. I have upon such considerations little concerned myself, in contending for one way, or another, whilst I was among you; or in censuring such as have differed from me in such notions or practices as might consist with our common great end, or as imported not manifest hostility thereto. Contenting myself to follow the course, that to my (preponderating) judgment seemed best, without stepping out of my way to justle others."

This was long before, and hath been ever since, the constant temper of my mind, in reference to matters of this kind. I have contented myself by the best means I could be furnished with, and the best use God enabled me to make of them, so far to form and settle my judgment, as was absolutely necessary to my own practice; not taking my measures from what I was to hope or fear, of worldly advantage or disadvantage, reputation or disreputation; but in what way, as my case was to be circumstanced, I might walk most agreeably to the common Christian rule, the holy word of God, and best serve the proper ends of life; do most good in the world, and, as my calling obliged me, most promote the common salvation. And that judgment, once formed, and preponderating to the way I chose, I have endeavoured faithfully to follow. Herein my heart reproaches me not, and, I hope, shall not as long as I live.

In the meantime, I have abstained from censuring others, who have taken a different way. I have rejoiced in the seriousness and success of any such, in their ministerial work, and in the liberty they had for public service, which I had not. I usually pray for a blessing upon their labours, as upon my own. My converse hath been as free, and pleasant, with divers of them, as with others, that were entirely agreed with me in circumstantial matters. Nor have I felt any inclination in my mind, to controvert with them the matters of difference between us, but have even, in our converse, forgot what we differed, having no more cause to suspect hurt from them, than they from me. Where is the man that can say, I ever persuaded him to conform, or not to conform?

a The inhabitants of Torrington, magistrates and people, to whom this discourse was dedicated.

This disinclination with me to controversies of any such kind, hath proceeded from sundry reasons. My judgment was already so far settled in these things, as was necessary to my own practice. I reckoned an unproportionable measure of the short time we have to live in this world, was not to be taken up about them: that it consisted not with a man's designed progress towards his end, to be always, or too long, inquiring about his way: that disputes of that kind have little savour in them, compared with the great, agreed matters of our faith and hope. I was loth to disquiet others, or cast stumbling-blocks before them, who seemed as well satisfied, in their way, as I was in mine. I observed such altercations seldom better men's spirits, but that often they make them worse. I had a great reverence for divers that differed from me in these things: I knew several of them to be much superior to me, in all sorts of more valuable knowledge; as also I did of them that therein agreed with me. Comparisons I thought odious and vain. I could not be of every worthy and good man's mind, when they were not all of the same mind. I had enough, I thought, to satisfy myself in reference to my own practice, not enough to change theirs; or enable me to set up to be a decider of such controversies. It was remote from me to think sincere religion, either confined to any party, distinguished by these little things, or excluded from any. That the kingdom of God consisted not in them, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. I have thought, that as things that were most necessary were most plain; so things that were so very little plain were the less necessary. Those particles of matter must have very little of real entity in them, that escape the acies, and discerning, of the finest and quickest eye. I have hardly known any point in metaphysics or scholastic divinity, disputed with greater niceness and subtlety, than our controversy about the ceremonies; and though I never thought myself to be any of the quickest in the art of disputing, yet I think, taking which side I will in this disputation, I could easily puzzle the most, of plain people, and that are but of an ordinary understanding, about them; much more easily than I could convince, or satisfy them, (or perhaps, did myself,) the one way, or the other.

The matter were indeed easy, if (for instance) in a select gathered church (of one or other whereof I suppose you are) one conscience, or a few men's, would serve for the whole body; or by parity of cases, of a whole parish or nation. But when we consider, that every one must give an account of himself to God; and that in matters which concern our own duty Godward, we are no more capable of having it done by another for us, than (as a noted person in our time aptly speaks) of being represented by another in the day of judgment; this will bring the matter with weight, upon our spirits, lest we should be found transgressors in Bethel, and to have offered strange fire, instead of a sacrifice, on the one hand; or needlessly, on the other hand, set on fire the temple itself. This will, in God's time, I doubt not, be considered by such as can make the occasion cease, of such difficulties. In the mean time, it is of great consolation to those that sincerely fear God, that if with upright minds they principally study to approve themselves to him, and if they mistake, do only err for fear of erring; he will not with severity animadvert upon the infirmity of a weak and merely misguided judgment.

It is a most sure truth, and worth all this world, that to an honest unbiassed heart, 'tis a far easier thing to please God, than men.—I have also considered, that some that can contend fervently, and conclude positively, concerning church power, where it is lodged, and how far it can extend, in making rules, and inflicting censures, discover too often more confidence than knowledge and solid judgment, in those very things themselves; but much oftener, little of the Spirit of Christ and the Gospel; little of that meekness, humility, charity, that are most essential, and inward to true Christianity; and are too apt to magnify the tithing of mint, annis and cummin, above faith, mercy, and the love of God.—I have sometimes thought that to be somewhat instructive, which is storied of Plato,[b] that having one in his academy that had great skill in driving a chariot, with that exactness, as not to swerve one jot from the lines on which the wheels were, very swiftly to move; nor could be satisfied till he had prevailed with that great man to be the spectator of his performance herein, he was so far from applauding him, that turning away with contempt, he said, "they that mind, with such exactness, little things, will never mind great."—I detract nothing from the exact care that ought to be had in observing God's own revelations and injunctions, if you understand aright under what notion, and for what ends, he intended them. Nothing is to be thought little in religion, that truly belongs to it. But, Sir, if you should take upon you to devise rules and measures of your own and then put a sacredness upon them; yea more, insist to have them observed with greater strictness, and for more distinguishing purposes, than ever God intended divers of his own revelations for; this I must tell you were bold, and extravagant. And how you are concerned herein, we shall see in the progress of this discourse.

To come somewhat closer to you therefore, Mr. Prefacer, I shall first consider how reasonably and justly you offer to engage me in this quarrel; and this will lead me on to take a view of your treatment of that honorable person, against whom your quarrel is more principally meant. As to your endeavour to involve me in this affair, I [illegible] before you had offered at it, you should have been well assured of these two things; at least of the one or the other of them: 1. That I really did concern myself to advise, one way or other, as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of that occasional conformity, about which you contend. 2. That I ought to have done so. If neither of these can be made to appear, I cannot but think it was a distemper of mind, an immoderate scripturiency, or what shall I call it? too great an affectation of intermeddling beyond any call you had, that could lead you to it. And whereas you think you have not exceeded, herein, the rules of charity or good manners; as to the point of manners, I will not take upon me to be your judge; I believe you guess me to be no master of ceremonies. But as to the much greater business of charity, I must talk with you more about that before we part. For it is a matter of much greater compass. And in your measures and exercise whereof the generality of serious Christians are concerned as well as I. But as concerning myself, can you make either of these appear?

I. As to the former, I am sure you cannot, nor any man. Nor ought you to have presumed it, unless you had been sure of the 2nd, That I ought. I, for my part, judged I ought not. Whether I did truly judge or no, that leads into the main cause, that will lie between us, wherein I shall be no less cautious than you, though therein I shall not so far compliment you, as to pretend I more follow your example in it, than my own inclination; *i. e.* I shall not undertake to determine, whether the action (as circumstanced) of that honourable personage you principally reflect upon, were lawful or unlawful. This I meddle not with; and you pretend to decline it too; (either you, or the author you recommend and follow, which is all one to me;) *viz.* the question, whether this or that communion be lawful or unlawful; but are so little true to that pretence, as to judge that person who occasionally partakes in the legally established church's communion, unfit, ever after, to be received, otherwise than as a penitent, to any other Christian communion. And I think no man is to do the part of a penitent, but for what was unlawful, or a fault.

Now I, for my part, shall not take so much upon me as to determine, not being called, if I were never so competent, whether there were any thing faulty in that action or no. But in this I am neither in doubt, nor without a sufficient occasion to declare, that I can judge it no such fault (if it be one) as should exclude one, that in all other respects appears a serious and an orderly Christian, from any other Christian communion, to which he may have thought fit to adjoin himself. And that I may set in view the ground for my not judging otherwise, and for the following discourse, we must distinguish,

I. Of the obligation of precepts negative, and affirmative, or against sins, and unto duties, *viz.* against or unto, such things, as, by those precepts, become sins or duties. And of these, I shall speak only so far, as concerns our present purpose, *i. e.* as they are to come under considera-

[b] Æl. Var. Hist.

tion in *foro ecclesiæ*, or in a visible church of Christ. And so, there are sins consistent with the Christian state. And there are sins inconsistent with it; or destructive of it. Duties that are matter of simple precept, and duties that are also conditions of Christian communion. We are also to distinguish the obligation of negative and affirmative precepts, as 'tis usual and common, *viz.* that the former bind (unless the precept were repealed) *semper, et ad semper*, always, and to every point of time. The latter, always, while the precept stands in force, but not to every point of time. Of this we shall make the proper use, in the fit place.

2. Of the different notions under which, or causes for which, men of different sentiments or persuasions may decline the communion of this or that church: *viz. Some* may decline the communion of this or that church, as judging it essentially defective; so as not to have in it the essentials of a Christian church. (Whether that judgment be right or wrong, true or false, is not now the question; or under our present consideration.) *Others* may decline it, as judging it defective in respect of some accidentals, or circumstances; either simply considered, or compared with some other Christian church, that they may apprehend to come nearer the Christian rule; and wherein the administration of Christ's ordinances may be more profitable, and tend more to their advantage and benefit, in their spiritual concernments.

These distinctions we shall consider severally, both by way of explication and application to the present case.

I. For the former, when we speak of sins consistent or inconsistent with the Christian state; of duties that are merely such; or that also are required as necessary to Christian communion; we intend the distinction as referring to visible Christianity. And mean, that as there are sins inconsistent with visible Christianity: avowed atheism, open idolatry, infidelity, apostacy, total, or in respect of some or other known fundamental or Christian religion; contumacious and continuing rebellion against the authority and known laws of Christ; which, without visibly serious repentance and reformation, slur and deface a man's character, as a visible Christian: so there may be faults that do it not; which may yet come under common notice, or view. I only instance in what is more agreeable to our present case, as misjudging in some circumstantial matters, and very disputable, that are extra-essential to the substance of Christianity; and practising according to that erring and mistaken judgment; even though the mistake be continued, never discerned, and never repented of or reformed as long as one lives.

Such were the differences in judgment and practice about meats and days, Rom. xiv. 2, &c. wherein there could not but be right and wrong. Both sides could not be in the right, *i. e.* referring their practice to their judgment. The question being, whether such and such things were lawful or unlawful, and that the one side judged them lawful, the other, unlawful. The one side must be in the wrong. The things about which they differed, could not be both lawful and unlawful. It must be sin to judge and do amiss; duty, to judge aright, and practice accordingly. And what was now to be done in this case? Were they to excommunicate, and curse, and damn one another? Some that presided in the Christian church did, 'tis true, in process of time, come to use an unchristian severity in such cases. As when some tied themselves to the eating of herbs only, and abstained from flesh (whether they derived their opinion from the school of Pythagoras, or however they came by it, matters not.) And it was determined concerning them, (I could show where and when were it needful,) that if they would use abstinence, upon other considerations, they might; but if upon a judgment, or opinion, that the eating of flesh was unlawful, they should be excommunicated. And this was thought a sufficient reason for that hard censure, because they denied Christ to have given that liberty, as to meats, which he had really given. But was this according to the mind of God? No, quite contrary; we see it otherwise determined by apostolical authority, Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations, Rom. xiv. 1. The case follows. The charge is, Receive them, take them into your communion, and dispute not his doubting judgment with him, or pass you no judgment upon it, so as to vex or disquiet him with it. Let him alone with his judgment and practice together; but receive him. And the forementioned rigour, we find to have been corrected in after-time.

And the like charges are elsewhere given in reference to the differences between the Jewish and the Gentile Christians, the circumcised and the uncircumcised; *i. e.* that in the Christian state, no distinction was to be made of Jews or Greeks, circumcision or uncircumcision, them that used or disused the Jewish rites and ceremonies; but all were to be esteemed as one in Christ Jesus, or Christ to be all in all among them, Gal. iii. 28. Col. iii. 11. *i. e.* God makes no difference, supposing they be good men, sincere Christians, or become new creatures; he stands neither upon their being circumcised, or uncircumcised, Gal. vi. 15. Retaining or quitting the subsequent judaical observances; so tenderly, and by so gentle a hand, did the Divine wisdom and goodness draw off the judaizing Christians from those things, whereof he designed the total abolition; whereof they had more pretence to be tenacious, being things enjoined by God himself. Therefore God treats them with more indulgence. And what example should we rather choose to follow? especially, what indulgence doth the case itself challenge, in not pressing, under penalty, what there can be no pretence of divine authority for? And we find this is the measure according to which we are to go, in receiving persons into our communion. We are to receive such as we have reason to think God receives; in the forecited, Rom. xiv. 3. Do not judge, but receive him, for God hath received him.

There are therefore two plain rules, laid down by that great apostle, in reference to such dubious and small matters; *viz.* one concerning such scrupulous persons themselves, that they be fully persuaded in their own minds, (ver. 5.) and do nothing against the judgment of their own consciences, in those matters; which he enforces, verse 23. The other concerning the carriage of fellow Christians towards them, that they judge them not, but receive them, verse 1, 2, 3—10. Whereupon Mr. Prefacer, I conceive myself clear in not judging. And you will be clear in judging, if not only you are an abler judge, (which I will never dispute with you,) but also, that you were called to judge; and that your judgment is most assuredly true. If God have authorized you, and revealed to you, not only what was right or wrong, in the case itself, but the secrets of his heart, whom you judge; and that he practised what he thought to be wrong: *i. e.* that he is a hypocrite, and that he hath, against his conscience, yielded to do that for (an unprofitable) preferment, probably to his great loss, (as some have found it,) which he himself thought unlawful; if you know him to be of so vain and light a mind, that not for any real advantage, but for a little temporary, evanid honour and gayety, he hath offered this violence to the judgment of his own conscience; if God revealed this to you, and charged you to proclaim it to the world; then hath he indeed set you over him, and far above him; placed you in a much higher seat of judicature, than that wherein he is seated; dignified you with an authority superior to what he ever conferred upon any apostle, or on the whole Christian church, or on any, besides his own Son.

But if there be nothing of all this; then, though your judgment should happen to be true, yet if it were without any ground, upon which you could know it to be true; and so it were only right by chance: if it were without call; if you had nothing to do with the matter; if it come among the exempted cases reserved by the great God to his own tribunal, and which he hath subjected to no ecclesiastical nor human cognizance; being, as to the matter itself, very minute, not so much as a doubtful action; but the circumstance of an action, and that touches not any vital of religion; as to the lawfulness of that circumstance, disputable; a ceremony; one of them, that were not less disputed, by men of excellent wisdom, and piety on both sides, than the Jewish ones, in the time when they were matter of controversy to the Christian church: and after all that disputation, determinable, for aught I know, chiefly, by the *majus* or *minus bonum ecclesiæ*; as in the time when that Jewish rite of circumcision was the occasion of so much disquiet to the primitive Christians, St.

Paul circumcised Timothy, for the greater service of the Christian interest; and being, as to the inward intention, motive, and inducement, secret, and liable only to the Divine view; then, I say, upon all this, even supposing the thing you censure were faulty, yet it is no such fault as can slur the character of a man, otherwise appearing a serious Christian. If the contrary were duty, 'tis no such duty as is necessary to entitle a man to any Christian communion. Yea, and I add, your censuring it, as you do, is a thousand-fold (even unconceivably) more faulty. And if you could truly say, as Diogenes did, trampling upon Plato's rich bed, *calco Platonis fastum, I tread upon Plato's pride*, it might more justly be replied, as the latter did reply, *sed majori fastu, but you do it with greater pride.* You take upon you to invade the throne of the Most High; and may take that as said to you, Who art thou that judgest another's servant? Why dost thou judge thy brother? We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, Rom. xiv. 4—10. And I wonder you did not dread those awful words, of that very Judge, Matt. vii. 1. Judge not that ye be not judged. And shall more wonder, if yet you perceive not, when you thought a mote was in another's eye, that there was a beam in your own, as verse 3. A thing that among heathens[c] has been animadverted on with just severity. Nor shall I recharge you in the following words, Thou hypocrite, (for I know not your heart in this matter,) but I would have you re-consider, with how little warrant you have broadly charged that worthy person your quarrel is about, with hypocrisy; that he acted against his own conscience, because he acted not according to yours: as if yours were to be the standard, and the conscience-general to mankind! But that you may apprehend it not impossible for a man to follow the dictate of conscience, and perhaps as good a one as yours, though he do not follow yours; I shall yet have recourse to a second distinction, before laid down, *viz.* betwcen the different notions under which, or causes for which, men of different sentiments may decline the communion of this, or that church, *viz.* some, as thinking it essentially defective—others, as judging it defective in some circumstances only.—Now, Sir, if any man decline the communion of what is (however) vulgarly called a church, as counting it really no church at all, his withdrawing or abstaining from its communion, must be total and constant, he can have no communion with it as a Christian church at all. But if one avoid more ordinary communication with a church, as judging it, though not essentially defective, yet to want or err in some circumstances so considerable, as that he counts another church comes nearer the common Christian rule, the Holy Scriptures; and finds its administrations more conducing to his spiritual advantage; he may be led, by the judgment of his conscience; both, sometimes, upon weighty and important reasons, to communicate with the former, and continue therein, according as those reasons shall continue urgent upon him; and yet, sometimes, as the eessant or diminished weight of such reasons shall allow, to communicate with the other.

They that will not admit of this distinction, thus generally proposed, as a ground of such different practice in the general, as is here expressed; but judge not only essential perfection, but a perfection by the concurrence of all desirable accidents, to be necessary also unto Christian communion, can have no communion with any Christian church on earth; for where is any to be found every way perfect? 'Tis true, that accidental defects may be more or less, and it requires great accuracy to apply what is here generally said to particular cases; nor shall that be my present business; I have somewhat else of greater importance to do. All that I concern myself for, is only to have it considered, that a man of conscience may, upon the grounds generally mentioned, vary his communion as hath been said, while he keeps himself within the limits of a Christian church, essentially true, and that hath no additions destructive of that essence. And if he mistake in making application hereof to a particular case, it proves him not to be a man of a profligate conscience, or of none at all. He may have arguments so specious, that, supposing he err, may impose upon the judgment, and thereby direct the practice of a very intelligent, discerning, and upright-bearted man: so as to make him think that which is perhaps an error, his present duty; and so not offer violence to his conscience, in what he so doth. As, judging such a church true, as to essentials, he may think (occasion inviting) he hath greater reason, though it be defective in accidents, to communicate with it sometimes, than to shun its communion always; since those Christians that agree in all the essentials of Christianity, agree in far greater things than it is possible for them to disagree in. He must have mean and misshapen thoughts of Christian religion, that thinks not the great doctrines of faith, ordinances of worship, and rules of daily practice (common to us all) unspeakably more valuable, than this or that external mode, or form, of religion, that is but accidentally, and mutably, adherent thereto. And what if some have thought that alone a sufficient reason for their occasional communion with a church, with which they have not constant communion, that they may do it and themselves that right before the world, as to testify, they decline it not as no church; but so far practically, own it, as the reason of the thing requires: why may they not be supposed to do this, as thinking it a good reasou, whether it be really so or no, without going against conscience herein? And yet the same person may, perhaps, think the communion of another church preferable, and, for ordinary resort, rather to be chosen, as wherein he finds the same essence, with more regular, grateful, and advantageous modes and ways of administration.

And if hereupon it should be said, But since, Sir, you think it not unlawful to communicate with such a church sometimes, why should you not, for common order's sake, do it always?

May he not reply, Pardon me in that, good Sir, if I think I owe more to what I take for Christ's rule, and to the discernible advantage of my own soul; judging, in these respects, that communion to be best, which I more constantly adhere to. I say, why may not an honest well-meaning man reason thus; and do accordingly, (whether his sentiments herein be right or wrong,) without gainsaying his own conscience? And the rather, for that the church itself, with which he more ordinarily communicates not, (as comprehended in the states of the realm,) so far gives him the liberty of his choice, as to reckon his doing herein what is more for his satisfaction, and advantage, no punishable thing. Why may he not conscientiously say, Let me be excused, if I do not compliment away things that are, to me, of so great importance; and which they to whom I give it, cannot but count a profane sort of compliment?

Question. But should not the latitude of a Christian carry him to fix his communion with the larger and more extensive church?

Answer. What! Should the latitude of a Christian bind him to one sort of Christians, with exclusion of all other? Never was that noble principle of true Christian latitude more perverted, or turned even against itself, than if it be used to train men into a religious bigotry! As if the apostle's professing to be all things to all men, to the Jews as a Jew, &c. must signify, that he take one side, and engage with the Jews, against the Gentiles! They that refuse confinement to the largest church may avoid it, not because they should, otherwise, express too much latitude, but too little.

Some may here, perhaps, say, "What one judges best, ought to be chosen always." And indeed nothing is more easy, or ordinary, than for them that have little compass of thought, to pronounce hastily, and conclude peremptorily, even beyond seven men that can render a reason. How would such a one stare, if one should oppose a downright negative to his confident assertion! and say, What is best, in matter of practice, is not to be chosen and done always? 'Tis not enough to justify such a choice, and practice, that it be in itself, or simply best; but that it be best, in present circumstances, and all things considered, that ought to be considered, in the present juncture.

[c] Cum tua pervideas oculis mala lippus inunctis,
Cur in amicorum vitiis tam cernis acutum.
Quam aquila, aut serpens Epidaurius?—Hor.
(And many others of them abound with like passages.)

Let here another distinction be remembered, before laid down. Negative precepts oblige to every point of time. Affirmative do not so. He that is always under obligation to pray solemnly, is not obliged to be always solemnly at prayer. The worship of God is better than most actions of our lives; yet the saving of a town or house from fire, yea, the plucking of a sheep or an ox out of a ditch, is sometimes to be preferred. The most sacred external act of duty becomes a sin, when it excludes that which is more a duty at that time. How fatal, how totally destructive an error might it have proved, before, to the Jewish nation, always to have thought it unlawful to defend themselves on the sabbath-day! [d] How long was sacramental obsignation in the wilderness omitted? How much more may attending upon such an institution, in, what some may think, a more eligible manner; if there be a reason that outweighs; when, not the substance of the ordinance is wanting, but what is counted (perhaps by you) a fitter modus!

To be plain with you, Mr. Prefacer, suppose you judge kneeling at the Lord's table a sin, (as cautious as you are, not to seem to take this, or that side, in these controversies, wherein you, however, unwarily betrayed yourself, as hath been noted; yet my supposing it doth you no hurt,) and suppose you judge another gesture a duty; suppose you judge concurrence in the use of the liturgy a sin, and the unprescribed way (by human authority) a duty; yet who hath empowered you to make such sins (if they were such) exclusive from Christian communion? or such duties, conditions of it? Sometime, surely, it will be understood how bold an adventure it is, to make terms of Christian communion, which Christ hath never made. There are sins and duties, immediately by God's law itself, that he never intended to be so characteristical, *viz.* of the unfit or fit subjects of Christian communion. For what! hath God forbidden any to be admitted to Christian communion, but such as are perfect in knowledge and holiness? How bold a self-assuming then is it in you, not only to make sins and duties which God hath never made so; but also to make them distinguishing terms of Christian communion! which is far higher, and the more insolent usurpation! You know, or it is meet for you so to judge, that many pious men dare not partake of the Lord's supper, otherwise than kneeling. And I have been sufficiently assured concerning divers of eminent sanctity, that they have been as greatly affected, and had as high elevations of soul, in the use of the common prayer, as others in any other way of devotion.

Now, Mr. Prefacer, ought another man's gust to have been the measure of theirs? would you have these men excluded from all Christian worship, *viz.* in society with Christian worshippers? To say, Let them worship God with those of their own way, is to say you know not what. For if (as by your rule it seems to be determined) the things are unlawful and exclusive from all Christian communion in worship, there ought to be none of any such way, that they can worship with. And now, Sir, if that be your conscience, that supposing there be never so many thousands in a Christian nation that cannot worship God in your way, you would have them paganized, made as heathens and publicans, God bless me from your conscience! And shall this be your way of recommending yourself to Christian communion? Wheresoever such a spirit appears of zeal against such and such external forms; (or if it be for them, 'tis all one to me;) of pride and self-esteem, for so contemptibly little things; of malice and cruelty, that they could persecute even to the death, if it were in their power, or into strange countries, such as differ from them in things of no greater moment: I would sooner be of a fellowship with drunkards, or other sensualists, (though I hope God will keep me from both,) than with them; as much, as I count a devil somewhat a worse thing than a brute. Nor can it be said, that herein Satan is transformed into an angel of light; his transformation is, at least, in this, very inartificial. He apparently enough shows himself to belong to the darkest region. And whereas some such may talk of offering strange fire, because it comes not from their altar; their fire is as much stranger than Nadab's and Abihu's, as common unconsecrated fire differs from infernal.

You will say, These human forms, and other devices they are so much set upon, are sins. Sins! but I ask, Do they unchristian a man? They will be much more overmagnified, by so fervent opposition, than by serious use. But what would I do in such a case? would I not reject a man from the Lord's table, how serious soever, that would not communicate otherwise than kneeling? No, God forbid! Let him use his own freedom, and be fully persuaded in his own mind; he shall not offend me. And though there was a time when Christians were forbidden kneeling at all on the Lord's day; I had rather that human institution were neglected, than any good man debarred of so useful an ordinance. I should never quarrel with any man for that gesture itself. But I should like no one's choice of it the better, that should pretend to choose it for a moral reason. For instance, as expressive of greater reverence; because a moral reason must immediately bind conscience; and is of universal extent, must equally concern all; whence, this would imply an accusation of all other Christian churches that use not this gesture, as irreverent, or less reverent than they ought to be. Nor can there be any other measure of *debitum*, or of that which ought to be, but some law or other; nor can there be any law of universal obligation, but by a universal law-giver. This would therefore insinuate an accusation of our Lord himself of neglect, in not making such a law, and in allowing a different gesture to his disciples, when he first appointed that ordinance. For though their gesture was not sitting, it is more probable to have been such, as was used in those times and countries for their ordinary table gesture. And this other I should use, being in communion with those that use it, rather not to offend them, than please the master of the house, or to satisfy my own conscience, as if it were in itself a sin not to use it. But for them that use it on that account, *i. e.* of conscience towards God; I should, according to the mentioned rule, not judge, but receive them.

And whereas some may think it would introduce confusion into the church, that all should not be confined to one gesture in such an act of worship, it would be a worse confusion to have serious Christians, because their conscience obliges them to kneel, when others do not, mingled with Turks and infidels. Nor is that oneness of gesture more necessary to any order that is itself necessary, than that all that partake together in such an ordinance, be of one stature, size, or sex; or wear all garments of the same shape or colour. I hope for a time, when Christianity will be the religion of the world. While it is cramped it will never grow. I hope it not to prevail in the world, by having all the world, in every minute thing, reduced to the model of this or that party. How absurdly arrogant would he be, that should pray that all the world might be of one mind, by being all brought to be, in every nice punctilio, of his mind. When I see partition-walls taken down, truly catholic Christianity coming into repute, a readiness and promptness of mind, to be all things to all men in the apostle's true meaning; when the great things of religion do more engage men's minds, and they cease to magnify trifles; when as to faults, (real or supposed,) men no longer strain at gnats and swallow camels; when the love of God comes to govern the Christian church, and reign in the hearts of men; then will the kingdom of God come with power. For I am sure the spirit of love is the spirit of power, and of a sound mind. In the meantime, I declare myself (as I have often) to be of no party, self-distinguished by so little things. Nor, when the visible church of Christ on earth comes to be confessedly composed (as of old) only of three sorts, catechumens, penitents, and the fideles, with their infants, can it be any great or insuperable difficulty, whom we are to receive into our communions, and whom we are to exclude.

And thus, Mr. Prefacer, I have said all I intend, as to the main of your cause, *i. e.* Whether they that shall not be of your mind, when such a case occurs to them, as that about which you litigate, and shall practise otherwise, (*i. e.* shall not please you,) should therefore, except they repent,

[d] As it was once said to have been, Plutarch de Superst.

be excluded all other Christian communion? I shall say no more to it, except what may occasionally fall in, upon my giving some short remarks as to the manner of your treating such worthy persons, whose judgment and practice agree not with yours. Herein, because I never intended to answer your book, (thinking what I have said makes that needless,) I shall only note some passages from it, here and there.

And I begin with the title-page. Where, I pray you inquire of your own heart, what you meant by that suggestion "in cases of preferment?" Was it not to insinuate, that preferment was the inducement to that worthy person, to act against his own conscience in that case? when it was his known judgment, testified by his practice several years before. Herein you should have been sure. You meddled with a two-edged weapon, wherewith you vainly aimed to wound him, (for a sincere conscience is invulnerable,) but have most certainly wounded yourself. You may in time feel the wound; 'tis worse while you don't. If he can sincerely appeal to the Searcher of hearts, (as for ought you know, he can,) Lord, thou knowest this man hath wronged me: I would not have such an appeal lying in heaven against me for all the world! How can you tell but that such a thing was designed, and done with a sincere aim and intention of mind? Among heathens it hath not been unknown, that some having honorary coronets conferred upon them, consecrated them to their gods.[e] Is it impossible somewhat like it should be done by a Christian to the true and living God? Are you so much a stranger to a devoted life, as not to think this possible? You have wronged him, when, without ground, you judged otherwise: but you wronged the great God infinitely more, whose throne you presumed to usurp. And you should have been able, before you concluded with so rash confidence, to prove the act in its circumstance unlawful. If it were lawful. go among them you thought to gratify, and inquire who of them will think a consequent preferment could make it unlawful? Therefore your insinuations, except wherein it is spiteful and mischievous, is idle and vain.

Again, your subjoined text of Scripture, "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal"—for what purpose was it set there? What! to signify, that the God of the dissenters, and of the established church, differ as the living God and Baal? Did you take this for a piece of wit? 'twas uncharitable. Uncharitable! that's a trifle in comparison; 'twas profane and most impious wit; yet you are mighty fond of the conceit, and we have it over and over in the book, that the conformists and dissenters serve two Gods (as the one of them is miscalled) and have two religions! The Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, and as truly the congregations of England, to place his name in them, (and whom, as invocated in many, and for ought appears you intend in most of them, you blaspheme as a senseless idol,) rebuke, and forgive you!

This may occasion some idle people to cry out, "What! at church in the forenoon, and at a meeting-house in the afternoon! This is fine! and what will now become of our religion?" And what is, already, become of his religion who so exclaims? Do the religion of the church and of the meeting-house make two religions? Wherein do they differ? The substance of the same religion is common to them both. Therefore the modes and accidents, wherein only they differ, are this man's religion. And can any man be the better for such a religion, that consists of modes and accidents? 'Tis true, that religion may possibly be so ludicrously disguised and misrepresented, as scarce to be fitly owned for any religion at all. But this cannot be said of most (if of any) of the congregations of England, of either sort. And they that have any thing of charity, or the fear of God, about them, will be very wary how, for a misplaced word, or indecent action, or expression, they censure one or another of these two sorts of solemn worshipping assemblies, as having nothing of God, or true religion, among them.

Thirty-nine articles are given us for the summary of our religion, and of what is thought to appertain to it. Thirty-six contain the substance of it, wherein we agree: three, the additional appendices, about which we have some difference. With such a man, the three weigh more than all the thirty-six. And if his eyes and understanding were useable things with him, he would see the church is a meeting-house, and the meeting-house a church. How remote are these men from the temper of spirit they were directed to be of, that had far greater differences among them than ours, to count themselves all one in Christ Jesus! But throughout the book, such as are of this Christian latitude and benignity of mind towards one another, and not so stingily bigoted to a party, as he, are treated with this sort of charity, to be styled painted hypocrites; such as play bo-peep with God Almighty; that, if such an occasion offer itself to any of them to serve God and their country, in a public station, do what the law requires, and which they think they may sinlessly do in order to it, do trespass upon their consciences, and damn their own souls to serve their country. And they that censure them not, as he doth, are induced to forbear it, only by their gold ring, or fine apparel.

And that he would have all such as use that liberty, which their consciences and the divine law, as they think, allow them, in order to their serving God and their country, to be disfranchised, and made incapable of doing public service to either, *i. e.* for doing that, which as wise men as he count indifferent; and which can therefore make no one either a better or worse man, or Christian. And would draw that odium upon the established church, to represent it as if it sought to engross all power to itself, as such, even in civil affairs, upon so insignificant a pretence! than which he could not attempt doing it a greater mischief, or more directly tending to make it intolerable to the prince, nobility, gentry, and to the whole body of the nation itself. No such arts need to be used to expose the clergy to the ill-will of the people, and raise in nobler minds what some may count a just and generous disdain of being so enslaved. The nature of man, in his lapsed state, is so alienated from God, as to have little regard for any sacredness of persons and things, by which only they become related to him.

The church of Rome hath not gained much upon kings and princes, of later years, by affecting to make them dependent on her. And it is not difficult to pre-appreher., what may at length engage them against her, to her final ruin: *i. e.* to make them hate her, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. In that church, this caprice first began in their *dominium temporale, in gratia fundatum*; and thence by a strangely wide sort of stride or skip, even of a heavenly width, from pole to pole, 'twas got quite among another sort of men, treading antipodes to the former, in the immodest, rude claim, and appropriation to themselves, of the entire privilege and prerogative of the saints' reign. 'Tis the easiest thing in the world, when any sort or party of men have got power into their hands, to saint themselves, and unsaint all other men, at their own pleasure. But do the civil rights of men depend upon such (*i. e.* so easily abusable) pretences? We are saying nothing now of their rights, claimable from God himself, but from one another; and even such rights none could have, *i. e.* that are claimable from their fellow-creatures, or their (concives) fellow-members, under any government, but by some original grant, one way or other conveyed from the Supreme Ruler, who is the fountain of all rights.

But hath he ever given Christians, (or saints,) as such, a right to seize the rights and properties of other men? The notion of the saints' reign, because we find it in the Holy Bible, is not to be torn out, but must have its true sense assigned it. And if there be a time yet to come, wherein it shall have place; it must mean, that a more general pouring forth of the Spirit shall introduce a supervening sanctity upon rulers, as well as others; not to give every man a right to rule, (for who should then be ruled?) but to enable and incline them that shall duly have a right, to rule better. And so the kingdom will be the saints, when it is administered, by some, and for others, who are so. If God have allowed to men, as men, any rights, *i. e.* that are claimable against other men; and should again give a right to Christians in other men's properties; to what a strait and distress were the rest of the world reduced! Might not any of them say, Since one must be a man before he

e Athen. Deipnos. cum Animadvers. Is. Casaub.

can be a Christian, what am I to do in this case? must I unman myself, and lose the rights I have, as such, that I may recover them by being a Christian? I had them as a man before, sufficiently to secure me against the claim of all others. What! but not against Christians? Then are they an unmanned sort of men! And whereas obligations accompany rights, what lawless men are these Christians!

But whereas God hath in great compassion to the world appointed it to be Christianized, he hath with equal wisdom chosen the fittest methods for it; *i. e.* not to commission Christians to divest other men of their all, unless they become Christians; but to let men see, Christianity had no design to disturb the world, or disquiet them in their former possessions, though they should not be Christians; but that they might enjoy them with higher advantage, if they be, in order to another world. If God had made Christianity the measure of civil rights to mankind, his sovereignty were not to be disputed; but he never exerts acts of sovereignty, but by the direction of his wisdom. Wheresoever the sound of the Christian name comes, if it carried that avowed principle with it, that Christians, as such, had a right to out all other men of their birth-rights; instead of becoming the religion of the world, nothing could more directly tend to engage and inflame all the world against it, and make them endeavour its utter extirpation, as a thing intolerable to mankind. Nor could they have any so plausible pretence against it besides; having nothing in itself, but what must render it most amiable and self-recommending. Did the Spaniards' methods for Christianizing America, recommend the Christian faith to that miserable people? And if God himself would never give such a power, for introducing the very substance of Christian religion itself; how intolerable must it be for any sort or church of Christians, to claim and use it for the introduction of their own additions to Christianity, as the church of Rome hath notoriously long done! And time will show the event, as common reason doth the tendency of it.

And, Sir, though the strain of your discourse shows your no great kindness to this established church, the compliments which here and there you bestow upon it, too broadly show, as if, under a colour of kindness, you would tempt it, to aim at loading itself with such a weight of power and greatness as, you may think, must finally sink it. Its more real friends, our civil rulers, are more wisely kind to it, and give it no more interest in the civil government, than it may more safely bear. They never exact in order to any one's having a share therein, a total, constant conformity to all its rites, as you would have them. And have only designed by the limits they have set, the excluding that sort of men, whose known principles make them more incapable of human society, than mere pagans. But especially, 'tis not to be let pass, that you, or your author, industriously represent the primitive English puritans, (concerning whom it were in some respects well for you, if, as the great author you mention speaks, your soul were with theirs,) as if they were generally of your stingy narrow spirit. I wonder how you could think to impose upon the world in a matter of so recent memory. This attempt had been more prudently deferred till three or four ages hence; especially if great care had been taken, in the meantime, that all books were burnt, or buried, that give any account of them. How notorious is it, that generally they that continued in their native land, as far the greater number did, looked not upon the church of England as no church! That they wished her more reformed; but in great part kept in her communion, (their principal leaders and the people,) taking other opportunities of spiritual improvement, as they could; for which they often ran great hazards. In 62, the same spirit and sentiment afresh appeared; when most of the considerable ejected London ministers met, and agreed to hold occasional communion with the (now) re-established church: not quitting their own ministry, or declining the exercise of it, as they could have opportunity. And as far as I could by inquiry learn, I can little doubt this to have been the judgment of their fellow-sufferers through the nation, in great part, ever since. How could you have the confidence to represent this as a new thing; and an apostacy from primitive puritanism! that hath so much in it of the spirit of primitive Christianity; such largeness of mind! such reverence of what bears a divine stamp and signature upon it, undefaced! such benignity, even towards them by whom they suffered! How strangely inverted, Sir, do things lie in your mind! must we accordingly transpose the names of virtue and vice? And by how much more illustrious any render themselves by the eminent virtues of pride, fury, self-conceit, censoriousness, to the damning of every body, that in all things do not think, and do, as they! Are these things with you characters of the most excellent sorts of Christians?

If I had seen any thing in your book that needed, or deserved, a particular answer, I should not have balked it. But seeing nothing that looks like reasoning, but what is so idly sophistical, that any one of common sense can see through it; such as that, "How can a man dissent and conform at the same time?" when all the world knows, or may, conformity consists of numerous parts; and is it such a miracle for a man to conform, in some part, and not in every part? conscientiously to scruple constant entire conformity, and not scruple some part of it, at some time? If any think such talk needs further answering, let them seek it elsewhere. And for your replying, I shall not prescribe to you; only I can assure you, that thereby, neither you, nor any man else, shall divert me from my much more important, pleasant work; unless I see somewhat that shall make it worth my while. The person you criminate, may yet, notwithstanding what you have said, be in the right for ought I see. And therefore, to any such whose case this is, or may be, I can only say, that their rule having been consulted with serious diligence, as I hope it hath; and their end a secret between God and them, which, if it be sincere, is enough for them; they have no cause to be discouraged, but go on, and prosper. But, Mr. Prefacer, if your judgment, upon the case itself, be true; I conceive that truth, accompanied with your temper of spirit, is much worse than their error.

THE

BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS OPENED.

AND FURTHER

RECOMMENDED FROM THE CONSIDERATION

OF THE

VANITY OF THIS MORTAL LIFE.

IN TWO TREATISES,

ON PSALM XVII. 15. AND PSALM LXXXIX. 47.

WHEN HE SHALL APPEAR, WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM, FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS, 1 JOHN III. 2.

Ἀλλὰ τὰ κακὰ οὐ δυνατὸν ἐν θεοῖς ἱδρῦσθαι τὴν δὲ θνητὴν φύσιν, καὶ τόνδε τὸν τόπον περιπολεῖ ἐξ ἀναγκης. Διὸ καὶ πειρασθαι χρὴ ἐνθένδε ἐκεῖσε φεύγειν ὅτι τάχισ'α. Φυγὴ δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν, ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον. καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γένεσθαι.
Plat. in Theæt.

TO THE READER.

I AM not at all solicitous, that the world should know the history of the conception of this treatise. If there be any thing that shall recompense the pains of such as may think fit to give themselves the trouble of perusing it, in the work itself, I should yet think it too much an undervaluing of them, if I did reckon the minuter circumstances relating thereto, fit matter for their entertainment. Nor am I more concerned to have it known what were the inducements to the publication of it. Earnest protestations and remonstrances of our good intentions in such undertakings, as they leave men still at liberty to believe or doubt at their pleasure; so they gain us little if they be believed. It is no easy matter, to carry one even, constant tenour of spirit through a work of time. Nor is it more easy to pass a settled invariable judgment concerning so variable a subject; when a heart that may seem wholly framed and set for God this hour, shall look so quite like another thing the next, and change figures and postures almost as often as it doth thoughts. And if a man should be mistaken in judging himself, it would little mend the matter, to have deceived others also into a good opinion of him. But if he can approve himself to God in the simplicity of an honest and undeceived heart, the peace that ensues is a secret between God and him. *They are theatre enough to one another, as he said to his friend. 'Tis an enclosed pleasure: a joy which the stranger cannot intermeddle with.

'Tis therefore any man's concernment herein rather to satisfy himself than the world. And the world's, rather to understand the design of the work than the author; and whither it tends, rather than whereto he meant it. And 'tis obvious enough, to what good purposes discourses of this nature may serve. This is, in the design of it, wholly practical; hath little or nothing to do with disputation. If there be any whose business it is to promote a private, divided interest; or who place the sum of their religion in an inconsiderable and doubtful opinion; it doth not unhallow their altars, nor offer any affront to their idol. It intends no quarrel to any contending, angry party; but deals upon things in the substance whereof Christians are at a professed agreement. And hath therefore the greater probability of doing good to some, without the offence of any. 'Tis indeed equally matter of complaint and wonder, that men can find so much leisure to divert from such things, wherein there is so much both of importance and pleasure, unto (what one would think should have little of temptation or allurement in it) contentious jangling. It might rather be thought its visible fruits and tendencies should render it the most dreadful thing to every serious beholder. What tragedies hath it wrought in the Christian church! Into how weak and languishing a condition hath it brought the religion of professed Christians! Hence have risen the intemperate, preternatural heats and angers that have spent its strength and spirits, and make it look with so meagre and pale a face. We have had a greater mind to dispute than live; and to contend about what we know not, than to practise the far greater things we know; and which more directly tend to nourish and maintain the divine life. The author of that ingenious sentence,† (whoever he were,) hath fitly expressed what is the noisome product of the itch of disputing. It hath begot the ulcerous tumours, which, besides their own offensive soreness, drain the body, and turn what should nourish that into nutriment to themselves. And its effects are not more grievous than the pleasures which it affects and pursues are uncouth and unnatural. ‡The rough touch of an ungentle hand. That only pleases which exasperates, (as the moralist aptly expresses some like disaffection of diseased minds.) Toil and vexation is their only delight. What to a sound spirit would be a pain, is to these a pleasure.

Which is, indeed, the triumph of the disease, that it adds unto torment, reproach, and mockery, and imposes upon men by so ridiculous a delusion (while they are made to take pleasure in punishing themselves) that even the most sober can scarce look on in a fitter posture, than with a compassionate smile. All which were yet somewhat more tolerable, if that imagined, vanishing pleasure were not the whole of their gain; or if it were to be hoped, that so great a present real pain and smart, should be recompensed with as real a consequent fruit and advantage. But we know, that generally by how much any thing is more disputable, the less it is necessary or conducible to the Christian life. God hath graciously provided that what we are to live by, should not cost us so dear. And possibly, as there is less occasion of disputing about the more momentous things of religion; so there may be somewhat more of modesty and awe in reference to what is so confessedly venerable and sacred, (though too many are over bold even here also,) than so foolishly to trifle with such things. Therefore more commonly, where that humour prevails, men divert from those plainer things, with some slighter and superficial reverence to them, but more heartily esteeming them insipid and jejune, because they have less in them to gratify that appetite, and betake themselves to such things about which they may more plausibly contend: and then, what pitiful trifles oftentimes take up their time and thoughts; questions and problems of like weighty importance, very often, with those which, the above named author§ tells us, this disease among the Greeks prompted them to trouble themselves about, as, "What number of rowers Ulysses had? Which was written first, the Iliad or the Odysses, &c.? So that (as he saith) they spent their lives very operously doing nothing. Their conceits being such, that if they kept them to themselves, they could yield them no fruit; and if they published them to others, they should not seem thereby the more learned, but the more troublesome" to this purpose he truly speaks. And is it not to be resented, that men should sell away the solid strength and vital joy which a serious soul would find in substantial religion, for such toys! Yea, and not only famish themselves, but trouble the world, and embroil the church with their impertinencies! If a man be drawn forth to defend an important truth against an injurious assault, it were treacherous self-love to purchase his own peace by declining it. Or if he did sometimes turn his thoughts to some of our petty questions, that with many are so hotly agitated, for recreation-sake, or to try his wit

* Seneca.

† Pruritus disputandi scabies Ecclesiæ.

‡ Ut ulcera quædam nocitura manus appetunt et tactu gaudent, et fœdam corporum scabiem delectat quicquid exasperat: Non aliter dixerim his mentibus in quas voluptates velut mala ulcera erumpunt, voluptati esse laborem, vexationemque. Sen. de Tranquillitate Animi.

§ Sen. de Brev. Vit.

and exercise his reason, without stirring his passions to the disturbance of others or himself; 'twere an innocent divertisement, and the best purpose that things of that nature are capable of serving. But when contention becomes a man's element, and he cannot live out of that fire; strains his wit and racks his invention to find matter of quarrel; is resolved, nothing said or done by others shall please him, only because he means to please himself in dissenting; disputes only that he may dispute, and loves dissention for itself: this is the unnatural humour that hath so unspeakably troubled the church, and dispirited religion, and filled men's souls with wind and vanity; yea, with fire and fury. This hath made Christians gladiators, and the Christian world a clamorous theatre, while men have equally affected to contend, and to make ostentation of their ability so to do.

And, surely, as it is highly pleasurable to retire oneself, so it is charitable to call aside others out of this noise and throng, to consider silently and feed upon the known and agreed things of our religion; which immediately lead to both the duties and delights of it. Among which there are none more evident and undoubted, none less entangled with controversy, none more profitable and pleasant, than the future blessedness of the righteous, which this discourse treats of. The last end is a matter so little disputable, that 'tis commonly thought (which is elsewhere more distinctly spoken to) not to be the object of election, and so not of deliberation consequently, but of simple intention only, because men are supposed to be generally agreed as touching that. And the knowledge and intention of it is apparently the very soul of religion; animates, directs, enlivens, and sweetens the whole thereof. Without which, religion were the vainest, most irrational, and most unsavoury thing in the world. For what were there left of it, but an empty unaccountable formality, a series of spiritless and merely scenical observances and actions without a design? For whereas all men's actions else, mediately tend to the last end, but that not being in view with the most, they pitch upon other intervenient ends; which, though abstracted from the last, should not be; yet they are actually to them the reason of their actions, and infuse a vigour and liveliness into them: religion aiming immediately at the last end, that being taken away, hath no rational end or design at all. And it cannot but be a heartless business, with great solemnity, in a continued course, to do nothing but professedly trifle, or keep up a custom of certain solemn performances which have no imaginable scope or end. And because the more clearly this our last end is understood, the more powerfully and sweetly it attracts and moves the soul, this treatise endeavours to give as plain and positive a state and notion of it as the text insisted on, compared with other Scriptures, would afford to so weak an eye.

And because men are so apt to abuse themselves with the vain and self-contradicting hopes of attaining this end, without ever having their spirits framed to it, or walking in the way that leads thereto, as if they could come to heaven by chance, or without any design or care of theirs; the proportion is endeavoured to be shown, between that Divine likeness, in the vision and participation whereof this blessedness consists, and the righteousness that disposes and leads to it. Which may it be monitory to the ungodly and profane, who hate and scorn the likeness of God wherever they behold it. And let me tell such from (better-instructed) pagans, *That* there is nothing more like or more acceptable to God, than a man that is in the temper of his soul truly good, who excels other men, as he is himself excelled* (pardon his hyperbole) *by the immortal God. That† between God and good men there is a friendship, by means of virtue; a friendship, yea, a kindred, a likeness; in as much truly as the good man differs from God but in time,* (here sprinkle a grain or two,) *being his disciple, imitator, and very off-spring. That‡ God is full of indignation against such as reproach one that is like to him, or that praise one that is contrarily affected;* (or unlike;) *but such is the good man* (i. e. he is one like God.) *A good man* (as it shortly after follows) *is the holiest thing in the world, and a wicked man the most polluted thing.*

And let me warn such haters of holiness and holy men in the words of this author immediately subjoined;§ *And this I say for this cause, that thou being but a man, the son of a man, no more offend in speaking against a hero, one who is a son of God.*

Methinks men should be ashamed to profess the belief of a life to come, while they cannot behold without indignation, nor mention but with derision, that holiness without which it can never be attained, and which is indeed the seed and principle of the thing itself. But such are not likely much to trouble themselves with this discourse. There is little in it indeed of art or ornament to invite or gratify such as the subject itself invites not. And nothing at all but what was apprehended might be some way useful. The affectation of garnishing a margin with the names of authors, I have ever thought a vain pedantry; yet have not declined the occasional use of a few that occurred. He that writes to the world, must reckon himself debtor to the wise and unwise. If what is done shall be found with any to have promoted its proper end; his praises to God shall follow it (as his prayers do that it may) who professes himself,

A well-willer to the souls of men.

J. HOWE.

* Nihil est Deo similius aut gratius quam vir animo perfecte bonus, &c. Apul. de Deo Socratis.
† Inter bonos viros ac Deum Amicitia est, conciliante virtute amicitiam dico? etiam necessitudo, et similitudo, &c. Sen. de Prov.
‡ Νεμεσα γαρ ο θεος οταν τις ψεγη τον εαυτω ομοιον, η επαινη τον εαυτω εναντιως εχοντα, εστι δ' ουτος ο αγαθος.—παντων ιερωτατον εστιν ανθρωπος αγαθος, και μιαρωτατον ο πονηρος. Plut. in Minoe.
§ Τουτου δ' ενεκα φρασω, ινα μη ανθρωπος ων ανθρωπου, εις ηρω Διος υιον λογω εξαμαρτανης

CHRISTIAN READER.

You whose hearts are set on heaven, who are daily laying up a treasure there, here is a welcome messenger, to tell you more than perhaps you have well considered, of the nature of your future blessedness, and to illustrate the map of the land of promise, and to bring you another cluster of its grapes: here is a useful help to make you know that holiness doth participate of glory, and that heaven is at least virtually in the seed of grace. Though this life be properly called a life of faith, as contradistinct from the intuition and fruition hereafter, as well as from the lower life of sense; yet is it a great truth, and not sufficiently considered and improved, that we have here more than faith, to acquaint us with the blessedness expected. Between faith and glory, there is the spirit of holiness, the love of God, the heavenly desires, which are kindled by faith, and are those branches on which the happy flower and fruit must grow: they are the name and mark of God upon us: they are our earnest, our pledge, and the first fruits. And is not this more than a word of promise only? Therefore though all Christians must live by faith, marvel not that I tell you, that you may, you must, have more than faith. Is not a pledge and earnest, a first-fruits, more? Therefore have Christians not only a Spirit to evidence their title, but also some foretaste of heaven itself. For faith in Christ is to recover us to God; and so much as we have of God, so much of fruition; and so much as faith hath kindled in you of the love of God, so much foretaste you have of heaven; for you are deceived, if you think, that any one notion speaketh more to you of heaven, and of your ultimate end, than *the love of God*. And though no unsound ill-grounded faith will serve to cause this sacred love, yet when it is caused, it over-tops this cause; and he that perceiveth the operations of a strong effectual love, hath an acquaintance with God and heaven which is above that of believing. Faith seeth the feast, but love is the tasting of it. And therefore it is, that the holiest souls stick closest unto God, because (though their reasoning faculty may be defective) they know him by the highest and most tenacious kind of knowledge which this world affordeth, (as I have lately shown elsewhere.) Here you have described to you, the true witness of the Spirit; not that of supposed internal voices, which they are usually most taken up with, who have the smallest knowledge, and faith, and love, and the greatest self-esteem, or spiritual pride, with the strongest phantasies and passions: but the objective and the sealing testimony, the divine nature, the renewed image of God, whose children are known by being like to their heavenly Father, even by being holy as he is holy. This is the Spirit of adoption, by which we are inclined, by holy love to God, and confidence in him, to cry Abba Father, and to fly unto him: the Spirit of sanctification is thereby in us the Spirit of adoption; for both signify but the giving us that love to God, which is the filial nature, and our Father's image.

And this treatise doth happily direct thee to that faithful beholding God in righteousness, which must here begin this blessed assimilation, which full intuition will for ever perfect. It is a happy sign that God is about to repair our ruins and divisions, when he stirreth up his servants to speak so much of heaven; and to call up the minds of impatient complainers, and contentious censurers, and ignorant self-conceited dividers, and of worldly, unskilful, and unmerciful pastors, to look to that state where all the godly shall be one; and to turn those thoughts to the furtherance of holiness, to provoke one another to love and to good works, which too many lay out upon their hay and stubble; and to call men from judging and despising each other (and worse than both those) about their meats and drinks, and days, to study righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ (in which his kingdom doth consist) is acceptable to God, and approved of men, that are wise and good. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. Whilst the contentious for meats will destroy the work of God, (Rom. xiv. 17—20.) the union between peace and holiness is so strict, that he that truly promoteth one promoteth both, Heb. xii. 14. Jam. iii. 17. The true way of our union is excellently described, Eph. iv. 11—16. If any plain, unlearned readers shall blame the accurateness of the style, they must remember, that those persons have not the least need to hear of heaven, and to be drawn up from the vanities of earth, who cannot digest a looser style. As God hath endued the worthy author with a more than ordinary measure of judiciousness, even soundness and accurateness, of understanding, with seriousness, spirituality, and a heavenly mind; so we have for our common benefit the effects of all these happy qualifications, in this judicious, heavenly discourse. And if my recommendations may in any measure further your acceptance, improvement, and practising of so edifying a treatise, it will answer the ends of him who waiteth with you in hope for the same salvation.

RICHARD BAXTER.

Acton, May 30.

THE

BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

PSALM XVII. 15.

AS FOR ME, I WILL BEHOLD THY FACE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS: I SHALL BE SATISFIED WHEN I AWAKE WITH THY LIKENESS.

CHAPTER I.

A PROEMIAL DISCOURSE. A REFLECTION UPON SOME FOREGOING VERSES OF THE PSALM, BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT. A CONSIDERATION OF ITS SOMEWHAT VARIOUS READINGS, AND OF ITS LITERAL IMPORTANCE. A DISCUSSION OF ITS REAL IMPORTANCE SO FAR AS IS NECESSARY TO THE SETTLING THE SUBJECT OF THE PRESENT DISCOURSE.

THE continual mixture of good and evil in this present state of things, with its uncertain fluctuations, and subjection to perpetual changes, do naturally prompt a considering mind to the belief and hope of another, that may be both more perfect and more permanent. For certainly it could never be a design adequate (or any way agreeable) to the Divine wisdom and goodness, that the blessed God should raise such a thing as this lower creation out of nothing, only to give himself the temporary pleasure of beholding the alternate joys and sorrows of (the best part thereof) his reasonable creatures seated in it: nor a delight at all proportionable to an eternally happy Being, when he hath connaturalized such a creature to this sensible world; only to take notice how variously the passions he hath planted in him, may be moved and stirred by the variety of occasions which he shall thence be presented with; and what sudden and contrary impressions may be made upon his easy passive senses, by the interchanged strokes and touches of contrary objects; how quickly he can raise him into a transport of high contentment and pleasure, and then how soon he can again reduce him to a very paroxysm of anguish and despair. It would discover us to have very vile and low thoughts of God, if we did not judge it altogether unanswerable to his perfections, to design no further thing in creating this world, and placing such a creature as man in it, than only to please himself for a while with such a spectacle, and then at last clear the stage, and shut up all again in an eternal, silent darkness. If we could suppose a man furnished with such power, he would surely add little to the reputation of his being wise or good beyond other men, by a design so to use it. Much less can we think it worthy of God to perpetuate such a state of things as this, and continue a succession of such persons and actions as we now behold in the world, through eternal generations, only to perpetuate to himself the same pleasure in the exercise of his immense power upon created natures, over which he hath so infinite advantage.

And indeed nothing can be more unconceivable, than that the great Creator and Author of all things should frame a creature of so vast comprehension as the spirit of man, put into it a capacity of knowing and conversing with himself, give it some prospect of his own glory and blessedness; raise thereby, in many, boundless unsatisfied desires after him, and unexpressible pleasure in the preconceived hope of being received into the communion of that glory and blessedness; and yet defeat and blast so great an expectation, by the unsuspected reducement of the very subject of it again to nothing. Yea, and that he should deal herein (as in that case he must) the most hardly with the best; and that such souls, whose mere love and devotedness to him had made them abandon the pleasures of this life, and run through whatsoever difficulties for his sake, should fare worse than the very worst; were, beyond all the rest, most utterly unimaginable, and a thought which Pagan reason hath not known how to digest or entertain. *If* (saith one,[a] and he speaks the sense of many others, as well as his own) *with the dissolution of our bodies, the essence of the soul, whatsoever that be should be dissolved too, and forever cease to be any thing. I know not how I can account them blessed, that never having enjoyed any good as the reward of their virtue, have even perished for virtue itself.*

Wherefore it is consequent, that this present state is only intended for a trial to the spirits of men, in order to their attainment as of a better state in a better world: that is, inasmuch as the infinitely wise and blessed God had given being to such a creature as man, in which both worlds (the material and the immaterial) did meet; and who, in respect of his earthly and spiritual natures, had in him somewhat suitable to each. And whereas this creature had lost (with his interest) his very inclination to the spiritual objects and enjoyments of the purer immaterial world, (wherein alone his true blessedness could consist,) suffered a vile depression of his spirit unto this gross corporeal world, and hereby brought himself under a necessity of being miserable, his nobler part having nothing now to satisfy it, but what it was become unsuitable and disaffected to. His merciful Creator, being intent upon his restitution, thought fit not to bring it about by a sudden and violent hand; (as it were to catch him into heaven against his will;) but to raise his spirit into its just dominion and sovereignty in him, by such gradual methods as were most suitable to a rational, intelligent nature; that is, to discover to him, that he had such a thing as spirit about him; whence it was fallen, how low it was sunk, to what state it was yet capable to be raised, and what he had designed and done for its happy recovery. And hence, by the secret and powerful insinuations of his own light and grace, to awaken his drowsy and slumbering reason, and incline his perverse and wayward will to the consideration and choice of such things as that felicity consists in; which that better world can afford, and his better part enjoy.

And while he propounds such things to him, how reasonable and agreeable was it, that he should keep him sometimes under a just probation, (yea, how much was there in it of a gracious and compassionate indulgence, often to renew the trial,) whether he would yet bestir himself, and (having so great hopes before him, and such helps and aids afforded him, and ready to be afforded) apply, at

[a] Ἐι μεν ουν αμα τοις σωμασι διαλυομενοις και το της ψυχης ο τι δε ποτε εστιν εκεινο συνδιαλυεται, &c. Dionys. Halicar. Antiq. Rom. lib. 8.

last, his intellectual and elective powers, to mind and close with so gracious overtures, in order to his own eternal advancement and blessedness? Nor was it an unreasonable expectation that he should do so. For, however the temporal good and evil that may constantly affect his sensitive part and powers be present and near, but the eternal misery or blessedness of his soul, future and remote; yet, inasmuch as he is capable of understanding the vast disproportion of time and eternity, of a mortal flesh and an immortal spirit, how preposterous a course were it, and unworthy of a man; yea, how dishonourable and reproachful to his Maker, should he prefer the momentary pleasures of narrow, incapacious sense, to the everlasting enjoyments of an enlarged comprehensive spirit! or, for the avoiding the pains and miseries of the former kind, incur those of the latter! Whence also the holy God doth not expect and require only, that men should make that wiser choice; but doth most justly lay the weight of their eternal states upon their doing or not doing so. And in that day when he shall[b] render to every one according to their works, make this the rule of his final judgment, to allot to them, who by a patient continuance in well-doing seek for honour, glory, and immortality, eternal life. To the rest, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, &c. and that whether they be Jews or Gentiles. Nor is it a new thing in the world, that some among the children of men should in this comply with the righteous will of God, and so judge and choose for themselves, as he is pleased to direct and prescribe. 'Tis a course approved by the concurrent suffrage of all them, in all times and ages, into whose minds the true light hath shined, and whom God hath inspired with that wisdom whereby he maketh wise to salvation. That numerous assembly of the perfected spirits of the just, have agreed in this common resolution; and did in their several generations, ere they had passed this state of trial, with an heroic magnanimity, trample this present world under their feet, and aspire to the glory of the world to come; relieving themselves against all the grievances they have suffered from such, whose portion is in this life, with the alone hope and confidence of what they were to enjoy in another.

And hereof we have an eminent and illustrious instance in this context, where the ground is laid of the following discourse. For introduction whereto, observe that —the title speaks the Psalm a prayer of David. The matter of the prayer is, preservation from his enemies. Not to go over the whole Psalm, we have in the 13 and 14 verses, the sum of his desires, with a description of the persons he prays to be delivered from: in which description every character is an argument to enforce his prayer.

From the wicked: q. d. they are equally enemies to thee and me; not more opposite to me by their cruelty, than by their wickedness they are to thee. Vindicate, then, at once thyself and deliver me.

Thy sword, thy hand. Thou canst as easily command and manage them, as a man may wield his sword, or move his hand. Wilt thou suffer thine own sword, thine own hand, to destroy thine own servant.

Men of the world, which have their portion in this life: time and this lower world bound all their hopes and fears. They have no serious believing apprehensions of any thing beyond this present life; therefore have nothing to withhold them from the most injurious violence, if thou withhold them not: men that believe not another world, are the ready actors of any imaginable mischiefs and tragedies in this.

Whose belly thou fillest: i. e. their sensual appetite; as oftentimes that term is used[c] *With thy hid treasures: viz.* the riches which either God is wont to hide in the bowels of the earth, or lock up in the repository of Providence, dispensing them at his own pleasure.

They are full of children. So it appears, by that which follows, it ought to be read, and not according to that gross,[d] but easy mistake of some transcribers of the Seventy. As if in all this he had pleaded thus: "Lord, thou hast abundantly indulged those men already, what need they more? They have themselves, from thy unregarded bounty, their own vast swollen desires sufficiently filled, enough for their own time; and when they can live no longer in their persons, they may in their posterity, and leave not strangers, but their numerous offspring, their heirs. Is it not enough that their avarice be gratified, except their malice be also? that they have whatsoever they can conceive desirable for themselves, unless they may also infer whatever they can think mischievous on me?" To this description of his enemies, he *ex opposito*, subjoins some account of himself in this his close of the Psalm: *As for me.* Here he is at his statique point; and, after some appearing discomposure, his spirit returns to a consistency, in consideration of his own more happy state, which he opposes and prefers to theirs, in the following respects. That *they* were wicked, *he* righteous. "I will behold thy face in righteousness." That *their* happiness was worldly, terrene, such only as did spring from the earth; *his* heavenly and divine, such as should result from the face and image of God. *Theirs* present, temporary, compassed within this life; *his* future, everlasting, to be enjoyed when he should awake. *Theirs* partial, defective, such as would but gratify their bestial part, fill their bellies; *his* adequate, complete, (the ἐνδαιμονια του συνθέτου,) such as should satisfy the man. "I shall be satisfied," &c.

The variety of rendering this verse (to be seen by comparing the original and translation noted in the margin[e]) need not give us any trouble, the differences not being of great moment, nor our own reading liable to exception. The word תמונה about which is the greatest diversity, hath the significancy we here give it, in the second commandment, and constantly elsewhere. And then, what more proper English can this text be capable of, than it hath in our Bibles? Each word hath its true and genuine import; and the syntax is sufficiently regular and grammatical of the whole. Only as to the former, that usual and obvious observation must here have place; that the ב prefixed to צדק and which with it we read *in righteousness*, doth often signify among its various acceptations, *by* or *through*; and that not only as denoting instrumentality, but more at large, the place of any medium necessary to the attainment of the end it subserves to; whence the same use of the Greek ἐν, that answers thereunto, is wont to go for a Hebraism.

And as to the latter, the only thing liable to controversy, is whether the gerund[f] בהקיץ is to be construed with the person speaking, *when I awake*; or *in my awaking*, or with the *thing*; the likeness or image spoken of *in the awaking of thine image*, or *when thine image shall awake:* and I conceive we need not discuss it, but following our own translation, leave the judgment of it to the ear itself, which, (as Elihu tells us,) trieth words.

In the meantime, the *real* importance of this scripture more calls for discussion than the *literal;* concerning which, a threefold inquiry will be necessary for the settling the subject of the following discourse.—1. What relation this *righteousness* must be understood to have to the vision of God's face, and the other consequent blessedness.—2. What time or state *awaking* refers to, and—3. What is intended by the *likeness of God.* To the *first.* It is only necessary to say at present, that the already noted import of the preposition[g] *in* being supposed most suitable to this text, (as apparently it is,) righteousness must be looked upon in reference to this vision, not as in an idle or merely casual concomitancy, or as an unconcerned circumstance, that hath nothing to do with the business spoken of; but as in a close and intimate connexion therewith; being, 1. antecedent, 2. conducible, 3. necessary thereto. Nor can I better express its place, and reference to it, generally and in one word, than in saying it qualifies for it; which how it doth, will be more proper to consider hereafter. It may now suffice to say, those words give us the qualified sub-

b Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

c Rom. xvi. 18. Phil. iii. 19.

d υωυ for υιωυ.

e אני בצדק אחזה פניך אשבעה בהקיץ תמונתך Sept. Εγω δε εν δικαιοσυνη οφθησομαι, τωι προσωπωι σου χορτασθησομαι εν τωι οφθηναι την δοξαν σου. The vulgar Latin, *Ego autem in justitia apparebo conspectui tuo, satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua.* Exactly following the Seventy, as doth the Ethiopic. The Chaldee paraphrase disagrees little; the Arabic less; the Syriac mistook, it seems, תמונה for אמונה and so read that word faith which we read likeness.

f Hieronymus (juxta Hebr.) reads the words exactly as we do: *Ego in justitia videbo faciem tuam, implebor, cum evigilavero, similitudine tua.*

g בצדק seems best to be rendered here, *by*, or *through righteousness*, as by the condition in which he may expect the return of God's mercies here, or the eternal vision of him hereafter, &c. So the learned Dr. Hammond, Annot. in loc. quoting also Castellio to the same purpose.

ject of this blessedness, "I in righteousness," a righteous person as such. To the *second*: Taking it for granted, that none will understand this awakening as opposed to natural sleep; in the borrowed or tropical sense, it must be understood to intend either some better state in this life, in comparison whereof the Psalmist reckons his present state but as a sleep; or the future state of blessedness in the other life. There have been some who have understood it of the former, and thought the Psalmist to speak only of a hoped freedom from his present temporal afflictions; but then, that which will be implied, seems not so specious: that trouble and affliction should be signified by the necessarily pre-supposed sleep, which sure doth more resemble rest than trouble.

I conceive it less exceptionable to refer *awaking* to the blessed state of saints after this life. For, that saints, at that time when this was writ, had the knowledge of such a state, (indeed a saint not believing a life to come, is a perfect contradiction,) no doubt can be made by any that hath ever so little read and compared the Old and New Testament. We are plainly told, that those excellent persons mentioned in the famous roll[h] lived by that faith, which was the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. That of them, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while they lived in Canaan, yet sought a better, a heavenly country, confessing themselves pilgrims, and strangers on earth. We know it was the more general belief of the Jews in our Saviour's time. And whence should they have it, but from the Old Testament? Thither our Saviour remits them to search it out, and the way to it. The apostle Saint Paul[k] gives it as the common faith of the twelve tribes, grounded upon the promise made to their forefathers; and thence prudentially he herein states the cause wherein he was now engaged; supposing it would be generally resented, that he should be called in question for avowing (only) so known and received a truth. Sure they were beholden to these sacred writings they had then among them, for so common a belief; and since it is out of question, from our Saviour's express words, they do contain the ground of that belief; what cause have we to be so shy of so interpreting scriptures that have a fair aspect that way? It is, that we can devise to fasten here and there another sense upon divers such? I wonder what one text can be mentioned in all the Old Testament to this purpose, wherein one may not do so. And what then would be the tendency of this course, but to deny in all the particulars, what, upon so clear evidence, we are in the general forced to admit? and to put Moses, and Abraham, and David, in a lower class than Pythagoras, and Socrates, and Plato? And I think it would not be easy to find one text in all that part of the Bible, where both the words thereof, and the context, do more fairly comply, than in this, so as not only to admit, but even to invite, that interpretation.

For the term *awake*, about which the present inquiry is, how apt and obvious is the analogy between our awaking out of natural sleep, and the holy soul's rising up out of the darkness and torpor of its present state, into the enlivening light of God's presence? It is truly said so to awake, at its first quitting these darksome regions, when it lays aside its cumbersome night-vail. It doth so more perfectly, in the joyful morning of the resurrection-day, when mortality is swallowed up in life, and all the yet hovering shadows of it are vanished and fled away. And how known and usual an application this is of the metaphorical terms of sleeping and awaking in holy writ, I need not tell them who have read the Bible. Nor doth this interpretation less fitly accord to the other contents of this verse: for to what state do the sight of God's face, and satisfaction with his likeness, so fully agree, as to that of future blessedness in the other world? But then the contexture of discourse in this and the foregoing verse together, seems plainly to determine us to this sense: for what can be more conspicuous in them, than a purposed comparison and opposition of two states of felicity mutually each to other? That of the wicked, whom he calls *men of time*, (as the words are rendered by one, and do literally signify,) and whose portion, he tells us, is in this life: and the righteous man's, his own; which he expected not to be till he should awake, *i. e.* not till after this life.

Thirdly. It is further to be inquired, how we are here to understand *the likeness of God?* I doubt not but we are to understand by it, his glory. And the only difficulty which it will be necessary at present to consider about it, is, whether we are to take it objectively, or subjectively; for the glory to be represented to the blessed soul, or the glory to be impressed upon it; the glory which it is to behold, or the glory it shall bear. And I conceive the difference is more easily capable of accommodation, than of a strict decision on either part. By *face* is undoubtedly meant objective glory, and that in its most perfect representation; the face being, as we know with men, the chief seat of aspectable majesty and beauty. Hence when Moses desires to see God's glory, though he did vouchsafe some discovery of it, yet he tells him his face cannot be seen. Hereupon, therefore, the next expression, *thy likeness*, might the more plausibly be restrained to subjective glory, so as to denote the image of God now in its most perfect impression, on the blessed soul. But that I insist not on. Supposing, therefore, that what is signified by *face*, be repeated over again in this word *likeness*, yet I conceive the expression is not varied in vain; but having more to say than only that he expected a state of future *vision*, *viz.* that he assured himself of *satisfaction* too, another word was thought fit to be used, that might signify also somewhat that must intervene in order to that satisfaction. 'Tis certain the mere objective representation and consequent intuition of the most excellent (even the Divine) glory, cannot satisfy a soul remaining disaffected and unsuitable thereunto. It can only satisfy, as being represented; it forms the soul into the same image, and attempers it to itself, *q. d.* "I expect hereafter to see the blessed face of God, and to be myself blessed or satisfied by his glory, at once appearing to me, and transfusing itself upon me." In short, therefore, I understand by that term, the glory of God as transforming, or as impressive of itself. If therefore glory, the object of the soul's vision, shall by any be thought to be intended in it, I contend not; supposing only, that the object be taken not materially, or potentially only, for the thing visibly in itself considered: but formally, and in *esse actuali objecti*, that is, as now, *actually impressing itself*, or as connoting such an impression upon the beholding soul; for so only is it productive of, such a pleasure and satisfaction to it, as must ensue. As in this form of speech, "such a man takes pleasure in knowledge," it is evident knowledge must be taken there both objectively, for the things known, and subjectively, for the actual perception of those things; inasmuch as, apparently, both must concur to work him delight. So it will appear, to any one that attentively considers it, glory must be taken in that passage,[m] "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." 'Tis divine glory both revealed and received; his exhibition and communication of it, according to his *immensity*; and our participation of it, according to our *measure*, that must concur to our eternal satisfaction. Herein the Platonic adage[n] hath evident truth in it; *Pleasure is here certainly made up of something finite and something infinite, meeting together.* 'Tis not (as the philosopher speaks) a χωριστον, but a κτητόν τι; not any thing *separate* from the soul, but something it *possesses*, that can make it happy. 'Tis not happy by an incommunicate happiness, nor glorious by an incommunicate glory. Indeed, the discovery of such a glory to an inglorious, unholy soul, must rather torment than satisfy. The future glory of saints is therefore called [o] *a glory to be revealed in them* (or *into them*, as the word signifies.) And in the foregoing words, the apostle assures Christ's fellow-sufferers, that they shall be glorified together with him. Surely the notation of that word, the formal notion of glorification, cannot import so little as only to be a spectator of glory; it must signify a being made glorious.

Nor is the common and true maxim otherwise intelligible, that grace and glory differ only in degree. For certainly it could never enter into the mind of a sober man (though how dangerously some speak, that might possibly have

h Heb. xi. 1, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16. i John v. 39.
k Acts xxvi. & 6, 7, compared with the 8.
l מכתים מחילד. Homines de tempore. *Pagnin.*

m Rom. v. 2.
n Voluptatis generatio est ex infiniti et finiti copulatione.
o Rom. viii. 18. εις ημας.

been so if too much learning had not made them mad, will be animadverted in its place,) that objective glory, and grace in saints, were the same specific (much less the same numerical) thing. 'Tis true, that Scripture often expresses the future blessedness, by vision of God. But where that phrase is used to signify it alone, 'tis evident, (as within the lower regions of grace, words of knowledge do often imply affection, and correspondent impressions on the soul) it must be understood of affective transformative vision, such as hath conformity to God most inseparably conjunct with it. And, that we might understand so much, they are elsewhere both expressly mentioned together, as joint ingredients into a saint's blessedness; as in those words so full of clear and rich sense: "When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Which text I take for a plain comment upon this; and methinks it should not easily be supposable, they should both speak so near the same words, and not intend the same sense.—You have in both, the same *season*, "When he shall appear, When I shall awake:" the same *subject*, The *righteous* person *born* of God; (compare the close of the former chapter with the beginning of this;) and, "I in righteousness;" the same vision, "We shall see him as he is, I shall behold his face:" the same *assimilation*, "We shall be like him; I shall be satisfied with his likeness" (concerning the χἑνις or habitude this vision and assimilation mutually have to one another, there will be consideration had in its place.) I therefore conceive neither of these notions of the Divine likeness to exclude the other. If it be inquired, which is principally meant? That needs not be determined. If the latter, it supposes the former; if the former, it infers the latter. Without the first, the other cannot be; without the other, the first cannot satisfy.

If any yet disagree to this interpretation of this text, let them affix the doctrine propounded from it, to that other last mentioned, (which only hath not the express mention of a consequent satisfaction, as this hath; whence, therefore, as being in this respect fuller, my thoughts were pitched upon this.) Only withal let it be considered how much more easy it is to imagine another sense, and suppose it possible, than to disprove this, or evince it impossible.—How far probable it is, must be left to the judgment of the indifferent: with whom it may not be insignificant to add, that thus it hath been understood by interpreters (I might adventure to say the generality) of all sorts. However, the few annexed[p] (for I neither apprehend the necessity, nor have the present conveniency, of alleging many) will suffice to avoid any imputation of singularity or novelty.

CHAPTER II.

A summary proposal of the doctrine contained in this scripture. A distribution of it into three distinct heads of discourse: *viz.* 1. The qualified subject. 2. The nature. 3. The season of the blessedness here spoken of. The first of these taken into consideration where the qualification, *righteousness*, is treated of. About which is shown, 1. What it is. 2. How it qualifies.

Now the foregoing sense of the words being supposed, it appears that the proper argument of the scripture is,—The blessedness of the righteous in the other life, consisting in the vision and participation of the Divine glory, with the satisfaction that resulteth thence. In which summary account of the doctrine here contained, three general heads of discourse offer themselves to our view:—The subject, the nature, and the season of this blessedness:—Or to whom it belongs, wherein it consists, and when it shall be enjoyed.

First, then, we begin with the consideration of the subject unto whom this blessedness appertains. And we find it expressed in the text, in these only words, "I; in righteousness;" which amounts to as much as, a righteous person as such. They represent to us the subject of this blessedness in its proper qualifications; wherein our business is to consider his qualification, *righteousness*, under which notion only he is concerned in the present discourse; and about which, two things are to be inquired—What it imports, and—How it qualifies.

First, What it imports. I take righteousness here to be opposed to wickedness in the foregoing verse; (as was intimated before;) and so understand it in equal latitude, not of particular, but of universal righteousness. That is, not that particular virtue which inclines men to give every one their right, (unless in that every one, you would include also the blessed God himself, the sovereign common Lord of all,) but a universal rectitude of heart and life, comprehending not only equity towards men, but piety towards God also. A conformity to the law in general, in its utmost[a] extent, adequately opposite to sin, (which is indeed of larger extent than wickedness; and in what different respects righteousness is commensurate to the one and the other, we shall see by and by,) as that is, generally, said to be ανομια, *a transgression of the law*. Among [c]moralists, such a comprehensive notion of righteousness as is inclusive of all other virtues, is not unknown. But in Scripture, it is its much more ordinary acceptation. To give instances, were to suppose too much ignorance in the reader; and to enumerate the passages in which this term is taken in that extensive sense, were too great an unnecessary burden to the writer. It were indeed to transcribe a great part of the Bible. How familiar is the opposition of *righteous* and *wicked*, and *righteous* and *sinner*, in sacred language! And how fully co-extent *righteousness* is, in the scripture notion of it, to the whole law of God, that one passage sufficiently discovers; where 'tis said of Zacharias and Elisabeth, [d] that they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 'Tis true, indeed, that when the words godliness or holiness are in conjunction with this term, its significancy is divided and shared with them; so as that they signify in that case, conformity to the will of God in the duties of the *first* table, and this is confined to those of the *second*: otherwise, being put alone, it signifies the whole duty of man, as the other expressions also do in the same case, especially the latter of them.

As it seems not to be within the present design of the context to take notice of any imputed wickedness of the opposite sort of persons, other than what was really in them; and whereby they might be fitly characterized; so I conceive, that imputed righteousness is not here meant, that is inherent in the person of the Mediator; but that which is truly subjected in a child of God, and descriptive of him. Nor must any think it strange, that all the requisites to our salvation are not found together in one text of Scripture. The righteousness of him, whom we are to adore as made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, hath a much higher sphere, peculiar and appropriate in itself. This of which we now speak, in its own inferior and subordinate place, is necessary also to be both had and understood. It must be understood by viewing it in its rule, in conformity whereto it stands; which must needs be some law of God. There

p Aeitur de resurrectione et manifestatione gloriæ cælestis. Ruffin in loc.—Cum apparuerit gloria tua, *i. e.* gloria resurrectionis. Bed. Comment. in Psalm.

How the Jews were wont to understand it, may be seen at one view in that of Petrus Galatinus in loc. Duo mi Capnio me hic per priscas Judæorum Scripturas ostendere hortatis, et generalem mortuorum resurrectionem futuram esse et eam per Messiam fiendam ait, primum itaque patet non solum per sacræ scripturæ testimonia verum etiam per Talmudistarum dicta. Nam illud quidem, Psal. xvii dictum ego in justitia—&c. sic exponunt, et præsertim Rabbi Abraham Aven Ezra et Rabbi Solomo, &c. And so he goes on to recite their words. De Arcanis Catholicæ veritatis.

Opponit hæc, iis quæ de impiis dixerat. Illi Sapiunt terrena Saturantur filiis et portionem suam in hac vita ponunt, mihi vero contentum est hæc vita; ad futuram festino, ubi non in divitiis, sed in justitia videbo, non terrena hæc transibura, sed ipsam faciem tuam, cœ saturabor in filiis carnis sed cum evigilavero tua similitudine, sicut. 1 Joh. iii. 2.—Cum apparuerit, &c. Luth. in Psal.

Resurgam e mortuis—videbo de perfectissime sicut ea, Similis ero tibi. Jun. and Tremel on Psalm 17.

Mollerus thinks it ought not to be restrained to life eternal, but saith, some understand of the glory, quâ ornabuntur pii in vitâ æternâ. And adds,—et quidem quo male. In—Ego vero et omnes electi tui—pie et juste vivimus in hoc seculo, ut aliquando in futuro seculo videamus faciem tuam, et ea satiemur cum sc. a pulvere terræ evigilaverimus et reformati fuerimus ad similitudinem Christi tui. Seb. Munster in notis in loc.

Cum ego ad imaginem tuam excitus resurrexero. Vatablus: though he adds, alii ad resurrectionem non referunt.

De futuræ vitæ felicitate ait, satiabor quum expergiscar. *i. e.* quum resurgam e mortuis—Similitudine tuâ, hoc est videbo de perfectissimo, sicuti es; et Similis ero tibi unum patefactus Christus gloriose adventu suo. 1 Joho iii. 2. Faluti. Conc. in Psal. 17. ult.

Describit his verbis Psalmographus beatitudinem æternam filiorum Dei. Generans in loc.

a 1 John. i. 8. b 1 John iii. 4.

c Ἐν δε δικαιοσυνη συλληβδην πασ' αρετ' εστι.

d Luke i. 5, 6.

hath been a twofold law given by God to mankind, as the measure of a universal righteousness, the one made for innocent, the other for lapsed man; which are distinguished by the apostle under the names of the [c]law of works, and the law of faith. It can never be possible, that any of the apostate sons of Adam should be denominated righteous by the former of these laws, the righteousness thereof consisting in a perfect and sinless obedience. The latter therefore is the only measure and rule of this righteousness, *viz.* the law of faith; not that part of the gospel-revelation which contains and discovers our duty, what we are to be and do in order to our blessedness; being, as to the matter of it, the whole moral law, before appertaining to the covenant of works, attempered to the state of fallen sinners, by evangelical mitigations and indulgence, by the superadded precepts of repentance and faith in a Mediator, with all the other duty respecting the Mediator, as such; and clothed with a new form as it is now taken into the constitution of the covenant of grace. This rule, though it be in the whole of it capable of coming under one common notion, as being the standing, obliging law of Christ's mediatory kingdom; yet according to the different matter of it, its obligations and annexed sanctions are different. As to its matter, it must be understood to require:

1. The mere being and sincerity of those gracious principles, with their essential acts (as there is opportunity) expressed therein, in opposition to the nullity and insincerity of them.

2. All the possible degrees and improvements of such principles and acts, in opposition to any the least failure or defect. In the former respect, it measures the very essence of this righteousness, and enjoins what concerns the being of the righteous man as such. In the latter, it measures all the super-added degrees of this righteousness, (which relations, where they have a mutable foundation, admit,) enjoining what concerns the perfection of the righteous man. In the former respect, righteousness is opposed to wickedness, as in that of the Psalmist, [d]I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God—therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness. In the latter to sin, with which the apostle makes unrighteousness co-extent, in these words, If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, &c. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Accordingly are its sanctions divers. For wherein it enjoins the former of these, the essence of this righteousness, in opposition to a total absence thereof, it is constitutive of the terms of salvation, and obligeth under the penalty of eternal death. So are faith, repentance, love, subjection, &c. required: [e]If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. He that believeth not is condemned already.—The wrath of God abideth on him.—[h]If ye repent not, ye shall all likewise perish. [i]Repent, that your sins may be blotted out.—Him hath God exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. [k]If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maran-atha. [l]He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me, &c. [m]If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, (that is, as the former scripture expounds this, loves them not less than me,) he cannot be my disciple; *i. e.* while he remains in that temper of mind he now is of, he must needs be wholly unrelated unto me, and incapable of benefit by me, as well as he is indocible, and not susceptible of my further instructions, neither capable of the precepts or privileges belonging to discipleship. [n]He is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him; and will come in flaming fire to take vengeance of those that know not God, and obey not his gospel; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, &c. W[o]ere it is only the sincerity of those several requisites, that is under so severe penalty exacted and called for; inasmuch as he that is sincerely a believer, a penitent, a lover of God or Christ, an obedient subject, is not capable of the contrary denomination, and therefore not liable, according to the tenor of this law, to be punished as an infidel, an impenitent person, an enemy, a rebel.

When it enjoins the latter, *viz.* all the subsequent duty, through the whole course whereof the already sincere soul must be tending towards perfection; though it bind not thereto under pain of damnation, further than as such neglects and miscarriages may be so gross and continued, as not to consist with sincerity, yet such injunctions are not wholly without penalty; but here it obliges, under less penalties, the hiding of God's face, and other paternal severities and castigations. They that thus only offend, [p]are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world. Their iniquity is visited with the rod, and their transgression with stripes, though loving-kindness be not taken away.—Yea, and while they are short of perfect holiness, their blessedness is imperfect also; which is to be acknowledged a very grievous penalty, but unconceivably short of what befalls them that are simply unrighteous. That it obliges thus diversely, is evident; for it doth not adjudge unto eternal death without remedy, for the least defect; for then what other law should relieve against the sentence of this? or wherein were this a relieving law? Yet doth it require perfection, that we [q]perfect holiness in the fear of God; that we be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. And otherwise, did it bind to no other duty than what it makes simply necessary to salvation; the defects and miscarriages that consist with sincerity were no sins, not being provided against by any law that is of present obligation (unless we will have the law of nature to stand by itself as a distinct law, both from that of works, and of grace; which is not necessary; but as it did at first belong to the former, so it doth now to the latter, as shall further be shown by and by.) For to suppose the law of works in its own proper form and tenor, to be still obliging, is to suppose all under hopeless condemnation, inasmuch as all have sinned. And besides, it should oblige to cast off all regard to Christ, and to seek blessedness without him; yea, and it should oblige to a natural impossibility, to a contradiction, to make that not to have been, which hath been; a sinner to seek happiness by never having sinned. It cannot therefore entirely, in its own form, as it was at first made and laid upon man, be of present and continuing obligation to him. But in what part and respect it is, or is not, comes now more distinctly to be shown. Here know, the law of nature, with fit additionals, became one formed constitution; which being violated by the apostacy, became unuseful to the end it was made for, the containing of man within the bounds of such duty as should be conjunct with his blessedness. Therefore was the new constitution of the law of grace made and settled, which alters, adds to, takes from it, relaxes, or re-enforces it, according as the matter of it, the exigency of man's case, and God's gracious purpose and design, could admit, and did require. For the *promise*, (implied in the threatening) it ceased; sin having disobliged the promiser. For the *precept*, the expressed positive part is plainly abrogated.[r] For the natural part, as it was not necessary, so nor was it possible it should be so; its foundations being more stable than heaven and earth. For the *commination*, we must understand two things in it: first, that for every transgression, a proportionable punishment must become due: secondly, that this debt be in event exacted; or, that God do actually inflict the deserved penalty entirely and fully upon the offending person.

The former of these is in the strictest and most proper sense natural, and therefore also unalterable. This dueness arising immediately from the relation of a reasonable creature offending, to his Maker. Whence also it is discernible to mere natural light. Pagans are said (Rom. i. 32.) to have known the righteous judgment of God, that they who commit such things (as are there mentioned) are worthy of death. And hence was the mention and dread of a Nemesis, and an ἐκδικον ὀμμα, *a vindictive Deity, and a revengeful eye*, over them, so frequent with them. "If therefore (as the learned Grotius speaks[s]) there had never been a penal law; yet a human act, having in itself a gravity, whether intrinsical, from the immutable nature of the thing

f Ps. xviii. 21, 24.
g John viii. 24. chap. iii. 18, 36.
h Acts iii. 19. chap. v. 31.
e Rom. iii. 27.
h Luke xiii. 3, 5.
k 1 Cor. xvi. 22.
l Matt. x. 37.
m Luke xiv. 26.
n Heb. v. 8. 2 Thes. i, 8, 9, &c.
o 1 Cor. xi. Psal. lxxxix.
p 2 Cor. vii. 1. Matt. v.
q 1 Tim. iv. 4.
r De Satisf. cap. 3.

or even extrinsical, from the contrary command of God, had deserved punishment, and that very grievous." Now what an arbitrary constitution did not create, it could not nullify; but might add strength, and give a confirmation to it. But now for the latter, that this debt be entirely and fully exacted of the sinner himself; though that be also natural, yet not in the strictest and most proper sense, *i. e.* it is convenient and agreeable to the nature of the thing; not what it doth so necessarily require, that it can upon no terms be dispensed with. It is so natural, as that[s] the son inherit from his father, which yet may, sometimes, for just causes be ordered otherwise. It is what, if it were done, justice could not but approve; not what it doth strictly and indispensably require; or, is a debt which it might exact, but which may, without injustice, upon valuable considerations be remitted. The former of these, therefore, the new constitution doth no way infringe or weaken, but confirm and reinforce. The latter it so far dispenses with, as that, for the satisfaction made by the Redeemer, the debt incurred by sin, be remitted to the sinner that truly repents and believes, and continues sincerely (though imperfectly) to obey for the future. So that his after-delinquencies, consisting with such sincerity, do not actually, or in event, subject him to other penalties, than the paternal rebukes and chastenings before mentioned. But this latter part considerable in the commination, the determination of the full penalty to the very person of the transgressor: it doth not dispense with to others (*i. e.* of the adult, and of persons in a present natural possibility of understanding the Lawgiver's pleasure herein) than such before described; but says expressly,[t] He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. That indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil.

Therefore the morally preceptive part of the law of works is not in force as man's rule of duty, considered in conjunction with the promise: that is, it doth not now say to any man, Do this, *i. e.* perfectly obey without ever having sinned, that thou *may'st live*. Both which he was obliged to eye conjunctly; the former as containing the *rule*; the other the *end*, in part, of his obedience. But it is in force even by the new constitution itself, as God's rule of judgment, considered in conjunction with the commination, upon all whom the law of grace relieves not, as not coming up to the terms of it; whom also this supervening law brings under a supervening aggravated condemnation. For where the obligation to obedience is violated, the obligation to punishment naturally takes place. We see then how far the law of works is in force, and how far not. But that so far as it is in force, it is to be looked on as taken into the new constitution of the law of grace, is evident. For it is new modified, and hath received a new mould and stamp by this law: which is now become (so far as it is promulgate) the standing rule of government over the lapsed world. The principal modifying act herein, is *dispensation*. Now this, 'tis true, may be so understood, or may be taken in such a sense, as wherein it will only belong to the executive part of government: that is, when it is not the act of the same power that made the law; as where only the execution of a deserved penalty is dispensed with, which may be done, in some cases, by a judge that is only a minister of the law, and not the maker of it; being (as may be supposed) enabled thereto by that law itself, or by an authority annexed to his office; or by virtue of instructions, which leave to him some latitude of managing the affairs of his judicature in a discretionary way, as present occasions shall dictate. And yet by none of these would any change be made in the law: but this is dispensation in a less proper sense. In the proper and more famous sense, dispensation belongs to the legislative part of government, being the act of the same power that made the former law, now dispensed with; and an act of the same kind, *viz.* legislation; the making of a new law that alters the former which it hath relation to: whence it was wont to be reckoned among those things that make a change in a law.[u] And so the case is here. The former law is dispensed with by the making of a new one; which so alters and changes it in its matter and frame, and more immediate end, as hath been shown: and a changed law is not the same.

Nor is it at all strange, that the minatory part of the law of works related to the preceptive, so as with it to constitute the debt of punishment, should be now within the compass of the Redeemer's law. For by this applied and urged on the consciences of sinners, he performs a necessary preparatory part of his work for their recovery, *viz.* the awakening, the humbling them; and reducing them to a just and useful despair of relief and help, otherwise than by his merciful hand and vouchsafement; and the rendering them hereby capable of his following applications. Cutting or lancing, with other such severities, are as proper and useful a part of the chirurgeon's business, as the applying of healing medicines: nor have they the same design and end for which wounds are inflicted by an enemy, the taking away of life, but the saving of it. And the matter is out of doubt, that the most rigorous determination of the penalty that shall be understood duly belonging to the least sin, hath a place, and doth stand visibly extant to view in the publicly avowed declaration, and among the placita or decretals of the Redeemer. We there read, that whosoever shall say to his brother,[v] fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire: (yea, and that lower degrees of the same kind of sin, do expose to lower degrees of the same kind of punishment, as our Saviour's words must be understood, if we attend the plain meaning of his allusive and borrowed phrase of speech:) "That the wages of sin is death. That as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. And we are told,[x] that the Scripture (which is the word of Christ, and was written not for innocent but lapsed man) hath concluded all under sin. Where also we find what is the true intent and end of this rough and sharp dealing with men, the shutting them up, like sentenced malefactors, as in order to execution, (which seems to be the import of the word here used,) *viz.* that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe (or to them believing, as the words may be read.) And moreover the Spirit, which breathes not in the law of works, as such, but in the law of grace, performs that operation which belongs to it, as it hath the name of the spirit of bondage, by applying and binding on the sentence of death, as due to the guilty person.

Therefore we must understand the Redeemer's constitution to have two parts. 1. An assertion and establishment of the ancient determined penalty due for every transgression; and to be certainly inflicted on all such as accept not the following offer of mercy upon the terms prescribed. Whereby the honour and justice of the Creator is salved and vindicated, in reference to that first covenant made with man. And the case of the sinner is plainly stated before him, that he may have a distinct and right apprehension of it. 2. The grant of pardon and eternal life to those that repent unfeignedly of their sins, and turn to God; believing in the Mediator, and resigning themselves to his grace and government, to be by him conducted, and made acceptable to God in their return, and that continue sincere herein to the end. Whereby the wonderful mercy of God in Christ is demonstrated, and the remedy is provided and ascertained to the, otherwise, lost and hopeless sinner. And these two parts therefore are to be looked on in this constitution, though distinctly, yet not separately. The sinner is, at once, to consider the same penalty as naturally, and by divine sanction, due to him; but now graciously to be remitted: the same blessedness as justly lost, but mercifully to be restored, with a high improvement. And to own both these jointly, as the voice of the Redeemer in his gospel. Death is due to thee; blessedness forfeited by thy having sinned; but if thou sincerely repent, believe, and obey for the future, thou art pardoned, and entitled to everlasting life.

It therefore now appears, that as the law or dictates of pure nature, comprehended together with other fit additionals, became at first one entire constitution aptly suited to the government of man in his innocent state, unto which

s Grot. Ibid.
u Vid. Suarez de Legibus.
t John iii. 36. Rom. ii. 8, 9.
v Matt. v. 22.
w Rom. vi. 23. Gal. iii. 10.
x Verse 22.
y συνεκλεισεν. Ibid.

the title did well agree of the law or covenant of works; so the same natural dictates, transcribed and made express, (because now sullied, and not so legible in the corrupted nature of man,) do, with such allays and additions as the case required, compose and make up the constitution which bears the title of the law or covenant of grace, or the law of faith, or the gospel of Christ, and is only suitable to the state of man lapsed and fallen; as the measure of that righteousness which he is now to aim at, and aspire unto. The rule of this righteousness therefore being evidently the law of faith, the gospel revelation, wherein it is perceptive of duty; this righteousness can be understood to be nothing but the impress of the gospel upon a man's heart and life: a conformity in spirit and practice to the revelation of the will of God in Jesus Christ; a collection of graces exerting themselves in suitable actions and deportments towards God and man; Christ formed in the soul, or put on; the new creature in its being and operations; the truth learned as it is in Jesus, to the putting off the old man, and the putting on the new. More distinctly, we may yet see wherein it lies, upon a premised view of some few things necessary to be fore-known in order thereunto. As, That this righteousness is a renewing righteousness. or the righteousness of one formerly a sinner, a lapsed perishing wretch, who is by it restored into such a state towards God, as he was in before that lapse (in respect of certain great essentials, though as yet his state be not so perfectly good, while he is in his tendency and motion; and shall, by certain additionals, be unspeakably better, when he hath attained the end and rest he is tending to.)

That a reasonable creature, yet untainted with sin, could not but have a temper of mind suitable to such apprehensions as these, *viz.* That as it was not the author of being to itself, so it ought not principally to study the pleasing and serving of itself, but him who gave it being; that it can no more continue and perfect itself unto blessedness, than it could create itself; and can therefore have no expectation hereof, but from the same author of its being; and hence, that it must respect and eye the great God, its Creator and Maker, as—the sovereign authority whom it was to fear and obey, and—the sovereign good whom it was to love and enjoy, But because it can perform no duty to him, without knowing what he will have it to do; nor have any particular expectation of favours from him, without knowing what he will please to bestow; and is therefore obliged to attend to the revelations of his will concerning both these; it is therefore necessary, that he eye him under a notion introductive and subservient to all the operations that are to be exerted towards him, under the two former notions; *i. e.* as the *eternal never-failing truth*, safely to be depended on, as intending nothing of deceit in any the revelations, whether of his righteous will, concerning matter of duty to be done; or of his good will, concerning matter of benefit to be expected and enjoyed: That man did apostatize and revolt from God, as considered under these several notions; and returns to him, when a holy rectitude is recovered, and he again becomes righteous, considered under the same: That it was not agreeable to God's wisdom, truth, and legal justice, to treat with man a sinner in order to his recovery, but through a mediator; and that therefore he was pleased in wonderful mercy to constitute and appoint his own Son Jesus Christ, God-man, unto that office and undertaking; that through him, man might return and be reconciled to himself, whom he causelessly forsook; designing that he shall now become so affected towards himself, through the Mediator; and firstly therefore towards the Mediator's own person, as he was before, and ought to have been towards himself immediately.

Therefore, whereas God was considerable in relation to man, both in his innocency and apostacy, under that forementioned twofold notion of the supreme authority and goodness; he hath also set up and exalted our Lord Jesus Christ, and represented him to sinners under an answerable twofold notion of a Prince and a Saviour; *i. e.* a mediating Prince and Saviour; to give repentance first, to bow and stoop the hearts of sinners, and reduce them to a subject posture again; and then by remission of sins to restore them to favour, and save them from the wrath to come. Him hath the father clothed with his own authority, and filled with his grace; requiring sinners to submit themselves to his ruling power, and commit themselves to his saving mercy; now both lodged in this his Son: to pay him *immediately* all homage and obedience, and through him *ultimately* to himself; from him *immediately* to expect salvation and blessedness, and through him *ultimately*, from himself. That whereas the spirits of men are not to be wrought to this temper, but by the intervention of a discovery and revelation of the Divine will to this purpose; our Lord Jesus Christ is further appointed by the Father to reveal all this his counsel to sinners, and is eminently spoken of in Scripture upon this account, under the notion of the *truth*; in which capacity he more effectually recommends to sinners both his *authority* and his grace. So that his threefold (so much celebrated) office of King, Priest, and Prophet, (the distinct parts of his general office as mediator,) which he manages in order to the reducement of lost sinners, exactly correspond (if you consider the more eminent acts and properties of each office) to that threefold notion under which the spirit of man must always have eyed and been acted towards God, had he never fallen: and hence this righteousness, which consists in conformity to the gospel, is the former righteousness, which was lost; with such an accession as is necessary, upon consideration that it was lost, and was only to be recovered by a mediator.

Therefore you may now take this short and as compendious an account as I can give of it, in what follows. It includes so firm and understanding an assent to the truth of the whole gospel revelation, as that the soul is thereby brought, through the power of the Holy Ghost, sensibly to apprehend its former disobedience to God, and distance from him, the reasonableness of subjection to him, and desirableness of blessedness in him; the necessity of a Redeemer to reconcile and recover it to God; the accomplishments and designation of the Lord Jesus Christ to that purpose: and hence, a penitent and complacential return to God, as the supreme authority and sovereign good, an humble and joyful acceptance of our Lord Jesus Christ, as its Prince and Saviour, with submission to his authority, and reliance on his grace; (the exercise of both which are founded in his blood;) looking and pitching upon him, as the only medium, through which he and his duties can please God, or God and his mercies approach him; and through which he hath the confidence to venture upon a covenant acceptance of God, and surrender of himself to him, afterward pursued to his uttermost, by a continued course of living in his fear and love, in obedience to him, and communion with him through the Mediator; always, while he is passing the time of his pilgrimage in this world, groaning under remaining sin, and pressing after perfect holiness; with an earnest expectation (animating him to a persevering patience through all difficulties) of a blessed eternity in the other world. That such a conformity to the gospel should be expressed by the name of righteousness, cannot seem strange to such as acquaint themselves with the language of the Scripture. That gracious frame which the gospel (made effectual) impresses upon the soul, is the kingdom of God, in the passive notion of it, his kingdom received, and now actually come with power upon our spirits. And this kingdom (sometimes also by an apt synecdoche called judgment in the same notion) is said to consist in righteousness; whence then result also,[z] peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The same holy impressions and consequent operations are mentioned by the apostle under the name of[a] fruits of righteousness, wherewith he prays his Philippians might be filled. It was Elymas's opposition to the gospel, that stigmatized him with that brand, "Thou enemy of all righteousness." To yield ourselves servants to righteousness, in opposition to a former servitude to sin, is[b] obeying from the heart the doctrine of the gospel, into the type or mould whereof we have been cast or delivered. And sure, both the seal and the impression, God's revelation and holiness, (however now more explicit and distinctly conspicuous in all their parts,) are the same, with us substantially, and in David's time; whence we need make no difficulty to own this latter, when we meet

z Rom. xiv. 17. a Phil. i. 11. b Rom. vi. 17.

with it, as here, under the same name. By what hath hitherto been said, it may be already seen in part, how exactly this righteousness corresponds to the blessedness for which it qualifies; whereof we shall have occasion hereafter to take further notice. In the meantime, it will be requisite to show, which was promised to be done in the next place.

How it qualifies. To which I say (very briefly) that it qualifies for this blessedness two ways:

1. Legally, or in *genere Morali*, as it describes the persons, who by the gospel-grant have, alone, title thereunto. —[c] The righteous into life eternal.—The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Say to the righteous it shall be well with them. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him.—In his righteousness he shall live. In which last words, how this righteousness conduceth to life, is expressed by the same preposition as in the text. In this kind it is not at all casual of this blessedness, but 'tis that which the free, and wise, and holy Law-giver thought meet, by his settled constitution, (besides what necessity there is of it, upon another account,) to make requisite thereto. The conformity of our Lord Jesus Christ to that severer law, under which he is said to have been made, is that which alone causes, merits, purchases, this blessedness; which yet is to be enjoyed, not by all *indiscriminatim*, or without distinction, but by such alone, as come up to the terms of the gospel; as he did fully satisfy the strict exactions of that other rigid law, by doing and suffering for their sakes.

2. Naturally, or in *genere Physico*. In this kind it may be said to be some way casual, that is, to be a *causa materialis dispositiva*, by a proper positive influence, *disposing the subject* unto this blessedness; which that it shall, yet, enjoy, is wholly to be resolved into the Divine good pleasure; but it is put by this holy rectitude in that temper and posture that it may enjoy it, through the Lord's gracious vouchsafement; when without it, 'twere naturally impossible that any should. An unrighteous impure soul, is in a natural indisposition to see God, or be blessed in him: That depraved temper averts it from him; the steady bent of its will is set another way, and 'tis a contradiction that any (*in sensu composito*) should be happy against their wills, *i.e.* while that aversion of will yet remains. The unrighteous banish themselves from God, they shun and hate his presence. Light and darkness cannot have communion. The sun doth but shine, continue to be itself, and the darkness vanishes, and is fled away. When God hath so determined, that only the pure in heart shall see him; that without holiness none shall; he lays no other law upon unholy souls, than what their own impure nature lay upon themselves. If therefore it should be inquired, Why may not the unrighteous be subjects of this blessedness, see God, and be satisfied with his likeness, as well as the righteous? the question must be so answered, as if it were inquired, Why doth the wood admit the fire to pass upon it, suffer its flames to insinuate themselves till they have introduced its proper form, and turned it into their own likeness; but we see water doth not so, but violently resists its first approaches, and declines all commerce with it? The natures of these agree not. And is not the contrariety here as great? We have then the qualified subject of this blessedness, and are next to consider this blessedness itself.

CHAPTER III.

The nature of this blessedness, propounded unto consideration, in the three ingredients (here mentioned) whereof it consists. 1. Vision of God's face. 2. Assimilation to him. 3. The satisfaction resulting thence. These propounded to be considered. 1. Absolutely and singly each by itself. 2. Relatively, in their mutual respects to each other. The first of these, Vision of God's face, discoursed of. 1. The object. 2. The act.

Now for the nature of this blessedness, or the inquiry wherein it lies, so far as the text gives us any account of it, we are invited to turn our thoughts and discourse to it. And we have it here represented to us in all the particulars that can be supposed to have any nearer interest in the business of blessedness, or to be more intimate and intrinsical thereunto. For (the beatific object supposed) what more can be necessary to actual, complete, formal blessedness, than the sight of it, an adaptation or assimilation to it, (which is nothing else but its being actually communicated and imparted to the soul, its being united and made as it were one with it,) and the complacential fruition the soul hath of it so communicated, or having so transformed it into itself.

And these three are manifestly contained in the text: (the beatific object being involved with them:) the first in the former cause, "I shall behold thy face;" the second and third in the latter, "I shall be satisfied with thy likeness;" where, being made like to God hath been discovered to be supposed; and the satisfaction, the pleasant contentful relishes consequent thereto, plainly expressed. We shall therefore have stated the entire nature of this blessedness in the handling of these three things;—vision of the face of God,—participation of his likeness, and—satisfaction therein.

And I shall choose to consider them, 1. Absolutely, and singly, each by itself. 2. Relatively, in the mutual respects (by way of influence and dependence) they may be found to have towards each other.

Therefore first, in the absolute consideration of them severally, we begin with,

First, the vision of God's face, where—the object, the face of God, and—the act of seeing and beholding it, are distinctly to be spoken to.

1. The face of God, the object of this vision, which is his glory represented, offered to view. And this object or exhibited glory is twofold:—1. Sensible, such as shall incur and gratify (after the resurrection) the bodily eye— 2. Intellectual, or intelligible; that spiritual glory that only comes under the view and contemplation of the glorified mind.

1. A sensible glory (to begin with what is lower) is fitly in our way to be taken notice of, and may well be comprehended (as its less principal intendment) within the significancy of the expression; the face of God. So indeed it doth evidently signify, Exod. xxxiii. 11. And if we look to the notation of the word, and its frequent use as applied to God, it may commodiously enough, and will often, be found to signify, in a larger and more extended sense, any aspect or appearance of God. And though it may be understood, ver. 23. of that chapter, to signify an overcoming spiritual glory, as the principal thing there intended, such as no soul dwelling in flesh could behold, without rending the vail, and breaking all to pieces; yet, even there also, may such a degree of sensible glory be secondarily intended, as it was not consistent with a state of mortality to be able to bear. And supposing the other expression, "Thy likeness," to signify, in any part, the *objective* glory saints are to behold; it is very capable of being extended so far, as to take in a *sensible* appearance of glory also, which it doth in these words,[d] "The similitude of the Lord shall he behold:" yet even that glory also was transformative and impressive of itself: Moses so long conversed with it, till he became incapable, for the present, of converse with men, as you know the story relates.

Such a glory as this, though it belong not to the being of God, yet it may be some umbrage of him, a more shadowy representation, as a man's garments are of the man, which is the allusion in that of the Psalmist,[e] Thou art clothed with majesty and honour: Thou coverest thyself with *light* as with a garment. And inasmuch as that spiritual body (the house not made with hands) wherewith the blessed are to be clothed upon, must then be understood to have its proper sensitive[f] powers and organs refined to that degree, as may be agreeable to a state of glory; so must these have their suitable objects to converse with. A faculty without an object, is not possible in nature, and is altogether inconsistent with a state of blessedness. The bodies of saints will be[h] raised in glory, fashioned like Christ's glorious body; must bear the image of the heavenly; and this will connaturalize them to a region of glory, render a surrounding sensible glory necessary and natural to them, their own element: they

c Matt. xxv. 1 Cor. vi. Isa. iii. Ezek. xviii.
d Numb. xii. 8. Ezek. i. 28 Exod. xxxiv. xxxv. &c.

e Psal. civ. 1, 2. f 2 Cor. v. 1. g Cuilibet potentiæ activæ respondet passiva, sive objectiva. h 1 Cor. xv. 43. Phil. iii. 21.

will, as it were, not be able to live but amidst such a glory. Place is conservative of the body placed in it, by its suitableness there. Indeed every created being (inasmuch as it is not self-sufficient, and is obliged to fetch in continual refreshings from without) must always have somewhat suitable to itself to converse with, or it presently languishes. By such a harmony of actives and passives, the world consists and holds together. The least defect thereof then, is least of all supposable in the state of blessedness. The rays of such a glory have often shone down into this lower world. Such a glory we know showed itself upon the Mount Sinai; afterwards often about the tabernacle, and in the temple; such a glory appeared at our Saviour's birth, baptism, and transfiguration; and will do at his expected appearance; which leaves it no unimaginable thing to us, and shows how facile it is to God to (do that which will then be, in some sort, necessary) create a glory meet for the entertainment and gratification of any such faculty, as he shall then continue in being. But,

2. The intellectual glory, that which perfected spirits shall eternally please themselves to behold, calls for our more especial consideration.[i] This is the glory that excelleth, hyperbolical glory, as that expression imports; such, as in comparison whereof, the other is said to be no glory: as the apostle speaks, comparing the glory of the legal with that of the evangelical dispensation; where the former was, we must remember, chiefly a sensible glory, the glory that shone upon Mount Sinai; the latter a purely spiritual glory; and surely, if the mere preludes of this glory, the *primordia*, the *beginnings* of it, the glory—yet shining but through a glass, (as he there also speaks of this glory,) were so hyperbolically glorious, what will it be in its highest exaltation, in its perfected state?[k] The apostle cannot speak of that, but with hyperbole upon hyperbole in the next chapter. As though he would heap up words as high as heaven to reach it, and give a just account of it. Things are as their next originals. This glory more immediately rays forth from God, and more nearly represents him. 'Tis his more genuine production. He is styled the[l] Father of glory: every thing that is glorious is some way like him, and bears his image. But he is as well the[m] Father of spirits, as the Father of glory; and that glory which is purely spiritual, hath most in it of his nature and image: as beams but in the next descent from the body of the sun. This is his unvailed face, and emphatically, the divine likeness. Again, things are as the faculties which they are to exercise and satisfy; this glory must exercise and satisfy the noblest faculty, of the most noble and excellent creature. Intellectual nature, in the highest improvement 'tis capable of in a creature, must here be gratified to the uttermost; the most enlarged contemplative power of an immortal spirit finds that wherein it terminates here, with a most contentful acquiescence. 'Tis true it must be understood not totally to exceed the capacity of a creature, but it must fully come up to it. Should it quite transcend the sphere of created nature, and surpass the model of a human understanding, (as the Divine glory undoubtedly would, did not God consider us in the manner of exhibiting it to our view,) it would confound, not satisfy. A creature even in glory is still a creature, and must be treated as such. After the blessed God hath elevated it to the highest pitch, he must infinitely condescend; it cannot otherwise know or converse with him. He must accommodate his glory to the weaker eye, the fainter and more languid apprehensions, of a poor finite thing. I had almost said, nothing; for what is any creature, yea, the whole creation in its best state, compared with the *I AM*, the being (as he justly appropriates to himself that name) the All in All? We must be careful then to settle in our own thought such a state of this glory, (in forming that indeterminate notion we have now of it,) as may render it (though confessedly above the measure of our present understandings as to a distinct knowledge of it) not manifestly incompetent to any created understanding whatsoever, and as may speak us duly shy of ascribing a deity to a worm, of affixing any thing to the creature which shall be found agreeing to the blessed God himself alone. Their expressions therefore who over-magnify (even deify) the creature assumed into glory, must be heard and read with caution and abhorrency, as the high-swelling words of blasphemous vanity.[n] Is it not enough that perishing wretches, that were within one hand's breadth of hell, are

i υπερβαλλουσης δοξης. 2 Cor. iii. 10.
k Καθ' υπερβολην εις υπερβολην. 2 Cor. iv. 17.
l Eph. i.
m Heb. xii.
n Not being willing to trouble a discourse wholly of another nature and design with any thing of controversy, I have chosen only to annex a marginal digression, wherein somewhat to animadvert upon the over-bold disputes and definitions of the scholastic generation, touching what we have now under consideration. Some of whose writings seem the very springs of the putid conceits (there not wanting those, that are officious enough to serve the illiterate, in accommodating things of that kind to their genius and language) so greedily imbibed by modern enthusiasts.

'Tis a question much agitated among the school-men, Whether the Divine essence be exhibited to the view of the blessed in heaven, in itself immediately, or by the intervention of any created likeness or similitude? Had it been agreed to forbear looking within this vail, (the rude attempt whereof, rather rends than draws it aside, and to shut up all discourse of this kind) in a modest awful silence; or had the adventures some have made been foolish only, not pernicious, this present labour had been spared. But when men speak of things above their reach, not to no purpose barely, but to very bad, what they say ought to be considered. The Divine essence, say the Thomists, (and the Scotists here disagree not,) is itself immediately united to the intellect of the blessed in *ratione Speciei intelligibilis*, so as there is no place for any intervening likeness, or representation. *Ipsa Divina essentia est, quæ videtur et quo videtur. Thom. Sum. prima parte*, q. 12. *Art.* 2. 3. *contr. Gentes*, c. 15. Now they assert concerning the *species intelligibiles*, in general, that they have not *Locum objecti, intellectionem terminantes;* (which they make the place and office of the *verbum mentis per intellectionem productum;*) but *formæ tantum et actus primi;* and that the understanding so acts by them, as fire by its proper form. *Thom. Sum. prima parte, q.* 85. *Art.* 2. (the contrary whereto is asserted by *Scotus in* 1. *Sentent. distinct.* 3. q. 6.) Yea, and *Cajet*, affirms 1. p. q. 76. *Art.* 2. That the intellect and the intelligible species are more one than the matter and form in the *compositum*, For, saith he, (or to that purpose, not having him now at hand,) the matter is not turned into the form, nor *e contra*, but the intellect, which is in itself mere power, doth, in *genere intelligibili*, turn into its very intelligible object; and the intelligible object itself is after a certain manner imbibed in the intellect. So *Ledesma de Divin. perfect.* q. 3. *Art.* 5. *unum transit in aliud, ex quo sequitur, quod unum sit aliud.* And hence, say they, applying this doctrine to the present purpose, *et secundum istum modum, in conjunctione illa ineffabili divinæ essentiæ cum intellectu creato, fit unum agens integrum*, scil. *intellectus creatus factus Deus mirabili modo. Intellectus in visione beatifica, est potentia jam deificata, per lumen gloriæ. Cajet. prima parte, q.* 12 *Art.* 2. *ex Ledes. q.* 8. *Art.* 8. For besides this immediate union of the Divine essence itself with the intellect, they assert a *lumen gloriæ*, an accident superadded, without which the vision cannot be performed; which additional the Scotists reject. Some, though they admit it, think the vision may be without it, and that it doth not *implicare contradictionem, visionem beatificam fieri sine lumine gloriæ, cum solo speciali Dei auxilio, quod item asserunt multi ex scholasticis, Palud. in* 4. *dist.* 49. *q.* 1. *Art.* 3. *Concl.* 2. *Thom. de Argent. q.* 2. *Art.* 1. *Major. q.* 4. *Henr. quolibet.* 7. *Zumel.* 1. *p. q* 12. *Art.* 5. *disp.* 2. *concl.* 3. *Ita Onuphr. de virtute pœnitentia.* Whether there be any *verbum creatum*, the product of intellection, the Thomists are themselves divided. Their more common opinion is, that there is none, as *Ledesma* assures us; telling us also his reason, why he conceives there can be none. *Beati non formant verbum in videndo Deo, sed plus vident quam verbo creato dicere possunt——nam beatus per visionem beatam quamvis non videat infinite videt tamen infinitum* ——(which is their great argument against any intelligible species:) and he further adds, *sicut visio Dei, quæ est in ipso Deo, habet pro principio et specie intelligibili ipsam divinam Essentiam, et pro termino ipsam Divinam Essentiam; sic visio beatorum est ita supernaturalis, et divini ordinis, et participatio divinæ visionis ita perfecta, ut ipsa etiam habeat pro principio et specie intelligibili, divinam Essentiam, et pro termino sive verbo producto, ipsamet divinam Essentiam.* So that the principal and term of this vision are owned to be nothing else but the simple Divine essence. Concerning the formal act itself, it is much disputed, whether the creature's intellect do at all effectually concur to it, or whether God himself be not the only efficient or agent in this vision. Some stick not to affirm the latter, *Marsil. in* 3. *q* 1. *Palud. in* 4. *dist.* 49. *q.* 1. *Art.* 2. (*referente Ledesma,*) and say plainly, that the action of the inferior agent wholly ceases, and the superior only acts; the same thing that D. M. Causabon in his Enthusiasm charges one Maximus with, who in a book entitled κεφαλαια θεολογικα writes thus: *την αμεσον λαβων ενωσιν προς τον θεον ο ν.υς την του νοειν και νοεισθαι παντελως δυναμιν εχει σχολαζουσαν. That the soul taken into immediate union with God, loses all its knowing power:* (though this be not distinctively spoken of the state of glory:) and what doth this amount to? but that while they are eagerly contending about the saints' blessedness, and too curiously labouring to explicate the manner of their seeing God, they unawares destroy the subject of the question, and deny that they see him at all; and so upon the whole, dispute themselves into a worse than paganish infidelity. And even the rest, that agree in the sense of the passages above recited will not be easily able to avoid the charge of as intolerable consequences which it is my business here only to discover, and not to determine any thing in this controversy, whiles I tax the too much boldness of others, who adventure it. And here not to insist on the absurdity of what they say concerning the intelligible species in general, let it be considered, 1. That the Divine essence is said to be united to the intellect of the blessed, as an intelligible species. 2. That the intelligible species, in the business of intellection, and the intellect, become one another; do not remain distinct things united, but are identified 3 That hence in understanding God, the intellect is deified and becomes God, which naturally follows from the two former, and is moreover expressly asserted in plain words. What need is there to press this doctrine with hard consequences? or how can it look worse than it doth already, with its own natural face? Nor can I apprehend which way it should be made look better. For should it lay claim to that favour, to be understood according to the usual sense of the peripatetic maxim, *intellectus, intelligendo, sit omnia;* it will be found manifestly to have precluded itself. That maxim is wont to be understood thus: That the intellect becomes that which it understands representative, by putting on the species or likeness of its object, the representation of it. For instance, when I form in my mind the notion of a mountain, my understanding becomes an ideal or spiritual mountain: it becomes that species (which is liable to more exception too than I shall now insist on, and looks more like the language of a poet than a philosopher) that is now formed there: and not the material mountain itself But how shall this assertion, The understanding, by its act of understanding God, becomes God, be capable of that interpretation, *i. e.* It becomes his likeness, his idea, his representation now formed in it, when any such intervening likeness or representation is utterly denied: and that supposed species is said to be the simple Divine essence itself; and if the Divine essence itself be that species by which 'tis understood, will it not follow from that other *Aristotelian axiom*, (which with them must signify as much as a text from Saint Paul,) *scibile et scientia sunt idem:*

saved, except they be also deified too? that they become happy, unless they also become gods? The distance even of a glorified creature from the glorious God, is still infinitely greater, than between it and the silliest worm, the minutest atom of dust.

And by how much more we shall then know of his glory, so much more shall we understand that distance. Yet as he shall then enlarge the capacity of the soul he glorifies to a very vast comprehension, so shall the exhibition of his glory to it be fully adequate to its most enlarged capacity. They are as yet but obscure glimmerings we can have of this glory; but so far as, without too bold curiosity, we may, and wherein Scripture light will give us any pre-apprehension of it, let us consider awhile the nature and the excellency of it. We cannot indeed consider these separately; for we can no sooner understand it to be glory, than we conceive it excellent: glory, in the proper notion of it, being nothing else but resplendent excellency, the lustre of excellency, or real worth made conspicuous. Yet as there is an excellency conceivable in the nature of it, that excellency whereof it is the splendour and brightness; so we must conceive a peculiar excellency of that very radiation, that splendour itself, wherewith it shines unto blessed souls. In its very nature it is the brightness of divine excellencies; in its present appearance, it shines in the highest excellency of that brightness; in its nature it excelleth all things else; in its present exhibition, compared with all its former radiations, it excelleth itself.

As to the *nature* of this glory, 'tis nothing else but the conspicuous lustre of divine perfections. We can only guide our present conceptions of it, by the discovery God hath already given us of himself, in those several excellencies of his being, the great attributes that are convertible and one with him. When Moses besought him for a sight of his glory, he answers him with this, "I will proclaim my name before thee." His name, we know, is the collection of his attributes. The notion therefore we can hence form of this glory, is only such as we may have of a large volume by a brief synopsis or table; of a magnificent fabric, by a small model or platform; a spacious country, by a little landscape. He hath here given us a true representation of himself, not a full; such as will secure our apprehensions, being guided thereby, from error, not from ignorance. So as they swerve not in apprehending this glory, though they still fall short. We can now apply our minds to contemplate the several perfections which the blessed God assumes to himself, and whereby he describes to us his own being; and can in our thoughts attribute them all to him, though we have still but low defective conceptions of each one. As if we could at a distance distinguish the streets and houses of a great city; but every one appears to us much less than it is. We can apprehend somewhat of whatsoever he reveals to be in himself; yet when all is done, how little a portion do we take up of him! Our thoughts are empty and languid, strait and narrow, such as diminish and limit the Holy One. Yet so far as our apprehensions can correspond to the discovery he affords us of his several excellencies, we have a present view of the Divine glory. Do but strictly and distinctly survey the many perfections comprehended in his name, then gather them up, and consider how glorious he is! Conceive one glory resulting from substantial wisdom, goodness, power, truth, justice, holiness, that is, beaming forth from him who is all these by his very essence, necessarily, originally, infinitely, eternally, with whatsoever else is truly a perfection. This is the glory blessed souls shall behold for ever.

For the *excellency* of it, 'tis called by way of discrimination,[o] "The excellent glory." There was glory put upon Christ in the transfiguration; of which, when the apostle speaks, having occasion to mention withal the glory of heaven itself, from whence the voice came; he adds to this latter, the distinguishing note of the excellent. He himself was eye-witness of the honour, and majesty, and glory, which the Lord Jesus then received; but beyond all this, the glory from whence the voice came, was the [p]excellent or stately glory, as the word imports. 'Tis a great intimation how *excellent* a glory this is, that 'tis said to be a glory [q]yet to be revealed; as if it had been said, whatever appearances of the Divine glories are now offered to your view, there is still somewhat undiscovered, somewhat behind the curtain, that will outshine all. You have not seen so much, but you are still to expect unspeakably more. Glory is then to shine in its noon-day strength and vigour: 'tis then in its meridian. Here, the riches of glory are to be displayed, certain treasures of glory, the plenitude and magnificence of glory. We are here to see him as he is; to know him as we are known of him. Certainly, the display of himself, the rays of his discovered excellency, must hold proportion with that *vision*, and be therefore exceeding glorious.[r] 'Tis the glory Christ had with the Father before the foundations of the world were laid; into the vision and communion whereof holy souls shall now be taken, according as their capacities can admit: that wherewithal his great achievements and high merits shall be rewarded eternally; that wherewith he is to be glorified in heaven, in compensation of having glorified his Father on earth, and finished the work whereto he was appointed. This cannot but be a most transcendent glory. 'Tis in sum, and in the language of the text, the glory of God's own face, his most aspectable, conspicuous glory. Whose transforming beams are productive of the glory impressed, the next ingredient into this blessedness, which will presently come to be spoken of, after we have given you some short account of,

That our very knowledge of God must be God too? or would they disown that maxim, sure when once the faculty is supposed deified, the act immanent in it cannot be a created accident: nor can that maxim (understood of the *scibile representativum*, or the species *scibilis*) be denied by them. And sure if the saints' knowledge of God, the likeness of him in their minds, be God; their holiness, the likeness of him in their hearts, must be so too. How absurd then would it be to use that scripture language, and speak of these under the names of God's image or likeness, when *similitude* and *identity* are notions so vastly disagreeing: and since a saints' knowledge and holiness here and in heaven differ but in degree: they can be here on earth, nothing but God dwelling in them. And supposing that Scotus have better defended than his adversaries impugned the real identity of the soul and its faculties, that must be deified too. However, what could be imagined more absurd, than that the substance of the soul should be a creature and its faculty God? Whence, then, do we think that modern Familists have fetched their admired nonsense? Whom have they had their original instructors? or who have taught them that brave, magnificent language of being Godded with God, and Christed with Christ, but these? Nor, sure, need they blush to be found guilty of so profoundly learned inconsistencies, or to speak absurdly after such patrons. And what should occasion these men so to involve themselves I cannot find or divine more than this, that they were not able to fasten upon any more tolerable sense of the word Καθως, 1 Cor. xiii. 12 1 John iii. 2. but taking that in its highest pitch of significancy, all their arguments are generally levelled at this mark, to prove that no created species can possibly represent God *sicuti est*, and thence infer, that he cannot be seen by any created species in the glorified state, where he is to be seen *sicuti est*. But could we content ourselves with a modest interpretation of these words, and understand them to speak not of a *parity* but of a similitude only, between God's knowledge and ours, nor of an absolute omnimodous similitude, but comparative only; that is, that comparing our future with our present state, the former shall so far excel this, that in comparison thereof it may be said to be a knowing of God as we are known, and as he is; insomuch as our future knowledge of him shall approach so unspeakably nearer to his most perfect knowledge of us, and the truth of the thing, than our present knowledge doth or can: by such an interpretation we are cast upon no such difficulties. For admit that no species can represent God as he is in the highest sense of these words; yet sure in the same sense wherein he can be seen by us as he is, he may be represented to us as he is. And what can be more frivolous than that fore-recited reasoning to the contrary? "There can be no created representation of God (*sicuti est*) adequate to the vision the blessed have of him; but they see more than any created representation can contain, for they see *infinitum*, though not *infinite*. For how must we understand the *infinitum* they are said to see? Materially or formally? Must we understand by it him that is infinite only, or as he is infinite? If it be said the latter, that is to say they see *infinite* too. If the former only, do not saints on earth see (*viz.* mentally, which is the vision we are speaking of) him who is infinite, in their present state, where it is acknowledged the knowledge is by species.

Yet would I not hence conclude that the knowledge saints shall have of God hereafter shall be by species; for my design in all this is but to discover the vanity of too positive and definitive conceptions concerning it, beyond the measure of God's revelation, and the ducture of clear and unentangled reason. All knowledge hath been thought to be by assimilation, *i. e.* by receiving the species or images of the things known. So the intellect is not really turned into the things which it understands, but only receives their species, wherewith it is united so closely, that it is therefore said to be like to them. Virtuosi of France, confer. 65.

One way or other it hath been judged necessary the mind should be furnished with such images of the thing it is said to understand; which therefore some have thought *connate*; others supplied by sense totally; others by a separate *intellectus agens*; which some have thought to be God himself; others one common intelligence; others a particular genius. So indispensably necessary it hath been reckoned unto intellection, that the office of furnishing the mind with the images of the things to be understood, should be performed by one or other. If any clearer explication can be given, or better way assigned, of the soul's knowing things, it cannot but be welcome to rational men. But I see no necessity or reason it should have a specifically distinct way of knowing here and in heaven. Much less that we should imagine to ourselves such a one as to that other state, as is altogether unaccountable and capable of no rational explication; and reckon it much more becoming to be silent, than on pretence of any mysteriousness in the things we discourse of, to talk absurdly and unintelligibly about them. A confessed ignorance in this case is becoming, to say with that great apostle, It doth not appear what we shall be; but to conclude and define such matters, is surely *φρονειν παρ ο δει φρονειν*.

o 2 Pet. i. 17.
p Μεγελοπρεπης.
q 1 Pet. iv. 13.
r John xvii.

2. The act of beholding: the vision or intuition itself, by which intervening the impression is made. Glory seems to carry in it a peculiar respect to the visive power; (whether corporeal or mental, as it is itself of the one kind or the other;) 'tis something to be contemplated, to be looked upon. And being to transmit an impression and consequent pleasure to another subject, it must necessarily be so, it can neither transform nor satisfy but as it is beheld. And here the sensitive intuition I shall not insist on, as being less intended in the text, and the discourse of it less suitable to such as with a spiritual mind and design set themselves to inquire into the nature of the saints' blessedness. Yet, as this is the most noble, comprehensive, quick, and sprightly sense, so is the act of it more considerable, in the matter of blessedness, than any other of the outward man, and the most perfect imitation of the act of the mind; whence also this so often borrows the name of the other, and is called seeing. 'Tis an act indeed very proper and pertinent to a state of glory. By how much more any sensible object is glorious, (supposing the *sensorium* to be duly disposed and fortified, as must be here supposed,) so much is it the fitter object of sight; hence when we would express a glorious object, we call it conspicuous; and the less glorious or more obscure any thing is, the less visible it is, and the nearer it approaches to invisibility; whence that saying in the common philosophy,[s] "To see blackness is to see nothing." Whatsoever a glorified eye, replenished with a heavenly vitality and vigour, can fetch in from the many glorified objects that encompass it, we must suppose to concur to this blessedness. Now is the eye satisfied with seeing, which before never could.

But 'tis intellectual sight we are chiefly to consider here, that whereby we see him that is invisible, and approach the inaccessible light. [t]The word here used, some critics tell us, more usually signifies the sight of the mind. And then, not a casual, superficial glancing at a thing, but contemplation, a studious, designed viewing of a thing when we solemnly compose and apply ourselves thereto; or the vision of prophets, or such as have things discovered to them by divine revelation, (thence called *chozim*, *seers*,) which imports (though not a previous design, yet) no less intention of mind in the act itself. And so it more fitly expresses that knowledge which we have, not by discourse and reasoning out of one thing from another, but by immediate intuition of what is nakedly, and at once, offered to our view, which is the more proper knowledge of the blessed in heaven. They shall have the glory of God so presented, and their minds so enlarged, as to comprehend much at one view; in which respect they may be said, in a great degree, to know as they are known, inasmuch as the blessed God comprehends all things at once, in one simple act of knowing. Yet that is not to be understood as if the state of glory should exclude all ratiocination, more than our present state doth all intuition; (for first and indemonstrable principles we see by their own light, without illation or argument;) nor can it be inconvenient to admit, that while the knowledge the blessed have of God, is not infinite, there may be use of their discursive faculty with great fruit and pleasure. [u]Pure intuition of God without any mixture of reasoning, is acknowledged (by such as are apt enough to be over-ascribing to the creature) peculiar to God alone. But as the blessed God shall continually afford (if we may speak of continuity in eternity, which yet we cannot otherwise apprehend) a clear discovery of himself, so shall the principal exercise and felicity of the blessed soul consist in that less laborious and more pleasant way of knowing, a mere admitting or entertaining of those free beams of voluntary light, by a grateful intuition; which way of knowing, the expression of sight, or beholding, doth most incline to, and that is, we are sure, the ordinary language of Scripture[x] about this matter.

[s] Arist. in 3. Meteorolog. Cap. de Iride.
[t] חזה.
[u] Cognoscere Deum clare et intuitive est proprium et naturale soli Deo, sicut est proprium igni calefacere et soli illuminare. Ledesm. de divin. perfect. q. 8. Art. 7.
[x] Matt. v. 8. Heb. xii. 14.

CHAPTER IV.

The second ingredient into this blessedness considered, Assimilation to God, or his glory imprest. Wherein it consists, discovered in sundry propositions. The third ingredient. The satisfaction and pleasure which results, stated and opened.

AND now, upon this vision of the blessed face of God, next follows, in the order of discourse,

The soul's perfect assimilation unto that revealed glory, or its participation thereof; (touching the order the things themselves have to one another, there will be consideration had in its proper place;) and this also must be considered as a distinct and necessary ingredient into the state of blessedness we are treating of. Distinct it is, for though the vision now spoken of doth include a certain kind of assimilation in it, as all vision doth, being only a reception of the species or likeness of the object seen; this assimilation we are to speak of, is of a very different kind. *That*, is such as affects only the visive and cognitive power, and that not with a real change, but intentional only, nor for longer continuance than the act of seeing lasts; but *this*, is total, real, and permanent. And surely it is of equal necessity to the soul's blessedness, to partake the glory of God, as to behold it; as well as to have the Divine likeness imprest upon it, as represented to it. After so contagious and overspreading a depravation as sin hath diffused through all its powers, it can never be happy without a change of its very crasis and temper throughout. A diseased, ulcerous body would take little felicity in gay and glorious sights: no more would all the glory of heaven signify to a sick, deformed, self-loathing soul.

It must therefore be all glorious within, have the Divine nature more perfectly communicated, the likeness of God transfused and wrought into it. This is the blessed work begun in regeneration; but how far it is from being perfected, we may soon find by considering, how far short we are of being satisfied in our present state, even in the contemplation of the highest and most excellent objects. How tasteless to our souls are the thoughts of God! How little pleasure do we take in viewing over his glorious attributes! the most acknowledged and adorable excellencies of his being! And whereunto can we impute it but to this, that our spirits are not yet sufficiently connaturalized to them? Their likeness is not enough deeply instamped on our souls. Nor will this be, till we awake. When we see better, we shall become better: when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. But do we indeed pretend to such an expectation? Can we think what God is, and what we are in our present state, and not confess these words to carry with them an amazing sound "we shall be like him!" How great a hope is this! How strange an errand hath the gospel into the world! How admirable a design! to transform men and make them like God! Were the dust of the earth turned into stars in the firmament, were the most stupendous poetical transformations assured realities; what could equal the greatness and the wonder of this mighty change? Yea, and doth not the expectation of it seem as presumptuous, as the issue itself would be strange? Is it not an over-bold desire; too daring a thought; a thing unlawful to be affected, as it seems impossible to be attained? It must be acknowledged there is an appearance of high arrogance in aspiring to this, to be like God. And the very wish or thought of being so, in all respects, were not to be entertained without horror. 'Tis a matter therefore that requires some disquisition and explication, wherein that impressed likeness of God consists, which must concur to the saints' blessedness. In order hereunto then take the following propositions:

Prop. 1. There is a sense wherein to be like God is altogether impossible, and the very desire of it the most horrid wickedness. The prophet in the name of God charges the proud prince of Tyre with this, as an inexpiable arrogance, that he did set his heart as the heart of God; and upon this score challenges and enters the lists with

him: Come, you that would fain be taken for a god, I'll make a sorry god of thee ere I have done; [a] Because thou hast set thy heart as the heart of God, I will set those upon thee, that shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and that shall defile thy brightness: And what! Wilt thou yet say in the hand of him that slayeth thee, I am a god? Thou shalt be a man and no god, in the hand of him that slayeth thee;—I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. He will endure no such imitation of him, as to be rivalled in the point of his Godhead. This is the matter of his jealousy; [b] "They have moved me to jealousy with not-God," so 'tis shortly and more smartly spoken in the original text. And see how he displays his threats and terrors hereupon in the following verses. This was the design and inducement of the first transgression, to be as gods. And indeed all sin may be reduced hither. What else is sin (in the most comprehensive notion) but an undue imitation of God? an exalting of the creature's will into a supremacy, and opposing it as such to the Divine? To sin, is to take upon us, as if we were supreme, and that there were no Lord over us; 'tis to assume to ourselves a deity, as if we were under no law or rule; as he is not under any, but what he is to himself. Herein, to be like God, is the very core and malignity of sin.

2. There is a just and laudable imitation of God, a likeness to him, that is matter of command, praise, and promise, as wherein both the duty, excellency, and blessedness of the reasonable creature doth consist; and which is in some respect inseparable from the nature of man. [c] We are required to be followers of God, as dear children, imitators the word is. David is commended as a man after God's own heart; though but now we saw in another, with what disdain and indignation it was resented, that he did set his heart as the heart of God. The [d] new creature, the new man, the first-fruits, as he is called, the flower of creation, is made after God. Saints expect, upon the assurance of his word, to be more fully like him, as we see in the text, and parallel places. Yea, man was made at first with a concreate similitude to God, which we know was the counsel of heaven, and the result and issue of that counsel, Gen. i. 26, 27. This is evident enough in itself, and needs no more words. But to make a further step in this business, observe next,

3. There can be no allowable imitation of any one, but with an exception as to some peculiarities that may belong to his special station, relation, and other circumstances of the condition in which he is; or with limitation to such things as are of common concernment unto both.[e] 'Tis commonly observed how naturally a people form their manners and fashions to the example of the prince; and there is no well-disposed ruler, but would take it well, to be imitated in things that are of common concernment to him and his subjects, that is, that concern him, not as he is a king, but as he is a man, or a Christian. To behold the transforming power of his own example, where it is such as begets a fair and unreproachful impress; how his virtues circulate, (his justice, temperance, love of religion,) and produce their likeness among his people; 'twill be a glory, and cannot but be resented with some delight. We cast an honour upon them whom we imitate; for we acknowledge an excellency in them, (which is all that honouring imports in the first notion of it,) and that naturally is received with pleasure. But now, should subjects aspire to a likeness to their prince, in the proper appendages and acts of sovereignty; and because he is a glorious king, they will be such too; and assume the peculiar cognizances of regality; ascend the throne, sway the sceptre, wear the crown, enact laws, &c. There cannot be more of dutifulness and observance in the former imitation than there is of disloyalty and treason in this. A father is pleased to have his son imitate him, within such limits before mentioned; but, if he will govern the family, and fill up his room in all relations, this will never be endured.

4. There are some things to be found in the blessed God, not so incommunicable and appropriate, but that his creatures may be said to have some participation thereof with him; and so far, to be truly like him. This participation cannot be univocal; as the nature of a living creature in general, is equal in men and brutes; so, it is a self-evident principle, that [g] *nothing can be common to God and an inferior being.* Nor is it only an equivocal, a participation of the same name, when the natures signified thereby are altogether diverse; but analogical, inasmuch as the things spoken, under the same names, of God and the creature, have a real likeness, and conveniency in nature with one another: and they are in God, primarily; in the creature, by dependence, and derivation: in him essentially, as being his very essence; in them but as accidents, (many of them,) adventitious to their beings; and so while they cannot be said to be the same things in them, as in him, are fitly said to be his likeness.

5. This likeness, as it is principally found in man, among all the terrestrial creatures; so hath it, in man, for its seat and subject, his soul or spiritual part. The effects of Divine wisdom, power, goodness, are every where visible throughout the whole creation; and as there is no effect, but hath something in it corresponding to its cause, (wherein it was its cause,) so every creature doth, some way or other, represent God. Some in virtues, some in life, some in being[h] only. The material world represents him, as a house the builder; but spiritual beings, as a child the father.[i] Other creatures (as one[k] fitly expresses it) carry his footsteps; these, his image; and that, not as drawn with a pencil, which can only express figure and colour; but as represented in a glass, which imitates action and motion. To give the pre-eminence therefore,[l] in this point, to the body of man, was a conceit so gross, that one would wonder how it should obtain, at least in the Christian world.

Yet we find it expressly charged by[m] St. Augustin upon the anthropomorphites of old, (or melitonians, as he calls them, from one Melito the father of them,) not only, that they imagined God in a human shape, (which was their known conceit,) but that they stated God's image in man, in his body, not his soul. Nor are Van Helmont's fancies, about corporeal likeness, capable of excuse by any thing, but that they were a dream, (as they are fitly styled,) and not likely to impose upon the waking reason of any man.

6. This image or likeness of God in the spirit of man, representing what is communicable in him, is either natural or moral. There is first a natural image of God, in the soul of man, which is inseparable from it; and which it can never [n] divest itself of. Its very spiritual, immortal nature itself, is a representation of his. Its intellective and elective powers are the image of what we are constrained to conceive under the notion of the same powers in him. Yea, the same understanding, with the memory and will, in one soul, are thought a lively resemblance of the [o] triune Deity. But there is further a similitude of him in respect of moral [p] virtues or perfections answering to

a Ezek. xxviii. 6—10.
b Deut. xxxii. 21. c Eph. i. 5. *μιμηται.* d Jam. i. 18. Eph. iv. 24.
e Regis ad exemplum totus componitur orbis.
Vana facere recte bonus princeps faciendo docet. Cumque sic imperio maximus, exemplo major est. Velleius Paterculus, Rom. Hist. l. 2.
g Inter Deum et creaturam nihil est commune
h Multis enim modis dici res possunt similes Deo; aliis secundum virtutem, et sapientiam, factas; quia in ipso est virtus et sapientia non facta; aliis in quantum solum vivunt, qui ille summe et primo vivit; aliis in quantum sunt, quia ille summe? et primitus est. Aug. 80; quest. p. (mihi) 211.
i *τοιουτος γαρ ο τεκτων εστιν.*
k P. Molinæus de cognitione Dei
l Heathens have disdained and declaimed against so unworthy thoughts of God. *Το δε θειον αυτο αορατον οφθαλμοις, ιρρητον φωνη, ανοφθες ακοαι,* &c. Maximus Tyr. Dissert. 1. The same author warns us to take heed, that we ascribe to God, *Μητε μεγεθος, μητε χρωμα, μητε σχημα, μητε αλλο τι ανης παθος.* Ibid.
Unto which purpose is that decantate distich of Homer, *Ου γαρ αιτιοι,* &c. And the saying of Pliny, *Qua propter efficiem Dei formamque quærere; imbecillitatis humanæ reor,* applied by Zanch *de operibus Dei.* And we may see much of the like import alleged by Natal. Com. lib. i. p. 13 Which (by the way) discovers how flatly opposite the idolatry forbidden in the second commandment, is to the light of nature itself. Which hath been also the just apology of the ancient patrons of the Christian cause, for the simplicity of their worship in this respect; and their not imitating the pompous vanity of pagan image-worship. *Ουδε θειας εικονας υπολαμβανομεν ειναι τα αγαλματα, ατε μερφην αοριστων θεων και ασχηματων μη διαγραφοντες.* Origen contr. Celsum lib. 7.
To which purpose see at large, Min. Felix. Quod simulacrum Deo fingam? &c.
And surely it is as improvable against the same piece of Christian paganism. The usually assigned differences would easily be shown to be trifling impertinences
m Corpus hominis non animum esse imaginem Dei: Aug. (if it be Augustine's) lib. de hæresibus. See Dr. Charleton of his image of God in man.
n Est Dei similitudo quædam, quam nemo vivens, nisi cum vita exuit: quam habet homo et volens, et nolens, &c. Bernard. de vitâ Solitar.
o D. Aug. (fusè) lib. 10. de Trinitat.
p Sed est alia, magis Deo propinqua, similitudo, quæ in virtutibus consistit. Bernard.

what we conceive in him, under that notion; his wisdom, (so far as it hath the nature of a moral virtue,) his mercy, truth, righteousness, holiness, &c. These two kinds or parts (as they may be called) of the Divine impress upon the spirits of men, are distinguished by some (I see not how properly) by the distinct names of image, denoting the former, and similitude the latter; answering, as is thought, to two Hebrew words of the like import;[q] but the things themselves are evidently enough distinct, *viz.* what perfects the nature of man *in genere physico*, as he is such a particular being in the universe; and what perfects him, *in genere morali*, as he is considerable in reference to a law or rule guiding him to blessedness, as his end.

7. 'Tis a likeness to God in respect of those moral excellencies or perfections, that is especially considerable by us, in reference to our present purpose; as more immediately relating to the soul's blessedness in God. By the former it hath a potentiality, by the latter a habitude, in reference thereunto. Or (to use terms, more liable to common apprehension) by the former it hath a remoter capacity, by the latter a present fitness; or, as the apostle expresses it, is made meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, *i. e.* considering this likeness as begun in the soul.

8. Besides what is thus (in the sense before expressed) communicable between God and man, there are some things so peculiarly appropriate to God, as that, in respect of them, there can be no formal likeness in the creature: and it would be impious boldness to aspire thereto. Many things of this kind might be mentioned; I shall only instance in two, wherein there is a manifest competition of the apostate world with him; and which are therefore more relative to practice: his sovereign authority, and his independency. In these, while men affect to imitate, they wickedly affront him. And here is the great controversy between the glorious God and the degenerous children of men. Every man would catch at a Godhead, and either assume it to himself, or cast it, many times, upon other creatures viler and more ignoble than himself; snatch the reigns of government out of God's hand, and exalt their own wills into an absoluteness, as liable to control from none; place and settle their dependence on their own wit, power, fortitude, industry; or, if that be a more hopeless course, (for they often find an entire Godhead too much for one creature, and are therefore constrained to parcel it out among many,) place their confidence and expectations in something else without them; do often that ridiculous thing, so worthy to be hooted at, make the congested dirt of the earth their trust, (r the righteous shall laugh at him, and say, Lo! this is the man that trusted in riches,) their wealth their strong tower; which only the name of the Lord is to his righteous ones. Yet, all the while, self is the centre and end in which all must meet and terminate. This at last carries away the assumed fictitious deity. And this thing, that is thus now made like God, is an idol, (which indeed signifies so much,) and this imitation of him, wicked idolatry; than which nothing more debases a reasonable soul, or divests man of himself, that till they redress this,[s] they give no proof of their being men. This assimilation of ourselves to God is very remote then from being a perfection; it is a most reproachful deformity: as we know imitations, if they be visibly affected, and strained too far, are always thought ridiculous by wise men.

9. Though, in respect of these incommunicable things, there cannot be a proper, formal, immediate similitude to God; yet, there ought to be a correspondency; which must be measured and estimated by the consideration of his state, and ours: whence it will appear, that what so properly appertains to him, and what ought to correspond thereto in us, do agree to each, upon one and the same intervening reason.

For instance, is he absolutely supreme inasmuch as he is the first being? the correspondent impression with us, and upon the same reason, must be a most profound, humble self-subjection, disposing our souls to constant obedience to him. Again, is he simply independent, as being self-sufficient and all in all? the impression with us must be a nothingness, and self-emptiness, engaging us to quit ourselves, and live in him. This is the only conformity to God, which with respect to his incommunicable excellencies, our creature-state can admit. It may be also styled a likeness to him, being a real conformity to his will concerning us, and his very nature as it respects us. We may conceive of it, as of the likeness between a seal and the stamp made by it; especially, supposing the inequality of parts in the seal to be by the protuberancy of what must form the signature. In that case there would be a likeness, *aliquatenus*, that is, an exact correspondency; but what would then be convex or bulging out in the seal, would be, as we know, concave or hollow in the impression. Such is the proportion between sovereignty and subjection, between self-fulness and self-emptiness. Whereas a similitude to God, in respect of his communicable perfections, is as that between the face and its picture, where no such difference is wont to appear.

10. Assimilation, or conformity to God, in both these respects, composes that excellent frame of moral perfections, which the Divine glory, beheld, impresses upon the soul; and, which immediately conduces to its satisfaction and blessedness. I say, moral perfection, because that only is capable of being impressed by the intervening ministry of our own understanding; *viz.* by its vision, intimated, as was formerly observed, in that of the apostle, "We shall be like—for we shall see him," &c. Its natural perfections are antecedent and presupposed, therefore not so fitly to be understood here. And I say, both these ways; for, as we cannot form an entire idea of God, without taking in, together, his perfections of both sorts, communicable and incommunicable, (the former whereof must serve instead of a genus; the latter of a *differentia*, in composing the notion of God;[t]) so nor will his impress on us be entire, without something in it respecting both, in the senses already given. What it will contribute to future blessedness, we shall shortly see, in its place, when we have made a brief inquiry (which is the next thing, according to our order proposed) concerning,

Thirdly, The satisfaction that shall hence accrue. Where it will not be besides our purpose, to take some notice of the significancy of the word. And not to insist on its affinity to the word used for swearing, or rather, being sworn,[u] (which, an oath being the end of controversies, and beyond which we go no further, nor expect more, in way of testifying, would the more fitly here represent to us the soul in its non-ultra; having attained the end in all its motions and contentions,) its equal nearness to the word signifying the number of seven, is not altogether unworthy observation. That number is, we know, often used in Scripture, as denoting plentitude and perfection; and God hath, as it were, signalized it, by his rest on the seventh day:[w] and if this were not designedly pointed at here in the present use of this word, (as it must be acknowledged to be frequently used where we have no reason to think it is with such an intendment) it may yet occasion us to look upon the holy soul now entered into the eternal sabbath,[x] the rest of God: which (secluding all respect to that circumstance) is, yet, the very substance and true notion of the thing itself, (to the consideration whereof I now pass,) under the word held forth to us. For this *satisfaction* is the soul's rest in God: its perfect enjoyment of the most perfect good; the expletion of the whole capacity of its will; the total filling up of that vast enlarged appetite; the perfecting of all its desires in delight and joy. Now delight or joy (for they differ not, save that the latter word is thought something more appropriate to reasonable nature) is fitly defined, *the rest of the desiring faculty in the thing desired.*[y] Desire and delight are but two acts of love,

q צלם דמות Zanch.

r Psal. lii. 6, 7.

s Isa. xlvi. 8.

t Thes. Salmu. de Deo immensu.

u שבע Which some think to be the Niphal of the same word notwithstanding the different punctuation of the ש.

w How fit a symbol it is of God's sabbatic rest, see Dr. More's defence of his Philosophical Cabbala from Philo Judæus.

x Erit ibi vere maximum Sabbatum, non habens vesperam, quod commendavit Dominus in primis operibus mundi; ut legitur, et requievit die Septimo—Dies enim Septimus etiam nos ipsi erimus, quando ipsus fuerimus benedictionum et sanctificationum pleni atque referti—ibi vacabimus et videbimus, videbimus et amabimus, amabimus et laudabimus, &c. Aug. de civit. Dei. lib. 22. c. 30. vid. eund de civit. Dei. l. 17. c. 4.

y Quies appetitus in appetibili. Aquin. Sun.

diversified only by the distance or presence of the same object: which, when 'tis distant, the soul, acted and prompted by love, desires, moves towards it, pursues it; when present and attained, delights in it, enjoys it, stays upon it, satisfies itself in it, according to the measure of goodness it finds there. Desire is therefore love in motion; delight is love in rest. And of this latter, delight or joy, Scripture evidently gives us the notion,[z] he will rejoice over thee with joy, (unto which is presently added as exegetical,) he will rest in his love; which resting can be but the same thing with being satisfied. This *satisfaction* then is nothing else but the repose and rest of the soul amidst infinite delights; its peaceful acquiescence, having attained the ultimate term of all its motions, beyond which it cares to go no further; the solace it finds in an adequate, full good; which it accounts enough for it, and beyond which, it desires no more; reckons its state as good as it can be, and is void of all hovering thoughts, (which perfect rest must needs exclude,) or inclination to change.

And so doth this being satisfied, not only generally signify the soul to be at rest; but it specifies that rest; and gives us a distinct account of the nature of it. As, that it is not a forced, violent rest; such as proceeds from a beguiled ignorance, a drowsy sloth, a languishing weakness, or a desire and hope of happiness, by often frustrations baffled into despair, (to all which, the native import and propriety of that word satisfaction doth strongly repugn.) But it discovers it to be a natural rest; I mean, from an internal principle. The soul is not held in its present state of enjoyment by a strong and violent hand; but rests in it by a connaturalness thereunto; is attempered to it, by its own inward constitution and frame. It rests not as a descending stone, intercepted by something by the way, that holds and stops it; else it would fall further: but as a thing would rest in its own centre; with such a rest as the earth is supposed to have in its proper place; that, being hung upon nothing, is yet unmoved, *ponderibus librata suis, equally balanced by its own weight every way.*

It is a *rational, judicious* rest; upon certain knowledge that its present state is simply best, and not capable of being changed for a better. The soul cannot be held under a perpetual cheat, so as always to be satisfied with a shadow. It may be so befooled for a while, but if it remain satisfied, in a state that never admits of change, that state must be such, as commends itself to the most thoroughly informed reason and judgment. It is hence a *free, voluntary, chosen* rest; such as God professes his own to be in Zion;[a] This is my rest, here will I dwell, for I have desired it. It is a *complacential* rest, wherein the soul abides steady, bound only by the chords of love; a rest in the midst of pleasantness; [b]The Lord is my portion, the lots are fallen to me in *amœnitatibus;* it cannot be more fitly expressed than *amidst pleasantnesses:* and this speaks not only what the Psalmist's condition was, but the sense and account he had of it. That temper of mind gives us some idea of that contentful, satisfied abode with God, which the blessed shall have. He intimates, how undesirous he was of any change. [c]Their sorrows (he told us above) should be multiplied that hasten after another god. Hereafter there will be infinitely less appearance of reason for any such thought. Now, it is the sense of a holy soul, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none I desire on earth besides thee:" *q. d.* Heaven and earth yield not a tempting object, to divert me from thee: 'tis now so, at some times, when faith and love are in their triumph and exaltation (but the Lord knows how seldom!) but much more when we see him as he is, and are satisfied with his likeness! It's an *active, vigorous* rest. Action about the end shall be perpetuated here, though action towards it ceases. 'Tis the rest of an awakened, not of a drowsy, sluggish soul; of a soul satisfied, by heavenly sensations and fruitions, not incapable of them, or that hath its powers bound up by a stupifying sleep. It's the rest of *hope*, perfected in fruition, not lost in despair; of satisfied, not defeated, expectation. [d]Despair may occasion rest to a man's body, but not to his mind; or a cessation from further endeavours, when they are constantly found vain, but not from trouble and disquiet; it may suspend from action, but never satisfy. This satisfaction therefore speaks both the reality and nature of the soul's rest in glory; that it rests; and with what kind of rest.

z Zeph. iii. 17. a Psal. cxxxii. 14.
b Psal. xvi 6 בנעימים c Ver. 4.
d I think it not worth the while to engage in the dispute (so much agitated between the Thomists and Scotists) whether blessedness do formally consist in this satisfying fruition, or in the antecedent vision; this satisfaction is certainly inseparable from it. and I see not how to be excluded out of its formal notion: 'tis not vision as vision, but as satisfying, that makes us happy; and to talk of the satisfaction or pleasure which the understanding hath in knowing is unapt; while the soul understandingr, *i. e.* the mind, knows, 'tis the soul enjoying, *i. e.* the will, is pleased and finds content: and till the soul be fully contented, it is not blessed; and it is by being so, when it saith, "Now I am fully satisfied, I have enough, I desire no more."

CHAPTER V.

The relative consideration of these three ingredients of the saints' blessedness; where it is propounded to shew particularly, 1. What relation vision hath to assimilation. 2. What both these have to satisfaction. The relation between the two former, inquired into. An entrance upon the much larger discourse, what relation and influence the two former have towards the third: What vision of God's face or glory, contributes towards satisfaction, estimated from the consideration, 1. Of the object, the glory to be beheld; as 'tis divine, entire, permanent, appropriate.

THUS far have we viewed the parts or necessary concurrence, of which the blessedness of the saints must be composed absolutely and severally each from other: we proceed,

Secondly, To consider them relatively, *viz.* in the mutual respects they bear one to another; as they actually compose this blessed state. Wherein we shall show particularly: 1. The relation, by way of influence, and dependence, between *vision* and *assimilation:* and—Between both these and the *satisfaction* that ensues: which latter I intend more to dwell upon; and only to touch the former, as a more speculative and less improvable subject of discourse, in my way to this.

1. First, It may be considered—What relation there may be between vision of God, and assimilation, or being made like to him; and it must be acknowledged (according to what is commonly observed of the mutual action of the understanding and will) that the sight of God, and likeness to him, do mutually contribute each towards other. The sight of God assimilates, makes the soul like unto him; that likeness more disposes it for a continued renewed vision. It could never have attained the beatifical vision of God, had it not been prepared thereto, by a gradual previous likeness to him.[a] For righteousness (which we have shown qualifies for this blessedness) consists in a likeness to God; and it could never have been so prepared, had not some knowledge of God introduced that conformity and yielding bent of heart towards him. For the entire frame of the[b] new man, made after the image of God, is renewed in knowledge. But, as notwithstanding the circular action of the understanding and will upon one another, there must be a beginning of this course somewhere, and the understanding is usually reckoned the ἡγεμονικὸν, *the first mover*, the leading faculty: so, notwithstanding the mutual influence of these two upon each other, seeing hath a natural precedency, and must lead the way unto being like; which is sufficiently intimated in the text, "I shall behold thy face," and then "I shall be satisfied with thy likeness;" and more fully in that parallel scripture, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him," &c. From whence also, and from the very nature of the thing, we way fitly state the relation of the first of these to the second, to be that of a cause to its effect; sight begets likeness, is antecedent to it, and productive of it. That is, the face or glory of God seen; that glory in conjunction with our vision of it; for the vision operates not, but according to the efficaciousness of the thing seen; nor can that glory have any such operation, but by the intervention of vision. 'Tis therefore the glory of God seen, as seen, that assimilates, and impresses its likeness

a Which necessity of a likeness to God to dispose for the vision of him, is excellently expressed by a Platonic philosopher. The Divine nature τὸ θεῖον, which he saith, is liable to no sense, μονοειδὲ καὶ τῆς ὄψεως κάλλιστον, καὶ καθαρώτατον, καὶ νοερώτατον καὶ λαμπρότατον, καὶ περιβλητὸν, ὁρατὸν δὲ ὁμοιότητα, &c. *to yet visible to that in the soul, which is most beautiful, most pure, most perspicuous, most sublime, most noble, in respect of a certain similitude and cognation that is between them.* Max. Tyr.

b Col. iii. 10.

upon the beholding soul; and so its causality is that of an objective cause, (which, whether it belong to the efficient or final, I shall not here dispute) that operates only as it is apprehended: so introducing its own form and similitude into the subject it works upon. Such a kind of cause were Jacob's streaked rods of the production that ensued: and such a cause is any thing whatever, that begets an impression upon an apprehensive subject, by the mediation and ministry, whether of the fancy or understanding.— This kind of causality the word hath in its renewing, transforming work; and the sacraments, wherein they are causal of real physical mutations on the subjects of them. So much of the image of God as is here impressed upon souls by gospel-dispensations, so much is impressed of his glory. The work of grace is glory begun. And now, as glory initial, and progressive in this life, enters at the eye; (beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed; so doth perfect and consummate glory in the other life. For we have no reason to imagine to ourselves any alteration in the natural order the powers of the soul have towards each other, by its passing into a state of glory.

The *object* seen, is unspeakably efficacious; the *act* of intuition is full of lively vigour; the *subject* was prepared and in a disposition before; and what should hinder, but this glorious effect should immediately ensue? as the sun no sooner puts up his head above the hemisphere, but all the vast space, whither it can diffuse its beams, is presently transformed into its likeness, and turned into a region of light. What more can be wanting to cause all the darkness of atheism, carnality, and every thing of sin, for ever to vanish out of the awakening soul, and an entire frame of holiness to succeed; but one such transforming sight of the face of God? One sight of his glorious majesty presently subdues, and works it to a full subjection; one sight of his purity makes it pure; one sight of his loveliness turns it into love; and such a sight always remaining, the impress remains always actually (besides that it is in itself most habitual and permanent, in the soul's now confirmed state) fresh and lively.

The *object* hath quite another aspect upon a wicked soul, when it awakes; and the *act* of seeing is of another kind; therefore no such *effect* follows. Besides, the *subject* is otherwise disposed; and therefore as the sun enlightens not the inward parts of an impervious dunghill, but it enlightens air; so the sight of God transforms and assimilates at last, not a wicked, but it doth a godly, soul. That which here makes the greatest difference in the temper of the subject is love. I look upon the face of a stranger and it moves me not; but upon a friend, and his face presently transforms mine into a lively cheerful aspect. [d]As an iron sharpens iron, so doth the face of a man his friend; puts a sharpness and quickness into his looks. The soul that loves God, opens itself to him, admits his influences and impressions, is easily moulded and wrought to his will, yields to the transforming power of his appearing glory. There is no resistant principle remaining, when the love of God is perfected in it; and so overcoming is the first sight of his glory upon the awaking soul, that it perfects it, and so his likeness, both at once. But enmity fortifies the soul against him, as with bars and doors; averts it from him; carries with it a horrid, guilty consciousness, which fills it with eternal despair and rage, and inwraps it in the blackness of darkness forever.

2. Both the *vision* of God, and *likeness* to him, must be considered in their relation to the consequent *satisfaction*, and the influence they have in order thereto. I say, both; for though this satisfaction be not expressly and directly referred by the letter of the text, to the sight of God's face; yet its relation thereto, in the nature of the thing, is sufficiently apprehensible and obvious; both mediate, in respect of the influence it hath towards the satisfying assimilation; and immediate, (which we are now to consider,) as it is so highly pleasurable in itself; and is plainly enough intimated in the text; being applied, in the same breath, to a thing so immediately and intimately conjunct with this vision, as we find it is. Moreover, supposing that likeness here do (as it hath been granted it may) signify objective glory also, as well as subjective, and repeat what is contained in the former expression, "the face of God," the reference satisfaction hath to this vision (which the re-mention of its object, though under a varied form of expression, supposes) will be more express, therefore we shall show, 1. What the vision of the Divine glory contributes to the satisfaction of the blessed soul, and what felicity it must needs take herein: which cannot but be very great, whether we respect—the glory seen, the object of this vision; or—the act of vision, or intuition itself.

1. The object, the glory beheld. What a spring of pleasure is here! what rivers of pleasures flow hence! "In thy presence (saith the Psalmist) is fulness of joy: at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore. The awaking soul, having now passed the path of life, (drawn through Sheol itself, the state of deadly-head,) appears immediately in this presence; and what makes this presence so joyous, but the pleasant brightness of this face? To be in the presence of any one, and before his face, in conspectu, are equivalent expressions; therefore the apostle, quoting this passage, renders it thus, [f]Thou hast filled me with gladness, by thy countenance; now in this glorious presence, or within view of the face of God, is fulness of joy, *i. e.* joy under satisfaction. And the Apostle Jude, speaking of this presence under this name, (a presence of glory,) tells us of an [g]exceeding joy, a jubilation, (an ἀγαλλίασις,) that shall attend the presentment of saints there. The holy soul now enters the divine [h]Shechinah, the chamber of presence of the great King, the habitation of his holiness and glory, the place where his honour dwelleth. Here his glory surrounds it with encircling beams; 'tis beset with glory, therefore surely also filled with joy. When the vail is drawn aside; or we are within the vail; in that very presence whither Jesus the forerunner is for us entered, (through that path of life,) O the satisfying overcoming pleasure of this sight! Now that is to us revealed or unvailed glory, which was hidden before. Here the glory set in majesty, (as the expression is, concerning the glory of the temple) is presented to view openly and without umbrage. God is now no longer seen through an obscuring medium. They are not now shadowed glimmerings, transient, oblique glances, but the direct beams of full-eyed glory, that shine upon us. The discovery of this glory is the ultimate product of that infinite wisdom and love, that have been working from eternity, and for so many thousand years, through all the successions of time, towards the heirs of salvation. The last and complete issue of the great achievements, sharp conflicts, glorious victories, high merits of our mighty Redeemer. All these end in the opening of heaven (the laying of this glory as it were common) to all believers. This is the upshot and close of that great design: will it not, think ye, be a satisfying glory? The full blessedness of the redeemed, is the Redeemer's reward. He cannot be satisfied in seeing his seed, if they should be unsatisfied. He cannot behold them with content if his heart tell him not, that he hath done well enough for them. [k]God would even be ashamed to be called their God, had he not made provision for their entertainment worthy of a God. 'Tis the season of Christ's triumphs, and saints are to enter into his joy. 'Tis the appointed jubilee, at the finishing of all God's works from the creation of the world, when he shall purposely show himself in his most adorable majesty, and when Christ shall appear in his own likeness; (he appeared in another likeness before;) surely glory must be in its exaltation in that day. But take a more distinct account, how grateful a sight this glory will be, in these following particulars:

I. It is the Divine glory. Let your hearts dwell a little upon this consideration. 'Tis the glory of God, *i. e.* the glory which the blessed God both enjoys and affords, which he contemplates in himself, and which rays from him to his saints; 'tis the felicity of the Divine Being. It satisfies a Deity, will it not a worm? 'Tis a glory that results and shines from him; and in that sense also divine, (which here I mainly intend,) the beauty of his own face, the lustre of divine perfections; every attribute bears a

c 2 Cor. iii. 18.
d Prov. xxvii. 17.
e Psal. xvi. 11.
f Acts ii. 28. which indeed is the Seventy's reading of the Psalmist's words.
g κατενοπτιον της δοξης.
h Ver. 24.
i Ezek. vii.
k Heb. xi. 16.

part, all concur to make up this glory. And here pretermitting those which are less liable to our apprehension, his eternity, immensity, simplicity, &c. (of which, not having their like in us, we are the more incapable to form distinct conceptions, and consequently of perceiving the pleasure that we may hereafter, upon the removal of other impediments, find in the contemplation of them,) let us bethink ourselves, how admirable and ravishing the glory will be.

1. Of his unsearchable wisdom, which hath glory peculiarly annexed and properly belonging to it. Glory is, as it were, by inheritance, due to wisdom. [l]The wise shall inherit glory. And here now, the blessed souls behold it in its first seat, and therefore in its prime glory: wisdom, counsel, understanding, are said to be with him; as if no where else. Twice we have the apostle describing glory to God, under the notion of [m]only wise; which is but an acknowledging him glorious in this respect. Wisdom, we know, is the proper and most connatural glory of intellectual nature; whether as it relates to speculation, when we call it knowledge; or, action, when 'tis prudence. How pleasant will the contemplation be, of the Divine wisdom, in that former notion! When in that glass, that *speculum æternitatis*, we shall have the lively view of all that truth, the knowledge whereof can be any way possible and grateful to our natures; and in his light, see light! When all those vast treasures of wisdom and knowledge which already, by their alliance to[n] Christ, saints are interested in, shall lie open to us! When the tree of knowledge shall be without enclosure; and the most voluptuous epicurism, in reference to it, be innocent! Where there shall neither be lust, nor forbidden fruit; no withholding of desirable knowledge, nor affectation of undesirable! When the pleasure of speculation shall be without the toil; and that maxim be eternally antiquated, that increased knowledge increases sorrow! As to the other notion of it; how can it be less grateful to behold the wisdom that made and governed the world; that compassed so great designs? and this, no longer in its effects, but in itself? Those works were honourable and glorious, sought of all them that have pleasure in them. What will be the glory of their cause? It would gratify some men's curiosity to behold the unusual motion of some rare *automaton;* but an ingenious person would, with much more pleasure, pry into the secret springs of that motion, and observe its inward frame and parts, and their depeadence and order to each other. 'Tis comely to behold the exterior economy of a well governed people, when great affairs are, by orderly conduct, brought to happy issues; but to have been at the helm; to have seen the pertinent, proper application of such and such maxims to the incident cases; to have known all the reasons of state; heard debates; observed with what great sagacity inconveniencies have been foreseen, and with what diligence prevented; would much more gratify an inquiring genius. When the records of eternity shall be exposed to view; all the counsels and results of that profound wisdom looked into: how will it transport! when it shall be discerned, Lo! thus were the designs laid; here were the apt junctures, and admirable dependencies of things; which, when acted upon the stage of the world, seemed so perplexed and cross, so full of mysterious intricacy! If St. Paul were so ravished at those more obscure appearances of Divine wisdom, which we find him admiring, (Rom. xi. 33.) O the depths, &c. what satisfaction will it yield, to have a perfect model of the deep thoughts and counsels of God presented to open view! How is the happiness of Solomon's servants magnified, that had the privilege continually to stand before him, and hear his wisdom! But this happiness will be proportionably greater, as Solomon's God is greater than he.

2. The glory of his power will add comeliness to the object of this vision. Power duly placed and allayed is lovely. Beauty consists much in a symmetry or proportion of parts. So must there be a concurrence of Divine perfections, to compose and make up the beautiful complexion of his face; to give us a right aspect, the true idea of God: and here his power hath a necessary ingrediency. How incoherent, and disagreeing with itself, were the notion of an impotent God! His power gives lively strokes to his glory. 'Tis called[o] glorious power, or the power of glory; yea, 'tis simply called glory itself: the apostle tells us[p] Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, when 'tis plain he means power. And the same apostle prays on the behalf of the [q]Ephesians, that God would grant them according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might, &c. How frequently are power and glory ascribed to him in conjunction! intimating that, as he is powerful, he is glorious. And certainly, even this glory cannot but cast a gratefnl aspect upon the blessed soul, and be infinitely pleasant to behold. What triumphs doth it now raise in gracious spirits, to behold the [r]exertions of it in his works; to read its descriptions in his word; while as yet he holds back the face of his throne; while the countenance of enthroned majesty cannot be seen; when so little a portion is heard of him, and the thunder of his [s]power so little understood! The infinitely fainter rays of this power in a creature; power in that unspeakable diminution and abatement; that derived, precarious power; when 'tis innocently used, is observed with pleasure. Here is power in the throne, power in its chief and highest seat; essential, and self-originated power; the root and fountain, the very element of power; power in its proper situation, in its native place, to which it belongs.[t] God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God. It languishes in a creature, as in an alien subject. If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong,[u] saith Job; *q. d.* "Created power is not worth the speaking of; here is the power that deserves the name, that is so *indeed*." How satisfying a pleasure will this afford, to contemplate this radical power! this all-creating, all-ruling power, the principle of all action, motion and life, throughout the whole creation! This will be as natural a pleasure, as the child takes in the mother's bosom, and in embracing the womb that bare it. How grateful to behold whence the vast frame of nature sprang; what stretched out the heavens, established the earth, sustained all things! what turned the mighty wheels of Providence, throughout all the successions of time! what ordered and changed times and seasons, chained up devils, restrained the outrages of a tumultuous world, preserved God's little flock! especially, what gave being to the new creation![x] (the exceeding greatness of power that wrought in them that believed, &c.) what made hearts love God, embrace a Saviour! what it was that overcame[y] their own, and made them a willing people in that memorable day! How delightful a contemplation to think, with so enlarged an understanding, of the possible effects of this power; and so far as a creature can range into infinity, to view innumerable creations, in the creative power of God! And yet how pleasant to think, not only of the extents, but of the restraints of this power; and how, when none could limit, it became ordinate, and did limit itself! that since it could do so much, it did no more; turned not sooner a degenerous world[z] into flames; withheld itself from premature revenge, that had aborlived the womb of love, and cut off all the hopes of this blessed eternity that is now attained! This also speaks the greatness of power: [a]Let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, the Lord is gracious, long-suffering, &c.—This was his mightiest power, whereby he overcame himself: *Fortior est qui se*, &c.

3. And what do we think of the ravishing aspects of his love, when it shall, now, be open faced, and have laid aside its vail! when his amiable smiles shall be checkered with no intermingled frowns; the light of that pleasing countenance be obscured by no intervening cloud! when goodness, which is love issuing into benefaction, or doing good; grace, which adds freeness unto goodness; mercy, which is grace towards the miserable; shall conspire in their distinct, and variegated appearances to set off each other, and enhance the pleasure of the admiring soul! when the wonted doubts shall all cease, and the difficulty vanish, of reconciling (once necessary) fatherly severity with love! when the full sense shall be unfolded to the

l Prov. iii. 35. Job xii.
m Rom. xvi. 27. 1 Tim. i. 17
n Col. ii. 3.
o κρατος της δοξης. Col. i. 11.
p Rom. vi. 4.
q Chap. iii. 16.
r Job xxvi. 9.
s Ver. 14.
t Psal. lxii. 11. Power to God, *Hebr.*
u Chap. xxvi.
x Eph. i. 19, 20.
y Psal. cx. 3.
z Posse et nolle nobile.
a Numb. xiv. 17, 18.

life, of that description of the Divine nature, "God is love;" and the soul be no longer put to read the love of God in his name, (as Moses was when the sight of his face could not yet be obtained,) shall not need to spell it by letters and syllables; but behold it in his very nature itself, and see how intimately essential it is to the Divine Being! How glorious will this appearance of God be, (we, now, hear, something of the[b] glory of his grace,) and how satisfying the tuition of that glory! Now is the proper season for the full exercise and discovery of love. This day hath been long expected, and lo, now 'tis dawned upon the awakening soul; it's now called forth; its senses unbound; all its powers inspirited, on purpose, for love-visions and enjoyments: 'tis now to take its fill of loves. The apostle's ecstatical prayer is now answered to the highest degree possible with respect to such a one. He is now, [c]according to the riches of Divine glory, strengthened with might, by the Spirit, in the inner man—to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; to know that love that passeth knowledge, &c. He shall now no longer stand amazed, spending his guesses, what manner of love this should be; and expecting fuller discoveries, further effects of it, that did not yet appear; but sees the utmost, all that his soul can bear, or wish to see. He hath now traced home the rivulets to their fountain, the beams to the very sun of love. He hath got the prospect, at last, into that heart, where the great thoughts of love were lodged from everlasting; where all its counsels and designs were formed. He sees what made God become a man; what clothed a Deity with human flesh; what made eternity become the birth of time, when come to its parturient[d] fulness; what moved the heart of the Son of God to pitch his tabernacle among men; what engaged him to the enterprise of redeeming sinners; what moved him so earnestly to contest with a perishing world, led him at last to the cross, made him content to become a sacrifice to God, a spectacle to angels and men, in a bitter reproachful death, inflicted by the sacrilegious hands of those whom he was all this while designing to save. The amazed soul now sees into the bottom of this design; understands why itself was not made a prey to Divine revenge; whence it was, that it perished not in its enmity against God; that he was not provoked by the obstinacy of its disobedience, and malice of its unbelief, beyond the possibility of an atonement; why he so long suffered its injurious neglects of him, and unkind repulses of a merciful Saviour; and persuaded, till at last he overcame, made the averse heart yield, the careless disaffected soul cry out, "Where is my God?" Now a Christ, or I perish? All this is now resolved into love; and the adoring soul sees how well the effects agree to their cause, and are owned by it. Nothing but heaven itself, that gives the sense, can give the notion of this pleasure.

4. Nor will the glory of holiness be less resplendent; that great attribute which, even in a remote descent from its original, is frequently mentioned with the adjunct of [e]beauties. What loveliness will those beauties add to this blessed face! Not here to insist (which is besides my purpose) upon the various notions of holiness: [f] real holiness Scripture states in purity, an alienation from sin; 'tis set in opposition to all filthiness, to all moral impurity: and in that notion it best agrees to God; and comprehends his righteousness and veracity, and indeed, whatever we can conceive in him, under the notion of a moral excellency. This may therefore be styled a transcendental attribute, that as it were runs through the rest, and casts a glory upon every one: 'tis an attribute of attributes. Those are fit predications, holy power, holy truth, holy love, &c. And so it is the very lustre and glory of his other perfections; [g] he is glorious in holiness. Hence in matters of greatest moment, he is sometimes brought in [h] swearing by his holiness, (which he is not wont to do by any one single attribute,) as though it were a *fuller expression* of himself, an *adæquatior conceptus*, than any of the rest.

What is of so great an account with him, will not be of least account with his holy ones, when they appear in his glorious presence. Their own holiness is a conformity to his; the likeness of it. And as their beholding it forms them into that likeness; so that likeness makes them capable of beholding it with pleasure. Divine holiness doth now more ravish than affright. This hath been the language of sinful dust. Who can stand before this holy God? when holiness hath appeared armed with terrors, guarded with flames, and the Divine Majesty been represented as a consuming fire. Such apprehensions sin and guilt naturally beget; the sinners of Sion were afraid. But so far as the new man is put on, created after God, and they, who were darkness, are made light in the Lord, he is not under any notion more acceptable to them, than as he is the Holy One. They love his law, because holy; and love each other because holy; and hate themselves because they are no more so. Holiness hath still a pleasing aspect when they find it in an ordinance, meet it in a sabbath; every glimpse of it is lovely. But with what triumphs hath the holiness of God himself been celebrated even by saints on earth![k] Who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness! There is none holy as the Lord, for there is none besides thee. Sing unto the Lord, all ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. What thoughts will they have of it,[l] when their eyes can behold that glory; when they immediately look on the archetypal holiness, of which their own is but the image; and can view that glorious pattern, they were so long in framing to? How joyfully will they then fall in with the rest of the heavenly host; and join in the same adoration and praise, in the same acclamation and triumphant song, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth! How unconceivable is the pleasure of this sight; when the *αὐτὸ καλὸν*, the first pulchritude, the original beauty offers itself to view! Holiness is intellectual beauty; Divine holiness is the most perfect and the measure of all other; and what is the pleasure and satisfaction, of which we speak, but the perfection and rest of love? Now[m] love, as love, respects and connotes a pulchritude in its object. And then the most perfect pulchritude, the ineffable and immortal pulchritude, that cannot be declared by words, or seen with eyes, (they are a heathen's[n] expressions concerning it,) how can it but perfectly and eternally please and satisfy?

And we are told by the great pagan theologue,[o] in what state we can have the felicity of that spectacle. Not in our present state; when we have, indeed, but obscure representations of such things as are, with souls of highest excellency; but when we are associated to the *blessed quire*.[p] When we are delivered from the body; (which we now carry about, *as the oyster doth its*[q] *shell*;) when we are no longer sensible of the evils of time. When we wholly apply ourselves to that blessed vision; are admitted to the beholding of the simple permanent sights; and behold them,[r] being ourselves pure, in the pure light: then have we the view of the *bright shining pulchritude*, &c.

2. It is an entire or united glory. We have something of the Divine glory shining now upon us; but the many interpositions cause a various refraction of its light. We have but its dispersed rays, its scattered, dishevelled beams: we shall then have it perfect and full. 'Tis the eternal glory we are hereafter to behold. Eternity (as the notion of it is wont to be stated) is a duration that excludes both succession and end. And if it be an unsuccessive duration, (though it is more difficult to apprehend how the being or enjoyments of a creature can come under that mensuration, or how there can be any such,) the glory presented to the view of a blessed soul, cannot be presented by parcels, but at once.[s] In our temporary state, while we are under the measure of time, we are not capable of the fulness of blessedness or misery; for time exists not alto-

b Eph. i. 6.
c Eph. iii. 16, 17, 18, 19.
d Gal. iv. 4.
e Psal. cx. 3, &c.
f 2 Cor. vii. 1.
g Exod. xv. 11.
h Psal. lxxxix. 35. Amos iv. 2.
i 1 Sam. vi.
k Exod. xv. 11. 1 Sam. ii. 2. Psal. xxx. 4. xcvii. 12.
l Si ergo pulchritudo divina nondum visa, sed solum credita et sperata, tantum ignem desideni excitat: Quid faciet cum, remoto velo, ut est in se conspicitur? Omnino id faciet ut torrente voluptatis illius inebriati, neque velimus, neque possimus, vel ad punctum temporis, oculos ab ea divertere. Ballarmdo ascens. mentis ad Deum, grad. 2.
m Max. Tyr. dissert. 11.
n Id. ibid.
o Plato in Phædro passim. (Though he there speaks these things as the memoirs of his supposed pre-existent soul.)
p Εὐδαίμονι χορῷ.
q Ὀστρέου τρόπον.
r Ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρᾷ, καθαροι ὄντες, καλλος λαμπρον.
s Æternitas est interminabilis vitæ tota simul et perfecta possessio. Boeth.

gether but by parts. And indeed we can neither enjoy nor suffer more, at once, than can be compassed within one moment; for no more exists together. But our relation to eternity (according to this notion of it) will render the same invariable appearance of glory, always presentaneous to us, in the entire fulness of it. We read indeed[t] of certain ὑστερήματα πίστεως, *afterings of faith*, (as it may be significantly enough rendered, let but the novelty of the expression be pardoned,) things lacking we read it; but there will be here no ὑστερήματα δόξης, *afterings of glory*. What is perfect admits no increase; 'tis already full: and why should not a full glory satisfy? There is here no expectation of (greater) future, to abate the pleasure of present discoveries. Why therefore shall not this satisfaction be conceived full and perfect? It must be the fulness of joy.

3. 'Tis permanent glory; a never fading, unwithering glory,[u] (ἀμάραντος δόξα,) glory that will never be sullied, or obscured, never be in a declination. This blessed face never grows old; never any wrinkle hath place in it. 'Tis the eternal glory, (in the other part of the notion of eternity,) as it imports an endless duration, neither subject to decay, in itself, nor to injury, or impairment,[x] from without. As stable as the Divine Being; Thy God, thy glory; the Lord thy everlasting light: if that have a true sense with respect to any of the church militant on earth, it must needs have a more full sense, in reference to it triumphing in heaven. As, therefore, full entire glory affords fulness of joy; permanent, everlasting glory affords[y] pleasures for evermore.

4. An appropriate glory, even to them 'tis so; a glory wherein they are really interested. 'Tis the glory of *their* God, and *their* happiness is designed to them from it. They are not unconcerned in it, as 'tis the glory of God. It cannot but be grateful to them to behold the shining glory of their God; whom they feared and served before, while they could have no such sight of him. That glory of his was once under a cloud, concealed from the world, wrapt up in obscurity: it now breaks the cloud, and justifies the fear and reverence of his faithful and loyal servants, against atheistical rebels, that feared him not. 'Tis infinitely pleasing to see him now so glorious, whom they thought to have a glory beyond all their conceptions before; while others would not think so of him, but judged it safe to slight and set him at nought. Subjects share in their prince's glory, children in their father's. But besides that collateral interest, that interest by reflection, they have a more direct interest in this glory. A true and real right, upon a manifold title: the Father's gift, Son's purchase, Holy Ghost's obsignation and earnest; the promises' tender; their faith's acceptance; their forerunner's prepossession: yea, 'tis their[z] inheritance; they are children and therefore heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, to the same glory with him. They are by him received to the glory of God, called to his kingdom and glory. Will it not contribute exceedingly to their satisfaction, when they shall look upon this glory, not as unconcerned spectators, but as interested persons? This is my happiness, to behold and enjoy this blessed God! What a rapturous expression is that,[m] God our own God shall bless us; and that, Thy God thy glory! Upon interest in God, follows their interest in his glory and blessedness; which is so much the dearer, and more valuable, as it is theirs: their glory, from their God. They shall be blessed by God, their own God; drink waters out of their own well. How endearing a thing is propriety! Another man's son is ingenious, comely, personable, this may be a matter of envy; but mine own is so, this is a joy. I read in the life of a devout nobleman of France,[n] that receiving a letter from a friend, in which were inserted these words, *Deus meus, et omnia; My God, and my all*; he thus returns back to him, "I know not what your intent was, to put into your letter these words, *Deus meus, et omnia; My God, and my all*; only you invite me thereby to return the same to you, and to all creatures; My God, and my all; my God, and my all; my God, and my all. If perhaps you take this for your motto, and use it to express how full your heart is of it; think you it possible I should be silent upon such an invitation, and not express my sense thereof? Likewise, be it known unto you therefore, that he is my God and my all; and if you doubt of it, I shall speak it a hundred times over. I shall add no more; for any thing else is superfluous, to him that is truly penetrated with my God, and my all. I leave you therefore in this happy state of jubilation; and conjure you, to beg for me, of God, the solid sense of these words." And do we think, My God, and my all, or my God, and my glory, will have lost its emphasis in heaven? or that it will be less significant among awaked souls? These things concur then, concerning the object: 'tis most excellent, (even divine,) entire, permanent, and theirs: how can it but satisfy!

t 1 Thess iii. 10.
u 1 Pet. i. 3. 2 Cor. iv. 17. 2 Tim. ii. 10. 1 Pet. v. 10.
x Isa. ix. 14. y Psal. xvi. 11.
z Rom. viii. 17. eb. xv. 7. 1 Thess. ii. 12.
m Psalm lxvii. 6.
n Monsieur de Renti.
a Res sunt perfectiores vel imperfectiores prout à summa perfectione maris vel minime abscedunt. Pet. Molin. de cognitione Dei. See Culverwel of the light of nature, speaking (as I remember) to this purpose, c. 17. Quocirca et cum universa voluptatem beatæ vitæ esse finem dicimus; longe profecto absumus, ut eas voluptates, quæ sunt virorum luxu diffluentium, aut alicrum etiam, quatenus spectantur in ipsa motione, actioneve fruendi; quo nimirum sensus jucunde dulciterque afficitur, intelligamus; veluti quidam rem ignorantes, aut a nobis dissentientes, aut alioquin adversum nos male affecti, interpretantur; sed illud duntaxat (ut res iterum dicatur) intelligimus non dolere corpore; animo non perturbari. Gassend. Syntag. Philos. Epicur. See his Epistle to Menoeceus in D. Laert.
b Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas.

CHAPTER VI.

What the vision of God's face contributes to the soul's satisfaction, estimated from the consideration of the act of vision itself. Wherein this pleasure surpasses that of sense. A comparison pursued more at large, between this intuition and discourse, between it and faith. This intuition more absolutely considered: its characters, and what they contribute to the satisfaction of the blessed soul: That it is, viz. efficacious, comprehensive, fixed, appropriative.

2. THE act of vision, or intuition itself. How great the pleasure will be that accrues to the blessed from this sight of God's face, is very much also to be estimated from the[a] nature of the act, as well as the excellency of the object. Inasmuch as every vital act is pleasant, the most perfect act of the noblest faculty of the soul must needs be attended with highest pleasure. 'Tis a pleasure that most nearly intimates divine pleasure. And every thing is more perfect, as it more nearly approaches divine perfections. Intellectual pleasure is as much nobler than that of sense, as an immortal spirit is more noble than a clod of earth. The pleasure of sense is drossy, feculent, the pleasure of the mind refined and pure; that is faint and languid, this lively and vigorous; that, scant and limited, this, ample, and enlarged; that, temporary and fading, this, durable and permanent; that, flashy, superficial, this, solid and intense; that, raving and distracted, this, calm and composed. Whence even that great reputed sensualist, Epicurus himself, professedly disclaims, or is represented as disclaiming, the conceit of placing happiness in sensual delights.

And as the pleasure of intellection excels all the pleasure of sense; so doth the pleasure of intuition excel all other intellectual pleasure. Let us, to this purpose, but consider, generally, this way of knowing things, and compare it with those two other ways, by discourse and by faith.

1. Discourse. I mean (that I be not mistaken by the vulgar reader) the discourse of the mind, or ratiocination; that way of attaining the knowledge of things, by comparing one thing with another, considering their mutual relations, connexions, dependencies; and so arguing out, what was more doubtful and obscure, from what was more known and evident. To the altogether unlearned it will hardly be conceivable, and to the learned it need not be told, how high a gratification this employment of his reason naturally yields to the mind of a man; when the harmonious contexture of truths with truths, the apt coincidence, the secret links and junctures of co-herent notions, are clearly discerned: when effects are traced up to their[b] causes, properties lodged in their native subjects, things sifted to their principles. What a pleasure is it, when a man shall apprehend himself regularly led on (though but by a slender thread of discourse) through the labyrinths of nature; when still new discoverics are successfully made, every further inquiry ending in a further prospect, and every new

scene of things entertaining the mind with a fresh delight! How many have suffered a voluntary banishment from the world, as if they were wholly strangers, and unrelated to it; rejected the blandishments of sense; macerated themselves with unwearied studies, for this pleasure; making the ease and health of their bodies to give place to the content and satisfaction of their minds! But how much intuition hath the advantage, above this way of knowledge, may be seen in these two obvious respects.

1. 'Tis a more facile way of knowing. [c]Here is no need of a busy search, a tiresome indagation, (the difficulty whereof makes the more slothful rather trust than try,) a chaining together of consequences. The soul hath its clothing (its vestment of light) upon as cheap terms as the lilies theirs; doth neither toil nor spin for it; and yet Solomon, in all the glory of his famed wisdom, was not arrayed like it. This knowledge saves the expense of study; is instantaneous, not successive. The soul now sees more, at one view, in a moment, than before in a life's-time: as a man hath a speedier and more grateful prospect of a pleasant country, by placing himself in some commodious station, that commands the whole region, than by travelling through it. 'Tis no pains to look upon what offers itself to my eye. Where there is a continued series of consequences, that lie naturally connected, the soul pleasingly observes this continuity; but views the whole frame, the whole length of the line, at once, (so far as its limited capacity can extend,) and needs not discuss every particle, severally, in this series of truths, and proceed *gradatim*, from the knowledge of one truth to another; in which case only one, at once would be present to its view. It sees things that are connected, not because they are so: *As a man, conveniently placed in some eminent station, may possibly see, at one view, all the successive parts of a gliding stream: but he that sits by the water's side, not changing his place, sees the same parts, only because they succeed; and these that pass, make way for them that follow, to come under his eye: so doth a learned man describe the unsuccessive knowledge of God;* of which the glorified soul's way of knowing, is an imitation; as the very words seeing and beholding (which it is so frequently set forth by in Scripture) do naturally import. Yet that, as to them, all ratiocination shall be excluded that state, I see no reason to admit; though with God it can have no place. And, as he is reckoned to live a pleasanter life, that spends upon a plentiful estate, than he that gets his bread by the sweat of his brows; so this more easy way of knowing, must needs be reckoned more pleasing. This knowledge is as Jacob's venison, not hunted for but brought to hand. The race is not here to the swift. The unlearned idiot knows as much as the profoundest Rabbi; (at least with as much satisfaction;)[e] and all arms are of an equal size; or are content with their own measure.

2. 'Tis more certain. For what do we use to reckon so certain as what we see with our eyes? Better (even in this respect) is the sight of the eyes, than the wandering of the desire. While here the mind is carried, with most earnest desire, to pursue knowledge, it very often mistakes its way, and miserably wanders. In our most wary ratiocinations, we many times shoot at rovers; but when we know by this vision, our mark is immediately presented to our eye. We are in no danger to be imposed upon by delusive appearances of things. We look through no fallacious mediums, are held in no suspense; puzzled with no doubts, whether such consequences will hold, such conclusions be rightly inferred; and so are not retarded from giving a present unwavering assent. Here are no perplexing intricacies, no dubious hallucinations, or uncertain guesses. We see things, as they are, by a simple and undeceiving light, with both subjective and objective certainty, being secure both from doubt and error.

2. Faith. How magnificent things doth Scripture speak of this grace! which the experience also of such as have been wont to live by it (*i. e.* to make it the governing principle of their lives) doth abundantly confirm. How clear are its apprehensions! [f]'tis the evidence of things not seen: how sweet its enjoyments! [g]whom not seeing ye love; and though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Even the heathen theology hath magnified it above knowledge. "What is it (saith one) that unites us with the self-goodness, and so joins us thereto, that it quiets or gives rest to all our action and motion? I will express it in one word; 'tis faith itself, which unspeakably, and after a hidden manner, doth unite and conjoin happy souls with the self-good. For (saith he) it concerns us not, either in the way of science,[h] *or with any imperfection, to inquire after the good; but to behold ourselves in the Divine light, and so shutting our eyes, to be placed in the unknown and secret unity of beings.*" And a later writer gives us this, as a conclusion from that former author, That as faith, which is credulity,[i] is below science; so that faith, which is truly so called, is, super-substantially, above science and intelligence, immediately uniting us to God. But 'tis evident, intuitive knowledge far exceeds even faith also.

1. 'Tis more distinct and clear. Faith is taking a thing upon report;[k] Who hath believed our report? And they are more general, languid apprehensions we have of things this way. Faith enters at the ear;[l] it comes by hearing. And if we compare the perceptions of these two external senses, that of hearing, and sight; the latter is unspeakably more clear, and satisfying. He that hath knowledge of a foreign country, only by report of another, hath very indistinct apprehensions of it, in comparison of him who hath travelled it himself. While the queen of Sheba only heard of Solomon's glory, she could not satisfy herself without an *αὐτοψια*, the sight of her own eye; and, when she saw it, she saith, the one half was not told her of what she now beheld. The ear more slowly and gradually receives, and the tongue more defectively expresses to another, an account of things; than one's ocular inspection would take it in. But, as to the excellency of this intuitive knowledge above faith; the comparison lies not between knowing by the ministry of a more noble sense, and a less noble; but knowing by dependence on a less noble, and without dependence upon any at all. When God hath been pleased to afford discoveries, in that way of vision, to men in the body, (his prophets, &c.) he hath usually bound up their senses, by sleep or trances; sense hath had no part or lot in this matter; unto believing it must necessarily concur.

2. More effective. What we see, even with our external eye, much more powerfully moves our heart, than what we only give credit to upon hearsay. The queen of Sheba much admired, no doubt, Solomon's famed splendour and magnificence, while she only heard of it; but when she saw it, it put her into an ecstasy; it ravished away her soul; she had no more spirit, &c. What would the sight of the Divine glory do, if God did not strengthen with all might; were there not as well glorious power to support, as powerful glory to transform! Joh had heard of God by the hearing of the ear, but when once his eye saw him, (whether that were by the appearance of any sensible glory; which is probable enough, for 'tis said, the Lord answered him out of the whirlwind; or whether by a more immediate revelation, 'tis less material,) what work did it make in his soul! The devils believe, and tremble; so impressive are the pre-apprehensions of judgment to come, and the consequents thereof, with them; yet their present torment, thence, is no torment, in comparison (art thou come to torment us before the time?) of what they expect. Let wicked men consider this; (they will have their intuition in hell too;) were your belief, and terror thereupon, with reference to the eternal judgment, and the impendent wrath of God, equal to what the devils themselves have, upon the same account; actual sensation will make you more exceed yourselves in point of misery, than the devils do now exceed you. There is, no doubt, a proportionable difference between the impressions of present faith, and future vision, with holy souls. Now, not seeing, yet believing, they rejoice, with joy unspeakable. Their present

c Nonnulli tædio investigandæ veritatis, cnilibet opinioni potius ignavi succumbunt; quam in exploranda veritate, pertinaci diligentia perseverare volunt. Min. Felix. Oct. 9.

d Atque ut homini sedenti ad ripam fluminis, sola aqua presens est quæ ei hoc temporis punctulo observatur; eidem vero homini, totum flumen presens esset, si supra summam aeris regionem erectus, uno aspectu fontem et ostium fluminis posset aspicere: Ita oculo Dei, &c. P. Molinæus de cognit. Dei.

e Herbert.

f Ἔλεγχος. Heb. xi. 1.

g 1 Pet. i. 8.

h Οὐ γνωστικως, οὐδὲ ατελως, αλλ' επιδοντας, εαυτους τῳ θειῳ φωτι, &c. Procius. in Plat. Theol.

i Picus Mirand.

k Isa. liii. 1.

l Rom. x. 16.

joy cannot be spoken; their future then cannot be thought! Experience daily tells us, how greatly sensible, present objects have the advantage upon us, beyond those that are spiritual and distant, though infinitely more excellent and important. When the tables are turned, the now sensible things disappear; a new scene of things, invisible and eternal, is immediately presented to our view; when the excellency of the objects, the dispositedness of the subjects, the nature of the act, shall all multiply the advantages, on this part. How affective will this vision be, beyond what we have ever found the faint apprehensions of our so much disadvantaged faith to amount to! A kind message from an indulgent father, to his far-distant son, informing of his welfare, and yet continuing love, will much affect; but the sight of his father's face, will even transport, and overcome him with joy.

But further consider this intuition a little more particularly and absolutely in itself. So, you may take this somewhat distinctor account of it, in some few particulars, corresponding to those, by which the object (the glory to be beheld) was lately characterized.—1. It will be a *vigorous, efficacious* intuition; as that which it beholds is the most excellent; even the *Divine* glory. Such an object cannot be beheld, but with an eye full of lively vigour; a sparkling, a radiant eye: a weak eye would be struck blind, would fail, and be closed up at the first glance. We must suppose, then, this vision to be accompanied with the highest vitality, the strongest energy, a mighty plenitude of spirit and power, no less than the Divine: nothing but the Divine power can sufficiently fortify the soul to behold Divine glory. When the apostle speaks only of his desire of glory, He that hath wrought us to this self-same thing (saith he) is God, he that hath moulded us, suitably framed us (as the word signifieth) for this thing, is God: 'tis the work of a Deity to make a soul desire glory: certainly, then, 'tis his work to give the power of beholding it. And by how much the more of power, so much the more of pleasure in this vision. Weak sight would afford but languid joy: but when the whole soul, animated with divine power and life, shall seat itself in the eye; when it shall be, as it were, all eye, (as one said of God, whom now it perfectly imitates,) and be wholly intent upon vision; apply itself thereto with all its might, as its only business;[m] what satisfying joys doth it now taste! renewed by every repeated view! how doth it now, as it were, prey upon glory; as the eye of the eagle upon the beams of the sun! We meet with the expression of *aures bibulæ;* here will be *oculi bibuli, thirsty eyes;* a soul ready to drink in glory at the eye. If vision be by intromission, what attractive eyes are here, drawing in glory, feeding upon glory! If by extramission, what piercing, darting eyes, sending forth the soul at every look to embrace the glorious object!

There is a great power that now attends realizing thoughts of God: whether it appear in the consequent working of the soul directly towards God; or by way of reflection upon itself. If directly towards God; how mightily is he admired! "Who is a God like unto thee?" If by reflection upon our own sin, and vileness; how deeply doth it humble!—"Now mine eye seeth thee, therefore I abhor myself.—Wo is me, I am undone,—mine eyes have seen the Lord of glory." If by way of reflection, upon our interest in him, or relation to him; how mightily doth it support and comfort![n] "I will look to the Lord,—my God will hear me." How full of rich sense is that scripture,[o] They looked to him and were lightened! One look clothed them with light, cast a glory upon their souls, filled them with life and joy; 'twas but a thought, the cast of an eye, and they were as full as hearts could hold. O the power then of these heavenly visions, when we dwell in the views of that transforming glory!—2. This will be a *comprehensive* intuition; as its object is *entire* glory. I mean comparatively, not absolutely comprehensive. More of the Divine glory will be comprehended, unspeakably, than before. 'Tis called, we know, by the schoolmen, the knowledge of *comprehensors*, in contradiction to that of *viators*. We shall better be able to discern the Divine excellencies together; have much more adequate conceptions; a fuller, and more complete notion of God: we shall see him as he is. 'Tis too much observable, how in our present state, we are prejudiced by our partial conceptions of him; and what an inequality they cause in the temper of our spirits. For wicked men, the very notion they have of God proves fatal to their souls, or is of a most destructive tendency; because they comprehend not together what God hath revealed of himself. Most usually, they confine those few thoughts of God they have, only to his mercy; and that exclusively, as to his holiness and justice; hence their vain and mad presumption. The notion of an unholy (or a not-holy, and not-just) God, what wickedness would it not induce! "Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself:" a God after their own hearts; then the reins are let loose. More rarely, when the conscience of guilt hath arrested the self-condemned wretch, God is thought of under no other notion, than of an irreconcilable enemy and avenger; as one thirsting after the blood of souls, and that will admit of no atonement. So without all pretence, and so flatly contrary to all his discoveries of himself, do men dare to affix to him black and horrid characters, forged only out of the radicated and inveterate hatred of their own hearts against him, (that never take up good thoughts of any one,) only because they have no mind to acquaint themselves with him; and that they may have some colour for their affected distance; and so, perhaps, never return; but perish under a horrid wilful despair. And even the people of God themselves are too apt sometimes, so wholly to fix their eye upon love and grace, that they grow into an unbecoming, uncreaturely familiarity; while the thoughts of infinite majesty, adorable greatness and glory, are asleep: sometimes, possibly, they apprehend vindictive justice, the indignation and jealousy of God against sin, (precluding meanwhile the consideration of his indulgent compassions towards truly humble and penitent souls,) to that degree of affrightment and dread, that they grow into an unchildlike strangeness towards him, and take little pleasure in drawing nigh to him. But when, *now*, our eye shall take in the discovery of Divine glory equally, how sweet and satisfying a pleasure will arise from that grateful mixture of reverent love, humble joy, modest confidence, meek courage, a prostrate magnanimity, a triumphant veneration; a soul shrinking before the Divine glory into nothing, yet not contenting itself with any less enjoyment, than of him, who is all in all!

There is nothing here in this complexion, or temper of soul, but hath its warrant, in the various aspect of the face of God comprehensively beheld; nothing but what is (even by its suitableness) highly grateful and pleasing.—3. 'Twill be *fixed, steady* intuition, as its object is *permanent* glory. The vision of God can neither infer, nor admit weariness. The eye cannot divert; its act is eternally delectable, and affords an unvariable, undecaying pleasure. Sensual delights soon end in loathing; quickly bring a glutting surfeit; and degenerate into torments,[p] when they are continued and unintermittent. A philosopher,[q] in an epistle which he writes to a friend, from the court of Dionysius, where he was forcibly detained, thus bemoans himself, "*We are unhappy, O Antisthenes, beyond measure! and how can we but be unhappy, that are burdened by the tyrant every day with sumptuous feasts, plentiful compotations, precious ointments, gorgeous apparel? and I knew as soon as I came into this island and city, how unhappy my life would be.*" This is the nature and common condition of even the most pleasing sensible objects: they first tempt, then please a little, then disappoint, and lastly vex. The eye that beholds them, blasts them quickly, rifles and deflowers their glory; and views them with no more delight at first, than disdain afterwards. Creature-enjoyments have a bottom, are soon drained and drawn dry: hence there must be frequent diversions; other pleasures must be sought out; and are chosen, not because they are better, but because they are new.

This demonstrates the emptiness and vanity of the creature. Affection of variety only proceeds from sense of want; and is a confession, upon trial, that there is not in such an enjoyment what was expected. Proportionably,

m S. Hieronym.
n Mic. vii. 7.
o Psal. xxxiv. 5.

p Proba istas, quæ voluptates vocantur, ubi modum transcenderint, pœnas esse. Sen. Ep. 83.
q Κακοδαιμονουμεν, ω Αντισθενες, ου μετριως, &c. Socraticorum. Epist. 9.

in the state of glory, a constant indeficient fulness, renders the blessed soul undesirous of any change. There is no need of varieties, or diversions: what did once please, can never cease to do so. This glory cannot fade, or lose any thing of its attractive power. The faculty cannot languish, or lose the disposition, by which it is contempered and made proportionable thereto. Hence no weariness can ensue. What! a soul in which the love of God is perfected, grow weary of beholding him! The sun will sooner grow weary of shining; the touched needle of turning itself to its wonted point; every thing will sooner grow weary of its centre; and the most fundamental laws of nature be sooner antiquated and made void for ever. The eye of the fool, Solomon tells us,[r] is in the ends of the earth. His, only, is a rolling wandering eye, that knows not where to fix. Wisdom guides, and fixes the eye of the holy soul; determines it unto God only:[s] I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel, my reins also instruct me,—I have set the Lord always before me. Surely heaven will not render it less capable of djudication; of passing a right judgment of the excellency and worth of things. And here, a rational judgment will find no want; and an irrational will find no place. Therefore, as permanent glory will certainly infer a perpetual vision; perpetuated vision will as certainly perpetuate the soul's satisfaction and blessedness.—4. 'Twill be a *possessive* intuition: as 'tis an *appropriate* glory which it pitches upon. 'Twill be the language of every look, "This glory is mine." The soul looks not upon it shyly, as if it had nothing to do with it; or with slight and careless glances: but the very posture of its eye speaks its interest, and proclaims the pretensions it hath to this glory. With how different an aspect doth a stranger passing by, and the owner, look upon the same house, the same lands! A man's eye lays his claim for him and avows his right. A grateful object that one can say is his own, he arrests it with his eye; so do saints with appropriative looks behold their God, and the Divine glory. Even with such an eye as he was wont to behold them;[t] To this man will I look, &c. that is, as the place of my rest, mentioned before; he designs him with his eye. Which is the import of that expression,[u] The Lord knows who are his; his eye marks them out; owns them as his own: as concerning others, whom he disowns, the phrase is, I know you not. And how vastly different is such an intuition, from that, when I look upon a thing with a hungry, lingering eye, which I must never enjoy, or never expect to be the better for! This vision is fruitive, unites the soul with the blessed object: which kind of sight is meant, when actual blessedness is so often expressed by seeing God. We see then what vision, the sight of God's face, contributes to the satisfaction of blessed souls.

CHAPTER VII.

Wherein assimilation (the likeness or glory of God impressed) contributes unto satisfactioo: where is particularly propounded to be shown, What pleasure it involves, what it disposes to: What it involves in the *esse* of it, what in the *cognosci*. 1. The pleasure of being like God discovered. 1. Showing concerning the image of God (generally considered) that it is the soul's health and soundness restored; that it is a vital, an intimate, a connatural, a perfect image.

2. OUR next business is to discover, what assimilation, or the impressed likeness of God, may further add to this satisfied state; or, what satisfying pleasure the blessed soul finds in this, that it is like God. And here we are distinctly to inquire into—the pleasure which such an assimilation to God involves in itself, and—that which it tends and disposes to.

I. The pleasure it involves in itself; or, which is taken in it abstractedly considered; which we may more particularly unfold by showing—the pleasure involved, I. in being like God: and—2. in knowing or reflecting upon the same: the *esse* and the *cognosci* of this assimilation.

I. The pleasure in being like God; which may be discovered both by a general consideration hereof, and by instancing in some particulars, wherein blessed souls shall be like him.

1. It is obvious to suppose an inexpressible pleasure in the very feeling, the inward sensation, the holy soul will have of that happy frame in *general*, whereinto it is now brought; that joyful harmony, that entire rectitude, it finds within itself. You may as soon separate light from a sunbeam, as pleasure from such a state. This likeness or conformity to God is an εὐκρασια, a perfect temperament; an athletic healthiness; a strong sound constitution of soul. Do but imagine, what it is to a man's body, after a wasting sickness, to find himself well. Frame a notion of the pleasure of health and soundness, when both all the parts and members of the body are in their proper places and proportions, and a lively, active vigour, a sprightly strength, possesses every part, and actuates the whole; how pleasant is this temper! If we were all body, there could be no greater felicity than this. But by how much the more noble any creature is, so is it capable of more exquisite pains, or pleasures. [a]Sin is the sickness and disease of the soul; enfeebles all its powers, exhausts its vigour, wastes its strength. You know the restless tossings, the weary roslings to and fro, of a diseased languishing body; such is the case of a sinful soul. Let it but seriously bethink itself, and then speak its own sense; (but here is the malignity of the disease, it cannot be serious, it always raves;) What will it be? "O I can take no rest!" The way of wickedness is called [b]a way of pain: sinners would find it so, if the violence of the disease had not bereft them of sense: Nothing savours with me; I can take comfort in nothing. The wicked are as a troubled sea (as their name imports) that cannot rest, whose waters, &c. The image of God, renewed in holiness and righteousness, is health restored, after such a consuming sickness; which when we awake, when all the drowsiness that attends our disease is shaken off, we find to be perfect. The fear of the Lord, (an ordinary paraphrase of holiness or piety,) is said to be health to the navel and marrow to the bones. Our Lord Jesus invites[c] wearied sinners to come to him, to take his yoke on them, to learn of him, that is, to imitate him, to be like him; and promises they shall find rest to their souls. How often do we find grace and peace in conjunction in the apostles' salutations and benedictions! We are told that the ways of Divine wisdom (*i. e.* which it prescribeth) are all[d] pleasantness and peace. That in keeping the commandments of God there is great reward. That they are not grievous, *i. e.* (for there seems to be a *meiosis* in the expression,) are joyous, pleasant. And what are his commandments, but those expresses of himself, wherein we are to be like him, and conform to his will?[e] The kingdom of God (that holy order which he settles in the spirits of men, his law transcribed and impressed upon the soul; which is nothing else but its conformation and likeness to himself:) is righteousness, and then peace. The φρόνημα Πνεύματος[f] that *notion*, and *judgment*, and *savour* of things, that excellent temper of mind and heart, (for that is the extent of the expression,) whereof the Holy Spirit of God is both the author and pattern, is life and peace, involves them in itself. When one thing is thus, in *casu recto*, predicated of another, it speaks their most intimate connexion, as Rom. xiv. 17. above: so 1 John v. 3. This is love that, &c. So here, such a mind is life and peace (though the copula be not in the original, it is fitly supplied in the translation.) You cannot separate (*q. d.*) life and peace from such a mind: it hath no principle of death or trouble in it. Let such as know any thing of this blessed temper and complexion of soul, compare this scripture and their own experience together; when at any time they find their souls under the blessed empire and dominion of a spiritual mind, when spirituality wholly rules and denominates them. Are not their souls the very region of life and peace? both these in conjunction, life and peace? not raging life, not stupid peace; but a placid, peaceful life, a vital, vigorous rest and peace: 'tis not the life of a fury, nor peace of

r Prov. xvii. 24.
s Psal. xvi. 7, 8.
t Isa. lxvi. 1, 2.
u 2 Tim. ii. 19.
a Τιμιωτερον ψυχη σωματος, το δε τιμιωτερον αγαθον μειζον, το δε τοι μειζονι, αγαθοι εναντιον, μειζον κακον·αγαθα δε μειζων υγεια ψυχης υγειας σωματος, μειζον συν κακον νοσος ψυχης, νοσου σωματος, νοσος ψυχης μοχθηρια, &c. Max. Tyr. dissert. 41.
b דרך כאב Psal. cxxxix. 24. רשע Isa. lvii. 20. Hinc illud et tædium et displicentis sui, et nusquam residentis animi volutatio, &c. Sen. de Tranqu. animi.
c Mat. xi. 28.
d Prov. iii. 13. Psal. xix. 1 John v. 3.
e Rom. xiv. 17.
f Rom. viii. 6.

a stone: life that hath peace in it, and peace that hath life in it. Now can the soul say, "I feel myself well; all is now well with me."[g] Nothing afflicts the spiritual mind so far, and while 'tis such; 'tis wrapt up and clothed in its own innocency and purity, and hereby become invulnerable, not liable to hurtful impressions. Holiness (under the name of light, for that is by the context the evident meaning of the word there) is by the apostle[h] spoken of as the Christian's armour. Put on, saith he, the armour of light, in opposition to the works of darkness, which he had mentioned immediately before. Strange armour! that a man may see through. A good man's armour is, that[i] he needs none: his armour is an open breast; that he can expose himself, is fearless of any harm. Who is he that shall harm you if ye be followers of that which is good? It should be read imitators, so the word signifies; and so whereas following is either of a pattern or an end, the former must be meant here, by the natural importance of that word. And hence, by[k] "that which is good," is not to be understood created goodness; for it is not enough to imitate that goodness, for so we must be good; but the words are capable of being read, him that is good, or (which is all one) the good.[l] And so 'tis the increate good, the blessed God himself, formally considered under the notion of good. Nothing can harm you if you be like God, that's the plain sense of this scripture. Likeness to God is armour of proof; *i. e.* an imitation of him, *viz.* in his moral goodness, which holiness (as a general name of it) comprehends. A person truly like God is secure from any external violence, so far as that it shall never be able to invade his spirit. He is in spirit far raised above the tempestuous stormy region, and converses where winds and clouds have no place.

Nor can, so far as this temper of soul prevails, any evil grow upon such a mind within itself. It is life and peace, it is light and purity, for 'tis the image, the similitude of God.[m] God is light, and with him is no darkness at all. Holy souls were darkness, but they are light in the Lord. He the Father of light,[n] they the children of light. They were darkness: not in the dark; but in the abstract, "darkness;" as if that were their whole nature, and they nothing else but an impure mass of conglobated darkness.[o] So, Ye are light: as if they were that and nothing else; nothing but a sphere of light. Why suppose we such a thing as an entire sphere of nothing else but pure light? What can work any disturbance here, or raise a storm within it: A calm, serene thing, perfectly homogencous, void of contrariety, or any self-repugnant quality: how can it disquiet itself? We cannot yet say, that thus it is with holy souls in their present state, according to the highest literal import of these words, Ye are light: but thus it will be when they awake; when they are satisfied with this likeness. They shall then be like God fully, and throughout. O the joy and pleasure of a soul made after such a similitude! Now glory is become as it were their being, they are glorified. Glory is revealed into them, transfused throughout them. Every thing that is conceivable under the notion of an excellency, competent to created nature, is now to be found with them; and they have it in-wrought into their very beings. So that in a true sense it may be said, that they are light; they not only have such excellencies, but they are them:[p] as the moralist saith of the wise or virtuous man, *that he not so properly hath all things, as is all things.* 'Tis said of man, in respect of his naturals, he is the image[q] and glory of God. As for his supernatural excellencies, though they are not essential to man, they are more expressive of God; and are now become so inseparable from the nature of man too, in this his glorified state, that he can as soon cease to be intelligent as holy. The image of God, even in this respect, is not separable from him, nor blessedness, (surely,) from this image. As the divine excellencies, being in their infinite fulness in God, are his own blessedness, so is the likeness, the participation of them in the soul that now bears this image its blessedness. Nothing can be necessary to its full satisfaction which it hath not in itself, by a gracious vouchsafement and communication. The good man, (in that degree which his present state admits of,) Solomon tells us,[r] is satisfied from himself: he doth not need to traverse the world, to seek his happiness abroad; he hath the matter of satisfaction, even that goodness which he is now enriched with, in his own breast and bosom;[s] yet he hath it all by participation from the fountain-goodness. But that participated goodness is so intimately one with him, as sufficiently warrants and makes good the assertion, he is satisfied from himself: *viz.* from himself, not primarily, or independently; but by derivation from him who is all in all, and more intimate to us than we ourselves. And what is that participated goodness, but a degree of the Divine likeness? But when that goodness shall be fully participated, when this image and imitation of the Divine goodness shall be complete and entire, then shall we know the rich exuberant sense of those words. How fully will this image or likeness satisfy then! And yet more distinctly, we may apprehend how satisfying this likeness or image impressed will be, if, a little further deferring the view of the particulars of this likeness which we have designed to instance in, we consider these general properties of it.

I. 'Tis a vital image: not the image only of him that lives, the living God; but it is his living and soul-quickening image. 'Tis the likeness of him, in that very respect; an imitation and participation of the life of God; by which, once revived, the soul lives that was dead before. 'Tis not a dead picture, a dumb show, an unmoving statue; but a living, speaking, walking image; that wherewith the child is like the father: the very life of the subject where it is; and by which it lives as God, speaks and acts conformably to him. An image, not such a one as is drawn with a pencil, that expresses only colour and figure; but such a one as is seen in a glass,[t] that represents life and motion, as was noted from a worthy author before. 'Tis even, in its first and more important draught, an analogical participation (as we must understand it) of the[u] Divine nature; before which first tincture, those preludious touches of it upon the spirit of man, his former state is spoken of as[x] an alienation from the life of God; as having no interest, no communion therein. The[y] putting on of the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, is presently mentioned, in direct opposition to that dismal state, implying that to be a participation of the Divine life: and certainly, so far as it is so, 'tis a participation of the Divine blessedness too.

2. 'Tis an image most intimate, therefore, to its subject. Glory it is; but not a superficial skin-deep glory; such as shone in Moses's face, which he covered with a vail. 'Tis thoroughly transformative; changes the soul throughout; not in external appearance, but in its very nature. All outward embellishments would add little felicity to a putrid, corrupt soul. That would be but painting a sepulchre; this adds ornament unto life; and both, especially to the inward man. 'Tis not paint in the face, while death is at the heart; but 'tis the radication of such a principle within as will soon form and attemper the man universally to itself. 'Tis glory, blessedness, participated, brought home and lodged in a man's own soul, in his own bosom; he cannot then but be satisfied. A man may have a rich stock of outward comforts, and while he hath no heart to enjoy them, be never the happier. But 'tis impossible, that happiness should be thus lodged in his soul, made so intimate, and one with him; and yet, that he should not be satisfied, not be happy.

3. An image connatural to the spirit of man. Not a thing alien, and foreign to his nature, put into him purposely, as it were, to torment and vex him; but an ancient well-known inhabitant, that had place in him from the beginning. Sin is the injurious intruder; which therefore puts the soul into a commotion, and permits it

g Invulnerabile est non quod non feritur, sed quod non læditur. Sen. de constantiâ sapientis, sive quod in sapientem non cadit injuria.
h Rom. xiii. 12.
i Integer vitæ scelerisque purus, &c. Hor. Μιμηται.
k Του αγαθου.
l As Plato and his followers used the expression, ταγαθον, fully according to the sense of Matt. xix. 17.
m 1 John i.
n Eph. v. James i.
o Σφαιρα ὑλικης συντασεως, οταν μητε εκτεινηται επι τι, μητε εσω συντρεχη, μητε συνιζανη, αλλα φωτι λαμπηται, &c. Marc. Antonin. lib. 11.
p Omnia non tam habere quam esse. Sen.
q 1 Cor. xi. 7.
r Prov. xiv. 14.
s Intimo nostro intimior. Esse nostrum laudabile. Gibieuf. de libertate, ex. Plat. et. Aug.
t Sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat.
u 2 Pet. i.
x Eph. iv. 18.
y Ver. 23, 34.

not to rest, while it hath any being there. This image calms it, restores it, works a peaceful, orderly composure within; returns it to itself, to its pristine, blessed state; being reseated there, as in its proper, primitive subject. For though this image, in respect of corrupted nature, be supernatural; in respect of institute, and undefiled nature, it was in a true sense natural, as hath been demonstrated by divers of ours against the papists; and upon the matter, yielded by some of the more moderate among themselves.[z] At least it was connate with human nature, consentaneous to it, and perfective of it. We are speaking, it must be remembered, of that part of the Divine image that consists in moral excellencies; there being another part of it, as hath been said, that is, even in the strictest sense natural. There is nothing in the whole moral law of God, (in conformity whereunto this image did, *ab origine*, consist,) nothing of what he requires from man, that is at all destructive of his being, prejudicial to his comforts, repugnant to his most innate principles: nothing that clashes with his reason, or is contrary to his interest; or that is not, most directly conservative of his being and comforts, agreeable to his most rational principles, subservient to his best and truest interest, for what[a] doth God the Lord require, but fear and love, service, and holy walking from an entire and undivided soul? what, but what is good; not only in itself, but for us; and in respect whereof, his law is said to be[b] holy, just and good? And what he requireth, he impresseth. This law, written in the heart, is this likeness. How grateful, then, will it be, when, after a long extermination and exile, it returns and re-possesses the soul, is recognized by it, becomes to it a new nature, (yea, even a divine,)[c] a vital, living law, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus! What grievance, or burden, is it to do the dictates of nature? actions that easily and freely flow from their own principles? and, when blessedness itself is infolded in those very acts and inclinations? How infinitely satisfying and delightful will it be, when the soul shall find itself connaturalized to every thing in its duty; and shall have no other duty incumbent on it than to be happy! when it shall need no arguments and exhortations to love God: nor need be urged and pressed, as heretofore, to mind him, to fear before him! when love, and reverence, and adoration, and praise; when delight, and joy, shall be all natural acts! Can you separate this, in your own thoughts, from the highest satisfaction?

4. This image will be now perfect; every way, fully perfect.—1. In *all its parts*, as it is in the first instant of the soul's entrance into the state of regeneration; the womb of grace knows no defective maimed births. And yet here is no little advantage, as to this kind of perfection. For now those lively lineaments of the new creature all appear, which were much obscured before: every line of glory is conspicuous, every character legible, the whole entire frame of this image is, in its exact symmetry and apt proportions, visible at once. And 'tis an unspeakable addition to the pleasure of so excellent a temper of spirit, that accrues from the discernible entireness of it. Heretofore, some gracious dispositions have been to seek, (through the present prevalence of some corruption or temptation,) when there was most need and occasion for their being reduced into act. Hence the reward and pleasure of the act, and improvement of the principle were lost together. Now, the soul will be equally disposed to every holy exercise that shall be suitable to its state. Its temper shall be even and symmetral; its motions uniform and agreeable: nothing done out of season; nothing seasonable omitted, for want of a present disposition of spirit thereto. There will be not only an habitual, but actual entireness of the frame of holiness in the blessed soul.—2. Again this image will be *perfect in degree;* so as to exclude all degrees of its contrary, and to include all degrees of itself. There will be now no longer any colluctation with contrary principles; no law in the members warring against the law of the mind; no lustings of the flesh against the spirit. That war is now ended in a glorious victory, and eternal peace. There will be no remaining blindness of mind, nor error of judgment, nor perverseness of will, nor irregularity or rebellion of affections: no ignorance of God, no aversation from him, or disaffection towards him. This likeness removes all culpable dissimilitude or unlikeness. This communicated glory fills up the whole soul, causes all clouds and darkness to vanish, leaves no place for any thing that is vile or inglorious; 'tis pure glory, free from mixture of any thing that is alien to it. And it is itself full. The soul is replenished, not with airy, evanid shadows; but with substantial, solid glory,[d] a massive, weighty glory; for I know not but subjective glory may be taken in within the significancy of that known scripture, if it be not more principally intended; inasmuch as the text speaks of a glory to be wrought out by afflictions, which are the files and furnaces, as it were, to polish or refine the soul into a glorious frame. 'Tis cumulated glory, glory added to glory. Here 'tis growing, progressive glory,[e] we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. It shall, now, be stable, consistent glory; that carries a selffulness with it: (which some include also in the notion of purity:)[f] 'tis full itself, includes every degree requisite to its own perfection. God hath now put the last hand to this glorious image, added to it its ultimate accomplishments. Now a conformity to Christ, even in the resurrection from the dead, in his glorious state, is fully attained. That prize of the high calling of God is now won. And the humble sense of not having attained as yet, and of not being already perfect, (in which humility the foundation of the temple of God in a saint is laid, and the building raised,) is turned into joyful acclamations, "Grace, grace!" for the laying on of the top stone, the finishing of this glorious work. And when this temple is filled with the glory of the Lord, the soul itself replenished with the divine fulness, will not its joys be full too? For here is no sacrifice to be offered but that of praise, and joy is the proper seasoning for that sacrifice.

Now, the new creature hath arrived to the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. The first formation of this spiritual, as well as of the natural man, was hidden and secret, it was curiously wrought, and in a way no more liable to observation, than that of framing the child in the womb; as that is as hidden as the concoction of minerals, or precious stones, in the lower parts of the earth. No secrets of nature can outvie the mysteries of godliness. Its growth is also by very insensible degrees, as it is with the products of nature: but its arrival to perfection is infinitely more strange than any thing in nature ever was. How sudden and wonderful is the change, when, in the twinkling of an eye, the blessed soul instantly awakes out of drowsy languishings, and miserable weakness, into perfect strength and vigour![g] As a man is, so is his strength; and as his strength is, so is his joy and pleasure. The sun is said to go forth as a strong man, rejoicing to run his race. When a man goes, in the fulness of his strength, upon any enterprise, how doth his blood and spirits triumph before-hand! No motion of hand or foot, is without a sensible delight. The strength of a man's spirit, is, unspeakably, more than that of the outward man; its faculties and powers more refined and raised; and hence are rational or intellectual exercises and operations much more delightful than corporeal ones can be. But (still as the man is, so is his strength) 'tis an incomparably greater strength that attends the heaven-born man. This man born of God, begotten of God, after his own likeness; this hero, this son of God, was born to conflicts, to victories, to triumphs. While he is yet but in his growing age, he overcomes the world; (as Hercules the serpents in his cradle;) overcomes the wicked one, and is at last more than conqueror. A mighty power attends godliness; "a spirit of power, and of a sound mind; but how much this divine creature grows, so much the more like God: and being perfect, conflicts cease: he had overcome and won the crown before. And now all his strength runs out into acts of pleasure. Now when he shall go forth in his might to love God, (as we are required to love him now with all our might, and every act

z As may be seen by comparing what Estius says to the two questions. 1. An gratia fuerit primo homini naturalis? 2. Utrum originalis justitia fuerit homini supernaturalis? l. 2. dist. 25.

a Deut. x. 12. Mic. vi. 3. b Rom. vii. 12.

c Rom. viii. 2. d 2 Cor. iv. 17. e 2 Cor. iii. 18.

f Purum est quod est plenum sui, et quod minimum habet alieni.

g Psal. xix.

of praise shall be an act of power, done with a fulness of strength, (as 'tis said their praises, at the bringing home of the ark, were with all their might,) O! what will the pleasure be that shall accompany this state of perfection! Perfect power and perfect pleasure are here met, and shall for ever dwell together, and be always commensurate to one another. They are so here, in their imperfect state: our feeble, spiritless duties, weak, dead prayers; they have no more sweetness than strength, no more pleasure than power in them. Therefore we are listless, and have no mind to duties, as we find we are more frequently destitute of a spiritual liveliness and vigour therein. When a spirit of might and power goes on with us in the wonted course of our converses with God, we then forecast opportunities, and gladly welcome the season, when it extraordinarily occurs, of drawing nigh to him. It cannot be thought, that the connexion and proportion between these should fail in glory; or that, when every thing else is perfect, the blessed soul itself made perfect, even as God himself is perfect, in this bearing his likeness, should be unlike him in bliss; or its satisfaction be imperfect.

CHAPTER VIII.

The satisfaction carried in the glory of God impressed, farther shown by instances. Certain particulars of this; impression instanced in a dependent frame of spirit, subjection or self devoting, love, purity, liberty, tranquillity.

But besides the general consideration of this likeness, we shall instance in some of the particular excellencies comprehended in it, wherein the blessed shall imitate and resemble God: whence we may farther estimate the pleasure and satisfaction that being like God will afford.—Only here let it be remembered, that as we all along in this discourse, speak of likeness to God in respect of moral excellencies; so by likeness to him, in respect of these, we understand, not only a participation of those which are communicable; but a correspondent impress also as to those that are incommunicable; as hath been more distinctly opened in the propositions concerning this likeness. Which being premised, I shall give instances of both kinds, to discover somewhat of the inexpressible pleasure of being thus conformed to God. And here, pretermitting the impress of knowledge of which we have spoken under the former head of vision, we shall instance,

I. In a dependent frame of spirit, which is the proper impress of the Divine all-sufficiency and self-fulness, duly apprehended by the blessed soul. It is not easy to conceive a higher pleasure than this, compatible to a creature,—the pleasure of dependance; yea, this is a higher than we can conceive. Dependance (which speaks the creature's σχέσις or habitude to its principle, as the subserviency which imports its habitude to its end) is two-fold.—1. Natural: which is common and essential to all creatures; even when no such thing is thought on, or considered by them. The creatures live, move, and have their beings in God, whether they think of it or no.—2. Voluntary, or rational: which is *de facto*, peculiar; and *de jure*, common to reasonable creatures as such. A dependance that is, ἐκ προαιρέσεως, *electivè*; and, with a foregoing reason, (which I understand by elective, not a liberty of doing, or not doing it,) and concomitant consideration of what we do, and animadversion of our own act: when knowingly and willingly, understanding ourselves in what we do, we go out of ourselves, and live in God. This is the dependance of which I speak. And it cannot but be attended with transcendant pleasure in that other state, when that knowledge and animadversion shall be clear and perfect: both, as this dependance imports—a nullifying of self—and magnifying (I may call it omnifying) of God, a making him all in all.—As it imports (which it doth most evidently) a *self-annihilation*, a *pure nullifying of self*, 'tis a continual recognition of my own nothingness, a momently, iterated confession, that my whole being is nothing, but a mere puff of precarious breath, a bubble raised from nothing, by the arbitrary fiat of the great Creator; reducible, had he so pleased, any moment to nothing again. These are true and just acknowledgments, and to a well-tempered soul infinitely pleasant, when the state of the case is thoroughly understood, (as now it is,) and it hath the apprehension clear; how the creation is sustained, how, and upon what terms, its own being, life and blessedness are continued to it; that it is every moment, determinable upon the constancy of the creator's will, that it is not simply nothing. 'Tis not possible that any thing should hinder this consideration from being eternally delightful, but that diabolical uncreaturely pride, that is long since banished heaven, and that banished its very subjects thence also. Nothing can suit that temper, but to be a god; to be wholly independent, to be its own sufficiency. The thoughts of living at the will and pleasure of another, are grating; but they are only grating to a proud heart, which here, hath no place. A soul naturalized to humiliations, accustomed to prostrations and self-abasements, trained up in acts of mortification, and that was brought to glory through a continued course and series of self-denial; that ever since it first came to know itself, was wont to depend for every moment's breath, for every glimpse of light, for every fresh influence, ("I live, yet not I—) with what pleasure doth it, now, as it were, vanish before the Lord! what delight doth it take to diminish itself, and as it were, disappear; to contract and shrivel up itself, to shrink even into a point, into a nothing, in the presence of the Divine glory; that it may be all in all! Things are now pleasant, (to the soul, in its right mind) as they are suitable; as they carry a comeliness and congruity in them; and nothing now appears more becoming, than such a self-annihilation. The distances of Creator and creature, of infinite and finite, of a necessary and arbitrary being, of a self-originated and a derived being, of what was from everlasting, and what had a beginning; are now better understood than ever. And the soul, by how much it is now come nearer to God, is more apprehensive of its distance. And such a frame and posture doth, hence, please it best, and doth most fitly correspond thereto. Nothing is so pleasing to it, as to be as it ought. That temper is most grateful that is most proper, and which best agreed with its state. Dependance therefore is greatly pleasing, as it is a self-nullifying thing. And yet it is, in this respect, pleasing, but as a means to a further end. The pleasure that attends it, is higher and more intense, according as it more immediately attains that end, *viz.* the magnifying and exalting of God: which is the most connatural thing to the holy soul; the most fundamental and deeply impressed law of the new creature. Self gives place, that God may take it: becomes nothing, that he may be all: it vanishes, that his glory may shine the brighter.—Dependance gives God his proper glory. 'Tis the peculiar honour and prerogative of a Deity, to have a world of creatures hanging upon it, staying themselves upon it; to be the fulcrum, the centre of a lapsing creation. When this dependance is voluntary and intelligent, it carries in it a more explicit owning and acknowledgment of God. By how much more this is the distinct and actual sense of my soul, Lord, I cannot live but by thee; so much the more openly and plainly do I speak it out, Lord, thou art God alone; thou art the fulness of life and being; the only root and spring of life; the everlasting I AM; the Being of beings.

How unspeakably pleasant, to a holy soul, will such a perpetual agnition or acknowledgment of God be! when the perpetuation of its being shall be nothing else than a perpetuation of this acknowledgment; when every renewed inspiration, every motion, every pulse of the glorified soul, shall be but a repetition of it; when it shall find, itself, in the eternity of life, that everlasting state of life which it now possesses, to be nothing else than an everlasting testimony that God is God: He is so, for, I am, I live, I act, I have the power to love him; none of which could otherwise be. When amongst the innumerable myriads of the heavenly host, this shall be the mutual, alternate testimony of each to all the rest throughout eternity, will not this be pleasant? when each shall feel continually the fresh illapses and incomes of God, the power and sweetness of Divine influences, the enlivening vigour of

a Gal. ii. 20.

that vital breath, and find in themselves, thus we live and are sustained: and are yet as secure, touching the continuance of this state of life, as if every one were a god to himself; and did each one possess an entire godhead. When their sensible dependance on him, in their glorified state, shall be a perpetual triumph over all the imaginary deities, the fancied *Numina*, wherewith he was heretofore provoked to jealousy; and he shall now have no rival left, but be acknowledged and known, to be all in all. How pleasant will it then be, as it were, to lose themselves in him! and to be swallowed up in the overcoming sense of his boundless, all-sufficient, every-where flowing fulness! And then add to this; they do by this dependance actually make this fulness of God their own. They are now met in one common principle of life and blessedness, that is sufficient for them all. They no longer live a life of care, are perpetually exempt from solicitous thoughts, which here they could not perfectly attain to in their earthly state. They have nothing to do but to depend; to live upon a present self-sufficient good, which alone is enough to replenish all desires; else it were not self-sufficient. [b]How can we divide, in our most abstractive thoughts, the highest pleasure, the fullest satisfaction, from this dependance? 'Tis to live at the rate of a God; a God-like life: a living upon immense fulness, as he lives.

2. Subjection; which I place next to dependance, as being of the same allay; the product of impressed sovereignty; as the other, of all-sufficient fulness. Both impressions upon the creature, corresponding to somewhat in God, most incommunicably appropriate to him. This is the soul's real and practical acknowledgment of the supreme Majesty; its homage to its Maker; its self-dedication: than which nothing more suits the state of a creature, or the spirit of a saint. And as it is suitable, 'tis pleasant. 'Tis that by which the blessed soul becomes, in its own sense, a consecrated thing, a devoted thing, sacred to God: its very life and whole being referred and made over to him. With what delightful relishes, what sweet gusts of pleasure, is this done! while the soul tastes its own act; approves it with a full ungainsaying judgment; apprehends the condignity and fitness of it; assents to itself herein; and hath the ready suffrage, the harmonious concurrence, of all its powers! When the words are no sooner spoken, "Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory, honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created;" but they are resounded from the penetralia, the *inmost bowels*, the most intimate receptacles and secret chambers of the soul, O Lord, thou art worthy: worthy, that I, and all things, should be to thee: worthy, to be the Omega, as thou art the Alpha, the last, as thou art the first; the end, as thou art the beginning, of all things; the ocean into which all being shall flow, as the fountain from which it sprung. My whole self, and all my powers, the excellencies now implanted in my being, the privileges of my now glorified state, are all worth nothing to me but for thee; please me only, as they make me fitter for thee. O the pleasure of these sentiments, the joy of such raptures; when the soul shall have no other notion of itself, than of an everlasting sacrifice, always ascending to God in its own flames.

For this devotedness and subjection speak not barely an act, but a state; a [c]being to the praise of grace; a living to God. And 'tis no mean pleasure that the sincere soul finds, in the imperfect beginnings, the first essays of this life, the initial breathings of such a spirit, its entrance into this blessed state; when it makes the first tender and present of itself to God; (as the apostle expresses it;) when it first begins to esteem itself a hallowed thing, separate and set apart for God; its first act of unfeigned self-resignation; when it tells God from the very heart, "I now give up myself to thee to be thine." Never was marriage-covenant made with such pleasure, with so complacential consent. This quitting claim to ourselves, parting with ourselves upon such terms, to be the Lord's for ever: O the peace, the rest, the acquiescence of spirit that attends it! When the poor soul that was weary of itself, knew not what to do with itself, hath now on the sudden found this way of disposing itself to such an advantage; there is pleasure in this treaty. Even the previous breakings and relentings of the soul towards God are pleasant. But O the pleasure of consent! of[d] yielding ourselves to God, as the apostle's expression is; when the soul is overcome, and cries out, "Lord, now I resign, I yield; possess now thy own right, I give up myself to thee." That yielding is subjection, self-devoting; in order to future service and obedience, [e]To whom ye yield ourselves servants to obey &c. And never did any man enrol himself, as a servant to the greatest prince on earth, with such joy. What pleasure is there in the often iterated recognition of these transactions; in multiplying such bonds upon a man's own soul (though done faintly, while the fear of breaking checks its joy in taking them on!) When in the uttering of these words,[f] I am thy servant, O Lord; thy servant, the son of thine hand-maid, *i. e.* thy born-servant, (alluding to that custom and law among the Jews,)[g] thy servant devoted to thy fear; a man finds they fit his spirit, and are aptly expressive of the true sense of his soul; is it not a grateful thing? And how pleasant is a state of life consequent and agreeable to such transactions and covenants with God! When 'tis meat and drink to do his will! When his zeal eats a man up; and one shall find himself secretly consuming for God! and the vigour of his soul exhaled in his service! Is it not a pleasant thing so to spend and be spent? When one can in a measure find that his will is one with God's, transformed into the Divine will: that there is but one common will, and interest, and end between him and us; and so, that in serving God we reign with him; in spending ourselves for him, we are perfected in him. Is not this a pleasant life? Some heathens have spoken at such a rate of this kind of life, as might make us wonder and blush. One speaking of a virtuous person saith, "[h]*He is a good soldier that bears wounds*, and numbers scars; and at last, smitten through with darts, dying, will love the emperor for whom he falls: he will (saith he) keep in mind that ancient precept, Follow God. But there are that complain, cry out and groan, and are compelled by force to do his commands, and hurried into them against their will; and what a madness is it (said he) to be drawn rather than follow!" And presently after subjoins, "We are born in a kingdom; to obey God is liberty." The same person writes in a letter to a friend: "[i]If thou believe me when I most freely discover to thee the most secret fixed temper of my soul, in all things my mind is thus formed: I obey not God so properly as I assent to him. I follow him with all my heart, not because I cannot avoid it." And another, "[k]Lead me to whatsoever I am appointed, and I will follow thee cheerfully; but if I refuse, or be unwilling, I shall follow notwithstanding."

A soul cast into such a mould, formed into an obediential subject frame, what sweet peace doth it enjoy! how pleasant rest! Every thing rests most composedly in its proper place. A bone out of joint knows no ease, nor lets the body enjoy any. The creature is not in its place but when 'tis thus subject, is in this subordination to God. By flying out of this subordination, the world of mankind is become one great disjointed body, full of weary tossings, unacquainted with ease or rest. That soul that is, but in a degree, reduced to that blessed state and temper, is as it were in a new world; so great and happy a change doth it now feel in itself. But when this transformation shall be completed in it; and the will of God shall be no sooner known than rested in with a complacential approbation; and every motion of the first and great Mover shall be an efficacious law, to guide and determine all our motions; and the lesser wheels shall presently run at the first impulse of the great and master-wheel, without the least rub or hesitation; when the law of sin shall no longer check the law of God; when all the contentions of a rebellious flesh, all the counter-strivings of a perverse, ungovernable heart, shall cease for ever; O unconceivable blessedness of this consent, the pleasure of this joyful harmony, this peaceful accord! Obedience, where 'tis due but from one creature to another, carries its no small advantages with it, and conduciveness to a pleasant unsolicit-

b Τὰ δὲ αὐτάρκες τίθεμεν, ὁ πανοῦργον αἱρετὸν ποιεῖ τὸν βίον, καὶ μηδὲ νοσῶ ἐνδεκα. Arist. de mor. lib. 1. c. 5.
c Rom. xii. 1. d Rom. vi. 13. e Ver. 16.
f Psal. cxvi. 16. g Psal. cxix. 38.
h Seneca de vita beata, lib. xv. Et ut bonus miles ferat vulnera, &c.
i Epist. xcvi. k Epictet. Enchr.

ous life. To be particularly prescribed to in things about which our minds would otherwise be tost with various apprehensions, anxious, uncertain thoughts; how great a privilege is it! I cannot forget a pertinent passage of an excellent person of recent memory.[l] And (saith he) for pleasure, I shall profess myself so far from doting on that popular idol liberty, that I hardly think it possible for any kind of obedience to be more painful than an unrestrained liberty. Were there not true bounds of magistrates, of laws, of piety, of reason in the heart, every man would have a fool, I add, a mad tyrant, to his master, that would multiply more sorrows, than briers and thorns did to Adam, when he was freed from the bliss at once, and the restraint of paradise; and was sure greater slave in the wilderness, than in the enclosure. Would but the Scripture permit me that kind of idolatry, the binding my faith and obedience to any one visible infallible judge or prince, were it the Pope, or the Mufti, or the Grand Tartar; might it be reconcilable with my creed, it would be certainly with my interest, to get presently into that posture of obedience. I should learn so much of the barbarian ambassadors in Appian, which came on purpose to the Romans to negotiate for leave to be their servants. 'Twould be my policy, if not my piety; and may now be my wish, though not my faith, that I might never have the trouble to deliberate, to dispute, to doubt, to choose, (those so many profitless uneasiness,) but only the favour to receive commands, and the meekness to obey them. How pleasurable then must obedience be to the perfect will of the blessed God, when our wills shall also be perfectly attempered and conformed thereunto! Therefore are we taught, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.[m] *What is most perfect in its kind, gives rule to the rest.*

3. Love. This is an eminent part of the image or likeness of God in his saints; as it is that great attribute of the Divine being that is, alone, put to give us a notion of God:[n] God is love. This is an excellency (consider it whether in its original, or copy) made up of pleasantnesses. All love hath complacency or pleasure in the nature and most formal notion of it. To search for pleasure in love is the same thing as if a man should be solicitous to find water in the sea, or light in the body of the sun. Love to a friend is not without high pleasure, when especially he is actually present and enjoyed: love to a saint rises higher in nobleness and pleasure, according to the more excellent qualification of its object. 'Tis now in its highest improvement, in both these aspects of it; where whatsoever tends to gratify our nature, whether as human, or holy, will be in its full perfection. Now doth the soul take up its stated dwelling in love, even in God, who is love, and as he is love; 'tis now enclosed with love, encompassed with love, 'tis conversant in the proper region and element of love. The love of God is now perfected in it. That love which is not only participated from him, but terminated in him, that perfect love, casts out tormenting fear; so that here is pleasure without mixture. How naturally will the blessed soul now dissolve and melt into pleasure! It is new-framed on purpose for love-embraces and enjoyments. It shall now love like God, as one composed of love. It shall no longer be its complaint and burden, that it can not retaliate in this kind; that being beloved it cannot love.

4. Purity. Herein also must the blessed soul resemble God, and delight itself. Every one that hath this hope, (viz. of being hereafter like God, and seeing him as he is,) purifieth himself as he is pure. A God-like purity is intimately connected with the expectation of future blessedness, much more with the fruition. "Blessed are the pure in heart;" besides the reason there annexed, "for they shall see God;" (which is to be considered under the other head, the pleasure under which this likeness disposes;) that proposition carries its own reason in itself. It is an incomparable pleasure that purity carries in its own nature; as sin hath in its very nature, besides its consequent guilt and sorrow, trouble and torment beyond expression. Whatsoever defiles, doth also disturb; nor do any but pure pleasures deserve the name. An Epicurus himself will tell us, *there cannot be pleasure without wisdom, honesty, and righteousness.* 'Tis least of all possible there should, when once a person shall have a right knowledge of himself, and (which is the moral impurity whereof we speak) the filthiness of sin. I doubt not but much of the torment of hell will consist in those too late and despairing self-loathings, those sickly resentments, the impure wretches will be possessed with, when they see what hideous deformed monsters their own wickedness hath made them. Here the gratifications of sense that attend it, bribe and seduce their judgments into another estimate of sin: but then it shall be no longer thought of under the more favourable notion of a γλυκερικόν; they shall taste nothing but the gall and worm-wood. 'Tis certainly no improbable thing, but that reason being now so fully rectified and undeceived, vizors torn off, and things now appearing in their own likeness; so much will be seen and apprehended of the intrinsic evil and malignity of their vitiated nature, as will serve for the matter of further torment; while yet such a sight can do no more to a change of their temper, than the devils' faith doth to theirs. Such sights being accompanied with their no-hope of ever attaining a better state, do therefore no way tend to mollify or demulce their spirits, but to increase their rage and torment. It is however out of question, that the purity of heaven will infinitely enhance the pleasure of it: for 'tis more certain, the intrinsical goodness of holiness (which term I need not among these instances; inasmuch as the thing admits not of one entire notion, but lies partly under this head, partly under the second, that of devotedness to God) will be fully understood in heaven, than the intrinsical evil of sin in hell: and when it is understood, will it not effect? will it not please? Even here, how pleasing are things to the pure, (but in degree so,) that participate of the Divine purity! "Thy word is very pure, saith the Psalmist, therefore thy servant loveth it. Under this notion do holy ones take pleasure each in other; because they see somewhat of the Divine likeness, their Father's image, in one another: will it not be much more pleasing to find it each one perfect in himself? to feel the ease, and peace, and rest, that naturally goes with it? A man that hath any love of cleanliness, if casually plunged into the mire, he knows not what to do with himself, he fancies his own clothes to abhor him; (as °Job rhetorically speaks;) so doth as natural a pleasure attend purity: it hath it even in itself. °The words of the pure (saith the wise man) are pleasant words; words of pleasantnesses, it might be read. That pure breath that goes from him, is not without a certain pleasurableness accompanying it. And if so to another, much more to himself, especially when every thing corresponds; and (as the expression is) he finds himself clean throughout.

5. Liberty, another part of the Divine likeness, wherein we are to imitate God, cannot but be an unspeakable satisfaction. Supposing such a state of the notion of liberty as may render it really a perfection; which otherwise it would be a wickedness to impute to God, and an impossibility to partake from him. I here speak of the moral liberty of a saint, as such; not of the natural liberty of a man, as a man: and of the liberty consummate of saints in glory; not of the inchoate, imperfect liberty of saints on earth. And therefore the intricate controversies about the liberty of the human will lie out of our way, and need not give us any trouble. 'Tis out of question that this liberty consists not (whatever may be said of any other) in an equal propension to good or evil; nor in the will's independency on the practical understanding; nor in a various uncertain mutability, or inconstancy; nor is it such as is opposed to all necessity; 'tis not a liberty from the government of God,[t] nor from a determination to the simply best and most eligible objects. But it is a liberty from the servitude of sin, from the seduction of a misguided judgment, and the allurement of any insnaring forbidden object; consisting in an abounded amplitude

l Dr Hammond's Sermon of Christ's easy yoke.
m Perfectissimum in suo genere est mensura reliquorum.
n 1 John iv. 8, 16. o 1 John iv.
p Whose doctrine, as to this matter of pleasure, is not so much to be blamed as his practice, if both be rightly represented to us. Οὐκ ἔστι ἡδονὴ ἄνευ τοῦ φρονίμως καὶ δικαίως. Ex. Cicer. l. de Fin.

q Psal. cxix. 140.
r Job ix.
s Prov. xv. 26.
t Which is a no more desirable state than that which, I remember, the historian tells us was the condition of the Armenians; who having cast off the government that was over them, became inerti, solutique, et magis sine Domino quam in libertate. Tacit. Ann. l. 2.

and enlargedness of soul towards God, and indetermination to any inferior good: resulting[u] from an entire subjection to the Divine will, a submission to the order of God, and steady adherence to him. And unto which the many descriptions and elogics agree most indisputably, which from sundry authors are congested together by Gibieuf, in that ingenious tractate of liberty. As that, He is free that lives as he will (from Cicero, insisted on by S. Aug. de Civit. Dei, lib. 14. c. 25.)—*i. e.* who neither wishes any thing, nor fears any thing; who in all things acquiesces in the will of God; who minds nothing but his own things, and accounts nothing his own but God; who favours nothing but God; who is moved only by the will of God. Again; He is free, that cannot be hindered, being willing, nor forced, being unwilling (from Epictetus)—*i. e.* who hath always his will; as having perfectly subjected it to the will of God, as the same author explains himself. Again; He is free that is master of himself (from the Civilians) *i. e.* (as that liberty respects the spirit of a man) that hath a mind independent on any thing foreign and alien to himself. That only follows God (from Philo Judæus;) That lives according to his own reason (from Aristotle:) with many more of like import; that alone does fully and perfectly suit that state of liberty the blessed soul shall hereafter eternally enjoy; as that author often acknowledges.

This is the glorious liberty of the children of God; the liberty wherewith the Son makes free. Liberty indeed, measured and regulated by the royal law of liberty, and which is perfected only in a perfect conformity thereto. There is a most servile [x]liberty, a being [y]free from righteousness, which under that specious name and show, [z]enslaves a man to corruption: and there is as free a service, by which a man is still the more free, by how much the more he serves, and is subject to his superior's will, and governing influences; and by how much the less possible it is he should swerve therefrom.[a] The nearest approaches therefore of the soul to God; its most intimate union with him, and entire subjection to him in its glorified state, makes its liberty consummate. Now is its deliverance complete, its bands are fallen off; 'tis perfectly disentangled from all the snares of death, in which it was formerly held; 'tis under no restraints, oppressed by no weights, held down by no clogs; it hath free exercise of all its powers; hath every faculty and affection at command. How unconceivable a pleasure is this! With what delight doth the poor prisoner entertain himself, when his manacles and fetters are knocked off! when he is enlarged from his loathsome dungeon, and the house of his bondage; breathes in a free air; can dispose of himself, and walk at liberty whither he will! The bird escaped from his cage, or freed from his line and stone, that resisted its vain and too feeble strugglings before; how pleasantly doth it range! with what joy doth it clap its wings, and take its flight! A faint emblem of the joy, wherewith that pleasant cheerful note shall one day be sung and chanted forth. Our soul is escaped, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken and we are escaped. There is now no place for such a complaint, I would, but I cannot; I would turn my thoughts to glorious objects, but I cannot. The blessed soul feels itself free from all confinement: nothing resists its will, as its will doth never resist the will of God. It knows no limits, no restraints; is not tied up to this or that particular good; but expatiates freely in the immense, universal, all-comprehending goodness of God himself. And this liberty is the perfect image and likeness of the liberty of God, especially in its consummate state. In is progress towards it, it increases as the soul draws nearer to God: which nearer approach is not in respect of place or local nearness, but likeness and conformity to him; in respect whereof, as God is most sublime and excellent in himself, so is it in him.[b] Its consummate liberty is, when it is so fully transformed into that likeness of God, as that he is all to it, as to himself: so that as he is an infinite satisfaction to himself; his likeness in this respect, is the very satisfaction itself of the blessed soul.

6. Tranquillity. This also is an eminent part of that assimilation to God, wherein the blessedness of the holy soul must be understood to lie: a perfect composure, a perpetual and everlasting calm, an eternal vacancy from all unquietness or perturbation. Nothing can be supposed more inseparably agreeing to the nature of God than this: whom Scripture witnesses to be without variableness or shadow of change. There can be no commotion without mutation, nor can the least mutation have place in a perfectly simple and uncompounded nature: whence even pagan reason hath been wont to attribute the most undisturbed and unalterable tranquillity to the nature of God. Balaam knew it was incompatible to him to lie, or repent. And (supposing him to speak this from a present inspiration) it is their common doctrine concerning God. *Any, the least troubles and tempests,* saith one,[c] *are far exiled from the tranquillity of God; for all the inhabitants of heaven do ever enjoy the same stable tenour, even an eternal equality of mind.* And a little after speaking of God, saith he, "'Tis neither possible he should be moved by the force of another, for nothing is stronger than God; nor of his own accord, for nothing is perfecter than God." And whereas there is somewhat that is mutable and subject to change; somewhat that is stable and fixed: *In which of those natures,* saith another,[d] *shall we place God? must we not in that which is more stable and fixed, and free from this fluidness and mutability? For what is there among all beings, that can be stable or consist, if God do not by his own touch stay and sustain the nature of it?*

Hence it is made a piece of deformity, of likeness to God, by another who tells his friend,[e] *It is a high and great thing which thou desirest, and even bordering upon a Deity: not to be moved.* Yea, so hath this doctrine been insisted on by them, that (while other Divine perfections have been less understood) it hath occasioned the Stoical assertion of fatality to be introduced on the one hand, and the Epicurean negation of providence on the other; lest any thing should be admitted that might seem repugnant to the tranquillity of their numina. But we know that our God doth whatsoever pleaseth him, both in heaven and earth; and that he doth all according to the wise counsel of his holy will; freely, not fatally, upon the eternal provision and foresight of all circumstances and events; so that nothing can occur that is new to him, nothing that he knows not how to improve to good; or that can therefore infer any alteration of his counsels, or occasion to him the least perturbation or disquiet in reference to them.

Holy souls begin herein to imitate him, as soon as they first give themselves up to his wise and gracious conduct. 'Tis enough that he is wise for himself and them. Their hearts safely trust in him. They commit themselves with unsolicitous confidence to his guidance; knowing he cannot himself be misled, and that he will not mislead them: as Abraham followed him, not knowing whither he went. And thus, by faith, they enter into his rest. They do now in their present state only enter into it, or hover about the borders: their future assimilation to God in this, gives them a stated settlement of spirit in this rest. They before did owe their tranquillity to their faith; now to their actual fruition. Their former acquiescency, and sedate temper,

u Libertas nostra non est subjectio ad Deum formaliter, sed amplitudo consequens eam. Gibieuf. De libert. Dei et creaturæ, lib. 1 c. 32.

x Quum invexere sibi, aliquorum servitutem. Et sunt, quodammodo, propriæ Libertate captivi. Boeth. ex Gib. Nectit qua valent trahi catenam. Sen. Trag

y Rom. vi. 20. z 2 Peter ii

a Libertas quo divinæ gratiæ subjectior. Primum Liberum arbitrium, quod homini datum est, quando primum creatus est rectus, potuit non peccare; sed potuit et peccare. Hoc autem novissimum eo potentius erit, quo peccare non potuit. Aug. de Civitat. Dei, lib. 22 c. 30.

b Libertas nostra inhæret divinæ, ut exemplari, et in perpetua ejus imitatione versatur, sive ortum, sive promissum, sive consummationem ejus intueatur. Libertas nostra, in ortu, est capacitas Dei. In progressu, libertas ea est longe clarior: progressus enim attenditur penes accessum hominis ad Deum; qui quidem non locali propinquitate, sed imitatione et assimilatione constat, et ea utique imitatione, et assimilatione secundum quam, sicut Deus est sublimis, et excelsus seipso, ita homo est sublimis, et excelsus Deo, et altitudo ejus Deus est, ut inquit D. Augustinus. Consummatio denique libertatis est, cum homo in Deum, 'clarissimo gloriæ cœlestis statu transformatur; et Deus omnia ille esse incipit. Qui quidem postremus status, eo differt a priore; quamque homo tum non modo indigatus est creaturis, sed nec circa illas negotiatur, etiam referendo in finem—nec in creaturis se infundit, nec per illas præcedit ut faciebat cum esset viator: sed in solo Deo, et conquiescit et effunditur se placidissime, et motus ejus, cum sit ad præsentissimum et conjunctissimum bonum, similitur est quieti quam mutui. Gib. l 2 c. 14.

c Omnes turbulæ tempestates quæ procul a Deorum cœlestium tranquillitate exulant, &c. Apuleius de Deo Socratis.

d—Ἐν ποτερα των φυρεων τουτων τον θεον τακτεον; αρα ουκ εν εκεινοτερα και εδραιοτερα, και απηλλαγμενη των ρευματος τουτου, &c. Max. Tyr. disser. 1.

e Quod desiderasse autem magnum, summum est. Deoque vicinum; non concuti. Sen. de tranquil. Animi.

was hence, that they believed God would deal well with them at last; their present, for that he hath done so. Those words have now their fullest sense, (both as to the rest itself which they mention, and the season of it,) [f]Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. The occasions of trouble, and a passive temper of spirit, are ceased together. There is now no fear without, nor terror within. The rage of the world is now allayed, it storms no longer. Reproach and persecution have found a period. There is no more dragging before tribunals, nor haling into prisons; no more running into dens and deserts; or wandering to and fro in sheepskins and goatskins. And with the cessation of the external occasions of trouble, the inward dispositions thereto are also ceased. All infirmities of spirit, tumultuating passions, unmortified corruptions, doubts, or imperfect knowledge of the love of God, are altogether vanished, and done away for ever. And indeed, that perfect cure wrought within, is the soul's great security from all future disquiet. A well tempered spirit hath been wont strangely to preserve its own peace in this unquiet world. Philosophy hath boasted much in this kind; and Christianity performed more. The philosophical (γαλήνη, or) calmness of mind, is not without its excellency and praise: "That stable settlement and fixedness of spirit, that εὐθυμία, (as the moralist[g] tells us, it was wont to be termed among the Grecians, and which he calls tranquillity,) when the mind is always equal, and goes a smooth, even course, is propitious to itself, and beholds the things that concern it with pleasure, and interrupts not this joy, but remains in a placid state, never at any time exalting or depressing itself." But how far doth the Christian peace surpass it! [h]that peace which passeth all understanding; that amidst surrounding dangers, enables [i]he holy soul to say, (without a proud boast,) [j]None of all these things move me: the peace that immediately results from that faith which unites the soul with God, and fixes it upon him as its firm basis; when [k]his kept in perfect peace, by being stayed upon him, because it trusts in him; when the heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord; filled full of joy and peace, or of joyous peace, (by an ἐν ᾧ πιστεύετε,) in believing. And if philosophy and (which far transcends it) Christianity, reason and faith, have that statique power, can so compose the soul, and reduce it to so quiet a consistency in the midst of storms and tempests; how perfect and contentful a repose, will the immediate vision and enjoyment of God afford it, in that serene and peaceful region, where it shall dwell for ever, free from any molestation from without, or principle of disrest within!

CHAPTER IX.

The pleasure arising from knowing, or considering ourselves to be like God; from considering it, 1. Absolutely. 2. Comparatively, or respectively; To the former state of the soul. To the state of lost souls. To its pattern. To the way of accomplishment. To the soul's own expectations. To what it secures. The pleasure wherein it disposes, of union, communion. A comparison of this righteousness, with thus blessedness.

2. HERE is also to be considered, the pleasure and satisfaction involved in this assimilation to God, as it is known or reflected on, or that arises from the *cognosci* of this likeness. We have hitherto discoursed of the pleasure of being like God, as that is apprehended by a spiritual sensation, a feeling of that inward rectitude, that happy pleasure of souls now perfectly restored: we have yet to consider a further pleasure, which accrues from the soul's animadversion upon itself, its contemplating itself thus happily transformed. And though that very sensation be not without some animadversion, (as indeed no sensible perception can be performed without it,) yet we must conceive a consequent animadversion, which is much more explicit and distinct; and which therefore yields a very great addition of satisfaction and delight: as when the blessed soul shall turn its eye upon itself, and designedly compose and set itself to consider its present state and frame; the consideration it shall now have of itself, and this likeness impressed upon it, may be either—absolute, or—comparative and respective.

1. Absolute. How pleasing a spectacle will this be, when the glorified soul shall now intentively behold its own glorious frame! when it shall dwell in the contemplation of itself! view itself round on every part, turn its eye from glory to glory, from beauty to beauty, from one excellency to another; and trace over the whole draught of this image, this so exquisite piece of divine workmanship, drawn out in its full perfection upon itself! when the glorified eye, and divinely enlightened and inspirited mind, shall apply itself to criticise, and make a judgment upon every several lineament, every touch and stroke; shall stay itself, and scrupulously insist upon every part; view at leisure every character of glory the blessed God hath instamped upon it; how will this likeness now satisfy! And that expression of the blessed apostle, (taken notice of upon some other occasion formerly,) "the glory to be revealed in us," seems to import in it a reference to such a self-intuition. What serves revelation for, but in order to vision? what is it, but an exposing things to view? And what is revealed in us, is chiefly exposed to our own view. All the time, from the soul's first conversion till now, God hath been as it were at work upon it, ([a]He that hath wrought us to, &c.) hath been labouring it, shaping it, polishing it, spreading his own glory upon it, inlaying, enamelling it with glory: now at last, the whole work is revealed, the curtain is drawn aside, the blessed soul awakes. "Come now," saith God, "behold my work, see what I have done upon thee, let my work now see the light; I dare expose it to the censure of the most curious eye; let thine own have the pleasure of beholding it." It was a work carried on in a mystery, secretly wrought (as in the lower parts of the earth, as we alluded before) by a spirit that came and went no man could tell how. Besides, that in the general only, we knew we should be like him, it did not yet appear what we should be; now it appears: there is a revelation of this glory. O the ravishing pleasure of its first appearance! And it will be a glory always fresh and flourishing, (as Job's expression is, "my glory was fresh in me,") and will afford a fresh, undecaying pleasure for ever.

2. The blessed soul may also be supposed to have a comparative and respective consideration of the impressed glory. That is, so as to compare it with, and refer it to, several things that may come into consideration with it: and may so heighten its own delight in the contemplation thereof.

I. If we consider this impression of glory, in reference to its former loathsome deformities that were upon it, and which are now vanished and gone; how unconceivable a pleasure will arise from this comparison! When the soul shall consider at once what it is, and what once it was, and thus bethink itself: I that did sometimes bear the accursed image of the prince of darkness, do now represent and partake of the holy, pure nature of the Father of lights: I was a mere chaos, a hideous heap of deformity, confusion, and darkness,[b] but he that made light to shine out of darkness, shined into me, to give the knowledge of the light of his own glory in the face of Jesus Christ; and since, made my[c] way as the shining light, shining brighter and brighter unto this perfect day. I was a habitation for dragons, a cage for noisome lusts, that, as serpents and vipers, were winding to and fro through all my faculties and powers, and preying upon my very vitals. Then was I hateful to God, and a hater of him; sin and vanity had all my heart. The charming invitations and allurements of grace were as music to a dead man; to think a serious thought of God, or breathe forth an affectionate desire after him, was as much against my heart, as to pluck out mine own eyes, or offer violence to mine own life. After I began to live the spiritual, new life, how slow and faint was my progress and tendency towards perfection! how indisposed did I find myself to the proper actions of that life! To go about any holy, spiritual work, was, too often, as to climb a hill, or strive against the stream; or as an attempt to fly without wings. I have sometimes said to my heart, Come, now let's go pray, love God, think of heaven; but O how listless to these things! how lifeless in them! Impressions made, how quickly lost! gracious frames, how soon wrought off and

f Psal. cxvi 7. g Sen. de Tranquil. Anim. h Phil. iv. 7.
i Acts xx. 21. k Isa. xxvi. 3. Psal. cxii. 7. Rom. xv. 14.

a 2 Cor. v. 5. b 2 Cor. iv. 6.
c Prov. iv. 18.

gone! characters of glory razed out, and overspread with earth and dirt! Divine comeliness hath now at length made me perfect: the glory of God doth now inclothe me; they are his ornaments I now wear. He hath made me, that lately lay among the pots, as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold; he hath put another nature into me, the true likeness of his own holy divine nature; he hath now perfectly mastered and wrought out the enmity of my heart against him: now to be with God is my very element; loving, admiring, praising him, are as natural as breathing once was. I am all spirit and life, I feel myself disburdened, and unclogged of all the heavy, oppressive weights that hung upon me; no body of death doth now encumber me, no deadness of heart, no coldness of love, no drowsy sloth, no averseness from God, no earthly mind, no sensual inclinations or affections, no sinful divisions of heart between God and creatures: he hath now the whole of me: I enjoy and delight in none but him: O blessed change! O happy day!

2. If in contemplating itself, clothed with this likeness, it respect the state of damned souls, what transports must that occasion! what ravishing resentments! When it compares human nature in its highest perfection, with the same nature in its utmost depravation! An unspeakably more unequal comparison than that would be, of the most amiable lovely person, flourishing in the prime of youthful strength and beauty, with a putrified rotten carcass, deformed by the corruption of a loathsome grave. When glorified spirits shall make such a reflection as this: Lo, here we shine in the glorious brightness of the Divine image; and behold yonder deformed accursed souls: they were as capable of this glory as we; had the same nature with us, the same reason, the same intellectual faculties and powers; but what monsters are they now become! They eternally hate the eternal excellency. Sin and death are finished upon them. They have each of them a hell of horror and wickedness in itself. Whence is this amazing difference? Though this cannot but be an awful wonder, it cannot also but be tempered with pleasure and joy.

3. We may suppose this likeness to be considered in reference to its pattern, and in comparison therewith; which will then be another way of heightening the pleasure that shall arise thence. Such a frame and constitution of spirit is full of delights in itself; but when it shall be referred to its original, and the correspondency between the one and the other be observed and viewed; how exactly they accord, and answer each other, as face doth face in the water; this cannot still but add pleasure to pleasure, one delight to another. When the blessed soul shall interchangeably turn its eye to God, and itself; and consider the agreement of glory to glory; the several derived excellencies to the original: He is wise, and so am I; holy, and so am I: I am now made perfect as my heavenly Father is: this gives a new relish to the former pleasure. How will this likeness please under that notion, as it is his; a likeness to him! O the accent that will be put upon those appropriative words, to be made partakers of his holiness, and of the Divine nature! Personal excellencies in themselves considered, cannot be reflected on, but with some pleasure; but to the ingenuity of a child, how especially grateful will it be, to observe in itself such and such graceful deportments, wherein it naturally imitates its father! So he was wont to speak, and act, and demean himself. How natural is it unto love to affect and aim at the imitation of the person loved! So natural it must be to take complacency therein; when we have hit our mark, and achieved our design. The pursuits and attainments of love are proportionable and correspondent each to other. And what heart can compass the greatness of this thought, to be made like God! Lord, was there no lower pattern than thyself, thy glorious blessed self, according to which to form a worm! This cannot want its due resentments in a glorified state.

4. This transformation of the blessed soul into the likeness of God, may be viewed by it, in reference to the way of accomplishment; as an end, brought about by so amazing stupendous means: which will certainly be a pleasing contemplation. When it reflects on the method and course insisted on, for bringing this matter to pass; views over the work of redemption in its tendency to this end, the restoring God's image in souls; considers Christ manifested to us, in order to his being revealed and formed in us: that God was made in the likeness of man, to make men after the likeness of God; that he partook with us of the human nature, that we might with him partake of the divine; that he assumed our flesh, in order to impart to us his Spirit: when it shall be considered, for this end had we so many [e]great and precious promises; for this end did the glory of the [f]Lord shine upon us through the glass of the gospel; that we might be made partakers, &c. that we might be changed, &c. Yea, when it shall be called to mind, (though it be far from following hence, that this is the only or principal way, wherein the life and death of Christ have influence, in order to our eternal happiness,) that our Lord Jesus lived for this end, that we might learn so to walk, as he also walked; that he died that we might be conformed to his death; that he rose again that we might with him attain the resurrection of the dead; that he was in us the hope of glory, that he might be in us (that is, the same image that bears his name) our final consummate glory itself also: with what pleasure will these harmonious congruities, these apt correspondencies, be looked into at last! Now may the glorified saint say, I here see the end the Lord Jesus came into the world for; I see for what he was lift up, made a spectacle; that he might be a transforming one: what the effusions of his Spirit were for; why it so earnestly strove with my wayward heart. I now behold in my own soul, the fruit of the travail of his soul. This was the project of redeeming love, the design of all-powerful gospel-grace. Glorious achievement! blessed end of that great and notable undertaking! happy issue of that high design!

5. With a reference to all their own expectations and endeavours. When it shall be considered by a saint in glory; the attainment of this perfect likeness to God, was the utmost mark of all my designs and aims; the term of all my hopes and desires: this is that I longed and laboured for; that which I prayed and waited for; which I so earnestly breathed after, and restlessly pursued: it was but to recover the defaced image of God; to be again made like him, as once I was. Now I have attained my end; I have the fruit of all my labour and travails; I see now the truth of those (often) encouraging words, blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Be not weary in well-doing, for ye shall reap, if ye faint not. What would I once have given for a steady, abiding frame of holiness, for a heart constantly bent and biassed toward God; constantly serious, constantly tender, lively, watchful, heavenly, spiritual, meek, humble, cheerful, self-denying! How have I cried and striven for this, to get such a heart! such a temper of spirit! How have I pleaded with God and my own soul, in order hereto! How often over have I spread this desire before the Searcher and Judge of hearts! Turn me out of all my worldly comforts, so thou give me but such a heart; let me spend my days in a prison, or a desert, so I have but such a heart; I refuse no reproaches, no losses, no tortures, may I but have such a heart. How hath my soul been sometimes ravished with the very thoughts of such a temper of spirit, as hath appeared amiable in my eye, but I could not attain! and what a torture again hath it been that I could not! What grievance in all the world, in all the days of my vanity, did I ever find comparable to this; to be able to frame to myself by Scripture, and rational light and rules, the notion and idea of an excellent temper of spirit; and then to behold it, to have it in view, and not be able to reach it, to possess my soul of it? What indignation have I sometimes conceived against mine own soul, when I have found it wandering, and could not reduce it; hovering, and could not fix it; dead, and could not quicken it; low, and could not raise it! How earnestly have I expected this blessed day, when all those distempers should be perfectly healed, and my soul recover a healthy, lively, spiritual frame! What fresh ebullitions of joy will here be, when all former desires, hopes, endeavours, are crowned with success and fruit! This joy is the joy of harvest [g]They that have sown in tears, do now reap in joy. They

d Phil. ii. 7. e 2 Pet. i. 4. f 2 Cor. iii. 18. g Psal. cxxvi 5.

that went out weeping, bearing precious seed; now with rejoicing, bring their sheaves with them.

6. In reference to what this impressed likeness shall for ever secure to it: an everlasting amity and friendship with God; that *it* shall never sin, nor *he* ever frown more.—1. That it shall sin no more. The perfected image of God in it, is its security for this; for 'tis holy throughout; in every point conformed to his nature and will; there remains in it nothing contrary to him. It may therefore certainly conclude, it shall never be liable to the danger of doing any thing, but what is good in his sight: and what solace will the blessed soul find in this! If now an angel from heaven should assure it, that from such an hour it shall sin no more, the world would not be big enough to hold such a soul. It hath now escaped the deadliest of dangers, the worst of deaths, (and which even in its present state, upon more deliberate calmer thoughts, it accounts so,) the sting of death, the very deadliness of death; the hell of hell itself. The deliverance is now complete, which cannot but end in delight and praise.—2. That God can never frown more. This 'tis hence also assured of. How can he but take perfect, everlasting complacency in his own perfect likeness and image; and behold with pleasure his glorious workmanship, now never liable to impairment or decay! How pleasant a thought is this, "The blessed God never beholds me but with delight! I shall always behold his serene countenance, his amiable face never covered with any clouds, never darkened with any frown! I shall now have cause to complain no more; My God is a stranger to me, he conceals himself, I cannot see his face; lo, he is encompassed with clouds and darkness, or with flames and terrors." These occasions are for ever ceased. God sees no cause, either to behold the blessed soul with displeasure, or with displeasure to avert from it, and turn off his eye. And will not this eternally satisfy? When God himself is so well pleased, shall not we?

2. The pleasure it disposes to. Besides that the in-being and knowledge of this likeness are so satisfying; it disposes, and is the soul's qualification for a yet further pleasure:—that of closest union, and most inward communion with the blessed God.

1. Union: which (what it is more than relation) is not till now complete. Besides relation it must needs import presence: not physical, or local; for so nothing can be nearer God than it is: but moral and cordial, by which the holy soul with will and affections, guided by rectified reason and judgment, closes with, and embraces him; and he also upon wise forelaid counsel, and with infinite delight and love, embraces it: so friends are said to be one (besides their relation as friends) by a union of hearts. A union between God and the creature, as to kind and nature higher than this, and lower than hypostatical or personal union, I understand not, and therefore say nothing of it.[h]

But as to the union here mentioned: as, till the image of God be perfected, it is not completed; so it cannot but be perfect then. When the soul is perfectly formed according to God's own heart, and fully participates the Divine likeness, is perfectly like him; that likeness cannot but infer the most intimate union that two such natures can admit: that is, (for nature,) a love union; such as that which our Saviour mentions, and prays to the Father to perfect, between themselves and all believers, and among believers mutually with one another. Many much trouble themselves about this scripture; but sure that can be no other than a love-union. For, (1.) 'Tis such a union as Christians are capable of among themselves; for surely he would never pray that they might be one with a union whereof they are not capable. (2.) 'Tis such a union as may be made visible to the world. Whence 'tis an obvious corollary, that the union between the Father and the Son, there spoken of as the pattern of this, is not their union or oneness in essence, (though it be a most acknowledged thing that there is such an essential union between them;) for, who can conceive that saints should be one among themselves, and with the Father and the Son, with such a union as the Father and the Son are one themselves, if the essential union between Father and Son were the union here spoken of: but the exemplary or pattern union, here mentioned between the Father and Son, is but a union in mind, in love, in design, and interest; wherein he prays, that saints on earth might visibly be one with them also, that the world might believe, &c. 'Tis yet a rich pleasure that springs up to glorified saints from that love-union (now perfected) between the blessed God and them. 'Tis mentioned and shadowed in Scripture, under the name and notion of marriage-union; in which the greatest mutual complacency is always supposed a necessary ingredient. To be thus joined to the Lord, and made as it were one spirit with him; for the eternal God to cleave in love to a nothing-creature, as his likeness upon it engages him to do; is this no pleasure, or a mean one?

2. Communion: unto which that union is fundamental, and introductive; and which follows it upon the same ground, from a natural propensity of like to like. There is nothing now to hinder God and the holy soul of the most inward fruitions and enjoyments; no animosity, no strangeness, no unsuitableness on either part. Here the glorified spirits of the just have liberty to solace themselves amidst the rivers of pleasure at God's own right hand, without check or restraint. They are pure, and these pure. They touch nothing that can defile, they defile nothing they can touch. They are not now forbidden the nearest approaches to the *once* inaccessible Majesty; there is no holy of holies into which they may not enter, no door locked up against them. They may have free admission into the innermost secret of the Divine presence, and pour forth themselves in the most liberal effusions of love and joy: as they must he the eternal subject of those infinitely richer communications from God, even of immense and boundless love and goodness. Do not debase this pleasure by low thoughts, nor frame too daring, positive apprehensions of it. 'Tis yet a secret to us. The eternal converses of the King of glory with glorified spirits, are only known to himself and them. That expression, (which we so often meet in our way,) "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," seems left on purpose to check a too curious and prying inquisitiveness into these unrevealed things. The great God will have his reserves of glory, of love, of pleasure for that future state. Let him alone awhile, with those who are already received into those mansions of glory, those everlasting habitations: he will find a time for those that are yet pilgrims and wandering exiles, to ascend and enter too. In the mean time, what we know of this communion may be gathered up into this general account, the reciprocation of loves; the flowing and reflowing of everlasting love, between the blessed soul and its infinitely blessed God; its egress towards him, his illapses into it. Unto such pleasure doth this likeness dispose and qualify: you can no way consider it, but it appears a most pleasurable, satisfying thing.

Thus far have we shown the qualification for this blessedness, and the nature of it; What it prerequires, and wherein it lies: and how highly congruous it is, that the former of these should be made a prerequisite to the latter, will sufficiently appear to any one that shall, in his own thoughts, compare this righteousness and this blessedness together. He will indeed plainly see, that the natural state of the case and habitude of these, each to other, make this connexion unalterable and eternal; so as that it must needs be simply impossible, to be thus blessed without being thus righteous. For what is this righteousness other than this blessedness begun, the seed and principle of it? And that with as exact proportion (or rather sameness of nature) as is between the grain sown and reaped; which is more than intimated in that of the apostle,[l] Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: for he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; (there is the same proportion too;) but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting: which though it be spoken to a particular case, is yet spoken from a general rule and reason applicable a great deal further. And as some conceive (and is undertaken to be demonstrated) that the seeds of things are not virtually only, but actually and formally, the very things themselves; so is it here also. The very

h I would fain know what the *Tertium* shall be, resulting from the physical union, some speak of.

i John xvii. 21. ver. 11. 21.
l Gal. vi. 7, 8.
k 1 Cor. vi. 16.
m Dr. Rarr. de Ovo.

parts of this blessedness are discernible in this righteousness, the future vision of God in present knowledge of him: for this knowledge is a real initial part of righteousness; the rectitude of the mind and apprehensions concerning God, consisting in conformity to his revelation of himself. Present holiness, including also the future assimilation to God: and the contentment and peace that attends it, the consequent satisfaction in glory. But as in glory, the impression of the Divine likeness is that which vision subserves, and whence satisfaction results; so is it here (visibly) the main thing also. The end and design of the gospel revelation, [n] of whole Christianity, (I mean systematically considered,) of all evangelical doctrines and knowledge, is to restore God's likeness and image; from whence joy and peace result of course, when once the gospel is believed. The gospel is the instrument of impressing God's likeness, in order whereunto it must be understood, and received into the mind. Being so, the impression upon the heart and life are Christianity, habitual and practical, whereupon joy and pleasure (the belief or thorough reception of the gospel thus intervening) do necessarily ensue, Rom. xv. 13. So aptly is the only way or method of seeing God's face, so as to be satisfied with his likeness, said to be in or through righteousness.

CHAPTER X.

The season of this satisfaction, which is twofold; at death and at the resurrection. The former spoken too; wherein is shown, That this life is to the soul (even of a saint) but as a sleep: That at death it awakes. As to the latter; That there is a considerable accession to its happiness at the resurrection.

3. THE season of this blessedness comes next to be considered; which (as the words, "when I awake," have been concluded here to import) must, in the general, be stated, beyond the time of this present life. Holy souls are here truly blessed, not perfectly; or their present blessedness is perfect only in nature and kind, not in degree. 'Tis, in this respect, as far short of perfection as their holiness is. Their hunger and thirst are present, their being filled is yet future. The experience of saints in their best state on earth, their desires, their hopes, their sighs and groans, do sufficiently witness they are not satisfied; or if they be in point of security, they are not in point of enjoyment. The completion of this blessedness is reserved to a better state, as its being the end of their way,[a] their rest from their labours, the reward of their work, doth import and require. Therefore many scriptures that speak of their present rest, peace, repose, satisfaction, must be understood in a comparative, not the absolute highest sense. More particularly, in that other state, the season of their blessedness is twofold; or there are two terms from whence (in respect of some gradual or modal diversifications) it may be said severally to commence, or bear date, *viz.*—The time of their entrance upon a blessed immortality, when they shall have laid down their earthly bodies in death; and—of their consummation therein, when they receive their bodies glorified in the general resurrection. Both these may not unfitly be signified by the phrase in the text, "when I awake:" for, though Scripture doth more directly apply the term of awaking to the latter, there will be no violence done to the metaphor, if we extend its signification to the former also. To which purpose it is to be noted, that it is not death formally, or the disanimating of the body, we would have here to be understood by it, (which indeed sleeping would more aptly signify than awaking,) but, what is coincident therewith in the same period, the exsuscitation, and revival of the soul. When the body falls asleep, then doth the spirit awake; and the eye-lids of the morning, even of an eternal day, do now first open upon it.

1. Therefore we shall not exclude from this season the introductive state of blessedness, which takes its beginning from the blessed soul's first entrance into the invisible state. And the fitness of admitting it will appear by clearing these two things,—1. That its condition in this life, even at the best, is in some sort but a sleep: 2. That when it passes out of it into the invisible regions, 'tis truly said to awake.

1. Its abode in this mortal body, is but a continual sleep; its senses are bound up; a drowsy slumber possesses and suspends all its faculties and powers. Before the renovating change, how frequently doth the Scripture speak of sinners as men asleep! [b]Let not us sleep as do others. Awake thou that sleepest, and stand up from the dead, &c. They are in a dead sleep, under the sleep of death: they apprehend things as men asleep. How slight, obscure, hovering notions have they of the most momentous things! and which it most concerns them to have thorough real apprehensions of! All their thoughts of God, Christ, heaven, hell, of sin, of holiness, are but uncertain, wild guesses, blind hallucinations, incoherent fancies; the absurdity and inconcinnity whereof, they no more reflect upon than men asleep. They know not these things, but only dream of them. They put darkness for light, and light for darkness; have no senses exercised to discern between good and evil. The most substantial realities are with them mere shadows, and chimeras; fancied and imagined dangers startle them, (as 'tis wont to be with men in a dream,) real ones, though never so near them, they as little fear as they. The creature of their own imagination, the lion in the way, which they dream of in their slothful slumber, affrights them; but the real roaring lion that is ready to devour them, they are not afraid of.

And conversion doth but relax, and intermit; it doth not totally break off this sleep: it, as it were, attenuates the consopiting fumes, doth not utterly dispel them. What a difficulty is it to watch but one hour! There are some lucid and vivid intervals, but of how short continuance! how soon doth the awakened soul close its heavy eyes and falls asleep again! how often do temptations surprise even such, in their slumbering fits, while no sense of their danger can prevail with them to watch and pray (with due care and constancy) lest they enter thereunto! [c]Hither are most of the sins of our lives to be imputed and referred; not to mere ignorance, that we know not sin from duty, or what will please God and what displease him; but to a drowsy inadvertency, that we keep not our spirits in a watchful considering posture. Our eyes that should be ever towards the Lord, will not be kept open, and though we resolve, we forget ourselves; before we are aware, we find ourselves overtaken; sleep comes on upon us like an armed man, and we cannot avert it. How often do we hear, and read, and pray, and meditate as persons asleep, as if we knew not what we were about? How remarkable useful providences escape either our notice or due improvement, amidst our secure slumbers! How many visits from heaven are lost to us, when we are as it were, between sleeping and waking! [d] I sleep, but my heart waketh, and hardly own the voice that calls upon us, till our beloved hath withdrawn himself? Indeed, what is the whole of our life but a dream? the entire scene of this sensible world but a vision of the night; where every man[e] walks but in a vain show? Where we are mocked with shadows, and our credulous sense abused by impostures and delusive appearances? Nor are we ever secure from the most destructive, mischievous deception, further than as our souls are possessed with the apprehensions, that this is the very truth of our case; and thence instructed to consider, and not to prefer the shadows of time before the great realities of eternity.

Nor is this sleep casual, but even connatural to our present state, the necessary result of so strict a union and commerce with the body, which is to the in-dwelling spirit as a dormitory or charnel-house rather than a mansion. A soul drenched in sensuality,) a Lethe that hath too little of fiction in it, and immured in a slothful, putrid flesh, sleeps as it were by fate, not by chance, and is only capable of full relief by suffering a dissolution; which it hath reason to welcome as a jubilee, and in the instant of departure to sacrifice as he did, [f](with that easy and warrantable

[n] Πως ουν γενομεθα καθ' ομοιωσιν; τα των ενδαγγελιων. Τι εστι χριστιανισμος; θειαν ομοιωσις: κατα το ενθρωπινον ενθρωπον φυσει. Greg. Nyss. in verba Faciamus hominem, &c. Orat. 1.

[a] Matt. v. 6. [b] 1 Thess. v. 6. Eph. v. 14.

[c] So well doth the apostle's watch-word suit our case, Awake to righteousness, and sin not, &c. 1 Cor. xv. 34

[d] Cant. v. 2. [e] Psal. xxxix. 6.

[f] *Viz.* Seneca. Who at the time of his death sprinkled water upon the ser-

change, to make a heathen expression scriptural,) *Jehovæ liberatori*, to adore and praise its great Deliverer: at least (accounts being once made up, and a meetness in any measure attained for the heavenly inheritance, &c.) hath no reason to regret or dread the approaches of the eternal day, more than we do the return of the sun after a dark and longsome night. But as the sluggard doth nothing more unwillingly than forsake his bed, nor bears any thing with more regret than to be awaked out of his sweet sleep, though you should entice him with the pleasures of a paradise to quit a smoky, loathsome cottage; so fares it with a sluggish soul, as if it were lodged in an enchanted bed: 'tis so fast held by the charms of the body, all the glory of the other world is little enough to tempt it out, than which there is not a more deplorable symptom of this sluggish, slumbering state. So deep an oblivion (which you know is also naturally incident to sleep) hath seized it of its own country, of its alliances above, its relation to the Father and world of spirits, it takes this earth for its home, where 'tis both in exile and captivity at once: and (as a prince stolen away in his infancy and bred up in a beggar's shed) so little seeks, that it declines a better state. This is the degenerous, torpid disposition of a soul lost in flesh, and inwrapt in stupifying clay, which hath been deeply resented by some heathens. So one brings in Socrates pathetically bewailing this oblivious dreaming temper of his soul, "which (saith he) had seen that pulchritude (you must pardon him here the conceit of its pre-existence) that neither human voice could utter, nor eye behold; but that now, in this life, it had only some little remembrance thereof, as in a dream; being both in respect of place and condition, far removed from so pleasant sights, pressed down into an earthly station, and there encompassed with all manner of dirt and filthiness, &c. And to the same purpose Plato often speaks in the name of the same person, and particularly of the winged state of the good soul[g] when apart from the body, carried in its triumphant flying chariot, (of which he gives a large description, somewhat resembling Solomon's rapturous metaphor,[h] "Before I was aware, my soul made me as the chariots of Amminadab;") but being in the body, 'tis with it as with a bird that hath lost its wings, it falls a sluggish weight to the earth. Which indeed is the state even of the best, in a degree, within this tabernacle. A sleepy torpor stops their flight; they can fall, but not ascend; the remains of such drowsiness do still hang even about saints themselves. The apostle therefore calls upon such to[i] awake out of sleep; from that consideration, (as we know men are not wont to sleep so intensely towards morning,) that now their salvation was nearer than when they believed, *i. e.* (as some judicious interpreters[k] understand that place,) for that they were nearer death and eternity than when they first became Christians; though this passage be also otherwise, and not improbably, interpreted. However,

2. The holy soul's release and dismission from its earthly body, which is that we propounded next to be considered, will excuss and shake off this drowsy sleep. Now is the happy season of its awaking into the heavenly, vital light of God; the blessed morning of that long desired day is now dawned upon it, the cumbersome night-vail is laid aside, and the garments of salvation and immortal glory are now put on. It hath passed through the trouble and darkness of a wearisome night, and now is joy arrived with the morning, as we may be permitted to allude to those words of the [l] Psalmist, though that be not supposed to be the peculiar sense. I conceive myself here not concerned operously to insist in proving, that the souls of saints sleep not in the interval between death and the general resurrection, but enjoy present blessedness. It being besides the design of a practical discourse, which rather intends the propounding and improvement of things acknowledged and agreed, for the advantage and benefit of them with whom they are so, than the discussing of things dubious and controversible. And what I here propound in order to a consequent improvement and application, should, methinks, pass for an acknowledged truth among them that professedly believe, and seriously read and consider, the Bible; (for mere philosophers that do not come into this account, 'twere impertinent to discourse with them from a text of Scripture;) and where my design only obliges me to intend the handling of that, and to deliver from it what may fitly be supposed to have its ground there, unless their allegations did carry with them the show of demonstrating the simple impossibility of what is asserted thence to the power of that God whose word we take it to be; which I have not found any thing they say to amount to. That we have reason to presume it an acknowledged thing, among them that will be concluded by Scripture, That the soul doth not sleep when it ceases to animate its earthly body, many plain texts do evince, which are amassed together by the reverend Mr. Baxter;[m] some of the principal whereof I would invite any that waver in this matter seriously to consider: as the words of our Saviour to the thief on the cross,[n] This day shalt thou be with me in paradise. That of the apostle,[o] we are Willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. And that,[p] I am in a strait, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ. That passage,[q] The spirits of just men made perfect, &c. Which are expressions so clear, that it is hard for an industrious caviller to find what to[r] except

vants about him, addita voce, se liquorem illum libare Jovi liberatori. Tacit Annal.

g *πτερωμα*. In Phædro. h Cant. vi. 13. i Rom. xiii. 11.
k Aretius, Beza, &c. l Psal xxx. 5. m In his Saint's Rest, p. 2, c. 10.
n Luke xxiii 43. o 2 Cor v. 8. p Phil. i. 23. q Heb. xii 23.

r 'Tis true, that divers of the fathers and others have spoken, some dubiously, some very diminishingly, of the blessedness of separate souls; many of whose words may be seen together in that elaborate tractate of the learned Parker, De Descens l secund. p. 77 Yea, and his own assertion in that very page (be it spoken with reverence to the memory of so worthy a person) argues something gross, and I conceive, unwarrantable thoughts of the soul's dependence on a body of earth. His words are *Tertium vulnus*, (speaking of the prejudices the soul receives by its separation from the body,) *omnes operationes etiam suas, quæ sunt præsertim ad extra, extinguit.* Where he makes it a difficulty to allow it any operations at all, as appears by the *præsertim* inserted. He first indeed denies it all operations, and then, more confidently and especially, those *ad extra*. And if he would be understood to exclude it only from its operations *ad extra*, (if he takes operations *ad extra* as that phrase is wont to be taken,) he must then mean by it all such operations as have their objects, not only those that have their terms to which without the agent, *i. e* not only all transient, but all imminent, acts that have their objects without them. As when we say, all God's acts *ad extra* are free: we mean it even of his immanent acts that have their objects without him, though they do not *ponere terminum extra Deum;* as his election, his love of the elect And so he must be understood to deny the separate souls (and that with a *præsertim* too) the operations of knowing God, of loving him, and delighting in him; which are all operations *ad extra*, as having their objects *extra animam*, though their *terminus ad quem* be not so: which makes the condition of the separate souls of saints unspeakably inferior to what it was in the body, and what should occasion so dismal thoughts of that state of separation, I see not Scripture gives no ground for them, but evidently enough speaks the contrary. Reason and philosophy offer nothing that can render the sense we put upon the aforementioned plain scripture, self-contradictious or impossible. Yea, such as had no other light or guide, have thought the facility of the soul's operations, being separate from its earthly body, much greater by that very separation. And upon this score doth St. Augustine, with great indignation, inveigh against the philosophers, (Plato more especially,) because they judged the separation of the soul from the body necessary to its blessedness *Qui videlicet ejus perfectam beatitudinem tunc illi fieri existimant cum omni prorsus corpore exuta, ad Deum simplex, et sola et quadammodo nuda redierit*, (De civit. Dei l. 13. c. 16.) unto which purpose the words of Philolaus Pythagoricus, of Plato, of Porphyrius, are cited by Ludovicus Vives, in his comment upon that above-mentioned passage. The first speaking thus—*Deposito corpore hominem Deum immortalem fieri.* The second thus—*Trahi nos a corpore ad ima, et a cogitatione superarum rerum subinde revocari: ideo relinquendum corpus, et hic quantum possumus et in altera vita prorsum, ut liberi et expediti, verum ipsi videamus et optimum amemus.* The third denies—*Aliter fieri beatum quenquam posse, nisi relinquat corpus et affigatur Deo.* I conceive it by the way not improbable, that the severity of that pious father against the dogma of the philosophers, might proceed upon this ground, that what they said of the impossibility of being happy in an earthly body, he understood meant by them of an impossibility to be happy in any body at all; when 'tis evidently the common opinion of the Platonists, that the soul is always united with some body or other, and that even the dæmons have bodies, (aerial or ætherial ones,) which Plato himself is observed by St. Augustine to affirm, whence he would fasten a contradiction on him, *ibid* not considering ('tis likely) that he would much less have made a difficulty, to concede such bodies also to human souls after they had lost their terrestrial ones as his sectators do not; who hold they then presently become dæmons In the meantime 'tis evident enough, the doctrine of the separate soul's present blessedness, is not destitute of the patronage and suffrage of philosophers And 'tis indeed the known opinion of as many of them as ever held its immortality, (which all of all ages and nations have done, a very few excepted,) for inasmuch as they knew nothing of the resurrection of the body, they could not dream of a sleeping interval. And 'tis at least a shrewd presumption, that nothing in reason lies against it, when no one instance can be given, among them that professedly gave up themselves to its only guidance, of any one, that granting the immortality of the soul, and its separableness from its terrestrial body, ever denied the immediate blessedness of good souls in that state of separation. Nor (if we look into the thing itself) is it at all more unapprehensible that the soul should be independent on the body in its operations than in its existence If it be possible enough to form an unexceptionable notion of a spiritual being distinct and separable from any corporeal substance, (which the learned Doctor More hath sufficiently demonstrated in his treatise of the Immortality of the Soul,) with its proper attributes, and powers peculiar to itself: what can reasonably withhold me from asserting, that being separate from the body, it may as well operate alone, (I mean exert such operations as are proper to such a being,) as exist alone? That we find it here *de facto*, in its present state, acting only with dependence on a body, will no more infer, that it can act no otherwise, than its present existence in a body will that it can never exist out of it, neither whereof amounts to more than the trifling exploded argument *a non esse ad non posse*, and would be as good sense as to say, Such a one walks in his clothes, therefore out of them he cannot move a foot. Yea, and the very use itself which the soul now makes of corporeal organs and instruments, plainly evidences, that it doth exert some action wherein they

to them; and, indeed, the very exceptions that are put in, are so frivolous that they carry a plain confession there is nothing colourable to be said. Yea, and most evident it is from those texts, not only that holy souls sleep not, in that state of separation; but that they are awaked by it, (as out of a former sleep,) into a much more lively and vigorous activity than they enjoyed before; and translated into a state as much better than their former, as the tortures of a cross are more ungrateful than the pleasures of a paradise; these joys fuller of vitality, than those sickly dying faintings; as the immediate presence and close embraces of the Lord of life, are more delectable than a mournful disconsolate absence from him, (which the apostle therefore tells us he desired as far better, and with an emphasis which our English too faintly expresses: for he uses a double comparative, πολλῷ μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον—*by much more better*;) and, as a perfected, *i. e.* a crowned triumphant spirit, that hath attained the end of its race, (as the words import in the agonistical notion,) is now in a more vivid joyous state, than when, lately, toiling in a tiresome way, it languished under many imperfections. And it is observable, that in the three former scriptures, that phrase, of being with Christ, or, being present with him, is the same which is used by the apostle, (1 Thess. iv. 17.) to express the state of blessedness after the resurrection; intimating plainly, the sameness of the blessedness before and after. And though this phrase be also used to signify the present enjoyment saints have of God's gracious presence in this life; which is also in nature and kind the same; yet it is plainly used in these scriptures (the two latter more especially) to set out to us such a degree of that blessedness, that in comparison thereof, our present being with Christ is a not-being with him; our presence with him now, an absence from him: While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, and, I am in a strait betwixt two, desiring to depart, (or having a desire unto dissolution,) and to be with Christ, &c. How strangely mistaken and disappointed had the blessed apostle been, had his absence from the body, his dissolution, his release, set him further off from Christ, or made him less capable of converse with him, than before he was! And how absurd would it be to say, the spirits of the just are perfected, by being cast into a stupifying sleep; yea, or being put into any state, not better than they were in before! But their state is evidently far better. The body of death is now laid aside, and the weights of sin, that did so easily beset, are shaken off; flesh and sin are laid down together; the soul is rid of its burthensome bands and shackles, hath quitted its filthy darksome prison, (the usual place of laziness and sloth,) is come forth of its drowsy dormitory, and the glory of God is risen upon it. 'Tis now come into the world of realities, where things appear as they are, no longer as in a dream, or vision of the night. The vital quickening beams of Divine light are darting in upon it on every side, and turning it into their own likeness. The shadows of the evening are vanished, and fled away. It converses with no objects but what are full themselves, and most apt to replenish it with energy and life. This cannot be but a joyful awaking, a blessed season of satisfaction and delight indeed, to the enlightened, revived soul. But,

II. It must be acknowledged, the further and more eminent season of this blessedness will be the general resurrection day, which is more expressly signified in Scripture by this term of *awaking*; as is manifest in many plain texts, where 'tis either expressly thus used, or implied to have this meaning in the opposite sense of the word sleep. What additions shall then be made to the saints blessedness, lies more remote from our apprehension; inasmuch as Scripture states not the degree of that blessedness which shall intervene. We know, by a too sad instructive experience, the calamities of our present state, and can therefore more easily conceive, wherein it is capable of betterment, by the deposition of a sluggish, cumbersome body, where those calamities mostly have their spring: but then we know less where to fix our foot, or whence to take our rise, in estimating the additional felicities of that future state, when both the states to be compared are so unknown to us. But that there will be great additions is plain enough. The full recompense of obedience and devotedness to Christ, of foregoing all for him, is affixed by his promise to the resurrection of the just; The judgment-day gives every one his portion according to his works. Then must the holy, obedient christian hear from his Redeemer's mouth, Come ye blessed of the father, inherit the kingdom, &c. Till then the devils think their torment to be before their time. 'Tis when he shall appear we shall be like him, and see him as he is. That noted day is the day of being presented faultless with exceeding joy. And divers things there are obviously enough to be reflected on, which cannot but be understood to contribute much to the increase and improvement of this inchoate blessedness. The acquisition of a glorified body. For our vile bodies shall be so far transfigured, as to be made like [conform to] the glorious body of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: and this shall be when he shall appear from heaven, where saints here below are required to have their commerce, as the enfranchised citizens thereof, and from whence they are to contiane looking for him in the meantime. When he terminates and puts a period to that expectation of his saints on earth, then shall that great change be made, *i. e.* when he actually appears, at which time the trumpet sounds, and even sleeping dust itself awakes; the hallowed dust of them that slept in Jesus first, who are then to come with him. This change may well be conceived to add considerably to their felicity. A natural congruity and appetite is now answered and satisfied, which did either lie dormant, or was under somewhat an anxious restless expectation before; neither of which could well consist with a state of blessedness, every way already perfect. And that there is a real desire and expectation of this change, seems to be plainly intimated in those words of Job, All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come; where he must rather be understood to speak of the resurrection than of death; (as his words are commonly mistaken, and misapplied;) as will appear by setting down the context from the seventh verse, for there is hope of a tree, if it be

assist it not. For it supposes an operation upon them antecedent to any operation by them. Nothing can be the instrument which is not first the subject of any action; as when I use a pen, I act upon it in order to my action by it, *i. e.* I impress a motion upon it, in order whereunto I use not that or any other such instrument; and though I cannot produce the designed effect, leave such characters so and so figured, without it; my hand can yet, without it, perform its own action, proper to itself, and produce many noble effects. When, therefore, the soul makes use of a bodily organ, its action upon it must needs at last be without the ministry of any organ, unless you multiply to it body upon body *in infinitum*. And if, possibly, it perform not some meaner and grosser pieces of drudgery when out of the body, wherein it made use of the help and service before; that is no more a disparagement or diminution, than it is to the magistrate, that law and decency permit him not to apprehend or execute a malefactor with his own hand. It may yet perform those operations which are proper to itself: that is, such as are more noble and excellent, and immediately conducive to its own felicity. Which sort of actions, as cogitation for instance, and dilection, though being done in the body, there is conjunct with them an agitatum of the spirits in the brain and heart; it yet seems to me more reasonable, that as to those acts, the spirits are rather subjects than instruments at all of them: that the whole essence of these acts is antecedent to the motion of the spirits; and that motion certainly (but accidentally) consequent, only by reason of the present, but soluble, union the soul hath with the body. And that the purity and refinedness of those spirits doth only remove what would hinder such acts, rather than contribute positively thereto. And so little is the alliance between a thought, and any bodily thing, even those very finest spirits themselves; that I dare say whoever sets himself closely and strictly to consider and debate the matter with his own faculties, will find it much more easily apprehensible how the acts of intellection and volition may be performed without those very corporeal spirits than by them. However, suppose them never so indispensably necessary to those more noble operations of the soul, it may easily be furnished with them, and in greater plenty and purity, from the ambient air, or (if need be) from a dull, torpid body; with some part of which air, if we suppose it to contract a vital union, I know no rational principle that is wronged by the supposition, though neither do I know any that can necessarily infer it. As therefore the doctrine of the soul's activity out of this earthly body, hath favour and friendship enough from philosophers; so I doubt not, but upon the most strict and rigid disquisition, it would be as much befriended (or rather righted) by philosophy itself; and that their reason would afford it as direct, and more considerable defence, than their authority.

In the meantime, it deserves to be considered with some resentment, that this doctrine should find the generality of learned pagans more forward advocates than some learned and worthy patrons of the Christian faith; which is only imputable to the undue measure and excess of an otherwise just zeal, in these latter, for the resurrection of the body; so far transporting them, that they became willing to let go one truth, that they might hold another the faster; and to ransom this at the too dear (and unnecessary) expense of the former; accounting, they could never make sure enough the resurrection of the body, without making the soul's dependance on it so absolute and necessary, that it should be able to do nothing but sleep in the meanwhile. Whereas it seems a great deal more unconceivable, how such a being as the soul is, once out of the entanglements and encumbrances of the body, should sleep at all, than how it should act without the body.

s See Dr. Hammond's Annot in loc.

t Dan. xii. 2. John xiv. 12. 2 Cor. xv. 2 Thess iv. &c.

u Μετασχηματισει, συμμορφον. Phil. iii. 20, 21.

x 1 Thess. iv. 14, 15, 16.

y Chap. xiv. 14.

cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground: yet through the scent of water, it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth, and drieth up; so man lieth down, and raiseth not till the heavens be no more: they shall not be awakened nor raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret till thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands. He first speaks according to common apprehension, and sensible appearance, touching the hopeless state of man in death; as though it were less capable of reparation than that of some inferior creatures, unto the end of ver. 10. And then gradually discovers his better hope; betrays this faith, as it were, obliquely, touching this point; lets it break out, first, in some obscure glimmerings, (ver. 11, 12.) giving us, in his *protasis*, a similitude not fully expressive of his seeming meaning, for waters and floods that fail may be renewed; and in his *apodosis* more openly intimating, man's sleep should be only till the heavens were no more: which *till* might be supposed to signify *never*, were it not for what follows, ver. 13, where he expressly speaks his confidence by way of petition, that at a set and appointed time, God would remember him, so as to recall him out of the grave: and at last, being now minded to speak out more fully, puts the question to himself, If a man die, shall he live again? and answers it, All the days of my appointed time, *i. e.* of that appointed time which he mentioned before, when God should revive him out of the dust, will I wait till my change come; *i. e.* that glorious change, when the corruption of a loathsome grave should be exchanged for immortal glory; which he amplifies, and utters more expressly, ver. 15. Thou shalt call, and I will answer; thou shalt have a desire to the work of thy hands: Thou wilt not always forget to restore and perfect thy own creature.

And surely that waiting is not the act of his inanimate sleeping dust; but though it be spoken of the person totally gone into *hades*, into the invisible state, 'tis to be understood of that part that should be capable of such an action; *q. d.* I, in that part that shall be still alive, shall patiently await thy appointed time of reviving me in that part also, which death and the grave shall insult over (in a temporary triumph) in the meantime; and so will the words carry a facile commodious sense, without the unnecessary help of an imagined rhetorical scheme of speech. And then, that this waiting carries in it a desirous expectation of some additional good, is evident at first sight; which therefore must needs add to the satisfaction and blessedness of the expecting soul. And wherein it may do so, is not altogether unapprehensible. Admit, that a spirit, had it never been embodied, might be as well without a body, or that it might be as well provided of a body out of other materials; 'tis no unreasonable supposition, that a connate aptitude to a body, should render human souls more happy in a body sufficiently attempered to their most noble operations. And how much doth relation and propriety endear things, otherwise mean and inconsiderable? Or why should it be thought strange, that a soul connaturalized to matter, should be more particularly inclined to a particular portion thereof? so as that it should appropriate such a part, and say 'tis mine? And will it not be a pleasure, to have a vitality diffused through what even more remotely appertains to me, to have every thing belonging to the *suppositum* perfectly vindicated from the tyrannous dominion of death? The returning of the spirits into a benumbed or sleeping toe or finger, adds a contentment to a man which he wanted before. Nor is it hence necessary the soul should covet a re-union with every effluvious particle of its former body: a desire implanted by God in a reasonable soul will aim at what is convenient, not what shall be cumbersome or monstrous.

And how pleasant will it be to contemplate and admire the wisdom and power of the great Creator in this so glorious a change, when I shall find a clod of earth, a heap of dust, refined into a celestial purity and brightness[a] when what was sown in corruption shall be raised in incorruption; what was sown in dishonour, is raised in glory; what was sown in weakness, is raised in power; what was sown a natural body, is raised a spiritual body! when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality, and death be wholly swallowed up in victory! So that this awaking may well be understood to carry that in it, which may bespeak it the proper season of the saints' consummate satisfaction and blessedness. But besides what it carries in itself, there are other (more extrinsical) concurrents that do farther signalize this season, and import a greater increase of blessedness then to God's holy ones. The body of Christ is now completed, the fulness of him that filleth all in all, and all the so nearly related parts cannot but partake in the perfection and reflected glory of the whole. There is joy in heaven at the conversion of one sinner, though he have a troublesome scene yet to pass over afterwards, in a tempting, wicked, unquiet world; how much more when the many sons shall be all brought to glory together! The designs are all now accomplished, and wound up into the most glorious result and issue, whereof the Divine Providence had been, as in travail, for so many thousand years. 'Tis now seen how exquisite wisdom governed the world, and how steady a tendency the most intricate and perplexed methods of Providence had, to one stated and most worthy end. Specially the constitution, administration, and ends of the Mediator's kingdom, are now beheld in their exact aptitudes, order, and conspicuous glory; when so blessed an issue and success shall commend and crown the whole undertaking. The Divine authority is now universally acknowledged and adored; his justice is vindicated and satisfied; his grace demonstrated and magnified to the uttermost. The whole assembly of saints solemnly acquitted by public sentence, presented spotless and without blemish to God, and adjudged to eternal blessedness. 'Tis the day of so'emn triumph and jubilation, upon the finishing of all God's works, from the creation of the world wherein the Lord Jesus[a] appears to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe: upon which ensues the resignation of the Mediator's kingdom,[b] (all the ends of it being now attained,) that the Father himself may be immediately all in all. How aptly then are the fuller manifestations of God, the more glorious display of all his attributes, the larger and more abundant effusions of himself, reserved (as the best wine to the last) unto this joyful day! Created perfections could not have been before so absolute, but they might admit of improvement; their capacities not so large, but they might be extended further; and then who can doubt but that divine communications may also have a proportionable increase, and that upon the concourse of so many great occasions they shall have so?

CHAPTER XI.

An introduction to the use of the doctrine hitherto proposed. The use divided into Inferences of truth, Rules of duty. 1. Inference. That blessedness consists not in any sensual enjoyment. 2. Inference. The spirit of man (since 'tis capable of so high a blessedness) is a being of high excellency.

Use. And now is our greatest work yet behind; the improvement of so momentous a truth, to the affecting and transforming of hearts; that (if the Lord shall so far vouchsafe his assistance and blessing) they may taste the sweetness, feel the power, and bear the impress and image of it. This is the work, both of greatest necessity, difficulty, and excellency, and unto which, all that hath been done hitherto, is but subservient and introductive. Give me leave, therefore, reader, to stop thee here, and demand of thee ere thou go further; hast thou any design, in turning over these leaves, of bettering thy spirit, of getting a more refined, heavenly temper of soul? Art thou weary of thy dross and earth, and longing for the first fruits, the beginnings of glory? Dost thou wish for a soul meet for the

z 1 Cor. xv a 2 Thess. i. 10 b 1 Cor xv. 28.

blessedness hitherto described? What is here written is designed for thy help and furtherance. But if thou art looking on these pages with a wanton rolling eye, hunting for novelties, or what may gratify a prurient wit, a coy and squeamish fancy; go read a romance, or some piece of drollery: know here's nothing for thy turn;[a] and dread to meddle with matters of everlasting concernment without a serious spirit; read not another line till thou have sighed out this request, "Lord, keep me from trifling with the things of eternity." Charge thy soul to consider, that what thou art now reading must be added to thy account against the great day. 'Tis amazing to think, with what vanity of mind the most weighty things of religion are entertained amongst Christians. Things that should swallow up our souls, drink up our spirits, are heard as a tale that is told, disregarded by most, scorned by too many. What can be spoken so important, or of so tremendous consequence, or of so confessed truth, or with so awful solemnity and premised mention of the sacred name of the Lord, as not to find either a very slight entertainment or contemptuous rejection; and this by persons avowing themselves Christians? We seem to have little or no advantage, in urging men upon their own principles, and with things they most readily and professedly assent to. Their hearts are as much untouched, and void of impression by the Christian doctrine, as if they were of another religion. How unlike is the Christian world to the Christian doctrine! The seal is fair and excellent, but the impression is languid, or not visible. Where is that serious godliness, that heavenliness, that purity, that spirituality, that righteousness, that peace, unto which the Christian religion is most aptly designed to work and form the spirits of men? We think to be saved by an empty name; and glory in the show and appearance of that, the life and power whereof we hate and deride. 'Tis a reproach with us not to be called a Christian, and a greater reproach to be one. If such and such doctrines obtain not in our professed belief, we are heretics or infidels; if they do in our practice, we are precisians and fools. To be so serious, and circumspect, and strict, and holy, to make the practice of godliness so much our business, as the known and avowed principles of our religion do plainly exact from us, (yea, though we come, as we cannot but do, unspeakably short of that required measure,) is to make one's self a common derision and scorn. Not to be professedly religious is barbarous, to be so in good earnest ridiculous. In other things men are wont to act and practise according to the known rules of their several callings and professions, and he would be reckoned the common fool of the neighbourhood that should not do so; the husbandman that should sow when others reap, or contrive his harvest into the depth of winter, or sow fitches and expect to reap wheat; the merchant that should venture abroad his most precious commodities in a leaky bottom, without pilot or compass, or to places not likely to afford him any valuable return. In religion only it must be accounted absurd, to be and do according to its known, agreed principles, and he a fool that shall but practise as all about him profess to believe. Lord! whence is this apprehended inconsistency between the profession and practice of religion? What hath thus stupified and unmanned the world, that seriousness in religion should be thought the character of a fool? that men must visibly make a mockery of the most fundamental articles of faith only to save their reputation, and be afraid to be serious lest they should be thought mad? Were the doctrine here opened believed in earnest, were the due proper impress of it upon our spirits, or, (as the pagan moralist's expression is,[b]) were our minds transfigured into it, what manner of persons should we be in all holy conversation and godliness? But 'tis thought enough to have it in our creed, though never in our hearts; and such as will not deride the holiness it should produce, yet endeavour it not, nor go about to apply and urge truths upon their own souls to any such purpose. What should turn into grace and spirit and life, turns all into notion and talk; and men think all is well if their heads be filled and their tongues tipt with what should transform their souls and govern their lives. How are the most awful truths, and that should have greatest power upon men's spirits, trifled with as matters only of speculation and discourse! They are heard but as empty airy words, and presently evaporate, pass away into words again; like food (as ‹Seneca speaks) *that comes up presently, the same that it was taken in; which* (as he saith) *profits not, nor makes any accession to the body at all. A like case,* (as another ingeniously speaks,[c]) *as if sheep, when they had been feeding, should present their shepherds with the very grass itself which they had crop't, and show how much they had eaten.* No, saith he, *they concoct it, and so yield them wool and milk.* And so, saith he, do not you (*viz.* when you have been instructed) presently go and utter words among the more ignorant, (meaning they should not do so in a way of ostentation, to show how much they knew more than others,) "but works that follow upon the concoction of what hath been by words made known to them." Let Christians be ashamed that they need this instruction from heathen teachers.

Thy words were found and I did eat them, (saith the prophet,) and thy word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart. Divine truth is only so far at present grateful, or useful for future, as 'tis received by faith and consideration, and in the love thereof, into the very heart, and there turned in *succum et sanguinem—into real nutriment to the soul;* so shall man live by the word of God. Hence is the application of it (both personal and ministerial) of so great necessity. If the truths of the gospel were of the same alloy with some parts of philosophy, whose end is attained as soon as they are known; if the Scripture doctrine (the whole entire system of it) were not a doctrine after godliness, if it were not designed to sanctify and make men holy; or if the hearts of men did not reluctate, were easily receptive of its impressions; our work were as soon done as such a doctrine were nakedly proposed: but the state of the case in these respects is known and evident. The tenour and aspect of gospel truth speaks its end; and experience too plainly speaks the oppositeness of men's spirits. All therefore we read and hear is lost if it be not urgently applied: the Lord grant it be not then too. Therefore, reader, let thy mind and heart concur in the following improvement of this doctrine, which will be wholly comprehended under these two heads,—Inferences of truth, and—Rules of duty,—that are consequent and connatural thereto.

1. Inferences of truth deducible from it.

1. Infer. True blessedness consists not in any sensual enjoyment. The blessedness of a man can be but one; most only one. He can have but one highest and best good. And its proper character is, that it finally satisfies and gives rest to his spirit. This the face and likeness of God doth; his glory beheld and participated. Here then alone his full blessedness must be understood to lie. Therefore as this might many other ways be evinced to be true; so it evidently appears to be the proper issue of the present truth, and is plainly proved by it. But, alas! it needs a great deal more to be pressed than proved. O that it were but as much considered as it is known! The experience of almost six thousand years, hath (one would think sufficiently) testified the incompetency of every worldly thing to make men happy; that the present pleasing of our senses, and the gratification of our animal part, is not blessedness; that men are still left unsatisfied notwithstanding. But the practice and course of the world are such, as if this were some late and rare experiment; which (for curiosity) every one must be trying over again. Every age renews the inquiry after an earthly felicity; the design is entailed, (as the Spanish designs are said to be,) and reinforced with as great a confidence and vigour from age to age, as if none had been baffled or defeated in it before; or that they were very likely to take at last. Had this been the alone folly of the first age, it had admitted some excuse; but that the world should still be cheated by the same so oft repeated impostures, presents us with a sad prospect of the deplorable state of mankind.[e] This their

a Dissoluti est pectoris in rebus seriis quærere voluptatem. Arnob.

b Scientiam qui didicit, et facienda et vitanda præcepit, nondum sapiens est, nisi in ea quæ didicit transfiguratus est animus.

c Non prodest cibus, nec corpori accedit, qui statim sumptus emittitur. Sen. Epist.

d Ἔπει και τα προβατα, ου χορτον φεροντα τοις ποιμεσιν επιδεικνυει ποσον εφαγεν, αλλα την νομην εσω πεψαντα, εριον εξω φερει και γαλα και συ τοινυν, μη ταχεως ρηματα τοις ιδιωταις επιδεικνυε, αλλα απ' αυτων πεφθεντων τα εργα. Epictet.

e Psalm xlix.

way is their folly, yet their posterity approve, &c. The wearied wits and wasted estates, laid out upon the philosopher's stone, afford but a faint, defective representation of this case. What chemistry can extract heaven out of a clod of clay? What art can make blessedness spring and grow out of this cold earth? If all created nature be vexed and tortured never so long, who can expect this elixir? Yet after so many frustrated attempts, so much time and strength and labour lost, men are still as eagerly and vainly busy as ever; are perpetually tossed by unsatisfied desires, labouring in the fire, wearying themselves for very vanity, distracted by the uncertain, and often contrary, motions of a ravenous appetite, and a blind mind, that would be happy and knows not how. With what sounding bowels, with what compassionate tears, should the state of mankind be lamented by all that understand the worth of a soul! What serious heart doth not melt and bleed for miserable men, that are (through a just nemesis[f]) so perpetually mocked with shadows, cheated with false delusive appearances, infatuated and betrayed by their own senses. They walk but in a vain show, disquieting themselves in vain; their days flee away as a shadow, their strength is only labour and sorrow; while they rise up early and lie down late, to seek rest in trouble, and life in death. They run away from blessedness while they pretend to pursue it, and suffer themselves to be led down without regret to perdition, "as an ox to the slaughter, and a fool to the correction of the stocks, till a dart strikes through their liver:" descend patiently to the chambers of death, not so much as once thinking, whither are we going? dream of nothing but an earthly paradise, till they find themselves amidst the infernal regions.

2. Infer. The spirit of man, inasmuch as 'tis capable of such a blessedness, appears an excellent creature.[g] Its natural capacity is supposed; for the Psalmist speaks of his own numerical person, the same that then writ; I shall behold; shall be satisfied: take away this *suppositum*, and it could not be so said: or as in Job's words; I shall behold him, and not another for me; it would certainly be another, not the same. Judge hence the excellency of a human soul (the principal subject of this blessedness) without addition of any new natural powers; 'tis capable of the vision of God; of partaking unto satisfaction the Divine likeness. And is not that an excellent creature, that is capable not only of surveying the creation of God, passing through the several ranks and orders of created beings; but of ascending to the Being of beings, of contemplating the Divine excellencies, of beholding the bright and glorious face of the blessed God himself; till it have looked itself into his very likeness, and have his entire image inwrought into it. The dignity then of the spirit of man is not to be estimated by the circumstances of its present state, as 'tis here clad with a sordid flesh, inwrapped in darkness, and grovelling in the dust of the earth: but consider the improvableness of its natural powers and faculties; the high perfections it may attain, and the foundations of how glorious a state are laid in its very nature. And then who can tell, whether its possible advancement is more to be admired, or its present calamity deplored. Might this consideration be permitted to settle and fix itself in the hearts of men; could any thing be so grievous to them, as their so vast distance from such an attainable blessedness; or any thing be so industriously avoided, so earnestly abhorred, as that viler dejection and abasement of themselves: when they are so low already by Divine disposition, to descend lower by their own wickedness; when they are already fallen as low as earth, to precipitate themselves as low as hell. How generous a disdain should that thought raise in men's spirits, of that vile servitude to which they have subjected themselves, a servitude to brutal lusts, to sensual inclinations and desires; as if the highest happiness they did project to themselves were the satisfaction of these? Would they not with an heroic scorn turn away their eyes from beholding vanity, did they consider their own capacity of beholding the Divine glory? could they satisfy themselves to become [h] like the beasts that perish, did they think of being satisfied with the likeness of God? And who can conceive unto what degree this aggravates the sin of man, that he so little minds (as it will their misery, that shall fall short of) this blessedness! They had spirits capable of it. Consider, thou sensual man, whose happiness lies in colours, and tastes, and sounds, (as the moralist ingeniously speaks,) that herdest thyself with brute creatures, and aimest no higher than they; as little lookest up, and art as much a stranger to the thoughts and desires of heaven: thy creation did not set thee so low; they are where they were; but thou art fallen from thy excellency. God did not make thee a brute creature, but thou thyself. Thou hast yet a spirit about thee, that might understand its own original, and alliance to the Father of spirits; that hath a designation in its nature to higher converses and employments. Many myriads of such spirits, of no higher original excellency than thy own, are now in the presence of the highest Majesty; are prying into the Eternal glory, contemplating the perfections of the Divine nature, beholding the unvailed face of God, which transfuses upon them its own satisfying likeness. Thou art not so low-born, but thou mightest attain this state also. That sovereign Lord and Author of all things calls thee to it; his goodness invites thee, his authority enjoins thee, to turn thy thoughts and designs this way. Fear not to be thought immodest or presumptuous: 'tis but a dutiful ambition; an obedient aspiring. Thou art under a law to be thus happy; nor doth it bind thee to any natural impossibility; it designs instructions to thee, not delusion; guidance, not mockery. When thou art required to apply and turn thy soul to this blessedness, 'tis not the same thing as if thou wert bidden to remove a mountain, to pluck down a star, or create a world. Thou art here put upon nothing but what is agreeable to the primeval nature of man; and though it be to a vast height, thou must ascend: 'tis by so easy and familiar methods, by so apt gradations, that thou will be sensible of no violence done to thy nature in all thy way. Do but make some trials with thyself; thou wilt soon find nothing is the hinderance but an unwilling heart. Try however (which will suffice to let thee discern thy own capacity, and will be a likely means to make thee willing) how far thou canst understand and trace the way (complying with it at least as reasonable) that leads to this blessedness. Retire a little into thyself; forget awhile thy relation to this sensible world; summon in thy self-reflecting and considering powers: thou wilt presently perceive thou art not already happy, thou art in some part unsatisfied; and thence wilt easily understand, inasmuch as thou art not happy in thyself, that it must be something, as yet without thee, must make thee so: and nothing can make thee happy, but what is in that respect better than thyself; or hath some perfection in it, which thou findest wanting in thyself. A little further discourse or reasoning with thyself, will easily persuade thee, thou hast something better about thee than that luggage of flesh thou goest with to and fro; for thou well knowest, that [k] is not capable of reason and discourse: and that the power of doing so is a higher perfection than any thou canst entitle it to; and that therefore, besides thy bulky, material part, thou must have such a thing as a spirit or soul belonging to thee, to which that, and thy other perfections, not compatible to gross matter, may agree. Thou wilt readily assent, that thou canst never be happy, while thy better and more noble part is unsatisfied; and that it can only be satisfied with something suitable and connatural to it. That therefore thy happiness must lie in something more excellent than this material or sensible world, otherwise it cannot be grateful and suitable to thy soul, yea, in something that may be better, and more ex-

[f] Ira Dei est ista vita mortalis, ubi homo vanitati similis factus est, et dies ejus velut umbra pretereunt, &c. Aug. de Civ Dei, l. 22. c. 24.

[g] Not that this blessedness can be attained by mere human endeavours, (more whereof see under the next inference,) but there is an inclination, a certain *pondus naturæ*, (as some school-men speak,) by which it propends towards it; or there is the *radix*, or *fundamentum*, or *capacitas*, (as some others,) i. e. that it not only may receive it; but that it may be elevated by grace, actively to concur, by its natural powers, as vital principles towards the attainment of it, according to that known saying of Saint Augustine *Posse credere naturæ est hominis, &c.*

[h] Voluptas bonum pecoris est——Hunc tu (non dico inter vires sed) inter homines numeras? cujus summum bonum saporibus, ac colonibus, ac somnis constat? excedat ex hoc animalium numero pulcherrimo, ac diis secundo; mutis aggeretur animal pabulo natum. Sen. Ep. 92.

[i] Hic Deos agnit, illo tendit, originis suæ memor. Nemo, improbe, eo conantur ascendere unde descenderat—socii ejs somnus et membra, &c. Sen. Ep. 92.

[k] Λογισμος δε και νους, συκετι ταυτο σωμασι διδοσιν ουτα, και γαρ εργον αυτων ου δι οργανων τελειται του σωματος εμπαθειαν γαρ τουτο, ειτις αυτω εν ταις σκεψεσι προχρωτο. Plotin. Ennead. 4. lib. 3.

cellent than thy soul itself, otherwise how can it better and perfect that.[l] As thou canst not but acknowledge thy soul to be spiritual and immaterial, so if thou attend thou wilt soon see cause to acknowledge a spiritual or immaterial being, better and more perfect than thy own soul. For its perfections were not self-originate, they were therefore derived from something, for that reason confessedly more excellent; whence at last also thou wilt find it unavoidably imposed upon thee, to apprehend and adore a Being absolutely perfect, and than which there cannot be a more perfect; the first subject and common fountain of all perfections, which hath them underived in himself, and can derive them unto inferior created beings.[m] Upon this eternal and self-essential Being, the infinitely blessed God, thou necessarily dependest, and owest therefore constant subjection and obedience to him. Thou hast indeed offended him, and art thereby cut off from all interest in him, and intercourse with him; but he hath proclaimed in his gospel, his willingness to be reconciled, and that through the sufferings, righteousness, and intercession of his only-begotten Son, thy merciful Redeemer, the way is open for thy restitution and recovery; that thou mayst partake from him whatever perfection is wanting to thy blessedness. Nothing is required from thee in order hereunto, but that, relying on and submitting to thy Redeemer's gracious conduct, thou turn thy mind and heart towards thy God, to know him, and conform to him; to view and imitate the Divine perfections; the faithful endeavour and inchoation whereof, will have this issue and reward, the clear vision and full participation of them. So that the way and work differ not, in nature and kind, from thy end and reward; thy duty from thy blessedness. Nor are either repugnant to the natural constitution of thy own soul. What violence is there done to reasonable nature in all this? or what can hinder thee herein, but a most culpably averse and wicked heart? Did thy reason ever turn off thy soul from God? was it not thy corruption only? What vile images dost thou receive from earthly objects, which deform thy soul, while thou industriously avertest thy Maker's likeness that would perfect it! How full is thy mind and heart of vanity! how empty of God! Were this through natural incapacity, thou wert an innocent creature; it were thy infelicity, (negative I mean,) not thy crime; and must be resolved into the sovereign will of thy Creator, not thy own disobedient will. But when this shall appear the true state of thy case, and thou shalt hear it from the mouth of thy Judge, "Thou didst not like to retain me in thy knowledge or love; thou hadst reason and will to use about meaner objects, but none for me; thou couldst sometimes have spared me a glance, a cast of thine eye at least, when thou didst rather choose it should be in the ends of the earth: a thought of me had cost thee as little, might as soon have been thought, as of this or that vanity; but thy heart was not with me. I banish thee, therefore, that presence which thou never lovedst. I deny thee the vision thou didst always shun, and the impression of my likeness which thou didst ever hate. I eternally abandon thee to the darkness and deformities which were ever grateful to thee. Thine is a self-created hell; the fruit of thy own choice; no invitations or persuasions of mine could keep thee from it." How wilt thou excuse thy fault, or avert thy doom! what arguments or apologies shall defend thy cause against these pleadings? Nay, what armour shall defend thy soul against its own wounding self-reflections hereupon? when every thought shall be a dart; and a convicted conscience an ever-gnawing worm, a fiery serpent with endless involutions ever winding about thy heart?

It will now be sadly thought on, how often thou sawest thy way and declinedst it; knewest thy duty and didst waive it; understoodest thy interest and didst slight it; approvedst the things that were more excellent, and didst reject them. How often thou didst prevaricate with thy light, and run counter to thine own eyes; while things, confessedly most worthy of thy thoughts and pursuits, were overlooked, and empty shadows eagerly pursued. Thy own heart will now feelingly tell thee, it was not want of capacity, but inclination, that cut thee off from blessedness. Thou wilt now bethink thyself, that when life and immortality were brought to light before thy eyes in the gospel, and thou wast told of this future blessedness of the saints, and pressed to follow holiness, as without which thou couldst not see God; it was a reasonable man was spoken to, that had a power to understand, and judge, and choose; not a stone or a brute. Thy capacity of this blessedness makes thee capable also of the most exquisite torment; and reflected on, actually infers it. How passionately, but vainly, wilt thou then cry out, "O that I had filled up the place of any the meanest creature throughout the whole creation of God, that I had been a gnat, or a fly, or had never been, rather than to have so noble, abused powers eternally to reckon for! Yea, and thou must reckon for not only the actual light and good impressions thou hadst, but even all thou wast capable of and mightest have attained. Thou shalt now recount with anguish and horror (and rend thy own soul with the thoughts) what thou mightest now have been; how excellent and glorious a creature! hadst thou not contrived thy own misery, and conspired with the devil against thyself, how to deform and destroy thy own soul. While this remembrance shall always afresh return, that nothing was enjoined thee as a duty, or propounded as thy blessedness, but what thou wast made capable of; and that it was not fatal necessity, but a wilful choice, made thee miserable.

CHAPTER XII.

Inference 3. That a change of heart is necessary to this blessedness. The pretences of ungodly men, whereby they would avoid the necessity of this change. Five considerations proposed in order to the detecting the vanity of such pretences. A particular discussion and refutation of those pretences.

3. 'Tis a mighty change must pass upon the souls of men in order to their enjoyment of this blessedness. This equally follows from the consideration of the nature and substantial parts of it, as of the qualifying righteousness pre-required to it. A little reflection upon the common state and temper of men's spirits, will soon enforce an acknowledgment that the vision of God, and conformity to him, are things above their reach, and which they are never likely to take satisfaction in, or at all to savour, till they become otherwise disposed than before the renovating change they are. The text expresses no more in stating the qualified subject of this blessedness *in righteousness*, than it evidently implies in the account it gives of this blessedness itself, that it lies in seeing God, and being satisfied with his likeness. As soon as it is considered, that the blessedness of souls is stated here, what can be a more obvious reflection than this; Lord, then how great a change must they undergo! What, such souls be blessed in seeing and partaking the divine likeness, that never loved it! were so much his enemies! 'Tis true they are naturally capable of it, which speaks their original excellency; but they are morally uncapable, *i. e.* indisposed and averse, which as truly, and most sadly speaks, their present vileness; and the sordid, abject temper they now are of. They are destitute of no natural powers necessary to the attainment of this blessedness; but in the mean time have them so[a] depraved by impure and vicious tincture, that they cannot relish it, or the means to it. They have reasonable souls, furnished with intellective and elective faculties, but labouring under a manifold distemper and disaffection; that they[b] cannot receive, they cannot savour, the things of God, or what is spiritual. They want the *εὐθεσία*, (as we express it,) the well-disposedness for the kingdom of God, intimated Luke ix. 62. the *ἐυκόνοης*,

l Sicut non est ac ame, sed super carnem, quod carnem facit vivere: sic non est ab homine, sed super hominem, quod hominem, facit beate vivere. D. Aug. de Civit. Dei, lib. 19. c. 25.

m Ut in ordine causarum efficientium, ita et in gradibus virtutis et perfectionis, non datur progressus in infinitum: sed oportet sit aliqua prima et summa perfectio: Pet. Molin. de cognitione Dei. Not to insist upon what hath been much urged by learned men of former and latter (yea, and of the present) time,—that whosoever denies the existence of an absolute perfect being, contradicts himself in the denial, inasmuch as necessity of existence is included in the very subject of the negation,—some accounting it sophism, and it being unseasonable here to discuss it.

a Capax est coster animus, perfertur illo, si vitia non deprimant. Sen. Epist. 92.

b 1 Cor. ii. 14. Rom. viii. 5.

the meetness, the aptitude, or idoneity for the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. i. 12.

A settled aversion from God hath fastened its roots in the very spirits of their minds; (for that is stated [c] as the prime subject of the change to be made;) and how can they take pleasure in the vision and participation of his glory? Whereas by beholding the glory of the Lord, they should be changed into the same image; a veil is upon the heart till it turn to the Lord, as was said concerning the Jews, 2 Cor. iii. 14. The God of this world hath blinded their minds, lest (that transforming light) the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them, chap. iv. 4. They are alienated [d] from the life of God, through their ignorance and blindness of heart. The life they choose is to be ἄθεοι ἐν κόσμῳ, atheists, or [e] without God in the world. They like not to retain God in their knowledge, are willingly ignorant of him, say to him, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if any will understand, if any will seek after God; and the result of the inquiry is, there is none that doth good, no not one. They are [f] haters of God, as our Saviour accused the Jews, and Saint Paul the Gentiles;[g] are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Their understandings are dark, their minds vain, their wills obstinate, their consciences seared, their hearts hard and dead, their lives one continued rebellion against God and a defiance to heaven. At how vast a distance are such souls from such blessedness! The notion and nature of blessedness must sure be changed, or the temper of their spirits. Either they must have new hearts created, or a new heaven, if ever they be happy. And such is the stupid dotage of vain man, he can more easily persuade himself to believe, that the sun itself should be transformed into a dunghill, that the holy God should lay aside his nature, and turn heaven into a place of impure darkness; than that he himself should need to undergo a change. O the powerful infatuation of self-love, that men in the gall of bitterness should think 'tis well with their spirits, and fancy themselves in a case good enough to enjoy divine pleasure; that (as the toad's venom offends not itself) their loathsome wickedness, which all good men detest, is a pleasure to them; and while 'tis as the poison of asps under their lips, they roll it as a dainty bit, revolve it in their thoughts with delight! Their wickedness speaks itself out to the very hearts [h] of others, while it never affects their own; and is found out to be hateful, while they still continue flattering themselves. And because they are without spot in their own eyes; they adventure so high, as to presume themselves so in the pure eyes of God too; and instead of designing to be like God, they already imagine him [i] such a one as themselves. Hence their allotment of time (in the whole of it, the Lord knows, little enough) for the working out of their salvation spends apace; while they do not so much as understand their business. Their measured hour is almost out; an immense eternity is coming on upon them; and lo! they stand as men that cannot find their hands. Urge them to the speedy, serious endeavour of a heart-change, earnestly to intend the business of regeneration, of becoming new creatures; they seem to understand it as little as if they were spoken to in an unknown tongue; and are in the like posture with the confounded builders of Babel, they know not what we mean, or would put them upon. They wonder what we would have them do. "They are (say they) orthodox Christians: they believe all the articles of the Christian creed: they detest all heresy and false doctrine: they are no strangers to the house of God; but diligently attend the enjoined solemnities of public worship: some possibly can say, they are sober, just, charitable, peaceable; and others that can boast less of their virtues, yet say, they are sorry for their sins, and pray God to forgive them." And if we urge them concerning their translation from the state of nature to that of grace, their becoming new creatures, their implantation into Christ: they say they have been baptized, and therein regenerate, and what would we have more?

But to how little purpose is it to equivocate with God! to go about to put a fallacy upon the Judge of spirits! or escape the animadversion of his fiery flaming eye! or elude his determinations, and pervert the true intent and meaning of his most established constitutions and laws! Darest thou venture thy soul upon it? that this is all God means, by [k] having a new heart created, a right spirit renewed in us: by being made God's [l] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works; by [m] becoming new creatures, old things being done away, all things made new; by [n] so learning the truth as it is in Jesus, to the putting off the old man, and putting on the new which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; by [o] being begotten of God's own will by the word of truth, to be (the ἀπαρχὴ) the chief excellency, the prime glory, (as certainly his new creature is his best creature,) the first-fruits, or the devoted part of all his creatures; by [p] having Christ formed in us; by partaking the Divine nature, the incorruptible seed, the seed of God; by being born of God, spirit of Spirit, as of earthly parents we are born flesh of flesh. When my eternal blessedness lies upon it, had I not need to be sure that I hit the true meaning of these scriptures? especially, that at least I fall not below it, and rest not in any thing short of what Scripture makes indispensably necessary to my entering into the kingdom of God? I professedly wave controversies; and 'tis pity so practical a business as this I am now upon, and upon which salvation so much depends, should ever have been encumbered with any controversy. And therefore, though I shall not digress so far, as to undertake a particular and distinct handling here of this work of God upon the soul, yet I shall propound something in general, touching the change necessarily previous to this blessedness, (wherein that necessity is evidenceable from the nature of this blessedness which is the business I have in hand,) that I hope will pass among Christians for acknowledged truth, not liable to dispute, though the Lord knows it be little considered. My design being rather to awaken souls to the consideration of known and agreed things, than to perplex them about unknown. Consider therefore:

First, That the Holy Scriptures, in the forementioned and other like passages, do plainly hold forth the necessity of a real change to be made in the temper and dispositions of the soul; and not a relative only, respecting its state. This cannot be doubted by any that acknowledge a real inherent depravation, propagated in the nature of man. No, nor denied by them that grant such a corruption to be general and continued among men; whether by imitation only, or what way soever. And willing I am to meet men upon their own principles and concessions, however erroneous or short of the truth they may be, while they are yet improvable to their own advantage. Admit that regeneration, or the new-birth includes a change of our relation and state Godward; doth it therefore exclude an intrinsic, subjective change of the inclinations and tendencies of the soul? And if it did, yet other terms are more peculiarly appropriate to, and most expressly point out, this very change alone; as that of conversion, or of turning to God; of being renewed in the spirit of the mind; of putting off the old man that is corrupt by, &c. and putting on the new man, which is created in righteousness and true holiness, &c. of partaking the Divine nature. It matters not if this or that expression be understood by some, more principally in another sense, the thing itself, of which we speak, is as clearly expressed, and as urgently pressed, (as there was cause) as any other matter whatsoever throughout the whole book of God. But men are slower of belief, as to this great article of the Christian doctrine, than to most (I might say any) other. This truth more directly assaults the strong holds of the devil in the hearts of men, and is of more immediate tendency to subvert his kingdom; therefore they are most unwilling to have it true, and most hardly believe it. Here they are so madly bold, as to give the lie to all divine revelations; and though they are never so plainly told without holiness none shall see God, they will yet maintain the contrary belief and hope, till "Go, ye cursed," vindicate the truth of God, and the flame of hell

c Eph. iv. 23. d Eph. iv 18.
e Chap. ii. 12. Rom. i. 28. 2 Pet. iii. Job xxi. 14. Psal. liii.
f John xv. g Rom. i. h Psal. xxvi. 1, 2.
i Psal. l. k Psal. li. l Eph. ii. 10.
m 2 Cor. v. 17. n Eph. iv. 23, 24. o Jam. i. 18.
p Gal. iv. 19. 2 Pet. i. 4. 1 Pet. i. John iii. 6.

be their eternal confutation. Lord! that so plain a thing will not enter into the hearts of men; that so urgent inculcations will not yet make them apprehend that their souls must be renewed or perish! that they will still go dreaming on with that mad conceit, that (whatever the word of God says to the contrary) they may yet with unsanctified hearts get to heaven! How deplorable is the case, when men have no other hope left them, but that the God of truth will prove false, and belie his word; yea, and overturn the nature of things to save them in their sins! Thou that livest under the gospel, hast thou any pretence for thy seeming ignorance in this matter? couldst thou ever look one quarter of an hour into the Bible, and not meet with some intimation of this truth? What was the ground of thy mistake? What hath beguiled thee into so mischievous a delusion? How could such an imagination have place in thy soul: that a child of wrath by nature could become a child of God without receiving a new nature; that so vast a change could be made in thy state, without any at all in the temper of thy spirit.

Secondly, Consider, that this change is in its own nature, and the design of God who works it, dispositive of the soul for blessedness.' Tis sufficiently evident from the consideration of the state itself of the unrenewed soul, that a change is necessary for this end; such a soul in which it is not wrought, when once its drowsy, stupifying slumber is shaken off, and its reflecting power awakened, must needs be a perpetual torment to itself. So far it is removed from blessedness, it is its own hell, and can fly from misery and death no faster than from itself. Blessedness composes the soul, reduces it to a consistency; it infers, or rather is, a self-satisfaction, a well-pleasedness and contentment with one's self, enriched and filled with the Divine fulness. Hence 'tis at rest, not as being pent in, but contentedly dwelling with itself, and keeping within its own bounds of its own accord. The unrenewed soul can no more contain itself within its own terms or limits, is as little self-consistent, as a raging flame, or an impetuous tempest. Indeed its own lusts perpetually, as so many vultures, rend and tear it; and the more when they want external objects: then as hunger, their fury is all turned inward; and they prey upon intestines, upon their own subject; but unto endless torment, not satisfaction. In what posture is this soul for rest and blessedness? The nature of this change sufficiently speaks its own design. 'Tis an introduction of the *primordia*, the *very principles*, of blessedness. And Scripture as plainly speaks the design of God: He regenerates to the undefiled inheritance; makes meet for it; works, forms, or fashions the soul unto that self-same thing, *viz.* to desire and groan after that blessed state; and consequently to acquiesce and rest therein. Therefore, vain man, that dreamest of being happy without undergoing such a change; how art thou trying thy skill to abstract a thing from itself! for the pre-required righteousness whereunto thou must be changed, and this blessedness, are in kind and nature the same thing, as much as a child and a man. Thou pretendest thou wouldst have that perfected which thou canst not endure should ever be begun; thou settest thyself to prevent and suppress what, in its own nature, and by divine ordination, tends to the accomplishment of thy own pretended desires. Thou wouldst have the tree without ever admitting the seed or plant: thou wouldst have heat, and canst not endure the least warmth: so besotted a thing is a carnal heart!

Thirdly, That inasmuch as this blessedness consists in the satisfactory sight and participation of God's own likeness, unto whom the soul is habitually averse, this change must chiefly stand in its becoming holy or godly, or in the alteration of its dispositions and inclinations as to God. Otherwise the design and end of it is not attained. We are required to follow peace with all men, (but here the accent is put,) and *holiness*, without which no man shall see God, Heb. xii. 14. 'Tis therefore a vain thing, in reference to what we have now under consideration, *viz.* the possibility of attaining this blessedness, to speak of any other changes that fall short of, or are of another kind from, the right disposition of heart Godward. This change we are now considering, is no other than the proper adequate impress of the gospel discovery upon men's spirits, as we have largely shown the righteousness is, in which it terminates. The sum of that discovery is, that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,[s] the proper import of it, therefore, is the actual reconciliation of the soul to God through Christ; a friendly well-affected posture of spirit towards God, our last end and highest good; and towards Christ, our only way, since the apostacy, of attaining and enjoying it. To rest therefore in any other good dispositions or endowments of mind, is as much besides the business, as impertinent to the present purpose, as if one designed to the government of a city, should satisfy himself that he hath the skill to play well on a lute, or he that intends physic, that he is well seen in architecture. The general scope and tenour of the gospel tells thee, O man, plainly enough, what the business is thou must intend (if thou wilfully overlook it not) in order to thy blessedness. 'Tis written to draw thee into[t] fellowship with the Father and the Son, that thy joy may be full. It aims at the bringing of thee into a state of blessedness in God through Christ; and is therefore the instrument by which God would form thy heart thereto; the seal by which to make the first impression of his image upon thee, which will then as steadily incline and determine thy soul towards him, as the magnetic touch ascertains the posture of the needle. Wherefore doth he there discover his own heart, but to melt, and win, and transform thine? The word of grace is the seed of the new creature. Through the exceeding great and precious promises, he makes souls partake of the Divine nature. Grace is, firstly, revealed to teach the denial of ungodliness, &c. Turn thy thoughts hither then, and consider what is there done upon thy soul by the gospel to attemper and conform it to God? Wherein has thy heart answered this its visible design and intendment? Thou art but in a delirious dream till thou seriously bethinkest thyself of this. For otherwise how can the aversion of thy heart from him escape thy daily observation? Thou canst not be without evidences of it. What pleasure dost thou take in retiring thyself with God; what care to redeem time only for converse with him? hadst thou not rather be any where else? In a time of vacancy from business and company, when thou hast so great a variety of things before thee, among which to choose an object for thy thoughts, do they not naturally fall upon any thing rather than God? Nor do thou think to shift off this by assigning the mere natural cause; for if there were not somewhat more in the matter, why is it not so with all? He upon whom this change had passed could say,[u] My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches.[x] My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.[y] How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with thee.[z] Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O God, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early, &c. Therefore plain it is, there is a sinful distemper to be wrought ont, an ungodly disposition of heart, which it concerns thee not to rest till thou see removed.

Fourthly, Consider, that to become godly, or this change of inclinations and dispositions towards God, is that which of all other the soul doth most strongly reluctate and strive against; and which therefore it undergoes with greatest difficulty and regret. 'Tis a horrid and amazing thing it should be so, but Scripture and experience leave it undoubted that so it is. What! that the highest excellency, the most perfect beauty, loveliness, and love itself, should so little attract a reasonable, spiritual being that issued thence? His own offspring so unkind! what more than monstrous unnaturalness is this, so to disaffect one's own original! 'Twere easy to accumulate and heap up considerations that would render this astonishingly strange. So things are reckoned upon several accounts, either as they are more rare and unfrequent, (which is the vulgar

q αυταρκεια.
r 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. 2 Cor. v. 5. Col. i. 12.
s 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.
t 1 John i. 1—4.
u Psal. lxiii. 5, 6.
x Psal. civ. 34.
y Psal. cxxxix. 17, 18.
z Isa. xxvi. 3.

way of estimating wonders,) or as their causes are of more difficult investigation; or (if they are moral wonders) as they are more unreasonable or causeless. Upon this last account,[a] Christ marvelled at the Jews' unbelief; and so is this hatred justly marvellous; as being [b] altogether without a cause. But thence to infer there is no such thing, were to dispute against the sun. No truth hath more of light and evidence in it, though none more of terror and prodigy. To how many thousand objects is the mind of man indifferent; can turn itself to this or that; run with facility all points of the compass, among the whole universe of beings: but assay only to draw it to God, and it recoils; thoughts and affections revolt, and decline all converse with that blessed object! Towards other objects it freely opens and dilates itself, as under the benign beams of a warm sun: there are placid, complacential emotions; amicable, sprightly converses and embraces. Towards God only it is presently contracted and shut up; life retires, and it becomes as a stone, cold, rigid, and impenetrable: the quite contrary to what is required, (which also those very precepts do vainly imply,) 'tis alive to sin,[c] to the world, to vanity; but crucified, mortified, dead to God and Jesus Christ.

The natures of many men that are harsh, fierce, and savage, admit of many cultivations and refinings; and by moral precept, the exercise and improvement of reason, with a severe animadversion and observance of themselves, they become mild, tractable, gentle, meek. The story of the physiognomist's guess at the temper of Socrates is known. But of all other, the disaffected soul is least inclinable ever to become good-natured towards God, wherein grace or holiness doth consist. Here 'tis most unpersuadable, never facile to this change. One would have thought no affection should have been so natural, so deeply inwrought into the spirit of man, as an affection towards the Father of spirits; but here he most of all discovers himself to be without natural affection: surely here is a sad proof, that such affection doth not ascend. The whole duty of man, as to the principle of it, resolves into love. That is the fulfilling of the law. As to its object; the two tables divide it between God and our neighbour; and accordingly divide that love. Upon those two branches whereof, love to God, and love to our neighbour, hang all the law and the prophets. The wickedness of the world hath killed this love at the very root, and indisposed the nature of man to all exercises of it, either way, whether towards God or his neighbour. It hath not only rendered man unmeet for holy communion with God, but in a great measure for civil society with one another. It hath destroyed good nature: made men false, envious, barbarous; turned the world, especially the dark places of the earth, where the light of the gospel shines not, into habitations of cruelty. But who sees not the enmity and disaffection of men's hearts towards God, is the more deeply rooted and less superable evil?

The beloved apostle gives us a plain and sad intimation how the case is, as to this, when he reasons thus; He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? He argues from the less to the greater; and this is the ground upon which his argument is built, that the loving of God is a matter of greater difficulty, and from which the spirit of man is more remote, than loving of his neighbour. And he withal insinuates an account why it is so, God's remoteness from our sense, which is indeed a cause, but no excuse: it is a peccant, faulty cause. For is our so gross sensuality no sin? that nothing should affect our hearts, but what we can see with our eyes? as if our sense were the only measure or judge of excellencies. We are not all flesh; what have we done with our souls? If we cannot see God with our eyes, why do we not with our minds? at least so much of him we might, as to discern his excellency above all things else. How come our souls to lose their dominion, and to be so slavishly subject to a ruling sense? But the reason less concerns our present purpose; that whereof it is the reason, that implied assertion, that men are in a less disposition to the love of God than their neighbours, is the sad truth we are now considering. There are certain homiletical virtues that much adorn and polish the nature of man, urbanity, fidelity, justice, patience of injuries, compassion towards the miserable, &c. and indeed without these, the world would break up, and all civil societies disband; if at least they did not in some degree obtain. But in the mean time men are at the greatest distance imaginable from any disposition to society with God. They have some love for one another, but none for him. And yet it must be remembered, that love to our neighbour, and all the consequent exertions of it, becoming duty by the divine law, ought to be performed as acts of obedience to God, and therefore ought to grow from the stock and root of a divine love; I mean, love to God. They are otherwise but spurious virtues, bastard fruits, (men gather not grapes of thorns, &c.) they grow from a tree of another kind; and whatever semblance they may have of the true, they want their constituent form, their life and soul. Though [d] love to the brethren is made a character of the regenerate state, of having passed from death to life; 'tis yet but a more remote, and is itself brought to trial by this higher and more immediate one, and which is more intimately connatural to the new creature, even the love of God; [e] By this we know we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. A respect to God [f] specifies every virtue and duty. Whatever is loved and served, and not in him and for him, (*servato ordine finis*, as the school phrase is,) becomes an idol; and that love and service is idolatry. And what a discovery is here of disaffection to God; that in the exercise of such (the abovementioned) virtues, one single act shall be torn from itself, from its specifying moral form, only to leave out him. A promise shall be kept, but without any respect to God, for even the promises made to him are broken without any scruple. That which is another's shall be rendered to him; but God shall not be regarded in the business. An alms given, for the Lord's sake left out. That which concerns my neighbour often done, but what concerns God therein, as it were, studiously omitted. This is what he that runs may read, that though the hearts of men are not to one another as they should, they are much more averse towards God.

Men are easier of acquaintance towards one another, they slide insensibly into each other's bosoms; even the most churlish, morose natures, are wrought upon by assiduous repeated kindnesses, (*gutta cavat lapidem*,) &c. as often-falling drops at length wear and work into very stones; towards God their hearts are more impenetrable than rocks, harder than adamants. He is seeking with some an acquaintance all their days: they live their whole age under the gospel, and yet are never won. They hearken to one another, but are utterly unpersuadable towards God; as the deaf adder that hears not the voice of the charmer, though charming never so wisely. The clearest reason, the most powerful arguments, move them not; no nor the most insinuative allurements, the sweetest breathings of love: [g] "How often would I have gathered thee, as the hen her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." God draws with the cords of a man, with the bands of love; but they still perversely keep at an unkind distance. Men use to believe one another, (were there no credit given to each other's words, and some mutual confidence in one another, there could be no human converse, all must affect solitude, and dwell in dens and deserts as wild beasts,) but how incredulous are they of all divine revelations, though testified with never so convincing evidence! Who hath believed our report! The word of the eternal God is regarded (O amazing wickedness) as we would the word of a child or a fool; no sober, rational man, but his narrations, promises, or threatenings, are more reckoned of. Men are more reconcilable to one another when enemies, more constant when friends. How often doth the power of a conquering enemy, and the distress of the conquered, work a submission on this part, and a remission on that. How often are haughty spirits stooped by a series of calamities, and made ductile; proud arrogants formed, by necessity and misery, into humble supplicants, so as to lie prostrate

a Mark vi. 6.
b John xv. 25.
c Rom. vi. 11.
d 1 John iii. 14.
e Chap. v. 2.
f Proinde virtutes quas sibi videtur habere, nisi ad Deum retulerit, etiam ipsa vitia sunt potius quam virtutes. Aug. de Civit. Dei, l. 19. c. 25.
g Matt. xxiii. 37. See Psal. lxxi. 8—13. Prov. i. 20—24, &c. Hos. xi. 4.

at the feet of a man that may help or hurt them; while still the same persons retain indomitable unyielding spirits towards God, under their most afflictive pressure. Though his gracious nature and infinite fulness promise the most certain and liberal relief, 'tis the remotest thing from their thoughts to make any address to him. [h]They cry because of the oppression of the mighty, but none says, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night? rather perish under their burthens than look towards God, when his own visible hand is against them, or upon them, and their lives at his mercy; they stand it out to the last breath; and are more hardly humbled than consumed; sooner burn than weep; shrivelled up into ashes sooner than melted into tears; [i]scorched with great heat, yet repent not to give glory to God; gnaw their tongues for pain, and yet still more disposed to blaspheme than pray or sue for mercy. Dreadful thought! As to one another reconciliations among men are not impossible or unfrequent, even of mortal enemies; but they are utterly implacable towards God! Yet they often wrong one another: but they cannot pretend God ever did them the least wrong, yea, they have lived by his bounty all their days. They say to God, "Depart from us," yet he filleth their houses with good things. So true is the historian's[k] observation, "Hatred is sharpest where most unjust."

Yea, when there seems at least to have been a reconciliation wrought, are treacheries, covenant breakings, revolts, strangeness, so frequent among men towards one another, as from them towards God? How inconsistent with friendship is it, according to common estimate, to be always promising, never performing; upon any or no occasion to break off intercourses, by unkind alienations or mutual hostilities; to be morose, reserved each to other; to decline or disaffect each other's converse; to shut out one another from their hearts and thoughts. But how common and unregretted are these carriages towards the blessed God! It were easy to expatiate on this argument, and multiply instances of this greater disaffection. But in a word, what observing person may not see, what serious person would not grieve to see, the barbarous sooner putting on civility; the riotous, sobriety; the treacherous, fidelity; the morose, urbanity; the injurious, equity; the churlish and covetous, benignity and charity; than the ungodly man, piety and sincere devotedness unto God? Here is the principal wound and distemper sin hath infected the nature of man with: though he have suffered a universal impairment, he is chiefly prejudiced in regard of his habitude and tendency towards God, and what concerns the duties of the first table. Here the breach is greatest, and here is the greatest need of repair. True it is, an inoffensive, winning deportment towards men, is not without its excellency, and necessity too. And it doth indeed unsufferably reproach Christianity, and unbecome a disciple of Christ; yea, it discovers a man not to be led by his Spirit, and so to be none of his; to indulge himself in immoral deportments towards men; to be undutiful towards superiors; unconversable towards equals; oppressive towards inferiors; unjust towards any. Yet is a holy disposition of heart towards God most earnestly and in the first place to be endeavoured, (which will then draw on the rest,) as having in it highest equity and excellency, and being of the most immediate necessity to our blessedness.

Fifthly, Consider, that there may be some gradual tendencies, or fainter essays, towards godliness, that fall short of real godliness, or come not up to that thorough change and determination of heart Godward, that is necessary to blessedness. There may be a returning, but not to the Most High,[l] and wherein men may be (as the prophet immediately subjoins) like a deceitful bow, not fully bent, that will not reach the mark; they come not home to God. Many may be almost persuaded, and even within reach of heaven, not far from the kingdom of God; may seek to enter, and not be able; their hearts being somewhat inclinable, but more averse; for they can only be unable as they are unwilling. The soul is in no possibility of taking up a complacential rest in God, till it be brought to this, to move toward him spontaneously, and with, as it were, a self-motion. And then is it self-moved towards God, when its preponderating bent is towards him. As a massy stone that one attempts to displace, if it be heaved at till it preponderate, it then moves out by its own weight; otherwise it reverts, and lies where and as it did before. So 'tis with many men's hearts, all our lifting at them is but the rolling of the returning stone; they are moved, but not removed: sometimes they are lifted at in the public ministry of the word; sometimes by a private, seasonable admonition; sometimes God makes an affliction his minister; a danger startles them; a sickness shakes them; and they think to change their course: but how soon do they change those thoughts, and are where they were! What enlightenings and convictions, what awakenings and terror, what remorses, what purposes, what tastes and relishes, do some find in their own hearts, that yet are blasted and come to nothing! How many miserable abortions after travailing pangs and throes, and fair hopes of a happy birth of the new creature! Often somewhat is produced that much resembles it, but is not it. No gracious principle but may have its counterfeit in an ungracious heart; whence they deceive not others only, but themselves, and think verily they are true converts while they are yet in their sins. How many wretched souls, that lie dubiously struggling a long time under the contrary alternate impressions of the gospel on the one hand, and the present evil world on the other; and give the day to their own sensual inclinations at last! In some degree,[m] escape the corruptions of the world, by the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but are again entangled and overcome, so as their latter end is worse than their beginning. Such a man is so far from being advantaged by his former faint inclinations towards God, that he would be found at last under this aggravated wickedness beyond all other men; that when others wandered from God through inadvertency and inconsideration, this man will be found to have been his enemy upon deliberation, and against the various strivings of his convinced heart to the contrary. This is more eminently victorious and reigning enmity; such a one takes great pains to perish. Alas 'tis not a slight touch, an overly superficial tincture, some evanid sentiments of piety, a few good thoughts or wishes, that bespeak a new man, a new creature. 'Tis a thorough prevailing change, that quite alters the habitual posture of a man's soul, and determines it towards God, so as that the after-course of his life may be capable of that denomination, a living to God, a living after the spirit; that exalts the love of God into that supremacy in him, that it becomes the governing principle of his life, and the reason and measure of his actions; that as he loves him above all things else, better than his own life, so he can truly (though possibly sometimes with a doubtful, trembling heart) resolve the ordinary course of his daily walking and practice into that love, as the directive principle of it. I pray, I read, I hear, because I love God. I desire to be just, sober, charitable, meek, patient, because I love God. This is the perfection and end of the love of God, (therefore that must needs be the principle hereof,) obedience to his will.[n] Herein appears that power of godliness denied (God knows) by too many that have the form: the spirit of love, power, and of a sound mind. That only is a sound mind in which such love rules in such power. Is not love to God often pretended by such that, whenever it comes to an actual competition, discover they love their own flesh a great deal more? that seldom ever cross their own wills to do his, or hazard their own fleshly interest to promote his interest? We may justly say, (as the apostle, in a case fitly enough rendeible hither,)[o] how dwells the love of God in that man? Notwithstanding such a subdued ineffectual love to God, such a one shall be denominated and dealt with as an enemy. 'Tis not likely any man on earth hates God so perfectly as those in hell. And is not every quality, not yet perfect in its kind, and that is yet growing more and more intense, in the meantime allayed by some degree of its contrary? Yet that over-mastered degree denominates not its subject, nor ought a man from

h Job xxxv. i Rev. xvi.
k Tacitus speaking of the hatred of Tiberius and Augusta against Germanicus, the causers whereof, saith he, were acriores, quia iniquè.
l Hos. vii. 16. m 2 Pet. ii.
n John ii. 5. Τετελείωται. o 2 Tim. iii. 5. chap. i. 7.

such a supposed love to God to have the name of a lover of him. That principle is only capable of denominating the man, that is prevalent and practical, that hath a governing influence on his heart and life. He in whom the love of God hath not such power and rule, whatever his fainter inclinations may be, is an ungodly man.

And now methinks these several considerations compared and weighed together, should contribute something to the settling of right thoughts in the minds of secure sinners, touching the nature and necessity of this heart-change; and do surely leave no place for the forementioned vain pretences that occasioned them. For (to give you a summary view of what hath been propounded in those foregoing considerations) it now plainly appears,—That the holy Scripture requires in him that shall enjoy this blessedness, a mighty change of the very temper of his soul, as that which must dispose him thereto; and which must therefore chiefly consist, in the right framing of his heart towards God; towards whom it is most fixedly averse, and therefore not easily susceptible of such a change. And that any slighter or more feeble inclination toward God will not serve the turn; but such only whereby the soul is prevalently and habitually turned to him. And then what can be more absurd or unsavoury, what more contrary to Christian doctrine, or common reason, than instead of this necessary heart-change, to insist upon so poor a plea, as that mentioned above, as the only ground of so great a hope? How empty and frivolous will it appear in comparison of this great soul-transforming change, if we severally consider the particulars of it. As for orthodoxy in doctrinals, 'tis in itself a highly laudable thing; and in respect of the fundamentals (for therefore are they so called) indispensably necessary to blessedness. As that cannot be without holiness, so nor holiness without truth.[p] But, (besides that this is that which every one pretends to,) is every thing which is necessary sufficient? As to natural necessity, (which is that we now speak to,) reason and intellectual nature are also necessary; shall therefore all men, yea, and devils too, be saved? Besides, are you sure you believe the grand articles of the Christian religion? Consider a little,—the grounds and effects of that pretended faith.

First, Its grounds. Every assent is as the grounds of it are. Deal truly here with thy soul. Can you tell wherefore you are a Christian? What are thy inducements to be of this religion? are they not such as are common to thee with them that are of a false religion? (I am here happily prevented by a worthy author,[q] to which I recommend thee, but at the present a little bethink thyself.) Is it not possible thou mayest be a Christian for the same reasons for which one may be a Jew, or a Mahometan, or a mere pagan? as, *viz.* education, custom, law, example, outward advantage, &c. Now consider, if thou find this upon inquiry to be thy case, the motives of thy being a Christian admit of being cast together into this form of reasoning. That religion which a man's forefathers were of, which is established by law, or generally obtains in the country where he lives, the profession whereof most conduces to, or best consists with, his credit, and other outward advantages, that religion he is to embrace as the true religion. But such I find the Christian religion to be to me; therefore, &c. The proposition here is manifestly false; for it contains grounds common to all religions, publicly owned, and professed throughout the world; and sure all cannot be true: and hence the conclusion (though materially considered it be true, yet) formally considered, as a conclusion issuing from such premises, must needs be false. And what then is become of the orthodoxy; when, as to the formal object of thy faith, thou believest but as Mahometans and pagans do? when thou art of this faith, by fate or chance only, not choice or rational inducement?

Next, as to the effects of thy faith: let them be inquired into also, and they will certainly bear proportion to the grounds of it. The[r] Gospel is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes; to them that believe it not, it signifies nothing. The word of God received with a divine faith, as the word of God, works effectually upon all that so receive it, *i. e.* all that believe. What such efficacious workings of it hast thou felt upon thy soul? Certainly, its most connatural effect is that very change of heart, and inclination Godward, of which we have been speaking. What is so suitable to the gospel-revelation, as a good temper of heart Godward? And how absurd is it to introduce the cause on purpose to exclude its genuine inseparable effect! But evident it is, (though true faith cannot,) that superficial, irrational assent, in which alone many glory, may too well consist with a disaffected heart towards God: and can it then signify any thing towards thy blessedness? Sure to be so a solifidian is to be a nullifidian. Faith not working by love is not faith; at least profits nothing. For thy outward conformity in the solemnities of worship, 'tis imputable to so corrupt motives and principles, that the thing itself, abstractively considered, can never be thought characteristical and distinguishing of the heirs of blessedness. The worst of men may perform the best of outward duties. Thy most glorious boasted virtues, if they grow not from the proper root, love to God, they are but splendid sins, as above appears, and hath been truly said of old. Thy repentance is either true or false; if true, it is that very change of mind and heart I speak of, and is therefore eminently signalized by that note, 'tis repentance towards God; if false, God will not be mocked. For thy regeneration in baptism; [s]what can it avail thee, as to this blessedness, if the present temper of thy heart be unsuitable thereto? Didst thou ever know any that held, that all the baptized should be saved? Will thy infant sanctity excuse the enmity and disaffection to God of thy riper age?

In short, if we seclude this work of God upon the soul, how inconsiderable is the difference between the Christian and the heathen world! Wherein can it then be understood to lie, but in some ineffectual notions, and external observances? And can it be thought that the righteous, holy God, will make so vast a difference in the states of men hereafter, who differ so little here? or that it shall so highly recommend a man to God, that it was his lot to be born, and to have lived upon such a turf or soil, or in such a clime or part of the world? His gracious providence is thankfully to be acknowledged and adored, that hath assigned us our stations under the Gospel: but then it must be remembered, the Gospel hath the goodness, not of the end, but of the means; which, as by our improvement or non-improvement, it becomes effectual or ineffectual, doth acquit from, or aggravate, condemnation: and that it works not as a charm or spell, we know not how, or why, or when we think not of it; but by recommending itself, in the demonstration and power of the Holy Ghost, to our reason and consciences, to our wills and affections,[t] till we be delivered up into the mould or form of it. Surely were it so slight a matter, as too many fondly dream, that must distinguish between them that shall be saved and shall perish, there would need no striving to enter in at the strait gate; and the disciple's question would never have been, Who then shall be saved? but rather, Who shall not be saved? nor would it have been resolved by our Saviour into the immediate power of him alone,[u] to whom all things are possible, that any are saved at all; nor have been so earnestly asserted by him, that [x]none could come to him but whom his Father draws. The obvious import of which passages is such, that if careless sinners could once obtain of themselves seriously to consider them, methinks they would find little rest in their spirits, till they might discern a work wrought there, in some degree worthy of God; an impression some way proportionable to the power of an almighty arm, and that might speak God its author. For notwithstanding the soul's natural capacities before asserted and inferred, its [y]moral incapacity,

p John xvii 17. q Mr. Pink's Trial of sincere love to Christ.
r Rom. i. 16. 1 Thes. ii. 13. s Heb vi. t Rom. vi. 17.
u Matt. xix. x 1 John vi
y That moral incapacity is also in some sense truly natural, that is, in the same sense wherein we are said to be by nature the children of wrath. Eph. ii. 3. Therefore human nature must be considered as created by God, and as propagated by man. In the former sense, as God is the author of it, 'tis taken in this distinction, of moral and natural impotancy, which needs not further explication; yet you may take this account of it from Dr. Twisse. Impotentia faciendi quod Deo gratum est et acceptum, non est impotentia naturæ, sed morum. Nulla elegim nobis deest facultas naturæ per peccatum originale, juxta illud Augustini. Nulli sanocendæ veritatis absulit facultatem. Adhuc remanet potentia, qua facere possumus quicunque volumus. Vind. l. 3. errat. 9. sect. 6. Naturalem potentiam, quidibet egendi pro arbitrio ipsorum, dicimus ad omnes transmitti, non autem potentiam moralem. Vindic. Crimina'. 3. S. 1. diar. 2. chap. 3.

I mean its wicked aversion from God, is such as none but God himself can overcome. Nor is that aversion the less culpable, for that it is so hardly overcome, but the more. 'Tis an aversion of will; and who sees not, that every man is more wicked, according as his will is more wickedly bent? Hence his impotency or inability to turn to God, is not such as that he cannot turn if he would? but it consists in this, that he is not willing. He affects a distance from God. Which shows therefore the necessity still of this change. For the possibility of it, and the encouragement (according to the methods wherein God is wont to dispense his grace) the sinner hath to hope and endeavour it, will more fitly fall into consideration elsewhere.

CHAPTER XIII.

Fourth Inference. That the soul in which such a change is wrought, restlessly pursues this blessedness till it be attained. Fifth Inference. That the knowing of God, and conformity to him, are satisfying things, and do now in a degree satisfy, according to the measure wherein they are attained. Sixth Inference. That the love of God towards his people is great, that hath designed for them so great, and even a satisfying good.

4. Infer. 'Tis further to be inferred, that a soul wherein such a change is wrought, pursues this blessedness with restless, supreme desire, till it attain to the fulness thereof. We have here a plainly implied description of the posture and tendency of such a soul (even of a sanctified holy soul, which had therefore undergone this blessed change) towards this state of blessedness. I shall (saith he) be satisfied with thy likeness, *q. d.* I cannot be satisfied otherwise. We have seen how great a change is necessary to dispose the soul to this blessedness, which being once wrought, nothing else can satisfy it. Such a thing is this blessedness; (I speak now of so much of it as is previous and conducing to satisfaction, or of blessedness materially considered, the Divine glory to be beheld and participated;) 'tis of that nature, it makes the soul restless, it lets it not be quiet, after it hath got some apprehension of it, till it attain the full enjoyment. The whole life of such a one, is a continual seeking God's face. So attractive is this glory of a subject rightly disposed to it: while others crave corn and wine, this is the sum of the holy soul's desires, [a] Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance, &c. The same thing is the object of its present desires that shall be of its eternal satisfaction and enjoyment. This is now its one thing, the request insisted on, [b] to behold the beauty of the Lord, &c. and while in any measure it doth so, yet 'tis still looking for his blessed hope, still hoping to be like him, see him as he is. The expectation of satisfaction in this state, implies the restless working of desire till then; for what is this satisfaction, but the fulfilling of our desires, the perfecting of the soul's motions in a complacential rest? Motion and rest do exactly correspond each to other. Nothing can naturally rest in any place, to which it was not before naturally inclined to move. And the rest is proportionably more composed and steady, according as the motion was stronger and more vigorous. By how much the heavier any body is, so much the stronger and less resistible is its motion downward: and then accordingly it is less moveable when it hath attained its resting place. 'Tis therefore a vanity and contradiction, to speak of the soul's being satisfied in that which it was not before desirous of.[c] And that state which it shall ultimately and eternally acquiesce in, (with a rest that must therefore be understood to be most composed and sedate,) towards it must it needs move with the strongest and most unsatisfied desire, a desire that is supreme, prevalent, and triumphant over all other desires, and over all obstructions to itself; least capable of diversion, or of pitching upon any thing short of the term aimed at. Ask therefore the holy soul, What is thy supreme desire? and so far as it understands itself, it must answer, "To see and partake the Divine glory; to behold the blessed face of God, till his likeness be transfused through all my powers, and his entire image be perfectly formed in me: present to my view what else you will, I can be satisfied in nothing else but this." Therefore this leaves a black note upon those wretched souls that are wholly strangers to such desires; that would be better satisfied to dwell always in dust; that shun the blessed face of God as hell itself; and to whom the most despicable vanity is a more desirable sight than that of Divine glory. Miserable souls! Consider your state: can that be your blessedness which you desire not? or do you think God will receive any into his blessed presence, to whom it shall be a burden? Methinks, upon the reading of this you should presently doom yourselves, and see your sentence written in your breast. Compare your hearts with this holy man's; see if there be any thing like this in the temper of your spirits; and never think well of yourselves till you find it so.

5. Infer. The knowledge of God, and conformity to him, are in their own nature apt to satisfy the desires of the soul, and even now actually do so, in the measure wherein they are attained. Some things are not of a satisfying nature; there is nothing tending to satisfaction in them. And then the continual heaping together of such things, doth no more towards satisfaction, than the accumulating of mathematical points would towards the compacting of a solid body; or the multiplication of cyphers only, to the making of a sum. But what shall one day satisfy, hath in itself a power and aptitude thereto. The act, whenever it is, supposes the power. Therefore the hungry craving soul, that would fain be happy, but knows not how, needs not spend its days in making uncertain guesses, and fruitless attempts and trials: it may fix its hovering thoughts; and upon assurance here given, say, I have now found at last where satisfaction may be had; and have only this to do, to bend all my powers hither, and intend this one thing, the possessing myself of this blessed rest; earnestly to endeavour, and patiently to wait for it. Happy discovery! welcome tidings! I now know which way to turn my eye, and direct my pursuit. I shall no longer spend myself in dubions, toilsome wanderings, in anxious, vain inquiry. I have found! I have found! blessedness is here. If I can but get a lively, efficacious sight of God, I have enough—Show me the Father, and it sufficeth. Let the weary, wandering soul bethink itself, and retire to God; he will not mock thee with shadows, as the world hath done. This is eternal life, to know him the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Apart from Christ thou canst not know nor see him with fruit and comfort; but the gospel revelation (which is the revelation of God in Christ) gives thee a lovely prospect of him. His glory shines in the face of Jesus Christ; and when by beholding it thou art changed into the same likeness, and findest thyself gradually changing more and more from glory to glory, thou wilt find thyself accordingly in a gradual tendency towards satisfaction and blessedness: that is, do but seriously set thyself to study and contemplate the being and attributes of God; and then look upon him as through the Mediator, he is willing to be reconciled to thee, and become thy God; and so long let thine eye fix and dwell here, till it affect thy heart, and the proper impress of the gospel be by the Spirit of the Lord instamped upon it; till thou find thyself wrought to a compliance with his holy will, and his image formed in thee; and thou shalt soon experience thou art entering into his rest; and wilt relish a more satisfying pleasure in this blessed change, than all thy worldly, sensual enjoyments did ever afford thee before.

Surely, if the perfect vision and perception of his glorious likeness will yield a complete satisfaction at last, the initial and progressive tendencies towards the former will proportionably infer the latter. 'Tis obvious hence to collect, who are in this world (ordinarily and, *cæteris paribus*, where more unusual violent temptations hinder not) the most satisfied and contented persons; even those that have most of the clarifying sights of God, and thence partake most of his image (indeed Scripture only vouchsafes the name to such sights of God; [d] He that doth evil hath not seen God.) Such as have most of a godly frame wrought

a Psal. iv. b Psal. xxvii.

c Aptitudinally. I mean, and ex hypothesi, *i. e.* supposing the knowledge of the object: otherwise as to actual explicit desires, God doth give us beyond what we can ask or think. But 'tis impossible the soul should rest satisfied in that, which upon knowledge it is undesirous of, and doth or would reject.

d 1 John iii. 6. 3 John 11

into their spirits, and that have hearts most attempered and conformed to God; these are the most contented persons in the world. Content is part of the gain that attends godliness; it concurring, renders the other a great gain; 'godliness with contentment: the form of expression discovers how connatural contentment is to godliness; as if they were not to be mentioned apart. Godliness, as if he had said, is a very gainful thing, but if you would comprehend the gainfulness of it fully, do not abstract too curiously, take in with it that which is of so near an alliance, that you will hardly know how to consider them apart; let its inseparable adjunct, contentment, go along with it, and you will find it a gainful thing indeed. The true knowledge of God so directly tends to holiness, and that to contentation, that it may be too evidently concluded, that a discontented person hath little of the one or the other, not much knowledge, and less grace; he is so far from being like God, that in the apostle's language above we may say, he hath not seen him. Doth that person know God, or hath ever seen him, that falls not into the dust, admiring so glorious a Majesty? that subjects not himself to him, with loyal affections, accounting it his only grand concernment to please and serve him? But the discontented person takes upon him, as if he were God alone, and as if he expected every creature to do him homage, and thought the creation were made for the pleasure and service of none but him. Hath that person ever seen God, that acknowledges him not a sufficient portion, a full, all-comprehending good? Hath he seen him, that sees not reason to trust him, to commit all his concernments to him? Hath he seen him that loves him not, and delights not in his love? Hath he seen him that quits not all for him, and abandons not every private interest to espouse his? And how evidently do these things tend to quiet and compose the soul! Discontent proceeds from idolizing thoughts of ourselves: 'tis rooted in self-conceit, in self-dependence, self-love, self-seeking, all which despicable idols (or that one great idol, *self*, thus variously served and idolized) one sight of the Divine glory would confound and bring to nothing. The sights of God melt the heart, break it under a sense of sin, and hence compose it to a meek, peaceful humility; but the discontented spirit is an unbroken, proud, imperious spirit. The sights of God purify the soul, refine it from the dross of this vile world, make it daily aspire to a conformity unto the pure and spiritual nature of God. But a discontented spirit is a sensual, terrene spirit? (for what but such objects are the usual matter of most men's discontents?) taking sensuality in its just latitude, 'tis a low dunghill spirit, fit for nothing but to rake and scrabble in the dirt.

I insist upon this, apprehending (what deserves more lamentations than it hath observation) that too many annex a profession of eminent godliness and spirituality to an indulged querulous, impatient temper of spirit; join a splendid appearance of piety, to an unreformed perverse frowardness; (which agree as well as a jewel of gold to a swine's snout;) nothing pleases them, their mercies are not worth the acknowledgment; their afflictions intolerable, not to be borne. They fall out and quarrel with all occurrences, actions, events; neither man nor God doth any thing good in their sight. The world is not well governed; nothing falls out well as to themselves. What can possibly be thought on more repugnant to the knowledge of God, the grand design of all religion, and the very spirit of the Gospel, than this temper? Which way do these tend and aim, but to lead souls to blessedness; to bring them into a peaceful, happy, satisfied state and frame? And must we, because that end cannot be attained here, therefore go the quite contrary way? or pretend we are going to heaven with our backs turned upon it? Sure the discoveries God now makes of himself to us, and by which he impresses his likeness upon his own: (though they ultimately design our satisfaction and blessedness in heaven, as intermediate thereunto;) they aim at the bringing us into a heaven upon earth; to form us unto a life agreeable, and that hath analogy with that of heaven; unto which nothing is more analogous in our present state, than that peace and serenity which result from Divine knowledge and holiness; nothing more inconsistent, than a peevish, fretful, turbulent spirit. The one is a participation of a bright and mild light from heaven; the other, of a dark and raging fire from hell. 'Tis only God's face, his glorious likeness reflected on our souls, that shall satisfy hereafter, and make heaven heaven. He doth not now wholly conceal himself from us, not altogether hide his face. The shining of the same face (in what degree he now vouchsafes it) will make this earth a heaven too. One glance towards him may transmit a lively pleasant lustre upon our spirits,[f] they looked on him, and were lightened. And we live in the expectation of clearer and more impressive eternal visions. It will become us to express a present satisfiedness, proportionable to our present sights and expectations; and to endeavour daily to see more, and to be more like God; that we may be daily more and more satisfied; while we cannot yet attain, to be making gradual approaches towards that blessed state. By how much any have more of the vision and likeness of God in their present state, so much they approach nearer unto satisfaction.

6. Infer. We infer; The love of God to his people is great, which hath designed for them so great, and even a satisfying good. We cannot overlook the occasion this doctrine gives us, to consider and contemplate awhile the love of God. If this shall be the blessedness of his saints, 'tis a great love that shall be the spring and source of it. Two things here before our eyes discover the greatness of his love:—that it designs satisfaction to the persons meant; and—that they shall be satisfied with the Divine vision and likeness.

1. It designs their satisfaction. This is as far as love can go. 'Tis love to the uttermost: it doth not satisfy itself till it satisfies them. 'Tis love to spare an enemy, to relieve a stranger; but to satisfy for ever them that were both, this sure exceeds all the wonted measures of love. Much love is shown in the forgiveness of sin, in the supply of necessities; but herein (as the apostle speaks in another case) is the love of God perfected, as to its exercise: it hath now perfectly attained its end, when it hath not left so much as a craving desire, not a wish unsatisfied; the soul cannot say, "I wish it were better; O that I had but this one thing more to complete my happiness." It hath neither pretence nor inclination to think such a thought. Divine love is now at rest. It was travailling (big with gracious designs) before; it hath now delivered itself. It would rather create new heavens every moment, than not satisfy; but it hath now done it to the full; the utmost capacity of the soul is filled up; it can be no happier than it is. This is love's triumph over all the miseries, wants, and desires of a languishing soul: the appropriate peculiar glory of Divine love. If all the excellencies of the whole creation besides were contracted into one glorious creature, it would never be capable of this boast, I have satisfied one soul. The love of God leaves none unsatisfied, but the proud despisers of it. Now is the eternal sabbath of love. Now it enters into rest, having finished all its works; it views them over now with delight, for, lo! they are all good: its works of pardon, of justification, and adoption; its works of regeneration, of conversion, and sanctification; its establishing, quickening, comforting works; they are all good, good in themselves, and in this their end, the satisfaction and repose of blessed souls. Now Divine love puts on the crown, ascends the throne, and the many myriads of glorified spirits fall down about it and adore; all profess to owe to it the satisfying pleasures they all enjoy. Who can consider the unspeakable satisfaction of those blessed spirits, and not also reflect upon this exalted greatness of Divine love!

2. 'Tis again great love, if we consider wherewith they shall be satisfied. The sight and participation of the Divine glory, his face, his likeness, his represented and impressed glory. There may be great love that never undertakes nor studies to satisfy all the desires of the persons we cast our love upon, especially where nothing will satisfy but high and great matters. The love of God knows no difficulties; nor can be overset. The greater the performance or vouchsafement, the more suitable to Divine love. It hath resolved to give the soul a plenary satisfaction, perfectly to content all its desires; and since nothing else can do it, but an eternal beholding of the glorious face of

e 1 Tim. vi. 6.

f Psal. xxxiv. 5.

the Divine Majesty, and a transformation into his own likeness, that shall not be withheld. Yea, it hath created refined, enlarged its capacity on purpose, that it might be satisfied with nothing less. Great love may sometimes be signified by a glance; the offered view of a willing face. Thus our Lord Jesus invites his church to discover her own love, and answer his, Let me see thy face, &c. Cant. ii. 14. Love is not more becomingly expressed or gratified, than by *mutual looks, ubi amor, ibi oculus.* How great is that love that purposely lays aside the vail, that never turns away its own, nor permits the aversion of the beholder's eye throughout eternity. Now we see in a glass; then face to face, as if never weary of beholding on either part; but on that part the condescension lies, is the transcendant admirable love. That a generous, beneficent, the other (till it be satisfied here) a craving, indigent love. And how inexpressible a condescension is this! Poor wretches! many of whom, possibly, were once so low, that a strutting grandee would have thought himself affronted by their look, and have met with threatening rebukes their overdaring venturous eye; lo, now they are permitted (to stand before princes; that's a mean thing) to feed their eyes with Divine glory, to view the face of God. He sets them before his face for ever. And that eternal vision begets in them an eternal likeness; they behold and partake glory at once, that their joy may be full. They behold not a glorious God with deformed souls; that would render them a perpetual abomination and torment to themselves. Love cannot permit that heaven should be their affliction; that they should have cause to loath and be weary of themselves in that presence. It satisfies them, by clothing and filling them with glory; by making them partake of the Divine likeness, as well as behold it. 'Tis reckoned a great expression of a complying love, but to give a picture; when the parties loved only permit themselves to view in a mute representation a vicarious face. This is much more a vital image, (as before,) God's own livingness propagated in the soul; the inchoation of it is called the Divine love, the seed of God. What amazing love is this, of the great God to a worm! not to give over till he have assimilated it to his own glory; till it appear as a ray of light begotten of the Father of lights! [g] Every one, saith the apostle, that doth righteousness is born of him; and then it follows, [h] behold what manner of love—to be the sons of God; to be like him, to see him as he is, &c. How great a word is that (spoken in reference to our present state)—to make us partakers of *his* holiness. And (as well it might) 'tis instanced as an effect and argument of love, (for sure chastening itself, abstracted from that end of it, doth not import love,) whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,—and then by and by, in the same series and line of discourse, is added, —to make us partakers of his holiness. Love always either supposes similitude, or intends it; and is sufficiently argued by it either way. And sure, the love of God cannot be more directly expressed, than in his first intending to make a poor soul like him, while he loves it with compassion; and then imprinting and perfecting that likeness, that he may love it with eternal delight. Love is here the first and the last, the beginning and end in all this business.

CHAPTER XIV.

7. Inference. That since this blessedness is limited to a qualified subject, "I in righteousness," the unrighteous are necessarily left excluded. 8. Inference. That righteousness is no vain thing, inasmuch as it hath so happy an issue, and ends so well.

7. Infer. CONSIDERING this blessedness is not common, but limited to a qualified subject, "I in righteousness," a person clothed in righteousness; it evidently follows, the unrighteous are necessarily excluded and shut out, can have no part nor portion in this blessedness. The same thing that the apostle tells us, without an inference; [a] Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, &c. Intimating that to be a most confessed known thing: know ye not? is it possible ye can be ignorant of this? The natural necessity of what hath been here inferred, hath been argued already from the consideration of the nature of this blessedness. The legal necessity of it, arising from the Divine will and law, is that I mainly intend at present. By such a necessity also, they are excluded, who by God's rule (according to which the supreme judgment must be managed) shall be found unrighteous: those that come not up to the terms of the gospel-covenant; never accepted the offers, nor submitted to the commands of it; and that hence consequently are unrelated to Christ, and ununited to him; no way capable of advantage by his most perfect and all-sufficient righteousness, that alone fully answers all the exactions and demands of the covenant of works: and so, who are at last found unrighteous by the old law and the new, the law both of the Creator and Redeemer too. There is the same necessity these should be excluded, as that God should be just and true. The word is gone forth of his mouth in righteousness, and cannot return. He did not dally with sinners, when he settled those constitutions, whence this necessity results. He is not a man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent. A heathen understood so much of the nature of God.

I have thought sometimes, with much wonder, of the stupid folly of unsanctified hearts; they are even confounded in their own wishes; and would have (in order to their security) they know not what. Were the question faithfully put to the very heart of such a one, What wouldst thou have done in order to thy eternal safety from Divine wrath and vengeance? would not the answer be, O that God would re-call those severe constitutions he hath made; and not insist so strictly on what he hath required in the gospel, in order to the salvation of sinners. But foolish wretch! dost thou know what thou sayest? wouldst thou have God repeal the Gospel, that thou mayst be the more secure? in what a case art thou then? Hast thou no hope if the gospel stand in force? what hope wilt thou have if it do not? Must the hopes of all the world be ruined to establish thine? and yet leave them involved in the common ruin too? What but the gospel gives the least hope to apostate sinners? There is now hope for thee in the gospel-promise, if thou return to God. [b] Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon. But take away the gospel, and where art thou? Were it possible for thee to repent, and become a new man; what settles the connexion between repentance and salvation, but the gospel-promise? Will the violated law of works accept thy repentance instead of obedience? Doth it not expressly preclude any such expectation? Doth it give any ground to look for any thing but death after sin? Thou must therefore fly to the Gospel, or yield thyself lost. And know, it contains none but faithful and true sayings, that have more stability in them than the foundations of heaven and earth: therefore expect nothing to be altered for thy sake. The gospel-constitution was settled long before thou wast born: thou comest too late with thy exceptions (if thou hadst any) against it. Remember therefore this is one of the unalterable determinations of this gospel, without holiness thou shalt never see God, or (which amounts to the same) thou canst not behold his face but in righteousness. There is no word in all the Bible of more certain truth than this. In this also how apt are sinners foolishly to entangle themselves! The Gospel is true, and to be believed, till they meet with something that crosses them, and goes against the hair, and then they hope it is not so. But vain man! if once thou shake the truth of God, what wilt thou stay thyself upon? Is God true when he promises? and is he not as true when he threatens? If that be a true saying, "Say to the righteous, it shall be well with him,"—is not that as much to be regarded, "Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him? The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Are not these of equal authority? If thou hadst any reason to hope thou mayst be happy though thou never be righteous; is there not as much reason to fear thou mightst be miserable though thou be; since the one is as much against the flat express word of God as the other? Let not thy love to sin betray thee out of all religion and thy wits together.

g 1 John ii. ult. h iii. 1. i Heb. xii.

a 1 Cor. vi. b Isa. lv.

Wherein wilt thou believe one upon the bare value of his word, that will lie to thee in any thing? Yea, and as it is the same authority that is affronted in every command, whence disobedience to one is a breach of all; so is the same veracity denied in every truth, and the disbelief of one belies all; and wilt thou believe him in any thing, thou hast proclaimed a liar in every thing? Therefore, so little hast thou gained by disbelieving the divine revelation in this thing, that thou hast brought thyself to this miserable dilemma; If the word of God be false, thou hast no foundation of any faith left thee; if it be true, it dooms thee to eternal banishment from his blessed face, while thou remainest in thy unrighteousness. It will not be thy advantage then to disbelieve this gospel-record, but to consider it, and take it to heart; 'twill prove never the less true at last, for that thou wilt not believe it; shall thy unbelief make the truth of God of none effect? And if thou wouldst but reasonably consider the case, methinks thou shouldst soon be convinced. Since thou acknowledgest (as I suppose thee to do) that there are two states of men in the other world, a state of blessedness, and a state of misery; and two sorts of men in this world, the righteous and the unrighteous; let thy reason and conscience now judge who shall be allotted to the one state, and who to the other. Sure, if thou acknowledge a righteous Judge of all to the world, thou canst not think he will turn men promiscuously into heaven or hell at random, without distinction; much less canst thou be so absurd and mad, as to think all the unrighteous shall be saved, and the righteous perish. And then what is left thee to judge but that which I am now urging upon thee, that when the righteous shall be admitted to the vision of God's blessed face, the unrighteous shall be driven forth into outer darkness.

It may be some here will be ready to say, "But to what purpose is all this, they were of the same mind before, and cannot think that any one would ever say the contrary." Nor do I think so either; but 'tis one thing not to believe a conclusion to be true, and another to profess a contrary belief; and one thing to believe a conclusion, another to think we believe it. Men often know not their own minds. In practical matters, 'tis best known what a man's belief is by his practice: for when any profess to believe this or that practical truth, relating to their salvation, if they believe it not practically, *i. e.* with such a belief as will command their suitable practice, it matters not what belief they are of, or whether they were of that judgment or no: yea, it will prove in the issue better for them they had been of another, when their own professed belief shall be urged against them. But let us consider a little, how in practical matters of less concernment we would estimate a man's belief. You meet a traveller upon the way, who tells you, the bridge over such an unpassable river is broken down, and that if you venture you perish; if you believe him, you return; if you hold on, he reasonably concludes you believe him not; and will therefore be apt to say to you, if you will not believe me you may make trial. Your physician tells you a disease is growing upon you, that in a short time will prove incurable and mortal, but if you presently use the means he shall prescribe, 'tis capable of an easy remedy; how would you yourself have your belief of your physician judged of in this case? Would you expect to be believed, if you should say, you do not at all distrust your physician's integrity and judgment, but yet you resolve not to follow his directions; unless you would have us believe too, that you are weary of your life, and would fain be rid of it? There is no riddle or mystery in this. How ridiculous would men make themselves, if in matters of common concernment they should daily practise directly contrary to their professed belief? How few would believe them serious, or in their wits? But however, call this believing, or what you will, we contend not about the name; the belief of such a thing can no further do you good, you can be nothing the better for it, further than as it engages you to take a course suitable and consequent to such a belief. To believe that there is a hell, and run into it; that unrighteousness persisted in will damn you, and yet will live in it. To what purpose is it, to make your boasts of this faith? But since you are willing to call this believing: all the foregoing reasoning is to engage you to consider what you believe. Do you believe that unrighteousness will be the death of your soul; will eternally separate you from God, and the presence of his glory? and when you have reasoned the matter with yourself, you find it to be certainly so: should not such a thing be more deeply pondered? The bare proposal of an evident truth commands present assent; but if I further bend my mind to reason out the same thing to myself, I am occasioned to take notice of the grounds, dependencies, the habitudes of it, what it rests upon, and whither it tends, and thence more discern its importance, and of what moment it is, than I should have done, if upon first view I had assented only, and dismissed it my thoughts. And yet is it possible, you should think this to be true, and not think it a most important truth? Is it a small matter in your account, whether you shall be blessed or miserable for ever? whether you be saved or perish eternally? Or is it considered by you, according as the weight of the matter requires, that as you are found righteous or unrighteous, so will it everlastingly fare with you?

You may possibly say, you already conclude yourself righteous, therefore no further employ your thoughts about it. But methinks, you should hardly be able however to put such a thing out of your thoughts; while as yet the final determination is not given in the case. If a man have a question yet depending, concerning his life or estate; though his business be never so clear, he will hardly forget it, the trial not being yet past. And though in this matter, you have no reason to suspect error or corruption in your Judge, (through which many honest causes may miscarry in a human judicature,) yet have you no reason to suspect yourself? If the Holy Spirit hath assured you, it hath not stupified you; but as you have then the less of fear, you have the more of love and joy. Therefore you will not thence mind such a concernment the less, but with the more delight; and therefore also, most probably, with the more frequency and intension. What a pleasure will it be to review evidences, and say, Lo! here are the mediums by which I make out my title to the eternal inheritance. Such and such characters give me the confidence to number myself among God's righteous ones. And do you lead that heavenly raised life? do you live in those sweet and ravishing comforts of the Holy Ghost, that may bespeak you one whom he hath sealed up to the day of redemption? If you pretend not to any such certainty, but rely upon your own judgment of your case; are you sure you are neither mistaken in the notion of the righteousness required, nor in the application of it to your own soul? Possibly, you may think yourself, because in your ordinary dealing you wrong no man, (yourself being judge,) a very righteous person. But evident it is, when the Scripture uses this term as descriptive of God's own people, and to distinguish between them that shall be saved and perish, it takes it in that comprehensive sense before explained. And, however, it requires at least much more of thee, under other expressions, as thou canst hardly be so ignorant but to know. And do but use thy reason here a little, and demand of thyself: Is he to be accounted a righteous person, that thinks it fit to avoid wronging a man, but makes no conscience at all of wronging God? More particularly: Is it righteous, to live all thy days in a willing ignorance of the Author of thy being, never once to inquire,[a] Where is God my Maker? Is it righteous to forget him days without number, not to have him from day to day in all thy thoughts? Is it righteous to estrange thyself from him, and live as without him in the world, while thou livest, movest, and hast thy being in him? not to glorify him in whose hands thy breath is? to be a lover of pleasure more than God? a worshipper, in thy very soul, of the creature more than the Creator? Is it righteous to harden thy heart against his fear and love? to live under his power, and never reverence it? his goodness, and never acknowledge it? to affront his authority, to belie his truth, abuse his mercy, impose upon his patience, defy his justice; to exalt thy own interest against his; the trifling petite interest of a silly worm, against the great all-comprehending interest of the common Lord of all the world? to cross his will, to do thy own? to please thyself, to the displeasing of him? Whence hadst thou thy measures of justice, if this be just?

[a] Job xxxv.

Again, is it righteous to deny the Lord that bought thee, to neglect that great salvation which he is the author of? And whereas he came to bless thee in turning thee from thine iniquities, wilfully to remain still in an accursed servitude to sin? when he was made manifest to destroy the works of the devil, still to yield thyself a captive at his will? Whereas he died that thou mightest not any longer live to thyself, but to him that died for thee, and rose again; and that he might redeem thee from thy vain conversation; and that thou art so expressly told, that such as still lead sensual lives, mind earthly things, have not their conversation in heaven, are enemies to the cross of Christ. Is it no unrighteousness, that in these respects thy whole life should be nothing else but a constant contradiction to the very design of his dying? a perpetual hostility, a very tilting at his cross? Is there no unrighteousness in thy obstinate infidelity, that wickedly denies belief to his glorious truths, acceptance of his gracious offers, subjection to his holy laws? No unrighteousness in thy obstinate, remorseless impenitency? thy heart that cannot repent? that melts not, while a crucified Jesus, amidst his agonies and dying pangs, cries to thee from the cross, O sinner, enough, thy hard heart breaks mine! yield at last, and turn to God. Is it righteous, to live as no way under law to Christ? to persist in actual rebellion against his just government, which he died, and revived, and rose again, to establish over the living and the dead? yea, and that while thou,pretendest thyself a Christian? In a word: Is it righteous to tread under foot the Son of God, to vilify his blood, and despise his Spirit? Is this the righteousness that thou talkest of? Are these thy qualifications for the everlasting blessedness? If thou say, thou confessest thou art in thyself, in these several respects, altogether unrighteous, but thou hopest the righteousness of Christ will be sufficient to answer for all; no doubt Christ's righteousness is abundantly available to all the ends for which it was intended by the Father and him; but it shall never answer all the ends that a foolish, wicked heart will fondly imagine to itself.

In short, it serves to excuse thy non-performance of, and stands instead of thy perfect sinless obedience to, the law of works; but it serves not instead of thy performance of what is required of thee, as the condition of the gospel-covenant. That is, it shall never supply the room of faith, repentance, regeneration, holiness, the loving of Christ above all, and God in him; so as to render these unnecessary, or salvation possible without them. There is not one *iota* or *tittle* in the Bible, that so much as intimates an unregenerate person, an unbeliever, an impenitent or unholy person, shall be saved by Christ's righteousness; but enough to the contrary, every one knows, that hath the least acquaintance with the Scriptures. Vain man! what, is Christ divided, and divided against himself; Christ without against Christ within? his sufferings on the cross and foregoing obedience, against his Spirit and government in the soul? Did Christ die to take away the necessity of our being Christians? And must his death serve not to destroy sin out of the world, but Christianity? Who hath taught thee so wickedly to misunderstand the design of Christ's dying? And when the Scripture so plainly tells thee, [d] that God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; and [e] that he became the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him; yea, and that he will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know and obey him not; what should induce thee to think thou mayest be saved by him, whether thou believest and obeyest or not? No, if ever thou think to see God, and be happy in him, thou must have a righteousness in thee resembling his; the very product, the thing wrought in the work of regeneration. [f] If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. Whereupon follows the description of the blessedness of such righteous ones, in the beginning of the next chapter,——They are sons——they shall be like, &c. So that in a word, without some sight of God here, there is no seeing him hereafter; without some likeness to him now, none hereafter. And such as are destitute of that heart-conformity to the gospel, wherein the evangelical righteousness stands, are so far from it, that we may say to them as our Saviour to the Jews,[g] Ye have neither heard his voice, nor seen his shape, *i. e.* you have never had right notion, or any the least true glimpse of him; your hearts are wholly destitute of all divine impressions whatsoever.

8. Infer. We may further infer, from this qualification of the subject of blessedness, that righteousness is no vain thing. That is not in vain, that ends so well, and hath so happy an issue at last. Scripture tells us,[h] that the labour of the righteous tendeth to life: and that we may understand it of their labour as they are righteous, we are more plainly told, that [i] righteousness tendeth to life; [k] and that to them that sow righteousness shall be a sure reward. That the righteous shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The righteous into eternal life. [l] And we here see that righteousness ends in the blessed sight of God's glorious face, in being satisfied with the Divine likeness. Foolish sinners are justly upbraided that they spend their [m] labour for that which satisfies not; take much pains to no purpose. Such are all the works of sin, toilsome, fruitless:[n] What fruit had ye of those things (*viz.* which ye wrought when you were free from righteousness) whereof ye are now ashamed; for the end of those things is death. But (it follows) being now made free from sin, and become servants to God, (which is paraphrased above by servants to righteousness,) ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. The fruit is a continual increase of holiness, a growing more and more like God; till at last everlasting life, satisfaction with his likeness, do crown and consummate all.

You have now what to answer to the atheist's profane query, What profit is it to serve God? to what purpose to lead so strict and precise a life? You may now see to what purpose it is; and whereunto godliness (which righteousness here includes) is profitable, as having, besides what it entitles to here, the promise of that life which is to come. There needs no more to discover any thing not to be vain (inasmuch as nothing can be said to be so, but in reference to an end, as being good for nothing) than the eviction of these two things:—that it aims at a truly worthy and valuable end; and—that its tendency thereto is direct and certain. In the present case, both these are obvious enough at the first view. For as to the former of them: all the world will agree, without disputing the matter, that the last end of man (*i. e.* which he ultimately propounds to himself) is his best good: and that he can design no further good to himself than satisfaction; nothing after or beyond that: and what can afford it, if the vision and participation of the Divine glory do not? As to the latter: besides all that assurance given by Scripture-constitution to the righteous man, concerning his future reward, let the consciences be consulted of the most besotted sinners, in any lucid interval, and they will give their suffrage, (Balaam, that so earnestly followed the reward of unrighteousness, not excepted,) that the way of righteousness is that only likely way to happiness; and would therefore desire to die, at least, the righteous man's death, and that their latter end should be like his. So is wisdom (I might call it righteousness too; the wicked man is the Scripture fool, and the righteous the wise man) justified not by her children only, but by her enemies also. And sure, 'tis meet that she should be more openly justified by her children, and that they learn to silence and repress those misgiving thoughts;[o] Surely I have washed my hands in vain, &c.; and [p] be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they know their labour is not in vain in the Lord.

d John iii. 16. e Heb. v. 9. f 1 John ii. 29.
g John v. 37. h Prov. x. 16. i Ch. xi. 14, 18.
k Matt. xiii. 43. l Chap. xxv. 46. m Isa. lv. 2.
n Rom. vi. 20, 21. o Psal. lxxii. p 1 Cor. xv. 58.

CHAPTER XV.

Two other inferences, from the consideration of the season of this blessedness: The former, that inasmuch as this blessedness is not attained in this life, the present happiness of saints must in a great part consist in hope. The latter, that great is the wisdom and sagacity of the righteous man, which waives a present temporary happiness, and chooses that which is distant and future.

INASMUCH as the season of this blessedness is not on this side the grave, nor expected by saints till they awake; we may further infer,

9. Infer. Ninthly, That their happiness in the meantime doth very much consist in hope; or that hope must needs be of very great necessity and use to them in their present state for their comfort and support. It were not otherwise possible to subsist in the absence and want of their highest good, while nothing in this lower world is, as to kind and nature, suitable to their desires, or makes any colourable overture to them of satisfaction and happiness. Others (as the Psalmist observes) have their portion in this life; that good, which as to the species and kind of it, is most grateful to them, is present, under view, within sight; and (as the apostle[a]) Hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it? But those whose more refined spirits, having received the first fruits of the Holy Spirit of God, prompt them to groan after something beyond time, and above this sublunary sphere; of them the apostle there tells us, that they are saved by hope. They (as if he should say) subsist by it; they were never able to hold out, were it not for their hope; and that a hope too, beyond this life, as is the hope of a Christian; [b] if in this life only we had hope in Christ, &c. The hope of a Christian, as such, is suitable to its productive cause, the resurrection of Christ from the dead; begotten to [c] a lively hope by the resurrection, &c. Thence is it the hope of a renewed, never-dying life, the hope of a blessed immortality; whereof Christ's resurrection was a certain argument and pledge.

Indeed the new creature is, *ab origine*, and all along, a hoping creature, both in its *primum* and its *porro esse*: 'tis conceived, and formed, and nursed up in hope. In its production, and in its progress towards perfection, 'tis manifestly influenced thereby. In the first return of the soul to God, hope, being then planted as a part of the holy, gracious nature, now manifestly discovers itself; when the soul begins to act, (as turning after the reception of the Divine influence is its act,) hope insinuates itself into (or induces rather) that very act. Returning is not the act of a despairing, but hoping soul. 'Tis God apprehended as reconcilable, that attracts and wins it; while he is looked upon as an implacable enemy, the soul naturally shuns him, and comes not nigh, till drawn [d] with those cords of a man, the bands of love. While it says, There is no hope, it says withal, (desperately enough,) [e] I have loved strangers, and after them will I go. But if there be any hope in Israel, concerning this thing: if it can yet apprehend God willing to forgive, then [f] Let us make a covenant, &c. This presently draws the hovering soul into a closure and league with him. And thus is the union continued. [g] Unsteadfastness in the covenant of God, is resolved into this not setting or fixing of hope in him; or (which amounts to the same) setting of hope in God is directed as a means to [h] steadfastness of spirit with him, and a keeping of his covenant. Revolting souls are encouraged to turn to the Lord upon this consideration, that salvation is [i] hoped for in vain from any other; the case being indeed the same in all after-conversions as in the first. God as multiplying to pardon, and still retaining the same name,[k] The Lord, the Lord gracious and merciful, (which name in all the severals that compose and make it up, is in his Christ,) invites back to him the backsliding sinner, and renews his thoughts of returning. And so is he afterwards under the teachings of grace, led on by hope, through the whole course of religion towards the future glory. Grace appears, teaching sinners to deny ungodliness, &c. and in the [l] looking for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God, &c. So do they keep themselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Thus is the new creature formed in hope, and nourished in hope; and if its eye were upon pardon at first, 'tis more upon the promised glory afterwards. And yet that last end hath in a degree its attractive influence upon it, from the first formation of it; 'tis even then taught to design for glory. 'Tis begotten to the lively hope, (where though hope be taken objectively, as the apposition shows of the following words, to an inheritance, yet the act is evidently connoted; for the thing hoped for, is meant under that notion, as hoped for,) and its whole following course is an aiming at glory; a [m] seeking glory, honour, immortality, &c. Thus is the work of sanctification carried on;[n] He that hath this hope purifieth himself. Thus are losses sustained; [o] The spoiling of goods taken joyfully through the expectation of the better and enduring substance. The most hazardous services undertaken, even an apostleship to a despised Christ,—[p] In the hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised. All difficulties encountered and overcome, while the [q] helmet is the hope of salvation. All worldly evils are willingly endured; and all *such* good things quitted and forsaken, for Christ's sake and his elect's. And if the question be asked, (as it was once of Alexander, when so frankly distributing his treasures among his followers,) What do you reserve for yourself? The resolved Christian makes (with him) that short and brave reply, HOPE. He lives upon things future and unseen. The objects any one converses with most, and in which his life is as it were bound up, are suitable to the ruling principles of life in him. [r] They that are after the flesh, do savour the things of the flesh; they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. The principle of the fleshly life is *sense*: the principle of the spiritual life is *faith*. Sense is a mean, low, narrow, incomprehensive principle, limited to a point, this centre of earth, and *τὸ νῦν, this now* of time; it can reach no higher than terrene things, nor further than present things; so brutish is the life of him that is led by it; wholly confined to matter and time. But the righteous live by faith. Their faith governs and maintains their life. They steer not their course according to what they see, but according to what they believe: and their daily sustenance is by the same kind of things. Their faith influences not their actions only, but their comforts and enjoyments. They subsist by the things they believe, even invisible and eternal things; but it is by the intervening exercise of hope, whose object is the same. The apostle having told us from the prophet, that the [s] just shall live by faith, presently subjoins a description of that faith they live by, *viz.* that it is [t] the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; it substantiates and realizes, evidences and demonstrates those glorious objects, so far above the reach and sphere of sense. It is constantly sent out to forage in the invisible regions for the maintenance of this life; and thence fetches in the provisions upon which hope feeds, to the strengthening of the heart, the renewing of life and spirits. Our inward man, (saith the apostle)[u] is renewed day by day; while we look, or take aim (which is next in the series of the discourse, for the intervening verse is manifestly parenthetical) not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal. And the word here rendered [x] *look* doth plainly signify the act of hope as well as that of faith; for it doth not import a mere intuition or beholding, a taking notice or assenting only that there are such things, but a designing or scoping at them (which is the very word) with an appropriative eye; as things that, notwithstanding their distance, or whatsoever imaginable difficulty, are hoped to be attained to and enjoyed. And here are evidently the distinct parts of faith and hope in this business; faith, upon the authority and credit of the Divine word and promise, persuades the heart that there is such a glorious state of things reserved for the saints in general, (faith can go no further, for the word of promise goes no further,) and so serves instead of eyes in the Divine light, to view those glories; or it presents them

a Rom. viii. 24.
b 1 Cor. xv. 19.
c 1 Pet. i. 3.
d Hos. xi.
e Jer. ii.
f Ezra x. 2, 3.
g Psal. lxxviii. 7, 13.
h Ver. 10.
i Jer. iii. 22, 23.
k Exod. xxxiv. 6.
l Tit. ii. 11, 12, 13.
m Rom. ii. 7.
n 1 John iii. 3.
o Heb. x. 34.
p Tit. i. 1, 2.
q 1 Thess. v. 8.
r Rom. viii. 5.
s Hab. ii. 4.
t Heb. xi. 1.
u 2 Cor. iv. 16, 18.
x σκοπουντων.

(as so many substantial realities,) demonstrates them, submits them to view, whence *hope* reaches forth to them; contends against and triumphs over all attending difficulties, and possesses them; gives the soul an early anticipated fruition of them, for its present support and relief. So that it [y] rejoices in the hope of the glory of God. It might well therefore be said, I had fainted, if I had not believed, or who can express how sad my case had been, if I had not believed? for there is an elegant aposiopesis in the Hebrew text, the words "I had fainted" being supplied in the translation. If I had not believed, what had become of me then? *q. d.* Inasmuch as faith feeds, as it were, those hopes which more immediately, the Lord makes use of, for the strengthening his people's hearts, as it was intimated in the following words, compared with Psal. xxxi. 24. In the present case; faith ascertains the heart of the truth of the promises, so that thus the soul states the case to itself. Though I have not walked to and fro in those upper regions, nor taken a view of the heavenly inheritance; though I have not been in the third heavens, and seen the ineffable glory; yet the gospel revelation, which hath brought life and immortality to light, the word of the eternal God, who hath told me this is the state of things in the other world, cannot but be true: my faith may therefore be to me instead of eyes: and the Divine testimony must supply the place of light: both together, give, methinks, a fair prospect of those far distant, glorious objects which I have now in view. Now this awakens hope, and makes it revive, and run to embrace what faith hath discovered in the promise: [z] In the hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised. 'Tis [a] the word of God that causes the soul to hope, (*i. e.* believed, for disbelieved, it signifies nothing with it,) and that not only as it contains a narration, but a promise concerning a future state. I may without much emotion of heart, hear from a traveller the description of a pleasant country, where I have not been; but if the lord of that country give me, besides the account of it, an assurance of enjoying rich and ample possessions there, this presently begets a hope, the pleasure whereof would much relieve a present distressed estate; and which nothing but that of actual possession, can exceed. That 'tis not more so with us here, admits of no excuse. Is God less to be believed than a man? Will we deny him the privilege of being able to discover his mind, and the truth of things credible, which we ordinarily allow to any one that is not a convicted liar? Christ expects his disciples should very confidently assure themselves of the preparations made for them in another world, upon that very ground alone, that he had not told them the contrary: [b] Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare, &c. intimating to them, they ought to have that opinion of his plainness and sincerity, as never to imagine he would have proselyted them to a religion that should undo them in this world, if there were not a sufficient recompense awaiting them in the other, but he would certainly have let them known the worst of their case: much more might he expect, they should be confident upon his so often and expressly telling them, that so it is. If his silence might be a ground of hope, much more his word. And surely so grounded a hope cannot but be consolatory and relieving in this sad interval, till the awaking hour.

10. Infer. Lastly, Since this blessedness of the righteous is, as to the season of it, future, not expected till they awake, we may infer, that 'tis great wisdom and sagacity that guides the righteous men's choice; while he waves a present and temporary, and chooses this future and expected, blessedness. 'Tis true, that philosophy hath been wont to teach us, that choice or election hath no place about the end, because that is but one, and choice always implies a competition. But that very reason evinces, that in our present state and case, choice must have place about the end. That philosophy might have suited better the state of innocent Adam; when there was nothing to blind and bribe a man's judgment, or occasion it to deliberate about the supreme end, (then it might be truly said, deliberation itself was a defection,) nor to pervert and misincline his will; and so its action, in proposing its end, would be simple intention, not choice. But so hath the apostacy and sin of man blinded and befooled him, that he is at a loss about nothing more than what is the chief good. And though St. Augustine [c] reduce Varro's two hundred and eighteen differing sects about it to twelve, that's enough to prove (but daily experience doth it more convincingly, and sadly) a real, though most unjust competition. Therefore a sinner can never be blessed without choosing his blessedness; and therein it highly concerns him to choose aright, and that a spirit of wisdom and counsel guide his choice. While man had not as yet fallen, to deliberate whether he should adhere to God or no, was a gradual declension, the very inchoation of his fall; but having fallen, necessity makes that a virtue which was a wickedness before. There is no returning to God without considering our ways. The so much altered state of the case, quite alters the nature of the things. It was a consulting to do evil before; now to do good. And hence also, [d] choosing the Lord to be our God, becomes a necessary duty. Which is to make choice of this very blessedness, that consists in the knowledge, likeness, and enjoyment of him. And now, inasmuch as this blessedness is not fully attained by the longing soul, till time expire and its eternity commence; here is a great discovery of that wisdom which guides this happy choice. This is great wisdom in prospection; in taking care of the future; and at how much the further distance one can provide, so much the greater reputation of wisdom is justly acquired to him; yea, we seem to place the sum of practical wisdom in this one thing, while we agree to call it providence, under the contracted name of prudence. The wise man makes it at least an evidence or part of wisdom, when he tells us [e] the prudent foreseeth, &c. The righteous man so far excels in this faculty, as that his eye looks through all the periods of time, and penetrates into eternity, recommends to the soul a blessedness of that same stamp and alloy, that will endure and last forever. It will not content him to be happy for an hour, or for any space that can have an end; after which it shall be possible to him to look back and recount with himself how happy he was once: nor is he so much solicitous what his present state be, if he can but find he is upon safe terms as to his future and eternal state. As for me, saith the Psalmist, (he herein sorts and severs himself from them whose portion was in this life,) [f] I *shall* behold—I *shall* be satisfied, when I awake; *he could not say it was well with him, but shall be, q. d.* Let the purblind, short-sighted sensualist embrace this present world, who can see no further: let me have my portion in the world to come; may my soul always lie open to the impression of the powers of the coming world; and in this, so use every thing as to be under the power of nothing. What are the pleasures of sin, that are but for a season; or what the sufferings of this *now*, this moment of affliction, to the glory that shall be revealed, to the exceeding and eternal glory? He considers, patient afflicted godliness will triumph at last, when riotous raging wickedness shall lament for ever. He may for a time weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; he may be sorrowful, but his sorrow shall be turned into joy, and his joy none shall take from him. Surely [g] here is wisdom; this is the wisdom that is from above, and tends thither. This is to be wise unto salvation. The righteous man is a judicious man; he hath in a measure that judgment (wherein the apostle prays the Philippians might [h] abound) to approve things that are excellent, and accordingly to make his choice. This is a sense (little thought of by the author) wherein that sober speech of the voluptuous philosopher is most certainly true, [i] A man cannot live happily, without living wisely. No man shall ever enjoy the eternal pleasures hereafter, that in this acquits not himself wisely here, even in this choosing the better part, that shall never be taken from him. In this the plain righteous man outvies the greatest sophies, the scribe, the disputer, the politician, the prudent mammonist, the facete wit; who, in their several

y Rom. v. 2. xii. 12. Psal. xxvii. 13, 14. z Tit. i. 2. a Psal. xix. 49.
b John xiv. 1, 2. c De Civit. Dei, lib. 19.
d Josh. xxiv. 15. e Prov. xxii. 3.
f Est bene non potuit dicere dicit erit.
g John xvi. 29, 22. h Phil. i. 9, 10. i Epicurus.

kinds, all think themselves highly to have merited to be accounted wise: and that this point of wisdom should escape their notice, and be the principal thing with him, can be resolved into nothing else but the Divine good pleasure! In this contemplation our Lord Jesus Christ is said to have rejoiced in spirit, (it even put his great comprehensive soul into an ecstacy,) [k] Father I thank thee, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes; even so Father, because it pleased thee! Here was a thing fit to be reflected on, as a piece of Divine royalty; a part worthy of the Lord of heaven and earth. And what serious spirit would it not amaze, to weigh and ponder this case awhile; to see men excelling in all other kinds of knowledge, so far excelled by those they most contemn, in the highest point of wisdom; such as know how to search into the most abstruse mysteries of nature; that can unravel, or see through the most perplexed intrigues of state; that know how to save their own stake, and secure their private interest in whatsoever times; yet so little seen, (often, for not many wise) in the matters that concern an eternal felicity! It puts me in mind of what I find observed by some, the *particular madness*, (a *dementia quo ad hoc*,) as 'tis called; when persons, in every thing else, capable of sober, rational discourse, when you bring them to some one thing, (that in reference to which they became distempered at first) they rave and are perfectly mad. How many that can manage a discourse with great reason and judgment about other matters, who, when you come to discourse with them about the affairs of practical godliness, and which most directly tend to that future state of blessedness, they are as at their wit's end, know not what to say; they savour not those things! These are things not understood, but by such to whom it is given; and surely that given wisdom is the most excellent wisdom. Sometimes God doth, as it were, so far gratify the world, as to speak their own language, and call them wise that affect to be called so, and that wisdom which they would fain have go under that name; Moses, it is said, was skilled in all the [l] wisdom of Egypt, &c. But at other times he expressly calls those wise men fools, and their wisdom, folly and madness; or annexes some disgraceful abject for distinction sake; or applies those appellatives ironically, and in manifest derision. No doubt, but any such person as was represented in the parable, would have thought himself to have done the part of a very wise man, in entertaining such deliberation and resolves, as we find he had there with himself. How strange was that to his ears, [m] Thou fool, this night shall they require thy soul, &c. Their wisdom is sometimes said to be foolish; or else called the wisdom of the flesh, or fleshly wisdom; said to be earthly, sensual, devilish; they are said to be wise to do evil; while to do good they have no understanding; they are brought sometimes as it were upon the stage with their wisdom, to be the matter of Divine triumph; where is the wise? and that which they account foolishness is made to confound their wisdom. And indeed do they deserve to be thought wise, that are so busily intent upon momentary trifles, and trifle with eternal concernments? that prefer vanishing shadows to the everlasting glory? that follow lying vanities, and forsake their own mercies? Yea, will they not cease to be wise in their own eyes also, when they see the issue, and reap the fruits of their foolish choice? when they find the happiness they preferred before this eternal one is quite over; and nothing remains to them of it, but an afflictive remembrance? that the torment they were told would follow, is but now beginning, and without end? when they hear from the mouth of their impartial Judge, Remember, you in your life-time had your good things, and my faithful servants their evil; now they must be comforted, and you tormented? when they are told, [n] you have received the consolation; you were full, ye did laugh, now you must pine, and mourn, and weep? Will they not then be as ready to befool themselves, and say as they, [o] See, those (righteous ones) are they whom we sometimes had in derision, and for a proverb of reproach: we fools counted their life madness, and that their end was without honour; but now, how are they numbered among the sons of God, and their lot is among the saints? They that were too wise before, to mind so mean a thing as religion (P the world through wisdom knew not God; strange wisdom!) that could so wisely baffle conscience, and put fallacies upon their own souls; that had so ingenious shifts to elude [q] conviction, and divert any serious thought from fastening upon their spirits; that were wont so slyly to jeer holiness, seemed as they meant to laugh religion out of countenance; [q] they will now know, that a circumspect walking, a faithful redeeming of time, and improving it in order to eternity, was to do, not as fools, but as wise; and begin to think of themselves, now at last, as all wise and sober men thought of them before.

k Luke x. 21. n Luke xi. 24, 25. l Acts vii. 22. o Wisd. v. 3. &c. m Luke xii. 20. p 1 Cor. i. 21. q Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom. Prov. xv. a 1 Cor. ii. 9.

CHAPTER XVI.

The second general head of the improvement or use of the doctrine propounded from the text, containing certain rules or prescriptions of duty connatural thereto. 1. That we settle in our minds the true notion of this blessedness. 2. That we compare the temper of our own spirits with it, and labour thence to discern whether we may lay claim to it or no.

THUS far we have the account of the truths to be considered and weighed that have dependence on the doctrine of the text.

Next follow the duties to be practised and done in reference thereto, which I shall lay down in the ensuing rules or prescriptions.

I. That we admit and settle the distinct notion of this blessedness in our own minds and judgments; that we fix in our own souls apprehensions agreeable to the account this scripture hath given us of it. This is a counsel leading and introductive to the rest; and which if it obtain with us, will have a general influence upon the whole course of that practice which the doctrine already opened calls for. As our apprehensions of this blessedness are more distinct and clear, it may be expected more powerfully to command our hearts and lives. Hence it is, in great part, the spirits and conversations of Christians have so little savour and appearance of heaven in them. We rest in some general and confused notion of it, in which there is little either of efficacy or pleasure; we descend not into a particular inquiry and consideration what it is. Our thoughts of it are gloomy and obscure; and hence it is our spirit is naturally listless and indifferent towards it, and rather contents itself to sit still in a region all lightsome round about, and among objects it hath some present acquaintance with, than venture itself forth as into a new world which it knows but little of. And hence our lives are low and carnal; they look not as though we were seeking the heavenly country; and indeed who can be in good earnest in seeking after an unknown state? This is owing to our negligence and infidelity. The blessed God hath not been shy and reserved; hath not hidden or concealed from us the glory of the other world; nor locked up heaven to us; nor left us to the uncertain guesses of our own imagination, the wild fictions of an unguided fancy; which would have created us a poetical heaven only, and have mocked us with false elysiums: but though much be yet within the vail, he hath been liberal in his discoveries to us. Life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel. The future blessedness (though some refined heathens have had near guesses at it) is certainly apprehensible by the measure only of God's revelation of it; for who can determine, with certainty, of the effects of Divine good pleasure ('tis your Father's good pleasure to give you a kingdom?) Who can tell beforehand what so free and boundless goodness will do, further than as he himself discovers it? The discovery is as free as the donation. The things [a] that eye hath not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not entered into the heart of man, God hath revealed to us by his Spirit; and it follows, ver. 12. We have received the spirit of God, that we might know the things freely given us of God. The Spirit is both the principle of the external revelation, as having inspired the Scriptures which foreshow this glory, and of the internal revelation also, to enlighten blind minds that would otherwise (μυωπάζειν) never be able to discover things at so

great a distance, see afar off; therefore called the spirit of wisdom and revelation, by which [b]the eyes of the understanding are enlightened to know the hope of that calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance *among* the saints, as the *εν* there is most fitly to be rendered.

But this internal discovery is made by the mediation and interveniency of the external; therefore having that before our eyes, we are to apply our minds to the study and consideration of it; and in that way to expect the free illumination of the Holy Spirit. In the meantime we must charge our ignorance, and the darkness of our cloudy thoughts, touching these things, upon our carelessness, that we do not attend; or our incredulity, that we will not believe what God hath revealed concerning them: 'tis therefore a dutiful attention, and reverential faith, that must settle and fix the notion of this blessedness. If we will not regard nor give credit to what God hath discovered concerning it, we may sit still in a torpid, disconsolate darkness, which we ourselves are the authors of, or (which is no less pernicious) compass ourselves with sparks beaten out of our own forge, walk in the light of our own fire, cheat our souls with the fond dream of an imagined heaven, no where to be found, till we at length lie down in sorrow. How perverse are the imaginations of men in this (as in reference to the way, so) in respect of the end also; for as they take upon them to fancy another way to happiness quite besides and against the plain word of God; so do they imagine to themselves another kind of happiness, such as shall gratify only their sensual desires; a Mahometan, indeed a fool's, paradise; or at best 'tis but a negative heaven; they many times entertain in their thoughts (of which their sense too is the only measure) a state wherein nothing shall offend or incommode the flesh; in which they shall nor hunger, not thirst, nor feel want: and when they have thus stated the matter in their own thoughts, we cannot beat them out of it, but that they desire to go to heaven; (*viz.* the heaven of their own making;) when, did they conceive it truly and fully, they would find their hearts to abhor from it, even as hell itself. Therefore here we should exercise an authority over ourselves, and awaken conscience to its proper work and business; and demand of it, Is it not reasonable these divine discoveries should take place with me? hath not God spoken plainly enough? why should my heart any longer hang in doubt with me, or look wishly towards future glory, as if it were an uncouth thing? or is it reasonable to confront my own imaginations to his discoveries? Charge conscience with the duty it owes to God in such a case; and let his revelations be received with the reverence and resignation which they challenge; and in them study and contemplate the blessedness of awakened souls; till you have agreed with yourself fully how to conceive it. Run over every part of it in your thoughts; view the several divine excellencies which you are hereafter to see and imitate; and think what every thing will contribute to the satisfaction and contentment of your spirits. This is a matter of unspeakable consequence. Therefore, to be as clear as is possible, you may digest what is recommended to you in these more particular directions.

1. Resolve with yourselves, to make the divine revelation of this blessedness the prime measure and reason of all your apprehensions concerning it. Fix that purpose in your own hearts, so to order all your conceptions about it, that when you demand of yourselves, what do I conceive of the future blessedness? and why do I conceive so? the divine revelation may answer both the questions. I apprehend what God hath revealed, and because he hath so revealed. The Lord of heaven sure best understands it, and can best help us to the understanding of it. If it be said of the [c]origin of this world, *πῶς νοοῦμεν*, it may much more be said of the state of the other, we understand it by faith: that must inform and perfect our intellectuals in this matter.

2. Therefore reject and sever from the notion of this blessedness, whatsoever is alien to the account Scripture gives us of it. Think not that sensual pleasure, that a liberty of sinning, that an exemption from the divine dominion, distance and estrangedness from God (which by nature you wickedly affect) can have any ingrediency into, or consistency with, this state of blessedness.

3. Gather up into it whatsoever you can find by the Scripture-discovery to appertain or belong thereto. Let your notion of it be to your uttermost, not only true, but comprehensive and full, and as particular and positive, as God's revelation will warrant: especially remember 'tis a spiritual blessedness, that consists in the refining and perfecting of your spirits by the vision and likeness of the holy God, and the satisfying of them thereby for ever.

4. Get the notion of this blessedness deep imprinted in your minds; so as to abide with you, that you may not be always at a loss, and change your apprehensions every time you come to think of it. Let a once well-formed idea, a clear, full state of it be preserved entire, and he (as a lively image) always before your eyes, which you may readily view upon all occasions.

2. *Rule.* That having well fixed the notion of this blessedness in your minds, you seriously reflect upon yourself, and compare the temper of your spirit with it; that you may find out how it is affected thereto; and thence judge in what likelihood you are of enjoying it. The general aversion of men's spirits to this so necessary work of self-reflection, is one of the most deplorable symptoms of lapsed degenerated humanity. The wickedness that hath overspread the nature of man, and a secret consciousness and misgiving, hath made men afraid of themselves, and studiously to decline all acquaintance with their own souls; to shun themselves as ghosts and spectres; they cannot endure to appear to themselves. You can hardly impose a severer task upon a wicked man, than to go retire an hour or two, and commune with himself: he knows not how to face his own thoughts; his own soul is a devil to him, as indeed it will be in hell, the most frightful, tormenting devil. Yet, what power is there in man, more excellent, more appropriate to reasonable nature, than that of reflecting, of turning his thoughts upon himself? Sense must here confess itself outdone. The eye that sees other objects cannot see itself: but the mind, a rational sun, cannot only project its beams, but revert them; make its thoughts turn inward. It can see its own face, contemplate itself. And how useful an endowment is this to the nature of man! If he err, he might perpetuate his error, and wander infinitely, if he had not this self-reflecting power; and if he do well, never know without it the comfort of a rational self-approbation: which comfort paganish morality hath valued so highly, as to account it did associate a man with the inhabitants of heaven, and make him lead his life as among the gods (as their pagan language is): though the name of the reflecting power, *conscience*, they were less acquainted with; the thing itself they reckoned as a kind of indwelling deity, as may be seen at large in those discourses of Maximus Tyrius, and Apuleius, both upon the same subject, concerning the god of Socrates. And another giving this precept, [d]Familiarize thyself with the gods, adds, *and this shalt thou do if thou bear thy mind becomingly towards them, being well pleased with the things they give, and doing the things that may please thy dæmon or genius, whom* (saith he) *the most high God* (which they mean by Jupiter) hath put into every *man as a derivation or extraction from himself* (*ἀπόσπασμα*) *to be his president and guide; viz. every one's own mind and reason.* And this mind or reason in that notion of it, as we approve ourselves to it, and study to please it, is the same thing we intend by the name of conscience. And how high account they had of this work of self-reflection, may appear in that they entitled the oracle to that document, [e]*know thyself*, esteeming it above human discovery, and that it could have no lower than a divine original; and therefore consecrating and writing it up in golden characters in their Delphic temple (as Pliny informs[f] us) for a heavenly inspired dictate.

Among Christians that enjoy the benefit of the gospel-revelation, in which men may behold themselves, as one

b Eph. i. 17. c Heb. xi. 3.

d Συζην θεοις Συζη δε θεοις ο συνεχως δεικνυς εαυτοις την εαυτου Ψυχην αρεσκομενην μεντε τοις απονεμομενοις: ποιουσαν δε οσα βουλεται δαιμων, ον εκασ-ω προσ-ατην, &c.—ουτος δε εστιν εκασ-ου νους και λογος. Marc. Ant. l. 5.

e E cœlo descendit, γνωθι σεαυτον.

f Hist. Mundi. The wisdom and significancy of which dedication Plato also (in Alcibiad. 1.) takes notice of.

may his natural face in a glass, how highly should this self-knowledge be prized, and how fully attained! The gospel discovers, at the same time, the ugly deformities of a man's soul, and the means of attaining a true spiritual comeliness; yea, it is itself the instrument of impressing the Divine image and glory upon men's spirits; which when it is in any measure done, they become most sociable and conversable with themselves, and when 'tis but in doing, it so convincingly, and with so piercing energy, lays open the very thoughts of men's hearts, so thoroughly rips up and dissects the soul, [g] so directly turns and strictly holds a man's eye intent upon himself; so powerfully urges and obliges the sinner to mind and study his own soul; that where it hath effected any thing, been any way operative upon men's spirits, they are certainly supposed to be in a good measure acquainted with themselves, whatever others are. Therefore the apostle bids the Corinthians, if they desire a proof of the power and truth of his ministry, to consult themselves: [h] Examine yourselves, and presently subjoins, know ye not your own selves? intimating, it was an insupposable thing they should be ignorant. What! Christians and not know yourselves? Can you have been under the gospel so long, and be strangers to yourselves? none can think it. Sure 'tis a most reproachful thing, a thing full of ignominy and scandal, that a man should name himself a Christian, and yet be under gross ignorance, touching the temper and bent of his soul. It signifies, that such a one understands little of the design and tendency of the very religion he pretends to be of, that he was a Christian by mere chance, that he took up and continues his profession in a dream. Christianity aims at nothing, it gets a man nothing, if it do not procure him a better spirit; 'tis an empty insignificant thing, it hath no design in it at all, if it do not design this. It pretends to nothing else. It doth not offer men secular advantages, emoluments, honours; it hath no such aim to make men in that sense rich, or great, or honourable, but to make them holy, and fit them for God. He therefore loses all his labour and reward, and shows himself a vain trifler in the matters of religion, that makes not this the scope and mark of his Christian profession and practice; and herein he can do nothing without a constant self-inspection. As it therefore highly concerns, it well becomes, a Christian under the gospel, to be in a continual observation and study of himself, that he may know to what purpose he is a Christian; and take notice, what (or whether any) good impressions be yet made upon his spirit; whether he can gain any thing by his religion. And if a man enter upon an inquiry into himself, what more important question can be put than this, In what posture am I as to my last and chief end? how is my spirit framed towards it? This is the intendment and business of the gospel, to fit souls for blessedness; and therefore, if I would inquire, What am I the better for the gospel? this is the sense and meaning of that very question, Is my soul wrought by it to any better disposition for blessedness? Upon which the resolution of this depends, Am I ever likely to enjoy it, yea or no? That which may make any heart not deplorably stupid, shake and tremble, that such a thing should be drawn into question; but the case with the most requires it, and it must be so. 'Tis that therefore I would fain here awaken souls to, and assist them in; that is, propound something, (in pursuance of the present direction,) which might both awaken them to move this great question, and help them in discussing it. Both which will be done in showing the importance of this latter ultimate question in itself, and then the subserviency of the former subordinate one, towards the deciding it. These two things therefore I shall a little stay upon:—1. To show and urge the requisiteness of debating with ourselves, the likelihood or hopefulness of our enjoying this blessedness. 2. To discover that the present habitude, or dispositedness of our spirits to it, is a very proper apt medium, whereby to judge thereof.

First, As to the former of these. Methinks our business should do itself; and that the very mention of such a blessedness, should naturally prompt souls to bethink themselves, Doth it belong to me? have I any thing to do with it? Methinks every one that hears of it should be beforehand with me, and prevent me here. Where is that stupid soul that reckons it an indifferent thing to attain this blessed state, or fall short of it? When thou hearest this is the common expectation of saints, to behold the face of God, and be satisfied with his likeness, when they awake; canst thou forbear to say with thyself, And what shall become of me when I awake? what kind of awaking shall I have? shall I awake amidst the beams of glory, or flames of wrath? If thou canst be persuaded to think this no matter of indifferency, then stir up thy drowsy soul to a serious inquiry, how 'tis likely to fare with thee for ever; and to that purpose put thy conscience to it to give a free, sincere answer to these few queries.

1. Canst thou say thou art already certain of thy eternal blessedness? Art thou so sure, that thou needest not inquire? I know not who thou art that now readest these lines, and therefore cannot judge of thy confidence whether it be right or wrong; only that thou mayst not answer too hastily, consider a little, that certainty of salvation is no common thing; not among (I speak you see of subjective certainty) the heirs of salvation themselves. How many of God's holy ones, that cannot say they are certain; yea, how few that can say they are! That exhortation to a church of saints, Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, (they of whom he expresseth such confidence, chap. i. 6. over whom he so glories, chap. iv. 1.) implies this to be no common thing; so doth Christ's advice to his disciples, Strive to enter in at the strait gate; and St. Peter to the scattered Jews, (that he saith had obtained like precious faith, &c.) Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; with many more passages of like import. Yea, how full is the Scripture of the complaints of *such* crying out of broken bones, of festering wounds, of distraction by divine terrors. Now what shall we say in this case, when so eminent saints have left us records of the distresses and agonies of their spirits, under the apprehended displeasure of God? May it not occasion us to suspend awhile, and consider? have we much more reason to be confident than they? and do we know none that lead stricter and more holy lives than we, that are yet in the dark, and at a loss in judging their spiritual states? I will not say, that we must therefore think ourselves bound to doubt, because another possibly better than we doth so. Unknown accidents may much vary the cases. But who would not think, that reason and modesty had quite forsaken the world, to hear (where the odds is so vastly great) the vain boast of the loose generality, compared with the humble, solicitous doubts of many serious knowing Christians? to see such trembling about their soul-concernments, who have walked with God, and served him long in prayers and tears; when multitudes that have nothing whereon to bottom a confidence but pride and ignorance, shall pretend themselves certain! If drawing breath awhile, thou wilt suspect thou have reason not to be peremptory in thy confidence, thou wilt sure think thyself concerned to inquire further. Urge thy soul then with this question again and again, Art thou yet certain, yea, or no?

2. Is it a comfortable state to be uncertain, or to have before thee apparent grounds of a rational and just doubt? For causeless doubts may sooner vanish, when their causelessness is once discovered; and so they are less likely to keep a person that is capable of understanding his own case, under a stated discomfort. But I suppose thee, in order to the answering the foregoing query, to have in some measure considered the case; and that with a preponderating apprehension of danger in it, thou remainest it uncertain. Uncertain, man! And what, wilt thou remain uncertain? wilt thou sit still so, till thou perish? shall thy life hang in doubt, and thy soul be in jeopardy every hour, till the everlasting flames resolve the doubt, and put the matter out of question with thee? What course canst thou apply thyself to, but to inquire and search further into thy own state, to avoid the torture of thy own fears, the pangs and dreadful expectation of a palpitating, misgiving heart? 'Tis true, that inquisitive diligent doubtfulness hath hope and comfort in it; but doubtfulness joined with a resolution of casting off all further care, is utterly desperate and disconsolate. What remains to thee in that

[g] Heb. iv. 12.

[h] 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

[i] Phil. ii. 12.

case, but a fearful looking for of fiery indignation ? How canst thou pass an hour in peace, while thou apprehendest it unlikely, thou shalt see the face, and be satisfied with the image of God ? Do not thy own thoughts represent to thee the amazing sights, the horrid images which shall for ever entertain and possess thy soul ? Art thou not daily haunted with divine horrors ? When thou say'st at night, thy bed shall refresh thee, art thou not terrified with dreams and affrighted with visions ? Dost thou not say in the morning, Would to God it were evening; and in the evening say, Would to God it were morning ? and while thou knowest not what else to do, meditate only changes instead of remedies ? Or if thou find no such trouble invading thy mind, let me further ask:

3. Is it reasonable to be secure in such a state of uncertainty ? Debate this matter a little while with thyself. Is it thy reason, or thy sloth, that makes thee sit still and forbear to look into thy spiritual affairs ? Is it any rational consideration, or not rather the mere indisposition of a soul, afraid to know its own state, that suspends thee from inquiring ? What hast thou to say, that looks like a reason ? Is it that it will disturb thy thoughts, interrupt thy pleasures, fill thee with anxious cares and fears, which thou art as loth to admit, as burning coals into thy bosom ? Is it that thou canst not endure to look upon so dreadful an object, as the appearing danger, or possibility of thy being miserable to eternity ? And art thou therefore resolved to shut thine eyes, and cry peace, peace ? This is to avoid a present inconvenience, by an eternal mischief, (a gross overstraining the paradox !) for avoiding the present fear of hell to run into it; as if because a man cannot bear the thoughts of dying, he should presently cut his own throat. Vain man! canst thou not bear the thoughts of eternal misery; how wilt thou bear the thing ? And how long-lived dost thou think that peace shall be, that thou purchasest upon so dear and hard terms ? canst thou promise thyself an hour ? mayst thou not lose thy purchase and price together the next moment ? canst thou defer thy misery by forgetting it; or will thy judgment linger, and thy damnation slumber, while thou securely lingerest and slumberest ? canst thou wink hell into nothing; and put it out of being, by putting it out of thy thoughts ? Alas, man! open thy eyes when thou wilt, thou shalt find thou hast not bettered thy case by having them fast closed. The bitterness of death is not yet past. The horrid image is still before thee. This is not a fancied evil, which a man may dream himself into, and *eâdem operâ, with as little difficulty*, dream himself out of it again. No, thy case is miserable and dangerous when thou composest thyself to sleep; if thou awakest thou wilt find it still the same; only thou did'st not apprehend it before, for then thou wouldst not have slept: as the drunkard that kills a man, and after falls asleep in his drunken fit, he awakes and understands his wretched state. Would his sleeping on, till the officer's arrest had awaked him, have mended the matter with him ? But thou wilt possibly say, is it not better here to have a little quiet now, than to be miserable by sad thoughts here, and miserable by actual suffering hereafter too ? Is not one death enough ? Why should one kill himself so often over; and hasten misery, as if it came on too slowly ? Better, man ? A hard choice. Supposing thou art to be eternally miserable, (if thou understandest that word eternity,) the good or evil of this little inch of time, will signify so little with thee, as hardly to weigh any thing in the scale of a rational judgment. But what, art thou now dreaming while thou thus reasonest ? Dost thou yet no better understand thy case ? Art thou not under the Gospel ? Is it not the day of thy hope, and of the Lord's grace and patience towards thee ? It was said that sleeping would not better thy case; but it was not said that awaking would not; but all that is here said, is designed to the awakening of thee, that thou mayst know thy case, and endeavour a redress. Dost thou think any man in his sober wits would take all this pains thus to reason with thee, if that were the acknowledged and agreed state of thy case, that it were already taken for granted thou must perish ? We might as well go preach to devils, and carry down the Gospel into hell. But dost thou think the holy merciful God sent his Son and his ministers to mock men; and to treat with them about their eternal concernments, when there is no hope ? Were that thy case, thou hadst as good a pretence as the devil had, to complain of being tormented before thy time. But if thou be not wilfully perverse, in mistaking the matter we are reasoning about, thou mayst understand, thy reason is here appealed to in this; whether having so fair hopes before thee, as the gospel gives, of this blessedness we are discoursing of, it be reasonable from the apprehension of a mere possibility of miscarrying, (which can only be through thy wilful security and neglect,) to give up thyself to a supine negligence, and indulge that security which is so sure to ruin thee, and exchange a possible hoped heaven for a certain hell; or whether rather it be not reasonable to stir up thy soul to consider in what posture thou art, towards the attainment of this blessedness, that thou may'st accordingly steer thy course in order to it ? If an accusation or a disease do threaten thy life, or a suspected flaw thy title to thy estate, wouldst thou not think it reasonable to inquire into thy case ? And is it not much more desirable, in a matter of this consequence, to be at some certainty ? and prudent to endeavor it, if it may possibly be attained ? Whence let me further ask:

4. Canst thou pretend it to be impossible ? Hath God left thee under a necessitated ignorance in this matter ? or denied thee sufficient means of knowing how 'tis with thee in respect of thy spiritual estate ? Though he have not given thee a list, or told thee the number or names of his sanctified ones, yet hath he not sufficiently described the persons, and given the characters by which they may be known ? And hath he not furnished thee with a self-reflecting power, by which thou art enabled to look into thyself, and discern whether thou be of them or no ? Doth he not offer and afford to serious, diligent souls, the assisting light of his blessed Spirit to guide and succeed the inquiry ? And if thou find it difficult to come to a speedy, clear issue, to make a present certain judgment of thy case; ought not that to engage thee to a patient continued diligence, rather than in a rash despairing madness to desist and cast off all ? inasmuch as the difficulty, though great, is not insuperable; and the necessity and advantage incomparably greater. And (though divers other things do confessedly fall in) the principal difficulty lies in thy aversation and unwillingness. Thou art not put to traverse the creation ? to climb heaven, or dig through the earth; but thy work lies nigh thee, in thy own heart and spirit; and what is so nigh, or should be so familiar to thee, as thyself ? 'Tis but casting thy eye upon thy own soul, to discern which way 'tis inclined and bent, thou art urged to. Which is that we propounded next to discover: *viz.*

Secondly, That we are to judge of the hopefulness of our enjoying this blessedness, by the present habitude or dispositedness of our spirits thereto. For what is that righteousness which qualifies for it, but the impress of the Gospel upon the minds and hearts of men ? The gospel-revelation is the only rule and measure of that righteousness: it must therefore consist in conformity thereto. And look to the frame and design of the gospel-revelation, and what doth so directly correspond to it, as that very habitude and dispositedness of spirit for this blessedness whereof we speak ? Nothing so answers the Gospel, as a propension of heart towards God gratified, in part now, and increasing till it find a full satisfaction: a desire of knowing him and of being like him. 'Tis the whole design of the Gospel, which reveals his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, to work and form the spirits of men to this. They therefore whose spirits are thus wrought and framed, are righteous by the gospel-measure, and by that righteousness are evidently entitled and fitted for this blessedness. Yea, that righteousness hath in it (or rather is) the elements, the first principles, the seed of this blessedness. There can therefore be no surer rule or mark whereby to judge our states, whether we have to do with this blessedness, may expect it yea or no, than this. How stand we affected towards it ? in what disposition are our hearts thereto ? Those fruits of righteousness, by which the soul is qualified to appear without offence in the day of Christ, the several graces of the sanctifying Spirit, are nothing else but so many holy principles, all disposing the soul towards this blessedness, and the way to it; mortification, self-denial, and godly sorrow, take it off from other objects, the world, self, ar

sin; repentance (that part of it which respects God) turns the course of its motion towards God the end; faith directs it through Christ the way; love makes it move freely; desire, earnestly; joy, pleasantly; hope, confidently; humility, evenly; fear, circumspectly; patience, constantly and perseveringly. All conspire to give the soul a right disposition towards this blessedness. The result of them all is heavenliness, a heavenly temper of spirit. For they all, (one way or other,) as so many lines and rays, have respect to a blessedness in God (which is heaven) as the point at which they aim; and the *cuspis*, the *point* in which they meet, in order to the touching of that objective point, is heavenliness. This is the ultimate and immediate disposition of heart for this blessedness; the *result*, the *terminus productus*, of the whole work of righteousness in the soul; by which 'tis said to be, as it were, *nata ad gloriam, begotten to the eternal inheritance*. Concerning this therefore chiefly institute thy inquiry. Demand of thyself, Is my soul yet made heavenly, bent upon eternal blessedness, or no? And here thou mayst easily apprehend, of how great concernment it is, to have the right notion of heaven, or future blessedness, as was urged under the foregoing rule. For if thou take for it another thing, thou missest thy mark, and art quite beside thy business; but if thou retain a right and scriptural notion of it, the rule thou art to judge by is sure, They shall have heaven whose hearts are intent upon it, and framed to it. Scripture is every where pregnant and full of this.

The apostle plainly intimates, this will be the rule of God's final judgment. Certainly it cannot be unsafe for us to judge ourselves by the same rule. He tells us, when God shall judge every one according to his works, (the great business of the judgment day, eternal life shall be the portion of them, [k] who, by patient continuance in well-doing, sought glory, and honour, and immortality; which are but other expressions of the same thing. What can be more plain? They shall have eternal life and glory that seek it; whose hearts are towards it. Again, speaking of true Christians, διακριτικῶς, (*i. e.* in a way of contradistinction from Pseudo-Christians, such as he saith were enemies of the cross,) he gives us among other, this brand of these latter, that they did mind earthly things, and tells us, their end should be destruction; but gives us this opposite character of the other, [l] our conversation is in heaven; our trade and business, our daily negociations, as well as the privileges of our citizenship, lie there, as his expression imports; and thence intimates the opposite end of such, whence we look for a Saviour; not destruction, but salvation. And in the same context of Scripture, where they that are risen with Christ, [m] and who shall appear with him in glory, are required to set their mind on things above, and not on things on the earth. That we may understand this, not to be their duty only, but their character, we are immediately told, they who follow not this counsel, and mortify not their earthly members, (those lusts that dispose men towards the earth, and to grovel in the dust, as the graces of the Spirit dispose them heavenward, and to converse with glory,) are the children of disobedience, upon whom the wrath of God cometh. The faith the just live by, [n] is the substance of things hoped for, &c. Such believers are confessed, avowed strangers on earth; and seekers of the better, the heavenly country, whence 'tis said God will not be ashamed to be called their God; plainly implying, that as for low, terrene spirits, that love to creep on the earth, and embrace dunghills, God will be ashamed of them; he will forever disdain a relation to them, *while* and *as* such. And if we will be determined by the express word of our great Redeemer, to whom we owe all the hopes of this blessedness; when he had been advising not to lay up treasure on earth, but in heaven, he presently adds, [o] where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also. If thy treasure, thy great interest, thy precious and most valuable good be above, that will attract thy heart, it will certainly be disposed thitherward.

Yet here it must carefully be considered, that inasmuch as this blessedness is thy end, *i. e.* thy supreme good, (as the notion of treasure also imports,) thy heart must be set upon it above any other enjoyment; else all is to no purpose. 'Tis not a faint, slight, over-mastered inclination that will serve the turn, but (as all the fore-mentioned Scriptures import) such as will bespeak it a man's business to seek heaven, his main work; and give ground to say of him, his heart is there. If two lovers solicit the same person, and speaking of them in comparisons she say, this hath my heart; is it tolerable to understand her, as meaning him she loves less? So absurd would it be to understand Scriptures, that speak of such an intention of heart heaven-ward, as if the faintest desire, or coldest wish, or most lazy inconstant endeavour, were all they meant. No, 'tis a steady, prevalent, victorious direction of heart towards the future glory, in comparison whereof, thou despisest all things else, (all temporal terrene things, that must be the *evidential* ground of thy hope to enjoy it. And therefore in this, deal faithfully with thy own soul, and demand of it, Dost thou esteem this blessedness above all things else? Do the thoughts of it continually return upon thee, and thy mind and heart, as it were, naturally run out to it? Are thy chiefest solicitudes and cares taken about it, lest thou shouldst fall short and suffer a disappointment? Dost thou savour it with pleasure? hath it a sweet and grateful relish to thy soul? Dost thou bend all thy powers to pursue and press on towards it? Urge thyself to give answer truly to such inquiries; and to consider them seriously, that thou mayst do so. Such whose spirits are either most highly raised and lifted up to heaven, or most deeply depressed and sunk into the earth, may make the clearest judgment of themselves. With them that are of a middle temper, the trial will be more difficult, yet not fruitless, if it be managed with serious diligence, though no certain conclusion or judgment be made thereupon. For the true design and use of all such inquiries and reflections upon ourselves (which, let it be duly considered) is, not to bring us into a state of cessation from further endeavours; as if we had nothing more to do (suppose we judge the best of our state that can be thought) but to keep us in a wakeful temper of spirit; that we may not forget ourselves in the great business we have yet before us, but go on with renewed vigour through the whole course of renewed endeavours, wherein we are to be still conversant, till we have attained our utmost mark and end. Therefore is this present inquiry directed, as introductive to the further duty, that in the following rules is yet to be recommended.

CHAPTER XVII.

Rule 3. Directing such as upon inquiry find, or see cause to suspect, a total aversation in themselves to this blessedness, to be speedy and restless in their endeavours to have the temper of their spirits altered and made suitable to it. Doubts and objections concerning the use of such endeavours, in such a case, answered. Some considerations to enforce this direction propounded and pressed.

3. *Rule.* THAT if upon such reflection we find or suspect ourselves wholly disaffected and unsuitable to this blessedness, we apply ourselves to speedy, incessant endeavours to get the temper of our spirits changed and fitted thereto. The state of the case speaks itself, that there is no sitting still here. This is no condition, *soul*, to be rested in; unless thou art provided to encounter the terrors of eternal darkness, and endure the torture of everlasting burnings. Yet am I not unapprehensive how great a difficulty a carnal heart will make of it to bestir itself in order to any redress of so deplorable a case. And how real a difficulty it is, to say any thing that will be thought regardable to such a one. Our sad experience tells us, that our most efficacious words are commonly wont to be entertained as neglected puffs of wind; our most convictive reasonings and persuasive exhortations lost (yea, and though they are managed too in the name of the great God) as upon the deaf and dead: which is too often apt to tempt into that resolution, of "speaking no more in that name." And were it not that the dread of that great Majesty restrains us, how hard were it to forbear such expostulations; "Lord, why are we commonly sent upon so vain an errand? why are we required to speak to them that will not hear, and expose thy sacred truths and counsels to the contempt of sinful worms; to labour day by day in vain, and spend our strength for nought?"—Yea, we cannot forbear to complain, "None so

k Rom. ii. 6, 7. l Phil. iii. 18, 19, 20. m Col. iii. 1, 2, 3, 4. n Heb. xi. 1, 13, 16. o Matt. vi. 19, 20, 21.

labour in vain as we: of all men none so generally unprosperous and unsuccessful. Others are wont to see the fruit of their labours, in proportion to the expense of strength in them: but our strength is labour and sorrow (for the most part) without the return of a joyful fruit. The husbandman ploughs in hope, and sows in hope, and is commonly partaker of his hope: we are sent to plough and sow among rocks and thorns, and in the high-way; how seldom fall we upon good ground! Where have we any increase? Yea, Lord, how often are men the harder for all our labours with them, the deader for all endeavours to quicken them? Our breath kills them whom thou sendest us to speak life to; and we often become to them a deadly savour. Sometime, when we think somewhat is done to purpose, our labour all returns, and we are to begin again; and when the duties we persuade to, come directly to cross men's interests and carnal inclinations, they revolt and start back, as if we were urging them upon flames, or the sword's point; and their own souls and the eternal glory are regarded as a thing of nought: then heaven and hell become with them fancies and dreams; and all that we have said to them false and fabulous. We are to the most as men that mock, in our most serious warnings and counsels; and the word of the Lord is a reproach. We sometimes fill our mouths with arguments, and our hearts with hope, and think, sure they will now yield; but they esteem our strongest reasonings (as Leviathan doth iron and brass) but as straw and rotten wood; and laugh at Divine threatenings as he doth at the shaking of the spear. Yea, and when we have convinced them, yet we have done nothing; though we have got their judgments and consciences on our side and their own, their lusts only reluctate and carry all. They will now have their way though they perish. We see them perishing under our very eye, and we cry to them (in thy name, O Lord) to return and live, but they regard us not. For these things, sometimes we weep in secret, and our eyes trickle down with tears; yea, we cry to thee, O Lord, and thou hearest us not; thy hand seems shortened, that it cannot save; it puts not on strength as in the days of old: it hath snatched souls by thousands, as firebrands out of the fire; but now thou hidest and drawest it back. Who hath believed our report? To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Meanwhile even the devil's instruments prosper more than we; and he that makes it his business to tempt and entice down souls to hell, succeeds more than we that would allure them to heaven."

But we must speak, whether men will hear or forbear; though it concerns us to do it with fear and trembling. Oh, how solemn a business is it to treat with souls! and how much to be dreaded, lest they miscarry through our imprudence or neglect! I write with solicitude what shall become of these lines; with what effect they will be read (if they fall into such hands) by them whom they most concern: yea, and with some doubt, whether it were best to write on or forbear. Sometimes one would incline to think it a merciful omission, lest we add to the account and torment of many at last; but sense of duty towards all, and hope of doing good to some, must oversway. Considering therefore the state of such souls I am now dealing with, I apprehend there may be obstructions to the entertainment of the counsel here recommended, of two sorts; partly in their minds, partly in their hearts; something of appearing reason, but more of real perverse will. That which I shall do in pursuance of it, will fall under two answerable heads; 1. A reply to certain doubts and objections, wherein to meet with the former: and—2. The proposal of some considerations, wherein to contend against the latter.

As to the first: It appears, men are grown ingeniously wicked, and have learned how to dispute themselves into hell; and to neglect what concerns their eternal blessedness with some colour and pretence of reason. It will therefore be worth the while to discuss a little their more specious pretences, and consider their more obvious (supposable) scruples, which will be found to concern, either the possibility, lawfulness, advantage, or necessity of the endeavours we persuade to.

Doubt 1. Is it a possible undertaking you put us upon; or, is there any thing we can do in order to the change of our own hearts? We find ourselves altogether undesirous of those things wherein you state blessedness, and they are without savour to us. If therefore the notion you give us of blessedness be right, all the work necessary to qualify us for it is yet to be done; we yet remain wholly destitute of any principle of life, that may dispose us to such relishes and enjoyments. If the new creature (as you say) consist in a suitable temper of spirit unto such a state as this, 'tis as yet wholly unformed in us: and is there any thing to be done by a dead man in order to life? Can a child contribute any thing to its first formation? or a creature to its coming into being?

Reply. If you were serious in what you say, methinks you should have little mind to play the sophisters, and put fallacies upon yourselves, in a matter that concerns the life of your soul. And what else are you now doing? For sure, otherwise one would think it were no such difficulty to understand the difference between the *esse simpliciter*, *the mere being* of any thing, and *the esse tale*, its *being such or such*; by the addition of somewhat afterward to that being. Though nothing could contribute to its own being simply; yet sure when it is in being, it may contribute to the bettering or perfecting of itself, (even as the unreasonable creatures themselves do:) and if it be a creature naturally capable of acting with design, it may act designedly in order to its becoming so or so qualified, or the attaining of somewhat yet wanting to its perfection. You cannot be thought so ignorant, but that you know the new creature is only an additional to your former being; and though it be true, that it can do no more to its own production than the unconceived child, (as nothing can act before it is,) doth it therefore follow, that your reasonable soul, in which it is to be formed, cannot use God's prescribed means in order to that blessed change? You cannot act holily as a saint; but therefore can you not act rationally as a man? I appeal to your reason and conscience in some particulars. Is it impossible to you to attend upon the dispensation of that gospel, which is God's power unto salvation, the seal by which he impresses his image, the glass through which his glory shines to the changing souls into the same likeness? Are you not as able to go to church as the tavern; and to sit in the assembly of saints as of mockers? Is it impossible to you, to consult the written word of God, and thence learn what you must be, and do, in order to blessedness? Will not your eyes serve you to read the Bible as well as a gazette or play-book? Is it impossible to inquire of your minister, or an understanding Christian neighbour, concerning the way and terms of blessedness? Cannot your tongue pronounce these words, What shall I do to be saved, as well as those, Pray what do you think of the weather? or, What news is there going? Yet further: Is it impossible to apply your thoughts to what you meet with suitable to your case, in your attendance upon preaching, reading, or discourse? Have all such words a barbarous sound in your ear? Can you not consider what sense is carried under them; what they import and signify? Can you not bethink yourself, Do the doctrines of God and Christ and the life to come, signify something or nothing? or do they signify any thing worth the considering, or that 'tis fit for me to take notice of?

And yet to proceed a little further with you: I pray you once more demand of yourselves, and put your consciences closely to it, whether, when they have told you (as no doubt they will) that such things deserve your consideration, it be impossible to you to use your considering power thus, and employ it even about these things? Do but make this easy trial, and then say, whether it be impossible. See if you cannot select one hour on purpose, wherein to sit down by yourselves alone, with this resolution; Well, I will now spend this hour in considering my eternal concernments. When you have obtained so much of yourself; set your thoughts on work, (you will find them voluble and unfixed, very apt to revolt and fly off from things you have no mind to, but) use your authority with yourself, tell your soul (or let it tell itself) these things concerning thy life. At least, taking this prepared matter along with thee, (that thou mayst not have this pretence, thou knowest not what to think of,) try if thou canst not think of these things, now actually suggested and offered to thy thoughts: as namely, Consider, that thou hast a rea-

sonable, immortal soul, which as it is liable to eternal misery, so it is capable of eternal blessedness: that this blessedness thou dost understand to consist only in the vision of the blessed God, in being made like to him, and in the satisfaction that is thence to result and accrue to thee. Consider, (what thy very objection supposeth,) that thou findest the temper of thy spirit to be altogether indisposed and averse to such blessedness. Is it not so? is not this thy very case? feel now again thy heart; try, is it not at least coldly affected towards this blessed state?

Is it not then obvious to thee to consider, that the temper of thy Spirit must be changed, or thou art undone? that inasmuch as thy blessedness lies in God, this change must lie in the alteration of thy dispositions and the posture of thy spirit towards him? Further, Canst thou not consider the power and fixedness of thy aversation from God, and with how mighty a weight thy heart is carried and held down from him? Try, lift at thy heart, see if it will be raised God-ward and heaven-ward? Dost thou not find it is as if thou wert lifting at a mountain, that it lies as a dead weight and stirs not? Ponder thy case in this respect. And then, is it not to be considered, that thy time is passing away apace? that if thou let thyself alone, 'tis likely to be as bad with thee to-morrow as this day, and as bad next day as to-morrow? And if thy time expire and thou be snatched away in this state, what will become of thee? And dost thou not therefore see a necessity of considering whatever may be most moving and most likely to incline thy heart God-ward, of pleading it more loudly and importunately with thyself? And canst thou not consider and reason the matter thus? "O my soul, what is the reason that thou so drawest back and hangest off from thy God? that thou art so unwilling to be blessed in him? that thou shouldst venture to run thyself upon eternal perdition rather? What cause hath he ever given thee to disaffect him? What is the ground of thy so mighty prejudice? Hath he ever done thee hurt? Dost thou think he will not accept a returning soul? That is to give the lie to his Gospel! and it becomes not a perishing wretch so to provoke him in whom is all its hope. Is the eternal glory an undesirable thing? or the everlasting burnings tolerable? Canst thou find a way of being for ever blessed without God; or whether he will or no? or is there a sufficient pleasure in thy sinful distance from God, to outweigh heaven and hell? Darest thou venture upon a resolution of giving God and Christ their last refusal; or say, thou wilt never hearken to, or have to do with them more? or darest thou venture to do what thou darest not resolve; and act the wickedness thou canst not think of? scorn eternal majesty and love; spurn and trample a bleeding Saviour?" Commune thus awhile with thyself; but if yet thou find thy heart relent nothing, thou canst yet further consider, that it lies not in thy power to turn thy own heart, (or else how comest thou thus to object?) And hence, canst thou avoid considering this is a distressed case? that thou art in great straits; liable to perish, (yea, sure to do so if thou continue in that ill temper of spirit,) and wholly unable to help thyself? Surely thou canst not but see this to be a most distressed case.

I put it now to thy conscience, whether being thus led on, thou canst not go thus far? See whether upon trial thy conscience give thee leave to say, I am not able thus to do or think: and be not here so foolish, as to separate the first cause and the second, in judging thy ability. Thou mayst say, No, I cannot think a good thought without God: true, so I know thou canst not move thy finger without God; but my meaning in this appeal to thy conscience is, whether upon trial thou findest not an assistance sufficient to carry thee thus far? Possibly thou wilt say, Yea, but what am I the better? I am only brought to see myself in a distressed perishing condition, and can get no further. I answer, 'Tis well thou art got so far, if thou indeed see thyself perishing, and thy drowsy soul awake into any sense of the sadness of thy case. But I intend not thus to leave thee here; therefore let me furthermore demand of thee, What course wouldst thou take in any other distress, wherein thou knowest not what to do to help thyself? would not such an exigency, when thou findest thyself pinched and urged on every side, and every way is shut up to thee, that thou art beset with calamities, and canst no way turn thyself to avoid them; would not such an exigency force thee down on thy knees, and set thee a-crying to the God of mercy for relief and help? Would not nature itself prompt to this? Is it not natural to lift up hands and eyes to heaven when we know not what to do? [a] Therefore having thus far reasoned with thee about thy considering power; let me demand of thee if thou canst yet go somewhat further than considering? that is, in short, Is it impossible to thee to obey this dictate of nature? I mean, represent the deplorable case of thy soul before him that made it: and crave his merciful relief. Do not dispute the matter; thou canst not but see this is a possible and a rational course as thy case is. Should not a people seek unto their God? Fall down therefore low before him; prostrate thyself at the footstool of his mercy seat. Tell him, thou understandest him to be the Father of spirits, and the Father of mercies; that thou hast heard of his great mercy and pity towards the spirits of men in their forlorn lapsed state: what a blessedness he hath designed for them; what means he hath designed to bring them to it. Tell him thou only needest a temper of spirit suitable to this blessedness he invites thee to? that thou canst not master and change thy sensual, earthly heart; thou knowest he easily can; thou art to implore his help, that his blessed and Holy Spirit may descend and breathe upon thy stupid, dead soul; and may sweetly incline and move it towards him; that it may eternally rest in him; and that thou may'st not perish, after so much done in order to thy blessedness, only for want of a heart to entertain it. Tell him, thou comest upon his gracious encouragement, having heard he is as ready to give his Spirit to them that ask him, as parents bread to their craving children rather than a stone: that 'tis for life thou beggest: that 'tis not so easy to thee, to think of perishing for ever; that thou canst not desist and give up all thy hopes; that thou shalt be in hell shortly if he hear and help thee not. Lastly, If thus thou obtain any communication of that holy, blessed Spirit, and thou find it gently moving thy dead heart, let me once more demand of thee: Is it impossible to forbear this or that external act of sin at this time, when thou art tempted to it? sure thou canst not say, 'tis impossible. What necessitates thee to it? And then certainly thou may'st as well ordinarily withhold thyself from running into such customary sensualities, as to tend to grieve the Spirit, debauch conscience, stupify thy soul, and hide God from thee. And if thou canst do all this, do not fool thy slothful soul with as idle a conceit, that thou hast nothing to do, but to sit still, expecting till thou drop into hell.

Doubt 2. But have I not reason to fear, I shall but add sin to sin in all this? and so increase the burden of guilt upon my soul; and by endeavouring to better my case, make it far worse. Two things I consider, that suggest to me this fear,—the manner and end of the duties you put me upon, as they will be done by me in the case wherein I apprehend myself yet to lie.—1. Manner. As to the positive action you advise to, I have heard, the best actions of an unregenerate person are sins, through the sinfulness of their manner of doing them; though as to the matter of the thing done, they be enjoined and good: and though it be true, that the regenerate cannot perform a sinless duty neither; yet their persons and works being covered over with the righteousness of Christ, are looked upon as having no sin in them, which I apprehend to be none of my case. —2. End. You put upon me these things in order to the attaining of blessedness; and to do such things with intuition to a reward, is to be (as may be doubted) unwarrantable, mercenary, and servile.

Reply. First, As to this former reason of your doubt, methinks the proposal of it answers it. Forasmuch as you acknowledge the matter of these actions to be good and duty, (and plain it is they are moral duties, of common perpetual concernment to all persons and times,) dare you decline or dispute against your duty? Sure if we compare the evil of what is so substantially in itself, and what is so circumstantially, only by the adherence of some undue *modus* or *manner:* it cannot be hard to determine which is the greater and more dreadful evil. As to the present case; shouldst thou when the great God sends abroad his proclamation of pardon and peace, refuse to attend it,

[a] Audio vulgus cum ad cœlum manus tendunt nihil aliud quem Deum dicunt, vulgi iste naturalis est sermo. Min. Fel. Octav.

to consider the contents of it, and thy own case in reference thereto, and thereupon to sue to him for the life of thy own soul? Dost thou not plainly see thy refusal must needs be more provoking than thy defective performance? This, speaks disability, but that, rebellion and contempt.[b] Besides, dost thou not see, that thy objection lies as much against every other action of thy life? The wise man tells us,[c] the ploughing of the wicked is sin; (if that be literally to be understood;) and what, wouldst thou therefore sit still and do nothing? Then how soon would that idleness draw on gross wickedness! And would not that be a dreadful confutation of thyself, if thou who didst pretend a scruple, that thou mightest not pray, read, hear, meditate, shalt not scruple to play the glutton, the drunkard, the wanton, and indulge thyself in all riot and excess? Yea, if thou do not break out into such exorbitancies, would any one think him serious that should say, it were against his conscience to be working out his salvation, and striving to enter in at the strait gate; seeking first the kingdom of God, &c. Would not this sound strangely? And especially, that in the meantime it should never be against his conscience, to trifle away his time, and live in perpetual neglects of God, in persevering atheism, infidelity, hardness of heart, never regretted or striven against; as if these were more innocent? And what thou sayst of the different case of the regenerate, is impertinent; for as to this matter the case is not different, they that take themselves to be such, must not think that by their supposed interest in the righteousness of Christ, their real sins cease to be such, they only become pardoned sins; and shall they therefore sin more boldly than other men, because they are surer of pardon?

Secondly, As to the other ground of this doubt, there can only be a fear of sinning, upon this account, to them that make more sins and duties than God hath made. The doubt supposes religion inconsistent with humanity: and that God were about to raze out of the nature of man, one of the most radical and fundamental laws written there,—a desire of blessedness;—and supposes it against the express scope and tenor of his whole gospel revelation. For what doth that design, but to bring men to blessedness? And how is it a means to compass that design, but as it tends to engage man's spirits to design it too? unless we would imagine they should go to heaven blindfold, or be rolled thither as stones that know not whither they are moved; in which case the gospel, that reveals the eternal glory, and the way to it, were a useless thing. If so express words had not been in the Bible, as that Moses had respect to the recompense of reward; yea, that our Lord Jesus himself, for the joy set before him endured the cross, &c., this had been a little more colourable, or more modest. And what, do not all men, in all the ordinary actions of their lives, act allowably enough, with intuition to much lower ends? even those particular ends which the works of their several callings tend to, else they should act as brutes in every thing they do. And would such a one scruple, if he were pining for want of bread, to beg or labour for it for this end, to be relieved? 'Tis the mistaking of the notion of heaven that hath also an ingrediency into this doubt, if it be really a doubt. What? is it a low thing to be filled with the Divine fulness? to have his glory replenishing our souls? to be perfectly freed from sin? in every thing conformed unto this holy nature and will? That our minding our interest in this, or any affairs, should be the principal thing with us, is not to be thought; our supreme end must be the same with his, who made all things for himself, of whom, through whom, and to whom all things are, that he alone might have the glory. But subordinates need not quarrel. A lower end doth not exclude the higher, but serves it: and is, as to it, a means. God is our end as he is to be glorified and enjoyed by us: our glorifying him is but the agnition of his glory; which we do most in beholding and partaking it; which is therefore in direct subordination thereto.

Doubt 3. But it may further be doubted, What if it be acknowledged, that these are both things possible and lawful; yet to what purpose will it be to attempt any thing in this kind? O what assurance have I of success? Is there any word of promise for the encouragement of one in my case? Or is God under any obligation to reward the endeavours of nature with special grace? Wherefore, when I have done all I can, he may withhold his influence, and then I am but where I was, and may perish notwithstanding. And suppose thou perish notwithstanding? Do but yet consult a little with thy own thoughts: which is more tolerable and easy to thee; to perish, as not attaining what thy fainter strugglings could not reach; or for the most direct, wilful rebellion, doing wickedly as thou couldst? Or who shall have, thinkest thou, the more fearful condemnation? He that shall truly say when his Master comes to judgment, "I never had indeed, Lord, a heart so fully changed and turned to thee, as should denote me to be the subject of thy saving, pardoning mercy; but thou knowest (who knowest all things) I longed (and with some earnestness) did endeavour it. Thou hast been privy to my secret desires and moans, to the weak strivings of a listless distempered spirit, not pleased with itself, aiming at a better temper towards thee. I neglected not thy prescribed means; only that grace which I could not challenge, thou wast pleased not to give: thou didst require what I must confess myself to have owed thee; thou didst withhold only what thou owedst me not; therefore must I yield myself a convicted, guilty wretch, and have nothing to say why thy sentence should not pass." Or he that shall as truly hear from the mouth of his Judge, "Sinner, thou wast often fore-warned of this approaching day, and called upon to provide for it; thou hadst precept upon precept, and line upon line. The counsels of life and peace were with frequent importunity pressed upon thee, but thou rejectedst all with proud contempt, didst despise with the same profane scorn the offers, commands, and threats, of him that made thee; hardenedst thy heart to the most obstinate rebellion against his known laws; didst all the wickedness to which thy heart prompted thee, without restraint; declinedst every thing of duty which his authority, and the exigency of thy own case, did oblige thee to; didst avoid as much as thou couldst to hear or know any thing of my will; couldst not find one serious, considering hour in a whole life-time, to bethink thyself, what was likely to become of thee when thy place on earth should know thee no more. Thou mightst know, thou wast at my mercy, thy breath in my hand, and that I could easily have cut thee off any moment of that large space of time my patience allowed thee in the world; yet thou never thoughtest it worth the while to sue to me for thy life. Destruction from the Lord was never a terror to thee. Thou wouldst never be brought upon thy knees; I had none of thy addresses; never didst thou sigh out a serious request for mercy; thy soul was not worth so much in thy account. Thy blood, wretch, be upon thy guilty head: Depart, accursed, into everlasting flames," &c.

Come now, use thy reason awhile, employ a few sober thoughts about this matter; remember, thou wilt have a long eternity wherein to recognise the passages of thy life, and the state of thy case in the last judgment. Were it supposable, that one who had done as the former, should be left finally destitute of Divine grace and perish; yet in which of these cases wouldst thou choose to be found at last? But why yet shouldst thou imagine so bad an issue, as that after thine utmost endeavours, grace should be withheld, and leave thee to perish; because God hath not bound himself by promise to thee? What promise have the ravens to be heard when they cry? But thou art a sinner: true, otherwise thou wert not without promise; the promises of the first covenant would at least belong to thee. Yet experience tells the world, his unpromised mercies freely flow everywhere: The whole earth is full of his goodness; yea, but his special grace is conveyed by promise only, and that only through Christ; and how can it be communicated *through* him to any but those that are *in* him? What then, is the first in-being in Christ no special grace? or is there any being in him before the first, that should be the ground of that gracious communication? Things are plain enough, if we make them not intricate,

b Therefore as to that form of expression—that such acts of unregenerate men are sins,—that is a catachrestical piece of rhetoric, which being so understood, is harmless; but to use it in propriety of speech, and thence to go about to make men believe, that 'tis a sin to do their duty, is void both of truth and sense, and full of danger unto the souls of men.

c Prov. xxi. 4.

or entangle ourselves by foolish subtleties. God promises sinners indefinitely, pardon and eternal life, for the sake of Christ, on condition that they believe on him. He gives of his good pleasure that grace whereby he draws any to Christ, without promise directly made to them, whether absolute or conditional; though he give it for the sake of Christ also. His discovery of his purpose to give such grace to some, indefinitely, amounts not to a promise claimable by any: for if it be said to be an absolute promise to particular persons, who are they? whose duty is it to believe it made to him? If conditional, what are the conditions upon which the first grace is certainly promised? who can be able to assign them? But, poor soul! thou needest not stay to puzzle thyself about this matter. God binds himself to do what he promises; but hath he any where bound himself to do no more? Did he promise thee thy being; or that thou shouldst live to this day? did he promise thee the bread that sustains thee, the daily comforts of thy life? Yea, (what is nearer the present purpose,) did he promise thee a station under the gospel? or that thou shouldst ever hear the name of Christ? If ever his Spirit have in any degree moved upon thy heart, inclined thee at all seriously to consider thy eternal concernments, did he before-hand make thee any promise of that? A promise would give thee a full certainty of the issue, if it were absolute, out of hand; if conditional, as soon as thou findest the condition performed. But what! canst thou act upon no lower rate than a foregoing certainty, a pre-assurance of the event? My friend, consider a little, (what thou canst not but know already,) that 'tis hope (built with those that are rational, upon rational probabilities, with many, oftentimes upon none at all) is the great engine that moves the world, that keeps all sorts of men in action. Doth the husbandman foreknow when he plows and sows, that the crop will answer his cost and pains? Doth the merchant foreknow, when he embarks his goods, he shall have a safe and gainful return? Dost thou foreknow, when thou eatest, it shall refresh thee? when thou takest physic, that it shall recover thy health, and save thy life? Yea, further, can the covetous man pretend a promise, that his unjust practices shall enrich him? the malicious, that he shall prosper in his design of revenge? the ambitious, that he shall be great and honourable? the voluptuous, that his pleasure shall be always unmixed with gall and wormwood? Can any say, they ever had a promise to ascertain them that profaneness and sensuality would bring them to heaven? that an ungodly, dissolute life would end in blessedness? Here the Lord knows men can be confident and active enough without a promise, and against many an express threatening. Wilt thou not upon the hope, thou hast before thee, do as much for thy soul, for eternal blessedness, as men do for uncertain riches, short pleasures, an airy, soon blasted name? yea, as much as men desperately do to damn themselves, and purchase their own swift destruction? Or canst thou pretend, though thou hast no pre-assuring promise, thou hast no hope? Is it nothing to have heard so much of God's gracious nature? Is it suitable to the reports and discoveries he hath made of himself, to let a poor wretch perish at his feet, that lies prostrate there, expecting his mercy? Didst thou ever hear he was so little a lover of souls? Do his giving his Son, his earnest unwearied strivings with sinners, his long patience, the clear beams of Gospel light, the amiable appearance of his grace, give ground for no better, no kinder thoughts of him? yea, hath he not expressly styled himself the God hearing prayers, taking a name on purpose to encourage [d] all flesh to come to him. Wilt thou dare then to adopt those profane words, [e] What profit is it to pray to him? and say, 'tis better to sit still, resolving to perish, than address to him, or seek his favour, because he hath not by promise assured thee of the issue, and that, if he suspend his grace, all thou dost will be in vain? How wouldst thou judge of the like resolution, if the husbandman should say, When I have spent my pains and cost in breaking up and preparing the earth, and casting in my seed; if the sun shine not, and the rain fall not in season, if the influences of heaven be suspended, if God withhold his blessing, or if an invading enemy anticipate my harvest, all I do and expend is to no purpose; and God hath not ascertained me of the contrary, by express promise; 'tis as good therefore sit still? Censure and answer him and thyself both together.

Doubt 4. But thou wilt yet, it may be, say, that though all this may be possible true, yet thou canst not all this while be convinced of any need so earnestly to busy thyself about this affair. For God is wont to surprise souls by preventing acts of grace, to be found of them that sought him not, to break in by an irresistible power, which they least thought of. And to go about to anticipate his grace, were to detract from the freeness, and so from the glory, of it.

Reply. But art thou not in all this afraid of charging God foolishly? When the merciful God, in compassion to the souls of men, hath given his Gospel; constituted and settled a standing office to be perpetuated through all ages for the publication of it; invited the world therein to a treaty with him, touching the concernments of their eternal peace; required so strictly their attendance to, and most serious consideration of his proposals and offers; encouraged and commanded their addresses to him, set up a throne of grace on purpose; wilt thou dare to say, all this is needless? When God speaks to thee, is it needless for thee to hear him, or regard what he saith? or when he commands thee to pour forth thy soul to him, wilt thou say, 'tis a needless thing? Dost thou not plainly see, that the peculiar, appropriate aptitude to the things pressed upon thee, speaks them *f necessary*, as *means* to their designed end; whence they are fitly called [g] means of grace? Is not the word of God the immortal seed? Are not souls begotten by that word to be the first-fruits of his creatures? Is it not the type, the mould, or print by which Divine impressions are put upon the soul; the instrument by which he sanctifies? Are not the exceeding great and precious promises, the *vehicula*, the *conveyancers* [h] of the Divine nature? And what can be the means to mollify and melt the obdurate heart of a sinner, to assuage its enmity, to overcome it into the love of God, to transform it into his image, but the gospel discovery of God's own gracious and holy nature? And can it operate to this purpose without being heard, or read, or understood, and considered, and taken to heart? Do but compare this means God works by, with the subject to be wrought upon, and the effect to be wrought, and nothing can be conceived more adequate and fitly corresponding. But inasmuch as there hath been an enmity between God and sinners, and that therefore the whole entire means of reconciliation must be a treaty; and that a treaty cannot be managed or conceived without mutual interlocution; therefore must the sinner have a way of expressing its own sense to God, as well as he speaks his mind to it; which shows the necessity of prayer too; and therefore, because the peace begins on his part, (though the war began on ours,) he calls upon sinners to open themselves to him; [i] Come now, let us reason together; he invites addresses; Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is nigh, &c. And doth not the natural relation itself between the Creator and a creature require this, besides the exigency of our present case? Every creature is a supplicant; its necessary dependance is a natural prayer. The eyes of all things look up, &c. 'Tis the proper glory of a Deity to be depended on and addressed to. [k] Should not a people seek unto their God? 'Tis an appeal to reason; is it not a congruous thing?

Further, Dost thou not know thy maker's will [l] made known infers upon thee a *necessity of obeying*; unless thou think the breach between God and thee is better to be healed by rebellion; and that the only way to expiate wickedness, were to continue and multiply it. Is it a needless thing to comply with the will of him that gave thee breath and being? and whose power is so absolute over thee, as to all thy concernments, both of time and eternity? Again, while thou pretendest these things are needless, come now, speak out freely; what are the more necessary affairs wherein thou art so deeply engaged, that thou canst not suffer a diversion? What, is the service and gratification of thy flesh and sense so important a

[d] Psal. lxv. 3. [e] Job xxi. 15.
[f] Necessitas medii.
[g] 1 Pet. i. 23. Jam. i. 18. Rom. vi. 17. John xvii. 17. [h] 2 Pet. i. 4.
[i] Isa. i. chap. lv. [k] Isa. viii. 19. [l] Necessitas præcepti.

business, that thou canst be at no leisure for that more needless work of saving thy soul? Where is thy reason and modesty? Dost thou mind none other, from day to day, but necessary affairs? Dost thou use, when thou art tempted to vain dalliances, empty discourses, intemperate indulgence to thy appetite, so to answer the temptation, Is it not necessary? Or art thou so destitute of all conscience and shame, to think it unnecessary to work out thy salvation, to strive to enter in at the strait gate that leads to life? but most indispensably necessary to be very critically curious about what thou shalt eat and drink, and put on; and how to spend thy time with greatest ease and pleasure to thy flesh, that it may not have the least cause to complain it is neglected? Thy pretence,[m] that God is wont to be found of them that sought him not, to the purpose thou intendest it, is a most ignorant or malicious abuse of Scripture. The prophet is, in that text, foretelling the calling of the Gentiles, who, while they remained such, did not ('tis true) inquire after God; but then he expressly tells us, (personating God,) I am sought of them that asked not for me, (that is, after the gospel came among them,) and then it is added, I am found (upon this seeking, plainly) of them that sought me not (*i. e.* who once in their former darkness, before I revealed myself in the Gospel dispensation to them, sought me not:) *q. d.* I am now sought of a people that lately sought me not, nor asked after me, and I am found of them. But what is this to thy case; whom God hath been, in the Gospel, earnestly inviting to seek after him, and thou all this while refusest to comply with the invitation?

And suppose thou bear of some rare instances of persons, suddenly snatched by the hand of grace out of the midst of their wickedness, as fire-brands out of the fire, is it therefore the safest course to go on in a manifest rebellion against God, till possibly he may do so by thee also? How many thousands may have dropped into hell since thou heardest of such an instance? as a worthy person speaks to that purpose.[n] If thou hast heard of one Elijah fed by ravens, and of some thousands by our Saviour's miracles, canst thou thence plead a repeal of that law to the world, They that will not labour shall not eat! Or is it a safer or wiser course to wait till food drop into thy mouth from heaven, than to use a prudent care for the maintenance of thy life? If thou say, thou hearest but of few that are wrought upon in this way, of their own foregoing expectation and endeavour; remember, (and let the thought of it startle thee,) that there are but few that are saved. And therefore are so few wrought upon in this way, because so few will be persuaded to it. But canst thou say, (though God hath not bound himself to the mere natural endeavours of his creature neither,) that ever any took this course, and persisted with faithful diligence, but they succeeded in it? What thou talkest of the freeness of God's grace, looks like a hypocritical pretence. Is there no way to honour his grace, but by affronting his authority? but to sin, that grace may abound? Sure grace will be better pleased by obedience, than by such sacrifice. For a miserable, perishing wretch, to use God's means to help itself, doth that look like merit? Is the beggar afraid thou shouldst interpret his coming to thy door and seeking thy alms, to signify, as if he thought he had deserved them? I hope thou wilt acknowledge thyself less than the least of all God's mercies, and that thou canst not deserve from him a morsel of bread; mayst thou not therefore in thy necessity labour for thy living, lest thou shouldst intrench upon the freeness of Divine bounty? With as much wisdom and reason mightst thou decline the use of all other means to preserve thy life, (which thou must owe always to free mercy,) to eat when thou art hungry, to take physic when thou art sick, lest thou shouldst intimate thyself to have merited the strength and health sought thereby. Nor can I think of any rational pretence that can more plausibly be insisted on, than these that have been thus briefly discussed. And it must needs be difficult to bring any appearance of reason for the patronage of so ill a cause, as the careless giving up of a man's soul to perish eternally, that is visibly capable of eternal blessedness. And certainly were we once apprehensive of the case, the attempt of disputing a man into such a resolution, would appear much more ridiculous, than if one should gravely urge arguments to all the neighbourhood, to persuade them to burn their houses, to put out their eyes, to kill their children, and cut their own throats. And sure, let all imaginable pretences be debated to their uttermost, and it will appear, that nothing withholds men from putting forth all their might in the endeavour of getting a spirit suitable to this blessedness, but an obstinately perverse and sluggish heart, despoiled and naked of all show of reason and excuse. And though that be a hard task to reason against mere will, yet that being the way to make men willing, and the latter part of the work proposed in pursuance of this direction, I shall recommend only such considerations as the text itself will suggest, for the stirring up and persuading of slothful, reluctant hearts, choosing those as the most proper limits, and not being willing to be infinite herein, as amidst so great a variety of considerations to that purpose, one might.

That in general which I shall propose, shall be only the misery of the unrighteous; whereof we may take a view in the opposite blessedness here described. The contradictories whereto will afford a negative, the contraries a positive, description of this misery. So that each consideration will be double; which I shall now rather glance at than insist upon.

1. Consider then, If thou be found at last unqualified for this blessedness, how wilt thou bear it to be banished eternally from the blessed face of God? There will be those that shall behold that face in righteousness; so shalt not thou: the wicked is driven away in his wickedness, with a "Never more see my face." Again, What amazing visions wilt thou have! What ghastly, frightful objects to converse with, amidst those horrors of eternal darkness; when the devil and his angels shall be thy everlasting associates! What direful images shall those accursed, enraged spirits, and thy own fruitful parturient imagination, for ever entertain thee with, and present to thy view!

2. Is it a small thing with thee, to be destitute of all those inherent excellencies which the perfected image of God, whereof thou wast capable, comprehends? View them over in that (too defective) account some of the former pages gave thee of them. Thou art none of those bright stars, those sons of the morning, those blessed, glorified spirits thou mightest have been. But consider, What art thou? What shalt thou for ever be? What image or likeness shalt thou bear? Alas, poor wretch, thou art now a fiend? conformed to thy hellish partners; thou bearest their accursed likeness. Death is now finished in thee; and as thou sowedst to the flesh, thou reapest corruption. Thou art become a loathsome carcass; the worms that never die, abound in thy putrified, filthy soul. Thou hast a hell in thee. Thy venomous lusts are now grown mature, are in their full-grown state. If a world of iniquity, a fulness of deadly poison, tempered by hell-fire, is here sometimes to be found in a little member, what will there then be in all thy parts and powers?

3. Consider, how blessed a satisfaction dost thou lose? how pleasant and delightful a rest, arising both from the sight of so much glory, and so peaceful a temper and constitution of spirit? Here thou mightst have enjoyed an eternal undisturbed rest. But for rest and satisfaction, thou hast vexation and endless torment, both by what thou beholdest, and what thou feelest within thee. Thy dreadful visions shall not let thee rest: but the chiefest matter of thy disquiet and torment is in the very temper and constitution of thy soul. Thy horrid lusts are fuller of poisonous energy, and are destitute of their wonted objects, whence they turn all their power and fury upon thy miserable self. Thy enraged passions would fly in the face of God, but they spend themselves in tormenting the soul that bred them. Thy curses and blasphemies, the envenomed darts pointed at heaven, are reverberated and driven back into thy own heart. And therefore,

4. Consider, what awaking hast thou? Thou awakest not into the mild and cheerful light of that blessed day, wherein the saints of the Most High hold their solemn, joyful triumph. But thou awakest into that great and terrible day of the Lord, (dost thou desire it, for what end is it to thee?) a day of darkness, and not light; a gloomy

m Isa. lxv. 1. n Mr. Baxter. o Pœna Damni—Sensus.

and stormy day. The day of thy birth is not a more hateful than this is a dreadful day. Thou awakest and art beset with terrors, presently apprehended and dragged before thy glorious, severe Judge, and thence into eternal torments. O happy thou, mightst thou never awake, might the grave conceal, and its more silent darkness cover thee for ever. But since thou must awake then, how much more happy wert thou, if thou wouldst suffer thyself to be awakened now! What, to lose and endure so much, because thou wilt not now a little bestir thyself, and look about thee? Sure thy conscience tells thee, thou art urged but to what is possible, and lawful, and hopeful, and necessary. Methinks, if thou be a man, and not a stone, if thou hast a reasonable soul about thee, thou shouldst presently fall to work, and rather spend thy days in serious thoughts, and prayers, and tears, than run the hazard of losing so transcendent a glory, and of suffering misery, which as now thou art little able to conceive, thou wilt then be less able to endure.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Rule 4. Directing to the endeavour of a gradual improvement in such a dispositedness of spirit (as shall be found in any measure already attained) towards this blessedness. That 'tis blessedness begun which disposes to the consummate state of it. That we are therefore to endeavour the daily increase of our present knowledge of God, conformity to him, and the satisfiedness of our spirits therein.

4. *Rule.* THAT when we find ourselves in any disposition towards this blessedness, we endeavour a gradual improvement therein, to get the habitual temper of our spirits made daily more suitable to it. We must still remember we have not yet attained, and must therefore continue pressing forward[a] to this mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. That prize (not price, as we commonly mis-read it in our Bibles) of which the apostle here speaks, is (as may be seen by looking back to verse 8, 9, &c.) the same with the blessedness in the text. Such a knowledge of Christ, as should infer at last his participation with him in his state of glory; or of the resurrection of the dead. This is the ultimate term, the scope or end of that high calling of God in Christ; so 'tis also stated elsewhere. Who hath[b] called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus. Now we should therefore frequently recount how far short we are of this glory, and stir up our souls to more vigorous endeavours in order to it. Our suitableness to this blessedness stands in our having the elements and first principles of it in us; 'tis glory only that fits for glory; some previous sights and impressions of it, and a pleasant complacential relish thereof, that frame and attemper us by degrees to the full and consummate state of it. This is that therefore we must endeavour, A growing knowledge of God, conformity to him, and satisfiedness of spirit therein. What we expect should be one day perfect, we must labour may be, in the meantime, always growing.

1. Our knowledge of God. The knowledge of him I here principally intend, is not notional and speculative, but (which is more ingredient to our blessedness, both inchoate and perfect) that of converse, that familiar knowledge which we usually express by the name of acquaintance. See that this knowledge of him be increased daily. Let us now use ourselves much with God. Our knowledge of him must aim at conformity to him; and how powerful a thing is converse in order hereto! How insensibly is it wont to transform men, and mould anew their spirits, language, garb, deportment! To be removed from the solitude or rudeness of the country to a city or university, what an alteration does it make? How is such a person divested by degrees of his rusticity, of his more uncomely and agrest manners! Objects we converse with, beget their image upon us;[c] They walked after vanity, and became vain, said Jeremiah; and Solomon,[d] He that walketh with the wise, shall be wise. Walking is a usual expression of converse. So to converse with the holy is the way to be holy, with heaven, the way to be heavenly, with God, the way to be God-like. Let us therefore make this our present business, much to acquaint ourselves with God. We count upon seeing him face to face, of being always in his presence beholding his glory; that speaketh very intimate acquaintance indeed. How shall we reach that pitch? What, to live now as strangers to him? Is that the way?[e] The path of the righteous is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The text shows us the righteous man's end, To behold the glory of God's face, &c. 'tis easy to apprehend then, his way must needs have in it a growing brightness, as he comes still nearer this end. Every nearer approach to a lucid thing infers (to us) an increase of light from it. We should therefore be following on to know the Lord, and we shall see his going forth will be before us as the morning.[f] He will be still visiting us with renewed, increasing light, (for such is morning-light, fresh and growing-light,) and ere long it will be perfect day. Labour we to improve our knowledge of God to such a degree of acquaintance as our present state can admit of: to be as inward with him as we can, to familiarize ourselves to him. His gospel aims at this, to make those that were afar off nigh. Far-distant objects we can have no distinct view of. He can give us little account of a person that hath only seen him afar off; so God beholds the proud afar off, that is, he will have no acquaintance with them: whereas with the humble he will be familiar;[g] he will dwell (as in a family) with them. So the ungodly behold God till he bring them in, and make them nigh; then they are no longer strangers, but of his family and household, now thoroughly acquainted. Several notes there are of a thorough acquaintance which we should endeavour may concur in our acquaintance with God, in that analogy which the case will bear:—To know his *nature*; or (as we would speak of a man) what will please and displease him, so as to be able in the whole course of our daily conversation to approve ourselves to him: to have the skill so to manage our conversation, as to continue a correspondence, not interrupted by any of our offensive unpleasing demeanours: to walk worthy of God unto all well-pleasing. It concerns us most to study and endeavour this practical knowledge of the nature of God; what trust, and love, and fear, and purity, &c. his faithfulness and greatness, his goodness and holiness, &c. do challenge from us: what may in our daily walking be agreeable, what repugnant, to the several attributes of his being. To know his *secrets*; to be as it were of the cabinet-council.[h] (The word used by the Psalmist hath a peculiar significancy to that purpose; to signify, not only counsel, but a council, or the consessus of persons that consult together.) This is his gracious vouchsafement, to humble reverential souls. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; such acquaintance with him is to be sought, to know the (communicable) secrets both of his mind and heart. Of his mind; his truths, gospel-mysteries, that were kept secret from ages and generations. We have the mind of Christ. This is great inwardness. Of his heart; his love, his good-will, his kind bosom thoughts towards our souls. To know his *methods*, and the course of his dispensations towards the world, his church, and especially our own spirits. This is great knowledge of God, to have the skill to trace his footsteps, and observe by comparing times with times, that such a course he more usually holds; and accordingly, with great probability, collect from what we have seen and observed what we may expect. What order and succession there is of storms of wrath, to clouds of sin; and again of peaceful, lucid intervals, when such storms have inferred penitential tears. In what exigencies, and distresses, humble mourners may expect God's visits and consolations. To recount in how great extremities former experience hath taught us not to despair; and from such experience still to argue ourselves into fresh reviving hopes, when the state of things (whether public or private, outward or spiritual) seems forlorn. To know the proper seasons of address to him; and how to behave ourselves most acceptably in his presence, in what dispositions and postures of spirit we are fittest for his converse, so as to be able to come to him in a good hour,[i]

[a] Phil. iii. 14. Βραβειον. [b] 1 Pet. v. 10.
[c] Jer. ii. 5. [d] Prov. xiii. 20. [e] Prov. iv. 18. [f] Hos. vi. 3.
[g] Isa. lvii. 15. [h] Psal. xxv. 14.
[i] Psal. xxxii. 6.

in a time when he may be found. To know his *voice:* this discovers acquaintance. [k] The ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meats. God's righteous ones, that are filled with the fruits of rightcousness, do proportionably abound in *knowledge, and in all sense.* They have quick, naked, unvitiated senses, to discern between good and evil; yea, and can have the suffrage of several senses concerning the same object; they have a kind of taste in their ear. They taste the good word of God, even in his previous workings on them. Being new-born, they are intimated to have tasted in the word how gracious the Lord is. As they grow up thereby, they have still a more judicious sense,[m] and can more certainly distinguish, when God speaks to them, and when a stranger goes about to counterfeit his voice.[n] They can tell at first hearing, what is grateful and nutritive, what offensive and hurtful, to the divine life; what is harmonious and agreeable, what dissonant, to the gospel already received, so that an angel from heaven must expect no welcome, if he bring another. To know his inward *motions* and impulses; when his hand toucheth our hearts, to be able to say, This is the finger of God, there is something divine in this touch. [o] My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved. This speaks acquaintance, when the soul can say, I know his very touch; the least impression from him, I can distinguish it from thousands of objects that daily beat upon my heart. To understand his *looks;* to know the meaning of his aspects, and glances of the various casts, as it were, of his eye. [p] Such things intimate friends can, in a sort, talk by, with one another; I will guide thee by mine eye; that implies an intelligent teachable subject. We have now no full-eyed appearances of God; he shows himself, looks in upon us through the lattice, through a veil or a shadow, or a glass. That measure of acquaintance with him to be able to discern and own him in his appearances, is a great participation of heaven, utter unacquaintance with God is expressed by the denial of these two, Ye have neither heard his voice, nor seen his shape, John v. 37.

Finally, which brings us home to the text, to keep our eye intentively fixed on him, not to understand his looks only as before, but to return our own. Intimate acquaintance (when such friends meet) is much expressed and improved by the eye, by a reciprocation of glances, or (which speaks more inwardness) more fixed views; when their eyes do even feed and feast upon each other. Thus we should endeavour to be as in a continual interview with God. How frequent mention have we of the fixed posture of his eye towards saints. To this man will I look; I have found out, *q. d.* that which shall be ever the delight of mine eye, do not divert me. Towards him I will look. What he speaks of the material temple is ultimately to be referred to that which is typified, [q] his church, his saints, united with his Christ, Mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually; and elsewhere, He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous; he cannot (admirable grace) allow himself to look off, to turn aside his eye: and he seems impatient of the aversion of theirs, [r] Let me see thy countenance, (saith he,) for it is comely.

Is it not much more reasonable it should be thus with us towards him? that we should be more delighted to behold real comeliness than he with what is so, only by his gracious vouchsafement and estimation? How careful should we be, that our eye may at every turn meet his; that he never look toward us, and find it in the ends of the earth, carelessly wandering from him! How well doth it become us, [s] to set the Lord always before us; to have our eye ever towards the Lord! This you see is the initial, leading thing in this blessedness of heaven. So it must have also a prime ingredience into our heaven on earth. It is a part of celestial blessedness; but it is not peculiar to it. The present blessedness the righteous enjoy here is a participation of heaven. It hath something in it of every thing that is ingredient into that perfect blessedness. Our present knowledge of God is often expressed by vision, or sight, as we have had occasion to observe in many passages of Scripture. He hath given us such a visive power, and made it connatural to that heavenly creature, begotten of him, in all the true subjects of his blessedness. [t] We know that we are of God, and presently it follows, He hath given us an understanding to know him that is true. This new man is not born blind. The blessed God himself is become liable to the view of his regenerate, intellectual eye, clarified, and filled with vigour and spirit from himself. He therefore that hath made, that hath new-formed this eye, shall not he be seen by it? shall not we turn it upon him? Why do not we more frequently bless our eye with that sight? This object (though of so high excellency and glory) will not hurt, but perfect and strengthen it. They are refreshing, vital beams that issue from it. Sure we have no excuse that we eye God so little, *i. e.* that we mind him no more. Why have we so few thoughts of him in a day? What, to let so much time pass, and not spare him a look, a thought? Do we intend to employ ourselves an eternity in the visions of God, and is our present aversion from him, and intention upon vanity, our best preparation thereto? This loudly calls for redress. Shall God be waiting all the day, as on purpose to catch our eye, to intercept a look, and we studiously decline him, and still look another way, as of choice? And what is it but choice? Can we pretend a necessity to forget him all the day? How cheap is the expense of a look! How little would it cost us! And yet how much of duty might it express? how much of comfort and joy might it bring into us!

How great is our offence and loss, that we live not in such more constant views of God! Herein we sin and suffer both at once, things both very unsuitable to heaven. Mindfulness of God is the living spring of all holy and pleasant affections and deportments towards him; sets all the wheels a going; makes the souls as the chariots of Aminadab. These wheels have their eyes also, are guided by mind, by an intellectual principle. Knowing, intelligent beings (as we also are by participation and according to our measure) so act mutually towards one another. We cannot move towards God but with an open eye, seeing him and our way towards him. If we close our eyes we stand still, or blindly run another course, we know not whither. All sin is darkness, whether it be neglect of good, or doing of evil: its way is a way of darkness; as a course of holy motion is walking in the light. Our shutting our eyes towards God creates that darkness; surrounds us with a darkness comprehensive of all sin. Now is every thing of enjoined duty waived, and any evil done, that sinful nature prompts us to. Well might it be said, [u] He that sinneth hath not seen God. When we have made ourselves this darkness, we fall of course under Satan's empire, and are presently within his dominions. He is the prince of darkness, and can rule us now at his will. Perishing lost souls are such as in whom the god of this world hath blinded their minds.—To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, is, to turn them also from the power of Satan unto God. What a hell of wickedness are we brought into, in the twinkling of an eye! We are without God in the world, as if a man wink, though at noon-day he hath as it were put out the sun, 'tis with him as if there were no such thing. When we have banished God out of our sight and forgotten him, 'tis with us as if there were no God. If such a state grow habitual to us, (as we know every sinful aversion of our eye from God tends thereto,) what wickedness is there that will not lurk in this darkness? How often in Scripture is forgetting God used as a character, yea, as a paraphrase, a full, though summary expression of sin in general! as if the wickedness, the malignity, the very hell itself of sin, were wholly included (and not connoted only) here. [x] Now consider this, (after so dreadful an enumeration, so black a catalogue,) all that forget God. And (as deep calleth to deep, one hell to another,) [y] The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God. That heap, that mass of wickedness, of pride, of persecution, cursing, blasphemy, deceit, and mischief, all meet in one that hath not God in all his thoughts.

k Job xii. 11.
l Phil i. 9. αἰσθητηρια γεγυμνασμενα. Heb. v. ult. Heb. vi.
m 1 Pet. i. 2, 3. n John x. o Cant. v. 4.
p So we apprehend God proportionably more clearly, as the idea we have of a person is more distinct that we have of him by the sight of his picture or face through a glass, beyond that which we have by hearing a reported description of him, though by himself unseen. This is acquaintance with God.
q 1 Kings ix. 3. Job xxxvi. 7. Psal. xxxiii. 18. and xxxiv. 15.
r Cant. ii. 14. s Psal. xvi 8. xxv. 15. t 1 John v. 19, 20.
u 1 John iii. 6. x Psal. l. y Psal. ix.

But who is so hardy to look the holy God in the face, and sin against him! What an astonishment is it, when he watches over present sin, or brings forth former sins out of secret darkness, and sets them in the light of his countenance! Who that understands any thing of the nature and majesty of God, dare call him for a witness of his sinning? The worst of men would find themselves under some restraint, could they but obtain of themselves, to sit down sometimes, and solemnly think of God. Much more would it prove an advantage to them, (whom I most intend,) such as sin within the nearer call and reach of mercy; that sin not to the utmost latitude; even such as lead the strictest lives, and are seldomer found to transgress. Are not their sins wont to begin with forgetting God? Did they eye God more, would they not sin less frequently, and with greater regret? You his saints, that have made a covenant with him by sacrifice, that profess the greatest love and devotedness to him, and seem willing yourselves to become sacrifices, and lay down your lives for his sake; what, is it a harder thing to give him a look, a thought! or is it not too common a thing, without necessity, (and then not without injury,) to withhold these from him? Let us bethink ourselves, are not the principal distempers of our spirits, and disorders yet observable in our lives, to be referred hither? As to enjoined services; what should we venture on omissions, if we had God in our eye? or serve him with so declining, backward hearts? Should we dare to let pass a day, in the even whereof we might write down, Nothing done for God this day? Or should we serve him as a hard master, with sluggish, despondent spirits? The apostle forbids servants to serve with eye-service, as men-pleasers; meaning they should eye men less, and God more. Sure, as to him, our service is not enough eye-service. We probably eye men more than we should; but we do not eye him enough. Hence such hanging of hands, such feebleness of knees, such laziness and indifferency, so little of an active zeal and laborious diligenee, so little fervency of spirit in serving the Lord. Hence also such an aversion to hazardous services, such fear of attempting any thing (though never so apparent important duty) that may prove costly, or hath danger in it. We look not to him that is invisible. And as to forbidden things; should we be so proud, so passionate, so earthly, so sensual, if we had God more in view? should we so much seek ourselves, and indulge our own wills and humours, drive a design with such solicitude and intention of mind for our private interests? Should we walk at such a latitude, and more consult our own inclination than our rule, allow ourselves in so much vanity of conversation, did we mind God as we ought?[z] And do we not sensibly punish ourselves in this neglect? What a dismal chaos is this world while we see not God in it! To live destitute of a Divine presence, to discern no beam of the heavenly glory; to go up and down day by day, and perceive nothing of God, no glimmering, no appearance; this is disconsolate as well as sinful darkness. What can we make of creatures, what of the daily events of Providence, if we see not in them the glory of a Deity; if we do not contemplate and adore the Divine wisdom, power, and goodness, diffused every where? Our practical atheism, and inobservance of God, make the world become to us the region and shadow of death, states us as among ghosts and spectres, makes all things look with a ghastly face, imprints death upon every thing we see, encircles us with gloomy, dreadful shades, and with uncomfortable apparitions. To behold the tragical spectacles always in view, the violent lusts, the rapine and rage of some, the calamitous sufferings, the miseries and ruins of others; to hear every corner resounding with the insultations of the oppressor, and the mournful groans of the oppressed; what a painful continuing death were it to be in the world without God! At the best, all things were but a vanishing scene, an image seen in the dark. The creation a thing the fashion whereof were passing away, the whole contexture and system of Providence were mere confusion, without the least concinnity or order; religion an acknowledged trifle, a mere mockery! What, to wink ourselves into so much darkness and desolation, and by sealing up our eyes against the Divine light and glory, to confirm so formidable miseries upon our own souls[a]! How dreadfully shall we herein revenge our own folly, in nullifying him to ourselves, who is the all in all! Sure there is little of heaven in all this! But if now we open our eyes upon that all-comprehending glory, apply them to a steady intuition of God, how heavenly a life shall we then live in the world! To have God always in view, as the director and end of all our actions; to make our eye crave leave of God, to consult him ere we adventure upon any thing, and implore his guidance and blessing; upon all occasions to direct our prayers to him and look up; to make our eye wait his commanding look, ready to receive all intimations of his will; this is an angelic life. To be as those ministers of his that are always ready to do his pleasure; to make our eye do him homage, and express our dependance and trust; to approve ourselves in every thing to him, and act as always in his presence, observing still how his eye observes us, and exposing ourselves willingly to its inspection and search, contented always he should see through and through us; surely there is much of heaven in this life; so we should endeavour to live here. I cannot omit to give you this instruction in the words of a heathen:[z] *We ought*, (saith he) *so to live, as always within view, order our cogitations as if some one might or can look into the very inwards of our breast. For to what purpose is it, to hide any thing from man? from God nothing can be hid; he is continually present to our spirits, and comes amidst our inmost thoughts*, &c.

This is to walk in the light, amidst a serene, placid, mild light, that infuses no unquiet thoughts, admits no guilty fears, nothing that can disturb or annoy us. To eye God in all our comforts, and observe the smiling aspects of his face, when he dispenses them to us; to eye him in all our afflictions, and consider the paternal wisdom that instructs us in them; how would this increase our mercies, and mitigate our troubles! To eye him in all his creatures, and observe the various prints of the Creator's glory stamped upon them; with how lively a lustre would it clothe the world, and make every thing look with a pleasant face! What a heaven were it to look upon God, as filling all in all! and how sweetly would it, ere-while, raise our souls into some such sweet seraphic strains, [a] Holy, holy,—the whole earth is full of his glory! To eye him in his providences, and consider how all events are with infinite wisdom disposed into an apt subserviency to his holy will and ends; what difficulties would hence be solved! what seeming inconsistencies reconciled! and how much would it contribute to the ease and quiet of our minds! To eye him in his Christ, the express image of his person, the brightness of his glory; and in the Christian economy, the gospel revelation and ordinances, through which he manifests himself; to behold him in the posture wherein he saves souls, clad with the garments of salvation, girt with power, and apparelled with love, travelling in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save: to view him addressing himself to allure and win to him the hearts of sinners, when he discovers himself in Christ, upon that reconciling design, makes grace that brings salvation appear, teaching to deny ungodliness, &c. to behold him entering into human flesh, pitching his tabernacle among men, hanging out his ensigns of peace, laying his trains, spreading his net, the cords of a man, the bands of love: to see him in his Christ, ascending the cross, lifted up to draw all men to him; and consider that mighty love of justice and of souls, both so eminently conspicuous in that stupendous sacrifice; here to fix our eyes looking to Jesus, and beholding him whom we have pierced: to see his power and glory, as they were wont to be seen in his sanctuaries; to observe him in the solemnities of his worship, and the graceful postures wherein he holds communion with his saints, when he seats himself amidst them on the throne of grace, receives their addresses, dispenses the tokens and pledges of his love: into what transports might these visions put us every day!

Let us then stir up our drowsy souls, open our heavy eyes, and turn them upon God, inure and habituate them to a constant view of his (yet veiled) face, that we may not

[z] Sic certo vivendum est tanquam in conspectu vivamus, &c. Sen. Epist. lxxiii.

[a] Isa. vi. 2, 3.

see him only by casual glances, but as those that seek his face, and make it our business to gain a thorough knowledge of him. But let us remember, that all our present visions of God must aim at a further conformity to him; they must design imitation, not the satisfying of curiosity: our looking must not therefore be an inquisitive, busy prying into the unrevealed things of God. Carefully abstain from such over-bold presumptuous looks. But remember, we are to eye God as our pattern. Wherein he is to be so, he hath plainly enough revealed and proposed himself to us. And consider, this is the pattern, both to which we ought and to which we shall be conformed, if we make it our business; so will sense of duty and hope of success concur to fix our eye and keep it steady. Especially, let us endeavour to manage and guide our eye aright, in beholding him, that our sight of him may most effectually subserve this design of being like him; and herein nothing will be more conducible, than that our looks be qualified with—reverence, and—love.

1. Let them be reverential looks. We shall never be careful to imitate a despised pattern, or that we think meanly of. When this is the intimate sense of our soul, Who is a God like unto thee in holiness? there is none holy as the Lord: this will set our powers on work; such sights will command and over-awe our souls into conformity to him. Subjects have sometimes affected to imitate the very imperfections and deformities of their adored prince. Let us greaten our thoughts of God. Look to him with a submissive, adoring eye. Let every look import worship and subjection. Who can stand before apprehended sovereign majesty with such a temper of soul as shall signify an affront to it? This will make every thing as suitable to God, yield and render our souls susceptible of all divine and holy impressions.

2. Let them be friendly and (as far as may consist with that reverence) amorous looks. 'Tis natural to affect and endeavour likeness to them we love. Let love always sit in our eye, and inspirit it; this will represent God always amiable, will infinitely commend us to his nature and attributes, and even ravish us into his likeness. The loving spouse often glories to wear her beloved husband's picture on her breast. The love of God will much more make us affect to bear his image in our hearts. His law is a true representation of him, and *love* is the fulfilling of that law, an exemplification of it in ourselves. Love will never enter a quarrel, nor admit of any disagreement with God. His more terrible appearances will be commendable in the eye of love. It thinks no evil. But so interprets and comments upon his severer aspects, whether through his law or providence, as to judge all amiable, and frame the soul to an answerable deportment.

2. In this way then let us endeavour a growing conformity unto God. It hath been much (and not unnecessarily) inculcated already, that the blessedness of the righteous hereafter, doth not consist merely in beholding an external, objective glory, but in being also glorified. They are happy by a participated glory; by being made like God, as well as seeing his glorious likeness; whereby the constitution of their spirits is changed and reduced to that excellent, harmonious, agreeable temper, that holy composure and peaceful state, from which blessedness is inseparable. As far as we are capable of blessedness in this world, it must be so with us here. Glory without us will not make us happy in heaven; much less will any thing without us make us happy on earth. 'Tis an idle dream, of sickly, crazy minds, that their blessedness consists in some external good, that is separable and distant from them; which therefore as they blindly guess, they uncertainly pursue; never aiming to become good, without which they can never know what it is to be blessed What felicity are men wont to imagine to themselves in this or that change of their outward condition! were their state such or such, then they were happy, and should desire no more. As the child's fancy suggests to it, if it were on the top of such a hill, it could touch the heavens, but when with much toil it hath got thither, it finds itself as far off as before. We have a shorter and more compendious way to it, would we allow ourselves to understand it. A right temper of mind involves blessedness in itself; 'tis this only change we need to endeavour. We wear out our days in vanity and misery, while we neglect this work, and busy ourselves to catch a fugitive shadow, that hovers about us. It can never be well, till our own souls be a heaven to us, and blessedness be a domestic, a home dwelling inhabitant there. Till we get a settled principle of holy quietude into our own breasts, and become the sons of peace, with whom the peace of God may find entrance and abode; till we have that treasure within us, that may render us insensible of any dependence on a foreign good, or fear of a foreign evil. Shall that be the boast and glory of a philosopher only, I carry all my goods with me wherever I go? and that, A virtuous, good man, is liable to no hurt? [b] Seneca thinks "they discover a low spirit, that say, externals can add any thing (though but a very little) to the felicity of an honest mind; as if (saith he) men could not be content with the light of the sun without the help of a candle or a spark." And speaking of the constancy of the virtuous man, (saith he,) "They do ill that say, such an evil is tolerable to him, such a one intolerable, and that confine the greatness of his mind within certain bounds and limits. Adversity (he tells us) overcomes us, if it be not wholly overcome. Epicurus, (saith he,) the very patron of your sloth, acknowledges yet, that unhappy events can seldom disturb the mind of a virtuous person, (and he adds,) how had he almost uttered, the voice of a man! I pray, (saith he,) speak out a little more boldly, and say he is above them altogether." [c] Such apprehensions the more virtuous heathens have had of the efficacy and defensative power of moral goodness, however defective their notion might be of the thing itself. Hence Socrates the pagan martyr is reported to have cried out, (when those persons were persecuting him to death,) Anytus and Meletus can kill me, but they cannot hurt me. And Anaxarchus the philosopher, having sharply reproved Nicocreon, and being by him ordered to be beaten to death with iron mallets, bids, Strike on, strike on, thou mayest (saith he) [d] break in pieces this vessel of Anaxarchus, but Anaxarchus himself thou canst not touch.

Shall Christianity here confess itself outvied? shall we, to the reproach of our religion, yield the day to pagan morality, and renew the occasion of the ancient complaint, [e] *that the faith of Christians is out-done by the heathen infidelity?* It is, I remember, the challenge of Cicilius in Minutius. "There is Socrates (saith he) the prince of wisdom, whosoever of you Christians is great enough to attempt it, let him imitate him if he can." Methinks we should be ambitious to tell the world in our lives, (for Christians should live great things, not speak them,) that a greater than Socrates is here: to let them see in us our represented pattern: to show forth higher virtues than those of Socrates; even his, who hath called us out of darkness into his glorious and marvellous light. Certain it is, that the sacred oracles of the gospel set before us a more excellent pattern, and speak things not less magnificent, but much more modest and perspicuous; with less pomp of words they give us a much clearer account of a far more excellent temper of mind, and prescribe the direct and certain way of attaining it. (Do but view over the many passages of Scripture occasionally glanced at, Chap. 7.) But we grope as in the dark for blessedness; we stumble at noon-day as in the night, and wander as if we had no eyes; we mistake our business, and lay the scene of a happy state at a great distance from us, in things which we cannot reach, and which if we could it were to little purpose.

Not to speak of greater sensualists, (whom at present I have less in my eye,) is there not a more refined sort of persons, that neglecting the great business of inspecting, and labouring to better and improve their spirits, are wholly taken up about the affairs of another sphere; that are more solicitous for better times, for a better world, than better spirits; that seem to think that all the happiness they are capable of on earth, is bound up in this or that external state of things? Not that the care of all public concernments should be laid aside; least of all, a just solici-

b Epist. 92.
c Max. Tyr. dissert. 2. who adds, For a good man cannot receive detriment from an evil man.
d Diogen. Laert. Anaxarchus.
e Non præstat fides quod præstitit infidelitas.
f As this author's expression is.

tude for the church's welfare: but that should not be pretended, when our own interest is the one thing with us. And when we are really solicitous about the church's interests, we should state them aright. God designs the afflictions of his people for their spiritual good, therefore that is a much greater good, than their exemption from suffering these evils; otherwise his means should eat up his end, and be more expensive than that will countervail; which were an imprudence no man of tolerable discretion would be guilty of. We should desire the outward prosperity of Sion, for it is a real good; but inasmuch as it hath in it the goodness, not of an *end*, but only (and that but sometimes neither) of a *means;* not a constant, but a mutual goodness; not a principal, but a lesser subordinate goodness; we must not desire it absolutely, nor chiefly, but with submissive limited desires. If our hearts are grieved to hear of the sufferings of the church of God in the world, but not of their sins; if we more sensibly regret, at any time, the persecutions and oppressions they undergo, than their spiritual distempers, their earthliness, pride, cold love to God, fervent animosities towards each other; it speaks an uninstructed carnal mind. We take no right measure of the interests of religion, or the church's welfare, and do most probably mistake ourselves as much in our judging of our own; and measure theirs by our own mistaken model.

And this is the mischievous cheat many put upon their own souls, and would obtrude too often upon others too; that overlooking the great design of the gospel, to transform men's spirits and change them into the Divine likeness, they think 'tis religion enough to espouse a party, and adopt an opinion; and then vogue themselves friends to religion according to the measure of their zeal for their own party or opinion; and give a very pregnant proof of that zeal, by magnifying or inveighing against the times, according as they favour or frown upon their empty, unspirited religion. It being indeed such (a secret consciousness whereof they herein bewray) as hath no other life in it, than what it owes to external favour and countenance. And therefore all public rebukes are justly apprehended mortal to it; whereas that substantial religion that adequately answers the design, and is animated by the spirit of the gospel, possesses the souls of them that own it, with a secure confidence, that it can live in any times, and hold their souls in life also. Hence they go on their way with a free unsolicitous cheerfulness, enjoying silently in their own bosoms that repose and rest which naturally results from a sound and well-composed temper of spirit. They know their happiness depends upon nothing without them.[g] That they hold it by a better tenure than that of the world's courtesy. They can be quiet in the midst of storms, and abound in the want of all things. They can in patience possess their own souls, and in them a vital spring of true pleasure, when they are driven out of all other possessions. They know the living sense of these words, That the good man is satisfied from himself: That to be spiritually-minded is life and peace: That nothing can harm them that are followers of the good: That the way to see good days, is to keep their tongues from evil, and their lips from speaking guile, to depart from evil and do good, to seek peace and pursue it. They cannot live in bad times; they carry that about them that will make the worst days good to them. Surely they can never be happy in the best times, that cannot be so in any. Outward prosperity is quite besides the purpose to a distempered soul; when nothing else troubles, it will torment itself. Besides, we cannot command at pleasure the benign aspects of the world, the smiles of the times; we may wait a life's-time, and still find the same adverse posture of things towards us from without. What dotage is it to place our blessedness in something to us impossible, that lies wholly out of our power; and in order whereto we have nothing to do, but sit down and wish; and either faintly hope, or ragingly despair? We cannot change times and seasons, nor alter the course of the world, create new heavens and new earth. Would we not think ourselves mocked, if God should command us these things in order to our being happy? 'Tis not our business, these are not the affairs of our own province (blessed be God 'tis not so large) further than as our bettering ourselves may conduce thereto, and this is that which we may do and ought, 'tis our proper work, in obedience and subordination to God as his instruments, to govern and cultivate our own spirits, to intend the affairs of that his kingdom in us, (where we are his authorized viceroys,) that consists in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. We can be benign to ourselves, if the world be not so to us; cherish and adorn our inward man; that though the outward man be exposed daily to perish, (which we cannot help, and therefore it concerns us not to take thought about it,) the inward may be renewed day by day. We can take care that our souls may prosper, that through our oscitant neglect they be not left to languish and pine away in their own iniquities. They may be daily fed with the heavenly hidden manna, and with the fruits of the paradise of God; they may enjoy at home a continual feast, and with a holy freedom luxuriate in divine pleasures, the joys wherewith the strangers intermeddle not, if we be not unpropitious and unkind to ourselves.

And would we know wherein that sound and happy complexion of spirit lies, that hath so much of heaven in it: 'Tis a present gradual participation of the Divine likeness. It consists in being conformed to God; 'tis, as the moralist tells us,[h] *If one would give a short compendious model of it, such a temper of mind as becomes God;* or to give an account of it in his own words who prescribes it, and who is himself the highest pattern of this blessed frame,[i] 'Tis to be transformed in the renewing of our minds, so as to be able to prove what is the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God; that is, experimentally to find it in ourselves, impressed and wrought into our own spirits, so as to have the complacential relish and savour, of its goodness, excellency, and pleasantness diffused through our souls. Where remember, this was written to such as were supposed saints; whence it must be understood, of a continued progressive transformation, a renewing of the inward man day by day (as is the apostle's expression elsewhere.) 'Tis a more perfect reception of the impress of God, revealing himself in the gospel; the growth and tendency of the new creature, begotten unto the eternal blessedness, towards its mature and most perfect state and stature in the fruition thereof.

And 'tis this I am now pressing; inasmuch as some account hath been already given (according as we can now imperfectly guess at it, and spell it out) what the constitution of the holy soul is in its glorified state, when it perfectly partakes the Divine likeness; that when we find in ourselves any principles and first elements of that blessed frame, we would endeavour the gradual improvement thereof, and be making towards that perfection. This therefore being our present work, let it be remembered wherein this participated likeness of God hath been said to consist, and labour now the nearest approach to that pitch and state. Your measures must be taken from what is most perfect, come now as near it as you can, and as that pagan's advise is; [k] "If yet thou art not Socrates, however, live as one that would fain be Socrates." Though yet thou art not perfect, live as one that aims at it, and would be so. Only it must be considered, that the conformity to God, of our present state, is in extent larger and more comprehensive than that of our future; though it be unspeakably less perfect in degree. For there is no moral excellency (that we have any present knowledge of) belonging to our glorified state, which is not in some degree necessarily to be found in saints on earth. But there are some things which the exigency of our present state makes necessary to us here, which will not be so in the state of glory; repentance, faith, as it respects the Mediator, in order to our future happiness; patience of injuries, pity to the distressed, &c. These things, and whatsoever else, whose objects cease, must be understood to cease with them. In short, *here* is requisite all that moral good which concerns both our end and way; *there*, what concerns our end only.

Yet is the whole compass of that gracious frame of spirit,

g Ἑλίωτον ψασις και χαρακτηρ, ουδεποτε εξ εαυτου προσδοκα ωφελειαν η βλαβην, αλλ' απο των εξω φιλοσοφουψασις και χαρακτηρ, πασαν ωφελειαν και βλαβην εξ εαυτου ποσσδοκα. Epict.

h Denique ut breviter tibi formulam scribam; talis animis sapientis viri esse debet qualis Deum deceat. Sen. Epist.

i Rom. xii. 2.

k Epictet.

requisite in this our present state, all comprehended in conformity to God. Partly, inasmuch as some of these graces which will cease hereafter in their exercise, as not having objects to draw them forth into act, have their pattern in some communicable attributes of God, which will cease also, as to their denomination and exercise; their objects then ceasing too, as his patience towards sinners, his mercy to the miserable. Partly inasmuch as other of those graces now required in us, though they correspond to nothing in God that is capable of the same name, as faith in a Saviour, repentance of sin, (which can have no place in God,) they yet answer to something in his nature, that goes under other names; and is the reason wherefore he requires such things in us. He hath in his nature that faithfulness and all-sufficient fulness, that challenges our faith; and that hatred of sin, which challenges our repentance for it, having been guilty of it. His very nature obliges him to require those things from us, the state of our case being considered. So that the sum even of our present duty lies in receiving this entire impression of the Divine likeness (in some part invariably and eternally necessary to us, in some part necessary with respect to our present state.) And herein is our present blessedness also involved. If therefore we have any design to better our condition in point of blessedness, it must be our business to endeavour after a fuller participation of that likeness, in all the particulars it comprehends. You can pitch your thoughts upon no part of it, which hath not an evident direct tendency to the repose and rest of your spirits. I shall commend only some few instances, that you may see how little reason and inducement a soul conformed to the holy will of God, hath to seek its comforts and contents elsewhere. Faith corresponds to the truth of God, as it respects divine revelations. How pleasant is it to give up our understandings to the conduct of so safe a guide; to the view of so admirable things as he reveals! It corresponds to his goodness, as it respects its offers. How delectable is it to be filling an empty soul from the Divine fulness? What pleasure attends the exercise of this faith towards the person of the Mediator, viewing him in all his glorious excellencies, receiving him in all his gracious communications by this eye and hand. How pleasant is it to exercise it in reference to another world! living by it in a daily prospect of eternity; in reference to this world, to live without care in a cheerful dependance on him that hath undertaken to care for us!

Repentance is that by which we become like the holy God; to whom our sin hath made us most unlike before. How sweet are kindly relentings, penitential tears, and the return of the soul to its God, and to a right mind! And who can conceive the ravishing pleasures of love to God! wherein we not only imitate, but intimately unite with him who is love itself. How pleasant to let our souls dissolve here, and flow into the ocean, the element of love! Our fear corresponds to his excellent greatness. And is not (as it is part of the new creature in us) a tormenting servile passion, but a due respectfulness and observance of God; and there is no mean pleasure in that holy awful seriousness unto which it composes and forms our spirits. Our humility, as it respects him, answers his high excellency; as it respects our own inferiors, his gracious condescension. How pleasant is it to fall before him! And how connatural and agreeable to a good spirit, to stoop low, upon any occasion to do good! Sincerity is a most God-like excellency; an imitation of his truth, as grounded in his all-sufficiency; which sets him above the necessity or possibility of any advantage by collusion or deceit; and corresponds to his omniscience and heart-searching eye. It heightens a man's spirit to a holy and generous boldness; makes him apprehend it beneath him to do an unworthy, dishonest action, that should need a palliation, or a concealment.[l] And gives him the continual pleasure of self-approbation to God, whom he chiefly studies and desires to please. Patience, a prime glory of the Divine Majesty, continues a man's possession of his own soul, his liberty, his dominion of himself. He is (if he can suffer nothing) a slave to his vilest and most sordid passions at home, his own base fear, and brutish anger, and effeminate grief, and to any man's lusts and humours besides that he apprehends can do him hurt. It keeps a man's soul in a peaceful calm, delivers him from (that most unnatural) self-torment, defeats the impotent malice of his most implacable enemy, who fain would vex him, but cannot. Justice, the great attribute of the judge of all the earth, as such; so far as the impression of it takes place among men, preserves the common peace of the world, and the private peace of each man in his own bosom, so that the former be not disturbed by doing of mutual injuries, nor the latter by the conscience of having done them. The brotherly love of fellow-Christians; the impression of that special love, which God bears to them all, admits them into one another's bosoms, and all the endearments and pleasures of a mutual communion. Love to enemies, the express image of our heavenly Father; by which we appear his children, begotten of him; overcomes evil by goodness, blunts the double edge of revenge; at least the sharper edge; (which is always towards the author of it;) secures ourselves from wounding impressions and resentments; turns keen anger into gentle pity; and substitutes mild pleasant forgiveness, in the room of the much uneasier thoughts and study of retaliation. Mercifulness toward the distressed, as our Father in heaven is merciful, heaps blessing upon our souls, and evidences our title to what we are to live by, the Divine mercy. A universal benignity and propension to do good to all: an imitation of the immense, diffusive goodness of God, is but kindness to ourselves, rewards itself by that greater pleasure is in giving than in receiving; and associates us with God in the blessedness of this work, as well as in the disposition to it; who exercises loving-kindness in the earth, because he delighteth therein.

Here are some of the μιμήματα τῆς Θείας ζωῆς, or *the things wherein consists that our conformity to the Divine nature and will, which is proper to our present state.* And now, who can estimate the blessedness of such a soul? Can (in a word) the state of that soul be unhappy that is full of the Holy Ghost, full of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, those blessed fruits of that blessed Spirit? Blessedness is connaturalized unto this soul; every thing doth its part, and all conspire to make it happy. This soul is a temple, a habitation of holiness. Here dwells a Deity in his glory. 'Tis a paradise, a garden of God. Here he walks and converses daily, delighted with its fragrant fruitfulness. He that hath those things and aboundeth, is not barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus: he is the sun, and the knowledge of him the quickening beams that cherish and ripen these fruits. But the soul that lacketh these things is a desert, a habitation of devils. Here is stupid, disconsolate infidelity, inflexible obstinacy and resolvedness for hell, hatred and contempt of the Sovereign Majesty; whom yet, its secret misgiving thoughts tell it, will be too hard for it at last. Here is swollen pride and giddy vain-glory, disguised hypocrisy and pining envy, raging wrath and ravenous avarice, with what you can imagine besides, leading to misery and desolation.

You have then some prospect of a happy temper of spirit. It can now be no difficulty to you, to frame an idea of it in your thoughts, to get a notional image (or this likeness in the notion of it) into your minds; but that will avail you little, if you have not the real image also; that is, your spirits really fashioned and formed according thereto: if having the knowledge of these things, (as the pagan moralist's expression, before mentioned, is of virtuous rules and precepts,)[m] they become not habitual to you, and your spirits be not transfigured in them. But now, I treat with such as are supposed to have some such real impressions, that they may be stirred up to endeavour a further perfecting of them. In order whereto, I shall add but this two-fold advice:

1. Be very careful that this living image (such you have been formerly told it is) may grow equally in every

[l] As that noble Roman whom his architect (about to build him a house) promised to contrive it free from all his neighbours' inspection; he replies, Nay, if thou have any art in thee, build my house so that all may see what I do. Vell. Pat. p. 32.

[m] Philosophia hæc dividitur in scientiam, et habitum animi, unam illam qui didicit et faciendo ac vitanda præcepit nondum sapiens est, nisi in ea quæ didicit animus ejus transfiguratus est. Sen. ex Agrippa, Epist. 94.

part. See that the impression of this likeness be entire, that it be not a maimed thing; if it be, God will never own it as his production. Integrity is the glory of a Christian; to be entire, lacking nothing. This is the soundness of heart that excludes a blushing consciousness and misgiving, exempts it from the fear of a shameful discovery. [n] Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, is paraphrased, by having respect to all God's commandments; to which is opposite, that being [o] partial in the law, spoken of by the prophet, by way of complaint concerning the priests of that time. A thing hateful in the eye of God, and as uncomfortable to ourselves, as to be without a leg or an arm. And see that it be preserved entire by a proportional and uniform growth, that fresh life and motion may daily appear in every limb of this heavenly new creature. How odious a deformity is it, when a show of moral virtues excludes godliness: And how much more odious (inasmuch as there is more impudent falsehood in it, and more dishonourable reflection upon God) when under a high pretence of godliness, any shall allow themselves in visible immorality? What, to be oppressive, envious, contentious, deceitful, proud, turbulent, wrathful, morose, malicious, fretful, and peevish, and yet a Christian? What serious person, that shall have no fairer representation of Christianity than such do give, would not be ready to say rather, *Sit anima mea cum philosophis, If this be Christian religion, give me honest paganism?* A Christian that hath received the proper, uniform, entire impress of the gospel of Christ, is the most meek, mild, calm, harmless thing in the world. Never mention so venerable a name, if you will not be very jealous of the honour of it. Will you give God occasion to charge you, Wretch, I never had had this dishonour, if thou hadst never been called a Christian; thou art a Christian to no purpose, or to very bad; it does thee no good, and it injures me? But (which is more directly considerable as to our present purpose) the neglect and consequent decay of any gracious principle, infers a languor, a consumption and enfeeblement of all. Any such perverse disposition doth not affect that part only, is not only an impairment to the contrary gracious principle, but (as a cancer in some exterior part of the body) it gradually creeps up till it invade the vitals. Can the love of God live and grow in an unquiet, angry, uncharitable breast? Consider Jam. i. 26. I John iii. 17.

2. Be constantly intent upon this business of spiritual growth. Mind it as a design, make a solemn purposed business of it, your great daily business. You do not till your ground by chance, as a casual thing; but you do it industriously, and of set purpose. The apostle speaking of his own method of pursuing conformity to Christ, tells us, [p] he did, in comparison, count all things else loss and dog's meat; he threw every thing else aside. Then next he recounts with himself, how far short he was; [q] not as if I had already attained, &c. (where by the way he intimates, that to stand still, and give over further endeavours, implies that gross absurdity, as if we thought ourselves to have attained already, to be already perfect; are we not ashamed to seem so conceited of ourselves?) and then, [r] still as he did attain in this pursuit he forgot what was behind; and held on his course with fresh and constant vigour, still reaching forth and pressing onward towards his designed mark.

In this great business we, alas! seem to dream. He that hath been observed ten or twenty years ago to be proud, and covetous, or passionate, still remains so, and we apprehend not the incongruity of it. What, always learning, and yet never come to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, to the putting off the old man, and putting on the new? Who would meddle with any profession upon such terms, to be always doing and yet to do nothing? Surely it must be imputed to this, we design not, we do not seriously intend the perfecting of holiness, to make a real progress in our way and work, and to get still nearer heaven, as we draw nearer to the end of our days on earth. We too contentedly confine ourselves within certain limits, and aim not, as we should, at a spiritual excellency.

n Psal. cxix. 6, 80.
o Mal. ii. 9.
p Phil. iii. 8.
q Ver. 9, 10.
r Ver. 12, 13.
s Tiberius. Neque enim eminentes virtutes sectabatur, et rursum vitia oderat. Tacit. Annal.

This is the temper of many that have long trodden the path of (at least an external) religion; they will go but their own pace, and that within a self-prescribed round or circle. They perform their stated task of religious exercises, and shun the grosser vices of the time; and resolve never of go higher: much like the character that was once given of a great man, [s] *that he followed not the more eminent virtues, and yet that he hated vice.* And 'tis a true censure that a [t] barbarian is said to have given of that middle temper, that dull indifferency: *What is equally distant from being the matter either of praise or punishment, is upon no terms to be accounted a virtue.* At least, we drive not on a design of growth and self-improvement in our spiritual states with that constancy we ought; we are off and on; our spirits are not steadily intent [u] we are unstable as water, how can we excel? God hath not put us, sure, upon so fruitless a task, wherein our utmost labour and diligence shall profit nothing. Therefore strive more vigorously, and pray with more earnest importunity. Consider and plead it with God, that he hath set before thee the hope of such a state, wherein thou art to be perfectly like him; and shalt thou (that must hereafter be like God) be now like a clod of earth? Thou art now a child begotten of him; and though thou art yet in the minority, yet may not somewhat be spared out of so fair an estate, hereafter designed for thee, as that thou mayst now live worthy of such a Father, and suitable to thy expected inheritance.

3. And now, a contented, satisfied temper of spirit, as I have told you, results from the other two; and will therefore follow, of course, upon growing knowledge of God, and conformity to him, as the latter of these also doth upon the former. Yea, 'tis a part of our conformity to God; but a part consequent to the impression of the things mentioned under the former head, as knowledge also is a part previous and antecedent thereto. 'Tis in the state of glory we see something superadded. The likeness impressed is pre-supposed; satisfaction follows thereupon. The case is so too in our present state; contentment is spoken of as a thing consequent and superadded; godliness with contentment. A satisfied contented spirit, when 'tis the result of godliness, (of the Divine image impressed,) is indeed great gain. Yet as to this I shall only say these two things.

1. Be distinct and explicit in the proposal of it as an end. Religion doth not brutify men, but make men more rational. Its business is to guide them to blessedness. It must, therefore, pitch their eyes upon it, as the mark and end they are to aim at, and hold them intent there. 'Tis ingenuous and honourable to God, that we should expressly avow it. We come to him for satisfaction to our spirits, not knowing whither else to apply ourselves. We turn our eyes upon him, we lay open our souls to receive impressions from him, for this very end. This is an explicit acknowledgment of him as God, our highest sovereign good.

2. Actually apply and accommodate divine visions and communications to this purpose. Say, "O my soul, now come, solace thyself in this appearance of God; come, take thy allowed pleasure in such exertions of God, as thou dost now experience in thyself." Recount thy happiness; think how great it is, how rich thou art; on purpose that thy spirit may grow more daily into a satisfied, contented frame. Often bethink thyself, What is the great God doing for me, that he thus reveals and imparts himself to my soul? O how great things do those present pledges pre-signify to me? that thou mayst still more and more like thy portion, and account it fallen in pleasant places, so as never to seek satisfaction in things of another kind; though thou must still continue expecting and desiring more of the same kind. And remember to this purpose, there cannot be a greater participation of the misery of hell before-hand, than a discontented spirit perpetually restless and weary of itself; nor of the blessedness of heaven, than in a well-pleased, satisfied, contented frame of spirit.

t Theopesion, Παν γαρ ο τιμης τε, και τιμωρια; ισον αρεσηκεν, ουπω αρετη. Philostr. in vit. Apollon. Tyan.
u Gen. xlix. 4

CHAPTER XIX.

Rule 5. Directing to raise our desires above the actual or possible attainments of this our present, and terminate them upon the future consummate state of blessedness. The rule explained and pressed by sundry considerations. Rule 6. That we add to a desirous pursuit, a joyful expectation of this blessedness, which is pursued in certain subordinate directions.

Rule 5. THAT notwithstanding all our present or possible attainments in this imperfect state on earth, we direct fervent vigorous desires towards the perfect and consummate state of glory itself; not designing to ourselves a plenary satisfaction and rest in any thing on this side of it. That is, that forgetting what is behind, we reach forth not only to what is immediately before us, the next step to be taken; but that our eye and desire aim forward at the ultimate period of our race, terminate upon the eternal glory itself; and that not only as a measure, according to which we would some way proportion our present attainments, but as the very mark, which (itself) we would fain hit and reach home to. And that this be not only the habitual bent and tendency of our spirits; but that we keep up such desires, in frequent (and, as much as is possible) continual exercise. Yea, and that such actual desires be not only faint and sluggish wishes, but full of lively efficacy and vigour; in some measure proportionable to our last end and highest good; beyond and above which we neither esteem nor expect any other enjoyment. Whatsoever we may possibly attain to here, we should still be far from projecting to ourselves a state of rest on this side consummate glory, but still urge ourselves to a continual ascent; so as to mount above, not only all enjoyments of any other kind, but all degrees of enjoyment in this kind, that are beneath perfection.

Still it must be remembered, this is not the state of our final rest. The mass of glory is yet in reserve; we are not yet so high as the highest heavens. If we gain but the top of mount Tabor, we are apt to say, 'Tis good to be here, and forget the longer journey yet before us, loth to think of a further advance; when, were our spirits right, how far soever we may suppose ourselves to have attained, it would be matter of continual joy to us to think, high perfections are still attainable; that we are yet capable of greater things than what we have hitherto compassed; our souls can yet comprehend more. Nature intends what is most perfect in every creature; methinks the divine nature in the new creature, should not design lower, or cease aspiring, till it have attained its ultimate perfection, its culminating point; till grace turn into glory. Let us, therefore, Christians, bestir ourselves; let us open and turn our eyes upon the eternal glory. Let us view it well, and then demand of our own souls, why are our desires so faint and slothful? why do they so seldom pierce through the intervening distance, and reach home to what they professedly level at; so rarely touch this blessed mark? How can we forbear to be angry with ourselves, that so glorious an end should not more powerfully attract; that our hearts should not more sensibly find themselves drawn, and all the powers of the soul be set on work by the attractive power of that glory? It certainly concerns us, not to sit still under so manifest a distemper. But if the proposal of the object, the discourse (all this while) of this blessed state, do not move us to make some further trials with ourselves, see what urging and reasoning with our souls, what rubbing and chafing our hearts will do. And there is a two-fold trial we may in this kind make upon our spirits:—What the sense of *shame* will work with us; whether our hearts cannot be made sensible to suppose how vile and wretched a temper it is to be undesirous of glory. And then what sense of *praise* can effect, or what impression it may make upon us to consider the excellency and worth, the high reasonableness, of that temper and posture of soul which I am now persuading to, a continual desirousness of that blessed, glorious state.

1. As to the former: Let us bethink ourselves, Can we answer it to God or to our own souls, that we should indulge ourselves in a continual negligence of our eternal blessedness? a blessedness consisting in the vision and participation of the Divine glory? Have we been dreaming, all this while, that God hath been revealing to us this glorious state, and setting this lovely prospect before our eyes? Did it become us not to open our eyes while he was opening heaven to us, and representing the state which he designed to bring us to? or will we say, We have seen it and yet desire it not? Have we been deaf and dead while he hath been calling us into eternal glory? have all our senses been bound up all this while? Hath he been speaking all along to senseless statues, to stocks and stones, while he expected reasonable, living souls should have received the voice, and have returned an obedient, complying answer? And what answer could be expected to such a call (a call to his glory) below this, We desire it, Lord, we would fain be there. And if we say we have not been all this while asleep, we saw the light that shone upon us, we heard the voice that called to us; wherewith shall we then excuse ourselves, that our desires were not moved, that our souls were not presently in a flame? Was it then, that we thought all a mere fiction; that we durst not give credit to his word, when it brought us the report of the everlasting glory? Will we avow this? Is this that we will stand by? Or what else have we left to say? Have we a more plausible reason to allege, that the discovery of such a glory moved us not to desire it, than that we believed it not? Sure this is the truth of our case. We should feel this heavenly fire always burning in our breasts, if our infidelity did not quench the coal. If we did believe, we could not but desire. But doth not the thoughts of this shake our very souls, and fill us with horror and trembling? We that should be turned into indignation, and ready to burn ourselves with our own flame, and all about us, if one should give us the lie; that we should dare to put the lie upon the *eternal truth:* upon him whose word gave stability and being to the world, who made and sustains all things by it! That awful word! That word that shivers rocks, and melts down mountains, that makes the animate creation tremble, that can in a moment blast all things, and dissolve the frame of heaven and earth (which in the meantime it upholds:) is that become with us fabulous, lying breath? Those God-breathed oracles, those heavenly records, which discover and describe this blessed state, are they false and foolish legends? Must that be pretended at last (if men durst) that is so totally void of all pretences? What should be the gain or advantage accruing to that eternal, all-sufficient Being? What accession should be made to that infinite self-fulness by deluding a worm? Were it consistent with his nature; what could be his design to put a cheat upon poor mortal dust? If thou dare not impute it to him; such a deception had a beginning, but what author canst thou imagine of it, or what end? Did it proceed from a good man or a bad? Could a good and honest mind form so horribly wicked a design, to impose a universal delusion and lie upon the world, in the name of the true and holy God? Or could a wicked mind frame a design so directly levelled against wickedness? Or is there any thing so aptly and naturally tending to form the world to sobriety, holiness, purity of conversation, as the discovery of this future state of glory? And since the belief of future felicity is known to obtain universally among men, who could be the author of so common a deception? If thou hadst the mind to impose a lie upon all the world, what course wouldst thou take? How wouldst thou lay the design? Or why dost thou in this case imagine, what thou knowest not how to imagine? And dost thou not without scruple believe many things of which thou never hadst so unquestionable evidence? Or must that faith, which is the foundation of thy religion and eternal hopes, be the most suspected, shaking thing with thee; and have, of all other, the least stability and rootedness in thy soul? If thou canst not excuse thy infidelity, be ashamed of thy so cold and sluggish desires of this glorious state.

And doth it not argue a low, sordid spirit, not to desire and aim at the perfection thou art capable of; not to desire that blessedness which alone is suitable and satisfying to a reasonable and spiritual being? Bethink thyself a little; How low art thou sunk into the dirt of the earth! how art thou plunged into the miry ditch, that even thine own clothes might abhor thee! Is the Father of spirits thy

father? is the world of spirits thy country? hast thou any relation to that heavenly progeny? art thou allied to that blessed family; and yet undesirous of the same blessedness? Canst thou savour nothing but what smells of the earth? Is nothing grateful to thy soul, but what is corrupted by so vicious and impure a tincture? Are all thy delights centred in a dunghill; and the polluted pleasures of a filthy world better to thee than the eternal visions and enjoyments of heaven? What, art thou all made of earth? Is thy soul stupified into a clod? Hast thou no sense with thee of any thing better and more excellent? Canst thou look upon no glorious thing with a pleased eye? Are things only desirable and lovely to thee, as they are deformed? O consider the corrupted, distempered state of thy spirit, and how vile a disposition it hath contracted to itself! Thine looks too like the *mundane* spirit; the spirit of the world. The apostle speaks of it[a] *διακριτικῶς, by way of distinction;* We have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit that is from God, that we might know, or see (and no doubt 'tis desire that animates that eye; 'tis not bare speculative intuition and no more) the things freely given us of God. Surely he whose desire doth not guide his eye to the beholding of those things, hath received the spirit of the world only. A spirit that conforms him to this world, makes him think only thoughts of this world, and drive the designs of this world, and speak the language of this world. A spirit that connaturalizes him to the world, makes him of a temper suitable to it: he breathes only worldly breath, carries a worldly aspect, is of a worldly conversation. O poor low spirit, that such a world should withhold thee from the desire and pursuit of such glory! Art thou not ashamed to think what thy desires are wont to pitch upon, while they decline and waive this blessedness? Methinks thy very shame should compel thee to quit the name of a saint or a man: to forbear numbering thyself with any that pretend to immortality, and go seek pasture among the beasts of the field, with them that live that low, animal life that thou dost, and expect no other.

And when thou so fallest in with the world, how highly dost thou gratify the pretending and usurping god of it! The great fomenter of the sensual, worldly genius;[b] the spirit itself that works in the children of disobedience, and makes them follow the course of the world, holds them fast bound in worldly lusts, and leads them captive at his will; causes them (after his own serpentine manner) to creep and crawl in the dust of the earth. He is most intimate to this apostate world; informs it (as it were) and actuates it in every part; is even one great soul to it. [c] The whole world lies in that wicked one; as the body, by the best philosophers, is said to be in the soul. The world is said to be [d] convicted when he is judged. He having fallen from a state of blessedness in God, hath involved the world with himself in the same apostacy and condemnation; and labours to keep them fast in the bands of death. The great Redeemer of souls makes this his business, [e] to loose and dissolve the work of the devil. With that wicked one thou compliest against thy own soul and the Redeemer of it, while thou neglectest to desire and pursue this blessedness. This is thy debasement, and his triumph; the vile succumbency gives him the day and his will upon thee. He desires no more than that he may suppress in thee all heavenly desires, and keep thee thus a slave and a prisoner (confined in thy spirit to this low, dark dungeon) by thy own consent. While thou remainest without desire after heaven, he is secure of thee, as knowing then thou wilt take no other way, but what will bring thee unto the same eternal state with himself in the end. He is jealous over thee, that thou direct not a desire nor glance an eye heaven-ward. While thou dost not so, thou art entirely subject, and givest as full obedience to him, as thy God requires to himself in order to thy blessedness. But is it a thing tolerable to thy thoughts, that thou shouldst yield that heart-obedience to the devil against God? And this being the state of thy case, what more significant expression canst thou make of the contempt of Divine goodness? O the love that thou neglectest, while the most glorious issue and product of it is with thee an undesired thing! Yea, this the thing itself speaks, were there no such competition. What, that when eternal love hath conceived, and is travailing to bring forth such a birth; that when it invites thee to an expectation of such glory shortly to be revealed, the result of so deep counsels and wonderful works, this should be the return from thee, I desire it not? Is this thy gratitude to the Father of glory, the requital of the kindness, yea, and of the blood, of thy Redeemer? If this blessedness were not desirable for itself, methinks the offerer's hand should be a sufficient endearment. But thou canst not so divide or abstract, it consists in beholding and bearing his glorious likeness who invites thee to it; and therefore in the neglect of it thou most highly affrontest him.

Yea, further, is it not a monstrous unnaturalness towards thyself, as well as impiety towards God, not to desire that perfect, final blessedness? Doth not every thing naturally tend to its ultimate perfection and proper end? What creature would not witness against thee, if thou neglect, in thine own capacity and kind, to aim at thine? Surely thou canst not allow thyself to think any thing beneath *this*, worthy to be owned by thee, under that notion, of thy highest good and thy last end. But that thy spirit should labour under an aversion towards thy highest good, towards thy blessedness itself, is not that a dismal token upon thee? If thou didst disaffect and nauseate the things in which thy present life is bound up, and without which thou canst not live, wouldst thou not think thy case deplorate? What dost thou think will become of thy soul, whose everlasting life is bound up in that very good which thou desirest not; which cannot live that life without that good, nor with it, if thou hast no desire to it? O the eternal resentments thy soul will have of this cruelty! to be withheld from that wherein its life lies! Wouldst thou not judge him unnatural that should kill his brother, assassin his father, starve his child? What shall be said of him that destroys himself? How may that soul lament that ever it was thine; and say, O that I had rather been of any such lower kind, to have animated a fly, to have inspirited a vile worm, rather than to have served a reasonable beast, that by me knew the good it would never follow, and did not desire! But if thou hast any such desires, in a low degree, after this blessedness, as thou thinkest may entitle thee to the name thou bearest, of a saint, a Christian; is it not still very unnatural to pursue a good, approved by thy stated judgment as best in itself, and for thee, with so unproportionable, so slothful desires? For the same reason thou dost desire it at all, thou shouldst desire it much; yea, and still more and more, till thou attain it, and be swallowed up into it. Thy best and last good thou canst never desire too much. And let it be considered by thee, that the temper thou thinkest thyself innocent of, an habitual prevalent disaffection to the true blessedness of saints, may for ought thou knowest be upon thee; while it appears thou art so very near the borders of it; and it appears not with such certainty that thou partakest not in it. It is not so easy a matter, critically to distinguish and conclude of the lowest degree (in *hypothesi*, or with application to thy own case) of that desire which is necessary to qualify thee for the enjoyment of this blessedness. And is it not a matter both of shame and terror, that thou shouldst desire thy blessedness so faintly, as not to know whether thou truly desire it at all. 'Tis true, that a certainty, amongst such as may be sincere, is very little common; but whence proceeds it, but from their too common, indulged sloth; out of which all this is designed to awaken thee. And the commonness whereof doth as little detract from the reproach and sinfulness, as from the danger of it. 'Tis but a poor defence, for what is intrinsically evil in itself, that it is common.

But further, as the case is, this is so reproachful a thing, even in common estimate,—not to desire heaven and eternal glory, or to desire it with very cold and careless desires —that there are few will profess it, or own it to be their temper; much fewer that will undertake to excuse or justify it. 'Tis so evilly thought of, that among merely sober and rational men, it can never find an advocate, or any that will afford it patronage. The generality pretend a desire of going to heaven, and being with God. If any be so observant of themselves as to know, and so ingenu-

a 1 Cor. ii. 12. *εἰδῶμεν.* b Eph. ii. 2, 3. c 1 John v. 19. d John xvi. e 1 John iii. 8.

ous as to confess it otherwise with them, they complain of it as their fault, and say, they would fain have it redressed, but are far from assuming that confidence, to defend or plead for it. Consider then, wilt thou persist in such a temper and disposition of mind as all men condemn; and be guilty of so odious a thing, as shall be censured and blamed by the common concurrent vote and judgment of mankind? Thou wouldst be ashamed to stand forth and profess openly to men, that thou desirest an earthly felicity more than a blessedness in heaven; or at least, that thou art so indifferent, and the scales hang so even with thee, that thou canst hardly tell which way they incline most. And art thou not ashamed that this should be thy usual temper; how much soever thou conceal it from the notice and observation of the world? Moreover, how can it escape thy serious reflection, that if thou pretend it otherwise with thee, 'tis but to add one sin to another, and cover thy carnality with hypocrisy and dissimulation? Yea, while thou continuest in that temper of spirit, not to desire this blessedness as thy supreme end, the whole of thy religion is but an empty show, an artificial disguise; it carries an appearance and pretence, as if thou wast aiming at God and glory, while thy heart is set another way, and the bent of thy soul secretly carries thee a countercourse. Hath not religion an aspect towards blessedness? What mean thy praying, thy hearing, thy sacramental communion, if thou have not a design for eternal glory? What makest thou in this way, if thou have not thy heart set towards this end?

Nor is it more dishonest and unjust, than it is foolish and absurd, that the disposition and tendency of thy soul should be directly contrary to the only design of the religion thou professest and doth externally practise. Thy profession and desires are nothing but self-contradiction. Thou art continually running counter to thyself; outwardly pursuing what thou inwardly declinest. Thy real end (which can be no other than what thou really desirest and settest thy heart upon) and thy visible way are quite contrary: so that while thou continuest the course of religion, in which thou art engaged, having taken down from before thine eyes the end which thou shouldst be aiming at, and which alone religion can aptly subserve, thy religion hath no design or end at all, none at least which thou wouldst not be ashamed to profess and own. Indeed this temper of heart I am now pleading against, an undesirousness or indifferency of spirit towards the eternal glory, renders religion the vainest thing in the world. For whereas all the other actions of our lives have their stated, proper ends, religion hath in this case none at all; none to which it hath any designation in this nature, or any aptness to subserve. This monstrous absurdity it infers, (and how strange is it, that it should not be reflected on?) That whereas if you ask any man of common understanding, what he doth this or that action for, especially if they be stated actions, done by him in an ordinary course, he can readily tell you, for such and such an end: but ask him why he continues any practice of religion, he cannot say (in this case) for what. For can any man imagine what other end religion naturally serves for, but to bring men to blessedness? Which being no other thing than what hath been here described; such as are found not to desire it really and supremely, as their end, can have no real attainable end of their being religious at all. To drive on a continued course and series of actions in a visible pursuit of that which they desire not, and have no mind to, is such a piece of folly, so fond and vain a trifling, that as I remember Cicero reports Cato to have said concerning the soothsayers of his time, he did wonder they could look in one another's faces and not laugh; (being conscious to each other's impostures, and the vanity of their profession;) so one would as justly wonder that the generality of carnal men (who may shrewdly guess at the temper of one another's minds,) do not laugh at each other, that they are jointly engaged in such exercises of religion, to the design whereof the common and agreed temper of their spirits do so little correspond. As if all were in very good earnest for heaven, when each one knows for himself, and may (possibly with more truth than charity) suppose of the rest, that if they might always continue in their earthly stations, they had rather never come there. And therefore that they desire it not supremely, and so not as their end at all; consider it then, that thy no-desire of this blessed state quite dispirits thy religion, utterly ravishes away its soul, leaves it a dead, foolish, vain thing, renders it an idle impertinency, not a mean to a valuable end. This desire is the life of religion; all duties and exercises of piety are without it, but empty formalities, solemn pieces of pageantry; every service done to God, but the sacrifice of a fool, if not animated by the desire of final blessedness in him, and be not part of our way thither, a means designed to the attainment of it; which nothing can be, that we are not put upon by the virtue of the desired end. Without this, religion is not itself. A continuance in well-doing is as it were the body of it; and therein a seeking honour, glory, and immortality, the soul and spirit. The desire of a heavenly country must run through the whole course of our earthly pilgrimage: it were otherwise a continued error, an uncertain wandering, no steady tending towards our end: so that thou art a mere vagrant, if this desire do not direct thy course towards thy Father's house. And methinks all this should make thee even ashamed of thyself, if thou canst not find this desire to have a settled residence, and a ruling power in thy soul. Then,

2. Sense of praise should signify something too, as the apostle, Whatsoever things are—pure, lovely, &c. If there be any virtue,—any praise, think of these things. And hath not the eternal glory those characters upon it of purity and loveliness beyond all things? Is it not a laudable and praiseworthy thing, to have a heart and mind set upon that? The blessed God puts a note of excellency upon this temper of spirit: [f] But they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, &c. This renders them a people worthy of him who hath called them to his kingdom and glory; [g] fit for him to own a relation to. Had they been of low, terrene spirits, he would have accounted it a shame to him, to have gone under the name and cognizance of their God. But inasmuch as they desire the heavenly country, have learned to trample this terrestrial world, cannot be contained within this lower sphere, nor satisfy themselves in earthly things; they now discover a certain excellency of spirit, in respect whereof, God is not ashamed to own a relation to them, before all the world to be called their God; to let men see what account he makes of such a spirit. Yea, this is the proper, genuine spirit and temper of a saint, which agrees to him as he is such. He is begotten to the eternal inheritance. A disposition (and therein a desire) to it is in his very nature, (the new nature he hath received,) implanted there from his original. He is born spirit of Spirit, and by that birth is not entitled only, but adapted and suited also to that pure and spiritual state of blessedness. That grace, by the appearance whereof men are made Christians, teaches also, instructs to this very thing, to look for this blessed hope, the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; that which you know consummates that blessedness. For when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory; by the participation of the divine nature, their spirits escape and get up above this corrupt, impure world. That new nature is a holy flame that carries their hearts upwards towards heaven.

Further, such desires appear hence to be of divine original, an infusion from the blessed God himself. That nature is from him immediately in which they are implanted. The apostle speaking of his earnest, panting desire [h] to have mortality swallowed up of life, presently adds, He that wrought us to the self-same thing is God. They are obedient desires; the soul's present answer [i] to the heavenly call, by which God calls it to his kingdom and glory [k] This glory is (as hath been formerly noted) the very term of that calling. [l] The God of all grace hath called us into his eternal glory, by Christ Jesus. The glorified state is [m] the mark, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ. 'Tis the matter of the apostle's thanksgiving unto God, on the behalf of the Thessalonians, that [n] they were called

[f] Heb xi. 16.
[b] 2 Cor. v. 4.
[g] 1 Thess. ii. 12.
[i] Heb. iii. 1.
[k] 1 Thess. ii. 12.
[m] Phil. iii. 14.
[l] 1 Pet. v. 15.
[n] 2 Thess. ii. 12.

by his Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. When the soul desires this glory, it obediently answers this call. This is a compliance and subjection of heart to it. How lovely and becoming a thing is this, when God touches the heart with a stamp and impress of glory, and it forthwith turns itself to that very point, and stands directly bent towards the state of glory; is not wayward or perverse, but herein yields itself to God, and complies with the Divine pleasure. Such desires have much in them of a child-like ingenuity; to desire the sight of a father's face; when this is the intimate sense of the soul, Show me the Father and it suffices. To desire the fullest conformity to his nature and will, to be perfect as that heavenly Father is perfect, what doth better become a child? They are generous desires; they aim at perfection, the highest that created nature is capable of; not contented to have had some glances of Divine glory, some strokes and lines of his image, but aspiring to full-eyed visions, a perfect likeness. They are victorious desires; they (as it were) ride in triumph over the world and every sublunary thing; they must be supposed to have conquered sensual inclinations, to have got the mastery over terrene dispositions and affections. With what holy contempt and scorn of every earthly thing doth that lofty soul quit this dirty world and ascend, that is powerfully carried by its own desire towards that blessed state? The desire of such a knowledge of Christ, as might transform into his likeness, and pass the soul through all degrees of conformity to him, till it attain the resurrection of the dead, and become like a risen, glorified Jesus; such a desire I say, if it make all things seem as loss and dung in comparison, (even a formal, spiritless religion itself,) will it not render this world the most despicable dunghill of all the rest? Try such a soul if you can, tempt it down to enjoy a flattering, kind world, or to please it when angry and unkind. When desires after this glory are once awakened into an active, lively vigour, when the fire is kindled, and the flame ascends, and this refined spirit is joyfully ascending therein, see if you can draw it back, and make it believe this world a more regardable thing. Why should not all those considerations make thee in love with this blessed frame of spirit, and restless till thou find thyself incapable of being satisfied with any thing but divine likeness?

6. *Rule.* That while we cannot as yet attain the mark and end of our desires, we yield not to a comfortless despondency in the way, but maintain in our hearts a lively joy, in the hope that hereafter we shall attain it. We are not all this while persuading to the desire and pursuit of an unattainable good. Spiritual desires are also rational, and do therefore involve hope with them; and that hope ought to infer and cherish joy. Hopeless desire is full of torment, and must needs banish joy from that breast which it hath got the possession of. 'Tis a disconsolate thing, to desire what we must never expect to enjoy, and are utterly unlikely ever to compass. But these desires are part of the new creature, which is not of such a composition, as to have a principle of endless trouble and disquiet in itself. The Father of mercies is not so little merciful to his own child, to lay it under a necessity, from its very natural constitution, of being for ever miserable by the desire of that which it can never have. It had been very unlike the workmanship of God, to make a creature to which it should be necessary to desire, and impossible to enjoy the same thing. No; but as he has given holy souls, (as to the present case,) great incentives of desire, so doth he afford them proportionable encouragement of hope also; and that hope intervening, can very well reconcile desire and joy, and lodge them together in the same bosom. So that as it is a thing capable of no excuse, to hear of this blessedness and not desire it; so it would be, to desire and not expect it, to expect it, and not rejoice in it, even while we are under that expectation. And it must be a very raised joy that shall answer to the expectation of so great things. If one should give a stranger to Christianity an account of the Christian hopes, and tell him what they expect to be and enjoy, ere long; he would sure promise himself, to find so many angels dwelling in human flesh, and reckon when he came among them he should be as amidst the heavenly choir; every one full of joy and praise. He would expect to find us living on earth, as the inhabitants of heaven, as so many pieces of immortal glory lately dropped down from above, and shortly again returning thither. He would look to find, every where in the Christian world, incarnate glory sparkling through the over-shadowing veil; and wonder how this earthly sphere should be able to contain so many great souls. But when he draws nearer to us, and observes the course and carriage of our lives, when he sees us walk as other men, and considers the strange disagreement of our daily conversation to our so great, avowed hopes, and how little sense of joy and pleasure we discover ourselves to conceive in them; would he not be ready to say, "Sure some or other (willing only to amuse the world with the noise of strange things) have composed a religion for these men, which they themselves understand nothing of. If they do adopt and own it for theirs, they understand not their own pretences; they are taught to speak some big words, or to give a faint or seeming assent to such as speak them in their names, but 'tis impossible they should be in good earnest, or believe themselves in what they say and profess." And what reply then should we be able to make? For who can think that any who acknowledge a God, and understand at all what that name imports, should value at so low a rate, as we (visibly) do, the eternal fruition of his glory, and a present sonship to him, the pledge of so great a hope. He that is born heir to great honours and possessions, though he be upon great uncertainties as to the enjoyment of them, (for how many interveniences may prevent him!) yet when he come to understand his possibilities and expectancies, how big doth he look and speak! what grandeur doth he put on! His hopes form his spirit and deportment. But is it proportionably so with us? Do our hopes fill our hearts with joy, our mouths with praise, and clothe our faces with a cheerful aspect, and make a holy alacrity appear in all our conversations?

But let not the design of this discourse be mistaken. 'Tis not a presumptuous confidence I would encourage, nor a vain ostentation, nor a disdainful over-looking of others whom we fancy ourselves to excel. Such things hold no proportion with a Christian spirit. His is a modest, humble exultation; a serious, severe joy; suitable to his solid, stable hope. His spirit is not puffed up and swollen with air, it is not big by an inflation, or a light and windy tumour, but 'tis really filled with effectual pre-apprehensions of a weighty glory. His joy accordingly exerts itself with a steady, lively vigour, equally removed from vain lightness and stupidity, from conceitedness, and insensibleness of his blessed state. He forgets not that he is less than the least of God's mercies, but disowns not his title to the greatest of them. He abases himself to the dust, in the sense of his own vileness; but in the admiration of Divine grace, he rises as high as heaven. In his humiliation he affects to equal himself with worms, in his joy and praise, with angels. He is never unwilling to diminish himself, but afraid of detracting any thing from the love of God, or the issues of that love. But most of all he magnifies (as he hath cause) this its last and most perfect issue. And by how much he apprehends his own unworthiness, he is the more wrapt up into a wonderful joy, that such blessedness should be his designed portion. But now, how little do we find in ourselves of this blessed frame of spirit! How remote are we from it! Let us but inquire a little into our own souls: are there not too apparent symptoms with us of the little joy we take in the fore-thoughts of future blessedness? For,

First, How few thoughts have we of it! What any delight in, they remember often. 'Tis said of the same person, that [o] his delight is in the law of the Lord, and that in his law he doth meditate day and night. And when the Psalmist professes his own delight in God's statutes, he adds, [p] I will not forget thy word. Should we not be as unapt to forget heaven, if our delight were there? But do not days pass with us, wherein we can allow ourselves no leisure to mind the eternal glory; when yet vanities throng in upon us, without any obstruction or check? And (what is consequent hereupon) how seldom is this blessed state the subject of our discourse! How often do Christians

o Psal. i. 2.

p Psal. cxix. 16.

meet, and not a word of heaven! O heavy, carnal hearts! Our home and eternal blessedness in this, appears to be forgotten among us. How often may a person converse with us, ere he understood our relation to the heavenly country! If exiles meet in a foreign land, what pleasant discourse have they of home! They suffer not one another to forget it. Such was their remembrance of Sion, who sat together bemoaning themselves by the rivers of Babylon, a making mention of it, as the phrase is often used. And methinks (even as to this remembrance) it should be our own common resolution too; If we forget thee, O Jerusalem; if we forget to make mention of thee, O thou city of the living God; let our right hand forget her cunning; our tongue shall sooner cleave to the roof of our mouth: and so it would be, did we prefer that heavenly Jerusalem above our chief joy.

Again, How little doth it weigh with us! It serves not to outweigh the smallest trouble; if we have not our carnal desire in every thing gratified, if any thing fall out cross to our inclinations, this glory goes for nothing with us. Our discontents swallow up our hopes and joys; and heaven is reckoned as a thing of nought. If when outward troubles afflict or threaten us, we could have the certain prospect of better days, that would sensibly revive and please us. Yea, can we not please ourselves with very uncertain groundless hopes of this kind, without promise or valuable reason? But to be told of a recompense at the resurrection of the just, of a day when we shall see the face of God, and be satisfied with his likeness; this is insipid and without savor to us, and affords us but cold comfort. The uncertain things of time signify more with us than the certain things of eternity. Can we think 'tis all this while well with us? Can we think this a tolerable evil, or suffer with patience such a distemper of spirit? Methinks it should make us even weary of ourselves, and solicitous for an effectual, speedy redress.

The redress must be more in our own doing (striving with our souls and with God for them) than in what any man can say. Most of the considerations under that foregoing rule, are with little variation applicable to this present purpose. I shall here annex only some few subordinate directions; which may lead us into this blessed state of life, and give us some joyful foretastes of the future blessedness, according as our spirits shall comply with them. But expect not to be cured by prescriptions, without using them; or that heavenly joy can be the creature of mortal, unregarded breath; we can only prescribe means and methods through which God may be pleased to descend, and in which thou art diligently to insist and wait. And because I cannot well suppose thee ignorant, where much is said to this purpose, I shall therefore say little.

1. Possess thy soul with the apprehension, that thou art not at liberty in this matter; but that there is a certain spiritual delectation, which is incumbent on thee as indispensable duty. Some, whose morose tempers do more estrange them from delights, think themselves more especially concerned, to banish every thing of that kind from their religion, and fancy it only to consist in sour and righteous severities. Others seem to think it arbitrary and indifferent; or that, if they live in a continual sadness and dejection of spirit, 'tis only their infelicity, not their fault; and apprehend not the obligation that is upon them by a divine law, otherwise to manage and order their spirits. But what then, are such words thought to be spoken at random: Her [q] ways are ways of pleasantness; The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance: The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, (or, in the midst of pleasantness, as the expression hath been noted to signify:) Do such precepts carry no sense with them? [r] Delight thyself in the Lord: Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice; with many more? Do all passages of this kind in Scripture stand for ciphers, or were they put in them by chance? Is there such a thing as an aptitude to delectation in our natures; and doth the sanctification thereof entitle the joy of saints to a place among the fruits of the Spirit; [s] and yet is the exercise of it to have no place in their hearts and practice? Do not think you are permitted so to extinguish or frustrate so considerable a principle of the divine life. Know, that the due exercise of it is a part of the order and discipline of God's family: that it is a constitution of the Divine goodness and wisdom both to cherish his own, and invite in strangers to him: yea, that is the scope and aim of the whole gospel revelation, that what is discovered to us of the word of life, was purposely written to draw souls into fellowship with the Father and the Son, that their joy might be full: [t] that the ministers of this gospel are therefore styled the [u] helpers of their joy. Therefore, though here it be not required nor allowed, that you should indulge a vain, trifling levity, or a sensual joy, or that you should rejoice you know not why, (imitating the laughter of a fool,) or inopportunely, when your state admits it not, or when the Lord calls to mourning; yet settle however this persuasion in your hearts, that the serious, rational, regular, seasonable exercise of delight and joy is matter of duty, to be charged upon conscience, from the authority of God; and is an integral part in the religion of Christians. And then sure you will not think any object more proper and suitable for it to be exercised upon, than the foreseen state of blessedness, which is in itself a [x] fulness of joy; the joy of our Lord. And is, in the preapprehensions of it, a more considerable matter of joy than our present state affords us besides; and without relation whereto we have no rational joy at all.

2. Keep faith in exercise; both in that act of it which persuades the soul of the truth of the gospel revelation, and that act of it which unites it to God through the Mediator. The apostle prays on the behalf of his Roman Christians, that they might be [y] filled with joy and peace in believing; and we are told, how effectually (as to this) it supplied the place of sight. Such as had not seen Christ, (which was the privilege of many other Christians of that time,) yet [z] believing, did rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious. Faith directly tends, in that double office before mentioned, to excite and foment this joy. As it assents to the truth of the gospel revelation, it realizes the object, is the substance and evidence of the invisible glory. [a] As it unites the soul with God through Christ, in a fiducial and obedience closure, it ascertains our interest therein, and is our actual acceptance of our blessedness itself; for when we take God through Christ to be our God, what is it, but to accept him as our eternal and satisfying portion, whom we are after fully to enjoy, in the vision and participation of his glorious excellencies and infinite fulness? Which two acts of faith we have mentioned together in one text,—they were persuaded of the promises, and embraced them; the former respecting the truth of the promises, the latter the goodness of the thing promised. And hereupon they confessed themselves (as it follows) pilgrims and strangers on earth; which abdication of the earth, as none of their country, could not be, but that through their faith they had a joyous pre-apprehension of that better state. That confession did manifestly involve in it a lively joy, springing from the sight and embrace of that more taking, distant good, which the promise presented them with; whence they could not think it enough, to be such to themselves in their own thoughts and the temper of their minds; but they cannot forbear (so overcoming were their sights and tastes) to give it out, to speak, and look, and live, as those that were carried up in their spirits above this earth, and who did even disdain to own themselves in any other relation to it than that of foreigners and strangers.

Set thy faith on work, soul, and keep it a-work, and thou wilt find this no riddle; it will be so with thee too. We have much talk of faith among us, and have the name often in our mouths, but how few are the real lively believers! Is it to be thought that such blessedness should not more affect our hearts? nay, would it not ravish away our very souls, did we thoroughly believe it? And were it our present daily work, to renew the bonds of a vital union with the blessed God, in whom we expect to be blessed for ever, could that be without previous gusts of pleasure? 'Tis not talking of faith, but living by it, that will give us the experience of heavenly delights and joys.

3. Take heed of going in thy practice against thy

q Prov. iii. 17. r Psal. xxxvii. 4. Phil. iv. 4.
s Gal. v. 22. t 1 John i. 4. u 2 Cor. iv
x Psal. xvi. Matt. xxv. y Rom. xv. 13.
z 1 Pet. i. 8. a Heb. xi. 1.

light; of persisting in a course of known or suspected sin, that states thee in a direct hostility and rebellion against heaven, and can never suffer thee to think of eternity and the other world with comfort; will fill thy mind with frightful apprehensions of God, render the sight of his face the most terrible thing to thy thoughts thou canst imagine, and satisfaction with his likeness the most impossible thing. Let a good understanding and correspondence be continued between God and thee, (which is not possible, if thou disobeyest the dictates of thy conscience, and takest the liberty to do what thou judgest God hath forbidden thee,) that this may be thy rejoicing,[b] the testimony of a good conscience; that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not according to fleshly wisdom, but the grace of God, thou hast had thy conversation. Take God for a witness of thy ways and walkings; approve thyself to his jealous eye; study to carry thyself acceptably towards him, and unto all well pleasing. Let that be thy ambition, to stand right in his thoughts, to appear gracious in his eyes. Hold fast thine integrity, that thy heart may not reproach thee as long as thou livest. If iniquity be in thy hand, put it away; then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot and without fear. Be a faithful subject of that kingdom of God, (and here conscience rules under him,) which consists first in righteousness, and then in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Thou wilt, so, daily behold the face of God in righteousness and with pleasure; but wilt most of all please thyself to think of thy final appearance before him, and the blessedness that shall ensue.

4. Watch and arm thyself against the too forcible strokes and impressions of sensible objects. Let not the savour of such low vile things corrupt the palate of thy soul. A sensual earthly mind and heart cannot taste heavenly delights; they that are after the flesh do savour the things of the flesh; they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. Labour to be thoroughly mortified[c] towards this world and the present state of things. Look upon this scene and pageant[d] as passing away; keep natural appetites under restraint, (the world and the lusts of it pass away together,) sensuality is an impure thing. Heavenly refined joy cannot live amidst so much filth. Yea, and if thou give thy flesh liberty too far in things that are (in specie) lawful, it will soon get advantage to domineer and keep thy soul in a depressing servitude. Abridge it then, and cut it short, that thy mind may be enlarged and at liberty, may not be thronged and prepossessed with carnal imaginations and affections. [e] "Let thy soul" (if thou wilt take this instruction from a heathen) "look with a constant erect mind into the undefiled light, neither darkened nor borne down towards the earth; but stopping its ears, and turning its eyes, and all other senses back upon itself; and quite abolishing out of itself all earthly sighs, and groans, and pleasures, and glories, and honours, and disgrace; and having forsaken all these, choose for the guides of its way, true reason and strong love, the one whereof will show it the way, the other make it easy and pleasant."

5. Having voided thy mind of what is earthly and carnal, apply and turn it to this blessed theme. The most excellent and the vilest objects are alike to thee, while thou mindest them not. Thy thoughts possibly bring thee in nothing but vexation and trouble, which would bring in as soon joy and pleasure, didst thou turn them to proper objects. A thought of the heavenly glory is as soon thought as of an earthly cross. We complain the world troubles us; then what do we there? Why get we not up, in our spirits, into the quieter region? What trouble would the thoughts of future glory be to us? How are thoughts and wits set on work for this flesh! But we would have our souls flourish as the lilies, without any thing of their own care. Yea, we make them toil for torture, and not for joy, revolve an affliction a thousand times before and after it comes, and have never done with it, when eternal blessedness gains not a thought.

6. Plead earnestly with God for his Spirit. This is joy in the Holy Ghost; or whereof he is the author. Many Christians (as they must be called) are such strangers to this work of imploring and calling in the blessed Spirit, as if they were capable of adopting these words, We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost. That name is with them as an empty sound. How hardly are we convinced of our necessary dependance on that free Spirit, as to all our truly spiritual operations! The Spirit is the very earnest of our inheritance. The foretastes and first-fruits we have here of the future blessedness, the joy and pleasure, the complacential relishes we have of it beforehand, are by the gracious vouchsafement and work of this blessed Spirit. The things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which have not entered into the heart of man, are revealed by this Spirit. Therefore doth the apostle direct his prayer on the behalf of the Ephesians, to the Father of this glory,[f] that he would give them this Spirit of wisdom and revelation,—to enlighten the eyes of their understanding, that they might know the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in (or among) the saints. And its revelation is such as begets an impression; in respect whereof, 'tis said also, to seal up to the day of redemption. Therefore, pray earnestly for this Spirit; not in idle, dreaming words of course, but as being really apprehensive of the necessity of prevailing; and give not over till thou find that sacred fire diffusing itself through thy mind and heart, to enlighten the one and refine the other, and so prepossess both of this glory, that thy soul may be all turned into joy and praise. And then let me add here, (without the formality of a distinct head,) that it concerns thee to take heed of quenching that Spirit, by either resisting or neglecting its holy dictates, or, as the same precept is otherwise given, of grieving the Spirit: he is by name and office the Comforter. The primitive Christians, 'tis said, walked in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Is it equal dealing, to grieve him whose business it is to comfort thee? Or canst thou expect joy where thou causest grief? Walk in the Spirit: adore its power. Let thy soul do it homage within thee. Wait for its holy influences, and yield thyself to its ducture and guidance; so wilt thou go as the redeemed of the Lord, with everlasting joy upon thy head, till thou enter that presence where is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

Nor do thou think it improper or strange, that thou shouldst be called upon to rejoice in what thou dost not yet possess. Thy hope is instead of fruition; 'tis an anticipated enjoyment. We are commanded to[g] rejoice in hope; and saints have professed to do so, to[h] rejoice even in the hope of the glory of God. Nor is it unreasonable that should be thy present highest joy. For though yet it be a distant thing, and distinctly revealed, the excellency of the object makes compensation for both, with an abundant surplusage. As any one would much more rejoice to be assured by a great person of ample possessions he would make him his heir to, (though he knew not distinctly what they should be,) than to see a shilling already his own, with his own eyes.

b 2 Cor. i. 12. c 1 Cor. vii. 31. d 1 John ii. 17.
e Max. Tyr. in Disscrt. τι ο θεος κατα Πλατωνος.

CHAPTER XX.

The addition of two rules, that more specially respect the yet future season of this blessedness, after this life; viz., Rule 7. That we patiently wait for it until death. Rule 8. That we love not too much this present life.

THERE are yet two more rules to be superadded, that respect the season of this blessedness,—when we awake,—*i. e.* not till we go out of time into eternity, not till we pass out of the drowsy darkness of our present state, till the night be over with us, and the vigorous light of the everlasting day do shine upon us. Hence therefore it will be further necessary,

Rule 7. That while the appointed proper season of this blessedness is not yet come, (*i. e.* till God shall vouchsafe to translate us from our present earthly state,) we compose our spirits to a patient expectation of it. Upon a twofold account, the exercise of patience is very requisite in the

f Eph. i. g Rom. xii. 12. h Rom. v. 2.

present case, *viz.* both in respect of this very expectation itself, and also in respect of the concomitant miseries of this expecting state. In the *former* respect, an *absent* good is the matter of our *patience;* in the *latter, present,* and *incumbent* evil. It falls more directly in our way, to speak to the exercise of *patience* upon the former account, yet as to the latter, (though it be more collateral as to our present purpose,) it cannot be unseasonable briefly to consider that also.

First, therefore, The very expectation itself of this blessedness, renders patience very requisite to our present state. Patience bath as proper and necessary an exercise in expecting the good we want and desire, as in enduring the evil that is actually upon us. The direction, (it must be remembered,) intends such only as apprehend and desire this blessedness as their greatest good, whose souls are transported with earnest longings fully to enjoy what they have foretasted. I am apprehensive enough, that others need it not. There is no use of patience in expecting what we desire not. But as to those who desire it most, and who therefore are most concerned in this advice, it may possibly become a doubt, how since there is sin in our present ignorance of God and unlikeness to him, this can be the matter of any patience. We must therefore know, that as our knowledge of God, and conformity to him, are both our duty and blessedness, the matter both of our endeavour and of God's vouchsafement; so our ignorance of him, and unlikeness to him, are both our sin and our misery; which misery, though God hath graciously removed it in part, yet also he continues it upon us in part, (as our sad experience tells us,) by his just and wise dispensation, which we cannot except against. Now therefore, looking upon the defect of our knowledge of God and likeness to him, under the former notion, though we are to reflect upon ourselves with great displeasure and indignation; yet looking on them in the latter notion, we are to submit to the righteous dispensation of God with a meek, unrepining patience. By this patience, therefore, I mean not a stupid succumbency under the remaining disease and distemper of our spirits, in this our present state; a senseless indifferency and oscitant cessation from continual endeavours of further redress; but a silent and submissive veneration of Divine wisdom, and justice, and goodness, that are sweetly complicated in this procedure with us, with a quiet, peaceful expectation of the blessed issue of it. This being premised, I shall briefly show,—that we have need of patience, and—that we have reason for it in this present case.

1. That we have need of it, (supposing our souls are intent upon glory, that we are in earnest in this pursuit,) will appear upon sundry accounts.

First, The greatness of the thing we expect. To behold the face of God, to be satisfied with his likeness. What serious heart, apprehensive of its own concerns, can without much patience, hold out under such an expectation? How do lovers that expect the marriage-day, tell the hours, and chide the sun that it makes no more haste! But how can that soul contain itself, that expects the most intimate fruition of the Lord of glory.

Again, consider the continual representation and frequent inculcations of this glory. Its vigorous, powerful beams are, by often repeated pulsations, continually beating upon such souls as are intent towards it. Life and immortality are brought to light in the Gospel; and they are obliged by command and inclination to attend its discoveries. The eye that 's once smitten, looks again and again, 'tis not satisfied with seeing; and every renewed look meets with still fresh rays of glory; they have frequent foretastes and prelibations, which still give life to new desires. To lie under the direct stroke of the powers of the world to come, this requires much patience, to sustain the burden of such an expectation. Life itself were otherwise a bitter and a wearisome thing. [a] And the want of such foretastes, (for alas they are not constant,) makes desire sometimes more restless, and expectation more bitter and grievous.

[a] Canerem tibi angelica voce thronorum; quam mirifica, semper in patria dulcedine repleamur; nisi verear, ne forte, prothue, tantæ dulcedinis hujus comparatione, tota tibi in terris vita non solum amarissima, verum etiam amaritudo ipso penitus videatur. M. Ficin. Epist.

Moreover, Consider the nature and spring of these desires, that work in heavenly souls towards this glory. They are of a divine nature and original; he that hath wrought us to this self-same thing is God, 2 Cor. v. 5. Observe the tenor of this proposition; God is not the subject of predication, but the predicate. The action is not predicated of God, as it would in this form of words, God hath wrought us, &c. but God is predicated of this agent, *q. d.* this is the work of a Deity; none but God could be the author of such desires. That a soul should be acted towards glory by the alone power of an almighty hand! here needs a divine patience to sustain it, and make it strong and able to endure such a motion, where there is divine power to act and move it forward. The frame could not hold else, it must dissolve. The apostle, [b] therefore, praying for the Thessalonians, that God would direct their hearts into the love of himself, (which could not but inflame their souls with a desire of a perfect vision and enjoyment,) presently adds, and into the patient waiting for of Christ. Where we cannot by the way but reflect upon the admirable constitution and equal temper of the new creature, as to the principles that are ingredient into the composition of it, fervent desires allayed with meek submission, mighty love with strong patience. If we consider it in *actu signato*, or in its *abstract idea*, this is its temperament; and of these there is a gradual participation, wherever you find it actually existing. God hath otherwise formed a creature (the prime of his creatures) so as by its most intrinsical constituent principles to be a torment to itself.

Lastly, The tiresome nature of expectation in itself, is not least considerable. It carries ('tis true) pleasure (if it be hoping expectation) with it; but not without a great admixture of pain. It brings a kind of torture to the mind, as a continued exertion or stretching forth of the neck (by which it is expressed) [c] doth to the body. Therefore it is most significantly said by the wise man, [d] Hope deferred makes the heart sick. All these, I say, together discover the truth of what the apostle tells us, [e] We have need of patience, that when we, &c. we may inherit the promise.

2. And as we have need of it, so we have also reason for it upon many accounts. It is no piece of rigorous severity to be put upon the exercise of some patience, to be kept awhile in a waiting posture for the completion of this blessedness. For,

First, The thing you expect is sure. You have not to do in this matter with one who is inconstant, or likely to change. If such a one should make us large promises, we should have some cause never to think ourselves secure, till we had them made good to us. But since we [f] live in the hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie, and who we [g] know is faithful, hath promised, we may be confident, and this confidence should quiet our hearts. What a faithful friend keeps for us, we reckon as safe in his hands, as in our own. He that believes makes not haste. An impatient haste argues an unbelieving jealousy and distrust. Surely, there is an end, and thy expectation will not be cut off.

And then 'tis a happiness that will recompense the most wearisome expectation. 'Twere good sometimes to consider with ourselves, what is the object of our hope? are our expectations pitched upon a valuable good, that will be worth while to expect? So the Psalmist, [h] What wait I for? and he answers himself, My hope is in thee. Sure then that hope will not make ashamed. 'Twere a confounding thing to have been a long time full of great hopes that at last dwindle into some petite trifle, but when we know beforehand the business is such as will defray itself, bear its own charges, who would not be contented to wait?

Nor will the time of expectation be long—when I shall awake—when he shall appear. Put it to the longest term, it was said, sixteen hundred years ago, to be but a little while: three times over in the shutting up of the Bible, he tells us, I come quickly. He seems to foresee he should be something impatiently expected: and at last, Surely I come quickly,

b 2 Thess. iii. 5.
c 1 Rom. viii. 19.
d Prov. xii. 12.
e Heb. x. 36.
f Tit. i. 2.
g Heb. x. 33.
h Psal. xxxix. 7.

p. d. What will you not believe me? Be patient, saith the apostle, [i] to the coming of the Lord: and presently he adds, be patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Yea, and amidst the many troubles of that short time of expectation many present comforts are intermixed. Heaven is open to us. We have constant liberty of access to God. He disdains not our present converse. We may have the constant pleasure of the exercise of grace, the heavenly delights of meditation, the joy of the public solemnities of worship, the communion and encouragement of fellow-Christians, the light of that countenance whereof we expect the eternal vision, the comforts of the Holy Ghost, the continual prospect of glory all the way thither. What cause have we of impatience or complaint?

Further, Saints of all ages have had their expecting time. We are required to be followers of them who through faith and patience have inherited the promises. Our Saviour himself waited a life's time for his glorification. I have (saith he) glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work thou gavest me to do! And now, Father, glorify me with thine own self, &c.

And while we are waiting, if it be not our fault, our glory will be increasing. We may be glorifying God in the meantime, which is the end of our beings: we need not live here to no purpose.

Again, we were well enough content, till God more clearly revealed that other state, to live always as we do. 'Tis not now ingenious to be impatiently querulous about the time of our entering into it. 'Tis his free vouchsafement; we never merited such a thing at his hands. 'Tis not commendable among men, to be over quick in exacting debts even where there was an antecedent right, much less where the right only shall accrue by promise, not yet sueable; would it not shame us to have God say to us, Have patience with me, and I will pay you all? And our former state should be often reflected on. If you had promised great things to a wretch lately taken off the dunghill, and he is every day impatiently urging you to an untimely accomplishment, would you not check his over-bold haste, by minding him of his original? It becomes not base and low-born persons to be transported with a preposterous, over-hasty expectation of high and great things. And if God [k] bear with the sinfulness of our present state, is it not reasonable we should bear with the infelicity of it to his appointed time? Besides that, we should much injure ourselves by our impatiency; imbitter our present condition, increase our own burden, dissipate our strength, retard our progress towards the perfection we profess to aim at; for patience must have its perfect work, that we may be perfect.

And others, that have had as clear apprehensions and vigorous desires (at least) of the future state of glory as we can with modesty pretend to, have yet herein moderated themselves so, as to intend their present work with composed spirits. Take that one instance of the blessed apostle, who, whilst in this earthly tabernacle he groaned, being burthened, to be clothed with glory, and to have mortality swallowed up of life, being sensible enough, that during his abode or presence in the body, he was absent from the Lord; yet notwithstanding the fervour and vehemency of these longings, with the greatest calmness and resignation imaginable, as to the termination or continuance of his present state, he adds, that though he had rather be absent from the body, [l] to be present with the Lord, it was yet his chief ambition, (as the word he uses signifies,) whether present or absent, (as if in comparison of that, to be present or absent were indifferent, though otherwise, out of that comparison, he had told us, he would be absent rather,) to be [m] accepted, to appear grateful and well-pleasing in the eye of God; such that he might delight and take content in, as his expression imports. As if he had said, Though I am not apprehensive of the state of my case, I know well I am kept out of a far more desirable condition, while I remain in this tabernacle; yet, may I but please and appear acceptable in the sight of God, whether I be sooner dismissed from this thraldom, or longer continued in it, I contend not. His burden here, that so sensibly pressed him, was not a present evil so much as an absent good. He was not so burthened by what he felt and could not remove, as by what he saw and could not enjoy. His groans accordingly were not brutal, as those of a beast under a too heavy load; but rational, the groans of an apprehensible spirit panting after an alluring, inviting glory, which he had got the prospect of but could not yet attain. And hence the same spiritual reason which did exercise, did also, at once, moderate his desires; so that, as he saw there was reason to desire, so he saw there was reason his desires should be allayed by a submissive, ingenious patience, till they might have a due and seasonable accomplishment. And that same temper of mind we find in him, when he professes to be in a [n] strait between two, having a desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which he thought to be far better, and yet apprehended his longer abode in the world to be needful for the service of the church; whereupon he expresses his confidence, that he should abide longer, and therein discovers how well contented he was it should be so. Therefore, as in reference to this very expectation itself, there is great need of patience; so the exercise of it in this case hath nothing harsh or unreasonable in it, or which the spirit of a saint may not well comport with.

2. And for the exercise of patience upon the latter account; the concomitant miseries of this our present expecting state; I need not insist to show how needful it is, this being that which our own sense will sufficiently instruct us in. We are not to expect the future state of blessedness in a state of present ease and rest, in a quiet, friendly world, in a calm and penceful region, under placid and benign influences from men and times; but amidst storms, and tempests, and troubles on every side, under frowns and displeasure, threats and dangers, harsh and rough severities, ill and ungentle usages, flouts and scorns, wrongs and injurious dealings, wants and pressures in many kinds. When the world is once forsaken by us, it grows angry; if we disclaim it, and avow ourselves not to be of it, become confessed strangers and pilgrims in it, set ourselves seriously and visibly to mind and design something above and beyond it, discover ourselves to be of them that are called out of it: from the same principle that it loves its own, it will hate us; when once God calls us his sons, the world will not know us.[o] We see in this context we are discoursing from, what the Psalmist's condition was, while as yet he remained under this blessed expectation; he found the men of time, whose portion was in this life, to be deadly enemies, wicked oppressors, proud insulters; they were to him as greedy lions, as a blood-thirsty sword. His cries to be delivered from them, show what he met with at their hands, or thought he had reason to fear. Nor can so raging enmity and hate ever cease to meditate mischiefs and cruelties. The same principle still remains in all the serpent's brood, and will still be putting forth itself in suitable practices, which cannot but infer to the contrary seed continual trouble and matter of complaint.

And, in short, whatever is here the matter of your complaint, ought to be the matter of your patience. Whence it cannot be doubted the matter of it will be very copious; so as to require the *all* of patience; (as the apostle speaks;) which his addressing this solemn request to God on the behalf of these Colossian Christians plainly intimates. He prays that [p] they may be strengthened with all might according to the glorious power of God unto *all* patience, &c. Patience is the Christian's suffering power, 'tis passive fortitude, an ability to suffer: and so apprehensive he is of their great need of a full and ample supply of this power, that he prays that they might be strengthened in this kind with might, with all might: that they might be even almighty sufferers; strengthened with a might according and corresponding to the glorious powers of God himself; such as might appear the proper impress and image of Divine power, whereof the Divine power might be both the principle and the pattern (for the patience whereby God bears the wrongs done to him is called the power too; Let the power of the Lord be great as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long suffering, forgiving, &c.) And this *unto*

[i] Jam. v. [k] Jam. i. [l] 2 Cor. v. 2. φιλοτιμουμεθα. [m] ευαρεστοι. [n] Phil. i. 23. [o] 1 John iii. 1. [p] Col. i. 11.

all patience, where patience is put for an act of this power, or must be understood of patience in exercise, actual bearing. Nor are we to look upon the expressions of this prayer as so many hyperbolical strains, or rhetorical schemes of speech. He prays according to the apprehension he had of the necessity of suffering Christians.

And yet how much soever the need is, the reason is not less, 'tis a thing as possible as it is necessary; yea, there is more in the power of the cause, than to work this single effect. I mean it not only of the efficient cause mentioned before, but of the objective or final (as having such a superabundant sufficiency in its kind also) hinted in the close of the following verse. He doth not utter vain and groundless wishes, when he prays, that to that all of patience they might add joyfulness too, and giving of thanks; no, the matter (as if he had said) will bear it, even the inheritance of the saints in light, the very expectation objective, I am speaking of. It hath enough in it to induce, not only patience, but joy, not a contented bearing only, but giving of thanks too, [q] to him that hath made you meet for that inheritance. True it is indeed, that the very need we have of patience, and the gain that would accrue by it, is itself a reason, why we should labour to frame our spirits to it: for if such evils must be undergone, how much better is it to bear them alone, than to have the disease of a wounded, impatient spirit to bear also as an additional burden. The *law* of patience is certainly a most indulgent, merciful law, a gracious provision (as much as can be made by a law) for the quiet and ease of our spirits, under the sharpest and most afflictive sufferings. As might at large be shown, were it suitable to fall into a discourse of patience in itself considered; and to treat of that rest and pleasure, that liberty of spirit, that possession and dominion of one's own soul, which it carries in it: but that were too much a digression. It only falls directly here in our way to consider, that as we have many grievances and pressures to undergo, while we are expecting the future blessedness, which render the exercise of patience very requisite, so that there is enough of weight and worth in that very expectation (*i. e.* in what we expect) to outweigh them all, and to render the exercise thereof highly reasonable upon that account. [r] I reckon (saith the apostle) that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. Thus (saith he) I reckon, *i. e.* it is my stated, settled judgment, not a sudden, rash thought. When I have reasoned the matter with myself, weighed it well, considered the case, turned it round, viewed it exactly on every side, balanced advantages and disadvantages, pondered all things which are fit to come into consideration about it, this is the result, the final determination, that which I conclude and judge at last, (judgment is the last product and issue of the most exquisite inquiry and debate, the ultimate and most perfect act of reason,) that the sufferings of this now of time are of no value; things not fit, as it were, to be mentioned the same day with the glory to be revealed, &c. It can therefore be no *hard law*, no unreasonable imposition, that shall oblige us to the exercise of *patience*, under such sufferings, in the expectation of so transcendent glory. For, consider,—First, These sufferings are but from men; (for the sufferings of which the apostle here speaks, are such as wherein we suffer together with Christ, *i. e.* for his name and interest, on behalf of the Christian cause;) but this glory is from God. How disproportionable must the effects be of a created and increated cause.—Again, these sufferings reach no further than the bone and flesh, (fear not them that kill the body, and after they have done that, can do no more, &c.) but this glory reaches unto and transforms the soul. How little can a clod of earth suffer, in comparison of what an immortal spirit may enjoy!—And further, There is much mixture in our present sufferings; the present state of suffering saints is not a state of total misery; there are, as it were, rays of glory interlaced with their present afflictions: but there will be nothing of affliction mingled with their future glory.

Yea, and (what may not only convince, but even transport us too) these sufferings are but temporary, nay but momentary, this glory eternal. What heart is big enough to comprehend the full sense of these words, [s] Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. How might I dwell here upon every syllable, light affliction, weighty glory, *exceeding weight*, affliction for a moment, eternal weight of glory! O then, how unworthy is it of the Christian name and hopes, that we should have an impatient resentment of this method God follows with us, (as he did with our great Redeemer and Lord,) that we should suffer first, and then enter into glory! Heaven were a poor heaven, if it would not make us savers. It were high time for us to give over the Christian profession, if we do not really account, that its reward and hope do surmount its reproach and trouble; or do think its cross more weighty than its crown. Is the price and worth of eternal glory fallen? It hath been counted worth suffering for. There have been those in the world that would not accept deliverance from these sufferings, that they might obtain the better resurrection. Are we grown wiser? Or would we indeed wish God should turn the tables, and assign us our good things here, and hereafter evil things? Ungrateful souls! How severe should we be to ourselves, that we should be so apt to complain for what we should admire and give thanks! What, because purer and more refined Christianity in our time and in this part of the world, hath had public favour and countenance, can we therefore not tell how to frame our minds to the thoughts of sufferings? Are tribulation and patience antiquated names, quite out of date and use with us, and more ungrateful to our ears and hearts, than heaven and eternal glory are acceptable? And had we rather (if we were in danger of suffering on the Christian account) run a hazard as to the latter, than adventure on the former? Or do we think it impossible we should ever come to the trial, or be concerned to busy ourselves with such thoughts? Is the world become so stable and so unacquainted with vicissitudes, that a state of things less favourable to our profession can never revolve upon us? It were, however, not unuseful to put such a case by way of supposition to ourselves. For every sincere Christian is in affection and preparation of his mind a martyr. He that loves not Christ better than his own life, cannot be his disciple. We should at least inure our thoughts more to a suffering state, that we may thence take some occasion to reflect and judge of the temper of our hearts towards the name and cause of Christ. 'Tis easy suffering indeed, in idea and contemplation; but something may be collected from the observation, how we can relish and comport with such thoughts. 'Tis as training in order to fight; which is done often upon a very remote supposition, that such occasions may possibly fall out.

Therefore, What now do we think of it if our way into the kingdom of God shall be through many tribulations? If, before we behold the smiles of his blessed face, we must be entertained with the less pleasing sight of the frowning aspect and visage of an angry world? If we first bear the image of a crucified Christ, ere we partake of the likeness of a glorious God? What, do we regret the thoughts of it? Do we account we shall be ill dealt with, and have a hard bargain of it? O how tender are we grown, in comparison of the hardiness and magnanimity of primitive Christians! We have not the patience to think of what they had the patience to endure. We should not yet forget ourselves, that such a thing belongs to our profession, even in this way to testify our fidelity to Christ, and our value of the inheritance purchased by his blood, if he call us thereunto. We must know it is a thing inserted into the religion of Christians, and (with respect to their condition in this world) made an essential thereto. He cannot be a Christian, that doth not deny himself and take up the cross. How often when the active part of a Christian's duty is spoken of, is the passive part studiously and expressly annexed! Let us run [t] *with patience* the race that is set before us. The good ground brought forth fruit, [u] *with patience*, eternal life is for them that by [x] *a patient* continuance in well-doing seek after it. Yea, and hence the word of Christ is called [y] the word of his *pa-*

q Col. i. 12.
r Rom. viii. 18.
s 2 Cor. iv. 17.
t Heb. xii. 1.
u Matt. xvii.
x Rom. ii.
y Rev. iii.

tience. And the style wherein the beloved disciple speaks of himself and his profession, is this, [z] I John, a companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and *patience* of Jesus Christ. Do we mean to plead prescription against all this? or have we got an express exemption? Have we a discharge to show, a manumission from all the suffering part of a Christian's duty? and is it not a discharge also from being Christians as much? Will we disavow ourselves to belong to that noble society, of them that through faith and patience inherit the promises? Surely we are highly conceited of ourselves, if we think we are too good to be numbered among them of whom the world was not worthy. Or we design to ourselves a long abode here, while we so much value the world's favour, and a freedom from worldly trouble: or eternity is with us an empty sound, and the future blessedness of saints an airy thing, that we should reckon it insufficient to counterpoise the sufferings of a few hasty days that will soon have an end. 'Tis a sad symptom of the declining state of religion, when the powers of the world to come are so over-mastered by the powers of this present world, and objects of sense so much outweigh those of faith. And is not this apparently the case with the Christians of the present age? Do not your thoughts run the same course with theirs that meditated nothing but sitting on the right and left hand of Christ, in an earthly dominion, while they never dreamt of drinking of his cup, or being baptized with his baptism? How many vain dreamers have we of golden mountains, and (I know not what) earthly felicity; whose pretended prophecies about a (supposed) near approaching prosperity to the church on earth, gain easier belief, or are more savoury and taking, with too many, than all that the sacred oracles discover about its glorious state in heaven! Hence are our shoulders so unfitted to Christ's yoke, (like the unaccustomed heifer,) and the business of suffering will not enter into our hearts. Methinks the belief and expectation of such a state hereafter, should make us even regardless of what we see or suffer here; and render the good or evil things of time as indifferent to us. Yet neither plead I for an absolute stoical apathy, but for patience. A great follower of that sect acknowledges, [a] "It is not a virtue to bear what we feel not, or have no sense of. Stupidity under Providence is not a Christian temper;" as that moralist says of the wise man, "'Tis not the hardness of stone or iron that is to be ascribed to him." But lest any should run into that more dangerous mistake, to think, that by the patience we have been all this while persuading to (in the expectation of the blessedness yet to come) is meant a love of this present world, and a complacential adherence of heart to the earth; (which extreme the terrene temper of many souls may much incline them to;) it will be necessary upon that account to add (in reference also to the yet future expected season of this blessedness) this further and concluding instruction, *viz.*

8. *Rule.* That (however we are not to repine at our being held so long in this world in an expecting state, yet) we let not our souls cleave too close to their terrestrial stations, nor be too much in love with the body, and this present low state of life on earth. For evident it is, that notwithstanding all the miseries of this expecting state, the most are yet loth to leave the world, and have hearts sordidly hankering after present things. And surely there is much difference between being *patient* of an abode on earth, and being *fond* of it. Therefore since the true blessedness of saints consists in such things as we have shown, and cannot be enjoyed till we awake, not within the compass of time and this lower world; it will be very requisite to insist here awhile in the prosecution of this last rule. And what I shall say to it shall be by way of—caution—and enforcement.

1. For caution: that we misapprehend not that temper and disposition of spirit, we are in this thing to endeavour and aim at. And it especially concerns us to be cautious about the—inducements, and—degree, of that desire of leaving this world, or contempt of this present life, which we either aspire to, or allow ourselves in.

First, Inducements. Some are desirous, others at least content, to quit the world upon very insufficient, or indeed wicked considerations.

1. There are, who desire it merely to be out of the way of present troubles, whereof they have either too impatient a sense, or an unworthy and impotent fear. Many times the urgency and anguish of incumbent trouble impresses such a sense, and utters itself in such language, as that, [b] Now, O Lord, take I beseech thee my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live. Or that, [c] My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life: makes men long for death, and dig for it as for hid treasure; rejoice and be exceeding glad when they can find the grave.

Yea, and the very fear of troubles that are but impendent and threatening, makes some wish the grave a sanctuary, and renders the clods of the valley sweet unto their thoughts. They lay possibly so humoursome and fanciful stress upon the mere circumstances of dying, that they are earnest to die out of hand to avoid dying so and so; as the poet would fain persuade himself [d] it was not *death he feared, but shipwreck: it would not trouble them to die, but to die by a violent hand,* or to be made a public spectacle; they cannot endure the thoughts of dying so. Here is nothing commendable or worthy of a Christian in all this. It were a piece of Christian bravery to dare to live in such a case, even when there is a visible likelihood of dying a sacrifice in the midst of flames. How much this glory was affected in the earlier days of Christianity is sufficiently known: though I confess there were excesses in that kind, altogether unimitable. But if God call a man forth to be his champion and witness, to lay down a life, in itself little desirable, in a truly worthy cause, the call of his providence should be as the sound of the trumpet to a truly martial spirit; it should fill his soul with a joyful courage and sense of honour, and be complied with cheerfully, with that apprehension and resentment a stout soldier would have of his general's putting him upon some very hazardous piece of service, *viz.* he would say, [e] (as the moralist expresses his sense for him,) *My general hath not deserved ill of me, but it appears he judged well.* It should be counted all joy [f] to fall into such trials; that is, when they become our lot by a providential disposition, not by a rash precipitation of ourselves. And as it is a wickedness inconsistent with Christianity, to be of that habitual temper, to choose to desert such a cause for the saving of life; so it is a weakness very reproachful to it, to lay down one's life in such a case with regret, as unwilling in this kind to glorify him who laid down his for us. We are no more to die to ourselves than to live to ourselves. Our Lord Jesus hath purchased to himself a dominion over both states, of the living and dead, and whether [g] we live, we must live to him, or die, we must die to him. 'Tis the glory of a Christian to live so much above the world, that nothing in it may make him either fond of life, or weary of it.

2. There are others who are (at least) indifferent and careless how soon they die, out of either a worse than paganish infidelity, disbelieving the concernments of another world; or a brutish stupidity, not apprehending them; or a gross conceited ignorance, misunderstanding the terms of the gospel, and thinking themselves to be in a good condition, as to eternity, when the case is much otherwise with them. Take heed thy willingness to die be from no such inducements, but a mere desire of being with God, and of attaining this perfection and blessedness, which he hath engaged thee in the pursuit and expectation of. And then, having made sure it be right as to the rise and principle.

Be careful it be not undue in point of degree; *i. e.* a cold intermittent velleity is too little on the one hand, and a peremptory, precipitant hastiness is too much on the other. The middle and desirable temper here is a complacential submission to the Divine will in that affair, with a preponderating inclination on our part, towards our eternal home, if the Lord see good. For we have two things to attend in this business, and by which our spirits may be swayed this way or that, *i. e.* the goodness of the object to be chosen, and the will of God which must guide and overrule our choice; the former whereof we

z Rev. i.
a Sen. de Constant. sapientis.
b Jonah iv. 3
c Job vii 15.
d Dumte naufragium, mors mihi munus erit. Ovid.
e Imperator de me non male meruit, sed bene judicavit. Sen.
f Jam. i. 2.
g Rom. xiv. 8.

are permitted to eye in subordination to the latter, and not otherwise. Now our apprehension of the desirableness and intrinsic goodness of the object ought to be such, (we are infidels else, if we have not that account of it,) that nothing we can eye under the notion of a good to us, may be reckoned so eligible as that, *viz.* our final and complete blessedness in the other world; which because we know we cannot enjoy without dying, death also must be judged more eligible than life, that is, our blessedness must be judged eligible for itself, and death as requisite to make it present. So that the entire object we are discoursing of being present blessedness, consider it in comparison with any thing else, that can be looked upon by us as a good which we ourselves are to enjoy, it ought to be preferred and chosen out of hand, inasmuch as nothing can be so great a present good to us as that. And this ought to be the proper habitual inclination of our spirits, their constant frame and bent, as they respect only our interest and welfare. But considering God's dominion over us, and interest in our lives and beings, and that as well ingenuity as necessity binds us to be subject to his pleasure, we should herein patiently suffer ourselves to be overruled thereby, and not so abstractly mind our own interest and contentment in this matter, as if we were altogether our own, and had no Lord over us. Plato, who abounds in discourses of the desirableness of dying, and of the blessed change it makes with them that are good, yet hath this apt expression of the subjection we ought to be in to the Divine pleasure as to this matter, [h] "That the soul is in the body as soldiers in a garrison, from whence they may not withdraw themselves without his order and direction who placed them there:" and expostulates thus, "If (saith he) a slave of yours should destroy his own life without your consent, would you not be displeased; and if there had been any place left for revenge, been apt enough for that too?" So he brings in Socrates discoursing; and discovers himself herein to have had more light in this matter, touching that subordinate interest only men have in their own lives, and the unlawfulness of self-murder, (as he had in other things too,) than most heathens of the more refined sect ever arrived to.

If therefore God would give us leave to die, we should upon our own account be much more inclined to choose it; but while he thinks fit to have it deferred, should yield to his will with an unrepining submission. Only it ought not to rest at all on our part, or that as to ourselves we find any thing more grateful to us in this world, that we are willing to stay a day longer in it. That for our own sakes we should affect a continuance here, would argue a terrene, sordid spirit. But then such should be our dutiful filial love to the Father of our spirits, that in pure devotedness to his interests, we would be content to dwell (if he would have it so) a Methuselah's age in an earthly tabernacle for his service; that is, that we may help to preserve his memorial in a lapsed world, (overrun with atheism and ignorance of its Maker,) and win him hearts and love (to our uttermost) among his apostate, disloyal creatures; and in our capacities be helpful to the encouragement of such as he continues in the world for the same purposes. This is the very temper the apostle expresses [i] when in that strait. Which way the poise of his own spirits inclined him, in the consideration of his own interest, and what was simply more eligible to him, he expresses with high emphasis; To be with Christ, saith he, is more, more desirable to be, (for there are two comparatives in the Greek text,) and therefore he professes his own desire in order thereto, to be dissolved; but that private desire was not so peremptory and absolute, but he could make it yield and give place to his duty towards God and his church, as it follows. So we know 'tis possible, that respects to a friend may oversway a man's own particular inclination; and the inclination remain notwithstanding, but is subdued only; otherwise, had any reason or argument that did respect myself persuaded me to change it, I should then follow but my own proper inclination still, and so my friend hath nothing to thank me for.

So it ought to be with us here. Our inclination should preponderate towards a present change of our state; only our devotedness to his interest and pleasure, whose we are, should easily overrule it. This is the lovely temper of a gracious spirit, as to this thing, that to die might be our choice, and to live in the meantime submitted to as our duty. As an ingenuous son whom his father hath employed abroad in a foreign country, though duty did bind him cheerfully therein to comply with his father's will, and the necessity of his affairs; yet, when his father shall signify to him, that now he understands no necessity of his longer continuance there, and therefore he may if he please return, but he shall have leave to follow his own inclination, 'tis not hard to conjecture, that the desire of seeing a father's face would soon determine the choice of such a son that way. But how remote are the generality of them that profess themselves God's children from that pious ingenuity! We have taken root in the earth, and forgotten our heavenly originals and alliances. We are as inhabitants here, not pilgrims; hardly persuaded to entertain with any patience the thoughts of leaving our places on earth; which yet, do we what we can, shall shortly know us no more. In short, then, that vile temper of spirit, against which I professedly bend myself in the following discourse, is, when men, not out of any sense of duty toward God, or solicitude for their own souls, but a mere sordid love to the body, and affixedness of heart to the earth and terrene things, cannot endure the thoughts of dying. And that which I persuade to is, that having the true prospect of the future blessedness, before our eyes, and our hearts possessed with the comfortable hope of attaining to it, we shake off our earthly inclinations, and expect with desire and joy the time of our dismission hence, that we may enjoy it; which is the design of what was promised in the next place, *viz.*

2. The inforcement of this instruction. Suffer we therefore ourselves to be reasoned with about this matter; and let us consider whether we can in good earnest think such an aversation, as we discover, to our blessed translation hence, an excusable, a tolerable temper; or whether it be not highly reasonable, that we should entertain the thoughts, at least, with more content and patience (if not with more fervent desire) of our departure hence and introduction into that other state. Let me demand of thee, dost thou thus regret the thoughts of death, as being unwilling to die at all, or as being unwilling to die as yet? Is it the thing itself, or only the circumstance of time that thou exceptest against? 'Tis likely thou wilt say that which will seem more plausible, and so fix only on the latter; and that thou wilt not profess to desire an eternity on earth, but only more time. Well, let that for the present be supposed, as it is a more modest, so to be a true account of thy desires: yet what is the reason of this moderation with thee herein; and that thou so limitest thyself? Is it that thou believest the blessedness of the other state will prove better than any thing thou canst enjoy here; and that thou art not willing eternally to be deprived of? But dost thou not think it is *now* better also? And what canst thou pretend, why what is *now* the best and most desirable good, should not be *now* chosen and desired out of hand? Or is it that thou thinkest it unbecomes thee to cross the supreme will of him that made thee, who hath determined, that all men once shall die? And then, how knowest thou but he hath also determined concerning thee that thou shalt die the next day or hour? and it is only a present willingness to die, in subordination to the Divine will, or upon supposition of it, thou art persuaded to. Why, art thou not afraid, lest thy present unwillingness should cross his present will? Dost thou not think that sovereign power is as sufficient to determine of the circumstance, as the thing itself? And art thou not ashamed to pretend an agreement with God about the thing itself, and yet differ with him about a circumstance? Shall that be a ground of quarrel between him and thee?

But while thou only professest that more modest desire of more time in the world, what security canst thou give, that when that desire hath been liberally gratified, it shall be at length laid down, and tumultuate no more? What bounds wilt thou fix to it, which thou darest undertake it shall not pass? Art thou sure, when thou shalt have lain at the world's breast ten or twenty years longer, thou wilt then imagine thyself to have drawn it dry; or that then

[h] In Phæd. Vid. et Plotin. περι εξαγωγης, Enead. 1.

[i] Phil. i.

thou shalt begin to nauseate the world and wish for heaven? Or hast thou not reason from thy former experience to suspect, that the longer thou dwellest on earth, the more terrene thou wilt grow; and that if thou be indisposed to leave it this day or year, thou wilt be more so the next; and so thy desire become boundless and infinite, which is to desire to be here always, the thing which thou seemedst so unwilling to own? And if that prove at last the true state of thy case, art thou then a Christian, or art thou a man, that thou harbourest in thy breast so irreligious and irrational, yea, so sordid a wish? What! wish eternally to be affixed to a clod of earth? Is that at length become thy God? Or wilt thou say, he is thy God whom thou never desirest to enjoy? Or, that thou hast already enough of him, but not of the world, and yet that he is thy God? Or wouldst thou overturn the laws of nature, and subvert the most sacred divine constitutions, abortive the designs of eternal wisdom and love, evacuate and nullify the great achievements of thy merciful and mighty Redeemer, only to gratify a sensual, brutish humour? But evident it is, thou dost only in vain disquiet thyself, thou canst not disturb the settled order of things. Eternal laws are not repealable by a fond wish. Thou settest that dreadful thing, *death*, at nothing the further distance, by thine abhorrency of it. It will overtake thee whether thou wilt or no; and methinks thine own reason should instruct thee to attemper and form thyself to what thou canst not avoid, and possess thee with such thoughts and desires as those of that discreet pagan.[k] "Lead me, O God, (saith he,) whither thou wilt, and I will follow thee willingly; but if I be rebellious and refuse, I shall follow thee notwithstanding." What we cannot decline, 'tis better to bear willingly, than with a regret, that shall be both vain and afflictive.

And what hast thou hitherto met with in the world, that should so highly endear it to thee? Examine and search more narrowly into thy earthly comforts; what is there in them to make them self-desirable, or to be so for their own sakes? What is it to have thy flesh indulged and pleased? to have thy sense gratified? thy fancy tickled? What so great good, worthy of an immortal, reasonable spirit, canst thou find in meats and drinks, in full barns and coffers, in vulgar fame and applause, that should render these things desirable for themselves? And if there were any real felicity in these things for the present, whilst thou art permitted to enjoy them, yet dost thou not know, that what thou enjoyest to-day thou mayst lose to-morrow, and that such other unthought-of evils may befall thee, as may infuse a bitterness into all thou enjoyest, which causes immediately the enjoyment to cease, while the things themselves remain, and will be equal to a total loss of all? And thus, as the moralist[l] ingeniously speaks, "thou wilt continually need another happiness to defend the former, and new wishes must still be made on the behalf of those which have already succeeded." But canst thou indeed think it worth the while that the Maker of the universe should create a soul, and send it down into the world on purpose to superintend these trivial affairs, to keep alive a silly piece of well-figured earth while it eats and drinks, to move it to and fro in chase of shadows, to hold it up while others bow the knee and do it homage, if it had not some higher work to mind in reference to another state? Art thou contented to live long in the world to such purposes? What low worthless spirit is this, that had rather be so employed than in the visions of his Maker's face; that chooses thus to entertain itself on earth, rather than partake the effusions of Divine glory above; that had rather creep with worms than soar with angels; associate with brutes than with the spirits of just men made perfect? Who can solve the phenomenon, or give a rational account why there should be such a creature as man upon the earth, abstracting from the hopes of another world? Who can think it the effect of an infinite wisdom; or account it a more worthy design, than the representing of such a scene of actions and affairs by puppets on a stage? For my part, upon the strictest inquiry, I see nothing in the life of man upon earth, that should render it, for itself, more the matter of a rational election (supposing the free option given him in the first moment of his being) than presently again to cease to be the next moment.

k Epictet. l Sen. de Brev. Vit.

Yea, and is there not enough obvious in every man's experience, to incline him rather to the contrary choice; and supposing a future blessedness in another world, to make him passionately desirous (with submission to the Divine pleasure) of a speedy dismission into it? Do not the burdens that press us in this earthly tabernacle teach our very sense, and urge oppressed natures into involuntary groans, while as yet our consideration doth not intervene? And if we do consider, is not every thought a sting, making a much deeper impression than what only toucheth our flesh and bones? Who can reflect upon his present state and not presently be in pangs? The troubles that follow humanity are many and great, those that follow Christianity more numerous and grievous. The sickness, pains, losses, disappointments, and whatsoever afflictions that are, in the apostle's language,[m] human, or common to men, (as are all the external sufferings of Christians, in nature and kind, though they are liable to them upon an account peculiar to themselves, which there the apostle intimates,) are none of our greatest evils; yet even upon the account of them, have we any reason to be so much in love with so unkind a world? Is it not strange, our very bridewell should be such a heaven to us? But these things are little considerable in comparison of the more spiritual grievances of Christians, as such; that is, those that afflict our souls while we are (under the conduct of Christ) designing for a blessed eternity; if we indeed make that our business, and do seriously intend our spirits in order thereto. The darkness of our beclouded minds; the glimmering ineffectual apprehension we have of the most important things; the inconsistency of our shattered thoughts, when we would apply them to spiritual objects; the great difficulty of working off an ill frame of heart, and the no less difficulty of retaining a good; our being so frequently tossed as between heaven and hell; when we sometimes think ourselves to have even attained and hope to descend no more, and all on a sudden plunged in the ditch, so as that our own clothes might abhor us; fall so low into an earthly temper, that we can like nothing heavenly or divine, and because we cannot, are enforced justly most of all to dislike ourselves? are these things little with us? How can we forbear to cry out of the depths, to the Father of our spirits, that he would pity and relieve his own offspring! Yea, are we not weary of our crying; and yet more weary of holding in? How do repelled temptations return again, and vanquished corruptions recover strength! We know not when our work is done. We are miserable that we need to be always watching, and more miserable that we cannot watch, but are so often surprised and overcome of evil. We say sometimes with ourselves, we will seek relief in retirement, but we cannot retire from ourselves; or in converse with godly friends, but they sometimes prove snares to us and we to them, or we hear but our own miseries repeated in their complaints. Would we pray? How faint is the breath we utter! How long is it ere we can get our souls possessed with any becoming apprehensions of God, or lively sense of our own concernments? Would we meditate? We sometimes go about to compose our thoughts, but we may as well assay to hold the winds in our fist. If we venture forth into the world, how do our senses betray us? how are we mocked with their impostures? Their nearer objects become with us the only realities, and eternal things are all vanished into airy shadows. Reason and faith are laid asleep, and our sense dictates to us what we are to believe and do, as if it were our only guide and lord. And what, are we not yet weary? Is it reasonable to continue in this state of our own choice? Is misery become so natural to us, so much our element, that we cannot affect to live out of it? Is the darkness and dirt of a dungeon more grateful to us than a free open air and sun? Is this flesh of ours so lovely a thing, that we had rather suffer so many deaths in it, than one in putting it off and mortality with it? While we carry it about us, our souls impart a kind of life to it, and it gives them death in exchange. Why do we not cry out more feelingly," O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Is it not grievous to us to have so cumbersome a yoke-fellow, to be tied (as Mezentius is said to have done) the living and the dead together. Do we not

m 1 Cor. x. 13.

find the distempers of our spirits are mostly from these bodies we are so in love with, either as the proper springs or as the occasion of them? From what cause is our drowsy sloth, our eager passions, our aversion to spiritual objects, but from this impure flesh; or what else is the subject about which our vexatious cares, or torturing fears, our bitter griefs, are taken up day by day?

And why do we not consider, that 'tis only our love to it that gives strength and vigour to the most of our temptations, as wherein it is most immediately concerned, and which makes them so often victorious, and thence to become our after-afflictions? He that hath learned to mortify the inordinate love of the body, will he make it the business of his life to purvey for it? Will he offer violence to his own soul, to secure it from violence? Will he comply with men's lusts and humours for its advantage and accommodation; or yield himself to the tyranny of his own avarice for its future, or of his more sensual lusts for its present, content? Will it not rather be pleasing to him, that his outward man be exposed to perish, while his inward man is renewed day by day? He to whom the thoughts are grateful of laying it down, will not (though he neglect not duty towards it) spend his days in its continual service, and make his soul a hell by a continual provision for the flesh and the lusts of it. That is cruel love that shall enslave a man, and subject him to so vile and ignoble a servitude. And it discovers a sordid temper to be so imposed upon. How low are our spirits sunk, that we disdain not so base a vassalage! God and nature hath obliged us to live in bodies for a time, but they have not obliged us to measure ourselves by them, to confine our desires and designs to their compass, to look no further than their concernments, to entertain no previous joys in the hope of being one day delivered from them. No such hard law is laid upon us. But how apt are we to become herein a most oppressive law to ourselves; and not only to lodge in filthy earthen cottages, but to love them and confine ourselves to them, loth so much as to peep out. 'Tis the apt expression of a [n] philosopher, upbraiding that base, low temper, *The degenerous soul*, (saith he,) *buried in the body, is as a slothful creeping thing, that loves its hole and is loth to come forth.*

And methinks, if we have no love for our better and more noble self, we should not be altogether unapprehensive of an obligation upon us, to express a dutiful love to the Author of our beings. Doth it consist with the love we owe to him, to desire always to lurk in the dark, and never come into his blessed presence? Is that our love, that we never care to come nigh him? Do we not know, [o] that while we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord? Should we not therefore be willing rather to be present with the Lord, and absent from the body? Should we not put on a confidence, a holy fortitude, (as 'tis there expressed, we are confident, or of good courage, and thence, willing, &c.) that might carry us through the grave to him. As is the brave speech of that last-mentioned philosopher, *God will call thee ere long, expect his call.* [p] *Old age will come upon thee, and show thee the way thither; and death, which he that is possessed with a base fear, laments and dreads as it draws on, but he that is a lover of God expects it with joy, and with courage meets it when it comes.* Is our love to God so faint and weak, that it dares not encounter death, nor venture upon the imaginary terrors of the grave, to go to him? How unsuitable is this to the character which is given [q] of a saint's love! And how expressly are we told, that he who loves his life better than Christ, or that even hates it not for his sake, (as certainly he cannot be said to do, that is not willing to part with it to enjoy him,) cannot be his disciple! If our love to God be not *supreme* 'tis *none*, or not such as can denominate us lovers of him; and will we pretend to be so, when we love a putrid flesh and this base earth better than him? And have we not professedly, as a fruit of our avowed love to him, surrendered ourselves? Are we not his devoted ones? Will we be his, and yet our own? or pretend ourselves dedicated to his holy pleasure, and will yet be at our own dispose, and so dispose of ourselves too, as that we may be most ungrateful to him, and most incapable of converse with him? How doth this love of a perishing life and of a little animated clay stop all the effusions of the love of God, suspend its sweet and pleasant fruits, which should be always exerting themselves towards him! Where is their love, obedience, joy, and praise, who are through the fear of death all their lives subject to bondage, and kept under a continual dismal expectation of an unavoidable dissolution? But must the great God lose his due acknowledgments because we will not understand wherein he deals well with us? Is his mercy therefore no mercy? As we cannot nullify his truth by our unbelief, so nor his goodness by our disesteem. But yet consider, doth it not better become thee to be grateful than repine that God will one day unbind thy soul and set thee free, knock off thy fetters and deliver thee out of the house of thy bondage; couldst thou upon deliberate thoughts judge it tolerable, should he doom thee to this earth for ever? *He hath however judged otherwise*, (as the pagan emperor and philosopher excellently speaks,[r]) *who is the author both of the first composition of thy present being and now of the dissolution of it; thou wert the cause of neither, therefore depart and be thankful, for he that dismisseth thee dealeth kindly with thee.* If yet thou understandest it not, yet remember, it is thy Father that disposes thus of thee. How unworthy is it to distrust his love; what child would be afraid to compose itself to sleep in the parent's bosom? It expresses nothing of the duty and ingenuity, but much of the frowardness and folly, of a child: they sometimes cry vehemently in the undressing; but should their cries be regarded by the most indulgent parent? or are they fit to be imitated by us?

We have no excuse for this our frowardness. The blessed God hath told us his gracious purposes concerning us, and we are capable of understanding him. What if he had totally hidden from us our future state? and that we knew nothing, but of going into an eternal, silent darkness? the authority of a Creator ought to have awed us into a silent submission. But when we are told of such a glory, that 'tis but drawing aside the fleshly veil and we presently behold it, methinks the blessed hour should be expected not with patience only, but with ravishing joy. Did we hear of a country in this world, where we might live in continual felicity, without toil, or sickness, or grief, or fear, who would not wish to be there, though the passage were troublesome? Have we not heard enough of heaven to allure us thither? Or is the eternal truth of suspected credit with us? Are God's own reports of the future glory unworthy our belief or regard? How many, upon the credit of his word, are gone already triumphantly into glory! [s] that only by seeing the promises afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them; and never after owned themselves under any other notion than of pilgrims on earth, longing to be at home in their most desirable, heavenly country. We are not the first that are to open heaven; the main body of saints is already there; 'tis, in comparison of their number, but a scattering remnant that are now alive upon the earth. How should we long to be associated to that glorious assembly! Methinks we should much more regret our being left behind.

But if we should desire still to be so, why may not all others as well as we, and as much expect to be gratified as we? And then we should agree in desiring, that our Redeemer's triumph might be deferred, that his body might yet remain incomplete, that he might still be debarred of the long expected fruit of the travail of his soul, that the name of God might be still subjected to the blasphemy and reproach of an atheistical world, who have all along said with derision, Where is the promise of his coming? Would we have all his designs to be still unfinished, and so mighty wheels stand still for us, while we sport ourselves in the dust of the earth, and indulge our sensual inclination, which sure this bold desire must argue to be very predominant in us; and take heed it argue not its habitual prevalency. At least, if it discover not our present sensuality, it discovers our former sloth and idleness. It may be, we may excuse our averseness to die by our unpre-

n Η δε δειλη ψυχη κατορωρυγμενη εν σωματι, ως ερπετον νωθες εις φωλεαν, φιλει τον φωλεον, &c. Max. Tyr. Diss. 41.

o 2 Cor. v. 6, 8.

p Δειλος οδυρεται, &c. Item. Diss. 1.

q Cant. viii.

r M. Aurel. Ant. de Vit. Sua, l. 12. απιθι ιλεως οι απολυων ιλεως.

s Heb. xi. 13, 16.

paredness, *i. e.* one fault with another; though that be besides the case I am speaking of. What then have we been doing all this while? What! were the affairs of thy soul not thought of till now? Take then thy reproof from a heathen, that it may convince thee the more: "No one (saith he) [t] divides away his money from himself, but yet men divide away their very life.—But doth it not shame thee (he after adds) to reserve only the relics of thy life to thyself, and to devote that time only to a good mind which thou canst employ upon no other thing; How late is it to begin to live when we should make an end; and defer all good thoughts to such an age as possibly few do ever reach to. The truth is (as he speaks) we have not little time, but we lose much, we have time enough were it well employed, therefore we cannot say we receive a short life, but we make it so, we are not indigent of time, but prodigal: what a pretty contradiction is it to complain of the shortness of time, and yet do what we can to precipitate its course; to hasten it by that we call pastime! If it have been so with thee, art thou to be trusted with more time?" But as thy case is, I cannot wonder that the thoughts of death be most unwelcome to thee; who art thou that thou shouldst desire the day of the Lord? I can only say to thee, hasten thy preparation, have recourse to rule second, and third, and accordingly guide thyself till thou find thy spirit made more suitable to this blessedness; that it become savoury and grateful to thy soul, and thy heart be set upon it. Hence thou mayst be reconciled to the grave, and the thoughts of death may cease to be a terror to thee.

And when thou art attained so far, consider thy great advantage in being willing and desirous to die upon this further account, That thy desire shall now be pitched upon a thing so certain. Thine other desires have met with many a disappointment. Thou hast set thy heart upon other things, and they have deceived thy most earnest, thirsty expectations. Death will not do so. Thou wilt now have one certain hope; one thing in reference whereto thou mayst say, "I am sure." Wait awhile, this peaceful sleep will shortly seize thy body and awaken thy soul. It will calmly period all thy troubles, and bring thee to a blessed rest. But now, if only the mere terror and gloominess of dying trouble thy thoughts, this of all other seems the most inconsiderable pretence against a willing surrender of ourselves to death. Reason hath overcome it, natural courage, yea, some men's atheism; shall not faith? Are we not ashamed to consider, what confidence and desire of death some heathens have expressed? Some that have had no pre-apprehension or belief of another state, (though there were very few of them,) and so no hope of a consequent blessedness to relieve them, have yet thought it unreasonable to disgust the thoughts of death. What wouldst thou think if thou hadst nothing but the sophisms of such to oppose to all thy dismal thoughts? I have met with one [u] arguing thus, "Death, which is accounted the most dreadful of all evils, is nothing to us, (saith he,) because while we are in being death is not yet present, and when death is present we are not in being; so that it neither concerns us, as living, nor dead; for while we are alive, it hath not touched us, when we are dead we are not.—Moreover (saith he) the exquisite knowledge of this, that death belongs not to us, makes us enjoy this mortal life with comfort; not by adding any thing to our uncertain time, but by taking away the desire of immortality." Shall they comfort themselves upon so wretched a ground, with a little sophistry, and the hope of extinguishing all desire of immortality; and shall not we, by cherishing this blessed hope of enjoying shortly an immortal glory?

Others of them have spoken magnificently of a certain contempt of this bodily life, and a not only not fearing but desiring to die, upon a fixed apprehension of the distinct and purer and immortal nature of the soul, and the preconceived hope of a consequent felicity. I shall set down some of their words, added to what have been occasionally mentioned, (amongst that plentiful variety wherewith one might fill a volume,) purposely to shame the more terrene temper of many Christians.

"The soul (saith one of them [x]) is an invisible thing, and is going into another place, suitable to itself, that is noble, and pure, and invisible, even into hades, indeed, to the good and wise God, whither also my soul shall shortly go, if he see good. But this (he saith in what follows) belongs only to such a soul as goes out of the body pure, that draws nothing corporeal along with it, did not willingly communicate with the body in life, but did even fly from it, and gather up itself into itself, always meditating this one thing. A soul so affected, shall it not go to something like itself, divine, (and what is divine, is immortal and wise,) whither when it comes, it becomes blessed, free from error, ignorance, fears, and wild or enormous loves, and all other evils incident to men."

[y] One writing the life of that rare person Plotinus, says, That he seemed as if he were in some sort ashamed that he was in the body; which, (however it would less become a Christian, yet,) in one that knew nothing of an incarnate Redeemer, it discovered a refined, noble spirit. The same person speaks almost the language of the apostle, concerning his being wrapt up into the third heaven, and tells of such an alienation of the soul from the body: "That when once it finds God (whom he had before been speaking of under the name of the τὸ καλὸν, *or the beauty*) shining in upon it, it now no longer feels its body, or takes notice of its being in the body, but even forgets its own being, that it is a man, or a living creature, or any thing else whatsoever, for it is not at leisure to mind any thing else, nor doth it desire to be: yea, and having sought him out, he immediately meets it presenting itself to him. It only views him instead of itself,—and would not now change its state for any thing, not if one could give it the whole heaven in exchange."

"And elsewhere discussing, whether life in the body be good and desirable, yea or no, he concludes it to be good, not as it is a union of the soul and body, but as it may have that virtue annexed to it, by which what is really evil may be kept off. But yet, that death is a greater good: that life in the body is in itself evil; but the soul is by virtue stated in goodness; not as enlivening the body with which it is compounded, but as it severs and sejoins itself from it; meaning so, as to have as little communion as possibly it can with it." To which purpose is the expression of another: "That the soul of a happy man so collects and gathers up itself out from the body while it is yet contained in it;—and that it was possessed of that fortitude, as not to dread its departure from it."[z]

Another gives this character of a good man: "That as he lived in simplicity, tranquillity, purity, not being offended at any that they believed him not to live so; he also comes to the end of his life, pure, quiet, and[a] easy to be dissolved, disposing himself without any constraint to his lot." Another is brought in speaking thus:[b] "If God should grant me to become a child again, to send forth my renewed infant cries from my cradle, and having even run out my race, to begin it again, I should most earnestly refuse it; for what profit hath this life? and how much toil! Yet I do not repent that I have lived, because I hope that I have not lived in vain. And now I go out of this life, not as out of my dwelling-house, but my inn. O blessed day! when I shall enter into that council and assembly of souls, and depart from this rude and disorderly rout and crew," &c.

I shall add another, (of a not much unlike strain[c] and rank, as either being not an open, or no constant friend to Christianity,) that discourses who is the heir of divine things, saith, "He cannot be, who is in love with this animal, sensitive life; but only that purest mind that is inspired from above, that partakes of a heavenly and divine portion, that only despises the body," &c. with much more of like import.

Yea, so have some been transported with the desire of immortality, that (being wholly ignorant of the sin of self-

t Sen.

u Epicurus in Gassend. Synt.

x Plato in Phedone; from whom I adjoin what (to them that understand it) is more elegant in his own language: ον ιδης αγανακτουντα μελλοντα αποθανεισθαι συκ αρ φιλοσοφος αλλα τις φιλοσωματος. Ibid. Αγριων ερωτων.

y Porphyrius. Plotinus Ennead. vii. lib. 6. whom, though a just admirer of him, would fain have men reckon to have been a Christian, because he writes much against the pseudo-Christian gnostics, nothing against Christianity, yet it appears not he ever made profession of it. Ennead. i. lib. 7.

z Marin. Procliu

a Ευκλεης. M. Aur. Ant.

b Cato in Ciceron de Senect

c Philo Judæus.

murder) they could not forbear doing violence on themselves. Among the Indians,[d] two thousand years ago, were a sort of wise men, as they were called, that held it a reproach to die of age, or a disease, and were wont to burn themselves alive, thinking the flames were polluted if they came amidst them dead. The story of [e]Cleombrotus is famous, who hearing Plato discourse of the immortality of the soul, by the sea-side, leaped from him into the sea, that he might presently be in that state. And 'tis storied, that [f]Nero refused to put Apollonius to death, though he were very much incensed against him, only upon the apprehensions he had that he was very desirous to die, because he would not so far gratify him.

I only make this improvement of all this:—Christian principles and rules do neither hurry nor misguide men, but the end (as we have it revealed) should much more powerfully and constantly attract us. Nothing is more unsuitable to Christianity our way, nor to that blessedness the end of it, than a terrene spirit. They have nothing of the true light and impress of the gospel now, nor are they ever like to attain the vision of the blessed face of God, and the impress of his likeness hereafter, that desire it not above all things, and are not willing to quit all things else for it. And is it not a just exprobation of our earthliness and carnality, if mere philosophers and pagans should give better proof than we of a spirit erected above the world, and alienated from what is temporary and terrene? Shall their Gentilism outvie our Christianity? Methinks a generous indignation of this reproach should inflame our souls, and contribute somewhat to the refining of them to a better and more spiritual temper.

Now, therefore, O all you that name yourselves by that worthy name of Christians, that profess the religion taught by Him that was not of the earth, earthly, but the Lord from heaven; you that are partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the great Apostle and High Priest of your profession, who only took our flesh that we might partake of his Spirit, bore our earthly, that we might bear his heavenly image, descended that he might cause us to ascend. Seriously bethink yourselves of the scope and end of his apostleship and priesthood. He was sent out from God to invite and conduct you to him, to bring you into the communion of his glory and blessedness. He came upon a message and treaty of peace: to discover his Father's love and win yours: to let you know how kind thoughts the God of love had conceived to you-wards; and that, however you had hated him without cause, and were bent to do so without end, he was not so affected towards you: to settle a friendship, and to admit you to the participation of his glory. Yea, he came to give an instance, and exemplify to the world, in his own person, how much of heaven he could make to dwell in mortal flesh; how possible he could render it to live in this world as unrelated to it; how gloriously the divine life could triumph over all the infirmities of frail humanity. And so leave men a certain proof and pledge to what perfections human nature should be improved by his grace and Spirit, in all them that should resign themselves to his conduct, and follow his steps; that heaven and earth were not so far asunder but he knew how to settle a commerce and intercourse between them; that a heavenly life was possible to be transacted here, and certain to be gloriously rewarded and perfected hereafter.

And having testified these things, he seals the testimony, and opens the way for the accomplishment of all by his death. Your heavenly Apostle becomes a Priest and a Sacrifice at once; that no doubt might remain among men of his sincerity, in what, even dying, he ceased not to profess and avow. And that by his own propitiatory blood a mutual reconciliation might be wrought between God and you; that your hearts might be won to him, and possessed with an ingenuous shame of your ever having been his enemies. And that his displeasure might ever cease towards you, and be turned into everlasting friendship and love: that eternal redemption being obtained, heaven might be opened to you, and you finally be received to the glory of God; your hearts being bent thitherward, and made willing to run through whatsoever difficulties of life or death to attain it. Do not think that Christ came into the world and died to procure the pardon of your sins, and so translate you to heaven while your hearts should still remain cleaving to the earth. He came and returned to prepare a way for you; and then call, not drag you thither: that by his precepts, and promises, and example, and Spirit, he might form and fashion your souls to that glorious state; and make you willing to abandon all things for it. And lo! now the God of all grace is calling you by Jesus Christ unto his eternal glory. Direct then your eyes and hearts to that mark, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 'Tis ignominious, by the common suffrage of the civilized world, not to intend the proper business of our calling. 'Tis your calling to forsake this world and mind the other; make haste then to quit yourselves of your entanglements, of all earthly dispositions and affections. Learn to live in this world as those that are not of it, that expect every day, and wish to leave it, whose hearts are gone already.

'Tis dreadful to die with pain and regret; to be forced out of the body; to die a violent death, and go away with an unwilling reluctant heart. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness. Fain he would stay longer, but cannot. He hath not power over the spirit, to retain the spirit, nor hath he power in death. He must away whether he will or no. And indeed much against his will. So it cannot but be, where there is not a previous knowledge and love of a better state, where the soul understands it not, and is not effectually attempered and framed to it.

O get then the lovely image of the future glory into your minds. Keep it ever before your eyes. Make it familiar to your thoughts. Imprint daily there these words, I shall behold thy face, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness. And see that your souls be enriched with that righteousness, have inwrought into them that holy rectitude, that may dispose them to that blessed state. Then will you die with your own consent, and go away, not driven, but allured and drawn. You will go, as the redeemed of the Lord, with everlasting joy upon their heads; as those that know whither you go, even to a state infinitely worthy of your desires and choice, and where 'tis best for you to be. You will part with your souls, not by a forcible separation, but by a joyful surrender and resignation. They will dislodge from this earthly tabernacle, rather as putting it off than having it rent and torn away. Loosen yourselves from this body by degrees, as we do any thing we would remove from a place where it sticks fast. Gather up your spirits into themselves. Teach them to look upon themselves as a distinct thing. Inure them to the thoughts of a dissolution. Be continually as taking leave. Cross and disprove a common maxim, and let your hearts, which they use to say are wont to die last, die first. Prevent death, and be mortified towards every earthly thing beforehand, that death may have nothing to kill but your body; and that you may not die a double death in one hour, and suffer the death of your body and of your love to it both at once. Much less that this should survive to your greater, and even incurable, misery. Shake off your bands and fetters, the terrene affections that so closely confine you to the house of your bondage. And lift up your heads in expectation of the approaching jubilee, the day of your redemption; when you are to go out free, and enter into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; when you shall serve, and groan, and complain no longer. Let it be your continual song, and the matter of your daily praise, that the time of your happy deliverance is hastening on; that ere long you shall be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. That he hath not doomed you to an everlasting imprisonment within those close and clayey walls, wherein you have been so long shut up from the beholding of his sight and glory. In the thoughts of this, while the outward man is sensibly perishing, let the inward revive and be renewed day by day. "What prisoner would be sorry to see the walls of his prison-house (so a heathen speaks[g]) mouldering down, and the hopes arriving to him of being delivered out of that darkness that had buried him, of recovering his liberty, and enjoying the free air and light. What cham-

[d] Q. Curt. lib 8. [e] Cicer. Quæst. Tuscul.
[f] Scil. Domitianus aliquoties sic dictus. Philostr. in vit. Apoll. Tyanæi.
[g] Max. Tyr Dissert. 41.

pion inured to hardship, would stick to throw off rotten rags, and rather expose a naked, placid, free body, to naked, placid, free air? The truly generous soul (so he a little above) never leaves the body against its will." Rejoice that it is the gracious pleasure of thy good God, thou shalt not always inhabit a dungeon, nor lie amidst so impure and disconsolate darkness; that he will shortly exchange thy filthy garments for those of salvation and praise. The end approaches. As you turn over these leaves, so are your days turned over. And as you are now arrived to the end of this book, God will shortly write *finis* to the book of your life on earth, and show you your names written in heaven, in the book of that life which shall never end.

THE

VANITY OF THIS MORTAL LIFE;

OR,

OF MAN, CONSIDERED IN HIS PRESENT MORTAL STATE.

TO THE DESERVEDLY HONOURED

JOHN UPTON, OF LUPTON, ESQ.

WITH THE MANY SURVIVING BRANCHES THAT FORMERLY SPRUNG OUT OF THAT RELIGIOUS FAMILY, AND THE WORTHY CONSORTS OF ANY OF THEM.

Since it is the lot of the following pages to be exposed to public view, there is somewhat of justice in it, to yourselves or me, that the world do also know wherein divers of you have contributed thereto; that if any thing redound hence to public advantage, it may be understood to be owing in part to you; or if it shall be reckoned a useless trouble, in this way to represent things so obvious to common notice, and whereof so much is already said, all the blame to the publication be not imputed (as it doth not belong) to me only. But I must here crave your excuse, that, on this account, I give you a narrative of what (for the most part) you already know, and may possibly not delight to remember; both because it is now become convenient that others should know it too, and not necessary to be put into a distinct preface; and because to yourselves the review of those less pleasing passages may be attended with a fruit which may be some recompense for their want of pleasure.

Therefore give the reader leave to take notice, and let it not be grievous to you that I remind you, that after this your near relation* (whose death gave the occasion of the ensuing meditations) had from his youth lived between twenty and thirty years of his age in Spain, your joint importunity had at length obtained from him a promise of returning; whereof, when you were in somewhat a near expectation, a sudden disease in so few days landed him in another world, that the first notice you had of his death or sickness, was by the arrival of that vessel (clad in mourning attire) which, according to his own desire in his sickness, brought over the deserted body to its native place of Lupton; that thence it might find a grave, where it first received a soul; and obtain a mansion in the earth, where first it became one to a reasonable spirit. A little before this time, the desire of an interview among yourselves (which the distance of your habitations permitted not to be frequent) had induced divers of you to appoint a meeting at some middle place, whereby the trouble of a long journey might be conveniently shared among you. But, before that agreed resolution could have its accomplishment, this sad and most unexpected event intervening, altered the place, the occasion, and design of your meeting; but effected the thing itself, and brought together no less than twenty, the brothers and sisters of the deceased, or their consorts, besides his many nephews and nieces and other relations, to the mournful solemnity of the interment. Within the time of our being together upon this sad account, this passage of the Psalmist here insisted on, came into discourse among us; being introduced by an occasion, which (though then, it may be unknown to the most of you) was somewhat rare, and not unworthy observation; *viz.* that one of yourselves having been some time before surprised with an unusual sadness, joined with an expectation of ill tidings, upon no known cause, had so urgent an inculcation of these words, as not to be able to forbear the revolving them much of the former part of that day, in the latter part whereof the first notice was brought to that place of this so near a relation's decease.

Certain months after, some of you with whom I was then conversant in London, importuned me to have somewhat from me in writing upon that subject. Whereto I at length agreed, with a cautionary request, that it might not come into many hands, but might remain (as the occasion was) among yourselves. Nor will I deny it to have been some inducement to me to apply my thoughts to that theme, that it had been so suggested as was said. For such presages and abodings, as that above mentioned, may reasonably be thought to owe themselves to some more steady and universal principle than casualty or the party's own imagination: by whose more noble recommendation (that such a gloomy premonition might carry with it not what should only afflict, but also instruct and teach) this subject did seem offered to our meditation. Accordingly, therefore, after my return to the place of my abode, I hastily drew up the substance of the following discourse; which, a year ago, I transmitted into their hands who desired it from me, without reserving to myself any copy. Hereby it became difficult to me presently to comply (besides divers considerations I might have against the thing itself) with that joint request of some of you, (in a letter, which my removal into another kingdom occasioned to come long after to my hands,) that I would consent these papers might be made public. For as I have reason to be conscious to myself of disadvantages enough to discourage any undertaking of that kind; so I am more

* Mr. Anthony Upton, the son of John Upton, of Lupton, Esq.

especially sensible, that so cursory and superficial a management of a subject so important, (though its private occasion and design at first might render it excusable to those few friends for whom it was meant,) cannot but be liable to the hard censure (not to say contempt) of many whom discourses of this kind should more designedly serve. And therefore, though my willingness to be serviceable in keeping alive the apprehension and expectation of another state, my value of your judgments who conceive what is here done may be useful thereto, and my peculiar respects to yourselves, the members and appendants of a family to which (besides some relation) I have many obligations and endearments, do prevail with me not wholly to deny; yet pardon me that I have suspended my consent to this publication, till I should have a copy transmitted to me from some of you, for my necessary view of so hasty a production, that I might not offer to the view of the world, what, after I had penned it, had scarce passed my own. And now, after so long an expectation, those papers are but this last week come to my hands: I here return them with little or no alteration; save, that what did more directly concern the occasion, towards the close, is transferred hither; but with the addition of almost all the directive part of the use: which I submit together to your pleasure and dispose.

And I shall now take the liberty to add, my design in consenting to this request of yours (and I hope the same of you in making it) is not to erect a monument to the memory of the deceased, (which how little doth it signify!) nor to spread the fame of your family; (though the visible blessing of God upon it, in the fruitfulness, piety, and mutual love, wherein it hath flourished for some generations, do challenge observation, both as to those branches of it which grow in their own more natural soil, and those, as I have now occasion to take further notice, that I find to have been transplanted into another country;) but that such into whose hands this little treatise shall fall, may be induced to consider the true end of their beings; to examine and discuss the matter more thoroughly with themselves, what it may or can be supposed such a sort of creatures was made and placed on this earth for: that when they shall have reasoned themselves into a settled apprehension of the worthy and important ends they are capable of attaining, and are visibly designed to, they may be seized with a noble disdain of living beneath themselves and the bounty of their Creator.

It is obvious to common observation, how flagrant and intense a zeal men are often want to express for their personal reputation, the honour of their families, yea, or for the glory of their nation: but how few are acted by that more laudable and enlarged zeal for the dignity of mankind! How few are they that resent the common and vile depression of their own species! Or that, while in things of lightest consideration they strive with emulous endeavour, that they and their relatives may excel other men, do reckon it a reproach if in matters of the greatest consequence they and all men should not excel beasts! How few that are not contented to confine their utmost designs and expectations within the same narrow limits! through a mean and inglorious self-despiciency confessing in themselves (to the truth's and their own wrong) an incapacity of greater things; and with most injurious falsehood, proclaiming the same of all mankind besides.

If he that amidst the hazards of a dubious war betrays the interest and honour of his country be justly infamous, and thought worthy severest punishments; I see not why a debauched sensualist, that lives as if he were created only to indulge his appetite; that so vilifies the notion of man, as if he were made but to eat, and drink, and sport, to please only his sense and fancy; that in this time and state of conflict between the powers of this present world, and those of the world to come, quits his party, bids open defiance to humanity, abjures the noble principle and ends, forsakes the laws and society of all that are worthy to be esteemed men, abandons the common and rational hope of mankind concerning a future immortality, and herds himself among brute creatures; I say, I see not why such a one should not be scorned and abhorred as a traitor to the whole race and nation of reasonable creatures as a fugitive from the tents, and deserter of the common interest of men; and that both for the vileness of his practice, and the danger of his example.

And who, that hath open eyes, beholds not the dreadful instances and increase of this defection? When it hath prevailed to that degree already, that in civilized, yea, in Christian countries, (as they yet affect to be called,) the practice is become fashionable and in credit, which can square with no other principle than the disbelief of a future state, as if it were but a mere poetic or (at best) a political fiction. And as if so impudent infidelity would pretend not to a connivance only but a sanction, 'tis reckoned an odd and uncouth thing for a man to live as if he thought otherwise; and a great presumption to seem to dissent from the profane infidel crew. As if the matter were already formally determined in the behalf of irreligion, and the doctrine of the life to come had been clearly condemned in open council as a detestable heresy. For what tenet was ever more exploded and hooted at, than that practice is which alone agrees with this? Or what series or course of repeated villanies can ever be more ignominious than (in vulgar estimate) a course of life so transacted as doth become the expectation of a blessed immortality? And what, after so much written and spoken by persons of all times and religions for the immortality of the human soul, and so common an acknowledgment thereof by pagans, Mahomedans, Jews, and Christians, is man now at last condemned and doomed to a perpetual death, as it were, by the consent and suffrage even of men; and that too without trial or hearing; and not by the reason of men, but their lusts only? As if (with a loud and violent cry) they would assassinate and stifle this belief and hope, but not judge it. And shall the matter be thus given up as hopeless; and the victory be yielded to prosperous wickedness, and a too successful conspiracy of vile miscreants against both their Maker and their own stock and race?

One would think whosoever have remaining in them any conscience of obligation and duty to the common Parent and Author of our beings, and remembrance of our divine original, any breathings of our ancient hope, any sense of human honour, any resentments of so vile an indignity to the nature of man, any spark of a just and generous indignation for so opprobrious a contumely to their own kind and order in the creation, should oppose themselves with an heroic vigor to this treacherous and unnatural combination. And let us (my worthy friends) be provoked, in our several capacities, to do our parts herein; and, at least, so to live and converse in this world, that the course and tenor of our lives may import an open asserting of our hopes in another; and may let men see we are not ashamed to own the belief of a life to come. Let us by a patient continuance in well-doing (how low designs soever others content themselves to pursue) seek honour, glory, and immortality to ourselves; and by our avowed, warrantable ambition in this pursuit, justify our great and bountiful Creator, who hath made us not in vain, but for so high and great things; and glorify our blessed Redeemer, who amidst the gloomy and disconsolate darkness of this wretched world, when it was overspread with the shadow of death, hath brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel. Let us labour both to feel and express the power of that religion which hath the inchoation of the (participated) divine life for its principle, and the perfection and eternal perpetuation thereof for its scope and end.

Nor let the time that hath since elapsed be found to have worn out with you the useful impressions which this monitory surprising instance of our mortality did first make. But give me leave to inculcate from it what was said to you when the occasion was fresh and new: that we labour more deeply to apprehend God's dominion over his creatures; and that he made us principally for himself, and for ends that are to be compassed in the future state; and not for the temporary satisfaction and pleasure of one another in this world. Otherwise providence had never been guilty of such a solecism, to take out one from a family long famous for its exemplary mutual love, and dispose him into so remote a part, not permitting to most of his near relations the enjoyment of him for almost thirty years (and therein all the flower) of his age, and at last when we were expecting the man, send you home the breathless frame wherein he

lived. Yet it was not contemptible that you had that, and that dying (as Joseph) in a strange land, he gave also commandment concerning his bones; that though in his life he was (mostly) separated from his brethren, he might in death be gathered to his fathers. It was some evidence (though you wanted not better) that amidst the traffic of Spain he more esteemed the religion of England, and therefore would rather his dust should associate with theirs, with whom also he would rather his spirit should. But whatever it did evidence, it occasioned so much, that you had that so general meeting with one another, which otherwise probably you would not have had, nor are likely again to have, (so hath Providence scattered you,) in this world; and that it proved a more serious meeting than otherwise it might: for however it might blamelessly have been designed to have met together at a cheerful table, God saw it fitter to order the meeting at a mournful grave; and to make the house that received you (the native place to many of you) the house of mourning rather than of feasting. The one would have had more quick relishes of a present pleasure, but the other was likely to yield the more lasting sense of an after profit. Nor was it an ill errand to come together (though from afar for divers of you) to learn to die. As you might, by being so sensibly put in mind of it, though you did not see that very part acted itself. And accept this endeavour, to further you in your preparations for that change, as some testimony of the remembrance I retain of your most obliging respects and love, and of my still continuing

Your affectionate and respectful kinsman,
and servant in our common Lord

J. HOWE.

Antrim,
April 12, 1671.

THE

VANITY OF MAN AS MORTAL.

PSAL. LXXXIX. 47, 48.,

REMEMBER HOW SHORT MY TIME IS: WHEREFORE HAST THOU MADE ALL MEN IN VAIN. WHAT MAN IS HE THAT LIVETH, AND SHALL NOT SEE DEATH? SHALL HE DELIVER HIS SOUL FROM THE HAND OF THE GRAVE? SELAH.

We are not concerned to be particular and curious in the inquiry, touching the special reference or occasion of the foregoing complaints, from the 37th verse. It is enough to take notice, for our present purpose, that besides the evil which had already befallen the plaintiff, a further danger nearly threatened him, that carried death in the face of it, and suggested somewhat frightful apprehensions of his mortal state, which drew from him this quick and sensible petition in reference to his own private concern, "Remember how short my time is," and did presently direct his eye with a sudden glance from the view of his own, to reflect on the common condition of man, whereof he expresses his resentment, first, in a hasty expostulation with God, "Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?" —Then, secondly, in a pathetic discourse with himself, representing the reason of that rough charge, "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver," &c. *q. d.* When I add to the consideration of my short time, that of dying mankind, and behold a dark and deadly shade universally overspreading the world, the whole species of human creatures vanishing, quitting the stage round about me, and disappearing almost as soon as they show themselves; have I not a fair and plausible ground for that (seemingly rude) challenge? Why is there so unaccountable a phenomenon, such a creature made to no purpose? the noblest part of this inferior creation brought forth into being without any imaginable design? I know not how to untie the knot, upon this only view of the case, or avoid the absurdity. 'Tis hard sure to design the supposal, (of what it may yet seem hard to suppose,) that all men were made in vain.

It appears, the expostulation was somewhat passionate, and did proceed upon the sudden view of this disconsolate case, very abstractly considered, and by itself only: and that he did not in that instant look beyond it to a better and more comfortable scene of things. An eye bleared with present sorrow, sees not so far, nor comprehends so much at one view, as it would at another time, or as it doth, presently, when the tear is wiped out, and its own beams have cleared it up. We see he did quickly look further, and had got a more lightsome prospect, when in the next words we find him contemplating God's [a] sworn loving-kindness unto David: the truth and stability whereof he at the same time expressly acknowledges, while only the form of his speech doth but seem to import a doubt—"Where are they?" But yet—they were sworn in truth. Upon which argument he had much enlarged in the former part of the psalm; and it still lay deep in his soul, though he were now a little diverted from the present consideration of it. Which, since it turns the scales with him, it will be needful to inquire into the weight and import of it. Nor have we any reason to think, that David was either so little a prophet or a saint, as in his own thoughts to refer those magnificent things (the instances of that loving-kindness, confirmed by oath, which he recites from the 19th verse of the psalm to the 38th, as spoken from the mouth of God, and declared to him by vision) to the dignity of his own person, and the grandeur and perpetuity of his kingdom; as if it were ultimately meant of himself, that God would [b] make him his first-born, higher than the kings of the earth, when there were divers greater kings, and (in comparison of the little spot over which he reigned) a vastly spreading monarchy that still overtopped him all his time; (as the same and successive monarchies did his successors;) or that it was intended of the secular glory and stability of his throne and family; that God would

[a] Verse 49.

[b] Verse 27.

make them [c]to endure for ever, and be as the days of heaven; that they should be as the sun before him, and be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.

That God himself meant it not so, experience and the event of things hath shown; and that these predictions cannot otherwise have had their accomplishment, than in the succession of the spiritual and everlasting kingdom of the Messiah [d]whom God raised up out of his loins to sit on his throne) unto his temporal kingdom. Wherein 'tis therefore ended by perfection rather than corruption. These prophecies being then made good, not in the kind which they literally imported, but in another (far more noble) kind. In which sense God's covenant with him must be understood, which he insists on so much in this psalm,[e] even unto that degree, as to challenge God upon it, as if in the present course of his providence he were now about to make it void: though he sufficiently expresses his confidence[f] both before and after, that this could never be. But 'tis plain it hath been made void long enough ago, in the subversion of David's kingdom, and in that we see his throne and family not been established for ever, not endured as the days of heaven; if those words had no other than their obvious and literal meaning. And if any, to clear the truth of God, would allege the wickedness of his posterity, first making a breach and disobliging him, this is prevented by what we find inserted in reference to this very case: [g]If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, &c. Then will I visit their iniquity with the rod, &c. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. All which is solemnly sealed up with this, [h]Once have I sworn in my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. So that, they that will make a scruple to accuse the holy God of falsehood, in that which with so much solemnity he hath promised and sworn, must not make any to admit his further intendment in these words. And that he had a further (even a mystical and spiritual) intendment in this covenant with David, is yet more fully evident from that of the prophet Isaiah: [i]Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, &c. Incline your ear and come to me. And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander, &c. What means this universal invitation to all thirsty persons, with the subjoined encouragement of making with them an everlasting covenant, (the same which we have here, no doubt, as to the principal parts, and which we find him mentioning also, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. with characters exactly corresponding to these of the prophet,) even the sure mercies of David? The meaning sure could not be, that they should be all secular kings and princes, and their posterity after them for ever; which we see is the verbal sound and tenor of this covenant.

And now since it is evident God intended a mystery in this covenant, we may be as well assured he intended no deceit, and that he designed not a delusion to David by the vision in which he gave it. Can we think he went about to gratify him with a solemn fiction, and draw him into a false and fanciful faith; or so to hide his meaning from him, as to tempt him into the belief of what he never meant? And to what purpose was this so special revelation by vision, if it were not to be understood truly, at least, if not yet perfectly and fully? It is left us therefore to collect that David was not wholly uninstructed how to refer all this to the kingdom of the Messiah. And he hath given sufficient testimony in that part of sacred writ, whereof God used him as a penman, that he was of another temper than to place the sum and chief of his expectations and consolations in his own and his posterity's worldly greatness. And to put us out of doubt, our Saviour (who well knew his spirit) expressly enough tells us, that she in spirit called him Lord, when he said, [k]The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thy enemies thy foot-stool. A plain discovery how he understood God's revelation touching the future concernments of his kingdom, (and the covenant relating thereto,) *viz.* as a figure and type of Christ's, who must reign till all his enemies be subdued. Nor was he in that ignorance about the nature and design of Christ's kingdom, but that he understood its reference to another world, and state of things, even beyond all the successions of time, and the mortal race of men; so as to have his eye fixed upon the happy eternity which a joyful resurrection must introduce, and whereof Christ's resurrection should be the great and most assuring pledge. And of this we need no fuller an evidence than the express words of the apostle St. Peter,[m] who after he had cited those lofty triumphant strains of David, Psal. xvi. 8—11. I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, (or in the state of darkness,) neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life. In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. All which, he tells us, [n]was spoken concerning Christ. He more expressly subjoins,[o] that David being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne. He seeing this before, spake of [p]the resurrection of Christ, (it appears he spake not at random, but as knowing and seeing before what he spake,) that his soul was not left in hell, &c. nor can we think he thus rejoices, in another's resurrection, forgetting his own.

And yet we have a further evidence from the apostle St. Paul, who affirms, [q]that the promise made to the fathers, God had fulfilled to their children, in that he had raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption; he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Which it is now apparent must be understood of eternal mercies; such as Christ's resurrection and triumph over the grave doth insure to us. He therefore looked upon what was spoken concerning his kingdom here, as spoken ultimately of Christ's, the kingdom whereby he governs and conducts his faithful subjects through all the troubles of life and terrors of death (through both whereof he himself as their king and leader hath shown the way) unto eternal blessedness; and upon the covenant made with him as the covenant of God in Christ, concerning that blessedness and the requisites thereto. And (to say no more in this argument) how otherwise can we conceive he should have that fulness of consolation in this covenant when he lay a dying, as we find him expressing, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. (for these were some of the last words of David, as we see, verse 1.) He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire. What so great joy and solace could a dying man take in a covenant made with him, when he had done with this world, and was to expect no more in it, if he took it not to concern a future blessedness in another world? Was it only for the hoped prosperity of his house and family when he was gone? This (which is the only thing we can fasten on) he plainly secludes in the next words,—although he make it not to grow. Therefore it was his reflection upon those loving-kindnesses mentioned in the former part of the psalm, contained in God's covenant, and confirmed by his oath, but understood according to the sense and import already declared, that caused this sudden turn in David's spirit; and made him that lately spoke as out of a Golgotha, as if he had nothing but death in his eye and thoughts, to speak now in so different a strain, and (after some additional pleadings, in which his faith further recovers itself) to conclude this psalm with solemn praise; Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen and Amen.

We see then the contemplation of his own and all men's mortality, abstractly and alone considered, clothed his soul with black, wrapped it up in gloomy darkness, makes the

c Verse 29, 36, 37.
f Verse 39.
Ilsa. lv. 1—5.
d Acts ii. 30.
g Verse 30—34.
k Matt. xxii.
e Verse 28—34.
h Verse 35.
l Psal. cx.
n Verse 25.
p Verse 31.
m Acts ii. v. 25, &c.
o Verse 30.
q Acts xiii. 32—34.

whole kind of human creatures seem to him an obscure shadow, an empty vanity; but his recalling into his thoughts a succeeding state of immortal life, clears up the day, makes him and all things appear in another hue, gives a fair account why such a creature as man was made; and therein makes the whole frame of things in this inferior world look with a comely and well-composed aspect, as the product of a wise and rational design. Whence therefore we have this ground of discourse fairly before us in the words themselves:—that the short time of man on earth, limited by a certain unavoidable death, if we consider it abstractly by itself, without respect to a future state, carries that appearance and aspect with it, as if God had made all men in vain.—That is said to be vain, according to the importance of the word here used, [r] which is either false, a fiction, an appearance only, a shadow, or evanid thing; or which is useless, unprofitable, and to no valuable purpose. The life of man, in the case now supposed, may be truly styled vain, either way. And we shall say somewhat to each; but to the former more briefly.

I. It were vain, *i. e.* little other than a show, a mere shadow, a semblance of being. We must indeed, in the present case, even abstract him from himself, and consider him only as a mortal, dying thing; and as to that of him which is so, what a contemptible nothing is he! There is an appearance of somewhat; but search a little, and inquire into it, and it vanishes into a mere nothing, is found a lie, a piece of falsehood, as if he did but feign a being, and were not. And so we may suppose the Psalmist speaking, upon the view of his own and the common case of man, how fast all were hastening out of life, and laying down the being which they rather seemed to have assumed and borrowed, than to possess and own: Lord, why hast thou made man such a fictitious thing, given him such a mock-being? Why hast thou brought forth into the light of this world such a sort of creatures, that rather seem to be than are; that have so little of solid and substantial being, and so little deserve to be taken for realities; that only serve to cheat one another into an opinion of their true existence, and presently vanish and confess their falsehood? What hovering shadows, what uncertain entities are they! In a moment they are and are not, I know not when to say I have seen a man. It seems as if there were some such things before my eyes; I persuade myself that I see them move and walk to and fro, that I talk and converse with them; but instantly my own sense is ready to give my sense the lie. They are on the sudden dwindled away, and force me almost to acknowledge a delusion. I am but mocked with a show; and what seemed a reality proves an imposture. Their pretence to being, is but fiction and falsehood, a cozenage of over-credulous, unwary sense. They only personate what they are thought to be, and quickly put off their very selves as a disguise. This is agreeable to the language of Scripture elsewhere, [s] Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie, &c. In two respects may the present state of man seem to approach near to nothingness, and so admit this rhetorication of the Psalmist, as if he were in this sense a vain thing, a figment, or a lie, *viz.* in respect to the—*minuteness*, and—*instability* of this, his material and perishable being.

1. The minuteness, the small portion or degree of being which this mortal part of man hath in it. It is truly said of all created things, Their *non-esse* is more than their *esse*, they have more *no-being* than *being*. It is only some limited portion that they have, but there is an infinitude of being which they have not. And so coming infinitely nearer to nothingness than fulness of being, they may well enough wear the name of *nothing*. Wherefore the first and fountain-being justly appropriates to himself the name, I am; yea, tells us, He is, and there is none besides him; therein leaving no other name than that of *nothing* unto creatures. And how much more may this be said of the material and mortal part, this outside of man, whatever of him is obnoxious to death and the grave! Which alone (abstractly looked on) is the subject of the Psalmist's present consideration and discourse. By how much any thing hath more of matter, it hath the less of actual essence. Matter being rather a capacity of being, than being itself, or a dark umbrage or shadow of it, actually nothing, but *ευδωλον, ψευδος*, (as are the expressions of a noble [t] philosopher,) *a mere semblance, or a lie.* And it is the language not of philosophers only, but of the Holy Ghost concerning all the nations of men, [u] They are as nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. What a scarcity then, and penury of being, must we suppose in each individual! especially if we look alone upon the outer part, or rather the umbrage or shadow of the man.

2. The instability and fluidness of it. The visible and corporeal being of man hath nothing steady or consistent in it. Consider his exterior frame and composition, he is no time all himself at once. There is a continual defluence and access of parts; so that some account, each climacteric of his age changes his whole fabric. Whence it would follow, that besides his statique individuating principle, (from which we are now to abstract,) nothing of him remains; he is another thing; the former man is vanished and gone; while he is, he hastens away, and within a little is not. In respect to the duration as well as the degree of his being, he is next to nothing. He opens his eye, and is not. [x] Gone in the twinkling of an eye. There is nothing in him stable enough, to admit a fixed look. So it is with the whole scene of things in this material world. As was the true maxim of an ancient, [y] All things flow, nothing stays; after the manner of a river. The same thing which the apostle's words more elegantly express; [z] The fashion of this world passeth away. The scheme, the show, the pageantry of it. He speaks of it but as an appearance, as if he knew not whether to call it something or nothing, it was so near to vanishing into nothing. And therefore he there requires, that the affections which mutual nearness in relation challenges, be as if they were not; that we rejoice in reference to one another, (even most nearly related, as the occasion and scope of his discourse teach us to understand him,) but as if we rejoiced not, and to weep as if we wept not. Which implies, the objects merit no more, and are themselves as if they were not. Whence, therefore, a continued course of intense passion, were very incongruous towards so discontinuing things. And the whole state of man being but a show, the pomp and glittering of the greatest men make the most splendid and conspicuous part of it; yet all this we find is not otherwise reckoned of, [a] than an image, a dream, a vision of the sight; every man at his best state is altogether vanity, walketh in a vain show, disquieteth himself in vain, &c. Of all without exception, 'tis pronounced, Man is like to vanity, his days are as a shadow that passeth away. As Ecclesiastes often, of all sublunary things, Vanity of vanities, &c.

2. But yet there is another notion of *vain*, as it signifies *useless*, unprofitable, or to no purpose. And in this sense also, if we consider the universal mortality of mankind without respect to a future state, there was a specious ground for the expostulation, Why hast thou made all men in vain? Vanity in the former notion speaks the emptiness of a thing, absolutely and in itself considered; in this latter relatively, as it is referred to and measured by an end. That is, in this sense, vain, which serves to no end; or to no worthy and valuable end, which amounts to the same. For inasmuch as all ends, except the last, are means also to a further end; if the end immediately aimed at be vain and worthless, that which is referred to it, as it is so referred, cannot but be also vain. Whereupon now let us make trial what end we could in this case think man made for. Which will best be done by taking some view,—1. Of his nature,—2. Of the ends for which, upon that supposition, we must suppose him made.

1. Of the former (neglecting the strictness of philosophical disquisition) no more is intended to be said than may comport with the design of a popular discourse. And it shall suffice, therefore, only to take notice of what is more obvious in the nature of man, and subservient to the present purpose. And yet we are here to look further than the mere surface and outside of man, which we only considered before; and to view his nature, as it is in itself; and not as the supposition of its having nothing

r נשׁב
t Plotin. En. 2. l. 6.
u Isa. xl.
s Psal. lxii. 9.
x Job xxvii. 19.
y Heracl.
a Job xx. 7, 8, 9. Psal. lxxiii. 20. xxxix. 5, 6.
z 1 Cor. vii.

but what is mortal belonging to it, would make it: for as the exility (and almost nothingness) of man's being, considered according to that supposition, did best serve to express the vanity of it, in the former notion that hath been given of a vain thing; so the excellency and solid substantiality of it, considered as it is in itself, will conduce most to the discovery of its vanity in this latter notion thereof. That is, if we first consider that, and then the supposition of such a creature's being only made to perish. And if what shall be said herein, do in the sequel tend to destroy that above-mentioned disposition, (as it, being established, would destroy the prime glory of human nature,) it can only be said *magna est veritas, &c.* In the meantime we may take a view, in the nature of man,

1. Of his intellective powers. Hereby he frames notions of things, even of such things as are above the sphere of sense; of moral good and evil, right and wrong, what is virtuous and what is vicious; of abstract and universal natures. Yea, and of a first being, and cause, and of the wisdom, power, goodness, and other perfections, which must primarily agree to him. Hereby he affirms and denies one thing of another, as he observes them to agree and disagree, and discerns the truth and falsehood of what is spoken or denied. He doth hereby infer one thing from another, and argue himself into firm and unwavering assent to many things, not only above the discovery of sense, but directly contrary to their sensible appearances.

2. His power of determining himself, of choosing and refusing, according as things are estimated, and do appear to him. Where also it is evident how far the objects which this faculty is sometimes exercised about, do transcend the reach of all sensible nature; as well as the peculiar nobleness and excellency is remarkable of the faculty itself. It hath often for its object things of the highest nature, purely spiritual and divine, virtue, religion, God himself. So as that these (the faculty being repaired only by sanctifying grace, not now first put into the nature of man) are chosen by some, and, where it is not so, refused ('tis true) by the most; but not by a mere not-willing of them, (as mere brutal appetite also doth not-will them, which no way reaches the notion of a refusal,) but by rejecting them with a positive aversion and dislike, wherein there is great iniquity and sin: which could not be but in a nature capable of the opposite temper. And it is apparent, this faculty hath the privilege of determining itself, so as to be exempt from the necessitating influence of any thing foreign to it; upon the supposal whereof, the managery of all human affairs, all treaties between man and man, to induce a consent to this or that, the whole frame of government, all legislation and distribution of public justice, do depend. For take away this supposition, and these will presently appear most absurd and unjust. With what solemnity are applications and addresses made to the will of man upon all occasions! How is it courted, and solicited, and sued unto! But how absurd were it so to treat the other creatures, that act by a necessity of nature in all they do! to make supplications to the wind, or propound articles to a brute! And how unjust, to determine and inflict severe penalties for unavoidable and necessitated actions and omissions! These things occur to our first notice, upon any (a more sudden and cursory) view of the nature of man. And what should hinder, but we may infer from these, that there is further in his nature,

3. A capacity of an immortal state, *i. e.* that his nature is such, that he may, if God so please, by the concurrent influence of his ordinary power and providence, without the help of a miracle, subsist in another state of life after this, even a state that shall not be liable to that impairment and decay that we find this subject to. More is not (as yet) contended for; and so much methinks none should make a difficulty to admit, from what is evidently found in him. For it may well be supposed, that the admitting of this (at least) will seem much more easy to any free and unprejudiced reason, than to ascribe the operations before instanced in, to alterable or perishable matter, or indeed to any matter at all. It being justly presumed, that none will ascribe to matter, as such, the powers of ratiocination or volition. For then every particle of matter must needs be rational and intelligent (a high advance to what one would never have thought at all active.) And how unconceivable is it, that the minute particles of matter, in themselves, each of them destitute of any such powers, should by their mutual intercourse with one another, become furnished with them! that they should be able to understand, deliberate, resolve, and choose, being assembled and duly disposed in counsel together; but, apart, rest all in a deep and sluggish silence! Besides, if the particles of matter, howsoever modified and moved, to the utmost subtilty or tenuity, and to the highest vigour, shall then become intelligent and rational, how is it that we observe not, as any matter is more subtil and more swiftly and vigorously moved, it makes not a discernibly nearer approach (proportionably) to the faculty and power of reasoning? And that nothing more of an aptitude or tendency towards intelligence and wisdom is to be perceived in an aspiring flame or a brisk wind, than in a clod or a stone? If to understand, to define, to distinguish, to syllogize, be nothing else but the agitation and collision of the minute parts of rarified matter among one another; methinks, some happy chemist or other, when he hath missed his designed mark, should have hit upon some such more noble product, and by one or other prosperous sublimation have caused some temporary resemblance (at least) of these operations. Or, if the paths of nature, in these affairs of the mind, be more abstruse, and quite out of the reach and road of artificial achievement, whence is it, that nature herself (that is vainly enough supposed by some to have been so happy, as by some casual strokes to have fabricated the first of human creatures, that have since propagated themselves) is grown so effete and dull, as never since to hit upon any like effect in the like way: and that no records of any time or age give us the notice of some such creature sprung out of some epicurean womb of the earth, and elaborated by the only immediate hand of nature, so disposing the parts of matter in its constitution, that it should be able to perform the operation belonging to the mind of man. But if we cannot, with any tolerable pretence or show of reason, attribute these operations to any mere matter, that there must be somewhat else in man to which they may agree, that is distinct from his corruptible part, and that is therefore capable, by the advantage of its own nature, of subsisting hereafter (while God shall continue to it an influence agreeable to its nature, as he doth to other creatures.) And hence it seems a modest and sober deduction, that there is in the nature of man, at least, a capacity of an immortal state.

2. Now, if we yet suppose there is actually no such state for man hereafter, it is our next business to view the ends for which, upon that supposition, he may be thought to have been made. Whence we shall soon see, there is not any of them whereof it may be said, this is that he was created for, as his adequate end. And here we have a double agent to be accommodated with a suitable end;—Man now made; and—God who made him.

I. Man himself. For it must be considered, that inasmuch as man is a creature capable of propounding to himself an end, and of acting knowingly and with design towards it, (and indeed incapable of acting otherwise as a man,) it would therefore not be reasonable to speak of him in this discourse, as if he were merely passive, and to be acted only by another: but we must reckon him obliged, in subordination to his Maker, to intend and pursue (himself) the proper end for which he appointed and made him. And in reason we are to expect that what God hath appointed to be his proper end, should be such as is in itself most highly desirable, suitable to the utmost capacity of his nature, and attainable by his action; so carrying with it sufficient inducements, both of desire and hope, to a vigorous and rational prosecution of it. Thus we must, at least, conceive it to have been in the primitive institution of man's end, unto which, the expostulation hath reference,—Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? And we can think of no ends which men either do or ought to propound to themselves, but by the direction of one of these principles, sense, reason, or religion.

1. Sense is actually the great dictator to the most of men, and *de facto*, determines them to the mark and scope which they pursue, and animates the whole pursuit. Not that sense is by itself capable of designing an end, but it too generally inclines and biasses reason herein. So that

reason hath no other hand in the business, that only as a slave to sense, to form the design and contrive the methods which may most conduce to it, for the gratification of sensual appetite and inclination at last. And the appetitions of sense (wherein it hath so much mastery and dominion) are but such as we find enumerated, 1 John ii. 16. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life. Or (if we understand the apostle to use the name of lust objectively) the objects sufficiently connote the appetitions themselves. All which may fitly be referred to sense: either the outward senses, or the fancy or imagination, which as deservedly comes under the same common denomination.

Now, who can think the satisfying of these lusts the commensurate end of man? Who would not, upon the supposition of no higher, say with the Psalmist, Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? To what purpose was it for him to live in the world a few years, upon this account only, and so go down to the place of silence? What is there in the momentary satisfaction of this mortal flesh; in his pleasing view of a mass of treasure, (which he never brought with him into the world, but only heaped together, and so leaves not the world richer or poorer than he found it,) what is there in the applause and admiration of fools, (as the greater part always are,) that we should think it worth the while for man to have lived for these things? If the question were put, Wherefore did God make man? Who would not be ashamed so to answer it, He made him to eat, and drink, and take his pleasure, to gather up wealth for he knows not who; to use his inventions, that each one may become a talk and wonder to the rest; and then when he hath fetched a few turns upon the theatre, and entertained the eyes of beholders with a short scene of impertinencies, descend and never be heard of more? What, that he should come into the world furnished with such powers and endowments for this? It were like a case, as if one should be clad in scarlet to go to plough, or curiously instructed in arts and sciences to tend hogs.

Or, 2*dly*, If we rise higher, to the view of such ends as more refined reason may propose, within the compass only of this present state: we will suppose that it be either, the acquisition of much knowledge, the furnishing his understanding with store of choice and well-digested notions; that he may please himself in being (or in having men think him) a learned wight. Death robs away all his gain. And what is the world the better? How little shall he enrich the clods, among which he must shortly lie down and have his abode! Or how little is the gain, when the labour and travail of so many years are all vanished and blown away with the last puff of his dying breath, and the fruit that remains, is to have it said by those that survive, "There lies learned dust?" That any part of his acquisitions, in that kind, descends to others, little betters the case, when they that succeed are all hastening down also into the same ignoble dust. Besides, that the increase of sorrow, both because the objects of knowledge do but increase the more he knows, do multiply the more upon him, so as to beget a despair of ever knowing so much as he shall know himself to be ignorant of; and a thousand doubts, about things he hath more deeply considered, which his more confident (undiscovered) ignorance never dreamt of or suspected. And thence an unquietness, an irresolution of mind, which they that never drove at any such mark are (more contentedly) unacquainted with. And also, because that by how much knowledge hath refined a man's soul, so much it is more sensible and perceptive of troublesome impressions from the disorderly state of things in the world; which they that converse only with earth and dirt, have not spirits clarified and fine enough to receive. So that, except a man's knowing more than others were to be referred to another state, the labour of attaining thereto, and other accessary disadvantages, would hardly ever be compensated by the fruit or pleasure of it. And unless a man would suppose himself made for torment, he would be shrewdly tempted to think a quiet and drowsy ignorance a happier state.

Or if that man's reason, with a peculiarity of temper, guide him to an active negociating life, rather than that of contemplation; and determine him to the endeavour of serving mankind, or the community to which he belongs: by how much the worthier actions he performs, and by how much more he hath perfected and accomplished himself with parts and promptitude for such actions; the loss and vanity is but the greater thereby, since he and those he affected to serve, are all going down to the silent grave. Of how little use are the politician, the statesman, the senator, the judge, or the eloquent man, if we lay aside the consideration of their subserviency to the keeping the world in a more composed and orderly state, for the prosecution of the great designs of eternity, when ere long all their thoughts shall perish? what matter were it what became of the world, whether it be wise or foolish, rich or poor, quiet or unquiet, governed or ungoverned? Whoever should make their order and tranquillity their study, or that should intend their thoughts and endeavours to the finding out the exactest methods and rules of government and policy, should but do as they that should use a great deal of pains and art in the curious adorning and trimming up of a dying person; or as if some one, among many condemned persons, should be very solicitous to have them march with him in very exact order to the place of execution. If the world be not looked upon as a tiring room to dress one's self in, for an appearance on the eternal stage; but only as a great charnel-house, where they undress and put off themselves, to sleep in everlasting darkness; how can we think it worth a thought, or to be the subject of any rational design or care? Who would not rather bless himself in a more rational neglect and regardlessness of all human affairs; and account an unconcerned indifferency the highest wisdom?

Yea, 3*dly*, If we suppose *religion* (which we need not (because it is mentioned in this order) conceive exclusive of reason, but rather perfective of it: reason having first found out God, religion adores him) to become with any the ruling principle, and to have the direction and government of the man, as to his way and end: how would even that languish with the best, were the consideration of a future state laid aside, which with so few, notwithstanding it, hath any efficacy at all to command and govern their lives! Religion terminates upon God; and upon him under a double notion, either as we design service and honour to him, or as from him we design satisfaction and blessedness to ourselves. Now if a man's thoughts and the intention of his mind be carried towards God under the former notion, how great an allay and abatement must it needs be to the vigour and zeal of his affection, who shall with the most sincere devotedness apply himself to serve his interest and glory, to reflect upon the universal mortality of himself and mankind, without any hope of compensation to it by a future immortality!

It is agreed on all hands, that the utmost contributions of creatures can add nothing to him; and that our glorifying him doth only consist, either in our acknowledging him glorious ourselves, or representing him so to others. But how little doth it signify, and how flat and low a thing would it seem, that I should only turn mine eye upwards and think a few admiring thoughts of God this hour, while I apprehend myself liable to lose my very thinking power and whole being the next! Or if we could spread his just renown, and gain all the sons of men to a concurrence with us in the adoring of his sovereign excellencies, how would it damp and stifle such loyal and dutiful affection, to consider, that the universal testimony, so deservedly given him, shall shortly cease for ever, and that infinitely blessed Being be ere long (again, as he was from eternity before) the only witness of his own glory! And if the propension of a man's soul be towards God under the latter notion also, in order to a satisfaction that shall thence accrue to himself, (which design, both in the pursuit and execution of it, is so conjunct with the former that it cannot be severed,) it cannot but be an unspeakable diminution and check to the highest delights in this kind, to think how soon they shall have an end; that the darkness and dust of the grave shall shortly obscure and extinguish the glory of this lightsome scene.

To think every time one enters that blessed presence, for ought I know I shall approach it no more! This is possibly my last sight of that pleasant face, my last taste

of those enravishing pleasures! What bitterness must this infuse into the most delicious sweetness our state could then admit! And by how much more free and large grace should be in its present communications, and by how much any soul should be more experienced in the life of God and inured to divine delights, so much the more grievous and afflictive resentments it could not but have of the approaching end of all; and be the more powerfully tempted to say, Lord, why was I made in vain? How faint and languid would endeavours be after the knowledge of that God whom I may but only know and die! How impotent and ineffectual would the attractions of this end be to man in this terrene state to raise him above the world, and rescue him from the power of sensible things, to engage him in the pursuit of that sanctity and purity which alone can qualify him for converse with God, to bear him out in a conflict against the (more natural) inclinations of sense, when if with much labour and painful striving, much self-denial and severity to the flesh, any disposition should be attained to relish divine pleasures, it be considered all the while, that the end of all may be as soon lost as it is gained; and that possibly there may be no more than a moment's pleasure to recompense the pains and conflicts of many years! Although, in this case, the continual hope and expectation of some further manifestation and fruition might much influence a person already holy, and a great lover of God, unto a steadfast adherence to him; yet how little would it do to make men such, that are yet unsuitable and disaffected to him! or even to recover such out of their lapses and drowsy fits, that are not altogether so!

And 'tis further to be considered, that since God hath given man a being capable of subsisting in another state; (as doth appear by what hath been already said;) and since he is therefore capable of enjoying a greater happiness than his present state can admit of; that capacity will draw upon him a most indispensable obligation to intend that happiness as his end. For admit that there be no future state for him, it is however impossible any man should know there is none; and upon an impartial view of the whole case, he hath enough to render it, (at least) far more likely to him that there is. And certainly he cannot but be obliged to pursue the highest good (even by the law of nature itself) which his nature is capable of; which probably he may attain, and which he is no where forbidden by his Creator to aspire unto. Whence therefore, if we now circumscribe him within the limits of this present mortal state; or if, for argument's sake, we suppose eventually there is no other; we must not only contess that capacity to be given him in vain, but that he is obliged also to employ the principal endeavours of his life and all his powers in vain; (for certainly his principal endeavour ought to be laid out in order to his principal end;) that is, to pursue that good which he may attain, but never shall; and which is possible to him, but not upon any terms future. And if it be admitted, that the subject state of man must silence all objections against any such inconsistencies, and make him content to act in pure obedience to his Maker, (whether he signify his will by the law of nature only, or by any positive precept,) though he shall not hereafter enjoy any permanent state of blessedness as the consequent reward: that virtue and goodness, a holy rectitude of inclinations and actions, are reward enough to themselves: and there is that justice and sweetness in religion, to oblige him to love and reverence and adore the Divine Majesty this moment, though he were sure to perish for ever and be reduced to nothing the next; I say, admitting all this, yet,

2. Since the blessed God himself is to be considered as the principal Agent and Designer in this inquiry, "Why hast thou made all men in vain?" It is with modest and humble reverence to be considered, what end worthy of that infinitely perfect Being, he may be supposed to have propounded to himself in forming such a creature of so improveable a nature, and furnished with so noble faculties and powers, for so transient and temporary a state? and how well it will consist with the most obvious and unquestionable notions we can have of an absolutely perfect Being and the attributes which he most peculiarly challenges and appropriates to himself, (so as not only to own, but to glory in them,) that he should give being not to some few only, but to the whole species of human creatures, and therein communicate to them a nature capable of knowing, of loving, and enjoying himself in a blessed eternity with a design to continue them only for some short space on earth, in a low, imperfect state, wherein they shall be liable to sink still lower, to the vilest debasement of their natures; and yet not for their transgression herein, (for 'tis the mortality of man, not by sin, but by creation or the design of the Creator only, that is now supposed,) but for his mere pleasure to bereave them of being, and reduce them all again to nothing? It is to be considered, Whether, thus to resolve and do, can any way agree to God, according to our clearest and most assured conceptions of him; not from our reasoning only, but his discovery of himself? For otherwise we see the imputation falls where we should dread to let it rest, of having made man in vain.

He is, in common account, said to act vainly, who acts beneath himself, so as to pursue an end altogether unworthy of him, or none at all. 'Tis true, that some single acts may be done by great persons as a divertisement, without dishonourable reflection, that may seem much beneath them. And if any do stoop to very mean offices and employments to do good, to help the distressed and relieve the miserable, it is a glorious acquest; and the greater they are, the higher is the glory of their condescending goodness. Benignity of nature and a propension to the most unexpected acts of a merciful self-depression, when the case may require it, are the most comely ornaments of princely greatness, and outshine the glory of the richest diadem. But a wonted habitual course of mean actions in great persons, that speak a low design or no design at all, but either a humour to trifle, or a mischievous nature and disposition, would never fail to be thought inglorious and infamous; as may be seen in the instances of Sardanapalus's spinning, and Domitian's killing of flies.

When wisdom and goodness are in conjunction with power and greatness, they never persuade a descent but upon such terms and for such purposes that a more glorious advancement shall ensue. Wisdom foreseeing that end, and goodness readily taking the way, which (though it were most undesigned, or not aimed at as an end) could not fail to effect it. Nor are any attributes of the Divine Being more conspicuous than these; more testified by himself, or more generally acknowledged by all men that have not denied his existence. Or if any have done that violence to their own minds, as to erase and blot out thence the belief of an existing Deity, yet at least, while they deny it, they cannot but have this notion of what they deny, and grant that these are great perfections, and must agree to God, upon supposition that he do exist. If therefore he should do any thing repugnant to these, or we should suppose him to do so, we should therein suppose him to act below a God, and so as were very unworthy of him. And though it becomes us to be very diffident of our own reasonings concerning the counsels and designs of that eternal Being; so, as if we should find him to assert any thing expressly of himself, which we know not how to reconcile with our own preconceived thoughts, therein to yield him the cause, and confess the debility of our understandings; yet certainly, it were great rashness and void of all pretence, to suppose any thing which neither he saith of himself, nor we know how, consistently, to think. Nor are we, in judging of his designs, to bring him down to our model, or measure him by man, whose designs do for the most part bespeak only his own indigency, and are levelled at his own advantage and the bettering some way or other of his present condition. Whatsoever the great God doth towards his creatures, we must understand him to do, though with design, yet from an exuberant fulness of life and being, by which he is incapable of an accession to himself. And hence that he can, in reference to himself, have no other inducement to such action, besides the complacency which he takes in diffusing his free communications, (for he exercises loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, because he delighteth in these things,) and the maintaining

b Jer. ix. 24.

the just honour and reputation of his government over his creatures, who as they are of him, and through him, must be all to him, that he may have glory for ever.

Now, though it be most undoubtedly true, that the sovereignty of his power and dominion over his creatures (of which he hath no need, and to whom he so freely gave being) is so absolute and unlimited, that if we consider that only, we must acknowledge, he might create a man or an angel, and annihilate him presently; yea, that he might, if he so pleased, raise up many thousand worlds of intelligent and innocent creatures into being in one moment, and throw them into nothing again the very next moment. Yet how unwarrantably should we maim the notion of God, if we should conceive of him only according to one attribute, secluding the consideration of the rest! How misshapen an idea should we bear of him in our minds! And how would it deform the face of Providence, and spoil the decorum of his administrations, if they should be the effects of one single attribute only, the other having no influence on the affairs of the world! If nothing but *mercy* should appear in his dispensations towards sinful man, so that every man might do what were good in his own eyes, without cause of fear to be called to account; if the most dissolute and profane were equally assured of his favour, with those who are most holy and strictly regular in all their conversation, what would be thought of God and religion? Or how should we savour the notion of an impure deity, taking pleasure to indulge the wickedness of men? And if *justice* alone have the whole management of affairs, and every act of sin be followed with an act of sudden vengeance, and the whole world become a flaming theatre, and all men held in a hopeless expectation of fiery indignation and of judgment without mercy, what would become of that amiable representation, and the consolatory thoughts we have of God, and of that love and duty which some souls do bear towards him? Or if *power* should affect daily to show itself in unusual appearances and effects, in changing every hour the shapes of the terrestrial creatures, in perpetual quick innovations of the courses of the celestial, with a thousand more kinds of prodigious events that might be the hourly effects of unlimited power, how were the order of the world disturbed, and how unlovely an idea would it beget in every intelligent creature, of him that made and rules it! Yet is it from no defect of *mercy*, that all men are not equally favoured and blessed of God; nor of *justice*, that a speedy vengeance is not taken of all; nor of *power*, that the world is not filled with astonishing wonders every day; but rather from their unexcessiveness, and that they make that blessed temperature where they reside, and are exercised in so exact proportion, that nothing is ever done unworthy of him, who is, at once, both perfectly merciful, and just, and powerful, and wise, and hath all perfections eminently comprehended and united in his own most simple Being. It were therefore besides the purpose to insist only what sovereign power, considered apart, might do; but we are to consider what may be congruous to him to do, who is infinitely wise and good, as well as powerful.

1. And first, let it be weighed, how it may square with the Divine wisdom, to give being to a world of reasonable creatures, and giving them only a short time of abode in being, to abandon them to a perpetual annihilation. Wisdom in any agent must needs suppose the intention of some valuable end of his action. And the Divine wisdom, wherein it hath any end diverse from that which his pure goodness and benignity towards his creatures would incline him to, (which also we must conceive it most intent to promote and further,) cannot but have it chiefly in design; it being determined that his goodness should open itself and break forth into a creation, and that of reasonable creatures, so to manage his government over these (which indeed are the only subjects of government in the strict and proper notion of it) as may most preserve his authority, and keep up his just interest in them, both by recommending him to their fear and love; to possess them with that due and necessary reverence of him that may restrain them from contemptuous sinning; and so endear his government to them, as to engage them to a placid and free obedience. But how little would it agree with this design of the Divine wisdom, to have made man only for this temporary state! For,

I. How little would it tend to the begetting and settling that fear of God in the hearts of men, that were necessary to preserve his authority and government from a profane contempt; whereas daily experience shows, that there is now no difference between them that fear God and them that fear him not, unless wherein the former are worse dealt with and more exposed to sufferings and wrongs: that, at least, 'tis often (yea for the most part) so, that to depart from iniquity is to make oneself a prey; that those who profess and evidence the most entire devotedness to God, and pay the greatest observance and duty to him, become a common scorn upon this very account, and are in continual danger to be eaten up as bread by those that call not upon God; while in the meantime the tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure, are not plagued as other men, nor in trouble as other men. And judgment is not here executed for wicked works in this world. If also nothing is to be expected, either of good or evil, in another, who is likely to be induced, in this case, to fear God or to be subject to him? And how unlike is this to the wisdom of the Supreme Ruler, to expose his most rightful and sovereign authority to the fearless and insolent affronts of his own revolted creatures, without any design of future reparation to it; as if he had created them on purpose only to curse him and die! But he hath prevented the occasion of so reproachful a censure, and thought fit to fill his word and the consciences of guilty sinners with threats and dreadful presages of a future judgment and state of punishment. To which he is no less concerned, both in point of wisdom and veracity, (and I may add of legal justice,) to make the event correspond, that he may neither be found to have omitted any due course for preventing or redress of so great an evil; and that, if the threatening do not effectually over-awe sinners, the execution may at least right himself: and that, in the meantime, he do not (that which would least of all become him, and which were most repugnant to his nature) make use of a solemn fiction to keep the world in order, and maintain his government by falsehood and deceit, that is, by threatening what he knows shall never be.

2. Nor were there (in the case all along supposed) a more probable provision made, to conciliate and procure to the Divine majesty the love which it is requisite he should have from the children of men. And this cannot but be thought another apt method for his wisdom to pitch upon, to render his government acceptable, and to engage men to that free and complacential subjection which is suitable to God. For how can that filial and dutiful affection ever be the genuine product or impress of such a representation of the case between God and them; that is, that they shall be most indispensably obliged to devote their whole being and all their powers entirely to his service and interest; exactly to observe his strictest laws, to keep under the severest restraint their most innate, reluctant inclinations; and in the meantime expect the administrations of Providence to be such, towards them, that they shall find harder usage all their days than his most insolent and irreconcilable enemies, and at last lose their very beings, they know not how soon, and therewith (necessarily) all possibilities of any future recompense. Is this a likely way to procure love, and to captivate hearts into an affectionate and free obedience? Or what is it probable to produce, but a sour and sullen despondency, the extinction of all generous affection, and a temper more agreeable to a forced enthralment to some malignant, insulting genius, than a willing subjection to the God of all grace and love? And every one will be ready to say, There is little of wisdom in that government, the administration whereof is neither apt to beget fear nor love in those that are subject to it; but either through the want of the one to be despised, or to be regretted through the want of the other. And this being the very case, upon supposition of no future state, it seems altogether unworthy of the Divine wisdom, that such a creature should ever have been made as man, upon which no end is attainable, (as the course of providence

c Rom. xi. 36.

commonly runs in this world,) in comparison whereof, it were not better and more honourable to his Maker, (whose interest it is the part of his wisdom to consult,) that he had never been. And therefore, as to God and the just and worthy designs of his glory, he would seem, upon this supposition, wholly made in vain.

2. And secondly, How congruous and agreeable would this supposition prove to the goodness of God? As that other attribute of wisdom doth more especially respect his own interest, so doth this the interest of his creatures: that is, if it be understood, not in a metaphysical, but in a moral, sense; as it imports a propensity and steady bent of will unto benefaction, according to that of the Psalmist, Thou art good, and dost good.[d] And this free and generous principle it is, which gives the first rise and beginning to all the designs any way respecting the well-being and happiness of creatures; which then infinite wisdom forms and manages to their full issues and accomplishment, guiding (as it were) the hand of almighty power in the execution of them.

That there should be a creation, we may conceive to be the first dictate of this immense goodness, which afterwards diffuses itself through the whole, in communications agreeable to the nature of every creature. So that even this inferior and less noble part, the earth, is full of the goodness of the Lord.[e] It creates first its own object, and then pours forth itself upon it with infinite delight, rewarding the expense with the pleasure of doing good. Now if we should suppose such a creature as man made only for that short time and low state which we see to be allotted him in this world, it were neither difficult nor enough to reconcile the hypothesis with strict justice, which upon the ground of absolute dominion may do what it will with its own: but the ill accord it seems to have with so large and abounding goodness, renders it very unlike the dispensation of the blessed God; no enjoyment being in that case afforded to this sort of creatures, agreeable to their common nature and capacity, either in degree or continuance.

Not in *degree:* for who sees not, that the nature of man is capable of greater things than he here enjoys? And where that capacity is rescued from the corruption that narrows and debases it, how sensibly do holy souls resent and bewail their present state, as a state of imperfection! With how fervent and vehement desires and groans do they aspire and pant after a higher and more perfect! We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed,[f] (that is not enough, to be delivered out of the miseries of life, by laying down this passive part, is not that which will terminate their desires,) but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Theirs are not brutal groans, the complaint of oppressed sensitive nature under a present evil; but rational and spiritual, the expressions of desire strongly carried to pursue an apprehended suitable good. The truest notion we can yet have of the primitive nature and capacity of man, is by beholding it in its gradual restitution. And is it agreeable to the goodness of God, to put such a nature into any, and withhold the suitable object? As if it were a pleasure to him, to behold the work of his hands spending itself in weary strugglings towards him, and vexed all the while it continues in being, with the desire of what it shall never enjoy; and which he hath made it desire, and therein encouraged it to expect?

Nor in *continuance:* for I suppose it already evident, that the nature of man is capable (in respect of his principal part) of perpetuity, and so of enjoying a felicity hereafter that shall be permanent and know no end. And it seems no way congruous to so large goodness, to stifle a capacity whereof it was itself the author, and destroy its own work. For if the being of man is intended for so short a continuance, either he may have the knowledge of this determination concerning him, or not. If he cannot have the knowledge of it, why should any one say what they cannot know; or put such a thing upon God, that is so vilely reflecting and dishonourable to him? If he may have the knowledge of it, then doth he seem a creature made for torment, while by an easy reflection upon himself he may discern, he is not incapable of a perpetual state, and is yet brought forth into the light to be ere long extinguished and shut up in everlasting darkness. And who can think this a thing worthy of infinite and eternal goodness? Besides, (as hath been insisted before,) that this torture, proceeding from so sad an expectation, cannot but be most grievous and afflictive to the best. Whence the apostle tells us,[g] that Christians, if in this life only they had hope, were of all men most miserable: so that it were more desirable never to have been. If any yet fall hereafter into a state to which they would prefer perpetual annihilation, inasmuch, as it is wholly by their own default, it no way reflects upon Divine goodness. But it would be a dishonourable reflection rather upon that Author and Fountain of all goodness, if he should not express himself wise and just as well as good; as it would upon a man, especially a ruler over others, if that which we call good-nature were conjunct with stolidity, or an insensibleness of whatsoever affronts to his person and government. Upon the whole, therefore, it seems most repugnant to these great attributes of the Divine Being, to have made man only for this present state. That to think so, were to conceive unworthily of him, as if he had acted much beneath himself, and done a vain thing in making such a creature, no end being attainable by it, which we can suppose either his wisdom or goodness to aim at.

If any would imagine to themselves an expedient, by supposing an eternal succession of human generations, upon whom the wisdom and goodness of God might have a perpetual exercise in the government and sustentation of them for their appointed times: this would be far from satisfying as to either, but would rather increase the difficulty; for there would be the same temptation upon all the individuals, to contemn or regret the government of their Maker. So that he should hereby even eternize his own reproach; and should always, in every succession, have still the same craving appetites returning, and expectations never to be satisfied, which were as repugnant to all he hath discovered to us of his nature, as any thing we can suppose. Though some persons of a light and desultory humour, might imagine to themselves a pleasure in it, if they had the power to make such a rotation of things, rising and falling, coming and passing away, at their beck and command; and such as were of a sanguinary temper, might sport themselves in raising up and lopping off lives at pleasure with an arbitrary hand: yet sure they would never gain by it the esteem of being either wise or good; and would, 'tis like, in time grow weary of the sport. But to form to ourselves such ideas of the blessed God, were an injury not inferior to the very denial of his being.

His providence towards the inferior creatures hath no resemblance of any such thing; whom his bounty sustains agreeably to their natures, who have no foresight of their own cessation from being, to keep them in a continual death by the expectation of it; and who serve to valuable and reasonable purposes while they are continued; for they are useful, partly to the sustentation of man, and partly to his instruction, in order to his higher ends. And though each individual of them do not actually so, it is sufficient that the several kinds of them are naturally apt thereto, which are propagated according to a settled course and law of nature, in their individuals. And if all immediately serve not man, yet they do it mediately, in serving those that more immediately do. Besides, that when such a work was to be done, as the furnishing out and accomplishing this lower world; it was meet all things should be in number, weight, and measure, and correspond in every part. As if one build a house for entertainment, though the more noble rooms only do come in view, yet all the rest are made answerably decent, on supposition that they may. It was becoming the august and great Lord of this world, that it have in it, not only what may sustain the indigent, but gratify the contemplative by fresh variety; who would be apt to grow remiss by conversing only with what were of every day's observation. Nor was that a low end, when such contemplation hath so direct a tendency to raise a considering mind to the sight, and love, and praise of the Supreme Being, that hath stamped so lively signatures and prints of his own perfections upon all his works. If it be said, man might be in the same kind serviceable to the contemplation of angels, though he were himself never to

[d] Psal. cxix. 68. [e] Psal. xxxiii. 5.

[f] 2 Cor. v. 4. [g] 1 Cor. xv. 18.

know any other than this mortal state; 'tis true that he might so; but yet the incongruities were no way salved, of God's putting a capacity and expectation into his nature of a better state: of his dealing so hardly with them, that he hath procured to love him: of his never vindicating their high contempt that spent their days in rebellion against him. Besides, that these were ill precedents, and no pleasant themes for the view of an angelical mind. And if they see a nature extinct, capable of their state, what might they suspect of their own? So that, which way soever we turn our thoughts, we still see that man's mortality and liableness to an unavoidable death, abstracted from the thoughts of another state, carry that constant aspect, as if all men were made in vain.

What remains then, but that we conclude hence, we ought not too much, or too long, thus to abstract, nor too closely confine our eye to this dark and gloomy theme, death and the grave, or withhold it from looking further. For far be it from us to think the wise and Holy God hath given being to man (and consequently exereised a long continued series of providence through so many successive ages towards him) in vain. Nothing but a prospect of another state can solve the knot and work through the present difficulty, can give us a true account of man and what he was made for. Therefore since it would be profane and impious, sad and uncomfortable, a blasphemy to our Maker, a torture to ourselves, to speak it as our settled apprehension and judgment, that God hath made man to no purpose; we are obliged and concerned, both in justice to him and compassion to ourselves, so to represent the case, as that we may be able to remove so unworthy and black a thought to the greatest distance from us, both in itself and whatsoever practice would be consequent thereto: that is, to conclude, That certainly there must be another state after this, and accordingly steer our course.—The Improvement then of the foregoing discourse will have a double aspect:—on our judgments, and practice.

1. On our judgments. To settle this great principle of truth in them. The certain futurity of another state after this life is over, unto which this present state is only preparatory and introduetive. For whereas we can never give a rational account why such a creature as man was made, if we confine all our apprehensions concerning him to his present state on earth: let them once transcend those narrow limits, fly over into eternity, and behold him made for an everlasting state hereafter, and the difficulty now vanishes, the whole affair looks with a comely and befitting aspect.

For we may now represent the case thus to ourselves: that man was put into this terrestrial state and dwelling, by the wise and righteous designation of his great Creator and Lord, that his loyalty to him, amidst the temptations and enticements of sensible things, might be tried awhile: that revolting from him, he is only left to feel here the just smart of his causeless defection: that yet such further methods are used for his recovery, as are most suitable to his so impaired state. An allayed light shines to him in the midst of darkness, that his feebler eye may receive a gradual illumination, and behold God in those more obscure discoveries which he now vouchsafes of himself, till by degrees he be won to take up good thoughts of him, and return into an acquaintance and friendship with him; which once begun here, shall be hereafter perfected in eternal fruitions. The offence and wrong done to his Maker, he in a strange unthought-of way makes compensation of to himself; and testifies his reconcileableness, and persuades a reconciliation upon such terms, and by so endearing mediums, as might melt and mollify hearts of adamant; and shall effectually prevail with many to yield themselves the subjects and instances of his admired goodness for ever; while others lie only under the natural consequents and just resentments of their unremedied enmity and folly. So are the glorious issues of God's dispensation towards man, and the wise and merciful conduct of his equal government, worthily celebrated through the days of eternity with just acclamation and praises. We can fasten upon nothing exceptionable or unaccountable, yea, or that is not highly laudable and praise-worthy, in this course of procedure. Therefore, though now we behold a dark cloud of mortality hanging over the whole human race; though we see the grave still devouring and still unsatisfied, and that all are successively drawn down into it; and we puzzle ourselves to assign a reason why such a creature was made a reasonable being, capable of an everlasting duration, to visit the world only and vanish, to converse a short space with objects and affairs so far beneath it, and retire we know not whither: if yet our eye follow him through the dark paths of the region of death, till at the next appearance we behold him clothed with immortality and fitted to an endless state, the wonder is over, and our amusement quickly ceases.

Wherefore let us thus bethink ourselves, and consider: Surely he that made this great universe, and disposed all the sorts, stations, and motions of creatures in it in so exquisite order and method, cannot but be a most perfectly wise and intellectual agent, and therefore cannot be supposed to have done any thing to no purpose; much less when all the inferior ereatures have ends visibly answering the exigency of their natures, to have made so excellent a creature as man (the nobler part of his lower creation) in vain; that he only should be without his proportionable end, and after a short continuance in being, return to nothing, without leaving it conjecturable what he was made for. This were so intolerable an incongruity, and so unlike the footsteps that every where else appear in the Divine wisdom and goodness, that we cannot but inquire further into this matter, and conelude at last, that he was made for some higher purposes than are within the reach of our sight, and hath his principal part yet to act upon another stage, within the veil, that shall never be taken down. The future immortality of man seems therefore so certainly grounded upon what is discovered and generally acknowledged touching the nature of God and his most peculiar and essential perfections, that unless we were further put to prove the existence of a God, (which to them that are rational need not, and to them that are not were in vain,) there can no reasonable doubt remain concerning it.

2. Wherefore the further use we have to make of the matter proposed, is in reference to our practice: which it may fitly serve both to correct and reprove, and also to direct and guide.

1. It administers the ground of just *rebuke;* that since, if we terminate our thoughts and designs upon things only on this side the grave, it would seem we were wholly made in vain; and we do yet so generally employ our cares and endeavours about such things, and even the vilest and most despicable of these; and so live not to our own dishonour only, but to the reproach of our Maker, as if he made us for no more worthy ends. And let us bat impartially debate the matter with ourselves; Can we, in sober reason, think we were made only for such ends as the most only pursue? have we any pretence to think so? or can it enter into our souls to believe it? Would not men be ashamed to profess such a belief; or to have it written in their foreheads, these are the only ends they are capable of? Then might one read, such a man born to put others in mind of his predecessor's name, and only fest such a family should want an heir: such a one to consume such an estate, and devour the provenue of so many farms and manors: such a one to fill so many bags and coffers to sustain the riot of him that succeeds: some created to see and make sport; to run after hawks and dogs, or spend the time which their weariness redeems from converse with brutes, in making themselves such, by drinking away the little residue of wit and reason they have left; mixing with this genteel exercise, their impure and scurrilous drolleries, that they may befriend one another with the kind occasion of proving themselves to be yet of human race, by this only demonstration remaining to them, that they can laugh; which medium, if the wisdom of the just were known, would be found so pregnant as to afford them a double conclusion, and be as effectual, oftentimes, to prove them fools as men. Others one might read born to trouble the world, to disquiet the neighbourhood, and be the common plague of all about them; at least, if they have any within their reach and power that are wiser and more sober than themselves, or that value not their souls at so cheap a rate as they: others made to blaspheme their Maker, to rent the sacred name of God, and make proof of their high valour and the gallantry of their brave spirits,

by bidding a defiance to Heaven, and proclaiming their heroic contempt of the Deity and of all religion. As if they had persuaded themselves into an opinion, that because they have had so prosperous success in the high achievements of conquering their humanity, and baffling their own fear, and reason, and conscience, death also will yield them as easy a victory, or be afraid to encounter men of so redoubted courage; that the God of heaven, rather than offend them, will not stick to repeal his laws for their sakes, or never exact the observance of them from persons of their quality; that they shall never be called to judgment, or be complimented only there with great respect, as persons that bore much sway in their country, and could number so many hundreds or thousands a year; that at least, the infernal flames will never presume to touch so worthy personages; that devils will be awed by their greatness, and fear to seize them, lest they should take it for an affront. No conceit can be imputed to these men absurd enough to over-match the absurdity of their practice. They can themselves think nothing more gross and shameful than what they daily are not ashamed to act. For what absurdity can be compassed in a thought greater than what appears in a course of life managed in perpetual hostility to all principles of reason and humanity? And either they must own all the impious folly of such thoughts, or confess, upon other accounts, an equal infatuation in their thinking faculty itself. For either they think their course justifiable, or they do not. If they do, how fatally are all things inverted in their depraved minds! Wisdom and folly, virtue and vice, good and evil, seem to them transformed into one another, and are no longer to be known by their own names. The common notions of all mankind are but blind fancies in comparison of their later and clearer illumination: and the ancient religious sentiments of all former ages, dreams and follies to their admired new light. Their wise and rare discoveries, that they and all things came by chance, that this world hath no owner or Lord, (because they never had wit or patience to consider the nonsense of them; and though they never, any of them, had the luck to see one clod of earth, or grain of sand, start up into being out of nothing; much less ground to think, that such a world should of itself do so,) are reason enough with them, to mock at the Eternal Being, and attempt to jeer religion out of the world, and all other men out of their reason and wits, as they have themselves. And sure this must be their only pretence, and their atheism the best reason, upon which to justify their constant practice. For who can think (while he sees them not yet in chains) they should be so perfectly mad, as to acknowledge only such a Deity (the Author and Ruler of all things) whose favour were worth nothing, or to be procured by affronts; to whom contempt were a sacrifice, and the violation of whatsoever is sacred, the most effectual propitiation? or acknowledge him for a God, whom they hope to overpower, and to prosper in a war against him?

And if they acknowledge none at all, and this be the fundamental article of their creed, that there is indeed none: then can no man charge them with any thought more grossly foolish than their own; nor can they devise to say any thing, by which more certainly to argue themselves bereft of the common understanding of men. For who that is not so, if he only take notice of his own being, may not as certainly conclude the existence of a God, as that two and two make four? Or what imagination can be too absurd to have place in that mind, that can imagine this creation to be a casualty? He would be thought besides himself that should say the same of the composition of a clock or a watch, though it were a thousand times more supposable. But if they do not justify themselves, to what purpose is it further to press them with absurdities, that persist in constant self-contradiction; or that have not so much left them of rational sensation, as to feel in their own minds the pressure of the very greatest absurdity? If they only presume they do well, because they have never asked themselves the question, or spent any thoughts about it; this speaks as much a besotted mind as any of the rest, and is as unworthy of a reasonable creature. Why have they the power of thinking? Or who do in any case more generally incur the censure of imprudence and folly, than they who have only this plea for their actions, that they did not consider? Especially when the case is so plain, and the most sudden reflection would discover the iniquity and danger of their course. And one would think nothing should be more obvious, or more readily occur to the mind of a man, than to contemplate himself, and taking notice there is such a creature in the world, furnished with such abilities and powers to consider, what was I made for? what am I to pitch upon as my proper end? nor any thing appear more horrid to him, than to cross the very ends of his creation.

2. It may also be improved to the *directing* of our practice. For which purpose we may hence take this general rule, that it be such as becomes the expectation of a future state:—for what else is left us, since in our present state we behold nothing but vanity? We see thus stands our case, that we must measure ourselves by one of these apprehensions; either—we are made in vain, or—we are made for a future state. And can we endure to live according to the former, as if we were impertinencies in the creation, and had no proper business in it? What ingenuous person would not blush to be always in the posture of a useless hang-by; to be still hanging on, where he hath nothing to do; that if he be asked, Sir, what's your business here? he hath nothing to say. Or how can we bear it, to live as if we came into the world by chance, or rather by mistake, as though our creation had been a misadventure, a thing that would not have been done had it been better thought on? And that our Maker had overshot himself, and been guilty of an oversight in giving us such a being? Who, that hath either just value for himself, or any reverence for his Maker, could endure either to undergo the reproach, or be guilty of the blasphemy, which this would import? And who can acquit himself of the one or the other, that lives not in some measure agreeably to the expectation of somewhat beyond this present life? Let us, therefore, gird up the loins of our minds, and set our faces as persons designing for another world; so shaping our course, that all things may concur to signify to men the greatness of our expectations. We otherwise proclaim to the world (to our own and our Creator's wrong) that we have reasonable souls given us to no purpose. We are, therefore, concerned and obliged both to aim at that worthy end, and to discover and make it visible that we do so.

Nor is a design for an immortal state so mean and inglorious, or so irrational and void of a solid ground, that we have any cause either to decline or conceal it; either not to retain, or to be ashamed of our hope. Nor is there any thing to be done in prosecution of it, so unworthy as to need a corner, or merit to be done as a work of darkness. Neither yet is it a vain-glorious ostentation, or the affectation of making show of an excellency above the vulgar pitch, that I persuade to, but a modest sober avowing of our design and hope; neither making any near approach to a proud arrogance on the one hand, nor a mean pusillanimity on the other. Truly great and generous spirits know how to carry under secular honour with that prudent and graceful decorum, as shall signify a just owning of themselves without insolence towards others. Real worth, though it do not vaunt, will show itself; and while it doth not glare, yet cannot forbear to shine. We should endeavour the excellency of a spirit refined from earth and dross, and aspiring towards a state of immortality, may express itself, and shine in its native lustre; with its *own*, not with *borrowed* beams; with a constant, even, natural, not with an unequal, artificial light; that all that will may see, by the steady tendency of our course, that we are aiming at the great things of another world; though we all the while are not so much solicitous to have our end and purpose known, as to obtain it.

And verily, since the vile sons of the earth, the men of sense, that aim at no other end than to gratify their brutal appetite with such pleasure as is only to be compassed within a short life's time in this world, and who live to the reproach of their Maker and of mankind; do not go about to hide the infamy of their low design, or conceal the degenerous baseness of their mean spirits; but while they make their belly their God, and only mind earthly things, do also glory in their shame; how much were it beneath the state and spirit of the sons of God, that are worthily

designing for a glorious immortality, to be ashamed of their glory, or think of stealing a passage to heaven in the dark! No: let them know, it is not only too mean a thing for them to involve themselves in the common spirit of the sensual world, but even to seem to do so: and that this is so foul and ignominious a thing, as whereof they are concerned, not to be free from the guilt only, but the suspicion. Those worthy souls that in former and darker days were engaged in seeking the heavenly country, thought it became them to confess themselves pilgrims and strangers on the earth; and therein to declare plainly, that they were seeking that better country. Which confession and plain declaration we need not understand to be merely verbal, but practical and real also; such as might be understood to be the language of their lives, and of a constant uniform course of actions agreeable to such a design.

Let us, therefore, bethink ourselves, what temper of mind and manner of life may be most conformable to this design, and best become persons pretending to it; whereupon we should soon find our own thoughts instructing us, that such things as these would be most becoming and fit in reference thereto; and which we may therefore take as so many particular directions how to govern our spirits, and behave ourselves answerable to so great an expectation.

1. That we endeavour for a calm indifferency and dispassionate temper of mind towards the various objects and affairs that belong to this present life. They are very narrow limits already set, by the nature of the things themselves, to all the real objective value that such things have in them; and it is the part of wisdom and justice to set the proportionable bounds to all the thoughts, cares, and passions we will suffer to stir in our minds in reference to them. Nothing is a more evident acknowledged character of a fool, than upon every slight occasion to be in a transport. To be much taken with empty things betokens an empty spirit. It is a part of manly fortitude to have a soul so fenced against foreign impressions, as little to be moved with things that have little in them: to keep our passions under a strict and steady command, that they be easily retractable and taught to obey; not to move till severe reason have audited the matter, and pronounced the occasion just and valuable. In which case the same manly temper will not refuse to admit a proportionable stamp and impress from the occurring object. For it is equally a prevarication from true manhood to be moved with every thing and with nothing: the former would speak a man's spirit a feather, the latter a stone. A total apathy and insensibleness of external occurrents hath been the aim of some, but never the attainment of the highest pretenders. And if it had, yet ought it not to have been their boast; as upon sober thoughts it cannot be reckoned a perfection. But it should be endeavoured, that the passions which are not to be rooted up, (because they are of nature's planting,) be yet so discreetly checked and depressed, that they grow not to that enormous tallness as to overtop a man's intellectual power, and cast a dark shadow over his soul. A rational authority must be maintained, a continency and dominion of one's self, that there be not an impotent profusion, and we be never so affected with any thing, but that the object may still be able to warrant and justify the affection, both for the nature and degree of it. Which rule, if we strictly observe and apply it to the present case, we shall rarely meet with any temporal concern that ought to move us much; both for the littleness of such things themselves, and that we have so unspeakably greater things in our view and design.

In conformity therefore to our so great expectation, we ought more particularly to watch and repress our inclinations, appetites, and affections towards each several sort and kind of objects, which time and this present state hath within the confines of it. As, how contemptuously should we look upon that empty vanity of being rich? How coldly and carelessly should we pursue, how unconcernedly should we lose, any thing that might entitle us to that name! The pursuit of so despicable a trifle, with violent and peremptory desire, so as hereby to suffer a diversion from our design for another world, as to make our eternal hope less than nothing (for to any man's calm and sober thoughts, this will be found as little;) and so will amount to a total quitting of all our pretensions to a better, future state; that is, when so we indulge this odd irrational, this wildly fanciful, and purely humoursome appetite, (of which no man can give any tolerable account,) that it becomes ravenous, when it devours a man's time, his thoughts, the strength and vigour of his spirit, swallows up his nobler designs, and makes an idle doting about he knows not what, or why, his main business. Especially when conscience itself becomes a sacrifice to this impure unhallowed idol; and the question is wholly waived, "is this thing just and honest?" and nothing is considered, but that it is commodious and gainful. Yet, (if herein we will take upon us to pass a judgment upon other men,) it will be no way ingenuous or just, that in smaller and disputable matters, we make our own apprehensions a measure and standard to them. They are commonly aptest to do so, who have least studied the matter, and have nothing but their ignorant confidence to entitle them to the dictator's chair; where, however, having placed themselves, they liberally bestow their censures and reproaches on all that think it not fit to throw away their own eyes, and see with their bad ones; and conclude them to have no conscience, who go not according to theirs; and that they cannot but have some base design, who in any thing presume to swerve from their judgment, especially if the advantage, in any temporal respect, happen to lie on that side from which they dissent.

Nothing can indeed so comport with the spirit and design of one who believes himself made for another world, as a brave and generous disdain of stooping to the lure of present emolument, so as thereby to be drawn into any the least thing which he judges not defensible by the severest rules of reason and religion; which were to quit a serene heaven for mire and dirt. There is nothing in this world of that value, or worthy to be bought so dear, as with the loss and forfeiture of the rest and repose of a mind, quiet, benign, peaceful, and well pleased with itself. It is enough, if one find himself, by difficulties which he cannot master, constrained to dissent from persons above exception wise and pious, placidly, and without unbecoming confidence, to go on in the way which his present judgment allows, carrying with him a modest sense of human infirmity, and how possible it is, the error may lie on his own part; having yet to relieve him against that supposition, the clearness of his own spirit, the conscience of his innocency of any ill disposition or design, of his instructibleness and preparedness to admit a conviction if he err. And be he never so fully persuaded about the thing in difference, yet to consider the smallness of it, and how little cause he hath of glorying, if he know in this matter more than others, who possibly know ten times more than he, in far greater and more important matters. But, in matters clearly determined by common agreed principles, to prevaricate out of an indulgence to mere appetite, to give up oneself to practices apparently immoral and flagitious, only to comply with, and lest he should not satisfy, sensual desires, is the character of one who hath abandoned the common hope of all good men; and who, that he may have his lot with beasts in this world, dreads not to have it with devils in the other. And it is upon the same ground, equally unbecoming them that pretend to this hope, to be visibly concerned and discomposed for losses and disappointments they may meet with in this kind, when unexpected events withstand their having much of this world, or deprive them of what they have. It becomes them that reckon their good things are to come hereafter, to show by their equal deportment and cheerful aspect in any such case, that they apprehend not themselves touched in their most considerable interests. Yea, though they suffer not losses only, but injuries; and besides that they are damnified, (as much as such things can signify,) they find themselves wronged; and though further trouble and danger threaten them in the same kind, they should evidence how much it is above the power either of chance or malice, not only to make them miserable, but even to disturb or make them sad; that they are not happy by a casualty; and that their happiness is not in the command of them who cannot command their own; that it only depends on the inward constitution and frame of their own

h Heb. xi.

spirits, attempered to the blessed objects of the invisible world, whereby they have the assurance of enjoying them fully hereafter, and the present grateful relishes thereof in the meantime. And hence, that they can be happy without the world's kindness, and in despite of its unkindness; that they have somewhat within them, by which they are enabled to rejoice in tribulation; being troubled on every side, yet not to be distressed; to "take joyfully the spoiling of goods, knowing within themselves they have in heaven a better and enduring substance;" not to suffer or discover any perturbation or disquiet; not to have their souls ruffled, or put into disorder; nor let any cloud sit on their brow, though dark and dismal ones seem to hang over their heads.

And the same absurdity it would be to indulge to themselves an unbounded liberty of sensual pleasures. For that looks like a despair of futurity; as if a day were a mighty gain for eating and drinking, because to-morrow we must die. An abstemious shyness here is comely; a tasting only the delights, whereof others suffer themselves to be ingulfed; a prudent reservedness and restraint, so as that what shall cause with others an unbeseeming transport and diffusion of themselves, be entertained not with a cynical morosity, but a pleasant composure and well-ordered complacence; keeping a due and even distance between levity and sourness. Yet there is a natural retiredness in some men's tempers; and in others an aversion to pleasures, proceeding only of a rational estimate of their emptiness and vanity in themselves; which may, however, much fall short of what the present case requires; the exigency whereof is no way satisfied, but where such a moderation is the product of a comparative judgment between the delights of the present and those of the future state; when one so enjoys any thing in this world, as to be under the power of nothing because of the more prevailing influence he is under from the power of the world to come; when his faith is the parent of his sobriety, and his denial of worldly lusts flows from the expectation of the blessed hope; when, because he more highly prizes, and lest he forfeit, eternal pleasures, he so behaves himself towards all temporary ones, as neither to abuse those that are lawful, nor to be abused by the unlawful; not to exceed in the one, nor to touch with the other.

Thus also ought we to look upon secular honours and dignity; neither to make them the matter of our admiration, affectation, or envy. We are not to behold them with a libidinous eye, or let our hearts thirst after them; not to value ourselves the more for them, if they be our lot, nor let our eye be dazzled with admiration, or distorted with envy, when we behold them the ornaments of others. We are not to express that contempt of them, which may make a breach on civility, or disturb the order and policy of the communities whereto we belong. Though this be none of our own country, and we are still to reckon ourselves but as pilgrims and strangers while we are here; yet it becomes not strangers to be insolent or rude in their behaviour, where they sojourn, how much soever greater value they may justly have of their own country. We should pay to secular greatness a due respect, without idolatry, and neither despise nor adore it; considering, at once, the requisiteness of such a thing in the present state, and the excelling glory of the other. As though in prudence and good manners we would abstain from provoking affronts towards an American sachem, or sagamore, if we did travel or converse in their country; yet we could have no great veneration for them, having beheld the royal pomp and grandeur of our own prince; especially he who were himself a courtier and favourite to his much more glorious sovereign, whom he is shortly to attend at home, could have no great temptation to sue for offices and honours, or bear a very profound intrinsic homage, to so mean and unexpressive an image of regality.

It can surely no way become one who seeks and expects the honour and glory which is conjunct with immortality, to be fond of the airy titles that poor mortals are wont to please themselves with; or to make one among the obsequious servile company of them whose business it is to court a vanishing shadow, and tempt a dignified trifle into the belief it is a deity: to sneak and cringe for a smile from a supercilious brow, and place his heaven in the disdainful favors of him, who, it may be, places his own as much in thy homage, so that it befalls into the supplicant's power to be his creator, whose creature he affects to be. What eye would not soon spy out the grossness of this absurdity? And what ingenuity would not blush to be guilty of it? Let then the joyful expectants of a blessed immortality pass by the busy throng of this fanciful exchange; and behold it with as little concern, as a grave statesman would the sports and ludicrous actions of little children; and with as little inclination of mind, as he would have to leave his business and go play with them; bestowing there only the transient glance of a careless or a compassionate eye, and still reserving their intent steady views for the glorious hope set before them. And with a proportionable unconcernedness should they look on, and behold the varied alterations of political affairs, no further minding either the constitution or administration of government, than as the interest of the universal Ruler, the weal and safety of their prince or country, are concerned in them. But how many under the specious pretence of a public spirit, make it their whole business to inspect and pry into these affairs, even with a most meanly private and interested one; watching over the public beyond the bounds of their own calling; and with no other design, than to catch at an opportunity of serving their own turns! How many that stand perpetually at a gaze, in a suspenseful expectation how things will go; either joying or hoping to behold any favourable prognostics to the party whereto they have thought fit to addict themselves! glad or desirous to see it engross power, and grasp the sum of things, not from any sense of duties towards God's vicegerents, not from love of justice or study of public advantage, but that the happier lot may befall or remain to themselves. These men are absorbed, and swallowed up by the spirit of this world, contempered only to this sublunary region, concorporate with the earth, so as to partake in all its pangs, and paroxysms, and tremulous motions. By the beating of their pulse you may know the state of things in this lower world, as if they were of the same piece, and had but one soul with it. Let them see times and a state of things on earth suitable to their genius, and you put a new life and soul into them. Reduce them to a despair here, and (so little communion have they with the affairs of that other country) the most specious inviting representation that can be made to them of the world to come hinders not, but their hearts languish and die, and become as stones within them.

But that lofty soul that bears about with it the living apprehensions of its being made for an everlasting state, so earnestly intends it, that it shall ever be a descent and vouchsafement with it, if it allow itself to take notice what busy mortals are doing in their (as they reckon them) grand negociations here below. And if there be a suspicion of an aptness or inclination to intermeddle in them to their prejudice to whom that part belongs, can heartily say to it, (as the philosopher to the jealous tyrant,) We of this academy are not at leisure to mind so mean things; we have somewhat else to do than to talk of you. He hath still the image before his eye, of this world vanishing and passing away; of the other, with the everlasting affairs and concernments of it, even now ready to take place and fill up all the stage: and can represent to himself the vision (not from a melancholic fancy or crazed brain, but a rational faith and a sober well instructed mind) of the world dissolving, monarchies and kingdoms breaking up, thrones tumbling, crowns and sceptres lying as neglected things. He hath a telescope through which he can behold the glorious appearance of the Supreme Judge; the solemn state of his majestic person; the splendid pomp of his magnificent and vastly numerous retinue; the obsequious throng of glorious celestial creatures, doing homage to their eternal King; the swift flight of his royal guards, sent forth into the four winds to gather the elect, and covering the face of the heavens with their spreading wings; the universal silent attention of all to that loud sounding trumpet that shakes the pillars of the world, pierces the inward caverns of the earth, and resounds from every part of the encircling heavens; the many myriads of

[1] Rom. ii. 7.

joyful expectants arising, changing, putting on glory, taking wing, and contending upwards, to join themselves to the triumphant heavenly host: the judgment set; the books opened; the frightful amazed looks of surprised wretches; the equal administration of the final judgment; the adjudication of all to their eternal states; the heavens rolled up as a scroll; the earth and all things therein consumed and burnt up.

And now, what spirit is there any more left in him towards the trivial affairs of a vanishing world? How indifferent a thing is it with him who bears himself highest in a state of things whereof he foresees the certain hastening end! Though he will not neglect the duty of his own place, is heartily concerned to have the knowledge and fear of God more generally obtained in this apostate world, and is ready to contribute his utmost regular endeavours for the preservation of common peace and order in subserviency hereto; yet abstractedly from these considerations, and such as have been before mentioned, he is no more concerned who is uppermost, than one would, passing by a swarm of flies, which hath the longest wings, or which excels the rest in sprightliness or briskness of motion. And for himself, he can insert this amongst his most serious thanksgivings, that while the care is incumbent on others, of watching over the public peace and safety, he may sit still and converse with God and his own more sedate thoughts. How secure is he in this, that infinite wisdom governs the world! that all things shall be disposed the best way, to the best and most valuable ends! that an afflicted state shall never befall unto good men, but when it is fittest and most conducible it should do so! that the prosperity carnal appetite covets, is never denied them, but when it would be pernicious! How calm is he in the midst of external troubles! how placid and serene a spirit inhabits his peaceful breast! When all things are shaken round about him, he is not shaken. He bears all sorts of troubles, but creates none to others, nor is disturbed by any himself. But they that delight to see this world rolling or fixed, as they most serve their private purposes, and have a perpetual quarrel with it, while it looks not kindly upon them; their life is bound up in it, and their pretences to another are but the languid, faint notions of what they never heartily believe nor desire. Upon the whole matter; nothing is more agreeable to this great expectation, than a steady restraint and moderation of our passions towards things without us; that is, all the several sorts of external objects and affairs, that so variously invite and tempt our observation and regard in this our present state.

2. I next add: a further congruity, if we pretend to this expectation, is, that we be not over-much taken up in minding the body. For this looks like a design (or that inconsistent wish) to have our present state perpetuated; and that the thoughts are remote from us of a change for a better. As if notwithstanding all that the Divine goodness hath promised concerning the future inheritance of the free and heaven-born seed, this did still lie nearest to our hearts, O that Ishmael might live in thy sight! And that the belief did miserably languish with us, of any better portion than what our eyes do already behold; together with the apprehension of a spiritual being in us, to be ripened into a complete and actual capacity of enjoying what is better. It is true, that all the exorbitant working of those meaner and ignoble passions that are moved by objects and occasions without and foreign to us, have the body for their first and last, their spring and source, their centre and end. But thence it becomes the more proper and requisite, that we draw nearer this their seat and centre, and strike at the root; and in killing that inordinate love and solicitude for the body, mortify them all at once. We are indeed so far to comply with the pleasure of our Maker, as not to despise the mean abode which he hath assigned us for awhile in the body. But withal, to take heed lest we so cross and resist it, as to make caring for the body our whole business; which he hath only enjoined us in subserviency to an unspeakably greater and more important business. Its health and welfare ought upon very valuable accounts to be carefully preserved by all prudent means; but to indulge its slothful desires, and comply with its licentious wild cravings, is far beneath us, a base unmanning of ourselves, and would signify, as if so absurd a conceit had passed with us into a settled judgment, that a reasonable immortal spirit was created only to tend and serve a brute. It is monstrous to behold, with how common consent multitudes that professedly agree in the belief of the immortal nature of their souls, do yet agree to debase and enslave them to the meanest servility to their mortal bodies; so as these are permitted to give laws to them, to prescribe them rules of living, and what their daily employment shall be. For observe the designs they drive, and what is the tendency of their actions and affairs, (whence the judgment is to be made concerning their inward thoughts, deliberations, and resolves,) and is not the body the measure and mark of them all? What import or signification is there in this course, of a design for futurity? And (which increases the folly of it to a wonder) they can make a shift to go on thus from year to year, and take no notice, of the absurdity! They agree to justify each one himself, and one another. The commonness of the course takes away all sense of the horrid madness of it. And because each doth as the rest do, they seem to imagine they all do well, and that there is nothing exceptionable in the case; and go on, as the silly sheep,[k] *not the way they ought, but which they see others go before them.*

But, if any place could be found for calm and sober thoughts, what would be reckoned a greater impertinency, than to be at so great pains for maintaining a bodily life, without considering what that life shall serve for? to employ our utmost care to live, but to live for we know not what? It becomes us to be patient of the body, not fond: to treat and use our bodies as things shortly to be put off and laid aside: to care for them, not for their own, but the work's sake we have to do in them, and leave it to them to indulge and pamper the body, who expect never to live out of it: not to concern ourselves, that the circumstances of our bodily state be such as will gratify our appetites, but answer the ends for which our Maker thought fit we should live awhile in the body: reckoning with ourselves, we are lodged in these mean receptacles (though somewhat commodiously, yet) but for a little while, and for great purposes; and more minding our journey and home, than our entertainment in our inn: contentedly bearing the want of bodily accommodations that are not easily to be compassed, and the pressure of unavoidable bodily infirmities; not much pitying ourselves because of them; nor deeply regretting it, if wants and pains pinch our flesh; nay, though we see the outward man perishing, so we can but find the inward renewing day by day.

3. That we set ourselves with the whole intention of our souls, to mind the concernments of the future state, the invisible things of the other world; and direct the main stream of our thoughts, desires, hopes, and joys, thitherward. For how highly justifiable and becoming is it, that we principally mind the state and things we are made for? We should therefore make these familiar to ourselves, and use our spirits to those more noble and pleasant themes: recounting often, how unworthy it is of them to grovel in the dust, or choose the objects of their converse by such measures only as are taken from sense. It is an iniquity which, though God may be so gracious to us as to forgive, we should not easily forgive to ourselves, that we have so often chosen to converse with empty trifles, while so great things have invited our thoughts in vain. Their remoteness from sense hath little of excuse in it, and unworthy a reasonable creature. Methinks they should be ashamed to allege it, who consider themselves furnished with an intellectual power, that doth, in many other instances, control the judgment of sense, and impeach it of falsehood. Would we not blush to profess it for a principle, that there is nothing real that exceeds the sphere of our sense? We would reckon it a part of modesty not to ascribe too much to our own understandings, or presume too far upon our intellectual ability, against the judgment of sage and knowing persons. How is it then, that we think it not immodest, to oppose the apprehensions of our dull and incapacious sense to the common faith and reason of all good and wise men that are or have been in

[k] Non qua eundum est sed qua itur. Sen.

the world, as well as our own? If we have not seen what the state of things is in the other world, are we not told? and have we not enough to assure us, that, 'tis he hath told us, whose nature cannot suffer him to impose upon us, or represent things otherwise than they are? Who else can be the author of so common a persuasion? If any man had been the first inventor of the opinion,—that there is another state of things to succeed to this, would he not have assumed it to himself, that he was so? would he not have owned it, and gloried in it? Or would not some or other of his proselyted disciples have preserved his name and memory, and transmitted them to posterity? Could so vast a sect be without a head or master, known and celebrated among men?

Less plausible opinions find some owners; why is it not said, who was the first broacher of this? And if he can find no other parent for it, but he who was the Parent of our beings, how grateful should such a discovery be to us, both for his sake and its own? Upon his account, we should surely think it worthy to be believed; and upon its own, to be considered and seriously thought on, with greatest delight and sense of pleasure.

Many things that we reckon considerable upon much lower accounts, we so believe, as to let them engage our hearts, and influence our practice, upon much lower evidence. How entirely are men's spirits taken up many times about meaner matters, whereof they have only a (much more uncertain and fallible) report from one another? What pretence can we have, less to regard the testimony of him that made us, discovering to us things so great, so important, so rational in themselves, even though they had not been so expressly revealed? Let us therefore drive the matter to a clear and short issue, and come to a resolution with ourselves, Have we reason to believe such things, or no? If we can so far impose upon ourselves, as to think we have not; or be tempted into so abject, so unrequired, and so unwarrantable a self-denial, so base an esteem of our own beings, as to account the things of this earth and present world have enough in them to answer any ends we can suppose ourselves made for; let us no longer mock the world, by pretending to believe what we believe not. But if this be our settled judgment, and we will avow and own it, that we believe these things; let us no longer expose and make ourselves ridiculous, by counteracting our own professed belief in matters of such moment, pretending to believe and disregarding them at the same time. 'Tis absurd and foolish, to believe such things, and not mind them much, or not let our souls and our practice be commanded and governed by them: not to have our desires, and cares, and hopes, and joys, influenced thereby to the uttermost. How rational is it, here to be deeply solicitous, that by the unsuitableness of our own spirits we defeat not our own expectations! How pleasant and delectable (that danger being provided against) to sit down and compare our present with our expected state, what we are, with what we hope to be ere long! to think of exchanging shortly, infirmity, pollution, darkness, deformity, trouble, complaint; for power, purity, light, beauty, rest, and praise! How pleasant, if our spirits be fitted to that state! The endeavour whereof is a further congruity in the present case, *viz.*

4. That we make it our principal business to intend our spirits, to adorn and cultivate our inward man. What can more become us, if we reckon we have somewhat about us made for immortality, than to bestow our chief care upon that immortal part? Therefore, to neglect our spirits, confessedly capable of so high an estate, to let them languish under wasting distempers, or lie as the sluggard's field, overgrown with thorns and briers, is as vile a slur as we can put upon ourselves and our own profession. We should therefore make this the matter of our earnest study. What would be the proper improvements and ornaments of our spirits, and will most fitly qualify them for the state we are going into; and of our daily observation how such things thrive and grow in us. Especially, we should not be satisfied, till we find in ourselves a refinedness from this earth, a thorough purgation from all undue degrees of sensual inclination and affection, the consumption of our dross by a sacred fire from heaven, a spirit of judgment and of burning, an aptitude to spiritual exercises and enjoyments, high complacency in God, fervent love, a worshipping posture of soul, formed to the veneration of the eternal wisdom, goodness, power, holiness; profound humility and abnegation of ourselves, a praiseful frame of spirit, much used to gratulations and thanksgivings, a large and universal love, imitating as much as is possible the divine, a proneness to do good to all, a steady composure and serene temper of spirit, the repose and rest of a contented mind, not boisterous, nor apt unto disquiet, or to create storms to ourselves or the world, every way suitable to the blissful regions, where nothing but perfect purity, entire devotedness to God, love, goodness, benignity, well-pleasedness, order, and peace, shall have place for ever.

This we ought to be constantly intent upon, as the business of our lives, our daily work, to get our spirits so attempered and fitted to heaven, that if we be asked, What design we drive? What are we doing? we may be able to make this true answer, We are dressing ourselves for eternity. And since nothing is required hereto, that is simply impossible, nothing but what is agreeable to our natures, and would be a perfection to them: how worthy and commendable an ambition were it, to be always aspiring! not to rest or take up beneath the highest pitch of attainable excellency in these kinds! reckoning every degree thereof a due to our natures, and that they have not what belongs to them, while any thing of real intrinsic moral goodness is yet wanting; and not only due but necessary, and what we shall have need of in reference to the state we are shortly to enter upon; that except such things be in us, and abound, we cannot have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom. And should we, pretending to such an expectation, omit such endeavours of preparing ourselves, it were a like thing as if an unbred peasant should go about to thrust himself, with an expectation of high honours and preferments, into the prince's court; or as if a distracted man should expect to be employed in the greatest and most intricate affairs of state; or an uninstructed idiot take upon him to profess and teach philosophy.

Therefore let us consider: Are we conscious of no unfitness for that blessed state? to dwell in the presence of the holy God? to be associated with the heavenly assembly of pure intellectual spirits? to consort and join with them in their celebrations and triumphant songs? Can we espy no such thing in ourselves, as an earthly mind, aversation to God, as pride, disdain, wrath, or envy, admiration of ourselves, aptness to seek our own things with the neglect of others, or the like? And do not our hearts then misgive, and tell us we are unready, not yet prepared to approach the Divine presence, or to enter into the habitation of his holiness and glory? And what then have we to do, but set ourselves to our preparatory works; to set our watches, make our observations, take strict notice of all the deflections and obliquities of our spirits, settle our methods, hasten a redress? Do not we know this is the time and state of preparation? And since we know it, how would the folly torture us by reflection, of having betrayed ourselves to a surprisal! None are ever wont to enter upon any new state without some foregoing preparation. Every more remarkable turn or change in our lives, is commonly (if at all foreknown) introduced by many serious forethoughts. If a man be to change his dwelling, employment, condition, common discretion will put him thinking how to comport with the place, business, converse, and way of living he is next to betake himself to. And his thoughts will be the more intense, by how much more momentous the change. If he be to leave his country, with no probability of returning; if he be designed to a station, the circumstances whereof carry any thing of awfulness in them; if to public business; if on court attendances; with what solemnity and address are such things undertaken! How loth and ashamed would one be to go into such a condition, being totally unapt, not at all knowing how to behave himself in it! But what so great change as this can the nature of man admit, that a soul long shut up in flesh, is now to go forth from its earthly mansion, and return no more; expecting to be received into the glorious presence of the Eternal King, and go act its part among the perfected spirits that attend his

throne! How solicitous endeavour of a very thorough preparation doth this case call for! But how ill doth the common course of men agree to this, who never have such matters in their thoughts, who so much neglect not their very hogs as they do their spirits!

5. That we have much conversation with God. He is the only full and permanent good; therefore the endeavour of becoming very inward with him, doth best agree with the expectation of a state perfectly good and happy. To expect this, and converse only with shadows and vanishing things, is to expect to be happy without happiness; or that our happiness should betide us as a casual thing, or be forced upon us at last whether we will or no. But since our happiness in God is on his part not necessary, but vouchsafed and gratuitous, depending on mere good pleasure; is it our best way of ingratiating ourselves with him, to neglect him and live as without him in the world; to keep ourselves strangers to him all our days, with a purpose only of flying to him at last, when all things else that were wont to please us are vanished and gone? And if we could suppose his wisdom and justice to admit his forgiving so provoking contempt of him, and receiving an exiled soul forced out of its earthly abode, that to the last moment of it would never look after him, or have to do with him; yet, can it be supposed that his own habitual aversation to him could allow it to be happy in him? Especially being increased and confirmed by its consciousness and sense of guilt? How can these but make it banish itself, and in a sullen enmity and despair perpetually flee the Divine presence? What can in this case be more natural to it, than to give up itself to eternal solitary wanderings, as a fugitive from God; to affect to be ever inwrapt in its own darkness, and hidden from his sight, and be an everlasting tormentor to itself? Can we be happy in him whom we do not love? or love whom we will not know, or be acquainted with?

What sure ground of hope can we imagine to ourselves, that our reconciliation and acquaintance with God shall ever be brought about, if it be not done while we are here in the body? Will we be so vain as to cherish a hope that not only affronts the visible import of God's revelation, but the very reason of things, and the natural tendency of our own spirits? Nor indeed (if we would consider better) can we possibly hope for what we desire not, or whereto our hearts are in an habitual disaffection, otherwise than (in the present case) negatively, and that our infidelity permits us not to fear the contrary. Yea, and the lively hope of a blessedness in God, as it includes desire, would certainly infer that purity (the image of his own) that could never fail to incline our hearts to him, and which would habituate us to a course of walking with him in inward communion. And this were comely and agreeable to our pretences, if while we profess ourselves made for another state, we retire ourselves from the fading things that put a vanity into this, and single out, by our own choice, the stable good which we expect ever to enjoy. How befitting is it, to pass by all things with neglect, and betake ourselves hither with this sense! "Lord, I have viewed the world over, in which thou hast set me; I have tried how this and that thing will fit my spirit and the design of my creation; and can find nothing in which to rest, for nothing here doth itself rest, but such things as please me for awhile, in some degree, vanish and flee as shadows from before me. Lo, I come to thee, the eternal Being, the Spring of life, the Centre of rest, the Stay of the creation, the Fulness of all things! I join myself to thee, with thee I will lead my life and spend my days, with whom I am to dwell for ever, expecting when my little time is over to be taken up ere long into thy eternity."

And since we who live under the Gospel, have heard of the Redeemer, of the dignity of his person, of his high office and power, of his merciful design and great achievements for the restoring of lapsed and lost souls.

6. It is most agreeable to our apprehensions of the vanity of this present state, and our expectations for the future, that we commit ourselves to him: that with entire trust and love, devotedness and subjection, we give ourselves up to his happy conduct, to be led by him to God, and instated into that eternal blessedness which we look for. His kingdom is not of this world; as we profess not to be. We cannot be innocently ignorant, that its constitution and frame, its laws and ordinances, its aspect and tendency in itself, and the whole course of its administration, are directed to that other state. "He hath overcome death, and him that had the power of it; hath brought life and immortality to light; is the first-begotten from the dead, and the first-fruits of them that slept; hath opened heaven to us, and is himself ascended and entered as our victorious, triumphant Captain and Forerunner. He is adorned with highest power, and hath set up a universal kingdom, extended to the utmost bounds of this apostate world, and the vaster regions of innocent and constantly loyal spirits. His proclamations are issued out, his ensigns displayed, to invite and call in whosoever are weary of the sin and vanity of this wretched world, of their alienation from the life of God, of living in the midst of death; to join themselves to him, the Prince and Lord of life, and be led by him to the immortal state. If the present state of things appear dismal to us; if we reckon it a woful spectacle to behold sin and death reigning, wickedness and immorality acting their combined parts, to waste the world and lay it desolate; if we would deliver ourselves and escape from the common ruin, are seriously designing for heaven, and that world in which death hath no place, nor any shadow of death; let us betake ourselves to him, enroll our names, put ourselves under his banners and discipline, strictly observing the laws and following the guidance of that our invisible Lord, who will be Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him, and save to the utmost all that come to God through him. How dear should he be to us! How cheerfully should we trust him, how dutifully serve him, how faithfully adhere to him, both for his own sake, and that of the design he hath in hand for us, and the pleasant savour of heaven and immortality which breathes in both! But if we neglect him, and disown our relation to him; or if we let days or years go over our heads, wherein we drowsily slumber; roll ourselves in the dust of the earth; and while we call ourselves Christians, forget the reason and importance of our own name, and think not of our being under his call and conduct to the eternal kingdom and glory: this is perversely to reject what we say (only) we seek; to disclaim and renounce our pretences to immortality; to blast and damn our own great hopes.

7. Lastly, It is congruous to our expectation of so great things after death, that we live in a cheerful, pleasant expectation of it. For what must necessarily intervene, though not grateful in itself, should be reckoned so, for the sake of that which is. This only can upon the best terms reconcile us to the grave, that our greatest hopes lie beyond it; and are not hazarded by it, but accomplished. Although, indeed, nothing were to be expected hereafter; yet so little suitable entertainment doth this world afford to a reasonable spirit, that the mere weariness of beholding a scene of vanity and folly, might well make a recess acceptable. For is it so grateful a thing to observe the confused scramble and hurry of the world? how almost every one makes it his business to catch from another what is worth nothing? With what toil, and art, and violence men pursue, what when they embrace they find a shadow! To see deluded mortals, each one intent upon his own particular design, and most commonly interfering with another's: some imposed upon by others' over-reaching wit, and all by their own folly: some lamenting their losses, others their short and unsatisfying acquisitions: many pleasing themselves with being mocked, and contentedly hugging the empty cloud, till death comes and ends the story, and ceases the busy agitation; that is, with so many particular persons, not with the world: a new succession still springing up, that continue the interlude, and *still act over the same parts, ad tædium usque!*

What serious person, who that is not in love with impertinency and foolery, would much regret it, to close his eyes, to have the curtains drawn, and bid good-night to the world without ever wishing to see the morning of such another day? And even they that have the world most in their power, and can command what they please for the gratifying of their appetites, without the contradiction and control of others, what can they enjoy more to-morrow than

they did yesterday; or the next year than this? Is it so much worth the while to live, to see a few more persons bow the knee? to extend power a little further? to make another essay, what pleasure sense can taste in some or other hitherto unexperimented rarity? What more peculiar gusto this or that thing will afford; and try the other dish? or to renew the same relishes over again? He whose creative fancy could make him golden mountains in a dream, create him a prince of nations, give him to enjoy the most delicious pleasures of the world in idea, might, with some plausible show of reason, be deemed the happier man, than he that hath and is all this indeed: for his toil is less, and his victories unbloody, his pleasures not so impure. However, one would think, that to such whose utmost attainments end only in the pleasnre of their sense, and have bnt this epiphonema, "Now let us sit down, eat, drink, and be merry." A little time might snffice for business of no more weight; and that no man, after he hath once seen the course of the world and tasted of its best delicacies, should greatly wish for a renewal or long-continued repetition of so fulsome vanities.

But the most find not the world so kind, and are not so much exercised in the innovating of pleasures as miseries; (changes being their only remedies, as the moralist speaks;) or in bearing (more sadly) the same every day's burden; and drawing out the series of their calamities in the same kind through the whole course of their time. And surely, these things considered, there wants not what might persuade a sceptic, or even a perfect infidel, as to another world, not much to be in love with this. For upon the whole, let bnt the case be thus put; is it not as good to do nothing, as to be busy to no purpose? And again, is it not as good to be nothing, as to be, and do nothing? Sober reason would judge, at least, there were but little odds. Bnt now; if such considerations as have been mentioned, would snffice to state the matter in *æquilibrio*, to make the scales even; ought the rational sober belief of a blessed immortality to do nothing to turn the balance? Ought the love of God to do nothing? The desire and hope of a state perfectly good and happy, qniet and peaceful; of living in the region of undefiled, innocent love and pleasnre; in the communion of holy and blessed spirits; (all highly pleased, not in their own only, but one another's happiness; and all concentring in the admiration and praise of their common Parent and Lord;) ought all this nothing to alter the case with us; or signify nothing to the inclining our minds to the so unspeakably better part? Methinks since we acknowledge such an order of intelligent (and already happy) creatures, we should even blush to think they should be spectators of our daily course and (too plainly discovered) inclinations, so difform and unagreeable to all the laws and dictates of reasonable nature. What censures, may we think, do they pass upon our follies? Are those things great in their eyes, that are so in ours? In lesser matters (as some interpret that passage) indecencies are to be avoided, because of those blessed spirits. May we not then be ashamed, that they should discern our terrene dispositions; and see us come so unwillingly into their comfort and happy state? Although our present depressing circumstances will not suffer us to oe in all things, as yet, conformable to their high condition, we should however carry it as candidates thereto, studying to approve ourselves, waiting and longing to be transumed and taken up into it.

And since we have so high and great an expectation, and 'tis understood and known, that the very perfection and end of our beings is no otherwise attainable, than by putting off our sordid flesh, and laying aside this earthly appurtenance; that yet there should be so fixed and prevailing an aversion to it, is a most unaccountable thing, and one of the greatest problems in natnre. I say, prevailing; for admit, what is like to be alleged, that an addictedness to the body is by natural inclination, ought not the laws of a superior to prevail over those of the inferior nature? And is not the love of God a higher natural law than that of the body; to whom here our service is little, yea, our disservice much; and from whose most desirable commerce we suffer so uncomfortable a disclusion by the sad circumstance of our bodily state? Are we more nearly allied to a piece of clay, than to the Father of our spirits? And again, is not every thing nearest to itself and obliged to place love there, rather than on an inferior thing (at least) how nearly soever united; since there can be no pretence of any such nearer union, than of a thing with itself? And are not our souls and our bodies (though united, yet) distinct things? Why then should not our souls, that are capable of understanding their own interest, mind that first, intend most their own perfection and improvement, and begin their charity at home? It is not strange, that what is weaker and more ignoble, should affect union with what is above it, and a spring of life to it; but when it is found burdensome, nothing forbids, but that the superior being may be well content, upon fair and allowable terms, to be rid of the burden. Therefore, though flesh and blood may reluctate and shrink at it, when we think of laying it down; yet it becomes immortal spirits to consider their own affairs, and be (more principally) intent upon what will be their own advantage. If so mean a creature as a sorry flea, finding it can draw a snitable aliment from our bodies, affect to dwell there, and is loath to leave us; it were a ludicrous pity to be therefore content to endnre its troublesome vellications, because we fear the poor animal should be pnt to its shifts, and not be otherwise able to find a subsistence.

'Tis true, that the great Creator and Lord of the universe, hath not permitted us the liberty of so throwing off our bodies when we will, which otherwise are in dignity far more beneath our spirits than so despicable a creature is beneath them. And to his dispose that hath ordered this conjunction for a time (whether we look upon it as an effect of his simple pleasnre, or of his displeasure) we must yield an awful and a patient submission, till this part of his providence towards us have run its course and attained its ends. And then, how welcome should the hour of our discharge and freedom be, from so troublesome an associate? Which upon no other acconnt, than that of duty towards the Anthor of our beings, one would more endure; than to have the most noisome offensive vermin always preying upon his flesh. At least, (though the consideration of our own advantage had no place with us in this matter,) the same sense of duty towards our great Creator, which should make us patient of an abode in the body while he will have it so, should also form our spirits to a willing departure when it shall be his pleasure to release us thence. Bnt, that neither a regard to his pleasure, nor our own blessedness, should prevail against our love to the body, is the unacconntable thing I speak of. And to plead only, in the case, the corruption of our natures that sets us at odds with God and ourselves, is to justify the thing by what is itself most unjustifiable; or rather (as some that have affected to be styled philosophers have been wont to expedite difficulties, by resolving the matter into the usual conrse of nature) to resolve the thing into itself, and say, it is so because it is so, or is wont to be; and indeed, plainly to confess there is no account to be given of it. This being the very thing about which we expostulate, that reasonable nature should so prevaricate. The commonness whereof doth not take away the wonder, but rather render it more dreadfnl and astonishing.

The truth is, the incongruity in the present case is only to be solved by redress; by earnest strivings with God, and our own sonls, till we find ourselves recovered into a right mind; into the constitntion and composure whereof a generous fortitnde hath a necessary ingrediency; that usually upon lower motives refuses no change of climate, and will carry a man into nnknown countries, and throngh greatest hazards in the pursuit of hononrable enterprises, of a much inferior kind. It is reckoned a brave and manly thing, to be in the temper of one's mind a citizen of the world; (meaning it of this lower one;) but why not rather of the universe? And 'tis accounted mean and base, that one should be so confined by his fear or sloth to that spot of ground where he was born, as not upon just inducement to look abroad, and go for warrantable and worthy purposes (yea, if it were only honest self-advantage) as far as the utmost ends of the earth: but dare we not venture a little further? These are too narrow bounds for a truly great spirit. Any thing that is tinctured with earth, or

1 1 Cor. viii.

savours of mortality, we should reckon too mean for us; and not regret it, that heaven and immortality are not to be attained but by dying: so should the love of our own souls, and the desire of a perpetual state of life, triumph over the fear of death. But it may be alleged by some, that 'tis only a solicitous love to their souls, that makes them dread this change. They know it will not fare with all alike hereafter, and know not what their own lot shall be. And is this indeed our case? Then, what have we been doing all this while? And how are we concerned to lose no more time? But too often a terrene spirit lurks under this pretence; and men allege their want of assurance of heaven, when the love of this earth, which they cannot endure to think of leaving, holds their hearts.

And, (a little to discuss this matter,) what would we have to assure us? Do we expect a vision or a voice? Or are we not to try ourselves; and search for such characters in our own souls, as may distinguish and note us out for heaven? Among these, what can be more clear and certain than this, that we have our hearts much set upon it? They that have their conversations in heaven, may from thence expect the Saviour, [m] who shall change their vile bodies, ([n] the bodies of their humiliation, or low abject state,) and make them like his own glorious body. God, who will render to every man according to his works, will give them [o] that by patient continuance in well-doing seek honour and glory and immortality, eternal life. They that [p] set their affections (or minds) on the things above, not those on the earth; when Christ shall appear, who is their life, shall appear with him in glory. Mistake not the notion of heaven, or the blessedness of the other world; render it not to yourselves a composition of sensual enjoyments: understand it (principally) to consist in perfect holiness and communion with God; (as his own word represents it, and as reason hath taught even some pagans to reckon of it;) and you cannot judge of your own right by a surer and plainer rule, than that eternal blessedness shall be theirs, whose hearts are truly bent and directed towards it. Admit we then this principle; and now let us reason with ourselves from it: We have a discovery made to us of a future state of blessedness in God, not as desirable only in itself, but as attainable and possible to be enjoyed, (the Redeemer having opened the way to it by his blood, and given us, at once, both the prospect and the offer of it,) so that it is before us as the object of a reasonable desire. Now either our hearts are so taken with this discovery, that we above all things desire this state, or not. If they be, we desire it more than our earthly stations and enjoyments, are willing to leave the world and the body to enjoy it; and so did falsely accuse ourselves of a prevailing aversion to this change. If they be not, the thing is true, that we are upon no terms willing to die: but the cause is falsely, or partially, assigned. It is not so much because we are unassured of heaven, but (as was above suspected) because we love this world better, and our hearts centre in it as our most desirable good.

Therefore we see how unreasonably this is often said, we are unwilling to change states, because we are unassured. The truth is, they are unassured, because they are unwilling. And what then ensues? They are unwilling because they are unwilling. And so they may endlessly dispute themselves round, from unwillingness to unwillingness. But is there no way to get out of this unhappy circle? In order to it, let the case be more fully understood: either this double unwillingness must be referred to the same thing, or to divers: if to the same thing, it is not sense; they say what signifies nothing; for being to assign a cause of their unwillingness to quit the body, to say, because they are unwilling, (*viz.* of that,) is to assign no cause, for nothing can be the cause of itself: but if they refer to divers things, and say, they are unwilling to go out of the body, because they are unwilling to forsake earth for heaven; the case is then plain, but sad, and not alterable, but with the alteration of the temper of their spirits. Wherefore let us all apply ourselves (since with none this is so fully done that no more is needful) to the serious endeavour of getting our souls purged from the dross of this world, and enamoured of the purity and blessedness of heaven. So the cause and effect will vanish together; we shall find that suitableness and inclination in our spirits to that blessedness as may yield us the ground of a comfortable persuasion that it belongs to us; and then not be unwilling, though many deaths stood in our way, to break through to attain it.

m Phil. iii. 20, 21. n Gr. o Rom. ii. 6, 7. p Col. iii. 2, 3, 4.

A

DISCOURSE

RELATING TO THE

EXPECTATION OF FUTURE BLESSEDNESS.

WITH AN APPENDIX.

HEBREWS X. 36.

FOR YE HAVE NEED OF PATIENCE, THAT, AFTER YE HAVE DONE THE WILL OF GOD, YE MIGHT RECEIVE THE PROMISE.

It is evident, the Creator of this lower world never intended it to be the perpetual dwelling-place of its inhabitants, if man had continued innocent; inasmuch as sin and death, by inseparable connexion, entered together; had sin never entered, death would never have had place here. And whereas, by the blessing of God, multitudes had been continually born into this world, and none have ever died out of it; by consequence it must have been, in time, so over-peopled, as not to contain its inhabitants. Whereupon, man having been created in a state of probation, as his fall showed, and a candidate for a better state in some nobler region; the time of probation being over (the limits whereof, considering the sad events that soon ensued, it was to no purpose for us to know, nor consequently for God to reveal) it could not be, but that nature itself, being, in every one, pure and genuine, must prompt him to continual aspirings towards the highest perfection, whereof, by the Divine will, he should find himself capable. Though yet it could not consist with the sinfulness of his present state to be over-hasty; but the conscience of his being a debtor for all his present attainments to the freest and most munificent bounty, must oblige him to a dutiful compliance with the wise and sovereign pleasure of his blessed Lord; to a cheerful contentation, and willingness, that he should make what further use of him he should see fit, for transmitting a holy life and nature to such as should come after him; and to a most calm, serene, and pleasant expectation of being seasonably translated higher.

But now sin and death having invaded this world and spread through it, into how horrid a gulf have they turned this part of God's creation! Men having by their own apostacy cut themselves off from God, do each of them grasp at deity; every one attempts to fill up his room, and is so profanely insolent, as to affect being a god to himself, his own first and last. And all having withdrawn themselves from God, and abandoned his interest, which the law of their creation, and their dependent state, obliged them to serve; they have no common interest left: whereupon every one makes his own his only interest. And that sovereign principle of divine love being extinct, whereby they were to love God with all their hearts, souls, minds, and might, which is the first and great command; the second branch, like the former, by which they were all, for his sake, to love each other, as himself, naturally fails and dies. Whence every one sets up himself, in exclusion to God, and all other men. And that self (all concern for their better and nobler part, which could only have its support and satisfaction in God, being suppressed and lost) is only their baser, their carnal self. 'Tis this alone they are concerned for. And every one seeks to catch and engross all that he can, for the service and gratification of this vile, sensual self, out of this sensible world; which, because it is all empty vanity, and hath not enough in it to satiate so enormous and ungoverned an appetite, this makes them tear this world in pieces; every one snatching what he can of it for himself. Hence are wars, and fightings, James iv. 1, 4. And as by *friendship*, every one seeks to contract with this world separately, and alone, so as to engross it to himself, apart from other men, they make themselves enemies to God; so they become devils to one another. And thus are men generally drowned in perdition and destruction. But the merciful God hath appointed his own Son a Redeemer for us, who gave himself for our sins, to deliver us (to take us out from, Gal. i. 4. as the word signifies) this present evil world; whose first law, and most deeply fundamental to the whole Christian state, as the case before stated required, is that of self-denial; which, so far as it obtains, doth truly restore us to ourselves, and to our first and primitive state, and place, in God's Creation. For having suffered once for us, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. and having redeemed us to God by his blood, Rev. v. 9. when he shall have obtained this his end upon us, all things fall right with us as to him, ourselves, and one another.

Yet because the wise and God-becoming methods, which are used in pursuance of the Redeemer's design, do not generally take place, or prevail against the spirit of this world; but men, through their own wicked inclination, obstinately adhere to this world, seeking their all from it; and the usurping God of this world blinding their minds, that the glorious light of the gospel of Christ should not shine to them, (2 Cor. iv. 4.) and being an inworking spirit in the children of disobedience, (Ephes. ii. 2.) leading them captive at his will, (2 Tim. ii. ult.) and that this prince of the darkness of this world, made up of malice and envy against God, and of malignity and mischief against men, as their common Apollyon, and destroyer, doth with all his legions haunt and infest this lower world, till the time of their torment come; and that thus enmity against God and his Christ is fomented, and naturally propagated from age to age in this world; it is therefore God's righteous and declared pleasure, to put an end to this state of things; not to continue this world, as the stage of his perpetuated dishonours; but to shut it up by the final judgment, and at last consume it with fire. In the meantime, while he is gradually consuming sinners out of this earth, he is, by equal degrees, gathering home his own out of it. And to them, how great a privilege is it to be taken out from this present evil world! Which that they may apprehend with savour and relish, their blessed Lord hath let them have a foresight of death abolished, and of life and immortality brought to light in his gospel; and gives them the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that they may know the hope of their calling, (Ephes. i. 17, 18.) endowing them with that faith, which is the substance of the things they hope for

Heb. xi. 1. Whereupon, having all the glories of the other world in view, and the representation of a state, which they have reason to apprehend as much more blissful and glorious, than, in the way of even primitive nature, they could have attained to; in proportion as the second Adam doth excel the first in dignity, performances, and glory. Here, therefore, their *need of patience*, in expecting this final issue of things, to themselves in particular, and to the whole redeemed community, is most conspicuous, and appears great, even as it relates to this expectation, though they did not labour under the pressure of very grievous evils besides, which yet must increase that need.

But it is this *expectation* itself, to which I intend principally to confine the present discourse. In reference whereunto, the greater the pleasure is of our fore-sight, the greater need we shall have of this patience; *i. e.* as our fore-sight, though beholding the terrible things, death, and the final dissolution of all things, which must intervene, doth yet terminate on the blessed consequents thereof. And those consequents, *viz.* the enjoyments and blessedness of the future state, it is plain the apostle did intend in these words, as the context evidently shows, *i. e.* whether you consider the foregoing or the following context. For that great recompense of reward, mentioned in the immediately foregoing ver. 35. and the salvation of our souls, in the close of this chapter; and the things hoped for, and not seen, in the very beginning of the next, do plainly show, the discourse being of a piece, that the *promise* to be received, must be the promise of that blessedness, that is not to be enjoyed, in the fulness of it, but by intervening death; nor by all holy men together till the end of all things, chap. xi. 13. And whereas we have here the expression of *receiving* the promise, it is plain the promise must be understood objectively; *i. e.* that transcendent good that was promised; *viz.* that principally, wherein all the promises do finally and lastly centre: which, it is plain, the apostle here most especially intends, as being eminently called the promise. Whereupon, there are now two things that offer themselves to our observation from this Scripture:—1. That the business of a sincere Christian in this world, is to be doing the will of God:—2. That patience, in expecting the consequent blessedness of the future state, is a needful requisite in every sincere and thorough Christian. The former of these I shall not insist upon; but only touch transiently.

I need not tell you that, by the will of God, we are to understand the object of his will, or that which he wills, *viz.* the thing willed; not his will itself, which is not a thing yet to be done, but eternal, as his own very being itself. And again, that you may easily apprehend, it is our duty willed by him, and not mere events, that must be understood to be the object of this will, *viz.* wherein we have a part to act; otherwise, how are we said to do his will? Of this, every sincere Christian must be the active instrument. All creatures, whether they will or no, whether they design any such thing, or design it not, must be the passive subjects, upon which his will takes place. But to be the active instrument thereof, is, in fact, the business only of a devoted person, one given up to God in Christ. Such only are in an immediate capacity or promptitude to do the will of God, intentionally, and with their own design; though it be the undoubted duty of all, who are naturally capable thereof.

Will this rebel-world never consider this, that are in a continual war with him in whose hands is their breath, on this high point, whose will shall be supreme? and dread not the issue of so unequal a combat, between omnipotence and an earthen potsherd? Nor bethink themselves what woes impend and hang over their guilty heads, for so mad insolence, as striving with their maker? Isa. xlv. 9. Will they never consider it, that pretend subjection to him, when their very pretence is a mockery? and that affront him with the frequent repetition of that ludicrous petition, "Thy will be done on earth," amidst their open, contemptuous oppositions thereto?

2. But I shall apply myself to consider the latter of these; that patience, in the expectation of the blessedness of the heavenly estate, is very needful to every sincere and thorough Christian.—And in speaking to this, I shall —I. Give some account of this patience, according as it is to have this exercise, in expecting future blessedness; —2. Labour to evince to you the necessity of it; how needful a thing it is to any serious and thorough Christian. And so the use will ensue.

I. I shall give some account of this patience, as it is to be exercised in the present case. We might, indeed, assign a third occasion of exercising patience, besides *suffering* present incumbent evils, and *expecting* a future hoped good, *viz. doing* the good which belongs to the duty of our present state, which the text points out to us in what it interposes, "after ye have done the will of God," and which is intimated, when we are charged not to be weary of well-doing, (Gal. vi. 9.) and, by a patient continuance in well-doing to seek honour, glory, immortality, &c. (Rom. ii. 7.) and to run with patience the race set before us, (Heb. xii. 1.) when also the good ground is said to bring forth with patience, Luke viii. 15. But considering the pleasure which doing good contains in itself, and that the patience it gives occasion for is accidental, and arises from the other two; either the sufferings to which doing good often exposes, or the expectation of a greater good in a perfect state; when also all indisposition and lassitude shall perfectly cease; we need not make this a distinct head. Or, however, our present design confines us, chiefly, to the patience that is to be exercised in the expectation of our final good,—*viz. blessedness.* And in speaking hereto, I shall—1. Lay down some things more generally, and—2. Thence proceed to what will more particularly concern the matter in hand.

1. There are some things more generally to be considered which, though more remotely, will aptly serve our purpose.

1. That the natural constitution of the human soul disposeth it, equally to covet and pursue a desirable good, as to regret and shun a hurtful evil. This is plain to any that understand their own natures, and take any notice of the most connatural motions and operations of their inward man.

2. That the want of such a desirable and suitable good, understood to be so, is as truly afflicting and grievous, as the pleasure of a present evil.

3. That an ability to bear that want, is as real and needful an endowment, as the fortitude by which we endure a painful evil. Yea, and it may be as sensibly painful, the pain of thirst being as grievous as that of a wound or bruise. Therefore the ability to bear it without despondency, or any perturbation or discomposure of spirit, call it by what name you will, is a most desirable advantage and benefit to any man.

4. That, therefore, it equally belongs to patience, to be exercised in the one case, as well as in the other. And the general nature of it being found in each, as we shall further see hereafter, the name is, with equal fitness, common to both, and to be given alike to either of them. For what do names serve for, but to express the natures of things as near as we can? These generals being thus premised, I shall,

2. Proceed more distinctly to give account of patience, according to this notion of it, by showing—what it supposes, and—wherein it consists.

1. What it supposes, as it hath its exercise this way, *viz.* in the expectation of the blessedness of the future state.

2. Wherein, so considered, it consists.

1. What, thus taken, it supposes.

1. That blessedness, truly so called, be actually understood and apprehended by the expectants, as a real and most desirable good to them. They can, otherwise, never think themselves to need patience, in expecting it. To the blind, befooled world, true blessedness is a frightful thing. They run from it as a *mormo*, or some terrible appearance. Religion, *i. e.* nearness to God, and inward conversation with him, (which we will not say hath affinity with it, but contains it, or is the same thing,) they dread as a formidable darkness, or the shadow of death. Therefore they say to God, "Depart from us." Whereupon it is not the want of this blessedness, but the thing itself, so monstrously misunderstood, that gives exercise to their patience; nor have they patience enough for it. The Divine presence they cannot endure.

2. The delays and deferring of this blessedness must be an afflicting and felt grievance. Otherwise patience can have no place or exercise about it. Paganish morality hath taught us,[a] *Nulla est Virtus quæ non sentis perpeti: it is no virtue at all to bear that which I do not feel.* A stone, if it bears the most heavy weight, yet feels it not. And, saith that instructive writer, we ascribe not to the virtuous man the hardness of a stone. If I have no feeling of a grievance in the deferred blessedness of the future state, I have no use for patience in expecting it. Hope deferred (saith one divinely wise) makes the heart sick. There will be a sickness at the heart, by the delay of what I hope for, most of all, when the sum of my blessedness is the thing hoped for, and still deferred. The delay must be as grievous, as the attainment is pre-apprehended to be pleasant and joyous; *viz.* that when it comes, it is a tree of life: so the gratefulness of enjoyment is, in the opposite sentence, (Prov. xiii. 12.) set against the heart-sickness of expectation. They that never felt their hearts sick with the desire of heaven, and the blessedness of that state, cannot conceive of it a tree of life before-hand, nor ever know what patience in expecting it signifies, in the meantime. These things being supposed unto this patience, we next come to show,

2. Wherein it consists. And are here to consider, that its more special nature cannot be understood, without taking some previous short notice of its general nature, or what it hath in it common to it with other patience under the same name. Its more general notion seems not capable of any fitter expression, than an ability becomingly to endure. But because that may be without or with reference to God; this latter we are to single out, for the subject of our present discourse, as that which the text expressly intends: Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God ye may receive the promise. And its reference to God may be twofold, *viz.* both as he is the Author and the Object of it.

1. As he is the Author. Inasmuch as it is a most useful principle and disposition of soul, which, with a compassionate regard to the exigency of our present state, God is pleased to implant in such as he hath a favour for, that they may not be exposed, as a vessel in a wide and stormy sea, unable otherwise to endure, and under a necessity of sinking, or of being broken in pieces. In their make and frame they are fitted to their state, even by gracious vouchsafement; and therefore is this fitly reckoned a divine grace. We find it placed among the fruits of the Spirit, (Gal. v. 22.) and are therefore to count it, as that is the Spirit of grace, a most needful and excellent grace of that blessed Spirit, by which, duly exercised, the soul is composed unto a right temper, not only in bearing the evils of this present state, but in waiting for the blessedness of the future. And thus we consider it as not only a rational temperament, that may, in great part, take its rise from ourselves, and the sober use of our own thoughts, (which yet it unbecomes us not to employ to this purpose,) but also as a gratuitous donation, a gift of the good Spirit of God. And hereof there is a not obscure intimation in the text, telling us we have need of patience. 'Tis grace, of merciful vouchsafement, that considers what we do need. Whence, therefore, we hear of a throne of grace, whither we are to come for mercy and grace to help in time of need, Heb. iv. 16.

And, as such, how fitly is its nature signified in the mentioned place by the word μακροθυμία, *longanimity;* which we read, less properly, long-suffering, there being no notion of suffering in the word; taking also θῦμος, or *animus*, in present composition, as not only signifying mind, as that denotes the understanding faculty, or mere intellect; but lively desire, a certain vigour and strength of spirit, zeal, hope, courage, fortitude, an unaptness to a yielding succumbency; and this (as the other word signifies) through a long space or tract of time. When desire and hope are lengthened and continued, without despondency, even to the appointed term, and during the prescribed season of expectation. And so the word doth rather incline to express patience, as it refers unto a desired good, that we are expecting and waiting for. And you find it mentioned with other graces, (2 Pet. i. 5, 6.) by the word in the text, ὑπομονὴ, which is equally apt to express a permanent waiting, or expectation of good, as suffering of incumbent evil. But also, if we consider that context, we there may discern its heavenly descent, and its being a part of the offspring of God among men. For immediately upon the mention of a divine nature participated, (or a godly frame and habit of soul,) that carries a man up, or enables him to emerge and escape the pollutions of this impure world; besides this escape are to be added (not without our own intervening diligence) the several following gracious principles, as branches, into which that divine nature shoots forth, exerts, and spreads itself, of which this patience is one.

And, to show its divine original, God is pleased to style himself in his word, the God of patience, (Rom. xv. 5.) it is his very image in the soul. For is not the Divine patience one of the great attributes by which we are to know him, and for which we are to adore him? It is that, by which he suffers not hurt, whereof the Divine Being is not capable; but by which he bears much wrong from his injurious revolted creatures. Whence it is a mighty power that is said to lie in the Divine patience. Let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, the Lord is long-suffering, &c. Numb. xiv. 17, 18. It is, indeed, his power over himself, by which he restrains his anger, his omnipotent anger, that would otherwise go forth to consume offending creatures. We cannot, indeed, conceive any such passion in God which he finds a difficulty in restraining, though speaking to men, he uses their language, and bespeaks them in their own idioms and forms of speech. But 'tis owing to the necessary self-originate concurrence of all perfections in his nature and being, that nothing unbecoming Deity can have place there. In the meantime, since the new creature is God-like, the image of God, we hence are taught to conceive of patience, (a part of that production,) not under the notion of dull and sluggish impotency, but of power, an ability to endure, as before, and that as having its original and pattern in the blessed God himself.

2. And it is also specified by a respect to God as the object. For a deference to his holy pleasure in ordering the occasions of such exercise, is carried in the notion of it. It hath in it submission to the will of God. And by this it comes to be taken into religion, or religion must be taken into it, and be comprehended in our conception of it. True and gracious patience, and every exercise of it, is to be looked upon as a part of piety and godliness. We are here not to suppose that patience, in expecting good, and in bearing evils, must have distinct notions, but exercises only. And, though these exercises are distinct, yet as the suffering of many incumbent evils is, in our present state, complicated with the absence and expectation of the good we desire; these exercises are scarce ever to be separated. It is, therefore, the less to surprise us, that this ingredient into the nature of patience, *submission to God*, should run into both, as we find a mixture in the occasions thereof. As when the Psalmist complains of them that breathed cruelty against him, he says, 'he had fainted' (as we translate, for those words "I had fainted" are not in the Hebrew text, but concealed in a more emphatical aposiopœsis: *q. d.* it cannot be expressed how deplorable my case had been, if I had not believed) to see the goodness of the Lord. And adds, Wait on the Lord, he shall strengthen thine heart, &c. Psal. xxvii. 13, 14.

This, in the meantime, is the voice of patience. It is the Lord; and, in the present case, 'tis he that disposes, and orders I should so long bear and wait; that overawes my soul, and brings it down to a peaceful and dutiful acquiescence in his good pleasure; peaceful to myself, dutiful towards him. Let him do what seems him good. Since it is his pleasure that I should wait so long, before I shall become a blessed creature, I shall admire and praise him, that I hope I shall be so at last: but, with profound submission unto his purpose and determination herein, wait, till he shall think fit to fulfil this good pleasure of his goodness towards me, in accomplishing my desires, and in answering my expectations fully at last; when I shall be brought into that state where is fulness of joy, and be placed at thy right hand, O Lord, where are rivers of

[a] Seneca.

pleasure for evermore! The thing is wholly from him, and it is fit the time should be also. And now, as true patience hath belonging to it what is so special, *viz.* a *respect to God*, which we understand to be casual of it, in its *proper kind;* so we may give a further short account of it, considering it—2dly, *In its peculiar effect;* (or, as it is called, James i. 4.) the work of patience, *viz.* that it gives a man a mastery and conquest over all undue and disorderly passions. It fixes the soul in a composed serenity, creates it a region of sedate and peaceful rest; infers into it a silent calm; allays or prevents all turbulent agitations; excludes whatsoever of noisy clamour; permits no tumults, no storm or tempest within; whatsoever of that kind, in this our expecting state, may beset a man from without. And this most connatural effect of patience, we see how most aptly it is expressed by our Saviour, (Luke xxi. 19.) In your patience possess ye your souls, *q. d.* it is patience that must give a man the *dominum sui;* and keep him, under God, in his own power. He intimates, if you have not patience, you are outed of yourselves; you are no longer masters of your own souls, can have no enjoyment of yourselves, and therefore are much less to expect a satisfying enjoyment of him.

The temper of spirit it introduces, in opposition to angry and querulous repinings, is a pitiful silence. I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it, Psal. xxxix. 9. In opposition to fear, it is fortitude. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord, Psal. xxvii. 14. In opposition to a despairing dejection of mind, confidence; as in this context, Cast not away your confidence, you have need of patience. In opposition to immoderate sorrow, for your deferred felicity, complacency. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness; giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, (Col. i. 11, 12.) *q. d.* O blessed be God for our prospect! and that we have a firm ground whercupon to live, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, Rom. v. 2. It is that by which, with this composure of soul, we expect, and are still looking for, the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, (Titus ii. 13.) knowing, that to them who look for him, he shall appear the second time, without sin unto salvation, (Heb. ix. 28.) for then it is that our blessedness is complete, when he shall appear a second time. Then all those many things concur, that are requisite to the making the work of our salvation most perfect and consummate work. And patience is to have its perfect work, in commensuration thereto. But while we are present in these earthly bodies, we are absent from the Lord; and many things are wanting to the happiness we expect. This is the patience we are to exercise in the meantime. We may thus shortly sum up the matter, *viz.* that in reference to the delay of the blessedness we expect—1. We ought not to be without sense, as if it were no grievance, which were stupidity, and not patience; and—2. That we ought not to have an excessive sense of it, which were mere peevishness and impatience. Therefore having given this account what this patience, considered in this exercise, imports; I come,

2. To show the necessity of it, in a serious and thorough Christian, from the consideration of—the principles, from whence this necessity arises, and—the ends, which it is necessary unto. It must, indeed, be acknowledged, that the form of speech here used in the Greek, χρείαν ἔχειν, doth directly lead us to consider the latter of these, usefulness to such or such purposes, rather than the intrinsical necessity of a thing in itself. But it cannot be denied, that, to make a man a complete Christian, must be taken in, as a primary and fundamental part, the use of patience, subservient to all the rest. And we find it recommended upon this account, (James i. 4.) Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect, and entire, lacking nothing. Therefore, what shows its necessity, as belonging to the inward frame and constitution of a Christian, cannot be irrelative to our purpose.

And this appears from its intimate connexion with several things, that most confessedly belong, as principles, to the most inward frame and constitution of a Christian. The principles we shall here refer to, are either subordinate, or sovereign and supreme. And they both make it necessary, and produce it.

1. Those that are subordinate, concur in the constitution of a truly Christian frame, and thereupon, both make this exercise of patience necessary, and existent; or make way for it, that it may obtain, and take place with them in a man's soul. They are such as these:

1. *Faith* of the unseen state. That faith, which in this very context, the beginning of the next chapter, is called the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. This faith of a Christian tells him, God hath made report to me of the glory and blessedness of the unseen world; and I believe it, take his word, rely upon it. I do, as the apostle says, hope for eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised, Titus i. 2. This realizes the things themselves, makes them that are future as present. It serves me instead of eyes, and present sense. They are things, in reference whereto, we must walk by faith, and not by sight. That faith makes a supply for vision, as we find it did, in reference to an unseen Christ, 1 Pet. i. 8. One great part of the expected blessedness of the other state is that beatific sight of him which we shall have; and which believed, and hoped for, maintains present life and vigour in us towards him; though we have not had the privilege of seeing him in the flesh, as divers had in time past; yet, not having so seen, we love him; and, for that other sight of him in glory, how far off that may be, in time to come, we know not. But though so too we now, or as yet, see him not, believing, we rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8. If I do, with my whole heart and soul, believe God, telling me that thus it shall be, this faith will operate to this height, a glorious joy; much more to this depth, a soul-composing patience. Therefore are these two, faith and patience, so often paired, and put together in Scripture; and particularly, with reference to this expectation of inheriting the promises, Heb. vi. 12. And how plainly is the affinity and near alliance of these two signified, (James v. 7, 8.) where the apostle exhorting to the patience of expectants saith, Be patient, brethren, behold the husbandman waiteth,—be you also patient,—subjoins the proposal of the great object of their faith, the coming of the Lord draws nigh. It is the faith of the unseen state (which commences to the whole Christian community, at their Lord's coming) that makes patience, at once, both necessary and possible; yea, and actual too: necessary, because the prospect it gives is so glorious; possible, because it is so sure. Upon the former account, without patience, the delay could not be endured; upon the latter, because it affords continual relief, and strength, that one may be capable of enduring, and actually endure. We more easily bear the delay of the most excellent things, whereof we are sure at last. Out of the very eater itself comes forth meat and sweetness.

2. Nor shall we unfitly add hope to faith. We learn them to be distinguishable, finding them distinctly mentioned, as two of that great triad of principles, said to abide, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. Nor shall be at a loss how to distinguish them, if we consider faith, as more directly respecting the ground upon which we rest, the divine testimony or revelation; hope, the object unto which we, thereupon, reach forward in desire and expectation. And, as we see how this latter is complicated with faith; so we may see how it connects with patience, Rom. viii. 24, 25. We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for it. But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we, with patience, wait for it.

And if we follow the thread of discourse through this context, and observe how it begins; We are saved by *hope;* and how it terminates in *patience:* it is obvious to collect, that were it not for patience, we were lost! And may so learn how further to understand our Saviour's words, Luke xxi. 19. In your patience possess you your own souls; *viz.* as possessing, or keeping, stands opposed to losing. They that cannot endure to the end, cannot be saved. So is the new creature composed by a contexture of principles, to be, under God, a self-preserving thing

3. *Love* is another great constituent of the Christian

frame, as such, that makes patience necessary; as much patience is requisite to make them endure one another's absence, who are very cordial lovers of one another. Nothing is more essential in the constitution of a sincere Christian, than divine love: it is the very heart and soul of the new creature. Love desiring after God, as my supreme good; love delighting and acquiescing in him above all, according to my present measure of enjoyment of him; which being very imperfect, makes my patience most absolutely necessary, till it can be perfect. If I have not patience, how can I endure the absence of him, whom I love better than myself? And that love of him doth connote, and carry along with it, the extinction of the love of this present world, so that it shall not longer be predominant; its predominancy being inconsistent with the love of God. Love not this world—if any man love this world, the love of the Father is not in him, I John ii. 15. Now when a soul is mortified to the love of this world, it is not hereby quite stupified; love is not destroyed, but turned to another, and its more proper object; and is so much the more intense Godward, by how much the more it is drawn and taken off from all inferior things. Thereupon it must be so much the more grievous to be kept off from him; and that grievance cannot be borne without patience. For that which aggrieves is the absence of my best good, which can have no equivalent; and the want whereof nothing can supply, or fill up its room. God cannot be loved without being known; nor can he be known to be God, but as the best good. Though I can never know him perfectly, yet so much I must be supposed to know of him, that he is better than all things else; that nothing that is not superior in goodness to all things besides, even infinitely superior, can be God; and nothing but such an uncreated good can make me a happy creature. And what patience do I need, to make me content not to be happy? But he were not such a good, goodness itself, if he could impose it upon me to choose to be miserable, or never to be happy. He only requires, that I wait awhile, that I be patient of some delay.

And hereupon, if my love be such as it ought, it doth not only make patience necessary, but facile too. It corresponds not to its glorious and most excellent object, if it be not very reverential and most obsequious love, full of duty towards him on whom it is placed; if it hath not in it a regard to the blessed God, as well under the notion of the sovereign Ruler, as the sovereign Good. And thereupon my patience, as hath been said, carrying religion in it, *i. e.* a dutiful disposition towards God; the same principle which makes it necessary, makes it practicable also. When he, whose devoted servant I am, hath signified to me his good pleasure, *viz.* he finally intends me to a blessed state; but that in the state, wherein I now am, he hath present service for me to do; or that he sees it requisite before he translates me out of this state, further to prepare me for a better; and requires, in the meantime, I seek honour, glory, and immortality, by a patient continuance in well-doing: my love to him itself, which makes it to appear necessary, makes it also appear to me the most reasonable thing in all the world; and that my heart say within me, even from the power and spirit of Divine love, when he imposes this expectation, though tedious, and when he inflicts any thing grievous, I was dumb, O Lord, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it, (Psal. xxxix. 8) though I could not have taken it from another. We further add, not as a single, but most comprehensive principle,

4. *Holiness*, which impressed upon the soul, suits it unto the heavenly state, and so makes it covet it more earnestly. All things naturally tend to the perfection of that state, unto which they are predisposed, which is more congenerous to them, or whereto they have an agreement in their natures. It is so in the new nature, as well as that which is common to other creatures. All things naturally tend to their like. It cannot be less thus with the new creature, whose nature is improved, heightened, and perfected beyond that of other creatures. It is the Divine holiness impressed upon the soul, that suits it unto the participation of the heavenly inheritance. None ever come to heaven, but they that are made meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. ii. 12. They that are made meet for heaven, suited in the temper of their spirits to it, cannot but long for it, and do therefore need patience, while they are waiting. It is indeed but that to which they are begotten. Holiness in general is the product of regeneration. And we find, that in 1 Pet. i. 3. we are said to be begotten unto the lively hope. Hope must be taken there objectively by what follows, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, ver. 4. A disposition to it is in our very *natalitia:* we are begotten to it by the implantation of this principle, of the new, divine, and heavenly birth. Such are born for that country, born with a suitableness to that inheritance, therefore cannot but have earnest longings after it; and therefore cannot but need patience, that they may endure the delay. And that also connotes and carries with it these two things,—1. Hatred of the opposite, and—2. A tendency unto the improvement and perfection of itself.

1. Hatred of the opposite, sin. And this makes a serious Christian groan: I have a body of death hanging about me. I cannot get rid of the impurities which I hate. And because the very habit of their soul is now so far changed, that they are made holy, they cannot but hate the contrary. You that love the Lord, hate evil; it belongs to your character to do so, Psal. xcvii. 10. And they know, that they shall never be quite rid of it, as long as they are here. And though as sin is an evil against God, it is not to be the object of their patience; yet, as it is a grievance to themselves, the remainders of it are, so far, to be the object about which their patience may be exercised, that they are not to enter into any quarrel, that he doth not immediately made them perfect in the very first moment of their conversion. And as there is conjunct with this frame of holiness, hatred of the opposite, so there is,

2. A tendency to the improving and heightening itself: for every thing naturally affects its own perfection, or the perfection of its own proper kind. As nature, in every thing that grows, aims at a certain pitch, at a certain ἀκμή; so where there is an inchoate holiness, there cannot but be a tendency unto consummate perfect holiness. The precept, therefore, agrees to the temper of their mind, to whom it is given, perfecting holiness, in the fear of God, 2 Cor. vii. 1. This is having the law written in our heart, and put into the inward part. But as holiness includes conformity to the preceptive will of God, so it doth to his disposing will, being made known. Therefore, when we understand it to be his pleasure, we should wait: the holy nature itself, which prompts us so earnestly to desire the perfection of our state, must also incline us (it were otherwise made up of contradictions) patiently to expect it, our appointed time. Herein we are to be subject to the Father of our spirits; as to the fathers of our flesh, when they shall think fit to give a full portion, Heb. xii. 9.

2. Besides all these subordinate principles, we are to consider the co-operation of a sovereign and supreme principle with them, and that is the blessed spirit of God himself. He begets, raises, and cherisheth such desires after the blessedness of the heavenly state, as makes this patience most absolutely necessary. You find in 2 Cor. v. 4. where the apostle is speaking of his earnest aspiring, and groaning, not to be unclothed of this flesh, this earthly tabernacle; but to be clothed upon, *q. d.* To be unclothed, is too low and mean a thing; hereby I only avoid the troubles of life. This can by no means terminate desires of so high a kind, and of so divine and heavenly an original. These were only the desires of a brute, oppressed by a sensible, too heavy burthen. But the thing I aspire to, and groan after, is to be clothed upon. 'Tis somewhat positive, and much higher, *viz.* the perfection of that state I am designed to, and by grace made capable of, wherein mortality is to be swallowed up of life. These are desires proceeding not from the sense of what we feel, but from the attraction of what we see; and not from a brutal, but a divine nature. So he next tells us, ver. 5, whence they were. Now he that hath wrought us for this self same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. It is the Spirit of God working in us, that makes us thus restlessly aspire and groan. He that hath wrought us for this self-same thing is God. It is more than if it had been barely said, God hath wrought us for this self same thing. So he

might express a work common to him with other agents; as if it had been said, *He* hath wrought us for this self-same thing, and so might *another*. But *he* that hath wrought us for this self-same thing *is God*. This is a far more emphatical way of speaking, *i. e.* it doth assert Deity to him that doth this work, *q. d.* "None but God could do such a thing." Therefore observe the form of expression here used, that we lose not the emphasis of it. The act—working us for the same thing—is not affirmed of God, as it would in this form,—God hath wrought us.—But being God, or Godhead, is affirmed of the agent, *q. d.* he cannot but be a God, that doth work this upon us. The other way of expression would serve to represent an action that were common, indefinitely, to one or another agent; as if we say, "The king walks, speaks," &c. but to express an act peculiar to majesty, we would say, "He that reigns is the king." This expression, then, doth not only ascribe out appropriate the work done to God. What? that moles, such dunghill worms, should thus aspire! He is a God that hath done this! For that such a work should be done upon such creatures! to mould them into such a frame, that now nothing terrestrial, nothing temporary, nothing within the region of mortality, will satisfy; but they are restless for that state, wherein mortality shall be swallowed up of life. He that hath wrought us for this self-same thing is God. This is the work of a Deity.

Therefore also, are so solemn thanksgivings tendered to the Father, for his having made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, (Col. i. 12.) which he doth not only by bringing life and immortality to light in the gospel, (1 Tim. ii. 10.) but by giving the Spirit of wisdom and revelation—by enlightening the eyes of our understanding, that we may know the hope of our calling. (Eph. i. 17, 18.) shining into our souls with such a vivific, penetrative, and transforming light, as should change their whole frame, and fully attemper them thereto. Now if it be a divine power that hath excited such desires, and given such a disposition; it must be a divine power that must moderate them too; by giving also that patience, that shall enable us to wait for the fulfilling of them. And the rather doth there need the interposition of a God in the case, to make us endure and patiently expect the state he hath wrought us for, inasmuch as the same Spirit that frames us for that state (as we see recurring to the place before mentioned) doth assure us of it; who hath given us the earnest of the Spirit. His Spirit, working in us, not only gives us a clear signification of the truth of the thing, but of our title; and therefore makes us so earnestly aspire, and groan for it. Wherefore patience cannot but be the more necessary; and (the whole being entirely his work, who doth no inconsistent things) the easier too. And so we find in Rom. viii. 23, 24. where it is said, That they that have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, do groan within themselves; they have the same aspirings that this apostle here speaks of, they groan earnestly within themselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of their body. The adoption; that is an allusion unto a known usage among the Romans, to whom the apostle here writes; and therefore they were the more capable of understanding it. There was among them a twofold adoption:—1. Private; when such a patron did design to adopt such a one for his son, and express his purpose to such as were concerned, as he judged it convenient; which was but to inchoate adoption:—2. Public; when the action was solemn, *in foro*, and enrolled, a register kept of it. And this was the adoption the apostle here alludes to; the manifestation of the sons of God, as ver. 19. of this chapter. Whereto agrees the expression of another apostle, Yet it doth not appear what we shall be; but when he shall appear, we shall be like him, 1 John iii. 2. When the sons of God are to be manifested, they shall appear like themselves, and like their Father. This is their public solemn adoption, when before men and angels they are declared sons of God. And this is that we groan for, says the apostle, having received the first-fruits of the Spirit. We groan for this, the perfection of our state; and thereupon would accordingly enter upon the inheritance, being assured that all his children are heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ (as before in the same chapter, ver. 17.) But now, whereas, from these passages, He that wrought us for the self-same thing is God; that it is he that made us meet for this inheritance; that the first-fruits of his Spirit made us groan for it; we collect, that it is divine power which gives this aptitude and inclination, and limits it. What is it, that doth so qualify divine power, but divine power?

It is, indeed, too plain, that the influence of this power received into such a subject, a mind in too great part yet carnalized, and situated amidst a sensible tempting world, meets with sufficient allays, and enough to obstruct its tendencies towards an object yet out of sight. But all this obstruction, such a power can easily overcome. Therefore we are equally to admire the wisdom of God, as his power; nor as simply omnipotent, though it be so; but as having its place and exercise in the most perfect Divine nature, in which all excellencies meet; and which therefore is not exerted *ad ultimum*, so as to do all that almighty power can do, but what is convenient and fit to be done; that can moderate itself, can move forward, and *sistere se*, stop its motion at pleasure, so as to provide that desire and patience may, in our present state, consist; and that whilst God hath work for us to do, and a station to fill up in this present world, we may not be weary of life; or by the expectation of blessedness in the other world, be made impatient of serving his purposes here, as long as it is his pleasure to continue us in this. So doth he all things, according to the counsel of his will! Thus from the principles whence patience proceeds, you may collect how absolutely necessary it is.

2. You may collect it too, from the ends which it serves. And I shall mention but these two, which are in the text: that which is nearer and more immediate—our doing the will of God;—remoter, and ultimate—our inheriting the promise.

1. This nearer end is manifestly supposed to be so; and withal, that patience is necessary thereto. For when we are told, "Ye have need of patience, that when ye have done the will of God," it is plainly signified, patience conduces to our doing God's will; and that without patience we cannot do it. Not that patience is the proper principle of doing it, but active vigour; yet the concomitancy of patience is requisite hereto; not directly, in respect to the thing to be done; but the time through which the doing of it must be continued, and the expectation which, as hath been said, is complicated therewith. To the former, vigorous activity, a promptitude and suitableness of mind and spirit to the Divine will, even a love of holiness, whereof that will revealed is the measure, must be reckoned the genuine, requisite principle; as patience is to the latter. Therefore do we find labour ascribed to love, and patience to hope, 1 Thess. i. 3. If we have run well; and it is the will of God we shall lengthen out our course by a patient continuance in well-doing; and not express only a present agility, but patience in running the race; without this we do not the will of God.

2. But we are more largely to insist on the remoter and more ultimate end—that we may inherit that promise—which we see is represented, as the end of that former end: and patience made necessary to the latter, as it is necessary to the former. And can we in good earnest think of inheriting the promise, which is all of grace, whether God will or no? And, if he will the end, doth it not equally belong to him to will the way and method of our attaining it? To he here somewhat particular. Two things, we may conclude, God doth ordinarily will concerning the way, wherein he conducts, and leads on those that peculiarly belong to him, to the blessed end, and consummate state he designs them to, the one whereof is also requisite to the other, *viz.*—1. Their gradual growth and improvement in holiness, and all dutiful dispositions towards him, till they come nearer to maturity for glory, and a meekness for the heavenly state: and—2. Their maintaining an intercourse with himself, in order hereto.—These things he wills us to design through our whole course, though he is at liberty to shorten or lengthen our course, as to him seems meet.

1. Our own gradual improvement. Hereto such patience is necessary; for perpetual fretting must naturally hinder our growth. Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect, James i. 4. It cannot have its perfect work, if it have not its work and exercise this way, as well as others; that ye may be perfect, and entire, wanting

nothing. If you have not patience, that you can endure such a delay, you will never grow, will be always starvelings. Do we not observe the method, wherein the Divine wisdom brings all things to their ἀκμὴ, or perfect state? vegetables? sensitive creatures? in the several kinds of both? Do we not observe it in ourselves? and in our children? whom (as the comedian) we should most absurdly expect to be born old men. And as to our spiritual states, after conversion, or regeneration, what are the gifts vouchsafed by our glorified Lord meant for, but our growth to a perfect man? Conversion, 'tis true, till work of that kind be all over, perfects the whole body; but the increase of knowledge, and grace, perfects each particular member or part.

And, besides the improvement of habitual principles, there is a fulness of actual duty and serviee, to be to our utmost endeavoured, that we may stand complete, and perfeet in all the will of God, Col. iv. 12. Every one hath his *pensum*, his allotment of work and time assigned him in this world, though some come not into the vineyard till the eleventh hour. What a sharp reproach is that, (Rev. iii. 2.) I have not found thy works filled up!—How glorious a character is that of the man after God's own heart, that after he had—by the will of God—served his generation, run through the course of service, which the Divine will had measured out to him for his own age wherein he lived, he at length so seasonably fell asleep; was gathered to his fathers, as a shock of corn fully ripe. This is the state of growth and service; the other, the state of perfection and retribution. And to improvement and progress, patience is neeessary, not only as being itself a part of our duty, the want whereof, therefore, must infer a maim; but as, also, it hath influenee upon all other parts, and without which, therefore, there would be a universal languor and debility upon the whole new man; which is evident from what is to be added. 'Tis through the Lord alone we are to make mention of his name, Isa. xxvi. 13. Without him we ean do nothing, (John xv. 5.) neither grow, nor serve. Therefore further is our patience necessary,

2. That so our communion and intereourse with God here, according as in our present state we are capable, may be continued, and his communications to us therein, which we daily need, may not be obstructed. Herein lies the very life of our spirits, a continued intereourse between God and us. But of this, without such patience, we shall be ineapable. See how the apostle argues, (Heb. xii. 9.) The fathers of your flesh chastised you, and you gave them reverence; how much more shall we not be subjeet to the Father of our spirits and live? Shall we not be subject to the Father of our spirits? We must remember, that he, whom the apostle here calls by a more general title, the Father of spirits, doth elsewhere vouchsafe to be styled (Numb. xxvii. 16.) the God of the spirits of all flesh. A most eondescending expression! That he, who hath so innumerable myriads of spirits, whose dwelling is not with flesh, replenishing the spaeious realms and regions of light and bliss above, should also not disdain to own a relation to this inferior sort of spirits, that are so meanly lodged, even in frail and mortal flesh; and to express a concern about them, that somewhat of tolerable order might be preserved among them, in their low and abjeet state; and therefore allow himself to be called the God of such spirits! This is admirable vouchsafement. And, because he is (in this other place) generally called the Father of spirits, comprehending these with the rest; upon both aecounts, it belongs to him by prerogative, to determine what spirits shall dwell in flesh, and what shall not; how long any such spirits shall dwell in flesh, and when they shall be removed, and taken out of this fleshly state. And observe what follows, "shall we not be subjeet to the Father of spirits, and live?" The impatient will eontend; they that cannot bear delay will quarrel, and that will be deadly to them. If we be not subjeet, we cannot live. He is the universal Father of spirits; all spirits are his offspring. And shall not he determine eoneerning the spirits he hath made, which shall, and how long they shall, inhabit flesh; as well the time, as the thing itself; or who shall, and who shall not? It is his pleasure, that my spirit should so long animate and inhabit such a piece of clay; if I am not subject to him, I shall not live. This is severely monitory! and extends far. It admonishes me of danger, as to my final state. For what is here said, hath reference to what is after said of the future vision of God; and our association to the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; whereof want of the patience preseribed, (ver. 1.) through all the whole race set before us, hazards our falling short. But how are we, by impatience, endangered, as to our final and eternal state of life! 'Tis intimated, that without being patient, and subjeet, we cannot live now. Intereourse will be broken off between him and us; he will retire, and withhold his influence: and if he do so, and we pine away in our sins, how shall we then live? (as their misgiving hearts presage, Ezek. xxxiii. 10.)

But if spiritual life already fail, which is of the same kind with blessed eternal life, and is therein perfeeted, what shall beeome of that life itself, which is but the perfection of the other? If we cannot live now, how shall we live eternally? If not a day, how for ever? 'Tis true, we are kept by the power of God; but it is, through faith, unto salvation, (1 Pet. i. 5.) and faith is neeessary to support our patience, as hath been noted. This our Saviour prayed for to Peter, that amidst all his winnowings, his faith might not fail. And all this with this final referenee, that we might be followers of them, who, through faith and patience, have inherited the promises, (Heb. vi. 12.) which plainly shows what is God's ordinary method of bringing his own, at last, to that inheritance. And this, in the context, whieh we were last eonsidering, (Heb. xii.) is eopiously illustrated by the method observed in families; wherein a prudent father considers how long it is fit a son should be under diseipline, whereof, while he is patient, he is under paternal care, and enjoys the provisions of the family; but, if he will not be subject, how shall he live? This prudent conduct is not always observed by the fathers of our flesh. They use, sometimes, harsh severities, more for their own pleasure, and to gratify their own passion, than the child's profit. But with the Father of spirits no rash passions can have place. He only designs our profit, and improvement, in the highest and most exeellent kind, *i. e.* to make us partakers of his holiness; to make us more and more God-like, and fit, at length, to be admitted into the presence of his glory. And whereas the mere deferring of our expeeted felicity is some chastisement and rebuke upon us, for our yet-continuing impurities and disorders; there are also other afflictions that befall us in this our expecting state, which, though they proceed from this world's hatred, may proceed from the love of God, and are meant to work out for us greater glory, (2 Cor. iv. 17.) as now they tend to make us partakers, in a greater measure, of his holiness; which, as it is his glory, will be ours; and by his influence, a peaceful fruit of righteousness accrues to us, and grows up in us, upon which we are to feed and live. Now what conversation can there be between a father in a family, and a son in minority and under diseipline, but by wise and tender care on the part of the former, and the dutiful submission of the latter? Or ean the son hope the sooner to come by his inheritance, by wayward and contentious behaviour towards such a father? So that both from the *principles* whence such patience proceeds, and the *ends* whieh it serves, we may colleet the necessity of it unto every serious Christian.

And now how copious use might we make of so important subject! But we must contraet. We may learn from it,

1. The desperate condition of those wretehed creatures, that are of terrene minds, whose hearts, by habitual and prevailing inclination, cleave to this earth, and this earthly state. They can apprehend no need of patience, in expecting the blessedness of heaven. It is no grievance to them not to partake therein. They had rather live where they are; are better pleased with their present state of life. Tell them of patience in waiting for the heavenly felicity! 'Tis language they understand not! Oh the wretched state of those forlorn souls, whose habitual temper makes them ineapable of the excreise or need of this patienee! It may be said indeed, of many a good man, that he doth not covet death, (whieh, for itself, no man can,) but it cannot be said of any good man, that he doth not covet blessedness, whieh, in a general, indeterminate notion, every man covets. But there is no truly good man, none that is regenerate, and born of God, who doth not partieu-

larly covet that, wherein blessedness truly lies, and doth consist. For all such are begotten to the lively hope—of the undefiled inheritance, reserved in heaven for them, (1 Pet. i. 3, 4.) nor can be supposed, when they covet blessedness, not to covet perfect blessedness. Such may, indeed, not yet covet to die; because yet they may be under some doubt concerning their present state God-ward. And so such a one doth not know, whether, if he die, he shall enter upon a blessed state, or no. But, in the meantime, it cannot be said of any good man, that he doth not covet to be blessed; though for that single reason, because he doubts of his title to the heavenly blessedness, he covets not death. Therefore that doubt doth not extinguish his desire of blessedness, but suspends only the desire of death, as an uncertain way to it; because it is equally the entrance to a state of misery, to them who have no title to blessedness, as it is unto a blessed state, to them that have a title. And concerning their present title, they are still in doubt; which way they hope, by Divine assistance, if they have more time, may yet be gained. Whereas, upon supposition that doubt were removed, they would be glad to be gone. But this is their miserable case, whose hearts cleave to this earth, that they prefer it before all the blessedness and glory of heaven; and rather bless themselves from it, than desire to be blessed by it. If they can but live pleasantly, and as long as they would do here, take heaven, and all the blessedness and glory of it, that will for them! I would fain have you apprehend the deplorable condition of such men, upon sundry accounts.

1. Their temper differs from that of all the children of God; they are quite of another complexion from the whole family that belongs to him. For all that are the sons of God, as they are born from above, (ἄνωθεν, John iii. 3.) they are born with a disposition heavenward. Therefore, if such a man could but view, and behold himself, he could not but cry out, affrighted and amazed, God be merciful to me! what sort of creature am I? If God be not merciful to me, to change me, his mercy can never own me for his; I am quite of a different make from all that ever had leave to call him Father! They all love heaven more than earth, and I love earth more than heaven! That a man's own temper should distinguish him from all the Divine offspring! Methinks it should be considered with dread and horror! That there should be a sort of men in this world, that are all lovers of God, as their best good, and longing to be at home with him in the heavenly state, and I to be severed from them all! My heart being strange to him, and always tending downward! This is a dismal thing; a sad reflection to any one, that can, and will reflect; and be so true to himself, as to own this to be his sense, "I had rather live amidst the vanities of this world, than partake in the glories of heaven! I had rather please my flesh and sense on earth, than enjoy the felicity of saints and angels above!" A fearful case! For now you have nothing to do with this character, belonging to holy men, of standing in sensible need of patience, that you may inherit the promise! nor,

2. Can you inherit. For as all, so only, God's children are his heirs. They are no heirs who are not his children. Cast out the bondwoman and her son; he cannot inherit with the son of the promise. The children of Jerusalem above are free; the rest are slaves. Can it be thought worthy of God to have bondmen, and slaves to vile terrene affections, for his sons? can they inherit the blessedness of heaven, that never loved, desired, or chose it; that always preferred this earth before it? Can any be brought to heaven violently, whether they will or no? Whoever have come thither, first sought it, as the better country. Therefore God was not ashamed to be called their God, (Heb. xi. 16.) which implies he would be ashamed to be called the God of an earthly-minded generation of men. And will he ever do the thing that he would be ashamed of? so ignominious a thing as to take base sons of the earth into his kingdom (who may all say in *regno nati sumus, we are born of the kingdom* we belong to) for his children and heirs?

3. Notwithstanding their obstinate inclination and adherence to this earth, they still live in the continual fear of being removed out of it, *viz.* if they bethink themselves. And what sort of felicity is that, that can be blasted and extinguished by a thought! that depends only upon a present forgetfulness! How afflicting a misery to be united in affection with that, as my best good, which I continually fear to lose, and to have rent away from me!

4. Such addictedness to this earth, *i. e.* the desire of a perpetual abode here; which is the complexion of all earthly-minded men, who herein never limit themselves; but should they live here never so many ages, they would be always of the same mind, I say, their earthly propension is liable to be encountered continually, not with fear only, but despair; and is therefore most vain, irrational, absurd, and tormenting to themselves. Vain, for it contributes nothing to their end. Can any man's adhesion to this earth, be it never so peremptory, perpetuate, or prolong his abode upon it? Irrational, for what is there in this state itself, to be alleged as a plausible reason, why one should desire it to be everlasting? Absurd, for it is to set one's heart upon a known impossibility. What can be more ludicrous, than to contend with necessity, which will at last be too hard for me? to cherish a desire in my soul, wherein I know I must at length be disappointed? And it cannot, in the issue, but be tormenting, and even in the foresight of it; fear afflicts, but despair cannot do less than torment. How amazing is the forethought of being plucked away from one's dwelling-place; rooted out from the land of the living! (Psal. lii. 5.) An immortal spirit torn out of mortal flesh, unto which 'tis now, however, so inwardly connaturalized, as to have no thought, but with abhorrence, of any other state or dwelling! That one's soul should sit trembling on the lip, and muttering, "I fain would stay, but must go, and leave behind me whatsoever I loved best! and not only quit all my former known delights and wonts, but pass into unknown darkness and woes!" *Animula vagula, blandula, &c.* (as he desperately) *O my poor wandering, self-flattering soul, whither art thou going*—into what dismal, horrid places, where thou shalt not jest as thou wast wont!

That a man should thus recount with himself; I have had my good things! my pleasant days are all over, never to return more! And now must I finish them by so violent a death! Driven away (as the wicked is said to be) out of light into darkness, and chased out of the world, John xviii. 5, 18. How calamitous is this case! And how much the more, that it scarce leaves room for a rational, or even for a religious pity. For we read in the mentioned Psal. lii. when we are told, ver. 5. of God's plucking and rooting such out of their dwelling-place, &c. That the righteous shall see and fear, and laugh at them. At once they reverence God, and deride them, ver. 6. And are justified herein by what follows, ver. 7. Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness, *viz.* that he acted so foolish a part, in so plain a case; imagining, that wealth and wickedness, in conjunction, could signify more than all the mercy and justice of a Deity! And did therefore that ridiculous thing, so deservedly to be laughed at by all that are wise and just, as to attempt by so much earth to fill up the room of God! That a reasonable and immortal mind should place its supreme desire upon a terrene good, from which it shortly must be plucked away, against the strongest reluctance! Veneration of the Divine *nemesis* overcomes compassion in this case. Pity towards them is not extinguished, but its exercise suspended only, by religion towards God.

5. This temper of mind (which ought to signify with professed Christians) hath in it a downright repugnancy unto whole Christianity. For consider, and compare things. Here is a heart cleaving to this earth; but did Christ establish his religion to plant men in the earth? Was it not to prepare them for heaven, and then translate them thither? He died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. And he hath redeemed us to God by his blood, Rev. v. 9. And to deliver us from this present world, Gal. i. 4. His kingdom, in the whole constitution and frame of it, is avowedly not of this world; but terminates upon eternity, and an everlasting state. And, therefore, they that mind earthly things, are said to be enemies to the cross of Christ, Phil. iii. 18, 19. Their whole business is nothing else but fighting against, tilting

at the cross! *i. e.* counteracting the design for which Christ was crucified. And can it enter into the imagination of any man, that hath not forfeited the repute of an intelligent creature, or quite lost his understanding; or (if he retain any thing of reason) that hath not abandoned his religion; to think, that the Son of God should come down from heaven, and die on earth, to counteract himself, or only to procure, that such as we might be rich men, be in friendship with this world and enmity with God? here live, eat, drink, trade, gather wealth; and forget who made us, and redeemed us with his blood? Was this the end for which the world was to be Christianized? and Christianity set up among men? and for the founding whereof, the Head and Author of this profession died upon the cross? What an insolent absurdity is it in such as call themselves Christians, to live in so open, continual, and direct opposition to the very end for which Christ died.

6. And in the mentioned case, their very frame carries with it a direct opposition and contradiction to their own profession, *i. e.* supposing they live under the gospel, and profess the Christian religion. They fight not only against Christ, even dying, but themselves. And this is that which the apostle considers with so deep sense, and tenderness, in that mentioned, Phil. iii. There are some, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, they are enemies to the cross of Christ—they mind earthly things. But, in opposition to men of this character, he adds, Our conversation is in heaven. All runs into this at last, they that are Christians indeed, have their conversation in heaven. I now tell you of these earthly-minded ones, even weeping, that they unchristian themselves! What compassion doth it challenge! to see men baptized into Christ's death; to behold immortal spirits united with bodies washed with pure water, therein renouncing this world, and all its pollutions, yet sunk into carnality! buried in flesh! where they should but dwell; living under the gospel, where life and immortality are brought to light, regardless of immortal life; afraid to die, yet void of any inclination to the way of living for ever! And that while they pretend to it, and do really love their death, which their profession obliges them to shun, and dread! (Prov. viii. 36.) So are they made up of contradictions, and inconsistencies with themselves! In the forementioned context, (Phil. iii.) the way and course of walking, which the blessed apostle observed, and lamented with tears, was such, as none of them that took it could be supposed to avow. They were not professed enemies to Christ and Christianity, of whom he complains. It could be no surprise to him, or strange thing, to see men practise according to their known principles. But that enmity to Christ, and his great design, should appear in the lives of Christians, pierced his very soul; and the more for what there follows:

7. That their end will be destruction. For they were to be treated, and dealt with at last, not according to what they did falsely pretend, but what they truly were; besides, that their destruction naturally follows their earthly inclination. They have that death-mark upon them, which is also the true cause why they cannot live. All their designs and inclinations terminate upon earth, that hath nothing in it that souls can live by; and they are enemies to the cross of Christ, *i. e.* to the design of his death thereon, in compliance wherewith stands their very life. For, if they are crucified with him, they live, Gal. ii. 20. The love of this world must be deadly to them excluding Divine love, which is their life. In the same degrees wherein this world, and all worldly lusts, are crucified by the cross of Christ. (Gal. vi. 14.) their true life is renewed and improved. Who can think less is meant by saying so expressly, to be carnally minded is death—to be spiritually minded is life, and peace? Rom. viii. 6. When death is consummate, and finished, their lusts grown mature, and wanting external objects, turn inward with most intense fury, as never-dying worms, on the miserable creature itself; here is the fulness of death!

8. Their destruction must be so much the more grievous for having lived under the Gospel, where the state and the way of life are so plainly revealed. There God's design is laid open, only to continue them under such a dispensation here, as the means of discovery, and operation, to reveal heaven to them, and prepare and fit them for the heavenly state, that they may seasonably be removed thither. But this would never enter into their hearts, while the amusements of their present earthly state have more powerfully diverted them, disposed them to dream and trifle away the precious hours of their gospel-day, rather than improve them to their proper end. To have their spirits remain unimpressed by the Gospel; they have got nothing by it, of what is intended, and aimed at: to have lived so many years, twenty, thirty, forty years, or more, under the Gospel, and have got nothing of a correspondent frame to so glorious a ministration: a Gospel, which calls men to God's eternal kingdom and glory, to be so defeated of its great design! how is this to be accounted for? That is the final term of this call, *viz.* the eternal kingdom, and glory of God, I Thess. ii. 12. I Pet. v. 10. He calls to repentance, faith, and holiness, and to the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ: but the ultimate term of this calling is, his eternal kingdom, and glory, and by Jesus Christ, as it is there expressed, and from the all or fulness of grace; the God of all grace. But now, to have an ear invincibly deaf to this call, that stones might as well have been called to heaven, clogs of earth to turn themselves into stars, and fix themselves in the highest orbs; what a deplorable case is this! what serious heart would it not melt, and dissolve into tears, that from under such a Gospel souls should be dropping down into perdition continually, and we have no way to help it! And if this be a compassionable case to them that behold it, their misery is great that shall endure it.

Great, if we consider how great the salvation was which they neglected. Great, if it be considered, how provoking the affront was to its great prime Revealer, as well as Author, which began to be spoken by the Lord; and the divine attestation afforded to the after-publishers, being confirmed by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, Heb. ii. 3, 4. Whereupon it is demanded, how can the neglecters escape? Great, if we consider their odious and ignominious comparison, and preference of the vanities of this earth, to the Divine and heavenly glory! And add, that they perish in sight of this glorious state; not far from the kingdom of God! having it in view!

2. Let us see, on the contrary hand, the blessedness of them, whose hearts are supremely set upon the heavenly felicity; and who, therefore, only need patience, that they may wait till God sees fit to translate them to it. There are many things to be considered here.

1. Their spirits are attempered to the heavenly state; hereupon they may daily reflect, and view the kingdom of God begun within them, and live in a very pleasant, comfortable expectation, that the first-fruits will be followed by a blessed harvest; that the kingdom within them, consisting in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, (Rom. xiv. 17.) will issue in their being at last received into a most perfectly glorious kingdom; that he, who is working them for that self-same thing, (the state, wherein mortality shall be swallowed up of life,) hath given them the earnest of the Spirit, and thereby assured to them the inheritance itself, 2 Cor. v. 4, 5.

2. They feel, therefore, within themselves, that their patience is not indifference; much less, that it imports aversion to the state they profess to be waiting for; that they love not this present world, and are loth to leave it. Herein communing with themselves, they can appeal to the kind eye of their gracious Lord; and say, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee: and that with so superlative a love, that there is nothing in all this world, which they would not willingly leave, to be with him, as that which for themselves, and considering their own interest only, they count to be best of all. Whereupon also, therefore,

3. Their hearts will bear them this testimony, that their expectation with patience is understood, and designed by them, as their duty. They exercise it in compliance with the Divine pleasure. They dare not prescribe to him about the time, when he will take them up. He enables them patiently to wait, as having formed their hearts to a governable temper, and to be subject to the Father of spirits.

And apprehending, that as he is also peculiarly styled the God of the spirits of all flesh, it must belong to him to determine, both what spirits shall sojourn in flesh, and what shall not; as also to limit the time of their abode there; how long they shall continue in that mean dwelling, and when they shall leave it. Conscience of duty, in this very case, is in itself a pleasant reflection, and sensation! Whence it appearing, that it is a matter of duty; this is further to be considered by them,

4. That their very expectation itself will be rewarded; that since they were willing to wait, though they had real, vivid desires to be dissolved, and to be with Christ; and that their willingness to wait was not idle, but conjunct with a willingness also to serve him in this world, they shall have so much the more ample reward in heaven; their very heaven itself will be so much the more grateful; and they shall have so much the more abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom and glory. They may, therefore, encourage themselves from that consolatory exhortation of the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. ult. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as you know your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. And if no part of that work shall be in vain, nothing of it, according to that connexion which the grace of God hath settled between work and reward, shall be without its recompense; nor consequently any part of that time, in this our state of expectation, which we had for the doing of such work, shall pass without its relative consideration thereto; if only we had opportunity to give one cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple.

Therefore, to shut up all: let us now apply and bend ourselves to this one thing; to get into such a temper of soul, as that we may find, and feel, we need patience to wait for the blessedness of heaven. If we do not sensibly need patience, we are dead, there is no life in us. If we live that life that tends towards God, and will end in eternal life, that life will have sense belonging to it, and that sense will make us feel our need of patience; we shall wait, not like-stupid stocks, but like obedient children. And when we see this to be the genuine temper of a Christian spirit, how uneasy should it be to us, not to be able to say, Blessed be God, it is our temper! Which, if we do find, our own sense not letting us doubt, that, upon the mentioned account, we need patience; our next care must be, that we have it; which will not exclude our feeling the need of it. For when we find, that through the mercy of God, in some competent measure, we have it, our sense of the need of it will not cease, *i. e.* we shall never account that we have it as an unnecessary or needless thing. We shall, indeed, truly judge, with just gratitude, that we do not altogether want it; but shall apprehend we need it still, as that we cannot be without. Yea, and the more we have of it, and are under its dominion and possessive power, the more we shall apprehend its value and excellency, and how needful it is to us. But that when we feel our need, we may not be destitute of it, ought to be our great and very principal care. Nor are we to content ourselves with the mere self-indulgent opinion, that we have it laid up (as in a napkin) in the dull and lazy habit; but must take care, that we have it in act and exercise; which is the express import of that apostolical exhortation, James i. 4. Let patience have its perfect work, *q. d.* take care, not merely, that you have the principle; as where one good and holy principle belonging to the new creature is, there all are; but that we have it in its present use and operation, or in an actual promptitude, and readiness for use and exercise, as the occasions that call for it shall occur; that then we be not as men of might that (though not supposed to want) cannot find their hands, *i. e.* have them not ready for present use.

Moreover, we are here also to consider, that though patience is needful as that text imports, upon the account of mere absence, and expectation of the good, *i. e.* principally the final blessedness contained in the promise; and that this alone is a true ground, upon which patience is necessary, if we look upon the case abstractly, and in *thesi*, or in the theoric, and contemplation: yet when we come to the exercise of patience, we actually find no such case, wherein the expectation of this promised good is alone; but variously complicated with many other occasions, in this our present state, while we dwell in such a world, and in such bodies, that must increase our need of patience. For, taking the whole matter, as may be said, in *concreto*, and as comprehending all our present circumstances, we may be put to expect the promised good, under much suffering for the sake of Christ and a good conscience, as is signified in this context, ver. 32, 33, 34. Enduring a great fight of afflictions—made gazing stocks, by reproaches on ourselves, and as the companions of others so used—suffering the spoiling of our goods, even our all, as to this world; so as nothing shall remain to us, but the (expected) better, the enduring heavenly substance. And we may thus be obliged to expect, amidst great bodily pains and languishings, the concussions and shakings of our earthly tabernacles, while, as yet, they come not down; the outward man daily perishing, but we know not how long it will be ere it actually perish; besides, the more grievous distempers of the inward man, that not being so sensibly renewed, as with many it is not, day by day, 2 Cor. iv. 16. And thus, if we had not others' burdens, we are burden enough to ourselves. Whereupon, the greater our need of patience is, the more earnestly we should endeavour for it. And we are to use very earnest endeavours in order hereto, both with God, and with ourselves.

With *God*, by incessant prayer, as the God of all grace; that, as the apostle speaks in another instance, we may abound in this grace also. Another apostle, St. James, (ch. i. 4, 5.) speaks of this Christian excellency under the name of wisdom. 'Tis plain he so intends; for having (ver. 4.) given the exhortation, Let patience have its perfect work—he subjoins, (ver. 5.) If any man lack wisdom, *i. e.* as is evident, this wisdom, patiently to acquiesce in the Divine pleasure, under whatsoever exercises, or of what continuance soever; than which no part of wisdom can be more necessary, or any thing more apparently wise. But we see what his further direction is upon that supposition, if any man lack this wisdom, let him ask it of God, &c. Agreeably whereto he is pleased to be styled the God of patience, (Rom. xv. 5.) to let us know whether, in this apprehended and felt necessity, our great resort must be. And how kind and compassionate is the encouragement given in the following words of that former text, James i. 5. that he giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; is not apt to reproach frail creatures with the folly of their impatient frettings, but freely, upon their request, to give them that composure of mind which may show them to be truly wise; and wherein their wisdom doth eminently consist. Moreover, we find that elsewhere experience is appealed to for further encouragement, and as a demonstration of God's faithfulness in this case, 1 Cor. x. 13. No temptation hath befallen you but what is common to man, or incident to our present state, and for the bearing whereof you had divine support. And God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted, or tried, above what you are able, or beyond the ability which he will graciously afford you; but will, with the trial, make a way to escape, that you be able to bear it; *i. e.* such a way of escape, as will not avoid bearing, but consist with it; and wherein a vouchsafed ability to bear shall consist; so as that you come off unharmed, and without real hurt or prejudice. And since patience is this ability to bear, how reasonable is it, with a filial faith and confidence, to supplicate for it.

Yet, as we are thus by fervent prayer to strive and wrestle with God; it will argue we are grossly neglectful, or very ignorant of God's usual methods of communicating his gracious assistances, if also we do not, by proper and suitable means, strive, and take pains with ourselves, that we may obtain what we pray for. And nothing can be more suitable to reasonable creatures, that are not to be wrought upon as stocks or stones, but as men and Christians, capable of consideration and thought; and of such thoughts and considerations, as God's own word, which we profess to believe, hath given ground for; of which considerations there are many, wherewith we should urge our own souls to the exercise of such patience as the present case calls for; *i. e.* while as yet we are to continue expectants, waiting his time, for our receiving the promise. In this way we should therefore commune, and discourse this matter with ourselves: Am not I God's creature, the

work of his hands? Hath he not given me breath and being? Was it not for his pleasure, or by his will, that I, with the rest of his creatures, am and was created? Did it not depend upon his will, whether I should be or not be? have any place in his creation? be any thing or nothing for ever? Did not his own free choice determine in what rank or order of creatures I should be placed? Whether among frogs, toads, serpents, or men? Could I choose my place and station in the creation of God? How favourable a vouchsafement was it, that he made me a creature capable of thought, of design, of felicity, of immortality, and eternal life! of receiving such a promise, as I am now expecting to be accomplished and fulfilled unto me! What could be considered here but the good pleasure of God's goodness? How impossible was it that no arbitrary and royal bounty should be prescribed unto! And shall I not now wait with patience for the final result and issue of it?

But how overpowering a consideration should it be with me, to think, I am not only his creature, but one that had offended him, and how unexpressibly what I expect is above the condition of a revolted creature! One fallen from God! in rebellion against him! and by nature a child of wrath! One engaged in the common conspiracy of the apostate sons of Adam, against their sovereign rightful Lord! that were agreed, in one sense, to say to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways: and were all best pleased, to be as without God in the world! Whence is it to me! one of that vile, degenerate, rebellious crew! that a promise should be before me, and in view, pointed at me, (as it is to all that do not disbelieve or despise it) of entering into the blessed rest of God himself! Heb. iv. 1. Or, according to the nearer and more immediate reference of the words we have in hand, chap. x. ver. 34. of having in heaven the better and enduring substance! And shall I not patiently wait for it? Why am I so over hasty, to snatch at what I am bnt dutifully to receive! and with highest admiration, of the rich grace of the glorious Giver!

Is the gift itself wholly in his power, and not the time? Did it not entirely depend upon his pleasure, to give, or not to give? And doth it not as much belong to him to determine when his gift shall take place? Is the substance in his choice, and not the circumstance? The thing itself was infinitely above expectation; and shall it now be grievous to expect the appointed time? There was a time and state of things, when with me, an offender, an obstinate, impenitent rebel, no other expectation could remain, but of wrath, and fiery indignation. It is of mere gracious vouchsafement that I comfortably expect at all; and shall I count it a hardship, that I am not presently told how long? And how relieving a thing should it be against the weariness of such an expectation, that so great a good is sure at last, *viz.* as that contained in the promise! For is not he faithful who hath promised? And hath he not so graciously condescended, as to add to his promise his oath, that by two immutable things, by which it is impossible for God to lie, the heirs of promise might have strong consolation? Heb. vi. 17, 18. And when this assurance is given to the heirs of promise, ver. 17. *i. e.* to the regenerate; for if children then heirs, Rom. viii. 17. nothing can he surer than this, in the general, that all that are regenerate, or sincere Christians, shall inherit at one time, or other. Nothing is left doubtful, but the time when, *i. e.* the time when they shall die. For they that die in Christ are past danger. And the method is prescribed us, of making our calling and election sure.

When, therefore, this is done, how great is the consolation, that one time or other I am sure to die! What can be surer? It is not in the power of all the world, not of the greatest enemy I can have in it, to keep me always there, or hinder my going out of it, at my appointed time. Such therefore our Saviour, under the name of his friends, (Luke xii.) forbids to fear them that kill the body, and, after that, have no more that they can do. Which is a triumph over the impotency of the utmost human malice against good men; the greatest hurt they have it in their own power to do them, is to put it out of their own power ever to hurt them more! and to put them into the possession of the most blessed state!

This consideration, therefore, should, at once, both make us patient of death, when expected as an apprehended evil; and of the expectation of the consequent good, to which it is an appointed, unalterable introduction. Of death, as that which must intervene, and in reference whereto itself, we have need of patience, that we may inherit the promise. For that which is sown is not quickened, except it die. It is necessary we be reconciled to this wise and equal law of our sovereign Lord, by which it is appointed for all men once to die:—that we be satisfied and well pleased, that this world be not continued always, for the production and sustenance of men born in sin: that rebels against heaven are not to be everlastingly propagated here on earth: that God shall not thus perpetuate his own dishonours, and prevent the judgment that is to shut up this scene, and set all things right between him and his revolted creatures, after apt and suitable means used for their reduction and recovery. With how dutiful submission and complacency should we yield, for our parts, to this constitution! so as for ourselves, not to wish for an exemption. For how can we harbonr a desire in our hearts, which we cannot form into a prayer? And how would such a prayer sound, "Lord, when all this world is to die round about me, let me be an excepted instance? Let me live here always?" How presumptuous a request were it! And how foolish! For is not the course of God's procedure herein, from age to age, a constant avowing of the righteousness and of the immutability of his counsel, in reference to it? 'Tis a wretched thing to be engaged in a war with necessity made by righteousness itself, and the most invincible reason! A pagan, represented in the height of madness, was not so mad as not to see this,[b] *that he is a wretched creature, that is unwilling to die, when the world is every where dying with him!* Our patience possessing our souls, will not endure there should be such a *pugna*, a reluctant disposition, not overcome against this inviolable statute and determination; which disposition must be equally disloyal to our Maker and uncomfortable to ourselves.

And this consideration should make us patient in expecting the consequent good, whereto death is the introduction; that the expected good is so ascertained to the friends of Christ, that death intervening cannot be hurtful, or be any bar to onr attainment of the good promised; nor is rationally formidable; since we cannot suppose our Lord would forbid our fearing what we have reason to fear. But unto his friends he forbid the fearing of them that can kill the body only, and after that have no more that they can do; but requires them to fear him, that can cast soul and body into hell. It is plainly implied, that killing the body is no hurt or damage to the soul; it cannot separate from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, Rom. viii. 38, 39. No, nor the principalities and powers which, in that juncture, in that very article, or instant of dying, will be sure to do their uttermost to work that separation. And considering this bodily death as an introduction to blessedness, it not only can infer no damage, but it must be our great advantage. Which is implied in the mentioned context, Luke xii. 8. Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will the Son of man confess before the angels of God. For though it is not the lot of every Christian to be an actual martyr, yet every true Christian is an habitual one. Whosoever, therefore, dies with a fixed disposition of spirit never upon any terms, to deny Christ, he assures us he will solemnly own them, even before all the angels; which must include their being admitted into a most blessed state. When also such are expressly told, that all things are theirs, (1Cor. iii. 21, 22.) and *death* is reckoned into the account of the *all things*, this cannot but signify that death is to be, not only no detriment to them, but their advantage and gain; which is also plainly spoke out, Phil. i. 21. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. And that most gainful good being so fully assured to them, they have all the reason in the world to expect it with patience.

Moreover, how consolatory must it be to them, that

[b] Miser est quicunq; non vult, mundo secum meriente, mori. Sen. Trag.

have any taste of spiritual and heavenly things, that so pleasant a way is prescribed them of living, through the whole time of their expecting state, *i. e.* as long as they live in the flesh, *viz.* to live by faith in the Son of God, Gal. ii. 20. How unspeakable is the joy and pleasure of that way of living! That all the days of our abode in the flesh, we have so great a one as the glorious ever-blessed Son of God to depend upon; by continual, and often repeated vital acts, resigning ourselves to his conduct and government, and deriving from that fulness, which it pleased the Father should dwell in him, all needful supplies of grace, spirit, life, and righteousness; and that we are taught to consider him, not as a stranger, or one unrelated to us, or unconcerned for us; but who hath loved us, and (which is the highest evidence hereof) given himself for us, that great, rich, and glorious self! In whom, therefore, our faith may not only repose, and acquiesce, but triumph and glory! And that we may do thus, not by rare, unfrequent, and long intermitted intervals; but as long as we breathe in mortal flesh, even to the last breath! Should such a way of living be tedious, and irksome to us? Though we expect long, we are not to expect as forlorn creatures, without Christ, and without hope, and without God in the world! Therefore, in how high transports of spirit should we exult, and bless God, who hath so stated our case; endeavouring to our uttermost and earnestly aspiring to that excellent temper of spirit, (Col. i. 11, 12.)—to be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience, and long-suffering, with joyfulness, giving thanks.—And how overpowering a consideration should this be with us! What! am I to aim at that high pitch of all patience, and long-suffering with joyfulness; and, instead of repining, to give thanks; and have I not attained so far, as to meet patience? My not being able to endure the enjoined expectation, should make me not endure myself!

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING SOME MEMORIAL

OF DOCTOR HENRY SAMPSON,

A LATE NOTED PHYSICIAN IN THE CITY OF LONDON.

Although the foregoing discourse is grounded upon the same text of Scripture that was insisted on soon after the notice was brought me of this worthy person's decease, and upon the occasion thereof; yet this discourse itself cannot admit to be called a funeral sermon. The frequent and inward conversation I had with him, divers years, gave me ground to apprehend, that the temper and complexion of his mind and spirit did very much agree with the sense and import of this text; which, when I heard of his death, first led my thoughts to it; and was my inducement to say something of it in public, with some particular reference to him, in whom I had seen an exemplification of it in an eminent degree. But of what was then said, I could now give no distinct account. For having then no thought of its further publication, and my own long languishings presently ensuing, what was spoken upon that occasion, was with me lost. Nor was it afterwards decent to offer at publishing a sermon, for the funeral of one, though very dear to me, that was deceased so long before. Yet God affording me, at length, some respiration from the extremity of those painful distempers that had long afflicted me; apprehending, that a discourse upon this subject might be of some use to divers others besides the present hearers, I did, by intervals, set myself to reconsider it. And only now take this occasion to annex some memorial of this excellent person, that first drew my thoughts to it. He was long a member, and lived in communion with many of us, in the same church, *viz.* by the space of thirty years, under the pastoral inspection of the Reverend Doctor Jacomb, and of him who, with great inequality, succeeded him. This he signified himself, in a paper written by his own hand, and delivered to me when we were entering upon the administration of the Lord's supper, the last time that God ordered him that opportunity with us. The paper was thus:

"Sir,

"It is my request to you, that you will please to acquaint the congregation with the great sense I have of the mercy of God, that hath afforded me communion with them, and their ministry, for thirty years together. But now being, by the providence of God, deprived of my health in the city, I am to seek relief thereof in the country air, and shall thereby be, in a great measure, deprived of those blessings; yet I earnestly desire their prayers for me, and my family, that in some sort of such intercourse, our communion may continue still, if not in body, yet in spirit.

Your servant,

HENRY SAMPSON."

He now found himself constrained by his declining age, and growing distempers, to retire from us (but not without very great reluctancy) into a village at no great distance from the city; but which, for change of air, was necessary, and, as he found, relieving to him. From thence his earnest desire to visit his relations, and native country, engaged him in a long journey, as far as Nottinghamshire. And that journey brought him into the better, even the heavenly country: God so ordering it, that near the place where he drew his first breath, he should draw his last; and end a very holy useful life, not far from the very spot where he began to live. For reaching the seat of a reverend brother of his, near to that of his birth, he there found, but for a very few days, a temporal, and there entered upon his eternal rest. So falling a little short of the (*patrias sedes*) the place that had been the dwelling of his earthly parents, by a joyful anticipation, he sooner arrived at his heavenly Father's house, and found his place among the many mansions, and everlasting habitations, where was to be his proper and perpetual home. It is not now my design to write the history of his life, the former part, and therefore the longer course and tract whereof, must have been more known to divers of our society, than it could be to me; though I have had much opportunity also, within the space of twenty years past, to understand and know much of it. But that must contain many things which, though useful in their kind, my circumstances allow me not to relate. Nor shall I enlarge in giving his character, though the subject is copious; for my present infirmities will make my limits narrow, whether I will or no.

But a man of so real value, and usefulness in his station, and of so instructive, and exemplary a conversation,

ought not to be neglected, or be let slide off the stage from among us, without some such observation, as may some way answer a debt owing to his memory; and be a real gain and advantage to ourselves. He began his course, favoured by the Author of nature, with very good natural parts; and very early enriched with communications of the more excellent kind, by the God of all grace. Herewith, having his spirit seasoned, and deeply tinctured betimes, the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, became, near the beginning of his course, the governing principle thereof. His choice was, therefore, of that way and state, wherein he, in the general, conceived he might most glorify God, and do most good to men. And because, he thought, he might serve those ends best, in that high and noble employment, wherein he should be obliged principally, and most directly, to intend the saving of men's souls, thither he more immediately bent and directed his preparatory endeavours.

And, therefore, though in his academical studies, wherein he spent several years, he neglected no part of that rational learning, which was most fitly conducing and serviceable to this his purpose; yet he most earnestly applied himself to the gaining a thorough acquaintance with those languages, wherein the Holy Scriptures were originally written; and spared no cost to procure great variety of the best and most celebrated editions of both the testaments, with other helps, for the attaining of that most necessary knowledge; whereof his library, so richly furnished in that kind, did appear, after his decease, a full evidence; to the bettering of divers other libraries, of such as he had formerly been wont to hear, and among them, as I must with gratitude acknowledge, by his special kindness and bequest, my own. Accordingly this had been his calling, if the way of managing it could as much have been the matter of his choice, guided by his judgment and conscience, as the calling itself had been.

But things falling out, in this respect, otherwise, before he could solemnly enter upon it; he seasonably diverted from it, to that which he judged the next best; and wherein the persons of men were still to be the objects of his care. Things of higher excellency than lands and riches; as life and the body are, by the verdict of our Saviour, of more worth than their perquisites, food and raiment, unto which, ample estates and revenues are but more remotely subservient. And the vicinity of this to that other most excellent calling, is so near, that it is an easy step from it to the affairs of the other. Which we see exemplified in that excellent person, a dear and most worthy [a] relative of the deceased; unto whose historical account of him, subjoined to this discourse, I refer the reader for fuller information: whose most useful and elaborate works may not only occasion us to consider theology as every one's business, or the calling of a divine as in some respect transcendental, and running through every man's calliog; but that of a physician, as more nearly allied to it than any other; many excellent speculations being common, and, as those works show, of great importance, to both. And in which performance that accurate writer doth not, indeed, preach to the vulgar, but instructs preachers. And, as it hath been sometime thought a greater thing to make a king, than to be one, he hath attained a higher degree, above being, himself, one single preacher, in doing that whereby now, and in future time, he may contribute to the making of many.

These are some instances, and blessed be God, 'tis to be hoped there are others, which show, that *Religio Medici* is not always opprobrious, or a note of ignominy and reproach; and that a beloved physician, on the best account, was not appropriate to the first age. That calling gives very great opportunity to a man of a serious spirit, of doing good to men's souls; and I know, it hath been improved by some, to discourse, and to pray with their dying patients; and when their art could not immortalize their bodies, they did all that in them lay for the saving their immortal souls. And this, I have reason to think, was a great part of the practice of this worthy man. In the proper business of this calling, he sincerely studied the good of mankind; endeavouring to his utmost, to lengthen out their time in this world, in order to their further preparation for the other. And herein his skill was not unequal to his sincerity; nor his charity to his skill: for being applied to, upon no former acquaintance, when the cases of extreme illness and extreme poverty have met together, he hath most cheerfully embraced the opportunity of doing such good; declaring, he was ready as well to serve the poor, when he was to receive nothing, as the rich, from whom he might expect the largest fees: his visits have been there repeated with equal constancy and diligence. He equally rejoiced in the success of such endeavours, whereof he had no other recompense, than the satisfaction of having relieved the distressed and the miserable. And of such, some do survive him, to whom the remembrance of his name is still grateful and dear. Nor were the great advantages lost, which he had gained, for the instructing a congregation, (had the state of things and his judgment concurred thereto,) for they eminently appeared to such as had the privilege of living under his roof, and of partaking in the instructions which his great acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures enabled him to give them from time to time: which, together with his daily fervent prayers, and holy conversation, made his family as a well ordered and a watered garden, compared with the howling wilderness of too many others.

But in all my conversation with him, nothing was more observable, or more grateful to me, than his pleasant and patient expectation of the blessed state, which he now possesses. The mention whereof would make joy sparkle in his eye, and clothe his countenance with cheerful looks; accompanied with such tokens of serenity, and a composed temper of mind, as showed and signified submission, with an unreluctant willingness to wait for that time, which the wisdom and goodness of God should judge seasonable for his removal out of a world, which he loved not; nor yet could disaffect from any sense of its unkindness to him, but only from the prospect he had of a better. Which made me think him a fit example of what is treated of in the foregoing discourse.

[a] Dr. Grew.

THE WORTHY

DOCTOR GREW'S ACCOUNT

OF THIS HIS EXCELLENT BROTHER-IN-LAW.

Doctor Henry Sampson was the son and heir of a religious gentleman, Mr. William Sampson of South-Leverton, in Nottinghamshire; and nephew to those two eminent linguists, Mr. John and Mr. Samuel Vicars, the joint authors of the Decapla on the Psalms. In his minority, he was first under the government of his most virtuous mother. Upon her re-marriage of his father-in-law, the very reverend Doctor Obadiah Grew of Coventry; by whom he was committed, at the age of fifteen, to the tutorage of Mr. William Moses, then fellow, and some time after the learned and worthy master, of Pembroke Hall, in Cambridge. Under whom, his proficiency was such, as preferred him to be the moderator of his year. So soon as he was of sufficient standing, he was chosen fellow of the same Hall. And, not long after, had one of the best livings in the gift of the college bestowed upon him, *viz.* that of Framlingham in Suffolk. Here he was, when he published that correct edition of the learned Thesis of Mr. Thomas Parker, entitled, Methodus Divinæ Gratiæ, &c. a golden book, with a golden epistle of his own prefixed to it; both of them having a great deal of weight in a little room. While he continued here, he made several visits to Coventry, where he often preached for the Doctor, his father-in-law, with great acceptation, as well as among his own people. In both which places his name is as a precious ointment, and his memory had in honour unto this day. Upon the restoration of King Charles, being obliged to leave his people, he resolved, as well because he was never reclaimed, as for some other reasons, to qualify himself for the practice of physic. In order whereunto, having visited several universities, famous for medicine abroad, he stayed first at Padua, and then at Leyden, for some time. In the latter of which he became very well acquainted with that eminent person, the Lord Chief Justice St. John, who bore a singular respect to him, as long as he lived. Having here taken his degree, he returned home and settled in this city. Where also, for order's sake, he entered himself of the College of Physicians, as an honorary fellow. Among the members whereof, he justly obtained the repute of being substantially learned in all the parts of his profession. Besides other improvements he aimed at, he laid up a considerable treasure of observations made of diseased bodies, dissected with his own hand. Nor did he lose any of his spare hours; as appears by many historical papers relating to theology, left behind him. All which, though they have been long suppressed, partly through his own great modesty, and partly the infirmities of his latter years, which permitted him to finish but few, if any, of them; yet it is hoped, that some of both kinds may ere long see the light. His reading and speculation were ever in order unto action. By which means, as he became, under all relations, in every station of his life, desirable and exemplary unto others; so he enjoyed the happiness of continual peace within. And as he lived, he died; his last hours being very composed, and concluding with that *εὐθανασία*, *euthanasia*, for which he had often prayed.

A DISCOURSE

CONCERNING THE

REDEEMER'S DOMINION OVER THE INVISIBLE WORLD,

AND THE ENTRANCE THEREINTO BY DEATH.

SOME PART WHEREOF WAS PREACHED ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF JOHN HOGHTON, ESQ. ELDEST SON OF SIR CHARLES HOGHTON, OF HOGHTON TOWER, IN THE COUNTY OF LANCASTER, BARONET.

TO THE MOST DESERVEDLY HONOURED AND TRULY HONOURABLE

SIR CHARLES AND THE LADY MARY HOGHTON,

OF HOGHTON TOWER.

Grace, mercy, and peace, &c.

You will, I know, count it no indecency, that, when God hath so nearly, many years ago, joined you in relation, in affection, and now so lately, in the affliction equally common to you both, I do also join your names on the same paper, and make this solemn address to you together.

It is by the inestimable favour of Heaven, that the mutual interest God hath given you in each other, as it obligeth, doth also (as I have great reason to hope) effectually dispose and enable you so not only to partake in the comforts, but in the sorrows, that are common to you both, as that the former shall be greatly increased, and the latter proportionably allayed and mitigated, thereby. Thus is the advantage of your conjugal state both *represented* in God's designation, and *apprehended* in your own experience.

And you are to consider the blessing of God herein as having a peculiarity in it, not being extended to all so related, neither to all that were great in this world, nor to all that were pious and good. Great worldly felicity hath been rendered insipid and spiritless, great calamities much the more bitter, by the want of a meet mutual helpfulness between such relations.

A great and a good man,* in his time, a prince, as he is thought to have been, in his country; "a man that was perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil;" when he lost not *one*, not the *eldest* only, of his numerous offspring, (as you have,) but all at once, seven sons and three daughters, with such concomitant circumstances of accumulated afflictions, as, blessed be God, are not in your case; and might now expect some relief from his other self, the nearest and most inward companion of his life, and partaker of his joys and sorrows; all the succour he had from her, was an impious endeavour to provoke and irritate his spirit; that taunting scoff, "Dost thou still retain thy integrity?" and that horrid advice, "Curse God and die." Whereas that rational, religious, soul-composing thought, "Shall we receive good things at the hand of God, and not also evil things?" was deeply fixed in the mind of the one. how much more effectually relieving had it been, if it had circulated between both the relatives; and they had alternately propounded and enlarged upon it to one another!

With you, I cannot doubt, it hath been so; and that you have made it your business to improve your mutual interest, not to aggravate, but to alleviate your affliction each to other.

You have both of you great occasion and obligation to revolve and recount to each other the many good things you have received at the hand of God, to mitigate what there is of evil in this dispensation.

Both of you have sprung of religious and honourable families, favoured of God, valued and beloved in the countries where he had planted them. They have been both seats of religion, and of the worship of God: the resorts of his servants: houses of mercy to the indigent, of justice to the vicious, of patronage to the sober and virtuous, of good example to all about them.

You were both dedicated to God early, and he gave early testimony of his accepting the dedication. He began with you both betimes, blessing your education, and owning you for his, by disposing and forming your spirits to own betimes the God of your fathers. He hath blessed you indeed, adding the spiritual blessings in heavenly things to your many earthly comforts. Which Jabez might mean, not content with a common blessing; and the more probably, from the acceptance he found, 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10. God granted his request, as Solomon's, when his request was as little vulgar, 1 Kings iii. 10.

You both concurred in the dedication of *this* your son, as in the rest of yours; and I doubt not with great seriousness, you covenanted with God in Christ, to be his God. And if he enabled you to be in good earnest herein, even that was of special grace and favour, and ought to come into the account of the many good things you have received of God's hand; as offering to God willingly did in the estimate of David, when the oblation was of a meaner kind, 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

But then you ought to consider, what the import and meaning was of that your covenant, wherein you accepted God in Christ to be the God of your son; and dedicated him to God through Christ to be his. Was it not absolute, and

* Job i. 1.

without limitation, that God should be a God to him entirely and without reserve, and that he should be his absolutely, and be disposed of by him at his pleasure? Otherwise, there was a repugnancy and contradiction in the very terms of your covenant. To be a God to him! Is not *God the* name of a Being incapable of limitation? Doth it not signify infinite, unlimited power and goodness? To be a God to any one, therefore, under restriction, is to be *a God* to him, and *no* God. And so to covenant with God, can neither have sincerity in it, nor good sense. He can be under no restraint in the exercises of his power and goodness towards any to whom he vouchsafes to be their God in covenant; but what he is pleased to lay upon himself, which must be from his own wisdom and good pleasure, to which in covenanting we refer ourselves; with *particular* faith—in reference to what he hath expressly promised; and with *general*—that all shall be well, where his promise is not express. But from ourselves, nothing can be prescribed to him. He must be our all, or nothing; in point of enjoyment, as our sovereign, all-comprehending good; in point of government, as our sovereign, all-disposing Lord. So we take him, in covenanting with him for ourselves and ours: for he so propounds and offers himself to us. If we accept and take him accordingly, there is a covenant between him and us; otherwise we refuse him, and there is no covenant. When he promises, as to his part, he promises his all; to be God all-sufficient to us; to be ours in all his fulness, according to our measure and capacity: we are not straitened in him, but in ourselves. He undertakes to be to us, and do for us, all that it belongs to him, as a God, to be and do. To give us *grace and glory, about which, there can be no dispute or doubt: they are always and immutably good; and to withhold from us no good things: here, are comprehended, with the former, inferior good things, about which, because they are but mutably, and not always good, there may be a doubt, whether now, and in present circumstances, they will be good for us, or no. And now, it belongs to him, as he is to do the part of a God to us, to judge and determine for us, (for which he alone is competent, as being God only wise, and otherwise he were not God all-sufficient,) and not to leave that to us, who are so apt to be partial and mistaken in our judgment.

But when he makes his demand from us, of what we on our part are to be, and do, he demands our all, absolutely; that we surrender ourselves and ours, whatsoever we are and have, to his pleasure and dispose, without other exception or restriction than by his promise he hath laid upon himself.

Nor are we to think it strange there should be this difference, in the tenor of his covenant, between his part and ours. For we are to remember, that the covenant between him and us is not as of equals. He covenants as God; we, as creatures: He, according to the universal, infinite perfection and all-sufficiency of a God; we, according, to the insufficiency, imperfection, and indigency of creatures.

These things were, I doubt not, all foreknown, and I hope considered, by you, when you so solemnly transacted with God, concerning this your son; wherein you could not but then take him for your God, as well as his God. It needs now *only* to be applied to the present case; and it manifestly admits this application, *viz.* That this his disposal of him, in taking him now up to himself, to be glorified by him, and to glorify him in the heavenly state, was a thing then agreed upon by solemn covenant, between God and you. It was done by your own virtual and unretracted consent. The substance of the thing was agreed to expressly; that God should be his God, and finally make him happy and blessed in himself. But if you say, you would only have had his complete blessedness yet a while deferred; I will only say, Could you agree with that God whose he was, and whose you are, about the substance of so great a transaction; and now differ with him about a circumstance? And besides, all circumstances must be comprehended in your agreement. For, taking him to be your God, you take him to be supreme Disposer in all things, and his will to be in every thing the rule and measure of yours; which you have expressly consented to as often as you have prayed, either in the words, or after the tenor, of that prayer, wherein our Lord hath taught us to sum up our desires, and represent the sense of our hearts.

But besides the duty that is, both by his law, and by covenant-agreement, owing to God, it is also to be considered as a high dignity put upon you, to be the covenanted parents of a glorified son; a matter of greater boast, than if you could say, "Our son" (to repeat what I formerly wrote) "is one of the greatest princes on earth!"

How far should paganism be outdone by Christianity, which exhibits to our view death abolished, life and immortality brought to light, by Jesus Christ, in the Gospel! 2 Tim. i. 10. Which sets before us all the glories of the other world in a bright representation! Which, if we believe, that faith will be to us the substance of what we hope for, and the evidence of what we see not. Thus, though you saw not the kind reception and abundant entrance of this son of your delights into the everlasting kingdom, it will yet be a thing evident to you, and your faith will render it a great and most substantial reality. Pagans had but obscure glimmerings of such things; and in such afflicting cases, when they have occurred, comparatively lank and slender supports; yet such as were not to be despised.

Should I transcribe what I find written in way of consolation, by Plutarch to Apollonius, upon the loss of a son, you would see what would give both instruction and admiration. I shall mention some passages. He praises the young person deceased, for his comeliness, sobriety, piety, dutifulness towards parents, obligingness towards friends; acknowledges that sorrow, in the case of losing such a son, hath (*φυσικὴν ἀρχὴν*) *a principle in nature*, and is of the things that are (*οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν*) *not in our power*, or which we cannot help; that to be destitute of it is neither possible nor fit; that an apathy, or insensibleness, in such a case, is no more desirable than that we should endure to have a limb, a part of ourselves, cut or torn off from us, without feeling it. But yet affirms, that immoderate sorrow, upon such an occasion, is (*παρὰ φύσιν*) *preternatural*, and hath a pravity in it, and proceeds from a misinformed mind; that we ought in any such case to be neither (*ἀπαθεῖς*, nor *ὑπεραθεῖς*) *unaffected*, nor *ill affected*. He tells his friend a story (the meaning whereof is more considerable to us, than the credit of it, as perhaps it was to him) concerning two Grecian youths, Cleobis and Biton, whose mother having a duty to perform in the temple of Juno, and the mules not being at hand, in the instant when she expected them to draw her chariot thither, they most officiously drew it themselves; with which act of piety, their mother was so transported, that she made her request to Juno, on their behalf, that if there were any thing more desirable unto mortals than other, she would therewith reward her sons; who, thereupon, threw them into a sleep, out of which they awaked no more: thereby signifying, that death was the best gift that could be bestowed upon persons of such supposed piety as they!

To which purpose, is what he relates concerning the death of Euthynous, an Italian, referred to towards the close of the following discourse, son and heir to the ample estate of Elysius, a person of principal dignity among the Terinæans; to whom, anxiously inquiring of diviners concerning the cause of this calamity, the spectre of his son, introduced by the father of the latter, appeared in his sleep, showing him certain Greek verses, the sum whereof was, Thy inquiry was foolish.

> The minds of men are vain, Euthynous rests by a kindly decreed death,
> Because his living longer had neither been good for him nor his parents.

He afterwards adds, A good man, when he dies, is worthy, not so much of lamentations, as of hymns and praises.

He animadverts upon the aptness of parents to quarrel with any circumstances of a son's death, be they what they will. If he die abroad, then the aggravation is, that neither the father nor the mother had opportunity to close his eyes; if at home, then, How is he plucked away, even out of our hands!

* Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

He gives divers memorable instances, of sundry great persons, bearing, with strange composure of mind, the same kind of affliction; I omit what he wrote to his wife on their loss of a child; as also to recite many very instructive passages out of Seneca writing to Marcia, on the same account, *viz.* by way of consolation for her loss of a son, and to Helvia, for her loss in the same kind; to Polybius, having lost a near relation, &c.

But we have the oracles of God, and do, too commonly, less need to receive instruction from Heathens than deserve to be reproached by them; that there is so frequent cause for the complaint of that ancient worthy * in the Christian church; *Non præstat fides quod præstitit infidelitas—The infidelity of pagans performs greater things than the faith of Christians.* Their sedate temper, their mastery over turbulent passions, may in many instances shame our impotency and want of self-government, in like cases.

For who of them have ever had, or could have, so great a thing to say, as is said to us by the word of the Lord, 1 Thess. iv. 13. for this very purpose, "that we may not sorrow concerning them that are asleep, even as others who have no hope:" *i. e.* ver. 14. "If we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For (ver. 15.) this we say to you," (and 'tis said by the forementioned authority; the Lord himself having revealed it to this great apostle, and directed him to say it,) "that we who are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep." Ver. 16. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Ver. 17. "Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up, together with them, in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Ver. 18. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

I have transcribed these few verses, that they might readily appear to present view. And because all their efficacy, and all our advantage by them, depend upon our believing them, let us closely put the question to ourselves, Do we believe them, or do we not? The apostle seems to design the putting us upon this self-reflection, ver. 14. by inserting the supposition, *If we believe, q. d.* This will effectually do the business of allaying all our hopeless sorrow. For if we believe that one fundamental truth, (and therefore let us see whether we do or no,) of Christ's dying and rising again, it will draw such a train of consequences, all tending to fill our souls with a vital joy, as will leave no place for undue sorrow any longer. That faith will be still urging and carrying us forward, will make us wholly intent upon prospect and expectation. What are we now to look for upon such a foundation, so firmly laid, and fully believed? If we believe that Jesus died! He did not submit to die without a design; and his rising again, speaks him master of his design, and that he hath it now entirely in his power. He died not for himself, but for them he was to redeem! And being now risen again, what must become of them? All that follows, is now matter of glorious triumph!

If Plato, Plutarch, or Seneca, had but once had such a revelation from heaven as this, and had that ground to believe it that we have, how full would their writings have been of it! How had they abounded in lofty paraphrases upon every period and word of it!

The faith of such things would surely make a truly Christian heart so earnestly press forward in the expectation of the great things still to ensue, as to leave it little leisure for retrospection. And this is the source of all our intemperate sorrow, in such a case as this—our framing to ourselves pleasing suppositions of being as we were, with such and such friends and relatives about us as we heretofore enjoined. As hope of what is future and desirable feeds our joy; so memory of good things past doth our sorrow. In such a case as this, which the apostle here speaks to, the decease of our dear friends and relatives fallen asleep, we are apt to look back with a lingering eye upon that former state of things, and to say, as he, *O mihi preteritos—O that God would recall for me the years that are gone over!*—Or, as in sacred language, "O that I were as in months past—when the †secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me; when my children were about me!"

What pleasant scenes do we form to ourselves afresh, of past things, on purpose to foment present sorrow! And whether we have that design or no, we are more prone to look back to former things we have known, than forward to future we know not; especially, if the further we look back the less we find of trouble intermingled in our former course. A smooth and pleasant path we would go over again, if reason and the necessity of affairs do not recall us, and urge us forward.

And so, Sir, might you find matter for a very copious and not ungrateful recollection, to call over again, and revolve in your thoughts, the pleasures of your youth, (more innocent than of many others,) when you were encumbered with no cares, entertained with various delights of one sort and another, in this or that pleasant seat of your parents. But how remote is it from you, upon consideration, to wish yourself back into your juvenile state and circumstances! How much more generous and Godlike pleasure is it, to be doing good in the world, and still to abound therein; to go forward, and do still more and more!

And, Madam, who could have a more pleasant retrospect upon former days than you? recounting your Antrim delights, the delight you took in your excellent relations, your garden-delights, your closet-delights, your Lord's-days delights! But how a much greater thing is it to serve God in your present station; as the mother of a numerous and hopeful offspring; as the mistress of a large family; where you bear your part, with your like-minded consort, in supporting the interest of God and religion, and have opportunity of scattering blessings round about you!

But our business is not recurring, or looking back. God is continually calling us forward. Time is a stream running on towards the vast ocean. Tending backward, is vain striving against the stream. And as it is the course and method of nature, of providence, and grace, to tend forward, and carry us from less to greater things in this world; so do all these conspire to carry us on (because our ἀκμὴ, *our highest pitch*, cannot be here) to yet far greater things in the greater world. Of which vast world, it is the design of the following discourse to give you some account; though, God knows, it is but a very imperfect one. Such as it is, if God only make it an occasion to you, of fixing your minds and hearts upon that mighty theme, you will find it easy and pleasant to you to amplify upon it and enlarge it to yourselves. And thereby, through God's blessing, I doubt not, arrive to a fulness of satisfaction concerning this late dispensation, which hath a gloominess upon it; but is in very deed only gloomy on one side, *viz.* downwards, and towards this wretched world, this region of sorrow and darkness: but on the side upwards, and towards that other world which casts its lustre upon it, its phasis and appearance will be altogether bright and glorious. And the more you look by a believing intuition into that other world where our blessed Redeemer and Lord bears rule in so transcendent glory, the more will you be above all the cloudy darkness of this event of Providence towards yourselves and your family. Herein your perusal of this very defective essay may be of some use to you. And I reckoned it might be of more lasting and permanent use to you, and yours after you, and to as many others into whose hands it might fall, as a little book, than as one single sermon.

You will, however, I doubt not, apprehend in it the sincere desire to assist you in this your present difficult trial; followed by the faithful endeavour of,

Most honoured in the Lord,

Your very respectful and obliged servant,

in him, and for his sake, JOHN HOWE.

* Hierom. † Job xxix. 1—5.

THE

REDEEMER'S DOMINION, &c.

REV. I. 18.

——AND HAVE THE KEYS OF HELL (HADES, OR THE UNSEEN WORLD) AND OF DEATH.

THE peculiar occasion of this present solemnity (I mean, that is additional to the usual business of the Lord's day) may be somewhat amusing to narrower and less considering minds; *i. e.* That I am now to take notice to you of (what the most would call) the premature or untimely death of a most hopeful young gentleman, the heir of a very considerable family, greatly prepared by parts and pious sentiments, and further preparing by study and conversation, to be useful to the age, cut off in his prime, when the mere showing him [a] to the world had begun to raise an expectation, in such as knew him, of somewhat more than ordinary hereafter from him, his future advantageous circumstances being considered, of which you will hear further towards the close of this discourse.

Nor did I know any passage in the whole sacred volume, more apt to serve the best and most valuable purpose in such a case, than the words now read; none more fitted to enlarge our minds, to compose them, and reduce to a due temper even theirs who are most concerned, and most liable to be disturbed, or to instruct us all how to interpret and comment aright upon so perplexing and so intricate a providence as this, at the first and slighter view, may seem unto us.

In order whereto, our business must be to explain and apply this most weighty awful saying,

First, For the *explication*, these three things are to be inquired into.

I. Who it is that claims and asserts to himself this power here spoken of.

II. What it is about which this claimed power is to be conversant.

III. What sort of power it is that this emblematical expression signifies to belong to him.

I. Who it is that claims the power here spoken of; where the inquiry is not so much concerning the person that makes this claim, which all the foregoing context puts out of question to be our Lord Christ; but touching the special notion and capacity wherein he claims it, and according whereto it must be understood to belong to him.

And whereas he is described by very distinct titles and attributes, promiscuously interwoven in the preceding verses of the chapter, *viz.* that sometimes he is introduced speaking in the style of a God; (as *v.* 8. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. And again, *v.* 11. I am Alpha and Omega;) but that sometimes he is represented in the form of a man, and accordingly described even from head to foot, and said to appear in the vision that exhibits him as one like unto the Son of man, that we might certainly understand him so to be, *v.* 13—16. And such things said of him as are incident to a mortal man, the shedding of his blood, *v.* 5. and that he was dead, *v.* 18, *former part.* Yea, and expressions of this different import intermingled, that we might know it was the same Person that was continually spoken of under these so vastly different characters; as, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead, *v.* 17, 18. We may thereupon very reasonably conclude that he is not here to be conceived under the one notion or the other, neither as God nor as man, separately or exclusively of each other; but as both together, as Θεάνθρωπος, as *God-man*, under which conjunct notion, he receives and sustains the office of our Redeemer, and Mediator between God and man.

Which will enable us the more clearly to answer the third inquiry, when we come to it, concerning the kind of that power which is here claimed; and which, because there can be no doubt of the justice of his claim, we are hereby taught to ascribe to him.

For the management whereof, we are also hence to reckon him every way competent; that he was *par negotio*, that it was not too big for him; no expressions being used to signify his true humanity, but which are joined with others, as appropriate to deity. And that nothing therefore obliges us to narrow it more than the following account imports, which we are next to inquire about; *viz.*

II. The large extent of the object about which the power he here claims is to be conversant; *i. e. Hades* (as we read *hell*, but which is truly to be read the unseen world) and death.

The former of these we, with a debasing limitation, and (as I doubt not will appear) very unreasonably, do render *hell*.

The power belonging to Christ, we are elsewhere taught to conceive, is of unspeakably greater latitude. And here we are not taught to confine it to so vile and narrow limits, as this translation gives it. All things in the context conspire to magnify him, and, agreeably hereto, to magnify his dominion. When therefore the apparent design is to speak him *great*, that he should only be represented as the Jailer of devils, and their companions, is, to me, unaccountable; unless a very manifest necessity did induce to it.

For the word ἅιδης, there can be no pretence for it. Though it ought to be extended, it is by no means to be restrained to that sense; which as it is the ignoblest, so it will appear but a very small, minute part of its signification; whether we consider the literal import, or the common use, of the word.

[a] Ostendunt terris hunc tantum, fata nec ultra esse sinunt.

Literally, it signifies but what we see not, or what is out of our sight. And as the word of which it is compounded signifies also to know, as well as to see, it may further signify, that state of things which lies without the compass of our knowledge, even out of the reach of our mental sight; or concerning which, though we are to believe what is revealed, we cannot immediately or distinctly know it; and in reference whereto, therefore, we are to walk by faith, not by sight, 2 Cor. v. 7.

And the common use of the word hath been very agreeable hereto, with the writers of all sorts; *i. e.* to signify indefinitely the unseen world; or the state of the deceased out of our world, who are, consequently, gone out of our sight, whether they were good or bad; so as not peculiarly to signify hell, or any place or state of torment only.

It were easy to abound in quotations to this purpose, if it were either needful or proper in a discourse of this nature.

What I intend in this kind, I shall only set down on the bye in the margin, upon which they that will may cast their eye;[b] that the discourse be not interrupted as to others, that either have no need to be informed in this matter, having known as much before as can be now told them; or no inclination to be diverted from their present purpose in reading; apprehending that what is generally told them, only concerning the usual signification of a word, is not said without some ground. And let texts of Scripture be consulted about that, how *hades*, and the correspondent word in the Old Testament, *sheol*, are used there. If we take the help of interpreters, the impartial reader is to judge of their fidelity and ability who go our way.[c]

Upon the whole, it being most evident that hell is but a small and mean part of what is signified by *hades*, it will be very unreasonable to represent or conceive of the power here ascribed to our Lord, according to that narrow notion of it. And would be a like incongruity, as if, to magnify the person of highest dignity in the court of a mighty prince, one should say, "He is the keeper of the dungeon."

The word itself, indeed, properly taken, and according to its just extent, mightily greatens him, *i. e.* 'tis as much as to say, His dominion is of unknown limits; such as no eye can measure. We think with a sort of veneration, of what is represented as too big for our knowledge. We have a natural awe and reverence for unsearchable darkness. But in the meantime we herein suffer a just diminution of ourselves, that when our inquiry stops, and can proceed no further, it being but a very little part of the universe that lies within our compass, having tired our inquiring eye and mind; upon all the rest we write, *Hades;* call it *unseen*, or *unknown*. And because we call it so, in reference to us, God himself calls it so too; it being his way, (as is observed by that noted [d] Jew) speaking to men, to use the tongue of the children of men, to speak to them in their own language, and allow them to coin their own words: which at first they often do very occasionally; nor, as to this, could they have a fairer or a more urgent occasion, or that is more self-justifying, than in one word to say of that other world, that it is *hades*, or *invisible*, when that is truly all that they have to say, or can have any immediate notice of about it.

It hath therefore its rise from ourselves, and the penury of our knowledge of things; and is at once both an ingenuous confession, with some sort of modest cover, and excuse of our own ignorance: as with geographers, all that part of this globe which they cannot describe, is *terra incognita;* and with philosophers, such phenomena in nature as they can give no account of, they resolve shortly and in the most compendious way into some or other occult quality, or somewhat else, as occult.

How happy were it, if in all matters that concern religion, and in this, as it doth so, they would shut up in a sacred venerable darkness what they cannot distinctly perceive; it being once by the undeceiving word expressly asserted that it is, without therefore denying its reality, because they clearly apprehend not what it is.

With too many their religion is so little, and their pride and self-conceit so great, that they think themselves fit to be standards; that their eye or mind is of a size large enough to measure the creation, yea, and the Creator too. And by how much they have the less left them of mind, or the more it is sunk into earth and carnality, the more capable it is of being the measure of all reality, of taking

b And here it may suffice to take notice, that Greek writers, poets, philosophers, historians, and other writers, that have made only occasional mention of this word αδης, or of the words next akin to it, αις, or αιδης, or lexicographers, that have purposely given an account of it, from Greek authors, that must be supposed best to understand the use of words in their own tongue; generally such as have not been engaged in a controversy, that obliges men usually to torture words to their own sense, or to serve the hypothesis which they had espoused; have been remote from confining this, or the cognate words, to that narrow sense as only to signify a place or state of torment for bad men, but understood it as comprehending, also, a state of felicity for the pious and good.

For such as have been concerned in interpreting this or other like words with reference to the known and famous controversy, which I need not mention, their judgments must weigh according to the reputation they are of with the reader.

The Greeks no doubt, best understood their own language. And among them can we think that Homer in the beginning of his 1 *Iliad*, when he speaks of the many brave souls of his heroes, those ιφθιμοι ψυχαι, which the war he is describing sent into the invisible regions, αιδι προιαψεν, that he ever dreamt they were all promiscuously despatched away to a place of torment? Not to mention other passages where he uses the words ᾳδης to the same purpose. Divers others of the Greek poets are cited by several ready to our hands, with which I shall not cumber these pages That one is enough, and nothing can be fuller to our purpose, which is quoted by Clem. Alexand. Str. l. 5 as well as by sundry others, and ascribed to the comic Diphilus, though by others to another Philemon.

Και γαρ καθ' ᾳδην δυο τριβους νομιζομεν
Μιαν δικαιων, κατεραν ασεβων οδον.

In *hades* we reckon there are two paths, the one of the righteous, the other of the wicked: plainly showing that *hades* was understood to contain heaven and hell. Plato, when in his *Phædo* he tells us that he that comes into *hades*, αμυητος, και ατελεστος, not initiated and duly prepared, is thrown into Βορβορος, *a stinking lake*, but he that comes into it fitly purified, shall dwell with the gods: as expressly signifies *hades* to include the same opposite states of misery and felicity. In that dialogue called *Axiochus*, though supposed not to be his, written by one that sufficiently knew the meaning of such a word, we are told that when men die they are brought into the Πεδιον αληθειας, the field of truth, where sit judges that examine τινα βιον, what manner of life every one lived while he dwelt in the body, that they who, while they lived here, were inspired by a good genius or spirit, go into the region of pious men, having before they came into *hades* been purified. Such as led their lives wickedly are hurried by furies up and down chaos, in the region of the wicked In the third Book *de Repub* Plato blames the poets that they represent the state of things in *hades* too frightfully, when they should μαλλον επαινειν, praise it rather. *Plutarch de Superst.* brings in Plato speaking of *hades*, as a person or a god, *Dis*, or *Pluto*, as they frequently do, and says he is φιλανθρωπος, *benign or friendly to men;* therefore not a tormentor of them only. *Cœlius Rhodigin.* quotes this same passage of Plutarch, and takes notice that our Saviour speaks of the state of torment by another word, not *hades*, but *Gehenna;* which sufficiently shows how he understood it himself.

And whereas there are who disagree to this notation of this word, that makes it signify *unseen*, as some will fetch from the Hebrew, and go as far back as Adam in their search, alleging for this the authority of an old sibyl, will have it go for αηδης, and signify as ατερπης, *unpleasant;* nothing is, plainer than that this other is the common notion, which (though fancy hath not a greater dominion in any thing than in etymology) would make one shy of stretching invention to find how to differ from the generality. Therefore Calepio, upon this word, tells us that the Greek grammarians do, against the nature of the *Etymon*, (which plainly enough shows what they understood that to be,) generally direct its beginning to be written with the asper spirit, but yet he makes it signify *obscure*, or *not visible*. And though Plato is endeavoured to be hooked in to the deriving it from Adam by a very farfetch; yet it is plain that his calling it τοπον αδηλον, in a place before referred to, shows he understood it to signify *invisible;* and so lexicons will commonly derive it (*Vulgo*, says *Cœlius Rhodig*) But its extensiveness, as comprehending a state of happiness, is our principal concern, which way (as we might show by many more instances) the common stream carries it. Pausanias in his 'ΑΡΚΑΔΙΚΑ, speaking of Hermes (according to Homer) as Διος διακονον, and that he did lead souls υπο τον ᾳδην, could not be thought to mean that they were then universally miserable. Sext. Empir is an authority good enough for the meaning of a Greek word. When (Adversus Mathem.) he tells us, though by way of objection, all men have a common notion περι των εν αδου, (using the genitive with εν, as Homer and others do, another word, house or abode, in the dative, being understood,) and yet, as to the thing, he afterwards distinguishes poets' fables, and what, from the nature of the soul itself, all have a common apprehension of. As also Diog Lært. hath the same phrase, mentioning the writings of Protagoras, who, he says, wrote one book περι των εν αδου, using the genitive, as here, after εν, as hath been usual, on the mentioned account. And though his books were burnt by the Athenians, because of the dubious title of one of them concerning the gods, so that we have not opportunity to know what his opinion of *hades* was, we have reason more than enough, to think he understood it not of a state of torment only for evil spirits.

c Primate Usher's judgment may be seen in his answer to the Jesuits' challenge, that this word properly signifies the other world, the place or state of the dead—so that heaven itself may be comprehended in it. Grot. on Luke xvi. 23. makes *hades* most certainly to signify a place withdrawn from our sight; spoken of the body, the grave; of the soul, all that region wherein 'tis separate from the body So that as Dives was in *hades*, so was Lazarus too, but in separate regions: for both paradise, and hell, or, as the Grecians were wont to speak, *Elysii*, and *Tartara*, were in *hades* You may have in him more quotations from the poets, the sense of the Essenes from Josephus, and passages from divers of the fathers to the same purpose. Dr Hammond's mind was the same, copiously expressed on Matt. xi. 23. but differs from Grot. in ascribing to Philemon the iambicks above recited, which the other gives to Diphilus. Dr Lightfoot is full to the same purpose, on the 4th Article of the Creed And though Bellarmin will have this word always signify *hell;* (which, if it do with *sheol* the correspondent word; Jacob desired to go to hell to his son, as Dr. H. argues;) Camero, as good a judge, thinks, except once, it never does. If any desire to see more to this purpose with little trouble to themselves, let them peruse Martinius's Lexic. on the word *inferus*, or *infernus*. I could refer to many more whom I forbear to mention.

Only if any think in some or other text of Scripture this word must signify *hell* only, since it is of that latitude as to signify *heaven* in other places, an impartial view of the circumstances of the text must determine whether there it be meant of the one, or the other or both.

d Maimonides.

the compass of all being, created and uncreated. And so that of the philosopher takes place in the worst sense that can be put upon it; "to see darkness is to see nothing." All is nullity that their sense reaches not. *Hades* is with such, indeed, empty, imaginary darkness; or in plainer English, there is neither heaven nor hell, because they see them not.

But we ought to have the greater thoughts of it, not the less, for its being too big, too great, too glorious, for our present view; and that it must as yet rest as to us, and so let it rest awhile, under the name of *Hades*, the unknown dominion of our great Lord; according to that most express account he at his ascension gave of the existence of both parts together, that less known to us, and that more known, Matt. xxviii. 18. All power is given to me both in heaven and earth.

That death is added, as contained also within the limits of our Lord's dominion, doth expressly signify his custody of the passage from this visible world to the invisible, *viz.* as he commands the entrance into each distinct part of *hades*, the *invisible world*, consisting of both heaven and hell, so he hath power over death too, which is the common outlet from this world, and the passage unto both.

But it withal plainly implies his very absolute power over this visible world of ours also; for it signifies he hath the power of measuring every one's time here, and how long each inhabitant of this world shall live in it. If it belong to him to determine when any one shall die, it must by consequence belong to him to assign the portion and dimensum of time that every one shall live. Nor is there any conceivable moment in the time of any one's life, wherein he hath not this power of putting a period by death thereunto, at his own pleasure. He is therefore signified to have the power of every man's life and death at once: and the power of life and death is very high and great power. He therefore herein implicitly claims, what is elsewhere expressly ascribed to him, Rom. xiv. 7—9. None —lives to himself, (*i. e. de jure*, no man should,) or dies to himself: for "whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die to the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord, both of the dead and living."

In sum, here is asserted to him a dominion over both worlds; this in which we live, and that into which we die, whether the one or the other part of it. And so in reference to men, who once have inhabited this world, the sense of this text, and that we are insisting on, is the same. Though *hades* is of vastly larger extent than only to be the receptacle of such as have lived here; it having also, in both the parts of it, innumerable inhabitants who never had a dwelling assigned them in this world of ours at all.

But thus far we have the vast extent of our Lord Christ's dominion completely cleared to be the proper intendment of this text; and that it never meant so faint and minute a representation of it, as only to make him Keeper of the bottomless pit; though of that also he hath the key, as we shall further take notice: but we are now to inquire of, what will take up less time,

III. The kind of that power over so vast a realm, or manifold realms, signified by this emblematical expression, of *having the keys, &c.*

Every one knows that the keys are insignia; some of the tokens of power; and according to the peculiarity of the object, may be of Divine power.

The Jews, as some writers of their affairs say, appropriate the keys of three, others of four things, to God only: of life, or the entrance into this world; of the rain, or the treasures of the clouds; of the earth, say some,[e] as of the granary of corn; and of the grave; "Of which," says one of their own,[f] "the Holy, Blessed One hath the keys of the sepulchres in his hand," &c. And as we may be sure he admits thither, so he emits from thence; and, as he says, "In the future age, the H. B. One will unlock the treasures of souls, and will open the graves, and bring every soul back into its own body," &c.

Nor is this key of the vast *hades*, when it is in the hand of our Redeemer, the less in the hand of the Holy, Blessed One; for so is he too. But it is in his hand as belonging to his office of Mediator between God and man, as was before said. And properly the phrase signifies ministerial power, being a manifest allusion to the common usage, in the courts of princes, of intrusting to some great minister the power of the keys; as it was foretold of Eliakim, (Isa. xxii.) that he should be placed in the same high station in Hezekiah's court, wherein Shebna was, of whom so severe things are there said; and that the key of the house of David should be laid upon his shoulder, &c. *v.* 20—22. And the house of David being a known type of the house or church of God, and he himself of Christ, who as the Son, hath power over the whole house, according to this typical way of speaking, our Lord is said (Rev. iii. 7.) to have the key of David, to open so as none can shut, to shut so as none can open; *i. e.* to have a final, decisive power in all he doth, from which there is no appeal.

Nor could any thing be more congruous, than that having the keys of the celestial house of God, the heavenly palace of the Great King, the habitation of his holiness and glory, (in which are the everlasting habitations, the many mansions, the places prepared for his redeemed,) he should also have the keys of the terrestrial Bethel; which is but a sort of *portal*, or *vestibulum*, to the other; *the house of God, and the gate of heaven.* And as he is implied to have the keys of this introductive, preparatory kingdom of heaven, (as the keys of the king's palace, where is the throne or seat of government, and the keys of the kingdom, must mean the same thing,) when he is said to give them to the apostle Peter, and the other apostles; this was but a prelude, and a minute instance of his power of those keys of *hades*, and of the glorious heavenly kingdom itself contained therein, which he was not to delegate, but to manage himself immediately in his own person.

If moreover he were signified by the angel, (Rev. xx. I.) who was said to have the key of the bottomless pit; that also must import a power, though great in itself, very little in comparison of the immense *hades*, of which he is here said to have the keys. So remote is it, that the power ascribed to him *there*, should be the measure of what he here asserts to himself; and the difference must be vastly greater than it is possible for us to conceive, or parallel by the difference between having power over the palace, and all the most delightful and most spacious territories in the vastest empire of the greatest prince, and only having power over a dungeon in some obscure corner of it; which, for the great purposes whereto all this is to be applied, we can scarcely too much inculcate.

And to such *application* let us now, with all possible seriousness and intention of spirit, address ourselves. Which will consist in sundry inferences or deductions, laying before us some suitable matter, partly of our meditation, partly of practice; the former whereof are to prepare and lay a ground for the latter.

I. Divers things we may collect, that will be very proper for deep meditation; which I shall propose not as things that we can be supposed not to have known before, but which are too commonly not enough thought on or considered.

And here we shall somewhat invert the order wherein things lie in the text, beginning with what is there latter and lower, and thence arising, with more advantage, to what is higher and of greater concernment; as,

1. That men do not die at random, or by some uncertain, accidental bye-stroke, that, as by a slip of the hand, cuts off the thread of life; but by an act of divine determination, and judgment, that passes in reference to each one's death. For as the key signifies authority and power, the turning this key of death, that gives a man his exit out off this world, is an authoritative act. And do we consider in what hand this power is lodged? We cannot but apprehend every such act is the effect of counsel and judgment.

What philosophers are wont to discourse of fortuitous events in reference to rational agents, or casual, in reference to natural, must be understood but with relation to ourselves, and signifies only our own ignorance of futurities, but can have no place in the all-comprehending mind, as if any thing were a contingency unto that. For them that live as if they thought they came into this world by

[e] Weems.

[f] Pirke. R. Eliezer. Edit. per G. H. Vorst. C. F.

chance, 'tis very natural to them to think they shall die and go out of it by chance too, but when and as it happens. This is worse than paganish blindness; for besides what, from their poets, the vulgar have been made to believe concerning the three fatal Sisters, to whom they ascribed no less than deity concerned in measuring every one's life, the grave discourses which some of them have writ concerning Providence, and its extent to the lesser intermediate concerns of life, much more to that their final great concern of death, will be a standing testimony against the too prevailing Christian scepticism (they ought to excuse the solecism who make it) of this wretched age! But such among us as will allow themselves the liberty to think, want not opportunity and means by which they may be assured, that not an imaginary, but real, deity is immediately and constantly concerned in measuring our time in this world. What an awful thought is this! And it leads to a

2. Inference. That it is a great thing to die. The Son of God, the Redeemer of man, hath an immediate presidency over this. He signalizes himself by it, who could not suppose he should be magnified by a trifle! We slightly say, Such a one is dead! Consider the matter in itself, and 'tis great. A reasonable soul hath changed states! An intelligent spirit is gone out of our world! The life of a gnat, a fly, (those little *automata*, or self-moving things,) how admirable a production is it! It becomes no man to despise what no man can imitate. We praise the pencil that well describes the external figure of such an *animalculum*, such a little creature; but the internal, vital, self-moving power, and the motion itself, what art can express! But a human life, how important a thing is it! 'Twas one of Plato's thanksgivings, that God had made him a man! How careful a guard hath God set over every man's life, fencing it by the severest law! "If any man shed man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed;" and how weighty is the annexed reason! "For in the image of God he made man." This then highly greatens this matter He therefore reserves it wholly to himself, as one of his peculiarities, to dispose of such a life. "I am he that kills and makes alive." We find it one of his high titles—"The God of the spirits of all flesh." He had what was much greater to glory in, that he was "the Father of spirits," indefinitely spoken. When he hath all the heavenly regions, the spacious *hades*, peopled with such inhabitants, "whose dwelling is not with flesh;" and, for vast multitudes of them, never was, that yet, looking down into this little world of ours, this minute spot of his creation, and observing that here were spirits dwelling in flesh, he should please to be styled also the God of those spirits, signifies this to be with him too an appropriate glory, a glory which he will not communicate further than he communicates Godhead; and that he held it a divine right to measure the time unto each of them of their abode in flesh, and determine when they shall dislodge.

'This cannot be thought on aright, without a becoming most profound reverence of him on this account. How sharp a rebuke is given to that haughty prince,[g] "The God in whose hands thy breath is, hast thou not glorified." That would prepare the way, and we should be easily led on, were we once come to think with reverence, to think also with pleasure of this case, that our life and every breath we draw are under such a divine superintendency. The holy Psalmist speaks of it with high complacency, as the matter of his song, that he had a God presiding over his life. So he tells us he would have each ψυχῆμερον, composed not more of *night* and *day*, than of *prayer* and *praise*, directed to God under this notion, as the God of his life, Psal. xlii. 8. And he speaks it not grudgingly, but as the ground of his trust and boast. Psal. xxxi. 14, 15.—"I trusted in thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my God, my times are in thy hand." That this key is in the hand of the great *Emmanuel—God with us*, will be thought on with frequency, when it is thought on with delight.

3. Our life on earth is under the constant strict observation of our Lord Christ. He waits when to turn the key, and shut it up. Through the whole of that time, which, by deferring, he measures out to us, we are under his eye as in a state of probation. He takes continual notice how we quit ourselves. For his turning the key at last is a judicial act; therefore supposes diligent observation, and proceeds upon it. He that hath this key, is also said in the next chapter, (*v.* 18.) to have eyes like a flame of fire. With these he observes what he hath against one or another, (*v.* 20.) and with most indulgent patience gives a space of repentance, (*v.* 21.) and notes it down if any then repent not, as we there also find. Did secure sinners consider this, how he beholds them with a flame in his eye, and the key in his hand, would they dare still to trifle? If they did apprehend how he, in this posture, stands over them, in all their vain dalliances, idle impertinencies, bold adventures, insolent attempts against his laws and government, presumptuous affronts of his high authority; yea, or but in their drowsy slumberings, their lingering delays; did they consider what notice he takes how they demean themselves under every sermon they hear, in every prayer wherein they are to join with others, or which, perhaps, for custom's sake, they put up alone by themselves; how their hearts are moved, or unmoved, by every repeated call that is given them to turn to God, and get their peace made by application of their Redeemer's reconciling blood; in what agonies would they be, what pangs of trembling would they feel within themselves, lest the key should turn before their great work be done!

4. Whatsoever ill designs by this observation he discovers, 'tis easy to him to prevent. One turn of this key of death, besides the many other ways that are obvious to him, disappoints them all, and in that day all their thoughts perish. 'Tis not, therefore, from inadvertency, indifference, or impotency, but *deep counsel*, that they are permitted to be driven on so far. He that sitteth in the heavens laughs, and he knows their day is coming. He can turn this key when he will.

5. His power as to every one's death cannot be avoided or withstood. The act of this key is definitive, and ends the business. No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; nor hath he power in death, Eccl. viii. 8. 'Tis in vain to struggle when the key is turned; the power of the keys, where 'tis supremely lodged, is absolutely decisive, and their effect permanent and irrevocable. That soul, therefore, for whose exit the key is turned, must thereupon then forthwith depart, willing or unwilling, ready or unready.

6. Souls that go out of this world of ours, on the turn of this key, go not out of being. He that hath this key of death hath also the key of *hades*, a key and a key. When he uses the former, to let them out from this, he uses the latter, to give them their inlet into the other world, and into the one or the other part of it; into the upper or the lower *hades*, as the state of their case is, and doth require.

Our business is not now with Pagans, to whom the oracles of God are unknown. If it were, the best and wisest of them who so commonly speak of souls going into *hades*, never thought of their going no whither; nor therefore that they were nothing. They had reasons, then, which they thought cogent, they indeed them, though unassisted with divine revelation, to conclude they survived their forsaken bodies. And what else could any unbribed understanding conclude or conceive? When we find they have powers belonging to them, which we can much more easily apprehend capable of being acted without help from the body than by it, we are sure that can form thoughts, purposes, desires, hopes; for it is matter of fact they do it; and coherent thoughts, and thoughts arising from thoughts, one from another: yea, and thoughts abstracted from any thing corporeal, the notions of right and wrong, of virtue and vice, of moral good and evil, with some agreeable resolves; thoughts quite above the sphere of matter, so as to form a notion of the mind itself of a spiritual being, as unexceptionable a one as we can form of a body: yea, of an original self-subsistent Mind and Spirit, the Former and Maker of all other. 'Tis much more apprehensible, since we certainly know that all this is done, that it is done without any help of the body, than how flesh, or blood, or bones, or nerves, or brains, or any corporeal thing, should contribute to such methods of thinking, or to any thought at all. And if it can be con-

[g] Dan. v. 23.

ceived that a spirit can act without dependence on a body, what should hinder but we may as well conceive it to subsist and live without such dependence? And when we find this power of thought belongs to somewhat in us that lives, since the deserted carcass thinks not; how reasonable is it to suppose, that as the body lives not of itself, or life is not essential to it, for life may be retired and gone, and it remain, as we see it doth, the same body still; that the soul to which the power of thought belongs, lives of itself, not independently on the first cause, but essentially, so as to receive life and essence together from that cause, or life included in its essence, so as that it shall be the same thing to it to be and to live. And hereupon how obvious is it to apprehend that the soul is such a thing as can live in the body, which when it doth, the body lives by it a precarious, borrowed life; and that can live out of the body, leaving it, when it doth so, to drop and die.

These sentiments were so reasonable, as generally to prevail with the more deeply-thinking part of mankind, philosophers of all sorts, (a few excepted, whose notions were manifestly formed by vicious inclination,) in the pagan world, where was nothing higher than reason to govern. But we have life and immortality brought to light in the gospel,[h] and are forewarned by it that these will be the measures of the final judgment, to give eternal life at last[i] to them who, by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek honour, glory, and immortality. To the rest,[k] indignation and wrath, &c. because[l] there is no respect of persons with God. As supposing the discovery of another world, even by natural light, much more by the addition of supernatural, to be so clear, as that the rule of the universal judgment, even for all, is most righteously to be taken from hence, and that there is nothing but a resolution of living wickedly, to be opposed to it.

It is also no slight consideration, that a susceptibleness of religion should, among the creatures that dwell on earth, be so appropriate and peculiar to man, and (some rare instances excepted) as far diffused as human nature; so as to induce some very considering men, of the ancients as well as moderns, both pagans and Christians, to think *religion* the more probable specifying difference of man than *reason*. And whence should so common an impression be, but from a cause as common? Or how can we avoid to think that this signature upon the soul of man, a capacity of religion, should be from the same hand that formed the spirit of man within him, and that a natural religiousness, and human nature itself, had the same Author? But who sees not that[m] religion, as such, hath a final reference to a future state? He was no despicable writer, though not a Christian, that positively affirmed hope towards God to be essential to man; and that they that had it not, were not partakers of the rational nature.

'Tis so much the more a deplorable and monstrous thing, that so many, not only against the light of their own reason, but of divine revelation, are so industrious to unman themselves: and having so effectually in a great degree done it really and in practice, aim to do it in a more compendious way notionally and in principle too; and make use or show of reason to prove themselves not to be reasonable creatures; or to divest themselves of the principal dignity and distinction of the rational nature: and are incomparably herein more unnatural than such as we commonly count felons upon themselves, who only act against their own bodily life, but these against the much nobler life of their soul; they against the life of an individual, these against their own whole species at once. And how deplorable is their case, that count it their interest to be in no possibility of being happy! when yet their so great dread of a future state, as to urge them upon doing the most notorious violence to their own faculties to rid themselves of it, is a very convictive argument of its reality; for their dread still pursues and sticks close to them. This shows it lies deep in the nature of things which they cannot alter. The terrible image is still before their eyes; and their principal refuge lies only in diverting, in not attending to it. And they can so little trust to their sophistical reasonings against it, that when they have done all they can, they must own what they have of ease and quiet in their own minds, not so much to any strength of reason they apprehend in their own thoughts, as in not thinking. A bold jest may sometimes provoke others' laughter, when it doth not extinguish their own fear. A suspicion *a formido oppositi* will still remain; a misgiving that they cannot nullify the great *hades*, pull down the spacious fabric of heaven, or undermine the profound abyss of hell, by a profane scoff. They will in time discern the difference between the evanid passion of a sudden fright, that takes its rise from imagination, and the reason of things; as one may between a fright in a dream, and the dread of a condemned criminal, with whom, sleeping and waking, the real state of his case is still the same.

Nor are the things themselves remote or unconnected; God's right to punish a reasonable creature that hath lived in contempt of him, and his own reasonable apprehension hereof, of his conscience both of the fact and desert. They answer as face to face, as the stamp on the seal, and the impression on the wax. They would fain make their reason a protection against their fear, but that cannot serve both ways; the reason of the thing lies against them already, and there cannot be an eternal war between the faculty and the object. One way or other the latter will overpower the former, and draw it into consent with itself; either by letting it see there is a just, true cause of fear, or, assisted by Divine grace, prevail for the change of the sinners' course. Whereupon that troublesome fear, and its cause, will both upon the best terms cease together. And that what hath been proposed to consideration under this head, may be the more effectually considered, to this blessed purpose, I add that,

7. The discovery of the invisible world, and the disposal of affairs there, have a most encouraging aspect upon this world; for both the discovery and the disposal are by our blessed Redeemer, in whom mercy and might are met in highest perfection. How fragrant breathings of grace, how glorious a display of power, are there in what he here says! "Fear not! I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead, and I am alive for evermore. Amen. And I have the keys of *hades* and of death." He hath opened the celestial *hades* to our view, that it might be also open to our safe entrance and blissful inhabitation. He who was dead, but liveth, and had made his victorious triumphant entrance before us, and for us; he who had overcome him that had the power of death,—conquered the gigantic monster at the gate, gained the keys, and designed herein their deliverance from the fear of death, who were thereby subject to bondage; (Heb. ii. 14, 15.) he who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel; (2 Tim. i. 10.) 'tis he who bids us lift up our eyes, and behold the heavens opened, and himself standing at the right hand of God. The horrid infernal *hades* he hath discovered too, only that we might fear and shun it. But yet more distinctly consider, why doth he here represent himself under this character, "He that liveth and was dead," but that he might put us in mind of that most convictive argument of his love, his submitting to die for us; "Greater love hath no man:" and that he might at once put us out of doubt concerning his power, that he yet survives, and is sprung up alive out of that death, victorious over it. How amiable is the representation of such power in conjunction with such love! The same person having a heart so replenished with love, a hand so armed with power, neither capable of *unkind* design, nor unable to effect the *most kind*. Behold him in this representation! Who would not now fall at his foot and adore? Who would hesitate at resigning to him, or be appalled at his disclosure of this unknown world?

Do but consider him who makes the discovery, and who would not expect from him the utmost efforts of love and goodness? From him who is the Brightness of his Father's glory, and the express Image of his person! His essential image, who is Love! From him who came into this wretched world of ours, full of grace and truth! And who could not have come but by the inducement of compassion to our miseries. From him who knows all things, and whose eye penetrates into every recess of the vast *hades*; all his own empire; in whom are hid all the

h 2 Tim. i. 10.
k Verse 8.
i Rom. ii. 7.
l Verse 11.
m Philo Judæus, Quod deter. potiori insid. soleat, ως των μη ελπιζοντων επι Θεον, λογικης φυσεως ου μεμοιραμενων.

treasures of wisdom and knowledge; but who only knows not to deceive: who hath told us, in his Father's house are many mansions, and if it were not so, would have told us that, John xiv. 2. From him into whose mouth guile never entered, but into whose lips grace was poured, and is poured out by them; so that the ear that hath heard him hath borne him witness, and filled with wonder those that heard the gracious words which came out of his mouth. Who hath told us all concerning that unseen world, that in this our present state it was fit for us to know; and enough, in telling all that will be his followers, that where he is, there he will have them be, John xvii. 24.

And consider the manifest tendency of the discovery itself. What doth it mean or tend to, but to undeceive miserable mortals, whom he beholds from his high throne mocked with shadows, beguiled with most delusive impostures, and easily apt to be imposed upon? foolish, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures; feeding upon ashes, and wearying themselves for very vanity; sporting themselves in the dust of this minute spot of earth; wasting their little inch of time, wherein they should prepare for translation into the regions of unseen glory. To these he declares he hath formed a kingdom for all that covet to mend their states, and that his kingdom is not of this world; that for such as will be of this kingdom, he will provide better, having other worlds, the many heavens, above all which he is ascended, at his dispose, Eph. iv. 10. But they must seek this kingdom and the righteousness of it in the first place, and desist from their care about other things. He counsels and warns them not to lay up their treasure on earth, but in heaven; and to let their hearts be there with their treasure. And what can withstand his power, who having been dead, liveth victorious over him that had the power of death, and is alive for evermore, possessed of an eternal state of life?

And have we not reason to expect the most equal and most benign disposal of things in that unseen world, when he also declares, I have the keys, righful authority, as well as mighty power, to reward and punish? None but who have a very ill mind can fear from him an ill management. He first became capable of dying, and then yielding himself to die, that he might obtain these keys for gracious purposes. He had them before to execute just vengeance, as he was originally in the form of God, and without robbery equal with God; an equal sharer in sustaining the wrong that had been done by apostate rebels, and an equal sharer in the right of vindicating it.

But that he might have these keys to open the heavenly *hades* to reduced apostates, to penitent, believing, self-devoting sinners, for this it was necessary he should put on man, be found here in fashion as a man, take on him the form of a servant, become obedient to death, even that servile punishment the death of the cross, Phil. ii. 7, 8. For this he is highly exalted into this power, that every knee might bow to him, in hope of saving mercy, *v.* 9, 10. compared with Isa. xlv. 22, 23. He had the keys without this of the supernal *hades*, to shut out all offenders, and of the infernal, to shut them up for ever. But that he might have them to absolve repenting believers, admit them into heaven, and only to shut up in hell implacable enemies—for this he must die, and live again. He was to be slain and hanged on a tree, that he might be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sin, Acts v. 30, 31. That to this intent he might be the Lord of the dead and the living, he must both die and rise, and live so as to die no more, Rom. xiv. 9. These keys for this purpose, he was only to have upon these terms. He had a right to punish as an offended God, but to pardon and save as a meditating, sin-expiating God-man.

But as he was to do the part of a Mediator, he must act equally between the disagreeing parties: he was to deal impartially on both sides. To render back entire to the injured Ruler of the world his violated rights, and to obtain for us his forfeited favour, as entire. And undertook therefore, when as a sacrifice he was to be slain, to redeem us to God by his blood, Rev. v. 9. To give him back his revolted creature, holy, pure, subject, and serviceable, as by his methods he shall be at last; and procure for him pardon, acceptance, and eternal blessedness.

When therefore he was to do for us the part of a Redeemer, he was to redeem us from the *curse* of the law, not from the *command* of it; to save us from the[n] *wrath* of God, not from his *government*. Had it been otherwise, so firm and indissoluble is the connexion between our duty and our felicity, that the sovereign Ruler had been eternally injured, and we not advantaged. Were we to have been set free from the preceptive obligation of God's holy law, then most of all from that most fundamental precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, soul, might, and mind." Had this been redemption, which supposes only what is evil and hurtful, as that we are to be redeemed from? This were a strange sort of self-repugnant redemption, not from sin and misery, but from our duty and felicity. This were so to be redeemed as to be still lost, and every way lost, both to God and to ourselves for ever. Redeemed from loving God! What a monstrous thought! Redeemed from what is the great active and fruitive principle; the source of obedience and blessedness; the eternal spring, even in the heavenly state, of adoration and fruition! This had been to legitimate everlasting enmity and rebellion against the blessed God, and to redeem us into an eternal hell of horror and misery to ourselves! This had been to cut off from the Supreme Ruler of the world for ever, so considerable a limb of his most rightful dominion, and to leave us as miserable as everlasting separation from the Fountain of life and blessedness could make us.

When therefore our Lord Jesus Christ was to redeem us from the curse of the law, it was that the promised Spirit might be given to us, (Gal. iii. 13, 14.) who should write the law in our hearts; (Jer xxxi. 33. Ezek. xxxvi. 27.) fulfil the righteousness of it in us, by causing us to walk after his dictates, according to that law; regenerating us, begetting us after God's image, and making us partakers of a Godlike nature. So we through the law become dead to the malediction and curse of it, that we may live to God more devoted lives than ever, Gal. ii. 19. Thus is God's lost creature given back to him with the greatest advantage also to itself.

With this design it is apparent our Lord redeemed us, and by his redemption acquired these keys. Nor are we to doubt, but in the use of them, he will dispense exactly according to this just and merciful design. And what a perverse distorted mind is that, which can so much as wish it should be otherwise! *viz.* That he should save us to the eternal wrong of him that made us, and so as that we should be nothing the better; *i. e.* that he should save us without saving us.

And hath this no pleasant comfortable aspect upon a lost world, that he who hath the keys will use them for such purposes? *i. e.* to admit to eternal bliss, and save to the uttermost, all that will come to God by him; (not willing to be everlastingly alienated from the life of God;) because he ever lives to make intercession, or to transact and negociate for them, (as that word signifies,) and that in a rightful way, and even by the power of these keys!

8. That there must be some important reason why the other world is to us unseen, and so truly bears the name of *Hades*. This expresses the state of the case as in fact it is, that it is as a world lying out of our sight, and into which our dim and weak eye cannot penetrate. That other state of things is spoken of therefore as hidden from us by a vail. When our Lord Jesus is said to have passed into the heavens, (Heb. iv. 14.) he is also said to have entered into that within the veil; (Heb. vi. 19, 20.) alluding to that in the temple of Solomon, and before that, in Moses's tabernacle; but expressly signifying, that the holy places into which Christ entered, not those made with hands, which were the figure of the true, but heaven itself, filled with the glorious presence of God, where he appears for us, (Heb. ix. 24.) is also veiled from us. As also the glory of the other state is said to be a glory as yet to be revealed, Rom. viii. 18. And we are told, (Job xxvi. 9.) the great God holdeth back the face of his throne; and above, *v.* 6. 'tis represented as a divine prerogative, that *sheol*, which is there groundlessly rendered *hell*, the vast *hades*, is only naked before

[n] Gal iii. 13, 14. Rom. xviii. 3, 4.

him, lies entirely open to his view, and therein the dark and horrid part of it, *destruction*, by which peculiarly must be meant *hell*, is to him without a covering, not more hidden from his eye.

Which shows this to be the Divine pleasure; so God will have it be, who could have exposed all to common view, if he had pleased.

But because he orders all things according to the counsel of his will, (Eph. i. 11.) we must conceive some weighty reason did induce hereto, that whatsoever lies beyond this present state of things should be concealed from our immediate view, and so come *uno nomine*, to be called *hades*. And if the reason of God's conduct, and the course of his dispensation herein, had been equally hidden, as that state itself is, it had been a bold presumption to inquire and pry into it; modesty and reverence should have restrained us. But when we find it holds a manifest agreement with other parts of his counsel, that are sufficiently revealed; and that the excellency of the Divine wisdom is most conspicuous, and principally to be beheld and admired, in ordering the apt congruities and correspondencies of things with each other, and especially of the ends he proposes to himself, with the methods and ways he takes to effect them; 'twere very great oscitancy, and an undutiful negligence, not to observe them, when they stand in view, that we may render him his due acknowledgments and honour thereupon.

'Tis manifest that as God did not create man, at first, in that which he designed to be his final state; but as a probationer, in a state of trial, in order to a further state; so when he apostatized and fell from God, he was graciously pleased to order for him a new trial, and put him into the hands of his merciful Redeemer, who is intrusted with these keys, and with the power of life and death over him, to be managed and exercised according to the terms plainly set down and declared in his Gospel. Wheresoever he is with sufficient evidence revealed and made known, men immediately come under obligation to believe in him; to intrust and commit themselves into the same hands; to rely upon the truth of his word in every thing he reveals, as the ground of their submitting to his authority in every thing he requires. What concerns their present practice he hath plainly shown them; so much as it was requisite they should pre-apprehend of future retributions, rewards and punishments, he hath revealed also; not that they should have the knowledge hereof by immediate inspection, but by taking his word. That as their first transgression was founded in infidelity, that they did not believe God, but a lying spirit against him; their first step in their recovery and return to God should be to believe him, and take his word about things they have themselves no immediate sight or knowledge of. This point was by no means to be quitted to the first apostates. As if God's saying to them, "If you transgress, you shall die, or go into *hades*, was no sufficient enforcement of the precept, unless he had given them a distinct view of the state of felicity or misery, which their obedience or disobedience would lead them into. This had been to give away the whole cause to the revolted rebels, and rather to confess error and oversight in the Divine government, than impute fault to the impugners of it!

This being the state of the case, how suitable had it been to the design of this second trial to be made with men, to withdraw the veil, and let every one's own eyes be their informers of all the glories of the heavenly state? and hereupon proclaim and preach the Gospel to them, that they should all partake herein that would entirely deny themselves, come off from their own bottom, give themselves up absolutely to the interest, love, service, and communion of their Redeemer, and of God in him? To fortify themselves against the assaults and dangers of their earthly pilgrimage by reversing that rule, The just shall live by faith; even that [o] faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; or by inverting the method, that in reference to such things [p] we are to walk by faith, not by sight, and letting it be, We are to walk by sight, not by faith? And that lest any should refuse such compliance with their great Lord, whole *hades* should be no longer so, but made naked before them, and the covering of hell and destruction be taken off, and their own eyes behold the infernal horrors, and their own ears hear the shrieks and howlings, of accursed creatures, that having rejected their Redeemer, are rejected by him. We ar not here to consider, what course would most certainly effect their salvation, but what most became the wise holy God, to preserve the dignity of his own government, and save them too; otherwise Almighty power could save all at once. As therefore we have cause to acknowledge the kindness and compassion of our blessed Lord, who hath these keys, in giving us for the kind, such notices as he hath, of the state of the things in *hades*; so we have equal cause to admire his wisdom, that he gives us not those of another kind, that should more powerfully strike the sense and amaze us more, but instruct us less; that continues it to be *hades* still, a state of things to us unseen as yet. As the case would have been on the other supposition, the most generous, noble part of our religion had been sullied or lost; and the trial of our faith, which is to be found unto praise, honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, even upon this account; that they who had not seen him in his mean circumstances on earth, nor did *now* see him, amidst all the glories of his exalted state, yet *believing*, loved him, and rejoiced in him with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 7, 8. This faith, and all the glorious trials of it, with its admirable achievements and performances, whereby the elders heretofore [q] obtained so good a report, and high renown on earth, and which filled the world with wonder, had all vanished into obscurity and darkness; *i. e.* if they had believed no more, or no greater things, than every man besides had the immediate view of by his own eye-sight.

And yet the trial had been greater, on another account, than the Divine wisdom, in conjunction with goodness and compassion, thought fit ordinarily to put sincere Christians upon. For who could with any tolerable patience have endured longer abode on earth, after they should once have had the glory of the heavenly state immediately set in view before their eyes? especially considering, not so much the sufferings, as the impurities, of their present state? What, for great reason, was a special vouchsafement to one apostle, was, for as great, to be common to all Christians. How great is the wisdom and mercy of our blessed Lord in this partial concealment of our future state, and that while so much as is sufficient is revealed, there is yet a *hades* upon it, and it may still be said, It doth not yet appear what we shall be. 1 John iii. 2.

But as these majestic life-breathing words of our great Lord do plainly offer the things that have been mentioned, and many more such that might occur, to our thoughts and meditation; so will they be thought on in vain, if they be not followed and answered by suitable dispositions and actions of heart and life. Therefore the further use we are to make of this great subject will be to lay down,

2. Divers correspondent things to be practised and done, which must also suppose dispositions and frames of heart and spirit agreeable thereto.

1. Let us live expecting a period to be ere long put to our life on earth. For remember, there are keys put into a great hand for this very purpose, that holds them not in vain. His power is of equal extent with the law he is to proceed by. And by that it is [r] appointed for all once to die. Therefore, as in the execution he cannot exceed, so he will not come short of this appointment: when that once shall be, it belongs to him to determine. And from the course we may observe him to hold, as it is uncertain to all, it can be very remote to none. How short is the measure of a span! 'Tis an absurd vanity to promise ourselves that which is in the power of another. How wise and prudent a thing to accommodate ourselves composedly to his pleasure, in whose power we are; and to live as men continually expecting to die! There are bands of death out of which when they once take hold, we cannot free ourselves. But there are also bands of life, not less troublesome or dangerous. 'Tis our great concern to be daily, by degrees, loosening and disentangling ourselves from these bands; and for preventing the necessity of a violent rupture, to be daily disengaging our hearts

o Heb. x. 38.—ch. xi. 1.
p 2 Cor. v. 7.
q Heb. xi. 2.
r Heb. ix. 27.

from an ensnaring world, and the too close embraces of an over-indulged body. Tell them resolutely, I must leave them whensoever my great Lord turns the key for me; and I know not how soon that may be. It is equally unhappy and foolish to be engaged in the pursuit of an impossibility, or in a war with necessity; the former whereof cannot be obtained, the latter cannot but overcome. We owe so much to ourselves, and to the ease and quiet of our own minds, to be reconciled, at all times, to that which may befall us at any time. How confounding a thing is surprisal by that which ourselves regret and dread! How unaccountable and ignominious must it be to pretend to be surprised with what we have so great reason always to expect, and whereof we are so oft forewarned! Is it no part of Christian watchfulness to wait for such an hour? Though that waiting all the days of our appointed time, mentioned Job xiv. 14. refers to another change than that of death, *viz.* (as the foregoing and following verses show,) that of the resurrection, yet it cannot but be equally requisite, upon a no less important reason. And the requests that the Lord would make us know our end, and the measure of our days, that we may know how frail we are, (Ps. xxxix. 4.) and that he would teach us so to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom, (Ps. xc. 12.) are equally monitory to the same purpose, as the most express precepts; as also the many directions we have to watch and wait for our Lord's appearance and coming are as applicable to this purpose. For whensoever his key opens our passage out of this world, and these bodies, *hades* opens too, and he particularly appears to us, in as decisive a judgment of our case, as his universal appearance and judgment will at last give for all. The placid agreement of our minds and spirits with divine determination, both as to the thing, and time, of our departure hence, will prevent the trouble and ungratefulness of being surprised; and our continual expectation of it, will prevent any surprisal at all. Let this then be an agreed resolution with us, to endeavour being in a posture, as that we may be capable of saying, "Lord, whensoever thou shalt move thy key, and tell me this night, or this hour, I'll require thy soul, thou shalt not, O Lord, prevent mine expectation, or ever find me counting upon many years' enjoyment of any thing this world can entertain me with."

In further pursuance hereof,

2. Be not over-intent on designs for this present world; which would suppose you to count upon long abode in it. Let them be always laid with a supposition, you may this way, even by one turn of this key, be prevented of bringing them about: and let them be pursued with indifferency, so as that disappointment even this way may not be a grievance. A thing made up of thought and design, as our mind and spirit naturally is, will be designing one way or other; nor ought we to attempt that violence upon our own natures, as to endeavour the stupifying of the intelligent, designing mind, which the Author of nature hath put into us. Only let us so lay our designs, as that how many soever we form that may be liable to this sort of disappointment, we may still have *one* greater and more important, so regularly and surely laid, that no turn of this key shall be in any possibility to frustrate, but promote it rather. The design for the kingdom of God to be first sought, with his righteousness, (Matt. vi. 33.) or which is pursued by seeking glory, honour, and immortality, to the actual attainment of eternal life, (Rom. ii. 7.) may, if prescribed methods be duly observed, have this felicity always attending it, to be successfully pursued while we live, and effected when we die.

But this is an unaccountable vanity under the sun, that men too generally form such projects, that they are disappointed both when they do not compass them, and when they do. If they do not, they have lost their labour; if they do, they are not worth it. They dream they are eating, and enjoying the fruit of their labour; but they awake, and their soul is empty. And if at length they think of laying wiser and more valuable designs, the key turns, and not having fixed their resolution, and begun aright, they and all their thoughts, foolish, or more wise, perish together. Because there is a fit season to every fit undertaking, a time and judgment for every purpose, or a critical time, such as is by judgment affixed to every such purpose, (Eccl. viii. 6.) and because also men know not their time, (ch. ix. 12.) therefore their misery is great upon the earth, and as birds caught in a snare, they are snared in an evil time that falleth suddenly upon them. O miserable, miserable mortals! So are your immortal spirits misemployed and lost!

Their most valuable design for another world is seldom thought on in season; their little designs for this world they contrive and prosecute with that confidence, as if they thought the world to be theirs, and themselves their own, and they had no Lord over them. This rude insolence that holy apostle animadverts upon, of such as say,[a] "To-day or to-morrow we will go to such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas they know not what shall be on the morrow: and what is their life? A vapour," &c. So much of duty and becoming behaviour is in the meantime forgotten, as to say, "If the Lord will we shall live," &c. This is to bear themselves as absolute masters of their own lives How bold an affront to their sovereign Lord! They feel themselves well in health, strength, and vigour, and seem resolved it shall be a trial of skill who hath the power, or to whom the keys belong, till it come to the last irrefragable demonstration, that he changes their countenance, and sends them away; (Job xiv. 20.) and then they go, driven, plucked, and torn away from their dwelling-place, rooted out from the land of the living, Ps. lii. 5.

But if any premonitory decays make them doubt the perpetuity of their own abode here, they somewhat ease their minds by the pleasure they take in thinking, when they have filled their own bellies, (Ps. xvii. 14.) what they shall leave of their substance to their babes, and to them that shall come after. And "their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; and they call their lands after their own names, and their posterity approve their sayings," think and act as wisely as they, (Ps. xlix. 11, 12.) Thus they take upon them, and reckon they for their time, and theirs after them, shall still dwell in their own. A wise thought! They are the owners, when another keeps the keys.

Several other things of like import I shall more lightly touch, that may be collected from what hath been already more largely said, and leave to be further enlarged upon in your own thoughts; and shall dilate more upon some other, as they are either more material, or less thought on by the most.

3. Be not prodigal of your time on earth, which is so little in your power. Because you are not to expect much, make the best use you can of your little. 'Tis so precious a thing that it is to be redeemed; 'tis therefore too precious to be embezzled and trifled away. The connexion of those two precepts, (Eph. v. 15, 16.) of walking circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, and that of redeeming the time, more than intimates, that to squander time is a foolish thing. Of the several sorts of things that we make ourselves, their shape and frame show their use and end. Are we to make a less judicious estimate of the works of God? If we therefore contemplate ourselves, and consider what a sort of production man is, can we allow ourselves to think God made him a reasonable creature on purpose to play the fool? Or can we live as if we thought so, without reproaching our Maker? But whereas he who hath been the Author to us of such a nature, capable of improving a life's time in this world unto most valuable purposes, hath also been the Author of such a law, requiring us to redeem time; the reproach will be wholly turned off from him upon ourselves, and our consequent ruin be upon our own guilty heads. And he will find some among ourselves, who by the advantage only of the reasonable nature, common to us and them, that are instructors to us not to waste our days in vanity, and will be witnesses against us if we so foolishly consume what we cannot command.

Some such have unanswerably repreheaded the common folly of those that dread the thought of throwing away their whole life at once, that yet have no regret at

[a] Jam. iv. 13—15

throwing it all away by parcels and piecemeal. And have told us, *A wise man can find nothing of that value, for which to barter away his time.*[t]

And we are to consider, that as we are reasonable creatures, we are accountable. That we are shut up in these bodies as in workhouses. That when he that keeps the keys lets us out, we are to "receive the things done in the body, according to what we have done, whether good or evil," 2 Cor. v. 10. That it belongs to him that measures our time to censure it too, and the use we have made of it.

4. Let him be at once both great and amiable in our eyes, who hath so absolute power over us, and so gracious propensions towards us; *i. e.* who hath these keys, and who acquired them with so merciful intentions, even upon such terms as could not but signify the greatest compassion and good will towards such as we.

Reconsider what hath been offered as matter of meditation, to both these purposes. And now, hereupon, let us endeavour to have a correspondent sense inwrought into our hearts, and to bear ourselves towards him accordingly. The power and efficacy of whole Christianity depends upon this, and do very principally consist in it. What a faint, impotent, languishing thing is our religion, how doth it dwindle into spiritless, dead form, without it! The form of knowledge is nothing else but insipid, dead notion, and our forms of worship only fruitless, unpleasant formality, if we have not a vivid sense in our hearts both of his glorious greatness, and of his excellent loving-kindness. As much as words can signify towards the impressing such a sense into our hearts, we have in these words, uttered from his own mouth; so that he may say, as that memorable type of him once did, You may plainly perceive,[u] "It is my mouth that speaketh to you. I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." And hereto he now sets his solemn ratifying seal, *Amen*. Wherewith he leaves us to pause, and collect, that thus it was brought about, that he could add, "And I have the keys of the vast *hades*, the whole *unseen world*, and of death."

And God forbid that, now, these words should be with us an empty sound, or a dead letter! Let us cast in our minds what manner of salutation this should be! Doth the Son of God thus vouchsafe to bespeak miserable abjects, perishing, lost wretches? How can we hereupon but bow our heads and worship? What agitations of affection should we feel within! How should all our internal powers be moved, and our whole souls made as the chariots of Amminadab! What can we be now unwilling of, that he would have us be, or do? And as that, whereof we may be assured he is most willing.

5. Let us entirely receive him, and absolutely resign ourselves to him, as our Prince and Saviour. Who would not covet to be in special relation to so mighty and so kind a Lord? And can you think to be related to him upon other terms? And do you not know that upon these you may, when in his Gospel he offers himself, and demands you? What can that mean, but that you are to receive him, and resign yourselves? The case is now brought to this state, that you must either comply, or rebel. And what! rebel against him who hath these keys, who is in so high authority over the whole unseen world, who is the Head of all principality and power, who is gone into the heavens, the glorious upper *hades*, and is at the right hand of God, angels, authorities, powers, being made subject to him! 1 Pet. iii. 22. We little know or can conceive, as yet, the several orders and distinctions of the celestial inhabitants, and their great and illustrious princes and potentates, thrones, dominions, &c. that all pay him a dutiful and a joyful subjection and obedience. But do we not know God hath given him a name above every name? and that in his name, or at it, as it may be read, *i. e.* in acknowledgment of his sovereign power, every knee must bow, of things in heaven, on earth, and under earth, and all confess that he is Lord, to the praise and glory of God the Father? And who art thou, perishing wretch! that darest dispute his title? or that, when all the creation must be subject to him, wilt except thyself?

t Neque quicquam reperit dignum, quod cum tempore suo permuteret. Sen.

And when it cost him so dear, that his vast power might be subservient to a design of grace, and thou must at last be saved by him, or lost for ever, what can tempt thee to stand out against such power and such grace?

If thou wert to gratify thy ambition, how glorious a thing is it to be a Christian! a subject, a devoted homager, to so mighty a Prince! If to provide against thy necessity and distress, what course can be so sure and successful, as to fly for refuge to so compassionate a Saviour? And dost thou not know there must be, to this purpose, an express transaction between him and thee? Wonder he will condescend to it! To capitulate with dust and ashes! To article with his own creature, with whom he may do what he will! But his merciful condescension herein is declared and known. If there shall be a special relation settled between him and thee, he hath told thee in what way it must be, *i. e.* by way of covenant-transaction and agreement, as he puts his people of old in mind his way was with them; "I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine," Ezek. xvi. 8. This I insist upon and press, as a thing of the greatest importance imaginable, and the least thought of: nor the strange incongruity animadverted on, *viz.* that we have the seals of such a covenant among us; but the covenant itself slips through our hands. Our baptism soon after we were born, with some federal words then, is thought enough, as if we were a nation of always minors. Whoever therefore thou art, that hearest these words, or readest these lines, know that the great Lord is express towards thee in his gospel-proposal—"Wilt thou accept me for thine, and resign thyself as mine?" He now expects and requires thy express answer. Take his gospel as from the cross, or take it as from the throne, or as from both, 'tis the same Gospel, interwoven of grace and authority; the richest grace, and the highest authority, at once inviting and requiring thee to *commit* and *submit* thyself unto him. Take heed lest his key turn before thou hast given thy complying answer, importing at once both thy trust and thy subjection.

Give not over pleading with thyself, with thy wayward stupid heart, till it can say to him, "Lord, I yield; thou hast overcome." Till with tender relentings thou hast thrown thyself at his feet, and told him, "Lord, I am ashamed, I am confounded within myself, that thou shouldst die upon a cross to obtain thy high power, and that thou art now ready to use it for the saving so vile a miscreant as I: that when thou hast so vast an unknown world, so numberless myriads of excellent creatures in thy obedience, thou shouldst yet think it worth thy while to look after me; and that I should so long have withstood thy kind and gracious overtures and intendments! O forgive my wicked aversion! I now accept and resign."

And now this being sincerely done, with fulness of consent, with deep humility, with yearning bowels, with unfeigned thankfulness, and an inward complacency and gladness of heart;

6. Let your following course in this world be ordered agreeably hereto, in continued dependence and subjection. As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so we are to walk in him, Col. ii. 6. Take him according to the titles here given him, as Christ, a Person anointed, authorized, qualified to be both Jesus, a Saviour, so we are to walk, according to our first reception of him, in continual dependence on his saving mercy, and to be a Lord, or, as 'tis here exprest, with eminency, *the Lord*, so we are to walk in continual subjection to his governing power. Otherwise our receiving him, at first, under these notions, hath nothing in it but mockery and collusion.

But if his obtaining these keys, upon the terms here exprest, as having been dead, and now living, and having overcome death, as 'tis also Rom. xiv. 9. did signify his having them for saving purposes, as it must, since for other purposes he had them sufficiently before; and if we reckon this a reasonable inducement to receive him, and commit and intrust ourselves to him as a Saviour, that he died, and overcame death; (for his grace in yielding to die, had not rendered him a competent object of trust, otherwise than in conjunction with his power in overcoming death, and so gaining into his hands these keys;) then the same reason still remaining, how constant an encourage-

u Gen: xlv.

ment have we to continue accordingly walking in him all our days! How potent an argument should it be to us, to live that life which we live in the flesh, by faith in the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us! (Gal. ii. 20.) *i. e.* inasmuch as having been crucified with him, (which is also there exprest,) we feel ourselves to live nevertheless; yet so as that 'tis not so much we that live, as Christ that liveth in us; who could not live in us, or be to us a spring of life, if he were not a perpetual spring of life in himself.

And consider, how darest thou live otherwise in this flesh, in this earthly house, whereof he keeps the keys, and can fetch thee out at his pleasure? When he hath warned thee to abide in him, that when he shall appear, thou mayst have confidence, and not be ashamed at his coming, 1 John ii. 28. He will certainly then appear, when he comes to open the door, and dislodge thee from this flesh; (though there be here a further and final reference to another appearance and coming of his;) and if he then find thee severed and disjoined from him, (thy first closure with him not having been sincere, truly unitive and vital,) how terribly will he look! how confoundedly wilt thou look in that hour!

Neither hast thou less reason to live in continual subjection to him, considering that as he died, and overcame death, that he might have these keys, so he now hath them, and thou art under his governing power. The more thou considerest his right to govern, the less thou wilt dispute it. When he was spoken of as a Child to us born, that he might become a Man of sorrows, and be sorrowful unto the death, and have all the sorrows of death come upon him, he is at the same time said to be the mighty God, and it was declared the [x] government should be upon his shoulders. As he was the first-begotten from the dead, *viz.* both submitting to death, and conquering it, so he was the Prince of the kings of the earth, (a small part of his kingdom too,) his throne being founded on his cross, his governing power in his sacrifice; *i. e.* the power whereby he so governs, as that he may also save; making these two things, the salving the rights of the Godhead, injured by sin, and the delivering of the sinner from an eternal ruin, to agree and consist with one another.

What an endearing obligation is this to obey! That he will be the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him! Inasmuch as, while our obedience cannot merit the least thing from him, yet his vouchsafing to govern us doth most highly merit from us. For he governs by writing his law in the heart, which makes our heart agree with the law; and by implanting divine love in us, which vanquishes enmity and disaffection, and virtually contains in itself our obedience, or keeping his commandments, John xiv. 15, 23. and 1 John v. 3. Therefore this government of his, over us, is naturally necessary to our salvation and blessedness, and is the inchoation and beginning of it; as our perfected love to God, and conformity to his nature and will, do involve and contain in themselves our complete and perfect blessedness, with which a continued enmity, or a rebellious mutinous disposition against God, is naturally inconsistent, and would be to us, and in us, a perpetual, everlasting hell.

There can therefore be no enthralling servitude in such obedience, but the truest liberty, that by which the Son makes us free indeed, John viii. 36. Yea, a true sort of royalty: for hereby we come, in the most allowable sense, to live as we will, our will being conformed to the will of God. Whereupon that was no high extravagant rant, but a sober expression, "We are born in a kingdom; to serve God is to reign."

And we know this to be the will of God, [y] that all should honour the Son, as they honour the Father. Herewith will the evangelically obedient comport with high complacency; accounting him most highly worthy that it should be so. Wherein therefore the Christian law seems strictest and most rigorous in the enjoined observance of our Lord Christ, herein we shall discern an unexceptionable reasonableness, and comply with a complacential approbation. And let us put our own hearts to it, and see that without regret or obmurmuration they can readily consent to the equity of the precept.

'Tis enjoined us, constructively at least, that because Christ died for us, when we were dead, quite lost in death, we that live, hereupon should settle this with ourselves as a fixed judgment, and upon that intervening judgment yield to the constraint of his love, so as henceforth no more to live to ourselves: *q. d.* God forbid we should henceforth be so profane! We must now for ever have done with that impious, unlawful way of living. What! after this, that we have so fully understood the state of our case, that we should be so assuming as ever again to offer at such a thing as living to ourselves, to make ourselves deities to ourselves; or to live otherwise than unto him who died for us, and rose again! 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. This is high and great, and may seem strict and severe. What! to have the whole stream of all the actions and aims, the strength and vigour of our lives, to be carried in one entire, undivided current unto him, and (as it must be understood, Gal. ii. 19.) to God in him, so as never more to live to ourselves, a divided, separate life apart from him, or wherein we shall not finally and more principally design for him! How high is his claim, but how equal and grateful to a right mind! With what a plenitude of consent is every divine command (taking this into the account) esteemed to be right in all things! So as that whatsoever is opposite, is hated as a false way, Psal. cxix. 128. And as the precept carries its own visible reason, the keeping of it carries its own reward in itself, Psal. xix. 11. And is it too much for him who bears these keys, and obtained them on such terms, and for such ends, to be thus affected towards him?

We are required, without exception, without limitation or reserve, whatsoever we do, whether in word or work, to do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Col. iii. 17.

Inquire we, Do our hearts repine at this law? Do not we? Doth not this world owe so much to him? Why are we allowed a place and a time here? Why is not this world a flaming theatre? Is it not fit every one should know under whose government they live; by whose beneficence, under whose protection, and in whose name they may act so or so, and by whose authority; either obliging, or not restraining them, requiring, or licensing them to do this or that? Doth this world owe less to him, that bears these keys, than Egypt did to Joseph, when thus the royal word went forth in reference to him, "I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt?" How pleasant should it be to our souls, often to remember and thiuk on that name of his which we bear, (Isa. xxvi. 8. Mal. iii. 16.) and draw in as vital breath, the [z] sweet odours of it, Cant. i. 3. How glorious a thing should we count it, because he is the Lord our God, to walk in his name for ever and ever, as all people will walk every one in the name of their god, Mic. iv. 5. And then we shall account it no hard law, whatever we do, to do all in the name of our Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him, and for him; blessing God every day, that we are put by him under the mild and merciful government of a Redeemer. Then we shall rejoicingly avow, as the apostle doth, (1 Cor. ix. 21.) that we are not without law to God, but under law to Christ.

Whereupon, when you find your special relation is thus settled and fixed unto the great Lord both of this present visible world, and of *hades*, or the invisible world, also by your solemn covenant with him, and evidenced by the continued correspondency of your heart and life, your dispositions and actions, thereunto,

7. Do not regret or dread to pass out of the one world into the other at his call, and under his conduct, though through the dark passage of death; remembering the keys are in so great and so kind a hand; and that his good pleasure herein is no more to be distrusted, than to be disputed or withstood. Let it be enough to you, that what you cannot see yourself, he sees for you. You have oft desired your ways, your motions, your removals from place to place, might be directed by him in the world. Have you never said, If thou go not with me, carry me not hence? How safely and fearlessly may you follow him blindfold or in the dark any whither; not only from place to place in this world, but from world to world; how lightsome soever the one, and gloomy and dark the other may seem to you. Darkness

[x] Isa. ix. 6.

[y] John v. 23.

[z] Psal. xlv. 6—11. John xx 28.

and light are to him alike. To him, *hades* is no *hades*, nor is the dark way that leads into it to him an untrodden path. Shrink not at the thoughts of this translation, though it be not by escaping death, but even through the jaws of it.

We commonly excuse our aversion to die, by alleging that nature regrets it. But we do not enough consider, that in such a compounded sort of creature as we are, the word *nature* must be ambiguous. There is in us a sensitive nature that regrets it; but taking the case as it is now stated, can we think it tolerable, that it should be regretted by the reasonable nature? Unto which, if we appeal, can we suppose it so untrue to itself, as not to assert its own superiority? Or to judge it fit that an intelligent, immortal spirit, capable of so great things in another world, should be content with a long abode here, only to keep a well-figured piece of flesh from putrefying, or give it the satisfaction of tasting meats and drinks that are grateful to it, for a few years? And if for a few, why not for many? And when those many were expired, why not for as many more? And the same reason always remaining, why not for always? The case is thus put, because the common meaning of this allegation, that nature regrets or abhors this dissolution, is not that they are concerned for their souls how it may fare with them in another world, which the most little mind or trouble themselves about; but that they are to have what is grateful to them in this world. And was this the end a reasonable spirit was made for, when, without reason, sense were alike capable of the same sort of gratifications? What law, what equity, what rule of decency, can oblige the soul of a man, capable of the society and enjoyment of angels, to this piece of self-denial, for the sake of his incomparably baser body? or can make it fit that the nobler and more excellent nature should be eternally subservient to the meaner and more ignoble? Especially, considering that if, according to the case supposed, the two last foregoing directions be complied with, there is a sort of divine nature superadded to the whole human nature, that cannot but prompt the soul ennobled by it, to aspire to suitable, even to the highest, operations and enjoyments whereof it is capable, and which are not attainable in this present bodily state.

And if there were still a dispute between nature and nature, 'tis enough that the great Lord of *hades*, and of this present sensible world too, will determine it. In a far lower instance, when the general of an army commands it upon an enterprise, wherein life is to be hazarded, it would be an ill excuse of a cowardly beginning, to say, their nature regrets and dreads the adventure. The thing is necessary. Against what is so unavoidable as death, that is an abject mind that reluctates.[a]

Come, then, let us imbolden ourselves; and, when he brings the key, dare to die. It is to obey and enjoy him, who is our life and our all. Say we cheerfully each of us, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit; into thy hands I commit it, who hast redeemed it.

8. Let us quietly submit to Divine disposal, when our dear friends and relatives are by death taken away from us. For consider into what hands this affair is put, of ordering every one's decease, and removal out of this into the other world, and who hath these keys. 'Tis such a one, whose right, if we use our thoughts, we will not allow ourselves to dispute; or to censure his administration. His original right, is that of a Creator and a God. "For all things were created for him, and by him," Col. i. 16. "And without him was nothing made that was made," John i. 3. "The first and the last" to all things, Rev. i. 17.

His supervening right was that of a Redeemer, as hath been already noted from this context, and as such he had it by acquisition, dying to obtain it, and overcoming death! "I am he that liveth and was dead." And then, as he elsewhere declares, by constitution, "All power is given me both in heaven and on earth," Matt. xxviii. 18. The word (ἐξουσία) imports *rightful power*. And who are we, or any relatives of ours, whom all the power of heaven and earth hath no right to touch? What exempt jurisdiction can we pretend ourselves to belong unto?

Or will we adventure to say, not denying his right, He did not use it well in this case? Who is more fitly qualified to judge, than he that hath these keys? And let this matter be yet more thoroughly discussed. What is it that we find fault with in the removal of this or that person, that was near and delightful to us? Is it that he was to die at all? Or that he died so soon? If we say the former; do we blame the constitution appointing all men once to die, by which this world is made a portal to another, for all men, and whence it was necessary none should stay long in this, but only pass through, into that world wherein every one is to have his everlasting abode? Or is it that, when we think it not unfit this should be the general and common course, there should yet have been a particular dispensation for this friend or relation of mine?

Let the former be supposed the thing we quarrel at, and consider the intolerable consequences of the matter's being otherwise, as the case is with this apostate sinful world. Such as upon second, better weighed thoughts, we would abhor to admit into our minds, even as the matter of a wish. What! would we wish to mankind a sinning immortality on this earth, before which a wise heathen[b] professed to prefer one day virtuously spent? Would we wish this world to be the everlasting stage of indignities and affronts to him that made it? Would we wish there should never be a judgment-day, and that all the wise and righteous counsels of heaven should be transversed and overturned, only to comport with our terrene and sensual inclinations? Is this our dutifulness and loyal affection to our blessed Lord, the Author of our beings, and the God of our lives, whose rights and honours should be infinitely dearer to us than ourselves? Is it our kindness to ourselves, and all others of our kind and order, that are all naturally capable, and many, by gracious vouchsafement, fitly qualified, to enjoy a perfect felicity in another world, that we would have altogether confined for ever to this region of darkness, impurity, and misery?

Or if it displease us, that our relatives are not, by some special dispensation, excepted from the common law of mortality, we would surely as much have expected an exemption ourselves; otherwise, our dying away from them, would make the so much regretted separation, as well as theirs from us. And what then, if we were required to draw up our petition, to put it into express words, to turn our wish for ourselves, and all our relatives and peculiar friends, into a formed, solemn prayer, to this effect, that we are content the law stand in force, that all the world should die, with only the exception of some few names; *viz.* our own, and of our kindred and more inward friends? What ashamed confounded creatures should we be upon the view of our own request! Would we not presently be for quelling and suppressing it, and easily yield to be non-suited, without more ado? What pretence can we have not to think others as apt to make the same request for them and theirs? And if all the rest of the world shall die, would we and our friends dwell here alone, or would we have this world be continued habitable only on this private account, to gratify a family? And if we and our friends be holy, heavenly-minded persons, how unkind were it to wish to ourselves and them, when fit for the society of angels and blessed spirits above, a perpetual abode in this low earthly state! Would we not now, upon riper, second thoughts, rather be content that things should rest as they are, and be that hath these keys, use them his own way.

But if by all this we are put quite out of conceit with the desire of a terrestrial immortality, all that the matter finally results into is, that we think such a relative of ours died too soon. We would not have coveted for him an eternity on earth, but only more time. And how much more? Or for what? If we were to set the time, 'tis like that when it comes, we should be as averse to a separation, if coexistent, then, as now; and so we revolve into the exploded desire of a terrestrial immortality back again at last. If we were to assign the reason of our desire, that would seem, as in the present case, a plausible one to some, which is mentioned by Plutarch in his consolation to Apollonius for the loss of his son, concerning another such case, (as he instances in many,) of one Elysius, an Italian, whose loss of his son Euthynous was much aggravated by this, that he was a great heir. But what was said to that, there, and what is further to be said to

a Miser est quicunque non vult, Mundo secum moriente, mori. Sen. Tr.

b Cicero.

any thing of that kind, I shall reserve to a more proper place.

It is a more weighty allegation, and of more common concernment, when a useful person is gone, and one very capable of becoming very eminently so. And this requires deeper consideration, and sundry things ought to be considered, in order to the quieting their minds, who are apt to behold such darker dispensations, in the course of providence, with amusement, and disturbance of spirit; *i. e.* when they see persons of excellent endowments and external advantages beyond the most, cut off in their prime, while the world is cumbered with drones never likely to do good, and pestered with such as are like to prove plagues to it, and do great hurt and mischief to the age wherein they live: an ancient and not uncommon scruple to pious observers heretofore. "Wherefore," says holy Job, "do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight," *ch.* xxi. 7, 8. when his seed was cut off before his eyes. And here let us consider,

1. That this world is in apostacy from God; and though he is pleased to use apt means for its recovery, he doth what he thinks fit herein, of mere grace and favour, and is under no obligation to do all that he can. His dispensation herein must correspond to, and bear upon it, the impress of other divine perfections, his wisdom, holiness, justice, as well as grace. And for grace itself, whereas all since the apostacy lie together in a fearful gulf of impurity and misery; and some, made more early sensible hereof than the most, do stretch out a craving hand, and cry for help. If now a merciful hand reached down from heaven take hold of them, and pluck them sooner out; is this disagreeable to the God of all grace, to make some such instances, and vouchsafe them an earlier deliverance; though they might, being longer delayed, be some way helpful to others, that continue stupid and insensible?

2. When he hath done much, in an age still obstinately unreclaimable, he may be supposed to let one appear, only with a promising aspect, and in just displeasure presently withdraw him, that they may understand they have forfeited such a blessing, to this or that country, as such a one might have proved.

3. This may awaken some, the more to prize and improve the encouragements they may have from such as remain, or shall spring up in their stead, who are gone, and to bless God that the weight of his interest, and of the cause of religion, doth not hang and depend upon the slender thread of this man's life. "The God of the spirits of all flesh" can raise up instruments as he pleases; and will, to serve his own purposes, though not ours.

4. He will have it known, that though he uses instruments, he needs them not. 'Tis a piece of divine royalty and magnificence, that when he hath prepared and polished such a utensil, so as to be capable of great service, he can lay it by without loss.

5. They that are most qualified to be of greatest use in this world, are thereby also the more capable of blessedness in the other. 'Tis owing to his most munificent bounty, that he may vouchsafe to reward sincere intentions, as highly as great services. He took David's having it in his heart to build him a house, as kindly as Solomon's building him one: and as much magnifies himself in testifying his acceptance of such as he discharges from his service here, at the third hour, as of them whom he engages not in it till the eleventh.

6. Of their early piety he makes great present use in this world, testifying his acceptance of their works, generally in his word, and particularly by the reputation he procures to them in the minds and consciences of such as were best able to judge, and even of all that knew them, which may be truly accounted a divine testimony; both in respect of the object, which hath on it a divine impress, and speaks a self-recommending power of true goodness, which is the image of God, and in respect of the subject, shows the dominion God hath over minds; engaging not only good men to behold with complacency such pleasant, blooming goodness, correspondent to their own, but even bad men to approve in these others what they entertain not in themselves. "The [e] same things are accepted with God, and approved of men," Rom. xiv. 18. "Thus being dead, they, as Abel, yet speak."

7. And it is a brighter and more unsullied testimony, which is left in the minds of men, concerning such very hopeful persons as die in their youth. They never were otherwise known, or can be remembered, than as excellent young persons. This is the only idea which remains of them. Had they lived longer, to the usual age of man, the remembrance of what they were in youth would have been in a great degree effaced and worn out by latter things; perhaps blackened, not by what were less commendable, but more ungrateful to the greater part, especially if they lived to come into public stations. Their just zeal and contestations against the wickedness of the age, might disoblige many, and create them enemies, who would make it their business to blast them, and cast upon their name and memory all the reproach they could invent. Whereas the lustre of that virtue and piety which had provoked nobody, appears only with an amiable look, and leaves behind nothing of such a person but a fair, unblemished, alluring, and instructive example; which they that observed them might, with less prejudiced minds, compare with the useless, vicious lives of many that they see to have filled up a room in the world, unto extreme old age, either to no purpose, or to very bad. And how vast is the difference in respect of usefulness to the world, between a pious young gentleman dying in his youth, that lived long in a little time, untainted by youthful lusts and vanities, and victorious over them, and an accursed sinner of a hundred years old: (Isa. lxv. 20.) one that was an infant of days, and though a hundred years old, yet still a child, that had not filled up his days with any thing of real value or profit to himself or others, (as some very judicious expositors understand [d] that text,) that, as he aptly speaks, *had nothing besides gray hairs, and wrinkles, to make him be thought a long liver;* but who might truly be said not to have *lived* long, but only to have *been* long, in the world. How sweet and fragrant a memory doth the one, how rotten and stinking a name doth the other, leave behind him to survivors!

Therefore such very valuable young persons as are taken hence in the flower of their age, are not to be thought, upon that account, of usefulness to this world, to have lived in it that shorter time in vain.

They leave behind them that testimony which will turn to account, both for the glory of God's grace, which he hath exemplified in them, and which may be improved to the good of many who shall have seen that a holy life, amidst the temptations that a youthful age is exposed to, is no impracticable thing; and that an early death is as possible also to themselves.

But besides their no little usefulness in this world, which they leave, we must know,

8. That the affairs and concernments of the other world, whither they go, are incomparably greater every way, and much more considerable. And to this most unquestionable maxim must be our last and final resort, in the present case. All the perturbation and discomposure of mind which we suffer upon any such occasion, arises chiefly from our having too high and great thoughts of this world, and too low and diminishing thoughts of the other; and the evil must be remedied by rectifying our apprehensions in this matter. Because that other world is *hades*, unseen, and not within the verge of our sense, our sensual minds are prone to make of it a very little thing, and even next to nothing, as too many will have it to be quite nothing at all. We are concerned, in duty to our blessed Redeemer and Lord, and for his just honour, to magnify this his prefecture, and render it as great to ourselves as the matter requires, and as our very narrow minds can admit: and should labour to correct it as a great and too common fault, a very gross vulgar error, to conceive of persons leaving this world of ours, as if they hereby became useless; and, upon the matter, lost out of the creation of God. So is our fancy prepossessed and filled with delusive images, that throng in upon it through our unwary senses, that we

[e] Heb. xi. 4.

[d] Non est quod quenquam propter canos aut rugas, putes diu vixisse. Non ille diu vixit, sed diu fuit. Sen.

imagine this little spot of our earth to be the only place of business, and all the rest of the creation to be mere vacuity, vast empty space, where there is nothing to do, and nothing to be enjoyed. Not that these are formed, positive thoughts, or a settled judgment, with good men, but they are floating imaginations, so continually obtruded upon them, from (what lies next) the objects of sense, that they have more influence to affect the heart, and infer suitable, sudden, and indeliberate emotions of spirit, than the most formed judgment, grounded on things that lie without the sphere of sense, can outweigh.

And hence when a good man dies, elder or younger, the common cry is, among the better sort, (for the other do less concern themselves,) "O what a loss is this! Not to be repaired! not to be borne!" Indeed this is better than the common stupidity, not to consider, not "to take it to heart, when the righteous man perisheth, or is taken away." And the law of our own nature obliges and prompts us to feel and regret the losses which afflicts us. But such resentments ought to be followed and qualified by greater thoughts, arising from a superior nature, that ought presently to take place with us, of the nobler employments which God calls such unto, "of whom this world was not worthy," Heb. xi. 38. And how highly his great and all-comprehending interest is to be preferred before our own, or the interest of this or that family, country, or nation, on earth!

And at once both to enlarge and quiet our minds, on such occasions, we should particularly consider,

I. The vast amplitude of the heavenly *hades*, in comparison of our minute spot of earth, or of that dark region, wheresoever it is, reserved for the just punishment of delinquents, according to such intimations as the Holy Scriptures give us hereof; which being writ only for the use of us on earth, cannot be supposed to intend the giving us more distinct accounts of the state of things in the upper world, than were necessary for us in this our present state.

But it is no obscure hint that is given of the spaciousness of the heavenly regions, when purposely to represent the Divine immensity, 'tis said of the unconfined presence of the great God, that even heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain him, 1 Kings viii. 27. 2 Chron. vi. 18. How vast scope is given to our thinking minds, to conceive heavens above heavens, encircling one another, till we have quite tired our faculty, and yet we know not how far short we are of the utmost verge! And when our Lord is said to have ascended far above all heavens, (Eph. iv. 10.) whose arithmetic will suffice to tell how many they are? whose uranography to describe how far that is?

We need not impose it upon ourselves to judge their rules infallible, who, being of no mean understanding, nor indiligent in their inquiries, have thought it not improbable that there may be fixed stars within view, at that distance from our earth, that if moveable in as swift motion as that of a bullet shot from a cannon, would be fifty thousand years in passing from one to the other.[e] But how much remoter that star may be from the utmost verge of the universe, is left altogether unimaginable. I have been told that a very ingenious artist going about, in exact proportions, to describe the orb or vortex to which our sun belongs, on as large a table as could be convenient for him to work upon, was at a loss to find a spot not too big, in proportion, for our earth, and big enough, whereupon to place the point, made very fine, of one foot of his compasses.

If any suspect extravagancy in our modern computations, let him take a view of what is discoursed to this purpose by a writer of most unexceptionable wisdom and sobriety, as well as most eminent sanctity, in his time.[f]

Now when the Lord of this vast universe beheld upon this little spot intelligent creatures in transgression and misery, that he did so compassionately concern himself for the recovery of such as should, by apt methods, be induced to comply with his merciful design; and appoint his own eternal Son to be their Redeemer, in order whereto, as he was God with God, he must also become Man among men, one of themselves; and so, as God-man, for his kindness to some, be constituted universal Lord of all. Shall mere pity towards this world greaten it above the other?

But we are not left without ground to apprehend a more immediate reason for his being, as Redeemer, made Head and Lord of all those creatures that were the original inhabitants of the invisible world. For when it had been said, (Col. i. 16.) that all things were created by him, not only the visible things on earth, but the invisible things in heaven, here is a regression to these latter, who were before, for their greater dignity, generally first mentioned, and now some enumeration given of them, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; and all things again repeated, that these might appear expressly included; said over again to be created by him, and for him, which was sufficient to express his creative right in them. 'Tis presently subjoined, (*v.* 17.) "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." All owe their stability to him; *viz.* the mentioned thrones, dominions, &c. as well as other things. But how? or upon what terms? That we might understand his redemptory right was not here to be overlooked, 'tis shortly after added, "And having made peace by the blood of his cross, it pleased the Father" (to be repeated out of what went before) "by him to reconcile all things to himself;" and this *by him*, iterated; *q. d.* "By him shedding his blood on the cross, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven;" lest the thrones, dominions, mentioned before, should be forgot. And a word is used accommodable enough to the several purposes before expressed, ἀποκαταλλαξαι, which doth not always suppose enmity, but more generally signify, upon a sort of commutation, or valuable consideration, to procure or conciliate, or make a thing more firmly one's own, or assure it to himself; though 'tis afterwards used in a stricter sense, *v.* 21.

I have often considered with wonder and pleasure, that whereas God is called by that higher and far more extensive name, *the Father of spirits*, he is also pleased so graciously to vouchsafe, as to be styled *the God of the spirits of all flesh*; and thereby to signify, that having an order of spirits so meanly lodged that inhabit frail and mortal flesh, though he have a world of spirits to converse with whose dwelling is not with flesh, yet he disdains not a relation to so mean and abject spirits, his offspring also, in our world. And that, because this was the place of offending delinquents that he would recover, the Redeemer should sort himself with them, and, as they were partakers of flesh and blood, himself likewise take part of the same! This was great and Godlike, and speaks the largeness and amplitude of an all-comprehending mind, common to Father and Son, and capable of so applying itself to the greatest things, as not to neglect the least; and therefore so much the more magnifies God and our Redeemer, by how much the less considerable we and our world are. But that hence we should so over-magnify this world, as if nothing were considerable that lies without its compass, is most perversely to misconstrue the most amazing condescension.

The Spirit of God by holy David, teaches us to reason the quite contrary way; and from the consideration he had of the vastness and splendour of the upper world, of the heavens, the moon and stars, &c. not to magnify, but diminish, our world of mankind, and say, What is man?

And let us further consider,

2. The inexpressible numerousness of the other world's inhabitants, with the excellencies wherein they shine, and the orders they are ranked into, and how unlikely is it, that holy souls that go thither should want employment. Great concourse and multitudes of people make places of business in this world, and must much more do so, where creatures of the most spiritual and active natures must be

e Computation by the Hon. Francis Roberts, Esq. Philosophical Transactions for the months of March and April. 1694.

f Bolton, in his *Four Last Things*, who speaking of heaven, directs us to guess the immeasurable magnitude of it, (as otherwise——so) by the incredible distance from the earth to the starry firmament; and adds, "If I should here tell you the several computations of astronomers, in this kind, the sums would seem to exceed all possibility of belief." And he annexes in his margin sundry computations which I shall not here recite: you may find them in the author himself, *p.* 21. And yet besides, as he further adds, the late learnedest of them place above the 8th sphere, wherein all those glorious lamps shine so bright, three moving orbs more. Now the empyrean heaven comprehends all these: how incomprehensible, then, must its compass and greatness necessarily be! But he supposes it possible, the adventure of mathematicians may be too audacious and peremptory, &c. and concludes the height and extent of the heavens to be beyond all human investigation.

supposed to have their residence. Scripture speaks of *myriads*, which we read, *an innumerable company*, of angels, besides all the spirits of just men; (Heb. xii.) who are sometimes said to be more than *any one*—which we causelessly[g] render *man*, could number, Rev. vii. And when we are told of many heavens, above all which our Lord Jesus is said to have ascended, are all those heavens only empty solitudes? uninhabited glorious deserts? When we find how full of vitality this base earth of ours is; how replenished with living creatures, not only on the surface, but within it; how unreasonable is it to suppose the nobler parts of the universe to be less peopled with inhabitants, of proportionable spirituality, activity, liveliness, and vigour to the several regions, which the remoter they are from dull earth, must be supposed still the finer, and apt to afford fit and suitable habitations to such creatures? Whether we suppose pure unclothed spirits to be the natives in all those heavens, all comprehended under the one name of *angels*, or whether, as some think of all created spirits, that they have all vital union with some or other vehicles, etherial or celestial, more or less fine and pure, as the region is to which they belong, having gradually associated unto them the spirits of holy men gone from us, which are said to be *ἰσάγγελοι—angels' fellows*, (Luke xx. 36.) it is indifferent to our purpose.

Let us only consider them all as intelligent, spiritual beings, full of holy light, life, active power, and love to their common Lord and one another. And can we imagine their state to be a state of torpid silence, idleness, and inactivity, or that they have not much higher and nobler work to do *there*, than they can have in such a world as this, or in such bodies as *here* they lug to and fro?

And the Scriptures are not altogether silent, concerning the distinct orders of those glorious creatures that inhabit all the heavens which this upper *hades* must be understood to contain; though it hath not provided to gratify any one's curiosity, so far as to give us particular accounts of their differences and distinctions. And though we are not warrantable to believe such conjectures concerning them as we find in the supposititious Dionysius's *Celestial Hierarchy*, or much less the idler dreams of Valentinus and the Gnosticks about their *Æones*, with divers more such fictions; yet we are not to neglect what God hath expressly told us, *viz.* That giving us some account of the creation in the *hades*, or the invisible part of it, there are thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, angels, (and elsewhere arch-angels,) authorities; (Col. i. 16. with 1 Pet. iii. 21.) which being terms that import order and government, can scarce allow us not to conceive, that of all those numberless multitudes of glorious creatures that replenish and people those spacious regions of light and bliss, there are none who belong not to some or other of those principalities and dominions.

Whence therefore, nothing is more obvious than to conceive, that whosoever is adjoined to them, ascending out of our world, presently hath his station assigned him, is made to know his post, and how is to be employed, in the service and adoration of the sovereign Lord of all, and in paying the most regular homage to the throne of God and the Lamb: it being still to be remembered, that God is not worshipped there, or here, as an *ἐνδεὴς*, or as though he needed any thing, since he gives to all breath and being, and all things; (Acts xvii.) but that the felicity of his most excellent creatures doth in great part consist in acting perpetually according to the dictate of a just and right mind; and that therefore they take highest pleasure in prostration, in casting down their crowns, in shrinking even into nothing, before the original, eternal, subsistent Being, that he may be owned as the All in all, because they follow, hereiu, a most satisfied judgment, and express it when they say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created, Rev. iv. 11. And worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive riches, and wisdom, and strength," &c. *ch.* v. 12.

And they that rest not night or day from such high and glorious employments, have they nothing to do? Or will we say or think, because we see not how the heavenly potentates lead on their bright legions, to present themselves before the throne, to tender their obeisance, or receive commands and despatches to this or that far remote dynasty; or suppose to such and such a mighty star, (whereof there are so numberless myriads; and why should we suppose them not replenished with glorious inhabitants?) whether they fly as quick as thought, with joyful speed, under the all-seeing Eye, glad to execute wise and just commands upon all occasions. But alas! in all this we can but darken counsel with words without knowledge. We cannot pretend to knowledge in these things: yet if from Scripture intimations, and the concurrent reason of things, we only make suppositions of what may be, not conclusions of what is; let our thoughts ascend as much higher as they can. I see not why they should fall lower than all this. And because we cannot be positive, will we therefore say or think there can be no such thing, or nothing but dull inactivity, in those regions? Because that other world is *hades*, and we see nothing, shall we make little or next to nothing of it? We should think it very absurd reasoning, (if we should use it in reference to such mean trifles in comparison, and say,) There is no such thing as pomp and state, no such thing as action or business, in the court of Spain or France, of Persia or Japan, because no sound from thence strikes our ear, or the beams of majesty there dazzle not our eye.

I should indeed think it very unreasonable to make mere magnitude, or vast extent of space, filled up with nothing but void air, ether, or other fine matter, (call it by what name you will,) alone, or by itself, a very considerable note of excellency of the other invisible world, above this visible world of ours. But I reckon it much more unreasonable and uninforced, (to say no more,) by any principles, either of philosophy or religion, finding this world of ours, a baser part of the creations, so full of life, and of living inhabitants, of one degree or another; to suppose the nobler parts of the universe, still ascending upwards, generally unpeopled, and desert, when it is so conceivable in itself, and so aptly tending to magnify our Creator and Redeemer, that all the upper regions be fully inhabited with intelligent creatures; whether mere spirits, unclothed with any thing material, or united with some other matter, we need not determine.

And whereas Scripture plainly intimates, that the apostate revolted spirits that fell from God, and kept not their first stations, were vastly numerous; we have hence scope enough for our thoughts to conceive, that so spacious regions being replenished with intelligent creatures, always innocent and happy, the delinquents, compared with them, may be as despicable for their paucity, as they are detestable for their apostacy: and that the horrid *hades*, wherein they are reserved to the blackness of darkness for ever, may be no more in proportion, nay, unexpressibly less, than some little rocky island, appointed as a place of punishment for criminals, in comparison of a flourishing, vast empire, fully peopled with industrious, rich, sober-minded, and happy inhabitants.

We might further consider,

3. The high perfection they presently attain to, who are removed, though in their younger years, out of this into that other world.

The spirits of just men are there said to be made perfect. Waiving the Olympic metaphor, which is, at most, but the thing signifying; that which is signified, cannot be less than the concurrence of natural and moral perfection: the perfecting of all our faculties, mind, will, and active power, and of all holy and gracious excellencies, knowledge, wisdom, love, holiness. The apostle makes the difference be, as that of a child, and that of a man, 1 Cor. xiii. And would any one that hath a child he delights in, wish him to be a child always, and only capable of childish things? Or is it a reasonable imagination, that by how much we are more capable of action, we shall be the more useless, and have the less to do?

We may further lastly add, that which is not the least considerable,

4. That all the active services and usefulness we are capable of in this world, are but transitory, and lie within the compass of this temporary state of things, which must have an end. Whereas the business of the other world

[g] οὐδείς.

belongs to our final and eternal state, which shall never be at an end. The most extraordinary qualifications for service on earth, must hereafter; if not by the cessation of the active powers and principles themselves, as tongues, prophecies, and such knowledge as is uncommon, and by peculiar vouchsafement afforded but to a few, for the help of many: these endowments, designed for the propagation of the Christian faith, and for the stopping the mouths of gainsayers, must in the use and exercise, at least by the cessation of the objects and occasions, fail, and cease, and vanish away, I Cor. xiii. 8. The like may be said of courage and fortitude to contend against prevailing wickedness; skill, ability, with external advantages, to promote the impugned interest of Christ, and Christian religion; of all these there will be no further use in that other world. They are all to be considered as means to the end. But how absurd were it to reckon the means of greater importance than the end itself! The whole present constitution of Christ's kingdom on earth, is but preparatory and introductive to the celestial kingdom. And how absurd were it to prefer this temporary kingdom to the eternal one, and present serviceableness to this, to perpetual service in the other!

'Tis true, that service to God and our Redeemer in this present state, is necessary in its own kind, highly acceptable to God, and justly much valued by good men. And we ought ourselves willingly to submit to serve God in a meaner capacity in this world, while it is his pleasure we shall do so; especially if God should have given any signification of his mind, concerning our abode in the flesh some longer time, as 'tis likely he had done to the apostle Paul, (Phil. i. 24.) because he says, he was confident, and did know, that so it should be, (*v.* 25.) we should be abundantly satisfied with it, as he was. But to suppose an abode here to be simply and universally more eligible, is very groundless and unreasonable; and were a like case, as if a person of very extraordinary abilities and accomplishments, because he was useful in some obscure country village, is to be looked upon as lost, because his prince, being informed of his great worth, calls him up to his court, and finding him every way fit, employs him in the greatest affairs of state!

To sum up this matter, whereas the means are always, according to usual estimate, wont to derive their value from their end; time, from eternity; this judgment of the case, that usefulness in this present state is of greater consequence and more important than the affairs of the other world, breaks all measures, overturns the whole frame, and inverts the order of things; makes the means more valuable than the end; time more considerable than eternity; and the concernments of a state that will soon be over, greater than those of our fixed, permanent, everlasting state, that will never be over.

If we would allow ourselves the liberty of reasoning, according to the measure and compass of our narrow minds, biassed and contracted by private interest and inclination, we should have the like plausible things to think, concerning such of ours as die in infancy, and that when they have but newly looked into this world, are presently again caught out of it; that if they had lived, what might they have come to! How pleasant and diverting might their childhood have been! How hopeful their youth! How useful their riper age! But these are commonly thoughts little wiser than theirs, and proceed from general infidelity, or misbelief, that whatsoever is not within the compass of this little, sorry world, is all emptiness and nullity! Or if such be pious and more considering, 'tis too plain they do not, however, consider enough, how great a part of it is of Divine magnificence, to take a reasonable immortal spirit from animating a piece of well-figured clay, and presently adjoin it to the general assembly above! How glorious a change is made upon their child in a moment! How much greater a thing it is to be adoring God above, in the society of angels, than to be dandled on their knee, or enjoy the best provisions they can make for them on earth! That they have a part to act upon an eternal stage! and though they are but lately come into being, are never to go out of being more, but to be everlasting monuments and instruments of the glory of their great Creator and Lord!

Nor, perhaps, is it considered so deeply as it ought, that it hath seemed meet to the Supreme Wisdom, upon a most important reason, in the case of lengthening or shortening the lives of men, not ordinarily, or otherwise than upon a great occasion, to interrupt the tendencies of natural causes. But let nature run its course: for otherwise, very frequent innovations upon nature would make miracles cheap and common, and consequently useless to their proper, great ends, which may be of greater significancy in the course of God's government over the world, than some addition to this or that life can be worth. And therefore should this consideration repress our wonderment, why God doth not, when he so easily can, by one touch upon this or that second cause, prevent or ease the grievous pains which they often suffer that love him, and whom he loves. He reckons it fitter, and they will in due time reckon so too themselves, when the wise methods of his government come to be unfolded and understood, that we should any of us bear what is ungrateful to us, in point of pain, loss of friends, or other unpleasing events of Providence, than that he should make frequent and less necessary breaches upon the common order and course of government which he hath established over a delinquent, sinful world.

Whereupon it is a great piece of wisdom and dutifulness towards our great Lord, not to pray absolutely, peremptorily, or otherwise than with great submission and deference to his wise and holy pleasure, for our own or our friends' lives, ease, outward prosperity, or any external or temporary good thing. For things that concern our spiritual and eternal welfare, his good and acceptable will is more expressly declared, and made known already and before-hand.

But as to the particular case of the usefulness of any friend or relative of ours in this or the other state, the matter must be finally left to the arbitrement and disposal of him who hath the keys of *hades* and of death. And when by his turn of them he hath decided the matter, we then know what his mind and judgment are, which it is no more fit for us to censure, than possible to disannul. Whatever great purposes we might think one cut off in the flower of his age capable of serving in this world, we may be sure he judged him capable of serving greater in the other.

And now by this time I believe you will expect to have somewhat a more particular account of this excellent young gentleman, whose early decease hath occasioned my discoursing so largely on this subject; not more largely than the importance, but much less accurately than the dignity, of it did challenge.

He was the eldest son of Sir Charles Hoghton, of Hoghton-Tower, in the county of Lancaster, Baronet, and of the Lady Mary, daughter of the late Lord Viscount Massarine, his very pious consort; a family of eminent note in that northern part of the kingdom, for its antiquity, opulency, and interest in the country where it is seated; and which hath intermarried with some or other of the nobility, one generation after another; but hath been most of all considerable and illustrious, as having been itself, long, the immemorial, known seat of religion, sobriety, and good order, from father to son; giving example, countenance, and patronage, to these praiseworthy things to the country round about; and wherein, hitherto, through the singular favour and blessing of Heaven, there hath not been that visible degeneracy that might be so plainly observed, and sadly deplored, in divers great families. As if it were an exemption from what was so anciently remarked by the poet, *Ætas parentum, pejor avis, &c.* But, on the contrary, such as have succeeded, have, by a laudable ambition and emulation, as it were, striven to outshine such as have gone before them, in piety and virtue.

In this bright and lucid tract and line, was this most hopeful young gentleman, now arrived to the age wherein we use to write man, beginning to stand up in view, and to draw the eyes and raise the hopes of observers and well-wishers, as not likely to come short of any of his worthy ancestors and predecessors. But Heaven had its eye upon him too, and both made and judged him meet for an earlier translation, to a more eminent station there.

He was from his childhood observed to be above the

common rate, docile, of quick apprehension, solid judgment, and retentive memory, and betimes a lover of books and learning.

For religion, his knowledge of the principles of it continually grew, as his capacity did more and more admit, under the eye and endeavours of his parents, and such other instructors as they took care he should never want. But his savour and relish thereof, and the impression made thereby upon his soul, was so deep, and so early, as to be apparently owing to a higher cause, the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, and a singular blessing thereby, upon his pious education. And in this way, it could not be easy, to such as were his most diligent and constant observers, to conclude or conjecture when God first began to deal with his spirit.

Above ten years ago, I had opportunity, for a few days, to have some converse with him in his father's house; and as I could then perceive his spirit was much tinctured with religion; so I received information, that for a considerable time before, there constantly appeared to him such *specimina* of serious piety, as were very comfortable to his parents, and might be instructive to others that took notice of them.

In the course of divers following years, he greatly improved, under domestic and private instruction, both in grammar-learning and academical studies, for which he wanted not apt helps. When there was great reason to hope he was so well established in religion and virtue as neither to be shocked by the importunate temptations of a sceptical vicious age in the general, or betrayed by the facility of his own youthful age, his prudent, worthy father judged it requisite, and not unsafe, to adventure him into a place of more hazard, but greater advantage for his accomplishment in that sort of culture and polishing that might, in due time, render him both in reality, and with better reputation, serviceable in a public station; *i. e.* where he might gain such knowledge of the world, of men, and of the laws of his country, as was proper for his rank, and one that was to make such a figure in the nation, as it was to be hoped he might: and upon that account, not yet a year ago, brought him up to London, entered him in the Temple, took for him convenient lodging there, and left him settled unto mutual satisfaction.

He was little diverted by the noise, novelties, or the gayeties of the town, but soon betook himself to a course of close study; discontinued not his converse with God, and thereby learned, and was enabled, to converse with men warily and with caution so as he might be continually improving and gaining good, without doing or receiving hurt.

The substance of the following account I received from a pious intelligent young man, who several years attended him before his coming to town, and afterwards, to the finishing of his course.

"Mr. Hoghton's early seriousness, increased with his years. His deportment was grave, composed, without any appearance of pride, which he carefully avoided. His diligence in study was unusual, and his proficiency very great: neither was this less an effect of his conscientiousness in the improvement of his time, than of his desire after knowledge.

"As to his demeanour and performance of duties towards his several relations, his self-denial, his sedateness of mind, his fear of sin, his tenderness of conscience, love of the best things, and unconcernedness about things of an inferior nature, so far as hath fallen under my observation, in near six years' time, I believe few, if any, of his years, did exceed him.

"In his sickness he was very patient, submissively undergoing those heavy strokes it pleased God to lay upon him.

"Upon his apprehension of death, he seemed very little discouraged, but quietly resigned himself into the hands of the all-wise Disposer of all things.

"Some time before his sickness, and in the time of it, he said, afflictions were very proper for God's children; and those that were never afflicted, had reason to question the truth of their grace, and God's love to them; quoting that scripture, 'If ye are without chastening, then are ye bastards and not sons.'

"He often repeated those words, in the beginning of his illness: 'It is a hard thing to make our calling and our election sure.'—'I desire to glorify God.'

"When he understood, from some expressions of his physician, how dangerous his distemper was, he said he knew very well the meaning of his physician's words; but that however it proved, he hoped he was safe.

"He was so strict in the observation of the Lord's day, that if he happened to lie longer than ordinary in the morning, he would continue the later in duties in the evening; saying, we ought not to make that day shorter than other days.

"Though he was very intent on his studies, yet on Saturdays he always broke them off at noon, and spent the afternoon in reading divinity, and preparing himself for the Lord's day.

"He was always constant in his secret duties, and suffered nothing to hinder him from the performing of them.

"Before he expired, he spoke with great assurance of his future happiness, and hopes of meeting his relations in glory." Thus far goes that account.

His sickness was short. When, hearing of it, I went to visit him, I was met in an anti-chamber, by his ingenious, dear brother, to whom it is no reproach to be second to him, and who, it is to be hoped, will be at least truly so: making him, though a fair example, yet not a standard; who hath for divers years been most intimately conjunct and conversant with him, known his way, his spirit, his manner of life, his purity; and may be led on and excited thereby, wherein he hath observed him to excel others, to endeavour not to come short, but if it were possible, to excel him; remembering, he is to be the next solace of his parents, hope of his family, and resort of his country, if God shall vouchsafe to continue him, in succeeding time.

From him, I had little expectation of finding his sick brother in a conversable condition, the malignity of his fever having before seized his head, and very much disordered his intellectuals; but going in, I was much surprised to find it so far otherwise. He presently knew me, and his understanding, that served him for little else, failed him not in the concernments of religion and of his soul. There was not an improper or misplaced word, though the case could not admit of interchanging many, that came from him. Concerning the substance of the Gospel of Christ, as it could be shortly summed up to him, he said he had no doubt. And his transactions with Christ himself, accepting him, resigning and intrusting himself absolutely and entirely to him, and God in him, were so explicit, distinct, and clear, as could leave no place of doubt concerning him. He professed his concurrence to such requests as were put up to God concerning him, and the next morning slept quietly in the Lord.

Nor now will it be unfit to shut up the discourse with some few suitable reflections upon this double subject: the *text*, and *this providence*, taken together.

1. How happy is it, when this power of our great Redeemer and Lord, mentioned in the text, and a preparation, with cheerful willingness, dutifully to comport with it, concur and meet together, as they have done in this instance! Our Lord hath shown his power: he *asserted* it in the text; in this instance he *used* it; giving an open testimony that he takes it to belong to him, to make such translations from one world to another, whensoever he judges it a fit season; nor is solicitous whether men acknowledge his right so to do, or no; or what censures they will pass upon what he hath done. He doth his own work, and leaves men to their own talk, or mutterings, or wonder, or amusement at it, as they will. So it becomes sovereign power to do, established upon the most unquestionable foundations, exercised according to the wisest and most righteous measures. He hath used his own right, and satisfied himself in the use of it. He thought not himself concerned to advise with any of us about it, who, as his counsellor, should instruct him, Isa. xl. 13. Rom. xi. 34. He owes so much to himself, to act as accountable to no one, nor liable to any one's control.

Here is most rightful, resistless power, justly and kindly used on the one hand; and on the other, how placid, how calm a resignation! Here was no striving, no crying, no reluctant motion, no querulous, repining voice; nothing

but peaceful, filial submission; a willingness to obey the summons given.

This was a happy accord, the willingness of this departing soul proceeding not from stupidity, but trust in him who kept these keys; and such preparedness for removal, as the Gospel required. O happy souls! that finding the key is turning, and opening the door for them, are willing to go forth upon such terms, as "knowing whom they have believed," &c. And that neither "principalities or powers, life or death, &c. can ever separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus their Lord." Life, they find, hath not separated—whereof was the greater danger; and death is so far from making this separation, that it shall complete their union with the blessed God in Christ, and lay them infolded in the everlasting embraces of Divine love! Happy they, that can hereupon welcome death, and say, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!" that before only desired leave to die, and have now obtained it; that are, with certainty of the issue, at the point of becoming complete victors over the last enemy, and are ready to enter upon their triumph, and take up their ἐπινίκιον, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord." Happy soul! here will be a speedy end of all thy griefs and sorrows; they will be presently swallowed up in an absolute plentitude and fulness of joy. There is already an end put to thy tormenting cares and fears; for what object can remain to thee of a rational fear, when once, upon grounds such as shake not under thee, thou art reconciled to death! This is the most glorious sort of victory, *viz.* by *reconciliation*. For so thou hast conquered, not the enemy only, but the enmity itself, by which he was so. Death is become thy friend, and so no longer to be feared; nor is there any thing else, from whence thou art to fear hurt; for death was thy last enemy, even this bodily death. The whole region beyond it is, to one in thy case, clear and serene, when to others is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. There are no terrible ἐσχάματα, no formidable consequences, no reserves of misery, no treasures of wrath, to be feared by thee. To one in thy condition, may that, without hesitation, be applied,[h] *Nihil metuit, qui optat mori—He fears nothing who desires to die.* What is the product of some men's infidelity, is the genuine product of their faith. From so contrary causes may proceed the same effect. The effect, a willingness to die, or a bold adventure upon death, is the same, but only in respect of the general kind; with great differences in the special kind, according to the difference and contrariety of the causes, whereof they discernibly taste and savour. With *infidels*, it is a negative, dead, stupid, partial willingness, or but a non-aversion; and in a lower and much diminished degree: or if some present intolerable, disgraceful calamity urge them, a rash, obstinate, presumptuous rushing upon death; because they *do not consider consequences*. With *believers*, such as in reference to the concernments of the other world do walk by faith, while as yet they cannot walk by sight, in reference to those things, (2 Cor. v. 7.) 'tis a positive, vital courage,[i] (*v.* 8.) *We are confident*: and a preponderating inclination of will, "We are willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord; because, as is manifest, they *do consider consequences*, and how blessed a state will certainly ensue! How vast are these special differences, of the same thing in the general, willingness to die!

O the transports of joy that do now most rationally result from this state of the case, when there is nothing left lying between the dislodging soul, and the glorious unseen world, but only the dark passage of death, and that so little formidable, considering who hath the keys of the one, and the other! How reasonable is it upon the account of somewhat common herein to the Redeemer and the redeemed, although every thing be not, to take up the following words, that so plainly belong to this very case: "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in *sheol*, or *hades*; thou wilt not forsake or abandon it in that wide world, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption Thou wilt show me the path of life; the path that leads unto that presence of thine, where is fulness of joy, and to those pleasures which are at thy right hand, or in thy power, and which are for evermore: and shall never admit either of end or diminution," Psalm xvi. 9.—11.

Now what do we mean to let our souls hang in doubt? Why do we not drive things for them to an issue? Put them into those same safe hands that hold these keys; absolutely resign, devote, intrust, and subject them to him; get them bound up in the bundle of life; so adjoin and unite them to him, (not doubting but as we give them up, he will and doth, in that instant, take hold of them, and receive them into union with himself,) as that we may assure our hearts, that because he lives we shall live also. Thus the ground of our hope becomes sure, and of that joy which springs from such a hope. Our life, we may now say, is hid with Christ in God; even though we are, in ourselves, dead, or dying creatures, Col. iii. 3. Yea, Christ is our Life; and when he "who is our Life shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory." *v.* 4. He hath assured us, that because "he is the Resurrection and the Life, he that believeth in him, though he were dead, shall yet live;" and that "whosoever lives, and believes in him," hath thereby a life already begun in him, in respect whereof "he shall never die," John xi. 25, 26. What now can be surer than this? So far we are at a certainty, upon the included supposition, *i. e.* that we believe in him.

And what now remains to be ascertained? What? Only our own intervening death. We must, 'tis true, be absent from these bodies, or we cannot, as we would, be present with the Lord. And is that all? Can any thing now be more certain than that? O happy state of our case! How should our hearts spring and leap for joy, that our affairs are brought into this posture; that in order to our perfect blessedness, nothing is further wanting but to die; and that the certainty of death completes our assurance of it! What should now hinder our breaking forth into the most joyful thanksgivings, that it is so little doubtful we shall die; that we are in no danger of a terrestrial immortality; and that the only thing that it remained we should be assured of, is so very sure, that we are sure it is not in the power of all this world to keep us always in it; that the most spiteful enemy we have in all the world, cannot do us that spite to keep us from dying! How gloriously may good men triumph over the impotent malice of their most mischievous enemies! *viz.* that the greatest mischief, even in their own account, that it can ever be in their power to do them, is to put it out of their power ever to hurt them more; for they now go quite out of their reach. They can (being permitted) kill the body, and after that (Luke xii. 4.) have no more that they can do. What a remarkable, significant *after that* is this! what a defiance doth it import of the utmost effort of human power and spite, that here it terminates! 'Tis now come to its *ne plus ultra!*

And so we are to look upon all the other trials and afflictions, that in any providential way may befall us; we may be sick, in pain, in poverty, in disgrace, but we shall not be always in mortal flesh, which is the *substratum* and the root of all the rest. Can we be upon better terms, having but two things to be concerned about, as necessary to our complete felicity, union with Christ, and disunion from these bodies? God is graciously ready to assist us in reference to the former, though therein he requires our care, subserviently hereto: in reference to the latter, he will take care himself, in his own fit season, without any care or concern of ours in the matter; and only expects us to wait with patience, till that fit season come. And come it will, perhaps sooner than we may think. He doth not always go by our measures in judging of the fit season, as this present instance shows.

2. From the text, taken in conjunction with this act of Providence, we may observe the great advantage of a pious education. Though the best means of such education do not always prove effectual; yet this being much the more probable course upon which to expect God's blessing, than the parents' profane negligence of the souls of their children, such an example, wherein God by his blessing testi-

h Sen. Tr.

i Θαρροῦμεν.

k John xiv. 19.

l Rom. v. 2.

fied his approbation of parental care and diligence, should greatly quicken the endeavours of parents herein; as hoping hereby to serve his great and merciful and most principal design, who hath these keys, and whose office it is to transmit souls, when they are prepared and ready, out of this world of ours into that blessed, glorious world above. And though they may think themselves disappointed when, through God's blessing upon their endeavours, they have educated one to such a pitch as this young gentleman was raised and brought up unto, with a prospect and hope of his having a long course of service to run through here on the earth, yet let parents hence learn to correct what was amiss or what was wrong, not what was right and well. Their action and endeavour were what ought to be; their error or mistake, if there were any, was more principally, as the case is here stated, about their design and end. Not that they designed such an end, for that also was very justifiable and laudable; but if they designed it as their more principal end, which the case, as it is now put, supposes; that is, that they take themselves to be disappointed; for no man complains of it as a disappointment, if he miss of an inferior end, and attain that which is far nobler and more excellent. Our great aim should be the subserving the design of the great Lord of heaven and earth, which ultimately and supremely refers to the heavenly, eternal state of things; and that souls may be ripened and fitted for that, and to do service here on earth, subordinately to the other, and while they are in preparation for the heavenly state. His principal design must be for that which is principal: and concerning that, as was formerly argued, there can be no more doubt, than whether heaven or earth, eternity or time, a fixed, permanent, everlasting, or a temporary, transitory, vanishing state of things, be more valuable, and to be preferred.

Our Redeemer hath acquired and doth use these keys, for the translating of souls, as soon as he shall judge them "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of saints in light," Col. i. 12. Some he makes meet much earlier than others. His design, so far as it is known, or may be supposed, should give measure to ours; therefore ours must be to make them meet, as early for his purposes as possible, as knowing it cannot be too early: they were devoted to him early, and pursuantly hereto, no time should be lost from the great business of fitting and forming them for him; inasmuch also, as the same qualifications, *viz.* that are of highest excellency and value, do equally prepare them to serve and glorify him, in either world, as he shall choose to dispose of them. And it unquestionably belongs to him to make his choice, as it does to us to endeavour to make them ready. If any of us, having purposely educated a son for the service of his prince, and present him accordingly, we would submit it to his pleasure, to choose the station wherein he shall serve him; especially if he be a prince of celebrated wisdom and goodness. And should we complain, that he is put early into a station of much higher dignity than we thought of?

How little is this matter considered by most that go under the name of *Christian* parents, that are, more generally, very solicitous to have, as they call it, their children *christened*, but never have it in their thoughts to have them educated in the knowledge *of* Christ, or trained up *for* Christ. As if their baptism were intended for a mockery, their education, in the whole course of it, hath no such reference. 'Tis how they may with better reputation bear up not the name of Christ but their own. Their aim looks no higher than that they may inherit their lands, maintain the honour of their families, appear, if such be their own rank, well-accomplished gentlemen: and of some of those little things that are thought requisite hereto, we may say, as our Saviour did in another case, These things ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other, the much greater things, undone.

What should hinder, but that learning to sing, or dance, or fence, or make a modish leg, might consist with learning to know God in Christ, in which knowledge stands eternal life! Whatsoever hath real excellency, or hath any thing in it of true ornament, will no way disagree with the most serious Christianity. And how lovely is the conjunction of the well-accomplished gentleman and the serious Christian! Only sever inconsistencies, as how fashionably to curse, and swear, and damn, and debauch, which are thought to belong to good breeding in our age.

Let not religion, reason, shame, and common sense, be so totally abandoned all at once, as that the same persons shall take care to have their children baptized into Christ's name, and be taught to renounce, by their deeds, that great name, almost as soon as they can pronounce the word.

Where so direct a course is not taken to make those of the succeeding age ignominiously bad, yet how little is done towards the making of them truly and usefully good! Much care is taken to shape and adorn the outside of the man; how little to form and furnish their minds! Here, if they can be brought to make or judge of a verse, or a jest, or a piece of wit, 'tis a great attainment. Or if, at home, they can have them taught so much law as shall hereafter enable them to squeeze their tenants, and quarrel with their neighbours, or so much of behaviour as shall qualify them to keep gentlemen company; or if, as our pious poet phrased it, they ship them over, the thing is done: then they shall be able to talk a little of the fashions of this or that foreign country, and make much the better figure in their own.

But if, with all other parts of useful knowledge and good breeding that are thought requisite for this world, they be also well instructed touching their Redeemer's dominion over it, and the other world also; and concerning the nature, constitution, design, laws, and privileges of his kingdom; if it be seriously endeavoured to make them apt and prepared instruments of serving his interest here, as long as he shall please to continue them in any station on earth; and that they may also he made meet to be partakers, at length, of a far more excellent inheritance than an earthly parent could entitle them to, that of the saints in light; (Col. i. 12.) if they can be fitted to stand in the presence of the Eternal King, and to keep company with angels and blessed spirits above—how worthy and noble a design is this! And with what satisfaction is it to be reflected on, if the parents have ground to apprehend they are herein neither unaccepted nor disappointed!

3. It is of ill presage to our land, that when he that hath these keys, uses them in the so early translation of so hopeful a person as this young gentleman was, so few such are observed to spring up for the support of the truly Christian interest in the succeeding generation. That the act of our great Redeemer and Lord herein was an act of wisdom and counsel, we cannot doubt. Against the righteousness of it, we can have no exception. The kind design of it towards them whom he so translates, is so evident in the visible agreement of their spirit and way with the heavenly state as their end, as puts that matter out of question. But we are so much the more to dread the consequences, and to apprehend what may make our hearts meditate terror.

By the Christian interest, I am far from meaning that of a party: but what every one must take for Christianity, that will acknowledge there is any such thing. And for the support of that, in the most principal doctrines and laws of it, what is our prospect?

To go down here somewhat lower.

Let us suppose a rational susceptibleness, or capacity of religion, to be the difference of man, wherein the controversy may seem to admit of being compromised; whether it be religion alone, or reason alone, of which this must be said, that it distinguishes man from the inferior creatures. And let it be reason, with this addition, an aptness, *suspicere numen*, to be impressed with some religious sentiment, or to conceive of, and adore, an original Being; the wise and mighty Author and Cause of all things. And now, how near akin are religion and humanity?

Let us next understand Christianity to be the religion of fallen man, designing his recovery out of a lapsed and lost state; *i. e.* man having violated the law of his creation, and offended against the throne and government of his Creator, the supreme and universal Lord of all, it was reckoned not becoming so great a Majesty (though it was not intended to abandon the offenders to a universal ruin, without remedy) to be reconciled, otherwise than by a mediator and a reconciling sacrifice. For which, none being found competent but the Eternal Son of God, the Brightness of his glory, and the express Image of his own

person, who was also the first and the last, the Lord God Almighty; and partaking with us of flesh and blood, was capable, and undertook to be both Mediator and Sacrifice. It seemed meet to the offended Majesty, to vouchsafe pardon and eternal life, and renewing grace requisite thereto, to none of the offenders, but through him; and accept from them no homage, but on his account. Requiring, wheresoever the gospel comes, not only repentance towards God, but faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as the summary of the counsel of God contained therein; (Acts xx. 21—27.) and that all should honour the Son, as he the Father requires to be honoured, John v. 23.

Whereas now so apt a course as this was established for restoring man to himself and to God, through the influence of the blessed Spirit, flowing in the gospel dispensation from Christ as the Fountain; what doth it portend when, amidst the clear light of the Gospel, that affords so bright a discovery of the glorious Redeemer, and of all his apt methods for bringing to full effect his mighty work of redemption, an open war is commenced against him and his whole design, by persons, under seal, devoted to him! If there were but one single instance hereof in an age, who would not with trembling expect the issue?

But when the genius of a Christian nation seems, in the rising generation, to be leading to a general apostacy from Christianity, in its principal and most substantial parts; and they are only patient of some external rituals, that belong, or are made appendant, to it, so as but to endure them, either with reluctancy, or contempt: when the juvenile wit and courage which are thought to belong to a gentleman entering upon the stage of the world, are employed in satirizing upon the religion into which they have been baptized, in bold efforts against the Lord that bought them! whither doth this tend?

Some would seem so modest, as in the midst of their profane oaths, and violations of the sacred name of God, to beg his pardon, and say, God forgive them. But so ludicrously, as he whom Cato animadverts upon, for begging pardon, that he wrote in Greek, which he was unacquainted with, saying,[m] he had rather ask pardon, than be innocent; for what should induce him to do so unnecessary a thing, for which pardon should be necessary? These men think pardons very cheap things. But will God be mocked? or doth he not observe? 'Tis the prevailing atheistical spirit we are to dread, as that which may provoke jealousy, and to make himself known by the judgments he shall execute.

There is great reason to hope God will not finally abandon England. But is there not equal reason to fear, that before the day of mercy come, there may be a nearer day of wrath coming? A day that shall burn as an oven, and make the hemisphere about us a fiery vault! In our recovery from a lapsed state, which the religion professed among us aims at, there are two things to be effected; the restoring reason to its empire over the sensitive nature, that it may govern that, and the restoring religion and love to God to their place and power, that he may govern us. While the former is not done, we remain sunk into the low level with the inferior creatures; and till the latter be effected, we are ranked with the apostate creatures that first fell from God. The sensuality of brutes, and the enmity of devils, rising and springing up observably among us, import the directest hostility against the Redeemer's design. And them that bid this open defiance to him, he hath every moment at his mercy!

In the meantime, is this Emmanuel's land? His right in us he will not disclaim. And because he claims it, we may expect him to vindicate himself. His present patience we are to ascribe to the wisdom and greatness of an all-comprehending mind. He counts not a heap of impotent worms his match! But when the besom of destruction comes, one stroke of it will sweep away multitudes: then contempt will be answered with contempt. They cannot express higher, than to oppose and militate against a religion, introduced and brought into the world by so clear, divine light, lustre, and glory, not by arguments, but by jests! O that we could but see their arguments, to dispute those keys out of his hands that holds them! But do they think to laugh away the power of the Son of God? "He also will laugh at their calamity," &c. (Prov. i.) or expose them to the laughter of men wiser than they, Psal. lii. 5, 6. 'Tis little wit to despise what they cannot disprove. When we find a connexion between death and judgment, how will they contrive to disjoin them? They will be as little able to disprove the one, as withstand the other.

But a great residue, 'tis to be hoped, our blessed Redeemer will, in due time, conquer in the most merciful way, inspiring them with divine wisdom and love, detecting their errors, mollifying their hardness, subduing their enmity, making them gladly submit to his easy yoke and light burthen. He is, before the world end, to have a numerous seed, and we are not to despair of their rising up more abundantly than hitherto among ourselves, so as no man shall be therefore ashamed to be thought a serious Christian, because 'tis an unfashionable or an ungenteel thing.

Then will honour be acquired, by living as one that believes a life to come, and expects to live for ever, as devoted ones, to the Ruler of both worlds, and candidates for a blessed immortality, under his dominion. Nor will any man covet to leave a better name behind him here, or a more honourable memorial of himself, than by having lived a holy, virtuous life. It signifies nothing, with the many, to be remembered when they are gone: therefore is this trust wont to be committed to marbles and monumental stones. Some have been so wise, to prefer a remembrance, among them that are so, from their having lived to some valuable purpose. When Rome abounded with statues and memorative obelisks, Cato forbade any to be set up for him, because (he said) he had rather it should be asked,[n] why he had not one, than why he had.

What a balmy memory will one generation leave to another, when "the savour of the knowledge of Christ shall be diffused in every place," (2 Cor. ii. 14.) and every thing be counted as dross and dung, that is in any competition with the excellency of that knowledge; when that shall overflow the world, and one age praise his mighty works, and proclaim his power and greatness, to the next: and the branches of religious families, whether sooner or later transplanted, shall leave an odour, when they are cut off, that shall demonstrate their nearer union with the true Vine, or speak their relation to the "Tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations;" even those that were deciduous, and have dropped off, may (without straining a borrowed expression) signify somewhat towards this purpose.

4. From both the mentioned subjects, good parents may learn to do God and their Redeemer all the service they can, and have opportunity for, in their own time; without reckoning too much upon what shall be done, by a well-educated, hopeful son, after they are gone, unless the like dispensation could be pleaded unto that which God gave to David, to reserve the building of the temple to his son Solomon, which, without as express a revelation, no man can pretend. The great keeper of these keys may cross such purposes, and without excusing the father, dismiss the son first. But his judgments are a great deep, too deep for our line: and his mercy is in the heavens, (Psal. xxxvi.) extending from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him; and his righteousness unto children's children, Psal. ciii.

m Corn. Nep. Frag.

n Plutarch de geraud. Repub.

OF

THOUGHTFULNESS FOR THE MORROW;

WITH AN APPENDIX,

CONCERNING THE IMMODERATE DESIRE OF FOREKNOWING THINGS TO COME.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

ANNE, LADY WHARTON.

It was, Madam, the character an ancient worthy in the Christian church gave of a noble person of your sex, that, in reference to the matters of religion, she was not only a learner, but a judge. And accordingly, he inscribes to her divers of his writings, (even such as did require a very accurate judgment in the reading of them,) which remain, unto this day, dispersedly, in several parts of his works, dignified with her (often prefixed) name. A greater, indeed, than he, mentions it as an ill character, to be not a doer of the law, but a judge. It makes a great difference in the exercise of the same faculty, and in doing the same thing, with what mind and design it is done. There is a judging that we may learn, and a judging that we may not; a judgment subservient to our duty, and a judgment opposite to it. Without a degree of the former no one can ever be a serious Christian; by means of the latter, many never are. The world through wisdom knew not God. A cavilling litigious wit, in the confidence whereof any set themselves above the rule, and make it their business only to censure it, as if they would rather find faults in it than themselves, is as inconsistent with sincere piety, as an humbly judicious discerning mind is necessary to it. This proceeds from a due savour and relish of divine things, peculiar to them in whom a heavenly spirit and principle have the possession, and a governing power. They that are after the Spirit, do savour the things of the Spirit. The other from the prepossession and prejudice of a disaffected carnal mind. They that are after the flesh, do only savour the things of the flesh.

The ability God hath endowed your Ladyship with to judge of the truth that is after godliness, is, that you are better pleased to use, than hear of. I shall, therefore, be silent herein, and rather displease many of them that know you, who will be apt to think a copious subject is neglected, than say any thing that may offend either against your Ladyship's inclination or my own. Here is nothing abstruse and difficult for you to exercise a profound judgment upon; nor any thing curious to gratify a pleasant wit. But plain things, suitable to you, upon accounts common to the generality of Christians, not that are peculiar to yourself. 'Tis easy to a well tempered mind (of how high intellectual excellencies soever) to descend to the same level with the rest; when for them to reach up to the others' pitch, is not so much as possible. Our heavenly Father keeps not (as to the substantials of our nutriment) distinct tables for his children, but all must eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink. He hath not one Gospel for great wits, and another for plainer people; but as all that are born of him must meet at length in one end, so they must all walk by the same rule, and in the same way, thither. And when I had first mentioned this text of Scripture in your hearing, the savour you expressed to me of the subject, easily induced me, when, afterwards, I reckoned a discourse upon it might be of common use, to address that also (such as it is) in this way, to your Ladyship. Accounting the mention of your name might draw the eyes of some to it, that have no reason to regard the author's, and that by this means, if it be capable of proving beneficial to any, the benefit might be diffused so much the further.

The aptness of the materials and subject here discoursed of, to do good generally, I cannot doubt. Neither our present duty or peace, nor our future safety or felicity, can be provided for as they ought, till our minds be more abstracted from time, and taken up about the unseen, eternal world. While our thoughts are too earnestly engaged about the events of future time, they are vain, bitter, impure, and diverted from our nobler and most necessary pursuits. They follow much the temper and bent of our spirits, which are often too intent upon what is uncertain, and perhaps impossible. All good and holy persons cannot live in good times. For who should bear up the name of God in bad, and transmit it to succeeding times? Especially when good men are not of the same mind, it is impossible. And more especially, when they have not learned, as yet, to bear one another's differences. The same time and state of things which please some, must displease others. For some that will think themselves much injured if they be not thought very pious persons, will be pleased with nothing less than the destruction of them that differ from them. So that while this is designed and attempted only, generally neither sort is pleased; the one because it is not done, the other because it is in doing.

It must be a marvellous alteration of men's minds, that must make the times please us all; while, upon supposition of their remaining unaltered, there is nothing will please one sort, but to see the other pagans or beggars, who in the meantime are not enough mortified either to their religion, or the necessary accommodations of human life, as to be well pleased with either.

To trust God cheerfully with the government of this world, and to live in the joyful hope and expectation of a better, are the only means to relieve and ease us; and give us a vacancy for the proper work and business of our present time. This is the design of the following discourses. The former whereof is directed against the careful thoughts, which are apt to arise in our minds concerning the events of future time, upon a fear what they may be. The other, which by way of appendix is added to the former, tends to repress the immoderate desire of knowing what they shall be. Which latter I thought, in respect of its affinity to the other, fit to be added to it; and in respect of the commonness, and ill tendency of this distemper, very necessary. And indeed both the extremes in this matter are very unchristian, and pernicious: a stupid neglect of the Christian interest, and of God's providence about it, on the one hand; and an enthusiastic phrensy, carrying men to expect they well know not what, or why, on the other.

Our great care should be to serve that interest faithfully in our own stations, for our little time, that will soon be over. Your Ladyship hath been called to serve it in a family wherein it hath long flourished. And which it hath dignified, beyond all the splendour that antiquity and secular greatness could confer upon it. The Lord grant it may long continue to flourish there, under the joint influence of your noble consort, and your own; and afterwards, in a posterity, that may imitate their ancestors in substantial piety, and solid goodness. Which is a glory that will not fade, nor vary; not change with times, but equally recommend itself to sober and good men in all times. Whereas that which arises from the esteem of a party can neither be diffusive nor lasting. 'Tis true that I cannot but reckon it a part of any one's praise in a time wherein there are different sentiments and ways, in circumstantial matters relating to religion, to incline most to that which I take to come nearest the truth and our common rule. But, as was said by one that was a great and early light in the Christian church; "That is not philosophy, which is professed by this or that sect, but that which is true in all sects." So nor do I take that to be religion which is peculiar to this or that party of Christians, (many of whom are too apt to say, here is Christ, and there is Christ, as if he were divided,) but that which is according to the mind of God among them all. And I must profess to have that honour for your Ladyship, which I sincerely bear, and most justly owe unto you, chiefly upon the account not of the things wherein you differ from many other serious Christians, (though therein you agree also with myself,) as for those things wherein you agree with them all. Under which notion (and under the sensible obligation of your many singular favours,) I am,

Madam,

Your Ladyship's very humble

And devoted servant in the Gospel,

JOHN HOWE.

OF

THOUGHTFULNESS FOR THE FUTURE.

MATTHEW VI. 34.

TAKE THEREFORE NO THOUGHT FOR THE MORROW: FOR THE MORROW SHALL TAKE THOUGHT FOR THE THINGS OF ITSELF. SUFFICIENT FOR THE DAY IS THE EVIL THEREOF.

The negative precept, or the prohibition, in the first words of this verse, I shall take for the principal ground of the intended discourse. But shall make use of the following words, for the same purpose for which they are here subjoined by our Lord, *viz.* the enforcement of it.

For our better understanding the import of the precept, two things in it require explication. How we are to understand the morrow; and what is meant by the thoughtfulness we are to abstain from in reference thereto.

1. By the morrow must be meant, I. Some measure of time or other; II. Such occurrences, as it may be supposed shall fall within the compass of that time. We are therefore to consider,

I. What portion or measure of time may be here signified by *to-morrow*, for some time it must signify, in the first place, as fundamental to the further meaning. Not abstractly, or for itself, but as it is the continent of such or such things as may fall within that time. And so that measure of time may,

1. Admit, no doubt, to be taken strictly for the very next day, according to the literal import of the word to-morrow. But,

2. It is also to be taken in a much larger sense, for the whole of our remaining time, all our futurity in this world. Indeed, the whole time of our life on earth is spoken of in the Scriptures but as a day. Let him alone, that he may accomplish as a hireling his day, Job xiv. 6. We are a sort of ἡμερόβιοα, *short-lived creatures*, we live but a day, take the whole of our time together. Much less strange is it that the little residue, the future time that is before us, which we do not know how little it may be, should be spoken of but as a day. Experience hath taught even sensual epicures so to account their remaining time: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die," *i. e.* very shortly. They were right in their computation, but very wrong in their inference. It should have been, let us watch and pray to-day, we are to die to-morrow; let us labour for *eternity* because time is so short. But say they, "Let us eat and drink to-day, for to-morrow we shall die." A day to eat and drink was, it seems, a great gain. And if the phrase were not so used, to signify all the residue of our future time, yet by consequence it must be so understood. For if we take to-morrow in the strictest sense, for the very next day; they that are not permitted, with solicitude, to look forward so far as the very next day, much less may they to a remoter and more distant time. Yea, and we may in some sense extend it not only to all our future time, but simply to all future time as that measures the concernments and affairs, not of this world only, but, which is more considerable, even of that lesser select community, the kingdom of God in it, mentioned in the foregoing verse. Which kingdom, besides its future eternal state, lies also spread and stretched throughout all time unto the end of the world. And as to its present and temporal state, or as it falls under the measure of time, it is not unsupposable that it may be within the compass of

our Saviour's design, to forbid unto his disciples (who were not only to pursue the blessedness of that kingdom in the other world, but to intend the service of it in this) an intemperate and vexatious solicitude about the success of their endeavours, for the promoting its present interest: *i. e.* after he had more directly forbidden their undue carefulness about their own little concernments, what they should eat, drink, or put on; and directed them rather and more principally to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, with an assurance that those other things should be added to them. It seems not improbable he might, in conclusion, give this general direction, as with a more especial reference to the private concernments of human life, about which common frailty might make them more apt to be unduly thoughtful: so with some oblique and secondary reference to the affairs of that kingdom too, which they were here to serve as well as hereafter to partake and enjoy; and about the success of which service (being once engaged in it, and the difficulties they were to encounter appearing great and discouraging to so inconsiderable persons as they must reckon themselves) they might be somewhat over-solicitous also.

Nor, though they might not as yet understand their own work, nor (consequently) have the prospect of its difficulties as yet in view, are we to think our Saviour intended to limit the usefulness of the instructions he now gave them to the present time, but meant them to be of future use to them as occasions should afterwards occur. As we also find that they did recollect some other sayings of his, and understand better the meaning of them, when particular occasions brought them to mind, and discovered how apposite and applicable they then were. Luke xxiv. 8. John ii. 22. So that we may fitly understand this prohibition to intend, universally, a pressing of that too great aptitude and proneness in the minds of men, unto undue excursions into futurity, their intemperate and extravagant rangings and roamings into that *unknown country*, that *terra incognita*, in which we can but bewilder and lose ourselves to no purpose. Therefore,

Secondly, and more principally, by *to-morrow* we are to understand the things that may fall within that compass of future time. For time can only be the object of our care, in that relative sense, as it refers unto such and such occurrences and emergencies that may fall into it. And so our Saviour explains himself in the very next words, that by to-morrow he means the *things* of to-morrow. To-morrow shall take care for the things of itself. And yet here we must carefully distinguish, as to those *things* of to-morrow, matters of *event* and of *duty*. We are not to think these the equally prohibited objects of our thoughts and care. *Duty* belongs to us, it falls within our province, and there are (no doubt) thoughts to be employed, how I may continue on in a course of duty, unto which I am, by all the most sacred obligations, tied for a stated course, that may lie before me, let it be never so long, and be never so many to-morrows in it. There ought to be thoughts used, of this sort, concerning the duties of the morrow, and of all my future time. If it please God to give me such additional time, I will love him to-morrow, I will serve him to-morrow, I will trust him to-morrow, I will walk with him to-morrow. I will, through the grace of God, live in his fear, service, and communion, even as long as I have a day to live. Upon such terms doth every sincere Christian bind himself to God, even for always, as God binds himself to them on the same terms. This God shall be our God for ever and ever, he shall be our guide even unto death, Psal. xlviii. 14. The case can never alter with us in this regard; but as the worthiest object of all our thoughts is yesterday and to-day the same, and for ever, so should the course of our thoughts be too, in reference to that blessed object. Every day will I bless thee, and praise thy name for ever and ever, Psal. cxlv. 2. I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being, Psal. civ. 33. The thoughts of our hearts should be much excited this way, how it may be thus with us, in all future time; that to-morrow, in this respect, may be as this day, and much more abundant as is spoken on another account, Isa. lvi. 12. To-morrow shall be as this day, God assisting, and much more abundant as to my love to him, serving of him, conversing with him, doing and designing for him, which are to run through all my days.

But now for the events of to-morrow, they are things quite of another consideration. They do not belong to us, they are not of the *τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν*, none of the things within our compass. To employ ourselves with excessive intention of thoughts and cares concerning them, is to meddle without our sphere, beyond what we have any warrant for, further than as it is in some cases supposable there may be some connexion, and dependance, between such and such events, and my own either sin or duty. Now events that may occur to us to-morrow, or in our future time, you know are distinguishable into good or bad, grateful and ungrateful, pleasing to us or displeasing. Good or grateful events, you easily apprehend, are not here intended. We do not use to perplex ourselves about good things, otherwise than as they may be wanting, and as we may be deprived of them, which privation or want is an evil. And under that notion our Saviour considers the object of the prohibited thoughtfulness, as his after-words show: Sufficient for the day is the evil of it. And therefore gives caution not equally against all forethoughts, about the events of future time; of which some may be both rational, and pleasant; but against forebodings, and presages of evil and direful things. As lest such thoughts should slide into our minds, or impose and obtrude themselves upon us: "Alas! what shall I do to live to-morrow? I am afraid I shall want bread for to-morrow, or for my future time." This our Saviour says is paganish, after these things do the Gentiles seek, that (as is intimated) have no father to take care of them. Your heavenly Father knows you have need of these things, (*v.* 32.) and directs his disciples to a nobler object of their thoughts and care, (*v.* 33.) Seek you first the kingdom of God; wherein, as their future reward, so their present work and business was to lie. And then adds, Take no thought for to-morrow, *q. d.* it would be indeed an ill thing if you should want bread to-morrow, and it would be worse if the affairs of God's kingdom should miscarry, or you be excluded it. But mind you your own present work, and be not unduly concerned about these surmised bad events, God will provide. This is then, in short, the object of this prohibited thoughtfulness—future time including whatsoever ungrateful events we suppose and pre-apprehend in it.

Secondly, We are to inquire about the thoughtfulness prohibited in reference hereto. It cannot be that all use of thoughts about future events, even such as, when they occur, may prove afflictive, is intended to be forbidden. Which indeed may be collected from the import of the word in the text that signifies another, peculiar sort of thinking, as we shall hereafter have more occasion to take notice. We were made, and are naturally, thinking creatures; yea, and forethinking, or capable of prospicience and foresight. 'Tis that by which in part man is distinguished from beast. Without disputing[a] as some do how far nature, in this or that man, doth contribute to divination and prophecy; we may say of man indefinitely, he is a sort of divining creature, and of human nature in common, that it much excels the brutal, in this, that, whereas sense is limited to the present, reason hath dignified our nature by adding to it a sagacity, and enabling us to use prospection in reference to what yet lies more remotely before us. And though we are too apt to a faulty excess herein, and to be over-presaging, (which it is the design of this discourse to show,) yet we are not to think that all use of any natural faculty can be a fault; for that would be to charge a fault on the Author of nature. The faculties will be active. To plant them therefore in our natures, and forbid their use, were not consistent with the wisdom, righteousness, and goodness by which they are implanted. It must therefore be our business to show—what thoughtfulness is *not*, —and then, what *is* within the compass of this prohibition.

1. What is not. There is, in the general, a *prudent*, and there is a *Christian*, use of forethought, about matters of that nature already specified; which we cannot understand it was our Saviour's meaning to forbid.

1. A prudent, which imports reference to an end. Our actions are so far said to be governed by prudence, and to

[a] Maimonid. Mor. Nev. D. Mer. Casaubon. Enthus.

proceed from it as they do designedly and aptly serve a valuable end.

1. The foresight of evils probable, yea even possible, to befall us, is useful, upon a *prudential* account, to several very considerable ends and purposes; either to put us upon doing the more good in the meantime, or upon the endeavour (within moderate bounds, and as more may be needful) of possessing more; or that we may avert or avoid imminent evils; or that what cannot be avoided, we may be the better able to bear.

1. That we may be incited, hereupon, to do all the good we can in the world, in the meantime, before such evils overtake and prevent us. For prudence itself will teach a man to account (and hath taught even heathens) that he doth not live in this world, merely, that he may live; that he is not to live wholly to himself; his friends claim a part in him, his neighbours a part, his country a part, the world a part. He lives not at the rate of a prudent man that thinks of living only to indulge and gratify himself, and consult his own ease and pleasure, and upon this consideration, his prudence should instruct him to do all the present good he can, because there are evils in view that may narrow his capacity, and snatch from him the opportunity of doing much. The evil day (as it is more eminently called) is not far off. He should therefore bethink himself of doing good to his friend (as the son of Syrach speaks) before he die. And there are other evils that may anticipate that day; unto which the preacher hath reference, (Eccles. xi. 2.) when he directs, to give a portion to seven and also to eight, because we know not what evil shall be upon the earth. We cannot tell how soon we may have neither power nor time left to do it in.

Yea, and secondly, That we may be provided (as far as it lies within the compass of regular endeavour) of such needful good things, as are requisite for our support in this our pilgrimage; and especially, upon occasion of a foreseen calamity approaching. This, as prudence doth require, so we cannot suppose our Saviour doth by a constant rule forbid, who sometime enjoined his disciples to carry a scrip with them, though at another time (that they might, once for all, be convinced of the sufficient care of Providence, when or howsoever they should be precluded from using their own) he did, extraordinarily, forbid it. And 'tis evident that, in common cases, it is more especially incumbent on the master of a family to make provision for his household for the future; to provide in the more convenient season of the year, as in summer, for the following winter. A document which the slothful are sent to learn from a very despicable instructor. Go to the ant, thou sluggard, Prov. vi. 6, &c. And again,

Thirdly, That the approaching evil may, if avoidable, be declined, the prudent man foresees the evil and hides himself, when the simple pass on and are punished, Prov. xxii. 3. And, perhaps, for this their simplicity; that they regardlessly go on with a stupid negligence of all warnings, till the stroke and storm fall. Which, whereas there may be one event to the wise man and the fool, (as Eccles. ii. 14.) will prove to the one a mere affliction, to the other (upon this as well as other accounts) a proper and most deserved punishment. Because (as is there said) the wise man's eyes are in his head, prompt and ready for their present use, the fool walks in darkness, which must be understood of a voluntary self-created darkness, as if he had plucked out his own eyes. Which is the wickedness of folly, as the same Ecclesiastes's phrase is, *ch.* vii. *v.* 25.

Fourthly, That what cannot be avoided may be the more easily borne. Every man counts it desirable, not to be surprised by evils that are unavoidable and no way to be averted. Prudence will, in such a case, use forethoughts to better purpose, than only to anticipate and multiply an affliction, or consequently, to increase its weight; but much to alleviate and lessen it: by learning to bear it; gradually, and by gentle essays to acquaint the shoulder with the burden: to inure and compose the mind, and reconcile it to the several circumstances (so far as they are foreseen) of that less-pleasing state we are next to pass into. Which advantage might be one reason why Solomon, in the abovementioned place, (though according to the genius of that reasoning book he variously discourses things on the one hand and the other,) prefers wisdom to folly as much as light to darkness, (Eccles. ii. 13.) though one event may happen to both. 'Tis an uncomfortable thing to walk in darkness; and (supposing there be that wisdom that can make due use of a prospect) not to see an evil till we meet and feel it. Unexpected evils carry, as such, a more peculiar sting and pungency with them: when any shall say, Peace, peace, till sudden destruction comes upon them as travail on a woman with child, 1 Thes. v. 3. Nor can we reasonably think it was any part of our Saviour's intendment, to advise his disciples unto such a self-revenging security, who so often enjoins them watchfulness, because of what should come to pass. Or that he should counsel them to the same thing, for which he blames and upbraids the Pharisees and Sadducees, their not discerning the signs of the times. Upon all these prudential accounts there is a use of forethoughts about future approaching evils.

Secondly, And there is a further use to be made of them upon an account more purely *Christian*. I would tempt none, under pretence of distinguishing these heads, to think they should oppose them. Christianity must be understood in reference to common prudence to be cumulative, not privative. It adds to it therefore; opposes it not, but supposes it rather. And indeed it adds that, upon the account whereof we are far the more liable to afflicting evils, and so are the more concerned to use forethoughts about them. For, whereas there are much rarer instances of suffering merely for the duties of natural religion, which the common reason of man acknowledges equal and unexceptionable, we are plainly told that all that will live godly *in Christ Jesus*, shall suffer persecution, (2 Tim. iii. 12.) though not in all times alike. Here therefore 'tis necessary we have serious forethoughts of the evils which seem likely to befall us, for the Christian interest, upon several accounts.

1. That we may espouse it sincerely; and enter ourselves the disciples of Christ with a true heart: which we are not likely to do if we understand not his terms, and do not consider the state of the case. What is done without judgment, or upon mistake, is not like to be done in truth. If we fall in with Christ and Christianity upon supposition of only halcyon days, in our time, and that we shall never be called to suffer for him, we shall most probably deceive ourselves, and prove false to him. It will appear our bargain was void in the making, as to any tie we can have upon him. We are to reckon, when we take on the yoke of Christ, of bearing, also, his cross; and be in a preparation of mind to lose and suffer all things for him. And to use forethoughts of this kind is what he enjoins us, (Luke xiv. 18.) under the expression of counting the cost, what it may amount unto to be a resolved sincere Christian. And he tells us withal, what the cost is to forsake all, (*v.* 33.) to abandon father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, and one's own life, *v.* 26. And all this, (as is often inculcated,) as that without which a man cannot be his disciple, *i. e.* not become one, as there the phrase must signify! So that though he have come to him, *i.e.* have begun to treat, (If a man come to me) and do not so, in his previous resolution, nothing is concluded between Christ and him.

Secondly, That, upon this constant prospect of the state of our case we may endeavour our own confirmation, from time to time, in our fidelity to him. For new and unforethought occasions, that we have not comprehended in their particulars, or in equivalence, may beget new impressions, and dispositions to revolt. Besides all that had come upon those faithful confessors, (Ps. xliv.) that they were sore broken in the place of dragons, and covered with the shadow of death; (*v.* 19.) notwithstanding which they appeal to God, that their heart was not turned back, and that their steps had not declined from his way: and offer themselves to his search, whether they had forgotten him, or stretched out their hands to a strange god. They add, Yea, for thy sake we are killed all the day long. They reckon upon nothing but suffering, and that to utmost extremity, all the rest of their day, and yet are still of the same mind. Patience must be laid in, that may be drawn forth unto long-suffering. And we are to endure to the end, that we may be saved. And therefore suffering to the last, is to be forethought of; through the whole course of which state of suffering we must resolve, through the grace of Christ, never to desert his interest. Otherwise we are so deceived,

as he that goes to build a tower, without counting what his expense will be before-hand; or he that is to meet an enemy in the field, without making a computation of the equality or inequality of the forces on the one side and the other; as our Saviour further discourses in the above-mentioned context.

Thirdly, That we may cast with ourselves how, not only not to desert the Christian interest, but most advantageously to serve it. Suppositions ought to be made of whatsoever difficulties seem not unlikely to be in our case, that we may bethink ourselves how we may be of most use to the interest of our great Master and Lord, upon such and such emergencies. For such a supposition he himself suggests, Matt. x. 23. If they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another. And 'tis likely he gives this direction not with respect merely to their being safe, but serviceable, as the following words seem to intimate, For verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come, *q. d.* "You will have work to do whither ever you come, and will scarce have done all within that allotment of time you will have for it, before the vengeance determined upon this people prevent you of further opportunity among them:" as Tertullian discourses at large, and not irrationally, upon this subject, and Augustine to the like purpose.[b]

Fourthly, That we may be the more excited to pray for the preservation and prosperity of the Christian interest. Those we should always reckon the worst days, that are of worst abode unto it, though we expect our own share in the calamities of such days. When his interest declines, and there are phenomena in providence, appearances and aspects very threatening to it, there ought to be the more earnest and importunate praying. And that there may be so, our eye should look forward, and be directed towards the foreshown events as from whence we are to take arguments and motives to prayer. And we should reckon therefore they are presignified that we may be excited, and a dutiful love to his great name be awakened in us. What shall be done to thy great name? What shall become of thy kingdom among men? Nor can we ever pray "thy kingdom come," without a prospect to futurity. Yea, and all prayer hath reference to somewhat yet future. If therefore all forethoughts about the concernments of future time were simply forbidden, there were no place left for prayer at all. Hitherto then we see how far taking thought about the future is not forbidden.

Secondly, We are next therefore to show wherein it is. And it appears from what hath been said, it is not evil in itself, for then it must be universally so, and no circumstance could make it good or allowable in any kind. Therefore it must be evil only either by participation or by redundancy. And so it may be, either as—proceeding from evil, or as tending to evil: *i. e.* in respect either of the evil causes from which it comes, or of the ill effects to which it tends. Under these two heads we shall comprehend what is to be said for opening the sense wherein it may be understood to fall under the present prohibition.

I. All such thoughtfulness must be understood to be evil and forbidden as hath an ill root and original. As, before, our Saviour, in this sermon of his, forbids somewhat else under this notion, because it cometh of evil. What doth so, partakes from thence an ill savour. Those are evil thoughts that participate, and, as it were, taste of an evil cause, which may be manifold. As,

First, It may proceed from a groundless and too confident presumption, that we shall live to-morrow, and that our *to-morrow* shall be a long day, or that we have much time before us in the world; which as it really is a great uncertainty, ought always to be so esteemed. Men presume first, and take somewhat for granted which they ought not, and make that their hypothesis, upon which they lay a frame of iniquity of this kind, and make it the ground of much forbidden thoughtfulness and care. They forget in whose hands their breath is, assume to themselves the measuring of their own time, as if they were lords of it, take it for granted, they shall live so long; and accordingly form their projects, lay designs, and then grow very solicitous how they will succeed and take effect. By breaking another former law, they lead themselves into the transgression of this, *i. e.* first boast of to-morrow against the prohibition, (Prov. xxvii. 1.) and then proceed unduly to take thought for to-morrow. The case which we find falls under animadversion, Jam. iv. 19, &c. To-morrow we will go to such a city, and buy and sell, and get gain, when as (saith that apostle) you do not know what shall be on the morrow; for what is your life, is it not a vapour? &c. Would we learn to die daily, and consider that, for ought we know, to-morrow, in the strictest sense, may prove the day of our death, and that then, in that very day must our thoughts perish, we should think less intensely on the less fruitful subjects. Our thoughts would take a higher flight, not flutter in the dust, and fill our souls with gravel, as is our wont; and less no doubt offend against the true meaning of this interdict of our Saviour in the text.

Secondly, There may be an undue forbidden thoughtfulness about to-morrow, proceeding from a too curious inquisitiveness, and affectation of prying into futurity. Men have nothing here but gloom and cloudy darkness before them. Fain they would with their weak and feeble beam pierce the cloud, and cannot; 'tis retorted, and doth not enter. They think to reinforce it by a throng and thick succession of thoughts, but do only think themselves into the more confusion; cannot see what is next before them. What new scene shall first open upon them, they cannot tell. And (as is natural to them that converse in dubious darkness) their thoughts turn all to fear. And they therefore think the more, and as their thoughts multiply, increase their fear. Whereas they should retire, and abstain from conversing in so disconsolate a region, among shades and spectres, which are their own creatures, perhaps, for the most part; and wherewith they first cheat, and then fright themselves. They should choose rather to converse in the light of former and present things, which they know; and of such greater and more considerable futurities as God hath thought fit plainly to reveal. And be contented there should be arcana, and that such future things remain so, as God hath reserved and locked up from us. It is not for you to know the times and seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power, saith our Saviour (departing) unto his disciples, (Acts i. 7.) when he was now going up into glory. Fain they would have known how it should speed afterwards with them, and his interest. Wilt thou now (say they) restore the kingdom to Israel? It is not for you (says he) to know, &c. If God should any way give us light into futurity, 'tis to be accepted, if we are sure it is from him; and be regarded according to what proofs there are that it is so. As, sometimes, he doth premonish of very considerable events, that are coming on; and, according to what of evidence there is in any such monition, ought the impressions to be upon our spirits. But when out of our own fancies we will supply the want of such a discovery, and curiously busy (much more if we hereupon torment) ourselves to no purpose; this we cannot doubt is forbidden us. But we shall say more of it hereafter apart by itself. And with this we may most fitly connect,

Thirdly, That such thoughtfulness about the future is to be concluded undue and forbidden, as proceeds from a too conceited self-indulgent opinion of our own wisdom, and ability to foresee what shall happen. For from our very earnest desire to foreknow, may easily arise a belief that we do, or can do so. As a dream cometh from multitude of business, the over-busy agitation and exercise of our minds about what shall be, makes us dream, and in our dream we seem to ourselves to see visions; and have before us very accurate schemes and prospects of things. How inventive are men, and ingenious in contriving their frames and models, either direful and dismal, or pleasant and entraining, as the disposition of their minds is, compared with the present aspect of affairs, which variously impresses them this way or that! If they be terrible and dismal, but raised only upon a conceited opinion of our own great skill and faculty in foreseeing, they have their afflicting

b. Expos in Evang. Johan c. 10. If they persecute you in one city, fly, &c. Yet Lord, thou sayst, the hireling fleeth. Who is this hireling? He that flies seeking his own things, not the things of Jesus Christ. Thou hast fled (though present) because thou wast silent; wast silent, because thou wast afraid; fear is the flight of the mind, &c.

evil in themselves, our own creature (of itself ravenous) tears and torments us. If they be pleasant and delectable, yet they may become afflicting by accident. For some one unthought-of thing, falling out contrary to our expectation, may overturn our whole model and fabric, as a touch doth a house of cards, and then we play the child's part in deploring, as we did in erecting it; fret and despair that things can ever be brought to so good a posture again. But whether they be the one or the other, their sinful evil (which we are now considering) they owe to one and the same culpable cause, that we are so over-wise, and take upon us with such confidence to conclude of what shall be; as if our wisdom were the measure of things, or could give laws to Providence from which it can never vary. It is not in itself a fault to be afraid of what is formidable, or pleased with what is pleasant, except it be with excess. But it is our fault to be either frighted with shadows, or to surfeit ourselves with a temporal short pleasure drawn out from them, that may, afterward, revenge itself upon us with the sharper torture, when as all their power to hurt us they receive from ourselves; and have no more of reality or existence, than a strong imagination, and confidence of our own undeceivable wit and sagacity, gives them. Who in all the world have minds so vexed with sudden passions of fear and hope, joy and sorrow, anger and despair, as your smattering pedants in policy, such as set up for dons; and who fancy themselves men of great reach, able to foretell remote changes, and see things whose distance makes them invisible to all but themselves: that hold a continual council-table in their own divining heads, think themselves to comprehend all reasons of state: are as busy as princes and emperors, or their greatest ministers; mightily taken up in all affairs, but those of their own private stations; and thereby qualified to be state weather-glasses, but prove no better for the use they pretend for, than a common almanack, where you may write wet for dry throughout the year, and as much hit the truth. They that shall consider the abstruseness of designs and transactions that relate to the public, and how much resolutions about them depend upon what it is fit should be commonly unknown; so that they that judge without doors must think and talk at random: and withal that shall consider the uncertainty of human affairs, and that they who manage them are liable to ignorances, mistakes, incogitancies, and to the hurry of various passions, as well as other men; especially that shall consider the many surprising interpositions of an overruling hand, and what innumerable varieties of paths lie open to the view and choice of an infinite mind, which we can have no apprehension of; might easily, before-hand, apprehend the vanity of attempting much in this kind, as common experience daily shows it, afterwards. So that multitudes of presaging thoughts, and agitations of mind, which proceed from the supposition of the contrary, cannot be without much sin against this precept of our Lord. And which would mostly be avoided, would we once learn to lay no great stress of expectation upon any thing that may be otherwise; and to reckon (with that modesty which would well become us) that we can foresee nothing in the course of ordinary human affairs upon more certain terms.

Fourthly, Here is especially forbidden such thoughtfulness as proceeds from a secret distrust of Providence, from a latent, lurking atheism, or (which comes all to one as to the matter of religion) an only epicurian theism that excludes the Divine presence and government; *i. e.* call it by one of these names or the other, whatsoever thoughtfulness proceeds from our not having a fixed, steady, actual belief, of the wise, holy, righteous, and powerful Providence that governs all affairs in the world, and particularly all our own affairs, no doubt highly offends against this law. When we have thought God out of the world, what a horrid darkness do we turn it into to ourselves! what a dismal waste and wilderness do we make it! We can have no prospect but of darkness and desolation always before us. Did we apprehend God as every where present and active; (*Deum ire per omnes terrasque tractusque maris—) that heavens, earth, and seas are replenished with a divine powerful presence;* were our minds possessed with the belief of his fulness filling all in all, and of governing power and wisdom, extending to all times as well as places; there were neither time nor place left for undue thoughtfulness of what is, or shall be. But by a secret disbelief of Providence, or our not having a serious, fixed, lively, practical belief of it, we put ourselves into the condition of the more stupid pagans, and are not only as strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and the covenants of promise, and without Christ and hope, but even as without God in the world, or atheists in it, as the word there signifies, Ephes. ii. 12. And when we have thus by our own disbelief shut out God, how over-officiously do we offer ourselves to succeed into his place! And now how immense a charge have we taken upon us! We will govern the world, and order affairs, and times, and seasons: a province for which we are as fit as he whom the poetic fable places in the chariot of the sun. And so were it in our power, we should put all things into a combustion. But it is too much for us, that our impotency serves us to scorch ourselves and set our own souls on fire. How do our own thoughts ferment, and glow within us, when we feel our inability to dispose of things, and counterwork cross events, or even shift for ourselves! For what are we to fill up the room of God! or supply the place of an excluded deity! No wonder if troublous thoughts multiply upon us, till we cannot sustain the cumbersome burden. The context shows this to be the design of our Lord, to possess the minds of his disciples, when he prohibits them thoughtfulness, with a serious believing apprehension of Providence, such a Providence as reacheth to all things; even the most minute, and inconsiderable; to the birds that fly in the air, the flowers that grow in men's gardens, the grass in their fields, and (elsewhere) the hairs on their own heads. And certainly if we could but carry with us apprehensive minds of such a Providence every where acting, and which nothing escapes, it must exclude the thoughtfulness here intended to be forbidden.

Fifthly, Such as proceeds from an ungovernable spirit, a heart not enough subdued to the ruling power of God over the world. Not only distrustfulness of Providence, but rebellion against it, may be the (very abundant) spring of undue thoughtfulness. A temper of spirit impatient of government, self-willed, indomitable; that says, I must have my own will and way, and things must be after my mind and manner; can never be unaccompanied with a solicitude that they may do so, as undutiful and sinful as its cause. A mind unretractably set, and pre-engaged one way, cannot but be filled with tumult, and mutinous thoughts, upon any appearing probability that things may fall out otherwise. In reference to an afflicted suffering condition (how ungrateful soever it be to our flesh) a filial subjection to the Father of our spirits is required under highest penalty. Shall we not be subject to the Father of spirits and live? Heb. xii. 9. To mutiny is mortal, *q. d.* you must be subject, your life lies on it. The title which the sacred penman there fixes on God, the Father of spirits, is observable, and ought to be both instructive and grateful to us. He is the great paternal Spirit. We (in respect of our spirits) are his offspring (as the apostle elsewhere from a heathen poet urges, Act. xvii.) In this context the fathers of our flesh and the Father of spirits are studiously contradistinguished to one another. The relation God bears to us as our Father terminates on our spirits. And his paternal care and love cannot but follow the relation, and principally terminate there too. He must be chiefly concerned about our spirits, that they be preserved in a good and healthful state. If therefore it be requisite for the advantage of our spirits, that our flesh do suffer, we are not to think he will stand upon that, or oppose the gratification of our flesh to the necessity of our spirits. And in this case shall not the wisdom and authority of the Father judge and rule, and the duty of the son oblige him to submit and obey? And whereas 'tis added [and live?] it implies we are not, upon other terms, to expect a livelihood, to subsist and be maintained. A son in a plentiful, well-governed family, as long as he can be content to keep to the orders and rule of the family, and live under the care of a wise and kind father, he may live without care, or taking thought; but if he will go into rebellion, he puts himself into a condition thoughtful enough. He is brought to the condition of the prodigal, that knew not what shift to make to live, till he advises with himself, and comes to

that wise resolution of returning. I will arise and go to my father—If we speak of the life of our spirits, in the moral sense, (which in the natural sense we know are always immortal,) it consists, as our bodily life doth, in an ἐυκρασία in that holy order, and temperament, which depends upon our continued union with God, and keeping in with him (as the bodily crasis is preserved as long as the soul holds it united with itself.) A holy rectitude, composure, and tranquillity is our life, carries with it a lively sprightly vigour. To be spiritually minded is life and peace, Rom. viii. 6. But if we refuse to submit to the order of God, and offer to break ourselves off from him, this hath a deadly tendency. It tends to dissolve the whole frame, and would end in death if sovereign victorious grace did not prevent. To be sure an attempt to rebel gradually discomposes our whole soul, and brings in a crowd of thoughts that will be as uncomfortable to ourselves, as they are undutiful towards God; and consequently impair and enfeeble life; which our Saviour implies to consist in a good, healthy, comfortable, internal habit of mind and spirit, when he denies it to stand in externals. A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses, Luke xii. 15. All which inward composure and tranquillity depend upon our willing submitting to be governed. What a blessed repose and rest! how pleasant a vacancy of diseasing vexatious thoughts doth that soul enjoy that hath resigned itself, and gives a constant unintermitted consent to the Divine government! when it is an agreed, undisputed thing, that God shall always lead and prescribe, and it follow and obey!

Some heathens have given us documents about following God, that might both instruct and shame us at once. It would save us many a vain and troublesome range, and excursion of mind and thoughts, could we once learn constantly to do so. If upon a journey, in an intricate way full of various turnings and windings, a man have a good and sure guide before him; as long as he follows he needs not be thoughtful, or make trials here and there. But if he will outrun his guide, and take this or that bye-way because it seems pleasant, he puts himself to the needless labour of coming so far back, unless he will err continually. As long as we are content that God govern the world and us, all is well.

Sixthly, All such thoughtfulness is undue as proceeds from a dislike of God's former methods, in what he hath heretofore done; when, because things have not gone so as to please us formerly, therefore we are thoughtful and afraid they may as little please us hereafter. Here the peccant cause is an aptness to censure and correct Providence; as they, Mal. ii. 17. Where is the God of judgment? (we may reckon it a branch from that former root, an unsubject spirit, only shooting backward:) a disposition to find fault with the paths God hath taken, as if he had made some wrong steps, or in this or that instance had mistaken his way. But he that reproveth God, let him answer it, Job xl. 2. Men are apt to fancy that things might have been better so or so. Hereupon how do thoughts flutter and fly out to futurity! "What if he should do to-morrow, as he did yesterday; in future, as in former time; what a world should we have of it?" There had been some rough unpleasant passages even to Moses himself in the course of God's dispensation towards Israel, while they were under his conduct. But in the review of all, when he was now to leave them, how calm and pacate is his spirit! When in that most seraphic valedictory song of his, (Deut. xxxii.) his sentence upon the whole matter is, His works are perfect, for all his ways are judgment, *v.* 4. Judgment is (with us who must argue and debate things before we determine) the most exquisite reason, or rather the perfection and final result of many foregoing reasonings. So that Moses's testimony concerning all God's ways is, that they were always chosen with that exact judgment, as if he had long reasoned with himself concerning every step he took; that certainly he had a very good reason for whatever he did, all as perfectly seen by him at one view, as if (like us) he considered long, before he judged what was to be done.

Could we once learn to sing tuneably the song of Moses and the Lamb, Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty, just and true are all thy ways, O King of saints; to like well all his former methods, to admire the amiableness and beauty of Providence in every thing, or generally to approve and applaud all things he hitherto hath done; to account he hath ever gone the best way that could have been gone, in all that hath past; we should never have dubious thoughts about what he will do hereafter. And this is no more than what the truth of the matter challenges from us, to esteem he hath some valuable reason for every thing he hath done. For sometimes, we can see the reason, and are to judge so explicitly upon what we see. And when we cannot, 'tis highly reasonable it should be with us the matter of an implicit belief that so it is. For though to pretend to pay that observance to fallible man, must argue either insincerity, or folly; the known perfection of the nature of God, makes it not only safe, but our duty, to hold always that peremptory fixed conclusion concerning all his dispensations. Indeed concerning some men of known reputed wisdom, it is not only mannerly but prudent, to account they may see good reason for some doubtful actions of theirs, when we cannot be sure they do. Much more may we confidently conclude that God ever doth and must do so. It is not a blind obsequiousness, but a manifest duty, which the plain reason of the thing exacts from us. And he justly takes himself affronted, and counts it an impious insolence, when things look not well to our judgments, then to question his, as he complains in that mentioned place, Mal. ii. 17. Ye have wearied me with your words, yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied thee? In that ye say, Every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them, and where is the God of judgment? But how free is that happy soul from sinful, anxious thoughts, with whom that conclusion neither is notionally denied, nor doth obtain merely as a notion, but is a settled practical and vital principle, He hath done all things well.

Seventhly, Such as proceeds from an over-addictedness to this world, and little relish of the things of the world to come. All that ariseth from a terrene mind, that savours not heavenly things. The heart is the fountain of thoughts. From thence they arise, and receive their distinguishing tincture. They are as the temper of the heart is. If that be evil, thence are evil thoughts; (Matt. xv. 19.) if it be earthly, they run upon earthly things, and savour both of it, and the things they are taken up about. This was the case of the disciples, Matt. xvi. 22, 23. When our Saviour had, immediately before, inquired the common opinion concerning him, and approved theirs, and confirmed them in it, that he was Christ the Son of the living God; they draw all to the favouring the too carnal imagination and inclination of their own terrene hearts. They think he cannot want power, being the Son of the living God, to do great things in the world, and make them great men. And reckon his love and kindness to them must engage the Divine power which they saw was with him for these purposes. And 'tis likely when he directs his speech to Peter, and speaks of giving him the keys, which he might know had heretofore been the insignia of great authority in a prince's court, he understood all of some secular greatness; and that there were dignities of the like kind, which the rest might proportionably share in; as it appears others of them were not without such expectations, when elsewhere they become petitioners to sit at his right and left hand in his kingdom (the places or thrones of those phylarchs, or princes of tribes, that sat next to the royal throne.) Now hereupon when our Saviour tells them what was first coming, and was nearer at hand, that he must be taken from them, suffer many things, be delivered over unto death, &c. Peter very gravely takes on him to rebuke him, Master, favour thyself, this shall not be unto thee; no, by no means! Full of thoughts, no doubt, his mind was at what was said. And whence did they proceed but from a terrene spirit? and that the notion of worldly dignity had formed his mind, and made it intent upon a secular kingdom. It was not absurnetly his care for Christ himself he was so much troubled at; as what would become of his own great designs and hopes. Therefore our Saviour calls him Satan, the name of that arch enemy, the usurping God of this world, who had as yet too much power over him, and tells him, "Thou savourest

not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men," *q. d.* a Satanical spirit hath possessed thee, get thee behind me. And so seeks to repress that unsavory steam of fuliginous earth-sprung thoughts, which he perceived arose in his mind.

It were a great felicity to be able to pass through this present state with that temper of mind as not to be liable to vexatious disappointments. And whereas the things that compose and make up this state are both little and uncertain, so that we may as well be disappointed in having as in not having them; our way were, here, not to expect, but to have our minds taken up with the things that are both sure and great, that is, heavenly, eternal things; where we are liable to disappointment neither way. For these are things that we may upon serious diligent seeking both most surely obtain and possess, and most satisfyingly enjoy. And the more our minds are employed this way, the less will they incline the other. As no man that hath tasted old wine presently desireth new, for he saith the old is better. The foretastes of heaven are mortifying towards all terrene things. No one that looks over that 11th to the Hebrews would think those worthies, those great heroes there reckoned up, troubled themselves much with thoughts of what they were to enjoy or suffer in this world. To see at what rate they lived, and acted, it is easy to collect they were not much concerned about temporary futurities. Whence was it? They lived by that faith that was the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, that exalted, raised, and refined their spirits, and carried them above an empty, unsatisfying, vain world. And again,

Eighthly (which is most conjunct with this last,) All such thoughtfulness is forbidden as proceeds from want of self-denial, patience, and preparedness for a suffering state. A heart fortified and well postured for suffering, is no susceptible subject of those ill impressions. They fall into weak minds, tender, soft, and delicate, that reckon themselves created, and embodied in flesh, only to taste and enjoy sensible delights; and that they came into this world to be entertained, and divert themselves with its still fresh and various rarities. We are deeply thoughtful because we cannot deny ourselves and bear the cross; and have not learned to endure hardships, as good soldiers of Christ Jesus. Our shoulders are not yet fitted to their burthen. Some perhaps think themselves too considerable, and persons of too great value to be sufferers. I am too good, my rank too high, my circumstances too little vulgar. Hence, contempt, disgrace, and other more sensibly pinching hardships are reckoned unsuitable for them, and only to be endured by persons of lower quality; so that the very thoughts of suffering are themselves unsufferable. Whereupon, when the exigency of the case urges, and they can no way decline, they cannot but think strange of the fiery trial, and count a strange thing is happened to them. The matter was very unfamiliar unto their thoughts, and they are as heifers wholly unaccustomed to this yoke. And now, upon the near prospect of so frightful a spectacle as an unavoidable suffering, a mighty resistless torrent of most turbid thoughts breaks in upon them at once. And they are (as a surprised camp) all in confusion: sorrowful, fearful, discontentful, repining, amazed thoughts do even overwhelm and deluge their souls. And all these thoughts do even proceed from want of thinking. They think too much now, because before they thought too little. Whereas did we labour by degree to frame our spirits to it, to reconcile our minds to a suffering state, (as they do horses intended for war, by a drum beaten under their nose, a pistol discharged or trumpet sounded at their very ear,) did we inure ourselves much to think of suffering, but yet to think little and diminishingly of it, and little of ourselves, who may be the sufferers; I am (sure) not better than those that have suffered before me in former times, such as "of whom the world was not worthy;" we should be in a good measure prepared for whatever can come, and so not be very thoughtful about any thing that shall.

II. That thoughtfulness is forbidden too which tends to evil, such as hath an evil tendency.

1. Such as tends to evil negatively, that is, to no good; all that is to no purpose. For we are apt when we see things go otherwise than we would have them, to exercise our contriving thoughts as deeply as if we were at the head of affairs, and had them in our own hand and power, and could at length turn the stream this way or that. But do we not busy ourselves about matters all the while wherein we can do nothing? When things are out of our power, are not of the τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, belong not to us, are without our reach, and we can have no influence upon them this way or that, yet we are prone over-earnestly to concern ourselves. And as men (in that bodily exercise) when the bowl is out of their hands variously writhe and distort their bodies, as if they could govern its motion by those odd and ridiculous motions of theirs; so are we apt to distort our minds into uncouth shapes and postures, to as little purpose, more pernicious, and upon a true account not less ridiculous. As our Saviour warns us to beware of idle words, such as can do no work, (as the Greek imports,) so we should count it disallowed us too, (for the same reason,) to think idle thoughts. The thoughtfulness our Saviour intends to forbid, you see how he characterizes, such as will not add a cubit, nor alter the case one way or other, *i. e.* that is every way useless to valuable or good purposes. The thinking power is not given us to be used in vain; especially, whereas it might be employed about matters of great importance to us at the same time. Which serves to introduce a further character of undue thoughtfulness, *viz.*

2. Such as tends to divert us from our present duty. Our minds are not infinite, and cannot comprehend all things at once. We are wont so to excuse our not having attended to what another was saying to us, that truly we were thinking on somewhat else. Which is a good excuse, if neither the person nor thing deserved more regard from us. But if what was propounded were somewhat we ought to attend to, 'tis plain we were diverted by thinking on what, at that time, we ought not. When men are so amused with their own thoughts that they are put into a state of suspense, and interruption from the proper business of their calling, as Christians, or men, or when their thoughts run into confusion, and are lost as to their present work, such are certainly forbidden thoughts: when they think of every thing but what they should think of. A few passant thoughts would surely serve turn for what is not my business. I have business of my own that is constant, and must be minded at all times, be they what they will. But when the times generally do not please us, upon every less grateful emergency we overdo it in thinking! 'Tis rational and manly to behave ourselves in the world as those that have a concern in it, under the common Ruler of it, and for him; and not to be negligent observers how things go in reference to his great and all-comprehending interest. But the fault is, that our thoughts are apt to be too intense, and run into excess; that we crowd and throng ourselves with thoughts, and think too much to think well, consider what others do or do not; that we allow no place nor room for thoughts what we are to do ourselves, even in the way of that our constant duty, which no times, nor state of things, can alter or make dispensable: *i. e.* to pray continually with cheerful trust: to live in the love, fear, and service of God: to work out our own salvation: to seek the things that are above: to govern and cultivate our own spirits: to keep our hearts with all diligence: to do all the good we can to others, &c. As to these things we stand astonished, and as men that cannot find their hands. We should endeavour to range and methodize our thoughts, to reduce them into some order, (which a crowd admits not,) that we may have them distinctly applicable to the several occasions of the human and Christian life. And with which useful order whatever consists not, we should reckon is sinful and forbidden.

3. Such as not only confounds, but torments the mind within itself, gives it inward torture, distracts and racks it, as the word in the text more peculiarly signifies, (μεριμνᾶν,) to pluck and rend a thing in pieces, part from part, one piece from another. Such a thoughtfulness as doth tear a man's soul, and sever it from itself. There is another word of very emphatical import too which is used in forbidding the same evil, (Luke xii. 29.) μὴ μετεωρίζεσθε, be not in suspense, do not hover as meteors, do not let your minds hang as in the air, in a pendulous, uncertain, unquiet posture; or be not of an inconsistent mind, as a critica-

writer phrases it;[c] or, as we may add, that agrees not, that falls out and fights with itself, that with its own agitations sets itself on fire, as meteors are said to do. Thoughts there are that prove as fire-brands to a man's soul, or as darts and arrows to his heart, that serve to no other purpose but to inflame and wound him. And when they are about such things (those less-considerable events of to-morrow) that all this might as well have been spared, and when we disquiet ourselves in vain, it cannot be without great iniquity. God, who hath greater dominion over us than we have of ourselves, though he disquiet our spirits for great and important ends; put us to undergo much smart and torture in our own minds, caused us to be pricked to the heart, and wounded, in order to our cure, and hath appointed a state of torment for the ineurable; yet he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. 'Tis a thing he wills not for itself. Those greater ends make it necessary, and put it without the compass of an indifferent choice. Much less should we choose our own torment, as it were, for torment's sake, or admit thoughts which serve for no other purpose. 'Tis undutiful; because we are not our own; we violate and discompose the temples of the Holy Ghost, where since he vouchsafes to dwell, we should as much as in us is provide he may have an entirely peaceful and undisturbed dwelling. 'Tis unnatural, because 'tis done to ourselves. A felony de se. Whoever hated his own flesh? No man cuts and wounds and mangles himself, but a madman, who is then not himself, is outed and divested of himself. He must be another thing from himself, ere he can do such acts of violence even to the bodily part. How much more valuable, and nearer us, and more ourself, is our mind and spirit! But this is the case in the matter of inordinate thoughts and care. We breed the worms that gnaw and corrode our hearts. Worms! yea the serpents, the vultures, the bears and lions. Our own fancies are the creators of what doth thus raven and prey upon ourselves. Our own creature rents and devours us.

4. Such as excludes divine consolation, so that we cannot relish the comforts God affords us, to make our duties pleasant, and our afflictions tolerable; or is ready to afford. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul, Psal. xciv. 19. Those thoughts, if they were afflicting and troublesome, they were not so without some due measure or limit, while they did not so fill the whole soul as to exclude so needful a mixture. But how intolerably sinful a state is it when the soul is so filled, and taken up, prepossessed already, with its own black thoughts, that there is no room for better! And its self-created cloud is so thick and dark that it resists the heavenly beams, and admits them not in the ordinary way to enter and insinuate. When the disease defies the remedy, and the soul refuses to be comforted, as Psal. lxxvii. 2. This seems to have been the Psalmist's case; not that he took up an explicit, formed resolution against being comforted, but that the present habit of his mind and spirit was such that it did not enter with him; and that the usual course did not succeed in order to it; for it follows, "I thought on God and was troubled," which needs not to be understood so, as if the thoughts of God troubled him, but though he did think of God he was yet troubled. The thoughts of God were not the cause of his trouble, but the ineffectual means of his relief. Still he was troubled not withstanding he thought of God, not because. For you see he was otherwise troubled, and says, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord." He took the course which was wont not to fail, but his mind was so full of troublous thoughts before, that when he remembered God, it proved but a weak essay. The strength of his soul was pre-engaged the other way, and the stream was too violent to be checked by that feebler breath which he now only had to oppose it. Though God can arbitrarily, and often doth, put forth that power as to break and scatter the cloud, and make all clear up on a sudden; yet also, often, he withholds in some displeasure that more potent influence, and leaves things to follow, with us, their own natural course; lets our own sin correct us, and suffers us to feel the smart of our own rod. For we should have withstood beginnings, and have been more early in applying the remedy before things had come to this ill pass. Because we did not, when we better could, set ourselves to consider, and strive and pray effectually, the distemper of our spirits is now grown to that height that we would and cannot. In that great distress which befell David at Ziklag, when he finds his goods rifled, his nearest relatives made captives, that city itself, the place of his repose, the solace of his exile, reduced to a ruinous heap; his guard, his friends, the companions of his flight, and partakers of all his troubles and dangers, become his dangerous enemies, for they mutiny and conspire against him, and speak of stoning him; the common calamity imbitters their spirits, and they are ready to fly upon him, as if he had done the Amalekite's part, been the common enemy, and the author of all that mischief; in this most perplexing case he was quicker in taking the proper course, immediately turns his thoughts upwards while they were flexible and capable of being directed, and comforted himself in the Lord his God. All that afflicting thoughtfulness which is the consequent of our neglecting seasonable endeavours to keep our minds under government and restraint, while they are yet governable; and which hereupon renders the consolations of God small, and tasteless to us, is certainly of the prohibited sort.

5. Such as tends to put us on a sinful course for the avoiding dangers that threaten us. When we think of sinning to day, lest we should suffer to-morrow. If it be but one particular act of sin by which we would free ourselves from a present danger, or much more if our thoughts tempt and solicit us to a course of apostacy, which (Psal. lxxxv. 8.) is a returning to folly. The thing now speaks itself, the thought of foolishness is sin, Prov. xxiv. 9. When upon viewing the state of affairs a man's thoughts shall suggest to him, I can never be safe I perceive in this way; great calamities threaten the profession I have hitherto been of. And hence he begins to project the changing his religion, to meditate a revolt. In this case *deliberasse est desciviss*e. A disloyal thought hath in it the nature of the formed evil to which it tends. Here is seminal apostacy. The cockatrice egg, long enough hatched, becomes a serpent; and therefore ought to be crushed betimes. A man's heart now begins sinfully to tempt him, (as he is never tempted with effect, till he be led away by his own heart and enticed, James i. 14.) And now is the conception of that sin, which, being finished, is eventually mortal, and brings forth death, *v.* 15.

6. Such as tends unto visible dejection and despondency, such as in the course of our walking shall make a show, and express itself to the discouragement of the friends of religion or the triumph of its enemies. It may be read in a man's countenance many times when he is unduly thoughtful. Cares furrow his face, and form his deportments. His looks, his mien, his behaviour, show a thoughtful sadness.

Now when such appearances exceed our remaining constant cause of visible cheerfulness, the thoughtfulness whence they proceed cannot but be undue and sinful. As when the ill aspect of affairs on our interests clothes our faces with fear and sorrow; our countenances are fallen, and speak our hearts sunk: so that we even tell the world we despair of our cause and our God. This, besides the distrust, which is the internal evil spoken of before, tends to a very pernicious effect; to confirm the atheistical world, to give them the day, to say with them the same thing, and yield them the matter of their impious boast, There is no help for them in God. And all this, when there is a true unchangeable reason for the contrary temper and deportment. For still that one thing "the Lord reigns," hath more in it to fortify and strengthen our hearts and compose us to cheerfulness, and ought to signify more with us to this purpose, than all the ill appearances of things in this world can do to our rational dejection. The Psalmist (Psal. xcvi. 11, 12, 13.) reckons all the world should ring of it, that the whole creation should partake from it a diffusive joy. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar and the fulness thereof; let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord, for he cometh, he cometh to judge the earth, &c.

[c] Heinsius.

He accounts all the universe should even be clothed hereupon with a smiling verdure. And what? are we only to except ourselves, and be an anomalous sort of creatures? shall we not partake in that common dutiful joy, and fall into concert with the adoring loyal chorus? Will we cut ourselves off from this gladsome obsequious throng? And what should put a pleasant face and aspect upon the whole world, shall it only leave our faces covered with clouds, and a mournful sadness?

Briefly, that we may sum up the evil of this prohibited thoughtfulness, as it is to be estimated from its ill effects to which it tends, whatsoever, in that kind, hath a tendency either dishonourable and injurious to God, or hurtful to ourselves, we are to reckon into this class, and count it forbidden us. Wherefore it remains that we go on the other part of the intended discourse, *viz.*

II. The enforcement of the prohibition. For which purpose we shall take into consideration the following part of the verse; "To-morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." The evil forbidden is carefulness about the future, as we read it, taking thought, which is a more general expression than the Greek word doth amount to. All thinking is not caring. This is one special sort of thoughts that is here forbidden, careful thoughts, and one special sort of care, not about duty but event, and about event wherein it doth not depend upon our duty, that is, considered abstractly from it; and so the thing intended is, that doing all that lies within the compass of our duty to promote any good event, or to hinder bad, that then we should cease from solicitude about the success. From such solicitude, most especially, as shall be either distrustful, or disquieting, or more generally, that shall be, any way, either injurious to God, or prejudicial to ourselves.

Now for the pressing of this matter upon our practice, these subjoined words may be apprehended to carry, either but one and the same argument, in both the clauses; or else two distinct ones; according as the former shall be diversely understood. For,

1. These words, "To-morrow shall take care for the things of itself," are understood by some to carry but this sense with them, *q. d.* "To-morrow will bring its own cares with it, and those perhaps afflicting enough, and which will give you sufficient trouble when the day comes. To-morrow will oblige you to be careful about the things thereof, and find you business and molestation enough." Which is but the same thing in sense with what is imported in the following words: "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

2. Or else those former words may be understood thus,—"To-morrow shall take care for the things of itself;" *i. e.* "to-morrow and the things of to-morrow shall be sufficiently cared for otherwise, without your previous care. There is one that can do it sufficiently, do not you impertinently and to no purpose concern yourselves." It is implied there is some one else to take that care, whose proper business it is. The great God himself is meant, though that is not expressly said, the design being but to exclude us; and to say who should not take care, not who should. That is therefore left at large, and expressed with that indifferency, as if it were intended to signify to us, that it was no matter who took care so we did not. That we should rather leave it to the morrow to put on a person and take care, than be ourselves concerned; that whose part soever it is, it was none of ours. A form of speech not unexampled elsewhere in Scripture. "Let the dead bury their dead," only follow thou me; *q. d.* sure somebody will perform that part. It will be done by one or other, more properly than by you, who have devoted yourself to me, and are become a sacred person (not permitted by the law to meddle with a dead body, as a learned person glosses upon that place.) And, in common speech, especially of superiors to inferiors, such *antanaclases* (as the figure is called) are frequent. And the same word used over again, when in the repetition (though here it be otherwise) we intend not any certain sense; more than that we would, with the more smartness and pungency, repress an inclination we observe in them to somewhat we would not have them do, or more earnestly press the thing we would have done. So that we need not in that expression trouble ourselves to imagine any such mystical meaning, as, let them that are dead in sin bury them that are dead for sin; or that it intends more, than, be not concerned about the matter. And to show the absoluteness of the command, it is given in that form of words that it might be understood he should not concern himself about that business in any case whatsoever, *q. d.* suppose, what is not likely, that there were none else that would take care; or none but the dead to bury the dead; yet know, that at this time I have somewhat else to do for you; when it is in the meantime tacitly supposed, and concealed, that the matter might well enough be left to the care of others. So here, while it is silently intimated that the things of the morrow shall be otherwise sufficiently cared for, by that wise and mighty Providence that governs all things, and runs through all time, yet our intemperate solicitude is, in the meantime, so absolutely forbidden, that we are not to be allowed in it, though there were none, but the feigned person of to-morrow, to take care for what should then occur. Yet the main stress is laid upon the concealed intimation all the while, as a thing whereof he was secure, and would have his disciples be too, that the business of providing for the morrow would be done sufficiently without them. And now according to this sense of those words, there are two distinct considerations, contained in this latter part of the verse, both which we shall severally make use of, for the purpose for which they are propounded by our Saviour, *viz.* the pressing of what he had enjoined in the former part of the verse. And we may thus distinctly entitle them, the unprofitableness and the hurtfulness of this forbidden care.

I. The former may well bear that title; the inutility or unprofitableness of our care. To-morrow shall take care for the things of itself, *i. e.* they shall be sufficiently cared for without you. Now under that head of unprofitableness, we may conceive these two things to be comprehended: *viz.* I. That we do not need to attempt any thing: II. That we can effect nothing by that prohibited care of ours: that we neither need, nor (to any purpose) can, concern ourselves about such matters.

I. That we do not need. They are under the direction of his providence who can manage them well enough himself. And unto this head several things do belong, which if they be distinctly considered, will both discover and highly aggravate that offence of immoderate thoughtfulness. As,

1. That, through that needless care of ours, we shall but neglect (as was formerly said) our most constant indispensable duty. That will not be done as it ought. We should study to be quiet, and do our own business, as is elsewhere enjoined, upon another account. We have a duty incumbent, which, what it is we are told, in the general, and at the same time encouraged against interrupting care, Psal. xxxvii. 3. Trust in the Lord and do good, and you shall dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Some perhaps are apt to have many a careful thought of this sort. "Alas! We are afraid the condition of the land may be such as we shall not be able to live in it." No, ('tis said,) never trouble your thoughts about that. Only neglect not your own part. Trust in the Lord, and do good, and 'twill be well enough. You shall dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.

2. We shall make ourselves busy-bodies in the matters of another, (1 Pet. iv. 15.) as it were, play the bishops in another's diocese, as the word there imports. We shall but be over-officious, and undecently pragmatical in intermeddling. Our great care should be, when we count upon suffering, that we may not suffer indecently, or with disreputation, (in their account who are fittest to judge,) much less injuriously to a good cause, and a good conscience. Which we cannot fail to do, if we suffer out of our own place and station, and having intruded ourselves into the affairs and concerns that belong to the management of another hand. And,

3. It is to be considered who it is that we shall affront, and whose province we invade in so doing, *viz.* of one that can well enough manage all the affairs of to-morrow, and of all future time, the Lord of all time, in whose hands all our times are, and all time. A province in the administration, whereof there is no danger of defect or error. And,

4. It is to be considered that we shall do so, not only without a call, but against a prohibition. It is reckoned,

among men, a rudeness, to intrude into the affairs of another uninvited; how much more if forbidden? It gives distaste and offence; and the reason is plain, for it implies a supposition of their weakness, and that they are not able to manage their own affairs themselves. And as we thereby cast contempt upon another, so, at the same time, we unduly exalt and magnify ourselves, as if we understood better. Such a comparison cannot but be thought odious. But now take this as an addition to the former consideration, and the matter rises high, and carries the same intimation with it in reference to the All-wise and Almighty God. No, is not he likely to bring matters to any good pass without us? And are we therefore so concernedly looking over the shoulder, thrusting in our eye, and sending forth our cares to run and range into his affairs and business? This is a wearisome impertinence. A prudent man would not endure it.

Nor are those words unapplicable to this purpose, "Seems it a small thing to you to weary men, but you will weary my God also?" Isa. vii. 13. They were spoken to a purpose not unlike. For observe the occasion. There were at that time the two kings with their combined power, of Syria and Israel, come up against Jerusalem and the house of David, meaning the king Ahaz. It is said hereupon of him, and the people with him, "Their hearts were moved as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." Full of thoughts, of cares, and fears, they were, no doubt. O! what will become of this matter? what will be the event? And the prophet comes with a comfortable message to them from God. But their hearts were so prepossessed with their own fears, it signifies nothing. A confirmation is offered and refused. The pretence was, he would not tempt God by asking a sign even when he was bidden. A hypocritical pretence, made only to cover a latent distrust. Thereupon, saith the prophet, is it a small thing to weary men, (meaning himself who was but the messenger,) but that you will weary my God also? *i. e.* who sent him; and who went not about to put the affrighted prince, and his people, upon any thing, but to trust him and be quiet: no agitation of whose minds was required to their safety. They are not directed, as if all lay upon them, to hold a council, and contrive themselves (at this time) the means of their preservation. Nor should they, with disturbed minds. Neither are we (in the sense that hath been given) required or allowed to use our care in reference to the things of to-morrow. The stress of affairs lies not upon us. The events that belong to to-morrow, or the future time, whatever it be, will be brought about, whether we so care or care not. Our anxiety is needless in the case. What will not to-morrow come, and carry all its events in it that belong to it, without us? will not the heavens roll without us? and the sun rise and set? the evening come and also the morn? the days, and all that belong to the several days of succeeding time? will not all he brought about without our care think we? how was it before we were born?

2. There is also comprehended besides, under that head of unprofitableness, our impotency to effect any thing by our care. As we do not need, so nor are we able. That is unprofitable, which will not serve our turn, nor do our business. This forbidden care leaves things but as we found them. 'Tis true, that may be some way useful that is not absolutely necessary, but if besides that no necessity, there be also an absolute usefulness, the argument is much stronger. All this prohibited care of ours cannot contribute any thing to the hindering of bad events or promoting of good. And that neither as to our own private affairs, nor (much less) as to those that are of public concernment.

1. Not as to our own private affairs, which the series of our Saviour's discourse hath directed reference unto, what we shall eat, and drink, and how be clothed; how to maintain and support life, and add to our days and the comfort of them. We cannot add ('tis said) so much as one cubit (*v.* 27.) to our stature. So we read that word, which perhaps (by the way) as a noted expositor observes, may better be rend *age*. The word signifies both. It would seem indeed something an enormous addition to have a cubit added to the stature of a grown man, but the same word (ἡλικία) signifying also *age*, that seems here the fitter translation: *q. d.* "Which of you by taking thought can make the least addition to his own time?" Nor is it unusual to speak of measures of that kind, in relation to time, as a span, a hand-breadth, and the like; and so is cubit as capable of the same application. Our anxiety can neither add more or less.

2. Much less can it influence the common and public affairs. Our solicitude, what will become of these things? how shall the Christian or protestant interest subsist? much more how shall it ever come to thrive and prosper in the world? so low, so depressed and despised as it may seem, how will it be with it to-morrow, or hereafter in future time? what doth it contribute? I speak not to the exclusion of prayer, nor of a dutiful, affectionate concernedness, that excludes not a cheerful, submissive trust; and what will more than this avail? If we add more, will that addition mend the matter; or do we indeed think, when the doing of our duty prevails not, that our anxiety and care beyond our duty shall. Can that change times and seasons, and mend the state of things to-morrow or the next day? Will to-morrow become, by means of it, a fairer or a calmer day, or be without it a more stormy one? We might as well think by our care to order the celestial motions, to govern the tides, and retard or hasten the ebbs and floods; or by our breath check and countermand the course of the greatest rivers. We, indeed, and all things that time contains and measures, are carried as in a swift stream, or on rapid floods. And a man at sea might as well attempt, by thrusting or pulling the sides of the ship that carries him, to hasten or slacken its motion, as we by our vexations care to check or alter the motions of Providence this way or that. Do we think to posture things otherwise than God hath done? Will we move the earth from its centre? Where will we find another earth whereon to set our foot?

2. We have to consider not only the unprofitableness but hurtfulness of this forbidden care. It not only doth no good, but it is sure to do us a great deal of harm. That is the consideration intimated in the latter words, "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." We shall but accumulate evils unto ourselves by it to no purpose. Our undue solicitude cannot add to our time or comforts, (as was said,) but it may much diminish and detract from them. Whereas every several day that passeth may have enough in it, and be of itself sufficiently fraught with perplexity, trouble, and sorrow. All that, added to the foregoing burden of excessively careful forethoughts, may overwhelm and sink us. There are sundry particular considerations that fall in here also.

1. That by this means we shall suffer the same thing over and over, which we needed not suffer more than once. It obtained for a proverb among the [d] Arabians, "An affliction is but one to him that suffers it, but to him that with fear expects it, double." I shall suffer the evil of to-morrow this day and to-morrow too. Yea, and by this course I may bring all the evil of all my future time into each several day, and may suffer the same affliction a thousand times over, which the benignity of providence meant only for my present exercise, when he should think it most fit and reasonable to lay it on.

2. I may, by this means, suffer, in my own foreboding imagination, many things that really I shall never suffer at all, for the events may never happen, the forethoughts whereof do now afflict me. And what a foolish thing it is to be troubled before-hand at that which for ought I know will never be, and to make a certain evil of an uncertain!

3. And it is further to be considered, that all the trouble I suffer in this kind is self-trouble. We therein but afflict ourselves. And it adds a great sting to affliction, that I am the author of it to myself. For besides the unnaturalness of being a self-tormentor, (which was formerly noted,) it is the more afflicting, upon review, by how much more easily it was avoidable. We are stung with the reflection on our own folly, as any man is apt to be, when he considers his having run himself into trouble, which by an ordinary prudence he might have escaped. With what regret may one

d The collection of Arabian proverbs illustrated by the notes of Jos. Scalig. and Erpen.

look back upon many bye-past days, wherein I might have served God with cheerfulness in my calling, "walking in the light of the Lord," which I have turned into days of pensive darkness to myself, by only my black and dismal thoughts! And so by having drawn unjustly the evils of future time into my present day, I come to draw justly the evils of my former time (and of a worse kind) into it also. What God inflicts I cannot avoid, but am patiently to submit to it, which carries its own relief in it, but I owe no such patience to myself, for having foolishly been my own afflicter, with needless and avoidable trouble.

4. I shall suffer hereby in a more grievous kind than if only the feared evil had actually befallen me. It being the nature of external evils (which the prohibited thoughtfulness chiefly refers to) that they commonly afflict more in expectation than in the actual suffering of them, (as was a wise heathen's observation,) as external good things please more in the expectation, than they do in the fruition: when (as he also observes) as to the good and evil things of the contrary kind, the case is contrary. And how often do we find those evils, in the bearing, light, and to have little in them, that looked big, seemed formidable, and carried a dreadful appearance with them at a distance? What a fearful thing is poverty to a man's imagination, and yet who live merrier lives than beggars? We therefore, by this anticipation, suffer in a worse kind. And if we do not make an affliction of no affliction, we make of a lighter one a more grievous. We turn a future outward affliction into a present inward and mental one. The affliction of forbidden care falls upon the mind, whereas the object of that care is only an affliction to the outward man. How much more of suffering is an intelligent spirit capable of, than a mere lump of animated flesh or clay? Can my body ever feel so much as my soul can? Pleasure and pain are always commensurate to the principles of life by which we are capable of the one or the other. How unspeakably greater are the pleasures of the mind than those of the body! and so, consequently, are mental afflictions than corporal. The providence of God, it may be, intends some affliction to our outer man to-morrow; but, in the meantime, our expectations and anxious thoughts are torturing our spirits to-day, while, perhaps, we have burden enough otherwise.

5. And as the affliction of anxious forethought and care is more grievous in the kind, so it is likely to be very intense in the degree of that kind; beyond what the other sort of affliction may be. For whereas the other may be, more directly, from God, and this (as was said) from myself. God afflicts with wisdom, mercy, and moderation. But this self-affliction proceeds from the want of prudence, and is without mercy. So that the moderating principles are wanting. Men, commonly, know no limit or measure in their thus afflicting themselves: never think it enough. Their own passions are their tormentors, which, having broke loose from under the government of their reason and prudence, run into wild rage and fury. What a misery is it to have fierce creatures preying upon us! God would never use us so unmercifully as we do ourselves. Or, if he suffer wicked men to be our afflictors, that know no pity, they cannot reach our spirits: and his mercy towards us is still the same. He can restrain or overrule them at pleasure; or infuse such consolations, as, when we are thus afflicting ourselves, we cannot expect; and which that self-affliction doth naturally exclude. 'Tis unconceivable what evils we superadd to our own days, beyond that which he counts sufficient. Nor do we design our own good in it, as he doth when he afflicts. Which design and end measure and limit the means, that they may not exceed the proportion requisite thereto.

6. All this superadded evil we bring upon ourselves against a rule, (which is fit to be again noted,) for both the considerations that are subjoined must be considered, as relative to the precept. We break first the law, before we break our own peace. Our Redeemer and Lord hath interposed his authority, as a bar against our troubling ourselves; and so fenced our peace and comfort for us, that we have no way to come at our own trouble, but by breaking through the boundary of this law. This then is a very pestilent addition to the evil of *this day*, that we draw upon ourselves by our taking thought for *to-morrow*. For we

e Psal. xix.

mingle the evil of sin with that of affliction. We deal very ill with ourselves in this, to taint our affliction with so foul a thing; which might have been mere affliction without that imbittering accursed mixture.

And it is to be considered, that this draws a consequence with it; (besides the depraving nature of sin, and the corroding nature, especially, of this sin;) 'tis, *as it is sin*, punishable. And so, as we bring the evil of to-morrow into this day, we may bring the evil of this day into to-morrow. God may be offended, and frown *to-morrow*, because we were no more apt to be governed by him *to-day*. And as we drew an imaginary cloud from the next day into this, it may, the next, return upon us in a real storm. But whether it be so or no, it highly aggravates the matter that,

7. We herein offend, not only against the justice of the law, but against the mercy of it, the kindness, goodness, and compassion imported in it. This, as it was intimated before, so needs to be more deeply considered by itself. It ought indeed to be acknowledged concerning the general frame and system of all the divine laws, that they are visibly, and with admirable suitableness, contrived for the good and felicity of mankind, and seem but obligations upon us to be happy. Such as in the keeping whereof there is great reward. And, in this particular one, how observably hath our Lord as it were studied our quiet, and the repose of our minds! How (especially) doth the benignity and kindness of the holy Lawgiver appear in it! upon comparing this consideration with the precept itself. Take no thought for to-morrow, sufficient for the day is the evil of it: *q. d.* I would not have you over-burdened; I would have you be without care. It imports a tenderness of our present comfort; which he many other ways expresses of our future safety and blessedness: *q. d.* I would have you go comfortably through this world, where you are in a pilgrimage and a wayfaring condition; I would not have you oppressed, nor your spirits bowed down with too heavy a burden. And 'tis elsewhere inculcated: Casting all care on him, for he careth for you, 1 Pet. v. 7. In nothing be careful, (Phil. iv. 6.) but in all things let your requests be made known to God, with thanksgiving; and the peace of God (so it immediately follows) which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds. Commit thy way to the Lord, devolve it on him, as the word signifies, Psal. xxxvii. 5. trust all in him, and he will bring it to pass. If we be so wise as to observe his rule and design, we shall be wise for ourselves. And that tranquillity and calmness of spirit, which many heathens have so highly magnified, and which their philosophy sought, our religion will possess and enjoy. But if we neglect and disregard him herein, we shall bring an evil into to-day that neither belongs to this day, nor to any other. It is true indeed, God doth often point us out the day, wherein we must suffer such and such external evils, and as it were say to us, "Now is your day of suffering." Sometimes by his providence alone, when I have no way of escape; sometimes by the concurrence of his word and providence, when the one hems me in on the one hand, the other on the other. He hath now set me a day for suffering, in this or that kind; but none for sinning in this kind, nor in any other. Why shall I draw in evils to this day, from to-morrow, that belong neither to this day nor to-morrow.

The sum is, whether we regard our innocency or our peace, whether we would express reverence to God, or a due regard to ourselves. If we would do the part either of pious and religious or of rational and prudent men, we are to lay a restraint upon ourselves in this matter. Have we nothing to employ our thoughts about, that concerns us more? nothing wherein we may use them to better purpose? Is there nothing wherein we are more left at liberty? or nothing about which we are more bound in duty to think? Unless we reckon that thoughts are absolutely free, and that we may use our thinking power as we please; and that the divine government doth not extend to our minds; (which if it do not, we confound God's government, and man's, and there is an end of all internal sin and duty, and of the first and most radical differences of moral good and evil;) we can never justify ourselves in

such a range of thoughts and cares, as this we have been speaking of. And 'tis very unreasonable to continue a course we cannot justify. A transient action done against a formed judgment would be reflected on with regret and shame by such as are not arrived to that pitch as not to care what they do. But to persist in a condemned course of actions, must much more argue a profligate conscience, enfeebled and mortified to that degree as to have little sense left of right and wrong. Where it is so, somewhat else is requisite to a cure, than mere representing the evil of that course. What that can do hath been tried already. And when men have been once used to victory over their own judgments and consciences, every former defeat makes the next the easier; till at length, light and conscience becomes such contemptible baffled things, as to signify nothing at all, to the governing of practice, this way or that.

The only thing that can work a redress, is to get the temper of our spirits cured; which will mightily facilitate the work and business of conscience, and is necessary, even where it is most lively and vigorous. For to be only quick at discerning what we should be, and do, signifies little against a disinclined heart. Therefore for the rectifying of that, and that our inclinations, as well as our judgments, may concur, and fall in with our duty in this matter, I will only recommend in order hereto by way of direction (among many that might be thought on) these two things.

1. That we use more earnest endeavour to be, habitually, under government, in reference to our thoughts, and the inward workings of our spirits. For can we doubt of the obligation of the many precepts that concern, immediately, the inner man? to love, to trust, to fear, to rejoice in God, &c.? What becomes of all religion, if the vital principles of it be thought unnecessary? Do not all the laws of God that enjoin us any duty, lay their first obligation upon our inward man? Or do they only oblige us to be hypocrites? and to seem what we are not? And why do we here distinguish; and think that, by some precepts, God intends to oblige us; and by others he means no such thing, but to leave us to our liberty? or would not those which we will confess more indispensable (*viz.* such as have been instanced in) exclude the careful thoughts, we speak of, about the events of to-morrow? For can a heart much conversant in the explicit acts of love to God, trust in him, the fear of him, &c. be much liable to these forbidden cares?

Nor, surely, can it be matter of doubt with us, whether God observe the thoughts and motions of our souls; for can we think that he will give rules about things wherein he will exercise no judgment? [f] The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity; and are any more vain than these? do we Christians need a heathen instructor to tell us, [g] "we ought always so to live, as under view; and so to think, as if there were some one that may, and can, inspect and look into our innermost breast. To what purpose is it that we keep any thing secret from man? nothing is shut up to God. He is amidst our minds, and comes among our most inward thoughts." Let us labour to accustom and use our spirits to subjection, to have them composed and formed to awful apprehensions of that authority and government which the Father of spirits claims, and hath established immediately over themselves. This, though it be more general, will yet reach this case.

2. That we aim at being, in the temper of our spirits, more indifferent about all future events, that lie within the compass of time. Let us not account them so very considerable. Time will soon be over, and is too narrow a sphere for us to confine our minds unto. We should endeavour a greater amplitude of thoughts. As he that hath large and noble designs, looks with great indifference upon smaller matters wherein they are not concerned. One that fears God, and works righteousness, believes a world to come, and lives in entire devotedness to the Redeemer, (the constitution of whose kingdom relates entirely to that other world,) hath little cause to concern himself about interveniences, which, as to his part in that world, will not alter his case. We are not the surer of heaven, if the sun shine out to-morrow; nor the less sure, if it shine not.

For the obtaining of this dutiful and peaceful indifferency, it concerns us to be much in prayer. For both, that happy temper of mind is part of the wisdom, [h] which if we want, we are to ask of God, and it directly eases us of the burden of our affairs to commit them in that way; as is signified in that mentioned scripture, Phil. iv. 6. Nor was any thing more agreeable, than that our Lord teaching us (in that admirable summary of petitions given in this same sermon on the mount) to pray every day for our daily bread, should here forbid us to take thought for the morrow. As also, in the gathering of manna, no care was to be extended further than the present day. [i] We have easy access daily. Story tells us, the poor Chineses could not enter into the presence of their Tartarian prince, with never so just a complaint, without submitting, first, to a hundred bastinados, as the condition of their admittance. Would we thankfully accept, and use as we might, the constant liberty we have upon the easiest terms, how much would it contribute both to our innocency and quiet!

AN APPENDIX

TO THE FOREGOING DISCOURSE,

CONCERNING THE IMMODERATE DESIRE OF KNOWING THINGS TO COME.

THERE is yet another very vicious habit of mind, besides this of taking thought about the events of future time; *viz.* an intemperate appetite of foreknowing them. Which hath such affinity, and lies so contiguous, and bordering to the former, that it will not be incongruous to add somewhat concerning it; and, which is of so ill and pernicious an import, that it will deserve some endeavour to show how we may discern and repress it. And it may be requisite to discourse somewhat to this purpose, both for the vindication of God's wisdom and goodness, in confining our knowledge of the events of future time within so narrow bounds and limits; and that serious Christians may the more effectually consult the ease and quiet of their own minds, by keeping themselves contentedly, as to this matter, within the bounds which he hath set them. This appetite of foreknowing is only to be animadverted on so far as it is inordinate, and a distemper. Our business therefore here must be, 1. To specify and distinguish this distemper; 2. To offer somewhat for the cure of it.

1. For the finding out and specifying of it. It is not to be doubted but there may be a faultiness in the defect; a too great listlessness, and indisposition to look forward Which indisposition will appear blameable, when it proceeds either—1. From a sensual slothfulness of temper, that ad-

[f] Psal. xciv. [g] Seneca. [h] Jam. i. 5. [i] Both which remarks are noted by some expositors.

dicts us wholly to the present. It is too much a-kin to the beast, to be totally taken up with what now pleases. When all the soul lies in the senses, and we mind nothing but the grateful relishes of our present and private enjoyments, are quite unconcerned about the state of the world, or the Christian interest, or what shall hereafter come of the affairs of our country, in civil or religious respects: when we are held in a lazy indifferency concerning the state of things in succeeding times and ages; are conscious of no desire of any hopeful prospect for posterity, and those that shall come after us: 'tis all one with us whether we know them likely to be civil or barbarian, Christian or pagan, free men or slaves, because we care not which of these we be ourselves, so we can but eat oo, and enjoy our own undisturbed ease and pleasure. This is a fatal mortification of the appetite of foreknowing; for it destroys it quite, when it should but rectify and reduce it within due bounds. And in what degree that, or any other inclination ought to die, it much imports what kills it; because that which doth so, succeeds into the dominion, and hath all the power in me which it before had. And surely no worse thing can rule over me, than a sensual spirit; that binds me down, and limits me to this spot of earth, and point of time. Or if it proceed—2. From a weak and childish dread of all futurity: as children apprehend nothing but bugbears, and hobgoblins, and frightful images, and appearances in the dark. This ill disposition is very intimately conjunct with the former. When a sensual mind, finding itself already well entertained with the gratifications of the present time, cleaves to it, and every thought of a change is mortal. 'Tis death to admit the apprehension of a new scene. 'Tis as true indeed, that the same temper of mind, in more ungrateful, present circumstances, runs all into discontent and affectation of change; as will be further shown hereafter in a proper place. But in this region of changes, 'tis most imprudent and incongruous, to let the mind be unchangeably fixed upon any external state and posture of things; or irreconcilably averse to any. It is becoming, it is laudable and glorious, with a manly and truly Christian fortitude, to dare to face futurity, how formidably soever any thing within the compass of time may look. For, certainly, so far as we ought to be mortified to the knowledge of future things, it ought to proceed from some better principle, than only our being afraid to know them.

But, that distemper of mind which is now more principally to be noted and reproved, lies rather in the excess. That therefore it may be distinctly characterized and understood, I shall endeavour to show—I. When this appetite of foreknowing the events of future time is not to be thought excessive; or how far a disposition to inquire into such matters is allowable and fit.—2. When, by its excess, it doth degenerate into a distemper, so as to become the just matter of reprehension and redress.

1. Therefore (on the negative part) we are not to think it disallowed us for; yea it cannot but be our duty, to have a well-proportioned desire of understanding so much of future event, as God hath thought fit to reveal in his word; as he hath there foretold very great things concerning the state of the Christian church and interest to the end of the world. Which predictions it cannot be supposed are made public and offered to our view to be neglected and overlooked. Only we must take care that our endeavour to understand them, and the time and labour we employ therein, be commensurate to the circumstances of our condition, to our ability and advantage for such more difficult disquisitions, and be duly proportioned between them, and other things, that may be of equal or greater moment to us.

2. Nor, again, is it liable to exception, if we only desire to make a right use of other additional indications and presages also; whether they belong to the moral, natural, or political world, or (if any such should be afforded) to the more peculiar sphere of extraordinary and immediate divine revelation.

1. It is not only innocent, but commendable, to endeavour the making a due improvement of moral prognostics; or to consider what we are to hope, or fear, from the increase and growth of virtue or vice in the time wherein we live. And herein we may fitly guide our estimate, by what we find promised, or threatened, or historically recorded in the Holy Scriptures (or other certain history) in reference to like cases. Only because God may sometimes arbitrarily vary his methods, and the express application of such promises, threatenings, and histories to our times is not in Scripture, we should not be too positive in making it.

2. The like may be said of such unusual phenomena as fall out within the sphere, but besides the common course of nature: as comets, or whatever else is wont to be reckoned portentous. The total neglect of which things, I conceive, neither agrees with the religious reverence which we owe to the Ruler of the world, nor with common reason and prudence.

It belongs not to the present design, as to comets particularly, to discourse the philosophy of them. Their relation to our earth, as meteors raised from it, is a fancy that seems deservedly exploded; but it seems to require great hardiness to deny they have any relation as tokens. Their distance from us may well argue the former. But, the constant luminaries of heaven, that in other kinds continually serve us, might by their distance (most of them) be thought quite unrelated to us as well as they. And if we should suppose all, or most, of those useful luminaries primarily made for some other nobler use, that makes not the constant benefit we have by them less in itself. The like may be thought of the use which these more extraordinary ones may be of to us, in a diverse kind; that they should cause what they are thought to signify. I understand not, nor am solicitous, how they are themselves caused; let that be as naturally as can be supposed, (of the rejected effluvia of other heavenly bodies, or by the never so regular collection of whatsover other celestial matter,) that hinders not their being signs to us, more than the natural causation of the bow in the clouds; though that, being an appropriate sign for a determinate purpose, its signification cannot but be more certain. And, if we should err in supposing them to signify any thing of future event to us at all, and that error only leads us into more seriousness and a more prepared temper of mind for such trouble as may be upon the earth; it will, sure, be a less dangerous error, than that on the other hand would be, if we should err in thinking them to signify nothing; and be thereby made the more supine and secure, and more liable to be surprised by the calamities that shall ensue; besides, that we shall be the less excusable, in departing from the judgment of all former times and ages, upon no certainty of being more in the right. And why should we think such things should serve us for no other purpose, than only to gratify our curiosity, or furnish us with matter of wonder, invite us to gaze and admire? when (as an ancient well observes[a]) "things known to all in the common course of nature are not less wonderful, and would be amazing to all that consider them, if men were not wont to admire only things that are rare." It is neither fit, indeed, we should be very particular, or confident in our interpretations and expectations upon such occasions; or let our minds run out in exorbitant emotions, as will be further shown in the positive account which is intended of this sort of distemper. But I conceive it is very safe to suppose, that some very considerable thing, either in a way of judgment or mercy, may ensue; according as the cry of persevering wickedness or of penitential prayer is more or less loud at that time.

3. There are, again, very strange and extraordinary aspects of providence that sometimes offer themselves to our notice, in the course of human affairs, and in the political world, where God presides over rational and free agents. And these also must be allowed to have their signification of what is likely to be future. For, otherwise, if we were to reckon they imported nothing, either of good or evil (so much as probable) to be expected from them; we should be to blame, if our minds should admit any impression from them, either of hope or fear, (which both refer to the future,) though in never so moderate a degree. And should be obliged to put on an absolute stoicism, in reference to whatsoever may occur beyond what human nature is capable of; and which would have more in it of stupidity, than prudence, or any human or Christian virtue. When, therefore, the face of providence seems more manifestly threat-

[a] August. de Civit. Dei, l. 22. c. 8.

ening; clouds gather, all things conspire to infer a common calamity, and all means and methods of prevention are from time to time frustrated; if we so far allow ourselves to think it approaching, as that we are hereby excited to prayer, repentance, and the reforming of our lives, this sure is better than a regardless drowsy slumber.

And again, if in order to our preservation from a present utter ruin, there fall out, in a continual succession, many strange and wonderful things which we looked not for, without which we had been swallowed up quick; we be hereupon encouraged unto trust and dependance upon God, and the hope we shall be preserved from being at length quite destroyed, whatever present calamities may befall us; and be the more fortified in our resolution not to forsake him, whatsoever shall; this seems no immodest or irrational construction and use of such providences. Yea, and at any time, when there is no very extraordinary appearance of a divine hand in the conduct of affairs; it unbecomes us not to use our reason and prudence, in judging by their visible posture and tendency, as they lie under human management, what is like to ensue; upon supposition the overruling Providence do not interpose, to hinder or alter their course; (as we often find they run on long in one current, without any such more remarkable interposition;) only we are to be very wary, lest we be peremptory in concluding; or put more value than is meet upon our own judgment, (as was noted before,) both because we know not when, or how, a divine hand may interpose; and may be ignorant of many matters of fact, upon which a true judgment of their natural tendency may depend, and our ability to judge, upon what is in view, may be short and defective. Others that have more power, and can do more, may also have much more prudence, and can discern better. But observing such limitations, 'tis fit we should use, to this purpose, that measure of understanding which God hath given us. In what part of the world soever he assigns us our station, we are to consider he hath made us reasonable creatures, and that we owe to him what interest we have in the country where we live. And therefore, as we are not to affect the knowledge which belongs not to us; so nor are we to renounce the knowledge which we have; to abandon our eyes, and be led on as brutes or blind men. But to endeavour, according as we have opportunity, to see where we are, and whither we are going; that we may know accordingly how to govern our spirits, and aim to get a temper of mind suitable to what may be the state of our case. And for aught we know, this may be all the prophecy we shall have to guide us. As it was the celebrated saying of a Greek poet, quoted by divers of the sager heathens, "He is the best prophet that conjectures best." Nor is it so reasonable to expect, that in plain cases, (which do ordinarily happen,) God should, by any extraordinary means, give us notice of what is to fall out.

4. But we are not suddenly to reject any premonitions of that kind, that appear to deserve our regard, if there be any such. 'Tis indeed a part of prudence not too hastily to embrace or lay much stress upon modern prophecies. But I see not how it can be concluded, that because God hath of latter time been more sparing as to such communications, that therefore prophecy is so absolutely ceased, that he will never more give men intimations of his mind and purposes that way. He hath never said it; nor can it be known by ordinary means. Therefore for any to say it, were to pretend to prophesy, even while they say prophecy is ceased. The superstition of the vulgar pagans was, indeed, greatly imposed upon by the pretence of divination; but among their more ancient philosophers none ever denied the thing, except Xenophanes and Epicurus, as Cicero [b] and Plutarch [c] inform us, and concerning the latter, Laertius.[d] It seems he did it over and over; and, indeed, it well agreed with his principles about the Deity to do so. Cicero himself, after large discourse upon the subject, leaves at last the matter doubtful, according to the manner of the academy which he professes to imitate. Yet a great father in the [e] Christian church, understands him to deny it, but withal observes that he denied God's prescience too (as one might, indeed, that he doubted it at least) in that discourse. Plato discourses soberly of it, asserting and diminishing it at once; (as we shall afterwards have more occasion to note;) the generality were for it, as is evident. And indeed the many monitory dreams related in Cicero's books upon that subject, and by Plutarch in several parts of his works, show that notices of things to come were not uncommon among the pagans; and in a way that seemed more remarkable, and of more certain signification, than their so much boasted oracles. How they came by them, from whom, or upon what account, we do not now inquire. But since the matter was really so, it seems no incredible thing, that some or other in the Christian church, even in these latter ages, should, upon better terms, partake somewhat of such privilege. Nor is it difficult to produce many instances, within the latter [f] centuries, that would incline one to think it hath been so.

But whosoever shall pretend it, I see not what right they can claim to be believed by others, till the event justify the prediction; unless they can, otherwise, show the signs which are wont to accompany and recommend a supernatural revelation. Where any such is really afforded, 'tis like it may produce a concomitant confidence, that will exclude all present doubt in their own minds, without external confirmation. But then, as the apostle speaks in another case, if they have faith, they must have it to themselves. They can never describe their confidence to another, so as to distinguish it from the impression of a mere groundless (and often deluded) imagination. Nor are others to grudge at it, if some particular persons be in this or that instance privileged with so peculiar divine favour, as to have secret monitions of any danger approaching them, that they may avoid it, or direction concerning their own private affairs, which none else are concerned to take cognizance of. But, if the matter be of common concernment, the concurrence of things is to be noted; and a greater regard will seem to be challenged, if several of these mentioned indications do fall in together. As supposing a gradual foregoing languor and degeneracy of religion, in the several parts of the Christian world. And Christianity (with the several professions which it comprehends) looks less like religion; or a thing that hath any reference to God. But rather, that men have thought fit to make use of this or that various mode of it, as a mark of civil distinction, under which to form and unite themselves into opposite parties, for the serving of secular interests and designs. It, generally, makes no better men than paganism. A spirit of atheism, profaneness, and contempt of the Deity, and of all things sacred, more openly shows and avows itself, than perhaps, heretofore, in any pagan nation. And not in a time of gross darkness, such as formerly, for several ages, had spread itself over the whole face of the Christian church; but in a time of very clear and bright light. Worse and more horrid principles, even in the ancient sense of mankind, apparently destructive of common order, and of all human society, are inserted into the religion of Christians; and obtain with them that have, in great part, obtained the power of the Christian world, and would wholly engross the Christian name. Better principles, in others, are inefficacious and signify nothing, too generally, to the governing of their lives and practice. Men are let loose to all imaginable wickedness, as much as if they were not Christians, and many (*viz.* that more vastly numerous and bulky party) the more for that they are so. Yea, and not let loose only; but obliged by their very principles to those peculiar acts and kinds of wickedness and violence, which directly tend to turn Christendom into an Aceldama, and involve the Christian world in ruin and confusion. When multitudes stand as it were prepared, and in a ready posture, to execute such vengeance, as is highly deserved by others, and make judgment begin at (that which our profession obliges us rather to account) the house of God, to rebound afterward, with greater terror and destructiveness, upon themselves who began it.

If now some eminent servant of God much noted, and of great remark for knowledge, wisdom, and sanctity, re-

b De divinat. c De Placit. Phil.
d Μαντικην δε απασαν εν αλλοις αναιρειτος και εν τηι μεσραι επιτομηι, i. e. vita Epic.

e August. de Civit. Dei, l. 5, c. 9.
f Savanrola, G. Wischard, of Scotland, and several others.

mote from all suspicion of levity, or sinister design, shall have very expressly foretold such a time and state of things as this, and what will be consequent thereupon; and with great earnestness and vehemency inculcated the premonition; and if, in such a time, God shall set again and again a monitory torch, high and flaming in the heavens, over our heads; methinks it doth not savour well to make light account of it, or think it signifies nothing. For, (to speak indeed, as himself doth allow and teach us to conceive,) the majesty of God doth in such concurrent appearances seem more august. His hand is lift up, and he doth as it were *accingere se, prepare and address himself* to action, raise himself up in his holy habitation, (Zech. ii. 13.) whereupon, all flesh is required to be silent before him. A posture both of reverence, in respect of what he hath already done; and of expectation, as to what he may further be about to do. And of what import or signification soever such things, in their concurrence, may be to us, it surely ought to be attended to, and received with great seriousness, yea, and with thankfulness. Especially, if there be ground to hope well concerning the issue, (as there will always be to them that fear God,) and we can see the better what special sort and kind of duty we are more peculiarly to apply ourselves to in the meantime.

And whereas we know a mind and wisdom govern all affairs and events through the whole universe; it is fit we should meet mind with mind, wisdom with wisdom. That, on our part, an obsequious, docile mind should advert to and wait upon that supreme, all-ruling, Divine mind, in all the appearances wherein it looks forth upon us; and with a dutiful veneration, cry hail to every radiation of that holy light; accounting, whatever it imports, it opportunely visits the darkness wherein we converse, and should be as gratefully received as the sun, peeping through a cloud, by one travelling in a dusky day. His is the teaching wisdom. It is well for us if we can be wise enough to learn; and unto that, there is a wisdom requisite also, [g] Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. And again, [h] I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye; which implies our eye must diligently mark his, and that (as it follows) we [i] be not as the horse or mule, that have no understanding, &c. And whereas all the works of God, even those that are of every day's observation, do some way or other represent God to us; and should constantly suggest unto us serious thoughts of him! those that are more extraordinary ought the more deeply to impress our minds, and excite in us those higher acts of a religious affection, which the circumstances of our present state admit not, that they can be constant in the same degree. As though subjects ought always to bear a loyal mind towards their prince; upon such greater occasions, when he shows himself in solemn state, 'tis becoming there be correspondent acts of more solemn homage. But upon the whole, since all the certain knowledge we can have of such futurities as naturally, and in themselves, are not certain, must be by God's own revelation only; and all probable pre-apprehension of them, by the use of our own reason and prudence, upon any other *apta Media* that occur to us. While we can confine our desire of seeing into the future within these limits, it will be just and innocent. And therefore we may now go on,

II. To the positive discovery wherein this appetite is inordinate, and degenerates into a distemper of mind. And it may, in general, be collected from what hath been now said, *viz.* that when we remain unsatisfied with what God is pleased to reveal about such things; and with what a well-governed prudence can any other way discern; and have an itch and hankering of mind after other prognostics, that lie not within this compass, and are no proper objects either for our faith or our reason. This is the distemper we are to get redressed, and are concerned to take heed lest we indulge or cherish. And that we may yet be somewhat more distinct in making this discovery, these that follow will be plain indications, that our inquisitiveness and thirst after knowledge of future things is a distemper of mind, and ought to be considered and dealt with accordingly. As,

1. If it be accompanied with discontent, and a fastidious loathing of our present lot and portion in the world. Which is so much the worse if, when our affectation and desire of change proceeds really, and at the bottom, from private self-respect, we endeavour to delude others, or flatter ourselves into a belief that 'tis only the public good we are intent upon, and the better state of God's interest in the world. And worst of all, if our desires be turbulent, vindictive, and bloody, *i. e.* if not only they are so fervent towards our own hoped advantages, that we care not through what public confusions and calamities our private ends be promoted and carried on: but should like it the better to see at the same time our heart's desire upon them we have allowed ourselves to hate; yea, though it be never so true that they hate us, and have been injurious to us. Thus with the study and desire of a new state of things, which in itself may be, in some cases, innocent; and, limited to due methods and degrees of the desired change, not only innocent but a duty, (for there is no state of things in this world so good, but being still imperfectly so, we ought to desire it were better,) a twofold vicious appetite may fall in, that of avarice, and revenge, of good to ourselves beyond what comes to our share, and of hurt to other men. Which complicated disease must taint and infect every thought and look, that is directed forward towards a better state of things.

If this be the case, it must be great negligence and indulgence to ourselves not to discern it. For the incoherence and ill agreement of what is real and what is pretended, would soon appear to one not willing to be mistaken. Sincere devotedness to God and his interest would be always most conjunct with that complacential faith in his governing wisdom and power, and entire resignment of ourselves and all his and our own concerns to his pleasure and goodness, that we will never think his procedure too slow; or suspect him of neglecting his own interest, or of that which he judges (and which therefore is, most truly) ours. And it is ever accompanied with that placid benignity, and universal love to other men, (enemies themselves being by the known rules of the gospel included,) as that we would not wish their least injury, for our own greatest advantage. And should most earnestly wish, that if God see good, the advantage of his interest in the world might be so carried on, as to comprehend and take in therewith their greatest advantage also. And if we should see cause to apprehend it may fall out to be otherwise; that, surely, ought to be our temper, which the prophet expresses (and appeals to God concerning it) upon a very frightful prospect of things, [k] "I have not desired the woful day, O Lord, thou knowest." So remote it should be from us to press forward with a ravenous, cruel eye, towards a tragical bloody scene; or to accuse the Divine patience, which we should adore, and (perhaps as much as any others) do also need.

2. If there be a greater inclination to look forward into the future things of time than those of eternity. If in the former we find a connaturalness, and they seem most agreeable to us, these other are tasteless, and without sap and savour. If it would be a great and sensible consolation, to be assured such a state of things as we would choose, shall very shortly obtain. But to think of a state approaching, wherein all things shall be perfectly and unexceptionably well for ever, is but cold comfort. Blessed God! what a mortal token is this? Do we apprehend nothing of distemper in it? Do we see ourselves the men of time, (as the Hebrew expresses what we read [l] men of this world,) and do not our hearts misgive at the thought? How little likely is it we are designed for that blessed eternity to which our spirits are so little suitable! when, as 'tis said of them that are for the state wherein [m] mortality shall be swallowed up of life, that he that hath wrought them for that self-same thing is God! Can the felicity of heaven belong to them that value it not as their best good? but count a terrestrial paradise of their own devising better?

3. If we be so intent upon this or that future event, as that hereby the due impression is worn off of much greater and more important things that are already past. What so great things have we to expect in our time, as

[g] Ps. cvii. ult. [h] Ps. xxxii. 8 [i] Ver 9. [k] Jerem. xvii. 16. [l] Ps. xvii. 14. [m] 2 Cor. v. 4, 5.

we know have come to pass in former time! What so great, as that the Son of God came down into our world! did put on man! lived a lifetime among us mortals! breathed every where heavenly love, and grace, and sweetness; and with these grateful odours perfumed this noisome, impure, forlorn region of darkness and death! died a sacrifice for sinners! and overcame death! ascended in triumph to the throne of God, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high! What [n] so great as the mystery of godliness, that God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory! Are any of those little futurities, whereof we have but an uncertain expectation, fit to be compared with these things which we certainly know to have come to pass? Or have we any thing so important and great to fix our eye upon, as a Redeemer now in his exaltation? invested with all power in heaven and earth, to whom every knee must bow, and every tongue confess! the arbiter of life and death to men! who hath established so admirable a frame of religion for the reduction of apostate man! made it triumph over the obstinate infidelity of the Jews, and the idolatry of the Gentile world! And what the glorious issue of his administration will be, we already know; and are not left about it to suspenseful dubious inquiry. Nor do need a more certain revelation than we have. Is all this to be waived and overlooked; while we stand at a gaze, expecting what shall be the height of the French monarchy, or the fate of the Dutch republic, or of this or that particular person, now upon the stage? It must surely be an ill symptom, and an indication of a sickly mind, when things have all their value and regard with us, not as they are great but as they are new. And are only considerable to us, because they are yet future and unknown.

4. If we more carnestly covet to foreknow the approach of an external state of things that would be better, in our account, than to feel the good effect upon our spirits, of one that we take to be worse, and that is externally afflictive to us. This excludes the apprehension of a wise Providence, governing the world; that pursues a design in what it doth or permits. As if we thought God did afflict us for affliction's sake, as more intending, therein, his own pleasure than our profit. Or as if we would impute a levity to Providence, and reckoned it inconstant and desultory, even beneath the ordinary prudence of a man. That it might forget and desist, and would not drive on a design to an issue. Or that (contrary to what God tells Eli by [o] Samuel) when he began, he would divert and alter his course, before he made an end. Or it implies, we place our felicity in somewhat without us, more than in a good habit and temper of spirit within. Whereas, surely things are much amiss with us, if we do not account that a mortified heart, towards whatsoever is temporary and terrene, is a thousand-fold more desirable than the best external state of things that is ever to be enjoyed under the sun. As calamitous as the condition of Job was, it had been a worse evil than any he suffered; if that censure of him were true,[p] that he chose iniquity rather than affliction. Or if that were not true, which he seems to intimate concerning himself, that he was less intent upon a present release from the furnace, than, at length, to come out like gold.[q]

5. If the other parts of Scripture be less savoury to us than the prophetical. And especially when these are of more grateful savour than the preceptive part. This is of great affinity with the foregoing character. For the precepts in God's word describe to us that excellent frame of spirit, which afflictions are designed (as one sort of means) more deeply to impress. And what there is of ill character here, lies in this, when any thing is of greater value, than that comely, amiable, well-complexioned temper of spirit. And surely it less concerns us, what God will do without us, than what he will have us do, and be, ourselves. It is an ill circumstance with a diseased person, when he hath less inclination to such things as tend to bring him to a confirmed habit of health, than such as more serve to nourish his disease. And whereas *Quicquid recipitur—ad modum recipientis*, there is little doubt, but where this distemper we are speaking of, prevails, men may be much inclined to make that use, even of Scripture prophecies, as to feed their distemper. When they can relish and allow themselves to mind no other parts of the Bible: when they take more pleasure to be conversant in these obscure things, than those that are plain, and concern us more, (as God hath mercifully provided that such things in his word should be plainest that are of greatest concernment to us,) and they, perhaps, neither have the requisite helps, nor the ability, with them to master the obscurity: when our prepossessed fancy must be the interpreter, and we will make the prophecy speak what it never meant; draw it down to the little particularities of the time and place wherein we live; and are peremptory in our applications, and so confident, till we find ourselves mistaken, that when we do, we begin to suspect the Bible; as if divine truths, and our attachments to them, must stand and fall together.

6. (And lastly) When we have an undue regard to unscriptural prophecies. Which we may be supposed to have, if we either much search after them, or give hasty credit to them without search.

1. If we much search after them, as weak and sickly appetites are wont to do for rarities and novelties; we are not content with what occurs, nor with our own allotment, and God's ordinary dispensation, if things of that kind occur not, but purvey and listen out after them; as if we had not considerable things enough, both for our employment, and our entertainment and gratification besides.

2. If we believe them without search, only because they seem to speak according to our mind; imbibe all things, of that import, promiscuously and on the sudden, without examining the matter. [r] The simple believeth every word. 'Tis the business of judgment, to distinguish and discern. We therefore call it discretion. It totally fails, when we can find no medium between believing every thing and nothing. Some things indeed of this pretence, are so apparently idle and ridiculous, that it will become a prudent man to reject them at the first sight. Some may perhaps, partly from the matter; or partly from the person, and other concurring circumstances, have such an appearance, as ought to stay our minds upon them, detain us awhile, and hold us in some suspense, while we consider and examine whether any further regard is to be given them or no. 'Tis a very distempered, ravenous appetite that swallows all it can catch without choice; that allows no leisure to distinguish between what is suitable, or fit for nourishment, and what is either noxious or vain.

II. And now for the cure of this distemper. We are to consider the nature of the things the foreknowledge whereof we so earnestly affect. And we find they are not such futurities as have their certain causes in nature. As when the sun will rise and set; or be nearer us or remoter; when there will be an eclipse, &c. These are not the things which will satisfy this appetite. But mere contingencies that depend upon free and arbitrary causes, *i. e.* especially, upon the mind and will of man, as it is under the direction of the supreme and all-governing mind. And again, we are to consider the nature of the knowledge we covet, of these things, *viz.* that it is not conjectural, (which indeed were not knowledge,) but we would be at a certainty about them. Now hereupon we are further to consider, that there is no reasonable appetite which we may not seek to have gratified in some apt and proper way, *i. e.* by means that are both lawful and likely to attain our end.

In the present case, we can think of no course to be taken for the obtaining of this knowledge, (even giving the greatest scope and latitude to our thoughts,) but it must suppose one of these two things;—either that we look upon it as an ordinary gift to be acquired by our own endeavours, *i. e.* by art and industry, and the use of natural means and helps, whereby we imagine our natures may be heightened, and improved to this pitch—or else that we reckon it an extraordinary immediate gift of God; so that if we affect it, we have no course to take but to seek it at his hands by prayer; either that God would confer it upon ourselves, or upon some others, by whom we may be informed. And we are now to bethink ourselves, what encouragement or allowance we can suppose is given us to seek it either of

n 1 Tim. iii. 16. o 1 Sam. iii. 12. p Job xxxvi. 21. q Job xxiii. 10. r Prov. xiv. 15.

these ways. For, if we can seek it in neither of these, we must be obliged either to assign a third (as we never can) or abandon it as an unreasonable and vicious appetite; the satisfaction whereof is no way to be so much as attempted, or sought after. And now,

1. As to the former of these ways. There is nothing more to be despaired of, the very attempt being both foolish and impious; both most impossible and unlawful.

1. 'Tis plainly an *impossible* attempt. For what natural means, what rules of art, can give us the knowledge of such futurities as we are speaking of, or improve our natural faculties to it? 'Tis a knowledge quite of another kind, and alien to our natures. For besides the notices we have of things by sense, which is limited wholly to things present as its object, and our knowledge of first and self-evident principles, (from which how remote are the future contingencies we now speak of?) we have no imaginable way of coming by the knowledge of any thing, otherwise than by reasoning and discourse, which supposes a natural connexion of things. Whereupon, when we have sure hold of one end of the thread, we can proceed by it, and lead ourselves on by such things as we know to other things we know not. But what such natural connexion is there between any present thing, known to us, and this sort of future things? Which, for the most part, are such as must be brought about by the concurrence of great multitudes of free agents, who may be opposed by as great, and prevented of accomplishing what they designed, though their minds were never so constantly intent upon the design. But we have no way to know with certainty the present minds of so many men, nor of any man at all, by immediate inspection; or otherwise, than as we may collect by the former series of his actions or professions, wherein men may deceive the most quick-sighted, and really intend otherwise than they seem. Much less do we know that so mutable a thing as the mind of man is, will not alter, and especially of so many men. And their condition and outward circumstances may alter, if not their minds. What can be certain in such a region of changes, where the effecting of purposes depends upon the body, as well as the mind, and many external aids and helps besides? and where all are subject to so many accidents, to maims, and sicknesses, and deaths? Nay, who can tell what his own mind shall be hereafter, supposing any such futurity to be within his own power, or that his power shall be the same if his mind should not change? And add, what is more than all the rest,[s] who knoweth the mind of God, or being his counsellor hath taught him? Who can tell what he will do, or enable or permit men to do? What event could ever have been thought more certain, beforehand, than the destruction of the Jews by Haman's means? And who could ever have foreseen, a few days or hours before, that he should be hanged on the gallows he prepared for Mordecai? Who can ever think or hope to measure that boundless range, and latitude, wherein infinite wisdom and power may work this way or that? Or, within that vast and immense scope, who can be able to predict what way God will take? Or what he will do, or not do? When all human contrivance and forecast it at an end, still more ways lay open to him. Or his power can make more, and break its way through whatsoever obstructions.[t] We know not what to do, (says Jehoshaphat in his distress,) but our eyes are upon thee. A dutiful confession of the limitedness of human wit and power, and of the unlimitedness of the Divine, both at once! To offer at comprehending his profound designs and abstruse methods, only shows how little we understand ourselves or him; our own scant measure, or his immensity. We might better attempt to sound the ocean with our finger, or gather it into the hollow of our hand. It were happy for us, if our confessed ignorance might end in adoration; and that the sense of our hearts were such as the apostle's words would aptly express, (Rom. xi. 33.) O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Such as affect to be wiser, but not so pious, and go about to form models and ideas for the future, apart from him; how often do their great wit only serve to expose their folly, and make them the sport of fortune! (as some would call it;) we may say rather, of that wise and righteous Providence, that delights to triumph over baffled insolence! (for *ludit in humanis*, &c.) and deride a confidence that is founded only in proud impotency! He that sits in the heavens laughs, the Most High hath them in derision. How often are the wisest politicians disappointed and despised! all their measures broken! their models shattered and discomposed! and all their fabrics overturned in a moment! So remote is human wit, at the utmost stretch, from any certainty, about the futurities we speak of. And if any imagine it may be helped to foresee, by some art or other; or by rules framed and collected upon former experience; according whereto judgments are said heretofore to have been happily made, of what would come to pass:

It is not here intended to examine the several ways that have been taken, and trusted in, for this purpose. That they are all such as have been, and are, much disputed, if they were not with manifest evidence disproved, would argue that foreknowledge of things not likely to be very certain, that must be had by arts and rules that are themselves uncertain. How much hath been said (anciently, and of late) to discover the vanity of that sort of astrology that relates to the futurities we have under consideration! Such as have a mind may view what is written to that purpose, and may save themselves much vain labour, by perusing the learned Dr. More's late Tetractys, and what it refers to in his Mystery of Godliness. Have we heard of none of our later pretenders this way, that have incurred the like fate with that wise man of Greece, that was laughed at by a silly girl (as Laertius tells us) for so long gazing upon the stars, (though perhaps upon a better account,) till at length, in his walk, he fell into a ditch; that he minded so much what was over his head, that he took no notice what was at his feet! And for the ancient augury of the pagans, in the several sorts of it, how much was it had in contempt by the wiser among themselves. Insomuch that one of them says, he wondered how they could look upon one another, and not laugh. As who would not, that such strange things should be foreshown by the flying, or the singing, or the feeding of birds! Their usual haruspicy was as wise, and as much regarded by some greater minds among them, as Alexander, that reproved and jeered the impertinency of his soothsayer that would have withheld him from action, upon the pretence of some ill omen he had observed in the entrails: telling him that he[u] would surely think he were impertinent and troublesome if he should go about to interrupt him in his employment, when he was busy viewing his sacrifice, and asked him, when he pressed further, what greater impediment a man could have, that had great things before his eyes, than a doting superstitious fortune-teller? And where there was not so much wisdom and fortitude, as to despise such fooleries, how ludicrous was it that great and momentous affairs were to be governed by them! That a general was not to march an army or fight a battle, but first such observations must be had of the flight of birds, and the entrails of beasts! or other things as idle as they, as the whirlings, rollings, and noise of rivers, the change of the moon, &c. Upon which, in[x] Germany (as is observed) when Cæsar had invaded it, their presaging women were to be consulted before it was thought fit to give him battle. Besides, what was not[y] less vain, but more horrid, presaging upon the convulsed members, and the flowing blood, of a man slain for the purpose. Nay, and the excess of this desire hath tempted some to try the blacker purposes of necromancy, or what might be gained to satisfy and please it, by converse with departed souls: or what if it be other familiar spirits? We here consider the folly of such courses apart from the impiety. As what reason have we upon which to apprehend, that they can ascertain us, or be, ordinarily, certain themselves of such futurities as we speak of? But also the thought of any such course we are to presume is horrid to the minds of serious Christians. Unto whom, what we find in the Holy Scriptures, concerning any such ways of presaging as have been mentioned, should, methinks, be enough to form their spirits both to the hatred and the contempt of them, and, by consequence, of the principle itself (this vain appetite) that leads unto them, and hath captivated

s Is. xl. 13. Rom. xi. t 2 Chron. xx. u Quint. Curt.

x Clem. Alexand. Strom. l. 1. y Diod. Sic. Bibl. Hist l. 5.

whole nations into so miserable delusion by them.[z] Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad, that turneth the wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish. [a] Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels: let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble, the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the flame, &c. See also Isa. viii. 19, 20. Dan. ii. 27.

And though it be true that God hath often given premonitions of future things by dreams, (which is a matter that belongs not to this head,) yet the rules that are given by some learned men for the interpreting of[b] such dreams as contain not the things expressly pretended to be signified, are generally so very ridiculous, that 'tis hard to say whether they were learnedly busy or idle that thought fit to trouble themselves or the world with them. And surely, though some dreams have been divine, such rules of interpreting any are so meanly human, as to be fit enough to be thrown in hither, and thrown away with the rest of the trash noted before; and may help to let us see, that the foreknowledge of the future things we are considering, is so impossible to human nature, improved by whatsoever rules and precepts of our devising, that while men seek to become wise in this kind, by such means, they do but befool themselves, and are not a whit the more knowing, but show themselves the less prudent and sober. And if such knowledge be a thing whereof human nature, by itself, is not capable, to be impatient of ignorance in these things, is to be offended that God hath made such creatures as we find we are. That is, if this had been the natural endowment of some other order of creatures, how unreasonable were it that a man should quarrel with his own nature, and with the inseparable circumstances of his own state! All creatures are of limited natures to one or other particular kind. This or that creature admits of all the perfections of its own kind. It admits not those of another kind. How foolish were it if a man should vex himself that he cannot fly like a bird, or run like a stag, or smell like a hound; or cannot as an angel fly, at pleasure, between heaven and earth, or visit the several orbs, and exactly measure their magnitudes and distances from one another!

Secondly, We are, therefore, to consider that the affectation of such foreknowledge (*i. e.* to have it in and of ourselves, or by any means of our devising) is *unlawful* as well as *impossible*. Indeed, this might be collected from the former; for the capacity of our natures ought to limit our desires. And it hence also further appears unlawful upon the highest account, in that it were to aspire to what is most peculiar and appropriate to the Deity. For hereby the great God demonstrates his Godhead, and expostulating with idolaters, insults over the unactive ignorance of their impotent inanimate deities upon this account. [c] Produce your cause, (saith he,) bring forth your strong reasons. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: *q. d.* if they be gods, why do they not, as gods, predict things to come, that if they be gods we may know it? So in *ch.* xlii. of the same prophecy, *v.* 8, 9. I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. This is a thing (saith he) that doth peculiarly belong to me. It is a glory of mine that shall never be imparted. And to the same sense is that in *ch.* xlvi. of that prophecy, *v.* 9, 10. Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. So also did our blessed Saviour, when he had a mind to convince that he was, as he gave out, the Son of God, design the same medium for that purpose.[d] Now, I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he. And again,[e] I have told you before it is come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe. It was, indeed, the great temptation used to our first parents; You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. Undoubtedly that knowledge wherewith they were tempted must include, at least, foreknowledge in it. You shall be as gods, knowing, &c. They were tempted by an expectation of being, in this respect, made like God; and we are become by it, in this respect, like beasts that perish, and in other respects, like the devils themselves, who joy in our deception and perdition; too like beasts in ignorance, and devils in malignity.

What can be a more presumptuous arrogance, than to aim at the royalties of the Godhead! If to affect what belongs to the nature and capacity of another creature were foolish; to aspire to any prerogative and peculiarity of God himself, cannot but be extremely impious and wicked! Are we to be offended that we are creatures? that our natures, and the capacity of our understandings, are not unlimited and all-comprehending, when we owe it to the mere benignity and good pleasure of our Maker that we are anything? and much more, that we have any such thing as an understanding at all? Yea, and if this knowledge were not peculiar to God, yet inasmuch as he hath not given it us, nor appointed us any means of attaining it, 'tis an uncreaturely disposition not to be satisfied without it. The rebuke our Saviour gave his disciples in one particular case of this nature, ought also to be monitory to us, in all such cases, *i. e.* when they inquire,[f] Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? His answer is reprehensive;[g] It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. The expression is remarkable, which the Father hath[h] put in his own power; it implies, as if, by a positive act, God had reserved, and locked up from us, the things which he hath not vouchsafed to reveal. And we may see how he hath, as it were, industriously drawn a curtain between the present and the future time, that we cannot see so far as one moment before us. Shall we with rude and irreverent hands, as it were, attempt to rend or draw aside the curtain?

2dly. And from hence we may also see, in the next place, how little encouragement we have in the other way to expect this knowledge, *viz.* by supplicating God for it, as an extraordinary gift to be obtained immediately from him. If we have not wisdom enough to present unto him reasonable desires, we may expect his wisdom will deny us such as are unreasonable. He is never so apt to dislike our requests for their being too great as too little; or for their having nothing valuable or important in them, nothing suitable to him or to us, fit for him to give, or for us to seek or receive. In the present case, 'tis true, he hath sometimes favoured men with this kind of knowledge, ordained and inspired prophets, who were to signify his purposes and pleasure to others. But it was rather modestly declined than sought; and was, mostly, upon great and important occasions, for high and very considerable ends, and to be effected at seasons and by persons of his own choosing. Nor doth it seem a thing fit for men to make the matter of petition. For if they should, either it must be for some peculiar to themselves, and which others cannot generally allege as well as they; which it is not supposable any can be able to assign: or for some common reason that concerns the generality of men as much. And then, we are sure, it can be of no weight; for, upon the same reason, all should, as much, be prophets. Which it is plain he doth not judge fit (who can best judge) in that he hath not made them so, which is concluding, as to things he hath not made it our duty to seek. And that this is a communication not fit to be constant and general at all times, and to all persons, is evident in itself. And may appear by divers considerations that partly respect God and his government, partly ourselves and our own interest and concernment.

1. On God's part. It would greatly detract from the majesty of his government that it should have no arcana, and that all things should lie open to every eye. We may easily apprehend that the dignity of the divine

z Isa. xliv. 25.
b Oneirocrit. Artem. Achm. &c.
a Isa. xlvii. 13, 14.
c Isa. xli. 21, 22, 23.
d John xiii. 19.
f Acts i. 6.
e Chap. xiv. 29.
g Ver. 7.
h εθετο.

government was, in this respect, designed to be kept up to an awful height, when we find there is somewhat mentioned to us (and how many things more may there be that are not mentioned?) which the angels in heaven knew not, nor the human soul of our Lord himself, but the Father only. For again, was it suitable (particularly) to the government of God over man, in this present state, which we find designed for a state of probation, to be concluded, and shut up at last by a solemn judgment. For unto this state, the final judgment hath its peculiar, only reference. Therein [i] we are to receive the things done in the body, *i. e.* (as 'tis explained,) according to what we have done, whether good or evil. How unfit were it that probationers for eternity should generally foreknow events that shall fall out in the state of their trial! Wherein they are to be strictly tied up to rules without regard to events. And are to approve themselves in that sincerity, constancy, fortitude, dependence upon God, resignation of themselves, and their concerns to him, that could have little place or opportunity to show themselves, in a state wherein all things were at a certainty to them.

2. On our own part. It is to be considered that the foreknowledge of temporary events is not a thing of that value to us, which we may perhaps imagine it is. It would serve us more for curiosity than use. An unfit thing for us to petition in, or expect to be gratified. The wiser heathens have thought meanly of it. They have believed, indeed, that *God did sometimes enable men to prophesy*, but have reckoned it, as one of them speaks, *a gift indulged unto human imprudence.* That [k] author accounts weaker minds the usual subjects of it. That *no man in his right mind* attained it, but either being alienated from himself, by sleep or a disease. And that they were not wont to understand, themselves, the meaning of their own visions, but must have them interpreted by others. The result of a larger discourse, he hath about it, than is fit here to be inserted, comes to this, that fools divine, and wise must judge. Whereupon [l] another thinks such prophecies little to be regarded, counting it strange that what a wise man could not see a madman should. And that when one hath lost human sense he should obtain divine!

They were not acquainted indeed with those ways wherein God revealed his mind to holy men whom he used as his own amanuenses or penmen, or who were otherwise to serve him for sacred purposes. But when we consider Balaam's being a prophet, methinks we should not be overfond of the thing itself, abstractly considered. How unspeakably is the Spirit of holiness, as such, to be preferred! To have a heart subject to God, willing to be governed by him, to commit to him, even in the dark, our less considerable, temporal concernments; and confidently to rely, for our eternal concernments, upon his plain word in the Gospel, wherein life and immortality are brought to light, would make us little feel the need of prophecy. The radical principle of holiness is love, (for it is the fulfilling of the law,) in the absence whereof, the apostle [m] esteems the gift of prophecy (with the addition of understanding all mysteries, and all knowledge) to go for nothing. And if we strictly consider, wherein can we pretend it needful to us to foreknow the events that are before us? They are either bad and ungrateful, or good and grateful. For the former sort, what would it avail us to foreknow them? That we may avoid them? That is a contradiction. How are they avoidable, when we know they will befall us? It is that we be not surprised by them? We have other means to prevent it. To bear an equal temper of mind towards all conditions; to live always, in this region of changes, expecting the worst. At least not to expect rest on earth, to familiarize to ourselves the thoughts of troubles; apprehending, as to those that are private, we are always liable.

And for any greater, common calamities that we may share in with the generality usually, they come on more slowly. There often are premonitory tokens, such as were before mentioned in this discourse, sufficient to keep us from being surprised. And with the rest this may concur, (as was said,) that perhaps some or other, of that value and consideration as to deserve our regard, may, in such a case, have great apprehensions of approaching trouble, which whether they proceed from their greater prudence and sagacity, or from any more Divine impression upon their minds, we need not determine. If it should be the latter, the design may yet be, not to ascertain, but to awaken us. Upon which supposition, a serious consideration of the thing, may well consist with suspending our belief of it. And whether it prove true or false, if we are put thereby upon the doing of nothing, but what a prudent man, a good Christian should do, however, and unto which we only needed excitation, a very valuable end is gained. Affairs are generally managed in human, yea and in the Christian life, upon no certainty of this or that particular event; 'tis enough that we are put upon seasonable consideration of what concerns us, in the one kind or the other, and do accordingly steer our course. When Jonah was sent to Nineveh upon that ungrateful errand, and came a stranger into that luxurious, paganish city, though he brought them no credentials from heaven, nor (that we find) wrought any miracle to confirm his mission, yet the matter he published in the streets being in itself most considerable, and they having (no doubt) sufficient light to know their practices were such as deserved the doom they were threatened with, and needed redress, they hereupon consider what he said, reform, and are spared. And what harm was now done in all this? except that Jonah had too tender a concern for his own reputation, and lest he should be thought a false prophet. Whereas the event that happened did better prove the impression upon his mind divine, than the destruction of the city, after their repentance, had done. It being a thing more agreeable to the Divine nature, and more worthy of God, to save than destroy a penitent people. If we see no such disposition to repentance, we have the more reason to expect the overflowing calamity; and have enough to prevent our being surprised, without fore-knowing the event. But for events that are pleasing and grateful, no matter how surprising they be; the more, the better, the sweeter, and the pleasanter. [n] When God turned again the captivity of Zion we were as them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. It enhanceth mercy, when it is preventing and unexpected.

And we may add, concerning ill events, it is not only needless to foreknow them, but better to be ignorant. Think what a case we were in, had we the prospect lying distinctly before us, of all the evils that shall befall us through our whole life. Such a day I shall have a terrible fit of the colic or the stone. Such a day my house will be burnt, or I shall be undone and reduced to beggary. Such a day my husband, wife, or this or that pleasant child, will die. At such a time I shall break a bone, or be in prison, &c. Were this knowledge a felicity? Some may think (says Cicero [o]) it were of great concernment to us to know what shall happen. But (he adds) Dicæarchus wrote a great book to show it is better to be ignorant. He had indeed a copious argument, and the book, 'tis like, were a jewel. But enough is obvious to any man's reason that will soberly consider. Infinite knowledge is only agreeable to infinite wisdom and power. How unsuitable were the knowledge we are apt to covet, to our impotency and imprudence! As monstrous as the head of a giant joined to the body of a child. The increase of such knowledge would certainly but increase our sorrow, and be to us but an engine of torture, a Medusa's head, always affrighting us with its own ideas, that would be worse to us, and more tormenting, than snakes and serpents. Divine mercy, in these respects, keeps us ignorant. Thereto 'tis fit we should attribute it, not to ill-will, as the devil at first suggested, and as they seemed to apprehend; against whom Plutarch [p] sagely reasons, That it was very improbable that God, who hath given us birth, nourishment, being, and understanding, should intend only to signify his displeasure towards us, by withholding from us the knowledge of things to come. Would we know what concerns our duty? We have plain rules to direct us; it would but tempt, disturb, or divert us many times to know the event. You need not consult a diviner, (saith a [q] heathen,) whether you are with hazard to help your friend,

[i] 2 Cor. v. 10.
[k] Ὡς μαντικην αφροσυνῃ Θεος ανθρωπινῃ εδεδωκεν, ουδεις εννους.
[l] Cicero.
[m] 1 Cor. xiii.
[n] Psal cxxvi.
[o] De divin.
[p] De defect. Orac.
[q] Epictet.

or defend your country. Nor any thing, by like reason, which we already know we ought to do. No more, [r] saith one commenting upon him, than whether a man should eat or sleep; or whether a husbandman should plant or sow. Or would we fill our minds with great thoughts, and employ them about matters more important than the affairs of the present time? Besides all the great things that we know to be past, let us look forward to certain futurities. We may look even with a certain expectation for the day when the heavens shall be rolled up as a scroll, and pass away with great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all things therein be consumed and burnt up. We have a certain foreknowledge of the final glorious appearing and coming of our Lord. We know he will come, and it will be gloriously. Behold the Son of man coming in the heavens with power and great glory! Such things as these we look for according to his promise; He will come and his reward with him. The trumpet will sound and the dead arise. How great a thing it is to have graves opening all the world over, and men and women springing up afresh out of the dust! and all the chosen ones of our Lord caught up into the clouds, to meet their Redeemer in the air, and so to be for ever with the Lord! Let our thoughts fly over earth and time; they will be purer and less tainted. Let them centre in God; they will be more steady, composed, and calm. Fixedly apprehend him to be most wise, holy, good, powerful, and ours. Let our hearts quietly trust in him as such, and be subject to him; contented to follow. [s] He will lead the blind in a way that they know not; and if we betake ourselves wholly to him, will be our God for ever and ever: our God and our guide even to the death.

r Simplic.

s Isa. xlii.

A TREATISE OF

DELIGHTING IN GOD;

FROM PSALM XXXVII. 4.

DELIGHT THYSELF ALSO IN THE LORD, AND HE SHALL GIVE THEE THE DESIRES OF THINE HEART.

IN TWO PARTS.

TO MY MUCH VALUED FRIENDS,

THE MAGISTRATES AND OTHER INHABITANTS

OF GREAT TORRINGTON IN DEVON;

WITH THE SEVERAL WORTHY AND RELIGIOUS PERSONS AND FAMILIES OF MY ACQUAINTANCE IN THOSE PARTS.

It is likely that the title of the following treatise will put many of you, my dearly esteemed friends, in mind, that sundry sermons were preached twenty years ago among you upon this subject. I had it indeed in design, to have given you some abstract of those sermons; but searching among my papers, could find none but so imperfect and broken memorials as would be of little use for that purpose. And yet being desirous to present you with somewhat that might both be a testimony of my affection, and an advantage to you; and knowing this subject was grateful to many, and affords what may be useful to all of you; I have, for your sakes, applied myself to a reconsideration of it. The *first part* is even altogether new, except the introductive suppositions in the beginning. Nor do I remember I then had more than one discourse to you on that subject, before the practical application of it. The *other part* contains many things formerly delivered to you, though perhaps not in the same order, much less in the same words, whereto the short notes in my hands could no way enable me.

The matter here treated of, is the very substance of religion; the first and the last; the root and the flower; both the basis and foundation, and the top and perfection, of practical godliness; and which runs through the whole of it. Nor knew I therefore what to present you with, that could have in it a fitter mixture and temperament of what might be both useful and pleasant to you. As there is therefore no need, so nor do I desire you should receive the matter here discoursed of, merely for my sake; there being so great reason it should be chiefly acceptable on higher accounts. I do very well understand your affection to me; and could easily be copious in the expression of mine to you, if I would open that sluice. But I do herein resolvedly, and upon consideration, restrain myself; apprehending that in some cases (and I may suppose it possible that in our case) a gradual mortification ought to be endeavoured of such affection as is often between those so related as you and I have been: which is no harder supposition, than that such affection may be excessive and swell beyond due bounds. So it would, if it should be accompanied with impatient resentments towards any providence or instrument, whereby it finds itself crossed, or from whence it meets with what is ungrateful to it: if it prove turbulent and disquieting to them in whom it is, or any others: or if it occasion a looking back with distempered lingerings after such former things as could be but means to our great end, with the neglect of looking forward to that end itself still before us. Far be it from me, to aim at the keeping any thing alive that ought to die; that is, in that degree wherein it ought so to do. But our mutual affection will be both innocent and useful, if it be suitable to mortal objects, and to persons not expecting the converse we have had together any more in this world; if also in the mean time it preserve to us a mutual interest in each others prayers; if it dispose us to such acts and apprehensions of kindness as our present circumstances can admit; and if particularly, as it hath moved me to undertake, it may contribute any thing to your acceptance of, this small labour, which is now designed for you. The subject and substance whereof, as they are none of mine, so they ought to be welcome to you, for their own sake, and his who is the prime Author, though they were recommended to you by the hand of a stranger, or one whose face you never saw. They aim at the promoting of the same end which the course of my poor labours among you did, (as he that knoweth all things knoweth,) the serious practice of the great things of religion, which are known and least liable to question; without designing to engage you to or against any party of them that differ about circumstantial matters. They tend to let you see, that formality in any way of religion unaccompanied with life, will not serve your turn; (as it will no man's;) than which, there is nothing more empty, sapless, and void both of profit and delight.

I have reflected and considered with some satisfaction, that this hath been my way and the temper of my mind among you. Great reason I have to repent, that I have not with greater earnestness pressed upon you the known and important things wherein serious Christians do generally agree. But I repent not I have been so little engaged in the hot contests of our age, about the things wherein they differ. For, as I pretend to little light in these things; (whence I could not have much confidence to fortify me unto such an undertaking;) so I must profess to have little inclination to contend about matters of that kind. Nor yet am I indifferent as to those smaller things, that I cannot discern to be in their own nature so. But though I cannot avoid to think that course right which I have deliberately chosen therein, I do yet esteem that but a small thing upon which to ground an opinion of my excelling them that think otherwise, as if I knew more than they. For I have often recounted thus seriously with myself, that of every differing party, in those circumstantial matters, I do particularly know some persons by whom I find myself much excelled in far greater things

than is the matter of that difference. I cannot, 'tis true, thereupon say and think every thing that they do; which is impossible, since they differ from one another as well as me. And I understand well, there are other measures of truth than this or that excellent person's opinion. But I thereupon reckon I have little reason to be conceited of any advantage I have of such in point of knowledge, (even as little as he should have, that can sing or play well on a lute, of him that knows how to command armies, or govern a kingdom,) and can with the less confidence differ from them, or contend with them. Being thereby, though I cannot find that I err in these matters, constrained to have some suspicion lest I do; and to admit it possible enough, that some of them who differ from me, having much more light in greater matters may have so in these also. Besides, that I most seriously think, humility, charity, and patience, would more contribute to the composing of these lesser differences, or to the good estate of the Christian interest under them, than the most fervent disputes and contestations. I have upon such considerations little concerned myself in contending for one way or another, while I was among you; or in censuring such as have differed from me in such notions and practices as might consist with our common great end; or as imported not manifest hostility thereto: contenting myself to follow the course that to my preponderating judgment seemed best, without stepping out of my way to justle others.

But I cannot be so patient of *their* practical disagreement, (not only with all serious Christians, but even their own judgments and consciences also,) who have no delight in God, and who take no pleasure in the very substance of religion. I have been grieved to observe that the case hath too apparently seemed so, with some among you: some who have been openly profane and dissolute, and expressed more contempt of God (which you know was often insisted on the one part of the day,* when I had this subject in hand the other) than delight in him. I know not how the case may be altered with such since I left you; or what blessing may have followed the endeavours of any other hand. Death I am sure will be making alterations, as I have heard it hath. If these lines may be beforehand with it, may they be effectually monitory to any such that yet survive! That however this or that external form of godliness may consist with your everlasting well being, real ungodliness and the denial of the power never can; which power stands in nothing more than in love to God or delight in him. Therefore seriously bethink yourselves, do you delight in God or no? If you do, methinks you should have some perception of it. Surely if you delight in a friend, or some other outward comfort, you can perceive it. But if you do not, what do you think alienation from the life of God will come to at last? It is time for you to pray and cry, and strive earnestly for a renewed heart. And if any of you do in some degree find this, yet many degrees are still lacking. You cannot delight in God, but upon that apprehension as will give you to see, you do it not enough: therefore reach forth to what is still before. I bow my knees for you all, that a living, delightful religion may flourish in your hearts and families, instead of those dry, withered things, worldliness, formality, and strife about trifles. Which will make Torrington an Heph-zibah, a place to be delighted in; your country a pleasant region; and (if he may but hear of it) add not a little to the satisfaction and delight of

Your affectionate servant in Christ,

Who most seriously desires your true prosperity,

JOHN HOWE.

Antrim Sept. 1, 1674.

* From Ps. x. 12.

OF

DELIGHTING IN GOD:

FROM PSALM XXXVII. 4.

DELIGHT THYSELF ALSO IN THE LORD, AND HE SHALL GIVE THEE THE DESIRES OF THINE HEART.

PART I.

SHOWING THE IMPORT OF THIS PRECEPT.

THIS psalm, by the contents of it, seems to suppose an afflicted state of good men, by the oppression of such as were, in that and other respects, very wicked; the prosperity of these wicked ones in their oppressive course; an aptness in the oppressed to impatience under the evils they suffered; a disposition to behold, with a lingering and an envious eye, the good things which their oppressors enjoyed, and themselves wanted. Hence the composure of it is such as might be most agreeable to these suppositions, and servicable to the fortifying of the righteous against the sin and trouble which such a state of things might prove the occasion of unto them.

This verse hath a more direct aspect on the last of these cases, or on this last mentioned thing considerable in the case, of upright men suffering under the oppression of violent and prosperous wickedness, *viz.* that they might hereupon be apt both to covet and envy the worldly delights of their enemies; to be desirous of their dainties, and grudge they should be theirs, who, they knew, deserved worse things; and while themselves also felt the pressure of worse, which at their hands they deserved not. What is here offered to the consideration of the sufferers, tends aptly to allay their discontent, to check and repress their inordinate desire towards inferior things; or to divert and turn it another way; as in case of bleeding to excess and danger, the way is to open a vein, and stop the course of that profusion by altering it. As if it had been said, "You have no such cause to look with displeasure or immoderate desire upon their delicacies: you may have better; better belong to you, and invite you; the Lord himself is your portion; it becomes both your state and spirit to apply yourselves to a holy delight in him; to let your souls loose, and set them at liberty to satiate themselves, and feed unto fulness those undefiled and satisfying pleasures unto which you have a right; and in which you will find the loss and want of their meaner enjoyments abundantly made up unto you. You have your natural desires and cravings as well as other men, and those may be too apt to exceed their just bounds and measures; but if you take this course, they will soon become sober and moderate, such as will be satisfied with what is competent, with an indifferent allowance of the good things of this earth. And towards the Lord, let them be as vast and large as can be supposed; they can never be larger than the rule will allow, nor than the object will satisfy; the direction and obligation of the former being indeed proportioned to the immense and boundless fulness of the latter."

We need not operously inquire what sort of persons this direction is given unto. It is plain, that it's the common duty of all to delight in God. But it cannot be the immediate duty of all. Men that know not God, and are enemies to him, have somewhat else to do first. They to whom the precept is directly meant are the regenerate, the righteous, and the upright, as the psalm itself doth plainly design them, or his own people. The most profitable way of considering these words, will be chiefly to insist on the direction given in the former part of the verse; and then to show towards the close, how the event promised in the latter part, will not only by virtue of the promise, but even naturally, follow thereupon. The direction in the former part, gives us a plain signification of God's good pleasure, that he himself would be the great object of his people's delight; or, it is his will, that they principally delight themselves in him. Our discourse upon this subject will fall naturally into two parts; the former whereof will concern the import, the latter the practice, of the enjoined delighting in God. Under which latter, what will be said of the latter part of the verse will fitly fall in.

That we may more distinctly open the import and meaning of delighting in God, it will be necessary that we treat, 1. Of the delectable object; 2. Of the delight to be taken therein.

1. As to the former. The general object of delight is some good, or somewhat so conceived of; with the addition of being apprehended some way present. Here it is the chief and best good, the highest and most perfect excellency. Which goodness and excellency, considered as residing in God, give us a twofold notion or view of the object whereupon this delight may have its exercise, *viz.* absolute and relative.

1. God may be looked upon in an absolute consideration, as he is in himself, the best and most excellent Being; wherein we behold the concurrence of all perfections; the most amiable and beauteous excellencies, to an intellectual eye, that it can have any apprehension of.

2. In a relative, *viz.* as his goodness and excellency are considered, not merely as they are in himself, but also as having some way an aspect on his creatures. For considering him as in himself the most excellent Being; if here we give our thoughts liberty of exercising themselves, we shall soon find, that hereupon he must be considered also as the first Being, the original and author of all other beings; otherwise he were not the most excellent. From whence, we will see, relation doth arise between him and his creatures that have their being from him. And besides the general relations which he beareth to them all, as the common maker, sustainer, and disposer of them; observing that there are some which, by their reasonable natures, are capable of government by him (in the proper sense, *viz.* by a law) and of the blessedness in him. To these we consider him as standing in a twofold reference, in both which we are to eye and act towards him, *viz.* as a Lord to be obeyed, and a portion to be enjoyed; and have most delectable excellencies to take notice of in him, (that require we should suitably comport with them,) answerable peculiarly

to each of these considerations, in respect whereof we are to look upon him.

I. As the most excellent Lord; most delectably excellent, (we take not here that title so strictly, as to intend by it mere propriety or dominion; but as to ordinary apprehension it is more commonly understood to signify also governing power, or authority founded in the other,) whom we cannot but esteem worthy of all possible honour and glory; that every knee bow to him, and every tongue confess to him; that universal homage, subjection, and adoration, be given him for ever.

2. As the most excellent Portion, in whom all things that may render him such do concur and meet together; all desirable and imaginable riches and fulness, together with large bounty, flowing goodness, every way correspondent to the wants and cravings of indigent and thirsty souls. The *former* notion of him intimates to us our obligation of duty to him: the *latter* prompts to an expectation of benefit from him. But now, because by the apostacy we have injured his right in us, as our Lord; forfeited our own right in him, as our Portion; and lost our immediate capacity or disposition, both to serve and enjoy him; this great breach between him and us was not otherwise to be made up but by a mediator. Unto which office and undertaking his own Son, incarnate, the Word made flesh, (being only fit,) was designed. By him, dealing between both the distanced parties, satisfying the justice of God, overcoming the enmity of man, the difference (so far as the efficacy of his mediation doth extend) is composed. And to the reconciled, God becomes again their acknowledged both Lord and portion. His right is vindicated, theirs is restored; and both are established upon new grounds, added to those upon which they stood before. And so, as that now our actings towards God, and expectations from him, must be through the Mediator. Whereupon this object of our delight, considered relatively unto us, is entirely God in Christ;—being reconciled, —we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom, &c.[a]

In these several ways that have been thus briefly mentioned, may God come under our consideration. Nor are they, any of them, unapplicable or impertinent to our purpose, when we would design him the object of our delight. Yea, and surely God considered each of these ways ought to be looked on by us as a most delectable object. For it is pleasant to contemplate him, even most absolutely considered, as the most excellent Being, when we behold his glorious excellencies in themselves: that is (not with the denial, but) without the actual present consideration of any advantage that may redound to us from them; as we are apt to find ourselves pleased and gratified in viewing an excellent object, (suppose a stately edifice or beautiful flower,) from which we expect no other benefit.

Again, if we consider him relatively, 1. In the *former* capacity of a *Lord*, it is grateful to behold him decked with majesty, arrayed in glory, clothed with righteousness, armed with power, shining in holiness, and guiding himself with wisdom and counsel in all his administrations. Yea, and it is delightful to obey him; while we are most fully satisfied of his unexceptionable right to command us. For there is a great pleasure naturally arising to a well-tempered spirit, from the apprehended congruity or fitness of things, as that he should command and that we should obey. His right and our obligation being so undoubtedly clear and great; especially when we also consider what he commands, and find it is no hard bondage; that they are not grievous commands which he requires we be subject to; but such in the keeping whereof there is great reward; and that his ways are all pleasantness and peace.

And being considered as a *portion*, the matter is plain, that so rich and abounding fulness, where also there is so communicative an inclination, cannot but recommend him a most satisfying object of delight.

And thus we are more principally to consider him, *viz.* rather *relatively* than *absolutely*: and that relatedness (which the state of the case requires) as now anew settled in Christ. And so, though it be very delightful to look upon him, as one that may and is ready to become related to us, (as he is to any that will consent and agree with him upon the Mediator's terms,) yet it adds unspeakably to the pleasantness of this object, when we can reflect upon such characters in ourselves, as from whence we may regularly conclude, that he is actually thus related unto us. That is, that we have consented; that our relation to him immediately arises from the covenant of life and peace; that he hath entered into covenant with us, and so we are become his. It is pleasant thus to behold and serve him as *our* Lord. How great is the emphasis of these words, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus *my* Lord!" To consider not only how well he deserves the acknowledgments and subjection of all; but also to find ourselves under the chosen and gentle bonds of perpetual service, and devotedness to him, is certainly matter of very high delight and pleasure.

But how infinitely delightful is it, to view and enjoy him as *our* Portion! And this seems very pertinent to the design of this scripture; which aiming to recall and draw in the hearts of godly persons from too earnest and from envious lingerings after the enjoyments of worldly men, (their enemies and oppressors,) propounds what may be an over-balance to the (imagined) felicity of their state; and wherein they should more than equal them in point of enjoyment. And should we single out this, as the object to be considered, God as a portion; that it might be more distinctly represented, we should have two things to take notice of that would render it most delectable, and such as wherein holy hearts may acquiesce, and rest with fullest satisfaction:—the sufficiency—and the communicableness of it.

I. The sufficiency of it. Which cannot but be every way complete and full; it being the all-comprehensive good, which is this portion.—God all-sufficient.—The most eminent and known attributes of his being, wherein by any issues of them they can be communicated, having an ingrediency and concurrence to the happiness of his people therein.

2. The communicableness thereof. Which proceeds from his bounty, more peculiarly, and his gracious inclination to do good, and make his boundless fulness overflow to the replenishing of thirsty, longing sonls, whom first it had allured and caused so to long. But though the scope and order of the discourse in this psalm, did not directly seem to import more than a design of calling off the persons here spoken to, from one sort of enjoyment to another, from a meaner and more empty to a better; yet it is to be considered, that true and the best enjoyment cannot be unaccompanied with duty; and that God is not otherwise to be enjoyed than as he is obeyed: nor indeed are the notions of him, as a Lord to be obeyed, and as a good to be enjoyed, entirely distinct; but are interwoven and do run into one another. We obey him, even in enjoying him; it being part of our enjoined duty, to set our hearts upon him, as our best and highest good. And we enjoy him in obeying him; the advantage and benefit of his government, being a real and most momentous part of that good which we enjoy from him, and in him. He is our benefactor even as he is our ruler; and is therein our ruler, as he proposes to us benefits, which he thereby binds us to accept; for even his invitations and offers are also laws and formal bonds of duty upon us. Yea, and even the act of delight itself pitched upon him, is an act of homage, as there will be occasion hereafter to take notice.

Wherefore it will be fit to steer a larger course, than merely to consider him as a good commensurate to our partial appetites. Which are apt to prescribe to, and limit our apprehensions to this or that particularly sort or good, and tincture them with such a notion of delight, as which, if it be not false and grossly carnal, may yet be much too narrow and unproportionable to the universal, all-comprehending good. And though we shall not here go beyond the compass of delectable good; yet as there is no good, truly so called, which is not in or from the first goodness; so indeed, nor is there any capable of being gathered up into that sum which is not delectable.

Nor therefore can the usual distribution of goodness into profitable, honest, and pleasant, bear a strict test. Only the false relishes of vitiated appetite in this corrupted state of man, have given ground for it. Otherwise to a

[a] Rom. v. 10, 11.

mind and will that is not distempered, the account would be much otherwise. To a prudent mind, profitable good would be pleasant, even as 'tis profitable. To a just and generous mind, honest, comely good would be pleasant, even as it is honest. Nor would there need another distinction, but into the goodness of the end, which is pleasant for itself, and the goodness of the means, which is pleasant as it is honestly and decently profitable (and otherwise it cannot be) thereunto.

That we may here therefore with the more advantage state the delectable good we are now to consider, it will be requisite to premise two things.

1. That all delightful enjoyment of God supposes some communication from him. Nothing can delight us, or be enjoyed by us, whereof we do not, some way, or by some faculty or other, partake somewhat; either by our external sense, sensitive appetite, fancy, memory, mind, will; and either in a higher or lower degree, for a longer or a shorter time, according as the delight is for kind, degree, or continuance which is taken therein. This is plain in itself. And in the present case therefore of delighting in God, or enjoying him, some communication or participation there must be one way or other according as the enjoyment of him is. And as the case with man now is, it is necessary he do with clearest and the most penetrative light and power, come in upon his mind and heart, scatter darkness, remove prejudice, abolish former relishes, transfuse his own sweet savour through the soul. Proportionably therefore to what is to be done, he communicates himself, as the event constantly shows, with all them that are ever brought to any real enjoyment of him. For we plainly see, that the same divine communication which being received, doth delight and satisfy, doth also procure, that it may be desired and received; makes its own way, attempers and frames the soul to itself; and gives it the sweet relish and savour thereof, wherein God is actually enjoyed.

2. That however God himself is truly said to be enjoyed or delighted in by holy souls, yet this communication is also a sort of mediate object of this delight or enjoyment. These things being forelaid, it is now needful to inquire somewhat more distinctly, what that communication or communicable good is, which is the immediate matter of proper, spiritual enjoyment unto holy men in this world. Because many have that phrase of speech *enjoying God* often in their mouths, that well understand not what they mean by it; yea even divers of them that have real enjoyment of him. Unto whom, though they possibly taste the thing which they cannot express or form distinct conceptions of, it might be somewhat their advantage to have it more cleared up to their apprehension, what it is that they immediately enjoy, when they are said to enjoy God; or by what he is to be enjoyed. It is not a mere fancy (as too many profanely think, and are too apt to speak) that is the thing to be enjoyed. There have been those, who, comparing their own experience with God's promises and precepts, (the rule by which he imparts and according whereto men are to expect his gracious influence,) were capable of avowing it, rationally, to be some very substantial thing they have had the enjoyment of. The sobriety of their spirits, the regularity of their workings, their gracious composure, the meekness, humility, denial of self, the sensible refreshing, the mighty strength and vigour which hath accompanied such enjoyments, sufficiently proving to them that they did not hug an empty cloud, or embrace a shadow, under the name of enjoying God. Such expressions as we find in the book of Psalms, (the 16th and many other,) with sundry parts of Scripture besides, leave us not without instance, that import nothing like flashy and flaunting bombast, no appearance of affectation, no pompous show of vain-glory, no semblance of swelling words of vanity; but which discover a most equal, orderly, well-poised temper of mind, in conjunction with the highest delight and well-pleasedness in God. That rich and unimitable fulness of living sense, could not but be from the apprehension of a most excellent nature and kind, whatsoever be the notion, that may be most fitly put upon it. Nor yet is it the mere essence of God which men can be said to enjoy. For that is not communicated nor communicable. Enjoyment supposes possession. But it would be a strange language to say we possess the essence of God otherwise than relatively; which is not enough unto actual enjoyment. His mere essential presence is not enough. That renders him not enjoyed by any, for that is equally with all, and every where; but all cannot be said to enjoy him.

As therefore it is a *real*, so there must be some *special* communication, by which, being received, we are truly said to enjoy him. A *special* good it must be, not such as is common to all. For there is a communication from him that is of that extent, inasmuch as all live and move and have their beings in him, and the whole earth is full of his goodness. This is a good peculiar to them that are born of God; and suited to the apprehension and sense of that divine creature which is so born.

What this good is, how fully sufficient it is, and how or which way it is communicable, may be the better understood when we have considered what are the wants and cravings of this creature, or of them in whom it is formed and wrought. For when we have pitched upon the very thing itself which they most desire, (and which they can tell is it, when they hear it named, though their thoughts are not so well formed about it, as to give it the right name before,) we shall then understand it to be both what will be sufficient to satisfy, and what may be communicated to that purpose. But now, before that new birth take place in the spirit of man, it wants, but knows not what; craves, indeterminately, (who will show us any good?) not fixing upon any particular one that is sufficient and finite, and labouring at once, under an ignorance of the infinite, together with a disaffection thereunto. Its wants and cravings are beyond the measure of all finite good; for suppose it to have never so large a share, nay, could it grasp and engross the whole of it, an unsatisfiedness and desire of more would still remain. But that *more* is somewhat indeterminate and merely imaginary: an infinite nothing: an idol of fancy: a God of its own making. God it must have; but what a one he is it misapprehends, and wherein it rightly apprehends him likes and loves him not; will by no means choose, desire, or take complacency in him. So that an unregenerate soul is, while it is such, necessarily doomed to be miserable. It cannot be happy in any inferior good, and in the supreme it will not. What the real wants and just cravings of a man's spirit therefore are, are not to be understood by considering it in that state. And if the work of the new creature were perfected in it, it would want and crave no more; but were satisfied fully and at perfect rest. Nor is that state so known to us as yet. Therefore they are best to be discerned in the state wherein that work is begun and hitherto unfinished; in which it therefore desires rightly, and still continues to desire: a state of intermingled motion and rest; wherein delight is imperfect, and allayed by the continual mixture of yet unsatisfied desire. And yet it may be collected what it is that would be sufficient to satisfy; because their desire is still determined to [c] one thing, is not vagrant, wanders not after things of another kind, but is intent only upon more of the same. Now let it be inquired of such a one what that thing is. We are generally told there,[d] "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord," &c. And it may be many would more shortly tell you it is God they desire, whence it would only be concluded it is God they aim to enjoy or delight in. But because this brings us but where we were; let it be further inquired, what then is your business with God, or what would you have of him? It is not, sure, to be God that you expect or seek, or to enjoy God in that sense wherein he possesses and enjoys himself. No, not by any means. It is then some communication from God, diverse from what all men have (for that they do not find apt to satisfy) which they desire and crave. And what is that? 'Tis somewhat, as possible to be apprehended, and as distinguishable both from his incommunicable being, and his so generally communicated bounty towards all. As if the inquiry were, what is it that I desire really to enjoy when I desire to enjoy a friend? (*viz.* as the notion of a friend or friendship doth most properly import.) That is neither

c Ps. xxvii. 4.

d Psal. xxvii. 4.

to desire the impossible thing, of possessing his being as my own; nor the unsatisfying thing, the mere partaking some part of his external goods and wealth, whereof it may be be daily imparts somewhat to every beggar at his door. But it is to have his intimate acquaintance, his counsel and advice, the advantage of improving myself by his converse and of conforming myself to his example in his imitable perfections; the assurances of his faithful, constant love and friendship, in reference to all future emergencies. A friend is really to be enjoyed in such things as these.

And in such-like is God to be enjoyed also; but with this difference, that God's communications are more immediate, more constant, more powerful and efficacious, infinitely more delightful and satisfying, in respect both of the good communicated, and the way of communication. In short then, the wants and desires of a renewed soul, the supply and satisfaction whereof it seeks from God, would he summed up in these things.—That it may know him more fully, or have clearer apprehensions of him.—That it may become like to him, and framed more perfectly after his own holy image.—That it may be ascertained of his love and good will, that he hath those favourable inclinations towards it, which shall certainly infer his doing all that for it which its real necessities (to be estimated by his infinite wisdom) can call for. These are the things *in kind* which would satisfy it. And answerably to these we may conceive the communicable good which is the immediate object of their enjoyment. So that, as God himself is the object which is enjoyed; this is the object by which, or in respect whereof, he is enjoyable.

Therefore the divine communication, or that which is communicated from God to regenerate souls wherein they are to delight themselves, contains in it,

I. An inwardly enlightening revelation of himself to them, that they may know him more distinctly. This is a part of the one thing would be so highly satisfying, and delightful. Show us the Father and it sufficeth us.[d] When their desires are towards God only, it is with this aim in the first place, that they may know him, which is supposed, when that is given as an encouragement to the pursuit of this knowledge. We shall know if we follow on to know the Lord.[e] As if it had been said; this is a thing not doubted of, but taken for granted, that we would fain know the Lord; we shall, if we follow on, &c. This is a dictate of pure and primitive nature, to covet the knowledge of our own original, him from whom we and all things sprang. Men are herein become most unnaturally wicked when they like not to retain God in their knowledge.[f] The new and divine nature once imparted, that is, primitive nature renewed and restored to itself, revives the desire of this knowledge. And in compliance with the present exigency of the case hath this inclination ingrafted into it, to know him, (as he is now only to be comfortably known,) *viz.* [g] in the Mediator. I determined to know nothing among you (saith St. Paul) but Jesus Christ, &c. *i. e.* to glory in, to make show of, to discover myself taken with no other knowledge than this, or with none so much as this. To which purpose, he elsewhere professes to count all things loss for the excellency of this knowledge.[h] So vehemently did desire work this way. And proportionably as it is apprehended desirable, must it be esteemed delightful also. Nor are we here to think that this desired knowledge was intended finally to terminate in the Mediator, for that the very notion of Mediator resists. The name Christ is the proper name of that office, and the desire of knowing him under that name imports a desire to know him in his office, *viz.* as one that is to lead us to God, and restore our acquaintance with him, which was not to be recovered upon other terms. So that it is ultimately the knowledge of God that is the so much desired thing, and of Christ, as the way and our conductor to God. That is, the knowledge of God not absolutely considered alone, (though he is, even so, a very delectable object, as hath been said, but as he is related to us, and from whom we have great expectations, our all being comprehended in him. It cannot but be very delightful (answerable to a certain sort of delectation of which we shall have occasion to speak in its proper place) to have him before our eyes represented and revealed to us, as the all-comprehending good, and that (in the way and method whereinto things are now cast) may, at least, become our portion. He is, some way, to be enjoyed even in this view. 'Tis a thing apt to infer complacency and delight thus to look upon him. They who place felicity in contemplation, especially in the contemplation of God, are not besides the mark; if they do not circumscribe and confine it there, so as to make it stand in mere contemplation, or in an idle and vainly curious view of so glorious an object, without any further concern about it. They will then be found to speak very agreeably to the language of Holy Scripture, which so frequently expresses the blessedness of the other state by seeing God. And if the act of vision be delicious, the representation of the object must have proportionable matter of delight in it. It cannot but have so, if we consider the nature of this representation; which, answerably to the sensible want and desire of such as shall be delighted therewith, must have somewhat more in it than the *common* appearances of God which offer themselves equally to the view of all men. Though it is their own as common fault, that they are destitute of the more grateful and necessary additions. That it hath more in it, is evident from God's own way of speaking of it. For we find that his revealing himself in this delectable way,

1. Is attributed to the Spirit.[i] And as a work to be done by it when it shall be given, (supposing it therefore yet not given, and that all have it not,) yea that such have it not, in such a measure as they may have it, unto this purpose, who yet truly have it [k] in some measure already; even as a thing peculiar to them from the unbelieving world.

For it is prayed for to such as concerning whom it is said, that after they believed (not before) they were sealed by the Spirit of promise, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give it them: [l] and it is mentioned by a name and title proper to the end and purpose for which it is desired to be given them, *viz.* as the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that end and purpose being immediately expressed in, or, as that particle is sometimes used, for, the knowledge of him.[m] The eyes of their understanding being enlightened by it (which are supposed blind before) for the same purpose. By which prayer it is supposed a communicable thing; yea, and that these had some way a right to the communication of it; or that it was a thing proper to their state, fit to be prayed for, as some way belonging to them, they being in a more immediate capacity of such revelation than others. But how incongruous had it been, with such solemnity of address, to make request on their behalf for that which they already sufficiently had as a thing common to all men.

2. It is spoken of as a reward of their former love, loyalty, and obedience. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.[n] Therefore is such manifestation no more to be accounted common, than the love of Christ is, and keeping his commandments. It is spoken of as given discriminatingly, and the grace of God admired upon that account. In the next words, Judas saith unto him,[o] (not Iscariot, it being well understood how little covetous he was of, or qualified, for such manifestations,) Lord, how is it, that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world? What it hath more than common light, external or internal, answerable to the deeply resented wants, and the hearts' desires of the regenerate, by which it becomes so highly pleasant and delectable to them, though it is rather to be felt than told, (as it is hard to describe the very things we have only immediate sensible perception of,) may yet in some degree be understood by such characters as these.

3. It is much more distinct and clear. They are confused and dark glimmerings which other men have of the blessed God, so that the light which is in them is darkness.[p] 'Tis true that an unregenerate person may possibly have clearer acquired notions of God, and of the things of God, than those may be which are of the same kind only in some who are regenerate. So that he may, by the advan-

d John xiv.
e 1 Cor. ii.
f Rom. i.
g Phil. iii.
h Eph. i. 17.
i Ver. 17.
k Ver. 13.
l Ver. 17.
m Ver. 18.
n John xiv. 21.
o Ver. 22
p Matt. vi.

tages he may have above some of the other in respect of better natural abilities, more liberal education, such circumstances of his condition as may more engage him to study and contemplation, and befriend him therein, be capable of finding out more, of making fuller discoveries, and more evident deductions, and be able to discourse thence more rationally and satisfyingly to others, even concerning God, his nature, attributes, and works, than some very pious persons destitute of those advantages may be able to do. But these, though their candle give a dimmer light than the others, have the beams of a sun raying in upon them, that much outshines the other's candle. And though they know not so many things, nor discern the connexions of things so thoroughly; yet as they do know what is most necessary to be known, so what they do know, they know better, and with a more excellent sort of knowledge, proportionably as whatsoever is originally and immediately divine, cannot but much excel that which is merely human. *Those* do but blunder in the dark, *these* in God's own light do see light.[q] And his light puts a brighter hue and aspect upon the same things, than any other representation can put upon them. Things are by it represented to the life, which to others carry with them but a faint and languid appearance, and are all covered over with nothing else but a dark and dusky shadow, so as that may be hid from the wise and prudent which is revealed to babes.[r] How bright and glorious things are divine wisdom, love, holiness, to an enlightened mind! which is therefore supposed to have a clearer discovery of them.

But it may be said, Is there any thing apprehensible concerning these or any other matters which may not be expressed in some proposition or other? And what proposition is there which a regenerate person can assent to, but one who is not regenerate may assent to it also? What definition, so truly expressive of the natures of these things, can be thought of, unto which a carnal mind may not give its approbation? What can be said or conceived so fully and truly tending to describe and clear them up, but an unrenewed understanding may have the representation of the same truth so as to give entertainment to it? 'Tis answered, there are many things to which somewhat may belong not capable of description, and whereof we have yet a most certain perception. As the different relishes of the things we taste. There are no words that will express those many peculiarities. And as to the present matter; there is somewhat belonging to the things of God, (those for instance that were mentioned, his wisdom, holiness, &c.) besides the truth of the conceptions that may be formed about them; which is more clearly apprehensible to a divinely enlightened understanding than to one that is not so. As,

1. The beauty of those truths; which is most delightful to behold. Their lively sparkling lustre, by which they appear so amiable and lovely to a well-tempered spirit, as to transport it with pleasure, and ravish it from itself into union with them. There was somewhat else apprehensible no doubt, and apprehended by them, the inward sentiments of whose souls those words so defectively served to express, Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the Gods, who is like thee, glorious in holiness, &c. besides the mere truth of any proposition that those words can be resolved into. And so in those, O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, &c. And those, God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that, &c. Or those, This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, whereof I am chief. Or the strains of that rapturous prayer,—that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. There is a certain acceptableness in some truths, necessary to their being received in the love thereof, which is peculiarly so represented to some, as that their apprehension is clear and vivid, beyond that of other men; who, however they have the representation of the *same things*, yet have not the *same representation*. Though if they be things of necessary and common concernment, it is (as was said) their own fault that they have it not. And to have yet clearer apprehensions of this sort, is what the renewed soul doth most earnestly crave, and would be proportionably delighted with.

2. The tendency of such truths is much more clearly conceivable to a holy soul, than another; what their scope and aim or aspect is, which way they look, and what they drive at or lead to. I mean not what other truth they are connected with, and would aptly tend to infer; but what design God hath upon us in revealing them, and what impression they ought to make upon us. To the ignorance or disregard of which tendency and design of God's revelation, it is to be attributed, that many have long the same notions of things hovering in their minds, without ever reflecting with any displeasure upon the so vastly unsuitable temper of their spirits thereto. They know it may be such things concerning God, the tendency whereof is to draw their hearts into union with him, to transform them into his likeness, to inflame them with his love. But they still remain, notwithstanding, at the greatest distance, most unsuitable, averse, coldly affected towards him, yea utterly opposite and disaffected; and fall not out with themselves upon this account, have no quarrel nor dislike, take not any distaste at themselves for it. They take no notice of an incongruity and unfitness in the ill temper of their own spirits; but seem as if they thought all were very well with them, nothing amiss; and apprehend not a repugnancy in their habitual dispositions towards God to their notions of him. For a vicious prejudice blinds their eyes; their corrupt inclinations and rotten hearts send up a malignant, dark, and clammy fog and vapour, and cast so black a cloud upon these bright things, that their tendency and design are not perceived; that prejudice not being conceived so much against the abstract notions of the things themselves, (whence they are entertained with less reluctancy,) but only against the design and scope of them. Against which poisonous cloud God's own glorious revelation directs its beams, dissolves its gross consistency, scatters its darkness, as to them to whom he by special grace affords it. Whereupon, observing any remainders of the same distemper in their spirits, though it be in a considerable degree abated and lessened, they are ashamed of themselves for it, filled with confusion, yea, and indignation; do loathe and abhor, and could even be ready, if it were possible, to run away from themselves. And what is the reason of this so great difference? Surely somewhat appears discernible to these in God's revelation of himself which to the other doth not. They have then before their eyes a more clear prospect of the aim and scope of it. Which so far as they have, it pleases them, for they like the design well, only they are displeased at themselves that they comport no more with it. And as the end, therefore, aimed at is desirable to them, and would be delightful, (as will be shown in its proper place,) so is it to have that representation immediately offered to the view of their souls, which hath so apt and comely an aspect thereon, not merely for its own sake, but for the sake of the end itself.

Wherefore there is somewhat to be apprehended by God's representation of himself to the minds of this regenerate people, at least more clearly than by other men. Whence the work of regenerating or converting them itself, is expressed by opening their eyes.[s] For the divine communication makes its own way and enters at the eye, the soul's seeing faculty, which it doth find (as opening the eyes imports) and not now create; but finding it vitiated, and, as to any right seeing of God, shut and closed up, it heals, opens, and restores it as it enters. It is expressed, by turning them from darkness to light; and from the power of Satan (the Prince of that darkness, the God of this world, who had blinded their eyes) unto God. Which (because they cannot turn and move towards God blindfold, and that this opening their eyes is in order to their turning to God) implies, that their eyes were so distempered, blinded, and sealed up, chiefly towards him.

q Psal. xxxvi.

r Matt. xi.

s Acts xxvi. 18.

So that, though they could see other things, him they could not see; but he was invisible to their intellectual, as well as their bodily eyes. Hence also is that understanding said to be given, (*i. e.* as rectified and renewed,) by which we know God; which implies it to be (wherein it is now given) somewhat superadded to the whole natural being and powers of the human soul, as in its present corrupted state,—He hath given us an understanding to know him that is true.[t] And that given rectitude of understanding is by such a communication from God, as hath not aptitude and power in it to infer so happy a change. The same renewing work is also said to be a calling of men out of darkness into his marvellous light.[u] As if they were brought by it into a new world, wherein they found themselves beset with wonders, and all things were surprising to them. To which purpose is that prayer of the Psalmist, (out of a just consciousness, that this work was not perfect in him, but might yet admit great additional degrees,) Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.[x] He supposed many undiscovered wonders, which more open eyes might yet behold in that external revelation of God's mind, which was then afforded, (and which was wont in those days to go under the name of his law, though it contained histories, prophecies, and promises, as well as precepts,) although he was no stranger to those records, nor little insighted into them, he yet apprehended a need of more light and better eyes; which he therefore desires. Not that God would cause a new revelation to be written,(though that he vouchsafed to do, and partly by himself,) but that he might learn more out of that already extant; and that the wonderful things contained in it might be made more clear to him. Nor can we suppose him, herein, to desire to be gratified and delighted by the communication of an incommunicable thing.

2. It is more powerfully assuring, and such as is apt to beget a more certain operative belief of the things revealed. That is, being added to the means of faith men may be supposed to have had before, it adds much to their assurance of the same things, so as to make it efficacious upon their spirits. And as well cures the doubtfulness, irresolution, and waywardness of their minds and hearts, as the confusion and darkness of them.

It is very possible those things may be distinctly understood, which the more we understand, the more we disbelieve them through their apprehended inconsistency with themselves or some certain truth. The delectable things of God, his own discovery procures at once, by one and the same radiation of light, both to be clearly understood, and effectually believed. Others have the word of faith without the spirit of faith. The faith therefore which they have is a carcass; not a weak only, (which imports but diminished power,) but a dead thing. And which hath no power at all to determine the soul and compose it to that delightful rest, which such things, duly believed, would certainly infer. The most delectable truths of God, and such as most directly tend (in this apostate lapsed state of man) to give us the sweet and refreshing relishes of a just and rational joy and pleasure, are such as are contained in the Gospel of Christ; the things that concern our reconciliation. friendship, and communion with God in him. And which are therefore wholly of immediately divine and supernatural revelation, and to be received by faith. Therefore one apostle prays for some, they might be filled with joy and peace in believing.[y] And another says of others, that believing, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.[z] The external revelation in the Gospel is an apt means to beget that faith which it is said comes by hearing; but the very notion of means importing what intervenes to the effect, between that and the principal agent, necessarily supposes such an agent; and that what is only means, cannot work the effect alone. That Agent, *viz.* (in this case) God himself or the Spirit, besides the means which he uses and makes effectual, must have his own influence whereby he makes them so. If a pen be a fit means or instrument to write with, it doth not therefore follow that it can write alone, without a hand to move and guide it, in order whereto a motive and directive influence is imparted. In the present case, the influence is the inward, enlightening, overpowering communication, whereof we speak. The efficacy whereof is such, as to give the soul that peaceful rest in believing, which is also most pleasant and delightful; according as the things are found to be so, which are believed. Nor doth it in order hereto work by way of enthusiastical impulsion, without any reference to the external revelation, which is rationally and aptly suitable to the working of the effect. For then, that should no way ha e the place so much as of means. But there being sufficient inducement to persuade that this external revelation is divine, so as to procure a rational assent to the things revealed, with any man that, having that revelation, with the account of its first confirmation, shall but use his understanding in reference thereto, and is not besotted to a party of sworn enemies to the Christian name. This inward revelation then falling in, captivates his heart to an entire unitive closure, with the great things contained in the outward one; and principally with the Son of God himself, unto which union that whole revelation is most directly subservient. Therefore it was, that when divers others (of whom it is said, and particularly of Judas, [a] that they believed not) forsook Christ, Peter and the other apostles stuck so resolutely to him, because, we believe (say they) and art sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God; which assurance we may then conclude was much of another sort than that of Judas; though we cannot suppose him to have wanted a rational certainty of the same truth, sufficient to have overcome objections in his judgment; but not sufficient to overcome the contrary corrupt inclinations of his wicked heart. Therefore as the inward revelation uses not to do its work without the outward; (for I suppose we have not heard of many Christians where the Gospel hath not been;) so nor is the outward revelation able, alone, to beget that which, in the most eminent sense, goes in Scripture under the name of faith. It may beget that merely intellectual certainty which may prevail against all doubts and objections in a man's mind to the contrary; but not the contrary inclinations of his corrupt will. Most men's faith is but opinionative, and many men's never reaches so high as to a *rational* opinion; *that* proceeds upon having balanced considerations on both sides, and inclines to that part on which seems to be the most weighty; whereas the faith (as they call it) of too many is no other thing than a merely blind and sequacious humour, grounded upon nothing but a willingness to be in the fashion; or the apprehension of disgrace, with other inconveniences, if where that is the common profession one should profess to be any thing but a Christian; or a lazy indifferency, easily determinable to that part which is next at hand to be chosen; or it may be, they never having heard of another profession, which precludes any choice at all.

But admit it did arrive to a rational certainty, as it easily might with them that have with the external requisite advantages, competent understanding, patience, diligence, and impartiality to consider: that is, suppose it to proceed upon that abundant evidence which the case will admit, that the Christian doctrine hath been testified by God; and that God's testimony cannot deceive: there needs more to win and overcome men's hearts; which must be done ere the things revealed in the gospel can be apprehended delectable. What can any man have greater certainty of, in a mere human way, than all men have that they must die? And yet how few are there whose spirits are formed hereby to any seriousness agreeable to that persuasion! Whatever way a man comes to be certain of any thing that hath a contrary tendency to the bent of his habitually wicked heart, he needs more than the evidence of the thing, to make it efficaciously determine his will against his former vicious course. If the matter be such as properly falls under faith; that faith grounds upon the authority of God, apprehended as avouching the truth of that revelation to which we subscribe our assent. But then it is lively or languid, according as the apprehension is we have of that avouchment. But the apprehension which is only the product of the external revelation, even recommended by the most advantageous and convincing circumstances, is too faint to command

t 1 John v. 20. u 1 Pet. ii. x Psal. cxi. 18. y Rom. xv. 3. z 1 Pet. i. 8. a John vi

the soul. Who amongst all the people of the Jews at Mount Horeb, could have any doubt, but the authority that avouched the law there given them was divine? And yet how boldly do they rush into idolatry, against the express letter of that law; while the sound of that dreadful voice of words which delivered it, could hardly, one would think, be well out of their ears! And though they could not doubt of God's authority, yet for all that, their frequent rebellions are plainly resolved into their infidelity. How long will this people provoke me?[b] And how long will it be ere they *believe* me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? Yea, they despised the pleasant land: they *believed not* his word.[c] Or what place could be left for rational doubt with the multitudes that beheld the miracles of our Lord Jesus, but that they were God's own seal affixed purposely to the doctrine taught by him? Yet how few (though we must suppose many convinced) did heartily believe in him! More (abundantly) did upon a less advantageous external revelation after his ascension. And the reason is plainly told us, The Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.[d] And how expressly have we it from his own mouth, after he had interpreted coming to him by believing on him,[e] No man can come unto me, except the Father that hath sent me draw him. And afterwards, having said, It is the Spirit that quickeneth;[f] he adds, but there are some of you that believe not.[g] (So that no man's professed assent, though as forward a professor as Judas was, there referred to, will in strict account entitle him a believer, if it be not produced by the quickening influence of the Spirit.) And then repeats,[h] Therefore I said unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father. And what provocation the Father had to withhold that quickening Spirit so generally from that people, any one may see that reads their story. Upon which, by the recess of that Spirit, they are hardened to as great a miracle as formerly their Egyptian oppressors were many ages before; there being indeed no greater miracle, as was said of old, than that men should not believe upon the sight of so many miracles. And this dreadful dereliction and consequent obduration we see is referred to primitive justice as a vindictive dispensation. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.[i] That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?[k] Where it is obvious to observe that the believing of the gospel-report owes itself to the revelation of God's arm; or requires the exerting of his power, agreeable to that of the apostle, that ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, &c.[l] And how the arm of the Lord came not to be revealed, or that power not to be put forth, is intimated in what follows: Therefore they could not believe, because (for which Isaiah is again quoted) he had blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, &c.[m] Which shows, that as that blinding and hardening of eyes and hearts, in some superadded degrees thereof, is the effect of a penal dereliction or retraction of God's arm for former obstinate opposition to the external revelation of the Gospel; so that there is a precedent blindness and hardness, not otherwise vincible than by the arm of the Lord; and which, it being penally withheld, will naturally grow worse and worse. And certainly that, upon the withholding whereof, such things certainly ensue as are inconsistent with believing, must needs itself be necessary to it. All which things considered, do so plainly speak the insufficiency of a mere external revelation, and the necessity of an internal besides, unto that faith which is the immediate spring of delight in God; that it is not needful to insist upon many plain texts of Scriptures besides, that fully say the same thing. As that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.[n] And again, Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.[o] And whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.[p] Upon which words, with many more of like import in the sacred volume, no sense can be put which is tolerable, and not the same with what we have above asserted.

In short, faith is a part of homage paid to the authority of the great God; which is to be estimated sincere, according as it answers the end for which the things to be believed were revealed. That end is not to beget only the notion of those things, as truths that are to be lodged in the mind, and go no further; as if they were to be understood true only that they might be so understood; but that the person might accordingly have his spirit formed, and might shape the course of his whole conversation; therefore is it called the obedience of faith; and the same word which is wont to be rendered unbelief, signifies disobedience, obstinacy, unpersuadableness; being from a theme which (as is known) signifies to persuade. So that this homage is then truly given to the eternal God, when his revelation is complied with and submitted to, according to the true intent and purpose of it. Which that it may be, requires that his Spirit urge the soul with his authority, and overpower it into an awful subjection thereto. The soul being so disjointed by the apostacy, that its own faculties keep not (in reference to the things of God) their natural order to one another, further than as a holy rectitude is renewed in them by the Holy Ghost. Therefore is it necessary, that the enlightening communication which he transmits into it, be not only so clear, as to scatter the darkness that beclouded the mind, but so penetrating, as to strike and pierce the heart, to dissolve and relax its stiff and frozen rigour, and render it capable of a new mould and frame. In order whereto, "God that (at first) commanded the light to shine out of darkness, is said to have shined into the hearts" of them, *viz.* whom he renews, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And as they to whom this communication of God is in some degree afforded, do hereupon apprehend how necessary it was to them that it should be afforded; and be such as they now find it, (which they apprehended not before,) so they perceive it to be delightful also, as well as necessary. And finding it yet given into them but in an imperfect degree, their continual cravings are still for more. And having tasted hereby how gracious the Lord is; as new-born babes they desire it, as sincere milk, that they may grow thereby.[q] They hereby come to know God and the things of God with savour. And wisdom having entered into their hearts, knowledge is pleasant to their soul.[r] Whereby, as every renewed taste provokes in them new desire, all such renewed desires dispose them unto further and more satisfying delight. They sensibly discern the difference between their former dry and sapless notions of God, and the lively-spirited apprehensions which they now have. They can in some measure understand the reason why the apostle should in such a rapture speak of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord; and why he should so triumphantly give thanks to God for the manifestation of the savour of his knowledge[s] in every place. They can perceive there was good sense in those words, they have a more quick and judicious perception of the fragrancy of that knowledge; it is to them a refreshing, vital, quickening perfume, as the word, there and before, imports, most cheeringly odoriferous, the savour of life to life,[t] lively in itself, and to them. So full of life, as to beget and transmit it, and replenish their souls therewith; so as they might feel life thence working in all their powers. A revelation of God, that is of such a nature, cannot but be highly delectable;

1. In respect of the matter revealed, God himself especially (if not yet testifying himself to be, yet at least willing in Christ to become) our God; in such a way, and upon such terms, as is expressed in the Gospel. A more particular mention of the things (contained in this revelation) that are more apt to beget delight and feed it, is purposely deferred till we come to press and enforce the duty itself.

2. In respect of the immediate way and manner of revelation, with so much facility continually coming in from time to time upon the soul, according as it is found ready by

b Num. xiv. 11.
c Psal. cvi. 24.
d John vii. 39.
e John vi. 35.
f Ver. 63.
g Ver. 64.
h Ver. 65.
i John xii. 37, 38.
k Isa. liii. 1.
l Eph. i. 19.
m Isa. vi.
n 1 Cor. xii. 3.
o 1 John iv. 15.
p Chap. v. 1.
q 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3.
r Prov. ii. 10.
s 2 Cor. ii. 14.
t Ver. 16.

a dutiful compliance to admit it, and doth lie open to it. For otherwise, a fatherly severity is most fitly expressed in withholding it at some times.

3. In respect of the life and vigour which it carries with it, whereby it is experienced to be a vital light; and that it is indeed (as is said) life, which is the light of men.[u] Dull, sluggish, ineffectual notions of such things can have little, comparatively, of delectation in them.

4. In respect of the design and tendency of the revelation, discernible at the same time, to draw the soul into union with God; and that there may be a continual intercourse between him and it. Not that it might have a transient glance of so lovely an object, and no more. When once it apprehends God hath made this light shine in upon me, not to amuse me, but here he fixes it as a lamp to guide me, in a stated course of communion with him. How pleasant is it to think he will be known for this blessed purpose! Now a communication of God including a revelation of him apt to beget such a knowledge, cannot be without much matter of delight.

But besides that, though most naturally following thereupon, it also includes,

II. A transforming impression of his image. This yet more fully answers the inquiry when a person is said to enjoy God; what doth he immediately enjoy? or whereby is he said to enjoy God? what doth God communicate or transmit, by which he may be said to be enjoyed? He communicates his own living likeness, the very image of himself; not the idea of likeness only by which he is known, though it must be confessed the knowledge of him, if he be known to be what he truly is, must suppose a true likeness of him offered to the mind, and formed there. But this of which we now speak, is not a merely representative but a real image. The product of the former it is, as is sufficiently to be collected from what hath been said. For that appears to be not a mere airy, spiritless, ineffectual thing, as the notion of God, and of all divine matters, is with the most; but as hath been said, operative, penetrating, efficacious, apt to beget suitable impressions upon the heart, and wholly transform the soul. The effect of it then is, this transformative impression itself; by which the soul becomes another thing than it was; a new creature;[w] old things being done away, and all things made new. In respect of this, it is said to be born of God. This is the new man which after God is said to be created in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness;[x] the Divine nature participated;[y] the seed of[z] God; the ἀπαρχὴ,[a] the prime and most excellent part of his creatures.

Concerning this likeness, and the satisfyingness of it, in its perfect state, though much hath been discoursed elsewhere, it will be requisite to say somewhat here also, that may bear a more direct reference to the present imperfect state of the regenerate in this world. That communication of God which must be supposed afforded them, in order to their delighting in him, could signify little to that purpose, if with deformed and diseased souls they were only to look upon a very lovely object, still themselves remaining what they were. Nor doth it delight them only as it is apprehended apt and aiming to work a happy change in them; but as it doth it, or hath in part done it. As like an active, quick flame, it passeth through their souls, searches, melts them, burns up their dross, makes them a new lump or mass, forms them for God's own use and converse.

God is proposed unto our communion and fellowship under the name of light. But such a light (it appears) as whereby we that were darkness do also become light in the Lord,[b] as elsewhere it is expressed. That, as he is the Father of lights,[c] we may appear the children of such a Father, and walk accordingly, *i. e.* as children of light. For we are presently told, that if we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.[d] But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have a mutual fellowship,[e] *i. e.* God and we. It is needful then, that we have that apprehension of him. And he therefore by solemn message makes that declaration of himself that he is light, (this then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and with him is no darkness at all,) *i. e.* the most pure, holy, excellent, glorious Being. But for what purpose are we to have that apprehension? We are told by the apostle for what; he there makes that declaration with that design, that we might be entered into the same fellowship in which he was already: for that end therefore we are to have this apprehension. But inasmuch as he immediately adds, that yet while we converse in darkness, we lie, if we pretend to that fellowship; 'tis manifest, that this discovery of God and our suitable apprehension are no further serviceable to their end, than bringing us into fellowship with him, than as by his beams he begets us into his likeness herein; and that, so far as our capacity and present state admit, we be truly in a degree made pure, bright, shining, excellent creatures, resembling our Maker, and being a second time formed after the image of him that created us.

The Gospel is the formative instrument in this work, as it was said to be the instrument or means of our intellectual illumination. The new creature is said to be begotten of the word of God; and the Divine nature to be communicated through the exceeding great and precious promises, which discovering God's gracious nature and favourable inclination towards us, are an apt means (but no more than a means) to render us well-natured (not cross, thwarting, contrary) unto him. Faith admits the gospel-discovery into the soul, and of an external word without, makes it become an ingrafted word; the word of Christ dwelling richly in us: and so gives it the advantage of becoming thus mightily operative; for unto them only who believe is it the power of God to salvation. And being received, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, it works effectually in them that believe. To them who believe it not, it signifies nothing; is to them an empty sound, or only as a tale that is told. And inasmuch as the gospel-revelation is the instrument of this impression; by it the impression must be measured, with it must it agree. Which revelation being expressive of the nature of God, and of his mind and will in reference to us, the impression cannot but be agreeable to that revelation; but it must also carry in it the resemblance and likeness of God himself; for the gospel-revelation is God's seal; the stamp upon it is a model of his image. Whence therefore the soul sealed therewith, bears on it at once the signature both of the author and the instrument. But because our best and surest way of forming true and right apprehensions of God, is to attend and guide ourselves by the representation that is there made of him; (for it were useless and in vain, if letting our thoughts work at random without reference to it, we might conceive as fitly of God and his mind concerning us, as by the direction and guidance of it;) therefore are we to aim at conformity to God as he is there represented. For that is the proper likeness to him we are to inquire after (and which only could be impressed by his Gospel) that is expressed and represented there. We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.[f] It is by the glory of the Lord shining through that glass, that we are changed. And the image whereinto we are changed is the same image that is to be seen in that glass. For there God hath provided such a representation of himself and of his mind should appear, as is most suitable to our ease and state, and which it most concerned us to have the view and the image of. That represents him in his imitable excellencies; and shows what he is towards us, what his counsels, determinations, and constitutions are concerning us; and hereupon shows, what we should be, or what temper of spirit becomes us in reference to such a revelation. And such, when we receive this his impressive communication, he really makes us thereby become. And then is it that it will be found most highly delectable. A heart formed according to the revelation of God in Christ, and cast into the mould of the Gospel, (as is the import of the apostle's words, Ye have obeyed from the heart the doctrine,[g] into the type or frame whereof ye were delivered,) hath a spring of pleasure in itself. Not of perfect unmixed pleasure; for there is much yet remaining, that cannot but be very displeasing and offensive to such as have learned no longer to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, and have senses exercised to discern between good and evil.

u John i.
y 2 Pet. i.
w 2 Cor. v.
z 1 John iii.
x Eph. v.
a Jam. i.
b 1 John i. 5, 6.
e Ver. 7.
c Eph. v.
f 2 Cor. iii. 18.
d Ver. 6.
g Rom. vi. 17.

And indeed by the same vital principle the soul is made capable both of the sweetest delights and the quickest sense of pain; while it was dead it was sensible of neither.

Nor is it an original spring. Whatever it hath that is good and pleasant comes from a higher head, and is communicated. But the communication remains not in this heart as in a dead receptacle, but creates the soul where it is a living spring itself. The Lord shall satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and as a spring of water whose waters fail not.[h] After which it follows, Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, &c.[i] So though the waters that are so pleasantly refreshing to holy souls are given by Christ; yet he himself tells us, they shall be in him to whom they are given a well of water springing up into everlasting life.[k] Whence also the good man is said to be satisfied from himself;[l] and the mouth of the righteous to be a well of life,[m] *i. e.* to others, much more must his heart be so to himself. Nor indeed can there be a vainer or more absurd design and expectation, than to aim immediately at delights and joys, without ever looking after that transforming, purifying, quickening communication from God, in which he is to be enjoyed; which is, apparently, the most prejudicial and dangerous mistake, the practical error (and so much the worse therefore) of many persons of much pretence to religion, that dream and boast of nothing less than raptures and transports, having never yet known or felt what the work of regeneration or the new creature means. And having only got some notions of God and Christ, that tickle their fancies without ever changing their hearts, these go for divine enjoyments. Others somewhat awakened and convinced, but not renewed, though they do not pretend already to have, yet do (from the same mistaken apprehension) as vainly seek and catch at joys and sweetnesses; while their unsanctified hearts do yet lie steeped in the gall of bitterness. And they wonder and complain, that they feel not in themselves the delights whereof they find Scripture sometimes make mention, while in the meantime they expect and snatch at them in that preposterous impossible way, as to abstract them from the things themselves, wherein the pleasure and delight lies. They would have delight without the delectable good that must immediately afford and yield it; or without foregoing the noisome evils that resist and hinder it; which therefore makes it necessary to treat the more largely of the delightful communication, by which only intervening souls are capable of delighting in God.

And as to this branch of it, the vital, sanctifying, transforming influence, whereby the soul is wrought to a conformity to the Gospel; if we take a somewhat more distinct view of it, we shall find, it cannot but have in it abundant matter of delight. In the general, the thing here to be communicated, is a universal rectitude of temper and dispositions, including—the removal of such as are sinful and corrupt; and—the settlement of such as are holy and gracious;—both to be measured and estimated, as to their good or evil, by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now surely that must be a blessed and delightful state (and it's that towards which this divine communication gradually tends) wherein a wretched soul, that was lost in the impurities of sin, shall be stripped and unclothed of all the pravity, perverse inclinations, corrupt affections, which the Gospel of Christ condemns; and invested with all the parts of that purity, that gracious and holy frame, which that Gospel recommends. For as the former carry in them matter of certain vexation and anguish, which it is hereby freed from; so the latter manifestly carry in themselves matter of unspeakable delight and pleasure, which it hereby partakes. And by the same degrees by which this divine communication infers the latter of these, it expels the former. By the same degrees by which any are made partakers of the Divine nature, they escape the corruptions which are in the world through lust. And that we may be here a little more particular, without descending into the innumerable particularities which might be severally spoken of upon this occasion; we shall only consider this heart-rectifying communication, in reference to some of the more principal things, towards which the spirit of man may be either perversely, or duly and aright, inclined; that we may see what matter of delight it infers and brings with it. In order whereto it must be considered, that wherein it is transforming, it is also enlivening; and therefore furnishes the soul with the power of spiritual sensation; whereby it comes to apprehend its former temper, as very grievous and detestable; not only being entire and undiminished, but even the relics of it which do yet remain; and proportionably, the holy frame to be introduced as highly covetable and to be infinitely desired.

Which being supposed, it must needs be very delightful to such a soul, to feel itself in part rectified, and to expect it further in its temper and inclinations,

1. Towards God, towards whom it was most disinclined; that is, both towards him as its end, and towards Christ as its way to him.

As to himself its end. It finds upon reflection, it was dead towards God, without motion towards him, without inclination, all its powers bent and set quite another way; so that to persuade it to begin a course of holy motion towards God, was a like thing as to persuade a stone to fly upwards. It could not trust the original truth, nor love the sovereign good, nor obey the supreme authority. Its course was nothing else but continual recession from him, towards whom it should have been continually pressing forward with all its might. It was wont to say to him, in whom was its life and all its hope, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" was utterly alienated from the life of God, and did choose to live as without him in the world. And although it still remain thus in too great a degree, yet as it abhors this as a hateful way of living, and desires it may be otherwise; so is it sensibly delightful that it doth in some degree perceive a change; that now it can find itself returning into its right and natural state of subordination to God. Which, while it was out of it, laid that claim to it, that its dislocation was uneasy, and it could have no rest; though it was not aware what the matter was with it, and could never thoroughly apprehend, that it ought (much less could desire or aim) to return. And if in returning, and its continual course afterwards, (which ought to be but a continuing return and moving back towards God,) there be much cause for the exercise of repentance; the disposition whereto is a part of that new nature now communicated; yet even such relentings as are due and suitable upon this account are not unpleasant. There is pleasure mingled with such tears, and with those mournings which are not without hope, and which flow naturally and without force, from a living principle within, as waters from their still-freshly springing fountain. When the soul finds itself unbound and set at liberty; when it can freely pour out itself to God, dissolve kindly and melt before him; it doth it with regret only at what it hath done and been, not at what it is now doing, except that it can do it no more; affecting even to be infinite herein, while it yet sees it must be confined within some bounds. It loves to lie in the dust and abase itself; and is pleased with the humiliation, contrition, and brokenness of heart, which repentance towards God includes in it. So that as God is delighted with this sacrifice, so it is with the offering of it up to him. Many men apprehend a certain sweetness in revenge; such a one finds it only in this just revenge upon himself. How unexpressible pleasure accompanies its devoting itself to God, when bemoaning itself, and returning with weeping and supplication, it says, "Now, lo I come to thee, thou art the Lord my God. I have brought thee back thine own, what I had sacrilegiously alienated and stolen away, the heart which was gone astray, that hath been so long a vagabond and fugitive from thy blessed presence, service, and communion. Take now the soul which thou hast made; possess thy own right; enter upon it, stamp it with the entire impression of thine own seal, and mark it for thine. Other lords shall no more have dominion. What have I to do any more with the idols wherewith I was wont to provoke thee to jealousy? I will now make mention of thy name, and of thine only. I bind myself to thee in everlasting bonds, in a covenant never to be forgotten."

The self-denial which is included in this transaction, hath no little pleasure in it. When the soul freely quits all pretence to itself, and by its own consent passes into

h Isa. lviii. 11. i Ver. 14. k John iv. 14. l Prov. xiv. 14. m Ch. xiii.

his now acknowledged right; disclaims itself, and all its own former interests, inclinations, and ends, and is resolved to be to him and to no other. When this is done *unreservedly*, without any intention of retaining or keeping back any thing from him; *absolutely*, and without making any conditions of its own, but only agreeing to and thankfully accepting his; *peremptorily* and without hesitation, and without halting between two opinions, "Shall I? or shall I not?" (as if it were ready in the same breath to retract and undo its own act;) how doth it now rejoice to feel itself offer willingly! They that have life and sense about them, can tell there is pleasure in all this. And the oftener repetition is made hereof, (so it be done with life, not with trifling formality,) they so often renew the relishes with themselves of the same pleasure.

Continued commerce with God, agreeable to the tenor of that league and covenant struck with him, how pleasant and delightful is it! to be a friend of God, an associate of the Most High, a domestic, no more a stranger, a foreigner, but of his own household, to live wholly upon the plentiful provisions, and under the happy order and government, of his family, to have a heart to seek all from him, and lay out all for him! How great is the pleasure of trust, of living free from care; that is, of any thing, but how to please and honour him in a cheerful unsolicitous dependence, expecting from him our daily bread, believing he will not let our souls famish; that while they hunger and thirst after righteousness, they shall be filled; that they shall be sustained with the bread and waters of life; that when they hunger, he will feed them with hidden manna, and with the fruits that grow on the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God; that when they thirst he will give water, and add milk and honey without money, without price. And for the body not to doubt, but he that feeds ravens and clothes lilies, will feed and clothe them. To be so taken up in seeking his kingdom and righteousness, as freely to leave it to him to add the other things as he sees fit; to have no thought for to-morrow; to have a heart framed herein according to divine precept; not to be encumbered or kept in an anxious suspense by the thoughts and fears of what may fall out, by which many suffer the same affliction a thousand times over, which God would have them suffer but once; a firm repose on the goodness of Providence, and its sure and never-erring wisdom; a steady persuasion, that our heavenly Father knows what we have need of, and what is fittest for us to want, to suffer, or enjoy; how delightful a life do these make! and how agreeable to one born of God, his own son and heir of all things; as being joint heirs with Christ, and claiming by that large grant, that says all things are yours; only that in minority it is better to have a wise Father's allowance, than be our own carvers.

To live in the fear of God, is not without its pleasure. It composes the soul, expels the vanity which is not without vexation, represses exhorbitant motions, checks unruly passions, keeps all within in a pleasant peaceful calm; is health to the navel and marrow to the bones.

To live in his love, is delight itself, or a tendency towards it. The disposition whereto being communicated from God, and a part of the holy new creature derived from him; is also part of the (secondary or subservient) delectable object. As the light that serves unto vision is partly (as the mediate object) somewhat of what I see, and doth partly, as a principle, actuate and concur with the faculty in the act of seeing. And as the blessed God himself is both the first principle and ultimate object of that and other gracious acts[n] therefore it cannot but be pleasant to the soul, to perceive that powerful influence from God stirring in it, by which it is disposed to design and pitch upon him as the great object of its highest delight, unto whom it laboured under so vile and wicked an aversion heretofore. Yea, though it yet have no certain persuasion of a present interest in him, yet this disposition of heart towards him, and that it finds it could satisfyingly rest in him as its best good upon supposition it had such an interest, the very strivings and contentions of the soul towards him upon this account, are not without a present pleasure: as we behold with an intermixed desire and delight a grateful object which we would enjoy, but do not yet know whether we can compass or not. To be in that temper of soul, as to resolve, "Him I will seek and pursue, him I will study to please and serve, and spend my strength and life in serving him, (which is to live in his love,) though I yet know not whether he will accept, or how he will deal with me!" this cannot but have a certain sensible delectation in it.

To live in a stated habitual subjection to him as the Lord of our lives, how pleasant is it! To have learned to obey; to be accustomed to the yoke; to taste and prove the goodness and acceptableness of his will through an effectual transformation in the renewal of our minds; to be by the law of the Spirit of life made free from the law of sin and death; to be able to speak it as the undisguised sense of our hearts, "Because thy law is holy, therefore thy servant loveth it;" to reckon it a royal law of liberty, so as to account ourselves so much the more free, by how much we are the more thus bound; when we affect to be prescribed to, and are become patient of government, not apt to chafe at the bridle, or spurn and kick at the boundaries that hem us in: this is a temper that hath not more of duty in it than it hath of delight. There is such a thing as delighting in the law of God, according to the inward man, when there is yet a difficulty in suppressing and keeping under inordinate rebellious workings of corrupt nature; unto which there is no desire an indulgence should be given, by having the law attempered to them, but severity rather used to reduce them to a conformity to the law: so will it be, if the law become a heart impression; when it can once be truly said, thy law is in my heart, it will be also with the same sincerity said, I delight to do thy will, O God.[o]

The continual exercise of good conscience towards God, hath great pleasure in it. Hereby our way and course is continually reviewed, and we pass censures upon ourselves, and upon that account survey our own works. And by how much the more carefully and often this is done, so much the more delectable it will be; that is, the more approvable we shall find them upon review. For we shall order our course the more warily, as we reckon upon undergoing an inquisition and search; wherein an apprehensive serious heart well understands it is not itself to be the supreme judge. How blessed an imitation might there here be of the blessed God himself, who we find beheld his six days' works, and lo they were all very good; whereupon follows his delightful day of rest: so we shall, in some degree of conformity to him, finding our works to be in that sort good, as that he will by gracious indulgence accept them as such, have our own sabbath, a sweet and peaceful rest in our own spirits. Though we can pretend no higher than sincerity only, yet how sweet are the reflections of a well-instructed conscience upon that! When our hearts reproach us not, and we resolve they shall not as long as we live; we are conscious to ourselves of no base designs, we propose nothing to ourselves wherein we apprehend cause to decline God's eye; we walk in the light, and are seeking no darkness or shadow of death, where (as workers of iniquity) we may hide ourselves from him; can implore him as an assistant, and appeal to him as a judge in reference to our daily affairs and wonted course: is this without pleasure? This is our rejoicing, saith the apostle, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation, &c.[p] And thus to converse with God, and him whom we daily design to glorify and serve, and whom we expect daily in some measure, and fully and finally ere it be long, to enjoy, is certainly throughout a way of pleasantness and peace. How delectable then is the soul-rectifying communication from God, whereby, being before so disaffected, it becomes now so well inclined towards him in all these respects. But because the exigency of the case did require (by rea-

n And how rationally men may be said at the same time to love, delight in, and enjoy the amiable or delectable object, and therewith also love their own love, enjoy their own fruition, or delight in their own delight; enough is said by some school-men. Nor indeed can it be conceived how the soul can continue to love or delight in any thing but it must be so. For while it perseveres, every latter act justifies the former, and takes complacency therein, but all as directed towards such an object.

o Ps. xl.

p 2 Cor. i. 12.

son of sin that had cut off the intercourse) that there should be a mediator to open the way and renew the former outworn friendship; therefore it was also necessary that so the soul might duly move towards God, it should be rightly framed and disposed also towards him.

We are therefore to consider too, how delectable this communication must be, as it aright disposes the heart towards Christ, our way to God. For towards him we must understand it to have been most obstinately and inflexibly averse; and that therefore a mighty communication of power was necessary to set it right here. Unto that part of religion which is natural, there was so much of an advantage beforehand, as that there was an old foundation to build upon. There are some notions of God left, not only concerning his existence, but his nature and attributes, many of them: and from the apprehension what he was, it was in some measure discernible what we should have been, and ought yet to be towards him; and from thence many checks and rebukes of conscience wherein it was found to be otherwise: so that here was somewhat in nature to be wrought upon, as to this part of religion. But as to that part which respects the Mediator, this was a frame wholly to be raised up from the ground. There were no principles immediately and directly inclining to take part with the Gospel; but all to be implanted anew. The way that God would take to bring back souls to him being so infinitely above all human thought. And therefore, though to a considering pagan it would not sound strangely, that God ought to be trusted, feared, loved, &c. yet even to such the Gospel of Christ was foolishness. Besides, that this way of dealing with men was not only unknown and unimaginable to them, not so much as once thought of, or to be guest at; but the tendency and aspect of it (when it should come to be made known) was such as that it could not but find the temper of men's spirits most strongly opposite, not merely ignorant, but prejudiced and highly disaffected. For this course most directly tended to take men quite off from their old bottom; to stoop and humble, and even bring them to nothing; to stain the pride of their glory, and lay them down in the dust as abject wretches, in themselves fit for nothing, but to be trampled on and crushed by the foot of divine revenge. Suppose a man to have admitted a conviction from the light of his own mind or conscience that he was a sinner, and had offended his Maker, incurred his just displeasure, and made himself liable to his punishing justice; it would yet have been a hard matter to make him believe it altogether impossible to him to do any thing to remedy the matter, and restore himself to divine favour and acceptance. He would naturally be inclined to think; why, admit the case be so, he should easily find out a way to make God amends. He would recount with himself all his own natural excellencies, and think himself very capable of doing some great thing, that should more than expiate his offence, and make recompense abundantly for any wrong that he had done. But when the Gospel shall come and tell him he hath deserved eternal wrath, that his sin is inexpiable but by everlasting sufferings, or what is of equal value; that here is one (the eternal Son of God) who became a man like himself, and thereupon a voluntary sacrifice, to make atonement for the transgression of men; that God will never accept another sacrifice for the sins of men than his, nor ever any service at their hands, but for his sake; that him now revealed to them they must receive, rely upon, and trust to wholly, or perish without mercy; yea, and that he hath put the government over them into his hands, laid it on his shoulders, and to him they must subject themselves as their Ruler and Judge, the great Arbiter of life and death to them and all men; that they are to be entirely devoted to him as long as they live, as their Redeemer and Lord; in him as they are to have righteousness and strength, so to him they must pay all possible homage and subjection, to him their knees must bow, and their tongues confess; they must receive the law from his mouth, be prescribed to by him, comply with his will, though never so much to the crossing of their own; and though, notwithstanding they must know they can deserve nothing by it; that so vile and wordless miscreants they are become that God will never have to do with them upon other terms.

When this shall appear the state of the case, and it comes to be apprehended, "Then must I yield myself a greater transgressor than ever I thought, and an undone, impotent, helpless wretch; I shall thus make nothing of myself; and what must all my natural or acquired excellencies go just for nothing? and a person of such worth and accomplishments as I, be thus brought down into the dust? yea, and besides, to be brought under such bonds, and profess to owe myself so entirely to a Redeemer, that I must for ever live after his will and pleasure, and no more at my own; and can never hope, if I take a liberty to indulge myself besides the allowance of his rules, that I can ever make any amends for such transgression by any thing that I can do? so that by taking his gift (of my pardon and life) upon such terms, I shall sell my liberty, and render myself a perfect slave to his will and pleasure for ever?" Here now cannot but be a strong stream to be striven against, and most vehement counter-strivings of the haughty and licentious spirit of man. So that it is not strange it should be said by our Saviour, No man can come unto me except my Father draw him. And that the exceeding greatness of power, according to the workings of the mightiest power in any case, should be put forth upon them that believe. Therefore are men in Christ by creative power only; if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.[q] He is new made, if he be in him. And this aversion being so deeply natural, will still in a degree remain (while any thing of corrupt nature remains) in the hearts of even the regenerate themselves.

Therefore a continual exertion of the same power will be ever requisite to hold souls to Christ, and retain them in their station in him. He that establisheth us with you in Christ,[r] is God, &c. *q. d.* it is only a God that can do this. Therefore how is God admired and adored upon this single account. Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery,[s] which was kept secret since the world began, (this was indeed a great secret to the lapsed world,)—To God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. But as the heart-rectifying communication from God, in this matter, is such as carries mighty power with it, so it doth proportionable pleasure, when it hath overcome, and (to the pitch of sincerity) set the soul right in this thing. How delectable is it to receive the Son of God, when the heart is made willing in the day of power! when his cords take hold of the soul, and draw it to him! what pleasure is there in the consenting, self-resigning act and disposition!

It is most highly delightful to receive him, and give up ourselves to him as our full suitable good, so exactly answering all the exigencies of our distressed case; when sensibly apprehending the true state of it, the soul cries out, "None but Christ," and finds him present, waiting only for consent, readily offering himself, "Here I am, take me, thy Jesus, thy help, thy life!" How overcomingly pleasant is this to a soul that feels its distress, and perceives itself ready to perish; yea, and that daily sees itself perishing, were it not for him! How pleasant, when in the time of love he finds the poor soul in its blood, and says to it, Live; clothes it, decks it, makes it perfect through his own comeliness, tenders himself to it, unto it taken off the dunghill, cast out in the most loathsome deplorable plight; and enters the marriage covenant with it, (we need not be squeamish or shy to speak after God himself, so representing this matter,) overcomes by his own mercy and goodness, and prevails with a sinful creature to accept him. How gladly doth it throw off every thing of its own, that it may entirely possess him and be possessed by him. Here is the joy of a nuptial solemnity, or the joy of espousals. "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." While as yet this transaction is not distinctly reflected on, (as when possibly afterwards it is, there may great difficulties and doubts arise, whether all were rightly done, or yet be on its own part, yea or no,) if however it be truly done, in the very doing itself, and the same continuing disposition, there is a sensible and inseparable delight. I

q 2 Cor. v. 15.

r 2 Cor. i.

s Rom. xvi.

say in the same disposition as often as by any repeated acts of the same kind, it expresses and shows itself: that is, as often as this covenant is renewed, (whether with solemnity or more occasionally,) though the relation arising thence be not in the same instant considered or reflected on, nor the sincerity of the act itself, which is necessary thereto; yet that very consent itself, if it be sincere, hath a secret joy accompanying it; and the soul feels the gratefulness and pleasure of its own act, though it do not for the present examine and take a view of it. For it is now from a principle of life, embracing and drawing into union with itself an object that is all life, and goodness, and sweetness; which therefore sheds its own delightful savour and fragrancy through the soul, while it is in the mean time acting only upon the object directly, and not reflecting upon its own act, or considering in that very instant what will be consequential thereupon. But if withal it do consider, (as that consideration cannot be far off, though it cannot consider every thing at once,) that it is receiving him that is to bring it to God, who is able to do it, (even to save to the uttermost all that will come to God by him,) who is intent upon that design, and did in the midst of dying agonies breathe forth his soul in the prosecution of it, and with whom God requires it to unite for this very purpose; this cannot but add unspeakably to the delightfulness of this transaction, and of this effusion of the Holy Ghost, in the virtue whereof the thing is done, how oft soever it be seriously done; as our case and state require that it be very often.

And to receive him as our Lord, (which is joined with that other capacity wherein we receive him, *viz.* of a Jesus or Saviour; as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord,[t] so, &c.) This also, and the heart-subduing influence that disposes to it, is most highly delectable. When the soul, that was so stoutly averse, and that once said within itself, "I will not have him to reign over me," is brought freely to yield; and with sincere, loyal resolutions and affections devotes itself to him, consents to his government, submits its neck and shoulder to his yoke and burden; says to him with an ungainsaying heart, as its full sense, "Now thou Lord of my life and hope, who hast so long striven with me, so often and earnestly pressed me hereto, so variously dealt with me, to make me understand thy merciful design, and who seekest to rule with no other aim or intent, but that thou mayest save; and who hast founded thy dominion in thy blood, and didst die and revive, and rise again, that thou mightest be Lord of the living and dead, and therefore my Lord: accept now a self-resigning soul; I make a free surrender of myself, I bow and submit to thy sovereign power, I fall at the footstool of thy throne, thou Prince of the kings of the earth, who hast loved sinners, and washed them from their sins in thy blood; glory in thy conquest, thou hast overcome, I will from henceforth be no longer mine own, but thine; I am ready to receive thy commands, to do thy will, to serve thy interests, to sacrifice my all to thy name and honour; my whole life and being are for ever thine." I say, (as before,) there is pleasure in the very doing this itself, as often as it is sincerely done; and it adds hereto, if it be more distinctly considered, it is no mean or any way undeserving person to whom this homage is paid, and obligation taken on unto future obedience. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person, the heir of all things, and who sustains all things by the word of his power; it is he whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace; 'tis he to whom all power is given both in heaven and earth, and (mnre especially) power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as were given him; 'tis he who spoiled principalities and powers, and made an open show of them; he whom because when he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, he humbled himself, made himself of no reputation, took on him the form of a servant, became obedient to death, the Father hath therefore highly exalted, and given him a name above every name, that in his name every knee should bow; and of whom, when he brought him (his first-born) into the world, he said, "Let all the angels of God worship him."

t Col. ii 6. u Psal. xcvii. x Rom. xiv. 17.

And such a one he is, whose temper is all goodness and sweetness. Tell Sion, thy King cometh meek and lowly. He came into this world drawn down only by his own pity and love, beholding the desolations and ruins that were wrought in it every where. Sin universally reigning, and death by sin, and spreading its dark shadow, and a dreadful cloud over all the earth. In which darkness the prince thereof was ruling and leading men captive at his will; having drawn them off from the blessed God their life, and sunk them into a deep oblivion of their own original; and disaffection to their true happiness that could only be found there. This great Lord and Prince of life and peace came down on purpose to be the Restorer of souls, to repair the desolations and ruins of many generations. He came full of grace and truth, and hath scattered blessings over the world wheresoever he came; hath infinitely obliged all that ever knew him; and is he in whom all the nations of the earth must be blessed. And who would not with joy swear fealty to him, and take pleasure to do him homage? Who would not recount with delight the unexpressible felicity of living under the governing power of such a one?

And if the tenor and scope of all his laws and constitutions be viewed over, what will they be found, but obligations upon men to be happy? How easy his yoke, how light his burden; what is the frame of his kingdom, or whereof doth it consist, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost? And who would not now say, "This Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof."[u] Why should it not be triumphingly said among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth, that the world also shall be established, that it cannot be moved: let the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein, and all the trees of the wood rejoice! It's plain, that be the matter of joy here what it will, be there never so much cause of exultation and glorying in him, the righteousness and peace[x] which his kingdom promises, never actually take place, nor the joy that is connected therewith, till the Holy Ghost dispose and form men's spirits thereto. For all this is but mere dream and idle talk to those who hear only of these things, and feel not that vital influence insinuating itself, that may give the living sense and savour of them. And we may rather expect seas and fields, beasts and trees, to sing his triumphant song, and chant his praises, than those men whose hearts are not attempered to his government, and who are yet under the dominion of another Lord, not being yet by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, made free from the law of sin and death. But where this is effectually done, how large matter of most rational pleasure do they find here; while there is nothing in that whole system of laws by which he governs, that is either vain, unequal, or unpleasant, or upon any account grievous! only there is not the estimate of distempered spirits, or of any other than them in whose hearts his law is written, and who because they love him, keep his commandments.[y] Unto love his commands are most connatural; for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; they are not grievous,[z] *i. e.* by the *meiosis* which some do reasonably enough apprehend in those words, they are joyous, delightful, pleasant, but to them only who, being born of God, have overcome the world. This holy influence and communication of God is therefore grateful, and contributes not a little to delight in this respect, that thereby men's spirits are rectified and set right towards God, *viz.* both towards the Creator and Redeemer.

2. As hereby they are rectified towards men, having the universal law of love wrought deep into their hearts; being filled with all goodness, righteousness, meekness, mercifulness; apt to do no wrong, to bear any, to pity and help the distressed, to love enemies, and as there is opportunity, to do good to all, especially to them that are of the household of faith. We must understand in this, as well as in the other parts of that stamp which the spirit of God puts on the souls of men, that the impression corresponds and answers to the seal, (as hath been said,) the inward communication to the outward revelation of God's will; and so we find the matter is: for as divine precepts require this should be the temper of men's spirits, so the very

y John xv. z 1 John v. 3.

things that compose and make up that blessed temper, are said to be the fruits of his own Spirit; The fruit of the Spirit is peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, [a] &c. And again, The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth. [b] Now hath not that soul a spring of pleasure within itself, that is in these respects as God would have it be? That is conscious to itself of nothing but righteousness, goodness, benignity, candour towards any man, and is in all things acted by a spirit of love, that suffereth long, and is kind, that envieth not, that vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, and never faileth. [c] That so equally poises and acts a man's spirit, that he carries seemly and suitable towards all men, takes pleasure in the best; in the saints and excellent ones of the earth hath all his delight; and is no worse affected, than to wish them better, even towards the very worst; neither envies the greatest, nor despises the meanest; neither is revengeful towards them that injure him, nor unthankful to them that oblige him; that is apt to learn of good men, and to teach the bad, by observing and giving the most imitable example; that is not undutiful to superiors, nor morose and unconversable towards equals; that lives not to himself; is a common good to all within the sphere through which his activity can extend itself; that doth good with inclination, from the steady propension of his own will, and an implanted principle of goodness. It is evident, God hath formed such a man's spirit unto delight of the purest kind, and the best sort of pleasure; unto which they who are strangers, banish it from their own breasts, by the resistance and grief they give his blessed Spirit, thereby making it a stranger there; and by harbouring in their own bosoms their own tormentors, the pride, the wrath, the envy, the malice, the revengefulness, the bitterness of spirit, which as they render them uneasy and intolerable to all that are about them, so most of all to themselves; and which while they prey wherever they range abroad, yet still bite most keenly and tormentingly that heart itself wherein they are bred; as poisonous vipers gnawing the bowels which enclose them.

3. Towards themselves: which also may be considered distinctly; for though all the good qualifications we can mention or think of, do redound to a man's self, and turn to his own advantage, repose, and delight, (which it is the design of all this discourse to show,) yet there are some that more directly terminate on a man's self, wherein the rectitude we now speak of doth in great part consist. When we are obliged to love others as ourselves, it supposes not only an allowable, but a laudable self-love. Men shall praise thee when thou dost well to thyself. Before this right spirit be renewed in a man, he doth not only wound himself, by blows that are reflected on him, and hurt at the rebound, but by many a direct stroke; or lets the wounds fester and corrupt, to the cure whereof he should with all diligence directly apply himself. How unpropitious and cruel to themselves are all unholy persons! what wastes and desolations do they commit and make in their own souls, by breaking the order God and nature did at first set and establish there! dethroning their own reason and judgment, which ought to bear sway and govern within them. This banishes delight, and drives it far away from them. They see what is fittest for them to do and seek, and run a quite counter-course. What storms do they hereby raise in their own bosoms! What a torture is it, when a man's own light and knowledge bear a standing testimony against him, and hold him under a continual doom! How ill-disposed are men towards themselves, when they wholly neglect themselves in one kind, when they too much mind and seek themselves in another; when they too little understand themselves, so as not to put a true value on themselves, but do either disesteem themselves, as to their more noble part, in respect of that common excellency which belongs to them with all other men; or do over-magnify themselves, and are conceited and too well opinioned of themselves, in respect of any peculiar excellency wherein they imagine they outstrip others! How ill do they treat themselves in their self-indulgence, their gratifying their own sensual inclination, with the greatest danger and damage to their souls; when they care not at what expense they make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof! What unkind usage do they find at their own hands, when they cherish and countenance desires which they cannot gratify, and raise to themselves expectations of things not within their own power, which being disappointed turn into so many furies, and in that shape take a sharp revenge upon their own hearts! when they exercise no authority and dominion over themselves, preserve not the liberty due to what should both be itself free, and should command the rest in them; enslaves themselves to vile and ignominious lusts and passions, put out their own eyes, and grind blindfold to the basest and most tyrannical lords, their own sordid humours, and base, mean appetites! when though they serve more rigorous taskmasters than the Israelites in Egypt did, and are more sorely beaten by them when their tale is not fulfilled for want of materials, yet groan not because of their hard bondage, nor affect liberty! This gracious communication from God, sets all things in a good degree right within: so that where there was nothing before, but horrid and hellish darkness, disorder, and confusion, there now shines a mild, pleasant, cheerful light, that infers regularity, purity, and peace.

How great is the pleasure that arises from self-denial, (wherein we do, duly and as we ought, deny ourselves,) not only as it is an act of duty towards God, (of which before,) but as it is an act of justice and mercy towards our own souls! That is, wherein we make a just and true estimate of ourselves, do esteem basely of ourselves; wherein we are really become base and vile; and wherein there is any thing of real value and excellency in our own beings, we value it only upon that account, and in that subordination wherein it is truly valuable! How pleasant, when we have learned to forsake and abandon ourselves, when we are not apt to magnify and applaud, to trust or love, to seek and serve ourselves unduly, and are only inclined to own, to cleave and stick to ourselves, wherein and so far as we ought! when that idol self is so no longer maintained within us, at the dear expense of our peace, comfort, safety, and eternal hope; an idol that engrossed the whole substance of our souls, that exhausted and devoured the strength and vigour of our spirits, which it doth not maintain, and cannot repair; which consumes our time, which keeps all our powers and faculties in a continual exercise and hurry, to make a costly, a vain, an unlawful provision for it! How great is the ease and pleasure which we feel, in being delivered from that soul-wasting monster, that was fed and sustained at a dearer rate, and with more costly sacrifices and repasts, than can be paralleled by either sacred or other history; that hath made more desolation in the souls of men, than ever was made in their towns and cities, where idols were served by only human sacrifices, or monstrous creatures satiated with only such refections; or where the lives and safety of the most were to be bought out by the constant successive tribute of the blood of not a few! that hath devoured more, and preyed more cruelly upon human lives, than Moloch, or the Minotaur! When this monstrous idol is destroyed and trodden down, what a jubilee doth it make, what songs of triumph and praise doth it furnish and supply to the poor soul, now delivered and redeemed from death and bondage! How much more easy and reasonable a service is it (when once the grace of God and their own experience give men to understand it) to study to please him than themselves! when they feel themselves dead to their former lord and service, and only alive to God, through Jesus Christ! when sin no longer reigns in their mortal bodies, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof! [d] when they no more yield their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but have yielded themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, [e] &c. when being made free from sin, they are become servants unto righteousness! [f] the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus having made me free from the law of sin! [g] What an ease is it to the spirit of a man, when he hath not himself to seek and serve and care for in any unlawful disallowed sense; when he finds not himself

a Gal. v. 22, 23. b Eph. v. 9. c 1 Cor. xiii.
d Rom. vi. 11, 12. e Ver. 13. f Ver. 18. g Rom. viii. 2.

necessitated or urged by his own imperious fleshly inclinations so to do; when he perceives himself by a prevailing better principle counterpoised, and the weight and bias of his own spirit incline him quite another way; when he finds he hath nothing left him to do, but to serve God, to know his will and do it, and is disburdened of all unnecessary care for himself; that which is necessary being part of his duty, and is therefore done on purpose only for God; and that which is unnecessary and forbidden (which part only was burdensome) being supplied by (what hath the greatest ease and pleasure in it imaginable) trust and self-resignation to his pleasure and will whose we wholly are! What life is pleasant, if this be not! Surely, wherein it is attained to, it is most pleasant; and hither this gracious heart-rectifying communication is gradually tending.

How great is the pleasure that arises from self-government! when that governs in us which should govern, and that is subject and obeys which should obey; when a man's mind is competently furnished with directive practical principles, and his heart is so framed that it is capable of being prescribed to, is patient of restraints and direction, easily obeys the rein and follows the ducture of an enlightened well-instructed mind; when the order is maintained between the superior faculties and the inferior, and there are no contentious murmurs of ungovernable appetitions and passions against the law of the mind. 'Tis true, that where this holy rectitude doth but in a degree take place there will be many conflicts, but those conflicts are in order to victory; and how joyful and glorious is the triumph upon that victory! when the soul enters upon its ἐπινίκιον, its thanksgiving song, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" how happy a state is that (wherein at some times it is here attained) when there are now no tumults within! The wicked (which is the very import of their name) are as a troubled sea, that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Here is no governing principle in any power; no sceptre, no trident to check and allay the rage of those waters. But when his power goes forth in the soul, whose very word winds and seas obey, how peaceful and pleasant a calm doth ensue! Now is a man restored to himself, and is again in his right mind. He is truly now said to enjoy himself, and upon the best terms; that is, he enjoys himself in and under God. He is (a due subordination) master of himself. He possesses his own soul; that one piece of holy rectitude, patience, enables him to do so. In your patience possess ye your souls.[h] Patience is a part of fortitude, an ability to suffer. He that is in this respect impotent of himself, not able to suffer, is a perfect slave; not a slave only to the vicious wills and humours of other men, in whose power he apprehends it is to befriend or hurt him; but first and chiefly to his own: he is not master of his own judgment, reason, and conscience; but he prostitutes all, in the first place, to his own inordinate self-love, his avarice, his fear, and consequently to the pleasure of other men, (which upon no other terms and inducements is base and vile towards any man, were the matter in itself never so right, and the obedience as due to them as can be supposed,) whereas if he could suffer, he retained his mastery over himself, and were, under God, within his own power. Upon this, with other grounds, is joyfulness i a companion of patience; how much more is it so (if to this one part) to the whole frame of that holy rectitude whereby a man's spirit is composed to a due order within himself; when there is a universal sobriety, (or soundness of mind, as the word that uses to express sobriety signifies,) a continency and dominion of oneself; and the soul is no longer hurried to and fro, and even outed of itself, by undue desires, fears, angers, sorrows, &c. nor vexed by the absence of, and its perverse inaptitude and indisposition to, those which it well knows are due; when it finds itself at liberty from the exactions of an unsubdued flesh, and for the kindly and genuine operations and exercise of the divine life. When it is in good measure freed from the rackings and tortures that naturally accompany the habitual contrariety of an ungovernable heart to a convinced judgment and conscience; and is no longer held in pain, by such continual self-upbraidings; Thou art, and affectest to be, what thou knowest thou shouldest not; and neither art, nor dost, nor canst desire or endure to be, or do, what thou very well knowest thou shouldest. In that case the soul is throughout disjointed, and continually grating upon itself. And the ease and pleasure which it finds by this happy change much resembles that which a man's body, being in such a case, feels, when every dislocated bone is brought back and well settled in its proper place and order again. How resentingly doth the Psalmist acknowledge Divine goodness in this! He restoreth my soul; and leadeth me in paths of righteousness, for his name's sake;[k] *q. d.* "Now I can walk and act as a sound man, and the paths of righteousness are become pleasant and delectable to me, which before I declined, or wherein my halt and maimed soul was unable to move a step." Now is heard the voice of joy and gladness, when the bones which were disordered and broken rejoice.[l]

How great is the joy and pleasure of self-activity! when the soul is not moved by foreign, improper motives, but finds itself to move freely from an implanted principle of life, that acts it forward in right and plain paths; when it doth, with its own full consent, what it is convinced it ought without being forcibly dragged or violently imposed upon; and is (not a weak, ineffectual, or only self-judging, but) a powerful governing vital law to itself.

How great pleasure arises from a constant, diligent self-inspection! when a man's spirit dwells within itself, resides at home, seeks not itself abroad; remains within its own bounds, is intent upon itself; watches over its own motions as its proper charge; is formed to a compliance with that precept, Keep thy heart with all diligence.[m] And upon that consideration, as seriously weighing that thence are the issues of life, all vital acts and operations whatsoever will savour of the root and principle from whence they proceed, and as the heart is: good and pure if that be so; if otherwise corrupt and nought. To have a spirit habituated to the business of its own province and territory; its eyes, not with the fool's in the ends of the earth, but turned inward upon itself. Hence his own vineyard is best kept; when the sluggard's (that neglects himself) is wholly overrun with thorns and briers, that cover the face thereof. How forlorn and comfortless a spectacle hath such a man of his own soul! The horror whereof is only avoided by (the more hopeless course of) turning off his eye; as conscious how ill entertainment is there to be met with. Therefore are such strangers at home; and are afraid to converse with themselves; are better acquainted with the affairs of France and Spain, or at least of this and that and the other neighbour, than those of their own souls. And the more things at home are neglected the worse they grow. Poverty and desolation come upon them as an armed man; that (in this case) waste and make havoc without resistance. And herein lies much of the heart-rectifying work and power of grace, in disposing and setting the heart so far right towards itself, as that it may first have the patience to look inward, and then the pleasure which will afterwards arise, most naturally, thence. The great aversion hereto of misgiving hearts is not otherwise overcome. But when it is, how do all things flourish under such a one's careful, self-reflecting eye! That soul is as a watered garden. Thither it can invite his presence who is altogether made up of delights, to come and eat his pleasant fruits. And now, retirement and solitude become delectable; and a man delightfully associates with himself; singles out himself to be his own companion, as finding another always stepping in; so that he is never less alone than when alone. How unspeakable a happiness is this, when the great Mediator that undertook to reconcile God to the soul, shall thus have also reconciled it to itself! When it shall be considered, how dreadful the case is, when a man's wickedness hath transformed him into a Magor-Missabib, compassed him with affrightments, made him a terror to himself; it may then be understood how grateful a change it is when he is reformed into a son of peace, and made a delight to himself; when he can recreate himself, and refresh his tired eye, overcharged with beholding the sad things that every where come in view from a world lost

h Luke xxi. 19. i Col i. 11. k Ps. xxiii. 3. l Psal. li. m Prov. iv. 23.

in wickedness, by looking into God's own plantation within himself; and considering it under that notion only, he doth not look upon himself with an eye of pride; as he doth not upon others with that of disdain. He beholds with a sort of self-complacency what God hath wrought and done there, not with self-arrogance; as knowing there is a self, too, upon which he hath still reason to look with abhorrence and self-loathing. And though there he now incorporated with him a better self, yet that was not of himself. He well understands who made him differ, not only from others but from himself; and put him into that capacity of saying that I am not I, I am not who or what I was before. And the more he is used to such self-reflection, the more pleasant it becomes to him; that is, if he confine not his eye too much, to the dark side of his own soul: and to look to the more lightsome side with that remembrance, (as before,) that whatsoever he is, that is good and grateful to behold, he is by grace. He thus grows familiar with himself, and the sight mends as it is often beheld; and while it is not observed always to do so. Yea, though things look many times sadly and sometimes dubiously; that, however, doth but occasion the accomplishment of a more diligent search, which engages to more earnest labour and strugglings with God and with himself; which labour is recompensed with a following fruit and pleasure; yea, and God is invocated not only for redress, but for further search. When such fear lest they have been too indulgent and partial towards themselves, and lest they have not made so strict a scrutiny as the case may possibly require; then the request is, "Search and try me, O Lord, see if there be any way of wickedness in me." And here the sincerity which appears in that self-suspicion, and jealousy over their own souls, is not without its grateful relishes: and a secret delight insinuates and mingles with the appeal which such a soul makes to him, whose eye is a flame of fire, searches hearts and tries reins. And it is some pleasure, however, to find that disposition in their own souls, that they are thoroughly willing to know themselves, and desire not to shun and decline the search of that fiery flaming eye. Thus then upon all accounts this divine communication is delectable, as it tends to rectify men's dispositions towards themselves, and to set them right in their inclinations and posture in reference to their own souls. We may add,

4. It contributes much to the matter of delight, as it sets men's spirits right in their dispositions towards this and the other world, the present and future state of things. How great a work is necessary to be done in this respect, wherein things are so monstrously out of course; and men become thereby not strangers only to true delight and pleasure, but even incapable of any such relishes till the matter be redressed! How vitiated and unexercised are men's senses as to these things, and unable to discern between good and evil! Their grosser sense is utterly incompetent, and a spiritual more refined sense is wanting; therefore do they judge, and choose, and love, and pursue only as that most incompetent and injudicious principle doth direct, that is appealed to in all cases; all their measures are taken from thence, and that only is called good, which to their sensual imagination, tinctured by the earthliness and carnality of their hearts, appears so; that evil, of which the same principle doth so pronounce; according hereto is the whole bent and inclination of their souls. And they are only influenced and governed by the powers of this sensible world; this present evil world, the fashion whereof (yea, it and the lusts thereof together) are passing away. And the things of the world to come have no power with them; no motives from thence signify any thing. They are only steered in their whole course by the apprehension they have of advantages or disadvantages in reference to their present secular concernments. They love this world, and the things of this world; mind earthly things, and are not startled when they are so plainly told, that men of this character have not the love of the Father in them, and are enemies to the cross of Christ, and that their end will be destruction. 'Tis a death to them to think of dying; not from the fear of what may ensue, (they have atheism enough to stifle such fear,) but from the love of their earthly stations, and that vile earthly body in which they dwell.

But how delightful a thing is the change which this rectifying communication makes! How pleasant to live in this world as a pilgrim and stranger, seeking still the better, the heavenly country! To behold the various enticements which are here offered to view at some times without inclination towards them; the frightful aspect and appearance of things at other times without commotion; is not this delectable? To dwell apart from this world in the midst of it; in the secret of the Almighty,[n] under his pavilion, as one of his hidden ones, withdrawn from the communion of this world to his own communion;[o] so severed and cut off from this world, as not to partake in the spirit of it, or be acted thereby; but by another, a greater and more mighty, as well as a purer and more holy, Spirit; Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.[p] And again, We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given us of God.[q] Which things the Divine Spirit disposes the soul to, and unites it with, when it disinclines and disjoins it from this world and the things thereof; and thereby discovers this soul to be quite of another community from that of this world, *viz.* of a heavenly community, unto which those better and more excellent things do lie in common, as their portion and inheritance. What matter of joy and glorying is it,[r] when one is crucified to this world, and this world to him; when the world appears to him a crucified thing, *i. e.* an accursed, hateful, detestable thing, (which is one notion of crucified,) such a thing as he can despise and hate; which he is as little apt to be fond of, as one would be of a loathsome carcass hanging upon an ignominious cross: and when he can feel himself crucified towards it, *i. e.* dead, (another notion of it,) disinclined without sense, breath, pulse, motion, or appetite; not so dead as to be without any kind of life, but without that base, low, sordid kind of life by which he lived to it, and in its converses and embraces. So much of delectation doth this infer, as even to endear the very cross itself (that hateful horrid thing) by which it is effected. But that carries a further signification with it, to be fetched more expressly from other scriptures; the cross is itself rendered amiable, and a thing to be gloried in, to be looked on with delight and pleasure, upon the account of the design and end of that tragedy which was acted thereon; within which design (being executed and accomplished) this happy effect is included. We elsewhere find the apostle expressing his vehement desire to know Christ and the power of his resurrection,[s] and (in order thereto) the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death.[t] But what did he lastly aim at in this? the next words more fully speak out (what he first mentioned) the power of his resurrection to be the thing chiefly in his eye, and that he desired (what he adds) the fellowship of his sufferings, &c. as a means unto that end, though it seemed a sharp and painful means; If by any means I might attain the resurrection of the dead;[u] *q. d.* I care not what I undergo, not the sufferings even of a painful crucifixion itself; or that my worldly earthly self do suffer conformably to the sufferings of my crucified Lord; I matter not by what so severe method the thing be brought about, if by any means it might be brought about, that I may know the power of his resurrection so feelingly, as to attain also the resurrection of the dead. And what was that? No doubt to attain a state (which he confesses he had not yet perfectly attained, but was in pursuit of) suitable to his relation and union with a risen Jesus: union with him supposes a being risen with him; If ye then be risen with Christ,[x] It is taken as a granted thing, that they that are his are risen with him. And what state and temper of spirit would be suitable to that supposition, the next words show: "Seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection (or mind) on the things above, not on the things on the earth." Then follows the method in which they were brought to the capacity of doing so; for ye are dead.

n Psal. xci.
o Psal. xxvii.
p 1 John iv. 4.
q 1 Cor. ii. 12.
r Gal. vi.
s Phil. iii.
t Ver. 10.
u Ver. 11.
x Col. i. 3.

Their professed relation to Christ did suppose them risen, and did therefore first suppose them dead. Now, if they would do suitably to what their profession imported, this was it they had to do; to abstract their minds and hearts from the things of this earth, and place them upon the things of a higher region. And (as [y]his afterwards expressed in this same context which we were considering before) to have our conversation, or citizenship, in heaven, whence we look for the Saviour. [y] That is, as our chief interests and privileges are above, to have our thoughts and the powers of our souls chiefly exercised upon that blessed and glorious state, which state is the prize (mentioned above) of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.[z] It being the scope and import of his call unto us, and the very design of his sufferings on the cross, to draw up a people from earth to heaven; whence therefore, they that under this call do still mind earthly things, are said to be enemies to the cross of Christ;[a] the great incongruity whereof the apostle even resents with tears as he there testifies. And it was in this that he was, for his part, so willing to comply with the design of the cross, that he made no difficulty to endure all the hardship and dolour of it, that he might attain this glorious fruit and gain which he reckoned should accrue to him from it; even more of a raised heavenly mind, which signifies it to be strongly bent that way already; when no mortifications were reckoned too severe to be undergone in order thereto. And here, therefore, this soul-rectifying influence must be understood to have been proportionably strong.

Hence, also, it was, that we find him groaning, as one under a pressure or heavy weight, to be clothed upon with the heavenly house: and to have mortality swallowed up of life;[b] because God had wrought him to this self-same thing; so bent and determined his spirit was towards the blessedness of the future state, (which seems the most natural contexture of discourse here, though some others have understood it otherwise,) as that, though he could bear patiently the delay, he could not but desire most earnestly to be there. And we see how the temper of the primitive Christians was, as to this, and the other world, in those days when the Spirit was plentifully poured out. They took joyfully the spoilings of their goods, knowing in themselves they had in heaven a far better and an enduring substance.[c] Heaven signified much with them, and this world very little. They look not to the things that were seen and temporal, but to the things unseen and eternal;[d] as those former worthies did, whose minds and hearts, being set right by that faith which is the substance of the things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.[e] They lived as pilgrims and strangers on earth, despised the pleasures, riches, and honours of it; endured all manner of hardships and tortures in it, not accepting deliverance, because they were taken up in the pursuit of the better country; had respect to the recompense of reward; and expected a part in the better resurrection. And is it not a delightful thing to the spirit of a man, when he is sensibly disentangled, and at liberty from the cares, desires, griefs, and fears that were wont to enwrap his heart? when he finds his weight and clogs fallen off that depressed him, the bonds and snares loosed which bound him down to this earth; and feels himself ascending and moving upwards; out of that darkness, stupidity, and death that possessed his soul, into that upper region of light, purity, and peace, unto which his spirit is still gradually more and more connaturalized day by day? when heaven in respect of the pure holiness, the calm serenity, the rest and blessedness of it, is now grown familiar to him, and his very element?

We see, then, that in all these mentioned respects this gracious communication, wherein it is rectifying, and tends to settle the soul in that frame which it ought to be in, and which is most proper and natural to it; therein it is also most delightful, and carries highest matter of pleasure in it.

It is, upon the whole, (that we may sum up the account of this divine communication in the following characters of it,)

I. Generative, and begets the soul to a new, a divine life; makes it of a sluggish, stupid, dead thing, (as it was towards all heavenly and divine matters,) living and sprightly, full of active life and vigour. Life we say is sweet, it is in itself a pleasant thing. This mean, bodily life itself is so; if we do but consider it, and allow ourselves to taste and enjoy the pleasure of it. As for instance, that this and that limb and member is not a dead lump, that we feel life freshly sprouting and springing in every part, is not this delightsome? How much more the life of the soul! especially this so excellent and sublime kind of life! And it is the radical principle of all other consequent pleasure, that by which we are capable thereof: every thing is sapless and without savour to the dead. How pleasant operation and fruitions doth the divine life render a person capable of!

2. It is nutritive. Souls are nourished by the same thing by which they are begotten, by the same divine influence. As a generative virtue is wont to be attributed to the Sun, so it cherishes also its own productions. The beams of that Sun of righteousness[f] make them that fear God grow up as calves in the stall, fill them with marrow and fatness, cause them to flourish as the cedars of Lebanon. And is not that delightsome to be increased daily with the increases of God? fed with heavenly hidden manna, angels' food; and thereby (though we need not here speak distinctly of these) to receive at once both nourishment and growth?

3. It is sanative, and virtually contains all the fruits in it which are for the healing of the nations; when the soul grows distempered, it restores it, and is both sustaining and remedying to it. How great is the pleasure of health and soundness! of ease to broken bones! of relief to a sick and fainting heart! so it is often (for in the present state the cure is not perfect, and relapses are frequent) with the soul in which the life of God hath begun to settle and diffuse itself, till his influence repair and renew it; and when it doth so, how pleasant is it to find a heart made sound in his statutes! and to perceive a new working in it, the Spirit of love, power, and a sound mind![g] So pleasant that it occasions a triumph (even when the outward man is perishing) if it be found the inward is renewed day by day.

4. It is corroborative and strengthening; confirms resolutions, and establishes the heart. Hereby they who have felt this quickening, cherishing, healing virtue, are also strengthened with might (*viz.* by the Spirit) in the inner man; so that they hold on their way, and being of clean hands, grow stronger and stronger.[h] They go from strength to strength;[i] and do not so much spend, as increase it by going forward. For the way itself of the Lord is strength to the upright.[k] He provides that fresh recruits shall still spring up to them in their way. For all their supplies are of him, and are acknowledged to be so; inasmuch as by waiting upon the Lord they renew strength,[l] and mount up with wings as eagles, run without weariness, and walk without fainting. And this increasing strength cannot be without a proportionably increasing delight. How pleasantly doth the strong man rejoice to run his race! and enterprise even difficult and hazardous things! By this strength doth the regenerate man perform the ordinary duties belonging to his holy profession; by it he encounters difficulties, combats and conquers enemies, bears heavy and afflicting pressures, and none of these without some intermingled pleasure. For even that exercise of this strength which is likely to be least accompanied with pleasure, the suffering of sharp and smarting afflictions, hath many times much of this grateful mixture; and can only be expected to have it in this way of gracious communication, as the depending sufferers shall be strengthened with all might according to the glorious power of God, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness.[m]

God is therefore to be enjoyed and delighted in by this delectable communication intervening, by which he now frames the soul according to his own image, and gives a heart after his own heart, that is, such as is suitable to him, and as he would have it be. And this way only is any one in a possibility to delight in God, by having a

y Phil. iii. 20. z Ver. 14. a Ver. 18, 19. b 2 Cor. v. 4, 5.
c Heb. x. 34. d 2 Cor. iv. ult. e Heb. xi. f Mal. iv. 2.
g 2 Tim. i. 17. h Job xvii. 9. i Psal. lxxxiv.
k Prov. x. l Isa. xl. m Col. i. 11.

good frame of spirit communicated to him, and inwrought in him: I mean never without this, and in a great measure by it. Then is he in a happy state, when God hath by his own Spirit made him what by his word he requires him to be. Now is he composed to delights and blessedness, being by the same workmanship created in Christ Jesus both to good works and to the best of enjoyments. How happy is that soul in whom the true matter of delight is become an implanted thing! that is what it should be, and should be nothing (such is the constitution of gospel-rules and precepts) but what most truly makes for its own content, delight, and rest! whose own temper is now in some sort become to it both a law and a reward! Surely this is one great part of what an enlightened apprehensive soul would most earnestly desire and crave, or would be the genuine breathings of a sincerely gracious heart. "O that I were more like God! more perfectly framed according to his holy will." And must therefore be, in great part, a thing apt to afford it delight and rest; as hath been already inculcated before.

But yet this natural consequence is little understood. And the common ignorance or inadvertency of this, hath made it necessary to insist the more largely (though but little hath been said in respect of what might) on this part of the delectable communication wherein God offers himself to his people's enjoyment. For from the not knowing, or not considering of this way of enjoying him, this twofold mistake (the one of very dangerous, the other of uncomfortable importance and tendency) hath arisen.

1. That some having thought they have enjoyed God when they have not; having only had their imaginations somewhat gratified, by certain, either false or ineffectual, notions of him. In which they have rested, and placed the sum of their religion and happiness. Never aiming, in the meantime, to have their spirits reformed according to that pure and holy image and exemplar which he hath represented in the Gospel of his Son; the impression whereof, is Christ formed in us.

2. That others have thought they have not enjoyed God when they have; supposing there was no enjoyment of him, but what consisted in the rapturous transporting apprehension and persuasion of his particular love to them; and slightly overlooking all that work he hath wrought in their souls, as if it were nothing to be accounted of, not allowing themselves to reflect on any thing in themselves, but what was still amiss; and vainly seeking with much anxiety and complaint what they have, while they will not take notice that they have it, nor apply themselves to improve the already implanted principles that are, in themselves, apt to yield fruits of so pleasant relish. It was upon this account requisite to discover and labour somewhat to magnify the intrinsical delightfulness of religion itself; and to put the more of note and remark upon a well tempered spirit, even in point of delectableness and the matter of pleasure it hath in it, by how much it is with too many, on one account or another, a neglected thing.

There is only somewhat of doubt or objection that may possibly lie in the minds of some, against the scope and drift of this discourse; which it will be needful we endeavour to remove before we proceed to what is further contained in this gracious communication: As,

1. It may be said, "Doth not all this tend to bring us, instead of delighting in God, to delight in ourselves? to make us become our own centre and rest? And how can the relishable sweetness of gracious principles and dispositions signify God's being to be enjoyed or delighted in? For what, are these things God?" To this I only say,

1. That such holy dispositions, as they are not God, so nor are they, in strictness of speech, ourselves. And how absurd were it, to call every thing ourselves that is in us! And how self-contradicting then were the very objection! for that would make delighting in God and in ourselves directly all one; and so the fault which it causelessly pretends to find, it would really commit. 'Tis true, that improperly holy dispositions are said to make up another self in us, a new man, according as corrupt and sinful principles and dispositions do make also a self, the old man. But then it is also to be remembered, that with no greater impropriety they are capable of bearing the name of God; as the image of any thing frequently doth the name of the thing which it represents, or the work of its author; and they are expressly called, Christ formed in us; and is not he God? They are called the Spirit; for when we are cautioned not to quench the Spirit, how can that be understood of the eternal uncreated Spirit himself? And the very thing produced (not merely the productive influence) in the work of regeneration, is expressly called by that name; (as it is no such strange thing for the effect to carry the name of its cause;) that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.[n] There is Spirit begetting, and spirit begotten. And the spirit begotten, as it must be distinguished from its cause, the Spirit of God; so it must from the subject wherein the effect is wrought, our own spirits; for they sure are not produced by the regenerating work. Yea, and when God is said to dwell in them that dwell in love, and that are humble and contrite; somewhat else is thereby signified to be indwelling there, than the mere being of God; for otherwise the privilege of such were no greater than of all other men and things. And what else is it, but somewhat communicated and imparted immediately from God to such? (else how by dwelling in love, do they dwell in God?) which because dwelling imports permanency, cannot be a transient influence only, but some settled abiding effect, a consistent frame and temper of spirit, maintained by his continually renewed influence; and therefore it would be very unreasonably said, that the representing this as delectable is a calling us off from God to delight in ourselves. For if this communication be not itself, in strict propriety, God, it were as great impropriety to say it were ourselves. Again,

2. It hath a great deal more affinity with God than with us. We are, 'tis true, the subjects of it; but it is his immediate production and very likeness, a divine nature, no human thing. Therefore if here our delight were to terminate, it were more proper to call it delighting in God, than in ourselves. But,

3. It is neither said nor meant, that here our delight is to terminate; but that hereby we are to delight in God, and so that our delight is to terminate in him.

4. When we are said to enjoy God, I inquire, is any thing communicated to us, or no? If not, we have no enjoyment. If any thing be, what is it? God's essence? that's impossible and horrid to think, as hath been said. And we need not repeat, that when we can tell what it is to enjoy a friend, without partaking his essence, whose communications are so incomparably more remote, mediate, resistible; it is less difficult to conceive, how God is to be enjoyed by his communications.

2. It may be again said; "But if God be thus to be delighted in, how can delighting in him be upon such terms our duty? for is it our duty that he communicate himself in this way to us?" Let any that object thus, only study the meaning of those precepts; Keep yourselves in the love of God. Continue in his goodness. Be ye filled with the Spirit. Walk in the Spirit. And if they can think them to signify any thing, they will not be to seek for an answer. But to this more hereafter; when from the delightful object, we come to treat of actual delighting in it.

3. But some may say, "It were indeed to be acknowledged, that such a temper of spirit once communicated, were indeed very delightful; but where is it to be found? And to state the matter of delight so much in what is to be sought in ourselves, is to reduce the whole business of delighting in God, to an impossibility, or to nothing; so little appearing of this temper, and so much of the contrary, as gives much cause of doubt, whether there be any thing to be rejoiced in or no. And what then? are we to suspend the exercise of this duty till we have gotten the difficult case resolved? (which may be all our time.) Is there a real thorough work of God upon my soul or no? For how can I rejoice in that whereof I have yet a doubt, whether it be what it seems or no?" I answer,

1. It is plain, they that really have nothing of this communication from God, cannot take delight in it (otherwise than as hoped for.) But,

2. Would we therefore have such to please themselves and be satisfied without it; and delight in their distance

n John iii. 6.

and estrangement from God; and while there is not intercourse between him and them? And shall this be called too delighting in God? Surely somewhat else than delight belongs to their states.

3. But for such as really have it, that which hath beea designed to be evinced, is, that it is delectable in itself; and therefore they cannot be without any taste or relish of pleasure therein; while yet some doubt touching the sincerity and truth thereof doth yet remain; though such doubt (but more their imperfect reception of this communication, and neglect to look after further degrees of it) cannot but render their delight comparatively little. Nor hath it been designed to speak hitherto of what delight the regenerate in this way actually have, but what they may have; and what matter of delight God's heart-rectifying communication doth in the nature of it contain; that is, supposing it were imparted and received, so as actually to have formed the soul according to the gospel-revelation. And if it were so in a more eminent measure and degree, it were then in itself so delectable, as without the assurance of our future safe and happy state, (though that, in that case, is not likely to be in a comfortable degree wanting,) that is, not by it only, but by itself, without the present constant necessary concurrence thereof, to afford unspeakable pleasure to that soul in which it hath place. So that the getting of assurance is not the only thing to be done in order to a person's delighting in God; of which more hereafter is intended to be said in the directive part.

But though that be not the only thing, yet it is a very great thing; and being superadded, makes a great addition to the matter of delight: therefore we further say,

III. This Divine communication is delectable as it includes in it the manifestation of God's love to the soul in particular.

Nor do we hereby intend an enthusiastic assurance; or such a testification of the love of God to the soul, as excludes any reference to his external revelation and exercise of our own enlightened reason and judgment thereupon; or wherein these are of no use, nor have subservience thereto. But as in the other parts of the Divine communication, his external revelation hath the place of an instrument whereby he effects the work inwardly done upon the mind and heart, and of a rule or measure whereby we are to judge of it; so we are to account it is, as to this part of it also; that is, he inwardly testifies and manifests the same thing which is virtually contained in his gospel-revelation, considered in that reference and aspect which it hath on the present state of the soul. For that outward revelation must needs be understood to signify diversely to particular persons, as their state may be diverse; as when it says, The things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, God hath prepared for them that love him;[o] to a person that doth indeed truly love God, it virtually says, "All these things are prepared for thee." To one that doth not love God, it can only be understood to say, "All these things may be thine, *i. e.* if thou shalt love him; if thou do not, thou hast no part in them." But inasmuch as a conditional promise when the condition is performed, is equivalent to an absolute; these words do as truly import this sense to one that loves God, These things are thine, as if they were directed to it in particular: as truly, I say, supposing the person do truly love God, but not so clearly, or with that evidence. For this truth, (supposing it a truth,) I do sincerely love God, is not so evident as this, that such preparation is made for them that do; for this is expressly contained in the word of God: the other is not so, but to be collected only by self-inspection and observation of the bent and tenor of my spirit and way God-ward: yet however the evidence of truth admits of degrees, truth itself does not. All things that are true, are equally true. And therefore, when it is said, so great things are prepared for them that love God, it is as truly said they are prepared for this man who loves God, as this or that particular lover of God is contained in the general notion of a lover of him. And then, as that public declaration says not to any, These things are prepared for you, whether you love God or no, or otherwise than as they come under that common notion of lovers of God; this inward manifestation is also so accommodate to that, as that it says not another thing but the same; that is, nothing that contradicts (and indeed no more than is virtually contained in) the other; or it applies what is generally said of the lovers of God to this particular lover of him as such; that is, enabling him to discern himself a lover of him, impresses this truth powerfully upon the heart, these great preparations belong to thee as thou art such a one.

We speak not here of what God can do, but what he doth. Who can doubt but as God can, if he please, imprint on the mind the whole system of necessary truth, and on the heart the entire frame of holiness, without the help of an external revelation; so he can imprint this particular persuasion also without any outward means! Nor do we speak of what he more rarely doth, but of what he doth ordinarily; or what his more usual course and way of procedure is, in dealing with the spirits of men. The supreme power binds not its own hands. We may be sure the inward testimony of the Spirit never is opposite to the outward testimony of his Gospel; (which is the Spirit's testimony also;) and therefore it never says to an unholy man, an enemy to God, Thou art in a reconciled and pardoned state. But we cannot be sure he never speaks or suggests things to the spirits of men but by the external testimony, so as to make use of that as the means of informing them with what he hath to impart; nay, we know he sometimes hath imparted things (as to prophets and the sacred penmen) without any external means, and (no doubt) excited suitable affections in them to the import of the things imparted and made known. Nor do I believe it can ever be proved, that he never doth immediately testify his own special love to holy souls, without the intervention of some part of his external word, made use of as a present instrument to that purpose, or that he always doth it in the way of methodical reasoning therefrom.

Nor do I think that the experience of Christians can signify much to the deciding of the matter. For besides that this, or that, or a third person's experience cannot conclude any thing against a fourth's; and the way of arguing were very infirm, what one, or two, or a thousand, or even the greater part of serious Christians, (even such as have attained to some satisfying evidence of their own good estate,) have not found, that no where is to be found; besides that, I say, it's likely few can distinctly tell how it hath been with them in this matter; that is, what way or method hath been taken with them in begetting a present persuasion at this or that time of God's peculiar love to them. His dealings with persons (even the same persons at divers times) may be so various; his illapses and coming in upon them at some times may have been so sudden and surprising; the motions of thought are so quick; the observation or animadversion persons usually have of what is transacted in their own spirits is so indistinct; and they may be so much taken up with the thing itself, as less to mind the way and order of doing it; that we may suppose little is to be gathered thence towards the settling of a stated rule in this case. Nor is the matter of such moment, that we need either be curious in inquiring or positive in determining about it; that principle being once supposed and firmly stuck to,—that he never says any thing in this matter by his Spirit to the hearts of men, repugnant to what the same Spirit hath said in his word; or, that he doth not say a new or a diverse thing from what he hath said there for their assurance: *i. e.* that he never testifies to any person by his Spirit that he is accepted and beloved of him, who may at the same time be concluded by his publicly-extant constitutions in his word to be in a state of non-acceptance and disfavour; or concerning whom the same thing (*viz.* his acceptance) might not be concluded by his word, if it were duly applied to his case. Hereby the most momentous danger in this matter is avoided; for if that principle be forelaid, enough is done to preclude the vain boasts of such as may be apt to pretend highly to great manifestations of Divine love, while they carry with them manifest proofs of an unsanctified heart, and are under the power of unmortified, reigning sin. That principle admitted, will convince that their boasted manifestations do only manifest their own ignorance, pride, and vanity; or proceed only from their heated imagination, or

[o] 1 Cor. ii. 9.

(the worse cause) Satanical illusion, designed to lull them asleep in sin, and the more easily to lead them blindfold to perdition. And this is the main concernment about which we need to be solicitous in this matter; which being provided for; as it is difficult, so it is not necessary, to determine, whether the Spirit do always not only testify according to the external revelation, but by it also; and so only as to concur in the usual way of reasoning from it.

No doubt but the same truth may be assented to upon divers grounds; sometimes upon rational evidence; sometimes upon testimony; and some truths may be seen by immediate, mental intuition, (as being self-evident,) which also may be capable of demonstration. And though this truth of God's particular love to such a man, be none of those that have self-evidence; yet God's Spirit, as it may by assisting the discursive faculty, help us to discern the connexions of some things which otherwise we should not perceive; so it may by assisting the intuitive, make things evident to us that of themselves are not. Nor yet, also, that it actually doth so, can any I believe certainly tell; for admit that at some times some have very transporting apprehensions of the love of God towards themselves, suggested to their hearts by the Holy Spirit; they having this habitual knowledge before that love to him, (for instance,) or faith in him, or the like, are descriptive characters of the persons whom he accepts and delightfully loves; how suddenly may the Divine light irradiate or shine upon those pre-conceived notions, (which were begotten in them by the interveniency of the external revelation before,) and excite those before implanted principles of faith, love, &c. so as to give them the lively sense of them now stirring and acting in their hearts! and thence also enable them unwaveringly to conclude (and with an unexpressible joy and pleasure) their own interest in his special love, in this way shedding it abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given to them! [p] This may be so suddenly done, that they may apprehend the testimony to be immediate when indeed it is not. Nor are they able to prove from Scripture the immediateness of it; for as to what it doth to them in particular, Scripture says nothing, they not being so much as mentioned there: what it doth or hath done to this or that person there mentioned signifies nothing to their case; if any thing were said that must have that import, (which will be hard to evince,) and that is any where in Scripture signified to be its usual way, in common, towards them on whose hearts it impresses this persuasion, to do it immediately, is much less to be evinced. For what Scripture saith so? and that famous text that speaks so directly to this matter, The Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, seemeth rather to imply the contrary; inasmuch as the Spirit of God is there expressly said to co-witness with our spirit, (as the word there used signifies,) by which it should seem to take the same course in testifying which our spirit or conscience doth, that is, of considering the general characters of his children laid down in his word, reflecting upon the same in ourselves, and thereupon concluding we are his children; which if it were supposed the only thing the Spirit of God ordinarily doth in this matter, we may with much confidence assert,

1. That it doth herein no small thing; for is it a small thing to be ascertained of God's fatherly love to us as his own children?

2. That it doth not a less thing than if it testified the same matter in a way altogether immediate. For wherein is it less? Is the matter less important? That cannot be said; for the thing we are assured of is the same howsoever we be certified thereof. Is it less evident? That can with as little pretence be said; for doth any one account a thing not evident in itself, and that needs to be proved to him some way or other, the less evident for being proved to him in a discursive way? What pretence can any one have to say or think so? Is it that reasoning is more liable to error and mistake? But I hope the reasoning of God's Spirit is not so, when it enables us to apprehend the general truth we should reason from; to assume to it; to collect and conclude from it, guiding us by its own light. In each of these surely we have as much reason to rely upon the certainty and infallibility of the Spirit's reasonings, as of its most assertory dictates; otherwise, we would (most unreasonably) think the authority of those conclusions laid down in the epistle to the Romans, and other parts of Scripture, invalidated by the Holy Ghost's vouchsafing to reason them out to us, as we know it most nervously and strongly doth. Or, is it less consolatory? That cannot be, for that depends on the two former, the importance and evidence of the thing declared: the former whereof is the same; the latter not less.

3. Yea, and supposing that the Holy Ghost do manifestly concur with our spirits in the several steps of that discursive way, so that we can observe it to do so, (and there is little doubt but it may do so as observably to us, by affording a more than ordinary light to assist and guide us in each part of that procedure, as if it did only suggest a sudden dictate to us and no more,) we may upon that supposition add, that it doth hereby more advantageously propose the same thing to us, than if it only did it the other way. It doth it in a way more suitable to our natures, which is not nothing; and it doth it in a way less liable to after-suspicion and doubt; for it is not supposed to be always dictating the same thing. And when it ceases to do so, howsoever consolatory and satisfying the dictate was at that instant when it was given, the matter is liable to question afterwards, Upon what grounds was such a thing said? And though it cannot be distrusted, that what the Holy Spirit testifieth is true; yet I may doubt whether it was indeed the Holy Spirit that testified it or no. Whereas if it proceeded with me upon grounds, *they* remain; and I have no reason to suspect that which was argued out to me, upon grounds which I still find in me, was either from an ill suggester, or with an ill design; whereas there may be some plausible pretence of doubt in the matter, if there was only a transient dictate given in to me, without any reference or appeal to that rule by which God hath not only directed me to try myself, but also to try spirits whether they be of him or no. Nor is there any imaginable necessity of assigning quite another method to the Spirit's work as it is a Spirit of adoption, from that which it holds as it is a spirit of bondage; for, as to this latter, when it convinces a person and binds down the condemning sentence upon him, this surely is the course it follows, to let a person see, (for instance,) they that live after the flesh shall die; but thou livest after the flesh, therefore thou shalt die; or, all that believe not, the wrath of God abides on them; but thou believest not, (as it is we know the Spirit's work to convince of not believing,) therefore the wrath of God abides on thee. And what need is there of apprehending its method to be quite another in its comforting work? Nor is it surely a matter of less difficulty to persuade some that they are unbelievers, and make them apprehend and feel the terror suitable to their states; than others, that they are believers, and make them apprehend the comfort which is proper to theirs. Yea, and is not its course the same in its whole sanctifying work, to bring home the particular truth, whose impression it would leave on the soul, with application thereof to it in particular? which (as generally propounded in Scripture) men are so apt to waive and neglect; for what is every one's concern, is commonly thought no one's: and what need that its method here should be wholly diverse? But in whichsoever of these ways the Spirit of God doth manifest his love, it is not to be doubted, but that,

There is such a thing in itself very necessary, and to be attained and sought after,—and that it is highly delectable when he doth vouchsafe it.

That there is such a thing to be sought after as a communicable privilege and favour to holy souls, is evident enough from multitudes of scriptures. Those that have been occasionally mentioned in speaking (what was thought fit to be said) of the way of his doing it, need not be repeated; unto which we may add, what we find is added to those above-recited words, Eye hath not seen, &c. the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, *viz.* but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit.[q] And that Spirit not only gives those lovers of God above mentioned a clearer view of the things prepared for them, so as that the nature of them might be the more distinctly understood, (as is argued in the latter part of this, and in

[p] Rom. v. 5.

[q] 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

the following verse;) but also of their own propriety and interest in them; Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God.[r] Whence therefore they are revealed by the Spirit, not as pleasing objects in themselves only, but as gifts, the evidences and issues of Divine love; their own proper portion, by the bequest of that love to whom they are shown. Nor is this the work of the Spirit only, as inditing the Scriptures, but it is such a work as helps to the spiritual discerning of these things; such as whereto the natural man is not competent, who yet is capable of reading the Scriptures as well as other men. And what will we make of those words of our Saviour, when having told his disciples, he would pray the Father, and he should give them another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, that he might abide with them for ever; even the Spirit of truth,[s] &c., he adds, I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you;[t] that is, (as is plain,) by that Spirit. And then shortly after subjoins, He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.[u] Here is an express promise of this love-manifestation, whereof we speak, by the Spirit; (the Comforter mentioned above;) not to those particular persons only unto whom he was then directing his speech, or to those only of that time and age, but to them indefinitely that should love Christ, and keep his commandments. Which is again repeated in other words of the same import; after Judas's (not Iscariot) wondering expostulation touching that, peculiarly of this loving manifestation; Jesus answered and said unto him, If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.[x] So that such a manifestation as is most aptly expressive of love, such converse and cohabitation as imports most of kindness and endearedness, they have encouragement to expect that do love Christ and keep his words; the same thing no doubt with that shedding abroad of the love of God in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given to them, mentioned before. And whereas we have so plain and repeated mention of the seal, the earnest, the first-fruits of the Spirit, what can these expressions be understood to import, (and they do not signify nothing,) other than confirmation of the love of God, or assuring and satisfying evidences and pledges thereof.

And that there should be such an inward manifestation of Divine love superadded to the public and external declaration of it, (which is only made indefinitely to persons so and so characterized,) the exigency of the case did require; that is, wherein it was necessary his love should be distinctly understood and apprehended, it was so far necessary this course should be taken to make it be so. A mere external revelation was not sufficient to that end; our own unassisted reasonings therefrom were not sufficient. As other truths have not their due and proper impression, merely by our rational reception, be they never so plain, without that holy, sanctifying influence before insisted on; so this truth also of God's love to this person in particular, hath not its force and weight, its efficacy and fruit, answerable to the design of its discovery, unless it be applied and urged home on the soul by a communicated influence of the Spirit to this purpose: many times not so far as to overcome and silence tormenting doubts, fears, and anguish of spirit in reference hereto, and where that is done, not sufficient to work off deadness, drowsiness, indisposition to the doing of God cheerful service, not sufficient to excite and stir up, love, gratitude, admiration, and praise. How many (who have learned not to make light of the love of God, as the most do) who reckon in his favour is life, to whom it is not an indifferent thing whether they be accepted or no; who cannot be overly in their inquiry, nor trifle with matters of everlasting consequence; who are not enough atheists and sceptics to permit all to a mad hazard, nor easy to be satisfied; walk mournfully from day to day with sunk, dejected spirits, full of anxiety, even unto agonies, under the clear external discovery of God's love to persons of that character whereof they really are! Such as observe them judge their case plain, and every one thinks well of them but themselves; yea, their mouths are sometimes stopped by such as discourse the matter with them, but their hearts are not quieted. or, if they sometimes are, in a degree, yet the same doubts and fears return with the former importunity, the same work is still to be done, and 'tis but rolling the returning stone: and all human endeavours to apply and bring home the comforts proper and suitable to their case prove fruitless and ineffectual, nothing can be fastened upon them; they refuse to be comfortcd, while God himself doth not create (that which is the fruit of his own lips) peace, peace; while, as yet, they are not filled with joy and peace in believing, and made to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.[y] It is plain there needs a more learned tongue than any human one, to speak a word in season to such weary ones.[z] How many, again, have spirits overcome with deadness and sloth, under a settled (perhaps not altogether mistaken, but more notional) apprehension of the same love! They have only that assurance which arises, it may be, not from a false but the single testimony of their own spirits; at least unaccompanied with other than the ordinary help of the Spirit, not very distinguishable from the workings of their own; have reasoned themselves (perhaps regularly, by observing the rule and the habitual bent of their own spirits) into an opinion of their own good estate, so that they are not vexed with doubts and fears as some others are. But they do not discover to others, nor can discern in themselves, any degree of life and vigour, of heavenliness and spirituality, of love to God or zeal for him, proportionable to their high expectations from him, or the great import of this thing to be beloved of God: there is no discernible growth or spiritual improvement to be found with them; how remote is their temper from that of the primitive Christians! It is apparent what is yet wanting, they are not edified (as those were) walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.[a] Wherefore the matter is plain, there is such a thing, as an effectual overpowering communication of the Holy Ghost for the manifesting of the love of God, of great necessity and importance to Christians; that may be had, and ought to be diligently sought after.

2. And if it be afforded; (which was the other thing proposed;) how infinitely delectable is that manifestation! the thing itself carries its own reason and evidence with it.

1. If we consider the matter represented to us thereby; the love of a God! How transporting would the thought of it be to an enlightened, apprehensive mind! No one whose nature is not overrun with barbarism would entertain the discovery of the harmless, innocent love (though it were not profitable to us) even of a creature like ourselves, otherwise than with complacency; yea, though it were a much inferior (even a brute) creature. Men are pleased to behold love expressing itself towards them in a child, in a poor neighbour, in an impotent servant; yea, in their horse or their dog. The greatest prince observes with delight the affection of the meanest peasants among his subjects; much more would they please themselves if they have occasion to take notice of any remarkable expression of his favourable respect to them! but how unspeakably more, if he vouchsafe to express it by gracious intimacies, and by condescending familiarities! How doth that person hug and bless himself! How doth his spirit triumph, and his imagination luxuriate in delightful thoughts and expectations, who is in his own heart assured he hath the favour of his prince! yea, with what complacency are inward friends wont to receive the mutual expressions of each other's love! And can it be thought the love of the great and blessed God should signify less? How great things are comprehended in this, the Lord of heaven and earth hath a kindness towards me, and bears me good will! How grateful is the relish of this apprehension, both in respect of what it, in itself, imports, and what it is the root and cause of!

True ingenuity values love for itself. If such a one will think of me, if I shall have a place in his remembrance, if he will count me among his friends; this we are apt to be pleased with. And tokens are sent and interchanged

r 1 Cor. ii. 12. s John xiv. 16. t Ver. 18. u Ver. 21.

x Ver. 23. y Rom. xv. 13. z Isa. l. a Acts ix. 31.

among friends, not only to express love, but to preserve and cherish it, and keep up a mutual remembrance among them. And as there is a great pleasure conceived, in receiving such expressions or pledges of love from a friend, not so much for the value of the thing sent, as of what it signifies, and is the token of his love, his kind remembrance; so is there no less pleasure in giving and sending, than in receiving: because that hereby, as we gratify our own love, by giving it a kind of vent this way, so we foresee how we shall thereby excite theirs; which therefore we put a value upon, even abstracting from any advantage we expect therefrom. And this hath a manifest reason in our very natures; because we reckon there is an honour put upon us, and somewhat is attributed to us, when we are well thought of, and a kindness is placed upon us; especially by such as have themselves any reputation for wisdom and judgment. How dignifying is the love of God! How honourable a thing to be his favourite! The apostle seems to put a mighty stress on this, when he utters those so emphatical words, Wherefore we labour (so defectively we read it, we covet, or are ambitious of it as our honour, as that word signifies) that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him;[b] *q. d.* neither life or death, neither being in the body or out of it, signify any thing to me, or they are indifferent things in comparison of this honour, that he may accept me, that I may be pleasing to him and gracious in his eyes, that I may stand well in his thoughts, and he bear a kind and favourable regard to me.

Yea, and this is a thing in itself delightful, not only as it's honourable, but as it is strange and wonderful. Things that are in themselves grateful, are so much the more so, for their being somewhat surprising, and above all our expectation. I say, supposing they have an antecedent gratefulness in them, for (otherwise we know there are also very unwelcome wonders, and which are so much the more dreadful, because they are surprising and unexpected) it is greatly heightened by their being out of the road quite of all our thoughts,—great things that we looked not for. And who would have looked for such a thing as this, that the Lord of glory should place his love on such a worm as I? Which is set off with the more advantage, because the same light that represents to a soul God's love, doth also discover to it, at the same time, its own deformity and unloveliness. And then how taking and overcoming is the thought, "I, impure wretch! loathsome miscreant! that lost apostate creature, that made one with a race and crew of rebels, was confederate with rebellious men against him, yea, in a combination with those revolted creatures the devils, and now taken, I know not why, into a state of acceptance and favour with him! and his love is declared to be towards me! And why towards me? in myself so vile! and such love! the love of a holy glorious God, towards one in whose very nature was such a horror and hell of wickedness! Why towards me rather than others, not naturally more vile than I?" How can this be thought on without crying out, O wonderful! O the depths, breadths, lengths, and heights of this love, that so infinitely passeth knowledge! and here the greater the wonder, the greater is also the delight.

And now also are the effects of this love great in the eyes of the soul, according to the apprehended greatness of their cause. If we indeed were to form conceptions of these things ourselves, by our own light and conduct, our way were to follow the ascending order, and go up from the effects till we reach the cause. But he can, if he please, in the cause present to us the effects, and magnify them in our eyes, by giving us to see unto how great and magnificent a cause they owe themselves. Now shall we know whence all hath proceeded that he hath done for us. Wherefore again must the transported soul admiringly cry out, "I now see whence it was that he gave his Son, because he so loved the world! why he came and bled and died, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood! What a lustre doth that love cast upon those sufferings and performances! I see why he sent his gospel to me, why so convincing, awakening words were often spoken in my ear, (I see much in what once I saw but little,) why he so earnestly strove with me by his Spirit, why he gave not over till he had overcome my heart, why he humbled, melted, broke me, why he drew so strongly, bound me so fast to himself, in safe and happy bonds; why he shone into my mind with that mild and efficacious light, transformed my whole soul, stamped it with his holy image, and marked me out for his own. These are now great things, when I behold their glorious mighty cause!" And now also in this same cause are all the great effects to be seen which are yet to be brought about by it.

They are seen as very great. His continued presence and conduct, which he affords to his own through this world; that constant fellowship which they expect him to keep with them; the guidance and support they look for; in his love these appear great things. And now doth heaven sound no more as an empty name, it looks not like a languid faint shadow; somewhat can be apprehended of it that imports substance, when it's understood to be a state of rest and blessedness in the communion of the God of love; and intended as the last product and expression of his love!

They are seen as most sure and certain. Such love, now manifested and apprehended, leaves no place for doubtful thoughts and suspicious misgivings. There is no fear that this love intends to impose upon us, or mock us with the representation of an imaginary heaven; or that it will fail to do what can be expected from it to bring us to the real one. How pleasant is it now to behold the great and sure products of this mighty love! its admirable designs and projects, as they appear in the gospel revelation (now illustrated and shone upon by Divine light) to lie ready formed in the pregnant womb of this great productive cause. It cannot but be an unspeakable pleasure which such a discovery will carry with it; when we thus behold the matter itself that is discovered and offered to our view, unto which it must be a very considerable additional pleasure that will arise,

2. From the nature and kind of this manifestation. As being,

In the general made by himself. 'Tis a too plain and sad truth, that men have unhappily learned to diminish God to themselves, and make every thing of him seem little. But when he represents his love himself (as who but God can represent the love of God? he only can tell the story of his own love) that evil is provided against. He will manifest it so as it shall be understood; and set it off to the best advantage. He will make it known how great a thing it is to be beloved of him. And when he gives that blessed salutation; "Hail, thou that art highly favoured! O thou that art greatly beloved!" he will withal bespeak and procure a suitable entertainment of it. And hence particularly it will be,

Most incomparably bright and lightsome in respect of any representation we have had of the love of God any other way.

Most immediate, that is, (at least,) so as not to be only made by some external testimony, given out many an age ago, out of which we are left to pick what we can, and to construe or misconstrue it as our own judgment serves us; but so, as that if he use such an instrument, he animates it, puts a soul into it, leaves it not as a dead, spiritless letter: and applies it himself, to the purpose he intends by it, and immediately himself reaches and touches the heart by it.

Most facile and easily sliding in upon us; so that we are put to no more pains, than to behold the light which the sun casts about us and upon us. Whatever labour it was necessary for us to use before, in our searches and inquiries into the state of our case, there is no more now than in moving, being carried; or in using our own weak hand when another that is sufficiently strong lifts and guides it for us.

Most efficacious and overcoming: that makes its own way, scatters clouds, drives away darkness, admits no disputes, makes doubts and misgiving thoughts vanish, pierces with a quick and sudden energy like lightning, and strikes through the mind into the heart; there sheds abroad this love, diffuses the sweet refreshing savour of it; actuates spiritual sense, makes the soul taste how gracious the

[b] 2 Cor. v. 9.

Lord is, and relish the sweetness of his love, puts all its powers into a suitable motion, and excites answerable affection, so as to make the soul capable of interchanging love with love. In all these respects, this manifestation of love cannot but be very delectable; and they who have not found it to be so, will yet apprehend that it must be so, if they have found and experienced the cravings of their own hearts directed this way, and can upon inquiry find this among the things they would fain have from God; O that I might be satisfied of his love! that I might know his good-will towards me! for to such cravings must this delight at least be commensurate (as was formerly said.) But to them that are indifferent in this matter and unconcerned, to whom the love of God is a fancy or a trifle, no real or an inconsiderable thing, all this will be as tasteless as the white of an egg.

Concerning which yet (before we pass from this head) 'tis needful to add these few things by way of caution.

1. That when we say this is of great necessity, we mean not that it is simply necessary; we think it not so necessary that a Christian cannot be without it; *i. e.* as a Christian. But it is necessary to his well and more comfortable being, and his more lively, fruitful walking and acting in his Christian course.

2. That, therefore, the way of God's dealing herein is with great latitude and variety; he having reserved to himself, by the tenor of his covenant, a liberty to afford or suspend it, to give it in a greater degree or less degree as in sovereignty and infinite wisdom he pleases and sees fit to determine.

3. It may not, therefore, with so absolute and peremptory an expectation, be sought after, as those things may that are necessary to the holding of souls in life; but with much resignation, submission, and deference of the matter to the Divine good pleasure; such as shall neither import disesteem of it, nor impatience in the want of it.

4. That it ought to be less esteemed than the heart-rectifying communication, that is impressive of God's image, and whereby we are made partakers of his holiness. This proceeds more entirely from pure love to God for himself, than from self-love; this tends more directly to the pleasing of us, than to the pleasing of God. This is necessary, as was said, but to our well or better being, that simply to our very being in Christ; this hath its greatest real value from its subserviency to the other. And what hath its value from its reference to another must be of less value than that.

5. That it's a great mistake to think God is not otherwise to be enjoyed than in this way of more express testification of his love; as if you could have no enjoyment of a friend otherwise than by his often repeating to you, I love you, I love you, indeed I love you.

6. That it's a much greater to place the sum of religion here; and that any should make it the whole of their business to seek this, or to talk of it; or should think God doth nothing for them worth their acknowledgment, and solemn thanksgiving, while he doth not this.

7. Most of all, that any should reckon it the first thing they have to do when they begin to mind religion, to believe God's particular love to them, and that he hath elected them, pardoned them, and will certainly save them. So too many most dangerously impose upon themselves; and, accordingly, before any true humiliation, renovation of heart, or transaction and stipulation with the Redeemer, do set themselves to believe, and it may be seek help from God more strongly to believe it, when—as the devil is too ready to help them to this faith. And when he hath done it, they ery to themselves, Peace, peace, and think all is well; take their liberty, and humour themselves, live as they list, and say that for so long a time they have had assurance of their salvation. The father of lies must needs be the author, (or the fantor, or both,) of this faith; for it is a lie which they believe; that is, that they are pardoned and accepted of God is a downright lie, repugnant to his word and the tenor of his covenant. And for any thing else that may import their state to be at present safe, is to them no credible truth.

8. That, for the most part, if Christians, upon whom the renewing work of the Holy Ghost in that former communication hath in some degree taken place, do yet want that degree of this also, which is necessary to free them from very afflicting doubts and fears, and enable them to a cheerful and lively walking with God; it is to be reckoned their own fault; either that they put too much upon it, (too little minding his public declarations in his word,) or do unduly seek it, or unseasonably expect it; or that they put too little upon it, and expect or seek it not; or that by their indulged carnality, earthliness, vanity of spirit, they render themselves incapable of it; or by their careless and too licentious walking, or their either resisting or neglecting holy motions, they grieve that Spirit that would comfort them. For though the restraint of such more pleasant communications may proceed, sometimes, from an unaccountable sovereignty, that owes no reason to us of its arbitrary way of giving or withholding favours; yet withal, we are to know and consider, that there is such a thing as paternal and domestic justice proper to God's own family, and which, as the Head and Father of it, he exerciseth therein; whereby (though he do not exercise it alike at all times) it seems meet to his infinite wisdom to awaken and rouse the sloth, or rebuke the folly, or check the vanity, or chastise the wantonness, of his offending children; and that, even in this way, by retiring himself, becoming more reserved, withdrawing the more discernible tokens of his presence, and leaving them to the torture sometimes of their own conjectures, what worse thing may ensue. And herein he may design, not only reformation to the delinquents, but instruction to others, and even vindication of himself. For however these his dealings with men's spirits are in themselves (as they must needs be) secret, and such as come not under the immediate notice of other men; yet somewhat consequential thereto doth more openly appear, and becomes obvious to the common observation of serious Christians with whom such persons converse; that is, not only such as languish under the more remarkable terrors of their spirits, and are visibly, as it were, consuming in their own flame; (of which sort there occur very monitory and instructive examples, at some times;) but even such also as are deprived of his quickening influence, and have only somewhat remaining in them that is ready to die, that are pining away in their iniquities, and sunk deep into deadness and carnality, (for his comforting communication is also quickening, and he doth not use to withhold it as it is quickening, and continue it as it is comforting, but if such have comfort such as it is, they are their own comforters,) do carry very discernible tokens of Divine displeasure upon them; and the evils and distempers under which their spirits lie wasting, are both their sin and punishment. Their own wickedness corrects them, and their backsliding reproves them. And that reproof being observable, doth the same time warn others, yea and doth that right to God, as to let it be seen he makes a difference, and refuses the intimacies with more negligent, loose, idle, wanton professors of his name, which he vouchsafes to have with some others, that make it more their business and study to carry acceptably towards him, and are more manifestly serious, humble, diligent, obedient observers of his will. If, therefore, we find not what we have found in this kind, however the matter may possibly be resolvable into the Divine pleasure, (as it is more likely to be in the case of such desertions as are accompanied with terror, when no notorious apostacy or scandalous wickedness hath gone before,) it is both safe and modest, yea and obvious, to suspect such delinquencies as were before mentioned, are designed to be animadverted upon; and that the love hath been injured, which is now not manifested as heretofore.

9. That yet such a degree of it as is necessary to a comfortable serving of God in our stations being afforded; such superadded degrees, as whereby the soul is in frequent raptures and transports, are not to be thought withheld penally, in any peculiar or remarkable respect, or otherwise than it may be understood some way a penalty, not to be already perfectly blessed. For it is certain, that such rapturous sensations, and the want of them, are not the distinguishing characters of the more grown, strong, and excellent Christians, and of them that are more infirm, and of a meaner and lower pitch and stature. Yea, those ecstatical emotions, although they have much of a sensible

delectation in them, (as more hereafter may be said to that purpose,) and though they may, in part, proceed from the best and most excellent cause, do yet, if they be frequent, (which would signify an aptitude thereto,) import somewhat of diminution in their subject, and imply what is some way a lessening of it, that is, they imply the persons that are more disposed this way, to be of a temper not so well fixed and composed, but more volatile and airy; which yet doth not intimate, that the chief cause and author of those motions is therefore mean and ignoble; nay, it argues nothing to the contrary, but that the Holy Spirit itself may be the supreme cause of them. For admitting it to be so, it doth not alter men's natural tempers and complexions; but so acts them, as that they retain (and express upon occasion) what was peculiar to their temper notwithstanding. The work and office of the Holy Ghost, in his special communications, is to alter and new-mould men in respect of their moral dispositions, not those which are strictly and purely natural: the subject is in this regard the same it was; and whatsoever is received, is received according to the disposition of that; and it gives a tincture to what supervenes and is implanted thereinto: whence the same degree of such communicated influence will not so discernibly move some tempers, as it doth others; as the same quantity of fire will not so soon put solid wood into a flame, as it will light straw. That some men therefore are less sensibly and passionately moved with the great things of God (and even with the discovery of his love) than some others, doth not argue them to have less of the Spirit, but more of that temper which better comports with deeper judgment, and a calm and sober consideration of things. The unaptness of some men's affections unto strong and fervent motion, doth indeed arise from a stupid inconsiderateness; of some others, from a more profound consideration, by which the deeper things sink, and the more they pierce even into the inmost centre of the soul, the less they move the surface of it. And though I do not think the saying of that heathen applicable to this case, "It is a wise man's part to admire nothing;" for here is matter enough in this theme, the love of God, to justify the highest wonderment possible, and not to admire in such a case is most stupidly irrational; yet I conceive the admiration (as well as other affections) of more considering persons, is more inward, calm, sedate, and dispassionate, and is not the less for being so, but is the more solid and rational; and the pleasure that attends it, is the more deep and lasting. And the fervour that ensues upon the apprehended love of God, prompting them to such service as is suitable to a state of devotedness to his interest, is more intense and durable; of the others, more flashy and inconstant. As, though flax set on fire will flame more than iron; yet withal it will smoke more, and will not glow so much, nor keep heat so long.

10. But to shut up this discourse: They that have more transporting apprehensions of the love of God, should take heed of despising them who have them not in just the same kind, or do not express them in the same seraphic strains. They that have them not, should take heed of censuring those that with humble modesty, upon just occasion, discover and own what they do experience in this kind; much less should conclude, that because they find them not, there is therefore no such to be found, which cynical humour is too habitual to such tempers. If they do fancy such to be a weaker sort of persons, they may be sincere for all that. And it ought to be considered of whom it was said, that he would not quench the smoking flax. The grace and Spirit of Christ ought to be reverenced in the various appearances thereof; whether we be sober or beside ourselves—the love of Christ constraineth us.[c] So diversely may the apprehensions of that love work in the same person, much more in divers. Christians should be shy of making themselves standards to one another; which they that do, discover more pride and self-conceit than acquaintance with God, and more admiration of themselves than of his love.

Thus far we have given some account of the object to be delighted in; wherein, if any think strange that we have spoken so much of the delectable Divine communication as belonging to the object; (which how it doth hath been sufficiently shown;) let them call it, if they please, a preparing or disposing of the subject; (which it also, making its own way into the soul, as hath been said, effectually doth;) and if the necessity of it be acknowledged upon that account, it equally answers the main purpose aimed in all this; and had it been only so considered, would but have inferred some alteration in the frame and method of this discourse, but not at all of the substance and design of it.

II. We are next to say somewhat briefly of the delight itself to be taken therein. Nor shall we be herein so curious as to distinguish (which some do) delight and joy. The distinction wont to be assigned, cannot, 'tis plain, hold here, so as to make the former of these signify a brutish affection only, and the latter proper to rational nature. Nor is there any such propriety belonging to the words, but they may be rendered (as indeed they are used in Scripture) promiscuously, either in reference to the matter of intellectual or sensitive complacency, and either of a reasonable being, or an unreasonable. We take these therefore to signify substantially the same thing, and here delight to be entirely all one with joy: that is, there is not any the highest degree of joy which may not fitly enough be comprehended under the name of delight, when it is placed (as here it is required to be) upon the blessed God; whereof, that we may speak the more fully, it will be necessary to preface somewhat concerning its general nature; and more principally as it is found in man, within which compass our principal business lies.

Delight, in the general, is most intimately essential to love; which imports a well-pleasedness arising from the apprehended goodness or congruity of the thing loved: and it seems to be merely by accident, that there is any thing else in love besides that complacency of delight; that is, what there is else belonging to the nature of love arises from the mixture and variety which is to be found in the present state of things; which if it were at present universally and perfectly good, and as most rationally it might be wished, love could have no exercise but in delight. Not being so, desire that it might be so, in reference to ourselves and others whom we love, comes duly to have place; together with other acts or exercises of love, which it belongs not so much to our present purpose to mention.

For instance, whatsoever we can love, is either things or persons; whatsoever things we love, is for the sake of persons, either ourselves or others; whom also we love either supremely or subordinately. And whomsoever we love supremely, as it is certainly either God or ourselves, we love whatsoever else, person or thing, either for God's sake or our own. Be it now the one or other, or wheresoever we can place our love, we find things in reference to any object of it, not yet as we would have them, and as they shall be permanent and last always; whereunto this is but preparatory only, and introductive. The creation is indigent, every creature wants somewhat even whereof it is capable; and our own wants in many respects we cannot but feel. Nothing is perfect in its own kind, in respect of all possible accessories thereto; even the state of glorified spirits above is not every way perfect; much is wanting to their full and complete felicity: the body and community whereto they belong, the general assembly, is not yet entire and full; their common Ruler and Lord is not acknowledged and had in honour as he shall be. In the meanwhile, their consummate blessedness, (which much depends on these things,) and the solemn jubilee to be held at the close and finishing of all God's work, is deferred. Yea, and if we go higher, the blessed God himself, the Author and Original of all things, although nothing be wanting to the real perfection of his being and blessedness, hath yet much of his right withheld from him by his lapsed and apostate creatures; so that, which way soever we turn ourselves, there remains to us much matter of rational (yea and holy) desire; and most just cause that our love (place we it as well and duly as we can) have its exercise that way; we have before us many desiderata, according as things yet are. Desire is therefore love suited to an imperfect state of things wherein it is yet imperfect. And because it's suited to such a state of things, it cannot therefore but be imperfect love, or love *tending* to perfec-

[c] 2 Cor. v. 13, 14.

tion. Pure and simple delight is love suited to a state of things every way perfect, and whereto there is nothing lacking. Wherefore delight appears to be the perfection of love, or desire satisfied. But now because this present state is mixed, and not simply evil, or such wherein we find no present good; therefore the love which is suited thereto, ought consequently to be mixed of these two especially, (unto which two the present discourse is both extended and confined, because these two affections only are mentioned in the text,) desire and delight. So far as things are otherwise than we practically apprehend, 'tis fit they should be with ourselves or others whom we love; our love is exercised in desire, wherein they are as we would have them, in delight; for then our desire is so far satisfied; and desire satisfied ceases, though love do not cease. Or, it ceases not by vanishing into nothing, but by being satisfied; that is, by being perfected in the delight which now takes place.

The one of these is therefore truly said to be love exercised upon a good which we behold at a distance, and are reaching at. The other, love solacing itself in a present good. They are as the wings and arms of love; *those* for pursuits, *these* for embraces. On the former is love in *motion*; the latter is love in *rest*. And as in bodily motion and rest, *that* is in order to *this*, and is perfected in it. Things move, not that they may move, but that they may rest; (whence perpetual progressive motion is not to be found;) so it is also in the motion and rest of the mind or spirit. It moves towards an object with a design and expectation to rest in it, and (according to the course and order which God hath stated and set) can never move forward endlessly towards a good in which it shall not at length rest; though yet desire and delight have a continual vicissitude, and do (as it were circularly) beget one another. And thus hath God himself been pleased to express his own delight, or the joy which he takes in his people, even by the name of rest, *viz.* that of love. He will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love.[d] Wherefore delight hath not been unfitly defined—the repose or rest of the desiring faculty of the thing desired.

It is true, that love, as such, hath ever somewhat of delectation in it; for we entertain the first view of any thing we apprehend as good, with some pleasedness therein, (so far as it is loved,) it is grateful to us, and we are gratified some way by it; yea, there is somewhat of this before any emotion by desire towards it; for we would not desire it, if it were not pleasing to us; which desire is then continued (as far as love is in exercise) till it be attained for ourselves or others, according as the object of our love (*i. e.* the object for whom as we may call it) is. Nor is that a difficulty, how yet there may be somewhat of delectation, and even of rest, in this love of desire. For the soul doth in that case, while it is thus desiring, rest from the indetermination of desire: that is, if it have placed love upon any one (itself or another) upon whom therefore it doth with a sort of pleasedness stay and rest; it doth first, in the general, desire it may be well with such a one; and then, if any thing occur to its notice, that it apprehends would be an advantage to the person loved; though it cease not desiring it, yet it ceases from those its former hoverings of desire being pitched upon this one thing, as satisfied that this would be a good to him it loves. The appetite stays and insists upon this thing; as the Psalmist, One thing have I desired.[e] It hath here as it were a sort of hypothetical rest; *q. d.* how well pleased should I be if this were compassed and brought about! or it hath an anticipated and pre-apprehended rest, a rest in hope, (by which the object is some way made present,) as it is said, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." For there is no rational desire which is not accompanied with hope. Despair stifles desire. That which appears simply impossible, passes for nothing; and goodness goes not beyond the compass of being. But whatsoever appears to us a good (whether for ourselves or another) that is suitable and possible, that, if love stir in reference to it, becomes the object of complacential desire; that is, it pleases us first upon sight, or upon such an apprehension of it; the appetite pitches, centres, and rests upon it; and then we pursue it with desire. But then our delectation therein grows, as our hope doth it will be attained; and still more (if we find it to answer its first appearance) as by degrees it is attained actually; till being fully attained, our desire (as to that thing) ends in all the delight and satisfaction which it can afford us. So that the delight and rest which follows desire in the actual fruition of a full and satisfying good, is much more intense and pure, than that which either goes before, or doth accompany it; and is indeed the same thing with fruition or enjoyment itself; only that this term hath been, by some, more appropriated to signify the delectation which is taken in the last end, unto which yet it hath no more native designation than divers other words. We have then thus far some general notion of delight, and also of desire, which is taken in here only on the bye, and as tending somewhat to illustrate the other, whereof yet what we now say may be of some use hereafter.

We are next to speak of this delight in special, which is here to be placed upon God. And about which we are to consider, both—what it is we are called to—and how we are to reckon ourselves called to it. And,

I. That we may show, what we are called to. Having in this general account spoken only of human delight, or of delight as it is to be found among men; it will now be necessary,

To distinguish this into merely natural, and holy. And when we thus distinguish, it is to be understood, that by natural we mean what is within the sphere of nature in its present corrupted state; otherwise, what was natural to man did (taken in a large sense) include holiness in it; and so the addition of holiness doth but make up purely natural delight, as it was at first: but as the case now is, the distinction is necessary. And the latter of these only will be the subject of our following discourse; as being only suitable to the blessed object whereon it must terminate, and only capable of being applied thereto. When therefore our delight is to be placed and set on God, this must be understood as presupposed, that it be purified, drained from the pollution and impure tinctures which it hath derived from our vitiated natures, and further contracted by our converse with impure, mean, and vile things. For only that delight is to be placed on God which can be so placed; and delighting in God being duly designed, that is, by consequence designed which is necessary thereto; and thereto is necessary, not merely the direction of one such particular act towards God, but a holy principle, as pre-requisite to the right doing even of that also. Unholy loves declines God; and indeed it is unholy inasmuch as it doth so. Whence therefore it is as impossible it should be set on God, remaining unholy, as that it should be another thing from itself, and yet be still wholly what it was. Although it cannot be another thing in its general nature, (as it is not necessary it should,) it must be a much altered thing, by the accession of holiness thereto. And this coming upon the whole soul, even upon all its faculties and powers, doth therein spread itself unto its delight also. Delight in God is not the work of an unholy heart. And (as may be collected from what hath been said) holiness consisting in a right disposition of heart towards God, a divine nature, participated from him, conformed to him, which works and tends towards him, and in itself so delightful a thing; it may thence be seen what holy delight is, or wherein the holiness of it stands.

It must to this purpose be considered, that this holy delight is twofold, according to a twofold consideration of the delectable object, into which what was formerly said about it may be reduced. All delight in God supposes, as hath been said, some communication from him.

That communication is either of light, whereby his nature and attributes are in some measure known; or of operative influence, whereby his image is impressed, and the soul is framed according to his will. And so it is partly mental or notional (I mean not merely notional, but that hath with it also an aptitude to beget a correspondent impression on the soul, and not engage it in some speculations concerning him only) and partly real, that actually begets such an impression itself. It is partly such as may be understood, and partly such as may be felt; the manifestation of his love partly belongs to the one of these, and partly to the other.

[d] Zeph. iii. 17, 18.

[e] Psal xxvii. 4.

Answerably hereto, the delight that is taken in him, is either more open and explicit, and wherein a person reflects upon and takes notice of his own act and whereupon it is exercised—or, more latent, implicit and unobserved, when his delight lies folded up in other acts and dispositions which have another more principal design, though that also is involved in them. The *former* way, the soul delights in God more *directly*, applying itself thereto on purpose, and bending the mind and heart intentionally thereto; its present views of him having that very design and aim. The *latter* way, it delights in him rather *collaterally* when its present action (as well as the disposition leading to it) hath another more direct scope and aim. And the delight only adheres to the act, as being in itself delightful; as for instance, the acts of repentance, trust, self-denial, &c. which have another end than delight, though that insinuates into them. The former of these may be called *contemplative* delight: the soul solacing itself in a pleasant meditation of God, whereby its delight in him is excited and stirred up. The latter (understanding sense spiritually, as it belongs to the new creature, and is taken Phil. i. 9. Heb. v. ult.) may be called *sensitive delight*; whereby the soul, as it were, tastes how gracious the Lord is. Which though it doth by the other also, yet the distinction holds in respect of the way wherein the delight is begotten and begun, if not in respect of the thing itself, begotten, or wherein the matter ends. In the former way, the soul more expressly reflects upon its own present exercise, which it directly intends. In the latter, it may not reflect expressly either upon its actual delight which it hath, nor actually consider God as the object that yields it that pleasure; as I may be delighted by the pleasant taste of this or that food, without considering what the thing is I am feeding on; nor have distinct reflection on the pleasure I take therein, having another and more principal design in eating, the recruiting of my strength, and that delight being only accessory and accruing on the bye. The former is less durable, and sooner apt to vanish upon the cessation of the present act, like the delight of the eye. The latter is more permanent, as that of the taste, and habitual; such as is the pleasure of any thing whereof one hath a continued possession, as of a confirmed state and habit of health, or of the riches, dignities, pleasant accommodations which belong to any one's settled condition; of which he hath that continual enjoyment that insensibly forms his spirit, raises and keeps it up to a pitch suitable to his condition, though he have not every day or hour distinct formed thoughts of them, nor is often in that contemplative transport with Nebuchadnezzar.—Is not this great Babylon which I have built? &c.

Both these are holy delight, or delight in God. In both whereof may be seen, added to the general nature of delight, a holy nature as the principle, inferring a powerful steady determination of the heart towards God, as the object and end which it ultimately tends to, and terminates upon. Though in the former way of delighting in God, the soul tends towards him more directly: in the latter (according as the acts may be to which the delight adheres,) more obliquely, and through several things that may be intermediate unto that final and ultimate object.

And both these may fitly be understood to be within the meaning of this text; which therefore we shall now consider apart and severally; though both of them very briefly.

And we begin with the latter of them. For though the former hath, in some respect, an excellency in it above the latter; yet as the progress of nature in other creatures is by way of ascent, from what is more imperfect to what is perfecter and more excellent; so is it with the communicated divine nature in the new creature, which puts itself forth, first in more imperfect operations, the buddings, as it were, of that tree of life which hath its more florid blossoms, and at length its ripe and fragrant fruit afterwards; or, (to come nearer the case,) inasmuch as the latter sort of delight (according to the order wherein we before mentioned them) hath more in it of the exercise of spiritual sense, the other more of spiritual reason; since human creatures, that have natures capable of both sorts of functions, do first exercise sense, and by a slower and more gradual process, come on to acts of ratiocination afterwards. So it is here, the soul in which the divine life hath taken place, doth first exercise itself in spiritual sensations; so that though, in the matter of delight, it is not destitute of the grateful relishes of things truly and spiritually delectable; yet the more formed and designed acts of holy delectation, in the highest object thereof, distinctly apprehended and pitched upon for that purpose, do follow in their season; and these are preparations, and the essays of the new creature, gradually and more indistinctly putting forth itself in order thereto; the embryos of the other.

If therefore it be inquired, wherein the delight of this more imperfect sort doth consist? I answer, in the soul's sensation and relish of sweetness in the holy, quickening communications of God unto it, by which he first forms it for himself, and in the operations which it is hereby enabled to put forth towards him, while it is in the infancy or childhood of its Christian state. Nor, while we say the delight of this kind doth more properly belong to the younger and more immature state of Christianity, do we thereby intend wholly to appropriate or confine it to that state. For as when a child is grown up to the capacity of exercising reason, it doth not then give over to use sense, but continues the exercise of it also in its adult state, even as long as the person lives; only, in its infancy and childhood its life is more entirely a life of sense, though there are early buddings of reason, that soon come to be intermingled therein; notwithstanding which, the principle that rules and is more in exercise, more fitly gives the denomination. So it is in this case also; that is, though there are sensations of delight and pleasure in religion, (yea, and those more quick, confirmed, and strong in more grown Christians,) yet these sensations are more single and unaccompanied (though not altogether) with the exercise of spiritual reason and judgment, and do less come in that way with Christians in their minority, than with others or themselves afterwards. Therefore that which we are to understand ourselves called to under the name of delighting in God (thus taken) is,—the keeping of our souls open to Divine influences and communications;—thirsting after them, praying and waiting for them;—endeavouring to improve them and co-operate with them, and to stir up ourselves unto such exercises of religion as they lead to, and are most suitable to our present state:—together with an allowing yea, and applying ourselves to stay and taste in our progress and course, the sweetness and delightfulness of those communications and operations whereof we have any present experience. For instance; when we find God at work with us, and graciously dealing with our spirits, to humble them, break and melt them under a sense of sin, incline and turn them towards himself, draw them to a closure with his Son the Redeemer, to a resignation and surrender of ourselves to him, upon the terms of his covenant and law of grace; yea, and when afterwards we find him framing our hearts to a course of holy walking and conversation; to the denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts; to a sober, righteous, and godly life in this present world; to the exercises of piety, sobriety, righteousness, charity, mercy, &c. And now this or the like heavenly dictate occurs to us, "Delight thyself in the Lord;" what doth it import? what must we understand it to say or signify to us? Though this that hath been mentioned, and which we are now saying, is not all that it signifies; (as will be shown hereafter;) yet thus much we must understand it doth signify and say to us: "Thy only true delights are to be found in a course of religion; they are not to be expected from this world, or thy former sinful course: but in exercising thyself unto godliness, in receiving and complying with the Divine discoveries, recommended to thee in the Gospel, and (through them) the influences of life and grace, which readily flow in upon any soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness; and by which thou mayest be framed after the good and holy and acceptable will of God. Herein thou shalt find such pleasures and delights entertaining thy soul, as that thou wilt have no cause to envy wicked men their sensual delights which they find in their sinful way; if thou wilt but observe what thou findest, and exercise thy sense, to discern between good and evil; and set thyself to consider whether there be not as well more satisfying, as purer, relishes of pleasure, in mortifying the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof, in denying thy-

self, in dying to this world, in living to God, in minding the things of another world, in giving up thyself to the several exercises of a holy life, watching, praying, meditating, &c. in trusting in the Lord with all thy heart, and in doing all the good thou canst in thy place and station, letting so thy light shine before men, that they seeing thy good works, may glorify thy Father which is in heaven; in contentment with what thou enjoyest, and patience under what thou sufferest in this world, in doing justice, loving righteousness, and walking humbly with thy God; than ever the vanishing pleasures of sin did or can afford." Thus into these two things may all be summed up, which delighting in God imports according to this notion of it —1. The applying ourselves to those things by the help of God's own communicated influence (which in that case will not be withheld) wherein the matter of delight lies— 2. The reflecting upon the things themselves that are so delightful, and setting ourselves to discern, and tasting actually the delectableness of them. And surely, if such words, "Delight thyself in the Lord," do say to us all this, they do not say nothing; nor say any thing impertinent, either to their own native import, or our state and condition in this world.

Ob. But here it may be objected; If we so interpret delighting in God, we shall by this means bring the whole of religion, and all sorts of actions that are governed and directed by it, within the compass of this one thing; and make delighting in God swallow up all that belongs to a Christian, and be the same thing with repentance, faith, self-denial, humility, meekness, patience, &c. which would sure seem too much to be comprehended under the name of one particular holy action or affection; especially that they should be called delighting in God, when in the exercise of divers of these, God may possibly not be in that instant actually so much as thought on. *Ans.* To this it may be sufficiently answered;

1. That these things cannot be hence said with any pretence to be made the same thing with delighting in God; but only that there is a delight adhering to all these; no more than it can be said, when, at some splendid treat or entertainment, there is a great variety of delicious meats and wine, which do therefore all agree in this,—that they are delectable; that all these dishes and liquors are therefore one and the same. Or, if the master of the feast call upon his guests to delight themselves with him their friend, (as here the particle in the text, which we read delight thyself *in* the Lord, may be read delight thyself *with* him,) and he explains himself, that he means by tasting this and that and another sort of his provisions, and eating and drinking cheerfully thereof, surely his words could not with more reason than civility be capable of that snarling reply; that, therefore, it seems, he thought the things themselves or their tastes and relishes were all one. For though they all afford delight, yet each of a different kind.

2. But are not all these truly delectable? Is there not a real delight to be had in them? Let any man, that hath tried, consult his experience; yea, let any one that hath not besotted his soul, and infatuated his understanding, but seriously consider the very ideas of these things, and revolve the notions of them in his mind, and then soberly judge, whether they be not delightful? And if so, when there is an actual sense of pleasure and sweetness in the communicated power, and in the practice of them, why is not this delighting in God? Admit that he is not actually thought on in some of these exercises; as when I freely forgive a wrong, or relieve a distressed person, or right a wronged one; if yet I do these things, from the radical principle of the love of God deeply settled in my soul, and with a sensible delight accompanying my act, and the disposition I find in mine heart thereunto; here is not, 'tis true, the very act of delighting in God, formally terminated upon him as the Object; but it is he that gives me this delight, and is the material Object (as well as Author) of it. The communication is from him, whereby I am delighted, and enabled to do the things that are further delightful. As if I converse with an excellent person, my intimate friend, who is at this time incognito, and by a disguise conceals himself from me, or I through my forgetfulness or inadvertency have no present thoughts of this person; but I hear his pleasant discourse, and am much taken with it, and the person on the account of it: it is my friend that I delighted in all this while though I knew it not.

3. And what fault can I find in the matter that divine delight thus runs and spreads itself through the whole business of religion, and all the affairs whereon it hath any influence? Is this the worse or the better? Have I any cause to quarrel at this? Sure I have not. But if I have not such actual thoughts of God, as may give me the advantage of terminating my delight more directly on him, that may be, very much, my own fault.

4. And what is that an absurdity, that under the name of delighting in God, the several acts and exercises of religion besides should be comprehended? How often in Scripture are other (no more eminent) parts of religion put for the whole. The knowledge of God, calling upon God, the fear of God, &c. How commonly are these acknowledged to be paraphrases of religion! And shall I not add, the *love* of God? that most authentic and owned summary of all practical religion, and which ought to influence all our actions. And then how far are we from our mark? What is the difference between loving God, and delighting in him? But I moreover add, that delight itself in him, cannot but be so taken in that sharp passage; (though misapplied to the person of whom it was meant;) for Job hath said, what profit is it that a man should delight himself with God,[f] *i. e.* or be religious? It fitly enough signifies religion, as thus modified or qualified, *viz.* as having this quality belonging to it, that it is delightful, or tinctured with delight in God. But this (so large) is not the only sense, as we have said, wherein we are to take delighting in God. And when any part of religion casts its name upon the whole, it would be very unreasonable to exclude the part from which the denomination is taken, or not to make that the principal thing there meant. We therefore proceed to speak,

2. Of the more explicit delight in God: and shall therein consider,—the nature and modification of it.

1. Its nature; which from what hath been said of delight in the general, with the addition of holiness thereto, (which is the work of God's Spirit, determining the act or faculty to which it adheres towards God,) may be conceived thus,— That it is the acquiescence or rest of the soul in God, by a satisfiedness of will in him, as the best and most excellent good. That it be the rest of the soul, belongs to its general nature. And so doth the mentioned kind of rest, more distinguishingly, by the will's satisfiedness in him, because the soul may be also said to rest satisfied (in respect of another faculty) by the mere knowledge of truth; but this supposes so much of that also as is necessary. And because the acts of the understanding are subservient and in order to those of the will, in the soul's pursuit of a delightful good; which is so far attained as it actually delights therein; therefore this may more simply be called the rest of the whole soul, whereas that other is its rest but in some respect only: especially when we add, as in the best and most excellent good; for this signifies the good wherein it rests to be ultimate, and its last end, the very period of its pursuits, beyond which it neither needs nor desires to go further, *viz.* as to the kind and nature of the good which it is now intent upon; though it still desire more of the same, till there be no place left for further desire, but it wholly cease and end in full satisfaction. And that we may speak somewhat more particularly of this rest in God; it supposes,

1. Knowledge of him. That the soul be well furnished with such conceptions of his nature and attributes, as that it may be truly said to be himself it delights in, and not another thing; not an idol of its own fancy, and which its imagination hath created and set up to it instead of God. Therefore his own representation of himself must be our measure; which being forsaken, or not so diligently attended to, he is either by some misrepresented, (according as their own corrupt hearts do suggest impure thoughts,) and made altogether such a one as themselves, and such as cannot be the object of a pure and spiritual delight; or by others (as their guilt and fear do suggest to them black and direful thoughts of him) rendered such as that he cannot be the object of any delight at all.

[f] Job xxxiv. 9.

2. It supposes actual thoughts of him; "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches."[g]

3. A pleasedness with even the first view or apprehension of him; which is most essential to any love to him, and which gives rise to any motion of,

4. Desire directed towards him, upon the apprehension that somewhat is absent, either of what is due to him, or lacking to ourselves from him.

5. It includes the satisfaction or repose itself which the soul hath, so far as it finds its desire answered in the one kind or the other. Where we must more distinctly know, that the delight taken in him, is according as the desire is which works towards him, and that as our love to him is: now we love him either for himself, or for our ownselves.

For *himself*, ultimately, so as that our love periods in him, and stays there, *viz.* on him, as good in himself.

For *ourselves;* as when our love to him returns upon ourselves, apprehending a goodness in him which is suitable for our enjoyment. Loving him in the *former way*, we desire all may be ascribed and given to him, that possibly may or can. And because we know him to be every way perfect and full, and that nothing can be added to him of real perfection, and therefore nothing can be given him besides external honour and acknowledgments, we therefore desire these may be universally rendered him to the very uttermost. And as far as we find him worthily glorified, admired, and had in honour, so far we have delight in (or in reference to) him; consisting in the gratification of that desire. Loving him in the *other way*, (which also we are not only allowed, but obliged to do, in contradistinction to all creature good,) we desire his nearer presence and converse, more full communications of his light, grace, and consolations. And are delighted according as we find such desire is answered unto us.

6. The form of expression used in the text, implies also a stirring up ourselves, and the use of endeavours with our own hearts, to foment, heighten, and raise our own delight. The conjugation (as it is thought fit to be called) into which the word is put, importing, by a peculiarity of expressiveness belonging to the sacred language, action upon one-self; which must also be understood to have the same force, in reference to that former sense of delighting in God; that is, that we put ourselves upon those acts and exercises whereunto such delight is adjoined. These things are now more cursorily mentioned, because there will be occasion more at large to insist on them in the discourse of the practice of this duty, reserved to the Second Part.

2. We now proceed to the modification of this delight in God; or the right manner or measure of it. Concerning which it is apparent in the general, it can be no further right than as it is agreeable to its object. That our delight should ever be adequate, or of a measure equal to it, is plainly impossible; but it must be some way suitable, or must bear proportion to it. I shall here mention but two (and those very eminent) respects wherein it must do so; *viz.* in respect of the excellency and the permanency of the good to be delighted in.

1. The *excellency* of it. Inasmuch as it is the best and highest good, it plainly challenges our highest delight. That is, the highest delight *simply*, which our natures are capable of, is most apparently due to the blessed God, even by the law of nature itself, resulting from our natures, referred unto his. And as the case stands under the Gospel, the highest delight *comparatively*, *i. e.* higher than we take in any thing else; nothing must be so much delighted in as he. We do not otherwise delight in him as God, which is one way of glorifying him. And 'tis part of the apostle's charge upon the pagan world, that knowing him to be God, they did not glorify him as God.

If we make the comparison between him and all the good things of this world, the matter is out of question. It is the sense of holy souls, Whom have I in heaven but thee? and whom can I desire on earth besides thee?[h] When others say, Who will show us any good? they say, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance.[i] And thereby he puts gladness into their hearts, more than when corn and wine increase. And whosoever love not Christ more than father, mother, wife, child; yea, and their own lives, cannot be his disciples.[k] Their present worldly life, if put in the balance, he must outweigh.

And if we put the comparison between our spiritual, eternal life and him; though he and that can never be in opposition, (as there may be often an opposition between him and this present life, so that the one is often quitted for the other,) yet neither is there a co-ordination, but the less worthy must be subordinate to the more worthy. We are to desire the enjoyment of him for his own glory. And yet here is a strange and admirable complication of these with one another. For if we enjoy him, delight and rest in him as our best and most satisfying good, we thereby glorify him as God. We give him practically highest acknowledgments, we confess him the most excellent one. 'Tis his glory to be the last term of all desires, and beyond which no reasonable desire can go further. And if we seek and desire his glory supremely, sincerely, and really beyond and above all things; when he is so glorified to the uttermost, or we are assured he will be; our highest desire is so far satisfied, and that turns to, or is, our own contentment. So that by how much more simply and sincerely we pass from and go out of ourselves, so much the more certainly we find our own satisfaction, rest, and full blessedness in him. As it is impossible the soul that loves him above itself, can be fully happy while he hath not his full glory; so it is for the same reason equally impossible, but it must be so when he hath.

2. Our delight must be suitable to the object (the good to be delighted in).

In respect of the *permanency* of it, this is the most durable and lasting good. In this blessed object therefore we are to rejoice evermore.[l] As in the matter of trust, we are required to trust in the Lord for ever, because in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength,[m] Everlasting strength gives sufficient ground for everlasting trust. So it is in the matter of delight. A permanent, everlasting excellency is not answered, but by a continual and everlasting delight. Therefore, is it most justly said, Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say unto you rejoice;[n] alway, and still on. If through a long tract of time you have been constantly alway rejoicing in the Lord, begin again, I, again, say to you rejoice; or rather, never give over. The object will warrant and justify the act, let it be drawn forth to never so vast a length of time. You will still find a continual spring, unexhausted fulness, a fountain never to be drawn dry. There will never be cause of diversion with this pretence, that now this object will yield no more; it is drained to the uttermost, and is now become an empty and gustless thing. With other things it may be so; and therefore our delight doth not answer the natures of such things, but when we rejoice in them as if we rejoiced not,[o] they are as if they were not. All the things of this world are so. For even the fashion of this world passeth away;[p] as it is afterwards added. Therefore no delight can fitly be taken in them, but what is volatile and unfixed as they are; lest otherwise it overreach, and run beyond its object. And how absurd and vain is it to have our hearts set upon that which is not, that takes wing, and leaves us in the dirt! This object of delight is the "I am, yesterday and to-day the same, and for-ever; without variableness and shadow of change." Therefore the nature of it cannot allow us a reason; wherefore, if we be delighted therein yesterday, we should not to-day; or if to-day, why not to-morrow, and so on to for ever. Whence then we may see no one can say he hath answered the import of this exhortation, "delight thyself in the Lord," by having delighted in him at some time. It is continual, as well as highest, delight we are here called to. We see then thus far what we are called to when we are here directed to delight ourselves in the Lord.

2. We are next to show how we are called to it. And the matter itself will answer the inquiry. We are called to it, according to what, in itself, it is. Now it is both a privilege and a duty. We are therefore called to it, and accordingly are to understand the words,

1. By way of gracious invitation to partake of a priv-

g Psal. lxiii. 5, 6.
h Psal lxxiii.
i Psal. iv.
k Matt. x. 37. Luke xiv. 26.
l 1 Thes. v. 16.
m Isa. xxvi. 4.
n Phil. iv. 4.
o 1 Cor. vii. 30.
p Ver 31.

lege which our blessed Lord would have us share and be happy in; no longer to spend ourselves in anxious pursuits and vain expectations of rest where it is not to be found; but that we retire ourselves to him in whom we shall be sure to find it. Pity and mercy invite here to place our delight, and take up our rest. And concerning this, there is no question or imaginable doubt.

2. By way of authoritative command. For we must know, that delight in God is to be considered not only under the notion of a privilege unto which we may esteem ourselves entitled; but also of a duty whereto we are most indispensably obliged. This is a thing (not so much not understood, as) not considered and seriously thought on, by very many; and the not-considering it proves no small disadvantage to the life of religion. It occurs to very many, more familiarly, under the notion of a high favour, and a great vouchsafement, (as indeed it is,) that God will allow any of the sons of men to place their delights in himself; but they (at least seem to) think it's only the privilege of some special favourites; of whom, because they perhaps are conscious they have no cause to reckon themselves, they are therefore secure in the neglect of it. And thus is the pretence of modesty and humility very often made an umbrage and shelter to the vile carnality of many a heart; and a want of fitness is pretended and cherished at the same time, as an excuse; that whereas they do not delight in God, they never may: for he that is unfit to-day, and never therewithal applies himself with seriousness to the endeavour of becoming fit, is likely to be more unfit tomorrow, and so be as much excused always as now; and by the same means at length excuse himself from being happy; but never from having been the author of his own misery. But what is it indeed no duty to love God? Is that become no duty which is the very sum and comprehension of all duties? or can they be said to love him, that take no pleasure in him, that is, to love him without loving him? It is indeed wonderful grace that there should be such a contexture of our happiness and duty; that, by the same thing wherein we are obedient, we also become immediately, in the same degree, blessed. And that the law of God in this case hath this very import, an obligation upon us to blessedness. But in the meantime we should not forget that God's authority and honour are concerned herein, as it is our duty; as well as our own happiness, as it is our privilege, and that we cannot injure ourselves in this matter without also robbing God.

Delight in God is a great piece of homage to him, a practical acknowledgment of his sovereign excellency, and perfect all-comprehending goodness. When we retire from all the world to him, we confess him better than all things besides; that we have none in heaven or earth that we esteem worthy to be compared with him. But when our hearts are averse to him, and will not be brought to delight in him, since there is somewhat in the meanwhile wherein we do delight, we do as much as say (yea, we more significantly express it than by saying) that whatever that is, 'tis better than he; yea, that such a thing is good, and he is not. For as not believing him as a denial of his truth, the making him a liar; not delighting in him is equally a denial of his goodness, and consequently even of his Godhead itself. And since we find the words are here laid down plainly in a perceptive form; "delight thyself in the Lord;" can any think themselves, after this, at liberty to do so or not? 'Tis true that they who are in no disposition hereto have somewhat else to do in order to that; (of which hereafter;) but, in the meantime, how forlorn is their case, who have nothing to excuse their sin by, but sin; and who, instead of extenuating their guilt, do double it! Yea, and we are further to consider, that it is not only commanded, by a mere simple precept, but that this precept hath its solemn sanction; and that not only by promise here expressly annexed, (of which hereafter,) but also of implied threatening; that we shall not else have the desires of our hearts, but be necessarily unsatisfied, and miserable: which is also in many other places expressed plainly enough. Great penalty is due upon not delighting in God, even by the gospel constitution itself; which is not so unreasonably formed as to require more in this matter, than is suitable to the object itself; and is framed so indulgently as to accept much less than is proportionable thereto; and yet within the capacity also of a reasonable soul. So that, though the very nature of the thing doth plainly dictate a rule, by which this matter is to be estimated and judged; yet this other rule gives considerable abatement and allowance. That is, it being considered what the *object* claims and challenges, as by its own proper excellency due to it; and what the *subject* is, by its own nature, capable of; not only doth it hence appear, that delight in God is a duty, but that the soul ought to rise to that highest pitch of delight in him, *i. e.* unto the highest the soul is naturally capable of. The very law of nature, resulting from the reference and comparison of our nature unto God's own, requires so much; that we love, or delight, in him with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our might, and with all our strength. He deserves from us our very uttermost. Yet this is by the gospel-constitution required with indulgence and abatement, not as to the matter required, but as to the manner of requiring it. The matter required is still the same, so as that the purest and highest delight in God doth not cease to be a duty, or any gradual defect thereof cease to be a sin. The Gospel doth make no change of the natures of things; makes nothing cease to be due to God from us, which the law of nature made due; nor renders any defect innocent, which is in its own nature culpable and faulty. Therefore the same pitch of delight in God is still due and required that ever was; but that perfection is not (finally and without relief) required in the same manner and on the same terms it was; that is, it is not by the Gospel required under remediless penalty, as it was. For the law of nature (though it made not a remedy simply impossible yet, it) provided none, but the Gospel provides one.

Yet not so but the same penalty also remains in itself due and deserved, which was before. For as the Gospel takes not away the dueness of any part or degree of that obedience which we did owe to God naturally, so nor doth it take away the natural dueness of punishment, for disobedience in any kind or degree of it. Only it provides that (upon the very valuable consideration which it makes known) it becomes to us a remissible debt, and actually remitted to them who come up to the terms of it. Not that it should be in itself no debt, for then nothing were remitted; nor yet, when it so provides for the remission of defects in this part of our duty, doth it remit the substance of the duty itself, or pardon any defects of it to any but such who are found sincere in this, as well as the other parts of that obedience which we owe. Others, who after so gracious overtures, remain at their former distance, and retain their aversion, enmity, and disaffection to God, it more grievously (and most justly) threatens and punishes as implacable; and who will upon no terms return into a state of friendship and amity with their Maker, whom they hated without cause, and do now continue strangers and enemies to him without excuse; so that the very blood of the reconciling sacrifice cries against them.[q]

And surely since (as was formerly said) it is God in Christ that is the entire object of this delight or love, 'tis a fearful penalty that is determined upon them that do not so place it; when it is said, If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha.[r] And when also it is said, Grace be upon all them that do,[s] it is plainly implied, that the penalty belongs to all them that do not love him in sincerity. Of which sincerity therefore of delight in God, (to keep within the compass of our present theme,) it is necessary we be well informed; as we may be from what hath been said before; that is—1. That we delight in him *supremely*, and above all things else, *viz.* with our highest and deepest complacency of will. For it is not necessary (nor ordinarily possible) that our delight in him should be ever accompanied with such sensible agitation of the corporeal spirits, as we find in reference to merely sensible objects. Which is not essential to such delight, but an accident that follows union with the body; and more frequently, and to a greater degree, in some tempers of body than others. But it is necessary there be that practical estimation of him, and propension towards him, as the best and most excellent good; as that we be in a preparation of mind and heart to forego whatever can come

q Heb. x 29. r 1 Cor. xvi. 22. s Eph. vi. 24.

into any competition with him for his sake. That though we do not thus delight in him so much as we should, yet we do more than in any thing else.—2. That we *continue* herein: that this be the constant habitual temper of our spirits towards him: that we cleave to him with purpose of heart, as not only the most excellent, but the most permanent, object of our delight: having settled the resolution with ourselves, "This God shall be our God for ever and ever; he shall be our God and guide even to the death."† And that there be frequent actual workings of heart towards him, agreeable to such a temper, though they are not so frequent as they ought. Which account we give of this sincerity of delight in God, not to encourage any to take up with the lowest degree of that sincerity; but that none may be encouraged, upon their own mistake in this matter, to take up with any thing short of it; and that we may see whence to take our rise in aiming at the highest pitch thereof. And that we may (understanding the highest intenseness and most constant exercise of delight in God that our natures are capable of, to be our duty) understand also, that in reference to our gradual defects and intermissions herein, we ought to be deeply humbled, as being faulty; not unconcerned, as though we were innocent in this regard; that we need continual pardon upon these accounts;—that we owe it to the blood of the Redeemer, that such things can be pardoned;—that we are not to reckon, or ever to expect, that blood should stand us instead, to obtain our pardon for never delighting in God sincerely at all; but only (supposing we do it sincerely) that we do it not perfectly. For most certainly, they whose hearts are never turned to him as their best and most sovereign good or portion, and Ruler or Lord; but do still remain alienated in their minds, and enemies through wicked works, will perish notwithstanding. And that we might the more distinctly, together with the apprehension of what we are called to in this matter, understand also how we are called to, *i. e.* not by an invitation only, that leaves us at liberty whether we will or will not, as we think fit; but by express command, and that also backed with the severe determination of most dreadful penalty in case of omission. And thus we have in some measure shown the import of the direction in the text,—that we delight ourselves in the Lord.

OF

DELIGHTING IN GOD:

FROM PSALM XXXVII. 4.

DELIGHT THYSELF ALSO IN THE LORD, AND HE SHALL GIVE THEE THE DESIRES OF THINE HEART.

PART II.

CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF DELIGHT IN GOD

WE have in the former Part extended the meaning of the words, "Delight thyself in the Lord," beyond what they seem at first sight literally to signify: so as not to understand them merely as requiring that very single act of delight to be immediately and directly terminated on God himself; but to take them as comprehending also the sum of all holy and religious converse with God, *i. e.* as it is delightful, or as it is seasoned (intermingled, and as it were besprinkled) with delight; and upon the same account, of all our other converse, so far as it is influenced by religion. And I doubt not, to such as shall attentively have considered what hath been said, it will be thought very reasonable to take them in that latitude; whereof the very letter of the text (as may be alleged for further justification hereof) is most fitly capable. For (as was noted upon another text where we have the same phrase) the particle which we read *in* the Lord, hath not that signification alone, but signifies also *with*, or *by*, or *besides*, or *before*, or *in presence of*; as if it had been said, "Come and sit down with God, retire thyself to him, and solace thyself in the delights which are to be found in his presence and converse, in walking with him, and transacting thy course as before him, and in his sight." As a man may be said to delight himself with a friend that puts himself under his roof; and besides personal converse with himself, freely enjoys the pleasure of all the entertainments, accommodations, and provisions which he is freely willing to communicate with him, and hath the satisfaction which a sober person would take in observing the rules and order of a well-governed house.

† Ps. xlviii.

According to this diverse import of the precept enjoining this duty, it will be requisite to speak diversely of the practice of the duty itself: that is, that we treat of the practice and exercise of delight;—As a thing adherent to the other duties of religion;—2. As it is a distinct duty of itself.

1. As to the former, our business will be to treat of the exercise of religion as delightful. Now religion is delightful naturally and in itself; and makes a man's other actions, even that are not in themselves acts of religion, delightful also, so far as they are governed and influenced by it; if that religion be true, *i. e.* if it be living, such as proceeds from a principle of divine life. Being therefore now to treat of the practice of this duty, (whereof the account hath been already given,) our discourse must aim at and endeavour these two things, the former as leading and subservient to the latter;—*viz.* I. That we may not take up and rest, or let our practice terminate, in a religion which is not naturally and in itself delightful;—2. That we seek after and improve in that which is.

I. That which is not so we have great reason not to acquiesce in, or be contented with, for it is plainly such as will not defray itself, or bear its own charges, as having only cumber and burden in it, no use or end; I mean the dead formality of religion only. We find it natural and pleasant to carry about with us our own living body; but who would endure (how wearisome and loathsome a task were it!) to lug to and fro a dead carcass? It will be upon this account needful to insist in showing more distinctly, what sort of religion it is, that is in itself wholly unde-

lightful, and propound some things to consideration concerning it, that may tend to beget a dislike of it, and so incline us to look farther.

1. That we may know what we are not to take up with; because our present subject confines us to this one measure of religion, that it be delightful, it will be proper to limit our discourse to this character only of the religion we are to pass from as vain and worthless, *viz.* that which is without delight; which it also will be sufficient to insist on to our present purpose. For since (as hath been largely shown) the delightfulness of the religion which is true and living, is intrinsical, and most natural to it, 'twill therefore be certainly consequent, that which is not delightful is dead, and can serve for nothing.

And yet here it will be necessary, for caution to insert,

1. That even such religion as is true and living, and consequently in itself delightful, yet may by accident sometimes not appear or be thought so; because either variety of occasions may divert from minding, or some imbittering distemper of spirit may hinder, the present relishing, of that pleasure which is truly in it. As a man may eat and feed on that which is very savoury and good; and yet, though his taste be not vitiated, but because he reflects not, may not every moment have that present apprehension that it is so; much more if the organs of taste be under a present distemper. But, if they be not so, any one's asking him how he likes that dish, (because that occasions a more express animadversion,) will also draw from him an acknowledgment that it is pleasant and savoury.

2. That a dead religion may be thought delightful; and through the ill temper of the subject, a pleasure may be apprehended in it, which doth not naturally arise from it; that is, the mere external part of religion may be flexible, and be accidentally perverted into a subserviency to some purposes which religion of itself intends not, in respect whereof a delight may injuriously (and as by a rape) be taken in it, as is said by the prophet of a hypocritical people: Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness; they take delight in approaching to God.[a] Therefore that which is here intended, is not, that the religion should be rejected, in some present exercises whereof we have not the actual relish of a present pleasure; (as that should not be embraced, wherein upon any whatsoever terms we find it;) but that which can rightfully, and upon just terms, afford us none; and which upon our utmost inquiry and search, cannot in reason (as it is not unfit that spiritual reason should be employed in making a judgment what may) be thought spiritually delectable. We shall therefore, in some particular heads, give a short account of such religion, as rationally cannot but be judged undelightful, or which hath not that in it which can yield pleasure to a sound and well-complexioned spirit; but that if any be taken therein, that very pleasure is so unnatural and out of kind, as to be the argument rather of a disease in the subject, than of any real goodness in the thing itself.

Whereunto we only premise this twofold general rule, whereby an undue and unnatural delight may be estimated and judged of.

1. That such delight may be justly deemed unnatural which is taken in any thing besides and with the neglect of the proper use and end which it most fitly serves for.

2. Such as is accompanied with a real hurt, greater than the delight can countervail, or as is so far from taking in profit and benefit in conjunction with it, as that the damage and prejudice which it cannot recompense, is inseparable from it; which rules will be the more fitly applicable to the present case; for that (as hath been formerly observed) the delight which accompanies the acts and exercises of religion, or that flow from it, (though it be natural thereto,) yet is not the only or chief end of those acts; but they have another more important end, unto the prosecution whereof by such acts delight is only adherent: whence the delight cannot but be most preposterous and perverse, which is taken in such things as do either not serve the more principal design of religion; or much more that are repugnant and destructive of it. By these rules we may plainly see what delight in the general is to be accounted undue. As by the former rule we would justly reckon that an undue delight which a man should take in food, if he only please himself with the looking on the handsome garnishing of the dishes, which he loaths in the meantime and refuses to taste, or which a covetous miser takes in having wealth hoarded up, which he is pleased often to view and cannot endure to use. And by the latter, that were most irrational delight, which in a fever one should take in gratifying his distempered appetite, whereby he doth not so much relieve nature as feed his disease.

And so we may say, that religion is undelightful, *i. e.* not duly delightful,

1. Which consists wholly in revolving in one's own mind the notions that belong to religion, without either the experience or the design and expectation of having the heart and conversation formed according to them. So the case is with such as content themselves to yield the principles of religion true, and behold with a notional assent and approbation the connexion and agreement of one thing with another; but do never consider the tendency and aim of the whole; or that the truth of the gospel is the doctrine that is according to godliness;[b] or such as is pursuant to the design of making men godly; of transforming them into the image of God, and framing them to an entire subjection to his holy and acceptable will; that bethink not themselves the truth is never learned as it is in Jesus, except it be to the renewing the spirit of the mind, the putting off the old man, and the putting on of the new.[c] When this is never considered, but men do only know, that they may know; and are never concerned further about the great things of God, than only to take notice that such things there are offered to their view which carry with them the appearance of truth, but mind them no more than the affairs of Eutopia, or the world in the moon; what delight is taken in this knowledge is surely most perverse. There is a pleasure indeed in knowing things, and in apprehending the coherence of one truth with another; but he that shall allow himself to speculate only about things wherein his life is concerned, and shall entertain himself with delight in agitating in his mind certain curious general notions concerning a disease or a crime that threatens him with present death, or what might be a remedy or defence in such a case, without any thought of applying such things to his own case, or that the case is his own, one may say of such pleasure, It is mad; or of this delight, What doth it? Or he that only surfeits his eye with beholding the food he is to live by, and who in the meantime languishes in the want of appetite, and a sickly loathing of his proper nutriment; surely such a one hath a pleasure that no sober man would think worth the having.

And the more any one doth only notionally know in the matters of religion, so as that the temper of his spirit remains altogether unsuitable and opposite to the design and tendency of the things known, the more he hath lying ready to come in judgment against him; and if therefore he count the things excellent which he knows, and only please himself with his own knowledge of them, 'tis but a like case as if a man should be much delighted to behold his own condemnation written in a fair and beautiful hand; or, as if one should be pleased with the glittering of that sword which is directed against his own heart, and must be the present instrument of death to him: and so little pleasant is the case of such a person in itself, who thus satisfies his own curiosity, with the concernments of eternal life and death, that any serious person would tremble on his behalf, at that wherein he takes pleasure, and apprehend just horror in that state of the case whence he draws matter of delight.

2. 'Tis yet a more insipid and gustless religion which too many place in some peculiar opinions, that are either false, and contrary to religion, or doubtful, and cumbersome to it, or little and inconsiderable, and therefore certainly alien to it, and impertinent. For if that religion only be truly delightful which hath a vital influence on the heart and practice, as that must needs be indelectable, which is only so notionally conversant about the greatest truths, as that it hath no such influence; much more is that so, which

[a] Isa. lviii. 2. [b] 1 Tim. vi. 3. [c] Eph. iv.

is so wholly conversant about matters either opposite or irrelative hereto, as that it can have none. It must here be acknowledged that some doctrines, not only not revealed in the word of God, but which are contrary thereto, may (being thought true) occasion the excitation of some inward affection, and have an indirect influence to the regulating of practice also, so as to repress some grosser enormities: as the false notions of pagans concerning the Deity, which have led them to idolatry, have struck their minds with a certain kind of reverence of invisible powers, and perhaps rendered some more sober and less vicious than had they been destitute of all religious sentiments. And yet the good which hath hence ensued, is not to be referred to the particular principles of idolatry, which were false; but the more general principles of religion, which were true. Yea, and though such false principles viewed alone, and by themselves, may possibly infer somewhat of good; yet that is by accident only, and through the short-sightedness and ignorance of them with whom they obtain; who, if they did consider their incoherence with other common notions and principles most certainly true, would receive by them (if thought the only principles of religion) so much the greater hurt, and become so much the more hopelessly and incurably wicked. As most manifestly the principles which (looked upon by themselves) while they are reckoned true, do lead to idolatry, and consequently, by that mistake only, to some religion; do yet, being really false, lead to atheism, and of themselves tend to subvert and destroy all religion. Therefore such doctrines as cohere not with the general frame of truth, whatever their particular aspect may be, considered apart and by themselves, are yet in their natural tendency opposite and destructive to the true design of religion, and the pleasure which they can any way afford, is only stolen and vain; such as a person takes in swallowing a potion that is pleasant, but which, if it perform what belongs to it, he must with many a sickly qualm refund and disgorge back again.

We also acknowledge some truths of less importance may be said to concern practice, though not so immediately. Nor is it therefore the design of this discourse to derogate from any such, that are of apparently divine revelation or institution; which, however they justly be reckoned less than some other things, yet for that very reason as they are revealed by God for such an end, are by no means to be esteemed little, or incousiderable; be their subserviency to the great design of religion never so remote. Upon the account of which subserviency, they are also to be esteemed delectable, that is, in proportion thereto; but when they are so esteemed beyond that proportion, and are exalted into an undue preference to their very end itself; so as that, in comparison of them, the great things of religion are reckoned low, frigid, sapless things; when men set their hearts upon them abstractly, and without consideration of their reference and usefulness to the greater things of religion; the delight that is so taken in them, argues but the disease of the mind that takes it, and so great a degree of dotage, that a serious person would wonder how men can please themselves with such matters, without considering, and with the neglect of so great things they have relation to.

3. And hither is to be referred the much less rational pleasure which is taken by some in the mere dress wherewith such notions and opinions may be artificially clothed by themselves or others; rhetorical flourishes, a set of fine words, handsome cadences and periods, fanciful representations, little tricks and pieces of wit, and (which cannot pretend so high) pitiful quibbles and gingles, inversions of sentences, the pedantic rhyming of words, yea, and an affected tone, or even a great noise, things that are neither capable of gratifying the Christian nor the man; without which even the most important weighty matters do to so squeamish stomachs seem gustless and unsavoury, and are reckoned dull and flat things. And most plain it is, (though it is not strange, that so trifling minds should impose upon themselves by so thin a sophism,) that such are in a great mistake, whose delight being wholly taken up in these trifles, do hereupon think they taste the delights of religion; for these are nothing of it, are found about it only accidentally; and by a most happy accident too, as ill (for the most of these things) agreeing to it and no more becoming it than a fool's coat doth a prudent grave person; and the best of them agreeing to it but in common with any thing else, about which such arts may be used; so that they are no way any thing of it, or more peculiarly belonging to it, than to any theme or subject besides, unto which such ornaments (as they are thought) can be added. How miserably therefore do they cheat themselves, who, because they hear with pleasure a discourse upon some head of religion thus garnished, according to their idle trifling humour; and because they are taken with the contrivance of some sentences, or affected with the loudness of the voice, or have their imagination tickled with some fantastical illustrations; presently conclude themselves to be in a religious transport, when the things that have pleased them have no affinity or alliance with religion, befall to it but by chance, and are in themselves things quite of another country!

4. Of the like strain is the religion that is made up all of talk. And such like are that sort of persons, who love to discourse of those great things of God wherewith it was never their design or aim to have their hearts stamped, or their lives commanded and governed; who invert that which was the ancient glory of the Christian church, "We do not speak great things, but live them." And are pleased with only the noise of their own (most commonly insignificant senseless) words; unto whom how ungrateful a relish would that precept have, "Be swift to hear, slow to speak!" And how much to be regretted a thing is it, that the delights of practical living religion should be so lost, and vanish into a mere lip-labour! Things of this nature are to be estimated by their end, and the temper of spirit which accompanies them; which unto a serious and prudent observer, are commonly very discernible and easy to be distinguished. It's an amiable, lovely thing to behold those that are intent upon the great business of religion themselves, provoking others also with serious gravity unto love and good works. And it will ever stand as a monumental character of them that feared the Lord, that they spake often one to another[d] upon this account. But the pretence of this is odious, when the thing designed is nothing but self-recommendation, and the spirit of the pretenders is visibly vain and empty: and when it is apparent they take delight, not in the things they speak of, but only in this thing itself, speaking much. No breath is then more fulsome; and the better the things are, the worse it is to have no more savour of them.

5. Again, the religion is akin to this which stands all in hearing. It is as remote (at least) from the heart, when it is wholly placed in the ear, as when it's all in the tongue. As it is with them that are hearers only, not doers of the word, deceiving their own souls.[e] When the preacher is to them as a very lovely song, of one that can play well on an instrument, and they hear his words, but do them not.[f] And it is natural to the same sort of persons to be pleased indifferently with either of these, as the Athenians were in hearing or telling some new thing. Only that this difference most commonly appears with the persons we intend, that when the things they delight to hear must be ever new, or at least new dressed, the things they speak shall be everlastingly the same. How perverse a delight is that! Whereas 'tis the glory of substantial religion, that the principal things of it can never grow old or be dry. Their ears shall itch after novelties; a plain argument that it is not religion itself that pleases them, (which cannot change,) but the variable accessory modes of representing it. However, there is certainly very often a distemper appearing among those that profess religion, in coveting to hear unto excess, and beyond what is either suitable or designed unto use and profit. When the pleasure of a delightful revolving of the ever fresh and fragrant truths of the Gospel, and reducing them to answerable practice, is lost and stifled, by heaping on of more than can be digested. And many a hopeful birth of pious and holy dispositions, affections, and good works, is suppressed or enfeebled by an untimely superfetation.

6. Lastly, 'tis a most undelightful religion, which consists entirely in the external additaments and forms of worship, which this or that party have chosen to affix to it. Yea, though those forms be never so certainly of Divine

[d] Mal. iii. [e] Jam. i. [f] Ezek. xxxiii.

prescription; which, however God hath appointed them, were never appointed or intended by him to be our religion, but to be subservient helps and means to it. Being enlivened by it, they are comely and delightful; but severed and cut off from it, or the course of vital spirit that should flow into them being obstructed and repressed, they have no more pleasure in them than a dead arm or finger. Such divine appointments themselves, severed from the things wherein substantial religion consists, have been an abomination to the Lord, (Your new moons and sabbaths, &c. my soul hates,) and then sure there is little reason they should be a delight to us.[g] If they be, it is as fond and trifling a delight, as when one hath the opportunity of conversing with some excellent person, to neglect all his wise sayings, and pleasant instructive discourses, and only to please oneself in viewing his handsome apparel; yea, though I should know at the same time, that I thereby greatly displease him whom (as is also supposable) I were greatly concerned to please. Thus it is with them that mind only the solemnity of God's worship, not the design. And more gross the matter is with such as by their observance of the external modes of religion, think to expiate the badness of their most vicious conversation; that will steal, and murder, and commit adultery, oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow; and yet presume to stand before the Lord in his house, and cry, The temple of the Lord, &c.[h] This is the pharisaical religion, that is scrupulous in tything mint, annise, cummin, and neglects the weighty things of the law, justice, judgment, and truth. These men delight in what not only is dead in itself, but will be mortal unto them. And if the Divine institution of the things wherewith they so vainly please themselves will not bear them out, much less their own, be their discriminating denomination or profession what it will. And now all these things, (whether severally or together,) and whatever else of like kind, do at the best make but a dead, and consequently an undelightful, religion, such as hath no pleasure in it, because it hath no life; it remains therefore,

2. To show how unfit such a religion is to be chosen or rested in. And surely since (as appears from what was formerly said) the persuading of men to become religious or godly, is but an inviting them to a state and course wherein they may delight themselves with God; or to a life of pure and heavenly pleasure; that is only the vain show of religion, which affords nothing of that pleasure. And how unreasonable and foolish is it when religion itself is the thing we pretend, to let ourselves be mocked (as we mock others, and vainly attempt to mock him also, who is not to be mocked) with the mere empty show and appearance of it! That we may be here somewhat more particular, let it be considered,

1. That the religion which is in itself undelightful, is, for the same reason for which it is so, incapable of growth; that is, because it is a dead thing. For that reason it is without delight; and for the same reason admits not of improvement. It wants the self-improving principle. He that drinks of that water (saith our Saviour) which I shall give him, it shall be in him as a well of water springing up in him unto life eternal.[i] That only principle of all true religion and godliness, the divine nature, the seed of God, is of that heavenly tendency, it aims and aspires upward; and will never cease shooting up till it reach heaven; and the pleasure and delightfulness of it stand much in its continual springing up towards a perfect state, from a grain of mustard-seed to the tallness of a cedar. 'Tis pleasant to behold its constant undecaying greenness and verdure; such as renders it subject like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth fruit in season, whose leaf also doth not wither, and whatsoever he doth prospers.[k] Or as plants set in the house of the Lord, that flourish in the courts of their God; that shall still bring forth fruit even in old age, and be fat and flourishing.[l] The dead, dry forms, or other appendages of religion, that have no communion with a living root, or the religion that is only made up of these, gives no such hope of improvement. A great and most considerable prejudice against any thing that pretends to the name of religion; which being at first an imperfect thing, (as that especially which itself is but pretence and shadow cannot but be,) if it shall never be expected to be better, can have little claim or title to any excellency. The value even of true religion, though it be of an excellent nature and kind, stands much in the hopefulness and improveableness of it; and is not so much to be considered in respect of what it is, as what it shall come to. This lank, spiritless religion, as soon as you assume and take it up, you know the best of it. 'Tis not of a growing, thriving kind; never expect better of it. 'Tis true, the notional knowledge, opinionativeness, and external observances, which we have spoken of, may be so increased, as a heap of sand may be; but the religion of such grows not as a thing that hath life in it, by vital self-improvement.

2. Nor for the same reason can it be a lasting thing. For it wants what should maintain it. It will, as a vesture, wear and grow old; or, being as a cloak put on to serve a present turn, is, when that turn is served, as easily thrown off, *i. e.* being found to be more cumbersome than useful. What hath living union with a man's own self, it's neither his ease nor convenience; he neither affects, nor can endure to lay it aside. It is given as a character of a hypocrite, (one who therefore must be understood to carry with him some show and face of religion, and to want the living root and principle of it,) that he is inconstant in his religion; Will he at all times call upon God?[m] or will he be constantly religious? The interrogative form of speech implies more than a mere negative. That is, doth not only say that he will not at all times call upon God, but that it is absurd to say or think that he will. For it is an appeal to common reason in the case; as if it had been said, "Can any man think that such a one's religion will be lasting? It imports a disdain it should be thought so. What! he call upon God at all times? A likely thing! No; the matter is plain, his religion is measured by his secular interest, and he will only be so long religious as will serve that purpose. And the reason is plainly assigned in the foregoing words, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty?" His religion hath no delight with it: 'tis a languid, faint, spiritless thing, a dead form. If it had life, it would have pleasure in it; and then the same vital principle that would make it pleasant, would make it lasting and permanent also.

3. While it doth last, it wants the fruit and profit which should be designed and sought by religion; even for the same reason for which it is without delight, it is also fruitless and vain, *i. e.* because it hath no life in it. So that all that is done in this way of religion is only labour and toil to no purpose. And what do or can we propose to ourselves from religion, as the proper design of it, but to have our spirits fitted to the honouring and enjoying of God, unto service to him, and blessedness in him; and that we may hereupon actually both serve and enjoy him? Both these chiefly depend upon his favourable acceptance of us. He will neither reckon himself served by us, nor allow himself to be enjoyed, if he be not pleased with us. And how shall we expect to please him with that, wherewith, the more our minds come to be rectified and made conformable to the rule of righteousness and life, the more impossible it is that we can be pleased ourselves? Can we please him by a religion that is in itself unsavoury, spiritless, and dead; and that affords not to ourselves the least relish of true pleasure? And partly the success of our religion in the mentioned respects, depends upon the due temperament our spirits receive by it; but what good impression can that light, chaffy, empty religion that hath been described, ever be hoped to make there? Is it a likely means of refining and bettering our spirits? Even as it is void of spiritual delight, it's also of spiritual benefit; for certainly our spirits are like to embrace and retain nothing in which they can take no pleasure. How vain then is that religion by which we can neither please God nor profit ourselves!

4. It ought to be considered how foolish a thing it is, and unworthy of a reasonable creature, to do that in a continued course and series of actions wherein we can have no design, and do aim at nothing. Even they that place their religion in things so remote and alien to the spirit and power of it, do yet spend a considerable part of

g Isa. i. h Jer. vii. i John iv.
k Psalm i. l Psalm xcii. m Job xxvii. 10.

their life-time in those things. And how becoming is it of a man to have spent so much of his time in doing nothing! and that from week to week, or from day to day, the seasons should return, of which he hath constantly this to say, "Now comes the time of doing that whereof I can give no account why I do it!" That there should be so constant a defalcation of such portions of time for that which a man can neither call business nor recreation, which tends to no advantage in any kind. For it tends not to promote his secular interest but in so indirect and by a way, and with so sinister and basely-oblique respects, as an honest man would abhor, and an ingenuous man be ashamed to profess; and his spiritual and eternal interest much less. This were therefore the same thing as to proclaim oneself a fool or a vain trifler. The things that have been instanced in, (considered so abstractly from the substance of religion as we have considered them,) being such, some of them, as to carry not with them so much as that very show of wisdom,[n] of which the apostle speaks; and others of them, so faint a show, as it ill becomes a wise man to be pleased with, while they do his better part no good, and carry not that show in any provision (as that word τιμὴ sometimes signifies) for the satisfying of the flesh.

And yet it is to be withal remembered, that this (waste and lost) time of their life is all that such persons allot to their everlasting concernments; and that the things which have been mentioned (some or other of them, for all do not always concur with the same persons) are not made subservient to, but are substituted in the room and stead of, the religion by which those concernments should be provided for. And is this a wise provision for eternity? What, man? a few empty, unimproved notions! a by-opinion or two! the flourishes of a little pedantic art tickling thy toyish fancy! the motion of thy only busy and labouring tongue! or the thirst and satisfaction of thy vain ear! the bowing of thy hypocritical knee! Are these all that thou designest, or wilt mind to do, for thy soul? Are these like well to supply the place of living religion? to serve thee instead of inward acquaintance with God? of being really and habitually good and holy? of doing good and walking in the path of life? What a soul hast thou, that can live upon chaff and air, and be sustained by the wind? Hast thou no need of quickening influence from God? no hunger after the heavenly, hidden manna, and the fruits of the tree of life? What use makest thou of thy understanding, or of the reason of a man, when thou thinkest such empty vanities as thou trustest in can do the office, or attain the ends, of true religion? How much more rational were it to pretend to nothing of religion at all, than to think such a one will serve the turn!

5. Consider, what reflections are likely to be made upon this matter hereafter, when thy short course in this world is run out. Will it be a grateful remembrance to thee that thou wast so long hovering about the borders of religion? and wast at the very door and wouldst not enter in? that thou didst so often think and speak, and hear of the things wherein religion stood, but wouldst never allow thyself to taste the pleasant relishes thereof? to have been so nigh to the kingdom of God, and yet an alien to it, to the righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, wherein it consists? that thou didst only please thyself with the painted casket (made fine, as thou thoughtest, but only with thine own pencil) wherein so rich a jewel was; and retaining that, threwest away this as a thing of nought? will not these be wounding thoughts?

6. Let it be seriously pondered how offensive it must be to the jealous God that any should thus trifle with him and his holy things, under a show and pretence of religion and devotion to him. Not to please him by the sincerity and truth of our religion, loses the end and reward we would expect. But that is not all. To provoke him by the hypocritical pretence and abuse of it, cannot but infer a sharp revenge which it may be we expected not. And let us bethink ourselves how high the provocation is! Either we design to please, honour, and enjoy him by that irrational and undelightful course of religion, or we do not. If we do not, this signifies nothing but highest contempt and defiance of him; and that we care not for his favour nor fear his displeasure. Yea, inasmuch as such religion is pretended as a homage to him, it is nothing really but most profane and insolent mockery; as if we would join in the same breath and in the same act, "Hail, Jesus, and crucify him;" and at once invest him with the purple robe, and spit in his face. But if we have such a design, and do really think to please him by such trifling with him; and that these vain fancies and formalities shall make amends for all our neglects of him through the whole course of our lives besides; then how vile thoughts have we of him! What do we make of the God we serve? How justly may that be applied to us, Ye worship ye know not what![o] Who gave us our idea of that ever blessed Being? It is not God, but a despicable idol of our own creating, we are thinking to please. We may see how well he is pleased with the external show and the appendages of religion (which being his own appointments would in conjunction and in subserviency thereto have signified somewhat, but disjoined from it, and accompanied with the neglect and abandoning of real piety and righteousness, signified nothing but an affront to him) in that remonstrance by the prophet; He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol.[p] He is pleased with their religion as he would be with murder, profaneness, and idolatry. And is it strange this should be his estimate, when he is hereby practically represented as such a one that will not be displeased with real wickedness, and that will be pleased with the thinnest and most superficial show of devotion?

They therefore make a fair hand of their religion, who are so far from pleasing God by it and advantaging themselves, that they wound their own souls, (as they are most like to do that handle so awkwardly such an edged tool,) and render God their most avowed enemy. The religion then which hath no delight in it, has so much of folly, incommodity, and mischief, that measuring it by the rules which were premised, we may see sufficient reason why such a religion should not be chosen or rested in: and that we are concerned to look further.

Wherefore we proceed next,

2. To the other head we proposed; the positive judgment we are to make, what religion is fit to be chosen, and wherein we may safely acquiesce; whereof we shall only give the account which the subject we have in hand allows to be here given, *i. e.* that it be such as is in itself rationally and justly delectable. And though religion is not to be chosen only or chiefly for the delightfulness of it; yet since, as we have seen, only that religion is true which is delightful, that only which is delightful is fit to be chosen. So that this is a certain character (though not the chief cause) of the eligibleness of religion. And when it is so expressly enjoined us as a duty, to delight ourselves in the Lord; if, as hath been shown, this be within the meaning of the precept, that, in the general, we delight ourselves in a way and course of religion; it is plain such religion only can be meant or intended, as can afford us matter of delight, or as is in itself truly and really delectable. And here we shall not need to repeat what hath been so largely discoursed in the Former Part, tending to show the rich matter of delight which the several exercises of true living religion, and all the actions influenced and directed by it, do carry in them. It will be only requisite, to offer somewhat partly to direct, partly to excite, unto that delightful pleasant life.

I. For direction, let such rules be observed as these which follow.

1. Endeavour to have a mind well instructed in the knowledge of such things as more directly concern the common practice of a religious man, as such. That is, to be thoroughly insighted into practical truths, or into that truth which is after godliness. It hath been the merciful vouchsafement of the Divine goodness, so to order it, that those things are plain and but few, which are of more absolute necessity in religion, as may be seen by the summary accounts which we find sometimes given thereof,—repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.[q] Which two things (intimated to comprehend the whole counsel of God) do manifestly suppose the state of

[n] Col. ii. 23.
[o] John iv.
[p] Isa. lxvi. 3.
[q] Acts xx.

apostacy, and express the way of remedy; whereinto, when we are brought, how succinct and clear a recapitulation of our duty have we in that of our Saviour, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself!" To a well-complexioned spirit, how comprehensive and how full, how savoury and acceptable, will these things appear: nor would such a one part with the substantial fulness of these few words for all the treasures of both the Indies. How truly is it called, that good, that acceptable and perfect will of God![r] And how fitly to be preferred before thousands of gold and silver! Things of highest value are not bulky; their excellency is the greater by being contracted; and that, being in themselves precious, they are so conveniently portable. How easily are these dictates carried about with us through our whole course! and how universally useful are they for the well-guiding of it, to such as have a greater mind to do their duty than move questions about it! Two things are both opposite to this rule, and not a little prejudicial to the delight of religious conversation, (by which it will appear, how conducible to it the matter here directed is) *viz.* excessive curiosity in the speculation of truths belonging to religion, without designing to refer them to practice; (which hath been animadverted on before,) and an equally excessive scrupulosity about matters of practice. It were indeed an argument of a desperate mind, and destitute of any fear of God, to be careless what we do, and unconcerned whether the way we take, in this or that case, be right or wrong. But it is certain, there may be an excess in this matter, and too often is; that is, there may be a scrupulosity which is both causeless and endless. There is surely some medium in travelling between a careless wandering we mind not whither, and a perpetual anxiety whether we be in our way or no, with often going back to inquire. This would quite destroy both the pleasure of the journey, and the progress of it. Some difficulties may occur, which should justly occasion one to make a stand and consider. But probably, very many cases that some do agitate with much disquiet to themselves and others, would soonest be expedited by sincerity, and reducing them to the law of love.

It would however make much for our pleasant, delightful walking on in the way of God, to have a mind (informed once and established thoroughly in the belief of the principal doctrines of Christian religion) well furnished also with the most useful practical precepts, which might at every turn be ready at hand to be applied upon emergencies; which they whom predominate self-interest or corrupt inclination render not difficult to the apprehending of their duty, (our way is not usually otherwise so very intricate,) may cheerfully and innocently guide themselves by. "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely." Though some men's way may, by the circumstances of their conditions, be much more perplexed than others, who are therefore concerned to be the more wary. But the difficult toil and tug that some have with themselves, is, how by contrived explications they may make their rule bend and yield to their self-biassed humours and ends; which because they find it not easy to do with full satisfaction to their consciences, (that see more than they would have them, and are yet not of authority enough with them to govern and command their practice,) it is not strange, they entangle and even lose themselves amongst thorns and briars, and meet with little delight in their way. Wherefore,

2. Be principally intent to have your soul become habitually good and holy, by its own settled temper and complexion inclined and made suitable to the way of righteousness and life. It was, no doubt, with a very sweet gust and relish of pleasure, that the Psalmist utters that gratulatory acknowledgment of the Divine goodness in this, He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.[s] The paths of righteousness are very agreeable and pleasant to a restored, a sound and healthy soul; to one that is now got into a good habit and a settled state of spiritual strength. You may, therefore, take the meaning and substance of this precept, in the apostle's (more authoritative) words, Be ye transformed in the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, that acceptable and perfect will of God.[t] You can never (*q. d.*) have a proof of it, the very palate of your soul will be vicious and still disaffected, till then, that is, till that transformation and renewing change hath past upon you. Then it will be pleasant to you to know the will of God; your delight will be in the law of the Lord, and in his law you will meditate both day and night. And it will be more pleasant to do it. You will esteem the words of his mouth as your appointed food, and it will be as your meat and drink to do his will. You can easily apprehend how toilsome and painful any thing of business and labour is to a person that languishes under some enfeebling lazy disease. A like case it is, when you would put one upon doing any thing spiritually good, that is listless, indisposed, to every good work reprobate. How will the heart recoil and give back! with how vehement a reluctation will it resist the proposal, as if you were urging it upon flames, or the sword's point! The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be.[u] But when once the law of God is within your heart, you will delight to do his will.[x] To one that is born of God, and hath, therefore, overcome the world, his commands are not grievous.[y] Know, therefore, you must be good, (really and habitually so,) in order to your doing good[z] with any delight, in conformity to the blessed God himself, (your pattern,) who, therefore, exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, as delighting in these things.[a] You must be partaker of a divine nature, and have the heart-rectifying communication before discoursed of, and become God's own workmanship, a second time, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.[b] 'Tis not to be hoped it can be delightful to act against inclination; or that a forced imitation of that good whereof you want the implanted vital principle, can be any more pleasing to you than it is to God, whom you cannot mock or impose upon by your most elaborate or specious disguises. And, therefore, since that holy heart-rectitude must be had, it must be sought earnestly and without rest. Often ought heaven to be visited with such sighs and longings sent up thither, O that my ways were directed to keep thy righteous judgments. Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.[c] And it should be sought with expectation of good speed and without despair, remembering we are told, if we ask we shall receive; if we seek we shall find; if we knock it shall be opened unto; yea, that our heavenly Father will much more readily give his Holy Spirit to them that ask, than you would bread to your child that calls for it, rather than a stone.

3. When once you find your spirit is become in any measure well-inclined, and begins to savour that which is truly good; know yet, that it needs your continual inspection and care, to cherish good principles and repress evil ones. Your work is not done as soon as you begin to live, as care about an infant ceases not as soon as it is born. Let it be, therefore, your constant business, to tend your inward man; otherwise all things will soon be out of course. God hath coupled delight with the labour of a Christian, not with the sloth and neglect of himself; the heart must then be kept with all diligence,[d] or above all keeping, inasmuch as out of it are the issues of life. All vital principles are lodged there; and only the genuine issues of such as are good and holy, will yield you pleasure. The exercises of religion will be pleasant when they are natural, and flow easily from their own fountain; but great care must be taken that the fountain be kept pure. There are other springs besides, which will be apt to intermingle therewith their bitter waters, or a root of bitterness, whose fruit is deadly, even that evil thing, and bitter, forsaking the Lord. I wonder not, if they taste little of the delights of religion that take no heed to their spirits. Such a curse is upon the nature of man as is upon the ground which was cursed for his sake, (till the blessing of Abraham through Jesus Christ do take place, even the promise of the Spirit,[e]) that it brings forth naturally thorns and thistles, and mingles sorrows with his bread. But that promised blessing, that will enable a man to eat with

r Rom. xii. 2.
s Psal. xxiii. 3.
t Rom. xii. 2.
u Rom. viii. 7.
x Psal. xl. 8.
y 1 John v.
z Psal. cxix. 68.
a Jer. ix. 24.
b Eph. ii.
c Psal. cxix. 80.
d Prov. iv.
e Gal. iii. 14.

pleasure, comes not all at once; nor do the increases of it come on, or the pleasant fruits of righteousness spring up, but in them that give all diligence, to add to their faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness charity;[f] which would make that we be not barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Otherwise, look in upon thy soul when thou wilt, and thou wilt have no other than the dismal prospect of miserable waste and desolation. Consider it seriously, wretched man! who tillest thy field, but not thy soul; and lovest to see thy garden neat and flourishing, but lettest thy spirit lie as a neglected thing, and as if it were not thine.

We are directed for the moderating of our care in our earthly concernments, to consider the lilies how they grow without their own toil, and are beautifully arrayed without their spinning; but we are taught by no such instances, to divert or remit our care of our inward man. To these concernments, let us then apply and bend ourselves. That is, carefully to observe the first stirrings of our thoughts and desires; to animadvert upon our inclinations as soon as they can come in view, upon our designs in their very formation; and inquire concerning each, whence is it? from a good principle or a bad? whither tends it? to good or hurt? will not this design, if prosecuted, prove an unjustifiable self-indulgence? does it not tend to an unlawful gratifying of the flesh, and fulfilling some lusts thereof? If so, let it be lopt off out of hand, and the axe be laid even to the root; strike at it, favour it not. Think with thyself, "This, if spared, will breed me sorrow; so much as I give to it, I take away from the comfort of my life; and spend of the stock of my spiritual delight in God. Shall I let sin, the tormentor of my soul, live and be maintained at so costly a rate?" If any good inclination discover itself, cherish it, confirm and strengthen it. Look up, and pray down a further quickening influence. Say with thyself, now that heavenly Spirit of life and grace begins to breathe, More of this pleasant vital breath, thou blessed and holy Spirit! Account this a seed time, now the light and gladness are a sowing in thy soul, (which are wont to be for the righteous and upright in heart,) and do promise, ere long, a joyful harvest. But if thou wilt not observe how things go with thy soul, despair that they will ever go well.

4. Be frequent and impartial in the actual exercise of gracious principles, or in practising and doing as they direct. Your actual delight arises from and accompanies your holy actions themselves, and is to be perceived and tasted in them; not in the mere inclination to them which is not strong enough to go forth into act. And as these principles are more frequently exercised, they grow more lively and vigorous, and will thence act more strongly and pleasantly; so that your delight in doing good will grow with the principles it proceeds from. But then you must be impartial and even-handed herein, as well as frequent, and run the whole compass of that duty which belongs to you as a Christian. Exercise yourself (as we find the direction is) unto godliness;[g] and in such acts and parts of godliness chiefly and in the first place, as may be the exercise of the mind and spirit, in opposition to the bodily exercise (whether severities imposed upon, or performances that require, the ministry of that grosser part) to which this nobler kind of exercise is justly preferred. Turn the powers of your soul upon God. Act seasonably the several graces of the Spirit that terminate directly upon him. Let none grow out of use. At some times repentance, at others faith, now your love, then your fear; none of these are placed in you or sanctified in vain. Retire much with God; learn and habituate yourselves unto secret converse with him; contemplate his nature, attributes, and works for your excitation to holy adoration, reverence, and praise. And be much exercised in the open solemnities of his worship; there endeavouring that though your inward man bear not the only, it may the principal, part. How delightful a thing is it, to be paying actual avowed homage to the great Lord of heaven and earth before angels and men! And never think your religious and devotional exercises can acquit you, or supply the want and excuse the absence of sobriety and righteousness. Exercise a just authority over yourselves. Keep your imagination, passions, sensitive appetite under a due restraint, so as to be moderate in your desires and enjoyments, patient as to your wants and sufferings. Do to others as you would be done unto: study common good; endeavour, so far as your capacity can extend, all about you may be the better for you. Forbear and forgive the injurious, relieve the necessitous, delight in good men, pity the bad, be grateful towards friends, mild and unrevengeful towards enemies, just towards all. Abhor to do not only a dishonest, but even a mean and unworthy, act, for any self-advantage. And all this out of an awful and dutiful respect to God; by which the ordinary actions of your life may become as so many acts of religion, or be directed and influenced thereby, tinctured as it were with the savour of godliness. Pass thus, in your continual practice, through the whole circle of Christian duties and graces, with an equal respect to all God's commandments; not so partially addicting yourselves to one sort of exercise, as to disuse and neglect the rest; which kind of partiality is that which starves religion, and stifles the delight of it.

There are those that affect the reputation of being sober, just, kind, charitable persons, and do appear such, who yet are great strangers to God, and to the more noble exercises of the divine life; know not what belongs to communion with God, live not in his love and converse, savour not heaven; have not so much as the taste of the great vital powers of the world to come. Others, that pretend to much acquaintance with God, and are much taken up in discoursing of his love, and of intimacies with him, that count justice and charity mean things, and much beneath them; can allow themselves to be covetous, oppressive, fraudulent, wrathful, malicious, peevish, fretful, discontented, proud, censorious, merciless; and so glory in a religion which no one is the better for, and themselves least of all; and which is quite of another stamp from the pure religion and undefiled,[h] which the apostle describes and recommends. And certainly, their religion hath as little of pleasure in it to themselves, as it hath of beauty and ornament in the sight of others. So maimed a religion can be accompanied with little delight. Would it not detract much from the natural pleasure of a man's life, if he should lose an arm or a leg; or have them useless and unserviceable? or if he should be deprived of some of his senses, or natural faculties, so as to be incapable of some of the more principal functions of life? And if we should suppose the new creature alike maimed and defective, will there not be a proportionable diminution of its delight? But the Spirit of God is the author of no such imperfect productions; and therefore the total absence of any holy disposition will not argue the true delight of such a one to be little, but none at all. However, let all the integral parts of the new man be supposed formed at first, and existing together; when this creature is thus entirely framed, it is our business to see to the due exercise, and thereby to the improvement and growth, of the several parts, wherein if one be neglected, it infers a general enfeeblement of the whole. Let patience have its perfect work, (saith that apostle,) that ye may be perfect, &c.[i] implying, that not only the absence of that one grace, but its not being thoroughly exercised, would render us very defective Christians. We may say of the several members of this divine creature, as is said of the complex body of Christians, If one suffer, all the members suffer with it; if one be honoured, all rejoice with it. Therefore that you may experience the delightfulness of religion, see that in the exercise and practice of it you be entire, thorough Christians.

5. Be ye confirmed in the apprehension, that religion is in itself a delightful thing, even universally and in the whole nature of it. Whereby a double practical mistake and error will be avoided, that greatly obstructs and hinders the actual relish and sensation of that delight.

1. That either religion is in the whole nature of it such a thing to which delight must be alien, and banished from it; as if nothing did belong to, or could consist

[f] 2 Pet. i. [g] 1 Tim. iv. [h] James i. 27. [i] James i. 4.

with it, but sour severities, pensiveness, and sad thoughts. Or else,

2. That if any delight did belong to it at all, it must be found only in peculiar extraordinary assurances and persuasions of God's love; and be the attainment consequently of none but more eminent Christians.

That apprehension being thoroughly admitted, both these misapprehensions fall and vanish. And it will take place, if it be duly considered,—that there is a delight that will naturally arise from the congruity and fitness of actions in themselves, and the facility of them, that they flow easily from their proper principles. Whereupon there can be no true vital act of religion but will be delightful. And we may appeal herein to the judgments of such as shall allow themselves to consider whether the matter do not evidently appear to be so upon a serious review, and revolving with themselves of the several gracious operations that proceed from the holy rectitude mentioned in the former part; as the acts of even repentance, self-abasement, self-denial, self-devoting, (appearing to be in themselves most fit and becoming things,) and readily without force proceeding (as they cannot but do) from a rectified and well-disposed heart, how can they but be pleasant? And it is much in our way to the experiencing of such delight, to be at a point with ourselves, and well resolved wherein it is to be sought and found.

6. However all the acts and operations of true and living religion be in themselves delightful, yet apply yourselves to the doing of them for a higher reason, and with a greater design than your own delight. Otherwise you destroy your own work therein, and despoil your acts of their substantial, moral goodness, and consequently of their delightfulness also. That is not a morally good act, which is not referred to God, and done out of (at least) an habitual devotedness to him, so as that he be the supreme end thereof. You would therefore, by withdrawing and separating this reference to God, ravish from them their very life and soul; yea, and perfectly nullify those of them that should be in themselves acts of religion. So as that in respect of all your actions, that separation were unjust; and as to these that should be direct acts of religion, impossible. Since therefore they are only delightful as they are vital acts, proceeding from a principle of divine life; and that an habitual devotedness to God, is that very (comprehensive and most radical) principle; you should, by designing your own delight in them supremely, counteract yourself, and cross your own end; you should make them acts of idolatry, not religion; and set up your own self as the idol of jealousy, that receives the homage of them, instead of God: whereby the unlawful pleasure which you would engross to yourselves, will turn all to gall and wormwood, and be bitterness in the end. That therefore you may taste the sweetness and pleasure which belongs to a religious, godly life, your way must be, to act on directly forward in the simplicity of your heart, doing all that you do to and for God. And thus that pleasure, because it is natural to such acts, will of its own accord result and arise to you; and so much the more, by how much less you design for yourself in what you do. From that uprightness and sincerity of heart towards God it can never be separated. But to be a religious epicure, to pray, hear, meditate, do acts of justice and charity, only to please and humour yourselves, and that you may derive a kind of solace and satisfaction from your own work, is to undo your design, and blast the delight which you covet. It follows while you seek it not; it flies from you while you so inordinately seek it.

7. Yet disallow not yourself to taste and enjoy the pleasure of well-doing: yea, and (secondarily and in due subordination) to design and endeavour that you may do so. It is in itself a covetable and a lawful pleasure; so that it be not sought and entertained out of its own place. It is a promised pleasure, the good man (it is said) shall be satisfied from himself.[k] And it is by particular direction to be testified to the righteous, they shall eat the fruit of their own doings.[l] It's God's gracious allowance to them, which it is a part of gratitude and dutifulness to esteem and accept; yea, and with great admiration of the Divine goodness that hath made and settled such a conjunction between their duty and their delight; that hath laid such laws upon them, as in the keeping whereof there is such reward;[m] when as they might have been enjoined a meaner servitude, and by the condition and kind of their work, have been kept strangers to any thing of delight therein.

That thankful acknowledgment of the bounty and goodness of God to them in the very constitution of his laws and government, is become a part of their duty, which cannot be done without previous relishes of the sweetness and goodness of their other duty. They are required in every thing to give thanks.[n] And it is said, they shall go on in their way as the redeemed of the Lord, with everlasting joy upon their heads;[o] that they shall sing in the ways of the Lord;[p] which cannot be, if they take not notice that the ways of the Lord are pleasantness, and all his paths peace.[q] Therefore you should designedly set yourself to taste the goodness and delightfulness of holy walking. And to that end, when you find the blessed cherishing warmth and vigour of God's gracious communication let in upon you, enlarging your hearts, making your way and work easy to you, and helping you to do with an untoilsome facility, what he requires and calls for, and to run the way of his commandments; so that you can do acts of piety, righteousness, and mercy as natural acts, borne up by the power of a steady, living principle acting in you, (as it's said, they that wait upon the Lord shall renew strength and mount up with wings as eagles, run without weariness, and walk without fainting,[r]) you should now reflect and take notice how good and pleasant is this! Make your pauses and deliberate; have your seasons of respiration and drawing breath; and then bethink yourself, commune thus with your own heart, "How do I now like the way and service of the Lord? and a life of pure devotedness to him? a course of regular walking in thorough subjection to his laws and government? and that the course of my actions be as a continual sacrificing; doing all to him, and for him?" What, do you not now rejoice that you find yourselves to offer willingly? Can you forbear with gratitude and joy to acknowledge and own it to him, that it is of his own hand that you do this? You should now compare your present with your former state and temper, and consider how much better it is to me to live in his fear, love, and communion, than to be, as once I was, alienated from the life of God, and as without him in the world! Now I can trust and obey, once I could not. Now, when the opportunity invites, I am in some readiness to serve him, created to good works, a vessel fitted to my Master's use; some time I was to every good work reprobate. Surely it is most becoming to take a free complacency in this blessed change. That is, not with a proud, pharisaical gloriation to say, "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men;" or, trusting in yourself that you are righteous, to despise others; but with a mean estimation of yourself, and all you can do; and with that deep and constant sense, that when you have done all you can, you are an unprofitable servant, you do but your duty. Yet blessing God that since he hath made such things your duty, he also doth in some measure enable you to do it; that he hath reconciled and attempered your heart to your way and work, and made it pleasant to you. Not hypocritically arrogating all to yourself, under the formal and false show of thanksgiving to him; or aiming only more colourably to introduce a vain boast and ostentation of yourself, in the form of gratulation to God; but as having a heart inwardly possessed with the humble sense, who it is that hath made you differ, not only from other men, but from yourself also.

8. And because that dispositedness of heart unto such a course of holy practice, may not be constantly actual, and equally sensible at all times, (that all delight in the ways of God may not hereupon cease, and be broken off, which in those sadder intervals cannot but suffer a great diminution,) you must take heed, that as to the distempers and indispositions you now discern in your own spirit, you do neither indulge yourself nor despair; but take the proper course of redress.

k Prov. xiv. 14.
m Psal. xix
l Isa. iii. 10.
n 1 Thess. v.
o Isa. li.
q Prov. iii.
p Psal. cxxxviii.
r Isa. xl.

To indulge yourself in them were mortal. Then down you go as a dead weight into the mire and dirt, into the depths of the earth, and your swift and pleasant flight ends in a heavy lumpish fall. You should therefore bethink yourself, that if you yield to a slothful, sluggish temper of spirit, which you now feel coming on upon you, shortly you shall have nothing (sensibly) remaining to you of your religion, but the dead and empty form. How waste and desolate a thing will that be! a like thing as if you come into a deserted house where you were wont pleasantly to converse with most delectable friends, and you now find nothing but cold bare walls. How dismal will it be when only the same duties, the same external frame and acts of worship, remain, but the spirit of life and power which was wont to breathe in them, is retired and gone! And what, will you take up with that delusive unconversable shadow, or be content to embrace the stiff and breathless carcass that remains? You find perhaps your spirit sinking into carnality, an earthly temper of mind gradually seizing on you; worldly thoughts, cares, desires, fears, invading your heart; by the same degrees that these come on, life retires; you grow listless towards God; your heart is not in your religion as heretofore; you keep up your fashion of praying, and doing other duties which were your former wont; but you languish in them. Can you here be content to lie still and die? and rather choose to suffer the pains of death, than of labour, by which your soul might yet live? Is this a time to roll yourself upon your slothful bed, and say, "Soul, take thine ease," even upon the pit's brink? Do not agree the matter so. Think not of making a covenant with death. It is not so gentle a thing as your slothful temper makes you think. Account the state intolerable wherein you are so manifestly tending towards it. Think not well of yourself in your present case. What reason soever any have to be pleased and delighted with a course of lively converse with God, and of walking in the Spirit; so much reason you have to be displeased with yourself as your case now is; to dislike and abhor the present temper of your own soul. If the life of religion, and its vigorous exercises, be delightful, by that very reason it appears its faint and sickly languishings are not so.

Therefore know, that self-indulgence is now most unsuitable and dangerous. Labour to awaken in yourselves some sense of your condition. Think, "Whither am I going?" Represent to your own soul the terrors of death. Admit the impression thereof. Behold its frightful visage, and be startled at it. Recount with yourself what you shall be if God who is your life quite depart; if this shall never be, yet know that your fear lest it should, is the means of your preservation. And let the apprehension of the tendency of your distemper excite in you that just and seasonable fear. How sure soever you are of the principle that God will never utterly forsake those that are his, (as most certainly he never will,) yet you cannot be so sure of your application of it to yourself, as your case stands, but that there will now be room for this fear; therefore let it be entertained.

But though you admit a just and very solicitous fear, be sure that you exclude not hope; though you apprehend your case to be dangerous, look not upon it as desperate. Your hope must not be in yourself, but in him that raises the dead, and calleth things that are not, as though they were; yea, makes them exist and be. But if you cast away all hope, you yield yourself to perish. This stops your breath; so that even all strugglings for life, and the very graspings of your fainting heart, must immediately cease and end in perfect death. The danger of your case, as bad as it is, calls not for this; nor will the exigency of it comport with it. When once the soul says there is no hope,[s] it immediately proceeds to say, I have loved strangers, and after them will I go. Your hope is as necessary to your safety as your fear; we are saved by hope,[t] *i. e.* of the end itself, which therefore animates to all the encounters and difficulties of our way, as well from within as from without. Great distempers appear in you and often return; yea, such as are of a threatening aspect and tendency. You should yet consider you are under cure; the prescribed means and method whereof are before you. There is balm in Gilead, and a physician there: one in whose hands none that trusted him ever miscarried. 'Tis well if you find yourself sick. The whole need him not, and will not therefore commit themselves to his care. He hath relieved many such as you, that apprehending their case, have been restored to him: let them despair that know no such way of help. Say within yourself, though I am fallen and low, I shall rise and stand, renewed by thee, O my God. Was there never such a time with you before, when in the like case you cried to the Lord and he answered you, and strengthened you with strength in your soul?[u] Say within yourself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance (where health shows itself in lively, sprightly, pleasant looks) and my God."[x] And this very hope, as it preserves life, so it doth the delight and pleasure of life from being quite extinct. The joy of hope is not to go for nothing, when it can only be said, not, it is well, but it shall be. It is pleasant to consider that the state wherein saints on earth are, is a state of recovery; that though it be not a state of perfect health, yet it is not (also) a state of death; but wherein they are tending to life in the perfection of it. And their frequent (and very faulty) relapses shall be found but to magnify the more the skill and patience of their great Physician. Therefore, however you are not hence to be secure, or imposing upon him; yet let not your hearts sink into an abject despair and sullen discontent, that you find a distempered frame sometimes returning. Let there be tender relentings after God. Your heart ought often to smite you, that you have been no more careful and watchful; but not admit a thought that you will therefore cast off all; that it's in vain ever to strive more, or seek to recover that good frame that you have often found is so soon gone.

Instead of that, apply yourself with so much the more earnestness to the proper course of remedy; and therein you must know your own labour and diligence: your contentions with yourself must have a great place; otherwise it would never have been said, Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die.[y] And give all diligence to add to your faith, virtue,[z] &c. Such things would never have been charged as duty upon you if you had nothing to do. You must expect to be dealt with as a sort of creatures capable of understanding your own concernments; not to be hewed and hammered as senseless stones that are ignorant of the artist's intent, but as living ones to be polished and fitted to the spiritual building, by a hand that reasonably expects your own compliance and co-operation to its known design. Unto which design, though you must know you are to be subservient and must do something, yet you must withal consider you can be but subservient, and of yourselves alone can do just nothing. Therefore, if ever you would know what a life of spiritual delight means, you must constantly strive against all your spiritual distempers that obstruct it, in the power of the Holy Ghost. And do not think that is enjoining you a course wholly out of your power; for though it be true, that the power of the Holy Ghost is not naturally yours, or at your dispose; yet by gracious vouchsafement and ordination it is. If it were not so, what means that exhortation, Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;[a] and that, If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit;[b] with the foregoing prescription of walking in the Spirit, that we might not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.[c] Doth the Holy Ghost himself prescribe to us impertinently, in order to our obtaining of his own imparted influences? Doth he not know the method and way wherein they are to be conveyed? or would he deceive us by misrepresenting it? In short, walking in the Spirit must signify something; and what can it signify less than dependence on its power, and the subjection thereto, with the continuance of both these? These therefore are necessary to the making of that power our own:

1. Dependence and trust; as that like phrase imports, I will go in the strength of the Lord God,[d] &c. And that, I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up

s Jer. ii. 25.
t Rom. viii. 24.
u Psal. cxxxviii.
x Psal. xlii.
y Rev. iii.
z 2 Pet. i.
a Eph. vi. 10.
b Gal. v. 25.
c Ver. 16.
d Psal. lxxi. 16.

and down in his name,[e] at once shows us both the communication of the Divine power, "I will strengthen them in the Lord," and the way wherein it is communicated, their walking up and down in his name, *viz.* in actual and continued dependence thereon. The blessed God hath settled this connexion between our faith and his own exerted power. As the extraordinary works of the Spirit were not done, but upon the exercise of the extraordinary faith, which by the Divine constitution was requisite thereunto; so that the infidelity which stood in the privation of this faith, did sometimes (so inviolable had that constitution made that connexion) in a sort bind up the power of God, and he could do no mighty works there,[f]—and he marvelled because of their unbelief. Why could not we cast him out? Because of your unbelief.[g] Nor also are the works of the Holy Ghost, that are common upon all sincere Christians, done, but upon the intervening exercise of that more common faith.[h] Therefore is this shield to be taken above all the other parts of the Divine armature, as sufficient to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; therefore are we said to be kept by the power of God through faith,[i] and more expressly in terms to our present purpose; we are to receive the promise of the Spirit, (*i. e.* the Spirit promised) through faith.[k] Hereby we draw the power of that Almighty Spirit into a consent and co-operation with our spirit. So the great God suffers himself, his own arm and power, to be taken hold of by us. He is engaged when he is trusted; that trust being now in this case, not a rash and unwarrantable presuming upon him, but such whereto he hath given the invitation and encouragement himself. So that when we reflect upon the promises wherein the gift of the Spirit is conveyed, or wherein the express grant thereof is folded up,[l] we may say, Remember thy word to thy servant, wherein thou hast caused me to hope.[m]

And then surely he will not frustrate the expectation which he hath himself been the author of. He would never have induced those to trust in him, whom he intended to disappoint. That free Spirit, which (as the wind blows where it listeth) now permits itself to be brought under bonds, even in the bonds of God's own covenant, whereof we now take hold by our faith; so that he will not fail to give forth his influence, so far as shall be necessary for the maintaining a resolution in us of steadfast adherence to God and his service, and retaining a dominion over undue inclinations and affections. How express and peremptory are those words, This I say, (*q. d.* I know what I say, I have well weighed the matter, and speak not at random,) "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh!" And so much as this affords great matter of rational delight, though more sensible transports (which are not so needful to us, and in reference whereto the Spirit therefore retains its liberty) be not so frequent. Therefore if we aim at the having our spirits placed and settled in the secret of the Divine presence, entertained with the delights of it; if we would know and have the sensible proof of that religion which is all life and power, and consequently sweetness and pleasure; our direct way is believing on the Spirit. That very trust is his delight, he taketh pleasure in them that hope in his mercy.[n] It is that whereby we give him divine honour, the homage and acknowledgment proper to a Deity; confessing ourselves impotent and insufficient to think any thing as of ourselves,[o] we rely upon his sustaining hand, and own our sufficiency to be of him. It is his delight to be depended on as a father by his children. He is pleased that title should be given him, the Father of spirits.[p] To have the spirits which are his offspring gathering about him, (especially those who being revolted from him and become sensible of their misery by their revolt, do now upon his invitation apply themselves, and say, "Lo, now we come to thee, thou art the Lord our God,") craving his renewed communications, drawing vital influences from him, and the breath of life, adoring his boundless fulness that filleth all in all And when we thus give him his delight, we shall not long want ours. But then we must also add,

2. Subjection to our dependance; a willing, obedient surrender and resignation of ourselves to the conduct and guidance of that blessed Spirit. A dutiful yielding to his dictates, so as that they have actually with us the governing, binding force and power of a law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ, as it is called.[q] Great care must be taken of grieving[r] and quenching[s] the Spirit, of rebelling and vexing it,[t] of resisting it[u] and of striving against it,[x] (which appears to have been the horrid crime of the old world; his Spirit it is intimated had striven, when it is said it should no longer strive; and that it had striven, implies a contending striving that was now, by his penal retirement, permitted to be victorious, but to their own sudden ruin,) of despiting the Spirit of grace.[y] A wickedness aggravated by the very style and title there given it, the Spirit of grace; and unto which only such a vengeance (as it is intimated in what follows) which it peculiarly belonged to God himself to inflict could be proportionable. When we permit ourselves entirely to the government of the Holy Ghost, thereby to have our spirits and ways framed and directed according to his own rules, his quickening influence, and the pleasure and sweet relishes thereof, will not be withheld.[z] And if the experience of some Christians seem not constantly to answer this, who complain they pray often for the Spirit, and desire earnestly his gracious communications, but find little of them, they are concerned seriously to reflect, and bethink themselves, whether their distrust or disobedience, or both, have not made them desolate. Surely we are altogether faulty in this matter; his promise and faithfulness do not fail, his Spirit is not straitened. But we either do not entirely commit and intrust ourselves to his guidance, or we obediently comply not with it; but either indulge our sluggishness and neglect, or our contrary inclinations, and resist his dictates; are intractable and wayward, not apt to be led by the Spirit, and hence provoke him to withdraw from us. Hereto we are in justice to impute it that we find so little of that power moving in us, all the motions whereof are accompanied with so much delight.

2. For excitation. Little one would think should be needful to be said more than only that we would bethink ourselves, what all this while we have been directed to and are by this text. If that be once understood, hath it not in itself invitation enough? Do we need further to be invited to a life of delight? Do we need to be pressed with arguments to choose delightful and wholesome food, rather than gall and wormwood, or even very poison? It is a sad argument of the deplorate state of man that he should need arguments in such a case! But because (moreover) much is to be said hereafter, to persuade unto delighting in God considered in the stricter notion of it, and that will also be applicable to this purpose; therefore little is intended to be said here. Only it is to be considered, do you intend to proceed in any course of religion, or no? If not, you are to be remitted to such discourses as prove to you the reasonableness and necessity of it; which if you think nothing you meet with sufficiently proves, think with yourself how well you can prove, that there is no God, and that you are no man, but a perishing beast. For these things they are concerned not fondly to presume and wish, but most clearly and surely to demonstrate, who will be of no religion. But if you think that horrid, and resolve to own something or other of religion; will you here use your understanding, and consider, is it indeed so horrid a thing to disavow all religion? And what is it better to pretend to it to no purpose? You find the religion is all but show and shadow, mere empty vanity and mockery, which is not delightful. If you will not choose a better, because it is delightful, (as you are not advised to do for that as your chief reason,) yet at least choose that which is so, because it is in other more considerable respects eligible, as being most honourable and pleasing to him that made you, and only safe and profitable to yourself. And what shall your religion serve for, that will not answer these purposes? And if you be not ashamed to spend so considerable a part of the time of your life, as the exercises of your religion will take up, in doing that (as was said before) whereof you can give no account; yet

e Zech. x. 12. f Mark vi. 5, 6. g Matt. xvii. 19, 20.
h Eph. vi. 16. i 1 Pet. i. k Gal. iii. 14.
l Prov. i. 23. Ezek. xxxvi. 27. with many the like. m Psal. cxix.

n Psal. cxlvii. 11. o 2 Cor. iii. p Heb. xii. q Rom. viii. 2.
r Eph. iv. s 1 Thess. v. t Isa. lxiii u Acts vii.
x Gen. vi. y Heb. x. 29.

methinks you should be afraid to make such things the subject of your vanity, as do relate to God, either really or in your opinion. Can you find nothing wherein vainly to trifle, but the sacred things of the great God of heaven, and the eternal concernments of your own soul? And shall the time spent about these matters be peculiarly marked out as your idle time, wherein you shall be doing that only which shall wholly go for loss and signify nothing? The religion which is not delightful can turn to no better account.

If therefore you will have a religion, and you have any reason for that resolution, by the same reason you would have any, you must have the pleasant delightful religion we speak of. You have no other choice. There is no other will serve your turn. And therefore what hath been said to divert you from the other, ought to persuade you to the choice of this. And besides, since there is so much of secret delight in true substantial religion, that ought not to signify nothing with you. If we did consider the delightfulness of it alone, upon that single account, it surely challenges the preference, before that which is neither profitable nor delightful. And that it is in itself so delightful, if you had nothing to inform you but the report of such as profess to have tried and found it so, methinks that at least should provoke you to try also. How sluggish a temper doth it argue, not to be desirous to know the utmost that is in it! It were even a laudable curiosity to resolve upon making trial; to get into the inmost centre of it; to pierce and press onward till you reach the seat of life, till you have got the secret, and the very heart of religion and your heart do meet and join in one. Did you never try experiments for your pleasure? Try this one. See what you will find in withdrawing yourself from all things else, and becoming entirely devoted to God through the Redeemer, to live after his will and in his presence. Try the difference between viewing truths to please your genius, or using divine ordinances to keep up the custom, to conform yourselves to those you live among, and help to make a solemn show; and doing these things with a serious design to get into an acquaintance with God, to have your soul transformed into his image, that you may have present and eternal fellowship with him. Try how much better it is, to have your lives governed by an awful and dutiful respect to God, than to follow your own wild and enormous inclinations; and whether it be not better, what good things soever you do, to do it for the Lord's sake, than from base and sordid motives.

And why should you be of so mean and abject a spirit, as to content yourself to be held at the door and in the outer courts of religion, when others enter in and taste the rich provisions of God's house? Why will you distinguish yourselves by so debasing a character? 'Tis a just and commendable ambition, to be as forward here as the best. Why will you suffer this and that and the other man to enter into the kingdom of God before you; even that kingdom which consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost! Think not so meanly of yourself; impose not on yourself that needless unwarrantable modesty, as to account you are of a lower rank than all that ever became intimately acquainted with the hidden delights of a godly life. At least you are as capable of being thought worthy as any, for his sake upon whose account all must be accepted. Therefore think with yourselves, Why should I not labour to attain as far in the matter of religion, as this or that neighbour of mine? What should hinder? Who restrains or forbids me?

But you cannot, if you consider, but have somewhat more to assure you of the delightfulness of it, than the mere report of others; for your own reason and conscience cannot but so pronounce, if you go to the particulars that have been instanced in. If you acknowledge a God, and consider yourself a reasonable creature made by him, and depending on him; you cannot but see, it is congruous and fit your spirit should be so framed and affected towards him, towards your fellow-creatures of your own order, and all things else that do and shall circumstantiate your present and future state, as hath been in some measure (though very defectively) represented; and that it must needs be very pleasant, if it were so. You can frame in your mind an idea of a life transacted according to such rectified inclinations. And when you have done so, do but solemnly appeal to your own judgment whether that were not a very delectable life, and thereupon bethink yourself what your case is, if you cannot actually relish a pleasure in what your own judgment tells you is so highly pleasurable. Methinks you should reflect thus, "What a monstrous creature am I, that confess that delightful wherein I can take no delight! How perverse a nature have I! Surely things are much out of order with me: I am not what I should be!" And one would think, it should be uneasy to you to be as you are; and that your spirit should be restless till you find your temper rectified, and that you are in this respect become what you should be. And will you dream and slumber all your days? How much time have you lost, that might have been pleasantly spent in a course of godliness! Do you not aim at a life of eternal delights with God! If you now begin not to live to God, when will you? That life which you reckon shall never end with you, must yet have a beginning. Will you defer till you die your beginning to live? Have you any hope, God will deal in a peculiar way with you from all men, and make the other world the place of your first heart-change? How dismal should it be to you, to look in and still find your heart dead towards God, and the things of God; so that you have no delight in them. Think what the beginnings of the divine life, and the present delights of it, must be the earnest of to you, and make sure the ground (betime) of so great a hope.

II. But I forbear here to insist further, and pass on to the discourse of delighting in God, under the other more strict notion of it, *viz.* as the very act of delight hath its direct exercise upon himself. So we are to consider this delight, not as a thing some way adherent to all other duties of religion; but as a distinct duty of itself, that requires a solemn and direct application of ourselves thereunto. For though it seems little to be doubted, but there is in this precept a part of religion put for the whole, (as having a real influence, and conferring with its name a grateful savour and tincture upon the whole,) it would yet be very unreasonable, not to take special notice of that part from whence the entire frame of religion hath its name. And having shown the nature of this duty already in the former Part, what is now to be said, must more directly concern the practice of it; and will (as the case requires) fall into two kinds of discourse, *viz.* expostulation concerning the omission and disuse of such practice, and invitation thereunto. And in both these kinds it is requisite we apply ourselves to two sorts of persons, *viz.* such whose spirits are wholly averse and alien to it, and such as, though not altogether unpractised, are very defective in it, and neglect it too much.

1. Both sorts are to be expostulated with; and no doubt the great God hath a just quarrel with mankind (whom these two sorts do comprehend) upon the one or the other of these accounts; wherein it is fit we should plead with men for his sake and their own. And,

1. With the former sort. Them who are altogether disaffected to God, alienated and enemies in their minds through wicked works, and (excepting such as deny his being, with whom we shall not here concern ourselves) at the utmost distance from delighting in him. And as to such, our expostulation should aim at their conviction, both of the matter of fact, that thus the case is with them, and of the great iniquity and evil of it.

First, It is needful we endeavour to fasten upon such a conviction, that this is the state of their case. For while his being is not flatly denied, men think it generally creditable, to be professed lovers of God; and reckon it so odious a thing not to be so, that they who are even most deeply guilty, are not easily brought to confess enmity to him; but flatter themselves in their own eyes, till their iniquity be found to be hateful. The difficulty of making such apprehend themselves diseased, that their minds are under the power of this dreadful distemper, that it is not well with their spirits in this respect, is the great obstruction to their cure. But I suppose you to whom I now apply myself, to acknowledge the Bible to be God's word, and that you profess reverence to the truth and authority of that word, and will yield to be tried by it.

1. Therefore, first, you must be supposed such as believe the account true, which that book gives of the common state

of man; that it is a state of apostacy from God; that the Lord looking down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if any did understand and seek God, finds they are all gone aside, [x] *i. e.* (that the return may answer to the meaning of the inquiry) gone off from him. Every one of them is gone back, [a] or revolted, as it is expressed in the parallel psalm, There is none that doeth good, no not one: [b] which is quoted by the apostle to the intent, that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may become guilty before God. [c] This is then a common case. And as the same apostle charges it upon the Gentiles, that they were haters of God; [d] so doth our Saviour as expressly on the Jews, (who no doubt thought themselves as innocent of this crime as you,) that "they had both seen and hated both him and his Father." And when it is said of men, that they were by nature the children of wrath, (they to whom he writes even as others,) do you think that is spoken of any lovers of God, as their present state? Or that when all by nature are children of wrath, any are by nature lovers of him, so as to love him and be under his wrath both at once? It is likely then, that against so plain evidence, while you confess yourselves men, you will not deny you were sometimes haters of God. Well then, is the case altered with you? It is a conviction against you, that you are of human race, till it can be evidenced you are born from above, and are become new creatures. And what, do you find this? It is not expected you should be able to tell the very moment when you ceased from your enmity against God, and became his friends; or give a punctual account of every turn or motion of thoughts in such a change: but it is to be supposed, the work was not done upon you in your sleep, so as that you could have no animadversion of what was doing. However, comparing what you sometime were with what you are, what difference do you observe? What, were you sometimes haters of God, and are you now come to love and delight in him without perceiving in yourselves any difference? Bethink yourselves, is not the temper of your spirits just such Godward as it was always wont to be, without any remarkable turn or alteration? That is a shrewd presumption against you, that your case is most deplorable. But,

2. What is your present temper, in itself considered? You do love God and delight in him, how do you make it appear? wherein doth that friendly and dutiful affection towards him evidence itself? Sure love and hatred are not all one with you. Whereby would you discern your hatred towards one you did most flatly and peremptorily disaffect? You would dislike the thoughts of him, hate his memory, cast him out of your thoughts. Do you not the same way show your disaffection to God? Do you not find, that so a wicked man (his enemy) is branded and distinguished, God is not in all his thoughts? [e] Are not they who shall be turned into hell described thus, the people that forget God; [f] that is, who willingly and of choice forget him, or from the habitual inclination of their hearts? And is not that your case? What could hinder you to remember him if you were so disposed?

Yea, but you often forget your friends, or those at least to whom you are sure you bear no ill will; and what friend would expect to be in your thoughts? It's answered; but you disrelish not the remembrance of a friend. Do you not the thoughts of God? You do not think on your absent friends while no present occasion occurs, to bring them to your remembrance; but is God absent? Is he far from any one of us? Or have you not daily before your eyes things enough to bring him to mind; while his glorious works surround you, and you live, move, and have your being in him, and your breath is in his hand? Have you that dependance on any friend? Are you under so much obligation to any? You often do not think on friends with whom you have no opportunity to converse; have you no opportunity to converse with him? Your friends can lay no such law upon you, to have them much in your thoughts. It argues a depraved inclination, not to do herein what you ought and are bound to do. You cannot by the exercise of your thoughts obtain the presence of a friend; you might a most comfortable Divine presence.

And what though you think not of many to whom you bear no ill will, nor have any converse with many such; is it enough to bear no ill will to God? Will that suffice you to delighting in him? are you no more concerned to mind God and converse with him, than with the man you never knew or had to do with? Your unconversableness with God, and unmindfulness of him, can proceed from nothing but ill will, who daily offers himself to your converse, who seeks and invites your acquaintance, would have you inwardly know him, and lead your lives with him. Why is it that you do not so, but that you like not to retain him in your knowledge? and that this is the sense and language of your hearts towards him, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" It can proceed from nothing but ill will and a disagreeable temper, that you shun the converse of one that seeks yours; that you will take no notice of one that often offers himself to your view, one that meets you at every turn, and aims to draw your eye, and cannot gain a look. When this is your deportment towards God, that he passes by you, and you perceive him not; he compasses you about, behind and before, and is acquainted with all your ways, and with him and his ways you will have no acquaintance, remain alienated from the life of God, and as without him in the world; is not this downright enmity? Or can this deportment agree with the habitual and the frequent actual delight in God which is required.

Again, would you not be justly taken to disaffect one whose temper is ungrateful, whose disposition and way is unpleasing to you? Is it not thus with you God-ward? When you hear of the purity and holiness of his nature, his abhorrence of all wickedness, and how detestable to him every thing is that is impure, and that he will not endure it; do not your hearts regret this quality (as we must conceive of it) in the nature of God? Which yet, because it is his very nature, doth so much the more certainly infer, that a dislike of it cannot but include disaffection to himself, and that habitual and constant, since his whole way of dealing with men, and the course of his government over the world, do (and shall more discernibly) savour of it; do they not wish him hereupon not to be, in this respect, what he is; which is in effect, to wish him not to be at all? The same thing which the heart of the fool says, "No God;" *i. e.* this would please such a one to the very heart. And doth this import no enmity? Can this stand with delight in him? Are you not disaffected to him, whom not being able to accuse of falsehood, whom having the greatest imaginable assurances of the impossibility he should deceive, you will yet by no means be induced to trust? Consider, what doth your trust in God signify, more than the sound of the name? Doth it quiet your heart, in reference to any affairs you pretend to commit to him? Doth it purify it, and check your ill inclinations, in any thing wherein they should be countermanded upon the credit of his word? What doth his testimony concerning the future things you have not seen, weigh with you, to the altering of your course, and rendering it such as may comport and square with the belief of such things? Would not the word of an ordinary man, premonishing you of any advantage or danger which you have no other knowledge of, be of more value with you? Constant suspicion of any one, without cause or pretence, most certainly argues radicated enmity. You love him not whom you cannot trust.

Do you love him whom upon all occasions you most causelessly displease; whose offence you reckon nothing of? Is that ingenuous towards a friend, or dutiful towards a father or a lord? How do you, in this, carry towards the blessed God? Are you wont to displease yourselves to please him, or cross your own will to do his? Do you take delight in him whom you make no difficulty to vex? whose known declared pleasure, though you confess him greater, wiser, and more righteous than yourself, you have no more regard to, wherein it crosses your own inclination, than you would have to that of your child, your slave, or a fool? Have you any thing to except against that measure and character of loyal affection to your Redeemer and Lord, "If ye love me, keep my commandments; Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you; This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments?"

x Psal. xiv. a Psal. liii. b Rom. iii. c Ver. 19. d Rom. i. 30. e Psal. x. 4. f Psal. ix. 17.

Do you not disobey the known will of God in your ordinary practice without regret? Do you not know it to be his will, that you "strive to enter in at the strait gate;" that you "seek first the kingdom of heaven;" that you "keep your heart with all diligence;" that you "deny yourself, crucify the flesh," be temperate, just, merciful, patient? Do you aim at obeying him in these things? Can you say, Lord, for thy sake I refrain the things to which my heart inclines? Hath his prohibition any restraining force upon your hearts? Do you not allow yourself to be licentious, earthly, vain, proud, wrathful, revengeful, though you know it will offend him? and is this your love to him, or delight in him? Do you bear good will to him whose reproach and dishonour you are not concerned for, yea, whom you stick not to dishonour and reproach? whose interest among men hath no place in your thoughts, whose friends are none of yours, whose enemies are your friends, whose favour you care not for, nor regret his frowns, whose worship is a burden to you, (that you had rather do any thing than pray to him,) and his fellowship an undesired thing? Make an estimate by these things of the temper of your hearts towards God; and consider whether it bespeak delight in him, or not rather habitual aversion and enmity.

It may be you will admit these things seem to carry somewhat of conviction with them; but they concern many that are taken for godly persons and lovers of God, as well as they do you. And it may be, many such may take themselves for godly persons and lovers of God, and be mistaken as well as you. And what will that mend your case? If these things will prove a person one that hath no delight in God, they equally prove it as to you and others, which will make nothing to your advantage. But if they who have sincere love to God, are in a degree peccant against the laws of such love, (as that they are, they will hear in due time,) they are more ready to accuse themselves than other men; they abhor themselves, that they do not more entirely delight in God, and repent in dust and ashes. It better becomes you, to imitate their repentance, than glory in their sinful weakness; which while they patronize not themselves, you should not think it can afford a valuable patronage unto you. When did you check and contend with your own hearts upon these accounts, as they are wont to do? And if these things, in a degree found with them, prove their delight in God imperfect, their prevailing contraries will prove it (however) sincere. And if you will not now understand the difference, God grant you may not hereafter at a more costly rate, between the imperfection and the total want of his love; between having your heart and soul imperfectly alive towards God, and perfectly dead.

You may further say, God is out of your sight, and therefore how can it be expected you should find a sensible delight in him? But is he out of the sight of your minds? If he be, what would you infer, that then you cannot delight in him at all, and therefore that you do not? the thing that you are charged with all this while. But he is out of sight by the high excellency of his being; for which reason he should be delighted in the more, *i. e.* with a deeper delight, though not like that you take in the things of sense: and he hath been so beyond all things, notwithstanding his abode in that light which is inaccessible. This therefore is confession without excuse; and would never be offered as an excuse by any, but those that are lost in flesh and sense, have forgot they have reasonable souls, and had rather be numbered with brutes than men; as if there were not many things you have not seen with the eyes of flesh, more excellent than those you have! or as if you had no other faculty than eyes of flesh to see with! Which, since you have, and the depravation thereof is vicious and sinful; as your not delighting in God (the matter of fact) seems to be yielded, and so you quit your first post, it will thence appear, that it cannot but be sinful too. And since at that you seem to make a stand, (as at your next post,) either thinking to deny or extenuate the evil of it, our expostulation must follow you thither, and be aimed,

2. To evince to you the greatness and horridness of that sin. Suffer yourselves therefore to be reasoned with to this purpose, and consider—First, That you have somewhat of delectation in your natures, *i. e.* you have the power naturally inherent in you, of taking delight in one thing or other. You have such a thing as love about you. Are not some things grateful and agreeable to you, in which you can and do take complacency? Therefore herein an act is not enjoined you which is incompetent to your natures, or simply impossible to you. Next, then, do you not know, your delight or love ought to be placed on some good or other that is known to you; and among things that you know to be good, proportionably to the goodness which you find in them, and supremely on the best? Further, do you not acknowledge the blessed God to be the best and most excellent good? as being the first and fountain-good, the fullest and most comprehensive, the purest and altogether unmixed, the most immutable and permanent good? How plain and certain is this? How manifestly impossible is it, if there were not such a good, that otherwise any thing else should ever have been good, or been at all! Is not this as sure and evident as any thing your senses could inform you of? Whence is the glorious excellency of this great creation, the beauty, loveliness, pleasantness of any creature? Must not all this, and infinitely more, be originally in the great Creator of all. This, if you consider, you cannot but see and own.

While then your hearts tell you, you delight not in God, do not your consciences begin to accuse and judge you, that you deal not righteously in this matter? And ought it not to fill your souls with horror, when you consider, you take no delight in the best and sovereign good? Yea, when you look into your hearts and find, that you not only do not delight in God, but you cannot; and not for the want of the natural power, but a right inclination? Should you not with astonishment bethink yourselves, every one for himself, "What is this that's befallen me? I am convinced this is the best good, every way most worthy of my highest delight and love, and yet my heart savours it not!" You can have no pretence to say, that because your heart is disinclined, therefore you are excused, for you only do not what through an invincible disinclination you apprehend you cannot do. But you should bethink yourself, "What a wretch am I, that am so ill-inclined!" For is not any one more wicked according as he is more strongly inclined to wickedness and averse to what is good? But how vincible or invincible your disinclination is, you do not yet know, not having yet made due trial. That you cannot of yourselves overcome, it is out of question; but have you tried what help might be got from heaven, in the use of God's own prescribed means? If that course bring you in no help, then may you understand how much you have provoked the Lord. For though he hath promised, that for such as turn at his reproof, he will pour out his Spirit to them; yet they who when he calls refuse, and when he stretches out his hand regard not, but set at nought all his counsel, &c., may call and not be answered, may seek him early and not find him.[g] And that wickedness may somewhat be estimated by this effect, that thus it makes the Spirit of grace retire, that free, benign, merciful Spirit, the Author of all love, sweetness and goodness, become to a forlorn soul a resolved stranger. If you are so given up, you have first given up yourselves; you have wilfully cast him out of your thoughts, and hardened your own hearts against him, who was the spring of your life and being, and in whom is all your hope. And whether this malignity of your hearts shall ever finally be overcome or no, (as you have no cause to despair but it may be overcome, if apprehending your life to lie upon it, you wait and strive, and pray and cry, as your case requires,) yet do you not see it to be a fearful pitch of malignity? and so much the worse and more vicious by how much it is more hardly overcome?

That we may here be a little more particular; consider,

1. How tumultuous and disorderly a thing this your disaffection is? You are here to consider its direct tendency, its natural aptitude, or what it doth of itself, and in its own nature, lead and tend to. If you may withdraw your delight and love from God, then so may all other men as well. Therefore now view the thing itself in the common nature of it: and so, is not aversion to delight in God a

[g] Prov. i.

manifest contrariety to the order of things? a turning all upside down? a shattering and breaking asunder the bond between rational appetite and the First Good? a disjointing and unhinging of the best and noblest part of God's creation from its station and rest, its proper basis and centre? How fearful a rupture doth it make! how violent and destructive a dislocation! If you could break in pieces the orderly contexture of the whole universe within itself, reduce the frame of nature to utmost confusion, rout all the ranks and orders of creatures, tear asunder the heavens, and dissolve the compacted body of the earth, mingle heaven and earth together, and resolve the world into a mere heap; you had not done so great a spoil, as in breaking the primary and supreme tie and bond between the creature and his Maker; yea, between the Creator of all things and his more noble and excellent creature. All the relations, aptitudes, and inclinations of the creatures to one another, are but inferior and subordinate to those between the creatures and their common Author and Lord: and here the corruption of the best cannot but be worst of all. Again,

2. What an unnatural wickedness is it! To hate thy own original! To disaffect the most bountiful Author of thy life and being! What wouldst thou say to it if thy own son did hate the very sight of thee, and abhor thy presence and converse? especially if thou never gavest him the least cause? If thou hast been always kind and indulgent, full of paternal affection towards him, wouldst thou not think him a vile miscreant? and reckon the earth too good to bear him? But how little, and in how low a capacity, didst thou contribute to his being in comparison of what the great God did to thine? How little of natural excellency hast thou above him, (it may be in many things besides this unhappy temper he much excels thee,) when thou knowest, in thy Maker is infinite excellency beyond what thou canst pretend unto! And what cause canst thou pretend of disaffection towards him? Many good works hath he done for thee; for which of these dost thou hate him? Whereby hath he ever disobliged thee? With how sweet and gentle allurements hath he sought to win thy heart? And is it not most vilely unnatural that thy spirit should be so sullenly averse to him, who is pleased to be styled the Father of spirits? And in which respect it may fitly be said to thee, dost thou thus requite the Lord, O foolish creature, and unwise? Is not he thy Father?[h] If thou didst hate thy own self, (in a sense besides that wherein it is thy duty, and in which kind thou hast, as thy case is, a just and dreadful cause of self-abhorrence,) if thou didst hate thy very life and being, and wert laying daily plots of self-destruction, thou wert not so wickedly unnatural. He is more intimate to thee than thou art to thyself. That natural love which thou owest to thyself, and the nature from whence it springs, is of him, and ought to be subordinate to him; and by a superior law of nature, thy very life, if he actually require it, ought to be sacrificed and laid down for his sake. Thy hatred towards him, therefore, is more prodigiously unnatural, that if it were most directly and implacably bent against thyself. And yet also in hating him thou dost most mischievously hate thyself too; and all that thou dost, by the instinct of that vile temper of heart towards him, thou dost it against thy own life and soul. Thou cuttest thyself off from him who is thy life; and art laying a train for the blowing up of thy eternal hope. All that hate him love death.[i] Further,

3. It is the most comprehensive wickedness, and which entirely contains all other in it. For as the law of love is the universal and summary law, comprehending all duty, and even as it enjoins love to God; (for love to men ought to be resolved into that, and must be for his sake;) so must disaffection to God be comprehensive of all sin, whereinto every thing of it resolves itself. Dost thou not see then how thou cancellest and nullifiest the obligation of all laws, while thou hast no delight in God? offerest violence to the very knot and juncture, wherein they all meet and are infolded together? Not to delight in God therefore, what can it be but the very top of rebellion? What will thy sobriety, thy justice, thy charity signify, if thou hadst these to glory in, while thou art habitually disaffected to thy God? Let men value thee for these, to whom thereby thou showest some respect; but shall he, who in the meantime knows thou bearest none to him?

4. It is a most reproachful contemptuous wickedness! To him, I mean, whom it most directly offends against!—Carries it not in it most horrid contumely and indignity to the most high God? It is a practical denial of all those excellencies in him, that render and recommend him the most worthy object of our delight; it is more than saying, He is not good, holy, wise, just, and true. Things may on the sudden be said that are not deliberately thought, and may be retracted the next breath; but a man's stated, constant course and way signifies, the apprehension it proceeds from to be fixed, and that it is the settled habitual sense of his soul. Yea, and since, as hath been said, thou delightest in other things whilst thou delightest not in him; it plainly imports it to be the constant sense of thy very heart, that those things are better than he. What is it then that hath thy delight and love? Whereon is thy heart set? Commune with thyself. Dost thou not tremble, when thou findest this to be thy very case, that thou mayst truly say, "I can delight in creatures, but not in God; can take pleasure in my friend, but none in him; I must confess it to be the temper of my heart, that I love my father, mother, son, or daughter, more than Christ. Is it not then to be concluded from his own express word, that thou art not worthy of him,[k] and canst be none of his disciple?[l] Nay, mayst thou not moreover truly say, that thou lovest this base impure earth more than God? that thou takest more delight in thy companions in wickedness; canst more solace thyself with a drunkard on the ale-bench, with a lascivious wanton, with a profane scoffer at godliness, than with the blessed God? that thou canst allow thyself to riot with the luxurious, and eat and drink with the drunken, and not only do such things, but take pleasure in them that do them, yea, and thyself take pleasure to commit iniquity; but in the glorious holy God thou canst take no pleasure? Then wouldst thou be content to carry the plain sense of thy heart written on thy forehead, and proclaim it to all the world, as thy resolved practical judgment, that thou accountest thy friends, thy relations, this vile and vanishing world, thy wicked associates, thine own impure lusts, better than God? And dost thou not yet see the horrid vileness of thy own heart in all this? Art thou yet a harmless innocent creature, an honest well-meaning man for all this?

Yea, wilt thou not see that thine heart goes against thy conscience all this while? that thou disaffectest him in whom thou knowest thou shouldst delight? that the temper of thy spirit is a continual affront to thy profession, through the perfidious falsehood and vanity whereof, thou dost but cover hatred with lying lips? Is not that an odious thing which thou so seekest to hide; and which, though thou art not loth to be guilty of it, thou art so very unwilling should be known? And since thou art so very loth it should be known, how canst thou hold up thy head before that eye that is as a flame of fire, that searches thy heart and tries thy reins, that observes thy wayward spirit, and sees with how obstinate an aversion thou declinest his acquaintance and converse? Wilt thou stand before the glorious Majesty of heaven and earth, who knows thy disaffected heart, and say, it is but a small transgression thou hast been guilty of, in not loving him and making him thy delight? Dost thou think this will pass for a little offence in the solemn judgment of the great day that is drawing on? Or will thy heart endure, or thy hands be strong, when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, thou shalt stand convicted before his tribunal in the sight of angels and men, of having borne all thy days a false, disloyal heart, full of malignity and ill will to thy Sovereign Lord, whom thou wast so many ways obliged to serve and cleave to with delight and love? When the difference shall be visibly put between those that delighted in God and them that never did, and thou shalt be marked out for one of them that didst in heart depart from him all thy days, and be thereupon abandoned to the society of that horrid accursed crew, in whom only thou didst delight; surely thou wilt not then say, thy transgression was small.

2. But we are also to expostulate with another sort;

h Deut. xxxii. i Prov. viii. k Matt. x. 37. l Luke xiv. 26.

who, though they are not altogether unacquainted with this heavenly exercise of delighting in God, yet too much disuse it, and apply not themselves to it (as who do?) with that constancy and intention of soul as the matter requires. And these we are to put upon the consideration of such evils, as either are included in this neglect, or are allied unto it, (and do therefore accompany and aggravate the natural evil of it,) as either causing it, or being caused by it. And,

1. Those whom we now intend are to bethink themselves, what evil is included in their neglect of this part of holy practice. And you are to judge of the evil of it by its disagreement with such known and usual measures, as whereto our practice should be suitable, and which in reason and justice it is to be estimated and censured by; as for instance, the Divine law, conscience, experience, obligation by kindness, stipulation, relation, profession, tendency of the new nature, dictates of God's Spirit, the course and drift of his design; with all which it will be found to have very ill accord.

1. How directly opposite is it to the law of God! not only to his express written precept, but to that immutable, eternal law, which arises from our very natures referred unto his! The obligingness or binding force whereof, doth not so much stand in this, That the thing to be done is such as whereto our natures were originally inclined; (which yet is of great weight, they having been thus inclined and determined by our Maker himself, so that our inclination was in this case expressive of his will;) but (which is indeed the very reason of that, for we must conceive the Divine wisdom in the blessed God to conduct all the determinations of his will) the natural unchangeable congruity of the thing itself. And therefore as to the things whose constant fitness would render them matter of duty to us at all times, it was provided, inclinations suitable to them should be planted in our natures from the beginning; but things that were to be matter of duty but for a time, having only a present fitness unto some present juncture or state of affairs, it was sufficient that the Divine pleasure should be signified about them in some way more suitable to their occasional and temporary use, and that might not so certainly extend to all men and times.

That great law of love to God (which comprehends this of delighting in him) is you may be sure of that former sort, it being impossible there should be a reasonable creature in being, but it will immediately and always be his duty to love God supremely and above all things; yea, that you must know, is the most fundamental of all such laws. And therefore when because original impressions were become so obscure and illegible in our natures, it became necessary there should be a new and more express edition of them in God's written word; this is placed in the very front of them, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" which signifies only the having of a God in name and no more, if it doth not signify loving him before all other. Wherefore when our Saviour was to tell which was the first and great commandment, he gives it thus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."[m] The thing enjoined by this law is most substantial, the life and soul of all other duty, and without which all that we can do besides is but mere shadow; for whatsoever we are enjoined to do else, we must understand enjoined to be done out of love to God, as the principle whence it must proceed; and not proceeding thence, the moral goodness of it vanishes as a beam cut off from the sun. For on this (with the other which is like unto it, and which also hangs upon this) "hang all the law and the prophets." And what, durst thou who knowest God, or rather art known of him, neglect so great and substantial a duty? This is not like the command of wearing fringe on the borders of the garment, or of not wearing a garment of linen and woollen; wherein sure they whom it concerned should have been very undutiful to have disobeyed; but it is the very greatest among the great things of the law; a duty upon which all duty depends, even for life and breath! Should not this have obtained in thy practice, that ought to run through and animate all the rest? Or was it fit it should lie dead and bound up in the habitual principle, and not go forth (or very rarely) into act and exercise? Or didst thou do thy duty herein by being only inclined to do it? Or would not the inclination, if it were right, infer (or otherwise is it like to last long without) suitable exercise? Why was so express a law neglected, so often enjoined (or the practice mentioned with approbation, or the neglect of it animadverted upon with abhorrence, in the very terms, or in terms evidently enough of the same import) in the sacred volume?[n] How could you turn over the leaves of that book, and not often meet with such words, "Rejoice ye in the Lord, ye righteous:[o] rejoice in the Lord, and again, I say unto you, rejoice,"[p] &c. Should not so frequent inculcations of the same thing have been answered by the frequency and continuedness of your practice of it? Or was it enough now and then, as it were casually and by chance, to hit upon the doing of what is so momentous a part of your religion, and ought to be the business of your life? Ought it not to cut your heart to find yourself convicted herein of a disobedient omission? And when the great God exacts that stated homage from you, a frequent, practical, explicit recognition and owning of him as the supreme delight, the great solace, repose, and rest of your souls, that you have been so little awed with the apprehension of his authority and right in this case? when he hath mercifully chosen to make that the matter of his command and claim, wherein your own advantage, satisfaction, and content, doth so entirely consist? That your practice is herein disagreeable to a law, speaks it sinful: that it transgresses so great a law, highly aggravates your sin: a law so important, upon which so much depends, so express and plain, legible in the very nature of things, and in reference whereto, the very excellency of the object would suffice to be law to you, and dictate your duty, if no command had been otherwise given in the case. Surely the neglect of such a law cannot have been without great transgression.

2. Your own conscience you will acknowledge ought to be a rule, to you, when it manifestly agrees with that former rule the supreme and royal law. Do you not find yourselves herein to have offended against that? It may be your sleeping conscience did not find yourself to offend; but do you not find yourself to have offended it now beginning to awake? This is not a doubtful and disputable matter, (perhaps your minding such matters too much hath hindered you in this,) surely you will not make a scruple of it a difficult case of conscience, whether you should take the Lord of heaven and earth for your God; whether you should choose him for your portion, seek rest in him, and place upon him your delight and love? And if in so plain a case your conscience hath not expressed itself offended, you have offended against it, in letting it sleep so securely, and not stirring it up to its proper office and work. And know that sinning against the light of one's own conscience doth not stand only in going against the actual deliberated thoughts which we have had, but also in walking contrary to our habitual knowledge, and the thoughts and apprehensions which thence we might and should actually have had. Inadvertency and disregard of known duty is the most usual way of sinning against conscience. And, besides, have you not in this often gone against the repeated checks of your own consciences? Bethink yourselves, have you not in your prayer intermingled frequent confessions of your cold love to God, and that you have taken so little delight in him? And were those only customary forms with you, and words of course? Surely (though it might not be urgently enough) your consciences did at such times accuse you. And let that be a dreadful thing in your eyes, to continue a course which, if you consider, you cannot but condemn. And,

3. Ought not your experience to have been instructive to you; as it commonly is to men in other matters? Have you not in this neglect run counter to such instruction? By this means you are supposed to have known the sweetness, as by that last mentioned, the equity and fitness, of delight in God. Have not those been your best hours, wherein you could freely solace yourselves in him? Was not one of them better than a thousand otherwise spent? Did you never find it good for you, in this way, to

m Matt. xxii.
n Isa. iv. 1, 2, 3. Psal. xliv. 19. Job xxvii. 10. ch. xxxiv. 9. Isa. lviii. 14.
o Psal. xxxiii. 1. xcvii. 12.
p Phil. iii. 1. iv. 4.

draw nigh to God?[q] and hereupon pronounce them blessed whom he did choose and cause to approach unto him?[r] And where is that blessedness of which ye spake? Have ye forgotten that ye ever thus tasted how gracious the Lord was? And 'tis like you have, by your taste, found it also an evil thing and bitter to depart from him. Methinks you should reckon it a great increase of your sin to have gone against your own sense, when especially your superior rule might give you assurance it did not deceive you. And doth it not expressly oblige you to follow its guidance, while it puts the character of perfect, or of being come to full age,[s] upon them, who by reason of use (or accustomedness) have senses exercised to discern between good and evil?

4. And what will you say to the great obligations which the love and kindness of God have laid upon you? Will you not esteem yourselves to have been thereby bound to place your love and delight on him? Could you decline doing so without putting a slight upon his love who is infinite in what he is, and who is love? Was not his love enough to deserve yours? the love of God, that of a silly worm? Were you not obliged to love him back again, who was so much before-hand with you in the matter of love? to love him who had loved you first?[t] The first love is, therefore, perfectly free; the latter is thereby certainly obliged and become bounden duty. How variously and with how mighty demonstration hath that love expressed and evidenced itself! It hath not glanced at you, but rested on you, and settled in delight. He hath so stood affected towards the people of his choice, and put a name on them on purpose to signify his delight in them.[u] He rejoices over them with joy, and rests in his love to them.[x] The Lord taketh pleasure in his people.[y] His delights have from of old been with the sons of men.[z] Could he delight in such as you, and cannot you in him? Be amazed at this! How mean an object had he for his delight! How glorious and enamouring a one have you! excellency and love in conjunction! whereas in you were met deformity and ill will! He hath loved you so as to remit to you much. To give to you and for you a great deal more; Himself and the Son of his delights. He then (thou shouldst recount) did invite thee to delight in him who hath always sought thy good, done strange things to effect it, takes pleasure in thy prosperity, and exercises loving-kindness towards thee with delight; who contrived thy happiness; wrought out thy peace at the expense of blood, even his own; taught thee the way of life, cared for thee all thy days, hath supplied thy wants, borne thy burdens, cased thy griefs, wiped thy tears. And if now he say to thee, "After all this couldst thou take no pleasure in me?" Will not that confound and shame thee? He hath expressed his love by his so earnest (and at last successful) endeavours to gain thine. By this, that he hath seemed to put a value on it; and that he desisted not till in some degree he had won it; whereupon there hath been an acquaintance, a friendship, some intimacies between him and thee, according as Sovereign Majesty hath vouchsafed to descend and advance sinful dust. And how disingenuous, unbecoming, and unsuitable to all this is thy strangeness and distance afterwards! It is more unworthy to cast out of your hearts, than not to have admitted such a guest.

5. How contrary is this omission to what by solemn vow and stipulation you have bound yourselves to! It hath graciously pleased the blessed God in his transactions with men to contrive his laws into the form of a covenant, wherein, upon terms, he binds himself to them, expecting (what he obtains from such as become his own) their restipulation. Wonderful grace! that he should article with his creatures, and capitulate with the work of his own hands! And whereas his first and great law (and which virtually being submitted to, comprehends our obedience to all the rest) is as hath been noted, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" this also he gives forth often, as the sum and abridgment of his covenant, "That he will be our God, and we shall be his people." Now this you have consented to; and therein bound yourselves (as you have heard our Saviour expounds the first and great commandment) to love him with all your soul, &c. And how well doth your neglect to delight in him agree and consist with this? What, love him with all your soul in whom you can rarely find yourselves to take any pleasure? Surely your hearts will now misgive and admit a conviction you have not dealt truly (as well as not kindly) in this. What, not to keep faith with the righteous God! To deceive a deceiver some would think not intolerable, but what pretence can there be for such dealing with the God of truth? You have vowed to him; what think you of this drawing back? Such trifling with him; the great and terrible God who keeps covenant and mercy for ever! How unbecoming is it! to dally with him as you would with an uncertain whiffling man! To be off and on, to say and unsay, that he shall be your God, and that he shall not, (for how is he your God if you delight not in him?) imports little of that solemn gravity and stayedness which becomes a transaction with the most high God. He takes no pleasure in fools; wherefore pay that which you have vowed.[a]

6. Nor doth it better agree with your relation to him, which arises from your covenant. Thence he becomes yours, and you his! "I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine:" and the covenant binding on both parts, the relation is mutual; so that thereby also he becomes yours. It is a most near, represented therefore by the nearest among men, even the conjugal, relation; therefore how full is that Song of Songs of expressions importing mutual delight suitable thereto! And what a bondage (as well as incongruity) were that relation without delight! Have you repented your choice? If not, why take you not pleasure? Why do you not rejoice and glory in it, even as he professes to do over you? If he should repent, in what case were you? Not to take pleasure in God! your own God! How strangely uncouth is it! You are not to consider him as a stranger, an unrelated one. If he were such to you, his own excellencies challenge to be beheld with delight. But you are to reckon and say of him, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, &c. I am his and he is mine." And how ill do such words become the mouth that utters them not from the abundance of the heart, even from a heart abounding and overflowing with love and joy!

7. And how doth the temper of your heart and your practice, while you take not actual, ordinary delight in God, clash and jar with your profession! For admit you do not then make an express verbal profession of actual delight in God at such times when you find it not, yet you still avow yourselves, and would be accounted and looked upon, as related to him: and the just challenges of that relation are not any way answered, but by a course of ordinary actual delight. So much your profession manifestly imports. Whilst you profess the Lord to be your God, you profess him to be your supreme delight. And how is he so, when you seldom have a delightful thought of him, or look to him with any pleasure? and the temper of your spirit towards him is usually strange and shy? And bethink yourselves, what would you then be esteemed such as care not for him, as value him not? Would you willingly be taken for such in all those long intervals wherein your actual delight in him is wholly discontinued? Would you not be ashamed the disposition of your heart towards him at such times should be known? Do you not desire to be better thought of? What is there then at the bottom, and under the covert, of your yet continued profession at such times, but falsehood? A correspondent affection there is not. Is not your very profession then mere dissimulation and a lie? a concealment and disguise of a heart inwardly bad and naught; but which only comforts itself that it is not known? that is all day long full of earth and vanity, and wholly taken up with either the contentments, delights, and hopes, or the cares, fears, and discontents that do naturally arise from these vile, mean objects, and so are of a kind as mean and vile as they? only makes a shift to lie hid all the while, and lurk under the appearance such a one hath put on of a lover of God, and one that above all things delights in him? But is this honest dealing? or was this indeed all that was this while to be got of God, the credit of being thought his?

q Psal. lxxiii. r Psal. lxv. s Heb. v. 14.
t 1 John iv. u Isa. lxii. 4. x Zeph. iii.
y Psal. cxlix. z Prov. viii. a Eccl. v.

Yet it may be you will somewhat relieve yourselves by saying you suppose for all this your profession was not altogether false. For you hope there was still a principle in you by which your heart was habitually directed towards God, and whereby his interest did still live and was maintained in you, notwithstanding your many and long diversions from him. And while your profession did signify that, it signified some real thing, and so was not a false and lying profession.

But to this I say, was this all that your profession was in itself apt, and by you designed, to signify? Surely it was apt and intended to signify more than habitual inclination. It carried the appearance of such actings Godward as were suitable to your having him for your God; and you would it's likely have been loth it should have been otherwise understood. And surely whatsoever it said or imported more than the truth was false.

And again, can you be confident that so much as you suppose was true? Are you sure of this, that because you have sometimes found some motions of heart towards God, it is therefore habitually inclined to him, when it very rarely puts forth itself in any suitable acts, and for the most part works quite another way? Whereby are habits to be known but by the frequency of their acts? Do not you know there are many half-inclinations and workings of heart with some complacency God-ward that prove abortive and come to nothing, as that of the stony ground, and that of Heb. vi. 4. do more than intimate. Surely your hope and safety more depend upon your repentance, your return and closer adherence to God thereupon, than the supposition your heart is in the main sound and right amidst those more notable declinings from him. But we will admit your supposition true, (which the consideration of the persons we are now dealing with, and the design of this present piece of our discourse requires,) and take it for granted, that amidst this your great neglect, you have notwithstanding a principle, a new and holy nature in you, whose tendency is God-ward; whereupon, we further say then,

8. And doth not your unaccustomedness to this blessed exercise resist the tendency of that new nature? And so your practice, while your hearts run a quite contrary course, (for they are not doing nothing while they are not in this delightful way working towards God,) doth not only offend towards your profession, which it in great part belies; but against that vital principle also, which is in you; and so your very excuse aggravates your sin. Is there indeed such a principle in you? And whither tends it? Is it not from God? And doth it not then naturally aim at him and tend towards him? being upon both these accounts (as well as that it resembles him, and is his living image) called a participation of the Divine nature? Yea, doth it not tend to delight in him? for it tends to him as the soul's last end and rest. What good principle can you have in you God-ward if you have not love to him? And the property of that, is to work towards him by desire, that it may rest in him by delight. Have you faith in God? That works by this love. *Faith* is that great power in the holy soul by which it acts from God as a *principle*; *love* is that by which it acts towards him as an *end*; by that it draws from him, by this it moves to him, and rests in him. The same holy, gracious nature (dependently on its great Author and Cause) inclining it both to this motion and rest; and to the former, in order to the latter: so by the work of the new creature in the soul formed purposely for blessedness in God and devotedness to him, its aspirations, its motions, its very pulse, breathe, tend, and beat this way. But you apply not your souls to delight in God. You bend your minds and hearts another way. What are you doing then? You are striving against your own life; you are mortifying all good inclinations towards God, stifling and stopping the breath that your panting heart would send forth to him; you are busily crucifying the new creature, instead of the body of sin. There is somewhat in you that would work towards God, and you suffer it not; and is that well? That divine thing, born of God, of heavenly descent, that hath so much in it of sacredness by its extraction and parentage, you fear not to do violence to!

If indeed such a thing (as you seem to hope) be in you; at some time or other you may perceive which way it beats and tends. The soul in which it hath place is biassed by it God-ward; and though often it is not discernible, it sometimes shows its inclination. Other men, and meaner creatures, sleep sometimes, and then their most rooted dispositions appear not; when they are awake they bewray them, and let them be seen in their actions, motions, and pursuits. The renewed soul hath its sleeping intervals too, and what propensions it hath towards God is little discernible; (and yet even then it sometimes dreams of him, at least between sleeping and waking; I sleep, but my heart waketh, it is the voice of my beloved;)[b] but if you seriously commune with yourselves in your more wakeful seasons, you may perceive what your hearts seek and crave; some such sense as this may be read in them, The desire of our souls is unto thy name, O Lord, and to the remembrance of thee.[c] One thing have I desired, that will I seek after, to behold the beauty (the delight, as the word signifies) of the Lord.[d] And when you observe this discovered inclination, you may see what it is that in your too wonted course you repress and strive against. That divine birth calls for suitable nurriment, more tastes how gracious the Lord is. You will have it feed upon ashes, upon wind and vanity; or (although it had the best parent, it hath so ill a nurse) when it asks bread, you give it a stone, and let it be stung by a scorpion; and the injury strikes higher than at it alone, even (as is obvious) at the very Author of this divine production; which therefore we add as a further aggravation of this evil, *viz.*

9. That it's an offence against the Spirit of grace, whose dictates are herein slighted and opposed; for surely with the tendencies of the new creature he concurs. It is maintained by him as well as produced, continually depends on him as to its being, properties, and all its operations. Nothing therefore can be cross to the inclination of a renewed soul as such, which is not more principally so to the Holy Ghost himself. And particularly the disposing of the soul unto delight is most expressly ascribed to him; that very disposition being itself joy in the Holy Ghost;[e] and we find it numbered among the fruits of the Spirit.[f] You may possibly be less apprehensive of your sin in this, because you find him not dictating to you with that discernible majesty, authority, and glory, that you may think agreeable to so great an Agent. But you must know, he applies himself to us in a way much imitating that of nature. And as in reference to the conservation of our natural beings, we are assured the first cause co-operates with inferior causes, (for we live, move, and have our being in him,[g]) though the Divine influence is not communicated to this purpose with any sensible glory, or so distinguishably, that we can discern what influence is from the superior cause and what from subordinate; our reason and faith certainly assure us of what our sense cannot reach in this matter. So it is here also, the Divine Spirit accommodates himself very much to the same way of working with our own, and acts as suitably to our own natures. And though by very sensible tokens we cannot always tell which be the motions that proceed from him; yet faith teaches us from his word, to ascribe to him whatever spiritual good we find in ourselves; inasmuch as we are not of ourselves sufficient to think a good thought. And if by that word we judge of the various motions that stir in us, we may discern which are good and which not; and so may know what to ascribe to the Spirit, and what not. Whereas, therefore, that word commands us to delight in God, if we find any motion in our hearts tending that way, we are presently to own the finger of God, and the touch of his Holy Spirit therein. And what, have you found no such motions excited, no thoughts cast in that have had this aspect and tendency, which your indulged carnality and aversion have repressed and counter-wrought? Herein you have grieved and quenched the Spirit.

And if it have not over-borne you into what you should have understood to have been your duty, but have, upon your untractableness, retired and withdrawn from you; do not therefore make the less reckoning of the matter, but the more rather; this carries more in it of awful consideration in you, and smarter rebuke that he desisted. You must consider him as a free Agent, and who works to

b Cant. v. c Isa. xxvi. d Psal. xxvii.

e Rom. xiv. 17. f Gal. v. 22. g Acts xvii.

will and to do of his good pleasure. His influence is retractable, and when it is retracted you ought in this case to reckon, it signifies a resentment of your undutiful and regardless carriage towards him. And ought you not to smite upon the thigh then, and say, "What have I done?" You have striven against the Spirit of the most high God; you have resisted him in the execution of his office, when you were committed to his conduct and government; you have fallen out and quarrelled with your merciful guide, and slighted at once both his authority and love. This could be no small offence. And you are also to consider, that when such a province was assigned him in reference to you, and such as you; and the great God set his Spirit on work about you; it was with a special end and design, being the determination of most wise counsel. And how highly doth this increase the offence! that,

10. You have herein directly obstructed the course and progress of that design; that could be no other than the magnifying of his grace in your conduct to blessedness. This is that whereon he hath been intent; and he hath made his design herein so visible, that they that run might read what it was. The very overture to you of placing your delights on him, speaks its end; 'tis that whereby he should be most highly acknowledged and you blessed both at once. His known design you ought to have reckoned did prescribe to you, and give you a law. It is a part of civility towards even an ordinary man, not to cross his design which I know him earnestly to intend, when it tends no way to my prejudice, or any man's; yea, to do so would in common interpretation, besides rudeness, argue ill nature and a mischievous disposition. Much more would duty and just observance towards a superior challenge so much, as not to counterwork him, and awe a well-tempered spirit into subjection and compliance; but a stiff reluctancy to the great and known design of the blessed God, meant so directly to our own advantage, speaks so very bad a temper, hath in it such a complication of peevish wilfulness, of undutifulness and ingratitude to him, of negligence and disregard of ourselves, that it must want a name to express it.

And now do you see what evil the neglect of delighting in God (accompanied as it cannot but be with the having your hearts otherwise engaged and vainly busy) doth include and carry in it? Will you pause awhile and deliberate upon it? Do but make your just and sober estimate by the things that have been mentioned. Measure it by God's law, and it imports manifest disobedience in a matter of highest consequence;—by the judgment of your own conscience, and it imports much boldness against light in a very plain case;—by your experience, and it speaks an uninstructable stupidity, or a very heedless forgetful spirit;—by the obligation laid upon you, by the kindness of this very counsel and offer, (besides many other ways,) and it hath in it great ingratitude and insensibleness of the greatest love;—by your covenant, and it imports treachery;—by your relation, much incongruity and undecency;—by your profession, falsehood and hypocrisy;—by the tendency of the new nature in you, unnatural violence;—by the dictates of God's Spirit, great untractableness;—by his known declared design in this matter, a most undutiful disrespect to him, with a most wretched carelessness of yourselves, as to your nearest and most important concern. One would think it needless to say more. But why should we balk any thing that so obviously occurs, tending to set forth the exceeding great sinfulness of this sin? Therefore know, that besides its great faultiness in itself,

II. Much also cannot but be derived into it from its very faulty causes. It supposes and argues great evils that flow into it, and from which it hath its rise.

1. Great blindness and ignorance of God. For is it possible any should have known and not have loved him? or have beheld his glory, and not have been delighted therewith? and that with such delight and love as should have held a settled seat and residence in them. And can your ignorance of God be excusable or innocent? The apostle's words are too applicable; Some have not the knowledge of God, I speak it to your shame.[h] Do you pretend to him, and know him not? worship him so oft, and worship you know not what? had such opportunity of knowing him, and yet be ignorant? At least it would be thought, In Judah is God known, and that his name were great in Israel,[i] where he hath had his tabernacle and dwelling-place. Here one would think his altar should not bear the same inscription as at Athens, "To the unknown God."[k] How express hath his discovery of himself been to you! and how amiable! What was there in it not delectable? or in respect whereof he hath not appeared altogether lovely? as it were composed of delights? You have had opportunity to behold him clad with the garments of salvation and praise; and as he is in Christ, in that alluring posture, "reconciling the world to himself,"[l] wherein all his attributes have visibly complied to the reconciling design; his boundless fulness of life and love not obstructed by any of them, from flowing out in rich and liberal communications. If you had not excluded that glorious pleasant light wherein he is so to be beheld, you would have beheld what had won your hearts fully, and bound them to him in everlasting delight and love. And have you not reason to be ashamed you have not known him better, and to better purpose! Alienation from the life of God[m] proceeds from blindness of heart, *i. e.* a chosen, affected, voluntary blindness. Or if your knowledge of him be not little,

2. Your little delight in him argues much unmindfulness of him; at least that you have not minded him duly, and according to what you have known. It might here be seasonable to suggest to you, how likely it is that several ways your great faultiness in the matter of thinking of God may have contributed to the withholding of your delight from him. Consider therefore,

1. Have not your thoughts of him been slight and transient? Have they not been overly superficial thoughts? casual only, and such as have dropped into your minds as it were by chance, fluid and roving, fixed neither upon him nor into your hearts? too much resembling what is said of the wicked man, God is not in all his thoughts,[n] he hath not been amidst them? Your thoughts have not united upon him, he hath not been situated and centred in them. Was not this the case? You bestowed upon him it may be now and then a hasty passant glance, the careless cast of a wandering eye; and was this likely to beget an abiding permanent delight? Have you been wont to compose yourselves designedly and on purpose to think of him, so as your thoughts might be said to have been directed towards him by the desire and inclining bent of your heart; according to that, the desire of our soul is towards thy name, and to the remembrance of thee?[o] Whence it is that 'tis represented as the usual posture of them whom he reckons among his jewels, and for whom the book of remembrance was written, that they thought on his name;[p] a thing that they might be known by, and distinguished from other men. Wherefore it is observable, that their remembrance of him was thought worth the remembering, and to be transmitted into records never to be forgotten. The evil of your not delighting in God, hath a great accession from your negligent thinking of him.

2. Have not your thoughts of him been low and mean, such as have imported light esteem? Compare them with those admiring thoughts, Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness?[q] O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth![r] How unlike have yours been to such thoughts! Bethink yourselves how deeply culpable you have made your neglect to delight in God, by your unworthy thoughts, by which you have detracted so unspeakably from the Divine excellency! Hence you have more to account for than merely not delighting in God, a rendering him such to yourselves, as if he were not worthy to be delighted in. How ought this to shake your hearts!

3. Have they not been hard thoughts; full of censure, and misjudging of his nature, counsels, ways, and works? have there not been perverse reasonings, with dislike of his methods of government over men in this present state? as if he had too little kindness for such as you would have him favour, and too much for others; judging his love and hatred by false measures? This seems to be much the evil

h 1 Cor. xv.
1 2 Cor. v.
i Psal. lxxvi. 1, 2.
m Eph. iv. 18.
k Acts xvii.
n Psal. x.
o Isa. xxvi 8.
q Deut. xxxii. 15.
p Mal. iii.
r Psal. viii.

unto which the injunction of delight in God is here opposed in this psalm and whence it may be estimated, how directly that militates against this, and prevailing, excludes it. Perhaps you have delighted so little in God because ye have thought (the thing that is so wearisome to him) every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them;[s] and have said in your hearts, where is the God of judgment? Or have you not been more peccant in your apprehensions of his rules and resolutions for the disposing of men as to their eternal states? Have you not disbelieved the revelation he hath given of his nature, and express declarations of his mind and purpose touching these matters? Was it not enough for you to have known his gracious propensions towards returning sinners, that desire him again for their God, and willingly accept the grace, and submit themselves to the conduct and government, of his Son? Should not this have allured and won your hearts to him, and made you, with humble, thankful admiration of his grace, resign and yield yourselves to be his for ever? Have you not measured your apprehensions of him by the suggestions and misgivings of your guilty, jealous hearts; or by your experienced animosity, and the implacableness of your own spirits towards such as have offended you; as if he could forgive no more than you are disposed to do? Have you not opposed your own imaginations of him to his express testifications of himself, that "He is love; slow to anger, and of great mercy, &c. And that as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts?" Have you not (against his plain word) thought him irreconcileable, and averse to the accepting of any atonement for you? prescribed and set bounds to him, and thought your sin greater than could be forgiven? And if hereupon you have not delighted in him, and have found all ingenuous affection towards him stifled within you, as your not delighting in him, was a foul evil; the more sinful injurious cause (denying the infinite goodness of his nature, and giving the lie to his word) hath made it beyond all expression worse. And further at least consider,

4. Have not your thoughts of God been few? Is not the meditation of him with you an unwonted thing? The Psalmist, resolving to mind him much, to praise and sing to him as long as he lived, and while he had any being;[t] doth as it were prophesy to himself, that his meditation of him should be sweet. Frequent right thoughts of God, will surely be pleasant, delightful thoughts; but your little delight in God too plainly argues, you have minded him but seldom. And how full of guilt is your not delighting in God upon this account! How cheap is the expense of a thought! What, that so much should not be done in order to the delightful rest of your soul in God!

3. It supposes much carnality, a prone inclination and addictedness to this earth and the things of it; and thereupon argues in you a very mean, abject spirit. While you can take no pleasure (or do take so little) in God, is there nothing else wherein you take pleasure! And what is it? God hath in this matter no other rival than this world. 'Tis its friendship that is enmity to him;[u] something or other of it, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life prevails far, while the love of the Father hath so little place in you.[x] Whither are you sunk? into how low and vile a temper of spirit, when you can take pleasure in so base things, rather than in the blessed God; and quit so high and pure delights for mire and dirt? What hath thus carnalized your minds, that you savour only the things of the flesh, and divine things are tasteless and without relish? Nor are you to think more favourably of your case, if you take little actual complacency in the world also; probably it is because you have little of it to delight in; it may be you are more acquainted with the cares of it than the delights; or your desire after it is much larger than your possession. 'Tis all one for that. But what are your hearts most apt to delight in? or, what is most agreeable to your temper? 'Tis the same thing, what earthly affection predominates in you, while the temper of your spirit is earthly; and it is thereby held off from God. Your not having actual earthly delights to put in the balance against heavenly is only by accident. But all your cares, desires, and hopes of that vile kind, would turn into as vile delights, if you had your wills. In the meantime, you are the more excuseless, and your sin is the grosser, that even the cares and troubles of this world are of more value with you than delight in God. How far are you from that temper, Whom have I in heaven but thee, and whom do I desire on earth besides thee?[y]

4. And how sad an argument is it, of downright aversion and disaffectedness to God, in a great degree at least yet remaining! Whence can your not delighting in him proceed, but from this, as its most immediate cause? What could hinder you, if your heart were inclined? Are you not astonished to behold this as the state of your case, that you delight not in him, because your heart is against it; that is, from flat enmity. And what doth more naturally import enmity to any thing than to turn off from it, as not being able to take pleasure in it. So God expresses his detestation of apostates, If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.[z] And his contempt of Jechoniah is signified by the like manner of speaking. Do you not tremble to think that should be the temper of your spirit towards God, and that your estimate of him, as if he were a despised broken idol,[a] and as mean a thing as a vessel wherein is no pleasure? Reckon then thus with yourself. As your case stands, and things do lie between God and you, your little delight in God can have no more favourable account given of it, nor be resolved into any gentler or milder cause, than enmity. And if this seem to you not to be a cause, but to be coincident, and fall in with it, so much the worse. By how much less this enmity hath of antecedency to your neglect, or the more it seems the same with it, so much the more it discovers the evil of the thing itself. For by what worse name can we call any thing than enmity to God? But we speak of your habitual temper, as that, which is the cause of your actual neglect. And since you have a discovery of God as the most delectable object, cannot pretend there is a better, have leave and free permission to place your delight on him, ye are earnestly invited and pressed to it. 'Tis plain nothing else is in your way to hinder you. Therefore you delight not in him, because your heart only is averse.

III. We also might insist further to show the evils that ensue and follow upon this neglect. Such I mean, as do not follow casually and by accident, but which have a very inward connexion with it, and are its most natural consequents; being some way caused by it, or which it doth very directly tend to beget. And yet these we need not be solicitously curious to distinguish, as things of a kind altogether diverse from those last mentioned under the foregoing head. For it is very apparent, the same things may both cause little delight in God, and be caused thereby; as a person may therefore not delight in God because he knows him not, and may therefore be the less apt to entertain the knowledge of him, because he hath no delight in him. And the case is the same as to the other things spoken of as causes of this omission, *i. e.* that it and they may be mutual causes of one another. But it however equally serves the design of aggravating the evil of not taking frequent actual delight in God, that hereby sin grows, whether in the same or in different kinds. There is still an increase of sin, though but of the same sort that was in being before. You ought to consider then, as you take so little delight in God from that very bad cause, that you have not entertained the right knowledge of him, when you had so great opportunity to get much of it, which makes your matter very ill; do you not also find that by your withholding yourselves from delighting in him, you have still less disposition to seek his more inward acquaintance? And doth not that make your matter much worse? If you already know somewhat of him, you yet know but in part; your object is infinite, and this knowledge so excellent, that you cannot fully attain to it, there is still more to be known.

Now therefore if you did delight much in God, would you not be pressing hard after him? would you not be following on to know him?[c] and then would his goings

s Mal. ii. 17. x 1 John ii.
t Psal. civ. 33. y Psal. lxxiii.
u Jam. iv. 4.
z Heb. x. c Hos. vi.
a Jer. xxii.
b Psal lxiii.

forth be prepared before you as the morning, and he would be still visiting you with fresh and increasing light; whereupon your pleasure would be renewed and increased by every fresh view, and consequently your progress would be from sight to sight, and from pleasure to pleasure; whereas now this wheel stands still, or you are going back into darkness and desolation. Have you not much the more to answer for upon this account? The like may be said as to the rest. The irrectitude and great faultiness of your thoughts of God, though that contribute not a little to your not delighting in him, yet also if you did delight in him more, would not your thoughts of him be more deeply serious, more highly raised? Would you not be very unapt to take up injurious hard thoughts of him? Would not his thoughts (once become precious to you) be also numerous, or innumerable rather, as the sands of the seashore?[d] Would not your earthly temper, your strangeness and averseness to him, vanish and wear off, if you were more exercised in actual delightful converse with him? Therefore the permanency and increase of those mentioned evils, and that they have got such settled rooting in you, is all to be charged upon your not applying yourselves to more frequent actual delight in God. Besides what may further follow hereupon, the languishment and decays of your inward man; the difficulty you find to trust in God, when you are reduced to straits, (as who would commit his concernments to one he doth not love?) your impatience of adverse and cross emergencies, that may often befall to you; your aptness to vexation or despondency; the easy victory a temptation hath over you; (as surely he is sooner drawn away from God, or into sin against him, who delights not in him;) your less usefulness in your place and station; your want of courage, resolution, zeal for God; (which are best maintained by delight, and the relishes of a sweet complacency taken in him;) your sluggishness in a course of well doing; the sense of a toilsome, heavy labour in religion, that it begets you weariness without rest; (whence you rather affect a rest from it, than in it and by it;) and lastly, your continual bondage by the fear of death, which one would not dread, apprehending it only a removal into his presence in whom I delight. All these things (which might have been distinctly insisted on, and more expressly accommodated to the present purpose, but that I would not be over-tedious, and that some where else some or other of them may fall again in our way) do bring in great and weighty additions to the evil and guiltiness of this sin, and much tend to lay load upon it, to fill up its measure, even unto pressing down and running over. For how just is it, to impute to it what it naturally causes, and lay its own impure and viperous births at its own door!

And though this discourse hath been drawn out to a greater length than was intended, it will not be lost labour, if by all that hath been said, any that fear God shall be brought to apprehend more of the odiousness of this sin; and the self-indulgent thought be banished far from them, that this is either an indifferent matter, or at least (if it be somewhat a careless) 'tis one of their more harmless inadvertencies and omissions. Which good effect, if through the blessing of God it may accomplish, there will be the less need unto such to read on, but take their nearer way to the immediate present practice of this great duty, and because also it is to be hoped, that the evil of this neglect once apprehended, will prompt and quicken serious and considering persons to set upon the enjoined duty; it will be the less necessary to enlarge much in that other kind of discourse which we now come to, *viz.*

II. Invitation thereunto. Wherein yet we have reason to fear it may be too needful to place some part of our present labour. For though in matters of an infinitely inferior nature and concernment, any practice is readily undertaken that is once represented reasonable and gainful; in such a business as this, a hundred difficulties are imagined; we stand as persons that cannot find their hands; and all the question is, (even if there be some inclination to it, or conviction at least it should be done,) but how shall we go about it? We are apt to grope as in the dark, even at noon-day, and cannot find the door or way that leads into a practice wherein there is so much both of pleasantness and duty. Therefore as the case is, the invitation to this exercise ought, if it were possible, to be a kind of manuduction; and it is needful we be not only called and pressed, but even led into it. This then we are to endeavour, the giving of some plain prescriptions that may put us into an easy and direct way of falling expeditely upon this delightful work. And here it must be considered, that all (as hath been said) are not in an equal disposition to it. Some are more averse, others less, but all too much; therefore are we to begin as low as their case may require, who are less disposed; and so proceeding on in our course, somewhat may fall in more suitable to them who are in some disposition to it, but do yet need (as who do not?) some help and furtherance in order thereto.

First therefore, It is necessary, that you do deliberately and resolvedly design the thing itself. Propose to yourselves delighting in God as a business unto which you will designedly and with steadfast purpose apply your whole soul. Content not yourselves with light roving thoughts about it, which many have about divers matters which they never think fit to engage themselves in. Determine the matter fully in your own heart, and say, "Many projects I have tried in my time, sundry things I have turned my mind unto, to little purpose, I will now see what there is of delight to be found in God. The sloth and aversion of a backward heart must be overcome by resolution; and that resolution be well-weighed, deliberately taken up, deeply fixed, that it may last and overcome. And why should you not be resolved in this point? Is this a matter always to be waived? Know you another way to be happy? Are you yet to learn, that a reasonable soul needs the fulness of God to make it happy, and that there is no other God but one? Can there be any dispute or doubt in the case, when there is but one thing to be done, besides yielding oneself to be miserable for ever? And what need of that while yet there is one way to avoid it? Surely, that there is but one, is better than if there were a thousand. You need not now be long in choosing; nor do you need to deliberate, because of any doubt in the case, but that you may more fully comprehend in your own thoughts that there is none, and that your resolution may hereupon grow the more peremptory, and secure from the danger of any change.

To talk of any difficulty in the matter, is a strange impertinency; for who would oppose difficulty to necessity? or allege the thing is hard which must be done? Or must it be done, and never be attempted? or attempted, and not be resolved upon? You have nothing to do to read further, who will not digest this first counsel, and here settle your resolution, "I will apply myself to a course of delight in God." If this appear not reasonable to you, despair that any thing will that follows. 'Tis foolish trifling, to look upon such writings that profess their design, and have in it their fronts, that they are meant for helps unto Christian practice, only with a humour of seeing what a man can say. And if ever you will be in earnest, you must return to this point; and will but waste time to no purpose, if you will not now set down your resolution; that is, that you will seek a happiness for your soul, (too long already neglected!) a happiness that may satisfy and last; and (where only it is to be found) in the blessed God; and in him by setting yourselves to delight in him; since nothing can make you happy wherein you delight not. And that you will make use of what you further read, according as you find it conducing, and apt to serve your purpose herein. Then next,

2. Consider your present state God-ward. Must you, do you see you must, come to this point, of having your delight in God? In what posture then are your affairs towards him? How do things stand between him and you? You do well know, you were unacceptable to him, and his enemy; and that his justice and holy nature obliged him to hold you as such, though he never gave you ground to think him implacable. Can you delight in an enemy? who (as matters in that case stand) must be apprehended ready to avenge himself on you, and as having whet his glittering sword, and made the arrow ready upon the string, directed against your very heart! Apprehend this to have been your case, and most deservedly, that you were an impure, hateful wretch, deformed and loathsome,

[d] Psal. cxxxix.

one that could yield the holy God no matter of delight, full of enmity and contrariety to him, and in whom he could not but find much cause of most just hatred. Remember you were one of his revolted creatures, under his most deserved wrath and curse. Know at how vast a distance you were from delighting in him, or a state that could admit of it. Consider, is this still your case? And do not rashly think it altered; or that you have nothing to do, but out of hand to rush upon the business of delighting in God.

3. Yet do not think it unalterable. Do not conclude it as a determined and undoubted thing, that matters can never be taken up between God and you, or you become suitable and acceptable to him. Look not upon your vile wicked heart as unalterably wicked; nor upon him therefore as an irreconcileable enemy. Account he waits for your turning to him, as being inclined to friendship with you. Otherwise, would vengeance have suffered you so long to live? Have you not been long at his mercy? Hath he not spared you, when it was in his power to crush you at pleasure? Do not think therefore (what you have no pretence for) that he hath a destructive design upon you, and will accept of no atonement.

4. Acquaint yourself with the way and terms upon which his Gospel declares him reconcileable; that is, that he will never be reconciled to you while you remain wicked, nor for your own sake, become you never so good: that a more costly sacrifice than you can either procure or be, must expiate your guilt, and make your peace. If this matter could have been effected in a less expensive way, the son of God had not (as you know he was) been designed himself, and made that sacrifice; nor a work have been undertaken by him that might as well have been done by common hands. And since he submitted and undertook as he did, reckon with yourself, how highly just it is, that the entire honour of so merciful condescension, and so great a performance, be wholly ascribed to him. But withal know, he shed his blood, not in kindness to your sin, but to you: and that his design was at once to procure the death of that, and your life; that you need his Spirit as well as his blood; *that* to recommend and reconcile you to his holiness, as well as *this* to his vindictive justice; that as you expect ever to experience and taste the delights of that communion, whereinto he calls you, you must not only have the "blood of Christ to cleanse you from all sin,"[d] but must also "walk in the light, as he is in the light;"[e] that an entire resignation, a betrusting and subjecting yourself to the mercy and governing power of the Redeemer, is necessary to the setting of things right between God and you; in whom only you may both accept God and be accepted of him; that he must be the centre of union between God and you; and that union the ground of all delightful intercourse.

5. Make request to him, that he would draw you into that union with his Son; unto whom none can come, but who are drawn by himself.[f] Do not dream and slumber in this business; but know your *all* depends upon it. Consider the exigency of your case. Do you find your heart sluggish and indisposed to any such transaction with God and Christ? Doth it decline and draw back? Know, it herein doth but act its own nature, and do as it is, or like itself. Therefore stir up yourself, to take hold of his strength;[g] in which way, if you have mind to be at peace, you shall make peace. Cry to him earnestly, "Draw a poor wretch out of darkness and death, that must otherwise be at eternal distance from thee, and be miserable for ever. Join me to him who will bring me to thee, and make me one for ever with thee." Hereupon,

6. Accepting Jesus Christ as thy Saviour and thy Lord, accept in him, with all humble reverence, thankfulness, and admiration of Divine mercy and goodness, the blessed God to be thy God; surrendering and yielding up thyself entirely and fully to be his forever. Do this unfeignedly, and with great solemnity; and let it be to thee for an everlasting memorial! Record it as a memorable day, wherein thou didst go out of thyself, and all finite, narrow, limited good, and pass into union with the eternal, immense, incomprehensible, and all-comprehending good, and enter upon it as thine own! And what! wilt thou delight in a God that is not thine? Canst thou be content to look wistly on him, as one unrelated, and a stranger? Apprehend (and bless God that this is the state of the case) that in this way he offers himself most freely to thee. It were astonishing to think of purchasing so great a good! The matter were not to be offered at. But how transporting is it, that nothing but acceptance and resignation should be needful to make thee one with the great God, and make his fulness thine! Therefore make haste to do this, and be not hasty in doing it. Defer not, but do it with great seriousness, deliberation, and fulness of consent; considering you are about to enter into an everlasting covenant not to be forgotten; and doing a thing never to be again undone. Now if herein your heart be sincere, and there be a real and vital exercise of your very soul in this transaction with God in Christ, so as that you truly take him for your God, preferring him in your estimation and choice above all things, and giving up yourself absolutely and without reservation to him as his, to be governed and disposed of by him in all things at his pleasure; you are hereby brought into that state that doth admit of delighting in him.

And what remains to be said, will concern you, as persons in a nearer capacity, and who have a kind of fundamental aptitude and dispositedness of heart unto this spiritual work; and will therefore be directed to you, considered according to that supposition. Only it is withal to be considered in the case of many such, that they were arrived hither long ago, and been (as was before supposed) hereupon somewhat exercised and versed in this piece of holy practice, have had many pleasant turns with God, and tasted often the delights of his converse: but have discontinued their course, and are grown strange to him who was their delight; have suffered themselves by insensible degrees to be drawn and tempted away from him; or there hath been some grosser and more violent rupture, by which they have broken themselves off. It will be requisite to say somewhat more peculiar to these, for the reducing of them again even to this unitive point. After which, what shall ensue, may in common concern them, and all that are arrived so far, together. For such therefore whose case this is, it will surely both become and concern you to take this course:

1. Make a stand, and bethink yourselves; Can you justify your carriage towards him whom you have taken to be your God? Can you approve your own way? Was this all that you obliged yourselves unto in the day of your solemn treaty with him; only to take on you the name of a relation to him, and so (excepting that you would now and then compliment him in some piece of external, heartless homage) take leave till you meet again with him in another world? And that in the meantime this present world, or your carnal self, (to be gratified and served out of it,) should really be your God, and he only bear the name? Was this indeed your meaning? or if it was, did you deal sincerely in that treaty? or can you think it was his meaning, and that he would expect no more from you? Can you allow yourselves so to interpret his covenant, and give this as the summary account of the tenor of it? How would you then expound it to nothing, and make a mere trifle of it, and make your religion a fitter service for an inanimate, senseless idol, than the living and true God! Do you not yet know what the name of God imports? Can he be a God to you that is not acknowledged by you as your very best, the universal, and absolutely all-comprehending good? But if you apprehend there was really more in the matter, and that you have been altogether faulty in this thing; then,

2. Represent to yourselves as fully as you can the greatness of the fault. What! have you made God an unnecessary thing to you, while the creature, your very idols, lying vanities, were thought necessary? And these were the things upon which you thought fit to set your hearts! which you have loved, which you have served, after which you have walked, which you have sought, and whom you have worshipped![h] The heap of expressions wherewith it seemed meet to the spirit of God to set out the profuse lavishness of idolatrous affection. Think how monstrous this is! Revolve in your mind the several aggravations of your sinful neglect before mentioned; and labour to feel the weight of them upon your own spirits. Think what

[e] 1 John xvii. [f] John vi. [g] Isa. xxvii. [h] Jer. viii. 2.

time you have lost from pleasant delightful walking with God! what damage you have done yourselves! how far you might have attained! how much you are cast behind in your preparations for a blessed eternity! what wrong you have done him, whom you took for the God of your life, to whom you vowed your hearts and souls! how little kindly and truly you have dealt with him!

3. Return to him with weeping and supplication. Open yourselves freely to him. Let him hear you bemoaning yourselves, pour out your souls to him, in large acknowledgments, and confessions of your guiltiness, which, while you keep silence, will consume your bones and waste you to nothing. "Remember whence you are fallen, and repent and do your first works."[i] Till then he hath this against you, that you have left your first love. And consider, is it not a grievous thing to you? Doth it not pain your hearts, that your Lord and Redeemer should have somewhat against you, as it were laid up, noted and put on record, kept in store, and, as himself remarkably expresses it, sealed up among his treasures;[k] somewhat that sticks with him, and which he bears in mind, and hath lying in his heart against you. Is this a small thing with you when that must be apprehended to be his sense? (and suppose him saying to you,) I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals?[l] And now since those former days, "What iniquity hast thou found in me, that thou art gone far from me, and hast walked after vanity, and art become vain?" How confounding a thing were it, if he should say, as sometime to others in a case resembling yours, (and why should you not take it as equally belonging to you?) O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me:[m] and while the case admits such sharp and cutting rebuke, and that it is the matter of rebuke (not rebuke itself abstracted from the matter, *i. e.* if it were causeless) that should smart or wound; how becoming is it, and suitable to the case, to cast down a wounded, bleeding heart before the Lord, and be abased in the dust at the foot-stool of his mercy seat! And though your sin be great and heinous;

4. Yet apprehend you are before a mercy-seat; that "There is forgiveness with him that he may be feared." How would this apprehension promote the humiliation which the case requires! A sullen despondency that excludes hope of mercy, hardens the heart; continues the sinful, comfortless distance. Therefore apply yourselves to him; seek his pardon in the blood of the Redeemer; know you need it, and that it is only upon such terms to be obtained. Yet also take heed lest any diminishing thoughts of the evil of your sin return, and make you neglect the thing, or waive the known stated way of remission. We are apt to look upon crimes whereby men are immediately offended, and which therefore are of worse reputation among men, as robbery, murder, &c. as very horrid. This is a matter that lies immediately between Spirit and spirit; the God of the spirits of all flesh and your spirit. You have had a solemn transaction with him, and have dealt falsely. And though the matter were secret between God and you, is it the less evil in itself for that? If you had dealt unworthily, and used base treachery towards a friend, in a matter only known to him and yourself, would you not, when you have reflected, blush to see his face, till matters be composed betwixt you? And is there another way of having them composed, and of restoring delightful friendly converse, than by your seeking his pardon, and his granting it? Could you have the confidence to put yourself upon conversing with him as at former times, without such a preface? or were it not great immodesty and impudence to offer at it? But that when this hath been the case between the blessed God and you, and you now come with deep resentments, and serious unfeigned acknowledgments of your most offensive neglects of him, to seek forgiveness at his hand, he should be easy and facile to forgive; how should this melt you down before him! And this is what his own word obliges you to apprehend and believe of him. These words he hath required to be proclaimed to you;[n] Return you backsliding ones, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree; (your offence hath been idolatry as well as theirs;) turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you.[o]

What heart would not break and bleed at this overture! You can be recovered to no capacity of delighting in God, as heretofore, till you sensibly feel the need of great forgiveness, and have a disposition of heart inwardly to relish the sweetness and pleasantness of it; till those words do agree with the sense of your hearts, and you can (as in a transport) cry out, O the blessedness of the man (as the expression imports) whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered![p] &c. And now when you are come thus far, if the temper of your spirit be right even in this, there will be in conjunction with the desire, hope, and value of forgiveness, at least an equal dread of such future strangenesses and breaches between God and you: and that will be very natural to you, which I next add as further advice:

5. Most earnestly seek and crave a better and more fixed temper of spirit; more fully determined and bent Godward; that your heart may be directed into the love of God;[q] that the spirit of love, power, and a sound mind may bear rule in you. Be intent upon the recovery of that healthy soundness, which wheresoever it hath place, will with a certain steady power, and a strong inclining bent of love, carry your heart toward God. And take heed lest you be satisfied in the expectation and hope of forgiveness, as to your former neglects of God without this; there is a manifest prejudice daily accruing to the Christian name and profession, by the unequal estimation which that part of the doctrine of Christ hath, that concerns the work of his Spirit upon us, regeneration, the new creature, repentance, and a holy life; in comparison of that which concerns his performances and acquisitions for us, expiation of sin, satisfaction of Divine justice, forgiveness, and acceptance with God. How sweet, ravishing, transporting doctrines, and how pure Gospel are these latter accounted by many, who esteem the former cold, sapless, unpleasant notions! Thence comes Christian religion to look with so distorted a face and aspect, as if it suffered a convulsion, that hath altered and disguised it unto that degree, that it is hardly to be known; being made to seem as if it imported only a design to rescue some persons from Divine wrath and justice, without ever giving them that disposition of heart which is necessary both to their serving of God and their blessedness in him. This is not to be imputed so much to the misrepresentation made of it by them, whose business it hath been to instruct others; (though of them too many may have been very faulty in almost suppressing or insisting less, or very little, upon doctrines of the former strain, while the stream of their discourses hath mostly run upon the other;) for it must be acknowledged, that by very many in our age, the absolute necessity of the great heart-change hath been both most clearly represented, and as urgently pressed as perhaps in most that have gone before. But the matter is plainly to be most attributed to that depravedness of man's nature, whence there is a most unequal and partial reception of the truth of God; and that which seems (taken apart by itself) to import more of indulgence to sinners is readily caught at, that which more directly strikes at the very root of sin, is let pass as if it had never been spoken. And so men make up to themselves a gospel of this tenor and import, that let the temper of their spirits towards God be what it will, if they rely and rest upon the righteousness of Christ, God will be reconciled to them. And they think they need take no further care. But whatever is said in the Gospel of Christ besides, of the necessity of being born of God, of partaking a divine nature, of putting off the old man, and putting on the new, &c. is looked upon as if it had been thrown in by chance, and did signify nothing. And the other, without this, is thought to be pure Gospel; as if these were impertinent additions and falsifications. But will not such men understand that the detracting of any thing from the instrument or testament of a man, as well as adding thereto, makes it another thing, and none of his act or deed? And so that their pure Gospel, as they call it, is another Gospel, nay (because there cannot be another) no Gospel? Or will they not understand, how simply

i Rev. ii. k Deut. xxxii. l Jer. ii. m Mic. vi. 3.
n Jer. iii. 12. o Ver. 13. p Psal. xxxii. 1. q 2 Thess. iii. 5.

impossible it is, in the very nature of the thing, that the end should be attained, of bringing men to blessedness, (*i. e.* to a delightful rest in God,) without their having a new nature, a heart inclined and bent toward God, wrought to a conformity and agreement with God's own holy nature and will, unto which the offer of hope and forgiveness by the blood of Christ is designed to win and form them? For can men be happy in him in whom they take no delight? or delight in him to whom the very temper of their spirits is habitually unsuitable and repugnant? How plain are things to them that are not resolved not to see!

Wherefore beware of contenting yourselves with the mere hope, that upon your having admitted a conviction, and felt some regret in your spirits for former strangeness to God, you shall be pardoned; so as thereupon never to design a redress, but run on the same course as before: and when you have hereby contracted a new score, and the load of your guilt begins to be sensibly heavy upon you, then betake yourselves to God for a new pardon. What presumptuous trifling is this with the Lord of heaven and earth! And what do you mean by it, or seem to expect? Is it not, that God should instead of remitting your sin to you remit your duty; cancel the obligation of that very supreme, universal, fundamental law of nature itself, and excuse you quite from ever loving, delighting in him, or setting your heart upon him at all? Think not forgiveness alone then will serve your turn; it will signify as much as a pardon will do to a malefactor just ready to die of a mortal disease. He, poor man! as much needs a skilful physician, as a merciful prince; and so do you. And your matter is nothing the worse (sure) that the person of each is sustained by the same Jesus, and that both parts can be performed by the same hand. And know, that a restored rectitude of spirit God-ward, a renewed healthiness and soundness of heart, with your actual delighting in God thereupon in your future course, stands in nearer and more immediate connexion with your final, perfect, delightful rest and blessedness in him, than your being perpetually forgiven the not doing of it; if this were supposed possible without that. But it is not indeed supposable, for if God would not therefore hereafter banish you his presence, (as now he does not,) you would for ever banish yourselves, as now you do.

6. Let there be a solemn recognition and renewal of your engagement and devoting of yourself to God. Again take hold of his covenant, and see that it take faster hold of you. Do it as if you had never done it, as if you were now to begin with him; only that your own sin and his grace ought now to appear greater in your eyes; that more odious, that you have added treachery to disaffection; this more glorious and admirable, that yet he hath left open to you a door of hope, and that there is place for repentance, and that he is ready to treat with you again on a new score. With what humility, shame, fear, and trembling, distrust of yourself, resolution of future more diligent circumspection and observation of your own spirit, trust and dependance on his, ought this transaction now to be managed with the holy God! And when you are thus returned into the way and course of your duty; then may what follows concern you in common with all others, that (being entered) desire direction how to proceed and improve in this holy exercise of delighting in God.

Because such as have been somewhat practised in this course, and being convinced of the equity and excellency of it, desire to make progress therein, do yet find a difficulty in it; it goes not easily with them, they are easily diverted and can hardly hold on in it; somewhat is intended to be said that possibly may, through the Lord's blessing, be of some use, as to that (too common) case.

1. First then, Let it be your great study and endeavour to get a temper of mind actually, ordinarily, and more entirely spiritual. We suppose the implantation of some holy and spiritual principles in you already; but that is not enough. For as a mind wholly carnal, only savours the things of the flesh, will perpetually withdraw and recoil, if you offer it any thing tending God-ward; so, in whatsoever degree it is carnal, it will do thus in a proportionable degree. If you say, let me now apply myself to some delightful intercourse with God, while an earthly tincture is fresh with you, and it was some carnal thing that made the last impression upon your spirit, many excuses will be found out, there will be manifold diversions; it will never be thought seasonable. Many other things will be judged necessary to be minded first. Wherefore fence against the addictedness of your hearts to those other things. And whereas, through the great advantages that sensible things have upon your senses and imagination, you are in continual danger to be over-borne and held off from God; this you must earnestly intend, to watch and fortify those inlets, and not to give away your souls to sense and the things of sense. Trust not your senses and their objects to parley, but under strict inspection. Never suffer that they should let in upon you what is suitable and grateful to them at their own pleasure.

You need to have somewhat else than sense, even a spirit of might and power, that may countermand and overrule in every of those ports, and turn the battle in the gate. Those used to be the places of most strength; and surely here there needs most. Your case and present state cannot admit that you securely give up yourselves to unmixed unsolicitous delight even in the best object. If you intermit care and vigilancy, you will soon have such things come in upon you, as will make a worse mixture in your delight than they can do, and corrupt and spoil all. Your delight were better to be mixed with holy care, than with sinful vanity; *that* tends to preserve, *this* utterly to destroy it. Your state is that of conflict and warfare. You must be content with such spiritual delight, as will consist with this state. In a time of war and danger, when a city is beset with a surrounding enemy, and all the inhabitants are to be intent upon common safety, their case will not admit, that they should entirely indulge themselves to ease and pleasure. And surely it is better to bear the inconvenience of watching and guarding themselves, and enjoy the comforts which a rational probability of safety by such means will allow them, than merely with the mad hope of procuring themselves an opportunity and vacancy for freer delights, to throw open their gates, and permit themselves and all their delectable things to the rapine and spoil of a merciless enemy. Understand this to be your case. Therefore strictly guard all the avenues of your inward man. It is better resist *there* and combat your enemy, than within your walls; who is more easily kept than driven out. *There* cause every occasion and object (even that importunes and pretends business to you) to make a stand, and diligently examine the errand. Let also for this purpose a spirit of wisdom and judgment reside here, (the gate was wont to be the place of counsel and judgment as well as strength,) that may prudently consider what is to be entertained and what not; and determine and do accordingly. But if you will have no rule over your own spirit, but let it be as a city broken down and without walls;[q] if you will live careless and at ease, and think in this way to have delight in God; your delight will soon find other objects, and grow like that of the swine wallowing in the mire, become sensual, impure, and at length turn all to gall and wormwood.

It may be you have known some of much pretence to piety, that would allow themselves the liberty of being otherwise very pleasant in their usual conversation; by which you may imagine delight in God (which you cannot suppose such persons unacquainted with) may fairly consist with another sort of delight. Nor indeed is it to be doubted but it may; for the rules and measures which the holy God hath set us import no such rigorous severity, nor do confine us to so very narrow bounds, but that there is scope and latitude enough left unto the satisfaction of sober desires and inclinations that are of a meaner kind. He that hath adjoined the inferior faculties we find in ourselves to our natures, and at first created a terrestrial paradise for innocent man, never intended to forbid the gratification of those faculties, nor hath given us any reasou to doubt but that the lower delights that are suitable to them might be innocently entertained; nay, and the very rules themselves of temperance and sobriety, which he hath given us, for the guiding and governing of sensitive desires, do plainly imply, that they are permitted. For that which ought not to be, is not to be regulated, but de-

q Prov. xxv. 28.

stroyed. But 'hen, whereas such rules do so limit the inclinations and functions of the low animal life, as that they may be consistent with our end, and subservient to it; how perverse and wicked an indulgence to them were it, to oppose them at once, both to the authority of him that set us those rules, and (therein) to our very end itself! That delectation in the things of this lower world, which is not by the Divine law forbidden and declared evil, either in itself, or by the undue measure, season, or other circumstances thereof, is abundantly sufficient for our entertainment, and the gratification of this grosser part, while we are in this our earthly pilgrimage: and so much can never hurt us, nor hinder our higher delights. God hath fenced and hedged them in for us (as a garden enclosed) by his own rules and laws set about them; so that we cannot prejudice or impair them, but by breaking through his enclosure. Our great care and study therefore must be, to repress and mortify all earthly and sensual inclinations, unto that degree as till they be reduced to a conformity and agreement with his rules and measures; unto which they who have no regard, and do yet pretend highly to spirituality and delight in God, 'tis apparently nothing else but mere hollow pretence; they only put on a good face, and make a fair show; look big, and speak great swelling words of vanity, as they must be called, while their hearts taste nothing of what their tongues utter. Spiritual delight and joy is a severe thing, separated from vain and unbecoming levities, as well as from all earthly impurities; and only grows and flourishes in a soul that is dead to this world, and alive to God through Jesus Christ.

See, then, to the usual temper of your spirit; and do not think it enough, that you hope the great renewing change did some time pass upon it; and that, therefore, your case is good and safe, and you may now take your ease and liberty: but be intent upon this, to get into a confirmed growing spirituality, and that you may find you are in your ordinary course after the Spirit;[r] then will you savour the things of the Spirit; and then especially will the blessed God himself become your great delight,[s] and your exceeding joy. Retire yourself from this world, draw off your mind and heart. This is God's great rival. The friendship of this world is enmity to him,[t] which is elsewhere said of the carnal mind;[u] that is indeed the same thing, *viz.* a mind that is over friendly affected towards this world, or not chastely; wherefore also in that forementioned scripture, they that are supposed and suspected to have made themselves, in that undue sense, friends of this world, are bespoken under the names of adulterers and adulteresses. You must cast off all other lovers, if you intend delighting in God. Get up, then, into the higher region, where you may be out of the danger of having your spirit ingulphed, and, as it were, sucked up of the spirit of this world; or of being subject to its debasing, stupifying influence. Bear yourself as the inhabitant of another country. Make this your mark and scope, that the temper of your spirit may be such, that the secret of the Divine presence may become to you as your very element, wherein you can most freely breathe and live, and be most at ease; and out of which you may perceive you cannot enjoy yourself; and that whatever tends to withdraw you from him, any extravagant motion, the beginnings of the excursion, or the least departing step, may be sensibly painful and grievous to you. And do not look upon it as a hopeless thing you should ever come to this; some have come to it; One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.[x]

Nor was this a transient fit only with the Psalmist, but we find him frequently speaking the same sense: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever:[y] and again we have the like strains; How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord God of hosts! my soul longeth; yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: blessed are they that dwell in thy house,[z] &c. And what was this house more to him than another house, save that here he reckoned upon enjoying the Divine presence? So that here was a heart so naturalized to his presence, as to affect an abode in it, and that he might lead his life with God, and dwell with him all his days: he could not be content with giving a visit now and then. And why should this temper of spirit in the clearer light of the Gospel be looked upon as an unattainable thing? A lazy despondency, and a mean conceit, that it is modest not to aim so high, starves religion, and stifles all truly noble and generous desires. Let this, then, be the thing designed with you, and constantly pursue and drive the design, that you may get into this disposition of spirit towards God. His Spirit will not be restrained, if it be duly sought, and dutifully complied with and obeyed; if you carefully reserve yourself for him, as one whom he hath set apart for himself.[a] If you will be entirely his, and keep your distance, using a holy chaste reservedness as to other things; that is, such things as any way tend to indispose your spirit towards him, or render it less suitable to his converse, he will be no stranger to you. And that it may be more suitable and fit for him, you should habituate and accustom yourself to converse in the general with spiritual things. You will be as the things are you converse most with; they will leave their stamp and impress on you; wandering after vanity, you will become vain; minding earthly things, you will become earthly; accordingly, being much taken up with spiritual things, you will bear their image, and become spiritual.

Think how unworthy it is, since you have faculties (and those now refined and improved by divine light and grace) that are capable of being employed about so much higher objects than those of sense, that you should yield to a confinement, in so great part, to so low and mean things; whence it is, that when you should mind things of a higher nature, 'tis a strange work with you, and those things seem odd and uncouth to you, and are all with you as mere shadow and darkness, that you should be most familiar with. Urge on your spirit; make it enter into the invisible world. May you not be assured, if you will use your understanding, that there are things you never saw, that are unspeakably more excellent and glorious than any thing you have seen, or than can be seen by eyes of flesh? Why should your mind and thoughts be limited within the narrow bounds of this sublunary world; so small and minute, and (by the apostacy and sin of man) so abject and deformed a part of God's creation? Do not bind down your spirit to the consideration and view of the affairs and concernments only of this region of sin and wretchedness; where few things fall under your notice that can be a comfortable (or so greatly edifying and instructive a) prospect to a serious spirit. But consider, that as certainly as you behold with your eyes the wickedness and miseries of this forlorn world, that hath forsaken God, and is in great part forsaken of him; so certainly, there is a vastly greater world than this, of glorious and innocent creatures, that stand in direct and dutiful subordination to their common Maker and Lord; loving, and beloved of him; delighting to do his will, and solacing themselves perpetually in his blessed presence, and in the mutual love, communion, and felicity of one another. Unto which happy number (or innumerable company rather as they are called) [b] the Redeemer is daily adjoining such as he recovers and translates out of the ruins and desolation of this miserable, accursed part of the universe.

Reckon yourself as some way appertaining to that blessed society. Mind the affairs thereof as those of your own country, and that properly belong to you. When we are taught to pray, "That the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven," can it be supposed it ought to be a strange thing to our thoughts, how affairs go there? Surely faith and holy reason, well used, would furnish us with regular and warrantable notions enough of the state of things above, that we should not need to carry it as persons that have no concern therein; or, when we are required to be as strangers on earth, that we should make ourselves such to heaven rather. Let your mind be much

r Rom. viii. 5.
s Psal. xliii.
t James iv. 4.
u Rom. viii. 7.
x Psal. xxvii. 4.
y Psal. xviii. 6.
z Psal. lxxxiv.
a Psal. iv.
b Heb. xii.

employed in considering the state of things between God and his creatures. Design a large field for your thoughts to spread themselves in; (and you will also find it a fruitful one;) let them run backward and forward and expatiate on every side. Think how all things sprang from God, and among them man, that excellent part of this his lower creation; what he was towards God, and what he is now become. Think of the admirable person, the glorious excellencies, the mighty design, the wonderful achievements and performances of the Redeemer; and the blessed issue he will bring things to at length. Think of and study much the nature, parts, and accomplishments of the new creature; get your mind well instructed and furnished with apprehensions of the whole entire frame of that holy rectitude wherein the image of God upon renewed souls doth consist; the several lovely ornaments of the hidden man of the heart, how it is framed and habited when it is as it should be towards God and towards men. Cast about, and you will not want matter of spiritual employment and exercise for your minds and hearts; nor have occasion, if any expostulate with you, why you mind this earth and the things of sense so much, to say, you know not what else to think of; you may sure find many things else. And if you would use your thoughts to such converse, and thus daily entertain yourself in this way, you may expect a spiritual frame to grow habitual to you; and then would the rest of your business do itself. You would not need to be pressed and persuaded to delight in God, any more than to do the acts of nature—to eat, and drink, and move, yea, and draw your breath.

2. Endeavour your knowledge or the conception you have of God, may be more distinct and clear. For observe whether when you would apply yourself to delight in him, this be not the next (or at least one) great obstruction, after that of an indisposed, carnal heart, that though you would, and you know 'tis fit you should do so, you know not how to go about it; for you are at a loss, what or how to conceive of him. But is it fit it should be always thus! What, ever learning and never arrive to this knowledge? 'Tis most true, "we can never search out the Almighty unto perfection;" and it will always be but a little portion we shall know of that glorious incomprehensible Being. But since there is a knowledge of God, we are required to have our souls furnished with, and whereon eternal life depends, with all gracious dispositions of heart towards him that are the beginnings of that life; certainly the whole compass of our duty and blessedness is not all laid upon an impossibility. And therefore, if we do not so far know as to love and delight in him above all things else, this must be through our own great default; and more to be imputed to our carelessness and contentedness to be ignorant, than that he is unknowable, or hath so reserved and shut up himself from us that we cannot know him. There are many things belonging to the being of God which we are not concerned to know, and which it would be a vain and bold curiosity to pry into; but what is necessary to direct our practice, and tend to show how we should be and carry ourselves towards him, is not (such hath been his gracious vouchsafement) impossible or difficult to be known. We may apprehend him to be the most excellent Being; and may descend to many particular excellencies, wherein we may easily apprehend him infinitely to surpass all other beings.

For we most certainly know, all things were of him, and therefore, that whatsoever excellency we can observe in creatures, must be eminently and in highest perfection in him, without the want of any thing, but what doth itself import weakness and imperfection; and hath it not been his errand and business into the world, who lay in his bosom, to declare him?[c] And hath not he, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person? He hath been on earth the visible representation of God to men: the Divine glory shone in him, the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.[d] Was not that divine? Suppose we then we had seen Christ in the flesh, and been the constant observers of his whole conversation on earth; (and though we have not seen it, we have the sufficient records of his life and actions in our hands;) let us I say suppose him from day to day before our eyes, in all his meek, humble, lovely deportments among men; and withal in the beams of majesty that appeared through that veil wherein he was pleased to enwrap himself. If we did observe him going to and fro, and every where doing good, scattering blessings wherever he went; with what compassion and tenderness he healed the sick, instructed the ignorant, supplied and fed the hungry and necessitous; how he bare with the weak, forgave the injurious, (even against his own life,) and wept over secure and obstinate sinners; with what mighty power he cast out devils, raised the dead, commanded winds and seas, and they obeyed him; with what authority, zeal, and conviction he contested against a hypocritical generation of hardened, impenitent, unbelieving wretches, casting flames of holy just displeasure in their faces, and threatening them with the damnation of hell. And now suppose the veil laid aside, and the lustre of all these excellencies shining forth, without the interposition of any obscuring cloud or shadow; and such a one is the blessed God. For this was the express image of his person; and as he himself tells us, they that have seen him have seen the Father.[e] And do you not now see one to be delighted in?

But yet further, Can you not frame a notion of wisdom, goodness, justice, holiness, truth, power, with other known perfections, all concurring together in a Being purely spiritual, (not obvious to our sense,) and that was eternally and originally of himself, the Author and Original of all things, and who is therefore over all and in all, infinite and unchangeable in all the perfections before mentioned? Surely such conceptions are not impossible to you. And this is he in whom you are to delight. Lift up then your minds above your senses and all sensible things; use your understandings, whereby you are distinguished from brute creatures. Consider, this is he from whom you and all things sprang, and in whom your life is. Do you perceive life, wisdom, power, love in other things; these must all have some or other fountain. Other things have not these of themselves, for they are not of themselves, therefore they must derive and partake them from him; and thence it is evident, they must be in him in their highest excellency. Of this, your understandings, duly exercised, will render you as sure, as if you saw that infinite glory, in which all these meet, with your eyes; and will assure you, 'tis so much more excellent and glorious, for that it cannot be seen with your eyes. You see the external acts and expressions of these things from such creatures as you are. But life, wisdom, power, love, themselves are invisible things, which in themselves you cannot see; yet you are not the less certain that there are such things. And do you not find, that the certain evidence you have, that these things meet in this or that creature, do render it lovely and delightful in your eyes? especially, if you have, or apprehend you may have, nearest interest in such a creature? The blessed God not only hath these things in himself, but is these very things himself; therefore must be invisible, as they are. And because he not only hath them, but is them, therefore they are in him perfectly unchangeably and eternally, as being his very essence. Think then of a Being that is pure, original, substantial life, wisdom, power, love: and how infinitely amiable and delectable should that ever blessed Being be unto you!

Converse with the word of God. Read his descriptions of himself; and do not content yourselves to have the words and expressions before your eyes, or in your mouths, that represent to you his nature and attributes; but make your pauses, and consider the things themselves signified by them; that is, when you read such passages of his own holy book, as that which tells you his name, that "He is the Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful,"[f] &c. or that tell you "He is light, he is love, he is God only wise, he is the Almighty, God all-sufficient, he is all in all," and that the "heavens, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain him;" or wherein you find him admired as "glorious in holiness;" or that say "he is what he is,"

[c] John i. 18. [d] Ver. 14. [e] John xiv. 9. [f] Exod. xxxiv.

that "he is the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega," &c. labour to fix the apprehension and the true import of all such expressions deep in your mind; that you may have an entire and well-formed representation of him before you, unto which you may upon all occasions have recourse, and not be at a loss every time you are to apply yourselves to any converse with him, what or how to conceive of him. And because mere words, though they may furnish you with a more full and comprehensive notion of him, yet it may be not with so lively a one, or that you find so powerfully striking your heart, compare with that account his word gives you of him the works which your eyes may daily behold, and which you are assured were wrought and done by him. To read or hear of his wisdom, power, goodness, &c. and then to have the visible effects within your constant view, that so fully correspond to what his word hath said of him, and demonstrate him to be what you were told he is; how mighty a confirmation doth this carry with it! You may behold somewhat of him in every creature. All his works do not only represent, but even praise and commend him to you.

Above all, since he is only to be seen in his own light, pray earnestly and continually to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, that he would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.[g] From such as so desire to know him, he will not conceal himself. This is your more direct following on to know the Lord;[h] in which case he hath said, you shall know, and that his going forth shall be prepared as the morning. By your craving looks, and the expecting posture of your waiting eye, you draw forth and invite his enlightening communications, which do but wait for an invitation. For it is most reasonable you should feel your want, and express your desire of what is so precious, before you find it. Hereby you put yourselves amidst the glorious beams of his vital pleasant light; or do open your souls to admit and let it in upon you. Who when he finds it is with you a desired thing and longed for, takes more pleasure in imparting, than you can pains in seeking, or pleasure in receiving it. Nor yet, when you have thus attained to some competent measure of the knowledge of God, are you to satisfy yourselves that now you are not altogether ignorant: but,

3. Employ your knowledge in frequent and solemn thinking on him; which is one (and the next) end of that knowledge, and a further great means to your delighting in him. Your knowledge of God signifies little to this purpose, or any other, if, as it gives you the advantage of having frequent actual thoughts of him, it be not used to this end. Not having this knowledge when you would set yourselves seriously to think on God, you are lost in the dark, and know not which way to turn yourselves; and having it, you will be as much strangers to delight in him, if you let your knowledge lie bound up in dead and spiritless notion, and labour not to have it turned into active life and fervent love, by the agitation of your working thoughts. By your musing this fire must be kindled. Do you suppose it possible to delight in God and not think of him? If God be the solace and joy of your souls, surely it must be God remembered and minded much, not neglected and forgotten. My soul (saith the Psalmist) shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee on my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.[i] And he at the same time says his meditation of him shall be sweet,[k] when he says, he will be glad in the Lord.

'Tis not a brutal delight you are here invited to. Even such creatures have their pleasures also; and do need thereto, besides a suitable object, only the help and ministry of their senses. Your delight in God can find no way into your hearts, but by the introduction of your exercised minds. There the matter must be prepared and formed by which your delight is to be nourished and maintained. Hereto then you must apply yourselves with design, and with serious diligence, and take pains with your reconciling thoughts. Do not make that fulsome pretence, to excuse your slothful neglect, that you cannot command your own thoughts. The thing itself is unquestionably true, and that you are not of yourselves sufficient to think any thing that is good, as of yourselves; and so you may truly enough say, that you cannot think any thought at all without God, or so much as draw a breath. Only, as besides your natural dependance on God for the support of your natural life and being, there must be that course taken, and those things done, by which in an orderly course of providence you may live; so for the maintaining of your spiritual life (which very much stands in delight and joy in God) you must join a spiritual dependance for that special influence and concurrence which is necessary hereto, with the doing of such things as by God's appointment and prescription are to serve this end. They who complain therefore they cannot attain to it, to delight in God, or their delight in him is faint and languishing; while in the meantime they use no endeavour to bend and direct their thoughts towards him, do make as idle a complaint, as he that shall say, he is in a miserable starving condition, and nothing nourishes him who wanting nothing suitable for him, is so wretchedly slothful, that he will be at no pains to prepare, or so much as eat and chew his own necessary food. You may not imagine, you have all that is needful for the well-governing of your spirits in your own hands and power. Nor ought you therefore to think, that what is simply needful is not to be had. God is not behind-hand with you; he is no such hard task-master, as to require brick and allow no straw: but may most righteously say, ye are idle, and do therefore only complain like the sluggard in his bed, whose hands cannot endure to labour. You dare not deliberately go to God, and tell him, you do all you can to fix the thoughts of your hearts on him, and yet it will not be; or that he gives you no help. Though he can be no way indebted to you, but by his own free promise; he giveth meat to them that fear him, being ever mindful of his covenant, (yea he doth it for ravens and sparrows,) he will not then famish the souls that cry to him, and wait on him; their heart shall live that seek God. It's becoming and suitable to the state of things between him and you, that he should put you upon seeking that you may find. Your reasonable nature and faculties (especially being already rectified in some measure, and enlivened by his grace and spirit) do require to be held to such terms. It is natural to you to think; and there is nothing more suitable to the new creature, than that you apply and set yourselves to think on him, and that your thoughts be set (and held) on work to inquire and seek him out. Know therefore, you do not your parts, unless you make this more your business. Therefore to be here more particular;

1. Solemnly set yourselves at chosen times to think on God. Meditation is of itself a distinct duty, and must have a considerable time allowed it among the other exercises of the Christian life. It challenges a just share and part in the time of our lives; and he in whom we are to place our delight, is, you know, the prime and chief object of this holy work. Is it reasonable that he who is our life and our all, should never be thought on, but now and then, as it were by chance, and on the by? "My meditation on him shall be sweet." Doth not that imply that it was with the Psalmist a designed thing to meditate on God? that it was a stated course? whereas it was become customary and usual to him, his ordinary practice, to appoint times for meditating on God, his well-known exercise, (which is supposed,) he promises himself satisfaction and solace of soul herein. Let your eyes herein therefore prevent the night-watches. Reckon you have neglected one of the most important businesses of the day, if you have omitted this, and that to such omissions you owe your little delight in God. Wherein therefore are you to repair yourselves but by redressing this great neglect?

2. Think often of him amidst your other affairs. Every one as he is called (be his state or way of living what it will, be he bond or free) is required therein to abide with God.[l] And how is that but by often thinking on him, as being a great part (and fundamental to all the rest) of what can be meant by this abode? How grateful a mixture would the thoughts of God make with that great variety of other things which we are necessarily to be concerned in, while we are in this world! If they be serious and right thoughts, they will be accompanied with some

g Eph. i. h Hos. vi. i Psal. lxiii. k Psal. civ. 34. l 1 Cor. vii.

savour and relish of sweetness, and, at least, tend to keep the heart in a disposition for more delightful, solemn intercourses with God. It is a sad truth, (than which also nothing is more apparent,) that whatsoever there is, either of sinfulness or uncomfortableness in the lives of those who have engaged and devoted themselves to God, doth in greatest part proceed from their neglect to mind God. A thing, if due heed were taken about it, so easy, so little laborious, and the labour whereof (so much as it is) were sure to be recompensed with so unspeakable pleasure: that they are so often lost in darkness, drowned in carnality, buried in earthliness, and overwhelmed with miseries and desolations of spirit, and all this for want of a right employing of their thoughts, is from hence only; they set their thoughts upon things that tend either to corrupt or deprave their spirits, or to disquiet and afflict them.

At this in-let, and by the labour of their own thoughts, sins and calamities are brought in upon them as a flood; which very thoughts if they were placed and exercised aright, would let in God upon them, fill them with his fulness, replenish their souls with his light, grace, and consolations. And how much more easy an exercise were it to keep their thoughts employed upon one object that is ever full, delectable, and present; than to divide them among many, that either lie remote, and out of their power, to be pursued with anxiety, toil, and very often with disappointment; or being nearer hand, are to be enjoyed (if they be things that have an appearance of good in them) with much danger and damage to their spirits, and with little satisfaction; or (if they appear evil) to be endured with pain and sorrow! So that the labour of their thoughts, among those many things, brings them in torture, when their rest upon God alone would be all pleasure, delight, and joy: here their souls might dwell at ease,[m] or (as those words import) rest in goodness, (even with that quiet repose which men are wont to take by night; for so the word we read *dwell* peculiarly signifies,) after the weariness which we may suppose to have been contracted by the labour of the foregoing day. And if no such sweet and pleasant fruit were to be hoped for from the careful government and ordering of our thoughts, is the obligation of God's law in this matter nothing with us? whom we are bound to fear and love, to trust and obey above all things, of him are we not bound so much as to think? And what is loving God with all our mind, so expressly mentioned in that great summary of our duty towards him? Or what can it mean, after the required love of all the heart, and all the soul, to add so particularly, and with all thy mind, when as the mind we know is not the seat of love! Surely it cannot, at least, but imply, that our thoughts must be much exercised upon God even by the direction of our love, and that our love must be maintained by thoughts of him; that our minds and hearts must continually correspond and concur to the loving of God; and so our whole soul to be exercised and set on work therein.

What doth it mean that our youth is challenged to the remembrance of him?[n] What, is our riper age more exempt? Do we as we longer live by him owe him less? Doth it signify nothing with us that (as was hinted formerly) the wicked bear this brand in the Scriptures, they that forget God;[o] that it is a differencing character of his own people, that they thought on his name? Why do we suppose our thoughts exempt from his government, or the obligation of his laws? Why should it be reckoned less insolent to say, "Our thoughts, than our tongues, are our own, who is Lord over us?" May we do what we will with our thoughts? Who gave us our thinking power, or made us capable of forming a thought? And now, will we assume the confidence to tell God we think on him all that we can? How many idle thoughts in the day might we have exchanged for thoughts of God! and every thought have been to us a spring of pleasure, and holy delight in him! Know then that if ever you will do any thing in this great matter of delighting in God, you must arrest your thoughts for him, and engage them in more constant converse with him: and withal mix prayers with those thoughts; or let them often be praying, craving thoughts, such as may carry with them annexed desires; or wherein your heart may breathe out requests, such as that, (for instance,) Rejoice the soul of thy servant; for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul,[p] &c. See they be spiritful thoughts, that carry life in them, and aim to draw more. But now our thoughts may be conversant about him under very various considerations, and all of them very delightful. And this variety may much increase our delight, while our minds converse with him, now under one notion, then under another. They are apt to tire and grow weary, being long employed the same way upon the same thing. And it were an injury to the blessed God himself, when he presents himself under various aspects and appearances, so to take notice of any one, as to overlook and neglect the rest. Therefore,

4. Look often to him according as absolutely considered he is in himself the most excellent Being: and as in reference to his creatures, he is the supreme Author and Lord of all. There is an unspeakable pleasure to be taken in him so beheld. Too many, while their distrust, or their carnality and strangeness to God holds them in suspense concerning their own special relation to him, are apt to fancy themselves excused of delighting in him. It belongs not to them they think, but to some familiar friends and great favourites of his to whom he expresses special kindness, and on whom he places the marks of his more peculiar good-will. But do you think so to shift and waive the obligation of a universal law upon mankind, and all reasonable nature? You are to remember (as hath been said) your delight in God is not to be considered only as your privilege, but as an act of homage to him that made you, and put an intelligent apprehensive spirit into you, by which you are capable of knowing who made you, and of beholding your Maker's excellency with admiration and delight. And if now you are become guilty and vile; will you run into darkness and hide yourself from him, or close your eyes, and then say, the sun doth not shine, and deny the blessed, glorious God to be what most truly and unchangeably he is? Whatever you are or have desired he should be towards you, yet do him right. Behold and confess his glorious excellency, every way most worthy to be delighted in. Nor have you rendered yourselves so vile, nor had so much cause of apprehending his displeasure towards you, by any thing so much as this, your not having taken delight in him all this while; and your neglect to take the ways (spoken of before) tending to bring you thereto. If you think you have no special relation to him, do you think you ever shall if you continue, in the temper of your spirits, strangers to him, and look upon him as one in whom you are to take no delight? Surely 'tis your dutiful affection towards him and complacency in him, that must give you ground to hope you are his, and he is yours; and therefore the beginnings and first degrees of that complacency and delight must be in you before; being begotten by the view of that excellency which he hath in himself antecedently to his being related to you. Yea, and if your relation to him were already as sure and evident to you as can be supposed; yet are you to take heed of confining your delight in him to that consideration of him only; or of making it the chief reason of that your delight. For so your delight in him will be more for your own sakes, or upon your own account, than his. Learn to look upon things as they are, and not according to their aspect upon your affairs. Is it not a greater thing that he is God, than that he is yours?

It is a purer, a more noble and generous, affection to him you are to aim at, than what is measured only by your private interest. Is that boundless fulness of life, glory, and all perfection (treasured up in the eternal and incomprehensible Being) to be all estimated by the capacity and concerns of a silly worm? That consideration, therefore, being sometimes laid aside, sit down and contemplate God as he is in himself, not disowning (as it is not fit you should) but only waiving the present consideration of any more comfortable relation, wherein you may (though most justly) suppose him to stand to you; and see if you cannot take pleasure in this, that he is great and glorious, and to have a Being so every way perfect before your eyes. Try if it will not be pleasant to you to fall down before him, and give him glory; to join your praises and triumph-

m Psal. xxv. 13.

n Eccl. xii. 1.

o Psal. ix. 16.

p Ps. lxxxvi. 4.

ant songs to those of saints and angels; and how much yet also it will add to your satisfaction to behold and acknowledge him exalted above all blessing and praise. How great delight hath been taken in him upon such accounts! In what transports have holy souls been upon the view and contemplation of his sovereign power and dominion; his wise and righteous government; his large and flowing goodness, that extends in common to all the works of his hands! Labour to imitate the ingenious and loyal affection of this kind, whereof you find many expressions in the sacred volume. For what hath been matter of delight to saints of old, ought surely still as much to be accounted so. To give instances:

You sometimes find them in a most complacential adoration of his wonderful wisdom and counsels. O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out![q] And again, To God only wise be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen.[r] To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever,[s] &c. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and ever,[t] &c. Elsewhere we have them in transports admiring his holiness. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods! Who is like thee glorious in holiness![u] There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none besides thee, neither is there any rock like our God![x] And this is recommended and enjoined to his holy ones as the special matter of their joy and praise: Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.[y] At other times we have their magnificent celebrations of his glorious power, and that by way of triumph over the paganish gods: Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased.[z] Their idols are silver and gold, &c. Be thou exalted, O God, in thine own strength.[a] We will sing and praise thy power. Forsake me not until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come,[b] &c. This is given out as the song of Moses and the Lamb; "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, &c. And how do they magnify his mercy and goodness, both towards his own people and his creatures in general. O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, that thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the children of men![c] Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright; praise the Lord with harp; sing unto him with the psaltery,[d]—The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. I will extol thee, my God, O King, I will bless thy name for ever and ever.[e] Men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts, they shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. To insert all that might be mentioned to this purpose, were to transcribe a great part of the Bible. And in what raptures do we often find them, in the contemplation of his faithfulness and truth, his justice and righteousness, his eternity, the boundlessness of his presence, the greatness of his works, the extensiveness of his dominion, the perpetuity of his kingdom, the exactness of his government: Who is a strong God like unto thee, and to thy faithfulness, round about thee![f] Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and thy faithfulness reaches unto the clouds.[g] Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth or the world, from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.[h] But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee.[i] The works of the Lord are great, sought out of them that have pleasure therein. His work is honourable and glorious,[k] &c. All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee; they shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power, to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.[l] Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

And his glory in the general, (which results from his several excellencies in conjunction,) how loftily is it often celebrated with the expression of the most loyal desires, that it may be every where renowned, and of greatest complacency, in as far it is apprehended so to be. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever. They shall sing in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord. Be thou exalted above the heavens, let thy glory be above all the earth.[m] Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is excellent, his glory is above the earth and the heavens.[n] When you read such passages as these, (whether they be elogies or commendations of him, or doxologies and direct attributions of glory to him,) you are to bethink yourselves, with what temper of heart these things were uttered! with how raised and exalted a spirit! what high delight and pleasure was conceived in glorifying God, or in beholding him glorious! How large and unbounded a heart, and how full of his praise, doth still every where discover itself in such strains; when all nations, when all creatures, when every thing that hath breath, when heaven and earth are invited together, to join in the concert, and bear a part in his praises! And now eye him under the same notions under which you have seen him so magnified, that in the same way you may have your own heart wrought up to the same pitch and temper towards him. Should it not provoke an emulation, and make you covet to be amidst the throng of loyal and devoted souls, when you see them ascending as if they were all incense! when you behold them dissolving and melting away in delight and love, and ready to expire, even fainting that they can do no more; designing their very last breath shall go forth in the close of a song! I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live, I will sing praise to my God while I have my being![o] How becoming is it to resolve, "This shall be my aim and ambition, to fly the same, and if it were possible, a greater, height." Read over such psalms as are more especially designed for the magnifying of God;[p] and when you see what were the things that were most taking to so spiritual and pious hearts; thence receive instruction, and aim to have your hearts alike affected and transported with the same things. Frame the supposition, that you are meant, that the invitation is directed to you, "O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise to him with psalms; for the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods," &c. And think with yourselves, Is he not as great as he was? Is he not as much our Maker as he was theirs? Is it not now as true, that "The Lord reigneth, and is high above all the earth, and exalted far above all gods." Now since these were the considerations upon which so great complacency was taken in him, set the same before your own eyes. And since these were proposed as the matter of so common a joy, and the creation seems designed for a musical instrument of as many strings as there are creatures in heaven and earth; awake, and make haste to get your heart fixed; lest "the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad, the world and all that dwell therein; lest the sea roar, and the fulness thereof, the floods clap their hands, the fields and the hills be joyful together, and all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord," while you only are silent and unconcerned.

And seriously consider the kind and nature of that joy and delight in God wherewith the hearts of holy men did so exceedingly abound; which is to be collected from the expressed ground and reasons of it, for the most part, wheresoever you have any discovery of that joy itself. This general and principal character may be given of it, that it was a sincerely devout and a loyal joy; not a mean, narrow, selfish pleasure, a hugging of themselves in this apprehension merely, It is well with me, or, I am safe and happy whatsoever becomes of the world. This was still the burden of their song; The Lord is great, and glorious,

q Rom. xi. 33.
u Exod. xv. 11.
x 1 Sam. ii. 2.
y Psal. xcvii. 12.
z Psal. cxv.
a Psal. xxi. 13.
b Psal. lxxi. 18.
c Psal. xxxi. 19.
d Psal. xxxiii. 1, &c.
e Psal. cxiv. 1, &c.
r Chap. xvi. 27.
s 1 Tim. i. 17.
t Jude 25.
f Psal. lxix.
g Psal. xxxvi.
h Psal. xc. 2.
i 1 Kings viii.
k Psal. cxi.
l Psal. cxlv.
m Psal. cxi. 31. cxxxviii. 5. lvii. 7, 11.
n Psal. cxlviii. 13.
o Psal. civ. 33.
p Psal. viii. xlviii. xcv. xcvi. xcvii. xcviii. xcix. &c.

and excellent; is exalted and most high over all. And it is to be observed, that as this was the common and more usual strain and temper of holy souls, in the ages whereof the Scriptures give us any account; so were doubts, and fears, and troubled thoughts concerning their own interest in God, a great deal less usual and common in those days. So that in proportion to the other pious and holy exercises of such as were true fearers of God and devoted to him, there is little account given us of any thing of that kind in the sacred writings, and especially in the New Testament of our Lord. An argument that such as were sincerely religious were most taken up about the interest of God and Christ in the world, rejoicing either in the observation of its growth and increase, or in the hope and confidence that it shall grow: and that they were much less concerned about their own interest; yea, and that this course did thrive best with them. While they were most intent upon the affairs of their common Lord, their own were well enough provided for.

We cannot hereupon but note therefore by the way, how altered a thing religion is now become. Almost the whole business of it, even among them that more seriously mind any thing belonging to it, is a fear of going to hell; and hence perpetual, endless scruples, doubts, and inquiries about marks and signs, and how to know what is the least degree of that grace which is necessary to their being saved. As if the intention were to beat down the price to the very lowest, and dodge always, and cheapen heaven to the utmost, it may be feared (as to many) with a design not to aim at any thing higher than what is merely necessary to that purpose only, and never to mind being excellent, but only being saved. And yet also it were well, in a comparative sense, if that itself were minded in good earnest by many that profess beyond the common rate; and that whereas their own interest is the thing they most mind, it were not their meanest and least considerable interest, even that of their sense and flesh, and secular advantage; and that under the pretence too (which makes the matter so much the worse) of much love and zeal God-ward, and devotedness to his interest; which they supposed involved and wrapt up wholly with theirs. Whence also all their delight and joy is measured only by the aspect of the world, and of public affairs upon them and their private ones. And they are either overwhelmed with sorrow, or transported with joy, according as the state of things doth either frown upon or favour their concernments. In the days when the interest of Christ lay more entirely and undividedly among one sort of men; and more apparently, their contests being less among themselves, and chiefly with the infidel world; and they had, for the most part, no enemies but those in common of the Christian name and cause: so that any common state of suffering to them, was the visible prejudice of that cause and interest: why, what, did they delight and please themselves in nothing but a warm sun and halcyon seasons? Surely they had matter little enough for that sort of joy. And what, did they therefore dejectedly languish and despond, and give themselves up to sorrow and despair? Nor that neither; unless they had all had but one neck, and that also perfectly in the enemies' power, it had been an impossible thing to stifle and extinguish their delight and joy. So fully did Christ make it good to them, that their sorrow should be turned into joy, and their joy should no man take from them. For even that increased it which aimed at its suppression; and the waters thrown upon their flame, became rivers of oil. They had got a secret way of "rejoicing in tribulation, of counting it all joy when they fell into divers temptations, of taking pleasure in reproaches for the sake of Christ;" of turning difficulties and hazards into matter of triumph, of taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and glorying to be counted worthy to suffer any thing for so excellent a name. Insomuch, that though their head and Lord was in a most ignominious way taken from them, and they left as a despised party of men in the midst of an outrageous world, under the (seemingly hopeless) profession of addictedness to the interest of a man that died upon a cross among thieves but the other day: and though many of them never saw his face, but had their knowledge of him by report and hearsay, yet believing they rejoiced, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.[q] The matter and ground of their joy was not so uncertain and changeable a thing, nor so light and unsubstantial, as the world's kindness and favour, and the smooth face of a terrene sky. These were true lovers of Christ; and such as counted him worthy for whom they should do all that lay in their power, and suffer all which it was in the power of any others to do against them upon his account.

They that rejoice and place their delight in the blessed God himself through Jesus Christ, have for the object of their joy the everlasting I AM, him who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. And whose excellent glory may be clouded indeed and eclipsed to the world and the eye of sense; but still shines in itself, and to the eye of faith, with the same bright and undiminished lustre. That delight will then be continued and permanent, and ever springing up in fresh liveliness and vigour, which is taken in this blessed object, considered as it is in itself; and that hath place in a soul that acts in a steady direct course towards that object, without sinister respects, or any selfish ones, of even the highest kind, otherwise than in that subordination which will be suitable to the vast disproportion and inequality between God's interest and ours; that is, (looking upon our own external concernments as unworthy to be named in the same day,) that though we reckon what there is delectable in God will make for our eternal advantage; yet to consider that advantage of ours so much less, and to be so much more pleased and satisfied, that he is in himself blessed and glorious, as it is in itself a thing more considerable that he be so, than it is what becomes of us, or of any creature, or of this whole creation. We are not indeed concerned, nor may think it warrantable, to put ourselves upon any such severe and unnatural trials of our love and fidelity to him, as to put the question to our own hearts, Could we be content to lie in hell, or be in the state of the damned for ever for his glory? For it were a most injurious and vile supposition of somewhat inconsistent with his own most blessed nature, and eternal, essential felicity, (for his happiness cannot but be much placed in the benignity of his nature,) to imagine that he ever can be pleased, or esteem himself glorified, by the everlasting miseries of any one that truly loves him. We ought to abhor the mention or imagination of such a thing, as a blasphemy against his infinite goodness: the denial whereof were to deny his Godhead. And it were also an absurd and self-contradicting supposition: for none can be in the state of the damned, but they must be also in a state of enmity to God, and of all wickedness and malignity arrived and grown up to its highest pitch; which indeed is the very horror and inmost centre of hell; wickedness and eternal misery differing (for the most part) but in degree, as grace and glory do. So that to put ourselves upon this trial of sincerity towards God, were to ask ourselves, whether we would be willing to express our sincere love to God, by everlasting hatred of him; and the truth of our grace, by being as maliciously wicked as the devil and his angels? The expressions of Moses and Paul so frequently alleged can be wiredrawn to no such sense. This is no place to discuss the importance of them. But it were certainly most imprudent (whatsoever they import) to seek marks of sincere love to God thence, which may be fetched from so many plain texts of Scripture. But it is out of question that we may and ought to mind and take complacency in our own blessedness, in a degree inferior and subordinate to that which we take in the glory of the blessed God, without making the sinful and absurd supposition of their inconsistency; or that we can ever be put to choose the absence or privation of the one as a means to the other. And such complacency and delight in God as arises upon such grounds is of the right stamp and kind.

See then that yours be a well complexioned delight, and such as inwardly partakes of the true nature of religion, *i. e.* that hath in it entire devotedness to God as the very life, soul, spirit of it. And if this be not the thing, but merely self-satisfaction, which you chiefly have in pursuit under the name of delight in God; you beat the air, and do but hunt after a shadow. For there is no such thing

[q] 1 Pet. i. 8.

as real, solid delight in God any where existing, or ever will be, separately and apart from a supreme love and addictedness of heart to him and his interest as our chief and utmost end. Which temper of spirit towards him, must be maintained and improved, by our fixed intuition and view of his glorious greatness, and absolute excellency and perfection; and the congruity and fitness which we thereupon apprehend, that we and all things (as all are of him) should be wholly to him, that he alone may have the glory.

5. And though you are not to prefer the consideration of your own interest in God as a good suitable to you, or to give it the highest place in your delight; yet also you must take heed of neglecting it, or of denying it any place at all. For though we may plainly observe, as hath been said; that it was the usual temper of holy men of old, to be most taken up in admiring God upon the account of his own excellency and glory, in itself considered; and may thence collect that to be the genuine right temper of a gracious heart when it is most itself: yet also 'tis as evident, that they were far from neglecting their own interest in God, and that they counted it not a small matter; yea, that it had (though not the principal) a very great influence upon their delight and joy in him. No one can read the Bible, and not have frequent occasion to take notice of this. For how often do we find him spoken of under the names of their portion, heritage, &c. And in what raptures of joy do we often find them upon that account! So the Psalmist considers him, when he says, The lines are fallen to him in pleasant places, and he had a goodly heritage.[r] How often do we find them glorying in their relation by covenant, and making their boasts of him as their God; I will love thee, O Lord, my strength,[s] &c. You have *my* no less than nine times repeated in the beginning (the first and second verses) of that psalm,—my strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, &c. And afterwards how glorious a triumph is there raised, and in what exultation do we behold them upon this! "Who is God save the Lord, and who is a rock save our God?"[t] And again, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted." And this was some of the last holy breath uttered by that anointed one of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel; He hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure;[u] and this is all my salvation and all my desire. With this, how well satisfied and pleased did he expire, and go down to the grave! And the people of God are sometime represented as so taken with this apprehension of their peculiar relation to God, that they cannot be content to know, but they proclaim it; nor was it enough the present age should know, but they must have it told the following generation; Let mount Sion rejoice, &c. Mark —That ye may tell the generation following[x]—For this God is our God. See their ostentation of him, this God? *q. d.* "Behold what a God have we! view him well, and take notice how glorious a God he is." And as they glory in the greatness of the God to whom they were related, so they do in the eternity of the relation. This God is our God for ever and ever! &c. And how unexpressible was the inward pleasure wherewith we may suppose those words to have been uttered, God, even our own God, shall bless us![y] How delightful an appropriation! as if it were intended to be said, the blessing itself were less significant, it could not have that savour with it, if it were not from our own God. Not only therefore allow but urge your spirits thus to look towards God, that you may both delight in him, as being in himself the most excellent one, and also as being yours; for know, you are not permitted only, but obliged, to eye, accept, and rejoice in him as such. It is his first and great law, and the form of his covenant which he requires you to enter into with him, to take him for your God. Herein to be shy and decline, is to rebel. And when he offers himself in all his rich fulness to be your portion and your God, how vile ingratitude were it to neglect and overlook the kindness of the overture! It is his glory to have indigent souls satiating themselves in him, drawing from him their vital breath, living upon him as their all: confessing they cannot live, but by his vouchsafed communications. And if you should say you love him, but so he be ever glorious in himself, you care not to be happy; it would sound like a hollow compliment. You are not to deal with a God upon such terms. It becomes you not, nor is suitable to him. It is fit for you to own it to him, that he is your life, that you are a mere nothing in yourself, and must seek your all in him. Your song and your prayer must be directed to him as the God of your life.[z] You do not own him as God, except you own and adore him as your all-sufficient good, and that fulness which filleth all in all. You detract from the glory of his Godhead, if you attribute not this to him; and if accordingly, as one that cannot live without him, you do not seek union with him, and join yourself to him, and then rejoice and solace yourself in that blessed conjunction.

And if you be not sure as yet that he is yours, your delighting in him is not therefore to be suspended and delayed till you be. But in the meantime delight in him as willing to become yours. To disbelieve that he is willing, is to give him the lie. It is the great design of his Gospel so to represent him to you. See that your hearts do embrace and close with that as a most delightful and lovely representation: the great and glorious Lord of heaven and earth offering himself in all his fulness to be thine! thy portion and thy God for ever! How transporting should this be to you! Nor, if you suspect the sincerity of your own heart towards him, (which is the only thing you can have any pretence to suspect, for it were a blasphemy to his truth and goodness to intimate a suspicious thought of him,) may you therefore spend all your time in anxious inquiries, or in looking only upon your own evil heart; but look most, and with a direct and steady eye, towards him. Behold and view well his glory and his love, that by this means your heart may be captivated and more entirely won to him.

This makes delight in God a strange thing in the hearts and practice of many. They find too much cause of complaint concerning their own hearts, that they are disaffected and disinclined God-ward. And what is the course they take hereupon? Their religion is nothing but complaint; and all their days are spent in beholding that they are bad, without ever taking the way to become better. They conclude their case to be evil and full of danger, because they find they can take no delight in God; and they will take no delight in him because they have that apprehension of the danger of their case. And so their not delighting in God resolves into itself. And they delight not in him because they delight not in him. 'Tis strange the absurdity of this is not more reflected on. And what now is to be done in this case? To rest here is to be held in a circle of sin and misery all your days; and would signify as if delighting in God were a simple impossibility, or as if not to delight in God, were a thing so highly rational as to be its own sufficient self-justification; and that it were reason enough not to delight in him because we do not. There can be no other way to be taken but to behold him more in that discovery of him which his Gospel sets before your eyes, and in that way seek to have your hearts taken with his amiableness and love, and allured to delight in him. And labour in this way to have that delight increased to that degree, that it may cease to be a question or doubt with you, Do I delight in God or no? Whence when you reflect and find that you do, then shall you have that additional matter of further delight; that whereas you before took delight in him because being in himself so excellent a one he hath freely offered himself to you to become yours, you may now delight in him also, because you are sure he is so; whereof you cannot have a more satisfying assurance than from his so express saying, I love them that love me;[a] and we love him because he loved us first.[b]

6. Take especial heed of more apparent and grosser transgressions. Nor account your security from the danger of them so much to stand in your being ordinarily out of the way of temptations to them, as in an habitual frame of holiness, and the settled aversion of your heart to them. Endeavour a growing conformity to God in the temper of your spirit, and to be in love with purity; that your heart

r Psal. xvi.
s Psal. xviii.
t Ver. 31.
u 2 Sam. xxiii.
x Psal. xlviii.
y Psal. lxvii. 6.
z Psal. xlii. 8.
a Prov. viii.
b 1 John iv.

may no more endure an impure thought, than you would fire in your bosom. If you be herein careless and remiss, and suffer your heart to grow dissolute, or more bold and adventurous, in admitting sinful cogitations; or if you have more liking or less dislike of any wicked course wherein others take their liberty; you are approaching the borders of a dangerous precipice. And if some greater breach hereupon ensue between God and you, what becomes of your delight in him! A sad interruption of such pleasant intercourse cannot but follow, both on his part and on yours. On *his part*, a suspension and restraint of those communications of light and grace which are necessary to your delight in him. He will be just in his way of dealing towards those of his own family, as well as merciful. It appears how much David's delight in God was intermitted, upon his great transgression, through God's withdrawing from him, when he prays he would restore the joy of his salvation.[c] And on *your part*, will ensue both less liking of God's presence, and dread of it. Your inclination will not be towards him as before; though the act of sin be soon over, the effect will remain; even a carnal frame of spirit that disaffects converse with God, and cares not to come nigh him. And if that were not, a guilty fear would hold you off; so that if you were willing, you would not dare to approach him. Your liberty taken to sin would soon infer a bondage upon your spirit Godward, unless conscience be wholly asleep; and you have learned a stupid, insolent confidence to affront God, which surely would signify little to your delight in him. Thou shalt put away iniquity from thy tabernacles. Then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty; and shalt lift up thy face unto God.[d] The conscience of unpurged iniquity will not let you lift up your face or appear in that glorious presence.

7. Cherish the great grace of humility; and be ever mean and low in your own eyes. That temper carries in it even a natural disposition to delight in God. How sweet complacency will such a soul take in him! His light and glory shine with great lustre in the eyes of such a one while there is not a nearer, imagined lustre to vie therewith. Stars are seen at noon, by them that descend low into a deep pit. They will admire God but little that admire themselves much! and take little pleasure in him, who are too much pleased with themselves. And how sweet a relish have his love and grace to an humble, lowly soul, that esteems itself less than the least of his mercies! With what ravishing delight will Divine mercy be entertained, when it is so unexpectedly vouchsafed; when this shall be the sense of the soul now caught into the embraces of God's love, What I, vile creature! impure worm! what, beloved of God! Expectation, grounded especially upon an opinion of merit, would unspeakably lessen a favour, if it were afforded, as also expected evils seem the less when they come. But the lowly soul, that apprehends desert of nothing but hell, is surprised and overcome with wonder and delight, when the great God expresses kindness towards it. Besides that he more freely communicates himself to such; To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit,[e] &c. And he looks to such with a design of habitation; heaven and earth are not to him so pleasant a dwelling. Down then into the dust; there you are in the fittest place and posture for delightful converse with God.

8. Reckon much upon an eternal abode in that presence where is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. Enjoy by a serious, believing foresight the delights of heaven; labour to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Look beyond this your present state. Confine not your eye and delight to what is now to be enjoyed, but think of what shall be. Set before your eyes the glorious prospect of the blessed God communicating himself to that vast assembly of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, in clearest discoveries of his glory, and richest effusions of his goodness. The best appearance of things in this world, makes but a dull scene in comparison of this. If you look towards God according to what now appears of his glory in the frame of the universe, and the course of his administrations and government over his creatures, he hath not, 'tis true, left himself without witness. And you may behold much that would be to you the matter of delightful admiration; if your eye be clear, and can pierce through clouds and darkness and a manifold veil. He hath made this world, and is every where in it, but it knows him not. His light shines in darkness, that doth not comprehend it. Beams of his glory do every where break forth, through every creature, providence, law, and ordinance of his. But much of his glory, that shines in the creation is hid by a train of second causes, through which few look to the first. His laws men judge of according to their interests and inclinations, while the holy, glorious majesty that enacted them is out of sight. His work in the world is carried on in a mystery. His interest lives, but is depressed. They who are most devoted to him are supported indeed by his invisible hand, but are, in the meantime, low, for the most part, and afflicted. If you now limit and confine your apprehensions of him to his present appearances, the matter of your delight is real, but much diminished. But conceive of him (as your faith can behold him at a distance) in that posture wherein having settled the eternal state of things he will finally show himself. Conceive him as having now gathered home all that have been recovered to him out of the apostacy, and joined them to those numberless legions of innocent and pure spirits about his throne that never offended. Conceive him as dispensing rewards, pouring out blessings, upon the loyal heads and hearts of them that expressed fidelity and duty to him in the time and state of trial and temptation; letting his glory shine out with bright and direct beams, to so many beholding and admiring eyes; giving forth the full and satisfying communications of his love, and making rivers of pleasure flow perpetually to the replenishing the vast enlarged capacities, of so innumerable a multitude of grateful adoring spirits, to whom it is now sensibly to be perceived how his fulness filleth all in all. Take this view of him; and let your faith and hope thus enter into that which is within the veil. And remember there is only a little time between you and that blessed state; that then you are to enter into the joy of your Lord; so that the very element and region wherein you are to live for ever, shall be nothing else but delight and joy. In this way of believing foresight, and by this lawful and allowed prepossession of future blessedness, much surely would be added to your present delight in God. Should not the thoughts of him be pleasant to you from whom you are expecting so great things? If your delight in him be any at all, upon what you have already found and experienced of his goodness; it should be abundantly the more upon what you are by his word encouraged to look for.

And having thus given some account in what way delight in God is to be exercised and improved; it were a charitable hope that there would be little need to propound arguments to persuade unto it. But it were a hope not grounded upon common experience, which too plainly tells us, that though such directions as these are plain and obvious, not unknown to Christians, but only less considered, (whence it was not needless here to recommend them,) yet delight in God obtains little place in the practice of the most. There will therefore too probably be still much need of excitation to it.

And yet because it is not multitude of words that is likely to do the business, but the weight of things, urged on by a more powerful hand than that of man, and that much may be collected to this purpose from what hath been said of the sinfulness of the omission; I shall, with great brevity, offer these things only to be considered.

Is it not a merciful vouchsafement that the holy God allows you to place your delight on him, and invites you to it? How much grace and love breathes in these words, "Delight thyself also in the Lord!" Trust in him was recommended before, and now this being added also; how plain is it that your ease and rest is the thing designed! Is it fit to receive so much kindness with neglect? Again, he delights in you, I speak to such of whom this may be supposed. And it is indefinitely said, his delights[f] were with the sons of men. Think what he is, and what you are; and at once, both wonder and yield. And what else have you to delight in? what thing will you name that shall supply the place of GOD, or be to you in the stead

[c] Psal. li. 12. [d] Job xxii. [e] Isa. lxvi. 1, 2. [f] Prov. viii.

of him? Moreover, who should delight in him but you? his friends? his sons? those of his own house? Think what life and vigour it will infuse into you; and that, the joy of the Lord will be your strength.[g] How pleasantly will you hold on your course! and discharge all the other duties of this your present state! You must serve him. Dare you think of throwing off his yoke? How desirable is it then to take delight in him whom I must serve! which only makes that service acceptable to him, and easy to myself! Further, this is a pleasure none can rob you of; a joy that cannot be taken from you. Other objects of your delight are vanishing daily. Neither men nor devils can ever hinder your delighting in God, if your hearts be so inclined. And were you never brought to take pleasure in any person or thing to which you had a former aversion? One that had wronged you might yet possibly win you by after-kindness. Give a reason why you should be more difficult towards the blessed God, that never wronged you! and whose way towards you hath constantly imported so much good will!

And consider that your condition on earth is such, as exposes you to many sufferings and hardships; which by your not delighting in him, you can never be sure to avoid, (for they are things common to men,) but which, by your delighting in him, you may be easily able to endure. Besides all this, seriously consider that you must die. You can make no shift to avoid that. How easily tolerable and pleasant will it be to think, then, of going to him with whom you have lived in a delightful communion before! And how dreadful to appear before him, to whom your own heart shall accuse you to have been (against all his importunities and allurements) a disaffected stranger!

To these I add the consideration in the other part of the verse; "And he shall give thee the desire of thine heart." By desire, 'tis plain we are to understand the thing desired, which is usual. By the thing desired, we must not be so unreasonable as to think is meant, any thing, whatsoever it be, that, even with the greatest extravagancy, we may set our hearts upon; as worldly possessions, riches, honours, &c. For it were most unbecoming that delight in God should be so mercenary; or be propounded as the price of so mean things; yea, and if the matter were so to be understood, delight in God were a means to the attaining of these things as the end; which were to make the blessed God an inferior good to these. Nor can we suppose that one who delights in God should ever esteem any reward or recompense of another kind, greater than what he finds in this very delight itself. And besides, we are very prone to desire things that (as the case may be) would prove very hurtful to us. If God should gratify us with every thing we fancy, he should many times please us to our ruin. And do we believe that when he hath won a person to place his delight and take pleasure in himself, he will requite him with a mischief? Since then we may not understand him to mean, that whatsoever we desire, if we delight in him, we shall have; we are to inquire further. And 'tis plain the things that can be supposed to be desired by such persons as are here spoken to, must be of one of these two sorts: either things of a spiritual nature, that tend directly to the gratification and advantage of the inward man; or else external good things, that make for the support and comfort of this present life. We will suppose it to be the one or the other of these. And shall show that whichsoever sort it be that is desired, delighting in God doth naturally infer the satisfaction (some way or other) of such desires.

1. Supposing they be spiritual good things that are desired, delight in God is most directly the satisfaction of such desire. Whatsoever purely spiritual good we can desire, is either God himself, or somewhat in order to him. If it be God himself we desire, so far as we delight in him we enjoy him, and have what we would have; and can only enjoy him more fully, by more entire and composed rest and delight in him. If it be somewhat in order to him, he is still supremely and ultimately desired in that very desire; so that in delighting in him, we have our end, and that upon which this desire doth lastly terminate. And now should not this be a great inducement to us to delight in God, that hereby our desires, the motions of our working hearts directed towards him, do immediately find in him a peaceful and pleasant rest, and turn into a satisfying fruition?

2. Supposing the things we desire be those of an inferior kind; delight in God doth not a little to the satisfying of them also. It doth not, as was said, entitle us to the things themselves we desire, whatever they be, or how unsuitable soever to us.

But, first, it moderates these desires, makes them sober, prudent, and rational, and capable of being satisfied with what is fit for us. He that is much habituated to delight in God, is not apt to foolish extravagant desires. This is the sense of such a one, "Not my will, Lord, but thine, be done." He may desire the same thing that others do, yet not with the same peremptory and precipitant desire, but with a desire tempered with submission, and with a reserved deference of the matter to the Divine pleasure: "This thing, Lord, I desire, if thou see good." So that the general object of such a one's desire is only that which in the Divine estimate is fit and good for him. And though he desire this or that particular thing, yet not as it is this thing, but as supposing it possible this thing may be judged fit for him by the Supreme wisdom, whereto he hath referred the matter. But if it shall be judged otherwise; this thing falls without the compass of the general object of his desire, and in just construction he desires it not. For he desires it not otherwise than on that condition that God sees it meet for him; and not longer than till he finds he does not. In which case the sobriety and submissiveness of his former desire, appears in his cheerful, patient want of the thing which he finds God hath thought fit to deny him. So that even then, his desire is satisfied, that is, it doth not (as often it is with a carnal heart) turn, being crossed, into rage and madness; but into a complacential peace and rest in the Divine will. He is satisfied in what God hath thought fit to do, Yea, the very thing is done which he would have done: God hath given him his heart's desire. For let the question be put to such a person, Do you desire such a thing, though God judge it will be hurtful to you or unfit for you? and no doubt he will, not in faint words that have no sense under them, (as almost any other man would,) but from his very heart and soul, say, No. And if he deliberate the matter of his own accord, or by any one's inquiry be occasioned to do so, this will be found the sense of his heart, (though his desire hath inclined to this or that thing in particular,) and this would be his prayer in such a case, "Lord, if thy wisdom, which is infinitely more than mine, see this thing not fit, cross me, deny me in this desire of mine." And this general desire at least, which is the measure of the particular one, is sure to be accomplished to one that hath God for his delight. For the promise is express and cannot fail, All things shall work together for good, to them that love God.[h]

And this love to God, or delight in him, as it entitles such to that his care and concern for them which is expressed in this promise; so it doth in its own nature dispose their hearts to an acquiescence and satisfiedness therein. For love to God, where it is true, is supreme, and prevails over all other love to this or that particular good. Whence it cannot be, but if this love be in act, (as the text must be understood to call unto actual and exercised delight in God,) it must subdue and keep the heart so far subject to the Divine good pleasure, as that its desire and addictedness to this particular, lesser good, (concerning which there may also be a just and rational doubt whether it will be now a good to him yea or no,) shall never be a matter of controversy and quarrel with him who is, unquestionably, the supreme and universal good. How will that one thought overcome, if such a one shall but apprehend God saying to him, "Dost thou love me above all things, and will yet contend with me for such a trifle!"

And we may by the way note, that upon this ground of the dubious mutability of external good things, (which, by circumstances, may become evil to this or that person,) as they are not here, so nor can they be any where, the matter of a general absolute promise, to be claimed indefinitely by any one's faith. The nature of the thing refuses it. For suppose we, that what may, in this or that case, be-

[g] Nehem. viii.

[h] Rom. viii. 28.

come evil or prejudicial to this or at person, doth now actually become so, and is the matter of an absolute promise, now claimable by such a person, what would follow? That an evil is now the actual matter of a promise! than which what can be said or supposed more absurd? when nothing can further or otherwise be the matter of a promise, than as it is good. Wherefore that promise would, in the supposed case, degenerate, (as the matter of it is by the present circumstances varied,) and turn into a threatening. Wherefore when that condition or proviso is not expressly added to a promise concerning a temporal good, the very nature of the thing implies, and requires it to be understood. For it is not otherwise than as qualified by that condition, any way a promise. Now he that is in the present exercise of delight in God, hath his heart so set upon God and alienated from earthly things, as that the present temper of it bears proportion to the natural tenor of such promises; and is not, otherwise than by the cessation of this delight, liable to the torture of unsatisfied desire in reference to these lower things: Although the fig-tree shal. not blossom—yet I will rejoice in the Lord,[i] &c. And as delight in God doth thus reduce and moderate desires in reference to any inferior good; so that, if it be withheld, they admit a satisfaction without it, and the want of it is easily tolerable; so,

Secondly, If it be granted, delight in God adds a satisfying sweetness to the enjoyment. A lover of God hath another taste and relish, even of earthly good things, than an earthly-minded man can have. He hath that sweet savour of the love of God upon his spirit, that imparts a sweetness to all the enjoyments of this world, beyond what such things in their own nature have with them. This makes the righteous man's little better, than the great revenues of many wicked.[k]

Upon the whole thereof this is, if duly weighed, a mighty and most persuasive argument to delight in God. For it imports thus much, which I add for a close to this discourse. If you place your delight here; you are most certainly delivered from the vexation and torment of unsatisfied desire. The motions of your souls are sure to end in a pleasant rest. Your lesser desires will be swallowed up in greater, and all in the Divine fulness; so that you will now say, Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth I desire besides thee.[l] If you take no delight in God, your own souls will be a present hell to you. And it may be it is not enough considered, how much the future hell stands also in unsatisfied desire; which desire (all suitable objects being for ever cut off from it) turns wholly to despair, rage, and torture. And that ravenous appetite, which would be preying upon external objects that now fail, turns inward, and as an insatiable vulture, gnaws everlastingly the wretched soul itself. And the beginnings of this hell you will now have within you, while you refuse to delight in God. The sapless, earthly vanities upon which your hearts are set, give you some present content, which allays your misery for a little while, and renders it less sensible to you: but they have nothing in them to answer the vast desires of a reasonable, immortal spirit. Whereby you certainly doom yourselves to perpetual disrest. For in these false, vanishing shadows of goodness, you cannot have satisfaction, and in the blessed God you will not.

[i] Hab. iii. 17, 18. [k] Psal. xxxvii. 16. [l] Psal. lxxiii. 25.

SELF-DEDICATION

DISCOURSED IN THE ANNIVERSARY THANKSGIVING OF A PERSON OF HONOUR FOR A GREAT DELIVERANCE.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN, EARL OF KILDARE, BARON OF OPHALIA,

FIRST OF HIS ORDER IN THE KINGDOM OF IRELAND.

My Lord,

I LITTLE thought when, in so private a way, I lately offered much of the following discourse to your Lordship's ear, I should receive the command (which I am not now, so far as it proves to me a possible one, to disobey or further to dispute) of exposing it thus to the view of the world, or so much as to present it to your Lordship's own eye. It was indeed impossible to me to give an exact account of what was then discoursed, from a memory that was so treacherous, as to let slip many things that were prepared and intended to have been said that day; and that could much less (being assisted but by very imperfect memorials) recollect every thing that was said, several days after. Yet I account, upon the whole, it is much more varied by enlargement, than by diminution; whereby, I hope, it will be nothing less capable of serving the end of this enjoined publication of it. And I cannot doubt but the injunction proceeded from the same pious gratitude to the God of your life, which hath prompted, for several years past, to the observation of that domestic annual solemnity, in memory of your great preservation from so near a death.* That the remembrance of so great a mercy might be the more deeply impressed with yourself, and improved also (so far as this means could signify for that purpose) to the instruction of many others.

Your Lordship was pleased to allow an hour to the hearing of that discourse. What was proposed to you in it, is to be the business of your life. And what is to be done continually, is once to be thoroughly done. The impression ought to be very inward, and strong, which must be so lasting as to govern a man's life. And were it as fully done as mortality can admit, it needs be more solemnly renewed at set times for that purpose. And indeed, that such a day should not pass you without a fall, nor that fall be without a hurt, and that hurt proceed unto a wound, and that wound not to be mortal, but even next to it, looks like an artifice and contrivance of Providence to show you how near it could go without cutting through that slender thread of life, that it might endear to you its accurate superintendency over your life, that there might here be a remarkable juncture in that thread, and that whensoever such a day should revolve in the circle of your year, it might come again, and again, with a note upon it under your eye, and appear ever to you as another birth-day, or as an earlier day of resurrection.

Whereupon, my honoured Lord, the further design of that providence is to be thoroughly studied, and pondered deeply. For it shows itself to be, at once, both merciful and wise, and as upon the one account it belonged to it to design kindly to you, so, upon the other, to form its design aptly, and so as that its means and method might fitly both serve and signify its end. If therefore your Lordship shall be induced to reckon the counsel acceptable which hath been given you upon this occasion, and to think the offering yourself to God, a living sacrifice, under the endearing obligation of so great a mercy is, indeed, a reasonable service; your life by that dedication acquires a sacredness, becomes a holy, divine life. And so by one and the same means is not only renewed and prolonged in the same kind of natural life, but is also heightened and improved to a nobler and far more excellent kind. And thus, out of that umbrage only and shadow of death, which sat upon one day of your time, springs a double birth and resurrection to you. Whereby (as our apostle speaks in another place of this epistle) you come to yield yourself to God as one alive from the dead.

So your new year (which shortly after begins) will always be to you a fresh setting forth in that new and holy course of life, which shall at length (and God grant it to be, after the revolution of many fruitful years, wherein you may continue a public blessing in this wretched world) end, and be perfected in a state of life not measured by time, wherein you are to be ever with the Lord. Which will answer the design of that merciful providence towards you; and of this performance (how mean soever) of

Your Honour's most obedient,
Humble Servant,
JOHN HOWE.

* By a fall from a horse, Dec. 5, 1674.

SELF-DEDICATION.

ROM. XII. I.

I BESEECH YOU THEREFORE, BRETHREN, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, THAT YE PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY, ACCEPTABLE UNTO GOD, WHICH IS YOUR REASONABLE SERVICE.

Two things are more especially considerable in these words:—The matter of the exhortation, that we would "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, our reasonable service." And the pathetic form of obtestation that is used to enforce it. "I beseech you by the mercies of God." The former I intend for the principal subject of the following discourse, and shall only make use of the other for the purpose unto which the holy apostle doth here apply it. Our business therefore must be, to show the import of this exhortation. In the doing whereof we shall,

1. Explain the terms wherein the text delivers it.

2. Declare more distinctly the nature of the thing expressed by them.

1. For the terms. By *bodies*, we are to understand our whole selves, expressed here (synecdochically) by the name of bodies for distinction's sake. It having been wonted heretofore, to offer in sacrifice the bodies of beasts, the apostle lets them know they are now to offer up their own: meaning, yet, their whole man, as some of those following words do intimate; and agreeably to the plain meaning of the exhortation, (1 Cor. vi. 20.) "Glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are his."

Sacrifice is not to be understood in this place in a more restrained sense, than as it may signify whatsoever is by God's own appointment dedicated to himself. According to the stricter notion of a sacrifice, its more noted general distinction (though the Jewish be variously distributed [a]) is into propitiatory, and gratulatory or eucharistical. Christianity in that strict sense, admits but one, and that of the former sort. By which One (that of himself) our Lord hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. We ourselves, or any service of ours, are only capable of being sacrifices by way of analogy, and that chiefly to the other sort. And so all sincere Christians are "as lively stones, built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," (1 Pet. ii. 5.) being both temple, priests, and sacrifices, all at once; as our Lord himself, in his peculiar sacrificing, also was.

In the addition of *living*, the design is carried on of speaking both by way of allusion and opposition to the ritual sacrificing. By way of allusion. For a *morticinum*, any thing *dead of itself*, the Israelites were not to eat themselves,[b] because they were a holy people; (though they might give it to a stranger;) much more had it been detestable, as a sacrifice to God. The beast must be brought alive to the altar. Whereas then we are also to offer our bodies a living sacrifice, so far there must be an agreement. Yet, also, a difference seems not obscurely suggested. The victim brought alive to be sacrificed, was yet to be slain in sacrificing: but here, living may also signify continuing to live. You (*q. d.*) may be sacrifices, and yet live on. According to the strict notion we find given of a sacrifice, it is somewhat to be, in the prescribed way, destroyed, and that must perish in token of their entire devotedness to God who offer it. When we offer ourselves,[c] life will not be touched by it, or at all impaired, but improved and ennobled highly by having a sacredness added to it. Your bodies are to be offered a sacrifice, but an unbloody one. Such as you have no cause to be startled at, it carries no dread with it, life will be still whole in you. Which shows by the way, 'tis not an animate body, without the soul. But the bodily life is but alluded to and supposed, 'tis a higher and more excellent one, that is meant; the spiritual, divine life, as *ch.* vi. 13. yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead. And *v.* 11. shows what that being alive means, "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ." Alive by a life which means God, which aims at him, terminates in him, and is derived to you through Christ. As he also speaks, Gal. ii. 19, 20. I am dead to the law, that I might live to God. I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Holy, though it be included in the word sacrifice, is not in the Greek θυσία, and was therefore added without verbal tautology. And there were, however, no real one. For there is a holiness that stands in an entire rectitude of heart and life, by which we are conformed in both, to the nature and will of God, besides the relative one which redounds upon any person or thing by due dedication to him. And which former is pre-required, in the present sacrifice, that it may be, as it follows,

Acceptable to God, not as though thereby it became acceptable, but as that without which it is not so. Yet also holiness, in the nature of the thing, cannot but be grateful to God, or well-pleasing, (as the word here used signifies,[d]) but not so as to reconcile a person to him, who was before a sinner, and hath still sin in him. But supposing the state of such a person first made and continued good, that resemblance of himself cannot but be pleasing in the eyes of God, but fundamentally and statedly in and for Christ, as 1 Pet. ii. 5. (before quoted.) This therefore signifies, both how ready God is to be well pleased with such a sacrifice, and also signifies the quality of the sacrifice itself, that it is apt to please.

Reasonable service, or *worship*, as the word signifies. This is also spoken accommodately, to the notion given before of offering ourselves, in opposition to the former victims wherein beasts were the matter of the sacrifice. Those were brute sacrifices. You (*q. d.*) are to offer reasonable ones. And it signifies our minds and understandings the seat of reason, with our wills and affections that are to be governed by it, must all be ingredient as the matter of that sacrifice; implying also the right God hath in us, whence nothing can be more reasonable than to offer ourselves to him.

a See Sigonius de Repub. Heb. Dr. Outr. de Sacr. b Deut. xiv. 21. c Cloppenburg. Sebol. Sacrific. and others. d εναρεστον.

Present, that is, dedicate, devote yourselves, set yourselves before God, as they *sistere ad altare—present at the altar* the destined sacrifice, make them stand ready for immolation. You are so to make a tender of yourselves as if you would say, "Lord, here I am, wholly thine. I come to surrender myself, my whole life and being, to be entirely and always at thy dispose, and for thy use. Accept a devoted, self-resigning soul!" Thus we are brought to the thing itself. Which now,

2. In the next place (with less regard to the allusive terms) we come more distinctly to open and explain. It is briefly but the dedicating of ourselves; or, as it is 2 Cor. viii. 5. the giving our ownselves to the Lord. So those Macedonian converts are said to have done. And there is a special notice to be taken therein of the word *first*, which puts a remarkableness upon that passage. The apostle is commending their liberal charity towards indigent, necessitous Christians: and shows how their charity was begun in piety. They did not only most freely give away their substance for the relief of such as were in want, but first they gave their ownselves to the Lord.

But that we may not misconceive the nature of this act, of giving ourselves, we must know it is not donation in the strict and proper sense, such as confers a right upon the donee, or to him to whom a thing is said to be given. We cannot be said to collate, or transfer a right to him who is before *Dominus absolutus*; the only Proprietor and *Supreme Lord* of all. It is more properly but a tradition, a surrender or delivery of ourselves, upon the supposal and acknowledgment of his former right; or the putting ourselves into his possession, for his appointed uses and services, out of which we had injuriously kept ourselves before. 'Tis but giving him his own, (1 Chron. xxix. 14.) "All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." It is only a consent, and obedience to his most rightful claim, and demand of us, or a yielding ourselves to him, as it is significantly expressed in the mentioned vi. to the Rom. 13. Though there the word is the same with that in the text, which here we read *present*.[e]

And now that we may more distinctly open the nature of this self-dedication, we shall show what ought to accompany and qualify it, that we may be a suitable and grateful preseat to him, in evangelical acceptation, worthy of God, such as he requires and will accept.

1. It must be done with knowledge and understanding. It cannot but be an intelligent act. 'Tis an act of religion and worship, as it is called in the text. Service we read it, which is much more general, but the word is *λατρεία—worship*. 'Tis indeed the first and fundamental act of worship. And it is required to be a rational act. Your reasonable service. Religion cannot move blindfold. And though knowledge and reason are not throughout words of the same signification and latitude; yet the former is partly presupposed upon the latter, and partly improved by it, nor can therefore be severed from it. In the present case it is especially necessary we distinctly know and apprehend the state of things between God and us: that we understand ourselves to have been (with the rest of men) in an apostacy, and revolt from God, that we are recalled unto him, that a Mediator is appointed on purpose through whom we are to approach him, and render ourselves back unto him: that so this may be our sense in our return, "Lord, I have here brought thee back a stray, a wandering creature, mine ownself. I have heard what the Redeemer, of thy own constituting, hath done and suffered for the reconciling and reducing of such, and, against thy known design, I can no longer withhold myself."

2. With serious consideration. It must be a deliberate act. How many understand matters of greatest importance, which they never consider, and perish by not considering what they know! *Consideration* is nothing else but the revolving of what we knew before: the actuating the habitual knowledge we have of things: a more distinct reviewing of our former notices belonging to any case, a recollecting and gathering them up, a comparing them together: and, for such as appear more momentous, a repeating, and inculcating them upon ourselves, that we may be urged on to suitable action. And this, though of itself without the power and influence of the Divine Spirit, is not sufficient, yet being the means he works by, is most necessary to our becoming Christians, *i. e.* if we speak of becoming so, not by fate or by chance, as too many only are, but by our own choice and design: which is the same thing with dedicating ourselves to God through Christ, whereof we are discoursing. For upon our having thus considered and comprehended the whole compass of the case in our thoughts, either the temper of our hearts would be such that we would hereupon dedicate ourselves or we would not; if we would, it is because we should judge the arguments for it more weighty than the objections, which, without such pondering of both, we are not likely to apprehend, and so, for want of this consideration, are never likely to become Christians at all. Or, if we would not, it is because to the more carnal temper of our hearts, the objections would outweigh. And then, if we do seem to consent, it is because what is to be objected came not in view: and so we should be Christians to no purpose. Our contract with the Redeemer were void in the making, we should only seem pleased with the terms of Christianity, because we have not digested them in our thoughts. So our act undoes itself in the very doing. It carries an implicit, virtual repentance in it, of what is done. We enter ourselves Christians, upon surprise or mistake. And if we had considered what we are, consequently, to do, what to forbear, what to forego, what to endure, would not have done it. And therefore when we do come distinctly to apprehend all this, are like actually to repent and revolt. As they, John vi. who, while they understood not what it was to be a Christian, seemed very forward followers of Christ. But when they did more fully understand it, upon his telling them plainly, went back and walked no more with him. And he lets them go; *q. d.* "Mend yourselves if you can; see where you can get a better master."

3. With a determinate judgment, at length, that this ought to be done. There are two extremes in this matter. Some will not consider at all, and so not do this thing; and some will consider always, and so never do it. Stand, Shall I? Shall I? Halt between two opinions. These are both of them very vicious and faulty extremes in reference to the management even of secular affairs, both of them contrary to that prudence which should govern our actions, *i. e.* when men will never consider what is necessary to be done, and so neglect their most important concernments; or, when they will never have done considering, which is the same thing, as if they had never taken up any thought of the matter at all. Indeed, in the present case, 'tis a reproach to the blessed God to consider longer, than till we have well digested the state of the case. As if it were difficult to determine the matter between him and the devil, which were the better or more rightful Lord! We must at last be at a point, and come to a judicious determination of the question, as those sincerely resolved Christians had done, (John vi. 68, 69.) who also express the reasons that had (before that time no doubt) determined them: "Lord, whither shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

4. With liberty of spirit, having thrown off all former bonds, and quite disengaged ourselves from other masters. As they speak, Isa. xxvi. 13. "Other lords besides thee have had dominion over us, but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." For our Saviour expressly tells, "No man can serve two masters," Matt. vi. 24. When those *Dedititii*, the people of Collatia,[f] were about the business of capitulating in order to the surrender of themselves, the question put, on the Romans' part, was, *Estne populus Collatinus in sua potestate—Are the Collatine people in their own power?* Wherein satisfaction being given, the matter is concluded. In the present case of yielding ourselves to God, the question cannot be concerning any previous tie in the point of right, or that could urge conscience. There cannot be so much as a plausible pretender against him. But there must be a liberty, in opposition to pre-engaged inclinations and affections. And this must be the sense of the sincere soul, entreating the matter of its self-surreader, and dedication, with the great God, to be able to say to the question, Art

e παριστημι, or παρισανω.

f Livius, *l.* 1.

thou under no former contrary bonds?" "Lord, I am under none, I know, that ought to bind me, or that justly can, against thy former sovereign right. I had indeed suffered other bonds to take place in my heart, and the affections of my soul, but they were bonds of iniquity, which I scruple not to break, and repent that ever I made. I took myself indeed to be my own, and have lived to myself, only pleased and served and sought myself as if I were created and born for no other purpose, and if the sense of my heart had been put into words, there was insolence enough to have conceived such as these; not my tongue only, but my whole man, body and soul, all my parts and powers, my estate and name, and strength, and time, are all my own; who is Lord over me? And while I pleased self with such an imagined liberty and self-dominion, no idol was too despicable to command my homage. I have done worse than prostrated my body to a stock, my soul hath humbled itself, and bowed down to a clod of clay. My thoughts and desires, and hopes and joys, have all stooped to so mean trifles, as wealth, or ease, or pleasure, or fame, all but so many fragments of earth, or (the less consistent) vapours sprung from it. And whereas this world is nothing else but a bundle of lusts, none of them was too base to rule me. And while I thought myself at liberty, I have been a servant to corruption. But now, Lord, I have through thy mercy learned to abandon and abhor myself. Thy grace appearing, hath taught me to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. Thou hast overcome; enjoy thine own conquest. I am grieved for it, and repent from my soul that ever I did put thee to contend for and conquer thine own." And so doth this self-dedication carry in it repentance from dead works, and towards God.

5. With a plenary full bent of heart and will. As that, "I have sworn, and will perform, that I will keep thy righteous judgments," Psal. cxix. 106. Or that, "I have inclined my heart to keep thy statutes always unto the end," *v.* 112. And herein doth this *self-dedication* more principally consist, *viz.* in a resolved willingness to yield myself, as God's own property, to be for him and not for another. Which resolvedness of will, though it may in several respects admit of several names, or be clothed with distinct notions, is but one and the same substantial act. It may be called, in respect of the *competition* which there was in the case, *choice:* or in respect of the *proposal* made to me of such a thing to be done, *consent.* But these are, abstracting from these references, the *same act*, which, in itself considered, is only a resolute volition. "I will be the Lord's." Which resolution, if one do (whether mentally or vocally) direct to God or Christ, then it puts on the nature of a vow; and so is fitly called devoting one's self.

It carries in it, as a thing supposed, the implanted divine life and nature, whereby we are truly said to *present ourselves living sacrifices*, as in the text, or as it is expressed in that other place, *chap.* vi. 13. "To yield ourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead; (as *v.* 11.) alive to God through Christ Jesus our Lord." Which life is not to be understood simply, but in a certain respect. For before, we were not dead simply, we were not dead, disinclined, or disaffected to every thing, but peculiarly towards God and his Christ. That way we were without any inclination, motion, tendency, or disposition. And so were dead *quoad hoc—as to this thing*, or in this respect; were alienated from the life of God. Now we come to live this life, and are made by his grace to incline and move towards him, of our own accord. Dead things (or destitute of life) may be moved by another, are capable of being moved violently, without or against inclination, hither or thither. But a living creature can spontaneously move itself, as of its own accord it inclines.

And whereas there are two more noble principles, that belong to this divine life and nature, faith and love; (a great and noted pair, as may be seen in divers places of the New Testament;) these have both an ingrediency into this *self-dedication.* The nature of each of them runs into it, and may be perceived in it. And it is hereupon a mixed act, partaking an influence and tincture, as it were, from the one and the other of them.

Faith respects the promises of God, and what we are thereupon to expect from him. And so our dedicating ourselves to God, is a self-committing. We give up ourselves to him as a trust, as the apostle's emphatical expression intimates, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he will keep that which I have committed unto him," παρακαταθηκην μου—*my pawn* or *pledge*, my *fidei commissum* against that day.[g] The soul flies to God as in a distress, not knowing to be safe another way. As once a people, not able to obtain tutelage on other terms, surrendered themselves to them whose help they sought, with some such expression, *Si non nostros, saltem vestros—If not as ours, yet at least as your own*, save, protect, and defend us. Nor, in our surrendering ourselves to God, is this any way unsuitable either to us or to him. Not to us; for we are really distressed, ready to perish; 'tis agreeable to the state of our case. Not to him; for it is glorious to him; a thing worthy of God to be a refuge and sanctuary to perishing souls; and is thereupon a pleasant thing, a God-like pleasure, suitable to a self-sufficient and all-sufficient Being, who hath enough for himself and for all others, whom he shall have taught not to despise the riches of his goodness. He "taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and them that hope in his mercy," Psal. cxlvii. 11. He waits that he may be gracious, and is exalted in showing mercy, Isa. xxx. 18. He lifts up himself when he does it, and waits that he may; expects the opportunity, seeks out meet and suitable objects, (as with thirst and appetite, an enterprising, valiant man is wont to do encounters, for none were ever so intent to destroy, as he is to save,) yea, makes them, prepares them for his purpose. Which he doth not, and needs not do, in point of misery, so they can enough prepare themselves; but in point of humility, sense of their necessity and unworthiness, great need, and no desert, nor disposition to supplicate. These are needful preparations, make it decorous and comely to him to show mercy. A God is to be sought, with humble, prostrate veneration. And such an opportunity he waits for. 'Tis not fit for him, not great, not majestic, to throw away his mercies upon insolent and insensible wretches: for, as there it follows, he is the God of judgment, a most accurate, judicious wisdom and prudence conducts and guides all the emanations of his flowing goodness. The part of which wisdom and judgment is to nick the opportunity, to take the fit season when mercy will be most fitly placed, best attain its end, relish best, be most acceptable to them that shall receive it, and honourable to him that shows it. And therefore (as is added) "blessed are they that wait for him," that labour to be in a posture to meet him on his own terms and in his own way.

Let such as have a mind to surrender and yield themselves to him consider this. Apprehend you have undone yourselves, and are lost. Fall before him. Lie at the foot-stool of the mercy-seat. Willingly put your mouths in the dust, if so be there may be hope. And there is hope. He seeks after you, and will not reject what he seeks; he only waited to bring you to this. 'Tis now a fit time for him, and a good time for you. And you may now, in resigning, intrust yourselves also to him; for his express promise is your sufficient ground for it. "I will receive you, and be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters."[h] Understand the matter aright; your presenting and yielding yourselves to him is not to be a desperate act. 'Tis not casting yourselves away. You are not throwing yourselves into flames, but upon tender mercies, thither you may commit yourself. The thing that is pleasing to him, and which he invites you to, (as he invites all the ends of the earth to look to him that they may be saved,[i]) cannot be unsafe, or unhappy to you.

Again, love hath a great ingrediency into this self-resignation. And as it hath, so it more admits to be called dedicating, or devoting ourselves. This holy, ingenuous principle respects more the commands of God, as the other doth his promises, and eyes his interest, as the other doth our own. This dedication of ourselves, as it is influenced by it, designs the doing all for him we can, as by the other it doth the receiving all. As by the other we resign ourselves to him for safety and felicity; so we do by this for service and duty to our uttermost. And an ardent lover

[g] 2 Tim. i. 12.

[h] 2 Cor. vi. 18.

[i] Isa. xlv. 22.

of God thinks this a little oblation. Myself? alas! What am I? Too small a thing for him who is all love, and who, though he hath it in hand to transform and turn me into love too, such as so drossy and limited a thing was capable of being made, how mean yet, and little, is the subject he hath to work upon! An atom of dust! Not combustible, or apt to be wrought upon to this (to a divine and heavenly love) by any, but his flame. And now therefore but a minute spark from the element of love, that must, however, thus transformed, tend towards its own original and native seat! It shall now flame upward. And this is all the flame, in which it is universally necessary, thy sacrifice should ascend; which will refine only, not consume it. Though, that it may be offered up in other flames, is not impossible; nor will it be much regretted by you; if the case should so require, nor shall be despised by him, if he shall so state the case. To give the body to be burned, without love, goes for nothing; but if, in that way, we were called to offer up our bodies living sacrifices to God, it would (in an inferior sense) be an offering of a sweet-smelling savour, would even perfume heaven, and diffuse fragrant odours on earth: nor would be grudged at by that love that first made our ὁλόκληρον, *the whole of ourselves*, an offering to God; and whose property it is to be all things, to do all things, to bear all things, to endure all things for him, whose we wholly are. So that if he design any of us to be an ὁλοκαυστωμα too, a *whole burnt-offering*, and will have to glorify him in the fire, love will not retract its vow, but say, after our great Pattern, "Not my will, but thine be done:" and as he, in his peculiar case and design, (not communicable with us, though the temper of spirit should be,) "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God! A body hast thou (it now appears for this very purpose) prepared for me."—"He loved us, and gave himself for us." So are we, from our love of him, to give ourselves for him, and his use and service, in whatsoever kind he shall appoint and prescribe. Every true Christian is, in the preparation of his mind, a martyr; but they are few whom he actually calls to it. Our love is ordinarily to show itself in our keeping his commandments; and with that design we are to present ourselves to him, as the resolved, ready instruments of his service and praise: as Rom. vi. 13. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Thus having been more large upon what was more essential in this dedication of ourselves, I shall be briefer in most of the other things belonging to it.

6. It must further be done with a concomitant acceptance of God. His covenant (which is now entered) is oftentimes summed up, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people:" and is resembled and frequently represented by the nuptial contract, in which there is mutual giving and taking. We are to resign and accept at the same time: to take him to be our God, when we yield ourselves to be his.

7. With an explicit reverence to the Lord Christ. We are to dedicate ourselves, after the tenor of a covenant whereof he is the Mediator. God doth not upon other terms treat with sinners. You are not to offer at such a thing as dedicating yourselves to him, but in the way and upon the terms upon which you are to be accepted. The Divine pleasure is declared and known, how great a one He must be in all the transactions of God with men; yea, and towards the whole creation, Eph. i. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. "He hath made us accepted in the beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he had purposed in himself; that, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." We must take heed how we neglect or overlook Him who is by Divine appointment so high in power, and with whom we have so great a concern.

8. With deep humility and abasement of ourselves, in conjunction with a profound reverence and veneration of the Divine Majesty. There ought to be the lowliest self-abasement, such as that good man expresses, Ezra ix. 6. (varied to one's own case,) "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for mine iniquities are increased over mine head, and my trespass is grown up unto the heavens." And indeed this is naturally consequent upon what was last said, of the regard that ought to be had in this matter to the Mediator; for surely that very constitution is in itself an humbling thing to us; and we cannot apply ourselves to God suitably to it, but with a self-abasing sense of our own state and case. Our coming and tendering ourselves to God in a Mediator, is in its very nature an humiliation, and carries with it a tacit confession, that in ourselves we have nothing, deserve nothing, are nothing, are worse than nothing; and that only this constitution of his could justify our offering ourselves to him, with any hope of acceptance; or make it less than an insolent presumption, for sinners to approach him, and expect to be received into his presence and service. It is not for such as we, to behave ourselves towards him as if we either had not offended, or were capable of expiating our own offence. Yea, and if there had been nothing of delinquency in the case; yet great humility becomes such applications to him, and that in conjunction with the profoundest reverence and veneration of him; for our very business in this *self-dedication*, is *worship*, as the word in the text hath been noted to signify. And it is the first and most principal part of all the worship we owe to him, (as was noted from 2 Cor. viii. 5.) fundamental to all the rest. We must have before our eyes the awful majesty and glorious greatness of God; which Scripture often speaks of, as *one notion* of his *holiness*, and which we are to have principal reference unto in all the solemn homage we pay to him; [k] as sacrifices are well observed to have been offered to him so considered. And therefore, by this consideration, their suitableness to him is to be measured, as he doth himself insist, Mal. i. 14. "Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."

9. With great joy and gladness of heart. It ought to be accompanied with the highest gusts and relishes of pleasure, both from the apprehensive congruity of the thing, and the expectation we have of acceptance. The thing itself should be pleasant to us. We are to do it as tasting our own act, as they did, 1 Chron. xxix. 9. "The people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly." The self-devoting person should be able to utter this as his sense, "Glad am I, that I am any thing, that I have a being, a soul, a reasonable intelligent being, capable of becoming a sacrifice to him." And that there is hope of being accepted: how great a joy is that! The apostle makes so great a thing of it, that he speaks (2 Cor. v. 8, 9.) as if he cared not whether he was in the body, or out of the body, so he might be accepted. Nuptials (that resemble, as hath been said, this transaction between God and the soul, wherein there is mutual giving and accepting) are wont to be seasons of great festivity and gladness. The great God himself rejoices in this closure, with such a joy, (Isa. lxii. 5. As a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride, so will thy God rejoice over thee,) and shall not we? How infinitely more amiable and delectable is the object *our* choice than *his!* when *we* are to rejoice in the supreme and most perfect excellency; *He*, in what is clothed over (if he did not super-induce another clothing) with most loathsome deformity.

10. With an ingenuous candour and simplicity, with that sincerity which is to be as the salt of our sacrifice: (Mark ix.) without latent reserves, or a hidden meaning, disagreeing to his; which were both unjust and vain. Unjust; for we may not deceive any. And vain; for we cannot deceive him. The case admits not of restrictions, it must be done absolutely, without any limitation or reserve. You have heard this *self-dedication* is, in part, an act of love. And what limit can be set to a love, whose object is infinite? A natural limit, 'tis true, as it is the love of a creature, it cannot but have; but a chosen one

[k] Outr. de Sac.

it ought never to have, as if we had loved enough. You know what kind of love is (and cannot but be) due to the all-comprehending God. With all thy heart, soul, mind, and might, &c. So without exception, that Maimonides,[l] reciting those words, adds, *etiamsi tollat animam tuam.* The stream of thy love to him must not be diverted, or alter course, *though he would take away thy very life, or soul.*

11. With the concomitant surrender to him of all that we have. For they that, by their own act and acknowledgment, are not themselves their own, but devoted, must also acknowledge they are owners of nothing else. In that mentioned form of surrender in Livy, when Egerius, on the Roman's part, had inquired,[m] *Are you the ambassadors sent by the people of Collatia that you may yield up yourselves and the Collatine people?* and it was answered, *We are:* and it was again asked, *Are the Collatine people in their power?* and answered, *They are:* it is further inquired, *Do you deliver up yourselves, the people of Collatia, your city, your fields, your water, your bounds, your temples, your utensils, all things that are yours, both divine and human, into mine, and the people of Rome's power?* They say, *We deliver up all.* And he answers, *So I receive you.* So do they who deliver up themselves to God, much more, all that they called theirs. God indeed is the only Proprietor, men are but usufructuaries. They have the use of what his providence allots them; He reserves to himself the property; and limits the use so far, as that all are to be accountable to him for all they possess; and are to use nothing they have, but as under him and for him, as also they are to do themselves. Therefore as they are required to "glorify him with their bodies and spirits, which are his," so they are to "honour him with their substance," upon the same reason. But few effectually apprehend his right in their persons; which as we are therefore to recognise in this dedication of ourselves to him, so we are, in a like general sense, to devote to him all that we enjoy in the world. That is, as all are not to devote themselves specially to serve him in a sacred office, but all are obliged to devote themselves to his service in the general; so though all are not required to devote their estates to this or that particular pious use, they are obliged to use them wholly for his glory in the general, and for the service of his interest in the world. We are obliged neither to withhold from him, nor mispend, these his mercies; but must "live righteously," (wherein charity is comprehended,) "soberly, and godly" in it; decline no opportunities that shall occur to us (within the compass of our own sphere and station) of doing him (though never so costly and hazardous) service; must forsake all and follow him, when our duty, and our continued possessions of this world's goods, come to be inconsistent; must submit patiently to our lot, when that falls out to be our case, or to any providence by which we are bereaved of our worldly comforts, with that temper of mind, as to be able cheerfully to say, "The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

It is indeed the greatest absurdity imaginable, that they who are not masters of themselves, should think it permitted them, to use what comes to their hands, as they list; for the service of their own lusts, and the gratifying of a rebel flesh, that hath rejected the government of their own reason, and of all divine laws at once; or that he who hath so absolute a right in them, should not have that right in what he hath committed to them, as to prescribe rules to them, by which to use and employ it. At the same time, and in the same sense, wherein we make a dedition of ourselves, we do the same thing as to all that we have. Even according to common, human estimate, according to what interest men have in others, or power over them, they have a correspondent interest in what they possess. They that *absolutely surrender themselves* to the power of another, leave not themselves capable of proper dominion as to any thing. Therefore says the civil law, *Non licet dedititiis testamenta facere.* They were so under several notions, it is true; but they that were strictly so, *had not power to make a will*, as having nothing to dispose of. No man has certainly a power to dispose of any thing (and when they surrender themselves by their own act and deed to God, they acknowledge so much) otherwise than as Divine rules direct or permit. They have a right in what is duly theirs, against the counter-claim of man, but none, sure, against the claim and all-disposing power of God, whether signified by his law or by his providence. Therefore with this temper of mind should this *self-dedication* be made: "Lord, I here lay myself and all that belongs to me, most entirely at thy feet. All things are of thee:" (as they are brought in saying, who make that willing, joyful offering, I Chron. xxix.) "What I have in the world is more thine than mine. I desire neither to use nor possess any thing, but by thy leave and for thy sake."

12. With befitting circumstantial solemnity; *i. e.* it ought to be direct, express, and explicit; not to be huddled up in tacit, mute intimations only. We should not content ourselves that it be no more than implied, in what we do otherwise, and run on with it as a thing that must be supposed, and taken for granted, never actually performed and done. It is very true indeed, that a continued, uniform course and series of agreeable actions, a holy life and practice, carries a great deal more of significancy with it, than only having once said, without this *conceptis verbis*, "Lord, I will be thine." Practice, whether it be good or bad, more fully speaks our sense, and expresses our hearts, than bare words spoken at some particular time, can do, for they at the most speak but our present sense at that time, and perhaps do not always that; but a course of practice shows the habitual posture and steady bent of our spirits. Nor do I think that a formal, explicit transaction, in this matter, whether vocal or mental, with circumstantial solemnity, is essential to a man's being a Christian, or a holy man. A fixed inclination and bent of heart towards God, followed (as it will be) with a course of practice becoming them that are his, will no doubt conclude a man's state to be safe and good God-ward; as one may, on the other hand, be the devil's servant all his days, without having made a formal covenant with him. But yet, though so explicit and solemn a transaction of this matter be not essential to our Christianity, (as what is said to belong only to the solemnity of any thing, is therein implied not to be of the essence of it,) yet it may be a great duty for all that, and I doubt it not to be so.

And it may here be worth the while, to insist a little; that if this indeed be a duty, it may obtain more in our practice, than perhaps it doth. Some, through mere inadvertency, may not have considered it; others, that have, may possibly think it less needful, because they reckon it was formerly done for them. They were born of Christian parents, who dedicated them to God from their birth; and they were, with solemnity, presented to him in their baptism. What need we then do over again a thing already done? Let us reason this matter therefore awhile, and consider whether, notwithstanding any such allegation, our personal dedicating ourselves to God in Christ be not still reasonable and necessary to be performed by ourselves also, as our own solemn act and deed? It were indeed much to be wished that our baptismal dedication to God were more minded and thought on than it commonly is; when with such sacred solemnity we were devoted to the triune Deity, and those great and awful names were named upon us, the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Ghost. Baptisms are, it is to be feared, too often in the Christian world turned into a mere pagcantry, and the matter scarce ever thought on more, when the show is over; and very probably because this great succedaneous duty is so unpractised among Christians.

And *first*, let it be considered, Are there no like cases? Do we not know, that though all the infants in a kingdom are born subjects, yet when they arrive to a certain age they are obliged, being called, to take the oath of allegiance, and each one to come under personal obligation to their prince? And do we owe less to the God that made us, and the Lord that bought us with his blood?

l De fund. legis. p. 64.

m Estisne vos legati oratoresque missi a populo Collatino, ut vos populumque Collatinum dederitis? Sumus.—Deditisne vos, populum Collatinum, urbem, agros, aquam, terminos, delubra, utensilia divina, humanaque omnia, in meam populique Romani ditionem? Dedimus. At ego recipio. Liv. ubi prius.

Again, Though all the sons of Israelites were in their infancy dedicated to God by the then appointed rite for that purpose, yet how frequent were their solemn, personal recognitions of his covenant; their avouching themselves to be his people, as he also avouched himself to be their God: which we see Deut. xxvi. and in many other places. It is remote from me to intend the pressing of a covenant that contains any disputable or doubtful matters, or any other than the substance of our baptismal covenant itself, consisting of the known essentials of our Christianity, all summed up in taking God in Christ for our God, and resigning ourselves to him to be inviolably his: no more is meant than that this may be done as our own reasonable service and worship; as our intelligent, deliberate, judicious act and choice.

And consider further, to this purpose, the great importance of the thing itself, compared with the lesser concernments wherein we use to deal most explicitly. Is it fit that a man's religion should be less the matter of his solemn choice, than his inferior concerns? that when he chooses his dwelling, his calling, his servant, or master, he should seem thrown upon his God and his religion by chance? and that least should appear of caution, care, and punctual dealing, in our very greatest concernment? How great a day in a man's life doth he count his marriage-day! How accurate are men wont to be, in all the preparations and previous settlements that are to be made in order to it! And since the great God is pleased to be so very particular with us, in proposing the model and contents of his covenant, the promises and precepts which make his part and ours in it; how attentive should we be to his proposals, and how express in our consent! especially, when we consider his admirable condescension in it, that he is pleased (and disdains not) to capitulate with the work of his hands, to article with dust and ashes. Is it reasonable we should be slight and superficial in a treaty with that great Lord of heaven and earth, or scarce ever purposely apply and set ourselves to mind him in it at all?

Moreover it is *your own* concernment, and therefore ought to be transacted *by yourself*. So far as there is any equity in that rule, *Quod tangit omnes debet ab omnibus tractari—What concerns all should be transacted by all*, it resolves into this, and supposes it, *Quod tangit meipsum debet tractari a meipso—That which concerns myself should be transacted by myself.*

Again, your being devoted by parents, no more excuses from solemn, personal, self-devoting, than their doing other acts of religion for you, excuses you from doing them for yourselves. They have prayed for you; are you therefore never to pray for yourselves? They have lamented your sin; are you never therefore to lament your own?

Further, Scripture warns us not to lay too much stress upon parental privilege, or place too much confidence in it, which it supposes men over apt to do, Matt. iii. 7, 8, 9. Abraham's seed may be a generation of vipers. John viii. 37, 44. I know you are Abraham's seed, yet he finds them another father.

Consider, moreover, the renewing work of God's grace and Spirit upon souls, consists in sanctifying their natural faculties, their understandings, consciences, wills, affections. And what are these sanctified for, but to be used and exercised? And to what more noble purpose? If there be that holy impress upon the soul, that inclines all the powers of it God-ward, what serves it for, but to prompt and lead it on to the correspondent acts? to apprehend and eye God, to admit a conviction of duty, and particularly, how I owe myself to him; to choose, love, fear, and serve him; and what doth all this import less, than an entire *self-resignation* to him? So that the genuine tendency of the holy new nature is in nothing so directly answered and satisfied as in this. And it ought to be considered, that the faculties of our reasonable souls have a natural improvement and perfection, as well as a gracious. And for their highest and noblest acts, 'tis fit they should be used in their highest perfection. 'Tis possible, that in the children of religious parents, there may be some pious inclinations betimes; and the sooner they thereupon choose the God of their fathers, the better, *i. e.* if you compare doing it and not doing it, 'tis better done, than not done. But because this is a thing that cannot be too often done, nor too well; the more mature your understanding is, the better it will be done, the grace of God concurring. Our Lord himself increased in wisdom, &c.

Moreover, let it be seriously thought on (what 'tis dreadful to think) the occasion you should give, if you decline this surrendering yourselves, to have your *neglect* taken for a *refusal*. 'Tis impossible, when you once understand the case, you can be in an indifferency about it. You must either take, or leave.

Nor can it be denied but personal self-devoting, one way or other, (more or less solemn,) is most necessary to the continuing serious Christianity in the world. Without it, our religion were but *res unius ætatis—the business of an age:* for how unlikely were it, and absurd to suppose, that a man should seriously devote his child to God, that never devoted himself? And if that were done never so seriously, must one be a Christian always, only by the Christianity of another, not his own? Some way or other then, a man must devote himself to God in Christ, or be, at length, no Christian. And since he must, the nature of the thing speaks, that the more solemn and express it is, the better, and more suitable to a transaction with so great a Majesty.

And hath not common reason taught the world to fix a *transitus*, and *settle some time or other*, wherein persons should have been reckoned to have past out of their state of infancy or minority, into the state of manhood or an adult state; wherein, though before they could not legally transact affairs for themselves, yet afterwards they could? This time, by the constitutions of several nations, and for several purposes, hath been diversely fixed. But they were not to be looked upon as children always. Some time they come to write man. Is it reasonable one should be a child, and a minor in the things of God and religion, all his days? always in nonage? Some time they must be men in understanding, (1 Cor. xiv. 20.) and have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil, Heb. v. 14.

Yea, and there is far greater reason we should personally and solemnly transact this great affair with God, than any concern we have with men. For, among men we may have a right by natural descent, or by valuable considerations, to what we enjoy, which may be clear and little liable to question: from God we have no right, but by his favour and vouchsafement. You are his children, if ever you come to be so, but by adoption. And human adoption has been wont to be completed by a solemnity; the person to adopt, being publicly asked (in that sort of adoption which was also called arrogation) *utrum eum quem adoptaturus esset, justum sibi filium esse vellet—whether he would have this person to be as his own very son?* And again; *ille qui adoptabatur—utrum id fieri pateretur—he that was to be adopted, whether he was contented it should be so?*[n]

Nor again is there that disinclination towards men, as towards God, or that proneness to revolt from settled agreements, with the one, as with the other. Whereas love sums up all the duty of both the tables; or which we owe both to God and man; it is evident that, in our present lapsed state, our love to God is more impaired, than to man. Indeed this latter seems only diminished, the other is destroyed, and hath, by nature, no place in us; grace only restores it. Where it is in some measure restored, we find it more difficult to exercise love towards God, than man; which the apostle's reasoning implies, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"[o] Who sees not that sensuality hath buried the rational world! Unregenerate man is said to be in the flesh, not as being only lodged in it, as all are alike, but governed by it, under its power: as the holy apostle is said to have been in the Spirit on the Lord's day.[p] To be in the flesh is expounded by being and walking after it.[q] Hence men only love and savour the things within this sensible sphere. They that are after the flesh, do only savour the things of the flesh. Where the regenerate, divine life is implanted, it doth *male habitare—is ill lodged*, in conjunction with a

n Cal. Lex. Jurid. o 1 John iv. 20. p Rev. i. q Rom. viii.

strong remaining sensual inclination; so that where the soul is somewhat raised by it, out of that mire and dirt, there is a continual decidency, a proneness to relapse, and sink back into it. Impressions therefore of an invisible Ruler and Lord (as of all unseen things) are very evanid; soon, in a great degree worn off; especially where they were but in making, and not yet thoroughly inwrought into the temper of the soul. Hence is that instability in the covenant of God. We are not so afraid before, nor ashamed afterwards, of breaking engagements with him, as with men, whom we are often to look in the face, and converse with every day.

Therefore there is the more need here of the strictest ties, and most solemn obligations, that we can lay upon ourselves. How apprehensive doth that holy, excellent governor, Joshua,[r] seem of this, when he was shortly to leave the people under his conduct! And what urgent means doth he use, to bring them to the most express, solemn dedication of themselves to God, that was possible; first representing the reasonableness and equity of the thing, from the many endearing wonders of mercy (as here the apostle beseeches these Romans by the mercies of God) which he recounts from the beginning, to the 14th verse of that 24th chapter: then, thereupon, exhorting them to "fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity," &c. in that 14th verse, telling them, withal, if they should all resolve otherwise to a man, what his own resolution was, (*v.* 15.) "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord:" taking also their express answer, which they give, *v.* 16, 17, 18. But fearing they did not enough consider the matter, he, as it were, puts them back (esteeming himself to have gotten an advantage upon them) that they might come on again with the more vigour and force. "Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after he hath done you good," *v.* 19, 20. Hereupon, according to his expectation and design, they reinforce their vow, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord." And upon this, he closes with them, and takes fast hold of them, "Ye are witnesses" (saith he) "against yourselves, that ye have chosen the Lord to serve him." And they say, "We are witnesses," *v.* 22. He exhorts them afresh, and they engage over again, *v.* 23, 24. Thus a covenant is made with them, *v.* 25. After all this, a record is taken of the whole transaction; 'tis looked down, (*v.* 26.) and a monumental stone set up, to preserve the memory of this great transaction. And the good man tells them, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall therefore be a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God." So he dismisses them, and lets them go every one to his inheritance.

Nor is it to be neglected that, Isa. xliv. 5. (which is generally agreed to refer to the times of the gospel) it is so expressly set down, "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." In the rendering of which words, "*subscribe with the hand*," the versions vary. Some read *inscribe in their hands*, the Lord's name; counting it an allusion to the ancient custom, as to servants and soldiers, that they were to carry, stamped upon the palm of their hands, the name of their master or general. The Syriac read to the same sense as we—Shall give an hand-writing to be the Lord's. That the thing be done, and with great seriousness, distinctness, and solemnity, is no doubt highly reasonable and necessary; about the particular manner I prescribe not.

Nor can I imagine what any man can have to object, but the backwardness of his own heart to any intercourse or conversation with the invisible God: which is but an argument of the miserable condition of depraved mankind; none, that the thing is not to be done. For, that backwardness must proceed from some deeper reason than that God is invisible: a reason, that should not only convince, but amaze us, and even overwhelm our souls in sorrow and lamentation, to think what state the nature and spirit of man is brought into! For is not the devil invisible too? And what wretch is there so silly and ignorant, but can by the urgency of discontent, envy, and an appetite of revenge, find a way to fall into a league with him? Is this, that God is less conversable with men? less willing to be found of them that seek Him? No surely, [s] but that men have less mind and inclination to seek Him! And is this a posture and temper of spirit towards the God that made us, (the continual spring of our life and being!) in which it is fit for us to tolerate ourselves? Shall not the necessity of this thing, and of our own case, (not capable of remedy while we withhold ourselves from God,) overcome all the imagined difficulty in applying ourselves to Him?

Use. And upon the whole, if we agree the thing itself to be necessary, it cannot be doubted, but it will appear to be of common concernment to us all: and that every one must apprehend it is necessary to me, and to me, whether we have done it already, or not done it. If we have not, it cannot be done too soon; if we have, it cannot be done too often. And it may now be done, by private, silent ejaculation, the convinced, persuaded heart saying within itself, "Lord, I consent to be wholly thine, I here resign and devote myself absolutely and entirely to thee." None of you know what may be in the heart of another, to this purpose, even at this time. Why then should not every one fear to be the only person of those who now hear, that disagrees to it? If any finds his heart to reluctate and draw back, 'tis fit such a one should consider, "I do not know but this self-devoting disposition and resolution is the common sense of all the rest, even of all that are now present, but mine." And who would not dread to be the only one in an assembly, that shall refuse God! or refuse himself to him! For, let such a one think, "What particular reason can I have to exclude myself from such a consenting chorus? Why should I spoil the harmony, and give a disagreeing vote? Why should any man be more willing to be dutiful and happy than I? to be just to God, or have him good to me? Why should any one be more willing to be saved than I; and to make one hereafter, in the glorious, innumerable, joyful assembly of devoted angels and saints, that pay an eternal, gladsome homage to the throne of the celestial King?" But if any find their hearts inclining, let what is now begun, be more fully completed in the closet; and let those walls (as Joshua's stone) hear, and bear witness!

Lest any should not consent, and that all may consent more freely, and more largely; I shall in a few words show—what should induce to it,—and what it should induce.

1. What should induce to it? You have divers sorts of inducements.

Such as may be taken from necessity. For what else can you do with yourself? You cannot be happy without it, for who would make you so but God? and how shall he, while you hold off yourselves from him? You cannot but be miserable, not only as not having engaged him to you, but as having engaged him against you.

Such as may be taken from equity. You are his right. He hath a natural right in you as he is your Maker, the Author of your being: and an acquired right as you were bought by his Son, who hath redeemed us to God, and who died, rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord of the living and the dead, here, to rule, hereafter, to judge us. Both which he can do whether we will or no: but 'tis not to be thought he will save us against our wills. His method is, whom he saves, first to overcome, *i. e.* to make them "willing in the day of his power." And dare we, who "live, move, and have our being in him," refuse to be, live, and move to him? or "deny the Lord who bought us?"

And again, Such as may be taken from ingenuity, or that should work upon it, *viz.* (what we are besought by, in the text,) "The mercies of God." How manifold are they! But they are the mercies of the gospel especially,

[r] Josh. xxiv.

[s] Read considerately, Heb. xi. 6.

[t] Rev. v. 9.

mentioned in the foregoing chapter, which are thus referred unto in the beginning of this, the transferring what the Jews forfeited and lost, by their unbelief, unto us Gentiles; that "mystery" (as this apostle elsewhere calls it, Eph. iii. 4, 5, 6.) "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the gospel." In reference whereto he so admiringly cries out a little above the text, (*ch.* xi. 33.) Ὢ *βάθος*, "O the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" The mercies of which it is said, Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat: yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Which free and sure mercies are heightened, as to us, by the same both endearing and awful circumstance, that these mercies are offered to us, *viz.* in conjunction with the setting before our eyes the monitory, tremendous example of a forsaken nation that rejected them, intimated *v.* 5. "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and nations that know not thee shall run unto thee:" a case whereof our apostle says, [u] in the foregoing chapter, Esaias was very bold; when speaking of it in another place, [w] he uses these words, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." He was bold in it indeed, to mention such a thing to a people, unto whom a jealous gloriation in the peculiarity of the privileged state, their being without partners or rivals, for so long a time, in their relation and nearness to God, was grown so natural: and who took it so impatiently, when our Saviour did but intimate the same thing to them by parables, as that they sought immediately [x] to lay hands on him for that very reason. So unaccountable a perverseness of humour reigned with them, that they envied to others what they despised themselves.

But on the other hand, nothing ought more highly to recommend those mercies to us, or more engage us to accept them with gratitude, and improve them with a cautious fear of committing a like forfeiture, than to have them brought to our hands, redeemed from the contempt of the former despisers of them; and that, so terribly, vindicated upon them at the same time; as it also still continues to be. That the natural branches of the olive should be torn off, and we inserted: that there should be such an instance given us of the severity and goodness of God. To [y] them that fell, severity; but to us, goodness, if we continue in his goodness, to warn us that, otherwise, we may expect to be cut off too! and that we might apprehend, if he spared not the natural branches, he was as little likely to spare us! That when he came to his own and they received him not, he should make so free an offer to us, that if we would yet receive him (which if we do, we are, as hath been said, to yield up and dedicate ourselves to him at the same time) we should have the privilege to be owned for the sons of God! What should so oblige us to compliance with him, and make us with an ingenuous trembling fall before him, and (crying to him, My Lord and my God) resign ourselves wholly to his power and pleasure?

And even his mercies more abstractly considered ought to have that power upon us. Were we not lost? Are we not rescued from a necessity of perishing, and being lost for ever, in the most costly way? costly to our Redeemer, but to us, without cost. Is it a small thing, that he offers himself to us as he doth when he demands us, and requires that we offer ourselves to him? that he, in whom is all the fulness of God, having first offered himself for us, doth now offer himself also to us? that he hath treated us, hitherto, with such indulgence, waited on us with so long patience, sustained us by so large bounty? And now upon all, when it might be thought we should be communing with our own hearts, discoursing the matter with ourselves, "What shall we render?" that he should say to us so shortly and compendiously, Render yourselves, Is that too much? Are we too inconsiderable to be his, or his mercies too inconsiderable to oblige us to be so? the mercies that flow so freely from him, for he is the Father of mercies: the mercies that are so suitable to us; pardon to the guilty, light to them that dwell in darkness, life to the dead, a rich portion and all-sufficient fulness for the poor, indigent, and necessitous: the mercies that we are encouraged to expect as well as what we enjoy: the great good laid up in store! the mercies of eternity to be added to those of time: the mercies of both worlds, meeting upon us! that here, we are to keep ourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life! [z] that, looking for that blessed hope, our life may here, in the mean time, be transacted with him, that we may abide in the secret of his presence, and dwelling in love, may dwell in God who is love; till the season come, when we shall be able more fully to understand his love, and return our own!

Nor are the favours of his providence to be thought little of in the time of our earthly pilgrimage. And now, if all this do effectually induce us thus to dedicate ourselves,

2. We are next to consider what our having done it ought further to induce us unto.

In the general, it ought to be an inducement to us (as we may well apprehend) to behave ourselves answerably to such a state, as we are hereby brought into, if we now first dedicated ourselves to him, and are confirmed in, by our iterations of it. For he takes no pleasure in fools, therefore having vowed ourselves to him, to serve, and live to him, let us pay what we have vowed. Better it had been not to vow, than to vow and not pay; and instead of the reasonable sacrifice he required of us, to give him only the sacrifice of fools. We are, upon special terms, and for special ends, peculiar to the most high God. They that are thus his, are "a royal priesthood," [a] He hath made us kings and priests." But those offices and dignities have sometime met in the same person. And to God and his Father, *i. e.* for him. Not that both those offices do terminate upon God, or that the work of both is to be performed towards him; but our Lord Jesus, it being the design of his Father we should be brought into that high and honourable station, hath effected it, in compliance with his design, and hath served his pleasure and purpose in it. He hath done it to, *i. e.* for, him. So that, to God and his Father may be referred to Christ's action, in making us kings and priests, not to ours, being made such. Yet the one of these refers to God immediately, the other to ourselves. Holy and good men are kings in reference to themselves, in respect of their self-dominion into which they are now restored, having been, as all unregenerate persons are, slaves to vile and carnal affections and inclinations. The minds of the regenerate are made spiritual, and now with them the refined, rectified, spiritual mind, is enthroned; lift up into its proper authority over all sensual inclinations, appetitions, lusts, and passions. A glorious empire! founded in conquest, and managed afterwards, when the victory is complete, (and in the mean time, in some degree, while "judgment is in bringing forth unto victory,") by a steady, sedate government in most perfect tranquillity and peace.

But they are priests in reference to God; the business of their office, as such, terminates upon him; for him they worship and serve. Worship is either social, external and circumstantial, that of worshipping societies, considered according to its exterior part. Herein one is appointed by special office to do the part of a priest for the rest. In this sense all are not priests. Or else it is solitary, internal, substantial and spiritual, wherein they either worship alone, and apart by themselves, or being in conjunction with others, yet their own spirits within them work directly,

u Rom. x. 20. w Isa. lxv. 1. x Matt. xxi. 45, 46.

y Chap. xi. z Jude 21. a Rev. i. 6.

and aspire upwards to God. And as to this more noble part of their worship, every holy man is his own priest.

And this is the double dignity of every holy, devoted soul. They are thus kings, and priests; govern themselves, and serve God. While they govern, they serve: exercise authority over themselves, with most submiss veneration of God: crowned, and enthroned; but always in a readiness to cast down their crowns at the footstool of the supreme, celestial throne. Into this state they come by *self-dedication.* And now surely, it is not for such to demean themselves at a vulgar rate. They are of the *ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων—the*[b] *church of the first-born written in heaven; i. e.* the church of the first-born ones; that is, all composed and made up of such; (as that expression signifies;) first-born, in a true (though not the most eminent) sense, being sons by the first, *i. e.* the prime and more excellent sort of birth, in respect whereof they are said to be[c] begotten again by the word of truth, that they should be a kind of first-fruits of the creatures of God. And this two-fold dignity is the privilege of their birthright, as anciently it was. Are you devoted to God? Have you dedicated yourselves? Hereby you are arrived to this dignity. For in the above-mentioned place it is said,[d] "Ye are come;" you are actually, already, adjoined to that church, and are the real present members of that holy community. For you are related and united to him,[e] of whom the family of heaven and earth is named; are of the household, and the sons of God, his, under that peculiar notion, when you have dedicated yourselves to him. You cannot but apprehend there are peculiarities of behaviour in your after-conduct and management of yourselves, that belong to you, and must answer and correspond to your being, in this sense, his. Some particulars whereof I shall briefly mention.

You should each of you often reflect upon it, and bethink yourself what you have done, and whose you now are. "I am the devoted one of the most high God." It was one of the precepts given by a pagan to his disciples, "Think with yourself, upon all occasions, I am a philosopher." What a world of sin and trouble might that thought, often renewed, prevent, "I am a Christian, one devoted to God in Christ." Your having done this thing, should clothe your mind with new apprehensions, both of God and yourselves: that he is not now a stranger to you, but your God; that you are not unrelated to him, but his. "I was an enemy, now am reconciled. I was a common, profane thing, now holiness to the Lord." 'Tis strange to think how one act doth sometimes habit and tincture a man's mind; whether in the kind of good or evil. To have committed an act of murder! What a horrid complexion of mind did Cain bear with him hereupon. To have dedicated oneself to God, if seriously and duly done; would it have less power to possess one with a holy, calm, peaceful temper of mind?

You should, hereupon, charge yourself with all suitable duty towards him; for you have given yourself to him to serve him; that is your very business. You are his, and are to do his work, not your own, otherwise than as it falls in with his, and is his. You are to discharge yourself of all unsuitable cares; for will not he take care of his own, who hath put so ill a note upon them that do not? He that provideth not for his own, (his domestics,) those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel? Will you think, he can be like such[a] one? Who, if not the children of a prince, should live free from care?

You should most deeply concern yourself about his concernments, without any apprehension or fear that he will neglect those that are most truly yours: and are not to be indifferent how his interest thrives, or is depressed in the world; is increased, or diminished. They that are his, should let his affairs engross their cares and thoughts.

You should abandon all suspicious, hard thoughts of him. When in the habitual bent of your spirits you desire to please him, it is most injurious to him, to think he will abandon, and give you up to perish, or become your enemy. 'Tis observable what care was taken among the Romans, *Ne quid dedititiis hostile illatum sit—that no hostility might be used towards them that had surrendered themselves.* Can man excel God in praise-worthy things? You can think nothing of God more contrary to his gospel, or his nature, than to surmise he will destroy one that hath surrendered to and bears a loyal mind towards him. And what a reproach do you cast upon him, when you give others occasion to say, "His own, they that have devoted themselves to him, dare not trust him?" You are taught to say, "I am thine, save me;" not to suspect he will ruin you. They do strangely misshape religion, considering in how great part it consists in trusting God, and living a life of faith, that frame to themselves a religion made up of distrusts, doubts, and fears.

You should dread to alienate yourselves from him, which (as sacrilege is one of the most detestable of all sins, a robbing of God) is the most detestable sacrilege. You are to reserve yourselves entirely for him.[f] Every one that is godly he hath set apart for himself.

Yea, and you are not only to reserve, but, to your uttermost, to improve and better yourselves for him daily: to aspire to an excellency, in some measure, suitable to your relation: "to walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory," (1 Thess. ii. 12.) remembering you are here to glorify him, and hereafter to be glorified with him. And who is there of us that finds not himself under sufficient obligation, by the mercies of God, unto all this? or to whom he may not say, in a far more eminent sense, than the apostle speaks it to Philemon, "Thou owest even thyself also unto me?" Will we refuse to give God what we owe? or can we think it fit, in itself, "we should be no otherwise his, than (as one well says) fields, woods, and mountains, and brute beasts?" And I may add, can it be comfortable to us, he should have no other interest in us than he hath in devils? Is there no difference in the case of reasonable creatures and unreasonable? theirs who profess devotedness to him, and theirs who are his professed enemies? The one sort, through natural incapacity, cannot, by consent, be his, and the other, through an invincible malignity, never will. Are there no mercies (conferred or offered) that do peculiarly oblige us more? Let us be more frequent and serious in recounting our mercies, and set ourselves on purpose to enter into the memory of God's great goodness, that we may thence, from time to time, urge upon ourselves this great and comprehensive duty. And at this time, being here together on purpose, let us consider and reflect afresh upon that eminent mercy which you are wont to commemorate in the yearly return of this day.

And that I may, more particularly, direct my speech the same way that the voice of that memorable providence is especially directed; you are, my lord, to be more peculiarly besought by the mercies of God, that you would this day dedicate yourself to him. I do beseech therefore you, by the many endearing mercies which God hath so plentifully conferred upon you, by the mercies of your noble extraction and birth, by the mercies of your very ingenious and pious education, by the mercies of your family, which God hath made to descend to you from your honourable progenitors; (which, as they are capable of being improved, may be very valuable mercies;) by the blood and tender mercies of your blessed and glorious Redeemer, who offered up himself a Sacrifice to God for you, that you would now present yourself to God, a holy, living sacrifice, which is your reasonable service. I add, by the signal mercy which hath made this a memorable day to you, and by which you come, thus long, to enjoy the advantages of all your other mercies. How came it to pass that this day comes not to be remembered by your noble relatives, as a black and a gloomy day, the day of the extinction of the present light and lustre of your family, and of quenching their coal which was left? You had a great Preserver, who we hope delivered you because he delighted in you. Your life was precious in his sight. Your breath was in his hand; he preserved and renewed it to you, when you were ready to breathe your last. And we hope he will vouchsafe you that greater deliverance, not to let you fall under the charge which was once exhibited against a great man, (Dan. v. 23.) "The God in whose hands thy breath is—hast thou not glorified:" and make you rather capable of adopting those words, (Psal. xlii. 8.)

b Heb. xii. c James i. 18. d Heb. xii. e Eph. iii. f Epict. g Psal iv.

"Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." Your acknowledgments are not to be limited to one day in the year; but from day to day his loving-kindness, and your prayer and praise, are to compose your *νυκθήμερον*; the one, to show you, the other, to be unto you your morning and evening exercise. Let this be your resolution, "Every day will I bless thee: and I will praise thy name for ever and ever;" (Psal. cxlv. 2.) or that, (Psal. civ. 33.) "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise unto my God while I have my being."

Yet your more solemn acknowledgments are justly pitched upon this day. God hath noted it for you, and made it a great day in your time. You have now enjoyed a *septennium, seven years,* of mercies. And we all hope you will enjoy many more, which may be all called the posterity of that day's mercy. It was the parent of them all; so pregnant and productive a mercy was that of this day. You do owe it to the mercy of this day, that you have yet a life to devote to the great Lord of heaven and earth, and to employ in the world for him: and would you think of any less noble sacrifice?

Æschines the philosopher, out of his admiration of Socrates, when divers presented him with other gifts, made a tender to him of himself. Less was thought an insufficient acknowledgment of the worth and favours of a man! Can any thing less be thought worthy of a God? I doubt not you intend, my lord, a life of service to the God of your life. You would not, I presume, design to serve him under any other notion, than as his. By dedicating yourself to him, you become so in the peculiar sense. It is our part in the covenant which must be between God and us. "I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine," Ezek. xvi. 8. This is the ground of a settled relation, which we are to bear towards him, as his servants. "Tis possible I may do an occasional service for one whose servant I am not; but it were mean that a great person should only be served by the servants of another lord. To be served but precariously, and as it were upon courtesy only, true greatness would disdain; as if his quality did not admit to have servants of his own.

Nor can it be thought a serious Christian (in howsoever dignifying circumstances) should reckon himself too great to be his servant, when even a heathen pronounces,[h] *Deo servire est regnare—to serve God is to reign.* A religious nobleman of France,[i] whose affection I commend more than his external expression of it, tells us he made a deed of gift of himself to God, signing it with his own blood. He was much a greater man, that so often speaks in that style, *Thy servant,* that it is plain he took pleasure in it, and counted it his highest glory. "Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear," Psal. cxix. 38. "Thy servant, thy servant, O Lord, the son of thy handmaid;" (alluding to the law by which the children of bond servants were servants by birth;) "thou hast broken my bonds;" (Psal. cxvi.) hast (*q. d.*) released me from worse bonds, that I might not only be patient, but glad to be under thine.

Nor was he a mean prince[k] in his time, who at length abandoning the pleasures and splendour of his own court, (whereof many like examples might be given,) retired and assumed the name of *Christodulus—A servant of Christ,* accounting the glory of that name did outshine, not only that of his other illustrious titles, but of the imperial diadem too. There are very few in the world, whom the too common atheism can give temptation unto to think religion an ignominy, and to count it a reproach to be the devoted servant of the most high God; but have it at hand to answer themselves, even by human (not to speak of the higher angelical) instances, that he hath been served by greater than we.

You are, my lord, shortly to enter upon the more public stage of the world. You will enter with great advantages of hereditary honour, fortune, friends; with the greater advantage of (I hope) a well cultivated mind, and (what is yet greater) of a piously inclined heart: but you will also enter with disadvantages too. It is a slippery stage; it is a divided time, wherein there is interest against interest, party against party. To have seriously and with a pious obstinacy dedicated yourself to God, will both direct and fortify you.

I know no party in which nothing is amiss. Nor will that measure, let you think it advisable, to be of any, further than to unite with what there is of real, true godliness among them all. Neither is there any surer rule or measure for your direction, than this; to take the course and way which is most agreeable to a state of devotedness to God. Reduce all things else, hither. Wheresoever you believe, in your conscience, there is a sincere design for the interest and glory of God, the honour or safety of your prince, the real good and welfare of your country, there you are to fall in, and adhere. And the first of these comprehends the rest. You will not be the less inclined, but much the more, to give Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, for your giving God the things that are God's. And that is (as hath been said) principally and in the first place yourself; and then all that is yours to be used according to his holy rules, and for him whose you are.

And what can be to you the ground of a higher fortitude? Can they be unsafe that have devoted themselves to God? Dedicate yourself, and you become a sanctuary (as well as a sacrifice) inviolably safe in what part, and in what respects, it is considerable to be so. And who can think themselves unsafe, being, with persevering fidelity, sacred to God; that understand who he is, and consider his power and dominion over both worlds, the present, and that which is to come; so as that he can punish and reward in both, as men prove false and faithful to him. The triumphs of wickedness are short, in this world. In how glorious triumphs will religion and devotedness to God end in the other!

h Seneca. i Monsieur de Renty.

k Cantacuzenus, whose life also, among many other remarkable things, was once strangely preserved in the fall of his house.

TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED AT THURLOW, IN SUFFOLK,

ON THOSE WORDS, ROM. VI. 13.

"YIELD YOURSELVES TO GOD."

TO THE MUCH-HONOURED

BARTHOLOMEW SOAME, ESQ.

OF THURLOW,

AND SUSANNA, HIS PIOUS CONSORT.

My worthy Friends,

I HAVE at length yielded to your importunity, and do here offer these Sermons to public view and your own, which were one day the last summer preached under your roof; attributing more to your pious design herein, than to my own reasons against it. I no further insist upon the incongruity, having divers years ago published a small treatise of Self-dedication, now again to send abroad another on the same subject. For the way of tractation is here very different; this may fall into the hands of divers, who have never seen the other; and however, they who have read the other, have it in their choice whether they will trouble themselves with this or no. And though your purpose which you urged me with, of lodging one of these little books in each family of the hearers, might have been answered by so disposing of many a better book already extant; yet your having told me how greatly you observed them to be moved by these plain discourses, considering the peculiar advantage of reading what had been with some acceptance and relish heard before, (through that greater vigour that accompanies the ordinance of preaching to an assembly, than doth usually the solitary first reading of the same thing,) I was not willing to run the hazard of incurring a guilt, by refusing a thing so much desired, and which, through God's blessing, might contribute something, though in never so low a degree, to the saving of men's souls. I could not indeed, as I told you, undertake to recollect every thing that was spoken, according to that latitude and freedom of expression wherewith it was fit to inculcate momentous things to a plain country auditory. But I have omitted nothing I could call to mind; being little concerned that the more curious may take notice, with dislike, how much in a work of this kind I prefer plainness (though they may call it rudeness) of speech, before that which goes for wisdom of words, or the most laboured periods.

May you find an abundant blessing on your household, for the sake of the ark which you have so piously and kindly received. And whereas, by your means, the parts about you have a help for the speading the knowledge of God among them, added to what they otherwise more statedly enjoy; may the blessing of heaven succeed all sincere endeavours of both sorts, to the more general introducing of the new man which is renewed in knowledge—"where there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, but Christ is all, and in all:" to whose grace you are, with sincere affection, and great sense of your kindness, earnestly recommended, by

Your much obliged,

Faithful servant in Christ,

JOHN HOWE.

SERMON I.

ROMANS VI. 13. YIELD YOURSELVES TO GOD.

These are but few words; but I can speak to you of no greater or more important thing than I am to press upon you from them this day. We are above taught how absurd it is to continue in sin, whereto we are avowedly dead, (*v.* 1, 2.) as is signified by our baptism; together with our entrance into a new state of life, and that in both we are to be conformed unto the death and resurrection of Christ, (*v.* 3—5.) so that sin ought now no more to have a new dominion over us, than death can again have over him, *v.* 6—10. We are, therefore, exhorted so to account of ourselves and of our present state, that "we are dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" and, thereupon, never more to let sin govern us or reign over us, or yield to it, *v.* 11—13. *former part.* But what then? How are we otherwise to dispose of ourselves? If we may not yield ourselves to the service of sin, what are we then to do with ourselves? The text tells us, and the very reason of the thing shows it; *But yield yourselves to God*, &c. The subject to be discoursed of is an express precept, charging it upon us all as our unquestionable duty, to yield ourselves to God; which, therefore, it can only be our business in speaking to this text, to explain and apply.

1. We are to explain it. Whosoever shall charge upon others such a duty, not obvious, perhaps, at the first view, in the full extent of it, to every one's understanding, may well expect to be asked, "But what do you mean by this precept? or what doth this yielding ourselves to God signify?[b] And here are two things to be opened to you.—1. How, or under what notions we are to consider God and ourselves in this matter: and—2. What our yielding ourselves to him, so considered, must include.

1. How are we to consider or look upon *God* in this affair? You are to consider him both as he is in himself, and according to the relations he bears to you; whether before your yielding yourselves to him, or in and upon your so doing.

1. As he is in himself. You that have heard, or now read what I have said, and do write, here make a stand, and bethink yourselves a while. What! are you about yielding yourselves to God? Sure you ought to be thinking of it as soon as you hear his claim laid to you. But do you now know with whom you have to do? Too many have the name of God, that great and awful name, in their mouth or ear, and have no correspondent thought in their mind; it passes with them as a transient sound, as soon over as another common word of no greater length, and leaves no impression. Perhaps there is less in their minds to answer it than most other words which men use in common discourse. For they have usually distinct thoughts of the things they speak of; otherwise they should neither understand one another nor themselves, but might speak of a horse, and mean a sheep; or be thought to mean so. And it would no more move a man or impress his mind to hear or mention a jest, than a matter of life and death. But the holy and reverend name of God is often so slightly mentioned; as in common oaths, or in idle talk is so merely taken in vain, that if they were on the sudden stopped, and asked what they thought on, or had in their mind, when they mentioned that word, and were to make a true answer, they cannot say they thought of any thing: as if the name of God, the *All!* were the name of *nothing!* Otherwise, had they thought what that great name signifies, either they had not mentioned it, or the mention of it had struck their hearts, and even overwhelmed their very souls! I could tell you what awe and observance hath been wont to be expressed in reference to that sacred name, among a people that were called by it; and surely the very sound of that name ought ever to shake all the powers of our souls, and presently form them to reverence and adoration. Shall we think it fit to play or trifle with it, as is the common wont? My friends, shall we now do so, when we are called upon to yield ourselves to God? Labour to hear and think, and act intelligently, and as those that have the understandings of men. And now, especially in this solemn transaction, endeavour to render God great to yourselves; enlarge your minds, that, as far as is possible and needful, they may take in the entire notion of him. As to what he is in himself, you must conceive of him as *a Spirit*:[a] as his own word, which can best tell us what he is, instructs us, and so as a Being of far higher excellency than any thing you can see with your eyes, or touch with your hands, or than can come under the notice of any of your senses. You may easily apprehend *spiritual being* to be the source and spring of life and self-moving power. This world were all a dead unmoving lump, if there were no such thing as *spirit*; as your bodies when the soul is fled. You must conceive him to be an *eternal, self-subsisting Spirit*, not sprung up into being from another, as our souls are: but who, from the excellency of his own being, was necessarily of and from himself; comprehending originally and eternally in himself the fulness of all life and being. I would fain lead you here, as by the hand, a few plain and easy steps. You are sure that somewhat now is—of this you can be in no doubt; and next, you may be as sure that somewhat hath, of itself, ever been; for if nothing at all now were, you can easily apprehend it impossible that any thing should ever be, or of itself now begin to be, and spring up out of nothing. Do but make this supposition in your own minds, and the matter will be as plain to you as any thing can be, that if nothing at all were now in being, nothing could ever come into being; wherefore you may be sure, that because there is somewhat now in being, there must have been somewhat or other always in being, that was eternally of itself. And then, to go a little further, since you know there are many things in being that were not of themselves, you may be sure that what was always of itself, had in it a sufficiency of active power to produce other things; otherwise nothing that is not of itself could ever be; as you know that we were not of ourselves; and the case is the same as to whatsoever else our eyes behold.

You must conceive of God therefore as comprehending originally in his own being, which is most peculiar to himself, a power to produce all whatsoever being, excellency, and perfection, is to be found in all the whole creation: for there can be nothing which either is not, or arises not from, what was of itself. And therefore that he is an absolutely, universally, and infinitely perfect Being, and therefore that life, knowledge, wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, justice, truth, and whatsoever other conceivable excellencies do all in highest perfection belong, as necessary attributes, unchangeably and without possibility of diminution unto him. And all which his own word (agreeably to the plain reason of things) doth in multitudes of places ascribe to him; as you that are acquainted with the Bible cannot but know. You must therefore conceive of him, as the All in All. So great, so excellent, so glorious a One he is, to whom you are to surrender and yield yourselves.

You are to conceive of him as most essentially One, for there can be but one All. And so his word teaches you to conceive. "Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord," Deut. vi. 4. "We know there is no other God but one," &c. 1 Cor. viii. 4—6. Your thoughts therefore need not be divided within you, nor your minds hang in doubt, to whom you are to betake and yield yourselves: there is

[a] John iv. 24.

no place or pretence for halting between two opinions. He most righteously lays the sole claim to you, a just God and a Saviour, and there is none besides him, Isa. xlv. 21. And so we are told often in that and the foregoing chapters. He whose far-discerning eye projects its beams every way, and ranges through all infinity, says he knows not any, *ch.* xliv. 8.

Yet again you are to conceive of him as Three in One, and *that*, in your yielding yourselves to him; as the prescribed form, when this surrender is to be made in baptism, directs; which runs thus, *In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, Matt. xxviii. 19. You are not to be curious in your inquiries beyond what is written in this matter, how far the Subsistents in the Godhead are three, and in what sense one; they cannot be both in the same sense. But there is latitude enough to conceive how they may be distinct from each other, and yet agree in one nature; which in none of them depending upon will and pleasure, sets each of them infinitely above all created being; which for the Divine pleasure only was and is created, Rev. iv. 11. And that we so far conceive of them, as three, as to apprehend some things spoken of one, that are not to be affirmed of another of them, is so plain, of so great consequence, and the whole frame of practical religion so much depends thereon; and even this transaction of yielding up ourselves, (which must be introductive and fundamental to all the rest,) that it is by no means to be neglected in our daily course, and least of all in this solemn business, as will more appear anon. In the meantime, set this ever blessed, glorious God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, before your eyes, as to whom (thus in himself considered) you are now to yield yourselves.

2. You must conceive of him according to the relations which he bears towards you, partly before your yielding yourselves to him, and partly in and upon your doing it, That is,

1. Before you do any such thing, you must conceive of him,

1. As your Creator, the Author of your being, of whom, and through whom, and to whom, all things are.[b] He that made you demands you for himself. You are required to yield yourselves to him that gave you breath.

2. As the continual Sustainer of your being; and who renews your life unto you every moment; in whom you live, and move, and have your being,[c] continually; so that if he should withdraw his supports, you immediately drop into nothing. But these are things common to you with all other creatures; and signify therefore his antecedent right in you, before you have yielded yourselves, upon which you ought to do it, and cannot without great injustice to him decline doing it. There are other considerations also you ought to entertain concerning him in this your yielding yourselves to him, *viz.* of some things which are partly and in some sense before it, and which it supposes, but partly also, and in a more special sense, would follow and be inferred by it.

Principally, this fourfold consideration you should have of him in your yielding yourselves to him, *viz.* as your *Owner*, your *Teacher*, your *Ruler*, and your *Benefactor*, and all these with the addition of *Supreme*, it being impossible he should have a superior; or that there should be any one above him in any of these. And he is in some sense all these to you before you can have yielded yourselves; (as may in great part be collected from what hath been already said;) but when you yield yourselves to him, he will be all these to you in a far higher, nobler, and more excellent sense; and you are to yield yourselves to him as such, or that in your so doing, he may actually become such to you.

1. As your Owner. The God whose you are, as the apostle speaks, Acts xxvii. 23. and whom, as it there follows, and is naturally consequent, you are to serve. You were by this a former right, as all things, being made by him, are: But you are to yield yourselves to him, that you may be more peculiarly his, in a sense more excellent in itself, and more comfortable to you; as Exod. xix. 5. If you will obey—you shall be to me a peculiar treasure above all people, for all the earth is mine. Of such as fear him, the great God says, They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels, Mal. iii. 17. Your yielding yourselves adds nothing to his right in you; you therein only recognise and acknowledge the right he had in you before, but it adds to you a capacity and qualification, both by the tenure of his gospel-covenant, and in the nature of the thing, for such nobler uses as otherwise you cannot serve for: as the more contemptible lumber about a man's house may be as truly his, as the most precious things; but neither doth he intend, nor can such meaner things admit to be the ornaments, either of his person, or his house. The great God intends his devoted peculiar people to be to him a crown and a royal diadem, Isa. lxii. 3. when he puts away the wicked of the earth like dross, Ps. cxix. 119. In a great house there are not only vessels of silver and gold, but also of wood and of earth, 2 Tim. ii. 20. But 'tis only the purged and sanctified soul (which is also a self-devoted one) that shall be the vessel unto honour, being made meet for the master's use, and prepared to every good work, *v.* 21. Persons and things acquire sacredness by being devoted to God. Persons especially, that can and do devote themselves, are highly ennobled by it; he hereupon (besides their relative holiness) really more and more sanctifies and frames them for his own more immediate service and communion. Of such a people he tells us, that he hath formed them for himself, and they shall praise him; and to them he saith, (intending it manifestly in the more eminent sense,) Thou art mine, Isa. xliii. 1, 7, 21. Such may with a modest and humble, but with a just, confidence freely say, I am thine, save me, Ps. cxix. 94. In yielding yourselves consider therefore first, that he is your Owner by an unquestionable former right, and let that effectually move you to do it with all your hearts. For will you not give him his own? When you account duty to your prince obliges you to give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, will you not give God the things that are God's? And will you not know him for your Owner? The ox knows his owner, Isa. i. 3. Or will it satisfy you to be in no other kind his, than brutes and devils are, that either through an incapacity of nature cannot acknowledge him, or through a malignity of nature will not? O yield yourselves, with humble desire and expectation that he will vouchsafe otherwise to own you!

2. As your teacher; so indeed he also is to all men, though they never yield themselves to him. He that teaches man knowledge, shall not he know? Ps. xciv. 10. There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding. Yea, and inferior creatures, as they all owe their natures and peculiar instincts to him, may be said to have him for their Teacher too. But will it content you to be so only taught by him? There is another sort of teaching which, if you yield yourselves to him as your great Instructor, he will vouchsafe unto you. The things you know not, and which it is necessary you should know, he will teach you, *i. e.* such things as are of real necessity to your true and final welfare, not which only serve to please your fancy, or gratify your curiosity: for his teaching respects an appointed, certain end, suitable to his wisdom and mercy, and to the calamity and danger of your state. The teaching requisite for perishing sinners, was, what they might do to be saved. And when we have cast about in our own thoughts never so much, we have no way to take but to yield ourselves to God, who will then be our most undeceiving Guide. To whom it belongs to save us at last, to him only it can belong to lead us in the way to that blessed end.

Many anxious inquiries and fervent disputes there have been, how one may be infallibly assured of the way to be saved. They are to be excused who think it not fit, but upon very plain grounds, to venture so great a concernment; or to run so great a hazard in a mere compliment to any man, or party of men. Confident expressions, as, My soul for your's, and such like, signify nothing with a cautious considering man, except that such as them care as little for his soul as their own. The papal infallibility some would have us trust to at a venture, and would make us think it rudeness to doubt it; when nobody stands upon good manners in endeavouring to escape a ruin; when a great part of their own communion trust not to it.[d] And some of them have written strongly against it.[e] The accurate stating and discussing of the controversy, how

b Rom. xi. 36. c Acts xvii. 28. d The Gallican church, &c. e Du Pin, &c.

far or in what sense any such thing as infallible light may belong to the Christian church, are not fit for this place, nor for a discourse of this nature. 'Tis enough now to say that this claim hereof to the pope or bishop of Rome, as such, 1. Cannot be proved, and, 2. May be plainly disproved.

1. *It cannot be proved.* For since no principles of common reason are pretended sufficient to prove it of any man, or of him more than another, it must be proved by supernatural revelation, if at all. But in the written word of God there is no such thing. Pretences from thence are too vain to be refuted or mentioned. And if any other revelation should be pretended, 'twill be a new, and as impossible a task, to prove the divinity of that revelation, so as to infer upon the world an obligation to believe it. Nor is it necessary to insist upon this; because,

2. *It may be plainly disproved;* for the same thing cannot be both true and false. And it sufficiently disproves such a man's infallibility, or the impossibility of his erring, that it can be evidently proved he hath erred. As when he hath determined against the express word of Christ, forbidding them (to take one or two instances among many) to drink of the eucharistical cup, whom he hath commanded to drink it; or (to mention a more important one) when believers in Christ, or lovers of him, are pronounced damned, who he hath said shall not perish, but have everlasting life, and the crown of righteousness; or when on the other hand, pardon of sin and eternal life are pretended to be given to such, whom the evangelical law condemns to death.

When one, to whom this privilege hath been asserted to belong, hath determined against another, to whom upon the same grounds it must equally belong. As 'tis well known in the Christian church, that pope might be alleged against pope, and one papal constitution against another. Not to insist on what might be shown out of their own history, that the same pope hath, being so, changed his judgment in a point of doctrine, and left us to divine when he was the fallible, and when the infallible, pope. And again,

When there have been determinations against the common uncorrupted senses of mankind, as that what their sight, and touch, and taste assures them is bread, is said to be the flesh of a human body. For if you cannot be sure of what both your own, and the sound senses of any other man would tell you, you can be sure of nothing at all: you cannot be sure you see one another, or hear me speaking to you; nor be sure when you heard the transforming words, "This is my body;" or much less that they were ever spoken, if you heard them not; or that that was bread and not a stone, or a piece of clay, that is pretended to be transubstantiated by them. The foundation of all certainty were upon these terms taken away from among men on earth; and upon the same common grounds upon which it is pretended you ought to believe that which is shown or offered you to be the flesh of a man, and not bread any longer, you must believe or judge the quite contrary, that it is bread still, and not flesh, and consequently that he is far from being infallible, but doth actually err, upon whose authority you are directed to believe otherwise.

And indeed the claimed infallibility is by this sufficiently disproved, that there is no imaginable way of proving it. For if there were any such thing, it must be by God's own immediate gift and vouchsafement; how otherwise should a man be made infallible? And if so, it must be for an end worthy of a wise and merciful God; whereupon for the same reason for which he should have made such a man infallible, he should have made it infallibly certain to other men, that he hath made him so. Whereas there is no one point wherein his infallible determination can be pretended to be necessary, against which there is more to be said than against the pretence itself of his infallibility; nor for which less is to be said than can, with any colour, or without highest and most just contempt, be said for it. The most weighty thing that I have known alleged is, the great expediency of an infallible judge. But if we will think that a good way of arguing, that things are in fact so or so, because we can fancy it would be better if they were; we may as well prove that all mankind are sincere Christians, or there is no sin in the world, nor ever was, and a thousand things besides in the natural world, that never were or will be, because it appears to us 'twould be for the better. So much is the foolishness of man wiser than God.

Besides that *sanctity* must be judged as necessary to the final salvation and felicity of the souls of men as *orthodoxy*, or exemption from doctrinal error, by all, with whom either Christian religion, or common reason, signifies any thing. For the same reason therefore for which it can be thought necessary God should have put it into the power of any man to make others not err, he should have put it equally into his power to make them holy, to renew and change their hearts and lives. But what man hath this power? And one would reasonably expect, if either were, that both powers should be lodged in the same man; which if they should pretend, who assert the other unto one man, their own histories might make them blush, unless they can think it more probable that he can and will effectually sanctify another, and make him holy, who is himself most infamously impure and unholy, than that he can secure another from erring in matters of doctrine, who cannot secure himself. But then it may be said, if such sure light and guidance is not to be found or had from one man, it must be from some community or body of men in the Christian church. For can it be thought God should have taken care to settle a religion in the world, on purpose for the saving of men's souls, that yet affords no man any certainty of being saved by it?

I answer, yes, there is a certain, undeceiving light afforded by it to the whole body of sincere Christians, sufficient, and intended not to gratify a vain humour, but to save their souls, and which you can only, and may confidently, expect by yielding yourselves to God as your Teacher. As it cannot agree with the absolute perfection of his nature to be himself deceived in any thing, it can, you may be sure, as little agree with it to deceive you, or let you mistake your way, in the things wherein he hath encouraged and induced you to commit and intrust yourselves to his conduct and guidance. Will he let a soul wander and be lost, that hath entirely given up itself to be led and taught by him? His word hath at once expressed to you his nature, and his good-will towards you, in this case. "Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in the way," Ps. xxv. 8. But what sinners? the next words tell you, the meek (self-resigned ones, humble, teachable learners) he will guide in judgment, or with judgment; (as that particle admits to be read;) he will guide them judiciously, and surely, so that your hearts need not misgive, or suspect, or doubt to follow; "The meek will he teach his way," *v.* 9. Who would not wish and be glad to have such a Teacher? You shall know (how express is his word!) if you follow on to know the Lord; for, his going forth is prepared as the morning, Hos. vi. 3. You do not need to devise in the morning how to create your own light, 'tis prepared and ready for you; the sun was made before you were, and it keeps its course; and so constantly will God's own light shine to you, without your contrivance or care, for any thing but to seek, receive it, and be guided by it. Know your advantage in having such a Teacher.

1. He will teach you *inwardly;* even your very hearts, and so as his instructions shall reach the centre, the inmost of your spirits. God, that made light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, &c. 2 Cor. iv. 6. And when that holy good man had been solacing himself with highest pleasure in considering this, that God was his portion, so contentful and satisfying a one, that he cannot forbear saying, The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage, (Ps. xvi. 5, 6.) he presently adds, "I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel;" *q. d.* "I should never else have thought of such a thing: it had never come into my mind to think of choosing God for my portion. I should have done like the rest of the vain world, have followed shadows all my days. My reins also instruct me in the night season." He will so teach you, as to make you teach yourselves, put an abiding word into you, that shall talk with you when you sit in your houses, and walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up, and whereby you shall be enabled to commune with your own hearts upon your beds while others sleep; and revolve or roll over in your minds, dic-

tates of life. You will not need to say, Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring down Christ from above? or, Who shall descend into the deep, to bring Christ again from the dead? for the word will be nigh thee, not in thy mouth only, but in thine heart, &c. You will have in you an engrafted word,[f] and the law of your God shall be in your heart, so as none of your steps shall slide.[h] This is our Lord's own interpretation of divers words of the prophets, that in the days of the more general diffusion of holy, vital light, which was to be after his own appearance in the world, "They shall be all taught of God," John vi. 45. *i. e.* so as to have their hearts inclined towards himself, and drawn to him, as the reference of these words to those of the foregoing verse shows. Wherein,

2. Lies your further advantage, That by him you shall be taught *effectually*. Other teaching, as it doth but reach the ear, or only, at the most, beget some faint notions in the mind, that you are little the better for; his shall produce real fruit. He is the Lord your God who teaches you to profit; and who by gentle and unforcible, but by most prevailing, insinuations, shall slide in upon your spirits, win them by light and love, and allure them to a compliance with what shall be in the end safe and happy for yourselves. He will instruct you, though not with a violent, yet with a strong hand, so as not to lose his kind design. Others teach you, and leave you what they found you; convinced perhaps, but not changed; unable to resist any ill inclination, or your disinclination to that which was good. Power will accompany his teaching; a conquering power, that will secretly constrain and captivate your hearts; and how pleasant a victory will that be to yourselves! O the peace and joy you will find springing up within you, when once you feel yourselves overcome! The most that a man can say to you is, what the prophet Samuel once said, (so great, and so good a man,) "God forbid I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way."[i] He could only show that way, and pray that God would do the rest; which implies God only can so teach it you, as to make you walk in it. I am not persuading you to slight human teaching; you will need it; and 'tis among the gifts which your glorious Redeemer, being ascended on high,[k] hath given to men, *viz.* pastors and teachers.[l] But understand their teaching to be only subordinate, and ministerial. Without, or against God, you are to call no man master or teacher upon earth. And thus far their teaching is to be regarded, as it agrees,

1. With what God doth inwardly teach you, by that common light which shines in every man's own bosom that with a sincere mind attends to it, and which is too little attended too. There are truths too commonly held in unrighteousness, seated generally in the minds and consciences of men; by which, though they have not another law, they are a law unto themselves;[m] and for the stifling and resisting whereof, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them. And from such truths they might infer others, and where God affords external helps, come to discern a sure ground whereupon to understand that what is contained besides in the frame of Christian doctrine is true; being enabled to judge of the evidences that prove the whole revelation thereof to be from God; and nothing being in itself more evident than that what he hath revealed is true. And withal God is graciously pleased to shine into minds that with upright aims set themselves to inquire out and understand his mind; and so further light comes to be superadded to that which is common. Now take heed how you neglect what a man teaches you, agreeably to that inward light which is already (one way or other) in your own minds and consciences. Hither in some part, and in great part, we are to appeal in our teaching you. So the more early Christian teachers did; "Not handling" (say they) "the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."[n] In the most deeply fundamental things that concern your practice every day, we may appeal to yourselves, and your own consciences. If we say to you, Ought you not to live according to his will that gave you breath? should you not above all things fear and love, and trust and obey, him that made you and all things? Should you not do as you would be done unto? Should you not take more care for your immortal souls, than for your mortal flesh? You must every one say, "I believe in mine own conscience this is so." If I appeal to you in the very thing I am speaking of, should you not yield yourselves to God, whose creatures you are? I doubt not you will any of you say, "I think in my very conscience I should." We have you witnesses against yourselves, if you will not hear us in such things. And again, it being a matter very capable of plain proof, that those writings which we call the Holy Scriptures, were from God, our teaching ought so far to be regarded by you as,

2. We can manifest to you that it agrees with the Scriptures. And we are sure he will never teach you inwardly against what he hath there taught. Will the God of truth say and unsay the same thing? That were to overthrow the design of all his instructions, and to subvert the authority which he requires men to reverence. No *man* could expect to be regarded on such terms. And by this rule freely examine all that we teach you, as our Saviour directed the Jews to do, John v. 39. And for the doing whereof, the apostle commended the Berean Christians, Acts xvii. 11. And we have here the same advantage at length, though not immediately, upon your consciences; which cannot but judge that whatsoever is found in that word which you confess to be divine, must be most certainly true. And if within such limits you take the help of men for your instruction; having yielded yourselves to God as your supreme and highest Teacher, you are upon safe terms. Only be sincere in listening to his dictates, whether internal or external. Let not a prepossessed heart or vicious inclination be their interpreter: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God," &c. John vii. 17.

3. You must consider God, in your yielding yourselves, as your sovereign Ruler. For to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey, as by *v.* 16. Though teaching and ruling may be diversely conceived of, they cannot be separate in this case. The nobler and final part of God's teaching you, is teaching you your duty; what you are to practise and do. And so when he teaches you, he commands you too; and leaves it not arbitrary to you whether you will be directed by him or no. What is his by former right, and by after-consent, and self-resignation, shall it not be governed by him? if it be a subject capable of laws and government, as such consent shows it to be? Your yielding yourselves to God is not a homage, but a mockery, if you do it not with a resolution to receive the law from his mouth; and that whereinsoever he commands, you will to your uttermost obey. But in this and the other things that follow, my limits constrain me unto more brevity. Only let not this apprehension of God be frightful, yea let it be amiable to you, as in itself it is, and cannot but be to you, if you consider the loveliness of his government, the kind design of it, and how suitable it is to the kindest design; that it is a government first and principally over minds, purposely intended to reduce them to a holy and peaceful order, wherein it cannot but continue them, when that kingdom comes to be settled there, which stands in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and all the laws whereof are summed up in love; being such also as in the keeping whereof there is great reward.

4. You are to consider him, and accordingly to yield yourself, as your greatest Benefactor, or rather as your best and supreme Good. Indeed you cannot sever his being your Ruler from his being your Benefactor, (more than his being your Teacher from his being your Ruler,) when the tendency and design of his government are understood. For it is a very principal part of our felicity to be under his government, and he doth you the greatest good by ruling you, when otherwise nothing is more evident than that you would run yourselves into the greatest of evil, and soon be most miserable creatures. You are now so far happy as you are subject to his government, and that which it aims at is to make you finally and completely happy. For it is the design of his government,

f Deut. xxx. 11, 12, &c. Rom. x. 6—8.
g Jam. i. 21.
h Ps. xxxvii. 31.
i 1 Sam. xii. 23.
k Ps. lxviii. 18.
l Eph. iv. 11.
m Rom. i. 18. ii. 14.
n 2 Cor. iv. 2.

not only to regulate your actions but your inclinations, and principally towards himself. You have been alienated from the life of God,[o] were become strangers to him, yea and enemies in your very minds; for the carnal mind is enmity against God.[p] The very business of his government is in the first place to alter the temper of your minds; for continuing carnal, they neither are subject to the law of God, nor can be,[q] as the same place tells you. Therefore if his government take place in you, and you become subject, you become spiritual, the "law of the Spirit of life"[r] having now the possession and power of you. Nor was it possible he should ever be an effectual Benefactor to you, without being thus an overpowering Ruler; so do these things run into one another. To let you have your own will, and follow your carnal inclination, and cherish and favour you in this course, were to gratify you to your ruin, and concur with you to your being for ever miserable; which you may see plainly if you will understand wherein your true felicity and blessedness must consist, or consider what was intimated concerning it, in the proposal of this head; that he is to be your Benefactor, in being to you himself your supreme and only satisfying Good. He never doth you good effectually and to purpose, till he overcome your carnal inclination. For while that remains, will you ever mind him? Can you love him, and desire after him, or delight in him? The first and most fundamental law which he lays upon you is, that "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and might." What will become of you if you cannot obey this law? This world will shortly be at an end, and you must, 'tis like, leave it sooner; you are undone, if your hearts be not beforehand so framed as that you can savour and take complacency in a better and higher good. You will shortly have nothing left you but himself; you will be plucked away from your houses, and lands, and friends, and all your outward comforts; and now in what a case are you, if you can take no pleasure or satisfaction in God! You are therefore to yield up yourself to him in full union, as with your most grateful and delectable Good; with this sense possessing your soul, Whom have I in heaven but thee, or whom on earth can I desire besides thee?[s]

And thus you are to look upon God in your yielding yourselves to him.—

You are to yield yourselves to his claim, as your rightful Owner—To his instruction, as your undeceiving Teacher.—To his government, as your gracious, sovereign Ruler; and—To the enjoyment of him, as your best and most satisfying Good, or your self-communicating Benefactor.

But it also concerns you to have distinct and right thoughts of the state of your case, and how things are between him and the sons of men, that you may duly apply yourselves to him in so great a transaction. The Gospel under which you live tells you, he treats with men in and by a Mediator, his own Son, who came down into this wretched world of ours, in great compassion to our miseries, and took our nature, was here on earth among us as an incarnate God; God manifested in the flesh. Because we were partakers of flesh and blood, he took part with us likewise of the same, and in that nature of ours died for us, to make way that we might yield ourselves to God, and be accepted. No man now comes to the Father but by him.[t] He must be acknowledged with great reverence; and a most profound homage must be rendered to him. He that denieth the Son hath not the Father.[u] And it being his pleasure to treat with us by his Son, and the case requiring that we apply ourselves to him, we are to take notice of him according to those capacities wherein Scripture represents him to us. And it represents him agreeably to those same notions according to which we have shown we are to consider God the Father in this matter; so as that Christ being the Mediator between him and us, when we yield ourselves to him ultimately, and finally, under the notions that have been mentioned, we are first to yield ourselves to his Son, Christ Jesus our Redeemer, under the like notions. For,

1. Being to yield ourselves to God as our Owner, we must know, the Father hath given all things into the hands of the Son, (John xiii. 3.) and that He is Lord of all; (Acts x. 36.) which in the first sense, signifies him to be, by the Father's constitution, the Owner of all things, even as he is the Redeemer. For, he therefore died and rose again, that he might be Lord of dead and living;[x] *i. e.* of both worlds; agreeably to what he himself speaks immediately upon his resurrection from the dead; All power is given to me both in heaven and earth, Matt. xxviii. 18.

And for those other notions of God under which we have shown we are to yield ourselves to him, as our Teacher, Ruler, and Benefactor, they correspond to that threefold office of Christ, of which you cannot but have heard much, *viz.* of Prophet, King, and Priest; so that we are to commit ourselves to him, when we yield ourselves to God, as a Teacher come forth from God, and who reveals him to us whom no man hath seen at any time; as one that must reign over us, and over the greatest on earth, (Luke xix. 14. and 27. Ps. ii. 6—10.) and by whom we are to be reconciled to God, and restored to the enjoyment of him, Rom. v. 11. And because our blind minds and perverse hearts need light and grace from above, to direct and incline us hereto, therefore hath the Spirit of the Father and the Son a great work to do in us to this purpose. Whereupon we are to yield ourselves to that blessed Spirit also, as our Enlightener and Sanctifier; which our being directed to walk in the Spirit, (Gal. v. 25.) and our being told that they that have not the Spirit of Christ are none of his, (Rom. viii. 9.) and, that as many as are the sons of God, are led by his Spirit, (*v.* 14.) do plainly show.

You see then we are to yield ourselves to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which also our having those great names named upon us in our baptism (as we before told you) doth import. And how necessary all this is, you will see, if,

2. We consider how we are to look upon *ourselves* in this transaction; *i. e.*

1. We are to consider ourselves as God's creatures, being, as you have heard, to consider him as our Creator; and so we must reckon we owe ourselves to him, and do but yield him what we owe, and what was his before. For, how can you but be his, who of his mere pleasure hath raised you out of nothing?

2. We must remember we have been apostate creatures, such as had fallen, and revolted from him; and so our yielding ourselves to him, is a giving ourselves back to him, having injuriously withdrawn and withheld ourselves from him before. And because the injury was so great as we could never make any recompense for, therefore it was necessary such a Mediator should be appointed between God and us, for whose sake only we can expect to be accepted when we yield ourselves. So great a Majesty was not to be approached by offending creatures without so great a Days-man and Peace-maker.

3. We must consider ourselves as impure, and every way unfit for the Divine presence, service, and converse, and who did therefore need the power of the Holy Ghost to be put forth upon us to make us fit; and that therefore our case required we should put ourselves into such hands for that purpose.

4. We are to consider ourselves as under the Gospel, as sinners invited and called back to God; as such whose case is not desperate; or who need to abandon ourselves to ruin, though we have greatly offended, as if there were no hope. We are to consider ourselves with distinction from the condition of other fallen creatures. The angels that fell, and kept not their first station, have no Gospel sent to them to invite them back, and persuade them again to yield themselves to God; you have. Into what a transport should this thought put you! how should it mollify you! oh what a yielding temper and disposition of spirit should it work in you towards this gracious call, and just challenge, which the great God now gives you, and makes unto you!

Sermon II. Thus far then you see how you are to consider God and yourselves in this your yielding yourselves to him. You are now next to consider,

o Eph. iv. 18.
p Col. i. 21. Rom. viii. 7.
q Rom. viii. 7, latter part.
r Ver. 2.
s Ps. lxxiii. 25.
t John xiv. 6.
u 1 John ii. 23.
x Rom. xiv. 9.

2. What your yielding yourselves to God according to such considerations must include, or be accompanied with. For it is not reasonable to think you have no more to mind in this matter, than only what is contained in the bare abstract nature of such an act; but looking upon your case in its circumstances, and considering the state of things between God and you, it greatly concerns you to see to it, that the matter be suitably carried to this state of your case. Whereupon,

1. Your yielding yourselves to God must be accompanied with very deep and serious repentance. 'Tis a most penitential surrender you are now to make of yourselves to him; for you are to remember that you are but now coming back out of a state of apostacy from your sovereign and most rightful Lord. Yea, though you are but renewing your surrender of yourselves, having done somewhat herein before, you are yet to consider this was your case; and perhaps some never have yet seriously thought of any such thing, but lived in this world hitherto as if you were your own, and there were no Lord over you: O then with what inward remorse, with what brokenness of heart, with what relentings and self-accusings, should this thing now be done! You should come, smiting upon the thigh, and saying within yourselves, "What have I done? So long, Lord, have I lived in this world of thine, which thou madest, and not I, as if I might do in it, and with myself, what I pleased! I have usurped upon thy unquestionable right in me, have lived to myself, and not to thee; I am now convinced that this was a very undutiful, unlawful way of living." Let him hear you (as he once heard Ephraim, or shall do) bemoaning yourselves, and saying, "Turn me and I shall be turned; thou art the Lord my God,"[y] &c. How can you think of yielding yourselves now at length to God, without being deeply sensible of your having deferred it so long, and that you have not done it sooner; and how great the iniquity was of your former course; that you have all this while committed a continual robbery upon him that gave you breath? Will a man rob God? And if you say, Wherein have I robbed him? You have robbed him of yourself; a greater thing than of tithes and offerings; and this robbery was sacrilege. For every thing due and devoted to God, hath a sacredness upon it; and consider, were you not, upon his just claim, in your baptism devoted to him? How should this startle you! you have constantly alienated from him a sacred thing! You have been in a continual contest with him about one of the highest rights of his sovereignty, yea and of his Godhead, for to that, nothing is more peculiar, than to be Lord of all. So that the controversy between him and you hath been, Who shall be God? You have refused him his own creature. How high a crime was this! Know then you have been a great transgressor, a grievous revolter, and now therefore yield yourself to him with a melting, broken heart, or you do nothing.

2. It must be done with great deliberation; not as the mere effect of a sudden fright. What is done in a rash haste, may be as soon undone. Leisurely consider, and take the whole compass of the case; weigh with yourselves the mentioned grounds upon which you are to yield yourselves, and the ends you are to do it for, that things may be set right between him and you, that you may return into your own natural place and station, that you may be again stated in that subordination to your sovereign Lord which fully belongs to you; that he may have his right which he claims, and you the mercy which you need. Here is place for much consideration. And when Israel is complained of as less willing to acknowledge God for his Owner and Master, than the ox and ass were to acknowledge theirs, all this is resolved into this, that the people did not consider, Isa. i.

3. It must be done with judgment, which is the effect of such consideration. When all things have been well weighed that belongs to this case, then let this formed judgment pass, "Lord, I ought to be thine, and no other's." Say to him hereupon, with a convinced judgment and conscience, "O God, I surrender myself, as now seeing none hath that right in me that thou hast." When the love of Christ becomes constraining upon souls, it is because they thus judge, that they ought no longer to live to themselves, but to him, &c. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. These things last mentioned will imply a rectified mind, which must be ingredient into this transaction, else it will be defective throughout.

[y] Jer. xxxi. 18, 19.

4. It must be done with a fulness of consent; and herein it chiefly consists, when the soul says, "Lord, I am now most entirely willing to be thine." This is your yielding yourselves. And hereby the covenant is struck between God and you; which consists in the expressed consent of the parties covenanting in the matters about which the covenant is. This covenant is about the parties themselves who covenant, as the conjugal covenant is, which resembles it; *viz.* that they shall be one another's. God hath expressed his consent in his word and Gospel, making therein the first overture to you. When you rejoin your own consent, the thing is done; this being the sum of his covenant, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people," as in many places of Scripture it is gathered up. When therefore, as God hath openly testified his willingness to be their God who shall accept and take him to be so, you also are willing, and do consent too, you do now take hold on his covenant, matters are agreed between him and you; and you may take those words as spoken to you particularly, I have entered into covenant with thee, and thou art become mine, Ezek. xvi. 8. But then you must take notice that this is to be done with a *full* consent, which that is said to be which determines you, though it be not absolutely perfect. No grace in any faculty is perfect in this life. But as in human affairs, that will is said to be *full*, which is the spring of answerable, following actions, so it is here. If a man have some inclination to this or that, and do it not, it goes for nothing; if he do it, his will is said to be full, though he have some remaining disinclination. You may be said to yield yourselves to God, with a full consent, when you live afterwards as one devoted to him.

5. Your yielding yourselves to God must carry life in it, as the following words signify; "Yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead." It must be a vital act, and have vigour in it. You must be capable of making that true judgment of your case, as 'tis *v.* 11. "of reckoning truly that you are dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ." Do it as feeling life to spring in your souls towards God in your yielding yourselves to him. What! will you offer God a carcass? not the "living sacrifice," which you see is required, Rom. xii. 1. Beg earnestly for his own Spirit of life and power, that may enable you to offer up a living soul to the living God.

6. There must be faith in your yielding yourselves. For it is a committing or intrusting yourselves to God, with the expectation of being saved and made happy by him. So Scripture speaks of it, 2 Tim. ii. 12. I know whom I have believed, (or trusted,) and that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day. 'Tis suitable to the gracious nature of God, to his excellent greatness, to his design, to the mediatorship of his Son, to his promise and gospel-covenant, and to your own necessities, and the exigency of your own lost, undone state, that you so yield yourselves to him, as a poor creature ready to perish, expecting, not for your sake but his own, to be accepted, and to find mercy with him. You do him the honour which he seeks, and which is most worthy of a God, the most excellent, and a self-sufficient Being, when you do thus. You answer the intendment of the whole gospel-constitution, which bears this inscription, *To the praise of the glory of his grace*, &c. 'Tis honourable to him when you take his word, that they that believe in his Son, shall not perish but have everlasting life. You herein set to your seal that he is true, and the more fully, and with the more significancy, when upon the credit of it you yield yourselves, with an assurance that he will not destroy or reject a poor creature that yields to him, and casts itself upon his mercy.

7. Another ingredient into this yielding of yourselves must be love. As faith, in your yielding yourselves to God, aims at your own welfare and salvation, so love, in doing it, intends his service, and all the duty to him you are capable of doing him. You must be able to give this as the true reason of your act, and to resolve it into this principle; "I yield myself to God, because I love him,

and from the unfeigned love I bear to him; to tell the world, if there were occasion, he hath captivated my heart with his excellencies and his love, and hereupon, having nothing else, I tender myself to him; to tell himself, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee; and because I do, I present myself to thee; 'tis all I can do. I wish myself ten thousand times better for thy blessed sake; and if I had in me all the excellencies of many thousand angels, I were too mean a thing, and such as nothing but thy own goodness could count worthy thine acceptance; because I love thee I covet to be near thee, I covet to be thine, I covet to lead my life with thee, to dwell in thy presence; far be it from me to be as without thee in the world as heretofore. I love thee, O Lord, my strength, becausc thine own perfections highly deserve it, and because thou hast heard my voice, and hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling, and I yield myself to thee, because I love thee. I make an offer of myself to be thy servant, thy servant, O Lord, thou hast loosed my bonds; and now I desire to bind myself in new ones to thee, that are never to be loosed." And you can make no doubt but that it ought to be done therefore with dispositions and a temper suitable to the state you are now willing to come into, that of a devoted servant; *viz.*

8. With great reverence and humility. For, consider to whom you are tendering yourself; to the "high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity;" to him that hath heaven for his throne, and earth for his footstool; and in comparison of whom all the inhabitants of the world are but as grasshoppers, and the nations of the earth as the drop of a bucket, and the dust of the balance, &c. Yea, to him against whom you have sinned, and before whose pure eyes you cannot, in yourself, but appear most offensively impure; so that you have reason to be ashamed, and blush to lift up your eyes before him.

9. And yet it surely ought to be with great joy and gladness of heart, that he hath expressed himself willing to accept such as you, and that he hath made you willing to yield yourselves. The very thought should make your heart leap and spring within you, that he should ever have bespoken such as we are to yield ourselves to him, when he might have neglected us, and let us wander endlessly, without ever looking after us more. How should it glad your hearts this day, to have such a message brought you from the great God, and which you find is written in his own word, to yield yourselves to him! Should not your hearts answer with wonder; "And, blessed Lord! art thou willing again to have to do with us, who left thee having no cause, and who returning can be of no use to thee!"[z] O blessed be God, that we may yield ourselves back unto him! that we are invited and encouraged to it. And you have cause to bless God, and rejoice, if this day you feel your heart willing to yield yourselves to him, and become his. Do you indeed find yourselves willing? You are willing in the day of his power.[a] This is the day of his power upon your hearts. Many are called and refuse; he often stretches out his hands, and no man regards.[b] Perhaps you have been called upon often before this day to do this same thing, and neglected it, had no heart to it; and he might have said to you, "Now I will never treat with you more; if you should call, I will not hear; if you stretch out your hands, I will not regard it, but laugh at your destruction, and mock when your fear cometh." But if now he is pleased to call once more, your hearts do answer; "Lord, here we are, we are now ready to surrender ourselves;" you may conclude he hath poured out his Spirit upon you. The Spirit of the Lord is now moving upon this assembly, this is indeed a joyful day, the day which he hath himself made, and you ought to rejoice and be glad in it.[b] When the people in David's days offered of their substance to God for the service of his house, 'tis said, The people rejoiced for that they offered willingly: and David, we are told, blessed God before all the congregation—saying, Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power—But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee and of thine own have we given thee.[c] If you are this day willing to offer yourselves, how much is this a greater thing! and it comes of him, and 'tis of his own you are now giving him; for he had a most unquestionable right in you before.

10. You should do it with solemnity.[d] For have you ever had a business of greater importance to transact in all your days? If you were to dispose of an estate, or a child, would you not have all things be as express and clear as may be? and would they not insist to have it so, with whom you deal in any such affair? And is there not a solemnity belonging to all such transactions? especially if you were to dispose of yourself? as in the conjugal covenant; though that is to be but for this short uncertain time of life; so as that the relation you enter into to-day, may be by death dissolved and broken off again to-morrow; how much more explicit, clear, and solemn, should this your covenanting with God in Christ be, wherein you are to make over your soul to him, and for eternity? You are to become his, under the bond of an everlasting covenant. You are entering a relation never to be broken off. This God is to be your God for ever and ever, and upon the same terms you are to be his. Is your immortal soul of less account with you than the temporal concernments of a mortal child that you are placing out but for a term of years that soon expires? yea, or than a piece of ground, or a horse, or a sheep, about which how punctual and express are your bargains and contracts wont to be? Or are only the matters of your soul, and wherein you have to do with the great God, to be slightly managed, or to be huddled up in confusion, or to be slid over in silent intimations? 'Tis true, that so express and solemn dealing in yielding and giving up yourselves to God, is not needful on his part, who understands sincerity without any expression of yours; but 'tis needful on your part, that a deep and lasting impression may be made upon your spirits; which if you be sincere, you will not only feel yourselves to need, but your own temper and inclination will prompt you to it; accounting you can never be under bonds strong and sure enough to him. You will not only apprehend necessity, but will relish and taste pleasure in any such transaction with the blessed God, in avouching him to be your God, and yourself to be his. The more solemn it is, the more grateful it will be to you.

Do so then. Fall before his throne; prostrate yourself at his footstool; and having chosen your fit season, when nothing may interrupt you; and having shut up yourself with him, pour out your soul to him; tell him you are now come on purpose to offer yourselves to him as his own. O that you would not let this night pass without doing so! Tell him you have too long neglected him, and forgotten to whom you belonged; humbly beseech him for his pardon, and that he will now accept of you, for your Redeemer's sake, as being through his grace resolved never to live so great a stranger to him, or be such a wanderer from him more. And when you have done so, remember the time; let it be with you a noted memorable day, as you would be sure to keep the day in memory when you became such a one's servant, or tenant, or your marriage day. Renew this your agreement with God often, but forget it never. Perhaps some may say, "But what needs all this?" were we not once devoted and given up to God in baptism? and is not that sufficient? To what purpose should we do again a thing that hath once been so solemnly done.

But here I desire you to consider, Are you never to become the Lord's by your own choice? Are you always to be Christians only by another's Christianity, not by your own? And again, have you not broken your baptismal vow? have you not forgot it for the most part ever since? I am afraid too many never think of any such matter at all, that ever they were devoted to God by others, but only upon such an occasion as this, to make it an excuse that they may never do such a thing themselves. And consider, were these Christian Romans on whom the apostle presses this duty never baptized, think you? Read over the foregoing part of the chapter, wherein you find him putting them in mind that they had been baptized into Christ's death, and buried with him in baptism, and that therefore

z Psal. cx. 3. a Prov. i. 24. b Psal. cxviii.
c 1 Chron. xxix. 9. d See the treatise of Self-dedication.

this was to be an argument to them why they should yield themselves to God; not why they should not. Wherefore our way is now plain and open to what we are further to do, *viz.*

2. To apply this practical doctrine, and press the precept further upon you, which hath been opened to you, and pressed by parts in some measure already, in our insisting on the several heads, which you have seen do belong to it; and are one way or other comprehended in it. Which will therefore make this latter part of our work the shorter, and capable of being despatched in the fewer words; and with blessed effect, if the Spirit of the living God shall vouchsafe to co-operate, and deal with your hearts and mine. Shall we then all agree upon this thing? Shall we unite in one resolution, "We will be the Lord's." Shall every one say in his own heart, "For my part, I will, and so will I, and so will I?" Come now, one and all. This is no unlawful confederacy, 'tis a blessed combination! Come then, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, not to be forgotten.[e] With whatsoever after-solemnity you may renew this obligation and bond of God upon your souls, as I hope you will do it, every one apart, in your closets, or in any corner, and you cannot do it too fully, or too often; yet let us now all resolve the thing; and this assembly make a joint-surrender and oblation of itself to the great God our sovereign rightful Lord, through our blessed Redeemer and Mediator, by the eternal Spirit, (which I hope is breathing and at work among us,) as one living sacrifice, as all of us alive from the dead, to be for ever sacred to him! O blessed assembly! O happy act and deed! With how grateful and well pleasing an odour will the kindness and dutifulness of this offering ascend, and be received above! God will accept, heaven will rejoice, angels will concur, and gladly fall in with us. We hereby adjoin ourselves in relation, and in heart and spirit, "to the general assembly, to the church of the first-born ones written in heaven, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect," and within a little while shall he actually among them. Is it possible there should be now among us any dissenting vote? Consider,

1. 'Tis a plain and unquestionable thing you are pressed unto: a thing that admits of no dispute, and against which you have nothing to say, and about which you cannot but be already convinced. And 'tis a matter full of danger, and upon which tremendous consequences depend, to go on in any practice, or in any neglect, against a conviction of judgment and conscience. For your own heart and conscience must condemn you if you consider, and it betrays you if you consider not. How fearful a thing is it for a man to carry his own doom in his own bosom! to go up and down the world with a self-condemning heart, if it be awake, and which if it be not, yet cannot sleep always, and must awake with the greater terror at length. And in so plain case 'tis most certainly God's deputy, and speaks his mind: If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, f &c.

2. 'Tis that therefore the refusal whereof none of you would avow. Who among us can have the confidence to stand forth and say, I will be none of the Lord's? Would any man be content to go with this written upon his forehead from day to day? And doth not that signify such a refusal to be a shameful thing? That must needs be an ill temper of mind which one would be ashamed any one should know.

3. And 'tis a mean thing to dissemble, to be willing to be thought and counted what we are not, or do what in truth we do not.

4. And considering what inspection we are under, 'tis a vain thing. For do we not know that "eyes which are as a flame of fire," behold us, and pierce into our very souls? Do we not know "all things in us are naked and manifest to him with whom we have to do?"[g] and that he discerns it, if there be any heart among us that is not sincere in this thing?

5. Consider that this is the very design of the Gospel you live under. What doth it signify or intend, but to recall apostate creatures back again to God? What is the Christian religion you profess, but a state of devotedness to God, under the conduct and through the mediation of Christ? You frustrate the Gospel, and make your religion a nullity and an empty name, till you do this.

6. And how will you lift up your heads at last in the great day? and before this God the Judge of all? You cannot now plead ignorance. If perhaps any among you have not been formerly so expressly called, and urged to this yielding yourselves to God; now you are: and from his own plain word 'tis charged upon you. Will not this be remembered hereafter? What will you say when the great God, whose creature you are, speaks to you with a voice of thunder, and bids you gird up your loins, and give him an answer? "Were you not, on such a day, in such a place, demanded and claimed in my name? Were you not told, were you not convinced, you ought to yield yourselves to me? and yet you did it not. Are you prepared to contest with your Maker? Where is your right, where is your power, to stand against me in this contest?"

7. But if you sincerely yield yourselves, the main controversy is at an end between the great God and you. All your former sins are pardoned and done away at once. Those glad tidings you have often heard that import nothing but "glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards men," plainly show that the great God whom you had offended, hath no design to destroy you, but only to make you yield, and give him back his own. Though you have formerly lived a wandering life, and been as a vagabond on the earth from your true owner, it will be all forgotten. How readily was the returning prodigal received! and so will you. How quiet rest will you have this night, when upon such terms there is a reconciliation between God and you! You have given him his own, and he is pleased, and most of all for this, that he hath you now to save you. You were his to destroy before, now you are his to save. He could easily destroy you against your will, but 'tis only with your will, he having made you willing, that he must save you. And his bidding you yield, implies his willingness to do so. O how much of Gospel is there in this invitation to you to yield yourselves to God! consider it as the voice of grace. Will he that bids a poor wretch yield itself, reject or destroy when it doth so?

8. And how happily may you now live the rest of your days in this world. You will live under his care, for will he not take care of his own, those that are of his own house? An infidel would. You are now of his family, under his immediate government, and under his continual blessing. And were you now to give an account where you have been to-day, and what you have been doing; if you say, you have engaged this day in a solemn treaty with the Lord of heaven and earth, about yielding yourselves to him; and it be further asked, "Well, and what was the issue? Have you agreed?" Must you, any of you, be obliged by the truth of the case to say, "No?" Astonishing answer! What! hast thou been treating with the great God, the God of thy life, and not agreed? What, man! did he demand of thee any unreasonable thing? "Only to yield myself." Why, that was in all the world the most reasonable thing. Wretched creature, whither now wilt thou go? What wilt thou do with thyself? Where wilt thou lay thy hated head? But if you can say, "Blessed be God, I gladly agreed to the proposal; he gave me the grace not to deny him:" then may it be said this was a good day's work, and you will have cause to bless God for this day as long as you have a day to live.

e Jer. l. 5. f 1 John iii. 20. g Heb. iv. 12.

THE

REDEEMER'S TEARS

WEPT OVER LOST SOULS.

A TREATISE ON LUKE XIX. 41, 42.

WITH AN APPENDIX,

WHEREIN SOMEWHAT IS OCCASIONALLY DISCOURSED, CONCERNING THE BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST, AND HOW GOD IS SAID TO WILL THE SALVATION OF THEM THAT PERISH.

PREFACE.

When spiritual judgments do more eminently befall a people, great outward calamities do often ensue. We know it was so in the instance which the text here insisted on refers to. But it is not always so; the connexion between these two sorts of judgments is not absolutely certain and necessary, yea, and is more frequent with the contraries of each. For this reason therefore, and because judgments of the former kind are so unexpressibly greater, and more tremendous, this discourse insists only upon them, about which serious monitions both have a clearer ground, and are of greater importance; and wholly waives the latter.

Too many are apt first to fancy similitudes between the state of things with one people and another, and then to draw inferences; being perhaps imposed on by a strong imagination in both; which yet must pass with them for a spirit of prophecy, and perhaps they take it not well, if it do not so with others too. It were indeed the work of another prophet certainly to accommodate and make application of what was spoken by a former to a distinct time and people. 'Tis enough for us to learn from such sayings as this of our Saviour, those rules of life and practice, such instruction and cautions as are common to all times, without arrogating to ourselves his prerogative, of foretelling events that shall happen in this or that. The affectation of venturing upon futurity, and foreboding direful things to kingdoms and nations, may, besides its being without sufficient ground, proceed from some or other very bad principle. Dislike of the present methods of Providence, weariness and impatiency of our present condition, too great proneness to wish what we take upon us to predict, the prediction importing more heat of anger than certainty of foresight, a wrathful spirit, that would presently fetch down fire from heaven upon such as favour not our inclinations and desires, so that (as the poet speaks) whole cities should be overturned at our request, if the heavenly powers would be so easy, as to comply with such furious imprecations: a temper that ill agrees with humanity itself, not to care at what rate of common calamity and misery a purchase be made of our own immunity from sufferings. Nay, to be willing to run the most desperate hazard in the case, and even covet a general ruin to others, upon a mere apprehended possibility that our case may be mended by it; when it may be more probable to become much worse. But O how disagreeable is it to the Spirit of our merciful Lord and Saviour, whose name we bear, upon any terms to delight in human miseries! The greatest honour men of that complexion are capable of doing the Christian name, were to disclaim it. Can such angry heats have place in Christian breasts, as shall render them the well-pleased spectators, yea authors, of one another's calamities and ruin? Can the tears that issued from these compassionate, blessed eyes, upon the foresight of Jerusalem's woful catastrophe, do nothing towards the quenching of these flames?

But I add, that the too-intent fixing of our thoughts upon any supposable events in this world, argues, at least, a narrow, carnal mind, that draws and gathers all things into time, as despairing of eternity; and reckons no better state of things considerable, that is not to be brought about under their own present view, in this world; as if it were uncertain or insignificant, that there shall be unexceptionable, eternal order and rectitude in another.

'Tis again as groundless, and may argue as ill a mind, to prophecy smooth and pleasant things, in a time of abounding wickedness. The safer, middle course, is, without God's express warrant, not to prophesy at all, but as we have opportunity, to warn and instruct men, with all meekness and long-suffering; for which the Lord's ordinary messengers can never want his warrant. And, after our blessed Saviour's most imitable example, to scatter our tears over the impenitent, even upon the (too probable) apprehension of the temporal judgments which hang over their heads, but most of all upon the account of their liableness to the more dreadful ones of the other state; which in the following discourse, I hope, it is made competently evident, this lamentation of our Saviour hath ultimate reference unto. For the other, though we know them to be due, and most highly deserved; yet concerning the actual infliction of them, even upon obstinate and persevering sinners, we cannot pronounce. We have no settled constitution, or rule, by which we can conclude it, any more than that outward felicity, or prosperity, shall be the constant portion of good men in this world. The great God hath reserved to himself a latitude of acting more arbitrarily, both as to promises and threatenings of this nature. If the accomplishment of either could be certainly expected, it should be of the promises

rather; because as to promised rewards God is pleased to make himself debtor, and a right accrues to them to whom the promise is made, if either the promise be absolute, or made with any certain condition, that is actually performed. But God is always the *creditor pœnæ, the right to punish*, remains wholly in himself, the exacting whereof he may therefore suspend, without any appearance of wrong, as seemeth good unto him. If, therefore, he may withhold temporal blessings from good and pious men, to which they have a remote and fundamental right, as having reserved to himself the judgment of the fit time and season of bestowing them; much more doth it belong to his wisdom, to fix the bounds of his patience and long-suffering; and determine the season of animadverting upon more open and insolent offenders by temporal punishments, according as shall make most for the ends of his government, and finally prove more advantageous to the dignity and glory of it. The practice, therefore, of our Saviour, in speaking so positively concerning the approaching fall and ruin of Jerusalem, is no pattern unto us. He spake not only with the knowledge of a prophet, but with the authority of a judge: and his words may be considered both as a prediction and a sentence. We can pretend to speak in neither capacity touching things of this nature.

But for the everlasting punishments in another world, that belong to unreconciled sinners, who refuse to know the things of their peace, the gospel-constitution hath made the connexion firm and unalterable, between their continuing, unrepented wickedness, and those punishments. When, therefore, we behold the impudent, provoking sins of the age wherein we live, against the natural law of our Creator, persisted in with all the marks of infidelity and obduration against the truth and grace that so gloriously shine forth in the Gospel of our Redeemer, we may (after him) speak positively, He that believeth not shall be damned—is condemned already; shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. If ye believe not that I am *He*, ye shall die in your sins. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. And here, how doth it become us too, in conformity to his great example, to speak compassionately, and as those that, in some measure, know the terror of the Lord! O how doleful is the case, when we consider the inconsistent notions of many, with, not this or that particular doctrine, or article of the Christian faith, but with the whole sum of Christianity, the atheism of some, the avowed mere theism of others! The former sort far outdoing the Jewish infidelity. Which people, besides the rational means of demonstrating a Deity common to them with the rest of mankind, could, upon the account of many things peculiar to themselves, be in no suspense concerning this matter. How great was their reverence of the books of the Old Testament, especially those of Moses! their knowledge most certain of plain, and most convincing matter of fact. How long the government of their nation had been an immediate theocracy! what evident tokens of the Divine presence had been among them from age to age! in how wonderful a manner they were brought out of Egypt, through the Red sea, and conducted all along through the wilderness! how glorious an appearance and manifestation of himself God afforded to them at the giving of the law, upon mount Sinai! and by how apparent exertions of the Divine power the former inhabitants were expelled, and they settled in the promised land! Upon all this they could be in no more doubt concerning the existence of a Deity, than of the sun in the firmament. Whereas we are put to prove, in a Christian nation, that this world, and its continual successive inhabitants, have a wise intelligent Maker and Lord, and that all things came not into the state wherein they are, by (no man can imagine what) either fatal necessity or casualty.

But both sorts agree in (what I would principally remark) the disbelief of Christ being the Messiah. And so, with both, the whole business of Christianity must be a fable and a cheat. And thus it is determined, not by men that have made it their business to consider and examine the matter, (for the plain evidence of things cannot but even obtrude a conviction upon any diligent inquirer,) but by such as have only resolved to consider; who have before-hand settled their purpose, never to be awed by the apprehension of an invisible Ruler, into any course of life that shall bear hard upon sensual inclination, have already chosen their master, enslaved themselves to brutal appetite, and are so habituated to that mean servility, made it so connatural, so deeply inward to themselves, so much their very life, as that through the pre-apprehended pain and uneasiness of a violent rupture, in tearing themselves from themselves, it is become their interest not to admit any serious thought. Any such thought they are concerned (they reckon) to fence against, as against the point of a sword; it strikes at their only life, the brute must die, that (by a happy παλιγγενεσία) they may be again born men. That is the design of Christianity, to restore men to themselves again; and because it hath this tendency, it is therefore not to be endured. And all the little residue of human wit which is yet left them, (which because the sensual nature is predominant, is pressed into a subserviency to the interest and defence of a brutal life,) only serves them to turn every thing of serious religion into ridicule, and being themselves resolved never to be reasoned into any seriousness, they have the confidence to make the trial, whether all other men can be jested out of it.

If this were not the case, if such persons could allow themselves to think, and debate the matter, how certain would the victory, how glorious would the triumph be, of the Christian religion over all the little cavils they are wont to allege against it! Let their own consciences testify in the case, whether ever they have applied themselves to any solemn disquisition concerning this important affair, but only contented themselves with being able, amidst transient discourse, to cast out, now and then, some oblique glance, against somewhat or other that was appendant, or more remotely belonging, to the Christian profession, (in so much haste as not to stay for an answer,) and because they may have surprised, sometimes, one or other, not so ready at a quick repartee, or who reckoned the matter to require solemn and somewhat larger discourse, (which they have not had the patience to hear,) whether they have not gone away puft and swollen with the conceit, that they have whiffled Christianity away, quite off the stage, with their profane breath; as if its firm and solid strength, wherein it stands stable, as a rock of adamant, depended upon this or that sudden, occasional, momentary effort on the behalf of it. But if such have a mind to try whether any thing can be strongly said in defence of that sacred profession, let them considerately peruse what hath been written by divers to that purpose. And not to engage them in any very tedious longsome task, if they like not to travel through the somewhat abstruser work of the most learned Hugo Grotius, de Veritate Christianæ Religionis, or the more voluminous Huetius, his Demonstratio Evangelica, or divers others that might be named, let them but patiently and leisurely read over that later very plain and clear, but nervous and solid, discourse of Dr. Parker, upon this subject, and judge then, whether the Christian religion want evidence, or whether nothing can be alleged, why we of this age, so long after Christ's appearance upon the stage of the world, are to reckon ourselves obliged to profess Christianity, and observe the rules of that holy profession.

And really if, upon utmost search, it shall be found to have firm truth at the bottom, it makes itself so necessary, (which must be acknowledged part of that truth,) that any one that hath wit enough to be author of a jest, might understand it to be a thing not to be jested with. It trifles with no man. And, where it is once sufficiently propounded, leaves it no longer indifferent whether we will be of it or no. Supposing it true, it is strange if we can pretend it not to be sufficiently propounded to us; or that we are destitute of sufficient means to come by the knowledge of that truth! Was this religion instituted only for one nation or age? Did the Son of God descend from heaven, put on flesh, and die? had we an incarnate Deity conversant among men on earth, and made a sacrifice for the sins of men? and hath he left the world at liberty, whether, upon any notice hereof, they should inquire and concern themselves about him or no? Being incarnate, he could not, as such, be every where; nor was it fit he should be long here, or needful (and, therefore, not fit) he should die often. It was condescension enough that he vouchsafed

once to appear, in so mean and self-abasing a form, and offered himself to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And whereas he hath himself founded a dominion over us in his own blood, did die, and revive, and rise again, that he might be Lord of the living and of the dead; and the eternal Father hath hereupon highly exalted him, given him a name above every name, that at his name every knee should bow, and that all should confess that he is Lord, to the praise and glory of God; and hath required that all should honour the Son as himself is to be honoured; hath given him power over all flesh, and made him head of all things to the church: was it ever intended men should, generally, remain exempt from obligation to observe, believe, and obey him? was it his own intention to waive, or not insist upon, his own most sacred, and so dearly acquired rights? to quit his claim to the greatest part of mankind? Why did he then issue out his commission as soon as he was risen from the dead, to teach all nations, to proselyte the world to himself, to baptize them into his name, (with that of the Father and the Holy Ghost? O the great and venerable names that are named upon professing Christians!) Could it be his intention, to leave it lawful to men to choose this, or any, or no religion, as their humours, or fancies, or lusts should prompt them; to disregard and deride his holy doctrines, violate and trample upon his just and equal laws, reject and contemn his offered favours and mercy, despise and profane his sacred institutions! When he actually makes his demand, and lays his claim, what amazing guilt, how swift destruction, must they incur, that dare adventure to deny the Lord that bought them! And they that shall do it, among a Christianized people, upon the pretended insufficiency of the revelation they have of him, do but heighten the affront and increase the provocation. 'Tis to charge the whole Christian institution with foolery, as pretending to oblige men, when they cannot know to what, how, or upon what ground they should be obliged; to pronounce the means and methods inept, and vain, which he hath thought sufficient (and only fit) for the propagating and continuing Christianity in the world; to render the rational reception of it from age to age impossible, in his appointed way; or unless men should be taught by angels, or voices from heaven, or that miracles should be so very frequent and common, as thereby also to become useless to their end; and so would be to make the whole frame of Christian religion an idle impertinency; and, in reference to its avowed design, a self-repugnant thing; and consequently were to impute folly to him who is the Wisdom of God.

And how are other things known, of common concernment, and whereof an immediate knowledge is as little possible? Can a man satisfy himself that he hath a title to an estate, conveyed down to him by very ancient writings, the witnesses whereof are long since dead and gone? or that he is obliged by laws made many an age ago? Or could any records be preserved with more care and concern, than those wherein our religion lies? or be more secure from designed or material depravation? But this is no place to reason these things. Enough is said by others, referred to before. I only further say, if any that have the use of their understandings, living in a Christian nation, think to justify their infidelity and disobedience to the Son of God, by pretending they had no sufficient means to know him to be so, the excuse will avail them alike, as that did him, who insolently said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I, &c. For have not we as good means to know who Christ is, as the Egyptians at that time had, to know who was the God of Israel, though afterwards he was more known by the judgments which he executed? Although the knowledge of the only true God be natural, and the obligation thereto common to them; yet the indisposition to use their understanding this way, is so great and general, and the express revelation that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, requires so much less labour to understand it, than there is in arguing out the existence and attributes of God, by an inhabile, sluggish mind, that the difference cannot be great, if any, on that side. This latter only needs the inquiry, whence the revelation comes; which as it is not difficult in itself, so this occasion, *viz.* of its being proposed, doth invite and urge to it; whereas the generality of the pagan world have little of external inducement, leading them into inquiries concerning the true God. Therefore, all circumstances considered, I see not how they that live under the Gospel can be thought to have less advantage and obligation to own Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son of God, than the rest of the world, to own the only living and true God; or that the former should be less liable to the revelation of the wrath of God from heaven for holding supernatural truth in unrighteousness, than the other, for doing so injurious violence to that which is merely natural. Unto what severities, then, of the Divine wrath and justice, even of the highest kind, do multitudes lie open in our days.

For besides those (much fewer) mental, or notional, infidels, that believe not the principles of the Christian religion, against the clearest evidence, how vastly greater is the number of them that are so in heart and practice, against their professed belief! that live in utter estrangement from God, as without him in the world, or in open enmity against him, and contrariety to the known rules of the religion they profess! How many that understand nothing of its principal and plainest doctrines! as if nothing were requisite to distinguish the Christian from the pagan world, more than an empty name; or as if the Redeemer of sinners had died upon the cross, that men might more securely remain alienated from the life of God, not to reconcile and reduce them to him! or that they might with safety indulge appetite, mind earthly things, make the world their god, gratify the flesh, and make provision to fulfil the lusts of it, defy heaven, affront their Maker, live in malice, envy, hatred to one another! not to bless them, by turning them from these impieties and iniquities! As if it were so obscurely hinted, as that it could not be taken notice of, that the grace of God, which bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared, teaching them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, so looking for the blessed hope. And that Christ gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works! How many, again, are Christians, they know not why! upon the same terms that others are Mahometans, because it is the religion of their country, by fate or by accident, not by their own choice and judgment! The same inconsideration makes them be Christians, that makes others be none.

And now, shall our Redeemer be left to weep alone over these perishing souls? have we no tears to spend upon this doleful subject? Oh that our heads were waters, and our eyes fountains! Is it nothing to us, that multitudes are sinking, going down into perdition, under the name of Christian, under the seal of baptism, from under the means of life and salvation! perishing! and can we do nothing to prevent it? We know they must perish that do not repent and turn to God, and love him above all, even with all their hearts and souls, and mind and might; that do not believe in his Son and pay him homage, as their rightful Lord, sincerely subjecting themselves to his laws and government. But this they will not understand, or not consider. Our endeavours to bring them to it, are ineffectual, 'tis but faint breath we utter. Our words drop and die between us and them! We speak to them in the name of the eternal God that made them, of the great Jesus who bought them with his blood, and they regard it not. The Spirit of the Lord is in a great degree departed from among us, and we take it not to heart! We are sensible of lesser grievances, are grieved that men will not be more entirely proselyted to our several parties and persuasions, rather than that they are so disinclined to become proselytes to real *Christianity;* and seem more deeply concerned to have Christian religion so or so modified, than whether there shall be any such thing! or whether men be saved by it or lost!

This sad case, that so many were likely to be lost under the first sound of the Gospel; and the most exemplary temper of our blessed Lord in reference to it, are represented in the following treatise; with design to excite their care for their own souls, who need to be warned, and the compassions of others for them who are so little apt to take warning. The good Lord grant that it may be, some way or other, useful for good!

JOHN HOWE.

THE

REDEEMER'S TEARS

WEPT OVER LOST SOULS.

LUKE XIX. 41, 42.

AND WHEN HE WAS COME NEAR, HE BEHELD THE CITY, AND WEPT OVER IT, SAYING, IF THOU HADST KNOWN, EVEN THOU, AT LEAST IN THIS THY DAY, THE THINGS WHICH BELONG UNTO THY PEACE! BUT NOW THEY ARE HID FROM THINE EYES.

We have here a compassionate lamentation in the midst of a solemn triumph. Our Lord's approach unto Jerusalem at this time, and his entrance into it, (as the foregoing history shows,) carried with them some face of regal and triumphal pomp, but with such allays, as discovered a mind most remote from ostentation; and led by judgment, (not vain-glory,) to transmit through a dark umbrage some glimmerings only of that excellent majesty which both his sonship and his mediatorship entitled him unto; a very modest and mean specimen of his true indubious royalty and kingly state; such as might rather intimate than plainly declare it, and rather afford an after-instruction to teachable minds, than beget a present conviction and dread in the stupidly obstinate and unteachable. And this effect we find it had, as is observed by another evangelical historian; who relating the same matter, how in his passage to Jerusalem the people met him with branches of palm-trees and joyful hosannas, he riding upon an ass's colt, (as princes or judges, to signify meekness as much as state, were wont to do, Judges v. 10.) tells us, these things his disciples understood not at the first, but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him, John xii. 16. For great regard was had in this, as in all the acts of his life and ministry, to that last and conclusive part, his dying a sacrifice upon the cross for the sins of men; to observe all along that mediocrity, and steer that middle course between obscurity and a terrifying, overpowering glory, that this solemn oblation of himself might neither be prevented, nor be disregarded. Agreeably to this design, and the rest of his course, he doth, in this solemnity, rather discover his royal state and dignity by a dark emblem, than by an express representation; and shows in it more of meekness and humility, than of awful majesty and magnificence, as was formerly predicted, Zech. ix. 9. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

And how little he was taken in this piece of state, is sufficiently to be seen in this paragraph of the chapter. His mind is much more taken up in the foresight of Jerusalem's sad case; and therefore being come within view of it, (which he might very commodiously have in the descent of the higher opposite hill, mount Olivet,) he beheld the city, 'tis said, and wept over it. Two things concur to make up the cause of this sorrow:—1. The greatness of the calamity; Jerusalem, once so dear to God, was to suffer, not a scar, but a ruin;—"The days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another:" and—2. The lost opportunity of preventing it;—"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes," ver. 42. And again, "Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

First, The calamity was greater in his eyes, than it can be in ours. His large and comprehensive mind could take the compass of this sad case. Our thoughts cannot reach far, yet we can apprehend what may make this case very deplorable; we can consider Jerusalem as the city of the great King, where was the palace and throne of the Majesty of heaven, vouchsafing to "dwell with men on earth" Here the Divine light and glory had long shone; here was the sacred Shechinah, the dwelling place of the Most High, the symbols of his presence, the seat of worship, the mercy-seat, the place of receiving addresses, and of dispensing favours; "The house of prayer for all nations." To his own people this was the city of their solemnities, whither the tribes were wont to go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord: for there were set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David, Psal. cxxii. 4, 5. He that was so great a lover of the souls of men, how grateful and dear to his heart had the place been where through the succession of many by-past ages the great God did use (though more obscurely) to unfold his kind propensions towards sinners, to hold solemn treaties with them, to make himself known, to draw and allure souls into his own holy worship and acquaintance! And that now the dismal prospect presents itself of desolation and ruin, ready to overwhelm all this glory! and lay waste the dwellings of Divine love! his sorrow must be conceived proportionable to the greatness of this desolating change.

Secondly, And the opportunity of prevention was quite lost! There was an opportunity: "He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: he came to them as his own." Had they received him, O how joyful a place had Jerusalem been! How glorious had the triumphs of God been there, had they repented, believed, obeyed! These were the "things that belonged to their peace;" this was their opportunity, their "day of visitation;" these were the things that might have been done within that day: but it was now too late, their day was over, and the things of their peace hid from their eyes; and how fervent were his desires, they had done otherwise! taken the wise and safe course. If thou hadst known! the words admit the optative form, *εἰ* being put, as 'tis observed to be sometimes with other authors, for *εἴθε, utinam;* O that thou hadst known, I wish thou hadst; his sorrow must be proportionable to his love. Or otherwise we may conceive the sentence incomplete, part cut off by a more emphatical *aposiopesis*, tears interrupting speech, and imposing a more speaking silence, which imports an affection beyond all words. They that were anciently so over-officious as to rase those words "and wept over it" out of the canon, as

thinking it unworthy so divine a person to shed tears, did greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, (which elsewhere speak of our Lord's weeping,) nor the power of Divine love, (now become incarnate,) nor indeed the true perfections and properties of human nature: otherwise they had never taken upon them to reform the Gospel, and reduce not only Christianity, but Christ himself, to the measures and square of their stoical philosophy: but these have also met with a like ancient confutation.

One thing (before we proceed) needs some disquisition, *viz.*—Whether this lamentation of our blessed Lord do refer only or ultimately to the temporal calamity he foresaw coming upon Jerusalem:—or whether it had not a further and more principal reference to their spiritual and eternal miseries that were certain to be concomitant, and consequent thereunto? Where let it be considered,

1. That very dreadful spiritual plagues and judgments did accompany their destruction very generally; which every one knows who is acquainted with their after-story, *i. e.* that takes notice what spirit reigned among them, and what their behaviour was towards our Lord himself, and afterwards towards his apostles and disciples all along to their fearful catastrophe; (as it may be collected from the sacred records, and other history;) what blindness of mind, what hardness of heart, what mighty prejudice, what inflexible obstinacy, against the clearest light, the largest mercy, the most perspicuous and most gracious doctrine, and the most glorious works, wrought to confirm it, against the brightest beams and evidences of the Divine truth, love, and power! what persevering impenitency and infidelity against God and Christ, proceeding from the bitterest enmity! (Ye have both seen and hated me and my Father, John xv. 24.) what mad rage and fury against one another, even when death and destruction were at the very door! Here were all the tokens imaginable of the most tremendous infatuation, and of their being forsaken of God. Here was a concurrence of all kinds of spiritual judgments in the highest degree.

2. That the concomitancy of such spiritual evils with their temporal destruction, our Lord foreknew as well as their temporal destruction itself. It lay equally in view before him; and was as much under his eye. He that knew what was in man, could as well tell what would be in him. And by the same light by which he could immediately look into hearts, he could as well see into futurities, and as well the one futurity as the other. The knowledge of the one he did not owe to his human understanding: to his divine understanding, whereby he knew all things, the other could not be hid.

3. The connexion between the impenitency and infidelity that prove to be final, and eternal misery, is known to us all. Of his knowledge of it therefore (whose law hath made the connexion, besides what there is in the nature of the things themselves) there can be no doubt.

4. That the miseries of the soul, especially such as prove incurable and eternal, are in themselves far the greatest, we all acknowledge: nor can we make a difficulty to believe, that our Lord apprehended and considered things according as they were in themselves, so as to allow every thing its own proper weight and import in his estimating of them. These things seem all very evident to any eye. Now though it be confessed not impossible, that of things so distinct from one another as outward and temporal evils, and those that are spiritual and eternal, even befalling the same persons, one may for the present consider the one without attending to the other, or making distinct reflection thereon at the same time; yet how unlikely is it, these things bordering so closely upon one another as they did in the present case, that so comprehensive a mind as our Saviour's was, sufficiently able to enclose them both, and so spiritual a mind, apt no doubt to consider most what was in itself most considerable, should in a solemn lamentation of so sad a case, wholly overlook the saddest part, and stay his thoughts only upon the surface and outside of it! That he mentions only the approaching outward calamity, (ver. 43, 44) was that he spake in the hearing of the multitude, and upon the way, but in passing, when there was not opportunity for large discourse; and therefore he spake what might soonest strike their minds, was most liable to common apprehension, and might most deeply affect ordinary, and not yet enough prepared, hearers.

And he spake what he had, no doubt, a deep sense of himself. Whatever of tender compassions might be expected from the most perfect humanity and benignity, could not be wanting in him, upon the foresight of such a calamity as was coming upon that place and people. But yet, what was the sacking of a city, the destroying of pompous buildings that were all of a perishable material, the mangling of human flesh, over which the worm was otherwise shortly to have had dominion; to the alienation of men's minds from God, their disaffection to the only means of their recovery, and reconciliation to him, and their subjection to his wrath and curse for ever! When also it is plain he considered that perverse temper of mind and spirit in them, as the cause of their ruin! which his own words imply; that "the things which belonged to their peace were hid from their eyes;" and that the things he foretold, should befall them, because "they knew not the time of their visitation." For what could the things be that belonged to their peace, but turning to God, believing in himself, as the Messiah, bringing forth of fruits meet for repentance? Whence also there must be another latent and concealed meaning of their peace itself, than only their continued amity with the Roman state; their peace with Heaven; their being set right, and standing in favour and acceptance, with God. For was it ever the first intention of the things enjoined in Gospel, but to entitle men to earthly secular benefits?

Nor can we doubt but the same things lay deep in the mind of our blessed Lord, when he uttered these words, as when he spake those so very like them, Matt. xxiii. 37, 38. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. These other were not spoken indeed at the same time, but very soon after: *those* we are considering, in his way to the city, *these* when he was come into it; most probably, by the series of the evangelical history, the second day, after his having lodged the first night at Bethany. But it is plain they have the same sense, and that the same things lay with great weight upon his spirit; so that the one passage may contribute much to the enlightening and expounding of the other.

Now what can be meant by that, "I would have gathered you as the hen her chickens under her wings?" Could it intend a political meaning; that he would have been a temporal prince and saviour to them? which he so earnestly declined and disclaimed; professing to the last, his kingdom was not of this world. It could mean no other thing, but that he would have reduced them back to God, have gathered and united them under his own gracious and safe conduct in order thereto, have secured them from the Divine wrath and justice, and have conferred on them spiritual and eternal blessings. In a like sense their *peace* here was no doubt more principally to be understood; and their loss and forfeiture of it, by their not understanding the things belonging thereto, considered and lamented.

Therefore the principal intendment of this lamentation, though directly applied to a community, and the formed body of a people, is equally applicable unto particular persons living under the Gospel, or to whom the ordinary means of conversion and salvation are vouchsafed, but are neglected by them and forfeited. We may therefore thus sum up the meaning and sense of these words:—That it is a thing in itself very lamentable, and much lamented by our Lord Jesus, when such as living under the Gospel, have had a day of grace, and an opportunity of knowing the things belonging to their peace, have so outworn that day, and lost their opportunity, that the things of their peace are quite hid from their eyes:—where we have these distinct heads of discourse to be severally considered and insisted on.

I. What are the things necessary to be known by such as live under the Gospel, as immediately belonging to their peace.

II. That they have a day or season wherein to know not these things only, but the whole compass of their case, and what the knowledge of those things more immediately belonging to their peace supposes, and depends upon.

III. That this day hath its bounds and limits, so that when it is over and lost; those things are forever hid from their eyes.

IV. That this is a case to be considered with deep resentment and lamentation, and was so by our Lord Jesus.

I. What are the things necessary to be known by such as live under the Gospel, as immediately belonging to their peace? Where we are more particularly to inquire, —1. What those things themselves are—2. What sort of knowledge of them it is that here is meant, and made necessary.

1. What the things are which belong to the peace of a people living under the Gospel. The things belonging to a people's peace, are not throughout the same with all. Living, or not living, under the Gospel, makes a considerable difference in the matter. Before the incarnation and public appearance of our Lord, something was not necessary among the Jews, that afterwards became necessary. It was sufficient to them before, to believe in a Messiah to come, more indefinitely. Afterwards he plainly tells them, If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins, John viii. 24. Believing in Christ cannot be necessary to Pagans that never heard of him, *as a duty*, howsoever necessary it may be *as a means*. Their not believing in him cannot be itself a sin, though by it they should want remedy for their other sins. But it more concerns us who do live under the Gospel, to apprehend aright what is necessary for ourselves. That is a short and full summary which the apostle gives, Acts xx. 21. Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel finds us in a state of apostacy from God, both as our sovereign Ruler, and sovereign Good, not apt to obey and glorify him, as the former, nor enjoy him, nor be satisfied in him, as the latter. Repentance towards God, cures and removes this disaffection of our minds and hearts towards him, under both these notions. By it the whole soul turns to him, with this sense and resolution: "I have been a rebellious, disloyal wretch, against the high authority and most rightful government of him who gave me breath, and whose creature I am. I will live no longer thus. Lo now I come back unto thee, O Lord, thou art my Lord and God. Thee I now design to serve and obey, as the Lord of my life; thee I will fear, unto thee I subject myself, to live no longer after my own will, but thine. I have been hitherto a miserable, forlorn, distressed creature, destitute of any thing that could satisfy me, or make me happy; have set my heart upon a vain and thorny world, that had nothing in it answerable to my real necessities, that hath flattered and mocked me often, never satisfied me, and been wont to requite my pursuits of satisfaction from it with vexation and trouble, and 'pierce me through with many sorrows.' I have borne in the mean time a disaffected heart towards thee, have therefore cast thee out of my thoughts, so that amidst all my disappointments and sorrows, it never came into my mind to say, 'Where is God my maker?' I could never savour any thing spiritual or divine, and was ever more ready, in distress, to turn myself any way than (that which I ought) towards thee. I now see and bemoan my folly, and with a convinced, self-judging heart, betake myself to thee; the desires of my soul are now unto thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. Whom have I in heaven but thee, or on earth that I can desire besides thee?"

This is "repentance towards God," and is one thing belonging, and most simply necessary, to our peace. But though it be most necessary, it is not enough. It answers to something of our wretched case, but not to every thing. We were in our state of apostacy averse and disaffected to God. To this evil, repentance towards him is the opposite and only proper remedy. But besides our being without inclination towards him, we are also without interest in him. We not only had unjustly cast off him, but were also most justly cast off by him. Our injustice had set us against him, and his justice had set him against us; we need, in order to our peace with him, to be relieved as well against his justice, as our own injustice. What if now we would return to him, he will not receive us? And he will not receive us for our own sakes. He must have a recompense for the wrong we had done him, by our rebellion against his government, and our contempt of his goodness. Our repentance is no expiation. Nor have we of our own, or were capable of obliging him to give us, the power and grace to repent. Our high violation of the sacred rights and honour of the Godhead, made it necessary, in order to our peace and reconciliation, there should be a sacrifice, and a mediator between him and us. He hath judged it not honourable to him, not becoming him to treat with us, or vouchsafe us favours upon other terms. And since he thought it necessary to insist upon having a sacrifice, he judged it necessary too, to have one proportionable to the wrong done; lest he should make the Majesty of heaven cheap, or occasion men to think it a light matter to have fundamentally overturned the common order which was settled between himself and men. The whole earth could not have afforded such a sacrifice, it must be supplied from heaven. His co-eternal Son made man, and so uniting heaven and earth in his own person, undertakes to be that sacrifice, and, in the virtue of it, to be a standing continual Mediator between God and us; through him, and for his sake, all acts and influences of grace are to proceed towards us. No sin is to be forgiven, no grace to be conferred, but upon his account. 'Tis reckoned most God-like, most suitable to the Divine greatness, once offended, to do nothing that shall import favour towards sinners, but upon his constant interposition. Him hath he set over us, and directed that all our applications to himself, and all our expectations from him, should be through him. [a] Him hath he exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give us repentance and remission of sins. Now to one so high in power over us, he expects we should pay a suitable homage. That homage the Holy Scripture calls by the name of faith, believing on him. God hath set him forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus, Rom. iii. 25, 26. So that when by repentance we turn to God, as our end, we must also apply ourselves by faith, to our Lord Jesus Christ, as our way to that end. Which, till we do, we are in rebellion still, and know not what belongs to our peace. He insists that his Son, into whose hands he hath committed our affairs, should be honoured by us, as he himself requires to be, John v. 23.

Now these two things sum up our part of the covenant between God and us. By repentance we again take God for our God. Repenting we return to him as our God. By faith we take his son for our Prince and Saviour. These things, by the tenor of the evangelical covenant, are required of us. Peace is settled between God and us, (as it is usually with men towards one another after mutual hostilities) by striking a covenant. And in our case, it is a covenant by sacrifice, as you have seen. Nor are harder terms than these imposed upon us. Dost thou now, sinner, apprehend thyself gone off from God? and find a war is commenced and on foot, between God and thee? He can easily conquer and crush thee to nothing, but he offers thee terms of peace, upon which he is willing to enter into covenant with thee. Dost thou like his terms? Art thou willing to return to him, and take him again for thy God? To resign and commit thyself with unfeigned trust and subjection into the hands of his Son thy Redeemer? "These are the things which belong to thy peace." See that thou now know them.

2. But what knowledge of them is it that is here meant? The thing speaks itself. It is not a mere contemplative knowledge. We must so know them as to do them; otherwise the increase of knowledge is the increase of sorrow. Thy guilt and misery will be the greater. To know any thing that concerns our practice, is to no purpose if we do not practice it. It was a Hebrew form of speech, and is a common form, by words of knowledge to imply practice. It being taken for granted that in matters so very reasonable and important, if what we are to do once be rightly known, it will be done. Thus elsewhere the same great requisites to eternal life and blessedness are expressed by our Lord. This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent:

[a] Acts v. 31.

it being supposed and taken for granted that a true, vivid knowledge of God and Christ will immediately form the soul to all suitable dispositions and deportments towards the one and the other; and consequently to all men also, as Christian precepts do direct to all the acts of sobriety, justice, and charity, unto which the law of Christ obliges. An habitual course of sin in any kind, is inconsistent with this knowledge of the things of our peace, and therefore with our peace itself. All sin is in a true sense reducible to ignorance; and customary sinning into total destitution of Divine knowledge. According to the usual style of the sacred writings, 1 Cor. xv. 34. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God. 3 John ii. He that sinneth, *i. e.* that is a doer of sin, ὁ κακοποιῶν, *a worker of iniquity*, hath not seen God.

II. Such as live under the Gospel have a day, or a present opportunity, for the obtaining the knowledge of these things immediately belonging to their peace, and of whatsoever is besides necessary thereunto. I say nothing what opportunities they have who never lived under the Gospel, who yet no doubt might generally know more than they do; and know better what they do know. It suffices us who enjoy the Gospel, to understand our own advantages thereby. Nor, as to those who do enjoy it, is every one's day of equal clearness. How few in comparison, have ever seen such a day as Jerusalem at this time did! made by the immediate beams of the Sun of righteousness! our Lord himself vouchsafing to be their Instructor, so speaking as never man did; and with such authority as far outdid their other teachers, and astonished the hearers. In what transports did he use to leave those that heard him, wheresoever he came, wondering at the gracious words that came out of his mouth! And with what mighty and beneficial works was he wont to recommend his doctrine, shining in the glorious power, and savouring of the abundant mercy of heaven, so as every apprehensive mind might see the Deity was incarnate, God was come down to treat with men, and allure them into the knowledge and love of himself. The word was made flesh. What unprejudiced mind might not perceive it to be so? He was there manifested and veiled at once; both expressions are used concerning the same matter. The Divine beams were somewhat obscured, but did yet ray through that vail: so that [b] his glory was beheld as the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. This Sun shone with a mild and benign, but with a powerful, vivifying light. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. Such a light created unto the Jews this their day. Happy Jews, if they had understood their own happiness! And the days that followed, to them (for a while) and the gentile world were not inferior, in some respects brighter and more glorious, (the more copious gift of the Holy Ghost being reserved unto the crowning and enthroning of the victorious Redeemer,) when the everlasting Gospel flew like lightning to the uttermost ends of the earth; and the word [c] which began to be spoken by the Lord himself, was confirmed by them that heard him, God also himself bearing them witness, with signs, and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. No such day hath been seen this many an age. Yet whithersoever this same Gospel, for substance, comes, it also makes a day of the same kind, and affords always true, though diminished light; whereby, however, the things of our peace might be understood and known. The written Gospel varies not; and if it be but simply and plainly proposed, (though to some it be proposed with more advantage, to some with less, yet,) still we have the same things immediately relating to our peace extant before our eyes; and divers things besides, which it concerns us to be acquainted with, that we may the more distinctly and to better purpose understand these things. For instance,

1. We have the true and distinct state of the quarrel between God and us. Pagans have understood somewhat of the apostacy of man from God; that he is not in the same state wherein he was at first. But while they have understood that something was amiss, they could scarce tell what. The Gospel reveals the universal pravity of the degenerate nature even of all men, and of every faculty in man. [d] That there is none that doth good; no not one; and that every one is altogether become filthy and impure, that there is an [e] entire old man to be put off, wholly corrupt by deceivable lusts; that the ἀνθρωπολις, the noblest powers, are vitiated, the mind and conscience defiled; that the spirit of the mind needs renewing, is sunk into carnality; and that the carnal [f] mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, nor can be, nor capable of savouring the things of God; that the sinner is in the flesh, under the dominion of power, and in the possession of the fleshly, sensual nature, and can therefore neither obey God, nor enjoy him; that it is become impossible to him either to please God, or be pleased with him. That the sinner's quarrel therefore with God is about the most appropriate rights of the Godhead; the controversy is who shall be God, which is the supreme authority, and which is the supreme good. The former peculiarity of the Godhead, the lapsed creature is become so insolent, as to usurp and arrogate to himself. When he is become so much less than a man (a very beast) he will be a god. His sensual will shall be his only law. He lives and walks after the flesh, serves divers lusts and pleasures, and says, "Who is the Lord over me?" But being conscious that he is not self-sufficient, that he must be beholden to somewhat foreign to himself for his satisfaction, and finding nothing else suitable to his sensual inclination; that other divine peculiarity, to be the supreme good, he places upon the sensible world; and for this purpose *that* shall be his god; so that between himself and the world he attempts to share the undivided Godhead. This is a controversy of a high nature, and about other matters than even the Jewish Rabbins thought of, who, when Jerusalem was destroyed, supposed God was angry with them for their neglect of the recitation of their phylacteries morning and evening; or that they were not respectful enough of one another; or that distance enough was not observed between superiors and inferiors, &c. The gospel impleads men as rebels against their rightful Lord; but of this treason against the Majesty of heaven men little suspect themselves till they are told. The Gospel tells them so plainly, represents the matter in so clear light, that they need only to contemplate themselves in that light, and they may see that so it is. Men may indeed, by resolved, stiff winking, create to themselves a darkness amidst the clearest light. But open thine eyes man, thou that livest under the gospel, set thyself to view thine own soul, thou wilt find it is day with thee; thou hast a day, by being under the Gospel, and light enough to see that this is the posture of thy soul, and the state of thy case God-ward. And it is a great matter towards the understanding the things of thy peace, to know aright what is the true state of the quarrel between God and thee.

2. The Gospel affords light to know what the issue of this quarrel is sure to be, if it go on, and there be no reconciliation. It gives us other and plainer accounts of the punishment of the other world, more fully represents the extremity and perpetuity of the future miseries, and state of perdition appointed for the ungodly world; speaks out concerning the [g] "Tophet prepared of old, the [h] lake of fire and brimstone;" shows the miseries of that state to be the immediate effects of Divine displeasure; that "the breath of the Almighty as a river of brimstone" always foments those flames; that "indignation and wrath cause the tribulation and anguish" which must be the portion of evil doers; and how [k] "fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!" Gives us to understand what accession men's own unaltered vicious habits will have to their miseries; their own outrageous lusts and passions, which here they made it their business to satisfy, becoming their insatiable tormentors; that they are to receive [l] "the *things done* in the body, according to what they have done; and that [m] "what they have sowed, *the same* also they are to reap;" and what their own guilty reflections will contribute, the bitings and gnawings of the worm that dies not, the venomous corrosions of the viper bred in their own bosoms, and now become a full-grown serpent; what the society and insultation of devils, with whom they are

b John i. 14. c Heb. ii. 4. d Rom. iii.
e Eph. iv. f Rom. viii.
g Isa. xxx. h Rev. xxi. i Rom. ii.
k Heb. x. l 2 Cor. v. m Gal. vi.

to partake in woes and torments, and by whom they have been seduced and trained into that cursed partnership and communion; and that this fire wherein they are to be tormented together, is to be everlasting, "a fire never to be quenched." If men be left to their own conjectures only, touching the danger they incur by continuing and keeping up a war with heaven, and are to make their own hell, and that it be the creature only of their own imagination; 'tis like they will make it as easy and favourable as they can; and so are little likely to be urged earnestly to sue for peace by the imagination of a tolerable hell. But if they understand it to be altogether intolerable, this may make them bestir themselves, and think the favour of God worth the seeking. The Gospel imports favour and kindness to you, when it imports most of terror, in telling you so plainly the worst of your case if you go on in a sinful course. It makes you a day, by which you may make a truer judgment of the blackness, darkness, and horror of that everlasting night that is coming on upon you; and lets you know that black and endless night is introduced by a terrible preceding day, that day of the Lord the business whereof is judgment. They that live under the Gospel cannot pretend they are in darkness so as that day should overtake them as a thief; and that, by surprise, they should be doomed and abandoned to the regions of darkness. The Gospel forewarns you plainly of all this; which it does not merely to fright and torment you before the time, but that you may steer your course another way, and escape the place and state of torment. It only says this that it may render the more acceptable to you what it hath to say besides; and only threatens you with these things if there be no reconciliation between God and you. But then at the same time,

3. It also represents God to you as reconcileable through a Mediator. In that Gospel "peace is preached to you, by Jesus Christ." That Gospel lets you see God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, that sin may not be imputed to them. That Gospel proclaims glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will towards men. So did the voices of angels sum up the glad tidings of the Gospel, when that Prince of peace was born into the world. It tells you "God desires not the death of sinners, but that they may turn and live;" that he would "have all men be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth;" that he is "long-suffering towards them, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," that he "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The rest of the world can't but collect, from darker intimations, God's favourable propensions towards them. He spares them, is patient towards them, that herein "his goodness might lead them to repentance." He sustains them, lets them dwell in a world which they might understand was of his making, and whereof he is absolute Lord. "They live, move, and have their being in him, that they might seek after him, and by feeling find him out." He doth them "good, gives them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." He lets "his sun shine on them," whose far extended beams show forth his kindness and benignity to men, even "to the utmost ends of the earth. For there is no speech or language whither his line and circle reaches not." But those are but dull and glimmering beams in comparison of those that shine from the Sun of righteousness through the gospel-revelation, and in respect of that divine glory which appears in the face of Jesus Christ. How clearly doth the light of this gospel-day reveal God's design of reducing sinners, and reconciling them to himself by a Redeemer! How canst thou but say, sinner, thou hast a day of it? and clear daylight showing thee what the good and acceptable will of God towards thee is? Thou art not left to guess only thou mayst be reconciled and find mercy, and to grope and feel thy way in the dark, unless it be a darkness of thy own making. And whereas a sinner, a disloyal rebellious creature, that hath affronted the Majesty of heaven, and engaged against himself the wrath and justice of his Maker, and is unable to make him any recompense, can have no reason to hope God will show him mercy, and be reconciled to him for his own sake, or for any thing he can do to oblige or induce him to it; the same gospel shows you plainly, it is for the Redeemer's sake, and what he hath done and suffered to procure it. But inasmuch also as the sinner may easily apprehend, that it can never answer the necessities of his state and case, that God only be not his enemy, that he forbear hostilities towards him, pursue him not with vengeance to his destruction. For he finds himself an indigent creature, and he needs somewhat beyond what he hath ever yet met with to make him happy; that it is uneasy and grievous to wander up and down with craving desires among varieties of objects that look speciously, but which, either he cannot so far compass as to make a trial what there is in them, or wherewith, upon trial, he finds himself mocked and disappointed, and that really they have nothing in them; he finds himself a mortal creature, and considers that if he had all that he can covet in this world, the increase of his present enjoyments doth but increase unto him trouble and anguish of heart, while he thinks what great things he must shortly leave and lose for ever; to go he knows not whither, into darksome, gloomy regions; where he cannot so much as imagine any thing suitable to his inclinations and desires. For he knows all that is delectable to his present sense he must here leave behind him; and he cannot divest himself of all apprehensions of a future state, wherein if God should make him suffer nothing, yet, if he have nothing to enjoy, he must be *always* miserable.

4. The Gospel, therefore, further represents to him the final, eternal blessedness, and glorious state, which they that are reconciled shall be brought into. They that live under the Gospel are not mocked with shadows, and empty clouds, nor with fabulous elysiums. Nor are they put off with some unintelligible notion of only being happy in general. But are told expressly wherein their happiness is to consist. "Life and immortality are brought to light in the Gospel." 'Tis given them to understand how great a good is laid up in store. "The things which eye hath not seen, and ear not heard, and which otherwise could not have entered into the heart of man, the things of God's present and eternal kingdom, are set in view. It shows the future state of the reconciled shall consist not only in freedom from what is evil, but in the enjoyment of the best and most delectable good; that God himself in all his glorious fulness will be their eternal and most satisfying portion; that their blessedness is to lie in the perpetual fruitive vision of his blessed face, and in the fulness of joy, and the everlasting pleasures which the Divine presence itself doth perpetually afford. And whereas their glorious Redeemer is so nearly allied to them, flesh of their flesh, who inasmuch as the children were made partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, (Heb. ii. 14.) and is become by special title their authorized Lord, they are assured (of that, than which nothing should be more grateful to them) "they shall be for ever with the Lord;" that they are to be where he is, "to behold his glory;" and shall be "joint-heirs with Christ," and be "glorified together with him," shall partake, according to their measure and capacity, in the same blessedness which he enjoys. Thou canst not pretend, sinner, who livest under the Gospel, that thou hast not the light of the day to show thee what blessedness is. Heaven is opened to thee. Glory beams down from thence upon thee to create thee a day, by the light whereof thou mayst see with sufficient clearness, what is "the inheritance of the saints in light." And though all be not told thee, and it do not in every respect appear what we shall be; so much may be foreknown, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, and shall see him as he is, 1 John iii. 1, 2. And because the heart, as yet earnal, can savour little of all this; and finding itself strange and disaffected to God, affecting now to be without Christ and without God in the world, may easily apprehend it impossible to it to be happy in an undesired good, or that it can enjoy what it dislikes; or in the mean time, walk in a way to which it finds in itself nothing but utter averseness and disinclination.

5. The Gospel further shows us what is to be wrought and done in us to attemper and frame our spirits to our future state and present way to it. It lets us know we are to be born again, born from above, born of God, made partakers of a divine nature, that will make the temper of

our spirits connatural to the Divine presence. That whereas "God is light, and with him is no darkness at all," we "who were darkness shall be made light in the Lord:" that we are to be "begotten again to a lively hope, to the eternal and undefiled inheritance that is reserved in the heavens for us:" that we are thus to be made "meet to be partakers of that inheritance of the saints in light." And as we are to be eternally conversant with Christ, we are here to put on Christ, to have Christ in us the hope of glory. And whereas only the way of holiness and obedience leads to blessedness, that we are to be "created in Christ Jesus to good works to walk in them." And shall thereupon find the ways prescribed to us by him, who is the Wisdom of God, to be all "ways of pleasantness and paths of peace:" that he will "put his Spirit into us, and cause us to walk in his statutes," and to account that "in keeping them there is great reward." And thus all that is contained in that mentioned summary of the things belonging to our peace, "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," will all become easy to us, and as the acts of nature; proceeding from that new and holy nature imparted to us.

And whosoever thou art that livest under the Gospel, canst thou deny that it is day with thee, as to all this? Wast thou never told of this great necessary heart-change? Didst thou never hear that the "tree must be made good that the fruit might be good?" that thou must become a "new creature, have old things done away, and all things made new?" Didst thou never hear of the necessity of having "a new heart, and a right spirit" created and renewed in thee; that except thou wert "born again," or from above, (as that expression may be read,) thou couldst "never enter into the kingdom of God?" Wast thou kept in ignorance that a form of godliness without the power of it would never do thee good? that a name to live without the principle of the holy, divine life, would never save thee? that a specious outside, that all thy external performances, while thou wentest with an unrenewed, earthly, carnal heart, would never advantage thee as to thy eternal salvation and blessedness? And this might help thine understanding concerning the nature of thy future blessedness, and will be found most agreeable to it, being aright understood; for as thou art not to be blessed by a blessedness without thee and distant from thee, but inwrought into thy temper, and intimately united with thee, nor glorified by an external glory, but by a glory revealed within thee; so nor canst thou be qualified for that blessed glorious state otherwise than by having the temper of thy soul made habitually holy and good. As what a good man partakes of happiness here is such, that he is "satisfied from himself;" so it must be hereafter, not originally from himself, but by divine communication made most intimate to him. Didst thou not know that it belonged to thy peace, to have a peace-maker? and that the Son of God was he? and that he makes not the peace of those that despise and refuse him, or that receive him not, that come not to him, and are not willing to come to God by him? Couldst thou think, living under the Gospel, that the reconciliation between God and thee was not to be mutual? that he would be reconciled to thee while thou wouldst not be reconciled to him, or shouldst still bear towards him a disaffected, implacable heart? For couldst thou be so void of all understanding as not to apprehend what the Gospel was sent to thee for? or why it was necessary to be preached to thee, or that thou shouldst hear it? Who was to be reconciled by a Gospel preached to thee but thyself? who was to be persuaded by a gospel sent to thee? God, or thou? Who is to be persuaded but the unwilling? The Gospel, as thou hast been told, reveals God willing to be reconciled, and thereupon beseeches thee to be reconciled to him. Or could it seem likely to thee thou couldst ever be reconciled to God, and continue unreconciled to thy Reconciler? To what purpose is there a days-man, a middle person between God and thee, if thou wilt not meet him in that middle person? Dost thou not know that Christ avails thee nothing if thou still stand at a distance with him, if thou dost not unite and adjoin thyself to him, or art not in him? And dost thou not again know that Divine power and grace must unite thee to him? and that a work must be wrought and done upon thy soul by an Almighty hand, by God himself, a mighty transforming work, to make thee capable of that union? [n] that whosoever is in Christ is a new creature? [o] that thou must be of God in Christ Jesus, who then is made unto thee of God also wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; every way answering the exigency of thy case, as thou art a foolish, guilty, impure, and enslaved, or lost creature? Didst thou never hear, that none can come to Christ but whom the Father draws? and that he draws the reasonable souls of men not violently or against their wills, (he draws, yet drags them not,) but makes them willing in the day of power, by giving a new nature and new inclinations to them? 'Tis sure with thee not dark night, not a dubious twilight, but broad day as to all this.

Yes, perhaps thou mayst say, but this makes my case the worse, not the better; for it gives me at length to understand that what is necessary to my peace and welfare is impossible to me; and so the light of my day doth but serve to let me see myself miserable and undone, and that I have nothing to do to relieve and help myself. I therefore add,

6. That by being under the Gospel, men have not only light to understand whatsoever is any way necessary to their peace, but opportunity to obtain that communication of divine power and grace whereby to comply with the terms of it. Whereupon, if this be made good; you have not a pretence left you to say your case is the worse, or that you receive any prejudice by what the Gospel reveals of your own impotency to relieve and help yourselves; or determines touching the terms of your peace and salvation, making such things necessary thereto, as are to you impossible, and out of your own present power; unless it be a prejudice to you not to have your pride gratified; and that God hath pitched upon such a method for your salvation, as shall wholly turn to the praise of the glory of his grace, or that you are to be *of him* [p] in Christ Jesus—that whosoever glories might glory in the Lord. Is it for a sinner that hath deserved, and is ready to perish, to insist upon being saved with reputation? or to envy the great God, upon whose pleasure it wholly depends whether he shall be saved or not saved, the entire glory of saving him? For otherwise, excepting the mere business of glory and reputation; is it not all one to you whether you have the power in your own hands of changing your hearts, of being the authors to yourselves of that holy, new nature, out of which actual faith and repentance are to spring, or whether you may have it from the God of all grace, flowing to you from its own proper divine fountain. Your case is not sure really the worse that your salvation from first to last is to be all of grace, and that it is impossible to you to repent and believe, while it is not simply impossible; but that he can effectually enable you thereto, unto whom all things are possible; supposing that he will: whereof by and by. Nay, and it is more glorious and honourable, even to you, if you understand yourselves, that your case is so stated as it is. The Gospel indeed plainly tells you that your repentance must be given you. Christ "is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins." And so must your faith, and that frame of spirit which is the principle of all good works. By grace ye are saved, through faith, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them, Ephes. ii. 8—10. Is it more glorious to have nothing in you but what is self-sprung, than to have your souls the seat and receptacle of divine communications; of so excellent things as could have no other than a heavenly original? If it were not absurd and impossible you should be self-begotten, is it not much more glorious to be born of God? As they are said to be that receive Christ: John i. 12, 13. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And now that, by being under the Gospel, you have the opportunity of getting that grace, which is necessary to

n 2 Cor. v. 17. o 1 Cor. i. 30. p 1 Cor. i. 30, 31

your peace and salvation; you may see, if you consider what the Gospel is, and was designed for. It is the ministration of the Spirit; that Spirit by which you are to be born again, John iii. 3, 5, 6. The work of regeneration consists in the impregnating, and making lively and efficacious, in you the holy truths contained in the Gospel. Of his own good will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures, James i. 18. And again, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, 1 Pet. i. 23. So our Saviour prays: Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth, John xvii. 17. The Gospel is, upon this account, called the word of life, Phil. ii. 16. as by which the principles of that divine and holy life are implanted in the soul, whereby we live to God, do what his Gospel requires, and hath made our duty, and that ends at length in eternal life. But you will say, Shall all then, that live under the Gospel, obtain this grace and holy life? Or if they shall not, or, if so far as can be collected, multitudes do not, or, perhaps, in some places that enjoy the Gospel, very few do, in comparison of them that do not, what am I better? when, perhaps, it is far more likely that I shall perish notwithstanding, than be saved? In answer to this, it must be acknowledged, that all that live under the Gospel do not obtain life and saving grace by it. For, then, there had been no occasion for this lamentation of our blessed Lord over the perishing inhabitants of Jerusalem, as having lost their day, and that the things of their peace were now hid from their eyes; and by that instance it appears too possible, that even the generality of a people living under the Gospel, may fall at length into the like forlorn and hopeless condition. But art thou a man that thus objectest? A reasonable understanding creature? or dost thou use the reason and understanding of a man in objecting thus? Didst thou expect, that when thine own wilful transgression had made thee liable to eternal death and wrath, peace and life, and salvation should be imposed upon thee whether thou wouldst or no, or notwithstanding thy most wilful neglect and contempt of them, and all the means of them? Could it enter into thy mind, that a reasonable soul should be wrought and framed for that high and blessed end, whereof it is radically capable, as a stock or a stone is for any use it is designed for; without designing its own end or way to it? Couldst thou think the Gospel was to bring thee to faith and repentance, whether thou didst hear it or no? or ever apply thy mind to consider the meaning of it, and what it did propose and offer to thee? or when thou mightest so easily understand that the grace of God was necessary to make it effectual to thee, and that it might become his power (or the instrument of his power) to thy salvation, couldst thou think it concerned thee not to sue and supplicate to him for that grace? when thy life lay upon it, and thy eternal hope? Hast thou lain weltering at the footstool of the throne of grace in thine own tears, (as thou hast been formerly weltering in thy sins and impurities,) crying for grace to help thee in this time of thy need? And if thou thinkest this was above thee and without thy compass, hast thou done all that was within thy compass in order to the obtaining of grace at God's hands? But here, perhaps, thou wilt inquire, Is there any thing, then, to be done by us, whereupon the grace of God may be expected certainly to follow? To which I answer,

1. That it is out of question nothing can be done by us to deserve it, or *for which* we may expect it to follow. It were not grace if we had obliged, or brought it, by our desert, under former preventive bonds to us. And,

2. What if nothing can be done by us *upon which* it may be *certainly* expected to follow? Is a certainty of perishing better than a high probability of being saved?

3. Such as live under the Gospel have reason to apprehend it highly probable they may obtain that grace which is necessary to their salvation, if they be not wanting to themselves. For,

4. There is generally afforded to such that which is wont to be called common grace. I speak not of any further extent of it, 'tis enough to our present purpose that it extends so far, as to them that live under the Gospel, and have thereby a day allowed them wherein to provide for their peace. Now, though this grace is not yet certainly saving, yet it tends to that which is so. And none have cause to despair, but that being duly improved and complied with, it may end in it.

And this is that which requires to be insisted on, and more fully evinced. In order whereto let it be considered, that it is expressly said to such, they are to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, for this reason, that God works (or is working ἐστιν ὁ ἐνεργῶν) in them, *i. e.* statedly and continually at work, or is always ready to work in them, to will and to do of his own good pleasure, Phil. ii. 12, 13. The matter fails not on his part. He will work on in order to their salvation, if they work in that way of subordinate co-operation, which his command, and the necessity of their own case, oblige them unto. And it is further to be considered, that where God had formerly afforded the symbols of his gracious presence, given his oracles, and settled his church, though yet in its nonage, and much more imperfect state, there he, however, communicated those influences of his Spirit, that it was to be imputed to themselves if they came short of the saving operations of it. Of such it was said, Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them, Nehem. ix. 20. And to such, Turn ye at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit unto you. I will make known my words unto you. Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no man regarded, but ye set at nought my counsel, and despised all my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity, &c. Prov. i. 23, 24. We see whence their destruction came; not from God's first restraint of his Spirit, but their refusing, despising, and setting at nought his counsels and reproofs. And when it is said, they rebelled and vexed his Spirit, and he therefore turned and fought against them, and became their enemy, Isa. lxiii. 10. it appears, that before his Spirit was not withheld, but did variously, and often, make essays and attempts upon them. And when Stephen, immediately before his martyrdom, thus bespeaks the descendants of these Jews, Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised,—ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your Fathers did, so do ye, Acts vii. 'tis implied the Holy Ghost had been always striving from age to age with that stubborn people: for where there is no counter-striving there can be no resistance, no more than there can be a war on one side only. Which also appears to have been the course of God's dealing with the old world, before their so general lapse into idolatry and sensual wickedness, from that passage, Gen. vi. 3. according to the more common reading and sense of those words.

Now whereas the Gospel is eminently said to be the ministration of the Spirit in contradistinction not only to the natural religion of other nations, but the divinely instituted religion of the Jews also, as is largely discoursed 2 Cor. iii. and more largely through the Epistle to the Galatians, especially chap. iv. and whereas we find that, in the Jewish Church, the Holy Ghost did generally diffuse its influences, and not otherwise withhold them, than penally, and upon great provocation; how much more may it be concluded, that under the Gospel, the same blessed Spirit is very generally at work upon the souls of men, till by their resisting, grieving, and quenching of it, they provoke it to retire and withdraw from them.

And let the consciences of men living under the Gospel testify in the case. Appeal, sinner, to thine own conscience; Hast thou never felt any thing of conviction, by the word of God? hadst thou never any thought injected of turning to God, of reforming thy life, of making thy peace? have no desires ever been raised in thee, no fears? hast thou never had any tastes and relishes of pleasure in the things of God? whence have these come? What! from thyself, who art not sufficient to think any thing as of thyself? *i. e.* not any good or right thought. All must be from that good Spirit that hath been striving with thee; and might still have been so unto a blessed issue for thy soul, if thou hadst not neglected and disobeyed it.

And do not go about to excuse thyself by saying, that so all others have done too, 'tis like, at one time or other; and if that therefore be the rule and measure, that they that contend against the strivings and motions of God's Spirit must be finally deserted and given up to perish,

who then can be saved? Think not of pleading so for thy neglecting and despising the grace and Spirit of God. 'Tis true that herein the great God shows his sovereignty: when all that enjoy the same advantages for salvation deserve by their slighting them to be forsaken alike; he gives instances and makes examples of just severity, and of the victorious power of grace, as seems him good, which there will be further occasion to speak more of hereafter. In the mean time the present design is not to justify thy condemnation but procure thy salvation, and therefore to admonish and instruct thee, that, though thou art not sure, because some others that have slighted and despised the grace and Spirit of God are notwithstanding conquered and saved thereby, it shall therefore fare as well with thee; yet thou hast reason to be confident, it will be well and happy for thee, if now thou despise and slight them not. And whether thou do or not, it is however plain that by being under the Gospel thou hast had a day, wherein to mind the things of thy peace, though it is not told thee it would last always, but the contrary is presently to be told thee.

And thou mayst now see 'tis not only a day in respect of *light* but *influence* also; that thou mightest not only know notionally what belonged thereto, but efficaciously and practically; which you have heard is the knowledge here meant. And the concurrence of such light and influence has made thee a season wherein thou wast to have been at work for thy soul. The day is the proper season for work: when the night comes working ceases, both because that then light fails, and because drowsiness and sloth are more apt to possess men. And the night will come. For, (which is the next thing we have to speak to,)

III. This day hath its bounds and limits, so that when it is over and lost with such, the things of their peace are for ever hid from their eyes. And that this day is not infinite and endless, we see in the present instance. Jerusalem had her day; but that day had its period, we see it comes to this at last, that *now* the things of her peace are hid from her eyes. We generally see the same thing, in that sinners are so earnestly pressed to make use of the present time. To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, Psal. xcv. quoted and urged Heb. iii. 7, 8. They are admonished to seek the [q] Lord while he may be found, to call upon him while he is nigh. It seems some time he will not be found, and will be afar off. [r] They are told this is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation.

This day, with any place or people, supposes a precedent night, when the day-spring from on high had not visited their horizon, and all within it sat in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death. Yea, and there was a time, we know, of very general darkness, when the Gospel day, "the day of visitation," had not yet dawned upon the world; "times of ignorance," wherein God as it were winked upon the nations of the earth; the beams of his eye did in a sort overshoot them, as the word ὑπεριδὼν imports. But when the eyelids of the morning open upon any people, and light shines to them with direct beams, they are *now* commanded to repent, (Acts xvii. 30.) limited to the present point of time with such peremptoriness, as that noble Roman used towards a proud prince, asking time to deliberate upon the proposal made to him of withdrawing his forces that molested some of the allies of that state; he draws a line about him with the end of his rod, and requires him now, out of hand, before he stirred out of that circle, to make his choice, whether he would be a friend or enemy to the people of Rome. So are sinners to understand the state of their own case. The God of thy life, sinner, in whose hands thy times are, doth with much higher right limit thee to the present time, and expects thy present answer to his just and merciful offers and demands. He circumscribes thy day of grace; it is enclosed on both parts, and hath an evening as well as morning; as it had a foregoing, so hath it a subsequent night, and the latter, if not more dark, yet usually much more stormy than the former! For God shuts up this day in much displeasure, which hath terrible effects. If it be not expressly told you what the condition of that night is that follows your Gospel day; if the watchman being asked, "What of the night?" do only answer it cometh as well as the morning came; black events are signified by that more awful silence. Or 'tis all one if you call it *a day*; there is enough to distinguish it from the *day of grace*. The Scriptures call such a calamitous season indifferently either by the name of night or day; but the latter name is used with some or other adjunct, to signify *day* is not meant in the pleasant or more grateful sense: a day of wrath, an evil day, a day of gloominess and thick darkness, not differing from the most dismal night; and to be told the morning of such a day is coming, is all one, as that the evening is coming of a bright and a serene day.

And here, perhaps, reader, thou will expect to be told what are the limits of this day of grace. It is indeed much more difficult punctually to assign those limits, than to ascertain thee there are such; but it is also less necessary. The wise and merciful God doth in matters of this nature little mind to gratify our curiosity; much less is it to be expected from him, that he should make known to us such things, whereof it were better we were ignorant, or the knowledge whereof would be much more a prejudice to us than an advantage. And it were as bold and rash an undertaking, in this case, as it would be vain and insignificant, for any man to take on him to say, in it, what God hath not said, or given him plain ground for. What I conceive to be plain and useful in this matter I shall lay down in the following propositions, insisting more largely where the matter requires it, and contenting myself but to mention what is obvious, and clear at the first sight.

1. That there is a great difference between the ends and limits of the day or season of grace as to particular persons, and in reference to the collective body of a people, inhabiting this or that place. It may be over with such or such a place, so as that they that dwell there shall no longer have the Gospel among them, when as yet it may not be over with every particular person belonging to it, who may be providentially cast elsewhere, or may have the "ingrafted word" in them, which they lose not. And again, it may be over with some particular persons in such a place, when it is not yet over with that people or place, generally considered.

2. As to both there is a difference between the ending of such a day, and intermissions, or dark intervals, that may be in it. The Gospel may be withdrawn from such a people, and be restored. And God often, no doubt, as to particular persons, either deprives them of the outward means of grace for a time, (by sickness, or many other ways,) or may for a time forbear moving upon them by his Spirit, and again try them with both.

3. As to particular persons, there may be much difference between such as, while they lived under the Gospel, gained the knowledge of the principal doctrines, or of the sum or substance, of Christianity, though without any sanctifying effect or impression upon their hearts, and such as, through their own negligence, lived under it in total ignorance hereof. The day of grace may not be over with the former, though they should never live under the ministry of the Gospel more. For it is possible, while they have the seeds and principles of holy truth laid up in their minds, God may graciously administer to them many occasions of recollecting and considering them, wherewith he may so please to co-operate, as to enliven them, and make them vital and effectual to their final salvation. Whereas, with the other sort, when they no more enjoy the external means, the day of grace is like to be quite over, so as that there may be no more hope in their case than in that of pagans in the darkest parts of the world; and perhaps much less, as their guilt hath been much greater by their neglect of so great and important things. It may be better with Tyre and Sidon, &c.

4. That yet it is a terrible judgment to the most knowing, to lose the external dispensation of the Gospel, while they have yet no sanctifying impression upon their hearts by it, and they are cast upon a fearful hazard of being lost for ever, being left by the departed Gospel in an unconverted state. For they need the most urgent inculcations of Gospel truths, and the most powerful enforcing means, to engage them to consider the things which they know. It is the design of the Gospel to beget not only light in the mind, but grace in the heart. And if that were not

q Isa. lv.

r Isa. xlix. 2 Cor vi.

done while they enjoyed such means, it is less likely to be done without them. And if any slighter and more superficial impressions were made upon them thereby, short of true and thorough conversion, how great is the danger that all will vanish, when they cease to be pressed and urged, and called upon by the public voice of the gospel-ministry any more. How naturally desident is the spirit of man, and apt to sink into deadness, worldliness, and carnality, even under the most lively and quickening means; and even where a saving work hath been wrought! how much more when those means fail, and there is no vital principle witbin, capable of self-excitation and improvement! O that they would consider this, who have got nothing by the Gospel all this while, but a little cold, spiritless, notional knowledge, and are in a possibility of losing it before they get any thing more!

5. That as it is certain death ends the day of grace with every unconverted person, so it is very possible it may end with divers before they die; by their total loss of all external means, or by the departure of the blessed Spirit of God from them, so as to return and visit them no more. How the day of grace may end with a person, is to be understood by considering what it is that makes up and constitutes such a day. There must be some measure and proportion of time to make up this (or any) day, which is as the *substratum* and ground forelaid. Then there must be light superadded, otherwise it differs not from night, which may have the same measure of mere time. The gospel-revelation some way or other must be had, as being the light of such a day. And again there must be some degree of liveliness, and vital influence, the more usual concomitant of light; the night doth more dispose men to drowsiness. The same sun that enlightens the world, disseminates also an invigorating influence. If the Spirit of the living God do no way animate the gospel-revelation, and breathe in it, we have no day of grace. It is not only a day of light, but a day of power, wherein souls can be wrought upon, and a people made willing to become the Lord's, Psal. cx. As the Redeemer revealed in the Gospel, is the light of the world, so he is life to it too, though neither are planted or do take root every where. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. That light that rays from him is vital light in itself, and in its tendency and design, though it be disliked and not entertained by the most.

Whereas therefore these things must concur to make up such a day: if either a man's time, his life on earth, expire, or if light quite fail him, or if all gracious influence be withheld, so as to be communicated no more; his day is done, the season of grace is over with him. Now it is plain, that many a one may lose the Gospel before his life end; and possible that all gracious influence may be restrained, while as yet the external dispensation of the Gospel remains. A sinner may have hardened his heart to that degree, that God will attempt him no more, in any kind, with any design of kindness to him, not in that more inward, immediate way at all, *i. e.* by the motions of his Spirit, which peculiarly can import nothing but friendly inclination, as whereby men are personally applied unto, so that cannot be meant; nor by the voice of the Gospel, which may either be continued for the sake of others, or they continued under it, but for their heavier doom at length. Which though it may seem severe, is not to be thought strange, much less unrighteous.

It is not to be thought strange to them that read the Bible, which so often speaks this sense: as when it warns and threatens men with so much terror, as Heb. x. 26—29. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath *done despite unto the Spirit of grace?* And when it tells us, after many overtures made to men in vain, of his having given them up, &c. Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12. But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me; so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels: and pronounces, Let him that is unjust be unjust still, and let him which is filthy, be filthy still, Rev. xxii. 11. and says, In thy filthiness is lewdness, because I have purged thee and thou wast not purged; thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee, Ezek. xxiv. 13. Which passages seem to imply a total desertion of them, and retraction of all gracious influence. And when it speaks of letting them be under the Gospel, and the ordinary means of salvation, for the most direful purposes: as that, This child (Jesus) was set for the fall, as well as for the rising, of many in Israel, Luke ii. 34. As to which text the very learned Grotius glossing upon the words κεῖται and εἰς πτῶσιν, says, *Accedo iis qui non necdum eventum, sed et consilium*, that *he is of their opinion who think not that the naked event, but the counsel or purpose of God, is signified by it, the same with* τίθεται; and alleges several texts where the active of that verb must have the same sense, as to appoint or ordain; and mentions divers others places of the same import with this so understood; and which therefore to recite will equally serve our present purpose; as that, Rom. ix. 33. Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone, and rock of offence. And 1 Pet. ii. 8. The stone which the builders refused, is made a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed. With that of our Saviour himself, John ix. 39. For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see, might be made blind. And most agreeable to those former places is that of the prophet, Isaiah xxviii. 13. But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. And we may add, that our Lord hath put us out of doubt that there is such a sin as that which is eminently called the sin against the Holy Ghost; that a man may, in such circumstances, and to such a degree, sin against that blessed Spirit, that he will never move or breathe upon them more, but leave them to a hopeless ruin; though I shall not in this discourse determine or discuss the nature of it. But I doubt not it is somewhat else, than final impenitency, and infidelity; and that every one that dies, not having sincerely repented and believed, is not guilty of it, though every one that is guilty of it, dies impenitent and unbelieving, but was guilty of it before; so as it is not the mere want of time, that makes him guilty. Whereupon therefore, that such may outlive their day of grace, is out of question.

But let not such, as, upon the descriptions the Gospel gives us of that sin, may be justly confident they have not perhaps committed it, therefore think themselves out of danger of losing their season of making their peace with God before they die. Many a one may, no doubt, that never committed the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, as he is the witness, by his wonderful works, of Christ being the Messiab. As one may die, by neglecting himself, that doth not poison himself, or cut his own throat. You will say, "But if the Spirit retire from men, so as never to return, where is the difference?" I answer, the difference lies in the *specific nature* and greater heinousness of that sin, and consequently, in the deeper degrees of its punishment. For though the reason of its unpardonableness lies not principally in its greater heinousness, but in its direct repugnancy to the way of obtaining pardon, yet there is no doubt of its being much more heinous than many other sins, for which men perish. And therefore 'tis in proportion more severely punished. But is it not misery enough to dwell in darkness and wo for ever, as every one that dies unreconciled to God must do, unless the most intense flames and horror of hell be your portion? As his case is sufficiently bad that must die as an ordinary felon, though he is not to be hanged, drawn, and quartered.

Nor is there any place or pretence for so profane a thought, as if there were any colour of unrighteousness in this course of procedure with such men. Is it unjust severity to let the Gospel become deadly to them, whose malignity perverts it, against its nature, and genuine ten-

dency, into a savour of death, (as 2 Cor. ii. 16.) which it is *τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, i. e.* to them (as the mentioned author speaks) who may be truly said to seek their own destruction? or that God should intend their more aggravated condemnation, even from the despised Gospel itself, who, when such light is come into the world, hate it, show themselves *lucifugæ, tenebriones*, (as he also phrases it, speaking further upon that first mentioned text,) *such as fly from the light, choose and love to lurk in darkness?* He must have very low thoughts of divine favour and acceptance, of Christ, and grace, and glory, that can have hard thoughts of God, for his vindicating, with greatest severity, the contempt of such things. What could better become his glorious majesty, and excellent greatness, than, as all things work together for good towards them that love him, so to let all things work for the hurt of them that so irreconcileably hate him, and bear a disaffected and implacable mind towards him? Nor doth the addition of his designing the matter so, make it hard. For if it be just to punish such wickedness, is it unjust to intend to punish it? and to intend to punish it according to its desert, when it cannot be thought unjust actually to render to men what they deserve?

We are, indeed, to account the primary intention of continuing the Gospel to such a people, among whom these live, is kindness towards others, not this higher revenge upon them; yet nothing hinders but that this revenge upon them, may also be the fit matter of his secondary intention. For should he intend nothing concerning them? Is he to be so unconcerned about his own creatures, that are under his government? While things cannot fall out to him unawares, but that he hath this dismal event in prospect before him, he must at least intend to let it be, or not to hinder it. And who can expect he should? For, that his gracious influence towards them should at length cease, is above all exception: that it ceasing, while they live still under the Gospel, they contract deeper guilt, and incur heavier punishment, follows of course. And who can say he should not intend to let it follow? For should he take away the Gospel from the rest, that these might be less punished? that others might not be saved, because they will not?

Nor can he be obliged to interpose extraordinarily, and alter for their sakes the course of nature and providence, so as either to hasten them the sooner out of the world, or cast them into any other part of it, where the Gospel is not, lest they should, by living still under it, be obnoxious to the severer punishment. For whither would this lead? He should, by equal reason, have been obliged to prevent men's sinning at all, that they might not be liable to any punishment. And so not to have made the world, or have otherwise framed the methods of his government, and less suitably to a whole community of reasonable creatures; or to have made an end of the world long ago, and have quitted all his great designs in it, lest some should sin on, and incur proportionable punishment! or to have provided extraordinarily that all should do and fare alike; and that it might never have come to pass, that it should be less tolerable for Capernaum, and Chorazin, and Bethsaida, than for Tyre, and Sidon, and Sodom, and Gomorrah. But is there unrighteousness with God? or is he unrighteous in taking vengeance? or is he therefore unjust, because he will render to every one according to his works; to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the gentile? Rom. ii. 6—9. Doth righteousness itself make him unrighteous? O sinner, understand how much better it is to avoid the stroke of Divine justice, than accuse it! God will be found true, and every man a liar, that he may be justified when he speaks, and be clear when he judges, Psal. li. 4.

6. Yet are we not to imagine any certain fixed rule, according whereto (except in the case of the unpardonable sin) the divine dispensation is measured in cases of this nature: *viz.* That, when a sinner hath contended just so long, or to such a degree, against his grace and Spirit in his Gospel, he shall be finally rejected; or if but so long, or not to such a degree, he is yet certainly to be further tried, or treated with. It is little to be doubted, but he puts forth the power of victorious grace, at length, upon some more obstinate and obdurate sinners, and that after longer persisted in their rebellions, (not having sinned the unpardonable sin,) and gives over some sooner, as it seems good unto him. Nor doth he herein owe an account to any man of his matters. Here sovereign good pleasure rules and arbitrates, that is tied to no certain rule. Neither, in these variations, is there any show of that blameable *προσωποληψία* or *accepting of persons*, which, in his own word, he so expressly disclaims. We must distinguish matters of right, (even such as are so by promise only, as well as others,) and matters of mere unpromised favour. In matters of right, to be an accepter of persons, is a thing most highly culpable with men, and which can have no place with the holy God: *i. e.* when a human judge hath his rule before him, according whereto he is to estimate men's rights, in judgment; there, to regard the person of the rich, or of the poor, to the prejudice of the justice of the cause, were an insufferable iniquity; as it were also in a private person to withhold another's right, because he hath no kindness for him. So even the great God himself, though of mere grace he first fixed and established the rule, (fitly therefore called the covenant, or law of grace,) by which he will proceed in pardoning and justifying men, or in condemning and holding them guilty, both here, and in the final judgment; yet having fixed it, he will never recede from it; so as either to acquit an impenitent unbeliever, or condemn a believing penitent. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive. None shall be ever able to accuse him of breach of faith, or of transgressing his own rules of justice. We find it therefore said in reference to the judgment of the last day, when God shall render to every man according to his works, whether they be Jews or gentiles, that there is no respect of persons with God, Rom. ii. 6—11. yet (*qui promisit pœnitenti, veniam, non promisit peccanti pœnitentiam*) whereas he hath, by his evangelical law, ascertained pardon to one that sincerely obeys it, but hath not promised grace to enable them to do so, to them that have long continued wilfully disobedient and rebellious; this communication of grace is, therefore, left arbitrary, and to be dispensed, as the matter of free and unassured favour, as it seems him good. And indeed, if in matters of arbitrary favour, respect of persons ought to have no place, friendship were quite excluded the world, and would be swallowed up of strict and rigid justice. I ought to take all men for my friends alike, otherwise than as justice should oblige me to be more respectful to men of more merit.

7. Wherefore no man can certainly know, or ought to conclude, concerning himself or others, as long as they live, that the season of grace is quite over with them. As we can conceive no rule God hath set to himself to proceed by, in ordinary cases of this nature; so nor is there any he hath set unto us to judge by, in this case. It were to no purpose, and could be of no use to men, to know so much; therefore it were unreasonable to expect God should have settled and declared any rule, by which they might come by the knowledge of it. As the case is then, *viz.* there being no such rule, no such thing can be concluded; for who can tell what an arbitrary, sovereign, free agent will do, if he declare not his own purpose himself? How should it be known, when the Spirit of God hath been often working upon the soul of a man, that this or that shall be the last act, and that he will never put forth another? And why should God make it known? To the person himself whose case it is, 'tis manifest it could be no benefit. Nor is it to be thought the holy God will ever so alter the course of his own proceedings, but that it shall finally be seen to all the world, that every man's destruction was, entirely, and to the last, of himself. If God had made it evident to a man, that he were finally rejected, he were obliged to believe it. But shall it ever be said, God hath made any thing a man's duty, which were inconsistent with his felicity. The having sinned himself into such a condition wherein he is forsaken of God, is indeed inconsistent with it. And so the case is to stand, *i. e.* that his perdition be in immediate connexion with his sin, not with his duty. As it would be in immediate, necessary connexion with his duty, if he were bound

to believe himself finally forsaken, and a lost creature. For that belief makes him hopeless, and a very devil, justifies his unbelief of the Gospel, towards himself, by removing and shutting up, towards him, the object of such a faith, and consequently brings the matter to this state, that he perishes,[s] not because he doth not believe God reconcileable to man, but because, with particular application to himself, he ought not so to believe.

And it were most unfit, and of very pernicious consequence, that such a thing should be generally known concerning others. It were to anticipate the final judgment, to create a hell upon earth, to tempt them whose doom were already known, to do all the mischief in the world, which malice and despair can suggest, and prompt them unto; it were to mingle devils with men! and fill the world with confusion! How should parents know how to behave themselves towards children, a husband towards the wife of his bosom in such a case, if it were known they were no more to counsel, exhort, admonish them, pray with or for them, than if they were devils!

And if there were such a rule, how frequent misapplications would the fallible and distempered minds of men make of it! so that they would be apt to fancy themselves warranted to judge severely, or uncharitably, and (as the truth of the case perhaps is) unjustly concerning others, from which they are so hardly withheld, when they have no such pretence to embolden them to it, but are so strictly forbidden it; and the judgment-seat so fenced, as it is, by the most awful interdicts, against their usurpations and encroachments. We are therefore to reverence the wisdom of the Divine government, that things of this nature are among the arcana of it; some of those secrets which belong not to us. He hath revealed what was fit and necessary for us and our children, and envies to man no useful knowledge.

But it may be said, when the apostle (I John v. 16.) directs to pray for a brother whom we see sinning a sin that is not unto death, and adds, there is a sin unto death, I do not say he shall pray for it; is it not implied that it may be known when one sins that sin unto death, not only to himself, but even to others too? I answer it is implied there may be too probable appearances of it, and much ground to suspect and fear it concerning some, in some cases; as when any against the highest evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, and that Jesus is the Christ, or the Messiah, (the proper and most sufficiently credible testimony whereof, he had mentioned in the foregoing verses, under heads to which the whole evidence of the truth of Christianity may be fitly enough reduced,) do notwithstanding, from that malice, which blinds their understanding, persist in infidelity, or apostatize and relapse into it from a former profession, there is great cause of suspicion, lest such have sinned that sin unto death. Whereupon yet it is to be observed, he doth not expressly forbid praying for the persons whose case we may doubt; only he doth not enjoin it, as he doth for others, but only says, I do not say ye shall pray for it, *i. e.* that in his present direction to pray for others, he did not intend such, but another sort, for whom they might pray remotely from any such suspicion: *viz.* that he meant *now* such praying as ought to be interchanged between Christian friends, that have reason, in the main, to be well persuaded concerning one another. In the mean time intending no opposition to what is elsewhere enjoined, the praying for all men, (1 Tim. ii. 1.) without the personal exclusion of any, as also our Lord himself prayed indefinitely for his most malicious enemies, Father, forgive them, they know not what they do; though he had formerly said, there was such a sin as should never be forgiven; whereof 'tis highly probable some of them were guilty: yet such he doth not expressly except; but his prayer being in the indefinite, not the universal, form, 'tis to be supposed it must mean such as were within the compass and reach of prayer, and capable of benefit by it. Nor doth the apostle here direct personally to exclude any, only that indefinitely and in the general such must be supposed not meant as had sinned the sin unto death; or must be conditionally excluded if they had, without determining who had or had not. To which purpose it is very observable, that a more abstract form of expression is used in this latter clause of this verse. For whereas in the former *positive part* of the direction, he enjoins praying for him or them that had not sinned unto death; (*viz.* concerning whom there was no ground for any such imagination or suspicion that they had;) in the *negative part*, concerning such as might have sinned it, he doth not say for him or them, but for it, (*i. e.* concerning, in reference to it,) as if he had said, the case in general only is to be excepted, and if persons are to be distinguished (since every sin is some one's sin, the sin of some person or other) let God distinguish, but do not you, 'tis enough for you to except the sin, committed by whomsoever. And though the former part of the verse speaks of a particular person, "If a man see his brother sin a sin that is not unto death," which is as determinate to a person as the sight of our eye can be, it doth not follow the latter part must suppose a like particular determination of any person's case, that he hath sinned it. I may have great reason to be confident such and such have not, when I can only suspect that such a one hath. And it is a thing much less unlikely to be certain to oneself than another, for they that have sinned unto death, are no doubt so blinded and stupified by it, that they are not more apt or competent to observe themselves, and consider their case, than others may be.

8. But though none ought to conclude that their day or season of grace is quite expired, yet they ought deeply to apprehend the danger, lest it should expire, before their necessary work be done, and their peace made. For though it can be of no use to them to know the former, and therefore they have no means appointed them by which to know it, 'tis of great use to apprehend the latter; and they have sufficient ground for the apprehension. All the cautions and warnings wherewith the Holy Spirit abounds, of the kind with those already mentioned, have that manifest design. And nothing can be more important, or apposite to this purpose, than that solemn charge of the great apostle, Phil. ii. 12. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; considered together with the subjoined ground of it, ver. 13. For it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure. How correspondent is the one with the other; *work*, for *he works*: there were no working at all to any purpose, or with any hope, if he did not work. And work with fear and trembling, for he works of his own good pleasure, *q. d.* "'Twere the greatest folly imaginable to trifle with one that works at so perfect liberty, under no obligation, that may desist when he will; to impose upon so absolutely sovereign and arbitrary an agent, that owes you nothing; and from whose former gracious operations not complied with, you can draw no argument unto any following ones, that because he doth, therefore he will. As there is no certain connexion between present time and future, but all time is made up of undepending, not strictly coherent, moments, so as no man can be sure, because one now exists, another shall; there is also no more certain connexion between the arbitrary acts of a free agent within such time; so that I cannot be sure, because he now darts in light upon me, is now convincing me, now awakening me, therefore he will still do so, again and again. Upon this ground then, what exhortation could be more proper than this? "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." What could be more awfully monitory, and enforcing of it, than that he works only of mere good will and pleasure? How should I tremble to think, if I should be negligent, or undutiful, he may give out the next moment, nay let the work fall, and me perish! And there is more especial cause for such an apprehension, upon the concurrence of such things as these:

I. If the workings of God's Spirit upon the soul of a man have been more than ordinarily strong and urgent, and do now cease: if there have been more powerful convictions, deeper humiliations, more awakened fears, more formed purposes of a new life, more fervent desires, that are now all vanished and fled, and the sinner is returned to his old dead and dull temper.

2. If there be no disposition to reflect and consider the difference, no sense of his loss, but he apprehends such workings of spirit in him unnecessary troubles to him, and thinks it well he is delivered and eased of them.

[s] See more to the purpose in this Appendix

3. If in the time when he was under such workings of spirit, he had made known his case to his minister, or any godly friend, whose company he now shuns, as not willing to be put in mind or hear any more of such matters.

4. If hereupon he hath more indulged sensual inclination, taken more liberty, gone against the checks of his own conscience, broken former good resolutions, involved himself in the guilt of any grosser sins.

5. If conscience, so baffled, be now silent; lets him alone, grows more sluggish and weaker (which it must) as his lusts grow stronger.

6. If the same lively powerful ministry, which before affected him much, now moves him not.

7. If especially he is grown into a dislike of such preaching; if serious godliness, and what tends to it, are become distasteful to him; if discourses of God, and Christ, of death and judgment, and of a holy life, are reckoned superfluous and needless, are unsavoury and disrelished; if he have learned to put disgraceful names upon things of this import, and the persons that most value them, and live accordingly; if he hath taken the seat of the scorner, and makes it his business to deride what he had once a reverence for, or took some complacency in.

8. If, upon all this, God withdraw such a ministry, so that he is now warned and admonished, exhorted and striven with, as formerly, no more. O the fearful danger of that man's case! Hath he no cause to fear lest the things of his peace should be for ever hid from his eyes? Surely he hath much cause of fear, but not of despair. Fear would in this case be his great duty, and might yet prove the means of saving him; despair would be his very heinous and destroying sin. If yet he would be stirred up to consider his case, whence he is fallen, and whither he is falling, and set himself to serious seekings of God, cast down himself before him, abase himself, cry for mercy, as for his life, there is yet hope in his case. God may make here an instance what he can obtain of himself to do for a perishing wretch! But,

IV. If with any that have lived under the Gospel, their day is quite expired, and the things of their peace now for ever hid from their eyes, this is in itself a most deplorable case, and much lamented by our Lord Jesus himself. That the case is in itself most deplorable, who sees not? A soul lost! a creature capable of God! upon its way to him! near to the kingdom of God! shipwrecked in the port! O sinner, from how high a hope art thou fallen! into what depths of misery and wo! And that it was lamented by our Lord, is in the text. He beheld the city, (very generally, we have reason to apprehend, inhabited by such wretched creatures,) and wept over it. This was a very affectionate lamentation. We lament often, very heartily, many a sad case, for which we do not shed tears. But tears, such tears, falling from such eyes! the issues of the purest and best governed passion that ever was, showed the true greatness of the cause. Here could be no exorbitancy or unjust excess, nothing more than was proportionable to the occasion. There needs no other proof that this is a sad case, than that our Lord lamented it with tears, which that he did, we are plainly told, so that touching that, there is no place for doubt. All that is liable to question is, whether we are to conceive in him any like resentments of such cases, in his present glorified state?

Indeed we cannot think heaven a place or state of sadness, or lamentation; and must take heed of conceiving any thing there, especially on the throne of glory, unsuitable to the most perfect nature, and the most glorious state. We are not to imagine tears there, which in that happy region are wiped away from inferior eyes; no grief, sorrow, or sighing, which are all fled away, and shall be no more; as there can be no other turbid passion of any kind. But when expressions that import anger, or grief, are used, even concerning God himself, we must sever in our conception every thing of imperfection, and ascribe every thing of real perfection. We are not to think such expressions signify nothing, that they have no meaning, or that nothing at all is to be attributed to him under them.

Nor are we again to think they signify the same thing with what we find in ourselves, and are wont to express by those names. In the Divine nature, there may be real, and yet most serene, complacency and displacency, *viz.* that are unaccompanied with the least commotion, and import nothing of imperfection, but perfection rather, as it is a perfection to apprehend things suitably to what in themselves they are. The Holy Scriptures frequently speak of God as angry, and grieved for the sins of men, and their miseries which ensue therefrom. And a real aversion and dislike is signified thereby, and by many other expressions, which in us would signify vehement agitations of affection, that we are sure can have no place in him. We ought therefore in our own thoughts to ascribe to him that calm aversion of will, in reference to the sins and miseries of men in general; and, in our own apprehensions, to remove to the utmost distance from him all such agitations of passion or affection, even though some expressions that occur, carry a great appearance thereof, should they be understood according to human measures, as they are human forms of speech. As, to instance in what is said by the glorious God himself, and very near in sense to what we have in the text, what can be more pathetic, than that lamenting wish, Psal. lxxxi. 13. O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!

But we must take heed lest, under the pretence that we cannot ascribe every thing to God that such expressions seem to import, we therefore ascribe nothing. We ascribe nothing, if we do not ascribe to a real unwillingness that men should sin on, and perish; and consequently a real willingness that they should turn to him, and live; which so many plain texts assert. And therefore it is unavoidably imposed upon us, to believe that God is truly unwilling of some things, which he doth not think fit to interpose his omnipotency to hinder, and is truly willing of some things, which he doth not put forth his omnipotency to effect. That he most fitly makes this the ordinary course of his dispensations towards men, to govern them by laws, and promises, and threatenings, (made most express to them that live under the Gospel,) to work upon their minds, their hope, and their fear; affording them the ordinary assistances of supernatural light and influence, with which he requires them to comply, and which, upon their refusing to do so, he may most righteously withhold, and give them the victory to their own ruin; though oftentimes he doth, from a sovereignty of grace, put forth that greater power upon others, equally negligent and obstinate, not to enforce, but effectually to incline, their wills, and gain a victory over them, to their salvation.

Nor is his will towards the rest altogether ineffectual, though it have not this effect. For whosoever thou art that livest under the Gospel, though thou dost not know that God so wills thy conversion and salvation, as to effect it, whatsoever resistance thou now makest; though thou art not sure he will finally overcome all thy resistance, and pluck thee as a firebrand out of the mouth of hell; yet thou canst not say his good will towards thee hath been without any effect at all tending thereto. He hath often called upon thee in his Gospel, to repent and turn to him through Christ; he hath waited on thee with long patience, and given thee time and space of repentance; he hath within that time been often at work with thy soul. Hath he not many times let in beams of light upon thee? shown thee the evil of thy ways? convinced thee? awakened thee? half persuaded thee? and thou never hadst reason to doubt, but that if thou hadst set thyself with serious diligence to work out thy own salvation, he would have wrought on, so as to have brought things to a blessed issue for thy soul.

Thou mightest discern his mind towards thee to be agreeable to his word, wherein he hath testified to thee he desired not the death of sinners, that he hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, or in the death of the wicked, but that he should turn and live; exhorted thee, expostulated with thee, and others in thy condition, Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? He hath told thee expressly thy stubbornness, and contending against him, did grieve him, and vex his Spirit; that thy sin, wherein thou hast indulged thyself, hath been an abomination to him, that it was the abominable thing which his soul hated, that he was broken with the whorish heart of such as thou, and pressed therewith, as a cart that was full of sheaves.

Now such expressions as these, though they are borrowed from man, and must be understood suitably to God,

though they do not signify the thing with him as they do in us, yet they do not signify nothing. As when hands and eyes are attributed to God, they do not signify as they do with us, yet they signify somewhat correspondent, as active and visive power: so these expressions, though they signify not, in God, such unquiet motions and passions, as they would in us, they do signify a mind and will, really, though with the most perfect calmness and tranquillity, set against sin, and the horrid consequences of it, which yet, for greater reasons than we can understand, he may not see fit to do all he can to prevent. And if we know not how to reconcile such a will in God, with some of our notions concerning the Divine nature; shall we, for what we have thought of him, deny what he hath so expressly said of himself, or pretend to understand his nature better than he himself doth it?

And when we see from such express sayings in Scripture, reduced to a sense becoming God, how God's mind stands in reference to sinners, and their self-destroying ways, we may thence apprehend what temper of mind our Lord Jesus also bears towards them in the like case, even in his glorified state. For can you think there is a disagreement between him and the Father about these things? And whereas we find our blessed Lord, in the days of his flesh, one while complaining men would not come to him that they might have life, (John v. 40.) elsewhere grieved at the hardness of their hearts, (Mark iii. 5.) and here scattering tears over sinning and perishing Jerusalem; we cannot doubt but that the (innocent) perturbation, which his earthly state did admit, being severed, his mind is still the same, in reference to cases of the same nature; for can we think there is any disagreement between him and himself? We cannot therefore doubt but that,

1. He distinctly comprehends the truth of any such case. He beholds from the throne of his glory above, all the treaties which are held and managed with sinners in his name, and what their deportments are therein. His eyes are as a flame of fire, wherewith he searches hearts, and trieth reins. He hath seen therefore, sinner, all along, every time an offer of grace hath been made to thee, and been rejected; when thou hast slighted counsels and warnings that have been given thee, exhortations and entreaties that have been pressed upon thee, for many years together, and how thou hast hardened thy heart against reproofs and threatenings, against promises and allurements; and beholds the tendency of all this, what is like to come of it, and that, if thou persist, it will be bitterness in the end.

2. That he hath a real dislike of the sinfulness of thy course. It is not indifferent to him whether thou obeyest, or disobeyest the Gospel; whether thou turn and repent or no; that he is truly displeased at thy trifling, sloth, negligence, impenitency, hardness of heart, stubborn obstinacy, and contempt of his grace, and takes real offence at them.

3. He hath real kind propensions towards thee, and is ready to receive thy returning soul, and effectually to mediate with the offended Majesty of heaven for thee, as long as there is any hope in thy case.

4. When he sees there is no hope, he pities thee, while thou seest it not, and dost not pity thyself. Pity and mercy above are not names only; 'tis a great reality that is signified by them, and that hath place there, in far higher excellency and perfection, than it can with us poor mortals here below. Ours is but borrowed, and participated from that first fountain and original above. Thou dost not perish unlamented, even with the purest heaveuly pity, though thou hast made thy case incapable of remedy. As the well-tempered judge bewails the sad end of the malefactor, whom justice obliges him not to spare, or save.

And now let us consider what use is to be made of all this. And though nothing can be useful to the persons themselves, whom the Redeemer thus laments as lost, yet that he doth so, may be of great use to others.

Use. Which will partly concern those who do justly apprehend this is not their case; and partly such as may be in great fear that it is.

I. For such as have reason to persuade themselves it is not their case. The best ground upon which any can confidently conclude this, is that they have in this their present day, through the grace of God, already effectually known the things of their peace, such, *viz.* as have sincerely, with all their hearts and souls, turned to God, taken him to be their God, and devoted themselves to him, to be his; intrusting and subjecting themselves to the saving mercy and governing power of the Redeemer, according to the tenor of the gospel-covenant, from which they do not find their hearts to swerve or decline, but resolve, through Divine assistance, to persevere herein all their days. Now for such as with whom things are already brought to that comfortable conclusion, I only say to them,

1. Rejoice and bless God that so it is. Christ your Redeemer rejoices with you, and over you; you may collect it from his contrary resentment of their case who are past hope; if he weep over them, he, no doubt, rejoices over you. There is joy in heaven concerning you. Angels rejoice, your glorious Redeemer presiding in the joyful concert. And should not you rejoice for yourselves? Consider what a discrimination is made in your case! To how many hath that Gospel been a deadly savour, which hath proved a savour of life unto life to you! How many have fallen on your right hand, and your left, stumbling at the stone of offence, which to you is become the headstone of the corner, elect, and precious! Whence is this difference? Did you never slight Christ? never make light of offered mercy? was your mind never blind or vain? was your heart never hard or dead? were the terms of peace and reconciliation never rejected or disregarded by you? How should you admire victorious grace, that would never desist from striving with you till it had overcome! You are the triumph of the Redeemer's conquering love, who might have been of his wrath and justice! Endeavour your spirits may taste, more and more, the sweetness of reconciliation, that you may more abound in joy and praises. Is it not pleasant to you to be at peace with God? to find that all controversies are taken up between him and you? that you can now approach him, and his terrors not make you afraid? that you can enter into the secret of his presence, and solace yourselves in his assured favour and love? How should you joy in God through Jesus Christ, by whom you have received the atonement! What have you now to fear? If, when you were enemies, you were reconciled by the death of Christ, how much more, being reconciled, shall you be saved by his life? How great a thing have you to oppose to all worldly troubles? If God be for you, who can be against you? Think how mean it is for the friends of God, the favourites of heaven, to be dismayed at the appearances of danger that threaten them from the inhabitants of the earth! What if all the world were in a posture of hostility against you, when the mighty Lord of all is your friend? Take heed of thinking meanly of his power and love; would any one diminish to himself, whom he takes for his God? All people will walk every one in the name of his god; why should not you much more in the name of yours, glorying in him, and making your boast of him all the day long? O the reproach which is cast upon the glorious name of the great God, by their diffidence and despondency, who visibly stand in special relation to him, but fear the impotent malice of mortal man more than they can trust in his Almighty love! If indeed you are justified by faith, and have peace with God, it becomes you so to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, as also to glory in tribulation, and tell all the world that in his favour stands your life, and that you care not who is displeased with you for the things wherewith, you have reason to apprehend, he is pleased.

2. Demean yourselves with that care, caution, and dutifulness that become a state of reconciliation. Bethink yourselves that your present peace and friendship with God is not original, and continued from thence, but hath been interrupted and broken; that your peace is not that of constantly innocent persons. You stand not in this good and happy state because you never offended, but as being reconciled, and who therefore were once enemies. And when you were brought to know, in that your day, which you have enjoyed, the things belonging to your peace, you were made to feel the smart and taste the bitterness of your having been alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works. When the terrors of God did beset you round, and his arrows stuck fast in you, did you not then

† See the Appendix.

find trouble and sorrow? were you not in a fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation to consume and burn you up as adversaries? Would you not then have given all the world for a peaceful word or look? for any glimmering hope of peace? How wary and afraid should you be of a new breach! How should you study acceptable deportments, and to walk worthy of God unto all well-pleasing! How strictly careful should you be to keep faith with him, and abide steadfast in his covenant! How concerned for his interest! and in what agonies of spirit, when you behold the eruptions of enmity against him from any others! not from any distrust, or fear of final prejudice to his interest, but from the apprehension of the unrighteousness of the thing itself, and a dutiful love to his name, throne, and government. How zealous should you be to draw in others! how fervent in your endeavours, within your own sphere, and how large in your desires, extended as far as the sphere of the universe, that every knee might bow to him, and every tongue confess to him! They ought to be more deeply concerned for his righteous cause, that remember they were once most unrighteously engaged against it. And ought besides to be filled with compassion towards the souls of men, yet in an unreconciled state, as having known by the terrors of the Lord, and remembering the experienced dismalness and horror of that state, what it was to have Divine wrath and justice armed against you with Almighty power! And to have heard the thunder of such a voice, "I lift my hand to heaven, and swear I live for ever, if I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on vengeance, I will recompense fury to mine adversaries, vengeance to mine enemies."—Do you not know what the case is like to be, when potsherds, that should strive but with the potsherds of the earth, venture to oppose themselves as antagonists to omnipotency? And when briars and thorns set themselves in battle-array against the consuming fire, how easily it can pass through, and devour, and burn them up together? And how much more fearful is their condition that know it not! but are ready to rush like the horse into the battle! Do you owe no duty, no pity to them that have the same nature with you, and with whom your case was once the same? If you do indeed know the things of your peace God-ward, so as to have made your peace, to have come to an agreement, and struck a covenant with him; you have now taken his side, are of his confederates; not as equals but subjects. You have sworn allegiance to him, and associated yourself with all them that have done so. There can hereupon be but one common interest to him and you. Hence therefore you are most strictly obliged to wish well to that interest, and promote it to your uttermost, in his own way, *i. e.* according to his openly avowed inclination and design, and the genuine constitution of that kingdom which he hath erected, and is intent to enlarge and extend further in the world. That, you do well know, is a kingdom of grace; for his natural kingdom already confines with the universe, and can have no enlargement, without enlarging the creation. Whosoever they are that contend against him, are not merely enemies, therefore, but rebels. And you see he aims to conquer them by love and goodness; and therefore treats with them, and seeks to establish a kingdom over them, in and by a Mediator, who if he were not intent upon the same design, had never lamented the destruction of any of them, and wept over their ruin, as here you find. So, therefore, should you long for the conversion of souls, and enlargement of his kingdom this way, both out of loyalty to him, and compassion towards them.

II. For such as may be in great fear lest this prove to be their case. They are either such as may fear it, but do not; or such as are deeply afflicted with this actual fear.

1. For the former sort, who are in too great danger of bringing themselves into this dreadful deplorate condition, but apprehend nothing of it. All that is to be said to them apart by themselves, is only to awaken them out of their drowsy, dangerous slumber and security; and then they will be capable of being spoken to, together with the other sort. Let me therefore,

I. Demand of you; do you believe there is a Lord over you, yea or no? Use your thoughts, for about matters that concern you less, you can think. Do you not apprehend you have an invisible Owner and Ruler, that rightfully claims to himself an interest in you, and a governing power over you? How came you into being? You know you made not yourselves. And if you yet look no higher than to progenitors of your own kind, mortal men, as you are; how came they into being? You have so much understanding about you, if you would use it, as to know they could none of them make themselves more than you, and that, therefore, human race must have had its beginning from some superior Maker. And did not he that made them make you and all things else? Where are your arguments to prove it was otherwise, and that this world, and all the generations of men, took beginning of themselves, without a wise and mighty Creator? Produce your strong reasons, upon which you will venture your souls, and all the possibilities of your being happy or miserable to eternity! Will your imagination make you safe? and protect you against his wrath and justice, whose authority you will not own? Can you, by it, uncreate your Creator, and nullify the eternal Being? or have you any thing else, besides your own blind imagination, to make you confident, that all things came of nothing, without any maker? But if you know not how to think this reasonable, and apprehend you must allow yourselves to owe your being to an Almighty Creator, let me,

2. Ask of you how you think your life is maintained? Doth not he that made you live, keep you alive? Whereas you have heard we all live, and move, and have our beings in him, doth it not seem most likely to you to be so? Have you power of your own life? Do you think you can live as long as you will? At least do you not find you need the common helps of meat and drink, and air and clothing, for the support and comfort of your lives? And are not all these his creatures as well as you? And can you have them, whether he will or no?

3. And how can you think that he that made and maintains you, hath no right to rule you? If it were possible any one should as much depend upon you, would you not claim such power over him? Can you suppose yourself to be under no obligation to please him, who hath done so much for you? and to do his will, if you can any way know it?

4. And can you pretend you have no means to know it? That book that goes up and down under the name of his Word, can you disprove it to be his Word? If such writings should now first come into the world, so sincere, so awful, so holy, so heavenly, bearing so expressly the Divine image, avowing themselves to be from God, and the most wonderful works are wrought to prove them his word, the deaf made to hear, the blind to see, the dumb to speak, the sick healed, the dead raised, by a word only commanding it to be so, would you not confess this to be sufficient evidence that this revelation came from heaven. And are you not sufficiently assured they are so confirmed? Do you find in yourselves any inclination to cheat your children, in any thing that concerns their well being? Why should you more suspect your forefather's design, to cheat you in the mere reporting falsely a matter of fact? Was not human nature the same, so many hundred years ago? Did ever the enemies of the Christian name, in the earlier days of Christianity, when it was but a novelty in the world, and as much hated, and endeavoured to be rooted out, as ever any profession was, deny such matters of fact? Have not some of the most spiteful of them confessed it? Did not Christians then willingly sacrifice their lives by multitudes, upon the assured truth of these things. Have they not been ever since most strictly careful to preserve these writings, and transmit them, as wherein the all of themselves and their posterity was contained? And where is now your new light? where are your latter discoveries, upon which, so many ages after, you are able to evict these writings of falsehood, or dare venture to disbelieve them?

5. But if you believe these writings to be divine, how expressly is it told you, in them, what the state of your case is God-ward, and what he requires of you! You may see you have displeased him, and how you are to please him, as hath been shown before in this discourse. You know that you have lived in the world mindless and inobservant of him, not trusting, fearing, loving, or delighting in him, declining his acquaintance and converse;

seeking your own pleasure, following your inclination, doing your own will; as if you were supreme, never minding to refer your actions to his precepts as your rule, or to his glory as your end. And from that word of his you may understand all this to be very displeasing to him. And that you can never please him by continuing this course, but by breaking it off, and returning to him as your Lord and your God. That since your case did need a redeemer, and reconciler, and he hath provided and appointed one for you; you are to apply yourselves to him, to commit and subject your souls to him, to trust in his merits and blood, and submit to his authority and government. And,

6. Are you not continually called hereto by the Gospel, under which you have lived all this while? so that you are in actual, continual rebellion against him all the while you comply not with this call; every breath you draw is rebellious breath. There is no moment wherein this lies not upon you, by every moment's addition to your time. And that patience of his which adds by moments to your life, and should lead you to repentance, is, while you repent not, perverted by you, only to the treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of his righteous judgment.

7. And do you not find, as his word also plainly tells you, a great averseness and disinclination in you to any such serious solemn applying yourself to him, and your Redeemer? Try your own hearts; do you not find them draw back and recoil? if you urge them, do they not still fly off? How loth are you to retire! and set yourselves to consider your case! and unto serious seeking of God in Christ! both from a reluctancy and indisposition to any such employment as this is itself, and from disaffection to that whereto it tends, the breaking off your former sinful course of life, and entering upon a better. And does not all this show you the plain truth of what the word of God hath told you, that the Ethiopian may as soon change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as they do good who are accustomed to do evil; (Jer. xiii. 23.) that you have a heart that cannot repent, (Rom. ii. 5.) till God give you repentance to life, (Acts xi. 18.) that you cannot come to Christ till the Father draw you, John vi. 44. Do you not see your case then? that you must perish if you have not help from heaven, if God do not give you his grace, to overcome and cure the averseness and malignity of your nature? that things are likely thus to run on with you as they have from day to day, and from year to year; and you that are unwilling to take the course that is necessary for your salvation to-day, are likely to be as unwilling tomorrow, and so your lives consume in vanity, till you drop into perdition? But,

8. Dost thou not also know, sinner, (what hath been so newly shown thee from God's word,) that, by thy being under the Gospel, thou hast a day of grace? not only as offers of pardon and reconciliation are made to thee in it, but also as through it, converting, heart-renewing grace is to be expected, and may be had? that what is sufficient for the turning and changing of thy heart, is usually not given all at once, but as gentler insinuations (the injection of some good thoughts and desires) are complied with, more powerful influences may be hoped to follow? that therefore thou art concerned, upon any such thought cast into thy mind, of going now to seek God for the life of thy soul, to strive, thyself, against thy own disinclination? that if thou do not, but yield to it, and still defer, it may prove mortal to thee? For is it not plain to thee in itself, and from what hath been said, that this day hath its limits, and will come to an end? Dost thou not know thou art a mortal creature, that thy breath is in thy nostrils? Dost thou know how near thou art to the end of thy life? and how few breaths there may be for thee between this present moment and eternity? Dost thou not know thy day of grace may end before thy life? that thou mayst be cast far enough out of the sound of the Gospel? and if thou shouldst carry any notices of it with thee, thou, who hast been so unapt to consider them, while they were daily pressed upon thee, wilt most probably be less apt when thou hearest of no such thing? that thou mayst live still under the Gospel, and the Spirit of grace retire from thee, and never attempt thee more for thy former despiting of it? For what obligation hast thou upon that blessed Spirit? Or why shouldst thou think a Deity bound to attend upon thy trifings? And,

9. If yet all this move not: consider what it will be to die unreconciled to God! Thou hast been his enemy, he hath made thee gracious offers of peace, waited long upon thee, thou hast made light of all. The matter must at length end either in reconciliation or vengeance! The former is not acceptable to thee: art thou prepared for the latter? canst thou sustain it? Is it not a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God? Thou wilt not do him right; he must then right himself upon thee. Dost thou think he cannot do it? canst thou doubt his power? Cast thine eyes about thee, behold the greatness (as far as thou canst) of this creation of his, whereof thou art a very little part. He that hath made that sun over thine head, and stretched out those spacious heavens, that hath furnished them with those innumerable bright stars, that governs all their motions, that hath hung this earth upon nothing, that made and sustains that great variety of creatures that inhabit it, can he not deal with thee, a worm? Can thine heart endure, or thine hands be strong, if he plead with thee? if he surround thee with his terrors, and set them in battle array against thee? Hell and destruction are open before him, and without covering; how soon art thou cast in and ingulfed! Sit down, and consider whether thou be able, with *thy impotency*, to stand before him, that comes against thee with *almighty power!* Is it not better to sue in time for peace? But perhaps thou mayst say, "I begin now to fear it is too late, I have so long slighted the Gospel, resisted the Holy Spirit of God, abused and baffled my own light and conscience, that I am afraid God will quite abandon me, and cast me off for ever." It is well if thou do indeed begin to fear. That fear gives hope. Thou art then capable of coming into their rank who are next to be spoken to, *viz.*

2. Such as feel themselves afflicted with the apprehension and dread of their having out-lived their day, and that the things of their peace are now irrecoverably hid from their eyes. I desire to counsel such faithfully, according to that light and guidance which the Gospel of our Lord affords us in reference to any such case.

1. Take heed of stifling that fear suddenly, but labour to improve it to some advantage, and then to cure and remove it by rational, evangelical means and methods. Do not, as thou lovest the life of thy soul, go about suddenly, or by undue means, to smother or extinguish it. 'Tis too possible, when any such apprehension strikes into a man's mind, because 'tis a sharp or piercing thought, disturbs his quiet, gives him molestation, and some torture, to pluck out the dart too soon, and cast it away. Perhaps such a course is taken, as doth him unspeakably more mischief, than a thousand such thoughts would ever do. He diverts, it may be, to vain company, or to sensuality, talks or drinks away his trouble; makes death his cure of pain, and to avoid the fear of hell, leaps into it. Is this indeed the wisest course? Either thy apprehension is reasonable, or unreasonable. If it should prove a reasonable apprehension, as it is a terrible one, would the neglect of it become a reasonable creature, or mend thy case? if it shall be found unreasonable, it may require time and some debate to discover it to be so; whereby, when it is manifestly detected, with how much greater satisfaction is it laid aside! Labour then to inquire rightly concerning this matter.

2. In this inquiry, consider diligently what the kind of that fear is that you find yourselves afflicted with. The fear that perplexes your heart, must some way correspond to the apprehension you have in your mind, touching your case. Consider what that is, and in what form it shows itself there. Doth it appear in the form of a peremptory judgment, a definitive sentence, which you have past within yourself concerning your case; that your day is over, and you are a lost creature? or only of a mere doubt, lest it should prove so? The fear that corresponds to the former of these, makes you quite desperate, and obstinately resolute against any means for the bettering of your condition. The fear that answers to the latter apprehension, hath a mixture of hope in it, which admits of somewhat to be done for your relief, and will prompt thereunto. Labour to discern which of these is the present temper and posture of your spirit.

3. If you find it be the former, let no thought any longer dwell in your mind *under that form, viz.* as a definitive sentence concerning your state. You have nothing to do to pass such a judgment; the tendency of it is dismal and horrid, as you may, yourself, perceive. And your ground for it is none at all. Your conscience within you is to do the office of a judge; but only of an under-judge, that is to proceed strictly by rule, prescribed and set by the sovereign Lord and Arbiter of life and death: there is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Nor is your conscience, as an under-judge, to meddle at all, but in cases within your cognizance. This about your final state is a reserved, excepted case, belonging only to the supreme tribunal, which you must take heed how you usurp. As such a judgment tends to make you desperate, so there will be high presumption in this despair. Dare you take upon you to cancel and nullify to yourself the obligation of the evangelical law? and whereas that makes it your duty to repent, and believe the Gospel, to absolve yourself from this bond, and say, it is none of your duty, or make it impossible to you to do it? You have matter and cases enough within the cognizance of your conscience, not only the particular actions of your life, but your present state also, whether you be as yet in a state of acceptance with God, through Christ, yea or no. And here you have rules set you to judge by. But concerning your final state, or that you shall never be brought into a state of acceptance, you have no rule by which you can make such a judgment; and therefore this judgment belongs not to you. Look then upon the matter of your final condition, as an exempt case, reserved to the future judgment, and the present determination whereof, against yourself, is without your compass and line, and most unsuitable to the state of probation, wherein, you are to reckon, God continues you here, with the rest of men in this world; and therefore any such judgment you should tear and reverse, and as such, not permit to have any place with you.

4. Yet since, as hath been said, you are not quite to reject or obliterate any apprehension or thought touching this subject, make it your business to correct and reduce it to that other form, *i. e.* let it only for the present remain with you, as a doubt how your case now stands, and what issue it may at length have. And see that your fear thereupon be answerable to your apprehension, so rectified. While as yet it is not evident, you have made your peace with God upon his known terms, you are to consider God hath left your case a doubtful case, and you are to conceive of it accordingly; and are to entertain a fear concerning it, not as certainly hopeless, but as uncertain. And as yours is really a doubtful case, 'tis a most important one. It concerns your souls, and your eternal well-being, and is not therefore to be neglected, or trifled with. You do not know how God will deal with you: whether he will again afford you such help as he hath done, or whether ever he will effectually move your heart unto conversion and salvation. You therefore are to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, because (as was told you) he works, but of his own good pleasure. Your fear should not exceed this state of your case, so as to exclude hope. It is of unspeakable concernment to you, that hope do intermingle with your fear. That will do much to mollify and soften your hearts, that after all the abuse of mercy, and imposing upon the patience of God, your neglects and slights of a bleeding Saviour, your resisting and grieving the Spirit of grace, he may yet, once for all, visit your forlorn soul with his vital influence, and save you from going down to perdition! How can your hearts but melt and break upon this apprehension! And it is not a groundless one. He that "came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance," will not fail to treat them well, whom he sees beginning to listen to his call, and entertaining the thoughts that most directly tend to bring them to a compliance with it. Your hope insinuating itself and mingling with your fear, is highly grateful to the God of all grace. He takes pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy, Psal. cxlvii. 11.

5. But see to it also that your fear be not slight and momentary, and that it vanish not, while as yet it hath so great a work to do in you, *viz.* to engage you to accept God's own terms of peace and reconciliation, with all your heart and soul. It is of continual use, even not only in order to conversion, but to the converted also. Can you think those mentioned words were spoken to none such, Phil. ii. 12, 13.? or those, Heb. iv. 1. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short, &c.? And do we not find a holy fear is to contribute all along to the whole of progressive sanctification? 2 Cor. vii. 1. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. And that by it he preserves his own, that they never depart from him, Jer. xxxii. 40. Much more do you need it in your present case, while matters are yet in treaty between God and you. And as it should not exceed the true apprehension of your case, so nor should it come short of it.

6. You should therefore in order hereto aggravate to yourselves the just causes of your fear. Why are you afraid your day should be over, and the things of your peace be for ever hid from your eyes? Is it not that you have sinned against much light, against many checks of your own consciences, against many very serious warnings and exhortations, many earnest importunate beseechings and entreaties you have had in the ministry of the Gospel, many motions and strivings of the Spirit of God thereby? Let your thoughts dwell upon these things. Think what it is for the great God, the Lord of glory, to have been slighted by a worm! Doth not this deserve as ill things at the hands of God as you can fear? 'Tis fit you should apprehend what your desert is, though perhaps mercy may interpose and avert the deserved dreadful event. And if he have signified his displeasure towards you hereupon, by desisting for the present, and ceasing to strive with you as he hath formerly done; if your heart be grown more cold, and dead, and hard, than sometime it was; if you have been left so as to fall into grosser sin; 'tis highly reasonable you should fear being finally forsaken of the blessed spirit of God, and greatly fear it, but with an awful fear, that may awaken you most earnestly to endeavour his return to you, not with a despairing fear, that will bind you up from any further endeavour for your soul at all.

And if upon all this (by death or otherwise) such a ministry be withdrawn from you as God did work by, in some degree, upon you, and you find not in that kind, what is so suitable to your state and case; take heed lest you be stupid under such a stroke. Think what it imports unto you, if God have, as it were, said concerning any servant of his, (as Ezek. iii. 26.) I will make his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, that he shall not be a reprover to you any more! Consider that God may by this be making way that "wrath may come upon you to the uttermost," and never let you have opportunity to know more the things of your peace. Perhaps you may never meet with the man more, that shall speak so accommodately to your condition, that shall so closely pursue you through all the haunts, and subterfuges, and lurking-holes, wherein your guilty convinced soul hath been wont to hide itself, and falsely seek to heal its own wounds. One of more value may be less apt, possibly, to profit you: as a more polished key doth not therefore alike fit every lock. And thy case may be such, that thou shalt never hear a sermon or the voice of a preacher more.

7. And now in this case recollect yourselves, what sins you have been formerly convinced of, under such a ministry, and which you have persisted in notwithstanding. Were you never convinced of your neglecting God, and living as without him in the world? of your low esteem and disregard of Christ? of your worldliness, your minding only the things of this earth? of your carnality, pride, self-seeking, voluptuousness, your having been lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God? of your unprofitableness in your station? wherein you ought to have lived more conformably to Christian rules and precepts, according to the relations wherein God had set you? Were you never convinced how very faulty governors you have been, or members of families? parents or masters, children or servants, &c.? What will this come to at last, that convictions have hitherto signified and served for nothing but increase of guilt?

8. Under all this weight and load of guilt, consider what

you have to do for your souls! Bethink yourselves; are you to sit down and yield yourselves to perish? Consider, man, it is the business of thy soul, and of thine eternal state, that is now before thee. Thou hast the dreadful flaming gulf of everlasting horror and misery in view; hast thou nothing left thee to do but to throw thyself into it? Methinks thou shouldst sooner reconcile thy thoughts to any thing than that; and that, if any thing at all be to be done for thine escape, thou shouldst rather set thyself about it, and do it. Thou art yet alive, not yet in hell, yet the patience of God spares thee, thou hast yet time to consider, thou hast the power to think yet left thee, and canst thou use it no other way than to think of perishing? Think rather how not to perish. A great point is gained, if thou art but brought to say, "What shall I do to be saved?" which doth imply thou dost both apprehend the distressedness of thy case, and art willing to do any thing that is to be done for thy relief. And if thou art brought to this, thy circumstances may perhaps be such, that thou canst only put this question to thyself, and art only thyself to answer it, without a living, present guide, which may therefore make such a help as this needful to thee. Possibly some irresistible providence may have so cast thy lot, that thou art only now to be thy own preacher; though it sometime was otherwise with thee; and things were said to thee most suitable to the condition of thy soul, which thou wouldst not then consider. It is yet pressed upon thee to consider now, with some design to direct thy thoughts, that they run not into useless and troublesome confusion only. And your subject being what course you are now to take, that you may escape eternal wrath and ruin, 'tis obvious to you to apprehend nothing is to be done against or without God, but with him, and by him. Your utmost consideration can but bring the matter to this short point, that whereas you have highly offended the God that made you, incurred his wrath, and made him your enemy, either to resist, or treat and supplicate. That madness which would let you intend *the former*, is not capable of consideration at all. For, if you consider, will you contend with omnipotency, or fight with an all-devouring flame? And *as to the latter*, it is well for you, that it can be the matter of your consideration, that you have any encouragement to turn your thoughts that way. You might have enemies that, being provoked, and having you in their power, would never admit of a treaty, nor regard your supplications, but fall upon you with merciless fury, and leave you nothing to think of but perishing. Here it is not so with you. The merciful God hath graciously told you, fury is not so in him, but that (though if briars and thorns will set themselves in battle against him, he will easily pass through, and burn them up together, yet) if any will take hold of his strength, that they may make peace with him, they shall make peace with him, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. You are to consider there is danger in your case, and there is hope, that your sin is not so little as to need no forgiveness, nor too great to be forgiven. Wherefore, whose case soever this is, since you may be forgiven, if you duly apply yourselves, and must be forgiven, or you are undone, my further advice to you is, and you may, as to this, advise yourself, having nothing else left you to do.

9. That you cast yourselves down before the mercy-seat of God, humble yourselves deeply at his footstool, turn to him with all your soul, implore his mercy through Christ, make a solemn covenant with him, taking him to be your God, and devoting yourself to him to be his, accepting his Son as your Lord and Saviour, and resigning your soul with submission and trust entirely to him, to be ruled and saved by him. That you are to do this, the case is plain, and even speaks itself; how you are to do it may need to be more particularly told you.

1. Take heed that what you do in this be not the mere effect of your present apprehended distress, but of the altered judgment and inclination of your mind and heart. The apprehension of your distressed dangerous condition, may be a useful means and inducement to engage you more seriously to listen and attend to the proposals made to you in the gospel. But if upon all this, it should be the sense of your heart that you would rather live still as without God in the world, and that you would never come to any such treaty or agreement with him, if mere necessity, and the fear of perishing, did not urge you to it, you are still but where you were. Therefore, though the feared danger was necessary to make you bethink yourself, and consider what God propounds to you; that consideration ought to have that further effect upon you, to convince you of the equity and desirableness of the things themselves which he propounds, summarily, of your betaking yourselves to him as your sovereign Lord, and supreme Good, to fear and love, obey and enjoy him, in Christ Jesus, and accordingly ought to incline your heart thereto.

2. You are to consider in your entering into this covenant with God in Christ, that it is not a transaction for the present only you are about, but for your whole life. This God is to be your God for ever and ever, your God and your guide even to the death, Psal. xlviii. 14. You are to live in his fear and love, in his service and communion, all your days, and must understand this to be the meaning and tenor of the covenant which you make with him.

3. And hence, therefore, it is plain that your whole transaction in this matter must proceed from a new nature, and a new vital principle of grace and holiness in you. What you do herein will otherwise neither be sincere nor lasting. You can never embrace religion for itself, without this, nor continue on in a religious course. What you do only from a temporary pang of fear upon you, is but from a kind of force that is for the present upon you, and will come to nothing, as soon as the impression of that fear wears off. The religion which is true and durable, is not from a spirit of fear, but of love, power, and a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7. You must be a new creature, God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works—that you may walk in them. The life of the new creature stands in love to God, as its way and course afterwards is a course of walking with God. If your heart be not brought to love God, and delight in him, you are still but dead towards God, and you still remain alive unto sin, as before. Whereas, if you ever come to be a Christian indeed, you must be able truly to reckon yourself dead to sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ, Rom. vi. 11. Whereupon in your making the mentioned covenant, you must yield yourself to God, as one that is alive from the dead, as 'tis ver. 13. of the same chapter. A new nature and life in you, will make all that you do, in a way of duty, (whether immediately towards God or man, the whole course of godliness, righteousness, and sobriety,) easy and delightful to you. And because it is evident both from many plain scriptures, and your own and all men's experience, that you cannot be, yourselves, the authors of a new life and nature, you must therefore further, in entering into this covenant.

4. Most earnestly cry to God, and plead with him for his Spirit, by whom the vital unitive bond must be contracted between God and Christ and your souls. So this will be the covenant of life and peace. Lord! how generally do the Christians of our age deceive themselves with a self-sprung religion! Divine indeed in the institution, but merely human, in respect of the radication and exercise; in which respects also it must be divine or nothing. What, are we yet to learn that a Divine power must work and form our religion in us, as well as Divine authority direct and enjoin it? Do all such Scriptures go for nothing that tell us, it is God that must create the new heart, and renew the right spirit in us; that he must turn us, if ever we be turned; that we can never come to Christ, except the Father draw us, &c.? Nor is there any cause of discouragement in this, if you consider what hath before been said in this discourse. Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you. Your heavenly Father will give his Spirit to them that ask, more readily than parents do bread to their children, and not a stone. But what if you be put to ask often, and wait long, this doth but the more endear the gift, and show the high value of it. You are to remember how often you have grieved, resisted, and vexed this Spirit, and that you have made God wait long upon you. What if the absolute sovereign Lord of all expect your attendance upon him? He waits to be gracious—and blessed are they that wait for him. Renew your applications to him. Lay from time to time that covenant before you, which yourselves must be wrought up unto a full entire closure with.

And if it be not done at one time, try yet if it will another, and try again and again. Remember it is for your life, for your soul, for your all. But do not satisfy yourself with only such faint motions within thee, as may only be the effects of thy own spirit, of thy dark, dull, listless, sluggish, dead, hard heart, at least not of the efficacious regenerating influence of the divine Spirit. Didst thou never hear what mighty workings there have been in others, when God hath been transforming and renewing them, and drawing them into living union with his Son, and himself through him? What an amazing penetrating light hath struck into their hearts! as 2 Cor. iv. 6. Such as when he was making the world, enlightened the chaos. Such as hath made them see things that concerned them as they truly were, and with their own proper face, God, and Christ, and themselves, sin and duty, heaven and hell, in their own true appearances! How effectually they have been awakened! how the terrors of the Almighty have beset and seized their souls! what agonies and pangs they have felt in themselves, when the voice of God hath said to them, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light! Eph. v. 14. How he hath brought them down at his feet, thrown them into the dust, broken them, melted them, made them abase themselves, loathe and abhor themselves, filled them with sorrow, shame, confusion, and with indignation towards their own guilty souls, habituated them to a severity against themselves, unto the most sharp, and yet most unforced self-accusations, self-judging, and self-condemnation; so as even to make them lay claim to hell, and confess the portion of devils belonged to them, as their own most deserved portion. And if now their eyes have been directed towards a Redeemer, and any glimmering of hope hath appeared to them; if now they are taught to understand God saying to them, Sinner, art thou yet willing to be reconciled, and accept a Saviour? O the transport into which it puts them! this is life from the dead! What, is there hope for such a lost wretch as I? How tasteful now is that melting invitation! how pleasant an intimation doth it carry with it! Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest, &c. If the Lord of heaven and earth do now look down from the throne of glory, and say, "What! sinner, wilt thou despise my favour and pardon, my Son, thy mighty merciful Redeemer, my grace and Spirit still?—What can be the return of the poor abashed wretch, overawed by the glory of the Divine Majesty, stung with compunction, overcome with the intimation of kindness and love? I have heard of thee, O God, by the hearing of the ear, now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. So inwardly is the truth of that word now felt, That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God, Ezek. xvi. 63. But, sinner, wilt thou make a covenant with me and my Christ? wilt thou take me for thy God, and him for thy Redeemer and Lord? And may I, Lord? yet, may I? O admirable grace! wonderful sparing mercy! that I was not thrown into hell at my first refusal! Yea, Lord, with all my heart and soul. I renounce the vanities of an empty cheating world, and all the pleasures of sin. In thy favour stands my life. Whom have I in heaven but thee? whom on earth do I desire besides thee? And O, thou blessed Jesus, thou Prince of the kings of the earth, who hast loved me, and washed me from my sins in thy blood, and whom the eternal God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, I fall before thee, my Lord and my God; I here willingly tender my homage at the footstool of thy throne. I take thee for the Lord of my life. I absolutely surrender and resign myself to thee. Thy love constrains me henceforth no more to live to myself, but to thee who diedst for me, and didst rise again. And I subject and yield myself to thy blessed light and power, O Holy Spirit of grace, to be more and more illuminated, sanctified, and prepared for every good word and work in this world, and for an inheritance among them that are sanctified in the other. Sinner, never give thy soul leave to be at rest till thou find it brought to some such transaction with God (the Father, Son, and Spirit) as this; so as that thou canst truly say, and dost feel thy heart is in it. Be not weary or impatient of waiting and striving, till thou canst say, this is now the very sense of thy soul. Such things have been done in the world; (but O how seldom of latter days!) so God hath wrought with men to save them from going down to the pit, having found a ransom for them. And why may he not yet be expected to do so? He hath smitten rocks ere now, and made the waters gush out; nor is his hand shortened nor his ear heavy. Thy danger is not, sinner, that he will be inexorable, but lest thou shouldst. He will be entreated, if thou wouldst be prevailed with to entreat his favour with thy whole heart.

And that thou mayst, and not throw away thy soul, and so great a hope, through mere sloth, and loathness to be at some pains for thy life; let the text, which hath been thy *directory* about the things that belong to thy peace, be also thy *motive*, as it gives thee to behold the Son of God weeping over such as would not know those things. Shall not the Redeemer's tears move thee? O hard heart! Consider what these tears import to this purpose.

1. They signify the real depth and greatness of the misery into which thou art falling. They drop from an intellectual and most comprehensive eye, that sees far, and pierces deep into things, hath a wide and large prospect; takes the comfort of that forlorn state into which unreconcileable sinners are hastening, in all the horror of it. The Son of God did not weep vain and causeless tears, or for a light matter; nor did he for himself either spend his own, or desire the profusion of others' tears. Weep not for me, O daughters of Jerusalem, &c. He knows the value of souls, the weight of guilt, and how low it will press and sink them; the severity of God's justice, and the power of his anger, and what the fearful effects of them will be, when they finally fall. If thou understandest not these things thyself, believe him that did, at least believe his tears.

2. They signify the sincerity of his love and pity, the truth and tenderness of his compassion. Canst thou think his deceitful tears? his, who never knew guile? was this like the rest of his course? And remember that he who shed tears, did, from the same fountain of love and mercy, shed blood too! Was that also done to deceive? Thou makest thyself some very considerable thing indeed, if thou thinkest the Son of God counted it worth his while to weep, and bleed, and die, to deceive thee into a false esteem of him and his love. But if it be the greatest madness imaginable to entertain any such thought, but that his tears were sincere and inartificial, the natural genuine expressions of undissembled benignity and pity, thou art then to consider what love and compassion thou art now sinning against; what bowels thou spurnest; and that if thou perishest, 'tis under such guilt as the devils themselves are not liable to, who never had a Redeemer bleeding for them, nor, that we ever find, weeping over them.

3. They show the remedilessness of thy case, if thou persist in impenitency and unbelief till the things of thy peace be quite hid from thine eyes. These tears will then be the last issues of (even defeated) love, of love that is frustrated of its kind design. Thou mayest perceive in these tears the steady unalterable laws of Heaven, the inflexibleness of the Divine justice, that holds thee in adamantine bonds, and hath sealed thee up, if thou prove incurably obstinate and impenitent, unto perdition; so that even the Redeemer himself, he that is mighty to save, cannot at length save thee, but only weep over thee, drop tears into thy flame, which assuage it not; but (though they have another design, even to express true compassion) do yet unavoidably heighten and increase the fervour of it, and will do so to all eternity. He even tells thee, sinner, "Thou hast despised my blood, thou shalt yet have my tears." That would have saved thee, these do only lament thee lost.

But the tears wept over others, as lost and past hope, why should they not yet melt thee, while as yet there is hope in thy case? If thou be effectually melted in thy very soul, and looking to him whom thou hast pierced, dost truly mourn over him, thou mayst assure thyself the prospect his weeping eye had of lost souls, did not include

thee. His weeping over thee would argue thy case forlorn and hopeless: thy mourning over him will make it safe and happy. That it may be so, consider further, that,

4. They signify how very intent he is to save souls, and how gladly he would save thine, if yet thou wilt accept of mercy while it may be had. For if he weep over them that will not be saved, from the same love that is the spring of these tears, would saving mercies proceed to those that are become willing to receive them. And that love that wept over them that were lost, how will it glory in them that are saved! There his love is disappointed and vexed, crossed in its gracious intendment; but here having compassed it, how will he joy over thee with singing, and rest in his love! And thou also, instead of being involved in a like ruin with the unreconciled sinners of the old Jerusalem, shalt be enrolled among the glorious citizens of the new, and triumph together with them in eternal glory.

APPENDIX.

Because some things, not fit to be wholly omitted, were as little fit to come into the body of a practical discourse, 'twas thought requisite to subjoin here the following additions, that will severally have reference to distinct parts of the foregoing discourse.

As to what was said of the unreasonableness and ill consequence of admitting it—to be any man's duty to believe himself utterly rejected, and forsaken of God, inasmuch as it would make that his duty which were repugnant to his felicity:—this is to be evinced by a consideration, which also, even apart by itself, were not without its own great weight, *viz.* that such a belief were inconsistent with his former stated and known duty; it were therefore inconsistent with his felicity, inasmuch as it would make that duty impossible to be performed, which before, was by constitution of the evangelical law, made necessary to it, *viz.* repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The hope of acceptance is so necessary to both these, that the belief of a man's being finally rejected, or that he shall never be accepted, cannot but make them both impossible, equally impossible as if he were actually in hell, as much impossible to him as to the devils themselves. Nor is this impossibility merely from a moral impotency, or that obduration of heart which were confessedly vicious, and his great sin, but from the natural influence of that belief of his being for ever rejected, which (upon the mentioned supposition) were his duty. Besides, inasmuch as it is the known duty of a sinner under the Gospel, to turn to God through Christ, and it is also declared in the same Gospel (sufficiently to make it the common matter of faith to Christians) that none can of themselves turn to God, and believe in his Son, without the help of special efficacious grace; it must hereupon be a man's duty also to pray for that grace which may enable him hereto. How deep in wickedness was Simon Magus, even in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, when yet Peter calls him to repentance, and puts him upon praying for forgiveness; (which must imply also his praying for the grace to repent;) but how can a man pray for that, which, at the same time, he believes shall not be given him? yea, and which is harder, and more unaccountable, how can he stand obliged in duty, to pray for that which at the same time, he stands obliged in duty to believe he shall not obtain? How can these two contrary obligations lie upon a man at the same time? or is he to look upon the former as ceased? should he reckon the Gospel as to him repealed? or his impenitency and infidelity, even when they are at the highest, no sins?

I know 'tis obvious to object, as to all this, the case of the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; which will be supposed to be stated and determined in the sacred Scriptures; and being so, the person that hath committed it, may equally be thought obliged (by a mixed assent, partly of faith to what is written, partly of self-knowledge, which he ought to have of his own acts and state) to conclude himself guilty of it; whereupon all the former inconvenience and difficulty will be liable to be urged as above. But even as to this also, I see not but it may fitly enough be said, that though the general nature of that sin be stated, and sufficiently determined in *thesi*, yet that God hath not left it determinable in *hypothesi*, by any particular person, that he hath committed it. For admit that it generally lies in imputing to the devil those works of the Holy Ghost, by which the truth of Christianity was to be demonstrated, I yet see not how any man can apply this to his own particular case, so as justly and certainly to conclude himself guilty of it. I take it for granted none will ever take the notion of blasphemy in that strictness, but that a man may possibly be guilty of this sin as well in thought as by speech. I also doubt not but it will be acknowledged on all hands, that prejudice and malice against Christianity must have a great ingrediency into this sin; not such malice as whereby, knowing it to be the true religion, a man hates and detests it as such (which would suppose these Pharisees, whom our Saviour charges with it, or cautions against it, to have been, at that time, in their judgments and consciences, Christians,) but such malignity, and strong prejudice, as darkens and obstructs his mind, that he judges it not to be true, against the highest evidence of its being. It will also be acknowledged that some enmity and disaffection to true religion is common to all men; more especially in their unregeneracy, and unconverted state.

Now let it be supposed that some person or other, of a very unwarrantably sceptical genius, had opportunity to know certainly the matter of fact, touching the miraculous works wrought by our Saviour, and understood withal somewhat generally of the doctrine which he taught; and that he sets himself as a philosopher, to consider the case. Suppose that, partly through prejudice against the holy design of Christianity, whereof there is some degree in all; and partly through shortness of discourse, not having thoroughly considered the matter; he thinks it possible that some demon or other, with design, under a specious pretence, to impose upon or amuse the credulous vulgar, may have done all those strange things; suppose his judgment should for the present more incline this way: what if, thinking this to be the case in the instance of Apollonius Tyanæus, he hath not yet, upon a slighter view, discerned enough to distinguish them, but thinks alike of both cases: yea, and suppose he have spoken his sentiments to some or other: perhaps upon further inquiry and search, he might see cause to alter his judgment; and now, setting himself to inquire more narrowly, he perceives the unexceptionable excellent scope and tendency of our Saviour's doctrine and precepts, considers the simplicity and purity of his life, contemplates further the awful greatness of his mighty works; but amidst these his deliberations, he finds among the rest of Christian constitutions this severe one, Matt. xii. 31, 32. and begins to fear lest, supposing the truth of this excellent religion, he have precluded himself of all the advantages of it by that former judgment of his. What is he to do in this case? what were he to be advised unto? What, to pass judgment upon himself, and his case, as desperate? or not rather to humble himself before the God of heaven, ask pardon for his injurious rash judgment, and supplicate for mercy, and for further illumination, in the mystery of God, of the Father, and of Christ?

Which course, that it may have a blessed issue with him, who dare venture to deny or doubt? And what have we to say hereupon, but that in great wisdom and mercy, our Saviour hath only told us there is such a sin, and what the general nature of it is, or whereabouts it lies, but the judgment of particular cases wherein, or of the very pitch and degree of malignity wherewith, it is committed, he hath reserved to himself; intending further to strive with persons by his Spirit, while he judges them yet within the reach of mercy, or withhold it, when he sees any to have arrived to that culminating pitch of malignity, and obstinacy, wherein he shall judge this sin specially to consist? And what inconvenience is it to suppose he hath left this matter, touching the degree, humanly undeterminable? The knowledge of it can do them who have committed it no good: and probably they have by it so blinded and stupified their own souls, as to have made themselves very little capable of apprehending that they have committed it, or of considering whether they have or no. But they are sunk into a deep abyss of darkness and death, so as that such knowledge may be as little possible, as it would be useful to them. All their faculties of intellection, consideration, and self-reflection, being (as to any such exercise) bound up in a stupifying dead sleep.

And to what purpose should they have a rule by which to determine a case, who—1. Can receive no benefit by the determination, and—2. Who are supposed when they use it, to have no faculty sufficiently apt to make this sad (but true) judgment of their case by it? But for them who have not committed it, and who are consequently yet capable of benefit by what should be made known about it, there is, therefore, enough made known for their real use and benefit. It will,

1. Be of real use to many such, to know their danger of running into it. And it is sufficient to that purpose, that they are plainly told wherein the general nature of it consists, or whereabouts it lies; without showing them the very point that hath certain death in it; or letting them know just how near they may approach it, without being sure to perish, when there is danger enough in every step they take toward it. As if there were some horrid desert, into any part whereof no man hath any business to come, but in some part whereof there is a dreadful gulf, whence arises a *contagious halitus*, which, if he come within the verge of it, will be certainly poisonous and mortal to him. What need is there that any man should know just how near he may come, without being sure to die for it? He is concerned to keep himself at a cautious awful distance.

2. It may be of great use to others, that are afflicted with very torturing fears lest they have committed it, to know that they have not. And they have enough also to satisfy them in the case. For their very fear itself, with its usual concomitants in such afflicted minds, is an argument to them that they have not. While they find in themselves any value of Divine favour, any dread of his wrath, any disposition to consider the state of their souls, with any thought or design of turning to God, and making their peace; they have reason to conclude God hath hitherto kept them out of that fearful gulf; and is yet in the way, and in treaty with them. For since we are not sufficient to think any thing (that good is) of ourselves, it is much more reasonable to ascribe any such thought or agitation of spirit that have this design to him, than to ourselves, and to account that he is yet at work with us, (at least in the way of common grace,) though when our thoughts drive towards a conclusion against ourselves, that we have committed that sin, and towards despair thercupon, we are to apprehend a mixture of temptation in them, which we are concerned earnestly to watch and pray against. And yet even such temptation is an argument of such a one's not having committed that sin. For such as the devil may apprehend more likely to have committed it, (and 'tis not to be thought he can be sure who have,) he will be less apt to trouble with such thoughts, not knowing what the issue of that unquietness may prove, and apprehending it may occasion their escaping quite out of his snare. And I do conceive this to be a safer method, of satisfying such as are perplexed with this fear in our days, than to be positive in stating that sin so, or limiting it to such circumstances, as shall make it impossible to be committed in this age of the world. For let it be seriously considered, whether it be altogether an unsupposable thing, that, with some in our days, there may be an equivalency, in point of light and evidence of the truth of Christianity, unto what these Jews had, whom our Saviour warns of the danger of this sin, at that time when he so warned them; his warning and cautioning them about it, implies that he judged them at least in a possibility, at that time, of incurring the guilt of it; if the text Matt. xii do not also imply that he reckoned them, then, actually to have committed it. For it is said, ver. 25. he knew their thoughts, *i. e.* considered the temper of their minds, and thereupon said to them what follows concerning it. Let us consider wherein their advantage towards their being ascertained of the truth of the Christian religion, was greater than we now can have. It was chiefly in this respect greater, that they had a nearer and more immediate knowledge of the matter of fact, wherein that evidence which our Saviour refers to did consist. A more immediate way of knowing it they had; the most immediate the persons whom he warns (or charges) seem not to have had: for those Pharisees, it is said, heard of the cure of the demoniac, not that they saw it. They took it upon the (no doubt sufficiently credible) report of others. Now let it be further considered, what we have to balance this one single advantage. We have, to intelligent considering persons, rationally sufficient evidence of the same matter of fact. But how great things, that have since followed, have we the sufficiently certain knowledge of besides, beyond what they had in view, at that time. As the wonderful death of our Lord, exactly according to prediction, in many respects, together with all the unforetold amazing circumstances that attended it! His more wonderful resurrection, upon which so great a stress is laid for demonstrating the truth of the religion he taught: the destruction of Jerusalem, as he foretold, and the shattered condition of the Jewish nation, as was also foretold, ever since: the strange success of the Gospel in the first, and some following ages, by so unlikely means, against the greatest opposition imaginable, both of Jews and pagans. Not to insist on the apostacy foretold, in the Christian church, with many more things that might be mentioned. Let it be considered whether the want of so immediate way of knowing some of these things be not abundantly compensated by the greatness of the other things that are however sufficiently known. And if such as have wit and leisure to consider these things in our days, are often pressed to consider them, have them frequently represented, and laid before their eyes, if such, I say, have in view as great evidence, upon the whole, of the truth of Christianity, as these Pharisees had; it is then further to be considered, whether it be not possible that some such may equal the Jewish malice, against the holy design of our religion. To which I only say, the Lord grant that none may. But if there be really cause to apprehend such a danger, some other way should be thought of to cure the trouble of some, than by the danger and (too probable) ruin of others. However, none should themselves make their own case incurable, by concluding that they have sinned that sin, or by believing they are, otherwise forsaken and rejected of God; so as that he will never more assist their endeavour to repent, and turn to him through the Mediator.

If it be inquired here, since, as hath been shown, some may be quite forsaken of God, while yet they live in the world; ought such to believe then they are not forsaken, and so believe an untruth that they may make it true, or try if they can better their condition by it? I answer, nor that neither. For that God will further assist an obstinate sinner, that hath long resisted his Spirit, and despised his mercy, is no matter of promise to him, and so no matter of faith. When he doth conquer, at length, any such, 'tis of mere unpromised favour; (as was also shown;) wherefore therefore he gives others no ground to despair; and for which they are deeply concerned, with great earnestness, to supplicate. But if it be said, how can they pray for that whereof they have no promise? and can have no faith, since what is not of faith is sin, Rom. xiv. 23. I answer, that passage of Scripture would, in this case be much mis-

applied. It speaks not of faith concerning the certainty of any event to be expected, but the lawfulness of a work to be done, and of doubting, not concerning the event, but my own act. Can any man in his wits doubt concerning his own act in this case? whether it be better to pray for the grace of God to save him, than slight it and perish? Nor are they without very encouraging promises concerning the event, that God will be a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, Heb. xi. 6. And that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, Rom. x. 13. which promises 'tis true the context of both shows, do speak of believing prayer. They are to faith, not of it, and import, that God will reward and save the believer: not that he will give faith to the obstinate, contemptuous unbeliever. If he do this, 'tis (as was said) of unpromised bounty. But though they are not promises to give faith, they should induce it; and incline sinners to cast themselves down before the throne of so gracious a God, and seek grace to help them in their need, in confidence that he will never reject penitent believing prayer. They, indeed, that for their former wilful sinning are utterly forsaken of God, will not thus apply themselves; but our question is not what they will do, but what they should. Because they would not, therefore they were forsaken, and because they yet will not, they are still and finally forsaken. Their refusal proceeds not from any discouragement God hath given them, but from the malignity of their own hearts. God hath not repealed his Gospel towards them. The connexion continues firm between the preceptive and promissory parts of it. Their infidelity is not become their duty, but remains their heinous sin, and the more deeply heinous by how much their own malignity holds them more strongly in it.

Unto what also is discoursed concerning anger and grief, (or other passions,) ascribed to God, it will not be unfit here to add, that, unless they be allowed to signify real aversion of will, no account is to be given what reality in him they can signify at all. For to say (what some do seem to satisfy themselves with) that they are to be understood *secundum effectum*, not *secundum affectum*, though true as to the negative part, is, as to the affirmative, very defective and short; for the effects of anger and grief, upon which those names are put, when spoken of God, are not themselves in him, but in us. But we are still at a loss what they signify in him. Such effects must have some cause. And if they be effects which he works, they must have some cause in himself that is before them, and productive of them. This account leaves us to seek what that cause is, that is signified by these names. That it cannot be any passion, as the same names are wont to signify with us, is out of question. Nor indeed do those names primarily, and most properly, signify passion in ourselves. The passion is consequently only by reason of that inferior nature in us, which is susceptible of it. But the aversion of our mind and will is before it, and, in another subject, very separable from it, and possible to be without it. In the blessed God we cannot understand any thing less is signified than real displicency, at the things whereat he is said to be angry or grieved.

Our shallow reason indeed is apt to suggest in these matters, Why is not that prevented that is so displeasing? And it would be said with equal reason in reference to all sin permitted to be in the world, Why was it not prevented? And what is to be said to this? Shall it be said that sin doth not displease God? that he hath no will against sin? It is not repugnant to his will? Yes; it is to his revealed will, to his law. But is that an untrue revelation? His law is not his will itself, but the *signum*, the discovery of his will. Now, is it an insignificant sign? a sign that signifies nothing? or to which there belong no correspondent *significatum? nothing that is signified by it?* Is that which is signified (for sure no one will say it signifies nothing) his real will, yea or no? who can deny it? That will, then, (and a most calm, sedate, impassionate will it must be understood to be,) sin, and consequently the consequent miseries of his creatures, are repugnant unto. And what will is that? 'Tis not a peremptory will concerning the event, for the event falls out otherwise; which were, upon that supposition, impossible; for who hath resisted his will? as was truly intimated by the personated questionist, (Rom. ix. 19.) but impertinently, when God's will of another (not a contrary) kind, *i. e.* concerning another object, was in the same breath referred unto, Why doth he yet find fault? 'Tis not the will of the event that is the measure of faultiness; for then there could not have been sin in the world, nor consequently misery, which only, by the Creator's pleasure, stands connected with it. For nothing could fall out against that irresistible will. The objector then destroys his own objection, so absurdly, and so manifestly, as not to deserve any other reply than that which he meets with. Nay, but who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?

And what is the other object about which the Divine will is also conversant? Matter of duty, and what stands in connexion with it, not abstractly and separately, but as it is so connected, our felicity. This is objectively another will, as we justly distinguish Divine acts, that respect the creature, by their indifferent objects. Against this will falls out all the sin and misery in the world.

All this seems plain and clear, but is not enough. For it may be further said, When God wills this or that to be my duty, doth he not will this event, *viz.* my doing it? otherwise wherein is his will withstood, or not fulfilled, in my not doing it? He willed this to be my duty, and it is so. I do not nor can hinder it from being so, yet I do it not, and that he willed not. If all that his will meant was that this should be my duty, but my doing it was not intended; his will is entirely accomplished, it hath its full effect, in that such things are constituted, and do remain my duty, upon his signification of this his will, my not doing it not being within the compass of the object, or the thing willed.

If it be said, he willed my doing it, *i. e.* that I should do it, not that I shall, the same answer will recur, *viz.* that his will hath still its full effect, this effect still remaining, that I should do it, but that I shall he willed not.

It may be said, I do plainly go against his will however; for his will was that I should do so, or so, and I do not what he willed I should. 'Tis true, I go herein against his will, if he willed not only my obligation, but my action, according to it. And indeed it seems altogether unreasonable, and unintelligible, that he should will to oblige me to that, which he doth not will me to do.

Therefore it seems out of question, that the holy God doth constantly and perpetually, in a true sense, will universal obedience, and the consequent felicity of all his creatures capable thereof; *i. e.* he doth will it with simple complacency, as what were highly grateful to him, simply considered by itself. Who can doubt, but that purity, holiness, blessedness, wheresoever they were to be beheld among his creatures, would be a pleasing and delightful spectacle to him, being most agreeable to the perfect excellency, purity, and benignity of his own nature, and that their deformity and misery must be consequently unpleasing? But he doth not efficaciously will every thing that he truly wills. He never willed the obedience of all his intelligent creatures so, as effectually to make them all obey, nor their happiness, so as to make them all be happy, as the event shows. Nothing can be more certain, than that he did not so will these things; for then nothing could have fallen out to the contrary, as we see much hath. Nor is it at all unworthy the love and goodness of his nature not so to have willed, with that effective will, the universal fulness, sinlessness, and felicity of all his intelligent creatures. The Divine nature comprehends all excellencies in itself, and is not to be limited to that one only of benignity, or an aptness to acts of beneficence. For then it were not infinite, not absolutely perfect, and so not divine. All the acts of his will must be consequently conform and agreeable to the most perfect wisdom. He doth all things according to the counsel of his will. He wills, 'tis true, the rectitude of our actions, and what would be consequent thereto, but he first, and more principally, wills the rectitude of his own. And not only not to do an unrighteous, but not an inept, or unfit thing. We find he did not think it fit efficaciously to provide concerning all men, that they should be made obedient and happy, as he hath concerning some. That in the general he makes a difference, is to be attributed to his wisdom, *i. e.* his wisdom hath in the general made this determination,

not to deal with all alike, and so we find it ascribed to his wisdom that he doth make a difference: and in what a transport is the holy apostle in the contemplation and celebration of it upon this account! Rom. xi. 33. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! But now when, in particular, he comes to make this difference between one person and another, there being no reason in the object to determine him this way, more than that, his designing some for the objects of special favour, and waving others, (as to such special favour,) when all were in themselves alike; in that case wisdom hath not so proper an exercise, but it is the work of free, unobliged sovereignty here to make the choice. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, Ephes. i. 5.

Yet in the mean time, while God doth not efficaciously will all men's obedience introductive of their happiness, doth it follow he wills it not really at all? To say he wills it efficaciously, were to contradict experience, and his word; to say he wills it not really, were equally to contradict his word. He doth will it, but not primarily, and as the more principal object of his will, so as to effect it notwithstanding whatsoever unfitness he apprehends in it, *viz.* that he so ever-power all, as to make them obedient and happy. He really wills it, but hath greater reasons than this or that man's salvation, why he effects it not. And this argues no imperfection in the Divine will, but the perfection of it, that he wills things agreeably to the reasonableness and fitness of them.

THE

CARNALITY OF RELIGIOUS CONTENTION,

IN TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED AT THE MERCHANT'S LECTURE, IN BROAD STREET.

THE PREFACE TO THE READERS.

This title nobody can think is meant to condemn all contention about matters of religion as carnal; but since there is too much which is apparently so, it only signifies it to be the design of the following discourse to show what contention that is, and when, or in what case, though it hath religion for its object, it may not have it for its principle, but that very frequently, the lust of the flesh hides itself under that specious name. And to show wherein, while it affects to hide, yet unawares it discovers itself, in the management of affairs of that sacred kind. Thus it often really is; and then is that noble cause as ignobly served, as when (according to that * father's observation) a man proves to be unfaithful even for the faith, and sacrilegious for religion.

When in one place (Jude 3.) Christians are exhorted to contend earnestly for the faith; and in another (2 Tim. ii. 24.) we are told the servant of the Lord must not strive; 'tis plain there is a contention for religion, which is a duty, and there is a contention even concerning religion too, which is a sin. And that sin the apostle, in this context, out of which our discourse arises, doth deservedly expose by the name of flesh, and of the lust, or of the works thereof; such as wrath, variance, envy, hatred, &c. Whence it is easy to collect in what sense it is said in the mentioned place, the servant of the Lord must not strive, *viz.* as that striving excludes the gentleness, the aptness to instruct, and the patience, which are in the same place enjoined, where that striving is forbidden. And from thence it is equally easy to collect too, in what sense we ought to contend for the faith earnestly, *i. e.* with all that earnestness which will consist with these, not with such as excludes them: as earnestly as you will, but with a sedate mind, full of charity, candour, kindness, and benignity towards them we strive with. We ought, we see, (in the mentioned place,) to be patient towards all men. Towards fellow-Christians there should certainly be a more peculiar brotherly kindness.

The difference is very great, and most discernible in the effects, between the church's contention against enemies without it, and contentions within itself. The former unite it the more, increase its strength and vigour. The latter divide and enfeeble it. As to those of this latter kind, nothing is more evident, or deserves to be more considered, than that as the Christian church hath grown more carnal, it hath grown more contentious, and as more contentious, still more and more carnal. The savour hath been lost of the great things of the Gospel, which have less matter in them of dispute or doubt, but which only did afford proper nutriment to the life of godliness; and it hath diverted to lesser things, (or invented such as were, otherwise, none at all,) about which the contentious, disputative genius might employ, and wherewith it might entertain, feed, and satiate itself.

Thereby hath it grown strong and vigorous, and acquired the power to transform the church from a spiritual society, enlivened, acted, and governed by the Spirit of Christ, into a mere carnal thing, like the rest of the world. Carnality hath become, and long been in it, a governing principle, and hath torn it into God knows how many fragments and parties; each of which will now be the church, enclose itself within its own peculiar limits, exclusive of all the rest, claim and appropriate to itself the rights and privileges which belong to the Christian church in common, yea, and even Christ himself, as if he were to be so enclosed or confined: and hence it is said, Lo, here is Christ, or there he is, till he is scarce to be found any where; but as, through merciful indulgence, overlooking our sinful follies, he is pleased to afford some tokens of his presence both here and there. Yet also how manifest are the tokens of his displeasure and retirement! And how few will apprehend and consider the true cause! I will now adventure to offer these things to serious consideration.

1. Whether for any party of Christians to make unto itself other limits of communion than Christ hath made, and hedge up itself within those limits, excluding those whom Christ would admit, and admitting those whom he would exclude, be not in itself a real sin? When I say *make to itself*, this more peculiarly concerns those who form their own communions, having nothing herein imposed upon them by civil authority. Let others censure themselves as they see cause. They have a holy table among them, the symbol of their communion with one another in the Lord. I would ask, "Whose is this table? Is it the table of this or that man, or party of men? or is it the Lord's table?" Then certainly it ought to be free to his guests, and appropriate to them. And who should dare to invite others, or forbid these?

2. If it be a sin, is it not a heinous one? This will best be understood by considering what his limits are. Nothing

* Cypr. de Simplicit. Præl.

seems plainer than that it was his mind, Christianity itself should measure the communion of Christians, as such; visible Christianity their visible communion. It will here then be inquired (as in all reason it should) what Christianity is. And if it be, every one will understand the inquiry concerning that, as they would concerning any thing else, what is its essence? or what are its essentials, or wherein doth it consist? Not what are all the several accidents it may admit of? as you would do, if it were inquired, What is humanity? Now here it will be readily acknowledged that Christianity (as all things else that are of moral consideration) must be estimated more principally by its end, and that its final reference is not to this world, but to the world to come, and to a happy state there. And that, considering the miserable state wherein it finds the souls of men here, and the greater misery they are hereafter liable to, it must design their present recovery, and finally, their eternal salvation.

That in order hereto it must propound to men some things necessary to be believed, some things necessary to be done. And that both must intend the making of them good in order to the making them happy, or the saving of them from eternal misery. That both are sufficiently propounded by the kind and great Author of this constitution, Christ himself, in his word or Gospel. That this Gospel, besides many incidental things, expressly represents some things as of absolute necessity to salvation, by which are settled the very terms of life and death, unto sinners; and as a principal, most comprehensive, and most fundamental thing to all the rest, requires men's resigning and subjecting themselves unto him; or putting themselves by solemn covenant into his hands, or under his conduct, to be by him brought to God, and made finally happy in him.

Whatsoever therefore is of absolute necessity to this end is essential to Christianity. Christians then are a sort of men tending to God and blessedness under the conduct of Christ, to whom they have by covenant devoted themselves, and to God in him. Visible Christians are such as are in this visible tendency, with their children, yet in minority, and not capable of making an understanding profession themselves. Such as have arrived to that capacity are no longer to be considered in their parents, but apart by themselves. They that have been sufficiently instructed in the principles of the Christian religion, that have devoted themselves to God in Christ, and live in their general course conformably to his holy rules, are visibly personal covenanters. 'Tis plainly the mind of Christ, that those be received into that plenary communion which belongs to the Christian state; and particularly, unto that sacred rite which is the communion of his body and blood, and wherein the new testament or covenant hath its solemn obligation, and wherein as *fœderati*, or *persons in covenant*, they have more express communion with him, and one another.

They that are yet unacquainted with the most necessary things of Christian religion, are to be held as catechumens under instruction, if they be willing. They that live licentiously in the state of penitents, till they give that proof of their serious repentance, as that their profession thereof appear not to be slight and ludicrous; they that refuse to learn, or be reformed, that live in open hostility against the known laws of Christ; are not visible Christians, are not visibly in the way of salvation. Visible subjection and visible rebellion are inconsistencies. If therefore any society of men, professedly Christians, do make other limits of their communion; admitting those that Christ's rule excludes, excluding them whom it would admit; especially, if the alteration be, not only by the making those things necessary which he hath not revealed or enjoined as necessary, but which he hath not revealed or enjoined at all; and so is not only to add to Christian religion taken at large, but even to its essentials; this is substantially to change the evangelical covenant, to make it another thing, to break Christ's constitution, and set up another. If they be little things only that we add, we must know that there is *nihil minimum* in religion. What, if as little as they are, many think them sinful, and are thereby thrown off from our communion? The less they are, the greater the sin to make them necessary, to hang so great things upon them, break the church's peace and unity by them, and of them to make a new Gospel, new terms of life and death, a new way to heaven. And is, as much as in us lies, to make things of highest necessity depend not only upon things of no necessity, but that are, in our religion, perfect nullities, not having any place there at all. And thereupon is, in effect, to say, If you will not take Christianity with these additions of ours, you shall not be Christians, you shall have no Christian ordinances, no Christian worship; we will, as far as in us is, exclude you heaven itself, and all means of salvation. And upon the same ground upon which they may be excluded one communion by such arbitrary devised measures, they may be excluded another also, and be received no where. And if their measures differ, they all exclude one another; and hence, so many churches, so many Christendoms. If this be sinful, it is a sin of the deepest die. Whereas the Holy Scriptures speak with such severity as we know they do, of the altering of man's landmarks, what may we think of altering God's? And the sin is still the greater, if the things of highest necessity are overlooked in the mean time as trifles, tithing of mint is stood upon, but judgment, faith, mercy, and the love of God passed over, (as Matt. xxiii. 23. Luke xi. 42.) infidels poured in upon the church! wolves and bears under the name of sheep, and the lambs of Christ (which he requires to be fed) thrown out into the wilderness!

3. But if we suppose it a sin, and so heinous a one, how far doth the guilt of it spread! How few among the several sorts and parties of Christians are innocent, if the measures of their several communions were brought under just and severe examination! How few that lay their communions open to visible Christians as such, excluding none of whatsoever denomination, nor receiving any that by Christian rational estimate cannot be judged such!

4. How few that consider this as the provoking cause of Christ's being so much a stranger to the Christian church! And how little is it to be hoped we shall ever see good days till this wasting evil be redressed! or that our glorious Redeemer, who is head of all things to the church, should ever own it by visible favours, should protect, cherish, enlarge it, or make it spread in the world! (and how little it is naturally in any probability of doing so!) or that he should treat it as his, while it is so little itself, and so little one! In the present (most deplorable) state of things, private (that is, carnal) interest is the thing every where designed, by one party, and another. And by wishing the prosperity of the church, or endeavouring it, is only meant seeking the prosperity of our own party. So that there can be no united prayers nor joint endeavous for any truly common good; but what seems desirable to some, is dreaded and deprecated by all the rest. Thus for thirteen or fourteen hundred years hath the church been gradually growing a multiform, mangled, shattered, and most deformed thing; broken and parcelled into nobody knows how many several sorts of communions. The measures whereof how strangely alien have they been from those which were genuine and primitive, *i. e.* from substantial Christianity, and the things that must concur to make up that. Instead of sound knowledge of the few, clear, and great things of religion, a great many doubtful opinions; the taking one side in a disputed point; the determination of a logical question, understanding, or saying one understands, (whether we do or no,) a metaphysical nicety; and sometimes professing to believe somewhat that Scripture never said, or shows itself never to have meant, and that is most manifestly contrary to all reason and common sense. Instead of reverent, decent, grave worship; affected, scenical, ludicrous formalities, uncouth gesticulations, disgusted countenances, with I know not what empty shows of a forced and feigned devotion; which things also were to serve instead of orderly, unreprovable conversation, of serving God, and of doing good to other men; and to expiate the crimes of a very bad one, to make amends, and atone for the lewdest, the most licentious, and most mischievous practices.

In sum; not only are things most alien from real Christianity added to it, but substituted in the room of it, and preferred before it; yea, and things most destructive of it, indulged and magnified in opposition to it. This is too generally the state of the carnalized Christian church. And never were there more fervent contentions among all sorts, whose notions, opinions, modes, and forms are to be preferred.

The word of God tells us that to be carnally minded is death. These contests seem therefore to express great solicitude how most neatly to adorn a carcass, or at best how with greatest art and curiosity to trim and apparel gorgeously a languishing man, in the feared approaches of death, instead of endeavouring to save his life. But if any endeavour to that purpose were yet to be used, what should it be? That any man should go about to propose to the Christian church, were both presumptuous and hopeless. We can only speak our wishes to men, and offer them in solemn supplications to God. And it were a happy omen, if good men could once agree what, in particular, to pray for; it being out of question that such men would not be guilty of so much hypocrisy, as, to their uttermost, not seriously to endeavour, what they durst adventure and thought it necessary to make the subject of their prayers. And one would think it should not be difficult to men of sincere minds, upon serious consideration of the present sad state of things, not only in general to pray for the true spiritual welfare of the Church of Christ in the world; but so far to be particular, as to pray in order thereto, that it may be more entirely one.* We are told, There is one body, and one Spirit. That the Spirit is but one, we are sure is true in fact: and so we are that the body animated by that Spirit, as it is such, can be but one also. But the apostle's business in that place, is not merely to assert such a union, as there already was, but also to persuade to such a one as there yet was not, *i. e.* that it might be more entire and complete than hitherto it was; and that such a unity might be preserved in the bond of peace: and this in order to its growth to the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ; implying plainly enough, that the less it was one the less it would grow. Which also is sufficiently evident in itself. For it is first plain in the nature of the thing, that by how much it is more divided and multiform, it will appear the less considerable in the world, and so be less apt to attract, and draw in others. Yea, and its appearance and aspect will not only be less inviting and attractive; but it will be offensive, and create prejudices in the minds of men against Christianity itself. Which appears the plain meaning of that petition of our blessed Lord, when he was leaving the world,† That they all might be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. Implying manifestly, that if they did not appear one, it would strongly tempt the world to infidelity. Whereupon all good men have a mighty inducement to unite in this request; for more entire visible oneness in the Christian church, not only from the example of our Lord leading them in this request, but from the reason also by which he enforces it, that otherwise the rest of the world must be confirmed and obdured in their infidelity. Who sees not therefore that the Christian interest is naturally obstructed in its extensive growth by the visible disunion of the Christian community? for it can scarce admit to be called a society in its present torn and shattered state.

And again, its divisions being (as they cannot be other than) criminal, the effect of indulged carnality, and designed to serve the carnal interests of this or that party, in opposition to the rest; they hereby not only offend and give scandal to the world, who thereupon discern nothing of peculiar excellency in the Christian profession, when under it they see men driving but such low designs, as they themselves (more honestly) do without any such veil; but they offend the Spirit of Christ too, who, thereupon, in great degrees, withdraws itself; not totally, which could not consist with the promise,‡ I am with you always, unto the end of the world; but unto such degrees as shall testify displeasure. And hence is the growth of the church obstructed, not only naturally, but penally too. Whence it is most evident, that they cannot with judgment pray for the spiritual welfare of the church of Christ, who pray not for its union; nor with sincerity, who to their uttermost, endeavour it not also. Nor can there be true seriousness, insomuch, but the consideration must ensue, what course is most likely to serve so desirable an end. And since necessary things are most plain, and less liable to dispute and doubt; and it is matter of fact, obvious to every observing eye, that the deceptations and divisions in the Christian church, which are, and have been, from age to age, do for the most part arise from the addition of unnecessary things to it, which belong not to its constitution; and which while some think lawful only, and at best but an ornament to it, others think sinful and a deformity; it cannot hence but appear a thing much to be desired, and endeavoured, that these occasions of offence and division might cease, and be removed. Which even they that think such additions to be, for the matter of them, lawful, might yet see reason enough to desire and to endeavour should be taken away; yea, though they apprehend them of some use; it being so manifest that the hurt which accrues by them is unspeakably more. And besides, one would think it should not be unapprehensible to any man that allows himself the free use of his thoughts, that though he should continue of the judgment, that such additions were in the matter of them lawful, yet the making them additional terms of Christian communion must be highly sinful, as being the introduction of a new Christianity. Christian communion being of Christians as such.

But this amputation is, according to the present posture of men's minds all the Christian world over, a thing equally to be desired and despaired of: as a general union therefore is, in the meantime. We cannot unite with them who insist upon terms of union that we judge unlawful in those things. For those that insist upon terms that we think not simply unlawful, while yet they are different, in several Christian societies; we cannot, therein, unite with any; but we must, for aught we know, divide from as many. That only which the present state of things admits of, is, that we keep ourselves united in mind and spirit with all serious Christians, in the plain and necessary things wherein they all agree: that we preserve in our own spirits a resolved unaddictedness to any party, in the things wherein they differ: that for actual and local communion, (which we cannot have with all the Christians in the world, and can have comparatively but with a few,) we join with them that come nearest us, *i. e.* that we judge come nearest to our common rule: that (as some means hereto) we especially labour to centre in some such scheme of doctrinals, as for which all these profess to have a common reverence; that while our union cannot as yet be so extensive as it ought, it may be as extensive as we can; that the Gospel be not hindered, and that our ministry may be the more successful and profitable to the promoting of the common salvation, among those that attend upon it. Such schemes or collections of doctrines, reduced into an order, (as gold formed into a vessel, whereas truth, as it lies in the holy scriptures, is as gold in the mass,) may be of use (as they have always been used in the church in all ages) more distinctly to inform others concerning our sentiments, (though the use is less, that after thorough search and inquiry they can be of to oneself,) provided they be avowed to be looked upon but as a *mensura mensurata*, reserving unto the Scriptures the honour of being the only *mensura mensurans*; and so that we only own them as agreeable to the Scriptures. And again, that we declare we take them to be agreeable thereto in the main, or for substance, without attributing a sacredness to the very words of a mere human composition; which indeed we cannot attribute to the words used in the translation of the Bible itself. And that for the things we believe them with a degree of assent proportionable to their greater or less evidence. This, through the blessing of God, such as have used a sincere and ingenious freedom one with another, have found an effectual expedient to deliver their minds from mutual doubt, concerning each other, that because of some different modes of expressing their sentiments, they held very different opinions, which they have found to be a mistake on one hand and the other; and have given and received satisfaction, they intended nothing that ought to be reckoned into the account of Socinian, Pelagian, Popish, Arminian, or antinomian errors. That fraudulent and unjust way of making the estimate, being justly exploded, that whosoever shall in some things that touch not the main points of difference, say as some other of these do, must therefore be of their minds throughout. Which rule of judging would make any Christian be taken for a Jew, a Mahometan, or a pagan; there being no intelligent Christian, but must say many things that they do.

* Eph. iv. 4. † John xvii. 21. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 20.

But it is to be hoped this engine of the devil's is by the mercy of God broken, so as that the people shall be no more frighted from attending to the ministry of such (be their denomination what it will) as use apt and proper methods to awaken, convince, and save souls, by being told they are antinomians or Arminians, &c. It being upon inquiry found, that persons so and so charged, by the rash folly of some that understand nothing of the difference, besides the different sound of those odious names, do really detest the doctrines imputed to them. And that furthermore, while we look upon an agreement therein as a sufficient character of one sound in the faith, we do not profess to reckon every one of the things therein contained (without distinguishing their importance) necessary to that purpose. And do never intend our communion shall be limited by other bounds than only an agreement in those things for doctrinals, which we take to be of such importance and necessity, as without the belief whereof a man cannot be a sincere Christian. Which certainly cannot but be a very few less disputed things, among them that profess to believe the divine authority of the Scriptures, and that will allow them to be interpreted according to the ordinary ways of interpreting other writings. That for matters of practice in the worship of God, we be satisfied, not to be obliged to do things, which we think unlawful ourselves, without entertaining the least surmise, but that many good men may judge some things lawful that we do not, and may practise accordingly. That we always keep ourselves in a prepared temper of spirit to receive further information about doubtful things. That we cherish in our souls a universal sincere love to Christians as such; and to men as men. That we studiously endeavour in our several stations the doing the most general good we can. And that our whole design do terminate upon what, so far as we can succeed in it, must be acknowledged by all good men to be a real service to the church of Christ, by gathering into it as many as we can, considering it as made up of persons that with judgment, and in practice, own the very substance of Christian religion. With such dispositions of mind as these, we shall, in this divided state of the Christian church, be innocent of the sinful evil of its divisions, and keep, as much as in us is, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And do we yet entertain in our minds any hope that the Christian religion shall spread, and be more generally propagated through the world? Or do we desire it should? Or do we dread that it should not, through our default? Let us then look back to the years of ancient time, and consider what it was when it grew and increased mightily; when without other advantages than its own self-recommending excellency, it every where made its own way, subdued nations, proselyted enemies, defied the most fervent oppositions and persecutions; when the professors and preachers of it triumphed over martyrdoms, the fierceness and fury of wild beasts and flames, overcame by the blood of Jesus, and the word of his testimony, not loving their lives unto the death. * When as Pliny writing to Trajan in favour of the Christians, intimates to him, they were every where so increased both in cities and countries, that the pagan temples had lain almost quite desolate, and that there had scarce been any to buy off their sacrifices. When (about a hundred years after) Tertullian representing in apology for them, their peaceableness, and how easy it were, otherwise, to them to relieve themselves of their sufferings, says they were become so numerous in the empire,† that if it were possible to them to withdraw themselves into some remote, obscure place, they who were left would even tremble at their own solitude. Christianity was then all life and spirit. The Christian church in those days flourished in purity, power, and vigour. But when for the space of about three hundred years together it had enjoyed the protection and benignity of Christian emperors; and was hereby become wanton, lost in carnality, not content with itself, and its own native comeliness, but affected to shine in a borrowed lustre and ornature, when (as harlots are wont) it began to paint, to be fond of gay attire, and devise things for deckings to itself most alien from its original state and constitution; (and which afterwards became the matter of bloody contentions, and cruelties:) when it grew ambitious of secular pomp, splendour, grandeur, and power, then was it so far forsaken of God, and his Spirit, that within a very few years after Boniface the Third had obtained of the emperor Phocas the title of universal bishop, whereby popish tyranny and superstition became more fully *regnant* in the church, (*i. e.* within less than twenty years,) began the senseless delusion of Mahometanism to spring up without the church; and assisted by the incredible accession of force and arms, came at length to prevail against it (now gradually sinking more and more into vice and ignorance) unto that degree, that in process of time, what Christianity had gained from paganism, it lost, in a great measure, unto Mahometanism;‡ so that in several parts of Christendom, where were reckoned thirty Christians for one pagan, there came to be thirty Mahometans for one Christian. And how next to unchristian the Christian world is, in the nearer countries, (very generally protestant as well as popish,) is too well known; and in the remoter, divers writers inform us.§

Let it now therefore be considered for how many sad centuries of years Christianity hath been at an amazing stand! got no ground upon the whole, but rather lost much. Is this the religion which so early, by its own native light and power, conquered so many nations, and which we expect to be the religion of the world? Who that understands this, would not with deepest concern, and anxiety of spirit, inquire into the cause? And what cause can be so obvious to our inquiry, as a luxurious and a contentious carnality; which both go together, and which have enfeebled, dispirited, and lost its self-diffusing life and strength? What we cannot remedy, let us at least see, and lament!

And let us supplicate more earnestly for the effusions of that Holy Spirit, which alone can give remedy to our distempers, and overcome the lusts of the flesh, of whatsoever kind, and restore Christian religion to itself, and make the Christian name great in the world. For can it content us that Christianity should appear, and be counted a mean, a weak, and even a ludicrous thing? that the Son of God should have descended, and come down into our world! have put on man! have died upon a cross! have ascended that he might fill all things! diffuse spirit, light, and life through the world! have appointed prophets, apostles, pastors, and teachers for the publishing his everlasting Gospel; and at length leave men, even where the Christian name and profession doth obtain, no better men generally than he found them? distinguished only from the rest of the world, by certain peculiar notions, and by some different rights of worship; otherwise as flagitious, as sensual, as impious towards God, as full of wrath, hatred, malice, and mischievous design towards one another, as any pagans or infidels ever were! and yet that they should expect to be saved, only because they are called Christians! What a representation of Christian religion is this!

And thus it will be reckoned of, till it come to be understood more generally, and more openly avowed, that Christianity is not only a system of doctrines (and those reducible within a little compass) but of precepts also, not concerning the modes of worship only, but men's ordinary practice; and that not only respect their external actions, but which are designed to regulate and reform their minds and spirits, and do lay their first obligation there, must subdue their inordinate appetites and passions, render them holy and harmless,‖ the sons of God, shining as lights, holding forth the word of life, &c. The whole frame of the Christian institution being animated by the Divine Spirit, into whose name we are baptized, (as well as into that of the Father and the Son,) and which will be given where he is sought for, and not affronted.

Let this be taken for Christianity, and avowed to be so, and seriously endeavoured to be propagated as such, and it will not always be put to vie (but as upon equal terms) with Mahometanism, Judaism, paganism, mere deism, or whatsoever else shall exalt itself into a competition with it. And let whatsoever comes not within this compass, or is not truly and primitively Christian, be resected and cut off from it, and so it will appear an entire self-agreeable thing; and the Christian church be but one. While it is not so, it will be the business and design of the most, only to promote the

* Plin. Epist.
† Apol. contra Gent.
‡ See in Ererewood's Inquiries.
§ Ludolphus's Æthiop Hist. and divers others.
‖ Phil. ii. 15, 16.

interest of this or that party. And if their sense were put into plain words, this it would be, "I am for my church, or the church whereof I am, whatever becomes of the church of Christ." And so will a zealous endeavour for so narrow an interest, as that of a divided party, engage and engross all the attention of their minds, and their religion be summed up in contention, and such only as hath its root in that division which (on the one side at least, and in great part too probably on both sides) chiefly proceeds from mere carnality. And what is it but religious contention, for the most part, that hath filled the Christian world with blood and ruins for many by-past ages? Carnal contention, under this most specious pretence, as being conversant about spiritual or religious concernments, is the thing animadverted on (though in gentler instances, as later occasions did require) in the following sermons. It was little imagined when they were delivered from the pulpit, they should ever have been made more public. I have in this publication of them partly yielded to the opinion of divers, who judged they might possibly be useful to more than those who heard them, and to them further upon review. But have more complied with a sort of necessity laid upon me, by being told if they were not published by me, the thing would be done (as it could) from broken, mistaken notes, without me. My own memorials and preparations were indeed imperfect enough, as it cannot but be in the case of one, so often in the week, engaged in such work. I have, as I could, by my own recollection, and by such help as I have otherwise had, endeavoured a full account of what was spoken, and am very confident nothing material is omitted. (Some ingeminations or varied expressions of the same thing, that are pardonable, if not useful to a hearer, but not so grateful and less needful to a reader, I reckon not such.) But divers passages (though not distinct heads) that were intended, but through want of time omitted, I have inserted in the places to which they did belong. Wherein none can think there is any wrong done. I am sensible the introductive part should have been in some respects otherwise methodized. But I am content to let it go as it is, though I find, by the notes that were brought me, that some things were somewhat transposed (otherwise than was intended) in the delivery, from a memory not the most faithful.

If it do any good, it must be from the supply of the good Spirit of God, which I admonish all you that read seriously to seek, and ask from him, who hath promised, thereupon, it shall be given. The very expectation whereof will prevent reading with a vain mind, or ill design, and the consequent danger of receiving hurt by what you read.

Yours in our common Lord,

J. H.

THE

CARNALITY OF RELIGIOUS CONTENTION

GAL. V. 16.

THIS I SAY THEN, WALK IN THE SPIRIT, AND YE SHALL NOT FULFIL THE LUST OF THE FLESH.

The last time I spake to you from these words, having largely opened before the import of *walking in the Spirit*, I undertook to show you how *the flesh* here is to be understood, against the lusts whereof such walking in the Spirit is the prescribed remedy. In the general you have been told, that flesh is here to be taken morally, and in that latitude, as to signify all sorts of moral evil, or the general depravedness of our corrupt nature; for though sometimes, in the moral acceptation, the sense is limited (as hath formerly been showed) to grosser sins, in contradistinction to more refined, as 2 Cor. vii. 1. and 1 John ii. 16. yet sometimes also it is so far extended, as to signify all sins, as Col. ii. 11. compared with Rom. vi. 6. And in this context it is plain the apostle comprehends sins of both these sorts under this one expression.

But what particular evils he more especially intended here to censure and caution these Galatian Christians against, under this one name, cannot better be understood than by consulting this context itself; in which, though we cannot say we have a full enumeration, we have yet very many instances, of the carnalities against which this remedy is directed. Some of them more gross, (as we have told you they might be distinguished,) adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, murder, drunkenness, revellings; and some other that may seem more refined, not as having less, but only a more subtle, malignity in them; such as hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, &c. It may here be thought strange that such sins as these should be animadverted upon in Christian churches (as this epistle is inscribed to such, the churches of Galatia, chap. i. 2.) so soon after the Gospel was come among them, the apostle himself thought it strange, for you find him wondering at it, chap. i. 6. I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ to another gospel. Yea, and after that, with the Gospel, they had received the Spirit too. For 'tis said, chap. iii. 2, 3. This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? And are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, do you think to be made perfect by the flesh?

We are, therefore, to consider what sort of persons and doctrines they were that had corrupted and depraved those churches; and whereby it will be the more apprehensible by what kind of insinuations they so far prevailed: and we may collect, in very great part, what they were, from divers passages of this epistle itself; and, indeed, from this very context. Some would have us think the persons were of that sect called gnostics, from their pretended and highly boasted knowledge. We have no evidence that this sect was so early known by this name; but it is very likely they were that sort of men that were afterwards so called. The characters here given them in this and the other apostolical epistles, do much agree with what divers of the more ancient Christian writers, and one pagan one, (Plotinus,) say of that sect. Which pagan, an inter-

preter, and great admirer of his,[a] would fain have pass for a Christian, because living in a time when the controversy between Christianity and paganism was at the height, he says nothing against Christianity itself, but speaks very much against these pseudo-Christians, whom, though that author mentions not by that name, this his interpreter often doth it for him, inserting "The Gnostics" even when he is but translating into the body of the work itself.

But this less concerns us. It is, however, out of question, that this sort of men, very anciently called gnostics, did highly vaunt their great knowledge. A very tempting specious pretence! Though their sublimer notions (about the Æons, &c.) were imaginations only: fancy and not knowledge, or γνῶσις ψευδώνυμος, *knowledge misnamed*, or falsely so called, (as we may borrow the apostle's expression, 1 Tim. vi. 20. though those inventions were later,) and could only serve to fill the minds of their proselytes with wind and vanity.

But their doctrines upon which the apostle animadverts in this epistle, we may collect from the manifest scope and design of it; and that was to assert *justification by faith without the works of the law*, which they greatly perverted; and *sanctification by the Spirit of Christ*, or the doctrine of the *new creature*, which they even quite subverted. With which false doctrines they conjoined a most impurely vicious life and practice; falling in much with the Jews in their corrupt doctrines, and with the pagans in their licentious practice. Which must be equally tempting to carnal minds.

And this may make it appear less strange, that all these sorts of carnality that are here mentioned in this context, from verse 15 to 21, should, in reference to the same sort of men, be so put together. For it is evident they were partly a judaizing and partly a paganizing sort of Christians; as (for ends of their own) they affected to call themselves. They held it lawful for Christians to join with pagans in their solemnities of worship, which they were wont to celebrate in the temples of their idols. It is notorious how gross impurities and immoralities were in those days incorporated into the paganish worship; such as made it sufficiently reasonable that idolatry should have in conjunction with it fornication and adultery, uncleanness and lasciviousness. And for the addition of witchcraft, it was not unaccountable, there being also sorceries, magical rites, and diabolical incantations observed to have been intermingled with the *sacra* of the pagans. And for which these (misnamed) Christians might have the greater kindness also, for the sake of Simon Magus, the father of their sect, by whom the affectation thereof was transmitted to some of his noted followers, that thought it a glorious thing to vie with their predecessor in this sort of excellency.

Nor is it alien from this purpose to take notice, that those diabolical rites are said to have obtained among the paganish idolaters, of drinking the warm blood of their sacrifices, and of eating things strangled with the blood in them, upon the imagination that in their so doing, they did partake of the very spirit of their gods whom they worshipped; and 'tis not altogether unsupposable that the devil might, in some unusual manner, enter into them at those times, more violently agitating their blood and other humours; in the higher ferments whereof, if by the directer influence of the great enemy of mankind, quarrels and murders (as was not unlikely) should also sometimes ensue, it could not but heighten the sport and triumphs of hell.

And that the decree of the apostles and elders, Acts xv. might have such a reference, prohibiting these things conjunctly, idolatry and fornication, and things strangled, and blood, that they should by no means mingle with the pagans in these horrid rites, a learned modern writer of our own hath rendered very probable.[b] And hereto those vehement dehortations of the apostle must answerably be understood to refer, 1 Cor. x. 11. remonstrating to them, that they could not have fellowship with the Lord's table, and the table of devils. And I would not, says he, that you should have fellowship with devils. For though he did not judge it unlawful to eat of the *idolytha*, *i. e.* things offered to idols, being sold in the shambles, he yet most earnestly protests against their presuming to mingle and partake in the horrid diabolical rites and impure practices that were wont to be used at their festivals in the idol's temples.

All thoughts of being by their Christianity obliged and enabled unto strict purity and holiness of heart and life, were out of doors with these seducers, and endeavoured to be extinguished in such as they could work to a compliance with them; whereof the apostle seemed deeply apprehensive, when he so earnestly inculcates, that in Christ Jesus (or in the Christian state) neither circumcision nor uncircumcision were of any avail, but a new creature, and faith working by love.

But it must seem of all things the most unaccountable and incongruous, that men of so profligate sentiments and practices should be for introducing a justification by the works of the law, in opposition to that by the faith of Christ. 'Tis manifest they hated the holy design of Christian religion, which they professed; and professed it, that they might have better opportunity to undermine it. Hereupon (not opening at once all the arcana of their way) they carry answerably to persons and occasions as they occurred; and as the apostle was all things to all, that he might save some; so were they, that they might pervert and destroy. To the Christian Jews one thing, to the Christian Gentiles another. In this their doctrine they did most plausibly judaize; in their impure practices they verged more to paganism. Pretending to Christian converts from among them, that Christ never intended to tie them to strict severities, or hold them under an uneasy bondage; whereto the apostle seems to refer, chap. v. 13. Ye have been called (he grants) to liberty, but use not (saith he) your liberty for an occasion to the flesh.

Thus we must suppose that they differently applied themselves to such as they designed to make their proselytes, endeavouring to accommodate themselves in the one of these to one sort of men, and to another sort in the other. In dealing with the Jewish Christians they not only denied the doctrine of justification by faith, (opposing thereto that of justification by the works of the law,) but calumniated it too, as if it tended to infer a liberty to sin, and make Christianity subservient to wickedness, whereof they knew their own to be more guilty. A piece of monstrous impudence (but usual with men of such foreheads) to endeavour the averting that charge from themselves, to which they were most manifestly liable, by first charging it on the innocent.

Hereto the apostle hath manifest reference, when having first asserted against them justification by faith only, Gal. ii. 16. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. He then vindicates the assertion against their imputation, that it made Christ a patron to men's sins: If (saith he) while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things that I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ, and am in and with him dead unto all sin, so as not to be under the dominion of any; and death never more had dominion over him, when he had once died. And whereas they thus objecting against the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, that it ministered unto sin, or made Christ a minister thereunto, were liable to have the objection retorted upon them, being a sort of men themselves so very infamously wicked; for this they had a double *salvo*, both of which the apostle doth industriously refute. That is, from the two parts of the law given by Moses, and the two sorts of the works of the law enjoined thereby, that is, the moral and ritual or ceremonial part. In reference to the former, they fall in with those Jewish conceits of the merit of their good works, done from the principle of free will; and that in order to their justification, this merit was to be measured by the preponderation of their good works to their bad.[c]

a Marsil. Ficinus.

b Dr. Spencer de Ritibus Hebræorum.

c See at large to this purpose Smith's select discourses upon this subject.

and that it was possible that one good work in some cases might turn the scale; that is, if they were equal before. Now this the apostle occurs to, by showing that they that were under the law were under a curse; for that if they continued not in all things written in the law to do them, all they did was nothing, as you may see, chap. iii. of this epistle, ver. 10.

And then as to the ritual or ceremonial part, because their sacrifices were in great part expiatory of sin, and divers of their other performances carried a great show of sanctity and piety in them; which their expiatory sacrifices could only be, as they were representative of the one propitiation, and their other observances were nothing to their sanctity, if the thing they were designed to signify, did not accompany the sign; they imagined they were not to signify its presence, but to supply its absence. This notion did obtain even with the stricter sort of them, the Pharisees themselves, who thereupon made very light of the weightier matters of the law, reckoning that though they were guilty of many immoralities in practice, their exact observance of the rites and ceremonies enjoined by Moses, would go far to make an amends; and that their paying tithe of mint, annis, and cummin, would serve instead of judgment, faith, mercy, and the love of God, which they are said to pass over as very light and small matters. See Matt. xxiii. 23. compared with Luke xi. 42. And herein the apostle contests with these Galatian Christians, not only with vehemency, but with some kind of wonder, that when Gospel light had come among them, and that having known God, or rather been known of him, as chap. iv. 9. they should attribute any thing to so beggarly rudiments as these were; that is, being circumcised, and keeping days, and months, and years, &c., the things whereon they laid so great stress. And because they did so, he tells them in that 4th chapter, that he was afraid that he had bestowed labour in vain among them.

In sum, therefore, he makes it his business to evidence to them, that both their justification and their sanctification must be conjoined and arise together out of one and the same root, Christ himself, and by faith in him (without the works of the law) as that which must vitally unite them with him, and that thereby they should become actually interested in all his fulness; that fulness of righteousness which was to be found only in him, and no where but in him; and withal, in that fulness of spirit and life, and holy influence, which also was only in him; so as that the soul being united by this faith with Christ, must presently die to sin and live to God, chap. ii. 19, 20. And at the same time when he delivered a man from the law as dead to it, he became to him a continnal living spring of all the duty which God did by his holy rule require and call for, and render the whole life of such a man a life of devotedness to God.

And 'tis here by the way worth the while to observe how the apostle himself expounds that phrase of being dead to the law by being delivered from it, Rom. vii. 1—6. And no man can be said to be delivered from any thing, as it is a good or an advantage to him, but as it is an evil, and doth him hurt. And the law hurts no man as a rule of life. But as to one stated under the full power of it, 'tis a bar against that great blessing of the Spirit, (chap. iii. 13, 14.) which by its yet abiding curse it keeps off from him, hereby occasioning his continuance in sin, and then condemning him for it. Whereupon how clear is the current of the discourse in these words, *viz.* By the law I am dead to the law, that I might live to God; I am crucified with Christ, yet I live, *q. d.* The law itself hath slain me, and killed all my hopes and expectations from it: the same law that slew Christ, hath slain me. I am crucified with him; which supposes his being in him by that faith by which he was to live ever after. In this faith stood his marriage to Christ, who succeeds into the room of the law, as the case is stated, Rom. vii. 1—3, &c. They that were settled, in reference to each other, in the conjugal state, as the law and the sinner were; upon the death of the one (whichsoever it be) the relation ceases, and so the obligation which depended upon that relation. And thereupon, says he, the law itself having given me my death's wound, and killed me as to it, in the article of dying, I join myself to Christ, and yield to be crucified with him, but therein acquire with him a new life. Nevertheless I live. And how? Not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I live in the flesh, is by faith in the Son of God, who hath loved me, and given himself for me. And this life I now thus live is a life of pure and absolute devotedness to God; terminated upon his interest and glory, as the *end* of it, governed by his declared will, as the *rule* of it; *i. e.* in sum, 'tis a holy life, or (as before) 'tis a living to God. Whereupon he so copiously distinguishes, chap. iii. between Jews and Jews, those that were born after the flesh, and those born of the Spirit, the sons of the bond-woman, and of the free, (as he allegorically speaks,) signifying the latter only born into this new state of life. By all which he shows the connexion to be most necessary and inviolable, between being justified by faith in Christ, and a life of holiness; so little opposite were these to one another, that one and the same faith was to infer both.

But now, that the large extent of this holiness of life might more fully appear, the apostle signifies, that it must not only exclude those grosser lusts and works of the flesh, but also such, as because they might seem somewhat more refined, might be reckoned by some less criminal, he therefore inserts divers of this other kind also: and the state of the case did equally require it. For it appears (as it might well be supposed) that so far as any were tainted with the false notions, and with inclinations to the impure practices before mentioned, they were filled with animosities, with wrath, envyings, and hatred towards them that had not received the taint; and they might have too much place with these back again towards them. Whereupon there could not but be very great and high ferments in these churches. Nothing therefore could be more requisite, or seasonable, than that several instances of this sort of carnality should be put into this catalogue, *viz.* hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, &c. For they were not to be thought (as was said) more refined, as having less; but a more subtle energy, or penetrative power of malignity in them. Nor indeed hath Christianity and the Christian church suffered more by any sorts of evils, than by those of this sort. Others destroy particular persons; these, besides their doing so, do more directly hurt the community, and tend to waste and destroy the church.

Now as to those grosser carnalities mentioned in this context, I did formerly say somewhat briefly, and so I did as to that which seems the central one among those of this latter sort, *viz.* that of heresy: which I considered according to what it doth import in itself, and did design also to consider it in this its concomitancy, *viz.* of the things here mentioned in so near conjunction, and that are of nearer affinity with it, hatred, envyings, and the like. I have indeed been since in some suspense whether I should pursue that intention or no; but upon serious consideration, and solemn looking up to heaven for direction, I have determined not to let this sort of carnality pass without just animadversion. For I consider that I speak to a Christian assembly, who must be understood all to profess equal and impartial reverence to the word of God, as to a revelation come down from heaven, for our direction and conduct thither. And therefore none dare, upon serious thoughts, allow in themselves any kind of regret or disgust as to so material and important a part of this holy word. We are assured the words of God will do good to them that walk uprightly, that is, to upright-hearted ones; who it must therefore be supposed will walk or deal uprightly in their attendance thereunto. And I cannot but hope that God will graciously help us to speak and hear with that uprightness and integrity of heart, that this word of his may do good to some, without doing hurt to any.

In speaking therefore to this sort of carnality, (for we must mention it by such a term as the Holy Ghost hath thought fit to be put upon it,) I shall *first* note to you some previous things more generally, and then shall, *secondly*, let you see what appearances there may be of it in such a case as the apostle's present discourse hath reference unto.

First. It will be of use to us, more generally, to note these few things:

1. That the several expressions of it which we find in this context, in closer connexion with heresy, as it were

guarding it before and behind, *viz.* hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, do all note but one radical evil, and do all agree in one root. Whereupon it will be the less needful to insist upon them severally, or to give you the criticism of each word by itself, which it were a great deal more easy to do, than it will be useful, or of any avail to us. What I shall say therefore will be more general; but will however give you the occasion of casting your eye upon the particulars, whereby you will have the more distinct account of that carnality, which is here referred to by the apostle.

2. This is needful to be noted too, that this precept of the apostle, considered as a prescription against fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, has more immediate and direct reference to this sort of carnality. This is plain, if you will but again peruse the words as they lie in their closest connexion. For when he had said in the 14th verse, That all the law is fulfilled in this one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, (most of all, no doubt, one's Christian neighbour,) he adds, But if you bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not devoured one of another. Then immediately come in the words of the text, This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh: *q. d.* The lust of the flesh will be working this way, putting you upon biting and devouring one another. According as sentiments begin to differ, and minds are divided, inclinations will carry one this way, and another that; and then you will be too prone to be at biting, and be ready to fall to devouring one another. Now I have no better remedy to prescribe you against both than this, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. I should have been a very unfaithful interpreter of this context to you, if I had not taken notice of this so immediate connexion.

3. This is further to be noted that this sort of carnality that lies in strifes, in emulations, in envyings, in hatred, &c. may come to have its occasion of being exercised, of working, lusting, and exerting itself about the doctrines of the Gospel; than which nothing is more evident, in that you find that these things are put in connexion with heresies, which must be understood to be a corruption of Gospel doctrine. Very true indeed it is, that that word heresy, among the more ancient philosophers, was used in a more gentle, and no way infamous sense, signifying only this or that sect of philosophers. But the word coming to be borrowed and transferred by sacred writers into the Holy Scriptures, there it is mostly taken in a very ill sense, (though not always,) as signifying error or corruption in doctrine, of a very high and destructive nature, as Tit. iii. 10, 11. 2 Pet. ii. 1. For though all heresy be error, or carry error in it; yet all error is not heresy: that must be such error as strikes at the root, and is conjunct with heart-disaffection and malignity, (as was noted the last time,) standing in opposition to faith, which is not a merely mental thing, but lies very principally in the heart. Doctrinal matters are however here referred unto, even in the very notion of heresy, and therefore about those matters these carnalities may have place. For when the several passions here mentioned are raised, and do tumultuate in the breasts of this and that particular person, they soon and easily spread and propagate themselves to others, so as to infect the community. And then it comes to the forming of it into parties, or dividing it into two sides, as the word διχοστασίαι (which we translate *seditions*) signifies; the one stated and posited as in a hostile posture against the other, till at length the matter arrive to that height and pitch of contumacious and fixed obstinacy, as in matters so important as the apostle's discourse reflects upon, will complete the notion of heresies, *viz.* on one side, at least; not, perhaps, without great faultiness on the other, which comes next to be noted.

4. As such carnality may have place and exercise about Gospel doctrine, so it is very possible it may show itself on both sides, even on their part who have the *truth* with them, as well as on theirs who oppose it, and make it their business to propagate the contrary error or false doctrine. The very defence of truth itself may be accompanied with such carnalities, such strife, wrath, malice, envy, as divides the guilt between the divided parties, and leaves neither side innocent.

I am, you know, by mere providence, in the series and tract of a discourse long continued upon this context, led to say what I now do; and I have therefore the more hope, that through the blessing of God, it may be of some use to us. But this comes most directly under our notice; and let it be noted, that whereas in such contests both sides are wont to be confident they are in the right; neither the one nor the other may be over-confident or careless of not being in the wrong, in what may be of equal or greater importance than the matters themselves, disputed among them that agree in the substantials of religion, or that hold the head, can be. Let us, I say, deeply consider it, that such sinful carnality may have place, and exercise not only about religious concernments, but even on that side where the truth lies; which is from hence evident, that the apostle immediately before the text, as I have noted, says, If you bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not bitten and consumed one of another. A great aptitude he therefore observed there was, to be biting on both sides, even where the truth lay, and where it lay not.

For we are here further to observe, that whereas our apostle sadly considered that many among these Christians of Galatia were lapsed, and fallen from the purity and sincerity of religion; he apprehended too, that they who were not so fallen, took not the best course for the recovery of them that were. Which that admonition of his must mean, chap. vi. 1, 2. Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. It seems he reckoned that the sounder part among them, and that ought (and 'tis like thought themselves) to be more spiritual, while they showed not more of a spirit of meekness towards the lapsed, were not so spiritual as they should be, and discovered more carnality than became them, more wrath and bitterness of spirit than could comport with the law of Christ. They will be little awed by this, and be apt for all this to indulge their own furious passions, that think he hath no law. But though one were never so sure he hath the truth on his side, 'tis in itself a dreadful thing, to whosoever shall allow himself the liberty seriously to think of it. For what must we conceive of such truth, that is to be defended in some cases, I say, that in some cases ought to be so? We must surely conceive of it as a divine, a sacred thing, a heaven-born thing, a thing of heavenly descent, part of a revelation immediately come forth from the very bosom of God; so is the whole Gospel revelation to be looked upon. Now here is carnality that lusts; such a kind of carnality as the context speaks of, wrath, strife, hatred, &c. Here is such carnality, lusting, actually lusting, seeking prey, ravening for food. And what doth it feed upon? No meaner thing than divine truth! evangelical doctrines! Monstrous thought! Consider, I beseech you, my friends, what this comes to? The feeding an impure lust upon sacred things, or upon that which is divine! I must have my lust satisfied, says the proud, contentious spirit: wrath burns, anger boils: sacred things are not spared, but fallen upon, as the prepared food of lust. It will be fed, they are not forborn. All reverence of God is forgotten, heaven is ravaged, the most sacred mysteries of God's own kingdom are violated, and torn this way and that, (O horrid thing!) by harpies, vultures, by most fierce and furious lusts. And if a man would know, recognise, take knowledge of the most deeply inward sensations and intention of his own heart, thus it is, I must now apply my thoughts, bend my mind, to consider a revelation come from heaven: And what, for the end for which it was given, to enlighten, purify, quicken my soul towards God, renew and form it for God, to serve and enjoy him? no, but on purpose to feed, to gratify a lust! We can (too often) make neither better nor worse of it, but just so it is.

These things being premised, I would now go on a little more particularly to show you, wherein carnality may appear exerting itself, even about such things; or what will be manifest indications of such a carnality, as is here referred unto, acting about, or in reference to, the things of God, the most sacred and important truths and doctrines of his Gospel.

I. First, When in comparison of some less things,

wherein we find occasions or pretence to differ, little account is made of the incomparably greater things, wherein all serious Christians are agreed, and wherein they really cannot but be agreed. Let it be considered, whether pains be not taken to devise some matter or other to contend about; (that shows a great disposition;) and then having found out some minuter things about which to differ, our differences, as little as they are, quite swallow up our agreements. The whole Gospel signifies nothing, (though full of the most glorious wonders,) in comparison of some punctilios, either that we have invented, or that it may be doubted whether there be any thing in them or nothing. Here is some mystery in all this! A lust is to be gratified; an appetite to contend. This winds and wriggles this way and that, loth to appear but under some specious disguise of zeal for truth, indignation against false doctrine, or the like; but it bewrays itself, and unawares, shows its ugly serpentine head. For if the thing chosen out to be the matter of contest be thought worth so much, when it is manifestly either, in comparison, little, or nothing but a figment, why are not the things on all hands most confessedly great and most evident, more highly esteemed, loved, relished, and with gust and delight fed upon? Why do not the greater things signify more to unite us in love and communion with all that agree with us in them, than the lesser things to divide us, about which we disagree? Indeed the disagreements were in themselves vastly great between the untainted Christians of these Galatian churches, and that horrid sect that the apostle's discourse has manifest reference unto. Blessed be God there are not such disagreements amongst us. But while there is less taint of error in our minds, (as to these things,) are we not concerned to take heed there be not as great a taint of this vicious carnality in our hearts? It speaks too much of it; when having devised a difference, we are prone to overlook and make little account of the great things wherein we are entirely and most professedly agreed.

If we consider the things which the doctrinal part of this epistle doth more expressly refer to, as I have noted already how great things in reference hereto are we fully agreed in! We are all agreed, that a sinner, an apostate lapsed creature, can never be saved and brought to a blessed state, but he must be justified, and he must be sanctified. He must be justified, to make his state safe; he must be sanctified, to make the temper of his spirit good, capable of communion with God in this world, and of final eternal blessedness with him in the other. We are agreed, that such justification and such sanctification are both the effects of most absolutely free and sovereign grace; that none could be ever justified, but by freest grace; that none can ever be sanctified but by freest grace, most absolutely and most sovereignly free. We are agreed, that the highest perfection of sanctification that can ever possibly be attained unto, signifies nothing at all to deserve, to procure by merit our justification. We are agreed, that both, as they are from the most free and sovereign grace, so do come through the mediation of Jesus Christ, the alone Mediator between God and man: that the righteousness is entirely and only Christ's, by which we are justified: that the Spirit is most entirely and only Christ's, by which we are sanctified; according to that in 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. Such as are mentioned there were before the grossest and vilest of sinners, fornicators, adulterers, idolaters, &c. And such (saith the apostle) were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

You cannot but be in all these agreed. We are agreed, that whosoever does sincerely, evangelically believe in God through Christ, receives Christ, is united with him, or is in him: who doth by serious repentance turn to God, whose heart is won to love him in truth as his highest and best good, who is conformed to the image of his Son; and who having been made willing in the day of his power, doth now render a sincere obedience to him; every such one is in a safe state, accepted with God, has found grace in his eyes.

For no words of Scripture can be plainer, than that they that believe in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life, John iii. 16. yea, that they have it, ver. 36. That life is begun with them, which is never to end, or which is in the sure way to be continued till it become everlasting: that they that repent, and turn from all their transgressions, their iniquities shall not be their ruin; (Ezek. xviii. 30.) that God hath prepared the things which eye hath not seen——for them that love him, and will give them the crown of life according to his own promise; (1 Cor. ii. 9. Jam. i. 12.) that Christ doth become the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him; (Heb. v. 9.) that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; (Rom. viii. 1.) that it must turn wholly to the praise of the glory of his grace, that God makes them accepted in the beloved, Eph. i. 6. We do all agree, that they that do never believe, they that never repent, they that never love God, they that are never brought to obey him, that live in enmity and rebellion against him to the last breath, must needs be in a lost state, are never justified, never accepted with God, are liable unto coming and abiding wrath, and remain under condemnation, John iii. 16, 36. Luke xiii. 3. Col. iii. 6. We agree, that such faith, such repentance, such love to God, such obedience, even in the most entire sincerity, are not to be considered at all, as any cause of such a person's acceptance with God; they do characterize the accepted person, but they cause it not, they deserve nothing; nay, they could not, if they were perfect. No internal work of the Holy Ghost, though in this our present state it were most absolutely perfect, so as to exclude every thing of sin, could be any part of that righteousness that must justify us before God. To suppose that it could, would be manifestly to confound the offices of the Redeemer, and of the Holy Ghost. It was Christ that was to merit for us; the Holy Ghost was never to merit for us. It was not the Holy Ghost that died for us, nor can his operations or productions in us, have any causative influence to the meriting the justified and accepted state of any person before God. They were never meant for that purpose, nor have any aptitude or accommodateness thereunto. They cannot make us never to have sinned; nor can atone for our having done so. We cannot but be agreed in this, for 'tis plain, and carries its own evidences in itself: *i. e.* suppose we a person, as soon as he is converted, made perfectly free from sin, that very moment, by some extraordinary powerful work of the Holy Ghost on his soul, how shall that expiate for his having been a sinner? Now where there are so great things wherein we agree, and we make little of them; things that should raise up our souls, and awaken all our powers unto highest acts of love, gratitude, and praise to God and our Redeemer, and fill us with wonder and pleasure as often as we think of them; an indisposition of mind to take notice of, and consider such things, so as to improve and use them to the great purposes of the Christian life, as incentives to the love of God, an entire devoting of ourselves to him, vigorous and diligent serving of him, and walking holily and comfortably with him in our daily course, through a greater disposition to contend about we well know not what besides, too plainly shows much of that carnal disaffection, which the apostle doth here animadver upon. There are other things belonging to this same purpose that I find I cannot reach to at this time.

SERMON II.

Gal. v. 16.

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

I HAVE begun to show you by what indications much carnality may appear, and show itself in and about spiritual matters; as, (for instance,) in the controverting, yea, even in the defending, the truths of the Gospel; and intend now to proceed. You have heard it does so,

1. When Christians, who are very far agreed in the most important things, make little of the things wherein they are agreed though never so great, in comparison of the

much less things wherein they differ; as all serious Christian must be understood to agree in far greater things than it is possible for them to differ in. I lately mentioned to you sundry great agreements that I cannot doubt to be very common with serious and intelligent Christians, which I shall not now stay to repeat, but add,

2. Such carnality shows itself, when there is too much aptness to lay greater stress than is needful upon some unscriptural words in delivering Scripture doctrine. Here we may take carnality as the apostle doth, I Cor. iii. 3. While there are divisions among you, are you not carnal, and walk (or act) as men? There is more of the man in it than of the Christian: when we can make a shift to divide about a word, and that (in the present use of it) devised only by man; when words that are merely of human stamp, and used in no such sense, or to no such purpose in Scripture, however they may be significant, yet too great a stress and weight is laid upon them, either by too stiffly adhering to them on the one hand, or too vehemently decrying them on the other hand; while, perhaps (and it is a certain and a known case) the meaning may be the same on both sides, and would be so, or would appear to be so, if such and such words were waived, and others more understood were chosen, and used in the room of them. It is true, we are not to think (and no man of sense can) that we are obliged never to use other words in such matters, but such as the translators of Bible have hit on in their version of it, as if that must consecrate those words, and leave all other under a profane character; but if it appear that any word of a doubtful signification is misunderstood by many, creates offence, and through some fixed, immoveable prejudice, or prepossession that some other notion of it hath obtained in the minds of many, it will always be otherwise understood by them than we intend, let it rather go for a *nehushtan*, than that the peace of the church should be broken, and men's minds be disturbed and disquieted by it. This is the case, when any such words as might be arbitrarily used or laid aside, are made so necessary, or so destructive, as if all religion were saved or lost by them: when one so cries up such a word, as if he would say, "The heavens must fall if I have not my word." And another decries it as much, as if he said, "They must fall if it be admitted, or if I have not mine." Sure there must be in this case that forbidden λογομαχία, of which the apostle speaks in that, 1 Tim. vi. 4. which they are usually most apt to be guilty of, that are also guilty of what is put in conjunction therewith, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds; with these falls in this strife of words: whether that be to be understood objectively, or instrumentally, strife about words or wordy strifes, I shall not here determine. But that whole context is worth our considering, ver. 3, 4, 5. If any man teach otherwise, do ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖ, teach other or *alien* things, or after another or *alien* manner, and consent not to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness: 4. He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions, and strife of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 5. Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. And therewith agrees what we find also mentioned, with the charge of avoiding them, 2 Tim. ii. 23. Foolish and unlearned questions that gender strifes. Some may fancy they make themselves considerable for learning by such altercations; but the apostle slurs that conceit, calling them unlearned. So I remember[a] Seneca says of the Greeks, (calling it their disease,) that they made much ado with certain idle questions, (as, how many rowers belonged to the vessel that carried Ulysses? and such like, that he there mentions,) whereby, says he, they did not appear more learned, but only more troublesome.

3. When we consider with too little indulgence one another's mistakes and misapplications, in the use even of Scripture words, placing them as some may do, upon things to which they do not properly belong, when yet they agree about the things themselves. There are words in the Scripture revelation, that it may be the one or the other of disagreeing persons may apply to one thing, when the other (perhaps truly) thinks they belong more properly to another. There is an inconvenience in this: the case is much as if one should have an idea of all the streets of London, in his mind as they lie, but he mistakes the names, and transposes them. As for instance, calls Cheap-side Cornhill, or Cornhill Cheap-side. He does not speak so intelligibly to another, but at the same time may have the same idea in his mind of London that another has. And this, however, when it occurs in religious disceptations, ought to be considered (though there be an inconvenience in it) with indulgence, as knowing we are all liable to mistakes in greater matters. And as it is possible there may be somewhat of carnality, some perverseness, some cloud arising from infirm flesh that darkens the mind, and occasions it so to mistake; so 'tis much greater, not to be able to bear in another such a mistake.

4. When there is an agreement about the main and principal things that the Scripture revelation contains and carries in it; but there is not that agreement about their mutual respects and references unto one another. This is a matter indeed of greater importance; there can be no true scheme given of Gospel truths and doctrines, if such their references and respects to one another be not rightly understood. But an entire true scheme of Christian doctrines will not enter into all minds; and for the most part they are particular passages, or particular truths, that strike hearts, and that God makes use of to do souls good by. And if so entire a scheme will not enter into the minds of many, whether through their darkness or ignorance, or whether through any thing of prejudice, that was as it were forelaid in their minds; nothing remains but to be patient of it, and to do them what good we can, even upon their own terms, and in the way wherein they are capable of it. There was such an obstruction in minds among these Corinthians, even upon this very account of their carnality, as we see in that 3d of the 1st epistle, that the apostle tells them, I could not speak to you as spiritual, (it must be understood comparatively,) but as unto carnal; and therefore, as a wise instructor, thought it needful to keep back, to withhold some things from them that he reckoned might be meat to them, solid meat, strong meat, because they had been hitherto unable to bear it, nor were yet able. It is in that case needful rather somewhat to ἐπέχειν, to withhold some things, or suspend, than by a continued and too urgent inculcation to frustrate one's own design; and while we would have all enter into less capable minds, to have nothing enter. It may sometimes be, that when too much is endeavoured at once to be borne in upon them against an invincible obstruction, we only engage them to fortify the more strongly, and shut out all; and so we defeat ourselves. They gain nothing, and our whole design is frustrated and lost. In all our applications to the souls of men, there must be patient waiting, and very gradual endeavours used, without force and furious striving; yea, in our having to do with such as are yet the very vassals and captives of the devil. So the apostle speaks, 2 Tim. ii. 24. The servant of the Lord should not strive, but be patient towards (even all) men, and wait (even in reference to them that are hitherto altogether impenitent) when God will give them repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, that are led captive by him at his will. Much more are such methods to be used towards them, who call on the name of our Lord out of a pure heart, as he speaks a little above in the same context, ver. 22. And consider the extent and endearingness of this character. 'Tis to be deplored that it extends not further; but so far as it doth extend, God forbid it should not have a most persuasive efficacy and power upon our spirits, to make us follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, even with all them that bear that character, *i. e.* that call on the Lord with a pure heart; their Lord (as 'tis elsewhere) as well as ours; be they of what party, or denomination, soever:

5. Much of this carnality appears about such matters, when we are over intent to mould and square Gospel truths and doctrines by human measures and models, and too earnestly strive to make them correspond; that is, when we aim, beyond what things can admit, to stretch (or rather to shrink and contract) God's transactions with men, unto the scheme and model of our own abstract notions and de-

[a] De Brev. Vita.

finitions, or of merely human, civil, or political economies, administrations, and transactions; such I mean as obtain among men towards one another; and so labour to have the same measures take place throughout in reference to Divine things, as do in human. Whereby more than is needful, useful, (or indeed so much as possible to agree and quadrate,) of logic, metaphysics, and of civil and other law, is introduced into theology. Illustrations indeed may be taken thence, but not strict measures. It is impossible sometimes they should be so. Divers things are taken among men in such notions, as, in delivering the doctrine of the Gospel cannot have a full and adequate place: they often will not exactly agree or correspond. As if, in speaking of God's pardoning and justifying a sinner, we should take our measures of pardon and justification strictly from what obtains amongst men, we shall find a great difference and disagreement. For plain it is, that, according to human measures, the same person cannot be both pardoned and justified. He that is pardoned cannot be justified, and he that is justified, cannot be pardoned. But according to Divine and Gospel measures both are truly said of the same person. In the one case there is an inconsistency, in the other a fair agreement of the same things. He that is at a human bar a justified person, needs no pardon, his case admits of none; if he were justified, pardon were absurdly talked of; and so if he were pardoned, that does plainly imply that he was not justified. It is quite otherwise if you bring these things to the Gospel, and God's dealing with sinners. I cannot now spend time in showing you distinctly how these things do lie, and are very capable of being accommodated, in the sinner's case; some resemblance will appear, not an exact or entire correspondency. The instance however serves our present purpose, to show that God's procedure and methods in his dispensations towards men, will not in all things square with human measures.

Again, if we speak of the doctrine of God's covenant in Jesus Christ, we cannot take our measures from human covenants that pass between man and man, especially one private man and another; for there the persons are under no obligation before their mutual consent. It is not so between God and man: God's covenants are laws as well as covenants; and so a man is, before he consents, obliged to consent. Therefore here again it appears Gospel doctrines are not to be exactly measured by human models. Nor should this be too earnestly endeavoured, we should not too much set our minds upon it; 'tis to offer at a thing in its own nature not practicable, and there is too much of man in it.

6. When there is a discernible proneness to oppose the great things of the Gospel to one another, and to exalt or magnify one, above or against another. It is too plain this may more commonly come under observation, than it doth under that reprehension which it deserves. For instance, those two great things that I mentioned at first, justification and sanctification, both very great things, of most apparent and confessed necessity to the salvation and blessedness of the souls of men; justification, that a man's state may be good; sanctification, that the temper of his soul may become so. But is it not too common to magnify one of these above or against the other? To contend and dispute with great fervour concerning the higher value and excellency, the dignity or precedency, of this or that, and to which the preference belongs; to be so much taken up about the one, as seldom to think of the other; and it may be not well to savour and relish the mention of it? Some are so taken up about the business of justification, (that admirable vouchsafement of grace to sinners!) that they care not to hear of sanctification; and so all their religion is foreign to them, or lies in somewhat without them, or in a mere relative thing, that alters not their spirits. A strange religion! that makes a man nothing the better man; or notwithstanding which, he is, in the habitual frame of his soul, as bad as ever, vain, terrene, worldly-minded, proud, passionate, wrathful, malicious, vindictive, false, deceitful, perhaps (for that is not worse than the rest) very impurely sensual. But, no man can tell why, nor to be sure he himself, he takes himself to be a justified person: and perhaps his imagination of it arises in him a sort of rapturous, unaccountable joy, without ground or root, and which will not only wither, but turn (without a seasonable and merciful change) into endless horror, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth! A fearful and most surprising issue and disappointment of a high and unmisgiving confidence, and expectation to be saved! With others, whose temper, circumstances, or temptations, have less inclined them to rejoicing, their religion is made up of tormenting anxieties and fears, and consists in the daily revolving of perpetual endless doubts, whether they are justified or no; without any direct, formed design of being or doing good; by which they might, in due time, come to have more truly comfortable apprehensions of the goodness of their state. They more care to be pardoned for being bad, than to become good!

Again, on the other hand, there may be some so wholly taken up about what they are in themselves to be and do, and in the earnest, but too abstract, or less evangelical, (and therefore less fruitful,) endeavour after higher pitches of sanctity, without due reference to the grace, Spirit, and blood of a Redeemer, that they neglect and look not after their justification, and acceptance with God in him; nor do relish and savour, as they ought, the doctrine of the Gospel herein. Do more incline to a philosophical (and scarcely Christian) Christianity; forgetting Christ to be their Redeemer, their Lord, and vital Head, and that they are (or ought to be) under his conduct, and through his mediation, daily tending to God and blessedness.

But now upon the whole, when there appears an aptness or disposition to separate these two, justification and sanctification, from one another, or either of them from abiding in Christ; or to oppose them to one another, or contend about the priority of the one or the other, (when no doubt they go together,) and about the preference or excellency of the one above the other, which is the more considerable thing: herein appears much carnality of mind, an unsound, injudicious, distempered spirit. And 'tis a like case, as if a malefactor at the same time is under sentence by which he is condemned to die, and under a most dangerous disease, that appears very probably mortal to him: he has a compassionate prince, willing to save his life, and he at once vouchsafes him his pardon, and provides a very skilful and able physician for the curing of his disease: the wretched creature hearing of this, falls a disputing which of these is the greatest favour, to have my disease cured, or, to have my crime pardoned; and in the heat of the dispute he neglects both, looks after neither. This is indeed less supposable, in the instanced case; but how great a distemper doth it show, that it should be so, in this, which is of unexpressibly greater importance!

And now further it is agreed on all hands, that faith in a Redeemer is necessary to salvation, with those that are adult, and capable of attending to the Gospel revelation; but here, what disputes are then raised! with what fervour are they managed, concerning the place of it, or the kind of that necessity which this faith is of, in order to the safe state of a sinner! A like case again, as if such a condemned malefactor is told of his prince's professed, gracious intendments towards him, but he doubts the sincerity of his professions. He gives him all desirable assurances, and tells him, Do but trust me, and all shall be well. But he presently falls a disputing, Yea, but how am I to consider this trust? (we suppose it only such a trust as may be fitly enough placed upon a man;) which way is it to contribute towards my safety or welfare? Is it to be an instrument or a condition? How absurd an abuse were this of the clemency of a propitious prince! If there were a public proclamation of pardon to many offenders at once concerned together, and they all agree only to disagree, to vie with one another their skill in criticizing upon the words, or in disputing the method, contending about the order and coherence of parts, and make it their business not thankfully to accept, but cavil at, to tear and mangle and pluck in pieces the proclamation, and defeat the kind design and gracious tender of their prince? What clemency would not this provoke to the highest resentment and indignation! And what now can be stranger, or more perverse, than that a revelation from heaven of so much good will to men, in the substance so plain, and that so directly concerns the salvation of souls, should be so torn and mangled? considered for no purpose

less than that for which it was vouchsafed, and that the very end itself should be in so great part eluded, that was so kindly designed in it? Though yet the endeavour of salving difficulties that occur, by earnest prayer, diligent study, and by amicable and placid collation among brethren, or comparing of sentiments, sincerely designed for a clearer understanding the frame of the Gospel truth, or how it may be with most advantage represented to men for the promoting of the common salvation, can be liable to no just reprehension, being managed with that reverence that so sacred things challenge, and with a due sense of our own ignorance and imperfection. That only which is blameable in this case, and whereof I reckon no account can be given, or defence made, is that when, for the substance, the Gospel propounds and lays before us so plain a way wherein men are to endeavour the saving of their souls, as wherein the wayfaring man, though a fool, needs not err, *i. e.* that there must be repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, a renewed heart, a holy life. One comes and pretends to show that order of these things one way, so as to compose a scheme of them that is represented as most necessary to be observed and held to. No, saith another, I'll give you a righter scheme of salvation, another way, and mightily presses the necessity of that, and the dangerous mistakes of the other. And thus they cover a plain way with thorns and briers, do not instruct, but perplex and distract whom they should direct, create distinctions and oppositions of scheme to scheme, not only without necessity, but almost without a difference, and yet insist with vehemency, and lay men's salvation upon their understanding the matter so or so, when it is hoped thousands have been saved, that never heard of the one scheme or the other, as they are distinguished and opposed to each other. Who can justify this? Again, in the

7th. place, When any do with great zeal contend for this or that opinion or notion, as very sacred and highly spiritual, (as they account,) with no other design, than that under that pretence thay may indulge their own carnal inclination with the greater liberty. It was the very genius of this sort of men against whom this epistle was meant, whether they were then called gnostics it matters not. The name well agreed to them, and they were known by it afterwards. They were men of much pretence to knowledge and sublime notions, as they counted them. And herein lay their religion; and under this pretence they indulged themselves in all manner of licentiousness. When any do take up with mere notions, which they are zealous for, accounting them very highly spiritual; and under pretext of these, they indulge the carnality of their hearts, if not of their lives and practices too; and their fine notion, (as they account it,) which they (more uncertainly) father upon the Spirit of truth, must be substituted in the room of all that love, meekness, humility, heavenliness, self-denial, which are the most certain and undoubted fruits of this blessed Spirit: when under the pretence of being notional men, and of knowing a great deal more than most others do, any neglect their own spirits, and suffer pride, avarice, ambition, vindictiveness, and falsehood, to shelter themselves under the thin cobweb of a few fine-spun notions; and they can now hereupon live at random, with more ease to their own minds, and, they think, with better reputation as to other men.

Here is a glittering show only of an airy, imagined, pretended spirituality, drawn over (but which doth not hide) corrupt, rotten, putrid flesh. Have you never known such a case, when it might be said, there goes a proud, ambitious man, a covetous man, a false man, a malicious man; but he is a man of rare and singular notions, knows a great deal more than most others do; and this must atone for all his crimes with God and man, and both quiet his conscience and salve his credit together! And who can doubt but this man must be very fond of his own opinions, and zealously contend and dispute for them upon any occasion (though he never so ineptly make it) when they are to do him so great service, and to stand him in so much stead, *i. e.* to supply the room for him of all real religion and morality. And if he have happened upon such notions as are really true, and revealed by God himself, by how much the more certainly divine they be, so much the greater is the wickedness, so basely to prostitute sacred things, truths that are the very offspring of heaven, unto so vile purposes. It were fault enough to make them serve different or other purposes than they are capable of, *i. e.* to supply the room of religion and real goodness. What an indignity is that to religion, to suppose an empty spiritless opinion can fill up its place! a thing that does a man no good, for which his mind and spirit is nothing the better! much more, that shelters what is so very bad! Can this serve for religion? That religion that consists with being proud, with being deceitful, with being malicious, with being revengeful, learn, learn to despise such a religion! Much more that is taken up to veil over these, and exclude all real goodness! Again,

8. When, in the maintaining any doctrine of the Gospel in opposition to others, we industriously set ourselves to pervert their meaning, and impute things to them that they never say. Or again, if we charge their opinions whom we oppose with consequences which they disclaim, professing, it may be, rather to disclaim their former opinion, and change their judgment, than admit such consequences, if they could discern any connexion between the one and the other. This surely argues a mighty disposition to contend, when we will quarrel with one that is really of our own mind; for herein he appears to be virtually already of the same mind in a greater matter, at least, than he differs with us about; because no man charges another's opinion with a consequence, designing thereby to oblige him to change his opinion; but as supposing it to be an agreed thing between them both, that the consequence is worse than the opinion. When therefore the consequence I charge is disclaimed by him whom I oppose, either it is justly charged, or it is not. If it be not, his opinion may be true, notwithstanding what I herein say to the contrary, and I am certainly so far in an error. But if it be justly charged, being yet disclaimed, we are formally agreed concerning the consequence, and are virtually agreed concerning the disputed point too, because he professedly disavows it upon supposition such a consequence would follow, which yet perhaps he sees not; and so the agreement must be much greater than the difference. And yet commonly this signifies nothing in order to peace: that is, it is not enough, that I see the same things that you do, unless I also see them too with your eyes.

9. When such disputes do arise at length to wrath, to angry strife, yea, and even to fixed enmity. What dreadful carnality is here! Most deservedly so called, if you only consider flesh or carnality as an unreasonable, a brutal thing. For what can be more unreasonable or unaccountable than to fall out with another man, because he thinks not as I do, or receives not my sentiments, as I also do not receive his. Is it not to be considered, that he no further differs from me than I do from him? If there be cause of anger upon this account, on one side, there is the same cause on the other too; and then whither shall this grow? And how little can this avail upon a rational estimate? Can any good come of it? doth it tend to the clearing of truth? Shall we see the better through the clouds and dust we raised? Is a good cause served by it? or do we think it possible the wrath of man should ever work the righteousness of God? And when such carnalities as these do exert themselves, and the hot steams and fumes arise, which the apostle here calls the lusts of the flesh, the flesh lusting to envy, lusting to wrath; what is the product (or even the productive cause) but that sort of fire which is without light? And you know what fire that resembles! And if a man once find any fervour of this kind stir or kindle in his breast, if he aright consider, he would no more cherish it, than one would do a brand thrown into his bosom from the infernal fire. One would think in this case, What have I stirring within me? something a-kin to hell! Can this conduce to the service of divine and heavenly truth? And let it be sadly considered: our being, upon such accounts, angry with one another, is a dismal token of God's being angry with us all, and a provoking cause of it too. Methinks that should be a qualmy thought! and strike our souls with a strange damp! Shall I indulge that in myself, that is a mark upon me of Divine displeasure; and upon all in whom it is found? To have his Holy Spirit retire, that blessed Spirit of love, and of a sound mind, and to leave us under the power of rebellious

lusting flesh! Can this be grateful, or not be a dismaying, frightful thing? And whereas a right scheme of Gospel doctrine is the thing pretended to be striven for, I beseech you consider: The more entirely, and the more deeply, the true scheme of Gospel doctrine is inlaid in a man's soul, the more certainly it must form it into all meekness, humility, gentleness, love, kindness, and benignity towards fellow-Christians of whatsoever denomination; not confined, not limited (as that of the Pharisees) unto their own party; but diffusing and spreading itself to all that bear the character and cognizance of Christ. The Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ is a Spirit of greater amplitude; extends and diffuses itself through the whole body of Christ.

Nor can any man more effectually disgrace his own cause, or make sure to worst himself in it, than by defending it wrathfully. For admit that he err whom I oppose, a thousand to one but that my wrath is worse than his error, probably a thousand times worse. I go about therefore to take away a mote from his eye, having a beam in my own; or am more concerned for a misplaced hair upon his head, than I am for a fiery ulcer in my own breast. We are not, 'tis true, to be stoical to condemn the natural passion of anger, as such, for sinful. But if it exceeds its cause, and sets not with the sun, it becomes strange, unhallowed fire. But again in the

10th place, There is still a further appearance of great carnality in such cases, when any do adventure to judge of the consciences and states of them whom they oppose, or from whom they differ: when they ascend the tribunal, usurp the throne, pass sentence upon them, as men of no conscience, or of no sincerity, or uprightness of heart with God. As if theirs were to be the universal conscience, the measure of all consciences; and he that cannot be governed by their conscience, must have none at all: or he be stark blind towards truth, towards God, and towards himself, that sees not every thing they see, or fancy themselves to see.

This is a most high usurpation upon Divine prerogative; and how can any insensibly slide into such an evil as this, in the face of so plain and so awful a text of Scripture, that so severely animadverts upon it? that 14th to the Romans, and sundry verses of it. With what reverence and dread should it strike a man's soul in such a case! When we have the rights of the Redeemer asserted in those whom he hath bought with his blood. And are told that for this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living, ver. 9. And it's thereupon further said to us, Who art thou that judgest another's servant, as ver. 10. Why dost thou judge thy brother, or set at nought thy brother? We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We are all of us his, he both died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord of all, as Acts x. 36. And here of dead and living, *i. e.* that he might be owner of all, which is the first notion of *Dominus* or *Lord*, and in both worlds, the visible and the invisible; that into which many are dead, and deceased from hence, and so to us become invisible; and many that, yet surviving, are still visible to us. So ample is his dominion! And because the *jus imperii, the right of government*, of which judgment is the last, conclusive act, hath for its foundation the *jus dominii*; 'tis therefore asserted to him as the *coronis* and complement, the very *summity* of his acquired rights, that he is to finish all things by the last judgment, which must pass upon both the already dead and the yet living. Thus is the ground of the expostulation laid. Who art thou who presumest to justle him out of this his supreme and most sacred right? Perhaps the matter disputed about may be doubtful, but there is no doubt concerning this incommunicable authority of our Lord Christ, or concerning his law against such judging, Matt. vii. 1. And to run into certain sin, in a furious chasing of uncertain error! what consideration, what tenderness of offending, of affronting him, and of hazarding our own souls, is there in all this?

To judge other men's consciences, is of so near affinity with governing them, that they that can allow themselves to do the former, want only power, not will or inclination, to offer at the other too. Which puts the matter out of doubt, that when men of this temper complain of such usurpation, 'tis not that they think it an offence in itself, but against them only; and that no consciences ought to be free, but their own. The proof of an honest and equal mind herein is, when we judge this to be evil, not being hurt by it; or abhor to hurt others in this kind, when we have power to do it. Upon which account that passage is memorable of the emperor Maximilian II. to a certain prelate, that there was no sin, no tyranny, more grievous than to affect dominion over men's consciences; and that they who do so, go about to invade the tower of heaven. A considerable saying from so great a prince, that lived and died in the Roman communion. What shall be thought of any such protestants, that without any colour or shadow of a ground, besides differing from them in some very disputable and unimportant opinions, shall presume to judge of other men's consciences, (and consequently of their states God-ward,) which such a one as he thought it so presumptuous wickedness to attempt to overrule or govern?

II. When we over-magnify our own understandings, and assume too much to ourselves. That is, do expect that our minds be taken for standards to all minds; as if *we*, of all mankind, were exempt from error, or the possibility of being mistaken. A certain sort of *φιλαυτία* or *αὐθάδεια*, an access of love and admiration of ourselves, or over-pleasedness with ourselves, too much self-complacency, is the true (though very deep and most hidden) root of our common mischief in such cases. We wrap up ourselves within ourselves, and then we are all the world. Do only compare ourselves with ourselves, never letting it enter into our minds, that others have their sentiments too, perhaps wiser than ours; but abound in our own sense; and while (as the apostle in that case says) we are not wise, and perhaps are the only persons that think ourselves so, we yet take upon us, as if we were fit to dictate to the world, to all Christians and to all mankind; or as if we only were the men, and wisdom must die with us.

This is a sort of evil, than which there is none more common and none less observed; none wherewith the guilty are so little apt to charge themselves, or admit conviction of it. For, I pray, do but consider; all the several differing parties amongst us do with one voice pretend to be for peace; but how, and upon what terms? Why, that all the rest are presently to be of their mind; and that is all the peace that most are for. For where (scarce any where) is the man to be found, or how great a rarity is he, that entertains the thought, "That there may, for aught I know, be much to be redressed and corrected in my apprehensions of things, to make me capable of falling in with that truth which ought to be common to all." There is an expectation with many, of a good time and state of things, before this world end, when all shall be of one mind and judgment; but the most think it must be by all men's becoming of their mind and judgment. And of this self-conceit it is usually a harder thing to fasten conviction upon men, than of most other evils. We have more hope in speaking against drunkenness, murder, or any the grossest kind of wickedness; for there the conscience of the guilty falls in, and takes part with the reprover. But we can more easily, and more frequently do, (though not frequently enough,) observe the faults of the inferior faculties of our external actions, than of the faculty itself which we should observe. Our mind, which is naturally like our eye, is, in this, too like, *i. e.* that it can see every thing but itself. It doth not, by using it, preserve its peculiar, self-reflecting power; is blind towards itself, beyond what naturally belongs to it. An object may be too near our bodily eye to be seen. Our mind is herein too bodily, too much carnalized, sunk too deep into flesh. It is the next thing to itself; and here, not by its primitive nature, (by which as an intellectual sun it could revert its beams, and turn them inward upon itself,) but by depravation, it for the most part sees nothing; or does worse, thinks itself to see what is not to be seen, certain imaginary excellencies, which make the man his own idol; an object of a sort of adoration to himself; and of scorn and derision (most probably) to every one else. In this case every man is, however, most commonly innocent in his own eyes, or still thinks he is in the right; amidst the so vast a variety of apprehensions and sentiments no one suspects himself to be in the wrong. All are for the truth, and they are all for peace and union. By which some indeed, more gently,

mean, they hope all will quit their former mistaken opinions and ways (as in great kindness to themselves they take for granted all men's are but their own) and come wholly over to them. Others, that have not breasts capable of even so much charity as this, not only are as much lovers and admirers of themselves, but so vehement haters of all that presume to differ from them, that they think them not fit to live in the world that durst adventure to do so. The meaning therefore of their being for peace, is, that they would have all destroyed that are not of their minds; and then (as the Roman historian speaks) *Quando solitudinem fecere appellant pacem; when they have made a desolation*, so that they themselves are left alone in the world, *that they will call peace.*

But you will say, What is to be done? or what would I persuade in this case of differing apprehensions and ways still remaining among Christians? I answer, Not presently to unbelieve all that ever a man hath believed before; or to abandon on the sudden his former sentiments, or to find fault with himself for having thought them right. For 'tis a contradiction to be of any opinion, and not then to think it right. Nor, therefore, is it scepticism, by any means, that I would advise to; as if there were nothing to be thought certain, but this; that whereas the greatest and most necessary things in religion are most plain, that is, either most plain in themselves, or most expressly revealed in the word of God. Here let us be steadfast ourselves, without being severe towards other men. Other things, that are more matter of doubt and dispute, by how much the less plain they are, we should count so much the less necessary. In reference therefore to these less momentous things, about which there is with us most of jangling, there ought always to be great modesty, and distrust of our own understandings, and a continued readiness to receive information, with constant looking up to the Father of lights for further illumination, and a resolution, wherein we, with others, have attained, to walk by the same rule, minding the same (agreed) things, hoping God will reveal his mind to the otherwise minded in his own time, as the apostle in Phil. iii. 16, 17. But to hasten to a close, I further add in the

Last place, Such carnality greatly shows itself in an affectation and desire of having such disputes still kept afoot, and the contests continued without either limit or rational design. This shows a deep tincture, and is a plain indication of a mind, to a very great degree, carnalized, when a mighty pleasure is taken to see the saw drawn, and the ball kept up. And if the question be asked, Pray how long? So little of reasonable answer can be given, that it might as well be said in plain terms, Till all words be spent, till speech or language fail, till Elias come, or doomsday come. So that if there were never so much reason to commend the having said somewhat in defence of this or that disputed point, we might yet say, as Seneca did of Cicero's so much over-praising his own consulship, "I blame him not for praising it without cause, but for doing it without end;" or that he could never give over, or tell when he had said enough. Upon the same terms upon which it is now so much desired such disputes should be continued, when what is truly enough is already said, they might as well wish they always should. Which signifies, that when we say, we would have men contend for truth, we wish it not so much for truth's sake, as for the contention's sake. By all means, say they, strive for the truth: not that they care so much for the truth as for the strife. For in some circumstances there is not an end in view, that is rationally to be designed or served by it, on this side the end of all things. Nor consequently any good principle that is to be exercised or gratified thereby. What is needful to be said in the matters already referred to, for the informing and satisfying of tractable minds sincerely willing to understand the truth, lies within a little compass. And when, in controversy, that is once said, which truly belongs to the very point in question, the rest is commonly trifling and reflection, or the perplexing of the matter more, and darkening the counsel by words without knowledge. If love to truth be alleged for the principle that prompts men to covet so continual altercations about it, I would say this shows more want of love to it. For hereby they are diverted from that which renders it most of all amiable, and for which it ought chiefly to be loved. As it is the truth according to godliness, and by which we are to be sanctified, and begotten more and more (as of an immortal seed) into the Divine likeness. Experience shows how little disputes better men's spirits. If we love divine truth, why do we not feed and live upon it, and enjoy its pleasant relishes? but relish gravel more, or chaff and bran? For thither the agitation of continued controversies about it doth soon sift it, the grain of flour (the kidney of the wheat) being passed away, and gone from us. Can none remember when the disputative humour had even eaten out the power and spirit of practical religion and godliness? Thither things are again tending if, either by severity or mercy, (one may say rather than not otherwise, by merciful severity,) God do not prevent and repress that tendency. As yet I fear the humour is violent, when the fervour of men's spirits is such, as to carry them over all Scripture directions, and animadversions, that they signify nothing with them; only make it their business each one to animate the more vogued champions of their own party into the highest ferments, and cry, Dispute, dispute, write, write, preach, preach one against another; let not the business go over so, do not keep silence. Thus are many, as the apostle speaks, puffed up for one against another, 1 Cor. iv. 6. And what, has such a text of Scripture as that no edge, no point, by which to lance, to pierce such a tumour? No; when the humour is once up, and has enwrapt men's hearts; is settled there, and hath obdured them to a brawny hardness; such texts of Scripture, though so mighty pat and apposite, are esteemed by them but as leviathan esteems spears and swords, like straw and rotten wood, they do not enter into men's hearts. A strange kind of obduration!

And how supposable is it, that they who are so puffed up for others, may also, through the known corruption of nature even in the best, do herein not a little to the puffing up of them too. The apostle's concluding of this chapter with those cautions, Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another, immediately upon his renewing of the precept (ver. 25.) of walking in the Spirit, and immediately before those words, (chap. vi. 1.) If a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, shows how he understood the case to be with these Galatian Christians, that as to doctrinals were yet sound and unfallen: that there was yet such carnality working in their continued contests, (though for the truth,) such pride, such affectation of vain-glory, such wrathfulness, as showed it was not mere love to truth that kept up the contest, but some such worse principles. Nothing is plainer than that principles and ends measure one another. And when that is done, or coveted to be done, that serves no good end; or is so done, as not to serve, but destroy or hinder, any end that is truly good; the principle must be very bad that moves the wheel. Disorderly eccentric motions bewray their principle and end together. When the carriage and conduct of an affair, that carries with it the appearance of serving the truth, is impetuous, eager, precipitant; when there is no good end in view of the present so modified endeavour; when enough is agreed already to serve the most important ends, unity among brethren, the salvation of souls, and yet things are further insisted on, unnecessary to either, yea, prejudicial to both, and upon which the weight and stress of either of these cannot be laid without sin; it too plainly appears vain-glory to oneself, or the slurring of a (designed) adversary is the end; and then the principle is proportionable. Yet, even in the light, and when matters are thus open and in view, oppositions are pushed on, and men's spirits rise to that pitch, as to bear down whatever is proposed, only with design to make their career a little slower; yea, and they are apt, rather than hearken, to put opprobrious names and characters upon them that are not altogether so furious as themselves.

Nor have they themselves the patience to consider consequences, and whither these things tend; *i. e.* that God is provoked, that the souls of men are endangered, greatly endangered. I have found in my own conversation, that some, even in distress, in agonies, have said, "Lord, be merciful to us, I know not which way to go; one preaches

one thing, another preaches the quite contrary." I know they mistake; we do generally in substance preach the same Gospel. Thanks be to God, his Gospel is not confined to a few men, or to this or that party of men. But, in the mean time, it is a thing of very ill consequence to lay stumbling-blocks before the blind, bars and obstructions in the way of the weak and the lame, whereby they may be turned out of the way, who should rather be strengthened.

It is not considered, that where the danger is less of an utter ruin to the souls of men, there is, however, occasioned a great languor and enfeeblement. They should be considered and treated, not only as being weak, but lest they should be made so. When they are diverted from the proper means of improvement and growth, and their minds are alienated from those means, being otherwise engaged, an ill habit is contracted; and when the distemper hath seized some, it spreads, and soon infects more. Nutriment is dispensed from the head through the body, by the co-operation of the several parts, as those texts, Eph. iv. 16. Col. ii. 19. do with great emphasis and elegancy speak. Understand it so, that how far soever there is or ought to be actual communion, every limb and joint contributes something to the strength and vigour of the rest. So is nourishment ministered and spreads itself in the body to its edifying itself in love: which love if it fail, a universal languor cannot but ensue, the free circulation of vital spirits being obstructed and stopped. And those that are most sensible, if they be not so much otherwise damnified, cannot, when they observe it, but be grieved, and take it bitterly to heart, when the tokens appear to their view of a general decay. The living members of any body are pained, when the body is wasted and rent; dead or stupified and benumbed members feel it not, are unapprehensive. But above all, it ought to be considered, (and how little is it!) that the Holy Spirit is grieved, and doth (as we may fear it will more) sensibly retire: the Gospel in which it is wont to breathe is trifled with; the glorious Gospel, the Gospel of the grace of God, (can men find nothing else to play with,) by which that blessed Spirit hath begotten many a soul to God, and nourished them unto life eternal. That precious thing designed for so great and sacred purposes, (as pampered wanton children do with their food,) they dally with, or quarrel about it, or squander and throw it away. How can this but offend? The self-procured distempers which did precede, and those that ensue, increase the offence. When 'tis said, Eph. iv. 30. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God—and presently subjoined, ver. 31. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away. Is it not left to us to collect, that these things do more peculiarly grieve the Spirit; that Spirit of grace, of all love, goodness, sweetness, and benignity? There is but one body, and one Spirit, a spirit that spreads vital influence in the body. What can you think of that Spirit that feels every where? that is in the body a universal sentient? How can that Spirit but be grieved? Passion it is not capable of, but just and sedate displicency, that matters should be so. How should any of us like it to have our living body torn limb from limb, and part from part! Though with him real commotion and disturbance can have no place, intellectual resentment is infinitely greater and deeper than we can either feel or conceive.

But where this angry, tumefied, proud flesh is the governing thing, none of these tremendous consequences or considerations, while it is so, take any place. The litigious quarrelsome genius will throw off all, will find no leisure or room for a calm thought: but though the course in which we are engaged should be ready to set on fire the whole course of nature, will be still for casting abroad firebrands, and arrows, and death; and make us think this fine sport! If indeed there were room for any cooler thoughts, one would think such as these should not lie remote. How little any of us know, or are capable of knowing, in this our present state! that they that think they know most, or are most conceited of their own knowledge, know nothing as they ought to know; that they that are most apt to contend, do most of all fight in the dark; that it is too possible there may be much knowledge without love; how little such knowledge is worth! that it profits nothing; that it hurts, puffs up, when love edifies; that the devils know more than any of us, while their want of love, or their hellish malignity, makes them devils; that as by pride comes contention, so humility would contribute more to peace, (and to the discerning of truth too,) than the most fervent disceptation; that there is no hope of proselyting the world to my opinion or way; that if I cannot be quiet till I have made such and such of my mind, I shall still be unquiet if others are not of it, *i. e.* always; that if some one's judgment must be a standard to the world, there are thousands fitter for it than mine; that they that in their angry contests think to shame their adversary, do commonly most of all shame themselves.

But to close all, I pray let us consider, we are, professedly, going to heaven, that region of light, and life, and purity, and love. It well, indeed, becomes them that are upon the way thither, modestly to inquire after truth. Humble, serious, diligent endeavours to increase in Divine knowledge, are very suitable to our present state of darkness and imperfection. The product of such inquiries we shall carry to heaven with us, with whatsoever is most akin thereto (besides their usefulness in the way thither.) We shall carry truth and the knowledge of God to heaven with us; we shall carry purity thither, devotedness of soul to God and our Redeemer, Divine love and joy, if we have their beginnings here, with whatsoever else of real permanent excellency, that hath a settled, fixed seat and place in our souls now; and shall there have them in perfection. But do we think we shall carry strife to heaven? Shall we carry anger to heaven? envyings, heart-burnings, animosities, enmities, hatred of our brethren and fellow-Christians, shall we carry these to heaven with us?

Let us labour to divest ourselves, and strike off from our spirits every thing that shall not go with us to heaven, or is equally unsuitable to our end and way, that there may be nothing to obstruct and hinder our abundant entrance at length into the everlasting kingdom.

A SERMON

CONCERNING

UNION AMONG PROTESTANTS:

A DISCOURSE ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTION,

"WHAT MAY MOST HOPEFULLY BE ATTEMPTED TO ALLAY ANIMOSITIES AMONG PROTESTANTS, THAT OUR DIVISIONS MAY NOT BE OUR RUIN?"

COLOSS. II. 2.

THAT THEIR HEARTS MIGHT BE COMFORTED, BEING KNIT TOGETHER IN LOVE, AND UNTO ALL RICHES OF THE FULL ASSURANCE OF UNDERSTANDING, TO THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE MYSTERY OF GOD, AND OF THE FATHER, AND OF CHRIST.

THIS question is propounded to me; "What may most hopefully be attempted to allay animosities among protestants, that our divisions may not be our ruin?" I must here, in the first place, tell you how I understand this question. 1. As to the *end*, the preventing our ruin; I take the meaning chiefly to be, not the ruin of our estates, trade, houses, families; not *our* ruin, in these respects, who are Christians, but our ruin as we are Christians, *i. e.* the ruin of our Christianity itself, or of the truly Christian interest among us. 2. As for the *means* inquired after, I understand not the question to intend, what is to be done or attempted by laws, and public constitutions, as if our business were to teach our absent rulers, or prescribe to them what they should do, to whom we have no present call, or opportunity, to apply ourselves. Nor again can it be thought our business, to discuss the several questions that are controverted among us, and show, in each, what is the truth and right, wherewith every man's conscience ought to be satisfied, and in which we should all meet and unite: as if we had the vanity to think of performing, by an hour's discourse, what the voluminous writings of some ages have not performed. Much less are we to attempt the persuading of any to go against an already formed judgment in these points of difference, for the sake of union; and to seek the peace of the church, by breaking their peace with God and their own consciences.

But I take the question only to intend, what serious Christians may, and ought, to endeavour, in their private capacities, and agreeably with their own principles, towards the proposed end. And so I conceive the words read to you, contain the materials of a direct and full answer to the question. Which I reckon will appear,—by opening the case the apostle's words have reference to; that will be found a case like our own; and—by opening the words, whereby their suitableness to *that case* will be seen, and consequently to *our case* also.

1. The case which these words have reference to (as indeed the general aspect of the epistle, and in great part of the other apostolical letters, looks much the same way) was in short this: That a numerous sect was already sprung up, that began (so early) to corrupt the simplicity and purity of the Christian religion, and very much to disturb the peace of the Christian church. A sort they were of partly judaizing, partly paganizing Christians, the disciples, as they are reputed, of Simon Magus, who joined with the name Christian the rites and ceremonies of the Jews, with the impurities (even in worship) of the Gentiles, denying the more principal doctrines, and hating the holy design of Christianity itself, while they seemed to have assumed, or to retain, the name, as it were on purpose the more effectually to wound and injure the Christian cause and interest. Men of high pretence to knowledge, (whence they had the title of gnostics,) filched partly from the Jewish cabbalism, partly from the Pythagorean. By which pretence they insinuated the more plausibly with such as affected the knowledge of more hidden mysteries. Whereto the apostle seems to have reference, where he adds immediately after the text, that in Christ were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, ver. 3. And says, he did purposely add it, lest any man should beguile them with enticing words; intimating, there was no need to follow those vain pretenders, out of an affectation of sublimer knowledge, and forsake Christ in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were hid.

Of the progress and genius of this sect, not only some of the fathers of the church give an account, [a] but even a noted philosopher [b] among the heathens, who writes professedly against them, (though not a word against Christians as such,) both making it his business to refute their absurd doctrines, (that the world was in its nature evil, and not made by God, but by some evil angel, &c.) and representing them as men of most immoral principles and practices; worse, both in respect of their notions and morals, than Epicurus himself. It appears this sort of men did, in the apostles' days, not only set themselves, with great art and industry, to pervert as many professors of Christianity as they could, but found means (as they might by their compliances with the Jews, who were then much spread, and numerously seated in sundry principal cities under the Roman power, and who were every where the bitterest enemies to Christianity) to raise persecution against them they could not pervert, which some passages

a Clemens Alexandr., Irenæus, Epiphanius, &c.

b Plotinus Ennead 2. l. 9.

seem to intimate in the epistle to the Galatians, (who, as that whole epistle shows, were much leavened by this sect, insomuch that the apostle is put to travail as in birth again to have Christ formed in them, and to reduce them back to sincere Christianity,) *viz.* that some leaders of this sect so set the people's minds even against the apostle himself, that he began to be reputed by them as an enemy, (chap. iv. 16.) and was persecuted under that notion, because he would not comply with them in the matter of circumcision, (urged as an engagement to the whole law of Moses,) chap. v. 11. If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. And that they were as mischievous as they could be, to fellow-Christians, on the same account, biting and devouring them that received not their corrupting additions to Christianity, as the circumstances of the text show, ver. 15.

How like a case this is to ours, with our popish enemies, I need not tell you. And now in this case; whee the faith of many was overthrown, so much hurt was already done, and the danger of greater was so manifest, partly by the most insinuating methods of seduction, partly by the terror of persecution, the great care was to secure the uncorrupted residue, and preserve unextinct the true Christian interest.

The urgency of this case puts the solicitous, concerned spirit of this great apostle into an inexpressible agony, as his words do intimate: I would you knew what conflict I have, and not for these Colossians only, but for them of Laodicea, (which was not very remote from Colosse,) and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh: for it was a common case, and upon him lay the care of all the churches. So that hence his musing, meditative mind, could not but be revolving many thoughts, and casting about for expedients, how the threatening danger might be obviated and averted. And these in the text, which he fastens upon, and wherein his thoughts centre, how apt and proper they were to that case (and consequently to ours which so little differs) will be seen,

2. By our opening and viewing the import of the text itself: Wherein he,

1. Proposes to himself *the end* which he apprehended was most desirable, and above all things to be coveted for them; That their hearts might be comforted. A word of much larger signification than in vulgar acceptation it is understood to be. Παρακαλέω signifies (with profane as well as the sacred writers) not only to administer consolation to a grieved mind, but to exhort, quicken, excite, and animate, to plead and strive with dull and stupid, wavering and unresolved, minds. It was thought indeed comprehensive enough to express all the operations of the Divine Spirit upon the souls of men, when not only the Christian church, but the world, yet to be Christianized, was to be the subject of them, as we see, John xvi. 8. In respect whereof that Holy Spirit hath its name of office, *the paraclete*, from this word. And it being the passive that is here used, it signifies not only the endeavours themselves, which are used to the purpose here intended, but the effect of them wherein they all terminate, a lively, vigorous, confirmed state and habit of soul: and that not indefinite, but determined to one thing, the Christian faith and profession, which the apostle's drift and scope plainly show. 'Tis not to be thought, he so earnestly coveted and strove, that they might be jocund, cheerful, abounding with joy and courage, in any course, right or wrong; but that they might be encouraged, established, confirmed in their Christianity. And if the word he here uses were large enough to signify (as was noted above) all that was necessary to make men Christians, it may as well, all that is necessary to continue them such.

In short, the end which the apostle aims at, the παρακλήσις intended to these Christians, was their establishment and confirmed state in their Christianity, as the effect of all apostolical or ministerial exhortations, persuasions, encouragements, or any whatsoever endeavours; made efficacious to that purpose by the powerful influence and operation of the Holy Ghost. And that it was no lower thing than this, we have sufficient evidence, by comparing the close of the foregoing chapter with the beginning of this. Where we find, chap. i. 28. the avowed design of his preaching, warning, and teaching in all wisdom, was that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. That whereas there were various arts and endeavours used, to adulterate the Christian religion, and pervert men from the simplicity of it, he might lose none, but to his very uttermost keep all in a possibility of being presented perfect in Christ Jesus at last, *i. e.* that they might be all entire, complete, and persevering Christians to the end. And for this he adds, ver. 29. he did labour, striving according to his working, which wrought in him mightily. All his labour, and the strivings of his soul, acted by Divine power, and by a Spirit greater than his own, did aim at this end. And now hereupon he intimates how fervid these his strivings were, chap. ii. 1. I would you did but know (what it is not for me to say) ἡλίκον ἀγῶνα, what an *agony* I endure! how great this my conflict is for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh! And for what? That their hearts might be comforted, (as we read,) meaning manifestly the same thing he had expressed before; that notwithstanding all endeavours of others to the contrary, they might be complete and confirmed Christians to the last.

2. We have next to consider in the text the means or what expedients the apostle conceives would be most effectually conducing to this blessed purpose. They are two,—mutual love to one another;—and a clear, certain, efficacious faith of the Gospel. The former is shortly and plainly expressed; the other by a copions and most emphatical *periphrasis*, or circumlocution. He most earnestly covets to have them knit together by both συμβιβασθέντων, *compacted*, as the word imports, in the one ἐν ἀγάπῃ, and unto or into the other, as that particle signifies εἰς πάντα, &c.

1. Mutual love to one another: *q. d.* The thing were done, or much were done towards it, if they were knit together in love, compacted, made all of a piece, if by love they did firmly cohere, and cleave to one another: for then it would be one and all: and 'tis scarce ever supposable they should all agree to quit their religion at once. But if that were to be supposed, he adds another thing that would put all out of doubt.

2. A clear, certain, efficacious faith of the Gospel. For the several expressions that follow are but a description of such a faith. Where we are to note,—what he would have them apprehend,—and the apprehensive principle.

1. What he would have them apprehend: *viz.* the sum and substance of the Christian doctrine, which he calls a mystery, both because it was so in itself, and 'tis often spoken of under that name, by our Lord himself, Matt. xiii. 11. and familiarly by this apostle, Rom. xvi. 25. Ephes. iii. 3, 9. Col. i. 26. and elsewhere; and because of the high pretence of the gnostics to the knowledge of mysteries which sometimes he slights; especially being unaccompanied with love, as, with them, it most eminently was. Though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have no charity, I am nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. Knowledge puffeth up, love edifies, chap. viii. 1. Sometimes, as here, he makes the sincere doctrine of the Gospel to outvie theirs herein, intimating that such as made profession of it could have no temptation to go over to them for the knowledge of mysteries, (unless a mystery of iniquity were more pleasing to them,) whose very religion was that great mystery of godliness. God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory, 1 Tim. iii. 16.

Now this mystery he, first, more generally characterizes, by calling it the mystery of God, a divine mystery, not made one by merely human fiction; and then he very distinctly specifies it in the following words, and of the Father, and of Christ. Where the former *and* needs not be thought copulative, but exegetical, and might be read *even*, or *to wit;* or it may be read, *both*, as 'tis usual with the Greeks as well as Latins when the copulative is to be repeated, so to read the former. As if it were said, By the mystery of God I mean, not of God alone, and abstractedly considered; as if it were enough to you to be mere deists; and that the whole superadded revelation concerning the Mediator, might be looked upon with indifferency or neglect; (as by the gnostics it was known then

to be, and afterwards by some of their great leaders, in the substance of it, with downright hatred and opposition;) but that which I so earnestly covet for you, and wherein I would have you unite, and be all one, in the acknowledgment of the whole mystery of God; *i. e.* both of the Father and of Christ.

2. The apprehensive principle; which we may, by a general name, call faith, and accommodately enough to the name here given us of its objects, a mystery which is elsewhere called the mystery of faith, (1 Tim. iii. 9.) or a mystery to be believed: faith being the known principle of receiving the Gospel revelation. But he here expresses it by words that signify knowledge, *σύνεσις* and *ἐπίγνωσις*, thereby intimating that the faith of Christians is not to be a blind and unintelligent principle, but that though there were contained in the Gospel mysteries never to be understood, if God had not afforded a special revelation of them on purpose; yet being revealed, we ought to have a clear and distinct, as well as lively and practical, perception of them. By these two words, and the other expressions he joins in with the former, he seems to intimate two sorts of properties which belong to that faith of the Gospel which he wishes to them.

I. The rectitude, clearness, and certainty of notion.

2. The efficacy, impressiveness, and immediate aptitude to have influence upon practice, which he would have it carry with it. The latter properties supposing and depending on the former, he there highly exaggerates the matter, and heaps together expressions that might with most lively emphasis set forth the kind of that knowledge which he conceives would be of so great use to them. He wishes them a *σύνεσις*, a clear, perspicacious knowledge, and an assurance, even to a *plerophory*, a *fulness of assurance*, in their knowledge of the truth of the Gospel. Yea he wishes them the *riches*, *πλοῦτον*, yea and *all riches*, *πάντα πλοῦτον της πληροφορίας*, of that full assurance, or *plerophory* of understanding, and knowledge of that truth; apprehending that this would certainly fix them in their faith and profession, so as they would never recede from it. As when in Christ's own days many went back and walked no more with him, John vi. 66. that which retained others, so that when Christ asks, "Will ye also go away?" (ver. 67.) they presently answer, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" could entertain no such thought, was, that, besides what they believed of him was of greatest importance to them, Thou hast the words of eternal life, ver. 68. So their belief was with that assurance as to exclude all suspicion or doubt in the case: And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ the Son of the living God, ver. 69. and therefore neither canst want power to confer eternal life, as all thy words do import thy design and promise to do, nor truth to make good thy own plain words. And then he also knew that such a *σύνεσις* or *knowledge* would produce, what he further wishes them, an *ἐπίγνωσις*, and *acknowledgment*, an inward, vital owning, a cordial embrace, a lively perception of the same blessed truths, which must needs further most abundantly contribute to this their so much desired joint and unanimous stability.

And now these are the two expedients by which he reckons they would be so closely compacted together as that no subtlety or violence could endanger them; mutual love, and a clear, certain, operative faith of the Gospel; if, by the one, they did cohere with each other; and by the other, adhere to God in Christ; if the one might have with them the place, power, and bindingness of a cement, the other of a continual inclination, yieldingness, and compliance to the magnetism of the centre, they would never so fall asunder, as to give any enemies opportunity to be the successful authors, or the gratified spectators, of their ruin. Thus therefore I would sum up the sense of this scripture, and the answer to the question proposed.—"That the maintaining of sincere love among Christians, and the improving of their faith to greater measures of clearness, certainty, and efficacy in reference to the substantials of Christianity, are to be endeavoured as the best means to unite, establish, and preserve them, against such as design the ruin of the truly Christian interest."—The case was at that time urging and important. A great and numerous party was formed, of such as did nauseate the simplicity of the Christian religion, and hate the true design of it. All the care was what course was most proper and suitable to preserve the rest. And you see what was then thought most proper. Counsel was not taken to this effect, (and therefore Christians in a private capacity should not covet to have it so,) "Let us bind them by certain devised peter-evangelical canons to things never thought fit to be enjoined by Christ himself, severely urge the strict and uniform observance of them, make the terms of Christian communion straiter than he ever made them, add new rituals of our own to his institutions, and cut off from us all that (never so conscientiously) scruple them." No: this was the practice of their common enemies, and it was to narrow and weaken the too much already diminished Christian interest. The order mentioned ver. 5. might be comely enough, without things that were both unnecessary and offensive.

Nor was it consulted and resolved to agitate the controversy about this power and practice, in perpetual, endless disputations, and stigmatize them that should not be enlightened and satisfied in these matters, as schismatical and wilful: though they never so sincerely adhered to the doctrine, and observed the laws, of Christ, *i. e.* 'twas neither thought fit to urge the unsatisfied upon doubtful things against their consciences, nor to take order that continual endeavours should be used from age to age to satisfy them, or that the church should be always vexed with vain controversies about needless things; that, if they were never so lawful, might as well be let alone, without detriment to the Christian cause, and perhaps to its greater advantage. Yea, the attempt of imposing any thing upon the disciples but what was necessary, is judged a tempting of God, (Acts xv. 10.) a bringing the matter to a trial of skill with him, whether he could keep the church quit, when they took so direct a course to distemper and trouble it. But it was thought necessary, and sufficient, that all did unite, and were knit together in the mutual love of one another, and in a joint adherence to the great mysteries of faith and salvation.

In the same case, when there were so many antichrists abroad, and (it is likely) Ebion with his partakers made it their business to pervert the Christian doctrine, the same course is taken by the blessed apostle St. John, only to endeavour the strengthening of these two vital principles, faith in Christ and love to fellow-Christians, as may be seen at large in his epistles. These he presses, as the great commandments, upon the observation whereof he seems to account the safety and peace of the sincere did entirely depend. This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment, 1 Epistle, iii. 23. He puts upon Christians no other distinguishing test, but Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him: (chap. v. 1.) is only solicitous that they did practise the commandment they had from the beginning, *i. e.* that they loved one another, (2 Epist. 5.) and that they did abide in the doctrine of Christ, ver. 9.

The prudence and piety of those unerring guides of the church, (themselves under the certain guidance of the Spirit of truth,) directed them to bring the things wherein they would have Christians unite, within as narrow a compass as was possible, neither multiplying articles of faith nor rites of worship. These two principles (as they were thought to answer the apostles) would fully answer our design and present inquiry. And we may adventure to say of them that they are both sufficient and necessary, the apt and the only means to heal and save us; such as would effect our cure, and without which nothing will.

Nor shall I give other answer to the proposed question, than what may be deduced from these two, considered according to what they are in themselves, and what they naturally lead and tend unto. I shall consider them in the order wherein the apostle here mentions them, who you see reserves the more important of them to the latter place.

1. The sincere love of Christians to one another, would be a happy means of preserving the truly Christian interest among us. That this may be understood, we must rightly apprehend what kind of love it is that is here meant.

it is specified by what we find in conjunction with it, the understanding and acknowledgment of the mystery of Christianity. Therefore it must be the love of Christians to one another as such. Whence we collect, lest we too much extend the object of it on the one hand, or contract it on the other,

1. That it is not the love only which we owe to one another as men, or human creatures merely, that is intended here. That were too much to enlarge it, as to our present consideration of it. For under that common notion, we should be as much obliged to love the enemies we are to unite against, as the friends of religion we are to unite with, since all partake equally in human nature. It must be a more special love that shall have the desired influence in the present case. We cannot be peculiarly endeared and united to some more than to others, upon a reason that is common to them with others. We are to love them that are born of God, and are his children, otherwise than the children of men, or such of whom it may be said they are of their father the devil; them that appear to have been partakers of a Divine nature at another rate, than them who have received a mere human, or also the diabolical nature, 1 John v. 1. Yet this peculiar love is not to be exclusive of the other which is common, but must suppose it, and be superadded to it, as the reason of it is superadded. For Christianity supposes humanity; and Divine grace, human nature.

2. Nor is it a love to Christians of this or that party or denomination only. That were as much unduly to straiten and confine it. The love that is owing to Christians as such, as it belongs to them only, so it belongs to them who, in profession and practice, do own sincere and incorrupt Christianity. To limit our Christian love to a party of Christians, truly so called, is so far from serving the purpose now to be aimed at, that it resists and defeats it; and instead of a preservative union, infers most destructive divisions. It scatters what it should collect and gather. 'Tis to love factiously; and with an unjust love, that refuses to give indifferently to every one his due: (for is there no love due to a disciple of Christ in the name of a disciple?) it is founded in falsehood, and a lie, denies them to be of the Christian community who really are so. It presumes to remove the ancient land-marks, not civil, but sacred, and draws on, not the people's curse only, but that of God himself. 'Tis true (and who doubts it?) that I may and ought upon special reasons to love some more than others; as relation, acquaintance, obligation by favours received from them, more eminent degrees of true worth, and real goodness; but that signifies nothing to the withholding of that love which is due to a Christian as such, as that also ought not to prejudice the love I owe to a man, as he is a man.

Nor am I so promiscuously to distribute this holy love, as to place it at random, upon every one that thinks it convenient for him to call himself a Christian, though I ought to love the very profession, while I know not who sincerely make it, and do plainly see that Jews and pagans were never worse enemies to Christ and his religion, than a great part of the Christian world. But let my apprehensions be once set right concerning the true essentials of Christianity, (whether consisting in doctrinal or vital principles,) then will my love be duly carried to all in whom they are found under one common notion, which I come actually to apply to this or that person, as particular occasions do occur. And so shall always be in a preparation of mind, actually to unite in Christian love with every such person, whensoever such occasions do invite me to it. And do we now need to be told what such an impartial truly Christian love would do to our common preservation, and to prevent the ruin of the Christian interest?

1. How greatly would it contribute to the vigour of the Christian life! For so we should all equally "hold the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God:" as afterwards in this chapter, ver. 19. Thus (as it is in that other parallel text of Scripture) speaking the truth in love, we shall grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love, Eph. iv. 15, 16. Obstructions that hinder the free circulation of blood and spirits, do not more certainly infer languishings in the natural body, than the want of such a diffusive love shuts up and shrivels the destitute parts, and hinders the diffusion of a nutritive vital influence, in the body of Christ.

2. It would inspire Christians generally with a sacred courage and fortitude, when they should know, and even feel themselves knit together in love. How doth the revolt of any considerable part of an army, discourage the rest! or if they be not entire, and of a piece! Mutual love animates them, as nothing more, when they are prepared to live and die together, and love hath before joined, whom now, their common danger also joins. They otherwise signify but as so many single persons, each one but caring and contriving how to shift for himself. Love makes them significant to one another. So as that every one understands himself to be the common care of all the rest. It makes Christians the more resolute in their adherence to truth and goodness, when (from their not doubted love) they are sure of the help, the counsels, and prayers of the Christian community, and apprehend, by their declining, they shall grieve those whom they love, and who they know love them. If any imagine themselves intended to be given up, as sacrifices, to the rage of the common enemy, their hearts are the apter to sink, they are most exposed to temptations to prevaricate; and the rest will be apt to expect the like usage from them, if themselves be reduced to the like exigency, and be liable to the same temptations.

3. It would certainly, in our present case, extinguish or abate the so contrary unhallowed fire of our anger and wrath towards one another, as the celestial beams do the baser culinary fire, which burns more fervently when the sun hath less power. Then would debates, if there must be any, be managed without intemperate heat. We should be remote from being angry that we cannot convey our own sentiments into another's mind; which when we are, our business is the more remote; we make ourselves less capable of reasoning aptly to convince, and (because anger begets anger, as love doth love) render the other less susceptible of conviction. Why are we yet to learn that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God? What is gained by it? So little doth angry contention about small matters avail, that even they that happen to have the better cause lose by it, and their advantage cannot recompense the damage and hurt that ensues to the church and to themselves. Our famous Davenant,[c] speaking of the noted controversy between Stephen Bishop of Rome, who, he says, as much as in him lay, did with a schismatical spirit tear the church, and Cyprian, who with great lenity and Christian charity professes that he would not break the Lord's peace for diversity of opinion, nor remove any from the right of communion, concludes that erring Cyprian deserved better of the church of Christ than orthodox Stephen. He thought him the schismatic, whom he thought in the right, and that his orthodoxy (as it was accompanied) was more mischievous to the church, than the other's error. Nor can a man do that hurt to others, without suffering it more principally. The distemper of his own spirit, what can recompense! and how apt is it to grow in him; and, while it grows in himself, to propagate itself among others! Whereupon, if the want of love hinders the nourishment of the body, much more do the things, which, when it is wanting, are wont to fill up its place. For as naturally as love begets love, so do wrath, envy, malice, calumny, beget one another, and spread a poison and virulency through the body, which necessarily wastes and tends to destroy it. How soon did the Christian church cease to be itself! and the early vigour of primitive Christianity degenerate into insipid, spiritless formality, when once it became contentious! It broke into parties, sects multiplied, animosities grew high, and the grieved Spirit of love retired from it! which is grieved by nothing more than by bitterness, wrath, anger, &c. as the connexion of these two verses intimates, Eph. iv. 30, 31. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and

[c] Sent ad Dur.

anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And to the same purpose is that, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. By this means religion, once dispirited, loses its majesty and awfulness, and even tempts and invites the assaults and insultations of enemies.

4. It would oblige us to all acts of mutual kindness and friendship. If such a love did govern in us, we should be always ready to serve one another in love, to bear each others' burdens, to afford our mutual counsel and help to one another, even in our private affairs if called thereto; especially in that which is our common concern, the preserving and promoting the interest of religion; and to our uttermost strengthen each others' hands herein. It would engage us to a free, amicable conversation with one another, upon this account; would not let us do so absurd a thing as to confine our friendship to those of our own party, which we might as reasonably to men of our own stature, or to those whose voice, and hair, and look, and mien, were likest our own. It would make us not be ashamed to be seen in each others' company, or be shy of owning one another. We should not be to one another as Jews and Samaritans that had no dealing with one another, or as the poet notes they were to other nations; *Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti, Not so much as to show the way to one not of their religion.* There would be no partition-wall through which love would not easily open a way of friendly commerce, by which we should insensibly slide, more and more, into one anothers' hearts. Whence also,

5. Prejudices would cease, and jealousies concerning each other. A mutual confidence would be begotten. We should no more suspect one another of ill designs upon each other, than lest our right hand should wait an opportunity of cutting off the left. We should believe one another in our mutual professions, of whatsoever sort, both of kindness to one another, and that we really doubt and scruple the things which we say we do.

6. This would hence make us earnestly covet an entire union in all the things wherein we differ, and contribute greatly to it. We are too prone many times to dislike things, for the disliked persons' sake who practise them. And a prevailing disaffection makes us unapt to understand one another; precludes our entrance into one anothers' mind and sense; which if love did once open, and inclined us more to consider the matters of difference themselves, than to imagine some reserved meaning and design of the persons that differ from us, 'tis likely we might find ourselves much nearer to one another, than we did apprehend we were; and that it were a much easier step for the one side to go quite over to the other. But if that cannot be,

7. It would make us much more apt to yield to one another, and abate all that we ever can, in order to as full an accommodation as is any way possible, that if we cannot agree upon either extreme, we might at least meet in the middle. It would cause an emulation who should be larger in their grants to this purpose; as it was professed by Luther when so much was done at Marpurg towards an agreement between him and the Helvetians, that he would not allow that praise to the other party that they should be more desirous of peace and concord than he. Of which amicable conference, and of that afterwards at Wittenburg, and several other negociations to that purpose, account is given by[d] divers; and insisted on by some of our own great divines, as precedential to the concord they endeavoured between the Saxon and the Helvetian churches of later time, as Bishop Moreton, Bishop Hall, Bishop Davenant, in their several sentences or judgments written to Mr. Dury upon that subject.

And indeed when I have read the pacific writings of those eminent worthies, for the composing of those differences abroad, I could not but wonder that the same peaceable spirit did not endeavour with more effect the composing of our own much lesser differences at home. But the things of our peace were (as they still are) hid from our eyes, with the more visibly just severity, by how much they have been nearer us, and more obvious to the easy view of any but an averse eye. It is not for us to prescribe (as was said) to persons that are now in so eminent stations as these were at that time. But may we not hope to find with such (and where should we rather expect to find it?) that compassion and mercifulness in imitation of the blessed Jesus, their Lord and ours, as to consider and study the necessities of souls in these respects, and at least, willingly to connive at, and very heartily approve, some indulgences and abatements in the administrations of the inferior clergy, as they may not think fit themselves positively to order and enjoin? Otherwise I believe it could not but give some trouble to a conscientious conforming minister, if a sober pious person, sound in the faith, and of a regular life, should tell him he is willing to use his ministry, in some of the ordinances of Christ, if only he would abate or dispense with some annexed ceremony which in conscience he dare not use or admit of. I believe it would trouble such a minister to deal with a person of this character as a pagan because of his scruple, and put him upon considering whether he ought not rather to dispense with man's rule, than with God's. I know what the same Bishop Davenant hath expressly said, that[e] "He that believes the things contained in the apostle's creed, and endeavours to live a life agreeable to the precepts of Christ, ought not to be expunged from the roll of Christians, nor be driven from communion with the other members of any church whatsoever." However, truly Christian love would do herein all that it can, supplying the rest by grief that it can do no more.

8. It would certainly make us abstain from mutual censures of one another as insincere for our remaining differences. Charity that thinks no evil, would make us not need the reproof, Rom. xiv. 4. Who art thou that judgest another's servant? The common aptness hereunto among us shows how little that divine principle rules in our hearts, that in defiance of our rule and the authority of the great God and our blessed Redeemer, to whom all judgment is committed, and who hath so expressly forbidden us to judge lest we be judged, (Matt. vii. 1.) we give ourselves so vast a liberty! and set no other bounds to our usurped license of judging, than nature hath set to our power of thinking, *i. e.* think all the mischievous thoughts of them that differ from us that we know how to devise or invent, as if we would say, "Our thoughts (and then by an easy advance, our tongues) are our own, who is Lord over us?" I animadvert not on this as the fault of one party, but wheresoever it lies, as God knows how diffused a poison this is, among them that are satisfied with the public constitutions towards them that dissent from them, and with these back again towards them, and with the several parties of both these towards one another. This uniting, knitting love, would make us refrain, not merely from the restraint of God's laws in this case, but from a benign disposition, as that which the temper of our spirits would abhor from. So that such as are well content with the public forms and rites of worship, would have no inclination to judge them that apprehend not things with their understandings, nor relish with their taste, as persons that therefore have cut themselves off from Christ, and the body of Christ. They might learn better from the Cassandrian moderation, and from the avowed sentiments of that man,[f] (whose temper is better to be liked than his terms of union,) who speaking of such as being formerly rejected (meaning the protestants) for finding fault with abuses in the church, had by the urgency of their conscience altered somewhat in the way of their teaching, and the form of their service, and are therefore said to have fallen off from the church, and are numbered among heretics and schismatics. It is, saith he, to be inquired how rightly and justly this is determined of them. For there is to be considered, as to the church, the head and the body. From the head there is no departure but by doctrine disagreeable to Christ the head; from the body there is no departure by diversity of rites and opinions, but only by the defect of charity. So that this learned Romanist neither thinks them heretics that hold the head, nor schismatics, for such differences as

d Hospinian. Histor. Sacramentar. Thuanus, &c. Though by Scultetus's account that pretence was too little answered.

e Ibid.

f Cassander de officio pii ac publicæ Tranquillitatis vere amantis viri.

ours are, from the rest of the body, if love and charity towards them remain. And again, where this love remains, and bears rule, it can as little be, that they who are unsatisfied with the way of worship that more generally obtains, should censure them that are satisfied as insincere, merely because of this difference. It cannot permit that we should think all the black thoughts we can invent of them, as if because they have not our consciences they had none, or because they see not with our eyes they were therefore both utterly and wilfully blind. To be here more particular, the most, you know, are for the public way of worship; and of these, some are for it as tolerable only, others as the best way, and think all other ways of worshipping God in assemblies (being forbidden us they think by a just law) sinful. Others, dissenting, are of several sorts. Some think the conformity required of ministers sinful, because of previous terms required of them which they judge to be so, but not that which is required of the people. Of which sort, some that think it not simply unlawful, find it however less edifying to them, and though they can therefore partake in it at some times, think themselves more ordinarily bound to attend such other means as they find more conducing to their spiritual profit and advantage, judging they have an undoubted right from Christ, anciently allowed from age to age in the best times of the Christian church, and never justly taken from them, of choosing the pastors to whose ordinary care and conduct they shall commit their souls. Others judge the public way simply unlawful, and therefore judge themselves bound to decline it wholly; and are the more averse to any participation in it, as apprehending it to have no suitableness or aptitude to profit their souls: wherein they are the more confirmed, that they believe not God will ever bless the means which he hath not appointed. Now how apt all these are unto very severe censures of one another, he knows not the age, that is ignorant. One sort censuring the other as humoursome, factious, schismatical; the others them back again, as formal, popishly affected, destitute of any savour of spiritual things, having nothing of God in them, or of the life and power of godliness.

Now is this suitable to the love that should rule among Christians? or to the reverence we ought to have for that authority that forbids such judging? It ought to be considered both that all have not the same understanding, nor the same gust and relish of things.

1. Not the same understanding. And therefore where conscience hath the same rule, it cannot have with every one the same actual latitude, that rule, being so very diversely understood, which different estimate of consciences, the apostle hath express reference to, in that large and most healing discourse of his, Rom. xiv. One (saith he, ver. 2.) believeth that he may eat all things, another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Nor doth he, in reference to such doubted things, determine what all should do, or not do, by particular rules, concerning every such case, that was then depending, which it seems he reckoned was not necessary, or that might afterwards fall out, which was little to be expected. But he lays down one general rule, against judging one another, which he presses with that authority, and such awful reasons, as might make a Christian heart tremble to be guilty of it.

And in reference to the mentioned differences among ourselves, (as well as others no nearer to the substantials and vitals of our religion,) there is somewhat else to be done than to conclude against a man's sincerity because of such differing sentiments and practices, and which certainly would be done, if truly Christian love, or even justice itself, did take place as they ought; *i. e.* it would be considered what these several differing parties have to say for themselves, what reasons they may allege, and whether though they be not sufficient to justify their several opinions and practices, (as all cannot be in the right,) they be not such as by which a conscientious man, a sincere fearer of God, may be swayed, so as to take the way which he is found in by the ducture of an upright (though misguided) conscience, and not as being under the government of depraved vicious inclination. As those that can, and do, yield the conformity that is required of ministers, though perhaps they wish some things altered, why may it not be supposed they sincerely think (though it should be mistakingly) that the things more liable to exception are capable of a sense wherein they are not unlawful? and not being so, they think themselves bound to take the opportunity which they this way obtain of doing good to the souls of men? others also apprehending it lawful, how possible is it to them from a certain reverence they have for antiquity, and for our own first reformers, to think it best and fittest to be continued! Nor is it unsupposable that many of the laity may upon the same grounds have the same apprehensions.

Again, divers in the ministry judging the terms unlawful upon which only they can have liberty for the public exercise of it; is it not possible they may, with a sincere conscience, think themselves not therefore obliged wholly to renounce their calling and office, to which they were duly set apart, and had by their own solemn vow given up themselves; but to do so much of the work of it as they can have opportunity for? And whereas of the people, some may think the public forms and ways of worship not simply unlawful, but find them less edifying to them than other means which the providence of God affords them; and therefore do more ordinarily attend those, though sometimes also the other; why should it be thought on the one hand, or the other, that it is so little possible they should be guided by reasonable and conscientious considerations herein, that nothing but corrupt inclination must be understood to govern them? Is it not supposable, that accounting the public worship substantially agreeable to divine institution, though in some accidentals too disagreeable, they may think there is more to incline them at some times to attend it, than totally to disown it? For what worship is there on earth that is in all things incorrupt? And they may apprehend it fit to testify their union with the sincere Christians, that may be statedly under that form, and especially in a time when the contest is so high in the world, between them that profess the substance of reformed Christianity, and them that have so much deformed it; and may conceive it becoming them, at some times, to express their own unconfinedess to a party, and to use that liberty which, they think, should not be judged by another man's conscience, which yet they would have regard to, where there are not greater reasons to preponderate. They are indeed under a disadvantage (with them that are apt to use a greater liberty in their censures, than they do in their practice in these matters) when it falls out that their partial compliance is the means of their security from penalties; and their disadvantage is greater, whose judgment to this purpose hath not been formerly declared and made known. But they for shame ought to be silent whose total compliance gains them not only immunity, but great emoluments. And that perhaps yielded, not according to a former, but (at that time when the opportunity occurred) a new and altered judgment. They may however know themselves to be moved by greater ends than secular interest: and so may these we now speak of, and yet may think the preservation of their earthly portion, wherewith they are to glorify God in this world, not too little an end to be designed and endeavoured by lawful means. It were a very uncouth and sinful thing to do a spiritual action for a carnal end, but if the thing sincerely and supremely designed be the glory of God, that is the most spiritual end: if it be not, that ought to be changed which is wrong, not that which is right; the unlawful end, not the lawful action, if it be lawful; if it be not, their good end will not justify their action, but it will their sincerity; which is all that this discourse in ends.

And then for such as decline the public worship totally, as judging it simply unlawful; is it not possible they may be led to that practice by somewhat else than humour and factious inclination? Have they not that to say, which may at least seem solid and strong to a conscientious man? How jealous God did heretofore show himself in all the affairs of his worship! How particular in the appointment even of the smallest things he would have appertain to it! How unsuitable multiplied ceremonies are to the mature state of the church! and how sensibly burdensome they were to the disciples of the first age as a yoke not to be borne; and that therefore God himself, when the season of maturity, and the fulness of time came, thought fit to

abrogate those of his own former appointment, with no (probable) design to allow men the liberty of substituting others in their room. Why is it not to be thought that the fear of the great God withholds them from doing what they judge would offend him? and that, if they err, it is for fear of erring? Why can nothing be thought on whereto to impute their practice, but peevish humour? Especially if that be considered (which is common to these two last mentioned sorts of men) that they simply find other means more edifying to them, or expect them only to be so, if the other be thought unlawful. If they be thought merely lawful, and such as may therefore be used upon weighty reasons at some times, but are found less edifying, who can doubt but I ought to use for my soul (at least in an ordinary course) the aptest means that I can ordinarily have for the promoting its edification and salvation? Do we not reckon ourselves to owe so much even to our bodies? And what is an other man's opinion to signify against my sense and constant experience? Is there not such a thing as a mental *idiosyncrasy* (or peculiarity of temper) as well as a bodily? and whereto what is most agreeable, any man that is not destitute of ordinary understanding is the fittest judge himself: as every one, that is not a mere fool, is so much a physician as to know what diet suits him best.

And if it be said against the former of these two sorts, Are they not at all times obliged to use the means which are most edifying? They may say, At all times when they have nothing to outweigh their own present edification. But it is not impossible that a conscientious judgment may esteem all the forementioned considerations concurring, to be of more weight than the greater advantage hoped to be gained in that one hour. Nor need any man be ashamed professedly to avow that which may seem the least of them, the saving of himself from temporal ruin. For he is to be accountable to God for what portion he hath intrusted him with of the good things of this life, and is not to throw it away without sufficient cause. Who sees not that more is allowed and ordinarily done without scruple or censure upon the like account? as, to omit the hearing of a sermon, if at that time one's house be on fire, yea, or if it be to save my neighbour's, or the plucking of an ox or sheep out of a ditch on the Lord's day, when I might have been employed at that time in the solemn worship of God to my spiritual advantage. A mere commutation unto less advantage upon an equally or more urgent necessity is less than omission. And they that shall have learned as our Saviour directs, "what that means, I will have mercy and not sacrifice," will not condemn the guiltless.

Only such are concerned first to search well and be satisfied concerning the lawfulness of their action in itself, that they do it not with a self-condemning conscience, nor with a groundlessly self-justifying one. And then especially to see to it that their end be right; God's interest, not their own, otherwise than in a due, entire subordination to his. We can never act innocently or comfortably in any thing, till he be in every thing more absolutely our all in all; and have much more reason to be scrupulous, and (if others knew our hearts) were much more liable to censure, that, in our common affairs, he is so much forgotten, that we live not more entirely to him; which we little animadvert upon, and are very officious to cast motes out of our brother's eye, when this beam is in our own.

The design of mentioning these hints of reasons for so different judgments and practices, is not to show which are strongest, and ought to prevail, which cannot be the business of so short a discourse as this, and so much of another nature; but, to show that while there is any thing colourable to be alleged for this or that way, true Christian love, compassion of common human frailty, and a duly humble sense of a man's own, would oblige him to think that conscience towards God may have a greater hand (though with some misguided itself) in guiding men the different ways they take, than is commonly thought. And to consider though such and such reasons seem not weighty to me, they may to some others, who are as much afraid of sinning against God as I, and perhaps their understandings as good in other matters as mine. It would be considered how really difficult the controversy is about the ceremonies, and some other parts of conformity. Perhaps few metaphysical questions are disputed with more subtlety than that controversy is managed with, by Archbishop Whitgift, Bishop Morton, Doctor Burgesse, Doctor Ames, Cartwright, Calverwood, and others. And how very easily possible and pardonable is it to unlearned persons, or of weaker intellectuals, being obliged in order to their practice to give a judgment in reference to these things one way or other, to judge amiss! Why should we expect every sincerely pious man to be able to hit the very point of truth and right in matters that belong, as Bishop Davenant once said in another case, *non ad fidem fundamentalem, sed ad peritiam Theologicam, et fortesse ne ad hanc quidem, sed aliquando ad curiositatem Theologorum—not to the foundation of our faith, but to the skill of divines, and perhaps not to this neither, but sometimes only to their curiosity.* What were to be done in reference to so nicely disputable things made part of the terms of Christian communion, is more the matter of our wish than hope, till by a gracious influence God better men's minds, or by a more deeply felt necessity bring us to understand what is to be done. Our case is ill when only *vexatio dat intellectum*, when *nothing but sorrow and suffering will make us wise;* which is very likely from the righteous hand of God to be our common lot.

In the mean time 'tis hard to think that he cannot be a sincerely pious man whose understanding is not capable of so difficult things, as to make a certainly right judgment about them. *In absoluto et facili stat eternitas*, and why should not the communion of persons going into a blessed eternity have the same measure?

And besides the different size and capacity of men's understandings, and consequently of their conscientious determination,

2. There are also as differing relishes of these things, which Christian love would oblige a man to consider with equanimity, so as thereupon to refrain hard censures. All good men have not the same relish of the various forms and modes of dispensing the truths and ordinances of Christ. Some of our suffering brethren in Q. Mary's days are said to have found great spiritual refreshing by the Common Prayer. And, in our own days, some may profess to have their hearts warmed, their affections raised and elevated, by it. They are no rule to us; but it would less become us, hereupon, to suspect their sincerity, than our own. Others again cannot relish such modes of worship, when in the ministry of such as use them not, they find a very sensible delight and savour.

And this, by the way, shows the great difference between such things as have their evidence and goodness from God himself, and those that borrow their recommendableness only from human device. All good men, in all the times and ages of the Christian church, have a constant value and love for the great substantials of religion, which have in them that inward evidence and excellency, as command and captivate a rectified mind and heart; whereas the mere external forms of it, the outward dress and garb, are variously esteemed and despised, liked and disliked, by the same sort of men, *i. e.* by very sincere lovers of God, not only in divers times and ages, but even in the same time. How different hath the esteem been of the liturgic forms with them who bear the same mind, full of reverence and love towards religion itself; as that habit is thought decent at one time, which in another is despicably ridiculous; whereas a person in himself comely and graceful, is always accounted so, by all, and at all times.

Now this various gust and relish cannot but have influence, more remotely, upon the conscientious determination of our choice, concerning our usual way of worshipping God. For how should I edify by what is disgustful to me? Though it be true that our spiritual edification lies more in the informing of our judgments, and confirming our resolutions, than in the gusts and relishes of affection, yet who sees not that these are of great use even to the other? and that it is necessary that at least there be not a disgust or antipathy? What is constantly less grateful, will certainly be less nutritive. That is usually necessary to nourishment; though, alone, it be not suffi-

cient; as it is in the matter of bodily repasts. Who can without great prejudice be bound to eat always of a food that he disrelishes, though he may without much inconvenience, for a valuable reason, do it at some time.

And they that think all this alleged difference is but fancy, show they understand little of human nature, and ess of religion; though they may have that in themselves too which they do not so distinctly reflect upon, even that peculiar gust and relish, which they make so little account of. For, have they not as great a disgust of the others' way as they have of theirs? Would they not as much regret to be tied to theirs? Have they not as great a liking of their own? And doth not common experience show that there are as different mental relishes as bodily? How comes one man in the matters of literature to savour metaphysics? another mathematics, another history, and the like? and no man's genius can be forced in these things. Why may there not be the like difference in the matters of religion? And I would fain know what that religion is worth that is without a gust and savour, that is insipid and unpleasant? much more that would, being used in a constant course, this or that way, be nauseous and offensive?

If indeed men nauseate that which is necessary for them, the Gospel, for instance, or religion itself, that is certainly such a distemper, as if the grace of God overcome it not, will be mortal to them; and we are not to think of relieving them, by withdrawing the offending object, which itself must be the means of their cure. But is there any parity between the substance of religion, which is of God's appointing, and the superadded modes of it, that are of our own?

Upon the whole, nothing is more agreeable, either to this divine principle of love, nothing (within our compass) more conducible to our end, the ceasing of our differences, (which are most likely to die and vanish by neglect,) or their ceasing to be inconvenient to us, than to bear calm and placid minds towards one another under them, to banish all hard thoughts because of them. If I can contribute no way else to union, from this holy dictate and law of the spirit of love, I can at least abstain from censuring my fellow-Christians. It is the easiest thing in the world one would think not to do; especially not to do a thing of itself ungrateful to a well tempered mind; and a great privilege not to be obliged to judge another man's conscience and practice, when it is so easy to misjudge and do wrong. Most of all, when the matter wherein I presume to sit in judgment upon another is of so high a nature, as the posture of his heart God-ward: a matter peculiarly belonging to another tribunal, of Divine cognizance, and which we all confess to be only known to God himself. And if I would take upon me to conclude a man insincere, and a hypocrite, only because he is not of my mind in these smaller things that are controverted among us, how would I form my argument? No one can, with sincerity, differ from that man whose understanding is so good and clear, as to apprehend all things with absolute certainty, just as they are; and then go on to assume, (and a strange assuming it must be,) But my understanding is so good and clear as, &c. 'Tis hard to say whether the uncharitableness of the one assertion, or the arrogance of the other, is greater; and whether both be more immoral, or absurd. But the impiety is worst of all; for how insolently doth such a man take upon him to make a new Gospel! and other terms of salvation than God hath made! when his sentiments and determinations of things which God hath never made necessary, must be the measure and rule of life and death to men! How is the throne and judicial power of the Redeemer usurped which he hath founded in his blood! Rom. xiv. 4. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand. Ver. 9. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. Ver. 10. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Ver. 11. For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. One would think they that lay no restraint upon themselves in this matter of judging their brethren, upon every light occasion, reckon this chapter came by chance into the Bible. And that our Lord spake himself, at random, words that had no meaning, when he said, Matt. vii. 1. Judge not that you be not judged, &c. What man that fears God would not dread to be the framer of a new Gospel, or new terms of salvation? It is a great solace indeed to a sincere mind but implies a severe rebuke, in the mean time, to such a self-assuming censorious spirit, that it may, in such a case, be so truly said, it is a much easier thing to please God than man.

They that find this measure will have the better of it, if they can abstain from retaliating, when as the reason of it is the same on both sides. For they may say, You are to remember I differ no more from you in this matter, than you do from me; and if I judge not you about it, what greater reason have you to judge me? And they have little reason to value such a man's judgment concerning their duty in a doubtful manner, who cannot see his own in so plain a case. The matter for which they judge me may be very doubtful, but nothing can be plainer than that they ought not so to judge.

9. A due Christian love would oblige us, after competent endeavours of mutual satisfaction about the matters wherein we differ, to forbear further urging of one another concerning them. Which urging may be two ways: either by application to our affections, or to our reason and judgment.

Some perhaps find it more suitable to their own temper and measure of understanding and conscience, to go the former way; and only vehemently persuade to do the thing, wherein the other shall comply with them, and in some sort justify the course which they have taken; without regard to the others' conscience, press them right or wrong to fall in with them; sometimes labouring to work upon their kindness, by flattery, sometimes upon their fear, by threats and menaces. Sincere love would certainly abhor to do thus. Would it let me violate another's conscience any way? The love I bear to a fellow-Christian, if it be true, having for its measure that wherewith I love myself, would no more let me do it than hurt the apple of mine own eye. An inspirited waking conscience is as tender a thing, and capable of a worse sort of hurt. If some have more latitude than I, and think what they may do, in present circumstances so far as they may, they must, would it not be the dictate of love patiently to admit it, especially when it comes to suffering. For let me put my own soul in his soul's stead; and would I be willing to suffer upon another man's conscience, and not upon my own? and forfeit the consolations which in a suffering condition belong to them who for conscience towards God endure grief? would I, if I loved them, be content they had the grief, and did want the consolation? There will be still found in a state of suffering, somewhat that will prove a common cause to good men wherein they will most entirely agree, whatsoever smaller things they may differ in. As the pious bishops Ridley and Hooper well agreed upon a martyrdom at the stake, in the same important cause, who before, had differed (somewhat angrily) about some ceremonies. Concerning which difference how pathetical is the letter of the former of these to the other, when both were prisoners (the one at Oxford the other at London) on the same account. But now, my dear brother, (saith he,) forasmuch as we thoroughly agree and wholly consent together in those things which are the grounds and substantial points of our religion; against the which the world so furiously rageth in these our days, howsoever, in time past, by certain by-matters and circumstances of religion, your wisdom, and my simplicity (I grant) have a little jarred: each of us following the abundance of his own sense and judgment. Now, I say, be you assured, that even with my whole heart, God is my witness, in the bowels of Christ, I love you in the truth, and for the truth's sake, which abideth in us, and as I am persuaded shall, by the grace of God, abide in us for evermore.

Again, if others have less latitude; it would be far from us to add to the affliction they are liable to, upon that very account, by a vexatious urging and importuning them. Especially to do it with insulting threats and menaces, and

labour to overawe their brethren, against their consciences, into the embracing of their sentiments and way. Is it possible a Christian should not understand how necessary it is to every one's duty and peace, that he exactly follow that direction of the apostle's, and esteem it most sacred, Rom. xiv. 5. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind? and that we firmly resolve never to do any thing with regret or a misgiving heart, at least. Not against a prevailing doubt, for in very doubtful cases to be rid of all *formido oppositi or suspicion* that the matter may be otherwise, is perhaps impossible to me; but to do any thing against the preponderating inclination of my judgment and conscience, were great wickedness, and such as, if it were known, would make me unfit for any communion whatsoever. And I do here appeal to you who most severely blame any of us for our dissent from you, whether if we should thus declare to you, "That 'tis truly against our consciences to communicate with you upon your terms, we believe we should greatly offend God in it, and draw upon us his displeasure, but yet to please you, and prevent our temporal inconvenience, or ruin, we will do it." I appeal to you, I say, whether we should not hereby make ourselves incapable of any Christian communion with you or any others? This is then the plain state of the case, and you do even put these words into our months: "If we follow the dictate of our consciences, we must decline you; if we go against it, you must decline us; supposing we declare it, if we declare it not, we have nothing to qualify us for your communion but hypocrisy and dissimulation! and what do you gain by such an accession to the church? You have gained, in any such case, not half the man, the outside, the carcass only, or the shadow of the man, *i. e.* when you have debauched our consciences, when you have spoiled us, and made us worth nothing, then we are yours, wherein you show nothing of love, either to us, or to yourselves!"

Others again, that are themselves men of more reason and conscience, take the somewhat more manly and Christian course, and bend themselves by argument to convince the reason, and satisfy the consciences, of such as differ from them. But herein also there may be an excess that is unprofitable and grievous to those they would work upon by this course, and from which therefore Christian love, studying the peace and quiet of their brethren, would restrain them. I say, from the ungrateful excess of such an endeavour; for I would fain know, can there not herein be an excess? Is it not supposable that they who differ from me, in such lesser things, may be sometime arrived to a settlement and fixedness of judgment in them, as well as I? Is it not possible they have weighed the moments of things as much as I have done? Is such a cause infinite? Is it not possible that all may have been said in it which is to be said, and the matter have been sifted to the very bran? So that all my further arguings may serve but to argue my vain self-confidence, or aboundingness in my own sense, as if all wisdom were to die with me. Or what if they serve at length but to show the incapacity of the subject to be wrought upon, and the different complexion of his mind I am treating with. All cannot receive all things: we cannot make our sentiments enter with every one. Perhaps they show the weakness of his understanding: and then hath that direction of the apostle no authority with us? Him that is weak in the faith receive, but not to doubtful disputations, Rom. xiv. 1. He whom we account our weaker brother, and of slower understanding, must be received, (not cast out of our communion,) and because God himself hath received him, as ver. 3. (*q. d.* Is he thought fit for God's communion, notwithstanding his unsatisfied scruple, and is he unfit for yours?) and he is not to be vexed and importuned with continual disputation, if that apostolical precept be of any value with us. Sometime at least, we should think, we have tried in such a case as far as is fit, and driven the nail as far as it will go. Is it not possible such a matter may be agitated beyond the value of it, and that more time and pains may be spent upon it than it is worth? The obscurity and perplexity of the controversy show the less necessity. Things most necessary are most plain. Must we always, in matters of confessedly little moment, be inculcating the same thing, rolling endlessly the returning stone, and obtruding our offensive crambe? Perhaps as no good is done, we do much hurt. When is the saw of disputation long drawn about one thing without ill effects? reason, having at length spent its strength, grows (as weak people are) peevish and froward; degenerates into anger and clamour. In greater differences than our present ones, betweeo the protestant churches abroad; some, of more prudent and peaceable minds, have earnestly pressed the laying aside of disputes, and putting a period, by consent, to their theological wars. *Solitarum disputationum labyrinthos ne ingredi quidem conentur*,[h] said a great divine, in his days, in reference to those controversies that he would have had composed by an amicable brotherly conference. And that king of Navarre, who, at that time, seemed highly concerned for the peace and welfare of the reformed churches, (afterwards Henry the Fourth of France,) in his negociations with divers princes to that purpose, gave special instructions to his ambassador much to insist upon this, i *That, till other remedies could be used, an end might be put to bitter contentions and disputations, that Christian love and a brotherly union might be restored.* And who sees not how much this would conduce to peace and union in our case too? who sees it not, that is a hearty lover of peace? and that is not intent upon continuing and keeping a-foot a controversy, not so much as a means to that, but as an end, contending for contention's sake, and as a thing which he loves and delights in for itself? I am sure love to our brethren would not let us continually molest and importune them to no purpose. And 'tis fit they that urge to us, these are little things which they importune us about, should know we have great things to mind, of eternal concernment to us. And that we cannot be always at leisure to mind little things, beyond the proportion of our little time on earth, and the little value of the things themselves.

10. Sincere love restored and exercised more among us, would certainly make us forbear reviling and exposing one another, and the industrious seeking one another's ruin. For such as can allow themselves to do any thing that hath this tendency; not to preserve public order, but to gratify their private ill-will, not in a sudden heat and passion, but deliberately, and so as to pursue a formed design to this purpose; if such men were capable of being reasoned with, (though it were to as good purpose to talk to a storm, or reason with a whirlwind, or a flame of fire,) I would ask them, "What are you altogether unatoneable? will nothing divert you from this pursuit? If any thing, what will? What more gentle thing than our destruction do you seek, or will content you? Is it our communion? And do you so recommend yourselves? Do you not know Cain is said to have been of that wicked one who slew his brother? 1 John iii. 10. And that whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him? Is it not said, John viii. 44. That such are of their father the devil, and the lusts of their father they will do, who was a murderer from the beginning? And in the forementioned 1 John iii. 10. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother? If all were like you, under what notion were we to unite with them?" The apostle tells us, 1 Cor. x. 20, 21. I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils, ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partaker of the Lord's table and of the table of devils. And in good earnest, incarnate devils (though that text do not directly speak of such) have too much of devil in them, to be participants in a communion, that can seem desirable, or is likely to be grateful to serious Christians. I must avow it to all the world, it is not this or that external form I so much consider in the matter of Christian union and communion, as what spirit reigns in them with whom I would associate myself. How can I endure to approach those holy mysteries, wherein all are to drink into one spirit, and declare

h Davenant Sent. ad Dureum.

i Ut acerbis illis contentionibus, quibus, et verbis rivali sunt inter se Theologi, et scriptis: et ejusmodi disputationibus silentio tandem finis imponatur, ut Christiana charitas, et animorum fraterna conjunctio revocetur. Mandat. Hen. Reg. Navar. Jacobo Sigurtæ Legato suo, &c. Apud Goldastum.

their union with the God of love, with the Emmanuel, God most nearly approaching us, God with us, collecting and gathering us in unto him as our common centre, whence the blessed spirit of holy love is to diffuse itself through the whole body, all enlivened by that spirit, and formed by it unto all kindness, benignity, goodness, and sweetness! With what significancy can I do so, (though I were never so well satisfied with the external forms and modes myself,) if it be apparent (I say, if apparent) I must cast in my lot and join myself with them, (were they generally such,) whose souls are under the dominion of the quite contrary spirit, that fills them with malignity, with mischievous dispositions and purposes, towards many a sincere lover of God, that cannot be satisfied with those forms and modes, and who decline them only from a sense of duty to God, and a fear of offending against the high authority of their blessed, glorious Redeemer!

I know many are apt to justify themselves in their animosity and bitterness of spirit towards others, upon a pretence that they bear the same disaffected mind towards them. But besides that it is the most manifest and indefensible injustice, if they charge the innocent, or such as they are not sure are guilty, if their own wrath and enmity be so potent in them as to enable their tainted vicious imagination to create its object, or so to disguise and falsely clothe it, as to render it such to themselves, as whereupon they may more plausibly pour out their fury. I say, besides that, how contrary is this vindictive spirit to the rules and spirit of the Christian religion! Is this to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and despitefully use us, &c.? How unlike the example of our blessed Lord when, even in dying agonies, he breathed forth these words and his soul almost at once, Father, forgive them, &c. or of the holy martyr Stephen, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge! How unlike is that aptness to the retaliating of injuries, to the Christian temper which the renowned Calvin discovers in an epistle to Bullenger, speaking of Luther's severity towards him. If Luther a thousand times (saith he) call me devil, I will acknowledge him for a famous servant of God; which passage both Bishop Moreton, and Bishop Davenant magnify him for; and the former saith, he herein spake so calmly, so placidly, so indulgently, as if it were not a man, but humanity itself, that uttered the words.

Yea, and such retaliation is what paganism itself hath declaimed against. [k] A noted philosopher urges that against it, that, one would think, should not need to be suggested to Christians, somewhat so prudential as might not only work upon the principle of love to others, but even that of self-love, that then the evil must perpetually circulate, and so must again and again return upon ourselves. As indeed if that must be the measure, to revile them that revile us, and render evil for evil, railing for railing, we should never have done. It were a course which once begun, could, by that rule, never find an end.

This then is the first part of the answer to the proposed question, What may be most hopefully done, &c. The endeavour of having our hearts knit together in love would surely do much towards it. And this is agreeable to any the most private capacity. No man can pretend his sphere is too narrow (if his soul be not) for the exercise of love towards fellow-Christians. And I hope 'tis agreeable to all our principles. Sure no man will say 'tis against his conscience to love his brother. And the same must be said of,

2. That other expedient, the endeavour to have our souls possessed with a more clear, efficacious, practical faith of the Gospel, which was to make the other part of the answer to our question. And though this is the more important part, it is also so very evident, that we do not need to make this discourse swell to a bulk too unproportionable to the rest it is to be joined with by speaking largely to it.

Although we have not the name of faith in this text, we have the thing. It is not named, but it is described, so as that it may easily be understood, both what it is, and how necessary to our purpose.

1. What it is, or what measure and degree of it, that would be of such great use in such a case. We are told with great emphasis, The riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. Such as whereby,

1. Our understandings are duly enlightened so as mentally to entertain aright the doctrine of the Gospel, *i. e.* 1. Distinctly to apprehend the meaning and design of this mysterious revelation of God in Christ. 2. And to be fully assured of the truth of it.

2. Such again, as whereby our hearts are overcome, so as practically and vitally to receive it, *i. e.* to acknowledge, receive, resign, intrust, and subject ourselves unto God in Christ revealed in it.

2. And of how vast importance this is towards our establishment, the confirming, fortifying, and uniting of our hearts, and our joint preservation in our Christian state, (the main thing we are to design, and be solicitous for,) we may see in these particulars.

1. Hereby we should apprehend the things to be truly great wherein we are to unite. That union is not like to be firm and lasting, the centre whereof is a trifle. It must be somewhat that is of itself apt to attract and hold our hearts strongly to it. To attempt with excessive earnestness a union in external formalities that have not a value and goodness in themselves, when the labour and difficulty is so great, and the advantage so little, how hopeless and insignificant would it be! The mystery of God, even of the Father, and of Christ, how potently and constantly attractive would it be, if aright understood and acknowledged! Here we should understand is our life and our all.

2. Hereby we should, in comparison, apprehend all things else to be little. And so our differences about little things would languish and vanish. We should not only know, but consider and feelingly apprehend, that we agree in far greater things than we differ in: and thence be more strongly inclined to hold together, by the things wherein we agree, than to contend with one another about the things wherein we differ.

3. Hereby our religion would revive and become a vital powerful thing; and consequently more grateful to God, and awful to men.

1. More grateful to God, who is not pleased with the stench of carcasses, or with the dead shows of religion instead of the living substance. We should hereupon not be deserted of the divine presence, which we cannot but reckon will retire, when we entertain him but with insipid formalities. What became of the Christian interest in the world, when Christians had so sensibly diverted from minding the great things of religion to little minute circumstances, about which they affected to busy themselves, or to the pursuit of worldly advantages and delights?

2. More awful to men. They who are tempted to despise the faint languid appearances of an impotent, inefficacious, spiritless religion, discern a majesty in that which is visibly living, powerful, and productive of suitable fruits. Who that shall consider the state of the Christian church, and the gradual declining of religion for that three hundred years from Constantine's time to that of Phocas, but shall see cause at once to lament the sin and folly of men, and adore the righteous severity of God? For as Christians grew gradually to be loose, wanton, sensual, and their leaders contentious, luxurious, covetous, proud, ambitious affecters of domination, so was the Christian church gradually forsaken of the Divine presence. Inasmuch as that at the same time when Boniface obtained from Phocas the title of universal bishop, in defiance of the severe sentence of his predecessor Gregory the Great, sprang up the dreadful delusion of Mahomet.[m] And so spread itself to this day, through Asia, Africa, and too considerable a part of Europe, that where Christians were twenty or thirty to one, there was now scarce one Christian to twenty or thirty Mahometans or grosser pagans. And what between the Mahometan infatuation, and the popish tyranny, good Lord! what is Christendom become? when by the one, the very name is lost, and by the other, little else left but the name?

4. Hereby we shall be enabled most resolvedly to suffer, being called to it, when it is for the great things of the Gospel, the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of

[k] Maxim. Tyr. Dissert. 2.

[l] 1 Pet. ii. 23. chap. iii. 9.

[m] Berewood's Inquiries.

Christ, clearly and with assurance understood and acknowledged. Such a faith will not be without its pleasant relishes. 'Tis an uncomfortable thing to suffer either for the mere spiritless, uncertain, unoperative notions and opinions, or for the unenlivened outward forms of religion, that we never felt to do us good, in which we never tasted sweetness, or felt power, that we were really nothing ever the better for. But who will besitate at suffering for so great things as the substantials of the Gospel, which he hath clearly understood, whereof he is fully assured, and which he hath practically acknowledged and embraced, so as to feel the energy and power of them, and relish their delicious sweetness in his soul? And though by such suffering he himself perish from off this earth, his religion lives, is spread the more in the present age, and propagated to after-ages; so seminal and fruitful a thing is the blood of martyrs! as hath always been observed. And as such a faith of the mystery of the Gospel appears to have this tendency to the best, firmest, and most lasting union among Christians, and the consequent preservation of the Christian interest, this mystery being more generally considered only; so this tendency of it would be more distinctly seen, if we should consider the more eminent and remarkable parts of it; the mystery of the Redeemer's person, the Emmanuel, God uniting himself with the nature of man; his office, as reconciler of God and man to each other; his death, as a propitiatory sacrifice to slay all enmity; his victory and conquest over it, wherein is founded his universal empire over all; his triumphant entrance into heaven, whither he is to collect all that ever loved, trusted, and obeyed him, to dwell and be conversant together in his eternal love and praises. How directly do all these tend to endear and bind the hearts and souls of Christians to God, and him, and one another, in everlasting bonds!

Thus then we have the answer to our question in the two parts of the text. The former pointing out to us the subjects of our union, with the uniting principle by which they are to be combined with one another; the other the centre of it, with the uniting principle whereby they are all to be united in that centre.

Use. And what now remains, but that we lament the decay of these two principles, and, to our uttermost endeavour the revival of them.

1. We have great cause to lament their decay; for how visible is it! and how destructive to the common truly Christian interest! It was once the usual cognizance of those of this holy profession, "See how these Christians love one another, and even refuse not to die for each other!" Now it may be, "How do they hate! and are like to die and perish by the hands of one another!" Our Lord himself gave it them to be their distinguishing character. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if you love one another." Good Lord! what are they now to be known by?

And what a cloudy, wavering, uncertain, lank, spiritless thing is the faith of Christians in this age become! How little are the ascertaining grounds of it understood, or endeavoured to be understood! Most content themselves to profess it only as the religion of their country, and which was delivered to them by their forefathers. And so are Christians but upon the same terms as other nations are Mahometans, or more gross pagans, as a worthy writer some time since took notice.[n] How few make it their business to see things with their own eyes, to believe, and be sure that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God! How far are we from the riches of the full assurance of understanding! How little practical and governing is the faith of the most! How little doth it import of an acknowledgment of the mystery of God, *viz.* of the Father, and of Christ! How little effectual is it! which it can be but in proportion to the grounds upon which it rests. When the Gospel is received, not as the word of man, but of God, it works effectually in them that so believe it, 1 Thess. ii. 13.

2. Let us endeavour the revival of these principles. This is that in reference whereto we need no human laws. We need not edicts of princes to be our warrant for this practice, loving one another, and cleaving with a more grounded lively faith to God and his Christ. Here is no place for scruple of conscience in this matter. And as to this mutual love: what if others will not do their parts to make it so? What, shall we only love them that love us, and be fair to them that are fair to us, salute them that salute us? Do not even the publicans the same? What then do we more than others? as was the just expostulation of our Saviour upon this supposition, Matt. v. 47.

And let us endeavour the more thorough deep radication of our faith, that it may be more lively and fruitful: which this apostle you see (not forgetting his scope and aim) further presses in the following verses, testifying his joy for what he understood there was of it among these Christians. Though I be absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ, ver. 5. And exhorting them to pursue the same course. As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving, ver. 6, 7.

And what also, must we suspend the exercise and improvement of our faith in the great mysteries of the Gospel, till all others will agree upon the same thing? Let us do our own part, so as we may be able to say, "*Per me non stetit, It was not my fault,* but Christians had been combined, and entirely one with each other, but they had been more thoroughly Christian, and more entirely united with God in Christ, that Christianity had been a more lively, powerful, awful, amiable thing. If the Christian community moulder, decay, be enfeebled, broken, dispirited, ruined in great part, this ruin shall not rest under my hand." We shall have abundant consolation in our own souls, if we can acquit ourselves, that as to these two things, we lamented the decay and loss, and endeavoured the restitution of them, and therein, as much as in us was, of the Christian interest.

[n] Pink's Trial of a Christian's love to Christ.

OF CHARITY

IN RESPECT OF OTHER MEN'S SINS.

THE PREFACE.

A PROPOSAL was made to me, by some friends, for publishing of these papers; which I cannot doubt, proceeded from charity, both to the reader, whose good they intended in it; and to the author, that they could think so slender a performance was capable of serving it. I cannot, indeed, think it unseasonable, to take any occasion of recommending charity, though this subject led me only to consider one single instance of it. But if the practice of it, in this one, would redress so great an evil, what might we not expect from its universal exercise, in all cases upon which it might have influence? Even the tongues of men and angels, as (with our apostle) they are insufficient to snpply its absence; so nor are they more than sufficient fully to represent its worth. We vainly expect, from either eloquence or disputation, the good effects, which charity alone (could it take place) would easily bring about without them. How laboriously do we beat our way in the dark! "We grope for the wall, like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon-day, as in the night, but the way of peace we have not known." Human wit is stretched to the uttermost; wherein that comes short, the rest is endeavoured to be supplied by anger: and all to bring us under one form, which either will not be; or if it were, could be to little purpose; while in the mean time, this more excellent way is forgotten of our foot, and we are far from it. Which shows, it is God that must cure us, (the God of love and peace,) and not man.

How soon and easily would a mutual universal charity redress all! For being on one side only, it could never cement both. And limited only to a party, it is not itself, and acts against itself, divides what it should nnite. But a genuine, equally diffused charity, how would it melt down men's minds, mollify their rigours, make high things low, crooked straight, and rough places plain! It would certainly either dispose men to agree upon one way of common order, or make them feel very little inconvenience or cause of offence in some variety. But without it, how little would the most exquisite, unexceptionable form (universally complied with, in every punctilio) contribute to the church's welfare! No more to its quiet, and repose, than an elegant, well-shaped garment, to the ease and rest of a disjointed, ulcerous body: nor longer preserve it, than the fair skin of a dead man's body would do that from putrefaction and dissolution.

What piety is to our union with God, that is charity to our union with one another. But we are too apt, as to both, to expect from the outward form, what only the internal, living principle can give; to covet the one with a sort of fondness, and deny the other. One common external form in the church of God, wherein all good men could agree, were a most amiable thing, very useful to its comely, better being, and the want of it hath inferred, and doth threaten, evils much to be deplored, and deprecated. But this divine principle is most simply necessary to its very being. Whatsoever violates it, is the most destructive, mortal schism, as much worse than an unwilling breach of outward order, as the malicious tearing in pieces a man's living body, is worse than accidental renting his clothes. And indeed, were our ecclesiastical contests, about matters that I could think indifferent, as long as there is such a thing as distinction of parties, I should readily choose that where were most of sincere charity (if I knew where that were.) For since our Saviour himself gives it us, as the cognizance of Christians, (by this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if ye love one another,) I know not how better to judge of Christianity than by charity. Nor know I where, among them that profess, there is less of either, than with them that would confine and engross both to their own several parties; that say, here is Christ, and there he is; and will have the notions of Christian, of saint, of church, to extend no further than their own arbitrarily assigned limits, or than as they are pleased to describe their circle. We know to whom the doing so hath been long imputed; and it were well if they had fewer sorts of imitators. Nor doth it savour more of uncharitableness in any, to think of enclosing the truth, and purity of religion, only, within their own precincts, than it doth of pride and vanity, to fancy they can exclude thence every thing of offensive impurity. We are never like to want occasions, even in this respect, of exercising charity: not to palliate the sins of any, but recover sinners. God grant we may use it more to this purpose (when the case so requires) and neec it less.

JOHN HOWE.

OF

CHARITY IN RESPECT OF OTHER MEN'S SINS.

1 COR. XIII. 6.

REJOICETH NOT IN INIQUITY.

THE subject spoken of must be supplied from the foregoing verses; where we find the matter all along, in discourse, is *charity*; which it is the principal business of the whole chapter to describe, and praise. And this is one of the characters that serve (as they all do) to do both these at once. For being in itself a thing of so great excellency, to show its true nature, is to praise it. Whatsoever is its real property, is also its commendation.

Our business here must be,—1. Briefly to explain and give some general account of both these, *viz.* charity, and this is its negative character, that it rejoices not in iniquity. —2. To demonstrate the one of the other; or (which is all one) to show the inconsistency between that divine principle and this horrid practice: upon which the use of this piece of Christian doctrine will ensue.

I. We are to give some account both of this principle, the charity which the apostle here treats of, and of the practice which the text denies of it, rejoicing in iniquity.

1. For the former. The charity of love here spoken of, is the root of all that duty which belongs to the second table. The whole of the duty contained in both, is summed up by our Saviour in love. That of the former in that first and great commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c. Matt. xxii. 37. that of the latter in this other, which is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neigbbour as thyself. Upon which two we are told hang all the law and the prophets. See also Rom. xiii. 10. The instances which are given in this chapter, refer to man as the object, and show that it is the love of our neighbour which is meant.

But though it be so far human, it is however upon other accounts a real part of divine love; which we see 1 John iii. 17. that apostle speaking even of love to our brother, Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up the bowels of compassion from him, demands, How dwelleth the love of God in that man? And David called the kindness he intended the relicts of Saul's family, the kindness of God, 2 Sam. ix. 3. This part of love is divine both in respect of its original, and of somewhat considerable in its object.

1. In respect of its original. 'Tis a part of the communicated Divine nature, from whence they that partake of it, are said to be born of God. It is most conjunct with faith in the Messiah, and love to God himself, which are both comprehended in that birth. For as it is said in the Gospel of John, (chap. i. 12, 13.) that as many as received him, (*viz.* Christ,) to them he gave power to be called the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And in his 1 Epist. chap. v. 1. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. So it is in this latter place immediately added, as the double property of this divine production, (not more separable from one another than from it,) And every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. And hereupon also, from the in-being and exercise of this love (though towards an object that seems very heterogeneous and of much another kind) we come to bear the name of God's children. Love your enemies—that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, Matt. v. 44, 45. The law indeed of love to other men, though it oblige to love some above others upon a special reason, yet, in its utmost latitude, comprehends all mankind under the name of neighbour or brother, as the particular precepts contained in it do sufficiently show. Which surely leave us not at liberty to kill, defile, rob, slander, or covet from others, than the regenerate, (as we count,) or our friends or relatives.

Now that principle from which we are called God's children, must be of divine original; for it is not spoken of them casually, but as their distinguishing character. So that, in this respect, they are said to be of God. It is their very difference from the children of another, and the worst of fathers, 1 John iii. 10. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. Which also shows it is not universally all love unto which this dignity belongs. Some more noble-minded pagans, that were wont to ascribe divinity unto love, have also carefully distinguished, and told us of a love that was genuine, and another that was spurious; the one akin to virtue, the other to vice; and have noted it as an abusive error of the vulgar, to give the same name to God and a disease.[a] The corruption and degeneracy of love, is indeed less than human; but the first being and restored rectitude of it, is of an original no less than divine.

2. And even this love, though placed upon man, is divine too in respect of its object, *i. e.* of somewhat we have to consider in it, which is most properly and strictly the object, or the inducement and formal reason why we love. God is the *primum amabile*, the *first goodness*, as well as the first Being. As therefore there is no being, so nor is there any goodness, amability, or loveliness, which is not derived from him. We love any thing more truly and purely, the more explicitly we acknowledge and love God in it. Upon the view of those strokes and lineaments of the Divine pulchritude, and the characters of his glory, which are discernible in all his creatures, our love should be someway commensurate with the creation, and comprehend the universe in its large and complacential embraces. Though as any thing is of higher excellency, and hath more lively touches and resemblances of God upon it; or by the disposition of his providence and law, more nearly approaches us, and is more immediately presented to our notice, converse, use, or enjoyment, so our love is

[a] Max. Tyr. Dissert.

to be exercised towards it more explicitly, in a higher degree, or with more frequency. As man therefore hath more in him of Divine resemblance, of God's natural likeness and image; good men of his moral, holy image; we ought to love men more than the inferior creatures; and those that are good and holy, more than other men; and those with whom we are more concerned, with a more definite love, and which is required to be more frequent in its exercise. But all from the attractive of somewhat Divine appearing in the object. So that all rational love, or that is capable of being regulated and measured by a law, is only so far right in its own kind, as we love God in every thing, and every thing upon his account, and for his sake.

The nature and spirit of man is, by the apostacy, become disaffected and strange to God, alienated from the Divine life, addicted to a particular limited good, to the creature for itself, apart from God; whereupon the things men love, are their idols, and their love idolatry. But where, by regeneration, a due propension towards God is restored, the universal good draws their minds, they become inclined and enlarged towards it; and as that is diffused, their love follows it, and flows towards it every where. They love all things principally in and for God; and therefore such men most, as excel in goodness, and in whom the Divine image more brightly shines. Therefore it is, most especially, Christian charity that is here meant, *i. e.* which works towards Christians as such. For compare this with the foregoing chapter, and it will appear that charity is treated of in this, which is the vital bond of holy, living union in the Christian church supposed in the other. Whereby as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body being many, are one body; so also is Christ, *v.* 12. This principle refined, rectified, recovered out of its state of degeneracy, and now obtaining in the soul as a part of the new creature, or the new man which is after God, as it hath man for its object more especially, and more or less according to what there appears of Divine in him, is the charity here spoken of. Now of this Divine charity it is said, which we are to consider,

2. In the second place, It rejoices not in iniquity. Hereof it cannot be needful to say much by way of explication. The thing carries a prodigious appearance with it; and it might even amaze one to think, that on this side hell, or short of that state, wherein the malignity of wickedness attains its highest pitch, any appearance should be found of it. Yet we cannot think, but these elogies of charity do imply reprehensions, and tacitly insinuate too great a proneness to this worst sort of *ἐπιχαιρεκακία* or rejoicing in evil. Gnostics (or the sect afterwards known by that name) gave already too great occasion for many more express and sharp reproofs of this temper; which were not thrown into the air, or meant to nobody. The Scripture saith not in vain, The spirit which is in us lusteth to envy. With which, what affinity this disposition hath, we shall have occasion to note anon. Rejoicing in iniquity may be taken (if we abstract from limiting circumstances) two ways:—either in reference to our own sins:—or to other men's. Our own; when we take pleasure in the design, or in the commission, or in the review and after-contemplation of them: converse in that impure region, as in our native element, drink it in like water, find it sweet in the mouth, and hide it under the tongue, &c. Other men's; when 'tis counted a grateful sight, becomes matter of mirth and sport, to see another stab at once the Christian name, and his own soul. The scope and series of the apostle's discourse, doth here plainly determine it this latter way: for as charity (the subject of his whole discourse) respects other men; so must this contrary disposition also. *De iniquitate procul dubio alienâ*, &c., saith Cajetan upon this place: *'Tis, without doubt, unapt to rejoice in the sins of other men; for neither can it endure one's own.* And this aptness to rejoice in the iniquity of others, may be upon several accounts. It may either proceed from an affection to their sins,—from an undue self-love,—or from an excessive disaffection to the persons offending.

1. From a great affection and inclination unto the same kind of sins which they observe in others. Whereupon they are glad of their patronage; and do therefore not only do such things, but take pleasure in them that do them. Rom. i. Men are too prone to justify themselves by the example of others, against their common rule. "Others take their liberty, and why may not I?" And so they go (as Seneca says sheep do) *non quâ eundum est, sed qua itur, the way which is trodden, not which ought to be.*

2. From an undue and over-indulgent love of themselves. Whence it is, that (as the case may be) they take pleasure to think there are some men, that perhaps outdo them in wickedness, and offend in some grosser kind than they have done. And so they have, they count, a grateful occasion, not only to justify themselves, that they are not worse than other men, but to magnify themselves, that they are not so bad; as the Pharisee in his pompous, hypocritical devotion, "God, I thank thee (that attribution to God, being only made a colour of arrogating more plansibly to himself) that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers," &c. Luke xviii. 11. whereby the hypocrite, while he would extol, doth but the more notoriously stigmatize himself.

3. From a disaffection they bear to the offenders; whence they are glad of an advantage against them: that they have occasion to glory in their flesh, and insult over their weakness. It must be that rejoicing in other men's sins, which is most contrary to charity, that is here more especially meant. And that is manifestly the last of these; such as proceeds from ill will to the person that offends; whereupon we are glad of his halting, (which perhaps we watched for before,) and when his foot slippeth, magnify ourselves against him. Now rejoicing at the sins of other men, upon this account, may be either—1. Secret, when only the heart feels an inward complacency, and is sensibly gratified thereby; or—2. Open, when that inward pleasure breaks forth into external expressions of triumph and insultation, into derision, scoffs, and sarcasms.

II. And how inconsistent this is with the charity which our apostle so highly magnifies, it is now our next business to show. And it will appear by comparing this rejoicing in other men's sins; 1. With charity itself,—2. With what it is, ever, in most certain connexion with.

1. With charity itself; and so we shall consider it,—1. In its own nature, abstractly and absolutely:—2. In relation to its original, and exemplary cause. And shall compare this rejoicing in the sins of other men with it both ways.

1. Consider charity in its own nature; and so it is the loving another as myself, so as to desire his welfare and felicity as my own: where we must note, that love to ourselves, is the measure of the love we owe to others. But ye are also to consider, that this measure itself is to be measured: for we are not to measure our love to others, by the love we bear to ourselves, otherwise, than as that also agrees with our superior rule; which obliges us so to love ourselves, as to design and seek our own true felicity, and best good; to "lay hold on eternal life, to work out our own salvation." If in other instances we were not so to understand the matter, (since the particular precepts extend no further than the general one,) any man might, without transgression, destroy another man's goods, when he hath learned to be prodigal of what he is master of himself; and might make himself master of another man's life, whensoever he cares not for his own. And so by how much more profligately wicked any man is, he should be so much the less a transgressor.

We are not so absolutely *ἀνυπεύθυνοι*, or so much our own, that we may do what we will with ourselves. We are accountable to him that made us, for our usage of ourselves; and in making ourselves miserable, make ourselves deeply guilty also. We were made with a possibility of being happy. He that made us with souls capable of a blessed state, will exact an account of us, what we have done with his creature. He that commits a felony upon his own life, injures his prince and the community to which he belongs. The one is robbed of a subject, the other of a member that might be useful; wherein both had a right. No man is made for himself. And therefore the fact is animadverted on, and punished as far as is possible in what remains of the offender, in his posterity, from whom his goods are confiscate; in his name, which bears a mark of infamy, and is made a public reproach. How unspeakably greater is the wrong done

to the common Ruler of the whole world, when a soul destroys itself! loses its possibility of praising and glorifying him eternally in the participation and communion of his eternal glory! how great to the glorious society of saints and angels! from whom he factiously withdraws himself, and who (though that loss be recompensed to them by their satisfaction in the just vengeance which the offended God takes upon the disloyal, apostate wretch) were to have pleased and solaced themselves in his joint felicity with their own. So that he hath done what in him lay, to make them miserable, and even to turn heaven into a place of mourning and lamentation.

The supreme, primary law under which we all are, obliges us to be happy. For it binds us to take "the Lord only for our God; to love him with all our hearts, and minds, and souls, and strength." And so to love him, is to enjoy him, to delight and acquiesce finally and ultimately in him, and satisfy ourselves for ever in his fulness. So that every man is rebellious in being miserable, and that even against the first and most deeply fundamental law of his creation. Nor can he love God in obedience to that law, without loving himself aright. Which love to himself, is then to be the measure of the love he is to bear to other men; and so most truly it is said, that charity begins at home. Every man ought to seek his own true felicity, and then to desire another's as his own.

But now consider what we are to compare herewith. Rejoicing in the sins of other men, how contrary is it to the most inward nature! to the pure essence! how directly doth it strike at the very heart and soul, the life and spirit, of charity! For sin is the greatest and highest infelicity of the creature; depraves the soul within itself, vitiates its powers, deforms its beauty, extinguisheth its light, corrupts its purity, darkens its glory, disturbs its tranquillity and peace, violates its harmonious, joyful state and order, and destroys its very life. It disaffects it to God, severs it from him, engages his justice and inflames his wrath against it.

What is it now to rejoice in another man's sin? Think what it is, and how impossible it is to be where the love of God hath any place. What! to be glad that such a one is turning a man into a devil! a reasonable, immortal soul, capable of heaven, into a fiend of hell! To be glad that such a soul is tearing itself off from God, is blasting its own eternal hopes, and destroying all its possibilities of a future well-being! Blessed God! how repugnant is this to charity? For let us consider what it is that we can set in directest opposition to it. Let charity be the loving of another as I ought to do myself; its opposite must be, the hating of another, as I should not and cannot sustain to do myself. As loving another therefore includes my desire of his felicity, and whatsoever is requisite to it till it be attained, and my joy for it when it is; loathness of his future, and grief for his present, infelicity, as if the case were my own; so hating another must equally and most essentially include aversion to his future good, and grief for his present, (which is the precise notion of envy,) the desire of his infelicity, and whatsoever will infer it till it be brought about, and joy when it is, or when I behold what is certainly conjunct with it. Which is the very wickedness the text animadverts on, as most contrary to charity; the ἐπιχαιροκακία, which not only the Spirit of God in the Holy Scriptures, but the very philosophy of pagans, doth most highly decry and declaim against: which is of the same family you see with envy; and no other way differs from it than as the objects are variously posited. Let the harm and evil of my brother be remote from him, and his good be present, I envy it. Let his good be remote, and any harm or mischief be present and urgent upon him, I rejoice in it. Both are rooted in hatred, the directest violation of the royal law of loving my neighbour as myself, Jam. ii. 8. And it is that sort of ἐπιχαιροκακία, which hath most of horror, and the very malignity of hell in it; as the sin of another, wherein this joy is taken, is an evil against the great God, (which there will be occasion more directly to consider hereafter,) as well as to him that commits it; a wrong to the former, and a hurt to the latter; whereas other infelicities are evils to him only whom they befall.

2. Consider charity in relation to its original, and exemplar. And so it is immediately from God, and his very image. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him, 1 John iv. 16. And what sort of love is this which is made so identical, and the same thing, with the very being and nature of God; not a turbid and tumultuous, not a mean and ignoble, not an imprudent, rash, and violent, least of all, an impure, polluted passion: but a most calm, wise, majestic, holy will to do good to his creatures, upon terms truly worthy of God. Good-will, most conjunct with the other inseparable perfections of the Godhead: whence, with expressions of the most benign propensions towards his creatures, he still conjoins declarations of his hatred of sin, upon all occasions: that he is not a God that takes pleasure in wickedness, nor can evil dwell with him, that sin is the abominable thing which his soul loathes; that he is of purer eyes, than to look on iniquity. What can now be more contrary to the pure and holy love, which shall resemble and be the image of his, than to rejoice in iniquity? For as God, while he loves the person, hates the sin, men do in this case love the sin, and hate the person. And while this horrid, impure malignity is not from God, or like him, (far be the thought from us,) from whom doth it derive? Whom doth it resemble? We read but of two general fathers, whose children are specified and distinguished, even by this very thing, or its contrary, in a forementioned text, 1 John iii. 10. where, when both the fathers and their children are set in opposition to one another, this, of not loving one's brother, is given at once, both as the separating note of them who are not of God's family and offspring, not of him, as the expression is, having nothing of his holy, blessed image and nature in them, (and who consequently must fetch their pedigree from hell, and acknowledge themselves spawned of the devil,) and as a summary of all unrighteousness, as it is being taken (as often) for the duty of the second table, or as a very noted part of it taken in its utmost latitude. Agreeably to that of our Saviour, John viii. 44. Ye are of your father the devil—he was a murderer from the beginning—as every one is said to be that hateth his brother, 1 John ii. 15. If therefore we can reconcile God and the devil together, heaven and hell, we may also charity and rejoicing at other men's sins.

2. The inconsistency of these two will further appear, by comparing this monstrous disaffection of mind with the inseparable concomitants of charity, or such things as are in connexion with it. And the argument thence will be also strong and enforcing, if that concomitancy shall be found to be certain, and the connexion firm, between those things and charity. I shall only give instance in four things, which every one that examines will acknowledge to be so connected; *viz.* wisdom and prudence:—piety and sincere devotedness to God and the Redeemer:—purity: and—humility. Moralists generally acknowledge a concatenation of the virtues. Those that are truly Christian are not the less connected, but the more strongly and surely. Which connexion of these now mentioned with charity, we shall see as to each of them severally; and at the same time, their inconsistency with this vile temper and practice.

1. For wisdom or prudence, it is so nearly allied to charity, that it is mentioned by the same name, Jam. iii. 17. The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, &c. The foregoing words (*v.* 16.) show that love is meant. These words represent the heavenly descent, and the true nature of it, both together. That it is called wisdom, shows its affinity with it, and that it partakes of its nature; dwells in a calm, sedate mind, void of disquieting passions and perturbations, which it is the work of wisdom to repress and expel. Indeed the name is manifestly intended to express, generally, the temper, the genius, the spirit of one that is born from above, and is tending thither. The contrary temper, a disposition to strife, envy, or grief for the good of another, (which naturally turns into joy, for his evil, when his case alters,) is called wisdom too, but with sufficiently distinguishing and disgracing additions. It is said, (*v.* 15.) not to be from above, but earthly, sensual, devilish; and to have the contrary effects; where envying and strife is, there is con-

fusion,[b] (tumult the word signifies, or disorder, unquietness, disagreement of a man with himself, as if his soul were plucked asunder, torn from itself,) and every evil work, *v.* 16. There can be no charity towards another (as hath been noted) where there is not first a true love to a man's own soul, which is the immediate measure of it; nor that, where there is not prudence to discern his own best good, and what means are to be used to attain it. His true good he is not to expect apart by himself, but as a member of the Christian community. Not of this or that party, but the whole animated body of Christ. In which capacity he shares in the common felicity of the whole, and affects to draw as many as he can into the communion and participation of it. So he enjoys, as a member of that body, a tranquillity and repose within himself. But is undone in himself, while he bears a disaffected mind to the true interest and welfare of the body.

Wherefore to rejoice in what is prejudicial to it, is contrary to prudence and charity both at once. Put on, (saith the apostle,) as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; implying no true peace or satisfaction can be had, but in vital union with the body. Is he a wise, or is he not a mad man, that rejoices he hath an unsound hand, or foot, or an ulcerated finger or toe rotting off from him? or that is glad a fire or the plague is broken out in the neighbourhood, that equally endangers his own house and family, yea and his own life?

2. Piety and devotedness to God and the Redeemer, is most conjunct with true charity. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, &c. 1 John v. 2. For the true reason of our love to the one, is fetched from the other, as hath been shown. And how absurd were it to pretend love to a Christian upon Christ's account and for his sake, while there is no love to Christ himself! But can it consist with such love and devotedness to God, to be glad at his being affronted by the sin of any man? or to Christ, whose design it was to redeem us from all iniquity, and to bless us, in turning us away from our iniquities, to rejoice in the iniquity that obstructs, and tends to frustrate his design? Do we not know he was for this end manifested, to destroy the works of the devil? And that the works of wickedness are his works? Do we not know, the great God is, in and by our Redeemer, maintaining a war against the devil, and the subjects of his kingdom? in which warfare, what are the weapons, on the devil's part, but sins? Who but sinners his soldiers? And who is there of us, but professes to be on God's part in this war? Can it stand with our duty and fidelity to him, to be glad that any are foiled, who profess to fight under the same banner? what would be thought of him, who in battle rejoiceth to see those of his own side fall, here one, and there one? He would surely be counted either treacherous or mad.

3. Charity of the right kind, is most certainly connected with purity. The end (or perfection) of the commandment (or of all our commanded obedience) is charity, out of a pure heart, 1 Tim. i. 5. Sincere Christians are such as have purified their souls, in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; and must see, that they love one another with a pure heart, fervently, 1 Pet. i. 22. Pagans have taught, there is no such thing as true friendly love, but among good men. But how consists it with such purity, to take pleasure in other men's impurities, or make their sin the matter of jest and raillery?

4. A further inseparable concomitant of charity, is deep humility. We find them joined, and are required to put them on together, in the already mentioned context. Put on kindness, humbleness of mind; above all put on charity; (Col. iii.) and do find it among these celebrations of charity, that it vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up. *v.* 4. Nor can we ever, with due charity, compassionate the wants and infirmities of others, if we feel not our own. Which if we do, though we are not, ourselves, guilty of heinous wickednesses, we shall so entirely ascribe it to divine, preserving mercy, as to be in little disposition to rejoice that others are.

Use. We may then, upon the whole, learn hence, how we are to demean ourselves in reference to the sins of other men. So, no doubt, as charity doth command, and require: at least, so as it doth allow, or not forbid. We are manifestly concerned, not to offer violence to so sacred a thing; and shall be secure from doing it both these ways. We may therefore under these two heads, take direction for our behaviour upon such occasions: *viz.* the actual sins of others, or their more observable inclinations thereto.

1. We should faithfully practise, as to this case, such things as charity, and the very law of love, doth expressly require and oblige us to. As we are,

1. To take heed of tempting their inclinations, and of inducing others to sin, whether by word or example; we are, otherwise, obliged to avoid doing so, and this greatly increases the obligation. What we are not to rejoice in upon the account of charity; we are, upon the same account, much less to procure. Especially take heed of contributing to other men's sins, by the example of your own. The power whereof, though it be silent and insensible, is most efficacious in all men's experience. A man would perhaps hear the verbal proposal of that wickedness with horror and detestation, which he is gradually and with little reluctance drawn into, by observing it in other men's practice. A downright exhortation to it, would startle him. But the conversation of such as familiarly practise it, gently insinuates, and by slower degrees alters the habit of his mind; secretly conveys an infection like a pestilential disease; so that the man is mortally seized before he feels, and when he suspects no danger.

Most of all, let them take heed of mischieving others by their sins, who are men of more knowledge and pretend to more strictness than others. Perhaps some such may think of taking their liberty more safely: they understand how to take up the business more easily, and compound the matter with God. A horrid imagination! and direct blasphemy against the holy Gospel of our Lord! If it were true, and God should (do what is so little to be hoped) mercifully give them the repentance whereof they most wickedly presume, who knows but others may, by that example, be hardened in wickedness, and never repent? Yea, if thy greater knowledge should prompt thee to do, unnecessarily, that which (really, and abstracting from circumstances) is not a sin; but which another took to be so, and thence takes a liberty to do other things that are certainly sinful; yet walkest thou not charitably. Through thy knowledge shall a weak brother perish and be destroyed, for whom Christ died? Rom. xiv. 15. with 1 Cor. viii. 10, 11. Suppose the process be, as from sitting in an idol's temple to idolatry, so from needless sitting in a tavern, to drunkenness or other consequent debaucheries. But if the thing be, in its first instance, unquestionably sinful, of how horrid consequences are the enormities of such as have been taken to be men of sanctity, beyond the common rate? What a stumbling block to multitudes! How much better might it have been for many that are of the Christian profession, if such had never been Christians! And most probably for themselves also! No doubt it had been more for the honour of the Christian name. How many may be tempted to infidelity and atheism by one such instance! And whereas those scandalized persons do often, afterwards, incur this fearful guilt of rejoicing in the iniquity of such, even that also they have to answer for, with all the rest.

2. Charity requires, not only that we do not procure, but that we labour, as much as is possible, to prevent the sin of others. What, in this kind, we are not to rejoice at, we should hinder. And indeed what we do not hinder, if it be in our power, we cause.

3. We should not be over-forward to believe ill of others. Charity will, while things are doubtful, at least, suspend. See how immediately conjunct these two things are. It thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, (*v.* 5, 6.) it is not imaginative or surmising. And in the following verse, (on the better part, it must be understood,) it believeth all things, hopeth all things; *i. e.* briefly, it is unapt

[b] ακαταστασια.

to believe ill without ground, and hopes well, as long as there is any. But it is not so blindly partial, as to shut its eyes against apparent truth (of which more in its place.)

4. Much less should we report things at random, to the prejudice of others. That character of an inhabitant in the holy hill, must not be forgotten, that taketh not up a reproach against his neighbour.

5. If the matter particularly concern ourselves, and circumstances comply, we must have recourse first to the supposed offender himself, and (as our Saviour directs) tell him his fault between him and thee alone, Matt. xviii. 15.

6. We ought to compassionate his case. Not rejoicing in iniquity, may have in it a *μείωσις*. More may be meant; we are sure more is elsewhere enjoined, solemn mourning, and the omission severely blamed. Ye are puffed up, (1 Cor. v. 2.) (not perhaps so much with pride, as vanity, and lightness of spirit, as a bladder swollen with air, which is the significancy of that word,) and have not rather mourned. Perhaps he is burdened with grief and shame. A Christian heart cannot be hard towards such a one in that case. We are to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ, Gal. vi. 2.

7. We should, as our capacity and circumstances invite or allow, (at least by our prayers,) endeavour his recovery. And therein use all the genileness which the case admits, and which is suitable to a due sense of common human frailty. Take the instruction in the apostle's own words, (Gal. vi. 1.) Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

8. We must take heed, upon one man's account, of censuring others; for such as we know to be faulty, those that for ought we know (and therefore ought to hope) are innocent. A practice most absurd and unrighteous, contrary to common reason and justice, as well as charity. Yet that whereto some are apt to assume a licence, upon so slender and senseless a pretence, *i. e.* because some that have under a show of piety, hidden the impurities of a secretly vicious life; others that are openly profane, and lead notoriously lewd and flagitious lives, (who, though bad enough, are so far the honester men,) do add to all their other wickedness, that folly and madness, as to count all men hypocrites that are not as bad as themselves; and reckon there is no such thing as real religion in the world. A like case as if, because sometimes spectres have appeared in human shape, one should conclude there is, therefore, no such creature on earth as a very man.

2. But there are also other things that ought to come into practice, in the case of other men's sinning, very suitable to the case, and not unsuitable to charity. Which, though they proceed more directly, rather, from some other principle, yet are not inconsistent with this, (as the graces of God's Spirit and the duties of Christians never interfere, so as to obstruct or hinder one another,)—things which, though charity do not expressly command, yet are otherwise commanded, and which charity doth not forbid. As,

1. That we labour to avoid the contagion of their example: that we take not encouragement to sin from their sinning. They are not our rule. We have not so learned Christ.

2. That we take warning by it; and endeavour that their example may not only not be tempting to us, but that it may be monitory. We should reckon such things are our examples, for this purpose, (1 Cor. x.) and were not only, heretofore, recorded and written, but they are also, in our own days, permitted to fall out for our admonition. We that think we stand, should therefore take heed lest we fall. And must remember we are to stand by faith, and are not to be high-minded, but fear. 'Tis a costly instruction that is given us in such instances. Consider the dolour and pangs that they may perhaps endure who are our monitors. If they do not cry to us to beware, their case doth. Reckon as the Psalmist, (Ps. lxxiii.) It is good for you to draw near to God; they that are far from him shall perish. Labour to be sincere, living Christians. Let me tell you what I have often inculcated. A mere form of godliness will one time or other betray you. And that it is not being of this or that party, conjoined with a formal, lifeless religion, that will secure you from being public scandals on earth, and accursed wretches in hell. Let every one prove his own work, and make thorough work of it; so shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another, Gal. vi. (yea, though he may have much cause of mourning for another,) for every one must, at last, bear his own burden and give an account of himself to God.

3. Seriously bless God for being kept from gross and scandalous enormities. Such words savour well, spoken with deep humility, and unfeigned sense of Divine favour, not with pharisaical ostentation and scorn, "God, I thank thee I am not as other men." If the poor man was so transported, and poured out his soul in tears of gratitude to God, upon the sight of a toad, that he was not such a creature; how much more cause is there for it, upon the sight of a gross sinner! For, I should think, "Who made me differ? Why was not I the example? and reduced to such a condition, before which I would prefer the greatest sinless misery in all the world?"

There is a threefold degree of mercy in our preservation from more heinous and reproachful wickedness. We may owe it to nature, that less inclines us to some sins, as gluttony, drunkenness, &c. to external succedaneous providence, that keeps us out of the way of temptation; or to victorious grace, able to prevail, both against corrupt inclinations of nature, and whatsoever temptations also. God is to be acknowledged in all. He is the Author of nature, the Ruler in providence, the Fountain of grace. Under the first of these notions, he ought more to be eyed and praised, than the most are aware of. I could tell you, if it were seasonable, of some (and no despicable) heathen philosophy, which speaks of such an *ἐυφυΐα*, or goodness of natural temper, (though the word hath also another signification,) that is said to carry in it a sort of seminal probity and virtue: which, when it shall be observed how some others have the seeds of grosser vitiosity, and of all imaginable calamities, more plentifully sown in their natures, there is no little reason to be thankful for. Though all are bad enough by nature to be children of wrath, and for ever miserable without special mercy; and though again, none have so bad natures, as to be thereby excusable in wickedness, (they should endeavour, and seek relief the more earnestly,) yet some are less bad, and their case more remediable, by ordinary means; and therefore the difference should be acknowledged with gratitude. And surely there is no small mercy, in being kept out of the way of temptation, by the dispensation of a more favourable providence, that orders more advantageously, the circumstances of their conditions in the world, so as they are less exposed to occasions of sin than others are. Which providence I called succedaneous, for distinction's sake; because even the difference of natural tempers is owing to a former providence. But now who can tell, what they should be, or do, in such circumstances as might have befallen them? 'Tis a singular favour, not to be exposed to a dangerous trial, whereof we know not the issue. Nor yet should any satisfy themselves without that grace which can stem the tide. Which they that possess, how should they adore the God of all grace!

4. Charity doth not forbid, and the case itself requires, that when others do grossly and scandalously sin, we should, at length, upon plain evidence, admit a conviction of the matter of fact. For, otherwise, we cannot perform the other duty towards them, unto which charity doth most expressly oblige, nor discharge a higher duty, which another love requires, that ought to be superior to all other. No charity can oblige me to be blind, partial, unjust, untrue to the interest of God and religion. When we are told in the text, It rejoices not in iniquity, 'tis added in the next breath, It rejoices in the truth: *i. e.* in equity and righteous dealing. We are not to carry alike to good men and bad; and are therefore sometime to distinguish them, if there be a visible ground for it, or to take notice when they manifestly distinguish themselves. For it is necessary to what is next to ensue: *viz.* that,

5. We are to decline their society; *i. e.* when their heinous guilt appears, and while their repentance appears not. Scripture is so plain and copious to this purpose, that it would suppose them very ignorant of the Bible, for whom it should be needful to quote texts. We must avoid them for our own sake, that we be not infected, nor

be partakers in their sin and guilt. For theirs, (and so charity requires it,) that they may be ashamed, which may be the means of their reduction and salvation: and (which is most considerable) for the honour of the Christian religion, that it may be vindicated, and rescued from reproach, as much as in us lies. It ought to be very grievous to us, when the reproach of our religion cannot be rolled away without being rolled upon this or that man; if, especially, otherwise valuable. But what reputation ought to be of that value with us, as his that brought us with his blood? The great God is our example, who refuses the fellowship of apostate persons, yea and churches: departs, and withdraws his affronted glory. It is pure, and declines all taint. When high indignities are offered, it takes just offence, and with a majestic shyness retires. None have been so openly owned by the Lord of glory, as that he will countenance them in wickedness. Though Coniah (he tells us, expressing a contempt by curtailing his name) were the signet on his right hand, yet would he pluck him thence. Yea, and our Saviour directs, If our right-hand itself prove offensive, we must cast it from us, Matt. v. 30. And to the same purpose, (chap. xviii.) in the next words after he had said, Wo to the world because of offences: it must be that offences will come, but wo to him by whom the offence cometh. Wherefore if thy hand offend, &c. ver. 7, 8. It must be done as to a hand, a limb of our body, with great tenderness, sympathy, and sense of smart and pain; but it must be done.[c] *Dilectionem audio, non communicationem; I hear of love, not communion*, saith an ancient upon this occasion.

6. We must take heed of despondency, by reason of the sins of others, or of being discouraged in the way of godliness; much more of being diverted from it. Indeed the greatest temptation which this case gives hereunto, is (to this purpose) very inconsiderable and contemptible, *i. e.* that by reason of the d lascivious ways of some, (as that word signifies, and is fittest to be read; referred to the impurities of the Gnostics, as they came to be called,) the way of truth (*i. e.* Christianity itself) is evil spoken of. But this ought to be heard (in respect of the scoffers themselves with great pity, but) in respect of their design to put serious Christians out of their way, with disdain; and with as little regard, or commotion of mind, as would be occasioned (so one well expresses it) to a traveller, intent upon his journey, by the mowes and grimaces of monkeys or baboons. Shall I be disquieted, grow weary, and forsake my way, because an unwary person stumbles, and falls in it, and one ten times worse, and more a fool than he, laughs at him for it? We must in such cases mourn indeed for both, but not faint. And if we mourn, upon a true account, we shall easily apprehend it, in its cause, very separable from fainting and despondency. It is a discouraging thing for any party to be stigmatized, and have an ill mark put upon them, from the defection of this or that person among them, that was, perhaps, what he seemed not, or was little thought to be. But if we be more concerned for the honour of the Christian name, than of any one party in the world, our mourning will not be, principally, upon so private an account. All wise and good men, that understand the matter, will heartily concur with us, and count themselves obliged to do so. None that are such, or any man that hath the least pretence to reason, justice, or common sense, will ever allow themselves to turn the faults of this or that particular person (that are discountenanced as soon as they are known) to the reproach of a party. For others, that are aptest to do so, men of debauched minds and manners; with whom, not being of this or that party, but religion itself, is a reproach. I would advise all serious and sober-minded Christians, (of whatsoever way or persuasion,) if they be twitted with the wickedness of any that seemed to be such and were not, to tell the revilers, "They are more akin to you than to us, and were more of your party (howsoever they disguised themselves) than of any other we know of."

And if yet, after all this, any will give themselves the liberty to rejoice at the sins of other men, and make them the matter of their sport and divertisement, or take any the least pleasure in observing them, I have but these two things, in the general, to say to them;—You have no reason to rejoice.—You have great reason for the contrary.

You have first, no reason to rejoice: for produce your cause, let us hear your strong reasons.

1. Is it that such are like you, and as bad men as yourselves? But,

1. What if they be not like you? Every one, perhaps, is not, at whose sins (real or supposed) you at a venture take liberty to rejoice; what if your guilt be real, theirs but imagined? Sometimes through your too much haste, it may prove so; and then your jest is spoiled, and you are found to laugh only at your own shadow. At least you cannot, many times, so certainly know another's guilt as you may your own; and so run the hazard (which a wise man would not) of making yourselves the ridicule. And supposing your guess, in any part, hit right; what if those others sin by surprise, you by design? they in an act, you in a course? they in one kind of lewdness, you in every kind? they sin and are penitent, you sin and are obdurate? they return, you persevere? they are ashamed, you glory? These are great differences (if they are really to be found) in any such case. But,

2. If they be not found, and those others be like you throughout, every whit as bad as yourselves, this is sure no great matter of glorying, that I am not the very worst thing in all the world! the vilest creature that ever God made! Should it be a solace to me also that there are devils, who may perhaps be somewhat worse than they or I? Nor though they fall in never so entirely with you in all points of wickedness, will that much mend your matter? Can their wit add to yours, prove there will be no judgment-day? or that there is no God? or, if that performance fail, can their power and yours defend you against the Almighty? Though hand join in hand, the wicked will not go unpunished. Or again,

2. Suppose you are not of the debauched crew; is this your reason why you at least think you may indulge yourself some inward pleasure, that wickedness (you observe) breaks out among them who are of a distinct party from you, which you count may signify somewhat to the better reputation of your own?

But are you then of a party of which you are sure there are no ill men? There are too many faults among all parties; but God knows it is fitter for us all to mend, than to recriminate. Yea, but the party we are of, professes not so much strictness. No? What party should you be of, that professes less strictness? What more lax rule of morals have you than other Christians? Do you not profess subjection to the known rules of the Bible, concerning Christian and civil conversation? You do not sure profess rebellion and hostility against the Lord that bought you! Doth not your baptismal covenant (which you are supposed to avow) bind you to as much strictness as any other Christian? and can there be any other more sacred bond?

But if in other things, than matters of civil conversation, such delinquent persons were of a stricter profession, (suppose it be in matters of religion and worship,) doth that delinquency prove, that in those other things, you are in the right and they are in the wrong? Doth the wickedness of any person, against the rules of the common, as well as his own stricter profession, prove the profession he is of to be false? Then, wherein the profession of protestants is stricter than of other Christians, the notorious sins of wicked protestants, will conclude against the whole profession. And the wickedness of a Christian, because Christianity is a stricter professioo than paganism, will prove the Christian religion to be false. Who doubts but there may be found, of the Roman communion, better men than some protestants, and of pagans, better men than some Christians? But then, they are better, only in respect of some things, wherein all Christians, or all men, do agree in their sentiments, not in respect of the things wherein they differ. And the others are worse, in things that have no connexion with the matter of difference. Enough is to be found to this purpose, in some of the ancients, writing on the behalf of Christians, which we need not, in so plain a case. Nor can it be thought, that men of any understanding and sobriety, will make this any argument, one way or other: or think them at all justifiable, that glory in other men's

c Tertullian.

d ασελγειαις, 2 Pet. ii. 2.

wickedness, upon this or any other account. For such therefore, as are of so ill a mind, and think being of a different party gives them licence, they ought to know, they make themselves of the same party; and that upon a worse account, than any difference in the rituals of religion can amount to. Upon the whole, your reason then (allege what you will) is no reason, and argues nothing but shortness of discourse and want of reason; or that you would fain say something to excuse an ill practice, when you have nothing to say. But I must add,

2. That you have much reason to the contrary, both upon the common account, and your own.

1. Upon the common account. That the Christian world should, while it is so barren of serious Christians, be so fertile, and productive of such monsters! made up of the sacred Christian profession, conjoined with (even worse than) paganish lives! And the more of sanctity any pretend to, the more deplorable is the case, when the wickedness breaks forth, that was concealed before, under the vizor of that pretence. Is this no matter of lamentation to you? or will you here, again, say, your unrelatedness to their party, makes you unconcerned? If it do not justify your rejoicing, it will sure (you think) excuse your not mourning. Will it so indeed? Who made you of a distinct party? Are you not a Christian? or are you not a protestant? And what do you account that, but reformed, primitive Christianity? And so, the more it is reformed, the more perfectly it is itself. Who put it into your power to make distinguishing additions to the Christian religion, by which to sever yourselves from the body of other Christians in the world, so as not to be concerned in the affairs of the body? If this or that member say, "I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?" Is it not the Christian name that is dishonoured by the scandalous lives of them that bear that name? Whose laws are they that are broken, the laws of this or that party? or are they not the laws of Christ? Will you say you are unrelated to him too? or have no concern with him? Can any party be united within itself by so sacred ties, as all true Christians are with the whole body of Christ? I know no way you have to be unconcerned in such cases, as the matter of your humiliation, (when they occur within your notice) but by renouncing your Christianity. Nor, indeed, would that serve the turn. For what will you do with your humanity? Are you not still a man, if you would be no longer a Christian? And even that, methinks, should oblige us to bewail the depravedness and dishonour of the nature and order of human creatures! that they who were made for the society of angels, yea, and of the blessed God himself, should be found delighting and wallowing in worse impurities than those of the dog or swine.

The more strictness in morals they have (falsely) pretended to, the greater is your obligation to lament their violating those sacred rules, which you also profess to be subject to,) and not the less. Do I need to tell you, that even among pagans, where a profession of greater strictness had once been entered into, an apostacy to gross immoralities hath been the matter of very solemn lamentation. As in the school (or church should I call it?) of Pythagoras, where, when any that had obliged themselves to the observation of his virtuous precepts, did afterwards lapse into a vicious [e] course, a funeral and solemn mourning was held for them, as if they were dead.

2. On your own. For when our Saviour saith, Wo to that man by whom offence cometh, doth he not also say, Wo to the world because of offences? And who would not fear and lament his share in that wo? Are you proof against all hurt by another's sin? What if it encourage you to sin too? What if it harden you in it? How many do some men's sins dispose to atheism! and to think there is nothing in religion! And if you felt in yourselves an inclination to rejoice in them, that itself argues the infection hath caught upon you; seized your spirits, and corrupted your vitals: so that you have cause to lament even your having rejoiced; to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; to turn your laughter to mourning, and your joy to heaviness, James iv. One would think them indeed but half men, and scarce any Christians, that can allow themselves so inhuman and unhallowed a pleasure, as rejoicing in another's sin! 'Tis very unworthy of a man to take pleasure in seeing his fellow-man turning beast. There is little in it of the ingenuity that belongs to human nature, to delight in the harms of others; much less of the prudence, to make sport of a common mischief. And would a Christian rejoice in the disadvantages of his own cause? and in the dishonour and reproach of the very name which he himself bears?

To conclude, One would think no more should be needful to repress in any this ill inclination, than to consider,—what sin is, wherein they rejoice,—and what charity is, which is violated by their doing so. What, to rejoice in sin! that despites the Creator, and hath wrought such tragedies in the creation! that turned angels out of heaven! man out of paradise! that hath made the blessed God so much a stranger to our world, broken off the intercourse, in so great part, between heaven and earth; obstructed the pleasant commerce, which had, otherwise, probably been between angels and men! so vilely debased the nature of man, and provoked the displeasure of his Maker against him! that once overwhelmed the world in a deluge of water, and will again ruin it by as destructive fire! To rejoice in so hateful a thing, is to do that mad part, to cast about firebrands, arrows, and death, and say, "Am not I in sport?" And to do that which so highly offends against charity! so divine a thing! the offspring of God! the birth of heaven, as it is here below, among us mortals; the beauty and glory of it, as it is there above, in its natural seat; the eternal bond of living union, among the blessed spirits that inhabit there, and which would make our world, did it universally obtain in it, another heaven. Consider from whom, and from what region, that must proceed, which is so contrary to God and heaven. If any will yet, in despite of Divine love itself, laugh on, at so foul and frightful a thing as sin is, 'tis too likely to prove the Sardonian laughter; *i. e.* (as some explain that proverb) of them that die laughing; conclude their lives and their laughter both together; and only cease to laugh and to live in the same last breath.

[e] Jambl. de vit. Pyth.

THE RIGHT USE OF THAT

ARGUMENT IN PRAYER,

FROM THE NAME OF GOD;

ON BEHALF OF A PEOPLE THAT PROFESS IT.

PREFACE.

No sort of men have ever pretended to religion, who have not allowed unto prayer a very eminent place in it. And so much a deeper and more potent principle is religion in the nature of man than reason, (though both are miserably perverted and enfeebled,) that the former doth secretly prompt men (especially in great distresses) to pray, and expect relief by prayer, when the way wherein it is efficacious cannot so well be explicated or apprehended by the other.

And as prayer hath ever been reckoned a very principal part of religion; so hath intercession for others been wont to be accounted a very fit and proper part of prayer.

In the general, prayer is most evidently a duty of natural religion, a dictate of nature, which every man's own mind suggests to him, or may be appealed to about it: (should not a people seek unto their God?) Whence that personated, eloquent patron of the Christian cause, urging for the conviction of his heathen adversary, the common practice of people in their extremities, to lift up (even untaught) their hands and eyes to heaven, fitly says of it,* *Vulgi iste naturalis est sermo, That they do herein, as it were, but speak the language of Nature.*

Now hereupon, the impression of that primitive law of nature, (not quite worn out from the mind of man, even in this his very degenerate state,) to love our neighbours as ourselves, doth as a natural instinct, secretly prompt us to pray for others, whom we cannot otherwise help, (especially such to whom we have more peculiar obligations, who are in a more especial sense our neighbours,) as (at least in our last necessities) we do for ourselves.

In which recourse to God, whether for ourselves or others, we are led by a sense of our own impotency and dependent state from a deeply inward apprehension of a Deity, that is, (as Epicurus himself seems constrained to acknowledge concerning the idea of God,) even proleptical, or such as prevents reason. So that we do not, being urged by the pinching necessity of the case, stay to deliberate and debate the matter with ourselves how this course should bring relief, but do even take it for granted, that it may; by an apprehension that is earlier in us, than any former reasoning about it, and being prior to it, is also not suppressed by it, but prevails against it, if there be any thing in reason objected, which we cannot so clearly answer.

Yet when we do bring the matter to a rational discussion, we find that in our conception of God we have the apprehension of so perfect and excellent a nature, that we cannot suppose he should be moved by any thing foreign to himself, or that we can inform him of any thing he knew not before, or incline him to any thing to which his own nature inclines him not. And therefore that though the wise and apt course of his government over intelligent creatures requires that they should be apprehensive of their own concernments, (whether personal or that belong to them, as they are in communities) and pay a solemn homage to his sovereign power and goodness, by supplicating him about them, yet that if he hear their prayers, it must not be for their sakes, but his own. Therefore also it cannot, upon strictest reasoning, but seem most dutiful to him and hopeful for ourselves, that our prayers should be conceived after such a tenor, as may be most agreeable unto that apprehension.

The Holy Scriptures and the Divine Spirit do both aim at the recovery of apostate man, and the repairing the decays of his degenerate nature, and do therefore (besides what was necessary to be added) renew the dictates of the law of nature, the one more expressly representing them, the other impressing them afresh, and re-implanting them, in the hearts of all that are born of God. Therefore, that external revelation of the mind and will of God doth direct, and his blessed Spirit (which is pleased to be in all his children the Spirit of grace and supplication) doth inwardly prompt them, not only to pray, (in reference to their single and common concernments,) but to form their prayers after this tenor; which is to be seen in their so frequent use of this argument in prayer, from the name of God.

Whereupon, in a time when we are so much concerned to be very instant in prayer, not only each of us for himself, but for the body of a people, upon whom that holy name is called; I reckoned it seasonable to show briefly the import and right use of this argument; and to that purpose have taken for the ground, the following text of Scripture.

* Octav. apud Min. F.

PRAYER FROM THE NAME OF GOD.

JER. XIV. 21.

DO NOT ABHOR US FOR THY NAME'S SAKE.

WHERE we have—a petition, and—the argument enforcing it.

I. A very serious petition, or a deprecation of the most fearful evil imaginable. Do not abhor us. The word[a] doth not merely signify abhorrence, but disdain: a displeasure prevailing to that degree, and so fixed, as to infer rejection, even from a just sense of honour. So some of the versions read, reject us not, or cast us not forth, as we would do what (or whom) we despise and scorn to own; as if it were feared the holy God might count it ignominious, and a reproach to him, to be further related to such a people, and might even be ashamed to be called their God. And consequently that the following argument is used not without some suspense of mind and doubt lest it should be turned against them, whereof more hereafter. Here it is implied,

1. To be no impossible thing that God should reject with abhorrence a people once his own, or that have been in peculiar, visible relation to him. Prayer is conversant about matters of divine liberty, *i. e.* that are not known to us to be already determined this way or that; but that may be, or may not be, as he pleases and sees fit; consistently with the settled course and order of things, not about things that he had before made ordinarily necessary, nor about things that are simply or in ordinary course impossible. In the former case prayer would be needless, in the latter to no purpose. We do not pray that the sun may rise to-morrow at the usual hour, or that the sea may ebb and flow, nor that they may be prevented doing so. But we must distinguish such necessity and impossibility from a mere certainty that things shall either be, or not be. We are to pray in the present case, with a deep apprehension that this is perfectly a matter of liberty with the great God, and that as he took such a people to be his,[c] of mere good pleasure, so it depends wholly upon his mere pleasure, that he continues the relation, when he might abandon and cast them off. It is further implied,

2. That the more serious and apprehensive among such a people, do understand it (at sometimes more especially) a thing very highly deserved, that God should abhor and reject them. The deprecation is a tacit acknowledgment, that the deprecated severity was reasonably to be feared, not only from sovereign power, but offended justice. This is indeed expressed in the next foregoing words. We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee, do not abhor us, &c. So that this ought to be the sense of the supplicants in the present case, that they are herein perfectly at mercy, that if they be heard, 'tis undeserved compassion, if they be rejected, 'tis from most deserved displeasure. And if it were not expressed, yet the supplication must be understood to imply it. For when the great God hath vouchsafed to limit his sovereign power and antecedent liberty by his promise and covenant, such a prayer were itself reflecting, and an affront, if it should proceed upon a supposition, or but intimate, that he should ever be inclined to do such a thing, without an excepted cause. Such as that his rejecting them upon it might consist with his being faithful to his word: when he values himself so much upon his faithfulness, and seems even to lay his very Godhead upon it: as those strangely emphatical words import, (Deut. vii. 9.) Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; implying that he would even yield himself not to be God, if he did not in all points vindicate and demonstrate his faithfulness. Nor indeed do we properly crave for any thing, but we therein disclaim a legal right to it, and acknowledge it to be rightfully in his power, to whom we apply ourselves, to grant or deny; we make demands from justice, and are supplicants for mercy. And with this sense the spirits of holy men have abounded, when they have taken upon them to intercede in the like case, as we see Dan. ix. 7. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day, &c. And to the same purpose, Ezra ix. Neh. ix. at large, and in many other places: *q. d.* "Our only resort, O Lord, is to thy mercy: thou mightest most justly abhor and abandon us, and say to us, Loammi, ye are none of my people; but in the multitude of thy tender compassions and mercies, do it not." It is again further to be collected,

3. That this is a thing which holy and good men do most vehemently dread and deprecate, *viz.* that God should thus abhor and reject a people so related to him. 'Tis that which the very genius and spirit of holiness in the sincere, regret beyond all things for themselves. They have taken the Lord to be their God, for ever and ever; their hearts have been attempered to the tenor and constitution of an everlasting covenant, which they entered with no design or thought of ever parting; but that it should be the ground of an eternal relation. And the law of love written in their hearts, prompts them to desire the same thing for others too; especially such to whom they have more especial, endearing obligations; and (if it were possible) that the whole body of a people to whom they are themselves united, might all be united to God upon the same terms, even by the same vital and everlasting union; and therefore also, that same divine and soul-enlarging love, being a living principle in them, makes them have a most afflicting sense of any discerned tendencies to a rupture and separation that might prevent, and cut off the hope of his drawing still more and more of into them that inward living union, and intercourse with himself. These things it may suffice briefly to have noted from *the petition* in the text. That which I principally designed, is what we have next coming under our view, *viz.*

II. The argument brought to enforce it; "for thy

[a] מאס Sprevit contempsit. [b] Vulg. Lat. and Chald. Par. [c] Deut. vii. 7. chap. x. 15.

name's sake." About which, what I shall observe, shall be with special reference to the case which the prophet refers unto, in his present use of it; *viz.* that in praying for a people professing the name of God, that he would not reject and cast them off, the fit and proper argument to be insisted on is that from his own name, (see ver. 1, 9.) And here it will be requisite,—1. To have some very brief consideration of this argument in the general; though —2. We principally intend to treat of it as it respects this present case.

1. In the general, we are to consider both what the name of God in itself imports, and what is signified by using it as an argument in prayer. And,

(1.) As to what is imported by the name of God, in itself considered. We shall not trouble this discourse with the fancies of the Rabbins; of whom yet one[d] very noted, soberly and plainly tells us the name of God is wont to signify his essence and truth, though the instance he gives, shows he means it of the Nomen Tetragrammaton, (the name Jehovah,) which indeed more eminently doth so. To our purpose it is obvious, and sufficient to note, that by his name, more generally, is signified both the peculiar excellencies of his nature and being, which are himself, as the use of a man's name is to notify the man. So when he is pleased himself to proclaim his own name, thus it runs; The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, &c. Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. And again, that by his name is meant his glory, and most especially the honour and reputation of his government. For so, too, a man's name signifies his fame and repute in the world (as they whom our translation calls men of renown, Gen. vi. 4. the Hebrew text says only, but plainly, meaning the same thing, they were men of name.) And if he be a public person, a prince, and ruler over others, it must more peculiarly signify his reputation and fame as such. Thus Moses designing to celebrate the unexceptionable equity and awful majesty of the Divine government, begins thus; Because I will publish the name of the Lord; ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment, Deut. xxxii. 3, 4.

(2.) As an argument used in prayer, it may accordingly either signify the principle from which it is hoped and requested he should do what we desire, or the end for which. For as his name signifies his nature, which himself hath taught us primarily to conceive under the notion of goodness, mercy, love, in that forementioned Exod. xxxiv. 7. and 1 John iv. 16. so when we pray he would do this or that for his name's sake, the meaning may be, that we request he would do it for his mercy's sake, even in compliance with himself, and as it were to gratify his own nature, which, as nothing is more Godlike, is wont to be delighted in acts of goodness towards all, of compassion and mercy to the miserable, and of special favour to them that more peculiarly belong to him. And again, as his name signifies his glory, and principally the honour and reputation of his government; so when we pray he would do this for his name's sake, we further must be understood to mean, we desire he would do it to prevent his own dishonour, to augment his glory, and further to recommend himself to the world. And I conceive it must be meant in both these senses taken together, *viz.* that we pray he would do this, or that, both from himself, and for himself; from his goodness, or indeed the general perfection of his nature, and for his glory, and that he may represent himself such as he truly is. But some circumstances in the coherent verses, afterwards to be particularly noted, seem to intimate that the honour and dignity of his government are here more directly meant. His glory is indeed the end which he cannot but design in all that he does. For inasmuch as he is said to do all things according to the counsel of his will, Eph. i. his will must be principally of the end, which is ever the highest and most excellent good; and that can be no other than himself, and that only as he is capable of greatening himself by his own action; which cannot be in respect of intrinsic excellency, that being already perfect and capable of no addition, therefore it must be in point of glory and reputation only. And so as it's said, having no greater to swear by, he sware by himself, Heb. vi. So having no greater to act for, it is most just, and most worthy of him, and but a Godlike owning of himself, to act only to and for himself. And then whereas, having this constant, just, and holy will, he doth all things according to counsel in pursuance of it, it must signify that he ever takes the aptest and most proper methods for the advancing of his own glory; the choosing the fittest and most suitable means to a fore-resolved end, being the proper business and design of consultation. Though that be spoken of God but allusively, and after the manner of men, who by slow degrees, and by much deliberation, arrive to the very imperfect knowledge of things, which at one view he perfectly beholds from all eternity.

But also how the great God designs his own glory in all that he doth, we must take great care be duly and decently understood. It were low and mean to think that the design of his mighty works and accurate dispensations is only that he may fill men's minds with wonder; be highly thought of, admired, and celebrated in the world, which even a wise and virtuous man would think an end much beneath him. But the glory of his name must be understood to be primarily an objective glory, that shines with a constant and equal lustre in all his dispensations, whether men observe, or observe it not. And shines primarily to himself, so as that he hath the perpetual self-satisfaction of doing as truly becomes him, and what is in itself reputable, worthy of him, and apt to approve itself to a right mind, as his own ever is, let men think of his ways as they please. Thus it was in his creating the world, when he had not yet made man, nor had him to look on, as a witness and admirer of his other glorious works; it was enough to him to be self-pleased that he saw them to be good, and that they had his own most just and complacential approbation. Nor is he less pleased in himself, in his governing the world, than he was in the making of it. As also good men, by how much the more they excel in goodness, have herein the greatest resemblance and imitation of God, doing good for goodness sake, and pleasing themselves with the lustre and beauty of their own actions, shining to their own mind and conscience, and their discerned conformity to the steady rules of righteousness; without being concerned whether perverse and incompetent judges approve or disapprove them. Though also, because the blessed God delights in propagating blessedness, and imparting it to his intelligent creatures, he is pleased in recommending himself, so far, to their estimation and love, as is necessary to their own felicity, wherein also he doth as it were but enjoy his own goodness, as his felicity can only be in himself, and is pleased with the self-satisfying beauty, pleasantness, and glory of it.

Yet further also we are to consider, that though it be most suitable to the majesty, and the independent, self-sufficient fulness of God, to take pleasure only in the real goodness, excellency, decency, and glory of whatever he is, and doth; yet it belongs to, and becomes the dutiful affection of his people towards him, to be deeply concerned how he is thought and spoken of in the world. Dishonourable reflections upon him are therefore as a sword in their bones. What cannot hurt him ought to wound them. Which dutiful love also cannot but make them highly covet that his name might be known, and renowned all the world over, knowing that the reproach that is no real damage, is a wrong to him; and that universal praise is his right, though it cannnot be an advantage. And this love to his name they cannot more fitly express, than in praying to him. And here we are further to note that this argument, thus generally considered, hath, when we use it in prayer, a twofold aspect, *i. e.* we are to consider it as an argument both to God, and to ourselves. To God, as whereby we expect to prevail with him to hear our prayers. To ourselves, as whereby we are to be urged and excited to pray with the more importunity and confidence, so as not to faint in prayer. Thus much as to what is more general. We are now,

2. To consider it in reference to this present case. Where we are to show,—(1.) How the name of God may be understood to be concerned, in his abhorring, so as to forsake a people more peculiarly related to him,—(2.) The

[d] Maimon. Mor. Nevoch.

fit and right use of this argument in deprecating his doing so.

I. How the name of God may be understood concerned in this matter. Taking his name to signify not only his nature, and the attributes of his being themselves, but also the glory and lustre of those his attributes, especially, which are to have a more principal exercise and demonstration in the course of his government over mankind, and more particularly, over such a select, peculiar people. It may seem greatly to reflect upon those his governing attributes, and detract from the glory of them, and consequently to lessen the honour and dignity of his government, if having taken such a people into near and peculiar relation to him, he should grow into that dislike of them, as at length quite to reject and cast off them, as if he now disdained the relation. That such a contemptuous rejection of this people is the thing here deprecated by the prophet, is evident (besides what hath been noted of the true import of the word rendered abhor) from other expressions in the context, that plainly speak this very sense, and show this to be the matter about which he was so deeply concerned. Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? ver. 19. And then presently is added, to the same sense, Do not abhor us, &c. As when a man's heart is full of a thing, and the sense of it abounds, he varies expressions, and from the abundance of the heart, as from a fountain, the matter streams from him several ways. His iterations, and varied forms of speech to the same purpose, show what urged him, and about what his mind was engaged and taken up. 'Tis plain that, at this time, that which this holy man was in this agony for, was not a lighter, temporary anger, but so settled a displeasure, as upon which a final rejection was likely to ensue.

And he apprehends the name of God to be concerned in it; which it appears also lies with great weight upon his spirit; Our iniquities testify against us, but do thou it, *i. e.* save us, as afterwards, for thy name's sake, ver. 7. And again, ver. 9. Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not. Which also shows how he understood it to be concerned, *viz.* as the great God was not only the common Ruler of the world, but a Governor over them, in a way and upon terms that were very peculiar, *viz.* by covenant and compact. Such whereof the nuptial contract is the usual resemblance; by which the related persons mutually pass into each other's right, and whereupon, the inferior person in the relation takes the name of the superior; as Isa. iv. 1. We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel, only let us be called by thy name. So the great God entering that covenant with a people, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people," speaks of himself as conjugally related to them. Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord; and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed, Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married, Isa. lxii. 4. Thy Maker is thine husband, Isa. liv. 5. Who being the governing relative, the phrase of being called by his name imports the agreed, voluntary subjection of such a people to his government, and his vouchsafing to be their Governor, upon the special terms of his own covenant. Whereupon another prophet, pleading for his special favour, and protection unto this people, against their heathen adversaries, uses this phrase, We are thine, thou never barest rule over them, they were not called by thy *name*, Isa lxiii. 19. Therefore this prophet understood his *name* to be concerned, if he should reject them, as it signified his honour and reputation as their Governor by covenant, which further appears by the immediate connexion of these words, "Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake," with those that next follow, Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us: *q. d.* "Thou hast covenanted to be our Governor, and hast erected, accordingly, thy glorious throne among us. How canst thou sustain or endure to break thy covenant, and dishonour thy own throne! to draw a disreputation upon thy government; or cast a dark shadow upon those famed excellencies, which were wont to recommend thee in the sight of all nations as the best Ruler that ever people had; and might make the sons of men apprehend it the most desirable thing in all the world to be on the same terms, under thy government!" Particularly of his attributes that have more special relation to his government, such as these may seem (and have been apprehended) liable to be reflected on in this case.

1. His power, as if he had designed to do some great thing for them, which he could not bring about, and therefore he casts them off, and will seem no further concerned for them. Or as if his power were confined within such limits, that it would suffice him to destroy them once for all, but not constantly to preserve and prosper them. So when God threatened to smite his people Israel with the pestilence, and disinherit them, (Numb. xiv. 12.) Moses urges on their behalf, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou, Lord, art among this people, that thou, Lord, art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day-time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people, as one man, then the nations which heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness: ver. 13, 14, 15, 16. *q. d.* "That thou hast peculiarly owned them, and concerned thyself for them, cannot be hid. It hath made a great noise in the world, and been the common talk of all nations, and made a more special impression of awe and terror upon the Egyptians, (against whom thou first tookest part with them,) that thou wast usually seen face to face among them; that most extraordinary tokens of a Divine presence, the miraculous pillar of a cloud by day, and of fire by night, were constantly afforded them. There is no coming off, (so far and so openly hast thou been concerned for them,) but this construction will be made of it, that though very great difficulties have been overcome for them, there was a prospect of yet greater, that could not be overcome; and therefore, that whereas less power was required to make a present end of them, thou didst rather choose to do that." And this consideration seems sometimes to have weighed much with God himself, as we find he is brought in speaking, Deut xxxii. 26, 27. I said I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men; were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, &c. Whence also,

2. His wisdom must, by consequence, be exposed too; that this was not foreseen and considered, when he first undertook their conduct and espoused their interest.

3. His goodness and benignity, his propensity to do good and bestow favours, that it was not so unexhausted a fountain as might seem suitable to a god; and to him, whom his wonderful noted acts of favour towards that people, had made to be vogued among the nations as the only one.

4. His clemency and unaptness to be provoked; the great commendation of rulers; who ought to be *legum similes*, as little moved with passions, as the laws they govern by. A thing especially to be expected in a Divine Ruler, and most agreeable to the serenity of the nature of God. Accordingly not only to what men are commonly wont to apprehend of his nature, but what he had been pleased to declare of himself, as is alleged, Numb. xiv. 17, 18. Let the power of my Lord be great; intimating, that to appear hurried with passions would seem an un-Godlike impotency: and 'tis added, According as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy, &c. Whereupon therefore,

5. His sincerity, another great excellency in a governor, seems liable to be suspected too. That he should not be what he seemed, had given out of himself, or was taken, at least, to be the import and signification of his former dispensations. Which is the scope of Moses's reasoning, Exod. xxxii. 12. Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of

the earth? As if he had said, Why shall the Egyptian enemy have occasion to apprehend that God did only hide mischievous intentions towards this people, under an appearance and show of kindness to them; that he only drew them hereby to trust in him, and commit themselves to his care and protection, that he might, when he saw his time, the more please, and as it were sport himself in having deceived them, and in disappointing and destroying them. That therefore the God of Israel was not such a one as he seemed willing to be thought, nor a relation to him so covetable a thing. Or else,

6. His constancy and faithfulness to himself. He may be thought in this case more mutable and unsteady in his own designs than is worthy of a God. Even Balaam's notion of the Deity could not allow him to think either, first, that as a man he could lie, or next, that as the son of man he could repent, Numb. xxiii. The former he thought not agreeable to the sincerity, nor the latter to the constancy, which he reckoned must belong to the nature of God. That he should appropriate a people to himself, remarkably own them by a long-continued series of eminent favours; and at length seem to grow weary of them and his own design, and throw them off! How un-Godlike a levity doth this seem to import! and how contrary to the encouragement which we sometimes find given to such a people, even from the regard he would have to his own name in this respect, The Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people, 1 Sam. xii. 22.

7. His righteousness in reference to his promise and covenant with such a people, or his faithfulness unto them. For, as considering only his purpose, and his having begun a design, his pursuing of it is but faithfulness (or a being true) to himself and his own design; so when his purpose hath expressed itself in a promise to a people, to make it good is to be faithful and true to them. And is therefore a part of righteousness, his promise having created a right in them to whom he made it. By his purpose he is only a debtor to himself, by his promise he is a debtor to them too. Upon this account his name seems liable to be reflected on, if he should reject such a people; as the words following the text intimate. Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake; Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory, break not thy covenant with us. And such is the import of Moses's plea, Numb. xiv. 16. Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. Which pleading of his he himself also recites (Deut. ix. 28.) with little variation; and implies in it, that if God should reject this people, it would turn greatly to the prejudice of his name and repute in the world, in respect of his truth and fidelity, which made so great a part of his name and glory. That in his anger he neither regarded his word nor his oath. No bond was sacred with him. Than which, what could make a prince more inglorious and infamous? And how gladly would those more implacable enemies out of whose hands he had rescued his people, catch at such an occasion of traducing and defaming him! We see then how the name of God may appear concerned in this matter. It seems indeed in all these respects very deeply concerned, and much exposed to obloquy, if he reject such a people. Though if he should, it can never be, but upon such terms, as that all that can be objected, will appear to be but groundless cavil and calumny, and admit of easy answer, as we shall see anon. In the mean time, while the matter admits of any hope, we are,

2. To show the fitness and right use of this argument for the preventing of it. We are indeed manifestly to distinguish these two things,—The general fitness of this argument to be used, and—Wherein stands the fit and due use of it. As any thing else, though in itself very fit to be used for such and such purposes, (as meat and drink for instance, or learning or speech,) may yet notwithstanding be used very unfitly. Therefore we shall speak to both these severally, and show,—1. How fit an argument this is to be insisted on in prayer, even to the purpose we are now speaking of;—2. What is requisite to the due and right use of it to this purpose.

I. That it is in itself an argument very fit to be insisted on in prayer to this purpose, or to any other in reference whereto 'tis fit for us to pray, is most evident; for it is most likely to prevail with God, being an argument taken from himself; and most fit to move and affect us, for it hath most weight in it. And we ought in prayer as much as is possible to conform our minds to God's; so as not only to pray for the things which we apprehend him most likely to grant, but upon the same grounds, and with the same design, which he must be supposed to have in granting them, and that there be but one end and aim common to him and us. We are told that if we ask any thing according to his will he heareth us, 1 John v. 14. This is to ask according to his will, in the highest and most certain sense. For the first and most fixed object of any will, whatsoever is the end; of any right will, the best and most excellent end; which can be but one. The Divine will, we are sure, is ever right, and must, so far as it is known, be directive, and a rule to ours. Concerning the end it is most certainly known, he doth all things (as he made all things) for himself. Concerning the means and way to his end, we are often ignorant and in doubt; and when we are, we then are to will nothing but upon condition that it will conduce to the great and common end of all things, and do interruptatively retract and unpray every petition in the very making it, which shall be really repugnant thereto. Nothing can move God besides. He is eternally self-moved. Our attempt will be both undutiful and vain, if we suffer our spirits to be engaged, and moved by any thing which will not be a motive unto him. Therefore no argument can be fit besides this, for his own name, or that cannot be reduced to it. But the fitness of this argument may be more distinctly shown and discerned from the following considerations, *viz.* that it is most suitable.

1. To the object of prayer; the glorious ever-blessed God. To whom it belongs as the appropriate, most incommunicable prerogative of the Godhead, to be the last as well as the first, the Alpha and the Omega; the End, as he is the Author, of all things: of whom, and through whom, and to whom all things are, and unto whom must be all glory for ever, Rom. xi. 36. So that to pray to him that he would do this or that, finally and ultimately for any thing else than his own name, is humbly to supplicate him that he would resign the Godhead, and quit his throne, to this or that creature.

2. To the right subject of prayer, considered whether according to its original or renewed state; according to primitive nature, or renewing grace. To primitive nature, which was no doubt pointed upon God as the last end. Otherwise a creature had been made with aversion to him, and in the highest pitch of enmity and rebellion; since there can be no higher controversy than about the last end. And to renewing grace, the design whereof, as it is such, can be no other than to restore us to our original state; to bring us back and state us where, and as we were, in that absolute subordination to God that was original and natural to us. Which therefore stands in repentance towards God as our end, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as our way, wherein alone we can acceptably return and render ourselves back unto him. We through the law are dead to the law; being humbled, broken, macerated, mortified by it, we are become dead to it, exempt from its execrating condemning power and dominion, that we might live to God, (Gal. ii. 19.) that a new divine life and nature might spring up in us, aiming at God, tending and working entirely and only towards him. Have been reduced to a chaos, to utter confusion, or even brought to nothing, that we might be created anew, with a re-implanted disposition to serve the ends and purposes for which we were first made. And therefore are to yield ourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead, Rom. vi. 13. *i. e.* (as ver. 11.) alive to God through Jesus Christ. In him we are created to good works, (that are principally to be estimated from the end,) which God had before ordained that we should walk in them, Eph. ii. 10. Thus we are reconciled to God. The controversy is taken up, which was about no lower thing than the Deity; who should be God, he or we; whether we should live and be for ourselves, or him. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are past away, behold, all things are become new;

and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. v. 17, 18. Hereupon this is, in prayer, the only proper genuine connatural breath of the new creature, the most inward habitual sense of a devoted soul, "To thee, O Lord, be all things; mayst thou ever be the all in all. Let the creation and all things be nothing, otherwise than in thee and for thee!"

3. To the Mediator in whose name we pray. Who never undertook that part of mediating between God and us, with a design to alienate and give away from God the natural rights of the Godhead; but to assert them to the highest, to repair unto God and expiate by his blood the encroachments we had made upon them, and provide we might do so no more: that we might be forgiven what was past, and be dutiful and subject for the future. His principal design was to salve the injured honour and dignity of the Divine government, and to reconcile therewith our impunity and felicity, to make them consist. He was therefore to redeem us to God by his blood, Rev. v. 9. How immodest and absurd a confidence were it, for any to make use of the Mediator's name in prayer against his principal and most important design!

4. To the Spirit of prayer, who, we are told, (Rom. viii. 27.) makes intercession for the saints *κατα Θεὸν*. We read, *according to the will of God*, but no more is in the text than *according to God, i. e.* in subserviency to him, and his interest; so as that in prayer, by the dictate of that Spirit, they supremely mind the things of God, and are most intent upon his concernments, and upon their own only in subordination to his. As it may well be supposed his own Spirit will be true to him, and not act the hearts which it governs, otherwise; and that the prayers that are from himself, and of his own inspiring, will be most entirely loyal, and import nothing but duty and devotedness to him.

5. To the most perfect model and platform of prayer given us by our Lord himself. In which the first place is given to the petition, Hallowed be thy name, and the two next are about God's concernments, before any are mentioned of our own. So that the things we are to desire, are digested into two tables, as the decalogue is, containing the things we are to do; and those that respect God (as was fit) set first.

6. To the constant tenor of the prayers of holy men in Scripture. We have seen how earnestly Moses presses this argument in the mentioned places, Exod. xxxii. and Numb. xiv. And so doth Samuel express his confidence in it, when he promises, upon their desire, to pray for the trembling people of Israel, 1 Sam. xii. 22, 23. The Lord will not forsake his people *for his great name's sake*, because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people. Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for you. And this was a pair whom God hath himself dignified as persons of great excellency in prayer, and whose prayers he would have a value for, if for any man's. Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, &c. Jer. xv. 1. Thus also doth Joshua insist, upon occasion of that rebuke Israel met with before Ai, Josh. vii. 8, 9. O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? For the Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of the land, shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great *name?* And so doth Daniel plead, (one of a famous triad, too, of potent wrestlers in prayer, Ezek. xiv. 14.) O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people *are called by thy name*, Dan. ix. 19.

7. To the highest example and pattern of prayer, (fit to be mentioned apart,) our Lord himself; who, in some of his last agonies, praying, Father, save me from this hour, represses that innocent voice: But therefore came I to this hour; and adds, Father, glorify thy name, (John xii. 27, 28.) intimating that the sum of his desires did resolve into that one thing, and contented to suffer what was most grievous to himself, that so that might be done which should be finally most honourable to that great name.

8. To the design and end of prayer; which is partly and principally to be considered as an act of worship, a homage to the great God, and so the design of it is to honour him; and partly as a means, or way of obtaining for ourselves the good things we pray for, which therefore is another, but an inferior, end of prayer. Whether we consider it under the one notion or the other, or propound to ourselves the one or the other end in praying: 'tis most agreeable to pray after this tenor, and to insist most upon this argument in prayer. For,

First, Do we intend prayer as a homage to the great God, and to give him his due glory in praying to him? How fitly doth it fall in with our design, when not only our praying itself, but the matter we chiefly pray for, have the same scope and end. We pray that we may glorify God. And the thing we more principally desire of him in prayer is, that he would glorify himself, or that his name be glorified. And square all other desires by this measure, desiring nothing else but what may be, or as it is, subservient hereto. And,

Secondly, If we intend and design any thing of advantage to ourselves; we can only expect to be heard, and to obtain it, upon this ground. The great God deals plainly with us in this, and hath expressly declared that if he hear, and graciously answer us, it will only be upon this consideration, as is often inculcated, Ezek. xxxvi. 22. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy *name's* sake. And I will sanctify my great *name*, which was profaned among the heathen. And again, Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel, ver. 32. This every way then appears a most fit argument to be insisted on in prayer; and to this purpose as well as to any other; many of the instances mentioned from Scripture having an express and particular reference to this very case, of praying for a people related to God, and upon whom his name was called. It remains then to show,

2. What is requisite to the right and due use of this argument unto this purpose. Where we may sum up all in two words, sincerity and submission. The former whereof belongs to this case in common with all others, wherein we can use this argument, or, which is all one, wherein we can pray at all. The other hath somewhat a more peculiar reference to this case considered apart by itself. And indeed that the one and the other of these are requisite in the use of this argument, are both of them corollaries from the truth itself we have been hitherto insisting on, and that have the very substance and spirit of it in them. For if this be an argument fit to be used in prayer at all, it is obvious to collect, that it ought to be used with great sincerity in any case, and with much submission, especially in such a case as this.

1. It is requisite we use this argument with sincerity, *i. e.* that we have a sense in our hearts correspondent to the use of it, or that the impression be deeply inwrought into our spirits of the glorious excellency of the name of God. So as it be really the most desirable thing in our eyes, that it be magnified and rendered most glorious, whatsoever becomes of us, or of any people or nation under heaven. Many have learned to use the words "for thy name's sake," as a *formula, a plausible phrase*, a customary, fashionable form of speech; when, first, there is no inward sense in their hearts that doth *subesse, lies under* the expression, so as that with them it can be said to signify any thing, or have any meaning at all; or, secondly, they may have much another meaning from what these words do import, a very low, self-regarding one. As when in praying for a people that bear this name, of whom themselves are a part, these words are in their mouths, but their hearts are really solicitous for nothing but their own little concernments, their wealth, and peace, and ease, and fleshly accommodations. Apprehending a change of religion cannot fall out among such a people, but in conjunction with what may be dangerous to themselves in these mean respects. Whereupon it may fall out that they will pray earnestly, cry aloud, be full of concern, vehemently importunate, and all the noise and cry mean nothing but their own corn, wine, and oil. They mention the name of the Lord, but not in truth. It appears the servants of God, in the use of this argument, have been touched in their very souls with so deep and quick a sense of the dignity and

honour of the Divine name, that nothing else hath seemed considerable with them, or worth the regarding, besides; as in those expostulations, "What wilt thou do to thy great name? What will the Egyptians say?" &c. This alone, apart from their own concernments, was the weighty argument with them. For it weighed nothing with Moses on the contrary, to be told, "I will make of thee a great nation." To have himself never so glorious a name, to be spread in the world and transmitted to all-after ages as the root and father of a mighty people, was a light thing in comparison of the injury and disreputation that would be done to God's own name, if he should desert or destroy this people. Or, thirdly, they may have a very wicked meaning. The name of God may be invoked, religious solemnities used as a pretence and colour to flagitious actions. *In nomine Domini—&c.* Most execrable villanies have been prefaced with that sacred, adorable name. As when a fast was proclaimed, but a rapine upon Naboth's vineyard was a thing designed. And the awful name of God was indifferently used in prayer and in perjury to serve the same vile purpose. In whichsoever of those degrees this venerable name is *insincerely* mentioned, we ought to account a great requisite is wanting to a right use of it as an argument in prayer. And should consider both the absurdity and the iniquity of our so misusing it. . .

1. The absurdity. For who can reasonably think him capable of hearing our prayers, whom at the same time he thinks incapable of knowing our hearts? Am I consistent with myself when I invocate, worship, trust in him as a God, whom I think I can impose upon by a false show? Is it likely, if I can deceive him, that he can help and succour me?

2. The iniquity. For this can be no low (though it be not the peculiar) sense of taking the name of the Lord our God in vain. And we know with what awful words that great precept is enforced. The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Nor can any man devise to put a greater affront upon him than to approach him with insincerity. For it is to use him as a senseless idol, and signifies as if I counted him as the vanities of the Gentiles, one of their inanimate or brutal gods; denies his omniscience to discern, and his justice and power to revenge, the indignity, all at once. And what now is to be expected from such a prayer, wherein I both fight with myself and him at the same time. With myself, for the same object that I worship, I affront in the same act; and with him, for my worship is but seeming, and the affront real.

Such a disagreement with myself were enough to blast my prayer. The *ἀνὴρ δίψυχος*, the man with two souls, Jam. i. the double-minded man, is said to be *ἀκατάστατος, unstable; (inconsistent with himself,* the word signifies;) and let not such a man think, saith the apostle, that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. Much more when his prayer is not only unacceptable to God, but offensive. And by which he is so far from pleasing that he provokes.

It is then of unspeakable concernment to us in the use of this argument, that we will understand ourselves. Let us search our hearts; and see that we mean as we speak, that we do not pretend a concernedness and zeal for the name of God, when he knows all things, knows that we lie; and that we do but flatter him with our mouth, and lie unto him with our tongues, when our heart is not right with him, Ps. lxxviii. 36, 37. That we do not seem to be in great perplexity about the name and glory of God, when we are quite unconcerned what becomes of his name; are only solicitous lest we should suffer ourselves, afraid of being undone, of losing our estates, or of being driven from our dwellings, or perhaps but of being abridged somewhat of our conveniences, and more delectable enjoyments. As if (not the fortunes of Cæsar and the empire, but) the mighty and all comprehensive name of the great Lord of heaven and earth did depend upon our being rich or quiet, and at our ease, and having our sense and fancy gratified. As if the heavens rested upon our shoulders, and the frame of the universe were sustained by us, who ourselves need such pitiful supports, lean upon shadows, and if they fail us are ready to sink and drop into nothing!

e Selden. de Diis Syriis Synt. 2. Cap. 16.

2. Submission is highly requisite, especially in a case of this nature; *i. e.* we are to submit to his judgment the disposal both of his concernments, which this argument directly intends; and our own, which we are too apt indirectly to connect with his, so as to be more principally solicitous about them.

1. His concernment in this case must (as is fit) be submitted with all humble deference to his own judgment, it being really a doubtful case, not whether it be a desirable thing, that the name and honour of God should be preserved and advanced, or whether we should desire it; but whether his continuing such a people in visible relation to himself, or rejecting and casting them off, will be more honourable and glorious to him. Where the doubt lies, there must be the submission, *i. e.* this matter must be referred to himself, it being such as whereof he only is the competent judge, and not we. The thing to be judged of, is not whether occasion may not be taken by men of short discourse, and of profane minds, to think and speak reflectingly of such a piece of Providence, *viz.* if a people whom God had long visibly owned and favoured should be, at length, rejected with detestation, and exposed to ruin. 'Tis like, the heathen nations were very apt so to insult, when God did finally abandon and give up that people of the Jews, and make them cease at once to be his people and any people at all. As we know they did before, when they gained any temporary advantage upon them, upon their being able to spoil their country, to reduce them to some distress, and straiten their chief city with a siege, as if they had them totally in their power, they presently draw the God of Israel into an ignominious comparison with the fictitious deities of other vanquished countries; the gods of Hamath, Arphad, Sepharvaim, Isa. xxxvi. 19. (who are also styled their kings as is thought, e 2 Kings xix. 13. though the destruction of their kings may also admit to be meant as an argument of the impotency of their gods. And they are mentioned distinctly, as perhaps was not observed, in both those cited books of Scripture where that history is more largely recorded; 2 Kings xviii. 34. ch. xix. 13. and Isa. xxxvi. 19. ch. xxxvii. 12, 13.) as if he were able to do no more for the protection of his people, than they for their worshippers. And so for a few moments, he remains under the censure of being an impotent God. But that momentary cloud he knew how soon to dispel, and make his glory shine out so much the more brightly unto, not only a convincing, but an amazing confutation of so profane folly; yielded the short-sighted adversary a temporary victory, which he could presently redeem out of their hands, that he might the more gloriously triumph in their surprising, unfeared ruin; and so let them and all the world see that those advantages were not extorted, but permitted upon considerations that lay out of their reach to comprehend; and that they proceed not from want of power, but the excellency of other perfections, which would in due time be understood by such as were capable of making a right judgment. His wisdom, holiness, and justice, which appeared in putting a people so related to him under seasonable rebukes and discountenance, when the state of the case, and the methods of his government required it; and so much the rather, because they were so related. According to that, You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities, Amos iii. 2. The matter here to be disputed, was not whether it did not occasion a present dishonour to the God of Israel, to let the enemy have such a seeming ground of spiteful suggestions concerning him, as if he were impotent, or variable, or false to them that had intrusted themselves to his protection and care; but whether that dishonour were not recompensed with advantage, by the greater glory that accrued to him afterwards. And this also is the matter that must come under judgment, if at length he should finally cast off such a people; whether upon the whole, all things being considered and taken together, it be not more for the honour of his name, and the reputation of his rectoral attributes, to break off such a relation to them than continue. Wherein he is not concerned to approve himself to the opinion of fools, or half-witted persons; and whose shallow judgment, too, is governed by their disaf-

fection; but to such as can consider. Perhaps, to such as shall hereafter rise up in succeeding ages. For he is not in haste. His steady duration, commensurate with all the successions of time, and which runs into eternity, can well admit of his staying till this or that frame and contexture of providence be completed, and capable of being more entirely viewed at once; and till calmer minds, and men of less interested passions, shall come to have the considering of it. And in the mean time he hath those numberless myriads of wise and holy sages in the other world, the continual observers of all his dispensations, that behold them with equal, unbiassed minds; and from the evidence of the matter, give their concurrent approbation and applause, with all the true members of the church on earth, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints, Rev. xv. 3. But it is enough and much more considerable to approve himself to himself; and that all his dispensations are guided according to the steady, eternal reason of things, which is an inviolable law to him, from which he never departs, and from the perpetual uniform agreement of all his providences, whereto an indubious glory will result unto him, that will never admit the least eclipse, or ever be capable of being drawn into dispute. And according whereto it will appear, if ever he forsake such a people, the concernment of his name and glory in the matter, was the great inducement to it; that he did even owe it to himself, and had not, otherwise, done right to his own name. And whatsoever might be argued from it to the contrary will be found capable of a clear and easy answer, so as that the weight of the argument will entirely lie on this side. For,

1. *As to his power*, he hath reason to be ever secure concerning the reputation of that, having given, and knowing how further to give, when he pleases, sufficient demonstrations of it other ways. Nor was it ever his design to represent himself as a Being of mere power, which of itself hath nothing of moral excellency in it; nor do the appearances of it tend to beget that true notion of God in the minds of men which he designed to propagate; otherwise than as the glory of it should shine in conjunction with that of his other attributes, that are more peculiarly worthy of God, more appropriate to him, and more apt to represent him to the world as the most suitable object of a religious veneration. Whereas mere power is capable of having place in an unintelligent nature, and in an intelligent tainted with the most odious impurities. He never desired to be known among men by such a name, as should signify power only, unaccompanied with wisdom, holiness, &c. And,

2. *For his wisdom*; it is seen in pursuing valuable ends, by methods suitable to them, and becoming himself. It became the absolute sovereignty of a God, to select a nation, that he would favour more than other nations, but would ill have agreed with his wisdom to have bound himself absolutely to them, so as to favour them, howsoever they should demean themselves.

3. *His bounty and goodness*, though it found them no better than other people, was to have made them better. Nor was it any disreputation to his goodness to divert its current, when they, after long trial, do finally resist its design.

4. *His clemency* must not be made liable to be mistaken for inadvertency, or neglect; and to give the world cause to say, Tush, God seeth not, neither is there knowledge in the Most High. Nor for indifferency, and unconcernedness what men do, as if good and bad were alike to him. And that such as do evil were good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighted in them; words wherewith he sometimes complained that men wearied him, Mal. ii. 17. He is not to redeem the reputation of one attribute by the real prejudice of another; *i. e.* the offence and grievance to it, which acting directly against it (if that were possible) would occasion.

5. *His sincerity* will be highly vindicated and glorified, when it shall be seen that there is nothing more of severity in such a dispensation, whenever it takes place, than was plainly expressed in his often repeated fore-warnings and threatenings, even long before. And therefore,

6. He is herein but *constant to himself*, and should he more than once lie to the charge of mutability, and inconstancy, if finally, when the case should so require, he should not take this course. And

7. As to his *righteousness and fidelity* towards such a people, even those to whom he more strictly obliged himself than ever he did to any particular nation besides. Let but the tenor of his covenant with them be consulted, and see whether he did not reserve to himself a liberty of casting them off, if they revolted from him; and whether these were not his express terms, that he would be with them while they were with him, but that if they forsook him, he would forsake them also.

Therefore much more is he at liberty, as to any other people, to whom he never made so peculiar promises of external favours as he did to this people. Nor hereupon can any thing be pleaded from his name, or that is within the compass of its signification, with any certainty, that it shall conclude, and be determining on the behalf of such a people. There is a real, great doubt in the case, whether the argument may not weigh more the other way. And whether the wickedness of such a people may not be grown to such a prodigious excess, that whereas none of these his mentioned attributes do make it necessary he should continue his relation, some other, that could not be alleged for it, may not be alleged against it, and do not make it necessary he should break it off. The glory of his holiness (which if we consider it in itself, and consider the value and stress he is wont to put upon it, we might even reckon the prime glory of the Deity) is not, perhaps, to be sufficiently salved and vindicated without, at length, quite abandoning and casting them off. There seems to be somewhat very awful and monitory in those most pleasant, gracious words, and that breathe so sweet a savour: But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, Heb. xi. 16. *viz.* that if a people that have long enjoyed brighter discoveries of heaven, and the way to it, do yet generally bear a disaffected heart to the design of that revelation, remain habitually terrene like the rest of the world, governed by the spirit of it, ingulfed in the common pollutions, sensualities, impieties of the wicked atheistical inhabitants of this earth, God will be even ashamed to be called their God. He will reckon it ignominious, and a reproach to him, (though he will save such as are sincere among them,) to stand visibly related to such a people as their God. What, to have them for a peculiar people, that are not peculiar? to distinguish them that will not be distinguished? to make a visible difference by external favours and privileges, where there is no visible difference in practice and conversation, that might signify a more excellent spirit? This is not only to lose the intended design, but to have it turn to a disadvantage; and whom he expected to be for a name and a praise to him, a crown and a royal diadem, to become to him a dishonour and a blot. And we do find that such severities as have been used towards such a people; are declared to have been so, even for the sake of his name, Jer. xxxiv. 16, 17. But ye turned and polluted my name,—Therefore—I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. And when therefore a remnant of this people, rebelliously, against God's express word, went down into Egypt, preferring a precarious subsistence, under tyranny and idolatry, at the cruel mercy of a long since baffled enemy, before the true religion, and liberty, under the divine protection, see how God expresses his resentment of this dishonour done to his name, and the affront offered to his government: Jer. xliv. 26. Therefore hear ye the word of the Lord, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt, Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the Lord, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah, in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord God liveth.

And when the time drew near of God's total rejection of that people, as in the time of Malachi's prophecies; they are charged with despising and profaning his name, (chap. i. 6, 12.) and are told God had now no pleasure in them, nor would accept an offering at their hands, but that his name should be great among the Gentiles, (ver. 10, 11.) even from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, intimating that, excepting those few that thought on his name, (ch. iv

2.) who he says should be his, when he made up his jewels, (and the Sun of righteousness should rise upon them) he would have no more to do with them; but in the day that should burn as an oven, (when the whole hemisphere should be as one fiery vault,) they should be burnt up as stubble, and neither root nor branch be left of them; and all this upon the concern he had for his name, which was reproached by such a people's pretending to it. Whereupon, they had been threatened (ch. ii. v. 2.) that except they did give glory to his name he would curse them, and their blessings, corrupt their seed, spread dung upon their faces, even that of their solemn feasts, and they should be taken away therewith.

It is therefore possible the whole force of this argument may lie against us, in praying for such a people. I say, it is possible it may whether actually it do or no, we can never be competent judges. Our knowledge is not large enough, nor our minds enough comprehensive. Our wisdom is folly itself to the estimating such a case. We are capable of pronouncing hastily, it would in this or that particular respect, be dishonourable, and an obscurement of God's name, if he should cast off England. But he that pronounces hastily, considers but a few things, and looks but a little way.

The question is, whether, all things compared and considered together, that belong to such a case, it will be more honourable to God or dishonourable, and more or less recommend him to intelligent minds, get him a greater and more excellent name and renown in the world, when it shall be enlightened to consider the case, to break off his relation or continue it? We know his own judgment is according to truth, and hope he will judge the way that will be more favourable to us. But we cannot be certain of it. 'Tis a case that requires the judgment of his all-comprehending mind, whose prospect is large every way; and takes in all the decencies and indecencies that escape our notice. As we know in viewing things with the eye, a quick and clear sight (especially helped with a fit instrument) will discern many things, so fine and minute, as to be, to a duller eye, altogether invisible. It is the work of wisdom and judgment, to discern exactly the critical seasons and junctures of time, when to do this or that. And the wise God in his dispensations, especially towards a great community, or the collective body of a people, takes usually a vast compass of time, within which to select the apt and fit season, for this or that act, whether of severity or mercy towards them. And it is more fit, as, by the coincidence of things, it contributes more to the greater glory of his name. We cannot discern the things, the concurrence whereof makes this a fitter season than another, that such an event should be placed just there, within so large a tract of time. What mortal man, or indeed what finite mind, was capable of judging some hundreds of years before, what was just wanting to the fulness of the Amorites' sin, so as that it should be more honourable and glorious to the Divine justice, not to animadvert thereon, till that very time when he did it. Or why he chose that time which he pitched upon, wherein to come down, and deliver his Israel from their Egyptian oppressors. Or when (without inspiration) to be able to say, the time to favour Zion, even the set time, is come. Nor are we to resolve the matter only into the absoluteness of his sovereignty, upon the account whereof he may take what time he pleases; but the depth of his hidden wisdom, for he doth all things according to the counsel of his will, having reasons to himself, which our shallow, dim sight perceives not, and whereof we are infinitely less able to make a sure judgment, than a country idiot of reasons of state. He may (as to the present case) think it most fit, most honourable, and glorious, so often to forgive, or so long to forbear such a delinquent people; and may, at length, judge it most becoming him, and most worthy of him, as he is the common Ruler of the world, and their injured despised Ruler, to strike the fatal stroke, and quite cut them off from him.

Now here it is, therefore, necessarily our duty, to use this argument with him of his name, so, as wholly to submit the matter to his judgment, and but conditionally, if it will indeed make most for the glory of his name, that then he will not abhor and reject such a people even for his name's sake. Nor can we herein be too importunate, if we be not peremptory, not too intent upon the end, the glory of his name; for about the goodness, excellency, and desirableness of that we are certain; if we be not too determinate about the means, or what will be most honourable to his name, concerning which we are uncertain. Neither is it disallowed us to use the best judgment we can, about the means, and the interest of God's name in this case. It is not our fault to be mistaken; he expects us not to use the judgment of gods. But it will be our fault to be peremptory and confident in a matter, wherein we may be mistaken; and must signify too much officiousness, as if we understood his affairs better than himself, and a bold insolence, to take upon us to be the absolute judges of what we understand not; and to cover our presumption with a pretence of duty. Therefore though such a people be dear to us, yet because his name ought to be infinitely more dear, that, in the settled bent of our hearts, we ought to prefer; and be patient of his sentence, whatever it proves to be, with deep resentment of our own desert, but with high complacency that his name is vindicated and glorified, and with a sincere, undissembled applause of the justice of his proceedings, how severe soever they may be towards us; especially if we have reason to hope, that severity will terminate, but in a temporary discountenance and frown, not in a final rejection.

2. Much more are we to submit our own secular concernments, which may be involved; *i. e.* we ought only to pray we may have the continued, free profession and exercise of our religion, in conjunction with the comfortable enjoyment of the good things of this life, if that may consist with and best serve the honour of his great name. But if he do really make this judgment in our case, that we have so misdemeaned ourselves, and been so little really better to common observation, in our practice and conversation, than men of a worse religion, that he cannot without injury to his name, and the reputation of his government, countenance us against them, by the visible favours of his providence; that it will not be honourable for him to protect us in our religion, to so little purpose; and while we so little answer the true design of it; that if we will retain our religion (which we know we are upon no terms to quit) we must suffer for it, and sanctify that name before men by our suffering, which we dishonoured by our sinning. We have nothing left us to do but to submit to God, to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, to accept the punishment of our sin, to put off our ornaments, expecting what he will do with us. And be content that our dwellings, our substance, our ease and rest, our liberties and lives, if he will have it so, be all sacrifices to the honour of that excellent name. Nor can our use of this argument want such submission without much insincerity. Concerning this therefore look back to what was said on the former head.

Nor is there any hardship in the matter, that we are thus limited in our praying, for what even nature itself teacheth us to desire, our safety, peace, and outward comforts; unless we count it a hardship that we are creatures, and that God is God, and that ours is not the supreme interest. The desires of the sensitive nature are not otherwise to be formed into petitions than by the direction of the rational, that also being governed by a superadded holy, divine nature; unto which it is a supreme and a vital law, that God is to be the first-eyed in every thing. Reason teaches that so it should be, and grace makes it be so. And it ought to be far from us to think this a hardship; when in reference to our greater and more considerable concernments, those of our souls, and our eternal states, we are put upon no such (dubious suspenseful) submission. He hath not, in these, left the matter at all doubtful, or at any uncertainty, whether he will reckon it more honourable to his name to save, or destroy eternally, a sincerely penitent, believing, obedient soul. He hath settled a firm connexion between the felicity of such and his own glory. And never put it upon us, as any part of our duty, to be contented to perish for ever, that he may be glorified; or ever to ask ourselves whether we are so content or no. For he hath made such things our present, immediate, indispensable duty, as with which our perishing is not consistent,

and upon supposition whereof, it is impossible we should not be happy. If we believe in his Son, and submit to his government, his name pleads irresistibly for our being saved by him. He can have no higher glory from us, than that we be to the praise of the glory of his grace, being once accepted in the beloved. Neither is it disallowed us to do the part of concives, fellow-members of a community, civil, or spiritual, to pray very earnestly for our people, city, country, that are so justly dear to us. Only since prayer itself is an acknowledgment of his superiority to whom we pray; and we have no argument, that we ought to hope should prevail, but that of his own name; we can but pray and plead as the nature of prayer, and the import of that argument, will admit, *i. e.* with entire subjection to his holy and sovereign will, and subordination to his supreme interest, to whom we address ourselves in prayer.

Use. And now the use this will be of to us, is partly to correct and reprehend our prayers, wherein they shall be found disagreeable to the true import of this argument, and partly to persuade unto and encourage such praying, as shall be agreeable to it.

1. It justly and aptly serves to reprehend and correct, such praying as disagrees with it; especially the carnality and the selfishness of our prayers. The use of this argument implies that the glory of God, and the exaltation of his name, should be the principal design of our prayers. Is it not in these respects much otherwise? We keep fast after fast, and make many prayers. And what is the chief design of them? or the thing we are most intent, and which our hearts are principally set upon? We see how God expostulates this matter, Zech. vii. 5. When ye fasted and mourned, in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did you at all fast unto me, even unto me? Why, to whom can it be thought this people did keep fasts but unto God? Yes, no doubt they did eye him, as the object, but not as the end. They were kept to him, but not for him, so as that his interest and glory was the thing principally designed in them; nor can it be, if the things we chiefly insist upon, be such as have no connexion with his true interest, or subserviency to it. And let us inquire upon these two heads; whether our prayers, in these respects, do not run in such a strain, as that they cannot possibly be understood to mean him, or have a true reference to him.

1. In respect of the carnality of them. When we pray for the people of our own land, or for the Christian church more generally, what sort of evils is it that we find our hearts most feelingly to deprecate, and pray against? what are the good things we chiefly desire for them? We find ourselves, 'tis likely, to have somewhat a quick sense and dread of the calamities of war, depredation, oppression, persecution, and we feel, probably, somewhat of sympathy within ourselves, when we hear of any abroad, professing true, reformed Christianity, that suffer the spoiling of their goods, are banished from their present homes, dragged to prisons, pressed with pinching necessities, for the sake of their religion; and it were well if our compassions were more enlarged in such cases. And if we should hear of nations depopulated, cities sacked, towns and countries deluged with blood and slaughter, these things would certainly have an astonishing sound in our ears. But have we any proportionable sense of the spiritual evils that waste and deform the Christian church, exhaust its strength and vigour, and blemish its beauty and glory? Ignorance, terrene inclination, glorying in the external forms of religion, while the life and power of it are unknown and denied, estrangement from God, real infidelity towards the Redeemer, veiled over by pretended, nominal Christianity, uncharitableness, pride, wrath, strife, envy, hatred, hypocrisy, deceitfulness towards God and man? We ought to lament and deprecate the former evils without overlooking these, or counting them less, or being less affected with them. We are apt to pray for peace unto the Christian community, for halcyon days, prosperity, the abundance of all outward blessings, in conjunction with the universal reception of such forms of religion, as are most agreeable to our minds and inclinations. But do we as earnestly pray for the reviving of primitive Christianity, and that the Christian church may shine in the beauties of holiness, in heavenliness, faith, love to God and one another, in simplicity, meekness, patience, humility, contempt of this present world, and purity from all the corruptions of it. This we chiefly ought to have done, without leaving the other undone. Which while it is left out of our prayers, or not more principally insisted on in them, how ill do they admit of enforcement by this argument from the name of God! For do we think it is so very honourable to his name, to be the God of an opulent, luxurious, voluptuous, proud, wrathful, contentious people, under what religious form or denomination soever?

2. But also do not our prayers chiefly centre in ourselves, while we make a customary (not understood) use in them of the name of God? And when we principally design ourselves in our prayers, what is it we covet most for ourselves? 'Tis not agreeable to the holy, new divine nature, to desire to engross spiritual good things to ourselves; when for others, we desire only the good things of this earth. But if our prayers do only design the averting from ourselves outward calamities, or inconveniences, and the obtaining only of ease, indulgence, and all grateful accommodations to our flesh, how absurd an hypocrisy is it to fashion up such a petition, by adding to it, for thy name's sake! As if the name of God did oblige him to consult the ease and repose of our flesh! when our souls, thereby, are made and continued the nurseries of all the evil, vicious inclinations, which show themselves in our practice, most of all to the dishonour of that name! What subordination is there here? Manifest is the opposition of our carnal interest to the interest and honour of the blessed name of God. If a malefactor, convicted of the highest crimes against the government, should petition for himself to this purpose, that it will bring a great disreputation upon authority, and detract from the famed clemency and goodness of the prince, if any punishment should be inflicted on him for his offences, or if he be not indulged and with sober, intelligent men? 'Tis no wonder our flesh regrets suffering, but 'tis strange our reason should be so lost, as to think, at random, that right or wrong the name of God is not otherwise to be indemnified than by its being saved from suffering. As if the gratification of our flesh and the glory of God's name were so very nearly related, and so much akin to one another! And now this carnal self-interest, insinuating itself, and thus distorting our prayers, is the radical evil in them, and the first and original part of their faultiness. For it is not likely we should love others better than ourselves; therefore we cannot go higher in supplicating for others. But yet we inconsiderately mention the name of God for fashion's sake, though it be no way concerned in the matter, unless to vindicate and greaten itself, in rejecting us and our prayers together.

2. The further use of what hath been said upon this subject, will be to persuade and engage us to have more regard to the name of God in our prayers, especially in our praying about national and public concernments; or such external concernments of our own as are involved with them. That, in the habitual temper of our spirits, we be so entirely and absolutely devoted to God, and the interest of his great name, that our prayers may savour of it, and be of an agreeable strain; that the inward sense of our souls may fully correspond to the true import of this argument, and our hearts may not reproach us, when we use it, is only pretending God, but meaning ourselves, and that only our carnal self, the interest whereof alone can be in competition with that of God's name, and which, while it prevails in us, will be the measure of our prayers for others also; that the meaning of our words may not be one, and the meaning of our hearts another, that we may truly mean as we speak when we use the words for thy name's sake. And that our hearts may bear us this true testimony, that we desire nothing but in due subordination to the glory of his name; external favours with limitation, only so far as they may; and spiritual blessings absolutely, because they certainly will, admit of this subordination. And to this purpose let it be considered,

1. How unsuitable it is to the condition of a creature, that it should be otherwise. That were certainly a most uncreaturely prayer, that should be of a contrary tenor.

Let us but digest and state the case aright in our own thoughts. Admit we are praying with great ardency, on the behalf of a people to which we are related, and who are also related to God. It can scarce be thought we are more concerned for them than for ourselves; or that we love them more than we do ourselves. Our love to ourselves is the usual measure of our love to others. And that is higher in the same kind, which is the measure of all besides, that belongs to that kind. When therefore we are much concerned for the external felicity of such a people, it is very natural to be more deeply concerned for our own. Now if the sense of our hearts, in such a prayer, will not agree with the true import of these words, "for thy name's sake;" because indeed, we are more concerned for our own carnal peace, ease, and accommodation than we are for the name of God; let us, that we may have the matter more clearly in view, put our request into such words, as wherewith the sense of our hearts will truly agree, and will it not be thus, "Lord, whatever becomes of thy name, let nothing be done that shall be grievous, and disquieting to my flesh;" which is as much as to say, Quit thy throne to it, resign thy government, abandon all thy great interests for the service and gratification of this animated clod of clay; and do we not now begin to blush at our own prayer? We easily slide over such a matter as this, while our sense is more latent, and not distinctly reflected on, but let us have it before us *conceptis verbis*; let it appear with its own natural *face* and *look*; and now see what horror and detestableness it carries with it! And dare we now put up so treasonable a prayer? It would puzzle all our arithmetic, to assign the *quota pars*, or the *proportional* part, any of us is of the universe, or the whole creation of God! And do I think it fit that the heavens should roll for me? or all the mighty wheels of providence move only with regard to my convenience? If a worm in your garden were capable of thought, and because it is permitted to crawl there, should think, this garden was made for me, and every thing in it ought to be ordered for my accommodation and pleasure, would you not wonder that such insolence, and a disposition to think so extravagantly, should be in conjunction with the thinking power or an ability to think at all. If we allow ourselves in that far greater (infinitely more unbeseeming and disproportionable) petulancy, do we think when the roller comes it will scruple to crush us, or have regard to our immodest, pretenceless claim? Let us consider what little, minute things, how next to nothing we are, even compared with all the rest of the world; what are we when compared with the Maker and Lord of it, in comparison of whom, the whole is but as the drop of a bucket, or the small dust of the balance, lighter than nothing, and vanity! We should more contemplate ourselves in such a comparison; many comparing themselves with themselves are not wise. While we confine and limit our eye only to ourselves, we seem great things, fancy ourselves very considerable. But what am I? What is my single personality, ipseity, self-hood, (call it what you will,) to him who is the all in all? whose being (actually or radically) comprehends all being, all that I can conceive, and the infinitely greater all that I cannot. If therefore I take in with myself the whole body of a people besides, that I am concerned for, and admit that a generous love to my country should make me prefer their concernments to my own; or that upon a higher account, as they are a people related to God, I could even lay down my life for them. What are we all, and all our interests, to that of his name? And if we should all agree in a desire, that our interest should be served upon the dishonour of that name, it were but a treasonable conspiracy against our common, rightful Lord. And a foolish one, being expressed in a prayer; as if we thought to engage him, by our faint breath, against himself. We are to desire no more for them, than they may for themselves. And if we have joined in open sinning against him, to that height that he shall judge he is obliged for the vindication and honour of his name, (by which we have been called,) of his wisdom, holiness, and punitive justice, as openly to animadvert upon us, can we gainsay? If we know of such a judgment nothing could remain for us but shame and silence, conviction of ill desert, and patient bearing the punishment of our sin. And while we know it not, yet because it is possible, we ought no otherwise to deprecate such a procedure against us, than as will consist with that possibility. To pray otherwise, if we make no mention of his name, is absurd presumption, that we should wish or imagine he will prefer any concernments of ours, to the steady order and decorum of his own government. But if we do make mention of it, 'tis a more absurd hypocrisy to seem concerned for his name when we intend only our own external advantages! as if we thought he that could answer our prayers, could not understand them. 'Tis surely very unbecoming creatures to bear themselves so towards the God that made them.

2. Consider, that to have a sense in our hearts truly agreeable to the proper meaning of this argument, for thy name's sake, is very suitable to the state of returning creatures, who are gathering themselves back to God, out of the common apostacy wherein all were engaged and combined against that great Lord and Ruler of the world. In that defection every one did principally mind and set up for himself. Each one would be a God to himself, but all were, by consequence, against God. Whom to be for, they were divided, and of as many minds as there were men. Whom to be against, they were agreed, as if their common Lord was the common enemy. For his interest and theirs were opposite and irreconcileable. They were sunk and lost in sensuality, and had no other interest than that of their flesh. When man hath made himself a brute, he then thinks himself fittest to be a god. The interest of our souls must unite us with him; that of our flesh engages us against him. Some are through the power of his grace returning. What a pleasure would it be to us to behold ourselves among the reducers! those that are upon their return; that are again taking the Lord only to be their God, and his interest for their only interest!

3. Consider that our very name, as we are Christians, obliges us to be of that obedient, happy number. For what is Christianity but the tendency of souls towards God, through the mediation and under the conduct of Christ? Therefore is the initial precept of it, and the condition of our entrance into that blessed state, self-denial. We answer not our own name, further than as we are revolving and rolling back ont of our single and separate state, into our original most natural state of subordination to God, wherein only we are capable of union with him, and final blessedness in him. This is discipleship to Christ, and the design of the Christian religion, to be subdued in our spirits, and wrought down into compliance with the Divine will; to be meek, lowly, humble, patient, ready to take up the cross, to bear any thing, lose any thing, be any thing, or be nothing, that God may be all in all. This is our conformity, not to the precepts only but to the example too, of our great Lord. Who when he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. And hereupon, because he was so entirely devoted to the honour and service of God's great name, (Father, glorify thy name, summed up his desires,) therefore God highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, &c. ver. 9, 10. And whenever he shall have a church in the world, that he will think it fit to own with visible, unintermitted favours, it must consist of persons formed according to that pattern. And then, by losing their own name and little interests for God's, they will find all recovered, when their glorious Redeemer shall write upon them the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, and his own new name, Rev. iii. 12.

4. Let it be further (in the last place) considered, with what cheerfulness and confidence we may then pray; when our hearts are wrought to the pitch, that we sincerely design the honour of the Divine name as the most desirable thing, and which name above all things we covet to have glorified. For we are sure of being heard, and to have the same answer which was given our Lord by a voice like that of thunder from heaven, when he prayed,

Father, glorify thy name, (John xii.) I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. Our hearts are not right in us, till we can count this a pleasant, grateful answer. And if we can, we can never fail of it. For we are told, 1 John v. 14. That whatsoever we ask according to his will he heareth us. This will deliver our minds from suspense. When we pray for nothing whereof we are uncertain, but with great deference and submission, and for nothing absolutely and with greatest engagement of heart, but whereof we are certain; upon such terms we may pray with great assurance; as Daniel did, O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not for thine own sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name, ch. ix. 19. And though an angel be not thereupon sent to tell us, as was to him, so many weeks are determined upon thy people and thy holy city, (so the matter is expressed; as it were, kindly giving back the interest in them to Daniel, with advantage, that he had before acknowledged unto God,) to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, &c. yet we are assured, of what reasonably ought to be as satisfying, that whatsoever shall befall our city or our people, shall end in the eternal glory of God, and of the city of God.

THE

OFFICE AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,

IN EVERY AGE, WITH REFERENCE TO PARTICULAR PERSONS;

CONSIDERED IN SEVERAL SERMONS,

ON JOHN III. 6. AND GALATIANS V. 25.

TO MRS. HOWE.

MADAM,

It was apprehended the entire thoughts of this great man, upon so important a subject, might be very useful to the world, and acceptable to many; and though they are only a specimen of his ordinary course of preaching, without any finishing hand, or further design, or perhaps, always his ripest thoughts; yet they carry the lively signatures of the admirable genius, and excellent spirit, which always appeared in his composures, and rendered them so peculiarly fit to instruct and impress the minds of men. Whosoever considers the compass and variety of the matter, the thread and connexion of the thoughts, the striking imagery, and the pertinence and pungency of the expression, will see reason to admire the vast capacity of the author, and be easily disposed to forgive any lesser neglects and escapes; especially when he only proposed to speak familiarly and without any written notes, and allowed himself a liberty in expressing the well digested and disposed conceptions of his mind.

It will be necessary for your satisfaction, as well as the reader's, to assure you, that the same care has been taken, and the same method observed, in reviewing and transcribing this part of the subject, as was used in the other; as the manuscript was writ by the same skilful and diligent hand.

The intimacy of a long friendship, and mutual respect, the endearments of the nearest relation, for several of the latter years of his life; the high honour you always paid him, and the singular value he expressed for you, living and dying; give you the best title to these two volumes of posthumous discourses of the Spirit, and of Family Prayer; and to any respect we are capable of showing you. We believe the noble argument, as well as the excellent author, will be peculiarly acceptable and delightful to you, who were so well acquainted with his spirit and preaching; and may contribute to a well-grounded peace of mind in a clearer discerning of a regenerate state; and to your daily walking in the Spirit, and improvement in the spiritual life.

This is the sincere desire of,

Honoured Madam,

Your respectful humble servants,

W. HARRIS,
JOHN EVANS.

Goodman's-Fields,
July 9, 1726.

SERMON I.*

John iii. 6, latter part.

That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

THE apostle represents the different states of men, according to the different temper of their minds, as they are either carnal or spiritual; the misery and deadliness of the former; Rom. viii. that "to be carnally minded is death:" the life and peace which is involved in the other; that "to be spiritually minded is life and peace." We are presented in this text with a view of the two great fountains of that carnality and spirituality, which are themselves so great fountains of evil and good, unto the children of men, according as the one or the other hath place in them. The whole verse presents us with a view of both; "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" though I am to insist, as my design requires, only upon the latter. Some perhaps, taking some notice, that there is a universal death reigning over this world, by reason of that carnality which hath spread itself through it; may be prone to inquire, From whence is it, that so prevailing a carnality should so mortally have tainted the spirits of men every where? And this our Lord gives no other account of, and only resolves the matter into ordinary human propagation; "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." His account is not such as seems to aim at gratifying the curious, but such as wherein the

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sounder mind might very well be expected to acquiesce. It being taken for granted, that the higher original of human nature was very well understood and known; it might seem a sufficient account of the original of that corruption, which is now connate with the nature of man, that from apostate creatures, such as were like themselves have descended, and what is born of the flesh, is nothing else but flesh: it being manifest that our Saviour intends to comprehend under that name, with the nature of man, the corruption which is now adhering to it. But serious and awakened inquiries would not surcease here, though they were never so well satisfied thus far; but at least having gotten an intimation that there is a design on foot, for the restoring of life and peace among men, who were universally sunk into carnality, earthliness and death; they would carry the inquiry further: *i. e.* In what way this is ever to be brought to pass; by whom it is to be effected; what course is to be taken to bring about so happy and glorious a change, with any of this wretched and forlorn world? At least they would take notice that here and there is a renewed spirituality appearing, and putting forth itself open to view; though there is too little of it, the Lord knows. Why, whence is it, how comes it to pass, that here and there we can perceive spirit and life flourishing afresh in the world, which was so universally over-run with carnality and death? This matter our Lord gives an account of in the words which I have designed more especially to consider; and resolves it wholly into a spiritual production. This is owing to nothing else but the Spirit, or a new kind of creation, and generation: the Spirit of the living God has taken the matter into his own hands, to recover and revive and raise up life and spirit out of this wretched world, which is so lost and buried in flesh and sin. What is born of the Spirit is spirit; if there is any such thing as spirit, any thing worthy of that name to be found now among men, that spirit is not of man, but the production of the Eternal, Almighty Spirit.

And certainly to such whose hearts are deeply and thoroughly concerned about a matter of this consequence, this of our Lord here cannot but be a very grateful discovery, and carry with it a very pleasant and joyful sound; that there is so great and mighty an undertaker, who is engaged in this affair, thus to retrieve things among men, and make life and spirit spring up in this world, so universally under the dominion of death. Nor can it be more grateful to some than it is certainly necessary to all; and we may wonder that it should not be more generally apprehended so, and that more eyes are not looking wishly round about. What, is there no deliverer; no one to undertake? Is there no one suitable to such an undertaking as this; or who will engage in it? to repair the ruins of perishing flesh, and restore the life of God among men, who were alienated from the life of God? But, alas! instead of such solicitous inquiries, it appears, we are fallen into an age, wherein some deny, and others deride, and most utterly disregard, the operations of the blessed and glorious Spirit of God, for such purposes. There are multitudes to whom the mention of such a thing is matter of laughter. What, to have the Spirit! for men to talk of having the Spirit!—And there are a great many more, we have reason to suppose, who do as little concern themselves, whether they ever are the subject of such operations of this Spirit, as if they were yet to learn, or had never heard, whether there were any Holy Ghost: as is said concerning some, Acts xix. 2.

It is therefore my design and purpose from sundry texts of Scripture, which may successively suit our purpose, to assert unto you the office of the Holy Ghost, in reference to the refining the spirit of men, and restoring the life of God among them; to show that such a work is attributed to it; to let you see the necessity of so great an undertaker for this work, and his abundant sufficiency for it; to show you by whose procurement, and for whose sake, and in whose name, it is employed and set on work; and in what way, and through what dispensation, it is communicated, and by what methods, and steps, and degrees, it carries on this work upon the spirits of the elect of God, till having brought them to sow to the Spirit, they do at length of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

The scripture which I have now read doth plainly hold forth so much in general, as that it doth belong to the Holy Ghost, and is attributed and ascribed to it, to produce spirit, and bring forth such a thing as spirit in them who appertain to God, and are in purpose, and shall be actually, taken into communion and participation with him. For if we refer this verse to the foregoing verses of the chapter, we find our Saviour designedly insists upon this argument of regeneration; and doth not only discover to us that there is such a thing, but gives some account wherein it doth consist, or what kind of work it is; and represents the indispensable necessity of it to any man's entrance into the kingdom of God, *i. e.* his coming into it, or seeing and having any part in it. And so the truth which we shall recommend to you, as both answering the text and our present purpose, is, that there is a work to be done upon whomsoever shall be taken into the kingdom of God, by his own blessed Spirit, whereby they are to be created, or begotten, spirit of that Spirit. We have three things before us which require our consideration, in order to the more distinct and clear notion of it.

I. The effect to be wrought, or produced; which is here called by the name of the spirit.

II. The author or productive cause of this great effect; it is called with an emphasis, the Spirit.

III. The way or manner of production; and that is said to be by begetting, or being born; for so 'tis indifferently rendered.

I. We are to consider the product or the effect wrought, and that is defined by the name spirit; what is born or begotten of the Spirit, is spirit. It is needful to give some account here what we are not to understand by it, and then what we are.

1. It is very manifest we are not to understand by it the natural spirit of a man; for our Saviour is not speaking here of bringing men into the world, but bringing them into the church: he is not speaking of such a sort of begetting whereby men are produced, but Christians. Nor is it a distinct substance from that, or another substance diverse from the spirit of a man; for then a regenerate person and an unregenerate, the same person in his unregenerate and in his regenerate state, would substantially differ from himself; and that you may easily apprehend how absurd it would be. But,

2. As to the reason of the name, and the more general import of it; by spirit we are to understand something spiritual, and which is of a spiritual nature; the abstract being put for the concrete, which is a very ordinary elegance in the Scripture; as well as it is many times in a contrary sense: You were darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord, Eph. v. 8. The name is no more intended to hold forth to us, spirit, considered under a merely natural notion, without any adjunct, than flesh is intended to signify without any adjunct, and only in a merely natural sense. The thing which in general is intended to be held forth to us by this name, is that frame of holiness, which is inwrought in souls by the Spirit of God in regeneration; and which because it is a spiritual production, most agreeable to its productive cause, is therefore called here by the name of spirit. It is something which is many times in Scripture held forth to us by such other names as these: sometimes 'tis called simply by the name of light; "Now are ye light in the Lord;" as if this product were nothing else but a beam of vigorous vital light, darted down from heaven into the hearts of men. Sometimes it is called by the name of life; that is used, 'tis true, as an expression of a larger extent than for the internal work of the Spirit, but it comprehends that too; "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," John v. 45. Many times 'tis so used as that the circumstances of the place do determine it more limitedly, to that peculiar sense. 'Tis sometimes expressed by the seed of God, an incorruptible seed which is put into the souls of men, I Pet. i. 23. 1 John iii. 8, 9, 10. Sometimes 'tis called the new creature: In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, Gal. vi. 15. If any man is in Christ he is a new creature. It is very usual to speak of the effect, and the operation too, by which that effect is wrought; the former under the name of creature, the latter under the name of creation; as here it is spoken of as a thing begotten; and the causative action, under the

name of begetting. It is sometimes called the new man; the image of God; and God's workmanship. These different forms of expression, and if there are any more which are not in my thoughts, which are parallel to these, are only intended to signify one and the same thing and what is here signified by the name of spirit.

But to give you somewhat a more particular account of this thing, this being, this creature, which is here signified by the name of spirit. Of this we have said it is not a distinct substance from the spirit of a man, and yet we must know concerning it in the

1. place, That 'tis a distinct thing; or something, though not of another substance, which is yet superadded to the spirit of a man: and which the spirit of a man, considered according to its mere naturals, is destitute of; and which therefore lies without the whole sphere and compass of mere nature, or any of the improvements thereof. It is spoken of in the Scripture as a thing put on: Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, Col. iv. 10. There is something put off, and laid away; the old man, with his deeds. This shows it to be an adjunct, or a thing superadded to us; which is not only out of the compass of our natures, but is no more to be conceived as comprehended in that state, than a man's clothes which he puts on are comprehended in the notion of his body. And in that it is called a new thing, as the new creature and the new man; it shows it to be an additional thing.

2. Though it is diverse and distinct from the spirit of a man; yet it is a most intimately inherent thing, and is most closely united, wherever it comes to obtain and take place. It is a spirit which gets into a man's spirit, a spirit put into spirit. That you may be renewed in the spirit of your minds, Eph. iv. 23. Create in me a clean heart, renew a right spirit within me, Ps. li. 10. It is the Divine Spirit which is the formal renovating principle by which we are renewed; and our former natural spirit is the subject of it. And 'tis a thing which most inwardly seats and centres itself in a man's soul, and takes possession of his inmost soul, which is called the spirit of the mind; and which we must conceive to be to the soul, as the heart is to the body, so very inward and middle a part, and upon the account of which analogy it is that the name of heart is so often transferred thither to signify the inward part, or the very innermost of the inner man. There it is that the spirit doth most intimately inhere and reside. 'Tis not a thing which lies in the surface of a man, or consists in outward forms, or empty shows, or fruitless talk; but it is something which is got into a man's heart, and hath insinuated and conveyed itself there.

3. It is alterative of its subject, or of that nature to which it is adjoined. It is so in it, as to make a very great alteration within, and to work a change where it comes; as leaven, to which this very thing is compared by our Lord which he here calls spirit, hath in it that fermentative virtue, by which it strangely alters the lump into which it is put, and whereto it is adjoined. It is incredible, according to the accounts the chemists give, how very little and minute a portion shall quite alter and transform the mass into which it is put, so as to make it quite another thing. Such a thing is this begotten spirit, it is alterative of its subject; and when it gets within a man, it makes him quite another thing from what he was. If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; or which is all one, there is a new creature in him. Sometimes the whole man is spoken of as the subject of this production, and we are said to be new creatures, and the new creation is spoken of as being in us. It only carries this signification with it, that when a man is said to be begotten or regenerated, it is only said to be so *secundum quid*, or in this peculiar respect; as having such a thing of new production now put into him. It is such a great change which is made, as that all things which were old, are said to be done away, and all that remains to be made new, 2 Cor. v. 17. This is nothing else but the same Spirit which is got into the heart of a man, and makes its subject new; that is, to become a new heart and a right spirit, where it comes to obtain. 'Tis not so with every thing which is put into another, or whereof another thing is contained; you may put water into a basin, and it alters it nothing; but this is such a thing which alters that which it is put into, and makes it quite another thing; like putting some spirits into that water which changes the colour and quality of it.

4. 'Tis universally diffused in its subject, as it is in its nature alterative of it. 'Tis a thing universally diffused through the whole subject wherein it comes; whence it is that the operation also is universal, and it makes a thorough change. They are very comprehensive expressions which the apostle uses concerning holiness or sanctification, (1 Thess. v. 23.) where he prays on the behalf of the Thessalonians, that God would sanctify them wholly, or throughout, that is, in their whole spirit, soul, and body: he distinguishes these; probably meaning by the former, the soul as rational; by the second, the soul as sensitive; and by the third, the corporeal body. It is plain this same created, begotten spirit, being designed to repair what was impaired by sin, must take place and spread itself as far as sin had done. That had vitiated and depraved the whole man, and is therefore called, a man; the old man; as having extended itself to all the powers, and faculties, and all the parts of a man: 'tis a man in a man. This spirit therefore is to be a man in a man too, and must spread into all the same powers and parts which the former had done, and make a new man. Though it is true indeed, that the intelligent soul of man can only be formally the subject of this change, yet sin is by a sort of participation in the sensitive soul, and in the external senses and parts of the body; and so must grace or holiness too. 'Tis strange rhetoric the apostle uses in that collection of passages which we find in Rom. iii. from 10, onward, out of certain places of the Old Testament. The apostle designs to represent not only how universally sin had spread itself among all men, but how it had spread itself through the whole of every man: as if they were so very full of sin, and so under the possession and power of it, that they belched it out of their throats, and through their lips; acted it with their hands; and made haste to it with their feet: Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips, their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their ways. They do nothing but work mischief wherever they come. Why, according to this same spreading and diffusion of sin, which is here called flesh; so must be that of the spirit too, enthroning itself in the very inwards of the soul, and having its residence there; whilst thence it diffuses its energy and vital influence through all the parts and powers of the man, and leavens the whole lump. Both sin and holiness are represented to us upon the account of their diffusive nature, by a metaphor of the same kind; by the apostle, 1 Cor. v. 6. and by our Saviour, Matt. xiii. 31.

5. He must understand it to be a most excellent thing; of a very high and great excellence, which is here called spirit. 'Tis a most pure essence, and noble production, agreeable to its productive cause. How vain a thing is all this material world, if you abstract and sever spirit from it! What a sluggish dull lump were all this mass of earth, and all the matter of the world, without spirit! If you could imagine such a distinct thing as a spirit of nature, and we know there are operations which some call by that name, which in Scripture are simply ascribed to this same Spirit who is here spoken of under the name of the Spirit. The great Almighty Spirit of God, in the creation of the world, did move upon the waters; and in the continual sustentation, direction, and government of the creatures, it hath its agency: Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth, Psal. civ. 30. If we should conceive no such thing as spirit to influence this same material world, what a heap would it soon be! As a house would in time become, only much sooner, which should never have any inhabitant, or any body to reside there; for the influence of an inhabitant is not so much to keep the house up, as this Almighty Spirit is to keep up the frame of nature, and continue things in the course and order wherein they naturally were. Upon this account, many of the more refined philosophers have made it very much their business, to speak debasingly and diminishingly of man, and to represent him as a despicable thing; that is, the mere body or matter separate from spirit: which plainly carries this signification with it, that spirit was, in their account, a most excellent sort and kind

of being. This expression, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, holds forth this production to be such, *i. e.* of the noblest kind. When the prophet would speak diminishingly and with contempt concerning the Egyptian power, he says, Their horses are flesh and not spirit, Isa. xxxi. 3. They have no spirit in them; an expression merely designed to set forth how little they were to be feared or regarded, and how contemptible they were.

6. It is a soul-rectifying or restoring thing. It being a thing of a very high excellence, must needs not only render the spirit of a man into which it is put, a great deal more excellent than it was; but it was withal designed to restore it to its pristine excellence, and make it what it was, or what it ought to be. It is by this work or production in the spirits of men, that souls are said to be restored: Thou restorest my soul, Psal. xxiii. 3. So far as this work hath taken place in me, he hath brought me back and made me to return, where I was and ought to have been. It is therefore the very rectitude of the soul, or setting it right again: Create a right spirit within me, Psal. li. 10.

7. It is a divine thing, as we must needs understand it. For it is the birth and production of the Divine Spirit, and is immediately from God; and it is his very image; and the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. It is something which is as it were copied out of God himself, and whereof he is at once both the immediate efficient and exemplar. And upon this account it is called, by the apostle, the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4.

8. It is a thing, by the very nature of it, instincted into a dependance upon God; or immediately dependent upon him as to its continual subsistence. There is a natural dependance which is common to all creatures, and essential to them as creatures. All have a kind of instinct drawn from the continual sustaining them, from the great Author of all, but this is a creature which depends knowingly and of choice; and so as to own and avow itself to be a depending creature: I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me, Gal. ii. 20. And therefore there are continual breathings of desire after God: As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God, Psal. xlii. beg.

9. It is a creature which not only depends on God voluntarily and of choice, but aims at him and tends to him as an end, and carries the heart and soul of a man to do so. It is by this same inwrought Spirit that the soul is principally rectified and set right towards God, so as to design him only, and to do all for him. Hence this becomes the sense of such a one: "I desire to be nothing, Lord, but for thee. My whole life and being are things of no value with me, but for thy sake. I care not whether I live or die; whether I am in the body or out of the body, is all one to me; for to me to live is Christ; and my great desire is, that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death, Phil. i. 20, 21. And I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God," Gal. ii. 19. As soon as ever he becomes, in the former sense, dead, delivered from the law, and rescued from under the dominion and curse of it, he lives unto God. His life becomes a devoted thing; and the tenor and stream of all his thoughts, and designs, and endeavours, is altogether and wholly to him.

10. It is an active, powerful thing; or a creature made for action and contest. It is a Spirit of power, 2 Tim. i. 7. That which is born of God overcomes the world, 1 John v. 4. This son of God, this product and begotten spirit, is born of God. What! Shall not this son of God, which is begotten of him, overcome? Nay, in whom it obtains, they are more than conquerors: they conquer over and over; they conquer abundantly and with the greatest advantage imaginable. 'Tis to them who overcome, that the crown and throne are designed at last. They shall have a new name, and the heavenly hidden manna, and sit down with Christ upon his throne, as he overcame, and is set down upon the Father's throne, Rev. ii. 3.

Lastly. 'Tis an immortal thing, and which never dies. Spirit is a thing which essentially carries life in it, and therefore can never cease to live. 'Tis an incorruptible seed, and the seed of God put into the soul. He who is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remains in him, 1 John iii. 9. His seed, of whom he is born. Can that be a mortal thing? It is observable, therefore, how the apostle argues concerning those, whom he supposes to have been the subjects of this mighty and blessed operation of the Spirit of God. If by the spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live; for as many as are led by the Spirit, are the sons of God, Rom. viii. 13, 14. He takes it for granted they are the begotten sons of God, by the Spirit. And 'tis as if he had said; What, do you think the sons of God shall not live? hath he begotten any mortal sons, or such as can corrupt and die? So those words are commonly, and very probably, understood to signify, Rev. xx. 6. Blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection; over him the second death shall have no power. I will not assert that to be the sense, but it is not improbable to be so. They who are regenerate, and have got this Spirit of life into them; they have got that in them which will spring up into life everlasting: having their fruit unto holiness, their end is eternal life. As our Saviour speaks, John iv. and the apostle Paul, Rom. vi.

You have by these hints some account, what kind of thing this same begotten Spirit is, when 'tis said, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. The time doth not allow, at present, to go further in the explicatory part: I would hint this one thing by way of use before we depart, that is, that we take heed of diminishing, or thinking slightly and meanly of this mighty distinguishing work of the Spirit of God. They are awful words, if duly considered, That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. There is nothing to be found in all this world, worthy the name of spirit, but that which is born immediately of the Spirit, and is its offspring. Our Saviour speaks in the other part of the verse manifestly in a way of contempt; That which is born of the flesh is flesh: that is but flesh which is born of flesh! That is, men considered in their mere naturals only, or in this present corrupted state of nature. We must understand the whole being of man to be the corrupted subject; and so to be altogether comprehended under the name of flesh; his very soul and natural spirit itself in opposition to Spirit, in the other part of the verse, as the antithesis plainly shows. Let a man be of never so refined intellectuals, or great accomplishments; let him be never so much a man, and humanity cultivated to the highest pitch and degree; without this same additional superadded Spirit, he is nothing else but a lump of flesh. If this thought did sink into the hearts of men, what despicable and self-loathing thoughts would they have of themselves, while as yet they can find nothing of this begotten increated Spirit in them; while that Spirit is not yet come into me by which I live to God, and my soul is turned to him, and set on him, framed for him, and made active towards him, and on his behalf; all this while I am as if I were a body and no more, or a mere breathless carcass. For plain it is that to all the actions and comforts of the divine life, a man in his mere naturals, is as to these things, as the carcass is to the actions of a man; that is, a carcass can as well read, and discourse, and travel, and trade, as a man in whom this Spirit is not, can love God, take pleasure in him, act in pure devotedness to him, design him as a portion, and have respect to him as such. So that now if men did but allow themselves the liberty of reflection, it could not be but sometime or other this would be their communion with themselves: "Either I have this new superadded Spirit, or I have not; if I have, sure such a thing as I have heard it is, would make some work in my soul, and show itself; it could not be latent there; I should find some changes and transformation wrought in me. And if I have not, then where am I? In how dismal and forlorn a state! It is for me to go and dwell among graves, for I am as a carcass, but a piece of spiritless flesh, or breathless lump." Oh that right thoughts of our case upon this account, might once obtain, and take place. If this Spirit is not in us, then we are dead creatures: if we have any thing of life in us, 'tis because the Spirit of the living God hath infused and increated it. 'Tis of no small concernment if this latter is our case, to observe and view the Spirit of God aright. And if the former is our case, to see to it, and deal truly with our own souls, while any natural breath remains, in order to the regaining

that spiritual life, by which we may be capable of breathing spiritually. Methinks one should have a restless mind after it: Oh I have no Spirit within me; nothing that moves towards God; no sense of him, or breathings after him. O that I were more acquainted with it. 'Tis strange that there should be life, and no such motion; and impossible there should be this begotten spirit, and we should find no change within.

SERMON II.*

We have proposed in order to the explication of the text, these three things: 1. To consider the product here spoken of, under the name of the Spirit. 2. The productive cause, or the Divine parent, to which this birth owes itself; The Spirit. 3. The kind of the production expressed here by being born, or begotten. We have already spoken to the first of those, and proceed now to the

II. The productive cause, which is here styled, in an emphatical sense, the Spirit. This name being spoken of the Spirit, is commonly observed and known to be taken two ways, either essentially, or personally: essentially, so it signifies the nature of God, the pure perfect spirituality of that blessed Spirit; so it is said, John iv. 24. God is a Spirit. But most frequently 'tis taken in the other sense, personally; *i. e.* to signify the person known by that name; the third in the Godhead, who by eternal spiration proceeds from the Father and Son. That which I at present design is to speak of this blessed Spirit, the parent of this great production, as such: and therefore shall not so much discourse to you concerning the Spirit absolutely considered; as in this relation, or as the author of this work wrought in the spirits of men. What we are to conceive of it, as it is a subsistence in the Godhead: or what its agency and operations may be, between the Father and Son; or what the kind and nature of that eternal Spirit is, and by what way it collectively proceeds from both, we are left very much in the dark, as being things of less concernment to us. But what is of more importance to us, we find more clearly and expressly spoken of, *i. e.* how we are to consider it in relation to the creation. And so we are taught most evidently to look upon it as the great author of all those influences and operations, which are properly attributable to God, or any where have place throughout the whole creation; whether we speak of the old creation or the new; and both within the sphere of nature and grace.

Within the sphere of nature it must be acknowledged the author of universal nature, howsoever diversified, and in whatsoever creatures, and must be conceived to have influenced, and still to influence, all the creatures, both in the works of creation and Providence. Both these are manifestly attributed to the Spirit of God in Scripture. It was said in the creation to be upon the waters, (Gen. i. 2.) to be every where infusing its vital influence, through the chaos which was then to be formed and digested, and put into order. By it the world is as it were new-created every day; Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, and they are created; and renewest the face of the earth, Psal. civ. 30. And by his Spirit the Lord doth garnish the heaven, as well as renew the face of the earth, Job xxvi. 13. So that we don't need to seek after another distinct spirit of nature, much less an irrational and unintelligent one, as some fancy; yea, pagan light hath gone so far in some, as to understand it to be a mind and intelligent spirit which doth every where diffuse formative and governing influence, through this great creation. And being by its nature immense, it is every where at hand to answer every such purpose which the exigence of the case, in order to the creature's renewing, doth require. But our greater and more direct concern is to consider it as the author of all operations, within the sphere of grace, and the new creation. This is it which the text doth manifestly intend, *i. e.* to be the operator in that great work by which men are to be new formed, for that new and other kingdom, which God is raising up to himself in this world, out of the ruins of that kingdom of nature, which he hath, and still holds over all. And we must understand it to be with great propension, and the highest pleasure, that this blessed Spirit hath undertaken and doth perform this so important work; If we consider it under the name and style of the Spirit of grace, as it is called Heb. x. 29. It takes itself to be despited when the truth is not received, or when it is rejected, and men revolt from it; which is the great instrument by which this work of the Holy Ghost is to be effected and wrought upon the spirits of men. As you know there can be done to none a greater despite than to cross them in a design upon which they are intent, and unto which they are carried by a strong propension and inclination of mind. Here lies the emphasis and high pitch of aggravation, and the malignity of this wickedness, that the Spirit of all goodness, and benignity, and love, and sweetness, is despited by them; they can find nothing else to turn the spite upon, but the Spirit of grace. Consider it under this character, and we must understand this work to be undertaken by it with the greatest propension, and performed with the highest pleasure. Looking down upon this forlorn world, and beholding all things waste and ruin; nature in the best master-piece of the creation, grown degenerous, depraved, a poisonous and horrid thing; why, pity and compassion has been stirred up to the world, and that immense Spirit hath gone forth full of love and goodness; full of vital influence, being designed to the office of doing a blessed work, here and there, wherever it finds its work to lie; and that the new creation might be made to spring up out of the wastes and desolations of the old. As a spirit of grace we must understand it very intent upon this work, and highly pleased with it.

And as a spirit of power, we must suppose it to go on in this work with efficacy, and to crown it with most certain and glorious success. It will not be baffled out of its work, or suffer itself to be put beside its office, unto which it hath been designed and appointed, for so happy a purpose. And wherever it is that we find the state of souls bettered, and any thing done to form and prepare meet subjects for God's kingdom, we are most manifestly taught to ascribe all such work to this blessed Spirit. 'Tis his appropriate office to refine the spirits of men to that pitch, as that they may be capable of their own name again; that is, to be called spirit, when the whole man before is called flesh, till this divine work pass upon it.

This will be evident by considering the several part of this work; and you can instance in none whereunto the Spirit of God is not entitled. Is holy light and knowledge a part? This Spirit is, upon that account, called the Spirit of knowledge, Isa. xi. 2. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation, Eph. i. 17. This is implied in the following words; The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know the hope of your calling. Is, again, faith a part of this work? as certainly it is; for they who believe are said to be born not of flesh nor of blood, or the will of man, but of God, John i. 13. Why in reference hereto, it is styled, the Spirit of faith, 2 Cor. iv. 13. We having the same spirit of faith; *i. e.* the same with David who is quoted there; we believe and therefore speak. It is plainly signified to us, that this same Spirit is always employed as a Spirit of faith, and works uniformly from age to age; so that just as it wrought in David at so many hundred years' distance, so it wrought in Paul. Is, again, love a part of this work in the souls of men? It is styled in the Scripture the Spirit of love. 2 Tim. i. 7. He hath given us the Spirit of love. That pure and holy love by which the soul unites with God, becomes devoted to him, enjoys solace, and satisfies itself in him. And again, is hope a part of it? Why 'tis attributed to this same Spirit; Christians do abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost, Rom. xv. 13. Again, is joy a part and principle in this new creation? That is called joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. xiv. 17. Is meekness a part? This same Spirit upon that account is called, the Spirit of meekness, Gal. vi. 1. If that is understood to signify the habit of meekness in the soul of a Christian; yet that connotes a reference to this Spirit as the author of that gracious frame and disposition, and the name itself might congruously enough be understood of

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the blessed Spirit itself, as such a work is under the power and dominion of that Spirit, who is herein the Spirit of meekness in those in whom it is wrought. Is the fear of the Lord a part? It is called the Spirit of the fear of the Lord, which rests upon him who is the rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch growing out of his roots, Isa. xi. 1. And it is the same Spirit, and under the same characters, which is given to all who are united to him; and anointed with the same Spirit. If you would have sundry such particulars as have been mentioned together, you have an enumeration somewhat distinct, Gal. v. 22. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Would you take what is more summary and comprehensive, and contains all such particulars together? Holiness is of such a comprehensive nature: and it is called the spirit of holiness, Rom. i. 4. And the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth: that universal rectitude which ever comes to have place in the spirits of any. You have the equivalent of it in another expression; it is called the spirit of a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7. Which signifies an entire good habit of soul in all kinds and respects; or that renovation of soul by which a man becomes a new man. So we are renewed in the spirit of the mind, putting off the old man and putting on the new, Eph. iv. 23, 24. But if you go to the transcendental attributes, as I may call them, of this new creature, you have them still referred to this spirit. Life is such a one; for that is capable of being spoken of every gracious principle; 'tis lively faith, and lively hope, &c. Why, this is the spirit of life, which gives life, 2 Cor. iii. 6. Power is such another; for that is also capable of being spoken of every grace, it may be more or less powerful. There is the power of faith, the strength of love and hope, &c. And it is called the spirit of power, in reference hereunto, 2 Tim. i. 7. And elsewhere, the spirit of might, Isa. xi. 2. If we go to what is preparatory to this work, or the convictions which must pass upon the spirits of men in order to it, this blessed Spirit is entitled to that as the great author of them, John xvi. When the Spirit the Comforter is come, he will convince the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. When the Comforter is come: the word is indifferently capable of being rendered the advocate; or the great pleader, and he who undertakes to manage the cause of Christ and Christianity against the world. He, when he is come, will make work in the spirits and consciences of men; he will make the world understand what they are so unapt to understand, their own sin, my righteousness, and the power of that judgment and government, which is to be set up, in order to the saving whoever shall be saved; or this very kingdom, which is spoken of in the preceding verse. If we respect what is consequential, and following upon this work; the consolations of renewed souls; they are called, the consolations of the Holy Ghost; And the churches walking in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, were edified, Acts ix. 31. All their pre-assurances of the possessing of the eternal inheritance, are owing to the Spirit, as the earnest of that inheritance, Eph. i. 14. 2 Cor. v. 5. and the Spirit of adoption, Rom. viii. 15. If we consider the pregustations and foretastes of heaven and glory, which souls now enjoy sometimes in their way, these are called the first-fruits of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 23. If we respect the exercises of the new creature, when once there is an infused principle; or any thing of an habitual frame of a holy mind, comes to obtain in us; these are still constantly attributed to the Spirit. As the mortifying of sin: If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live, Rom. viii. 13. Leading a holy life, or walking in a way of course of holiness, is called walking in the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit, Gal. v. 16. The life of Christians is hereupon a sowing to the Spirit, whence of the Spirit they receive, at length, life everlasting, in Gal. vi. 8. Right worship is attributed to the Spirit. Prayer, which is worthy of the name, is praying in the Holy Ghost, Jude 20. and worship in general, if it is right, is worshipping in Spirit and truth, John iv. 24. which may be meant, under dominion of God's own Spirit. But more expressly, Phil. iii. 3. We are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit. So that look upon what you will relating to the new creature, and every thing of it is attributed to the Spirit, as the productive cause. Consider its parts, its sum, its exercises, its properties; consider what is preparatory to it, or consequently upon it; consider what it doth, and what it enjoys; and all is resolved into this great principle, the Spirit.

III. We are next to consider the kind of the production, which is signified by a peculiar expression, begetting: for so 'tis indifferently capable of being rendered, either born or begotten. This is a distinguishing sort of production: there are many ways of production, to which the name of begetting will not square. Our further work must therefore be to show you the peculiar import of this expression, and what is designed to be signified by it. It plainly holds forth to us such things as these:

1. It imports the productions to be of a living thing. Begetting is a natural, vital production. All productions are not so: but there is nothing properly said to be begotten, but that which lives. Begetting, 'tis true, goes as low as to the lowest kind of life; as to vegetives; that is not only *altrix*, and *auctrix*, but *procreatrix*, which propagates its kind; but it never goes lower, and is never carried to things inanimate. They are not said to beget, or be begotten, which are in their kind dead things; it reaches not the meaner sort of natural productions; much less to artificial ones. A man is not said to beget a house, when he builds it; or any thing else which is made by the art of man. This production, inasmuch as it is signified by the name of begetting, signifies it to be a living thing. And therefore we are to know, that whatsoever it is of religion which any one pretends to, if it is a dead religion, and without life, it is an artificial religion; and you know any thing which belongs to us, which doth not partake of life with us, and from us; we can without any inconvenience, or trouble, shake it artificially, as we please, this way, or that. Many a man's religion is a cloak to him, which is no living thing; and a man may alter and change the fashion of it; and put it off, and on, and never put himself to any pain. But if a man's religion is a living thing, and is animated by a life, as it were common to him and it; why, that must not admit of alterations. We cannot shape our limbs as we please, though we may our clothes, for they are not enlivened by that Spirit of life, which runs through the whole body. They who have a religion made up of dead formalities and duties in which there is no life, no soul; cannot be said to be born of the Spirit, and 'tis no production of his.

2. It imports the production of a thing of like nature to its productive cause. There is a likeness of nature between the cause and the effect, and from such a creature begetting a creature of a like nature doth proceed. Upon this account, though a parent is truly said by way of begetting, to produce a child: yet he doth not by way of begetting make any other effect, which is not of that kind; as a house, a picture, or suit of clothes, &c. It is very true indeed, we are not to strain this matter so far as if this were a univocal production which is here intended; which begetting doth not properly signify; Yet neither is it equivocal; when the thing produced is of quite a diverse nature, from the productive cause; but there is an analogy and proportion between the one and the other. There is something in that which is begotten, which doth in nature correspond and answer to that which doth beget, even wherein the one is begotten and the other begets. And what doth that speak? The production here spoken of, is not the production of a man, as a man; but of a saint, as a saint; or of a Christian, as such; and therein is an agreement, or correspondency. What is it which makes a saint? That is holiness. Why we find this both in the cause, and in the effect. The apostle presses the exhortation; Be ye holy, as I am holy, 1 Pet. i. 16. 'Tis a vain and absurd thing to call God Father, and pretend to be begotten of him, if you are not holy as he is holy, and nothing of his holiness appears in you.

3. In the very business itself of regeneration, passiveness in the subject is manifestly imported; for who can contribute to his own being born; that is, as to the thing itself of being begotten. We are here indeed to consider a production not *simpliciter*, but *secundum quid*; that is, a creature in a creature; or something begotten in that which was begotten before. There is a new work to be

done where there was a pre-existing subject; and that a rational and intelligent one. There is much therefore proper to be done, and necessary to be done, in order to this work, but there is nothing to be done in it, but only to be borne; we are therein truly passive. Faith comes by hearing; that is a previous thing, and that we may do, and can do. We can suppose nothing more subversive of religion, than the contrary; for 'tis all one to say, The Gospel is not at all necessary to regeneration, which is the end; as to say that the hearing of it, and understanding and considering of it, is not necessary. The Gospel is neither necessary, nor significant, nor useful to the purpose of conversion and regeneration, otherwise than as the minds and understandings come to be employed about it; and this they do as men; and this way the Spirit, who is as the wind, which bloweth where it listeth, doth, as the season of grace is arbitrarily and freely chosen, come in with that influence, by which men are made saints, and then capable of acting as such.

4. The impossibility of resisting, so as to frustrate or prevent it. Being born signifies such a way of production as whereto we cannot oppose ourselves, or any power which should prevent, or promote it. Such a resistance as should hinder God's designed work, or the good pleasure of his will, in this case, don't take place. This is intimated in this form of speech. For this is a production, not of a separate single substance, by itself; but a creature in a creature. 'Tis true indeed that the spirit of a man, as he was constituted, before any such work as this came to obtain, was apt enough to resist; but all that aptitude to resistance shall be overcome, whensoever that influence is put forth, by which this work is done.

And here there needs a caution too, as well as in reference to the former head. Some may be apt to apprehend, if this work is wrought and done, by such an irresistible power, to which no opposition can be made, what need we trouble ourselves; when God will do such a work, he will do it; it will never be in our power to hinder it, and we need never be afraid that we shall. To this it may be said, and it ought to be seriously considered; that though there is no possibility of such resistance to that influence by which this work is done, wheresoever it is done, which could have prevented the doing of it; yet there are many previous workings, in order to it, wherein the Spirit of God is frequently resisted; that is, the workings and operations of common grace, which lead and tend to this special work of grace. And here lies the great danger, when in these common precursory works of the Holy Ghost, which have a tendency in them to this work, and by which it is gradually moving on, they may resist and oppose themselves, to a total, utter, eternal miscarriage. The Spirit of God, in this work, can never be resisted; but so as that it will certainly overcome and effect its work. But we must know that he is a free Agent; and there is reason to apprehend there is the same reason in choosing the degree of operation, as there is of the subject. It doth not only work where it listeth, but to what degree it listeth of power and efficacy; and when it is working but at the common rate, then it suffers itself many times to be overcome, and yields the victory to the contending sinner. You see what the charge was upon the people of Israel by Stephen, Acts vii. 51. Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ear, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. 'Tis remarkable to this purpose what this blessed man charges that people with; that this was the genius of that people from age to age, from one generation to another. Ye do always resist, &c. The same spirit of enmity and contrariety is still propagated and transmitted from one age to another, your fathers are like their fathers, and their fathers like theirs; and so run on back as far as you will; they were always a people resisting and contending against the Holy Ghost; as the complaint was against them not long before, Isa. lxiii. 10. They rebelled and vexed his Spirit, therefore he turned and fought against them, and became their enemy. And that this is the common temper, is most evident, and was so even in the more early ages of the world. My Spirit shall not always strive with man, Gen. vi. 3. That striving implies a resistance. There is great danger of resisting the Spirit of God, when it is in that method and way of operation, wherein it many times yields to the resistance. 'Tis as if he should say to the sinner, "Because thou hast so great a mind to get the day, and deliver thyself from under the power of my grace, get that unhappy victory, and perish by it."

5. It imports the integrity and perfection of the product, and that the thing begotten is an entire thing. There doth not use to be born one simple member, but an entire creature; and there is a concurrence in the constitution of it, of whatsoever belongs to this sort and kind of creature. And though there are some kinds within the sphere of nature of mutilous and maimed persons, imperfect productions; yet we must know, that this doth by a peculiarity belong to this great parent, the Spirit of God, in reference to all those productions which are within the sphere of grace, that there are never any imperfect productions there. His work is perfect; which is the character of his work in general, and especially when he is forming a people for himself, as he speaks, Deut. xxxii. 4. He is the Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment. And of those who receive not the distinguishing stamp and impress upon them; it is said, their spot is not the spot of his children, ver. 5. There is nothing in them by which they should be known to be his children. Wheresoever the Spirit of God begets, it begets perfect births; that is, according to the common distinction, and a just and necessary one, speaking of a perfection of parts, not of degrees. A child hath as many parts, as a man, though not so strong and large. There is an entire concurrence of every gracious and holy principle in the heart, which goes to the composition of the new creature, wherever we can say, that any one is born of the Spirit. And therefore men who pretend to have passed this birth, and yet it appears most manifestly that it is but a maimed production, as it is in too many instances with several sorts of persons; they carry that about them, which is a confutation of their own pretences. As suppose the case to be this. Some pretend very highly to faith, but they have no humility, no meekness, no self-denial. Why, their pretence carries along with it that which confutes itself; for the Holy Ghost is the author of no such imperfect births. There are some who pretend highly in point of duty towards God, and think themselves altogether unexceptionable, in respect of the frame of their spirits, and their performances as to the commands of the first table; but bring them to the second, and there is no impression at all of any thing like the mind and will of God appearing in their hearts and lives. Men will pray, and read, and hear; go from sermon to sermon; take one opportunity after another of attending upon religious exercises; but in the mean time they will cheat and cozen, revile and reproach, their neighbours and those they have to do with. How unlike is such a production as this to the Spirit of God, when men are made Christians thus by halves!

So on the other hand, there are those who will be very punctual and exact in reference to the duties of the second table, and it may be to an eminency, and very high degree; so strictly just in all their performances, so orderly in the relations wherein they stand; yea, some very charitable, and apt to do good to others; but bring them to matters which relate to God, and what they can say of living in communion with God; how their hearts stand towards praying to him, and meditating on him; what inclinations or dispositions they have towards an eternal blessedness: to all these things they are silent, and have nothing to say. The matter speaks itself in this case; that which is born spirit of spirit, is certainly born a perfect thing as to all the parts which appertain and belong to this creature: and therefore where there are so remarkable maims, it is too manifest this production is none of that divine production by which a man is said to be born spirit of spirit.

6. It imports the permanency of the thing produced, and that it is a fixed and settled habit in the soul. As to things which are merely fluid and transient, we know no such things to which the name of begetting can with any propriety be applied; as a book, or glass of wine, &c. And therefore it must be very unsuitable to the meaning and design of such expressions as these, to think that only better actions are the product in the work of regeneration; and that a man is hence to be denominated regenerate, be-

cause he doth better things than he did before; and there is some kind of reformation and amendment of life. 'Tis true indeed the apostle says, He who doth righteousness is righteous, and is born of God, I John ii. 29. But what doth that mean? Not that the doing of righteousness is the *productus terminus* in this birth, but an argument that there is such a thing produced, or enabled and rendered capable of doing righteousness; that is, by being made habitually and internally righteous. But to think that there should be so many great expressions in the word of God concerning this product; that it should be called a divine nature, th new man, the seed of God, God's own image; and when we come to inquire what this is that any should run the matter into this; it is an action, a good action or two. What! is the divine nature and image a few good actions? And they who are wont to conceive so of the matter, commonly take up with actions which are far from being any of the best too; and so bring the matter to a very poor pass at last. Certainly this form of expression doth hold forth to us a fixed, permanent effect, and our habitual frame which remains and abides in the soul of a man, and will be an immortal thing.

Lastly, It imports somewhat relating to matter of privilege, *i. e.* a relation to him who begets, as a child. He who is begotten is related, as a child, to him who doth beget; and has consequently a title to his care and providence; as every parent thinks himself bound to make provision for his children. They who are begotten of God, are hence at the first step capable of the denomination of sons, or children. And then you know how the apostle rises with it, (Rom. viii. 17.) If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; that if we suffer with him, we may be also glorified together. They who are begotten, fall under his immediate care, and he takes himself concerned to make provision for them; they are a part of his family, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. If a man will not take care of his own, and they who are of his own house, he denies the faith, and is worse than an infidel; and it is never to be imagined that God will deal so with his family, or children. We must carry the matter of this begetting then as high as heaven; He hath begotten us again to a lively hope—to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fades not away, reserved in heaven for us, I Pet. i. 3, 4. We are not only to consider, what is born when such a production as this takes place; but what such a one is born to. He is born an heir, an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ: a vast patrimony it is, which they have a share and part in.

Now take all these things together, and it will appear not a mean or little work, which is intended by this expression, of being born or begotten spirit of spirit. Let us therefore take heed of derogating from this great work, or making little of it, as if it were some small trivial thing. Certainly it is not a slight thing, which finally and eternally distinguisheth between them who shall be saved, and them who perish; and is the discriminating mark between the children of God, and other men; or the new seed and race, raised up by God to himself; and the rest of the apostate world, who are called the seed and children of the devil. There are but these two seeds in the world; and it cannot be a small thing which doth distinguish them. Therefore take heed of thinking little of this work. And as we should take heed of derogating from it, so we should take equal heed of arrogating too much to ourselves upon the account of it. For what have we contributed to our being actually born or begotten? And take heed of censorious discriminations in your own thoughts concerning persons, or diversely denominated parties of men, pretending to religion. As to say, They who are of such a way, they 'tis likely are regenerate; but they of such a way, are not regenerate. This is to forget that the Spirit, as the wind, bloweth where it listeth, and we know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goes; and is as much as in effect to say, "Lo! here is Christ, and there is Christ!" This very work in the soul is called Christ formed in us; the name being put for the image or likeness. We should take heed of saying, Here he is, or there he is; and know that the kingdom of God (and the kingdom of God in one notion of it, *i. e.* subjectively considered, is not a diverse thing from the frame of holiness, inwrought in the soul) doth not consist in externals, in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. xiv. 17. And in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, Gal. vi. 15. The new creature may be found in the circumcision or in the uncircumcision; and 'tis no matter of which sort one is of, if the work of the new creature don't obtain and take place. This is therefore much to be minded, and sought, and valued, even for itself, and upon the account of its own intrinsic necessity and excellence. 'Tis enough to recommend any man to me, that there is a visible impress, so far as that thing can be visible, of the new creature upon his soul; for whosoever loves him who begets, loveth him also who is begotten of him, I John v. 1.

SERMON III.*

We have proposed to consider this truth from these words —That there is a work to be done upon all who shall partake in the kingdom of God, by which they are to be born spirit of spirit.—We have opened the work itself according to the several terms in the text; and have spoke to the effect, or production; that is, to make men spirit, who before were flesh;—the productive cause, the Spirit, and—the kind of the production, which is by begetting.

That which we have next to speak to, is the *necessity* of this work; that is, the necessity of it unto this end and purpose; namely, the rendering men capable of a place and partnership in God's kingdom. And as the former head we have hitherto been speaking of, does lie in the words of the text, looking upon them in their absolute consideration, so we are led to the latter, by the relative consideration of them, or in the reference they have to the foregoing discourse. For our Saviour having said before, that "except a man be born again of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot see or enter into the kingdom of God," he doth in this verse, subjoin a reason why he cannot: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and therefore there must be somewhat born of the Spirit which may be suitable thereto. In evincing therefore to you the necessity of such a work to such an end, it will be requisite to give you some account of that kingdom, for which such a work as this is so necessarily preparatory.

I will not trouble you with many distinctions about it, only we are necessarily to distinguish it, as we may in the common notion of a kingdom, into a kingdom taken formally and actively; so it signifies the royal state and governing power of a kingdom. In that sense the kingdom of God or Christ is manifestly understood in the prayer of the thief: "Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom:" *i. e.* into that dignity and royal state, which I believe thou will shortly be in. But then it is very often and familiarly taken too objectively, for the bulk and body of the community, or the subjects who are under such a king. So we take ours in common speech; and so is the kingdom of God very often taken, when we read of the increase and growth of it under the metaphorical expressions which represent it to us in the Gospel. Kingdom, taken in the former sense, doth either signify that which is more strictly formal, and so which is appropriate and communicable to the king himself, in such a kingdom; and not communicable to others with him: that is, the sovereign power, by which he doth in common govern his subjects. Or else, there may be somewhat consequential to that which is more strictly formal; and which doth more accidentally belong to the king; and is communicable, and in a secondary sense capable, of being imparted and derived, to many, at least, among his subjects; those especially whom he more particularly favours. And that is such honour and dignity as comes to be reflected upon such and such persons, by their relation to such a king. In that sense a kingdom is said to be given and communicated to the people of God: I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my

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Father hath appointed to me a kingdom, Luke xxii. 29. Fear not, little flock; 'tis the Father's good pleasure to give you a kingdom. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you. There are several things wherein especially favourite subjects do partake in a kingdom, with him who supremely rules, and holds and exercises the sovereign power. We would consider as belonging to the state of a king, great opulency and riches, splendour and glory, pleasure and delight, beyond what we must suppose common with other men. In this respect the appellation is given; Ye have reigned as kings without us; I would to God you did reign, that we might reign with you, 1 Cor. iv. 8. They were a sort of *tanquam* kings, speaking of that free state and condition wherein they were, and exempted from suffering: they had plentiful enjoyments beyond what the apostle could have. And so in this kingdom of God, all who do partake in it, are in these respects said to be kings: Unto him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood; and made us kings and priests unto God, and our Father, Rev. i. 6. That is, in pursuance of God's design, and according to his purpose and intendment, he hath done his work to his hand, which he appointeth him to do, in this kingly part. To enter into the kingdom, and behold and see the kingdom, which are the expressions our Saviour uses in this context, may very well be understood to signify one and the same thing; only that one must, according to the manifest import, denote the first introduction into that kingly state; and the other, the continued enjoyment of it; which seeing is frequently expressive of in the Scripture. Nothing is more usual than to signify enjoyment and fruition by sight, or vision; because that is the noblest of our external senses; and so (an expression being to be used which is borrowed from sense) the most emphatical, and to the present purpose. The blessedness of heaven is hence expressed by seeing: "The angels behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Follow holiness, without which no man shall see God."

But we are a little further to pursue that notion of a kingdom as it is taken in the latter sense, objectively, and as, by the name of a kingdom, is signified the governed community, or the body of the people who are under government. The kingdom of God taken in this sense, is either made up of involuntary or voluntary subjects; either such whom he governs with their own good liking and consent, or such as he governs whether they will or no, and although they never choose to be under his government. As for that kingdom of his, which takes in involuntary, unwilling subjects; they are either such as are so by natural incapacity, or by vicious disinclination. They who are so by natural incapacity, as also unintelligent creatures, who are never capable of choosing God to be their governor and king; and they who are not willing through vicious disinclination; who though they have that nature which was originally capable of intellection, and so consequently of election and choice; yet the pure powers and faculties by which they were capable of it, are now become so depraved, that they disaffect his kingdom, and can't endure to be under his government. And this kingdom of his, which takes in involuntary subjects, whether intelligent or unintelligent, doth measure with the universe. It is the kingdom of nature, and no one needs any other qualification to be in that kingdom, but to be in *rerum natura*. If he is an existent creature, he is in that kingdom without any more to do; but that is not the kingdom here meant.

There is therefore another kingdom, which comprehends and takes in only a willing people, made "willing in the day of his power;" who with choice and consent of their own hearts, subject themselves to him, to whom it is a pleasant thought (as often as it comes into their minds) that the Lord reigns. They triumph in it, and please themselves and glory in it, and pay a joyful homage to him, as the supreme and eternal King. It is into this kingdom that none can enter, but they who are born spirit of spirit. And this kingdom also is to be considered in a twofold state; either in its inchoate, or consummate state. Inchoate is that which we commonly call the kingdom of grace; and consummate, the kingdom of glory. Now to be born spirit of spirit, is necessary to any one's having a place in this kingdom, considered either way, or in either state. The inchoate kingdom, you know, for a long time, lay principally among the people of the Jews; and they were so apprehensive of their privilege and condition upon that account, and did so highly value it, that it was even a principle among them, that none could come into that kingdom, without being in a sort new born; as some have taken notice who have been well acquainted with their antiquities and usages. And therefore they whoever came to be proselyted to their religion, and who were not native Jews; if they arrived to that degree of proselytism, which made them more complete proselytes, that is, were proselytes of justice; when they came to be initiated, solemnly renounced their earthly relations, all their former kindred and acquaintance, so far that they should not have any power over them to detract or draw them back from the religion in which they were engaged. And so they were looked upon as men *recens nati*; as if they had then newly come into the world, and had a new sort of relations to which they were strangers before. And these proselytes were also hereupon solemnly admitted, through the use of the ceremony of washing in water; to which the words of our Saviour in the foregoing verse seem to have a manifest reference: "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Upon this account he blames Nicodemus for his great ignorance, who was a master among the Jews. Not that we are to suppose that he thought him ignorant that there was such a usage among them; but that he no more understood the reason and meaning of their common practice, and should make himself so great a stranger to that which was the true import of such a ceremony. And therefore our Saviour says, "Except a man is born of water, and of the Spirit;" not therein laying the great stress upon being born of water; for that is a thing he admits and takes for granted; and he implies in this expression his intendment to settle and establish that as an ordinance transferred from the Jewish to the Christian church, and to continue there; but that upon which he lays the weight, and where the emphasis lies, is the latter expression; "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit." As if he had said; "You are apt to lay a great stress upon that ceremony you use of baptizing with water, when any persons are initiated into the church of God; and though that is not nothing, yet you must know, if there is not a being born and baptized of the Spirit, as well as of water, it signifies nothing to your having a place in the kingdom of God, or to any one's else." This is a usual thing in Scripture, to join two matters together, in one tenor and form of speech, where the stress is mainly laid upon the latter, and sometimes only upon it. Rom. vi. 17. God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you. What are thanks given to God for? These are both joined together in the same form of speech: sure he never intended to give thanks for their having been the servants of sin. But the weight and emphasis is to be all carried to that which follows; "But you have obeyed the form of doctrine which was delivered to you." So here, "Except a man is born of water, and of the Spirit." *q. d.* I admit of the fitness and requisiteness that persons should be baptized with water; for that is intimated here, that it shall obtain as a constant usage in the very kingdom of God; but except unto that being born or baptized of water, there is the superaddition of being born of the Spirit, which that of water was but a signal of, no one is any way qualified for the kingdom of God; and cannot have any entrance into it, according to the inchoate or consummate state of it.

And now to evince the necessity of it, it will be only needful to consider,

1. It would be most unsuitable to the Supreme Ruler over this kingdom, that any should come into it who are not new born. For we are to consider, that this is not the kingdom of nature, as was said, but a kingdom founded, not in nature, but in choice. 'Tis true it were no incongruity, or reflection upon the great and glorious King of this kingdom, if it were only that constitution, and there were nothing requisite to give one a place in it, but to be in being; it would be no dishonour, I say, to him to have sinners, and devils too, in his kingdom, if that were all;

but considering that this is a kingdom of select persons, and that he makes choice between some and others, and by which he distinguishes some from others; it were a most unreasonable thing in this case to suppose, that he should take in promiscuously persons of so vastly different tempers and dispositions, as they who are born only of the flesh, and they who are born of the Spirit; or that when he goes to make a distinction, he should make a distinction without a difference, and should take just such as he leaves, and leave just such as he takes; that were most unworthy of the Divine wisdom, and the holiness or purity of his nature. This being a kingdom of chosen ones, it is to be supposed, that he should make them whom he chooses, suitable to himself. Therefore it is most strictly insisted upon, and highly charged upon them who come to stand visibly related to this kingdom, that they approve themselves suitably to it. Observe the expression of the apostle, I Thess. ii. 12. You know how I exhorted you, and how I comforted you, and how I charged you, that you should walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory. The great stress is laid upon a suitable becoming deportment, such as may not be reflecting and reproachful to the blessed and glorious God, who had called them to his kingdom and glory. It was therefore upon this account necessary, inasmuch as they must be rendered suitable to their king, who come into this kingdom, that the Almighty Spirit should be employed, go forth with power, and diffuse its mighty influence, and form and prepare men to be of this kingdom. And that was not to be done but by this begetting them spirit of spirit, and that they who come into this kingdom, might be at once both subjects and sons; for the kingdom is spoken of both under the notion of a kingdom and of a family; that family which is on earth, named from our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. iii. 15. It is not suitableness enough in this case, that it is a kingdom of rational and intelligent creatures: that would indeed give a natural suitableness; God is the God of the spirits of all flesh, Numb. xvi. 22. But it is most manifest here that the spirit in the latter expression, is not taken in a natural sense, any more than flesh, in the foregoing part of the verse. Our Saviour doth manifestly speak of flesh there contemptibly, and seems to cast an ignominy upon it; whereas mere natural flesh is a very innocent, harmless thing. And 'tis no more spirit that is taken in a natural sense; but as by the flesh, is meant corruption and sinfulness, so by spirit is meant holiness, principally and chiefly; and it is therein that they must be suitable to him, who shall see God. You must be a holy nation, a holy people; so he speaks concerning the people of the Jews, whose constitution was as it were a type and model of the kingdom of God, which was afterwards to obtain in the world in a greater lustre and glory, and to be perfected at length into an eternal kingdom, Ye shall be to me a holy people, Exod. xix. 6. So they became suitable to him as a peculiar above all nations: they were a peculiar people to him in this very respect, which certainly none can be who are not born spirit of spirit.

2. It were unsuitable that others should be of this kingdom, to the design and end of its constitution and appointment. We have that expressed in 1 Pet. ii. 9, a place taken from the forementioned 19th of Exodus, Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; and they are called for this end and purpose, "to show forth the praises of him who hath called you from darkness to his marvellous light." This then is a constitution set up and formed on purpose to be to the praise and glory of God. When our Lord has finished the work of his mediatorial kingdom, and put it out of its imperfect and growing state, into that of consummation, wherein it is to continue and endure always; he will then come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them who believe, 2 Thess. i. 10. But alas! what were there admirable or glorious in this matter, if men were to be gathered, as it were, by a casual hand, into one body and community, without making any discrimination? It were then a work which had nothing glorious in it; even when this kingdom is rising to its complete state, and perfect maturity, to have persons found there who were never born into it, or had a temper of mind agreeable to it. It might be said in that case, the end was lost, and the design miscarried. And the greater stress is to be laid upon this, for this reason, that this is a second constitution, to have a pure and holy kingdom in this world. The kingdom of nature was pure at first; there was nothing of iniquity in it; but there was an apostacy and revolt in it; a great part made a defection; the whole race of men. Now this is a design of retrieving the loss, so far as it is possible to be retrieved; that is, that those angels who fell not should be confirmed; and among men, who all fell, many should be restored; so that it was manifestly to be seen, that the design was, as if God had said, "I will have a kingdom which shall hold pure, and holy, and in which there shall be no more mutiny or tumult, no discord and disorder, and nothing of revolt or rebellion shall be known any more." This being the case, it was plainly his design to have such a constitution as this, for his own eternal praise, and wherein he might be manifest, and his name continue everlastingly glorious. He now forms a people for himself on purpose to be the eternal monuments of his praise. The exigency of the end aimed at in setting up this kingdom, did challenge so much, that it be a kingdom of them who are born to God, and have a temper suitable to the state they are to come into. Wherefore do we think God did constitute a second kingdom, but that he would be sure to have all things right and well there by that time he had brought things to their final result and issue? We may be confident he will make sure work now, and have nothing in this kingdom but what shall agree with the design and purpose of it, and be homogeneous to it, and all of a piece. And to suppose he should have such a design as this, and suffer himself to be foiled and baffled in it, is a most unreasonable and monstrous supposition.

3. It would be altogether unsuitable to the laws and offices of this kingdom, whether in the present or future state of it. God is to be taken for their God, which is the first and most fundamental of all his laws; "Thou shalt have none other God before me." This is indeed the swearing allegiance to this great King upon their entrance into this kingdom. Who can ever do this who is not born to it? The carnal mind is enmity against God; (can't endure his government;) it is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be, Rom. viii. 7. It is never possible any can join themselves to God as their God, without having their minds spiritualized and refined into such a temper as can agree to him. There will be perpetual tumultuations and regrets against his authority and laws, till this transforming work hath passed upon them. And then afterwards the whole course of such persons' walk and deportment must be a continued course of subjection and obedience. They must bear themselves toward God as their chosen God, and live entirely to him. And sure there needs another spirit than what is natural to man; for they are in all their after-course to walk in the Spirit, to worship in the Spirit, to pray in the Spirit, to do every thing they do in the Spirit. How necessary is it, upon this account, to be born spirit of spirit! It is, and must be, the eternal work of those who are of this kingdom, to love, and obey, and praise everlastingly. What is a carnal heart to such employment? The laws of this kingdom require that these be the perpetual exercises of those who come into this kingdom. Carnality, should we suppose such a thing in this kingdom, must needs carry with it that enmity, which stands in direct opposition to love; that rebellion, which stands in opposition to obedience; that stupidity, which stands in opposition to praise. The greatness and excellencies which the subjects of this kingdom are eternally to praise, it were altogether impossible a carnal mind should look upon, without regretting that he is so great, to whom they are so little.

4. It were most unsuitable to the grants and privileges of this kingdom. What is to be enjoyed in that kingdom, can never be enjoyed but upon this supposition, that they are born of the Spirit. Think of the present privileges which are granted to the subjects of this kingdom:

First, They are brought into a state of liberty. He who is king in the kingdom, is not a king over slaves, but a free people; and indeed their freedom does consist in this, that they are so willingly subject. A heathen could say so much, speaking in reference to a kingdom which God

governs, according to his apprehensions of it; *In regno nati sumus: Deo servire, regnare est.* We are born in a kingdom, or into a kingdom, so it had been fuller to this purpose. There are none come into this kingdom, without being born into it, or attempered and suited to it. And he supposes the highest privilege of being in this kingdom is, in being subservient to God; "To serve God," says he, "that is to reign." We are kings in this kingdom, rather than subjects, in being subject to him. The apostle James has a magnificent expression, but most just, and not strained; the law which we are required to obey, he calls the royal law of liberty, chap. i. 25, 28. And the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, does make us free from the law of sin and death, Rom. viii. 2. The felicity and duty of the subjects in this kingdom herein meet in one and the same point; for whereas it is their duty not to serve sin, 'tis their privilege to be exempt from that vile servitude; and they themselves are brought to resent it as such when once the law of the Spirit of life has made them free. Oh! what an ease is it to have the yoke thrown off, and to find a man's spirits so disentangled, as to be able to say; I am not restrained, as it hath sometimes been, from the love and communion of the blessed God; I am not depressed and borne down towards the earth as heretofore, when I should ascend and get up in lively affection to heaven. It is a most pleasant thing to feel liberty, and find oneself set free." This Spirit by which persons are thus born, makes them free as soon as they are born: Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty: *i. e.* that Spirit which refines and transforms from glory unto glory; as the connexion lies, 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18. How inconsistent therefore must it needs be with those who remain still in the flesh; for such a one loves the bondage which it is a privilege to be freed from; and takes pleasure in his chains, and is proud of them. The case is with him as with that servant concerning whom the supposition is made in the law of Moses, that he should so love his master, as when the time of relaxation came, he would not go free. The Gospel of Christ is the ministration of the Spirit, by which souls are begotten unto God; and whensoever any are by it made sons, they are made free. Therefore we read of this liberty as appropriate to the sons of God; for we are not to suppose, that God's own sons should be slaves. But the bondage of slaves is preferred by carnal hearts, to the liberty of sons: and it will be always so till they become sons; and they will never be sons, till they are born again, and till it can be said of them, there is something produced in them which is spirit born of the Spirit.

Again, Tranquillity is a great privilege belonging to this kingdom. One who is not thus born of the Spirit hath no seed or principle of peace in himself. To be spiritually minded is life and peace, and this kingdom is "righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost." But they who are still in the flesh, and not born of the Spirit, have that still in their temper and constitution, which is inconsistent with peace; and which, if we should suppose commonly to obtain in that kingdom, would as much shatter and discompose things there, as we find peace is from time to time disturbed in this lower world. What is it which hath made this world so troublesome a region, but only the carnality of it? What is it but the lusts of men, which occasion the wars, and tumults, and commotions, which fill the world with noise and blood from age to age? It would even be so above too, if you should suppose that persons should be generally brought thither, who were not born spirit of spirit.

Lastly, Communion with God is the great privilege of the subjects of this kingdom; in some degree in this present state, and perfectly in the perfect state of that kingdom. But do we think that one who is not born spirit of spirit, will ever care to converse with God eternally and always. Alas! how little do they care for it now! How little do they love the Divine presence! How wearisome a thing is an hour's attendance upon God, in a duty, to a carnal heart! How would such a one behave himself, to be eternally in that presence, unto which he is so averse! Would it be a heaven to him? Indeed there is nothing which hath made hell any where but sin; and if it were possible that sin could get into heaven, it would create a hell there too.

5. It would be most unsuitable to the community, and all the fellow-subjects, if any should come into that kingdom, who were not thus born. It was evidently the design to have them all of a piece, who should have place together, in this kingdom. When that work was designed to be set on foot which was preparatory and fundamental to the perfect and glorious state of this kingdom, it was thought fit that he who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified should be all of one, (Heb. ii. 11.) *i. e.* all reduced to conformity to one and the same original. He himself who is the Mediator, is the holy and just One; these are the characters by which we find him discriminately mentioned; and all who are to be gathered to him, must all be one with him in this thing, and he must be the common Sanctifier of them all; that is, by the Spirit by which they are thus begotten and born; that so they may agree and be suitable to him. And being so, it is manifest, there must be the same ground and medium of common agreement among all, who should be united to him; if they must all be made to agree to him who is holy, it cannot be but they must all agree to one another, being holy and sanctified ones. Heaven is called the "inheritance of them who are sanctified;" and certainly the communion which they are there to have with one another, is to be in the highest and perfect sense the communion of saints. And it being requisite that there should be an agreement and oneness among all the subjects of this kingdom, this agreement was not to be brought about, considering this kingdom must consist of persons who were unlike, but by reducing them who were fallen from that perfection which originally belonged to their natures, to a conformity to the rest. Therefore you find this said concerning those who are to be adjoined and brought into it, that they thereby actually come unto the general assembly, an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and so constitute and make up the church of the first-born, Heb. xii. 22, 23. You must note that first-born here is of the plural number, and so it signifies a church consisting of first-born ones, and must needs have reference to this same birth here spoken of in the text. It was not otherwise possible, that there should be an agreement or conformity when there was once an unlikeness before, but by reducing some to the rest; they who were fallen and lapsed from their original excellence, to a conformity to them who stood. And therefore those angels who stood, remain as a standard and pattern, to which all who are afterward to be adjoined to this kingdom must be made conformable. As soon as they are got into the account of first-born ones, or are the first-fruits of his creatures, (Jam. i. 18.) the flower and most excellent and noble part of his creation; they are said to be come to them. The church made up of such, in conjunction with those glorious spirits, the angels who stood, comes to be a uniform church and kingdom. But if they should not be so conformed, it would be prejudicial both to the order and felicity of this kingdom. How both uncomely and uncomfortable a thing, if there should not be this conformity! How uncomely would it be, that there should be some in this kingdom rejoicing in the excellency and glory of their eternal King, and some secretly envying him, and wishing they could tell how to unking him! How indecorous, when the generality are engaged in gladsome triumphant songs of praise, for some to lower and hang the head, and dislike the very thing for which others do give thanks! And how inconsistent would it be with the felicity of the subjects of that kingdom, that there should be such jars and discord among them! Certainly it must be, and could not but be, a torture and torment to them; and no doubt every thing of that kind must be excluded heaven, the perfect state of that kingdom. If there should be any one found there, who should have this for his known sense; that he cannot love God, or like his government; he cannot be pleased that he is Lord and King, it could not but be a torture unto the rest. When the kingdom is resigned by the Mediator into the Father's hand, (1 Cor. xv. 24.) and he is to be all in all; filling every soul with his fulness; all desires and wills satiating and satisfying themselves in him: in the midst of all these pleasures, it could not but be a tormenting thing, that there should be any who can take no felicity in him; who dislike his person, and wish him off the throne; who are

offended at the purity of that state, and at that wherein all the rest do place their common felicity. It would be very uncomely and uncomfortable to have any dissentions in that kingdom; and therefore it can never be admitted, and is apparently necessary, that whoever comes into it enter by this new birth.

6. It would be unsuitable to the course and way of government in this kingdom, whether you look upon it in its present, or future or perfect state. Consider the way of government in this present state. Why, here God governs in a way somewhat suitable to the methods of government by men; that is, by laws and public edicts, with threats and promises inserted into them; that men may know what they are to do, and what not; and what they are to expect by way of reward if they do well, and what by way of punishment, if they do amiss. This course of government is suited to the reasonable nature of man, and does well as it is managed by some men over others; because they who are to be the governed part, do sensibly perceive how much it is in the power of the governing part, either to do them good or hurt, according as they obey or rebel. So that men's senses are in this case their instructors, of how great concernment it is to conform themselves to the laws; and how dangerous a thing to attempt the violation of them. But consider how these same methods applied to men for their government, by an invisible Ruler, can signify in this case; or what their success commonly is. There are as plain proposals of the law of God to men, as any can be by earthly rulers. 'Tis impossible that human laws can be made plainer, than the Divine laws, are in many, and those the most important, cases. The great God promises infinitely greater things than any mortal can promise; and threatens greater things, than they can assume to themselves to do. But what do all these things signify, where men remain still in the flesh? His laws are plain, and his promises very assured, and his threatenings awful and monitory, to them who are once born of the Spirit, and have got somewhat of sense and life about them, and can perceive things which are above the common allay: but for them who yet remain strangers to this birth, and upon whom the Spirit of the living God hath done no such refining work, it is plain that such men's hearts take no impressions from the plainest discoveries of his will. When they are warned of the danger of a continued course of sin; they who warn them are like them who mock; and whatsoever they represent from the Divine promises of the blessed state of holy and sincere and obedient souls, is all but like a tale which is told. These methods of government, in the present constitution of this kingdom, will not suit those who are not born spirit of spirit, and till that Spirit come forth with that power, and in that operation, by which the souls of men are begotten to spiritual life. In that work itself, and by that work, the Divine precepts, and promises, and threatenings, come to be successful and effectually applied; but never else, no more than the most express human laws, with the addition of the severest penalties, or promises of the highest rewards, would signify to a multitude of dead men.

And then for the way of government in the future state of this kingdom, and when it arrives to its perfect state; there we must suppose, the way of government should be, by sweet and secret intimations, and internal irradiations, upon receptive minds and hearts; such elapses by which hidden sense is conveyed, even in a moment, so as that all the subjects of that kingdom are to obey, as it were, any wink, or nod, or glance of the eye; I mean any such intimations which can as secretly convey the sense of the great Ruler, as they do commonly among us. But how manifest is it that there must be a great refinedness of mind and heart, to receive those gentle touches by which spirits are in a moment to be swayed this way or that. One who is yet a composition of flesh, and not born of the Spirit, how incapable is he of these kind impressions; these touches which are to come by so gentle a hand; these so insinuating ways, by which God is to slide into the very spirits of these blessed souls, and prompt them this way or that as he pleases!

Lastly, It were most unsuitable to the unchangeableness and perpetuity of this kingdom, that any should be admitted into it, who are not born into it, or made spiritual as the constitution of it is. We ought in all reason to think, that such a state of things as is designed for perpetuity, and never to be changed, must be most unexceptionably perfect. It were a dismal thought that this kingdom should be at once both eternal, and imperfect: for then if it were imperfect it must be imperfect always; and whatsoever were amiss in this constitution of it, would never be repaired, or altered. This kingdom, though it is in its inchoate estate, yet imperfect, that inchoate state is but its temporary state, which will soon be over: but then there must be, even in the very entrance into it, an entrance the right way; otherwise the case will be like an error in the first concoction, which is never cured in the second; that is, it must be by being born spirit of spirit. When any one comes into it, he comes into a kingdom which is to be everlasting; and so whatever there should be of irregularity and imperfection in admitting him into this kingdom, it would be an unalterable thing. Substantially this kingdom can never be altered: grace and glory do not substantially differ. That holiness, which the saints carry the name of such from, while they are here on earth, is not another or a diverse thing, from what must be their eternal character above; it will be of the same kind, only much more perfect. That knowledge of God, and satisfaction in God, which is to be enjoyed hereafter, is of the same kind and nature, with what in a more inferior degree the saints partake of here; and in that lower degree they must be attempered and suited in their very constitution: otherwise there would be a substantial difference between one member of this kingdom and another; and which were never to be altered, but must last always; because the difference which is to be made between the present and future state of this kingdom, is not substantial, but gradual only. And therefore the apostle argues with so much severity, (Heb. xii.) when he had been speaking of that which is most constituent of this kingdom, "an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect," all making up together one "church of the first-born written in heaven; We having," says he, "received a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." You have now the frame and model of this kingdom brought among you, which is never to be shaken; you are to account therefore that God will make thorough work in his setting up this kingdom; that there shall be no flaws or defects to be found, which shall be incapable of remedy and cure afterwards. He never intends to take this frame of things asunder any more, but that it shall last for ever; and therefore expect him to be a consuming fire about this work; he is not to be dallied with now he hath such a work as this in his hands; therefore look that you carry it acceptably to him, with reverence and godly fear. He will show himself to be a consuming fire in the managing the work of his kingdom, and the setting and framing that constitution and state of things which he resolved never should be shaken, but should last always. And the very reason of the thing itself doth require that it should be so; for whatever a man designs for a long continuance, he would be most accurately curious about. That which he intends only for a day, he would be little solicitous how it were composed and framed; whether there were such curiosity and similitude of parts, yea or no; but that which he intends to be a lasting and permanent thing, that he would have to be very exact at first. A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Do we think that when the blessed God designed a perpetual and unshaken kingdom, he would take that into the constitution of it, by which it would certainly come to be divided against itself; and be disagreeing to itself, as the image or representation of Nebuchadnezzar, which was part brass, part iron, and part clay? Surely this kingdom must be another kind of constitution, and made better to agree with itself, inasmuch as it is designed to be unchangeable and everlasting.

Thus then you have the second thing demonstrated; the necessity of being born of the Spirit in order to the having place in the kingdom of God. It lies in our way here to reflect, that since there are so many full, clear, cogent, and convictive reasons of this truth, that yet there should be so great unaptness and slowness in the spirits of

men, to receive so vast a truth as this. Is it not an amazing thing, that whereas truths of another import, as soon as they appear to be such, are presently received, and without any more ado; and if they are understood to concern us, they are commonly received with suitable affections and impressions upon men's minds? If you should tell a man there is an opportunity of an advantageous bargain; if he once comes to believe it to be true, he not only assents to it, but receives it with correspondent impressions on his will, resolution, and affections; it influences his practice, and he goes and does accordingly. It is a thing most amazing, when we consider how express the affirmation is, and how plain and clear the reasons are; and that if once it be acknowledged a truth, it cannot but be acknowledged a most important truth; that yet we so commonly hear of such matters, just as we hear a tale which is told, and as if it were all one to us, whether it were true or false. What would we think necessary to beget an unwavering firm persuasion in our hearts, that such a thing is true? Why certainly the concurrence of testimony and plain reason together, carry as much as our hearts can wish in order to the clearing of whatsoever truth. Here is the express word of the Lord of this kingdom; for 'tis the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as well as the kingdom of God. Now you will look upon it as the greatest vanity and madness imaginable for any to promise himself an interest and share in the blessedness of that kingdom, against the express word of the Lord of it. Pray, by what right should you come into it, if the Lord and King will not admit you? Or by what power? Where is your right if he deny your right? Where is your power to evade or oppose, if he resist and withstand you? If there were no more in the business, this were enough, he hath spoken it, and ratified it by the seal of his own Amen. Verily, verily I say unto you: I do assever it to you; I assert it to you with all the peremptoriness imaginable. What should become of that man's soul, or what can we think of his persuasion, who is persuaded against the real word of the Lord of this kingdom, that he shall have place in it? The reason of the thing is so convictive and manifest, that nothing can be more. You may as well think of making a composition of light and darkness, fire and water, of the most inconsistent things; as to bring flesh and spirit together into the composition of this kingdom.

SERMON IV.*

THE truth we have in hand is this;—That there is a work to be done upon all who partake in the kingdom of God, by which they are to be born spirit of spirit.—We have spoken of this doctrinally at large;—the *Use* of it is now before us. And that which I have first to take notice of, as a reflection which cannot but be of very great and common use, is, that since this is so plain and evident a truth, it is exceeding strange that it should not more commonly and visibly obtain in the belief of those who profess themselves Christians. So important a truth believed, could not but infer that that belief would be visible in the practice; and so evident a truth, one would think, men should not stick to believe. Wherefore there are these two heads, I think might be worth our while to discourse to you:—1. To let you see that it is but too visible this truth is not believed by the generality of professed Christians.—2. To show the unreasonableness of men's disbelief in reference thereunto.

1. I am to show that this truth is not believed by the generality of those who call themselves Christians. And that I may speak more clearly and distinctly, it will be requisite

1. To tell you what I mean by their not believing this truth; and then—2. Show you that men do not believe it.

1st, What is intended by this charge upon the generality of persons professing Christianity? Here it will be necessary to say something to you,—concerning the object, or truth, which is not believed; and—2. Something concerning the nature of that belief which, we complain, is wanting in reference thereunto. Concerning the object, it is requisite you understand that we mean this truth taken entirely, and so as to comprehend together the several things which are contained in it. As for instance,—1. That there is a change necessary to be wrought in the spirits of men—2. That this change must be so great and entire upon their spirits as to amount to another birth, or being born of the Spirit—3. That God hath such a work and design in hand, as the constitution of a new kingdom of obedient and happy subjects; such as shall willingly obey, and gladly and joyfully partake and communicate with him in the glory and blessedness of this kingdom, and —4. That there is no other way of entrance into this kingdom but by being so born and connaturalized thereto. All these things are evidently contained in this doctrine. Now it is constantly acknowledged, when you put some one or other of these things single to a person, who, it may be, hath never yet admitted a serious thought of it; it is likely he will say, "Yes, this is true." But it doth manifestly appear, that he hath never digested the system and frame of such truths, as they lie together, and do amount to this sum. And indeed that is one great fault in the common faith of persons professing Christianity, that it is a partial faith; they believe this and that particular truth, they'll tell you, taken asunder from the rest: but consider such and such truths as they are a part in the general system of Christian truths; and so it is most apparent, that they are not received and taken in. And,

2. Suppose any have never so distinct thoughts and apprehensions of the truths of the Gospel; those in particular which this truth sums up; yet the faith of most who profess the Christian name, it is plain, is quite another thing, in the nature of it, than what really and truly we ought to reckon, the belief of the Christian doctrine. I do not intend, when I say these things are not believed, that men professing Christianity are arrived to an explicit disbelief, or that they reckon themselves unbelievers, or profess infidelity in this matter; or that there is no such thing as a real assent unto such truths as this. But there is not that assent which, according to the strictness of the Scripture notion, we ought to put the name of belief upon; that is, they don't take it upon the authority of the great God, as a thing revealed from heaven to them, that it is necessary they undergo such a transforming change in their own spirits, in order to their having place in this kingdom; this is not received on the authority of God, and so as accordingly to influence their hearts and practice. Which if it doth not do, it doth nothing; and which if it be not apt to do, it is not that faith which the Scripture intends.

This then is that which we are to make out, from several considerations. As,

1. That the Scripture doth commonly attribute, or gives intimation by which we are taught to attribute the inefficacy of the Gospel doctrine, to men's disbelief of it, or their not believing. As that passage of the apostle, wherein he quotes the prophet Isaiah, Rom. x. 16. They have not all obeyed the Gospel, for Esaias saith, Who hath believed our report? They have not all obeyed; and why? Because Isaiah saith, they have not believed. The things which the Gospel requires as matter of duty, by the precepts of it, would be comported with, and obeyed, if the truth of them were believed. They are not believed; and how is that demonstrated? Why they are not obeyed. So we are told of the scoffers who would be in the last days; and there is nothing in the days in which we live, more scoffed at than the Spirit, and this work of the Spirit upon the souls of men; who would walk after their own lusts, saying, Where is the promise of his coming? 2 Pet. iii. 4. Because they don't believe the great things contained in the Gospel, therefore they scoff, and therefore they indulge themselves in all ungodliness. We are told, that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes, Rom. i. 16. Which plainly intimates, that it signifies nothing with them who believe not. With them who believe it is a mighty powerful thing; but with them who believe it not, it effects nothing; there 'tis weak and impotent. So again we are told by the apostle, 1 Thess.

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ii. 13. that these Thessalonians, when he first came among them, received the word, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, which worketh effectually in them who believe. It hath a most effectual work, where it is believed; and wheresoever therefore it is ineffectual, and there are no suitable impressions to be found upon men's spirits, there it is manifest it is not believed. And 2 Thess. ii. 13. We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren; for God hath chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Which plainly implies, that the truth wherever it is believed, is accompanied with the sanctifying impressions and influences of the Spirit; and it can't be understood to be believed where it is not so. And,

2. Consider further, that the nature of the thing itself is such, and so nearly and directly concerns, and tends to influence the practice, that it is not possible it can be truly believed, if it is not believed practically. We are to consider a vast difference between such kiod of assents, which are conversant about truths, all the design whereof is compassed and attained, as soon as we have spoken them; and those which have a further design; that is, to guide and govern a man's practice, this way or that. Sure it is a far other kind of assent that I am to give, for example, to this truth; that such a thing is poison, and would destroy my life; such a thing is useful for food, and would preserve my life; than if I give to this, that the sun is so many hundred times bigger than the earth. The reason is, that that doth no way concern my practice, and 'tis no matter how superficial an assent I give it; but the other are things which concern my practice, and if I do not believe them suitably, and with a practical belief, I might as soon eat the poison as the food. It is incompatible with the nature of these things, that they should be or can be believed truly, if they are not believed practically; and so as to influence the heart, and direct the course; so far as that I never satisfy myself with knowing, that men are to be born spirit of spirit, but drive at this, to be myself so born. Otherwise it is the most manifest thing in all the world, that I turn this great important truth, which most nearly concerns me, to a thing of mere impertinency to myself. Again,

3. It is not consistent with the nature of a man, thoroughly to believe a thing to be true, and yet altogether to he unconcerned about it; supposing the thing in its own nature such as does nearly touch some grand concernment one way or other. There are two things I would remark to you concerning the nature of man: the one is, that it is capable of having some prospect of what is future; it is not confined to only present things, as it is with the brutal nature. The other is, that it is incapable of being indifferent about happiness and misery. The nature of man is capable of having a prospect of futurity, or somewhat beyond the present time. His rational nature doth in this differ from a brute creature, that whereas that is confined only to the present, and can have no prospect of what is future; men, as their own experience may tell them, have a prospect of what is future, and may befall them to-morrow, or the next day, or what may be a year hence, and what they are then to do. They have a foresight of what may be an advantage or disadvantage to them in future time. But then it is incapable of being indifferent whether things should be well or ill with them, supposing they do indeed believe what they have some prospect of. Suppose you hear such a one intends to kill you to-morrow, and have your blood; it is inconsistent with the nature of a man to be so far unconcerned, as altogether to be indifferent, whether his life be destroyed to-morrow or no. But according as he believes or disbelieves the report, so he will be concerned or unconcerned about it. Nothing can be more evident. Wherefore it must necessarily also be, that according as men believe or disbelieve what hath that aspect upon their future eternal states, either that upon such terms they shall have place in the kingdom of God, or be excluded and shut out for ever; it is altogether impossible, if men do really believe what is said to them concerning these things, that they should be so indifferent, whether they be happy or miserable throughout a vast and immense eternity, as to have no care or concern about the matter. I add,

4. That the common unconcernedness about such things, is not to be resolved into any thing else, but their unbelief. I shall here more distinctly labour to evince to you these two things,—1. That men are very generally unconcerned about those things which this truth hath relation to; their spiritual and eternal states.—2. That this their unconcernedness is otherwise unaccountable.

1. That they are unconcerned is too apparent from sundry considerations: as,

1. That they are so little inquisitive, whether this great transforming change hath passed upon their spirits, yea or no. I understand there is a great necessity of being born spirit of spirit. What would more naturally ensue, if this were believed, than to say, Am I so born? Or what is it to be so born? Do I find any specimen or discovery of such a work wrought in myself? While there are so few who ever give themselves the trouble of such inquiries, certainly there is a very great unconcernedness about the matter, and such as doth manifestly bespeak the disbelief that there is, or needs to be, any such thing. And,

2. That men so easily take the matter for granted, and are so easily satisfied. Certainly, if there were that deep concern which the exigence and importance of the matter requires, men would not be very easy to admit of satisfaction in the case, and soon and slightly pass it over; and think they have done enough when they have asked the question, though it be answered they can't tell how. If they have thought it probable, the thought yet would again and again return; But am I sure? Is this to be born spirit of spirit, and am I thus born? They would never think they could be too sure, or that enough could be done to make the matter sure.

3. That it is a thing so little insisted upon in prayer, among persons who profess the Christian name, that God would give his Spirit for this purpose; at least that the hearts of people so little go out in any such petitions and requests to God. If it should be asked them who allow prayer to have any place in their practice, Which way do your hearts work most in prayer? If they were to give an account of the sense of their hearts, would it not be this; "Lord, grant me what appears desirable to me in this world; that I may have my carnal desires satisfied to the full?" But who insists with importunity and earnestness upon this great thing? "Lord, whatsoever thou grantest or deniest, grant me thy Spirit: let me be miserable, and reduced to poverty and beggary; let me wander up and down in the want of all things; but give me thy Spirit." Oh! what loud and importunate cries would there be for the Spirit, if this doctrine were believed! But God may withhold many things from men much more to their displeasure and dissatisfaction, than his Spirit, and about which they would much more sensibly complain; take away their estates and relations, and they complain and cry for them; but he may withdraw or withhold his Spirit, and they can go years together, and never complain or feel themselves grieved at it. The very execution of the threatening does not make them uneasy: "My Spirit shall not strive." It doth not strive with many from day to day, and year to year; and yet it doth not make them complain. This is too plain an argument, that it is not believed that there is a necessity, in order to the entering into God's kingdom, to be born of the Spirit.

4. That men are so little in expectation, and no more generally in a waiting posture, for the Spirit when they hear of it. How few are there who are in such expectations, day by day, more than they who wait for the morning! Oh! when shall this Spirit come? When shall the happy hour be of its sensible appearance in my dead and forlorn soul? When they hear, that Spirit is as the wind which bloweth where it listeth; how few are ready to say, Oh! when shall I find its breathings upon me? When will it reach me? When shall I feel some of its powerful influences and refreshing gales?

5. That men are so little afraid of resisting the Spirit, and of giving it offence and provocation; so as that God should penally retract or withhold it. Certainly if this doctrine were believed, men would be in a very great dread upon this account; they would tremble to think of the possibility or danger of giving that distate by neglects, and resistance to the Spirit of grace, as to make it retire, not knowing whether ever it would return. Again,

6. That the thoughts of this concernment do no more

mingle with men's affairs, in which they employ themselves here under the sun; and not more check their too impetuous pursuit of their worldly designs, which their hearts are so ever intent upon. If this doctrine were indeed believed, it could not surely be, but that many times in the midst of secular business, such thoughts would come in; But am I yet born of the Spirit? All that I do is mere idle trifling impertinency when I don't yet know, whether I am so much as alive, in order to heaven and God's kingdom, and the eternal state which is before me. How seldom throughout the day can any such thoughts be crowded into the minds of men! Surely it would be a great check to the heat of their pursuits after the things of the world, if such thoughts did but now and then strike in; and they could not but strike in often, if the matter were indeed thoroughly believed; "I must be so born into heaven, or buried in all the darkness and misery of hell for ever."

7. If men were so concerned about this matter as the thorough belief of it, one would think, should infer; such thoughts must needs be a very great allay to the pleasure and sweetness of their sensual enjoyments. When they are relaxing themselves to pleasure, and allowing themselves the liberty of excursions into this or that kind of sensual delight; certainly they could not so freely enjoy the creatures themselves, if it were considered; "I am yet at a very great uncertainty whether the divine life hath any place in my soul or no; whether the great work of the new creation hath any, so much as the least, beginnings in me?" Alas, what an infusion would this be of gall and wormwood, of bitterness and death, into whatsoever sensual delights, which would utterly spoil the sweetness of them; if it were believed that it is necessary to be thus born; and yet that it is uncertain whether we are thus born!

And pray then, what can we resolve this unconcernedness into, which is the other thing under this head; but their disbelief, and that they want a thorough persuasion of this truth, that I must be so born, or perish? For think of what else we would resolve it into. Is it the obscurity of the matter, and that it is merely an unintelligible thing? But why is this unintelligible, that there is a work necessary to be wrought upon the spirits of men by the Spirit of God, to render them suitable to God, and capable of blessedness in him? Indeed what can we think of that is plainer, if we consider the common state of men, and the present temper of their spirits? and how apparently necessary it is, that their spirits must be of another temper, in order to their being happy; and that there is nothing to be done in this kind, but by a proportionable cause; and that such an effect doth manifestly challenge to be wrought by such a cause? They are to be changed by the dispensation of the Gospel from glory unto glory; where the progressive work is spoken of, of the same nature and kind with that whereof we are speaking; even as by the Spirit of the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 18. That *as* does not signify similitude but identity: the work must be such as may plainly and evidently speak its own author; or so as that it may be peremptorily concluded,—this is a work so very agreeable to the Spirit of God, that nothing but the Spirit of God could have done it. Now the Spirit of God hath wrought like itself, and worthy of itself; and what it, and it only, could do. 'Tis true indeed that the nature of the work, and all the several parts of it, and the way of working, may be very much unknown things to persons as yet unexperienced. But that there is such a work necessary to be done, by which the spirits of men are to be changed, and that the Spirit of God only can do it, I know nothing can be pretended more intelligible than this; or why, at least, it should with any tolerable or colourable pretence be said to be an unintelligible thing. 'Tis not because men cannot understand this, but because they have no mind to believe it and admit the truth about it into their hearts, that they are so little willing of. Or is it, that the thing is inconsiderable, and not worthy of their regard? No man who hath not abjured his understanding, can have the face to say so. What can concern me more, than whether I have a station in God's kingdom, or not? where the state is such as includes and comprehends the whole of that felicity and blessedness, which an intelligent nature is capable of, and being excluded that kingdom, is to be excluded blessedness, and left a miserable creature for ever? certainly no man who hath not abandoned man, and put off himself, but must acknowledge this to be the greatest concernment to him of all others; and that therefore he is not unmoved and unaffected, with this matter, because he thinks it inconsiderable and not worth his regard. The business therefore still returns hither, that it is not believed: men will not believe it, and therefore they are not concerned.

Thus far you see, that there is too plain evidence that this doctrine is not believed. The next thing would be to show the unreasonableness of this disbelief. It might well astonish our hearts to think what there is of malignity and horror in this belief among them who professedly own, that this revelation is from God; but yet, it is manifest, all the while, that they do not believe it: or that ever it should enter into the heart of a creature capable of understanding its own rise and original from the ever blessed God, to doubt, or dispute, or deny so plain and manifest a revelation from him as this. The case arrives to this state, and we cannot give it a more favourable one, as if such a person should say to the great God, the Lord of heaven and earth, "I take thee to have spoken by thy own Son, such and such words to men, but I do not believe them." This it plainly comes to. He hath said, that men must be born again, or they can never come into the kingdom of God; and if such persons would say, what is in their hearts, they must say too, We do not believe it. The matter comes to a direct and flat contradiction, a practical one, and which is more and worse than a verbal one, between them and the great Lord and Founder of this kingdom: as if they better knew the mind of God in this matter, than his own Son, who came out of his bosom; or better understood, who were to be of God's kingdom, and who not, than he into whose hands the management of all the affairs of this kingdom is put. Certainly when this matter comes to be discussed, we shall find it impossible to pitch upon any thing in our own thoughts which carries more of monstrosity and horror in it, than the disbelief of such a truth.

SERMON V.*

WE have insisted upon this subject doctrinally at large, and made some entrance upon the use. That which we have, in the first place, inferred, is; That this being so evident and important a truth, it is very strange it should not be more generally believed among Christians, than apparently it is. We have showed that generally it is not believed, in the last exercise; and are now to show,

Secondly, The great unreasonableness and perversity of this disbelief in reference to this great important truth. We insist the longer and more distinctly upon this use, because it is the use which our Lord himself makes of his discourse, upon this subject, as you may see in the 11th and 12th verses, which I shall have occasion to consider and open afterwards. The great unreasonableness of not believing this truth will appear, if you consider—1. How much is to be said for it—2. How very little and insignificant any thing is, which can be said against it.

1. Consider how much is to be said for it, and hath in part been said. As much surely as any considering person would think necessary to recommend a thing to his belief which he did not know before. I would appeal to men, what would they expect? Or what condition would they require any such thing to be qualified with, which they would think to be a competently credible object of their belief? What would they say is necessary? What suppositions would they make? If you had a voice from heaven, or an angel sent to you on purpose; or if Christ himself should appear and speak these words to you he did to Nicodemus; then you would believe. I they who say so would soon find, if God should make trials with them, it would be to as little purpose

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clothe it with the evidence wherewith he doth recommend it. For you see, though our Lord himself did speak these things to Nicodemus, yet he hath cause to complain of infidelity still. But what, is not a thing sufficiently credible without such a recommendation as this? Or is it not a most unreasonable extravagance to say, "Except ourselves, with our own eyes, see signs and wonders, we will not believe?" What, have you a vision and voice for every thing you believe which you don't see with your own eyes? Let it be considered what we have to assure us of this great truth.

1. We have the plain reasonableness of the thing itself: which will appear by laying together these several considerations.

1. That the kingdom of God imports a state of perfect felicity in the highest notion of that kingdom; or a state of preparation thereto, or gradual tendency thitherward, in the first or lower notion of it. This is a thing plain and obvious to all our thoughts, that the kingdom of God imports a state of persons either perfectly happy already, or else tending to a state of happiness.

2. Consider that such who are no way within the compass of this kingdom, are not happy as yet. Look upon any man in his natural state, and any one will soon acknowledge, I am not happy as yet. I appeal to your own senses, and to the common sense of men, can you say, you are already happy? What! do you know no wants? no desires? I wish it were better with me than it is! A plain indication to every man's sense, that he is not happy as yet. And,

3. That it is not in the power of all this world to make men happy. He who enjoys never so much of it, it is not a little more will make him happy; for it is manifest an additional degree of a good of the same kind, will not do it; it must be a good of another kind. They who have most of this world, have they ever thought themselves happy, or pronounced so concerning their present state? *Ante obitum nemo*, &c. Pagan light hath seen so much, that in this life no one can be happy; who have known how to make their best of this world, as well as any of us. Besides, it is in the reason of the thing manifest, that no man can be happy, as long as he knows himself to be mortal. There is a gloomy thing called death still hanging over my head, and it will light upon me one time or other. Can any man be happy as long as the case is so, and while he hath no comfortable expectation of any thing better hereafter? Men are a little pleased sometimes, while they can forget dying. But what is all that happiness which depends only upon a man's forgetfulness; that is, which is capable of being undone and blasted by a thought? That is a pitiful happiness, which a thought can destroy and blow away. Such only is that happiness which this world affords, and which can grow up out of this earth. I conclude therefore, that nothing can be more evident to the common sense and experience of all men, than that as they are not yet happy, so they cannot be, by any thing this world can give them.

4. That they cannot be happy in God without having their spirits changed, and made suitable to him. It puts an equal impossibility in the way of my happiness, whether, either my spirit be suitable to such or such a thing, and it hath not enough in it to make me happy; or that such another thing hath enough in it to make me happy, but my spirit is not suitable to it. As it is in reference to the matter of nourishment; neither can that nourish which doth not afford fit matter, or suitable aliment, to a man's body; nor doth that which is never so suitable nourish if it cannot be received, or there is an aversion and dislike to it. A stone cannot nourish, because 'tis not fit aliment; and the best food cannot nourish, if the appetite is averse and disaffected to it. That person who can think of God with no pleasure, takes no complacency in him; and who bears towards him, not only a cold, but an averse and disaffected heart, can never be happy in God. And such is every one who is as yet only born flesh of flesh; for the carnal mind is enmity to God, and they who are after the flesh, do savour only the things of the flesh.

5. That men cannot change their own hearts, so as to attemper them to God, and make them suitable to him, and capable of his converse, and of being blessed in him. This must also be evident to every man's conscience, who doth but reflect and commune a little with himself. If any man say, I can change the temper of my own soul; 'tis true it doth not love God, and take a present felicity in him, but I can alter it and bring it to that pass: any one who will say so, must be the most self-condemned creature in all the world. Canst thou turn and change thy own heart, and wilt let it go as it is, averse and disaffected to God, one moment longer? If they can work that change themselves, they are utterly inexcusable that they don't do it out of hand. But if they cannot, as whosoever will go into that trial will soon find; then in the

6th place, God must do it, or it can never be done; and this is that begetting spirit of spirit, which we speak of, as necessary to a man's coming into the kingdom of God, or being happy. And these considerations laid together, make it apparently reasonable in itself, unto any man who will allow himself to consider, that such a work must be done, in order to such an end. Now how perverse a thing is it to disbelieve and reject so plain a truth, which will not admit of debate! If a man bring the matter to a serious scrutiny, and will but reasonably consider it, he must yield the cause as soon as he begins to think of it.

2ndly, Add thereto the authority of the Revealer, which ought to silence our spirits, and bring them to a compliance with the revelation, though the thing were not evident, and we had much to say against it. And here we have a twofold revealer to consider, and speak briefly of; that is—the subordinate and secondary revealer, namely, the evangelist—and the primary and first Revealer, our Lord Jesus himself. If there is any doubt in the case, it must be concerning the one or the other of these; either that this holy inspired man did not truly report to us Christ's words, and that he tells us Christ said what he never said; or else that our Lord Jesus himself did not say truly, in what he said. As to the

1. Why should we think that this blessed man should write down such words as these in his Gospel as spoken by Christ, if he had not spoke them? If any man would think this matter is not to be believed upon that account; it doth manifestly appear, if we would think no better of him, by the general strain and tenor of his writing, that he writes like a rational man; and then supposing him a rational intelligent man, it cannot but be supposed, that he must have some design or other, in whatsoever he did set down. Now what can any man think his design should be, to say, that our Lord said such words as these, if he did not say them? You would easily suppose that John being by his calling and office a disciple and apostle of Christ, that he must needs think himself, upon that account, concerned and engaged to promote that interest, which he had now espoused, and to propagate to the utmost the Christian name and profession. We can't in reason but suppose him to be very intent upon this. If he were so, and would disguise and palliate things, and represent them otherwise than they were; surely he would have misrepresented them to the advantage of his cause with men, and not to the disadvantage. If we could allow ourselves to suspect; as we who are Christians cannot, though it is possible that such disallowed thoughts may sometimes start up in our minds; that he would disguise or misrepresent any thing; we must suppose that he would do it, so as to make the profession and cause, which he had undertaken, look more plausibly, and be more alluring and inviting, and fit to draw multitudes to embrace the Christian profession as he had done. But would any man who had such a design as this, if he would misrepresent things, offer to put such devised thing in those records which he was to transmit up and down the world, and from age to age, as he could not but know would be universally disrelished; and than which it was impossible that any thing could be more ungrateful to the spirits of men, or more opposite to their lusts and interests? What, to tell men that they must undergo a new birth, and must be born spirit of spirit, be refined into a certain sort of spiritual beings by the work of God upon them; or else they can never come into the kingdom of God? Certainly if he would disguise, and misrepresent, he would not have done it on that hand; he would have done it rather on the other by indulging and complying with the prejudices and lusts

and interests of men. There remains not therefore any colour for an imagination, that he should tell us, our Lord spake such words as these, if he did not. And there can be less pretence, in the

2nd place, To think or imagine, that our Lord Jesus Christ did speak these words, but that he misrepresented the matter, and did not speak the thing as it was. For what can be supposed? that he did not know his own power, or that he did not know his own mind? He who is appointed the great Lord of this kingdom, the very Founder of the constitution, and who is to gather and bring in all to it whoever shall come into it, did he not know upon what terms men could be brought into the compass of God's kingdom? Or was it to be supposed possible that any should intrude and maintain their intrusion into this kingdom, against him and the supreme power which he hath in it? Briefly consider, either he must be deceived himself, or have a design to deceive us. Why, what should that aim at? With what purpose and intent? What was to be got by it? What end could be served? If it could consist with his nature, with whom guile was never found, yet certainly it never could with his design; we cannot suppose any by-design he should aim at; and with his great and main design, it holds no agreement either way. But with what horror should men's infidelity be thought of, when it doth, even in the very substance of the thing, cast such reproaches as these upon our great Lord! What is infidelity in reference to any Gospel truth, but a disassent that this is true? and so it is saying, that it is not true, when he saith, it is; and opposing our sense to his plain and express word.

This is the complaint our Lord makes in this case, We testify the things we have known. As if he should say; "I speak upon knowledge, I understand all these things very well, they all lie before me and within my prospect. I testify what I see, and is under my own eye; and ye will not receive our witness. If I speak to you of earthly things, and you will not believe, (that is, in respect of the manner of their presentation, not the matter represented. It was not the matter ultimately represented, but mediately. He speaks with reference to a known custom among the Jews of baptizing their proselytes: the proselytes of justice were constantly admitted by baptism among them, and then forsook father and mother and all their former natural relations, and came into new relations throughout. Other usages belonging to the Jewish constitution, are called in Scripture by the suitable names of worldly and carnal things, like this expression here, of earthly things. I speak to you of what these earthly things, which are in use among yourselves, do signify; and yet you don't believe me, you will not take in what I say when I go so familiarly to work with you, only to show you the meaning of your own practice and what is done among yourselves,) how shall you believe when I come to tell you of heavenly things, which have no dependance upon or relation to such usages among yourselves; as the Son of man's descent from heaven, and ascent into it again; and his being on earth and in heaven at the same time; as his words afterwards are. What do you make of this, when you will not believe me opening to you so plain and obvious a rudiment of religion, that men must undergo a change in the temper of their spirits, signified by the practice, which is common and usual among yourselves, of baptizing them; as if they were born into a new world, who came to be proselytes of your religion?" It is therefore upon the whole matter a thing full of horror, and which ought to make our hearts to tremble, to think that such infidelity should lurk in the spirits of men who call themselves Christians, in reference to so great and unquestionable things of Christianity, and that it should admit of any debate. Such expostulations we find used by our Lord elsewhere; "I come to you," saith he, "in my Father's name, and you will not believe me." Monstrous partiality and disaffection of men's hearts to divine truths, even because they are truth, and because they are divine! So our Lord expressly speaks; Because I tell you the truth, you will not believe me, John viii. 45. As if it were truth as truth which was hated by men, and which they therefore cannot endure because it is true. And when we consider too, that to believe a divine truth with a divine faith is a great piece of homage which we pay to the great and glorious Lord of heaven and earth, the first and eternal truth, into whose veracity the whole matter is resolved. That is, the thing is therefore certainly true and credible, and to be believed as true, because it comes from the first and eternal truth, and is a derivation or beam of light from that original light. 'Tis the homage of a reasonable creature to the Author of his being, to have his soul overwrought and swayed by the authority of his word; because he hath said it, I yield and submit; I dare not but own it as true, and believe it as true. And then what an affront must it be on the other hand, to the great and eternal God, when such truths as these so plainly proposed to us in his word, are by infidelity excluded and shut out of our hearts. The authority of his word does not prevail to weigh and sink them down into their souls; but they hover on the surface, and we entertain them with a notional opinion, as true; but in the mean time, exclude them out of our hearts, as false. For there it is that infidelity hath its seat, as faith hath its seat there; With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, Rom. x. That assent is not worthy the name of faith which doth not enter into, and possess, and command a man's soul. Then it is indeed that a truth is entertained with a divine faith, when the thing revealed is received not as the word of man, but as the word of God. This comes from the eternal God, I take it upon the authority of his word; and hence it comes to be urged upon a man's heart, and to impress its own stamp and likeness there. This is the believing any thing with a Divine faith. So that indeed this truth, of the necessity of a man's being born spirit; that is, who do then come to be born spirit at that very time; it doth in this way insinuate and get into them: not by violence, or offering force to human nature; we are to imagine no such thing; but it doth by a plain and evident discovery of the truth, slide into it and through it, notwithstanding all the prejudices which obstruct and shut up the heart of man; and so creates that faith by which men believe unto righteousness and blessedness. And therefore it is plainly said, They who are of God do hear God's words, John viii. 47. Their hearing doth include believing; Ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God. The expression there, to be of God, is only a short elliptical expression for being born or begotten of him. You therefore receive not his words because you are not born of God; therefore his word doth not enter into you, and hath no place in you. And certainly it ought to fill our souls with deep resentments, to think that there should be such an obstruction in the hearts of men towards God; that a discovery about such an important matter, coming with so much evidence from him and upon his authority, can't be believed, when men do so ordinarily and easily believe one another, about matters wherein they take themselves to be very much concerned.

Thus much then is to be said for it; as to the little which can be said against it, see the close of the foregoing discourse. This is the first use of this truth, I should proceed to the rest, &c.

SERMON VI.*

WE have at large opened the words, and made some progress in the use. We have inferred from hence, how strange it is that so plain and important a doctrine as this cannot obtain to be believed: that we insisted somewhat largely upon. We proceed to,

2. Inference,—That it is evident the design of regeneration is to prepare and fit men to be of God's kingdom.—This is that which he hath in his eye and aim, when he begets souls by his own Spirit in a holy spirituality, suitable to the productive cause. It is very becoming a reasonable creature, when he observes some great work is to be done, and there is great apparatus for the doing of it, to inquire, What doth all this mean? What is all this for? We are plainly told, that such a work as this is to be done upon

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men, as begetting them anew; we see great preparations are made for it; the Gospel sent down from heaven on purpose; an office constituted and set up to dispense it; time sanctified and made sacred; solemn ordinances appointed; a frame of worship instituted. It would certainly be great inadvertency not to consider within ourselves, What is all this for? Why all this is for regenerating men first. And what is that for? Why to bring them into God's kingdom. I doubt it is not seriously considered as it ought to be, how great a design this is, and how intent the blessed God appears upon it, by begetting men of the Spirit to form them for his kingdom. And from hence arise several subordinate instructions. As,

1. That when a man comes to be regenerate, he is born to great things. If God hath given us to understand so much of his design, that it is on purpose and in order to the instating them into his kingdom, that he hath begotten them spirit of spirit; certainly it is a very great and glorious estate, that every regenerate person is born to. We commonly measure our judgments concerning the fortunes of this or that person by his birth. We say concerning the son of a rich or great man, of a nobleman or a prince; that he is born an heir to great and ample possessions, and will certainly be a possessor of them; though there are many things intervening which may cut off a person born to great things from ever being the possessor of them. But here the case is sure, and not liable to contiugencies, which can infer frustration and disappointment. It is very unreasonable all this while that we so little consider this, and have so mean low thoughts of the business of regeneration, or regenerate persons; certainly they ought to appear very venerable persons in our eyes. Here is one, as it is meet for us to judge, who is born of God, spirit of spirit; a refined being is begotten in him, which entitles him to eternal glory, an everlasting kingdom. Indeed it is not strange that such persons are obscure unto the most of the world. The world is said not to know God's sons: "What manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God?" *i. e.* made such; for God's calling is making them what he calls them. He calls things which are not, and makes them existent things. It is subjoined, Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew not him, 1 John iii. 1. There is a heavenly progeny among them, whom the world don't know; but though the world don't know God's sons, methinks, they should know one another, and not think so meanly of one another's state and condition as the rest of the world think of them. 'Tis a most emphatical scripture, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. Being begotten again to a lively hope—unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. A regenerate person is no mean person, if you consider his great parentage and high extraction; or the inheritance to which he is born, and the high and glorious hopes which are before him.

2. This instruction also proceeds hence, that we are to look upon it as a very unbecoming thing, when we regret what God further doth, in the prosecution of this design. He having begotten persons on purpose for his kingdom, and to partake of the glory and blessedness of its consummate state, doth gradually, as he hath prepared and adapted them for it, translate and take up into that kingdom, such as were before born into it, and begotten to it. It is unreasonable to regret this, whether we ourselves are the spectators only, or whether we also come to be the subjects of this dispensation.

When we are spectators of it as to others, and see him transuming and taking up some out of this lower state of his kingdom, into the more glorious state of it, whom he hath begotten thereto before; why are we to regret this? What, that God should have the disposing of his own children, whom he hath begotten, as the Father of spirits, spirit of spirit? Indeed whatsoever there is of displeasure towards us in such dispensations, ought to be considered and entertained by us, with a due sense of it; but what there is of divine good pleasure expressed in it, ought also to be submitted to with an awful and complacential subjection. How unreasonable a thing is it, that we should grudge him his own children whom he hath begotten! We should think it very hard, if we dispose of any child of ours in sickness to be nursed abroad, and we can't have it home without a quarrel when we think fit to have it home.

And how unworthy is it when men regret to be the subjects of this dispensation of God, and can't endure the thoughts of going into his kingdom, the most perfect and glorious state of it, unto which if they are regenerate, they were born? What, to be unwilling to go to our own Father, and have our spirits return to him, when he hath begotten them for himself? How vile a thing is this! What terrene, dunghill hearts are ours, which so cleave to this vile earth! We should think it a most unnatural thing in a son, who has been long in a foreign country, especially if in straits and wants there; and who is not so as to spiritual concernments; and yet should regret to be called home by his father; for that would carry this signification with it, that he counts any miseries more tolerable than his father's presence. Certainly it must needs speak what is very unlike and unworthy of a child. I know not what we can have to say for ourselves, that there should be so few unfeigned desires after our Father's house and our own home; and when we say, we belong to his family, and have been born into it, and begotten of him; that yet we never care to come there. Still a little longer, a little longer, we would be here below, in this mean and abject state; as though we were contented to endure any thing of misery, and calamity, and turmoil, and all the impurity of this world, rather than be at home with our own Father. There is an aptness to regret God's known purpose; we struggle and shrink at the thoughts of dying; but certainly that must argue a very great distemper of mind: for what, would we not have the end attained? would we have the design defeated and blasted for which we were born? If we were ever born spirit of spirit, the design of it was to prepare us for that kingdom into which we regret to go; we were born on purpose for it, and yet we would not come there.

3. We further learn this instruction hence, that 'tis a most highly becoming thing for the regenerate very much to mind that state for which they have been born. No one is wont to be blamed for minding things no higher than what he was born to. Many times we reckon it a piece of unwarrantable and unbecoming arrogance among men, when they aspire to things beyond their sphere and compass, and aim at things above their birth; but a Christian is not to be blamed, when he aspires to immortality and eternal glory, and all the felicity and blessedness of God's kingdom above; for it is that he is born to. It is justly blamed when the spirits of any are found visibly to sink below their birth and state to which they were born, and the grandeur of their families; when men born of noble parentage, who have that which they call generous blood running in their veins, do mind only mean things, and discover themselves to be of abject ungenerous spirits; this is reckoned a great incongruity among men. And certainly there is nothing more unbecoming than that a Christian should mind and be intent upon things which are of a mean and base allay, and forget the kingdom he was born to. We may aspire high; our birth and state will justify us in it; for we are born of God, and born to a kingdom. Why, to let our thoughts grovel, and our affections be scattered in the dust of the earth, to embrace dunghills; we have nothing whereto to impute it, but an ignoble and mean temper of spirit; which certainly when we know, and can reflect upon, it should be far from us to allow; and wherein we find ourselves guilty, we should lay our hands upon our mouth, for it is unaccountable, and nothing is to be said. See how the persons are described whom God sorts out and distinguishes from the rest of men for eternal blessedness, Rom. ii. 6. It is said, that God will judge every man according to his works. God is represented there in the person of a judge, and as undertaking the work of judgment upon all this world; and the world accordingly is divided into two parts, as the judgment of God finds them, and will distinguish them; that is, they are distinguished by their final states. There are some who are for life, as that which by the determination of the judge belongs to them; and others are for indignation and wrath, and tribulation and anguish. These are distinguished by their spirits, or present characters, in order to that final partition of them. These are "such who by

patient continuance in all well doing, who seek honour and glory and immortality." This is the character of their spirits; and to such when God will render to every one according to his works, he will render eternal life. The other sort are described by their character in reference to their state; that is, "who are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; to them he will render indignation and wrath," &c. To them who are contentious: it is plain enough, if we consider the scope and current of the apostle's discourse, what he means by being contentious here. If you consider it in opposition to what is subjoined, "who do not obey the truth;" or by way of collation with what he had been saying in the foregoing chapter, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;" 'tis plain the truth which he speaks of all along in that discourse is practical truth, or the truth by which they should be governed in their practice, and according to which they ought to square and conduct their course. It is very plain the contention he means, is a contention against such truth; when men's spirits resist and withstand the tendency and design and dictates of it, the practical and governing dictates which do more or less obtain in all; some even in the pagan world, and those which are more clear in the Gospel; but somewhat or other of practical truth there is in all. And this is that which is the common character of those who shall finally perish; who are contentious against that truth which should have governed them; and when it should have been as on a throne in their souls, it is shut up as in a prison. They held it in unrighteousness, and fettered it in chains, and pent it up, and confined it only to the notion of the mind; let it hover only in dark ineffectual notions, and never admitted it to walk forth into their lives and practices, and have that inspection and power there which it ought to have had. And that practical truth is resisted in nothing more than in this, when men addict themselves, in defiance of it, to things which their own reason and experience tell them are not proportionable to them; to earthly, terrene things, which they cannot but know are not commensurate to intelligent and immortal spirits.

They who are of such abject, mean spirits, the Lord will be ashamed at last to be called their God, Heb. xi. 16. But now they seek a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. These are a sort of persons who approve themselves his children, and evidence of whom their are born; the temper of their minds, and the course and drift of their designs, show of what Father they are descended. They mind and seek a better country, wherefore he is not ashamed to be called their God: "These are my own race; they are suitable to me." But it is a very sad and dreadful intimation to those who are of mean, base, and earthly spirits: He will be ashamed to be called their God: "These are no children of mine; they were never born of my Spirit: I never had any such children."

4. We further learn, that we are to consider them as most miserable creatures, who are not regenerate. Whosoever are for God's kingdom are regenerated on purpose to prepare them for it. They therefore who are not regenerate, want the radical, fundamental preparation; the *primordia*, or first principles by which they are to be adopted to that kingdom: and have, in the very temper and frame of their spirits, their doom; there is this to be read concerning their states, that they are not for the kingdom of God. Men are entered into this kingdom here by regeneration, or being born into it; and so growing up here, are transplanted into the eternal, glorious kingdom. Now it is a most miserable case that there is but one inlet or way into the kingdom of God, and men should not be in that way, or so much as about it, or apprehend they have any concern to be so; as the case is with too many, even the generality of those who are unregenerate. But then what is their hope, or what can it be? Do they think to leap over this initial state of God's kingdom, and get into the kingdom of glory without ever coming into the kingdom of grace? How strange a disappointment must they needs find at last! For they are to consider that this country is the only prolific country; they are now new born in heaven; there they are perfected, not begotten. As there are none who become first wicked in hell; they are there most wicked, or wicked to the utmost; but they were first wicked here on earth: why, so 'tis in reference to heaven too; here men must first be spiritual and holy, and born of the Spirit; and become most spiritual and holy, when they are most blessed above. And therefore they are certainly in a most miserable case, who since regeneration is designed as the preparation finally and ultimately for heaven, and for this eternal, glorious kingdom; are neither regenerate, nor apprehensive of any concern they have to be so.

5. We learn, that as the misery of the unregenerate is justly said to be great, so their folly may be concluded to be no way inferior to their misery. They are as foolish as they are miserable, that is, they speak, and think, and reckon upon it, that it shall be well with them hereafter, though they are never regenerate; they fortify their own hearts into a confidence, that they shall attain things which they were never born to, and have no other reason to expect. You would think it a great piece of madness, for a man to go about and say, that he expects a kingdom, and doubts not but he shall be a great prince; though he walks up and down in rags, and is only the son of a ploughman or some mean person: he would be thought fit to live in chains. Why, you will certainly say, the expectations of all unregenerate persons, to be hereafter happy in God's kingdom, do not carry this folly in it. Yea, it carries in it much greater folly; for we cannot say it is impossible that a person of a very mean parentage should come to greatness in this world. Histories of former and latter times, give us some instances of this kind; but you would think him a madman for all that, who should say so. As certainly he would be truly counted so, who should hope for every thing which is possible, merely because it is possible; as he would be who feared every thing which is merely possible to come to pass that is hurtful and evil to him: as if a man should fear that every bit of meat he eats should choke him, or that in his ordinary walks in the streets, a tile should fall and beat out his brains. Thousands of such accidents are not impossible; but if a man should fear them continually, it were certainly a great folly, and would put a great deal of misery into his life. It would be equally an absurd thing, to hope every thing which is possible, only because it is possible, and no more; but then to hope for that which is simply and absolutely impossible, and which the shortest and quickest turn of thought would convince a man is so, is a madness beyond all imagination. If you hear a man walking in the streets in rags, and saying, "I hope at some time to be a prince or great monarch before I die;" you can't say, he hopes for an impossible thing: but if you hear an unregenerate man say, "I hope I shall have the eternal kingdom, though I continue unregenerate, and die just as I am;" his hope is simply impossible; for there is an inconsistency even in the temper of his spirit with the purity and felicity of that kingdom; besides the irreversible determination of the righteous and supreme Lord of it, and the disposer of all the concerns of it. This is therefore the strongest piece of folly which ever had place in any human breast, that a man should be yet unborn of God, and never reckon upon being other than he is, and yet expect a place in God's kingdom.

I proceed now to the 3d inference,—That it is a most wonderful mercy, that any such work as this should be done among the children of men, as begetting them spirit of spirit, in order to their coming into his kingdom.—This is a mercy for ever to be had in admiration, and which we can never enough adore, if we allow our thoughts to work a little upon the following considerations.

1. The subject of it, or who they are who are thus born. Why, the most undeserving creatures; for, alas! what can they pretend to deserve who are by nature children of wrath, and exposed from their birth to his displeasure? and altogether uninclined either to desire or comply with that by which such a work as this was to be wrought upon them? who were uninclined so much as to desire, "Oh that the transforming power of the Holy Ghost might come upon me!" or disposed to fall in with the motions of the Spirit in order to it? And besides, what a wonderful mercy was it that ever such impure creatures should be dealt

withal, in such a way! How would any of us like to have that for our employment, to touch the ulcerous sores of some poor wretch lying in rags upon a dunghill, in order to the cure of them? Yea, and most disaffected and opposite to the work, and the worker of it, full of enmity, and apt to strive, and contend, and rebel against the blessed Spirit of God, whenever he comes to touch upon their hearts, in order to such a work as this.

2. The Author of the work, the blessed Spirit. What a wonderful mercy is it that the Spirit should ever come down amongst men, upon such a design; and become inclined and engaged to diffuse its life and vital influence, in a world lost in carnality and death! This appears if you consider either its purity, and that the Spirit of holiness should come with such a design into so impure hearts; or its high and excellent dignity. If such a work as this could have been done by the hand of man, or it would have sufficed to have sent an angel, it had been less wonderful; but that the Spirit should come, and come on purpose; *q. d.* "I myself will immediately attend this affair, it shall be my own doing; no other hand is proportionable." How highly hath he merited to be called the Spirit of grace! When the malignity of men's hearts against it is intended to be represented and aggravated, it is said, they have done despite to the Spirit of grace, (Heb. x. 29.) the Spirit of all love, and goodness, and benignity, and sweetness. Certainly we have reason to call it the Spirit of grace, and to account and reckon it so, who came among men upon such an errand as this. Or again,

3. The nature of this work. Why, it is begetting men; and what does that import? It imports directly a total change, or a change throughout; and it imports by consequence a resulting relation. They who are begotten, become children to him who begets. What a mercy was this that such a thing should be undertaken, as a total change, and that every part should be made new! If some little alteration would have served the turn, the Spirit of God might easily be supposed to be contented to do it; but to make them new throughout, and in every part, which begetting signifies; why the greatness of the undertaking speaks the mercifulness of the undertaker. And besides, there is the relation which results and is consequentially imported in it. The blessed God might thus have reasoned off the design; "What, shall I beget them? then must I be their Father: and what, to have such miscreants as they my children? Why should I beget them by my Spirit, and become a Father to them who are already of their father the devil? shall I go to make the devil's children mine?"

4. The end, which is to bring them at last into his own kingdom. It is a wonderful mercy, that they who are altogether born in sin, and born under wrath and ruin, should have such thoughts taken up about them; and the holy and eternal Spirit employed on purpose to beget them anew, and form them throughout, and bring them into the presence of his glory, to dwell with him and reign with him for ever. They so partake in this kingdom, as to be kings in it: "He washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." What a wonderful mercy to engage the blessed Spirit to this employment about the spirits of men, upon so important an account, and in order to so high and great a glory!

SERMON VII.

IT is the use we have in hand; for which purpose some practical inferences have been recommended to you; and others do yet remain. That which is the

4. Inference you may take thus;—That they cannot but be very gross hypocrites who carry that semblance and show with them, of having a standing in this kingdom of God; but were never thus born into it.—Here we have these two things to do:—1. To show that such pretenders are hypocrites upon this account.—2. To show the absurdity and folly of that hypocrisy.

I. That there is manifest hypocrisy in the case. In order to the evincing this, we need only to consider with ourselves, that such persons really have not a standing in God's kingdom, and yet that they would be taken to have Hypocrisy is when persons pretend to that good which they have not. It is not any kind of semblance which will put a glory upon us; but the simulation of some good or other; when men pretend to be better, or that their state is better, than indeed it is, or than they are. Nor is it necessary to a man's being a hypocrite that he should understand himself to be so; but only that he carries a show or semblance, whether he deceives others by it only, or himself also, of that good which he hath not. And that such persons are not of God's kingdom we have largely shown already. They neither are, nor is it possible they should be, upon other terms than by being born into it. There is no other possible way to come into this kingdom, or to be made suitable to the nature and end of this constitution, but by being new born spirit of spirit. And therefore that good which such persons pretend to, they have not, who ever they are who are not yet new born. They pretend to be the loyal subjects of the kingdom of God, but it is no such thing, if they are not by a new birth made so; for by their old and natural birth, and as they were born flesh of the flesh, they were never so. And yet it is very apparent on the other hand, that there are many who would be taken to be of that kingdom, though really they were never regenerate or born into it. And this added to the former, evinces the matter we have in hand; that such persons are egregious hypocrites, who are not of God's kingdom, and yet pretend to be of it. And that many of the unregenerate do so, we have such evidences of it as these:

1. That they are very loth to go under the contrary repute. There are none but are either subjects of this kingdom, or rebels against the authority and laws of it. There is no medium between rebellion and subjection; all are either subjects, or rebels. Now they don't profess rebellion, and think it inconvenient to go under the name of rebels, or avow rebellion against the Majesty of heaven. It is plain they would be thought subjects, and are loth to wear that inscription upon their foreheads: Here is a rebel against heaven. They would be thought to be what they are not.

2. They conform themselves to some parts of the law of this kingdom; that is, in such respects wherein their compliance is more easy, and less expensive, and wherein there is less disinclination of heart to it. There are many very easy externals, which being observed and complied with, a reputation may be gained, without any great pains, or inconvenience and loss, or without imposing too much upon themselves. There is an external obedience to the letter of the law, in some of the less principal commands and precepts of it: for if we compare them, we must acknowledge all that duty which immediately terminates upon God, to be more principal than that which immediately terminates upon men. Possibly they can be so content to put on the garb of just and charitable persons; yea, if you go with them no further than the externals of religion, they can be content to come to the public assemblies, and to sit before the Lord as his people sit; with their mouths, *ore tenus*, they show much love, (Ezek. xxxiii. latter end,) *i. e.* they are very devout persons. And while they do all this, what doth it signify, but that they have a great mind to be taken for subjects, and some of God's kingdom; and think it possible to gain a repute by such easy means as these, which they have no cause at all to regret.

3. They declare against the more open rebellions of others. It may be they will lift up loud outcries against very gross wickedness in other men, and condemn them for appearing to be that which themselves in heart really are.

4. They claim the privileges of the subjects of this kingdom. They will have their children to be enrolled, even as theirs who are the members of it, and it may be, come themselves to the Lord's table. They expect the protection

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and blessing of the great King of this kingdom; though possibly they may not have much recourse to him about the concerns of their souls; yet they believe and hope, he will succeed them in their affairs, and prosper them in the world, and save them at last. Why, all these things plainly manifest, that they have a great mind to be taken to be of this kingdom, what really and indeed they are not; and that there is a great deal of hypocrisy in the case. But,

2*ndly*, We are to show the absurdity and folly of that hypocrisy. This will be manifest too, if you consider these two things:—1. That it is without any colourable pretence.—2. That 'tis without any valuable design. If one would put any semblance or show of being what one is not, and manage the business with any wisdom or cunning, there must be these two conjunct; that is, the disguise must be framed with a great deal of art, and some considerable advantage must be got by it. For otherwise, to make such a show to no purpose, though there were never so great ingenuity showed in it, is but to play the fool. But now the hypocrisy which is to be found in this case, must needs be absurd, as having neither colourable pretence, nor valuable design.

1. It hath no sufficiently colourable pretence. Some pretence there must be; otherwise it could not but be hypocrisy. But there wants a specious and plausible pretence in the case; *i. e.* that one should pretend himself to be of this kingdom of God, which consists all of select persons; and yet he never hath been born into such a state. To pretend to be in a state into which there was no imaginable way to come, and with the supposed denial, which we must suppose in the present case, of the only way by which it was possible one could come into such a state. 'Tis impossible there can be a specious pretence for this. But to be a little more particular: It is plain,

I. That men do in this case pretend to be that which they abhor. They pretend at present to be of the initial kingdom, or the kingdom of grace; that is, in short, they pretend to be saints; every one pretends to be so, who pretends to be of this kingdom, for it is a kingdom of such: but being as yet unregenerate, they abhor to be so, and dislike the purity of that state to which they do pretend. This is very gross and absurd. And,

2. They pretend to hope for what they don't desire; and that is equally absurd. They hope they say to be in the consummate and glorious kingdom above; but they don't desire to be there: for it is impossible an unregenerate, unholy heart can. No man can desire that which is unsuitable to his nature, and to which his heart, in its habitual inclinations, is repugnant. Every one who hath this hope in him, purifies himself even as he is pure, 1 John iii. 3. Now for a man to pretend to the hope of that, which in his own heart he doth not desire; this is a most absurd pretence. For though it is very possible to desire that which a man doth not hope for; there are many such irrational desires of things which appear in themselves worth the having, but which we apprehend no possibility of having: such childish and foolish desires and wouldings there may be, of what we have no hope to attain. But it is impossible there can be, on the other hand, the hope of that whereof I have no desire; for hope doth superadd to desire, and therefore doth suppose it. Whatever I hope for I desire, though I do not necessarily, because I desire a thing, therefore hope for it; for to make a thing hopeful to me it must be possible, and it must be arduous, or attended with some kind of appearing difficulty. But I may desire a thing, merely because it appears good, whether I apprehend it possible to be attained or no; or though there is nothing of arduousness appearing in the case. It may be the object of desire, but not of hope.

And most manifest it is, that whosoever are not thus born spirit of spirit, have not any desire to be partakers in this kingdom rightly understood. That is, 'tis not possible that an unrenewed, unspiritual heart can desire the employment and business, the purity and enjoyments, of that state; or the Divine presence in which they are to converse. All by which they can so much as cheat themselves in the case, is only this, having taken up a defective or false notion of heaven, or a future state of blessedness, they hope, they say, to be happy when they die, without having ever formed a right notion, what that happiness is, or wherein it consists. But be it what it will, and though it is never so mistaken a notion, it is plain they desire that happiness which they do desire, only as it is put in comparison with hell, not as it stands in comparison with earth. They had rather indeed be happy, with such an imaginary happiness as they fancy to themselves *in* heaven, than to go to hell; but they had rather continue on earth perpetually, enjoying the good things it affords, than that heaven itself, though suited by their own imaginations never so much to the wish of their own hearts. An immortality on earth would be chosen rather. This is not to desire heaven as its blessedness or chief good; for whatsoever I desire as such, I desire absolutely. 'Tis impossible I can take that for my chief good, which I would be content never to enjoy. As much as they pretend to desire heaven, yet they wish never to come there, if they could stay in this world always, and have what it affords them. Therefore, I say, they most absurdly pretend to hope for that heaven, as their best good, which they don't so much as desire ever to enjoy. And,

3. There is a great deal of absurdity in the pretence upon this account, that very often it is to be seen through. It is so thin and slight a cover that any eye may even see through it. All who are hypocrites are not artificial ones: there are a great many hypocrites, and the far greater part of them, who are mere bunglers at it; they are hypocrites without any skill or artifice; and so they take up a pretence which any body, with half an eye, may penetrate and see through. As if, for example, a person who pretends to be a subject of God's kingdom, and yet makes it manifest in the course of his conversation that he stands in no awe of God at all, which is a prime thing in that subjection. So the case is very often, as the Psalmist takes notice, (Psalm xxxvi. beginning,) The wickedness of the wicked saith in my heart, the fear of God is not before his eyes. His wickedness speaks in my heart, that he is one fearless of God, and who stands in no awe of him. So it is with many a man who professes somewhat of religion, that is, who doth not profess atheism, or rebellion against heaven; yet the wickedness of his course and practice is such as to speak in another man's heart, sure this man has no fear of God before his eyes. Now how absurd is this, to put on a covering and disguise, which doth not hide a man at all! The whole course of their lives proclaims them to be no other than earthly, carnal worldlings, while they pretend to be designing for heaven; for every one who professes a relation to this kingdom, is understood to stand related not only to the inchoate but the consummate state of it, or the kingdom of heaven. But while they pretend themselves to do so, the pretence is easily to be seen through, and they who observe the ordinary course of their conversation, discourses, and designs, easily see that they are mere compositions of earth; and unless you can suppose a clod of clay can be carried up into heaven, they are never like to come there. It is to be seen that they are men, as it were made of earth; and all their discourses, converses, actions, and designs, smell of earth. It is therefore observable, that no man can make himself more ridiculous, than when he takes upon himself to act a part, to act it partially, and when he goes to personate another man, to do it absurdly: why he had better have contented himself to have appeared only in his own likeness, and in his natural face and posture. Thus the case is with such hypocrites; they do, it may be, disguise themselves *quoad hoc*, as to this particular thing; but then they lay themselves open in something or other else. Just as if some vain person should mightily pride himself in some gay rich apparel, which he had thrown on upon some part of him; and all the other parts appeared clothed with nothing but rags, or exposed to view more shameful nakedness. How ridiculous should we account such a person! And,

4. The pretence with many is an evanid thing, and soon vanishes away. And then how great is the absurdity to make myself be thought, if I could then succeed so far to be thought, such a one yesterday, and to-day discover myself to be quite another! They who pretend to be of this kingdom of God, and the appearance from whence they would gain to themselves that estimate and reputation, be-

ing nothing that hath life in it; as not being born or connatural to the new creature; it will then soon be a withering and vanishing thing. As Job speaks of the hypocrite; Can a rush grow without mire? Job viii. 11. Can there be verdure and greenness, and fair appearance, and nothing at all to maintain it? A mere spider's web, such a thing is the best pretence of the hypocrite; why, how soon is it swept away! It is very apparent, that the living root being wanting, that which is merely external of a person's religion, will in tract of time become tiresome, and he will be very well content to throw it away himself, when he finds it to be for convenience. So we find Job speaking again concerning the hypocrite, chap. xxvii. 10. Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God? That is, he will not be always religious; for calling upon God there, is only a synechdochal expression for religion in general. Will he always call upon God? No, surely; for he doth not delight himself in the Almighty, and hath not a temper of spirit suited to God; the habitual disposition of his soul is opposite and averse; God is one in whom he can take no pleasure; and then you may be sure he will not call upon him always; his religion will have an end, and he will soon grow weary. And how absurd a thing is it to take up and wear a while a disguise, and have afterwards a kind of an unhappy necessity come upon me to have it made appear, I did but act a part, and no more! That is the first thing. But,

2. It is without any valuable design. For what is there to be got by it, for a man to pretend himself to be a loyal subject of God's kingdom, who never had his heart changed and renewed, and made suitable to the laws and constitutions of it? Why certainly nothing worth designing, whether you consider the matter with reference to God or man. In reference to man; him indeed you may deceive; but that is to no purpose. In reference to God, though that were to never so great a purpose, yet him you can never deceive. 'Tis true you may deceive man; but what is to be got by it? What is the hope of a hypocrite though he gain, when God takes away his soul? Job xxvii. 8. Alas! what a pitiful little will the greatest gain dwindle into, when God comes to take away his soul! What is he the better for it then?

But as to God, what rational design can a man form to himself, in reference to him, by pretending to be what in this case he is not?

1. It is plain he can never deceive God by that pretence. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." You do but deceive yourselves, as if he had said, by attempting to deceive him. Every man shall reap as he sows; he who sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; he who sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, Gal. vi. 8. You do but deceive yourselves, and not at all impose upon God, if being flesh you look for any better issue of things, than what is suitable to your state and temper; and if not being spiritual you have any expectations of that state of blessedness, which is only agreeable to such a temper. That puts the matter quite out of doubt, you cannot deceive God in the case. But,

2. You will highly provoke him, even by an attempt of it, or admitting an imagination in your own hearts, that you can do it. For what higher an affront can we put upon the infinite and eternal God, than to suppose him like one of the idol gods of the nations, who hath eyes to sees, and sees not? Who would ever worship him as a deity, whom we think we could impose upon by a lie, or a false appearance? Indeed there cannot be a greater absurdity, and no man can act more inconsistently with himself, than at once to profess homage to an object, and think it possible at the same time to impose a cheat upon it. It is truly to deface my own act: I give him worship; that carries the face and appearance of very high thoughts which I have of him, and as if I took him for a very excellent being; but to think to impose upon him by a piece of falsehood, that carries the appearance of the meanest and most despicable thoughts of him which can be imagined. And therefore we find with what severity the holy God speaks, in that case, of any man, who does but say in his heart, I shall have peace, though he walks after the imaginations of his heart: My jealousy shall smoke against that man, Deut. xxix. 19. "What, will he take up such contemptuous thoughts of me? I will make him pay dear for that very thought, and my jealousy shall smoke against him."

3. By this attempt to impose upon the blessed God by false appearances, we bring in very pregnant convictive testimony against our own souls. Hypocrisy always does that. There is no man who plays the hypocrite, but that which he counterfeits, and whereof he puts on the appearance, he doth thereby proclaim it to be good, and valuable; otherwise why doth he imitate or counterfeit? People are not wont to put on a false appearance, to make themselves seem worse than they are, but to make themselves appear better: and their very practice in this thing carries this testimony with it against themselves, that they judge that to be better, and yet decline it. They judge that to be a good whereof they thought fit to clothe themselves with the show; they practically acknowledge it to be a good, and thereby give a mighty testimony against themselves. Thou thoughtest it a good and desirable thing to be a Christian; otherwise why didst thou seem one? to be sincere; otherwise why didst thou pretend to it? And if thou dost think so, why didst thou not aim to be such a one? Beside,

4. They hereby lose the opportunity which they might otherwise have had of becoming what they seemed to be. The moralist speaks about the business of wisdom, *Multi ad sapientiam pervenissent, nisi se ad sapientiam pervenisse putarant: Many had attained to be wise, had they not thought themselves to be already so.* If they had not cozened themselves with the appearance of it, many might have come to have been sincere. And 'tis a miserable thing to please oneself with the shadow, all that time wherein one should have been getting the substance, till the time is expired and gone.

But here now a question may perhaps arise, by some such person or other, who may fear himself not yet to be sincere, and may therefore say, "What am I to do in this case? while I think I am not sincere, and while perhaps that really is my case? Am I to throw away all my profession? Or am I to profess enmity against God? Being not yet regenerate, and therefore not yet a subject, must I therefore profess myself a rebel?" It would be very easy to discover what is duty in this case, if we do but consider and fasten upon what is only faulty in it. Now wheresoever there is hypocrisy there must be some good wanting; and there must be the present appearance and semblance of that good which is wanting. Thus it is in the present case. This good is wanting, a real subjection of heart and spirit to the laws and constitution of God's spiritual kingdom, which is only brought about by the new birth. Well, but here is the appearance of it too, else there could not be hypocrisy. Now let us consider where the fault lies in this case: the fault cannot lie simply in the appearance, but only as it is untrue; for there are true appearances, as well as false. The appearance therefore is upon no other account faulty, but as it is false; for if the good were there, whereof there is the appearance, the appearance would not only be lawful, but a duty. We are to hold forth the word of life, by which we have been made to live; as the apostle directs, Phil. ii. 16. Now therefore inasmuch as the fault here is, that while there is such an appearance, that good doth not *subesse*, there is not that good underneath which there ought to be; so the thing now to be done, is not to throw away the appearance, but to have the good supplied; that is, in this case, to be restlessly intent to obtain that Spirit, and the vital influences and operations of it, by which that great transforming work may be done. And how great encouragement is there for this at his hand, who hath told us, that if earthly parents, who are evil, will give good gifts to their children; bread rather than a stone; a fish rather than a scorpion; how much rather will our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask it! It is not because this Spirit is out of our power, and not at our command, that we have not the influences and operations of it, according to our need; but because we apprehend not, and will not admit the serious apprehension, of our need. It is a kind of contempt of this blessed Spirit that these pleasant vital influences are so little valued by crea-

tures lost in darkness and death; that we rather content ourselves to be desolate, and seem careless whether we live or die for the present; or are happy or miserable to all eternity. It is upon such accounts as these that the blessed Spirit, though the Author and Fountain of all love, and goodness, and benignity, and sweetness, retires; and that resolution seems taken up, "My Spirit shall no longer strive." It is no wonder if it don't, when there is so little apprehension of our need of him, so little dependance upon him; so little craving, and seeking, and solicitude, whether it be an indweller in our souls, or no: as if the doctrine of the Holy Ghost were a strange and new thing to our ears; or we had not yet heard whether there was a Holy Ghost or no.

SERMON VIII.*

SEVERAL inferences have been recommended to you already, and others remain to be added. As,

5. Inference,—That the depravation of a man's nature in the state of apostacy is total.—Being born denotes a total production, and the thing produced is only somewhat substituted in the room of the nature depraved: and what was corrupted and what is substituted instead of it, must necessarily be commensurate and proportionable to one another. If a man should have a leg or arm perish, he would not say, the production of that arm was a being born; for being born is the production of all the parts together, not of this or that single part alone. And hence it is that that which is corrupted, and that which is anew produced, are in Scripture spoken of under the name of a man; an old man, and a new man. The frame of graces, that impress of holiness, wherein the new creature doth consist, must be understood to be a whole entire body of graces; as the sins which meet together originally in the nature of man, are called by the name of the body of the sins of the flesh, which is to be destroyed; and elsewhere, the body of sin. It is therefore a forlorn miserable state that men are antecedently in to their being born spirit of spirit. And it is of no small consequence, that it be distinctly understood, and sink into our hearts, that this depravation is total, and that we need to be made new throughout. As we have it in 2 Cor. v. 17. If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new. Where this is not understood, it is of most unhappy consequence in these two respects—1. Men take not up right thoughts of the distressedness of their own case;—and, 2. By consequence they never apply themselves to the proper business of the redress of it.

1. They never take up right thoughts of the wretchedness of their own case. They understand neither the extent of it, nor wherein it doth especially consist. They understand not how extensive it is in a twofold respect, that is, to the subject disaffected, and the object whereunto they are disaffected. There is a twofold totality to be considered in this matter, both subjective and objective. The subject is disaffected universally in every faculty; the mind, and judgment, and will, and conscience, and affections, and executive powers; and by a kind of participation, the whole outward man. The apostle applying passages out of the Old Testament, runs over the several parts; Their throat is an open sepulchre, the poison of asps is under their lips, their feet make haste to shed blood, &c. Rom. iii. This is little apprehended by them who consider not the work to be wrought under the notion of a birth, which supposes the antecedent corruption, which always leads the way to generation, to have been universal and total.

And it is as little considered, that this disaffection, as it hath spread itself through the whole subject; so it refers to the whole object, which they ought to be otherwise affected to: that is, the whole law of God, or the entire sum of their duty. They make nothing of it, considered as a duty and enjoined by God, and whereby they pay a respect and homage to him; and indeed every act of duty should be in that regard an act of religion; and that religion is of no value, if this don't run through it, and is only the body and carcass of it, but not the soul and spirit. This is not understood, that in reference to every part of duty which is enjoined, there is a disaffection in the spirits of men, and they are to every good work reprobate: *i. e.* they don't know how to make proof of themselves, or approve themselves in any work they undertake which is truly good; and cannot accordingly be approved of God in what they do or go about.

But besides that the extent of this wretched case is not understood by such as don't consider, that a total depravation is now befallen the nature of man; so that is waived and overlooked which is the special thing in respect both of the object and subject, wherein the misery of their case doth more principally lie: that is, in respect of the subject, the principal depravation is in the heart; in respect of the object, the principal is towards God himself. True it is indeed that by the corruption which hath spread itself through the world, men are become hateful to God, and haters of one another; very ill-tempered towards one another; but we may observe that men are a great deal more easily brought to civility, than religion; and are with much less ado, whatever their tempers and dispositions are, brought to be kind one to another, than to take up loyal and dutiful affections towards God, and deport themselves suitably towards him. Nothing is more plain than that this depravedness which is in the spirits of men, and which this begetting them of the Spirit is to cure, hath for its principal subject and seat, the heart; and for the principal object, the blessed God. That is, the heart, as that doth contain within the compass of it, the judgment, will, and affections of the soul, will by no means endure to be exercised about God. Notional thoughts men can tell how to employ about him, without any great trouble to themselves; they regret it not; but deeply to consider, and with a design to choose him as their God; to desire after him, to love him, and delight in him, and fear before him as such; therein the great disaffection of the spirit of a man towards God doth especially discover itself. This men will not understand, while they apprehend not that the thing to be effected by regeneration, is to make them new at the heart; and to renew the heart principally towards God: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; renew a right spirit within me." When once that work is done, then this becomes the sense and posture of the soul; "As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." A renewed soul presently turns itself to God, and hath a bias put upon it, which inclines it towards him: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth I desire in comparison of thee." He is singled out as the one Good, in which the soul doth centre and rest; "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever:" *i. e.* dwell in the Divine presence, and be always nigh to God.

But this great disaffection of the heart towards God, is still overlooked by the generality of men, as if they did not need to be cured in this respect. And herein they are very much confirmed, because it is become so customary a thing never to make such kind of reflections upon themselves which may naturally and probably lead to the discovery of their case, in this regard. Men don't compare themselves with the rule, and what it requires the dispositions of men's spirits to God should be. It summarily saith, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and all thy strength, and all thy mind." And they don't compare themselves with the examples of holy men; for such they can't but read of, if they consult their Bibles; and such they may possibly sometimes converse with, who can say somewhat of the disposition of their spirits towards God; how pleasant it is to be conversant with him; how they can entertain themselves in solitude, and what a solace it is to a vacant and leisure hour, wherein they can be entirely taken up in conversing with God. They don't compare themselves with the rule, or with other holy men; but they compare themselves, as the apostle speaks, with themselves, (2 Cor. x. 12.) and so they are not wise, or never come to understand themselves. They only compare themselves with themselves; and they find they agree

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with themselves well enough; that is, they are such to-day as they were yesterday; and this week, as last; and this year, as the year before, and for many years past. They agree with themselves very well, and so only comparing themselves with themselves, they never come to understand the case. And this is very natural for men to do, and not to compare themselves with any thing which will be a reproof to them, or look ill upon them. And indeed if they took measure of their own spirits by the rule, or by another good and holy man, they would say, "Things are not so with me as they should be, and as with such and such it is." When I put myself upon a trial, I find I have no disposition of heart to love God; good thoughts of him are not at all delightful to me. But when they compare themselves with themselves, they can say, "I don't vary from myself; just such a temper of spirit as I had, I have." And so they think all is well, and never grow wise, or come to be instructed concerning the truth of their case. But if this great principle of truth could once obtain to be fixed in the minds of men, that there hath been a total depravation, and their whole souls are disaffected to the whole of their duty; and especially towards God, and all that duty which more immediately terminates on him; they would have quite other thoughts concerning the distressedness of their case, than is common with them. And 'tis of ill consequence that so plain and great a truth as this is overlooked.

2dly, Hence also they apprehend not wherein their redress must lie. They are apt either to think that some partial reformation is sufficient, and if they are reformed a little in this or that particular thing, then matters will be right and good, and will be well with them. If the drunkard take up and become sober, he thinks concerning himself, that he is a new man. If an unjust person admit a conviction, or it may be, is taught a little prudence by observing how much any thing of that kind reflects upon his reputation, and so he orders his affairs with more exactness, he is ready to look upon himself as regenerate. But if it were considered that there must be a being born, and that I am in a total corruption; surely another cure would be thought of than that, and it would appear no more proportionable to the case, than a man whose body was all over leprous, and full of sores, would acquiesce in the cure of a slight scratch in his little finger.

And as they apprehend such a partial reformation sufficient, so they apprehend too from hence, that a vital principle is unnecessary. It is very true indeed, that with only some partial maim a principle of life may consist, but a universal corruption imports death. If the case were therefore understood aright, men would see it necessary in order to their cure, that they should be made alive, and a principle of life put into them; which a total depravation speaks to be absent. They would never think themselves well till then, and would find that as they are alienated from the life of God; so their business was to be made alive to God, and to Jesus Christ, as those who have been dead. But again,

6. Inference.—Since in order to any one's partaking of God's kingdom, he must be born spirit of spirit, we infer further, that whosoever becomes truly and sincerely religious, a new creature is transmitted and communicated to him.—This being not understood, it is all a man's business, to contrive and form for himself an artificial religion; and there are several sad consequences ensue thereupon. As,

1. Men attempt to perform what is proper to the Divine life without it. The actions of the Divine life which are visible to men, carry a kind of amiableness in them, in the common consciences of men; and they attempt those actions which are done from a principle of life, without considering, that to be sincerely religious, is to have a new nature. They think to do these actions without that life; just as he who is observed in story, to have attempted the setting up of a carcass of one newly dead: he would fain have it stand in the posture of a living body, but how to make it stand so he knew not. The head falls one way, and the hands another, and the legs tremble under it: at last he cries out, "*Deest aliquid intus, There wants something within.*" Just so do men busy themselves to make an artificial frame, which is indeed a dead carcass of religion; they can't tell how to inspirit it, and it will upon no terms do, but hang and waver this way and that. And hence therefore,

2. All the actions of religion become exceeding grievous and irksome, and no pleasure is taken in them. You know it is a very easy thing for a man to move to and fro his own living body, where he will; pass into a speedy or slower motion, as he sees cause, without any considerable pain or difficulty; but it would be a very tedious thing to move to and fro a dead carcass; that would put him to greater pain. Here lies the difference between these two sorts of men; a man truly religious, and who therefore hath a new creature communicated to him, (as there is where any are begotten,) and other men. When any don't consider this, their business is to make up an external frame of religion, and to act and move and carry it to and fro with them; and that is alike burdensome as for a living man to move to and fro a dead carcass. But to one who is truly and spiritually alive, his new nature which is communicated to him, doth in a natural way animate the frame of religion, in which he is to act; so that the actions of it are easy and light, as all the acts of nature are.

3. Hence it is, that they are so manifestly defective imitations of religion. Their attempts and essays to do like religious men, have notorious and observable flaws in them, because they do not consider, there must be given a new nature, before I become truly religious. Some think it is only to do as men are taught, or only as a piece of art. And when we go to imitate only a natural action, there will be some very observable flaw and defect, some visible disparity in the attempt; as if you should make a puppet act just like a living child, the difference would be soon discovered. And hence,

4. Religion comes to be given over. Whereas where it ever comes to be taken up as an artificial thing, it is taken up on design of some present advantage and convenience; therefore if the inconveniences which shall come to you thereby be greater by continuing it than laying it aside, the reason why it was taken up being vanished, itself must needs cease. If the conveniences are not greater in a course of religion, than the inconveniences they sought to avoid, the religion itself must needs cease of course; and so it commonly doth. But where religion is in a man as a nature, it can't do so. I can easily lay aside my cloak, but not my flesh, which is vitally united with me, and is one thing with me, by a principle of life which runs through me. It is therefore of great concernment truly and thoroughly to understand this, that wherever any become truly religious, a new nature is communicated. Being taught only signifies the acquisitions of art; but being born, and principled, and constituted of such a complexion, signifies a stayed invariable principle of those actions which proceed from it.

7. Inference—That the constitution of God's kingdom must needs be spiritual; for men are born into it spirit of spirit.—It hath been a great modern controversy, as well as an ancient one, among philosophers, whether the constitution of the universe is of *primordia*, which are mechanical, or spermetical and vital. It is a dangerous thing when this comes to be a matter of doubt in religion, whether the constitution of this divine kingdom is mechanical or vital. According as the greater part of men practise, and as their habitual temper is, it seems as if it were thought that Christianity is nothing else but a piece of mechanism. But certainly if you are born into this kingdom, as they who come truly into it spirit of spirit; then the constitution of this kingdom is not mechanical, or an artificial contexture of things; but a frame of things which doth in a spiritually-natural way grow up towards that pitch it is designed to; and is that spirit of life which doth diffuse itself through all the mystical body of Christ; which makes the connexion between part and part, and keeps the body entire and firm to itself, and makes it a consistent and stable thing. And hereupon it must needs be consequent,

1. That whatever there is of disagreement among Christians, who are the living members of this kingdom and body, it must needs be unnatural. The reason is, that all who are of this kingdom, and truly belonging to it, are born into it, and in that birth partake of one and the same

nature, by which they are connaturalized to one another, and to their common Lord and Head: He who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, (Heb. ii. 11.) or make one entire piece. Wherefore now what there is of disagreement among Christians, must needs be preternatural, and beside nature. And hence it is consequent, that it must needs proceed from ill designs: that is, from the devil and his instruments, who make it their business, what they can, to act persons diversely; when if these things be left to their natural course, and the new nature in men is permitted to act undisturbedly, and according to its genuine tendency, it would all run one way. It is needful to be well aware of this, whatever there is of disagreement is accidental to it, and certainly proceeds from a foreign enemy, and somewhat without it, which sets such things on foot, and keeps them on foot, with an ill design towards this kingdom. If the new nature did run its course, and were not accidentally disturbed, by what is not of the constitution of this kingdom, it would certainly run the same way. It is one thing to say what is the constitution of the persons; and another, what is the constitution of them as members of this kingdom and born into it. The corruption of their own hearts, is extrinsical to the constitution of this kingdom; for 'tis only so far as they are new born that they are members of this kingdom. The sphere and verge of this kingdom doth properly and directly take in only the spiritual part. It is a sphere of spirituality; and what there is in it opposite thereunto, is alien to the constitution of it, and doth not belong to it. It is a great thing to be well possessed with this apprehension, that the great enemy of this kingdom does certainly foment whatever there is of disagreement among them who are born the vital members of it; and it must be understood to proceed from an ill design. And,

2. It must argue an evil state, and the prevalency of a contrary principle. If there be divisions among you, are you not carnal? 1 Cor. iii. 3. They who are of this kingdom are spiritual; they are born into it spirit of spirit; so they come into it. Therefore so far as there is a prevailing disagreement and dividedness in the state of things in the church of Christ; so far the persons who are of that state are in a decay, and lapsed into carnality, and things grow worse and worse, as the church grows more divided. That spiritual principle which agrees to every member of this kingdom, as he is born into it, drives all to oneness. It proceeds from God, and tends to him; all are children of the same Father, and they are all begotten to one and the same great and lively hope of an eternal and undefiled inheritance. The *primordia* of the new creature necessarily leads to unity, among all who are of this kingdom.

3. Where there is any departure from this said oneness, there is so much of the decay of the spiritual nature, by the communication whereof men are said to be born into this kingdom. So much disunion as there is, so much carnality; and the church is then in a languishing state spiritually, when it is in a divided state. The not considering this is attended with a double mischief very obvious; that is, that in different respects, the differences and disagreements among Christians, are thought greater and less than indeed they are. They are thought greater than they are, because it is not considered how the nature which is every where communicated among the true members of this kingdom, doth make them substantially one, in the great and main and more principal things. There is a greater stress put upon the differences of those who are Christians indeed, than there ought, or can be, in comparison of the small things wherein they differ. And they very much mistake who think them to be great; for they necessarily agree in one common, new, spiritual, divine nature and principle of life: and it is impossible they should disagree in any one thing, comparatively to so great a thing as this. Whatsoever other differences there are, they are comparatively little, in respect of their agreement in this. They cannot differ so but they are all one in Christ Jesus; whoever is in Christ is a new creature, they all come in him under one mould and stamp by their new creation.

But then, in another respect, the difference is thought a great deal less than indeed it is among Christians. Consider Christians who are truly and sincerely such, and so the difference can't be so great as many times it is thought; but then consider the difference between those who are Christians in truth, and those who are only so by profession; and there the difference, for the same reason, must be greater than it is commonly thought to be; for there the difference is between a living thing and a dead; as much as between a piece of nature and art, a man and a statue. So that it is a very vain kind of confidence which such pretend to, who because they have made a shift to imitate and resemble a Christian, they think the case is well with them, when as yet they may as much differ from them whose case is truly good, as a living man doth from a dead carcass.

8. Inference.—That love to God cannot but be characteristical to every regenerate person—For every such a one is a child of God, and born of him; and certainly it ought to be looked upon, as the property of a child, to love the Father. If you love him who begat; that is supposed and taken for granted, as a thing not to be doubted, 1 John v. 1. And therefore to have a heart destitute of the love of God, and having no love to him, is a most unreasonable and unnatural thing; and a certain argument, that one is not his child, and hath not been born spirit of spirit. 'Tis very true there may be so great a degeneration in the old decayed nature of man; but in the new nature, there can never be such a degeneration, as that a person born of God should not love him. It would be the greatest inconsistency imaginable; and therefore a certain argument, that such were none of God's children. For though it is very true indeed, as it is commonly observed, that love doth descend, more than ascend; from him who begets, to them who are begotten; so love in this case more especially doth a great deal more descend from God to them who are born of him, than ascend from them to him. But though it descends a great deal more, yet it doth really and truly ascend to him, though not indeed so much. There is nothing more connatural to the new creature than the love of God. The very heart and soul of the new creature is love to him primarily, and therein lies the end of the new creation, to form a person to God. "God is love," and every soul who is begotten anew by him, is turned into a like nature, and becomes love, as God is love. "He who dwells in love, dwells in God; for God is love." There can't but be a love-commerce, more or less, between God and every new-born soul. As the true mother, in that great proof of Solomon's wisdom, was distinguished by her love to her child; so we may proportionably say, that a child of God is distinguished by that love which works towards God. We find some whom it never toncheth to have God dishonoured and disgraced; but it goes to the heart of a true child of God, when his Father is struck at, his name reproached and torn, or any thing done against his interest.

9. Inference.—How great is the obligation upon all the regenerate to the love of one another. If you love God, how can it be but you must have a love for them who love God; who have all one parent, all partake of one and the same nature, all expecting the same inheritance; who have one and the same spirit, the same hope and calling? Upon the consideration of their being new born, 'tis evident they must have the same Father and inheritance: If children, then heirs; and joint-heirs with one another, as well as with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. And every one who loveth him who begat, loveth him also who is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, &c.

10. Inference.—We further infer, that the reason is evident, why the proper means of their regeneration, or spiritual birth, are very dear to renewed souls. There is a spiritually-natural reason for it. There are those in the world, who cannot believe otherwise, but it must be folly and fanaticism, or a mere humour and affectation, that any should discover that love to the word of the Gospel, or the ministry of the Gospel, which they do. But if men would consider this, it would give them a natural account of this love. For is it not natural to love the means by which even my very nature itself hath been communicated to me, and by which I am what I am? The apostle gives us the reason why we should love the word; As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, (1 Pet. ii. 2.) *i. e.* as those who by it are

new-born. It is a violence to the new nature of the children of God, to withhold from them the word of the Gospel, and the ministry of it, which hath been instrumental to their new birth; and can't but infer pain and anguish, to be abridged and deprived of what was so conducive to their spiritual beings.

Last inference, we collect,—That this same kingdom and church of God, which is truly and really so, must needs be a growing thing. All who are of it are born into it, and so become as it were naturally subjects; there is a new nature communicated to all who are in it: and therefore, it being made up of the spiritual nature and life, will grow, till it comes to its maturity. Never fear but it will grow, behold it never so languishing, never so assaulted, struck at, and contested against. For all who are born into it consist of spirit and life; and therefore it is impossible, but it must become a mature thing, worthy both of the great Author and Founder of it, and of the great design for which he formed it; namely, that he might have a people to be eternally governed by a placid, gentle empire, and a delightful, easy sway; who should be ruled by a beck and a nod; and to whom every intimation of his will should have the force of a perfect command, without any the least regret; and that all the subjects of this kingdom should partake in the glory of it. And so it will be a living kingdom, and will be a growing thing, till it come to that glorious maturity, which will answer both the greatness of the Undertaker, and the excellency of the design, for which this new nature and life was given to it.

SERMON IX.*

Gal. v. 25.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

In asserting the office of the Holy Ghost, or that work which it hath undertaken in reference to the spirits of men, we have already spoken of one great act of that office; *i. e.* the regenerating and begetting anew of souls into God's kingdom, spirit of spirit. We have now two other acts before us in these words; *i. e.* its maintaining the life, and causing all the right motion, of regenerate souls. The former of these are contained in the supposition; "If we live in the Spirit:" the latter is intimated in the inferred precept; "Let us walk in the Spirit." Both are alike imputed to the Spirit of God here, and it is represented as the very element of life, and the spring of all holy motion to renewed souls; which fills the whole region, as it were, with *vitality*, in which they converse, and draw their continual breath. The case is, in this respect, much like in the new creation as in the old, and in the sphere of grace as in that of nature. It is said concerning the natural world, that it doth, as it were, subsist in God; and it is spoken of the new creation here; and both in one form of expression: In him we live, and move, and have our being, Acts xvii. 28. And here we read of living in the Spirit; and walking or moving in the spirit. There is only this difference in the form of expression: that whereas we have three distinct phrases used to set forth the dependence of the natural creation upon God;—living, and moving, and having being in him;—there are only the two former used here in reference to the new creation, living and moving; living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit. The reason of the difference is obvious, that we have in reference to the former, that superadded expression, "and have our being;" because in this natural, material, sensible world, there are many things which *are*, that do not *live:* but with the new creation it is not so; here, to *live* and to *be*, are one and the same thing; and 'tis entirely and wholly a being of life. A collection of all vital principles compose and make it up what it is; and there is nothing in the new creation concerning which it can be said, it is, but *lives* not; for it is all life throughout. And as philosophy has been wont to teach, even modern philosophy itself, that creation and conservation are not diverse acts, but the latter only the former continued; and that God doth by the continual communication of the same influence, by which he created and made this world, keep it in the state wherein it is, that it doth not relapse back into its old nothing; that there would not need a positive act of God to destroy the world, if he would turn all things to nothing again, but only to suspend and withnold the influence by which every thing comes to be what it is: so it is in the new creation, or in the new creature, too. The very suspension of that influence by which it began to be, or to live, (which is all one,) must certainly infer the failure and extinction of the whole.

Think therefore what it would be if all vital influence were suspended and withheld on a sudden from this material and sensible world in which we converse. You might hereupon frame the apprehension within yourselves, of the face of the earth all on a sudden bestrewed with the dead carcasses of men and beasts, the beauty and pleasant verdure of it all vanished and gone, and nothing left in time but a great clod of dirt! This great temple of the Deity, which he inhabits by a vital presence, that diffuses life up and down every where, all turned into a ruinous heap. If, I say, there were a suspension of vital influence, supposing an influence continued by which this material world should still be. Why, so it must be, proportionably, in reference unto the new creature too. There is the *substratum* to be considered, which is a part of the natural creation, the soul or the man himself; but, that vital influence being suspended by which the new creature was made to be what it was, there is nothing left but a dead man, a dead soul! The temple of the Holy Ghost (as we must suppose it to have been, beautified and adorned with the Divine image on every side, in every part) laid waste and desolate! Nothing now but darkness and confusion, and misery and death, there where God dwelt! So the case would be, if we could suppose such a thing as the suspension of that influence, by which the life of the new creature first began to spring up.

And there is not only a parity in the cases, but in some respects a sameness. For we must know that all Divine influence is in one respect, that is, *ex parte principii*, one and the same, and only differs, or is diversified, *ex parte termini*, according as it doth terminate. We can't conceive the Divine influences to be distinguished in their Fountain, that is, in the Divine Being itself, the Almighty Spirit, whence all proceeds and flows out. That Almighty Spirit, if you consider the operations of it, produces divers, but by an influence that is radically and in the Fountain one and the same. As in reference to those diversities of its operations that were performed to the church, as divers as they were, they were all wrought by one and the same spirit. The spirit of prophecy was not one spirit, and of healing another, and of tongues another; but one and the same Spirit did thus diversify its operations, according as the products were divers which were caused by it, and which it was afterwards to continue in that being which it gave. To suppose a difference or diversity of influence in the Fountain itself, the Divine Being, were to suppose God to differ from himself, and to put somewhat in God that were not God; a thing most repugnant to the simplicity of the Divine Being. But the Divine influences may be diversified terminatively, according to the subjects in which it is received. Nature is various in this, and that, and the other creature; (speaking of the *natura naturata*, as, for distinction's sake, it is wont to be called;) and the influences are diversified according to those divers natures in which they terminate, and according to the different purposes which the exigency of those natures doth require should be served and complied with. And so that influence, which originally and in the Fountain is one and the same, according as it goes forth to beget and continue a variety of productions of this, or that, or another kind, is an influence that gives and that preserves being to things concerning which it can only be said, they *are:* it is a *vital* influence to things that *live;* it is a *motive* influence to things that *move;* it is an *intellectual* influence to things that are capable of *understanding;* it is a *holy* influence unto what is *holy*, to what it hath made holy,

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and is to continue and keep so; it is *light*, as it terminates in light; and *love*, as it terminates in love; and *power*, as it terminates in power; and holy gracious *action*, as it doth terminate in such actions.

But it is the principle of such actions, the subordinate principle, here signified by the name of life, or included in living, that we are now to speak of: and we shall speak of the action which proceeds from that life, and show how that hath rise also from the Spirit, when we come to the latter part of the text. From the former part the truth that we have to observe you may take thus—The blessed Spirit of God doth continue and maintain that life, whereof it hath been the Author, in every renewed soul.—We shall, in speaking to this,—1. Very briefly open the words to you, that we may clear the ground which the truth recommended to you hath in the text, and—Shall next give you some account of the thing which is asserted therein.

I. As to the former, you must take notice,

1. That the *if* in the beginning of the text is not an *if* of dubitation, but of argumentation—"If ye live in the Spirit."—The apostle does not say so as doubting, nor was his design to signify that he had a douht, whether they did so, yea or no; but supposing or taking that for granted, it is only a form used by him (as it is common in arguing hypothetically) thereupon to reason with them from such a supposed principle. The *if* therefore signifies as much as whereas, or since; since or inasmuch as ye live in the Spirit, therefore walk in the Spirit. . As in Col. iii. 1. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above: If ye be, that is, "Since ye are; it is the appearance which as professing Christians ye make, the aspect which ye visibly hold forth to men, *viz.* that of persons united with Christ, and made alive by him; since ye are risen with Christ, therefore set your affections on things above; act and do accordingly." So we are to take it here, and it affords us a clear ground for a positive assertion, those who are Christians indeed do live in the Spirit.

2. We must note, that to live cannot reasonably be understood as intending the first reception of the principle of life, but the continuation of that principle. This form of expression, *viz.* by the present tense, is commonly used to hold forth to us the continuedness of any thing; when we don't say such a thing was, or such a thing will be, but such a thing is, it notes, I say, the continuedness of the thing spoken of; inasmuch as the present time is that which doth connect and continue the two parts of time, *viz.* the past and the future. And the continued state of this life is after the same manner expressed by the apostle in the 2nd chapter of this epistle to the Galatians, verse 20. The life which I live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God. He means not, that he only first began to live that life by an influence received from the Son of God, but that he lived from day to day that life which he did live, that spiritual, divine life, by faith in the Son of God, who had loved him and given himself for him.

Nor again must we understand this living to signify the series of actions only proper to that life; for they are afterwards signified by the name of walking in the other part of the text. It is true indeed, that living, in a very common notion of it, does denote the continued series of the actions of one's life, whether good or bad, both in Scripture and in ordinary language: If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, (Rom. viii. 13.) that is, if ye continue to act, or walk, or converse after the flesh, according as that corrupt principle doth incline and dictate, ye shall die. The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that—we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; that is, act, and walk, and converse so, Titus ii. 11, 12. And in common speech we use to say such a man lives a good or a bad life, intending by living, the course of his actions whether good or bad. But this cannot be the meaning of living here, for the reason before mentioned; and should we so understand it, there would neither be argument, nor indeed congruity, in the apostle's way of expressing himself; for it would amount to no more than this; If ye continue to live in the Spirit, continue to live in the Spirit; or if ye continue to walk in the Spirit, continue to walk in the Spirit. Wherefore it is necessary that we conceive a middle sense between these two, *viz.* the first reception of the principle of life, and the continued series of the actions of that life; and that middle sense is, (as hath been already intimated,) the continuation of the vital principle itself. If ye live, that is, if ye have the principle of a new and divine life continued and maintained in you, walk in the Spirit, as those principles would direct and guide you to do. Again,

3. We must note that by Spirit, or the Spirit, is manifestly meant the blessed eternal Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost. It can't be meant of our natural spirit, as is most evident; nor can it be meant of the new creature itself, which is in the Scripture called spirit; (as we have had occasion lately to take notice again and again;) for of the same Spirit which is here spoken of you have an enumeration of the fruits in the verses immediately foregoing; The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, meekness, temperance, &c. These, we are sure, are not the fruits of our own natural spirit; neither can they be said to be the fruits of the new creature, for they are the new creature itself, those very principles whereof the new creature is composed and doth consist. It is therefore manifest that by the Spirit we must understand the divine eternal Spirit, the blessed Spirit of God itself.

And for that form of expression, "in the Spirit," that particle commonly denotes a causative influence, and signifies as much as *by; q. d.* If ye live by the Spirit. Many instances might be given, and have upon some other occasion been given, to show that the particle *in* doth sometimes signify *by*, and denotes the influence of an efficient cause. But then it must be noted too, that it denotes the part of an efficient cause, or a casual influence, with a great deal more emphasis than if another form of expression had been used. "If ye live in the Spirit." Why it imports the continual, vital, immediate presence of the Spirit for this purpose, to maintain this life. "If ye live in the Spirit;" as if the soul had its very *situs*, its situation, in a region of life which the Spirit did create and make unto it. As sometimes the continual present power, and dominion, and influence of wickedness, or some wicked principle, is expressed the same way, by being in the flesh. When we were in the flesh, under the power and regnancy of any corrupt, fleshly principle, the motions of sin which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death, Rom. vii. 5. And, Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, as it is said to Simon Magus, Acts viii. 23. And, The world lies in wickedness; so as to be continually receiving in and imbibing wickedness, as it were on every hand, I John v. 19. In like manner the soul is represented as imbibing life and vital influence on every part; agreeably unto which notion, some (and those I may reckon the best of) philosophers have been wont to say, that it is a great deal more proper to speak of the body of a man as being in his soul, than of the soul as in the body; that the body is in the soul, as being continually clothed with vital influence on every part, and which it diffuses throughout; the soul being as an element of life unto the body all the while they do converse, life extending even unto all the extremities, unto the most extreme part of the body that you can suppose. So is the soul spoken of here in reference to the Spirit of God; though that very intimate union is frequently held forth to us in Scripture by a kind of reciprocal and mutual in-being of one in the other, and the other in that. "He that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him;" they do, as it were, inhabit one another. So it is with the Spirit of God, and the soul that spiritually lives by it: it is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in it. It is not so in the Spirit, as if there were any thing of itself more intimate to it than the Spirit is; but the Spirit doth as it were clothe it with life, fill it with life, and is all in all of life to it.

So much therefore is now clear to you, that the truth which we have observed hath a very adequate ground in the text. "If ye live in the Spirit," since ye do so. It is a thing to be concluded, that the life of those who are Christians indeed, who have ever come to be spiritually alive, is to be maintained and continued by a constant influence of the blessed Spirit.

II. Now that we may open the truth of the thing that is asserted and contained in these words, it will be requisite to speak distinctly,—1. Concerning the life that is to be

maintained,—2. Concerning the influence that maintains it.

I. Concerning the life to be maintained. Of that I have need to say the less because we have had occasion to speak largely of it heretofore. What it will be needful to say, you may take in these few propositions.

1. We are not to understand it of natural life, no, not even of the soul itself; but we are to understand it of life in a moral sense, or if you will, in a spiritual and divine; I intend one thing by the expressions. It is called indeed the Divine life, or the life of God in plain terms, Eph. iv. 18. Being alienated from the life of God, having no share, no participation in the Divine life, in God's life.

2. As life in the natural sense is a principle of action; so life in the moral sense is a principle of *right* action, or by which one is enabled to act aright. The soul of a man is naturally a living, vital, active being; it is naturally so, *i. e.* it belongs to its very essence to be capable of acting. But to be disposed to act aright, though that was in some respect natural to it too, yet it was not inseparable, as sad experience has taught us all. Though the spirit of a man be a living, and consequently an active, being, made such by God in the first constitution of it, it is not to be supposed that he turned such a being as this loose into the world when he made it, to act at random, and according as any natural inclination might carry it, or external objects move it, this way or that; but it being not only a living, an active substance, but intellectual also, and thereby capable of government by a law, *i. e.* of understanding its Maker's will and pleasure, and directing the course of its actions agreeably thereto, God hath thereupon thought fit to prescribe it a law, or set it rules to act and walk by. Now the mere power to act is life natural, but the disposition or ability to act aright is a supervening life, by which the soul is as it were contempered and framed agreeably to the law by which it is to act, or the Divine government under which it is placed.

3. The prime and fundamental law which enters the constitution of the Divine government over reasonable creatures is, that they love the Author of their beings, his own blessed self, above all things; and consequently as that love doth dictate most directly, that they be devoted and subject unto him as the supreme authority, and that they delight and take complacency, and seek rest and blessedness, in him as the supreme good; both which are included in that one root or principle of love. I am to love him, and love him above all, and then I do of course willingly and with cheerfulness devote myself to him, being acted by the power of that love so to do, and seek blessedness in him as the most suitable, the most agreeable good to my soul.

This is but the very sum and substance of the first commandment, which we are to look upon as fundamental to all the rest; for it were a vain thing to prescribe any further laws as a God to those who will not take him for a God to them.

This was therefore the natural method, to begin the law, the frame of laws and constitution of government, over reasonable creatures, with this grand precept, "Thou shalt have no other God but me." That is, "I will be to thee the prime object of thy love; which love shall make thee devote thyself to me, and then make thee delight and take complacency in me as the supreme, both authority and goodness." Wherefore,

4. This life which we are now to consider as to be maintained, must principally and chiefly consist in the love of God; that is, a propension of soul towards him above and beyond all things else. It is a conformity unto that grand precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength;" a direction or bent of spirit towards God. So long, or so far, a person is said to live spiritually, as the main bent and inclination of his heart is toward God. If he fall from God, or in what degree soever he doth so fall, so far he dies; there is a gradual death according to all the gradual declensions of the heart from God. God is the great term of this life, as we have had occasion to inculcate formerly. When it is intended to be spoken of, it is not spoken of as an absolute thing, but is distinctly spoken of as a life that relates and refers to God. Alive to God, (Rom. iv. 11.) and it follows, ver. 13. Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, yield yourselves living souls unto God. And the apostle speaking of that life, which he says he did live by faith in the Son of God, (Gal. ii.) speaks of it as a life terminating upon God: "I through the law am dead unto the law, that I might live unto God," ver. 19. in the next verse to which you read, "The life which now I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," 'tis a life that comes to me from and through Christ, and points my soul directly upon God, so as that I live to him.

5. This life doth also comprehend all other gracious principles beside that great radical one of love to God, which suit the Spirit of a man to all the other parts of the Divine law, or all the other laws besides. Whatsoever gracious habit or disposition doth attemper and reconcile my spirit to this or that part of the Divine will revealed in his law, that I must understand to be a principle included within the compass of this life to be maintained. For we find the expression used to signify the impress of the whole frame of holiness upon the soul; it is but a diverse expression of the work of the new creature, which we find expressed again and again in Scripture by putting the law in men's hearts. To put the law into the heart, why, that is to form the new creature there, and so continue that impression upon the heart and maintain it there, or to continue the life of the new creature in the soul. Whence therefore that law so impressed and made habitual in the spirit of a man, is called the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, Rom. viii. 2. And hence also those fruits of the Spirit which we find mentioned in this chapter, and immediately before the text, are to be conceived as so many vital principles all belonging to the constitution of the new creature, and all of them serving to conform the spirit of a man unto the Divine law. After the mention of all those several principles which are called the fruits of the Spirit, it is said, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit;" *i. e.* if we have all these fruits which are so many living principles put by the Spirit of God into us, if we have them, and they are continued and kept alive in us; then let us walk in the Spirit; act and do according to these principles.

6. We must further note, that not only the continual being of all those vital principles which are called the fruits of the Spirit, but also the gradual improvements of their life, vigour, liveliness, do all belong unto this life considered according to the more perfect state of it. For there is no degree of this or that thing, but hath the nature of the thing in it, and doth belong to the nature of the thing. And therefore I say, that by life here we must understand not barely the being of these principles continued in the soul, but supposing that the soul hath been improved and grown unto some strength and vigour, whatsoever maintenance it is to expect of that good state unto which it is arrived, that is under the name of life here attributed to the Spirit, as it is its proper work to hold the soul in life; according as we use to say, speaking concerning the natural life, *non vivere, sed valere, vita est*, merely not to be dead, is hardly worth the name of living; but to be in health, to be strong, and lively, and vigorous. We must conceive it to be within the compass of the Spirit's work, and therefore we put it within the compass of the object, to keep up souls in a lively and vigorous state, and not only having put vital influences into them, merely to preserve them from being extinct. When we find that severe animadversion, Rev. iii. 1. Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead, it appears by what follows that he doth not mean by death there, simple death, as if there was nothing of life left, but a gradual deadness, a very languishing state; for it follows, "Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die," (ver. 2.) implying that to live so languid a life was hardly worth the name of living; they were rather to be called dead than living, while the case was only so with them. Therefore though it be true, that such a languishing is that which doth befall many a Christian who hath the *root* of life in him, yet if it be better with any, and if they be continued in a better state, it is to be attributed to the Spirit of God; they "live in the Spirit." If they live more prosperously, if their souls flourish, and are in a good

condition, and are kept on therein, it is all owing to this Spirit; but it is owing to men's ownselves if they be in languishings and decays, that they conform not themselves to the rules and methods of the Holy Ghost in which they are to expect, and according to which they may look for, its supplies, whereof we shall have occasion hereafter to speak.

7. This life must be understood to include too, not only the principles of grace, and the vigour and liveliness of those principles; but also the consolations, the pleasures, the grateful relishes of divine and spiritual things, which are proper to the new creature also. For it is usual to distinguish both of the life of grace, and the life of comfort, as comprehended under the same name of life in the general. We many times find the expression used to hold forth to us any consolation that a good soul hath given into it upon whatsoever spiritual account. We live, says the apostle, if ye stand fast in the Lord, 1 Thess. iii. 8. It is as a new life to us, a revival upon a distinct and superadded account, unto whatsoever doth more naturally and necessarily concern the very being of our life. And therefore according to what measures and degrees such pleasures, and consolations, and joys are afforded unto good souls; we must understand them all attributed unto the Spirit of God, under the expression of our living in the Spirit, or living by it.

8. As the tendency of this life is towards God as the term of it, so the root of it is from God, as the great Author and Fountain of it. It must be understood to be the life of God, or the Divine life, upon both these accounts, not only as it is a life that terminates upon him, but as it is a life that rises and springs from him, even in the very first rise of it: for none can tend towards God but by him, by a power and inclination that is received from him, by which he draws and acts the soul towards himself. As was noted before, that very life by which the apostle says he did live to God, he says he received it by faith from the Son of God, who had loved him, and given himself for him. And therefore,

9. This life doth necessarily suppose union with God, with Christ, and with the Spirit of God. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 17. Whosoever it is that is joined to the Lord, is caught into a union of spirit with him, and that Spirit is the continual source of life to him. It is not only vain and unintelligible, but most monstrously blasphemous, to imagine such a thing concerning this union an if it were an essential union with God, or a personal union with any of the persons in the Godhead: the former would make any one God; the latter would make us more one with that person, than the persons are with one another; for we can't say that the person of the Father is the person of the Son, or that the person of the Son is the person of the Holy Ghost; the union is in essence, not in person. And therefore to talk as some have done of being personally united to Christ, or with the Spirit of Christ, imports as if they were more one with Christ, than Christ is one with the Father, or than the Father is one with the Spirit; for personal union is that, the result whereof is one person; and so the two natures of Christ are united. But a real union there is of those, who live this divine life, with him who is the great origin and principle of it; for it were a most unreasonable and unintelligible thing, that a man should live by a principle of life that is disunited from him. There must always be a union between the thing which lives, and that which it lives by. I can't live by a vital principle that is remote from me, or wherewith I am not, in one sense or another, united. And it were very absurd to think that such words should be put into the Bible to signify nothing, or carry no sense with them, "He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit." Nor can that union, though it doth not sigoify so much as an essential, or a personal union, (both which, as I have said to you, are absurd and blasphemous,) carry so little as a mere presence of God, for he is equally present to all, more intimate to every creature than it is to itself; but it doth over and beside carry this, that there is a Divine presence specified by such ends, for which it is vouchsafed upon such peculiar terms, upon which such a presence is not vouchsafed to others; that is, he is present to them with whom he is thus united, as a spring and principle of life to them; he is present for this very purpose, to form them for himself, to incline, and to continue their souls inclined towards himself, and so more and more gradually; to dispose and fit them to glorify him, to be the instruments of his glory, and to be glorified with him, or to be the subjects of his glory. This is the special end for which he is present, and which doth distinguish his presence. For we can't (as was said before) suppose that *ex parte Dei*, on God's part, one part of himself can be more present than another, for that were to make God to differ from himself; but, with reference to the effects and ends, which such an influential presence doth work, there is a difference; he is present so, as to do such a work in those, to whom he is thus present, as he will not, as he doth not, do in others; so as to be the continual spring of such motions, and such workings and tendencies, as others, where he will not so exert his influence, are strangers to. And then he is present with them too upon terms suitable to those ends; that is, as having bound himself to them to be their God, and so to be all that to them which it belongs to him to be, as he undertakes to be the God of any. He is their God, engaged to be with them by his continual vital presence through time, and in all eternity. Such a union, that is, an intimate presence for such purposes, and upon such terms, is supposed in this life, and therefore must be supposed to be maintained and continued all the while this life is continued; that is, the soul is held with God and kept close to him by bonds of union, kept firm and tight between him and them.

Thus you have some account of the first of these heads which we proposed to open to you, *viz.* the life to be maintained. It would become us to make some present reflection upon what hath been said at this time; and that is, since we have heard so much said concerning such a life as this, (and more heretofore,) "certainly there is such a life." The thought offers itself, that such a life is not merely talked on, or is not a mere empty notion, but there must certainly be such a real thing. This distinct sort of life, though besides what other kinds of life are more obvious to the common notice of the world, is indeed a hidden life, a secret life: Your life is hid with Christ in God, Col. iii. 3. But the hiddenness of the thing doth suppose it to be, for that which is not, can't be hid; so far is it from carrying a supposition or an inference that it is not. We ought therefore to possess our souls of this apprehension, (think men of this matter what they will,) there is really a certain sort of life which doth distinguish a holy man from a mere man, as truly, as there is a natural life which doth distinguish a mere man from a carcass, from the deserted trunk and body of a man. And when we consider so, how can we forbear to lay our hands upon our hearts, and ask ourselves the question; "Do I live this life, yea or no? Do I feel myself to live? Do I feel an inclination and bent of heart towards God; some principles of life, springing up from the divine root, which carries my soul towards that blessed object: that I am acted from God to God in my ordinary course?" We can't have a greater question, or of more concernment in all this world, to deal with our souls about, and therefore let it be seriously thought of.

SERMON X.*

WE are upon the first act of the Holy Spirit in reference to souls born of it, held forth to us in this scripture, *viz.* in the supposition, from whence we have observed—That the blessed Spirit of God doth by its own influence maintain the life, whereof it hath been the Author unto regenerate souls.

And here we propounded to speak,—I. Of the life to be maintained, and—2. Of the influence which maintains it. Of the former we have spoken already, and are now to go on to the latter.

Concerning which we shall,—I. Show what kind of in-

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fluence it is;—2. How is it ascertained unto regenerate souls. Or, give you some account of the nature and of the certainty of it.

Of the former you may have some account by considering such properties of it as those that follow, *viz.*

1. It is a most free and arbitrary influence. It is a most gracious influence you know, in the very notion whereof the purest liberty is implied, wherein it has first to do with souls, as is subjoined to the scripture before discoursed of in John iii. 8. It is represented as "the wind that bloweth where it listeth." In operations of this kind the Spirit delights to discover and magnify a kind of sovereignty and royalty. It is a very awful word which hath reference, as we find, unto that consideration, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, in Phil. ii. 12. The consideration is immediately added, that "God worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure." And I conceive there are two things hinted to us in that expression, *viz.* that whatsoever he doth of this kind, he doth with delight, taking a complacency in it, and enjoying, as it were, his own act; "he exercises loving-kindness in the earth," and in no kind or manner of operation so as in this, because herein he doth delight. And it also intimates, that what he doth herein, he doth upon no obligation; he doth at the rate of most absolute liberty, so as that he might do, or might not do. *Liberum est quod potuit non fuisse, That is free which might not have been.* "He works of good pleasure," having no other tie upon him than what he takes on and lays upon himself; and therefore "work out your salvation," saith the apostle, "with fear and trembling." He works now; you don't know whether he will by and by, if you neglect him now. Therefore is the blessed Spirit mentioned with that distinguishing title of the free Spirit: Uphold me with thy free Spirit, Psal. li. 12. It is not only efficiently so, as the great Author of liberty unto those souls upon whom it works effectually, and with saving operations, as is the sense of what we find said in 2 Cor. iii. 17. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; liberty communicated by it unto those, who by the Spirit of the Lord, as it after follows, beholding as in a glass his glory, are changed into the same image from glory to glory. Whilst it refines them, it enlarges them, defecates them, makes them capable of ascending, and renders them some way adequate to a large, universal, all-comprehensive good; it is not, I say, only so a free Spirit, but it is in itself free, a Spirit that so works as was not to be expected, and that cannot be prescribed unto. Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? Isa. xl. 13.

2. It is a very various influence, in the degrees of its communication and operation. It may well be so, as being most free. It is not communicated alike unto all who have been born of this Spirit, nor to all those, nor to any of them, alike at all times. Some have more light and joy, more strength and vigour, than others have; and the same persons have themselves their more lucid and turbid intervals, and in their time there is often a very quick succession of night and day; there is sorrow in the night, and a calm in the morning, and quick interchanges of such darkness and light, as in Psalm xxx. 5. Which variations do proceed partly from sovereignity, as hath been said; but partly also from paternal justice. From sovereignty we may suppose, in great part, this Spirit comes and goes, even as it will, as to its more observable communications, to discover its liberty; but oftentimes it varies the course of its dispensation, and the state of the soul with whom it hath to do, in a way of paternal justice. For as we know that there is such a thing as economical justice as well as political, among us, so there is a justice too which the holy God doth exercise in his own family, and among the children which have been begotten and born of him, as well as towards those who are under his government upon a more common account: and it is very meet and reasonable it should be so. It were a most incongruous thing, if he should be equally indulgent unto the careless and vain, and wanton and extravagant, and the negligent of him and their own duty; as to the serious, and watchful, and diligent, and those who are most studious to please him, and most in love with his presence. He doth in his displeasure many times withdraw and hide himself, for the rebuke of negligences and undutiful deportments towards him; and he doth upon the account of the same justice show, or manifest himself, (as our Saviour's expression is in John xiv. 21.) for the encouragement and reward of those that do more closely and faithfully adhere to him, and make it more their business and study to please and imitate him. The Spirit is often grieved, and in a degree quenched, by the carelessness, and neglects, and resistances even of its own offspring, or of those who have been born of it; and then the discipline of the family doth require that they should be put to rebuke; and so its influence comes to be an often varying thing.

3. Yet it is so far a continual influence as is necessary for the maintaining of the root of this life, that that may not totally wither; and therefore at the lowest ebb of those who are the offspring of this Spirit, there is still a sustaining influence upon them. As it was very low with the Psalmist in the 73rd Psalm, when he was just ready to throw up all: Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, ver. 13. He thought it was to no purpose to be any longer religious; he was become in the temper of his spirit so unlike a saint, that he judged himself, upon reflection, to be a great deal more like a beast. And yet he says in the 23rd verse, that he had been ever with God: "Nevertheless I am continually with thee." Even all that while there was a presence of God continued, and he was even then held by his right hand. So are the souls of his held in life: Which holdeth our souls in life, Psalm lxvi. 9. Though that might have another, yet it is probable enough to have a spiritual, meaning, and there are passages in the context that may incline us to apprehend so.

4. It is a still, silent, a secret, and often an unobserved, influence; such as by which no great noise is made, and many times doth escape the notice of them who are the subjects of it. Their life is a secret kind of life, "hid with Christ in God," and by such a kind of influence it is maintained. God is near many times, when it is not known. He was in the very place, (and we can't think that Jacob meant it, by his essential presence, for that he very well knew, but by his gracious presence,) and he says that he knew it not. *q. d.* "I little thought of God's being so nigh." Gen. xxviii. 16. And we may at least allude to those words in Hos. xi. 3. I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. He deals so with those who are born of him, as even to teach them to go, and they know not that it is he that carries them all along. The operation of the Spirit doth very much imitate that of nature: it is in a very still and silent way that the sap is drained in by the root, and ascends up the trunk of the tree, and diffuses itself to every branch, so that we may see that it lives, but we don't see how. The case is with souls that are brought to live in the Spirit, as with very infirm and languishing persons, who have been consumed, and even next to death, in a putrid and corrupt air; being removed into such as is pure and wholesome they revive, but in a very insensible way: so is this life preserved by a vital, spiritual influence which is as pure air to them, a gentle, indulgent, benign, and cherishing air; they live by it, and never a whit the worse, because it is not so turbulent as to make a noise.

5. As still and silent as it is, it is yet a very powerful and efficacious influence. The case requires that it should be so; for it is a great thing to maintain such a life upon such terms. A thing that is so purely divine, if it were not maintained by a strong hand, it were hardly to be thought how it should subsist in such a region as this, so every way unsuitable to it; it is a life continually assaulted, often struck at; a life employed in continual conflicts and crowned with many a glorious victory, and that implies a mighty power to be employed to preserve life and maintain it. When I am weak, then I am strong, 2 Cor. xii. 10. Sure he must be weak in one respect, and strong in another: weak, he must mean spiritually too: weak, if you consider the principle in itself, absolutely; strong, if you consider it in reference to the continual aids and supplies that are given in. And it is plain that the exercises of this life require, that strength and might should be employed to maintain it through them. Very difficult and hard things they are, which those who live this life, are exposed to the sufferings of, and merely because they live this life, and

hold it forth that they are, in this sense, alive: as nobody goes about to wound a dead man, there is no need of that. Therefore is that rapturous prayer of the apostle in Col. i. 11, 12. that they might be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks to the Father, who had made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Made them meet, by making them sons, and to inherit as sons, or receive the inheritance of the saints in light. They were born light, and of light: Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord, Eph. v. 8. Why, that being supposed, it required, as the apostle's prayer implies, an exertion of mighty, glorious power, to maintain this life unto that pitch and degree, that they might have a greater disposition to give thanks for what God had done upon them, to make them meet and capable subjects of such an inheritance, than to complain of a little suffering. "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power," with such a kind of might as bears the very impress and image upon it of God's own glorious power itself; a might that has a glory upon it, and accords to its original: as you may suppose the effect, in such causations as this, to be very like to the cause, and to the productive influence. The new creature, as soon as it is born, is born to conflict, toil, and travail; born for fight, and born for victory. Such were the heroes, the sons of God. One so highly born, we must suppose born for great things; not only to enjoy, but to perform; and there must be a power proportionable hereunto to go with this heaven-born creature. I have written unto you, young men, says the apostle, because ye are strong, and have overcome the wicked one, 1 John ii. 14. Whilst they were yet but young, they had so great a conquest to glory in. "Ye have overcome the wicked one," *ye*, calling them by the name of little ones, a lower rank being designed by that expression: he yet tells them, that they had overcome, because greater was he that was in them, than he that was in the world, chap. iv. 4. And in chap. v. 4. he says, that whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. The predication is so universal, that we can conceive no state of a person born of God, be he never so newly born, but he is, even in that instant, made superior over this world, hath got the better of it, made his escape from the corruptions of it, which would hinder him through lust, and hath it in a degree under his feet: and therefore it must be a powerful influence, by which his life is maintained. Who are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. i. 5.

6. It is a connatural influence, or suitable to the nature of man both as reasonable and renewed. As reasonable, it doth it no violence: I drew them with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love, Hos. xi. 4. And it is accommodated unto all the principles of the new nature. It is an influence of faith to faith, of love to love, of meekness to meekness, and of humility to humility, as was intimated formerly.

7. It is a co-operative, or assisting influence. Such as doth engage us in the endeavour of preserving our own life, and then assists or co-operates with us therein. As the matter is in reference to the reflex acting of the soul, so it is, in proportion, in reference unto the direct. As when he would know what is wrought and done, or what impressions are made within, the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, in that reflex way of operation, Rom. viii. 16. So it, proportionably, doth in the direct way of operation too, it works with our spirits, and makes use of their own agency, in order to the maintaining of their own life. And therefore as you have heard in that now mentioned Scripture, that we are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation, so we are told too in 1 John v. 18. that he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not; he keeps himself from those deadly, mortal touches which would endanger his precious life; *i. e.* he is his own under-keeper. We are every one to be a brother's keeper, much more to ourselves; but still in a subordinate sense, subservient to, and dependent upon, that supreme one. Indeed it were a kind of a monstrous thing in the creation, that there should be so noble a life planted there, but destitute of the self-preserving faculty or disposition; whereas every life, how mean soever, even that of a worm, a gnat, or a fly, hath an aptitude in it, or a disposition accompanying it to preserve itself.

8. It is a regular and an ordinate influence. I put these together, because they have an affinity, though they may import somewhat diverse notions. The Spirit works according to rule, or agreeably unto the word, in what it does for the maintaining of this life. My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart, Isa. lix. 21. The word and the Spirit go together among all this race. The Spirit breathes in the word for the maintaining of this life. And so it is the influence of ordinate, not of absolute power, which works so as that there is no proportion between what it works, and what it works by; it works by apt and suitable means, and applies and directs our spirits unto such objects as are apt to be nutritive, or carry in them a suitable aliment for the maintenance of this life. Why, our natural life is maintained by a divine influence too; we could not otherwise draw breath, or subsist a moment. But how is it maintained? Not by miracle. Not in such a way as doth supersede all useful means for that purpose: but it is maintained by God's preserving and directing the natural faculties that belong to us, unto such objects as are suitable for the maintaining of natural life, and may be aptly nutritive thereof. He doth not maintain this life of ours without eating, or drinking, or breathing; by an influence exclusive of all such means, nor without apt and suitable means too: for it is not maintained by feeding upon iron, or stones, or by drinking of poison, or by breathing in contagious airs; but by what is agreeable to itself, and apt to afford a suitable aliment to it. So it is in the spiritual life also: it is not maintained by an influence that doth exclude apt and proper means, but by this influence the mind and spirit is directed to intend and converse with such objects, out of which it can draw nourishment, and which are suitable unto this purpose. God doth not maintain this life in such a way, and upon such terms, as that, though men mind nothing in the world else, but what the men of this world do, they shall live well notwithstanding. It is not strange if they who feed upon husks, who converse with nothing but shadows, and pant only after the dust of the earth, are very languishing souls. Things altogether insipid, that have no sap, or juice, or savour in them, formalities of religion, doubtful opinions, disputes about minute and inconsiderable things, airy notions that are apt to drop or distil nothing upon the spirit of a man, are not the things that this life is likely to be maintained by.

And this influence is such as doth work by likely and apt means, as it enableth the soul to savour those things which are called the τὰ Πνέυματος, *the things of the Spirit*, as you have it in Rom. viii. 5. They that are after the flesh, do mind (or savour) only the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit; and so they live by good, and suitable, and savoury food, being made capable of savouring that food. As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; ἄδολον γάλα, *that pure undeceitful milk*, as the word there imports, 1 Pet. ii. 2. The way therefore in which the Spirit doth maintain and improve this life, and afford vigour to it, is by leading the soul often into heaven, and making it to converse in the invisible regions; and to forget this world, and that it hath any relation to it, when it converses with God in spirit, and is made to look (for it draws down its nutriment even by the eye) by faith into the things that are unseen and hoped for; whereof that faith is the very substance and evidence too.

9. This influence is gradually perfective of the whole soul. Such as tends to improve it; such as by which it is still growing up to the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus, Eph. iv. 13. We infer upon all that hath been said, that there is such a life as this. A very obvious inference, but it is very sad that it should be needful to make it. For alas! how hardly and slowly does it enter into the minds of most, that there is such a thing, notwithstanding all those many and great things which the word of God is full of concerning it! It is very strange that we should have such accounts in Scripture of the way of begetting it, of the nature and tendency of it, how it is maintained, what the operations of it are, what the enjoy-

ments, what the pains which it doth at any time suffer, what its improvements, and what it shall end in at last, *viz.* eternal life; and that still it should be disbelieved by them, who will not profess to believe the Bible a legend, that there is such a life. They must too certainly disbelieve that there is any eternal life; for nothing can be plainer, than that the life, which shall never end, must sometime begin. But against so clear evidence there is nothing to be opposed, but ignorance and inexperience; "We know no such matter, and therefore we will not believe it, say about it what can be said." But what strange folly is this! What rashness! Such as any prudent man in another instance would censure and damn for the most vain, foolish, and preposterous rashness. If any man shall say, that he will not believe that there is in another, such or such an excellency, superior to what is in himself, because he does not experience the same thing in himself, he would be thought fitter to be booted at than confuted. We do not reckon brutes capable judges of the perfections and improveableness of the nature of men; nor do we think one man a competent judge of what is in the spirit of another. What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him? so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. ii. 11. Such as have been exercised about such matters can tell you much of the pleasure of philosophical knowledge; and divers can tell you of the strange things that are performable by mechanical and chemical powers and operations. Who would not think that countryman very ridiculous, who because he knows nothing at all of these matters, will therefore deny that there are any men in the world, that are of more excellent skill and judgment than himself, about things of such a nature? He does not know what belongs to chemistry, and therefore he will not believe there is any chemist. He knows not what belongs to astronomy, and therefore he does not think there is any such skill as astronomical skill. This is a piece of folly which confutes itself, when men have no more to say, why they will not admit that there is a divine life, a life come from heaven, than that they feel in their own spirits no workings of any such life. They may know indeed how the case is with themselves; that there is no such thing as life springing in them, that carries their hearts to God, and makes them still seek nearer and nearer union with him, thirst after his presence, and long to be near him; that carries them up often into heaven, and fills them with heavenly joy and solace in the foretaste of that blessed expected state; they may know, I say, that there is no such thing in their own hearts. But what! will you therefore judge there is no such thing in all the world? As if your knowledge were the measure of all reality, and there could be nothing within all the compass of being, but what must be within the compass of your understanding and experience. This is the greatest folly that can be thought of. We do not use so foolishly to conclude, when we hear of the pleasures and delicacies of such and such a country spoken of, in which we have never been, that there is no such thing, because we have not seen it with our own eyes; or, there are no such fruits, because we have not relished them with our taste. It will be therefore of very great importance to us to fix the belief of this in our own souls, that there is such a life; when the Spirit of the living God hath so much to do about it, and is continually attending it as his charge. Doth it employ itself about nothing? But the time doth not allow to proceed.

SERMON XI.*

WE are speaking of the influence by which the divine life is maintained; and have already shown what kind of influence it is. We are now to show how it is ascertained unto regenerate souls, or, give you some account of the certainty of it.

1. It is ascertained by the relation they hereupon come to stand in to God. They are his children, his begotten ones. You know it is naturally every one's care to provide for those who have been born of them, unto whom they have been (though but the secondary) authors of life and being. And the apostle argues even in this very case from this reason, Rom. viii. 13, 14. If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God: *q. d.* "Do you think that he will not care that his own sons shall live?" And the argument is yet more strong and enforcing, if you consider how this relation terminates, *viz.* more peculiarly and remarkably upon our very spirits; for so you find he is called the Father of spirits in contradistinction unto the fathers of our flesh, Heb. xii. 9. Therefore the relation leads to a more special care and concern about the life of our spirits, and most especially about that life of them, which is most immediately from him, and most resembles his own: not that natural life, which we have in common with the rest of men, but that life which is the more peculiar product of his own blessed Spirit, even as it is the Spirit of grace and of holiness. It is in that sense (as we have formerly shown you at large) that we are said to be born spirit of spirit. It is only a production, or generation *secundum quid*, and in this peculiar respect, the thing produced being his own holy, living image, or a nature superadded to the human nature conform unto his own in moral respects, and having been, in this so peculiar a kind, a Parent and an Author of life, it is not at all to be doubted, but the relation will draw with it the greatest care about that life which he hath given.

2. Add hereunto the paternal love which accompanies the relation. There is many times the relation of a father unaccompanied with the love of a father, (though it is very unnatural where it is so,) but here it is not so to be understood. It were horrid and blasphemous to think such a thought. Do we suppose him, who is the very Fountain of that natural affection which still descends and flows down, through all the successive generations of the world, in an ordinary stated course, from father to son, to be destitute of it himself; that there is a penury and want, or a failure in the very Fountain? Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him, Psalm ciii. 13. He is the very Fountain and Spring of all that kindness, and pity, and compassion, and love, that did ever reside in the hearts of any parents towards their own children, he put and placed it there; therefore we are to conceive it in him, as in its highest original, and its proper and native seat, and therefore fully and most invariably there. And our Saviour's argumentation to this very purpose, how much doth it carry of convictive evidence with it! If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give his Spirit unto them that ask him! Luke xi. 13. And it is an instinct put into all that are of this divine progeny to be still looking up with craving eyes for this Spirit. It is the very sum of the desire of the new creature, it doth, as it were, comprehensively enwrap all its desires; it is its very natural sense, "Lord, thy Spirit!" Though it is many times a silent and inexplicit prayer, yet it is, as it were, the voice of that new nature, "more of thy Spirit." The exigency of the case speaks, the very languors and faintings of holy souls carry craving in them, though they have not so formed desires, that they can reflect upon them and take notice of them: even as the parched ground doth secretly supplicate to the heavens for relief and supplies. Such we know the Psalmist's metaphor is once and again. And do we think that the Father of mercies (as he is called, as well as the Father of our spirits) will not hear the cries, and regard the necessities, even the crying necessities, of his own (otherwise languishing and dying) offspring? He that feeds the ravens, will he starve souls? The very sea-monsters draw forth their breasts, and do we think that there is less pity and compassion with God? The instinct is natural even in inferior nature, and stronger according as the order of being is more noble in which it is to be found. It is true, there may be among human creatures, some more than monsters, so prodigiously unnatural as not to regard the fruit of their own bodies, Lam. iv. 3. But suppose such a case; if a woman can forget her suck-

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ing child, and not have compassion on the fruit of her womb,—yea will not I forget, saith the Lord, Isa. xlix. 15. I can never forget you: I have graven you upon the palms of my hands, as there it is explained. As if the design were to let us know, that he did make it a concern to himself never to forget, that he would always have a remembrancing token before his eyes, to make supply to the necessity of souls, as their case should require.

3. Some thought may possibly occur with some; that though it be true that a fatherly love doth commonly follow the relation, yet, where it hath been in much strength and vigour, possibly something or other may avert it, something may be done by a child to alienate the father's love; we have therefore a yet further assurance from the Divine wisdom and all-comprehending knowledge. From which it must be understood, that when he formed the design of raising up to himself such a seed from among the lapsed children of men, he had the compass of it lying in view, and all things were present to his eye that should any way come to influence this design, or have any aspect upon it one way or another, whether to hinder or promote it: and yet it is manifest that he had such a design, and hath laid and fixed it, having all things in his view, even whatsoever might make most against it. Commonly if the minds and inclinations of persons do alter so, as that they come to disaffect, where heretofore they have borne a very peculiar love and kindness, it is upon some surprise that the alienation begins, something falling out unto them which was altogether unexpected: they did not think that such a one would have served them so and so, or have dealt so with them. But unto all-comprehending knowledge nothing is new. The blessed God had the entire prospect of his whole design, nor can we therefore suppose any thing that should alienate his paternal love, after he hath begun to exercise and express it, which he had not obvious unto his notice before. He loves with an everlasting love, from everlasting to everlasting: Having loved he loves to the end. John xiii. 1. And whereas it may be also said, that though we should suppose a continuing love with a father towards his own children, yet he may be reduced to those straits that he cannot do for them as he would; the matter therefore is further ascertained,

4. From his all-sufficient fulness. There is still the same undecaying plenitude of Spirit with him, that can never abate or grow less. It is a spring or fountain unexhausted and unexhaustible, that can never be drained or drawn dry. And therefore do we think, that those who have received this life from him shall not continue to live, when there is such love, and kindness, and compassion in conjunction with so rich and undecaying fulness? Methinks to any reasonable understanding this should make the matter very sure. Again,

5. We are further ascertained by his express promise. And it is very considerable unto this purpose, how noted and eminent in the Scripture, especially in the New Testament, (though we have divers instances too in the Old,) the promise is of the Spirit. Indeed the matter is so represented to us, that we have reason to account, that as before Christ's coming, the coming of Christ was the great promise, and the hope of Israel; so after the coming of Christ in the flesh, the gift of the Spirit was the great promise, the promise of the Gospel, Christ being (as then he was) actually come. It is therefore to be observed, (in Acts ii. 38, 39. that the apostle in that sermon calling upon his hearers (who were principally Jews, at least by religion) to repent, he tells them for their encouragement that they should "receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is unto you and your children." Observe the connexion; the giving of the Holy Ghost is spoken of by him as the promise, which did virtually comprehend in it the sum of the Gospel: and virtually it did so, for if that were once made good, all would be sure to be made good. And our Saviour speaks of this as what would be a greater good, a good that would more than compensate his own longer abode and presence in the flesh among his disciples: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you, John xvi. 7. Certainly it could not be expedient to part with a greater good for a less; no, nor could it be said to be an expediency to part with an equal good for an equal: if then it were expedient that He should go, that the Spirit might come, that must be reckoned a good superior to his mere bodily presence and abode. And so the apostle plainly intimates in 2 Cor. v. 17. compared with what goes immediately before, Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. He speaks of the matter with complacency, and with a kind of jubilation; *q. d.* I do not desire to know him after the flesh any more, that is, in comparison of what he after speaks of, *viz.* that inward, vital, spiritual union with him, by which the whole frame of the new creation comes to spring up in the soul. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." And it is promised in John xiv. 16. that this Spirit shall be given to abide with them for ever, in most exact correspondence unto the end and purpose for which he was to be given, (ver. 19.) to be the continual maintainer of their life. That must be a very constant thing to us which we are continually to live by, for if there were an intercision of life for a moment it would not be recovered. From the privation of a habit there were no return. He says therefore, "he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;" so fully to answer the exigence of the case, that you shall be no moment destitute of his vital influence.

6. We are further assured from the consideration of the Divine faithfulness, without the consideration whereof the promise would signify little. For there are many promises made, and not kept; but "he is faithful that hath promises." The promise of an unfaithful person gives very little assurance; but we are to add to the consideration of the express promise of God, that it is most simply repugnant to the perfection of his nature to be capable of deceiving us. In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised, Tit. i. 2. And that eternal life is nothing else but this life, whereof the Spirit hath been the Author, continued and improved unto that blessed, eternal state, till it reach to that plenitude and fulness of life at length. A well of water springing up into everlasting life, John iv. 14. And God, that we might be assured that he will keep his word, hath added hereunto the ratification of his own solemn oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, there might be strong consolation to the heirs of promise, Heb. vi. 17, 18. And as I have said, this is the great promise, which is the very sum of the rest.

7. This continual vital influence is ascertained unto the regenerate by their union with Christ, considered in conjunction with—his being constituted and appointed a Mediator between God and them.—As he is Mediator, he comes to have all that should serve the necessities of their souls lodged in his hand, and particularly to be the great treasury of spirit and life to them, and for them. All fulness, even by the Father's pleasure, dwells in him. But it may be said, what is it to them, that Christ is full, that he is rich, that he lives, and that there is a fountain and treasury of life and spirit in him? What! is it nothing to them? Why, consider that they are united to him, one with him. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 17. And that the inwardness of this union might be with more life represented to us, it is said in Eph. v. 30. We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. And do we think, that when such rich plenitude of spirit and influence is in that head, he will not diffuse it, and make it flow to those who are his members? that he will have any members to be cut off from him as totally dead?

8. This matter is ascertained from the consideration of the work inchoate, or already begun. A great argument this, that the issue and good event of such a thing will certainly be brought to pass, even with wise, and prudent, and considering men. For there is no such man that doth begin a business which he will not carry through, if he be able. And therefore with the blessed God the argument is most strong. He hath been the Author of this life, by his Spirit, unto the souls that he hath renewed; and therefore surely he will continue, and carry it on, and bring it to the mature and perfect state at last unto which he hath designed it. See how the apostle argues in Phil. i. 6. Being confident (says he) of this very thing, that he who

hath begun a good work will perform (or finish) it until the day of Jesus Christ. He is not of that light and uncertain temper, as having begun such an undertaking as this, about which he hath expressed so much concern, and wherein it did appear his heart was so much engaged, to throw it off. Indeed the lubricity of a man's spirit makes him very susceptible of such a thing as this, to begin a design, and then be sick of it, grow weary, neglect it, and throw away all thoughts and concern about it, and divert to somewhat else: but it is most repugnant to the natural, essential perfection of the blessed God to be capable of such a change. He will not forsake his people, (as Samuel speaks to the mourning Israelites in 1 Sam. xii. 22.) because it hath pleased him to make them his people. Though he sometimes seems, for the awakening of us out of our security, and the engaging of us unto that care and diligence which the case requires, to represent himself, as if he were contesting with himself about this matter, whether he should continue the relation, and the care that belongs to it, yea or no; yet we see how he answers himself in Jer. iii. 19. How shall I put thee among the children, &c.? I said, "Thou shalt (yet) call me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from me." He resolves that he would, with the relation, continue in them an instinct always to look towards him as their Father. "Thou shalt look to me as thy Father, and shalt not turn away from me, and so will I preserve all things entire between thee and me."

These considerations taken together are sufficient to ascertain to a regenerate soul that may be solicitous about the state of its own case, that the influence shall be continued, which is necessary for the continued maintenance of that life whereof the Spirit of God hath been the Author.

The *use* that we shall make of this at present shall only be in some few practical inferences, reserving the further use till after we have considered and opened the other doctrine from the latter part of the verse.

We have already (so far preventing ourselves) inferred,

1. That there is such a life as that which we are wont to call the life spiritual, distinct from, and to be superadded to, the natural life of men. I insisted upon this before, and therefore do but mention it now.

2. We may further infer, that this life is of a most excellent and noble kind. Of this we are taught to make a judgment by the way of its being maintained. What is it maintained upon? They that live this life, live in the Spirit; certainly this is a very high way of living, and speaks the life that is to be maintained so, and only maintainable so, to be a life of a most excellent and noble kind. The excellency of any life is to be measured and judged by the objects which are suitable to it, and nutritive of it, or, out of which it has its sustenance and support. They that do live this life, as they do so, can breathe no other but this pure and sacred breath. They "live in the Spirit." They live no where but in a region of vitality, filled with vital influence even by the eternal Spirit. This is to live at a very high rate. Think therefore how excellent a life that is which the blessed God doth distinguish his own children by from other men.

3. Since this life is here spoken of as in this way to be continue!—we learn, that it must certainly at some time or other begin. And therefore methinks this should be a rousing and awakening thought unto those who, when they hear of the ways and methods of maintaining and improving the spiritual life, have yet cause to suspect or doubt, whether as yet they have the very beginnings of it. Methinks it should be a chilling thought unto such a heart, "How much do I hear (may such a one say) of mighty things, things of very great and vast importance, which are all impertinencies to me, they signify nothing, nor have any suitableness in them to my case! How great things do fall beside me!" So it must be with every one that hath not yet begun to live this life. What! not yet begun? Do we find so many things so industriously inserted into the Scripture, to instruct and direct us concerning the ways of exercising, maintaining, and improving this life, and I not yet feel the very beginnings of it! O how much behind are men unto the whole order of Christians, of those that are so in deed and in truth, and may deservedly admit the name! "Some are gone so far, and I am yet to begin my course!"

4. We hence see how great a perfection is lacking unto unrenewed souls; how great a perfection properly appertaining unto the spirit and nature of a man, and which ought to be found in it and with it. Why, there is a whole state of life yet lacking to them. A dismal thing to think of! It might fill a man with astonishment to think that he should be so far short of what a man ought to be, because he is not yet so much as alive towards God. You have at large heard what that life is by which we are said to live spiritually, and that it is not to be understood in a natural but in a moral sense. For admit that the spirit of a man is of itself naturally and essentially a self-acting thing, yet it were not to be imagined that God would make such a creature, and turn it loose into this world to act at random: life therefore in this moral sense is a principle of acting regularly and duly towards God. And though there be the natural powers and faculties that belong unto the soul of a man, as it is such a creature in such a place and order of the creation, yet while they are destitute of that rectitude by which they are inclined to God, or apt to act and move towards him by rule and according to prescription, such a soul may as truly and fitly be said to be dead, or those powers and faculties of it to have a death in them, as the hand of a man's body, supposing it to retain its natural shape and figure, but to be altogether useless unto the ends and purposes, for which such an organ was made: if it be raised up, it falls down a dead weight; he can't move it this way, or that: you'll say, this is a dead thing; yet it hath its shape still.

It is strange to see how far some have gone in the apprehensions of this matter by merely natural light. You know we spake of this life comprehending, with the principles of grace, the consolations, and pleasures, and joys which are apt to result and spring from thence. Alone to have such a life, is not enough to denominate a person to be a living person, but to be well; to be healthful, and vigorous, and strong. I remember Socrates I find to speak thus (as Xenophon reports of him) among his dying discourses concerning life in this moral sense, "Do you ask (says he) what it is to live? I'll tell you what it is. To live truly is to endeavour to excel in goodness; and to live comfortably, or joyfully, is to feel oneself to do so, or to feel oneself growing better and better." He calls those, persons that lived pleasantly, who felt themselves improving in respect of the good temper of their spirits. And I remember Philo-Judæus (though he had opportunity for much more light than the other) giving the notion of a man, as that which he would have commonly to obtain, says, that "no one ought to be reckoned a partaker of the rational nature, that has not in him hope towards God." So he speaks of religion; and says plainly, that "he who hath this hope in him, he only is to be called a man, and that the other is to be looked upon as no man." That was his notion. We may so far comport with it as to say, that there is certainly a great perfection belonging to the nature of man, wanting to them that are yet not come to live this life. And it is amazing to think that such a perfection is wanting by privation, in the proper sense, and not by negation only. As how dismal a thing were it, should we suppose all the rational powers and faculties to be on a sudden cut off from the nature of a man, so that he is become a mere brute, he can't think a thought, every thing of reason and discourse is become alien to him! And if we should suppose next the faculties of the sensitive nature to be cut off, and he, who was before a rational man, had the power of reason and speech, and could move to and fro and converse as a man, turned into a tree; life he has, but no better life than that: and if you would suppose that life gone too, and he at last turned into a stone; these were most dismal degenerations. It is no disparagement at all to what was originally a brute, to be a brute, or to a tree, to be a tree, or to a stone, to be a stone; for it has all the perfection that belongeth to such a creature, or to the order whereof it is in the creation of God. But when this life is lacking to the soul of man, there is a perfection lacking which did originally belong unto this order of creatures. For what! Do you think that ever God made man to disaffect himself? that he ever made a reasonable

creature that should not be capable of loving its own original, and the supreme good? And whereas we find now that men do universally make themselves the centre of their own loves, do we think that ever God made man to do so? Why, it is a dreadful transformation then, that is come upon the nature of man, and a most amazing degeneracy. It would startle us, if we would but admit serious thoughts of it, that there should be an entire state of life so generally lacking among men. And especially, if any of us upon reflection, laying our hands upon our hearts, do feel no movings of such a life, no beatings of a pulse God-ward and heaven-ward that may bespeak and be an indication of it. To think that I have such a thing lacking in me, that doth belong originally unto the nature of man; not so light and trivial a thing that, if I had it, it would add some kind of perfection to me which might conveniently enough be spared; but a whole orb and order is lacking to me which belongs to such a creature as I. Certainly it should put such a person mightily out of conceit with himself, and make him think, "What a monster am I in the creation of God! I am no way suited to the order of creatures in which my Creator hath set me; for that was an order of intelligent creatures all formed to the loving, adoring, and praising, and serving the great Author of their beings, with open eyes beholding and adoring his excellencies and glory: and I have no disposition thereto."

5. We may further infer how great a misery is consequent, when persons have not begun to live this life; there is a great perfection lacking in this life itself, but it infers a further consequent misery, *i. e.* a being cut off from all conversing with God, a kind of exile out of that region, which is within the management of the Spirit, the region in which it rules, and which it replenishes with life, and with vital influence: for being dead towards God they can have no converse with him. If a person be dead, you know what is usual, "Bury my dead out of my sight." They are not fit to come into God's sight, or to have to do with him. Would we like it well to converse among the dead; or endure to have carcasses lying with us in our houses, and in our beds, and to be found at our tables? Why, the case speaks itself; they who are destitute of this life, are quite cut off from God, and from all his converse; they are as it were exiles from the world and region of spirit and spirituality. O the strength and vigour, the joys and pleasures, the purity and peace, of that blessed region! But these are excluded by their want of this life. The Spirit can only statedly converse with those that are alive. It steps out of its region (the case were otherwise sad with us) to make men alive, and to draw them within the circle, as it were, that they may be within the reach, of its continual ordinary converse. But they are in no way of converse with the Spirit, as yet, that have not the principles of this life as yet planted in them. So that they are to look upon themselves as cut off from God, and as those with whom his Spirit hath no converse in a stated way. What it may do, what it will do in a way of sovereign grace, is more than they know; but it is their great concern to implore it, that it would come and move upon them, and attemper to the region of life. They are otherwise cut off as from the land of the living, and have no place nor fellowship there.

6. Let us see the wonderful grace of this blessed Spirit. Well may it be called the Spirit of grace: Who hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace, Heb. x. 29. We should frame our apprehensions accordingly of this blessed Spirit, as the light of such a Scripture would dictate, and account it the Spirit of all love, and goodness, and benignity, and sweetness, that admits such souls to have a livelihood in it. "If ye live in the Spirit;" O strange goodness this! Such impure creatures, so lost in darkness and death, now brought within those blessed confines! That the Spirit of the living God should have taken them into such association with itself! *q. d.* "Come, you shall live with me: here is safe living, comfortable living." The communion which God holds with such souls is called the communion of the Holy Ghost in 2 Cor. xiii. 14. That it should come and lead souls out of death and darkness into the Divine presence, and say to them, "Dwell here, in the secret of the Almighty, and under the shadow of his wing. His feathers shall cover you, and his continual influence cherish you and maintain your life: here you shall spend your days!" This is a wonderful vouchsafement. How should we magnify to ourselves the grace of the Spirit upon this account! And yet further,

7. We see the great hazard of withdrawing ourselves from under the tutelage and influence of this Spirit. It is done by neglect, done by self-confidence, done by remitting our dependance, done by resistance, by our disobedience, our little obsequiousness to the Spirit: and you see the hazard of it. Step out of this region of life, and there is nothing but impure and desolate darkness. We languish and die, if we retire, or recede and step without these sacred boundaries. To be confined and kept within them, how great a vouchsafement is it! and, that it is undertaken that it shall be so! But though it shall be so, we are not to expect that this should be done without our care. We showed you, in speaking of that influence, that it is an assisting and co-operative influence, among many other particulars.

Lastly, We may infer, that is a most weighty and important charge that lies upon every renewed soul. For think, how precious and excellent a life is to be maintained in them; that spiritual, divine life, a thing which both requires and justifies their utmost care: requires it; for what would a person think of it, if he should be intrusted with the care of the life of a prince, the child of a great monarch? If any of us had such a charge committed to us, "I charge you with the life of this child, and to use your best care and endeavour for the nourishing of its life, and for the cultivating of it, and fitting it to the best purposes whereof it may be capable." How would this engage one's utmost diligence, that it is a very important life that is committed to my care. We have every one of us the care incumbent upon us of the life of a divine thing produced and brought forth in us, and which we are to apply the name first to, when we call ourselves the sons or children of God. There the name falls first; it is that divine thing that is his son, and we are only his sons or children upon the account of that. To have a divine life to maintain and cherish in my soul, as I may have a subordinate agency, under the Spirit, in order thereto, how should it engage my utmost solicitude and care, that nothing be done offensive to this life, that every thing be done that may tend to preserve and improve it!

And as it requires our care, so it finally justifies it. A great many are apt to think, yea, and do often speak, reproachfully concerning those who do any thing to discover and hold forth the power and efficacy of such an inbeing life in them. To what purpose do these persons take so much more care than other men about their souls, and about their spiritual state, as they are wont to call it? Why, they have a life more than you to be solicitous about; a life that you know nothing of; a noble, a divine life, which is incumbent upon them to care for. They wonder that this race of men don't run with them into the same excess of riot, when they never consider these are things that would be noxious to my life. It may be you find nothing in you, unto which such things would be an offence: they would hurt my very life. This hath the holy soul to say to justify all that care and concern which he hath about the maintaining and preserving his spiritual life. And would not he be thought to talk very unreasonably that should say; Why should such and such men, who are observed to be much addicted to study, and retirement, and contemplation, why should they inure themselves to more thoughts than the beasts do? They, who apply themselves to a course of praying, meditation, &c. why should they do so more than the beasts, who, say they, do but eat and drink, and what is given them that they gather, and no more ado? The answer would be obvious from such persons; "I have a thing called reason in me, which I am to cultivate, and improve, and make my best of, which beasts have not." And is not that a sufficient answer; "I have a life more in me than other men have, which I am to tend, and take all possible care of; a life capable of great improvements, a life of great hopes, a life put into me upon high accounts, and for the greatest and most noble designs." And therefore if any of us be tempted by the licentious persons of the

age to run their course, and do as they do, pray let us learn to distinguish our cases. The matter is not with us as it is with them. We have somewhat else in us; a divine thing, which hath a sacred life belonging to it, implanted in our natures; which hath given us hope, and which is in us the earnest and pledge, of a blessed eternity, an immortal state of life. And what! shall we be prodigal of this? Is this a thing to be exposed, and ventured, and thrown away, merely to comply with the humour of a sensual wretch, who knows nothing of the matter, and is a stranger to all such affairs?

SERMON XII.*

You have heard of a twofold work of the Holy Spirit upon such souls as it hath regenerated, or put a principle of spiritual life into; *viz.*—the maintaining of that life, which is mentioned in the former part of this verse, "If we live in the Spirit;" and—the causing, and conducting, and governing the motions which are agreeable to that life, in the latter part, "Let us also walk in the Spirit."—We have spoken of the former of these, and are now to proceed unto the latter, that is, to treat of that part or hand which the Holy Spirit hath about the motions and actions of renewed souls; and those must be considered in a reference unto that life unto which they are connatural, as you see they are mentioned in that reference in the text, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Therefore the latter truth which we have to note to you from this Scripture you may take thus;—That it belongs to their state, who live in the Spirit, to walk also in the Spirit.—In speaking to which we shall,

I. Show, what it is to walk in the spirit.

II. How it belongs unto the state of such persons so to walk.

I. What walking in the Spirit imports. This we may understand by inquiring severally into, and then joining together, these two notions; *i. e.* what walking doth import; and then,—what it imports to do any thing in the Spirit.—These being explained and put together, will give us the full and true import of walking in the Spirit.

Walking in the general, you know, is an expression that signifies action or motion; and sometimes it is taken in a natural sense, and then you know what it signifies; sometimes it is taken in a moral sense, a sense borrowed from the natural, because of some analogy and agreement between the one and the other; and then it plainly signifies the course of a man's conversation. So it must necessarily be understood to signify here, according to the transumed or borrowed sense. And nothing is more ordinary in Scripture than to express the course of a man's conversation, whether it be good or whether it be bad, by the phrase of walking; as you can't but have taken notice, such of you as have been conversant with the Scriptures, how often it is said concerning the kings of Israel and Judah, that they walked so and so; such and such a one in the way of his fathers, and the like: where the series of his actions, morally considered, is most expressly inteaded to be signified.

But that we may speak more distinctly unto the notion of walking, because it will give much light unto the matter which we have before us; as, in general, walking doth signify action or motion, so it also carries with it some specification of that action or motion, and so doth import action or motion of some special kind. For, though all walking is motion, yet all motion is not walking; and therefore it is an expression that serves to be some way restrictive of the general notion of action or motion. And that we may speak more clearly hereunto, we must take notice of something that walking doth *expressly denote*, or that is more formally included in the notion of it; and somewhat that it doth *connote* or import of a kind of *collateral* signification thereof.

1. There are some things which walking doth more directly and formally denote. As,

1. It denotes a self-motion. A motion which proceeds from an internal principle in the thing that moves; though not originally; for that cannot be supposed concerning it in a creature, but subordinately only. If one rolls a stone to and fro upon the ground, it would be very improper to say, that stone walks. It signifies motion from an internal principle, a kind of self-motion.

2. It doth most properly signify a voluntary motion. There may be motion from an internal principle, which is not voluntary, as there are many things that have a principle of motion in themselves, which have not the power of will; which belongs only unto intellectual agents, unto free creatures. Now if a man be dragged this way or that, he is not said to walk, though he make use of his own motive power too.

3. It imports an orderly motion. For he is not said to walk who only wildly skips and fetches freaks this way and that. And that signification is especially carried that is used for walking here, στοιχέω; a word from whence that word στίξ comes, which signifies military order, the orderly motion of any army in rank and file: so the word is noted to signify. Yea, and from the same word comes a word that signifies the order which is observed in verse, when the composition is most exact and accurate, of so many feet, or making up such or such a form of metre; δίστιχος. A metrical kind of order is signified by this word; so as that one's motions are measured by a strict kind of rule all along.

4. It imports a pleasurable motion. For you know we are wont to walk for our recreation. If persons go a journey, or the like, that is toilsome, we express that more usually by another word, travelling; but if a person be gone forth to exercise himself in order to his recreation and health, then we usually say, he is gone a walking.

5. It is a continued motion. For he that fetches a skip and jump now and then, this way and that, is not said to walk; but walking is a course of motion continued for such a time.

6. It is a progressive motion. There may be continued motion which is not progressive. One may continue moving to and fro, in the same place, for a long time together: but walking is a going forward. These things (as is obvious unto a common understanding) are carried in the notion of walking most expressly, and so it may be said to denote these things more formally. But,

2. There are also some things which it doth connote. And they are especially these two, *viz.*—(1.) an *end*, and—(2.) a *way*. It connotes an end; for walking is a tendency some whither, or unto some term. And it connotes a way; for a man can't walk, but it must be in some way or other, whether it be better or worse.

These things are considerable concerning the notion of walking. And as walking doth import a specification of motion, or is a more special kind of motion; so the addition of "in the Spirit" plainly imports a specification of walking, so as to denote a more special sort and kind of walking.

We shall consider, more at large, what it is to do any thing in the Spirit, before we come to sum up all in joining these notions together. To do any thing in the Spirit, is to do it in the light, and in the power of the Spirit.

1. In the light of the Spirit. For whenever it comes to deal with the spirits of men, it is in that way, by creating a light to them, which is directive of their motions. Let us walk in the light of the Lord, Isa. ii. 5. that is walking in the Spirit. To do any thing in the Spirit, is to do it in the light, not blindly and darkly, as those that know not what they do.

2. In the power of the Spirit. I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only, Ps. lxxi. 16.

These things thus laid before you will make it plain to us what is carried "in walking in the Spirit." We are to put together the notions of walking, and doing any thing in the Spirit. And an account of the result and sum of what has been said may be given you in these several particulars.

1. To walk in the Spirit is to intend and tend towards

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an end which is suitable to the Spirit. It is most proper to begin there; and that is, in short, walking in the Spirit imports a continual tendency towards God, as the great end and mark at which one aims. And this is an end agreeable to the Spirit; and this, and no other, as the last and ultimate end. The soul that is acted by the Spirit of God is acted towards God. Do but observe how these things are connected in that passage, Ps. lxiii. 8. My soul followeth hard after thee. How comes it to do so? Thy right hand holds me up. And what is that right hand? Why, it can signify nothing else but the power of God, that is, his Spirit, which we are taught to look upon as the great active principle of all the motions and operations of the creatures, whereof it can be said to be directly determinative. Then we may conclude that a person is acted by the Spirit, or walks in the Spirit, when he aims at God through his whole course. While men are under the power and rule of another, that is, a fleshly and corrupt principle, it is all for self that their designs lie, and the course of their actions run; they are confined wholly (as hath been said upon an occasion) within a circle of acting from self to self: but when once the Spirit of God comes to have the government and the motions of the soul, as all those motions do immediately spring from God, so they tend to him, and centre in him. The soul designs him, and none but him, in its whole course. And therefore, it being the great work of the Redeemer to reduce and bring back souls to God, what part or hand the Spirit of God hath in this matter, is in pursuance of the Redeemer's design. Therefore we are said to "have access, or come to God through him by the Spirit;" this is the common course stated for all men; for Jew and Gentile both, for with such reference it is said, Through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father, (Eph. ii. 18.) implying that none would ever come at God, aim at God, or tend towards him, but as, by the motive power, and in the directive light of the blessed Spirit, they are acted and carried towards him through Christ.

2. Walking in the Spirit implies a constant adherence unto Christ by dependence and subjection. Which it must needs do upon the account that all walking, as I have said, connotes a way, and Christ is expressly represented to us as the way leading unto God. I am the way; no man cometh unto the Father but by me, John xiv. 6. And hence, as we have this phrase of "walking in the Spirit," so we have that too of walking in Christ, Col. ii. 6. And the apostle Peter directs such a course of walking as might put them to shame who should falsely accuse their good conversation in Christ, I Pet. iii. 16. And certainly it is one great part of the work of the Holy Ghost upon the spirits of men, so as to attemper and frame them unto the way of access to God, or the way wherein God can be come at, that it may become even spiritually natural unto the soul to walk in that way. While they walk in Christ, they walk in the Spirit. It is the business of the Spirit to engage the soul in this way of tending and moving towards God, and to keep it on therein.

3. It imports walking in the divine light, whereof the Spirit is the continual Author unto renewed souls. And I do not now mean only that external light which it affords by the Scripture revelation, but an inward vital light which it sets up and continues in the soul itself, having caused "a day-spring, a day-star to arise there, and made a day within." The Spirit creates unto the soul a region of light, wherein it converses, while it is said to converse in the Spirit. They unto whom it hath not created such a light, are said "to walk in darkness;" and whatsoever there is of external light shining round about them, their darkness comprehends it not, as in John i. 5. But where this blessed Spirit is, it makes those that were darkness to be light in the Lord. "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." Well, and what then? Walk as children of the light, Eph. v. 8. 'Tis true that light doth here, as well as elsewhere, signify holiness, but not without reference unto intellectual light; only it imports that intellectual light to be a practical, refining, transforming, vital light, so as that the same thing is capable of a two-fold denomination, of light, and of life too; as St. John, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sun of righteousness, speaks of him as under the notion of life, and saith, that life was the light of men, John i. 4. It is therefore a region of living light which the Spirit doth create unto souls, in which they converse and walk: then are they said to walk in the Spirit, by that work and office of the Holy Ghost, which our Saviour calls "its leading persons into all truth." He promises in those consolatory, valedictory discourses of his to his disciples, (in xiv. xv. and xvi. chapters of John's Gospel,) again and again the Spirit, and for this purpose, "to lead them into truth;" that, you know, is the part of directive light. But then it is one thing to direct only by telling, so and so you must do; and another thing by way of instinct, or by an inward prompting; by which too a person does not go in that case blindfold, but with an inclination, with spontaneity, and seeing his way all the way he goes. He walks in the light; and such a light as is directive and active to him at once.

4. It imports acting by a divine power all along through our whole course. The Spirit, where it is, is the Spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7. They are said to be in the Spirit, who are under the power and dominion of it, as John says of himself, that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, in Rev. i. 10. Under the influence of its Almighty power, its captivating dominion. According as when persons are said to be in the flesh, (an expression frequently used in Scripture,) it notes their being under the power and dominion of a fleshly principle. So to walk in the Spirit, is to act on all along under the power and governing influence of the Spirit. I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, Zech. x. 12. That one attribute belonging to the Divine nature, *viz.* the power of God, is more especially pointed at there.

There is a strict connexion between this and the last mentioned thing, that light and this power; that light being a vital, a living thing. Though we may have distinct notions of them, yet they are in themselves connected and most inseparable. Come ye, let us walk in the light of the Lord, Isa. ii. 5. Even in the form of expression, though light is the thing which is directly spoken of, there is implied and involved therewith a certain active power, the being moved to go and walk in that light, which, as such, was to guide them in their way. See what is referred to in ver. 3. He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. This signifies that their spirits were acted by a certain power which did incline them unto this thing; and not that they were merely enlightened. And whereas in this very chapter, the expression, "led by the Spirit," is made use of in ver. 18. "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law;" as also in Rom. viii. 14. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God; the word which is rendered *led* is ἄγονται, and signifies acted or moved by a certain power. As many as are acted by the Spirit of God; and they that are acted by the Spirit of God are not under the law, they are not cursed and condemned by it.

5. It imports acting from spiritual habitual principles that are fixed and settled in the soul; and therefore includes in it the exercise of all the several graces of the Spirit. For you must know that when we say, walking in the Spirit implies walking in the Divine light, and by the Divine power; it is not to be understood as if there were nothing else but a temporary, present ray of light, and effort of power from the Spirit; and so that there comes to be any thing habitually fixed in the soul itself. But though it is very true indeed that habitual light, &c. in the soul from the Spirit must be maintained and continued by the Spirit, it is nevertheless to be looked upon as an habitual principle which is in the soul itself. And the case is here but as it is in nature; for there can be no sort of life in all the creation, whereof God is not the Author; nor any action done, but the power of doing it is received from him; though there are many actions which he doth not make creatures do, yet there is no action in which he does not enable, or not give them sufficient power. But yet notwithstanding this, we know that the natures of creatures are distinct from one another; and to say, that the Divine power must do all, is to take away the distinction of natures wholly, and then a stone might reason as well as a man, and a tree might walk to and fro as well as a sensitive living creature: but God's way of dealing with

creatures in the natural creation, ordinarily, is to act them according to, and co-work with that peculiar nature which he hath put into this, and that, and the other creature. So it is here: there is a divine nature, consisting of many gracious, holy, vital principles which God puts into the soul when he renews it; and which are so many several parts of the new creature, and with these several principles or with this divine nature, he concurs or co-works; though the exigency of the case is such, there being a corrupt nature joined therewith in the same subject, that here he must continually over-power unto every action that is done: and it is not enough to give, or maintain, the principle, but he must work the very act itself, because of a reluctant principle, which would otherwise strangle the act, and never let it be brought forth at all. But then we must not suppose that the power by which the work is done, is a thing only at this time given, and that there is no principle in the soul itself which it acts from; for there is a principle implanted and fixed in the soul, and though that requires to be acted, it is the way and method of the Spirit to act in and by that principle, or put that principle upon action. So that walking in the Spirit is walking in the exercise of the implanted principles of grace, and not without them, or not having any such work wrought or done in us; as if a person should be habitually inclined one way, and yet act another; believe, without a principle of faith; or love God, without a principle of love; or fear, without a principle of fear; by having these actions erected in him by the Spirit, without the habits from whence they are to proceed, and to which they are connatural. This is not to be supposed. And therefore whensoever any walk in the actual exercise of grace, they walk in the Spirit. And it is very observable to this purpose that you have several fruits of the Spirit, or gracious principles, ennumerated immediately before the text, ver. 22, 23. You are there told what the fruits of the Spirit are; or what the principles are which the Spirit is the productive cause of; and then it is afterwards subjoined, "If we live in the Spirit," or have all these principles, "let us also walk in the Spirit," *i. e.* in acting and exercising these principles. Hence therefore we read of walking by faith, (2 Cor. v. 7.) and walking in the fear of the Lord, (Acts ix. 31,) and walking with God, (Mic. vi. 8.) and of walking in love, Eph. v. 2. To walk in the exercise of these several graces of the Spirit, is walking in the Spirit.

6. It implies walking in the way of the Lord with freedom of choice, and from a spontaneous inclination; from both the notion of walking, which is voluntary, and the addition, in the Spirit, which is the great Author of all liberty wheresoever it is; Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, 2 Cor. iii. 17. A person is not the less, but the more, free by being impelled and moved by the Spirit; for it is the Spirit that makes him free and enlarges him: I will walk at liberty, says the Psalmist, for I keep thy precepts, Psalm cxix. 45. And, I will run the ways of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart, ver. 32.

7. It implies a continued reference to a rule. To walk in the Spirit is not to walk extravagantly, as those that know no measures or limits in their walking, and are as the wild ass used to the wilderness, Jer. ii. 24. It is opposed to walking after lust, or the inclinations of corrupt nature, which you know is the only principle of all extravagancy. This I say, says the apostle in the 16th verse of this chapter, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." The apostolical authority and majesty, which is imported in that solemn preface, is of very great remark and note. This I say, this I determine, this is one of the sacred *effata* and dictates which I pronounce to you in the name of the great God and Redeemer, whose office and authority I bear; "This I say, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." That Spirit will be a principle of holy order and regularity to you in all your walking: so the great promise of it implies, in Ezek. xxxvi. 27. I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. You shall then be willing to walk in a prescribed way, the way that I line and rule out unto you all along.

8. It implies a complacential course of walking on in religion. Walking in the Spirit is walking cheerfully; it belongs to it, it is comprehended within the compass of it. Whenever any have the Spirit, this lies within their walk; it is part of that spiritual walk to be conversant, amidst consolations and joys and pleasures, and it is part of the signification of that expression, "Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord." Light doth many times signify (besides knowledge, and holiness) joy, delight, pleasure. Walking is a motion for recreation, as you have heard; spiritual walking is a motion, if it be entirely in itself, amidst spiritual joys and comforts. The churches walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied, in the before-mentioned Acts ix. 31. That sure was walking in the Spirit. 'Tis suitable to the way in which Christians are to walk, which is throughout in every part of it, a way of pleasantness, and a path of peace, Prov. iii. 17. It is the Spirit that causes holy ones to walk in this way, and then sure it works in them a disposition suitable to the way. And if the way is pleasant, and the heart is suitably disposed thereunto, it cannot but be pleasant walking, so far as that disposition is in that pleasant way.

9. It is a continuing in the course and practice of religion. For walking is a continued motion: and therefore they that are said to walk in the Spirit, don't begin in the Spirit, and then think to be made perfect by the flesh, (as the expression is in Gal. iii. 3.) but they continue in a course of spiritual motion.

10. Lastly, It imports a progress in spirituality. As was said before, there may be a continued motion that is not progressive; but walking in the Spirit imports a progressive motion in a course of spirituality. When persons make still nearer and nearer approaches unto their end, the term of their course; draw nearer and nearer to God, and as they draw nearer to him, find a gradual influence of divine light, and life, and power, more discernible impressions of the Divine image, grow more and more into a suitableness to him; are more acquainted with him, are brought unto higher delectation, and to take more complacency in him: this is walking in the Spirit; when a man's path, as it is said concerning the righteous man, is as the shining light, that shines more and more, brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day, Prov. iv. 18. As you know the nearer approach we make unto the light of a glorious lucid object, the more light we have, still all along as we go, our way grows more and more lightsome. And strength grows and increases too with the light, The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger, Job xvii. 9. There is an increase with the increase of God. They don't walk in the Spirit therefore who keep moving, but move in a circle, or in a round of empty sapless duties, keep up the formalities of religion, and no more; but they walk in the Spirit who make a progress, who go forward, who draw nearer and nearer unto God, and become more suitable and like him, and fit for his eternal converse, and for all the present service whereto he calls them.

SERMON XIII.*

IT is the latter part of the verse that we are upon, from which, considered in that reference which it carries to the former, we have observed—That it belongs to the state of them, who are made alive by the Spirit of God, to walk in the Spirit.—We have proposed in speaking to this, to show you,—1. What walking in the Spirit imports,—2. How it belongs unto the state of living Christians thus to walk.—The former we have already spoken to, and now go on to the other, *viz.*

To evince to you, that it belongs to the state of those, that live in the Spirit, thus to walk in it. Now we are to show you, that it belongs to the state of such as a *privilege*; and therein, the part of the Holy Ghost to cause and conduct all the holy motions of renewed souls: and also, that it belongs to their state as a *duty*, and therein we are to

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show you our part. The motion of this or that thing, if it can be said to be its own motion as this is said to be ours, (for we must "walk in the Spirit,") signifies a part to be done by it; and we therefore have a part to do, in compliance with, and in subordination to, the Spirit of God, in this thing. There can't be walking in the Spirit, but there must be a concurrence of its part, and ours; its, according to its supremacy, and ours, according to our subordination. Under this second head therefore the demonstration will lie, how it belongs, or that it doth belong, to the state of renewed souls to walk in the Spirit; they may, and they ought. They may, so it speaks their privilege, and the readiness of the Spirit still to co-operate, according to what part is assigned it; they ought, so it speaks their duty; they ought so to walk, *i. e.* so to demean and carry themselves, as that they may, according to the prescribed and appointed methods, make sure to themselves the help, and concurrent influence and co-operation, of the Spirit through their course. Both these are plainly enough signified to us by the very words of the text itself; one, as implied, plainly enough implied, and the other more plainly expressed. And it will be necessary to speak unto them severally and distinctly.

I. Walking in the Spirit belongs unto the state of such as are spiritually alive, as a *privilege* proper thereunto. The injunction, "Walk in the Spirit," plainly supposes that the Spirit is communicable for this purpose, that walking in the Spirit is no impossible thing, that 'tis a thing which by a stated gracious vouchsafement appertains to the state of them to whom this charge is given. It is a known and unquestionable rule in such cases, that precepts and promises do imply one another: and such precept carries in it a virtual promise, any such promise carries in it a virtual precept. The precept supposes the promise, and the promise infers the precept; that is, an obligation to the thing in reference whereto such and such help is promised to be afforded. If it should be enjoined us to walk in the light of the sun, it is supposed that the sun doth ordinarily shine. There is a connexion therefore manifestly implied here between the action that is enjoined us, and the supposed communication of the Spirit in order thereto; or its constant communicableness, or aptitude and readiness to communicate itself, according as walking in it doth require. For how harshly would it sound, to enjoin any one to make use of that wherewith he hath nothing at all to do; to use an incommunicable thing, a thing to which I have no pretence, to which I can lay no kind of claim! As if one should enjoin a child to do such or such a thing by the strength of a giant. It is implied that there are certain rules and methods, according whereunto, in a stated way, the Spirit is ready to communicate and give forth itself, in reference unto all those actions and motions, proper to the state of the renewed soul, which are comprehended, as you have heard, under the expression of walking.

The Spirit's part being that therefore which we have to consider and speak to in the *first* place, as pre-supposed; there are two things that I shall do in reference to that. I shall show you,—1. What communication of the Spirit is necessary unto our walking in it,—2. The communicativeness of the Spirit, or its aptitude to communicate itself, unto this purpose, and according unto such necessity.

1. What communication of the Spirit is necessary unto this, that we may be said to walk in it. We have hinted to you already what communication is necessary, in telling you what walking in the Spirit implies. A communication both of light and power is necessary. Consider we both these. A communication of such light and such power, as are quite of another orb, and belong to another sphere than that of nature; a light that is more than natural, and a power that is more than natural: such light and power are necessary to our walking in the Spirit. We shall speak distinctly unto the one and the other of these.

1. Walking in the Spirit doth necessarily suppose a communication of spiritual light, or light from the Spirit, as the privilege of truly living Christians, proper to their state, which the exigency of their case doth require and call for. This is of the very *primordia* (as I may speak) of the new creation, that great work of God upon the spirits of men, by which he doth new-mould them both for obedience and blessedness. This light keeps within the sphere and verge of his own people, the people that he doth form for himself: O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord, Isa. ii. 5. It plainly means that directive light which is to guide the course of our walking, as you will see, if you look back unto the 3d verse of that chapter, "Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths." That we may do so, it is necessary that he teacheth us his ways, and enlighten our way, and, as it were, afford us a continual light through the whole course and tract of that way wherein we are to walk. This light is not merely an adventitious, uncertain thing, but a stated, settled thing. It is necessary that it be so in order to our walking in the Spirit. When God began this work of the new creation, the provision was, "Let there be light;" that was the care that was taken in the old creation, to which the apostle doth manifestly allude in 2 Cor. iv. 6. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He, that at first made light shine out of darkness, in raising up and forming this old world, when he comes to raise the new creation out of the ruins of the old, in the spirits of men, doth the same thing, and followeth the same method. He makes light to shine into those dark and desolate souls, that before were lost in darkness and death, that they may know which way to turn themselves, and to choose their way, what is to be done, and what is not to be done. We are not to think that this light, this more than natural light, is a thing separate from a vital and motive power and influence, but most inwardly and necessarily conjunct and connected therewith: as the light of the sun in reference to the sensible world is a vigorous light, a light which hath an influence accompanying it. And think we with ourselves, what a miserable desolation must presently ensue, not only darkness, but death too, if God should put out the sun, and that great luminary of heaven should become all on a sudden totally extinct! What a universal languor would there be upon universal nature, even all on a sudden! Such is the light unto the new world, the new creation of which I am speaking. That spiritual light, as was formerly intimated, is vital light, "light of life." Life is said to be light in that heretofore mentioned, John i. 4. And when, in Eph. v. 14. the words are directed unto souls that are asleep and buried, as it were, in death, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead," it is superadded what they were to expect from Christ; and one would think it should rather have been said, Christ shall give thee life; but it is said, "Christ shall give thee light," implying that to be a vital light, a light that carries life in it; and which, when he comes efficaciously and powerfully to awaken souls, and by his word make them arise, he must then infuse light and life together in one. Light is spoken of as the very composition of the new creature, as if it were a being all of light, "Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord," and this in reference to their walking as children of the light. Eph. v. 8. They are made up of light, being born spirit of Spirit, as we had occasion formerly to note. The great and glorious God himself is called the God of light, they are called the children of light. That is their parentage. Light descended of light, begotten of light. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." All converse with him is walking in the light as he is in the light, I John i. 7.—It is true, that light signifies holiness, it necessarily connotes it; but then this only, as was heretofore intimated, doth import and signify, that that light, which goes into the composition of the new creature, is efficacious, refining, transforming light, such as makes the soul some way throughout suitable unto the motions of truth, which are now placed in the speculative understanding. Whereas the case is much otherwise with unchanged, unrenewed souls. There is a discordancy, a disagreement between their habitual frame and temper, and the notions of truth which are in their minds. But when the notions of truth, and the frame and disposition of the heart, come to be similar unto one another, then is the soul said to be, as it were, a being of

light; it is all light. "Ye were darkness;" so men are in their natural and degenerate state, all darkness, the very light that is in them is darkness; but when this change comes to be made, then are they "light in the Lord." Now that which is so natural, and is even in the very constitution of the new creature, must needs be a continual thing; and so must be continually maintained, and is maintained by a continual influence, or irradiation of light from the blessed Spirit upon the soul that it hath begot.

I might be here yet more particular, as it is not unnecessary to be, and show you both in reference to what objects, and in reference to what acts, such light is needful for our walking in the Spirit.

1. In reference to what objects such light is necessary. What things are there to be discovered and made known to them that are capable of walking in the Spirit, in reference whereto such a light as this is necessary? Many objects we might speak of, if we would particularize, but we shall gather up things (because we intend to speak very briefly) under as general heads as we can.

1. It is necessary, that we have light in reference to the *end* towards which we are to act or move in this course. Spiritual walking, as you have heard, connotes an end; it is necessary that there be a spiritual light in reference to that end, unto which the course of this spiritual walking is and ought to be directed. That end, you know, is no other than the blessed God himself, and him considered as in Christ; for he is not otherwise accessible, and we are never to think a thought of moving or tending towards him, otherwise than in Christ, and through him. This light is necessary to reveal both the Father and the Son to us. "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." We need to have him shown. The disciples acknowledged so much in John xiv. 8. It is only in this light that we can see light, Ps. xxxvi. 9. How strangely confused and blundering notions of God have they, who are destitute of this supervening additional light! Whatsoever objects they have, they are dim and without efficacy, and God is known as if he were not known. He hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him, 1 John v. 20. And we are in him: the knowledge of God in Christ is that which unites, or draws the soul into union; and that is the understanding given, that is the additional, supervening light. Whosoever sinneth, saith that same apostle, hath not seen God, 1 John iii. 6. ὁ κακοποιῶν, he that is *an evil-doer*, (we can't render it more strictly according to the letter than so,) he hath not seen God; *i. e* he that is in an unregenerate state, he that yet lives a life of sin, he hath not seen God; no beam of true divine light hath ever yet shined in that wretched soul. As our Saviour tells the Jews in John v. 37. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. Ye have not seen, ye have never found a right notion of God to any purpose. All that while persons are in a very ill condition for walking towards him, for moving and tending God-ward. A soul can't move blindfold towards its end, but in the light, and with open eyes. And if men are alienated from the life of God, it is through the blindness of their hearts, Ephes. iv. 18. Persons therefore, who are brought to have a participation in the Divine life, have a participation of the Divine light at the same time to guide all the course of their motions and operations God-ward, and that continually supplied by his "Spirit of revelation." How strangely at a loss are persons to conceive of the excellencies and beauties of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom and through whom we are to tend to God, till this light shine in upon them! The apostle prays in behalf of the Ephesians, that "God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him," *i. e.* our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom he had spoken before, Ephes. i. 17. As if he should have said, "You can never come to know him, to own and acknowledge him, (the word there used doth signify acknowledgment,) to know him to purpose, unless the Spirit of wisdom and revelation he given you for that end." Others look upon him as one without form, without comeliness, even when they see him, as the expression is to that purpose in Isa. liii. 2. Even while men see him, they see no beautiful object; no inviting, no captivating excellencies are beheld in him, nothing for which he is reckoned desirable from a practical judgment. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation therefore is necessary to this. And when we consider God our end, towards whom through Christ we are now to be moving, the principal consideration of him as our end, as in that state wherein we are finally to acquiesce and rest in him, that is, the future state of glory and blessedness. And how altogether unapprehensive of the attractive power of that end are those souls that are yet destitute of this life! Therefore, in that mentioned Ephes. i. 18. the apostle prays for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to be given to the Ephesians, that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might know the hope of their calling, and what is the riches of the glory of the inheritance that God hath in his saints, or, among his saints, as it may be read; the glories of that state wherein the saints in common have a share. Our course is to be directed heaven-ward, walking in the Spirit; we are to walk towards heaven, that ought to be the tendency of our course all along: but how are they capable of walking heaven-ward, who are destitute of the inviting, alluring representations of it? And how impossible is it, that they should otherwise be had, than by this Divine light! Things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which it enters not into the heart of man to conceive of, God has prepared for them that love him; and as it follows, he hath revealed them to us by his Spirit, that Spirit which teaches the deep things of God, 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. And if you carry on the discourse to the 12th verse, there you find, We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. We come by this Spirit to have some right knowledge of the things that are freely given, which without this light we could never have known.

2. This light is necessary to show us our *way* from step to step. The spirituality of that duty which is required of us we can never understand aright without this Spirit. To know what it is to meet with God, what it is to obey out of love, what it is to be in a continual, profound subjection of Spirit unto the authority and law of an invisible God, we shall never understand these things, we shall never know them without this light. A regenerate man has the law of God, and an unregenerate man may have it too; but we find that in reference to that clearer light which the regenerate person is capable of, and is possessed of more or less, he hath need to have his eyes open to see what there is in that law; Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law, Psalm cxix. 18. There are wonders enclosed in the law of God, which an unregenerate man doth not dream of, which escape his ken, or come not within his notice. A regenerate person, one who is made spiritually alive, is brought in this respect as into a new world; all things look with another face and aspect to him. He is said to be translated out of darkness into marvellous light, φῶς θαυμαστὸν, *amazing light*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. When he once comes into that light, "Where am I?" saith he, "What a glorious light am I got into!" Look to the way in which he is to walk, and there is a lustre and glory upon it which was never apprehended before; as, according to another attribute of the same way, it is said to be pleasant. The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, Prov. iii. 17. A carnal mind never apprehends any pleasure in these ways, and so apprehends no glory, no amiableness in them.

3. This light is necessary, in reference to the proper *motives* of this walking. There are such things. Indeed they lie very much in the objects themselves, but we may frame, concerning some, a diverse consideration of motive; and besides those that are in the objects; that is, respect the spiritual and divine objects, they are desirable for themselves, and accordingly, the object is a motive; but there are accessary and supervening motives; as it is a very great motive to betake ourselves unto this region of spirituality, of spiritual light, and life, and motion, to cast an eye upon this our world, and behold the vanity, the nothingness of it, and all things that do belong unto this *compages* or frame. There needs this spiritual, Divine light to behold that. A carnal man can never make a right judgment, to the purpose, of the vanity of the creature,

of the emptiness and nothingness of all things under the sun. But to one that lives in the Divine light, that walks and is conversant there, what a fleeting, despicable shadow is all this world, this frame of sensible things that is vanishing under his eye! He sees how the fashion of it is passing away; and by how much the more he is weaned hereby and disengaged from it, so much the more is he at liberty for this spiritual walk which we speak of. But how much the more he gets out of the entangling snares of death that are below, so much the more is his way above, as the way of the wise is; so much the more is he conversant in that path, that unknown way, which the "vulture's eye hath not seen, and which the lion's foot hath not trod;" that way of wisdom, or holiness, or life, so much spoken of in Job xxviii.

4. This light is necessary in order to the knowledge of *ourselves*. We can never walk in the Spirit if we have not some competent discerning of ourselves; and we can never know the weaknesses, the wants, the wiliness, and deceit of our own spirits, without the Divine light. To be conversant therein is necessary to all such purposes, and in reference to our making a discovery of whatsoever is needful to be discovered concerning the state, and posture, and temper, and ordinary ways and methods of our souls.

2. The acts in reference whereto such light is necessary are these:

1. It is necessary in reference to the act of *apprehension*. We can't so much as apprehend clearly and with distinction the things which are needful for us to apprehend, without this light of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation given for these purposes.

2. In reference unto the act of *consideration* it is necessary that we have this light to converse and walk in. Otherwise we can have no steady discerning of any thing. For consideration is nothing else but knowledge continued, or the often repeated acts of apprehension, varied this way and that, according to the various representations of the object about which I am now employing my mind. In reference to such an act of vision as this, *i. e.* steady, intent vision, there needs steady light. I can't have a steady view of a thing by a flashy and evanid light. Walking therefore in the Spirit doth require a continued light of the Spirit to be afforded me, because I have constant need to go with my eyes in my head all along, and to consider and ponder my way from step to step, from point to point; but without such a steady light, as may, as it were, determine my eye to such and such objects needful to be considered, alas! how incapable is it of looking with a steady intuition, that is, of thinking composedly of any thing which it most concerns me to think of. Can we command our own thoughts? Consult we our experience; we can no more do it, than "gather up the winds in our fists." But the Spirit in this way of operation, holds them steady by a commanding light, which keeps them, as it were, under its own government. "Look hither," and so doth determine and fix the eye to that which I am called now to consider. Whence you have that experience pronounced and spoken out, We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal, 2 Cor. iv. 18. The word which is here rendered *look* signifies *to take aim at*, σκοπούντων ἡμῶν. That is a very steady intuition which a man hath of the mark which he is aiming at, or the end which he designs; he must always have it in his eye. And, by this looking, saith the apostle, "we find that notwithstanding all the decays of the outward man, the inward man is renewed day by day," life, and vigour, and spirit continually entering in at our eyes from that glorious aim which we have before us. This will need a very steady determination of mind unto such objects by a commanding light and glory that they carry with them, so as that the soul feels not a disposition in itself to direct or look off.

3. This light is necessary in order to the act of *dijudication*, *i. e.* distinguishing or discerning between things and things, what is of great value and account and to be chosen, and what is worthless and to be neglected, what is to be done and what is not to be done. There is a continual need through the whole course of our spiritual walk for the using of such a discretive judgment between things and things, and in reference hereto, there needs a continual emanation of the Holy Ghost; for otherwise, we put good for evil, and evil for good; light for darkness, and darkness for light; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. That sense which should be exercised to distinguish between good and evil, is, from the blessed Spirit residing in our eye, putting continually fresh vigour in it, that we may be able by quickness of sight to discern or see, here is somewhat to be closed with, here is somewhat to be refused, this will be good, that will be noxious. The apostle doth on this account pray (and that is a plain intimation to us, that it is the office and work of the Spirit of God to do the thing that he there speaks of; he prays) on the behalf of the Philippians, in chap. i. 9, 10. that their love might abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. So we read it; but the word rendered *judgment* is capable of being rendered *sense*, (πάσῃ αἰσθήσει, *in all sense*,) "I pray that you may have your spiritual senses in exercise, that you may have a judicious distinguishing sense." For what? Why, "that ye may approve things that are excellent;" so it follows, or as the words there may be read, to distinguish the things that differ. You are otherwise likely to be imposed upon, if the Spirit take not that particular care of you, by the deceitful appearances of things.

4. In order to the act of *determination*, or coming to a determinative judgment, as we do upon comparing things, and noting the difference between one and another. We need the Spirit's help here, to shine with that vigorous and powerful light into the mind, as to bring our judgments to a right determination, for the rule and government of our practice, which are apt to be long hovering and in suspense, if they do not hastily determine amiss. You have the apostle expressing his own determining judgment, in a particular, but very important, case in Rom. viii. 18. "I reckon," saith he; the word which he makes use of, is a word from whence we borrow the name of *logic*, λογίζομαι, I do compute, or I am, by reason, come at last unto this definitive and positive judgment, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." That there should be such a positive, determinative judgment as that which should have the power to be influential upon his course, and directive of it, do you think he was not beholden to the illumination of the Holy Ghost? He doth not speak like a doubtful, uncertain man, or one that did not know what to choose, or how to steer his course. "For my part, saith he, I thus judge; I am at a point, having viewed the case round, inspected it narrowly and thoroughly, and considered all about it that is to be considered, and I say, that these two things, the sufferings of time and the glories of eternity, are not to be named in the same day, there is no compare between them." In order to such a determination of the mind as this, it is plain this light must necessarily come in; and there can be nothing of greater moment to the whole course of our walking in the Spirit than such a determinative judgment.

You see therefore that a communication of *light* from the Spirit is necessary to our walking in the Spirit. A communication of power is necessary to the same purpose too; but of that in the next discourse.

SERMON XIV.*

I AM now to show you,

2. That a communication of spiritual *power* is also necessary that we may be capable of walking in the Spirit. It is said that they who shall walk in such a course as this is "without weariness," must in order thereto "renew their strength," and this strength is to be from a Divine communication, because it is that which we are to wait upon the Lord for, Isa. xl. 31. We hear of a strength in the inner man given and sought for, which implies it capable of being given, for this purpose. The Psalmist speaks his experi-

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ence of its being given in Psalm cxxxviii. 3. In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. And the apostle prays that it might be given unto the Ephesians, (chap. iii. 16.) That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, &c. You will never be able to act that faith wherewith to keep up any converse with Christ, or by which he can have any commodious reception in your souls, so as to dwell there, if you are not strengthened according to the riches of his glory with might by his Spirit in the inner man, in order thereunto.

That we may speak a little more distinctly to this, it will be requisite to show you,—1. What kind of influence, or communication of power, will *not* be sufficient in this case; and then,—2. What is, over and beside that, necessary, as what *will* suffice for this purpose.

1. What will *not* suffice. It is requisite that you have a right, and as clear an account as is possible of this.

1. It will not be sufficient to have only that *common power* afforded to us, which doth suffice for common, natural action; whether by that power we understand the faculties belonging to the reasonable nature, or whether you do also comprehend therewith the promptitude and aptitude of those faculties for common actions. This will not suffice for spiritual actions, so that we may be said to walk in the Spirit. Which may easily be made to appear from such considerations as these.

I. If only such a communication of power were sufficient, then no more influence is afforded unto *regenerate* persons than to the *rest* of men. For they have a power which doth enable them to the common actions which belong to them as men, as reasonable creatures; which doth enable them, not which doth constrain them; or make them do many actions which yet they do. And,

2. Then there were as much power and influence afforded and given forth, in order to *sinful*, and forbidden actions, as in order to *good* and holy, and commanded ones, which it were very unreasonable and horrid to think, as we shall have occasion to show you by and by. In reference to the latter, such an influence goes forth, as by which God doth procure that they shall be done, or makes them to be; but sure we will not dare to say concerning forbidden actions, that he makes them to be done, though he gives such a power as by which they may and can be done; otherwise indeed it were impossible they should be done, *viz.* if power were not derived from him.

3. Otherwise it might *be possible* that no *good action* should ever be done; and consequently that no person should be saved, or finally happy. Of so great concernment it is carefully to distinguish between that common power, by which such and such actions *may* be done, and that power by which such and such actions *must* and *shall* be done, or shall be procured to be done. And,

4. Otherwise it were not only possible that no spiritual and holy actions might be done, but *impossible* that any should. For it is not only impossible that any action should be done without power, but it is impossible also that any action should be done without a power proportionable to the kind and nature of that action. And since merely natural power is altogether unproportionable unto the kind of holy and spiritual actions, it would be equally absurd to say that such actions could be done by so improper a power, as to say, that an action can be done by no power at all. If you assign an unproportionable power to any action, it is a perfect equivalence to no power; for it is no power as to this purpose. As a power to walk is no power proportionable unto the offices and functions of a reasonable soul, so that common power by which such and such natural actions may be done, is no way proportionable unto spiritual actions, which it is undertaken shall be done, which must be done, in order to their blessedness in the other world, and their glorifying God in this, who are designed at length, even of the Spirit, to receive life everlasting, Gal. vi. 8.

5. If common natural power were all that is requisite in this case, then no *exercise of grace*, or no actual grace, could be said to be *the gift of God*, and consequently, it must be denied to be grace: for what is grace but a Divine gift? Common natural power in reference unto these actions whereunto it is adequate, never infers that those actions are to be referred to God as given by him. And it may very easily be made to appear to you, that the supposition of a power only for spiritual actions, (*i. e.* the natural faculty,) though you suppose never so much promptitude for common action, which is to be made use of even in these, could not leave us ground whereupon to call such and such exercises of grace Divine gifts. For it would be very absurd to give the name of the thing done, or to be done, to the power that must be used in the doing of it. If we might suppose that at all tolerable, then we must suppose that, because all men have natural faculties which must be made use of in believing, and have a promptitude for many other actions, which are some way congenerous, or of like kind, all men are believers. If it can be enough to say that God is the giver of faith, because he gives the natural faculties which are to be made use of in believing, then we must say that he hath given faith to all the world, and consequently since all believers shall be saved, we must say too, that all the world shall be saved. Yea, if there were not an aversion unto this same work of faith, for instance, which is to be otherwise overcome, it were yet altogether improper so to speak, *viz.* that the power of believing is believing, *i. e.* the natural power to be used for a purpose, which the spiritual power doth suppose. For you might every whit as well say, that the power of building a house is a house, and the power which is to be used in fighting is a battle; the absurdity of which phrases, or forms of speech, is obvious to every one at the first view.

And if this were sufficient to say, that such and such acts or exercises are the gifts of God, because that natural power, which is presupposed in order thereto, and must be used therein, is given by him, then we might as well call the fruits of the flesh the gifts of God, as the fruits of the Spirit. For (as hath been intimated before) that power by which any sinful or fleshly act can be done, must be supposed to have had a Divine original, or else no such act could have been done, God being the fountain of all power whatsoever. And all acts *ad extra*, all operations that are any where put forth towards the creature, are common to the persons of the Trinity, and are indeed expressly attributed to the Spirit of God. By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens, (Job xxvi. 13.) and reneweth the face of the earth, Psalm civ. 30. Upon this supposition therefore the very distinction would be taken away between the fruits of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit, which we see the text hath an express reference to; and those who do the most vile of those fleshly acts might all that while be said to walk in the Spirit, as those who do the best actions imaginable. That natural power therefore which is sufficient for actions in common is not sufficient there. Nor,

2. Is the *addition of gracious habits* sufficient to our walking in the Spirit, or our doing spiritual actions. There must be an influence beyond that by which such habits are given and infused. For,

1. Those habits themselves could not subsist without a *continual influence:* especially, it being considered, that they are in the souls of sinful, corrupt, degenerate men even at the best. They are in souls which are not natural to them. They are foreign plants, and do so much the more need a continual preservative influence. As heat which is introduced into water, because it is not natural unto that water, therefore needs to be continually cherished by a fire maintained and kept under it; and if the influence of the external agent, the fire without, were not continued to maintain the heat within, it would soon vanish, and the coldness, which is natural to the water, would recover itself. Which argues that that quality which is foreign, and from without, needs a continual influence from without to maintain it. But this is not all, for,

2. Beside the influence which is necessary to maintain such habits, there is an influence necessary *to act them* in a renewed soul; otherwise they would not be acted. For these habits are in conjunction with contrary habits which would impede the other from going forth into act: which we do not need to reason with you much about, because we find the matter so expressly asserted in Scripture, even this very Gal. v. 17. Ye cannot do the things that ye would. And why? because the flesh lusteth against the

Spirit, and these two, saith the apostle, are contrary the one to the other. And here it seems more reasonable to understand by Spirit, the new nature, the new creature, which you have heard is called Spirit, in John iii. 6. And for that very reason is the injunction given in the 16th verse of this chapter, to walk in the Spirit, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," &c. He speaks to those whom he supposes to be furnished with the habits of grace, and yet they could not act for all that, unless they did walk in the Spirit; and therefore walking in the Spirit must import more on the Spirit's part, than only its furnishing the soul with gracious habits added to natural powers. And for my part, I dare not venture to say, what many do, that the apostle speaks of himself, in Rom. vii. as in a state wherein he was destitute of grace, when he so expressly says, that how to perform that which is good he did not find. Sure he was not without the habits of grace when he said this; yet though he had the habits of grace, there were times in which he could not find to do the things that were good. Such habits therefore do need further influence than what doth infuse and maintain them, by which they may be capable of being brought forth into act. And therefore,

2. We shall next lay down what *is necessary* and will be sufficient in this case that spiritual actions may be done, and so that we may be truly said to walk in the Spirit. And such an influence is necessary, and would be sufficient for this purpose as will be so efficacious as to direct and determine and overrule the heart into the doing of this and that particular action, so that it may not only be said, as concerning common actions, such an action may be done by such a natural power put forth, but this action shall be done. In short, such an influence, as by which a person is not only enabled to do such an action, but is made to do it; or by which the action is procured to be done: so that the very production of the action is referable unto the Divine influence in this case, as that whereunto it doth actually enable and determine the doer. And that so much is necessary unto every spiritual and holy action we shall prove to you from several scripture considerations.

1. Holy souls are wont to *disclaim* any sufficient ability to do a good action. They say that it is not in them: that if a good action be done, it is not they that have done it by any power that was either natural to them, or superadded diverse and distinct from that, but by the issue and communication of a power from God when it was done. See how they speak unto this purpose. Look into 2 Cor. iii. 5. Thinking a good thought is as little a good action as any one you can suppose or think of; but for that, saith he, "we are not sufficient of ourselves." That great apostle had not yet got a sufficiency into his own hand, by all his light and knowledge, and by all his habitual grace, for so much as the thinking a good thought; Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God. You find his state again in that before-mentioned Rom. vii. 21. When I would do good, evil is present with me; so ver. 18. How to perform that which is good I find not. There was a natural power, and there were habits of grace, but yet there was wanting that present, actual, overpowering determination to the doing of this good action, which we have told you is further necessary.

2. The blessed God himself, who knows us better than we do ourselves, doth expressly deny us to have that ability, an ability to act otherwise than as it is supplied and given still from time to time. Without me ye can do nothing, saith our Lord to his disciples in John xv. 5. He means it apparently of spiritual actions; for the expression is expository of that of bearing fruit, by which they should appear to be his disciples, and such fruits as for which sap and influence was to be derived from him the vine, *q. d.* "There can't be a good action done without me."

3. The people of God, as they disclaim it in reference to themselves, so they *ascribe* it to God. When they have done any good action, they own it to have been from him; as David in his own and the people of Israel's behalf in 1 Chron. xxix. What a solemn and joyful thanksgiving to God is there upon this account, that he enabled them to offer willingly! That willingness of obligation is acknowledged unto God. Yea, they ascribe it to God that even such an action may be done; By thee will we make mention of thy name, (Isa. xxvi. 13.) implying that they could not so much as make serious mention of God, without God.

4. As they ascribe it to God, so God *claims it* to himself. He had denied it concerning them, and they deny it of themselves; they ascribe it to God, and God assumes it to himself. He claims it as a thing appropriate and belonging to him to be the author of any good action that is done by any of his. How plain is that passage in Phil. ii. 13. It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. Not the inclination only is from him, as it is the purpose of the habit to incline to this or that thing, but even the action itself; he works it. And so the apostle speaks concerning Christians in common in Phil. i. 29. that it is given to them to believe; not only the principle, but the act of faith is said to be the gift of God; for to believe is the act of faith. It is given not only to believe but to suffer, that is, the act of faith and the act of patience, the exercise of both the one and the other are given things. And it is very remarkable to this purpose, that God doth therefore promise that he would be the Author unto his people of their good works which they shall do by his Spirit. You see it is the tenor of his covenant in Ezek. xxxvi. 27. I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. Sure this is a peculiar thing, and different from what can be said of many other sorts of action; but concerning this sort of action, he causes the very doing of the thing. Nothing can be more plain.

5. We may further argue it, from the *reference* which holy and good actions have unto that same rank and order of things unto which spiritual habits and principles do belong. Take you such a sphere of good things, include good habits within that compass, and you must include good actions within it too; and then, if one be from God, the other must be from him, for every such good and perfect gift is from above, James i. 17. Now will I say, if an act of grace, or a holy spiritual action, be a good action, then it is from God, as that which he causes, or which he may be said to give; it is a gift of his grace: and we can't say that the habit is a spiritual good thing, and that the act is not, when as the habit is in order to the act, and were otherwise useless. And if habitual grace be a good thing, we may upon that account say, that actual grace, or the exercise of grace, is better, because it is that to which the other is subordinate, and to which it serves, and therefore may with the greatest certainty and clearness be concluded to be a Divine gift.

6. We may further argue, from the *analogy* which there is between the *direct* and the *reflex* actions of a Christian. For consider the reflex actions, by which he looks in upon himself, and takes notice of such and such things wrought and done in him, and concludes his relation to God, as a child; how are these reflex acts wrought? By the Spirit of God, bearing witness with our spirits; and you must suppose it to be the superior in this work, as it belongs to it to be. It must then be proportionably so in reference to the direct acts of a Christian too. That is, If I can't know without the Spirit's testimony witnessing with my spirit, that I am a child of God; then I can't do the direct actions which are proper to a child, without that Spirit overruling and acting my spirit in that case. I can't believe, I can't love, &c.

7. We may yet again argue, from the many *apostolical prayers*, which we find scattered up and down in the epistles, by which actual grace, or grace in exercise, is implored for the Christians unto whom they were written. Certainly such prayers were not impertinent or improper. Do but look into some of those passages briefly. In 2 Thess. iii. 5. the apostle prays that God would direct their hearts into the love of himself, and into the patient waiting for Christ. These were acts of grace, loving himself, and expecting the appearance of his Son; why, the Lord, saith he, directs your hearts thereinto, or determine them unto this very thing. It would be very strange to suppose that a man's heart should need such direction or determi-

nation unto another sort of actions; that is, that I should as much need that God should determine it to hate him, unto which my heart is so propense and inclined of itself: but as to such spiritual actions as these, you see the exigency of the case is such, as to make such a prayer as this very proper, "Lord, direct their hearts into the love of thee, direct their hearts into the expectation of thy Son." It is plain then that the very acts were referred unto the Divine productive power, or determinative influence, not the bare inclination. And the apostle prays also for the Colossians, in Col. i. 9, 10. that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; that expression walk, (by which you have heard in the opening of that term in the text, acting, or exercising of grace is to be understood) he explains, as we did, by working; being fruitful in every good work—strengthened with all might, &c. The like also you find in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. xiii. ver. 20, 22. The apostle supplicates the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, that he would make them perfect in every good work to do his will. Here is still the action, the exercise of grace, in reference unto which it is matter of prayer to God, that God would make them do so and so, or efficaciously determine their spirits unto such actions.

8. Lastly, We may argue from hence, that the Scripture makes certain discernible characters to be as it were impressed on such and such actions, *viz.* those that are spiritual and holy, as by which it might be known that God was the Author of them. To give you an instance in that one expression in John iii. 20, 21. The form of expression may lie thus, in reference to what had been before spoken concerning the light, that light in which every one must be understood to walk, that walks holy, or in the Spirit, as you have before heard. He who so walks, in such light, comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God. A true light will make it manifest that such and such works are wrought in God. It is therefore necessarily supposed that there are some discriminative characters between works and works, and that those which God makes men do are distinguishable by the Divine light, from those which he never doth so entitle himself to; that holy and spiritual actions, in short, may be said to have been wrought in God.

And it highly concerns us to consider, whether indeed the course and tenor of our actions is capable of having this said concerning it. Looking over the course of my conversation, can I say, "My works have been wrought in God; bring them to the light, and it will appear that they are wrought in God?" Even those works wherein we have immediately to do with him, the works and duties of religion themselves. O! can we say, that they are works wrought in God? "I have been so carried out in prayer, as that I could find this prayer was wrought in God; and so carried out in meditation, and conferring with mine own heart, in self-thoughts, that bring these into the light, and I can discern that they were wrought in God; the impress of the Divine hand and power is visible upon them?" Alas! how plainly convictive would the light which we have among us be concerning most of our works, that they are not wrought in God, that they are done at a very great distance from God, and that we have had little commerce with God in them! That little walking in the Spirit that appears even among those who profess religion at this day, is a great testimony against us, that God hath little to do by his Spirit with the government of our lives; that is, we do not put ourselves under it, and resign ourselves to it. (As when we come to speak of our own part in this matter we shall have occasion to show; though there we are acted too.) The vanity and the deadness of our spirits, the formality, the licentiousness and the extravagancies of our spirits, alas! they too plainly show that we do not walk in the Spirit, and that our works are not wrought in God. There is not a religion living amongst us, which is God-wrought, whereunto we can entitle him as the Author of it.

It was therefore necessary to insist, as we have done, in letting you understand what dependance we must have upon an immediate influence, as to every good work, which leaves not our spirits undetermined or at loose, but, they being averse to every thing of that kind, oversways them thereinto. It was necessary, I say, that the truth in this matter should be held forth to us, because I am very much persuaded, that this is the great worm at the root of religion this day. Faith in the eternal Spirit is not acted to draw forth that life and influence which would make our religion a living, active thing, and hold it forth lovely and beautiful in the eyes of the world. Therefore it is that we are such languishing creatures as to the business of religion, and as to all spiritual actions, because it is not enough understood that all these works must be wrought in us and for us. For if that were understood, we should not be so self-confident as we are, when we go to duties, and concerning the government of our conversations, to cover ourselves with a covering that is not of God's Spirit, and make up to ourselves a texture of religion which it never wrought for us, never put on us; nor should we be so inobservant of the motions and breathings of that Spirit, make so little of them, call for them so seldom, and complain so little when there is a cessation, a retraction of that influence from us in any measure. Certainly our judgments have need to be rectified about this matter, and actual thoughts to be revived in our hearts, that we can't move a step in our spiritual way and walk without the help of this Spirit; that it must do all in us and for us. Whilst this is not understood and considered, we wander, and live apart from God, and Christ, and his Spirit, as if we could choose our own way, and do all, that is needful for us to do, of ourselves; and so we betray ourselves into ruin and death, when we should be soaring aloft in that way which is the way of the wise. For we are not to think (as we shall have occasion to show) that because this Spirit governeth our way by a strong, that therefore it doth it by a violent hand. No! but in a certain method which it hath prescribed and wherein it must act with our concurrence; otherwise we could not be said to walk in the Spirit, but should be merely passive, stupid blocks, and no more. We should no more walk than a stone walks, when it is moved to roll by a violent hand.

SERMON XV.*

WE are showing how it belongs to the state of regenerate persons to walk in the Spirit, and have hitherto considered it as a privilege agreeable to their state. They *may* do so. We have proposed to show the extent of this privilege, or what communications of the Spirit must be understood to lie within the compass of it; and the attainableness of it, or how ready the Spirit is to give forth these communications according as the case shall require. As to the former of these, we have shown that the privilege consists in these two things, *viz.* A communication of spiritual light, and a communication of spiritual power. Both these have been spoken to, and we may refer unto either, or unto both of them, not only such a communication as is necessary for the operations of grace, but even the comforting and consolatory communications also, which are sometimes spoken of under the name of light, "Light in the Lord;" and sometimes under the name of strength and power, as when the joy of the Lord is said to be "the strength of his people."

But we pass over unto the next head, *viz.*

To show the attainableness of the Spirit; or how apt the blessed Spirit of God is to communicate and give forth such influence, as the case doth require, that they who live in the Spirit, may be capable of walking in the Spirit. And here it is necessary,—1. To clear to you the sense, and then,—2. To evince the truth, of what we do now assert, *viz.* that unto all those to whom the Spirit hath been the Author of a new, divine life, it is ready to communicate and give forth all needful influence, in order to their suitable walking. In reference to the former of these we shall

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give you some explanatory propositions, and in reference to the latter some demonstrative considerations.

1. For the clearing of the sense of what is asserted, take these few propositions.

1. When we say that the Spirit is ready to communicate itself for such purposes, or for that general purpose which has been expressed, of our walking in the Spirit, the meaning is, that it is ready to do so in a stated and constant course, and not that it doth so only sometimes, very rarely, and now and then. For it were not to be imagined that this should lie as a stated, constant precept upon all Christians, "Walk in the Spirit," if the supposed ground thereof were intercepted, and to be but rarely found actually in being. Walking is a continued thing, (as we formerly intimated,) and imports the constant and settled course of a Christian's life or practice; and therefore there were no sufficient ground upon which such an obligation as this could be inferred upon the Christians, if the influence of the Spirit in order thereto were exhibited but very rarely.

2. We must understand that therefore there are certain rules according whereto the blessed Spirit (though, as we find it is called in Scripture, a free Spirit) is come under obligation that it will be present, by a vital active influence, as the great Author and Directer of that course of holy motion unto which renewed ones are more immediately engaged. We must suppose that there is a connexion between their observance of such and such rules, and the Spirit's communicating and giving forth its influence according to those rules. This for explication I now lay down only in the general; what those rules are we shall have occasion distinctly to tell yon, when we come to the second general head, *viz.* to treat of our part in this matter, or how walking in the Spirit belongs to the state of souls spiritually alive as a duty.

3. When we speak of the Spirit's being so obliged, you must understand it in reference to a regenerate subject. For within these bounds our text doth confine us: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Living in the Spirit is supposed. We can't suppose that it should have annexed and tied its communication unto the actions, or the endeavour, of any other sort of persons that lie without this compass. To such as are got into the sphere of life, are within this verge, and have actual union with the Mediator, who is the spring and treasury of all spiritual life, and in whom all the promises, all the ties and obligations, that the blessed God hath brought himself under any way, are yea, and amen; to such, I say, we must understand that this influence is in this stated way to be communicated, and may be expected. It is very true that others have no cause to despair, but these have cause and ground to believe. They have no cause to despair, because this Spirit is, as hath been said, a free Spirit, and, as "the wind bloweth where it listeth," none can tell but it may, one time or another, cast a favourable breath even on them. But these have reason to be confident, for the communications, of which we speak, are part of his portion, and a privilege belonging unto their state. We only add in the

4th place, That whereas we told you, that the communications of the Holy Ghost, due unto this purpose, do comprehend both the influence of grace and of comfort, we must understand this obligation to be more in reference to the former than to the latter, to what concerns the being of gracious operations than the well-being. It is true, there is somewhat of comfort involved in the very nature of a gracious act, according as it is wont to be said concerning natural acts, that they all are pleasant, or carry a kind of pleasantness with them; so those acts which are connatural to the new creature, have a pleasure in them, which we can't separate even from those acts of that kind which seem to import most of vigour and severity; as the very acts of repentance and self-denial, if they be in their own kind vital acts, proceeding from the Spirit of grace, and from the new nature put into the soul. One might appeal to the experience of Christians, whether they do not find pleasure in melting before the Lord, pleasure in abandoning and quitting all that is dear to them, when they can fully do it, for his sake and upon his account. Such consolation therefore as is intrinsical to any gracious act, must be distinguished from that consolation which follows afterward upon reflection, or our taking a review of such and such gracious characters, discriminative tokens, discernible upon ourselves, and by which we can judge of our case. For the other pleasure is without intervening judgment, the acts are pleasant in themselves, even before we come to reflect, or take notice, or consider any thing concerning our states, whereof they are, or any thing else discernible in ourselves may be understood to be, characteristical. In reference to the consequential consolations we must understand the Spirit to have reserved to itself a liberty; it is more arbitrary in communications of that kind, and doth upon mere sovereignty many times retract and withhold that kind of light for ends best known to itself. But in reference to those operations which are essential to the divine life, we must suppose that it hath a fixed and stated course, in which its influence shall be communicated in order to it. Our next business therefore is,

2. To add several considerations by which the truth of the thing assented may be manifested.

1. And the consideration that first occurs, is what hath been suggested to you already, in clearing the ground of the observation which we took up, *viz.* That we find it enjoined and laid as a command upon those who live in the Spirit, that they walk in the Spirit. For, as you were heretofore told, it would be very strangely unreasonable to enjoin one to walk in the sunshine at midnight. And we find that this precept of walking in the Spirit is not dropped as it were, as a casual thing, but even in this very chapter it is urged and pressed, and with a great deal of solemnity. As you see in the 16th verse. This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. It is introduced here with a solemn preface, This I say; *q. d.* "I undcrstand myself in what I say, I do not speak rashly and at random." And with how great apostolical authority is the precept ushered in! This I say, Walk in the Spirit. We can't suppose that so solemn a charge should have been laid, if this had not been a certain thing, that the Spirit should be communicated, its influences should issue and go forth, as far as is necessary for this purpose, unto the persons that are concerned. We find particular precepts given again and again unto the same purpose; as to instance in that spiritual action, or operation of prayer, we read of praying in the Holy Ghost, Jude 20. and praying always in the Spirit, and of worshipping God in the Spirit as a stated thing, Eph. vi. 18. Phil. iii. 3. It is manifest that the apostle speaks of what was so, and not of what was very rare and occasional. So the charge, Walk in the Spirit, comprehends in it all duty, duty that is to run through our whole course, and intimates plainly that there is a communication of the Spirit always ready to go forth. The thing which is hinted in that other precept, which doth but in terms and expression differ from this, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure, Phil. ii. 12, 13. That word *κατεργάζεσθε* imports, "labour it out even till it be finished; till you come to the very end of your faith, the salvation of your souls." This too is an injunction, which exceeds its ground, if we do not suppose that the following words are to be understood in a proportionable sense, "God worketh in you to will and to do," that is, he is always ready to do so unto the finishing of your salvation.

2. We may consider to this purpose that Christians are severely blamed when holy and spiritual actions are not done in the proper time and season of them; which would not be charged upon them, if the Spirit were only arbitrarily suspended and withheld so far as was necessary to any such spiritual action. The inactivity, the sloth, the omissiveness of the necessary duty in the season of it, the sluggish performance, the decays and languors, that are upon the spirits of Christians, are charged upon themselves, and, no doubt, most justly and most righteously so. See but that one instance in Rev. iii. 4, 5. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. Why, if the case were not as we now suppose it, it would only be the unhappiness of a soul to be left destitute of vigour and vital active

power, not a crime. But we find it charged with great severity as a crime, that there are declinings from the first love, and that the things are not done, which have been done heretofore. Do we think that God would ever have left the matter so as that the case should admit of this reply? "'Tis true, the things which have been done heretofore, are not done now, but it is none of my fault, for there was no influence to be had, which was most necessary for the doing of them. My first love is lost, I don't love with that fervour, and life, and strength as heretofore; but it is no fault of mine, the Spirit did arbitrarily retire, without my iniquity or transgression, upon which this languor is come upon me." We must understand more of consistency in the precepts, and criminations, and communications of the wise and holy God, than to imagine there was place or room left for such explications.

3. That the Spirit is apt to communicate itself unto renewed souls for such purposes, we may further argue from hence, that it always can do it without any prejudice to itself. There is an all sufficient fulness and plenitude of Spirit; it is a perpetual spring which thi influence is to go forth from. And therefore whilst these communications can be afforded without any kind of prejudice, it is not to be supposed (the case being as it is, between it and its own offspring, regenerate souls) but that they will, but that they are, always ready to be given forth: and we are sure that its fulness admits of no abatement by all its communications. The sun hath lost nothing of its warmth and influence by spending it upon the world for almost six thousand years together: much less can infinite fulness suffer diminution. I argue,

4. From hence, that Divine influence doth go forth unto all creatures, and is exhibited unto all natures, according as is needful for their proper and connatural actions, and therefore certainly it will not be withheld from the new creature, and the new nature, so far as is necessary for the actions which are suitable to that. For this would be as strange a supposition, as if one would imagine a prince to be mighty liberal in all his provisions for his servants, but apt to starve his own children, the issue of his body: this is a most unsupposable thing. It is by an influence originally Divine, that every creature is enabled to act whatsoever it acts; enabled, not made to act in many cases, but enabled. It is by a Divine influence that every plant and tree brings forth after its kind, that the sun shines, that the fire burns, that all actions are done, and all motions set on foot that are any where to be found through the world. He gives to all breath and being: and all things live, and move, and have their being in him. He feeds the ravens, he feeds the sparrows, he takes care of the lilies; and do we think he will starve and famish the souls which he hath made to live spiritually, so as that they can't be able to act, or have power to move or stir this way or that, in any holy or spiritual action? This is a thing never to be supposed.

5. The communicativeness of the Spirit upon this account is hence to be argued, that it is always before-hand with us in its communications. It communicates more than we improve. A very great argument this, that it is not unapt to communicate. Indeed the case is most observably so in the natural world, as I may speak; that is, that active power and principle that works to and fro throughout, doth in proportion much exceed the passive and receptive capacity. Nothing is more evident. The light and influence of the sun would suffice many thousand such earths; this earth is too narrow and too limited a thing to receive and improve all the light and influence of the sun. And then as to what falls upon this earth itself, how much is there of seminal virtue that is lost, as it were, from year to year! As much as might suffice, for ought we know, for ten such earths as this, supposing that all seminal virtue should come to be actually prolific of what is like it in kind. The case is most manifestly so, as to spiritual influences and communications; we are not straitened there, the straitness and narrowness is in the subject, in ourselves, and that blessed Spirit always goes beyond us. It is a convictive appeal that the prophet makes in Mic. ii. 7. O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? It argues that there is some defect, some indisposition, or incapacity in the subject, if things do not take, if souls do not prosper. Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? What! is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? So the apostle also bespeaks the Corinthians in 2 Cor. vi. 12. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. In what respect doth he mean that they were not straitened in them? He means plain enough, that what of the influence and communication of the Holy Ghost had come forth upon them, to dispose and frame them for that great work of treating and dealing with souls, it was not fully answered by those whom they did treat and deal with: "Ye are not straitened in us." He gives a very great demonstration of it, in what he speaks with such largeness and liberty of spirit, in all that goes before. He speaks like a man triumphing in that large and abundant sense, which he had of those full and flowing communications of the Holy Ghost, which had come in upon him, by which he was enabled to "do all things, to bear all things, to endure all things," to pass through whatsoever difficulties, to be in "stripes, imprisonments, watchings, fastings, with all pureness, long-suffering, kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God," and so on. "O ye Corinthians," saith he, "our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not strained in us, but in your own bowels." This argues the matter we are speaking of, even *a fortiori*. The ministers of the Gospel at that time were not fountains, they were but cisterns; and if they were not straitened in the very cistern, much less in the fountain. "Even in that communication which is come so near you; that cistern from whence you are to receive, there ye are not straitened. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels."

6. We find it frequently insisted upon as a matter of prayer, that communications suitable to the actions of a Christian and the divine life might be given forth; but it would be most unreasonable to suppose that we should be taught to pray for an incommunicable thing. This consideration we formerly made use of to prove that such communications are necessary, and it equally serves the present purpose, to prove that they are possible. For as we are not taught to pray but for such things as are of great concernment to us, so we have very little reason to think that we should ever be taught to pray for such things as are not grantable, or cannot be had. But we find the apostle making it matter of prayer in Eph. iii. 16. that God would grant them according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that so Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, &c. intimating that Christ could have no commerce with their spirits, but by their active faith in him. They must entertain him, and converse with him, believing in him, and drawing influence from him that way; but this could never be done unless they were strengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man to this purpose: and therefore this is a thing for which the apostle thought it fit to "bow his knees unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And so, as we noted upon that other occasion, in praying for the Colossians that they "might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," he prays for an influence by which they might be enabled so to walk, which is the same thing as that they might walk in the Spirit. For it can be no other than that influence by which they were so to walk, "being fruitful in every good work," as you have it there expressed also: an influence suited to the actions and operations of the new creature, or of those who are made spiritually alive.

7. We may further argue hence, that if we do not suppose the Spirit thus communicative, according as the case requires, then were the whole workmanship of the new creature in vain. For the very end of its creation is the doing of holy and spiritual actions, but they could never be done without such an influence as by which the principles of the new creature may be reduced into act. We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, Eph. ii. 10. Now it were a most unreasonable thing, and infinitely unworthy the Divine wisdom, that he should create such a creature for such a purpose, and not supply it with influence that can make it serve that pur-

pose. Then might it be said as well in reference to the new creation, as it was said to the lapsed, apostate part of the old, Are all men made in vain? Indeed they made themselves so, unsuitable to the purpose for which they were made. But that there should be an essay to renovate things, a new creation, and such a sort of creature as should now certainly attain the end for which it was made, this is a thing never to be supposed. What was each principle in the new creature made for, but for actions suitable to that principle? Why is faith put into the soul, but that the soul might be enabled to believe? Why love, but that it might act love? Why patience, but that it might exercise patience? But after that these principles are all actually implanted in the soul, without an influence they can't be brought forth into act, as hath been formerly shown; there must be therefore a communication of the Spirit, it must be still ready to communicate in order to these actings, otherwise the whole frame of the new creature were to no purpose.

8. We find that Christians are called upon, and pressed to increase and abound more and more in good works; (as in 1 Cor. xv. 58. Be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. And in 1 Thess. iv. 1. We exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more;) which plainly implies that there is still a proportionable influence thereto, if it were attended to and improved.

9. Influence for such purpose hath been owned and acknowledged to have been received in a way of prayer, and therefore we are always to look upon it as communicable. In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul, Psal. cxxxviii. 3. There is a recorded experience. It is but ask, and have. "I have asked, and I have had upon my asking; influence did come in. He strengthened me with strength in my soul."

10. And lastly. It is matter of express promise and of faith, and therefore it must be a certain thing that such communication is to be had. Of promise, our Saviour speaks of it most plainly in Luke xi. 13. If ye—being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him! He will give his Spirit to them that ask it, as readily as you do bread to your children, and you have great reason to suppose, much more readily. And in reference to holy and spiritual actions (for these are a Christian's fruit) our Saviour tells his disciples that, Let them but abide in him, (which is a parallel expression to walking in the Spirit, for it is his Spirit in which they are to walk,) and they shall bring forth much fruit, John xv. 5. He hath assured us that it shall be so. And it is matter of faith as it is promised; for we are plainly told, that we are to receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, in Gal. iii. 14. It therefore must be a certain thing before. For faith doth not make its object be, but the object must be pre-existent. That which I am to believe as true, must be true before I believe it; I don't make it true by believing. That is, I am not to pitch my faith upon an object, which is hitherto false, and then think to make a falsehood truth by my believing; but that which I am to believe as true, must, as hath been said, first be true before I believe it, and the truth of the thing is the reason why I am obliged to believe it. If therefore I am to receive the promise of the Spirit, or the promised Spirit, by faith, it must certainly be true before, that it is receivable, that it is to be had, that it and its influences can be afforded, and are ready to be communicated.

And the case being so, why do we wistly look upon one another with meagre and languishing souls, into which leanness enters, which are wasting, and consuming, and pining away under their own distempers? There is an infinite fulness of Spirit, from whence we may have what is suitable to all our need: "That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." The apostle brings in that prayer of his when he had been desiring that they might be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, in the before-mentioned Eph. iii. That such communications are to be had as are needful to our walking in the Spirit, it was necessary thus to insist upon it, that we might understand and know to what it is to be imputed, and where all the blame and fault ought to lie, if there be languishings upon us, if we do not walk in the Spirit, if our knees are too feeble, and we can't walk, if we are become in a spiritual sense cripples, unapt, unable for spiritual motion and action. And therefore it concerns us to bethink ourselves seriously whether there be not the tokens upon us of a spiritual decay, languor, ineptitude for the actions and functions of the spiritual and Christian life. Are there not? Can we say, that God is with us as he hath been wont to be with his people heretofore? If he be with us, why is it thus? According to that expostulation in Judges vi. 13. When, in another sense, that people were in a miserable, decaying state, is it not in a spiritual sense so with us? Do we not fade as a leaf? Are there not gray hairs here and there upon us? If the Lord be with us as formerly by the communications and influences of his Spirit, why are our hearts so low? Why is it that so little grace stirs? Why is there so little faith, so little love to him, and so little appearance and discovery of a heavenly mind? Why do the fruits of the Spirit flourish no more? It concerns us to bethink ourselves. Can we say God is with us as he hath been with his people? or as it may possibly be remembered he hath been with us? with us in our closets? with us in our families? with us at our tables? Is he with us at his own table? Is he with us in our ordinary affairs and converse? Is he with us in our solemn assemblies, as he hath sometime been among us here? Is this Spirit with us, as a Spirit of faith, a Spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind? Is it with us as a Spirit of humiliation in such a time as this, to abase and humble us, and lay us low in the dust before the Lord? Is it with us, as a Spirit of grace and supplication, to enable us to strive and wrestle with Heaven, to implore earnestly, and cry aloud for mercy in such a time as this? Is it with us, as a sin-mortifying spirit, a world-crucifying Spirit; as the Spirit of meekness, and patience, and self-denial, and humility; and as the Spirit of the fear of the Lord, as a holy and a heavenly Spirit? If it be not, if our own hearts must say it is not, it is fit we should know what to say next, that is, that it lies upon us that it is not. It is not because this Spirit is not full, or is less apt to give forth its influences than formerly, but because we do not our part; we do not mind walking in the Spirit as that which doth belong to us, and to our state as our duty. Which is the next thing we have to speak to.

SERMON XVI.*

We now go on,

Secondly, To show, that it belongs to the state of regenerate persons, to walk in the Spirit, as a *duty*. The former, *viz.* that it belongs to them as a *privilege*, is implied in the precept, as you have heard; this latter is expressed in it, as you plainly see, Walk in the Spirit. It is a thing enjoined upon Christians, or those who are supposed to live in the Spirit, that they walk in it. This therefore doth imply, that somewhat is incumbent upon us as matter of duty, with which a participation of the Spirit, in order to our walking in it, is connected. And it will be here requisite,—1. To say somewhat concerning this connexion,—2. To give you an account of those things wherewith such participation of the Spirit is connected.

1. It is requisite to premise somewhat concerning this connexion. That there is such a connexion is plain to you already, from what hath been said: the precept doth manifestly suppose it. What kind of connexion it is, I shall very briefly show you, only in these two particulars, *viz.* —that it is gratuitous, and—that it is yet a sure connexion.

1. It is a gratuitous connexion. Not a natural one, as though it could not possibly have been but that, if such and such things should be by way of grace procured, or done for any of the children of men, still a further and a

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further communication of the Spirit must needs ensue. And we know there are many things that are so connected in their own natures that it would imply a contradiction, that one should be, and the other not. But such connexion there is not in the present case. For if we should reflect upon any of the things wherewith we may suppose such a communication of the Spirit to be most connected, it would be apparent that the connexion is most gratuitous, we can reflect upon nothing wherewith it is more eminently connected than with faith, as we shall have occasion to show presently. But no man can suppose the connexion to be natural between an act of faith exerted and put forth in and by my soul, and a participation consequent thereupon of an influence from the eternal and almighty Spirit of God. For how is it concerned in me, if it did not concern itself? Or what claim or challenge could there have been, if it had not brought itself under an obligation, of such a Divine influence. As well might a worm that crawls upon the earth, command the motions of the sun, or occasion it so and so to communicate its influence and its light. When we say it is a gratuitous connexion, it imports these two things:

1. That it is a connexion made with absolute, sovereign liberty: that such a connexion might have been, or might not have been, antecedently to its being settled and made.

2. It imports not only liberty, but complacency in the vouchsafement: that whatsoever is done in such a way is done with delight, that he that doth it takes pleasure in the doing of it. Indeed both these are manifestly imported in that expression in Phil. ii. 13. It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Of his good pleasure, *i. e.* so as that he might have forborne so to work, if it had pleased him; and while he doth so work in us, it doth most highly please him so to work, or to vouchsafe that co-operative influence. He doth it with delight; as it were, enjoying his own act, and gratifying himself in the benignity of his own nature, from whence it doth proceed that he works with such creatures as these.

In both these ways we must understand it to be gratuitous, that there is any such connexion between any thing of our duty, and such a participation of the Spirit. It is gratuitous the former way antecedently to any such connexion made and settled, as hath been shown. It is gratuitous in the latter sense continuedly all along, while this connexion doth hold, as it will perpetually hold. For though it be true indeed, that after this connexion is once made and settled, he who had made and settled it, hath brought himself under an obligation, so as that he will not rescind it, as we shall presently show you, and therefore it is not now continued upon such terms, as that it may, or may not be; yet it is gratuitous still in the latter sense, that is, as being continued with complacency, he never repenting that he hath made such a connexion, but remaining in the same mind still, and always; that we doing so and so, or there being such dispositions and frames of spirit inwrought in us, they shall be earnests and pledges to us of still further communications of his Spirit, according to the tenor of his own law and rule, *habenti dabitur*, "to him that hath shall be given." So it is a gratuitous connexion.

2. It is a sure connexion. Most stable and firm, such as whereof we need not fear an alteration. This may seem not so well to agree with the former; if it be so free and gratuitous, then some may think that it should not be so sure. But the apostle hath taught us to argue otherwise in this case, and to understand the matter quite after another tenor, in that passage of his, in Rom. vi. 16. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be of grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed. That is, the evangelical promise in general, whereof this, of the communication of the Spirit, is one great part, yea, itself sometimes goes, in the language of the New Testament, under the name of—the promise. Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is to you and your children, in Acts ii. 38, 39. It is therefore free, that it might be sure. This, I confess, according to the manner of men, would not be thought good logic. Things in reference whereto men act freely, or are left to their liberty, one would think were very unsure. But it is not so with the blessed God in this case. We are so much the more ascertained by how much the more the root and foundation of this connexion is in grace. For we must consider how grace hath laid out its own method, and made way for the pursuing and bringing about its own great design. Consider it in reference to this very case, the communication of the Spirit; it was obtained by a Mediator; it was so designed and determined, that no influence of the Spirit should go forth in order to saving purposes unto the lost and apostate children of men, but in and through a Mediator. Therefore it is told us again and again in Scripture that it is he that sends it, or if the Father be said to send it, that he would send it in his name. Both these form of expression you have in the 14th and 15th chapters of John's Gospel, and to the same purpose somewhat in the 16th. And he was made a curse for us, for this purpose, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that they might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, in Gal. iii. 14. And hereupon, upon the susception and undertaking of the Mediator, a covenant is established and settled on sure promises, a system of sure promises comprised and formed up together, in which, as was said before, this is the main thing, that the Spirit should be given forth. Now the whole undertaking of the Mediator must otherwise fail and come to nothing, and all these promises, which are yea and amen in him, 2 Cor. i. 20. So that hence it cannot but be that, though, as you have heard, this is a connexion most arbitrarily made, yet it is a most sure and certain connexion notwithstanding; inasmuch as the Spirit, wheresoever it is given forth, is given forth through a Mediator and upon the promise. And so we must understand the tenor of this connexion, as that upon such duty the participation of the Spirit will still ensue, in further and further degrees; and where there is no such thing as is incumbent upon us in a way of duty, there we can't promise it to ourselves in any certain stated course, though according to its absolute liberty, it can go forth and let out its influence when and where it pleases.

2. We are now to consider the things themselves that are charged upon us as matter of duty, wherewith the participation of the Spirit is connected. And they are such as these;

1. A sense of our indigent state in this respect: that we stand in the greatest need of this blessed Spirit and its vital influences, for all the purposes of the Christian life: that we can do nothing, nothing as we should, not turn a hand, or move a foot, without it. It was most reasonable, that the gradual communications of this Spirit should be in connexion with such a disposition and temper of soul in us. For do we think it were honourable that the Spirit should be under an obligation there to be and work, where there is no apprehension at all of any work done, but what might as well be done by a common hand; and that it should do the work, and we have the honour of it, that there should be a disposition in us to arrogate it to ourselves, if there be any holy, gracious operation in us, which hath a tendency to our future happy being. Nothing is more apparent than that there was a high congruity in it, that the Spirit should still go forth in its gradual communications and exertions of its influence, so as that there be sense still preserved in the subject to be gradually wrought upon, that without it we can do nothing. We may easily see how the matter stands in this respect, if we do but consider where there have been most manifest languishings and decays, feebleness and weakness, as to all the actions and operations of the spiritual life. As to instance in the church of Laodicea, it is plain they were got into a posture very unsuitable unto walking in the Spirit, and see what their sense was of themselves, and of their own state all this while: Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Rev. iii. 17. If they are blind and maimed creatures, whom this Spirit is to have the conduct of, it doth justly insist upon this, that they reflect, and understand themselves to be blind and maimed, that they can't go without being led, without being supported and borne up in their way all along. And while there is little of this sense among us of our great need of the continual influence of the blessed Spirit in order to the conducting the whole course of our walking, it is not much to be won-

dered at, if this Spirit do suspend and restrain its influences, and be at a very great distance from us. And I am afraid there is very little of this sense among us at this day, that it is too generally thought, that we can do well enough without the Spirit. There is not that notion and apprehension, yet there seems to be that practical judgment, "we don't need the Spirit;" and when we are left destitute of it in a great measure, we don't feel a need of it, and there is little complaint that the Spirit is retired, and not given forth as some have found it in former days. Gray hairs are here and there upon us, yet we know it not, (to apply those words to this purpose, which might mean another thing in) Hos. vii. 9. It is with a great many Christians as it is said to have been with Sampson in Judg. xvi. 20. He wist not that the Lord was departed from him. God was gone, and his great strength was gone, and he knew it not, but thought to have found it with him as at other times. When we walk on from day to day in a course of ordinary duty, and it may be get nothing by it, no life, no strength, no influence of the Spirit, how little sense is there all this while of its absence from us? How few, that regret the matter? One would think there should be strange palpitations and throbbings of heart among us, to think how little there is of the Spirit of the living God breathing in his own ordinances, and through the most sacred, weighty, and important truths that we hear from time to time. Methinks our hearts should misgive us, and we should be often recounting with ourselves, What will this come to? A religion not animated by the Spirit, in which there is no life, no influence, what will it come to?

2. A deep apprehension, or an inward, cordial owning of the arbitrariness of the Spirit and its communications, and of our own great unworthiness thereof. This is another thing wherewith we are to account the stated communications of the Spirit are connected. That is, that there be not only a sense of our want and indigency, but of our very great unworthiness that ever that pure and Holy Spirit should touch with our souls, or have to do with us. This way is its virtue engaged and drawn forth. How was the virtue of Christ drawn forth in order to the doing of cures which he wrought by the Spirit of God? It is a remarkable instance to our present purpose which we have in Matt. viii. 8. "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof;" then goes forth his influence, and does the thing that was desired to be done. To have only this notion in our minds, alas! that signifies little; but to have an intimate, habitual sense inwrought in our hearts, and maintained there, "how most utterly unworthy we, especially, and indeed all men are, that ever there should have been a descent of the blessed Spirit of the living God; that ever it should have let down any thing of its light and influence into this dismal and impure world." Were we more worthy that the Spirit of God should work among us, than among pagans? Where there is an admiring sense of the arbitrariness of grace in this case, and our own great unworthiness, there the Spirit is most apt to issue forth in vital influence according to the necessities of our state. This is true humility and poverty of Spirit, to which that kingdom belongs, which, in the very *primordia* of it, is made up of righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Matt. v. 3. compared with Rom. xiv. 17. It is to the humble soul that still more grace is given, but he resisteth the proud, (James iv. 6.) those who are so insolent as to think no divine gift too good for them. But to the humble soul that lies in the dust self-abased, and alway in an apt posture to admire grace, if it may but have any, the least, breath of that influence from the blessed Spirit of God; it may be expected still freely to be given forth. The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity—and dwelleth in the high and holy place, looks to that man, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word, Isa. lxvi. 2. and lvii. 15. And if you look back to the 14th verse of that chapter, you find the expressions more apposite to our present purpose, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people; "I would have my people have a fine, easy, pleasant, comfortable walk," (such as is their walk, who walk in the Spirit,) and then it is immediately added, "Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones;" so as that they shall be always in a posture for walking in that way thus cast up, prepared, and made level for them.

3. A high valuation of spiritual influence. When we put the greatest price upon spiritual good things, then we are in a disposition to receive them from this blessed Spirit. We find that they who have had most of it, upon whom it hath been continually coming in afresh, have been full of the expressions of their high value of spiritual communications. And even where such things as are considerable under the notion of means have been so highly valued, it appears rationally to be collected, that the end of those means was more highly valued, and by the expressions, by which hath been signified the value of the means, the value of the end hath been more signified; as when we find so high an esteem expressed of the law of the word of God by the people of God in Scripture records. Why, how do you understand it, when it is said, The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver, in Psal. cxix. 72. (and other passages of like import you have in that psalm, and elsewhere.) What! would we understand it otherwise than of the animated word, or law? Was it a dead letter, considered as such, without any reference to the Spirit and its influence working through it and by it, upon which all that price was put? What would that have signified to have had a spiritless law, a law without any such Spirit going with it as should make it a law of life? The law of the Spirit of life you find it called, that is, according to the impression that it hath upon the heart and soul, in Rom. viii. 2. It was, as such, that the law of God was so highly prized by his people, as it was the medium through which the Spirit was conveyed and given in from time to time. And we may measure our expectations of the Spirit to be communicated and given to us, very much by this thing. What is our estimation of such vouchsafements? If we were indeed to speak the sense of our souls, we might soon find what our value is of external and earthly good things. We know what value we should have for a plentiful estate, and for a peaceful, easy life, so as to have our flesh in all things accommodated, and our sense gratified. Do we find that there is a proportionable estimate of spiritual good things, and that is, that, according as their value is superior, we proportionably esteem them? Is it the sense of our souls, "Lord, whatever thou dost with me, let me have much of thy Spirit. Though I be poor, though I be miserable, though I be pinched with straits and wants all my days, though I be exposed to wanderings, let me have thy Spirit; take away any thing from me, withhold any thing rather than thy Spirit." And hereupon,

4. Earnest desire of spiritual influence. With that the participation, the further participation of it is most surely connected. Vehement longings, where there is some of it, are an earnest of still more. When the heart is panting after God, the living God, as the hunted hart after the water-brooks, it is a good pledge, a pre-assuring token, that there shall be still more and more. How express are those words of our Saviour, Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled, Matt. v. 6. To hunger and thirst after righteousness, is to hunger and thirst after spiritual influence; which implies that without that, all the fruits of righteousness languish, or could never have been. It is indeed a wonderful thing seriously to contemplate, that there should be a connexion between such desires, and such participations thereupon; that ever the great God should have vouchsafed and condescended thus, as to make it become a stated thing, that they who do desire, shall partake, even of that sacred, heavenly influence. We do not find it to be so, as to meaner things, and of a lower nature. We find not any such connexion between the desire of riches, and riches; between the desire of honour, and honour. There is no Scripture that saith, If you desire to be rich, you shall be rich; if you desire to be honourable and great in this world, you shall be great and honourable; and if you desire to live a peaceful, quiet life, you shall live such a life in this world. But we find it said, "Desire, and hunger and thirst after righteousness, and you shall be filled." There is no such connexion of an appetite to natural food,

and food; a hungry beggar can't be sure, that because he is hungry, therefore he shall be satisfied, that his hunger will entitle him to a meal's meat; but here you find the case is so; and how admirable is the grace that hath made it so! Desire spiritual influence, and you shall have it; spiritual communications, and your receivings shall be according to your hearts. For bring a sincere desire directed to God, and terminated upon him, and our Saviour hath assured us, that if we ask, we shall receive; if we seek, we shall find; if we knock, it shall be opened to us, and even in this very kind; look into the context of that Scripture, Luke xi. 12, 13. All comes at last to this result, How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? It is elsewhere said, good things, and here it is said, the Holy Spirit. According as grace hath laid out to itself its own methods, desire is a drawing thing; it draws in vital influence from the blessed Spirit, even as we attract and draw in breath, in the ordinary course of our breathing. And it must ordinarily be said, that they only are destitute of spiritual influence, who desire it not; and when that may be said, sure there is enough to be said to justify the retraction or suspension of any such influence.

5. Dependence upon it, is another thing wherewith a participation of the Spirit is most surely connected. I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me, Gal. ii. 20. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, and mount up with wings, as eagles, Isa. xl. 31. How did the poor cripple (that we read of in Acts iii.) derive influence by which he was enabled to walk? Why, he looked upon Peter and John, expecting to receive something from them. He drew even with his eye, a craving eye, an expecting eye. "Sure there is something to be gotten of these men." They bade him look upon them; he looked accordingly. And we are bidden to look too; "Look unto me—all the ends of the earth," Isa. xlv. 22. We are directed to look upward, to look with an expecting eye: influence will come. As the eyes of all other creatures are put up unto God, and he is not wanting unto the work of his hands, so the new creature is prompted to do so much more, to look up intelligently, and with design; "With design I do it, that I may receive; and he who feeds ravens, and takes care of sparrows, will not famish souls, that look up with an expecting and begging eye, as those that not only know their own need, but believe his bounty." And indeed if there be not this in it, it is most highly to affront him, and then no wonder, if the stream of his bounty be turned another way, and never reach us.

There are other particulars, which I should have spoken to, but I find the time prevents me. The design of all this will much drive this way, (which I shall so far prevent myself, as to take notice of to you now,) to let us see, that if we find not the Spirit communicated to us, so far as is necessary to our walking in the Spirit, it is through our own default, we owe it to ourselves. Pray do but consider; Is it not our fault, if we are insensible of any need of the Spirit? or, of our unworthiness of it? Is it not a fault, if we value not the immediate communications of the blessed God from his own Holy Spirit? Is it no fault, to prefer dirt and vanity before the influences of that Spirit, the maintenance of present spiritual life, and the pledge and earnest of an eternal state of life? Is it no fault, if we desire not that there should be a commerce between us and that Spirit? if we think it not a thing worthy to be desired, worthy to be sought after? If we could have the privilege of daily communication with an angel; if we might have him to talk and converse with, to guide and instruct us from day to day in all our ways and affairs, and to comfort and relieve us in all our troubles and sorrows, would we account meanly of this? or, think it a thing fit to be made light of? But what comparison is there between the commerce of an angel, and such a commerce with the blessed Spirit of God? A being taken into that communion, which is called the communion of the Holy Ghost, in 2 Cor. xiii. 14. Is it not our fault, if we want the influences of the Spirit, and it hath no intercourse with us, merely through our neglect, and because we care not for it? Is it no fault, if we will not trust him who hath promised, and whose word is more stable than the foundations of heaven and earth? He hath promised, and we will not believe him? Conscience, if it do its part, will fasten the charge of guilt upon ourselves; that if there be a retraction or suspension of spiritual communications from us, it is through our own fault; we walk solitarily; we don't walk in the Spirit, but we walk alone, and as outcasts from God, as those whom he hath nothing to do with, and who have nothing to do with him, but all through our own default. It is meet that we should admit the conviction of conscience concerning this thing, that we may not indulge ourselves in so manifest and so dangerous a delinquency.

SERMON XVII.*

WE go on to mention some more of the particular duties, wherewith such a communication of the Spirit stands connected, as is requisite to our walking in the Spirit, beside the five already spoken to.

6. That we obey its dictates; resign and yield ourselves to its governing power. This is plainly enough signified in the expressions of being "led by the Spirit," and "walking after the Spirit," which we have divers times in Rom. viii. and elsewhere. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." This imports a ductile, sequacious, guidable frame and temper, an aptness to yield and comply with all the suggestions of that blessed Spirit. Yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, Rom. vi. 13. How manifestly distinguishable is the case, between going about to raise a living person that is fallen, and to raise a dead carcass! A living person yields himself to our helping hand: "So yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive;"—the word that is there used, is the same with that which we have in Rom. xii. 1. Present yourselves to God a living sacrifice; and it signifies to offer oneself readily for this or that, to be in a ready posture to do what we are prompted to and put upon. And this walking after the Spirit is frequently inculcated in that forementioned chapter, Rom. viii. 1, 4, 13. And then you have the expression of being led by the Spirit, following the other, ver. 14. And again in this chapter where the text lies, Gal. v. 18. If ye be led by the Spirit. This word signifies to be acted by it: which doth also suppose a compliance on our part, and that we concur; that we be in a prepared posture to act as we shall be from time to time acted. To rebel against the Spirit, vexatiously to contend, to oppose ourselves unto its dictates, we may easily understand, cannot be the way to entitle ourselves to its communications. It is promised to be a guide to lead into all truth, all that truth which is after godliness; we must understand it chiefly of such truth as doth concern Christian practice; but if we fall out and quarrel with our guide, and will not obey, what can we expect, but that it should in just displeasure retire, and leave us to walk alone, or to wander as our own inclination shall lead us?

7. That we strictly observe and closely adhere unto our rule. This is requisite in order to our having these needful communications of the Spirit; for it dictates according to that external rule: we ought therefore to have our eye upon that, which all along lines the way in which we are to walk. We shall very unreasonably and vainly expect to have the Spirit still constantly following us in all our extravagancies and excursions: if it arbitrarily do so, as the Spirit many times doth; yet we have not reason to expect it should do so in a stated course. The way of the Lord is strength to the upright, Prov. x. 29. In their very way they met with their strength; holding on their course in that way, they find themselves still to go from strength to strength, (Ps. lxxxiv. 7.) to grow stronger and stronger, Job xvii. 9. When our way is pleasing to God, then we may expect that by his Spirit he should converse with us in our way; that is, if his way like us. Two cannot walk

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together, except they be agreed; and especially if they be not agreed upon their way. Now we find, that the way wherein we are to walk so as to please God, is prescribed and directed all along by his word. Ye have received of us, saith the apostle, how ye ought to walk and to please God, 1 Thess. iv. 1. He hath directed the way by express precept; in which if we walk and so please him, he will converse with us by his Spirit; then we shall have his continual assisting, directing presence. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way. Then though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand, Psal. xxxvii. 23, 24. Enoch gained a testimony of God, that he so walked as to please God, Heb. xi. 5. To be sure he had him for the guide and companion of his way. It is not much that we are under the same lot that our Lord Christ was contented to be under, John viii. 29. He that sent me, is with me; the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. And he doth require it of us, that as he did keep his Father's commandments, and abide in his love; so we should keep his commandments, and abide in his love, (John xv. 10.) and so have his spiritual presence, or his Spirit to be present with us, by which he saith he would be present with his, when as to his outward man he must be removed and gone out of this state. That passage in Psal. ci. 2. is very observable; the Psalmist resolves upon this, that he would behave himself wisely in a perfect way, and that he would walk with a perfect heart; would take care of his way that it was a strait and perfect path in which he should walk; and doing this, you find him in such a posture expecting, "O when wilt thou come unto me?" Walking, as we told you before, connoted a way; and this must be a way suitable to the Spirit, if we reckon upon walking in the Spirit. To walk in the way of our own hearts, and think that the Spirit should be with us there, is certainly a very foolish expectation.

8. That we design all the streagth and vigour, that we shall receive from the Spirit, in order to our walking unto the Divine honour and glory and service, as the end of it. Walking doth connote an end, as well as a way. And to walk in the Spirit must suppose, that there be an end suitable to the Spirit; and what is most immediately from God, ought to be most directly and entirely designed for him. And I doubt not but there is a very common fault among Christians as to this thing; they desire spiritual communications for themselves, because it is a very delightful and pleasurable thing to be carried as upon eagles' wings, to have so sensible help in all one's walking; therefore they desire such helps and influences as a privilege; and sometimes lament the retraction and withdrawment of it merely as an infelicity, without charging themselves with sin in the case; and it is in the mean time forgotten, that what God gives upon this account is for himself, and we ought to have the same design with him. The apostle speaks of his way of living, Gal. ii. 20. I live, saith he, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Immediately before you have the end of that life, as here you have the spring and source of it; I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God, ver. 19. Christ feeds and maintains that life, and supplies all the motive and active power belonging to it, which shall be devoted to himself, and terminate wholly upon himself. We are to look upon all these communications as trusts, which are to be employed according to the pleasure and for the service of him that doth intrust us. Who will commit to your trust, says Christ, the true riches, if ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon? Luke xvi. 11. The things of this life are comprehended under the "mammon of unrighteousness;" to these are opposed "the true riches," which must mean spiritual good things; such riches as those spoken of in Eph. iii. 16. where the apostle is praying for the Ephesians, that God would grant them according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man. Who will trust you with such riches? It implies, that such riches, wherever they are given, are given but as a trust, and therefore are to be employed for him that intrusts us with them. They are talents, that must be improved for him; for that passage doth refer unto the parable concerning the talents, as you may see in the beginning of Luke xvi. There is a great hold, as I may say, that the soul hath upon the Spirit and his communications by such an ingenuity as this is; as we many times by ingenuities engage and oblige one another. When this shall be the posture of the soul and its sense toward God, "I only desire such strength and such assistances from thee, to use them for thee, for thy own work;" when we are ready to put such a dedication, such an inscription, upon every act that we design to do by such a received power, "To thee, O Lord; Holiness to the Lord; I only desire thy influences, that I may do thy work, and be to the best purpose serviceable to thy name and interest in my sphere and station;" with such a disposition as this we may expect the communication of the Spirit to be most certainly connected.

Thus you see proved, how it doth belong unto the state of living Christians, as a duty proper thereto, to walk in the Spirit; or what there is of duty, with which the communications of the Spirit towards our walking in it are connected.

Now by way of *use*, we have several things to infer from all this.

Inference 1. Then if we do not walk in the Spirit, it must needs be our own fault, that we embrace not the privilege that is offered, and do not the duties required. It is fit we should own it as our own fault, and charge it where it ought to lie.

But it may perhaps here be objected; That all these things that have been mentioned, as so many parts of duty in order to our obtaining the needful communications of the Spirit, are themselves the Spirit's operations; and how can they then be pre-requisites unto our obtaining such communications of the Spirit? To this we say,

1. That they are requisite unto further communications, such as we shall still have further use for and need of in the continued course of our walking. And it is most highly congruous unto the royalty of the Divine bounty, to reward what is done by his own vouchsafement. It is his own rule and measure, that to them which have it shall be given, Luke viii. 18. They that have, shall have more. He gives more grace upon humility. James iv. 6. He giveth more grace; wherefore he saith, he resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Had he given no grace to such before? How became they humble? His grace made them so; but then he gives still more grace.

2. These are so the operations of the Spirit, as that they are our acts too. It is not the Spirit that believes and obeys, but it helps us to do so; as we shall have further occasion to speak hereafter.

3. In such actings of renewed souls, as are in themselves holy and gracious, there are certain previous actings, that lead to them, and which may and usually do end in them. As there is nothing more obvious unto the ordinary experience of Christians, than that they many times begin a duty, as to pray or read, to hear or meditate, with very indisposed acts; but the Spirit comes in amidst their work: oftentimes they have no such discernible assistance at first, when they begin to act. Therefore there is somewhat previous unto that which is strictly to be considered as a holy and spiritual act.

4. There is also a preventing influence or grace of the Spirit, unto which it is safe to attribute even those previous tendencies to such acts, to holy and gracious acts. But then we must also know, that this is not always efficacious, so as to end in holy and gracious actions; because the Spirit doth, sometimes from sovereignty, but more ordinarily from paternal justice, retire and withdraw itself, when those first overtures are not complied with. As is manifest from its being intimated to retire and withdraw upon being grieved, being resisted, being vexed; as we must suppose it to be, when it is not duly complied with in the applications it makes to the spirits even of renewed persons themselves; for they, such as "live in the Spirit," are the subject of our present discourse.

And in speaking to you of these previous tendencies unto good and holy actions, (which it is fit we should attribute unto the Spirit of God, when we find any thing of

them; though it doth not work in that overpowering way, as where it puts forth its efficacious influence in order to some holy and spiritual act to be done,) I shall speak by way of inquiry and demand; that I may the more engage conscience, and set it on work to judge in the case between God and us; whether, if we be destitute of such assistances of the Spirit, as the exigency of our case calls for, it is not to be imputed to our manifest neglect of somewhat that we might have done? Not, that we might have done of ourselves, neither; for we cannot of ourselves so much as move a finger, or stir a foot; but that by a preventing influence, in which the Spirit was beforehand with us, we could have done? Whether, if we had tried, we should not have found we might have done such and such things, that would have been in a fair tendency unto those operations or actions that are in themselves strictly and formally holy and gracious? Let us therefore commune a little with our own consciences, upon such heads as these.

1. Have we not omitted to reflect and take notice of the way of our own walking, so as to bring the matter to a disquisition? Can I be said in my ordinary course to walk in the Spirit? You know, reflection is a thing common to a Christian with another man. It is the privilege of the reasonable spirit of man, that it can reflect upon itself: it is a rational sun, that can invert its beams, and turn them inwards. The bodily eye cannot do so, it cannot see itself: but our mind can see itself, and turn in its beams to look in upon itself. If we did apply ourselves to do so, might we not discern whether our way be transacted so, as that they can say, "This is walking in the Spirit, this looks like the Spirit?" We might surely discern, whether our works can be said to be wrought in God; an expression we have formerly taken notice of. But do not we neglect even to do this? to survey our own way, and to consider with our own selves, "Is my course like walking in the Spirit?" It will be of no small service to put the question to ourselves often, Is it so, yea or no? am I to approve and like my way, or to disapprove it?

2. Might we not be often comparing our walking with that of others? As is usual with them that walk together, to measure with one another. They that are behind, take notice of such and such that are far before them, and thereupon mend their pace, and make after with more expedition. There is no one that mends his course of walking, but it is upon an apprehension of something that needs to be mended: and therefore that reflection is needful, that was spoken of before; either the pace was not quick enough, or not regular enough, or not continued enough. Besides that such faults in our walking are to be discerned by comparing with the rule, referring to the perfect law of liberty; so much might be discovered and discerned, by comparing our walk with the more spiritual sort of Christians. Sure we might do that, if we would. Might we not sometimes set such and such persons in our own thoughts before us, and think with ourselves, What a spiritual life does such a man live! How strict and even is his conversation! How manifest is it, that such a man walks with God, and lives much in heaven! Might we not do so, and accordingly mend our course in walking? For God hath set up such eminent Christians to be examples and patterns to others; and we are directed "so to walk, as we have such more eminent saints for our example; to be followers of them, as they are of Christ." We ought to do so. When we compare ourselves only with ourselves, we are likely to get no instruction by it, and to be never the wiser for that. "Those that compare themselves with themselves, doing so only, are not wise:" they never learn any thing. But comparing ourselves with others, then we may receive profit and instruction; and they may be, in the very view of their walking, a seasonable reproof of the carelessness, and remissness, and extravagancy of ours. And what would it be to consider with ourselves sometimes, what even and happy lives do such and such live in comparison of mine! I am weak, and they are strong; I am dull and dead and languid, and they are quick and lively! This would be somewhat in an apt tendency toward such works and actions, as wherein our spiritual walk doth more directly consist.

3. Do we not neglect to consider of the sadness of our case, if we are deserted of the Spirit? We might discern, that it is not so with us as it is with others. Might we not hereupon sit down and think, "How sad a thing it is to be forsaken of that blessed Spirit, or even not to have it discernibly present! to have that Spirit, that doth so freely and graciously converse with some, refuse to converse with me! and so to be out-gone by other Christians, and left languishing alone!" I might think, that this is not a state to be content and well satisfied in.

4. Do we not neglect to contemplate the fulness and plenitude of the blessed Spirit?—that when we find that we are poor and indigent, there are supplies to be had? Do we not neglect to take actual knowledge of this? This is a tendency to that faith in the Spirit, which is to be acted in order to our drawing forth its communications: for sure I must have the object of my faith in view, before I can perform an act of faith towards it; I cannot act faith upon that which I don't think of. And by how much the more I do consider the plenitude, and liberality, and graciousness of this blessed Spirit, so much the more I see in the object to invite and draw forth an act of faith; and I am to expect the Spirit to concur in this way in order to a kind of vital contract that I come to have with it, by which I actually partake of and draw forth influence from it. I must look to him, in whom my help is. They looked unto him, and were lightened, Ps. xxxiv. 5. A general expression of the gracious influence of God by his Spirit; they looked to him, and quick and lively vital influence was given in.

5. Do we not neglect the business of self-excitation? Surely we are not to make nothing of this matter of stirring up ourselves: as there is no walking, but there are some essays previous thereto; some efforts, before a man can be said actually to have walked; a *conatus* or applying himself thereto. Unto such a *conatus* is the expression accommodate, of girding up our loins in order to our spiritual walk. 1 Pet. i. 13. Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end, &c. If men design a walk, they do *accingere se*, they put themselves into a ready posture for it. So we might be doing in order to our receiving the Spirit's further influence; though as was said, we don't do this of ourselves, as we can do nothing without help; yet we should find that this is a help always afforded us, and wherein God is still beforehand with us, and which, if his helping hand were accepted in these things, might lead us further unto those wherein our walking in the Spirit doth more formally consist. And the many passages that we meet with in Scripture of this thing, certainly cannot be without their signification, are not set for ciphers in the Bible. As, when the apostle bids Timothy to stir up the gift that was in him, 2 Tim. i. 6. ἀναζωπυρειν, that emphatical word. And we are not to think, that what he saith hath reference only to an extraordinary gift conferred upon him; as the very next words that follow show, ver. 7. For God hath not given us the Spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind: that is, the Spirit in such operations wherein he is common to Christians; though very likely there was a fuller measure of that which did attend that ordinance of the imposition of hands, whereof the former verse speaks; according as a greater measure was required unto the greater work of an evangelist above that of an ordinary Christian, even a greater measure of special grace, or sanctifying influence. This the apostle would have Timothy to *blow up into a coal*, as the word signifies, to make the fire to live again. You also find it complained of as an accusation in Isa. lxiv. 7. that no man stirred up himself to take hold of the Lord. There is such a striving with ourselves in order to such and such spiritual works and actions to be done. The word in the last-mentioned place is very emphatical, it signifies to *awake*, and is put into that mood which in the Hebrew language signifies action upon oneself; there is no one that goes about to awake, to rouse himself, in order to the taking hold of God. Somewhat might be done, and is to be done to this purpose. Awake, my glory, says the Psalmist, Ps. lvii. 8. It is most probable, that by his glory he means his soul; "Awake, O my soul, do not lie drowsing always, thou hast great work to do." That expression, in Col. iii. 16. which we read, admonishing one another, is ἐαυτοὺς, and most properly signifies *admonishing ourselves*. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,

—admonishing your ownselves, speaking to your ownselves, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. He does not say, "We have nothing to do, nothing that lies upon us." Can we never commune with ourselves, and labour to awaken ourselves? We might expostulate with ourselves, as the Psalmist in Ps. xlii. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted within me? As in reference to want of comfort, so in reference to indisposition to duty we have much more cause to chide ourselves; "Why dost thou lie dead and asleep, when thou hast so great work to do? Arise, and walk in the light of the Lord." We might charge ourselves, urge our own souls with the obligation of the divine law which we are under; as the Psalmist does here, "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him." We might encourage ourselves, as David in that great distress at Ziklag is said to have encouraged himself in the Lord his God, 1 Sam. xxx. 6. And we might resolve with ourselves upon this or that thing to be done. I will love thee, O Lord my strength, Ps. xviii. 1. There was a resolution of going upon such an exercise of love and praise, before he actually engaged in the work itself; Now I will go and apply myself to a love-commerce with God, to enlarge and expatiate in his love and praises. We might say, "We will now apply ourselves to the business, before such and such a work be actually done." Are we not omissive and neglectful in such things?

6. Might we not be more frequent, or more diligent, serious, and attentive, in our waiting upon the solemn ordinances of God? Many of us might come oftener, or come sooner, or more compose ourselves to attention when we come unto those means, through which the Spirit of God is wont to work, and by which it conveys its influence.

7. Might we not be much oftener in our closets, and retire more frequently? Here lies the too little observed cause of the languishing of religion among us at this day; persons let the business of this world so shuffle out their religion, that they cannot have any time to go and be apart with God; and they are left so much alone, because they are so little alone: as was the saying of a heathen, "I am never less alone, than when I am alone." Many a time might we have a good meeting with God in a corner, if we should allow ourselves to be a little there.

8. Might we not be more conversant at such chosen times with the word of God, than we are? It is through that, this Spirit breathes. Thy word hath quickened me, Ps. cxix. 50. With thy precepts thou hast quickened me, ver. 93. Through that word which was of his own inspiring, γραφὴ θεόπνευστος, *the Spirit chooses still to breathe.* And is it not sad to think, that among many professors, the Bible should lie by as an unprofitable neglected history about the house, as part of the lumber which we know not how to make use of? The word is the Spirit's sword; and the corruptions of our hearts, that are the great hinderances in our walking, need hewing many times; but we put not ourselves under the stroke of the sword by which this should be done. And truly, if any of us should live to see the time or know the place, where it might be a crime to have a Bible in our houses, we should then have cause to reflect, that we have made so little use of it when we had it.

9. Might we not be more in prayer upon this subject, that is, for the Spirit? Might we not insist more upon it, and plead more earnestly for spiritual communications? We are told, that "God will give his Spirit unto them that ask him;" unto his children, as readily as we will give bread to ours, rather than a stone. And will not we believe it? Or if we do, is it a thing so little worth our looking after, to have our souls inhabited and animated by that blessed Spirit, to have it reside and rule in us? Is this so little to be regarded by us? I believe there will a time come with many professors, that are now very much asleep, when they shall value a communication of the Spirit more than any one enjoyment whatsoever, however they are now absorbed and drunk up of the spirit of this world. If God rend and take away all from us, and we have nothing else left, nothing to trust to, but what we have from above; then those things from above will be things of value. And what would we desire more, than to be so plainly told as we are, that we shall have for seeking? Your heart shall live, that do seek God, Ps. lxix. 32. Would you have plainer words? They shall praise the Lord, that seek him; your heart (their heart) shall live for ever, Ps. xxii. 26.

10. Might we not more abstain from the things that we know tend to grieve the Spirit? Many such things there are. It cannot but occur to our own knowledge and thoughts, if at any time they be serious, that such and such things (our own hearts will tell us what they are) must needs be a grief to the Spirit of God; and if I allow myself to tread such and such paths, the Spirit and I shall grow strangers unto one another. The indulging of sensual desires, allowing a liberty unto enormous and exorbitant passions, letting out our spirits to the minding of earthly things without check and restraint, falling into jangles and contentions with others, cherishing our own enmity and discontents toward such and such persons, or upon such and such occasions. How do we think, that that pure and holy and blessed Spirit will inhabit so impure and licentious and unpeaceable breasts as ours are? The letting out our thoughts and affections to vanity, so as only to be in a disposition to mind trifles and converse with them, cannot but produce a great strangeness. Don't you know, that there is many a serious man would forsake your company, if he saw that you were in no disposition to mind any thing that was serious; and that to talk of nothing but toys and trifles was pleasing and grateful to you? Serious men would leave you upon this, and think you unsuitable company for them.

SERMON XVIII.*

INFERENCE 2. In the great business of the Christian life, it is not the Spirit that doth all, but there is a part incumbent upon us. This is manifest, when it is said to belong to us, if we are Christians indeed, to "walk in the Spirit." Then the business of the Christian life is not to be done by the Spirit alone, but we have a part to do therein. And it is not unnecessary to insist a little upon this. I do not reckon this necessary, merely for the confutation of their error who think otherwise; for I cannot think there are any among us that are of a contrary opinion; though some such there have been, and probably, enough are in the world, who have thought it to be a great piece of perfection to be aspired unto by Christians, to be merely passive in the business of religion; and that by how much the more perfect they are, so much the more passive, and do so much the less in religion: but I suspect not any here to be of that mind. It is upon a more practical account, that this is fit to be insisted on: for though we have no such formed apprehensions, yet it is too plain that most carry the matter as if they had nothing to do. And therefore I shall urge some considerations to evince what I suppose to be already our common belief, that there is a part incumbent upon us; to enliven a little that belief in our souls, and that we may be stirred up to walk and act more agreeably to it.

1. The very notion of walking in the text, doth most strongly exclaim against the supposition of our having nothing to do. You have been formerly told, that if a man should roll a stone, or drag a log, neither of them would be said to walk. Walking is a voluntary, spontaneous motion, from an internal, and some way or other self-directing, principle; when we design the motion and choose the way wherein we are to walk, being enabled to choose aright. And by how much the more the Spirit puts forth its influence in order to our walking, so much the more are we at liberty; with so much the more spontaneity and activity and vigour do we go on in that course unto which it prompts. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, 2 Cor. iii. 17. And, I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart, Psal. cxix. 32.

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2. It is to be argued by an induction of such particulars, as we have formerly instanced in, that we have a part incumbent upon us. Concerning which of them would we say, that they are not our part? That which begins our course, repentance towards God, is not that our work? That, by which we derive strength and vigour for that course of holy motion, that faith which is continually to supply us from the fountain with influence, is not this incumbent upon us? Is it not our part to resign and yield ourselves, and to obey the influences and dictates of the blessed Spirit of God? Can we then yet say or think, that we have nothing to do, or carry as if we had not?

But it may be said, that these are the works of the Holy Ghost, to repent, to believe, to resign, to obey, and the like.

It is very true indeed. But what hinders, that even in reference to one and the same work the Spirit should have its part, and we our part? As when a musician plays upon an instrument, hath not the musician and the instrument each of them a contribution towards the melody? The strings don't sound without being touched, nor is that sound made by touching any thing but those strings. We cannot say in that case, that the musician and the instrument have each of them so their part, as that one note is from the musician and another note from the instrument; but both the musician and the instrument contribute to every note. And so it is plainly here, as to all the holy and spiritual motions and actions of a renewed soul; our spirits and the blessed Spirit of God have a kind of cooperation in reference to every particular act; which plainly shows that we have our part all along, and much more an active part than that similitude we used can serve to represent.

3. Were it not so, that we have such a part incumbent upon us, all the precepts that contain in them the duty which is charged upon us, (that is, which we ought to call duty, because they are precepts in which it is contained,) would be mere nullities; and so that duty would be no duty. It would indeed evacuate and nullify the whole law of God, and all the precepts that are in his book of one kind or another. For if we have no part belonging to us, then his precepts obliges us to nothing; and that which obliges to nothing, is no obligation: and so it were an apprehension, in the tendency of it, directly subversive of the whole frame of the Divine government: all his laws over us would carry no signification with them at all. Especially what sense could we make of such laws as these, that do in general express the whole of a Christian's course? This, for instance, in the text, "Walk in the Spirit?" Which you have with so much solemnity introduced in another verse of this same chapter; "This I say, Walk in the Spirit; and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," ver. 16. This I say; here would be great solemnity used for no purpose, the precept would carry no signification of a precept at all. And so of other such like scriptures. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, Eph. vi. 10. Be strong; what doth that say to us? what doth it mean? Can we tell how to make ourselves strong, and by the Lord's strength? It plainly shows, that regenerate ones have somewhat to do, upon the doing whereof they may expect the communications of the Spirit. So, Eph. v. 18. Be ye filled with the Spirit. What a strange thing were it to give us such a precept as that, that we should be filled with the Spirit, if we had nothing to do in order thereto! It doth indeed manifestly imply the Spirit's communicativeness, its aptness to communicate itself in all suitable and needful influences: and if we should not understand it so, the words would carry but such a sound, such a faint sound with them, as those that are supposed to be spoken by some charitable man, that should say to one in necessity, naked, and destitute of daily food, "Be thou warm, be thou filled;" but yet give nothing needful for the body, James ii. 15, 16. And what! shall we dare to imagine, that the Spirit of God, that Spirit of love and grace, should indite such words as these, "Be ye filled with the Spirit," and yet be altogether unapt to give that which should be needful to the soul? It doth plainly hold forth therefore the communicativeness of the Holy Ghost. But then it doth hold forth also a part incumbent upon us, somewhat to be done by us, whereupon we are to expect such a communication, and in a stated course; and not to expect it otherwise, or upon other terms; whatever it may arbitrarily and from a sovereignty and royalty of grace do, as it many times doth.

4. Otherwise all the holy and gracious principles, all the graces of the Spirit, were put into the soul in vain; they were needless and useless things. For pray, what use can we conceive them to be of, but only to dispose the soul for holy and gracious actings? And then sure it must have something to do. The frame and shape of every thing doth discover, even to a man's eye, what it was made for: the very shape of this or that utensil shows its use, and what purposes it will serve for. So the whole frame of the new creature, all the several principles that are ingredient into the constitution of it, plainly show what they are for. And the Spirit of God doth expressly tell us, Eph. ii. 10. We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he hath before ordained that we should walk in them. "We are his workmanship:" this is a piece of work wrought and done upon the soul, on purpose to fit him for the doing of good works: it is a very strange thing if yet it should have nothing to do. We might as well suppose, that the apt shape and frame of this or that instrument did contribute nothing to the use; a musician might as well play upon a log as upon a lute. Why should there be that curious workmanship, as there is wrought in every renewed soul, if all those principles are to lie dead, and there is no work to be done by such a soul? What is the grace of repentance for, but that the soul might turn to God? What is self-denial for, but to take it off from self? mortification towards this world, but to loose and unhinge the soul from that, that so it may be in a posture disengaged and free for the course of holy spiritual motion? What is love for, but that it may move vigorously and delightfully? fear, but that it may move regularly? humility, but that it may move equally? patience, but that it may move steadily, and so as not to be diverted by the evils that it meets with in the way? Take every particular grace severally, or take the entire frame of all together, and the very frame shows us what the new creature was for, that it was not to do nothing, and therefore sure that there is somewhat to be done.

5. Were it not so, this great absurdity would follow, that not only the Spirit of God was to be the agent, (which indeed is itself absurd enough,) but that that alone is to be denominated the agent of every work that is to be done. Not only might it be truly said, that the Spirit of God repents and believes; but that it alone doth so; and consequently that there was no believer in all the world, no penitent, no obedient person; but only that these names ought to be given to the Spirit of God.

6. The matter is hence plain, that the Scriptures doth manifestly say, that such and such things are done by the people of God. It is owned concerning them, that they "do believe, they have believed, they have received the word," and the like; they have "turned to the Lord from dumb idols," they have had "their labour of love," their approved works. I know thy works, I know by way of approbation that thou hast done so and so. And it being plain, that they are said to be the doers of such and such actions; either they do them as duty, as things incumbent upon them to do, or not: if as duty, we have what we seek: if not, then all such persons doing such works must be said to have done more than their duty: but certainly our own hearts will tell us, if we consider, that do what we can we always fall abundantly short.

These things make it plain enough, that there is a part incumbent upon us to do, and that it is not the business of the Spirit of God to do all, in the matter of the Christian life. It was necessary to insist upon this; because if we do not admit the principle into our hearts, however it may hover in our minds and notional judgment, we can never admit into our hearts any conviction of our neglects of God, nor any impression of the many exhortations and incentives that we have unto greater diligence in the business of our Christian walk. We shall but faintly charge ourselves, and easily put off all with saying, the Spirit of God did not act; and think ourselves very innocent and harmless all the while, though we only trifle and loiter in the great business of Christianity all our days. If we own the prin-

ciple, that we ought to be doing and walking, as we profess ourselves to be living Christians; why do we carry the matter, as if we believed it not? why do we stand still, as if we had nothing to do, as if we could not find our hands? Alas! how little is there among us of that which ought to go under the name of Christian walking! How little can we find in ourselves, upon a serious review of the things done by us from day to day, concerning which we can say, "These were a real part of the Christian walk, and which ought to be referred thither!" Surely, while we so slothfully sit still and do nothing, it is very needful we should be put in mind and have it urged upon us, that we have *not nothing* to do; that we cannot sit still, as having no business, but only as those that mind it not.

Inference 3. We may further infer hence, not only our obligation to a part incumbent upon us, but also our impotency to walk as we should alone. If it belongs to us as living Christians, both as our privilege and duty, to walk in the Spirit; both do argue, that we cannot walk alone as we ought, that we cannot walk acceptably and so as to please God, by ourselves. Such a charge as this laid upon us, "to walk in the Spirit," carries a plain signification, how incompetent we are for managing the course of our Christian walk without the Spirit. They that walk by the power of another, being acted and supported and borne up; though their walking imports that they do somewhat; yet plainly show, by their walking so sustained, their impotency to steer that course of themselves. And it is needful, that the conviction of this, too, do sink a great deal deeper with us than commonly it doth; that we can do nothing alone of the proper business that appertains to the Christian life: not so much as move a step, or draw a breath, or think a thought; not so much as think any thing, as of ourselves, 2 Cor. iii. 5.

This also is a thing that is easily assented to, as soon as we hear it: but there is a very great difference to be made, between assenting to such a thing as an opinion, that we think carries with it a very plausible pretence for our own sloth, and having ourselves possessed with a deep and serious sense of it, as a thing plainly spoke out to us by the word of God, and whereof we find an inward experience in our own souls. We are very carefully to distinguish between these two. It is a very common pretence among people, that they can do nothing, no good thing, without God, they are impotent to every thing that may have any tendency to their own salvation or to his glory; most profess to believe this, as soon as they hear the words spoken: but it is too apparent by the course that most hold, that this is only an opinion taken up, as supposed to carry a very favourable aspect upon their own sloth; and not that really they are of this faith. It is but a mere assumed opinion with them; not a part of their faith, nor a piece of their experience concerning themselves, "that without God they can do nothing."

It is plain enough, that persons may hold things as an opinion, that have no influence at all to govern their practice, notwithstanding that they are things in their own nature never so practical, or that ever so much concern practice. And it is of some necessity to us to consider, how impotent and ineffectual a thing mere opinion is to govern a man's practice. And to make way for this; that you may see that men hold this doctrine of their own impotency unto any spiritual good but as an opinion, without ever understanding the grounds of it, or without ever considering of what use it should be, or what course they are to take agreeable to such an apprehension; we shall show a little the insufficiency of mere opinion to regulate practice. Plain it is, that many things that are in their own nature most practical, men have opinions about, which never influence their practice at all. It is a common thing for men in the whole course of their lives to run counter to an opinion which they hold; as I might instance in sundry of the greatest things that one can think of. Men are of this opinion, that God is the supreme and rightful Governor of the world; and yet have his laws and authority all their days in contempt. They are of this opinion, that God is omniscient, knows their hearts, and beholds all their ways; and yet never care to approve themselves to his eye in the temper of their spirits or the course of their walking. They are of opinion, that all men as sinners are naturally liable to the wrath and justice of God; and yet never go about to flee from the wrath to come. They are of opinion, that there is a judgment to come, and a state of retribution after this life for what hath been done in it; and yet never make it their concern to be sure, that they are not miserable hereafter, cast in judgment, doomed to perdition, but adjudged to live. Men in their whole course, even all their days, run directly contrary to their own opinion, in the greatest and most important things that can be imagined; and that shows that it is a mere opinion: for a real, thorough belief of so great and important things, would certainly make other kind of work in their hearts and lives.

And because it is so plain in the general, that men may run all their time against their opinion, and guide their practice quite contrary to their opinion about practical things; it concerns us here to be a little more strict in our inquiry, whether it be not so in this particular case; that is, that men do hold the doctrine of their impotence for spiritual good but as an opinion, which they the more readily comply with, because they think it looks with a very favourable aspect upon that slothful, lazy course, which it is most agreeable to them to hold, and which they are very loth to alter. In this case, it doth them never the more good for being a true opinion; but the mischief to them is, that they hold it but as an opinion and no otherwise: which will appear, if you consider four things. If they held such a truth otherwise than as an opinion, if they believed it with a real faith and experienced the truth of it; it must, in conjunction with the things that I am to mention, make strange impressions upon their spirits, and alterations in their course, beyond what it is found to do. For,

1. Together with this apprehension, that they are impotent, and cannot of themselves walk as they should, so as to please God, they also know, or might easily know, that they do not walk so, as to have reason to think, that God is pleased with their walking. They may find upon a very easy reflection, that they do not walk in the Spirit: one would think it impossible for many of the looser sort of the professors of Christianity to resist the evidence of so plain a thing, if they ask themselves the question; "Can I say, my course and walking is like walking in the Spirit, such as that I dare entitle the Spirit to it as its author!" What! is the Spirit the author of your minding earthly things so intently? of seeking yourselves? of casting away the thoughts of God and eternity and the other world? And is not this thy walk?" Must not many say so? Let that then be considered by them that say, they cannot walk so as to please God without the Spirit; must they not also be forced to say, that they do not walk in the Spirit? And then add to that,

2. The consideration whither these things tend. While they acknowledge, that to walk so as God may be pleased, without the Spirit, is not possible; that their present course is not a walking in the Spirit; and along with these, that it is absolutely necessary for them to walk in such a course, as that God may be pleased with their walking; certainly it would put a reasonable, considering soul into a distress, if he would but lay these things together. "I cannot walk as I should without the Spirit, and I find I do not walk according to the Spirit, yet it is necessary for me that I should do so." What should be the end of this? Must it not needs be to put the spirit of a man, if he will reasonably consider it, into the greatest agonies imaginable? None pretend to hold this doctrine of their own impotency, but the same persons will say that they hold too, that it is necessary for them to please God in their walking. Now while no suitable impression is made, no lively concern excited, answerable to the exigency of such a case; is it not plain, that all this is but mere opinion, a hovering opinion and no more? especially if we should add hereto the considering,

3. That the Spirit is not tied to their time; and that no doubt they will grant also. If now they have not the Spirit to influence their walking, and enable them in the course of it, they cannot promise themselves that they shall have it the next hour, or the next day, or the next year.

4. They know withal, that they are not masters of their own time; and they don't know but that their time may be over and expired, before that blessed Spirit, so often

neglected and slighted and resisted, shall ever breathe or do any effectual work upon their souls.

These are things all of them as obvious as that other, that they are of themselves impotent. But take all these things together, and if there were more than mere opinion in the matter, certainly it could not but put such a soul into the greatest distress imaginable. "What shall I do? what shall I think of my case? which way shall I turn myself? The way wherein I walk I am sure cannot please God; I cannot walk better without his Spirit; that Spirit doth not breathe or move in me in order to my better walking; I cannot command that Spirit; my time may shortly be over; I may be dead and gone out of this world for ought I know, before that Spirit ever come to have any acquaintance with my spirit, any commerce with it, and then what will become of me?"

All this I urge to this purpose, that it may be taken notice of and reflected upon, how little it signifies for men to have such an opinion of their own impotency, while it is an opinion and no more, while it makes no impression and has no suitable effect. If it were firmly believed, it would certainly infer this, that a soul that finds it can of itself do nothing, would be put upon loud and importunate cries to him, who can help us to do all, and who must do all, that is, do the part appertaining to him in all and every thing that is to be done by us in order to our eternal well-being. But to lie still with the apprehension that I can do nothing, when (as the case doth signify) if I can do nothing I must perish, supposing that nothing be done by a higher and a stronger hand; and to be unconcerned whether that hand ever touch my heart, ever come near me, yea or no; this is a dreadful and a monstrous thing, and might make men amazed at themselves; that they can profess to believe a doctrine that carries with it a face of so much terror to their own souls, and never be startled at it; be well pleased that it casts a favourable aspect upon their sloth, while it carries a most frowning one upon their safety; unless it had that tendency with it, (which in most it hath not,) to bring men upon their knees, and to set them on crying and importuning for that grace and Spirit, without which it is true we can do nothing, and without which therefore nothing but perishing is to be looked for.

SERMON XIX.*

THERE are yet some further inferences remaining from the subject we have been upon.

Inference 4. Since it belongs to the state of persons living in the Spirit to walk in the Spirit; then we have great reason to admire the grace of the Spirit, that renders this a possible thing to us, to walk under its constant governing influence. But this I shall not insist upon, because there is no part or work and office of the Holy Ghost in reference to the spirits of men, on which we have insisted already, but hath given us some occasion to reflect upon its wonderful vouchsafement, that it would have so much to do with such as we are. But as this occasion is renewed to us of considering it, we should renew our observation and admiration of its strange condescension in this thing. For would any of us deign to be obliged to have from day to day the guiding and conducting of all the motions of a worm? And we do not need to be told, how much less considerable we are in reference to the great God and the blessed Spirit, than any the most despicable worm is to us.

Inference 5. Since it belongs unto the state of persons that own themselves Christians, or to live in the Spirit; (for to own Christianity, and to pretend to a life in the Spirit, is all one; those that profess themselves Christians, do not profess themselves dead Christians, but living ones;) since it belongs, I say, to such to walk in the Spirit; then we may too plainly collect, that there are very many going under that name, that walk so, as doth not belong to the state unto which they pretend. A plain and sad collection! as the apostle speaks, Phil. iii. 18. Many walk, as I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, as enemies of the cross of Christ; as those who are driving on a continual hostility against Christianity, and the design for which Christ was crucified. I doubt there is not less cause now for such a complaint, but only less sense. It is very observable, how great a stress is laid upon the visible decorum of a Christian's walk, up and down in Scripture; how they are required to be noted that walk disorderly; how earnestly Christians are exhorted and besought to walk becomingly and laudably, so that loveliness and amiableness might appear in their walk. I (Paul) the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, Eph. iv. 1. And he saith to the Thessalonians, I Epist. ii. 11, 12. Ye know, how we have exhorted, and comforted, (or, encouraged,) and warned every one of you, even as a father doth his children; that they walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. And in the epistle to the Colossians, he prays on the behalf of them, as we find him elsewhere praying for others, (chap. i. 10.) that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; so as to make a fair representation of him to the world, that he might be thought well of among men for the sake of them that bear his name and own a relation to him. And so to walk, that is, such worthy and becoming walking, and walking in the Spirit, do manifestly imply one another. Whatsoever is worthy, honourable, graceful in the conversation of Christians, can never be wanting, if their conversation be under the constant government and regulating influence of this Spirit. And if the conversation of any be otherwise governed in the general course and tenor of it, it is plain that it is under the government of some other principle. Do but see, as to this, the proportionable opposition between two passages, *viz.* this of the text, If ye live in the Spirit, walk also in the Spirit, and that in Col. iii. 7. In which ye also walked sometimes, when ye lived in them; referring to what was mentioned before and after, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry, (ver. 5.) and to anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communications, &c. ver. 8, &c. The course of any one's motion is so conform and agreeable to the principle that lives and rules with him. If we live in the Spirit, we walk in the Spirit; as it is most befitting we should; but if we live in the flesh, that is, under the government and dominion of fleshly principles, accordingly we shall walk; our walking will easily show, what principle is *regnant* and in dominion.

It would therefore be worth our while here, to point out some particular things, that are too observable in the walkings of many, and import a most direct repugnancy and contrariety unto walking in the Spirit; which are a manifest disclaiming of it, as none of the governing principle of those who so walk.

I. A visible conformity to this world speaks a contrariety to walking in the Spirit, and a repugnancy to all its influences and dictates. Plain it is, that the Scripture frequently speaks of a spirit and a spirit, that differently and oppositely influence the walking of men. We are told of the spirit of the world, and of the Spirit that is of God, I Cor. ii. 12. And as here we read of walking in the Spirit, the blessed Spirit of God; so we read of another course of walking, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, Eph. ii. 2, 3. As the holy, blessed spirit of God, wherever that rules, doth conform and frame the course and tenor of any one's conversation, in whom it so rules, unto the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, that course of walking that is directed and prescribed there; so the spirit and genius of the world doth conform men unto this world, and make them shape their course agreeable to it; as that expression with the emphasis signifies, Rom. xii. 2. *μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε*, Be not conformed (be not configured) unto this world, so as that your visible shape, frame, and mould, that appear obvious to every eye, should represent this world and hold an agreement with that; but be ye

* Preached May 1, 1678.

transformed by the renewing of your minds, that we may prove (or, give proof) what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God; as those that are framed according to that, delivered up into the mould by which that will is revealed, to wit, that of the Gospel revelation; as in Rom. vi. 17. Now when the course of any men's walking is such as that of the men of the world in common, what doth it discover, but that these men are acted by the spirit of this world, are ingulfed and swallowed up of that spirit? one spirit animates both the world and them, and makes them one piece with this world. And if we should give characters of the worldly spirit, you would easily see what the walking and conversation of many doth bespeak to be the governing principle of their lives, or the spirit that influenceth their conversations. Plain it is, that the spirit of this world is an atheistical spirit, a sensual and earthly spirit, a vain and proud, a malicious and contentious spirit. Concerning what is obvious in the walking of persons, agreeable unto such characters as these, give me leave a little to particularize.

1. A conversation or course of walking transacted in the continual neglect of God, is certainly a conversation governed not by the Spirit of God, but by the spirit of this world. Conceive of that Spirit under what notion you will; they that walk under the governing influence of the Spirit of God, walk as before God; Walk before me, and be thou perfect, or upright, Gen. xvii. 1. Walk as in God's sight, as under his eye; as that injunction again and again repeated to Abraham doth import. They walk in the fear of the Lord, Acts ix. 31. They, whose hearts must tell them upon reflection, "I do not use to walk in the fear of the Lord from day to day, my life is led as 'without God in the world,' as if I were my own, as if my ways were all in my own disposal, as if it were the sense of my heart, Who is Lord over me? I am under my own inspection, as if no account was to be taken of my walk;" it will be too plain for such to collect, that they walk not by the Spirit, or after the Spirit, or in the Spirit. For what! do we think, that that blessed Spirit can be the author to us of our forgetting God and leading ungodly lives? Doth that cast his fear out of our hearts, which is peculiarly called the Spirit of the fear of the Lord? Isa. xi. 2. Doth that Spirit drive us away from God, or make us unapprehensive of his presence, or make us strangers to him, or as persons unrelated?

2. A continued over-eager pursuit of the things of this world, speaks a co .versation governed by the spirit of the world, and not by the Spirit of God. I shall not speak here of grosser sensualities, when it is the business of men's lives to satisfy the viler lusts of the flesh; about which the case is so plain, that they cannot have the face to pretend, that the Spirit of God should be the author of such things in their conversation. And the antithesis is plain, where we have the same precept before, at the 16th verse of this chapter: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." So, fulfil the lusts of the flesh, and it is certain you do not walk in the Spirit; for the case is as broad as long. But there is what is more refined, what custom and common practice hath made less scandalous. It is hardly thought scandalous to be an earthly-minded man; one, all whose design and the whole business of whose life is, to lay up and amass together a great deal of the treasures of this earth. And it is a latent evil in very great part; for one man may be very busy in the affairs of this world, and another the like, and yet we cannot tell where the hearts of one and the other are. There may be many good thoughts, many holy affections and actings of grace, intermingled with worldly affairs and business. But notwithstanding that, there is much (as I say) of the air of a man's spirit to be seen in the constant course and tenor of his walking; a certain mien and deportment, that speaks the complexion of his soul. They that are after the flesh, savour the things of the flesh, and carry a scent with them that shows their spirits. We say, that such or such a course of walking, such a word, or such an action, is *par homini, just like the man*, speaks the spirit of the man. When the apostle comes to distinguish between walking and walking, conversation and conversation, we see how the minding of earthly things, and having a conversation in heaven, are made the distinctive characters of men, Phil. iii. 19, 20. Our business now is to put persons severally upon reflection into their hearts and upon their own walking. It is no matter what we appear, or are thought of by one another; but it greatly concerns us to be informed ourselves, what principle or spirit it is that governs our walking, or hath the management of our conversation. And it is no such difficult, at least no impossible thing, upon a faithful scrutiny and frequent observation, to understand, what are the great designs that we are driving in this world, and in what channel the main stream of our actions and endeavours run; what are the thoughts of our hearts, what their secret dispositions and propensions. When worldly objects, and worldly thoughts and affections, are most tasteful to us, and most habitual and customary, what shall we say concerning this case? When it is so through the whole course of our walking, who must govern this walk? Will we dare to entitle the Spirit of God unto the conduct and government of such a conversation as that? When my walking from day to day is nothing else but a continual tending towards this earth, a motion downward; is it the Spirit of God that so thrusts me down and depresses my spirit? Is it that, that makes me grovel in the dust, and lead the life of a worm, when I might lead that of an angel, when I might have my way above, as the way of the wise is?

3. A contentious course of life speaks the Spirit of God to be none of the governor of our walk, but another spirit most surely. When men love wrangles and contentions, cannot endure to live out of the fire, is the Spirit of God the author of that impure fire? It is very much to be observed, what the apostle hath reference to more immediately and directly in this very context, wherein the text lies. He first gives this precept of walking in the Spirit; "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," ver. 16. See what the foregoing verses are, ver. 14, 15. All the law is fulfilled in one word, by love; (as he had said, ver. 13. By love serve one another;) For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Upon which follows the 16th verse. The lusts of the flesh, which he hath more direct and immediate reference to there, are therefore those opposed to love, such as wrath and anger, envy and malice; which he speaks of, both afterwards in this chapter, and in other of his epistles. When he comes to enumerate the fruits of the flesh, how great a part do things of this nature bear in that enumeration! The works of the flesh are manifest. And after he had named some things more grossly sensual, (as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,) and interserted idolatry and witchcraft; then comes hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings. And when he had been speaking in Col. iii. 5. of the earthly members, that must be mortified, and for which the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience; in the which, says he, to those Colossians, ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them: then he adds, But now put ye off all these: and as he had named before fornication, uncleanness, &c. so now he goes on with the enumeration, mentioning further anger, wrath, malice, &c. And indeed, if we will not admit the apprehension deep into our souls, that it is the great business of the Spirit of God equally and alike to enliven and animate both parts of the law of God, to turn both tables into a living law, transcribing them out upon the hearts and spirits of men; we shall never understand the great work that is to be done upon our souls by the Spirit. We are to consider it as the Spirit of all love, and goodness, and benignity, and meekness; and then we may easily apprehend what the fruits of this Spirit will be: The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, Eph. v. 9. It is the reproach of our age, and (which is worse than that) of the Christian name, that there are so many that conjoin eminent pretences unto religion and spirituality with a froward, peevish, perverse, envious, spiteful, malicious spirit, as if it were possible for these things to consist. It is not strange indeed, that a worse spirit should assume and put on some appearances of a better; but you may be sure, that that better Spirit will never disguise itself by the appearances of the worse. This is the spirit of

the world, a spirit that fills the world with nothing but violence and mischief, that shakes and agitates the world with perpetual commotions; as it will be with it, till it dissolve and be burst asunder at last by the malignity of its own wickedness, and the wrath of God in a just conjunction therewith, coming upon the wicked. That spirit, and a just *nemesis*, that falls by way of punishment upon it, hath made the world so miserable a region, the very region of all miseries. So that any one may see, that the spirit of the world hath a great hold upon one, if things of this import are frequently observable in the course of his conversation.

4thly, A vain walk is a discovery, that a man's conversation is acted and influenced by the spirit of this world, which is a vain spirit. Such persons, who can never find a time wherein to be serious, who show this to be a thing that their hearts abhor from, whom you will find always vain, though you should meet them never so often in a day; as if a serious thought fled from their spirits as none of its element, and could not tell how to dwell with them; the very countenance and show of whose conversation discovers a continual vanity of spirit; what! will such persons dare to entitle the Spirit of God to this? Hath the Spirit of God the government of that man's walking, in which there is no face of seriousness, so that any one that sees hath reason enough to conjecture, that seriousness was never akin to his spirit, or had any place in it? This is matter of very necessary self-reflection. We ought to commune with ourselves very strictly and closely about this thing. Do we think, that we are under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and yet from day to day are unacquainted with what it means to have serious thoughts and serious frames and dispositions of heart about us?

Thus far conformity to the world speaks an unsuitableness and contrariety to walking in the Spirit. There are some other things, that are thought to be out of that verge, and are really beside the more common and general course of this walk; which I shall mention under distinct heads from this, because I would speak of them as they are thought of. And therefore I add,

2ndly, Opinionativeness in the business of religion. Many would little suspect this to be from the spirit of this world: and indeed it is not the very common course of this world to be much concerned about such matters. But no matter from what spirit it is, their own or a worse; it is not from the Spirit of God; that doth not influence their course. But take aright what I mean by the term, opinionativeness: I mean such as in their ordinary course from day to day either are wholly taken up about speculative matters, that either really belong or that they affix to religion; or who only converse about most practical matters speculatively, as if they were matters of mere opinion, and not to be turned or employed to practice at all. A course of walking so managed as this is, certainly is not governed by the Spirit of God; that is the author of no such persuasion to men. Men are apt to think, that they are very safe from sin and blame in this case, because they are things of religion that they are much concerned and taken up about. But what things? and how are they employed about them? Either they converse about the mere skirts and borders of religion, and keep as remote as they can from the heart and vitals of it, from having any commerce with such things: or, if the case be not so, then they presume (and it is a dreadful presumption) to touch tho e most sacred things with sacrilegious hands; to alienate the great and deep things of God, that appertain to his kingdom and glory, from their proper and genuine purposes; that, whereas they should be the food of souls, and the maintenance of the spiritual life, they employ them only to feed curiosity, and so to satisfy a more refined lust. This is the very truth of the case; and so a great many, that are persons of more leisure and vacancy from worldly affairs, spend most of their time. It is doleful to think, that the design, for which such important things are revealed to men, should be so little understood, and so little complied with and answered; and that so great things should be perverted unto so mean and ill services. And it is sad to think of the injury that such men do to their own souls; they go with famished souls from day to day, while they have most proper and suitable nutriment for them just at hand, but they will not touch, so as to taste or feed upon these things. Starving in the midst of plenty is their case: or, as if a sick man should have by him, in the midst of his languishing sickness, some vial of very choice and precious spirits, that in all likelihood would be relieving to him, and save him from death, but he keeps it by him, and will discourse to you very curiously and philosophically concerning the nature and virtues of this thing, yet never uses it, nor apprehends that he is concerned to use it, or that his case requires it; and so dies away with a medicine at hand all the while that might have saved his life.

3. Formality in the business of religion. There are those, who think it cannot serve their turn to speculate all their days, and therefore would practice somewhat. But what do they practise? They run in a common road of duties, in which their own hearts upon reflection must confess, that they never had the Spirit of God breathing, and never concerned themselves to have it so. Theirs is a religious course, and a course of practical religion; but transacted at the utmost distance from the Spirit of God, so that it and their spirits have no communion from day to day in the whole. They keep up a course of prayer in their families, and it may be in secret, go to public assemblies, attend upon the ordinances of worship; but never find any impression upon their spirits, any warmth or vigour there, or a concern to look after any such thing. They think it well, that such a duty is over, and so that they have walked in a religious course, though strangers to God and his Spirit all their time.

4. The neglect of the very form itself. This is too known a thing among some persons; and that too under the very pretence of spirituality. They are too spiritual to be bound to any forms of worship, or any stated course of duties; and that they may be more spiritual, they cast prayer out of their families, and refuse, yea even disdain, to live worshipping lives, as too mean for them. All these things speak a manifest repugnancy to walking in the Spirit. Sure it is not the governor of any such courses of walking as these are.

I shall shut up all with some brief reflections upon both parts of the text together.

Since it doth belong to the Spiri of God by office, as we have asserted, to maintain the life and govern the walk and motions of Christians; we should bethink ourselves, of how indispensable necessity the communications of the Spirit for these purposes are unto us, and how miserable a thing it is to be destitute of them. We may easily apprehend how necessary that influence is, without which we can neither live nor move; and how miserable to be without it. For represent we to ourselves the case of a poor, languishing, decrepit creature, that is deprived of motive power; suppose him barely to live, to have only life enough to feel himself in a dying condition: now is not the case so with many Christians, with some of those perhaps that have the root of the matter in them? They have but life enough to feel that they are consuming, and in a state wherein the things that remain are even ready to die! That they do not die, is by Divine vouchsafement, and none of their care. What a sad case is this! And is it not yet worse with some? They have not life enough to take any notice, or make inquiry, whether they live or no: as persons that have some life left, yet may be incapable of considering whether they are alive or dead. Many Christians are so far from having that motive power, that is to be exercised in the managing of their own walk, and that would be so if it were not through their own default; that they are so altogether destitute also of any presence and vital influence of the Spirit, as never to consider the case, "Am I alive or dead?" Certainly this is a miserable case. And I may add,

Where there is manifestly such a destitution, there are some things very intolerable, which yet are too obvious and frequent with many such. As,

1. It is intolerable in the case, to lay aside the apprehension of the distinction between natural and spiritual life, natural motion and spiritual. You may judge, whether the mention of this be not a most apparently needful thing. Are there not a great many, that spend away their days without so much as ever considering, that there is such a thing as spiritual life and motion, or a region all replenished

with spiritual vitality, a distinct sphere from that of nature wherein alone the rest of men do converse? They never think of such a distinction between world and world; an orb of spiritual life, and that mean and lower orb, wherein only a low kind of animality fills up all.

2. It is an intolerable thing in this case, to be unapprehensive of what others find of the power and vigour of that other Spirit moving in them, even the Spirit of God. There are some, that through grace (though that is not to be vaunted of, and whereof it becomes none to make a boast) feel the stirrings of another principle in them different from the spirit of this world: they feel themselves to live, and to be acted in their walk by a spring of life that is from above. Those that are without the experience of such a thing, will not believe there is any such thing; as if their knowledge were to measure all realities; as though they were persons commensurate in their understandings and experience with the whole nature of things. This is just for all the world, as if a languid person, that hath been long confined to his chamber and bed, should come to fancy, that his chamber and bed were all the world, and that there was nothing done among mankind but what he saw transacted in his own chamber: or, if we should imagine a thinking power to be in the grave, and fancying a grave to be the universe.

3. It is intolerable, to be unconcerned about our own part and share in the world and region of spiritual life and motion, of which we have been speaking. If there were a line to be drawn through the world to sever in it the living from the dead, and a public notification were made of this all the world over; would we not then be very much concerned, on which side of the line we placed ourselves, that it might be where we could live? But how strange is it, that in this case many are altogether unconcerned, whether they are of the living or the dead side! Lastly,

4. It is a most intolerable thing, to make no applications to this Spirit, after we know its distance. We know it is the Author of life, and the Governor of all holy motions unto all the children of God; and yet never apply to it, never put up a sigh or a cry! How intolerable is this! Do we know of any other way to live? Do we think, that there can be such a thing as everlasting life, a life which shall never end, and which shall also never begin? Sure if there be such a life, it must sometime begin: and where will we place the beginning of it, but in the communication of that spiritual, vital influence, which once given is a spring of living waters, springing up unto life eternal?

Let us so therefore represent the matter to ourselves; the high dignity, the immense fulness, the royal magnificent bounty and benignity of this blessed Spirit; that we may neither neglect it, nor distrust it. Represent the tendency of all its communications, and consider them as the earnest and pledges of everlasting life, the blossomings of glory; that which must be our preparation for, and our assurance of, the eternal state of life. And then desire such communications above all things. Let this be the sense of our souls, (sure there is reason enough that it should be so,) "Lord, let me rather live in poverty, live in pain and sickness, live in disgrace all my days, than live without thy Spirit! Let not that Spirit be a stranger to me, but inhabit and dwell in me, act and move me; and be my condition what it will in all external respects, I am unsolicitous, I will never capitulate, never dispute the matter." Till that Spirit come to be valued by us, and all its communications, even above all things else that men are wont to count dear to them, we have reason to apprehend, that it and we are like to continue still strangers; and if we be strangers to the Divine Spirit, we must be acquainted with misery both in this and another state.

THE

PROSPEROUS STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN INTEREST

BEFORE THE END OF TIME,

BY A PLENTIFUL EFFUSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT;

CONSIDERED IN FIFTEEN SERMONS,

ON EZEK. XXXIX. 29.

TO THE READER.

I APPREHEND little occasion to make an apology for the publication of the following discourses. They who relish Mr. Howe's inimitable spirit of piety, judgment, copiousness, and force, in the management of every subject he hath undertaken, will be glad of any remains of so great a man; and those who have been conversant with his writings, will hardly want any other voucher, besides the sermons themselves, that they are genuine, they so evidently carry in them, to a person of taste, the marks which always distinguish his performances.

They have not indeed had the advantage of his own masterly hand to prepare them for the press, and give them their last finishing; but were his discourses from the pulpit, taken first in short-hand by the hand of a very ready and judicious writer, who afterwards copied them out fair with the minutest exactness, as they were delivered. This very precise accuracy made it necessary, that they should be transcribed anew, before they saw the light. This I have adventured to do, without the alteration or addition of any one thought. But, in discourses delivered by a preacher without notes, some repetitions naturally occur in the pulpit; and very usefully, to enable the hearer to discern the connexion of the discourse as he goes along, and to make the deeper impression. These might appear tedious to a reader, who hath the whole before him; and therefore are omitted, further than they seemed to carry a peculiar emphasis, or than a different representation of the same thought was apprehended to convey the idea with greater force. The writer appears to have religiously followed the very words of the author, when he cited passages of Scripture by memory. It was judged proper to consult the texts themselves, and to cite them as they lie in the Bible; except where the author might be supposed out of choice to substitute another English word, as more expressive of the sense of the original. The repetition also of former discourses at the beginning of another sermon hath been omitted where nothing new occurred. But where a new thought is suggested, in such a repetition, it hath been carefully inserted in its proper place. This is all the variation I have allowed myself to make from the copy; and so much I apprehend will be accounted reasonable and necessary by all that are acquainted with such things.

The subject can hardly fail to be particularly acceptable. The reverend author hath often indeed expressed in general the same catholic sentiments in several of the works which he published himself; and shown his mind to have been uniformly the same as here, upon that head, wherein the prosperity of the Christian interest lies: that it consists not it the advancement of any party among Christians as such, or of any distinguishing name, or in any mere external forms; but in real vital religion and conformity to God. He hath also more than once intimated his expectation of better times for the church of God, than the present state of it. But he hath no where so professedly and distinctly explained his sentiments concerning the latter days of the Christian church, as in these discourses.

They were all preached in the course of a Wednesday lecture, which he formerly kept up at Cordwainer's Hall in this city; and all within the year 1678, as appears by the dates prefixed to each. A time, wherein he was in the vigour of life and height of judgment, between forty and fifty years old; and within a few years after his settlement with that congregation of protestant dissenters, where he ministered till his death. That was a time of peculiar distress and danger, not only to protestants out of the legal establishment in these kingdoms, but to the reformed interest in general through Europe. This may be supposed to have engaged his thoughts in so long attention to this subject, which animates with the hope of better times to come.

There are other discourses immediately preceding these at the same lecture, concerning the work of the Spirit in every age upon particular persons; as these relate to his work upon the Christian community, to be expected in the last age. A copy of those sermons, drawn up by the same writer, is fallen into the hands of a very worthy brother of this city, by as unexpected a providence as these came into mine. I hope he may be prevailed with to introduce them into the world, if those which are now offered meet with a favourable reception. And both these volumes together, will contain the sum of this great man's sentiments concerning the important doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

If any inquire, why these sermons were not inserted in the late collection of Mr. Howe's works in folio; I answer; besides that it was resolved to insert none there, but those which he had published himself; so, if it had been thought

proper to add more, the copy of these came not into my hands, or within my notice, till that edition was made public.

Such an index cannot be judged needful to a particular discourse; as I thought proper to add to that collection, where the subjects treated of are so various. It appeared more useful here to give a view of his whole scheme upon the argument, by way of contents: and because of the felicity of this author in descants upon Scripture, an index of the texts, which he hath taken notice of, is added even to this short treatise.

May the great Lord of the harvest succeed the revived labours of our fathers, and the endeavours of those in the present age, who are called to serve him in the Gospel; and still raise a seed to serve him, both in the ministry and out of it, which from time to time shall be accounted to him for a generation. This is the hearty prayer of

An unworthy Servant of

our common Lord,

JOHN EVANS.

Prescot-street.
Dec. 6th, 1725.

SERMON I.*

Ezek. xxxix. 29.

Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.

THE operations of the Holy Ghost may be considered either as relating to particular persons, in a single and private capacity; for the regenerating of souls, or implanting in them the principles of the divine and spiritual life; the maintaining of that life; the causing and ordering all the motions that are proper thereunto: or, as having an influence upon the—felicity and prosperous state of the church in general.—For this last, the Scripture that I have pitched upon, gives us a very plain and sufficient ground.

It is manifest, that it is a very happy and prosperous state, which is here referred unto, if you look back upon this and the foregoing chapters, the xxxvi. xxxvii. and xxxviii. which are all congeaerous, and as it were of a piece with this. You find such things copiously spoken of and promised, as we are wont to consider in the constitution of a prosperous happy state, in reference to what their case required; reduction from captivity, victory over their enemies, abundant plenty of all things, settled tranquillity and peace, entire union among themselves, both Ephraim and Judah, as you will find it expressed; the renewal of God's covenant with them, after their so great and long-continued defection and apostacy from it; in which covenant he would be their God, and take them for his people, and have the relation avowed and made visible to all the world, that he and they were thus related to one another. These things you may find at large in the several chapters mentioned; importing all the favour that we could suppose any way conducible to make a people happy. And indeed the same thing is compendiously and summarily held forth in the words of the text themselves: "Neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God." We cannot in few words have a fuller account given of a happy state. To consider these words themselves; the contents of them are, 1. A gracious prediction: "Neither will I hide my face any more from them:" a prediction, or prophetic promise, or a promissory prophecy of a most happy state: and, 2. The reason given hereof, why God would provide that all things should be well with them in other respects: "For I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God."

There are two things, that must be the matter of a little previous inquiry, in order to our taking up what we are to insist upon from this Scripture;—1. The import of this negative expression, "Neither will I hide my face any more from them;" and,—2. How we are to understand the subject of the promised favour here, as it is designed by this name, "the house of Israel."—These things being cleared, the matters that I intend to recommend to you and insist upon, will plainly result.

I. As to the former, what this negative expression should mean, "Neither will I hide my face any more from them." It is needful, that we may understand that, to know what the Scripture doth often mean, and may well be supposed to mean here, by "the face of God." It is very plain, that it frequently means his providential appearances, or the aspect of providence one way or another. And thus we are more frequently to understand it, when it is spoken of in reference to a community, or the collective body of a people; yea, and sometimes, when in reference to particular persons too. And hence it will easily appear, how we are to take the opposite expressions, of his "making his face to shine;" or of his "hiding, or covering, or clouding his face."

It appears from sundry scriptures, that by his—showing his face,—or letting it be seen,—giving the sight of it, or—causing his face to shine, giving the pleasant sight of it, or—lifting up the light of his countenance,—(expressions of the same import,) the favourable aspect of providence is to be understood; when these expressions are used, as I said, more especially in reference to the collective body of a people. And so the hiding of his face, signifies as much as the change of these more favourable aspects of providence, for those that are more severe, and that do import anger and displeasure. For so, by the aspects and appearances of providence, it is to be understood, whether God be propitious and favourably inclined toward a people, or whether he be displeased and have a controversy with them: as it may be discerned in the face of a man, whether he be pleased or displeased. Wherefore you have anger and severity, which uses to be signified by providence, and as it is so signified held forth to us under this same phrase or form of speech, Deut. xxxi. 18. I will surely hide my face in that day, for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods. See what the expression there is exegetical of, or with what other phrases it is joined, as manifestly intending the same thing; such as, his anger being kindled against them, and his forsaking them. It is interserted among such expressions again and again. So ver. 17. My anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them; and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us? In the same sense the word is used, chap. xxxii. 20., and in many other scriptures, in reference to bodies of men. And sometimes in reference to a particular person; as in Job xxxiv. 29. When he gives quietness, who shall give trouble? and when he hides his face, who shall behold him? Who dare behold him, when clouds and frowns do eclipse that bright and pleasant light of his countenance before lift up, whether it be against a nation or a particular person? as there Elihu speaks. And he had been speaking before of the acts of providence, in lifting up and casting down at his pleasure, and according as men's ways and deportment towards him in this kind or that did make it most suitable and fit. And therefore also the church, being represented as in a very afflictive condition, exposed to the insultations of tyrannous enemies, and having suffered very hard and grievous things from them; this is the petition that is put up in the case, Turn us, and cause thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved, Psal. lxxx. 3, 19.

Therefore it is obvious to collect, what the like expression here must mean; "Neither will I hide my face any more from them." It must mean, that he would put them into a prosperous condition; the course of his providence

* Preached May 8th, 1678.

toward them should be such as would import favour and kindness to them. And, "Neither will I hide my face any more from them," imports the permanency and settledness of this happy and prosperous state; that it should not be a short, lucid interval only; but through a very considerable and continued tract of time this should be the posture and course of his providence towards them. And then,

II. For the subject of this promised favour, as it is designed here by the expression, "The house of Israel."

1. I doubt not but that it hath a meaning included, as it is literally taken, of that very people wont to be known by that name, "The house of Israel," the seed of Jacob.

2. But I as little doubt, that it hath a further meaning too. And it is an obvious observation, than which none more obvious, that the universal church, even of the Gospel constitution, is frequently in the prophetical scriptures of the Old Testament represented by this, and by the equivalent names of Jerusalem and Zion, and the like. And the reason was as obvious as the thing itself; for they were the church of God, that people, and they who were proselyted to them: and the prophecies of the Old Testament we know were first and most immediately directed to them; and were more likely to be regarded by them, by how much the more the church, whom these prophecies did concern, was more constantly designed or set forth by their own name. It invited them to look towards the great things represented and held forth in these prophecies, as things wherein they had a special concern, and wherein their interest was bound up; though they had no reason to think, that they were things appropriate to them. And we find, that in the New Testament too the name is retained: "All are not Israel that are of Israel. He is not a Jew that is one outwardly:" he means certainly a Christian. "I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not." Rom. ii. 28. Rev. ii. 9. And we have little reason to doubt, and there will be occasion to make it more apparent hereafter, that so we are to explain the signification of this name here; not to exclude the natural Israelites, but also to include the universal Christian church.

These things being thus far cleared, the ground will be plain upon which to recommend to you a twofold truth from these words; *viz.*—First, That there is a state of permanent serenity and happiness appointed for the universal church of Christ upon earth.—Secondly, that the immediate original and cause of that felicity and happy state, is a large and general effusion or pouring forth of the Spirit. —It is the latter of these that I principally intend, and shall speak more briefly to the former.

But before I speak distinctly and severally to either of them, I shall do what is not usual with me; that is, entertain you a while with somewhat of a preface, to give you therein an account in reference to both, and of the whole of the intended discourse upon this subject, what I design, and upon what score I think it useful and proper, that such a matter, as this is, be entertained into your consideration and my own. Herein I shall, 1st, lay before you sundry things obvious unto the consideration of considering persons, that will serve for some representation of the state of the Christian church hitherto, and at this time, and as it may continue to be for some time hence. And then, 2dly, shall show you in some other particulars, what it is reasonable should be designed and expected in a discourse of this nature, and upon such a subject as this is, in way of accommodation to such a state of the case?

I. As to the former; these things I reckon very obvious to such as are of considering minds.

1. That the state of the Christian church hath been for the most part very calamitous and sad all along hitherto, in external respects. You know it was eminently so in the time of the first forming of the Christian church. The Christian name was a name every where spoken against; and they, that delivered themselves up to Christ, delivered themselves up to all manner of troubles and persecutions, even upon his account and for his name's sake. He foretold it unto his more immediate followers, that for his name they should be hated of all men; and they were to expect the most malignant hatred; and he told them too of the effects agreeable and suitable to such a principle. The church was externally miserable in the first ages of it by persecutions from without: and after it arrived to a state of some tranquillity and peace, by the favour of the world and its more gentle aspect upon it; after there was an emperor of the Christian religion, that would own and patronize it against the rage and fury that it was pursued with before; then it soon bred trouble enough within itself, and grew factious and divided, and broken into parts, pestered with heresies, and filled with varieties of contending opinions and sects; and then these were continually the authors of troubles to one another, according as one or another could get opportunity to grasp power into its hand. This hath been the state of things with it all along, though there have been some more quiet intervals here and there, in this or that part of the Christian world. It can hardly be said, the church hath ever had any considerable season of tranquillity and serenity, universally, and all at once, even in any time.

2. It is more obvious, as we may suppose, unto the most, that the state of the church is externally very miserable and sad at this time. Those, that understand any thing of the world, cannot but know so much; and we need not to except that part of the church at home, as you all well enough know. In other countries Christians are rolling and weltering in one another's blood; and you know the shattered state of things within ourselves.

3. By the present posture of affairs, the position and aspect of things, we cannot say that matters are in a tendency unto a better state; but have rather reason to fear, that all will grow worse and worse. Clouds gather and thicken, and grows blacker and blacker, and spread far and wide over the church of Christ in the world, and are very likely to discharge into very tremendous storms: according to human probabilities and experience nothing else is to be expected.

4. It is to be observed too, that there hath long been a retraction in a very great measure of the Spirit from the church. There was a gradual retraction soon after that large effusion of it at first in the apostle's days; unto which in Acts ii. we find by Peter that scripture in Joel applied, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." Then they said it had its accomplishment; though I doubt not it is to have another and fuller accomplishment; as it is no unusual thing for the same prophetic scripture to be said to be fulfilled again and again; as that passage, "Out of Egypt I have recalled my Son," applied to the people of Israel and to Christ. A long continued retraction there hath been of that Spirit, which is the very life of that body; whose work and business it is to act and animate it in every part. We are not now inquiring concerning the cause of the retraction. Much must be referred to sovereign pleasure, more to justice: for undoubtedly God hath proceeded according to the tenor of his own rule, I will be with you, as long as you are with me; and he did never in any degree leave his people first, that bare his name. Union always begins on his part; breaches on ours. But notwithstanding that so large effusion of the Spirit at first, when the Gospel light first dawned upon the world, and that pleasant spring of the Christian interest and religion that then appeared and showed itself; how gradual was the languor, that set it a fainting and withering by steps and degrees, very discernible to those that look upon the histories of former days! Though yet the life and vigour was still much preserved, as long as the church was in a suffering state from without by the persecution of pagan-ish enemies; as we know it was, for the three first centuries and more, in some degree and in some part of it.

But after once the world came to cast more benign aspects upon it, how soon did the life and vigour of the Christian church evaporate and expire? So as that there seemed to be a body left in a great measure destitute of a soul: to allude to the expression that the prophet Jeremiah uses to the people of Israel, "Be instructed, lest my soul depart from you." The very soul of the church was in a great measure departed; departed unto that degree, that it was become such a mere piece of formality, that another religion takes the advantage to vie with the Christian; the most fabulous, the most vain, the most despicable, that could be invented; and of the most despicable original, from Mahomet, a mean, inconsiderable, ignorant, illiterate

man; but a common soldier at the first, and yet the author of a religion so vastly spread in the world as it is at this day, and even so as to eat out Christianity in so considerable parts where it had obtained and taken place. This was argument enough of a great retraction of that Spirit, that made the Christian church and religion, while it was more visibly breathing, a mighty, majestic, awful, commanding thing.

About that time, when the apostacy in the Christian church became more visible, and the usurpation of the man of sin more explicit and avowed; that is, when Boniface the third obtained from Phocas the emperor the grant of the primacy; about that very time, within sixteen years after, was the Alcoran framed. When the church was become so despicable, when the Christian religion was but a formality and shadow, then was the time to set up this despicable religion; and nothing more despicable could have been set up. Yet at a strange rate it hath vied, so as to carry against the Christian interest the cause so far, and unto so great a degree, and for so long a time.

And then, for the first setting up of that religion, a time was chosen by Satan on purpose. As the church history of those times doth acquaint us, there was nobody to make opposition to the Mahometan dotages and deliirations. In the Eastern church they were all busy in propagating such and such opinions, that they were contending about, on the one hand and the other, amongst themselves. And in the Western churches they were all engaged generally, and so very busy in inventing, new forms and ceremonies and rites, that there was no body at leisure, not any of the doctors in the church to be found, (as the history tells us,) to make any opposition, or write any thing against the dotages of Mahometanism, that then first began to appear.

Afterwards, into how strange a darkness and stupidity did the Christian church and interest and religion sink! so that for several ages together there was an utter vacancy and destitution, not only of divine, but of all common human knowledge: nothing but the grossest and most horrid barbarism, that spread itself through the Christian church. And it was bad, if we may not say worse, through the pride and tyranny of those that took upon them to be governors in the church; and the viciousness, immorality, and sensuality, and all other kinds of wickedness, that abounded among the vulgar common sort. And so it continued, till some later stirrings and efforts towards reformation: which, how partial they have been, that is, in how small a part, and how imperfect and incomplete where they have been, and what recedations there have been, where any thing hath been effected and done in that kind; those who know any thing of former and foreign affairs cannot but understand.

And even now at this day, to cast our eyes round about us, whether we take nearer or more remote views, alas! how little, how little is there to be discerned of the true spirit of Christianity! Yea, how much, that speaks the very opposite thereunto, the spirit of the world! A spirit of malignity, that is working, and striving, and contending every where, and lurking under the profession, the usurped and abused profession, of the Christian name! So that, to speak as the truth of the matter is, a Christian is become but just like another man, and the Christian church just like the rest of the world. Christianity hath put on the garb of Paganism in worship in a great part of it; in manners and conversation in the most part, the far greater part.

5. It is to be observed and considered too, that we are still encountered with this two-fold evil *at once* and *in conjunction*, wheresoever we cast our eye; that is, the state of the church eternally calamitous and miserable, and the retraction of the Spirit; and the former of these still caused by the latter. This is very observable too, that these two things are in a connexion, and conjunct.

6. It is to be considered further, that we are much more apt to be sensible of the effect, than of the cause; whether we hear of such effects abroad, or whether we feel or fear them at home. If we hear of great devastations of countries, towns sacked, battles fought, blood spilt, barbarous usages, and acts of violence done; we are struck with a smarter and quicker sense upon the report of these things, than if we be made to understand, how the religion of Christians doth languish every where; or when we hear of the prevailing of pride and anger, and malice and contention; or of formality, deadness, indifferency, lukewarmness in the things of God. That is, the evils that are caused, affect us a great deal more, than those that we are to reflect upon as the cause, and which are all comprehended in that one cause, the retraction of the Spirit, or that it is in so great a measure retired and withdrawn.

7. It is to be considered too, (as pursuant unto that last note,) that we are a great deal more apt to covet a state of external prosperity for the church, than the effusion and communication of the Spirit, and those things which would be the most direct issues and effects of that. Let us deal with our own hearts about this matter, and consider, whether we be not more taken, and it do not far more highly please our imagination, to represent to ourselves, or to have represented, a state of external tranquillity and prosperity to the church, wherein we think to have a part or share, or may have; than to have a representation made of such a state of things, wherein the life and power of godliness, the mortification of sensual lusts, eminent self-denial, and the serious intending and designing for heaven, should be things visible and conspicuous in every one's eye. Let us consider, whether the former of these do not take our hearts a great deal more than the latter, if it be not more pleasing and grateful to our thoughts. And again,

8. It is to be considered also, that many are apt to mistake, and to take wrong measures of the Christian church, and the Christian interest, and the Spirit that breathes in and animates that church: that is, to reduce all these to the measure of this or that party, to which they have thought fit to addict themselves; and to judge it goes well or ill with the church, according as it goes well or ill with their own party; and to judge there is more or less of the Spirit, as there is more or less zeal for the propugning the interest of that party: and so the measures of the church and the Christian interest are mistaken; but especially the Spirit of Christ most of all mistaken and misapprehended. The heats and fervours which some have for a private, little, narrow interest of their own, are taken for that great, large, universalizing Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, that in all communications works with the greatest sweetness and benignity, and disposes the spirit of a man answerably herein to itself.

9. It is to be considered, that we are more apt to confine and limit our eye and thoughts unto what is present, than to extend them to what is future; whether the present state of things be good or bad, pleasing to us or unpleasing. For if the state of things be good, and such as pleases us, then we think a change will never come; our mountain is so strong, as never to be removed: and if it be bad, we are as apt to despond, that things must be always just as they are now, that it can never be better.

10. Those that do look forward unto what is future, if there be any representation set before them, any prospect of what is more pleasing and grateful to them, are more apt to be curious about the circumstances of such an expected state, than to be serious in minding the substantials that do belong to that state itself. And that vain curiosity to inquire, joined with an overmuch boldness in some persons to determine about the times and seasons, when such and such things shall be, hath certainly been no small prejudice unto the interest of the Christian religion in our days, upon a twofold account. The disappointment hath dashed the hopes of many of the better sort, and confirmed the atheism of those of the worst sort. Those of the better sort many of them that have allowed themselves to be so curious and bold, curious in their inquiries, and bold in their definitions and determinations; when they have found themselves disappointed, have been apt to conclude concerning all the concernments of religion, as concerning those wherein they have found themselves disappointed; as thinking, that their imagination was as true as the Gospel about these things: and so, if they have not undergone the shock of a temptation to adhere more easily and loosely unto the Christian profession upon account of such disappointments, yet at least their spirits have been as it were sunk into despondency, because they relied upon false grounds, and which could not sustain a rational hope. And then the atheists and infidels have been highly confirmed in their scepticism and atheism, because such and

such have been so confident of things, wherein they have been mistaken; and because they pretended to have their ground for their belief and expectation out of the Scriptures, therefore those Scriptures must sure signify nothing.

These things being considered, and we having the case so before us, as these things taken together do represent it; then,

II. That, which is reasonable to be designed and expected in discourses of this nature, and concerning such a subject as we have here before us, should be comprised within such particulars as these.

1. To establish the belief of this thing in the substance of it, being a thing so very plain in the Scripture; that there shall be a permanent state of tranquillity and prosperity unto the church of Christ on earth. So much, I doubt not, we have a sufficient ground for, in the word of truth, and even in this very prophecy which this Scripture hath relation to; as we may have occasion further to show.

2. To settle the apprehension fully, (that we should aim at on both sides; I in speaking, and you in hearing,) of the connexion between an external prosperity, and this internal flourishing of religion in the church, by the communication of the Holy Ghost in larger and fuller measures of it: the connexion of these with one another reciprocally, so as that there can never be an externally happy state unto the church without that communication of the Spirit; and that with it there cannot but be, if we speak of the freeing of it from intestine troubles, which will be the only things that it shall be liable to annoyance from in all likelihood in a further course and tract of time.

Take the former part of this connexion, that is,—that without such a communication of the Spirit an external state of tranquillity and prosperity to the church can never be;—we should design the fixing of this apprehension well: for certainly they are but vain expectations, fond wishes, to look for such prosperity without reference unto that large and general communication of the Spirit. Experience hath done very much in several parts of the world, if we had no prospect nearer us, to discover and refute the folly of any such hope, that any external good state of things can make the church happy. How apparent is it, that if there should be never so much a favourable aspect of time, yet if men are left to their own spirits, and acted only by them, all the business will presently be for one person to endeavour to lurch another, and to grasp and get power in their hands! and then they will presently run into sensuality, or make it their business to serve carnal and secular interests, grasping at this world, mingled with the spirit of it. Thus it cannot but be, it must be, if an effusion of the Spirit be not conjunct in time with any such external smiles of time. There can be no good time unto the church of God, without the giving of another Spirit, his own Spirit. That, or nothing, must make the church happy.

And that cannot but do it; which is the other side of the connexion. For let us but recount with ourselves, what it must needs be, when such a spirit shall be poured forth, as by which all shall be disposed and inclined to love God, and to devote themselves to him, and to serve his interest, and to love one another as themselves, and each one to rejoice in another's welfare, so as that the good and advantage of one shall be the joy and delight of all! when men shall have no designs one upon another, no endeavours of tripping up one another's heels, nor of raising themselves upon one another's ruins! This cannot but infer a good state of things, excepting what may be from external enemies. It is true indeed, that when there was the largest communication of the Spirit that ever was in the church, yet it was molested by pagans: but then it was not troublesome in itself, it did not contend part by part with itself. And if the communication of the Spirit, as we have reason to expect in the latter days, be very general, so as not only to improve and heighten the church in respect of internal liveliness and vigour; but also to increase it in extent, as no doubt it will; then less of trouble is to be feared from without. But we shall still be miserable, and it cannot be avoided but we must be so, if with the smiles of the times a large communication of the Spirit be not conjunct. It is also to be designed in such a discourse,

3. To mind more what is substantial in that good state of things, whereof we speak, than the circumstances that belong thereto; and especially than the time and season, when it may be hoped any such good state of things shall commence. And that we may be taken off from too much busying ourselves about that, I shall shut up all with two or three considerations: As,

1st, That to have our minds and hearts more set upon the best state of things that it is possible the church should ever arrive to on earth, than upon the state of perfect felicity above, is a very great distemper, and which we ought to reckon intolerable by any means to indulge ourselves in. We know, none of us can live in this world but a little while; and that there is a state of perfect rest and tranquillity and glory remaining for the people of God. We have therefore no pretence for being curious in our inquiries about what time such or such good things may fall out to the church of God in this world. It is a great piece of fondness to cast in our own thoughts, Is it possible that I may live to see it? For ought we know, there may be but a hand's breadth between us and glory, if we belong to God; to-morrow may be the time of our translation. We ought to live in the continual expectation of dying, and of coming to a better state than the church can ever be in here. It argues a great infirmity, a distemper in our spirits, that we should reflect upon with severity, if we should be more curious to see a good state of things in this world, than to see the best that can ever be, and infinitely better than we can think, in heaven. And,

2dly, That, as for that part of the good condition of the church, which consists in the communication of the Spirit; so much of it as is necessary for us we may have at any time, if we be not wanting to ourselves, and are of those that belong to God, any of that seed that by this Spirit have been raised up to Christ. It must be our fault, if we have not so much of the Spirit as is requisite for our comfortable walking with God in this world. And I add hereupon,

3dly, That that which is common to all times, yea, and common both to time and eternity, certainly ought to be the greatest thing with us, and upon which our hearts should be most set. Let us but be intent upon this, to get a large measure of the Spirit into our own souls; this may be had at any time, if we do not neglect ourselves and the rules that God hath set us: and this is a thing common to time and eternity. They that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, Gal. vi. 8. And therefore look we upon things according to the proper importance of them, and what they carry in themselves. Sure I am, that without much of the Spirit all the best things that this world can afford me will never do me the least good: I may be a great deal the worse for them, but never a whit the better. But if I have much of this Spirit, things can never go ill with me; I shall be carried through whatever hardships shall fall to my share, and be within the compass of my lot, while I am in this world, and never regret the thought of them, when once I arrive to the other shore; but forget all these troubles, like the waters that pass away, as the expression is in Job xi. 16.

SERMON II.*

Such things having been forelaid, we may adventure to enter upon the consideration of the former of the truths proposed, *viz.*—That there is a state of tranquillity and prosperity appointed for the church of God, for some considerable tract of time here in this world.—And concerning that, there are two things that I shall labour to evince to you: 1. That it is a very happy and prosperous state, which these words do manifestly import and refer unto; and, 2. That that state is yet future; or that what is here predicted concerning it is not yet fulfilled.

I. That it is a very happy state of things that is here

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referred unto, is plain from the very import of the words of the text. "Neither will I hide my face any more from them." What can we conceive desirable, which these expressions may not be understood to signify? But if we understand them to signify only a state of external prosperity, (and because any further meaning, which the words in themselves might admit of, is fully carried under the other expression of his pouring out his Spirit; and that is made casual of this, and nothing can be a cause to itself; therefore we do understand them only of outward prosperity,) yet surely that must be a very happy and prosperous state, which such an expression is chosen to signify; that God will shine upon them with most benign aspects of providence. What can go amiss with a people, upon whom he doth so?

And if we consider the reference of these words unto what goes before, and the place which they have in that series of discourse with which they stand connected, and wherein they make a part; it will be very evident upon review, that they have reference to a very happy state of things foretold. If you consider the whole book of these prophecies, you will find, that any thing consolatory unto this people, directly and properly said to them, except what is occasionally here and there let fall, doth but begin with the 36th chapter. The former chapters of this book are either full of reprehensions or comminations of the people; the first tweaty-four chapters are generally taken up so; or else in predictions of judgments and vengeance upon their enemies; (which doth collaterally and on the by import favour to them;) the Edomites, and the Egyptians, and the Amorites, the Moabites, the Philistines, the Tyrians, and the Sidonians. Sundry of the following chapters after the twenty-four first are taken up so. But these four lying here all connected together, (the 36th, 37th, 38th, and 39th,) are wholly taken up in comfortable predictions unto this people, speaking of their happy state in themselves; though also the destruction of such enemies, as did most stand in the way of that promised felicity, is here and there interserted. And then all the following chapters, the 40th, and the rest to the end, are a continued prophetical and emblematical description of the settled happy state, wherein they should be, after they were restored; as in the description of the meaning and building of the city and temple you see at large. And if we should go to point out particulars to you, you will find, that such as these do properly and fully lie up and down in these chapters that I have mentioned, and which seem to be all of a piece congenerous unto one another.

1. Their redneton from their captivity; that they shall all be brought back and gathered out of the several heathen nations of the world, where they were scattered and dispersed to and fro.

2. The reparation of all desolation, the great building of their wasted cities.

3. The great fruitfulness of their land. I will not direct you to the particular passages, where these things are mentioned; but you may at your leisure view over these chapters, and you will find them all.

4. The great multiplication and numerousness of their inhabitants.

5. Their most entire victory and conquest over their most potent and troublesome enemies.

6. Their entire union among themselves, under one king; as you may see in the 37th chapter. The making of that scattered people entirely one, that so divided people, so broken from themselves, Israel and Judah, one stick in God's own hand. And,

7. God's owning them visibly as his people, and taking them anew into covenant with himself, having pardoned their iniquities, and cleansed them from all their filthiness and their idols, and so restored the relation between himself and them. Certainly the concurrence of all these things cannot but make a very happy state.

II. That such a state of things is yet future, requires to be somewhat more at large insisted on. And for the evincing of it, it is manifest that such predictions must have a signification in reference unto the people of Israel, according to one understanding or another of that term or name, "the house of Israel." And we can have but these two senses to reflect upon; either that it must mean Jacob's natural seed; or else the church of God in the world in common, his universal church, including and comprehending such of Israel as have been, or at any time shall be, called, and brought within the compass of the Christian church. Now take either of these senses of that compellation, and I suppose it capable of being plainly enough evinced, that such a happy state of things hath not been as yet, and therefore is to be looked upon as still future.

1. If you take Israel in the former sense, it is very plain that these prophecies have not been accomplished to the natural seed of Israel. Particularly,

1st, That people have never been entirely restored to their own land. The prophecy concerning the dry bones that should be made to live, in chap. xxxvii. is expressly said to concern the whole house of Israel, ver. 11. But it is plain, that the whole house of Israel in the literal sense hath not been restored. What became of the ten tribes we do not know. This is a thing about which there is much dissentation; but none that I can tell are able to determine where or in what part of the world they are. It is true indeed that we find the apostle speaking of the piety of the twelve tribes, Acts xxvi. 7. Our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come unto the promise of the resurrection. But that can only be understood to mean, either that Salmanazer, when he carried away the ten tribes, left some; and yet it is plain that he left very few, insomuch that the new inhabitants wanted some to instruct them in the manner of the worship of the God of the land; or that some few might return of the several tribes, here and there one. But that they returned in a body, we have no reason at all to think; and so this prophecy hath not been fulfilled in reference to the main body of the ten tribes, concerning their restitution, and that resurrection that is imported by the enlivening into living men those dry bones.

2ndly. That people have never been reunited into one people, the two tribes and the ten. But that is expressly predicted in the prophecy of the two sticks made one, Ephraim or Joseph, and Judah. The prophet is directed to take two sticks, (chap. xxxvii.) emblematically to signify that twofold people, of the ten tribes, and the two tribes, and these sticks are represented to him as made one: and the Lord tells him the signification of the prophecy is this, that he would make these two entirely one people. It is plain, whatever there were of the ten tribes that did return from their captivity, they never came into a union with the two; but they were so much divided from one another, even in the matter of religion, that we see by what is recorded in John iv. that a Samaritan woman made a scruple to give a little water unto one whom she took for a Jew, that is, our Saviour himself. And they were so much divided upon other accounts, consequently upon that division in reference to matters of religion, that, as one of the heathen poets says, they would not so much as show the way to one that was not of their religion; *Non monstrare vias, eadem nisi sacra colenti.*

3dly, There hath been no such signal destruction of their enemies, as is here foretold, in the chapter where the text lies, and the foregoing; those enemies that are spoken of under the name of Gog and Magog. I shall not trouble you with the variety of opinions concerning the proper signification of those names, and the people designed by them; but whosoever can be understood by them, there hath been no such thing accomplished in reference to the house of Israel literally taken, as the prophecy of so great a destruction doth import. Some have thought the successors of Seleucus, expressly and chiefly Antiochus Epiphanes, to be meant; against whom the people of Israel were successful in their wars at some times. But no such destruction, as comes any whit near the terms of this prophecy, can ever be understood to have befallen those enemies. There is not the least shadow nor footstep of such a way of destruction, as is mentioned in chap. xxxviii. That they should be destroyed miraculously, by hailstones, by fire and brimstone, (ver. 22.) that there should be such vast multitudes destroyed, as that the very weapons should serve this people for fuel seven years together, chap. xxxix. 9, 10. Certainly take Israel in the literal sense, and understand the prediction in a propor-

tionable sense, there hath been no such thing ever yet done and past.

4thly, There hath been no such city built, and no such temple raised, as will answer the descriptions in these prophecies; as is most apparent, if you look from the 40th chapter onward to the end. Especially, that there should be such waters issuing from the temple, rising from the sanctuary, and carried in a great river, till at last it comes, after so vast a course and tract of running, to fall into the Dead sea, and to heal those waters. Take this in the literal sense, and no such thing hath ever been, or, for aught I know, is ever like to be; it is very improbable it should. So little reason there is, either to think there hath been any literal accomplishment of these things, or that the literal sense is that whereunto we are to adhere.

5thly, It is expressly said, that they should all have David to be their king, chap. xxxvii. 24, 25. This cannot be meant literally. It was impossible he should be their king, that was dead so many hundred years before. Nor can we understand the prophecy to have been accomplished in reference to Israel literally taken; for suppose you take David to mean Christ, as it must be taken, sure all Israel are not yet become Christians, they are not yet united under Christ. And therefore it is more than evident, that according to the literal sense of Israel, though we should take the things prophesied not strictly in the literal sense, yet they cannot be understood to have had their accomplishment yet.

2. If we go the other way, and take Israel to signify the Christian church, and so not to exclude, but to comprehend, Israel in the proper, natural, literal sense, being become Christians, so many of them as have been so, or shall be so; so these prophecies have not yet been fulfilled. That is, in reference to the universal church, it will appear, that it hath had no such happy state as these prophecies do amount unto; neither in point of degree, nor in point of duration and permanency.

1st, They have not had a happy state unto that degree, that is imported in these prophecies, and which even the text itself doth summarily import. There are especially these three things to concur: 1. The destruction of their external enemies; 2. A very peaceful, composed, united state of things among themselves; and, 3. A very lively, vigorous state of religion. Now a state composed and made up of the concurrence of these three, hath not befallen unto the church of God as yet. There hath been no such destruction of their external enemies, as can be understood to amount to the meaning of what is here predicted concerning that; no such victory obtained, as this destruction of Gog and Magog doth import; no such, as the success and issue of that famous battle of Armageddon, which some would have to be past; though there is, after that, a later destruction of Gog and Magog manifestly spoken of in the 20th of the Revelations. But for such, as would have that famous battle to be already past; that which they pitch upon as most probable, was that great battle between Constantine and Maxentius; the victory of the former over the latter by less than an 100,000 men, against the other opposing him with almost double that number. And it must be acknowledged, that that was a very great victory, and of very great concernment unto the Christian church; but no way at all correspondent, either unto what is foretold concerning the thing itself in these prophecies of Ezekiel; or unto the consequent events upon what is said of the battle of Armageddon, in Rev. xvi. 16. There was no such continued peaceful state, that did ensue to the church after that victory. There was indeed a calm and serenity in Constantine's time, mixed with a great deal of internal trouble within the church itself, and which increased upon it more afterwards, and so still unto greater degrees for several centuries of years; as we shall have occasion to take notice more upon another head. There was no such flourishing state of religion that did ensue, answerable to the expression of the text, "I have poured out my Spirit upon them, saith the Lord God." And so there was not a happy state, made up by the conjunction and concurrence of the things which must concur. There was in Constantine's time, and after, much of tranquillity, by the cessation of persecution from without; but there was less of the life and vigour and power of religion. That appeared a great deal more eminently in the suffering state and condition of the church; and prosperity was too hard for religion, much more than adversity had been; as all, that know any thing of the history of those times, know. There hath been no such eminent destruction of the church's enemies; no such internal tranquillity and peace within the church itself; no such lively vigorous flourishing state of religion by the pouring forth of the Spirit; there hath been no such concurrence of these, as to make up that measure and degree of happiness to the church, that is here plainly foretold.

2dly, For the permanency and duration of such a happy state of things, it is apparent, that they fall unspeakably short of making any thing out to that purpose, who would have the things to be past that are here spoken of. It is a duration of a thousand years; that seems referred unto as the measure of that happy state that is here foretold; if you compare these prophecies of Ezekiel with those that seem so very much akin to them in the book of the Revelations, especially the 20th chapter. Even those, that would have these things to be past, do acknowledge these prophecies to refer unto one time and one state, unto one sort of enemies, and unto the church of God considered under one and the same notion, that is, the Christian church. But the difficulty is very great to assign the beginning, and consequently the period, of such a thousand years.

For my own part, I will not assert any of these following things. Either, 1. That that thousand years doth precisely and punctually mean such a limited interval of time; however more probable it may seem that it doth so, and though it be confessed to do so by them that would have these things to be past. Nor, 2. That Christ shall personally appear, as some are bold to assert, at the battle of Armageddon; and that he shall personally reign afterwards upon the earth for a thousand years. Nor, 3. That there will be any resurrection, before that time do commence, of the bodies of departed saints. Nor, 4. That the happiness of that time shall consist in sensual enjoyments; which was the conceit of Cerinthus and his followers; and which caused the Millenaries to pass under the name of so odious a sect of old, by those who had taken notice of them, Epiphanius, and Austin after him, and others; for they reckoned the felicity of those times should very much consist in a voluptuous life, that persons should have every thing to the full that should be grateful to their sense, all opportunity to indulge appetite, and the like. And least of all, 5. That in this state of things the saints, as such, shall have any power or right given them in the properties of other men; or that there shall be a disturbing and overturning of ranks and orders in civil societies. I don't think, that any of these things are confidently to be asserted; and for the two last, they carry no other face, than of things to be abhorred and detested.

But I conceive that thousand years to intend a very long and considerable interval or tract of time, wherein the state and condition of the church shall be peaceful and serene and happy; but especially, (as we shall have occasion more to show hereafter,) by a large communication of the Holy Ghost, that shall make men have very little mind to this world, and very little seek such a thing as serving secular interests, and pleasing and gratifying their senses and sensual inclinations.

And that this state of things is not yet past. So much, I think, we may with some confidence assert; that is, there is not such a state of things, of such a constitution as that whereof you have heard, that hath been in any such permanency, as that thousand years, though not strictly taken, yet must rationally be understood to signify. They, that would have such a thousand years to be already past, are in very great difficulties about the commencement of it. Some would have it to begin with the beginning of Constantine's reign, and so to end proportionably from that day to a thousand years strictly; for just so much time. And others would place the beginning of that time a considerable while after; a hundred, or a hundred and forty, or a hundred and fifty years after; that is, from the time of the taking and sacking of Rome by Alaricus and his Goths; or by Gensericus and his Vandals; until which destructions, the latter especially, Rome did continue

pagan though the empire was in Christian hands; and that therefore this thousand years, wherein Satan is said to be bound, began after that paganism was quite extirpated and banished from Rome; and yet those that go that way, still more incline to the former account. If so, certainly such things must be acknowledged to have fallen within the compass of the thousand years, as the limits of them are set among themselves, as we would think very ill to agree with a state of things, wherein Satan should be bound. According to the former account, that persecution by Julian must come within it; it is true indeed that was not of long continuance, nor very bloody; but a *nubecula*, (as Athanasius said of it,) that would soon pass over; yet it was a very manifest prejudice that he did to the Christian interest, by those cunning arts he used in his time; far more prejudice, than had been done it by the bloody persecutions of former times; as may sufficiently appear by a view of the state of things in those days, when it was not so much as permitted the children of Christians to be taught any of the learned languages. They were particularly forbidden to be taught the Greek, upon which occasion I remember Gregory Nazianzen hath this expression, "But I hope though we may not speak Greek, we may be allowed to speak truth; and while we may be allowed to do so, as long as we have tongues, we will never forbear speaking." But it was a great check, that was put upon the interest of Christianity by that means; and very unlikely to be so soon after the commencement of the thousand years. And besides that, all the dreadful persecution of the orthodox by the Arians immediately falls in; "who persecuted the orthodox," (as one speaks writing of those times,) "*sævius et durius*, a great deal more harshly, more severely, more horridly, than ever the pagans had done before them; when even all the world was against Athanasius, and he alone was forced to sustain the brunt of the whole world;" very unlike to a time, wherein the devil was bound! And then falls in with the same time that strange and portentous growth of the Mahometan religion; and was that, too, while Satan was bound? And in the Christian church, the greatest tyranny among the church-governors, the greatest stupidity for several centuries of years among the priests and clergy, the greatest viciousness and debauchery among the generality of people, that we can possibly tell how to frame an imagination of. Besides, that within the same compass of time must fall out the bloody massacres of the poor Waldenses, about the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries. Certainly, if all this while Satan was bound, we can never think of a time when he was loose. And therefore, in point of permanency, there hath not been no such continuing happy state to the church, as yet past and over, which these predictions do most plainly refer unto. And therefore we have the thing first proposed I conceive in good measure cleared, that there is a state yet to come of very great tranquillity and prosperity to the church of God for some considerable tract of time.

I cannot now stand to apply this according to what it challenges; these two things I shall only for the present hint to you.

I. This being a matter revealed in the word of God, our faith ought to have an exercise upon it. We should believe, that there is such a state of things yet to come, and have affections raised in our hearts proportionable unto such a revelation. It would be unreasonable to say, that we are to be affected with nothing but what is present, and comes under our notice by way of experience, our own experience, contrary to the temper which Abraham discovered, who rejoiced in the foresight of Christ's day, than so very far off. Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad, John viii. 56. We should foresee such a state of things with gladness; our hearts should be comforted upon the apprehension of it. If we can have no enjoyment of future mercies that are designed unto the church of God, how should there have been any enjoyment of past mercies unto them that have lived long after? We find that to have been the temper of the people of God of old, that they have much enjoyed and lived upon ancient mercies, mercies long ago past; as you may see in such memorials as you have in the 105th and 106th Psalms, and in other places of Scripture. I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High, Psalm lxxvii. 10. What triumphs and exultations do you oftentimes meet with, in the book of Psalms, upon the account of the destruction of Pharaoh and his Egyptians in the Red sea, and the conduct of the people of Israel through the wilderness? Why, if memory will serve to fetch former mercies into our present enjoyment, certainly faith should serve to fetch future mercies into our present enjoyment too, and give us the taste and relish of them.

We should take encouragement hence against the present horrid atheism and wickedness, that doth so affront the interest of religion at this day. We are too much apt to pass our judgment upon things by very undue measures; to judge by the present sight of our own eye, that that is well which we apprehend, or which carries a sensible appearance with it of being well for the present; but to forget, that it is always somewhat future, that must give a determination unto that which is simply best or otherwise; that a judgment is not to pass, till we come to the end of things, till we see what will become of matters in their final issue. There will be a day of distinguishing, even in this world, in point of the external favours of providence, between them that fear the Lord, and them that fear him not. And though now the spirit of atheism be insolent, so as it never was in any age, no not so much in any pagan nation; and that where the Christian name is professed, even amongst ourselves; do we think therefore that atheists and their religion shall carry the cause? No: if we will but frame to ourselves the prospect, which the word of God gives us an advantage and warrant to do, it would guide our judgments much another way; to think, that that must need be the better side and the better part, which shall be successful and prevailing at last. It is most eligible to be on that side which shall finally prosper, when God comes to lay claim to us, to challenge our help in bearing a witness to his name and truth and holy ways: "Come, who will take part with me against an ungodly race of men? Who will be religious in this irreligious age? Who fear God, when it is counted matter of reproach, and an argument of a weak and crazy spirit, for men to fear and dread an invisible Being?" It would help your resolution much, would you think in this case, that there will be a time when God shall be visibly owned in the world, and when it shall cease to be a reproachful thing to be a religious man, a fearer of the Lord.

SERMON III.*

We have spoken already of this proposition,—That there is a state of very great prosperity and tranquillity, for a considerable tract of time, appointed for the church of God on earth.—We have offered several things to assert the truth of it; and made some use of it, to recommend it as a fit object to be entertained by our faith; and that we should take encouragement from it against the prevailing atheism and wickedness of this apostate world, which hath borne so much sway in it through many ages, upon that prospect which this truth gives us, of a time and state of things, wherein it shall cease to be so, wherein religion shall lift up the head, and outface the wickedness of a corrupt and depraved race of men; when this very earth itself, that hath been the state of God's dishonour through so long a tract of time, shall be the state of his glory.

But here some may be apt to say;—"To what purpose is all this, when no hope is given us of seeing any such good state of things in our days? If we are not encouraged to expect, with our own eyes, to see such a happy state of things, had not we as good take all our comforts and encouragements from the expectation of a judgment-day to come, and an eternal state? What doth it signify to have any representation made to us of a good state of things on earth, which we are told it is likely we shall fare never the better for?"

This is a thing that requires to be distinctly discussed; and therefore I shall spend some time upon it.

* Preached May 22, 1673.

1. The exception would lie as much against the putting of any of these things into the Bible, till at least immediately before the time when they should be accomplished and fulfilled. And so it is an insufferable reflection upon the Divine wisdom, that hath thought fit that such an account of things should be given for so long time previous unto their accomplishment or actual taking place. And,

2. It is no prejudice at all, against our receiving encouragement and having our spirits fortified against the atheism of a wicked world by this prospect, that we may receive such encouragement also by the consideration of a judgment to come and an eternal state. For do not we know, that sundry uses may be made of many doctrines, as one and the same truth may be proved by sundry mediums? What prejudice doth it do an honest cause, if one can produce twenty arguments to prove the same truth, and so all result into one conclusion? We reckon the truth is fortified and confirmed by it so much the more. And if there are sundry truths, if never so great a variety of truths, that all meet as it were in one point, and produce the same good frame and temper in our hearts, is that a prejudice to us? I hope it is so much the more an advantage. But that which I shall mostly insist upon is, that—

3. That same question of inquiry, "To what purpose is it, that we should hear of such things, when there is no hope given us to see them, or that they should be brought about in our time?" This question, I say, there is no serious, considering, well-tempered Christian, but is best capable of answering it out of his own heart. He doth but need to consult with his own heart, when he is himself and in his right mind, and he will see enough even out of his own spirit, from whence to answer the inquiry, and to say all that needs to be said in reference to it.

To make that out; it is obvious to our notice, that there are two extremes, (and therefore both of them bad enough, as all extremes naturally are,) from whence any such inquiry can be supposed to proceed. A man may say, "To what purpose is it?" either from stupidity and unconcernedness, as thinking they need not concern themselves about any thing that is not likely to fall within the compass of their own time; or from fretfulness, a vexatious, discontentful temper of spirit, upon having a prospect of such things set before them, as they have no encouragement it may be to think they shall see. Now a sound and good temper and complexion of soul hath that in itself, which would obviate and avoid both these extremes, and let us see sufficient reason for these two things in opposition to them: to wit, 1. The entertainment of such a truth with due complacency, notwithstanding we have no expectation to see the accomplishment of it in our time, supposing we have no such expectation. And, 2. To admit the delay of that accomplishment with composedness and quietude of mind, so as not to be disturbed in our own spirits with that delay, though such things may not receive a speedy and sudden accomplishment according to our desire. The former of these would enable us to make a due use of such a truth as this; and the latter would keep us from abusing it. By the former, we should be enabled to savour and relish it with complacency, and so as to get good out of it; and by the latter, to avoid the getting of hurt, have our hearts fenced and fortified against any prejudicial impressions thereby. Wherefore these two things I shall labour to make out to you, that there are certain principles in every gracious and well-complexioned soul, that will, *first*, enable it to take complacency in such a truth as this, for the substance of it; and that will, *secondly*, compose, so as not to admit of disturbance by the delay of its accomplishment; even notwithstanding it to be supposed that we are never to see it in this world ourselves and with our own eyes.

First, There are such principles as these, that have a tendency to make such a truth savoury to us; notwithstanding it be supposed, that we shall not see it fulfilled in this world ourselves.

1. A principle of self-denial. That will signify a great deal to this purpose. And you will know, there is nothing more deeply radical in the whole frame of practical religion and godliness, than that is. But certainly, if a man be of a self-denying spirit, he will be able to take complacency in somewhat else, than what doth respect his own personal concernments. And is it not a most insufferable thing, if a man should not? What! would I fancy this great world made for me; and that all the mighty wheels of providence, that roll and are kept in motion from time to time, are all moved with reference to me; to give me a gratification and content according to the wish of my heart? What an insolent thing is so private and selfish a spirit as that!

2. A just concern for posterity would make such a truth savoury. And certainly there is no well-tempered soul destitute of that principle. Grace doth in this, as well as it doth in many other things, graft upon the stock of nature. You know it is natural with men, upon a consciousness of mortality and a desire of immortality, when they find they can live no longer in their persons, to desire to live in their posterity, those that shall come after them: and it is a great solace that they naturally take in the hope of doing so. Now when grace comes to graft upon this natural stock, would not the spirit of a man be disposed to take a great solace in the hope and expectation, that those that shall come after him shall live in a better state upon religious accounts, than we have done in our days, or may be likely to do? If such a principle as this be not to obtain and take place and have an influence, what would you make of all the promises that were given to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob concerning their seed, so long before the accomplishment of many of them? What can all these promises signify, but upon the supposition of, and in a way of accommodation to, such a principle? You see how savoury and tasteful what God had told David concerning his house and posterity in aftertimes was to him: he was not so stupid, as not to be moved with any thing of that kind; but he is as a person in an ecstasy, a rapture, upon it, 2 Sam. vii. 19, 20. "Thou hast spoken concerning thy servant's house for a great while to come; and is this the manner of man, O Lord God? And what can David say more unto thee?" It was a great solace to good Jacob, old Israel, when he was now even next to death, to think of what should ensue in reference to his posterity and seed, when he was gone. "I die, (saith he,) but God shall be with you," Gen. xlviii. 21. And do not we think it were a good spirit in ourselves, if we could be of the same mind? Why, though we all die, God shall be with them that succeed! If they shall come into that land, which our eyes shall not behold, what! can we so put off man and Christian both together, as to take no complacency in the forethoughts of what good those that may come after may behold and enjoy, though we enjoy it not. It was a high pleasure, that seems to be expressed in the contemplation of the future good of following generations, by the Psalmist, in Ps. cii. 18. A people, which shall be created, shall praise the Lord. He was very well pleased to think of that, though it were then a time of very great affliction; as you see the title of that psalm doth import; whether the time present, or the time prophesied and foretold of: for the psalm is a prayer of the afflicted, when he pours out his soul to God, as there you have it. While they are languishing in all that affliction and trouble, which they are supposed then to be under; yet they are pleased to think of a generation to come, a people yet to be born, yet to be created, that shall praise God and rejoice in his great goodness.

3. A loyal and dutiful love unto the blessed God himself, and concern for his interest, tends to make such a truth savoury, though the accomplishment of it we may perhaps never see in this world. Was that heart ever touched with a dutiful sense of his interest, that would not be pleased to think of his being glorified highly, upon the same stage where he has been so insolently affronted and provoked for so long a time? It was an inexpressible pleasure, that seems to have gone with such expressions, as these that we sometimes meet with; "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and thy glory above all the earth;" as we find in Psal. cviii. 5. and in many expressions scattered up and down the Scripture of like import. A truly pious soul would be mightily concerned, that God should at one time or other have the just attribution and revenue of glory paid him, which is to arise out of this part of his creation, this lower, lapsed part. Considering now, how mean and low and wretched a place soever this world is, yet it is a part of the creation of God, and there is a revenue of glory due to him out of it; who would not take complacency in the

thoughts of a time, when it shall be gathered up and brought in, when the name of God shall be glorious on the earth, every knee bowing to him, and every tongue confessing to him; that at least it should more generally be so, than it hath hitherto been?

4. A compassionate regard to the souls of men hath still the same tendency to make us relish, with a great deal of pleasure, the forethoughts of such a state; wherein religion, that hath been so much under reproach for so long a tract of time, shall be a creditable thing, lift up the head with honour, and outface insolent atheism and wickedness. If we consider this, as that wherein the souls of men are concerned; it cannot but be highly grateful to us to contemplate such better days to come. For by how manifest experience doth it appear, that such a state of things, wherein religion is a reproach, endangers and ruins multitudes of souls every where? How many are jeered and flouted out of their religion, where there have been only some lighter tinctures of it upon their spirits, or only some half inclinations towards it; while it is reckoned matter of reproach to be a fearer of the great God; when to be a professed devotee unto the Sovereign Majesty of heaven and earth, to avow an awe and dread of invisible powers, is looked upon as an argument of a weak and effeminate mind; and when it goes for pure fanaticism for any to pretend to stand in awe of an invisible Ruler? It is manifest, what multitudes of souls are insnared unto perdition, even by the shame and reproach and fear of men, that religion hath been assaulted with in many ages, but never more than in our own. And is it not grateful and pleasant, to forethink of such a time and state of things, after that the prince of the darkness of this world hath been by such variety of arts and methods imposing upon souls to their ruin; to think, I say, of any time, wherein he shall be bound, and the word of God at liberty, and run and be glorified, without any kind of let or restraint; wherein effectual endeavours shall every where be set afoot for the rescuing of souls from the common ruin? Surely a just and generous love of mankind, refined and spiritualized as it ought to be in all our hearts, would, even upon that account and by its own natural tendency, make the fore-thoughts of such a state of things very grateful; and very much commend such a truth to our acceptance and entertainment; notwithstanding the supposition, that we see the accomplishment of no such thing in our time. But we are to show further, that—

Secondly, There are principles also in every gracious person, that tend to compose his spirit, so as that it shall not be disquieted by the delay of its accomplishment; and so will by this means prevent such a truth from being abused; or procure, that there shall be no evil and hurtful impressions made upon our spirits by it. For of that there is real danger; that, having the prospect of such a state of things before our eyes, and yet no hope that we shall see the accomplishment of it in our own time, vexation and discontent and secret frettings should be provoked thereby. Therefore we will show also, that there are principles contained in a right temper and constitution of soul, that will avoid that great extreme, as well as that of a stupid unconcernedness; and compose us unto a due comporting with the delay of the accomplishment of such things whereof we have the prospect in such predictive scriptures. As,

1. A right and well-complexioned faith concerning these things hath a tendency to make us brook the delay of the accomplishment, without any hurtful resentments of it, so as to be discomposed in our spirits thereby. For it is the nature of such a faith to feed upon the substance of things, and not to exercise itself so much about the minuter matters, and those that are of mere circumstance. That is rather belonging to the mean principle of sense; which can tell how to converse with nothing but what is present, and appears clothed with all the circumstances of a present event. But faith is not so narrow or confined a principle. It can tell how to converse with objects that are in themselves valuable, so as to unclothe them of present circumstances, and to consider them more abstractly as lying in themselves, and to enjoy the real gain that is in them, without limiting or determining them unto this or that time, or such or such other circumstances that do accompany them in their existence. Faith can tell how, while we are here upon earth, to fly to heaven for us, and to walk to and fro in the invisible regions, and to fetch us down comforts and consolations from thence. And if it can forage into all eternity, much more may it into a little future time, so as to fetch us what is relieving and comfortable from thence, according to what such futurity doth contain in it for that purpose. Upon this account we have that property of faith, that character of a believer, Isa. xxviii. 16. "He that believeth, shall not make haste." He that is a serious believer indeed, of the right stamp and kind, will not prematurely catch at things. That faith is not apt to discompose the soul, and put it into a violent and impetuous hurry; but it is its natural effect to compose, to quiet and calm it, to keep it peaceable and sedate, till the events shall be duly seasoned and timed by him who hath all times in his own hand and power. It is very observable, if you consider the substance of that prophecy, which these words of the prophet have a relation to, "I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth, shall not make haste." One would think, that, upon its being understood what that corner-stone meant, the very hint and intimation of such a thing should put all the powers of a soul, that hath the prospect of it, into a present hasty quick working; and that the matter should not admit of a moment's delay, but be presently done: so great a thing as the laying of that corner-stone! But this is said several hundred years beforehand; and yet "he that believeth shall not make haste." He shall enjoy it now by faith, taste the consolation of it; and have his spirit composed unto a willing and peaceful deference, or referring of the matter how this business should be timed, or when it should be brought about, unto him who is the great Lord and Author and Orderer of all things. As apt a thing as Christ's coming in the flesh was to raise desire, and heighten and stir up mighty affection among them that looked for the consolation of Israel; yet "he that believeth shall not make haste."

2. A truly Christian patience. It is the proper business of this to compose a man's soul. In your patience possess ye your own souls, Luke xxi. 19. The work of patience is to make a man master of his own soul; that it shall be in his power, and he shall enjoy himself: for an impatient man is outed, dispossessed of himself: he hath no command of himself. Now patience hath its exercise for keeping us in the possession of ourselves, not only in bearing the afflictions that lie upon us, but in expecting the good things that lie before us and which we have in prospect and view. Hope that is seen, is not hope:—But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it, Rom. viii. 24, 25. Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry, Heb. x. 36, 37. You have need of patience, that you may brook and comport with the delay of his coming, and not count it long. So the apostle James, chap. v. 7, 8. is pressing to patience in reference to the relief that was to be expected at the coming of our Lord; and he tells those to whom he writes, "The husbandman hath long patience, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." It is still drawing nearer and nearer. What coming that is, we shall not now dispute; or how near, or how far off. But he gives them to understand, that while he was not as yet come, they had need of patience, to compose their hearts, and to keep them composed and quiet during the time of their expectation.

3. Weariness of sin will do much to this purpose. If once the body of death be really burdensome to us, and we would fain by any means in the world have the power of sin abated; this will tend to compose us unto a willingness, that God should take any course with us, that according to his estimate and account may most aptly serve that end, to break the power of sin. Well, suppose he thinks this a fitter course for us, instead of letting the sun shine upon us, to make the fire burn round about us; suppose he judge it fitter for us to be under strikings and hammerings in order to the working off our dross, and

heating us into a better form and figure: then a true and real weariness and impatiency of sin would make us contented to be brought to this temper through any course, so it do but weaken and wear sin, and break the power of it more and more. It would make us contented to endure harsher methods for our time, so it will serve that happy end, and beget in us better frames of spirit. For he, that is a far more competent judge than we are, (we have reason to conclude by the event,) doth judge, that such rougher means and courses are more suitable to our state, to help us to that better pitch and temper of spirit, than a prosperous state of things externally would be; such as is meant here by God's not hiding his face. It may be he doth foresee, that we should not know how to comport with such a state of things, that we should grow vain and foolish, earthly and forgetful of him, and never mind the great concerns of religion, when once trouble and calamity left us. If once we be brought heartily to hate sin, and to reckon that the greatest of all imaginable evils; we should be very well contented, that God should use us with whatsoever severity, so that the power of sin may be abated, and a better temper of spirit promoted.

4. A sense of the demerit of sin, would certainly persuade to much composure of mind in such an expectation. He that considers with himself, "I am less than the least of all mercies, and I have deserved not only to be under the continual harassings of severe providence all my days in this world, but I have deserved hell;" may keep his spirit quiet by that means, though he doth not see a prosperous state of things in this world; especially if he have the apprehension withal of pardoning mercy, and the sweet savour and relish of that. He that would be contented to have undergone any, the greatest agonies and distresses whatsoever, so he might but have had the light of God's countenance shining upon him, so he might but see that those agonies and distresses of spirit did open a way unto a more halcyon season for his Spirit, certainly he would well be content to undergo any severities of dispensations in outward respects, and think all well, if God have pardoned his sin, and let fall all controversy with him. And that belongs to a good temper of spirit too, to apprehend sin either actually pardoned, or at least pardonable; that God is reconcilable, if he comply with his terms. And if I can once savour and relish such a thing as that, I may very well forbear indenting and capitulating with him for such a state of things in this world, that would be pleasing and grateful to me.

5. A subject, governable spirit, would contribute very much to keep us composed and quiet under such an expectation and delay: a spirit instructed unto obedience, and that knows how to be under government, and to yield a consent that God should rule. If we can but allow him to bear rule in all the kingdoms of the world, and do what he pleases on earth in his own way and time; if we have our hearts formed unto this, it will certainly make us composed in the expectation of whatever were most grateful to us in this world, or during the delay of bringing such things about for us. We find our Saviour doth with some severity reflect upon his disciples, immediately before his ascension, when they put that curious question to him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" It was an odd notion too, that they had of that kingdom; as appears from other passages. Why, says he, "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power," Acts i. 6, 7. What! are you for wresting the sceptre out of his hands, and will not you allow him the government of the world? Are you not contented he should bear rule? Certainly it is a very ill-tempered spirit, that will quarrel at this, that God is above us, that he hath the ordering and timing of all things in his own hand and power. Therefore a subject, governable spirit must needs be in this case a calm, composed, quiet spirit, unapt to storm and tumultuate, and to admit of any vexatious and unquiet thought, because such things are not done now, or possibly may not be done within our time, that we could wish to see done. You find, that it was indeed a very fervent desire, that Moses had of seeing the land of Canaan. It is worth while to take notice, how he pleads with God upon that account, as he recollects the story himself, Deut. iii. 24, &c. He is relating to the people how he besought the Lord at that time, when the controversy was about that business. "I besought the Lord," says he, "at that time, saying, O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand; for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon." But how is he answered? "But the Lord was wrath with me for your sakes, and would not hear me; and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee, speak no more to me of this matter," I won't be spoken to any more about the matter. And you see afterwards, how contentedly he goes up and dies on this side Jordan. "Go up and die;" and he goes up and dies; there was no more disputing about the business; he was contented to die, and not see that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. Certainly that is a very good contentment in such cases, for the Lord to order what he sees meet unto our lot and portion.

6. A serious diligence in present duty. Whoever have not a disposition of heart to mind the duty of their own time, the business that lies in their hand to do; certainly their temper is not good. But every serious Christian can find himself so much to do, as to have little leisure to entertain himself unto his prejudice with disquieting thoughts concerning what is yet future, whether of good or evil, within the compass of time and of this present lower world. And if it be observed, I doubt not but common experience will give suffrage to it, that they are most apt to let out their spirits extravagantly to mind the concernments of future time unto anxiety, and so as to busy themselves most about them, who have the least mind to be busy about present duties. You know the looser and more careless and licentious Christians, that cannot endure to have their spirits bound and tied down to their work, the work of their present stations, are they that love to be making complaints; Oh! how could I serve God, if I were but in such a time! So liberal are they to him of that which is not in their own power, which is not theirs. It is only the present time is theirs: but they will not serve him with that which they have, the present day. He that understands his work and business as a Christian, that is, to give up himself to prayer, and to a serious watching over his own heart, to the endeavour of preserving a good temper of spirit, or preventing a bad; he that knows what it is to be intent upon the mortifying of corruption, and the quickening and exercising of one and another grace seasonably, and as occasions do invite and call it forth into exercise; such a one we may truly reckon to be very well composed in his own spirit, in reference to what God does or is doing in his time.

7. Familiarity with death is another thing in the temper of a good soul, that will very much compose to a quiet peaceful frame, during the delay of such things as we wish to see in this world, in reference to the prosperous state of the church of God and the interest of religion. Certainly a man is to be reckoned so much the better Christian, by how much the more he is acquainted with the thoughts of dying, and hath made death familiar to himself. Now he that lives conversant about the very brink of the grave, that reckons upon living but a little while here, but is continually expecting his dismission and call into eternity, cannot surely be concerned to any great anxiety of mind, about what shall or shall not come in this world within his time. For such a one would reckon with himself; "Suppose I had never so great assurance, that such and such desirable things shall fall out next year, yet I may die this." No serious person will put death far from him, look upon it as a very distant thing; and therefore such will not be very apt to disquiet themselves with the solicitous expectation of good things on this side, because they will still reckon, death may come between me and that expectation, if it were ever so near.

8. A heavenly frame of spirit will do more than all in this matter. To have the heart much taken up with the thoughts of heaven, and the rest which remains for the people of God, will deliver one from the danger of hurtful impressions by having the prospect of such good things before us in this world, which it may be we shall not live

to see. You read of those worthies in Heb. xi. several of whom had been named in the verses before this which I am about to mention, ver. 13. It is said of them, they all died in faith, not having received the promises; but they saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. And doing so, they that say such things, ver. 14. declare plainly that they seek a country; that it is the affairs of some other country that their hearts and minds are more upon, and therefore that they are not so greatly concerned about the good and evil that they may enjoy or suffer in this country: no, they are seeking a country, knowing that their great concerns did not lie much here. And therefore they confidently died in faith, not having received the promise of such and such things that they had the prospect of; merely through the impression and power that a heavenly spirit had with them, to carry them to follow and mind heaven and the great concernments of the eternal world, that everlasting state of things. And (as was hinted before) it is certainly a most intolerable distemper of spirit, and wherein we are by no means to suffer or indulge ourselves, that there should be a disposition in us to be more pleased and take more complacency in the forethoughts of the best state of things imaginable in this world, than in the forethoughts of heaven, that every way perfect state, unexceptionably perfect. He that can be contented to sin on still, that he may have his imagination gratified here in this world, is certainly under a great distemper, to speak the most gently of it. And how unreasonably preposterous is it, that any should prefer that which is but intermediate, before that which is most ultimately final! Still always that which is best is at last; that state of things is the only unexceptionable state, which is unalterable; that state, which is never to give place to another, is the only state that is entirely and completely good; it is fit, that that only should be so. There is no pretence for a desire of change, in reference to a state perfectly good; and whatsoever state is not perfectly good, it is still always reasonable to expect and desire a better.

Now all these things, I doubt not, you must confess at the very first view do belong to a well-tempered spirit. And if so, it must argue a very ill frame, if there should be any such sickly hankerings after the best things that we can imagine in this world, as that we cannot satisfy ourselves, while we have no hope, or no great reason to hope, that we shall see them to fall out within the compass of our time.

SERMON IV.*

I SHALL add one or two more principles of a Christian spirit to those already mentioned, which cannot but keep our spirits composed in the prospect of a better state of things on earth, though we have little prospect that we shall live to see it.

9. A sincere devotedness to God and to his interest. This will compose, and upon the matter make us indifferent in what time or state of things we live, so it may serve his interest. We have that notion most clear in our minds, that we were not made for ourselves, nor sent into this world upon our own errand; and it can never be well with us, till the temper of our spirits doth correspond and answer to the true light that shines in us, to our light in this particular thing; so as that we hereupon become sincerely devoted and given up to God, as knowing, that this is our errand in this world, to be to him, and to be used by him, for his own purposes and services as he pleases. We well know, it is very reasonable and fit he should have some or other that should own him even in the worst of times; and why not we? What reason can we assign, why we should be the exempted persons? Why we, rather than others, should not serve him in difficulties and exercises, and endure hard things for him, if he will have it so? Unto a frame and state of sincere devotedness to God such a thought will be very familiar, "I am not my own;" and how strange a power would such a thought, seasonably admitted and well placed, have upon our souls, to have them contempered to this apprehension, "I am none of my own?" Sincere devotedness to God is, 1. Absolute and entire, so as to leave us no right in ourselves apart from him; 2. Upon conviction, that it is the highest excellency created nature is capable of, to be in pure subserviency to him; 3. Upon a thorough apprehension, that he is the most competent judge, how every one of us may serve him to the best purpose, and to the most advantage to his interest; and thereupon, 4. It cannot but be accompanied with the highest complacency and pleasure that we are serving him, though we are wasting ourselves in serving him. It cannot but be a matter of high complacency, to be sacrifices consuming in the very flames, on purpose for his glory and pleasure. While we apprehend he is pleased, it is most agreeable to such a temper of spirit to be highly ourselves pleased too. For what, should his pleasure and ours be diverse? And must there be two wills and interests between him and us?

10. A religious prudent fear of misapplying prophecies, or astricting and determining them to this or that point of time, which may not be intended by the Spirit of God. It is certain, there ought to be a religious fear of this, because they are sacred things, and therefore not to be trifled with, or made use of to other purposes than they were meant for; much less to serve mean purposes, to gratify our own curiosity, to please our fancy and imagination. And there ought to be a prudent fear of this, and will be in a well-tempered soul, because of the great hurt and danger that may attend such misapplications.

There are two extremes, that persons are apt to run into, in this matter; either to set such foretold events too far off, or to make them too near; and we are prone to run into one or the other of them, according as the cases vary and are opposite. For suppose it to be either a bad state of things that is foretold, or suppose it a time for doing some duty unto which we are disinclined, then we make the time very remote; put far off the evil day, think the time is not come yet of building the house of God, of being intent upon the duty that is incumbent upon us. But if they be halcyon days, and it be a grateful prospect of things that we have before us; then we are as apt to set it too near, and to catch at these good things prematurely, before they be ripe and ready for us, or we for them. And here lies our danger.

I cannot but recommend to you that remarkable piece of Scripture, in 2 Thess. ii. 1, 2. Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, (or by pretended inspirations,) nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. You shall hardly meet with a more solemn, earnest obtestation in all the Bible, than this is: that is the thing I reckon it so very remarkable for. "I beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;" by what he knew was most dear to them, and the mention whereof would be most taking to their hearts; if you have any kindness for the thoughts of that day, any love for the appearance and coming of our Lord; if ever any such thoughts have been grateful to your hearts: we beseech you by that coming of his, and by your gathering together unto him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, that you do not suffer yourselves to be discomposed by an apprehension, as if the day of Christ were at hand. It may perhaps be thought very strange, why the apostle should lay so mighty a stress upon this matter, to obtest in it so very earnestly. And really I could not but think it exceeding strange, if I could be of the mind, that the coming of Christ here spoken of were only the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, and that the man of sin afterwards spoken of were only meant of Simon Magus and his impostures, the feats that he was at that time supposed and believed to do; which certainly could be things of no such extraordinary concernment unto them, that lived so far off as Thessalonica at that time, and much less to the whole Christian church. But if we consider the thing itself, according to the ordinary notion that is wont to obtain con-

* Preached May 29th, 1678.

cerning this day of our Lord, and the gathering together of all his saints unto him; certainly it was a matter of most extraordinary importance, that it should not be apprehended as at hand. For do but think, what dismal consequences would have ensued, if it should have been so apprehended, as if that blessed state of things were presently to take place, were even at the door. We know what a dreadful apostacy hath come since, hath intervened, and of how long continuance. If this had obtained as a part of the religion of Christians, that the day of the Lord was then at hand; why then,—

1st, How strangely had the Christians of that time been diverted from the proper work and business of their present day? all held at a gaze, and in an amused expectation of the present coming of our Lord?

2dly, What a strange surprise had the afflictions been to them, that did ensue! When they were in a present expectation of nothing but the glorious appearance of their Lord, to have had things come upon them that were of so directly contrary a nature and import! Instead of that, to be presently thrown into a sea of trouble, or into the flames of suffering, how strange a surprise had it been!

3dly, What a despondency of spirit had followed upon their disappointment! How had the Christian hopes every where languished, and their hearts even failed them and died within them! As it was with them not being yet instructed in the constitution and design of Christ's kingdom; whose very hopes did expire, when he expired. "We trusted, that it was he that should have redeemed Israel."

4thly, How had it caused the infidel world to triumph over Christianity! How had it opened their mouths wide! "This was a part of the religion of Christians, that their Christ was to come again in that very age; and now even from their own principles, their religion is proved a cheat, a mere imposture."

There is certainly very great danger, and there ought therefore to be a religious and a prudent fear, lest we should misapply prophecies, and determine them unto unintended points of time. It is very agreeable unto a good temper of spirit so to do. And if we do so, that very awe will keep us composed and within the bounds of modesty and good temper.

I therefore shut up what I have to say on the first proposition offered from the text with this caution: That we take heed, lest we fail of giving a due preference unto the Spirit of holiness, or the Spirit of God as he is the Spirit of holiness, above what we give to the spirit of prophecy, as such. In so plain a case I need not industriously to represent to you the inequality of the comparison; and how much the Spirit of holiness, as such, is to be preferred before the spirit of prophecy, as such. That is peculiar unto the children of the Most High, the sons of God, those that are designed for an eternal inheritance: the other, strangers, even a paganish Balaam, may share and partake in, as well as others. And what good would it do us, if we had the foreknowledge of all events through all succeeding time? Most apparent it is, that infinite knowledge doth only agree with infinite power; and therefore that it is fit, that knowledge should be proportionably bounded as power is, kept within as narrow limits. It would not only do us no good, but it would be a most unspeakable prejudice to us, to have the foreknowledge of all events; that that should be the measure and compass of our understanding faculty, to have the knowledge of things future as well as of those that are present. For plain it is, that the good things that we should foreknow, if we see them certain not to fall out in our own time, and especially if we did foreknow that they would nearly border upon our time; how should we languish in the very sight of them, that we should come so near, and not reach! And for all the evils that we should foresee, we should thereby multiply them, and suffer every affliction a thousand times over; whereas God intends we should suffer it but once. We should bring the trouble of all our days into every day. It was therefore certainly a merciful law, if we would understand it; "Take no thought for to-morrow; sufficient for the day is the evil of it." And I reckon it admirable wisdom, which we are all concerned to adore, that when it was as easy to God to have given us a catalogue of all considerable events unto the end of the world, determined unto certain times when they should fall out, as to give us the ten commandments; he hath done this, and not that. It was admirable wisdom, which we ought highly to reverence him for, that he hath stated our case so, and doth keep times and seasons so hid in his own hand and power, as he is pleased to do. And for whatsoever satisfaction we are capable of taking, in apprehending the substantial truth of such a thing without bringing it to circumstances, that there is such a good state of things for the church of God in this world, and at one time or other will obtain; whatever just satisfaction we can take in the apprehension of it, I reckon, that if we had that due respect that we should have unto a right temperature of our own minds and hearts, in such particulars as I have mentioned, we should thereby highly enhance that pleasure; as much as the pleasure that a temperate man takes in eating and drinking is greater, than that which a furious and libidinous appetite is capable of taking, in a person to whom his very hunger is a disease. And therefore now I shall leave this proposition, and go on to that other truth that we observed,

That such a good state of things can never be brought about, but by a great effusion of the Spirit of God.

In speaking to this, I shall,—1. Briefly show what kind of communication of the Spirit this must be; and then-

2. Show the apt and appropriate usefulness of that means unto this end, the bringing about of a good state of things.

I. What kind of communication it must be.

If we speak of it objectively, that is, in respect of the thing communicated; so the communication of the Spirit must intend the influences and operations of the Spirit, and the consequent effects and fruits of it; its *χαρίσματα*: those principally and chiefly that do accompany salvation, which proceed from it as the Spirit of holiness. Though yet we are not to exclude those ordinary gifts of the Spirit, that are statedly in the church, and subservient to those other. Whether ever any extraordinary gifts shall be renewed, that, because I know nothing of it, I shall affirm nothing in.

If you speak of this communication formally, as to the nature or kind of it in itself considered; so we may understand it to be a very great and plentiful communication, that is here meant. So the very expression in the text of pouring forth doth import; the same word being used sometimes to signify the larger and more remarkable issues of God's wrath, when, as a deluge, and inundation, it breaks forth upon a people and overflows. It signifies (as some critical writers do observe) both celerity and abundance in the effusion. And the expression having that use, to denote the breakings forth of the wrath and fury of God, and being now applied here to this purpose, it carries such an import with it, as if it had been said, "My wrath was never poured forth so copiously, so abundantly, but that there shall be as large and copious an effusion of my Spirit." I take it, that these two properties must be understood to belong unto this communication; the fulness of it, in reference to each particular soul, or intensively considered; and the universality of it, so as that it shall extend unto vastly many, in comparison of what it hath done; but neither of them to be understood in an absolute sense. And so much being supposed, (as there will be occasion in future inferences from Scripture to let you see,) that the communication will be of this kind, and qualified by such properties; we have a sufficient ground upon which to go on unto the next head, that is, to show,

II. The apt and appropriate usefulness of this effusion of the Spirit unto this purpose, to bring about a good state of things for the Christian church. And in doing that, we shall have two things to evince: First, the *efficacy* of such an effusion of the Spirit unto this purpose; Secondly, The *necessity* of it. That this means will certainly do the business, and that nothing else can; that there is no other way to bring such a state of things about. Which things needs to be insisted on particularly and severally, to obviate two great evils, into which we are very incident; that is,—1. To distrust such a spiritual means of our good, and of the common good, as this is;—2. To let our minds and hearts hanker after some other means and methods, that certainly will never do the business.

1. There is a very great aptness to *distrust such a means as this*, to entertain very cold thoughts about it. The Spirit! How should the Spirit do such a thing as this? bring about a universal tranquillity and peace, and in all respects a more prosperous and flourishing state for the church of God in the world? That same expression of the prophet, and the form of it being considered, that it is expostulatory, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Mic. ii. 7. (so the house of Jacob is expostulated with;) it imports a very great aptitude even in a professing people, to have a great deal of distrust about the Spirit, and the effects to be accomplished and brought about by it. It is a keen and pungent way of speaking to speak expostulatorily, as here, "What! have you learned no better, you house of Jacob, than to think, that the Spirit of the Lord can be straitened? that there can be any limits and bounds set unto its power and influence?"

2. There is as great an aptness to *trust in other means*, and let out our hearts to them. An arm of flesh signifies a great deal, when the power of an almighty Spirit is reckoned as nothing. And persons are apt to be very contriving, and prone to forecast, how such and such external forms would do our business, and make the church and the Christian interest hugely prosperous. As great an extravagancy, as if we would suppose, that fine sights would fill a hungry belly, or that gay clothes would cure an ulcerous body; (as I remember that is Plutarch's similitude;) or a diadem cure an aching head, or a fine shoe a gonty foot. It is a very vain thing to think, that any thing that is merely external can reach this end or do this business. For it cannot be done by any other way, by any might or power, but by the Spirit of the living God. And therefore we shall speak distinctly to these two things, the *efficacy*, and *necessity*, of such an effusion of the Spirit unto this purpose.

First, The *efficacy* of it, to bring about a very happy state of things to the Christian church. Do but a little recollect yourselves, what hath been said concerning such a state of things as we might call happy and prosperous. All is capable of being reduced to these two things, 1. The more vigorous and lively verdure of religion, that that itself do live and prosper more; and then, 2. That there go therewith external tranquillity and peace. Now it may easily be apprehended, how an effusion of the Spirit doth *directly* do the former; and we shall afterwards come to show, how *by that* it doth the latter too.

I. There is nothing that is so genuine and natural a product of the effusion of the Spirit, as the *life of religion* in the world. And it may be shown, how the Spirit may have an influence to this purpose, both *mediately* and *immediately*.

1. Mediately; it may have an influence to the promoting of the life and vigour and power of religion, by the intervention of some other things: As,

1st, By means of the kings and potentates of the earth. We have had experience, how in all times and ages our own nation hath felt the different influences of the princes under which we have been. But we are not now to be confined within so narrow bounds; for we are speaking of the state of the church of God in the general. And think how it will be, if such scriptures ever come to have a fuller accomplishment than they have yet had; when in all the parts of the Christian world kings shall be nursing fathers, queens, nursing mothers; when the church shall suck the breasts of kings, when the glory of the Gentiles shall by them be brought into it. How much will it make for the prosperity of religion every where in the world, when these shall become in all places the proper characters of princes, (as they are the characters of what should be,) that they scatter the wicked with their eyes, that they are just, ruling in the fear of the Lord, and are upon the people, as showers upon the mown grass, and as clear shinings after rain, are men of courage, men fearing God and hating covetousness! Think whether this will not do much to the making of a happy state as to the interest of religion in the world, when they shall universally concur or very generally in the practical acknowledgment, that Christ is King of kings, and Lord of lords, willingly resign as it were their sceptres, or hold them only in a direct and designed subordination and subserviency to him and his sceptre.

2ndly, By and through them, upon whom the work of the Gospel is incumbent in the church, the ministers of it. In such a time, when the Spirit shall be poured forth plentifully, sure they shall have their proportionable share. And when such a time as that shall once come, I believe you will hear much other kind of sermons, or they will, who shall live to such a time, than you are wont to do now-a-days; souls will surely be dealt withal at another kind of rate. It is plain, too sadly plain, there is a great retraction of the Spirit of God even from us; we know not how to speak living sense unto souls, how to get within you; our words die in our mouths, or drop and die between you and us. We even faint, when we speak; long experienced unsuccessfulness makes us despond; we speak not as persons that hope to prevail, that expect to make you serious, heavenly, mindful of God, and to walk more like Christians. The methods of alluring and convincing souls, even that some of us have known, are lost from amongst us in a great part. There have been other ways taken, than we can tell how now to fall upon, for the mollifying of the obdurate, and the awakening of the secure, and the convincing and the persuading of the obstinate, and the winning of the disaffected. Sure there will be a larger share, that will come even to the part of ministers, when such an effusion of the Spirit shall be as is here signified; that they shall know how to speak to better purpose, with more compassion and sense, with more seriousness, with more authority and allurement, than we now find we can.

Other ways also we may suppose the Spirit to have mediate influence by others for this purpose. I shall only close this discourse with saying somewhat to an objection that some may be apt to make.

"But to what great purpose is it, may some say, to speak of what the Spirit will do, when it shall be so largely and plentifully poured forth? This we do not doubt, but when the Spirit comes it will do very great matters; (as the Jews' expectation was, 'When Elias cometh he will restore all things;) but what shall we do in the mean time? and what good will the foreknowledge of this do us now?"

Certainly it will import us not a little even now, to know which way we are to look, what it is that will do our business, and must do it; to be at least delivered from that impertinent trouble of making vain attempts, and of expecting that to be done any other way, which can never be. Our experience shows us, alas! it is not this nor that external frame of things, that can mend our case. Should we not be as bad, as any other men can be to us, if there be not another spirit? Hath not experience shown it? And to have a disposition to be continually making attempts, wherein we are sure to be disappointed, and can bring about nothing, so that we shall but traffic for the wind; it is but to add mockery to the torment of our disease. It is indeed a part of the disease itself, to have a kind of pruriency, and itch to trying things, that would make our case so much the worse. A prosperous state of things externally, some are ready to imagine, would itself do all. Alas! what an impertinency were that, and how little to the purpose! In all likelihood it would make us ten thousand times worse, than the sharpest sufferings could ever make us, or let us be, according to God's ordinary methods. And to know, that we are to look one way, is certainly a great advantage; that we may hence at least learn not to look a contrary way; that when we hear it is the effusion of this Spirit must do our business, we should not let our spirits run into union with another kind of spirit: as it is with all such, that, when a state of things displeases them, are ready to cry out, "Let fire come down from heaven, and make a present destruction of all." "You know not what spirit you are of," saith our Lord in this case. Is this like the gentle workings of that benign and sweet Spirit that we are told must do our business? And it would be a great advantage to us, if the apprehension of this did so constantly and habitually possess our souls, and sink into our hearts, as to frame all our deportments accordingly; and that this might be understood to be our only avowed expectation and hope. It would deliver the rest of men from fear about us; for certainly no man hath any reason to be afraid of the Spirit of God: that never did any one any hurt. It can never do men any hurt surely to be made better by its operations in so easy a way, and to be brought into so easy a state, as that will

be sure to issue in. Hereupon we shall deliver ourselves and the world about us from a great deal of inconvenience, if once this be but understood, and avowed and seconded by all suitable deportments, that we only expect the Spirit of the blessed God to change the state of things in the world, and to make it better and more favourable unto the religion of serious Christians.

SERMON V.*

WE have been treating of the mediate influence of the Spirit in order to the more prosperous and flourishing state of religion in the world: and have shown what influence it may have unto this purpose, by the magistracy, and by the ministry, being exercised immediately upon them; and so working mediately by them for the promoting of religion amongst others, by those that stand invested with the glory of these great offices. We shall go on to show what influence it may have,

3dly, By means of family order. And it is too obvious unto common observation, how religion hath decayed, and the interest of it declined by the disuse and deficiency of this means; since families have become so much the nurseries of vice and wickedness, that were much more generally the seed-plots of religion.

I doubt not but many of you can remember the time, when in this city family discipline was much another thing than now it is; and the sobriety and diligence and regularity of youth much more than now; and fewer known to miscarry than at this time. And it is too plain a case, that the miscarriage of so many doth owe itself much to this, the neglect and letting down of family government, and the banishing of religion out of families, at least in a very great degree: that there is so little calling upon the name of God, so little of family worship, family instruction, family discipline; that there are so few governors of families, of whom it may be said, as concerning Abraham, "I know Abraham:" What will he do? He will command his household, Gen. xviii. 19. How few will the state of the case admit that character to be given of in our days! How little care is taken to ground them that are under the charge and inspection of masters of families, in the principles of religion? Do we observe from sabbath to sabbath, that they profit by ordinances? whether they are going forward or backward in the business of religion? And where the fathers of families have or pretend to have less time, how much might be done by the mothers among the younger children, and the servants of their own sex? And whereas by the superior heads of families want of time is very much pretended, pray, whose is your time, do you reckon? and whose business is it, that you have to do in the world, God's or your own? And if you will say, that the duties of your calling are part of the business that God will have you do; it is but too possible to do God's business as our own; and therefore it is to be considered, whether you do that business as God's or as your own: and suppose it never so much God's, and intended for him, doth the doing of part excuse the neglect of the rest? and the lesser and much inferior part, the neglect of the more noble and principal parts of your business? Or would you think, that that servant did discharge himself faithfully, to the office or obligations under which he is, who, when you commit to him in a stated course many sorts of business to be done, spends all his time about one, and neglects all the rest, and the main and most important parts of the business you have put into his hands? And I think it might be considered too to good purpose, whether (since there hath been so great a neglect of keeping up order and government and worship in families, and the thing that is at the first challenge replied by every one is lack of time) the city is grown much richer than it was in those former days, when men could spare more time for such purposes than they do now!

Whatsoever there is of digression in this, I submit it to your own judgment, how needful and seasonable it is, and whether it be pertinent and proper. But I make no doubt, that, whensoever God shall restore religion in the world, and make it again to prosper, and more to prosper, as we hope he will; it will be by this means in very great part. Much will be done towards it, when it shall please God to stir up the hearts of those, that are governors of families, parents and masters, and to set them with effect on their duty in these things; when they shall be brought more to tender the precious immortal souls under their care, and be filled with a more just zeal against the licentiousness and growing debauchery of the world. I make no doubt, but when it shall be so, this will be found to do a great deal towards the reviving and restoring religion amongst men. There will be a time, when it shall be said severally and singly concerning the families of Israel, that God is the God of all their families, (as it is in Jer. xxxi. 1.) and they shall be his people; so as that the relation shall not be only with the bulk and body of the people in gross, but even with particular families. And this, it is said, should be in the latter days, if you look back to the close of the foregoing chapter, chap. xxx. 24. In the latter days, ye shall consider it. And at the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. And it is said, it should be at such a time, as wherein there should be planting of vines upon the mountains of Samaria, (chap. xxxi. 5.) and when the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim should cry, "Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion, unto the Lord our God;" (ver. 6.) when the people of Ephraim, that is, of the other ten tribes that use to go under that name, and those that did belong to Samaria, should go to Zion, as heretofore; a thing which certainly hath not yet been.

4thly, By means of the more common and general example of serious and exemplary religion in the professors of it. That is one great means, by which we may suppose the Spirit of God will work much, when it hath made religion to revive and live in some, to make their exemplary walking the means of diffusing religion unto others. Religion is now, as it is exemplified in the walking and practice of the most, a very little alluring thing, very little amiable; it carries little of invitation in it, little by which we may suppose it capable of proselyting the world, and captivating of men generally to the love of it. The mean, low, abject spirit that is discovered by some, and the contentious, jangling, and quarrelsome spirit that is discovered by others, carry little of allurement in them to strangers, and signify little to the making of proselytes, and the winning of persons to the love of religion. We have reason to expect that God will work mightily to make religion spread, by a certain aptitude that there shall be in it, when grown more lively and more vigorous, and a brighter shining and more glorious thing in the world, to attract hearts into the good liking of it.

We go on to speak—

2. Of its more immediate and direct influence upon the souls themselves to be wrought upon; which was the second head propounded to be spoken to. And so we are to reckon, that its greater influence, (when there shall be such an effusion of the Spirit, as we have been speaking of,) will show itself in these two great and noble effects: 1. In numerous conversions, and,—2. In the high improvement and growth of those that sincerely embrace religion, their eminent holiness: which, when we consider, will make the matter we were last speaking of more apprehensible to us, what example may do to the spreading of it yet further and further, as things once growing grow apace; especially such things as are themselves of a very growing and diffusive nature. The Scripture speaks very much in many places to both these purposes.

1st, There are many scriptures, that respect the matter of the church's increase by numerous conversions. Which is an increase as to its extent, as the other will be as to its glory. To instance in some few of the scriptures, that speak of the enlargement of the church by numerous conversions. We are told in Isaiah ii. 2, &c. what shall come to pass in the last days. You have these two forms of expression, the latter days, and the last days. The expression of the latter days doth more generally, according to the language of the Jews, intend the times of the Messiah. They divided time into these three great parts, the time or

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age before the law, the age under the law, and the age (as they called it) of the Messiah. The expression is here the last days, which seems rather to import the latter part of the latter time; as there is still later and later, till it come to the very last. Now "in the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house" (which is spoken by way of allusion to Zion, and the temple that stood upon that mountain) "shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people, and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Such a time as that the world hath not yet known, so as that it should be said generally concerning it, that this great effusion of the Spirit, and such a cessation from hostilities and wars in the world, should be concomitant and conjunct with one another: we have not had hitherto opportunity to observe a coincidency of these two things. To the same purpose is that in the prophecy of Micah, which I mention as being of so near affinity with the very letter of this text, Mic. iv. I, 2. "In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob," &c. The same words as before, with very little variation. And that passage of a great prince's dream, Daniel ii. 34, 35. of "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, that became a great mountain, and filled the earth;" I can, for my part, neither understand it in so carnal a sense as some do, nor in so limited a sense as others. Certainly it must signify some greater thing than we have yet seen. And such numerous accessions to the church by the power of the Holy Ghost in converting work, seem plainly intended and pointed out, Isaiah liv. I. "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate," (of her that was so,) "than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord." There should be a far greater fruitfulness, than in the time of their more formed, stable church state, when they appeared a people in covenant-relation, married to God. This, though spoken directly and immediately of the Jewish church, means in and by them the universal Gospel church, whom that church did in some sort typically represent. "Enlarge the place of thy tent, (so it follows, ver. 2, 3.) and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes: for thou shalt break forth on the right hand, and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." The like is in Isa. lxvi. 6, &c. "A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once?" What can this intend, but some such mighty effusion of the Spirit, by which there shall be great collections and gatherings in of souls as it were on a sudden? To the same purpose in Isaiah lx. 5. "Thou shalt see and flow together, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee," (the islanders or those that inhabit the more maritime places,) "and the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee." This is introduced in verse 4. "Lift up thine eyes round about and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee, thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side." And ver. 8. "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to the windows? Gathering in like great flocks of doves, that as a dense opacous cloud darken the air as they fly! Which numerous increase is most emphatically signified by the apt and elegant metaphor used Psalm cx. 3. where it is said the subjects of Christ's kingdom should be multiplied "as dew from the womb of the morning." That is a vast and spacious womb; imagine, how innumerable drops of dew distil out from thence; such shall the multitude of the converts be in the Christian church. That such scriptures have been fulfilling, ever since the first dawnings of Christianity, there is no doubt; but the magnificence of the expressions of many of these prophecies seems yet to be very far from being answered by correspondent effects. That passage in Joel ii. 28. where it is said, that "the Spirit shall be poured forth upon all flesh," we are told, it is true, in Acts ii. 16. that it had its accomplishment: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet," saith Peter, when the people began to wonder at what they saw, upon that strange pouring forth of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. But it is plain, that he did not intend, that the completion of that prophecy was confined to that point of time. For afterwards, in ver. 39. he tells them that were now awakened, and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" that they must "repent and be baptized, and they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." For, saith he, "the promise" (that promise most apparently, that he had reference to before) "is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." So that all that was intended in that prophecy is not fulfilled, till God hath done calling. And many other scriptures seem to intimate, that there shall be a time of far more general calling, than hath been hitherto; when the receiving and gathering in "of the Jews shall be as life from the dead," as a resurrection from the dead, Rom. xi. 15. and when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, ver. 25. The way of speaking implies, that that fulness or plenitude was yet behind, to succeed after the apostle's time; and no such time hath succeeded yet.

2dly, There are many scriptures also, that speak of the great improvement and growth of Christians by the *immediate* work of the Spirit of God. When I say *immediate*, I don't mean, as if it did work without means; but that by the means it doth itself immediately reach its subject; and therefore, that all the operations of the Spirit, whether in converting or in building up of souls, lie not in the instruments, but strike through all, so as to reach their subject. But that only on the by. Many scriptures speak of the great improvement of the church in point of holiness; so that it shall increase, not only in extent, but in glory, and in respect of the lustre, loveliness, and splendour of religion in it; that it shall become a much more beautiful and attractive thing, according to the representation which it shall have in the profession and conversation of them that sincerely embrace it. Which I suppose to be more especially pointed at in such passages as these, Isa. lx. 1, 2, 3. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." This speaks that religion should be so glorious a thing in its own subject, as by that means to be inviting and attractive to those that were without the church; and so doth directly and immediately speak of such an effect, as should be wrought by the Spirit of God upon persons seriously religious themselves, to make them far to excel and outshine the glory of former time and ages. This also is the more peculiar aspect and reference of that prophecy in Mal. iv. 2. "But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing under his wings." That is, in that day of the Lord spoken of in ver. 1. "Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Here is a prediction of such an operation of the Spirit, as hath the actual fearers of God already for the subject of it; upon them the Sun of righteousness shall arise with reviving, cherishing beams, and make them spring and prosper and flourish even as calves of the stall, as it is there expressed. Religion will not then be such a faint,

languid, impotent thing, as now it is, that makes men differ very little from other men, makes them but to look and walk and converse as others do.

3dly. Other scriptures speak of both these effects together; and so of the increase of the church both ways at once, both in extent and glory. As I reckon all those may be understood to have that import, that speak of the new heavens and the new earth that should be in the latter times: which are only metaphorical expressions; the heaven and the earth being the universe, making up the frame and compages of nature. These expressions are only borrowed, and denote how universal and glorious a change should be in the world; for these new heavens and that new earth are specified by the same adjunct, wherein dwelleth righteonsness, in one of those texts. We have it mentioned twice in the prophecy of Isaiah, that he would create new heavens and a new earth, chap. lxv. 17. chap. lxvi. 22. And in 2 Pet. iii. 13. that in these there should dwell righteousness. The renovation should consist in this; and both the universality and the intensive perfection of it are signified. The heavens and the earth, that is, the whole frame of things, should be the subject of the alteration; and this alteration should be a renovation, the making of them new, that is, better; as the newness of things is an ordinary Scripture expression of the excellency of them. Now the creation of these must refer to this time of the great restitution: as John speaks, Rev. xxi. 1. "I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away;" the former frame of things was all vanished and gone; nothing was like its former self, but all things were made new, as is added ver. 5. a day wherein there should be as it were a new-making of the world. The following texts also speak of that double increase of the church jointly, Isa. xxxii. 14, 15. A time and state of great desolation is spoken of as preceding, and to be continued. Till when? "Until the Spirit be poured upon us, from on high:" and what then? "The wilderness shall be a fruitful field." There is the taking in of more from the world, extending the territories of the church further, the enclosing of much more of the wilderness than hath hitherto been: "and the fruitful field be counted for a forest:" that, which was before reckoned a fruitful field, be counted to have been but as a forest, in comparison of what it shall be improved to: there is the increase of the church in respect of the liveliness and power of religion among converts. So in chap. xxxv. 1, 2. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."

And both these effects, numerous conversions, and the high improvements of converts, are so connatural, so congenerous, do so very well agree with one another, that we may very well suppose them to go together, that the former will be accompanied with the latter. For this great effusion of the Spirit we must understand to be sanative, intended for the healing of a diseased world, and to repair the corrupted forlorn state of things; and therefore must be proportionable to the state of the case, in reference whereto it is to be a means of cure. It is very apparent, that wickedness, as it is the more diffusive, is always the more malignant. The diffusion and the malignity are wont to accompany one another; just as it is with diseases, the plague and other distempers that are noisome and dangerous; they are always more mortal as they are more contagious and spreading; and so are extensively and intensively worse at the same time. And it must be proportionably so in the means of cure; there must be such a pouring forth of the Spirit, that will answer the exigency of the case in both respects, that there be very numerous conversions, and great improvement of converts unto higher and more excellent pitches of religion, than have been usually known in former times.

Objection. But here it may be said, that it is very difficult to conceive, how all this should be, considering what the present state and posture of the world is. As if we cast our eyes about us and consider, how it is in vast parts of it yet overrun with paganism, in others with Mahometanism, in others with antichristian pollutions and abominations: when we consider, how it is generally sunk in atheism and oblivion of God, drenched in wickedness; and even that part of it that is called Christian, how little it is better than the rest. The great doctrines of the Christian religion, the incarnation, the death, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the future judgment, and the eternal states of men, all become even as antiquated things! professedly believed for fashion's sake, because it is not convenient to pretend to be of no religion: but yet all these things lie with the most as ineffectual, insipid, unoperative notions in their minds, that do nothing; and notwithstanding which they are, and practise, just as they would do, if they believed no such things. When we consider this to be the present state and posture of the world, it is hard to conceive how such a change as this should come. And many may be apt to say in reference to this same Παλιγγενεσία, this renovation or regeneration of the church, the restitution of religion, as Nicodemus said concerning the regeneration of a particular person, "How can such things be?"

Answer. Indeed the long-continued restraints of the acts of absolute omnipotency make it even to seem but equal to impotency; and men expect as little from the one as from the other. When great and extraordinary things have not been done through a long tract of time, they are no more expected or looked for from the most potent cause, than they are from a most impotent. And therefore, when any great thing is done for the church and interest of God in the world, it comes under this character, things that we looked not for, (Isa. lxiv. 3.) things that do even surprise and transcend expectation, and which no man would have thought of. Men are very unapt to entertain the belief and expectation of things, that are so much above the verge and sphere of ordinary observation. We expect to see what we have been wont to see; and men are apt to measure their faith by their eyes for the most part in reference to such things, that that can be done which they have seen done; but are hardly brought to raise their faith and expectation to higher pitches than so.

To make things therefore as conceivable as we can, we shall point out briefly, in what way and by what methods and steps we may suppose so great a change to be brought about by such an effusion of the Spirit. For, as was said, it will not do the business with most, that the Spirit of God can do all this, which will be granted at the very first hearing; but a lively apprehension of these events to be brought about is not ordinarily begotten, but by seeing a way traced out, from point to point, and from step to step, how and by what degrees such a work may be carried on; and then the representation in that way being somewhat more lively, the impression that is made by it on the spirits of men is accordingly more lively. But of this more particularly hereafter.

I shall shut up the present discourse with desiring you to remind and reflect upon the tendency of all this; that our souls may be possessed with a serious apprehension, and thence have a lively hope begotten in them, of such a time and state of things to come, wherein religion shall prosper and flourish in the world, though now it be at so low an ebb. I may say to you, as Paul did to Agrippa, Acts xxvi. 8. Why should it be thought an incredible thing, that God should raise the dead? why should it be thought an incredible thing, that there should be a resurrection of religion? Thy dead men shall live, and together with my dead body shall they arise. He hath said it, that knows how to make it good; "who is the resurrection and the life," Isa. xxvi. 19.

And really it would signify much to us, to have our hearts filled with present hope; though we have no hope (as was formally supposed, admitting that supposition) of seeing it with our own eyes in our own days. Such a hope would however not be unaccompanied with a vital joy. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad;" though it was above two thousand years before. Plain it is, there is not a more stupifying benumbing thing in all the world, than mere despair. To look upon such a sad face and aspect of things through the world, as we have before our eyes: to look upon it despairingly, and with the apprehension that it never will, never can, be better; nothing can more stupify and bind up the powers of

our souls, and sink us into a desponding meanness of spirit. But hope is a kind of anticipated enjoyment, and gives a present participation in the expected pleasantness of those days, how long soever they may yet be off from us. By such a lively hope, we have a presentation, a feeling in our own spirit of what is to come, that should even make our hearts rejoice, and our bones to flourish as an herb. Religion shall not be an inglorious thing in the world always; it will not always be ignominious to be serious, to be a fearer of the Lord, to be a designer for heaven and for a blessed eternity. When these things, that common and prevailing custom hath made ridiculous, with their own high reasonableness, shall have custom itself and a common reputation concurring; how will religion at that time lift up its head, when there is such a blessed conjunction! It is strange to think, that so very absurd things, as the neglecting of God, the forgetting of eternity, the disregarding of men's souls and everlasting concernments, should even be justified by custom, so that nobody is ashamed of them, because they do but as other men do in these things: to be immersed all their life-time in the world, to mind nothing else but earthly business, as if they were made all of earth, and only for earth; such most absurd things even seem to be justified by common practice; men are not ashamed of them, because they are but like their neighbours. But when persons shall agree with one another in being serious, heavenly, avowing the fear of God, in express devotedness and subjection to him; when the concurrence of common practice shall be taken in with the high reasonableness of the things themselves, how magnificently will religion look in that day! And if we would but labour so to represent the matter to ourselves beforehand, by a lively hope of such a state of things, we should have the anticipated enjoyment of the felicity of those times; and have a great deal of reason, though it may be we are to suffer hard and grievous things in the mean while, to compose ourselves, and to enter upon that state of suffering very cheerfully; to wait patiently and pray earnestly, that of so great a harvest of spiritual blessings to come upon the world in future time, we may have some first-fruits in the mean time. As it is not unusual, when some very great and general shower is ready to fall, some precious scattering drops light here and there as forerunners.

And we should encourage ourselves in the expectation of a present portion, sufficient for our present turn and the exigency of our own case; for we have this comfortable consideration before us, that there is always so much of the Spirit to be had, that will serve the necessities of every Christian that seriously seeks it. He will give his Spirit to his children that ask him, as readily surely as they that are evil will give good gifts to theirs. At all times there is so much of the Spirit to be had, as, though it will not mend the world, will mend us; if it will not better the external state of things, it will better our spirits; and so, if not keep off suffering, yet will prepare and qualify us for it: and that sure is a greater thing, than to have suffering kept off; for that is but an external and natural evil, this internal and spiritual. It would be a great thing, if persons would admit the conviction of this, (and there is not a plainer thing in all the world,) that patience is better than immunity from suffering: that great and noble effect of the Spirit of God upon the soul, whereby it is brought into an entire possession of itself! Is that to be compared with a little advantage that only my flesh and outward man is capable of? Good things are to be estimated by the greatness and nobleness of their subjects. Sure a good of the mind, of the soul, must needs be far better than that which is only a good of the body, of this perishing external frame; and therefore for us, it is as great a thing as we can reasonably wish, that we may have such a portion of the Spirit imparted to us, that will qualify us to pass well and comfortably through any time. And have not we reason to expect this, even upon what is foretold us concerning what shall be done in the world hereafter? May not I look up with a great deal of hope and encouragement, and say, "Lord, that Spirit of thine that shall one day so flow down upon the world, may not I have some portion of it to answer my present necessities? and that Spirit, that can new-make the world, that can create new heavens and a new earth, cannot that new-make one poor soul? cannot it better one poor heart?" To have a new heart and a right spirit created and renewed in us, is better to us, than all the world; and we have no reason to look up diffidently and with despondency, but with hearts full of expectation. He will give his Spirit to them that ask him.

SERMON VI.*

We have told you, wherein a good state for the church would consist, to wit, in these two things concurring,—the flourishing of religion, and—outward peace.—I have said, *concurring*; for if they should be so severed, as that external prosperity should go unaccompanied with much of the power and life of religion, the case would be much worse with the church of God, rather than better. So true the observation is, that religion brought forth riches, and then the daughter destroyed the mother. We must say in this case somewhat like what they have been wont to say, who would give a favourable representation of Epicurus, and his doctrine concerning the matter of felicity, that would make his notion of it to consist of satisfaction of mind and indolency of the body. There must be a like concurrence of two such things to make up an entire and completely happy state to the church; principally a prosperous state of religion, and then (that which would be very much adjumental and accessory) a peaceful and sedate external state of things.

This being supposed, and having told you what sort of communication of the Spirit is to be expected, we came to show the apt and appropriate usefulness of the means to the end. For the clearing of this, we proposed to speak—1. Of the *efficacy*, and,—2. Of the *necessity* of this mean or cause to bring about the end.

We are yet upon the former of these heads, the *efficacy* of this effusion of the Spirit to work a very happy state of things in the church of God. We have shown, what it is easily supposable the Spirit may do towards this purpose, both by way of mediate and of immediate influence; both in producing numerous conversions, and then high improvements of converts; and in reference to both have mentioned many scriptures, and might many more, to let you see what we are taught and encouraged to expect.

We would now use some endeavour, for the facilitating of our belief concerning this matter, and to render it more easily apprehensible and familiar to our own thoughts; that it might not be looked upon as an impossible thing, or as altogether unlikely and improbable to be brought to pass. To this purpose let us consider,—1. What hath been done in like kind heretofore:—2. In what way such a thing may be supposed to be brought about; by what steps, and in what method, and by the conspiracy and consent of what subordinate causes such a thing may be effected:—3. How suitable and congruous every way it is to the blessed God to do such a thing.

I. We may a little help ourselves in this matter, by taking an estimate from what hath been, unto what may be. Much hath been done in the like kind heretofore. You know how it was with the Christian church in its beginnings, in its very *primordia*, when the light of the Gospel was but dawning upon the world. How great and unexpected were the changes, that were brought about then all on a sudden! Partly in our Lord's time; and more especially, when the Spirit was more eminently poured forth afterwards in the apostles' days! Insomuch that you find the matter represented by such expressions as these, concerning Christ himself in his own time; "Behold, the whole world is gone after him," John xii. 19. So the anxious and vexed minds of the rulers amongst that people did suggest to them; "We have lost all, the whole world will be his proselytes at this rate." But especially when the Spirit came to be poured forth after his resurrection and ascension; by that same means, "not by might nor by power, but by Spirit," what strange things were done! And who would have expected such things to have

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been done then, that had lived at that time; if it should have been foretold, that twelve men should convert so great a part of the world? and with what amused, diffident spirits did they receive their own commissions and instructions, when that strange thing was said to them, "Go you, and teach all nations?" Suppose twelve persons should be picked out from among us, and such a charge given them, "Go and proselyte the world unto serious religion!" Yet we know what was done. It is said in one place, Acts xix. 26. This Paul hath turned away much people; this one man; and in another, Acts xvii. 6. Those that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also. Thousands were converted at a sermon, the sound of the Gospel flying to the utmost ends of the earth. And this was but in pursuance of what Christ foretold should be done by his Spirit. These men did not levy armies to carry religion abroad into the world. When their hearts seemed to fail and sink within them, as despairing from the greatness of the enterprise, and the meanness of such agents as themselves were; they were only directed to stay and wait awhile, till they should receive power from on high, Acts i. 4, 8. And when at last it came, with what wonders did these men fill the world! Christ told them therefore, John xvi. 7, &c. It is expedient for you, that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you: and when he is come, he will convince the world. We read it, "the Comforter." The word signifies, (and it would be more fitly unto that purpose read,) the advocate, or the pleader; so παράκλητος more properly imports. "When that mighty Pleader comes; my Agent, that I intend shall negotiate my affairs for me (when I am gone) against an infidel world; then let him alone, he shall deal with the world, as infidel and wicked as it is. 'He shall convince of sin, and righteousness and judgment.' Whereas I have been reproached as a blasphemer, and a deceiver of the people, and one that hath designed only to set up for myself, and to acquire a name and reputation among men; he shall urge on my behalf the sin of the world in not believing in me; and my righteousness, both personal and imputable, capable of being applied unto others; and he shall urge efficaciously the business of judgment upon the usurping prince of this world, and dethrone him, and cast him down." And so it did succeed in very great part.

And how lively and vigorous was the religion of the primitive Christians at that time, those first owners and professors of the Christian faith! how did heavenliness, spirituality, and the life and power that was from above, sparkle in their profession and conversation! That one might see them walking like so many pieces of immortality, dropping down from heaven, and tending thitherward; all full of God, and full of Christ, and full of heaven, and full of glory: and this world was nothing to them; trampled upon as a despicable, contemptible thing.

Now we may say with ourselves, *Quicquid fieri potuit, potest: that which could have been done, and we see was done, may still be done.* "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Is his arm shortened?"

II. It would very much facilitate the belief of such a thing, at least the apprehension of it as very possible, to consider, in what easy and apt ways, and by how fit and suitable a method, such a work as this may be carried on. And it will be, I reckon, to good purpose to insist a little here; for when the workings of any extraordinary Divine power have been long withheld and restrained, (as was said,) the thoughts and apprehensions of such a thing is very much vanished out of the minds of men; and they expect generally as little from absolute omnipotency as from mere impotency, because their eyesight is usually the measure of their expectation. Therefore the more easy steps we may suppose to be taken in such a work, so much the more apprehensible the thing will be, and so much the more vivid the apprehension, and the deeper the impression upon our hearts; which is the great thing we should aim at in the hearing of any Gospel truth or doctrine whatsoever.

Now it must be acknowledged, that a very great and extraordinary exertion of Divine power, the power of the blessed Spirit, is necessary in this case. Such an extraordinary effort of absolute omnipotency there was at first to create the world: but when once it was created, there was a settlement of a certain law or course of nature, and a stating of all second causes in their proper stations and subordinations, in which the affairs of the world have ever since been carried on in an equal and very little varied course; which hath given atheists occasion to cavil, "All things are as they were from the beginning, even unto this day." This may assist us to apprehend, how things being once by so wonderful a hand put well onwards towards a good state, the course may be continued, and the great interest of religion improved more and more. Suppose it be somewhat proportionably in this new creation, the making new heavens and a new earth, as it was in the making of the world at first. There must once be an extraordinary effort of omnipotency or an almighty power; but that being once supposed, it is easily apprehensible, how many things may concur and fall in, what a conspiracy of inferior and subservient causes there may be, to promote and help on the reviving of religion in the world. That extraordinary effusion of the Spirit therefore once supposed, we will go on to particulars that will be easily supposable to succeed, and to be subservient and ministering causes in this work.

1. There will be a great observation, no doubt, of whatsoever shall be at first done in this kind, for the recovery of religion in the world. It is a matter that will naturally draw observation. The course, wherein the interest and kingdom of God is ordinarily promoted in the world, is rather governed by that maxim. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, Luke xvii. 20. The affairs of it are carried on in a more still and calm and silent way. But when God does (as we must suppose him to do) step out of his course in this case; no doubt that first effect, or the Spirit of God, when it comes to shake the spirits of men somewhat generally, and makes them bestir themselves; this cannot but be a very noted thing. If any considerable number in one such city as this should all on a sudden be struck, and a remarkable change be made upon them; if several notoriously debauched and dissolute persons should become very serious, sober, praying men; some noted to be very great worldlings, that one could never hear any thing from but what savoured of earth or an earthly design, now become eminently godly, spiritual, heavenly in all their conversation; this would be very much observed and taken notice of, as somewhat a strange and new thing. And,

2. Upon such observation, the minds of men will be filled with wonder, and much amusement. "What a strange thing is this, that such a great number of people will not be as they have been, and do as they have done! Such as could drink and swear and rant with the rest of their dissolute neighbours, are now taken up all of a sudden, and do no such thing! We can hear them speaking of God and heaven and eternity, unto whom all thoughts of any such thing seemed perfect strangers!" Men will be very apt to be amused, when such a thing as this shall be.

3. That amusement and wonder, will beget discourse about it from person to person. It will grow, as we may easily apprehend, into matter of talk, what changes appear in such and such.

4. Such discourse, it is very supposable, may put many persons upon search and inquiry; first into the truth of the matter of fact, and then into the tendency of such a thing, whither it drives, what kind of change it is. Is it true, yea or no, that such things really are? And when once it comes to be found really true, that there are great numbers of persons upon whom there is a very eminent and remarkable turn and change, either to make debauched persons become religious, or such as were before religious to become more visibly serious and lively and active in the business of religion; when it is found, I say, to be so, the matter itself, which such persons come to be changed to, naturally comes under inquiry: Whither do these persons tend? what do these impressions, that are now upon their minds, put them upon? And it is found, that they are urged by such impressions to mind God and the Redeemer of souls more, the concernments of eternity and another world; and to help all others to do so too, as much as in them lies. These things do very aptly succeed to one another. And so far the case was like this, in Acts ii. upon that first eminent effusion of the Spirit. The matter came to be noised abroad, (ver. 6.) and the multitude

came together. And (ver. 7.) they were all amazed, and marvelled: very great amusement was upon the minds of men. Though it is true there was somewhat miraculous in the case, that is, the power of speaking variety of languages all of a sudden; and we suspend any judgment for the present, about what we are to expect hereafter in the church of God of the same thing, or of any thing of like kind. But to have so much, as is of ordinary and common concernment to souls, wrought and done, as hath been mentioned, somewhat generally; this cannot but infer much observation, much wonder and amusement of mind with others, much discourse and talk upon the subject, and thereupon inquiry both into the truth and tendency of the matter of fact.

5. Upon such inquiry, we may suppose there will ensue approbation; that is, at least a judicious approbation, that shall go as far as the judgment and conscience, though it may not suddenly descend upon the heart and affections: we may promise ourselves that, such being the nature of religious concernments, and their high reasonableness so very apparent. What is it that these men drive at? whither do these new impressions on their minds carry them? Why, only to mind the great Lord and Original and Author of all things! to give over living, as the most of men have heretofore done, in a total oblivion and neglect of their own original! How strange is it for men lately come into being, to live in this world and never think: How came we into being? how came there to be such a thing as man on earth? such a world as this? so various orders of creatures in it? All that religion tends to, when it comes to revive in the spirits of men, is but to engage them to look back to their own original, to consider whence they sprang; and what duty they owe there, what reverence and fear and love; and what expectations they may have from that great and eternal and all-comprehending Being, from whom they and all things did proceed, and whereas they find themselves in a lapse and apostacy with the rest of mankind, and have the discovery of a Redeemer; and of God restoring and recovering souls by him; to consider, what trust, what love, what subjection, what entire devotedness is justly claimed as most due and fit to be paid to him. When religion aims at no other things than these; we may promise ourselves, that the inquiry will end in approbation: all this is equal, and righteous, and good; men can have nothing to say against it. The concernments of religion are of that sort and kind, that they will admit of search and bear an inquiry: and men are only therefore not approvers of religion at least, because they inquire not, and so can understand no reason imaginable why men should pretend to any religion at all. But the same reasons will urge a thousand times more for the greatest and deepest seriousness in religion: for the mere formality of religion, without the substance and soul, is the most absurd and ridiculous thing in all the world, and for which least is to be said. The profession of downright atheism were a great deal more rational, than to pretend to the belief of such a deity that can be pleased with trifles and shadows; than to worship such a thing for a God, that cannot tell whether I love him or no, and fear him or no, and have a heart really propense and devoted to him or no. The inquiry and discussion of the case must be supposed to infer great approbation.

6. That is likely to infer an apprehension of somewhat divine in it. When it shall be seen, that men are strangely wrought upon, and very great changes made upon them; and when being discoursed with, and the things unto which their spirits tend being examined and searched into, they are found to speak words of truth and soberness, and not like mad and distracted men, that are beside themselves; (as the apostles were fain to apologize once and again, when so strange things began to be wrought by their ministry at the first, in Acts ii. 15, 16. and chap. xxvi. 25.) This must be supposed also very apt and likely to succeed, that there will be an apprehension in the case, that there is something divine in all this; some misgiving or suspicion of it; "Sure it is of God, that there is this change and turn upon the spirits of so many men! Sure there is some divine hand in it!" We find, that there were such apprehensions of somewhat divine in the matter, when so great things were wrought at first by the ministry of the apostles. The most malicious enemies were full of doubt, whereunto this would grow, Acts v. 24. And one of their wisest men saith, in ver. 39. "If it (this thing) be of God;"—that *if* imports a suspicion, some doubt and apprehension of the thing as not improbable: "Perhaps this is of God, that there are begun such alterations in many men; that those who lived before as if they were altogether made of earth, now are come to mind nothing but heaven and eternity, and the concernment of another world. It is very likely, that there is a divine hand in this matter; for the more we inquire and search, the less we have to say against what these men do; we cannot see but it is highly reasonable, that men should live, as they say we should, in more serious observance of, and devotedness and love to, the great Lord of heaven and earth, and the Redeemer of sinners." And,

7. Hereupon succeeds naturally a favourable inclination towards religion, in those who have hitherto been strangers, at least, to the power and life of it. When they see it sparkle in the conversations of others; when they see persons that were become like other men, (for that is the present state of the world, and it is too much to be feared that it will grow more and more so, that those who have been very forward professors of religion fall to decay, and their profession like an old garment grows threadbare, and is worn off from them by piece-meal, and they cease to be what they were; family orders are thrown off, no worship, no calling upon God; they let themselves be ingulfed of the world, as if they were here in the world for nothing else than to drive designs for a few days; eternity and everlasting concernments being quite forgot,) when it shall be said, that men, whatever they were before, are awakening out of this drowsy, dead sleep, and returning from that dreadful apostacy; and a spirit of seriousness and life and vigour begins to show itself; and religion and holiness (as I was saying) shall sparkle in the lives of them, in whose conversation there was hardly the least glimmering of it appearing before: then so amiable and lovely a thing, as well as highly reasonable, religion is, that it will draw favourable inclination; especially when that apprehension goes along, that there is certainly some divine impression upon men's minds, that makes them to bestir themselves and to alter their course from what it was, and that induces so many to do thus as it were at once. For there is a natural reverence of what is apprehended to be divine; this naturally draws a kind of veneration. It was indeed strange, how the world could be imposed upon to believe such figments and fables as they did; but being made to believe them, we see what was the natural operation of that veneration, which resides in the spirits of men, of things apprehended divine. For the image that dropped down from Jupiter, mentioned in Acts xix. 35. it is strange, how the people could be made to believe, that such an image fell down out of heaven: but being made to believe it, nature followed its own course; that is, most highly to reverence what they apprehended to be of a divine descent, and what came from above. All the city, all that city of Ephesus, was a worshipper of the image that they were told came down from Jupiter. A favourable propension there will be towards religion, when once men come generally to take notice of it as a divine thing; of divine descent, as it is of a divine tendency. And so it was in that first great work of this kind, which we read of in Acts ii. That numerous multitude of converts, three thousand at one sermon, continued in breaking of bread from house to house, and did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, (ver. 46.) praising God, and having favour with all the people, ver. 47. Religion, when it comes to be itself and to look like itself, will very much attract favour from all that behold the genuine, natural workings and tendencies of it.

8. Hereupon doth unavoidably ensue a general reputation to serious religion, which will signify a great deal to this. When serious religion shall by these means be brought into credit, then the work will drive on apace, and the chariot-wheels move easily. Let us but bethink ourselves, what the reputation even of so despicable a thing as wickedness itself doth in the world; how it spreads, when common practice hath once given it a reputation. Things, that at other times persons would have been ashamed of,

or even that they should be suspected concerning them, afterwards they come to glory in: and when once the restraint of shame is gone off from the spirits of men, it is a strange liberty they find to do wickedly; now they can easily go from one wickedness to another, from bad to worse, and still to worse; for the restraint is gone, that bound up their spirits before. When the shame then of being seriously religious shall cease, and it shall become a reputation in the world; think, what that will signify in the case of so highly reasonable and beautiful a thing, as religion in itself is. Common reputation gives a patronage to so horrid, so ignominious a thing as wickedness: what will not so lovely and praise-worthy a thing, as religion is in the very heart and conscience of men that allow themselves to consider it, gain of reputation and by it in such a case; when every man shall be the more esteemed of, by how much the more he appears a sincerely religious man; when no man shall be afraid to avow himself a fearer of the great Lord of heaven and earth, but this shall be reckoned in every one's account a high glory; when every one shall be ready to give suffrage to it, and to say, it is reasonable we should all be so? Then may we suppose religion to be riding on prosperously, conquering and to conquer; then may we expect the arrows of the great Author of it to be sharp in the hearts of men, the way of access will be easy into the inwards of men's souls, the great truths and doctrines of religion will come under no prejudice, men will not be shy and ashamed to entertain them, or afraid what the tendency of entertaining them will be, or what course they shall be thereby engaged in, that may possibly prove injurious to them in point of reputation or worldly interest one way or another.

These things being all taken together, it seems we have a pretty apt method, and a representation of fair and easy steps, in which we may suppose such a work to be carried on; when once there is that great effort of the almighty power of the Spirit, to cause somewhat general rousings and awakenings in the spirits of men, to make them a little bestir themselves and look about them, with respect to the concernments of the Maker of this world, and their relation and tendency to another world. And when we see how such a thing may be carried on from step to step, the apprehension of it should not be thrown aside as very remote and alien, and as if it were altogether unlikely that any such thing should ever be done in the world. You know that great inundations, as they gradually spread in circuit, so they increase and grow more copious by a continual accession of new rivulets and springs to them, wherever they spread: so it is in such a work as this of the Spirit of God. That Almighty Spirit, the further it goes, the more it engages and takes in the concurrence of the spirits of men, as so many rivulets into the great and common inundation. For the expression of pouring forth the Spirit seems to favour that metaphor, and to look towards it; as the communications of the Spirit are frequently in Scripture spoken of under the same metaphor of streams of water, rivers of water. So it is also in a common conflagration; (the workings of the Spirit are represented by both these elements;) the further the fire spreads, still the more matter it meets with, the more combustible matter; and that way still more and more increases itself, even intensively, according as it spreads more extensively: because it still meets with more fuel to feed upon. We might thus render this business very easy and familiar to our own thoughts, by considering how such a communication of the Spirit once begun and set on foot doth spread and propagate itself, even in an ordinary and easy way and method further and further.

I shall only close at present with one hint, which may point out to us one thing more, as a way to make this apprehension most familiar to us. It would certainly be most clearly apprehensible, how such a work may be wrought, by getting as much of it as is possible exemplified in ourselves, upon our own souls. If once we come to find and feel the Spirit of the living God seizing our spirits, coming with an almighty and irresistible power upon us; if we can but feel the fire burn within, and find it refining us, consuming our dross, melting and mollifying us, new moulding us, quickening and enlarging us; it will be very easy to apprehend then, how such a work may be carried on in the world. For if I have but the notion of a unit in my mind, I can soon apprehend a bigger number; it is but adding one unit to that, and another to that, and so on, till I come to a greater number. If I can but find and experience such a mighty operation of that blessed Spirit upon my own soul, it is easy then to conceive thus; if it be so with another, and another, and another, religion will in this way become a very lively prosperous thing in the world. It is but the multiplying of instances, and the thing is done: and he that can do so by me, can do the same by another, and another, and so onwards. And methinks we should not rest ourselves satisfied, till we find somewhat, till we find more of this within ourselves. Oh what a miserable thing is a Christian, when he is dead! We look with a great deal of compassion upon the death of any thing; but the case claims so much the more, by how much the life is more noble that is extinct or seems extinct; or when the life once supposed to have been, now appears as if it were quite extinct. Is the expiration of this natural life a thing to be beheld with pity? what is it to lose, or to appear at least deprived of the life of a child of God? to be destitute of such a life, which I have at least pretended to, and carried some appearance and semblance of? The death of a peasant is a considerable thing, and it were barbarous not to take notice of it with a resentment; but when it comes to be talked, A great man is dead, a nobleman, a prince; this makes a great noise and ring in the world; and such a person having been of any use and account in his age, his exit is not without a great lamentation. If I had but a finger dead, it would be an affliction; but if I look into myself, lo, there I behold the death of a soul, a reasonable, intelligent pirit; that ought to live the life of God, devoted to God, in commerce with God; I look into it, and it is dead. Oh! how intolerable a thing should this be to me! till I find some revivings, some stirrings, some indications of life; that is, till I find religion live; that I have somewhat more than an empty, naked, spiritless form of religion; that I can now go and pray, and have life in my prayer; go and hear the word, and find life in my hearing. Of all deaths there is none so dreadful and so to be lamented, as that of religion, and certainly most of all in ourselves; that my religion is a dead thing. How impatient should I be to find it revived! And if I will but be restless in this, and make it my daily business importunately to supplicate the Father of spirits, "Take pity of thine own offspring, let me not lie languishing still in death;" and I at last obtain a merciful audience, (as it is plainly said, that the heart shall live that seeks God,) then I have such an exemplification in my own soul of the matter we have been discoursing of, as that I can easily represent to myself; "When such a work is done in others as is done in my own soul, and comes to be made common amongst others; then will religion be a very lively, prosperous, flourishing thing in the world." And that certainly is the best way of all others to make this thing apprehensible to ourselves, to get the thoughts of it familiarized to us, in how easy a way religion should grow and spread among men.

SERMON VII.*

It was thought requisite to lay before you some considerations, that might facilitate the apprehension and belief of the revival and prosperous state of religion in the world. Three were mentioned to that purpose.

I. The consideration of what hath been done in this kind heretofore, when the Spirit was so eminently poured forth at first.

II. The consideration, by how easy steps and in how apt a method it is supposable, that such a work may be done. These have been spoken of.

If once it please God to say, he will do such and such things, we need not to be told how. "Is any thing too hard for me?" saith the Lord. That should be enough

* Preached June 19th, 1678.

for us; but we find, that commonly it is not enough; experience doth too commonly show that. And therefore the supposition of such a gradual progress as hath been mentioned, doth most facilitate the apprehension of such a thing; though we do not imply or suppose in all this, that any thing the less power is exerted; but only that it is put forth in a way more familiar to our thoughts. As in the creation of the world there was an exertion even of absolute power, the Almightiness (as I may speak) of power; but that absolute power soon became ordinate; and that order and chain of causes, and the method of their operations and peculiar virtues, which we are wont to call by the name of nature, universal and particular nature, soon came to be fixed and settled; according whereto God hath since continued the world, and propagated the individuals of every sort and kind of creatures, or propagated the kind in those individuals. This is not to suppose more and less power, but is only a various exertion of the same power. But when power is exerted in this latter way, it is more apprehensible by us, how it goes forth to do such and such things. It is said in Heb. xi. 3. Through faith we understand, that the worlds were framed by the word of God. By faith; how is that? Why, faith is said, in the clause a little before, to be the "evidence of things not seen." We were none of us at the making of the world, we saw not how things were done then; but we have the matter imparted to us by God himself, we have a divine testimony in the case; the history committed into sacred records; by which we are informed, not only that the world was made, but how it was made, by what steps and by how gradual a progression the great God went on in the doing of that stupendous work. And hereupon it is said, "by faith we understand," Πίστει νοοῦμεν; that is, as that word signifies, by faith we come to have the formed, explicit notion in our minds, to have distinct thoughts and apprehensions how such a work was done. Thus we learn, how much was done such a day, and how much such a day; light created the first day; the second, the firmament; the third, the earth, dry land, and the seas or the gathering together of the waters into one place; and then herbs and trees and beasts, &c. according to their several kinds; and so on. Now this begets a clearer and more distinct apprehension in our minds of the way of making the world, than if it had been only said, that the world was at first made by God. We understand it by faith, have a notion begot in our minds clear and distinct by faith; inasmuch as or so far as the testimony is distinct and clear, which we have concerning this matter. Though it is true, reason would go far to demonstrate, that this world had a beginning; yet reasoning could never have helped us to νοεῖν, distinctly to understand, in what steps or in how easy and fit a method that great work was carried on. So now in making the world anew, erecting the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, wherein it shall dwell; we certainly can more distinctly apprehend how that work is done, if it be represented as done by such a kind of gradation as you have heard of, than if we were put to it to conceive it done all at once. There is no less power required to the continuing of this world as it is, than was to the making of it what it is; for it is the continual exertion of the same power that doth it. But our thoughts are not so liable to be amused, (they are not at all amused,) to see a continual succession of things in the natural way of production. It gives us no difficulty or trouble to see how children are born, how the kinds of other creatures are propagated; whereas it would greatly amuse us, to think of men and beasts and trees and herbs all starting up of a sudden out of nothing. Though we cannot, upon a reasonable consideration of the case, but acknowledge, that it were as easy a thing for God to have created man, as he did Adam, by an immediate hand, as it is to continue the race of mankind in that way wherein he doth it; the operation would not be harder to him; yet it was, it seems, in the judgment of his infinite wisdom, less apt; and it would be harder and more unapprehensible unto us. So, we must acknowledge too, that it were no harder a thing for God, "of stones to raise up children unto Abraham," to make Christians, proselytes to religion that way, than to convert men by the Gospel; but this, which he hath chosen to be his ordinary way, we have reason and obligation to account the fittest way; and it is a way more familiar and easily conceivable to our thoughts. And therefore it doth much towards the facilitating the apprehension and belief of this great change, to consider, by how easy steps and in how apt a method such a work as this may be done. And this will be very considerable unto such persons that take notice, (which any observing man would,) how little apt the wise and holy God is to step out of his usual course, further than the plain necessity of the case, in reference to such or such great ends of his, doth require. But then add we hereto,

III. The consideration, how highly suitable it is to the blessed God to do this work. Doth it not look like a God-like work? doth it not carry the aspect of a God-like undertaking and performance, a thing worthy of God, to restore religion and improve it much further in the world? We shall show, in what particular respects it is suitable to him.

1. It is very suitable to his most mysterious wisdom: the glory whereof it is to do things, that none could contrive to do besides; and especially to rescue and recover what seemed lost and hopeless, when the sentence of death was as it were actually thereupon, that is, religion. This is the attribute of Divine wisdom, to recover things out of so dreadful a degeneracy; to retrieve matters, when the case was so desperate unto all men's apprehensions. It is the choice of Divine wisdom to do so, to find an expedient even in the last necessity: according to that monumental name, which Abraham put upon the mount, where he was to have sacrificed his Son, Jehovah-jireh; The Lord will see, or, The Lord will provide and take care: an instance thought fit to be upon record unto all succeeding time, as a discovery what the choice of the Divine wisdom is; that is, to take things even when they are desperate, and to find out an expedient to salve all. An instance like to that I remember Plutarch[a] takes notice of, that one Metella in a certain great exigence was to have been sacrificed, but was prevented by the miraculous substitution of a heifer in the room of the intended victim: so possibly pagans might have fabulously imitated what some way or other they came to have heard from the sacred records. But so the case seems to be with religion, when God shall so wonderfully retrieve it, as it was with the heir of the promise, the knife just at the very throat. There was a contrivance suitable to the wisdom of God, to hit upon this critical juncture of time, to rescue him from so near a death, when he seemed even upon expiring. And as he was fetched from death even in a figure; (his father received him from thence in a figure, Heb. xi. 19.) so it must be with religion too. The son of the free-woman, Isaac, was the emblem of it: it is as it were in a like figure to be fetched from death, by a kind of resurrection from the dead; life from the dead, as the apostle speaks; when the time shall be of bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles, and the saving of all Israel. How glorious the display of Divine wisdom, to let so gross darkness cover the world, so black and gloomy a day be upon it, that shall issue at last in so much brightness and so glorious light! even in the evening, as it is in Zech. xiv. 7. wherein the Lord shall be king over all the earth; and there shall be one Lord and his name one, ver. 9. Then comes that bright and glorious evening after a black and gloomy day: not perfect darkness; there is not such in the spiritual world, when things are at the worst; as they use to say there is not in the natural world, *non dantur puræ tenebræ*: so it is there said, that the light shall not be clear nor dark, ver. 6. It shall be as if it were neither day nor night, ver. 7. In that day, (and it shall be one day known to the Lord, neither day nor night,) at evening-time it shall be light. You know how great a change the diurnal return of the sun makes; and were it not that the thing is usual, and we are accustomed to it, that would be thought a strange matter. How vast is the change, that, when darkness is upon the spacious hemisphere, all of a sudden the return of the sun should clothe all with so much light and lustre and glory, as we see it doth! Such vicissitudes the wisdom of God hath thought fit: but especially it hath been reckoned more suitable to

[a] Plutarchi Parallel. inter. Op. Moral. Edit. H. Steph. (Græc.) Vol. I. p. 550.

his wisdom, to carry things on from obscurer and less considerable beginnings unto perfect and more glorious issues, so that in the evening it shall be light: all the foregoing day did look more like night than day. That we reckon a great work of wisdom, to be able to find out a way of doing the most unexpected things, that no one would have thought of, further than as it may please him to give any previous intimations of his purpose, what he will do.

2. It is most suitable to that supreme interest which he hath in this lower world, that propriety and dominion which he claims in it to himself by a most rightful claim; to procure himself a more universal actual acknowledgment and subjection, than hitherto: whether we speak of his natural interest, as he is the God and the Creator of the world; (this lower part, this inferior region is a part of his creation too;) or of his acquired interest by the Redeemer; and I more especially intend the latter. When I consider the magnificent things, that the Scripture speaks concerning the interest of the Redeemer in this world, this lapsed apostate world; (such as this, Matt. xxviii. 18, 19. All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth: Go ye therefore, and teach all nations; make men know, that they belong to me and are all my right; lay my claim to them, proclaim my right, challenge my interest for me, proselyte them to me; baptize them into my name, with the Father's and the Holy Ghost's;) this doth import, as if some time or other he meant to have a more actual acknowledgment and subjection in this world, than hitherto. If we look upon such a text as that, He died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the living and the dead, Rom. xiv. 9. The living and the dead comprehend all that we can think of; and it signifies as much as, that he might be the universal Lord of all. Having paid so dear a price, do we not think, that he will make more of the purchase, than hitherto he hath? as you have it pursued in that 14th to the Romans in several expressions, ver. 7, 9. None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.—For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. That invitation to all the ends of the earth is of as strong import this way, Isa. xlv. 22. Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. Observe the solemnity and majesty of the following words, ver. 23. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Which saying is expressly applied to the Lord Christ by the apostle in Phil. ii. 11. Consider to the same purpose the solemnity of his inauguration, and the largeness of the grant made to him thereupon, Ps. ii. 6, 7. I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion: I will declare the decree;—Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. This day, that is, the resurrection-day; that is the eminently intended sense, as the apostle's quoting of it in Acts xiii. 33. plainly signifies. This day have I begotten thee; thou art now to me the first-born of the dead, the first-begotten of them that slept: and being my first-born, art a great heir; and this is thy inheritance:—I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession, ver. 8. Sure that signifies more than mere right and title. And think how pursuantly to that it is foretold, Rev. xi. 15. that, upon the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the voice should be, the proclamation should go forth, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." They are become so; that must needs be in some other way than they could be understood to be so before; they were always in right and title. It is very suitable to that supreme and sovereign interest that he hath, at one time or another, to assert his right; especially considering it as a disputed right: for how long hath this interest been contested about by the usurping god of this world, the prince of the darkness of this world! he who hath tyrannized in the dark, and made it so much his business to keep all men from knowing any other lord!

3. It is most suitable unto the immense almighty power, by which he is able to subdue all things to himself. It will be upon that account a God-like work, worthy of such an agent. To make all mountains vanish before Zerubbabel, Zech. iv. 7. to bring about what seemed so very difficult, and even unexpected to all men; this is a thing becoming God, to do what no one else could do. It is the acknowledgment therefore that is given him as God, a glorifying him as God, which we find done by Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 12. We know not what to do; but our eyes are upon thee. That is as much as to confess, that when all created power is at a nonplus and can do no more, (we can do no more,) yet thou hast still somewhat to do, when there is nothing remaining to be done by any hand else. And it is very subsidiary in this case, and helpful to our apprehension and faith, to consider the immensity and omniscience of that Spirit, whereby this great work is to be done; to think that that Spirit is already every where; as in Psalm cxxxix. 7. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? and whither shall I flee from thy presence? Whether I think of heaven or earth, or of any the remotest parts beyond the seas, there thy Spirit is. He doth not need to go far in order to the doing of these great things; but only to exert a present influence, where he is already, having all things subsisting in him, living, moving, and having their being in him. And when we consider, how great the efficacy is of that great apostate, inpure spirit, that in Scripture uses to go under the name of Satan or the devil, to keep the world in darkness and ignorance, to hold them off from God; (the course of the world is said to be after the power of the prince of the air, the spirit that worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 2.) when we think, that his influence should be so diffused and extensive, as that it is thought fit to be said, that the whole world lies ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ, which is capable of being read, in the evil one, in the wicked one, (1 John v. 19.) how should faith triumph in the apprehension of the absolute immensity and omnipresence of the blessed Spirit, by which this great work is to be wrought and done in the world! when, as we know, Satan cannot be every where, he makes use of many hands, many instruments: but this Spirit, that works all in all immediately itself, how agreeable is it to be the author of such a work as this, the reviving of religion out of that dismal death that is so generally upon it in the world!

4. We cannot but apprehend it most suitable to the Divine goodness, that boundless, flowing goodness; that, after the prince of darkness, the Apollyon, the destroyer of souls, hath been leading still his multitudes down to perdition from age to age, with so little check or restraint, a time should come, when in so visible a way the spoil should be rescued out of the hand of the terrible and the strong; and the Son of God come in for his portion and share, that it was said should be divided to him, Isa. liii. 12. How like will such a dispensation as this be unto that first joyful sound of the Gospel by the ministry of angels, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will toward men!" How agreeable to this will that be which we find in Rev. xxi. 3. When that voice shall be heard, concerning a thing then actually done and taking place, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them; and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and all tears shall be wiped away;" as it follows, ver. 4. Certainly it is very God-like upon this account, that such a thing should be. To reflect upon such passages of Scripture; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son," &c. "After that the kindness and love of God to man appeared," that φιλανθρωπία, and the large goodness which such expressions signify, methinks should prevent its being thought strange, that more large correspondent effects of such goodness are expected, before the end of all things shall come.

I must add here by way of caution, that it is true, it is not safe to conclude from what we conceive suitable to God to do, that such a thing shall certainly be done; a stress were not to be laid upon that kind of arguing, if we would suppose that argument to be the original and principle. But having other grounds to rely upon, which you have heard, it is very aptly subsidiary; and signifies very considerably as an addition to have the apprehension of such a work as every way most suitable to God and worthy of him. And when we find upon other grounds, that is, from what God hath expressly said and foretold, that we have cause to receive and entertain such a truth; we have reason to entertain it with a great deal more complacency, and to solace and satisfy ourselves in it the more,

by how much the more we apprehend of suitableness and congruity, and the fitness in it, and how every way it becomes that great God that is to be the Author of this blessed work. We may venture after him to speak of what is suitable; that is, when he hath told us what he will do, or when we have seen what he doth, then it is fit for us to say this was very worthy of God, fit for him to do; or it will be so whenever he shall please to do it, if it be what we are yet expecting him from his word to do.

But if it be objected here; If in these several respects it be a thing suitable to God to do such a work as this, why was it not done long ago? inasmuch as this was as good a reason at any other time, as it can be in any time yet to come; since God's wisdom, his sovereign dominion, his power and might, his grace and goodness, were always the same?

To that I shall shortly say,

1. That if it be a thing very suitable to God to do, as we have represented, certainly it seems a great deal more likely, and a far more probable way of reasoning, from its not being done, to expect that at some time or other it shall, than that it never shall. But we have told you we rely upon other grounds, and take in that consideration only as subsidiary and adjumental, to facilitate our apprehension and belief of what God hath foretold in his word. But I add,

2. That there are but these two things, that we can have to consider in this matter, and to give an account of; the delaying of such a word so long, and the doing it at last; and I doubt not but a very unexceptionable account may be given of both.

Ist, For the delaying of it so long. Truly we have reason enough to resolve that into that justice, against which no one that ever considers can open his mouth in this case. Is it to be thought strange, that God should so long withhold his light and influence from a world in so wilful an apostacy and degeneracy and rebellion through so many ages; that had always taken care to propagate the enmity, and to keep on foot the rebellion, so as that always, when he comes to look down upon the world, this is the prospect that he hath of it, this the account of things; looking down from heaven upon the children of men, he seeth, that there is none that doeth good, none that understand and seek God, Psal. liii. I, 2. Men affect distance from him, they please themselves to be without him in the world. Is it to be thought strange? is it not highly just, that he should make that their long continued doom, which had been their horrid choice? You affect to be without God! Be so, in your own loved darkness and death! Men might see, that things are not well with them, that they are in an unhappy state; it is visible. *Ira Dei est vita mortalis*, is an ancient saying, *this mortal life is the very wrath of God.* Men might apprehend, that God is angry, that they are not such creatures as man was made at first; heathens have apprehended and spoken of the apostacy. But when they are miserable, and feel themselves so, yet they don't return to him and seek after him: they cannot help themselves, to mend the temper of their own spirits, which they might easily discern is far out of course; yet they don't cry for help. It is highly glorious triumphant justice, to withhold so despised and neglected a presence and influence from so vile and wicked a generation. But then,

2dly, For doing such a thing at last notwithstanding, good account may be given also. Inasmuch as this cannot be said to be a thing to which justice most strictly and indispensably and perpetually obliges, but a thing which it doth highly approve; wisdom and sovereignty may most fitly interpose at pleasure, and when it shall be thought fit. God may let his action against the world fall when he will, though he have a most righteous one; and, as the apostle speaks, Rom. xi. 22. concerning this case, the restitution of the Jews, which shall be unto the Gentiles also life from the dead, when all shall be gathered in at once; we are to expect instances, in the mixed course of God's dispensation, both of his severity and goodness; and finally, when that time comes, when all Israel shall be saved, and the fulness of the Gentiles he brought in, the matter is to be resolved into such an exclamation, as that which the apostle makes, (ver. 33.) "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" It is to be referred unto his wisdom and sovereignty, to time things as seems good to him. The times and seasons are hid in his own power, Acts i. 7. Hidden from us, but in his power to state and settle and determine when and as he pleases. What is more agreeable unto so absolute a sovereign, and so wise a one, than such an arbitrary timing of the dispensation of grace, whenever it shall have its course?

And for our own part; as we have that reason to adore sovereign wisdom and goodness, whenever they shall have their exercise in this kind; so in the mean time we have reason to be silent, and our mouths to be stopped, while God doth as yet defer and delay the time of that pouring forth of his Spirit. We have reason to be silent, if it be our lot in our age to be under the restraints of that blessed Spirit. When was there ever any age in the world, that might more fitly be pitched upon for the object, upon which justice should have its exercise in this kind? Was there ever an age, wherein the Spirit was more grieved, more striven against? wherein God should have more cause and reason to say, My Spirit shall not strive with you? with whomsoever of all mortals it strives, it shall not strive with you! To cast our eyes abroad, and consider the state of the world; and to look on the state of things at home:—for the nations about us, we have heard how they have been for years together; what reformations do we hear of? what dispositions to return to God? Men cry because of the oppressions of the mighty; but none say, "Where is God our Maker?" Every where there is that disposition to groan and languish and die under their pressure; but no inquiries after God; and whereas they cannot turn to him without him, (and we acknowledge that for a principle,) help in order thereto is not implored. We can feel what is externally afflictive; the Divine absence we feel not: when his soul is departed from us, we are not concerned to be without the Spirit; as Jer. vi. 8. Lest my soul depart from thee. He speaks of that presence of his as a soul to that people; as it truly and really is to a people professing the name of God: his special presence is the soul of such a people, as they are such a people; holds things together, keeps up and maintains life and order. Be instructed, lest my soul be gone. When his presence and Spirit retire and are withdrawn, it is as discernible in the state of things among a people, as a man can distinguish a carcass from a living man. God is gone, his soul is departed, the soul which he had put into such a people, which was active and at work amongst them. Well! but we are men still for all that, we are reasonable creatures, and have an apprehensive understanding of the word, and faculties remaining to us; so that we might know, that such a presence is gone, and we are miserable thereby; and there might, one would think, be some lamentings after the Lord: but where almost are they to be found? If we could have the world at will, enjoy what would gratify sensual inclination, God might be gone and keep away from us, and few would concern themselves with the matter. Have we any thing then to say, that the season is deferred of pouring forth this Spirit? No. If we consider the resistance and grievance and vexation, that it hath met withal in our age and amongst us; it is not strange, if God should determine, "My Spirit shall not strive with you; whatever good thoughts I may have towards those that shall succeed and come up hereafter." But yet notwithstanding, it is most suitable and congruous, that at one time or another so great a work as this, the recovery of religion from under so dismal a darkness and so great a death, should be done. And all these things together serve to evince, that this means hath an efficacy, which we have reason to believe both can and will do this work, so as to make religion to prosper and flourish in the world sooner or later.

SERMON VIII.*

WE have shown at large the *efficacy* of the means assigned in the text, a plentiful effusion of the Spirit,

* Preached June 26th, 1678.

for bringing about a happy state of things to the Christian church; in one of those two things, that must be supposed to concur in making up such a happy state; namely,

I. For the revival of the power of religion.[a] Without which the other branch, which we are further to consider, would signify very little to the good state of the church. But this being presupposed, we now proceed to show, how efficacious a means the revival of religion and the prosperous flourishing state of that, by the spirit poured forth, would be—

II. For bringing about an externally happy state of things in the church of God. And it would be so, 1. By removing the causes of public calamities: 2. By working whatsoever doth positively tend unto public good.

1. By removing the causes of public calamities; both the deserving, and the working causes.

Ist, What does deserve public calamities? What so far provokes Divine displeasure, as to inflict them, or to let them befall a people. Nothing doth this but sin, that only troubles a people, and causes an unhappy and improsperous state of things, the hiding of God's face, as the text expresses it. It doth as it were cause an ireful aspect in the countenance of Providence; makes that otherwise shining, smiling face to be hidden and obscure, and clothes it with terror, that it is not to be beheld. The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you; in the language of the text, Isaiah lix. 1, 2. So it hath been threatened that it should be, and so in event it hath been, upon many of the more notable apostacies of the church of God. This hath constantly ensued, his hiding his face; that is, his altering the course of providence, so as that its aspect hath become ireful and terrible. It is foretold, that so it should be upon such delinquencies. God says to Moses, Deut. xxxi. 16, &c. Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be amongst them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. And what will come of that? Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us? and the like you have, chap. xxxii. 18, &c. Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be; for they are a very froward generation, &c. Such threatenings you find unto the Christian churches too, in the 2d and 3d chapters of the Revelations. There it is threatened to the churches of Ephesus, and Pergamos, and Sardis, and Laodicea; that inasmuch as there were such and such things, wherein they were notoriously delinquent; "If you don't repent, I will remove your candlestick, Rev. ii. 5. If you don't repent, I will fight against you with the sword of my mouth, ver. 16." (That means no doubt the threatenings of the word made operative, and brought to execution; as in Hos. vi. 5. I have hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth.) "Except thou repent, I will come against thee as a thief, Rev. iii. 3. And, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.—Be zealous therefore and repent, ver. 16, 19." And thus it hath also in event been, according to the tenor of these threats. If you look over those Psalms, which are the records of the carriage and deportment of God's own peculiar people towards him, and of his dealing with them thereupon; the 78th, 105th, and 106th; all hath but verified that one thing mentioned in Lev. xxvi. 23, 24. that when they should walk contrary unto him, then would he also walk contrary unto them; *i. e.* he hid his face, as you have heard the import of that expression. And it is with the same cloud that he doth as it were cover his face and them too. He covered the daughters of Zion with a cloud in his anger, Lam. ii. 1. So he often did that people of the Jews. And so he hath the Christian churches too in great displeasure: those seven in Asia, those in Greece, and in many other parts of the world that have been famous.

What is it now, that must counterwork that wickedness, which provokes God thus to hide his face? We know his Spirit must do it: when he pours out his Spirit, he ceases to hide his face. That is a quick refining fire, purges the dross; without the purging of which the whole lump is called reprobate silver, rejected of the Lord. When the matter was consulted of, the blessed God is represented as it were disputing with himself, whether not to abandon and disinherit his Israel: and when at length the contrary resolution is taken up, what do you find to be the concurrent resolution with that of not casting them off and laying them aside? Jer. iii. 19. And I said, how shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? Thus the matter is resolved, as in a subserviency to the resolution not to cast them off; Thou shalt call me, my Father, and shalt not turn away from me. "I will put a sonlike disposition into thee, and so the relation shall be continued, and I will not disinherit thee." Thus the thoughts of that severity, of disinheriting and abandoning, came to be laid aside. But the Spirit poured forth removes also—

2dly, The working causes, as well as the provoking causes of such calamities to the church of God; both without and within itself.

[1.] Causes *without* the church itself; the injurious violence of open avowed enemies, the atheistical, infidel, idolatrous world; and all reducible to that head, by which the church of God may be endangered. The effusion of the Spirit will remove this cause of public calamities, either,

1. By subduing such enemies and breaking their power. And while God is among his people and hath not hid his face they may venture to defy all the world. Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us, Isa. viii. 9, 10. "Our matters are in a good state; for we are not deserted and forsaken of the Divine presence, our defence and our glory." How is all the enemies' power gloried over upon this account in the 46th Psalm, and in many like places of Scripture! In that time, when they shall generally fear the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; then it is said, When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him, (Isa. lix. 19.) *i. e.* animate and fill up every part; so as that all that oppose shall even melt away before him. Or,

2. They shall be overawed, so as thereby to be made to surcease and desist from attempts of hostility against the church. For the church, when religion lives in it, (as you know that is to be the first effect of the Spirit to this purpose,) becomes terrible as an army with banners; as the expression is, Cant. vi. 4. Upon life, order will be sure to ensue, and with that goes majesty, and with that terror. There is an awful majesty, you know, sits in the face of a man, while he lives; but if he once become a carcass, the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, and even the very worms of the earth, dare prey upon him. So it is with the church; when it is dead, when religion is become a mere piece of empty, spiritless formality, this makes it look but just like other parts of the world; they will say of it, What are they better than we? The religion of Christians, if you look only to the external formalities of it, hath not so much of a superiority or higher excellency, but that it will be a disregarded thing with them who can easily distinguish between vivid religion and dead. But when the Spirit of the living God puts forth itself in discernible effects, and such as carry an awful aspect with them unto the common reason of men; religion then grows a venerable thing, and the very purpose of opposition and hostility is checked and countermanded, and even quite laid aside. Or else,

3. They become kindly affected by this means unto the church; to those that are seriously religious in the wor.d.

* See page 575.

which we suppose to be, upon so general a pouring forth of the Spirit, a very common thing. Their hearts incline to favour, as we have noted upon another occasion before, that it is apt to be. When there are manifest appearances of God in the restoring of religion, it appears that the thing is of the Lord, the hand of heaven is seen in it. When it was very remarkably so among the first converts, it is said, they had favour with all the people, Acts ii. 47. Upon those manifest appearances of God on behalf of the Israelites under the Egyptian oppression, the Egyptians at length came to favour them. The Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, (Exod. xi. 3.) for they manifestly saw, that God was for them. So natural a respect, from somewhat of a remaining congenerousness, the manifest appearance of any thing divine did of old draw from the reasonable nature of man! Yea,

4. They become sincerely proselyted very generally: that is to be supposed from the many scriptures formerly opened. And so the causes of offence and disturbance to the church from without very much cease, from the vast extension and spreading of its territories: they that were enemies to true Christians on every side, become such even of themselves. That transforming power and influence, which religion and the Spirit of God poured forth will have upon the generality of the spirits of men, is the thing designedly held forth by such expressions as these, Isaiah xi. 6, &c. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. It is subjoined to all this, (ver. 9.) They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Religion shall so diffuse itself, and the Spirit of God go forth with that transforming power, as to turn leopards and lions and beasts of prey into lambs, to make men of ravenous dispositions to become sincere Christians: according to the influence and power of the Spirit of Christ, the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters do the sea, and so there shall be no hurting nor destroying in all the holy mountain of the Lord. My design, as hath been often intimated, is more to show the connexion of these things with one another, than to define the circumstances of the state itself, and when it shall be. In the same manner I conceive the expression is to be understood in Psalm xlv. 5. where, speaking of the prosperous state and progress of the kingdom of Christ, its great improvements, when he shall go on prosperously, conquering and to conquer, he saith; "Thy arrow shall be sharp in the hearts of enemies, whereby the people shall fall under thee. Thy arrow shall be directed even into their very hearts, and so they shall become subject unto thy rule by means of the impressions made upon their hearts."

[2.] Causes of trouble and calamity, *within* the church itself, will by the same means be made to cease too.

We are told what those causes are by the apostle James, chap. iv. 1. From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts? Indeed this is the same cause that was before mentioned, but considered as disquieting and troubling the church of God in the world in another way of operation. The wickedness of the world may be considered, either with reference to the object of it, the great and blessed God, against whom all sin of whatsoever kind is ultimately directed; or with reference to the general subject of it, the world itself which lies in wickedness. According to the former notion of it, as it works in direct reference to God, it is the moral cause of calamities; it provokes God to inflict them, as hath been shown. But beside that, it is to be considered in the other notion, in reference to the subject: and so it hath an immediate malignant efficiency of its own, to work public calamities.

Plain it is, that the covetousness, the pride, the wrathfulness, the envy, the malice, that every where so much abound in the Christian church, are the source of its wars, the things that disquiet it, and will not let it rest: and (which involves them all) self-love; a radical evil, from whence spring all the other, and consequently all the miseries, that do or at any time have infested the church of God in this world. It is the observation of a pagan, that a people's self-love is (as he calls it) the cause of all sins; that too earnest love that every one unduly bears to himself. And the apostle Paul, speaking of the perilous times that should be in the latter age of the world, or the last times, (meaning by that phrase the latter part of the age from the Messiah to the end of the world, according to the known division of time into three ages by the Jews,) signifies that the perilousness of those times should then principally appear, when there should be a more notorious discovery of that great principle of self-love every where in the world. Indeed that hath been a principle ruling the world ever since the breaking off of man from God. Yet we know there are some times of more prevailing wickedness in the world than others are: and this is the character of those perilous times of the last age, that men should be lovers of their own selves, φίλαυτοι, 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2. Or, as the apostle Peter, speaking of the same latter times, expresses it, 2 Pet. ii. 10. men shall be αὐθάδεις, self-pleasers.

It is very obvious how all the other particular evils spring from this one root. What is pride but an overweening conceit of a man's self? too much complacency in and admiration of one's self? What is covetousness, but a labouring to grasp all to oneself? Envy rises, because I see others have the good things which I would fain have myself. When it fares better with a man than it doth with others, then he is proud; when it fares better with others than it does with him, then he is envious. When he is proud upon the former account, that subdues him to the dominion of such other evils, as have most affinity with that; it makes him wrathful, malicious, revengeful, and the like. All these miseries, in respect whereof the last days are said to be perilous, are by the apostles in the fore-mentioned places referred unto self-love, self-pleasing, as the proper diagnostics and characters of such a state of the world. But what kind of self-love is it? or what kind of self is it the love of? It is our most ignoble, meanest self, the basest part of ourselves; the body, the sensitive life, and the good things that are suitable and subservient to that. This self is the great idol set up all the world over, and the undue love of it is the idolatry by which that idol is served: terrene and earthly good, in the several kinds and sorts of it, are the several sorts of sacrifices, by which that idol is from time to time provided for. This being the true state of the case, as wickedness doth more prevail and abound, there is still the higher contestation between idol and idol: so many men, so many idols; and so many altars set up for each several idol. And this makes all the hurry and commotion in each part and corner, every man labouring to grasp as much as he can to the service of his own idol, his own private and particular interest. This hath drawn that inundation of miseries upon the church of God; the wickedness of men hath thus broke out like a flood. The floods of ungodly men, acted by such principles, and by that one principle as radical to all the rest, have overwhelmed the world and the church with miseries.

And where is the cure? Only the Spirit of the Lord lifting up a standard against these floods; and that by turning men from transgression in Zion, Isa. lix. 19, 20. by counterworking that wickedness, that hath prevailed so far and to so high a degree. The Spirit of the living God only can purge and compose at once the troubled state of things. Wickedness can never admit any such thing as quiet. The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked, Isa. lvii. 20, 21. They can neither admit it themselves, nor permit it to others. Now here the great purifier must be the Spirit poured forth; spoken of under the metaphorical expressions of a refiner's fire, and of fuller's soap, Mal. iii. 2. That is a quick and fervent fire, and will certainly make away with the dross and wickedness, when once it comes to pour forth its mighty and fervent influences to that blessed purpose: even though there should be a state of things, as is foretold in Zech. xiii. 8, 9. when two *third* parts of the land should be cut off and die, and only a third be left;

that shall be refined, as silver is refined, and tried, as gold is tried. It is but one and the same labour, that gives purity and peace. The same thing that defiles, disturbs; and the same thing that purges, pacifies, and brings all to a quiet state and happy composure. So the Spirit poured forth will be a most efficacious means to bring about a good state, by removing the causes of public miseries. And also,

2. By working whatsoever hath a positive tendency to the good and happiness of the church. To evidence this, I shall speak, first of the *principles*, which it doth implant. And, secondly, of the *effects*, which it works by those implanted principles, tending to the common prosperity of the whole church.

[1.] The principles, which it doth implant. We may comprehend them all summarily under the name of the Divine image, which it is the great business of the Spirit to restore among men. And I shall particularize no lower than to these two heads,—divine light, and—love; which the Spirit of God poured forth settles and plants in the minds of men. These are the two great things, wherein men are capable of imitating God. By one of the penmen of holy writ, the apostle St. John, in one and the same epistle, God is said to be both light and love. God is light, I John i. 5. God is love, chap. iv. 16. These made somewhat generally to obtain amongst men, cannot but infer a most happy state.

1. Light. When this is diffused, when the knowledge of God comes to cover the earth, (as was said,) as the waters do the sea, it cannot but make a happy peaceful state. There is nothing terrible in light. "A sphere of light (as I remember a heathen speaks) hath nothing in it that can be disquietive; and therefore therein can be nothing but perfect tranquillity." Wherever men are quarrelling with one another, they are quarrelling in the dark, scuffling and fighting with one another in the dark; though every man thinks he sees, which makes the matter so much the worse. It is a real, but an unimagined, unapprehended darkness, that overspreads the world; and in that darkness men are working all the mischiefs and miseries to themselves that can be thought of. There will be an end to that, when the Divine light comes and spreads itself (as it were) in men's lives.

2. Love. When God implants his love in the minds of men, there needs no more. Even that one thing is enough to make a happy world, the love of God dwelling in every breast, transforming them into love. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him, I John iv. 16. A most certain assurance, that all will be well. And I would speak of these three branches of Divine love, (for it is all divine in respect of the root and principle,) as conducing to ma e the world happy; supreme love to God; a due and well regulated love of every man to himself; and love to every other man as to himself. But of these hereafter.

I shall now close with a short word of *Use*. By the drift and tenor of what hath been hitherto discoursed, you may see, that the good and felicity of every person, and so of the church in common, though it come at last in the issue to be an external thing, yet in the root and principle is an internal thing. Every man's happiness or misery grows within himself: and so the common happiness and misery of the church of God grow principally and chiefly within itself. It is the saying of a heathen, Epictetus I mean, "The character or note of an idiot or plebeian is this, that he places the expectation of all his good or of all his evil from without; whereas the note, the certain character of a philosopher, (of a wise or virtuous man, so he means by that term,) is to place all his expectation of good or evil in things that are within himself." It were well if we could but learn this document from a heathen; and learn it well, so as to have the sense of it deeply infixed in our minds and hearts; that hearing of these several causes that work the calamities and troubles of the church of God, we would consider, that, according to our participation in any such calamities, these evils in ourselves do contribute a great deal more to them than the evils in any other men. Let us be convinced of this. Do but apprehend, that if the ambition, or pride, or covetousness, or malice of another man may hurt me, these things within myself do hurt me much more; and there is some spice or other of them in each of our natures. Why should not we be convinced of so plain a thing? Is not a dart in my own breast worse than in an enemy's hand? If I think myself concerned to know, what the pride and covetousness, and malice and ambition, of such and such a man may do against me; if I have any tincture of these evils, (as who dares say he hath not?) within my own soul; have not I a nearer thing to regret, than the evil that only lies in another man? To expect or fear all our hurt from without, and not to fear the next and nearest evil, is the greatest stupidity imaginable.

And then for the causes of common good, and so of our own, as that is involved; we hear, it may be, with a great deal of complacency, of such principles generally implanted in the minds of men. What glorious times would they be, if all other men were such lovers of God, such orderly lovers of themselves, and such lovers of their neighbours, as they should be? but is it not of a great deal more concernment to our own felicity, that we be so ourselves? can the goodness, the piety, the righteousness, the benignity of other men do me good, in comparison of what these things lodged and deeply rooted in my own soul would do? It is true, it were a most desirable thing to have all the world religious; but if all the rest of the world were so, and my own soul vacant of it, what should I be the better for that? If all other men were lovers of their own souls, it would be happy for them; but nothing to me, if I despised my own. Therefore let us learn, what our own present business must be; to labour to have the causes of common calamity wrought out from ourselves, and the causes of common felicity and prosperity inwrought into ourselves. We cannot tell how to mend the state and condition of the world; and our duty reaches not so far; but we have each of us a work to do at home, in our own bosoms. And if ever we expect to see good days, it must be in this way, by being good and doing going, Psalm xxxiv. 14.

SERMON IX.*

We are considering the principles, which the Spirit poured forth doth implant, conducive to the general prosperity and felicity of the people of God. And, as was said before, of the evil and mischievous principles, that naturally work their calamity and misery, that they may be all reduced to an inordinate self-love; so the good principles, which have a tendency to their welfare, may all be referred unto one common head, that of a due and well-tempered, well-proportioned love. When the Spirit of God comes to make a good and happy state of things to obtain and take place in the church; the work of that Spirit, poured forth for this purpose, is to write the laws of God in the hearts of his people. So you may find, (where there is a manifest reference to that future happy state promised, and which we are yet expecting and waiting for,) he speaks in that and in parallel Scriptures of giving his Spirit, and of its immediate workings and operations. And this is its general work, to write his law in the hearts of his people, Jer. xxxi. 33. Now the law, we are told, all the law is fulfilled in that one word, Love, Gal. v. 14. That is the sum and epitome of the whole law. And if we descend a little more to particulars, these three branches of a holy gracious love will do the whole business; that is,—1. That love to *God*, which he requires and claims;—2. That love of *particular persons*, each of them to themselves, which is due and regular;—3. Their love to *other men*, as to themselves; or measured by that love, which they duly bear to themselves.

1. Consider what the love of God is, according as the law requires; and that we must therefore believe will be, when God pours forth his Spirit generally, and by it writes his law upon the hearts of men. Here is the first and great thing in the law, as our Lord Jesus Christ himself gives us the system of it, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with

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all thy mind, Matt. xxii. 37, 38. What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, &c. and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul? Deut. x. 12. Do but consider, what this would do to make a happy world or a happy church, to have the love of God exalted into its just dominion and supremacy in the minds and souls of men: that is, suppose a universal agreement among men to love God with one consent, with all their minds, and with all their souls, and with all their strength, as far as the bounds of the church may be set. There must be considerable in this love to God, 1. Zeal for his interest and honour: and, 2. Desire of happiness in him. One is love to him, as our supreme and sovereign Lord: the other love to him, as our supreme and sovereign Good, our Portion and Felicity. Now,

1st, Do but suppose, a general agreement amongst us in the former of these,—that entire devotedness unto the interest of God, which his love doth most certainly include and must possess the hearts of men with;—what an influence must this have! When there shall be no other contention amongst men, than who can do most for God, who can most greaten him in the world; when men shall generally agree in an entire devotedness unto the sovereign, supreme interest of the Lord of heaven and earth; don't you think, that would do much of this happy business? For what cause of contention can there be amongst men then? There are no quarrels in heaven; where that is the entire business of all, the thing wherein all consent and agree, to praise and honour, to adore and glorify their common Ruler and Lord: and so far as the happy state we are speaking of shall obtain in the church of God on earth, so far that will be the very image of the church of God in heaven. Where there is an agreement among persons upon an evil principle, do but consider how it compacts such people amongst themselves; see how united the people of Ephesus were in a false religion! as is noted by that orator, who bespoke them on occasion of the commotion amongst them upon the apostle Paul's coming thither, in Acts xix. 35. "What man is there, that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?" It was it seems a most observable unanimity, that was amongst this people in this one thing, unto that degree, that the whole city is said to be but one worshipper. Now when the church shall come to be but one worshipper of the great God, all devoted to him to serve his interest; when there shall be but one altar, the many altars mentioned before being all overturned by that inundation of the Spirit poured forth, and now but one great interest to be served; must not this make a happy state of things so far as it obtains? It is the multiplicity and privateness of men's designs and ends, that sets all the world together by the ears, and makes men every where ready to tear one another in pieces; whether they go under the Christian name, or not, that makes no difference in the case; as certainly a wolf is never a whit the less a wolf for being clothed with a sheep's skin. But when persons shall become one, consenting and agreeing, by the influence of that great principle of divine love, in the main design and business of religion; this must produce a happy harmony. It is a very plain case, that if you draw a circumferential line, and place one centre within that circumference, you may draw as many straight direct lines as you will from any part of the circumference to that centre, and it is impossible you should ever make them to intersect or interfere with one another; but let there be several centres, and then you cannot draw lines from any part, but they must necessarily intersect and cross one another ever and anon. Here is the case before us. It is the making of many centres, that causes men to interfere, while every man makes his own self his end; no two men's interests can throughout and always agree; but that which this or that man does, to please and serve himself, disserves or displeases somebody else, and hereupon comes a quarrel. It is manifest, that sincere religion would cure all this: when there is but one end, and every man's business is to serve and glorify their common Maker and Lord; when all thus agree in the love of god, there would be no interfering: and how would that contribute to external prosperity!

2dly, Do but consider the other thing, which true love to God includes, that is, the desire of him as our portion, our best and supreme good; if that shall once come to be universal, (as it shall be, whenever the happy time comes, when the Spirit shall generally write the law of God in the hearts of men,) it must needs make stirs and contentions and troubles to cease from amongst men, so far as it doth obtain. For, (as was intimated before,) where self-love is the ruling principle, self the great idol, and something or other of terrene good the sacrifice wherewith this idol is to be served; so the business of every man is to grasp in all that he can of the good things of this earth for himself. Now terrene good is (as our bodily part itself is, unto which it is most adapted and suited) of such a nature, that it cannot be severed and divided into parts without being diminished and lessened in the several parts: it is not partible without diminution; so that the more one enjoys of it, the less every one else enjoys. But now, when the blessed God himself is the best good to every one, every one enjoys his share without the diminution of others' share. It is from the limitedness and unpartibleness of terrene good, without the lessening of the several parts, that it comes to be the object or occasion, about which or upon account whereof there is so much exercise of concupiscence, inordinate desire, envy, malice; every one labouring to catch from another, as thinking another's portion to be more than comes to his share, and his own less than should come to his: there is the occasion, (and the corrupt nature of man is apt to take occasion from any thing,) for stirring the lusts and passions I am speaking of, in reference to earthly good. But there is no occasion at all for the exercise of any such disquieting passions here; when there is a common agreement to make God their portion, to esteem him so with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee;" when this comes to be the common sense with men, no man's share is diminished by the greater and larger enjoyments of another. And therefore you do not find, that there is wont to be any exercise of disquieting passions in this case. Did you ever know any man, that entertained malice against another, because he himself desired to have very much of God, and he thought the other enjoyed more; there is no place or pretence at all for any such thing; because let another have ever so much, there is enough in the same fountain for him and for me too.

2. Consider, what love towards a man's self is in the due kind and degree of it; and how that, when it shall come to obtain generally amongst men, must make towards the good and happy state of the church. That due and just love of a man's self, will have its exercise in these two things; 1. A strict care of his mind and inner man; and, 2. A due care also of the body or outward man.

1st. A very strict care of the mind and inner man. I remember a heathen, speaking of self-love, saith; "It is true indeed, that every man ought to have a love to himself; there is a self-love that is divine, which God makes him to bear to himself." And by how much the more a man is a lover of himself with that kind of love, so much the less is he apt to disquiet other men, or to contribute any thing to common miseries. Now he that loves himself duly and aright, will principally and in the first place love his own soul; he will labour to cultivate that, to fit it for God, for his service and enjoyment; and about soul-concernments men's interests do not differ. Will you but suppose men thus employed and busied, intently taken up about their own eternal felicity and the present forming of their spirits in order thereto; such will not have leisure to give trouble to other men. They, that are all busy about this great affair, to intend their own spirits, to keep their hearts with all diligence, to depress whatsoever may be troublesome to themselves or offensive to God within them, to improve and adorn their souls, to fit them for, and render them capable of, a blessed eternity; you may be sure will find very little leisure to concern themselves with the affairs of the world, to the trouble and disquiet of that; though, if they can be any way serviceable, they will be most earnest and ready to do that, from the same temper and disposition of spirit. They are the most trouble-

some people every where, that do least mind their own souls, and have least business to do at home.

2ndly, A due care of the body also is included in regular self-love. And that would signify not a little to a happy time; that is, if there were that care commonly taken of the outward man, and of what doth more immediately influence that, the appetites and affections and passions of the lower soul, wherein the true notion of temperance consists; which is one of the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v. 23. If men could generally keep the flesh and its inordinate cravings under a government, so that it shall not be gratified in every thing that it would, nor sensual inclinations be suffered to grow into exorbitances: if all those things, that need to be corrected and reduced to order by sumptuary laws, were so reduced by a living law in every man's own self; if men were generally become by inward inclination chaste, sober; willing to content themselves with what is useful for the ends and purposes of nature, without making provision for the flesh and its lusts, to satisfy and content them; not addicting themselves to eat or drink more than is necessary, or to idleness and sloth and other pieces of indulgence to the flesh; there would be connected with such things as these, contentedness in every man's mind; (for lust is more costly than nature, covets more and must have more;) and hereupon necessarily a great deal of tranquillity and peace. For while men's minds are contented within themselves, they are very little apt to give discontent to others: but persons discontented themselves, restless and full of trouble, (which they are only by their lusts,) are fit instruments then to give all the world trouble, so far as their power can go. Nor would it be a small ingredient in the common external happiness of such a time, that by this means there would be a more general healthiness of body among people. If that great fruit of the Spirit, temperance, did commonly obtain; (by which we are able each one to possess his vessel, his own body, in sanctification and honour, 1 Thess. iv. 4. to attend his own body even as the temple of the Holy Ghost;) then there would not be that general cause of complaint concerning consuming and loathsome sicknesses, that are the great calamity of the age, and owing so manifestly in a high degree to unbridled lust. In that happy state of the church of God, wherein it is said, that the inhabitants of Zion shall not say they are sick, shall have no more cause to complain of sickness, because they shall be forgiven their iniquity, (Isa. xxxiii. 24.) I reckon, that forgiveness of sin hath a reference to that happy state of things, not only as it puts a stop to the inundations of Divine judgments in other kinds, but also as it hath a direct tendency to keep off the evil mentioned: that is, when sin is forgiven, the power of it is broken at the same time: God doth never forgive sin, and leave it reigning; but he forgives and breaks the power of it at once. Now, as when sin is not forgiven, men are left to the swing and *impetus* of their own lusts, and so are the executioners of God's vengeance upon themselves; so, when sin is forgiven, it languishes and dies; such a people grow more pure, holy, temperate, chaste, sober in all their conversation; and so there comes to be less appearance of sickness and ails, and those calamities with which men naturally affect their own flesh by the indulgence of their lusts. So that by the Spirit poured forth, and so a principle of due love to a man's self being once implanted and excited, and kept in due exercise, it must infer generally both more contented minds and more healthful bodies; and these things cannot but signify a great deal to make a very good time.

There is a third branch of love, that must obtain, when God comes to write his law in the hearts of men by his Spirit; love as it respects other men. But of this hereafter.

By what hath been said, it seems a plain case, that the Spirit of God poured forth would make a very happy *external* state of things. And since it is so proper and direct a means, and would be so efficacious, were it poured forth; truly it cannot but be matter of very sad reflection, that the thing should not be done; that there should be so great, so dreadful, a restraint of this blessed Spirit in our time and age, as we have cause to observe and complain of. It is matter of sad reflection, if you consider, what as an effect, it carries the signification of; and also what further mournful effects it carries a presignification of, as a cause.

[1.] Consider, what an evil it carries in it the signification of, as an effect. The principle of such a restraint must needs be a very great degree of Divine displeasure. It is the highest expression of such displeasure, that we can think of, and the most dreadful piece of vengeance, when God saith; Now because men have offended me at so high a rate, I will take away my Spirit from them. This was the act of vengeance, wherewith he punished the provocations of the old world, when the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and the imagination of his heart was all evil, and that continually; "Well!" saith he, "my Spirit shall no more strive with man, (Gen. vi. 3, 5.) I have done, my Spirit shall strive no more." It signifies the displeasure to be so much the greater, by how much the easier such a happy work as this might be wrought and brought about amongst us; it is no more but to let his Spirit breathe, and all our troubles, and all the causes of them, must vanish at once: no, but saith God, "My Spirit shall not breathe, shall not strive." The event speaks the determination and purpose: it doth not breathe or strive. Are we so stupid as not to observe that? is there that Spirit of love, of prayer, and supplication, stirring, as hath been wont? It is very terrible to think, that there should be such a restraint of that blessed Spirit, upon account of the signification made by it of Divine displeasure.

[2.] Consider, the presignification it also carries with it of most dreadful effects to ensue, when in displeasure his Spirit retires and is gone. The not pouring forth of the Spirit signifies, that wrath must be poured forth. When the Spirit is restrained, wrath shall not be restrained long. The pouring forth of the Spirit and of wrath do, as it were, keep turns; there is an alternation between them. When the Spirit is not poured forth, then there is blindness, hardness, an eye that cannot see, an ear that cannot hear, and a heart that cannot understand; as you have them joined in Isaiah vi. 10. And how long must this continue? Lord, how long? saith the prophet there, ver. 11. it follows, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man." That is the answer given. And therefore methinks we should be all in a kind of trembling expectation, while the matter is so manifest, that this blessed Spirit is under restraint. What doth it signify, but a purpose and determination of the offended majesty of the blessed God? "Let the lusts of men have their swing, let them rend and tear one another by the violent agitations and hurries of their own furious lusts." He hides his face all the while. I will hide my face, saith he, I will see what their end shall be, Deut. xxxii. 20. It is not difficult to apprehend, what will come of them, when once I give them up and leave them to themselves: then there need no other hands to be armed against them but their own; they will soon be self-destroyers: each man would be so to himself, if given up to the furious hurry and *impetus* of indwelling lust. Certainly we have reason to conclude, that this age hath highly displeased the Lord, that his Spirit is so much withdrawn, that could so easily work a cure: but yet he will not, he thinks fit to express resentment by holding under restraint that Spirit, that could rectify and set all right, and make us a very happy people in a moment.

SERMON X.*

WE are yet speaking of the tendency of that radical principle of love to make an external happy state of things, which we are to expect the Spirit when poured forth to implant. We have spoken of love to God, and of regular self-love; and of the influence which these severally must have towards a prosperous state.

3. Consider what love to other men, as to themselves, would do in this matter. This supposes that second branch we have been insisting on, a due love to ourselves, as not only allowed but enjoined us; when it is made the

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measure of the love we are to bear and exercise toward other men: and therefore, as being a deeper and more fundamental law of nature, that must be supposed to be more excellent and noble in its own kind. *Perfectissimum in suo genere est mensura reliquorum.* But the Spirit, whose work and business it is to write the laws of God in the hearts of men, when he shall be poured forth, will write this also, that they love other men as they ought to love themselves: especially in the latter days, the times which our discourse refers to. Because so great a part of that law is wrapped up in this love; therefore it cannot but be that in those latter days, when God doth design to reform and new-mould things, the felicity and happy state of things shall be brought about very much by the mediation and interveniency of this love and the influence thereof. And because this love hath a most direct influence this way, I have designed the more to enlarge upon it; and shall speak of it according to that double reference, which our subject obliges us to consider; that is,—its reference to God and his Spirit, as the author of it; and—its reference unto a happy state of things, as that which is to be brought about by it—its reference upwards to God, and downwards to the world—which two considered together will amount to thus much; that by God's working of this love more generally amongst men, that happy and blessed issue, that we are speaking of, is to be accomplished.

1st, Consider we its reference to God and to his Spirit; which we are necessarily to consider; otherwise the pouring forth of the Spirit would not include it. And it is requisite we should insist upon this, inasmuch as such love is too commonly meanly thought of; it were well, if there were not cause to say, that too generally professors of religion at a higher and stricter rate had not too low an opinion of this love in the Scripture regulation of it, the loving of others as ourselves, the measure unto which it is to be adjusted. And true it is indeed, that they who know no more of this matter than only the mere sound of the words, they into whose heart the thing never entered, and with whom it never yet became a vital, living law, will think it but a mean thing. It looks in such persons' eyes, while it is only clothed with a verbal representation and no more, as a meanly habited person at their doors, whom they guess at only by his garb; and if such a one should have meanness objected to him only from thence, and the case will admit it, it is but a doing himself right to speak of his parentage, and tell how nobly he is descended. And so much are we to do on the behalf of this love, to let you know it is a heaven-born thing, descended of God, that owes itself to heaven; it is of no lower and meaner extraction than so. Don't think I mean by it that common carnal love, which wicked men as such may bear one to another; which is a more mean and less innocent love, than that which birds and beasts have to those of their own kind; but I mean that love, whereby any are enabled to love men as men, and holy men as holy men, in God, and for God's sake, and upon his account. This is a heavenly, divine thing, the product of the blessed, eternal Spirit of God alone. For evincing of that, weigh these several considerations, which the Scriptures do plainly and plentifully afford us.

1. That even this love is called the love of God. So it is most plainly in 1 John iii. 17. Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him; how dwelleth the love of God in him? So noble and sublime a thing is not to be more meanly spoken of, it is to be called the love of God; no title inferior to that is suitable to it.

2. That God is called the God of this love. Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you, 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

3. It is expressly said to be of God, and men upon the account of this love to be born of God. So in 1 John iv. 7, 8. Beloved, let us love one another; for love (this love plainly) is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God; is acquainted with God, intimate and inward with God; as a man's own children would be with him, that are born of him, in whom his own nature is. Whereupon, on the other hand, they are spoken of as mere strangers to God, such as have nothing to do with him, nor he with them, that are destitute of this love. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. And again,

4. That it is plainly made a character of the elect of God, distinguishing and severing of them from the refuse world, Colos. iii. 12. Put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, &c. Intimating plainly to us, that wheresoever God doth place his own love, there he doth impress and beget this love.

5. It is placed amongst the fruits of the Spirit, and even in the front of them, Gal. v. 22. The fruit of the Spirit is love; in opposition to the hatred, wrath, strife, &c. mentioned in the foregoing verses as the works of the flesh. And we are told in Eph. v. 9. that the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth—in all goodness;—it is the proper work of the Spirit upon the spirits of men to fill them with goodness, propensions and inclinations to do good; and so to beget in them that love, which must be the spring of all such doing of good.

6. Walking in the Spirit is directed with a special eye and reference unto the exercise of this love; as you may see in Gal. v. the 14th, 15th, and 16th verses compared together. All the law is fulfilled in one word, (he means the whole law of the second table,) even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, (the opposite to this love, or that which follows upon the want of it, or from the opposite principle,) take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, (observe the inference,) Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. To walk in the Spirit is to walk in the exercise of this love.

7. It is spoken of as a peculiar, inseparable concomitant of that light, which is from God and the Spirit of God, and made and transmitted by the Gospel. Observe to this purpose, 1 John ii. 7, &c. Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word, which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith, he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. A new commandment this is, and not new: not new, in respect of the substance of it; for so it is one of the ancient, substantial, fundamental, great laws of nature; and wheresoever the revelations of God's mind and will is to be found, that is and was ever to be found; but new, in respect to that more glorious way of recommendation, which it now hath in and by the Gospel, and the Spirit of Christ; which, wheresoever it comes to obtain, in what soul soever, transforms that soul into a heavenly region, a region of calm, and mild, and benign, and holy light; in that light dwells this love, amidst that light; as the contrary, hatred, is a fiend that lives and lurks in darkness, and can dwell no where else. They that are destitute of this principle, have darkness for their region; they can dwell no where but in malignant, disconsolate darkness: there they wander as forlorn bewildered creatures. The apostle Peter having spoken of this love under several names, brotherly kindness, charity, and other expressions that are congeneous, tells us, 2 Pet. i. 9. that he that lacketh these things, is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

8. It closely adheres unto that principle of life, which is begotten in all the children of God, when they become his children. The begetting of souls unto God, is certainly the implanting in them and deriving to them a principle of Divine life. With that principle this love is complicated, or it is a part of that very principle; so as that by it the children of God and the children of the devil are distinguished from one another. He that hath this principle, hath passed from death to life, is in a state of life; as you may find by comparing together several verses of the I John iii. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, (therefore he is of the devil,) neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message, that ye

heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous, ver. 10, 11, 12. And ver. 14. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death; hath no participation of that vital principle. He is a murderer, ver. 15. and ye know, that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. None that is apt to destroy the life of another, can be supposed to have a principle of Divine life in himself, the beginning of eternal life. So that, divide the world into two seeds, and they are God's and the devil's. Those that are God's, live the life of God; have a life derived and communicated to them from God, wherein this same love is a part: and they that are destitute of it, are all to be reckoned to the other seed; they belong to the devil's kingdom; for to be destitute of this, implies a being possessed with the contrary principle: no man's soul can be neutral in this case. But as to all such good principles, as are due unto the original rectitude of man and his nature as originally right; if these be wanting, they are privately wanting, and are excluded by the opposite principles obtaining and having place in their room and stead: the soul of man had that and such principles as are duly belonging to him; it cannot be *rasa tabula*; but if the true and proper impression be not there, there is another impression, and not none. And therefore it is consequent in the next place,

That this love must needs be a great part of the Divine image and nature, that is to be found in all that appertain to God.

All these things taken together do sufficiently entitle the Spirit of God to it, as the great Author and Parent of it. And that being once plain and clear,

2dly, We may consider the other reference of this love, its reference downwards towards the world: and it cannot but be consequent, that wheresoever the Spirit poured forth doth work, it must needs work a very happy state of things, and would make this world a very pleasant region. For what! would it not make, think you, very happy days indeed to have men generally made like God, transformed into the Divine image? God is love; and he that loves, bears his image: he, whose soul is under the dominion of such a love, is a true living representation of an the goodness and benignity and sweetness of God's own blessed nature: and would it not make a happy state, if men were generally made such? so to bear themselves to one another, so to converse and walk together, as holding forth the image of God, according to the dictates of a nature received from God, a Divine nature put into them. But for the particular eviction of this, it will appear by considering the proper, natural, genuine workings of such love, being itself once inwrought. Consider to that purpose,—what it would exclude, and—what it would beget.

I. What it would exclude.

1. It would exclude all hard thoughts amongst men concerning one another. Love thinketh no evil; as one of the characters of it is in 1 Cor. xiii. 5. Further than necessity and irrefragable evidence doth impose, it would not take up so much as an ill thought of any one. It is full of candour and ingenuity, and apt to make the best construction of every word and action, and takes every thing in the best sense that is capable of being put upon it. And what a spring of mischief and misery in the world would be shut up, dried up, if that proneness to hard, harsh, and frequently unjust thoughts, were by the workings of such a Spirit of love erased out of the minds and hearts of men!

2. It would exclude every thing of pride and insolence towards others, vying with them, envying of them, which proceeds from pride. Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

3. It would exclude selfish designs; and with what tragedies and desolations do they fill the world! Love seeketh not her own things, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. The exhortation is, Phil. ii. 4. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Indeed it comes from that pride mentioned before, that men think all belong to them, and if they can grasp ever so much, it is no more than their due: and therefore we have these things so conjoined in the place just mentioned, ver. 3, 4. Each esteeming other better than themselves, and, not seeking his own things, but also the things of others.

Men are so much intent upon seeking their own things, are all for themselves, because every man is apt to esteem himself before all other men; but when we come to esteem others better than ourselves, (I am worthy of nothing, any mean thing is good enough for me;) then pride and selfishness are both excluded together by love.

4. It excludes all aptness to injure another. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, Rom. xiii. 10. Love so measured, whereby I love my neighbour even as myself, and whence therefore it comes to pass that I would no more hurt him than I would myself, and would no more cheat him than I would myself, no more oppress and crush him than I would myself; would not this make a happy world, do we think? the fruit of the Spirit is in all righteousness, Eph. v. 9.

5. As it would by these means exclude all aptness to offend others; so it would exclude a proneness to receive offence; and so make greatly to the quiet of the world. A good man, one himself full of love and goodness, is very little prone to take offence. As a heathen philosopher said concerning such a one; "A good man neither doth injure, nor is apt to resent an injury." So another discourses largely to show, that *in sapientem non cadit injuria*: injury doth not fall, doth not enter and sink (he means) into the mind and soul of a good, a wise, and virtuous man. This love excludes a captious disposition, apt to take offence at every thing, and to pick quarrels upon any or upon no occasion. What happy families would there be, what happy neighbours, when such a disposition should be excluded and banished by the overruling power of a Spirit of love! There would be no fractions in families, no parties, no maligning of one another; which commonly have their rise from an aptness to snarl at any thing that goes cross.

II. What it would beget.

1. It would beget mutual trust and confidence among men and Christians in one another; which makes not a little unto the common welfare. How sad is the case, when a man still continually converses with them whom he cannot trust, and they cannot trust him! A mutual confidence and trust in one another is fundamental to all society, to the good and prosperity of it. The apostle desires to be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, that have no faith, 2 Thess. iii. 2. It is probable he means, that have not trustiness, faith in the passive sense; that are unconversable men, such in whom we can place no faith. It is a dreadful thing to live in such a world or age, when a man must perpetually stand upon his guard, be so very cautious in all his converses and words and actions; "I don't know whom to trust, whom to deal with." When this Spirit of love shall have to do more in the world, as men are generally made more sincere and good; so they shall generally be more trusted: jealousy and suspicion and mistrust and misgiving thoughts concerning one another are gone, and they are secure concerning one another; as no more suspecting, that such a man hath an ill design upon me, than I have upon myself.

2. It would produce mutual pity. That would be a good world, when every man resents another's condition even as his own, and weeps with them that weep, as well as rejoices with them that do rejoice, Rom. xii. 15.

3. It would produce a promptitude to do one another good upon all occasions. Such a love, by the Spirit poured forth coming commonly to obtain, will make men disposed to do good, as opportunity occurs, Gal. vi. 10. As we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

4. It will beget a delight in one another's welfare, a well-pleasedness in the prosperity of others, that all things go well with them.

5. It will introduce mutual converse, solace and delight in one another's society. When a man shall see the face of his friend or neighbour as the face of an angel of God; be full of love, and the other full of love; nothing but goodness flowing and reflowing; this will surely make a good time, when the Spirit of God poured forth shall generally influence the spirits of men unto such a temper.

This must needs make a very happy state of things, make the church on earth the very emblem of the church in heaven; as the truth and sincerity of religion and godliness is not another thing from the felicity and blessedness of heaven, in the nature and kind. It is the same church, that hath the primordials of blessedness here, and the perfection of it hereafter. This is one great part of that blessedness, when all are inclined by the operation of that Spirit, whose fruit is in all goodness, to seek and desire and rejoice in the good of one another, as they would do for their own.

We can now easily frame to ourselves the idea of a very happy time; and we ought to believe, that the Spirit of God can work all that we can think, and a great deal more, when his own time and pleasure is. What hath been suggested, must produce tranquillity in every man's own spirit; which will infer common tranquillity. They, that have themselves unquiet, disturbed spirits, are the great troublers of the world. Therefore the devil works all that mischief to mankind, because he is himself a restless creature, going up and down, seeking a rest, but finding none. Men will be at rest in their own spirits, when they come to be under the possession and dominion of such a spirit as we have spoken of.

SERMON XI.*

WE have been evincing the efficacy and sufficiency of an effusion of the blessed Spirit, such as we hope for in the latter times, to produce not only a prosperous state of religion, but also an external peaceful state of the church, in consequence of the other; and this last, not only by removing the causes of general calamities; but by working likewise whatever hath a positive tendency to public good. Upon this head it was proposed to consider,—1st. The *principles*, which the Spirit poured forth is supposed to implant. These have been distinctly considered.[a] And we now proceed to consider,

[2.] The effects, which the Spirit works by those implanted principles, tending to the common prosperity of the whole church. They may be reduced to these two, *Union* and *Order:* which will, both of them, promote very happy times for the church of God.

1. Union amongst Christians is one of those great effects, which are to be wrought by the Spirit poured forth, as a thing wherein such a good state of things doth very much consist. Here I shall show,

1. That such a union amongst Christians will contribute very much to a happy state in the church of God, whenever it is brought about. It would, first, secure it very much from external violence. Hereby it would be terrible "as an army with banners," would dismay enemies, and such as might design to trouble it. Such union would make way for undisturbed communion. And, secondly, within the church itself there would be free and pleasant commerce. Christians would not be at a loss and difficulty, what way they were to take in order to the stated discharge of incumbent Christian duties. And what in both these respects such a union will contribute unto the common felicity of the Christian church, we are too well taught to apprehend, by our experience and observation of what we have felt or heard of the mischiefs and miseries of the church in both these kinds. How miserably hath Christendom been worried by the Turkish power, upon account of its own divisions! and within the Christian church itself, never hath it suffered more turmoils and trouble and vexation than from intestine division. It hath been a common observation in the former days, that the Arian persecution was as cruel and wasting to the sincere Christians as ever the paganish persecutions were; and some have reckoned, a great deal more. And we do not need to tell you, what the popish persecutions have been upon the protestants, and what persecutions have been even among protestants of one another. The church hath first been broken into parties, then these several divided parties have fallen to contending, and those contentions have grown to that height, that nothing less than the ruin of each several party hath been designed by another. And you cannot but observe or have known, that differences upon the slightest and most trivial matters have been managed with that heat and animosity, that nothing less could content and satisfy than even to crush unto utter ruin those that have dissented. But where were all that contention, if the contending parties were become all one? and where were all that hatred and enmity and malice, that hath managed these contentions? For what! doth any united thing, entire within itself, hate itself, and seek to ruin itself? I proceed therefore to show,

2. That it is the word of God's own Spirit to effect such a union; and consequently, that when it shall be generally poured forth, such a union must needs generally obtain. And the matter will be very clear from sundry Scripture considerations: as,

1st, We find in Scripture this matter mystically and allegorically represented; that is, that by the anointing of this Spirit, that precious ointment plentifully poured forth upon the head of our great High Priest, and diffusing itself unto all that appertain and belong to his body, that good and pleasant thing should be brought about, of brethren's dwelling together in unity. This is typically represented by the ointment shed upon Aaron, diffused unto the skirts of his garments, Ps. cxxxiii. 1, 2. It can have no other meaning, but that the anointing of the Holy Ghost, eminently and in the first place upon our Lord Jesus Christ, and thence diffused to all that relate to his body, brings this blessed thing about.

2dly, We find this anointing of the Holy Ghost upon Christians mentioned in Scripture as the great preservative against divisions. So you may see by perusing the greater part of 1 John, chap. ii. There is a discourse (as it is much the subject of the epistle) about the vital love that ought to be amongst the brethren; and thence he comes to take notice of a danger that would threaten Christians from the many antichrists that would arise, and that had in part risen, ver. 18. As ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. For so it was said that it should be in the latter times, or in the last part of time, even that from Christ unto the end of the world. Now wheresoever there are such antichrists starting up, pro-christs, mock-christs, those concerning whom it should be said, "Here is Christ, and there is Christ;" every one of these makes it his business to draw away a part; and so all their design is division, to snatch to themselves and draw off from Christ; (he that gathers not with him, scattereth;) their endeavour and aim is to divide. But, as a great preservative against the malignity of this design, the apostle tells them, that they had an unction from the Holy One, ver. 20. There was their security: and at ver. 26, 27. These things have I written unto you, concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you; the anointing of this Spirit, whereof we speak. A plain signification, that the genuine work of this Spirit is to unite, and to hold the parts of the body of Christ united, tight and firm unto one another. As much as if he should have said; "You were lost, the body of Christ were dissolved, were it not for such an anointing; there are many that make it their business to draw away here a limb, and there a limb, to pluck and dissect it part from part; but ye have an anointing, there is all your security."

3dly, The divisions, which fall out in the church of Christ, we find in Scripture attributed unto the want and absence and destitution of the Spirit. A plain argument, that union is its work where it is, and according to the degree in which it is amongst the people of God, Jude 19. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. And as a like note and expression of sensuality, you have the apostle Paul speaking, in Rom. xvi. 17, 18. Mark them which cause divisions and offences, —and avoid them: for they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly. A sensual sort of men, amongst whom there is little appearance of the Spirit, of being governed by the pure and holy Spirit of God. And whom can we think him to reflect upon in

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a See page 588.

such expressions, those that separate themselves, and cause divisions, but such as do make new terms of communion in the church of Christ, which Christ himself hath never made, and insist upon them; "You shall not have communion with us, unless you will come to these terms;" as the Gnostics of old did; patching up a religion, partly out of Judaism, and partly out of heathenism, and partly out of Christianity; and so making themselves a distinct body upon new terms from the rest of Christians. And so the papists have since done; and being associated and compacted together upon these terms, now assume to themselves the name and title of the church; they only are the church; cutting off themselves by such measures as these from all the rest of Christians, as if they were none of the church, because they do not consent with them in things that are beside Christianity and against it. And by how much the less and more minute the things are, by which persons make such difference and distinction, upon which they sort and sever themselves from the rest of Christians, so as to exclude all others; so much the more groundless and ridiculous is the division. A like case, as if a company of men should agree amongst themselves to be distinguished from other men by such or such a habit, such or such a colour of their garments, and call themselves mankind, and deny all others to be mankind; or as if a party in the city should distinguish themselves by some little trivial distinction, and call themselves the city, and deny all the rest to be citizens. This is from not having the Spirit. That Spirit, wheresoever it is and works in power, works like itself, suitably unto the greatness and excellency of such a Spirit, and suitably to the grand designs of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Spirit it is. It possesses and takes up the minds of men with things that are great, and does not teach them to insist upon themselves, or to impose and urge upon others, niceties and small trivial matters. Is this like the Spirit of the great and holy God? like the wisdom and holiness of that Spirit? or suitable to the greatness of those designs, which it is to manage amongst men? So they, that divide upon such accounts as these are, "are sensual, not having the Spirit, and serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies." And therefore, according to the degree in which such divisions have taken place amongst Christians, they have been spoken of not as spiritual, but as carnal. I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal; saith the apostle to the Corinthians, I Cor. iii. 1. "I could not tell how to look upon you, or converse with you, or apply myself to you, as spiritually-minded men; but as men miserably carnal, even lost in carnality:" for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? ver. 3. It is not like a Christian spirit, like the Christian design, but like other men. And therefore we also find, that where the works of the flesh are enumerated, Gal. v. 19, &c. among them come seditions, heresies, διχοστασίαι and αἱρέσεις; by which there are sidings, part-takings, part set against part, one party against another; and severings, divulsions, and rendings in the church, plucking it as it were piecemeal this way and that. In opposition whereto divers things, that have the contrary tendency, as love, meekness, peace, &c. are made the fruits of the Spirit in the following verses.

4thly, The unity, that doth obtain in the Christian church, in what degree soever it doth obtain, is called the unity of the Spirit: as in Eph. iv. 3. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. A unity therefore no doubt it is, whereof the Spirit is the author and the preserver; according as it doth keep the bond of peace unbroken amongst Christians, keeps them in a peaceable temper and deportment towards one another. The Spirit of God is the warrantee of the church's peace, and it is his part to preserve it entire; but yet so, as that every one hath a part of his own in a way of duty, and in subordination to the Spirit of God, to act too; and must contribute to it, each one in his place and station. And therefore, as though there be never so potent a warrantee of peace amongst nations, it is possible that these nations may by their own default fall foul upon one another; so it may be proportionably in this case. Christians by indulging the first risings of another spirit, a contentious, malignant spirit, may grieve that Spirit that is to be their preserver, causing it to retire and withdraw; and so he may leave them to look on, and see what their end will be, and what they will bring matters to themselves: as, when he hides his face, and withdraws his Spirit, the great God saith, I will hide my face, and see what the end will be, Deut. xxxii. 20. But what unity there is, that is true and of the right kind, is the unity of the Spirit: and that shows it is his proper work, where it doth obtain, and according to the measure wherein it is poured forth, to cause and preserve such unity.

5thly, The subject of such a union is also the seat and receptacle and habitation of the communicated Spirit. That, which is the subject of such a union, is also the subject and dwelling-place (as I may speak) of the indwelling Spirit: it comes to dwell there, where the proper subject of this union is. That is a signification to us, that it hath a great influence upon this union; that where it dwells, there cannot but be some union, a union even in the main and principal things amongst all living Christians. They are all come as lively stones unto the living corner-stone, (1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.) and compacted into a habitation of God through the Spirit, Eph. ii. 22. Where the union is, there the Spirit is, in contradistinction to all the rest of the world. That part, where the Spirit of God inhabits, is his church. And therefore to be added to the church, or to become Christians, if a man become so indeed, is at the same time to receive the Spirit. Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit? Gal. iii. 2, 3. They were supposed to have received the Spirit, and to have begun in the Spirit, inasmuch as they were Christians. And therefore one of the last things, that the apostle Peter spoke to his hearers, in that sermon by which so many thousands were converted, was, Repent,—and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost, Acts ii. 38. If ye be converts in truth, the Holy Ghost immediately comes upon you. Indeed in their becoming converts it seizes them: and when it hath made them converts, and formed them into a habitation, then it comes and dwells, and they receive it as an inhabitant; as a house must be built, before it be inhabited; and he that was the builder, is the inhabiter. Hereupon it is said, that they that have not the Spirit of Christ are none of his, Rom. viii. 9. They that are related to him, and they that are unrelated, are discerned by this, the having or not having his Spirit: Christ's Spirit enters and possess as all his. The true Christian church, the mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ, as that is the seat and subject of the union whereof we are speaking, so it is also the residence of the Spirit: and therefore certainly the Spirit hath much to do in the business of this union.

6thly, The very cause of this union amongst Christians, so far as it doth obtain, is the oneness of this Spirit. It is because that Spirit is one, that dwells every where in them all, that they are one. And so it doth appear, that the Spirit is not only there seated, and dwells in the same subject where the union is; but it is the very cause, why there is such a union in the body, because it dwells in every part of it. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, Eph. iv. 4. And the reason why the members of the body, though they are many, are yet said to make but one body, is, because by one Spirit they are all baptized into one body, and have been made to drink into one Spirit, I Cor. xii. 13. As if it should have been said, "You are so little one upon any other account, or under any other notion, than only as one Spirit hath diffused itself amongst you and cements you together, and refers and disposes you towards one another; that the body of Christ would be no more one than a rope of sand, there would be no more cohesion of the parts, but if there were opportunity, part would be severed from part. The body, though it consists of many members, yet is all one body, because ye have been "all baptized into one Spirit, and made to drink into one Spirit:" referring to the two sacraments, baptism, and the supper of our Lord; as both of them significative of the union, which persons do then enter into with the rest of the body; and as they are confirmed in it with the rest of the body, according as they make use of, or are subjected to, one or the other of these rites. And so you know it is in the

natural body. What other reason can we render, why so many parts should all but constitute one man? he hath one bond, one internal living bond, one soul. If there were one soul in one part, and another soul in another part; one soul in a leg, and another in an arm, another in an eye, and another in an ear; then it would not be one man, but many. The union is to be reduced into this, that there is but one soul as a consistent standing principle. For the parts of a man's body, as the parts of a church, are in a continual flux, continually passing; they wear and waste, and there is a constant succession of new parts, to make up the pretermission of the former that are past away and gone: and yet there is but one man still, notwithstanding that great change of parts in the several successions of time in his life, because he hath still but one soul. And so the church is still but one and the same thing, because it hath one Spirit, that in all times hath acted uniformly and equally.

7thly, It appears to be proper to the Spirit to work and maintain such a union as this; inasmuch as the principal operation, which it doth exert and put forth as the chief and main work which it doth, doth always necessarily imply this, of uniting and keeping the parts of the body united, as a secondary and consequential work. It cannot do its principal work, but it must do this. What is its principal and main work? It is, (as hath been intimated,) unto the church of Christ, even as a soul unto the body. And what is the office and business of the soul to the body? It is to animate the body, to enliven it in the several parts of it: but that it could never do, but by uniting the parts and keeping them united. You know, that if a finger or a toe, or a leg or an arm, be cut off from the body, the soul enlivens that no longer; therefore it animates it, as it keeps it united with the body. The case is manifestly thus here: the Spirit of God keeps the body alive, and all the several parts of the body which it animates, by holding them together: as all the members of this body partake of other privileges in a community, as they belong to the body; as for instance, that of peace, and that communion which it includes and carries in it. Ye are called to it, saith the apostle, in one body, Col. iii. 14. Ye are to share and partake in such a privilege, as being all of a piece, all of one body: called in one body to this great commerce of Christian peace and communion. You know, that full peace between people and people, nation and nation, doth include commerce. So we may say of life too; persons are called to the participation of life all in one body, as, being parts of that body, they come to share in life. The Spirit doth not animate, but as it unites, and keeps united, the several parts which it animates; no more than our soul will animate any part of our body that is once separate from it. Now this plainly argues it to be the work of the Spirit to effect and maintain this union.

8thly, All the terms of this union, wherein Christians do meet, are such whereunto they are disposed and inclined by this Spirit. You have these terms in Eph. iv. 4, &c. The apostle had said, that there was one body and one Spirit. Now wherein doth this Spirit make this body one? Why, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; inasmuch as they have all one hope, and all one Lord, and one faith, and one baptism, and one God and Father of them all. Now it is manifest, that it is the work of the Spirit to draw and dispose the hearts of Christians to meet in these common terms. As, to meet in this as a common term, in one hope, one blessedness and state of life. You know how the rest of the world are divided about blessedness; one places his confidence in this sort of good, and another in that sort: there be numbered up no less than two hundred and eighty-eight opinions among the heathens heretofore about blessedness, wherein it should consist: now how come all sincere Christians to agree in this, to hope for blessedness all in one thing, in that state of life and glory that is hereafter to be enjoyed; and that all in all times of the world should have met in the same hope? All this must be owing to one cause, and proceed from one principle. The rest of men are divided; why are they united in this hope? and so, as to the rest, if we should run over them. They have all one Lord, sincerely agree to be subject to that one head; "He shall rule over us, we will all trust him, and all obey him." They have all one faith; are all of one religion as to the essentials and main of it, believe all the same substantial truths, and all by one and the same sort and kind of faith; have the same object of faith in the main, and the same subject too in the nature and kind of it. They have all one baptism; which is not to be understood so much of the *signum*, as of the *res signata*, what is signified by it, that is, the covenant and agreement that passes between God and them that are baptized with his Spirit; unto whom the external baptism comes to obtain the thing which is intended to be signified corresponding in them. They all agree in one baptism, all come under one title, all give up and devote themselves under the bond of God's covenant alike, and in one and the same covenant: for God doth not make one covenant with one person, and another covenant with another; but they all meet in the same covenant. "And one God and Father of all." How come they all to have this one God and Father? It is one Spirit, that disposes and forms them hereunto. And in short, holiness, real substantial goodness, which doth some way or other include all these, as meeting in every one of them, and so uniting them; all sincere Christians meet in that. And how come they to meet in it? by chance? No, certainly; but by one designing cause, that works them all the same way. That so great a community, so vast a body as the Christians of all times and ages, the people of God, in all the parts of the world and in all times of it, should all meet and unite in so many things, and in this one thing, *viz.* substantial goodness and holiness, must needs be all from one cause: they being things too, wherein they cannot be supposed to agree naturally; for naturally, men are most disagreeing and repugnant as to such things as these. And therefore we may see, (that which it is very remarkable that a heathen should say, speaking of concord in a city,) "That there can be no concord at all in any thing, if there be not some common notices, wherein persons shall meet and agree. So, (speaking in reference to common and ordinary affairs,) it were impossible that persons should agree about the numbers of things, if there were not amongst them some common knowledge about the difference of numbers. If one person should understand one to be the number five, and another should understand it by another thing; or if persons could not generally understand so much of the matter of number, as to distinguish five from seven; (one number from another;) they could have no agreement in any common matter, wherein number was concerned. And so, saith he, If there can be any accord about things that come under measure: it is to be supposed, that there must be a common notice amongst all such persons, so far as to understand the difference between a palm and a cubit. And so there will be no agreement in things, that are of greater concernment to the good of a city, but by agreeing in this, that all agree to be good men: they cannot be good citizens, without being good men." But how should men come to be so? how should there come to be such a number of men, all agreeing in one thing and design, to be all for God in a world that is revolted and apostatized from him? It must be all from one cause and principle. It is one and the same Spirit, that in all times and ages works and disposes the spirits of such one way; so as that you may observe, that in all times there have been amongst Christians the same complaints, the same desires, the same designs, they have had the same sense of things. Such a uniformity, as doth appear even in the several successions of time, signifies, that there is one common unitive principle, that hath obtained amongst them all in all times; and so accordingly, that such a union must needs be the proper work of this blessed Spirit.

9thly, When a people do fall off, and break themselves off from God, (which they never do, but as this Spirit departs and leaves them,) according to that degree wherein they do so, they are broken off from one another, broken asunder amongst themselves. This we have emblematically represented in Zech. xi. by the two staves of Beauty and Bands. When one of them, the staff of Beauty, was broken, (that was the representation of the union that was between God and them,) next the staff of Bands is presently broken, (which was the representation of the union between Judah and Israel, of the people amongst

themselves,) ver. 10, 11, 14. When God saith, *Loammi*, ye shall be my people no more: then the consequence is this, they cease to be a people; they are no more one people, when they cease to be his. The case is not so with those who have professed visible relation to God, as with the rest of the world, in this thing. Others make shift to subsist and live without God, that is, they gain flourishing kingdoms and commonwealths and cities; and it may be, a people professing the name of God may expect to have it so with them too, if God should depart from them: but his presence is a soul among such a people; "Be instructed, lest my soul depart from you:" and if a man's soul go from him, he doth not then become a creature of the next inferior rank, a beast, but a careass. If this soul depart from a people professing relation to God, (as there is a divine presence that is larger than the most special presence, and yet more restrained than the general presence that he affords to men as men,) they do not then become like another people, but they become no people. Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee: lest thou become desolate, a land not inhabited, Jer. vi. 8. They may think, it may be, that it will be with them as with other nations, when God is gone: but see what a rebuke any such hope meets with, in Hos. ix. 1. Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people; for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, &c. The case will not be with you as with other people; you have forsaken your God, torn yourselves off from him. When the staff of Beauty is broken, the staff of Bands is broken too; and such a people as fall off from God, fall asunder: that it comes to at last; as the body of a man, when the soul is gone, dissolves and turns to dust.

10thly. In the time of the revival of the church from under the state of death they have been in; when God so revives it, he unites it part to part. How clearly have you this represented in vision after vision, in the whole 37th chapter of Ezekiel! When the Spirit of life entered into those dry and dead bones, when he breathed upon them and made them live, he made them one, he made them a great army, ver. 10. And the next thing that you hear of is, this people's being made one stick in God's hand; Judah and Israel one stick, united with one another; and in God's hand, to signify him to be the centre of that union, ver. 19. When there is a recovery of the church out of a lapsed, apostatized state, out of that death that hath been upon it, then also part comes to part; as there the bones came together, and flesh, and sinews; and so every thing falls into its own place and order in each particular body, and all these bodies into such an order, as to make one collective and well-formed body. And so it is very plain too, that when God doth design to bring that state of things about in his church, as that he will now have his covenant with them to obtain everlastingly, so as never more to turn away from doing them good; then he hath promised that he will give them one heart and one way. Even at the same time, when he comes to be more visibly and eminently in the view of the world engaged to such a people as their God, and to have taken them exemptly from all other people to be his people; when this comes to be more explicit and notorious, so that all the world may take notice of it, and so that he will dwell with them, and be visibly present amongst them, have his glory amidst them, and not cease to do them good; (so these things are expressed, Jer. xxxii. 37—41.) at the same time he gives them one heart and one way, so as that they are no more a rent, and torn, and shattered people, but all one, all agreeing about the very way of their walking with God according to that relation wherein they stand to him.

All these things do evidence, that such a union is the proper work of the Spirit; and that when it shall be poured forth generally and copiously, then this union shall obtain in a very great and visible glory. I should after all this speak a little more particularly to a twofold inquiry concerning this union; but of that hereafter.

From what hath thus far been said we may take notice, that our own divisions are a very sad argument to us, that the Spirit is in a great measure retired and withdrawn; that little of the Spirit is working amongst Christians in our times, in comparison of what hath been, and in comparison of what we may hope will yet be. But it is grievous, whatsoever hath been, whatsoever shall be, that it is our lot to be in such a time, when there should be such a gloomy overcast upon the glory of the Christian church in this respect. What we see and what we hear of that distance and disunion amongst Christians, is a sad argument, that the church is in a dismal lapse, the Spirit of God is in a great measure gone from amongst us, life retired and gone. If it were amongst us to enliven, it would be amongst us to unite.

SERMON XII.*

THAT which we have been upon in the last discourse, was—that union amongst them that own and bear the Christian name, we may reckon, will be one great effect of the Spirit poured forth; upon which the happiness of the church will greatly depend.—Two things have already been spoken to upon this head:—1. That such a union is of great concernment to the happiness and prosperity of the church: and—2. That it is the proper work of the Spirit of God to effect it; and consequently, that when that Spirit shall be generally poured forth, such a union cannot but generally obtain.

There are two further inquiries, which it will be requisite we somewhat insist upon relating to this matter:—1. What kind of union this shall be, which we may expect the Spirit poured forth to accomplish:—2. In what way we may expect the Spirit to accomplish it.

I. What kind of union we may expect it to be.

And we may expect it shall be such in the general, as wherein the duty and happiness of the Christian church shall in very great measure consist; such as is required as matter of duty, and promised as matter of gift; and which will contribute much to the church's felicity. But inasmuch as we neither expect the church of God on earth to be perfectly sinless, nor perfectly happy; therefore we cannot expect this union to be perfect: nor therefore can we suppose any such things requisite to it, as must be thought requisite unto a perfect union. We cannot think it necessary, that this Spirit poured forth should be, as poured forth or communicated, an infallible Spirit in order thereto, when it comes to be amongst men or in them; which you know some have thought very necessary in order to any union in the church of God; but have pretended highly to it, without being able to agree where to fix the seat of the spirit of infallibility they pretend to have amongst them. And since a union and agreement in holiness is as necessary for the church of God, as in truth; one would think there should have been as much pretence to an impeccable spirit as to an infallible, and every whit for as valuable reason: but they have been ashamed to pretend to the former, whilst the pretenders have been so notoriously vicious and vile in the view of all the world. And certainly, if there were an infallible spirit amongst such men, we may justly say it did *malè habitare*, it was ill-lodged and unfitly in the midst of so horrid impurities; and did no more become them, than a jewel of gold a swine's snout. But that we may be a little more particular here, we shall briefly show,—1st, What a union we are not to expect:—2dly, What union there already is amongst all living Christians: and—3dly, What union we are further to look and hope for.

1st, What union we are not to expect.

1. Not such, as that all shall agree in the same measure of knowledge; and consequently, that there will not be an idenity and sameness of apprehension throughout in all things; for then there must be the same measure of knowledge. There is no man, that thinks differently from another man, but he thinks so differently either truly or falsely; and wherever the falsity lies, on the one hand or the other, there lies so much ignorance: but it is never to be thought, that all will have just the same measure of knowledge.

2. Nor can we reasonably expect an agreement with all

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in the same pitch of holiness; that all will be holy alike; no one more holy, more spiritual, more heavenly than another.

3. Nor are we to expect, that all should agree in the same measure of joy or consolation; that there should be the same sensations of divine pleasure in all, the same pleasant motions of holy and spiritual affections; which, be they as holy and spiritual as they will, yet must also be complexional in a degree, and depend much even upon the bodily temper, wherein no man can think that all shall ever agree.

4. Nor can there be such a union, as shall infer, that all must be of the same rank and order, the same station and use in the church of God: which indeed would not belong to the perfection of union, but imperfection; it would be confusion, instead of regular and perfect union. Such kind of union we are not to expect. And it is to be considered further in reference to this matter,

2ndly, What kind of union there already is. And certainly some union there is among all these that are sincere and living Christians; such I chiefly intend as the subject of the union, whereof I am discoursing. And there is, and cannot but be amongst all such, a union in those great and substantial things, which we have already had occasion to take notice of, in Eph. iv. 3, 4. They are all one body, one living, animated body, by one and the same Spirit. They have all one hope of their calling, one happiness and end; one Lord, one faith; they are all substantially of one religion; one baptism, meaning by that (as hath been noted) not so much the *signum*, as the *signatum*; they are all comprehended within the bond of the same covenant of life and peace. They have all one God the Father of all, who is of all, and in all, and through all.

And, which sums up all this, one way or another, they are all united in one common head. The apostle, speaking of Christ, says, He is the head of the body, the church, Col. i. 18. And to the same purpose, in Eph. i. 22, 23. And by virtue of that union they have with Christ the Mediator, the head of the church, it comes to pass, that they do unite and agree besides in all the other things that were mentioned. They are all of his body. It is from him they all partake of that one and the same Spirit. It is he that hath opened heaven to them, given them a prospect of an eternal blessed state, brought life and immortality to light before their eyes; they are called by him in that one hope of their calling. It is a revelation from God by him, that is the matter of their common faith. He is the Mediator of that covenant, that comprehends them all. It is he that reduces and restores and reunites them to God, and sets all things right between him and them. Therefore herein is the sum of their union, that they have all one Head, wherein they are united.

And this their common Head is not only a political, but a vital Head; as is apparently enough represented in those most emphatical expressions, Eph. iv. 15, 16. where the metaphor is distinctly pursued of a union between the head and the body: That speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted, by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. With which agrees that in Col. i. 18. He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, &c. And that in chap. ii. 19. Not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. All these expressions speak a vital union, such as every member in the body hath with the head, being by proper ligaments jointed into its own place, and so connected with those that finally and ultimately have more immediate connection with the head; from whence there are those several *ductus*, those conveyances of spirits, by which the head doth become a fountain of directive and motive influence unto the whole body. And so is our Lord Jesus Christ unto the church a fountain both of directive and motive influence, of light and life.

He is a Fountain of light to all true Christians. For every beam of true light is a ray from that Sun of righteousness, shines from and through the Lord Jesus Christ. We are under a dispensation, wherein the Father speaks to us by his Son, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. i. 2, 3. This world were universally a region of nothing else but pure mere darkness, were it not for him, the light that lighteneth every one that cometh into the world, according to the several variations and degrees and kinds of light that shine here and there. And,

He is also a fountain of life and vital influence. That very light is vital light, the light of life. The life was the light of men, John i. 4. And for all that have real union with him, it is because he lives that they live also.

Herein therefore they have union with this Head. They all participate together in the light of divine truth, whereof he hath been the teacher; of all that saving wisdom and knowledge that is treasured up in him. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Col. ii. 3. And all that are really of his body, unite and meet in a participation of necessary light and knowledge from him; they partake according to their measure of necessary truth from that Fountain, so much as is essential unto the Christian religion, and necessarily concurs unto the constituting of that. And they all agree in the participation of motive and active influence from him, for the performance of all the essentially necessary duties and exercises that do belong to the Christian life. Such a union there is amongst all sincere Christians. This is implied in the expression of holding the head before mentioned. They truly hold the head, who are so united to it, as that by virtue of that union they receive and derive thence the knowledge and perception of all essentially requisite truth, and that life and power that is also requisite to the duty that lies upon Christians as such.

There hath been a great deal of controversy, between the reformed and those of the Roman church, about that distinction of the essentials and extra-essentials of Christianity. But let men cavil as long as they will, it would manifestly be the most absurd thing in all the world to deny the distinction; for if any would deny it, I would inquire of them; Which part of the distinction is it, that you would deny? Would you deny, that there are essential parts of Christianity? or else, that there are extra-essential parts? If the distinction be not good, one of these parts must be denied. But if any would say, there are no essential parts; that would be to say, that the Christian religion hath no being; for certainly that is nothing, unto which nothing is essential. And to say, that there are no extra-essential parts, is to say, that a man cannot be a Christian unless he knows every thing of truth, and unless he punctually do every thing of duty, whether he know it or not; then a man could not be a Christian unless he did certainly know the meaning of the number "six hundred sixty-six," and a thousand difficult passages besides up and down the Scripture. So that in effect, to deny the distinction of essential and extra-essential parts in Christianity, or of it, must either be to deny that there is any such thing as Christianity, or that there is any such thing as a Christian; if there be no essential parts, Christianity is nothing; for that is nothing to which nothing is essential; and if there be none extra-essential, then there are no Christians; for certainly there is no man, that knows and does every thing that belongs to the Christian religion. But that there are essential parts, and therefore extra-essential too, is most evident; and which the essential parts be, in contradistinction to all others, is not obscurely intimated to us in the Scripture itself, in such *summas* of Christian doctrine and practice, as we have pointed to us here and there in some remarkable texts. As, when we are told, 1 Cor. viii. 6. To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. Where we have the great objects upon which religion terminates; God considered as God, the end; and Christ the mediator, the way to that end. And then we are not without what is summary too of the acts to be done in reference to those objects. The apostle, speaking of the course he had taken in unfolding the mysteries of the Gospel, resolves all into this sum; he had been testifying

both to Jews and Greeks repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, Acts xx. 21. Which are such acts or parts of Christian practice, as belong to the inchoation of the Christian course at first, and then to be continued afterwards through it; but so as to comprehend many particulars of practice besides; whereof our Lord Jesus Christ gives us another summary, Matt. xxii. 37, &c. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. And, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments, saith he, hang all the law and the prophets. And indeed you have objects and acts implicitly comprehended together in that great summary, that is expressive of the faith, into which Christ directed his apostles to proselyte all nations into which they were to baptize them; that is, into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Matt. xxviii. 19. Where the Father is to be considered as the end, the Son as the way, and the Spirit as the great principle to move souls towards that end through that way. Now there are none, that are sincere and living Christians, but do and must unite in such things as these, these great essentials and substantials of the Christian religion.

But it may now be said; If there be so much union amongst all Christians already in these so great and substantial things, what further union must we look for? which was the third thing we proposed to speak to upon this head;

3dly, What further union we are yet to expect and hope for. And it must be acknowledged, and ought to be lamented, that there is all this union with very much disunion; such disunion, that is in a high degree dishonourable to God, scandalous to the world, and uncomfortable to the Christian community within itself. You well know, that there may be one house standing upon one foundation; and yet miserably shattered, ill-supported, ill-covered. There may be one large family, all under one family-governor; and yet many sidings and contentions in it, many parties, and part-takings this way and that. The like may be said of a city, a kingdom, an army, or any such aggregate body. The like may be said even of a man himself, that hath, while he is a man, several parts united in him; but yet this living man may be sick, very sick, and even nigh to death, in a most languishing state; soul and body still united, and several parts in the body still united with one another; but it may be some dying, some dead, all languishing at least; and, as the case is in some diseases, one member falling foul upon another, the man beating, hurting, wounding himself: the parts are still in union; but this is a union very remote from what belongs to a sound, sober, healthy man, in good plight every way. And so the matter is with the Christian church too. We do acknowledge such a union in all the fore-mentioned things, in all things of that nature; but it is with a most scandalous and pernicious disunion. We do not think that the Spirit of God hath totally forsaken the Christian church; but it is plain, it is miserably languishing and next to death; according to the import of that expression to the Sardian church, Rev. iii. 2. Strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die. There is truth, but wrapt up in obscurity, and held in unrighteousness; as is too obvious to common observation. And therefore it is another sort of union than this is, in respect of the degree and perfection of it, that we are yet to look for; and which certainly the Spirit, when poured forth copiously and generally, (as we are encouraged to hope it will be,) will effect and bring about. This union, which we are to expect, (as indeed the union, which already we have in nature and kind,) is to be both intellectual and cordial. We are to expect an improvement of it unto a much higher degree in both these kinds, a higher union both of judgment and love.

1. A much higher intellectual union, than we hitherto find; a nearer union, and agreement in mind and judgment amongst Christians. And it is very unreasonable not to expect it, when we consider how plain and express the charge is concerning that kind of union; it is very unreasonable to think, that the people of God, the community of Christians, shall be always in so notorious a discrepancy from their rule, even in this particular case. See the solemnity of that charge, in 1 Cor. i. 10. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. Do we think the Christian community shall be never nearer the rule in this case, than it is? We have reason to expect it shall; and especially since we find it is so expressly foretold, that in the latter days (which this discourse we have in hand hath reference to) one heart shall be given, and one way, Jer. xxxii. 39. Certainly there shall be so much agreement in minds and judgments, as shall lead the people of God all into one way; for such a word cannot fall to the ground, and is not put into the Bible to stand for a cipher there. And we have it expressly promised, that of them that are all intent to press forward towards the same mark, and wherein they have attained, to do all to their uttermost to walk by the same rule; if in any thing they be otherwise minded, God shall reveal this to them, Phil. iii. 15, 16. It is also expressly promised by our Lord Christ himself, that they that will do his will, shall know the doctrine whether it be of God, yea or no, John vii. 17. Certainly, when the Spirit comes to be so copiously and generally poured forth, men will be attempered more to the will of God; there will be more earnest minding and endeavouring to do his will; self-will will not be the common rule and law amongst those that bear the name of Christians, as now it is; and upon this is that great promise grounded; all that is required, is, "If any man will do his will, he shall know his doctrine." There is no so necessary and certain qualification for the knowledge of divine truth, as sincerity; when men do inquire for truth, not to gratify curiosity, not to serve an interest, not to keep up a party, not to promote a base design; but with sincere hearts, that they may understand what the good and acceptable will of the Lord is. They that are intent upon this, our Lord Christ will not fail them, nor break his promise, that such who will do his will, shall know the doctrine. There is a peculiar gust and relish, which the truth that is after godliness always carries in it to persons that are alive and well, and that have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil. Cannot my taste discern perverse things? saith Job, chap. vi. 30. Has not a lively Christian a taste to discern some things that are obstructive and destructive to the Christian religion and the Christian interest in the world? a person alive, and with senses exercised, will taste it out; even as the new-born babe desires sincere milk, while it would refuse that which is corrupt and mixed with any thing ungrateful. Herein we are to expect much more of an intellectual union, or union in judgment concerning the great truths of God.

2. A much nearer and more inward cordial union, a union of love. When the Spirit was more eminently poured forth upon Christ's ascension, see how it was with Christians in that respect, Acts ii. 46. They continued daily with one accord in the temple. Our translation renders it too faintly; ὁμοθυμαδὸν, they met together all with one mind: so the expression literally signifies. And chap. iv. 32. it is said, that believers were all of one heart and one soul; τοῦ πλήθους τῶν πιστευσάντων ἦν ἡ καρδία καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ μία, *Of the multitude that believed there was but one heart and soul;* as if they were a community, all acted and animated by one soul. However unlike itself the church of God is grown in a long tract of time, the Spirit of God is not grown unlike itself; and therefore when it comes to be poured forth as it hath been, it will still act as it hath done, uniformly and agreeably to itself; and make them, that now are many parties, divided and shattered, broken this way and that, all one entire piece. How passionately longing do the apostle's expressions import him to be, in reference to this one thing, that is, the union composed of the two things I have mentioned, of a union in mind and judgment, and of a closure in heart and love, in Col. ii. 1, 2. I would, that ye knew what great conflict I have for you and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. This is the union that he covets; and we

must know, that that Spirit, who is to be the author of this union, was no doubt the author of these very desires and longings of the apostle's soul about it; it acts agreeably to itself. He desired and longed so earnestly for this, that they might be knit together both in love and understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, both the Father and the Son. And what have there been, even from the dictate and direction of the Spirit, so earnest longings for? Why, though so long before, we are to account these very longings to be the earnest of these things desired, and so to expect that whereof they are the earnest.

We thus far see, what union we are not to expect, what already is, and what we are to expect and look for further than yet there is, or than yet we see.

Upon all this, while as yet we behold so little of so desirable a thing, we have reason to account that it is with the church of God a time of his hiding his face, and of the restraint of his Spirit. I will no more hide my face, I will pour out my Spirit. While the Spirit is not poured forth, even with reference to this blessed end and work; this is the notion which we ought to have concerning the present state of the Christian church; it is a time of God's hiding his face from them; the bright and glorious face, that hath shone upon it sometimes, and that we are to expect should shine, is yet obscured and hid. And what should our posture be upon that account? while we must reckon this the common state and case of the Christian church at this day; in what posture should our souls be? And surely,

1. It ought to be a very mournful posture. How hath he covered with a cloud in his anger the daughter of his people! how is her glory confounded! When he did decline to go with the people of Israel further on in their way towards Canaan, saying, I will send an angel before thee, and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, &c. He shall destroy them for you. "But I will not go up in the midst of thee, I will not go with you any further." The people, it is said, when they heard these evil tidings, mourned, and no man did put on him his ornaments, Exod. xxxiii. 2, 3, 4. It is a mourning time, when the bridegroom is withdrawn: and there is no sadder token that he is withdrawn, than to behold the confusions which have ensued in his absence.

2. It ought to be an expecting, a waiting posture. Sure this dark and gloomy night will be succeeded by a morning: it will not be a perpetual, eternal night; there will be a time, when the hid face will again appear, and the cloud remove. I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him, Isa. viii. 17. And it should be an earnest, desirous, longing expectation. There can be no more dismal token upon us, than to be indifferent: he is gone, his face is hid, he is not to be seen; and whether he come towards us again, whether we shall see him again any more, we matter it not; this would be the most dismal token.

SERMON XIII.*

BESIDE the principles, which the Spirit of God, when copiously and generally poured forth, will work in each individual person, tending to create a happy state of things in the church: we proposed to speak of two general effects, that must have the Christian community as such, for the subject of them, and not individual persons only, *viz.* union and order.

Much hath been said upon the former, the desirable effect of union. It hath been shown, that the happiness of the church doth much depend upon this, and that it is the proper work of the Spirit of God to effect it: and then the last time we came to speak to a twofold inquiry:—1. What kind of union this is to be. This we have gone through, and now proceed to a second, *viz.*

2. In what way the Spirit of God poured forth may be expected to effect this union.

And there is no doubt but it will effect it by the same means, by which it shall revive and recover religion; of which we have so largely spoken.[a] At the same time when it makes the Christian church a living church, it will make it one, that is, in that higher and more eminent degree, whereof we have been speaking. It is but one and the same thing, or is done *eâdem operâ*, the making the church more holy and the making it one: what brings Christians nearer to God and Christ, will certainly and infallibly at once bring them nearer to one another. For it is manifest, that the greatest differences that are to be found in the Christian world, lie between the godly and the ungodly, the converted and the unconverted, the sincere and the insincere: whatever differences there are amongst the people of God themselves, those are still the greatest differences which lie between them and those who are not of them; for there the disagreement is about having the Lord for our God. Every ungodly man is his own idol; he hath yet this first step to take in religion, the choosing of God alone to be his God: now the difference must needs be vast, between those that take the Lord for their God, and those that take him not, but serve a base and despicable idol, self, and make all to their very uttermost subservient unto that. The sincere and insincere differ about their last end; which is the greatest difference that can be imagined. All men's courses are shaped and directed by the ends, which they propose to themselves: and to have the Lord for our God, and to have him for our supreme and ultimate end, is all one. Now how vastly must those ways needs differ, that lead to two directly contrary ends! therefore still the greatest difference cannot but be between the godly and the earthly carnal-minded man, who hath himself for his God, and all the world if he could compass it, for a sacrifice to his own idol, himself. Men of that temper and complexion of soul are the men that stand most off from union, and that are the greatest schismatics in all the world; it cannot but be so. Therefore, whensoever the Spirit of God poured forth, shall make men agree in having the Lord for their God, this God shall be our God; when men shall become more generally sincere and thorough Christians; then it cannot but be, that they shall be united with one another, and agree in far greater things than it is possible they can differ from one another in. And therefore in the forementioned Jer. xxxii. 38, 39. at the same time when it is said, They shall be my people, and I will be their God; it is immediately added, And I will give them one heart and one way. This union cannot but be the result of more lively, serious religion, and of deeper impressions of godliness and of the Divine image upon the souls of men. Not only as that union between the blessed persons in the Godhead is the pattern of union amongst the people of God; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, John xvii. 21. But also as such a union is the certain and necessary result of other excellencies, wherein the Divine image doth consist, and wherein holy ones do and cannot but resemble God. One apostle giving an account of God, how we are to conceive of him, gives it us under these two notions, that he is light, and that he is love, 1 John i. 5. chap. iv. 8. 16. The image of God in these two things, more generally and vividly impressed upon men, doth this whole business, makes them all one. How blessed a union would there be, when Christians shall generally appear the representations of the blessed God himself in these two things, a composition, as it were, of light and love.

Therefore, to give you more distinctly the account, how or in what way the Spirit poured forth should bring about this union; it will be,—1st, By increasing of light and knowledge amongst them that bear the Christian name every where in the world:—2dly, By giving greater measures of grace. By the former, men shall generally come to be more knowing in things necessary to the union; and by the latter, they shall be more patient of dissent from one another in things less necessary to be known.

1st, By an increase of light and knowledge in things more necessary to be known. I do not mean here merely notional knowledge; as the apostle doth not mean that of God, when he saith, that God is light; but I mean that knowledge received in the minds of Christians, that lies in the next immediate tendency to holiness; the knowledge of the truth that is after godliness, as such, in that designed

* Preached October 2d, 1678.

[a] See page 575, &c.

and direct tendency, as it doth attemper and dispose the minds of men unto the reception of truth as sanctifying. Sanctify them by the truth; thy word is truth, John xvii. 17. We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, —that he hath chosen you unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, 2 Thess. ii. 13. The truth, as it lies in an immediate tendency to godliness, and is transformative of the soul into a holy and godly frame; so we must conceive it to be impressed in order to this blessed work: otherwise there wants the cement, and that which should hold hearts together, as intent and directed all towards one common design and end. And unto this purpose, we must suppose the Spirit poured forth shall heal the disaffection of men's minds unto such truth, or unto truth considered under that notion and upon that account. It hath a great work to do for this end upon the minds of men; the union that is to be brought about, (as was observed upon the former head,) being necessarily intellectual first, and then cordial. It is in the mind that the first concoction of truth must be wrought, in order to a further and more perfect concoction in the heart afterwards. And whereas there is a manifold distemperature and malady, even in the minds of men, that renders them incapable of useful, practical Gospel knowledge; the great work of the Spirit of God must be to remove and heal those infirmities and maladies of the mind, and to do it generally amongst Christians; that so they may be brought to increase in the knowledge of God, in divine knowledge; as the expression is Col. i. 10. I might make a copious enumeration here of many such maladies and distempers in the mind, by which it becomes disaffected to truth: and which appear now to be epidemical evils, and need therefore a universal effusion of the Spirit to cure them, and so to bring about the intellectual union, of which we speak. These maladies, though some of them be in the mind itself, yet most of them are originally in the heart, and thence come to affect and distemper the mind, and render it less susceptive of useful and savoury knowledge. As,—

There is an *unapprehensiveness* too generally observable in the minds of men; a dulness towards the apprehension of truth. The Spirit of God, when it comes to be generally poured forth, (as it was said to be upon the Messiah himself on whom it was poured forth without measure, and thence to be transfused, as from a common fountain, unto all that have vital union with him,) will make men of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: as it is expressed, Isa. xi. 3.

There is a *slothful oscitancy* in the minds of most; a regardlessness and unconcernedness to know the great and deep things of God: and that causes a great disagreement and disunion in the Christian world. There are many that stint themselves: they think they know enough, and desire to know no more, and cannot endure to be out-gone by others, or that any should exceed their measure. As these latter times, with reference to which we speak, will certainly be times of very much knowledge; so they will be of very much inquiry: Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased, Dan. xii. 4. There will not be a slothful, oscitant sitting down with a present measure and attainment, but there will be a following on to know the Lord, as you have it, Hos. vi. 3. and then the promise of "his going forth shall be prepared as the morning;" as it immediately follows. There will be always new and fresh breakings forth of divine light, ready to reward the endeavour of them that seriously set themselves to inquire and seek after it.

There is very generally observable with many much *credulity*; aptness to take up reports. The simple, says Solomon, believeth every word, Prov. xiv. 15. And hence it comes to pass, that every one, that can tell a plausible story, and a little set off any fancy and novel invention of his own, makes it presently to obtain and pass for a revelation: and hence comes, as is obvious to common observation, much of that division that hath been observable in our days.

There is also, on the contrary hand, an *excessive incredulity*, or unaptness to believe things; because they are very great and glorious, and exceed the measures of our preconceptions or preconceived thoughts, the evil of which our Saviour upbraids his disciples with, that they were slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken, the things contained in the divine revelation that had been made before by the prophets concerning him, Luke xxiv. 25.

There is *inconsideration*; an inability to consider and weigh things, to ponder and balance them as the case may require. Men are apt, rashly and without using their understandings, to take up things upon their very first appearance. It is spoken concerning these latter days, in Isa. xxxii. 4. that even the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge; of those that were so, before they shall be cured of that malady. There is also an unaptness to consider, as well as an inability and indisposition to it; many times from a kind of superstitious fear, that men think they must not use their understandings to examine and search into things, that it is not yet permitted to them to do so: as if God had given men faculties, which they were not to use: they might as well be afraid to look upon an object with their eyes, and to pry into it, and to labour that way to distinguish between one thing and another.

There is, opposite to that, a certain *petulancy of mind*: when men will make it their business to tear and unravel all principles, and they must have their reason satisfied in every thing, or they will be satisfied in nothing.

There is an *injudiciousness*; an inability to conclude; after considering never so much, never so long, when the balance will never be cast. So many are ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth, 2 Tim. iii. 7 never conclude, never determine; but are always as children tossed to and fro.

There is, again, a certain *scepticism of mind* with a great many; that when others have stated and settled, even by common agreement and consent in the Christian church, such conclusions, yet declaim against every thing as uncertain; not only from a peculiar inability to make a judgment; but from a principle that there is no judgment to be made, and that there is nothing certain at all, or ought to be looked upon as such; which hath starved the Christian church and made it languish for a long time, as to the matter of sound knowledge.

There is *instability of judgment*; that when men have concluded and determined upon good evidence, this is true and ought to be adhered to accordingly, yet they are presently off again; and therefore are so remote from agreeing with the generality of other Christians, that they are never found long to agree with themselves.

There is, as what is more directly opposite to the former, a certain kind of *obstinacy of mind*, prejudice, a fixed prepossession with corrupt and false principles, that once imbibed shall never be quitted; and which doth very frequently proceed from an enslavedness unto human dictates: that is, that they have taken some one or other to be a leader to them, and an orator; and so give away that faith, which is due only unto a divine revelation, and ought to pitch and centre there, unto the fallible judgment of a man; in direct contradiction to that rule of our Lord Christ, Call no man Rabbi, call no man Master upon earth, Matt. xxiii. 8, 10. Do not enslave your minds and judgments to any man.

It must be supposed, that when ever the Spirit of God doth that blessed work in the world, to revive and recover religion and Christianity, it will unite Christians even by this means, the curing of these great maladies and distempers, that are in the minds of men so generally, and by which they are rendered indisposed and averse to the entertainment and retention of sound Gospel knowledge. For this spirit, where it is given, is the spirit of a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7. The word, that is rendered soundness of mind there, σωφρονισμὸς, signifies *sobriety*, a spirit of sobriety. Indeed that word doth commonly misguide men; and they apply it unto a thing far inferior in nature and dignity unto that which it truly signifies; as if it were to be opposed only to gross sensual wickedness. But sobriety, as the very notation of the word doth import, hath its seat and subject in the mind, and doth firstly and chiefly affect that. A sound mind and a sober mind is all one. Till the Spirit of God do in these several respects cure men's minds, it is impossible there should be union or agreement; unless men do agree only in being diseased; or, (which would not do the business neither,) unless they could agree all to be in one disease, which would be a very unhappy union

also. When therefore the Spirit of the living God shall universally come forth upon men, and create the world Christians, and create the Christian world a region of light; when it shall generally make men apprehensive, inquiring, serious, considerate, judicious, lovers of the truth even for itself, sincere, so as to entertain truth with no other design than only that the life of godliness may be promoted and served by it; there cannot but then be in a very great degree the happy union obtaining amongst Christians, whereof we have spoken.

But yet, when all this is done, we cannot suppose by it, that men should be brought to know all things; but still there will be many things, wherein they cannot but remain ignorant, and consequently dissent and differ in many things from one another. Therefore the Spirit of God poured forth must be supposed also to effect this union,

2dly, By making Christians more generally patient of dissent from one another, in less necessary things which they may not still so generally know. And, if we consider, what the genuine operations of the blessed Spirit of God are, and what kind of Spirit that is wherever it comes to obtain; this cannot but be the general temper of Christians, when that Spirit shall be eminently poured forth; that they shall be very patient of dissent from one another in things wherein they continue to dissent. For,

1. We must suppose that the Spirit being generally so poured forth, there will be a greater ability to distinguish between truths that are of Scripture revelation, and those that are not; and consequently which it is matter of duty to believe, and which not. For undoubtedly there is to be such a distinction made between truth and truth, as any one may easily see at the first view. For we must know, that a thing is not therefore the necessary object of my assent, because it is true; but because it is evident, or because it is credible; either evident in itself, or recommended as credible to me by the authority of him that doth reveal it. I am not bound therefore to believe a thing immediately, because it is in itself true; for that it may be, and yet I have no means to know it to be so, but then is the obligation inferred upon me to believe such a thing, when it is clothed with sufficient evidence to recommend itself unto my understanding. And whereas there are some things that God hath revealed, even all things that are any ways necessary either to the being or the well-being of religion; I must consider those things that lie not within the compass of that revelation, as what God hath left unto men *in medio*; he has left them undetermined, and so they may be matter of very innocent disagreement, of discourse and decertation, without any concernedness, on the one part or the other.

2. Amongst revealed truths, we may suppose men will be enabled to distinguish between the greater and the less, between those that are more necessary and less necessary.

3. We must suppose Christians then to be generally more spiritual, and apt to be taken up more with the great things of religion; and less apt to be greatly and deeply concerned about matters of less consequence, so as to disturb and break the order and peace of the church upon the account of them.

4. We must suppose them then to be more holy; less opinionative, less conceited and humoursome; which is that kind of knowledge that the apostle doth oppose to love, as not only unedifying, but destructive of edification, 1 Cor. viii. 1, &c. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, if he knows with a conceited reflection upon his own knowledge, admiring himself upon account of it; he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. Ignorance is better than his knowledge. Men will think more meanly of themselves and their own judgments, and either more highly or more charitably of other men; either think, that possibly they may see that which themselves see not; or if they cannot apprehend so, yet at least that the men are sincere and upright-hearted towards God; as it is meet for them to judge, and not to be insolently censorious of such as do in such or such little matters differ from them; not to attribute to perverseness of mind every man's dissension of opinion from their own.

5. They must needs be supposed to be more compassionate unto those, whom they suppose to know less than themselves; as knowing, that there are many things which themselves are ignorant of, and they shall never attain to know all things as long as they live. There are still all the genuine workings of the Spirit of God, so far as it obtains and prevails over the spirits of men; and so this among the rest.

6. Christians will undoubtedly then be formed unto a more awful and reverential subjection to God's own prescribed rules, concerning the boundaries and terms of Christian communion. Men will not then dare to make terms of their own to limit the communion of Christians as such; to devise new terms which Christ was never the author of, and will never own; but the authority of such a law will obtain in the hearts of Christians, that are become so serious and subject to the authority of God as they must then be supposed to be, so as that they will extend their communion as far as it can be judged that God will extend his, and Christ will extend his. For that is the measure, that is given us, in these two passages. In one place it is said, Rom. xiv. 1, 3. Receive such a one, for God hath received him: receive him for all his doubting, for all his difference from you; and why? because the Lord hath received him. In the other place it is thus expressed, chap. xiv. 7. Receive ye one another, as Christ hath received us, to the glory of God. God receives such a one into his communion; and shall not I receive him into mine? Christ receives such a one, even unto the glory of the Father; and shall not I receive him into my fellowship? When once the spirits of men come to be awed into subjection unto the Divine authority in this thing, so as to reckon it profane to prescribe bounds and terms unto Christian communion, other than God and Christ have prescribed themselves; then no doubt will this blessed effect obtain and take place in the Christian church, then will it become an entire united thing, one thing within itself, and never till then. As long as we must have terms of Christian communion of men's own devising, according to the different humours of men, they will still vary, and so we shall never know where to be.

Thus we have considered that first effect to be expected from the Spirit generally poured forth, in order to promote the peaceful state of the church, *viz.* the union of Christians amongst themselves.[b] I would add something concerning another particular mentioned, as conducive also to the same peaceful state.

II. Order is another blessed effect to be looked for from the pouring out of the Spirit, and that belongs unto the Christian community as a community, and is most necessary unto the making up of that happy time and state of things, whereof we have been speaking. It is very plain, that this superadds somewhat unto union. It is a bad union, where there is not order. Union speaks the compactiveness of parts; order the due situation of them, that every one be in that place which duly belongs to it. Suppose there were never so much union in the parts of the natural body, but the eyes were placed where the ears should be, and the hands where the feet should be; notwithstanding all the union of parts, the lack of order would make this thing uncomfortable to itself, and deformed and monstrous in the view of others. There are many members in one and the same body; and these members have all their distinct place and use and purpose that they serve for, as the apostle at large discourses, 1 Cor. xii. Now the Spirit of God cannot be poured forth, but it will infer a comely order in the Christian church; by the same operation by which it gives it life, it will give it shape and comeliness, and a due figure and disposition of parts within itself. It was well said concerning this matter by a worthy person, "God will certainly not be wanting in point of shape and comely order to a church, that hath a principle of life within itself." He that clothes lilies, and gives life unto the sensitive creatures, and gives them their own proper shape also; will no doubt do so unto the lively body of his own son: he will never be wanting to it in point of shape and comely order, when it comes to be a lively vigorous thing: by how much the fuller of life, so much certainly the order will be the more comely and pleasant, by its own choice, and much more as directed by his rules. To evince this, consider these several things.

I. The Spirit poured forth comes to be, in them that

b See page 593.

receive it, as a certain kind of nature; it is called the Divine nature. Nature, you know, acts uniformly and orderly in all its operations. How regular are the courses of nature! how constant the returns of days and nights, of summer and winter! how strictly do all the species and kinds of things keep all their own kind, retain their properties, colours, virtues, ways and methods of operation! The Spirit of God, working, (as it is received in the hearts of Christians,) even as a certain kind of nature, must needs work uniformly; and so have a steady tendency to the begetting and keeping up of order in the whole community, that shall be aggregated by it.

2. It cannot be, but that, by how much the Spirit doth more obtain and shall be generally poured forth amongst men, each one will be more peculiarly adapted and fitted to the business of his own station, so as that he will thereupon choose that as fittest for him.

3. It cannot be, but that all men will be more debased and humbled, and equal estimators of themselves, and therefore apprehend not themselves fit for a station unto which they are not called.

4. The Spirit poured forth will no doubt make men more generally apprehensive of, and reverentially subject to, the authority of God himself, in all his own ordinances and appointments; and therefore, when one is to teach, and others to be taught; some to govern, others to be governed; the authority, that doth design men unto more public stations and capacities, will be considered as Divine. We notionally know so much already; but it will be another thing, when that impression is made upon the hearts of Christians, "He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God."

5. The Spirit poured forth cannot be without making men generally very tender of the community unto which they belong, and of the whole Christian community in general: as every one can easily apprehend, how this would be prejudiced, if order be broken, and men commonly allow themselves the liberty to step out of their own ranks and stations, to be and do what they are not called to be or do.

The concurrence of these things cannot but infer, that whencver the Spirit of God shall be generally poured forth, the Christian church will fall into order; there will need no great hammering in reference to that, the business will even do of itself. All will know, and all will mind, their own stations and the business of them; and apprehend their own unfitness for any station, unto which God doth not call; and apprehend their privilege in not being so called, in being exempt from the cumber and burden of more public stations; as certainly exemption, if it were understood, is a very great privilege; when God doth not lay any further charge upon me, than only to intend the business of a narrower station and a lesser sphere; when I can be vacant unto God, and for his commerce, and there walk with him undisturbedly within my own line; while others are eaten up with cares and solicitudes concerning the common affairs, that they are concerned in, and intrusted with the management of. No doubt the Spirit of God will help every man to make a true judgment of things, when it comes to be generally poured forth; and this, that hath been just spoken of, cannot but be judged; because it is a very great privilege to have freedom and vacancy for the proper business of a Christian as such, within his own calling and verge; when God shall, as it were providentially, say unto a man, "I lay no other charge upon thee, but to walk with me in thy own station and within the bounds of thy own calling, to make me the entire object of thy love and delight, and at all times to solace thyself with me; I exempt thee from things, that would disturb and disquiet and divert from the business and delights of such a continued course of walking with me." When this comes to be generally understood, there will be little disposition in the minds of men to break order, by usurping upon what belongs not to them.

Thus far you see, that little else can be thought needful to the bringing about of a very happy time and state of things, besides the pouring forth of the Spirit.

SERMON XIV.*

We have been showing in many discourses, what a good state of things or happy times are to be brought about by the Spirit of God poured forth. And hitherto we have been endeavouring at large to evince the efficacy and sufficiency of this means to the end mentioned; which was the first things undertaken to be made evident. We are now to proceed to show—

Secondly, The *necessity* of this means to reach such an end; that as it is a *sufficient* means, you may also understand it to be the *only* means, of bringing such a work about. And for evincing this, two things, clear enough in themselves, seem abundantly sufficient;—1. That nothing can mend the world, but what mends the spirits of men; and,—2. That nothing can effectually do that but the Spirit of the Lord poured forth. These are things that shine into our minds and understandings with their own light.

As to the *former;* What else do we think can mend the times, but what mends men's spirits? doth not every thing necessarily act and work just as it is? how can the posture of the world come to be other than at present, if the active principles of men's spirits continue the same?

And as to the *latter;* what besides the Spirit of God can effectually mend the Spirits of men, so as to make the state of things thoroughly and generally better?

What other cause can be *universal* enough, and spread its influence far and wide, to make a better world? There wants a cause in this case, that can diffuse and influence a vast way. That a nation should be born in a day, that the earth should be filled with the knowledge of God, that there should be new heavens and a new earth; this needs a cause that can work every where; and what else can do this but the Spirit of the Lord? And again,

What other cause is *potent* enough, of sufficient energy, of virtue piercing and penetrative enough, to do such a work as must be done upon the spirits of men, before the state of things will come to be better? What else can shiver rocks, and melt down mountains, and make rough places plain? What else, do you think, can dissolve adamantine hearts, subdue insolent passions, assuage and mortify furious lusts? What else can change men's natures, transform the very habit of their minds, and make them generally quite other men, other creatures, than they have been? Unto what agent inferior to his can we attribute the ability to create? New heavens and a new earth are to be created, Isa. lxv. 17. You know how they were created at first; "By faith we understand, that the worlds were created by the word of God." The heavens and the earth were the products of the breath of his mouth, with all that is contained in them; so must the spiritual creation be, as much as the natural. What, do we think, can make all the violences and mischiefs to cease out of the earth, that fill it with continual tragedies every where, and more or less at all times? Nothing is more evident, than that the Spirit of the Lord alone is a cause proportionable to such an expected effect.

And the matter will be yet more evident, if you do but consider these two things together.

1. That the Spirits of men are most horribly depraved, and wickedly bent in themselves to such things as tend to nothing but destruction and calamity. It is said of men universally, that destruction and misery are in their ways Rom. iii. 16.

2. That all these wicked inclinations of men's spirits are continually fostered and fomented by another spirit distinct from theirs, and over and besides theirs. The spirit that worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience, (Eph. ii. 2.) makes the world and the church miserable, so far as it prevails. Now what can we oppose to that spirit, but the Spirit of the living God? While that spirit is the great tormentor and disturber of the world, that disquiets all things, that sets the spirits of men on work against God and against one another every where, that hath deluged the world with an inundation of wickedness: what but the Spirit of the Lord can lift up a standard against it?

* Preached October 9th, 1678.

a See page 575.

But that the apprehension of this matter may yet settle and fix more deeply with us; (for it is of great concernment that it should do so, that we may know whither to direct our eye;) let us but enumerate a little all the probable means besides that we can think of, which might make the times good; and think, how inefficacious and altogether to no purpose they would be, without the Spirit of the Lord poured forth and working with mighty efficacy every where upon the spirits of men.

1. Think what the preaching of the Gospel would do. That, it must be supposed, will be very general, far more general than it is, to bring about such a state of things as we expect and hope for, before time end. But, alas! what would preaching do, if we could suppose it never so general, while the Spirit of the living God restrains and withholds his influences? Indeed it is not to be supposed, that there could be a general preaching of the Gospel amongst men, without the mighty work of the Spirit of God to prepare the way: but if there were, to how little purpose is our preaching, where that Spirit works not! We may as well attempt to batter strong walls with the breath of our mouths, as to do good upon men's souls without the Spirit of God. If there were preachers every where, that could "speak with the tongues of men and of angels," what would it signify? "Do I persuade men?" saith the apostle. Alas! it is above us to persuade men; it is a matter of very great difficulty in things that are but of common concernment. How hard to alter the mind and will of a man, once set and bent already upon this or that thing of a secular nature, that hath reference only to earthly affairs! The heathens themselves have been taught by that light that hath shone amongst them, to attribute unto a Deity the business of persuading men, to acknowledge it a *numen* that ever comes to have a persuasive power over men's minds. When the Son of God himself was the preacher, how little was effected, till the time came of the Spirit's being so copiously poured forth! He that spake, his enemies being judges, so as never man spake? into whose lips grace was poured forth! his hearers wondering at the gracious words that proceeded from his mouth! astonished sometimes at his doctrine! for they could distinguish, and see, that he taught with authority, and not as the scribes: yet how little was done! All ended in the martyrdom of the preacher, and not long after in the destruction of the people for the greatest part. When that Spirit was poured forth, then thousands at a sermon were subdued and brought under by the power of the Gospel: but it was not yet given in that plentiful measure, while as yet Jesus was not glorified. And if it had not been given upon Jesus's glorification, what could have enough fortified the hearts of these poor disciples, to undertake the converting of the world, the going to teach all nations, to proselyte mankind? How much, how unspeakably too big had such an attempt appeared for their undertaking, if a mighty Spirit had not come forth to raise them above themselves, to make them somewhat beyond men! How could they ever have thought of going about such a thing as that, wherein they were to be and actually were the successful instruments? Without it, what success could have been hoped for, howsoever attempted? Possibly it may be thought, that human endeavours might have done much at least towards the proselyting of mankind to the Christian profession: so much might have been discovered of the reasonableness of that religion, as that it might have been thought fit, somewhat generally, so far as men could be dealt with, to entertain and embrace the Christian name. Truly even that was very unlikely; that it should have been ordinarily in the power of any rhetoric or of any reason, generally to persuade men to forsake a religion, wherein they had been bred and born, and which was delivered down to them from their forefathers, whether Jews or pagans: it was very unlikely, that mere argument should prevail so far on the world. But suppose it did.

2. Consider what mere nominal Christianity would do to the bettering of the world. What doth it now to the bettering of the state of things, where it obtains? Wherein are the nominal Christians better than other men? wherein are they better towards God and Christ? The case is apparent, that though atheism and infidelity be conquered in men's minds and understandings by the strength of reason or of education, yet still the stronger fort in the heart remains inexpugnable, till the Spirit of the living God comes to deal effectually with the hearts of men: and so that consequently there is as great enmity against God and Christ, even in the Christian world as out of it. And wherein are men better in Christendom towards one another, than the pagans and Mahometans are? wherein better? where is there more deceit and fraud, more enmity and malice, more oppression and cruelty, than amongst the nominal Christians? If we take true measures of the Christian religion, and apprehend it to be what indeed it is; if we will say, that it is faith in God through Christ, or devotedness to God through Christ; or if we will say, that it doth consist, as no doubt in very great part it doth, in an imitation of Christ, in being like-minded to Christ in purity, heavenliness, spirituality, in self-denial, meekness, patience, peaceableness, aptitude to do good all that ever we can: if this be the Christian religion, we may confidently say, that Christianity hath not more bitter enemies in all the world than professed Christians: I wish we could not say so. And where throughout this world have there ever been more bloody wars, fierce commotions, dreadful ruins and devastations, than amongst Christians? Therefore think, how little towards the bettering of the world and mending of the times, nominal Christianity doth or can do without the Spirit of God: the world is filled with plagues notwithstanding, and whatsoever tends to make it miserable, in those very parts where that obtains. But then,

3. It may be supposed, that these very judgments themselves might effect somewhat to the purpose, to calm and subdue men's spirits, and so bring about a more sedate and composed state of things at last. And most true indeed it is, that they are very apt means to that purpose. But means, you must still remember, are but means, and suppose an agent that is to use them; as a sword will not cut without a hand to manage it, and a proportionable hand. The inhabitants of the world should learn righteousness, when God's judgments are abroad in the earth, Isa. xxvi. 9. But do they? Do not we all know that nations, countries, towns, cities, may more easily be ruined than reformed, more easily be harassed and crushed all to pieces than purged? Do we need instances? We cannot find a more bright one than the nearest to ourselves, to our own view. If we do but cast an eye upon this very city, it hath been wasted by judgment upon judgment: think what the plague hath done, what the fire hath done, what poverty invading as an armed man here and there hath done. Is the city more reformed? grown more pious and serious? doth the life of religion appear more in it? is it become more sober and just? Let this be seriously considered, and then think, what even judgments themselves, as severe as can be thought, are like to effect in the world without the Spirit poured forth. You have heard enough of the commotions and hurries of the world in other parts; but do you hear of its being grown much better even in those parts? And admit that such judgments should sober men's spirits generally, and reduce them to more calmness, that men should by very weariness be at length brought to be at rest, and so a peaceable and prosperous state of things ensue; yet what would that alone do to make the times good?

4. What, I say, would a prosperous state of things do (meaning it only of external prosperity) to better the condition of the church of God? Such a good state of things for the church, must, as hath been said, first and in the principal place consist in the flourishing of religion, and then but secondarily in external tranquillity. What would the latter of these do without the former? and what would become of the former without the Spirit poured forth? If we had never so happy times in external respects, what would be the issue of it, in reference to the state and condition of the church of God? We should then have, as was noted of old, golden chalices and wooden priests: the church would be a glorious sepulchre, splendid without, but full of rottenness and corruption within. Would this better our case? It is very plain, that there could be nothing more beside the purpose of mending the state of the church, than prosperity, without a great measure of the Spirit. It would be good in subserviency, nothing in

substitution: it might serve the Spirit, but cannot supply its place: much might be done under the management of the Spirit by such a state of things towards the promoting and furthering of religion; but without that Spirit all would go to ruin: religion would soon languish away and come to nothing, the sun of external prosperity would exhale the life and spirit and vigour of it; as experience has often shown that it has done heretofore. And what external prosperity can there be, while the minds of men are so very various, divided into varieties of parties this way and that? There cannot be a prosperous state, while only one party is uppermost, and all the rest under oppression. When the church of God hath been in so divided a condition, have you ever known or read or heard of any such state of things, that hath been so favourable, as to deserve to be called a prosperous state? If it hath been favourable to some, yet it hath, it may be, been equally or more unfavourable unto very many, that perhaps were better men that those whom the times smiled upon. And so it cannot but still be, where there are many parties: every party cannot be uppermost: and unless the Spirit of God new-mould men's spirits, whatever party were uppermost, they would make it their business to crush and vex and disquiet all the rest. And can that be a state fit to be called prosperous? But,

5. That which the minds of many may be apt to run upon, is, that some very exact form of government in the church would be the specific, or rather the *panpharmacon*, to cure all diseases in the church of God, and make a very happy time. A frame of things exactly squared according to their apprehension, they think, would soon do the business. The minds of many are apt to run much upon this project. But most forms, that can be thought on, have been tried; and what have they done, while the Spirit of God hath not animated the external form? or what hope remains, that any thing could be done by an external lifeless form, if never so excellent and unexceptionable, never so agreeable to rule? The expectation, that that would do the business, is as if a person were dangerously and extremely sick, even next to death, and any should go about to trim him up and dress him neatly, put on him a well made suit, and expect that this should effect his cure. Alas! what needs there amongst us such curiosity for a dead thing? We are dead, the Spirit of God is retiring, retired in a very great degree: to what purpose would it be to shape and figure a dead thing this way or that? Just to as much purpose, as the endeavour of him that we read of in Plutarch, who would fain erect a newly dead body in the posture of a living man; but alas! the legs yielded, the hands fell, the head dropped on one side; so that the poor defeated person was forced to cry out at last, "*Deest aliquid intus*, I find there is something wanting within; there wants a living soul to support and animate the frame." So it must be in our case too, if there were ever so exact order. You may suppose from what was formerly said, that order is a most excellent and desirable thing, and necessary to the prosperity of the church of God. But what is the order and frame of a thing that is dead? If a plot of ground should be laid out for a garden; square it never so accurately, let it have never so exact a figure, bestow upon it every thing of ornament that art can invent; yet if nature also do not do its part, if the sun never shine upon it, if no showers or dews ever descend, would it be, think you, a pleasant flourishing garden? We have all of us reason to have done expecting much from lifeless outward forms, even the best constitution imaginable; while a spirit of life from above breathes not, despair that that will ever work miracles, or do any great things amongst us.

Besides, the best form of things that can be supposed, that is, such as would be more serviceable than others unto the ends and purposes which should be aimed at, to depress wickedness and keep things composed and in order, could never last long, if a Spirit from God do not animate it. Lust and wickedness, which it goes about to curb, and which might be less in some external fruits of it, so long as it should continue curbed, yet would grow too strong and break the bonds. As you know, that, let the body of a man be never so comely and beautiful and well proportioned, yet all that excellent structure and fabric will soon dissolve after death; beauty is gone all of a sudden, ghastliness succeeds in the room of it, and in time it will corrupt and putrify within; and that corruption will break forth, so as to break the external frame, and cause part to drop from part. Therefore never expect a mere external frame of things to better our case much or long, to do any miracles in that kind. And I may add, as that leads me,

6. That indeed the very power of working miracles itself, which is but an external means, would not better the world and men's spirits, without the Spirit of God accompanying. It is true indeed they could not be wrought without that Spirit in the agent; but that would not do without the Spirit as a diffused soul. Many may be ready to imagine, that if God would but do some very strange things amongst men, work many astonishing wonders, fill the world and the time with prodigies; then, whereas his memorial is in so great part extinct, these things would effectually convince men of their atheism and infidelity, and so all would be set right. But what did miracles do with the Jews of old? who were brought out of Egypt by a succession of miracles, by plague upon plague inflicted on the land of Egypt, till they were constrained to let Israel go! who were brought through the Red sea by a most astonishing miracle, the sea dividing on the one hand and on the other, and their enemies pursuing destroyed, only by withdrawing that miraculous power, and letting the sea unite again! who were led through the wilderness by a continual miracle, the pillar of cloud and fire; and fed by another, manna, bread from heaven! who had the great God himself appearing with so stupendous a glory upon mount Sinai; speaking with the voice of words, that six hundred thousand might hear at once, the law, the ten words! yet the body of that people lapse into idolatry, while the Divine glory was in view before their eyes, and after it had been by so dreadful a voice immediately before forbidden with the utmost severity. And their after-ingratitude, infidelity, mutinies, rebellions, murmurings, testify how little miracles did amongst them. How little did they do in Christ's time! those that he himself wrought! restoring hearing to the deaf, and sight to the blind, and speech to the dumb, and life to the dead! how little was effected, save only to heighten and aggravate the wickedness which showed itself so invincible! All these are *external* things.

But if we should think of what is internal too; the common notions of religion; the practical dictates of natural conscience, that do more or less obtain every where amongst men; the light and knowledge, that comes by the Gospel discovery, where that obtains; common prudence, and respect to self-interest; how little do these things do towards the composing of the world and the bettering of the times! It is plain, that light is more easily extinguished than lust. When it comes to a contest, when there is a competition between corruption and conscience; alas! how much more intent are men to mortify their consciences, than to mortify their corruptions? How feeble and impotent a thing is their light! All the light that shines doth but testify against them, rather than direct or reform them; and will do no more, till the Almighty Spirit go forth. And for that of prudence and respect to interest, that is the very thing that undoes men; that is, that every man will be prudent for himself, and mind a particular interest of his own: this fills the world with tumults and blood, with mischiefs and miseries every where; so that that which should be men's preserver, is their destroyer, even self-love.

The sum of all is this. This ought to make us despair that ever we shall see a better world and state of things, till this blessed Spirit be poured down upon our heads. Without that, things will be growing worse and worse; it cannot be but they will do so; do not we see, that they have done so? The Spirit is in a great measure gone, retired even from Christian assemblies. When do we hear of the conversion of a soul, of any stricken and pierced to the heart by the word of God? And what is that like to come to, think we? what would it come to in this city, if always in a continued course the burials should exceed the births? Must it not be the very desolation of all at last? If we should speak of burials in a moral sense; alas! doth the number of converts equal the number of apostates? But take it in a natural sense, as all are dying;

do we think, that there are Christians brought in, serious Christians, effectually become so, in any proportionable number to the deaths of good people amongst us? What doth this tend to, but the extinction of religion? And not to speak of the rampant wickedness of those who have cast off all sense and fear of God and godliness, but only how those who profess religion degenerate and grow worse and worse; it is very dismal to think, how coldly affected they are towards religion, towards the ordinances of it, towards the Divine presence; how eagerly they fly at the world, when the clouds gather so thick and black, and all things seem to conspire to a storm; their ordinary business, all their business, must go on just as it did, except that of souls, except that for eternity and another world; which must be neglected, as it was wont to be. Is not this the case? If there be opportunities of solemn prayer, of mourning and fasting, of putting in for a part and share of the expected mercy; how do many, if we may not say the most of them that profess religion amongst us, as it were disclaim their part! for they will bear no part amongst them that cry for mercy. Think, what will this come to, if the Spirit of the living God be still withheld, and do not awaken men, and reduce their spirits to a better state. Despised ordinances, contemned worship, neglected seasons and opportunities of grace, how dreadful a testimony will they bear in the consciences of many, if once light should come to be extinguished amongst us, and all the frame of things, wherein they seem to take comfort, should be dissolved and shattered in pieces!

SERMON XV.*

IT remains now to make some improvement of so great and important a subject, as we have been upon—The dependance of the happy state of the church of God upon the pouring forth of his Spirit;—which shall be in certain practical notes or corollaries, that are deducible from the whole of what hath been opened to you. And we shall begin, where we ended at the close of the last discourse.

1. Since the happiness of the church doth so immediately and necessarily depend upon a pouring forth of the Spirit, it must needs be of very dreadful import, when that Spirit retires, when there is a manifest suspension of its light and influence. Every gradual retraction of that Spirit speaks a vergency to death, to a total dissolution; as if the whole frame of the church were ready to drop asunder. It is a dismal thing, when that which is the only light and life of it retires, visibly withdraws; when that Spirit breathes not as it hath done through the world, souls are not born by it unto God in a proportion to what hath been; considering, that this is the only way of entering into God's kingdom, either in the initial or consummate state of it, the kingdom of grace or the kingdom of glory. It is a dismal thing, when conversions are grown rare, and inferior in number to apostacies; when Christians are not born so fast as they die, whether in the moral sense, or in the natural; for all die alike. This ought to be considered as a thing of dreadful import, when the Spirit works not as he hath been wont, for the rescuing of souls out of a precedent death; and further, when those that live, languish; and much more, when death insensibly creeps on them that have but a name to live; as you know it doth with many languishing persons, seizing one limb first and then another, so that the man is dead while he is alive. With how many is it so, that have lost themselves either in the cares or pleasures of this world, and are dead while they live! This it becomes us to consider as a most melancholy case. If all the happiness and weal of the church depend upon the pouring out of the Spirit, how dreadful is it, when there is a discernible retraction!

2. All our hope of good lying in the pouring forth of the Spirit, it is very strange, that the retraction of it should not be considered with more sense; that we are not more apprehensive of so dismal a case as that is. It is a case exceeding gloomy in itself, as hath been said; but how strange is it, that we should so little understand and consider it as such! that this should be our danger, lest God should be quite gone from amongst us before we know it! that life is retiring, but we perceive it not! Alas! with too many there is scarce life enough left to feel themselves die, or light enough to perceive that darkness is gathering upon them. Strange that men should be dying, and say they are alive! Light is diminishing, and blindness increasing and growing upon them, yet they say they see well, and carry it as if nothing ailed them! This is a strange infatuation upon the minds of men, even of the professors of religion in our time; we keep up our wonted course while we can, our wonted forms and ways of worship; we assemble as we have been accustomed to do, we have praying and preaching and other ordinances of the Gospel; but there is not the wonted Spirit, such appearances and demonstrations of the power and presence of the Spirit as formerly, and yet we seem not aware of it. We do as we have been wont at other times; but we find it not with our souls in what we do, as Christians were used to find it; as it is said of that mighty man Samson; he said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself, but he wist not that the Lord was departed from him, Judg. xvi. 20. So, we seem not to know that the Lord is departing, but say we will do as at other times: indeed we reach not him; he said he would go forth and shake himself as at other times; we do not that, but as the complaint is in Isa, lxiv. 7. so is our case; There is none (scarce any) that stir up themselves to take hold of God, for, as it there follows, he hath hid his face from us and consumed us, we are consuming, because of our iniquities. We are pining away, but not aware of it; gray hairs are here and there upon us, but we seem not to know it. We read concerning men in general in the dying hour, Eccl. viii. 8. No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death. When the soul must dislodge and be gone, no man can hold it; but they would if they could, men are loth to die; they would retain the spirit longer, if it were any way in their power: what strivings and strugglings for breath are there in dying men; but there seems with us hardly to be so much as that, "Oh that we could retain the Spirit of life and grace?" It is not indeed in our power, any more than to retain the departing, dislodging soul, when the hour is come that it must be gone; but it is strange, that we should not be filled with complaint, that we should cross what is so common as to be a proverb; every thing would live, but it seems so would not we. When God as it were says to us by what he doth, (the most emphatical way of speaking,) "My Spirit shall not always strive," it shall no longer strive; for it is actually withheld from striving; yet we dread not this greatest of all threats, and when the threatening is enforced by a gradual execution, an execution already in a dreadful degree; not to be afraid what this will come to, is very strange.

3. We further collect, that such a dismal state of things is likely immediately to forego the more eminent effusion of the Spirit, and the shining of the light of God's face, here spoken of. When the time approaches, concerning which the text speaks, then a most dismal gloominess and darkness must be expected to precede. That is plainly implied, when it is said, "I will no more hide my face:" I have done it hitherto, but will not do it any more: it bespeaks, that till the time of this eminent effusion there was a very displeased hiding of God's face, and a great retraction and holding back of the Spirit. Other scriptures, that relate as I conceive to the same eminent season, intimate also a dreadful foregoing desolation. The prophet Isaiah (chap. xxxii.) describes the desolation of the Christian church, (for I doubt not his prediction is ultimately meant of that,) by the emblem of the land of Israel's lying waste, and the great city, the metropolis, being all ruined, the very houses of joy in the joyous city covered over with briars and thorns, ver. 13, 14. And thus it is said it should be, ver. 15. Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high; then the wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be connted for a forest; that which was before reckoned a fruitful field, shall now seem to have been but a wild forest, in comparison of the fruitfulness it shall now arrive at by the effusion of the Spirit. So that

* Preached October 16, 1678.

great pouring of it forth, in Ezek. xxxvii. meant no doubt of the same time with this in the text, is preceded by such a forlorn and desolate state of the church, that it is represented by the emblem of a slaughtered army covering all the ground about with dead carcasses, till the Spirit of life enter into them, bring bone to bone, cover them with flesh, and form them all into a regular army of living men again, ver. 1—14. It imports, that almost a universal death, next to total, will be upon the church before this happy day. And do not we seem in a tendency thither? We seem to be descending gradually into the dark shady vale, the region of darkness and of death: nor must we expect it to be silent darkness; no doubt it will rather imitate that of hell, a region turbid as well as dark. A night seems approaching, that will be equally stormy and gloomy; for it is the season of God's anger. It is never to be thought, that he will be neutral towards us; if he be not a friend, he will be an enemy; when he ceases to be our light and life, and hope and joy, it cannot be but he must become an astonishing terror. "Be not a terror unto me, thou art my hope," says the prophet, Jer. xvii. 17. When he is not the one, he must be the other. Are we prepared to meet him in such a way and in such a time? It cannot but be a dreadful time, the time of managing his controversy: when he hideth his face in displeasure, that is not all, it is not a bare hiding. Observe that passage in Deut. xxxi. 17. "Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them:" and what then? It follows, "So that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us? and I will surely hide my face in that day;" as it follows again in ver. 18. This is to make a way for wrath; and when you can see him no longer, you shall hear from him in a most terrible way.

The case of the Christian church seems to be as Israel was represented, in Psal. cvi. 35, &c. They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works: and they served their idols, which were a snare unto them. And, ver. 39. Thus they were defiled with their own works; (now they are called their own, since they had adopted them, and so made them their own;) and went a whoring with their own inventions. What follows there, and what may we expect to follow in the like case? "For this the Lord abhorred his own inheritance," ver. 40. Now take them who will, they are an abomination to the Lord, he seems to care no more for them. As to the former part, is not this manifestly our case; the Christian religion is in great part become paganish. We lately showed, how little good nominal Christianity doth to the world, where that only doth obtain. How plain is it, that Christianity hath let in paganism unto a dreadful degree! And now, when the time of controversy comes, the day of recompense and year of vengeance, which is in God's heart, how terrible a day will that be! When that day comes, that shall burn as an oven, and all the hemisphere as it were of the church be as a fiery vault! when the Lord shall bathe his sword in heaven, as the expression is in Isa. xxxiv. 5. as it were drench it with vivid celestial fire, that it may pierce like lightning! when he shall whet his glittering sword, lift up his hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever, I will render vengeance to mine enemies: (Deut. xxxii. 40, 41.) when he shall set himself to contest with the Antichristian spirit, that hath lurked under the assumed and injurious pretence and profession of the Christian name; the apostatical, the worldly spirit, that hath entered into the church, and wrought in it with such malignity; that spirit of envy, malice, hatred, bitterness; that profane, atheistical spirit; that spirit of hypocrisy and formality! when he shall come to a direct contest and grapple with all among whom that spirit dwells and rules; how can we think but that will be a very dreadful day? And do we know how near it is? May it not for ought we know be even at hand? May we not be upon the very borders of that turbid darkness, in which all the rage of hell shall play its part, the spirits of men be let loose, the devils not yet bound and ready to do their uttermost, when they know their time is short; the very hour and power of darkness, when all things shall conspire to make the church a chaos and place of confusion, when the elements shall be as it were commissioned to fight one another, and the powers of heaven shall shake? How are we prepared, in what posture to enter into such a state as that is? It is a dismal thing to live a winter, a continual night, in such a place as you have heard Greenland to be: one would not do it, unless unavoidable necessity drove; and if one must, he would make provision for such a winter-night all that he could. How then are we provided for such a time?

4. We may note again hence, how adorable the power and greatness of that spirit is, that can turn such a chaos, such a state of darkness and horror and confusion, into light and peace, into life and beauty, into harmony and glory. How adorable is that Spirit! how great and glorious should it be in our eyes upon that account! Let us use our thoughts as much as we will, we cannot make a too gloomy representation of the time just spoken of, wherein the Lord's face shall be hid, and the Spirit withheld. But when we have dwelt in the contemplation of the sadness and dismalness of that time awhile, then what cause have we, and what advantage thence, to take our rise to greaten and heighten our thoughts concerning this blessed Almighty Spirit, that can make so happy a change as soon as it comes forth, as soon as the divine light shines again! What a change will it be! Amidst all those calamities that the church complains of, (Psalm lxxx.) see where they apprehend the redress to be. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved; which is repeated no less than three times in this psalm, ver. 3, 7, 19. We are cured all of a sudden, all things are redressed, if thou do but turn us and cause thy face to shine. How soon doth the appearance, the first visit of the sun to the horizon wherein we are, transform a region of darkness into pleasant light! Look upon that wretched state of things wherein the Christian church is, and wherein we may well expect it further to be, and in a deeper degree: if we think, that however when the Spirit is poured out, all is well, how adorable ought that Spirit to be to us! that mighty Spirit, that can even of a sudden new-create the world, make new heavens and new earth, diffuse its light and influence every where, clothe all with lustre and glory! And truly I believe we must be brought to have higher thoughts of the Spirit than we have, before we see so good days as we would wish we might! Alas! how diminishingly is it conceived and spoken of amongst us! We have the name of the Spirit or of the Holy Ghost many times in our mouths, when our hearts ascribe not honour to him, we glorify him not as God in our conceptions: no, the notions of our minds and dispositions of our hearts are with too many, as if we had not "heard whether there be any Holy Ghost;" or as if it signified a mere nothing with us. But it concerns us to greaten our thoughts concerning the Spirit of the living God. When it works as the Spirit of nature, it renews the face of the earth, replenishes all the region with life. What would this creation be, if all divine influence were retracted and withheld, by which every thing lives, and which is attributed to the Spirit of God, as the active principle that works every where in the creation of the world, moving upon the abyss in the renewing of it from time to time? By him and from him there is such a thing as life in all the creation; he works all in all. But consider it also as a Spirit of holiness, of divine life and power in the Spirits of men; what a mighty Agent is that, that can spread such an influence every where, unto the remotest corners of this world! and can reach every heart of those that belong to God, and all at once; and pierce into them with so mighty power, that though all the art in the world cannot persuade and change the mind of a man, even in a matter of common concernment, if he be resolved, yet this Spirit can transform where it touches, and overcome, if it will, even in the first attempt! Oh! what homage should our souls within us pay to this Almighty Spirit! In how prostrate a posture should we be! How should we adore that Spirit, that can, when it will, fill all every where with light and life!

5. We collect further, that the grace of the Spirit is most admirably condescending, that it will ever vouchsafe to come down into such a world as this is; that there should be a time, in which such a favour is designed, as this, "I will pour out my Spirit." Well may it be called the Spirit

of grace, the Spirit of all goodness and benignity and sweetness, that it will ever vouchsafe to visit our world, a world so drenched in impurity, and so environed with malignant darkness. How well does the name agree, "The Spirit of grace!" So hellish is the malignity, that would despise such a Spirit: he is called so on purpose, we may suppose, by the author to the Hebrews, to aggravate that malignity; And hath done despite to the Spirit of grace, Heb. x. 29. But how magnificently glorious is that grace, that will finally overcome this malignity! That this Spirit will come down, and spread its light and influences through so much deformity and pollution and darkness, as is every where in this world; that it should become a soul unto such a world! What if an angel of God would humble himself to become a soul to a worm, to animate a worm? but a stranger humiliation far it is, that the Spirit of God should become as it were a soul to such a world as this. God says, "I have poured out my Spirit upon it, and now, will no more hide my face." It should put our hearts into raptures. How should we fall down and adore the Spirit of life and grace! Wilt thou do this? wilt thou come down into such a world as this?

6. We may note further, that the face of God shall never shine, but where he doth pour out his Spirit. His face will always remain hid towards the church, till the time comes that he pours out his Spirit. It will be of good service to consider this. Many vainly promise themselves halcyon days without the consideration of any influence of the Spirit connected with it; as if the aspects of Providence could be favourable to them, and they could do well enough without the Spirit: if we can but enjoy peace and tranquillity, free trade, and liberty to walk without check or control in the ways that we like best, though without the other; yet we are apt to think, that our happiness would be sufficiently provided for. But we are not to expect, that the aspects of Providence will be favourable, without a concurring effusion of the Divine Spirit: it is neither like to be; nor would be to any good purpose, if it should.

It is not like to be; for why should we suppose it should? What is the church of God, when the Spirit is withdrawn and gone? what are they that call themselves of it, more than other men? If the Spirit be gone, what is it but an Aceldama? a Golgotha! a place of skulls, a place of carcasses! Do we think, that the Divine glory shall only serve to adorn sepulchres? that the more glorious and pleasing aspects of Providence shall only serve for that? You cannot long sever and keep off from death internal rottenness and corruption: and surely it is very unlikely, that God should take pleasure to discover himself and to display his glory among such, in the more remarkable works of his favourable providence.

And to what purpose would it be, if he should? What should we be the better for a state of external tranquillity and peace, if the Spirit be withheld? Sure you will think religion to be necessary at least to the church; otherwise what distinguishes that from another community of men? But what a sad frame of religion must there be, if the Spirit of God be not in it? We cannot call that state prosperous to the church wherein the Spirit breathes not, unless sensuality will be the felicity of the church, unless we think ourselves warranted to abandon all care of the soul, and the belief of immortality and of a world to come, as if these were only mistakes and delusions: for great external prosperity to the church without the Spirit accompanying it, commonly issues in irreligion. That alone deserves to be esteemed a good state of things for the church of God, wherein the people of God every where are working and framing for a blessed eternity: and that they will never be without much of the Divine Spirit.

THE

OBLIGATIONS FROM NATURE AND REVELATION

TO FAMILY RELIGION AND WORSHIP,

REPRESENTED AND PRESSED IN

SIX SERMONS.

TO THE READER.

The favourable acceptance, which the generality of serious Christians have given to Mr. Howe's late posthumous treatise concerning the prosperous state of the Christian Interest before the end of time, hath encouraged me to take the same pains in fitting for the press the following sermons of the same excellent author concerning Family Religion. The copy, transcribed by some unknown, but skilful hand, different from that by which the sermons already published were preserved, was communicated to me by my worthy friend Mr. Herman Hood.

In the treatise just mentioned, Mr. Howe speaks of this as one of the ways, by which we may hope that the Spirit poured out will produce the better state of religion which we are expecting, namely, by means of family order* more generally and vigorously set on foot among the professors of Christianity. And certainly we cannot reasonably entertain strong hopes of the revival of the power of godliness either in our own age or the succeeding, till this necessary part of the form of it becomes general among Christians. As long as a customary neglect prevails in seasoning the rising age with proper instructions in the families to which they belong; while our youth, that spring from parents or are intrusted with masters who bear a Christian name, grow up altogether disused from the daily exercises of social piety; the seed of the church will soon be lost among the men of the world, and religion must die away without some very supernatural reviving.

This just apprehension occasioned that agreement among the protestant dissenting ministers of this city, of which mention is made at the beginning of these discourses, that were preached in pursuance of it in the year 1693, to engage the attention of their several congregations at one and the same time to this very great and important duty. Mr. George Hammond at that time published a discourse upon the subject, at the desire of the united ministers; to which Mr. Matthew Barker annexed an appendix: and Mr. Samuel Slater printed a course of sermons upon the head. I have been informed, that that general endeavour had the good effect, by God's blessing, to dispose several heads of families to set up religious exercises in them.

Another effort was made lately with as general concurrence by our ministers in this city, on November 20, 1720, to enforce the same needful practice; I hope not altogether without success.

But still is there not too visible reason to fear, that the neglect of family religion is a growing evil among us? Without prying unnecessarily into the affairs of families, it is unavoidable to those who have any conversation in the world, to hear from such as have been servants or residents in the houses of many who make great pretensions to religion without doors, that there is no more acknowledgment of God among them in daily family devotion, than if they believed no such thing being.

I thought therefore, that it might be serviceable to publish this short set of discourses upon the argument; which appear to me to have placed the duty upon the most clear and indisputable foot, so as to be fit to reach all that are open to conviction; with a plainness for the greatest part suitable to the meanest capacity, and yet with a strength not to be evaded by the most judicious, and at the same time with a life and spirituality fit to impress every serious mind.

It is no wonder to find people, who evidently discover a disaffection to religion, hardly drawn to the stated practice of its exercises in their houses. Till their hearts are touched with a lively sense and relish of true piety, it cannot be expected that they should be forward this way, but rather keep themselves in countenance in their neglect by the number of like examples among such as have not cast off all pretence to religion. The wonder is that any, who give reason from the rest of their conduct for apprehending them in the judgment of charity to have religion at heart, yet should omit so plain and profitable a duty.

The common reasons alleged by such are, either their inability to express themselves properly in family devotions; or an insuperable modesty, which will not allow them to speak before others with any freedom of thought or tolerable possession of themselves.

And I freely allow, that the one or the other of these may be the case with persons sincerely religious, so far as to hinder them from the performance of family-worship to edification, at least at first, without the assistance of forms. But in God's name let none continue the omission of so plain a duty out of a superstitious prejudice against precom-

* Christ. Interest, p. 576.

posed prayers. Our forefathers the puritans were far from having an aversion to forms as such. Nor is our dissent founded upon a dislike of all use of them even in public; we only declare against the use of some passages which appear to us exceptionable, and against being so tied down to them, as to be obliged invariably to use them without alteration or addition. Most sober writers have concurred in advising to make use of them in the cases mentioned, till people can arrive at more improvement of judgment and a greater presence of mind. Many dissenters have published "forms for the assistance of those" to whom they were needful: as in Mr. Baxter's Family Book; Mr. Murray's Closet Devotions, recommended by Mr. Henry: Mr. Henry hath published some himself, at the end of his Method of Prayer. And as Mr. Howe in one of the following discourses declares his judgment for the use of them, rather than the duty should be omitted; so his practice was agreeable. There is a small book in octavo, entitled "Prayers for Families," printed by Mr. Thomas Parkhurst without any author's name, about the year 1695; of which the late reverend Mr. Jeremiah Smith gave me this account many years ago. Upon the marriage of a daughter of the right honourable Philip Lord Wharton, the lady being desirous to have the worship of God kept up in the family into which she was entering, requested Mr. Howe, Mr. William Taylor, then his lordship's chaplain, and Mr. Smith, to draw up some prayers for that purpose. Mr. Smith, according to his usual modesty, declined bearing a part in the service. But Mr. Howe and Mr. Taylor complied with the request; and their composures were privately printed, and made use of in that lady's family.

I only mention these things, to prevent the misapprehension of any, as if in what I have said I had offered any thing singular. All who love religion in earnest, whether in or out of the public establishment, whether in their judgments they prefer praying by forms or otherwise, will I doubt not agree in this; that it is better that God should be worshipped either the one way or the other, both in secret, and in families, and in public assemblies, than that men should live in any of these respects, as "without God in the world."

For my own part, I should be glad that every head of a family were fully capable from time to time to represent the case of that under his charge with propriety and life, in supplication and praise and confession, according to all varying circumstances. But where that cannot be, yet I rejoice to know or to hear of a family, that seriously and solemnly calls upon the Lord in any way. Those who begin with a form, may find themselves gradually emboldened to go further; and either totally in time lay that way aside; or sometimes pray the one way and sometimes the other, as they find the temper of their spirits to be; or, if they cannot get over the difficulties, which first made it necessary for them to use the assistance of others' composures, yet they may be able gradually to intersperse a sentence here and there suitable to special occurrences in their family, without any tremor.

And after all, whether our words flow from the abundance of the heart, or we endeavour to excite affections answerable to what the words before us suggest; if the God who knows the heart sees sincerity and true devotion in the worshipper; it will undoubtedly be accepted, according to that a man hath, and not according to that which he hath not.

I commend these discourses to the perusal of all serious Christians, though of differing persuasions in lesser matters, earnestly begging, that by God's blessing they may reach the end of the author in preaching them, and of the transcriber in preparing them for public view; namely, the revival of religion in families, and by that means the diffusing of it far and wide in the present generation and in those which are to come.

I am

Your hearty well-wisher

for your best interests,

JOHN EVANS.

Prescot-Street,
May 11th, 1726.

SERMON I.*

Josh. xxiv. 15.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

THIS is the magnanimous resolution of that great and good man, Joshua, notwithstanding the supposed revolt of all the people of Israel from God, who had been bound to him by the most sacred and endearing ties. "Though you," says he, "should all go off and apostatize from God, even to a man, after all the great and glorious things that he hath wrought among you and for you; that shall not alter me: through his grace, the course that I will take, and that mine shall take, whom I can have any influence upon or any power over, shall be the same it was. I and my house will serve the Lord notwithstanding. Though you should all turn pagans and idolaters to a man, that shall not overturn the religion of my family or of my closet, but there shall be serving of the Lord still."

It hath been an unanimous resolution among the ministers of indulged congregations in and about this city, to insist upon the subject of family worship, even all at once, at least as many as to whom it was possible; and to begin upon it this very day, as I doubt not they generally do. And I should as little doubt the approbation and concurrence of divers other reverend persons in the ministry, who are not of that character, if there had been the same opportunity of consulting them and of knowing their sense; that is, of as many as do seriously desire and covet to see the prosperous and flourishing state of serious, vital, and practical religion and godliness in our days. But they, who could confer and agree to concur in such an endeavour as this, have done it with all the cheerfulness and unanimity that could be thought. Indeed, since that resolution was taken, a providence hath occurred *among us*, which some might reckon would have diverted and altered it for the present: a further breach, which God hath made upon our congregation, by the late decease of a considerable and very useful member of it, worthy Mr. Collet. Of whom divers might expect to hear a distinct account given them; apprehending, that it would not be so much an ornament to him or to his name when gone, as a means of instruction to them who are left behind.

* Preached December 10th, 1693.

But I am under restraint as to this; partly by my relation; but more principally by his own express prohibition, who declared his unwillingness to be made the subject of a funeral sermon. And that prohibition was equal (as any might understand) to the most copious one that could have been made by way of commendation. For it more represented the temper of his spirit, than my words could have done; the meekness, the humility, the modesty of it; and was most agreeable to the habitual frame, from whence the way of his walking proceeded; steady, but still and without noise; and showed how willing he was, that his exit out of this world might be with as much silence, as his course through it was.

Yet however, had I been to have preached a funeral sermon upon his account, I should never have laid aside for that the thoughts of this text. For I could not have found one in the whole Bible, from whence I might have

more taken occasion to represent him, as to his person and as to his family, as an example of both personal and domestical religion, single and family godliness. And indeed were they who profess godliness generally in these respects like him, there would be much less need of preaching upon such a subject, or of taking up such a resolution as you have heard hath been general in reference thereunto.

But it hath been generally apprehended and feared, by them whom God hath set as watchmen amongst us, that the case is too much otherwise; and that the religion of families languisheth, or indeed hath no place at all in many families, where yet there is a profession of and a pretence unto godliness above the common rate. For my own part, I do not know that there is this sinful omission with any of you that have families; I do not know that there is: and therefore I cannot be understood, without great injury to me, to intend a reflection upon any particular person. But yet for all that, I cannot think a discourse upon this subject needless: for it is possible, many may be guilty of this omission, though I know nothing of it; who do not covet to pry into families, beyond any particular occasion or call that I may have thereunto. And if it be so, it is not to be despaired of, but that through the blessing of God his word may be made use of to effect a conviction and a reformation of so great and so insufferable an evil.

And it is possible too, that it may serve for the confirmation of such in that good course, as may be tempted to desist from it. For have none ever come within the compass of your knowledge, who have for some time continued to practise and keep on foot the worship of God in their families, but have at length abandoned it and given it over? That is a far fouler case. *Turpius ejicitur, quàm non admittitur: It is a more ignominious thing to throw your religion and your God out of your families, than never to have admitted them.* I would labour to fortify all, as much as is possible against that temptation.

And it is possible further to be useful to divers, who yet have not families, but who may have; so as to be a guide and incentive to their purpose and practice for the future, when there shall be such occasions.

And even to us all, who are ever so resolute in the present use and for the continuance of this holy course, it may be useful for our quickening to manage this holy work with more seriousness, with more vigour, with more spirituality, and to better purpose, than we have been any of us wont to do.

And as to the subject itself, you see the words of this text are very plain words: I and my house will serve the Lord. The word, house, indeed doth sometimes signify more largely; but it cannot be understood to signify any thing else here but a household: and so we are saved from any thing of a disputation about that matter. For Joshua speaks only of them, for whom he would answer, at least as to their visible practice, and whom he had a power over. "I and my house will serve the Lord." And he contradistinguisheth the case of his own family from the supposed different common case. For he supposeth all the rest to be gone off to paganism or the service of other gods; notwithstanding which the practice of his house and family should be the same that it was.

And for the term, serve, it is true the Hebrew word here used is rendered promiscuously by the Septuagint in several places, so as sometimes to signify λατρεία, that is, that service which is peculiar and appropriate to God under the notion of worship to him; and sometimes to signify δουλεία, service in a much larger sense. Therefore I lay no stress upon the word, abstractly considered, but only considered according to the present circumstances. Abstractly considered, it is very true it doth sometimes signify not only service to God, but to man. And again being referred to God, it sometimes signifies any other service, or obedience, or duty, besides worship; as we are to obey and comport with his pleasure in other things besides worshipping of him: and then this word serves to express that service. But in this place it can signify nothing but worship. That is most plain. It signifieth that sort of service, which must either be paid to the true God, or will be paid to false ones. "You may serve other gods; but I and my house will serve the Lord." So that it is worship or religion that is meant here, and nothing else. And therefore about that, there is no place or room left for disputation. And now so much being plain, you find a twofold resolution expressed in the text.

1. Concerning personal religion: the religion of a single person, solitary worship: that worship, that may be confined to a man's soul and to his closet. "I will serve the Lord: I will be a worshipper of him, as long as I live, let the rest of the world do what they will." And then here is a resolution expressed too,

2. Concerning family religion; and that as the care of the family master, the governor of the family. He did not think he should answer the obligation that lay upon him as such, or do the part incumbent on him as so related, if he should shut up himself and his religion in a closet. No, but "I and my house will serve the Lord;" implying his resolution, both to do what was incumbent upon himself in worshipping God even among them, and to use the power he had to oblige them to a compliance and concurrence therein. Otherwise he must be thought to have spoken absurdly, when he says, "As for my house, we will serve the Lord;" if he must not be understood to have the authority in his own family to oblige them to attend thereupon.

It is the latter of these, which it suits our purpose to speak unto; though we shall in the close, God willing, look back upon the other two, as there will be occasion. The text will give it, and the series of the discourse will lead to it. So that, that which is left as the designed subject of my present discourse, is family religion; the religion that belongs to a family as such, and which it belongs to a family as such to set on foot and to keep on foot in the family.

And here I cannot but be apprehensive, that wherever there is among professed Christians a disinclination and aversion from such a course and practice as this, there will be (that they may give themselves a relief, that they may have some pretence and shelter against the urgency of what may be said in such a case) an aptness clamorously to insist and cry out; "But where is your proof? what proof have you, that there ought to be such a thing as family religion? where is it required, that we must so, and so often, or in such and such a continued course, attend upon God in the performance of family duties, and the exercises of domestical religion?" I doubt not, but by the blessing of God you will find, that there is proof clear and strong enough; as it was to be expected there should be in so important a case, and upon which so much depends. But before I come to give you any, I shall lay down some few things by way of preparation and promise. As,

1. That whereas this is matter of doubt, and is to be matter of dispute; that which is doubted of, is to be generally supposed not the substance of the thing spoken of, but only this or that circumstance. I hope that generally the matter that any would have brought into dispute, or for which they would desire proof, is not, whether there should be any such thing as religion in the world, or no. That cannot be the question with any, that call themselves Christians, with any reason or modesty, at least till they have renounced that name; nor can any make that a question, consistently with themselves and with the dictates of human nature, unless they will renounce the name of man too. But the question must be, whether there ought to be religion in a family as such; and to be performed so, and so often, or in so orderly, continued, and stated a course. Hereupon I would add,

2. That where the substance of any duty is agreed to be plainly required, it would be the most unreasonable thing in all the world to throw it off, upon a pretence that such and such circumstances are not enjoined. Nothing can be more unreasonably absurd than that. For so you would come to throw out of the world the most undoubted parts of all religion whatsoever, the most essential, most noble, and substantial parts. There could be nothing of solitary and personal religion upon such terms. For instance; at this rate a man should be excused from ever remembering God as long as he lived, from ever having any thought of him, because Scripture doth not expressly tell us how often in a day we should think of him. And the same may be said of all other vital acts of religion. At this rate

nobody should be obliged to love God, because we are not told how often in a day we must put forth an act of love to him; and nobody should be obliged to fear God, to exert any reverential act towards him, because we are not told at what hour of the day it must be. And so for social worship, there could be no such thing upon these terms; if any man should say, I am not obliged to worship God in Christian societies any where, because he hath not expressly told us, you shall come together at nine, or ten, or eleven o'clock for such purposes. And so under that pretence here would be an end of all religion, because every circumstance, and particularly this of time and frequency, is not stated expressly and determined in Scripture. I add,

3. That wheresoever the substance of any duty is expressly enjoined, and the circumstances are not determined; if it be plain and evident, that the thing is necessary, (and I will now suppose, that so family religion is, as well as religion in general, as that which I hope you will see proved,) then it is left to us to choose the circumstances; but not to choose them arbitrarily, or unfitly, or inconsistently with the end and design of the duty. This is one of the good man's characters, that he orders his affairs with discretion, (Psalm cxii. 5.) with judgment, as the word admits to be read: he judiciously considers the several obligations that lie upon him, so as seasonably to answer them all. If the thing itself be manifestly enjoined, it is required of us, that we find out the way of circumstantiating it, so as may most comport with the mind and pleasure of the legislator in laying us under such an obligation: and at our peril be it, if we do not find the circumstances, when the thing is required to be done.

As for instance, to suit this with a parallel case; you know it is an obligation upon family masters to take care as to externals for them that are of the household. He that doth not provide for them of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel, I Tim. v. 8. This charge lies upon him, that according to his ability he is to provide for his domestics: it is enforced upon him by a general law and precept: "Thou shalt do no murder." He would be a murderer before God, and before all rational and considering men, that should famish his family, when he could provide for them, and when his pretence is nothing else but this, "God hath not told me in his word how many meals they shall have in a day, or at what hour of the day I am to dine or sup them; he hath not said, it shall be at eleven, or twelve, or one o'clock, or at seven or eight, that I shall so and so provide for them." This man will be nothing less than a murderer, than if the particular hour were told him in the Bible, when he must take care that they shall have that which is convenient and competent for their meat and drink. And I hope, in process of time we shall come to evince, that they are not less liable to be found guilty as murderers before God, that do famish the souls of them that are committed to their charge; but that that guilt is unspeakably more foul and horrid and hateful. And therefore I observe,

4. That when any thing by general rules is enjoined in Scripture, then we are to use our understandings in deducing and bringing down that general rule to particular cases. For the Scriptures were writ not for brutes, but for men; for an intelligent sort of creatures, that have understandings about them, and are capable of using them, so as to deduce and collect particulars out of generals, and so as to infer from such and such plain grounds suitable conclusions and inferences: and what is by manifest and just deductions to be drawn from a Scripture ground, will equally oblige, as if it were, *certis verbis*, expressed in the Scripture itself. God doth speak to us as men, and it doth not beseem the majesty of God to trifle with his creatures. Indeed it would be thought unfit for the majesty of a prince, a secular prince, to descend to every little punctilio, when his mind in his public edicts is plainly enough expressed. It may better be expected, that there should be a grandeur observed by the supreme and universal Lord of all; and we should not expect him to descend to every minute thing, to gratify the litigious cavilling humour of every one that hath a mind to find all the flaws he can in God's commands, rather than obey them; even all the flaws and defects that he can any way suppose.

The great cry in this case is, "Is not the Scripture a perfect rule both of faith and manners? And therefore what is not to be found there, as to faith, we are not bound to believe; as to manners or practice, we are not bound to do." This is the allegation, when any have a mind rather to throw off such a piece of duty towards him that gave them breath, than to comport with his mind and pleasure in it. I therefore add,

5. That divers things, not so expressly contained in Scripture, will be found equally to oblige, if they be matters of practice. They will equally oblige to such practice, though not in so many words expressed in Scripture, if by any other light, than what is contained in Scripture as such, it shall be made to appear, that they are just and necessary.

You will say, What other light? I say, the light and law of nature. For we are to know, that the Scriptures were not written to repeal the law of nature. That is an unrepealable law, never possibly to be repealed, while God is God, and man is man. For therefore is it called the law of nature, because it results from the correspondency between the nature of man and the nature of God; and so is as impossible to be repealed, as it is impossible at once, that God should be ungodded, and that you should be nullified and reduced to nothing. It is true indeed, if the former were, the latter would be. But the former being altogether impossible, as long as a reasonable creature continueth such, the obligation of the law of nature will unalterably lie upon it.

You are therefore to consider; Was there no sin or duty in the world, before the Scriptures were written, for two thousand years together? when we are told, that before the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed, when there is no law, Rom. v. 13. And therefore there was this law of nature, in respect whereof men are a law unto themselves, Rom. ii. 14. That is, if they will look impartially and faithfully into their own souls, and not wilfully overlook their natural dictates and sentiments; if they will commune with themselves. And the very writing of the Scriptures doth suppose this, and all preaching according to the Scriptures supposeth it. Otherwise what means the apostle's saying in that text, 2 Cor. iv. 2. Recommending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God? That, which upon an impartial appeal to the conscience of a man in the sight of God he shall be obliged to judge is just and equal, binds his practice, and hath its ground in Scripture too, though every circumstance relating hereunto be not found there.

Scriptural revelation doth graft upon nature, that is, it supposeth us men. Otherwise to what purpose were it to put such a book into our hands; if we were not with dependance, with subordination, to apply our own understandings to consider what is contained there; still expecting and looking up to the Father of lights, from whom this collection of truths doth come to us, that he would irradiate or direct our minds, and enable us to discern his mind, as it is signified to us the one or the other way? All appeals unto the judgments and consciences of men were in vain and to no purpose, if what I now say were not to be admitted. I speak to wise men, says the apostle, judge ye what I say, I Cor. x. 15. God's own expostulations with men suppose it. "Are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" Ezek. xviii. 29. All this doth suppose, that there is an understanding and a conscience, that is capable of judging. And whatsoever shall appear just and requisite, and necessary unto that principle, must be understood to oblige by the authority of the Supreme Legislator, whose law this is. For he, that has made us and made our natures, has made this law that is written there.

Therefore this law is an inviolable law, and most deeply fundamental to all that we have contained in the Bible; which is but a superadded light. Inasmuch as it is most true, that this law of nature doth not declare, what is to be done by apostate and lost creatures in order to their recovery; therefore a supervening light is needful. The law of nature was impressed upon the mind of innocent man, and respected his innocent state. But then, those that were obligations of duty laid upon him in that state, are incessant obligations. What! will God say, "Because my creature has made a defection from me, shall he by

his own fault excuse himself from duty, and nullify the obligation of my law?" If that did oblige men to worship God, and oblige societies to worship him, lesser societies, supposing there had been such, while the state of innocency lasted; do we think, that that obligation is taken off by sin, by men's having offended and made a defection from God? As if men could nullify God's laws by disobeying them. And therefore, I say what doth by the law of nature appear to be necessary, will equally oblige our practice, as if it were in so many express words in Scripture. And in the last place, I propose this to be considered too,

6. That it is a master-piece of the devil's artifice, to oppose the means of our direction in matters of practice to one another, and to their common end. And they are most stupid creatures, who will suffer themselves to be befooled oy him in this matter. A great artifice of the devil! first to go about to oppose the light of nature, that is simply and truly such, (and there are characters, by which that may be discerned, though that is not the business of this hour,) unto Scripture light; and then to oppose one piece of Scripture to another; and then to make it be thought, that all together is insufficient to the true end; or else to set the means against the end. This is a great design that he hath been driving, ever since there was a church in the world; and to engage men in broils and disputes upon such seeming oppositions: but all to divert the practice of what was really most necessary unto men's serving of God in this world, and their being happy with him in the other; and then to represent the means as insufficient to the end, and by consequence as opposite; as if all together would not serve, because one alone will not. As indeed this is plain, that the light of nature alone will not serve to enable a man to glorify God as God, and to conduct a man to a final felicity in him. Therefore, says the devil, "It is of no use at all;" and so men are to be given up to enthusiasm. Thus he imposeth upon one sort of men. Again, if such and such things be found not to be contained expressly in the Scripture revelation, then Scripture revelation alone is represented as insufficient; and thereupon there must be I know not how many traditions and inventions of men pitched upon, to supply or make up the defects of Scripture; or otherwise, upon pretence of this insufficiency, the end, that should be served by it, is represented as impossible to be served; and the Scripture shall be pretended to throw religion out of the world because it is no sufficient means to serve it: and at last men shall be left to live irreligiously, according to the disinclination and bent of a disaffected heart.

God hath not left us altogether "ignorant of Satan's devices;" and "in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." When he would so grossly impose upon us in so plain cases, we are very foolish creatures, sillier than the silliest bird, if we will suffer ourselves to be beguiled and imposed upon; especially as to such parts and pieces of our religion, as upon which all our present comfort and welfare, and our future and eternal hopes, do so immediately depend. It would be great folly in so plain a case.

Do but consider a little, wherein this doth appear most plain, so that every one may understand it if he will. Take the most unquestionable and indisputable things, that lie within the compass of natural revelation, and that cannot be understood to serve any ill purpose, or to gratify any corrupt inclination in the heart of a man, but directly the contrary; take these natural sentiments, and take the whole compass of Scripture together with them; and here is that, which in point of rule both for faith and practice is every way sufficient to serve its end. When we say, the Scripture is a complete rule, we do not mean as severed and cut off from the law of nature, or in opposition to that, or as excluding that; but as including it; and as excluding only the unnecessary and arbitrary inventions of men, and the additions that they think fit to subnect to it. Take the Scripture, in conjunction with the frame of most unquestionably natural dictates and sentiments; and here we have an entire discovery of all that is requisite to our acceptable walking with God. And indeed all those more essential necessary dictates of the law of nature are contained in the Scripture. But there are many things, that are still to be borrowed from thence, which may respect the matter of undetermined circumstances; and circumstances of that kind, that they are necessary to actions to be done. Not merely unnecessary circumstances. For if any would take their advantage and occasion from thence, to devise what circumstances they please; that is a groundless and injurious pretence. There can be no action done but with circumstances; and the determination of some circumstances is necessary: as, it is impossible for an assembly ever to meet together, if they do not agree upon a time: there can be no such thing as social worship, if the persons that are to associate do not agree. Such a circumstance as this is necessary, because there cannot be worship without it. But for unnecessary circumstances, which signify nothing to the work, and without which it may be, and may be as well and perhaps better; these cannot be fetched from the law of nature. But from the law of nature I can fetch this circumstance; if I be obliged to worship God, then I must find some time for it. And if persons be obliged to worship God together, then they must find some time to come together. And therefore all that is substantial in religion, though a great deal of it be in the law of nature, you have it over again in Scripture. And for whatsoever of circumstance is necessary unto such exercises of religion, if you have not all those circumstances in the Scripture, yet the law of nature compared with Scripture will oblige you to find out fit circumstances; such as by which it shall be possible for the enjoined duty to be done, and such as without which it cannot be done.

And so in this sense the Scripture is a perfect rule, in opposition to unnecessary inventions; but not in opposition to the necessary parts of the law of nature, or whatsoever that is necessarily to be directive to us in. As, if Scripture say, "Worship God:" the law of natnre saith the same thing; but it over and above obligeth me to circumstance it duly, and so as that the thing designed may be possible to be done. And if both together do lay me under an obligation to this or that part or kind of religion and duty, my obligation will be indisputable and indispensable hereupon.

These preparations being laid, we shall (God willing) go on hereafter to evince to you the obligation that is upon us to family worship; on the governors of families to take care, that it be set up; and to oblige those under their charge to concur; and their obligation spontaneously and willingly to concur.

SERMON II.*

BECAUSE I lay a great stress in the argument before us upon the law of nature, as you may see by what hath been already offered; it may be requisite, before I proceed upon the forelaid grounds to the proofs, that I should obviate some things which may arise in the minds of some or other concerning this law.

Objection. It may be said: "To lay a weight in this matter upon the law of nature, is to lay it upon the most uncertain thing in all the world. Who can tell what the law of nature is? How obscure and dark, how dubious and mutable, a thing doth it seem to be; depending with one man upon this or that apprehension or fancy or inclination, and with other upon another?" To this I would say as follows,

1. The law of nature, as it lies in the minds of men, is a mightily shattered thing. But,

2. It is not equally obscure in all things.

3. In reference to what I design to appeal to it in, it is most clear and indisputable; and I shall lay a weight and stress upon it no where else, but where it is so.

4. As to what relates to this matter, religion and the worship of God in general, and which we shall afterwards have occasion to deduce and draw down to family worship; it is so very plain, that is, the general is so plain, that I may be as sure what the law of nature is in the case, as I may be that contradictions cannot be true. For the wor-

* Preached December 17th, 1683.

ship of God or religion doth carry that in it, the assertion or affirmation whereof must as necessarily exclude the contrary, as one proposition must exclude another contradictory to it.

For instance. When I worship God, my worshipping of him doth imply these affirmations in it; that he is supreme, that he is the best of beings, that all things do depend upon him, that I have my own absolute dependance upon him, that in his favour stands my life, that his displeasure and anger towards me not reconciled must be a mortal and destructive thing to me. My declining or refusing to worship him implieth all the contrary negations. If the former affirmations be true, (and the conscience of every man may be appealed unto, whether they be not true,) the contrary negations can no more be true, that is, the contradictory, than it is possible for the same thing to be true and false.

So little do we need to be at an uncertainty or in a suspense, what the law of nature, as we shall refer to it, is. It is nothing else, but that essential reference between God and his creatures, which, upon the supposed existence of both, is necessarily and unavoidably, whether I think of it, yea or no. It is not an uncertain or mutable thing; it doth not depend upon my thinking or not thinking of it. Whether I think or think not, whether I sleep or wake; if God is and I am, such obligations must lie upon me necessarily and unalterably in this state of the case. That is, there are these things to be considered in God; and such really is the state of things between him and me, that I cannot but be under such obligations. And therefore it is vain to suppose that the law of nature in these respects is an arbitrary and changeable thing. It is no more changeable, than the essential references must be between God and me, while he exists, and I exist; so that I cannot make these obligations to be by my thinking of them, nor can I unthink them into nothing.

And when we therefore read of the law of nature as a law written in us, as the apostle's expression is; that must suppose it to have been before it is written, that is, in order of nature before. For what is it that is written? Something that was before, at least in the order of nature. Those mutual references must be between God and us, which are only founded upon our own natures. They had a pre-existence; that is, whether there be any such impression upon me or no; if it remain, or if it be blotted out, that doth not nullify the obligations between me and my Maker. And if those obligations do unalterably and indispensably lie upon me in reference to myself, it will be a very easy deduction, when we come to that, to show that they must lie upon me also, in reference to those that I am concerned for. And hereupon, though after the apostle we call this a "law written in our hearts," we must consider it as antecedent to that impression. Cicero, a heathen, calls it *non scripta sed nata lex, a law born with us;* which results from the very existence of such a creature, of such a nature, related to the Supreme Being as his offspring, or one that hath immediately been raised up out of nothing by him.

But now upon all this, such preparatories being forelaid, we shall proceed to the proof of what hath been asserted; that is,—That it is incumbent upon the governors of families to take care that there be such a thing as family religion preserved and kept up in their families as such.—We must here note to you, that by the exercises of religion in families, we do not mean, that all the exercises of religion must be there; that every instituted Christian ordinance can have place in a family. We do not intend that, unless in such families as may be also churches; as we read of some such in Scripture. But we mean such exercises of religion, as a family is the capable seat and subject of; as it is of those parts of merely natural worship, which are wont to be referred to that head; as prayer, comprehending confession of sin, and thanksgiving for mercies; and instruction, the endeavour of knowing and of being acquainted with the mind and will of God, touching what we are to believe concerning him, and touching what we are to do in a way of duty towards him. These are things which lie within the compass of natural worship.

It is true, that there are instituted ordinances of worship besides, (as even these mentioned are instituted, as well as natural,) that do belong to a certain specified seat and subject; to wit, such and such societies, which the very institution itself doth characterize and notify as the apt and convenient seat and subject of such worship. Those I do not speak of. But that such parts of worship, that have been spoken of, which are natural as well as instituted, *viz.* praying to God, and instruction in the matters that concern us towards him, do belong to families as such, I shall labour to evince and make out to you. And I shall endeavour to do this, partly upon *rational*, and partly upon *scriptural* grounds. And I shall do it in reference to these two things:

I. To the substance of family religion; that there ought to be such a thing as family religion, containing those two substantial parts that I have mentioned. And,

II. To the frequency thereof; when and how often such and such acts and exercises of religion ought to be performed.

I. That there ought to be such a thing as family religion, made up of the mentioned parts, *family prayer*, and *family instruction*.

First, I shall labour to make out this to you upon *rational* grounds. And to that purpose I shall give you one general argument,—from the notion of religion generally considered;—which, as such, must be understood to carry with it a double respect,—1st, to its *object*—the great God; and 2dly, to its *subject*—a reasonable or intelligent creature, or a collection of such, by whom it is to be performed. Under the former notion, or in the former reference, it is to be looked upon as a duty to him, to whom I perform it, or such and such exercises of it. Under the latter notion, it is to be looked upon as a thing necessary for ourselves, for our own welfare and advantage, present and eternal.

The former notion doth not extinguish or exclude the other. But it showeth, how admirably God hath connected things, even in their natures; and with how tender regard to his creatures, that shall continue in, or that shall be reduced to an obedientiall or governable state and posture towards him: that they cannot do what is for his honour and glory, but they must be promoting their own true interest at the same time and by the same thing; that as religion is a homage to the Eternal Being, a debt that the reasonable nature ought to pay him; so it is as to ourselves a means to refine our spirits, to purge them from terrene dross; in the acts and exercises of which, we converse with the best of beings, the most pure, the most glorious, the most vital; and so derive an enlivening and purifying influence into our own souls. These notions are not inconsistent, or exclusive of one another. But the Author of our beings hath so kindly ordered the state of things between himself and us, that that which sums up all our duty sums up all our felicity too, Love to God; this sums up all that we are to do, and all that we are to enjoy. By one and the same love, we vitally do all that can be done by us in point of duty, and vitally enjoy all that can be enjoyed by us in point of felicity. Therefore wonder not, that there should be these two references of religion, that belong to it in itself most abstractly considered, so that we cannot consider or form a notion of it, but we must involve both of these; for it must be performed to some one, and by some one. There can be no such thing as vital religion, but it must be terminated upon God, and subjected in ourselves; and so cannot but have these distinct references with it. Hereupon then,

1. Consider religion according to the former reference, as a homage to God; and if it be found equally to be a homage to him from a family, as it is from a single person, then the obligation to family religion will be indispensable and indisputable upon this ground. We shall consider, how this obligation as to persons doth arise, that is, to pay such a continual homage to God as religion includes and involves in it.

1st. As he is the *most excellent* of all beings, so there is an obligation to worship him, or to bear a religious disposition and affection of soul towards him. That name of God, which includes all divine excellencies and perfections in it, "is exalted above all blessing and praise," Neh. ix. 5. Hence it is consequent, that my capacity measures my obligation. And I pray consider that; and let your own

thoughts, as you hear it, examine it. If the Divine name, comprehensive of all excellencies, be exalted above all blessing and praise; then I can never go beyond what I owe in point of homage thereunto. And therefore it cannot be, but that capacity must measure obligation. If I am capable of doing so much in a way of homage to the supreme and most excellent Being, I am bound to come up to that. If I can do more, I must still do that more: and so on still; because this blessed name is exalted above all blessing and praise. If I have a capacity then in my own person to do any thing in a way of duty towards this most excellent Being, whereunto therefore I owe that duty; whatsoever that capacity of mine extends to, I am to serve and glorify him according to the utmost of it. And if I am to be considered, not only in my own single personal capacity, but as the head of a family also; then, if capacity do measure obligation, I am to do all that in me lies, that he may have as much honour from my family, as he is to have from me; because it is as much owing, and I can never over-do in point of duty towards him, in whatever capacity I stand.

Suppose then my single capacity to be indeed improved to serve and glorify him, but that I neglect the other; may not he come and say, "There is another capacity in which you stand, pray what do you for me in that? Do you owe me no duty, as you are the master of a family, and have the care of others upon you? Both you and those for whom you are concerned owe me duty in that capacity; and you are concerned to see that that duty be done, by reason of the authority that you have over them, and the obligation that you can subordinately lay upon them." This is implied in the text; "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." He supposeth that capacity inherent in him, that he could not only do such duty or service himself, but that he could oblige those that were under his care.

Now where is that man, that dare stand forth and say, "It is true I owe all the homage I am capable of performing for my own person, to that most excellent of all beings, because he is most excellent, and because his name is far exalted above all blessing and praise; but my family owes him nothing, or I owe him nothing for my family?" Whereas you are in the capacity of a governor of a family, as well as in a single capacity; and may do still more to glorify that name in your family capacity, than you could do in the other alone; but while there is a capacity unanswered of glorifying the most excellent Being, an obligation must remain upon me to answer it, since I can never here exceed or even come up to what he deserves.

2dly, The obligation to religion ariseth also from our dependance upon the Divine Being for our first and for our continued being, as he is our Creator, and our continual Preserver, and consequently our Owner. And can any man say, "God hath created me, but he hath not created mine! He continually preserves and sustains me, but he doth not preserve and sustain mine!" But if I owe him my all, upon account of my own dependance on him, for my being, and for my hoped and expected well-being, present and eternal; is not the case so with my family also? Is he not the Proprietor and Owner of that, as well as of myself? Who would not tremble to say, "God hath no interest in my family, no right there?" And if he hath an interest and propriety there, shall he not be owned and have a homage paid him by my family as such? And I being a certain sponsor for them, and set over them, am bound to do all that in me is, that the obligation upon them be answered as well as that personally upon myself.

3dly, The dueness of religion as a homage to God, may be further argued from the very nature of man; not only with reference to personal, but to domestical religion, as he is naturally not only a reasonable, but a sociable creature. As he is a reasonable creature, so he owes religion as a homage to him, who has been the Author of this rational, intelligent nature to him. As he is a sociable creature, so he owes social religion, or worship in society; and in that society first, wherein he is first capable of rendering it, that is, in his family. This obligation lies upon him, and is always first to be answered. There was social worship in families before there could be other social worship. And that obligation, if it lay once, lieth always upon the same sort of persons. As God hath made me a creature apt for society, and hath cast me into such societies, I am obliged to worship him in them, by the very law of my own nature.

4thly, This debt of religion to God, even as from a family, is to be argued from the very constitution of families. They are divine plantations settled by God himself, for this very end and purpose, to be nurseries of religion and godliness. If God be the Author of such a constitution, and if religion be the end for which he hath purposely constituted them, then certainly there ought to be family religion and godliness. For the former, nothing is plainer. "God setteth the solitary in families," Psalm lxviii. 6. God hath so provided, that men should not live single and apart in this world in an ordinary course; but he hath so stated things, that they must be united and meet together first in families. And he in his providence makes so many single persons to be so and so related, as to constitute a family. And what will he have these families for? Plainly to be seminaries of religion. And see, how his design for that purpose may be evinced. If the most fundamental relation in a family, the conjugal relation, be for that end, and was appointed by God for that end, then certainly the family must be in the design of its constitution set up for that end; but the former is plain. The fundamental relation in the family was, that God might have out of it a godly seed; as the original constitution of families is referred to in Mal. ii. 15. "Did not he make one" for one at first? "And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed." He did not design the original constitution of that fundamental relation, by which mankind was to be continued and propagated in this world, only that there might be a continual descent of human nature; but that religion might still be transmitted from age to age. And this design of his he never quits. For is it a supposable thing, that his creature, by revolting from him, and sinning against the obligation of that law, which was naturally and primarily laid upon him as he was such a creature, should be capable thereby of nullifying God's constitution, or making such obligation to cease?

Nothing then can be plainer, than that, if God have appointed families to be nurseries of religion from age to age in this world, there must then be such a thing as family religion. Otherwise why should he seek such a godly seed out of human families, more than out of the cells of wild beasts, if there were no such thing as religion and godliness designed by him to be kept up in families? How shall godliness spring up with human nature in families, if there be no such thing as family godliness carefully maintained and kept up in the several exercises of it there?

Thus far the obligation unto religion, as it is a debt to God, and equally concerning families as persons, may be plainly inferred from *rational* grounds; and that these things were not unapprehensible to men, even by natural light; though they depend not thereupon; for whether we understand this or understand it not, this truly is the state of the case. But that the thing hath such a foundation in nature, may be collected hence, that they who have had no other light than merely natural, have apprehended an obligation upon them to family religion. For otherwise how came it to pass, that besides their temple worship, among the pagans they had their *lares*, their *penates*, to worship in their families, their family and domestical gods, as they called them? Whence came it to pass, that Laban had his gods in his house, which were carried away from him by Rachel? Whence was it, that Micah had his idol in his house, and his domestical priest to manage religion in his family? As in Judg. xviii. you have the story at large, from ver. 14. But you may say, "All this was but idolatry."

But then I would appeal to your reason or any man's else; in the room and stead of what stood that idolatry? Was it to be supposed, that it must stand in the room of irreligion, or in the room of no religion? Or did it only stand in the stead of true religion? Let any man answer by the rules of reason and conscience, when he considers this case. Here was idolatrous worship in families among wilder pagans; they had their *lares*, their *penates*. What was to be in the room of this? Or what was this to be in

the room of? Was it to be in the room of no religion, or of true religion? Sure it must be in the room of true religion; and that it had supplanted. It did not stand in the room of no religion, or no religion was not to be the thing which should succeed it, if this idolatrous worship were to be removed out of such families.

So may this matter be argued concerning family religion and the dueness of it; if you consider religion in general as a homage owing to God, and equally owing to him from a family as from single persons; and to which a single person, if he be also a master of a family, is equally obliged for them as for himself to do the utmost that he can, that it should be rendered to God as a debt to the Divine Majesty.

SERMON III.*

To prove that there ought to be such a thing as family religion, it hath been proposed to consider both the *rational* and the *scriptural* grounds, upon which it stands.

First, For the former, the *rational* grounds of it, we have chosen to insist upon one general argument from the nature of religion; which, as hath been observed, is to be considered under a twofold notion, both of which it naturally involves;—as a homage to God, and—as an advantage to men.—If it be found in this double reference to concern men in families as such, then it ought upon both accounts to have place there.

1. We have already considered it for this purpose in the former reference, as a homage to God. Proceed we now to the other branch.

2. Consider religion as an advantage to men. And if upon that account too, the reason of the thing doth as much reach my family, as it doth myself; then family religion ought to be inferred upon me as a charge, as an obligation necessarily incumbent, as well as personal religion. Plain it is that religion is the greatest advantage to a man that he is any way capable of. Do not we know, that he is an undone, lost creature, separate from God, having nothing to do with God? It is by religion, that he comes to have to do with God. He neither trusts him, nor loves him, nor feareth him, nor delighteth in him, if there be no religion; for these are all the essential, vital parts of it. And therefore religion, as it is that by which I have to do with God, is necessary for me. And it is necessary for mine, as much as for me.

And a twofold consideration will evince to us the obligation, that must lie upon family governors to introduce and to keep up religion in their families, upon this account, as a necessary advantage to them; namely, *paternal love*, and *paternal fidelity*. When I say *paternal*, it is not as if I would confine the duty as owing from a parent to a child only. For the notion of paternal goeth further. Every family governor is a *pater-familias*, in a sort, a father unto the whole family; as a prince is a father to the whole community which he governs. And so it is a sort of paternal love and paternal fidelity, that he oweth and is chargeable with in reference to the whole family, who is the head and governor of it. Whereupon it is, that duty among all relatives is summed up in the fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother." We must thereupon understand it to be implied, that all superiors are signified by father and mother, and all inferiors by children, the implied opposite term. Hereupon then I say, that,

1st, Paternal *love* doth oblige the governor of a family, the *pater-familias*, to take care, that family religion do obtain in his family, as it is a necessary advantage to them. The thing speaks itself so plainly, that I need not insist upon it; but only direct your thoughts thereupon to the contrary, that you may see, with how odious and frightful a visage that will look. If paternal love do oblige and would prompt to such a care of a family, as that religion may obtain and take place among them, as a necessary advantage which they cannot want; then the contrary unto this, must speak in the root the contrary unto love: and that contrary must be the most horrid thing in this case that can be thought, that is, cruelty unto the very height. For, as this love speaks tenderness, mercifulness, compassion to the souls of men, that I cannot endure to see them perish in ignorance of God, and estrangement from him and neglect of him; the contrary must needs speak the most horrid and the most barbarous cruelty; as if a man should say, and not care if it was written in his forehead, "I mind not what becomes of the souls of men that are committed to my charge, I care not whether they be saved or perish, whether they be happy or miserable to all eternity." With how horrid and frightful a visage doth this look, only to represent and state the matter just as it is! And,

2dly, Paternal *fidelity* doth oblige to it also. For there is a trust committed by the great and universal Lord of all to every master of a family, over them that are under his charge; and in reference to them he is a trustee. It is virtually said to every one, by the Divine law and providence compared and put together; "I constitute thee my trustee in reference to this part of mankind, as many as are collected and gathered into thy family, and belong to it, whether naturally or by accession; they are thy charge, I intrust them to thee." Thereupon, as hath been noted to you formerly, from 1 Tim. v. 8. He that doth not provide for his own, and especially for those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. The word is very emphatical, προνοεῖ; he that doth not use his mind and forethought about the affairs and concerns of his family. Let it be but according to common reason considered, how far that providing for one's own must extend. And to say, that one that doth it not is worse than an infidel, is to say, that infidels even by the light and law of nature may be directed to do much, in reference to the care of their families in matters of religion. As is intimated by what was noted to you the last time about their *lares* and their *penates*, their household gods to worship in families, besides the worship which they used to pay in the temples; and whereof you have instances in Laban's and in Micah's families. And whereas it may be obvious to say, "But this was all but idolatry:" this must indeed be confessed to be true. But what was to be in the room of that idolatry? Sure true religion, and not irreligion! So that room should have been filled up. And no man, that doth but commune with himself and consult his own understanding, can allow himself upon serious thoughts to think, "I do owe, even upon account of a trust reposed in me, a care and concern about the outward man of the several individual persons of my family, but none at all about their souls; I am to take care, that they have meat and drink and all necessaries for their bodies, but about their souls I am to take no care." Men will know one day, that they owe an account, and a severe account too, unto the Author of all nature, if they allow themselves to violate the law of nature; which is not an arbitrary thing, doth not depend upon the minds of men, or what they think or think not. But whether they think or not, the nature of things alters not; but God will be a God still, and a creature will be a creature still, and the respects the same between God and a creature. So that it is an idle mistake to think, that the law of nature is a mutable thing. Men do so impose upon themselves, merely upon this ground, that they think there is no law of nature but what exists in men's minds; whereas it lies even in the nature of things, and their natural references to one another. It is to be considered in its objective state, before it be considered in its subjective. Those respects that result between one thing and another, and especially between Creator and creature, will be unalterably the same, whatsoever is or is not in our minds.

And so whether you consider religion as a homage to God, or as an advantage to man, you see the obligation that will lie upon men either way unto family religion. But then, according to the method proposed,

Secondly, I come to evince to you the substance of the thing, that there ought to be family religion, from *scripture grounds*. And,

1. I shall labour to establish the *general foundation* upon such grounds; namely, that there is a charge lying upon the governors of families to take care, that there be such a thing as family religion; that there may be no shifting here; but that they may know where the obligation pri-

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marily lies, and where the fault lieth, if it be not answered: that it is incumbent upon heads of families, to settle and keep on foot religion in them.

1st, If there be a power given them, there is a care lying upon them. These two will answer one another. But they have a power given them. The station of superiority, wherein God hath set them, speaks that. "Honour thy father and thy mother." In reference to the inferior relatives of the family they have a governing power: and if there is a duty to be paid them, then there is a power wherewith they are invested, that renders them the due objects thereof. Therefore the great God himself, speaking of himself as invested with such capacities, and personating the governor of a family, saith, (Malac. i. 6.) "A son honoureth his father: I am a father, where is the honour due to me hereupon? A servant feareth or reverenceth his master; I am a master, where is my reverence?" Therefore there is an honour and reverence due to fathers and masters as such, and therefore a power conferred upon them; and with a power a care cannot but be incumbent.

2dly, How otherwise was it possible for Joshua, as here in the text, to undertake for his family as well as himself? to be a sponsor for them? "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

3dly, How comes it to pass, that Abraham is so highly commended for this, and his example recommended, that he would command his household, that they should keep the way of the Lord? that he should use an authority, and lay an obligation upon them to keep God's ways, that is, no doubt, to attend upon the exercise of religion?

4thly, If there were not such a charge and care lying upon a family master, what meaning can we suppose the words of the fourth commandment should have? "Thou shalt remember to keep holy the Sabbath-day, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and even the stranger," a lodger. Whence is this, that such a charge should be laid upon the *pater-familias?* though as is commonly and very aptly observed, it doth comprehend together the conjugal relatives, who are spoken to but as one person. These two are one: and then the other relatives in the family ensue, "thy son, thy daughter," &c. Yea, and if there be a stranger, he is to partake, if in the provisions, in the religion of the family too. And I remember it to have been one of the meditations of Mr. Fuller in his miscellanies; that, having had a person of great quality one night lodged under his roof as a stranger, out of an excess of modesty he forbore the duties of his family that night: and he hath a penitential meditation hereupon, acknowledging his great fault, and making very solemn resolutions and vows never to be guilty of the like again; but if any one, though never so great, did partake in the provisions, he should partake in the religion of his family.

But that this charge should be laid upon the family master, even about that piece of religion, the observation of the Lord's day; it bespeaks a charge from God incumbent upon the *pater-familias* in reference to the religion of the family.

And if any should yet pretend to have a doubt; I would have them to consider the matter with caution, whether there be any such charge lying upon them. Truly it concerns men, in point of prudence, to beware how they are shy of owning an authority in their families; for if you should pretend to doubt it, you would teach them it may be to doubt and to deny it too, and so make yourself to signify nothing in your family. But if that is but of small concernment to you; it is of the greatest concern imaginable, in reference to him whom you represent, and with whose authority you are invested. You have so much of the power of God lodged and seated in you; and it is treachery and falsehood to the great Lord and Ruler of the world, to let his authority, wherewith he hath invested you, be neglected and slighted and trampled upon, or not exerted and put forth to the uttermost for the ends of which he hath so seated it.

And if yet any should think, that such a charge is not sufficiently evinced to lie upon them; I would very fain know, in reference to what relative of the family you think it lieth not? For,

1st, In reference to the conjugal relatives, they are joint partakers therein; and there is a duty incumbent upon both, even upon the inferior relative, especially in case of the other's absence or indisposition. But it lieth supremely upon him that is first in that relation, who is required to dwell with his wife, even as a man of knowledge, according to knowledge; (1 Pet. iii. 7.) implying therefore, that he hath a charge even in reference to her. And it is his great iniquity, if he do not labour to render himself capable to discharge it; to add to her treasury of knowledge of divine things, that concern her God-ward. They are to be mutual helpers one to another, in reference to the concernments of their souls and a future state, and to the joint duty, which they owe to the Author of their beings, as partakers together "of the grace of life." But the charge lieth chiefly here, (though it be mutual towards one another,) upon the superior relative; though each is also to endeavour to the uttermost the saving of the other's soul, "What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" 1 Cor. vii. 16. Both are as it were to engage to their uttermost in an endeavour to save one another's souls.

2dly, In reference to children, there can never be any doubt; who are sprung from you, in reference to the souls of whom you have a special charge lying upon you. It is true, you did not make their souls; there is another Father of their spirits. You are the fathers of their flesh, not of their spirits: as these two are contradistinguished in Heb. xii. 9. But you are the means of those souls coming into union with mortal flesh, and of bringing them into a world of snares and temptations dangerous to their souls. Can it then be, that you should be exempt from care and concern in reference to their souls?

3dly, As to servants, God hath charged them to obey you. He hath most expressly directed you to command them equally, as knowing yourselves to be under a command, that you have a Master in heaven, and are to command them for his ends and purposes. Nothing is plainer, if you look to Eph. vi. Col. iii. and iv. 1 Tim. vi. where these relative duties are spoken of. So that they come by contract, as your children do by nature, under your commanding and governing power and authority. And that power infers care, and principally about their souls. I could appeal to any master of servants in such a case. Do you expect, that your servants should serve you only with their hands? Do you not expect they should serve you with their minds and understandings, as well as their limbs? Sure then their inward man, their souls, are to be cared for by you, as well as their outward man, their bodies. You would not have them to do you only such service as you can receive from a beast; and therefore you are to take care of their spirits, as well as their brutal part.

So much I reckoned it was necessary to lay down here upon Scripture grounds, to clear our foundation, that there is such a thing as a charge, a care lying upon governors of families over the families which God hath intrusted them with, to keep up religion there. Hereupon,

2. We shall proceed to give you proof upon *Scripture grounds*, that there ought to be in particular those two parts of family religion maintained and kept up by them, upon whom this care and charge hath been evinced to lie; to wit, family instruction, and family prayer. And we shall endeavour to evince both,

1st, From such scriptures, as either command the one or the other of these, in such terms as that it may be discernible that the obligation will reach to families; that is, to the family governors in reference to the family: either express precepts; or virtual precepts, such passages as some way imply and infer precepts, and are so applicable, or from whence inferences may be collected and drawn. As,

[1.] For family instruction. You have a most express command upon masters of families, that they shall teach the substance of religion to them who are under their care: nothing can be plainer than those words in Deut. vi. After this was given in charge in general, (which contains all religion in it,) ver. 5, 6. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might: and these words, which I command thee this

day, shall be in thine heart." Then it follows, ver. 7. "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Observe what they were to teach them; the substance of religion, all comprehended in the love of God, which is the fulfilling of the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, &c. And these words," and all that may be referred thither, to that great and all-comprehending topic, "thou shalt teach and diligently teach thy children." Children means the family, as we noted to you before; an apt synecdochical expression, as *pater-familias* is the head of the whole family. "And thou shalt teach them, when thou sittest in thine house." It is true, there are other occasions to be taken: but this speaks a stated teaching, to have times on purpose to collect and gather the family, and to set oneself in the authority of a family master, and there instruct and teach those under his care and charge, in the great substantials of religion. You have the same thing inculcated in Deut. xi. 19.

And more general precepts of the same kind are applicable plainly enough unto this purpose. As, when we are required to "exhort one another," and to do it "daily, while it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," Heb. iii. 13. And to have the word of Christ dwelling richly in us, that we may teach and admonish one another, Col. iii. 16. How obvious is it to any one of common sense to infer, that if I owe this occasionally unto a fellow-Christian, I owe it statedly to my own family? If there were no such express precept, and a man had this to allege in the judgment of the great day, Lord, thou gavest me no command; suppose there were no such positive commands, as those in Deuteronomy, and that in Proverbs, for instructing and training up children in the way they should go: suppose such general precepts as those just mentioned were alleged to any man in the great day, "You knew well enough, that it was a duty lying upon you towards any fellow-Christian, as there was occasion, to teach and exhort and instruct him; and he was under the same obligation towards you; had you not reason and understanding enough to make an inference, that if you owe so much to another occasionally, you must owe much more statedly to your own?" What could a man say, if this were urged upon him from the tribunal of the Supreme Judge?

[2.] For family prayer, such general precepts, as the Scripture is full of, are capable enough of application to this particular case. And we owe so much to God, yea to ourselves, to our own nature, as we are creatures endued with a reasonable nature, as to make the inference. That is, that when we are charged to pray with all prayer and with all supplication, we collect hence; sure it cannot be said, that family prayer is no prayer.

And it is a very observable thing, though I have not found it observed, to this purpose; that in those several places of Scripture, where the duties of domestical relatives are largely spoken of, immediately thereupon there is a charge given about prayer, or some mention of prayer. Thus, after the apostle had directed in the 5th and 6th chapters to the Ephesians, Ye wives, carry it so and so to your husbands, and ye husbands to your wives; ye children to your parents, and parents to children; ye servants to masters, and masters to servants; and after some directions given to arm ourselves for spiritual conflicts, he immediately subjoins, (chap. vi. 18.) "Praying always with all prayer and supplication." So in Col. iv. 2. just after a summary of the several duties of family relatives, follows this exhortation, "Continue in prayer;" implying, that there must be a continued course of family prayer between these several family relations, or else all is in vain and to no purpose. And when the apostle Peter had given like directions, all is enforced upon this consideration, that "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers," 1 Pet. iii. 12. Be sure you do so and so, and let your consideration be orderly and regular, as ever you expect your prayers should be answered, that in your families shall from time to time be put up.

And if to pray, when there is occasion, with other Christians be highly recommended by our Saviour himself, as more grateful, and likely to be more successful, when "two or three are met together;" if to do so with any two or three be so recommended, then most of all with those of our own family; because with them the occasions are more frequent, and may more easily be had, and the obligation is deeper and stronger; as any man, that considers what it is to have a family, and to have a charge lying upon him in reference thereto, cannot but apprehend.

But beside *direct* precepts; either referring to a family in particular, or enjoining both family instruction and family prayer to fellow-Christians in general, which must be more obligatory in reference to those with whom we have a particular concernment; besides these, I say, there are *virtual* precepts, or rules extendable unto this case, that may with great cogency and evidence of reason be applied to it; which suppose matter of precept in the case.

As, when the religion of families is spoken of as matter of Divine acceptance; that implieth it to be agreeable to God's preceptive will, without which nothing could be acceptable. As when it is spoken by way of encomium, that "the voice of joy and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous;" (Psal. cxviii. 15.) the solemnities of religion there are most manifestly intended. Go to the dwelling of a righteous man, and there you may hear the voice of rejoicing and praise; it belongs to a righteous man as such, therefore it cannot be the common, carnal rejoicing of the wicked that is there meant; but it must be a holy, religious thanksgiving and praising of God; which is but a synecdochical expression of all the other parts of his worship: as if he had said, "You may so distinguish the houses and tabernacles of the righteous and unrighteous. You may pass the unrighteous man's dwelling, and there you hear swearing and blaspheming of God, it may be higher jollity than in the other; but in the other you hear the voice of joy and salvation; God is owned and taken notice of."

So again, when we are told, what complacency God doth differently take in the solemnities of his own worship, (Psalm lxxxvii. 2.) "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob." He is more honoured and glorified by the public solemnities of worship; and therefore doth take more complacency in them. Yet there is a complacency he also takes in the worship performed in the several habitations of his people. Why doth God love the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob, but only because there was the seat of more public, solemn religion? But when it is said, he loveth them more, it is intimated that he loveth the dwellings of Jacob too; and upon the same account, because every such dwelling was to be looked upon as a seat of religion. For Zion was loved and delighted in under no other notion, and the several dwellings of Jacob are delighted in under the same notion; though less, as they are less public and solemn.

And again, threatenings and menaces do imply precepts, for violations of which they are given out. As that terrible one, Jer. x. 25. Pour out thy fury, thine indignation, upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name. It is an imprecation; but what is imprecated by an inspired person, is denounced by that God that inspires him. It is very true indeed, that families are frequently taken in a larger sense, sometimes they signify nations; but both being put together in that text, it is manifestly the design of the Holy Ghost to notify to us irreligious families, composing and making up irreligious nations. For what is a profane, carnal nation and people made up of? Heathen and nations are all one. When nations then are first mentioned, and afterwards families; it is plain they are mentioned as constituent parts of atheistical, ungodly, and irreligious nations. And when it is said, "Pour out thy fury upon such;" it signifies a denunciation of Divine fury upon such. Dismal, horrid clouds of wrath hang over such families, that will be discharged in terrible destructive storms.

But beside what may be thus collected from precepts, which are expressly so, or virtual, implied ones; we shall proceed to evince this to you,

2dly, From recommended examples in Scripture; examples in reference to one or the other, or both of those parts of family religion already mentioned, family instruc-

tion, or family-prayer. And one, or the other, or sometimes both together, we find recommended examples of, as ancient as we have any records whatsoever.

The religion at first, that began so early in the world, that of sacrificing, which could never be without invocation, could but be domestical; whether you look back as high as Abel, or look forward at your leisure. Do but peruse the short history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in all their several commorations and commigrations; you hear of their settling no where, or removing no whither, but there was presently an altar built for worship, and for calling on the name of the Lord. You have a treatise on those passages, called "A Family Altar," written by a worthy servant of Christ, Mr. Oliver Heywood; which would be of singular use for those who have a mind to peruse a short book on this subject. You read of two altars set up, in one chapter, upon a twofold removal of that great saint Abraham: at such a place he pitcheth, and there he builds an altar; and by and by to such a place he removes, and there he places an altar for calling on the name of the Lord, for the solemn worship of his family, Gen. xii. 7, 8. So you find it afterwards to be with Isaac and Jacob in their removals, or in their settlings, this way or that, or in this place or that.

That instance also of Job is very considerable to this purpose; who, in the absence of his sons and daughters offers sacrifices for them, Job i. 5. Which could never be unaccompanied with solemn invocation and calling upon God. And thus, it is said, he did continually. It was a stated course with him; he did not omit it when they were absent; for he must be understood to have a great family about him even then. And it is implied to have been his stated course, whether his children were with him or not; he kept up a course of family religion all along.

That action of David, though I do not find it taken notice of by others, seems to me to be mighty observable to this purpose; that in the history given us of his bringing home of the ark to the place which he had appointed for it, we find how greatly he was transported with the solemnity of that action and undertaking. But when all that was over, which was public and solemn, we are told, that he retired at length to bless his household, 2 Sam. vi. 20. He went home to bless his household. Nothing is more probable, than that this was a stated course with him; and that he had so contrived and ordered the work of that public solemnity, as that it might not interfere with the worship of his family; and therefore, amidst all the great pompous triumph, wherein he was more publicly engaged, upon this account he bethinks himself; "Well, now my hour of prayer is come at home;" and so the matter was prudently ordered, that that solemnity being over, he might return home to perform the ordinary duty that was to be done there, that is, to bless his household, and call upon the name of the Lord there. If you compare this with that which was his declared resolution, in Psal. cx. 2. "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way;—I will walk within my house with a perfect heart;" "I will keep an even steady course, there shall be no baulks, no ups and downs in my way in my family;" undoubtedly meaning a way of religion. If you compare, I say, that resolution, with his sudden bethinking himself, when he had been engaged in that great solemnity but now mentioned, "Now the time is come that I must go home and bless my house;" it appears to have been a stated thing with him.

If from thence you look further to that great instance of Daniel; when he was, though a great prince in another land, yet an exile from his own; and that terrible and severe interdict was published, that for thirty days no man should pray to God or man, but to the prince of those countries only; (a snare purposely laid for Daniel's life;) you read, that he went on in his course, as he was wont to do, as it is expressly said; and no doubt but those wretched conspirators against his life knew his course, otherwise they could not have laid this snare for him. And how should they know it? It is said, Dan. vi. 10. He went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks unto his God, as he did aforetime. It was a stated course with him. And that this must be family prayer, and the ordinary religion of his household, is the most reasonable supposition imaginable. For otherwise, if it were secret closet prayer, how should it be known to have been his course before? and how should they be able to accuse him now? But consider him as a great prince in a foreign country, and as having a family, and how heroic and generous a resolution he had taken up, and with how holy a fortitude and bravery of spirit, to own God against that insolent decree of the wicked creatures who would arrogate that honour to the prince that was only due to God: considering all these things, it is with the greatest reason imaginable to be supposed, that this was a stated course with him of family religion. He resolved, that his worship should be, as it was aforetime, open in his house. And thereupon the advantage was taken against him.

The instance of the centurion is very observable, and observed by many, in Acts x. 2. He is said to be a devout man, a religious man, that feared God, (that is an ordinary expression to signify worship; he was a worshipper of God,) with all his house. He was a worshipping person, and his family a worshipping family: "And he prayed unto God alway." Afterwards you read in the chapter, that at the time when the angel appeared to him, he was praying in his house, (ver. 30.) house being put for household, as is ordinary. He was praying in his family in his ordinary course; and there he had the benign appearance of that kind messenger from heaven, to direct him to the way by which he might come to a more distinct knowledge of the Mediator, and of worshipping God in Christ. According to the light he had, and the sincerity that God had given him in proportion thereunto, his acceptance above was declared before. But God resolved to help him, in the method and way which he most approved, unto more distinct notices; and these he is directed how to come by, even at the time when he was engaged in his domestic performances of religion in his house.

We need not further to insist for the eviction of this truth in the general, that there ought to be such a thing as family religion. It were easy, if necessary, to add to all these considerations, (and it ought to have some weight,) the accounts that we otherwise have of the practice of the primitive church, in those earlier times of it whereof we have any account, since the completing of the canon of Scripture, That is, we are told by some of the ancients, and in some of the early centuries, of the twofold social prayer that was in common use among them, family prayer and church prayer, or prayer in their church assemblies. We are told, what things they were wont to insist upon in prayer. Besides the spiritual blessings, which they continually and daily sought, and apprehended themselves to need, they were wont to pray for the lives of the emperors that ruled over them, though they were then pagans. And this (saith that ancient author) was their constant practice, both in their prayers in public assemblies, and in their own houses.

Having gone through what I thought fit to offer in proof of the substance of family religion, that there ought to be such a thing; I shall only hint this to you for a close: That the great thing, which will either facilitate or obstruct a general compliance with the mind of God in this matter, will be the consideration that men shall have of their families, that is, whether they will consider them as constitutions for this world, or for the world to come. If you can but agree with yourselves, under which of these notions to look upon your families; accordingly your compliance with the mind of God in this matter will either be facile or difficult.

It is true, we are to have a very distinct consideration of the nature of societies, from the ends of them. There are societies, that in their design, and consequently in their nature, are purely civil; and others, that in their design, and consequently in their nature and constitution, are purely sacred. Of the former sort are kingdoms and nations and incorporate towns, and the like; they are in their very nature, because they are from their ends, purely civil There are those that are purely sacred, as churches; the very end and design, upon which they are collected, is worship and religion. But now families are the elements of both these sorts of societies; that is, both churches and commonwealths are made up of families. Therefore both

these must meet in a family, religion, and civil and secular business; for the other societies, some whereof are purely sacred, others purely civil, do arise out of families. Persons are elements of families; families are the elements, of which both churches and kingdoms, or commonwealths, are composed and made up. And as the one sort of these is purely civil, the other purely sacred; that which is elementary unto both, must be both. And therefore now, when any come to turn this matter in their thoughts, "I am the head of a family; but what sort of society is my family? Is it made purely for this world, or for the world to come?" Sure, where the consideration of both worlds meet, the other world should be superior or uppermost; and therefore all things must be measured there with subserviency and reference to that. But if any will say, "No; families are made only for this world:" then I would ask, What is the world made for? Is it made for nothing? Or is it made for itself, to centre in itself, and to be its own end? You can never avoid it, but that families must be supremely and ultimately made for the other world; and then they are made for religion principally and chiefly. And no man can behave himself well in any station or relation in a family, that doth not let this thought lie deep in his mind; "My family, as well as others, is a constitution made for religion, as well as for other businesses; and principally for that noblest business: for where both meet, that must certainly be principal."

SERMON IV.*

IN speaking of family religion, the method proposed was, to evince the obligation to it, in reference to the substance of the thing, and then in reference to the frequency of it.

I. To the substance of the thing; that there ought to be such a thing as family religion. The two last discourses[a] have been employed in the proof of this. We proceed to speak somewhat also,

II. To the more doubted frequency of such religious exercises, as lie within the compass of families, or whereof families are to be the stated seats: how often, or at what seasons, such family worship ought to be. And in reference to this,

First, I would suggest some few things, by way of preparation. As,

1. That it will greatly concern us all to get an habitual spirituality inwrought into the temper of our souls, in order to our making a right judgment of this matter; when, at what time, how often, we ought to apply ourselves to the exercises of such family religion. If there be a frame of spirit suitable to the general rules of practical religion and godliness, the determination of this matter will be very easy. But if there be a prevailing carnality, nothing will be more difficult. And let me in this but appeal to your own reason, to that common understanding that belongs to us as we are an intelligent sort of creatures: that is, you would be loath in other instances to commit any cause, wherein you are concerned, especially if your all were concerned in it, to the judgment of an enemy, if you could help it. But "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" not only an enemy, but enmity itself. And I beseech you, do you think, that an enemy to God can be your friend? Therefore let not a carnal mind make a judgment in this case; whatsoever you do, let it not be judged by that measure; but labour to get an habitual spirituality inwrought into your souls, and then the judgment of this case will lie very easy.

2. We should look upon family religion, not merely under the notion of a duty, and as imposed; but as a privilege and a singular vouchsafement of grace, that there may be such a thing; that God will be invocated, or even mentioned in our families, in the families of such wretched creatures as we, who inhabit the dark and dismal region of this lower world; that God will have worship ascend and go up to him from off our earth, and out of our houses and families. Look upon it as a marvellous vouchsafement of grace; and that will greatly facilitate the determination of this case also. And nothing can be more opprobrious to us than not to think so: that, when God doth so far vouchsafe to let his tabernacle be with men on earth; "Every tabernacle of yours shall be my tabernacle; if you consent, if you do not shut me out, you shall no where have a tabernacle but what shall be mine; I, the high and lofty One that inhabit eternity, am content to cohabit with you, and to have your house for my sanctuary." What a vouchsafement is this! and how opprobrious a thing not to count it so!

It hath been accounted so, even in the very pagan world. A divine presence, to have a *præstò numen*, a *numen* at hand and ready, how great a privilege hath it been reckoned! In the dark and dismal days of popery, when that hath been regnant, what a terrible thing hath it been accounted to excommunicate a nation; to put it under an interdict, that there should be no religion in that nation! Our own records tells us, how such a thing hath been understood and resented in this land in former days. And if we look further and further back into the days of paganism, I remember Cæsar in his Commentaries[b] tells us, that the ancient Gauls did reckon no more terrible punishment could be put upon them, than to be interdicted the sacrifices. And by that means it was, that their *Arch-flamens* ruled over them; they were mere absolute governors among that people, because if they would not be prescribed to and directed by them in every case, if they would not suffer them to take up all controversies among them, they would presently forbid them the sacrifices; than which no penalty was reckoned more, nor any so grievous.

Now let us consider the matter so. What if instead of being bidden to pray in our families, we should be forbidden to pray in them? Make but that fearful supposition, to see how it will relish with you. Suppose there should be a particular interdict upon your house; suppose by some special signification of the mind of God from heaven it should be said, "I will allow all the neighbouring houses to call upon me, but I will have no worship out of your house; let all the rest in the street worship me, and I will hear and accept them, but from your house I will accept no sacrifice, I will hear no prayer." What a terrible doom were this! What a dark and horrid cloud would be drawn over that habitation, if it should be said, "Here shall be no prayer, here shall be no mention of the name of God!" So that, as in a like case represented to us in reference to the people of the Jews, the poor forlorn members of that family should say, "We may not make mention of the name of the Lord," Amos vi. 10. What a dismal thing were this! Labour but to get your souls possessed with the apprehension, that the liberty of family worship is a great privilege; and let that be forelaid in your minds, when you come to determine with yourselves about the frequency, how often we shall solace ourselves with this gracious vouchsafement of God from heaven unto us. Then it will be no hard thing to determine. And take this also,

3. That in reference to the determination of this matter, the same consideration is to be had of family religion, that we formerly told you was to be had of religion in general; that is, that it ought to be considered, either as a homage to God, or as an advantage to ourselves. And so it will be easy hence to determine, that the exercise of family religion ought to be so frequent, as religion considered under this twofold notion doth require; as frequent as a homage to God is to be paid, and as our own spiritual advantage is to be sought: as frequently as that can be in consistency with the other necessary affairs of human life. For indeed nothing is plainer, and that therefore must with less hesitancy be granted, than that nothing can be at that time necessary, when that which is inconsistent with it

* Preached December 31, 1693.

a See page 613, &c.

b Si quis aut privatus aut publicus, eorum (nempè druidum) decreto non steterit, sacrificiis interdicunt. Hæc pœna apud eos est gravissima. Quibus ita est interdictum, ii numero impiorum ac scelcratorum habentur; iis omnes decedunt, aditum eorum sermonemque defugiunt, ne quid ex contagione incommodi accipiant: neque iis petentibus jus redditur, neque bonos ullius communicatur. Cæsar. de Bell. Gallic. L. 6. sect. 13. edit. Clar.

is truly necessary. That must be acknowledged. But then there is a great deal of caution to be used in judging of this necessity that shall exclude for this or that time so great a thing as a solemn exercise of religion out of a family. It must be a great thing, that shall prevail to exclude that.

But let me ask myself the question; I am one that oweth a homage to God, and so doth my family. When do I not owe it? And when doth my family not owe it; so that if I have opportunity, consistent with the other necessary occasions of human life, that opportunity should not be taken?" And whereas religion, and so family religion, is a means of advantage to ourselves and them, as well as a homage to God; when can it be said, I stand in no need of the exercises of religion, or that those under my care do not, when those exercises can be had consistently with the other necessary occasions of human life? These things being premonished,

Secondly, I shall now offer somewhat by way of determination of the propounded case. As,

1. Nothing is plainer, than that the exercises of family religion ought to be daily. That seems out of all question. Every day will I bless thee, Psalm cxlv. 2. A synecdochical expression of religion; and that cannot be understood for any reason reaching a particular person, which will not reach a family too. And so the same thing is to be said to that in Psalm cxli. 2. Let my prayer be set before thee as incense; (that was stated solemn prayer;) and the uplifting of my hands as the evening sacrifice. That is, every evening let it go up as incense. That was a *juge sacrificium*, a daily solemnity. So look to that direction given us by our Lord, to pray for our *daily* bread, day by day. He tieth us not indeed to the use of those very words. So the instruction being given occasionally, plainly enough signifieth, that he did not intend this direction as a form; but that he directs it only as a summary or a form to be used with Christian wisdom and understanding, in enlarging upon the particulars contained in that prayer, and to guide and direct ourselves thereby in our solemn addresses unto God. Though also the use of these very words, as they lie, nobody can doubt to be lawful; yet, that they are enjoined, and so made necessary, there is little reason to affirm. But however, take them as a general direction in reference unto prayer; they signify that the things to be prayed for are to be daily prayed for. "Give us this day our daily bread;" this day. At the same time, when we pray for all things contained in that prayer, we are to pray too for daily bread. And that this is meant of social prayer, and that this direction is given to the disciples with reference to their praying together, to let them know what things they should insist upon in prayer, is made more than probable by the form of speech. For, when our Saviour was directing secret or closet prayer, Matt. vi. 6. then he saith, *Thou;* "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut thy door," &c. But when he cometh to give this direction concerning prayer, he saith, *Ye*. He speaks to them in the plural number; and directs them to speak in the plural number, "Our father," &c. And therefore, that it was social prayer, about which he giveth this direction; the prayer of such as could daily pray together; that seems most evident; and therefore also that such exercises of religion ought to be daily.

2. Such exercises of religion ought to be every day more than once. We read sometimes of thrice in a day. Psalm. lv. 17. Evening, and morning, and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice. This in all likelihood must refer too to family prayer. He speaks of crying with his voice, a loud voice. And so the before-mentioned instance of Daniel, which seems most likely to be meant of family religion, the prayer or religion of his family, was with him thrice a day. And indeed so it cannot but be in religious families; that is, that at least at noon there will be solemn invocation of God in reference to the use of his creatures; which, the apostle saith, "are good, if they be received with thanksgiving, but they are sanctified by the word of God and prayer," 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5. There must be prayer to sanctify the creatures; or else they are unholy things to you, profane things. It is unhallowed meat and drink. And therefore,

3. I doubt not, it is with a great deal of reason, and from Scripture light too, to be determined, that the exercises of religion ought to be steadily twice a day, that is, with greater solemnity. This is spoken of as a most comely and becoming thing, a thing that carries its own greatness along with it, (Psalm xcii. 1, 2.) "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most high; (giving of thanks being one essential part of prayer;) to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night." There can be no reason assigned, why this should concern one particular person, more than why it should concern every person; no more, why it should concern the master of a family alone, than those under his care. If the reason of the thing extend to a family as such, the thing itself ought to extend to a family as such. That is with serious and apprehensive minds and spirits to convene and meet together, to give God his due acknowledgment for his loving-kindness every morning, and his faithfulness every night.

And you see how the Psalmist represents this case in Psalm xlii. 8. The Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. Observe, how his *νύχθημερον*, his days and nights, were composed and made up, by the continual meeting together of God's loving-kindness and of his prayer and song every day and every night, morning and evening; so it is to be understood. "Thy loving-kindness and my prayer and praise shall meet one another. So shall my mornings and evenings be continually made up of that grateful contexture, of mercy and loving-kindness on thy part, and of prayer and praise on mine." But this cannot concern a particular person upon any reason, but upon which it will equally concern his family, that religious exercises should be there in a stated and continual course.

I may further reason this matter by some few considerations.

Suppose any will admit, (which in itself is sufficiently evident,) that it is a very reasonable thing, and manifestly the mind of God, that there should be daily exercises of religion in our families; then I would fain know, which should be excluded, if you would have one excluded? The Lord saith, morning and night; which would you have excluded, the morning or the evening sacrifice?

Would you exclude the morning exercise of religion? Pray how dare you think of that? Would not you desire God's blessing on your family this day? Would you not have the labours of the several members of it to be prospered and succeeded this day? Ask yourselves seriously that question; do not you desire a blessing should descend this morning upon your family as such? Again, do not you know, that this world is a place of snares and temptations? How dare you adventure your sons and daughters and servants into the world, without praying down a blessing upon them, before they go forth or set about their business? Suppose a disaster should happen, suppose a member of your family should be drawn into some scandalous wickedness; would it not be an uncomfortable reflection, "I ventured them out without family prayer; see what comes of it. Here is a blot and disgrace brought upon my family; was not this owing to my self-confidence, to neglect of God? was it not, because I was content to let mine go out abroad unblest? I forgot, that the world, the persons or things that they might have to do with, were all full of snares; this was not considered and taken to heart, and God hath let such a blast befall me or mine upon this account."

Or would you omit the evening exercise of religion in your family, of one sort and another? How can you think of that? Do you need none to watch over you this night? Doth not your house need a better keeper than you can be, especially when you are asleep; the Keeper of Israel, who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth? When we dwell in the midst of continual dangers, as we have so frequent experience; when some, that went to bed possessed of comfortable habitations, are unhoused and outed of all by the morning? Is it not pretended, that family prayer or family religion will be a certain protection of your habitations from such disasters, as experience hath from time to time shown; but I would appeal to you concerning the differ-

ence, suppose such a calamity to befall a religious family, and suppose it to befall an impious ungodly family. On the one hand, "My family hath been the seat of religion; I have desired, that God might be served and honoured there; of this I have been studious to the uttermost." How free and easy is the way of access to God, when such a person is not affrighted by guilt, and the horrors of an amazed conscience! But on the other side, to be forced to say, "I can look for no relief from God in this case, for I have neglected him, I have forsaken him and banished him my house and habitation; he had no abode or dwelling with me, no acknowledgment or worship from me and mine." What will this issue in? But if there be no such bar in the way between God and us; "Now my habitation is consumed and turned into flames and ashes, I have no dwelling; but thanks be to God, the secret of the Divine presence lieth open to me; I can go to him and say, Lord, thou hast been thy people's habitation through all generations. I shall never be destitute of a dwelling, as long as I have such a God to go to, and may solace myself in his love." For he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. How unsolicitous will that heart be, that finds itself possessed of a dwelling in the Divine love! That love will carry through all the straits and difficulties of time, and provide richly for us in an immense eternity that shall ensue. This makes a vast difference betwixt one that serveth the Lord and one that serveth him not.

Further; How are we directed by the course of nature itself? Do you think that those diurnal alternations of day and night carry no signification with them to an intelligent sort of creatures? When it is so inculcated to us in Scripture, what sacred things those ordinances of day and night are, and the statedness of their succession to one another; what can this intend, but to give us a measure as to the exercises of religion? Why else should this be so much insisted on, and we be called to fix our eye and take more special notice of those two great luminaries in this world of ours, "the sun that rules by day, and the moon that rules by night?" We are taught by nature itself to shape our other affairs accordingly. "Thou makest darkness, and it is night:—The sun ariseth;—Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour, until the evening," Psalm civ. 20, 22, 23. May he indeed do so, and shall he not take God along with him? And when the return of night calls him back from his affairs, ought he not then to be put in mind, who must be his keeper while he slumbers and sleeps, even that Keeper that never slumbers nor sleeps?

That it might be more expressly signified unto us, how nature may and should be a measure unto us of religion, as to this thing; do but take notice of that passage in Amos v. 8. Seek him (though these words, "seek him," are not in the Hebrew text in this verse, yet they are in the words but a little before, in several verses, and it is plain ought to be repeated or understood here, as the sense itself dictateth:) "Seek ye me, and ye shall live. Seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba. Seek the Lord, and ye shall live. Seek him that made the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night," &c. Seek him that doth so and so; what is the meaning of that? Seek him, because he doth so and so; seek him under that notion, as it is he that maketh the day dark with night, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning. What stupid, insensible creatures shall we be, if so wonderful a change doth not instruct us! If such a change were not common, it would be a subject of the greatest wonder to us. But that is the infirmity of our minds, that great things are little regarded, because they are common. That there should be that steady course kept in nature, as to make so vast a change in the world within the space of twenty-four hours, as the vicissitudes of day and night, of light and darkness; that we should have the brightness of an orient sun illustrating our hemisphere, and that within so many hours it is gone, and the shadow of death covers it; certainly this should set all religious minds upon adoring that Author of nature, that doth this in so steady a course, and in a way so unspeakably above all human conception, and which makes so many indeterminable controversies and disputes among the wisest philosophers, that are never like to be decided as long as this world lasts; particularly whether it be the earth that successively moves to the sun, or whether it be the sun that is whirled about the earth. The latter of these is so unapprehensible a thing, that the sun should run so vast a circle in so little a space of time, that it hath made many very considering men more to incline to the other opinion. But that we should be compassed about daily, once in twenty-four hours, with the strange vicissitudes of day and night, and not be disposed thereupon to adoration, is a most unaccountable thing; and will speak the inhabitants of this earth to be as stupid, as the earth on which they dwell.

But the idolatry of pagans will be a testimony against Christians, if it should be so. What tempted them to that idolatrous notion of worshipping the sun and moon, but that they thought them to be a sort of deities, from whom they received such a continual course of favours, that they thought they did owe continual adoration to them thereupon? If they falsely thought so, how truly and justly should we do what they have thought, if we reckon that the God of heaven and earth, of sun and moon, and of the whole creation, doth in such wisdom and in such kindness and benignity to us provide, that there should be so necessary an alternation, as this of light and darkness in so continued a course!

What then doth this require and call for from us? To seek the Lord upon this account, the Lord that maketh the day dark with night, and that turneth the shadow of death into the morning. He doth even impose upon us those daily acknowledgments and acts of worship morning and evening, by the very course and current of nature itself, as he is the Author and God of nature. And wonder not, that the light and law of nature is so often appealed unto in this case. It is what we find the apostle does in a matter of far less import, than this that is now before us; when he speaks about the business of hair, I Cor. xi. 14. Surely we are to act according to the unerring plain dictates of nature, in so great and important a matter as this is, much more.

I might further add upon all this that general precept, Phil. iv. 8. "Whatsoever things are honest, *comely*, whatsoever things are lovely, of good report, think on these things." What a lovely thing is a praying, orderly family! a family, where religion is kept up in a stated course, so as that that course is as constant as the course of day and night! It is not left to us as a mere arbitrary thing, whether we will do things lovely, comely, honest, and of good report, yea or no; but as a necessary thing, founded upon necessary reasons. And therefore to be unconcerned and indifferent, whether those of our family (if we have families) do things so necessary, or not, is a contradiction in terms; for it is to say, that which is necessary is not necessary; or, it is an indifferent thing, whether that which is necessary be done or not done.

SERMON V.*

HAVING endeavoured to evince to you, that there ought to be such a thing as family religion; and then to show you, what we were to conceive and practice, as to the frequency of the exercises of it, or when and at what times it ought to be performed; I would further speak to a *question* or two relating to this matter, and answer one or two *objections*, and so shut up all with some *Use*.

There are some *questions* that occur, which may require some consideration.

Question I. Some have desired to be informed, "Whether in case of the absence or sickness of a husband from or in the family, it be incumbent on the wife to keep up family duty in such a case?" And the case is the same as to widows, or others of that sex, who are sole governesses of families.

Answer. It must be said in general to this, that one

* Preached January 14th, 1694.

rule cannot be suited to all cases. There may be very great variety, as circumstances differ. But,

I. Nothing is plainer, than that while the conjugal relatives remain, the female relation hath a real part in the government of the family. That is plainly enough asserted in 1 Tim. v. 14. that it is the woman's part to "guide the house." The word is οἰκοδεσποτεῖν, *to have a despotical power in the family*, a governing power; which must be solely in her in the absence or failure of the other relative; and that must by no means be abandoned or quitted. And whereas all power and all order is from God, it cannot be denied or disowned or laid aside without an injury to him.

2. Hereupon, if there be in a family a prudent pious son, or a prudent pious man-servant, who may be assigned to this work; it may fitly enough be done by such a one by her appointment. And so the authority that belongs to her in her station, is preserved, and the thing done. That such a work as that is may be assigned to another, is out of all doubt, and ought to be so, where it may most fitly and most duly be so. And none question the fitness of assigning such a work statedly to another, in such families where persons are kept on purpose for the discharge of family duties.

3. It is possible, there may be families, that do entirely at present consist of those that are of the female sex; and concerning them there is no question.

4. Where the family is more numerous, and consists of the male sex, of whom none are fit or willing to undertake that business, and it cannot be done by the governess with decency or to edification; in that case she is to follow the example of Esther, (a very laudable one,) with her maidens and younger children still to keep up to this worship in her family; and, as much as in her lies, to warn and charge the rest, that they be not omissive for their part, (though they do not concur with them,) together or severally in calling on the name of the Lord daily.

Question II. A second question that occurs in this case, is, "Whether, where there is no competent ability to perform such a duty, as that of family prayer, with decency and edifyingness, it be fit to make use of helps, the preconceived words of others?"

Answer. As to that the matter seems to me so plain, that we need make no long discourse about it. I make no question at all, but that the substance of every duty is to take place of circumstance. It is better that the duty be done, than that upon the account of a mere circumstance it should be omitted and let alone. And there are useful helps, such as "The Practice of Piety," and other good books contain in them, which may fitly be made use of for that purpose; provided that they be not rested in, or that there be not a design of taking up there.

But persons in that case are more to study the Scriptures, the excellencies and attributes of the Divine nature, the natures and offices of Christ; to acquaint themselves with the particular office of the Holy Ghost, as he is the Spirit of grace and supplication; and to study their own hearts more, and to consider what are their true necessities. And in time, if people do conscientiously labour to make themselves acquainted with these things, and especially to get a sense upon their own hearts of their own true and great spiritual necessities; that will easily furnish them with matter, and matter will dictate words. Every one can tell, how eloquent necessity is wont to make beggars, that are pinched with want and hunger; they do not use to want words to represent their case. And for a more special help in this matter, if any such as make it a matter of doubt, would but allow themselves the leisure and give themselves the trouble, (but shall any call it a trouble? they would not account it so, if they did the thing,) to peruse Bishop Wilkin's treatise about "The Gift of Prayer;" they would there see, not only what the judgment of so great a man was, concerning the best and most eligible way of managing our addresses to God in prayer; but how also an ability may be obtained through the grace and blessing of God, for applying ourselves in the name and on the behalf of others to God in prayer.

But there is yet an *objection* or two, that needs to be considered.

Objection I. Some will say perhaps, "That they *want time*, and that their necessary secular affairs cannot admit of time for a stated course of family worship, morning and evening." As there can be no reason, as you have heard, alleged for the one of these times, that will not be as weighty for the other.

Answer. To this I have several things to say.

1. It would be a very great piece of justice, if such, as are wont to object, would but represent the case as truly it is; that is, that they would rather say, they want hearts than that they want time. Undoubtedly, where there is a bent of heart right set in this matter, time will be found; it will not be a difficulty to find it.

2. I would fain know of such, why they do not object too, that they cannot find time to have solemn meals in their families, set meals; that they cannot find time for eating or drinking, no, nor for sleeping. But are these things more necessary than religion? What is become of their understanding? How forlorn an understanding is that grown, that can apprehend a necessity for set and appointed seasons for repast and the repairing of natural decays, and cannot apprehend a necessity of constant family religion, or seem to think of that as a matter less necessary! Will they pretend to believe, that they have souls, immortal spirits about them; and that an immortal mind or spirit is a more valuable thing than a clod of clay? Do we need to make speeches to Christians or to men for such purposes as these? Therefore I add again,

3. It is very true, that nothing is at that time necessary, when somewhat inconsistent therewith is truly necessary. That is a concession, that must be stated and established, for it cannot be shaken. And therefore we are to take our measures, not against it, but by it, and according to it. For in morality it is impossible that necessaries should be repugnant one to another, any more than that truths can; that one duty to be practised should be contrary to another duty, than that one truth to be believed should be contrary to another truth. They are all of a family, of a kind and alliance, and very easily reconcilable with one another. But as we formerly had occasion to mind you, so I must remind you, that it is the good man's character, that he "orders his affairs with discretion." If men will do this, they will then find out ways and methods, how to reconcile their important necessary affairs with one another.

There are cases, wherein even a religious duty itself must yield and give place to other necessary occurrences. It may not only in some cases be lawful, but a duty, to intermit the course of family duty in the ordinary season thereof. As, suppose a person be taken with a sudden, surprising fit, that endangers life, and requires the present attendance of all the house; or suppose my house be on fire, or my neighbour's house. The strict observance of the religion of the sabbath-day was among the Jews dispensed with upon a less occasion, when there was but an ox or a sheep to be pulled out of a ditch.

But if any will pretend such necessary occasions to be constant, then the pretence overthrows itself; that they must constantly or in an ordinary course exclude religion out of their families upon account of their constant or ordinary secular business. If this be pretended, the very pretence showeth it to be a false necessity, or the false pretence of a necessity; and so is a pretence, that doth overthrow itself even in the allegation. This is none of those cases, to which that great maxim is applicable, that "God will have mercy and not sacrifice." Such cases there are; but these cannot be constant: for then there could be no such thing as sacrifice; that is, religion upon these terms must quite be thrown out of doors and out of the world.

4. I would appeal to yourselves, or to ordinary observation, whether it be not evident that there are many instances in former and latter time, that make it manifest that there may be diligence in a calling, and great success upon such diligence; and yet no exclusion of family religion, but that kept up in great constancy and order? I believe you, or most of you, can instance in many such observable cases. And if I should instance them to you, many of you would upon knowledge consent and concur with me.

I doubt not, but that many of you have seen the Life of that famous man Mr. Ignatius Jordan, who fifty or sixty years ago was a magistrate and sometimes mayor of the noted city of Exeter. I mention him because, besides his extant Life, I have had opportunities to converse with some, that lived a

considerable time in his family; and who did assure me, that his daily course was to go to bed early, and to take care that his family should do so too. Then generally he was up first of all the house; usually at four o'clock in the morning, both winter and summer. Two hours he commonly spent alone in his secret devotions. About six o'clock, it was his usual way to call his family together, and to spend a considerable time in the serious exercises of religion among them: and so all went with great order about their several affairs and businesses about seven. A very signal instance of the easy reconcileableness (by the use of discretion and prudence) of religion with secular business! And an instance too, how discernible a blessing did ensue and follow upon all; so as to leave it no matter of objection against religion, that it must impoverish the families into which it comes.

Nor should I doubt the concurrence of more of you, if I should instance in the known conduct of alderman Ashurst.[a] I have had opportunity myself to know much of the order of his family in this respect, as to the daily exercises of religion in it. And I think his posterity left behind are a sufficient proof to you, that religion doth not beggar a family.

I mention these instances, not as if I thought an opulent condition in the world to be any considerable part of the reward of religion, or any constant reward of it. That were to dishonour religion, to think that we should need to mention so mean a thing, as outward and worldly prosperity, wealth and riches, as the recompense and reward of religion. There are much greater things to be mentioned, the secret blessing of God upon a man's spirit; the hoped blessing, that may descend upon one's relatives: the peace, that a man shall have in his own bosom, from the consideration of his not having the blood of souls on his head, the blood of children, and the blood of servants, for not having taken care of their souls: the instructive good remembrance, that such a one will leave behind him; which may be of use to others, when he is dead and gone: the glory that he brings to God: the eternal recompenses that sincere religion will find at the last: the present pleasure and satisfaction, that a man will have, while he survives, where God blesseth his endeavours; and where he can see godly children springing up under the influence of godliness practised and kept up in the family; or a godly servant becoming or made such under his eye, though it was not always so; it may be, he may see such a child or servant gone out of his family, and planting other families. What a comfort is it to the heart of a man in such a case, to see the godly, praying parent and master of such another family; who must say, he carried his religion out of my family, and that God blessed the worship and religion of my house so to season his spirit, that I can reckon such or such a religious family springing out of mine! What a comfort is this!

But what I speak of worldly emolument, (as sometimes by the especial blessing of God a consequent, though not a necessary or constant consequent of family religion,) hath this farther design—That if this be the case with any of you, that you are descended of godly parents, and sprung out of families where religion was kept up, and there is a blessing descended upon you in inward respects also; if God hath enlarged your portion as to the things of this life, and with that blessing hath blessed you indeed; then I reckon the mention of such instances may be useful to such as you in this respect; that you may take encouragement and understand your engagement from thence to keep up the religion which you find hath not been a useless disadvantageous thing to your family.—Religion hath not dishonoured your families, nor you: do not you dishonour it; be not ashamed of the religion of your fathers, who have gone before you in this way and course. In the last place, as to the objection of want of time, I would add, that,

5. It ought deeply to be considered, whether more time might not be redeemed, not only from such occasions as are in a degree necessary, but from such as are altogether unnecessary; and this without any prejudice to health? Where such an allegation is used and stood upon, certainly one half hour without any great prejudice might be gained from sleep by rising so much the earlier in the morning. But as that may be said to be a gaining and sparing of time from that which is necessary, how much more may be gained from that which is unnecessary? And about that I must appeal to yourselves. I know not other people's circumstances, but every one is supposed to know his own: and so yourselves know, whether some time might not be spared from the coffee-house, or from unseasonable visits, at that hour of the day that would be most fit for the religion and worship of your family. I can but appeal to yourselves, whether it may not be so.

I know, it may possibly be alleged in a particular case, if it be asked, "Why were you not at a more seasonable hour about the exercises of religion in your family?" Why, "I was obliged to observe such an appointment with such a one about business in a coffee-house or a tavern." But I would inquire; Is it necessary, that this must be constantly so, or more ordinarily so? Or can it not be provided, that such meetings might be at more seasonable hours, so as not to exclude family duty in its proper season; that is, to occasion it either to be quite laid aside, or (which may be as culpable) to be deferred to so late an hour of the day or night, (for the greatest danger of this kind is in the evening,) till every one naturally is more disposed to sleep, than to prayer, or to hear God's word read or opened to them? Might it not be managed otherwise? And then may I not appeal to you, whether this be not an affront to the majesty of God? According to that which is urged by the prophet Malachi, (ch. i. 13.) "When ye bring that which was torn, and the lame and the sick for an offering, should I accept this at your hand? saith the Lord." Or, as in ver. 8. "Is not such a sacrifice evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee?" It is to offer God an affront, instead of a sacrifice; the worship of a carcase, instead of a living sacrifice or service. It speaks your contempt of the Divine Majesty, when you dare ordinarily presume to do so; instead of that reverence which ought to animate all your worship.

And therefore about this, no other course can be taken by one who shall preach to you upon such an occasion, but only to leave you to serious communing about this matter between God and your own souls. Bring the case before him, and consider your rule, and consider your judge; for you are not to be final judges, nor are you to judge arbitarily in a subordinate way, but by rule.

Consider, I say, the rules you are to judge by, what such laws as these lay upon us. Whatsoever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God, I Cor. x. 31. Can you go to God in this case, and say, "Lord, I appeal to thee, who knowest all things, whether I was not about business at the coffee-house or tavern, which did more tend to glorify thee, than inspecting my family would then have done; than reading out of thy holy word or calling upon thy name would then have done."

We are required to do all that we do in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Col. iii. 17. A most awful thought that! This is to run through our lives, to do all we do in the name of our Lord Jesus. Nor is it an unreasonable thing, that this law should be laid upon us. For by whose vouchsafement and procurement is it, that we have a being in this world? It is "by him that all things consist." This world, if it had not been for him, would have been pulled in pieces about the ears of its inhabitants many a year ago. It was said concerning Joseph, exalted in that high trust in Egypt; and it was said to him by the prince upon the throne, "Without thee shall no man lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt," Gen. xli. 44. If God say so concerning him, of whom that Joseph was but a type, our glorious blessed Lord; "The creation is given to thee, it might have been all made to vanish into nothing long ago, but it is now devolved into thy hands; be thou absolute arbiter of life and death, and of all concernments to this whole creation; all power is given to thee in heaven and in earth:" this being the state of the case, it is not an unreasonable law that I now mention, that whatsoever ye do in word or deed, ye should do all in the name of Christ, you have nothing to do in this world, but in his name. Now can you go by this rule, and say, "Lord, it was in

[a] The father of Sir Henry Ashurst, Bart. and of Sir William Ashurst, Knt. Lord Mayor of London in 1693, when these sermons were preached.

the name of Jesus Christ, that I thought myself more concerned to mind such and such business at a public house at such an hour in the evening, rather than the one business of my family in the exercises of religion; rather than in reasoning, and in opening and urging the Scriptures to them, and calling on thy name with them?" Let these things be considered in the fear of God; and not like persons that mean to trifle in matters, wherein God will not trifle with us one day. I need to do no more, than to leave such cases to a communing between God and your own souls. If you will let the matter be heard there, it will bring the case before God, and the appeal will be made to him about it. But if you will judge the matter without hearing, and as the sole judges, when you are no way so but in subordination; if you will have it determined finally by an improper judgment, without debate, without examining the matter *pro* and *con:* this argueth a bad cause and a guilty conscience; when you dare not try the matter between God and your own souls; and dare not to see how it will go there, when there is none to audit the account but He and you.

I would fain have you consider the matter in this light day by day in such cases; that, when you go to take your rest at night, you may lie down and sleep in peace; not because you do not consider the state of your case, whether you have done your duty or not; but because you have; and so can appeal to God about it, that you have done according to the obligations of the Christian law, lying upon you in reference to yourself and in reference to yours.

Objection II. Some may say, "It is true they begin to apprehend and admit a conviction, that it is very reasonable and fit, there should be religion in families, even as such; but they know not how to master the great difficulty of *beginning*." It hath been hitherto an unwonted thing with them; and if the truth of the matter should be confessed, it would be plainly this, that they are ashamed to be taken notice of by their relatives and dependants, as those who have admitted a conviction that they have been hitherto in the wrong. They think it will be an owning of a sort of guilt in their omission hitherto, when they shall set this on foot as a new course.

Answer. But methinks the providence of God hath mighty opportunely provided you an answer against this objection, if it hath any place in the minds of any; by ordering the matter so, that the duty should be recommended so unanimously at the same time by so great a body of the ministry, that in many considerable congregations in this city this subject of family religion hath newly been insisted on at once. Is it a shame to hearken to the voice of instructors, so instructed (as we may believe) of God, as unitedly to give a kind of *celeusma*, to *cry*, "Come let us all at once see what can be done to beat down the growing irreligion and profaneness of the age, and to revive languishing religion, and to cause it to spring up afresh in families!"

Oh what a comely, lovely example was London to the rest of the Christian world, when religion and the order of families was more generally kept up in it! Such a lustre in this respect did hardly shine upon any spot on earth, as did upon this city. And when there is so common a cry only to revive a former practice, should it be a shame to hearken to it?

We are indeed to take all heed imaginable, that this may not degenerate into a dead or sleepy formality. It is no necessary consequence, that it should do so. It is not the design, either of the Scripture precept, or of them that enforce such precepts upon you, that you should rest in the external form of this piece or part of religion; but that we should all labour to get the form filled up with life and spirit more and more. And by how much the more it shall be so; as London hath been an eminent instance of religion in former times and ages, especially since the Reformation, so it will be much more so. As it is grown more in other respects, so may it through the blessing of God grow in this respect also!

We are expecting the time, when the Spirit of the Lord is to be poured forth more copiously, more generally, and in a greater measure, than hitherto: and what an honour will it be, that shall be put upon London, if that shall be made a luminary to so great a part of the world besides, as such a city can fall under the notice and observation of! Instead of shame, here will be glory. Do you glory (instead of being ashamed) to bear your part in so noble a design, to revive languishing religion in our land, and in London, and in our age. If you think it fit, that Christian religion should not dwindle and go out in a snuff; oh, contribute your utmost in your several stations, that it may be more and more a spreading and vivid thing, such as may spread and recommend itself.

SERMON VI.*

WE now proceed to the *Use*, which may be proper to be made of all the foregoing discourses. And,

I. That which hath been said may be useful for our instruction in sundry inferences, which it will be very obvious to deduce from it.

First, That if there ought to be such a thing as family religion, then certainly there ought to be such a thing as personal. For as families do suppose persons, and are made up of them; so family religion must suppose personal religion. For the reason formerly mentioned, I did select out of this text for my main subject the business of family religion, and do not design a distinct discourse concerning personal; that being the business of all our preaching and hearing all the year about. But yet, as I told you, I shall not pass over upon this subject the business of solitary or personal religion. But I reckon it very fitly comes in by way of inference and deduction from what hath been said to the former: for there cannot be a greater absurdity or solecism in all the world, than that a man should pretend to set up religion in his family, and yet know nothing what belongs to any exercises of religion alone and apart by himself.

I know many pretend, (but I hope from what you have heard it is but a pretence,) that the obligation unto family religion is obscure and hard to be made out. But in the mean time, as to personal religion, nothing can be more express. How distinct is the command of our great and blessed Lord, in Matt. vi. 6. "Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, and pray to him in secret that seeth in secret, and he will reward thee openly." Because then we have shown, that religion is not to be shut up in a closet, is it therefore to be shut out thence, against so express a precept as this? I intend no more than only to touch upon this subject; and pursuantly unto my design in taking notice of it, it will suffice to say briefly these four things concerning it.

1. That there is more constant and easy opportunity for the exercise of personal and solitary religion, than there can be for any other. And a mighty privilege that is, which a good soul would be loth to forfeit or to make nothing of: "I can be with God alone at any time; I can retire myself, when I will, to the more stated exercises of personal religion. Whenever my heart is in a disposition, I can presently ejaculate a thought, a desire, a holy aspiring Godward. It is possible that men may hinder the meeting of others together for the exercises of religion; but who can come between God and me? With him I can converse in any den, in any desert, in any dungeon; and none can prevent me."

2. There is more liberty and freedom of spirit in the secret exercises of religion. Then I can pour out my soul and vent myself unto God freely, when I am with him in a corner. This is one of the great privileges of friendship. It is the mutual sense of those that are entirely friends to one another, "We are theatre enough to one another," as the noted moralist speaks, *Alter alteri satis amplum theatrum sumus.* I and my friend; there needs no witness, no spectator: it is enough for us, that we can be entirely and inwardly conversant with one another.

3. There is hereupon so much more of delight in it, the highest complacency. You know what the delights are of

* Preached January 21st, 1694.

friendly commerce with one of a suitable spirit. But as there is no friendship like the divine, so there are no delights like those of divine friendship. When I retire myself with him on purpose, "My meditation of him shall be sweet," saith the Psalmist, Psal. civ. 34. He forecasts thus with himself. "How precious are thy thoughts to me, O God! I can be with God, as soon as I can think a thought; and how delightful is it, when he is pleased to mingle thoughts with me, to inject thoughts!" That is the way of spirits conversing with one another; and most of all of the paternal Spirit, the Father of spirits, that knoweth how most immediately and inwardly to influence his own offspring.

4. There is the fullest expression of sincerity in secret and closet religion. It is in opposition to the practice of hypocrites, that our Saviour gives that injunction which I mentioned in Matt. vi. 5, 6. "When ye pray, be not as the hypocrites; they would fain appear to men to pray; they love to pray in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." All their religion is street religion, synagogue religion; they know no other. "But do thou enter into thy closet, and shut the door," &c. There is nothing of design in this, but to meet with God, to pay him the homage I owe to him, and to seek from him the vital communications which I need. Here is nothing of pomp, nothing of ostentation. When our Saviour saith, hypocrites do so and so; you may easily by other places in the Gospel know whom he means by that character, namely, the scribes and Pharisees, mentioned in the foregoing chapter and elsewhere. They are often mentioned in conjunction with that other title, in Matt. xxiii. "Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Of all religions in the world, I would never make a Pharisee the measure of my religion; to have but a pharisaical religion, a religion with others or in the sight of others, but none to myself. How many please themselves, if they think they have a more excellent gift in this kind, to make ostentation of it to others; but towards God alone they are dumb and silent! They seem to be all religion with others; but alone they are nothing in it, their hearts are all earth and stone.

Secondly, If there ought to be family religion set up and kept up by governors of families; then—they in families, who are under government, are obliged to comply thereunto.—Any duty, that is incumbent upon one relative as such, doth manifestly imply the duty of the correlative or of the correlate. If governors of families must set up and keep up religion in their families; then they that are under government must comply. The same authority, that binds the one, binds the other too. So that they, who refuse to comply, are not only rebels against the governors of the family; but rebels against the Lord of heaven and earth, with whose authority such governors are invested: for there is no power but from him.

And though it be true indeed, that a human governor can see no further than to an external conformity; he from whom the obligation principally comes, seeth further, seeth into the heart and soul with the strictest and most prying inspection. And therefore with reference to him, such as are under government in families are obliged to concur in heart and spirit, and not to afford an external and bodily presence only. For your business lies with the God of the spirits of all flesh; who takes notice, whether you come with an inclined heart or a disinclined, with aversion or with desire; or whether you attend upon such duties with complacency or without delight. There is no deceiving of him. The same law, that obliges you to pray, obliges you to "pray in the Holy Ghost;" and implieth, that if you desire his communications and assisting influences, as "a Spirit of grace and supplication," they will ordinarily be afforded; and that you will not be destitute of those assistances but by slighting them, by despising and resisting and vexing that Spirit, who is ready to assist you, and to engage your hearts and to do them good by such a duty.

And let me tell you, that as it is a eulogy, a character of praise and commendation, in any one to be good in a bad family; so it must proportionably be a horrid brand upon any one to be bad in a good family. It was thought fit to be put upon record concerning Abijah the son of Jeroboam, (I Kings xiv. 13.) that "there was some good thing found in him towards the Lord his God, even in the house of Jeroboam;" good desires, good inclinations, even in so wicked a family as Jeroboam's was. It is proportionably a horrid mark upon that person, who continueth ungodly in a godly family; that is, a prayerless wretch in a praying family; whose heart at least never prayeth, hath no desires after God; no contrition, no sense in the confession of sin; no love, no gratitude in the acknowledgment of mercy. For one to continue ungodly in a godly family, or to go out ungodly from a godly family, what a horrid thing will this be! How much of terror and amazement will it carry in it at last, when the case comes to open itself to view, and to be looked upon and considered in its proper and native aspect! And even as it now is; to think with oneself, "That such or such children or fellow-servants in a family, where I may have lived a considerable time, may have had their hearts melted in hearing the word read and opened and applied, but mine was always hard: they have had their souls humbled in the acknowledgment of sin, but mine was unhumbled: they have had desires enlarged in seeking for mercy, but I had no desire after spiritual good."—To live so in a good family, and to go out such from a good family; oh, the horror of this case, and the reflections it will cause in the close of time! or, if not so, in an eternity of misery, that will never end!

Thirdly, We may further collect hence, that if family governors are to resolve, for their families as well as themselves, upon serving the Lord; then—they have a power and a trust over their families, and about their families, in reference hereto.—Otherwise Joshua had said he knew not what, or why, when he said, "I and my house will serve the Lord." But this I have evinced already by several considerations; as was necessary in reference to a discourse of this nature. It is plain, such a power God doth invest every governor of a family with.

Fourthly, If there be such a power lodged in family governors, then—this power ought to have its exercise. There is no power in nature, that is frustraneous, and never to be reduced into act. Such an incongruity as that is never to be found in the whole volume of nature. And it is as little to be found in matters that are of a moral and spiritual consideration. If there be then such a power, it ought to be reduced into act. That is, masters of families, by the use and exercise of this power, must oblige those that live under their government to comport becomingly with the duties and exercises of religion in their families. There ought to be a paternal, a despotical use of this power in reference to this case.

If you ask, Wherein? we must speak with distinction, because the subordinate relatives in a family are not all of one order, but there is great diversity among them.

If where there is a godly praying husband, there is an ungodly wife, who cannot endure to comport with such exercises of religion in the family; here is indeed, in reference to what is past, matter of deep shame and humiliation, that no wiser and better a choice was made. Persons in their choice ought mutually to have reference to this as the first and main thing, to match minds and spirits, rather than fancies and fortunes. And it should be matter of deep humiliation, if it have not been so. But as to what is future, there can be no more done in this case, than to exhort with authority, and so to reprove as may be most suitable to the end, and most likely to attain it.

If it be the case as to the husband in reference to the wife, that he discovers an aversion to every thing of religion, and especially to any family exercises of it; here is no authority to be used; (the woman hath none over the man;) but in that relation there must be all the prudent and gentle persuasions that can be, and a resolution to engage as many of the family as she can to bear a part with her in the exercises of family religion; as you heard of Esther and her maids. For she is to obey but "in the Lord;" and not so to obey, as to abandon religion upon his account, and to throw it out of the family. And she is kind to him herein, and puts the greatest obligation upon him, (which he may come to understand in time,) in that she labours to keep off a curse from coming upon the family; as Abigail did once keep off from Nabal a vengeance that was just coming upon him.

But as to children; where there are godly parents that have ungodly children, discovering early a disinclination to religion; (as indeed for the most part it is too early discoverable;) where this is discoverable, there ought to be so much the more serious, earnest endeavour used to cultivate this wilderness of nature, and to correct it betimes. There ought to be early insinuations and endeavours to instil principles of religion, to be instrumental towards the possessing of souls with a reverence of that Majesty, whom they themselves reverence. As no doubt it was from what Jacob had long observed concerning his father Isaac, that, swearing by God, he swore by him under the name of "the fear of his father Isaac;" (Gen. xxxi. 53.) him, whom he had long observed his father to have a great reverence for.

But when any are grown up with this aversion, (which it may be through great negligence was not animadverted upon betimes, as it should have been,) and do now discover open enmity against the religion of their father and of their family; wise and holy parents have ways yet to make use of their paternal authority in that case, at least in the disposal of what is theirs. They may let it be understood and known, that by how much the less they show themselves lovers of God, they the parents shall show themselves so much the less lovers of them, and the more sparingly provide for them. And they ought not only to say so, but to do so. There is not a greater fault to be animadverted upon among persons professing religion, who are governors of families, than that they let a fond and foolish affection to their children prevail against that dutiful and loyal love which they owe to God; that is, that without distinction they labour to put all that they can into the hands of an ungodly son: which is indeed to arm him against God's interest in the world, and against religion. They should take care, that such shall live; but that they shall have all the advantages that they can give them, wherewith to maintain and keep up a war against heaven, this is what good parents can never give an account for, that when they are only intrusted as stewards of the manifold grace of God, they should dispose of it so. These are the gifts of his grace, taken in a larger sense, of his bounty and goodness. And if they shall employ them, in order so much the more effectually to keep up and maintain a war against the universal Ruler of the world; this is a most undutiful and disloyal affection.

As for servants; they are no such inseparable parts of a family, but that, if they be found finally inflexible, and discover an enmity against God and religion that cannot be overcome and got out of their hearts, they may be got out of the house. And they *must* be so. As the Psalmist speaks concerning telling a lie, (Psalm ci.) when he had expressed in the beginning of the Psalm his resolution concerning family order, that "he would walk" or converse "in a perfect way and with an upright heart in his house," perform and do the duties of a family governor with integrity and uprightness; (that must be meant by *walking* there;) so in what follows he tells you, what the characters should be of one that should stay or should not stay in his house. He speaks to this purpose, both negatively and positively. Negatively; The work of them that turn aside, should not cleave to him, ver. 3. That is, of them that decline and are opposite to religion; so it must principally be understood. "A froward heart shall depart from me; I will not know a wicked person," ver. 4. He had spoken before of the rule he would observe in reference to his house and family; and to this, those following expressions must be understood to have a direct reference. And for the expression of *froward*, and that other of *turning aside*; they are used in divers places of Scripture to signify disinclination to religion, an averse, disaffected heart towards God. As in Psalm liii. 2, 3. one of these words is there used; When "God looked down from heaven, to see if any did understand and seek God;" (it is said,) "every one of them *is gone back*; they are in an averse, disaffected posture, all hanging off from God and disaffected to him." So one of those words is used in Psalm lviii. 3. "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they *go astray* as soon as they be born." This reference the expressions must be understood to have here, to signify disaffection to religion. Now such a one, saith he, "shall depart from me, and I will not know him." And afterwards, ver. 7. "He that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight;" one, in whom this conjunction is actually found, (which is always to be expected,) disaffection to God and falsehood to oneself. A thing, that a heathen took notice of long ago; *Qui Deum non timent, fallent homines: They that fear not God, have no truth towards men.*

But the Psalmist tells us who shall stay in his house. ver. 6. "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; and he that walketh in a perfect way, or uprightly, he shall serve me." "I will have mine eyes every where; and if there be an honest, upright-hearted person to be found, I will choose such a one for my servant."

This ought to be a measure to all of us. A godly, faithful servant is, I am afraid, a too little valued thing with many among us; they are more indifferent, how their servants stand affected towards religion; whether they have any love of God or godliness, yea or no. But if such can be found, saith the Psalmist, they shall serve me, live with me; I will labour to furnish my house, as far as in me is, with such as will labour to comply and fall in with me in the great business of religion. You have heard concerning this same Psalmist David, (2 Sam. vi. 20.) how, after that great solemnity was over of placing the ark, "he returned to bless his household." It is obvious enough to collect, that this was a stated practice with him, from which that great solemnity should not divert him, when the time and season was come of going to perform the ordinary exercises of religion in his house: and unto that therefore in its proper time he applieth himself.

It will therefore be the care of good family masters, to have such for members of their families, as may contribute to the drawing down of a blessing upon their house; that they may not counteract themselves; and, as the daily exercise of religion is the blessing of a family, that they may not, by connivance and indulgence to wickedness and disaffection to religion, undo their work and pull down a curse, more effectually than they can hope in a half and divided way to gain or draw down a blessing.

These several ways there ought to be an exercise of the power, that God hath invested each master of a family with. And it ought to be considered, that wherever there is a power, there is a trust. There can be no power but from God; and where he lodgeth this power, he doth also commit a trust into such hands; and the weight of this ought to lie, and will lie, upon every one that is conscientious. And therefore,

II. I shall shut up all the discourse upon this subject with a few words of exhortation.

I. Wheresoever family religion hath been set on foot, let it be continued, and labour to improve it; that is, to be more and more serious and lively and spiritual; both they that are to manage the duty, and they that are to concur and join. Let there be an endeavour to grow more quick and lively herein. When I spoke about the circumstances of such exercises, I said nothing how much time was to be spent in them. Indeed there is no particular rule to be set for that; as I have told you the matter stands upon other accounts. In such cases prudence is to be exercised in matters of religion, as well as in other matters. "A good man will order his affairs with discretion," as hath been said again and again. Every man is to take his rule and measure for that from discretion; but by no means from indiscretion. It ought to be considered with prudence and judiciousness, what is most likely to serve the end of religion, in such exercises of it as we have been speaking of. I reckon, that one quarter of an hour spent with spirit and life, is a great deal better than hours together spent in nauseous flatting repetitions, (which was the pharisaical way,) in such a tedious and fulsome way, as tends to make religion a burden and grievance. I think that is applicable to the purposes of religion, which hath been applied to meaner, much meaner purposes; that it is good to come from a meal with an appetite; that it is good to come so too from an exercise of religion, with those pleasant lively relishes left upon one's spirit as may make him wish for the return of such a season; "When

will the time for prayer and solemn attendances upon God come again?" But this, beyond all things, should be endeavoured, that there may be an improvement in life and vigour and spirituality in the performance of these things, both in them that manage them, and in those that are to concur and join; where such a thing as family religion is set up and hath been kept up.

2. I must desire you to suffer the exhortation too, where family religion hath not hitherto been begun. Oh, make haste and begin it, keep it off no longer. Defer no longer to God so indisputable a right; or to make use of so great an advantage for yourselves, and for yours that you are concerned for. I hinted to you in what was said to an objection, that it may be a great difficulty with some how to begin. They are ashamed to be taken notice of, as having received a conviction of this matter, and so to own a fault by appiying to a contrary practice. But we all profess ourselves Christians; and as we are men, we are under the government of the Supreme Ruler, and must be accountable to him. It becomes us on both accounts, to learn to be ashamed of our sin, and not to be ashamed of our duty. And if what hath been said shall obtain to be considered and laid to heart; I cannot but hope, that they who are ashamed to begin, will rather be ashamed not to oegin, to defer and neglect so great and important and olessed a work as this is.

O think, how shame will be estimated one day in "the general assembly;" when all the world, the whole creation of intelligent creatures, angels and men, shall be convened before the judgment-seat. Think how shame and reputation will be estimated in the great day. You are told that the resurrection of ungodly ones will be a resurrection and awakening to shame and everlasting reproach. (Dan. xii. 2.) Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake: some to shame and everlasting reproach. Oh! for a man to be hurried away from the bright, glorious presence of the blessed God, under the notion of one that would not call upon him; severed from all "the spirits of just men made perfect," and from that innumerable company of glorious and blessed angels, to be made an associate and companion of devils to all eternity, for this very reason! Why is he driven into darkness, and cast out into those regions, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth? Why, he would never call upon God; he had a family, but there was no religion in it; he never cared to keep up God's interest in his earthly station. This is therefore his portion and punishment. Think, whether this will not be a greater shame, than to begin a holy religious course, that hath been neglected hitherto.

I shall briefly shut up all with the following considerations, that may through God's blessing help to enforce all upon us.

1. Consider, How come you to have a family, and your family to have a place and habitation in this world? Do you not know, that the Lord is the Ruler of all this world, and that he sets the solitary in families, and appoints to all the bounds of their habitation? And for what? That they might seek the Lord: (as is signified, Acts xvii. 26, 27, 28.) if so be they may feel and find him out, who is not far from any one of us, since in him we all live and move and have our being. Will you defeat the design, for which God made such a world of creatures, and hath disposed them into societies and convenient stations here upon this earth? Was this done merely to gratify and please these creatures? That is to suppose a creature designed by God to be its own end, and that he had resigned the prerogative of his Deity to the work of his own hands now in rebellion against him.

2. Do not you know, that you need a constant preserver in your several dwellings? Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen waketh but in vain, Psalm cxxvii. 1. A city you know is made up of so many houses inhabited; but every such house is kept in vain, if God be not the keeper. And what! is *he* not worth the taking notice of, that watcheth over you night after night and day after day?

3. How can you expect to live comfortably in your dwellings without God? What good will your enjoyments do you? Can a blessing for a soul spring out of the earth, a good suitable to an immortal mind? It is an amazing thing, as Job represents it, (chap. xxi. 7, &c.) that men should outwardly flourish in their external circumstances, "live, become old, and mighty in power, have their seed established in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes and their houses safe from fear;" they dwell securely in them, they are safe from fear, though not from danger; and yet take no notice, who it is that makes them dwell in that safety; and thereupon say unto God, notwithstanding all this, that they live under his wing and upon his bounty, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," ver. 14. "Our houses shall be as much strangers to religion, as they are to fear: they are free from fear, and they shall be as free from piety too." This they are pleased with as their greatest privilege, to be without God. And yet, as it follows ver. 16. "Their good is not in their own hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me." Let it be far from me! I would not have my soul bound up with such a one's soul! O my soul, enter not into the secret of those horrid creatures, those monsters of ingratitude, undutifulness, and disaffection, towards a kind, gracious, and benign Lord! They have not their good in their own hand, but it is all in his, to whom they yet say, "Depart from us!" And they may seem to prosper in this course awhile; but see what comes of it at length, ver. 17, &c. "How often is the candle of the wicked put out!" their prosperity reversed, their light extinguished! and how often cometh their destruction upon them! Ver. 19. "God layeth up his iniquity for his children:" (this cometh of it at last;) "he rewardeth him, and he shall know it." Many times he takes care, that he shall know it in such ways as are there expressed, ver. 20. "His own eyes shall see his own destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty. For what pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off in the midst?" He hath children springing up, it may be, and furnished by his foolish and fond care and concern with great things in this world; such a son is married into such a family, and such a daughter into another, where they are richly and opulently provided for. But his children come to destruction in his very sight. It is often so; he seeth all wasting and melting away, even as a heap of snow before the sun. This is often the heritage of wicked men from the Lord in this world; and if it be not so in this world, worse and more dismal things ensue afterwards. In the mean time, what comfort can there be, with all the enjoyments and affluence that a man can have in his house, be it ever so pleasing a habitation, while God is a stranger, dwells not there; is not worshipped, and so dwells not there?

4. Consider, how amiable a thing a religious family is, where the fear of God governeth and flourisheth. Do but read to that purpose the 128th Psalm, which might fruitfully be run over.

5. Do not you desire, that the world should mend? that you may see better times, and to see your city flourish? If trade languish, every one is sensible: methinks we should not be insensible, if religion languish. But how shall it live, if not in families? There is the great failure. And any place, that hath been long the seat of religion, when it comes to decay in that respect, will decay in other respects too. "Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee: and I leave thee desolate without inhabitant," Jer. vi. 8. If that, which is the very soul of any people's good estate, even of the political body; if that retire, all moulders: as, if the soul of a man retires, is gone and withdrawn, the body crumbles and turns to dust. How desirable a thing is it to a Londoner, to see London in a prosperous, flourishing condition! But never expect to see it so, if religion shall be in a languishing decaying condition gradually from day to day. That will be a dreadful foretoken.

6. Consider, that all family masters are stewards, and all stewards must be accountable. O consider within how little a time we are every one of us to be called to an account: "What did you do in your station as governor or governed in such a family?" Prepare that you may be capable of rendering a good account, an account comfortable to yourselves.

7. Consider, that there cannot be a better omen of a good state of things coming than if we could see that

take effect, which hath been designed and endeavoured by so many servants of God at this time, upon the subject of family religion. There could not be a more promising token to us. God hath touched the minds of those who are associated in the work of the Gospel among us, all at once by a kind of *celeusma*, to cry up family religion. If this should have its good effect, (and why should we not hope it will?) we cannot have a better token for good. The cry of wickedness is loud. If the cry of prayer, when it shall come to be so united a cry, shall prevail and be louder, this will draw down blessings. The cry of wickedness is calling for wrath and vengeance, for the vials to be poured out upon us: but if so many houses, as there are in London, wherein religion is professed, should really become so many oratories, houses of prayer: it is to be hoped there will be so many louder cries, ascending up to heaven for mercy. If there had been fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, nay, ten righteous persons in Sodom; that would have prevailed for mercy upon that city. If so many as profess religion in London, would but practice it, and this part of it in particular, to set prayer on work with importunity and fervour in their several families; in this respect *vox populi* will be *vox Dei*: the voice of a praying people will be as the voice of God blessing us from above; and telling us that you have prevailed, the course of wrath is stopped, the decree reversed, prayer is heard, and that you shall see London, the city of your solemnities, a quiet habitation This is said by way of answer to the people, who are brought in at the beginning of Isa. xxxiii. 2. praying, "O Lord be gracious unto us, let thine arm be awakened for us every morning." Here was daily prayer ascending and going up. It follows in ver. 20. "Look upon Zion the city of our solemnities, thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down, not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken." And so many prayers ascending out of so many several families of London, will be harbingers to those, from whom those prayers proceeded, and in whose souls they were formed and inwrought. Such praying souls shall ascend at length and follow their prayers. And if we who are now here assembled have not this hope, what are we here for? Why do we worship; if this be not our hope, that our souls shall follow our adoration? We know we are to be here but a little while. We send up prayers, desires, and praises here in our assembly, in the hope and expectation, that we shall follow the prayers and praises which ascend out of our assembly ere it be long. Worship God with the same hope and expectation in your families, that you yourselves shall ere long follow your prayers and praises ascending from thence also.

THE VANITY OF A

FORMAL PROFESSION OF RELIGION.

CONSIDERED

IN EIGHT SERMONS

ON TITUS I. 16.

SERMON I.*

THEY PROFESS THAT THEY KNOW GOD; BUT IN WORKS THEY DENY HIM, BEING ABOMINABLE, AND DISOBEDIENT, AND UNTO EVERY GOOD WORK REPROBATE. TITUS i. 16.

SINCE it is too obvious, that many persons are apt to satisfy themselves with the mere profession of Christianity; and to reckon that while they explicitly own the true religion they are sound Christians and good protestants, without considering whether that religion carries due and suitable impressions on their hearts or not; I have therefore thought it might not be unuseful, to discourse a little from this Scripture, and show the vanity and insignificance of an empty profession, a profession which refutes and contradicts itself. To make way for what I intend from this passage of Scripture, there are a few things that it will be necessary for me to recommend to your notice.

First, That this phrase, the knowing of God, is a usual expression to signify religion in general; inasmuch as it is the primary, the most deep and fundamental, thing in all religion. It is, as I remember the moralist styles it, "The foundation of foundations." Hence, from so noted and principal a part, the denomination is put upon the whole. To know God, therefore, is to own him, to acknowledge him as our God; and thereupon to carry ourselves suitably towards him. In the first commandment, which establishes the relation betwixt God and us, it is intimated, that if we will have him to be our God, we must have no other gods before him, Exod. xx. 3. And again, one of the prophets expresses it by knowing no other *god* but *Him*. "I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt; and thou shalt know no other god but me, for there is no saviour beside me," Hos. xiii. 4. The import then of the expression, is to own him as *God*, in relation to ourselves; and consequently to love and fear him, to hope and delight in him, and the like. All which result from the relation betwixt him and us; according to that well known observation and rule among the Hebrews; that "words of knowledge import life and sense, as consequent; as words of life and sense suppose knowledge antecedent."

Secondly, This phrase imports not only natural religion, but also that which is revealed. Knowing God therefore is not to be taken so abstractedly, as though it meant no more than only to entertain the notion of the Deity, and the practice of those duties that we are led to by the light of nature; but more generally whatever duty he is pleased to enjoin also by revelation. We then know and acknowledge him as *God*, with respect to his sovereignty and dominion, when we are universally observant of his will; how or by what means soever it is made known to us; whether it be by natural light, or express superadded revelation. And therefore we find this expression made use of to signify religion among the Jews, while they were a peculiar people unto God. It is said, Hezekiah, a good king, "spoke comfortably to the Levites," *to their hearts*, according to the Hebrew, "who taught the good knowledge of the Lord," 2 Chron. xxx. 22. That is, instructed the people in religion, according to the revelation of the mind and will of God, which was then afforded them.

Thirdly, We find this phrase expressly used to signify the Christian religion in particular. And thus the same apostle uses it in another place. "Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God, I speak this to your shame," 1 Cor. xv. 34. As if he had said, "You do not know God, you do not demean and behave yourselves like those, who understand the principles of your own religion." And again, says the apostle, "After you have known God, why turn ye back to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye again desire to be in bondage?" Gal. iv. 9. That is, Why do you follow the gnostics in mixing judaical and pagan rites with the religion of Christ.

Fourthly, We are therefore further to collect, that the apostle does here, in this place, particularly intend the Christian religion. "They profess that they know God;" that is, they profess to be Christians. For it is very evident he writes of such, as professed the only true religion. The teachers who seduced and corrupted them, it is evident, were professed Christians, though very corrupt and unsound ones; for they endeavoured to deprave others; not indeed as avowed adversaries to the Christian name, but as deceivers and gainsayers. It is true, the apostle said, they ought to be convinced; by which he implies that there were some common agreed principles among them, which might be the ground of such conviction. He calls them deceivers, who by cunning insinuations laboured to pervert the Christian doctrine, and to render it favourable to licentious and immoral practices. And therefore those, whom they had perverted, must be of the same stamp; not wholly of the Jewish religion, for that their teachers were not; but judaizing Christians. They who lived so remote from Judea, cannot be thought to have entertained the principles of the Jewish religion entirely; nor so generally, and in such numbers, as is here implied, for "many whole houses were subverted," Tit. i. 11. Much

* This Sermon is without date; but it is very probable it was preached on January 16, 1680.

less can we suppose the whole body of the people to be naturally Jews; for the apostle does manifestly describe them by the common national taint of that island, that is, as "liars, evil beasts, slow bellies," (Tit. i. 12.) according to the character given of them by one of their own poets.[a] Thus are the people described, whom the apostle speaks of, namely, the natives of Crete, who were converted from paganism to the profession of the Christian religion, with which they mingled many of the Judaical sentiments. This therefore being premised, our way is plain and clear to the things I intend to insist upon; which are especially these two—That men may profess the true religion, and yet lead very ill lives; and—That they who do so, by just interpretation, may be said to deny the religion they profess.—I propose to speak to these two observations jointly in this order.

I. I shall show what sort of profession that must be, which can be meant in such a case.

II. What the persons who make it may be notwithstanding, in the temper of their spirits, and the course of their practice.

III. I shall show whence it is, that men should make profession of a religion, to which the temper of their spirits and the course of their walking are so repugnant. And,

IV. The vanity of such a profession, and how little it signifies to entitle persons to the reputation or proper rewards of such a religion.

I. I shall show what sort of profession that must be, which can be meant in this case, or was made by such persons as the apostle speaks of.

1. It must be understood to be, in the main, but a nominal profession. These professors indeed own the Christian name, call themselves by it; and not only do so, but also claim the privilege of being called Christians by others: like those who said they were Jews, when they were not, but were of the synagogue of Satan, Rev. ii. 9. And St. Paul, in the second chapter of his epistle to the Romans, speaking of these professors, uses the very same style, alluding to those who called themselves Jews, or were commonly so called by others: "Thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God," &c. but says he, in the close of that chapter, "He is not a Jew that is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, that is one inwardly—whose praise is not of men but of God," Rom. ii. 17, 29.

2. This profession could be only formal; that is, wholly made up of the external form of that religion to which they pretended. So, in like manner, many now profess the Christian religion, and make a show or appearance of being religious by frequenting Christian assemblies; by owning themselves to be members of the catholic, or some protestant church; and by wearing the badge and cognizance of such and such a party. The bare having a name, is all we can suppose to be in such a profession as this. And therefore to these professors may be applied what our Lord says to the church in Sardis; "Thou hast a name that thou art alive, when thou art dead," Rev. iii. 1. And so it is, in like manner, with all others; who content themselves with making a show of religion, and performing such external rites, as are the distinguishing badge of the several parties of the Christian world.

II. I am now to show you, what such persons may be, notwithstanding their profession, both in temper and practice; which shall be done briefly by opening the terms of the text. They may be, for all that, abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate; that is, in one word, inclined to all evil, and averse to all good. To these two things do these several expressions amount.

1. They are said to be βδελυκτοὶ, *abominable*, or shamefully addicted to all manner of evil. The word, in the original, denotes the heinousness of those practices, in which they allow themselves; and is derived from a word that signifies to send forth an offensive smell. For all sentiments of right and good, are not so totally lost and obliterated among mankind, but that there are some things which even pagans would detest.

2. They are said to be also ἀπειθεῖς, *disobedient*, which expression imports perseverance and obstinacy in an evil course. They will by no means, by no importunity, no arguments whatever, be dissuaded from practices so unjustifiable, and detestable in their own nature. They are resolved to run on whatever it costs them; to continue in sin, and in the profession of religion at the same time, which is the greatest absurdity imaginable.

3. They are said, lastly, to be πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἀδόκιμοι, *reprobate to every good work*; which signifies a disinclination to every thing that is good, to every thing that is worthy of praise. The word may be taken, as it is observed, either actively or passively, and so may signify not only to be disapproved by others, but to disapprove themselves; in which latter sense we must, at present, principally understand the phrase. They disapprove all that which claims their approbation and esteem; and are disaffected to all that good which the religion they profess would oblige them to the practice of. The expression therefore does not so much signify their omission of what is good, as their disinclination to it; but it further denotes that if they do any thing at all in religion, it is what they neither delight in, nor can endure. "Every good work" is an expression of such latitude, that it may comprehend all the works of piety, mercy, and common justice. And so it is fit we should understand it in this place. Whatever they do of this kind, their hearts are averse to it, and they bear a disaffected mind to it all. And such as are here described, persons may be found to be, notwithstanding their profession.

III. We are next to consider, whence it is, or what inducements men have to make profession of a religion, which they are resolved to contradict in the course of their lives and conversations. And many things may be considered as inducements or reasons in this case, which concur partly in all those who are mere professors; though some are of greater force than others to particular persons, whom we shall distinguish from the generality of men of this character.

1. One reason why such men join a profession of religion to a vicious life, is their unapprehensiveness and irreverence of an invisible Lord and Judge; whom because they do not see, they stand in no awe of. Therefore it is that they are not ashamed of that incongruous and inconsistent behaviour towards him, of which they would be ashamed in their deportment towards men. The following expression of the apostle gives us a great deal of light to this purpose, "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen; how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" 1 John iv. 20. Wherein is implied a greater difficulty of loving God, than a Christian brother; on this account, because God is not seen. Man continually falls under our sight and view, we converse with him daily in a way that is obvious to our natural sight, while God is invisible. And as it is in the point of love, so is it in all other natural affections; for as men with greater difficulty admit the impressions of Divine love into their hearts, than those of a visible object, so they do of Divine fear; and for this reason, I say, because God is not seen. Men would be ashamed continually to profess to one another, what they contradict in practice. Who would not be ashamed to declare himself perpetually such a one's friend; and yet, in the mean time, take all opportunities to do him all the mischief he can? But as to their carriage to an unseen God, men are not ashamed of such an incongruity as this.

2. This inconsistent conduct proceeds from the power and malignity of sinful inclinations; more especially in things that relate to and terminate on God. Sin has filled the world with enmity, which, it is true, works in men one against another: but more directly, and with greater virulence, against the blessed God himself; insomuch that they care not what dishonours they throw on his sacred name, nor what affronts they offer to his high authority and righteous laws. And though it must be acknowledged, the working of this enmity is great among men towards one another; yet, it is manifest, it is in general much greater towards the Almighty: for were it as common a thing to stab a man, as it is to wound the name of God and to affront his government, the world had been at an end long before this.

3. It is natural for men to have somewhat of religion,

[a] Epimenides.

while a disaffection still remains against that which is true: whence it is that they resist, and overthrow the profession they make by a most repugnant practice. It is manifest, as to the former, that all must be of some religion or other; and so they come to profess, as external circumstances lead them. It has been noted by heathens, that no society of men can live without religion. Divers have taken notice of it. It is a common passage of Cicero; "There is no nation so barbarous as to be without religion."[b] It seems as if none such had fallen within the compass of his observation. Maximus Tyrius also tells us, that "For a man to be without any religion at all, were as monstrous and unnatural, as for an ox to be without horns, or a bird to be without wings."[c] And so Plutarch in like manner observes, that "Though there be many towns and cities without coin, without government, as it happens sometimes; yet," says he, "I never heard or read, in my life, of a city without a temple. And I believe it is as impossible, that there should be a society of men without religion, as to build a city without foundations."[d]

Hence many persons, both ancient and modern, have thought religion to be the specific difference of man, and not reason; because there are so many apparent specimens of this in beasts, that in some instances it is hard to distinguish by this only between the brutal and human nature: whereas religion is peculiar to man, wherein no other sort of creatures do participate. For it is very plain that man, by his self-reflecting power, discerns himself to be a depending creature; which necessarily prompts him to pay homage to some superior being, on whom he thinks himself dependent. And therefore, if many of the pagans have worshipped for deities, those creatures which they thought most useful to them; it was not that they supposed them to be deities in reality, but because they looked upon them as representing the Deity, in those respects, wherein it was most beneficial to them.

But now, while men are naturally addicted to profess some religion, as it comes in their way, that which they have the best opportunity to know; so at the same time they have, generally, a most rooted disaffection to sincere religion, such as should command their hearts, and govern their lives and practice. This is to be resolved in some measure into the justice and sovereignty of God. Into his justice, in not continuing to give that grace which men resist and contend against: and though it is of infinite mercy that his grace does overcome in some instances, yet that it does not in all, is to be attributed to his sovereign dominion: in which he is not to be prescribed unto, as to his dispensations to his creatures, who have made themselves obnoxious to his displeasure. He is just, where he withholds any benefit; he is sovereignly gracious where he gives that assistance and power, which shall prevail against this enmity in the hearts of men. And when persons must have something of religion, and will have only that of it which is most tolerable, and does not bear hard upon corrupt nature; no wonder then, I say, if they take up with the bare name, and content themselves with the mere form of godliness. But to profess at such a rate is the most easy thing in the world.

4. This may in some cases proceed, particularly in the Christian world, from an inward conviction of the importance and excellence of religion, arising from the light of Scripture, joined with the inefficacy of it. Very plain it is, that the light by which the truth of the Christian religion is discovered to any one, carries mighty conviction of its excellence along with it. It does so to any one who views the weight and importance of the Christian religion, and considers also the evidences of it which are superadded. A religion that came with triumphant evidence and glory into the world! spoken at first by the Son of God, and confirmed by them who heard him; God bearing them witness by signs and wonders of the Holy Ghost, Heb. ii. 3, 4. Some do consider these things, and thereupon the light is so convincing, that they cannot withstand it, nor avoid receiving this religion as divine; but then, alas! it is too faint and impotent to govern their hearts and lives. It is, powerful enough to convince their judgments and consciences; but too weak to change their minds, and influence their actions. Hence it is that there is in many a profession of the true religion, with a repugnant, inconsistent practice.

5. With some others, a profession of religion may proceed from mere sinister designs. They make a profession of religion, because it suits with their interests and private views; and serves to raise and establish their reputation, and by consequence to increase their gain. They could not do so well without it in such a country, and among such a people; so that gain and godliness with them are commensurate to each other. Therefore, since a profession alone serves their turn, and answers their purpose, what need is there of any more? What need has any man of more than will answer his end? "I will have no more to do with religion, but to serve my secular interest," will such a one say, if he speaks his own sense: "I design not to be saved by religion; but to live creditably in the world, and to suit my designs with those with whom I live." Again,

6. With others it may proceed from a regard to their ancestors, from whom a religion has been transmitted to them. This is a thing that has descended from father to son; "I must therefore be of the religion of my fathers." This shows the reason why a religion so received, be it ever so good, should be so ineffectual; and have so little command of the hearts and lives of men: for its efficacy, and the grounds for receiving it, do as it were measure one another. The apostle Paul, speaking of the manner in which the Christian religion was received by the Thessalonians, says, They received it not as the word of man, but of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe, 1 Thess. ii. 13. Hence it appears plain, that where the religion of Jesus as coming from God is embraced on the authority of the Divine word, and where men have their souls overawed by this apprehension, there it works effectually; but on the contrary, where it is received without grounds, there it becomes ineffectual. Many are Christians on the same grounds, and for the same reasons, that others are pagans, Mahometans, or any thing else. And were they to give a true account of their faith, it would be this; "The religion that my forefathers were of, must be mine also." This is an argument, which, *mutatis mutandis*, serves as well to make the Mahometan religion true, as the Christian. And if it is so professed, without grounds or reasons, it is no wonder if it be without efficacy on men's lives and practice.

7. With others a profession of religion is taken up as a novelty. A veneration for antiquity has a great influence on some; while others are as fond of novelty. This was the case, it is likely, of many of those unsound Christians, whom the apostle speaks of in this epistle to Titus. Christianity at this time could be but newly planted in Crete, it could be only in its infancy; and therefore many embraced it as a new thing, and were pleased with it on this account. Thus we may see, men of different tempers are swayed to the same end by contrary inducements. And we may add in the last place,

8. That nothing but custom can make the profession of religion to appear tolerable, where it is attended with a repugnant and contradictory practice. Were there but few instances of this kind, a man would not have the boldness to venture on an open course of wickedness, repugnant to the religion commonly professed where he lives, whilst he continued to make a profession of it himself. But it is very obvious to common experience, that many do emulate one another in that, which is most indecorous and unbecoming, even in that which is contrary to the common reason of all. How many gainful sorts of wickedness have ceased to be shameful now-a-days from their being common! For when the restraint of shame is taken off from the mind, it is a most easy thing then for a man to be wicked. Thus influenced by custom they justify one another in what their own sedate thoughts would condemn, if they would but allow themselves to think. And hence it is that men are able to reconcile two of the most inconsistent things in the world; a profession of the most pure religion with the most impure conversation.

I should have proceeded to the fourth general head of

b Tuscul. Disput. Lib 1.
c Max. Tyr. Dissert. 17. Sect. 5.

d Plut. adversus Colotem. See this point handled at large by the Author in his Living Temple, part 1. chap. 2.

discourse, but shall conclude with one dreadful and tremendous reflection. What apparent danger are we in, of losing that religion from among us, which is more generally professed at this day! principally because of the resistance and opposition which is made against it, by the practices of those who profess it. For pray do but consider—What does God send his Gospel among a people for? Does he aim at any end in this, or does he not? And can that be a wise, intelligent agent, who aims at no end? Or can we suppose him to act wisely who aims at no proportionable and suitable end? What then can we think the great God designed as his end, in sending the Gospel into the world; in planting it in this, or any other nation? There are certainly fruits that he expects to receive; and therefore we find how express the threatenings are, when these fruits are withheld. Nothing less is threatened than the taking of the kingdom of God from them, and the giving it to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, Matt. xxi. 43. Oh the little correspondency of the hearts and spirits of men to the design of the Gospel! And what a tremendous and melancholy prospect does this afford us!

I should not be so afraid of comets and blazing stars,[e] nor of all the malice and subtlety of earth and hell combined together; I should never be afraid of these things, I say, even though the subtlety of our enemies was a thousand times greater than it is, if I could but see such a love of the Gospel, joined to the enjoyment of it, as to form the heart and influence the practice. But when I find it is God's way, and express threatening, that where the truth is not loved, there to give them up to strong delusions even to believe a lie, that they might be damned, who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness, (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12.) then, I confess, I fear, I tremble.

I know not why we should think ourselves exempt from a danger of this kind, when we consider how generally ineffectual the Gospel is among us. Alas! why should we expect God to be indulgent towards us, in this respect, above all mankind? What have we the Gospel for, if we never intend our spirits should be formed by it? If we have no design it should govern our lives, have not we of this nation reason to fear, inasmuch as we do not conform our practice to our religion, that we shall be suffered to conform our religion to our practice? We know there is a religion, too near at hand, that will allow and square well enough with the most vicious practice imaginable. Live as loosely as you will, and confess your sins to a priest, and his absolution solves all. Surely we have reason to fear lest our acting contradictory to the end and design of our religion should even lead us to embrace that sottish one of the church of Rome.

SERMON II.*

IN our last discourse we considered the various reasons and inducements, that lead many persons to make a profession of religion, even while they are contradicting it in their lives and practice. To which one more might have been added; and that is, they have a foolish thought that by the good they profess, they shall some way or other expiate the badness of their conduct. Such a hope as this, as fond as it is, too apparently obtains with a great part of the world. And this I mention, not only as a thing too evident, and considerable in itself, but as it most fitly leads to what I intend in this discourse: which is,

IV. To show the vanity of such a profession, and by consequence the fondness and folly of such a hope as is here spoken of. And in treating on this subject I shall show, that such a profession in persons of so immoral a character, signifies nothing either to procure them the reputation or the rewards of the religion that they profess, or unto which they pretend; I would be understood to say, that it is of no avail to entitle them to the reputation of it amongst men, nor to any reward of it from God. These two things we shall distinctly consider.

1. Such a blasted, self-confuted profession as this, of which we are speaking, is of no significancy for securing the reputation of being religious amongst men. If it were indeed so far available as to secure them such a reputation, or to procure them that esteem from men, which is due to those who are in reality what they profess themselves to be, that would be but a poor thing, and very little to their service. It is a small thing, says the apostle St. Paul, to be judged by man's judgment, 1 Cor. iv. 3. All must finally stand or fall by the judgment of a superior Judge, whose judgment will control and reverse all false judgments passed before. Every man must then give an account of himself to God. He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but he is a Jew that is one inwardly, whose praise is not of men, but of God, Rom. ii. 28, 29. If one could never so effectually recommend oneself to man, it is "not he who commendeth himself that is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth," 2 Cor. x. 18. And therefore I should not think this much worth insisting on, but only with design to lay the ground of an argument from the less to the greater; that if such a profession of religion cannot do that which is less, to wit, entitle one to the reputation of it amongst men; much less can it do that which is greater, that is, procure the rewards which God has promised to the constant and sincere.

We must understand here, that by such evil practices, as can be supposed to overthrow a profession, and annul the significance of it, cannot be meant such things as are reasonable to be imputed to the infirmities which are incident to the best, and consistent with the most perfect human character: but it must be understood of open hostilities against Christ and his religion; for doubtless the words abominable, and disobedient or unpersuadable, as the word *ἀπειθεῖς* signifies, amount to so much. By the former is to be understood, the heinousness and grossness of their wickedness; and by the latter, their obstinacy in an evil course. It is true, though the last expression the apostle makes use of in describing the persons whom he censures as reprobate to every good work, denotes an evil habit of mind, not always falling under human cognizance and censure; yet there is enough in the two former, besides the symptoms there may be of the latter, to show what the men really are. A profession therefore I say, in men of such a character, can signify nothing, even to this lower purpose, that is, to entitle them to the reputation of religion amongst men. And this will appear from being viewed in several lights.

1. Such a contradicted profession is not wont to do so in other cases. No man can take him to be a friend, who calls himself one against a continued series of actions, which manifestly imports habitual hatred, enmity, and malice. No one will call him a good subject, whatever he pretends, who is at present in open hostility against his prince.

2. Such a profession in other cases not only gives no reputation amongst men, but brings a disgrace, and casts a reproach upon the person making pretences. When a man's actions are continued, palpable and manifest against his profession, as in this case, it brings, I say, a reproach upon him for pretending to it. And it is so far from being to his reputation, that he draws upon himself the suspicion of being either false, or foolish: of being false, that he would design to deceive; of being foolish, that he could hope to succeed in such a case, or, indeed, of both these together.

3. A mere profession among men, in every common case, is so far from securing reputation to him who makes it, that it even sinks the reputation of the man that credits it. A very judicious person this to be so easily imposed upon! Therefore he who attempts in such a way to impose upon another, either he, upon whom he makes the attempt, will but regard him as a fool; or will be so accounted himself, because it is supposing him to be one who is capable of being so imposed upon. Which is no less

[e] N. B. The author here alludes to the famous comet which appeared in December, 1680; and perhaps at the very time when this Sermon was preached.

* Preached January 23, 1680.

than an attempt to blast the reputation of him, whom he endeavours to deceive.

4. A series or course of actions is always to be taken as more significant and expressive of the habitual sense and temper of a person's mind, than words can be thought to be. Words only speak a man's present sense of things, but a continued course of action shows his habitual sense of them; and is therefore the far greater and more considerable thing on all accounts.

If I am to form a judgment of another man, it is of more importance to know what the bent of his mind is now, than to know what it was, at this or that particular time. It is manifest that a series of actions is more significant and expressive; whether you compare words and actions together with relation to the same thing, or apply them severally to contrary things.

If you apply words and actions to one and the same thing, let it be for instance to kindness and good-will: suppose then you have for your object a very indigent and distressed person, one exposed to cold and pinched with hunger; let one say to him in this case, "Come, be filled, be warmed;" pray what would that signify in comparison of giving him the things which are needful for the body, Jam. ii. 16. as the apostle speaks in the same case. Which is the most significant expression, such fair words, or such effectual actions?

Again; Let words and actions be applied together to the same thing, and to signify ill-will. An unkind word may signify but a sudden passion, and no one will infer habitual hatred from an angry word; but a course of actions may import not only unkindness, but a malicious temper of mind.

Then if we apply these two ways of expressing a man's mind, that is, words and actions, to contraries, the one to signify kindness, the other unkindness; if it be manifest that words are less significant and actions more, surely then that which has less significance in it, is never to be believed against that which has greater. Again,

5. No man's words are to be believed against his works. If a man should say and unsay the same things, it may be a hundred times in a day, would you give any credit at all to his words? It is impossible you should. For in any case where I am to exercise human faith, if there be much to be said for and against the thing, I must believe, according to the greatest evidence, and cannot do otherwise; I necessarily must take that side in my belief on which the stronger probability lies. But in this case what shall I do? I can here take neither side: for how can a thing be greater or better than itself? I have therefore nothing to do here. I can exercise no faith; for I am not to believe a man's word against his word; when there is equal evidence on the one hand and the other. I am much less to believe his word against his actions, for that would be believing according to the less evidence. And further,

6. If a profession were to prevail amongst men, against a series of actions, it would take away the ground and foundations of all public human judgments. For suppose a man arraigned of murder, the business to be inquired into is, what evidence there is of malice prepense. This is the matter to be tried. For the bare taking away the life of a man, is not the crime to be punished. But the thing to be inquired into is, what evidence there is, or what inducements to believe, that the thing was designed or purposely done. If against plain facts, and apparent circumstances, to the contrary a man's word should be believed, there could then be no such thing as a human judicature in the world.

7. Actions cannot be opposed to a mere verbal or a scenical profession, with greater absurdity, in any case whatsoever, than in the matter of religion. You can suppose no case wherein actions can be opposed to actions, and words or a profession to a course of actions, with greater absurdity than in this present case. If we were to think of things manifestly absurd, we could advance nothing that is more so. Suppose, for instance, a person upon a journey should pretend to be in his right road, and he is told he is going a quite contrary way, and one should follow him, from day to day, and still see him going wrong, though he still says he is on his journey and is going right; what can be more absurd? Now let us use our understanding, and consider whether there be not as ridiculous an absurdity in pretending to religion, against a series of actions which have a contrary tendency. Do we not all know that religion, in the common notion of it, has a tendency to blessedness; even to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever in glory, as the end? Can there be a greater contrariety supposed in any one thing to another, than there is in a course of wickedness to the glorifying and enjoying God? Or can any man think, without as palpable absurdity as is possible in any case, that whoredom, drunkenness, and debaucheries of all sorts, are means and instruments for the glorifying God, and saving a man's own soul? To say, I am a Christian, is to say, I am going to God, to glorify to enjoy him for ever. But you can suppose no case wherein contrary actions can be opposed to a profession, with more absurdity than in this.

6. We are expressly forbidden, in the Holy Scriptures, to treat and behave ourselves towards Christians that are only so in name and profession, in the same manner as we are obliged to act towards those that are sincere. We are even directed to turn away from those who have a form of godliness but deny the power of it, 2 Tim. iii. 5. When persons are unpersuadable and obstinate in an evil way and vicious course, and will not hear the church, they are to be counted as heathens and publicans, (Matt. xviii. 17.) and are not to enjoy the reputation of Christians, even amongst men, according to the law and judgment of Christ himself in this very matter.

9. And lastly; The common profession of religion, in which they seem to bear a part, suffers by their inconsistent conduct and behaviour; and it is very unreasonable, therefore, they should gain by it. They would gain honour from the profession of Christianity, and yet bring a reproach and scandal upon it. And is it to be supposed that their profession, in such a case, should honour them? They do the greatest indignity imaginable to the worthy name which they profess; nay, it is blasphemed by them, and through their means is evil spoken of by others.

But yet it may be said, as to all this; "Are we not then to call such Christians as profess themselves to be such? Are we not to give them the name?" Truly controversies about names are always to little purpose. It is no great matter by what name such persons are called. I am willing to give them all that their profession reasonably can be understood to entitle them to. They are by profession Christians. But what can that signify to any man's being in reality what he does profess himself to be? I will therefore say, such a one is a professing Christian; and what can they make of this? What advantage is it? They are called Christians, just with the same propriety that you would call the picture of a man, a man. Though perhaps not altogether with that propriety neither; for truly a good picture is more like a man, than such persons are like real Christians. It is a very bad picture indeed, that would not be more like the person it pretends to represent, than many such men are to true, sincere Christians. Possibly we may call the carcass of a man, a man, when it is rotten and stinking. "Such a man (you say) lies buried there;" but you know very well that the corpse is not the person himself. And yet there is more propriety in using such language in this case; because such a one was a man, but he whom we speak of never was a Christian, and God only knows whether he ever will be one!

We call such persons Christians, in like manner as in a play, or theatrical representation. One we call the Grand Seignior, and another an Emperor, according to the parts they act. In this manner, I say, we may call the persons before spoken of, Christians; for they perform a part, and make a show on the stage of the world in performing cheap and easy acts of Christianity. Or it is something like the compliments of one person to another, to whom he would pretend friendship; and under that pretence hides the greatest malice, till he can have an opportunity of showing it with effect.

Now if such a profession as we have been speaking of, will signify so little to the purpose mentioned in the beginning of this discourse, the giving of a man the reputation of being religious among men; how much less can it signify to that higher purpose, the entitling him to a reward from God! Surely it is less possible to deceive him.

And whatever advantage is gained in this world by such an empty, inconsistent profession, it is infinitely less than the final reward of God, which will be given to those, who both profess and practise religion in sincerity.

But before I proceed to this important point, suffer me to exhort you all seriously to consider of something better, than such an empty, self-confuted profession as this, to be a support to you, in such time as we have lying before us. Surely, in a season of distress, there are no sort of persons whose case is to be lamented so much as theirs, who have nothing for a support but only this pitiful thing, this empty, self-confuted thing, we have been speaking of. Oh! the cold comfort it will give a man's heart, when he comes to suffer affliction, to say, "I have been called a Christian and a protestant; I have professed on the right side, and have gone on in the right way; but, alas! all the while have been fighting against the very design of religion I have professed, by a contrary life and conversation!" Will this bear up the sinking heart of such a one in a season, when the guilt of his former course, through a long tract of time under the Gospel, stares him all at once in the face?

Labour then to do more than barely to profess to know God; since a bare profession will signify nothing with him, and but little with men. And truly it must signify very little to yourselves, to your own comfort and consolation in an evil day; when gloominess, blackness, and darkness cover all on every side. There may then possibly, if such a time should come, be room enough for consideration. Labour therefore to know God in good earnest. They that know his name, will put their trust in him, Psal. ix. 10. To have such a refuge as the eye of God in such a world as this is, what solace and satisfaction does it give the soul of a man! especially when there is nothing but darkness and terror on every hand.

To conclude, I shall only take notice to you of one passage in the book of Daniel. "And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he (the king there spoken of) corrupt by flatteries; but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" or wonders, Dan. xi. 32. These passages refer to the time when Antiochus fell with fury upon the Jews. A great many of them, when the aspect of the times was frowning upon their religion, did then prevaricate, and do wickedly against the covenant; that is, turned from their religion and complied with his idolatry; but of such of the people as knew their God, it is said, that they should be strong and do exploits. It is a great matter to know God in such a time. He that has the knowledge of God possessing and filling his soul, will have God represented to him as *the all in all;* and this whole world will be before him as a vain shadow, a piece of pageantry, a dream, a vision of the night. He who is invisible will be always with us, when we once come to be of the number of those who know God, in the manner we profess to do it.

SERMON III.*

2. I NOW proceed to show, that a bare profession of religion cannot entitle any one to the rewards of it with God. And the argument is capable of being drawn, as was formerly intimated, from the less to the greater. If it cannot entitle one to a reputation amongst men, much less can it to the reward of it with God. And it will be conclusive two ways. In the first place, that the gain and advantage of the rewards of it with God, is unspeakably greater than the reputation it can give us among men. If then it cannot entitle one to the less, it cannot to the greater. And then in the next place, that to deceive men, by such a profession, is infinitely less difficult than to deceive God. They who cannot deceive men by such a profession, joined with a practice so grossly wicked as is here expressed by the apostle, can surely much less deceive God. There is, even in the minds of men, a judgment concerning them contrary to that profession; "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, there is no fear of God before his eyes."[a] It speaks that language, carries that signification with it in the mind and judgment of any common observing spectator. What sentiment then must it beget in the mind of God, who sees immediately, and without the intervention of any argument, beholding things just as they lie in themselves! But besides this double argument, from the less to the greater, there are several other considerations, that will evince the same thing. As,

1. Is it the declared rule of God's righteous judgment, to deal with men finally according to their works, and not merely according to their profession; according to what they do, and not to what they pretend. It is the constant tenor of Scripture, (of which you cannot be ignorant who are wont to read your Bibles,) that God will in the last day "render to every man according to his works,"[b] as it is in sundry places. And in the epistles to the Asian churches, our Saviour putting on the person of a judge, thus addresses himself to the one and the other of them; "I know thy works."[c] Immediate cognizance is taken of them, even of those which are most latent; much more of those which are apparent and manifest, as the works we have spoken of are. Upon this account he makes himself known to them by the description of one "who trieth the heart, and searches the reins, that he may render to every one according to their works."[d] And he is further represented as one who has "eyes as a flame of fire,"[e] searching into the very things wherein it takes place. And we are told that in that very day, it is not the saying unto him, "Lord! Lord! that shall entitle any one to the kingdom of heaven; but the doing of the will of God the Father who is in heaven."[f] Where our Saviour also further assures us, that those who shall make this profession, without a suitable life and conversation, will be rejected in this awful manner, "Depart from me! I know you not."[g] But under what notion, or for what reason, are they thus to be abandoned? As workers of iniquity. Thus we see their evil works will cast the balance against all their pretences to that which is good.

2. We are further to consider, that it is an unreasonable thing to imagine, that God will give men a title, without giving them a capacity for enjoying the rewards of the blessed state. Certain it is, that mere profession qualifies no one for this happiness; therefore it is not reasonable, that it should entitle any one to it. A man is never a whit the more capable by his profession of dwelling with God, in another world; of immediately beholding with satisfaction his blessed, glorious face. To what purpose is a title, where there is no capacity? It would not consist with the wisdom of God, to divide these things, which must necessarily concur to one end, namely, to his own glory, and the person's fitness for the enjoyment of Him. Men are wont to be wiser. A title with them fails, when a capacity does. They cease to be entitled to an estate, who by a natural incapacity cannot enjoy it, as for instance, fools and lunaties. Again,

3. Their profession is so far from entitling them to the rewards of another world, which belong to those who are sincerely of the true religion; that, being joined with a wicked life and evil practices, it provokes God so much the more highly against them, engages the Divine wrath and vindictive justice, so much the more directly to their ruin. And this on several accounts. As,

(1.) Because such a profession demonstrates, that these persons sin against so much the more light; otherwise what makes them profess at all? They who profess religion, as a great part of the world do not, certainly must be supposed to know more. We do not call them professors of the Christian religion, who were born among pagans, and always have lived as such among them. They who profess Christianity, are supposed to live (and do so for the most part) in the enlightened region; in that part of the world through which the Gospel light hath diffused itself. This is therefore a most horrid thing, for the works of darkness, and of the night, to be transacted, where the Gospel has made it broad day. And if they, who have opportunity to know more than others, are, after all, vicious and immoral, doth not this highly increase their wick-

* Preached February 13th, 1680.

a Ps. xxxvi. 1. b Rom. ii. 6. c Rev. ii. 2, 9, 13, 19. iii. 1, 8, 15. d Rev. ii. 23. e Rev. ii. 18. f Matt. vii. 21. g Ver. 23.

edness? Will not this inflame the wrath of God much more against them? And if, in fact, they do know more, is not the provocation the greater? Men certainly know something of what they profess, more or less. For as there is not in the natural world, so neither is there in the moral, any such thing as pure and absolute darkness. And when light shines round a man, it makes him the more deeply guilty, that he can find nothing else to do but to commit wickedness. Light got within! What an aggravation is that of a man's iniquities, or the works of darkness! Light shines in his judgment and conscience! Divine and merciful light projects its beams from above into his very soul, where it is held in unrighteousness! This is that which wrath flames against, even the wrath of God; which "is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and iniquity of men, who hold the truth of God in unrighteousness," Rom. i. 18. This is most highly provoking, that where divine truth might expect to find a throne, there it should find only a prison. And therefore, what can ensue upon this, but tribulation and anguish, instead of a reward? It is to him who knows his master's will and does it not, that many stripes do belong, Luke xii. 47. In like manner, we find the apostle James speaking, "To him that knoweth to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin," Jam. iv. 17. And our Saviour saith thus to the pharisees, "If ye were blind ye should have no sin; but now ye say you see, therefore your sin remaineth," John ix. 40, 41. What! "are we blind also?" say the rulers. They took it for a great reproach not to be thought very discerning. But, says our Lord, "It had been well for you if you had been blind; for since you are so knowing, your sin remains, and you are absolutely inexcusable."

(2.) It follows of consequence, that they sin with malice who can allow themselves to join wickedness with their profession; and outface, as it were, the light of that truth, which directly teaches them otherwise. For, in the case now supposed, the interest of Christ and his religion has already, as it were, fought its way through all the outworks; and there is now no further opposition but the fortress of the heart, the seat of love or hatred, of kind propensity and inclination to God and Christ, or of enmity and malice to them. The business now lies wholly at the door of the will. By how much the more of the will, by so much the more of enmity and malice there is in sinning. By how much the more of light, so much the more of will; and the more profession there is, so much the more of light. In this series do these things lie. "If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there is no more sacrifice for sin," Heb. x. 26. If you sin against this sacrifice, you are not to expect another. Your peace therefore is to be made this way, or not at all. And when a man's knowledge, as well as his profession, is against him; and his opposition to God and the design of Christianity is resolved into nothing, but mere will; there is not the least pretence, or the shadow of a reason, left to justify his conduct. All things that could have induced me to be at all a Christian, should also have induced me to be a true Christian. For there can be no reason brought that a man should be a Christian in profession, but the same reason will be equally conclusive that he should be one in reality, and in truth. And therefore, when reason, judgment, conscience, and profession, go together and are all on one side, how miserably exposed and naked is such a person, who does not fall in cordially with God, in a way of holiness, because he will not! It is with them as with the Jews to whom our Lord says, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life," John v. 40.

(3.) It must be the more provoking, because there is hypocrisy in this conjunction. It cannot be without hypocrisy, that a man should lead a wicked life, and yet profess the true religion. It is very true, it looks like a very gross sort of hypocrisy, that persons should profess religion, and yet lead such lives as are visibly abominable. It is not indeed of the finer sort of hypocrisy; but by how much the grosser it is, by so much the more insolent it is. The affront is the greater, that a man should sin even in the face of heaven itself, and commit such wickedness as all the world will cry shame of, and this under the cloak of profession. Again

(4.) There is most perfidious falsehood and treachery in such a conduct; and therefore it must be the more provoking. For, in this case, men not only sin against law, since all sin is against law, "for where there is no law there is no transgression," (Rom. iv. 15.) but against the covenant too. They who profess to know God, as we have said again and again, profess to be Christians. If such therefore lead wicked and immoral lives, they sin as well against the covenant as the law; and in their way of sinning, there is treachery both against Christ, and the God of heaven.

The covenant betwixt God and his people, who are visibly related to him, is illustrated in Scripture by the marriage contract. And those who break it, God threatens "he will judge, as they who break wedlock are judged, with fury and jealousy," Ezek. xvi. 38. ver. 42. Now jealousy is allowed to be the most fervent of all the passions; and distinguished from common wrath and anger, even by this peculiar consideration in the object, the being thus related. And it is observable in what style he speaks afterward. Having discarded his people and cast them off, that they should be no longer related to him; "then," says he, "I will make my fury towards thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee," that is, to cease for ever. Thus we see, the relation being dissolved, they are no longer the objects of jealousy. Indeed while they continue a professing people there is a visible relation, and consequently they are objects of jealousy; but when the injured party has sufficiently vindicated himself, this vindictive passion ceases; and whatever anger and resentment may remain, it is jealousy no longer. Again,

(5.) They who join a religious profession and wicked practices together most highly provoke God; because they sin with the highest indignity against God, against Christ, and the religion which they profess. And it is very plain that they do so, inasmuch as herein they both mock God, and misrepresent him. They mock his sovereignty, and misrepresent his holiness. It is a plain mockery to him, as he is the Ruler of the world. For men to profess to know God, to own him as their God, and yet visibly to affront him by the most insolent wickedness; what is this like, but putting on the purple robe, and saying, "Hail, Master!" and spitting in his face at the same time? It is in a case similar to this, namely, that of a man's reaping according to what he sows, that the apostle warns Christians not to deceive themselves. For says he, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" (Gal. vi. 7.) intimating that they would be greatly deceived, if they expected to reap the reward of eternal life.

Moreover, such a conduct is a horrid misrepresentation of God, particularly as to his holiness; as if he were one who could dispense with his injunctions to men of being really holy, and sincerely good, and be satisfied instead thereof with appearances, with mere show and pretence. A most odious representation of God, as if he were like the impure deities of the pagan world! You see with what severity he himself speaks in a case like this; "Take heed," says he, "lest there should be among you a man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose hearts turn away from the Lord their God—lest there be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood: And it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying; I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: The Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man; and all the curses, that are written in the book, shall lie upon him; and the Lord shall blot his name out from under heaven," Deut. xxix. 18, 19, 20. Observe here the provoking thing, on which the emphasis is put. It is that a man should walk in a vain course of wickedness, and yet bless himself in his heart, and say, "I shall have peace for all this." Provoking it must be, because it is a horrid, reproachful misrepresentation of the most holy God; as if he intended to be a patron of wickedness, or as if it were indifferent to God how men lived, or all one to him whether they were righteous or wicked. "And does the sinner indeed think so? I will make him pay dearly for the thought! All the peace and satisfaction that he has taken

in that thought, or enjoyed in that delusive dream, shall cost him dear! for because of this shall my jealousy smoke against him."

(6.) To join profession with such a wicked practice, is to make that very profession itself a lie; and a lie, in this case, cannot but have high provocation in it, if you consider these things.

1st, In the first place, it is a lie to *him* who knows it to be so. He is an impudent liar indeed, who tells a lie to a person, whilst he himself is sensible that such person knows he lies. To come and hold forth such an appearance so flagrantly contradicted, to *one* so wise and incapable of being deceived as God is; what can be more provoking? And herefore you find that this is mentioned as the aggravating circumstance of the crime of Ananias and Sapphira, that they lied to the Holy Ghost, (Acts v. 3.) whose eye could clearly see through every disguise. Again,

2dly, To lie in this case must needs be very provoking, inasmuch as it carries in it an implicit denial of the omniscience of God; that is, by such a conduct I speak or do that, which is equivalent to such denial. I do indeed by my profession declare my belief, that God sees all things, and that to him nothing can be secret; but at the same time by my life and conversation, I do more strongly declare that he neither sees nor knows. And what is this but to deny God to be what he is? It is, as it were, as much as in me lies, to strike out the eye of the Deity. "Tush! He does not know, neither is there knowledge in the Most High, (Psalm x. 11.) he forgets it or does not behold it." Strange brutishness! "He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?" Psal. xciv. 10. This is to make the omniscient God like a "blind, deaf idol in a heathen temple, that hath eyes but seeth not, and ears but heareth not," Psal. cxv. 4, 5. What a provocation is this! Moreover,

3dly, It is most repugnant to the nature of God to make this lying profession, and is therefore abominable. "To cover hatred with lying lips," says the wise man, "is abominable to the Lord," Prov. x. 18. Even such an abomination as his very nature detests. It is against his nature to prevaricate. For though he is Almighty, yet he is pleased to have this said concerning him, again and again, in his holy word, that he cannot lie; nay, it is impossible to him to do so, notwithstanding his omnipotence. It is a thing so repugnant to the true God, so contradictory to the sincerity and simplicity of the Divine nature, that you can imagine nothing more hateful and provoking.

4thly, and lastly, It is a participation of the diabolical nature to be an habitual liar in such a case as this. For we know the devil is the father of lies. "Why has Satan filled thine heart, says Peter to Ananias and Sapphira, to lie to the Holy Ghost?" Acts v. 3. It makes a man a devil before God, when the habitual course of his profession is nothing else but a lie. And that it is a lie, and ought to be so deemed by us, many passages do clearly demonstrate. "If a man say he has fellowship with God, and walketh in darkness, he lieth, and doth not the truth." The man who does thus, is guilty of a lie in practice; for God is light, and in him is no darkness at all, 1 John i. 6. So that if any one professes he has fellowship with God, and yet allows himself in works of darkness, he is guilty of a practical lie. He does by his practice give the lie to his profession. The word rendered fellowship, κοινωνίαν, signifies participation and converse, but we may understand it in a greater latitude, than to signify converse with him only, since it signifies to have an interest in him, and relation to him, and is therefore of the same import with knowing God. Israel shall say, "My God, we know thee; but Israel hath cast off the thing that is good," Hos. viii. 2, 3. There was a laying claim to God, as if they had a part or portion in him, when there was no such thing. It was but a lie. I know the blasphemy of them who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie, Rev. ii. 9. As if our Lord had said, "I take it for a high blasphemy against me, and my name, against the religion of which I have been the Author, that such persons should pretend to be of it, or to belong to me." It is at once a scandalous lie and blasphemy itself.

Thus it appears, that they who lead such wicked, immoral lives, are so far from entitling themselves to the Divine rewards by their profession, that they only expose themselves seven times more to the wrath of God, than if they had never professed at all. This effectually demonstrates, to do which was the main design of what has been hitherto said upon this subject, the vanity and folly of a mere profession of religion, without a suitable practice, let men's secret motives and views be what they will.

SERMON IV.*

HAVING in the foregoing discourses shown the nature of, as well as the secret motives to, a mere profession of religion, attended with vicious practices; and also the vanity of it both with respect to God and man; I shall now by way of use draw some inferences from the whole.

1. That such as make a profession do, notwithstanding their flagitious practices, highly justify the religion to which they pretend. All that has been said serves to this purpose, to let you see the excellency of religion; and to this even the very worst of men do give testimony by their profession, how inconsistent soever be their practice.

Wisdom is justified by the actions of her children, and the testimony of her very enemies. The testimony of an enemy is, of all others, the most convincing, and carries the most demonstrative evidence; because that can never be understood to come from inclination. It is a thing which deserves to be well thought of, that the very worst of men have such inward notices and sentiments of things as evidently imports, that the way they hate they cannot but in their judgment approve. Their profession is from an emanation of eternal light and truth let into their minds and consciences. They are of such a judgment, and cannot be otherwise. Light shows itself, and cannot but carry evidence with it. Conviction extorts profession from those, who consider the grounds upon which the truth of religion is established. So that by the way it is amazing to think, that men should hate others for practising the very things which they themselves in their own judgment and consciences approve.

What a justification is this of religion in the sincere professors of it? One might even say it confidently to a wicked, profane, debauched Christian, "Thou who hatest such and such for their strict walking, and holy conversation, they do more agree with thee, than thou dost with thyself." Thus do but take the real sentiments of the most vicious man, who is a professor of the Christian religion, and the life and conversation of the godly and virtuous man, and you will find them correspond well enough one with another. The one says in his mind and judgment, and by his profession also, "I own it to be a very reasonable thing, that God should be loved, feared, and served above all." The other does so, and this is his practice, to love, and serve, and fear the most high God. The one also says; "The wrath of God ought to be greatly more dreaded than the wrath of man; and that it is a matter of greater moment to please God, than all the world beside." The other actually does what the other thinks and judges he ought to do. The wicked professor, if the question be asked, will acknowledge, that it is much more considerable to him to save his soul, than to please the flesh; but the truly good man practises according to this apprehension. So that between the wicked man's notions, and the godly man's practice, there is a fair agreement; but, in the mean time, what a disagreement between the persons themselves! Thus having shown, that persons who make a profession do, notwithstanding their flagitious practices, highly justify the religion to which they pretend; I proceed to the next inference.

2. Whilst nominal professors justify those who are real Christians, they evidently condemn themselves. Such professors as these must, of all men in the world, be the most self-condemned. "Out of thine own mouth," may it be said of them, "will I condemn thee," Luke xix. 22.

* Preached February 20th, 1689

And the like condemnation they may expect to hear at least out of the mouth of their Judge. "Thou knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent:—Thou therefore that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?" (Rom. ii. 18, 23.) says the apostle St. Paul, addressing himself to the Jews of this character.

It were a hard thing to be resolved, if we should expostulate with such persons, and demand of them, "Pray why do you make any profession at all? what tolerable account can you give, why you profess to know God; to be of the true religion, or indeed of any religion at all?" It is true, as to some, they are of the Christian religion by fate, not by choice. They are thrown upon the religion which they profess. They owe their being Christians to the external circumstances of their condition. They were born in such a country, of such parents, it is the religion of the nation where they live, the religion of their ancestors, and it may be they know nothing of another. Many are Christians because they cannot help it; but with others it is very plain, that their profession is the emanation of internal light; it is the genuine product of the conviction of their own consciences, that this which they profess must be the true religion. And thus surely all persons must conclude, who ever set themselves to consider seriously and impartially its evidence and internal excellence. But the greater part never do this. Whereas if any man could be brought once to consider this point, his profession would be the product of his inward light. A light perhaps too weak to govern his practice; but too strong to be expelled by force, or extinguished by his own false and delusive reasonings. They profess those things to be true, which they would be glad in their hearts were not so. And their light, though it is too weak to rule them, is not too weak to affright them. In a word, it is too strong to be mastered by any thing they themselves, or others, have to say to the contrary.

I would in this manner appeal to any such person if he hath the common understanding of a man, with reference to the great articles of his own creed. You say, you "believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." And what! is it not most reasonable, in your own judgment and conscience, that you should do so? It may be you had rather that an article, directly opposite to this, were true. But do you think it more likely, that this world did some time or other rise up of itself, than that it was made by an almighty, wise, invisible Being? You say, you profess to "believe in his Son Jesus Christ your Lord." And is not this, if the matter be examined, far more reasonable to believe, that Jesus is the Son of God, and is in right and title your Lord; than that he was mortal, and came into the world to cheat mankind? Is it more likely that the Gospel, of which he was the Author, was all a cheat? that his religion, which was sealed by so numerous and glorious miracles, and brought down to our knowledge in such unquestionable records, was an imposture? Is it likely, when he had "witnessed that good confession before Pontius Pilate," that he sealed it with his blood to deceive the world, or that he died only to mock mankind? If men would consider, their profession would certainly be the emanation of their light, and the conviction they have of the truth of what they profess. They must however be sensible, that this profession is a standing testimony against them. Nay, though they profess they know not what, nor consider the grounds and reasons of it, yet they are self-condemned.

But why do they profess, if they don't understand? Why do they not understand what they may? They profess they know God. Either they do know him, or they know him not. If they do not, why do they profess at all? If they do know him to be God, what a soul-commanding thought should that be! "In Judah is God known, and his name is great in Israel," Psalm lxxvi. 1. Has not Israel known God? A thing not to be imagined, that he should be ignorant of him. We have then, for the most part, the seminal principles of true religion; which only need to be reflected on, to enable us to discern how reasonable and coherent a frame that of the Christian religion is. Which when we come to apprehend it, and consider its excellent nature, the more we find it deserves to be considered; and, of consequence, professing with the more knowledge, the greater must our condemnation be, if our lives are repugnant to it. For can any man believe these two things, that there is a God who made heaven and earth, and that Jesus Christ is his own Son; and after that believe that it is more reasonable to disobey than to obey that great God; or be subject to him, who bought us with his blood, and purchased to himself a dominion over them and all mankind? I would fain see the man and hear what he could say for himself, who professing to believe, that there is one Creator of all things, and one Redeemer, who has procured to himself a dominion over all by his death, shall say, "I hold all this; but I will withal hold, that it is a great deal more reasonable to affront than to obey them." What man would dare to say so? Who can believe there is such a God, who, by the right of creation and redemption, claims a governing power over them; and yet imagine that it can be safe for them to live in open hostilities against so rightful a dominion and irresistible power? In a word, who can say, "I believe there is a judgment to come, but I have no need to prepare for it? It is full as safe to put all to the venture, as to prepare that it may go well with me in that day."

All these things considered, what self-condemning creatures must these professors be! especially when the secrets of all hearts must be opened, and all these latent sentiments be exposed to public view! How will men quake when they come to be expostulated with, by so high and indisputable an authority? when terrible majesty shall plead with them, in the following manner! "Was that religion, which you professed, true, or was it false? If it was false, why did you profess it? If true, why did you not practise it? You either believed there was a God, or that there was none. If you believed the notion of a God was but a fancy, why did you worship him? But if you did believe there was a God, why did you not constantly obey and serve him?" Again, "Either you took Jesus Christ to be an impostor, or a Saviour and Lord. If you took him to be the former, why should you be called after his name? Why did you number yourselves among his deluded followers? But if you took him to be the Son of God, why did you not subject your will, your soul, to that government of his, which he founded in his blood?" Oh! then, what a confounded creature must that be, who has lived under such a profession, and in such wickedness at the same time, all along? When such a one shall remember with regret that ever he was a Christian, or that he ever heard of the name of Christ! When it shall be the matter of his too late wish, "O that I had been born a Scythian or Barbarian! that I had lived in a den or cave and had never seen man; or had lived without having an opportunity of ever hearing that there was a God!"

3. We may further take notice, how little there is of shame and modesty left in the world, with reference to the behaviour of men towards God. We find, with relation to human affairs, and transactions with men, there is such a thing as shame; which, as bad as the world is, has a great power and influence over them. If it were not for this, the influence that shame and common decency have in the world, there would be no living; and it would be a great deal worse. If it were not a shame to lie openly drunk in the streets, wallowing in one's own vomit; if it were not a shame to commit filthiness in the sight of the sun; if it were not a shame to be unclean, or to be a thief; or if men in general had given over all regard to a good reputation among their fellow-creatures; the world would certainly abound with worse and more numerous monsters.

And this useful passion evidently influences men in this very matter of professing, as it restrains them from making professions that are not suitable to them. An ignorant ploughman would be ashamed to profess himself a statesman; or a cobbler, a merchant. But how strange is it, that no modesty or shame have any influence in this case! that is, in the affairs and deportments of men towards God.

The matter is this. In reference to the things which they have to do one with another, men are awake and in their wits; but with relation to God, and the concerns of religion, they are in a continual sleep and dream. And

you know we don't use to reflect with regret upon the remarkable incongruities in our dreams. When therefore men, who connect together the most incoherent things in a dream, can do the like in matters of religion, it is very plain they are not in their wits. We reckon that none but such as are out of their wits, none but such as are fit to be in chains and a dark room, would in their restraint and under the rod, call themselves lords and dukes, and I know not what names besides of the greatest sound. But I beseech you to consider the case with attention. Is there not a greater disagreement between the spirit and character of a wicked man, and the names of a believer; an heir of salvation, and an expectant of glory? Is there not an unspeakably greater disagreement? And yet here, men are not ashamed to profess at this rate; to own a profession that imports them to be true believers, the sons of God, and heirs of heaven; while they are abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.

4. It appears from hence, that there is as little fear of God among men, as there is of shame. "The wickedness of the wicked says in my heart the fear of God is not before his eyes," Psal. xxxvi. 1. Whatever they fear, they do not fear the Almighty. They make no scruple of doing things which import an absolute denial of his existence. What a tremendous thought is this to a considering soul! Methinks this should strike with consternation, even a soul made of earth. What! does their practice amount to a denial of God? O think what this imports; what it is to deny his existence! This is to throw all things into confusion. This is to ruin the creation, as much as in us lies; and to take away the root of all things, and consequently the things themselves. Finally, this is to commit felony on myself and my own life. How! art thou a man, if there be not a God?

But it is the practical denial of God that we chiefly speak of; a denial of his authority, and the rights of the Divine government. Like Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" Exod. v. 2. This impious king speaks more according to the truth of the case, and consistently with himself, when he says, "I know him not." But so rooted is that power, and right of governing in the Godhead, and so necessarily does it result from the supposition of a God, and a reasonable creature in being; that it is impossible there should be a denying of that governing power, without denying his being too. "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God;" (Psal. xiv. 1.) that is, does not believe there is no God, so much as wish there were none.

However, in respect to men, fear has great influence. How will it, for instance, restrain men from conspiring against the government? How are men afraid to say or do any thing, that may admit of any such interpretation; or that looks like a design to subvert the government, under which they live! But how strange is it, that men have no fear in them with reference to the Divine government, unto which they profess a subjection! Will any man look upon himself as a loyal subject, for speaking good words of the king? Especially when it could be proved, that he was forming designs against his person and authority. One would think a man's heart should never endure to think that he is liable to such a charge as this, with respect to God, the King of kings. Thou, O wretch! art guilty of practically denying, and abandoning, the Author of thy life and being, the very Father of thy spirit, and him who gave thee breath. Thou hast marked thyself out as a common enemy to the creation of God. And how can that man expect to draw another breath, who breathes only by the favour of that God whom he denies?

5. As to the main purposes of religion, it is plainly no great matter what religion a wicked man is of. It is all one whether he be of a false religion, or falsely of the true; except only that his case on this latter account, is worse. As the apostle says, with respect to the Jews, "Circumcision profiteth, if a man keep the law; but if he breaks the law, his circumcision goes for uncircumcision," Rom. ii. 25. Thy baptism profits, if thou keepest the Gospel; but if thou observest it not, thy baptism shall signify nothing. Though a man cannot be saved under any religion, yet he may perish under any one. What a poor pretence is it when one has nothing to trust to and rely upon, as the ground of his eternal hope, but only that he is an orthodox man! An orthodox son of this or that church! So far it is well. But what does it signify to be an orthodox drunkard, an orthodox swearer, an orthodox sabbath-breaker? If such would but admit one to reason soberly with them, I would ask them, "What! do you not believe, that holiness is as essential to Christianity as truth? Do you not think that the decalogue is of as good authority as the articles of your creed? is there not the same authority for the *agenda*, as there is for the *credenda*, of a Christian? Has not any man, that owns the Christian name, as great obligations to be pious, sober, and chaste, as he has to be true, or right in his principles?" There is certainly the same authority for the one as for the other. What does a man hope he shall gain, by tearing the essential parts of the Christian religion asunder, as much as in him lies; or by dividing Christianity from itself?

6. We see how weak a thing the light of an unregenerate person is, and how little reason such a one has to glory in his profession. How weak, I say, is this light! too weak to restrain him from such gross inconsistencies as these are; as weak it must be, since it permits him to run into the most palpable absurdities; and even suffers him to make a profession that he knows God, the great Lord and Ruler of all things, whilst he lives in a continual disobedience to him. With some, indeed, the knowledge of the true religion does signify more. We read of some that, by the knowledge of God, have escaped the corruptions of the world, through lust; (2 Pet. ii. 20.) but with many others, you see their light is so impotent and inefficacious a thing, that it cannot withhold them from making beasts of themselves, instead of Christians. And that is a doleful thing to think of, that a man should have light to no other purpose than to damn him! A light, which upon all other accounts is darkness, and makes his profession of religion so much the worse and more dangerous. To this purpose our blessed Saviour speaks, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Matt. vi. 23. The knowledge of some Christians is no better than mere paganism. Whatever it is, they do the same things they would do if they had none. As to certain points indeed they are of such a belief; but they walk and practice, as if they were of a quite contrary faith. How weak then is their light, and how deplorable is the case of such men!

Do we not see then how little they have to boast of? Such a profession as this is can surely be a matter of no glory to them. Nor is to be accounted so, any more than we would esteem the title of lord or knight, a glory to the man who is forced to go naked or in filthy rags every day. So they walk in their nakedness, like accursed creatures; as they are implied to be by the blessing which is pronounced on those, who keep their garments so, as that their nakedness may not appear, Rev. xvi. 15. It is but a poor glory and empty honour to be called Christians on such terms!

7. We further learn, how mysterious a piece of self-contradiction such a wicked professor is, and how unhappy his condition must necessarily be. A Christian of an unchanged heart and vicious life, has one and the same object of worship and contempt. It is a strange kind of monster that this must needs be. No eye hath ever seen any thing more monstrous! Having the head and face of a Christian, joined with the hands and heart of an atheist. So true and pertinent was the saying of a noble Italian lord, "That there is no monster in all the world worse than a speculative atheist, except one; and that is the practical atheist, who is the more horrid monster of the two."

How unhappy then must such a person be! To every good work reprobate, and yet a professor! How uneasy must his life be, who must do many things, which, in substance, are good works, that he may keep up the show of religion, let them be never so much his aversion! How uneasy a life, I say, is this, to go against the grain, and to do things in a continued course for which a man has no heart or relish! To come into the assemblies of God's people when he had rather be somewhere else; and many other such like things must he do to keep up a profession. This is indeed a most grievous thing, for a man to have only an artificial religion, which proceeds from no vital principle, and perfectly disagrees to the habit of his soul,

and the bent and temper of his heart. And that a man should toil at it all his days, is a sad case; especially when it is considered, that it is but for a shadow, for that which will turn to no account, or rather to a heavy one.

8. Lastly, We see hence the necessity of renewing grace. This is absolutely necessary, not only to reconcile man to God, but also to reconcile him to himself: to make the man to agree with himself: who without the grace and spirit of regeneration, neither agrees with God, nor his own soul. He fights with heaven, and his whole life is a continual fighting against himself. He practises wickedly against his profession of godliness; directly contrary to all his worship and his own prayers. Methinks therefore, this should make such a man long to feel the power of regenerating grace, that he may bring things to an agreement between God and himself. For the light which makes him profess, does not govern his practice. It is too weak, as you have seen, and insufficient for this purpose. There needs something more to change him, and to give him a right spirit; and when that is done, then all will be well. Then he can take pleasure in God, his worship and converse, and to know good work will be reprobate any more.

But here a great *question* might arise; to wit, "What should a man do in the mean time, who has not attained, as yet, the regenerating grace of the Spirit of Christ? Is it not better (that so there may be greater harmony of things) that he should give over professing, since he has only that in his own power? For it is in his power to give up his profession, though not to change his heart and life. Or, at least, should he not do so till there be a change, that may bring his profession and the course of his walking to a perfect consistence and agreement with one another?" To this I answer briefly;

I. Whereas there must be a change in order to an agreement between profession and practice, certainly that must be changed which is wrong. It is very evident the change ought to be where the fault is. He professes a religion which is true; the alteration then must not be there, but in his spirit and his course, which are wrong. And,

2. As the question supposes the laying down a profession as being in one's own power, there must and ought to be a greater regard here to moral power than natural; that is, to what I may do, rather than to what I can do. There is nothing truly possible to me, but what is lawfully possible. And so it is not in my power to go and profess a false religion, and abandon the true.

3. That till there be a change made, it is better to give over professing and the like, is to talk impertinently; because there is no moment of time, wherein it is permitted to live in an unconverted state. Do we think it lawful for us, so much as one moment, to live in rebellion against God, and his Son Jesus Christ? And therefore,

4. That power we want must be sought for, and that immediately; and be prayed for with an earnestness suitable to the exigence of the case; saying, "Lord, I am a monster, as true as I am a man amongst men! I shall be a lost creature, till I am changed!" Therefore do not talk of laying down your profession a moment; because you do not know but Divine grace may set all right in the next; only there should be a looking up to heaven, with a continual fervent desire of it. And methinks no one, who sees cause enough to suspect his case to be bad, should go away without lifting up a craving eye to God for assistance; saying, "Lord! for that grace that may work this necessary change! That may change me from being a self-repugnant creature, and liable to thy wrath; to a happy consistency with myself, and a meetness to enjoy thy rewards, and the inheritance of the saints in light!"

And, to conclude, what obligation to thankfulness and praise lies upon those, whom the grace of God has brought matters to a blessed agreement with themselves? So that their continual profession is the product of a new nature; and their habitual temper and practice ever harmonious and consistent with it. Oh what a blessed case is this!

SERMON V.*

We have, in the foregoing discourses, already shown in the general, that men may profess the true religion, and yet lead very wicked lives; be "abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate:" and of consequence, that they who do so, may be said by just interpretation to deny the religion they profess.

From these two propositions connected together, we have shown, what sort of profession is here meant; what the persons who make it may be, notwithstanding, as to their moral character; moreover, whence it is that any man should make a profession of religion, when the temper of his spirit, and the whole course of his practice, are so repugnant to it; and finally, the folly and vanity of all this have been largely shown, both with respect to God and men; inasmuch as, by this means, men do not acquire the reputation of being what they would be thought to be, that is, religious; nor have any share in the divine rewards of religion, in the future state. To all which have been subjoined several important inferences and useful reflections. But there is yet further use to be made, partly for the detection and conviction of such as do vainly profess; and partly for direction, that we ourselves may not do so. If it then be asked, "What sort of persons are they, who may be understood to overthrow their profession, and to make it a mere nullity, or of no significance? I answer; that though there are indeed sundry sorts of professors, who may be said so to do, yet all are reducible to these two general heads.

I. Such as do profess the true religion, but so falsified and corrupted, as that the very object of their profession is strangely altered from itself. They profess what, originally, was the true religion; but as they profess it, it is not true. Or else,

II. Such as do profess what is actually, even still, the true religion, but do it very untruly; that is, are not sincere in that profession.

I. The first sort of persons in the Christian world, who may be said to overthrow their profession, and to make it a mere nullity, are those who profess the true religion, but greatly falsified and adulterated: that is, they profess what, originally, was the true religion; but as they profess it, it is not true.

Now, though this class is capable of sundry subdivisions, yet since our part of Christendom is generally divided into those who are of the Roman communion, and those who protest against it, I shall only speak of them; that is, of those who call themselves catholics; and not of all them neither; but only of such as do practically hold such principles superadded to pure Christianity, as must necessarily make it another religion. I mean when they hold such principles practically, as corrupt the true, simple Christian religion, or the genuine Gospel of Christ, as it was delivered by him and his apostles. For indeed amongst those who are members of the church of Rome, not only charity, but justice, obliges us to distinguish thus far: that, as it is possible for a man to hold very good principles, which have no good influence upon his spirit and practice; so it is possible also, that men may in speculation hold some very bad principles, which have not that poisonous influence on their spirit and practice, to which they naturally tend. And therefore, if what is the substance of the Christian religion be found in them, notwithstanding many corrupt additions and gross falsehoods; if by the special favour and grace of God the true Christian principles only become impressive on them, and the false corruptive ones not so, which are of human invention; these are an exempt sort of persons, whom I have nothing to do with in the present case.

But because I must be within those limits, which it is fit the text should prescribe to me, I shall only treat upon one principle, which is practical, as we have reason to apprehend, with multitudes of that communion; and which the very terms of the text do lead us to take notice of. "They profess to know God, but in works they deny him." So in like manner, those, whom I allude to of the church

* Preached March 27th, 1681.

of Rome, profess to know God. But what God is it? Who, or what is that God which they practically own? Is it not another than the true and living God, whom they practically acknowledge as such? It is well if it be not so, with the generality of that way and persuasion! I mean that very God, of whom you have a description given by St. Paul, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians: 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4. namely, "the man of sin, the son of perdition: who exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." They do profess indeed to know the living and true God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: but the god whom they practically own, serve, and obey, is this same god that is here referred to by the apostle. Their god is a man, and that man a monster of men. In respect of pride and malice, more a devil than a man. In respect of sensuality and impurity, more a beast than a man; as you know he is so called in the Holy Scriptures.

This is actually the god, who is practically acknowledged as such by too great a number of professing Christians in the world. The principle therefore I now insist upon, is the ascribing a divinity to that creature, whether it be one single person, or a succession of persons, or a community according to some. This principle, so far as it is practical, and governs their religion, makes it quite another thing than what it truly and really is in its original purity. And though it be very true, they will tell you, that they only intend or mean an under deity, or a vicarious sort of godhead, which they place in this creature; and so think to salve the matter by alleging, that they do not idolize nor deify him; I therefore desire the following things may be considered.

1. That if it should be said, it is only a vicegerency which they ascribe to this same god of theirs, yet if their hearts terminate on him whom they call vicegerent, and their religion is carried no higher, this is to deify him as much as in them lies. What does it signify to acknowledge in speculation one superior to him, while in a practical sense their minds and hearts, and the sum of their religion, do centre and terminate here? As to multitudes of those who call themselves catholics, they trust in no higher object than the pope. All their reliance for pardon and salvation is ultimately on him, and all their obedience and subjection terminates on him. To call him therefore vicegerent only, when he is practically made the ultimate object of their religion, does not salve the matter at all.

2. I say further, and inquire, Where is their charter for this vicegerency? If they call him God's vicegerent, who has nothing to show for it, and so accordingly place a religious trust in him, what does it signify to say, that the respect and honour they pay to him is as to God's vicegerent? If a man should pretend to be for the king, while he really rebels against him, will that pretence be any excuse for me, if I fall in with them who are under this leader? There wants so much as a colourable pretence for this vicegerency. It would make some blush, others laugh, to hear the allegations they bring for it. How weak are some! how ridiculous are others! how remote, absurd, and insignificant are they all indeed taken together! That passage, for instance, the words of our Lord to Peter upon his remarkable confession of his Messiahship, is much insisted upon: to wit, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xvi. 18, 19. But how this should signify any thing to the popedom, I cannot conceive. What a strange fetch must it be to imagine any thing in such a passage to this purpose! No more power was given to him than what was given to the rest of the apostles. For to all the apostles, as well as Peter, Christ gave the power of the keys, as it is called, as appears from that parallel passage in the Gospel of John; where we are told, that Christ after his resurrection "breathed upon his disciples, and said unto them all, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins *ye* remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins *ye* retain, they are retained," John xx. 23. Which is the same thing with saying to all the apostles, "I give unto *you* the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and what you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," Matt. xvi. 19. That is, you acting according to the rules I left you, what you do on earth of this nature, shall be ratified in heaven too. But how impertinently is this drawn and appropriated to Rome! There is not the least mention of the grant of this power being confined to Peter, as bishop of Rome; and his successors as such. Nor is it to be imagined, what colour there should be of any reasoning from thence to this purpose, for it no more appears, that Peter was ever a settled, residing bishop at Rome, than that Paul was; who, it is most apparent, had a settled residence there. No such thing is recorded of Peter in the Holy Scriptures; and as to what is said in history on this matter, is variously disputed this way and that; though indeed it need not to be so, because it can signify nothing to the purpose. Those who say Peter was there as well as Paul, do also say, that they both suffered martyrdom in the same year. Besides, if there were a primacy to be settled where Peter did reside, it should rather have been at Jerusalem; where it is certain he had his residence for some time, and where it is more likely he presided, than at Rome. And because it is said to Peter only, "Feed my sheep!" John xxi. 15, 16, 17. are we to conclude from thence, that he must be the universal bishop? Is not this charge to be considered as given to the rest of the apostles, as well as to Peter? and not only so, but to all the ministers of the Gospel? So idle and trifling are these pretences to primacy for Peter, as bishop of Rome, and his successors as such!

3. They do, at least many of them, very frequently ascribe to this same god of theirs more than vicegerency, and what indeed is inconsistent with that state and character. They do it professedly; and if hereupon they do it practically, as we have great reason to apprehend multitudes may, then it is most certain that this false god of theirs, is the only object of their religion. Upon this point, because it is so much to my purpose, I shall largely insist. In the

(1.) Place, it is very apparent, that they give to this fictitious god of theirs, the titles that do peculiarly belong to the great God and his Christ. Nothing is more ordinary and common with them, than to call the pope by the titles of *beatissime* and *sanctissime Pater!* The *most blessed and most holy Father;* and other titles they are not afraid to apply to him, which the holy Scriptures give to God and his Son. A person speaking of one of the popes says, "His name is Wonderful;" assuming that which is spoken of Christ in Isaiah, Isa. ix. 6. and applying it unto him. They call him also, in express terms, the *head* of the Church, the *husband* of the church, the *foundation* of the church; titles peculiarly belonging unto Christ. One says, "He is the *head, excluso Christo;*" that is, *Christ being excluded,* and without any consideration of him. "He is (saith he) the *achmè;* the supreme, and *chief* of the church, *Summum caput ecclesiæ,* succeeding in the room of Christ; and all power is translated from Christ to him." Not derived, but transferred; as if it were removed from Christ, or as if he ceased from his primacy over the church, and transferred it himself to this vicarious god. For this they think a modest name, and that the power is lodged in him, so as to reside in Christ no longer. And hereupon, though they do speculatively own a superior head of the church, yet practically they own no higher when this notion obtains among them. Here their religion stops. Here it seems to terminate, and to go no higher. For how little suspicion do they discover, that those sins are yet unpardoned, which the pope pardons! Or how little dread appears among them, of having his judgment reversed by a superior judgment! And so they speak of this headship, which they attribute to the pope over the church, and represent it in the same manner in which it is attributed unto Christ, that is, they say the influence of life is communicated by him to the church; and represent it as flowing from this fictitious head of theirs. But,

(2.) Such scriptures also, as speak of the dignity, power, and greatness of Christ, they do most familiarly apply to the pope; some ridiculously, and others impiously, even to blasphemy itself. That passage in the eighth Psalm is an instance; "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy

hands," Ps. viii. 5, et seq. This passage which the apostle applies to Christ, they apply to the pope. And it is not to be imagined with what absurdity they do minutely apply the several following particulars to his holiness. As where it is said, Thou hast given him to have dominion over the fowls of the air, by that they would have the Gentiles understood; by the oxen, they understand the Jews; by the beasts of the field, the pagans; and by the sheep, the generality of Christians; and finally, by the fish of the sea, or whatsoever passeth through the paths thereof, which are also said to be put under his feet, they understand purgatory. So ridiculous that nothing can be more so!

But in other of their applications they are most horribly blasphemous. They have not scrupled to apply to him such passages as these; "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth," Psal. lxxxix. 27. Yea, and even this also, "From his fulness we have all received grace for grace," (John i. 16.) which some of their writers have, in express terms, applied to the pope.

(3.) Which is yet more particular, they ascribe unto him infallibility, as to all matters of faith; which is a peculiar attribute of the Deity, as such. "He cannot err," says one expressly concerning the pope; "he cannot be deceived. It must be conceived concerning him that he knows all things." Another expresses himself thus; "He has all things in the chest, the cabinet of his own breast. He is unto all the world a living law, that cannot err; and in which there is no obliquity:" and the like.

How very likely is it, that where this notion is prevailing, practice itself should go no higher than this notion! How likely is it that the faith of multitudes, on this account, must terminate on this supposed infallible creature! And so, what comes all that religion to, which hath, as to that part of it that consists in believing, only a man for its final object, and so is made purely a human thing?

Hereupon they resolve all the validity of the Scriptures themselves into the authority of the pope, or the church, which is much the same thing. One says, that from the church or bishop of Rome the whole book of sacred Scriptures draws all its strength. And another to the same purpose, that the sacred Scripture draws all its force from the authority of the bishop or church of Rome. Finally, another is so bold as to say very profanely, that the Scriptures have no more authority than Æsop's fables, but as they derive it from the church. So that it is very plain they place Deity upon this same creature and idol of their own making, inasmuch as they ascribe to him infallibility in all things; which is one of the peculiar attributes of the supreme God.

(4.) They ascribe to this god, the power of forgiving sins. That none can forgive sins but God is an acknowledged principle. But this power they give to this god of theirs. One of themselves preferred to the pope such an application as this; "Thou lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on me! Thou lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace!" This was actually said to, and received by, one of their popes. And it has been expressly taught of the papal power, with respect to this very matter; that whereas any ordinary bishop may remit temporal punishment, the pope has power to remit eternal; and that he has more power, as to this point, than Christ hath as man. "For (say they) Christ, as man, did only procure pardon; but the pope, as a god, does give it." Again,

(5.) They attribute unto him a power of dispensing with the very law of nature. I might instance in several things that belong to each table of the decalogue. For example, they place a power in their pope to dispense with the most solemn oaths. And one positively says, "He can make perjury righteousness, if it be for any valuable purpose; for the service of his, or the catholic cause." They say again; "that he can dispense with any of the books of the Old Testament, because he is greater than the penmen thereof." As if they had written in their own name, or as if he could not be greater than they, in any sense, but in his wealth and wickedness.

6. They ascribe to the pope, what indeed he has been wont to assume to himself, a power to alter or add to the Gospel. Not only to take off the obligations of the law of nature, but to mould too, as he pleases, the law of grace. A certain writer expressly says; that in respect to this or that particular case, he can give another sense to the Gospel. And another tells us in plain words, that he can not only interpret the Gospel, but add to it. And we find that really the popes have done so. For do not they damn to hell, against the sum and the main tenor of the Gospel, many good Christians, merely because they will not play the idolater, nor give religious homage to this great idol the pope; and do they not profess to give a title to heaven to many a vile wretch, as wicked as any can be supposed to be? And merely on this account, because they are subject to that usurped power? What is this but to make another Gospel? Christ says, "He that believes in *me* shall have eternal life." But they say, at least in their practice, "If you do not believe in the pope too, you shall not have eternal life." And whereas Christ says, "He that believeth not, shall never see the face of God;" they say, "Be he never so unholy, if he trusts in the pope, he shall be saved." And what does all this amount to, but the setting up a created thing, as the final object of religion? Is not this to dispense with all the fundamental laws of nature, and to invade the Gospel of Christ? Well may it be said that this vain mortal has set up himself above all that is called God, or worshipped as God, 2 Thess. ii. 4.

Now let men profess to know the true God as long as they will, yet if they will make another god, they take away the unity which is most essential to the Divine nature, and contrary to the first commandment, which runs thus; Thou shalt have no other god before *me*. Either they do this in speculation, or, which is in reality the same thing, in practice. Their faith and obedience terminate on this god. For all their professing to know God, who is the Most High and Supreme above all, they at least practically deny him.

And thus far I have thought proper to insist on sundry accounts, though I may not suppose any to hear me whom this does directly concern.

1st, That so we may all of us, who call ourselves protestants, have a deep sense on our hearts of the great mercy of God, in distinguishing our case. And,

2dly, That we may be duly sensible of his mercy in preserving us from such a church, as he has hitherto done: and from such men, whose principles not only allow, but oblige them to fill the world with slaughters and blood, if there be but the least dissension from their party and interest; or if people are not entirely devoted to their way.

3dly, That we may all of us understand, what a noble cause we have to struggle for against this party of men, in this difficult time in which we live; and may see what reason we have to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," (Jude 3.) and as it was given to them. And finally, to add no more,

4thly, That if ever it should be our lot to suffer by such hands, we may understand, how glorious a cause we have to suffer in; and how much better it is to suffer by such men, than to be of them. Men! whose religion instructs them in all impiety and vice; and who are much worse by the influence thereof, than they would have been by mere nature. So that any impartial unconcerned person who shall consider the case, view it in every light, and take a survey of the scheme or model of their practical principles, cannot but say, "If this be Christianity, let me be an honest pagan!"

In a word: When their doctrines lead them to such things as cruel murders, injurious treacheries, and the most horrid perjuries; when their principles rase the foundations of all human society, or tend to make it dissolve, so as that no man knows how to trust another; when mankind must even disband on these terms, and live in cells or dens apart by themselves, (for there can be no commerce one with another, if these principles generally obtain in the world,)—I say, if this be the case, it is surely better to suffer by such men, than to be of their party. Especially if we consider how these things must needs engage Heaven against them, and that Divine vengeance must fall at length upon them who have profaned such a name, and so horridly pretended to Christianity, on purpose as it were to make it odious to the heathen world. "If the Christian religion," may pagans say, "be such as these men represent it, what a strange God is their God

that will oblige them, who profess his religion, to be false, bloody, and cruel; and all for the serving a secular interest and end!"

It is easy to apprehend the mischievous tendency of such practical principles of theirs, and how much paganism is better than their religion. How much better indeed it were to have no religion; because, in this case, there is a coincidence of the most vicious inclinations with wicked principles. Now think what strength is added to a vicious inclination, when a principle falls in with it that shall justify it. Mere pagans do, many times it is true, transgress the law of nature; but as the apostle tells us, it is with their consciences accusing them, (Rom. ii. 15.) or with regret. But now, when the dictates of judgment and conscience concur with men's vicious inclinations, this is worse than it is with the heathens.

A heathen may possibly be guilty of perjury himself, but his conscience remonstrates against it, and on his own principles he is self-condemned. But when there shall be a principle which suggests to a man that it is lawful to sin, and not only so but that it is his duty to perjure himself, with how strong a stream must the current of wickedness run in the world!

And certainly at such a time as ours is, and indeed in future ages, it is to be feared, there will be this reason why such a case should be represented to the world as it is; that we may know what we have to oppose, and what it is we have to stand by in such an opposition; whether in doing or suffering, or whether with success in this world, or no. Upon these accounts I have thought it proper to insist thus far on this sort of persons, who profess the Christian religion, but corrupt and falsify it; partly speculatively, partly practically; professing to know God, while, in another sense, and more effectually a great deal, they deny the God whom they profess to own and acknowledge

SERMON VI.*

In our former discourse we proposed to inquire, what sort of persons they are, who may be said to overthrow their profession; and to make it a mere nullity, or of no significance. Namely,

I. Such as profess the true religion, but so falsified and corrupted, as that the very object of their profession is strangely altered from itself. They profess what, originally, was the true religion; but, as they profess it, it is not true. These we have already considered.

II. I proceed now to consider the second sort of men that were spoken of: namely, such as profess that which is most true, to wit, the Christian religion in its purity; but do it most untruly, and are altogether insincere in that profession.

And, in order to this, I shall confine myself to these two heads that lie in the text, which I have doctrinally opened in a former discourse. That is, as I have already shown, they may very truly be said to deny Him in works, whom they profess to know and acknowledge as the true God: who have, in the first place, an habitual propension to abominable wickedness; or in the next place, an habitual aversion to whatsoever is good.

1. They may be truly said to deny God in their works, though they profess to know him, who have an habitual propension to habitual wickedness. There are indeed two expressions of the apostle, that are here alluded to; namely, *abominable* and disobedient: the former of which, as we have shown before,[a] speaks the wickedness to which such are propense; and the latter, the obstinacy of that propension. Which is plainly signified by the word rendered *disobedient;* which we may render more emphatically *untractableness*, such as by no persuasions can be withdrawn from a wicked course.

I doubt not but there are many such persons, who because they are not of that sort which we have spoken of in the preceding discourse, but account themselves very good protestants; and are resolved, for ought they know, to continue such as long as they live, therefore conclude they are on very good terms with God. Whether there are not many who go under this honourable name, unto whom this character too much agrees, of being obstinate in a course of wickedness, you yourselves, with too much clearness, may judge. However I hope, that your acquaintance does not lie with such persons, so as to have much occasion to observe their way and course; I hope, I say, it is not generally so with you. But who is there, whom common fame and common cry can suffer to be ignorant of the wickedness that lurks, yea that rages, under the very name of protestantism? Unless a man would shut himself up in a den or a cell, he cannot help knowing that there is a great deal of wickedness amongst us, which ought to go under the title of abominable: wickedness! which even protestants obstinately persist in. The horrid oaths, execrations, and blasphemies, which the taverns resound with, and of which the streets are not innocent;—the debaucheries of all sorts;—who can keep himself from knowing there are such things done and practised among those, who are concerned to maintain the name and reputation of being protestants, and value themselves upon it?

And yet it must be said, that though such wickedness be abominable, yet it is too little abominated. Those who are not themselves, it may be, guilty of such vices, are drawn into a participation of the guilt of others, in some measure, by not resenting, by not taking to heart, and by not mourning over the wickedness of the times in which they live. A way of partaking with other men's sins that is but too real, and too little thought of!

And it is well, if some do not partake of the guilt of others further than this, that would not be thought to countenance or approve their wicked practices; who yet, when they are in company with them, bear a part therein. Particularly to mention one instance, in drinking confusion to such or such a party, and the like; as if it were the pouring in of liquor, and not the pouring out of prayer, that is the way to engage the Almighty God to be on their side. And whither does all this tend? What seems to be the meaning and import of it but this? That men do, as it were, set themselves to tempt or defy the justice and vengeance of Heaven! To try whether God can yet find a way to turn our houses into flaming beacons, and lay this city again in a ruinous waste! Or to try what further stores there are yet in the armoury of God; what furniture in his quiver, and whether he hath any more arrows to spend upon us or no! For, to go no further than this city, I would very fain know, who that has had the opportunity to observe and take notice, can say that London is so much better now, than it was before the fire, that we have no reason to fear a repetition of any such judgment as that, or the pestilence which immediately preceded it? Unless we will think that all things fall out by chance, or casually, or by the designs of men; or that a just and holy God has no hand in the government of the world, and the ordering and disposing of events, which fall out in it. That calamity which brought this glorious city into dust, did not spring out of it; neither does affliction come from thence, though it may bring us thither.

And will men think, that the name of protestant will be a protection from such severities and awful judgments hereafter? Why then was it not so before? Do we imagine that Almighty God is so taken with names; or that they are a matter of so high account with him? Can we suppose that he will less resent, or be more patient of, affronts and contempt from a protestant, than from a papist, or a pagan? Will not wickedness be the same thing in both?

But perhaps some may be ready to say; "All this is very right; but we have more than the name of being protestants: we perform many duties that do belong to that religion." And perhaps one sort of protestants may glory and make their boast, that for their parts, they are diligent in their attendance on public worship, and devout in bearing a part in the solemnity thereof, but especially in the prayers of the church: they are very punctual in the observances of it; missing in no point of ceremony; keep exactly to all the modish and fashionable rites; have their

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a See Page 630.

responses at their fingers' ends, and the like. Another sort, it may be, boast otherwise and on different grounds; who, thinking that this is not so sure a way, choose rather another kind of worship, which they fancy to be purer: and with great zeal and diligence hear the preachers, that are in most vogue amongst them, and yet it may be all the while are not the better men. So prone are persons of vicious inclinations to be any thing, rather than true Christians! To put on any shape, or pass under any denomination in the world, rather than admit of that one thing, called serious living Christianity!

But if we might but reason the matter here a little, I would observe, that be your denomination what it will under that general one of protestants; be the thing you profess, objectively, never so good; can you really think that such a profession of true principles, or the being of such and such a denomination, can in God's balance preponderate, and outweigh gross and abominable wickedness? Can those things singly considered, which are in themselves so light, entitle us to a greater share of the Divine favour, than the people of Israel could expect? Concerning whom we find, that when they were become "a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquities, a seed of evil doers," and who upon their being "smitten more, did still revolt more and more;" (Isa. i. 4, *et seq.*) yet although the case was thus with them, they thought to expiate all this, and to make God some great recompense and amends by their sacrifices. Wherefore these were brought upon the altar one upon another, and mighty punctual they were in observing their new moons and solemn assemblies. When the case, I say, stood thus, How does God accept the recompense? Why thus, "Bring no more," says he, "your vain oblations, your incense is an abomination to me, and your new moons and solemn assemblies: My soul hates them, I am weary to bear them," ver. 13, 14. And to the same purpose we find it largely spoken throughout the fiftieth Psalm. And how could we possibly think it should be otherwise, if we understand at all the nature of God, or the genius and design of true religion? Which, if it serve for any purpose at all, must serve for this; "to refine men's spirits, to govern their lives, to fit them for walking with God in this world, and to prepare them for the next." What serves religion for, if not for this purpose? And of what service is their religion, which is frustrated of its main design and end? Indeed, for men to take up religion for other inferior purposes, is most grossly to debase it. It is true it should serve other purposes as secondary, and subordinate to that which is the ultimate design of it; if it was only to keep up the decorum of things. But when it is made to serve inferior purposes, as if they were primary; when it is only taken up as a badge of distinction between one party of men and another, under pretence of which men are only designing to promote the interest of a party; this frustrates its end and ultimate design. It is very true, God is pleased to twist, as it were, the interest of religion with that of a civil nature. But when this is made the chief design of the other, it is to turn it into vain idolatry; and, in effect, to disannul religion; inasmuch as all things, of moral consideration, are ever specified from the object and end.

It concerns us then to consider, how little it can avail any of us to bear such a name as we have been speaking of, if in the mean time there be a life and practice that is manifestly flagitious, and contrary in its general stream and current to the rules and design of the religion to which we pretend. Why should we think ourselves more considerable to God, or more favoured by him, than his ancient people were, namely, the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? who, notwithstanding any privileges on that account, are said upon their apostacy unto wickedness to be as the children of the Ethiopians to him; (Amos ix. 7.) that vile accursed race, the posterity of Cush, who descended from an accursed Cham.

Indeed there is little reason why their religion should at all advantage them, who do themselves most reproachfully expose and dishonour their profession. In the account of God it will be all one, protestant or no protestant, so long as men indulge to a vain wicked life. As "in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature;" (Gal. vi. 15.) so we may say, out of Christ this availeth nothing. Trojan or Tyrian will be all one, if wickedness rule and reign in the heart and life of the man. For thus the apostle Paul argues; it makes no difference in the point of acceptance with God, under the Gospel dispensation, whether a man be a Jew or "Greek, Barbarian or Scythian," and the like, since "Christ is all and in all," Col. iii. 11. In which passage he may possibly refer to a Scythian, who, having an inclination to learning, betook himself to Athens, to study the principles of philosophy that were taught there. But meeting one day with a person, that very insolently upbraided him on the account of his country, he gave him this smart repartee; "True indeed it is, my country is a reproach to me; but you, for your part, are a reproach to your country." So we may say of these professors; that though their religion is no reproach to them, yet they are a shame and reproach to their religion. It is sad indeed, that so great a part of the world should lie under so gross and corrupt a religion as that is of the church of Rome, which is a brand of infamy on its professors; but it is a far worse case when men, by their vicious immoral practices, are a reproach to a better religion, as we protestants esteem ours to be; which conduct God will severely punish, without doubt, another day. If Christian protestants behave as ill as vicious papists or pagans, while they carry a better name, it is likely God will distinguish them hereafter, just as they have here distinguished themselves; that is, they shall lie under the name of protestants in hell, as others do under that of papists. If our great Redeemer and Lord command us to reckon a disorderly Christian, who is obstinate in his wickedness, as a heathen and a publican; (Matt. xviii. 17.) pray what do you think he will account of them himself in the great day? Will he have us more strictly righteous, or equitable, than he himself intends to be?

It may perhaps here be said upon all this, "It is very true; it cannot but be acknowledged, when men make such a profession, and are of so bad lives, they greatly dishonour their religion, and unquestionably expose themselves to greater degrees of Divine vengeance than others. Yet is it not hard to judge so ill of the case, as to say, these men deny their God? They do indeed what must be owned to be very bad; but surely some gentler thing should be said of it, than that they deny the God whom they profess to know."

In answer to this, I would ask such persons the following question: to wit, Must we or you teach God how to speak? And does not the text say expressly, that this is a denying of God? We have before shown, in the former part, how much more significant an habitual denial of him in practice is, than a transient one in speculation, or in so many words. However, let us consider, and see if there be not, in this case, a plain denial of the great God. These two things I imagine will evince it. For, in the 1st place, it is plain he is denied in the attributes; and 2nd, in the relations that are appropriate and peculiar to him, as God.

(1.) God is denied in his attributes which are peculiar to his nature. As for instance, his *omniscience*. For do not such men, as we here allude to, plainly say; "How does God see? or is there knowledge in the Most High?" Psalm lxxiii. 11. Does not their practice say it? Is it not the language of their lives? And does not that speak the sense of their hearts? How can that man be said to own an omniscient God, who is gradually transforming himself into a beast? Or to believe that his jealous eye is looking on, while he obstinately persists in his sinful courses?

There is also a manifest denial of his *wisdom*. This is the attribute which magnifies itself in the frame of nature, and the contrivance of all the laws and constitutions of his government. Wisdom is the great and principal endowment of a legislator. But though God has established certain rules to guide and govern us by, and to which it is our duty to square our lives; yet says the wicked debauched wretch, "My appetite dictates to me more wisely than so." And thus the wisdom of the flesh is preferred to that which is divine. God says it is wisest and best for men to be governed, and to steer their course, by such and such strict rules; that it is best for them to be sober, temperate, chaste, just, and the like. No, say they, to consult inclination and carnal appetite is a far wiser course, than

to follow him; and this is a thing fit to be confronted to the Divine Wisdom! Further,

They deny his *power*, both as it signifies might and authority. As it signifies authority, they carry the matter as if he had no right to rule or direct them. As it signifies might, they behave as if he were not able to revenge himself on them. Moreover,

They deny his *truth*. He has declared that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven, (I Cor. vi. 9, 10.) but they seem confident they shall.

There is also in their practice and conduct a manifest denial of his *holiness*. "Be ye holy (says the Almighty) for I am holy," I Pet. i. 16. But their behaviour implies as much as if they said both, that they will not be holy, and that God himself is not so; whilst they imagine to themselves, that he approves the unholy course they take. And,

There is a denial of his *justice*, his vindictive justice. It is plainly saying, as it were, that he will not judge the world; that he will not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, but will deal alike with all. Yea, and which is no paradox, though it seems one, their conduct implies also a denial,

Lastly, of his *mercy* and *goodness* too. But you will perhaps say, that seems strange; for it is Divine mercy on which these men do peculiarly rely. God will be merciful when all is done. But can they be said to trust in his mercy, when they do not truly rely on his word? That which they trust in is nothing but a mere phantom, an imagination of their own hearts; and so it is trusting to themselves, and not to God. They have no other trust but that of fools, that is, trusting to their own hearts; to what the fancy suggests, or the imagination can create. For if they did hope in the Divine mercy in reality, they who had such a hope would purify themselves as God is pure. That would break their hearts and mollify their temper, so as that they would have but little disposition to be stout against God.

Whilst, therefore, men thus deny these great attributes of the Divine nature, may they not be said to deny God himself. For pray what kind of notion should we have of God, if these were set aside? What a horrid idea would that be of an untrue, unholy, unwise, unjust Deity!

(2.) God is also denied by persons of this character, with respect to the great relations in which he stands to all his reasonable creatures. I do not mean those special relations which he bears to his own peculiar people; but those wherein he stands to all in common, who are universally the work of his hands, and as the Psalmist expresses it, the sheep of his pasture, Psalm c. 3. Which relations are principally these following, to wit, those which result from his creation of us; his propriety in us; his dominion over us; and his continual beneficence towards us. But,

Do they own him as their Creator, or themselves to be his offspring, who thus bend themselves against the great Parent of all?

Do they own him as their Proprietor, or themselves as his property? The ox indeed knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, (Isa. i. 3.) but they know not theirs, saying; "We are our own; who is Lord over us?" This is at least the sense and meaning of the conduct of these men. Further,

Do they own him to be their Ruler, or do they truly call themselves his subjects, when their life is a continued rebellion? Or, finally,

Do they own him for their Benefactor? But how can they be said to acknowledge, that it is he from whom all their good comes, when they live to themselves, and not to him? It is very plain therefore they deny God in all these relations as well as in his attributes.

Now let us consider what it is to own God in an absolute, while he is disowned in a relative, sense. To say he is a God, but shall not be a God to me, what does this amount to but a denial of him? He must be acknowledged in the general relation first, before we can have any ground to hope that he stands in those of a special nature to us, in which he is related to his peculiar people. If a man should own his prince after that rate, that is, only under an absolute notion, as a great king, as he would the Grand Signior Cham of Tartary; but at the same time should avow he should be no king to him; would that profession, think you, justify a man who should oppose or rebel against his rightful prince?

Thus far then you see as to the first character, That they who are obstinate in a course of wickedness, whatsoever they profess, do most apparently in their works deny God. I shall touch but briefly on the

2. In which I propose to prove the same point, from their habitual aversion to that which is good; or a general disaffection to every good work; which is the next characteristic of this sort of persons, according to St. Paul's account.

There are those in the world who are apt to think well of their own case, because they are not of this last mentioned sort. They for their parts practise no such impieties, as many others do; none can say they are murderers, adulterers, false-dealers, and the like; and therefore they reckon their case good: just as if it should be thought impossible a man should die of any distemper but the plague. Or as if in a battle, a soldier should employ his whole care to protect his head, and not expect a stab or a bullet in his heart. So little is it considered what is so obvious to the common reason of a man!

Good comes only by the concurrence of all things which are requisite thereunto; and evil, by any failure of one of those things. It may therefore be said of such persons, "Ye are not, it may be, guilty of such and such evils, but what good do you do? from what temper of mind? from what principle? or with what disposition do you do it?" To such I address myself, and suppose, that many have this to say for themselves, that they pray; they hear God's word; they give alms; and the like. "Do you so? It is well. But with what disposition do you engage in all these duties? Is it not with an averse disinclined heart? or is it not from some corrupt root and principle or other?" The case is very forlorn indeed when men do make their boasts of the fruits, and cannot so much as show the tree! As there cannot be a good and holy principle without its connatural effects, so nor can there be right effects if they proceed not from their proper principle. There are none capable of good works, but those that are created in Christ Jesus thereunto; without this, men perform religious duties without heart or soul. To illustrate this matter let it be considered, how much the hearts of men are engaged in the work of some profitable calling or pleasing recreation; and on the other hand, how little their hearts are in prayer, in any duties in which they are to converse with God. And how can persons think to please God in those duties, in which they take no pleasure themselves? If you are not pleased with them, how do you think he should?

But it may here be said, "What! does every one deny God in his works, who feels an indisposition in himself to those which are good? Or who does good works, though many times it may be with an indisposed heart?" I answer; Is it not easy to understand the difference between the indisposition of the sick and lame, and that of the dead? Is there no difference between those, who have weak imperfect grace, and those who have none? I shall briefly point out to you some things to this purpose, which are very obvious.

(1.) The indispositions of one sort are only gradual, but of the other they are total. There is in one no taste or disposition for any thing that is good: in the other, though there be a great indisposition in the general, yet there is withal some desire after God; some inclination and tendency to that which is good. So as that they may be capable of saying, as the apostle St. Paul represents the case, "The good that I would do, I do not," Rom. vii. 19. I have a mind to it, though the bent of my mind is not so strong as it should be.

(2.) The indispositions of the one are constant and habitual, of the other only intermitted. That is, the indisposition of a wicked unregenerate heart is continued, and at all times alike; but the indispositions of a soul, which is in the main pious and good, are only by intervals. They are not always alike indisposed. There is an alteration in this case, but none in the other, so long as that spiritual death remains upon them. In a word, all good persons experience, that they have sometimes a greater relish for their duty and the service of God, than they have at other times. Besides,

(3.) The indispositions of the carnal and vicious are un-

observed and unlamented; but it is not so with those of the other character. Their indispositions to that which is good are reflected on with sorrow; taken notice of with regret; and very much bemoaned, in these pathetic words, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this death!" Rom. vii. 24. Do the dead reflect? do they lament that they are dead?—But the sick lament that they are sick, and the pained that they are in pain; and each are sensible of their respective calamities.

(4.) And lastly, good Christians strive against their indispositions in the expectation of remedy and redress; but there is no such thing in the other. The indispositions of those who are regenerate, are matter not only of their present complaint, but horror. It is not so with those of the opposite character. These like their state well enough, and are contented with the present situation of their immortal souls. Their hearts are disaffected towards God; they are far from him, and they choose to be so. But the people of God, in whom the Spirit of grace or the divine life doth obtain, are aiming to be nearer and nearer to him; and to have whatever disinclines their hearts to religion, or keeps them at a distance from him, effectually removed. Upon the whole, they may find difficulty in their course; but is there no difference between breathing with difficulty, and having no breath? While therefore those who profess to know God, but in works deny him, are really far from God; these who have the divine life in them as a prevailing principle, do breathe for the liberty of the sons of God, and to be brought into that state, where they shall love, and serve, and obey the ever blessed God perfectly, and eternally.

SERMON VII.*

I NOW proceed, by way of further use and improvement of this subject, to lay down some rules and directions, that may be of service to all who desire to be of a different spirit, or character, from those we have been considering; and would not have this ever justly said of them, that while they profess to know God, yet in works they deny him. And surely if it be considered how incongruous, how odious, how pernicious and destructive a thing this is; nothing can be apprehended of greater concernment to us, than affectually to endeavour, that we may not have this character resting upon us. That you may not, consider seriously, I pray, and observe such directions as these.

1. Once bring the matter to this point, that the profession you make may be the effect of your solemn deliberate choice. There is too much reason to recommend this rule to the generality of Christians, amongst whom, it is very apparent, there are too many, whose profession is rather the effect of chance, or fate; or any thing they are thrown into, by the concurrence of some external circumstances in their condition; than of a serious deliberate choice. How many are there who profess themselves Christians, as we observed before, merely because it is the religion of their country! or was that of their ancestors! or is established by the laws under which they live! So that it would be very inconvenient for them, too hazardous it may be, or at least scandalous, to make a contrary profession. Now it highly concerns us once to come to this, that the religion we are of be what we have chosen, and that we profess it upon mature deliberation. We are nothing in religion till we come to this. But,

It may here be said, "What then! are we to begin again? We have been Christians long, it is a profession we have long sustained, and do so to this day." To which I reply, that all is yet to begin, wherein we are still short and defective. We read concerning the people of Israel, that when Moses had brought them to a more explicit owning of God, and said, "You have this day avouched the Lord for your God, and he has avouched you for his people;" it is added, with reference to this same thing and time also, "Thou art this day become a holy people unto the Lord thy God," Deut. xxvi. 17, 18, 19. What! did they but then become his people? Not so, for they were esteemed as such before by Jehovah the God of Israel; but they became so more explicitly, and by a direct act of their own, wherein they did as it were interchange obligations with the Almighty. And several years after, when Joshua, towards the close of his life and government, was upon that solemn treaty with them, which you find in the 24th chapter, he again puts all to their choice, saying, "Choose you this day whom you will serve;" (Josh. xxiv. 15.) submitting the matter again to their judgment and election. What! were they then to choose what religion to be of? No, they were to renew their choice, and to do the thing with great solemnity and seriousness, and in a distinct manner, over again. And if it has not been done seriously and deliberately hitherto by you, let it be done now once for all; for till then, you cannot so much as say you have a religion of your own. And surely if a man would call any thing his own, it would be his religion. Your religion is otherwise but the religion of your country, or of the party to which you belong. It is not truly your own. No man would be contented merely because he lives in an opulent country, while he himself has no estate in it; or account himself rich, only because he lives in a rich nation. What should be so much mine, as my religion? But this can never be mine till I undertake to profess it, on a solemn and well weighed choice, after having considered and balanced all things, so as to be able to say; "This profession I take upon me as best, most excellent, most comfortable, as well as most glorious.'

2. Endeavour to know God in good earnest. Know him indeed, and you are then in no danger of the charge, which the apostle brings against false professors. You have been formerly told, that this phrase of professing to know God, is not to be restrained and limited unto the bare speculative knowledge of him, abstractly considered. But though it is not to be thus limited, yet it must include this as the leading, initial thing to all the rest. It is an expression for religion in general, and is sometimes put for the whole of it; and therefore it cannot be supposed to leave out that, which is the fundamental and leading principle of all, from whence the denomination is taken, and put upon the whole.

If you consider the object of this knowledge; it is not God abstractly considered. If you consider the nature of it, it is not barely notional knowledge that is sufficient; nor, as we have already shown, the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, according to that divine revelation, which is contained in the New Testament: which phrase is used in Scripture to signify the Christian religion, before the revelation of which, the Gentiles are represented as not knowing God, Gal. iv. 8. What! did they not own a Deity before? No doubt they had some knowledge of a supreme eternal Being, as the heathens had in common, (Rom. i. 19, 20, 21.) and yet their state of heathenism is said to be a state wherein they did not know God. They did not know God so as to be acquainted with the true method of worshipping, conversing with, and enjoying of him, which is discovered to us only in the Gospel. The world, says the apostle, through wisdom knew not God, 1 Cor. i. 21. It is spoken plainly of the more refined pagans, who go under the name of Gentiles. And had not they the knowledge of the Deity? No doubt they had; for it is elsewhere said, they did know him, but not glorify him as God, Rom. i. 21. The meaning is, that they did not know him through Christ as Mediator. And it was through their wisdom that they did not so know him, when they might have done it; because the doctrine of a crucified Christ to them appeared a very foolish thing, which by no means gratified that wisdom to which they highly pretended. They knew not God, that is, they were not Christians.

With respect to the nature of this knowledge, it is of a vital, efficacious, transformative quality, which alone is worthy of the name. Such is the knowledge which our Lord speaks of. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3. It is such a knowledge, as by which the soul is caught into a union with the blessed object of it. He has given us understanding that we may know him that

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is true; and we are in him, even in his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. "This is the true God and eternal life," 1 John v. 20. It is a knowledge that blasts and withers sin at the very root, and so efficaciously transforms the soul into the image of God's own holiness. "He that sinneth, hath not seen God nor known him," 3 John 11. The same word there rendered *seen* signifies *known*; Ye have not heard his voice nor seen his shape, John v. 37. You have never had a true notion of God yet truly inwrought into your souls. "Awake to righteousness and sin not! I speak it to your shame, some have not the knowledge of God," 1 Cor. xv. 34. Labour then thus to know God in earnest, by such a kind of knowledge as shall influence the practice, and in the event bring about and accomplish the blessed union betwixt him and you.

3. Ponder well on the dignity and sacredness of this profession. Oh what a mighty thing is this! that whereas the world has been lost in the ignorance of God, through many successive ages, we should take upon us to profess to know him. It is too big a word for the mouth of a profane and irreligious world. That description of Balaam which he gives of himself, is grand and very solemn; "The man whose eyes are opened, that heard the word of God, that knew the knowledge of the Most High, and saw the vision of the Almighty," Numb. xxiv. 3, 4, 15, 16. And yet the knowledge he alludes to, and which this prophet seems to glory in, was only such as he derived from the spirit of prophecy, and not the spirit of saving, holy illumination. However, it was a great thing to come out of such a profane mouth as that of Balaam, when he came to curse the armies of Israel.

Let us then consider, I pray, what we say and do, when we take upon us to profess to know God. As I intimated before, it is an appropriative knowledge that is here pretended to. To know him is to acknowledge him as our God, as his knowing us is to acknowledge and own us as his people. This was the pretence of Israel, but connected with horrid contempt of him, as we learn from the prophets. To know God then is, I say, to acknowledge him as our Lord; our Owner, our Proprietor, to whom we belong upon a peculiar account. And consider what that account is, and under what notion we must own him to be our Lord; namely, as we are his property, and his peculiar treasure. For so are all those who are his people, by virtue of the relation which results from their mutual contract and agreement. I entered into covenant with thee, says the Almighty to the Jews, and thou becamest mine, Ezek. xvi. 8. And again, "You shall be to me a peculiar treasure before all people, for all the earth is mine." Exod. xix. 5. They who are his people he reckons them as his crown and his diadem, Isa. lxii. 3. Who, says God, shall be mine in the day that I make up my jewels, Mal. iii. 17. Those therefore who know God, and are known of him, are as the jewels of his crown, the jewels which adorn his diadem. And who would be so insolent, as to presume to place there a lump of dirt, or a clod of filthy clay! It is then very awful to think what professing to know God does import, if we only reflect on the dignity and sacredness of this profession.

4. Look upon your profession as an obligation upon you to a correspondent practice. Every profession is so understood among men; and what an ignominy were it for a man, to wear the name, when there were none of the thing to which the name corresponds! Do we look upon professing to know God only as an idle profession? as a thing which no business goes along with, nor is attended with any suitable employment? Theology was well described by him, who reckoned it was not mere knowing for knowing sake, but was the doctrine of living unto God. Moreover,

5. Comprehend as distinctly as you can in your own thoughts, the sum of that duty unto which this profession does oblige you. Learn and encompass in your own mind, the whole circle of all those duties, which a professing to know God does engage you to. Run through the encyclopædia, or the whole system of practical religion; to wit, the duties, to the practice of which you are obliged by virtue of your profession, both internal and external. Duties towards God the Father, and his Son, your Creator and Redeemer; such as agree with your acknowledgment of the mystery of God and of Christ, Col. ii. 2. Yea, and not only such, but also duties towards man too; which religion ought to influence, and wherein we are to be governed by our knowledge of God.

6. Labour thoroughly to understand the grounds on which you take upon you the obligation to every Christian duty. It is very plain that the *agenda* of religion, that is, the things to be performed by us, are grounded upon the *credenda*, or things to be believed. "I believe so and so, and therefore conceive myself as obliged to do so and so. And the common foundation of both I must reckon to be the divine authority, revealing certain principles and truths as necessary to be believed; and enjoining certain duties as consequences from thence, and equally necessary to be done." Thus go to the bottom and ground of the religion you profess, and then you have it in its original, and truly divine. But if we look upon our religion as merely human, handed down from father to son, and the like, no wonder then if we trifle with it; but no man would be adventurous, with relation to what he apprehended to be divine. Therefore is men's religion usually weak, impotent, and ineffectual; and has not its proper influence in commanding the heart, and governing the life, because the divine original of it is not apprehended. My own things, I am ready to think, may be used as I please, but I may not do so with those which are divine. In a word,

When once the authority of God is apprehended, particularly of his truth in revealing such and such things, and of his power in commanding others, with what weight do they come in upon the Spirit of a man! What a pressing question was that of our Lord to the Jews! "The baptism of John," his solemn manner of initiating men into religion, "whence was it? from heaven or of men?" Matt. xxi. 25. They were sensible of the pungency of this question, and were afraid to answer him. They knew not what to say, and could not but confess themselves guilty of a profane neglect, if they owned it to be of divine original. The image that was apprehended to fall down from Jupiter, what a sacred esteem and veneration had those heathens for it, who worshipped that idol! because the priests had deluded them with such an idle fancy. So the Christian religion becomes an operative lively thing, when the divinity of it once comes to be understood, and really believed. "We think ourselves bound," says the apostle, to the Thessalonians, "to give thanks to God for you without ceasing, that when ye received the word of truth from us, you received it not as the word of man, but as the word of God, which effectually works in all them that believe," 1 Thess. ii. 13.

7. Settle it in your minds as an important truth, that the design of that religion of which you are professors, that is, of the whole Christian institution and frame of things, is to have a people distinguished by peculiar excellencies from all other men, who are not of that profession. They must be supposed to be very slight readers and considerers of the Bible, who have not seen this to have been God's design ever since he made the world. "You shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation," (Exod. xix. 6.) says the Almighty to Israel, whose whole business was as it were religion, worship, and immediate attendance on God; being, "a royal priesthood," (1 Pet. ii. 9.) as the apostle paraphrases that expression. "Our Lord gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14. And therefore he thus expostulates with his disciples, "If you do only so and so, what do you do more than others?" Matt. v. 47. Do you think I would have a people among men, professing my religion and belonging unto me, who shall be only as other men are, in whom there is nothing of peculiar excellence to be found? And therefore the apostle exhorts the Christians of Thessalonica, to aim at superior piety and virtue, saying, "Let us not sleep as do others;" for, as it follows, "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thess. v. 6. What! to live in the same drowsy security as others do, or as if you were still under the dominion of the same spirit of slumber, or as if the same death had prevailed over you which has spread itself over the rest of the world, what an incongruous thing is this! It is true, God

has found no difference among men, but he has made a very great one, which arises from the dispensation of his grace, rather than from nature; being determined to have a people peculiarly distinguished by their excellent spirit and eminent piety and goodness. And this is the meaning and intent of this profession of the Christian religion. Therefore,

8. Never rest upon that bare level, which it is possible some may come up unto, that are not of this profession. Some do not profess to know God in Christ at all, as Jews and pagans for instance. What the traditional religion of the former, and the mere natural religion of the latter, will carry them to, do not think that enough for you. As to the former, our Saviour expressly tells his disciples, and all that will be his followers, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. v. 20. And yet they were the strictest sect of the Jews, as St. Paul intimates when he declares, that he had this, as well as other things to glory in, if that was of any consequence, that he himself was a Pharisee; but yet, says he, "what I thought a gain to me when I was of that religion, I reckon loss for Christ and the excellency of his knowledge, that I might know him," (Phil. iii. 5—12.) and so attain, with him, the resurrection from the dead.

You must then be able to outgo the strictest of those whom the Judaical religion had formed. For it is very apparent that when the time was come, in which Christ intended his religion should take place, after having made sufficient discovery of himself to the world, then did the Spirit of grace retire from the religion of the Jews, as being no longer of any force. And though there had been many of that religion who feared God before, yet now that the Christian institution was established, there was no ground to expect that the Spirit should breathe through that of Moses. And therefore our Lord tells them plainly, "If you believe not that I am He, that is, the Messiah and the Son of God, ye shall die in your sins," John viii. 24. And accordingly the apostle appeals to the Christians, at that time, in the following manner; "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" that is, the Gospel, Gal. iii. 2. In short, that religion which carries you in a course of holy practice, no higher than Judaism in effect, is certainly much short of the design of our Lord, and what your profession of Christianity supposes. But how much more may this be affirmed, if professors among us proceed no further, than the natural religion of the heathen world will carry them? Who, notwithstanding their profession to know God in Christ, yet go no higher than they in point of justice and truth, temperance and sobriety, and in a contempt of this world, as well as value and care of their better part, even their immortal souls: concerning which some heathens speak strangely. "I wonder," says one, "that whereas man consists of a soul and body, that there should be so much care taken about the latter, and the care of the soul be neglected by most, as a hated thing." And several of them have left us various discourses, concerning the greater mischief and malignity that there are in the diseases of the mind, than in those of the body, or the outward man. Maximus Tyrius has a large dissertation on this very subject,[a] and several others of them have wrote to the like purpose. Some of them also have expressed their reverence to God in a surprising manner. "I so live (says one) as always under God's eye and as apprehending he is ever prying into, and looking upon me." And how pleasant expectations and forethoughts have they had of a future felicity! It is really admirable to think in what transports some of them have been, in the expectations they had of a happy state for good and virtuous men. Now when paganism does outdo us in these respects, can we be said to answer our profession of Christianity, in which we have such an amiable discovery of God in Christ; and when also we have life and immortality brought to light by the Gospel, shining by clear and direct beams. To have Christians therefore basely creeping upon the face of this earth, and rolling themselves in the dust, so as some pagans would be ashamed to do! to see them wallowing in the impurities of sensual wickedness, which would have been a reproach to many of them! This is surely not to answer our profession.

9. Lastly; inasmuch as it is not the best institution in the world, that will do our business, without a living religion implanted in us, never rest nor be satisfied without that. And whereas there are two things intimated in the text, to be opposed to true religion and sincere profession, that is, a propension to evil, and an aversion to good; an indulgence in such a course of life as is indeed abominable, with a mind reprobate to every good work; know then, there must be accordingly a twofold power of religion, which must be implanted, to counterwork those two; to wit, a sin-mortifying power, and a quickening power. The former of which takes away the inclination to evil, and the latter an aversion to good.

There are sundry other particulars which I should mention, but have not time; only take this one thing with you, that it is never well till the operation of religion be from nature; that is, from our participation of the Divine nature, which thus exerts and puts forth itself.

[a] Dissert. xiii. Edit. Davis, Lond. 1740, quarto.

SERMON VIII.*

In the conclusion of the preceding discourse it was observed, that whereas it is not the best institution in the world that can do us any service, without an internal vital principle of religion within us, therefore we should never rest till we find that prevailing in ourselves. Now in order to the obtaining this divine principle so necessary to our eternal welfare, it will be of service to lay down the following directions, in subordination to that last mentioned. Particularly,

1. That wherever this is the real state of the case, that is to say, whoever have not this internal power, this vital principle of religion, let them own it, and tell their souls the real truth of the matter. The principle here spoken of is an implanted power, enabling a person to do good with promptitude, facility, and delight. Now if such a principle as this is wanting in any, let them own it, for it is a discernible thing; and consequently where it is in fact discerned, it is fit and requisite that it should be ingenuously owned, or that persons should acknowledge this to be the real truth of the case.

I have said that it is a discernible thing. Indeed, what reason can be given why it should be otherwise? How can it be imagined that persons should not perceive whether they have such a principle or power within them, or not? What! is there so small a difference between life and death, that it cannot be perceived? nay, that it cannot be perceived by oneself? There is in men however another kind of life, which makes them capable of discussing this point: to wit, the principles of rational nature, by which I am capable of self-reflection; and of debating also this very question, whether I have any further superadded principle or not. And when I hear there is really such a principle that ought to exist in the mind, my duty is to deal closely with myself, and inquire whether I, myself, have ever felt any such thing. The question is not, whether I have any sort of life or power in the general; but have I this life, this power, this which terminates on God! Do I find a living principle within my soul which carries it to God, and makes it tend to him? The apostle Paul bids the Christians at Rome to "reckon themselves to be alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" (Rom. vi. 11.) and certainly no man ought to judge falsely in his own case. There is a certain divine power which goes along with true religion; as is supposed in that passage of Scripture mentioned before, speaking of persons who had "the form of religion but denied the power thereof," 2 Tim. iii. 5. And again, says the apostle, "God hath given to us the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," 2 Tim. i. 7. And wheresoever this power or principle is, it is a kind of natural power; that is, belonging to that new and divine nature; which is in all them that belong to God; in all that are born and begotten of him accord-

* Preached April 24th, 1681.

ing to the very design of the Gospel itself. For the Gospel is appointed for this purpose, to work this divine frame in the souls of men. "The exceeding great and precious promises thereof are given us, that by them we might partake of the Divine nature;" (2 Pet. i. 4.) of a certain divine and godly nature, as those words may be read. The operations of nature, though they are silent, yet they are strong and powerful. There is no greater difficulty in the world than to withstand the course of nature. Now whether such a power is working in ourselves, is the point to be considered. Let me then ask my soul, "Do I find myself powerfully withheld from evil, as a thing against my nature? Do I find myself powerfully engaged to that which is good, as if it was connatural to me? most agreeable to my nature? Who is there that cannot tell what his nature is for and against? Do such and such acts flow from me, as the acts of nature do; from their proper and congenial principles? Had I ever such a kind of new nature, withholding me from evil, as a thing I hate; and carrying me to what is good, as a thing I love? There are a sort of living men, in respect of the life of God and religion; and there are a sort of men, who are dead: shall I be always ignorant to which party I belong? What an absurdity were it, if one should always be in doubt what sort of creature he is! that he does not know whether to call himself a man or a brute! what an absurdity, I say, is this! But certainly it is a much more important question, and of greater concernment, to have it decided whether we are the offspring of God or the devil. Whence then am I inspirited? is it from above, or is it from beneath? It is indeed most shameful to think that such multitudes of persons, that go under the name of Christians, should be contented to live all their days, like an amphibious sort of creatures, that they cannot tell themselves what sort of beings they are. Certainly he would be looked upon as a great wonder among men, who should be always ignorant of his own name; that is, not know the name which rightfully belongs to him. So in like manner it is wonderful, if persons who are destitute of the divine principle, which makes men real Christians, do not discern this to be the case. But where it is in fact discerned, it must be freely owned by all, who desire to obtain it.

2. If you apprehend this to be the case, that you have not this principle, acknowledge it however to be a real thing; and that some persons have it, though you have it not. It is too common, when the clearness and force of the matter constrain an acknowledgment, that such a divine power does exist in the souls of men, for persons to satisfy themselves with this, that they are but as other men are; and to reckon theirs to be no worse, than that which is the common case of mankind. All that lies without their compass, or above and beyond their own perceptions, they take to be mere fancy and fiction; and every body is a hypocrite, or an enthusiast, that pretends to more than they find in themselves. But for what reason is all this? Or why must the experience of any such person be thought the standard of reality? that is, that nothing can be real but what they experience to be so, or exceeds the limits of their own perceptions. What! is it not apparent to every man, that there are far more considerable realities which we know not, than those which we do know? and is there no danger of coming under the character of speaking evil of those things which we know nothing of, which some were stigmatized with by the apostle Jude with so much severity? And I would fain have such consider with themselves, what expressions they find scattered up and down in the Holy Scriptures, of such a real thing as lively affections towards God, and a principle of living religion. Particularly I would recommend to their consideration such passages as these, "The Lord is my portion, the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage," Psalm xvi. 5, 6. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God!" Psal. xlii. 1, 2. And again, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever," Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26. When you meet with such expressions as these, I would ask you; Do you believe that the persons who used them were hypocrites or enthusiasts? that there was nothing in all this but fiction? And when, on one hand, we compare the internal living religion, suitable to the import of these devout expressions, with a mere external profession, joined with disobedience, and abominable practices, on the other hand; I would fain know, which of these two does best agree with the Gospel? which is most agreeable to the sacred records, in which these and other such like passages are to be found? And if you believe that there was really such a thing as a living religion in such persons as we are speaking of in ancient times, I would fain know why you, or any one else, should have such a bad opinion of the world as to think it is quite banished now from among us. For, to what end should the Gospel be continued in the world, if not to accomplish its own design? which is to work such a realizing apprehension of divine things in the minds of men, as to influence their practice and behaviour. Or does any one think, that religion is so altered in its nature and essence, as that what was religion in former ages, is not so now? Have we then, since those times, had a new way and method of attaining felicity prescribed to us? have we any later Gospel of divine authority, that teaches us that mere formalities will serve the turn? Where is that Gospel to be found?

3. Being then convinced of the reality of such a divine principle, endeavour to understand and seriously consider the necessity of it. Consider it as a thing that does not serve barely for convenience and ornament, but to answer the most absolute necessity of our souls, and the exigence of your own case.

4. Apprehend also the impossibility of attaining it your own selves; I mean this inward principle and power of religion; or by any unassisted endeavours of your own. For I pray consider, would you have a religion that should be your own or God's creature? A religion indeed that shall be of my own forming and contrivance, I can easily make myself accord to; but why should I ever hope that this should serve my turn, or do the work? or why should I think against plain experience and my Bible, that the most excellent part of religion should be within the compass of my own power to effect, and produce? Let us think how it is with us in other cases. It is you know within the compass of human power to shape a statue, or paint in colours the picture of a man; but when the artist has done all this, can he infuse a soul into that statue, or make that picture fit to reason and discourse? No: when he has done his utmost, it will be only a mere piece of ingenious contrivance, that looks specious to the eye, but has in itself nothing of sense, life, or motion; can do nothing like what it imitates, for still something within will be necessary. So in like manner I can externally shape myself like a Christian, but can I infuse the divine life into this external form? can I make myself to live, choose and delight, love and joy in God, as a Christian? It is therefore good for us to know the bounds of our own power; what it can, and what it cannot, do in this regard. And hereupon to prevent an objection, I add another direction: to wit,

5. Seek this principle and divine power were it is to be had, even of him who alone can give it. For it may be said perhaps, "If it be not within my compass to help myself, what have I to do but to sit still?" The case itself tells you what you must do. If you cannot help yourself in that which is absolutely necessary to your welfare, you are to go to God, from whom this assistance is to be had by fervent prayer. It is the common dictate of nature to all mankind, when once they apprehend a distress, to fly to heaven for help. Finally,

6. Use all the other means of obtaining this power, which are appointed for this purpose, designedly with a view to this great and important end. To read the Holy Scriptures, to hear sermons, to meditate upon what we read and hear, to confer with living Christians, such as evidently appear to have the power of religion, are the means I speak of; but we must regard them only as means, otherwise they may be used long, and the end of all be never brought about. It is one thing how other creatures attain their end, and how a reasonable creature reaches his. An arrow reaches its mark, without considering whither it goes; but do you think a reasonable being is to attain his end so?

No; his duty is to take that course, and use those means, that lead to his end, designedly, and on purpose to secure it. As for instance: there are many that join in the ordinance of Christian worship; but if I put the inquiry to myself, What do I do this for? and cannot answer, "I use such and such means on purpose for such ends, that I may have my soul furnished with internal religion, or the life of God;" I may call these the means of grace, but it is plain I do not understand the end thereof; nor use the means designedly for the attainment of this end. When a man finds his soul empty, and destitute of the power of godliness, or the internal living principle of religion, though he does the things which God hath appointed to be means for begetting such a principle, yet it is plain he never uses them as the means to this end. But if you purposely design, by attending upon God's solemn worship, to get this vital and internal principle of real piety, this may come to something in time; and in this way you are to wait, which is of divine appointment, till the desired end is effectually obtained. For always remember this; you are bound to God, but he is not bound to you. And now for the enforcement of all this, I shall add two or three motives, and so conclude.

(1.) If you come not to this, whatever you do, with relation to matters of a religious nature, you do under a force. There are many things, it may be, you abstain from, or practise; but it is all owing to a force put upon you, if this divine principle is wanting; which must needs make religion an uncomfortable service.

(2.) Religion is nothing in itself, when it is nothing else but mere profession. Alas! how inconsiderable a thing is it! a mere show! a vain shadow! And what can be expected from what has no more of substance in it, than such an empty profession? It will be of no avail. We read that, "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk and they see his shame," Rev. xvi. 15. Truly such a profession that has no bottom, nothing internal to correspond to it, is a garment that will not be kept; you will lose it; it will be blown away from you in an evil time: it is too short while you have it, and very soon you will cease to have it, when a time of difficulty comes, which you have reason to expect.

(3.) And lastly; to go on with such a profession without ever looking after the power of godliness, will not only come to nothing, but will most highly provoke Almighty God. For I pray consider, professing religion is assuming to yourselves the name of God; therefore to profess vainly, is to profane his sacred name. And do we not know, that the God whose name we assume is a jealous God? and that he will not hold them guiltless that take his name in vain? Oh, how dreadful will the controversy be about this in the day of final account! But really there is reason to believe, that God has a controversy to manage with the Christian world before that day come: partly with those who corrupt and deprave the whole frame of the Christian institution itself; and partly with those who contradict the very design of it, in their lives and practice. And, oh! when God shall come to plead with such in this manner, "Why have you profaned such a divine religion as this? Why have you made the religion of Jesus seem to the world an impotent or ignominious thing? inasmuch, as you have formed it, it has made men no better than Turkism or paganism would have done!" how, I say, will this be answered in the great day? And in like manner, when God comes to plead his own cause against a hypocritical generation, who contented themselves with external forms and shadows, though they never so openly contradicted all that they pretended to in their behaviour; how will they be able to answer for themselves, or to justify their conduct?

Now that this may not be the case of any of us, God of his infinite mercy grant for the sake of our blessed Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be given and ascribed all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

THE

LOVE OF GOD AND OUR BROTHER,

CONSIDERED IN SEVENTEEN SERMONS,

ON 1 JOHN IV. 20.

PREACHED AT A WEEKLY MORNING LECTURE AT CORDWAINER'S HALL,

IN THE YEAR 1676.

SERMON I.*

1 JOHN IV. 20, the latter part.

HE THAT LOVETH NOT HIS BROTHER WHOM HE HATH SEEN, HOW CAN HE LOVE GOD WHOM HE HATH NOT SEEN?

The whole verse runs thus:

IF A MAN SAY, I LOVE GOD, AND HATETH HIS BROTHER, HE IS A LIAR: FOR HE THAT LOVETH NOT HIS BROTHER WHOM HE HATH SEEN, HOW CAN HE LOVE GOD WHOM HE HATH NOT SEEN?

My purpose at present is not to speak from these words either of love to God, or our brother, absolutely and singly; but comparatively only, according to that connexion which they have one with another; and the difference of the one from the other respecting their objects, as the object of the one is somewhat visible, and of the other somewhat invisible. There is one thing necessary to be premised to this intended discourse concerning the acceptation of love here, and it is this; that the apostle in this little tractate of love, as this epistle may for the most part be called, doth not design to treat of love as a philosopher, that is, to give us a precise formal notion of it; but to speak of it, with a latitude of sense; not so indeed as to exclude the formal notion of love as it is seated in the inner man, but so as to comprehend in it such apt expressions and actings of it, as according to the common sense of men were most agreeable and natural to it. And therefore speaking of love to God in chap. ii. ver. 5. he tells us, that "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected:" that is, the very perfection of the love of God stands in this, in keeping his word. So in chap. v. ver. 3. "This (saith he) is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." And speaking of the other branch of this love in chap. iii. ver. 17. he saith, "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" The apostle calls this the love of God also; it being one and the same divine principle of love implanted by God himself, which spreads itself to several objects all under one and the same communication, as having more or less of the divine beauty and loveliness appearing in them.

So that if any one should go about here to play the sophister, and say, "Love is a thing, which hath its whole nature and residence in the inner man. Define it never so accurately, you will find it to be wholly and entirely seated there. Now therefore, since nothing can be denied of itself, let it be confined and shut up there never so closely, admit that no expression be made of it one way or another, yet I need not be solicitous on this account: for let me walk and do as I list, the love of God may be in me for all that; since love is such a thing, wherever it is, as must have its whole nature within one." To this the apostle would reply, No, I do not speak of love in so strict a sense. Love, as I intend it, is not to be taken so; or if it were, it must however be supposed to have that strength and vigour with it, as to enable it to be the governing principle of a man's life; to affect and influence his own soul; and so to run through the whole course of his daily practice. I speak of love according to what it virtually comprehends in it; namely, conformity to the will of God, and obedience to his laws whereby that will is made known. And thus love is elsewhere taken in Scripture also. Our Saviour you know gathers up our duty into love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself; upon these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," Matt. xxii. 37—40. The apostle also tells us, that "love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. xiii. 10. Therefore love to God and our brother, in this place, must be taken for the summary or abridgment of our whole duty; an epitome of the two tables; a virtual comprehension of all we owe either to God or man, that is, universal holiness, and an entire obedience to the Divine will. But still in this system or collection of duties, love, strictly and formally taken, is to be considered as the primary and principal thing; as seated and enthroned in the heart and soul; and as the original principle, upon which all other duties do depend, and from whence they must proceed. The acceptation of love being thus settled, there are three things that I chiefly intend to show from this Scripture.

First, That there is a greater difficulty of living in the exercise of love to God than towards man, upon this account, that he is not the object of sight, as man is; and consequently, that the duties of the second table are, ac-

* Preached May 24th, 1676.

cording to this our present state of dependence on external sense, more easy and familiar to us than the duties of the first. Hence proceeds that general propensity, which it greatly concerns us to be aware of; to acquiesce and take up our rest in a fair, civil deportment among men, without ever being concerned to have our souls possessed with holy, lively, and powerful affections towards God.

SECONDLY, I shall show, that this impossibility of seeing God, doth not however excuse us from exercising love to him in this our present state. It is indeed one reason why he is actually so little loved in the world, but it is no sufficient excuse. For the impossibility of seeing God doth not render it impossible to love him, and to live in his love, while we are here in this world, dwelling in the flesh. And this also is plainly grounded in the text; for this vehement expostulation of the apostle, "If any man do not love his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" plainly supposes it to be an intolerable thing not to love God. And therefore hence he takes the advantage of enforcing the duty of loving our brother, because otherwise we should be convicted, and proved to be no lovers of God; taking it for granted, that this would be esteemed a most horrid thing, even at the very first sight. Otherwise his exhortation would have no force nor pungency in it; but would be flat, and insignificant. Therefore he plainly supposes here, that though God's not being the object of sight doth render the exercise of love to him, upon that account, more difficult; yet it doth not render it impossible, or the neglect of it at all excusable; but considers it as a thing to which men are most indispensably obliged. This therefore will be my second head to discourse upon from this Scripture. And then in the

THIRD place, My design is to show you the absurdity of their profession of love to God, who do not love their brother also; and how false and fulsome a thing it is for men to pretend to any thing of sanctity and religion, while they neglect the duties of the second table. Of these we shall speak in order, and begin now with the

FIRST observation, That the impossibility of seeing God renders the exercise of our love to him more difficult, than the exercise of it towards man whom we do see. In this doctrine there are two branches, which are to be distinctly considered.

I. That it is more difficult to love God than our brother.

II. That one great reason of it is, that we cannot see God, as we do our brother.

I. As to the former of these, that there is a greater difficulty in the exercise of love to God than to men, we may collect from the common observation of the world. For it is very plain and evident, that the common course and practice of men shows what is more easy to them, and what less; it plainly discovers which way they are most inclined. This is the thing, which I understand here by difficulty; and it answers the intent and force of the apostle's expression, "How can he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, love God whom he hath not seen?" This plainly must be understood in a relative sense, and have respect to some agent, and here must have reference to ourselves. It is less easy to us; that is, it is a thing which our nature in our present state doth less incline us to, actually to live in the exercise of love toward God, than towards men. And, I say, what men are more or less inclined to, is to be seen in their common course; and from the common observation of the state and posture of the world we may gather, that men in general are less inclined to love God, than one another. And though it be very true, there is too little of love, kindness, and mutual affection among men, and a great neglect of justice, common honesty, and the other duties of the second table, which love must be understood to comprehend; yet certainly the instances are not so rare of persons that are kind, courteous, affectionate, and well-humoured one to another, as of persons well-affected towards God. This is a thing which commands our assent even at the very first sight. Nay, further, though it is also no less true, that men are too much lovers of themselves, to the exclusion not only of God, but of men too; yet certainly there is more of love to men, than to God, prevailing in the world. And to make this out let us go to the usual evidences and expressions of love; such as mindfulness of others, trust in them, a readiness to be concerned for their interest, a studious care to please them, loving to converse with them, or seeking and being pleased with it, and the like. If we descend, I say, to the considerations of such evidences of love as these are, we shall find that man is generally better beloved than God is. And that this may gain the greater possession of our souls, let us a little consider these particular evidences of love; and then see whether men are not generally more beloved by one another, than God is by them; hereby we shall plainly see, what is most agreeable to their temper, and what not. And,

1. *Mindfulness*, or a kind remembrance of others, is a most natural evidence of love. But what! are men who transact affairs one with another, so apt to forget each other, as they are to forget God? It is given us as a common distinctive character of a wicked man, that he is one that hath not God in all his thoughts. For thus saith the Psalmist, "The wicked in the pride of his countenance," that is, his heart expressing itself in the haughtiness of his countenance, and his supercilious looks, "will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts," Ps. x. 4. And by the same divine penman a wicked man, and a forgetter of God, are used as exegetical expressions, Psal. ix. 17. But there is many a wicked man that will kindly remember his friends, his relations, even his very companions in wickedness. And if we demand an account of ourselves, do we not find it more easy and familiar to us to entertain thoughts concerning our friends, and relations, from day to day, than we do to think of God? Are we not also more inclined to love them than God? What we love we are not apt to forget. "The desire of our soul is to thee, and to the remembrance of thy name," Isa. xxvi. 8. Our love to thee, which naturally works by desire, will not let us forget thee; it is too deeply impressed and rooted in us ever to lose the remembrance of the object of our love. This is one thing that showeth, that God is a great deal less loved by men, than they are by one another. Again,

2. To be apt to *trust* in one another, is a very natural evidence and expression of love. Whom we hate, we cannot trust; whom we love entirely, we know not how to distrust. One of the characters of love is this, "It hopeth all things, it believeth all things:" (1 Cor. xiii. 7.) it abhors to entertain a jealous surmise of the person who is the object of it. Now let the matter be tried by this also, and how much more ready are men to trust to one another, than they are to trust to God! What is there so vain, so uncertain, so unstable, which they are not more forward to repose their trust in, than in him? Therefore, saith the apostle to Timothy, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded; nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God," 1 Tim. vi. 17. Which charge implies the propensity of men's minds, rather to trust in the most fugitive, uncertain, vanishing shadows, than in God himself. This is an argument, that he hath but little love among men; that he cannot be trusted; and that few will give him credit. But how safely and quietly do men repose a trust and confidence in one another? And indeed if faith and trust were not natural to man, there would be no such thing as commerce, which is the bond of human society. The world must dissolve and break up; all must live apart in dens, and caves, and wildernesses, and have nothing to do one with another, if they could not trust one another. Without mutual confidence, there would be an end of all traffic. But to this, human society shows there is a disposition; and you can easily find out persons, in whom you would as safely repose your trust and confidence, as in your own hearts. You can say, "I would put my life into such a man's hands, or whatever is most dear to me." And if that person should but promise to undertake an affair, saying, "I will do such a thing for you, trust me with it, leave it upon me;" you would be as quiet, as if you saw the business done and already effected. But how unapt are the hearts of men to trust in God! and this it is, that holds off the world from him. He hath sent the Gospel of peace and reconciliation to mankind, and therein declares the good tidings, how willing he is that the controversies should be taken up between men and himself; yet none will believe it, none think him in earnest, till he is pleased himself to draw them. "Who hath believed," saith the prophet, "our report? or to

whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Isaiah liii. 1. Plainly intimating, that the arm of God must go forth to make a man believe him, and take his word. A strong argument, that he hath but little love among men, when he cannot be trusted; or, at least, when so few will give him credit!

3. A *readiness* to be concerned for one another's interest and reputation, is also a natural evidence of love. And we know how easily men are drawn in for one another, and take part with a neighbour, or a friend, when they are traduced, and evil spoken of; and especially when they see indignities and affronts put upon them. There is usually a great siding among persons upon such occasions. "Such a one has spoken ill of my friend, I must stand up for him to the uttermost. Another has injured him, purloined from him that which was his, and the like; I must right him." Should we not reckon him a base fellow, who should behold an act of stealing committed upon the estate of another, and not make a discovery of it, or endeavour to have him righted? But how little generally are men concerned for God, and his affairs! What robberies are every where committed against him, and yet how few do lay it to heart! How evil is he spoken of many times, and his truth, and his ways! But how few can say, "The reproaches wherewith they have reproached thee, have fallen upon me?" Ps. lxix. 9. It is true, this is the sense of David, when he cries out, "As with a sword in my bones mine enemies reproach me, while they say unto me daily, Where is thy God?" Ps. xlii. 10. It is to me as if one was forcing a sword into my bones, even into my marrow; a most intolerable torment, to be upbraided in respect to my God: that he is either impotent, and cannot help me; or that he is false to me, and answereth not the trust I have reposed in him. But how few are there of David's mind in this case! How many oaths and blasphemies can they hear, wherein the sacred name of God is rent and torn, and yet their hearts are not pierced at all! Further,

4. An earnest study to *please* men is a natural expression of love. Now let the matter be estimated by this, how much less God is loved in the world than men. It is an ordinary thing with them to study to please one another, to humour one another. "Such and such things I do, and such I omit, lest I should displease a relation, a friend, or one that I have frequent occasion to converse with." But how few are the persons, who can say, "This I do purposely to please my God!" or with Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!" Gen. xxxix. 9. A man will oftentimes cross his own will, to comply with that of another; and reckon it a great piece of civility to recede from his own inclination in order to gratify another person, when he can do it without any great inconvenience. But how rare a thing is this with respect to God! To be able to say, "In such a thing I displease myself, that I may please God; I cross my own will, to comply with his." Among men there is especially one sort, that we are more concerned and obliged to please, as far as we can; and that is, such as rule over us. We are bound to please our superiors; and to obey them, that we may do so. And there is no obedience either to God or man, that is right in its own kind, but what proceeds from love, and is an evidence as well as an effect of it. "If ye love me," saith Christ, "keep my commandments," John xiv. 15. "And this is the love of God," saith St. John, "that we keep his word," I John v. 3. Moreover, the duties of the second table, which we owe to men, particularly that of obedience to superiors, are summed up all in love. The apostle having in the 13th chapter of this epistle to the Romans, pressed subjection to the higher powers, in that they are of God, adds in the 10th verse, that "to love one another is the fulfilling of the law." "Render," saith he, in the same discourse, "to all their dues: tribute, to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honour, to whom honour," Rom. xiii. 7, 8. Yet observe, all is wrapt up in love; for the command is immediately after, "to owe no man any thing, but to love one another:" and in short there is nothing which love doth not comprehend, or to which it doth not incline us.

But however, though such obedience be due to our human superiors as proceedeth from love; yet how apparent is the case, that herein is greater love shown to men, than to God, though too little to both! There is indeed too little regard to laws both human and divine, in the most important matters; yet surely a great deal less to the latter than, to the former. The thing speaks itself as to common observation; and we daily see how much more human laws do influence men's practice, than those which are divine; and that persons that are a great deal more prone to be precisely observant of them about matters, which they themselves do otherwise count indifferent, than of the laws of God, which are about the most necessary matters, and which also are acknowledged as such. Thus it hath long apparently been in the Christian world. A greater account hath been made of this and that arbitrary circumstance, than of the substance of religion itself. More stress hath been put upon the cream, the salt, and the oil, and such additionals of human invention, than on the great obligations of the baptismal covenant. And if it were not so, it could never have been desired by any, that we should rather be all infidels, than not be Christians after their fashion, and in their way. For that it hath been evidently so, may be seen in this; that this whole nation itself hath at once suffered under the interdict of excommunication in former days. All the doors of our churches and chapels have been shut up, only for some non-compliance with this or that human addition; thus they choose we should rather be no Christians at all, than not have Christianity with those additions. This shows a greater disposition in the minds of men to obey human laws, in circumstantial matters; than divine laws, in those points which are most necessary and important.

What then is more apparent, than that God is less loved in the world than men are; since persons are more forward to show respect to them, than to him? Not but that we are bound to show respect to them too, especially to those who represent him, and as his vicegerents, rule over us. But surely it was never intended, that when we are to obey men for God's sake, we should regard him less; we should rather do it so much the more on this very account.

In a word, love ought to be an ingredient in every act of obedience; even to human government, as I have said before, as well as to that which is divine. What love is expressed in that great canon of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;" (Matt. vii. 12.) that is, you ought to judge the case thus; "What would I wish to be done to me in such a man's circumstances? Would not I expect to be obeyed and reverenced, if I were a magistrate? My love to myself would incline me to expect it. Therefore my own love to myself, being the measure of that love which I owe to another, should oblige me to show the same respect to him in his circumstances, that I would wish to be shown to me in the like circumstances." But here is the iniquity of the case: those whom we should honour and love in the Lord for his sake, men are apt to put the supreme respect upon; which is to dethrone the supreme Lord of all, and to set up his creature in his place. And as to other persons, who are not invested with power and authority over us; how many are there of those, who will not wrong men, or do them any injustice! How many that are most highly civil, and candid in their converse with them, and strictly careful not to disoblige them by their behaviour! But who sticks at disobliging God, or makes a difficulty of disobeying him? Again,

5. Towards men there is a disposition deeply to *regret* any offence we unwarily have given them. When we though undesignedly, have done another an injury; if, for instance, we but casually tread on his foot, or some such like matter, we presently say, "I am afraid I have hurt you, I am sorry for it." Common civility would oblige one to express such a regret. And if we by any rash word or weak action have trespassed upon another, we are reckoned almost unfit for society, if we do not show a sense of our having offended such person. Men that are not very ill-natured indeed, are apt to make apologies, and desire to be forgiven, in cases where they have offended through inadvertency. But how much is it otherwise with men towards God, who trespass upon him every day, and never cry to him for mercy! who wear away their lives, from one month, year, and day, to another, in continual devi-

ations from him, and rebellions against him, without its ever coming into their thoughts to say, "Lord, forgive me, that I have lived so long in the world, as it were, without thee! that I have carried it to thee as if I owed thee no duty nor service! Lord, I have offended, I desire to put an end to this course, and to do so no more." Finally,

6. A *love* of converse or delight in each other's company, is another expression of that regard which men have for one another. Man is naturally a sociable creature; and how few do you know, or ever have known, who do not affect company! Some few instances there are of persons, that are of a gloomy retired temper; but generally men seek to converse with one another, and take pleasure in it. But alas, how little do they care to converse with God! They had rather be any where, than in his presence. Many, otherwise ingenious persons, men of good dispositions and of facetious tempers, who, as they delight in converse themselves, so their conversation proves delightful to others; yet care not at what distance they keep themselves from God. How many, I say, of such ingenious persons do we know; who yet neglect to pray to God; take no pleasure in having any thing to do with him; take his holy name in vain; and set themselves at a distance from him, by their own evil practices? It may be they will come to the solemnities of public worship for the sake of order, and to express their respect to others; so that even in those things which are peculiarly appropriated to him, they show more respect to men, than to God. And how sociable soever their temper is one with another; yet with the Almighty they care not to converse at all, but say to him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job xxi. 14. From whence we may conclude, that to man in his present state, it is even natural to wish the great God out of being. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," Ps. xiv. 1. "I would there were no God; my vote shall go for it, that there were none; I could wish him out of the universe."[a] But you never heard of such a monster among men, as to wish there was no man beside himself. You never heard of such a hater of mankind, as to wish the whole human race into nothing.

Now all these things concur to evidence or prove to us, that God is much less beloved in the world, than men are by one another. And it must be allowed that the common practice of men showeth their inclination. This is discovered by constant experience and observation, and the very aspect of men's deportment doth represent this as the true state of things. And, as I observed before, men may find something of it by the experience they have of themselves; even those who have applied themselves to the business of religion, seriously and in good earnest. They find they can presently set their love on work towards this or that creature; but how long an exercise of the thoughts doth it require, and how great is the difficulty and toil, before the heart can be wrought up into a frame of actually loving God!

So that the former branch of this truth, that men are more inclinable to love one another, than they are to love God, is abundantly clear. The latter is, that it proceeds in a great measure from this cause, that God is not seen by us, as we are by one another; but this must be reserved for another discourse.

SERMON II.*

In my former discourse I told you, that my design from this scripture was not to handle singly and apart either the love of God, or of our brother; but to speak of them comparatively, with respect to the greater or less facility attending the exercise of the one or the other, according to their different objects; the object of the one being visible, and of the other, invisible.

The first observation raised from the words, after setting the acceptation of love, was this: That it is more difficult to live in the exercise of love to God, than towards men; because he is not the object of sight, as we are one to another. In which doctrine, as we observed, there are two things to be considered.

I. That it is more difficult to love God than our brother. This has been proved from experience, and the common observation of the world, in several particulars. The

II. Branch contained in this proposition, which we are now to speak to, is this; That one great reason of this difficulty is, that men cannot see God, whereas they do see one another. In the prosecuting of this part of my subject it will be more necessary to insist on the explication, than on the proof of it; and still more upon the application, than on either of the former. Something I shall endeavour to say to all, as the time shall allow.

For the explication of this matter, namely, How we are to understand, that the not seeing God as we do men, is a cause of its being more difficult to love him than it is to love them, take these few propositions. As,

1. That it is not an impossible thing in itself to love the unseen God: for if the not seeing him did make it impossible to love him, he could never be loved by any one; because he is seen by none with the bodily eye, as we see one another. But it is plainly implied in our text, that there are some that love God, notwithstanding his invisibility. And the apostle therefore endeavours only to evince the absurdity and guilt of not loving our brother, because from thence a man may be convicted of being no lover of God, which he accounts as a most intolerable thing. The not seeing him therefore doth not make it impossible to love God, but only renders it less easy. That is, it is not simply impossible, and therefore he who can do all possible things, can make the nature of man to love him; he, I say, can form the nature of man to the love of himself.

2. The not seeing of God cannot be understood to be a necessary cause of this sad thing. It is not such a cause as doth necessitate this evil and horrid effect. For that would be to reflect upon God, as if he had made a reasonable and intelligent creature, that was by the necessity of his nature prevented from loving him. This would be to suppose, that the seeing of God with the bodily eye, were necessary to the loving of him; which would make it altogether impossible that he should be loved by any of us at all, since he is visible to none. Nay, we might say further, he were never to be loved by any being, no not by himself, on the same grounds. The cause therefore of this difficulty is such as doth not necessitate the thing caused: for that indeed would imply that the nature of man is such as would never admit of his loving God, and so there would be a contradiction in men's very nature; to wit, that they should be capable of being blessed in him only, whom at the same time they are not capable of loving. For experience showeth, that there is nothing else in which we can be blessed; nothing below, or besides God. Therefore this would infer, that man must be a creature made on purpose for misery; for it is evident he can be happy in no creature; neither in God could he be happy, if it were simply impossible he should ever love him, which is to cast the whole matter upon God himself. For if this were the case, then a man might say, "God hath given me such a nature as renders it impossible for me even to exercise love towards him." But far be it from us that we should entertain such a thought of God! that he should make man, a creature endued with an intellectual mind, and yet not capable of loving him, who is the Author and Original of his life and being! This it were even horrid to think of. And again,

3. Nor hath this always been the cause of such an effect; for there are some that are actually brought to love God, though they never saw him in the sense we speak of, to wit, with the bodily eye. It was not so with man from the beginning, that because he could not see God, therefore he loved him not, or was for that reason the less inclined to love him. He was formed at first for the love of his Maker, so as to take the highest complacency in

[a] For it is in the Hebrew text: אמר נבל בלבו אין אלהים that is, *The fool hath said in his heart, NO GOD.* And so it may as well be understood to signify the fool's wish, as his judgment. And this is the more likely to be the meaning; inasmuch as it is manifest, that this is not the speech of some particular persons, or of some rare instances of most monstrous horrid wickedness; but it is spoken of apostate man in general, concerning whom it is said in ver. 3. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one.

* Preached May 31st, 1676.

him, and to make him his supreme delight. Man, I say, was made thus upright; but he hath since been trying inventions, to see if he could be happy any other way, or upon other terms. And therefore since this is not the necessary, nor the constant, cause of such an effect as this, we must add,

4. That it cannot be a cause of itself alone, but must needs be a cause in conjunction with some other cause; by the intervention of some other thing, by the concurrence of which this sad effect is brought about. For if it be true, that there have been men who have loved God, though they never saw him with the bodily eye, there must be some other cause of the want of love to God in those persons who love him not, besides his invisibility. Because otherwise, since God was always invisible, and never seen with the bodily eye, it would necessarily follow that he could never have been loved at all. And hence again we may observe,

5. That the other cause therefore, which is considerable in this case, must needs be the degeneracy of man's nature. It is not to be imagined, that man in a state of integrity should be incapable of loving God further than he could see him; or that the sight of his eye should be the conductor of his affections, and of the motions of his soul, which is a reasonable intelligent spirit. But the nature of man is not now what it was. Certainly the case was better with him formerly, than it is now in this lapsed state, in which we must confess him to be; since there is so great an alteration in his very nature. This even the heathens themselves have seen, confessed, and lamented. I remember Plato brings in Socrates somewhere speaking to this sense, upon a supposition of the pre-existence of his soul: "There was a time, says he, when I could have seen, and did see, the *first beauty*, the highest and most perfect comeliness and loveliness; but now being subject to the body, all that impression is vanished and gone." And divers others have complained of that great darkness and ignorance which was in them; and of the bonds and chains that held their souls fast, so that they could not tell how to exercise the powers of them towards invisible things. It cannot be then, but the matter must be resolved into this; that if our not seeing God is the reason why he is so little loved, it is because our nature is grown so corrupt and degenerate, that what we see, takes with us most. And again,

6. We may add hereupon, that this degeneracy of the nature of man must needs stand very much in the depression of the mind, or intellectual powers, and the exaltation of sense. For the mind and the understanding, by the light which God had placed there, were to guide and govern the man; instead of which, sense usurped the throne, and took the government of him into its own hands. During the distraction and interruption of that order, which God had originally set between the superior and inferior powers of man's soul, sense, I say, usurped the throne, and took the government into its own hands, and man has ever since basely yielded, and subjected himself to its dominion, so that nothing moves him now but what is sensible. In this therefore the degeneracy of man very much consists, that sense dictates, and is become the governing principle of his life. And,

7. We add further, for of this more will be said when we come to the use or application, that the not seeing God can be only a temporary cause of our not loving him; inasmuch as it is only a cause, with the intervention or concurrence of another cause, I mean, the disturbance of that primitive order, which God had settled between one faculty and another, belonging to the nature of man. Our not seeing God could never have prevented us from loving him, if things had not been so deplorably out of course with us, or this confusion of order had never been brought in among us. Therefore this cause is only temporary, that is, so long as this great depravation of our nature doth prevail. But there are those, with whom it either doth not, or shall not, prevail always. There are some, blessed be God, in whom this distemper and disorder of the soul of man is cured. For God hath sent his Son, the Redeemer, into the world on purpose to undertake this cure, and to rectify and set things right in men's spirits. And "Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity,"[a] and therefore surely from this monstrous kind of iniquity, the most horrid of all the rest, to wit, that most unrighteous, unequal thing, that man should not love his own Original, and the Author of his life and being. Therefore it was the resolution of the Redeemer, "I will die, but I will remedy this matter. I will give myself, I will sacrifice all that I have, but I will bring this matter to rights again." I say that it is only a temporary cause, which has been assigned of men's not loving God, subsisting only so long as man's nature continues depraved: which is not only curable, but in part is actually cured, when the work of regeneration is set on foot, and the Spirit of the Redeemer has begun to obtain in the soul; and it is completely cured, when the new creature becomes mature, and is risen up to its full growth and perfection. But in the mean time, so long as this distemper in the nature of man continues, our not seeing God is one great reason why we love him not. For that way of apprehending God, which should be the same with respect to invisible objects, that sight is with respect to those which are visible, is wanting. And this apprehension will still be wanting, that must supply the room of sight, so long as this degeneracy remains in us. While it is thus with us, that we are subject to the power of sense which has usurped the throne, the soul is destitute of those clear conceptions, those lively and vivid apprehensions, that issue in love to God. And so the great neglects of God, and the intolerable disrespect and affronts that are put upon him in the world, are, in a great measure, according to the present degenerate state of man, to be resolved into this cause, namely, that he is not seen. Hence it is, that so many persons neither love, nor regard him at all.

Having thus explained the point we are upon, I now proceed to evince this truth, that one great reason why men are not so apt to love God as they are one another, is because he is not the object of sight as we are. And this I shall do from the following considerations, namely,—that the object is certainly such as would command our love, if it could be apprehended aright; and—if it be not so, it must proceed from some defect in ourselves.

1. That the object is certainly such as would command our love, if it were rightly apprehended. For he is most amiable in himself; and has infinitely more obliged man, than they can ever oblige one another.

God, I say, is most amiable in himself, who is chiefly to be loved by all, though he is not actually so; as he is confessed to be the supreme object of our understanding, while in reality he is least known. "God is light,"[b] says the apostle in one place of this epistle; and "God is love,"[c] as he affirms in two others; a being of pure light and glorious love. Would he not be loved therefore, if apprehended aright? "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods!" as we find Moses speaking with admiration, "Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"[d] God is a Being wherein the most perfect wisdom, goodness, power, truth, and righteousness, make so admirable a temperature, that it is not possible he should not be loved, if he were but known.

Besides, he has infinitely more obliged men than they ever have or can oblige one another. Take any man whatsoever, whose soul you may suppose to be utterly destitute of the love of God, how low and abject soever he his state, yet you may say, "Thou impious wretch! thou hast not the love of God in thee; though he hath done more for thee, than all the men in the world whatever could do, even though they should all join together to oblige thee. For is he not the Author of thy life and being? Could the invention of all the men in the world have formed such a creature as thou art out of nothing? Is he not a continual spring of life to thee? Thou livest and movest, and hast thy being in him every moment. And it is with this design, that God doth continue to thee thy breath and being, that thou mightest feel after him, though thou canst not see him, and also labour to find him, though he be not far from every one of us. Thou art his offspring, as even heathen poets tell us:[e] no creature could ever have made thee. No man is always doing thee good every moment, and at all times; but thou art continually sustained by the Divine hand. The great God who made thee, feeds thee

a Tit. ii. 14. b 1 John i. 5. c 1 John iv. 16. d Exod. xv. 11. e See Acts xvii. 27, 28.

with breath from moment to moment, and is always exercising towards thee sparing and sustaining mercy; for his patience and bounty always concur together, in every moment's addition to thy breath." It were altogether impossible then but that God should be loved, more than all other beings, if he were but known. And then,

2. Since an object so excellent in himself, and beneficent towards us, must have been loved by us, if there were not some defect in ourselves, therefore it plainly appears that there is a defect; and it is owing to this, that sense has got dominion over us, and the ruling sway within us. For if he be not loved by any one, it must proceed from hence, that those lively apprehensions are wanting, which sense is the instrument of with reference to visible objects. This is in itself most plain, that such an object as the blessed God is, could not but attract our love, if there were not some great defect in ourselves, or if sense had not the power and dominion over us. And that it has such power and dominion, may be seen by comparing these two things together: to wit, that generally the objects of sense do make great impressions upon us; but the things that fall not within the reach thereof, or exceed its sphere, usually make little, or none at all.

The things of sense, I say, in the first place do usually make a great impression upon us, and are the things that have the deepest influence and operation upon the minds of men, so long as they are destitute of the grace of God. Hence it is, that men, who are yet in an unregenerate state, are said to be "in the flesh."[f] And a wicked man is spoken of as one, that is lost in the flesh: so that there is nothing comes near him, nothing affects the soul, nothing reacheth his heart, but what some way or other doth slide in upon him, through the mediation of his external senses. It is true, sense is the instrument of conveying to us the knowledge of many things that are not the objects thereof. But when any are spoken of under this character, of being in the flesh, it bespeaks the degeneracy of man while unrenewed to be so great, that he is a creature so wrapt up in the flesh, as that nothing can come at him, but what is sensible. And therefore of such persons it is said, "They savour the things of the flesh."[g] While this is the state and case of any man, it is no wonder that things, which are not the objects of sight, should move his heart but little. It is evident to all that make any observations upon themselves, how mighty a power sensible things have upon them. A danger that we see, how do we start at it? Without using any intervening thoughts, as soon as we see it we dread it. How apt are we also to be amused, by the variety of sensible objects! how apt to be ensnared and enticed by them! Therefore such as have a due care of themselves, what a watch and guard do they set upon their senses? For this purpose holy Job is said to "make a covenant with his eyes."[h] And we also read of a heathen philosopher, that would outdo Job, by putting out his eyes, that he might be able to contemplate the better; acting herein agreeably to this Arabian proverb, Shut the windows, that the house may be light. Thus it is evident how great a power sense has over us, to draw us this way and that. And,

On the other hand, it is also obvious to experience, how little power, in general, those things have usually over us which fall not under the senses. Not only the objects of our love, but of our other affections, signify nothing, make no impression, if they be invisible. Therefore it is spoken of as a characteristical note of the saints, that "they look not at the things that are seen, which are but temporal, but at the things that are not seen, and are eternal."[i] We read particularly of Noah, who "being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, and through faith prepared an ark for the saving of his house."[k] Do but consider; here was one man, and only one in a whole world, that was actually moved by the discovery and report of things not seen as yet, who when he was warned by God of such and such things coming, though unseen at present, admitted into his soul a pious preventing fear. I say there seems to have been but one such man in a whole world, and he is thereupon recorded with honour in the book of God for it. So rare a thing is it that a man should be influenced by things not subject to sight, that if there be but one Noah, any one such person in the world, Record him for it (saith God) to future ages, for his excellency in this, that he took notice of the monition, or warning from God, as to things not seen as yet, so as to do what was agreeable to the exigence of the case. Accordingly he stands at this day as an eminent example to all succeeding ages. And you find, that it is the same faith which distinguisheth those who belong to God, and is the principal rule of their life; to wit, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen."[l] Plain therefore and visible it is to us, and so it must be to all the world, that most persons are governed by their senses; while things not sensible never move, nor signify any thing with us. How plainly doth experience every day speak in this case! When we tell men of a judgment to come, a dreadful tribunal where they must all appear, and an endless state of things, that is before them; we are to them as men that mock. They cry out, "Surely you are but in jest; you mean not as you say, when you tell us of such dreadful things; we see nothing like it, nothing tending that way." Thus in like manner it is said, that when the inhabitants of Sodom were admonished by Lot, that fire and brimstone were ready to come down upon their heads to punish the most flagitious enormities of that people, "he was to them as one that mocked."[m] So we are told this will be the language of scoffers in the latter days, "Where is the promise of his coming?"[n] As much as to say, "You have told us often of the great and terrible day, when the sign of the Son of man shall be seen in the heavens, and that there shall be most terrible concomitants of his appearance; but we see nothing like it, no token of its approach, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Thus the judgment of sinners is framed only by what is seen; and what is not seen, is not at all minded; not regarded by them. So David says, "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God," Ps. lv. 19. They say, "All things are as they were. There is no alteration fallen out so important, as seems to portend such dreadful things as you talk of. The sun runs its course as it has been wont, and there is the same succession of day and night, summer and winter, as in former times. Who therefore can make us believe, that there is such a day coming as that which is so much talked of?"

Now, since we find that God is such a one as you have heard; namely, most amiable in himself, and beneficent towards us, and consequently that he would most certainly be beloved, if there were not some great defect in us which hinders so blessed an effect; and since we find, that there is such a defect, that we have promoted sense to be the ruler in us, and that sensible things make a deep impression on us, while things that are not subject to the senses have little or no regard from us; we have all the reason in the world to conclude, that the great reason why men love not God is, because they do not see him. He is out of sight, and they regard him not.

I thought to have insisted on many things by way of use, as I proposed, after having explained, and evinced, this second branch of my first proposition; but I shall now only hint at some things, which I purpose to speak more largely to in the next discourse.

In the first place, we may infer and gather from hence, that the apostacy and degeneracy in which this world has been and is still involved, is very dreadful; in that it hath destroyed man's right disposition towards God. If it had wrought only so far as to deface men's limbs, and torn them into monstrous shapes, it had not been by many degrees so tremendous; but it hath deformed the mind, and spoiled the temper of the spirit as it hath reference to God most of all, which is a thing never enough to be deplored.

Again, we may further infer, that there is a necessity for something or other to supply the room of our not seeing God, as man did in the state of innocence; inasmuch as he is not seen by us now in this lapsed state, so as to furnish us with such apprehensions of him as to engage us to love him. There must be something analogous to sight, some communications of God's grace, that must influence our hearts to love him; without which it is impossible.

f Rom. vii. 5. g Rom. viii. 5. h Job xxxi. 1. i 2 Cor. iv. 18. k Heb. xi. 7. l Heb. xi. 1. m Gen. xix. 14. n 2 Pet. iii. 4

Moreover, I would observe that it is a wonderful mercy that God hath not wholly concealed himself from men; that though he cannot be seen by the bodily eye, yet he hath vouchsafed to show us, how we may attain to the knowledge of him. No man, saith John the Baptist, hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him, John i. 18. How then ought Divine grace to be admired for this!

We may also hereupon see the great necessity of much Gospel preaching, and that very lively and serious too. There are a great many that are apt to say, "What needs such ado? why must we have sermons so often?" Surely the exigence of the state of man is but little considered by them that say so. Do not we need to be often put in mind of the invisible God, when men love him not, because they see him not? If they should hear of him neither, what would become of them? Certainly they misunderstand the state of things among us, who think every little in this kind is too much.

Finally, we may see how little reason we have to be in love with this state of dependence upon sense, which amuseth our souls, usurpeth the power over them, and so disturbs and muddles our minds as to divert them from their true objects. How little reason have we to be fond of living in and walking after the flesh; which is to live the life of a creature, as it were, buried alive. Surely, I say, we have no reason to be fond of such a life.

SERMON III.*

HAVING told you in the introduction to the first discourse, that love to God and man is the summary of our whole duty, I proposed to insist on these three things.

FIRST, that there is a greater difficulty of living in the exercise of love towards God than towards men on this account, that he is not the object of sight, as man is; or, in other words, men are much more disposed to love one another, rather than God, inasmuch as they can see each other.

SECONDLY, that although this is one great reason why men in reality love God so little, yet it is no excuse.

THIRDLY, I proposed also to show you the manifest falsehood and absurdity of any one's pretending to love God, who does not love his brother also. The first of these we have made some progress in, and in the handling of it, told you, that it contained these two parts:

I. That it is more difficult to love God than our brother.

II. That one great reason of it is, that we cannot see God as we do one another.

As to the former of these, we have shown you in several particulars, that how much soever mutual love is wanting in the world; yet it is not so hard a matter to find out instances of kind, good natured men, who are friendly and fair in their deportment one to another, as it is to find persons who are kindly affected towards God. In the prosecution of this matter, the usual expressions or evidences of human love were considered. Such as mindfulness, or a kind remembrance of one another; mutual trust; a readiness to be concerned for each other's interest, and reputation; an earnest study to please, and oblige; and a disposition deeply to regret an offence, though given unwarily; and finally, a love of converse, or delighting in each other's society, is another expression as we observed, of that regard, which several persons have for one another. In all which respects it appears from constant observation and experience, that men are more disposed to show love and respect to one another than to God.

As to the latter of these propositions, that all this proceeds for the most part from this cause, namely, that God is not seen by men as they are seen by one another, several propositions were first laid down for the explication of this point; and then two considerations for the eviction of it, tending to show, that it must necessarily be from some great defect in the nature of man, that the most excellent and most amiable object of all others, should not be generally loved by us. After which, two or three hints by way of use were given you, and so we concluded the last exercise on this subject.

I now proceed to a larger and more close application of this important truth.

1. Hence we infer, that man is in a very low and lapsed state. The present state of man, I say, is a lapsed state. He is fallen, and fallen very low indeed, when this is the case with him, that he is less apt to love God than man; and only for this reason, because he cannot see God. It argues, I say, man to be sunk very low, and greatly fallen. And can we hereupon think otherwise? For what! can it ever enter into the imagination of any of us, that God did ever create such a thing as the reasonable intelligent spirit of man, his own offspring, image, and glory, with an original indisposition to the love of himself? Do we think that God gave such a nature to man at first, as was capable of being employed about spiritual objects, and yet with this strange defect or flaw in it, that it should be impossible to this nature of man to love the Author of itself, and the Original of its own life and being? This cannot be. It can never be, that a reasonable spirit, the immediate issue of the great Father of spirits, should be so alienated from its own Father; and that it should be so dependent upon sense, as not to be able to love him from whom it came, or any thing which is above the sphere of that base principle, which now presumes to give laws to the immortal mind. It is not to be supposed, that God ever created man so, as that his invisibility, which is the excellency of his own being, should be the reason why man should not love him. For he is therefore invisible, because he is excellent. And to think that the nature of man at first was so formed, that the excellency of things should be the reason why they should not be loved, and his own excellence a reason for his creature not to love him, is too absurd for any rational person to imagine. It is therefore plain, that the present state of man is a very lapsed state.

Some of the heathen, as we observed before, have acknowledged and lamented this. We find one of them complaining, that the darkness of ignorance clouded his mind, and that this body and flesh was but as a living sepulchre to the man. Another complains of certain bonds and chains, that tied down the mind of man to the body, and the things of sense. And a third speaking of the excellent state of man at first, says, that he then lived in a sort of familiarity and converse with God, but that now it was become quite otherwise with him. Such things as these we find in the writings of divers of the heathen. And how incongruous a thing is it for us, who have all the concerns of our souls, and what relates to our being so expressly discovered and made known to us; how incongruous a thing is it, I say, that such a malady as this should be so little minded as it is by us! Many have very slight notions of the degeneracy of man, and make a little matter of it, and the most have a much slighter sense thereof in practice. How few are there, who carry it as those who apprehend themselves fallen, and cast down from great excellencies! fallen short, very far short, of the glory of God! We live as if we apprehended no such malady, as if we knew not that there was a disease or distemper inwrought into our natures. Oh, how little is there of the sense of this to be found in the bulk of mankind! And hence I would further infer,

2. That this depravity or lapsedness of the nature of man consists greatly, in the depression and declination of his mind, and intellectual powers, as to the particular work and office of guiding his passions, his affections, and practical inclinations. This was just mentioned before in the last discourse,[a] but shall now be more largely considered. I do not say, with some, that this is all that is meant by the corrupt state of man; but certainly it stands very much in this, that his mind and rational powers are become unfit

* Preached September 6th, 1676.

N. B. The author begins the third sermon on this subject after the following manner:

"It will be necessary, after so long an interval, to be somewhat larger than usual in the recollection of what has been said from this scripture." And accordingly he proceeds to give a large recapitulation of the two former discourses, which he had preached about three months before; of which this is only an abstract.

There is a like interval or chasm, with respect to time, between the VIII. and IX. of those posthumous sermons, published by Dr. Evans; and there are several more of the like nature in the manuscript volumes, out of which these discourses are selected.

[a] See Prop. 6. p. 654.

for their proper business; and, that sense hath got the throne, usurped the reins, and governs his passions and affections. Herein, I say, consists, in very great part, the corruption and depravedness of man's present state. And do not we find it to be so? Do not we see, as to the objects that draw men's affections daily into a certain course, that it is not the mind, but sense, which prescribes? Sense dictates and says, "Love here," and they do accordingly: "Love not there," and they obey. "Let that be the object of your love, which sense tells you is amiable and lovely; and that which sense says no such thing about, you may slight, neglect, and take no further notice of." Thus men are dictated to, and they do accordingly. It is plain then, that the depravedness of man's state stands chiefly in this, that sense takes upon itself to do the business of the mind and intellectual powers, and we consent it should be so.

But is not this a dismal thing? more dismal that it is not laid to heart! Is it not a dismal thing, I say, that the first rank and order of creatures in this sublunary world should be sunk into that low bestial life, so as to be governed by no higher a principle than what is common to them with brutes; and that the incongruity of this should not be reflected upon, and more deeply considered? that men should so seldom consider with themselves the unfitness of their course, or labour to shake off the usurped dominion over them? This, I say, is most sad and doleful to think on, that matters should have gone on thus from age to age, and from generation to generation, in so many successions to this day, and we have heard of so few in all that time, who have regretted to be so imposed upon, and forborne to live the life of beasts and brute creatures through so many ages! One would think it should some time or other have come into the mind of man, to think thus with himself. "What! is it a becoming thing for me, a reasonable and intelligent creature, one formed after the image and likeness of God, one of those creatures made at first for his immediate service and fellowship, that I must now be imposed upon and dictated to by sense; that vile and base principle of sense, so as to love nothing but what that counts lovely, and neglect every thing which that takes no cognizance or notice of?" It is an amazing thing, that there should not be so much apprehensiveness left among men, as to remember, that they were men, in their original, once at least that they were men. "Remember," saith the prophet in a like case, "and show yourselves men," Isa. xlvi. 8. But alas, how little is there left of a sense of this degeneracy among us! how little resentment of the vile indignity that is done to the whole kind, and which the whole species of men have suffered to come upon them! to be degraded and brought down into an inferior rank and order! to do, to act, and live, as if they were also made to die like the beasts that perish!

There are indeed many, in the mean time, who proudly arrogate and give to man that which belongs not to him in his present condition, and which this state does not admit of. They say him to be that which he is not, but in the mean time really see not, nor lament, that he is neither what he was, or what he should or ought to be. And to how little purpose is it to magnify human power, when it is manifest how forlorn the present state of man is! He is fallen very low! And what are these men intent upon, who make it their business now to magnify the nature and power of man in this condition? those parasites of mankind as I may call them, what mean they by it? When he is become a lost perishing creature they adorn him with shadows, and think they make up the matter by attiring him with magnificent titles and attributes. As if when a person is condemned to suffer the execution of the sentence of death passed upon him, one should clothe him with a majestic robe, and bestow great compliments upon him. This is to add scorn to his ruin, and is only insulting over the wretchedness and calamity of the man's condition. And yet this is the course of them that go about to persuade man, that although the case is thus with him, he can recover his own excellence that he hath lost; that he can anew create himself, or repair the ruins of his decayed and shattered state. This is the way to add incurableness to his misery, by tempting him to neglect the only means of taking it off; and so make him miserable without remedy. But that persons out of a deep concern for the honour and glory of man as the top of the creation, should go about to make him believe himself now in an honourable state, and that he can even now do great things; how unsuitable and insignificant is this, as well as inconsistent with truth! And again, we,

3. Infer hence, that man is most especially prejudiced and impaired by his lapse or fall, in respect to his disposition and inclinations towards God. The wound is principally in his mind, and consists in the depression and enfeebling of its powers; but the mind itself is most especially hurt and impaired in respect of those inclinations by which it should be guided towards God. For in the state in which he is at present he is indisposed to the love of God; and for this mean reason, because he cannot see him. And that he is not able to love what he cannot see, shows him to be a very mean, abject creature, and that his powers are mightily impaired. Surely the time was, that he could have loved what he could not have seen with his bodily eye; and how comes it to pass that because he cannot see God, therefore he cannot love him? This shows that his mind is impaired, that he is hurt chiefly in what respects his Creator; and that his propensity, the bent and bias of his spirit, towards God, is lost.

This is a sad and dismal thing that is befallen the nature of man; because God is far beyond the reach of his sight, and he himself is sunk into flesh, lost in earth, and always imposed upon by sense, he cannot see him, cannot lift up the dull heavy eye of his mind to his God, which is the eye he must be seen with by his creatures. So that, as the apostle Paul expresses it, he is become alienated from the life of God, and without God in the world, Eph. ii. 12. And how much is this to be lamented, that man is so fallen off from God! that his original propensity to him is lost and dropped from his nature! If we had heard but of one man since the creation of the world with whom this was the case, it would deserve to be very much lamented. But that this should come upon the whole kind, that it should be thus, as I may speak, with the whole race of men: methinks the sense of it should never wear off from our hearts. Strange! that it should be the course and fashion of this world all over the earth, to live in an oblivion of him that made us, and with hearts devoid of his love, and only because he is so excellent as not to be seen by us with the bodily eye! It was reckoned a sad and terrible day, when a tribe was cut off from Israel; but if we consider what man was made for, what were the design and end of his creation, we see as it were a whole race of beings lost from the creation of God. For what can we think man was made for, but to love, admire, triumph, and glory in his great Maker? But to all this he is lost; and abstracting what is done in order to the recovering him again, it had been as well if there had been no men at all, and for themselves unspeakably better. How strange then is it, that such a matter as this is, should ever escape our thoughts! If we speak of the corruption and depravedness of human nature, they are words of course that drop from us now and then, and some slight notions of the matter hover in our minds; but how few are there to whom it is a familiar thing to roll themselves in the dust before the Lord, in the sense of that vile and abject state, which man in common now is in! How few lament that they are by the fall cut off from God; and spoiled as to all their capacities, whereby they were suited to the Divine love, service, and communion! and yet the most tragical calamities that could possibly have fallen out in this world, or of which we could form any imagination, had been nothing in comparison of this. Nay, if all mankind, as to shape, or impossibility of external enjoyments, were the most monstrous and most miserable creatures living, it were nothing when compared to the mischief and misery which are the fruits of man's apostacy from his Maker.

4. We further infer hence, that man upon all these accounts must necessarily be at a very great distance from true blessedness. Whoever understands or considers the connexion between blessedness and love, will soon perceive the reasonableness of this inference. It is impossible to be blessed without love; and it is necessary to every one's satisfaction, that it be a full and sufficient good that is the object of his love. If either of these be wanting, it

is impossible it should be satisfying, or a suitable good to me. Or if, on the other hand, there be a good never so self-sufficient or all-sufficient, yet if I cannot love it, if my heart be averse to it, this also is a sufficient bar to my happiness. The things that are seen, though a man love them never so much, can never satisfy, because they are not sufficient. The infinite incomprehended good is all-sufficient, and fit for every purpose; but this cannot make him happy, because he doth not love it. In the creature therefore man cannot be happy; in God he will not. He cannot in the creature, because that hath not in itself to give; in God he will not, because his heart is disinclined to him, and will not be brought to a closure with him by love.

Consider man according to this state of his case, and you must look upon him as one, who by his very constitution and present temper of his soul, is formed for misery; I say, so long as he continues in his present situation. His heart inclines him truly to visible things, and to love the objects of sense, which can never make him happy. The good that is unseen hath enough in it to make him blessed, but then he will not love it. He will not apply himself to love God, merely because he is out of sight. You must needs think then that it is a great thing that must work the cure of man, who is thus involved in so great an abyss of depravedness and misery. And therefore I must add,

5. There is a very great necessity of much Gospel preaching in order to persuade men to the love of God. For what is the design of the Gospel, but to render God amiable to men? What is it but a method of rendering God lovely, and of restoring men's love to God? And since his loveliness is not the object of sight, there needs such a supplemental representation of himself, to supply the want of vision. And since the things that court our senses are obvious, and occur to us every day, yea every hour of the day, it is needful that we should be frequently put in mind of God; and that those discoveries of him which tend to beget the love of him in our hearts, should be very much urged and inculcated upon us. For otherwise what shall countervail sense, or what shall we set against the sight of our own eyes? "No man hath seen God at any time," John i. 18. What is it then that must supply that defect, and be in the stead of the sight of God to us? Why, "the only-begotten Son of God, he hath declared him." So that we have now a revelation of God himself. And our Lord Jesus Christ, who lay in his bosom, and came from thence to declare the Father to the world, has ordained that this revelation, of which he is the prime Author, shall be held out before us from time to time, by the use of inferior and subservient instruments.

I have often considered the strange prevarication, and sophistry, which some men use in stating things that are necessary to salvation; and the use they make of that state. That is, because they can make a shift to gather up the main principles of religion into a little compass, as they may very easily, they say, "Here is all that is necessary to salvation. And therefore since in that way, or in that church, all things necessary to salvation are taught, what need is there of any more? why should not we come over thither? or why should we separate from it?" Methinks it were an obvious easy thing to most people to detect the fallacy. They state what is objectively necessary to salvation, without considering the condition of the subject, and what is necessary for that subject. That is, they state what is necessary to be known and believed in order to our being saved, but consider not what is necessary to bring men to this knowledge and belief of these necessary things, so as to make a due impression of them upon their hearts. If, for instance, you were to prescribe to a sick languishing person a remedy for the taking off his distemper: would you only tell him of such and such good substantial food that you would have him eat? and would you then think you had done the business? Alas! the poor man is sick; he desires nothing, can take nothing, can digest nothing, and casts up all you give him. Why then do you talk to him of such things as will make wholesome and substantial food, when he can neither receive nor retain it? So in like manner in the present case and exigence of man, considered as a fallen creature, if the bare proposal of the sundry heads of religion, necessary to be known and believed, were sufficient; then to have a sermon once in a man's life-time might do the business; or a mere system of the principal parts of the Christian religion would do what it is urged for, and answer the exigence of the case. This I say, were a thing easily to be granted, if it were really so with men, that a doctrine would be understood as soon as proposed, and received when understood, and so beget its due and proper impression upon the hearts of men. But truly the case is manifestly otherwise, since man is fallen into so depraved a state. And to talk thus, is to speak of a scheme of divinity suitable only to innocent men in paradise; when no more was needful to be done than barely to propound things with respect to the clearness of the understanding, the rectitude of the will, the agreeableness of the powers one to another, tog ther with the truth and goodness of their objects. But to say that this is all that is requisite, that there is enough held forth or laid before men, the knowledge and belief of which is sufficient to save them, is just as if one should say, that such and such things proposed to a sick man would do him good if he were not sick. So in like manner this way of propounding the Gospel would serve the turn for men, if they were such as when they were at first created. Indeed it were no Gospel, if it were only enough to save men from sin, who as yet were no sinners. The very notion implies a contradiction. For doth not the same sin which makes them stand in need of a Gospel for the reconciling them to God, disaffect at the same time their hearts unto God, and make them unwilling to close with him? Therefore they need to have precept upon precept, and line upon line; here a little, and there a little. And they that preach the Gospel to men, are urged "to be instant in season and out of season, to admonish, exhort, reprove;" (2 Tim. iv. 2.) and all little enough, indeed all too little.

Surely then there is somewhat else to be considered in the matter. When we consider what is objectively necessary, it is also to be considered what will bring men to believe these necessary things. And in order to that there is need of their being frequently inculcated, inasmuch as things that are seen are more the objects of our love, than the things which are not seen; and what we ought to set our hearts most upon, are out of sight. God himself is the great Object men are to be directed to, and to whom they must be united, or they are lost. He is invisible, and they are apt, as you have heard again and again, to mind nothing but what is seen. Therefore it is a strange unapprehensiveness of the real state and condition of mankind, which those are guilty of, who decry preaching as a needless thing. Surely they that do so, have little studied the nature of man!—There are several other things that remain to be spoken to, which I cannot insist upon at this time.

SERMON IV.*

WE have gone through the first part of my design from these words, which was to show, that men are less apt or disposed to the exercise of love to God than to one another. And we have made some progress in the application, by way of inference; and therein have endeavoured to show, —that the indisposition of man to the love of God is a proof of his being in a lapsed and very degenerate condition —that this degeneracy must consist principally in the depression of the mind and its intellectual powers—that more especially man is prejudiced by the lapse or fall with respect to his inclinations towards God—that in consequence of this, he must needs be at a great distance from true blessedness, which is inseparably connected with the love of God—and in the next place, it is further inferred, that there is great occasion for frequent Gospel preaching, which is the method instituted by Christ for restoring and reviving love to God in the souls of men. But though this is necessary, yet we are also to know that it is not sufficient; for all the preaching in the world cannot alone make the sensual heart of man to love God. And therefore we proceed to infer further,

* Preached September 13th, 1676.

6. That since men are so very unapt to love God, and for this reason, because they see him not; there is great need of the communication and influence of that glorious and mighty Spirit of life to relieve him in this sad extremity and distress. For surely it is a very distressed case, that man cannot love his own Maker, the Author of his life and being, him in whom is his eternal hope, and all because he cannot see him. It is a case that calls for a very great and powerful hand to redress; and no other hand is proportionable to the exigence thereof. Though he works by means, and even by that of the Gospel revelation, yet it doth not follow that the means will do the business alone; but the contrary follows, that because they are means, therefore there must be an agent, and an efficient to use them, and one proportionable to the work of forming and disposing the spirits of men towards God, that they may be capable of his love, and admit it into their hearts so as to rule and govern there. And what can do this but the Spirit of God? What else is it that can awaken and rouse the dull, sluggish, drowsy spirits of men? What else, I say, can quicken, purify, and refine spirits lost in pleasure and sense? The way of bringing any soul to love God, is to give it the spirit of love. There is no other way of doing it. Now the apostle says, that "God hath given to us not the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," 2 Tim. i. 7. One and the same Spirit is all these at once. And till that Spirit is given us, there is nothing but enmity and disaffection towards God; there is nothing but feebleness and impotence, as to any thing that is good; there is nothing but distemperature and diseasedness in man, which have pierced him to the very heart. This Spirit therefore, in reference to these several exigencies, is a Spirit of love, of power, and of a sound mind. That same Spirit that makes the soul capable now of doing things that require power; that same Spirit that rectifies the mind, and heals it of those distempers under which it was wasting and consuming before, is a SPIRIT OF LOVE. It is said to be a Spirit given, a Spirit superadded to our own, a Spirit that we had not before. Indeed it must be some other spirit than ours, which must render us capable of loving God.

You know, that the apostle, recounting the several fruits of the Spirit, (as he had done those of the flesh before,) sets this of love in the front of them. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy," &c. Gal. v. 22. And after telling us, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him;" (1 Cor. ii. 9.) he tells us also of a Spirit different from that of the world, the Spirit which is of God, which such as they had received. "We have received," says he, "not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God," 1 Cor. ii. 12. And in this same chapter, wherein is our text, you have the apostle John speaking to this very case, to wit, the impossibility of our seeing God: "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit," 1 John iv. 12, 13. Love to one another as Christians or saints, is also a fruit of that same blessed Spirit. And if there be such a principle of love within us, it plainly speaks that God dwells in us, and we in him, and that he hath planted his own love in our souls, which is perfecting there. It is manifest now that he hath taken possession of us, and drawn us into union with himself, so as to become the great Fountain of that principle of love in us, whereby we are capable of loving him, and loving such as are his, for his sake.

And because the act of the heart in loving supposes some foregoing act of the mind by which the object is perceived to be lovely, therefore this same Spirit is elsewhere called a "Spirit of wisdom, and revelation, in the knowledge of him," (Ephes. i. 17.) whom we are to love. The apostle is there praying earnestly on behalf of the Ephesians, that this Spirit might be given them, by which they might be capable of knowing, and knowing practically, as the word ἐπίγνωσις signifies, and of coming into union with that blessed One that is known. And on this union love hath a great influence. St. John says, "We know the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life," 1 John v. 20. The understanding here spoken of is said to be given by which we so come to know God in Christ, as to be brought into union with him by love: it is, I say, a given thing, men have it not of themselves.

It is very requisite, and therefore I so long insist upon it, that we understand how necessary it is, that there be another and a better Spirit than our own, to render us capable of loving God, whom we have not seen; for otherwise we shall never love beyond the sight of our own eye. And it is very strange, that this necessity, since the case speaks itself, and the Holy Scriptures so often declare it, should be no more understood. If there be no such necessity, what is the reason we are taught to "pray for the Spirit," (Matt. vii. 9, 10, 11.) as starving children do for bread? That we are bid to "live in the Spirit," (Gal. v. 25.) "to walk in the Spirit," (Rom. viii. 1.) and "by the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the flesh?" ver. 13. And are we not told, that we must "be born of the Spirit, or else we shall never enter into the kingdom of God?" John iii. 3. All this is plain language one would think, and easy enough to be understood by those that have a mind to it. But it is very observable, that those notions which tend to make as little as possible of the depravity and corruption of man's nature, to magnify beyond measure the power of man in his fallen state, to depress preaching, and to make light of the operations of the Holy Ghost upon the minds of men, are all of a sort, all of a piece. These are notions that hang upon one thread, and when we see wherein they issue and terminate, we may easily discern the danger of them; and into how great hazard they bring the eternal concerns of the souls of those men, who suffer themselves to be tainted with them. We again further infer,

7. That the work of regeneration must needs stand in very great part in the implanting and seating in the souls of men such principles, as may directly tend to control the dictates of sense, and in opposition to it rule and govern in men. The infirmity and distemper of man's nature easily show, wherein this cure and renovation must consist. This is at present the great distemper of his soul, it cannot love but where it can see. It is the sight of the eye that carries the heart, and draweth it this way and that way. A most dreadful distemper this! But as we know the distemper, we know wherein the cure must consist. Regeneration is that which restores the man to his right mind, and sets things to rights again with him. Though his former state is expressed by being in the flesh, he is now said to be in the Spirit, from the spiritual frame created in him by the great work of regeneration. Thus, says the apostle, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you," Rom. viii. 9. And the thing produced in the work of regeneration is called spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," John iii. 6. While man is in flesh he is capable of loving nothing but what is seen, nothing but what to his senses appears amiable and lovely. Herein therefore stands the work of regeneration, to take a poor sensual creature, a mere lump of flesh, and to make him spiritual; and then it is he becomes capable of loving God. There must be a new creation, and right principles planted in the mind, to influence the heart, and to direct and determine souls towards God, from whom they were cut off and so dreadfully alienated. Again, in the

8. Place, we further infer, that the power by which it comes to pass that there are any lovers of God in the world, is highly to be adored and magnified. You see it is far more difficult to love God, whom we see not, than our brother whom we do see. How then can this difficulty be overcome, unless Divine power implant this principle of love? We ought therefore to make the representation of that power, that hath wrought this work in us, appear very glorious in our own eyes, that so with reference to this matter our hearts may be put in an adoring posture. Let us then bless and adore that glorious Being, who hath done such a thing as this; who hath made a stupid sensual heart, which could never rise beyond the sphere of flesh, ascend and enlarge itself, and fix and terminate its love

upon the blessed God. "How great is the power" (should one say that finds it thus) "which hath done this in me! to make a clod of earth, a lump of clay; to love God! This is as great a thing as out of stones to raise up children unto Abraham." In reality we ought not to think little or meanly of this. And again,

9. We may further infer, that the life of Christians in this world cannot but be a conflicting life. The life of a Christian as such must be influenced throughout by the love of God. He is to act according to the direction of St. Jude, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life," ver. 21. Is this the business of a Christian, and what must be his very life to live in the love of God all along? then he must indeed live a conflicting life all his days. That is, there must be a continual conflict kept up against imperious sense, and its dictates, which always is crying to the heart of man, "Love what is seen, what you perceive to be lovely:" there must, I say, be a continual striving in the heart of a Christian against this; since he must keep up a continual love to him whom he cannot see, to him who is far above out of sight.

This showeth, that they who know not what a continual striving against sense, its dictates, and inclinations, means, are yet to learn what the business of the Christian life is. How can a man love God whom he seeth not? When there is a continual difficulty, there must be a continual striving and vigorous endeavours always used. Loving God is not swimming down with the stream of nature, it is quite another thing. And agreeable to this, what a strife is represented all along, throughout the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, between the "law of the flesh," and the "law of the mind;" the inclinations of sensual nature, and the spiritual dictates and prescriptions which are by the apostle called "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 2. which doth as it were repeal and abrogate the law of sin and death; and so far as it obtains, delivers a man from its impositions and imperious commands, which lead to death.

It is highly needful for us to state our own case to ourselves, and to consider what we are like to meet with in our Christian course; and if we mean to persevere, we must resolve upon a striving conflicting life all our days, for thus it must be. How much then are they beside the Christian course, who know not what it is to strive against any inclination of their own, nor to oppose the earthly tendencies of their own spirits; who can never find occasion to contend with themselves; who espy no fault in the temper of their own spirits, but carry the matter to themselves as if all were well; who can pass a whole day with no rebukes nor checks, when their hearts have run after their eyes only! These persons perhaps have never minded, never loved any thing better than what came within the reach of their senses, or could be seen with the eye: and yet they are innocent creatures in their imagination, and think they have no cause to blame themselves. But let us not be deceived, who see that the life of a Christian must be a continual running counter to a man's own eyes, and the dictates of sense; since these prescribe to a man to love only what he sees, whereas certainly he is no Christian who liveth not in the love of God whom he doth not see. In the

Last place, we further infer, that the proneness of men to acquiesce in a civil deportment, and to rest in the mere formalities of religion, hath one fixed common cause, and that is, the want of the great principle of love. In this respect it is fit that we should consider what the case of man is. Men are very apt to satisfy themselves with a fair and unexceptionable carriage to others, or at most with a little formality in the duties of religion, and never look further; which certainly must proceed from one and the same cause, namely, the want of love to God. This, I say, in the

(1.) Place, is the reason why persons are so prone to acquiesce in a fair and civil deportment towards men. It is necessary for us to know this, that so the danger of it may be more carefully avoided and deeply dreaded. What is it that is really the principle of duty even towards men? Certainly it is love. This is easy, as the text supposes, towards men, in comparison of what it is towards God; men therefore are apt to take up with what they find most easy.

The state of the case lieth thus. There are characters of the ancient law, which God at the creation impressed upon the spirit of man; *Lex non scripta sed nata; The law not written, but born with us*, as once heathen writer expresses it, or the νόμος φύσικος, *natural law*, as another heathen writer calls it. There are, I say, still some broken parts, some scattered fragments, some dispersed characters of this law, which was by our Maker put into our very frame, which lie discomposed and dispersed here and there in men, whereof some refer to our duty towards God, and others to our duty towards men. Those relating to men are more legible, are oftener read, and come more frequently under view. For how much more prevalent is this sense in the minds of men, "My neighbour is not to be wronged or disobliged," than this, "God is not to be forgotten, neglected, disobeyed!" Why, the matter being so, that the characters representing our duty to men are oftener in view, and so more frequently furbished, as it were, and brightened, than those which express our duty to God; being, I say, more frequently reflected upon, they are more put into practice. And therefore here men are apt to take up, saying, "I do that which is just, honest, and fair before men, and there are none that can charge me with the contrary." And so they think their case is very good.

Indeed there are several things concurring to make such principles, as point out to us the duties we owe to man, more influential upon practice. As for instance, men have sensible kindnesses from one another, which work upon ingenuity, and so influence to a suitable behaviour to them that show such kindnesses. When they receive a kindness from the hand of a man, it is from a visible hand. They see who doth them good. Though there is a thousand times more good done them by the invisible God, but his invisible hand they take no notice of.

Again, they are sensible continually of their need of men. All persons sensibly find they need some other, for they cannot live alone. They are not only obliged to a mutual dependence upon one another, but they are very sensible of it; and therefore are apt to carry it so much the more fairly to men, as those who stand in need of one another.

Besides, men find a sensible advantage from the reputation of a fair, just, and honest carriage to others. "If I have not the repute of being a person kind, goodnatured, and well-humoured, I shall have no friend; nobody will converse with me, but be shy of me. If I have not the reputation of being a just man, honest and square in all my dealings, I shall have no trade, no one will trust me, every one will be afraid to have to do with me." These considerations dispose us to good behaviour towards one another.

Finally, men are frequently sensible of hurt or some great inconveniences accruing to them, if at any time they misbehave themselves to others. They that are morose and churlish do often fall upon tempers as cross-grained and perverse as their own, and so meet with such measure as they bring. If they be quarrelsome, it falls out sometimes that there are those who will quarrel with them, and will not take an affront at their hands. And though there are some that scorn the tutorage and instruction of fear, which should govern them in the conduct of their affairs; yet many others are more prudent, and are not apt to follow the hurry of their own pride and inclinations. They consider how much it concerns them, not to provoke those who will right themselves, nor to injure those who will be sure to meet with them one time or other. Yea, those who are more considerate will be very cautious how they make any man their enemy, even the meanest; for no man is so mean but it may be some time or other in his power to do him a shrewd turn.

Such inducements there are, I say, as these, unto a fair and unexceptionable deportment towards men, whom we see and converse with every day. And with this men are inclined to take up their rest; contenting and satisfying themselves with this, that they carry it to others, so as that none have any great reason to find fault with them, and thereupon think that God will find none neither.

(2.) There is also a proneness in mankind, as we observed, to take up with formality in the matters of religion. For what besides formality can there be in the religion of those who love not God? If I pretend to worship him and not love him, though I spend all my days upon my knees, will it signify any thing as to real religion? But because this is more easy, that is, bodily exercise than that of love, or an inclination of mind and heart to God, it is natural to take up with it for that reason, and to rest there.

The Pharisees among the Jews, one would think, should not have been to seek where religion really lay; but, alas! where did they place theirs? In ceremonial sanctity, in washing their hands before they did eat bread, in cleansing their cups and platters, and in frequent purifications of themselves; all which they made to be as significant things, as the instituted rites of worship by God himself. Moreover they were very exact in tithing mint, rue, and all manner of herbs, while in the mean time they "passed over judgment and the love of God," Luke xi. 42. What a strange oversight was this! that the Pharisees, those devout men, those zealous pretenders to the greatest strictness in the observance of the law of God, as well as to the profoundest knowledge of it, even beyond all other men, should be guilty of such an oversight as to pass over the sum and substance of it, to wit, the love of God! And yet our Saviour speaks of it as their common character. If then the Pharisees, those knowing and strict men, as they would be thought to be, were in such an error as this so commonly, we may well conclude that the spirits of men are generally prone to acquiesce in the mere externals of religion, and to take up with the outside thereof without ever going any further. They think their case is well enough with God if now and then they bow the knee, compliment him in duty, and put on some face and show of devotion; while in the mean time the love of God is an unthought-of thing. So that how many must say, if they would speak as their case truly is, "I never thought that the love of God must go into my worship." Since then the proneness of mankind to acquiesce in a fair and civil deportment, and in the mere formalities of religion, proceeds from one common, fixed cause, to wit, the want of this Divine principle of love, it is necessary that we consider the matter, lest we ourselves be thus dreadfully imposed upon.

And now to conclude this first part of our subject, it appears that temptations to atheism must needs find great advantages in the temper of men's spirits, while they are so depressed and overborne by sense. For its essence, particularly of practical atheism, consists in the alienation of the heart from God. And how easy a step is it from hence to speculative atheism, when a man has lived so long "without God (ἄθεοι, the apostle's phrase is) in the world!" Eph. ii. 12. For if he do not love God whom he hath not seen, for the same reason he will not fear him; neither hope nor rejoice in him as his chief good. How obvious is it for such a man to entertain such a thought as this? "Is it not as good to say, there is no God, or I will own none; as to say, there is no one that I will love or fear, nor any one with the thoughts of whom my heart is at any time affected?"

Let us therefore hence take occasion to admire the patience, and much more the bounty, of God towards his revolted creatures in this world. How wonderful is it that he spares and maintains them also! that he should make constant provision for such as put the highest affronts and indignities upon him, by loving and preferring his own dust, before him who formed it into what it is; by exalting the work of his hands above him; and finally, by profusely bestowing their affections on the creature, but none upon God the great Creator of all! Do not we think this is a thing not to be endured? and do not we wonder that it is actually endured, and that men are permitted from age to age, to continue in this course, and are suffered by vengeance to live, when the whole business of their lives is to express how much more they value despicable nothings, creatures like themselves, than the great, the blessed, and glorious Lord of heaven and earth! Certainly it should be often our business to set ourselves to admire the sparing and sustaining mercy which God exerciseth towards this world, while this is the state of things between him and apostate men.

SERMON V.*

We have hitherto been showing you from these words, That men are less apt to love God than one another, principally for this reason, because God is not the object of sight as men are. We are now to go on to the

Second thing observed from them, namely, That we are most indispensably obliged to the exercise of this duty, though we see him not, and therefore notwithstanding this excuse, it is a most intolerable thing not to love God.

This hath its manifest ground in the text, and doth fundamentally belong to the apostle's reasoning in this place. For the argument or medium which he reasons from is this, that if we do not love our brother whom we have seen, then we cannot so much as love God whom we have not seen. By which he endeavours to represent how grievous a thing it would be, if Christians should continue in a mutual neglect of one another. Now all this would fall to the ground, and signify nothing, if they were disengaged from loving God upon the account of his invisibility. But the apostle takes it for granted, that all men must esteem it a most horrid thing to be convicted of not loving God; otherwise his argument would be altogether to no purpose. For it might have been replied to him, "Though we be convicted of this, that we do not love God, inasmuch as we do not love one another, yet what is the inconvenience of such a neglect? We grant the whole, but what are the ill consequences that follow upon it?" Now the apostle doubts not but they would see the consequences, and that every man must needs take it to be an intolerably hateful thing to pass for one that is no lover of God. This therefore is supposed by the apostle as a fundamental circumstance in his discourse—that not to love God, though we see him not, is a most horrid hateful thing, as well as absolutely inexcusable.

Now as this is plainly to be collected, so it is very necessary to be insisted upon. For as it is apparent, that as men commonly do not love God, or at least are less disposed to it, because they see him not; so they are very apt to excuse and exempt themselves from guilt upon this account. "Why should I look upon it," says one, "as so abominable a thing not to live in the exercise of love to God? He is out of sight, sure he expects no such thing from us who cannot see him, and who live at so great a distance from him!"—What multitudes are there who can wear out the whole time of life, and never charge themselves with any fault all their days for not having lived in the love of God! As if the old heathenish maxim were their settled notion, *Quæ supra nos, nihil ad nos; We have nothing to do with what is so far above us.*

And besides, this is not only the latent sense of most of that which lies closely wrapt up even in the very inwards of their souls, to wit, that they have little to do with God, and need not concern themselves about him; but it is also what many have the confidence to speak out, and to declare in plain express words. It is very notorious that there are sundry persons in the world, not of one denomination or party only among the professors of the Christian name, who are not afraid to avow this very sense Those who have made it their concern to look into the doctrines that have been handed about in the Christian world, do well know whose casuistical divinity this is, "That we are not obliged to love God, unless it be once or twice a year." Or as some have presumed to say, "If it be only once in a man's life-time it may serve the turn," as a worthy person, now removed from us, hath largely shown; as also what the morals and practical divinity of that sort of men are. And another[a] of quite a different strain, who hath disciples more than a good many in our time, in his discourse of the human nature, would slily insinuate, that we are not obliged at all to formal direct acts of love to God, from this very passage of Scripture in

* Preached September 29th, 1676.

[a] Hobbes.

he next chapter of this epistle, This is the love of God, hat we keep his commandments, I John v. 3. As if because the apostle would there include all the external effects virtually in the principle, it was therefore fit to exclude the principle itself by the external effects. Nor indeed was there ever any time or age wherein the heart and e of practical religion and godliness were so openly struck at as in our days, by the perverse notions of some, and the scorns of others; as if it were thought a very feasible thing to jeer religion out of the world; and that men ought to be ashamed to profess love to God, because they can have the impudence and be so daring as to laugh at this and such like things.

We are therefore so much the more concerned to bestir ourselves, and to look more narrowly into the very grounds and bottom of our own practice in the ways of religion. We are to consider whether indeed we have a reason to oblige us to be godly, yea or no; and especially is it incumbent upon us to defend this great principle and summary of all godliness, *The love of God.* For certainly if we must yield to the extinction of this principle, if a love to God may be banished from among us, we turn all our religion into nothing else, but a mere piece of pageantry. How vain and foolish, how absurd and ridiculous, things were the forms of religion, which we keep up from time to time, supposing this great radical principle was to have no place nor exercise among us! To come together, and make a show of devotion to him whom we do not love, nor think ourselves obliged to love, is nothing but inconsistency and contradiction. And those who came on such terms, as oft as they undertake to worship God, must needs offer nothing but the sacrifices of fools. But it is our business to defend this principle; to vindicate it against every thing that can be alleged against it by those who would excuse themselves from the obligation to this duty, from their not seeing God. And that we may the more fitly prosecute the present design, we shall endeavour to do these two things.

I. To show the vanity and impertinence of this excuse for not loving God, to wit, our not seeing him.

II. To demonstrate the intolerable heinousness of this sin notwithstanding, and to show its horrid nature though God is not visible to us. Because persons are apt upon this ground or reason either totally to excuse themselves, as if there were no iniquity at all in it; as there are multitudes of people who can pass over their days one after another, without any emotion of heart to love towards God at all: or else because if they cannot obtain of themselves against the clearest light to believe it is no sin; yet they would fain have it to be only a peccadillo, or a very little one. "God, say they, cannot expect much love from those who cannot see him! or that such beings to whom he is invisible should mind him much, or concern themselves with him from day to day!" Therefore I say, we shall endeavour both to show, how most impertinently this is alleged as an excuse for not loving God, or how unreasonable it is to infer from his invisibility, that we are under no such obligation: and after that, to represent to you the hateful nature of the sin: or to show, that if we love not God, it is not only a sin notwithstanding this pretence, but a most prodigious and horrid one too.

I. That we may evince to you the vanity of this excuse, or the impertinency of alleging that we are not obliged to love God, because we see him not, there are these two things that we charge this excuse with, and shall labour to make out concerning it; to wit, that it is both invalid and absurd. It is invalid, because it hath nothing in it which a valid excuse ought to have. And it is monstrously absurd, and draws most intolerable ill consequences after it, if such an excuse should be admitted in such a case.

1. I shall show the insufficiency of this excuse, or that it is vain and hath nothing in it which a valid excuse should have. "We do not see God, therefore we are not concerned to love him." This will easily be made out to you thus. Whenever any thing is charged upon us by a law, and the exception lies not against the authority of the lawgiver, but only the matter of the law as applied to us, no excuse can be valid in that case, but where the matter brought in excuse shall be able to prove one of these two things: either that what is enjoined, is in itself impossible to us, or at least that it is unfit and unreasonable to be expected from us. But our not seeing God can never infer either of these. It neither renders our loving him impossible; nor unfit and unreasonable, supposing it to be possible.

(1.) Our not seeing God doth not render our loving him impossible. This it is needful for us rightly to understand before we proceed any further. The thing that we intend to make out to you is, not that it is possible to us to love God by our own natural power. You have heard already enough to the contrary. He can never be truly loved by us, till the Spirit of love is given us; which is also at the same time a Spirit of power, and of a sound mind. Till then, I say, it is impossible that any should love God. But when he implants this principle in us, he doth not therefore render himself visible to our bodily eye, which is the seeing here meant, for we must understand the word in the same sense in both parts of the text. All that we have to evince then is, that our not seeing God as we do our brother, does not make it impossible for us to love him. So that our present inquiry is not concerning the power, that gives the principle of love; but only concerning the means that should be made use of, in order to the begetting or planting that principle. Which being understood, the several considerations following will plainly evince to us, that our not seeing God doth not render it impossible to us to love him.

1st, Consider that the sight of our eye is not the immediate cause or inducement of love to any thing, but only a means to beget an apprehension in our minds of the loveliness of the object. And then it is, that is, upon the perception of this loveliness, that we are brought to love the object itself. For after the sight of the eye there must pass in the mind an act of the judgment upon the object, before we can be brought to love it; otherwise we should love or hate every thing that we see promiscuously, and not distinguish objects of love from objects of hatred. It is only the apprehension of the mind, even in reference to objects of sight, that brings us to love them. If there be any other means of begetting an apprehension in our mind concerning such and such objects, that they are lovely and fit to be loved, it is not necessary that we should see them with our eyes. To this we add,

2dly, There are other sufficient means to possess our minds with an apprehension of the loveliness of an object, and more especially those objects that are never liable to the sight of our eye. We do not need to insist much on so plain a case. It is plain that there are sundry ways, by which the apprehension of the loveliness even of an invisible object, may come to have place in us; invisible at least so far as to be out of the reach of our eye. To be a little particular here:

There is, for instance, with respect to the unseen God, naturally a divine impression upon the minds of men, by which, when they are put upon reflection, they must needs own that he is not only a lovely, but the most lovely and amiable object, and has the best right to claim their love. Whosoever they are that do acknowledge a God, [b] must also read such attributes and properties of the being of God engraven there, importing that he is the first and supreme object of our love. No one that acknowledgeth a God, but presently acknowledgeth too, that he is good; that he is true; that he is holy; that he is wise; and the like. And then his own heart must tell him, whether he will or no, that he ought to be loved above all.

Again, our own reasonings from the manifest visible effects and characters of Divine wisdom, and power, and goodness, that are to be seen every where, may also beget an apprehension or judgment in us that he should and ought to be loved. Do we live in a world full of the Divine glory, that arrayeth and clotheth every thing we can cast our eyes upon; and do we want ground to perceive, that this is the lovely Object that ought to captivate all hearts, and draw into a closure with itself the will of every intelligent creature? Moreover,

b As Epicurus himself confesseth this to be a proleptic notion, that prevents every man's reason, so as that he needs not argue the matter with himself, but if he will but read what is written in his own soul, must read *that there is a God.* See more of this in the Author's Living Temple, Part I. Chap. 2.

The express testimony of the Gospel is another means more apt still to beget this apprehension within us, that God is one we should love, and whose excellencies do every way entitle him, with a most indisputable right, to the highest degree and supremacy of our love. "No man hath seen God at any time," John i. 18. What then? Is it therefore impossible that he should be loved? Hath not "his only-begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, declared or revealed him?" Surely he hath made such a declaration of him, given such a prospect and view of him to the world, as that every one who will believe a God, and receive his report, must confess him to be the most amiable and excellent Being. Here all hearts ought to meet and unite; and this ought to be the universal centre of love. "He is in Christ reconciling the world to himself;" (2 Cor. v. 19.) giving mankind a lovely prospect of himself. And in him, who is Emmanuel, God with us, he is ready to communicate himself, and to draw souls into union with him, and to a participation of his own likeness and felicity. Who then is there but must acknowledge, that upon this representation he lays a just claim to our highest love? Finally,

There is also the inward revelation of the Holy Ghost, by which the want of seeing God is abundantly supplied. It is true, this Spirit of wisdom and revelation, by which we come to the practical knowledge of God so as to love him, is but the portion of a few. But it is in the mean time the great fault and wickedness of every one who seeks it not, values it not, and makes it not his business, with an earnest and restless importunity, to sue for it till it is obtained. God hath given no man any cause to despair; but if he seek that Spirit, by which he may be so known as to be certainly loved, he hath given him ground to hope that he shall have that knowledge of him, which shall be efficacious of that love. God has given no ground to any to despair, or fear that they shall seek in vain; but as our Saviour says in this very case, If they seek, they shall find, for he is more ready to give the Holy Spirit, than parents are to give bread rather than a stone to their children, Matt. vii. 7—11. And now that there are so many ways for conveying the apprehension into the mind, which is to be the immediate parent of love, to wit, that this object is most amiable; it is more evident, that the not seeing God, doth not render it impossible for him to be loved. And we may further consider to this purpose,

3dly, That in sundry cases besides, other means than sight, do suffice to convey such apprehensions into the mind, as to excite and raise proportionable affections in the soul. Then why should it not be so in this case? For what can any man say why he ought not to be moved by such apprehensions concerning God, as are by other means brought into his mind than by sight? What! do you love nothing, do you never find your hearts taken with any thing, but that which your eyes have seen? Is it an impossible thing, or what your ears never heard of, for a person to love only upon report, as being informed of such and such excellencies and perfections in the object? Have not many been taken with the description of a country they have not seen? Or do we think it impossible for a blind man to love his children, his wife, his friend? Do we imagine that such persons, because they can see nothing, can therefore love nothing? Do you not love your life? You cannot see that, but only in the effects; and in the effects also you may see the blessed God himself, who is the life of your life. And who can deny, that they have notions in their own minds of things that are altogether unliable to sight; which, if they will but ask themselves the question, they must acknowledge to be lovely, and which many are actually brought to love. For instance, the notions of truth; the abstract ideas of this, and that, and the other virtue; things that are never discoverable by the eye; who that considers, but must acknowledge a loveliness in them? And how many in fact are brought into a real and hearty love with such fair and orderly contextures of truth, when they see things do well cohere and hang together? The ideas of justice, fortitude, humility, patience, temperance; how many are there that do really love and admire these virtues, though they only perceive the beauty and usefulness of them by the mind, and in their effects?

So then it is no impossible thing that there may be that apprehension in the mind concerning God, upon which he shall be confessed to be lovely, and that he ought to be loved though he is never to be seen. The case is the same as to other affections, and there is a parity of reason between them. If it were impossible to love any thing but what one sees, we are proportionably incapable of fearing, hating, or admiring any thing but what we see. But let any one ask himself the question, whether he is not many times offended at the mention of things he doth not see; and whether his heart is not really afraid of things as yet invisible; or whether he hath not been many times raised into an admiration of sundry things, of which he has only heard the report. And again, I add in the next place,

4thly, That many persons have lived in this world in bodies of flesh as we do, exercising a holy love to God, notwithstanding they never saw him. Therefore it is no impossible thing; for what has been, may be, according to the old maxim, *Quod fieri potuit, potest.* Do we think that there have been no lovers of God in the world, who have lived in bodies and depended on sense as we do? God knows there have been but few, in any time or age of the world; yet have there not been some who have loved him, and have not loved their lives unto the death for his sake? What professions of love, what raptures of phrase and expression, do we find many times in Scripture from those whose hearts were full of and overflowed with love? When the fire burned within, it could not be withheld from flaming out. "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength," says David; and again, "I love the Lord," that is, from my very bowels, "because he hath heard my voice and my supplications," Psalm xviii. 1. cxvi. 1. How full are the Psalms of these expressions! and we must suppose the Psalmist to be full of an answerable sense. "As the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! My soul fainteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" xlii. 1, 2. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts?" lxxxiv. 1. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple," xxvii. 4. "For whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee," lxxiii. 25.

Such expressions as these verbal ones, and some significantly real actions and sufferings on the account of love to God, will not suffer us to doubt but that there have been true lovers of God, whatever there are in our days. And it is to be hoped, that there are some even now. However it is to be feared, that there are persons in the world who are heartily grieved, and vexed at the very heart, that there should be such expressions as these now mentioned, in those writings which they think it convenient to acknowledge as divine. For if they did not think thus, how loudly and clamorously would David and those who speak such words, have been cried out upon; and perhaps be charged with being fanatics and enthusiasts, as much as any in our days!

And that an unseen God should be loved, and an unseen Christ, who is also out of sight, is spoken of in Scripture not only as the true character, but the high glory of Christian believers. "Whom having not seen," says St. Peter, "ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," I Pet. i. 8. This is not barely affirmed, concerning these primitive Christians, but spoken of them, as their high praise and encomium; as being a discovery of the refinedness, excellency, and greatness of their spirits, who could so far lift up themselves above sense and sensible things, as to place their highest and most vigorous love upon an unseen object. That was glorious joy, and glorious love, placed upon what was not seen; a deserving object, at least believed to be such, though not seen.

And so it is we know that the blessed God becomes visible. "By faith Moses endured, as seeing him who is invisible," Heb. xi. 27. The word of God is a representation of himself, and makes report of all the glorious excellencies belonging to him. Among the rest this is his peculiar and distinguishing attribute, "that he cannot lie," Heb. vi. 18. His truth is one of those excellencies; there-

for it is impossible that he should misrepresent himself, or say that he is other than he is, "For," as the apostle says, "what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 11. He sure can best tell what an excellent and glorious Being he is; and as he has told us he is such a one, (which it was impossible he should do if he were not really possessed of those excellencies,) then there is all the reason in the world to acknowledge, that he ought to be loved infinitely above all. And this hath been the sense of many, whose practice also hath been answerable to it; who have been in this world, living in tabernacles of clay and earth as we do. Therefore it follows, that it is no impossible thing that God should be loved, though he be not seen. And supposing it not impossible, then,

In the next place, it is easy to be proved also, that it is not unfit to love God, for that reason. Sundry suggestions might be used to enforce this, and afterwards the absurdities of this excuse might also be brought in view. Indeed I have had it most in my eye, to expose this absurd principle, that men have no need to concern themselves with things unseen; I would fain, I say, drive it out of the world. And if men would but examine it thoroughly, it would appear to them monstrously absurd. To do this, therefore, and set it before their eyes, would be worth our time, and shall accordingly be done hereafter

SERMON VI.*

UPON the latter part of the text lies the main weight of the discourse we have in hand. "How can he love God whom he hath not seen?" In which it is plainly implied, that we are still perpetually bound to love God, notwithstanding his being invisible. And the vehemence of the apostle's expostulation here, implies it to be a most intolerable thing not to do so. And therefore we have observed,

That not to love God is a sin most horrid and heinous, notwithstanding the excuse that we see him not. Here we proposed in the

I. Place, to show the vanity and impertinence of this excuse; and then,

II. To demonstrate the heinousness of this sin, and its horrid nature.

In order to evince the impertinence of this excuse, there were two things which it was charged with; to wit, that it has nothing which a valid excuse should have; and if it could be admitted, it would draw the worst consequences after it.

1. It is insufficient, as we have observed, to allege this as an excuse for not loving God, that we see him not; because it is not for this reason impossible, nor unfit, that God should require this by a law.*

(1.) It is not impossible. For the sight of our eye is not the immediate cause of our loving any thing, but only the medium by which the mind discerns the loveliness of the object. For there are other means besides this of sight, to possess our minds with the love of certain things. And since there are such in the present case, which lead us to the love of God, and have actually led others to it, it is therefore possible to be done, and is by no means an improper thing to be the matter of a law. We now proceed,

(2.) To show that it is not an unreasonable law; or, that it cannot with any colour be pretended, that it was an unfit thing that God should lay a law upon men, dwelling in flesh as we do, obliging them to love an invisible being. We shall here first examine what can be pretended from God's invisibility, to make it unfit to oblige men by a law to love him; and then lay down some considerations to evince that it is most reasonable and fit that men should, notwithstanding, be under this obligation.

1st, Let us examine what may be thought of as a pretence to the contrary, or alleged against the obligation of this law. Perhaps some may object against it after this manner: "That admitting what hath been proved, that it is no impossible thing that God should be loved by men who see him not; yet it doth not therefore follow that it is the fit matter of a law. Many things are possible, yet very unfit to be enjoined, especially those things which are unsuitable to the common inclination of a people. The wisdom of law-givers teacheth them to study the temper of their subjects, and to suit their laws to them; and it would be thought very unfit and improper to make laws, that should cross the common genius of the people; and to urge the observance of them. But now the dependance that we have upon sense, cannot but infer a disinclination to the love of such things as sight cannot reach, nor come within the sphere and cognizance of our senses. To apply this to the present case. Every man, by consulting himself, may find a disinclination in his own heart to the exercise of love to God. And what!" hereupon may the sensualist say, "must I be obliged to a perpetual war with myself? to run counter to all my most natural inclinations? to neglect the things which my own eyes tell me are lovely; and labour to love an invisible being, of whom I have none but cloudy thoughts, a very faint and shadowy idea? Who can imagine that I should be put into this sensible world, with such senses suitable thereunto, as I find about me; and that it must be expected from me that I must even renounce my senses, run counter to my very eyes, abandon the things which so presently court my love, and tell me so feelingly that they are delightful? In short, that I must retire from substantial good which I know, to seek after what appears to me as a dark shadow? and which whether there be any thing substantial in it, I know not?" Thus may the man devoted to sense pretend on such grounds, that God is not to be loved by such as we who dwell in bodies of flesh, and have so much dependance upon the things of sense. Well! let us examine this pretence a little, and see whether there is any thing in it to make the duty of loving God unfit to be imposed upon us in this our present state. And there are several things here to be considered in reference to this matter. As,

[1.] If we would have this inclination to signify any thing with relation to the fitness or unfitness of a law to be imposed upon us, we ought surely to examine whether that inclination be good or bad, and so judge. But can there be a worse inclination in any creature than to disaffect the Author and Original of its own being? And by how much the stronger the inclination is to evil, by so much the greater is the wickedness likely to prove. For do not we think every one more wicked as he is the more wickedly inclined, especially when he indulges his wicked inclinations? Doth not his evil inclination, I say, when indulged, add to, and not detract from, his wickedness? If one be found to have killed another, the great thing inquired into, is the inclination indulged, the intention; whether or no it was through malice prepense. If he did the thing without the design of ill to the party, without inclination or propensity to such an action, he is looked upon as innocent. An unintended fact is not punishable as a crime. Therefore to allege inclination in this case, is but to excuse one wickedness by another.

[2.] Consider what would become of this world, if men were to be ruled only by their own inclination, or if that were to be the only rule by which all laws relating to them were to be measured. What a dreadful state would you be in, if it were permitted to any man to rob, murder, rifle away your goods and destroy your lives, only because he is inclined to it! if every one might take from you what he would, and do any imaginable mischief to you or yours, merely because he hath a mind to it!

* Preached September 27th, 1676.

a Here we showed that if any thing be brought in excuse for not obeying the law, and the exception is not against the authority of the law-giver, but to the matter of the law, that which is alleged as a valid excuse, must be able to evince one of these two things: either that the thing enjoined by this law, is impossible to them on whom it is enjoined; or that at least, though possible, yet it is unfit, and therefore unreasonable to be imposed. Neither of which will be admitted. It is indeed impossible to men considered under the reigning power of sin, and while they remain so. It is so only by a compound impossibility: as there is a compound necessity, by which a thing is said necessarily to be, while it is. But to love God though we see him not, is not a simple impossibility; for then it were impossible that he should be loved by any one at all.

And whereas the disaffection to God is very common, and rooted and confirmed in men by their being disused to converse with things above the reach of their senses, (which might tend to invite their hearts and attract their affections,) how horrid a thing were it if such a vicious custom were to obtain the force of a law! or, if men were to be allowed to do so and so wickedly, only because they have been wont so to do! if the oftener the swearer, the drunkard, the fornicator, and the murderer, have indulged their respective vices, the more lawful it should be for them to continue such practices! if men, in a word, should be so far a law to themselves, as to be permitted to do whatsoever they have been used to do! or, as Seneca says, if a reasonable creature should go like a sheep, not the way he ought, but that which he has been used to: what, I say, can be more unreasonable and unfit than this?

[3.] It must be considered, that though it is the wisdom of a ruler to regard the inclinations of a people in making laws, yet sure there must be a distinction made between things indifferent and things necessary. But is there any thing of higher and more absolute necessity than the love of God, though we see him not? Doth not our experience tell us, that we stand in need of somewhat that we do not see, in order to the continuance of our being? much more in order to our happiness. If you had nothing but what you see to maintain life, do you think it were possible for you to live another moment? I would appeal to the considerate reason of any man, whether he were not to be thought a madman that should say, "I will be alive the next hour?" Man! there is somewhat invisible and unseen that is the continual Sustainer of thy life; "in whom we all live, and move, and have our being," Acts xvii. 28. Our own experience must convince us of this, that there is an invisible Being which hath dominion over our lives, otherwise every man could measure his own time. But do not we find men die before they are willing, and when they would fain live longer? Why, it is somewhat unseen that imposes this necessity upon them, "Here thou must expire!" No man hath power over the spirit to retain it, neither hath he power in the day of death, Eccl. viii. 8.

And again, is it at all necessary to us to be happy? Our own experience tells us that we are not as yet happy and satisfied. And common experience tells all the world, that all the things they can see and set their eyes upon, can never make them happy in this world. And if we expect to be happy in another, when will our eyes lead us to heaven? when will sense, inclination, and following the customs of this world, bring us to blessedness? It were a dreadful thing, if in a matter of so absolute necessity, custom or inclination were to be the measure of the law which must govern us. And again,

[4.] I add in the next place, that it is true indeed that rulers do consider the tempers and inclinations of a people under their legislature. And there is good reason they should do so, and not impose unnecessarily upon the people, things of mere indifferency, and so run the hazard of urging them into tumults about matters of very little consequence. But sure there is no such need or reason that the great Author and Lord of all things should so much concern himself what the inclinations of those are whom he is to govern. If they dislike his laws, and have an inclination to tumultuate or rebel against him, let their dislike and inclination be as strong as it will, He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh, and have them in derision; when they say, Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us, Psal. ii. 3, 4.

[5.] There is a very great difference in the consideration of laws already made, and of laws to be made. This law was made for man when he was no way disinclined to the love of God. It is a law as ancient as his being. He had it as soon as he had the nature of man. It is therefore a part of the law of nature, and one of the most deeply fundamental things in that law; for it is made the summary, and wraps up all laws whatsoever in itself; for all is fulfilled in love. And what! was it reasonable or fit that this law, so suitable at first to the nature of man, should be then repealed, when he thought fit to break and violate it? That were a strange way of superseding the obligation of a law, that as soon as it is transgressed, it should oblige no longer! Then may any subject be a sovereign; since there would be no need of any thing more to make a law cease to oblige him, than for him to disobey it.

[6.] Consider that our not seeing God is so far from having a necessary tendency to preclude the love of him, that if things were with men as they should be, and as they have been with some in the world, it would very much promote our loving him. For though we cannot see him, yet we see many things that are great arguments, and should be powerful inducements, to us to love him. It is true we do not see God with our bodily eyes, but we see the effects of his wisdom, his goodness, his mercy, and patience every where; and of his mighty power over all, especially over those who are for God and lovers of him.

If we take a view, as we can do with these eyes, of the beautiful and glorious works of his creation, we continually behold in the visible things that are made, the invisible power and Godhead, (Rom. i. 20.) which we are called upon to adore and love. And in the works of his providence and the ways of his dispensations towards men, great arguments of love do daily occur. And into what raptures of affection do we find holy souls transported even by the help of their own eyes! the things seen representing to them the great unseen Object of love. In what an ecstasy do we find David, upon the view of the beauty and glory of this creation! "How excellent is thy name in all the earth, O Lord our Lord, who hast set thy glory above the heavens!" What put him into this rapture? The sight of his own eyes. He beheld "the heavens the work of God's hands, the moon and stars which he had ordained;" and therefore as he begins, so he ends the Psalm in a transport; "How excellent is thy name in all the earth!" Psal. viii. And thus our own eyes may serve to be our instructors, and prompt us to the love of him, the great Author and Original of all that glory which we find every where diffused in this world.

The viewing God also in the ways of his providence, how hath it excited the love of holy men sometimes! When Moses and the children of Israel had seen that marvellous work of the sea divided, themselves conducted and brought safe through it, the waters made a wall on the right hand and on the left, and their enemies dead on the sea-shore, how did this set love on work in them! how is the blessed God adored and admired upon the account of what their eyes had seen of him! "Who, say they, is a God like unto thee? Who is like to thee among the gods, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Exod. xv. 11. And after the people of God had seen that great salvation wrought that we find recorded in the fourth chapter of Judges, what a mighty raisedness of heart do we find in the next chapter, all shut up in this. "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord, but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might," Judg. v. 31. Here was love set on work and raised to the height, so as even to pour out blessings upon all the lovers of God. What a phrase of benediction is that, "Let all that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might!" which proceeded from the view of his excellent greatness.

So that this pretence, that God is not seen, doth not make it unreasonable or unfit that the duty of love to him should be imposed upon men by his law. They are not for this reason necessarily disinclined to love him, and therefore this excuse for not loving him is neither reasonable nor fit, nor can exempt men from the obligation, as the objection supposes. Let us then see,

2dly, What can be alleged to prove, that the love of God is most fit and reasonable to be the matter of a standing and indispensable law. And to this purpose, in order to show how reasonable this is, we shall only note in general, that if any should object against the fitness of loving God on this ground, because he is not seen, and affirm that for this reason men should not be required to love him; what they have to say in this case, if it signifies any thing to the purpose, must be as strong an objection in all cases of like consideration, and must at last come to this; that it is unreasonable and unfit that men should be effected with any thing they cannot see. But the falsehood hereof, and the reasonableness of this injunction upon men, may

be gathered from this fourfold consideration; to wit, that we may be as sure of the objects of the mind, as we can be of the objects of our sight; that those of the former sort are generally more excellent; that we are concerned in them, as much at least, and in many of them infinitely more, than in the others; and finally, that what can only be the object of the mind may be more intimately present with us, than those things which are the objects of sense. And if we can make out all these, which I hope we may, then it must be concluded that God is so much the more to be loved, yea, infinitely more than any thing our eye can see or make a discovery of.

[1.] We may be as sure of the real existence of the objects of our mind, as we can be of any objects of our sight; or in other words, we may be as certain of the existence of invisible beings, as of visible ones. We may frame a notion of their existence with as much assurance; and form certain conclusions concerning their nature, though they are invisible to the bodily eye. We may especially be most sure of the existence of God, though we cannot see him; more indeed than we can be generally of the existence of visible things.

Sometimes the objects of our mind and sight meet in one, there is somewhat visible and somewhat invisible. As for instance, in actions that are capable of moral consideration, there is the action itself, and there is also the rectitude or irrectitude of that action. Now here is at once an object of my sight and of my mind; and I may be as certain of the one as of the other, in many instances. As, suppose I see one strike, wound, or kill an innocent person; or, suppose I see one affront a magistrate, injuriously or barbarously; here I have the object of my eye and mind at once. That the action was done, I am certain, for I saw the stroke; and I am no less sure of the affront, though that be an object of the mind. As soon as I see such an action done, do not I apprehend it to be ill done? Is not the thing which my mind apprehends, as real as that which my eyes see? Am I not as sure that it was ill done, as that the action was done at all? though the one falls under my eye, and the other only under the cognizance of the mind.

Again, if we look no further than ourselves, our own frame and composition, we may be as certain of the existence of what we see not, as of what we do see. We have a body. We are sure we have a body, for we can see it. It is many ways the object of our senses, or the external organs that are planted there. But we cannot see our minds; yet I hope we are nevertheless sure that we have minds. We are as certain that we have somewhat about us that can think, can understand, as we are that we may be seen and felt. I go not about to determine now what it is that thinks, whether material or not, mortal or not; but every man that will consider, is as sure that he has a mind which he cannot see, as that he has a body which he can see.

To bring this matter home to our present purpose concerning the Supreme invisible Being, the blessed God. It is most apparent that we may be as certain of his existence as of any thing; and unspeakably more certain of his constant existence, than we can be of any being whatsoever. There is no man that will use his understanding, but must allow this. For, suppose an object of sight before me, I am certain that it doth exist; for I see it. Now the following conclusion may be as certain to any one that considers, to wit, something is, therefore something hath ever been. I will appeal to any understanding man, whether this be not as certain as the other. For if we should suppose a time when nothing ever was, when nothing existed, any man's understanding must tell him, it was impossible that any thing should ever have been. Suppose a season when nothing was, and then was it possible any thing of itself should arise out of that nothing, when there was nothing at all conceivable? that a thing should be before it was, and do something when it was nothing? Therefore it is hence most necessarily consequent, that there must needs be some original, eternal Being, subsisting of itself, that was always, and never began to be; and therefore was necessarily, and so can never cease to be.[b]

b This argument is urged at large, with great force and strength, in the Author's admirable Treatise, entitled the Living Temple. Part I. Chap. 2.

Let this be but weighed, and let any sober understanding judge, whether this conclusion be not as certain as the former. That is, compare these two conclusions together, I see something, therefore something is; and this also, something is, therefore something hath ever been, some original Being that always was of itself, and could not but be. A man, I say, feels as great a certainty in his own mind concerning this, as concerning the other. He must renounce his understanding as much in one case, as his eyes in the other, if he will not grant this to be certain, that as some beings now exist, there has been always an original, self-existing Being.

And then supposing the existence of the thing already, I may form as certain conclusions concerning the attributes of what I cannot see, as of that which I can see. To apply this also to the invisible, eternal Being; look to any visible thing, and your eyes can tell what are its visible accidents. I look upon the wall, and see it is white. I know it is so, because I see it is so. Cannot I as certainly conclude concerning this original, eternal Being, that he is wise, holy, just, and powerful? I know that there is such a thing as wisdom, and justice, goodness, and power, in the world. I know that these things are not nothing, and that they did not come out of nothing; therefore they must needs originally belong to the original Being. Is not this as certain, and as plain, as any visible accident of any thing is to a man's eye? Must not these attributes necessarily first be in God, as in their original seat and proper subject? yea, a great deal more certainly, than any kind of quality we can suppose to be lovely in the creature can agree to it; because, as for the original Being, that existed of itself; and therefore is necessarily and by consequence eternally and invariably whatever it is. Therefore since these perfections are originally in God himself, or derivations from him, what should rationally keep a man in suspense, when by the intervention of his mind he sees such an invisible object, but that he should fall in love with that, as well as with any visible object, that commends itself as lovely to the sight. And I should next add,

[2.] That invisible excellency is infinitely greater than any visible excellency can be. As there is a reality in unseen things, and especially in this invisible object, as much as in any thing we see with our eyes; so there is generally a higher excellency in invisible objects, than in those that are visible, and infinitely more in this than in other invisible objects. But this and the other considerations I cannot reach to now.

SERMON VII.*

THE second head of discourse which we are still upon is this, That men are not released from the obligation to love God though he be invisible; and that it is not only an evil, but a most horrid and intolerable one too, not to love him, notwithstanding the excuse that we cannot see him. And this, as we observed, you have from the plain words of the text; inasmuch as all the force of the apostle's reasoning depends upon it. For he is endeavouring to evince how unreasonable it is we should not love one another, because upon this would ensue that infernal thing, our not loving God; rather than admit which, it is supposed that men would admit any thing. For the prosecution of this truth we propose to evince, in the first place, that this is a very vain excuse; and have already shown from many considerations, that it is not impossible to love God in these bodies of flesh, wherein we have such a dependance on the senses; neither is it unreasonable or unfit it should be enjoined as a duty. Against the contrary principle we have designed to insist on sundry considerations, and have observed already in the

[1.] Place, that we may be as sure of the existence of many invisible beings, especially of God, as we are of any that are visible. This we have shown, and also that it is

* Preached October 4th, 1676.

as easy to form conclusions respecting the nature of the former, as it is of the latter. Both these we laboured to evince from several instances; and concluded with observing to this effect, that since all perfections are originally in God, which we may discern by the intervention of the understanding, therefore it is as reasonable to love him, as any visible object how lovely soever; and more so indeed, because he is eternally and invariably the same. For, to add something further on this head,

I see and converse often with such or such a person, who because of certain amiable qualities that I discern in him, hath attracted and drawn my love; but I am never sure those qualities will remain in him always. I know not whether they be of that kind, yea or no, that they will remain. But I most certainly know that he will not always remain with me the conversable object of my love. And therefore if sense, if the sight of what is lovely in him, be the only ground of my love to him, I could never have loved him longer than my eye could see him. For as soon as he is gone out of my sight, I know not but he is gone out of being, out of the world, and so the object of my love may be quite lost. But I know that the eternal Being doth exist necessarily, and always. It is impossible that God should ever not exist, or ever be other than he was; and therefore if loveliness and amiableness were found there at any time, it is to be found there at all times; without variableness and shadow of change, yesterday and today the same, and for ever.

And now upon all this, since it is very plain and evident, that we may be as certain concerning what we see not, as concerning what we do see; as sure of the existence of invisible as of visible beings; and more especially about the nature and existence (as far as concerns us) of the blessed invisible God; it is plain that there our love ought to have its exercise, as much as any where else, supposing such excellencies to be found in the invisible things, as may equally recommend the object to our love. Therefore we add,

[2.] That, invisible things are really of far higher excellency, than those which are visible. As the things that we cannot see have as certain a reality as those that we can see; so, I say, they are of higher excellency; and this blessed invisible object infinitely more excellent, as we must acknowledge, while we acknowledge him to be God. If we speak of such things as lie within the compass of our being, how plain is the case and how evident the inference! Sure the invisible world must needs be of incomparably greater excellency and glory, than the visible world. And if you reduce all kinds of being in the whole universe to these two ranks and orders, visible and invisible, certainly the latter must be unspeakably more excellent.

We who are for our parts set in the confines of both worlds, visible and invisible; we in whose very nature both meet, unite, and touch one another, and are as it were comparted together; we who are of a nature partly visible, partly invisible, partly flesh, and partly spirit, or as the language of Plato's school was, Νους, ψυχη, mind and dust united into one compound; surely we should not be partial in our judgment of this case. Who should be impartial if we are not, who are set as a middle sort of creatures between the two worlds, and so are capable of looking into and surveying the one and the other.

And if we contemplate both even in ourselves, methinks it should be no difficult thing with us to determine which is of greater excellency, this bulk of flesh, or this spirit which inhabits it, and keeps it from being a dead lump, a useless, rotten, putrid carcass. Yea, if we should suppose the body of a man to be animated by some inferior vital principle to that of a reasonable spirit, yet this would be the more excellent part. It is true, we should then have before our eyes a certain sort of human brute, of which kind there are but too many in our age, at least that live and carry it as such. We should, in short, to speak plainly, have somewhat before our eyes that wore the mere shape of a man, and could hear, and see, and smell, and taste, and move to and fro this way or that, and must ere long, after a few turns are fetched about, turn to dust, to rottenness, and corruption. But suppose we a spirit separately, such as is wont to animate a human body; here we have to contemplate something that can think, reason, and understand; that can form abstract notions of things, or compare one thing with another; something that can reflect upon itself, which our eye cannot do; that can control and correct the errors of sense; that can run through the vast compass of known things; is capable of solving problems and difficult questions; of laying down principles and maxims of truth, after having weighed and found them firm, so as that they may pass current; for such there are which pass unquestionably every where for undoubted principles. In a word, we have here a kind of being to contemplate, that is capable of taking up what lies within the compass of philosophy, policy, and the whole human orb of learning; of being instructed in all the great mysteries of mechanical skill of every kind; and in short, that can turn itself every way; and is of a nature unperishable and immortal, not liable to nor capable of corruption, but must last for ever and always endure. Who now would make any difficulty of owning, that this is a far more excellent thing than the other; this spirit, than that shape of a man which merely lives? But yet even this more excellent creature which we have been supposing, is somewhat diminished, and falls beneath a brighter order of beings, by its being proportioned to a human body. And upon this account man is said to be a little lower than the angels, Psalm viii. 5. at least this is one account that may be given of this passage; for it is a diminution of the spirit of a man, that it is proportioned to its habitation, the body. But then consider those purely intellectual creatures, of whom we know not how to form a notion which shall be more expressive than to call them INTELLIGENCIES; inasmuch as they are, as far as we can apprehend them, beings of knowledge and light, and also of goodness and love proportioned to that light of theirs; what can match the excellency of such creatures as these, among the whole sphere of visible beings?

But let us further consider how vastly numerous that order of creatures is, as we may very well suppose, and partly collect from intimations of Scripture, where they are said to be innumerable. "The innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect," Heb. xii. 22. How much of glory and excellency must then be in the invisible world, beyond what we can possibly conceive of in this lower visible region! If we do but bethink ourselves and consider what a mere punctilio, a little point, this earth is in which we dwell, in comparison of that vast expanse that doth surround and encompass it about; how unspeakably, how inconceivably more numerous must we suppose the inhabitants to be, that replenish those vast superior regions quite out of sight, than those which inhabit and replenish this point of earth! How vast, I say, must we suppose the invisible world to be, if we consider the number of its inhabitants who are parts of God's creation, whom we have reason to think do competently replenish all those vast regions that are, when our eye has gone as far as it can, far more exceeding the reach of our thoughts. What limits can we set to the creation of God in our most enlarged thoughts? Finite we must suppose it to be; but alas, we are never capable of measuring the bounds! And we have reason to believe it is every where replenished with such glorious invisible creatures as we speak of, in comparison of whom all the inhabitants of the earth, that ever were or shall be, are but an inconsiderable handful. Are we not then to think that the invisible world is far more excellent than that which is visible?

But then if we ascend to the great Author of all things, the blessed invisible object that we are concerned to speak about, that vast profound abyss of all excellencies, perfection, and glory, how much more must we conclude there is of excellency in that sort of being in general which is invisible, than in that which is visible! If we consider him inhabiting his own eternity, if we consider his immensity who was before all time, whom "heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain," (1 Kings viii. 27.) every where existing, and never not existing; in whom there is an infinite fulness, a rich fountain of being, life, wisdom, power, goodness, and holiness, and whatsoever we can conceive under the notion of excellency and perfection: to think of such a being that was every where before all time was, and continuing to be the same when time shall be no more,

where no worlds are, and where never any shall be, replenishing all the space that we can imagine, and that we cannot imagine, all, every where, and eternally full of being, life, and glory! what an object have we now to contemplate, and think of in the invisible order of things! And what! would we confine all excellency as well as reality to this little, minute, inconsiderable earth? the things that sense can reach unto? as if our senses were to be the measure of all excellency, perfection, and reality, and it was the same thing for any thing to be nothing, or at least worth nothing, as to be out of our sight.

How unreasonable were such an imagination as this! And indeed well might we be ashamed, and count it a reflection upon our profession of the Christian name, that we may so often read pagans discoursing in transports of the INTELLECTUAL PULCHRITUDE, of the beauty and excellency of mental and invisible things; while our hearts, in the mean time, are taken with nothing but what our eyes can reach to see, or our senses to judge of. With what raptures do some of them speak of the first pulchritude, and the self-pulchritude, or that which is lovely of itself. Plato in particular calls him, "The being that is with itself, always agreeing to itself, always existing uniformly, never varying from itself, and lasting always." Thus he speaks of the first ORIGINAL BEAUTY, meaning the great object that we now speak of, to wit, the invisible God. But what a degeneracy is it to measure the objects of our love by the sight of the eye! whereas there is nothing fair or good, as philosophers speak, but what hath its derivation from the first pulchritude; or as it hath a kind of precarious beauty and comeliness derived to it from him, who is the first and original Beauty. If then we seriously bethink ourselves of this, we cannot but acknowledge that the prime object of our love lies among the invisible things. If we will but use our thoughts, we must say thus; this, I say, must be the conclusion, if we will not profess brutality, and renounce our humanity; that is, deny that we are human and reasonable creatures.

But because here it may possibly be said, "That admitting there be so great excellency and glory in the invisible sort of beings, yet we are to love where we are concerned; we are to place our love among things with which we have to do, and upon which we have dependance; but how little can we have to do with things invisible, and out of our sight!" Therefore I add,

[3.] We are a great deal more concerned about invisible than visible things. They are of much more importance to us, as well as of greater excellency considered in themselves. It will certainly be found one day, that faith, holiness, humility, meekness, mortifiedness to this world, a mastery over insolent and brutish passions, tranquillity, peace, and composure of spirit, those great ornaments of the hidden man of the heart, are of unspeakably more concernment, than all the things of the visible world besides. These are of greater importance to our present comfort, and to our future and eternal well-being, than whatsoever our senses can bring to our notice. But the invisible God is so most of all, who is infinitely beyond and above all.

And what! will any pretend, that they have no concern with God, because they cannot see him? no concern with him, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being, and in whose hand our breath is," without whom we cannot move a hand or lift a foot, or think a thought, or live a moment? Have we no concern with him? none in this present state? Or are we the less concerned with God, because we see him not? May we not be convinced, if we will allow ourselves to think, that it is somewhat invisible which our life and being depend upon? For we know ourselves to be depending beings. We do know and feel, yea our own thoughts and hearts must instruct us in this, that we are not self-subsistent. We have not in our own hands the measure of our time, nor the command of our own concernments. We find ourselves controlled and overruled in many things every day. There are many thousands of things that we would have otherwise, if we could tell how. There is something invisible to which we owe our breath, and that hath dominion over us, whether we mind it or not. And have we no concern with that being, which hath such immediate power over our lives, and all our comforts, in this present state and world? But what talk we of measuring our concernments by this present state? Have not our own souls a secret consciousness in them, that they are made for eternity? for a world where they are to be perpetual inhabitants, after a little short time is over? And have we not therefore now in this life most to do with invisible things, especially with the great invisible Lord, both of the visible and invisible creation?

We should soon know ourselves to be most concerned with what is invisible, and most of all with God, if we would but understand the state of our case. We know ourselves to be creatures. We did not come into this world of our own choice, or by our own contrivance. We made not ourselves, neither was it the object of our choice, whether we would be of this or that rank or order of creatures; but were put into that rank of beings wherein we are, by a superior and higher hand. Yea, considering what sort of being it is we have, and what a nature the great Author and Parent of all nature hath furnished us with, it is easy for us by a little reflection to come to this knowledge, that we are not what he made us; that we are fallen creatures as well as reasonable ones; that we have incurred the displeasure of him that made us; that we are absolutely at his mercy; that there is such a darkness and blindness upon our minds and understandings, and such a stupidity and death possessing our very souls, that can never be supposed to have been in the first formation of such a creature by the hands of God. Lastly, we may find, that we are become impure and corrupt; that there are perverse sinful inclinations and affections, which we ourselves cannot but disapprove of, and disallow upon reflection: and that hereby we are under a very egregious guilt, and so subject to wrath and eternal punishment. If we would but allow ourselves to consider this as our state, we should soon know that we have more to do with the invisible God, than with all the world of visible things. Yea further, how amiable would he appear in our eyes, if we did but understand ourselves! if we would but take notice what dark, blind creatures we are, how would it recommend him to us, who is represented as the light of our eyes, and the life of our hearts! In a word, if we would but consider what deformed creatures we are, how impure, and, alluding to the expression in Job, (Job ix. 31.) so plunged in the ditch, that our own clothes might abhor us, O how delectable would the thoughts of him be! how lovely would he be in our eyes that brings such overtures of purification to us! I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness; and from all your idols will I cleanse you, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. And he that offers this, will certainly effect it in all those who are designed for a blessed commerce with him for ever, in order to make them perfect in his own comeliness.

Then again, if we consider how liable we are to his wrath, how fast bound with the cords of our own guilt, how amiable would that notion and name of God be to us, which was proclaimed to Moses, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin," Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. But we measure things by the sight of our own eye, because we will not allow ourselves to take any cognizance of the true state of our own case. Whereas if we did but consider the matter, and give ourselves leave to think and inquire, we should know there are things which concern us unspeakably more, that are out of sight, than what come under our view day by day; and that especially we are most concerned with him who is least in our sight, and most remote from the view of our external eye. And then add to all this,

[4.] That invisible things are a great deal more capable of being intimate to us, or we may be infinitely more conversant with them, than it is possible for us to be with things that are seen. We love a friend whom we have often seen; and it may be, the oftener we have seen him the more we love him. But we cannot be with this friend always. The dearest friends must part. We cannot have him perpetually in our bosom to converse with in a friendly manner. A great many things must concur to the entertainment of our friends with delight, and to converse with them with pleasure. For instance, they must be in a pleasant humour, and at leisure for converse. We many

times wait for visits, and they are not given; or we design them, but are disappointed. Messengers may be sent to this or that place, one after another; and yet two friends, that would converse, cannot be brought together. Besides, when we are conversing with such lower objects of our love, we must make use of speech, and are fain to employ words, those necessary but imperfect instruments, or media of conversation. But we cannot convey by words our full and clear apprehensions to others, so as to let them know all that we would have them know. And most of the controversies in the world, about matters of opinion in religion, do arise from hence, that men cannot be brought to understand one another. I cannot tell how to make another master of my thoughts, but one way or other the notion will be misrepresented, and so not he so distinctly clear in another's mind, as it doth in his that would propagate it. But if we could this way infuse into them a full and clear knowledge of what we ourselves do intend, yet we cannot thereby infuse a living sense, nor convey the affections that are in our own bosoms to another by words.

But how intimately conversant may we be with the invisible God, and that blessed Spirit that understands not only our words, but our sighs and groans, and the living sense thereof that is unutterable. God can also be conversant with us whithersoever we go, wheresoever we are, so that as soon as we are minded to retire, we find him with us. As soon as we retire into ourselves with a design to converse inwardly with the living God, he is immediately present with us, and it is as easy to converse with him as with our own thoughts. As soon as we think, so soon are we with God, and as soon is he with us. In the twinkling of an eye we find him. We look unto him and are lightened. Thus with a cast of the eye the soul is filled; it finds itself replenished with a divine and vital light, that diffuseth the sweetest and most pleasant influences and savours through the soul.

Surely then, what is invisible, and most of all the blessed God, is most fit for our converse; an omnipresent God, who is every where present with us in the very first instant; so that there are no bodies, or other circumscribing circumstances, to withhold and divert that commerce between him and us; but he is with us in our walking in the way, in our sitting down in our houses, in our lying down in our beds, in any wilderness, in any den or desert. Certainly it can be no way unfit, that he should be chosen for our converse, and for the great object of our love, though we cannot see him. Our not being able to see him detracts nothing from the reasonableness of placing our love there, upon all these accounts. Therefore the pretence for our not loving God because he is invisible, is altogether insufficient, and carries nothing in it that a valid excuse should have to make it so. I should now proceed to show the intolerable absurdities of not loving God because he is invisible; but the time doth not give me leave now to speak them.

SERMON VIII.*

HAVING in the three last discourses shown the invalidity of the excuse for not loving God, drawn from his invisibility, we now proceed in the

2. Place, To evince more fully the obligation we are under to this duty, and to show the intolerable absurdity of this excuse, that is, of pleading that we do not love God, only because we cannot see him.[a] For,

(1.) It would infer, that we are to be affected or moved with no invisible thing whatsoever; or that nothing but what can strike our senses ought to touch our hearts. For if this be a good reason in the present case, we do not love God because we cannot see him, wheresoever the case is alike, the reason will be so too; and so we are to be moved by nothing at all, but what is to be seen. No threatening danger then is to be feared or provided against, and no distant good to be cared for; and so our greatest concernments, that should urge us more than all others, must be quite thrown aside. Our business for eternity and another world, the apprehensions of which, men cannot quite abolish out of their minds, must all stand still; and we live at such a rate that no man will be able to give a tolerable account what he liveth for, or what his business in this world is. For it is altogether inconceivable for what purpose such a creature as man is should be here in this world, furnished with so much higher and nobler faculties than the brute beasts, and yet to do no other business but what they might do as well as we.

(2.) It would hence be consequent, that the blessed God would be everlastingly excluded our love, or that he could never be loved by his reasonable intelligent creature, for an eternal reason; because he can never be seen, as we see our brother with eyes of flesh. None of us in this sense can ever behold God; and if this reason be conclusive, to all eternity he must be excluded our love. And so it may be affirmed even of his reasonable creatures, "None do love him, nor ever shall." And again,

(3.) According to this way of reasoning, God would lose his interest in our love by the excellency of his nature. And how monstrously absurd is it, that by how much the more excellent an object is, so much the less it should be loved! For it is owing to the excellency of his nature and being, that God cannot be seen. And is it not a horrid consequence, that because he is so excellent as he is, therefore he is not to be loved? Nothing is more manifest, than that by how much the more excellent any thing is, so much the more it is remote from our sight. And shall this be admitted a as principle, that by how much the more excellent any thing is, the less it shall be loved? Shall God lose his interest in our love, merely because he is so excellent and perfect as he is? or shall he for this reason be less loved than visible objects are? Again,

(4.) All commerce would hereupon cease, or rather never be, between the blessed God and his intelligent creature, at least all intellectual commerce suitable to such a creature. For if this were a good reason, He is not to be seen, therefore he is not to be loved, it would also follow, that he is not to be trusted, feared, or obeyed. All which would infer, that God hath made an intelligent being with whom he can converse no way suitable to its nature, than which nothing can be thought more absurd. Further,

(5.) All differences of moral good and evil, in such a case, would be quite taken away, or all apprehensions of them, from among men. For the rectitude or irrectitude of actions is not to be judged of nor discerned by the sight of our eye. We cannot by this means alone, tell whether this or that thing be right or wrong. And this by consequence would necessarily render mankind incapable of being governed by laws; because the reason why a law should oblige, doth not fall under any man's sight. The decency and fitness of a thing the eye does not reach; for to discern this is the business of the mind. And so it would be left altogether impossible for any one to assign a reason, why it should be more congruous to equity and justice for one to embrace his friend, than to murder him; why a man should relieve the poor who cannot help themselves, rather than oppress them; or why a man should not as well, and with as great reason and equity, affront a ruler, as obey him and be subject to his authority? So that in short you take away the foundation of converse with man, at the same time you take away the foundation of religious converse with God and invisible things. By this kind of argument you not only overturn the practice of godliness and piety, which is a great part of that love to God we ought to be exercised in, but you do as effectually by the same means destroy all civil commerce between man and man, howsoever related; and leave no foundation for human society, considering the members of it in relation to governors or rulers, and to one another. And,

(6.) It would hence follow, that the original constitution of man's nature was made up of inconsistencies; nothing else but a piece of self-contradiction. That is, it would be necessary to do a thing, and yet at the same time impossible. It is necessary by the constitution of the human nature that man do love a known good, and therefore most

* Preached October 11th, 1676.

[a] See Sermon V. p. 662.

of all the Supreme Good, which may be certainly known to be what it is, the absolutely best, the highest and most excellent Good, as hath been already shown; and yet by this argument it would be impossible to do this. So absurd is this maxim or pretence, that we are not to be affected with invisible things, and are under no obligation to love God, because we see him not! In the last place,

(7.) It would also be consequent from hence, that man must be a creature from the very first made only to be miserable. For it is impossible that sense should ever afford him relief against internal evils, or ever supply him with suitable and satisfying good. How then can he be otherwise than miserable?

Sense cannot afford him relief against internal evils, and no man can exempt himself from them, nor give himself any security that he shall never be invaded by such. Let there be never so great a calm, and according to his present apprehension let all things be never so well now; yet no man can assure himself, that he shall never meet with any inward pangs; that he shall never have cause to complain of the terrors of the Almighty besetting and overwhelming his soul, even ready to cut him off. These things have invaded as fortified breasts as any our age can afford; and no man knows when he is secure from them. And suppose they do invade a man, and conscience, molested by known and often repeated wickedness, does at length awake, and grow furious; pray where shall relief be had? Will the things of sense afford it? Will they ease such pangs, or work off agonies of this nature? In such a state of mind, for a man to feast himself with the objects of sense, or with that which pleases the eye, would be as impertinent as music to a broken leg, or fine clothes for the cure of a fever or an ulcerous body.

Nor can sense be the inlet to a man of any suitable or satisfying good. Let experience witness. To those who have all sensible enjoyments to the full, I would say, "Are you happy? Can you pretend to want any thing that sense can possibly supply you with to give pleasure to your spirits? Have you not what you would have? and yet can you say, All is full and well?" Undoubtedly what was the wise man's experience, would be every man's that were at leisure to consider the case; The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing, Eccles. i. 8. Sense, let it be gratified never so much, will still live unsatisfied, will be always craving and never contented. And therefore by this supposition it must needs be consequent, that man could be created for no other state than a state of misery. But how absurd were it to suppose, that the God of all goodness had made a creature, whom it should be impossible, even to himself, to make happy! (for it is impossible to his nature ever to make himself visible to an eye of flesh;) and that it should be only possible to terrify and torment his creature, but not to satisfy it and do it good! All these things do plainly evince that this excuse, to wit, we cannot love God because we see him not, is not only insufficient, but also most absurd. Then, say we, it ought not to be admitted as an excuse at all, and men are still under an indispensable obligation to the love of God notwithstanding.

But here it may possibly be suggested to the thoughts of some, "Admit it to be a duty to love God, although we cannot see him. We acknowledge that his invisibility renders it not impossible nor unreasonable to love him; and therefore we see the excuse is insufficient, and that many inconveniences and absurdities would ensue upon making it. But though it will be no entire excuse, yet it will sure be a great alleviation. And methinks the love of God in this world should not be so strictly urged; or though we should not live in the exercise of this duty, it should not be represented as so very great a crime." Therefore in answer to this we are to evince to you according to what was proposed,[b]

II. The greatness and heinousness of the sin of not loving God, notwithstanding this excuse that we do not see him; that it not only leaves it a sin still, but a most horrid one. And this will appear if we consider sundry things that I have to mention to you, which will show it to be injurious to ourselves and others, but chiefly to the blessed God himself, the great Author of our being.

[b] See page 662.

1. It cannot but be a most horrid thing, inasmuch as it is a most injurious distortion of our natural faculties. And therein it is injurious even to ourselves, to our own nature, and to God, the great Author and Parent of all nature, at once. For what do we think he has given us such faculties for, as we find the nature of man to be enriched with? Why hath he given us a mind, originally capable of knowing him, and that could once retain God in his knowledge; or a will that could then embrace him by love? It must needs be a very injurious perversion of our own faculties, to withhold and divert them from the prime, the best and highest use, whereof they were originally capable. And it is a very unaccountable thing that it should be thus, that man should have a power given him, originally ordained by the very designation of the God of nature to such and such purposes, and that it should never be applied thereunto. Not to love God is to set those faculties one against the other, and both of them against him.

2. It is a most vile debasing of ourselves, and a sordid depression of our own souls. By love we most strictly join ourselves to that which is the object of our love, and enter into the closest and most inward union with it. And what is it that we love, while we love not God? Are not the things which our love terminates upon, such as we should even be ashamed to think of separately and apart from him? What is there that is not base, when severed from God, or if we do not eye and consider him in it? We cannot conceive of any creature whatsoever, not even of the best and most noble, but as of a most horrid idol, if made the terminative object of our love, taken apart from God, and not considered or regarded in subordination to him who is supreme. And as to the mind and spirit of a man, there is nothing that so defiles it, that renders it so impure, as spiritual idolatry does. A vile and filthy thing, that the spirit of a man should be alienated from God, and prostituted to an idol! For we make any thing so, that we make the supreme object of our love. And so in effect we join ourselves to vanity, as idols are wont to be called; to that which is not only vain, but by this means made odious and loathsome.

And how deep a resentment should this be to us, that so excellent a thing as the spirit of man, God's own offspring, should suffer so vile a dejection! that it should be depressed and debased unto such meanness as to join itself to vanity and dirt, when it might be united with the God of glory, with the fulness and excellency of the Deity; yea, and when it is apparent, that by the original designation of that nature he hath given us, we were at first made capable thereof! For how came we by that love which we find in our nature? We plainly see we can love somewhat. While we love not God there is something or other that we do love; yea, and it is altogether impossible to our nature, not to love something or other. And hath he "planted a vineyard, and shall he not eat of the fruit thereof?" I Cor. ix. 7. He hath planted that love in our natures which we have made vile, by alienating it from him, and which may yet be made a sacred thing by being sanctified and turned upon God again. For it is the object and a suitableness thereunto, wherein consists the sanctification of the affections. And again,

3. Not to love God is a most merciless self-destruction. It is a divulsion of ourselves from him who is our life. It is to rend our souls from the Supreme Good, and so abandon ourselves by our own choice unto misery. How infamous among men is the name of a *felo de se*, one that hath done violence to his own life, and perisheth by his own hands! Though the nature of the thing doth exempt him from personal punishment in this world; yet you know that human laws do very severely animadvert upon, and punish the crime as far as the matter can admit. Juries are impanelled, a strict inquiry is made into the nature of the case. "What! did he do it voluntarily? was he *compos sui?* did he understand himself when he did it?" And if this be found to be the case; his goods are confiscated, and his memory branded with all the infamy that can be devised. And there is a great deal of reason for it. For the wrong that is done does not terminate upon himself, or his own relatives; but the prince is wronged, being robbed of a subject; and the community is wronged also

being deprived of one that otherwise might have been a useful member.

No man, as I remember Cicero somewhere speaks, *is born for himself, Nemo sibi nascitur.* Many claim a part in us besides ourselves, to wit, our prince, our country, and our friends. And when one destroys himself, many are injured by that self-destruction. And though some heathens have spoken of self-destruction as a very noble and generous act, yet Plato, who had more light, (speaking, as I remember, to this very case,) says, "We are here in the body like soldiers in a garrison, who are not to stir out without the general's order and direction; no more may any one dare to go out of the body, till the great Ruler of the world, who hath placed him there, gives him leave, or a call." And he appeals to men themselves. "If you" (saith he) "had a slave that should kill himself, would you not say he had wronged you, as well as himself, who had an interest in him and his service?" And what! do we think all this while that God's dominion is less over our spiritual and eternal being? over these souls of ours that are capable of being employed in his love and praise eternally? And is not this injurious to him, that men, who are naturally capable of all this, should yet throw themselves off from God, and cast themselves among a crew of damned spirits, whose business will be always to curse their Maker? Is not this, I say, an injury to the blessed God himself, who is the Author of that being and capacity to serve him, which we find ourselves possessed of? Moreover,

4. By not loving God we render ourselves altogether incapable of doing him any faithful service, upon which our great comfort and advantage, and his honour and glory, do at once depend. For God is glorified only by our voluntary action and devotedness to him. And is it not also more pleasant to serve God cheerfully than otherwise? but can we do that without loving him? And doth it not cast a most intolerable calumny upon him, that we should serve such a master unpleasantly, and with uncheerful service? Further,

5. We should, in breaking of this one law of love to God, break all. It is a breach of all the law at once, and so makes us incapable of doing God any service at all. For we can never serve him while we obey him not, and we can never obey him without love. We find that the whole law is summed up in it. Therefore we break the whole law of love to God in epitome, when we do not love him. All the law is fulfilled and comprehended in that one word *Love.* And though it is plain that the apostle when he says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. xiii. 8—10. speaks there with a more direct reference to love to men, or one another; yet it is plain too that both branches may be reduced to one; for no man loves his brother or neighbour truly, if he do not love him for God's sake, and upon his account. That great law against murder in the book of Genesis, (ix. 6.) is founded upon this reason, "For in the image of God made he man:" so that it is God who is principally struck at, when one man murders another. Thus our Saviour made the summary of the law twofold, when he said, (to the lawyer, who had asked him, which was the great commandment,) "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," Matt. xxii. 37—40.

The whole of our duty therefore centres in this one thing, love to God. This is the radical principle whence all is to proceed; and every command doth bind us with this reduplication, "Do this and love God, and do that as a lover of God," otherwise what we do is no more the same thing which the law enjoins, than the carcass of a man is the man. That which is the soul of the duty is wanting, and that is love. What signify, think you, those prayers to God, which are put up by one that does not love him? or of what avail is any other act of worship that is performed by such a one? and if we do any part of our duty which respects man, and that duty be not animated by the love of God, the love that one man can have to another in this case is nothing else but a sort of friendly intercourse among rebels, that have cut off themselves from their supreme Ruler; and take no more notice of his interest which he hath in common in them, but as they are confederated and joined in a conspiracy against him. Love among men, why do we talk of that? To love such men as have quite cut off themselves from God, as well as we ourselves have done, is only such a love as is among rebels, that treat one another kindly in a state of rebellion. To proceed,

6. It is a violation of the most merciful indulgent law, enjoining us a duty most agreeable to our own necessities, and the least toilsome and expensive of all others. How intolerable then is it to affront God, and even to do it with no pretence of advantage to ourselves, but greatly to our own disadvantage and loss! How merciful is the law of love! how direct a provision is there made in it for the necessity of man! Pray what shall we do, nay what can we do with ourselves, if we place not our love upon God? It may be we do not find our present need of him, as long as we find objects of sense courting and flattering us in our way; but do not we know that this world must break up, and this frame of earth and flesh in which we dwell dissolve! What then will become of him at last that will be found to have been no lover of God? How dreadful a thing is it for a soul to be stripped naked and to have nothing to enjoy? It cannot enjoy God, because it never loved him. For sure, what we love not, we can never enjoy.

Therefore it was a most merciful law that said unto us, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." It is a law teaching us to be happy, and to solace ourselves in the rich plenitude of Divine goodness. Our necessity doth at once urge us, and the Divine goodness invite us, here to place our love. This is the true solution of Plato's riddle, "That love is the daughter of Pluto and Penia." For it plainly appears that the rich plenty of Divine goodness, and the poverty and indigence of the poor creature that cannot otherwise dispose of itself, are the true parents of love.

This is a thing also that will cost us nothing. To love God therefore is the most unexceptionable thing in the world. It is what we are capable of in the worst external circumstances. If a man be never so poor he may yet love God. If he be sick and infirm, if he be never so mean, if he have no estate, no interest, or be never so little in repute, he is yet capable of loving God. This he can do any where, in any place, in any desert, or cave, or upon the most afflictive bed of languishing. There is no pretence against loving God, let a man's case be what it will, or supposed to be. It is therefore a most intolerable thing to offend against a law that provides so directly for our happiness and most urgent necessities. It is such a law, an obedience to which will cost us nothing, neither can there be the least pretence of gaining any thing by the neglect of it. The sin is therefore the more horrid; and foul and shameful it is to disobey in a case wherein we have nothing to say for ourselves. And again,

7. It is a direct contradiction to our own light, and the common sentiments of mankind. For this is no disputable thing, whether we are to love God, yea or no. There are many things in religion, and many things more that are affixed to it, that make much matter of disputation, and great ventilating of arguments there is *pro* and *con*, this way and that; but pray who can tell how to form an argument against the love of God? To deny this is to affront our own light, and that of the world in common; for there is no man that will profess himself to be no lover of God. Did you ever meet with any one that would profess enmity to him? And the soul of a man cannot be indifferent in this case. It must either be a friend or an enemy, must either love or hate. God is not indifferent, or a mere nothing to us, and how should we be affected to him, if not by love? And we further add,

8. It is a most unnatural wickedness to the Parent of that being which we are each of us furnished with, to disaffect our own Original. That men should disaffect him from whom they immediately sprang, and whose image they expressly bear, is, I say, a most unnatural crime. Suppose there were a son to be found that never could love his father, and always hated the womb that bare him; what a strange prodigy in nature would he be thought!

But is not this infinitely more prodigious, to disaffect the entire and supreme Author of our own life and being, of which parents are but partial, or at most but subordinate, authors. And in the

Last place, not to add more, it is blasphemy against the Divine goodness. It is a practical blasphemy. It is the most emphatical way of denying God. For as the man that does not believe him, denieth his truth and makes him a liar, so by manifest parity, he that doth not love him denieth his goodness, a great deal more significantly than can be done by words. For men many times earnestly speak what is not their settled judgment, and what they are afterwards ready to retract. But how horrid a thing is this, that a man by a continued course and series of practice should discover this to be the fixed sense of his soul, that God is not worthy of his love! that a race of reasonable creatures should bear their joint testimony against the great and blessed God, the common Author and Cause of all being, that he is not worthy of the love of any of them! For we practically say so while we live in the neglect of this duty. What do we talk of words in this case, when deeds and our constant practice do more significantly and directly speak? and what doth the course of a man speak, who loves not God, but this, that he is not to be loved? Therefore sure, not to love God, though we see him not, is not only a sin, but a most monstrous and horrid one.

We should go on to make some practical inferences from all that has been said on this part of our subject, that we might thereby the more closely apply all; but of this hereafter.

SERMON IX.*

In speaking to the second part of our subject, we have largely insisted in showing you, that our not seeing God is no excuse for our not loving him. We have shown particularly, that it is insufficient, and also very absurd, to be alleged as an excuse; and that it is not only a sinful omission, but a most horrid wickedness, not to live in the exercise of love to God, notwithstanding this excuse that we cannot see him.

It now remains, as we promised in our last, to deduce from the whole some practical inferences, by which (if God will so direct his word) all may be applied, and brought home with the greater pungency to our own hearts. And,

I. We may hence take notice of the insolent wickedness of the world, that they so generally agree to confine the little love that is left in it to one another, and to exclude the blessed God. That men do not love God speaks them very wicked: that they continue in the neglect of this duty, without any excuse, speaks the insolency of their wickedness. While they have not a cloak left them, not a colourable pretence, nor any thing to say for themselves that is so much as plausible, yet they continue their course of excluding God out of their hearts, and live as if they owed him nothing, and had no concern at all with him.

That men do not love God is a thing that cannot be excused, as you have heard; and it is as little capable of denial, as of excuse. The matter is open and manifest. The general face and aspect of this world showeth, how little there is of the love of God in it. The very show of its countenance speaks it plainly. Men do in this matter even declare their sin as Sodom. They openly testify to one another that they are God's enemies. So that every man that runs, may read how the matter commonly is with men in this respect.

Alas, how little doth God's interest signify in this world! this shows how little he is beloved. How little is his interest valued, in comparison of that which is merely secular, and human! We have instanced to you already in this and many other things, for the eviction of the matter of fact in this case. As for the matter of right and wrong in the case, you have fully seen, from the demonstration which hath been given you, that our not seeing, excuseth us not from loving God. Nothing can be more plain, than (as we noted heretofore) that although too little respect be paid in the most important matters to human laws, yet there is a great deal less paid to divine. Men are more prone to be observant of the laws of men than of God. But there is no true obedience to the one or the other which doth not proceed from love, so far as it is true. We are to owe nothing to any man but love, or what may spring from thence. It was the complaint you know of old, "the statutes of Omri are kept," Micah vi. 16. A very scrupulous care, as is intimated and complained of, there was to observe them; while the statutes of God were neglected, or not so much respected among those that professed his name.

Yea, and which is more than that; how much more frequent are the instances that may be assigned of laws made directly against God's interest, and the precepts of the first table, than against those of the second! The world in the several successive ages of it, hath been full of instances of laws made for polytheism, infidelity, idolatry, the worshipping of false gods, and the abolishing, or very much depraving, the worship of the true. But when did you ever hear of laws made for theft, false-witness bearing, and the like? so as to oblige men under certain penalties to invade each other's interests, as they generally make bold with God. We have heard and read very frequently of men persecuted even to the death by laws, for not burning incense to idols, for not denying of Christ, and the like; but when did you ever hear of a man exposed to such penalties for not stealing, for not cozening, not defrauding this, or that, or the other man? So apparent is it, that men can express somewhat of tenderness one to another, in respect of their own private and secular interest; when, in the mean time, there is no concern at all for the common interest of the Lord of all this world. So that what interest is in the world is shut up almost entirely among men themselves. And though there is too little regard to that interest; yet they confine what there is among one another, excluding the blessed God from having any part or share in their love at all.

And truly, sirs, I fear we are too little concerned about this sad case. We do not consider this matter as it deserves, nor with that solemnity that it challenges. We are not so affected about the rights and interest of him, whom we call our God, as we ought to be. It doth not pain us to the heart as it should, to think how little God is made of in his own creation, and among the works of his own hands. We sometimes, when we hear the matter spoken of, say it is a sad case, but we know not how to help it, and so pass it very slightly over. But do not we indeed know how to help it? And should not this affect us ten thousand times more, when it is a case that we can only lament? Sure, methinks, at least we should do that if we can do no more. But how prone are we to alleviate the matter by considering it as a common case. "Oh! this is a matter of observation every day. It may be seen in every place, that there is little of the love of God to be found among men." And is it a common case? Is it not then a thousand times more horrid that it should be so common? If there had been but one apostate creature from God in all the world, one person of whom it might be said, "He doth not love God," how shocking and horrid would this man look in our eye! But is it not inconceivably worse and more horrid, that there should be so general a revolt from God? and that the hearts and love of his poor creatures are so averted without cause, and wickedly alienated from him all the world over?

2. We further collect hence, that the conviction of the unreconciled part of the world must needs be very clear and easy in the great day. When this shall be the common case brought into trial, (as indeed it will be with every man,) "Was he a lover of God, or was he not?" how easy and clear, I say, must the conviction needs be, since, as you have heard, it is a matter that admits of no excuse? If this be a matter not defensible at our own bar, among ourselves, when we controvert the matter one with another; how easily and gloriously will Divine justice triumph in the eviction of his right, and of the wrong that hath been done him by his creatures in this matter! Behold a whole

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race of creatures, originally capable of his love and communion, gone off from him with one consent! alienated in heart and spirit from the life and love of God! transmitting their enmity and disloyalty from age to age, from generation to generation! and, in a word, emboldening themselves in wickedness against him, because they see him not; and, as they vainly think, because he secs not them.

And yet in the mean time it is very plain, that men might know him if they would; for they live, and move, and have their whole subsistence in and by him. He is not far from any one of them. He supplies them with breath from moment to moment. They entirely owe themselves, their being, and preservation, to an every where present and apprehensible Deity. Yet they do not, neither will they, know him; and in this voluntary ignorance they sufficiently show, that they love him not. How glorious then will the triumphs of justice be, when this case comes to be stated! when this shall be the charge brought against men, be they who they will, or whatsoever they have been in other respects, that they have been no lovers of God.

3. We are hence to note and admire the wonderful patience and bounty of God to this wretched world. How admirable are the riches of his goodness, and his sparing and sustaining mercy! that the treasures of wrath are shut up, and the treasures of bounty opened, to a world, where he hath, upon the matter, but little or no love! One would wonder that this world should not have been in flames many an age ago, considering how enmity against God hath been transmitted from age to age. But how much more reason have we to wonder, that he so concerns himself about, and takes such care for, a company of wretched miscreants, among whom he is not valued! Still his treasures are opened to us! his sun shines, his rain falls, and in ways of grace and mercy he leaves not himself without witness, in that he is continually doing us good, "Giving rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness;" (Acts xiv. 17.) though in the mean time men will not know who feeds them and maintains their life, and parcels out their breath to them, every moment, from time to time.

Surely it becomes us deeply to adore that patience and bounty, that are so continually exercised towards such creatures, who are here shut up in the dark, as it were, from one day to another. God appears not to them; they see him not, and in the mean time agree in this, that they will have no thoughts of him, but have him in perpetual oblivion. Yet all the while they have natural powers and faculties, which if employed in the inquiry, might easily inform them, that they did not make themselves; that they have not their life in their own hands, neither can they prolong it at their own pleasure, inasmuch as all of us "live, and move, and have our being in God," Acts xvii. 28. However, they content themselves with their ignorance of him; and yet he hath sustained the world, and upheld the pillars of it, when sometimes it hath been ready to dissolve, and burst asunder, with that weight of wickedness that hath overwhelmed it for a time.

We ought surely in the contemplation of this to say, "How far are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts!" Men sometimes, when they receive but a petty injury, and an apparent wrong from another, are presently wondering that the earth doth not swallow up the man that hath done them this palpable wrong; that vengeance spares him; or that God suffers such a one to live. Oh! why do not we turn all our wonder this way; that God spares those that are perpetually affronting him! making it as it were the whole business of their life to testify to all the world, how little they care for him that made them! We ought then to consider with great admiration that vast and immense goodness, which is so indulgent to men all this while. Again,

4. We may hence learn too, the absolute necessity and proper business of the Redeemer; how great need there was of a Redeemer, and what work and business he has to do on the behalf of sinful men. We may learn, I say, how great need there was of such a one. For who can stand under the weight of this charge, to have lived days, and months, and years in this world, destitute of the love of God? Any man that apprehends the horror of the thing, and knows how inexcusable a wickedness it is, and how horrid, notwithstanding any pretence of excuse, cannot but be greatly affected by it; methinks paleness must possess his face, and pining his heart, to be subject to so heavy a charge, and also liable to be convicted of not oving God. And then, one would think, it should be easy to understand what need there was of a Redeemer. The crea on would not be able to sustain this burden, to have creatures in it that love not God, and were disaffected to their own Original. If this guilt were to be parcelled out among the creation, how soon would it make all things fly asunder! and how impossible would it be for things to subsist and hold together! How great then was the need of a Redeemer in this case!

And we may see what his business hereupon must be also; that is, both to expiate the guilt of such as have not loved God, and to procure that they may do so for the time to come. And these two we are to consider not as separate and apart from another. We are not to fancy or imagine, that Christ hath only this to do, namely, to procure pardon for our not having loved God. Sure he is to procure grace also, that we may and effectually shall do so for the future, or else he will profit us but little. If we have to do with Christ at all, if ever we receive any benefit at all by him, it must be this double benefit in conjunction; not the one separate from the other.

The imagination runs in common among men, as if Christ's business as Mediator was only to reconcile God to man, and not man to God. But how expressly doth the Scripture speak of this part too! You that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, Col. i. 21. He must reconcile us to God. And therefore the apostle again saith, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, 2 Cor. v. 19. To take out of the hearts of men the enmity that is reigning every where against God, and bring them into love with him, is the very business of the Gospel.

There did not need a Gospel to be preached to heaven, to incline God to man; but there was a necessity of dispensing one on earth to men, to incline them to God. If the business had only been to reconcile God to man, there had been no need of a Gospel at all. The affair of our redemption might have been transacted between the Father and the Son, in God's eternal counsel. Christ might have died as he did, and the ends of his dying be never known to us, were it not that this was the means, that the Spirit of Christ was to work by, in order to overcome men's hearts, and slay the enmity in them, not to be done by any other way. And shall any of us think, that Christ came into the world to procure the salvation of those, that loved not God? This were to think, that he came into the world to banish the love of God out of it.

Therefore we must know, that if ever we be the better for Christ, it must be both in his expiating our guilt, for not loving God, and in removing our enmity, that our love may be set upon him, our hearts joined with him, and engaged in communion and fellowship with him, in our future course. For this is the business of a Mediator between God and man: to salve the breach on both sides; to make a mutual agreement between both parties; to vindicate God's right, and so to act the part of a just Redeemer, and to procure man's righteousness, which is the part of a merciful Redeemer. This was his thought: "This case must be either redressed in men by working a change in them, or else vindicated upon them. This he is obliged to as Redeemer. The Father hath given all judgment (John v. 22.) into his hand: and, as it were, deposited his rights there, to be vindicated by him, or restored.

5. Learn hence the generous nature of Divine love in men. The love that we owe, and that good souls do live in the exercise of, and actually bear to God, of how noble and generous a nature, I say, is it! Their love is of so refined and solid a nature, that it breaks through the whole sphere of sense, and flies above all visible things, and pitcheth upon an invisible object. There it terminates, and takes up its residence. It never rests till it has flown up thither, and seeks no excuse from the duty of love to God, merely because he is invisible. It despiseth to be so excused, and neglects and disregards the dictates of sense

in the case. This is the genius of Divine love, and the inward spiritual sense of the new creature, whereof this love is the heart, and life, and soul. "What! shall external sense impose upon me, and tell me what is fit for me to love, and what not? What! shall I love no higher than so? no higher than a brute?" Therefore how much more noble and excellent a spirit is that of the truly good man, than the men of this world are of? and how excellent is the spirit of Divine love, which is in the saints, above that which is earthly and sensual! Let us believe this therefore, and be convinced, that the spirit that is peculiar to godly men is quite another thing from a vulgar and mundane spirit; and its strain and genius different from that of the men of this world. These love only what they see, and think they are excused from loving any but sensible objects. But, sayst he good man, "When I have seen and viewed all the good and all the excellency that this sensible creation can offer to my view, I must have something unseen for my love to pitch upon, which is beyond all this." Therefore a gracious spirit is an excellent spirit. It cannot grovel upon this earth. It must ascend above all visible things, and get up to that God who is invisible.

6. Since we are so strictly obliged to the love of God though we cannot see him; what reason have we to charge and condemn ourselves, and even loathe and abhor ourselves, that we have loved him so little, and that so small a part of our life can be said to have been spent in this divine exercise! It is high time for us to understand the state of our case, and to consider it in this respect: though it is very much to be feared that it is but little considered; for alas, how generally do people carry it as if they thought themselves innocent in this point! After all the injury that has been done to God by our not loving him, this is the most intolerable aggravation, that we should think ourselves innocent therein, and maintain that temper of spirit as if we apprehended all was well. And how plain is it that it will not enter into the souls of men, that they are guilty creatures before the Lord on this account, that they have not loved him?

If a man had secretly and privily been guilty of the death of another on such a day, and the matter was closely covered up, and nobody knew it; yet how would his own thoughts dog him and accuse him at night! The blood of that man would so cry in his conscience, that certainly he would have but a hard matter of it to compose himself to quiet peaceful repose. Why, men in not loving God are guilty of deicide, as much as they can be, or as far as their power extends. It is an attempt against God. It is saying in their hearts, "No God!" For it is a plain denial of his goodness, and therefore of his being. It is as much a denial of his goodness, as infidelity is of his truth. What a strange thing is it, that men can be so much at peace with themselves, can pass over whole days one after another, yet no such thing as the love of God to be found among them! and at night can sleep and rest, and their hearts never smite them for it.

Methinks it is strange that men can make so slight a matter of breaking all laws at once, as you have heard this is of not loving God; of subverting the whole frame of the Divine government over us. For how do we obey it in any thing, who comport not with the first principle of obedience, namely, love to God? Oh that men should be guilty of a more horrid fact, than it would be, if it were in their power, to turn all things out of order, and yet not only be able to rest, but even to think themselves innocent all the while!

These things, in my apprehension, do make a most wonderful conjuncture, where they happen to meet together; these four things especially,—that it should be so plain to every man that he ought to love God;—that it should be so plainly demonstrable, as to the most, that they do not love God;—that it should be so confessedly a foul and horrid thing not to love him, even by every man's acknowledgment; and yet,—that so many can be guilty of this horrid crime all their lives, and yet live as if all was well, and they were innocent all the while.—All these things make, I say, an amazing conjuncture. I appeal to you if they do not.

But that none of us may be so stupid under such guilt as this, let us, since we cannot excuse it, freely condemn ourselves. For who is there among us but must be forced to acknowledge, that the love of God is too little exercised, or is very faint and languid among us? Methinks we should hate ourselves for this, that we do not love God. It ought to be looked upon as a frightful thing, a monstrous indisposition in us. We should then in our own thoughts commune with ourselves, and reason thus: "Why, what a creature am I! what a strange creature am I! of how amazing a composition! I have an understanding about me. I know that which is good and what is best. I know the Author of all goodness and excellency, must needs be the highest excellency and goodness himself. I have also love in my nature, which I can employ upon inferior things, and which I confess to be of unspeakably less, and of diminutive goodness. How monstrously strange is it then that I cannot feel daily emotions of love in my heart to God! that I cannot find my heart to beat for him! that every thought of him is not pleasant to me! How amazing and wonderful is this!" Why sure it is a very befitting posture, that we should be covered with shame and confusion before the Lord; and be even wallowing in our own tears, lamenting that there should be so stupid and cool an ascent in our hearts towards him: that we can spend whole days without him; give him no visits, and receive none that are of concernment to us; and in a word, lead our life as it were without God in the world.

It should make us ashamed to read that precept of a heathen emperor,[a] who expresses himself to this effect, "You must lead your lives with God. Then," says he, "you will be said to lead your life with God, when you approve yourselves well-pleased with every thing that he dispenseth to you, and take all kindly at his hands; and when also you obey that leader and ruler[2] (he can mean nothing, but the conscience that is in man) "which he has set to be the guide of your actions. So shall you lead your lives with God, and have daily converse with him." And now to have daily our conversation in the world without God, and yet have no scruple about it, nor remorse upon it, is a marvellous thing; especially among us, who hear of him and from him so often, and know that we must be happy in him at last, or else eternally miserable. In the

Last place, since our not seeing God cannot excuse us from loving him, how much we are concerned to see to it that it be no hinderance or impediment to this our duty of loving God. And that it may not, it is very necessary that it be some way or other supplied. Since it is impossible for us to see God, we ought to consider seriously with ourselves, whether there be not something or other that may serve us instead of the sight of God, and be a means of our living in his love. And here I had several things in my thoughts to have hinted to you, and intended to have gone through them at this time; but I must leave them to the next opportunity.

SERMON X.*

SINCE it is necessary, that our not seeing God should be so supplied, as that we may be capable of loving him, notwithstanding; I now proceed to give some directions, which I hope will be of use to us in this great and important matter. As,

1. Let us fix the apprehension deep in our souls, of his certain necessary existence, and supreme excellence. Our sight doth not serve us to the loving of any thing, otherwise than as it is a means to beget an apprehension in our minds of the loveliness of it. Sight is in no case the immediate inducement of love, but only as it is ministerial and subservient to the nobler powers of the mind. And if by any other means than by seeing, we can come to apprehend so much concerning the blessed God, to wit, his most necessary existence, and supreme excellency, we shall

[a] Antoninus.

* Preached October 5th, 1676.

not be at a loss then for an apt medium, by which our love is to be excited in us towards him.

These two things are the same in effect with those that the apostle tells us we ought to be assured of, in order to our coming to God with acceptance, namely, that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, Heb. xi. 6. We may easily understand how he is a rewarder, if we compare this passage with what is said to Abraham, I am thy exceeding great reward, Gen. xv. 1. God is at once both a rewarder, and reward to those whose hearts are towards him. He is a rewarder by communicating himself, and not by giving rewards alien and diverse from himself. And it is necessary that we be assured, that he both is, and that he is in this sense a rewarder, as being in himself the highest excellency, or the supreme and best good. For without a persuasion concerning both these, it is intimated, that we cannot come unto him in an acceptable manner.

Now loving him is one way of coming to him. It is that by which the soul moveth to him in desire, and then rests in him in delight. There can be no such motion in the soul towards God, without this double persuasion concerning him; namely, of his certain existence, and highest excellency, as our terminative good. And you have heard that we may be as sure of both these, as of any thing that we see with our eyes. For if our eyes tell us, that any thing is in being, our minds tell us as certainly, that there is an original being. And if we can be any way sure, that there is such a thing as goodness and excellency in the world; we may be as sure, that there is an original excellency, an original good, which must needs be the supreme good, and can be no where, but in the original supreme Being. For goodness and excellency are not nothing, and therefore cannot come out of nothing, but must proceed from the same fountain, from whence all being comes. We are not more sure of any thing that our eyes inform us of, than we shall be of this, if we do but consider, and use our understanding in the case.

So that we should endeavour once to fix the apprehension of these things, as being most certainly true; and from our very souls should bless God, that we are at a certainty in these things; that we do not feel the ground loose under us, but are in this respect on firm ground, when we affirm that God most necessarily is and is the highest and most excellent good. And being once sure of this, it would be very unreasonable to be recalling this matter into doubt, or to be perpetually moving questions and disputes concerning it in our minds. It is what we may be as sure of, as that there is a world in being, or that any thing is, that we ourselves are, who being nearest to ourselves, may be surest of our own being.

And it would make strange confused work in the world, if in reference to all the actions of man, they should be ever moving disputes about them, whether they really are or are not. As if a man could not tell how to eat, but he must fall a doubting presently, "Is this real food before me, or is it not? or am I awake to eat it, yea or no?" Or as if he could not tell how to converse with any one, about never so important a business, but he must fall a disputing, "Is this a real man, or but a spectre? may it not be only the umbra of a man?" In short, what could be done, what business transacted in the world, if, about such plain matters, doubts must be perpetually raised?

Every man that hath understanding, as bath been said, may be at as great certainty concerning the existence of the supreme and first Being, as of any thing whatever. Nay, a great deal more, because his existence is supremely necessary. So that if I confine certainty to the eye, then I am sure of nothing but what I see. But I am certain that God always was of himself, and therefore is necessarily; and so, not to be, must to him be simply impossible. This, therefore, would be one great supply to our not seeing him, once to make the matter plain and clear, that he exists, and that he is the most excellent and supreme good. Which would be a great deal in our way, towards the exercise of love to God, though we do not see him.

2. It will concern us much to use our thoughts in being conversant with other invisible objects. For certainly, minds and hearts that are continually busied about things of sense only, will be but in a very defective capacity, at all times, to converse with the invisible God. It needs a very refined temper of mind to behold him with the intellectual eye, and thereupon to love and embrace the blessed glorious God. And as while we converse with things that are vain, our minds are vain; while with things that are earthly, our minds are earthly, and bear the impress and image of those things with which we have most to do; so, if we did but converse with spiritual things, or those which are above the reach of sense, it would be a means to make our minds and hearts grow more spiritual, and consequently more fit for the love and converse of the eternal, supreme, invisible Spirit.

It is a mean base thing, since God hath furnished our natures with a thinking power, to use our thoughts only about those things that lie in common to us with brute creatures. "Can I, have I, a power to mind higher and nobler objects, and will I so vilely debase myself as not to mind them! to mind only things that are earthly, drossy, and terrene! By this means I shall always keep myself in an incapacity to have to do with God."

We should therefore consider with ourselves, that as we have faculties by which we are rendered capable of conversing with men and visible things; so we have faculties too in our natures, whereby we are capable of conversing with things that are not visible, and that are of a higher nature. It is easy to turn all the things of this visible state into a dusky shadow to ourselves. We can clothe all the world with darkness, in a moment, only by shutting our eyes. And therefore as our eyes would signify nothing to visible things, if we did not use them; so nor will our thoughts signify any thing in reference to the invisible world, unless we employ them upon their more proper and peculiar objects.

We should also recollect with ourselves, that there is such a thing as an invisible world, which is the best and noblest part of the creation of God. We ourselves, as to the better part of our natures, belong to it. Therefore we should not behave as strangers, and unrelated to that world. We should consider how glorious the invisible world is, and recount who are its inhabitants, what are the affairs and pleasures, the excellencies and ornaments of those inhabitants. Let us think with ourselves, what vast numberless myriads there are of glorious spirits, creatures of God, that are composed all of mind and love, whose perpetual business and employment is to behold and adore the great Father of spirits, the PATERNAL MIND, or REASON, as the heathen have called him, the original intellect, that is every where, and ALL IN ALL.

We should think with ourselves, that the affairs of those innumerable multitudes of glorious spirits, and their pleasures and delights, are the same. Their business is to be always beholding the Divine glory; and by adoration and praise to return it to him, reflecting it back again to its own Original. We should think with ourselves, what the lovely ornaments and excellencies are of those blessed inhabitants: we should consider their vast knowledge, their mighty power, their pure holiness, their profound humility, the benignity, love, and serenity, that are every where to be found among those happy beings.

And when we have thought and considered all this, then let us ask ourselves, "Why am I a stranger to this invisible world?" For indeed we are strangers to it, while we are unrelated to God, and his Christ. But this is not our necessity, but our great folly, that we continue in so distant and unrelated a state. We are naturally aliens, strangers, foreigners; but there are overtures made to us by Christ, to become of the household and family of God, Eph. ii. 19. And this family is made up of heavenly ones, though part be in heaven and part on earth. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, besides his natural, hath an acquired dominion and lordship over the whole of it. By him were all things made, both visible and invisible; (Col. i. 16—21.) and even besides that, by the blood of his cross, he is become the Head over all principalities, and powers, and thrones, and dominions; whether they be in heaven, or earth, or under the earth.

So that if we be of those who profess themselves to be Christians, and are united to him, we are come to an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect, Heb. xii. 22, 23. We are actually joined as members of that body, which is all but one community of glo-

rious creatures above and holy ones here below, in whom the beginnings and first principles of the new creature, and the work of sanctification, are to be found. So that we may again demand of ourselves and ask, "Why do we estrange ourselves, and carry it as if we were unrelated to those invisible creatures?" Those blessed spirits are continually mingling with us, if we will believe the Divine testimony concerning them. The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him, and delivereth them, Psal. xxxiv. 7. And what are all the angels, but ministering spirits sent forth for the good and service of them who are heirs of salvation? Heb. i. 14. They are conversant in our assemblies, as some understand that passage in the first epistle to the Corinthians, where the woman is directed to have power over her head, that is, a vail, in token of her subjection to power, "because of the angels;" (1 Cor. xi. 10.) though some understand this passage otherwise. And again, more expressly it is said, that unto powers and principalities in heavenly places is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 10.

Therefore in that we do not entertain more frequent thoughts, and exercise our minds more about what the Scriptures reveal in this matter, we are certainly injurious to ourselves. We keep back our minds from being clarified from earth and sensible things, by which they might be raised up to the honour and advantage of being employed about the blessed God himself. For if we were filled, all the day long, with becoming thoughts of the state and condition of the affairs of the inhabitants of the invisible world, how easy were it to fix upon God the great Ruler of all, the Father of spirits!

And being of the same community, making but one society with those blessed creatures, as being under the same Head with them, we make a great schism in the body if we break off ourselves from them, and their employments and affairs, and involve ourselves with things that are visible, and the objects of sense. Of all men in the world, the sensualist is the greatest schismatic. He breaks himself off from all the affairs and concernments of the invisible world; and wraps himself in this narrow sphere, as one quite cut off from God, and all that are more immediately conversant with him. We, I say, quite rend ourselves from that body, that happy society, if we do not apply ourselves more to mind the concernments of that other world, and to have our spirits, thoughts, and affections, exercised and carried up thither. And again,

3. It is necessary in order to supply our not seeing God, that we most firmly believe the report and testimony that is given of him in the Gospel of his Son. What we cannot know by our own eyes, we must be beholden for the knowledge of to the report of others. And it is the business of the Gospel to make a report of God to us, and the errand of his Son into the world was to bring us this report. He who best knew him, and from eternity was in his bosom, "hath declared him;" (John i. 18.) and that on purpose for our relief in this case, because "no man hath seen God at any time." Since therefore God is invisible, and we are creatures that depend so much upon sense, he "hath spoken to us by his Son, the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3. So that it is by no mean one that he hath sent us an account of himself, though we cannot see him.

All reports signify as they are believed. They signify nothing where no credit is given to them. But what should induce us to doubt, whether the revelation which Christ hath made to us of God, in his word, be true or no? What should make us imagine, that God should misrepresent himself? What! doth he need to beguile us, his creatures, whom he hath entirely in his power? the works of his hands, whom he can wink and beckon into nothing? Do you think he means to beguile us with specious representations of himself, otherwise than as the matter really is?

Therefore we should thus consider with ourselves. "We have not indeed seen God, nor is he liable to so mean a thing as human sight. But we have an express discovery of him by his own Son, who came upon this very errand: and what he has said was not casually, and on the by, as words dropped by chance; but he came for this very end, that he might acquaint the world what God is, and give to men an account of him, since he is not to be seen with eyes of flesh." And sure, upon the account we have of this blessed and glorious Object, he must be acknowledged to be the most lovely Object. We are not then at a loss for an object of our love, if we will but believe the record and testimony of the blessed God in his own word; and take it as a revelation from heaven with so merciful a design. How awful an acquiescence therefore doth that challenge and command! So that our hearts should readily suggest to us, that it is the greatest profaneness, if we do not with reverence and veneration admit that testimony.

In what honour and veneration had those poor deluded creatures the image that was said to have come down from Jupiter! Acts xix. 35. Why, God's own word is his own lively image, a true representation of himself, which certainly came down from himself. He hath sent many on this message; his own Son, his prophets, and apostles, on purpose to draw men into communion and fellowship with himself. These things, saith St. John, are written, that we might have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, 1 John i. 3. And then he goes on in his epistle to tell them, that the message which the apostles heard of him and declared unto them, was this—that God is light, and God is love, 1 John i. 5, &c. Surely then such a Being is the most worthy of our esteem and love; and the message sent to men is most worthy of their acceptance, to wit, that such a God is offered to them for their God. Thus men are acquainted with him by the revelation they have of him in the Gospel, that so they may be drawn into a communion and fellowship with him, the life and soul of which is love.

4. It is necessary, that we bend ourselves much to contemplate and study the nature of God, according to the discovery we have of him in his revelation. That which we do know and believe, makes an impression upon us only as it is improved by our thoughts; as it is considered or not considered. A great many things lie asleep in our souls, and signify nothing to us, for want of actual thought. At certain times and seasons, therefore, we should say to ourselves; "Well! I will now go on purpose, and sit down, and meditate upon God. This shall be the business of the present hour." For surely nothing can with higher right lay claim to our entire thoughts, than the Author of all. And it is a strange piece of negligence, that he, with whom we have such great concerns, and who is our All in all, should be so seldom the subject of our solemn, designed, purposed meditation; that the thoughts of God should be casualties with us; that we should think of him only now and then by chance, and never find a time, wherein we may say to ourselves, "I will now on set purpose think of God."

How doth this correspond with the practice of the saints, who had communion with him of old? as we find the Psalmist intimating, that he thought of God on his bed, and meditated on him in the night watches, Psal. lxiii. 6. I would not here propound to you the indulging or gratifying a vain curiosity, inquiring into the unrevealed things of God; but would recommend to you the study of those plain intelligible attributes of his, that are obvious to the understandings of the generality of men, because the Divine Being is not capable of a strict and rigid definition. These are enough to suggest such a notion of him, as renders him an object worthy of our love and worship; while a multitude of things may be supposed concerning God, which it is not necessary for us to be acquainted with.

Consider then his wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, and the like, which are his communicable attributes; and add to these the incommunicable properties of his eternity, his immensity, his self-sufficiency, his self-subsistence, his necessary existence, and so we have an account of God. And then how excellent and glorious an Object both of love and worship have we before us! a Being of himself originally perfect; who is essential wisdom, goodness, love, truth, righteousness, and holiness. In what a transport should we be upon such a representation of God! We have his name often in our mouths when it is with us but as an empty sound; as if that great and venerable name signified nothing. He is near in our mouths, and ears, but far from our hearts; and then no wonder he is so little loved all the while. But would we once admit to have our souls possessed with the apprehension of the

import of that mighty and venerable name, which was given to Moses; how would it engage us to bow our heads and worship him, who is "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty," Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Our Lord told the Samaritan woman, "Ye worship ye know not what," John iv. 22. So do they, who make his worship nothing else but a ceremonious compliment; the mere bowing of the knee, and the honouring him with the lip. But if it be the worship of love, it is impossible then that we should worship we know not what. For the interior faculties of the soul, as to love and desire, cannot be wrought upon by a shadow. They must be moved by something substantial, and set on work by something which really exists. When therefore we hear the name of God spoken, how should it make us stoop and bow before him! and into what an awful and pleasing commotion should it put all the powers of our souls at once! But to go a whole day, and forget God; and to let many days pass, without ever choosing a time to think of him on purpose, is a great iniquity. And while that iniquity abounds, the love of such must needs grow cold. And then again,

5. We must take heed, that we entertain no horrid and dismal thoughts of God, and that we believe nothing that is contrary to his own revelation of himself. Take heed lest the belief of a God suggest only a guilty enslaving fear. I mean not the fear of reverence, which the angels owe and pay; but that fear of horror, which is most proper to devils, and is the product of a diabolical faith. "The devils believe and tremble," James ii. 19. They believe and are full of horror, as that word φρίσσουσι signifies; do even shiver with the belief they have concerning God. As "perfect love casteth out fear," (1 John iv. 18.) so such fear will always put out love. For a fear proceeding from gross and horrid mispersuasions concerning God, must needs stifle all dutiful, ingenuous, loyal affection to God.

It is the great art of the devil to possess men with the apprehension, if it be possible, that their case is the same with his own, that so thereby they may make it their own. If the devils can once persuade men, that God is as unreconcilable to them, as he is to themselves, who sinned with open eyes, without a tempter, and all at once in their own proper persons; if they can, I say, but make men believe this, then it is a most easy thing to keep the love of God from ever having any entrance into the soul. It is natural to hate those whom we fear or dread; therefore, I say, the fallen angels believe and tremble, believe, and are full of horror.

But, do you believe, and bless God? Believe him actually reconciled, if you find your hearts do yield to him. Believe him willing to be at peace. Believe him when he testifies, that whosoever cometh to him shall in no wise be cast out, John vi. 18. Believe him saying, "Though thou hast forgotten me, and hast set up thyself to be thine own idol, and hast been perpetually affronting me; yet do thou but accept my Son, and of pardon in and through him, and I will make thee my friend, my associate, and my son." Do but believe this, and try if it be in your power not to love him. This faith will certainly work by love. But take heed of believing what God hath never said; and what the destroyer of souls would make you believe he hath said. For whatsoever thoughts tend to the making him unlovely, or not amiable in your eyes, have them far from you. And,

6. Make him your own by an entire and cheerful choice, and acceptance of him for your Lord and your God. How mightily doth relation, interest, and property command love! You cannot see him, it is true, but you may choose and apprehend him for your God; which relation, once understood, will happily supply the want of seeing him. Surely you would love your own child, your own father, your own husband, or wife, though you were born blind and could never see them. How many are apt to say, when they observe any thing lovely, in such or such a relation in another family; for instance, a dutiful, ingenuous child; "O had I such a one, how should I love him!" Why, you have an amiable description of your God; and do not your hearts say within you, "If he were my God, how should I love him?" And why is he not your God? he offers himself to be yours, and has put no harder terms upon you, than that you receive him for your God. Comply then with his righteous law, "Thou shalt have no other god but me," Exod. xx. 3. Say therefore, "Thou shalt be my God wholly and alone." As every covenant is made up by a mutual stipulation, so his willingness and yours make the bargain. He hath declared his own willingness, do you but make out yours, and the matter is effected, so as that none can tear you asunder.

And how pleasant a thing is it to have such a God your own to glory in, and to walk in his name! to be able to say, "God, even my God, shall bless me! I need no other." How high matter of triumph was this to the Psalmist! Let it be told to the generations following, This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death, Psal. xlviii. 13, 14. As if he had said, We are willing that this should be known, in the present and succeeding ages. Let it be transmitted to posterity. Let there be a perpetual everlasting monument of this, that we have had the Lord for our God. Thus a certain noble person would have an inscription put upon his tomb, without any further enlargement, to this effect, That he had been a servant to Queen Elizabeth, counsellor to King James, and friend to Sir Philip Sidney. By this it appears that he would have all ages know whose servant, counsellor, and friend he had been.[a] In like manner should every good and pious soul declare to the present, and all future ages, that THE LORD IS HIS GOD.

7. Let your souls be filled with this apprehension, that God is always and every where present. How sweetly moving are those thoughts of God's omnipresence in the 139th Psalm! They were so to the Psalmist, and they are so to all the saints. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee," Ps. cxxxix. 7—18. And when the royal Psalmist considered, how God insinuated himself into every bone of his flesh, and particle of his frame, saying, "Thou hast possessed my reins, thou hast covered me in my mother's womb;" he breaks out at last into these words, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!"

Let us then but habituate ourselves to the apprehension of an every where present Deity, conceiving all things filled with the Divine fulness, and this will supply the defect, or the want of seeing God. Let every creature, every place, every providence, put us in mind of God. Thus begins and ends the eighth Psalm, the design of which is, to contemplate God in these things, regarding them all as the works of his hands; "How excellent is thy name, O God in all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the heavens!" Psal. viii. 1, 9. And what an ecstasy do we find Moses in, while he is celebrating a particular providence! "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Exod. xv. 11. If then we did but labour to make this thought familiar to ourselves, that whithersoever we go, or wherever we are, we have a God to behold; that there are footsteps of God, every where, for us to take notice of, or impressions and prints of his glory; this would habituate us to his converse, and make the motions and exercises of love easy and familiar to us. This effect it had on the Psalmist in the 104th Psalm, who after a glorious descrip-

[a] The noble personage here alluded to, is Fulke Grevill, Lord Brooke; whose funeral monument is yet remaining in St. Mary's church in Warwick, and has on it this inscription:

FVLKE GREVILL
SERVANT TO QVEENE ELIZABETH
CONCELLER TO KING IAMES
AND FREND TO SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

tion of God, thus closeth it up; "My meditation of him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord," Psal. civ. 34. He had been viewing God, as he was to be seen in the works of his hands; and his spirit was now drenched deeply in the thoughts of God's active power and providence, every where diffused in the world.

We, in like manner, should always have such thoughts injected into us, if we would but consider with ourselves, that wherever we are, still we live, and move, and have our being in God. The whole earth is full of his glory. By him all things consist. We can set a foot no where, but still we tread upon his ground, and are in his dominion. We cannot live, but by a vital influence derived from him. How much would this contribute to the facilitating the exercises of love! By converse love insinuates itself into persons, they are captivated before they are aware. And there is no man of so morose, sour, churlish a nature, but will have a sort of kindness for such, whom he converseth frequently with. Assiduous converse wins hearts. How much more, when we have such an amiable object, should we associate with him! It will then ensue of course, that we shall be taken with him, and drawn by the cords of love into the happy bonds.

8. And lastly, let us pray much and earnestly for the Spirit of life and love, which is his own gift. Among the many excellent fruits of the Spirit you see love leads the van, Gal. v. 22. It is of considerable moment to state the case to ourselves thus; "The love of God is one of the fruits of his own Spirit." How intent then should we be upon this, that he who claims to be the Object of our love, is pleased to be the Author of it! even of that pure, refined love, that is fit to be set upon so glorious an Object. Whereas such a carnalized, impure, drossy love as ours, can never turn itself unto God; will always decline, and shun that blessed Object. He must form our love for himself, or it will never do.

As he therefore makes our love the sum of his law, and of all his precepts, so we should make it the sum of all our requests. For it is at once indeed both our privilege and our duty. Both what we are to do, and what we are to enjoy, are all summed up in love. And if we make this the sum of our desires, how much of ingenuity would there be in this prayer, when we come to the Lord, and say, "Lord, if I should cast all my desires into one request, it is *love!* Love is the only thing. I beg only a heart to love thee." How much ingenuity is there, I say, in such a prayer! and how great also is the necessity of it! For we can as soon pluck down a star, or create a new sun, as plant in our own souls this principle of love to God, without his aid. Every good and perfect gift is from him; and certainly this is good, and a matter of high excellency, to have the heart possessed with his love. We can never understand the love of God to us, till our souls are, as it were, trans-elemented into a love to him. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him, 1 John iv. 16.

And now, after all this, would we be excused from the duty of loving God? that is, from being happy, from living a life of pleasure, from solacing ourselves with the immense Good? We should, methinks, as little wish to be excused, as a poor indigent man from having all his wants supplied; or a sick languishing person, from returning to health and strength; or a hungry fainting person, from receiving convenient food; or a weary person, from receiving refreshing ease and rest. Would we be excused from having God for our portion, our health and strength, our rest and all in all? We cannot indeed see God; but will that excuse us, when so many things present us with an idea and image of him? or when we have the privilege of addressing ourselves to him by prayer? The Scriptures do not speak to us in this matter with any intention or design to excuse us from this duty. There it is intimated, that all the good, which concerns a man's present state, comes from love to God. All, says the apostle, shall work together for good, to them that love God, Rom. viii. 28. And with respect to the other world, it is said that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath laid up for them that love him, I Cor. ii. 9.

* Preached November 1st, 1676.

And if we would but consider the matter, it is plain we cannot excuse our conduct to ourselves; much less to God. For do not our consciences tell us, that nothing is so easy, nothing so ready? And it is likewise to be considered, what will be made of this one day. I make little doubt but one very great part of the torture of hell, will lie in a too late repentance; that we never loved what our convicted consciences must needs have told us was most congruous, and fit to be loved. When an awakened soul shall make reflection, and consider, what infinite reason there was for the loving of God, and yet it could never be brought to it; we can conceive no sort of mental torture to be more tormenting than this. So that they, who live destitute of the love of God, and content themselves with so doing, are busily preparing their own hell all their days. Oh, how tormenting will be the reflection! "I lived a life's time in the world, and knew how reasonable a thing it was, how just and righteous to love God, and yet I never did love him!" This will be a most amazing subject for thoughts to feed upon, and to find torment by, throughout an eternal state. And therefore we are the more concerned to be restless in our spirits, till we feel the fire so to burn within us, and can make our appeal to God, saying, Thou knowest all things. Lord! thou knowest that I love thee, John xxi. 17

SERMON XI.*

We have endeavoured from these words to evince to you the indispensable obligation there is upon us to the continued exercise of love to God, notwithstanding that we cannot see him. This hath been doctrinally discoursed of, and also insisted upon by way of use, and particular application of that doctrine; but before we pass from it, it will be requisite to add somewhat further of a casuistical import.

It is very plain, that though there are not many sincere lovers of God in this world, yet there are few who pretend not to be so. They are apt to please themselves with the conceit that they love God, and so take the matter for granted, though there be nothing of any such affection in their hearts at all. Others there are, who are apt to suspect that they do not love him in sincerity, and are too forward to conclude, that they have none of this Divine affection, because they do not perceive it to work towards God, as their love does towards other objects. Finally, there are others again, who are very prone to censure those that speak of more passionate workings of affection to God, as mere hypocrites for this pretension. For since they experience nothing of such workings on their own hearts, they think it impossible there should be any such thing at all in the world. There are therefore three sorts of persons that our present discourse must have reference unto.

I. Such ignorant and careless souls as do, at random and without ever considering the matter, pronounce concerning themselves, that they are lovers of God; though if the matter be strictly looked into, they have no such thing as a motion of love in their heart to God at all.

II. Those that are prone to suspect, and conclude themselves to have no love to God at all, because they do not find this affection to work with that fervour and constancy that they think it should, and which they perceive on other occasions.

III. Such as are very apt to suspect, and accuse others of hypocrisy or folly, who seem to express the most passionate and fervent love to God, and think that such an affection towards him cannot have place in a human breast. What therefore is pretended to be of a spiritual and holy kind, must be resolved, they imagine, wholly into enthusiasm; or be attributed to the power of fancy, or imagination; or to the temper and disposition of the bodily humours, and the various structure and fabric even of the inferior parts of the body itself. To each of these sorts, reference must be had in what is now to be discoursed upon at this time.

I. As to those who confidently give out themselves to be lovers of God, though they never felt any motion of love to him at all in their hearts, such things as these it would be very fit for them to consider.

1. That it is a very rash and unreasonable, as well as dangerous, presumption, for them to conclude there is that in them which they have never perceived at all. For what might not one imagine or fancy upon such a pretence? Supposing it possible, must I believe every thing to be true which is barely possible to be true? How many absurd things should I then believe! For there are many things that possibly may be, which yet it would be a very great absurdity to believe are in reality. It is a known rule, that of things that appear not, nor exist, the same esteem is to be had. If then it no way appears, or however appears not to me, that I am a lover of God; with what confidence can I pretend to it, or say that I am so?

2. It is to be considered that it is a most natural thing to men to be very indulgent to themselves, and to think that of themselves, which none would think or imagine but themselves. It is natural to every wicked man to "flatter himself in his own eyes, until his wickedness be found out to be hateful," Ps. xxxvi. 2. Thus says the Psalmist, "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart," that is, suggests to me, "that there is no fear of God before his eyes," Ps. xxxvi. 1. And truly this does as effectually speak or declare, that he hath not the love of God in him; yet at the same time he flatters himself, as it there follows, in his own eyes, till the matter comes to be plainly observable to every eye. Hence it may be very well understood, how it comes to pass that men are so apt to judge themselves any thing, which it would be horrid for them not to be thought to be, only from the kindness they have to themselves. For how horrid is it for any man to admit himself to be no lover of God! Therefore he must needs think himself such, or affirm that as true, which it were a horrid thing to confess and avow to be false. And so, upon the matter, their love to God depends upon, and runs into nothing else, but a partial and fond love to themselves.

3. They should consider how obvious the mistake is, to take a conviction of conscience in this case for an affection of the heart. That is, because they are convinced that it is a very reasonable and fit thing to love God, therefore they conclude, that they do love him. But how most irrational is the conclusion! They may as well conclude their approbation of any thing else, to be the possession of the thing itself. For instance, that they are rich, because they approve of riches; or that they are in very good health, because they approve of a sound habit of body. It is plain that this is all which the most can say, as to the bottom of their pretence. They have nothing at all in them like the love of God, but only this conviction of conscience, that it is fit he should be loved. Of this there is a necessary and unavoidable approbation imposed upon their judgment, from the evidence of the thing itself. And as all men are convinced, that the obligation is indispensable, therefore they are willing to take it for granted, that they have the love of God in them.

4. It follows, as another thing to be considered, that if the love of God in itself be really a distinct thing, and different from such a conviction, then their love to him is reduced to nothing; for it is really nothing, distinguished from such a conviction, or apprehension in their own minds. And under a notion of its being an affection of a finer kind and nature than to be obvious to common observation, they have refined it quite away, even into a mere nothing. For doth not every man's own sense tell him, that the love of this or that thing is quite another thing than a mental approbation of it? Or may not I be convinced in my judgment of the excellencies of one, to whom I have yet a settled aversion in my heart? How many cannot endure such persons, of whom upon conviction they cannot say they are not excellent men? And certainly it will put every sober considerer of this state of the case upon quite new thoughts, when he shall find he is not able to tell what the thing is, that he calls love to God, if it must be distinguished from the mere conviction of the reasonableness of it.

5. It is also to be considered, that since love to God, if it be any where, is to be discerned and felt, and must be a ruling principle; it is then a most absurd imagination, that such a principle should be in men, of which they have no perception. For is it not absurd, that a principle, which is to have the conduct of a man's life, and so very great power in and over him in his whole course, should yet be neither discernible, nor felt? Indeed there are many thoughts and motions that stir in our minds, of which we take very little notice; nor can we in a little time say positively, whether we have such a thought or no. But that a principle, which runs through the universal course of a man's life, and which of all things should most frequently come under his notice, should yet be neither felt nor perceived by him, is the most unimaginable of all things we can conceive of. Therefore those who have so hastily pronounced themselves to be lovers of God, and yet never felt any thing by which this love is to be discerned, are besought to think again, to allow the cause a rehearing, to take it into new consideration, and not run away with a groundless conceit that they are what it so much concerns them actually to be, while they are only so in their own fancies and imaginations.

II. I now come to the next sort, namely, those who are apt to judge themselves wholly destitute of sincere love to God, because they do not find those passionate motions of it towards him, as they do towards many inferior objects. And there are sundry considerations, which will be very requisite to be weighed in this case too. As,

1. That certainly the actual exercise of love towards God may be often intermitted, when an habitual propension of heart towards him doth remain. The soul may frequently be put beside the direct acts and exercise of this duty; and yet that virtue and principle, which hath touched their hearts, and by gracious vouchsafement is seated there, may still habitually incline them the same way. As the needle touched with the load-stone, is frequently diverted from its direct tendency towards the north; for being moved it shakes and quavers, and hath its various vibrations this way and that, yet there is a virtue in it that will bring and reduce it to the right point again. Therefore it is not this or that act of love towards God, that gives the denomination; but the habitual propension, and bent of the heart. A man then is to be esteemed a lover of God, according as his heart stands habitually propense to him. But if the denomination depend upon this or the other act; then a man would cease to be a lover of God, as often as he loveth or thinketh of any one else, or is diverted from it by this or that though never so necessary an occasion. And again,

2. It is very necessary, that we consider the act and the passion of love as very distinguishable, or different things. The act of love in a reasonable intelligent creature, is nothing else but the complacential motion of the will towards this or that object, that is apprehended amiable, or worthy to be loved. The passion of love is the impression made by an object, upon the animal and vital spirits of the brain and heart, which, being sensible, are reflected upon, and by many are taken notice of (through a great mistake) as if the very notion and being of love was placed there. Whereas the whole entire nature of Divine love is separable from that passion, and may be without it; otherwise if passion were of the essence of love, it were altogether impossible, that the separate soul should be capable of loving God, or any thing else. This is a mere accident to our love, and a result that depends upon our present union with the body; which body is essentially necessary, neither to our soul, nor to our love, for both may be without it. And I add,

3. That those acts which are performed, as I may call it, in the upper region of the soul, and which are more peculiar to its intellectual nature, are as truly discernible, as the passions are which rebound upon, and affect the body. The acts of the mind, and of the will, are no more imperceptible than the passions; and it is as possible for me to be able to discern and feel the former, as the latter. Cannot I as well tell that I think such a thought, if I do think it; that I intend and purpose such a thing, if I do really entertain in my heart such a resolution; as that I feel the motions that affect my outward man? If therefore a person with a practical judgment esteems the blessed

God to be his highest and best good, and accordingly chooses him as such, and settles this resolution in his own soul, saying, "This God shall be my God, my best and supreme Good, here will I seek my felicity, and take up my rest, and to him will I be an entirely devoted one for ever;" in this person certainly lies the substance and essence of love. And is not this perceptible? are not such acts as these capable of being reflected on, and taken notice of, if men would but more frequently turn their eyes inward, and habituate themselves to converse with themselves. But I further add,

4. That most certain it is, that during our abode in the body, the affections of the soul have more intimately an influence upon it. Such is the close and mysterious union between these two natures of flesh and spirit; that the influences between the one and the other are reciprocal. And therefore it is that the very temper or complexion of our souls doth so naturally, some way or other, represent itself in the outward man, as that it is very difficult, almost impossible, to hide and conceal what are the sentiments of our spirits upon certain occasions. Whence it hath grown into a maxim, *Vultus est index animi. That the face is the character of the mind. Heu, quam difficile est crimen non prodere vultu! How hard is it for a man not to betray guilt in his countenance, if he has the sense of it in his own mind and heart!* And therefore we should consider with ourselves, how our affections work towards God; even according to the usual way, wherein human affections are wont to show and discover themselves. For I add,

5. That even spiritual, holy affections, such as respect the invisible God, and other invisible objects, do frequently so work in those pious souls in whom they are, as to make very great and deep impressions upon the body, and are accompanied with such passionate expressions, as are discernible, even to the inferior senses which belong to the animal nature. Let passages of Scripture to this purpose be looked into. How was the Psalmist affected and wrought upon by one affection towards God, when he tells us, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments," Ps. cxix. 120. There is a proportion between fear and love, in this case. As for love, the same devout Psalmist says, "My soul thirsteth for thee, O God! yea, my flesh longeth for thee," Ps. lxiii. 1. And again, "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God," Ps. lxxxiv. 2. Now these are not to be understood as mere rhetorical strains; for indeed they are not so, but do plainly carry this signification with them, that though the flesh be more immediately incapable of desire, of thirsting, and longing after God, whereof the soul alone is primarily capable, yet, mediately, the flesh partakes thereof. That is, the heart and soul did so much long after God, that the flesh was affected and bore the impression of that vehement desire, which was in the soul, as in its original and proper seat. We are therefore to consider, that even the more passionate workings of love towards God are very agreeable to that kind of affection, which in respect to the object, and principle of it, is spiritual and divine. And therefore,

6 It must further be added, that if persons be very apt to be passionately affected in other kinds, and towards other objects, but do always find themselves dull and insensible of such motions towards God and invisible things, they have a great deal of reason to suspect themselves to be under a very bad distemper. Indeed, when persons are equally, and alike, unapt to feel such passionate resentments in their hearts towards any kind of objects, the matter is quite otherwise. But if they can ordinarily say, "I feel my love to work towards the creature, a relation, or other amiable objects, in this and that passionate manner, but I can feel no love working towards God," they are far from being in a good condition. They have, at least, a good deal of reason to suspect, that a distemper prevails upon them. Their love languisheth, and needs re-enforcement; and they ought not to content themselves to have the matter so, as if it were a case to be approved of, and that needed no redress. But yet again,

7. We must consider, that tempers are very carefully to be distinguished. The temper of some men's minds is more composed, according as the bodily temper is more fixed, and their natural spirits are less volatile. Hence some are of a more even deportment to every object, even to the observation of others, and seldom are seen to be exalted, or depressed, whatever occurrences happen to them in the course of their lives. They are not often seen, it may be, either to weep or laugh, to be either remarkably sad or cheerful. And grace, or this holy affection, wherever it is in its subject, is somewhat conform to the natural temper of the person; as water poured into a vessel resembleth the form of that vessel. If the vessel be round, then it resembles a round figure; if triangular, then it resembles a triangular figure. So I say, grace and holy affections, where they are, resemble their subject, and receive in some sense a likeness and conformity to it, so as not to change the natural temper of the mind. Indeed the great business of the grace of God is to influence men as to morals, and not as to naturals. Therefore it were an unreasonable thing for any one to make himself a measure to all other persons, how much soever they differ in temper from him. Or that any one should make another such a standard to himself, that however it be with him as to his natural temper, he must be just such as others are; which is equally to aim at a thing both unnecessary and impossible. Further,

8. We must warily distinguish between the exercise of love upon extraordinary and sudden occasions, and such as are common and less surprising. As you know one may converse daily among the nearest relatives, and never feel any discernible pang of affection working towards them, as one does to an object that suddenly appears. This proceeds from frequency and familiarity with them; when possibly the very same person would be in a transport upon the sudden and unexpected sight of the face of a friend, whom he had not seen for many years before. Now this is not inconsiderable as to our present case. It may be thus with many persons, who do not feel such a passionate pang of love towards persons they daily converse with, as they do towards others, at the sight of whom they are surprised; yet, notwithstanding this, their love may be far dearer, and habitually much more strong, to those relations whom they daily converse with, as occasions when administered abundantly show; that is, they would do more for them, and be more deeply concerned if they saw them in distress, pain, and anguish. They would with much more regret endure separation from them, or take their deaths much more impatiently; which things show their affections to be habitually much stronger, though, upon sudden occasions, or in a certain juncture, they may work much more observably. And thus it may possibly be with some persons, who walk more evenly in their spirits before God. They have, it may be, fewer transports than others, who are of such uneven spirits, that the sight of God is often a new thing to them. They have him less frequently out of sight, and are daily more conversant with him, and therefore are not subject to such violent emotions of mind. And if we compare these together, certainly we can never think, that there is a greater excellency in that temper which subjects a man, now and then, to higher transports of spiritual and divine affection, than in that temper of spirit, which is more steadily determined to a continual course of walking with God, in whom there is also an habitual complacence.

Lastly, This is further to be considered, that if at any time one would try the sincerity of one's heart towards God, it is much more clearly to be evinced by the influence this hath on a man's life, than by the passionate or sensible impressions made upon the body. I say, we have a far surer evidence of our love to God, from the influence it has to govern and manage the course of our lives, than from all the passionate emotions and resentments we may feel in the inferior parts of the outward man. Suppose such raptures, and transports, and ecstatical motions, as are very strange, and not without their delectation and pleasure; alas! these signify but little towards the evincing of true sincere love to God, in comparison of a stable course of living under his government, as persons who are beyond all things loath to offend and displease him. If you seek an evidence of the truth of your love to God, take this; "If ye love me, keep my commandments," John xiv. 15. And again, "This is the love of God, that we may keep his commandments," I John v.

3. Though we must take heed here of thinking, as was formerly said, that the external effect is sufficient without the principle; or that a course of obedience, in outward acts, to the rules set before us, will do the business, though there be nothing of the principle of the love of God in us. But take these in connexion, the principle with the effect, and they are a great deal more pungent demonstrations of love, than mere transports of extraordinary affection, now and then, are. Agreeably to which our Lord says, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him," John xiv. 21. And again, as it afterwards follows, "If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," ver. 23.

So that we should take heed of putting too much upon the mere matter of passionate love in this case; unless, as we said before, it be manifestly discernible, that we can be passionately affected to any other kind of objects, while we find a stupidity and dulness upon us, with respect to those which are spiritual and divine. Therefore lay the great stress always here; "What doth the love I pretend to signify as to the conduct of my life? Do I live as a lover of God? as if it were an ungrateful matter to me, above all things, to displease him? as that I study, by all means possible, to maintain an intercourse of union and communion between him and me? Is it such a love as makes his honour dear to me, so that I am above all things concerned not to disgrace the name which I bear, or be a reproach to him to whom I profess a relation? Is there such a principle in me as makes distance from God a wearisome thing? And would I fain be nearer to him daily, more acquainted with him, more cooformed to him, and changed into his divine image and likeness?" If this is the influence that love to God hath upon our lives, it is the evidence, it is the thing, if any thing can be so, that must prove and demonstrate to ourselves the sincerity of our love.

SERMON XII.*

WE have already in the preceding discourse offered sundry considerations to those, who are apt to take it for granted that they are lovers of God, though they never really discerned any motion of love to him in their hearts at all; or who fondly imagine that the conviction of their judgment in this matter, is to be taken for the affection of the heart. We have also spoken in several particulars to another sort, who suspect they are no true lovers of God, and are many times ready to conclude so; because their love to him is not so fervent and passionate as they think it ought to be. And now,

III. We come to the third sort that we have to do with, to wit, those who are apt to censure other persons, merely upon this account; because they make profession of such a fervent love to God, as they themselves are altogether strangers to. All expressions of such a fervent passionate love to God fall under a suspicious censure, and accusation from these men. As for instance, they charge all such expressions of love with hypocrisy, or with enthusiasm; thinking it proceeds from nothing else but a fantastic representation of the object they pretend to love; or else, they resolve it all into the temper of the body, and say it owes itself to nothing else but to such or such a crasis, a present habit and temperature, or a freer circulation of the blood, and quicker agitation of certain brisk and agile spirits. And thus they think that a mechanical account is to be given of all such kind of affections; and that whosoever well understands the structure of the brain, or the nature of the spleen and hypochondria, and the various twistings of the nerves about the veins and arteries, may very well be able to give a good account of all such kind of love.

1. Now as to the first of these, to wit, the charge of hypocrisy, we must allow (as there will be further occasion to evince hereafter when welcome to the last doctrine) that if any do pretend to such a love to God, and join with it an immoral conversation, there is a great deal of reason for the charge; and in such a case we must fall in with the accuser and say the same. But if this charge be fastened upon persons, whose walk and conversation is sober and just, we have then several things to say to it. As,

(1.) It is a most uncharitable censure to say that all pretence to a more fervent and vehement love to God, is for this very reason hypocritical. I wonder why so? Does not this seem to say, that there can be no such thing as a real and fervent love to God? This is surely a very strange accusation, at once without warrant, and against the express law of charity, which requires us to "think no evil," 1 Cor. xiii. 5. And it is an essential character of it to be absolutely disinclined to take up an evil surmise, or bad thoughts of any one, where there is not a very manifest and apparent cause.

(2.) The charge is most unreasonable. There is not the least ground for such a censure, supposing the persons to be in the main of a sober, just, and unexceptionable deportment among men. Of such it may most unrighteously be said, that they are hypocrites, while they pretend to love God. But how will you prove your charge? by what medium will you make it out, that all pretences of love to God, by such persons, are hypocritical? And surely that is a most unreasonable censure, for which no reason can be given.

(3.) Such a charge or accusation must needs proceed from a most idle and pragmatic temper. For these censurers show themselves to be vain busy-bodies, who meddle out of their own province. But what have they to do to judge the hearts of other men? That is a province they have nothing at all to do in. What is it then but a vain pragmatic humour that prompts them to meddle in a sphere wherein they have no concern? "Who art thou," saith the Scripture, "that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth," Rom. xiv. 4. Nay,

(4.) It is to be guilty of the most insolent presumption; for it is to encroach upon the prerogative of God, to whom alone it belongs to search and judge the heart. Who are they that take upon them to judge one another? "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," Rom. xiv. 10. Whoever they are that do judge so, they subject themselves to the judgment of God. Therefore says our Lord, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," Matt. vii. 1. That is, in effect, if you judge so at random, and where you have nothing to do, you shall know what judging means, when you shall be judged also.

(5.) I would further say, by way of question, Pray what is the thing you find fault with in this case? Is it this love itself, or is it the appearance of it? Sure it will not be said, it is the love itself. Who would be so impudently profane as to say, it is a crime to love God? or that such love is criminal, when it is warm and vehement? as if it were possible to love God too much. Sure this will never be said by those who consider that we are required to "love him with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind," Matt. xxii. 37. And besides, this were to make the accusation to contradict itself; for whensoever the charge of hypocrisy is alleged against any one, the thing pretended to is implied to be good and commendable.

Or is it the appearance of such love that is found fault with? That is just the same thing as to find fault with the sun for shining. It is true, all discovery of this or any other excellency whatsoever ought to be modest, and sober; most remote from any thing of boasting or vain-glorious ostentation, than which, in such a case as this, nothing in all the world can be more fulsome. But what! should a man be ashamed to become, and appear, an earnest lover of God? Was the Psalmist shy of appearing so, when he again and again avowed it with so much solemnity? when he made professions of his love to God, which he designed, and no doubt knew would be recorded to all future times? And the noble personage whom we spoke of before, was he ashamed to have it recorded, that he was such a one's friend? It is so remarkable that we cannot look

* Preached November 8th, 1676.

over a page in the book of Psalms, but we shall find some or other expression now made public to the world, of an avowed love of God. "I love the Lord," says he, "because he hath heard my voice and my supplications," Ps. cxvi. 1. And again, "I will love thee, O Lord my strength," xviii. 1. The word there used is most emphatically expressive of the most vehement, ardent, fervent love. "I will love thee from my very bowels." And what! is this a thing for a man to be ashamed of? to profess himself an earnest lover of God, if indeed he is so. He only has reason to be ashamed of saying he is so, who is not so in reality. But I say further,

(6.) That this same accusation is hypocritical. It carries the most palpable hypocrisy in it; for it is manifest that such persons do only pretend to be angry at the pretence of love to God; when it plainly appears they are angry that the love of God should really be in any one. And this is easy to be made out. For do not all men generally profess love to God? Now they are not angry at those that profess, but love him not. But what religion is there without love? and whoever professes religion, does consequently profess love to God. But let them make it appear by their practice, that their profession is but a mockery, that they do but say, "Hail!" and strike at the Divine Majesty at the same time; let them I say, with their pretence of religion, or love to God, but join some practical signification that they are not in good earnest, and they please well enough, no fault is found with them.

So that it is very plain the fault they are bent against is not hypocrisy, but sincerity. They are angry that there is any such thing as sincere love to God in the world. Therefore, as Plato said to the cynic, who trod upon a fine bed of his, and cried out, "I tread on Plato's pride," that he, the cynic, discovered greater pride by this action; so we may say to these men who accuse professors of love to God with hypocrisy, that it is with more hypocrisy. It is not the mere pretence of love to God, that they intend to accuse, as supposing it false, or that there is no such thing, but because they really suspect it is true. They think that such men have that in them, which they have not, and therefore they pass a kind of judgment upon them in their own consciences. This they cannot endure; and since they would fain malign them in their report, therefore they would do it as plausibly as they can, and are more witty than to say, they censure them for loving truly, but for pretending to it falsely. But then again,

2. The affection of this kind is by some charged with enthusiasm. "If (say they) there be any such affection, it is altogether enthusiastic. It owes itself entirely to the fantastical representation of the object, and so can have nothing sincere or genuine belonging to it." To this I say,

(1.) Why so? why must it needs be thought enthusiastical? What! because it is more than ordinarily vehement or fervent? as if no sober exercise or expression of love to God could be so. And we know too, though I lay very little stress upon it,

(2.) That the name of enthusiasm hath sometimes had a gentler sound than now it hath; since the Ἐμπνευσθέι, and phrases signifying inspiration from God, are so frequently to be found in the writings of Plato, and others of the philosophers. And yet they were never twitted as enthusiasts, nor treated as if that name carried any thing of evil signification, or the import of a bad character in it. But,

(3.) Why should it be wondered at that there should be expressions of love to God which import great fervour and intenseness; since we know that such as have been professedly related and devoted to God heretofore, and of whom Scripture records give us an account, have been all along very full of such expressions? What would they think of such expressions as these of David? "I opened my mouth, and panted; for I longed for thy commandments," Ps. cxix. 131. "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times," ver. 20. "Oh how love I thy holy law!" ver. 97. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God," xlii. 1. Yea, we find that there have been such appearances and expressions obvious to view, of this divine spiritual affection, that have incurred the censure of insanity; and yet they have been reckoned a glory. Thus it was with David, who when he was censured for dancing before the Lord, answers, "I will play before the Lord, I will yet be more vile," &c. 2 Sam. vi. 21, 22. And says the apostle, "Whether we be besides ourselves it is to God; or whether we be sober it is for your cause: for the love of Christ constraineth us," 2 Cor. v. 13, 14. It is very likely he speaks here with reference to the censure of those false teachers, with whom you find him conflicting in that very chapter; as very frequently he does in both the epistles to the Corinthians, and also in others. They perhaps went about to represent him as a wild enthusiast; as one that was acted by an enthusiastical fury. Therefore he speaks according to their sense. Admit it, be it so; if I be really besides myself, as they talk, it is the love of Christ which constrains me! He thinks himself not at all disparaged in the case. But I further say,

(4.) I make little doubt but many do attribute too much to rapture, and the ecstatic motions and transports of otherwise pious love. I refer therefore to what was said under a foregoing head, especially to that distinction which was given you of the act, and of the passion of love, which are not only distinguishable, but sometimes plainly separable things. There may be very intense love, very strong and mighty love, where there is nothing of passion felt. This is a thing altogether accidental to the nature of love, which may be diverse and distinct from passion; otherwise there would be no such thing as loving God at all in any other way. And we must further say,

(5.) That no doubt it is a very great fault to frame representations and ideas of God and of divine things in our minds, by the use of a liberty indulged to our own fancy and imagination, if therein we go beyond or besides the warrant of his own revelation. And even there too we must be very careful, when we find God representing himself, or other matters of a divine and spiritual nature, under borrowed expressions or similitudes, that we mind the thing that is to be represented, and held forth to us, and that we drain and defecate it from all the dregs of materiality, which belong to the metaphor; otherwise we may be greatly injurious, more than we are aware of, both to the Divine honour, and to ourselves.

Too many do greatly gratify the luxury of their fancies in such cases. We read of one, but very likely there may be more instances than one, I say we read of one, a popish female saint, who pretended in vision to such a communion with our Saviour, that forsooth she took upon her to describe him; what sort of eyes he had, and what kind of features; and pretended to be most passionately enamoured of him. And perhaps there are too many over-prone to frame imaginations concerning the Deity, altogether unworthy of and disagreeable to that glorious and ever-blessed Being; and having thereupon formed such and such ideas of him in their own minds, are variously affected according to the import of the idea about him. For instance, those of very melancholy tempers are apt to frame ideas altogether unlike God, and such as render him in their eyes a dreadful and hateful object. Or if the idea be such as imports loveliness; yet if it be fantastical, and an affection of love be raised thereupon, it is most plain and evident that such a person is all the while but hugging his own shadow, and entertaining himself with an empty cloud, or an idol of his own forming. And I do not know wherein he is less guilty, than in falling down before an image. When we do in our own fancies create a God to ourselves, and an extraordinary motion of affection is working towards it, one kind or another, it is our own creature that we are all this while entertaining ourselves with, and not God. Therefore we ought to take heed that our apprehensions of things be scriptural and regular; such as that light which shines in God's word, or that clear flame which reason, when it argues according to the word of God, doth give us. Otherwise we are mere idolaters, while we imagine that we have only complacency in doing homage to God. But I add,

Lastly, That the most regular, true, and rational apprehensions of God, do give ground for the most fervent and vehement love of him that is possible, And therefore it is a very foolish, idle thing, to charge love to God with being enthusiastical merely because it is fervent. For though it be such as answers truly, it can never answer fully such apprehensions of the object, as are agreeable to God, and

such as God's own revelation gives ground and warrant for. Certainly there is no warrant to say that there is any thing of enthusiasm in such a pretence as this. There is no need that any such exorbitant digressions and excursions should be made to by-ways of representing God to ourselves, that so he may be amiable and lovely in our eyes. A true and right apprehension of him, that is most agreeable to the Object itself, and his revelation, as the best and truest ground of the strongest and most vehement ove. And certainly to a sober Christian, a fantastical representation of a divine object will rather greatly cool and check his love, than contribute to the heat of it. But,

3. Such an affection, as we are speaking of, is by others resolved into the temper and disposition of the bodily humours; or the various structure of our frame, and the freer motion of the blood and animal spirits. And to this also it is,

(1.) To be acknowledged that there is undoubtedly very much truth in the matter, so far as that the affection may be more intense, and exercised with a more sensible vigour, according as the body is so and so disposed, or as the habit of it is at that time.

(2.) Do not we also know that there are pious men of all tempers and constitutions of body? and is not every man the more pious, by how much the more he is a lover of God? And,

(3.) Admit that bodily tempers signify any thing in this matter, that is, in the present exercise of the affections in general, what is to be inferred? Will it follow, that such an affection as this, in which the blood and spirits may be so and so concerned, hath therefore nothing spiritual and divine in it? which way should that follow? Why is it not as apprehensible that divine and spiritual love may run in the same natural channel, and follow the same common course of operations, with other love, as that wine and water may alternately flow through the same conduit pipes? Or why should it be more unreasonable and absurd, that divine and spiritual love should exert itself by the same corporeal organs with love of another kind, as having the same seat and subject, the faculties of the soul? I hope it is not one faculty in the soul that common love hath its seat in, and another faculty that divine love hath its seat in. Why should it be necessary there should be other internal organs for divine than for common love, more than external ones? Why may not divine love run the same course with common love in the respect that hath been mentioned? And why may that not be promoted, in its bent and exertions, by a brisk and quick agitation of the vital and animal spirits? What great inconvenience is there in this? Or what greater necessity is there for it to be otherwise, than there is for a man to have one pair of hands to do his common business, and another to lift up to God in prayer? May not a man speak of God or of divine things, and of other matters, with the same tongue? and may not the same eyes which serve to read the Bible, serve to read any other book? But this carries more of folly and foolery at the bottom, than to deserve more words to be said about it.

Therefore to wind up all, Will we severally resolve, upon all that hath been at so many times discoursed to you upon this subject, namely, the love of an unseen God, are we I say resolved to apply ourselves in good earnest to the exercise and practice of it? It is a very dismal thing, if all our hearing at such times and occasions as these are, must be for nothing else, but only to give the ear a present pleasure. Or that we must take such an opportunity as this to meet together, only to see one another's faces, without ever minding to lay up a stock, and to add to a treasure, of that light and grace, that may actually influence our future course. Certainly we should be most inexcusable persons, if after all this we should make as little conscience of the actual frequent exercise of love to God as heretofore. If any that have heard so much of this matter, shall go hereafter from day to day, and have reason to say, "This day I have not loved God at all, I do not know there has ever been a pleasant thought of him," and so indulge themselves in the liberty of running on in this course, it will not admit of being said all this hath been to no purpose. For it will certainly be found to have been to some purpose, but to a sad and dismal one, when the day comes that every one must be judged according to the light they had. And the word that hath been spoken to those that live under the Gospel is that by which they must be judged.

Let us bethink ourselves, What is our life, if love run not through it? if a vein of love to God be not carried through the course of it? Alas, without this, life is but a dream, and all our religion but a fancy! What do such assemblies as these signify? What a cold, pitiful business is it, for so many of us to come together, if no love to God stir among us! We pretend to come to a God, whom we do not love. What a pitiful account can we give of our coming together, if this be all! The show and shadow of a duty! a holy flourish! and that is all. This, I say, is all, if the love of God do not animate our worship.

We cannot pretend to doubt whether God ought to be loved or no. It is a plain indisputable case. There are a great many things in religion, that are matter of doubt and disputation, and many things are made so more than need. And truly I take this occasion to say, it is no wonder there is so little love of God, and of true, living religion; because there is so much unnecessary disputing about the formalities of religion. It is a very sad and dreadful contemplation to think of, that so many persons can make the matters of religion a topic barely to please themselves with. If they can but toss an argument, cavil, and contend about this or that matter, then they are enamoured with and highly applaud themselves, as if they could do some great thing in the business of religion; but all this while, and even by these very means, the love of God and all practical religion vanishes. These things have exhausted and wasted the strength, spirits, and vigour of religion itself, and made it look so languidly, and become so pitiful a thing as it is grown to be in our days; so that professors are now but the spectres and umbræ of Christians, mere skeletons. They are so in comparison of what Christians were in former days, when every one might discern that in their behaviour, which might justly make them cry out, Aye! these are heavenly persons indeed! Heaven was seen in their converse, and all savoured of love to God. The Lord knoweth to what degree our religion is degenerated, and what it is like to come to at last!

And let us consider with ourselves, that we fill up our days with calamities, and make our souls desolate and forlorn; we involve ourselves in all manner of miseries by estranging ourselves from God, and not living in the actual exercise of love to him.

Moreover, let us consider that we are not always to live in this world. A dying hour doth expect us. We are hovering upon the brink of the grave. And what! is it a good preparation for death to live strangers to God, as long as we live in this world? Oh! with what horror must that thought strike a man in a dying hour, when his own heart shall tell him, "Thou hast not lived in the love of God!" Dare we, can we think, have we, I say, the confidence to think of going to God at length! to one that we have never loved, and to whom we have lived strangers all our days. But, oh blessed preparation for death! when a man shall be able, under the expectation of expiring his last breath, to reflect and say, that his life hath been a continual walk with God. How easy a death must that man die! Death conveys him to no stranger, to no unknown presence; to die, in regard to him, is but to know that Being better whom he knew before; and to love him better whom he loved before; and to have those enjoyments improved in degree, with the nature and kind of which he had a former acquaintance.

Let us then be serious, and in good earnest in this business; and know, we can never do any thing to purpose in it if we labour not to have our spirits more entirely abstracted from the world. Alas! do we think we can serve two masters, God and the world? If we love the one we shall despise the other; for, as our Lord tells us, Matt. vi. 24. we cannot love both. How often should these monitory, these weighty and wounding, words be thought of, by them whom they more especially concern? "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," I John ii. 15. Therefore saith the apostle, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." And is not this a cutting word of our Saviour's to the Jews, "I

know you, that you have not the love of God in you?"[a] And would we be branded for such? We had need then to watch the more strictly over ourselves, when we have to do with the affairs of this world, that our spirits be not ruffled, nor suffer a discomposure by the amusements of sensible things, or the variety of occurrences and affairs that we meet with in this our earthly pilgrimage.

Constant watchfulness, and much dependance upon God, and having him still before our eyes, would be a great help to us in this matter. It might make you wonder to hear, what some have professed to have attained unto, who were not of your religion. For instance, we are told of a nobleman of a foreign country, a Romanist, who professed to have had such times, that when he passed along the streets of Paris, where continual diversions might easily have disturbed him, and could scarce be imagined to do otherwise, his soul was so taken up with God as to be no more moved, than if he had been in a desert. And Seneca himself, a pagan, writing a letter to his friend, says to this purpose; for I remember not the very words, nor have lately seen the book: "You write to me to give you an account how I passed yesterday. Truly you have a very good opinion of me, to think I so pass a day as to be able to give you an account of what took it up. But since you desire it, I will tell you. My window opens to the theatre, where are all the shows, and the noise and clamours that you well know the theatrical sports carry with them. Why (saith he) all these things (so much have I been taken up with divine matters) have no more moved me, than the whistling of the wind among the leaves of the trees in a wood," &c.

These things that I mention should be upbraiding to us, that we so little mind our spirits, and inward man, with the operative motions and reflections thereof, and never look after a composed spirit, that is employed in minding God, and taken up with the exercise of his love, through the worldly affairs and occurrences we meet with here. If we would do any thing to purpose in the exercise of love to God; if we would not be as those, that busy themselves about trifles; like the pharisaical hypocrites whom our Saviour speaks of, who were so zealous in tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, that in the mean while they forgot judgment, and mercy, and the love of God; I say, if we would not be like them, but would do any thing to purpose, there must be times set apart for us to quit the world, with the torturing and distracting thoughts thereof; and let us labour to do it so totally, as to forget that there is any thing in it but God, and misery.

SERMON XIII.*

WE have largely insisted upon a twofold truth from these words, and told you,

FIRST, That there is a greater difficulty of living in the exercise of love to God than towards man, upon this account, that he is not the object of sight as man is. And,

SECONDLY, That our obligation to the love of God is most indispensable, notwithstanding that we see him not; or, that the impossibility of seeing God, is no excuse for our not loving him. There is yet another point which remains to be considered, and which was at first proposed with the former; and that is,

THIRDLY, That they do most falsely and absurdly pretend to the love of an unseen God, who love not their brother whom they do see. This point is full and direct in the eye of the text.

It is manifest the apostle speaks here upon the notice he had taken, that there were some persons of very high pretensions to religion, and the love of God, who were yet manifestly and notoriously defective in the exercise and expression of love towards men, and even towards their fellow-Christians. And he counts it therefore necessary to cast a slur upon that empty kind of profession, and to give a dash unto that specious fancy and gilded nothing of a pretence to the love of God, disjoined or severed from that other branch of love, namely, that towards men. In speaking to this it will be requisite to do these three things, in order to the rendering this truth more capable of belief.

I. To show in what extent, or with what limitations, we are to understand this form of speech here in the text, the loving our brother.

II. To show whence it comes to pass, that any should take upon them to pretend love to God, who yet have no love to their brother. And,

III. To show the absurdity and falsehood of that pretence. Upon which the use will ensue.

I. It will be needful to consider a little in what extent, or with what limitation, this form of speech is to be understood, namely, the love of our brother; that is, how we are to understand the expression, our brother; and what is meant by love, as it refers to him in this and other such like passages.

I conceive we may very warrantably extend the meaning of this expression, as was formerly hinted to you in the first opening of the words, to such a latitude as to understand by it the duties of the second table; as love to God includes all the duties of the first. So our Saviour hath taught us to understand both these, in the answer which he gave to that querist, who asked him which was the great commandment of the law. The answer was this; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," Matt. xxii. 37—40. And the apostle you know also tells us, that "Love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. xiii. 10. All is summed up in this one word, love.

And the same apostle in the very epistle from whence my text is taken, in insisting so much upon love to our brethren, as he doth throughout this epistle, guides us to his own drift and scope; and particularly when he tells us, that "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments," 1 John v. 3. It is manifest, that sometimes in this epistle he intends by this expression, the love of God, not merely that love which terminates upon him as the object of it, but that love which is from God, as the author of it, divine love. And he speaks of this divine love indefinitely, and says it is the keeping of God's commandments; and of these commandments too we are to understand him speaking universally, and intimating that to love God is to keep all his commandments. It is love which runs forth in obedience to all his laws, which you know are divided into these two tables; the one is a comprehension of the precepts touching such things as relate to himself; the other of those which concern man. Therefore I doubt not but the word, brother, here in the text, may be taken in the same latitude, that neighbor is taken in, when it expresseth and signifieth to us the duties of a Christian to his neighbour, as in that place before mentioned, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," that is, any man. So that the duties that we owe to men, as men, are all to be collected and gathered up in this, as the great summary, namely, love to our brother.

It is very true indeed, brother is a title that many times in Scripture doth distinctly, and with some limitation, hold forth to us a community and fraternity in religion; a brotherhood, who are in a state of subjection and devotedness to God, and are really his servants and children, as we shall have occasion further to speak by and by. But it is plain also, that it is sometimes used in Scripture in a far more extensive sense; as Adam in a more extensive sense is said to be the son of God. You find it was part of the accusation against Job, (injurious enough no doubt, but that is nothing to our purpose,) that he did take away the pledge from his brother, and made the poor naked, and sent them away unclothed, Job xxii. 6. And so you know Paul bespeaks all that great assembly before whom

[a] John v. 42. See a moving discourse on these words by the Author in this volume, entitled, A Sermon directing what we are to do, after a strict inquiry, whether or no we truly love God? It is only one single discourse out of seven or eight upon the same subject; and seems to have been published without his full consent, on account of the great impressions it had made upon the audience.

* Preached November 15th, 1676.

he was convened, and with whom he was disputing, after this manner, "Men and brethren," Acts xxiii. I. Though they were far from being all Christians as he was.

And I wish that there were not too much need to insist upon this business of love to our brother according to this latitude; that those were not many in our days, who make a very great show of piety towards God, and hold forth an appearance of religion even in a more eminent degree; and yet indulge in themselves a very great liberty (most injuriously assumed, God knows) as to their dispositions and deportment towards men as men, with whom they are cast into human society. Yea, and there hath been a way found out to make little of all matters of this nature; a way to depreciate and speak diminishingly of whatever is of that import, by affixing characters upon persons which it is intended should lessen them; as such a one is a good moral man, and the like. Truly, if it were only to assign to each man his proper place, or to determine that to be of less value and account which really is so, this were tolerable and very fit; but it is too manifest that very often religion is professedly magnified, not to the lessening only, but even the nullifying and exclusion of what is called morality. As if the tables were again to be broken, by being dashed one against another; or as if there were such incompatible things in the laws of God, that it is altogether impossible that a man should carry it as does become him towards men with whom he has to do, but he must intrench upon, and offer violence to the duty he owes to God; or as if, on the other hand, the duty which immediately terminates upon God, must quite shut out the world, and whatsoever relates to men as men.

Though yet by the way too, it is to be noted, there is all the while a very great mistake and misapplication in the use of the term morality. And I wonder whence we or any of us have learned to appropriate moral to the duties of the second table; as if the duties of the first table were not as much moral as those of the second, and in a higher and more eminent seose so. Certainly he is but a person of bad morality that does not love God, and whose heart is not set upon him as the best, the supreme Good. It is a great injury to take the term moral, and affix it only or chiefly to the duties of the second table. I hope there is such a thing, which ought to obtain in our notion and practice, as being well-mannered unto God, or behaving ourselves well and fitly towards him. And that is the meaning of morality, when a man is in general well-mannered. Therefore he that behaves himself ill to God, doth very ill deserve the character of a moral man.

But the thing is, men intend civil by the term moral, and so mistake morality for civility. Civility indeed is only between men and men, as they are cast into societies one with another; but morality must needs run through the whole law of God. Every commandment of his law, which he hath distinguished from all other laws by vouchsafing himself to speak it by an audible voice, in ten words, to a vast assembly of men, we ought surely to account moral; and not elevate the authority or obligation of one part, by using terms with an intention to lessen or diminish another part of the same law.

But as to the thing itself, waving the name, (as it is pity there should be so much logomachy, or contention about the use or misapplication of bare words,) it is I say the thing itself, wherein the religion of Christians hath been so very deficient, and by which it hath been so much slurred that a great many have learned in their practice, not to care what their deportments are to men, so they can but keep up a continued profession of, and course of pretence to, sanctity, piety, and devotion towards God. And therefore the exigence of the case so much requiring it, and the text so plainly inviting to it also, it will be very fit to say somewhat of the duty of loving our brother in this latitude, as comprehensive of all the duty we owe to men as men. Though what I shall say at present will be in general. What is particular I shall refer to be enlarged upon in the use or application. And here I must hint to you that a twofold extreme is carefully to be avoided, that when we speak in this latitude of loving our brother we do not,

1. By that love to our brother so intend the inward principle of that love as to cut off the external acts of it; nor,

2. So confine the notion of this love to the external duties of the second table, as to exclude or shut out the internal principle. These are two extremes which men are very propense to run into, either into the one or the other of them. On the one hand,

1. Some are very apt to satisfy themselves that they are blameless, and not liable to exception, if their external deportment be fair and candid, just and equal, and also charitable now and then as occasion offers; though, in the mean time, there be no such thing as the inward root and principle of this love in their hearts. It would be as great an absurdity for any one to say, that this love doth virtually include and comprehend in it all the external duties that flow from such a principle, as it would be to state those duties so abstractly, as to exclude the principle itself whence they are to proceed. They no way answer the intention and design of the Holy Ghost in this matter, who only comply with the external part and letter of these laws, when, in the mean time, the spring and fountain of all these duties hath no place in the soul, namely, love itself. For the external acts may proceed from another principle. A man may carry himself justly to others, for the sake of his reputation; and from the same motive may do many acts that carry in them mercy, pity, and compassion to those that are in distress; but the principle from whence all this proceeds is self-love, and not love to his brother. Thus a man may do such and such an act of justice, such and such charitable actions, as the occasions of them are administered, merely because he would gain the reputation of being a most unexceptionably just man, a good natured man, a charitable man. And many apprehend that they are greatly concerned to do so upon the account of prudence, out of a prudential respect, I say, to their own interest and advantage; such especially whose way of living in the world depends upon trade and commerce with men. They know, if they do not obtain and preserve the reputation of justice, none will have to do with them; every one will shun them; they will be thought unfit for any kind of commerce whatsoever. This is one extreme therefore that is carefully to be avoided in this matter. When we say that love to our brother includes all the duties of the second table, yet we must not say it excludes the inward principle whence those external duties flow; that is, such a love to our neighbour as that which we bear and owe unto ourselves, as we know our Lord resolves it, in the forementioned scripture. The other extreme is,

2. That we lay not the whole stress of the business upon the internal principle, without the external acts and expressions: that is, that none should content themselves with the imagination and conceit, that they have in their own hearts and bosoms the principle of love to their brother; but in the mean while never express it nor let in be seen. No, that must be a great secret to themselves, and kept close in their own conciences; they have love in their breasts, but they can find no time or occasion to let it be seen: that is, they can, it may be, give him a good word, or as the apostle James expresses it, say to one in distress, that wants food or raiment, "Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled," (James ii. 16.) but give them nothing for the body. They say that they pity such and such persons; and perhaps there may be some low degree of pity, but not such as exerts itself and commands the consonant act which is agreeable to compassion, and should be consequent or ought to follow thereupon.

But we must understand this duty of loving our brother so as to comprehend the internal principle and external expressions of it together. It is necessary that there be a sincere love in the heart, and that it demonstrate its own sincerity by such expressions and discoveries, from time to time, as the providence of God gives us opportunity. As occasion offers we should, as the apostle exhorts, do good to all men, but especially to them who are of the household of faith, Gal. vi. 10.

And if love to man is to be taken in such a latitude as hath been said, if it gathers within the compass of it both the principle and all the actions that properly belong to it, we are not then to think we have a mean, low, ignoble object for our love. There is an image of God that man as man doth bear upon him. It is true, there is an image

that hath been lost, but there is one still that is not capable of being so. The spiritual supernatural image wherein man did resemble God in holiness was banished from the nature of man universally, till he was pleased to renew it, and make us his own workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works. But there is besides that a natural image of God, which man still bears, inasmuch as he partakes of a spiritual, intellectual nature, resembling that of God. So that it is a noble object of love we have. We are to love men, even as God's own offspring, his sons, as he is the Father of spirits. There is in every man a spiritual nature, of which God owns himself to be the great Parent and common Father. Therefore to have a heart universally inspired with love to men as men, which flows even as far as the nature of man reaches and extends itself, even to all mankind, this, I say, we must understand to be the sum of the duty given us in charge under the expression of love to our brother.

We are to be lovers of mankind under one common notion; that is, to love upon a universal reason, which reaches to man as man, and so consequently to every man. "This is one of my own species whom I am required to love; of that rank and order in which God hath set me in the creation, and who all of us bear the image of the common Lord upon us." And you know it is the thing we find superadded, as the enforcement of one of the great precepts of the second table, namely, "Thou shalt not kill;" (Exod. xx. 13.) and a reason why the breach and violation of it should be punished, that "in the image of God created he man," Gen. ix. 6. Certainly the reason is the same as to all the other laws of that table. And besides what is appropriated to the conditions of some men by the very terms of this law itself, yet men as men, under that common notion, and for that very reason, are the objects of that required duty. As when we are forbidden to kill, is not every man whatever the object of that prohibition? When we are commanded not to steal, or bear false witness, are we not equally barred up from doing that injury to all mankind? When we are inhibited the coveting another man's property, is it not every man's property which we are thereby forbidden to covet? But then,

It must also be understood, that there is a stricter notion of loving our brother, to which we are to have a more particular reference, without excluding that more common extensive notion; (as there is no quarrel at all between things that are in subordination to one another;) that is, we ought upon the Christian account, in a special distinguishing manner, to love those who under that notion are to be esteemed or reputed brethren; I mean Christians, in the truest and strictest sense, as far as they appear so to us; that is, those who are the regenerate sons of God, who are the children of one and the same Father, and therefore are brethren one to another, on that account.

And you find that the apostle hath his eye to these brethren here, as it is manifest by many passages in this and the next epistles. If you consult the beginning of the next chapter, you will see who are to esteem one another as brethren in the most special sense. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten, 1 John v. 1. You see those are to be principally esteemed as brethren, who can look upon themselves and one another as related upon the account of regeneration, unto the holy, blessed God, as their common Father. So the notion of sons is manifestly taken in the third chapter of this epistle at the beginning. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! 1 John iii. 1. Those, who are God's own sons by gratuitous adoption, are to be accounted by us as brethren, if we have any reason to look upon ourselves as of that character. Those who are sons by adoption, and thereupon are entitled to the inheritance of sons, and are designed to that blessed state of the vision of God, and participation of his likeness, are characterized more eminently as his sons; which plainly tells us who are brethren to one another, and should, I say, be eyed and respected under that notion.

But here we must take heed of narrowing and limiting the object any further. This is limiting and restraining it enough, we need not do it any more. Many will allow this measure, that we ought to love a godly man, or one that bears God's image, as such; but they will after this be the measures of their own measure, or they will cut God's measure according to the square of their own fancies. And when they have said they ought to love a godly man as such, that is, every good man, they will have him to be of their own opinion in the smallest matters, one of their own persuasion and party, one of their own temper and humour. So that in short, upon the whole matter, that same Christian love, that ought to flow to all good men, to all Christians as such, is confounded with that which ought to be called the love of friendship.

There is a vast difference between the love, which does and ought to lie in common, between Christians and Christians, and that which should be particular, as between friends and friends. It is indeed true, if I were to design and choose out myself a friend, an intimate, one whom I would trust, and with him deposit my secrets and the like, I might warrantably enough make choice of one with those qualifications before mentioned; that is, as near my own temper as possible, or of such a lovely, amiable temper, as would render his friendship acceptable to me. I might choose one of as much prudence as I could, of my own rank and condition, whose ends, interests, and designs, lay very much the same way with my own. But it were a most unjust thing to think that Christian love ought to be so confined. That must run to all Christians as such, and under that very notion. So that it is not merely one of such a rank in the world, of such a temper and humour, of such or such a party, holding certain opinions in smaller and more disputable matters, that is the character of one who is to be loved as a Christian.

Though indeed that has all along been in all times, and among all sorts of persons pretending to religion, a very usual practice, to fix the church, and set the boundaries of God's house, just according to the measure of their own fancy, and of their own persuasion. So the Romanists will pretend to have the church only among those of their communion. And so we know there are others also, who would so confine the pale of the church. Besides, of others among ourselves there are not a few, who will allow none to be of the church but who will bear such external badges. One may as truly judge of a man by his clothes and garb of what profession or calling he is, and we may as well confine all human love and commerce to persons of such and such a complexion, as Christian love and converse to men distinguished only by certain external adjuncts. But I shall not here insist further on the extent and limitation of this form of speech, loving our brother. When we come to the use there will be occasion to say more on this head.

II. We are next to inquire, whence it is that any should pretend love to God, and yet be destitute of Christian or even human love to their brethren. We have formerly showed you that the exercise of love to God is a thing of far higher difficulty than that which terminates on men. Love to an unseen God is unspeakably more difficult in the exercise of it than towards men that we see, and have occasion to converse with daily. Now though this be most true and apparent, yet the pretence of love to God is much more easy than the real exercise of love to our brother. It is a far more difficult thing to love God, than our brother; but withal it is a far more easy thing to pretend love to God, than really to exert it to our brother. We have in the one the real exercise of love, and in the other case only the pretence to it. And there are two things particularly that do much more facilitate this business of men's making a show, and putting on a pretence of love to God, rather than really exercising it to men.

1. That it is more cheap, and less expensive. And,

2. It is more glorious, and makes a more glittering show than the other does; therefore men are a great deal more apt, and more easily induced to it.

1. It is more cheap to pretend love to God, than really to exercise love to our brother. It will cost them less. The things by which men acquire to themselves a reputation of love to God, may stand them in little; only to be at some small pains to get notions into their minds, by which they may be furnished with talk upon such and such subjects. They are not one straw the poorer for this, it costs them nothing. Their keeping up the external

duties of religion, going from time to time to Christian assemblies, waiting as much as they can upon the ordinances of God; all this may be done, and they be at no expense. There may be little or no cost in all this. But really to exercise love to our brother, will many times prove a costly thing. A man must deny himself, his own interest, gain and advantage very often, that so he may be just or merciful as the circumstances of the case may be.

And it is plain, the great temptations that men have to encroach upon the rights of other men, and intrench upon the businesses that come within this summary of love to our neighbour, are principally from self-love, and self-interest. Men would be just if they did not find or imagine, that they should gain by this or that trick, by putting this and that cheat and fraud upon their neighbours with whom they have to do. They would be charitable if it did not cost them much, if they were to expend nothing. And thus to pretend love to God is a cheap thing; but to exercise real love to our neighbour according as various occasions may be, to draw forth the principle into act and exercise, may frequently prove very costly and expensive.

2. There is also more of glory in the show, and glittering in the appearance, of religion, (in some times more than others, and it may be in our times as much as any,) than there is in the discharge of the duties of justice and charity to men. He that acquires to himself the reputation of a godly man, by an ability to discourse of godly matters, having gotten a great stock of notional knowledge, gains thereby also the reputation of a man of a very refined mind. As the gnostics in their age, an age of errors, were men of much pretence; had very high and sublime notions; but as to their morals they were as bad men as ever the world knew, if you will take the testimony concerning them, not from their professed enemies the Christians, who opposed themselves to them, but even from a heathen who characterizeth them at large (Plotinus.) There were not a viler sort of men, as to matters concerning the duties of the second table, and what lay between man and man. But they were men of high speculative knowledge, had very airy and sublime notions, wherewith they did seduce and captivate not a few. A great reputation was acquired by them of that kind, when they could recommend themselves as persons, who had made it their business to separate from the rest of the world, to give themselves up to the study of all wisdom, as the wise man's expression is, Eccles. vii. 25.

And as those men looked big and talked high in those former ages upon this account, I mean the reputation they had acquired for their knowledge and wisdom which they boasted of; so many do now, and think to make a glitter in the places where they live, as men of high, notional knowledge in matters of religion; but in comparison of this they think that to do good in a place where a man lives, to be a useful member of a civil, or a Christian society, to observe the strict rules of justice, charity, and compassion, are mean things and very low matters, compared with that glorious show and glitter, which the appearance of a great measure of notional, speculative knowledge casts upon men in their own eyes, and the eyes of them that are about them. Thus knowledge puffeth up, while true love would edify. But in the mean time that which so puffeth up makes a better show, than that which does substantially and solidly edify the soul.

It is too apparent a truth, which hath been hinted to you thus far, that there are persons, who upon such accounts as these, are easily induced to pretend to religion, and to make a show of love and devotedness to God, who are strangers to the effects of love to their brother. But from this so very apparent truth men are apt to induce as manifest and gross a falsehood; that is, because there are those who pretend love to God, that are found manifestly peccant as to the exercise of that duty which love to man would command, and ought to be the spring and principle of, that therefore all pretences to stricter religion than ordinary are hypocritical. No man who makes a more strict profession than his neighbours, and is more frequently conversant in the exercise of religion than they are, but he must needs be a Pharisee and a mere pretender, only because some such persons are manifestly capable of being convicted as such. But this is no more reasonable, than because there is some counterfeit coin in the world, that therefore all is to be rejected as false, and not current; or because spectres and ghosts have been seen to walk in human shape, therefore there are no true men; or as if, because some do hypocritically pretend loyalty and devotedness to the government, while they carry on conspiracies against their rulers, that therefore there is no way for others to approve themselves blameless, but presently to turn open and contemptuous rebels. This is strange kind of logic!

And in truth, none are honest men in their account, but such as will swear, and drink, and run into all wickedness and excess of riot with them. Of such a one they will be ready to say, "A very honest gentleman!" and then all the talk flies against such and such persons that addict themselves to a course of religion. And if some who are the notorious scandals of it have shown themselves to be what they are, then those who make it their business to keep up a course of strictness in piety and religion have the common infamous brand of hypocrites put upon them.

Now at this rate we must certainly quite turn the tables. Virtue must be called vice, and vice be called virtue, and the names of things be utterly altered. And we must account, that God's children and the devil's are to change families, fathers, and states one with another. For we shall have none left to be called honest men, or the children of God, but such as are no better than good-fellows; and all serious fearers and sincere lovers of God must be abandoned for none of his, only because some false brethren creep in among them.

And yet it very greatly concerneth those, who are actually and truly of the family and household, or the church of God by faith in Jesus Christ, though men do never so causelessly and injuriously scandalize the whole fraternity, upon the delinquencies of some false pretenders, to learn instruction by it, and to be abundantly more wary in all manner of conversation, upon the account of their calling him Father. All therefore that I shall by way of use leave with you at this time is the admonition of the apostle. If ye call upon the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear, 1 Pet. i. 17.

SERMON XIV.*

We are endeavouring to show you, that their pretence to the love of God is both untrue and absurd, who love not their brother. And as to this we proposed to show in the

I. Place, how we are to understand the duty of loving our brother; that is, in what extent and latitude, and also with what restriction and limitation.

II. Whence it is that persons pretend to the love of God, who never loved their brother. We now proceed,

III. To show the falsehood and absurdity of that pretence; or to evince to you, that the pretence of love to God, where there is no love to our brother, is both false and absurd. That it is false is expressly enough said in this very verse, and we need go no further for the proof of it. "If a man say he loveth God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." What need we more to prove this pretence false? That it is also absurd, is to be evinced to you from the considerations we shall give you for that purpose, which are especially two: namely, the necessary connexion that there is between the love of God and the love of our brother, in the nature of things; and the greater difficulty of loving God whom we have not seen, than our brother whom we have seen. So that it is absurd for a man to pretend, that he has mastered the greater difficulty, who has not overcome the less.

1. The absurdity of this pretence may be evinced from the necessary strict connexion there is between the love of God and the love of our brother, even in the nature of the things themselves. And here we shall show you that

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there is a fourfold connexion between them:—(1.) They are connected in respect of their object—(2.) In respect of their root and principle—(3.) In respect of their rule, and —(4.) Of their end.

(1.) They are connected in respect of their object. Love to God and love to our brother will be found to have in some sort the same object. I would not go about to prove any great affinity between the things themselves, but it is plain, I say, they have in some sort the same formal object. That is, our love to our brother, if it be right and true, falls in with our love of God; so as that our love of God must be the very formal reason of our loving our brother, whom we can never truly love, if we do not love him for God's sake and because we primarily love God.

The truth is, whatever specimens of beauty or excellence we find any where in the creature, we are then only said to love them duly, when our love is pitched upon them as so many rays and beams from the first and supreme Good. And so it is the original primary Goodness which we rightfully love, even in this or that creature. It is true indeed, goodness in its original, and in its descent and derivation, are not univocally the same. Nothing can be univocally common to God and the creature. But they are analogically the same. Goodness is primarily in God, and so descends, and is imparted to this or that creature. But it is only there by dependance upon him, from whom and in whom it originally is. And our love to our brother, in the strictest sense of that expression, is exerted, when it meets with that goodness, which is the most express and vivid image of God's own. We there love the representation of God in that subject wherein he has proposed himself to us as our pattern, even the excellency and glory of his holiness.

They that are in the strictest sense our brethren, as you have heard, are God's own regenerate sons; and because we are to love him that begat, we are to love them that are begotten of him, 1 John v. 1. And it is therefore to be observed, that elsewhere in this epistle, our states Godward are to be measured by this one thing, namely, our love to the brethren. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," 1 John iii. 14. So that if we compare place with place, it is very plain that the measure here is but *mensura mensurata*; that is, it is itself to be measured by a supreme measure, namely, our love to God. It is a mark or character, which itself is tried by a higher mark. "By this," says the apostle, "we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments," 1 John v. 2. So that no man may depend further upon this as a mark and trial of his state with respect to God, that he loves such and such his children, than as he is able to evince the love of them to be for God's own sake, and as they bear his image and likeness. And so the trial finally and ultimately resolves in this, "Am I a lover of God, yea or no?"

It is very true, that I may first and more sensibly have the perception perhaps of my love to this or that particular man. But I must run the matter higher, and particularly inquire, what is the reason I love this man? Is it because he is a good man? taking goodness in the strictest and most noble sense. Is it because he hath participated of the Divine goodness? and is a follower, imitator, representer of God's moral goodness, which is his holiness? We must be capable of concluding ourselves lovers of our brethren, as they are holy ones, as they bear, or appear to us to bear, the image of God. And hereby, and not otherwise, can we conclude our love to our brother to be of the right kind, by our being able to evince that we love God primarily and above him, that is, that we love him for God's sake. And whatever is to be said of any thing for such a reason, and only upon that account, is much more to be said of that reason itself. We do not therefore love our brother aright, if God be not loved much more; our love to God being the very reason why we truly and aright do love our brother.

Thus they stand connected in their object. You see they cannot be severed; and that a man cannot possibly love his brother aright, if he love not God: therefore the love of God must needs draw in the love of our brother, as a thing inseparably connected with it.

(2.) They are connected also in the root and principle, which in both is one and the same; namely, that very spirit of love, which is mentioned by Paul to Timothy, and which God has given us, as well as that of power, and of a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7. We must know that love to our brother is a fruit of the Spirit as well as love to God. We have an enumeration of the several fruits of the Spirit in the epistle to the Galatians, and love is set in the front of them all, Gal. v. 22. Now if you consider what fruits of the flesh those of the Spirit do stand in opposition to, you will find yourselves necessitated to admit and conclude, that love there, is not meant of love to God alone, but of that love which diffuses and spreads itself duly according as the objects are presented or do invite; in which the Divine goodness is found, in himself primarily, and derived to this or that creature, and especially to such as bear, as was said, the more lively image and representation of his goodness.

We are not therefore to think, that love to God is one gracious principle, and love to our brother is another gracious principle; but we must know, that it is one and the same gracious principle of holy love which works towards this or that object, according to the excellency and amiableness thereof; that is, proportionably to what I see of Divine goodness in it, which is the formal reason of my love. Holy love is the affection of love sanctified; which affection is not many but one, but yet turns itself towards this or that object according as the object claims and requires.

And therefore we find expressly that love to our brethren is resolved into the spirit of holiness, as its original cause, which is the thing that I would mainly and principally inculcate, that so it may not be looked upon as a thing of inferior nature; since we are too apt to look with a diminishing eye upon this duty of love to our brethren. It is really one of the fruits of the Spirit of holiness, a part of its production in renewed souls. See how expressly the apostle Peter speaks to this purpose. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently," 1 Pet. i. 22. So again we are told, that "the end of the commandment is charity (or love, for it is the same word that is rendered sometimes one way and sometimes the other) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned," 1 Tim. i. 5. By the end of the commandment is meant the perfection, the top, the sum of it; or that which does virtually include all that lieth within the whole compass of the commandment. And what we are to understand by the word, commandment, which is expressed indefinitely, we may see in what follows; namely, that it is the same thing with the law. "The law," says the apostle, "is not made for a righteous man; but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane," &c. (ver. 9.) which supposes the commandment and law here to be meant of the law in its extent, as it comprehends both tables; not only our duty to God, but to our brother also. And therefore that love which is the *coronis* and very sum of it, goes to both. Now it is said concerning this love, taken thus extensively, that it must proceed out of a pure heart, and faith unfeigned. It must proceed from that faith, which is peculiar to the regenerate sons of God. "They that believe are born of God," 1 John v. 1. "And as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 12, 13. Now this same faith is the immediate production of the Spirit in the work of regeneration. It works out into love, and even into that love, which exercises itself upon our brother. Love to him, I say, must proceed from faith unfeigned. Therefore when the exercise of love was required by our Saviour, in forgiving an offending brother; and the question was put, how often they should forgive? and he replies, "unto seventy times seven;" presently the disciples, as knowing the great need and exigency of the case, said, "Lord, increase our faith," Luke xvii. 5. There needs much faith in order to the exercise of such love.

Wherefore this love is in most necessary connexion with

what is intimate to the new creature, and what most essentially belongs unto the constitution of it. It is part of the work of regeneration, and of that holy creature, which is, when produced, called the new creature. You find therefore in that Scripture, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7. where several graces of the Spirit are mentioned together, that brotherly kindness comes among the rest, in conjunction with faith, patience, and the like.

Yea, and to evince this a little further, you find that in this very epistle in which is our text, love to our brother, even an indigent brother, is called by the name of love to God; that is, not with reference to him considered as the object, (though in some respects, as was said before, God may be considered as the object too,) but in reference to him as the Original and Author of this love. "He that hath this world's goods," saith the apostle, "and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" 1 John iii. 17. It is as if he had said, it is plain, that this divine love, which God is the Author of, and of which this poor indigent brother is an object, is not in him, if he has no bowels of compassion towards him at such a time, when the exigency of his case calls for relief.

The apostle Paul tells the Thessalonian Christians, that concerning brotherly love they needed not that he should write unto them, "for (saith he) you yourselves are taught of God to love one another," 1 Thess. iv. 9. Sure we are not strangers to the import of that expression in Scripture, or what it is to be taught of God. The expression is paralleled by those which represent men as drawn by him efficaciously moved, and acted by his almighty Spirit. "Every one," saith our Saviour, "that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me," John vi. 45. That hearing and learning of the Father, is expounded by that of being drawn or powerfully attracted by the Father. Therefore the meaning of this expression, "You have been taught of God," is this; your hearts have been powerfully drawn by God into the exercise of this love to one another. "You need not that I write to you concerning this matter, for ye are taught of God." As in another case it is said, (the passage is taken from the prophet Jeremiah, xxxi. 31—35.) "They shall not teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me from the least to the greatest," Heb. viii. 11. The same form of expression you see is used here, and must be taken in the same sense.

In the second chapter of this same epistle of John, ver. 20. we read of an unction of the Holy Ghost, by which the spirits of those who belong to God are so seasoned, and tinctured, that they are even connaturalized unto the truth; and this is the way of God's teaching, even to love, as well as any thing else. It is a mighty, potent work of that Spirit of holiness, by which men are taught to love. He teaches as none besides does. His way of teaching is by working in us the things that we are taught. And therefore they who think that whatsoever is required of goodness and holiness, may be the product only of human endeavour and acquisition, are to understand that we cannot do so much as this, without being taught so to do by the mighty power and Spirit of God; not so much, I say, as truly to love men as such, upon whom the stamp and impression of God's holy image is to be found. And indeed, they who think that all may be the effect of our own endeavour which is herein required of us, or of moral suasion, might learn better Christianity even from some heathens of Plato's school. A heathen philosopher, I remember, in one of his dialogues, discusses this question, Whether virtue is to be taught or not? And he undertakes to demonstrate, that it is not a thing to be taught, but is infused, or inspired by God himself. Particularly he says as to this virtue of love, love to good men, that it is a divine thing infused by God. And he gives the reason of this general assertion, namely, that whatsoever virtue any do partake of, it is not taught by men, but infused from heaven alone; "For, (saith he,) if it were a thing to be got by mere human teaching, then certainly good men might easily teach others to be good and virtuous; and only they must do it, because they alone have virtue, and so are alone capable of teaching it. But if they were capable of teaching it to others, nothing could hinder it but their envy and ill-nature; or unwillingness that any should fare as well as themselves. But a good man cannot be envious. Therefore, (he concludes upon the whole) virtue is a thing not to be taught, a thing that cannot be got by teaching." We see then how it is to be understood, when love, which is so great a part of it, is said to be taught of God. So that love to God and the brethren agree in their root and principle. They have there a firm connexion; so as that it is impossible they should be severed, or that a man can be a lover of God who is not a lover of his brother.

(3.) They are connected also in their rule, which is one and the same law; for indeed the whole law of God is summed up in love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," (Rom. xiii. 10.) as we had occasion to show formerly. And you see what the apostle means there by law, from the occasion of this discourse. "And this commandment have we from him, that he that loveth God, should love his brother also," 1 John iv. 21. He hath laid this law upon us, that we should thus dispense our love; that if we pretend to exercise our love to him, we must do it to our brother too. He will never otherwise take us into the *census*, or account of lovers of himself.

And when the apostle James insists upon it, that "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," (James ii. 10.) pray look back there, and see upon what occasion, and with what reference, he says this. "If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well. But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors," James ii. 8. You find he has reference to this very thing, our love to our brother; which is what he calls the royal law. The law enjoined us is this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And if we be found *peccant* as to this, and obey it not, nor comply with the authority of the law and the Lawgiver in this instance, we make ourselves rebels throughout; we break the whole law, and all that we do besides signifies nothing. Therefore he gives an instance. The same law that hath said, "Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill," ver. 11. The law doth equally and alike forbid inordinate love and unjust hatred: inordinate lust and impure love, as that which offends against one command; and inordinate hatred and ill-nature, which equally offends against the other, as it is the root of murder. In opposition to which this law stands, as the summary of all that duty, which we must understand to be implicitly enjoined in that law.

(4.) Love to God and our brother concentre and agree in one end; that is, the glory of God, and our own felicity: which two, you know, do make up the end of man. We ought to love God, in order to our glorifying him; and we ought also to love our brother, for the same reason. So we ought to love God in order to our enjoying him, and being happy and blessed in him; and in like manner ought we to love our brother, in order to our enjoying God, and being happy and blessed in him.

The glory of God first depends upon our loving him, but it also as truly depends upon our loving our brother. Yea this glory of God which is the end, and some way ought to be the effect, of our actions, shines a great deal more, sometimes, in the exercise of love to men. Thus saith David, "My goodness extendeth not unto thee, but unto the saints that are upon the earth, in whom is all my delight," Psalm xvi. 2, 3. As if he had said, Thou art never the better for it, but they may be. Here it is that we make the glory of God to shine forth in our course and practice, when we do visibly exemplify the goodness of his nature in our own goodness, that is, in doing good; in those continual fruits and acts of goodness, which issue and flow from the principle of divine love (with which our souls are possessed) to those that are related unto God, according as their relation to him is larger or more special, as we have formerly showed.

It is by our doing good that we show to whom we belong, though that goodness of ours can reach only to men and saints. "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness:" (Eph. v. 9.) namely, that goodness which can flow and diffuse itself according as we have objects here below, upon which it may be continually pouring itself forth, and

spreading itself. Herein we bear testimony to God, that we are the very children of his love. We do, as it were, herein justify and honour our great Father. We own our Father, and own ourselves his children. Love, that ye may be the children of God, says our Saviour, who doth good both to the evil and the good; (Matt. v. 44, 45.) that is, that ye may appear to be his children. And again, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another," John xiii. 35. This refers to that more special love which we ought to settle upon nobody but those, who are particularly related and united to Christ. "You will own me in the world, and your relation to me; and I shall be owned and honoured among men by you, if ye love one another." And this was the character of Christians in the primitive times of the Christian church, "See how these Christians love one another, and refuse not to die for one another."

Yea, and again, our own felicity is promoted (which is another part of our end) by the love of our brother. For though God himself be the supreme felicitating object, yet he intends to be enjoyed by his in a community. He gathers them all unto himself in one body, of which body love is the common bond, the unitive thing which as it were embodies and holds the members together; being the same bond of perfectness the apostle speaks of, or the most perfect bond, which, says he, is charity, Col. iii. 14.

And the case is plain and manifest, that where there is a languor and deficiency of Christian or brotherly love, the way of access to God is obstructed and barred up. Such persons have no free converse with God. A Spirit that is full of rancour, under a distemper filled with animosity though but to this or that one particular person, knows not how to go to God. The new creature is starved and famished this way. The soul cannot heartily enjoy God, hath no liberty towards God. Therefore our Saviour considering the state of the case gives this general law and rule: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, (he speaks in the phrase and language of the Jews under the Old Testament administration, designing the instruction of Christians under the New,) and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, (thou hast nothing to do at the altar, there can be no commerce between God and thee except thou go,) and be reconciled first to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift," Matt. v. 23, 24. Love must flow, and have a free course between thy brother and thee, or it can have none between God and thee. And if it were possible, how monstrous would it be, if in a man's natural body all the nutriment should be drawn to one side! Would any one think fit to feed and cherish but one side of himself? Especially, would the new creature cherish only a love to God, and at the same time famish what may be called the other side, a love to his brother? He attempts a thing impossible to be done; and it were extremely monstrous if it could be done, or should ever take place.

Thus far you see then, that by an inseparable connexion which there is, in these four respects, between love to God and love to our brother, it must needs be an absurd pretence that men make of love to God, who exercise not love to their brother also.

2. I proceed to speak briefly (and so shall shut up for the present) to a further consideration, whence the absurdity of such a pretence ariseth; which is drawn from the greater difficulty of loving God whom we have not seen, than our brother whom we have seen. It must needs be an absurd thing for a man to pretend that he hath mastered the greater difficulty, who hath not overcome the less. Which you see is the plain and full sense and meaning of the apostle's reasoning here.

But here it may perhaps be said, that "These two considerations do seem to contradict one another, or that the latter is repugnant to the former. For if love to God and to our brother be so connected as hath been shown, then how can it be that love to our brother should be less difficult than love to God? Yea and if there be such a connexion, as it appears there is, it may rather be said that love to our brother seems more difficult: for we can never truly love him, till we have first been brought to love God; and so we love our brother secondarily, that is, upon his account and for his sake." For the clearing of this I shall briefly say two or three things to you.

(1.) That when we say, love to God is more difficult than love to our brother, we speak not (as formerly you may have taken notice) of implanting the principle of this love; but we speak of the exercise of it. It is God that implants the principle, and all things are equally easy to him; but it is we that are to exercise it.

(2.) Whereas we cannot exercise it neither without his concurrence, we are to consider that concurrence of his with reference not to his absolute, but to his ordinary power. Not, I say, according to the extraordinary, but the ordinary workings of the power of God. And though it be true, that according to the extraordinary working of his power he can make it equally facile to love himself and any creature in which his image shines, and more facile or easy many times; yet according to his ordinary working, his people find by their own sad experience, that they have more to do in getting their hearts to act that way, than towards the creature, according to that degree of divine goodness which they can take notice of. But though this be clear enough, yet we answer further,

(3.) There are many persons, who in some degree love Christians and good men upon lower and less sufficient motives: and not upon the account of what peculiarly respects godly men as such. And we are principally to understand the apostle as speaking to such persons, as pretended to love their brethren, professed Christians, upon these lower motives. As if he had said, "You are not yet arrived so far as to love your brother upon motives sufficient to establish your love, though you see him as one, with whom you have sensible converse. Are you then got so high as to love God? Is it a credible thing you should be able to love an unseen God?" So that the pretence carries the same absurdity with it, as if one should pretend this or that more difficult thing to be easy and facile, when many things that are unspeakably more easy he cannot do or effect. As if a man should pretend it easy to fly to the stars, who cannot walk upright on his feet. Or as if another were vaunting to be able to outface the sun, whose eyes are perpetually dazzled with the light of a candle. A likely thing you should love God, whom you have not seen; who cannot so much as love your brother, whom you have seen, but upon the lowest motives! Wherefore these things have a connexion, and it appears from these considerations, that true love to our brother must be inseparable from the love of God. And so we have sufficiently seen the falsehood and absurdity of such a pretence as this is.

The *Use* of all remains; and for the present it concerns us to bethink ourselves and reflect, that whereas all of us profess and pretend to love God, (I presume there are none here but will avow themselves to be lovers of God, for to profess any religion is virtually to profess love to God; I say, we are concerned to bethink,) whether our want of love to our brother carries not in it a conviction of the falsehood of that pretence. The languishing of this love shows a deficiency of the exercise of that noble principle of love to God. Love to God cannot be fervent, when love to Christians is so cool and feeble. And we have not only reason to complain that love is cold, but that envy and hatred are flagrant and burning hot. So far from loving one another are Christians now-a-days, that they cannot endure one another, nor tell how to live by one another!

SERMON XV.*

THE truth which we have in hand from these words, I mean the last of those which have been proposed from them, is to this purpose; That their pretence to the love of God is both false and absurd, who join not therewith love to their brother. And here,

I. We have already shown, in speaking to this proposition, how we are to understand love to our brother; with what latitude, and with what limitations.

* Preached November 29th, 1676.

II. We have shown you whence it is that some may pretend to love God, who do not love their brother. And,

III. We have shown both the falsehood and absurdity of such a pretence: the former from plain words of Scripture: and the latter from such considerations, as do plainly demonstrate it to be a most unreasonable pretence, and therefore such as carries the most manifest absurdity with it

The *Use* doth yet remain. And that which I more principally intend is to put you upon reflection: to engage you to reflect upon yourselves, and the common practice, but more especially upon your own; to consider how disagreeable it is to that love, which we owe to our brother; that so we may lament the great miscarriage that is to be seen in the common practice of the world, and reform it in ourselves.

And consider as to both, since we all of us profess love to God, (as all implicitly do who profess any thing of religion, of which love to God is the very life and soul,) whether want of love to our brother doth not too generally carry with it a plain confutation of that profession. And that I may the more distinctly pursue this *use*, and more comprehensively, as to the cases and persons concerned, I shall, according to the double notion of the duty in the text, take notice how little love there is to be seen towards men as men, or towards Christians as Christians.

First, Towards men as men: whom we may consider either universally, that is all men in general; or indefinitely, that is, any man in particular with whom we have to do, or have occasion to converse withal.

I. How little love is there to be seen towards men universally considered! To love men as men, is to love them upon a universal reason, that extendeth or should make our love extend unto all men. As you know all the commandments of the second table are all founded in love, resolved into that duty, and gathered up into that one sum. And we find that this or that particular command being reduced thither, doth oblige us to duty even to men as men, and that upon a universal reason common to all men. As we instanced before in that one negative precept, "Thou shalt not kill," enforced by that universal reason, "For in the image of God made he man." The obligation of this in reference to the object, extends as far even as that natural image of God does; which, as an ancient speaks, "every man bears whether he will or no, and can no more part with it than with himself." It is indeed his very nature. But how little of such love is there to be found among us! How few true lovers are there even of their own species, who have a real and fervent affection (such as the object claims and challenges) for such as partake of the human nature with themselves! For I pray consider,

1. How little is our resentment of the common calamities of the world, whether in reference to their eternal or temporal concernments! How few regret it, or take it deeply to heart, that men are so generally without God in the world, and without Christ! That the knowledge is so imperfect among men of their own original, and of the end of their being; of him who made them, and what they were made for: That the knowledge of a Redeemer (the sweet savour of which the apostle tells us it was so much his ambition to have manifested in every place, 2 Cor. ii. 14.) is yet so little among men! Who regrets or lays it to heart, that the world is so filled with violence, barbarism, and blood? that a deluge and inundation of misery is with sin spread over the world, and transmitted and propagated from age to age, and from generation to generation? When we hear of wars and devastations, and garments rolled in blood here and there, how few are there who concern themselves for it, as long as they are quiet and at peace in their own habitations! And again,

2. How cold and faint are our supplications on the behalf of men so generally considered! though we are expressly directed by that exhortation of the apostle to make prayer and supplication for all men, 1 Tim. ii. 1. How little comprehensive are our spirits to take in the common concerns of the world with seriousness as the case requires! How little do we imitate the blessed God in this! for a general philanthropy, or kindness to men, is even a most godlike quality, and that wherein he hath represented himself as a pattern to us. And,

II. We may consider men indefinitely, that is, any with whom we have to do or converse with. And though there may be, as there ought to be, the inward workings of love towards men considered under that formal and extensive notion, yet there may not be so much as the external expressions and exercises of love to men considered this latter way. This external exercise of love requires a present object, determined by such circumstances, and such particular occurrences and occasions, as render it liable to the exercise of our love. So the apostle limits particularly our benefaction; "As we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith," Gal. vi. 10. "The poor," says our Saviour, "ye have always with you, but me you have not," John xii. 8. A present object so circumstanced, is required for the exercise of such love as goes forth into external acts. We cannot ourselves actually do good unto all. We cannot reach all, for our sphere is not so large. The most we can do in that kind is by prayer to our utmost to engage a universal agent, who can adapt himself to every one's case and exigence. But within our sphere, I say, and in reference to those we have to do with and where we have opportunity, how little does there appear of love to men!

The rule according to which we are to exercise our love, is that royal law, as the apostle James calls it, to love our neighbour as ourselves, James ii. 8. Or as our Saviour elsewhere expresses it, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye so to them," Matt. vii. 12. A rule that hath been very highly magnified even among some of the heathen; and the author of it also, our Lord Jesus Christ himself, upon the account of it. That is a known thing of the emperor Alexander Severus, who caused it to be inscribed up and down in the most noted places of his palace; and professed to bear so high an honour unto Christ, upon the account of his being the Author of so good a rule, as to desire to have him placed among the other deities. This indeed was designed before, but providence ordered it so as that it should not be said he came into so mean a copartnership for a Deity.

And that rule it is plain doth oblige us in reference to men indefinitely, or to any man whatsoever. For we would not only wish that this or that good man should deal well with us, or regret he should deal ill, but that any man whatsoever should do so. We take it ill to be traduced, detracted, oppressed by any man. And so we have the object of our love in that extent plainly pointed out to us. Now we might here show you, how this royal law is violated: namely, by such carriages and dispositions as are directly repugnant to love; or else by such a temper, disposition, and behaviour, which (though it doth not carry in it repugnancy to love, but would consist very well with it) proceeds from other principles, and not from a genuine and pure principle of love. And here,

1. We shall animadvert upon some things which are more directly repugnant to this love. As,

(1.) A morose unconversable frame and temper. When men are become unsociable, and nobody knows how to deal with them; such sons of Belial (as was said concerning Nabal) that one knows not how to speak to them. Such as, although it has been a proverb that every man hath two handles, have themselves never a one that one can tell how to take hold of them by. It is impossible to know how to converse with them, so as not to give them offence; always sour, captious, snarling, supercilious, and tractable on no terms. And this is a great deal more odious when religion is pretended for it; and when because they would be taken for persons more strictly and severely godly, they must needs therefore in their great zeal for such a reputation show themselves uncivil and humoursome. As if religion, which beyond all things else tends to cultivate men's minds and manners, must quite destroy humanity out of the world, and render men incapable of civil converse.

If we did but read and consider such passages of Scripture, where we are enjoined to be courteous, and kindly affected to men: or consider such instances and examples as that of Abraham treating with the sons of Heth, or that

of the apostle Paul's deportment towards Felix, Festus, and Agrippa: we should soon see that much acquaintance with God is in no way at all inconsistent with the most comely, fair, and even genteel deportment unto men; and that there is no inconsistency at all between religion, even at the very highest pitch, and a civil and ingenuous behaviour to them with whom we have to do.

(2.) We may instance in what is still worse, namely, an unmerciful temper and disposition, and a practice suitable to it. There is a heart that is hard as a stone, which hath no bowels, no compassion, even towards the most moving objects, which do from day to day occur. And this the apostle in this very epistle tells us very plainly doth argue the love of God not to have place in us. And again,

(3.) Injustice or unrighteousness is fitly reducible hither also as a violation of that royal law of love, inasmuch as love ought to be the principle of all the duties of righteousness. Else how can the duties of the second table be gathered up in that sum, as you heard before, of love to our neighbour as ourselves.

And here comes in all falsehood, the violations of men's words and promises, so that one does not know whom to trust; which is the thing that directly tends to break up all human society. For every thing of commerce between man and man depends upon human faith, as commerce with God depends upon a divine faith. A man that cannot trust in God can have no fellowship with him; and when there is no such thing as trust in men, there is no place for commerce between man and man. For if that should be once banished out of the universe, the world must disband, all human societies must break up; men must resolve to live as beasts, retired in cells, and caves, and wildernesses.

All that oppression also, extortion, and fraudulent commerce that are among men, belong to this head. If men did but love others as themselves, or if they would but do to others as they would be done unto, (which is the great measure of the exercise of love,) none of this would be.

(4.) We may add as another instance, furious passions, rash anger, and precipitous choler, and the contentions and strife which are so frequent, and so hotly maintained among men. And we may add to these, fretting envy, secret repining in men's spirits when others are better, or do better than themselves. This is a disaffection of soul, which, as some heathens have noted, speaks a direct quarrel with God and a fighting with him. Because a wise providence sees fit to favour such and such persons, therefore we will be sure to be none of their friends. And most of all repugnant to this duty of love are hatred, malice, revengefulness, a continual watching and waiting for opportunities to do others an ill turn, from whom we conceive ourselves to have received one. And I instance,

Lastly, in that from whence almost all this doth proceed, namely, inordinate self-love, which hath set all the world at variance. This is what the apostle means by lust; an affectation of drawing all to ourselves, by an inordinate and extravagant affection to which we indulge ourselves and our own interest, each minding his own things. And so, whereas we should each of us fill up the sphere we converse in with love, that so dwelling in love we might dwell in God who is love, most men shrink their sphere into one point. They make themselves the only object of their love; all is confined there, and terminateth there.[a]

And therefore, because men's private interests do interfere and clash with one another, hence it comes to pass that the world is filled with all those strifes, quarrels, contentions, wars, and blood, with which it is afflicted from day to day, and age to age. Whence are all these but from lusts? and what are those lusts all gathered up into one, but inordinate self-love, that knows no regulation, and will be confined by no just measures? It is a most apt and elegant expression of the Roman Emperor Marcus Antoninds to this purpose, who says, "Such an inordinate self-love is like an ulcer, or imposthumated part, that draweth all to itself, and starveth the body to which it belongs." But there may be also,

2. A violation of this royal law of love to others, not only where things directly repugnant to it are indulged, but also where there are external carriages which would well comport with it, while they proceed not from a principle of love to one another, as the root and fountain of them. As in the opening of the doctrine we observed to you, that so waywardly are the spirits of men affected, that sometimes they will make the principle exclude the external acts and expressions, and sometimes the contrary. Men may carry it fairly and without exceptionableness to others, but it proceeds not from the principle of love, but some other principle.

As for instance, with respect to acts of charity, some express their compassion to those who are in distress, by relieving them in their exigencies; but it is out of vainglory, and to procure themselves a name. They sound a trumpet before them, and proclaim that they give alms, as our Saviour speaks of the Pharisees. So a man will be just and square in his dealings, but it proceeds not from love to his neighbour, such as we owe to ourselves, but only from prudence; for if they do not carry it fair, they shall undo themselves as to their name and commerce in the world. Or it may proceed from fear; "I will not wrong or injure such a one for fear he should right himself upon me, and prove too hard for me at the long run." It may also proceed from deceit, and a treacherous disposition. They will carry it with all kindness to such till they can have an opportunity as it were to smite them under the fifth rib, as Joab did Abner, while he spoke to him peaceably, 2 Sam. iii. 27.

These are manifest violations of this great and royal law; that is, they may be manifest to the persons themselves who are guilty, if they would but allow themselves the liberty to reflect, and take a view of the temper of their own spirits. In the exercise of this kind of love, ἀγάπη ἀνυπόκριτος, an unhypocritical love is required, love without dissimulation, Rom. xii. 9.

Now concerning all these things many are apt to think them but little matters. "They are but offences against men, say they, such as ourselves." Conscience as to these is little sensible or smitten in most men, because it is stupid, and cannot feel by reflections of this kind. But indeed these are very far from being light matters in themselves. They are things of dreadful import, if we consider what it is they argue or prove; that is, they argue little or no love to an unseen God. For thither it is that the apostle's argumentation directs us to run up the business. If it appear by these instances that there is no love to our brother whom we have seen; how can there be any love to God whom we have not seen? These things argue the little respect men bear to an invisible God, to an unseen Ruler and Lord. They argue how low the interest of the blessed God is among men, how little his authority and law do signify with them, and that men are sunk into a deep oblivion of him that made them.

These miscarriages, where they are more common, prevailing, and customary with men, are all rooted in atheism. Where there is but little respect to the duty between man and man, it is an argument there is a much less respect to that which we owe to the unseen God, the Lord both of them and us. It argueth, that when he hath settled an order in this world among his creatures, designed and appointed such a thing as human society, and directed that human love should be the common bond of that society; it argues, I say, a great want of respect unto God that men should make a rupture of that sacred bond, and so at once break themselves off from one another and from him.

This is a matter of dreadful consequence if we do but

[a] There is an excellent passage to this purpose, which I beg leave to transcribe verbatim from one of the author's discourses on self-denial, never yet published.

"Consider the great incongruity, yea, the monstrous incongruity, of this self-addictedness, that a creature should be addicted to itself; a creature, I say, be it as good and great as it will! For what is the creation itself, the whole collection of all creatures together, but a mere drop unto the ocean, the drop of a bucket! Such a minute thing, a little inconsiderable thing that sprung up out of nothing into something but the other day, now to set up for itself! Monstrous incongruity, horrid absurdity! most of all for that self, that most addict themselves to serve fleshly self. A fit thing to be a deity! a thing whose wants and cravings continually might convince one, that it is not nor can be alone. How does it hug, and cleave, and cling to a sojourning soul for a merely borrowed life! feeling itself going when the soul is going. Is this a fit thing to subsist alone; by itself and of itself?" And so the author goes on to show, that "to set up for ourselves as if we were born for ourselves alone, or as if we owed nothing to our brother, nor had any dependence upon God, cuts us off from him, and forfeits all interest in his common care."

run it up to its original, and lay the stress and the weight of the matter where it ought to lie. As was said of a certain country, "The fear of God is not in this place," (Gen. xx. 11.) where it was apprehended there was a danger of suffering violence in reference to property; so it may equally be said, there is no love of God in that place; that is, in that heart and soul where so many manifest violations are continually offered (habitually and without regret) unto a law upon which he lays such weight; a law which God has made so fundamental, and built the frame of so great a part of all our other duty upon it.

And it may be now upon all this, some will be ready to say; "Truly it is a very sad thing there should be so little love among men as such, and highly reasonable it is that such love should obtain more than it does." But they withal think it very reasonable that they should be dispensed with, especially in two cases; that is, where men are very wicked, or where they are enemies to them. In the former case they would be dispensed with upon the account of their pretended respect to God, who is injured by men's wickedness; and they would fain be excused in the latter case, upon a real but very undue respect to themselves, whom they apprehend to be injured by such and such persons.

Therefore I would say somewhat more particularly (before I leave this head of love to men as men) to these two cases; that is, to evince to you how great iniquity it is that such limitations should be admitted of as these; namely, that we would extend our love to men in general, except the more wicked sort of men, and also such as are particular enemies to ourselves.

I. As to the former, the pretence is more plausible; they cannot apprehend how they should be bound to love a wicked man. And yet I shall show you briefly what exercise love ought to have in that case, and upon what considerations; what place there is, and what room, for love to those who are profligately wicked, whom we are thus urged to love.

1. It is plain, negatively, that we ought not to love a man the better because he is a wicked man, and yet it is plain that most men do so. It is as ill to love a wicked man for his iniquity, as to hate a good man for his goodness; as Cain did his brother Abel, which is noted also in this epistle. For there are persons, "who (knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death) not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them," Rom. i. 32. But this is very remote from the temper of a gracious spirit. The Psalmist makes his solemn appeal to God concerning this case; "Do not I hate them that hate thee, O Lord? I hate them with a perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies," Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22. That is, barely considered as wicked, or upon the account of their wickedness and enmity to God; which is the thing upon which this professed, avowed hatred is founded. But notwithstanding,

2. There is room still for the exercise of love to such persons several ways. As,

(1.) Love ought to be exercised in assuaging and repressing of undue and inordinate passions, which are apt to tumultuate, even in reference to cases of that nature. A fretting corroding spirit, when we find wickedness and a prosperous state in conjunction, is most expressly forbidden. "Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass," Ps. xxxvii. 7. And again, "Let not thine heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long," Prov. xxiii. 17. The daily and assiduous fear of God will be a check able to restrain such an ebullition of spirit where it doth prevail.

In like manner a vindictive temper of spirit as to such is not allowed. There are those, many times, who cannot have patience till providence has run its course, when they see wickedness prosperously triumphing and lifting up the head, but with impatient heat they are presently for calling down fire from heaven to destroy such. As it was with those over-zealous disciples of our Lord, when entertainment and lodging were refused by the Samaritans. But see how our Saviour resents it, who rebuked and said unto them, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," Luke ix. 55. There ought to be the exercise of love to the mitigation and depression of the inordinate workings of the heart in such cases. And also,

(2.) In serious and affectionate compassion, from the consideration of the tendency of their course, and of what these poor wretches are doing against themselves. The same compassion, I say, that we would have towards a distracted man, who we fear every moment will suffer by his own violent hands; and of whom we apprehend extreme peril, if he should be left a quarter of an hour to himself. These are persons that are likely to undo themselves, and in danger finally of piercing their own souls as they are wounding them every moment. The true spirit of Christian love to men as men, considered as never so wicked, ought to be exercised towards these persons upon that account, and because they are so. We reckon it as a very unnatural inhuman thing not to have great motions of pity and compassion, upon the hearing of towns, villages, and cities, in which pestilential diseases are raging, and tumbling thousands daily into the dust. But how much more dreadful is this case! and therefore how much more pitiful, compassionate love doth it require and challenge! And again,

(3.) Love should have its exercise in offering up very earnest prayers for them. It is a very sad case when the hearts and consciences of too many may witness and testify, that they could tell how to rage against such persons as they have observed to be wicked, and find their hearts ready to storm at them; but never can find, from time to time, an occasion to put up a prayer to God for them, who have no disposition themselves to seek for mercy to their poor souls. And,

(4.) In prudent and kind admonitions too, and rebukes, when providence administers the occasion; which is to be judged of by more rules and circumstances than our present design will suffer us to mention. But besides what hath been said, as to the particulars in which this love is to be exercised in such cases, the considerations to move us to the exercise of it are manifold. As for instance,

We ought to consider that such have human nature and reasonable immortal spirits, capable of service to God as much as ourselves, and also of being in God as well as we are. And what! is there no place for love to them, who are bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and even of the same reasonable nature with ourselves?

We should also consider that we have a corrupt nature as well as they have, even the same corrupt nature. And if it has not broke forth into as ill practices, we owe it not to ourselves but to that mercy which distinguisheth persons, and doth exercise itself as it will. And it may be even as to practice too, such we have been in times past, as the apostle speaks of some of the Corinthian Christians, 1 Cor. vi. 11. Therefore the wickedness of such is separable from their nature, otherwise if we think the case better with us, how came it separable from ours?

Finally, Let it be considered, that God expresses a common love and kindness and indulgence to such. He does good to the evil and the unthankful, to the just and the unjust; and makes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall, upon the one and the other, Matt. v. 45. Yea and his particular love hath fallen upon many such, and doth mostly fall upon such, where it does fall. For herein "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," Rom. v. 8. If God did not know how to love sinners, not indeed for their wickedness, but notwithstanding it; where were we, and what would have become of us!

SERMON XVI.*

WE have already shown from these words, that their pretence to the love of God is both false and absurd, who do not join with it love to their brother. And by way of use or application we have animadverted upon the common temper and frame, so very unsuitable to what this scrip-

* Preached December 8th, 1676.

ture plainly requires and calls for; namely, the little love that appears among christians in our days. And after we had pressed and recommended love to men universally considered, and shown also that we are obliged in our carriage and practice to show our love to men considered indefinitely, that is, every one with whom we have anything to do; it was observed, that some would fain indulge themselves in the neglect of this duty, and particularly in two cases think that they may challenge a dispensation. We therefore proposed to consider them severally.

I. The case of those who think themselves to be under no obligation to love wicked men, especially such as are persons of profligate wickedness. In speaking to which we have briefly shown what sort of exercise love ought to have in this case. The

II. Case is that of those who think they may be dispensed with or excused from loving those that are their enemies, which we now proceed to consider. In the former case, as we have observed, persons are prone to think they may be dispensed with out of respect to God, or on his account; in the latter case, out of respect to themselves. A great piece of hardship many think it to be compelled to love them who they know are no friends of theirs, but are continually contriving mischievous designs against them. What room or place can there be for the exercise of love in such a case, we shall here briefly show you, and then upon what considerations it ought to be vigorously exercised. On the former of these I shall not insist very largely.

1. There ought to be the exercise of love, even to enemies, in calming and subduing whatever is contrary thereunto in ourselves. All opposite passions, and the workings of them, must be restrained; every thing of anger, wrath, malignity, bitterness of spirit, revenge or vindictiveness more especially. Thus ought love to be exercised in the maintaining of a calm in our own minds and hearts, that there may be no tumultuations of any undue or forbidden passion upon any such account. Yea and again,

2. There ought to be love exercised in a more positive way; in forgiving or passing by whatever trespasses are done against us, as we expect to be forgiven ourselves. Love ought to be exercised to such even in doing them good; which is yet more positive. "Do good," says our Saviour, "to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you," Matt. v. 44. We should do them what good we can ourselves, and pray for them that they may have that good which we cannot procure for them. The order and gradation of this precept is very observable. We are first in general enjoined to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us; and then we are enjoined to do them good, and to pray for them. As if our Lord had said, "First do all the good you can to them yourselves; but when you are gone as far as you can, then engage and set on work an almighty agent by prayer. Pray that God would do them good when you can do them none."

We should take heed of looking on this as a Platonical chimæra; as a thing that can only have place in the imagination, or as a matter altogether impracticable. Christ has enjoined us no impracticable things. And there have been great examples in the world, that of his own and others, who have been so influenced by the grace of God as to give demonstration that this was no impracticable matter. And have we never heard of any that have rendered themselves remarkable on this account? of those of whom it hath been said, "No man could take a readier course to make such a one his friend, than by doing him an injury?" I believe some of us have heard of such instances even in these lower dregs of time. This we should then fix with ourselves as our resolution. "Doth any man make it his business and design to trouble and molest me? Is he from time to time seeking occasions to vex me? The next opportunity that occurs to me of doing that man a good turn, I will be sure to lay hold upon it. I will be even with him that way. If I can do him good, I will. This I would fix upon my heart as a law."

I will now proceed to give you some considerations that evince to us the reasonableness of such an exercise of love to our enemies; to such as bear us ill will, and are ready to do us an ill turn. As,

1. Consider it is the law and glory of Christianity to do so. That it is the Christian law is plain, and you have heard it already. You see how in the sermon on the mount, our Saviour reflects upon that mean, sordid, narrow principle of the Jews, which mostly in those times did possess and steer that people. "You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies," &c. Matt. v. 43. He then plainly, as to the matter of the exercise of love, takes away the distinction between neighbour and enemy. Our Saviour will allow no such distinction. And it is very plain, that by neighbour and brother he means the same thing in that fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, where expounding the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," (ver. 21.) according to its spiritual sense and meaning, he makes the object of that law to be our brother; plainly intending by brother all those whom it was unlawful to kill. "I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment," ver. 22. It is plain he means anger and killing with respect to the same object. We are therefore to love our enemies under that common notion of brother. This, I say then, is most clear, that our Lord Christ hath made this law with respect to enemies. Love them, bless them, pray for them, and do good to them, are his express precepts.

And it is the particular glory of Christianity, that such a constitution as this is, is to be found in it as a law. This must be acknowledged to be peculiar to Christianity. "To love friends, that is common to all men; to love enemies, that is proper to Christians;" as said an ancient in the Christian church long ago. It is true indeed such a temper as this hath been well spoken of among the heathen: but a great deal more praised, than practised; more applauded, than imitated. I remember one of them says, that "It is to imitate God himself not to hate any one at all, and more especially to terminate the exercise of our most fervent and complacential love upon the best." And we have heard of some who in lower things have done somewhat like this. As a great man of Athens, when on a certain night one followed him all along the street, reviling him and calling him most injurious and contumelious names, as soon as he came to his own house, he only commanded his servant to light the man home again. And every man must acknowledge it an amiable and lovely thing, when but a specimen has appeared, though never so faint, of such a kind of practice.

But I say it is the peculiar glory of Christianity to form and habituate the spirits of those who are sincere unto this temper; that so the instances of this nature may not be rare, and that love may be exemplified in men's course and behaviour, according as the occasions of human life do require. And who can but reckon it a glory? For is not every creature upon that account the more excellent as his spirit is more conformed unto God? It is with this enforcement that this law is given by our Saviour, in the verse immediately after the precepts before mentioned; "That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust," Matt. v. 45. As if he had said, Love your enemies, and do good to them that use you ill, that you may hold forth a visible resemblance of God; that his image in this kind may appear and shine in you; and that it may thereupon be made known to all whose children you are, and by whom you are begotten; that it may be seen, that there is a nature truly divine conveyed and transmitted into you, and so inwrought into your temper as demonstrate you to be the children of God. Certainly it is the glory of a creature to resemble its Maker; and by how much the more it does so, by so much the more glorious is that creature; for what is the glory or excellency found in the creature, but the reflection and impress of the Divine excellency and glory? And again, in the

2. Place, let it be considered, that by this exercise of love to our enemies we make ourselves superior to them, according to the injunction which is laid upon us by the apostle: "Be not ye overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," Rom. xii. 21. The latter part of the verse we may take notice of by and by. All the while that a

man can continue and keep up a spirit of kindness, and benignity, and goodness to his enemies, it is plain he is not overcome; he is upon the upper ground, and hath unspeakably the better of them. And it is the easiest and surest defeat of malice that can be imagined or thought of. For it is certain where an ill-minded, mischievous person doth bend and set himself against such a one as you, he will not only set himself to hurt you but to vex you. It is not only your hurt that he aims at, but he would disquiet you, and put your mind to torture. So then it is plain, let a man have never so much hard usage from another, if there are manifest evidences that his spirit sinks not, but rather that he maintains a great spirit under all, it retorts the vexation upon him who designed it, and he himself alone is vexed who aimed at that design Therefore he still keeps the superiority in this case, the temper of whose spirit remains within him placed, calm, and undisturbed; free from any unmanly, and most of all unchristian, passions.

And it is love which hath that dominion, that it will not let such impure and unbecoming things as envy, hatred, or malice, come into that state, which is all made up of goodness, kindness, and love. The strength of that gracious principle, working with its due vigour, expels and keeps them from coming into the soul, or making inroads there. And all this while there can be no vexation, no disquietude, in the spirit of such a one. It is fortified, and so strengthened as to shut out whatever would disturb and break the peace within. And so he that hath set himself against you hath not his design, because you are not overcome by him.

And to be sure whatever hand the devil hath in such attempts he is defeated; for he only desires you should sin against God, which certainly you do when you admit of any breach of charity. He does not care whether it be well or ill with you in external respects, only as it is a means to induce you to commit sin. So that if he stirs up a quarrel between any one and you, his design is to transfer it between God and you; and having put it into the heart of any one to be your enemy, he would fain excite enmity in your heart against him, so as to render you God's enemy. This is the design he wholly aims at. Now he is defeated thereof, when your spirit remains conform to the law of God in this case; and you are not conscious of any evil temper of spirit towards them, who are, in the mean time, working you all the michief that they can.

3. This temper of spirit carries in it, and a suitable deportment expresses, a holy, great, and generous independency upon external things. For any man's ill will to you, and whatsoever effects there can be of it, are all to you external things. Such a temper of spirit then, I say, shows your independency upon all outward things, and a superiority unto all external good and evil: that you do not take yourself to be greatly concerned in matters that are so foreign to you as such a man's ill will or any ill effects thereof. For whether can they reach if you do not betray yourself, or be false to yourself? "Fear not them that can kill the body only, and after that have no more that they can do," Luke xii. 4. We are addressed to there as if we were hardly to reckon the concernments of the body any part of our own concerns.

So indeed some heathens have been wont magnificently to speak, reckoning up such things wherein good and evil may be said to consist; and upon stating the notions of the one and the other, all the good and evil things of the body are cast out of the account. "For," says one, "do you think I take my body to be ME, and this flesh to be *myself?*" And so another, "They can kill me, but they cannot hurt me." So when one was to be beaten to death with hammers and axes, he cried out, "Strike on! thou mayest break in pieces this vessel of Anaxarchus, but him himself thou canst not touch." And another discoursing upon that question, *An injuria sit referenda?* denies it peremptorily, and reasons against it most strongly. "A good man," says he, "is neither capable of being affected with injury, nor of affecting any one with it. Injuries can properly have place only among ill men, who are upon that account offenders and breakers of laws. But among good men there is no one that can do an injury because he hath that virtue that will not let him; and he cannot suffer injury neither, because his virtue keeps it off, so as that it cannot have access to his spirit. It cannot invade or disturb his inward man. There is nothing to be detracted or taken from him by such an injury. For as to external good he doth not reckon it his, he cares not for it, and so parts with it without loss."

Thus many of them have talked at a high rate, but it is the great concern of Christians that they may feel in themselves what may answer the import of such expressions; and as one said, "Live rather than talk great things." And certainly it is a great thing when the temper of a man's spirit is such, as that in all his course he shall discover an independency upon externals; so as to hold it forth that he is little concerned with, or moved by any kind of good and evil as can only reach the outward man, which ends with his life, and will shortly be as if it had never been.

Such a temper of spirit as this is will soon keep a man out of the reach of this lower and more troublesome sphere. He is above, liveth in another world, in another region. His mind and spirit are not within the reach of storms and tempests, but above that region which is liable to the stroke of such things; and so he continually keeps the possession of his own soul. It is a dominion over himself, a dominion in himself, the peace and tranquillity of reason that such a man enjoys. Thus says our Saviour, "In your patience possess ye your souls," Luke xxi. 19. That is a thing not very remote and alien from that temper of spirit that we are speaking of. For what think we patience is? It is not a mere sturdiness of spirit, a stoutness by which we are able to endure whatever comes; but it is that sweet and pleasant tranquillity, that repose of rest and spirit, by which it remains undisturbed whatever evils fall out to be our lot in this evil world. It is not merely to be able to bear, but to bear well; to bear becomingly and with a composed and quiet temper of mind, which admits no ill impression or resentments under what it happens to be our lot to bear.

So it falls in with love, and is animated by it. Love is the life and soul of it. Patience towards him by whom I suffer evil, is influenced by love to him; and then that evil which I suffer by him signifies nothing. And it is by this I possess my own soul; otherwise, I am not master of myself, but am an impotent slave to this or that passion, raised and stirred up in me by this or that outward affliction. And thus I betray myself to an injury, which otherwise could not hurt or touch me. And again,

4. It is further to be considered, that the person that maligns me, or suppose them to be many that do so, they may yet have many excellencies, and on other accounts may be very worthy persons. And it would be a useful consideration, to keep and preserve a good temper of spirit in us, and to quicken love to its due exercise, if we would turn off our eye from that one particular thing, the ill will they bear to us, and look upon the many things that are good and commendable besides. And whatever real goodness there is, that doth certainly challenge love. For what! do we think love is to have its exercise no where, but where there is perfect goodness? Then are we to love no creature at all.

What if in that respect we apprehend such a man to be evil or to do evil, who bears ill will to us or to our way, and those who bear our character upon them; yet may they not have very good things in them besides? Such may be sober, prudent, learned persons, and useful men in the world. And what! must all that good be lost and buried, only because they have some particular animosity and ill will to us? It is too much to take our measure of what is to be loved, and what not, by ourselves and by our own interest; and it would argue a very private and narrow spirit, that we should judge of what is lovely and commendable, only by what has reference to us. We have no reasonable warrant to do so.

And perhaps it is a disputable thing that such and we differ in; and it is not altogether impossible, that they may be in the right, and we in the wrong. And it becomes such persons as we are, conscious to ourselves of human frailty, not to be too confident that every man is in the wrong who opposeth himself unto us. At least, it would become the modesty of Christians to search so much the more, and inquire the more diligently into the matter, that they do

not a double injury by being opposite to such persons wrongfully at first, and then persevering in it; and letting an unworthy, unsuitable temper of spirit obtain thereupon, and take place in them.

5. Suppose we be unjustly maligned by certain persons, then we have certainly God on our side; and consequently have a very good cause if we do not spoil it. If such and such bear us ill will, and we on our parts maintain the law of love inviolate, we are well as to the matter we suffer for, and we shall be tolerably well as to the manner of suffering too. Suppose we suffer hard things through their ill will, this is not so much, so we do but quietly bear our wrong; but if we miscarry here, we perfectly spoil a good cause. Whereas before we were right as to the matter, now as to the manner of our suffering under any one's displeasure, we have involved ourselves in guilt, and consequently have done so much to disoblige God from interesting himself for us. And certainly then we have done very ill for ourselves.

6. If we do suffer the displeasure and ill will of any unjustly with the effects thereof, and yet keep up love in our own hearts, those persons who injure us, do first a great deal more injure God. Therefore we have all the reason in the world to turn private, selfish anger upon that account, into a resentment of the indignity and offence done to the common Ruler and Lord of all. And certainly by how much more the exercise of our spirits worketh out towards him, his interests and concernments; so much the less shall we find ourselves prejudiced in our own spirits, by what does more directly tend to us, and hath an aspect that way. We shall less consider that he hath injured us, and so be less tempted to render ill for ill, and hatred for hatred. He hath injured him that made him as well as us, which is a superior thing and a greater crime. And therefore that anger which turned the other way before, ought to turn against the dishonour that is done thereby to God, and into pity of the offender, upon the account of the anger of God incurred thereupon. And it ought to be considered further,

7. That if any such do never so unjustly malign us, and therein wrong us, they wrong themselves much more. That would be a great allay to our passion, to consider they slightly hurt us, but greatly hurt themselves. They are more injurious to themselves, than to those they design hurt unto. They do us but some external injury, but they wound themselves to the heart and soul. Sure then there ought to be that love in us, which should work pity in us upon that account. Nay further,

8. We ought to consider that if they have wronged us, we have at one time and in one way or other wronged ourselves worse. We have done ourselves more wrong, than all the men in the world or the devils in hell could ever have affected against us, with their combined powers. If we have long lived in this world strangers to God, wandering from him who is our life; if we have lived in impenitence, disobedience, and rebellion to him, and strangers to his converse; we have then infinitely more wronged ourselves, I say, than men or devils can possibly do. And yet we can tell how to love ourselves for all that. Why then shall we not know how to love them who do us unspeakably less wrong, and are in no possibility of being so prejudical to us as we are to ourselves? We can be indulgent to ourselves, who have done more wrong and hurt; why not to them who have done us less?

9. We shall do ourselves a great deal more wrong than it is possible for them to do us, if we requite them with ill will, and do not maintain the law of love inviolate to them. We shall do ourselves a greater injury than they can make us suffer, though it were in their power to do as much as one creature can do to another. For they can but hurt us externally, unless it be our own fault; but we hurt ourselves internally, if there be any unbecoming passion working or raging within. And what reason is there, because one giveth me a light scratch, that I must therefore give myself a mortal stab? And yet further consider,

10. That whatsoever exercise our love shall have in his kind it will rebound upon ourselves, and turn to our own great advantage. For, in the first place, we shall have present peace and tranquillity within, which is a great reward; and we shall be also entitled unto that reward which is future, as all sincere obedience is, by the law of God and the Redeemer.

(1.) There is a great reward in this temper of spirit which it carries in itself. For do but consider what it is plain the law of Christ requires in this case. "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you," Matt. v. 44. Let us allow ourselves to pause here a little. What advantage is there in this temper of spirit, whereby a man without forcing, or straining the habitual frame thereof, desires the fulness of all good to them, who perhaps rashly or injuriously wish all harm to him! Certainly the very sense of those words, "Bless them that curse you," if they were but transferred into and impressed upon our souls, is of unspeakably more worth than all the wealth of both the Indies. For a man to bear that temper of soul in himself, and to be able on reflection to conclude, though he be assaulted on all sides by the unjust displeasure of men, that there are yet no other but good propensions of kindness and mercy, tenderness and compassion, and a readiness to do them all the good he can, as soon as ever he has an opportunity; the pleasantness of such a temper, if known and experienced, no one would change for the greatest advantage this world could afford him. How happy is it to be able to say with the apostle, "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat," 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13. As if he had said, "He that looks into our ways, nay into our breasts, shall be able to discern nothing but calmness there; even an undisturbed composure of spirit, and benignity towards them who are full of malignity to us." And,

(2.) This is that temper of Spirit also to which the blessed God hath particularly promised a reward. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee," Prov. xxv. 21, 22. Rom. xii. 20. It may be the person himself will not reward thee for so much good done to him. Concern not thyself for that; if he will not, God will. The Lord will reward thee for all that good which thou hast done, in lieu of the evil which he has done to thee. And I add,

Lastly, In this way you may quiet conquer him at last, to whom you exercise love to that height. And how glorious a conquest is this! The apostle says in the forementioned place, which is quoted from the Proverbs, that you shall by this means (by returning good for evil) "heap coals of fire upon his head." I know there is a controversy about these words; some understand them in a good, others in an evil sense. Some say thereby is meant, that you shall engage God on your side, and his wrath and vengeance shall vindicate your quarrel. Others think that we may understand by coals of fire, the melting warmth of love; which will dissolve and mollify the obdurate, malicious spirit of the unjust adversary. And I for my part make little doubt but that is the meaning, and I am the more induced to believe it from what we find conjoined in both these Scriptures. It is in the Proverbs, "The Lord shall reward thee," as one that has been a subordinate benefactor to himself; who doth good to those, who carry it very ill towards him. But to this passage quoted by the apostle is subjoined this exhortation; "Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." Your goodness makes you glorious conquerors, and will melt down your enemy, and subdue him to you at the long run.

And there is no way wherein we can contribute so much to the accomplishment of God's promise, to wit, "If a man's ways please the Lord, he will make his enemies be at peace with him," Prov. xvi. 7. And we have the most reason (though we are not to limit God as to the time or method of working things) to promise ourselves a happy issue and success this way, that is, to make our enemies at peace with us; when we in our whole deportment express and hold forth nothing but benignity, kindness, and sweetness to them, however harsh in their words and actions they are to us.

And we ought to bethink ourselves, too, (with which I shall conclude,) that let us be put to forgive them never so much, God has forgiven us more. It is impossible they

should ever offend us so much as we have transgressed against him. Therefore let us not grudge to extend our love to our enemies, for if God had not done so to us, what had become of us? Miserable creatures had we been! "When we were enemies Christ died for us." It was for enemies he laid down his life, and exposed himself to those cruel sufferings which he underwent. And when we expect eternal life by him, who hath done so much for enemies; will we not, at his word, and upon the obligation of his own law, conform our spirits and practice to our utmost herein? For it is impossible we can have any enemies so injurious to us, as we have been to Christ; all which injury and wrong he is yet willing to bury in everlasting oblivion.

SERMON XVII.*

THE truth which we have more lately handled from these words is this; That their pretence to the love of God is both false and absurd, who do not conjoin with it love to their brother.

We have insisted a little upon this doctrine, and have made some progress in the use, which was mainly intended to be this; namely, To animadvert upon the common practice of the world; and especially to put us upon animadverting on our own practice, wherein it is contrary to the law of that love, which we are required to exercise towards our brethren, considered as men and as Christians. We have already, in the

First place, shown and complained that there is but little of that love which ought to be exercised to men, as men, and we have particularly spoken to two cases, wherein many would plead an exemption; namely, the case of those who are profligately wicked, and of those who are their particular enemies: and we have showed you how reasonable and necessary it is that love should be exercised to them as men, notwithstanding either of these circumstances. We are now to speak,

Secondly, According to the other and more restrained notion of brother, to that love which we should have for one another as Christians; or which should be generally exercised by us upon a Christian account. And is it not worth our while to take notice, how the law of such love is most commonly violated among them who bear the Christian name, and to give instances hereof? We will do this in two kinds. That is, we shall give you both privative and positive instances, and let you see by both, how the law of love is too frequently broken and intrenched upon, even as if it were not a sacred thing.

1. We shall give you some privative instances of this, wherein persons appear not to do what the law of love doth require. As,

1. When the object of this love is mistaken; that is either stated with too much latitude, or else is too much narrowed and limited.

(1.) I say when it is stated too largely, and men do give exorbitant measures of Christianity. There is a love to be exercised to all, as you have heard before; but there is, many times, a very unwarrantable extension of the notion of Christianity. There is so manifestly, when persons think the very assumed name itself a criterion enough of a Christian, and so would stretch that which is peculiarly Christian love to a proportionable latitude. As very often the Christian name is assumed, and taken on by such persons as understand not, nor believe any more of the Christian religion than mere pagans. As to them, it is by mere hap that ever that name comes upon them. As if it were enough to make a Christian, only to live on such or such a turf; or as if because they think it fit and convenient to call themselves Christians, therefore they must be accounted as such; and under that consideration be owned, respected, and loved as such without any difference, though all their practices hold forth nothing less than a perpetual avowed hostility unto Christ, as it is with too many others.

I would indeed allow to that profession as much of respect as can, with any appearance of justice, be understood duly to belong to a name; and such are to be loved suitably to the state and condition they are in. But totally to mistake their state and condition, and then to exercise love to them without discrimination according to that mistake, certainly there is a great injury done in this case, especially where the case is so very apparent, that persons more significantly show themselves what they are by what they do, than can be known by what they are called. And then,

(2.) When the notion of Christianity is too much narrowed and restrained, or of those whom we are to account and love as Christians. The whole Christian fraternity is confined by some of those of their own party, or particular way and persuasion in respect of some little things, altogether extra-essential and circumstantial only to religion. And so Christian love comes to be confined to, and is exercised only within, this little circle. This is a very great injury on the other hand; and the same thing in effect as to say, Lo, here is Christ, and there he is; yea, it is to say exclusively, Here he is, and no where else! And it is as great a fault to say he is not where indeed he is, as to say he is where he is not. Love to Christians, as Christians, surely ought to run a larger course. And again,

2. When the principle of love doth languish. Suppose the object of it to be stated never so rightly, without any error or mistake, the languor and decay of the principle does every whit as much intrench upon the law of love, and is a more injurious violation of it, than a mistaking the object. When love so exceedingly fails among Christians, as such, that upon reflection it is hardly to be known whether any such thing be alive or at work or no; when, I say, our love so waxes cold, it is, as our Saviour intimates, a time of great iniquity. And it is plain he means it of that love that ought to have its exercise to Christians, fellow-Christians, and not merely of love to himself. For in the context you will find him speaking of persons betraying one another; and hating one another; and then he adds, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold," Matt. xxiv. 12. And indeed the cause is very manifest and obvious to be from thence, from the abounding of iniquity.

He that loveth a Christian as a Christian, must be understood to love Christianity itself proportionably more. That which makes a thing such, is more such; that which makes a person lovely, is more lovely. To love Christians as Christians, is to love their religion. But now, when once the iniquities of the times abound, many who loved professors before grow cool in their love. It was taken up for their conveniency, and it is laid down for their conveniency, according as may best serve their turn.

Now this coldness of love among Christians considered as such is a dreadful token, how little and slight an account soever is made of it. The law of love doth not only say, "Love your brother, or one another; but with a pure heart fervently," 1 Pet. i. 22. And it is not a little that is contributed to the life and vigour of religion itself, by the vigour and lively exercise of this love. Therefore this great duty is recommended upon this very account, and with this design, that our hearts may be established in holiness. "The Lord make you increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you; to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints," 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13.

3. An unaptness to take care of avoiding offences among Christians is another breach of this same law of love. Too many lay no restraints upon their spirits in this matter at all, or have no consideration of the case; never saying, "Shall I offend by this or that, or shall I not?" And others are as faulty in being apt to take offence, where the matter carries none in it. They are testy, froward, and captious, so that no one knoweth how to converse with them, or careth to have to do with them, or to be of their society. And again,

4. That I may hasten through many things, which I would at this time say to you in the close of all this long

* Preached December 13th, 1676.

discourse, a very great difficulty either to give or receive satisfaction, is very unsuitable to the love of our brother.

To give satisfaction; how are the spirits of many straitened and bound up in this case, by their own pride and self-conceit, and the great opinion which they have of themselves! As if it were a far greater reflection to say, "Sir, I have done wrong;" than it is to do another wrong. Or that men must needs give out themselves to be of something above a mortal human race, that it is impossible they should ever have offended, or ever do amiss. How great mischiefs would one such word as this sometimes prevent, among those with whom we have a familiar converse, "Sir, I confess I have not done well in such a thing, pray pass it by!" That great precept of confessing our faults to one another, and praying for others, (Jam. v. 16.) how is it quite thrown out of doors now-a-days! how rare instances are there of any such kind of practice!

And there is as great an unaptness on the other hand to receive satisfaction. Persons insist highly upon the wrong, and cannot abate so much as one punctilio. Such things as forbearance and forgiveness, where there is an offence and wrong done, how little do they obtain in common practice in our time! And it is amazing to think that the moving enforcements which we have in Scripture of that one thing, should signify so little among us. Forgive ye one another the trespasses that ye commit one against another, even as God for Christ's sake freely forgave us. Oh what! should not such a consideration as that is prevail with Christian hearts to forgive, when it is considered how freely God for Christ's sake is said to forgive us? "Be ye kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," Eph. iv. 32. Col. iii. 12, 13. And again,

5. A mutual shyness and strangeness to one another, without a sufficient cause, is also unsuitable to this brotherly love. Many Christian friends grow of a sudden strangers to one another, and no one can tell how or whence it should be. It may be the person that is passive in the case is altogether at a loss to account for it. For a long while he observes such a one to grow a stranger to him, and he cannot devise what should be the reason, or whence it should proceed, but upon a surmise. As if it were so great a difficulty to ask a person the question, Is it so? or if so, were it well? But instead of this, alienation must be the next thing, the first thing done without any more ado.

How intolerable is this among Christians! And surely if we should live to see a day wherein the Christian community should be scattered, and we tossed and driven to and fro, it may be it would be a grateful sight to meet such a man, to see such a face in a wilderness or upon the tops of the mountains, whom formerly we could not endure. Cordial then perhaps would be the embraces amongst those persons, who almost mortally hated one another before. We have reason to pray to God that such distempers of mind among us be not thought fit to be cured by such means.

6. Another instance is neglect of mutual admonition and exhortation among Christians concerning known sins or manifest neglects of duties. We know that this is frequently pressed in Scripture, and the charge and weight of it is laid upon our love. Yea, to neglect this is an interpretative hatred. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart, thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him," Lev. xix. 17. How often are we called upon to exhort and admonish one another! "Exhort one another daily while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," Heb. iii. 13. And how strange a thing is it, that any should take upon them to pass over such commands as these, as if they were reversed, as if they were repealed, as if such laws were abolished! Do we take upon ourselves arbitrarily, and at our own pleasure, to abolish the Bible? or to abandon in our practice things as plainly pressed upon us, as any thing in the world can be? And how little is it considered how great a share such persons as neglect this duty of admonition, have in the miscarriages of such as they converse with? How much do they partake of their sins! "Such a man would have been a more reformed man, less passionate, more orderly in his family, not so light and vain, if I had but, when occasion was offered to me, dropped a seasonable word to him." And so instead of having the benefit of Christian society and partaking the fruits of one another's graces, we partake of one another's sins, and share the guilt with them. That is a sad part of Christian community.

And there is many times as much fault in the undue manner of reproving, as in the neglect of the thing itself; when it is done in so proud, and imperious, and passionate a way, as if the design was not to correct such a man's faults, but only to vent my own passion. Or while I pretend to mend the faults of another, I myself shall commit a greater. For it may be, the fault in the manner of reproving, is greater than the matter which I take upon me to reprove. But when this duty issues from love, and is so managed as that it may plainly be seen to be the product of love, then as it is in itself a great duty, so a great blessing doth often accompany and go along with it.

7. The neglect of doing good and kind offices for one another, as occasion doth require and call for, is altogether unsuitable to this law of love. For you know how we are charged and required, as we have opportunity, to do good to all, but especially to those who are of the household of faith, Gal. vi. 10. And undoubtedly the apostle, using expressions of such import as he does there, is not to be understood as if he meant that this kindness, or doing good, was to be confined to the poor and indigent only, or to necessitous persons; though that is one great part of the sense: it is then to be referred to those good offices we should do to all who stand in need of our help, though it may be they are not indigent; but notwithstanding are the objects of our love, in such or such a particular case, wherein they may possibly receive assistance from us. But when persons are bound up in themselves, and so are little capable of minding any one's interest but their own, how greatly is love hereby suppressed, and stifled in the exercise of it! But besides these privative instances,

II. We shall give some positive instances too of the violation of this law of love, and so hasten to a close. And,

1. Hard thoughts and rash censures of one another do very little comport with the love that should be exercised towards brethren. With respect to their particular actions, words, or expressions, we are many times guilty of great injustice, and wrong is done to this law of love. That is, when upon this or that action that we see done by such or such a one, it may be against our inclination or judgment, we put the worst construction upon it that we possibly can devise. So in like manner we are faulty when we torture the words of another, and wiredraw them, that we may if possible make them speak a bad sense, when it may be a much better might be put upon them. Persons also are guilty in this regard, when they are prone to load the differing opinions of others in some smaller matters with the most odious, and many times with the most ill-grounded, consequences; putting them as it were into bears and wolves skins, (as some did the Christians in the primitive times,) that they may be the more exquisitely worried, and torn all to pieces.

But the matter rises many times much higher than this; and men proceed, upon some small matters of difference, to pass censures concerning such and such persons, as to their states God-ward. They sit in judgment upon their souls, and pass determinations concerning them in reference to their very life or death. And yet it many times so happens, that such as contend for that small matter of difference are hypocrites, and they that are against it are hypocrites also. The one party is censured and judged as formal, superstitious hypocrites; and the other as phantastical, self-conceited, perverse hypocrites: and nothing less than the charge of hypocrisy will serve the turn, in this case, on the one hand or the other. So persons arrogate to themselves the peculiar business of the Almighty. But "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? (This is spoken of such smaller matters as we are speaking of.) Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ," Rom. xiv. 4, 10. "Let us therefore (as it is afterwards inculcated and urged)

follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another," ver. 19.

2. Rash anger is another positive violation of this law of love; or tumultuous and insolent passions, that suddenly rise and storm and rage in Christian breasts one against another; many times on very small and little provocations, but to that height as no provocation can justify. How little is it considered that our Saviour, in the interpretation which he gives of the law in his sermon on the mount, does so interpret the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," as to make anger against our brother a kind of murder, and to bring it within the compass of that prohibition! Moreover,

3. Which is a great deal worse, inveterate grudges are also inconsistent with that love which we owe to our Christian brother. These strike at the very root of love, and tend to the starving and famishing the principle itself. Thus persons lay up something in their minds against this or that fellow-Christian, and there it shall lie, corrode, work and fret, till it is the occasion of their doing him hurt; but it is much more mischievous to themselves, and turns to their own far greater hurt and damage. "Grudge not one against another," says the apostle, "the Judge is at the door," Jam. v. 9. An intimation that this is a matter that will be brought before the Judge. Here now is work for the Judge when he comes, that such and such have allowed themselves to harbour grudges in their hearts, till they are grown old and turned into rankling and festered sores within.

And certainly to a truly Christian spirit that is itself, and in a right frame, nothing will be more agreeable than to say, "I would not for all this world know or experience any thing as a settled grudge in my heart to any one, who or whatsoever he be; so as to wish that his finger should ache, or that he should have the least harm or hurt upon my account, or for any disaffection he may bear or express to me." This now is a truly Christian spirit. But to allow myself to treasure up such things; to let them remain (*altâ mente reposita*, as it were) against such a man, is very much against this law of love. He has offended you; it may be you are as prone to offend him, or to offend another.

It is little considered what is the true, the proper and right notion of the Christian church, or the churches of Christ in general. They are hospitals, or rather one great hospital, wherein there are persons of all sorts under cure. There is none that is sound, none that is not diseased, none that hath not wounds and sores about him. Now how insufferable insolence were it, that in an hospital of maimed and diseased persons, one sick or wounded man should say; "Such a man's sores are so noisome to me, that I am not able to endure the being neighbour to him?" Is it fit to talk thus in an hospital where all are sick? Cannot sore and wounded men endure one another, when they are all there for cure? Indeed if a person is stark dead, apparently stark dead, it is not fit he should remain there to be an annoyance to the rest. But further,

4. A secret delight taken in the harm of another is yet worse than the former. When those that call themselves Christians, or to whom that name may belong, secretly please themselves to see inconveniencies befall this or that person, this, I say, is a horrid violation of the law of love. It is a most unnatural thing to rejoice in the harm of another. In the body, as the apostle intimates, (1 Cor. xii. 26.) when one member is suffering, all the members suffer with it. And to delight in the harm of others is as contrary to the spiritual nature, which is diffused in the true body of Christ, as if the head or any other member should rejoice that the hand or foot is put to pain. And,

5. Directly opposite to this, but no less inconsistent with this duty of loving our Christian brother, is envy at the good of another. When I behold the good of another with an invidious, displeased eye, because such a man is better than I am; or is better reputed, or reported of; or has better gifts, or parts; or there is more appearance of his grace; and he doth more good, or has more to do good with: these are most insufferable things, most directly contrary to love.

6. Most of all inconsistent with this duty is hatred. This is directly contrary to it, and, in the tendency of it, aims at no less than the destruction of the person himself. And how frequently is the case so even among some Christians, that nothing can satisfy them but the destruction of those who differ from them! Nothing less than their destruction will serve their turn. This is a thing so common and manifest, as if it were quite forgotten that ever there was such a portion of Scripture in the Bible as this, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him," 1 John iii. 15. And it is yet worse, when the very reason of that hatred is because such and such persons are better than themselves; as it is with many profane persons that go under the name of Christians, and yet hate Christians all the while for Christianity's sake; for living the Christian life, and observing the precepts of their common Lord: as Cain did his brother Abel, because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous. To shut up all,

7. Another positive instance of the violation of this law of love to our Christian brother, (in the last place,) is bearing hardly on one another's consciences in matters of external form relating to religion. I speak this with respect to private persons, for such I suppose my hearers to be. That is, when they do in their own minds wish, or any way within their own compass or capacity endeavour, that the consciences of such who differ from them may be hardly born upon.

It is very true indeed that the pretence of conscience, for apparent flagitious crimes, is a most wicked and blasphemous pretence. For that is to entitle God to my wickedness, or to charge him with it; inasmuch as I cannot allege conscience for any thing, but I must in that case look upon it, and refer to it, as God's substitute and vicegerent, and as doing his part within me. Therefore to pretend conscience for any thing that is in its own nature wicked and flagitious, is to cast all upon God; and to pretend that he hath enjoined me to do such or such a wicked thing. But when the difference is about small matters, which are (as we said before) extra-essential to religion, even by common consent; it is a great violation of love for Christians in this case to affect and desire to have those who dissent from them hardly dealt withal, and their consciences grievously imposed upon on this pretence, that they must be, in such forms and external modes of religious worship, just as themselves, or they are not to be endured.

We do not count it necessary that it should be so as to the natural body. For I look upon matters of external form in the church, as I do upon the external vestments or coverings of our bodies. Now we do not think it necessary, that every member of the natural body should have a covering of the same shape, size, and colour. And if this case were but considered as it should be, and Christian love did but do its part, (abstracting from what necessity there may be by an authoritative sanction,) we should not think it more necessary, that every member in such a Christian community should be clothed in external form alike, than that every part of the body should have the same sort of garment; or, that for conformity's sake, a man should wear a cap on his foot as well as on his head.

Love, if it might be allowed its place and exercise, would consider the necessities of the several members. Love to ourselves, in the natural body, teaches us to do so. Sometimes it may be I have a sore toe or a hurt finger, that will not endure a pinching shoe or a strait glove; yet I do not think it necessary to cut off that finger or toe, or to let it go naked; but I provide a covering for it that it will bear, and that is suitable to it. Certainly, Christian love would lead us to act in like manner to the members of the Christian body, if it had but the place and exercise that belongs to it and which it claims.

Therefore now to conclude, let it be seriously considered by us how happy a world and how happy a church it would make, if we could but learn according to what we have heard, to exercise this love to men as men, and to Christians as Christians. There would then be no contention in the world, or the church, but only a striving who should do the most good, and who should be most good and kind to others.

And it is a vain thing to hope, until the spirit of love revives, ever to see good days. It is no external thing that

will do the business. To be brought under the same form in every punctilio, in every minute circumstance, what would that do? What I say would this do if love be wanting, which is the life and soul of all communities, especially of the Christian community? Without this, the body would hang together but as a rope of sand. Love then alone is the unitive, living cement, that joineth part to part and all to the head. It is this that must make Christianity to flourish, and the Christian church a lovely and a living thing; a thing full of loveliness, life, and vigour. And happy will it be when hearts are knit together in love, and all aim at the edification of one another, and also at the good of the whole; bearing with one another in tolerable things, and labouring to redress what is intolerable and not to be borne. Therefore as we are to direct our prayers this way, so let us direct our practice also amongst ourselves, and all those with whom we converse. And so I have done with this Scripture.

THIRTEEN SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

SERMON I.*

AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW THE TIMES OR THE SEASONS, WHICH THE FATHER HATH PUT IN HIS OWN POWER. ACTS i. 7.

These words are part of our Saviour's reply unto an impertinent question that was put to him by his disciples, after he had some time conversed with them since his resurrection, and immediately before he ascended, and went up into glory from them. They inquire of him, saying in the 6th verse, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He answers, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." And then it follows, "when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight."

It is obvious to the observation of any that read the evangelical history, what it was that the minds, even of Christ's more immediate followers, were intent upon, during the time of his abode in the flesh among them; and great was the expectation they had of a time when the Roman yoke should be shaken off, and when Israel, that had now been tributary long to that power, should be restored to its liberty. And when they had found that they had now got among them one that manifestly appeared to be an extraordinary person, who could heal the sick, raise the dead, and do all other wonders with a word, they little doubted but now was the time of this great turn and revolution which they so much hoped for. He that could feed multitudes as with miracles, they doubted not could easily maintain an army strong enough to do the business, upon very easy and unexpensive terms.

But see at length now what this great expectation of theirs came to! Which expectation, you must know too, had a private aspect even towards themselves, and their own concernments; for they doubted not if their Head and Lord became so great, they that were immediately related to him, must share proportionably in his greatness; and some of them, as the Gospel tells you, thought of nothing less than sitting at his right hand and left hand, in this his temporal kingdom which they thought he was about to set up. But see, I say, what this expectation came to! Him, whom they expected to be a potent glorious king, they had seen apprehended and haled to judgment, and to death, as a most ignominious malefactor. They had beheld the end of him, and seen him expire, and die upon a bloody reproachful cross; and now all these great hopes of theirs were vanished. "We trusted," say they, "that this was he that should have redeemed Israel." Great hopes we had, that the so long expected work would now, without any possibility of frustration or disappointment, have received its accomplishment and be brought to a glorious period. But they saw their hope laid in the dust; and now they reckon there was nothing more to be looked for from him; there was an end of him, and all their expectations from him. We hoped this was he; but we are fain now to think we know not what, or to think other thoughts of him.

Well, but at length he revives, and rises again; and now their hopes revive, and rise too. But their hopes are still of the same carnal and low alloy; still their minds run the same way they had done, and they take up the matter afresh where they had left it. "Come, Lord, what sayest thou now to this great business? Wilt thou now at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? Now that thou hast conquered this same death that hath befallen thee, what canst thou not conquer? Shall the business be yet done?" See what he tells them in this reply of his; "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." What kindness (as if he had said) God hath for Israel, in that respect you intimate, it belongs not to you to know; it becomes you not to inquire. In the mean time there is another work for you to do. "You shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, &c. He answers them first with a rebuke, and then with a promise. With a rebuke of that curiosity and carnality, which they betrayed in their question. As if he had said, "You meddle with things that concern you not; you too busily pry, and with an eye too daring and adventurous, into matters which God hath purposed to reserve and hide from you." But unto this mild rebuke he adds also a gracious promise. "There is a work for you to do that is properly yours, and which you have been designed to, and you shall be fitted and qualified for it; and pray let that content you, and serve your turn. Your work and business must be to be witness-bearers to me, to my name and truth; to be my agents to carry on the business and design of that spiritual kingdom, which I am intent to establish, and promote, and spread through the whole world. And in order thereunto, you shall have a power come upon you which you shall little understand till you feel it, and which shall furnish you for this great work. You shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

You see then the occasion and drift of the words, which I have designed at present to speak to; and these two things (that we may not lose more time in any thing previous) we may observe from them,

First, That there are times and seasons respecting the church of God in the world, which the Father doth reserve and conceal in his own hand and power from men. And,

Secondly, That they are not concerned to be solicitous

* Preached at Mr. Case's, March 3rd, 1675.

or make inquiry touching those times and seasons, but are to be patient of ignorance in reference thereunto. These I shall briefly open, and assert severally; and then apply them jointly together.

FIRST, That there are such times and seasons, that have reference to the state of the church of God upon earth, which the Father doth reserve and hide from men, in his own power. Now here concerning this we are to inquire, what these times and seasons are; and then what the hiding of them in God's own power doth import, which will serve for the explication of this truth. And then we shall let you see upon what accounts the blessed God is thus reserved towards men in this matter, hiding the events of such times and seasons in his own hand and power; and therein you may have some account of the reasons of what is asserted in this point.

As to the explication of it, two things are to be spoken to, namely, I. What these times and seasons are; and, II. What the hiding of them in God's hand and power is, or the putting them there, as it is here expressed. As to the former:

I. The times and seasons which he doth so hide, we may say concerning them that he doth conceal, first, the final and concluding season of time, the period and upshot of time; and then, of each man's own particular time. He hides,

1. The period of all time from men. We know not when the season shall be, that shall shut up time. It is a thing determined, that there shall be such a season, beyond which time shall be no more. As that great angel is brought in swearing by him that liveth for ever and ever, "that there should be time no longer," Rev. x. 6. But we are elsewhere told, that "of that day knoweth no man, no, not the Son," (as man we must understand it,) "but the Father," Matt. xxiv. 36. And,

2. The period of our own times also he hides, and keeps in reserve, as a thing put in his own power, and not into ours. "No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, nor hath he power in death; and there is no discharge in that war," Eccles. viii. 8. The measure of our own days he hath not put in our power. If any would hold the spirit in that day, or detain the soul in the body in which they live, they cannot do it. No man hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit; he must resign it when God commands it away; and that time is a thing he hath kept in his own power. You have that expression of Isaac remarkable to this purpose; "I am old, and know not the day of my death," Gen. xxvii. 2. Though he was grown a very old man, and very near to death, yet he could not know the time; though it was so very near that he might be sure it could not be very far off, yet he professeth ignorance concerning the time still. "My times are in thy hand," (Psalm xxxi. 15.) saith David. And into his hands he commits his spirit, as you have it in the fifth verse of the same psalm. That life which he knew he could not command, he very willingly commits; he is well pleased that the measuring of it should be in the hands wherein it was. As if he had said, "I desire not to have it in mine own hand; I commit my spirit into thy hand; let it lodge here in this tabernacle as long as thou wilt, and let it go forth when thou wilt; this power is better lodged in thy hands than mine." Moreover,

There are contained within this compass of time in general, or of our own time, the seasons of good or evil unto the church in general, and the especial members of it in particular; which are for the most part unknown, and reserved in the hand and power of God.

The good seasons seem to be more especially referred to here; for it was a certain good to the church of God that the apostles were inquisitive about. "It is not for you to know the times." God hath his set time, an appointed time, wherein to favour Zion, that may seem instant and at hand now and then; as they speak in the 102nd Psalm, (we may well suppose as they would have it,) The time to favour Zion, yea the set time, is come, Ps. cii. 13. Methinks it should be come; why should not the full time be accomplished? If one may make an estimate from the affections of the well-wishers of Zion, it should be come. "Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof." But this could not be peremptorily said; he had stated the time of it with himself; the appointment of it was a matter in his own hand and power. And by consequence,

The ill times, the more afflictive times, of the people of God are hid, and put in his own hand and power too. For supposing that a good season be determined by him, a calm, and more serene or halcyon season, it must be by consequence in his hand and power too to measure all the intervals: how long the intervening ill seasons shall last, how long it shall be that his people shall feed upon the bread of affliction, and have their own tears for drink, and have men riding over their heads, and they be themselves even as the street to them that pass over. All that time must come under the same mensuration, the mensuration of the same hand. So that to determine when the church of God shall enjoy better days, and how long worse times shall last, this they were to account and reckon upon, that he had put it into his own hand and power. It is that which we have an interdict upon us to know. "It concerns not you to know, trouble not yourselves to inquire, the matter is in good hands." But then we are to consider too,

II. What its being in the power of God and being put there doth signify; which last we are to consider chiefly as leading to the other. The force and emphasis of the expression, seems to set forth more, than that it should barely import they are in his power; the phrase signifieth withal a positive act that is put forth in reference to their being so; that is, an act of the Divine will which hath determined with itself that it will have the matter so, that such times and seasons shall remain in his own hand and power. As for those expressions in Scripture, (hand and power,) they explain one another. The hand of God is nothing else but his power; his active power, by which he ruleth the world, and changeth times and seasons, as to him seemeth good. But if you inquire for a more distinct explication of this matter, how this power and hand of God exerts itself, in reference to such times and seasons? Why, it doth so, I. In reference to the existence of them, 2. To the discovery of them.

I. In reference to their existence: his power doth effect, and bring it to pass, that there should be such times and seasons, as he hath stated and determined with himself. And so more particularly his power orders or effects such things as these, in reference to the existence of the times and seasons. As,

(1.) The commencement of them: that is, when such a state of things, good or evil, shall take its beginning; when such a cloud shall first begin to arise and spread itself over the horizon; when it shall scatter and be dispersed, and a bright and cheerful light spring up; "the day-spring from on high" to visit the desolate. This, his hand or power hath determined. And then,

(2.) How long such or such a state of things shall continue. The duration of it, its bounds and limits, are the work of his hand and power. So long my people shall be afflicted; as he did determine concerning the people of Israel, from the time that he spake to Abraham about that matter, namely, four hundred and thirty years; and then ensued that blessed peaceful calm, and the glorious and wonderful works of Providence, which did make way for that and introduce it, whereof the history afterwards gives an account. And again,

(3.) His own hand or power exactly measures all the degrees of good and evil, that shall be within such a compass of time, so as that there shall be nothing, more or less, than what his power orders. For we are not to take times and seasons here abstractedly; but so as to take in the events of such times and seasons; all those events which such times and seasons go pregnant with. All the births of those times, of what kind soever they be; his power orders every one so to come forth, even as it doth comes forth. He works all things according to the counsel of his own will, Dan. iv. 35. And,

(4.) That hand or power doth order all the occasions and methods by which such and such seasons, with all that they are laden and burdened with, shall be brought about. Nothing comes to pass but as that hand or power doth direct and order: not only the effects, the things that are produced; but all their causes, or whatsoever is productive of them. And we may add.

(5.) That the hand or power of God doth also order all the consequences and dependencies, of any such times and seasons. For there is still a concatenation in providences; and nothing falls out in the world but somewhat else depends upon it: this and that is done which is preparatory, and leads the way to something else that is to be done, till the end and the folding up of all things; till that season come, when it is determined, that time shall be no more. But,

2. This hand or power of the Father hath its exercise not only in reference to the existence, but also to the discovery and notification, of those times and seasons which he hath reserved in his own power. That is, either to make them known beforehand or not, as he pleaseth; or else to make them known more or less clearly as he pleaseth, with greater or less degrees of obscurity or perspicuity, according as seems to him good. This is that he hath in his own hand and power, either to reveal or not to reveal them, what seasons shall be as seemeth him good; or if he let any light break out beforehand into the heads or hearts of those that are in covenant with him, then to let out so much and no more as seemeth him good.

And this may suffice for the explication of the first point. And would you now have some reason of it, why he doth thus put future times and seasons in his own power, and keep them there; why it is always his will and pleasure, while such things remain hid and reserved, that it should be so; the reasons will partly respect him, partly ourselves.

I. Respecting him there is a great reason for it on his part; that is, this twofold reason;—1. It is his right,—2. It is his glory.

1. It is his right to have futurity thus in his own hand and power, it belongs to him as he is Ruler of the world, the great Disposer and Orderer of all things. For is it not inconsistent with sovereignty, to be accountable for every thing one means to do? should there be no *arcana imperii, nothing kept hid and secret?* It cannot stand with the absolnteness, at least, of his dominion, and that power which rightfully belongs to him over the whole creation, that there should be nothing determined or done, but there must be previous notice of it given to his creatures. He gives no account of any of his matters unto any. And then,

2. It is his glory, and his honour; it is the peculiar honour of his Godhead, to have the prospect of all his works in view, even from the beginning to the end. A glory that he cannot share nor communicate. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, to hide things, to have his way in the dark, so as that his footsteps shall not be known; and so to steer the course, and manage the whole administration of his government, that none shall be able to trace him, or know what he will do next; neither make any certain collection from what is done, what shall be done. As the wise man says, "He hath made every thing beautiful in its time," (hath ordered all things in the aptest and fittest seasons for the same,) "also he hath set the world in their hearts, so that no man can find the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end," Eccles. iii. 11. He hath set the world in their hearts, so as that the very world itself, that is, the stage on which are acted so many successive parts, doth become a blind to them, that they cannot see his way; nor from the beginning or former things conjecture, or make any collection what will ensue. As, you know, the eye that sees all things, sees not itself. He hath set the world in their heart, the seat of prudence, understanding, wisdom, and knowledge; but the object is so close to the faculty that it cannot see. They cannot see what is done in the world so near them, so as to be able to discern and make inferences from any former things, to any future things yet to be done, at least wise as to the timing of them, which our text referreth chiefly to. "Such a thing was done such a time, therefore such a thing will be done such a time."

This then is his peculiar and singular glory, that he can outdo apprehension, and counterwork the conjectures and guesses even of all men. Sometimes such a state of things, according to all visible human appearances, seems instant; it may be nothing but gloominess, darkness, and horror is to be looked for at such a time, according to all the prognostics we can have; and lo! by a quick turn of providence, most unexpectedly a bright lightsome season is brought forth in view. Sometimes, on the other hand, external appearances are fair and pleasing; men are ready to cry nothing but Peace, peace; and then a sudden cloud arises, and spreads itself over all, out of which nothing but storms and tempests ensue. And so doth the providence of God, as was aptly expressed by the poet, seem to sport with men; *ludere in humanis rebus.* God doth, as it were, glory over men in this kind, by giving them to see, how by letting such appearances come into view he can raise fears and scatter them; or excite such and such probabilities to make persons full of hopes, and presently dash them, that men may know the Lord omnipotent reigneth. There is no searching his understanding; he is not capable of being prescribed unto. None can direct the Spirit of the Lord; it runs the most unthought-of ways in its disposal and management of things. This then is reason enough as to God; it is his right to have the disposal of times and seasons; and then it is his glory wherein his excellency doth shine and discover itself, and shows how far he transcends all the thoughts and apprehensions of men; how far his thoughts are above our thoughts, and his ways above our ways. And,

II. There is reason too, in reference to his people, why it should be so; that is, it is their great advantage that thus it should be. As,

1. That they may not be diverted from their proper work and business, the work they have to do from day to day, and from hour to hour; which certainly they would be, if they had the range of all future times open to them. They would be taken off from minding their present business; and spend their time in continual profitless ranges, to and fro, in the futurities that should lie open, and present a vast prospect to them. And again,

2. That they may not be disquieted; for certainly it would be a very great disquietment to the mind of a good man, if he did know all things that should fall out in the compass of time, even his own time. But I hasten to the other thing, and therefore enlarge not further here.

SECONDLY, The second point was this; We are not concerned, and therefore should not be solicitous to inquire, or know much of these reserved times and seasons, which he hath so put and hid in his own hand and power; "It is not for you to know the times," &c. And here we may reckon it is not for us,

I. As being none of our right, it belongs not unto us; we can claim no such thing. And,

II. As being no way for our advantage. It can profit us nothing. What should we get by it? It is therefore not for us. God hath so disposed the state of things, and the way of his dispensation towards us men, over whom he is Governor, as not to please and gratify our humour; but to do, in reference to his own, what may make for their real advantage. But what shall we be the better for knowing what God will do, what times or seasons shall come either of good or evil? I add further,

III. It would be our great disadvantage, and a prejudice to us. For,

1. It would multiply our troubles. For do not we know how apt we are to forecast troubles to ourselves? When we are not sure they will come, yet our minds will not be withheld from a most tormenting anticipation of evil, and possible troubles; (we do not know they are certainly future, but we apprehend them possible;) and so that which God would have us suffer but once, we suffer a thousand times. We ought to admire here the Divine wisdom and mercy in conjunction, upon this occasion; that he doth not let us have any more knowledge than what will suit with our power in such things. What a dreadful concurrence would it be in us between infinite knowledge and finite power! Could we know all things, and yet do but this or that; if a man should have the knowledge of such and such things to come, but no power to prevent it; (as alas! what can our impotency do?) how dreadful, I say, would this be!

There is a great deal of compassion in this; that since it belongs to our state as creatures to be able to do but little, to be mere dependencies, impotent things, that therefore we should not have foreknowledge of what it would

be afflictive to us to foreknow. We are therefore put under a restriction that comes so close to us, as to stand betwixt us and to-morrow. "Take no thought for the morrow; sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," Matt. vi. 34. We are not to range with afflicting thoughts so far as to the next day. Thou wilt have enough in this day to trouble thee with, never let thy solicitude be conversant about the accessions of time. We foolish creatures should fetch the troubles of all our days into every day, if we could foreknow what is to come. Take then no thought for to-morrow; it is enough for you that you have One to think of you, and care for you. And it will make most for your advantage to be looked upon by him every day; who will make your strength to be sufficient for each day when it comes. And then,

2. As it would be a prejudice to us in the multiplication of afflictions, so in the diminution of mercies. For there is a great accent of pleasure and delightfulness certainly added to them by the surprisingness of them, when they come most unexpectedly. How grateful is a bright, warm, refreshing sun, shining all on a sudden out of a thick dismal cloud! Memorable things have been done for the church of God that they looked not for; such things as eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had it entered into their hearts to conceive, or which they could form no conception of beforehand. "Who would have looked (said they) for such a day as this is?" How sweet is a mercy that comes unknown, unlooked for! "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing," Ps. cxxvi. 1, 2. God so provides in this matter, that nothing of the gust and sweetness of mercy shall be lost to his people; they shall have it with the best and highest set-off or advantage. Now,

To make some brief use of all that we have observed, taken together; we may learn hence,

1. That there is an aptness in the spirits of men, even of good men, to be very inquisitively prying into futurity, beyond what God hath thought fit to reveal and put out of his own hand and power, as to the discovery thereof. "Lord, wilt thou" (say his disciples) "at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" wilt thou do it now? It would not, it seems, satisfy them or serve their turn, to have some understanding, such as they might collect from the prophets, whom they had in their hands, that God had a kind thought towards Israel, had not utterly cast off his people: they cannot be content to know only so much; but, Lord! shall it be now? Wilt thou now restore the kingdom to Israel?

That disposition of spirit, since it is so natural, ought to be watched and repressed; and as we find any hankering in our own spirits this way, we should see to it that they meet with their seasonable and due rebukes, even from our own animadversions. We are, when a suffering time is upon us, very impatiently set upon it to know when it shall be over. If we have any expectation of a good time, oh! but when shall it be? Thus we would bring God to our punctilio, and to our very *now*. Upon such niceties would we be with him, so apt are we to dodge with the great Lord of heaven and earth. "That which I would have, shall it be now? or when shall it be? This is that I would be rid or freed of, but when? How long must I bear? how long must I wait?" This now is undutiful, and stands not with that creaturely submission, that is belonging and proper to our state: much less with the spirit of a child; that tractableness, resignation, yielding in all things to the Father's pleasure and wisdom, which is most agreeable to that relation. And again,

II. We may learn hence, that times or seasons, whether they be good or evil to a people, fall not out to them casually, or by chance; but they remain in the hand and power of God. We are too apt to let our spirits work many times as if we thought such and such things came to pass by casualty. For if any ill state of things come upon us, how apt are we to aggravate the evil of it to ourselves, saying; "Had it not been for such a thing, this had not come; this might have been kept off; if it had not been for the miscarriage of this instrument, our case had not been so bad. If it were not for this or that unhappy accident, all had been well enough." Alas! we forget, these things are in his hand and power that overrules and orders all, that it is not blind chance that regulates the world, but the counsel and wisdom of God that run through the compass of all events, and hath the conduct of all things.

III. We may also learn, that men have it not in their hand and power to order times and seasons of good and evil, to God's people, as they please. We may sometimes seem to have that apprehension ourselves; and if we have not, some may have an apprehension, that it is in their hand and power to dispose and measure out good and evil, to the children of God, as they will. No, God hath not let the reins go yet, he hath the times and seasons in his own power. Say they sometimes, "We will pursue, we will overtake, and we will divide the spoil, we shall have our will over them," when God hath not said so: and his will and work shall stand against and above theirs. And take we heed of our attributing too much to creatures, that what men have a mind to, shall be; or what they have no mind to, shall not be. There is a God in heaven that changeth the times and seasons as he seeth good. And, for the shutting up of all, let us in reference to this matter, and upon what hath been spoken to you, take in the close these few counsels.

1. Let us labour to trust in him, who hath all the times and seasons which concern us, and his people, and the world, in his own hand and power. Have we not reason enough to do so, and encouragement enough? And so though we be blind and cannot see the product of to-morrow; know not what a day will bring forth; we shall have him to be eyes to us. He will be eyes to the blind, if they will but trust in him. As when a blind person is led by another, he useth that person's eyes who leads him. Let him lead us on from day to day, time to time, season to season. We cannot see with our own eyes, but is it not better for us that we have better eyes to see with? For we have one to see for us, who seeth infinitely better than we. We know not the product of the next day, or week; but is it not enough that he knoweth the event of all future times, and that he orders all things with exact judgment? "He is a Rock, his work is perfect, all his ways are judgment," (Deut. xxxii. 4.) or reason: the most exquisite reason, that is, the result of deliberation, and the most concocted thoughts. Deliberation, it is true, can have no place with him, who is the most absolutely perfect Being; but that which is equivalent is intended to be signified by the applying it to him. He sees with one view all the connexions of things; and so is able to outdo them who reason but by degrees, and by recollecting of things after things, so as to make a judgment at last. "Our God is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him," Isa. xxx. 18. To every thing there is time and judgment. He doth particularly state the time and season, applieth to every thing its proper time when it is most fit it should fall out; and then it will so do to the best purpose. Trust in him, I say, who hath all future times and seasons in his own hand and power. The Father hath put them all in his own hand and power. Father! that is an expression of love, tenderness, compassion, and care. Is he not fit to be trusted then?

2. Submit to him, who hath all things and seasons in his power; resign, I say, and yield the matter to him. Subdue an unquiet, turbulent heart; beat down all wayward and perverse reasonings. Father is a name of authority, as well as love. The Father hath put all things in his hand and power; he who is the Head of the family, that great family, which is made up of heaven and earth. And are you children of that family, and will you not allow that he orders the timing of things as to him seemeth meet.

3. Since you cannot know his times and seasons, pray labour to know your own. Since you cannot know the times and seasons which he hath put in his own hand and power, know those that he hath appointed to you. Though he hath hid from you those seasons of future events, in the contingencies of the world, yet he hath not hid from you the duty of all seasons and events. This is our time. "Your time is alway ready," saith Christ; (John vii. 6.) that is, the present time is ours, that he hath put as a prize

into our hands; the present time for present work, if we have wisdom and hearts to make use of it.

It is a dreadful thing not to know our own time. "For man," says the preacher, "also knoweth not his time," Eccles. ix. 12. That was the miserable state of Jerusalem; they knew not the time of their visitation. For our Saviour beheld the city, and wept over it, considering what was coming upon it. Enemies should begirt it round about, such and such ruins should befall it, and all because they did not know in their day the things that did belong to their peace; but now they were hid from their eyes, Luke xix. 41, 42. Thou hadst a good time, as if he had said, if thou wouldst have known it. We are barred up as to future time; but we are bid to know the present time, and what God calls for at our hands therein. We may know when it is a time to mourn, and when to rejoice; when to weep, and when to be merry and pleasant.

He points out to us our more extraordinary praying seasons, if we would but observe the finger of Providence, and take notice of his indications. It is a lamentable case, when we cannot understand the time of such a thing; when we cannot know this is a time for such work, and this for such work. The present time points out such and such work that we should be intent upon. We cannot indeed know these reserved times and seasons; let us then know the times that are left open to our view. As now this present time is come, but do we know what ought to be the work of this time? God hath ordered for us this time, this season to be waiting for him, humbling ourselves before him. The season tells us what the working of our souls should be now at this time; what there should be of humiliation; what of striving and wrestling with God; what endeavours to take hold of him, that we may yet keep him with us, while we have him. It is a happy thing to be able to know a praying day, when it comes; to know it so as to answer it by a suitable frame and temper of spirit.

So also you are expecting shortly another good time, a season of drawing nigh unto God, and to converse with him and with your great Redeemer, even at his own table. If God do order for you that season, that will tell you what disposition of spirit there must be; and you ought to be forecasting, that you may have a temper and disposition of spirit suitable to such a season, and the work of it. If you have the season, it will then prove a blessed season; and if you should be deprived of it, yet all these sweet gracious workings of spirit will not be lost, they will be a rich advantage to you even in reference to a future holy course. Oh then, if you cannot know God's time, labour to know your own? the present time for present work, that he seems to call you to. And then I add in the

4. And last place, since you cannot look far into future time, look more into eternity, over and beyond all time. For it is only future time that God hath shut up from you, while he leaves eternity open to you. He would have you look over time into a vast and boundless eternity. Look then not to the things that are seen and temporal, (things measured by time,) but to the things unseen and eternal! And doing so, this will be your great advantage and gain; you will find that though the outward man should perish, (as there will come a crash upon all our earthly tabernacles, and down they must,) the inward man will be renewed day by day. If, then, the outward man will perish, let it perish; if it will go down, let it go; there is somewhat we shall gain by that loss. In the mean while we shall in our souls be renewing strength day by day, if we keep our eye open to eternity; to that unseen state of things within the vail, whither he hath led the way, who is our great Forerunner to the glory that is to be revealed; with which glory the sufferings of the present time, this *now*, are not to be compared; not to be named in the same day, with that felicity which accrues to us hereafter. In a word, what we now suffer, within the compass of time, cannot bear any parallel with that glory and blessedness which is to come after time is done. Let us therefore in the mean while seriously mind these things.

* Preached at Haberdasher's Hall, February 27th, 1675.

SERMON II.*

2 Cor. iv. 8.

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed.

I SHALL detain you very little about the context. In the foregoing verse the apostle speaks of a certain treasure which was committed to earthen vessels, with this design, that the excellency of the power might be of God; that is, might appear to be of God, and not of men. What this treasure was you may collect from the 6th verse. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Now "this treasure," saith he, "we have in earthen vessels;" that is, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ: conveyed in and through a Mediator, and discovered in the Gospel. It is a treasure of light whereof he speaks, a treasure of glorious light. And this is that which he said was put into earthen vessels; intrusted to the ministerial disposition of very mean, and very weak and fragile instruments. And that upon this account, that all might see that the excellency of the power was of God, and not of them; that there was somewhat more than human in the matter, that such effects, as he had spoken of in the close of the foregoing chapter, should follow that dispensation they were intrusted with. Where also it is by the way intimated, that this same treasure is not a treasure of mere light; feeble, ineffectual notions, that were apt only to reach the mind of a man, and stay there as the matter of contemplation only; but it is a certain vital, vigorous light, whereof he speaks, a light that carries power, efficacy, and a transforming influence along with it. The light of that glory which, being beheld, changeth souls into the same likeness, from glory to glory. This light we have, this treasure of glorious light, in earthen vessels; that so the excellency of that power, which accompanieth this light, may appear to be of God, and not of men: that all who observe it may be convinced, and constrained to confess something divine in it, when such things are discovered and held forth to men, as work at the rate, which the Gospel dispensation was designed to do, and did actually do.

And then in the words that we are to speak unto, and those that follow, he giveth a proof and demonstration of the excellency of the power, that did accompany and go with the Gospel light wherever it reached its end, and did the work to which it was designed; and to which it was also in its own nature adapted and made suitable. Let this be a proof to you (as if he had said) that there is a certain excellency of power accompanying that light, which we are appointed to convey to the world; namely, that we, who are thus intrusted, though we are but a company of earthen vessels, are not for all that presently knocked asunder, by being on every side struck at and dashed against. "We are, indeed, troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." Certainly there was somewhat more than ordinary in this matter, that a little light should so preserve vessels of earth, that they could not be broken. There was an excellency of power went along with it. And this is brought for a proof of it, that their spirits were sustained and upheld in defiance of surrounding troubles. Our spirits are not broken, we are still where we were, whatever assaults are made upon us from without. This is that which the apostle says here, and is manifestly the design and scope of the words.

And in these and the following words we have the apostle very curiously criticising about the degree of the afflictions, which he, and others in his circumstances, were exposed to, or the extent and limits of them; that they reached so far, to a certain point or degree, but no further. And he makes, as you see, a fourfold distinction between trouble on every side, and distress; perplexity, and despair; persecution, and desertion; dejection, and destruc-

tion: yielding the former as to each of these, but denying the latter.

And as to this passage which we have chosen to speak unto, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed:" we are to consider the subject, that is common to this, and all the rest; and then what is said about it by way of affirmation, and by way of negation.

It is very true, the apostle doth more directly speak here of a particular subject; that is, of such persons as were intrusted with the ministry and dispensation of the gospel: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, we are troubled on every side," &c. But yet the same persons were considerable too in a capacity, that was common to them with all other Christians. And he speaks in that guise before, of something that must be understood as common to Christians in general; and not appropriated to ministers only: and that is, the having the light to shine into their hearts; that "light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." This was not peculiar unto them alone. It having shone first into the minds and hearts of the apostles; from thence, as its instrument, this light was further conveyed, and transmitted unto others. We take "we" therefore in that more exclusive sense, or as it holds forth to us a larger subject; namely, Christians as such, who are so in sincerity and truth; and I would observe to you,

That it is very possible to be encompassed with surrounding troubles, and yet at the same time not to be in distress. Or, if we take it with application to the subject; sincere Christians, even then, when they are surrounded with troubles on every side, may yet be exempted from distress; may be troubled on every side, yet not distressed. And that this may be more distinctly spoken to, we are to consider,

FIRST. Of whom this is said.

SECONDLY, What it is that is said of them. And,

THIRDLY, Upon what grounds.

FIRST, We are to consider of whom this is said. I have already in general told you, that we may justly extend it to all Christians that are sincere; that is, who are entirely such, and who faithfully persevere.

I. To those, who are entirely such, or are Christians throughout: who do not content themselves with this or that piece of religion; but have gotten the whole and entire frame of it. It is very possible, that the whole of religion may not, by these troubles on every side, be struck at all at once. But if a man be an entire Christian, by the concurrence of all the integral parts which belong to such a character, it is likely that he will some time or other find himself troubled on every side; and yet may find himself also exempted from distress. The apostle tells us, that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution," 2 Tim. iii. 12. It was possible to be a sober man, and a pious man, (as piety went in the pagan world,) and yet not be persecuted. But if a man would be a godly man in Jesus Christ; if he would add Christianity, in that state of things, and at that time, to his profession of piety; then, as if the apostle had said, let him look to it, he will be persecuted; and then he had need to look to this also, that he be not distressed.

II. The true Christian of whom we speak is also one that faithfully perseveres. Having been once an entire Christian, by the concurrence of all that was requisite to make him so, he continues to be what once he was. Otherwise, by laying aside this or that piece of religion, when that comes to expose him to danger, the case would be altered. He neither would be exposed to affliction, nor so much need the support. If I did preach circumcision, says the apostle, when the doing of that was so great a salvo to a man, why should I then suffer persecution? I should then be liable to no trouble, the offence of the cross being ceased, Gal. v. 11. "It were" (as if he had said) "an easy matter for me to avoid the stroke, if I could waive such a particular piece of Christian truth, and such a part of Christian duty; as this very juncture of time did challenge my owning and asserting even to the utmost hazard. I were well enough if I could dispense in this matter: but because I cannot, the offence of the cross is not likely to cease; I shall have that in my way if I were apt to stumble at it."

SECONDLY, We are next to consider what it is that is here said of these persons. Something is said affirmatively, to show the extent of the present affliction; and something negatively, to show the limitation of it.

I. That which is said by way of affirmation, and to show how far the present affliction did extend, is this; "We are troubled on every side." It reached so far as to give trouble on every side. Here we are to consider what sort of trouble that is, in respect of the nature of it; then in respect of the degree of it.

I. In respect of the nature of it, it is plain it was external trouble. The very word there used, θλιβόμενοι, signifieth dashing a thing from without. As the beating and allision of the waves against a rock make no trouble in the rock, no commotion there; but a great deal of noise, clamour, and tumult, round about it. That is the sort of trouble which that word in its primary signification holds forth to us; and which the circumstances of the text declare to be the signification of the thing here meant. And then we have next to consider,

2. The degree of this same trouble; or what is intimated concerning it in the expression "on every side." It is very true indeed we are not necessitated, by the literal import of the expression there used, (παντη,) to read it thus. We may as well read it, troubled in all things, troubled in all kinds, or at all times. The universal expression is capable of any of these additions, whereof there is none expressed in the text. It may therefore mean a great variety of those external troubles that we are liable to: such as we find the apostle making a distinct enumeration of pretty frequently; as in the 2 Cor. xi. 22. and onward, and so elsewhere. And also the expression may import the continuedness of such troubles running along with us in our course. We are always troubled, surrounded with trouble, always filled with it. "In every city, bonds and afflictions abide me," says St. Paul, Acts xx. 23. This is said by way of affirmation, to show the extent of this affliction. And then,

II. By way of negation, to show the limitations of this affliction, it is said that it did not arrive to distress. That is the thing denied of this subject. While trouble on every side is confessed, the apostle, I say, denies their being actually distressed on this account. And there the word used (στενοχωρούμενοι) signifieth such a kind of straitening as doth infer a difficulty of drawing breath: that a man is so compressed that he cannot tell how to breathe; that is the native import of the word. As if he had said, We are not reduced to that extremity, by all the troubles that surround us; but we can breathe well enough for all that. Properly there are meant, by this thing denied, two degrees or steps of inward trouble. As,

1. That it is trouble that doth not reach the heart. For that is a distressing trouble which does so, which cuts and wounds the heart. But it does not touch there, as is the import of that expression in the 32nd Psalm, "In the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him," Psal. xxxii. 6. That is strange that floods of waters should not come nigh unto him, when he is in the midst of them. No, they do not so invade his spirit as to affect that, they do not afflict his heart. And,

2. Here is denied (supposing such afflictions do reach the heart) that they so overwhelm as to constrain them to acknowledge, that they are distressed. If the waters should so flow in upon a man's soul that he could not breathe, that were a distress indeed. But the matter is not so. Either it is a trouble that reacheth not the heart; or if it doth, it does not oppress or overwhelm it. But now,

THIRDLY. We are to inquire concerning the grounds of this affirmation and negation; or how it comes to pass that such are troubled on every side, and yet not distressed.

1. Let us inquire how it comes to pass, that true, sincere Christians, are troubled on every side; to keep to the expression in our translation. It is to be observed, that besides the permissive and disposing providence of the great Ruler of the church and the world, who for wise and holy ends permits and orders such a state of things sometimes; besides this, I say, there are those proper inclinations in the persons immediately concerned, which directly

reach the case. That is, there is somewhat in the disposition or temper of those, who are agents in this matter, or immediately work this surrounding trouble; and also in the patients, by which they are exposed, or do expose themselves, to trouble on every side.

As to the former, there needs no other account be given of it, but only the hate, the malignity of a wicked heart; that will be as mischievous to any more visible appearances of God, and his interest, as is possible. Therefore wicked men will create trouble on every side, because they are so wickedly bent.

But then on the part of the patients, or suffering Christians, why are they so exposed? or why do they expose themselves, since the trouble that is on every side, upon the account of religion, might be avoided? To this we answer, that as the reason why others will create this trouble is from the corrupt malignity of their natures, so the reason why these do expose themselves to such trouble is from that new nature, that holy gracious nature, which is put into them, and superadded to what they naturally were before. We are to consider their religion as a thing, which is vitally united with them; that is, as it were, incorporated, and wrought into them, so as to make another sort of person in them from what there was before. For what a difference is there between the religion of one, who is not thorough, and in good earnest, in the business of Christianity, and one who is a Christian indeed! To the former sort, religion is but as a sort of cloak. A man can easily lay aside his cloak if he finds it inconvenient, or a burden to him. It has no living union with himself; therefore it puts him to no pain or trouble at all to throw it away, if he finds thereby any inconvenience. But the religion of one that is truly and sincerely a Christian, is a vital thing, and part of himself. And though a man can easily part with his cloak, yet he cannot so easily part with his skin. That has a vital union with himself to which the spirit of life gives an animating power. And this is the case here. One that is only an overly outside professor hath put on a cloak of Christianity. If he finds that any prejudice is like to accrue to him upon this account, it is, I say, the easiest thing in the world for him to throw off his cloak. But one, who is a Christian indeed, cannot do so. He cannot part with his religion. It is not as a cloak to him, but it is a piece of himself, and therefore he must be exposed. What will directly strike at such a man as he is, cannot be helped; for he cannot cease to be what he is. It is his very nature: that is, a new nature is put into him, which he cannot alter, or change and vary as he will; and therefore he must take what comes. But then again,

II. We are to consider the ground of the negation; why such, though troubled on every side, are not distressed. And they are not so, partly upon the account of that gracious presence that is afforded to them; and partly because of those principles which are in them, that necessarily carry matter of solace and relief, so as to keep them from distress, notwithstanding their being surrounded with external troubles. There is, I say,

1. A gracious presence afforded upon promise. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee," Isa. xliii. 2. This is promised and made good, more or less, in a higher or lower degree, as to the Divine wisdom and goodness seems most meet. He will never leave nor forsake such, whose hearts he hath determined to himself, and who adhere and cleave to him. He will not cast away the upright man. Such a one then is not like to be in distress when he hath God so present to him. It is but turning himself to him, and he hath him at hand. And,

2. In subordination to the former, the very native tendency of the principles, which God has implanted in a holy soul, and which incline and dispose it towards him, are its great relief against every thing that tends to distress, or works that way. As for instance, faith, which adjoins the soul to God, interests it in his infinite fulness; when the soul must be far remote from straits of distress. Love, too, is another principle by which the soul comes to have the actual fruition of that fulness, according to its measure; and what God doth now see meet, or fit, and suitable for it. There is patience also, by which the soul is composed, and brought into a perfect mastery and dominion over itself, so far as this gracious principle obtains. "By your patience possess ye your souls," Luke xxi. 19. You are outed of yourselves, if you be not patient; but if you be patient you enjoy yourselves. So that let the storm be never so great and boisterous without, there will be peace and calmness within. Patience is an ability to suffer. It is passive fortitude. He that can suffer, who is furnished with this ability, is in peace and quiet; is in no distress. He considers the case thus: "Such and such can afflict, and I can suffer; I am therefore in this respect on even terms with all the world. They can indeed lay upon me such and such things, and I can bear them through grace that helps me." If such be the temper of a Christian that he cannot suffer, he must be a slave. Every such person must be subject to the power of those that can hurt him, or do him an ill turn; only because he can suffer nothing. He cannot suffer, therefore he must serve; or yield to every one's beck that hath any power to hurt him. But he that can suffer, hath the mastery over himself; and remains in self-possession. The other is outed of himself; and must resign his will, his judgment, his conscience, and every thing, to the pleasure of another. Again, the principle of a good conscience also keeps a person from distress. When a man's own heart doth not reproach him, what can be distressing unto him? As Job said his should never do so, though he suffered, you know, very hard and grievous things. "My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live, till I die I will not remove my integrity from me," Job xxvii. 5, 6. Where such a disposition of spirit remains there can be no distress; no distress can ever fall there. And now to make some brief use of this subject, we learn,

I. How happy a good man is when no external trouble, though it compass him on every side, is yet able to bring him into distress! Is not this man a happy man that can defy the world? that can stand in the face of storms unhurt, untouched, unshaken? The matter deserves our serious thoughts, that there should be such a privilege as this communicated unto mortality; unto a poor creature dwelling in mortal flesh. It gives us to see, that there is somewhat that greatens the spirit of such a one to that degree, as to make it too big for all this world. For what else is the reason, why such a one cannot be distressed? only because things apt to distress in their own nature, and in a subject more liable to it, are not able to compass, and entirely comprehend within themselves that spirit, which they would aim to distress. The spirit of a good man, as such, is too big for all this world; and if it have that grace in exercise that is suitable to such a case, it is too big for this world entirely to compass. You cannot compress and straiten that which you cannot grasp. This world cannot grasp such a spirit. It is, I say, too big to be held within this narrow sphere. It looks above all sensible things. It is of too great a prospect to be confined, in its apprehension of things, to time; it looks into a vast and boundless eternity. Therefore such a person cannot be distressed in his spirit. It surmounts the world, and is too great to be straitened by all the powers thereof, which can never reach unto it. Or if it should be brought into some very great trouble, it looks beyond this present troublous state of things. It looks into eternity, and says, "If it be not well now, it shall be. Things at present are not as I could wish, but they shall be as well as ever I could wish hereafter." In short, you cannot confine the eye of such a one, but it will have a look at something beyond what is present and liable to common view. Therefore there is no way entirely to cut off relief from the spirit of a good man; for though it be troubled on every side, it is yet exempt from distress.

II. Hence we see also the vast difference that there is between such a one, and a wicked, carnal man that knows not God; who is unacquainted with, and unrelated to him. Such persons, when external trouble comes upon them, are presently distressed, or are very liable to be so upon every occasion. They have not the way of escaping the pressure thereof, that holy gracious persons have. A person is not distressed so long as he hath some way of

escape or other left. This is intimated by St. Paul himself, when he says; "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13. It is no strange thing that an affliction or trial should be borne, when there is a way of escape.

But it may be said, Why is there any talk of bearing what I shall escape? I answer, it is plain that it is not escaping to suffer, that is there meant; but real hurt or damage by that suffering, so as to be not at all the worse for it, or prejudiced by it, at least in our spiritual concerns. It is such an escape as that, which our Saviour means in these words: "Watch and pray always, that ye may be counted worthy to escape the things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man," Luke xxi. 36. Not that they should escape suffering, for he had been telling them before, what grievous things they should suffer; but that they should receive no hurt from their sufferings: that is, upon the whole matter they should have no cause to reckon themselves sufferers, inasmuch as no damage should accrue to them from thence.

Now when a man hath a way of escape, he is not distressed; his state, I say, is not to be called a real distress. There is, at least upward, always a way of escape. David was sore distressed in Ziklag, after the Amalekites had invaded and burnt it with fire, and taken his people captive; yet it is said, that "he encouraged himself in his God," 1 Sam. xxx. 6. He looked upward, and had a way of escape or deliverance open to him from above.

But it is however said there, that he "was greatly distressed." I answer, it is very true, and so any good man may be in a great degree distressed, as well as David. Thus the apostle Paul, speaking of the impossibility of working any separation between him and Christ, and intimating that nothing could force him out of the arms of his love; not even persecution, or tribulation, nor famine, nor the sword; mentions distress also as the supposed lot of good men, Rom. viii. 35. But we must understand however only by this, that something may befall a good man which is apt to distress; but is not actually distressing, at least to that degree as to allow no way of escape. Then indeed a man would be in real distress, if that were true of him, which his enemies said of David; "Many there be which say of my soul, there is no help for him in God," Psalm iii. 2. But this is not the case; there is no state in which a good man may be, wherein there remains no help for him in God.

It was indeed a distressing case, which you find Saul was in, when he had caused Samuel, or somewhat that appeared like to him, to be called up; who said unto him, "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" To whom Saul answered, I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, 1 Sam. xxviii. 15. This was a grievous distress indeed: there was great trouble from without, and God was gone. Here then is the vastly different state of a wicked wretch, from that of a godly man under affliction in a time of trouble, and when distress is on every side; God is gone! God is afar off! Besides such a one has no disposition to take the way that leads to God. Thus Elihu speaking of such distressed wicked men, says, "By reason of the multitude of oppressions they cry; they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?" Job xxxv. 9, 10. They lie grovelling, and groaning, ready to expire away under their burden; but it never comes into their mind, to inquire after God, saying, Where is our God? This is a thing unthought of, and therefore theirs is a most distressed state and condition; having no shift left them, nor knowing what to do. But there is always this shift left to a pious soul, if there be nothing else, namely, to look up. "We know not what to do," says Jehoshaphat, "but our eyes are up to thee," 2 Chron. xx. 12. But when a man hath simply nothing to do, no prospect of relief, then the case is very forlorn; and this, at length, will be the case of all wicked men. We may easily guess, that they have nothing left to do, who cry to rocks and mountains to fall upon them. This speaks plain desperateness; and yet this will be the case one day with those, who find not out in due season, the way of being exempted from distress. Then there will be a great deal of trouble on every side, when the world will be all in flames; and then it must certainly be distress. There will be, as our Lord informs us, (Luke xxi. 25, &c.) distress of nations with perplexity; the seas and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming upon the earth: for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, when we shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory; and when the cry shall go forth, "Lo! he is come, behold his sign in the heavens!" Consider then how we are concerned to make sure of his favour, and to hasten to get into that state; wherein, though for a while we may not be exempted from trouble, yet we shall from distress: I mean, from that distress for which there is no remedy, which can admit of no relief.

I thought to have propounded something by way of counsel, in order to such a course as this. As

1. Labour to be disengaged from all terrene things, the things of this world. If there our life is bound up, if we are troubled there on every side, we cannot but be distressed. But if the world be crucified to us, and we to the world, there can be no distress; the troubles of it cannot be distressing to us. Dead things cannot feel, cannot afflict one another. Let us say then, "The world is dead to me, and I am dead to it; we are crucified one to another." The dead can lie quietly one by another, without giving mutual wounds. And then too,

2. Draw nigh to God, that large and boundless good, in whom all fulness is. Of them that fear him it is said, "their souls shall dwell at ease," Ps. xxv. 13. The expression in the original is, "Their souls shall lodge or rest in goodness;" for the word there aptly signifies the quiet rest of the night. We must then draw nigh to God; and stick close to him in trust, confidence, love, obedience, subjection, and by a continual daily course of prayer. For they who are given much to pray will feel little of distress, in comparison of what they are else liable to. The Psalmist speaks of enemies, who were continually designing evil to him. "For my love," says he, "they are mine adversaries, but I give myself unto prayer," Ps. cix. 4. If there be any design against me, if my enemies are aiming at me, "I prayer;" for so the expression is in the Hebrew text: that is, I betake myself to prayer, my known and usual resort, and then I fare well. Thus, in so doing, you will find your soul to dwell at ease, and rest in the goodness of God. A wicked man, in the midst of his sufficiency, is full of straits; you, in the midst of straits, will be in the fountain of all-sufficiency, and have the all-flowing goodness streaming on every side. And in such a course you may come to experience what is here said by the apostle, so as no longer to look upon this as a paradox, but as that which your hearts can witness to; namely, that though trouble be on every side, yet thanks be to God, we find no distress.

SERMON III.*

James i. 2.

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.

I TAKE it for granted that by temptations here, we are to understand afflictions; such as are, for trial's sake, laid upon the people of God. And whereas such, namely, those to whom the compellation of brethren is agreeable, are enjoined to count such afflictions matter of all joy; this plainly implies, that to such persons they are so. For they are not surely enjoined to judge otherwise of the matter than it really is, nor directed to make a false judgment of things. Therefore the truth I have to insist upon you may take briefly thus;

* Preached at Haberdashers' Hall, March 29th, 1677.

That the afflictions laid upon Christians, for the sake of trial, are to a right and spiritual judgment the matter of joy; even of all joy, as you have it here expressed.

Now that this truth may be capable of use, (which is the main thing I design upon it,) it is necessary that I do these two things in the general; namely,

FIRST, That I state this truth; and then,

SECONDLY, Give you the grounds of it.

FIRST, I shall state this truth, or show you how it is to be taken and understood. And here we have two things to open to you; namely, the object of that judgment, which is here directed to be made, and then the nature of it. The opening of these two things concerning the judgment we are to make of afflictions, which good men are exercised withal, will take up the whole of the business that is needful by way of explication; so as that you may have the distinct state of the matter before you.

I. I shall consider the object of the judgment here to be made; that is, the truth of this proposition, that afflictions laid upon us for the sake of trial are matter of joy. And this is the thing to be judged; as indeed in any proper act of judgment, a proposition is still the object; wherein one thing is affirmed or denied of another. And the truth of this proposition is the thing to be judged; that afflictions, such afflictions or temptations as the apostle speaks of, are really matter of joy. Therefore it is necessary that we open to you this proposition as the object of the judgment here to be made. Particularly that we,—1. Consider what is supposed here to be matter of joy; namely, afflictions, for the sake of trial: then—2. We shall open to you that which is affirmed, or supposed, concerning temptations; namely, that they are matter of joy; and then—3. The manner of the agreement of the one of these to the other.

1. Let us consider what it is that is supposed by the apostle to be matter of joy; namely, temptations, or afflictions for trial's sake. Not any man's afflictions, but those that befall a Christian; not any afflictions of a Christian neither, but those which are laid upon him for the sake of trial, as the word (πειρασμοῖς) used in the text doth plainly import. For it is one very well known, and very useful and necessary distinction of afflictions, that they are either corrective, even unto the people of God, or else tentative. This is not a distinction of afflictions considered in their natures, but taken from the end thereof: for in their natures they may be the very same, as the afflictions of good men and bad men may be.

Divers temptations are mentioned: which implieth not only multitude, as to number; but variety, as to kind. There may be the same kinds of them inflicted, for either the one or other of those ends. So that the distinction I mention to you is not of their natures, but it is taken from something extrinsical; as the end of any thing is extrinsical to the thing itself. God doth sometimes lay on afflictions to try, and sometimes to correct or chastise, his people. The principle of those afflictions, that are for the sake of correction, is displeasure and paternal justice; which God doth exercise upon his own family, and among his own children. And they have been wont, as indeed they ought, so to understand the matter. Thus says the prophet Micah, in the name of the people; "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him," Micah vii. 9. And his anger is sometimes said to smoke, and continue long to do so; as several expressions in Scripture, that I might turn to, import. But when the afflictions are to try, the principle thereof is not displeasure; but wisdom, and sovereign good pleasure. In this case, I say, they are to be resolved into wise and holy sovereignty, not anger, as their principle.

Now it is concerning afflictions so designed, or directed to this end, namely, for trial, that the attribute here in the text must be understood; that is, that they are matter of all joy, and are to be so accounted. And because we must take the state of the subject, so as to understand the apostle speaking not of punitive but tentative afflictions, as such; therefore we are a little more concerned to inquire in every case, how we may be able to discern when any affliction, or series of afflictions, are brought upon the people of God, or upon a particular person, for the sake of trial. For the stress of the whole business lies upon the right understanding of this matter, and is the main thing we have to do in stating of the truth before us.

In order to it therefore, you must know that though these two notions of afflictions, to wit, corrective and tentative, are very distinct; yet we are not to suppose that they are always to be separated. It is very possible that an affliction, or a state of affliction, may come upon a good man for both these ends at once; but it is impossible that both these ends should, at any time, be principal. When both these ends do fall in together, so that afflictions are sent both to correct and also to try; yet still one of them only is the principal end, and it is from thence that the denomination is to be taken. As for instance; that affliction is to be called tentative, or that state of affliction is to bear the name of temptation or trial, when this appears to be the chief end, which God designed and aimed at, in ordering such a state of things to be the lot of his people, or of this or that person. But when the principal end appears to be their chastisement, then they are to be accounted corrective afflictions; or punishments, and judgments, as these expressions are also used with respect to the people of God. But yet it may be said, "How shall we know which end is principal, when an afflictive condition comes to be the lot of any of God's people?"

This case cannot be very distinctly and particularly spoken to now, for that would take up all our time. I shall only say this one thing to it at present, which is very plain and clear, and I doubt not satisfactory to every one that seriously attends to it. When the people of God, who are in a state of affliction, have been and still are in a declension, as to matters of religion; or when this and that person can reflect, that they have been guilty of some very great enormity, some more notable transgression, and an affliction befalls them; why, truly, in this case they have all the reason in the world to look upon this affliction as punitive; that is, as principally designed for correction. But if the state of the church of God, when such an afflicted condition falls out to be their lot, is spiritually good; that is, if they have been for some time in a better condition than ordinary, or under no very observable delinquency and decay in their spiritual state; then the course of afflictions, which they at such a time fall under, is chiefly tentative; or to be reckoned as sent principally for the sake of trial.

And truly if we look into the afflictions which befell the people of God in common, at different ages, you will find, by what you have recorded in the Old Testament, concerning the church in those days, (which consisted of the Jews for the most part,) that miseries always befell them, when they were in a state of apostacy from God, or some more notable defection; which therefore constantly passed under the notion of corrections, or chastisements and punishments, upon that account. But as to what we find recorded of the sufferings of the church of God in the New Testament, (which you know gives us an account only of a small space of time) those afflictions and sufferings befell good men, at a time when the church of God was in its best state; and when there was most of the vigour, the power, and spirit of religion, that ever was known. Therefore we have most reason to look upon the afflictions, that befell them, as designedly tentative; wherenpon it is that you have afflictions more usually spoken of, in the New Testament, under the notion of trials and temptations.

So that this is a short and summary account that I give you of this matter: afflictions befall persons for correction, when they are in their worst state; for trial, when they are in their best. And now you have the state of the subject (as far as it is necessary) cleared up to you. But concerning afflictions it is said, when it is discernible that they are principally tentative, that they are to be accounted matter of all joy. And,

2. This is the thing spoken of this subject, which we are now to speak to; we are to reckon these afflictions joy, *all joy*. We shall need to say but little here. This joy, if we take in the term *all* with it especially, includeth these two things; to wit, complacency, and gloriation: a being well pleased with these afflictions, and also a visible glorying upon such an account. It is true indeed these things are wont to be expressed by two different words, (Χαρά, and Ἀγαλλίασις,) whereas we have but one in the text. You

have them put together by our Saviour when he pronounces blessedness on them who suffer persecution for righteousness sake; "Rejoice," (says he) "and be exceeding glad," Matt. v. 10, 11, 12. There is inward pleasure, an inward sense of pleasure, and a certain kind of triumph, that appear and show forth themselves in conjunction. And when it is said, that we are to account it all joy, when we fall into such temptations, it implies, that we are to comprehend both these together in the sense of the expression. In which expression, we are indeed to understand joy objectively, as is usual, and so very obvious that I need not hint it to you; not, I say, the act, but the matter of joy, as we before explained it to you.

3. We have further to consider, concerning this proposition, the agreement of the object with the subject of it. How comes it to be truly said of afflictions, that they are matter of all joy? How do these agree together? It is very plain it is not a natural agreement; it is no agreement arising from any affinity that these afflictions have, in their own nature, unto joy. Nothing more remote than affliction, and joy. Affliction "for the present is not joyous, but grievous," Heb. xii. 11. Therefore that which connects them must be something extrinsical; somewhat which God puts in the case, so as wholly to alter it from what it would else be in its natural state. But this we shall have occasion to show by and by, when we speak to the grounds of it, which we are to come to presently.

II. Having considered the object, we are now to consider the nature of this judgment. The apostle bids us so to account such afflictions, as we have considered, all joy, as that this may be a fixed kind of judgment with us; for so the word ἡγήσασθε signifies. I shall particularly say but these two things about it:

1. That it must be a judgment spiritually enlightened, a judgment that is irradiated by a divine light shining upon it, by which the truth of the thing might be discerned; which otherwise would go for a paradox, and that the most incredible one that ever was heard of. It must be a heavenly divine light, which must inform that judgment that shall be able to discern the truth here asserted, that these trying afflictions are matter of joy. And,

2. It must be a judgment spiritually actuated and enlivened, that so it may become a practical judgment. By the former means it comes to be a clear judgment, when divine light once shines in the mind, so as that the truth of this matter appears very clear; by the latter means it comes to be a practical judgment, that is, such as is impressive of a proportionable correspondent frame of heart, which is that which the apostle chiefly intends here. For it would do persons but little good, to have such a notion only hovering in their minds concerning afflictions, that they are matter of joy; this would be but a cold business. The word *count* here in the text, is taken from the word ἡγεμονικὸν, from whence that phrase is taken, which is expressive of the leading faculty and power of the soul. But there is nothing leading where nothing follows; the one implies the other. It is therefore implied here that this must be such a judgment as commands what is duly and properly the subject of it, and what ought to be commanded; namely, the heart, and will, and affections of the soul. It implies that a person willingly bear a temper of spirit, proportionable to this judgment; that is, maintain a holy cheerfulness and vigour, and liveliness of spirit, through the whole course of such an afflicted state, as may happen to be his lot. Such a judgment it is that being enlightened from above is in some measure clear, and does not suffer us to be always in the dark, puzzled and entangled in our thoughts about the matter. In a word, it is a judgment that being actuated by a divine power ought to be practical, proportionable and conformable to itself; that so we may carry ourselves in a state of affliction, as though we judged in this case, that it is matter of great joy that we are brought into such a condition as this.

Thus now you have the state of the truth in reference to the things propounded to be opened, concerning the subject spoken of, and particularly the nature of the judgment that is to be made concerning the afflictions that befall good men; which, as I have shown, must be spiritually enlightened, and so spiritually enlightened as to be a practical principle in the soul.

SECONDLY, I now proceed to the next general head to be spoken to, after having stated this truth; and that is, to give you the grounds of it. What should be the ground of this, that to a true judgment such afflictions as these are should be matter of joy? I can but just touch at what requires to be largely insisted upon. In general, if this be our case, that we are Christians exercised with tentative afflictions, we are to count them all joy, if we would judge rationally and prudently, both upon God's account, and our own.

I. On God's account; and you have no reason to think it strange, that this should be alleged as a ground of a Christian's rejoicing in temptations. For God and good men are no such strangers to one another, but that wherein his interest is concerned and advantaged, they have real matter of joy, both upon the account of their relation to him, and the determination of their spirits towards him and his interest. Now his interest is manifestly concerned to great advantage in this case; and by this means it hath always been promoted, and his glory hath shone forth illustriously through the trials that have befallen his people.

If we speak of the glory of God, which is capable of being given to him; which cannot be the glory that is essential to his being, but his extrinsical, or adventitious glory, it may be said to lie in these two things: namely, in the display thereof, and in the agnition and acknowledgment of his glory upon that display. That is all we can make of glorifying God, and of his being glorified in the world; that there is a lustre shining forth, or a visible glorious representation of him made; and then, that this be acknowledged, or taken notice of, and he be confessed hereupon to be glorious. Why both these are concerned, whenever it falls out to be the lot of his people to be exercised with tentative afflictions.

I. There is a most visible display of his glory in this case; to wit, the glory of his power, of his wisdom, of his goodness, of his faithfulness and truth, both in sustaining and delivering his afflicted ones. There is a spirit of glory resting upon them in such a time and state as that is. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye," I Pet. iv. 14. Men cast upon you reproach, God puts a glory upon you; for, as St. Peter expresses it, "the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you:" it stays and abides with you, and hath a fixed settled residence upon you. Agreeable hereunto is the tenor of that prayer of St. Paul for the Colossians: "That ye might be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience, and long-suffering, with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," Colos. i. 11, 12. Here is a very great display of the Divine glory in this case. And,

2. The agnition or acknowledgment thereof is wont to ensue, which is the other thing considerable in God's being glorified. Such as feel supports from God in their afflictions, do highly magnify him in their spirits; yea, and many times his glory is acknowledged by afflicting enemies themselves. They are made to confess that they have to do with somewhat they cannot master, a spirit that is too hard for them, even an invincible spirit. They are made to own and confess that greater is he that is in the sufferers, than he that is in this world.

I have sometimes taken notice in the histories of former times, concerning the persecutions that befell the people of God more than once, that this expression hath been used in those cases, "The devil is in them;" that is, a more than an ordinary spirit. They could not but believe it was somewhat more than the spirit of a man that supported them; but if they called it by any other name, they must have reproached themselves, and acknowledged that they were fighters against God. However, they could not but have a secret conviction, (and it appears sometimes they had so,) that it was an almighty Spirit they were fighting against, when they were dealing with the people of God in this kind.

This then is the ground of joy to the patients themselves, that though they suffer, yet God is glorified. His glory shineth through all the clouds and darkness that involve them, and wherein they are inwrapt. The apostle speaks

as if he did not care what became of him, so that Christ might be but magnified by him, living or dying, Phil. i. 20.

II. I now come to show that good men, exercised with such afflictions as the apostle speaks of, ought to rejoice in them on their own account; not only because of the glory that redounds to God thereby, but also because of the advantage that accrues to themselves; which is twofold, namely, reputative and real.

1. A reputative advantage accrues to them from hence: for it is an honour and dignity put upon them to be called to suffer on this account, that is, for the sake of trial. As I remember, a heathen moralist says, "A soldier who is one of the number selected or picked out to go upon some very hazardous enterprise, if he be one of true fortitude and real valour, he will not say, '*Imperator de me malè meruit, sed benè judicavit.*' My general discovers a good opinion of me, and so he puts the honour of such a service upon me." So when God thinks fit to exercise his people in a way of trial, he puts an honour upon them, saying; "Come forth, now, you shall be my champions, you shall be the buts and marks against which all the power and malice of devils and men shall be directed, and yet I will make you stand." A poor bruised reed, God is able to make to stand, as in another case is said concerning a weak Christian. A reed that is bruised, and hangs its head, is capable of being made to stand against all the storms and rage of earth and hell. "You," as if he had said, "are some of my instruments, which I will make use of to baffle hell and all the powers of darkness. I will make them, even by you, confess themselves outdone."

Here then is a great reputative advantage, an honour and dignity put upon good men, to come forth as God's own champions; to contend on his behalf against every adversary and power in a way of affliction; that so they may overcome them by the blood of Jesus and the word of his testimony, not loving their lives even to the death. This is some of the honour of these saints of God. And if it had not been accounted so in former days, we should not have had, among the writings of some of the ancients, consolations writ purposely to them who missed of martyrdom; whose lot it was to be delivered, and not to fall as martyrs, in the common day of trial. And then,

2. There is a real advantage accruing from afflictions or temptations of this nature, both present and eternal. They that are exercised with them get great advantage by them at present, and foresee that they are like to do so hereafter; as is instanced in one particular in the words immediately following my text. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." James i. 2, 3, 4. So that at the long run they tend to their consummation and perfection. But first it is said, "knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience;" which carries its intimation along with it, that this one single advantage or gain by the trial of faith, even the grace of patience, countervails all evils whatever which such trials can bring upon them.

And certainly it is so, if it be considered what a heaven patience carrieth in it; namely, that meekness, that subjection to the Father of spirits, that complacency in his will, that holy fortitude and greatness of mind, which, I say, patience carries in itself. So that if a man had lost all that ever he had in the world, and got patience, he is a great gainer. Such a one is refined, and purged, and shines so much the more gloriously, as a star in the higher region, or the upper firmament. But this is only a leading thing to the universal gain, which they, who are spiritual, have in other respects; for upon this improvement of patience the whole inward man partakes of so much the more strength, vigour, sprightliness, and activity. Spiritual strength and soundness are thereby throughout promoted; so that they have great reason to glory with respect to the present gain and advantage, accruing from their afflictions.

And then with respect to hereafter, what matter of joy and glory to think how all will be compensated to them in the other world! The "light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. iv. 17. If we suffer with Christ, we shall be also glorified together; "for I reckon," says the apostle, (this is the computation I make,) "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed," Rom. viii. 17, 18. These are things not to be mentioned the same day, one with the other, for there is no comparison between them.

Therefore you see how it is that this same joy doth guide itself, and which way the eye of the soul is directed to the exercise of it: not to pore upon afflictions alone, but to consider them as subservient to glory. Thus says the apostle, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." And then it presently follows too, "We rejoice in tribulations also;" Rom. v. 2, &c. that is, considered with and in their subserviency to future glory. And this it is that makes them the matter of the highest joy.

But I would say something by way of *Use*, though the time hath almost overslipt me. Sundry things might be *inferred* from hence, which I shall but name to you.

1. Since this judgment, and the temper of spirit agreeable thereto, are peculiar to the case of trials or tentative afflictions, they must be necessarily otherwise where afflictions are visibly punitive, and principally of a chastising nature. As this judgment, namely, to count them all joy, answers the one case; so truly deep humiliation cannot but answer the other: even very deep humiliation, abasing oneself and lying low, and owning that the holy, righteous, jealous God is punishing them for the evil they have done. For in this case he is dealing with his children another way; he is not arraying them with glory, but clothing them with shame, before all the world. And therefore it is a season for them to be deeply humbled whenever that appears to be their stated case. Though to such persons there may be a mixture of pleasure, arising from the hope that God will bring such a state out of it (out of their sin and suffering) as shall turn into matter of joy afterwards. But the occasion of joy in such a case is more occult, and remote; and is wrapt up in a great deal more visible matter of sorrow, shame, and humiliation, when it appears that an afflicted state is brought upon them purposely for punishment and rebuke. And again,

II. We may infer hence, that mere patience is not enough for Christians under trying afflictions. It is not sufficient to be merely patient; they are to account their condition all joy. Therefore the apostle prays that more patience might be granted to the Colossians, in the place mentioned before; that they might suffer with joyfulness, and give thanks to him who had made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. i. 10—14. He writes there to such as were likely to meet with, or to have, very little of any earthly inheritance; rather to lose what they had, for the sake of Christ: and he intimates that it was not enough for them to be merely content, or patient under such a loss, but it was suitable to their state to be in a high triumph and exultation of spirit upon this account; because God was thereby making them meet for another inheritance with the saints in light. Those Christians do not quit themselves well, nor as becomes them, who do only not murmur or repine that they are tried by afflictions: for the thing to be aimed at, in the midst of all such exercises, is to thank God, and rejoice in the thoughts of what they are to enjoy; namely, an inheritance with the saints in their pure, lightsome, peaceful, blissful regions. "What an inheritance have I above! Blessed be God, though I lose all I have in this world, while he is making me meet for such an inheritance; and makes it evident he hath such a design in hand as this upon me!"

III. We learn too, that to be impatient and repining upon the account of afflictions, is greatly intolerable. To be patient merely, is not enough; to be impatient, is simplicity, folly, and sin. It is intolerable that we should think we are ill dealt with, when we are exercised with such afflictions as are designed only for the sake of trial. But I cannot stay on this head.

IV. We learn, that joy is most exceedingly connatural to true living religion. There cannot be a greater demonstration of it than this, that there can be no state, externally so bad, that can make their joy unseasonable; or that can make it an incongruous or unfitting thing for

them to rejoice. To have a disposition unto spiritual and heavenly joy is a thing very intimate to the constitution of a true Christian. That must needs be a very strong, predominant, prevailing principle in any thing, which converts and turns that which is of an opposite nature into nutriment to itself; such is the joy as can even feed upon and maintain itself out of afflictions. God's people can rejoice not only notwithstanding they are afflicted, but because they are so afflicted. The divers temptations they are exercised with are counted the matter of their joy. And we may yet further infer hence,

V. That there is something very peculiar in living true Christianity. For how odd a sound doth this carry to an unchristian ear, and how uncouth a taste to an unchristian heart, that afflictions are to be made and accounted matter of joy. But it is past all doubt that there is a real truth in the matter. We find that it hath been so; and that this is not a mere notion that hovers in the air, but is a practical thing, and has been a tried case. Do not we read of the apostles' rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ? Acts v. 41. This was not only so in their account, but was really so. So we are told of the believing Hebrews, that they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, Heb. x. 34. What! for a man to rejoice to be undone? A strange paradox that any, who was not seriously a Christian, should count this matter of joy! Therefore true Christianity hath somewhat peculiar to itself belonging to it. It is a very extraordinary thing, which lies without the compass and comprehension of all, who do not experimentally know it.

Before I close, there are two things I would say to you by way of *counsel*.

I. Labour to fix this judgment in general upon your minds. Let it not seem to you as an uncouth incredible thing. It is a most certain truth, that afflictions in some cases may most reasonably be matter of joy. It is a sad thing when we cannot obtain so much of ourselves as to receive this notion, and to believe the truth of what is here implied. For when we are bid to count so, it is implied that it is really so; that is, that afflictions in such a case, namely, for the sake of trial, are matter of joy. But our spirits boggle at this; we cannot tell how to receive or entertain it. And then,

2. Endeavour that it may be your judgment with application to yourselves and your own state and case. And we must here take notice to you of what is in itself most obvious, that when we are directed to count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations, we are also directed to do whatever is necessarily pre-supposed hereunto. It is never to be imagined or thought, that one who lives in sin, who is a secure, carnal, earthly-minded creature, and a stranger to God and heaven, if any affliction should come upon him, that he must off-hand count it a matter of joy. No, there is something must intervene. What then is it we should apply ourselves to? Why, to endeavour to get into a safe state of soul, and that things may be so with us God-ward, that if ever it come to be our case to be afflicted we may be able to pass this judgment, so clear and satisfied as to impress the heart, that afflictions are to be counted all joy, and in such a case may actually ourselves rejoice.

I thought to have insisted on sundry things here, but have not time. Yet I must observe, that to get our states clear with respect to God, and to keep and maintain our consciences both clean and quiet, are necessary to such a happy state as to able to rejoice in adversity. Then we shall suffer without grudging, and with rejoicing for the sake of Christ. How impossible is it ever to rejoice in an afflicted condition, till we have hearts brought under the power of a self-denying spirit; till we are mortified to this world, and our spirits loosened and disengaged from every thing terrene! The man whose heart cleaveth to this earth; who is taken with an ample estate, an opulent trade, a neat habitation, all desirable comforts and accommodations; the man, I say, who is so taken up with these things that his life is bound up in them, cannot endure the thought, upon any terms, of suffering in these kinds; it is death to him to think of it. But if a man's spirit be once divested of an earthly frame, and can tell how to digest the thoughts of being undone, he may rejoice, and say; "What am I, that I may not be undone? have not many as good as I been undone? who had as good an estate, lived in as good credit in the world? Why may not I be poor, come into straits, be destitute of friends, and exposed to wants as well as others?" When a man by familiar converse with these objects hath reconciled his spirit to them, so that he can digest these things, then he is in a way to rejoice in such a case, when it comes to be his, and is able to say; "Blessed be God that I have an estate to sacrifice for Christ! that I had liberty, and had still a life, to sacrifice for him, whenever he calls for it." If we did but thus labour beforehand to inure ourselves to such thoughts as these; if we did but put the case frequently and make the supposition familiar to ourselves, "What if we were to live in a wilderness? dwell in a cave of the earth? What if we were to go up and down helpless, living upon Providence for daily bread?" When we had, I say, used ourselves to think thus, and made the matter familiar to ourselves, we might, if it should come to be really our case, or God should put us upon the trial, turn it into a matter of triumph and great joy.

And so likewise it is highly necessary to live much in heaven, and to realize that state to ourselves; not to make it as a strange country, but this state rather in which we are. To a man that is abroad in some foreign country, which is full of war, trouble, and blood, it is some comfort to him (if he be certain of a way of return) to think, "Well! I am not to stay here long in this troublesome country; I know how to get home to mine own house in a peaceful country; I shall find all quiet there." How pleasant a thought, I say, is this, especially if a man is sure of a return! In this case he may be sure, and a Christian may say, "My own country is a quiet country; there will be nothing but peace, rest, pleasures, and delights to people of God. Here, indeed, I do not intend to abide. I do not expect to stay long here, this is not my country." Oh, to be here, as in a strange country, and to look upon that other, namely, heaven, as our own; will make it possible to us not only to despise, but even to rejoice in what we meet withal that is troublesome in this world, because it is part of our way home. It is indeed a dirty way, but it is our way notwithstanding to our better country.

I would enforce all that has been said by a consideration or two, and so conclude.

1. Think with yourselves how pleasant it is to have spirits got into this frame and posture, that we can really count it matter of joy to fall into afflictions. Oh think, I say, how pleasant it is! For how happy are those persons, who when they have a prospect of great evils before them, are yet not afraid of them! and certainly we shall not be afraid of that, which we have an actual disposition to rejoice in. In such a case we should be under the pressure of no very tormenting fear. "They that hearken to me" (saith Wisdom) "shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil," Prov. i. 33. He that has got to this pitch, who can count it all joy to fall into divers temptations, is arrived already to a safe dwelling: he hath so hid himself in the Divine presence, that he is secure from the fear of evil. No evil can ever reach him. And consider again,

2. That this is the only way we have to make any good or advantage of a matter that is bad in itself and in its own nature. For let us a little recount ourselves. I believe there are few among us, if any, that have not some prospect, more or less, of troublesome days a coming; a very afflictive condition. Pray what shall we do in this case, if we will not do those things that tend to bring us into a capacity of making this judgment our own, in reference to our own concernments? What have we else to do? Would we busy our thoughts how any such condition shall be prevented? Shall that be our concern? Shall we try if we can stop the sun, or alter the course of the stars? Do we think to change the external posture of the world? That is, alas! a hopeless thought, a vain attempt.

But we have a nearer and a possible thing to do, namely, to get the temper of our own spirits altered; brought off from this world; pitched upon another and a better world. We have no other course to take. Let us then drive the nail that will go. We have hopes that we may alter our spirits that will go. We have hopes that we may alter our spirits if we will employ our power so to do, but we cannot change the times and the seasons. That is our province and business. We have work to do here. We have a superintendency over our own spirits; here we are autho-

rized; God puts us upon it to see our own spirits, that if they be earthly, we may endeavour to get them made heavenly; if impure, holy; if dead, lifely; if vain, serious. This is our own proper business. So that as our case is, our circumstances are. We cannot hope to avoid suffering, our business therefore is to avoid suffering uncomfortably; this, I say, is our great business. To avoid suffering we cannot reasonably hope, though we should resolve to make shipwreck of faith, and a good conscience. For do we think, that all such persons that do so are secure from suffering? It is a remarkable passage from Scripture we have in St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. "There hath no temptation befallen you, but such as is common to men." That is one consideration. Another is, "But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted, above what you are able," &c. 1 Cor. x. 13. It is the former I would now speak to; "No temptation hath befallen you, but such as is common to men." As if he had said; You are liable to afflictions as you are men, not merely as you are Christians; so that you cannot certainly save yourselves from them, though you should abjure your Christianity. For what can a man be safe from, that is common to man? These afflictions follow humanity. Are Christians the only men that are poor? that are crossed? or in a prison? If a man be a man (reckon only so) he is liable on that account to these things. Therefore, I say, since we have no way in the world to secure us from suffering, our great concern is to labour that we may suffer in the most comfortable way we can; so as that when it comes to be our lot, we may be capable of counting it all joy. And then we are a thousand times upon better terms, than if we were sure never to feel affliction; for that is only an external good; but the other is a spiritual good. And these are to be estimated according to the capacity and condition of the subject. I hope my flesh, my body, is not capable of so much hurt, as my spirit is of good. To be freed from afflictions, it is true, would be the advantage of the outward man; but to be able to bear them rejoicingly is an advantage to the soul; a thing capable of greater good than my outward man is capable of.

Therefore this is the great thing that lies upon us to do; to take heed, since we cannot be sure we shall not suffer, that we do not suffer as evil doers; neither in respect of the cause, nor of the temper of our spirits: to take heed that we suffer not so, as that it shall be the effect of a controversy between God and us; or the affliction be regarded as his coming upon us with anger and displeasure. We are to see to it that we have no rebuke nor anger to reflect upon; (these tend to shame, these are humbling things;) that we may regard his sovereignty and divine pleasure as things in which we may rejoice and triumph; which sovereign pleasure we may rejoicingly comply with, when once we can make it out, that the affliction of our lot is principally of a tentative nature, to try our loyalty to God, and fidelity to his interest.

SERMON IV.*

1 Peter v. 10.

But the God of all grace, who hath called us into his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

I SHALL spend none of your time at all in looking upon the context. And although there are many great truths, which lie within the compass of this verse, as any of you may easily apprehend at first sight; I shall only pitch upon that one which I intend to insist upon, and which it may be hoped will be equally suitable to the time and to our case, as it is to the text. You may without further preface take it thus;

That to a right and well-disposed judgment, spiritual improvements and advantages by sufferings, are more desirable, than a freedom from those sufferings themselves.

That the ground may be clear, I shall present you with a supposition or two, before I proceed to make out the truth itself. As,

First, We will suppose these expressions, to wit, "make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you," do all of them hold forth to us spiritual improvement and gain. I apprehend that none of you will doubt, but the apostle by these expressions intended the better state of those, to whom he wrote, in spiritual respects. We may suppose not of each person considered absolutely, and singly; but all considered in common, that they might be brought into a better state with reference to their spiritual concernments and affairs; which indeed the word καταρτίσαι doth more especially seem to hint to us. It signifies the setting in joint what was unjointed before, and quite out of frame; and so rather imports a relation to a community, than to a single person alone. But take all together, and no doubt the expressions do intend spiritual improvement and advantage. And then again,

Secondly, We may lay down further supposition, that the order of the sufferings here mentioned is not merely that of precedency in time, but of subserviency to some kind of cause that has an instrumental influence to their spiritual advantage. "After that ye have suffered awhile, or you having suffered a little," (as the words may be read, for the word "after" is not in the Greek text,) "may the God of all grace make you perfect," &c. But it would be very unreasonable to suppose, that these sufferings should only precede, and no more; or have only an idle priority in respect of time; for that were to suppose, that God, as it were, was consenting to it, that they should suffer for nothing, or to no purpose. And therefore we must conclude that the apostle intended to insinuate, that this precedent state of suffering would conduce and contribute much to their spiritual improvement; which he had principally in his eye, on their behalf. These things being supposed, I shall endeavour very briefly to evince to you,

I. That a well-informed judgment will reckon, and does reckon and account, as you have heard, namely, that spiritual improvements and advantages by sufferings are more desirable, than a freedom from those sufferings themselves. And,

II. Show you what reason and ground it has so to judge. And this I shall do only from the text, and with all possible brevity, that I may hasten, to the use which I chiefly intend.

I. That a well-informed judgment doth reckon spiritual improvements by sufferings to be more desirable, than a freedom from those sufferings themselves. We need no further light than what the text affords us to make this point clear, if we will but admit this twofold consideration.

1. That this great apostle was undoubtedly furnished with wisdom enough to understand what was really best for these scattered strangers, to whom he writes here. There can be no room for a doubt concerning this. And,

2. That he was prompted by that love, which would certainly engage him to pray for that which was best for them, according to his judgment. We can, I say, doubt of neither of these, if we will but consider that this prayer of his was indited by the Spirit of all wisdom and love. We cannot therefore doubt but that he both understood that to be best for them, which really was so; and that he thereupon prayed for that, in great kindness of heart to this poor people, which he so understood to be best. No more need be said to evince that a well-informed judgment will determine thus, that spiritual improvement by sufferings is better than a freedom from them, and more desirable. I proceed to show,

II. That there is a sufficient reason for such a judgment, which we may also see in the text; that is, that it is more desirable to have sufferings improved, than to have them presently removed from us. And this appears most suitable to that grace by which Christians are called; and also to that glory unto which they are called.

Observe the connexion of the request, which the apostle makes on the behalf of these scattered Jews; (as we have most reason to suppose them Jews converted to Christianity;) do but observe, I say, the connexion of the request,

* Preached at Plaisterer's Hall, February 29th, 1677.

with the preface to it; "The God of all grace, who hath called you to his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, make you perfect," &c. It is to be supposed, that the preface in this prayer (as it is usually intended in all such prayers) should carry somewhat or other in it, agreeable to the matter afterwards prayed for. And so it really is here. For the apostle does not pray, that these Christians might not suffer; but that upon, or by the means of, their sufferings, they might receive that great and spiritual advantage, of being brought into a more perfect and better state than they were in before; and gain more strength, more stability, more fixedness than ever. And to pray thus, I say, is,

1. Most suitable to that grace by which they had been called; or most suitable to God, as he is the God of all grace.

But it may be said, "Is that suitable to the gracious nature of God, to let his own peculiar people be abused by a vile, wicked world? to expose that sort of persons (who of all others do alone love him, and are true to him among men) unto violent and injurious usage from the rest of mankind?" Yes, certainly; if we consider the matter well, it is most suitable. God is, it is true, a Father to that select people; but consider where the relation falls, and where it terminates. He is said in contradistinction to the fathers of our flesh, to be the Father of our spirits, Heb. xii. 9. It is certainly most suitable to the love of God to let his own people suffer, if you will allow his love to be correspondent to the relation. He is indeed related to them as a Father, but to what of them? To their spirits principally, and especially to that spiritual product, or new nature, of which he is the immediate Author. There the relation terminates, to that he is chiefly related as a Father, and there his care and love goes with the relation, "Let it be well with their spirits, and it matters not much how it goes with them any where else. I am the Father of their spirits; I am to take care it may go well with them upon spiritual accounts. Therefore if their flesh feel pain, if it suffer want, if it be pinched and straitened, if it languish and complain, it agrees very well with my relation to their spirits, as a Father to them. Let it then be so, let sufferings come upon them, if all this shall prove to the greater advantage of their spirits; if they shall thereby come to have so much more thriving and prosperous souls; if by this means they grow more refined; more freed from terrene dross; be more fitted for my fellowship; rendered more capable of doing me duty in their respective places; and of tasting and relishing the pleasure thereof: if this be the case, I think I deal with them but as a Father, whose relation is to their spirits."

The apostle speaks of this with a great deal of complacency, and as one that is highly well pleased. "Though (says he) our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal," 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18. He does not speak this with any kind of regret that he found the outward man so struck as to be continually liable to perish.

"No," saith he, "let it perish daily; I matter it not. Though it does perish, that signifies nothing to me, so that the inward man be but renewed day by day." And,

2. It is more suitable to that state of glory, whereunto we are called; as well as to that grace, by which we are called. It is very necessary to our being introduced into that glorious, blessed state, that we be prepared, and made some way fit for it, before we reach it. And the great concernment and necessity of this makes the apostle Paul bless God, with a great deal of triumph, on the behalf of those Christian Colossians to whom he wrote: and he puts them upon blessing of God, that though they were suffering to that degree as that they stood in need of all patience, yet that all this while he was making them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Col. i. 11, 12. He speaks of it as the proper matter of thanksgiving, that though they suffered so much as to require their being strengthened with all might, according to the glorious power of God; yet it was all well enough: they were so far from having cause to complain, that they had a great deal of reason rather to give thanks to God. As if he had said, "It is a pure, a bright, and lightsome region that you are going to, and you need a great deal of refining before you come there, that you may be fit to be received. You need to have your spirits clarified, and freed from all impure dross, even while you are suffering so as that all patience is requisite unto it. You have therefore reason to give thanks, if God by this means is making you meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints, in their state of life, purity, and perfection."

This is also intimated in that place before mentioned. "I do not care," as if he had said, "though the outward man perisheth, while the inward is renewed day by day." And how is it renewed? Why thus, the "light affliction, which is but for a moment, works out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17. But how do afflictions work out a state of glory for us? In answer to this, we are to consider what notion we ought to have of the glory, whereof the saints are to be partakers hereafter; and by which they are to be made happy and blessed. Now it is not merely an objective glory that can make me happy, and be the satisfaction of my soul? that is, to have only some glorious sights to behold and look upon, and no more. For I can be happy by nothing, which is not united to me; and it is impossible any one should be blessed by a distant good, severed from themselves. And therefore we are told how we are to conceive of this glory, by St. Paul, who tells us it is a glory that is to be revealed in us, Rom. viii. 18. It is a glory most intimate to the subjects, and by which they are made glorious; not merely to be seen, but what they themselves are to bear: and therefore the apostle says it is εἰς ἡμᾶς, to be revealed in, or into us. It is that impress of the Divine glory, which is imparted and communicated from God to the soul, upon the vision of his blessed face; by which it is transformed perfectly now into the same likeness, as much as a creature can be like to him. Here is the glory, by which souls are made happy and blessed at last; and into the stated participation of which they are now actually called by Jesus Christ.

Now consider this glory so, as here explained, and it is very apprehensible how the light afflictions, that are but for a moment, do work it out for us. For they gradually refine the soul after the image of the Divine nature, make it more and more conformed to God; and according to the degree of the progress to which this refining work is carried on by such means while we are in this world, is our participation of the Divine glory hereafter. According to the capacity of the vessel, which God hath designed to be a vessel of glory and honour, is the measure of that glory which is to be put into it in the other state. But certainly by this refinement, to which afflictions are so subservient and useful in this world, the soul is made more and more capable and receptive; it is refined and enlarged at once. And thus it is more suitable to that state of glory to which we are called, which was to be proved, in order to show that it is more desirable to have sufferings improved, than to be freed from those sufferings themselves. Therefore now to apply this, as the time will allow;

I. We may learn hence, that we have another interest to concern ourselves about, besides that of our flesh or outward man. For otherwise it could never be understood how that, which is really an offence and prejudice to the outward man, should be an advantage to us in any other respect. As chastising afflictions by a paternal rod are natural evils, but yet inflicted on us for spiritual good. It is plain then, I say, we have another interest about which we ought to be concerned.

II. We may further collect; that these two interests, as they are very distinct, so they are ordinarily, too, very opposite to one another. That may make for the advantage of the spirit or inward man, which is greatly to the hurt and prejudice of the outward; and that which contributes to the gratification and pleasure of the outward man, may be very prejudicial to the inward. These are opposite interests, and we should consider them as such; and it would be of very great advantage to us, through our

whole course, to carry this as a fixed thought with us, "That the interests of my flesh, and of my spirit, are often stated in such an actual opposition to one another, that what makes for the advantage of the one, is frequently hurtful and prejudicial to the other." For if we would but allow ourselves to consider this, and admit it as a fixed thought, then it would not, upon every occasion that occurs to us, be our first concern and care; namely, "What shall I do to save my flesh and outward man? how shall I order matters that all may go well with that?" especially as there is another interest in myself, which may be provided for by the methods of Providence, that cast a severe and threatening aspect upon the other. And,

III. We may hence further learn, that the interest of the inward man is much more considerable than that of the flesh; which is the subject of the supposed sufferings, of which the apostle speaks, who puts up a very solemn request for spiritual advantage by such sufferings. He that loved them so well does not pray, that they might not suffer at all; but only after that they had suffered a little, they might be perfected and established. Certainly our spiritual interest is more considerable than our outward interest; and we should be willing that the interest and advantage of the flesh should be sacrificed to the interest of the soul; and that which I am willing to part with for another, must certainly be less considerable than that other. But,

IV. We may also learn, that sufferings are not novelties among the people of God in this world; neither are they to be looked upon as novel, even the sharpest and severest of them. The apostle directs those, to whom he writes, in the same chapter, that they should look with another kind of eye upon an afflicted state, than to suppose it a new thing, or as if nothing like it was known before. In the verse before my text, he intimates that they only suffered such afflictions as were common to others in the world, and such as many good men had endured, who were gone before them. And in another place of this epistle he admonishes them not to think strange even of the fiery trial, ("which," says he, "is to try you,") as if some strange thing had happened to them; assuring them that after that they had suffered awhile, the Spirit of glory and of God should rest upon them. That they should suffer was reckoned upon, taken for granted; and therefore it speaks a very strange spirit among us, if the thoughts of any sufferings should presently startle us. What! are we grown so soft and delicate, that we must meet with no afflictions in the world? as if it were a more wonderful thing that we should suffer, than others who have gone before us in former days. Wherein are we better than they?

But I pass on to another use, which may be for conviction to us, who seem to be so much of another judgment from the apostle, in this important case. And there are two or three things which I would here premise. As,

I. That there is no present question depending whether we should simply desire to be freed from affliction, yea or no; or whether, considering the matter simply in itself, we may not judge it desirable to be free from affliction. This is not the thing concerned in the present discourse, nor any part of it. It will be easily acknowledged, that the sufferings we speak of are natural evils; and evil as such, or in itself, cannot be eligible to a reasonable nature. But the thing we speak of is, that when these two matters are compared; to wit, freedom from afflictions, and spiritual advantage by them, we should not prefer the former; not but that a freedom from suffering, simply in itself and alone, is a desirable thing; but compared with the spiritual advantages arising from thence, is not to be preferred or desired by us. And,

II. I again premise, that by judgment here I do not intend a mere notional, but a practical, judgment. For I make no question but we are all of the apostle's mind without any more ado; and agree with him that it is better to have spiritual advantage by affliction, than to be free from it. But when we speak of a practical judgment, here it is that our error lies, and wherein we are to be rectified. The practical judgment is that, to which the temper of a man's soul doth correspond; that which is of such power and prevalency with a man, as to impress its own likeness, or somewhat correspondent to itself upon his own heart, upon his will, his choice, and affections; and so consequently influence the course of his walking and conversation. The thing therefore I complain of, in this case, is, that the temper of our spirits is so unsuitable; so unlike the apostle's judgment in this case, that spiritual improvement by suffering is more desirable than freedom from it. These things being premised, I shall evince, I. What there is a failure among us in these things, particularly that we are not like-minded with the apostle in this matter; and then, 2. Show you the great evil of it, that is, of our error in this regard.

I. I am to evince that there is a great failure or mistake in our judgment, if we are not of the same mind with the apostle, as to this point. And this I would do by putting a few queries to you, by which you may be able to convict yourselves wherein the matter does require, and will admit. As,

(1.) Whether are we more sensible of the external calamities which befall us, than of inward spiritual distempers? Suppose a person by some surprising providence lose all he had in the world, is reduced to the utmost distress and necessity, whether is not this more grievous, or more sensibly felt, than inward spiritual evils? "Do I so cry and bemoan myself, because of the body of sin and death, as I do when I have lost my friend, my husband, my wife, my child, my house, my estate, my pleasant delectable things in this world?" In such cases we cry out as undone persons; we mourn, and refuse to be comforted. "But I have an earthly, vain heart; a heart that will not be brought to live in love and communion with God; unapt to prayer, to meditation, to spiritual commerce with heaven." Do we so sensibly complain upon these accounts, I say, as men are apt to do under the sharp and acute sense of external evils? This shows which way the poize of our spirits inclines, and we may plainly discern it by urging ourselves with this question.

(2.) Whether do we more dread and fear the continuance and increase of inward distempers, or external sufferings? which, I say, is more the matter of our dread? I have a near evil that hath pressed me, and is like to do so still; a carnal, stupid, terrene, and corrupt heart; whether do I dread the continuance of this, or the increase of it, more than I do the continuance or increase of any external sufferings that are upon me, or may threaten me? If you should be told that there is danger of being devoured in all your external concerns by a formidable enemy; or that you are in danger of fire, of great losses, of coming into a decayed state in respect of your trade and traffic; which things would you think of with most dread? Should not we dread more the thoughts of being turned out of all, driven from house and home, of going to seek our bread in desolate places, of wandering in wildernesses and deserts, lurking in dens and holes of the earth? Should we not, I say, think of these things with more dread, than we ordinarily do of that close, latent enemy, that lies lurking at our very hearts and souls? namely, infidelity within, and disaffection to God; a proneness to depart from him, and a heart bent to backslide? Which sort of evils are we most apt to dread?

(3.) Which should we consider with more complacency, an external state of things just agreeable to such an idea as we could form to ourselves in our own minds; or an inward frame of holiness, agreeable to the idea which the blessed God hath set before us in the word of truth? which, I say, should we think of with more delight? Suppose we should have the prospect set before us of such a state of things in outward respects as we could wish; garners yielding all kind of store, nothing but prosperity, pleasure, and peace in our dwellings; all the liberty our hearts could desire, to do and walk according to our own inclinations: and frame again the prospect of an enlightened, lively mind and spirit; full of God, full of heaven, full of Divine love, full of spiritual strength, vigour, activity, and fervour in all holy exercises whatsoever; and which, I pray, of these seemeth the more grateful prospect to us? Or which is the more taking thing with our hearts, upon the view of the one and the other? to have in outward respects, all the opulence and prosperity our hearts could wish on the one hand; and on the other, to have hearts

disentangled and freed from sin, so as that we may go to God upon all occasions with freedom, or without restraint, and always converse with him with delight?

Such questions as these closely urged may convince some, as the case may require, how much they differ from this apostle; and are of a different sense and estimate from him, in reference to what we are speaking of. And if there be such a disagreeing judgment in this case, then we are to consider,

2. The great evil of it. And this I might represent to you very largely; but at present, take some account of it only in these few particulars.

(1.) It speaks great injudiciousness in the matter of discerning between things that differ, and which doth more excel. It is one great part of the work and business of judgment to distinguish between things, that are of different value from one another; and he is a very injudicious man, who is not able to prefer those things that are more excellent, which when compared and judged of do vastly differ: as it would argue very great injudiciousness, indeed, if I could not tell which of the two to prefer, a gay feather, or a rich diamond. The odds is so vastly great here, that it must needs argue a great want of discerning the just value of things: and so it must in like manner if we cannot tell which is to be rather chosen, a little freedom from pain and affliction, or that which is a great advantage and gain to the inward man.

(2.) It argues very great unbelief of the truth of God's word in reference to this very case. It is expressly said, All things shall work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose, Rom. viii. 28. But we do not believe this: for it is plain that if we did believe it, it were then altogether impossible we should reject or less value that, which at the same time we believe to be the greater good. For it is spiritual good that is there meant, which is to be wrought out by external natural evils. And can we tolerate in ourselves an habitual indisposition to take God's word? Sure, methinks, we should look upon this as a most intolerable thing.

(3.) It argues a very low and mean temper of spirit, when we do not know how to value and savour most our best and most excellent good. It shows that we have a very vile esteem of our own souls, when we are more concerned about a clod of clay, a lump of flesh, than we are about them, or their benefit and advantage. And,

(4.) It argues most unworthy thoughts of the wisdom and goodness of the providence of God, with respect to those sufferings and afflictions we speak of. It looks as if we did not really believe, that they are brought upon us for some greater good, than any we can lose, or be indamaged in, by them; or that we thought that neither wisdom, or goodness, conducted the course of affairs towards us. What account can we give, or what reasons produce, why the course of Divine Providence should run so and so, (as it many times has done in the world,) as to cast smiling fair aspects on the worst sort of men, and frowning severe aspects on the better sort? Hence men have been apt to make very sinister interpretations and applications. Thus the prophet Malachi charges some in his time: "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words: yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" Mal. ii. 17. And truly, though we have explicit formed thoughts otherwise, yet the sense of our hearts will seem to be agreeable to such thoughts as these, if we tolerate in ourselves the error which I am detecting, and representing the evil of; that is, of supposing that it were better to be freed from afflictions, than to have them improved to our gain and advantage. Either we must think, that afflictions come upon the people of God by chance, and so that God has no design at all by such an ordering of things; or else, that he afflicts his people out of hatred and perfect ill-will; both which are monstrous and horrid thoughts. It were altogether an unaccountable thing, upon the whole matter, why the course of the dispensations of God's providence should be as it ordinarily is, that the saints should be exposed to sufferings and afflictions, while the wicked live in ease, prosperity, and pleasure; I say, this were unaccountable, if it could not be said that there is some greater good to be wrought out by these sufferings, which shall abundantly compensate and countervail them. But if we persist in the error I speak of, we lose the only way of solving this difficulty of providence.

(5.) To represent the evil of this error yet more, I would observe, that it argues much impatience and weakness of spirit: for patience is passive power, fortitude, or ability to suffer. It argues very great weakness when we had a great deal rather not be good, than suffer affliction. Sure it is a sign that we can suffer nothing. And if there be such a disposition to faint in the day of adversity, our strength is small; as saith the wise man; and this is not only our great infelicity but our sin.

(6.) It is a tacit choosing of sin, rather than affliction; and certainly that is a very bad thing. It is manifestly so, if we consider and look upon the case as it is. "Let me be impure still, drossy and terrene still, unlike to God still; so my flesh may but escape, my sense be gratified and indulged, and incur no prejudice."

(7.) Lastly, It argues a great deal of pride; and also insensibleness both of what we deserve and what we need. If any can by no means bring their spirits to think of suffering, there commonly lies at the bottom an insensibility of what they are; what wretched hearts and untoward natures they have. It is little apprehended what we deserve, and what we need, when we look upon such an aspect of providence as unsuitable; which threatens us with suffering, and is like to prove afflictive. This should be the sense of our hearts: "Alas! whatever I suffer, it is much less than my iniquity deserves! Yea, if I suffer never so severely, it is but what the exigency of my case requires. My heart is very sleepy and dead, and needeth rousing; it is very drossy, and needs a hot furnace." And we should think so if we thought of ourselves aright, and if too good an opinion of ourselves did not blind our eyes. I might mention several things more, but the time permits not. I shall only desire hereupon in the close, to recommend two things;

1. That we should fix this judgment of the apostle in ourselves, as the standard and measure of our own. I judge thus, as the apostle Paul says; "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us," Rom. viii. 18. As if he had said, "This is my logic, I compute so upon the whole matter; and this is the result I come to, having considered it thoroughly, and viewed it on every side." Let us settle our judgment of this in like manner, and record it: "This was my mind at such a time, and I came then to be convinced of the truth of it. I will never alter it, till I see better reason (which I suppose I never shall) for laying it down, than I had to take it up." And,

2. Agreeably hereunto let us direct the scope, current, and end of our prayers, on such days as these, as the apostle here doth his. It is necessary our hearts should be brought to an agreement with our judgments. What is the good I should most desire, and wish, and seek for my soul this day? If this be a right judgment which we have now heard of, it will be very good for us, at such times as these, and even at all times, in our prayers, to say: "I pray not that I may be freed from suffering; that is not the great thing I request. As to that I refer myself to the Divine pleasure, and acquiesce in the determination of Providence. But, O Lord! I have another request to make unto thee, that whatsoever shall befall me, I may have more of thine image; more life and strength; vigour and heavenliness; fitted for holiness in this world, and blessedness in the other. And then let my sufferings be what they will, so they be but subservient to this great design, of procuring my spiritual advantage."

And we pray upon pretty sure grounds when we pray thus. We do not need to doubt whether this be agreeable to the Divine will or no. We are upon a certainty. If I should insist peremptorily in prayer upon this and that temporal good for myself, or the community I belong unto, it may be said; "Where is the promise? and thereupon, where is the faith of being heard in such a prayer?" But I am sure I pray agreeably to his own will, when I pray, that I may be brought into spiritual prosperity. I am sure therein to suit with what he himself doth com-

mand. This will be acceptable and well-pleasing to God; and turn to my ineffable good and advantage, both here and hereafter.

SERMON V.*

Isaiah lxiii. 10.

But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.

IN the foregoing part of this chapter you have a representation, as it is generally agreed, of our Lord Christ in triumph; returning as a conqueror from his victories, with garments discoloured with the blood of the slain. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." The enemies, whom the Messiah is supposed to have engaged against, are represented and set forth by Edom, and the metropolis thereof, Bozrah; because they were the next enemies to the church of God, mostly confined within Palestine, upon which Idumea bordered, and who were continually vexatious, and afflictive to them: by these, I say, are the spiritual enemies represented, which our Lord Jesus Christ was to set himself against. And so I have taken notice of a certain author (though I profess not to like all his allegories) who allegorically speaks of the carnal part, under the name of Edom. "The mind or spirit ought to follow God unweariedly, without deviating or turning aside, lest he come into Edom:" alluding no doubt to the word itself edom or earth, as the name of Adam comes from the same root. Against these spiritual enemies, that readily fall in with our carnal earthly part, did our Lord Jesus Christ use his prowess, unto a glorious victory and triumph. This being represented, how ready the Redeemer was to undertake on the behalf of them, who were to be defended and saved by him; a reflection is made upon God's former dealings on the behalf of this people, and their unequal carriage and deportment towards him, in the seventh, eighth, and ninth verses. But I cannot go distinctly over them. Unto which this complaint is subjoined; "But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them."

There are two things, which present themselves to our view and consideration, from these words: namely, that the rebellions of a people professing the name of God, are very vexatious to his Spirit; and that such vexations engage him against them as their enemy. To speak to both these together, for the sake of despatch, I shall do only these two things.

FIRST, Inquire concerning the evil done; that is, vexing the Spirit of God, by rebelling against him. And,

SECONDLY, Concerning the evil suffered; and that is, his turning against them, so as to become their enemy. Upon which the use of all will ensue.

FIRST, As to the evil done, we are to inquire in the first place concerning the nature of it; and then, in the next place, the cause thereof.

I. Let us consider the nature of the evil done, namely, the vexing of the Spirit of God. We are not to understand it as if the blessed Spirit of God was capable of such vexation, as we are in ourselves; that is, of real perturbation or passion. That, common reason will tell us, the Divine nature is not capable of. But yet notwithstanding, this doth not signify nothing; there is some great thing lies under this expression, which we may conceive of in these two particulars.

(1.) His will is really crossed; somewhat is done, that is against his will. I mean his will concerning our duty, not his will concerning the event; against his preceptive will, and consequently against that good, which he wills to us upon the supposition of our compliance with his just and righteous will. He really wills many things in reference to men, which he doth not will effectually to procure that they shall be done. He wills our obedience and duty; and, as this is connected with it, he wills also our felicity and happiness. The will of God in the former part, is expressed by his precepts; in the latter, by his promises, so far as they are of a general tenor. But there is a will of his in reference to the event, of which it may be truly said, "Who hath resisted his will," Rom. ix. 19. When the commands of God are disobeyed, and persons by their disobedience rush upon vengeance, and put themselves under the effects of Divine displeasure; then is that done, which is averse to the legislative will of God, as it is signified to us by his word. And this is implied in the expression in the text of his being vexed; namely, that there is a matter or object lying before him, at which he may take offence, or resent.

(2.) It is implied also, that he doth apprehend and resent this matter; though without any commotion or perturbation. He resents it so as not to look upon it as a matter of indifference. It does not escape his notice, as profane, atheistical spirits are apt to fancy; who say, "The Lord shall not see, neither will the God of Jacob regard it," Psal. xciv. 7. No, there is no such thing to be imagined. God takes notice of the matter, and resents the wrong done to him; yet so calm is the resentment, as every way agrees with the felicity of the Divine nature. It is this which he lays up in store, as it is emphatically expressed by Moses, and seals up among his treasures, Deut. xxxii. 34. This he keeps by him as the just matter of a controversy, which he will manage; and will animadvert upon it in his own time, and when a fit and proper season shall come. So much then are we to conceive as spoken of God, or of the Spirit of God, under the expression of its being vexed.

2. We are now to inquire concerning the cause of this vexation; or show, what it is that thus vexes the Spirit of God. We may well understand in the general that sin does so; being in its own nature a direct contrariety to his good, and holy, and acceptable will. But especially rebellion against the Spirit of God is vexatious, which is a higher pitch of sin, and implies a continued course of disobedience. Rebellion speaks a prevalent and continued malignity of sin. "They rebelled, and vexed his Spirit."

But to be more particular here; we may understand what sin is more especially vexing to the Spirit of God, if we allow ourselves to consider what the titles and attributes of this Spirit in Scripture are. By these we shall know what is the tendency of the office and operations of the blessed Spirit of God; and so more easily conceive what tends to vex, and to grieve it, as you know the expression is elsewhere. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption," Eph. iv. 30.

(1.) The Spirit of God is styled the Spirit of truth, John xiv. 17. It is therefore very grievous and vexing to this Spirit, to have a light esteem of divine truth; to be indifferently affected towards it; to have a loose adherence to it; an easiness to part with it; and much more a proneness to oppose it, and run away from it. This, I say, must needs be vexing to the Spirit of God. And because I foresee I shall be able to speak but little to the use, I desire you as we go along to make reflections on each head; and to consider how far you may suppose yourselves guilty, and how far this age (professing the truth of God) is guilty of vexing the Spirit in this and other respects. Again,

(2.) It is mentioned in Scripture under the name of the Spirit of grace, Heb. x. 29. It is therefore very vexing to this blessed Spirit, when that grace, of which it is the author, and which it is its office and business to convey and apply, or effectually to reveal, is rejected; when in that Gospel under which we live, and which is the ministration of the Spirit, grace is offered and despised; when there are few that express any regard to, or any desire or value of, the Spirit of God; this is a most vexing thing to this Spirit.

(3.) It is called the Spirit of faith, 2 Cor. iv. 13. Infidelity therefore must needs be reckoned a most vexing

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thing to this Spirit. When persons continue under the Gospel in obstinate unbelief; and the great things, there revealed and discovered to us, are but as a tale that is told; or regarded no more than we would regard the word of a child; a most vexing thing to the Spirit of God this must be understood to be. Moreover,

(4.) It is a Spirit of contrition and repentance. This is an effect that is attributed to this Spirit as the author of it. The Spirit of grace and supplication shall be poured forth, as it is promised in Zechariah, (Zech. xii. 10.) and then it is that souls shall mourn over him whom they have pierced, and be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. An impenitent hard heart, a heart that cannot repent, is a most vexatious thing to the Spirit of God. We cannot conceive a greater vexation to him, than to find hearts hard as rocks and stones, under the dispensation of the everlasting Gospel.

(5.) It is styled the Spirit of love; which is the great principle that disposes and inclines the soul towards God. He hath given us the Spirit of his love, (2 Tim. i. 7.) that principle which influenceth, and is the life and soul of all the communion there is between the blessed God and those that belong to him; which itself therefore is called "the communion of the Holy Ghost," 2 Cor. xiii. 14. A cold heart then towards God, a heart that is disaffected to him, that keeps at a distance from him, that will not be engaged in sweet communion with him through love, is a most vexing thing to his Spirit. Again it is in the

(6.) Place, called a Spirit of power and of life. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, (John vi. 63.) says our Lord. And again St. Paul tells us, God hath given to us the Spirit of power, 2 Tim. i. 7. It is a very vexatious thing to this Spirit, when any indulge themselves in deadness of heart; when they allow themselves to be formal, lukewarm, and indifferent; neither cold nor hot, as it was said of the Laodicean church, (Rev. iii. 15, 16.) whom our Lord threatens therefore to spew out of his mouth; a strong expression of his being vexed, and of his resenting the matter with very high displeasure.

(7.) It is styled the Spirit of holiness, Rom. i. 4. And here in our text it is said, They rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit. This is a most vexing thing, when persons professing the Christian name indulge themselves in a liberty to walk at random, are impatient of restraints; affect libertinism; have not refrained their feet, but have loved to wander; therefore the Lord doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins, Jer. xiv. 10. When no bonds can be endured; when the yoke and burden of our Lord Jesus Christ are apprehended uneasy, grievous, and intolerable, and the resolution is come to this, "Let us cast away his cords, let us throw off his bonds from us, he shall not reign over us;" when the law of sin and death contesteth to that height against the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, as to engage us to comply with the lustings of the flesh; this is a most vexatious thing to the Spirit of our purity and holiness.

(8.) It is a heavenly Spirit, and the design of all its gracious operations upon souls is to fit them for heaven. "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." 2 Cor. v. 5. And again says the apostle, "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given us of God;" even those things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," 1 Cor. ii. 12, 9. A worldly heart therefore is a vexation to this Spirit; that is, when we mingle with, and suffer ourselves to be swallowed up of the spirit of this world; the inclinations and tendencies of which spirit are earthly, and running downwards; while the Spirit of God is aiming to lift us up towards God and heaven. Again,

(9.) It is a Spirit of prayer. So it is called in Scripture, the Spirit of supplication, Zech. xii. 10. It is the great business of this Spirit to act souls, and to raise them to God, in the way of prayer. It is a very great vexation therefore to the Holy Spirit, when persons grow to a prayerless disposition; do not care to converse with God in this duty; are slow in the business of prayer; either not minding it, or doing it as though they did it not; this, I say, is a very vexing thing. So he interprets it, and speaks of it with resentment; "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; thou art weary of me, O Israel," Isa. xliii. 22 When persons, who formerly loved prayer, are now grown out of love with it; when those, that have taken pleasure in being in their closets, and shut up in corners, are now grown strange to him, and care not to come nigh him in that way; this is especially to provoke and grieve the Spirit. The very bent and tendency of such a soul runs now directly counter to his proper design and business; which is to engage the souls of men with God in that great duty, wherein they may enjoy continually a fruitful and useful commerce with him. But they decline, and will not be brought to it by this means. This is also a very bitter vexation. And again,

(10.) It is a Spirit of sincerity and uprightness; and wherever it obtains, it makes men upright and sincere. Thus it is called the Spirit of a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7. Hypocrisy therefore, or a deceitful dealing with the blessed God in matters of religion, is a most vexatious thing to his Spirit. When there is only a show and appearance of love, and devotedness to him; and this only made a cover to a false disloyal heart; this is an abomination unto God. He loves truth in the inward parts, and his countenance beholdeth the upright; giving them pleasant, smiling, complacential looks, which are plain indications of his approving and being well pleased with them. So again, he cannot but frown with displeasure where there is falsehood and deceit; where there is an unsound heart; a latent hypocrisy, as if we designed to impose upon him by a cheat and show; to deceive and mock him, who cannot be deceived, neither will be mocked.

(11.) It is a Spirit of union, peace, and meekness, among them that belong to God. It is designed to form the hearts of believers to these things; and so far as his Spirit is given, one heart and one way are also given; as we may see from Ezekiel xi. 19, compared with other scriptures. Animosities among the people of God; heartburnings, whether they be upon a common, or a particular, personal account; are the most vexing things imaginable to the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of union, peace, and concord, and the very soul of the mystical body. It is a very vexatious thing when one member of this body goes to fight with another; and it may be, some against the common interest of the whole. And it is, in the

Last place, a Spirit of sobriety and temperance, in opposition to grossly sensual lusts. It is a very vexatious thing to the Spirit of God, when among a people that profess his name, there is a general profusion, and running into vile sensual lusts. Some are sensual, not having the Spirit, Jude 19. The connexion is very observable. Whereas God gives his Spirit, to form a people to that purity, that they may be different from the rest of the world; they allow themselves to run into the same excesses of riot. And I believe there are few of us that ever heard or read of an age, in which there were more gross instances of impurity among professors, than the present. How many instances do we hear of this kind! It must needs be very vexatious to the Holy Spirit, whose design it is to form a people unto God, to bear up his name in opposition to a commonly dissolute and debauched age.

You see then as to the evil done, what it is, and what is the cause of it; namely, sin, and more especially rebellion in those instances wherein the designs of the Spirit (as represented to us by various titles and attributes in Scripture) are most opposed. We are therefore now,

SECONDLY, To inquire concerning the evil suffered hereupon; or which we may expect will be inflicted on persons on this account; namely, his turning against them so as to become their enemy. Here we should speak distinctly,

I. Concerning the nature of this evil; and,

II. Concerning the issue of it, and how justly it does ensue in this case.

I. Let us consider the nature of this evil, and show what is imported in it. And here something is expressed, and something is implied in the words of my text; "therefore he turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." It is implied, that he shall cease doing for such a people

as he hath done If he was wont formerly to be a bountiful, liberal benefactor, he shall stop his hand. And especially it is to be expected, that we should be so dealt with in that very respect, wherein we have been vexatious. That is, Have we vexed the Spirit of God? then it is natural to expect that the Spirit of God will retire. This is certainly implied in his becoming an enemy to us. If he become an enemy, it is not likely he should hold that friendly commerce, which sometimes he hath done. If God become our enemy, his Spirit shall withdraw from us; shall not strive nor wrestle with us. And then also these words express some positive evils against such persons; which I might instance in many particulars, but cannot now mention them.

II. I am to consider how justly this penal evil does ensue in this case; namely, that God should turn against those who rebel and vex his Spirit. This is to be collected from the greatness of the evil done. Consider therefore how just cause and matter of provocation this injurious dealing with the Spirit of God doth carry in it. Particularly,

1. Consider that this is very despiteful dealing, to do that which will vex his very Spirit. Sinners of this kind are expressly said to do "despite unto the Spirit of grace," Heb. x. 29. And surely to do that, which must directly contradict the very business and design of the Spirit, is a most spiteful kind of wickedness.

2. Consider that this is a wickedness, wherein the most immediate kind of affront is offered unto God. He deals with men in a more distant way when he deals with them in his providence, or the outward manifestation of his will in his word. But when he comes to deal with the spirits of men, and to have his work within them, and their spirits resist and oppose him; there is then a most immediate contest between the blessed God and them. And we cannot but think this is a high provocation unto God, and reckon upon this issue, that he must hereupon become our enemy. And,

3. It is to be considered that sinning so as more directly to vex the Spirit of God, does carry with it a withstanding of the Spirit in that which is its proper office: which is a great aggravation to the wickedness. It is one thing when I withstand a person in a thing, which he does casually and by the by; and another when I withstand him in that which is his stated business. It is, you know, reckoned a high affront among men to be resisted and withstood in an office. To oppose an ordinary, private person, is but a small matter in comparison of affronting an officer, in the execution of his office. The Spirit of God, when it is about the work of diffusing Gospel light and grace, is in the work of its own office. And when persons do such things as are vexatious in this respect; that is, oppose and withstand the Holy Spirit in its proper stated business, this must needs be highly provoking. It is a bold and insolent affront done to the blessed God; and therefore may well infer upon such a people that dreadful thing, that God should turn against them, and become their enemy.

Now as to the use (though these matters have been more lightly touched and considered than the matter required, for want of time) we may infer the following things:

I. We may infer hence, that among a people professing the name of God, the Spirit of God is wont to be at work; and where it is not doing any work, we cannot suppose it to be thus vexatiously resisted, and contended against. It was the testimony that Stephen bore against this people, even dying, that they constantly rebelled, and vexed the Holy Spirit. "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye," Acts vii. 51. Now what doth this imply? Inasmuch as it is said expressly that there was a war kept up against the Spirit of God, from age to age, and from generation to generation; it implies, that as they were from age to age a professing people, so from age to age the Spirit of God was still, more or less, striving with them; or else how could they be said always to resist? Where there is no striving, there is no resisting. We ought therefore to consider this, that ordinarily where the Gospel is professed, there the Spirit of God is at work, more or less, though not always so as to prevail. It is a free Spirit; and works, as the wind blows, where it listeth, and to what degree also. But I conceive, that in all those who live under the Gospel, the Spirit of God moves at some times, in one degree or another. For it is hardly to be imagined, that any should wear out a life's time under the Gospel, and not, one time or other, have the injection of some good thought, some check or rebuke, as to their evil course; and some inclination, at least, to return, and alter their course. And I doubt not but there is a parity between these two cases; that is, as in matters of consolation the Spirit of God co-operates with our spirits, so he doth in matters of conviction, whether it ever becomes effectual or no. So that I reckon it most safe, and most honourable to God, when any injection of that kind is made in the conscience of any man, that lives under the Gospel, to ascribe it to the Spirit in its common operations.

II. We are hereupon to reflect and consider, whether this may not be much our case and the case of the generality at this time, even thus like the Jews to have vexed the holy Spirit of God, which hath been for a long season dealing with us. Recount with yourselves the particulars mentioned; and think whether there has not been a great deal of vexation given the Spirit of God in those several ways. But I cannot stand now to remind you of them.

III. Let us be hereupon persuaded to hasten the taking up this controversy (for it is a dreadful thing to have it depending) by humbling and abasing ourselves in the dust, before the Lord; for ourselves on our own account, and on the behalf of the generality of those among whom we dwell. Surely this ought to be much the business of such a day as this, even deeply to humble ourselves before the Lord, for the vexation given to his Spirit; and that our temper, course, and spirits run so directly counter to him. We should not want matter of humiliation for many such days, if we did but seriously consider this case; though every day should be kept a fast, and as a day of humiliation on this account. And indeed it is sad, when the matter of humiliation is so very great and manifest, there should be any appearance of declining these occasions, or of shyness in closing with them. We desire to bless God for it, that it is in the hearts of any to join us, but yet it cannot but be observed that there is too great a coolness; and many persons are easily diverted, it is to be feared, from closing with such occasions as these. And methinks it is more especially to be observed, that but few masters of families do appear before God, at such times and on such occasions; who might represent their families, and in the name of them come and lie prostrate at the foot of the throne of grace.

Give me leave but to reflect upon a passage, which is not unworthy of our notice upon this occasion. They are the words of those idolatrous women that burned incense to the queen of heaven, who said to the prophet Jeremiah, "When we burnt incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink-offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink-offerings unto her without our men?" Jer. xliv. 19. "Did not they come and fall in with us?" It is a sad case, if the men of our times cannot be as forward to fall in with the ways and methods of atoning God, and pacifying his displeasure against us, as they were in those days in ways of so high provocation!

IV. Let us apply ourselves particularly and with great earnestness to supplicate the continuance of the Spirit, where it remains breathing in us; and the restoring it, where it had been in any measure restrained. O, how loud and importunate should our cries be upon this account! It is a fearful thing to lie under the guilt of continual vexation to the Spirit of God. You know there is a particular accent put upon such wickedness. You know there is such a thing as the sin against the Holy Ghost, in an eminent sense; and we had need to take heed of every gradual approach unto it. I do not think that every sin against the Spirit of God, is that sin against the Holy Ghost; but we had need, I say, to look to ourselves as to any gradual approaches to it. For how great is the censure laid upon that sin! It is therefore a fearful thing to have our heart and way bent against the way and course, the tendencies and motions, of the Holy Ghost.

And when we consider the matter in this light, what reason have we to cry out, as we find the Psalmist does!

"Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me," Ps. li. 11. It is a great matter God hath against us, when he hath this to charge us with, namely, the vexing of his Spirit. It is a part of the charge against Sodom, that they vexed Lot's righteous spirit, 2 Peter ii. 8. It is mentioned as a high aggravation of their wickedness, that they vexed the spirit of a righteous man. But how much more heinous a thing is it to vex the Spirit of God! Is it (says the prophet Isaiah) a small thing to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Isa. vii. 13. And the more we apprehend the heinousness of this matter, the louder should our cry be, "Take not away thy holy Spirit from us, that Spirit, which we have vexed, grieved, and done so much to quench." And to this purpose consider, before I conclude, these two things.

1. The exigence of the case, and the necessity of having this Spirit. Alas! what will become of us when this Spirit is gone, quite gone, and breathes no more? What do we conceive of ourselves, we that carry about with us bodies of flesh, animated by a living soul? What becomes of us when that spirit retires, and is gone? Into what noisome putrid carcasses do we turn in a short time! And what a miserable carcass will that church become, out of which the Spirit of God is gone! a body without a soul! an unmoving breathless thing! If God should leave us the Gospel, and the external frame of ordinances, what will that avail us when the Spirit is gone? The matter would be with us, as with some noble stately mansion-house, that is deserted of its great inhabitant. There you may come in, and walk from room to room, and find nobody, where there was once great resort, and a great deal of splendour, pomp, and joy, but now, nothing but desolation! Such a thing will that church be, out of which the Spirit of God, the great Inhabitant, is gone. You might have gone to that ordinance and the other, and have met with life; but now no such thing: there are the empty rooms inhabited by no one.

We should therefore so apprehend the exigence of the case, that our spirits may be awakened and stirred up, even with the utmost importunity, to obviate and avert, as much as in us lies, so great a calamity, as this, and so great a death. The presence and influence of the Spirit would stand us in the stead of a great deal of mercy of other kinds. It was supposed, that to have ministers and teachers in the church would overbalance a great calamity, where it is said; "Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers," Isa. xxx. 20. But how much external misery would it outweigh, to have this Spirit (so teaching as none does) remaining among us! So that it may well become us still to be praying, "Lord, whatever thou doest, withdraw not thy Spirit from us! Rather tear our flesh, pour our blood like water upon the ground, than cease to be pouring out thy Spirit among us!" We should make this much the design of all our prayers on such a day as this.

It may be many are come before the Lord this day, to try to deprecate and avert that wrath, which threatens us with external calamities; or that they may do something for the saving their estates, and their pleasant delectable things: but this is a low design. Rather say, "Let all these things go, if thou wilt, Lord, but let thy Spirit remain! let that breathe, and work in us still; and do with us, in all external respects, what thou wilt."

Let us labour thus, I say, to apprehend the necessity of our case. It is not necessary that we should be rich, or in quiet, or at liberty; it is not necessary we should have such and such external accommodations; but it is necessary we should have the Spirit: for they that have not the Spirit of Christ are none of his, Rom. viii. 9. And again,

2. Apprehend too (wherewith I close) the possibility of succeeding well, in our strivings and wrestlings with God, yet to obtain more of his Spirit. It is itself a Spirit of grace, and supplication; and according as it is complied with in that, which is its proper business and office, so we may expect more and more plentiful effusions of it. We are therefore to look upon this as a hopeful case, if we set ourselves to strive with God for his Spirit, that it shall not withdraw. But if it be an indifferent matter with us, then are we lost before we are aware. We feel death creeping upon us by degrees, and we regret it not; death drawing near our vitals, but we mind it not.

This is a sad case; but if we, feeling a decay and languishment, cry with importunity to God, the case is not hopeless. He hath said, that he will give the Spirit to them that ask for it; and that he will pour out his Spirit upon us. Christ represents it as given to a child, as a boon from the Father; and that this gift is comprehensive of all good things, Matt. vii. 11. compared with Luke xi. 13. Nay, that the Spirit is to us as bread to a child; for we can no more live without the Spirit, than a child can without bread.

If we would therefore set ourselves a craving in good earnest, and represent our case to the Father of spirits and mercies, his bowels would work towards us; and he would not long withhold his Spirit from them, whom he sees to want it, and ask for it. Therefore beg of God thus: "O Lord, behold a poor company of creatures gasping for life! thy Spirit is vital breath; we are ready to die, if thy Spirit breathe not. Pity thine own offspring, thou Father of mercies, and of all spirits!" Surely then this Spirit will return; for why should not we rest upon his promise, who has said, that God will give his holy Spirit to them that ask him?

And we may the more boldly ask, because we may suppose ourselves to be nearer those days, wherein there shall be a more general pouring out of the Spirit. And we might argue that those days are nearer indeed, if there was a more general, and importunate, and loud cry for this Spirit. This would import that a great measure of it is already come, and that far greater measures are coming. It would be an argument, that it would be a Spirit of consolation and joy, life and vigour; which would make religion a glorious thing, and Christians shine and live, both at once.

SERMON VI.*

James i. 22.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your ownselves.

THE limits of my time, since I intend to discourse to you only this hour upon this Scripture, will not allow me to reflect much upon the context; which is all suitable, and of the same piece with the words of the text itself. We have at the eighteenth verse a very high eulogy given us of the word of God, as that which is the divine seed and principle of the new birth; and out of which God's great and glorious work of the new creation doth result. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." Whereupon the exhortation, "Be swift to hear," (ver. 19.) is grounded; that is, be very covetous of all seasons to wait upon the dispensations of this word. And then, at last, we come to this caution here in the text; "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." Though hearing the word is the appointed means of this new creation; and is that which by divine designation is able to save the soul of a man, by virtue of that efficacy which many times accompanies it from God; yet this is not to be understood, as if it should do any such work upon them, who only give it to the hearing and no more. And therefore the apostle thinks it seasonable and necessary to give this intimation by the way, upon what terms we might expect so glorious an effect to be wrought by it: that is, supposing that we apply ourselves to attend upon it, with that earnest intention of the mind, as those who have a design to comply with, and to guide and govern their practice by the word they hear; otherwise all will come to nothing. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your ownselves."

We might recommend to you several propositions of

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divine truth from this Scripture; but we shall choose to collect and gather up all as much as we can into one, for the sake of greater despatch, which you may take thus.

That it is a miserable self-deception for any to be hearers of the word only, and not doers of it. And herein we shall speak to these three things, as previous to the improvement of it.

I. Show what it is to be a doer of the word.

II. What to be a hearer only. And,

III. Wherein those, of the latter sort, do so miserably deceive themselves.

I. We are to show what it is to be a doer of the word. The expression plainly imports a habit; according as we denominate every person that is of such or such a calling or trade, from the course and way of life which he follows. A doer of the word, (ποιήτης,) is not one that doth some single act, now and then, which the word enjoins or directs, but one whose wonted course, and the business of whose life, it is to obey the dictates of this word, and who governs his life and the tenor of his actions by it. Just as we find the phrase of a worker of iniquity is in the Old and New Testament, made use of to represent and hold forth to us the course of those persons who trade in sin. They are said to be sin-makers, as the expression κακοποιοῦντες doth emphatically note: their business is to work sin; and they do often exert their strength and power that way. So we are to understand in general, a doer of the word of God; that is, one whose business of his life it is to do it in a continual course. And this supposes and includes in it many things, which I shall briefly hint to you.

1. It doth suppose a design, a formed fixed design, that this shall be my course. Accordingly we have the Psalmist speaking to this purpose; "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments: I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end," Psal. cxix. 106, 112. As if he had said, "I purpose and intend so to do; and this is an intention I resolve to pursue, throughout my whole course, from which nothing shall divert me." So in like manner, when we attend upon the dispensation of the word, it should be with a settled design in our hearts, and a sincere purpose to learn somewhat in order to practice; to apply and accommodate to practice the truths we hear, and that are capable of being applied to this purpose.

2. It carries with it a very serious applying of our minds to understand what is the mind and will of God, which is held forth to us in his word: that we content not ourselves to have heard such and such things propounded to us; but that we distinctly apprehend the scope and drift of what we hear and what is the great thing aimed at in it. For we can never be doers of the word and will of God blindly, and in the dark. It is necessary that we understand and know it first. It is a way we are to walk in with open eyes. A good understanding (says the Psalmist) have all they that do his commandments, Ps. cxi. 10. He supposes a good understanding as necessary to the doing the commandments of God. We cannot do them, without having a right understanding of them. These words do also imply (which seems to be the particular sense of them) that a good understanding will certainly incline a man to keep his commandments; and that the keeping his commandments will argue him to have a good understanding. And indeed he is the wise man that understands this to be his interest, and accordingly makes it his business to know and practice the mind and will of God.

3. It implies the use of our judgment in hearing the word, in order to distinguish what is divine, and what is human. For God hath thought fit that it should be so dispensed in the world, by such hands and instruments as may too possibly admit somewhat that is human into the dispensation of it. It is so sometimes merely as to the manner of the dispensation. There is nothing of this treasure that is conveyed to us by such vessels, but it will, some way or other, taste of the vessel: and that which we are principally to attend and mind, is to close with that which is most substantial, as supposing it to be altogether divine. It is also true sometimes that there may be some error as to the matter, as well as the manner. And there our desire ought to be of the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby, even as new-born babes, 1 Pet. ii. 2. New-born babes have a kind of discerning if the milk be pure, or if there be any thing ill tasted or unsavoury in it. And there is a certain kind of taste and relish, which belongs to the new creature. "Cannot my taste (says Job) discern perverse things?" Job vi. 30. And this was the great commendation of the Bereans, That they searched the Scriptures in order to know, whether the things spoken to them by the apostles were of God or no, Acts xvii. 11. And it was noted to be a piece of generosity in them. They were more noble than they of Thessalonica, upon this account. We are to make use of our judgment: as the apostle prays for the Philippians, that they might abound in judgment and all sense, spiritual sense; that so they might discern the things that differ, or approve those which are more excellent, Phil. i. 9, 10.

4. It requires a great deal of reverence to be used in hearing the word. So to hear it as that we may be doers, requires a very reverential attendance upon it; as considering, that this is a revelation that comes from heaven, some part of which is now to be held forth to us. It is a divine light, which, through such a medium, is to shine forth to us. And there is certainly altogether a fault in this respect, among a great many professors of religion; that the reverence is wanting, which is due to those sacred records that go under the name of God's word, and which he claims and appropriates to himself, as his word. I have wondered, I confess, to see how among scholars, and learned men, there should be so great a veneration for some or other notable pieces of antiquity, any aged volume, any old record; and how high a price and value have been put upon them. Now there is no such piece of antiquity as this in all the world that we know of. The holy Scriptures, at least a great part, are the most ancient writings in all the world. And it should challenge a mighty reverence and veneration, to have a word brought down, and transmitted to us, through so many successive ages. But to consider it as a divine word, a revelation come from heaven, doth much more claim our reverence. How strange a veneration did those Ephesians express for that image, which they were made to believe fell from heaven! All Ephesus, as it is expressed, is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter; (Acts xix. 35.) as if all the city were of a piece, all heart and soul upon that one thing, which they believed to be of heavenly descent. Now this word we are sure is a divine-breathed thing; for all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, 2 Tim. iii. 16.

Then it is that the word is like to be done, when it is received with reverence, not as the word of man, but of God; when we in our own thoughts prefix that preface to every part of that truth, which he himself hath prefixed to many parts and portions of it; namely, "Thus saith the Lord," who is the Lord of heaven and earth. It is his word, who made and sustains all things by the word of his power. When therefore we look upon this word as carrying the stamp of the majesty of God upon it, then it is like to command the heart; but it will signify little till this is done.

5. To be a doer of the word supposes that we believe it, or that our hearing of it be mingled with faith. It profits not where it is not so; and signifies nothing, if there be not that mixture. The word of God, says the apostle, works effectually in them that believe, 1 Thess. ii. 13. But, as it is in another place, "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it," Heb. iv. 2. And it is never likely that men should practise that word, which they regard no more than the word of a child. If any one, whose truth you suspect, tell you this or that, it will signify little to determine your practice, or to guide and influence any design you have in hand. Now to receive this word with faith, is to rely upon the authority of the speaker, or him from whom it originally comes. "This is the word of God. There is no more doubt to be made of it, than whether the things be, or exist, which I see with my own eyes." For it is faith that supplies the room of sight, in reference to things that fall not under our eye. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, Heb. xi. 1. "God hath said this; and therefore it is as sure as if my own eyes saw it all." The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believes; (Rom. i. 16.)

but to them that believe not, it signifies nothing, it has no power with them. Again,

6. It requires love; a great exercise of love that the heart may close with it. It is said of some, that they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, 2 Thess. ii. 10. They had pleasure in unrighteousness. They had so much love to wickedness, that they had none for truth. Therefore they were left under strong delusions to believe lies, that they might be damned. So you find things are connected there. The love that is required here is such as works out in sincere desire of the milk of the word, that so we may grow thereby, 1 Pet. ii. 2. Also in delight; for the soul hath a sweet and savoury relish in it. "O how I love thy law!" (Psal. cxix. 97.) says David: which was the name of that revelation of the mind and will of God then extant; and was sweeter to him than honey to his taste, ver. 103. Thy words (saith Jeremiah) were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, Jer. xv. 16. The word of God is then like to be done, when there is so dear a love to it; and the soul so taketh complacency in it, and unites to it, that it becomes, as it were, consubstantiate with the soul itself. And again,

7. It requires subjection; an obediential subjection to it, and compliance of heart with it. Receive with meekness (as it is in this context) the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls, James i. 21. There are many hearts of men so opposite to the word of God, that when they meet with that in and from it, which is cross and adverse to their corrupt inclinations, their spirits swell, and storm, and tumultuate: and they are ready to say with those in the prophet, The word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken to us, we will not hear, Jer. xliv. 16. You must then receive it with meekness; that is, so as to yield to it, how cross soever it may be to any present disposition of yours. The word has been so received by gracious hearts, when it hath spoken very terrible things. When dreadful things were foretold by the prophet to Hezekiah, he said, "Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken," Isa. xxxix. 8. Again,

8. It requires a previous transformation of the heart by it, so as that the proper stamp and impress of it be upon the soul. For the word can never be done by the hearer, but from a vital principle; of which it is itself to be the productive means. So it is said to be in the eighteenth verse of this chapter, in which is my text; "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." If the new creature be not wrought by it in the soul, there will never be that doing of the word, which is expected and required. There must be an exemplar copied out from the word upon our hearts; and then we are to practise and do according to that exemplar; still comparing it with the first idea, to be seen in the rule or word itself. You obeyed (says the apostle) from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you, Rom. vi. 17. Or, as the words are capable of being read, into which ye were delivered. That is, you were cast into the very mould of the word; and have received the stamp and impress of it upon your souls, and so have obeyed it from the heart. Our Lord Jesus Christ in his kingdom (in that part of it which is more appropriate and peculiar) rules over a willing people, and is not a king of slaves. He is obeyed with an inward inclination and propensity of heart. His power hath made his subjects willing; that is, by writing his law in their hearts, which is the great promise of the evangelical covenant. When souls are made the epistle of Christ, having his mind transcribed and written out upon their hearts; then it is they obey, and do the word, and never till then. And then it requires also,

9. A faithful remembrance of it; that is, of its rules accommodable to particular occasions as they occur. The apostle subjoins here in the words following my text a representation of a man that hears, without a design of doing, the word; who, says he, is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was, Jam. i. 23, 24. If we apply the apostle's similitude fully unto the purpose for which he brings it, it must not only have reference to such an idea, as we have exhibited to us in the word, or the representation of what we now actually are, but also of what we should be, both together. Looking into the word as into a glass, we have a representation made to us there of the new creature in all the lively lineaments of it; and so we see what we should be: and comparing ourselves therewith, we see what we are; and wherein there is a deflection and disagreement from our pattern. They that do only throw a transient eye upon the glass, go away and forget what they see; the image vanisheth presently out of their thought. Therefore there must be a perpetual image kept up before our eyes, by a faithful and continual remembrance of what the word of God representeth to us; to wit, of the true complexion of a Christian, and wherein our own disagreeth; that so upon all occasions we may be able to correct thereby what is amiss; and to direct our way and course according thereunto. And then there must be in the

Last place, an actual application of all such rules in the word, to present cases, as they occur. Thy word I have kept in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee, Psal. cxix. 11. It is laid up in that repository and treasury for this purpose, to be used as there is need and occasion. Therefore so skilful ought we to be in the word of righteousness, which hath enough in it to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished for every good work; that upon all occasions, and whatever work we go about, we may have our rule still in readiness to apply, and actually may apply it to our case; so as neither on the one hand to walk dubiously, nor carelessly on the other. For those are extremes to be avoided. A continual scrupulosity is provided against by a continual acquaintance with the word, and having rules always in readiness to measure particular cases by as they occur; and, on the other hand, carelessness is inexcusable. For many walk without having any regard to their own spirits, and matter it not whether they are right or wrong. To have this word, as the measure of our lives, to apply to upon occasion, is necessary in order to avoid these exorbitances; the one whereof is so very uncomfortable, and the other so very dangerous and destructive. But then we are,

II. To speak to the other thing a little; namely, what is it to be a hearer only? By being a hearer only, we must not understand every thing to be excluded, besides the bare external act of hearing; as if no more were intended by it, than the outward act common to man with the brute creatures: for, undoubtedly, there may be included in it many acts of the understanding, and of the outward man. So to be a hearer only, is in the general to hear without any design of doing at all. For when it is required that we should be doers, the meaning of it is, not that we must be doers of all that is bidden and directed by the word, just while we are hearing. Therefore that which is required over and besides hearing, is a design to be doing the word; while to be hearers only, is to hear without any previous design of acting according to what they do hear. Some other motives and considerations there are, which bring persons to hear; but as for the business of practice they intend it not. It never came into their minds to look upon that as the true and proper end of hearing, that they should do and practise what they hear.

Now truth is but one, error is manifold. If there be but one right end, that end is to be aimed at, which is practice. And that we may be capable of this, but one entire frame and right disposition of soul is required. But various are the ends, and many are the ill principles and dispositions, which may have place in the spirit of a man in reference to this matter. It is, therefore, a manifold character, which I might give if the time would allow, of the hearer only. For as there is a manifold end; and many indispositions, in the spirit of a man, to the true end; so manifold are the characters of such as are hearers only. Therefore we are not to suppose, that they all belong to one and the same person; but some to one, and some to another. There is,

1. The unattentive hearer; that taketh very little heed to what he heareth. We ought (says the apostle to the Hebrews) to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip, Heb. ii. 1. And set your hearts (says Moses) unto all the words which I testify among you this day, Deut. xxxii.

46. He that never intends to be a doer of what he hears, will very probably little regard what he hears.

2. There is the inconsiderate hearer; that never ponders what he hears, nor compares one thing with another. I can but name particulars to you, which might well be enlarged upon. There is again,

3. The injudicious hearer; that never makes any judgment upon what he hears, whether it be true or false. All things come alike to him, he matters them not. Consideration is in order to judgment, and judgment follows upon it. We deliberate first, and then judge upon that deliberation. The inconsiderate hearer, therefore, will be an injudicious one. There is also,

4. The unapprehensive hearer; who hears all his days, but is never the wiser. Ever learning, but never comes to the knowledge of the truth. No light comes in to him, and he remains as ignorant after twenty years living under the Gospel, as he was at the first.

5. The stupid, unaffected hearer; that is as a rock and a stone under the word. Nothing ever enters or gets within the stony ground. Things are heard sometimes that would even rend all hearts to pieces, if rightly disposed; things full of terror, amazement, astonishment, and of dread; but they are heard by these without any trembling. Rocks and mountains may shake and shiver sooner than they. Again,

6. There are your prejudiced, disaffected hearers; who hear with dislike, especially those things which relate to practice: and with the greater dislike it may be, by how much the more what they hear relates to the proper end of hearing. They cannot endure such things as aim at the heart, and concern the business and work of religion. And there are again,

7. Your fantastical, voluptuous hearers; that hear only to please their fancy or imaginations. So they come on purpose to try if they can hear a pretty sentence, any fine jingle, some flashes of wit. For it may be they have found some, who have to do with this sacred word, that will allow themselves to be so vain, as to gratify them in such things, when they come with such an expectation. Of which temper I remember an ancient saying, *Dissoluti est pectoris in rebus seriis quærere voluptatem: It is a dismal token upon a person to seek for the gratification of his fancy in serious matters.* As if one would bring music to another, that lay under the torture of a broken leg; how very incongruous would this be! And such we are to consider is the state of souls, all shattered, broken, diseased, and maimed. This is the common case of those we have to do with.[a] There are again,

8. Your notional hearers; that are of somewhat a higher form and sect than the others; who do not aim merely to have their fancies and imaginations gratified by something light and flashy, but their understandings also. But it must be by some fine notion, which they have not met with before. And so they always come to learn some kind of novelty; and if they cannot meet with some new thing, which they have not met with before, they go away with a great deal of dislike, and distaste, at those they hear. With these (and they are for the most part of the same sort, and therefore we may join them together) you may put,

9. Those talkative persons; who only come to hear that they may furnish themselves with notions for the sake of discourse; or that, when they come into company, they may have something just to talk of afterwards. Upon which a heathen moralist reflects with a great deal of ingenuity. "That is, (saith he,) when they hear such moral precepts as the philosophers use to deliver, and press in the schools; as all came into them in words, so, with them, all go out in words. Which is just the same thing, as if the sheep, when they have been grazing all day, should come at night to the sheepherd, and cast up the grass they swallowed, to show how much they had eaten. Grass it came in, and grass it goes out again. The shepherd does not expect this, but expects that of the grass they had eaten that day, there should come milk and wool from the concoction and digession of what they had eaten." It is much that we have need to learn such documents as these from a heathen. What! because all we hear comes to us in words, should it all come out in words again? No, the end is surely that it should be so digested and concocted, as to yield work and fruit, agreeable to what we hear. And then there are again,

10. The censorious and critical hearers; who come on purpose not as doers of the law, but as judges. They come to see what they may carp at, and so to pass their verdict. "Were such and such things rightly methodized? such and such words well placed? was there an exact concinnity in what was said?" and the like. This now is all the design they have in hearing the word. And then there is another sort too, and we have some experience, I am afraid, of too many such, in the age and day wherein we now live, and that is,

Lastly, Malicious hearers; that come on purpose to seek an advantage against those they come to hear, particularly from what they preach. By this sort, you know, our Saviour was often pestered; who came to hear him, and to put questions to him, and so gave him occasion to speak, only to entrap and insnare him. To which may be added your raging exasperated hearers, such as Stephen's were at his last sermon; who gnashed upon him with their teeth, and could not forbear violence to his precious life, upon their hearing him. Thus you see the characters of those that are hearers only, which are various and manifold. I shall only touch upon the

III. Thing, namely, to speak to the self-deception of such persons. And here I shall show, wherein such are deceived; and the grossness of the deception itself.

1. Wherein such are deceived. And they are certainly so,

(1.) In their work. For they commonly think they have done well; and they find no fault with themselves, that they have been hearers only. And then,

(2.) As to their reward they are also deceived. They get nothing by it all this time. That and their labour are lost. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed," Jam. i. 25. But they never go away with a blessing; most certainly they miss of it, who are hearers only.

2. For the grossness of this deception, it will appear to be very great, if we consider,

(1.) That they are deceived in so plain a case. For it is the plainest thing in the world, that the Gospel is sent in order to practice. Now how strange is it, that men should be deceived in a thing so plain! What can the Gospel be sent for but only in order to practice? What other aim, or end, can it possibly have? As might be shown in many particulars, if time gave leave. And,

(2.) It is self-deception; for they are said to deceive themselves; which is a far other thing, than when the matter is wont to be expressed passively only, and in softer terms. As to say to a person, "Sir, you are mistaken; you are deceived and imposed upon." This, I say, is much gentler, than to say of a man, that he deceiveth and imposeth upon himself. For this carries in it an intimation, that men do use some industry in the matter; that they industriously deceive themselves, as indeed it must be so in this case. For if men did not use some art or contrivance, they could never have hid these things from their own eyes; particularly, that this word is sent to be the guide of men's practice. And to overlook such a thing as this all their days, (as those men must be supposed to do who are hearers only,) is miserable deception. It is their trade, and a poor trade the Lord knows! And they must be supposed to have used a great deal of artifice with themselves, to veil so plain a case as this from their own eyes and view; so as not to understand, that the Gospel is sent to be their rule of practice, in order to their attainment of a happy state at last. And now, to shut up all with a little application, we may learn hence,

[a] The word here, ακροαται, *hearers only*, may remind one (says the author) of an ancient word that is of affinity with it, namely, ακροαματα; of which this is the sense. It was the name of certain songs and sonnets, joined with vocal and instrumental music, which were wont to be used in the conclusion of stage-plays, wherewith the hearers were entertained at their going out of the theatres. They were also very frequently used in the close of banquets. Why! the word of God is looked upon as such an ακροαμα, and the things contained in it as ακροαματα, to these [ακροαται] kind of hearers. "Thou art" (says the Almighty to the prophet Ezekiel) "unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words but do them not." Ezek. xxxiii 32. Such hearers there are who come only to have their imaginations and fancies gratified with somewhat, that may be delicious to them; and that is all that they aim at. These sure are hearers only!

I. That persons are apt to overlook the main of their duty, and to take up with some lesser parts.

II. That in the very business of hearing the word, there is great danger of self-deception, if persons do not carefully watch against it. And again,

III. We may learn, that the whole business of the Gospel hath a designed reference unto practice. Be not hearers only, but doers of the word. As if he had said, Do not satisfy yourselves with merely hearing the word of God, as if there was nothing in it conducing or referable to practice, as generally the things contained in it manifestly have; for this alone is not sufficient to answer the end and design of the Gospel. Again,

IV. We may learn, that it is a duty of very great concernment to attend upon the word preached, or to be a hearer of it; for the whole business of our practice is to be consequent thereupon. It is then of great consequence to be a hearer of the word; and as much as this duty is neglected by many, the whole stress lies upon it of the design and end, for which the Gospel comes into the world. The Gospel signifies nothing unless it be believed, and this "faith cometh by hearing," Rom. x. 17. There are many persons that humour and please themselves in talking against so much hearing, and so much preaching; and think it a vain and needless thing. But that is certainly because they have little considered what hearing and preaching are for. If it were only for the minister to teach, and the hearers to learn, some new thing not known before, truly all necessary truth, by attentive diligent inquirers, might be learnt in a little while. But it is rather to urge and inculcate things, which were known before. Therefore when the apostle had said, that it is by the word of truth that we are begotten of God, to be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures, he presently adds, "Be swift to hear," Jam. i. 18, 19. As if he had said, these things ought to be often urged and inculcated upon you; that so the product thereof, to wit, the new creature, may be sure in you. If this be not done at one time, it may at another; some time or other it may be effected. Therefore be swift to hear, your life lies upon it. But then,

V. And lastly, You see of what consequence it is to add doing to the hearing the word. And for that I need to give no other encouragement than that of our Lord at the close of his sermon on the mount. "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them; I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. But, (says he,) every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not; shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it," Matt. vii. 24—27. And I cannot upon consideration of this but apprehend, that, as the stability of many (I hope) hath been promoted by the much preaching and hearing of our times; so there are many (I am afraid) near to a very dreadful fall, who have been hearers only of Christ's sayings, but never minded to be doers of them.

And I must needs think it strange, if we have not among us a general apprehension of the danger of losing our opportunities of hearing the word of God. We have these upon such terms, that we should, methinks, reckon ourselves always in danger. And if we have any cause for that apprehension, what in all the world can we imagine more provoking, and likely to infer such a doom and judgment upon us, as the penury of the word of God, than to be hearers only, without any design to be doers of it? Whereas if we did but set ourselves, with a more earnest design, to apply, and turn all that we hear into fruit and practice; it may be this might prevent such a stroke as we are not without reason to dread, nor without grounds to fear. But if we should not prevent it, yet it would be a very comfortable thing however in a cloudy, dark, and gloomy time, to be able to make such a reflection as this; "Blessed be God, while I had such seasons, I laboured to improve them as well as I could. I laboured to take all opportunities that I could, to hear with a design to do, to quicken and help me to move onward in Christian practice." It will, I say, be very comfortable to be able to make such a reflection in a time of gloominess and darkness which it is possible we may see, and how soon we know not. And if in such a season we should be able to make this reflection, it would be a happy provision for us against it. It would suppose us to have gotten some stock, some treasure within us, which we might draw forth. We should then have the word within us, which when we should lie down, rise up, or walk, might commune within us; and so we be capable of being preachers to ourselves.

In a word, if ever we should come to such a state of things, that we should never see the face nor hear the voice of a minister of God's word, where our lot is cast; if we should wear out our days in a wilderness, a desert, or a cave; it would be comfortable to have this word a companion to us, and ingrafted into us, which is able to save our souls: it would be comfortable, I say, to have a stock of divine truth to live upon, whether we should, as to the external dispensation of it, be in penury and want. Let these things, therefore, move us to a more earnest endeavour to be doers of the word, and not hearers only.

SERMON VII.*

Luke xviii. 1—8.

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

My purpose is not to give you a particular explication of this parable. The design of it is sufficiently seen in the application of it, which our Saviour here makes. All that I shall at present do shall be to show you, with all possible brevity, the strength of the reasoning which our Saviour here useth, from the importunity and success of this widow; in order to encourage our addresses to God, and a continuance therein without fainting. And his argument to this purpose may be seen to be very strong and cogent, if we consider these two things in the general.

First, The parity of reason between the case he argueth from, and that which he argueth to.

Secondly, The superiority of reason, which is in the latter case, above the former. For so we must understand him to argue, partly *à priori*, and partly *à fortiori*. And the strength of the argument both ways we shall endeavour to make out unto you.

First, I am to consider the parity of reason between these two cases; which you may conceive especially in these four things.

I. That here was distress in the one case, and there is distress in the other. This widow comes to this judge in a very distressed case, as it should seem, though it be not particularly expressed; only it appears she was very much grieved, and that there was a great deal of wrong done her. And so in the other case, the elect of God are always very much injured; and they sustain a great deal of wrong from this evil world, in which they are. And surely if this unjust judge was moved with the distress of this suppliant, there is a great deal of reason to suppose, that distress will be moving in this case also; and that the elect will be heard, when they make their cries to heaven, urged by their own distresses.

II. There appears to have been justice in the one case,

* Preached at Mr. Case's, September 29th, 1675.

as we are sure there is justice in the other. This widow's did appear to be a just cause. She comes with this request to the judge, that he would avenge her of her adversary. The word Ἐκδίκησόν, there used, signifies, Right me of my adversary. She came to petition a matter of right, and all that she desired was to have right done her. And there is a great deal of right in the other case also. "It is a righteous thing with God (says the apostle) to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you, who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels," 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. And again,

III. There was importunity in the one case, and there is importunity in the other. Why then should not success be hoped to correspond in this case, as well as that? This widow was so urgent, that the judge was sensible of a grievance in it; and found a necessity upon himself to do her right, lest he should be wearied by her importunity. The elect too are represented as crying night and day; that is, the loud voice of their prayers is not by fits, only now and then, but is continued, and incessant; as night and day take in the whole complex of time. And do you think then, saith our Saviour, that God will not hear their cry? Besides,

IV. There is an obligation by office to do right, both in the one case, and in the other. The person, to whom this woman applied herself, was a judge in the city. Now it is known, that in several of the more eminent cities of Israel, there were constituted stated judges, to whom all persons might have recourse, and bring their grievances, in order to their being redressed. So that this woman doth not come to a person unconcerned. She does not request that an occasional kindness might be done her; as one might request such a thing of any one, when in necessity; but she comes to an appointed person, to one who by his office was obliged to right her. And God hath been pleased to take upon himself such an office, and to make himself known by the name of the Judge of all the earth; that all might know whither to apply, and to whom they may appeal and address themselves. And why is not right to be expected in this case, as well as in the other? So far this parable gives us ground to argue from a parity of reason. But.

SECONDLY, It gives us ground also for arguing from a superiority of reason too, in sundry respects. As,—I. In respect of the supplicants in the one case, and the other; in respect—II. Of the persons supplicated in the one case, and the other; and—III. In respect of the supplication itself in the former case, and the latter compared.

I. There is very prevailing and much stronger reason in the latter case, than in the former; if we consider the supplicants in both, and compare them. In the former case you have a poor woman; and here we are to consider,

1. That she was a single woman, only one person, who comes to make her complaint to this judge; but in the other case you have a community, the whole body of the elect. How vast is the disproportion here! This great body joining in one cry, surely that must needs be unspeakably more prevailing! And,

2. (For we can but speak shortly to so many things as are before us) This was but an ordinary woman, of an inferior rank, by any thing that appears; that is, she is not mentioned here under any remarkable particular character, that might add weight to her cause and suit; but this community is a choice community; the elect; a community of very peculiar persons, that are severed from the rest of men, and distinguished by God's own special seal set upon them. As when God's portion in the several tribes was spoken of, there were sealed of each a tribe, so many thousands; and of such a tribe, so many thousands, Rev. vii. 4, &c. All God's elect ones are sealed ones; they carry a mark of honour upon them. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his," 2 Tim. ii. 19. And,

3. The supplicant was unrelated to him, to whom she makes her supplication. We do not find, that she pretended to any relation to him at all; only comes to him as the judge of her city. But in the other case, the supplicants are God's elect; his own peculiar people that he had taken, and made nigh unto himself; "called, and chosen, and faithful," as you have those expressions put together in Scripture, Rev. xvii. 14. And do not we think then, that a more especial regard will be had here? Besides,

II. There is a great superiority of reason in arguing from the one case to the other, if we consider the persons supplicated; or to whom the addresses are made in each case. In the general, in one case it is man; in the other, it is God. And particularly,

1. In the former case it was a wicked profane person, to whom the address was made; one that did neither fear God, nor regard man; good to no one, neither to God nor man; a vile wretched creature, wrapt up within himself; who studied and consulted nothing but his own ease, and peace; having no fear of God before his eyes, nor any regard to man. But in the other case, you have the holy God addressed to; whose natural, essential holiness, is a perpetual law and obligation to him to do always that which is best. His essential rectitude cannot but do such things, as have an agreeable rectitude in them to his own very nature.

2. In the one case it was a merciless man, that was applied to; in the other, a merciful God. How much stronger is the reason! This judge was a man who had no mercy, no pity to any one, but to himself. He took some pity of himself indeed, that he might not be wearied out with continual clamours and cries; otherwise, it seems, his heart knew no pity, there were no bowels of compassion rolling, or working in him. But in the other case, it is the Father of mercies who is addressed, and appealed to. It is he with whom there is so abundant pity, and kindness; so strong a propension and inclination to do good to the necessitous and miserable, only because his will inclines and leads him thereunto; the Spring and Fountain of all that pity and mercy, that is any where to be found, diffused among his creatures. If parents pity their children: if there be bowels gathering in any towards the afflicted and distressed; from what spring, from what fountain did all this proceed? All must come from some original or other; and they can be derived from no higher, neither are they to be derived from any lower, than this great Father of mercies. And what! shall not he hear his elect? And again,

3. It was, in the former case, an unjust man that was supplicated; here it is the just and righteous God. As his holiness doth oblige him in general to do that, which is right and fit to be done; his justice, as a particular attribute in his general character, inclines him in this case to administer and execute justice. As he hath been pleased mercifully himself to lay down a rule and law of mercy, in reference to those that are his; (though it be impossible that God can injure a man in any thing, yet it is possible that men can injure one another; and very certain also that those are the worst used by the world, who have such a near relation to him, and whom he hath chosen and gathered out of the world;) so here in this case, when there is a proper object of vindictive justice, shall not the Judge of all the earth do right, to whom righteousness belongs as part of his peculiar glory? And then again,

III. There is, in respect of the supplication on the one hand, and on the other, a great superiority, and triumphant prevalency of reason. For, in the former case, consider,

I. The matter of the petition of this widow; and that was only a private good, that she sought for herself: and consider also the petition of the elect of God. They have all one common concernment, wherein the interest of God is involved with theirs. So that whatsoever they supplicate for, as the elect of God, must needs be a matter that is so far public; that is, wherein they all agree, and in which their hearts and desire do meet and concur. It is one thing for a particular person to desire to be gratified in some particular, private concernments; and another thing to insist upon such matters as are common to us with all the elect of God. And this it is to be supposed is the matter of the supplications of the elect unto God in this case. It is that, wherein all the elect do concentre, and wherein all their desires do meet.

2. Look to the manner and style of the supplication; on the one part, and on the other. This woman comes in her

own name, but the supplications of the elect of God run in another style; they come all in the name of the great Mediator and Intercessor. And is there not unspeakably more reason, that we should expect their supplications to prevail? They come in the name of him who is most nearly related to the Judge, and to them. "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John ii. 1. It is said indefinitely, with the Father; not of his, or our Father; but the common Father of him, and us, as we are to understand it. And since with him we have such an Advocate, shall we not hope to prevail? Again,

3. Consider the principle of the one's supplication, and that of the other. We must suppose this woman's supplication to be dictated by her own sense of the urgency and necessity of her case; and the unrelievableness of it by any other way than that of addressing herself to the known judge. In short, it was her own private spirit that dictated her supplication; for she alone knew her own need, felt her own necessity. But the prayers of all the elect of God have another principle. When they know not what to pray for, they are furnished with matter, and with sighs and groans at once, Rom. viii. 26. There is a spirit appointed on purpose, known by the name of the "Spirit of grace and of supplications;" (Zech. xii. 10.) whose business it is to indite requests for the elect of God, and to strive and to wrestle with him; which is strongly moving at the same time in their own breasts; so as that their hearts, and the heart of God, as it were, are united, and joined by that Spirit. Shall they not then hope to prevail? They may say, when they are putting up such prayers as are the common sense of all the elect of God; "Lord, I do not speak of myself now. Thou hast taught me to pray. This prompts me to it, and puts me upon it; and I had never prayed so, nor uttered such cries, and such desires had not entered into my heart, if thou hadst not put them there." And shall not God hear his own elect offering up petitions of his own speaking? The desires of his own creating shall not he answer? Doth he stir up desires on purpose to disappoint them? or, will he make his people refuse to pray, by denying their petitions, and casting their prayers back upon their hands? And then,

4. Consider the end of the one's supplication, and that of the other. The end that this woman aimed at, was nothing but self-advantage, to be relieved herself; but the end of the elect of God in their supplications, is somewhat wherein their interest is jointly concerned with his in reference to those great concernments, which belong to the whole body. They know he hath a concern twisted with theirs; and so can speak it, with Daniel, as the real sense of their hearts, "Do, defer not, for thine own sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name," Dan. ix. 19. This is the common sense of all the people of God; "Thou hast not been ashamed to be called our God. Thou hast taken us into a near relation unto thee. It is a grievous thing to be twitted with our God. It is as a sword in our bones to have it said to us, Where is your God? Thy concernments and ours are one; do therefore, and defer not for thine own name's sake." In this strain do all the supplications of the elect run. So that in all these respects you see there is a great superiority of reason, if such a widow should succeed well in her private request to such a judge, why all the elect of God should much more succeed in the request, which they are day and night making to the great Lord of heaven and earth. And therefore, briefly to apply all this, we learn,

I. How great a privilege it is to have this matter clear to us, that we are of the elect of God; and how much therefore we are concerned to make our calling and election sure; for then we find ourselves to belong to a community, that are continually praying prayers which shall be sure to prevail. And how great a privilege, how blessed a thing is this! Methinks when we understand how certainly the elect of God shall be heard, who are crying to him night and day; we should be at this work night and day, poring into our hearts, till we are certain of this, that we are the elect of God. Then we shall be sure to put up all prosperous and acceptable prayers, when they are all of the same sense, and run in the same channel, that theirs are wont to do. And again,

II. We are to collect hence, that the elect of God, as long as they continue in this world, are to bear the character of praying ones. To be acted by a spirit of prayer, and to have continually a praying disposition, is characteristical of the elect of God, who are gathered in from among the common refuse of a sinful world. Therefore we had need to look well to ourselves concerning this thing. How stand our hearts Godward? Are they formed unto prayer? Is it become even a spiritually natural thing to us to pray? As natural as breathing is to a living man, so natural a thing is praying to the new creature, and as agreeable. The elect are supplicants day and night. The great business of their lives is prayer. This is that, to which the heart of an elect person doth impel him; so far as he is himself, and hath the true genius and spirit working in him, which is common to all the elect of God, and also peculiar to them. And again, we are to learn hence,

III. In how wretched a case they must needs be, who are the stated and habitual enemies of the church of God in the world. It is a fearful condition that such men are in, to have all the elect of God crying against them, night and day. What will become of this matter at last? Who, that considers the case, would not dread to be found in such a condition as these are in? to be one against whom all the elect of God are joining their requests, night and day, and exhibiting complaints? For they do in common pray against the enemies of the name and interest of God; and so every one is involved, and the cry of this whole community goes against each individual; that is, supposing them to persevere in a course of enmity to the interest of our Lord, and his Christ. So that this might make any heart to tremble, to think what this is like to come to, and what it must needs infer. What fearful storms of wrath and vengeance will be plucked down at length upon their heads, against whom all the elect of God are continually joining their requests! And, in the last place,

IV. We see hence, how unreasonable a thing it is to be despondent in prayer, or to faint in this duty, supposing that the things we mainly insist upon are the common concernments of the elect of God. This being supposed, we pray securely. Indeed if we vainly and unwarrantably set our hearts upon this or that particular thing, that would gratify ourselves; and nothing will serve our turn, but that we be so and so gratified; we may pray, and pray, and all to little purpose; for there can be no acceptable prayer that is not the prayer of faith; and that can be no prayer of faith, which goeth beyond the bounds of the promise. Therefore, if I pray for that, which was never promised, I may thank myself if I succeed not.

There are some things that cannot be the matter of a universal, absolute promise; being things which are in themselves of an uncertain and variable nature; as all such things as have no intrinsic goodness of their own, but may sometimes be good to particular persons, and sometimes not. For circumstances may so vary the case, that the good that is in them may be preponderated by a far greater evil, if they should at that time be given. And whatsoever is a good of this nature; that is, good or not good, according as circumstances are, which often vary; it is apparent cannot be the matter of an absolute promise; for supposing circumstances so to vary, as that this should become an evil, you would then have evil to be the matter of a promise, which is contradictious and absurd. But since it is possible, that external or worldly good things, yea, and some also that may be externally subservient to religion, may in some circumstances do more hurt to the people of God, who does with a gracious care preside over their actions, and all things that have any respect to them, and who is best able to judge; they cannot, therefore, be the matter of his absolute promise. These things may be more hurtful than gainful, in such and such circumstances; and he sees how to do them more good by the want of such things, than by the having of them. A less good, when compared with a greater, is then to pass under the notion of evil; and it would, I say, be unreasonable to suppose evil to be the matter of a promise. And where any thing of that nature is not promised absolutely, but with a reserved latitude to the wisdom and goodness of our great Lord and Ruler; our faith can be exercised no otherwise about them, than according to the tenor of such

promises: that is, we may believe we shall have such and such things, if God seeth good; but if he seeth not good, he will deny or withhold them, even in mere goodness and faithfulness to us.

But then in such things as are absolutely promised to all the elect of God, there we may give room and scope to our faith. And it is an unreasonable thing to be at all desponding concerning the matter of such prayers: as it is, with respect to others also, no less unreasonable to admit the least doubt, that we shall have such things if they be best for us; and what God in his unerring wisdom discerns will be for our advantage. Therefore let us settle this apprehension with ourselves, of how great concernment it is to us in prayer, to insist on such things as are properly of common concern to the whole fraternity of the elect; and therein to take heed of any diffidence or distrust.

Great and glorious things are promised to be the portion of God's elect in this world, at his own appointed time and season; but he hath not told us when that shall be. However we may, with this peremptory faith, go unto God in prayer, that he will make the kingdoms of the earth the kingdoms of our Lord, and his Christ, who shall reign for ever and ever, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established, above all the mountains; that there shall be new heavens, and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. But we make all this matter a private business, if we go and cry; "Oh let it be so now! let it be in my time, that mine eyes may see it!" especially if we peremptorily insist upon it; without reservation or submission to the supreme wisdom and will. Whereas if we pray in general, that such things may be; our hearts should be full of hope, faith, and joy, in the apprehension that thus it shall be; and we cannot be without success, since it is the common sense of all the elect of God.

And in matters which respect the particular concernments of our souls, see that they be things of absolute necessity, and that fall within the consent of all the community. Let us pray against the body of sin and death; that we may have grace kept alive, and maintained and improved; that we may grow, and be carried on from strength to strength, till we reach "the measure of a perfect man in Christ Jesus." This is the common sense of all the elect; and our prayers fall in with theirs, who have been wont to cry out against the body of sin and death, as the great and most violent enemy they would be rid of. We may then be sure that our prayers shall have effect, and not be lost; and that God will certainly hear them.

If we are praying for the Divine presence; he hath promised that he will never leave nor forsake those that cleave to him, Heb. xiii. 5. Whatever he may do to people in common, he will never break the bond between himself and that soul which is one of his elect; and when they cry, "Lord, never leave me, nor forsake me!" they shall be sure to be heard. When we pray for the Divine presence to be afforded more especially to us, in reference to some special case, or season of trouble and trial, this is what God will not fail to do. If his presence be desired, I say, as to any special duty; so it will be, and God will hear us.

I hope you are desirous and earnest in your prayers to God, for his more immediate presence, in reference to that special season of your approaching to the Lord's table. Sure all the elect of God have been wont to do so, praying and striving that they might at such times and seasons meet with God; that there might be a real intercourse between their souls and him (whom they love) to such a degree as to him seems best. Why, God will hear all these cries, that are common to us, with all the people of God; and such prayers being directed to him, shall not be in vain. Therefore we should take heed, upon these accounts, that we faint not.

We must know that fainting may be either when faith languisheth, or desire. It is faint praying, when we pray as if we cared not whether we prayed or no. The word ἐκκακεῖν, here rendered faint, in our text, is the same with that which elsewhere is rendered weary. Let us not, ἐκκακῶμεν, *be weary* in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not: (Gal. vi. 9.) that is, if ye be not sluggish in the course of well-doing. Take heed therefore of praying the sluggard's prayer, or at the sluggard's rate. "The desire of the slothful kills him, because his hands refuse to labour," Prov. xxi. 25. His own desires carry no life in them; they are even death to his very heart; cold things that strike death into the soul, and put no life into it.

And then, too, when faith languisheth it is faint praying. "Let not that man," (says St. James,) that is, the man who wavers like a wave of the sea, and is driven of the wind and tossed, "think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord," James i. 7. What! come to God, as if we did not expect to get any thing by God? and as if we agreed in the same sense with those profane atheists, and symbolized with them who say, "What profit is it that we have prayed to him or kept his ordinances?" go heartlessly into the Divine presence? give way to a cold, dull spirit, in the very performance of the duty; and never look after the success of it when it is over? Such had as good never pray at all, who pray only to keep up a custom, and to make a show; and that they may be able to say when all is over, "The duty is done." Let not such think they shall receive any thing at the hands of God; such especially as come to him with no expectation, and pray to him as to one that cannot save.

It is to cast infamy upon the great object of our worship; as if we were only blessing an idol, when we pray to the true, living God, as if he were such a one as the idols of the Gentiles are said to be, that have eyes but see not, ears but hear not, and can neither do good nor hurt. It is no wonder if such praying signify nothing; for it carries an affront in itself. Every such prayer is an indignity, and an insolent affront put upon the great God: as if the injunction of this duty upon the children of men, was either unreasonable and to no purpose, and so a reflection upon the wisdom of his law, who has commanded us to pray; (inasmuch as that is always unwisely enjoined that hath no end;) or, as if there were no power in him to accomplish what we come to him about, though we come according to his own direction. It cannot, I say, but be an affront to God, either way, to come to him with desponding hearts. In the former case, if our desires languish, we are worse than the importunate widow; in the latter case, if faith languish, we make God worse than the unjust judge.

SERMON VIII.*

Rom. v. 5.

—Hope maketh not ashamed.—

It will not be impertinent or unuseful to say something, from this Scripture, concerning this property of the Christian's hope; namely, that it maketh not ashamed. But let us, first, briefly consider the scope and series of the apostle's discourse here, and see how this passage depends and is introduced.

We have here, after a long discourse touching our justification by faith in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, some account of the privileges of a justified state in the beginning of this chapter. As, first, peace with God. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, though our Lord Jesus Christ," ver. 1. And secondly, free access unto God, and the liberty of his presence. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God," ver. 2. In which words we have also the patient, joyful expectation of the glorious state, that was designed for the people of God hereafter. And finally, cheerfulness in a present afflicted condition, is represented by the apostle as another privilege. And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also, ver. 3. It was no such strange thing, that they should be found exulting in the expectation of so glorious a state, as that which Christians look for hereafter; but we have this also to say (saith the apostle) concerning our case, that we can

* Preached at Jewin-street, March 15th, 1675.

glory in tribulation too, and triumph over all the difficulties that accompany an afflicted condition. And of this, as having something of a paradox in it, and appearing more strange, he giveth the particular grounds and reasons. As,

1. The knowledge of this truth, that tribulations worketh patience, ver. 3. We are, as if he had said, well pleased, yea, and do even glory in our present afflicted condition upon this ground, that we know, by this means, that patience will be wrought out. We look upon it as a thing of very high value, that the mere hope of so much gain should make persons glory in such tribulations, which seemingly call for other affections. Tribulation is not a pleasant thing to be glorified in of itself; why then, or upon what account, is it to be gloried in? Why, upon this account, as that out of it the gain of patience shall accrue, and result to us. By this we shall have our spirits composed to a peaceful acquiescence in the Divine will, and the waywardness of our own wills shall be subdued and brought down. There is a future heaven to be enjoyed, a glorious heaven; and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of that state: yea, and there is a present heaven too involved, and wrapt up in patience. When once the heart comes to be resigned, and rest quietly and peacefully in the Divine will, this is a present heaven; and bears a great resemblance to that which is future, and expected.

2. The apostle adds, that of this patience there will be a further gain, to wit, of experience, ver. 4. As patience comes to be more and more exercised, experience will grow. And,

3. Of that experience shall spring hope, (ver. 4.) that shall reach and touch the other heaven; hope, as he had said before, of the glory of God: (ver. 2.) even such hope as will not make ashamed; and that for this reason, because (saith he) the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us, ver. 5. While we find, by the Holy Ghost that is given to us, an effusion of the Divine love into our souls; while we find this love shed abroad in our hearts, and then testifying itself, as if there was an immediate assurance of heaven; this puts us out of all doubt that God will never let our hope be disappointed nor end in shame.

This is the order and contexture of the preceding discourses. And as to this passage that we have chosen to insist upon, we need not go about to vary the words, which you see are short and plain; "Hope maketh not ashamed;" only it is needful to inquire,

I. Of what this is spoken. And then consider,

II. This particular property of it.

I. Let us inquire of what this is spoken, or what it is that doth not make ashamed. It is here indefinitely said to be hope. But though it is so generally expressed, yet, it is plain, it is not meant of all hope. The circumstances of the text are sufficiently limiting, and teach us of what hope this is to be principally understood. It is hope of the glory of God; it is hope that groweth out of experience; it is hope that is maintained by the love of God, shed abroad in the soul, through the Holy Ghost given to it. It is in short then undoubtedly the Christian hope that is here meant; and whereof we find this is expressed, that it maketh not ashamed.

If you would have a more distinct account of this hope take it thus: It is that sanctified affection of a renewed soul, by which it is carried continually to expect what God hath promised, concerning its own welfare and blessedness here, and especially hereafter; notwithstanding whatever difficulties do occur in the pursuit and expectation of those things hoped for. And if you would know what it superadds to common hope, or what there is in this Christian hope of a distinguishing, peculiar nature; it superadds,

1. Sanctity. A true Christian hope, is a pure and holy hope. It engages them that have it, to purify themselves even as God is pure, 1 John iii. 3. And again it superadds,

2. Solidity. That which a Christian hopes for, is some solid substantial good thing. He hopes not for shadows and lying vanities. They who lived in the exercise of this hope, to whom the author of the epistle to the Hebrews speaks, had before them the prospect of a better and enduring substance in heaven; (Heb. x. 34.) a substance that would never fail their hope. There is a kind of hope that runs all in the chase of trifles, for the most part. Men hope for things, which they cannot have; and if they had, were to very little purpose. It superadds,

3. Certainty. Men that hope at the common rate, do but hope conjecturally; and therefore their hope often maketh ashamed. Even at present they frequently outlive their hopes, they being pitched mostly upon things that are temporary. They hope for that which is swept away like a spider's web. It is a most vanishing, uncertain hope. But if they should cast their eyes on futurity, that future happy state of things beyond time, they have no real ground to entertain any hope of it; or if their hope relate to present things, it is merely conjectural, and self-founded. God hath given them no ground for this hope. He hath not promised them, that they shall be rich; live a long life, and spend all their days in prosperity here. There is that strange kind of monstrousness in the common hope of men; that whereas a Christian hopes, because God in his word hath promised, who cannot lie; they hope, even with reference to these their greatest concernments, because they think he will lie. For if they believed that he would not lie, but that all was true that he had promised and spoken, they would be in despair; they would with respect to these concerns, have no hope at all, but the horror of despair. Besides,

4. Which is another distinguishing circumstance of the Christian's hope, every such person hath a commonity belonging to it. The Christian hope is common to them that are Christians, in which they all unite and meet: whereas in reference to the hope of other men, there is no such thing as a centre in which their hopes may unite and meet; and so they lie scattered, according as their own inclinations and appetites carry them. Falsity is various, and manifold; truth can be but one. And therefore says the apostle, concerning the hope of Christians, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling," Eph. iv. 4. All the hearts of Christians do run into one hope; they meet in one and the same hope, the ground of which is that they are called to one and the same state; and this call will warrant their hope, and justify it. "Why should not I hope to reach the state to which I am called? and why should not I attend to the affairs relating to that state? May not a man be warranted in things relating to his calling? This is my calling, (saith the Christian,) and I hope for and expect success." He can answer it to all the world, be the things never so great and high of which he is in expectation. They are very great things we hope for, but however to such things we are called, God hath called us to his eternal kingdom and glory by Christ Jesus, 1 Thess. ii. 12. 1 Pet. v. 10. This calling is not peculiar, or particular to persons severally; but the same unto all that are called, whose hope is one. There is a community, whose hearts, as they run one way in desire, so do their hope and expectation; and their faith too being one common principle among them, they must needs have one common hope of the glory of God. Now concerning this hope which is proper to the Christian community it is said, that it maketh not ashamed; which we are now to speak to in the

II. Place. And as to this property of the Christian hope, which we now proceed to consider, we have only two things to do:

1. To open the import of it; and,

2. To demonstrate the truth of the assertion; or to show how necessarily this property doth agree to the Christian hope, namely, that it maketh not ashamed.

1. We are to open the import of this property of the hope of Christians, which maketh not ashamed. Not making ashamed is a negative expression, denoting that those who admit or give place to this hope, and in whose hearts it lives, and is fixed, are not liable to be made ashamed on this account. Now to make out this, there must be a concurrence of several things, which we must understand to be denied by this same negation; or that do not belong to the hope of Christians. As,

(1.) Shame, as it refers to foregoing hope, implies disappointment. There may be shame upon many other accounts, but as it refers to hope, it implies a disappoint-

ment. They were confounded (as the expression is in Job) because they had hoped; they came thither and were ashamed, Job vi. 20. Job is speaking there allusively to a troop of travellers, or merchant men, passing through desolate countries, and expecting relief of which they fail, and meet not with. They were ashamed because of their hope; that is, because they had hoped, and were disappointed; they met not with what they hoped for.

(2.) It supposes hereupon disgrace and reproach. For shame is properly the resentment of any thing under the notion of its being ignominious, or that carries matter of reproach in it to us. We find therefore these in conjunction sometimes in Scripture; to wit, reproach, shame, and dishonour, Psal. lxix. 19. and elsewhere. Now in this present case; to have hoped, so as to suffer disappointment, is an argument of weakness, and so is apt to spread a shame over a man's face, and even to clothe him with confusion. A man reckons it a reproachful thing to him to have betrayed his impotence, want of foresight, an aptness to be gulled and imposed upon in this respect; and very shameful that he should hope with no more security. When a person has cause, and apprehends that others have also of censuring him, concerning the hope that he had, there it is that shame takes place. But this we must understand to be denied here. This hope, which the apostle speaks of, shall never meet with a disappointment; and consequently no reproach, nor disgrace, shall attend the hoper. He shall never have cause to call himself fool, because of his hope; nor shall any one else have cause or ground to call him so for ever.

(3.) Shame doth also imply our own reflection upon that reproach; or else there is no actual occasion of shame, if we do not consider in our minds, or view the reproachful thing we are to take shame for. Therefore when the matter is such as only in vulgar estimate is shameful, but is not so indeed; to fortify oneself against shame in that case, is to overlook it, or look another way. So it is said of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he "endured the cross, despising the shame," Heb. xii. 2. Because it was to him no shame, he overlooked it, and looked upon it with contempt. "This will be counted a shameful thing, but I mind it not." He looked another way, having his eye set upon glory. If any thing be really matter of shame, it is by reflecting on it that shame ensues. But this is denied here. In this case there shall be no occasion to pore and look on, so as that from thence matter of reproach may accrue to you that have hoped for the glory of God. Let not your hearts misgive you; you shall have no uncomfortable reflection for what you have done in this matter. As there shall be no reproach, so you shall imagine none. And,

(4.) Shame includes in it a heart-dejecting resentment hereupon. That is, a resentment seizes the heart upon this reflection, and sinks into the soul, so as to depress it, and bring it low. Shame is grief; only distinguished from other grief by this particular distinction in the object, that it is grief for a thing under the notion of its being uncomely and ignominious. But that is denied here. Hope maketh not ashamed. You shall never grieve for this hope. You shall never suffer heart-displeasure on this account. Your hope shall never leave your heart to sink, because it fails and comes to nothing.

This now is the negative import of this property of the Christian hope; it maketh not ashamed. But then there is somewhat positive implied under this too. We may fitly understand a *meiosis*, as they call the figure, in this expression; that is, when less is said than is intended or meant. Your hope, Christians, shall not make you ashamed: no, it shall make you exult; it shall make you triumph and glory; it shall raise and heighten your spirits; so far shall it be from occasioning in you a sinking or dejection of soul. This is very common, in Scripture, for negative expressions to be put with an accent, to signify some very great positive thing. Thus it is said of the Messiah, that "he shall not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;" (Isa. xlii. 3.) that is, he shall cherish and support it. Again, "his commandments are not grievous," 1 John v. 3. Here also a great deal less is said than meant; for they are glorious, consolatory, and refreshing. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace," Prov. iii. 17. This then must be understood to be the property of the Christian's hope, that it is so far from making him ashamed or exposing him to ignominy, that it ennobles his spirit; and this it does according to the nature and degree of the thing hoped for.

It is obvious to observe how the hopes of persons, by degrees, greaten their spirits from their childhood. There is in some an aptness to mind greater things, and to live at a greater rate than others. And this we call generosity, it being not a name from the descent, but from the temper of the mind. It not only shows itself by men's being descended from noble and generous parents and ancestors, (though there may be something in that too,) but when such persons as are born to greater things come to understand their capacity, and what they are born to, their hopes do heighten or raise their spirits, and lift them up above the common pitch. So that the proper spirit of a nobleman, a prince, or a king, is greater than that of a common and inferior man. And the reason is, because as he comes to understand his quality, his spirit grows with his hopes of what he shall come to; his very hopes greaten his spirit, ennoble and raise him, and make him think of living like one that expects to be in such a state, as that to which he is born. Therefore if a prince should be reduced in his infancy to that condition as to be brought up in a beggar's shed, and understand nothing of his birth; it is likely he would mind such things, as children of peasants use to do; but if he afterward come to understand the truth of his own original and descent, and what he was really born to; and withal what his capacity is, and the ground of his hope that he shall one day inherit such and such grandeur and honours; with this hope his spirit will swell, and rise, and greaten.

And such is the property of the Christian's hope. It not only makes him not ashamed; but it heightens, enlarges, and greatens the Christian's spirit, so as to make him aspire high, and to look for great things. Hence it is given as the description of them, to whom God will give eternal life, on that day when he shall give to every one according to their deeds; that they are such as, "by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for honour, glory, and immortality," Rom. ii. 6, 7. To these he will give eternal life; but to those that are contentious, against the plain truth of the Gospel which should rule and govern them, will he give "tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath." The former sort who shall have eternal life for their portion, are such, whose minds, hearts, and hopes, are carried after great things; who seek for honour, glory, and immortality; who disdain and scorn this earth, and all sublunary things, and can say, "*Non est mortale quod opto*; I have something above, better than, and beyond, all that this earth can afford."

In a word, a true Christian is one that seeks that better, even the heavenly, country, (Heb. xi. 16.) so as not to stoop to this world though there were never such opportunity for gaining it; he would not go back, though he had the opportunity of going into Egypt. And all this is by reason of the hope of coming to a better country. The Christian would not go back into the world, being called out of it; though he should have opportunities for it as good as other men: no, because he is seeking a better country; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called his God. "Such are of a great, a noble, and generous spirit, like my children;" saith God. "Such are in some measure worthy of me. They discover something of an excellent spirit, heightened proportionably to those great hopes which I have set before them." And now,

2. We proceed to demonstrate this to be the true property of this same subject; which will be soon done, though we have but little time, if we do but consider these things about this hope.

(1.) Consider the Parent and Author of it. It is a divine thing, it is part of the new creature, it owes its rise immediately to the Holy Ghost; as the apostle intimates, when he says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost," Rom. xv. 13. Far be it from us to think, that God should beget a hope in his, that should end in disappointment and shame!

(2.) Consider the object of this hope. Christians do not

hope for creeping shadows; they have no reason to be ashamed of such great things as they hope for. They hope for the glory of God, for a kingdom that shall not be shaken, for the unseen things of the other world. Their hope entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, Heb. vi. 19, 20. A man that hath only pitched his hopes upon mean, base, low things, hath cause to be ashamed that he was such a fool to hope so; but the Christian's hope will never make him ashamed.

(3.) Consider the ground of their hope. They hope in God upon the encouragement of his truth and promise. Uphold me according to thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope, saith the Psalmist, Psal. cxix. 116. Thy word is that which I ground my hopes upon; shall I be ashamed? I hope in thee, thy truth, thy power and goodness; let me not be ashamed. That prayer is as much as a promise, that he should not be ashamed. Prayer by divine inspiration is as good as a promise. The prayer is, Let none that wait on thee be ashamed, Psal. xxv. 3. The promise is expressly, They shall not be ashamed that wait for me, Isa. xlix. 23. It is true, indeed, if there were not a proportionable ground for one's hope, a man might be ashamed of his hope; as well because it is too big, as because it is too little. But if there be a real ground for it, a word of promise from that God who cannot lie; then there is no cause to suspect the matter. There is no reason why any should be ashamed, let his hope be never so high, when he hopes only for what God has promised.

Now to make some brief use of what has been said;

I. See the highly privileged state of Christians; though in this present condition of little and low enjoyments, yet their case is so good as that they shall not be ashamed. They shall have heightened spirits, their minds shall be greatened by their hopes, even while it is little that they can enjoy in one kind or another.

II. Hence consider and contemplate the different state of other men. It is not said, concerning their hope, it shall never make them ashamed. There is nobody that warrants their hope to them. The Christian's hope hath a very good warrant. I warrant you for your hope, that it shall never make you ashamed; but what have other men to warrant their hope? they have no one that undertakes to guarantee it, and therefore they are left liable to a shameful disappointment, and bitter disgrace upon that account. Yea, they are not only liable thereunto, but it is a sure and certain matter that it will end so; for their hope shall be as the giving up the ghost," Job xi. 20. We commonly say, "As long as there is life there is hope:" but their hope comes at length to the giving up the ghost, and then the man is gone. A wicked man's hope quite vanishes away; it does not remain weak, and feeble, and infirm only, but it is absolutely gone, and become nothing at all; as we have no hope at all concerning a person, when he hath once given up the ghost. Let the object of their hope be what it will, either such do hope for vain things, which are gone when they expire; or if their hope lies towards better things, it is a vain hope. If they hope not for vain things, yet they hope for these better things vainly, having no ground nor reason for their hope; and so still it perishes, and, as the giving up the ghost, comes to nothing. Or it makes them ashamed, and despised; sinks them into horror, amazement, and consternation, and so much the more, by how much the stronger was their hope. Such a disappointment is a most confounding thing; when a person expects it should go well with him, yet he perishes, and all his hope turns on a sudden into horror!

III. We learn hence also, that hope must needs be a very great thing in the life of a Christian; and a most intimate, essential part of his Christianity. It is that which holds his soul in life. This property of hope, that it maketh not ashamed, as was said before, is not to be understood as merely negative; it is that which establishes the heart; invigorates, and gives life to soul. Indeed you would make a poor thing of Christianity, if you abstract and separate this hope from it. "If in this life only (says St. Paul) we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," 1 Cor. xv. 19. The most peculiar and distinguishing things in the hope of a Christian, objectively taken, are things beyond time. But if all we were to get by Christ, were to be compassed within time, then we were very miserable creatures indeed; we should make a bad bargain of it, if we had no more by Christ than what time can hold, and deal very poorly by ourselves.

A Christian lives by hope all along, from first to last. He is born to hope, begotten to a lively hope, (1 Pet. i. 3.) is saved by it; (Rom. viii. 24.) as if it had been said, he were lost if it were not for this hope. This then is the great, the momentous thing in the life of a Christian; for if it were not for this, we should sink and perish. So that if I am a Christian indeed, if I am a new creature, I must live by hope all my days. And that I may shut up all, I shall only leave with you a word or two of counsel, and caution.

1. Of counsel. Labour to establish in your hearts this hope, and maintain it; and live by, and upon it. But I cannot enlarge upon this. And then,

2. By way of caution, I add; be sure that your hope be the truly Christian hope only; that hope, whereunto you can entitle the Holy Ghost as the Author, so as that hereupon we may say, we are begotten by him to that hope. And also see to it, that it be just commensurate with Scripture grounds. That is genuine Christian hope, that measures with the Scripture, and the word of promise. "Remember (says David) thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." Ps. cxix. 49. Then you will hope for nothing, but what God has promised: and in the way, and according to the tenor, of his promise. And you need to hope for no more, for he hath promised to give grace and glory, and to withhold no good thing from them that love him, Ps. lxxxiv. 11. And what would you have more? what need your hope to range beyond that, or without the compass of this promise? But then it must be according to the tenor of his promise; for if you hope absolutely for that which is a matter only of a limited promise, then your hope would be beside its ground, and so be liable to disappointment.

And you must know there are things which lie within the promise, that cannot be the matter of an absolute hope; because God's promise, concerning them, is not absolute. As to temporal good things; outward prosperity to ourselves, or the church of God in common; there is no absolute promise of these; therefore if we hope for them absolutely, we deceive ourselves, and it is our own fault if we be made ashamed. Who bid us hope so? who bid us let our hopes run that way, otherwise than as God commands, or beyond what he has promised? We may hope absolutely for things, that are of an immutable goodness; but some things are not so, and are only to be estimated according to their end. Sometimes they will serve the end that God designed them for, and sometimes not; and when they do not, they are not good, but evil. External prosperity to the church of God, or ourselves, will not always be serviceable to the end for which it is designed by God; to wit, to make our spirits better, and more of the temper which he looks for, and approves; and he always knoweth whether it will be best for that end or no. Now if we suppose an absolute promise for any variable good things, which are sometimes good and sometimes not; then take the time when they are not good, and can they be the matter of a promise? No, sure; the promise would in that case be turned into a threatening.

This then shows the reason, why it is altogether impossible that promises, concerning external good things, can ever be universal and absolute. They are not always good, but only as circumstances are. But from the nature of the thing promised we may be at a certainty how the promise is to be understood; that is, in reference to the Divine wisdom. Such things as do appear good for us, to that unerring wisdom, in certain circumstances, shall be bestowed upon us; and if we so order our hopes, they will never fail us, for no good thing will God withhold from them that love him. But when there is a doubt in the case, whether it be good or no, there is all the reason in the world he should decide the doubt, and we should yield a matter of dubious consequence to him. But if our hearts be so set upon any temporary good thing, as that such savour more with us, than those things which run into an eternal state; this we ought to guard ourselves

against. As suppose it should be more consolatory to me, to be assured of present deliverance or prosperity, than to be told of being at the resurrection brought within the compass of his sheep, whatever troubles I meet with here: this is certainly a great distemper of soul, that I cannot taste the best, the sweetest, the most satisfying, and fullest good, more than present ease; but that any thing of earth would be more tasteful, and grateful. And this, I say, we should always take heed of; that we do not indulge ourselves in any thing, which is in itself of so very dangerous and dreadful a consequence.

SERMON IX.*

I Thess. v. 6.

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others—

I CAN spend no time in giving you a view of the context, which is very suitable to the words now read. They are a caution against security, and contain in them these two things. To wit, in the first place, a monitory prohibition of it; "Let us not sleep." And, secondly, a specification of the prohibited evil; "as do others:" which words plainly intimate that others sleeping is no warrant to us to do so. Common example indeed is apt to have that pernicious influence; but we are taught that it cannot justify us in sleeping, that others so generally, and as it were industriously, compose themselves to it. Moreover, these words signify, that others sleeping ought the more effectually to warn us not to do so. Examples that carry much of terror in them ought to strike our hearts with dread, and to possess us with a cautious prudent fear, lest we fall into the same dangerous and desperate state. It is as if he had said; "Come, let me show you a fearful sight. Take a view of the world, cast your eyes round about on every side; behold the generality of men all asleep, asleep under wrath, careless and at ease, securely slumbering while their judgment lingereth not, and while their destruction doth not slumber: be warned by so dreadful an example, not to do as they do."

The words do not need much of literal explication. Sleep is wont to be variously taken. You know what it means in the proper sense. In the borrowed sense it sometimes signifies, natural death; sometimes a quiet composure, and rest of the spirit: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for the Lord only maketh me dwell in safety," Psal. iv. 8. cxxvii. 2. Again, that is, in a moral sense, it signifies the state of sin: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light," Eph. v. 14. It denotes especially the security of such a state, with reference to the wrath and judgment of God, whether temporal or eternal; which sleep is always sinful, and in some cases penal too in some degree; for we read of a pouring forth a spirit of slumber, and a deep sleep, Isa xxix. 10. Rom. xi. 8. But we must know that the word Καθεύδωμεν, here used in the text, signifies a deeper or a more intense sleep. It is the word that is used by the Septuagint to signify the sleep of death. "Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake," Dan. xii. 2. And they use the same word to express that fast asleep of the prophet Jonah, out of which all the storms and perils of the sea were not sufficient to awaken him. As for the words *us* and *others;* the former plainly means true sincere Christians, and the latter the rest of the world: the refuse, as the word λοιποι emphatically signifies; or the reprobate, and worst of men. Two things offer themselves to us from the words,—That these *others,* the refuse, who are the most of men, do sleep; and —that God's own people by no means ought to do so. I shall speak to these two things: And,

I. Show you, that these *others,* here referred to by the apostle, do sleep; And,

II. Upon what accounts it so very ill becomes the people of God to do so too. And then, I shall make the use of both together.

* Preached at Haberdashers' Hall, May 2nd, 1678.

I. I am to show that the *others,* whom the text means, do sleep. And herein I must premise to you, before we come to evince this point, that by sleeping is not merely meant, that they do actually for the present sleep only; as if the apostle supposed them to be but in some present temporary slumber: but we are to understand him as speaking of them as habitual sleepers; or that they are under such a sort of sleeping disease, as is resembled by a lethargy; or a caros, which is reckoned a more intense degree of that disease; a *veternum,* or dead sleep. How physicians distinguish these things, or critics, I need not stay to tell you. But the thing that is plainly meant hereby, is to represent this as the common state of the world, that it is an habitual drowsiness, such as that kind of disease serves to resemble.

Now that this is the common state of most of the world we may evince to you by such things, as are usually incident to sleep, or are symptoms of a sleepy, sluggish disposition. As,

1. Forgetfulness, which has most proper reference to things past. Sleepy persons are very oblivious. So is the common case of the world. Men are forgetful of things they are most concerned to remember, and most forgetful of them. They have generally forgot that they are creatures; have forgot that with the rest of men they are lapsed, and revolted from their Creator, and become sinners; forgot that they sprung from an apostate race, and that they were children of wrath, one as well as another. Thus their strange forgetfulness of things, which one would think should continually urge them, shows that they are continually asleep.

2. Insensibleness, or stupidity, which hath reference to what is present. Persons that are in a more intense and deep sleep, you cannot make them feel without difficulty. Such as are in a caros, prick them and they do not feel. Sleep is a binding of the senses, and such a deep sleep strongly binds them. So the common case is with the world. It is a wonder of divine power if at any time their hearts are made to feel; and a thing to be recorded (as you find it is in the Acts of the Apostles, chap. ii. 37.) if any are ever pricked in their heart, though never so pungent things are spoken to them.

3. Security; or unapprehensiveness of any future threatening danger. Why, so you know the case is with persons asleep. Let the danger be never so near, as well as dreadful; if the house be on fire, if the murderer be by the bed-side, if the sword be at the breast, the knife at the throat, yet they are void of all fear. And do not we know this to be the common case with the world? Destruction from the Almighty is no terror to them. They rush with all violence upon every danger, as a horse into the battle: or are like persons in their nocturnals; who, if not hindered, would come upon rocks, precipices, or rivers, or fall into dangers that would certainly destroy them. Another thing incident to sleep is,

4. Misapprehension of all things past, present, or to come. For you know in sleep persons used to dream, and then how strangely do they misapprehend things! their heads are full of false images, or false conceptions of those things which are true. The case is so with the world too in their sleep. They can tell how to dis-imagine all the greatest realities, and turn them into shadows. God and Christ, heaven and hell, and the eternal judgment, which must determine them to the one or the other of these, are all fancies with them. But the pomp and grandeur of this world which is called fancy;[a] the business and turmoils of it, which are all walking in a vain show; outward prosperity, which is but as a dream when one awakes; these things are great realities, and with them these are the main things, and the most important. Riches and poverty, prosperity and adversity, which will be all thought fancies in a little while, are great things with these men; so aptly do they misapprehend in their dreams!

5. There is also (which is near a-kin to the last) a great unaptness to reflect upon any thing as absurd, though never so truly so, which occurs to them in this dreaming sleepy state. It is so with persons, you know, in dreams. Let things occur to them never so absurd, they never take no-

[a] Agrippa and Berenice came μετα πολλης φαντασιας. Acts xxv. 23.

tice of the absurdity. Let them dream themselves to be in never such odd, antic postures, all is well; they find no fault with any thing they do, or is done to them, while they are in their slumbers. And so is the case with the world too. The most absurd things imaginable, are no absurdities to them. To live in this world of God's making, while he feeds them with breath from moment to moment, yet as "without God in the world;" to be concerned a great deal more to please themselves than him, as if his favour were of no importance, and signified nothing; to study more the satisfaction of their flesh, than the saving of their souls; busying themselves all their days about mere trifles; these, I say, the most absurd things that ever could enter into any human imagination so much as to think of, are yet no absurdities to them. They find no fault with this; think all is well, though this be their continued course, which plainly shows they are asleep. Those things, for which persons when awake are ready to tear their flesh, and do abhor and loath themselves for, they indulge themselves in even for a life's time making no displeasing reflections upon them all their days; never at least till they awake, which shows what their state was before.

6. It is especially incident to a deeper sleep to be awakened with very great difficulty. The difficulty of bringing them to a right mind, to the exercise of their understanding, and to apply themselves to do according as a rectified understanding would dictate, shows them to be very much under the power of sleep, since there is so much ado to awaken them. And yet nothing will serve some, who are called upon by the word of God from heaven, even all their time, and yet never awake; roused by strange thunders of Providence, many times, yet awake not.

7. Slothfulness is manifestly ascribed to such a sleepy distemper, or a listlessness to business. So it is with the world too. That which is the proper business of men, in this world they will not be got to it; they are altogether indisposed thereunto. You know how Solomon represents the sluggard, whose hands refuse to labour, and indulges himself in sleep and slumber, Prov. vi. 9, 10. xxi. 25. xxiv. 30—34. Again,

8. They are apt to show great displeasure and frowardness towards those, who attempt to awaken them. So it is with very drowsy persons, who soon grow peevish and angry if you offer to awaken them. They are ready to quarrel even with the very light itself, if it shine in their faces. Thus it is with the sleepy world too. This very light itself is as the shadow of death, and whatsoever it is that tends to awaken them.

9. And lastly, there is a constant proneness to fall asleep again, if at any time they are startled a little. Thus it is with the world. You may have here and there persons who are roused to bestir themselves a little, but presently they drop asleep again. They can hold their eyes open but a little while. And thus I have shown what is the common state of the world, these "others;" they are generally asleep. I now come to show,

II. That it ill becomes those who are God's own children, that is, true sincere Christians, to sleep as do others; namely, the refuse of the world. This will appear upon a threefold account; it holds no agreement, either with their principles, or with their state, or with their design and end.

I. It is very unsuitable to their principles that they should sleep as do others; to the constituent principles of the new creature. As for instance,

(1.) Light is a main ingredient principle in that holy frame of the new creation. New creatures are all the children of God, as God is the Father of lights. They are born light, of light. It is true, light signifies holiness; not directly and formally, but consequentially, as being potently influential and efficacious. It derives or makes an impression upon the heart which is correspondent, and agreeable to itself. The apostle tells these Thessalonians, that they are the children of the light and of the day. I Thess. v. 5. It is day with them. It is not only day round about them, (so it is wherever the Gospel is afforded to men,) but God hath made it day within; or as the apostle expresses it, hath shined in our hearts, 2 Cor. iv. 6. A day-star is risen there; and to lie sleeping under the light of such a day, is a very unsuitable thing. They have light whereby to discern, both the mysteries of grace, and the methods of Providence; and very unsuitable it is in both respects that they should sleep. They have light to discern the mysteries of grace; those strange and wonderful things unfolded in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which should always hold the soul in an admiring posture, for it is a marvellous light they are brought into, (I Pet. ii. 9.) or an amazing light, as the word signifies (θαυμαστὸν φῶς.) And they have light more than other men to discern the methods of Divine Providence. The Lord's voice crieth to the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name, Micah vi. 9. There is that wisdom which is of heavenly descent, wisdom from above, by which they know what is the nature of God, and what are the ways of God, which are highly conformable to his nature, in his government of the word. It is not likely these should be asleep, when comparing things together; especially when they expect God will be doing some strange matter in the earth; though, at some times the appearances thereof are greater than at others, and things seem near even at the door. If they be so, they who have not internal light cannot apprehend it; but those who have enlightened eyes may, especially at some times, see that the providence of God is bringing it to pass. It is unreasonable then such should be asleep, who are not in darkness, lest the day should overtake them as a thief; as the expression is in the fifth chapter of this epistle and the fourth verse. And again,

(2.) It is unsuitable to the principle of life and power in the new creature. They are made to live by the most agile and noble kind of life that is in the world, and to which sleepiness is most disagreeable. They are made to give themselves unto God; as those that are alive unto him, and gotten out of death, wherein they were sleeping before. They are to reckon themselves indeed dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. vi. II. I might also mention those three eminent principles of faith, love, and hope, all directed to action; but the time will not permit.

2. For sincere Christians to sleep as do others is very unsuitable to their state. As in the ninth verse of this chapter the apostle observes, that God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. By which he intimates, that the refuse part of the world have the tokens on them of persons appointed unto wrath; while those who are true and sincere are appointed to obtain salvation. And,

3. It is unsuitable to their designs and ends. They who have so great things to do, as to serve and glorify God all their time in this world, and to save their own immortal souls, and to gain an immortal state of life and glory, methinks should have no time to sleep. It would be altogether unsuitable to their business to allow themselves so to do. But I cannot insist further here, and shall pass on to the use of this subject. And sundry things these truths taken together would yield us by way of inference, for our improvement. As,

I. That God's own people, and the men of this world, are two distinct sorts of people. They are *alii, atque alii.* "Let not us sleep, as do others." It would be a very useful consideration to us many times to think seriously of this matter, that there are two sorts of people in the world; and then to think seriously also to which I must annumerate myself, or to which sort I belong.

II. The people of God are a select and a saved people, the rest are a refuse people. This is plainly too held forth to us. Christians are a faithful, chosen generation, and possession; the others are not so, but are of a vile and abject sort. All indeed were naturally alike; but they who are taken out and selected, are made a very peculiar sort of people, in their habitual frame, and in respect of the permanent fixed excellencies that are in them, above and beyond what are to be found in other men.

III. The people of God are not to imitate the rest of the world. "Let not us sleep as do others." They are a peculiar and a different people from these "others;" and therefore must do other kind of things. "What do ye more than others?" (Matt. v. 47.) said our Lord to his disciples, upon a supposition, that they should only do so and so; or content themselves with going no further than the scribes and Pharisees; but this absurdity is implied at

the bottom, that for them to do nomore than others were a most intolerable thing. Our Sviour there reasons *ex absurdo*, and supposes it very absurd that his disciples should do no more than others. They are not to be conformed to this world; not to run with others into the same excess of riot, though they speak ever so ill of them for their singularity, I Pet. iv. 4. We may further learn,

IV. That it is not enough for the people of God to abstain from the positive evils of thee others, but they must beware also of their neglects. Many think that they do fairly well, that they are not guilty of those gross commissions that many other men are; but do not tax themselves for being guilty of their neglects, arelessness, sleepiness, sloth, and security. But alas! we are not to sleep with others, to be omissive with them of what is incumbent upon us to do.

Well, that I may hasten to a clos, this truth ought to be a akening to us all, and should pu us upon rousing ourselves. What! is the world asleepabout us? and do we profess to be of another sort from thm, and yet sleep with them? Surely it highly becomes us to hestir ourselves, and to shake off this drowsy temper. If I had time I would show in some particulars, how pernicious and mischievous a drowsy sluggish temper of spirit is to a Christian. While he sleeps, corruption grows "I went by (says Solomon) the field of the sluggard, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding, (the sleepy person is a fool and a witless person,) and it was all grown over with thorns," Prov. xxiv. 30. Temptation pevails; "Watch and pray therefore, that ye enter not into temptation," Matt. xxvi. 41. Where there is no watching but continual sleeping, temptation carries all before it. Grace languisheth, and cannot but do so hereupon. Comforts fail, we cannot so much as taste them; much less can we fetch them from the proper objects which would afford them. While we sleep providences are unobserved. A great deal of instruction is to be got out of them, and much duty lies upon us in reference to them. But while we sleep, we take no notice of whatever God does in the work. The breathings of the Spirit also are neglected; for they do not always quite awaken, though they do in a degree. It looks to be complied, and comported with by our st rring up ourselves to meet with it. The Divine presence is hereupon withdrawn! Christ is gone! How many good times are lost when our doors are knocked at, and we asleep! Is it not often so? Duties stand for little! all most slumberingly performed! in a slight, listless, heartless manner; as we do every thing, when we are between sleeping and waking. Either there is no calling upon God, or it is to no purpose. It is a dreadful thing to sleep upon the knee. There must be a stirring up of ourselves to take hold upon God, and a watching unto prayer. With what wakeful, lively spirits should we attend at the Lord's table! but if we indulge ourselves in this sleepy distemper, so it will be even there too. Our eternal states are hazarded! Are we sure we have done all that is requisite, in order to the securing of them? If we had done ever so much, we should be the less for sleeping. While the bridegroom tarried, all slumbered and slept; the wise as well as the foolish virgins; but the wise had their oil, and their lamps ready trimmed; but the foolish had not. He comes, and then the door was shut, and they were shut out. They were not ready, they had slept away their time, Matt. xxv. 1—13. We make ourselves by this means liable to the surprisal of judgments. And is not that terrible to our thoughts, to think of being caught asleep, when God comes to plead in his displeasure with the inhabitants of the earth? I am afraid this would be the too common case among those who bear the name of Christians, and is so now while God's judgments are abroad in the world. And I wish it may not be the case of many of those, who go for stricter professors among us, to be so surprised as the old world was. But certainly it will be inexcusable in us to do so who have had such warnings. We do not know that the old world had from Noah more express warnings than we had. It is recorded as one part of his encomium, that "By faith he, being warned of God, moved with fear, prepared the ark," Heb. xi. 7. We have been warned, I do not know how we have been moved. But sure we are very much without excuse if we are without fear and care upon such warnings as we have had. For what! would we expect voices from heaven? or must God send prophets among us, or else we will regard nothing? Needs it be proclaimed, that within so many days, we and our city shall be destroyed? Surely we have so much understanding as to compare the way of God's dispensation in former times, when the case has been as it is with us; and to make a comparison between the former and the present case, in respect of wickedness and provocation! we may then see how we are to make the comparison, in respect to God's judgments.

I know there are pretences for security; and things do very obviously suggest themselves to the thoughts of many, by which they put off or prevent what there is of an awakening tendency in the judgments of God. And perhaps it may be said; "Why, to what purpose would it be for us to be so wakeful, and apprehensive of such and such fearful things coming on? we cannot prevent them by that." But that is more than you know. You do not know but that most serious importunate seeking of the face of God, jointly and separately, in congregations, and families, and closets; being much upon the knee, much with God in private; may prevent a great deal: you do not know how much it may prevent of the Divine displeasure. But if you do not by this means prevent the common calamity, is it not much to save your own soul? And though you be not hid in the common calamity, is it not a desirable thing to die accepted with God?

But if you still say, To what purpose is it? I answer, Not to that purpose, that we should torment ourselves with the forethought. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof, Matt. vi. 34. This is not the meaning of God in requiring us to be watchful; nor that we should put ourselves upon the trial or use of any undue means, for the securing ourselves from external calamity. It is not, I say, to that purpose neither. But positively, we have a great deal to do, and a great deal we might do if we be awake, if we be not found asleep, when any wasting, desolating judgment comes. We may be drawing near to God. Is it not better that judgments take us near to God, than afar off? We may be entering into our chambers; we may be making our calling and election sure; clearing up our title to the eternal inheritance; labouring to get such graces in actual exercise, as are suitable unto such a time, and such a state of things; to be prompt and ready to know how to use our faith and patience; and not to be as those who know not how to use their hands, when the time for action cometh.

Finally, We may be contemplating the heavenly state; recounting with ourselves, that it is happy for us we are sure of happiness above; endeavouring to frame our hearts to an indifferency, as to all sublunary things and enjoyments, ready to lose all and be undone. These are things we know not how to digest, without preparation. And to have these things snatched away, before our hearts are loosened from them, will be the way to pluck our hearts away too. But we should be crucified to the world, and have the world crucified to us. Then we are unconcerned with one another. Dead men lie quietly one by another, give one another no more wounds. And certainly it is better to be taken in such a posture as this, when judgment comes, than to be found in all these respects altogether unprepared.

And whereas it may be said: "But why should we so concern ourselves; why should not we rest in peace and quietness? We have apprehended danger a great many times before to be very near us, but God has kept it off. He is able to keep us still." And this I am most troubled at of all, that this should be used as a kind of religious pretence for security, "God is able to keep off any threatening danger."

The doctrine is true but grossly misapplied. Did never any storm befall the church of God yet? and what! was not God as able to have kept it off then? We should consider with ourselves. Is it, according to the aspects of providence, and God's ordinary methods before, likely that it should be kept off? How can we but think there is a day coming of God's reckoning with a people of such provocations as we are? What! are we more innocent than our neighbours, weltering in blood, and in great desolation round about us? Nor do I think our danger is so much from incensed enemies abroad (for we hear of wars,

and rumours of wars among our neighbours) as from the security of our own hearts. We have not so much reason to fear their arms, as we have a slumbering spirit in our own bosoms.

But if these threatening evils be yet kept off, what are we the worse for being prepared? We lose no labour. It is worth our labour to be prepared to live or die, for good days and bad. We have been only doing what is our duty at all times. We should be always watching; for we know not when our Lord will come and call us. Therefore we have no reasonable pretence why we should indulge ourselves to sloth, and say; "Yet a little more sleep, and yet a little more." No, no; there has been a great deal too much already.

SERMON X.*

Daniel ix. 25.

—The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

THAT we may the better discern the reference of these words, we shall give you a very general and brief account of the contents of the chapter, which consists more especially of two parts; a prayer, and an answer thereunto.

We have first, the prayer made by Daniel on the behalf of ruined Jerusalem, and captive Judah. The occasion of which we have an account of, premised in the first and second verses of the chapter; to wit, that at such a time as is there mentioned, Daniel did understand by the books (that is, no doubt, by consulting the writings of Jeremiah) how long the desolations of Jerusalem were to continue, and that God meant to accomplish seventy years in those desolations. Hereupon he knew that the time was near expiring. There was a way opened very far, for the restitution and deliverance of this people. The reign of Nebuchadnezzar was finished; and those of Evil-merodach and Belshazzar past; Cyrus had succeeeded; and having taken Babylon, transferred the monarchy (which had continued for many years among the Assyrians[a]) unto the Medes and Persians. This Cyrus is called the servant, or the anointed, of the Lord, (Isa. xlv. 1.) by whom he meant to make way for the deliverance and restitution of his people; and by that Darius also, who is mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, and who, as some conceive, was at this time a viceroy under Cyrus.[b] Hereupon he applies himself to serious seeking of God's face; and makes that prayer, which you find continued unto the twentieth verse of the chapter. From thence, unto the end of it, is

The answer to this prayer by the angel Gabriel, sent while Daniel was yet a praying. In which he acquaints the prophet with the measure and compass of that time, wherein the great things were to be done; which he now not only immediately prayed for, but which he further had a commission to acquaint him with; namely, that seventy weeks were determined for the bringing these things to pass, (manifestly weeks of years, as is the Scripture way of computation sometimes,) all which amount to four hundred and ninety years. Within the first seven of those weeks, that is, forty-nine years, the angel gives him to understand that Jerusalem should be rebuilt; namely, the street, that is, all the inward part, or the houses of the city; and the wall that should encompass it about: that after the expiration of sixty-two weeks, added to those seven, the Messiah should come;[c] and that in the last week, even in the middle of it, he should be cut off. A propheey tc which afterwards the gent did so very punctually correspond, that a very noted hilosopher speaking of it was wont to say, that surely tha prophecy (as it was called) must have been written afte the things were done.

But the words that w are to consider concern what was done within the first seen weeks, or forty-nine years; for at the beginning of thatime did the command go forth for the rebuilding of the temple and Jerusalem, as it was said it soon should. But te work was very soon after intermitted, as is reckoned for about three years; and then despatched in the foty-six years that followed. Unto which the Jews have eference, more particularly speaking of the temple, "Erty and six years was this temple in building, and vilt thou rear it up in three days?" John ii. 20. As it wasnot a total destruction which it suffered afterwards; so it was not a rebuilding from one ground, but a restoration, which it had by Herod.

This is that which is, in short, foretold to Daniel here, in reference to Jerusalem: that though it would be a troublous time, in which such a work should be attempted and carried on; yet he work should be carried on, and completed notwithstanding. And therefore what the words do more obviously present us with and offer to our observation, is;

That God takes eire for the rebuilding of his Jerusalem, so as to effect itnotwithstanding the troubles of the times.

But that we may consider the matter with more use and profit to ourselves, it is requisite that we understand, that Jerusalem was capable of being considered under a twofold notion; either a spiritual, or as civil. In the former sense, by the name of Jerusalem is usually in Scripture signified the churchof God; and we are not to think that this sense was unintended in this colloquy, as I may eall it, or interlocution about Jerusalem between Daniel, and the great God by his angel. Neither had Daniel a reference to it in his prayer, nor God in his answer by the angel, only considered upon a civil account; that is, as it had been a great, and in opulent, and a famous city, of much account in the world. It was not, I say, upon this civil consideration, merely, that either Daniel was so concerned; or that the great God did seem so directly, and with so special a care and providence, to concern himself about it; but as it was the seat of the Divine presence and worship, and had been the throne of his glory, though he had suffered it to be disgraced to a very great degree. And therefore both Daniel in his prayer, and the angel in his answer, speak of it under the name of the *holy city*, as you may see in the sixteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-fourth verses of this chapter, in which they do, as it were mutually and *certatim* interest one another. And so the thing we have to observe and consider, is this;

That the great God doth mercifully provide and take care, that the building of his church should go on, even in troublous times.

It will be worth our while to consider this point a little. The people of God are by the apostle Paul called his building. "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are his building," I Cor. iii. 9. The conversion of souls is the building the church. The growth and improvement of the converted, is the building up or edification of particular souls. Such building work as this the blessed God takes care should go on; should not be laid aside altogether, even in times of difficulty and trouble, but should go on notwithstanding. For the power is greater by which God doth manage sueh work, than that by which he can be resisted in it; and the mercy is greater with which he is intent upon it, than to be diverted from it. If he have such work to do, who shall let it? If he will work, who shall hinder him? And

* Preached at Haberdasher's Hall, September 2nd, 1679.

It plainly appears, that the sermon was preachad on occasion of the fire of the city of London, (which began September 2, 1666,) and its restoration again to its former splendour, in a few years' time. In order to illustrate some parts of this discourse, some account will be given of this affair, towards the conclusion of it, in a marginal note.

a I suppose the author means the Babylonians. For the Assyrian monarchy was dissolved, on the death of Sardanapalus, after it had s'ood above 1300 years, by Arbaces and Belesis. The latter of whom, who is also called Nabonassar, founded the Babylonish empire, which continued only 210 years; that is, to the time of Cyrus's taking the capital, who laid the foundation of the Persian monarchy

b The opinion of those, whom the author alludes to, seems to be wrong. Darius, the Mede, was uncle to Cyrus, and without doubt is the same with Cyaxares in Xenophon; who both engaged, according to that author, in the war against the Babylonians. But Cyrus, who was general of the Persian army, commanded at the siege of Babylon; and took that city by a remarkable stratagem, of which Dean Prideaux gives an account, both from Herodotus, and the eighth book of the Cyropædia of Xenophon. The city being taken, the whole Babylonian empire fell into the hands of Cyrus; who, as long as his uncle Darius, otherwise Cyaxares, lived, allowed him a joint title with himself in the empire; and out of deference to him, made him not onerely a viceroy, but yielded him the first place of honour in it. Nine years are generally alloted by chronologers to the reign of Cyrus; the two first of which he reigned in conjunction with his uncle, and the seven following, (Darius being dead) he reigned as the sovereign and supreme head of the whole empire.

c The author undoubtedly means, in his public character.

if his merciful inclination hath once made him intent upon it, he will never suffer any thing to divert it. His power, I say, is too great to be resisted; and so is his goodness, to be diverted from such a work.

Yea, and he not only takes care that it should be carried on, notwithstanding the troubles of the times; but also that it shall be carried on in some measure by them, or that they shall be in some sort subservient thereunto. For he so orders it, as that even by the troubles of the times,

1. His under-agents, his instruments or builders whom he employs, have their diligence so much the more quickened. Those that were employed in the building of Jerusalem, appeared so much the more eager and intent upon the work, by how much the more Tobias, Sanballat, and some others, did bend and set themselves against them in it. Yea, and,

2. By the means of such troubles too are particular souls, many times, stirred up, and made more serious and impressible; more apt to prize, and more ready to improve, all good seasons, which tend to spiritual edification, as they do occur. When the word of the Lord is more precious, when it is enjoyed upon very uncertain terms, it ought to be always so; and sometimes it is so, by God's gracious disposition. Then it is usually most savoury! then it is most operative, and doth most good! And so this work of building the church of God is carried on, not only notwithstanding, but even in some measure by, the troubles of the times. Some brief *use* we shall make of this, and so pass on.

I. We should learn from it not to account and reckon, that in times of trouble and difficulty there is nothing to be done, but to sit still; no further endeavours to be used, for the carrying on of God's spiritual building. Far be it from us to think so! For our own parts, we have reason thankfully to acknowledge, that it is somewhat a quiet time with us hitherto; but it is a troublous time in the world round about us; and too prone we are to stand at a gaze, as amazed persons, wistly looking round about us; and having our eyes in the ends of the earth, (as Solomon says concerning the fool,) and in the mean time to neglect our own proper work. We mind what others are doing, in their busy hurries up and down in the world; and do but little consider what we should be doing. Our own work lies still too much neglected, as if we had no such thing to do as the building up ourselves in our most holy faith; as if we had finished our work, and had nothing more remaining, nothing left us to do. And,

II. We should take heed too of mistaking our work in a time when there is so much of hurry and confusion in the world; and when things are so blundered, that it is not very easy to discern what is to be done, and what not; or what way is to be taken, and what not. There are many who are so very intent upon this or that little mean design, in reference to this building, that it very much disturbs those, who are serious and in good earnest in reference to the main of the work itself. And there are those, who think there can be no such building at all, unless it be all according to their own model; and that the building of Jerusalem is nothing else, but the building up of their own party; that they are all the church, and that none have a share and part in it but themselves. But the main things, which belong to the constitution of the church of God, must be in our eye, while we are promoting the building thereof according to our capacities, and in our several stations; and whatever tends to promote real and substantial truth and holiness, is what we should be most intent upon in this work. But then again,

Jerusalem was to be considered too under a civil notion; as it was a great and a famous city, very much favoured by Providence, and which flourished under the benign influence of it, through a long tract of time. And so we may by analogy enlarge our observation; and render the truth we observe applicable unto other cities and places, which are considerable, in some respects in the same circumstances, with Jerusalem. And the thing we have to observe, is,

That a city, or place, being ruined by its own wickedness, when it is restored, the restitution of it is owing to the fixed purpose and active providence of God, who brings it about notwithstanding whatsoever difficulties.

All this we have exemplified in Jerusalem, and it is applicable to other places. Jerusalem, you know, was reduced from the height of its prosperity and flourishing state, into a miserable ruin; and it continued in that desolate state according to the measure of time which God had appointed it. It was at length restored, repaired, rebuilt, and in a very troublous time. If you read over the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which give us the history of that affair, which the prophecy in our text refers to, you will find it was a very troublous time; and that the troubles of the time were directed in most express opposition to this work, the rebuilding of Jerusalem. There were those that bore ill will to that city, who sometimes mocked the builders of it, sometimes threatened them, sometimes stirred up the Persian princes against them, to hinder the work; representing to them that that city was anciently "a rebellious city and hurtful to kings," Ezra iv. 15. And though by this means they sometimes prevailed to have the work intermitted, yet by the favour of those very princes, some or other of them, God orders it that it is carried on, and brought to a perfect issue at last. The rebuilding of Jerusalem is enacted by a law, and enforced by other additional laws. You have Cyrus his decree; you have Darius his decree; you have Artaxerxes his decree, in the seventh year, and again in the twentieth year of his reign; if it was the same person, which I dispute not. So that by decree upon decree, is the carrying on of this work reinforced; and all by the favour of the princes of that empire, the power whereof was endeavoured to be engaged against it; and sometimes it was, in some degree, upon the solicitation of its enemies. And solemn acknowledgments hereupon are made to the great God, that he did put it into the heart of the king, to ordain and decree so and so, in reference to this affair, as you find in sacred history.

Now consider, and compare the words of the text with the event, and the matter is plain; that it was by fixed purpose, and active providence, that the affair was brought to pass. The text says expressly, that "the streets shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." As if it was said, Let not the more formidable aspects of the times discourage you, as to the belief of this; the thing shall be done notwithstanding. And it was done.

This also affords and challenges too an application; and there are several things which by way of inference we may collect, and gather for our own use. As,

I. We have this implied, that a place or city long favoured by God, may be reduced to a very ruinous condition by its own wickedness. The rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the prediction here that it should be built again as it is expressed, does suppose such a ruin. "The street shall be built again, and the wall." What! of Jerusalem? is there a mention of building that city again? This plainly implies then, that Jerusalem was in desolation. And so it was; and we are told plainly enough how it came to be so. Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and before them Jeremiah, in their solemn confessions and lamentations, do own the cause. They had sinned, they had deeply revolted, and therefore God had brought upon them all the evils that were written in the law of Moses. So they came into that desolate state. Their city was burnt with fire, and all reduced even into an utter ruin.

And it is our business this day to consider a like case to this. You know this has been the case of your city too. The mention of the rebuilding of Jerusalem bespeaks it to have been ruined before. And you can have no occasion to consider the rebuilding of London, but it will lead you to consider the foregoing ruin of it. That is our direct business, which lies in our way to consider; but especially the causes of it.

The ruin itself is first to be considered, that dreadful ruin! In reference to the ruin of Jerusalem we find the prophet, in the name of the people of God; or we find the people of God, whom he represents, laying it as a charge upon their own souls, to remember the misery and the affliction, the wormwood and the gall, and to have their souls humbled within them. And what! can a dozen or fourteen years abolish in us the memory of such a ruin,

as that of London was? Can it be forgot how the lofty city was brought low; and how the more lofty flames triumphed over the riches, the pride, and the glory of it? The thing itself surely deserves and claims to be long remembered, and deeply considered and thought of.

But especially the causes of this desolation deserve to be considered: namely, the provoking, and the punishing cause; the wickedness of London, and the Divine wrath which was engaged thereby against it. The fury of those flames, those flames themselves were the indications and issues of the greater and more furious heat of lust, and the more intense and hotter fervour of Divine displeasure. And if it be considered, methinks it should even yet melt hearts to think, that there was wickedness more outrageous, and wrath hotter, unspeakably hotter, than those flames!

And we should have no reason to think that there was a disproportion in the deserving, to the punishing cause; if the particulars of those evils I allude to were to be recounted and reflected on. But I am afraid we are very apt to deal by the judgments of God, as we are too commonly wont to do with sermons. We hear them, and they move us (it may be, if at all) a little only for the present; and all the impression of them is soon lost and vanisheth, as if we had never heard them at all. The judgments of God are audible sermons. They have a voice. The Lord's voice crieth to the city, "Hear the rod and him who hath appointed it!" Micah vi. 9. Divine judgments are loudly audible, they have a crying voice; and it is strange that the voice of such a cry should be forgotten! that so dreadful an event of Providence should be but as a nine-days' wonder! that though the wound be healed, the scars should be worn ont, and no remembrance left of it; but all returning to their former course, as if no such thing had been done among us!

But the consideration, as was said, of the thing that was done, would receive a great deal of weight by considering the doers; namely, God and ourselves. That the inhabitants of London should be, as it were, in a conspiracy to destroy London seems very strange. And yet was not that the case? How full have men's minds been of severity towards such, as they have thought, or suspected, to have been the designing instruments; but how merciful in the mean time to themselves! Every one added something to the burning; and especially every one that allowed himself in the ways of such sins, as we cannot but know are very provoking to his jealous eyes, and which God will least of all spare for, when they are found among them who profess his name.

And that it should be God's doing is never to be forgotten. That God should have such a controversy with a people, who had so long borne his name; and with a city, wherein he had so long dwelt! And yet, "shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Amos iii. 6. Are not we to acknowledge his own doing in the case? He is said to do, whatsoever creatures do; whatsoever second or subordinate causes do, while he has them in his hand, or in his power; either to restrain or let loose their inclinations and natural tendencies, as he pleaseth; though he do not prompt them to this or that thing. And again,

II. We may collect hence for our further use, that such a desolation and ruin, followed by such a restitution and recovery, is to be looked upon as an argument of the Divine displeasure not prevailing so far as unto a total rejection, and abandoning of such a people, or such a city. There was great displeasure against Jerusalem, and the breaking out of that displeasure into such a judgment and vengeance as came upon it, was indeed very formidable, if you consider that alone. But if you consider the promise, that "the street and the wall shall be built again," and that notwithstanding the greatest difficulties that troublous times may lay in the way of such a work; this shows it was not a displeasure to a total abandoning that city. And we for our parts have reason to acknowledge the Divine goodness in this, and that mercy hath been remembered in judgment: that there has not been upon the ruin of this city such a curse or malediction, as was that of Jericho; "Cursed be the man before the Lord, that raiseth up and buildeth this city of Jericho! he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it," Josh. vi. 26. We have reason, I say, to bless God that he has not so cursed us. And,

III. We may collect further, that much less is such a ruin (when by the Divine favour it is followed with such a restitution) to be looked upon as an argument against our religion; against the religion of our people, and our nation. Some might perhaps be too apt to make such an invidious interpretation and comment upon such a piece of providence; but the following issue of things is some refutation good enough for such an argument. And it was the occasion of Saint Augustine's writing those twenty-two books (as he himself testifies) concerning the city of God; that there were, in his time, such conceits and apprehensions, upon such a like event that happened to a famous city. For the Goths having invaded Rome and sacked and ruined that city; the pagan enemies, of that time, had an apprehension among them, and talked it commonly, that this ruin was fallen upon Rome, upon the account of its having become so much Christian, as it was at that time. It was the design, I say, of all those books to contend against the folly of such an opinion as that; at least this was the occasion of Augustine's writing them, and that design is carried on very much throughout them. And again we may note,

IV. That it argues a very favourable divine providence, when God does fixedly purpose, and effectually bring it about, that a city so desolated should be restored and raised again. God's hand ought to be acknowledged in the raising, as well as in the ruin, of such a city. Both were indeed alike strange as to our case. Before that desolating judgment came, in whose thoughts was it? who suspected such an event? As before that judgment came upon Jerusalem, that calamitous state and desolate judgment which befell that city, you find it said, "Who would have believed, that ever an enemy should have entered within the walls of Jerusalem?" So who would have believed that such a calamity was approaching as that of London's fire before it came? that all the power of this city should not be able to withstand the fire at first; but that it should diffuse, and spread so universally, so irresistibly; who, I say, would have thought it? And who would have thought that it should have been so soon raised up again? and how much besides, and beyond expectation was it[d]! As in reference to Jerusalem, who of those, who beheld it in its ruins, would have thought or hoped that they should again with so much joy behold Zion the city of their solemnities, and see Jerusalem, as before, a peaceable habitation? When God doth things not looked for, they ought to make the greater and deeper impression. When he bestows unexpected mercies, he

d For the illustration of this and some other parts of this discourse, it may not be improper to give the reader a short account of what the author here alludes to; I mean, the ruin of the city of London by fire, and its sudden and wonderful resurrection again from its ashes. Of which surprising events many of our historians have given us a very pathetic account; though possibly some of my readers are not much acquainted with them, and consequently will not be able to read this sermon with equal pleasure and advantage.

The dreadful fire, so often alluded to, began on September 2nd, 1666, near the place where the Monument now stands; by which one of the noblest and most magnificent cities in the world was turned into ashes in a few days. A raging east wind, we are told, fomented it to an incredible degree; which in a moment raised the fire from the bottom to the tops of the houses, and scattered prodigious flakes in all places, which were mounted so vastly high into the air, as if heaven and earth were threatened with the same conflagration. The fury, as an English historian observes, soon became insupportable against all the arts of men and power of engines; and besides the dreadful scenes of flames, ruins, and desolation, there appeared the most killing sight under the sun, the distracted looks of so many citizens, the wailings of miserable women, and the cries of poor children and decrepit old people, with all the marks of confusion and despair.

The inscription on the famous pillar or monument, erected by that celebrated architect, Sir Christopher Wren, in memory of this calamity, tells us, "The fire with incredible noise and fury destroyed eighty-nine churches, among which was the cathedral of St. Paul; many public hospitals, schools, libraries, a vast number of stately edifices, thirteen thousand two hundred dwelling houses, four hundred streets, &c. The destruction was sudden; for in a short time the same city, which was seen in a flourishing condition, was reduced to nothing: and after three days, when the fatal fire had in appearance overcome all means of resistance and human counsels, by the will of Heaven it stopped, and was extinguished." This was a sight, as Dr Calamy observes, that might have given any man a lively sense of the vanity of this world, and all the wealth and glory of it, and of the future conflagration of the world itself.* I shall only add, without inquiring into the causes of this dreadful calamity, which the author has hinted at, in one part of this discourse; that all persons, as Echard tells us, were indefatigable in the great work of rebuilding, and making provision for the resurrection of this city: and that Sir Jonas Moor having raised Fleet-street, according to the model appointed; from that beginning the city grew so hastily towards a general perfection, that within the compass of a few years it far transcended its former splendour.

* Abridgment of Baxter's Life, vol. i. p. 314.

expects impressions of deep and lasting gratitude; such impressions as are not to be worn out. For what! will we refer all these things to chance? or to mere human industry? Is it by a casual concurrence of accidents that such a thing as this is brought about? With respect to a particular house it is said, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it," Psalm cxxvii. 1. And will we disinterest God in so momentous a work as this is, the restitution of such a city? And again,

V. Take both the ruin and the restoration together, and we have mighty incentives and strong obligations to study more the pleasing of that God, and keeping of his gracious presence, who must be our keeper; the keeper of you, and your city. We read of a certain city in Italy, whose inhabitants chained the statutes of their gods to their particular stations; upon the apprehension they had of how great concern it was to the weal of their city to keep their deities among them, or that they should not be deserted and forsaken by them. I need not trouble you with the particular occasion of it. But,

God is only to be held and kept among us by bands of his own making; by his own covenant and his own promises, by which he is most strongly held, if we do not make a violent rupture ourselves, and break off ourselves from him. But it is much to be feared the Divine presence is little coveted, or desired; and it little appears that God hath a dwelling in many of the new-built houses of this city, where men little concern themselves whether they have God with them or no. How many families are there, who, after so monitory a judgment, and after so obliging a mercy, yet call not upon the name of the Lord! or wherein that wickedness dwells, which will not permit him a dwelling there! Is this just dealing, that when he provides you houses, you will not permit him a dwelling there? He furnisheth your habitations, and you spoil his. We find mention made of a people, who say unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" (Job xxi. 14.) and yet he filled their houses with good things. Ungrateful and unworthy wretches! He fills their houses with good things, and they bid him begone. But, as it follows there, "the counsel of the wicked is far from me," ver. 16. Let it be far from you also. That vile temper, that wretched disposition of heart, far be it from me! Let not my soul enter into their secret; into the secret of those, who have the heart so to requite the Lord! I only add, in the

VI. And last place, that such a ruin, and consequent restitution, are no assurance to such a place or city that it shall never be ruined again. Let us so far improve the instance of Jerusalem here. Upon such a prayer so solemn, and many a prayer besides offered up by spirits wrestling and deeply engaged about this business, here comes a gracious prediction and promise; to wit, "I will favour Jerusalem, the streets shall be built again, and the wall, and the work shall be carried on, let the difficulty be never so great, and the contestation against it never so high and earnest." Why, one would have thought Divine favour had been now so fixed to Jerusalem, that it should never have been off more. But how much otherwise was the case! Jerusalem suffered many a distress after this rebuilding. For after this it was harassed much by the Grecians, Syrians, Parthians, and the Romans; and by some of these several times. And last of all it was taken, and so dreadfully ruined, (I mean the destruction brought upon it by Titus,) that ever since one may go (as once was said of another place) and seek Jerusalem in Jerusalem, and all in vain. But God forbid that this should be the issue as to London! God grant that it may never be so! that the prevailing and growing wickedness of this city (for it seems to be growing) may never bring things to that pass, as that one may as vainly go to seek London in London.

* Preached September 8th, 1695.

This sermon, it appears, was preached on September 8th, 1695: being the day appointed by public authority for a general thanksgiving, particularly for taking the strong town and citadel of Namur, in Flanders, by King William: which place, as Bishop Burnet tells us, was so happily situated, so well fortified, and so well furnished, and commanded, that it made the attempt seem bold and doubtful. Namur had been taken by the French about three years before, in the view of a great army; which was looked upon as one of the greatest actions of that long reign. But though the fortifications, both in strength and in the extent of the outworks, were double to what they had been, when the French took the place; yet King William, after a short siege, retook that important town and fortress, in the view of a hundred thousand French, commanded by the famous Marechal Villeroy: which, as the fore-mentioned historian says, was reckoned one of the greatest actions of the king's life; and indeed, one of the greatest in the whole history of war.

SERMON XI.*

Psalm lxvii. 2, 3.

That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.

I TAKE it for granted, it is generally known that it is by public authority recommended to us, this day, to celebrate the praises of God, for the preservation and success vouchsafed to his majesty's person and forces abroad: and particularly, that God hath protected and guarded so precious a life, amidst all the dangers and deaths that threatened it in the siege of Namur; and given success to the design of taking that fortress.

And whereas the proclamation by the lords-justices appointing a thanksgiving on this day in reference to these great things, takes notice; that this protection of the king's life, and the success of his forces in that great undertaking, is justly to be looked upon as an answer to prayer, especially the prayers of that day of fast, that was appointed and observed in the beginning of the summer, with relation to this year's expedition: I do accordingly, at this time, intend to consider the second verse of this psalm, in connexion with the third: as I did on that fast-day consider it, in connexion with the first.

The words of the proclamation are to this purpose; "That whereas they did appoint a general fast to be kept through this kingdom, for imploring the blessing and protection of Almighty God in the preservation of his majesty's sacred person, and prosperity to his arms, both at land and sea, which hath been observed accordingly; and forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God, of his infinite goodness, in answer to the prayers humbly and devoutly offered up to him, to grant to the forces of his majesty, and his allies, so great success in the taking of the town and castle of Namur: they do therefore, adoring the Divine goodness, appoint this day," &c.

Now, according to the observation that is justly made here, that God hath made the event to correspond so far unto prayer, I have, as hath been already said, determined to insist upon the second verse in connexion with the following, which run thus; "That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God! let all the people praise thee." Whereas on that day of public fast, I considered the second verse, in connexion with the first; the words of which are these: "God be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations."

It was with this design that such mercy was petitioned for; or that God would be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us. Which expressions, relating to a community of people, and their public affairs, import favourable aspects of Providence upon such a people, and such affairs; and that such requests were made, and such mercy supplicated for from heaven, with this design, that God's way may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations. As this was the end and design of prayer, so the prospect, the expectation, and hope hereof, is made the great inducement, as well as the spring and source of praise. And what we aim at or seek for, is, that all people may every where praise God; that all nations may be glad and sing for joy, because he will "judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth."

By the way of God we are to understand, the course of his economy in governing the world; but especially (as the expressions connected with it show) as it refers to the salvation of men. What our translation reads in two words, "saving health;" is but one in the Hebrew text,

salvation. And we know that from the same word comes that name Jesus, given to the great and eminent Saviour; who by a known and elegant metonymy, is hereupon again and again in Scripture called God's salvation. And judicious expositors understand this to be the highest intendment and ultimate meaning of these very words; that Christ, and God's design of saving sinners in and by him, may be more known in the world. And therefore, taking the foregoing supplication as I now state it, connected with the resolved duty of praising God, and the invitation of all to a general concurrence herein; and we have a sufficient ground for that observation, which I shall now recommend to you as the theme and subject of our present discourse,

That our souls should be greatly enlarged and highly raised in praising God for successes, and for favourable aspects as to our public affairs, from the hope, that thereby divine knowledge may more generally be diffused and spread in the world. I shall, in speaking to this,

I. Briefly show you what I mean by divine knowledge.

II. Show you, that such means as are here intimated; to wit, the successes and favourable aspects of providence, with relation to the public affairs of such as profess the name of God, and design to serve his interest in the world, have a tendency to the spreading of such divine knowledge among men. And,

III. I shall show, that the hope and expectation hereof is a very proper, and should be the principal, spring of our praises for such successes, and favourable aspects upon our common affairs. And so make application of all, as time will allow.

I. I shall briefly show you, what is here intended by divine knowledge. That is truly called such knowledge, whose object, and whose author, and whose nature are divine. And such I mean that to be, which I now speak of; and shall open to you in the terms of the text.

1. For the object of it; namely, God's way, and his salvation. The way of God, as I told you, is his economy, or course of dispensations in governing the world. And that takes in both religion and righteousness together, objectively considered; the knowledge of the true religion, and of all that men do mutually owe to one another. And we find that both are intended here in this context. That the general spreading of religion and righteousness is designed and aimed at, (with the desire and expectation of which the Psalmist's heart is so much taken up,) you may see from the seventh verse, which concludes the psalm. "God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." This shall be the consequence of his saving us; his giving us success, or his making his face to shine upon us; that is, that as he blesseth us, men shall more and more be induced to bless him. That expression, "the fear of God," is, you know, a paraphrase of true religion: not only religion in general towards God, but even such religion as hath its foundation in Christ, the Saviour and Mediator between God and men. And this seems to be here intended in the words of the text, "That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations." There can be no such thing as religion in the world at all, which is not founded in the hope of mercy, as the spring and fountain; and of final felicity, as the end, that all shall result into at last. There could be no more religion upon earth, than in hell, if there were no hope of salvation. Men would but have the religion of devils, or fear God with a fear of horror. For the devils are said to believe there is one God, and tremble, (φρίσσουσι,) that is, gnash their teeth for horror, James ii. 19. They tremble to think there is a power superior to them, which they cannot overcome; and that will take a just and eternal revenge upon them, for their insolent rebellion and wickedness.

It is then the knowledge of God's salvation, that giveth a rise and spring to religion; and without this, there can be no such thing as true religion in the world. But then also, that righteousness is comprehended within the compass of the object of this knowledge, as well as religion, appears from the same context; "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth," ver. 4. As God, by the dispensation of the everlasting Gospel, requires and teaches us to live righteously, as well as godly; so doth that knowledge, which he ingenerates and worketh in the minds of men, (wherever that teaching is efficacious,) produce righteousness towards one another as well as religion towards God. Both these I take therefore to be comprehended together, in the object of this knowledge; and so far it is divine. And,

2. It is divine also with respect to the author of this knowledge. The promise in the new covenant, which God said he would make with his people, and which is the connective bond of all that are his people indeed, is this; that they should be all taught of God. The passage is quoted from Jeremiah, chap. xxxi. 33, 34. by the apostle to the Hebrews; chap. viii. 10, 11. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me from the least to the greatest." And indeed if that were not designed and meant, we could not give a reasonable account, why this should be made the matter of request and supplication to him, that his way might be known upon earth, his salvation among all nations. But though this is a knowledge to be taught and given by God himself, yet he useth means in order thereto. But by how much the more overpowering his influences are, and by how much the brighter and more penetrating his light is, in begetting this knowledge, so much the less doth the instrumentality of the means appear herein, and God is seen in it so much the more. And then,

3. The nature of this knowledge, as well as the object and the author of it, must be understood to be divine too, inasmuch as it is plainly intimated to be efficacious and transforming knowledge, so as to make the subject like the object; that is, so as to make men appear like so many representations of God himself in this world; with respect to their holiness towards himself, and mutual love, equity, and righteousness one towards another. This is the meaning of his writing his law in their heart. For whereas his law is all gathered up (as it is by our Lord himself) into this double summary of loving God with all our hearts and souls, our minds and strength, and loving our neighbours as ourselves; to have this divine knowledge, in truth and reality, is to have it so efficaciously operative, as to transform the very soul into this twofold love; and so accordingly to frame this world and the minds of men every where into compositions of love towards God, as the supreme good, and towards one another, in obedience and subordination to him. And this is that divine knowledge, which the text and context do manifestly intend. But,

II. We are to show you how successes, and the favourable aspects of providence, relating to the public affairs of those who profess his name and espouse his interest, tend to propagate such knowledge as this in the world: that is, according to the expression in the text, to make it universal, so as that God's way may be known in all the earth, and his salvation unto all nations; and that true religion, and the fear of God, may take place unto the utmost ends of the earth, according to the conclusion of the psalm. And when we behold God in such favourable aspects and appearances, how much does the hope revive, and rise in our souls, that this shall be the final issue of things! namely, that God shall be thus known in all the earth so as to be every where worshipped, and subdue the nations of the world to his equal, mild, and merciful government. I shall proceed here by these two steps:—1. I shall take notice to you, that we have a great deal of reason to hope for this end; and, 2.—That we may observe an aptitude in such means to subserve it.

1. We have a great deal of reason to hope for this end; as a thing, which God ultimately has in design, and will effect. We find several unaccomplished, prophetical scriptures of this import, as that "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas," Isa. xi. 9. And so operative will be this knowledge, that besides the impressions of religion which it shall make upon the souls of men God-ward, it shall also impress a universal peaceableness and righteousness upon men's

minds, towards one another; so as that men shall generally agree to "beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," Isa. ii. 4. Such will be the powerful efficacy of this Divine knowledge, that it shall transform the world into love and kindness, benignity and goodness; as God himself is love, and the supreme and all-comprehending goodness.

And we see also a passage in the prophecy of Isaiah, which hath a more particular reference unto Christ: "Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth" (unto victory it is read in the New Testament, Matt. xii. 20.) "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law," Isa. xlii. 1—5. How far we are concerned in that I shall not insist to show; though many have made their observations upon that expression of the isles waiting for his law, and applied it to these islands that lie so near to one another, and wherein we are so much concerned. This however was a thing to be gradually done, but withal it was to be certainly and surely done; namely, that judgment should at length be set by him in the earth. This expression plainly imports the universality of the effect, and not as if it were this or that single spot, to which such an effect was to be confined; though, in strictness of speech, if it were any where known in the world, it would be known or set in the earth. But that cannot be the design of the expression as it is generally explained; but that the earth in general is to be the subject of this great effect: and the expressions, though they are wont to be applied to the case of particular souls, yet they have a more diffusive applicableness, which is not to be overlooked. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." A *meiosis* is acknowledged in these words; the meaning of which is, that he shall be so far from bruising the reed, that he shall strengthen it; he shall be so far from quenching, that he shall more and more inflame the smoking flax. This, I say, besides its being particularly applicable to the case of individual persons, must be understood also to have a general reference to the state of the Christian interest. That though it be low and languishing, and many times like a bruised reed, or a little smoking flax, where the fire is ready to expire and go out, yet it shall not be. That bruised reed shall grow stronger, and that smoking flax shall be blown up into a flame; and so will go further and further on, till the effect shall measure with the earth, and have no other confines and limits than that; till he shall set judgment in the earth, and have wrought that general transformation in the world, that all eyes shall see the salvation of God.

And when we are told in the book of Daniel (ii. 45.) of the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, that should become a mountain and fill the earth; I think there is nothing in any time or age hitherto past, that can answer the import of such a saying as that is. This is a work yet to be done, and therefore yet in great part to be hoped for; that that stone Christ, Christianity, his religion diffused, and spread among all nations of the earth, by an almighty Spirit poured forth upon all, shall be so great a mountain, as to measure with the world, and to fill all the earth. But I know nothing as yet done, that answers the import of so great a word of prophecy, as this is.

Moreover, we are told that upon the sounding of the seventh trumpet (which most agree hath not been sounded yet) all the kingdoms of this world are to be the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, Rev. xi. 15. And this will be in answer to what was predicted long before, in the second Psalm. Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession, Psal. ii. 8. So that as to the end we have a great deal of reason to hope for it, which I proposed to represent to you in the first place.

2. We may also discern an aptitude in such means, as we speak of, to serve this end: that is, when there are favourable aspects of providence upon those that espouse the interest of God in the world; in opposition to the irreligion, the anti-christianity, and the unrighteousness, that obtain therein, and too generally take place. By the consideration of several things that concur, you may discern an aptness in such means to serve this end. As consider,

(1.) That the minds of men do naturally sink into atheism, or irreligion and a deep oblivion of God, when things run on in one course and tenor with a still, uninterrupted stream. Nothing is plainer, or more obvious. Because, from the creation of the world to this day, the course of nature hath been so constant, steady, and uniform; therefore men have been apt to say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" 2 Pet. iii. 4. And so when the series of providence is generally equal to itself, or because men have no changes, therefore they fear not God, Psal. lv. 19.

(2.) God hath himself declared, that in such a case as this he will be known by the judgments which he executes, Psal. ix. 16. And when they are judgments of such a kind, as to ensnare men in the works of their own hands, (to use the following words,) and when men's violent doings are turned upon their own pates, the Lord is then known by the judgments which he executes. I know not the Lord, (said Pharaoh, Exod. v. 2.) neither will I obey his voice; but by judgment upon judgment, and plague upon plague, he made him know him before he had done with him. He could at length say, "The Lord fighteth for Israel, against the Egyptians," Exod. xiv. 25.

(3.) Men are more confirmed in their atheism, or in undue thoughts of God, (which comes upon the matter all to one,) when the course of providence seems to favour unrighteousness; or to run counter to a righteous cause. Then it is that they say, "God hath forsaken the earth; and if there be any God at all, he is surely a God that taketh pleasure in wickedness; he liketh our violence, our injurious and wrongful dealing to mankind; and even to them, who call themselves after his name." Thus because judgment, upon men's works of that kind, is not speedily executed, therefore are the hearts of the sons of men fully set in them to do evil, Eccles. viii. 11. For they say, "Tush! God seeth not, neither is there any knowledge in the Most High;" as such men are brought in speaking in the tenth and ninety-fourth Psalms: that is, this is represented as the sense of their hearts, which to him, who reads the sense, immediately impressed upon the mind, is equal to speaking; for he doth not need that they should put it into words. God reads it as it lieth there. But then,

(4.) When the course and tenor of providence in these respects alter, it tends both to revive and rectify the notions of God in the minds of men; I mean, when it alters so as to animadvert upon manifest and palpable unrighteousness and iniquity in the world, and to favour a righteous cause.

This, I say, tends to revive the notions of God in the minds of men; for every body, in his distress, is apt to think of God. There are certain *semina*, certain principles of natural religion in the minds of all; which, though some take a great deal of pains quite to eradicate, yet they can never quite do it; nature is too hard for them: but those principles that they cannot extinguish, they make a shift to lay asleep. Lust is too strong for light. A propension to, and a resolution of, being wicked, are for the most part victorious, generally governing in the minds of men; so as that the truths they hold, they hold in unrighteousness, Rom. i. 18. But affliction, and the cross rencounters of providence, revive the sleeping principles of religion: which are bound up in a torpid and stupifying state. Men begin to bethink themselves, when they find themselves in perplexity and distress. And when the wise man in Ecclesiastes (chap. vii. 14.) bids us in the day of adversity to consider, he speaks according to the natural tendency of the thing; because there will be a greater aptitude in the minds of men to consider, when things are adverse to them, and run quite contrary to their inclination. And,

The notion of a God is not only hereby revived, but in some measure rectified too. They, who before thought God did countenance their way, now find, that this was a

weak, infirm argument, and that it proves no such thing. They cannot now any further satisfy themselves, that that Deity (which they cannot altogether disimagine) is favourable to unrighteousness; but that if there be a God, he is such a one, to whom right and wrong are not indifferent things. They begin, I say, to apprehend so now.

An ungodly frame and disposition of spirit had obtained, to a very great degree, amongst Joseph's brethren; but when they meet with a series of cross providences, these remind them of their unrighteous dealing with their brother: the thoughts of which had slept with them long, but now they revive; and they now begin to return to a right mind concerning that very matter. But what comes nearer our case is that Assyrian tyrant,[a] who had been so long the plague and pest of the world, and wrought such a destruction among the people of God. When providence came to animadvert upon him, and he lay under God's rebukes and frowns, he fancied himself a beast; and became like one, by the power of his own imagination, (as that is most likely to be understood,) till he was capable of understanding, that the Most High did rule in the kingdoms of men, and give and dispose of them as he thought fit, Dan. iv. 17. And as I noted to you before, Pharaoh would not know God, neither obey his voice to let Israel go, after a series of cross providences following one another; till at length he saw himself surrounded with waters, that gave a safe passage to the Israelites, but a continual threatening and terror to him and his army; but when he found their chariot-wheels taken off, he cried out, "Now we must all fly, God is fighting for the Israelites." Then he bethought himself of a God, who did not like such a course as his was of oppression and tyranny, over a people more righteous than himself.

Not that we are to think, that successes and favourable aspects of providence are themselves, and considered apart, a measure of right and wrong, in the world. That can by no means agree with what we have supposed already. There are the greatest variations of providence imaginable, but there cannot be variations of what is right and wrong: for what is right, always will be right; and what is wrong, will always be wrong. But supposing that a cause be in itself manifestly righteous on the one hand, and unrighteous on the other; (which may be known by other measures,) then providence falling in with that which in itself is apparently right, revives and strengthens the apprehension of such a Deity, as approves of that which is right and equal, and disapproves the contrary. And so it tends at once, as I proposed to show, both to revive and rectify the thoughts of God. And hereupon,

(5.) The great commotions of nations, when the world hath been long before in a deep dream, and a drowsy sleep, taking no notice of God that rules the world, and governs the kingdoms of men: when, I say, there are great agitations; collisions of interests, and concussions of nations; nation dashing against nation; if in this case an apparently righteous cause receives countenance, and is under favourable aspects from heaven, God comes to be a great deal more thought of in the world than he was. He is then also thought to be such, as indeed he is; a God who takes not pleasure in wickedness, nor approves of unjust or unrighteous practices, though he may have forborne, and spared those for a time that used them. But further, when hereupon the thoughts of God are revived, and rectified in any measure in the minds of men, they become so much the more susceptible of superadded revelation from him; such as that which is contained in the Scripture. For it is to no purpose, when the world is generally atheistical, and have either buried the notion of a God, or perverted it, so as that to think there is a God, or that there is none, is all one with them; it is, I say, to little or no purpose for men to go up and down among such persons, in such a state of things, with a Bible; for they disbelieve such a kind of Deity as that book reveals. But if the thoughts of God be recovered and rectified in the minds of men, they are a great deal more susceptible of superadded revelation from heaven. And especially,

(6.) If that revelation be, as that of the Gospel is, a revelation of grace. For when God hath discovered himself by terrible things; being displeased with the wickedness, the atheism, the irreligon, the unrighteousness of men in this world; if then there be a discovery of his reconcileableness, of his willingness, or readiness to be at peace with the world; in what a preparation may the minds of men be supposed to be to receive such a doctrine, as that of the Christian religion! a discovery of God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Do but observe, therefore, that method of representing the great Christian doctrine of the Gospel, of free justification by faith in Jesus Christ, which the apostle takes in the epistle to the Romans. He begins it with the discovery of the general wickedness of the Gentile world, and afterwards of the Jews. As to the former he saith, The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, Rom. i. 18. And what is all this for? It is all to prepare and make way for the revelation of grace. We have proved, saith he, both Jew and Gentile to be under sin; and therefore that there can be no such thing as reconciliation to God and acceptance with him, but it must be by the intervening righteousness of another. And so nothing, in the way of means, doth so dispose the minds of men to receive the Gospel, as when God, in the methods and course of his providence, doth appear terrible against wickedness, the impiety and the injustice of men: nothing, I say, in point of means can be a greater preparation for the diffusion of the grace and light of the Gospel, and the more ready and successful spread thereof. And I add,

(7.) That by such favourable aspects of providence upon them that espouse God's interest in the world, the great obstructers of the progress of the Gospel come to be debilitated, and that power of theirs weakened, and retrenched; by which they opposed to the utmost the diffusing of religion, and the spreading the knowledge of God: making it their business as much as possible to extirpate that religion, which godly souls do so much desire to see spread in the earth. When the providence of God doth animadvert on such, as make it their business to destroy true religion out of the earth; so as that instead of its being known in all nations it shall not be known any longer in their own, as far as it is in their power to exterminate it:[b] when such, I say, are animadverted upon, every eye seeth how this tends to prepare, and make way for, the freer diffusion of the Gospel light and knowledge among men. For they that would do such a thing as root out true religion out of their own nation, to be sure would be far from letting it spread in the rest of the world; and, if it were in their own power, there should be no such thing in the world at all. Thus it appears that favourable events to those who espouse God's interest, tend to remove obstacles out of the way to the diffusion of true religion, and to promote the propagation of it in the earth. I therefore come now to show, in the

III. Place, That the hope of this issue and end should animate mightily our praises, and be the principal ground of thanksgiving unto God for such successes and favourable aspects of providence upon them, who espouse his interest in the world. This might be many ways made out, and indeed by such means as are most evident in reason, and most intimate to the very essence of religion. For in plain common reason it appears, that the creature is not to be his own end; much less are we to suppose, that God doth such and such things for the creature as his end. He that is the first, must be the last in all things. He that is the author of all things must be the end of all things. All this is plain to common reason. And if you go into the deeper inwards of religion, which are nearly allied to genuine and rectified reason, nothing is plainer, than that this is grounded in those great things of religion, which are most essential to it. Self-denial, for instance; I do not pray to, nor praise God upon my own account, so much as upon his. For if I be a Christian, if I be a disciple of Christ, I am taught to abandon myself, to nullify myself, and all interests and designs of mine, further than as they fall in with his, and are subservient thereunto. It is that which best agreeth with that great essential principle of all religion, the love of God, which is the noblest of all. By how

[a] Nebuchadnezzar.

[b] The author alludes, I suppose, to the late French king's repeal of the edict of Nantz a few years before, and the terrible persecution of the protestants in his kingdom.

much the more I love God, by so much the more is my heart raised in praises, when I find events to happen that have any tendency to promote his glory; and to make him more known, feared, loved, and honoured in the world. And, to speak summarily unto this matter, do but consider these two things; which we may superadd to all the rest.

1. That we ought to praise God for mercies, for the same reason that we pray for them. But we are not to pray for them ultimately for ourselves, but for God; that they may serve the interest of his glory, and be the means of diffusing the knowledge of him in the earth. It is not a real glory that can be wrought out for him; but it is manifestative glory; which stands in his being known and acknowledged by his creatures, the works of his hands, and so much the more by how much the more general it is. I have said we are to give thanks for mercies, upon the same terms that we are to pray for them. And how we are to do that, we are taught by that method of prayer which our Lord himself directed; in which the first thing petitioned for, is, "Hallowed be thy name," Matt. vi. 9. And that God may be glorified, is the thing which is to be first in our eye and design. It ought to be so in our seeking mercies from him; and consequently it ought to be so in our rendering acknowledgments and praises to him, for his kindness and mercies. And again,

2. We ought to praise God for mercies, for the same reason for which we are to apprehend he bestoweth them. But it is plain he bestoweth them not for our sakes, but his own, "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel," Ezek. xxxvi. 32. "I do not do these things on your account, but for my own name's sake; that my name may be known among the heathen, and that the world may more generally acknowledge me to be God."

And according as things have this tendency and design, so let our praises be directed, this day, upon the same inducement, and from this same spring; namely, the hope that God's ways shall be known upon earth, and his salvation unto all nations; and that the present favourable aspects of providence will some way contribute hereunto, as they have this tendency and design. If we do not consider the matter so, we disparage our own victories, when we should give thanks for them; we make them little and inconsiderable, and upon the whole matter to have nothing in them. For abstracted from the subserviency in such providences to the interest of God, and religion, and righteousness in the world, I pray what have they in them? All goeth for nothing, and will be as nothing in a few years. We cannot say that any thing is truly and rationally valuable, that runs not into eternity; that hath not a look towards an everlasting state of things, and the interest of that kingdom that shall never end. When the world passeth away, and all the lusts thereof, they who do the will of God abide for ever, 1 John ii. 17. It signifieth very little to particular persons whether they be rich, or poor, for a few days, here in this world. And it signifieth as little to nations, whether their condition be opulent or indigent; whether they be under oppression, or in a state of liberty; it signifieth little, I say, when it is considered, that these are replenished with inhabitants made for eternity, and an everlasting state of things, and who must shortly pass into that eternal state. Nothing is really, or upon rational accounts, valuable with them, but what carries with it a signification of good, in reference to eternity. So it is to a person, so it is to a nation, and so it is to this world and all the inhabitants of the earth.

Therefore, while we praise God for the favourable aspects of his providence, which have such a tendency as this, generally and indefinitely considered, let us bring down this to the particular case before us. If we apprehend much is not done toward this great end, by this particular instance of a favourable providence, yet consider this as a part, and as a step to more. And in order to excite our praises the more, to heighten them, and raise our spirits in this duty of praising God, let us, I pray, represent to ourselves the contrary state of the case, even as to this particular thing that we praise God for; namely his preserving the life of our king. What, if we had been to mourn for the loss of him! A strong hold hath also been taken, which a potent army came to relieve. Suppose the armies had fought; suppose the army that came to the relief of Namur had been victorious; and suppose there had been a total destruction of our own; think what the dreadful consequences would have been! when, instead of having the knowledge of God to spread further in the world, we should have had violence and tyranny in the height thereof deluging Europe! and threatening a deluge as general, as such power could extend unto! What hope could we have left to our posterity, that they should long enjoy that Gospel, which we enjoy; or profess that religion in peace which we profess in peace and tranquillity? I say, do but turn the tables; and consider what our case had been, if it were stated in a direct contrariety to what it is There are many more things which I might have said, by way of particular use of this subject; but at present let us call upon God for a blessing upon what hath been now spoken.

SERMON XII.*

Joshua xxiv. 20.

If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

SOME few things I shall offer to your notice, by way of introduction to what I intend from this portion of Scripture. As in the first place,

That the good which God had done this people, he was confessedly the Author of it. He not only was really and indeed so; but he was owned and acknowledged to be so. There was not a doubt in the case. It was a thing taken for granted, and which every one would own; that all the good which had been done to them, proceeded only from him, who is the Author of all good. And again,

That the good which he did for this people was very peculiar, such as he had then done for no people beside. He gave his testimonies unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel; he had not done so to any people, Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20. Moreover,

That the peculiarity of his favourable dispensation towards them was resolvable only into good pleasure. No other account could be given of it, why he should be so particularly favourable to that people above other people, than, as our Lord says in another case, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight," Matt. xi. 26. And lastly,

That though the destruction threatened unto one people, so and so offending against goodness and mercy, doth not import the certainty of such an event, in reference to another people, offending in the like manner; yet it imports the case of such a people to be very insecure, and that they are liable to the same destructive severities and consuming judgments, as if they had been the people immediately and directly threatened. I say they are liable, and cannot reckon themselves entitled to an immunity from such destructive judgments.

These things being premised, the ground of our present discourse will lie thus: That the good which God hath, of mere good pleasure, and in a peculiar distinguishing way, done for a nation, leaveth them liable to consuming judgments, if they grossly offend God, and generally revolt from him. In speaking to this, I shall,

FIRST, Give you the state of this truth, generally, and indefinitely considered. And then,

SECONDLY, Speak unto it with special application to our own case, and the state of things among ourselves.

FIRST, I shall give you the state of this truth, as considered more indefinitely. And therein,—1. Shall consider that good, which God may be supposed to do a people of his own good pleasure, and in a peculiar way; and—II

* Preached at Silver-Street, November 5th, 1695.

Their liableness unto his consuming wrath, upon the supposition here put; that is, if they should grossly offend, and generally revolt from God, or rebel against him.

I. Let us consider the good, which God may be supposed to do such or such a people, out of mere good pleasure. And here we shall consider, in what respects he may he supposed to do a nation good, and also upon what accounts.

1. In what respects. And for this we shall take our measure from what we find, even in this very chapter, in reference to the people of Israel. The chapter, you see, begins with a large narrative and rehearsal of what God had done for them; and it is well worth your notice and observation. You must consider, that the time of Joshua's leaving them was now at hand. He was apprehensive of it, and therefore gathers the princes and heads of the tribes to him on purpose to take a solemn leave. They had been under his conduct by Divine appointment; and, as their general, he had led them into that good land, which God, by promise and oath to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had entitled them to as their seed, and now conferred upon them. He was apprehensive of the state of their case, after his departure; knowing well the terms upon which God had put himself under such bonds and obligations to them. Therefore he gathers the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for their elders, their judges, and officers, who presented themselves before God. Upon which he begins his narrative of what God had done for them; and in what particular respects he had favoured them, and done them good. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side the flood in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac."

Joshua here begins with that which was the most observable thing, and was first in the Divine eye and intention; namely, his making this people a plantation of religion, when the world was generally overrun with idolatry and wickedness. He puts them in mind how God did select and sever the head of this people from the rest of the idolatrous world. As elsewhere the history acquaints us with his calling him out of his idolatrous family, saying, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee," Gen. xii. 1. And we are told that, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went," Heb. xi. 8. This is the fit posture of a devoted soul, and so inwardly had God touched his spirit, that he should upon his call readily answer him, and not dispute the matter, nor say, "Lord, must I go I know not whither? and into that state, and in that way I know not?" No, faith formed his spirit, not for disputation, but obedience. He obeyed, and went. "Here am I, thy ready prepared instrument; do with me what thou wilt." And that which God designed to do, was to make him the head of a religious people; among whom he would be known, when so gross and general darkness had spread itself over the rest of the world. This was the main and principal thing in God's design; and with this Joshua begins this narrative; and then continues it in showing in what ways, and by what gradations, God pursued the design which he had so graciously laid in favour of this people; out of whose line the promised seed was to arise, in which, at length, all the nations of the earth were to be blessed.

But, in the mean time, the more special notices of God were to be confined much within the limits of this people, or them that should be proselyted unto them. "In Judah was God known, and his name was great in Israel," Psal. lxxvi. 1. And whereas this was finally a design of grace, the rest of the narrative showeth, how Providence did work in subserviency to that design; to multiply this people, to keep them entire, and unmingled with other nations: till that seed should spring out of them, in the appointed season, in and by which there was to be so universal a diffusion of blessings through all nations.

Therefore, the workings of Providence are recounted afterwards, in subserviency to this design of grace, till he comes to show how by a succession of wonderful works, in a continued series, God had conducted them from Egypt (where they were oppressed, and multiplied at once) through a wilderness, where they were under his more immediate care: till at last, according to promise, they were planted in Canaan; the type of that heaven, into which the antitypical Joshua, our blessed Jesus, was to introduce all that should be adjoined to him as the great Captain and Prince of their salvation.

2. As we have seen in what respects God did thus do good to his people, so we may also see upon what account. And this matter is capable of being resolved into nothing else but the Divine good pleasure. It was upon such terms that this people were formed at first. The Lord did not set his love upon you, (said Moses,) because ye were more in number than any other people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you, Deut. vii. 7, 8. And why did he love them? why did he so peculiarly favour them? The matter resolves itself; he sets his love upon you, because he loved you. Divine love, which is the original love of him who is the Fountain of goodness, is its own reason; for there can be nothing former to, or higher than, the first. And the same thing Samuel takes notice of after they were become a formed people. The Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people, I Sam. xii. 22. How came you to be made his people? Nothing can it be referred to, but that he was so pleased whose people you are. And that he makes the ground why he would never forsake them, in respect of their external constitution, otherwise than upon such terms as he himself did express before, even when he took them to be his people. Of which more hereafter.

And when their state was to be restored, after its being lost in great measure through their defection and revolts from him, it is still upon the same terms. He would indeed gather them again, re-collect them out of the several nations into which for their defection they had been scattered. But why? Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel; but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen whither ye went, Ezek. xxxvi. 22. So that still the matter is resolved into Divine pleasure and goodness itself, the prime import of his name, as he himself proclaimed it to Moses; The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Exod. xxxiv. 6. And so much concerning the good, which God may be supposed to do for such a people indefinitely considered.

II. We are next to consider the liableness of such a people, notwithstanding, to more severe, and terrible, and even consuming judgments in case of their general revolt from him, and rebellion against him. This we see plainly exemplified, in the course of God's dispensation towards this people. And we are here to consider, that whatever good he did for this people, it was but according to free promise; and that such promise was made, with a reserved liberty to make use of his own right to vindicate himself, when, by injurious wickedness, the design of all that goodness is frustrated, and perverted, as much as in them lies.

1. It is plain, that whatever good he did for this people, was according to free promise. But that is more than can be said of other people. They had such promised peculiar favours, as no other people ever had. That is, they had that good and rich country, which they possessed, given them by immediate grant from heaven, which no people under heaven ever had the like besides; and a promise ratified and sealed by solemn oath, over and over, unto their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose God he declared himself to be, and the God of their seed; by which he obliged himself to do them good in this respect, by planting them, as a distinct people, in a rich country; where they should have all the accommodations that were needful for answering the ends for which he would have such a peculiar people in this world. And though what he did for them was thus according to promise, yet,

2. In the very tenor of that promise he reserved to himself the liberty of animadverting upon their wickedness;

and of making a way (as he sometimes expresseth himself) for his wrath to break in upon them, till at length it came upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. ii. 16. So that when any such destructive judgments should befall them, they could not pretend to be surprised; it was nothing but what they might expect and look for, even by the express tenor of that very grant, by which they held what they did before enjoy. And thus they were foretold it should be, as you may see if you look into the course of God's treating and stipulating with them. "It shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto my commandments, which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul; that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season," &c. Deut. xi. 13. All suitable blessings are, upon that supposition, promised to them. But it follows; "Take heed to yourselves that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them: and then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit, and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you," Deut. xi. 16, 17.

Now according to the tenor of this word of his, which you may meet with in multitudes of other places, was the course of his actual dispensation towards them. For see how things were, between God and them, after Joshua's decease. He had seen them planted, and settled in that good land. And we are told that "when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. And the people of Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua; who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel," Judg. ii. 6, 7. But now, Joshua being dead, we find soon after, that "Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim. And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them; and they were greatly distressed," Judg. ii. 11—16. And afterwards, in the residue of this second chapter of Judges, is the summary given us of their deportment towards God, and of God's procedure towards them, under all the several succeeding judges, that governed them, till the time they had a king set over them by their own choice. Whereas before, their government was designed to have been an immediate theocracy; that is, they were to have lived in all points under the immediate direction of God himself. But they affected to be like their neighbours, both in civil and religious respects; and so God, having, in his first grant of special favour to them, reserved a power of doing himself right upon them, managed the course of his dispensation towards them accordingly.

And this we may take for an account of the state of this case, more indefinitely considered; forming our idea from what we find exemplified in this people. Great things were in a peculiar way of favour done for them; yet we find all this did not exempt them from the terrible severities of vindictive justice upon their revolts from, God, and rebellions against him. I come now,

SECONDLY, To consider all this with application to our own case, and the state of our affairs; in which application two things must be considered.

I. A commemoration, with great thankfulness and gratitude, of the good which God hath done for our nation, in a continued series and course of dispensations, through a long tract of time. And,

II. A representation, notwithstanding, how vain an imagination it would be that we are thereby exempt from a liableness to vindictive and consuming judgments, in case of a gross and general revolt from God, and rebellion against him. Of these two parts this application shall consist.

I. We are to make a thankful commemoration of the great good which God hath done for our nation even in a long continued course; as he did for that people, who have given us the ground of our present instruction And here we are concerned to say as we find the prophet speaking; "I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us; and the great goodness towards the house of Israel (we may say towards our England) which he hath bestowed on them, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses," Isa. lxiii. 7.

And here we may go back a great deal further than Joshua could, at this time, in recounting God's favours towards Israel. They were not then of that antiquity. He had not so long a tract of time, as we have to reflect and look back upon from their beginning to be a people; that is, the time when God took Abraham out of his father Terah's idolatrous family, to make him the head of a people among whom there should be a plantation and nursery of true religion, from age to age, till the fulness of time. It was but a few hundreds of years, of which Joshua puts them upon the review; when he calls upon them to reflect upon and look back to the years of former time. We have a far longer time to reflect and look back upon. Ours is a country severed and distanced, as you know, from the rest of the world;

Et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos,[a]

and we are at so remote a distance, that it is to be reckoned among the miracles of providence, that the Gospel and Christianity should visit our island so soon.

It is true, the history of so early times is so much the more uncertain; but such as it is, it makes Britain to begin to be Christianized even in the first century, and as some have reported, by the ministry of Joseph of Arimathea, who had been under the ministry of our Lord himself, as the Teacher come forth from God, John iii. 2. And though afterwards this island of ours was invaded, first by one pagan, then by another; still Christianity kept its footing, so as never to be extinct. And when at last the Romish apostacy and corruption had spread itself, here did more ancient primitive Christianity contend long against it; and with that steadfastness, and earnestness, that they found it impossible to make proselytes, without making martyrs, even in those early days. And after a more general night of popish darkness had spread itself over this land of ours, (then unhappy indeed, as the greatest part of the Christian world was,) the dawnings or renewed light were earlier with us, than with a great part of the rest of Europe, where the reformation has obtained. We may count above three hundred years backward, wherein there was most express opposition among us, by the bright light which then shone against the worst of the popish abominations. And when that light was grown brighter and brighter, unto a more perfect day; by what wonders of providence has our day been prolonged, and the light of it extended for so long a space! With how indulgent an eye has Heaven watched over us to prevent the return of that enchanted night and darkness, out of which we had escaped! what designs have there been prevented from time to time, to bring us back again under both a darkness and a bondage worse than Egyptian!

And it is admirable to see and take notice, how Providence hath signalized the very seasons of our deliverance from those dark and horrid designs, which have been set on foot against us; that he should also twice put such marks upon such a year, and such a day; upon the year eighty-eight in one century after another, and twice upon the fifth of November in the same century; and at length draw two ancient mercies to meet together, as it were, upon one day, and in eighty-eight. This seems to be an artifice in wise Providence to accommodate itself to our unapprehensive and less retentive minds; that he should so mark out for us times and seasons, that when such a year, and such a day, reverted, we might recollect ourselves and consider, and also those that shall come after us: "Oh, how hath God signalized these days, by special favours and kindnesses to England! and all aiming at one

[a] Virgil, Ecl. i. 67.

mark, that is, to keep us safe from that popish delusion, and all the abominations which it sheltered, that he had before delivered us from; that we might not be brought back again, and return into so dismal, so gloomy, and so imbondaged a state."

And it concerns us to bethink ourselves as to this our last deliverance, now seven years ago, the fifth of November, 1688; in what a state of things we then were, and how our matters stood when a Divine hand was reached forth towards us, to pluck us out of the gulf into which we were sinking. We are to consider in how prepared a posture all things were for our destruction, as to our most principal concerns; those especially of our religion, than which we are to count nothing more so. The providence of God ordered us the view of our danger; not that it might overtake or oppress us, or end in our ruin, but that it might excite in us so much higher gratitude when he should deliver us. That is, in the course of providence he let it come to pass, that we should be under the power of a popish prince, intent to promote his own religion: that things should proceed so far, as that we should see mass-houses set up, even in the very metropolis of England; in this very city, Jesuits' schools opened; colleges in our universities seized, to serve the same purpose; and an Irish army brought into our bowels, easily to be assisted, if there should be occasion, by a French one; even when we knew how strict the confederacy was between those two princes, and by what methods the latter, to wit, the king of France, had been labouring to reduce all that were under his government to one religion, namely, that of popery.

And where are they now that dispute whether a Providence governs this world? Is there no specimen, no appearance of a Divine hand in this? That all the while that mighty French monarch was gradually springing up, until at length he should appear on the public stage with so aspiring a mind, as to think himself capable of giving law and a religion to all the world beside; as if he was not only greater and more potent, but wiser too, than all the rest of mankind, and a better judge of religion: I say, that while he was gradually springing up to this pitch, God should be forming his own instrument to appear upon the stage too, when it should be most seasonable? A prince, in such circumstances, and with such inclinations too! formed, and fitted, and placed on the stage, on purpose to give check (and we hope mate too) to that ambitious one, who made it his business, and doth still make it his business, to enslave, not only the bodies, but the minds and consciences too, of all to whom his power can reach and extend itself! is there, I say, nothing of a Divine hand in all this? We know indeed what extraordinary, unlimited power could otherwise have done; but God uses to work by ordinary means. And if he had not marked out this way, if he had not raised up such a one, if he had not had this in his councils; to wit, "While that prince is gradually springing up, whom I design to be a just scourge to a wicked European people, I will have one that shall spring up by degrees at the same time, that shall prevent his being more than a scourge, that though he shall chastise yet he shall not destroy." I say, If God had not done so, by way of opposition to those horrid designs that were on foot; we might suppose it as probable a means for any of us to repel the inundation of the sea by our breath, as by any other means in view to have prevented a universal deluge of the greatest calamities and miseries, all Europe over, that could be thought of or imagined.

And if there be a Divine hand eminently appearing in all this, and in a way of favour, if God hath been doing us, and the nations about us, good; all this ought to be acknowledged with the most grateful mention, and with hearts full of thanksgiving. For, consider, what if this had not been? Then had there nothing been in view to prevent our case, long before this day, from being like theirs, who professed the protestant religion in France, and in Piedmont. We might come nearer home, even to Ireland; which though we look upon it as a firebrand plucked out of the fire, yet we should consider that and ourselves as firebrands, not plucked out, but consuming in the fire, till we and our religion should have been reduced to nothing. If we would urge our own souls to a grateful commemoration of the goodness God hath shown, and the great things he hath done for us; we should, I say, state the case so as it would have been, if these things had not been wrought, and done for us.

Think then, what would have been our case! to be dragooned out of our habitations, our estates, and our families; out of our religion, our consciences, and eternal hopes, if we had not patiently comported with the former, to save the latter! And whereas the case of our brethren in France was such, that they had some refuges, some retreats, and knew whither to go; yet if the overflowing calamity had deluged all, us as well as them, whither should we have fled? what retreat should we have had?

Think we with ourselves, how many peaceful years have gone over our heads! Think too by what miracles of providence our state hath been preserved these several successive years! seven years past, and how much more than seven might we look back upon! One valuable life indeed (most valuable! and of precious savour) hath been plucked away from the throne;[b] but the other is preserved: and by how slender a thread doth so great a weight hang, and depend, as our visible all! How strangely is that life preserved from year to year! so as that after every campaign, we have, as it were, a king given us anew, as by a resurrection from the dead. Through so many surrounding deaths is he kept, and still from time to time returned, and brought safe back again to us; whereas the continuation of such a thread by moments, hath so great a weight hanging upon it, that if there had been an intercision, as there might have been in a moment, it is inexpressible, yea inconceivable, what miseries might have come upon us. Though, as was said before, we are not to measure or circumscribe Omnipotence, but we are to speak and judge of things according to the appearance which they carry to our view; who are not expected to judge with the judgment of God, but with the judgment of men, of what is obvious to our notice. And upon all these accounts we have cause to own, even with the most sincere gratitude, that God hath all this while been doing us good, and has done it of his own good pleasure, and in very peculiar kinds and respects. But then, I must come to the

II. Part too, that I may be just to the truth and to you, to show how vain a thing it would be (though we are obliged to acknowledge, and indeed to own it with the greatest gratitude, that God hath been all this while doing us good; yet, I say, how vain it would be) thence to conclude ourselves secure from destroying judgments, and consuming wrath; if still we grossly revolt from God, and generally offend against that goodness itself. And to this purpose let us,

I. Cast an impartial eye upon our own provocations; and see what matter for Divine displeasure there is to be found among us. Certainly there is what may equal that of this people, who are our present exemplar. It may be some may say, "We are not for serving strange gods, as they did." But pray, how many are there who are for worshipping no God at all! Set the atheism of the one against the idolatry of the other. And were the Israelites for worshipping strange and false gods? O, what multitudes among us are there, who cannot be supposed to be less guilty for their slight and careless and trifling worship of the true God; while they acknowledge and own him in all the perfections and excellencies of his being, which exalt him far above all blessing and praise! who come to worshipping assemblies with as slight minds, as others carry with them to the play-house! O, what provocation is there in this! How provoking is their wickedness, who deny the Lord that brought them! who contend even against his Deity itself, his All; who is to us our All in all, and upon whom our eternal hopes depend! How horrid is it to consider the gross immoralities that shelter themselves among us under the abused and usurped Christian name! So that the justice, the honesty, the temperance, the veracity, which were to be found among pagans, should be, from time to time, produceable to rebuke and shame us for their contraries, which we allow ourselves in, while

[b] Queen Mary, who died universally lamented, December 28th, 1694; in the 33rd year of her age.

we call ourselves Christians! Are not these high and great provocations? And then, let us herenpon consider,

2. What pretence have we to think ourselves secure from vindictive severities, or that wrath should not come upon us, even until it consume us, after God hath done us so much good? Is his doing us good, or his having done us good, any security? Pray let us weigh some considerations with reference to this.

(1.) How was it any security to the Jews? Do not we find, notwithstanding all the good which God had done for them, that yet there were times and seasons when their armies were routed, that they could not stand before their enemies? When their ark, in which they gloried, (that peculiar symbol of the Divine presence,) was made a captive to their enemies, and ravished away from them by paganish hands? Was there not a time, when notwithstanding all the good which God had done them, the Assyrian power sacked and enslaved their country, and they were carried away even beyond Babylon? Did all the good, which God had formerly done them, protect their country from invasion; their great city, which was the glory and praise of the earth, from being plundered and ravaged; their temple, one of the wonders of the world, from being turned into a ruinous heap? Again, let us consider,

(2.) Can we pretend any antecedent right to any of those favours, by which our state is distinguished from others, who have been most miserable round about us? Can we pretend any better right than the Jews had? They had a right by promise, we have not a right so much as by promise. Did God ever promise us that we should have peace in our own bowels, when the nations round about us should be involved in blood and ruin, and this for seven years together? This people had what they enjoyed by promise; but so conditional, so limited, as not to be a bar against such vindictive judgments, as did actually befall them; but we have not so much to say as that. We have no such prior right to our enjoyments, as that we can say, if such and such judgments should befall us, God would do us wrong; that if he should let our houses be burnt, our goods rifled, and ourselves come under oppression, bonds, tyranny, slavery, we should be injured, and wrong would be done to us by the common Ruler of the world. Dare any of us be so hardy as to say so? If we should, that alone would be provocation enough to bring the utmost of Divine severities upon us; for we can claim no such right without invading his, who is the common Lord of all. And again,

(3.) Let it be considered, whether it is not very apparent that God hath done us all that good, all the while, which we have been the continual subjects of. Was it not all from him? Is it not he that protected our peace and religion hitherto; and kept off from us calamities and miseries, wherein others are involved? If we should deny that God hath done all this for us, even that itself were enough to give him matter of most terrible controversy against us. But,

(4.) If we do grant, that God hath done all this for us, (exempted us all this while from miseries and ruins, put us under his protection, and that shadow which his wings have spread over us; if we will grant, I say, that God vouchsafes us the mercy of all these years, which we have enjoyed,) then let us consider, whether we must not apprehend him to have had some end, in such peculiar vouchsafements of favour to us. Is he indeed most infinitely wise, and in all respects the most absolutely perfect? And what! can he act without design? Can he in so distinguishing a way have showo favour to us, and not to others, as it were by casualty? or without saying, "So I will do. When I suffer such and such miseries to fall upon a people, professing my name, in France, in Hungary, in Piedmont, in Ireland, and elsewhere; yet I will cover and shelter those who profess my name in England?" Do we think this was without design or end?

(5.) If there is a design, if God aims at some end in all this, let it be considered, whether it is not an end worthy of himself; an end that was suitable to the wisdom, the excellency, and greatness of a God? And if so, then,

(6.) Consider, whether we can suppose it to be an end worthy of God, and suitable unto his universal perfection, only to gratify our inclination, by keeping off such and such miseries and calamities from us; when he hath not done it from others, round about us. Why was it more worthy of God to gratify the desires and inclinations in this kind, of an Englishman, than of a Frenchman, or an Hungarian, and the like? Was his end only, that he might not disturb and disquiet a people unwilling to be disturbed, and not patient of molestation? Was this his end? But,

(7.) If his end was higher and more godlike, that is, that we might have a peaceful opportunity of enjoying the Gospel, and improving it through such a tract of time; then let us consider, whether we have answered this end. Where are our advances? where is our profit? wherein is it to be seen that such a people have, for seven years together, lived under a peaceful state, and dispensation of the truth, and ordinances of the everlasting Gospel; which with others have been discontinued, and with many actually broken off? Pray, where is the difference? wherein are we better after all than they? We have experienced God's great goodness; and may still, if we continue in his goodness, and be attempered and suited thereto, in the disposition of our spirits; but if there is no such thing, what comes next but severity? Behold (saith the apostle, Rom. xi. 22.) the goodness and severity of God! which are conjoined upon the distinct suppositions which are there put in the context. And in the next place,

(8.) Let us but consider, whether we dare, any of us, lay a claim as matter of right, unto any of those private temporal mercies that we severally enjoy; namely, the health, the strength, the competent provisions which we find, and the reputation we have in the world, or with one another. Can any of us lay claim to any of these good things, considered in a private, or a personal, regard? If we cannot, then the good state of a people, which results from the particular enjoyments, accommodations, and comforts, of the several individuals, is owing entirely to the goodness and mercy of God. And who of us can say, "Because I have health this hour, therefore I shall certainly have it the next; I have health to-day, therefore I shall have it the next?" and so on. Can any of us say, "If we have peace this month, or this year, that we shall have it the next month, or year? Or, as we have now free opportunities of worshipping God, so shall we have in all future time?" How absurd reasoning would all this be! But then consider, further,

(9.) That greater miseries, than can be comprehended within the compass of time, are due to every impenitent sinner; to every one who is not converted, or turned effectually unto God in Christ. What do we talk of their not being liable unto the troubles, the calamities, and miseries, that lie within the measure of time; who, in the mean while, are liable unto eternal miseries? that they are not liable to have their houses or their city burnt, who are liable to that fire, which can never be quenched? and to have it said to them, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt. xxv. 41. And consider,

Lastly, That they who live under the Gospel, and obey it not, nor comply with the gracious design of it, are every way liable to greater severities, than ungospelized nations ever were. Would you think it a hard saying, if one should positively determine, that London is generally liable to more terrible things than Sodom was, or Gomorrah? Hath not our Lord himself told us, that the people among whom he conversed, of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, were exposed to worse calamities, than Sodom and Gomorrah, or than Tyre and Sidon? Matt. xi. 21—25. We should consider this, not only with conviction, but with consternation, to think what we are on this account liable to; as having still such matter of provocation, as you have heard found among us.

And therefore now, since it cannot with the least modesty be pretended that we are not liable, because God hath done us so much good, to the suffering of such grievous evils, as have been mentioned; as we have in view before us, even in ancient and in modern examples; if this, I say, cannot with modesty be pretended, the most fruitful inquiry will be, how we shall demean ourselves agreeable to the state of our case, as being exposed to the terrible severities of consuming vengeance. Is it plain? doth the

thing speak itself, that we are liable to very severe consuming judgments? What shall we do hereupon? how shall we demean ourselves, or what shall be our deportment in this case? I shall shut up this discourse with a few words in answer to this.

1st, Let us not hereupon cease from the most grateful acknowledgments of God's great goodness to us, in lengthening out our tranquillity so far, as he hath been pleased to do. For wherein he hath done us good, even freely, and from mere good pleasure; certainly the most grateful acknowledgments are due. We are to give thanks with the most serious gratitude for all that good, which we could never claim; and to which we could not pretend that we had any right. But,

2dly, Though we are to rejoice in the remembrance, and continual observation of God's great goodness, yet we are to mingle trembling with rejoicing; ("Rejoice with trembling," Psalm ii. 11.) that is, we are to take heed of being secure. Our hearts should not be secure, when our state is not. It is unbecoming a prudent and considering Christian, (our state being stated as you have heard,) to admit such a thing as a drowsy slumbering security to inwrap and stupify his heart; or that we should be of them that cry, Peace, peace to themselves, when sudden destruction may be at the door. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others," (1 Thess. v. 6.) lest such a day of calamity should overtake us as a thief. It is very unbecoming a wise man to be liable to a surprise, while our case is so stated, standing in view as it doth before us.

3dly, We should have also inwrought into the temper of our spirits a firm persuasion that God is to be justified, even upon the supposition that the most destructive and consuming calamities should befall us. Let this be inlaid deeply as a principle with us, if any thing should fall out, or whenever calamities or judgments befall us, that it is our business the first thing we do, and shall be continually upon that supposition, to say, "Righteous art thou, O Lord!" Jerem. xii. 1. While we have no right to be indemnified, he hath a right to punish. Again,

4thly, We should also labour to keep our hearts loose from all our temporal enjoyments and good things; that they may not be torn away from us by violence, but by an implicit, previous consent. "Lord, I have made over my all to thee. I have resigned all into thy hands. If it shall make for the honour of thy justice, and the dignity of thy government, for me to be involved in calamities and ruins, (as no one can pretend to claim an exemption,) I submit to it; and lay myself and all at thy foot. I desire that my heart may cleave to nothing against thee, nor against any determination of thine. I live in my house, as having no right to it. I go out, as having no certainty or assurance to return. I lie down in it, as if I expected to arise in the midst of flames." And so in reference to all the temporal good things we enjoy, we should lie before him as so many convicted creatures, ready to receive our judgment from his hand. For even his Moseses and his Aarons, while he vouchsafeth them mercy, and a pardon, with respect to their eternal concernments; yet, in reference to their temporal concerns, he may take vengeance upon their inventions, Psal. xcix. 8. And in the

Last place, make sure your interest in eternal good things, by coming to a covenant closure with God in Christ. Then shall your hearts not be afraid of the desolation of the wicked when it cometh. Then will you be able to apply to yourselves that sentence of the Divine wisdom, the Son of God, (for so we are to understand it, the supreme, archetypical, and eternal wisdom,) "He that hearkeneth to me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil;" (Prov. i. 33.) and so shall we have a calm, a quiet, a serenity in our own spirits; not from presuming, or because we conclude we shall not suffer, but upon a supposition that we shall: as was said to the church of Smyrna, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer," Rev. ii. 10. This is the way not to be in an astonishment or confusion at such a time; having our hearts possessed with the faith of such a saying as this, which is surer and more stable, than the foundations of heaven and earth: When the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever, I John ii. 17. Such a one may say, "I shall be unconcerned in the common ruin, when that day of the Lord cometh, which shall burn as an oven. When the whole hemisphere shall be like one fiery vault burning as an oven, I shall not be concerned in this destruction. All that have vital union with the Son of God shall be caught up to meet their Redeemer in the air, and be for ever with the Lord. I can see all this world consumed, and think myself to have lost nothing. My good lieth not here. My treasure is in heaven, and my principal interest is there."

Let this matter be once put out of doubt; and then with how cheerful, with how childlike, with how submissive spirits, may we expect and wait for the most dismal and the most dreadful things, that can fall out within the compass of time!

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following serious and pathetic discourse was preached by the author at Brixham in Devonshire, when he was about twenty-eight years of age; but upon what occasion is not certainly known.* It was communicated to the editor by a worthy gentleman in the west of England, who after mature deliberation has resolved to give it a place in this collection; not only because it is well calculated to make serious impressions on every reader, but also as it is a specimen of the excellent author's manner of preaching in his youth. There is, he thinks, no reason to doubt its being genuine; since (to use Dr. Evans's expression) it plainly carries in it the marks, which to a person of taste always distinguish his performances.

The following extracts from a few letters, sent to the editor by the gentleman to whom the world is obliged for this excellent discourse, will be sufficient to give an account of it.

"The Sermon (says he) bears date January, 1658; which, I believe, must be 58-9. For though it is not impossible but Mr. Howe might have been at Brixham in January, 58; yet as the protector (Oliver) kept him much at Whitehall, it is not so likely to be preached then, as the year after: about which time he returned into the West.† For though he continued a little while in the same relation to the protector Richard, that he did to his father; yet Dr. Calamy tells us, he cannot find that he continued longer at court than October, 58."

* It is entitled in the manuscript, "A Sermon preached at Brixham the 23rd day of January, 1658; by Mr. John Howe, a faithful minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

† Meaning to Torrington, in Devonshire.

"The copy was transcribed in the year 59. It is exceeding fair and perfect. The spirit and language of it (the discourse) plainly evince it to be the production of that masterly hand. The writer, who took it after him, does not seem to have dropped any thing, whereby the sense is any way maimed; and has religiously copied it out, as appears from the repetitions, which were made for the relief of the hearers' memory."*

"Though Mr. Howe has something to the same purpose with part of the contents of this sermon, in his treatise on Delighting in God, p. 389—392.† as one might reasonably expect; yet, though there are some of the thoughts, he has not only pursued the subject much further, but in a very different manner: insomuch that there can be no room for saying it is publishing the same thing over again, which is an injury some eminent authors have suffered after their death. Besides the fore-mentioned place, there can be no other where he has any thing so near to the purpose."

"That which brought our author on this side our country (for his charge lay fifty miles distant, to which he was lately returned) was his being related to the Upton family, of Lupton; which lies in the parish of Brixham, where 'The Vanity of Man as Mortal,' took its birth."

"It is very probable, that the Sermon was preached at once; and I have calculated on what day of the week, January 23rd, 1658-9, fell. And as D was the dominical letter for that year, the 23rd was a Friday; but if it was preached in 57-8, as the dominical letter was E, it was on a Thursday. So that as it could not be preached on a Lord's day, it was therefore most likely preached at once."‡ To all which the gentleman adds the following general remark; the latter part of which, at least, is very just.

"Though his style is not so smooth as some, yet it is as intelligible as any. And a person has this for his encouragement, that he is always sure to find something in Mr. Howe, that is well worth his pains."

* This discourse indeed abounds with repetitions, more by far than any other the editor has seen of Mr. Howe's in manuscript · most of which he omitted in his transcript of it designed for the press, and he hopes without the least injury to the whole. The sense is entire, and delivered throughout in the author's own words.

† There seems to be no resemblance, scarcely, in the whole sermon, to any thing in the pages here referred to; except in p. 390. where the text is indeed mentioned, and briefly descanted upon, and that is all.

‡ It is very probable it was preached on a fast-day; either a private one, or one of those public fast-days, which were frequently solemnized by authority before the restoration.

SERMON XIII.*

Psalm ix. 17.

The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

I CANNOT spend time in opening to you the connexion of these words with those that go before. In the words themselves you have these two things more especially remarkable; to wit, the description, and the doom of wicked men. Their description you have in these words, that they are such as do forget God; and their doom is, that they shall be turned into hell. So that accordingly there are two observations that offer themselves to our view from this scripture.

FIRST, That it is the property of wicked men to forget God. And,

SECONDLY, That it shall be the portion of wicked men, who forget God, to be turned into hell. These two I intend to handle together in this order.

I. I shall show you what we are here to understand by the wicked.

II. What by forgetting God. And then,

III. I shall evince unto you, that they are wicked persons who do forget God. And then,

IV. That such wicked persons shall be turned into hell. And so make use and application of the whole together.

I. I shall briefly show you what we are to understand by these wicked, that the text speaks of. In the

1. Place, negatively, we are not to understand by the wicked here, all persons that have sin in them. There are a sort of men in the world, that will confess themselves sinners; who yet dare to acquit themselves of wickedness. Thus David speaks; "I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God," Psal. xviii. 21. Every man that hath sin in him, is not presently a wicked person.

2. We are not to understand it neither of only gross sinners. As we are not to extend the signification of the word, so as to take in the former, so nor must we so much narrow it, as to take in only the latter. We are not to think that they are only spoken of as wicked ones, who live in gross and profane wickedness; so as that every one may characterize and point at them as wicked persons. No, there are wicked ones that pass under the notion of honest and good men according to common estimation; and there is such a thing as heart-wickedness, which is hidden and concealed from the eyes of the world, so as that others cannot take notice of it.

And therefore, affirmatively, by the wicked here we must understand unregenerate persons; whoever they are, that are in a state of unregeneracy. Whether they be open and gross sinners, or secret sinners only, it is all one for that: if they be such as the work of renovation hath not yet passed upon, they are those whom this scripture doth here intend by wicked ones.

II. In the second place we are to inquire what is meant by forgetting of God. The character, by which these wicked persons in the text are described, is, that they are such as forget God. Wherein then does this forgetting God consist? That is what we are next to consider. And in order to find out what we are to understand by it, our most direct course will be to consider, what is to be stated in opposition hereunto. And it is obvious at first sight, that it is thinking of God; as not to think of God, is to forget him. But here we must a little more particularly inquire, What is this thinking of God, to which the forgetting him must be understood to be opposed here? And, negatively,

1. We are not to understand by it a continual thinking of God; that is always, every moment, and without ceasing. This you may easily imagine to be impossible, and I need say no more of it.

2. Yet, on the other hand, we are not to understand by it neither a thinking of God slightly and seldom. Superficial and overly thoughts of God now and then, may well enough consist with that forgetting of God which is here spoken of.

And therefore, affirmatively, this forgetting of God stands in opposition to frequent and ordinary, serious and heart-affecting, thoughts of God. That person is here spoken of as a wicked man that forgets God, who does not think of him frequently and with affection; with fear, and delight, and those affections that are suitable to serious thoughts of God. "How precious (says the Psalmist) are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sands: when I awake I am still with thee," Psal. cxxxix. 17, 18. These thoughts of God, of which the Psalmist speaks, are such as God is the object of; as plainly appears from what is added by way of antithesis, "When I awake I am still with thee." My thoughts are

* Preached at Brixham January 23rd, 1658.

ever working towards thee, as soon as ever I awake. Now here is this twofold character of such thoughts; to wit, that they are precious, and they are numerous.

(1.) They are precious thoughts; such as affect a man's heart, and ravish the soul. Now in opposition to this, persons that forget God have no such thoughts of him; that is, they have no joyous, pleasant, and delightful thoughts concerning God, such as the Psalmist speaks of; who also says, "My meditation of him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord," Psal. civ. 34. So that it is such a forgetfulness of God, which is here spoken of, that stands in opposition to such a remembrance of him as reaches the heart, takes the soul, and turns all that is within a man towards God. And then,

(2.) They are numerous thoughts, as well as precious ones. They are not only sweet and pleasant, but they are frequent also. "If I should count them (says the Psalmist) they are more in number than the sand." Such are my thoughts of God, so frequent and numerous, and they so flow into my soul, and so often recur again and again; that if I go to count them, I may as well attempt to count the sands on the sea-shore: how great is the sum of them! Now it is in opposition to such thoughts of God that this forgetfulness must be understood. They are forgetful of God; the wicked persons, whom the text speaks of, who have not such thoughts of God frequently recurring upon their spirits, so as to affect and ravish them, as you heard before. And thus you see what this forgetfulness of God is, which the Psalmist speaks of. The next thing that is now to be done is,

III. To show you the connexion between these two things, which have been opened to you; or to evince, that those who have no such thoughts of God, as these which we speak of, are wicked persons. So you see the text plainly represents the matter; "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Why, to forget God, and to be a wicked person, is all one. And these two things will abundantly evince the truth of this assertion: namely, that this forgetfulness of God excludes the prime and main essentials of religion; and also includes in it the highest and most heinous pieces of wickedness, and therefore must needs denominate the subject, a wicked person.

1. Forgetfulness of God excludes the chief and main essentials of all religion. I shall instance in a few which you will easily discern, at first sight, a forgetfulness of God must necessarily exclude. As,

(1.) It excludes the esteem and love of God, as our highest happiness, and chief good. It is a plain case, that this is a most essential part of religion; and you will easily acknowledge, that he must needs be a wicked man with a witness that doth not esteem God, nor love him as his chief good. To esteem God as our highest happiness is to take him for our God; and the man that doth not this, disowns God as none of his. For when you say, "God is our God, and we are his people," what do you mean by it? Do you mean only the name of God, without any relation to him as your chief and highest good? is that all? Why, if there be any thing beyond a bare name, where or what is it? You must say it is this; "God is my portion, happiness, and delight; he it is whom I esteem, and love, beyond all the things of this world." Nothing else can be a taking or owning God to be your God. This is the very sum of all that God doth require from any people that would be related to him and own him for their God. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee? but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul," Deut. x. 12. "Otherwise," as if he had said, "you disown all relation to me." If it be not thus, you are never to reckon me as your God. If your hearts and souls and strength do not run out in love to me, you are none of mine, and I am none of yours." And God is again on the same terms with his people. "Hear, O my people, and I will testify against thee; O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; there shall no strange god be in thee, neither shalt thou worship any strange god. I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt," Psal. lxxxi. 8, 9, 10. The plain tenor of this scripture is this. "If you will have any thing at all to do with me, if you pretend any obedience or affection to me, you must take me alone to be your God; you must not entertain any strange god; there must be no god that must be higher in your thoughts than I, or adored and loved more than myself. If it be not so, if there are such among you as will not thus hearken to me, I have nothing to do with you." Thus it is evident, that it must needs be an essential thing in religion for a man to love and esteem God above all things; he must esteem him as his highest, chiefest, and most excellent good; for it is such a valuing of God that can alone denominate a man religious.

And now do but a little consider. Do you think it possible for such an estimation or love of God, as the highest and chiefest good, to consist with a forgetting of God? Can a man forget God from day to day, in the sense of the text, and yet esteem and love this God as his highest happiness and chief good? Is this possible? Can you apprehend it to be possible, that a man should place the top of his felicity in God; and love God above all things else in the world; and yet pass from day to day and never think of him with delight and pleasure? Is this, think you, consistent with the esteem of God, as your chief good? You cannot be so vain as to think so. That man would be hissed at as a ridiculous person, that will say, "What I love above all things in the world, I never use to think of. I love God better than any thing, but he hath no place in my thoughts; I never think of him; I can pass on from day to day, and never have a serious thought of him." Is this possible? You see what the love of God in the soul doth carry in it, namely, a remembrance of him, in the twenty-sixth chapter of Isaiah, "The desire of our soul is unto thee, and to the remembrance of thy name," ver. 8. That person would be scorned as a most absurd wretch, that would ever offer to pretend such a thing unto God, as to say, "Lord, I desire to love thee above all things in the world, and yet I never think of thee; it is very seldom that thou hast any place at all in my thoughts."

This is the most absurd, self-conceited speech that can be imagined. None that have any wit at all, but know that if they have any understanding of God, their souls do earnestly and vehemently flow forth in love and desires to God. Our Lord says, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven—for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," Matt. vi. 20, 21. Lay up your treasures in heaven, that is, in God; let God be your treasure. You know what a man counts his treasure; why, it is that which is most dear and precious to him; most valued by him, and loved above all things else. A man will count nothing his treasure, but what he holds in great esteem. Let your treasure then, says Christ, be in heaven; that is, let God who is in heaven, who there makes known his glorious presence, that is enjoyed by saints and angels, and which we expect to enjoy, let him be your treasure. And where our treasure is, there will our hearts be. What you esteem and love beyond all things, your hearts will be continually working to, and your spirits flow that way. It is a mere absurd vanity to talk of having a treasure in God, if a man's heart be not with him. As she said to Samson, "How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me," Judg. xvi. 15. So the soul is apt to say, it loves God, and counts him its treasures, and highest happiness, when, alas! the heart is not with him. We find that a light esteeming of God is the same thing with forgetting him, and those expressions are used as synonymous by Moses. "Jeshurun forsook God that made him, and he lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation." Deut. xxxii. 15. And then presently it follows, "Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee," ver. 18. Thus to make a light account of God is the same thing as to forget him; and therefore that person has never yet set one foot towards religion, who hath not yet made God his chief happiness, the only joy and delight of his soul. Therefore this is one thing, that forgetfulness of God doth exclude the estimation and love of God, as our portion and chief good.

(2.) Forgetfulness of God excludes dependance on God as our strength, and the life and stay of our souls; which is also a most essential piece of religion. That man knows nothing at all practically in matters of religion, that does

not live in a continual dependance upon God as the life, and strength, and support of the soul. They are spoken of as persons who cannot possibly obtain salvation, while in their present state, who are not yet come to that believing in God, which carries the whole heart to acquiesce, and rest, and centre in God. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Rom. x. 13, 14. Calling upon God is a thing essentially necessary unto salvation, and believing in him is indispensably necessary unto calling upon him. It is put for the whole worship of God; and it is impossible for a soul ever thus to call upon God; that is, to worship him, to live subject to him, and be devoted and given up to him, who doth not believe in him. And this believing in God respects him as the stay and strength of a man's soul. It plainly implies a sensibleness of its being utterly impossible that I should subsist or live without God; and supposes a constant reliance upon him as my God, who is my very life and strength. And therefore you find how those who do not so, are derided by the Psalmist. "The righteous shall see and fear, and sha... laugh at him: Lo! this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedoess. But I am like a green olive-tree, in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever," Psal. lii. 6, 7, 8. The soul that is truly religious is by trust so planted into the very mercy of God, as I may speak, that there it is rooted, and sprouts as a tree doth, in the soil that bears it. But they are outcasts, and a company of profane irreligious wretches, that do not thus trust in God, and make him the stay and support of their souls. "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength!" It is remarkable to see in how ludicrous a way such persons are spoken of, as if they were to be hissed out of the creation. "Lo, there is a man that lives without God; a person not fit to be numbered among men! Away with him as a most ridiculous wretch, who thinks to live without staying upon God!"

Trust in God then is essential to religion. And do you think that this can possibly consist with forgetting God? Can a man trust in God, as the stay and support of his life, of whom he is unmindful? who can pass one day after another, and never vouchsafe him a serious thought? Trust in God is a continual thing. I do not mean that it is to be exercised without intermission, but that it is an habitual dependance. And therefore it is said, "The just shall live by faith," Heb. x. 38. We live by breathing, and it will not serve our turn to breathe to-day, and live by that breath many days hereafter. No, that which we live by is a continual thing. And thus the just shall live by a continual reliance and dependance on God; which implies a mindfulness of him. When the Psalmist speaks of that trust which he reposed in God, he speaks of it in this language; "I have set the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved," Psal. xvi. 8. Here was a continual minding of God. What is it to have God always before us, but to have him the prime and the principle object of our thoughts? so as that there is nothing on which our eye doth so much fix as it doth on God. And this stands with that conjunction, or that dependance which the soul has on God. So again, "Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord, for he shall pluck my feet out of the net," xxv. 15. That is, my reliance is upon God; mine eye is continually towards him, and I have him ever in my thoughts. It is he in whom I live, and from whom I have all my expectation. Thus it is impossible that a man should be in this sense a religious person, who is forgetful of God; since he who thinks not upon him, cannot be supposed to depend upon him as the life and strength of his soul.

(3.) Forgetfulness of God excludes also the fear of God; and that awful subjection unto his laws and commands, as our rule, wherein the soul should continually live: and this is too an essential part of religion, as is well known to all that understand any thing of religion. Can he ever be said to be a religious man that doth not live in the fear of God? Why, it is so essential a piece of religion, that the Scripture doth often call all religion by that very thing, the fear of God. And hence it is also, that you find all wickedness summed up in this very expression; "There is no fear of God before their eyes," Rom. iii. 18. The apostle had been describing a wicked man at large, out of some of the Psalms, (xiv. lii. &c.) and this is that which he gathers up as the whole of that wickedness he had been painting out; to wit, there is no fear of God before their eyes. They are wicked persons with a witness that do not fear God, that live without having any fear of God before their eyes. And must not forgetfulness of God necessarily exclude the fear of God? What? can any man be said to fear him, whom he thinks not of? to fear God when he minds him not, when he hath him not in all his thoughts? Do but observe the connexion between this passage and the eleventh verse of the same chapter, quoted out of the Psalms. "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." It follows, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Indeed it is impossible it should; if they have no thoughts of God, if their minds and understandings be not bent towards him, it is impossible they should fear him. What! fear an unthought-of God? a God that a man does not think of, from day to day? why, it is an absurd thing ever to be imagined. And therefore this is a further thing that the forgetfulness of God excludes; namely, that fear of God, and that reverential subjection that we owe to his laws and commands, as the rule of our lives. And then again,

(4.) It excludes the intention of the honour and glory of God, as our end. That man hath no more religion in him, than there is in a beast, who doth not in the ordinary course of his life, design and aim at the glory of God, as the supreme and ultimate end of his actions. You know it is that, which is required and called for from us in every thing we do. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. This is a truth obvious to the understanding of every one, that every person who is religious, intends and designs the honour and glory of the great God, as the ultimate and chief end of the ordinary actions of his life. So as if a man should come and ask him, "For what is it that you are going about this business, and those affairs; and what end have you in what you do?" he will say, "That I may honour and glorify God in so doing." This is religion. So then it is not enough to bespeak a man religious, to do things that are in their own nature honest and just, and not liable to exception; but to do them designedly for the honour and glory of the great God, as his end. Now do but consider. Can a man do so, and not think of God? Can it ever be rationally said of any one of you, that you live from day to day in the service of the great God, and to the honour and glory of his great name, as the chief and principal thing you design in your whole life; when you do not, from day to day, think of God? do not from morning to night take up one serious thought of God? Why, your own hearts will tell you it is utterly impossible; and a man is nothing in religion, who does not come up to this; who does not make the glory of God the ultimate end of his affairs, and the actions of his life.

Thus you see that forgetfulness of God excludes the principal and essential parts of religion. It implies, that a man doth neither esteem, nor value, the all sufficiency and boliness of God, as his happiness and portion; nor doth he trust in the power and omnipotence of God, as his strength and support; nor doth he fear him, nor live in subjection to his laws and commands, as his rule; nor doth he aim at the glory of God, as his end: therefore every one who thus forgets God, must certainly be a wicked person.

2. Consider also what is included in this forgetfulness of God. As it excludes the mai essentials of religion, why so truly it does include the most horrid and heinous pieces of wickedness that you can think of. I shall instance, very briefly, in a few.

(1.) It includes worldliness and earthly-mindedness. The soul, though forgetful of God, is not idle. If God is not the object of a man's thoughts and affections, something else is. They do not want an object. They find something else to employ themselves about, when they thus forget God and shut him out of their thoughts. For much is evidently implied in this scripture; "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even

weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things," Philip. iii. 18, 19. Observe those very persons who are here spoken of as minding earthly things, are also said to be such as have chosen to themselves another god. Their god is their belly. This we are not to understand strictly, but in a large sense; to wit, their sensual appetite. Their belly is their god; and accordingly they mind earthly things, and their hearts are quite taken off from God. And do not think this is a light piece of wickedness, to live a whole life's time in this manner; especially under the Gospel, and the profession of the Christian name. The apostle as it were weeps over it. It is a thing, saith he, that I cannot think of without passion and tears; to see a company of wretches that call themselves Christians, and profess themselves to be so, who yet are the enemies of the cross of Christ; they are apparently such, for they mind earthly things. This then is one thing that forgetfulness of God includes, namely, earthly-mindedness; which is the most horrid wickedness you can think of, for it stands in most direct opposition to God; and therefore covetousness is called idolatry, or a taking another god. And then again,

(2.) It included enmity against God. It is a plain case; if men from day to day forget God, it is because they hate him, and cannot endure the thoughts of him. It is expressly spoken of some, that "they liked not to retain God in their knowledge," Rom. i. 28. What is it to retain God in our knowledge, but to have frequent actual thoughts about him? such as I have already spoken of, numerous and affecting thoughts. This is to retain God in our knowledge. But can they be said to do so, who do not think of God? who have no actual thoughts of God, from day to day? And why is this? Because they do not like them. The thoughts of God are grating, grievous, and annoying to their spirits; and therefore it is they do not think of him, because they do not love to think of him. This must needs be so, especially considering the case of such persons under the Gospel. God is ever before their eyes, they cannot look any way but they must see God shining upon them. He is shining upon them in his creatures, in his providences, but especially in the ordinances of the Gospel of his Son; and yet these persons will not now mind God, nor take notice of him. What is the reason of it? They do not, because they will not; or because their hearts cannot bear it. "Oh! take away God from my thoughts! take him away from my soul! It is a burden, a pressure on my spirit! I cannot bear the thoughts of God." Thus says the apostle; "They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace. The carnal mind is enmity against God," Rom. viii. 5, 6, 7. Do but observe here; he tells us that they who are after the flesh, or carnally-minded, will not mind any of the things of the Spirit of God; and that it is to be resolved into this, namely, that a carnal mind is enmity against God. And it is a plain case that such a one must be an enemy to him. Therefore it is, that he minds the things of the earth and of flesh; and will not look after God, nor spend any thoughts about him. No, he will rather choose to live upon dirt, and feed upon trash; and to spend thoughts and affections upon things that are as vile as earth and dung. And if such persons would but consult their hearts they would find it so. For, alas! when you are alone, and retired, have nothing else to do but to think of God, (as upon such a day as this especially, when you have no other business but to think upon him,[a]) pray consider, which way do your thoughts run? Can you say, it is God that is the object of your thoughts and affections? that upon such a day as this, they are from morning to night taken up about nothing else but God? You have nothing else to do but to think of God; and if your thoughts decline, and turn aside after covetousness and the things of this world, what is this but a plain enmity against him? And this is what the hearts of men say; they rather choose the most despicable, base objects to spend their thoughts upon, than about God. And is it, think you, a light piece of wickedness for a man to have such an enmity in his heart against God? And then again,

(3.) In the third place, forgetfulness of God includes in it plainly a contempt of him; or implies that we have a base, low, dishonourable esteem of God. It is said (in the psalm next to that in which is my text) of the wicked man, that "God is not in all his thoughts," Psal. x. 4. The wicked wretch passes from day to day, and never affords God a serious thought, nor allows him a place th re. And what is the reason of it? Why the Psalmist puts it plainly upon an open manifest contempt of God. "Wherefore (saith he) doth the wicked contemn God?" ver. 13. He speaks, as indeed the interrogation imports, with a kind of passion. Oh! wherefore is it? what heart can think of a reason, why any man should presume to contemn God? In short, their taking low base things into their thoughts while they shut out God, plainly proceeds from a contempt of him, and because they despise him in their own hearts. And,

(4.) To add no more, forgetfulness of God implies atheism; which involves in it all wickedness, as being the root and bottom of all. Persons who forget God, plainly deny in their own hearts that there is such a one; who ought to be the highest supreme object of their thoughts and affections. This evidently appears from the connexion of the beginning of the fourteenth psalm, with the following verses. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God." And the report you have is this: "They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one." There is not a person to be found among all these wretches that understands, or seeks after God; or hath any serious thoughts or consideration about him. And what is the reason of all this? Why, like fools as they are, they have said in their hearts, that there is no God: and hence it is that their minds and understandings have quite forgotten, and given over to look towards him; whereas "he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. xi. 6. They are corrupted within themselves, and then surmise that there is no such Being to whom they are accountable; and therefore they live securely, neglecting and forgetting him, from day to day, through their whole life. There is also a like connexion in the fiftieth psalm, towards the latter end. "These things hast thou done (having summed up a great many kinds of wickedness before in the preceding verses) and I kept silence. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself; but I will reprove thee and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God!" To deny any of God's essential attributes, is to take away his being. To say, that he is not so holy, as to hate sin; that he is not so just, as to revenge and punish sinners; is to say, that he is not.

Well! this you see is connected with forgetting of God. But this God whom you slight, and make so little reckoning of; this God, I say, will reprove you. And I pray, consider, ye that forget God, who have all this while looked upon him as if he was like the idols of this world, that the time is coming when he will set your sins in order before your faces.

And thus I have evinced to you this truth, that they are wicked persons who forget God; which is evidenced thus: to wit, forgetfulness of God excludes all religion, and also includes all wickedness; and what would you have more? It must needs then denominate such a person, who lives in the guilt of it, a wicked person with a witness; since it grasps within its compass all wickedness, and shuts out all religion. b

IV. The fourth thing propounded to be spoken to, was this; namely, That these wicked persons, who thus live in a forgetfulness of God, must be turned into hell. I

a This passage makes it very probable, that this sermon was preached on one of those fast-days, which were frequently solemnized before the restoration, by public authority.

b If any should find this discourse too long to be read at once, particularly in families, here is a proper resting-place.

shall touch briefly upon it, and so close with a few words of application. As it is the property of the wicked man to forget God, so it must be his portion to be turned into hell. The eviction of this will be easily evident from considering these three things only—1. It is most consonant to the justice of God that thus it should be—2. It is most agreeable to his law; and—3. It is most serviceable to his honour and glory.

I. The justice of God doth require this; that those persons, who live in this world forgetful of God, should at last be turned into hell. If God be just he must deal in this manner with a company of rebels; who never take notice of him all their days, and shut him out of their hearts and thoughts. What! can the highest God, the eternal Majesty, suffer such an affront as this from base dirt and earth, and never take vengeance? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (Rom. iii. 5.) as the apostle speaks in this case. No, undoubtedly. But I cannot stand now to insist on particulars.

2. It is agreeable to his law that God should thus punish the wicked. It is one and the self-same law that is a rule of duty to us, and which by the Divine appointment is a rule of judgment unto him. And this righteous law hath determined, that they who thus sin, must be thus punished. For this we need go no further than the text itself. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." The law of God hath expressly provided in this case; so that if any man should now think to put in his exception against this determination of God, alas! it must be said to him: "Vain wretch, it is now too late! This law was made long ago; before thou wert born, or heard of in the world, and ever since the world was. And dost thou think a law shall be repealed in a way of favour to a most rebellious wretch, which the sovereign eternal God had established before the ages of the world; that it might be a fundamental and invariable rule of God's proceedings even to the end of it? Alas! it cannot be." God hath decreed many thousand years ago this law; that they who do forget him, shall be turned into hell without mercy. And if this be their continual state and frame without a change, it must needs be thus with them. There is no alteration in this case; for "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent, (heathen Balaam knew so much of God as that came to.) Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Numb. xxiii. 19.

3. And again in the third place, it is most serviceable to his glory and honour, that thus it should be; I mean, that those who persist, and go on to the last in a forgetfulness of God, should be turned into hell. For what glory hath he otherwise of them? "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil," Prov. xvi. 4. He will punish them in the day of judgment, because they are the most perverse creatures that ever came out of his hands. He hath made them for the day of wrath, as the wise man speaks; and there is no other way for the Lord to have his honour and glory of those persons.[c] See to this purpose what is spoken in the words immediately before the text; "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth:" and then it follows, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." And why must this be? Because God will never else be known by them. Here they live so many years in the world, and God shows himself by his creatures, by his providences, and by his ordinances; and they will take no notice of him; they spend away their days, and allow God none of their thoughts. "I cannot be regarded by these creatures, (saith God,) they do not regard, nor take notice of me. Well! I shall take my leave of them. When they come to be turned into hell, and to fall under the pressures of everlasting wrath and misery, then they will not forget God; then they will know the God they never knew before; then they will remember him, though now they never think of him. Let them now try (saith God) whether they will forget me, now that I have them under my wrath and vengeance While they are in this world, they banish me out of their hearts and thoughts; I cannot get one spare thought from them from one day to another; but when they come to feel me, and the power of my anger, they will then know that which they would never know before." Thus you see, that God's justice, his law, and his glory require, that those wicked persons who forget God should be turned into hell. I shall close all with some few words of application.

1. We may hence learn, that religion consisting of mere externals will never save any man. A person may be a wicked man, and liable to be turned into hell, notwithstanding any religion that lies in mere outside show. You see this plainly, that men are liable to be turned into hell for their forgetfulness of God. Why, a man may forget God, and yet live under ordinances, and under the Gospel. A man may forget God, and yet may be a moral man, and just and righteous in his dealings among men. And therefore, it is nothing that lies in mere externals, that will either denominate a man religious, or that will save him from perishing. A man may go to the utmost extent of all outside religion, and yet forget God; be wicked all the while, and so turned into hell at last. And therefore, it is a vanity for men to deceive themselves into a hope, that all is well with them; and that all shall go well with them at last, because they are professors, and enjoy Gospel privileges; or because that no man can challenge them with fraud, injury, or wrong done to their neighbours. It is a vain thing for them to think that therefore they are safe, and in no danger. They are all the while forgetters of God, and that is enough to bespeak them wicked; let them in other respects be what they will. And therefore you are to know, that it is not taking up a profession, or this and that form of religion, that will entitle a soul to glory and salvation at last; but it must be the having of such a work done upon the heart, as will turn the stream of a man's soul towards God, and carry his thoughts and affections after him. It is this or nothing, that must make you Christians, and save you from hell.

It is but too common a vanity in these days, wherein we live, for men of carnal hearts and corrupt minds, that could never endure to be at the pains and expense to wait upon God in the way of his ordinances, in order to have their hearts thus changed and turned unto God; it is, I say, a common vanity with such persons, to think that all their business, in order to secure themselves and provide for their own safety and welfare, is to take up a certain form of worshipping and serving God. Alas! a man may perish, and go to hell, whatever form he is of, if he has a carnal heart; a heart that doth not delight in God: this will be sufficient to damn a man at last, let him take what course or be of what religion he will. And it is a plain case, it speaks an unsound, shifting heart, which cannot endure that such a work as this should be done, but slinks

[c] The learned author seems, almost every where, to quote texts of Scripture with great promiety, and is generally very happy and judicious in his descants upon them; of which all his posthumous discourses (as well as those published by himself) are an abundant testimony; notwithstanding the liberty he allowed himself, and the familiar freedom with which he delivered them, without written notes. But the editor is apprehensive, that some may look upon the quotation of this passage from Solomon, as an exception. It must be acknowledged, that these words have often been made use of in favour of a very discouraging doctrine; which, above all others, tends to enervate the force of all the motives and arguments, that can be made use of, to engage persons to attend to the exhortations to a holy and religious life. And because some may imagine the author, from his comment on the passage, understood it in the sense here alluded to, which is evidently contrary to the general strain and tenor of his sentiments, in all his writings; it may not be improper to endeavour to set it in its true point of light, and to show in what sense the author may be understood

It is very true, the glory of God's justice requires (as the author had observed) that wicked men be punished. For to suppose that God will make those happy, who live in a criminal forgetfulness of him, is a kind of outraging all his perfections; and no more to be imagined than that he will make an innocent being, for instance an angel that never fell, eternally miserable out of mere sovereignty and pleasure. Neither reason nor revelation represent the Almighty as so terrible to the innocent, or so easy to the guilty. But to assert that wicked men, persisting in forgetfulness of God and a course of sin, will be punished in the day of wrath; is to assert a very great and awful truth, and very probably is all that the author meant by this passage. But however, as the learned Bishop Patrick observes, the sense of the place seems to be this; that God makes use of wicked men, as well as all things else, to answer the ends of his providence in this world. As for instance; by the ambition of tyrants he inflicts those calamities, which he designs upon a wicked nation or people. But the sense, after all, needs not to be so confined. God has made all things for himself; or, as the words may be rendered, he has made all things to correspond, or answer to each other; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. That is, not only to be his scourge or instrument of bringing calamities upon others in this life, but has suited and proportioned the punishment of evil men to their deserts; or has settled the connexion between vice and misery in the world to come; just as he has fixed the relation of virtue to future happiness; or, as it is elegantly expressed, made righteousness and peace to kiss each other.

away from it. Such are pinching and galling ways; and therefore they seek for ease and rest some other way, and for a cheaper method of getting to heaven; as if going into such a party would save a man. Why, alas! it will not do it. It must be a change wrought upon the heart and soul, that will take it off from this world, and pitch it upon God; if we would have an interest in him, or live in his blessedness another day. There are those, who are like the persons Saint Paul speaks of to Timothy. "The time (says he) will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables," 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4. Thus it is with many wretched souls in the ways of God: while they have been walking in them, it may be they have been barren and unfruitful, through their carnal hearts, which cannot endure to have any thing done to the purpose; therefore they desire to find an easier way than this. They run to other teachers, having itching ears; and think of going to heaven upon other terms, by only taking up other forms, and changing the way of their religion. This speaks a heart to be unsound; as it is a sign of an unsound body, that can rest itself in no posture, but lies tumbling and tossing in the bed. It hath rest no where; when it hath rolled one way to another, it must come back to the same pitch and posture it was in before. Why, the man is not well! alas! the fault is not in the bed, but the body; it is because the body is not well, but unsound and unhealthy, that it cannot rest. And so men under the ordinances of the Gospel dispensation cannot find rest to themselves. They cannot indeed find fault with them; but they have fleshly carnal hearts, that cannot endure any thing should be done to change, and turn them unto God; and therefore they seek out new ways, that they may get to heaven in a cheaper and an easier manner. And if such souls have a mind to go in those ways, that were never known or heard of before, for so many years, they will not find what they seek. For, alas! a carnal heart will carry its own pest and trouble about it, wherever it goes: and they will be forced either to say at last, the old way of real religion is best; or else they will cast off all religion, and there will be the end, as experience in this case doth abundantly witness.

II. As this plainly instructs us, that religion, lying in externals only, will never save a man; so it informs us also, that wickedness, lying in the heart and thoughts, will abundantly suffice to damn a man. And this is no strange doctrine; at least it should not seem to any that have ever read the Bible, and know what belongs to true religion. Do not you know, that the heart and the thoughts are the prime and principal spring of that wickedness that ruins souls and turns them into hell for ever? "Out of the heart (says Christ) proceed evil thoughts;" (Matt. xv. 19.) and these speak a man defiled, make him wicked, and turn him into hell at last. Observe also this scripture: "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Jer. iv. 14. Wickedness and vain thoughts here are parallel expressions, which expound one another. That wickedness, of which the prophet speaks, consists in the vanity of the thoughts: and those are a man's vainest and most wicked thoughts, that run beside God; and have not him for their object, nor terminate upon him. Therefore wash thine heart from this wickedness, for certainly else there will be no salvation for thee. Alas! thou art a damned man, a lost creature, if thine heart be not washed from this wickedness of the thoughts. "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee," Acts viii. 22. In short, to exclude God out of our thoughts, and not to let him have a place there; not to mind, nor think upon God; is the greatest wickedness of the thoughts that can be. And therefore, though you cannot say of such a one, he will be drunk; or he will swear, cozen, or oppress; yet if you can say he will forget God, or that he lives all his days never minding nor thinking upon God; you say enough to speak him under wrath, and to turn him into hell without remedy.

III. If they are wicked persons who do not think of God, and shall for that reason be turned into hell, then all thoughts are not free; that is, men are not at liberty, as they vainly imagine, to dispose of their thoughts as they will. Alas! the case is quite otherwise than what many poor wretches imagine. They go up and down in the world, never minding God from day to day, and they think this is no sin; saying, "Why, what is this? It is but the disposing my thoughts; and surely I may do what I will with my thoughts. What matter is it what becomes of them?" But saith God; "What is there else that I value more, or set a greater price upon, than the thoughts and affections of the soul? I must have them or nothing. So, be what thou wilt in profession and pretence; yet if I be not in thy thoughts, if I be forgotten by thee, I will look upon thee as a wicked person, as one that shall be turned into hell." Truly, if the case be so, you must learn to correct that foolish imagination, that your thoughts are free; or that you may use them as you please: and know, that if men will give him no place there, this is a desperate, horrid wickedness, that the great God will be avenged upon one day.

IV. Since the case is thus, that wicked men, and all those who forget God, shall be turned into hell; we may learn hence, that there are but few that shall be saved. Do but weigh the case seriously, and consider with yourselves, how few there are that so live, or in the face of whose conversations it appears, that their hearts are set upon God! whose minds are taken up about him, walking up and down the world from morning to night, rejoicing and delighting themselves in God! Oh, how few such there are; and consequently how few that are not wicked, and shall not be turned into hell at last! My friends, God doth not dally with us in such scriptures as these. They are plain words which are here spoken, and we may turn off the edge of them from rending and cutting our hearts if we will; but one day we shall hear that we were told, and read also, that "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." We may easily therefore learn from hence, that going to heaven is not so common a thing as most men take it to be. Alas! it is not, if the word of God be true. It will be found, that going to hell will be much more ordinary among men that live under the Gospel, than going to heaven. For it is said, they shall be turned into hell that forget God. Now, are not these plain words? Do they not evince and demonstrate that a great part (alas! the greatest part) are hurrying into hell apace? And is it not sad and miserable to think, that poor souls should thus spend all their life-time under a Gospel of grace? and that so much light and love should shine from heaven in vain? It should not be thought of, without pain and agony, that men should thus perish; that there should be so few saved from hell and destruction, notwithstanding they are under a Gospel of light and salvation! The truth I am upon is intimated in part of the message to the church of Sardis. "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy," Rev. iii. 4. Alas! how few are there, how few amongst a whole assembly and congregation of people, that keep themselves from pollution through lusts? How few names are there to be found in an assembly, who come under the character of persons that have not defiled their garments! or, of those who have numerous thoughts of God from day to day! How few are there, that do not come under the character in the text, of being forgetters of God; and so of such as must be turned into hell? It concerns us all to be serious in thinking upon this matter. God hath been serious in revealing this truth to us; and his Spirit is poured out for the confirming, establishing, and pressing it upon your hearts and spirits, whoever you are; and therefore think well of it, and consider seriously how few good men there are, who shall finally be saved.

V. You may hence learn also, that God hath an inspection into, and a full knowledge of, the hearts and thoughts of men. This is evident, for you see he makes his judgment upon what lies within the inward man; and his judgment at last will proceed upon the same ground. "I must have those turned into hell, (saith the Almighty,) who never think of, nor remember their God: they must undergo my wrath that have thus forgotten me." Now, if God's judgments must be thus determined upon what is in the heart

of man, then he knows your hearts; and also what you do with your thoughts from day to day. His eye is upon your souls and spirits; and sees all the day long which way your affections lie, and which way they are carried: and it is by this he must guide his judgment at the last day. Thus says the Psalmist; "He that planteth the ear shall not he hear? He that formed the eye, shall not he see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity," Psal. xciv. 9, 10, 11. He knows well all the vanity of your spirits, though you may not observe it. His eyes are observing us all the day long, especially on such a day as this; and according to the observation he makes, he must judge us at the last day. And therefore he must be supposed to have a full and perfect understanding of all things; so as to be able in that day to lay out before a man the wickedness of his whole life; to spread before him the vain and wicked, the sensual and earthly thoughts, which he was perpetually exercised in; and of which his carnal heart was the continual tomb. And this cannot be a more difficult than it is a necessary thing to him, who must search the hearts, and try the reins, that he may judge accordingly at the last day. And then,

VI. And lastly, we may learn hence, that it is not an impossible or difficult thing for wicked men to know themselves to be such; and to make a judgment of their own estates God-ward. For you see, they have a plain rule to judge by; namely, this truth: He that forgets God is a wicked man; and he is a wicked man that thus forgets God; and he that forgets God must be turned into hell. I pray now do but consider, and think with yourselves. Is it so impossible for a man to know what is the ordinary course of his own thoughts? You may easily know if you will, at least the generality of you may know, what the current of your thoughts is; and so far make a judgment of your estate accordingly. This we must needs acknowledge. For those men who are carnal and earthly, their hearts tell them they have not a thought of God, from day to day, from week to week, from year to year. Such persons cannot be so brutish and absurd, but they may know it, if they will, especially if they will take God's word. If not, let them see whether they can have any surer rule that cannot deceive. But if they will take God's word, they cannot but see that they are those persons who are wicked, as they are forgetful of God; and upon that account must be turned into hell at last. My friends! if we do not study wilfully to ruin ourselves, is it so hard a matter for a man, a reasonable man, to sit down at night and consider, "Whither have my thoughts been this day? Who hath had my thoughts most? What have I taken most pleasure in this day? Is it in God? hath he been so delightful and so pleasant, and the remembrance of him in my heart and soul, as the pleasures and comforts of this life have been to me? Have I taken so much delight to-day in the law of God, as I have in my friends, my riches, and my relations? And have I had that fear of God in my heart, lest I should sin against him, as I have had about my business and affairs, lest they should miscarry?" Is it impossible, I say, for a reasonable man thus to consider, from day to day, whither hath been the course of his heart and thoughts? And if he find it is thus with him; that he lives without having a thought of God, that may stay his heart, and ravish his soul; how obvious then is it, that he is a wicked wretch! that the wrath of God pursues him! and that he must be turned into hell, without remedy, if this continues to be the state and condition of his soul! Consider this, and give me leave to close up all with one word of counsel and advice to such persons as these: and may it be acceptable to your hearts!

1. Own your state and condition. If the case be thus, as you see it is, that they are wicked persons who forget God, and that such shall be turned into hell; why, look into your own hearts, and see whether they are not forgetful of God. And when you find that it is thus with you, let your judgment pass upon your souls, and say; "My wretched and undone soul! thou art that soul whom this law condemns; whom this judgment convinceth as guilty of this wickedness against God, and liable to his vengeance upon this account!" Therefore I say, own your estate. It is no difficult thing for you to know it. Say then, "I am the person whom the word of God condemns: I am under the curse as a person that has forgotten God, and must be turned into hell upon this account, if it thus continue with me." But this is not all. I would not leave a soul in this case miserably perishing, and despairing of all possibility of being saved; but however know that you cannot be saved while it is thus with you, and while your hearts are thus framed and turned from God. Therefore,

2. Labour forthwith to have the course and stream of your spirits turned towards God: otherwise, all hopes of your being saved are quite taken away. There is no possibility of your salvation, till your carnal earthly hearts be changed. Consider and believe it, there are but these two things; either a change of heart, or ruin. And therefore labour, I say, to have the course of your thoughts turned about, and directed forthwith towards God, without any more delay.

And in order to this, you must in the first place endeavour to get a right and distinct knowledge of God; otherwise you can never think rightly of him. Study his word; labour to know what is there discovered of his justice, righteousness, holiness, and power; of his goodness, and his love. Take in the whole compass of the discovery of God, to make up the object of your thoughts; otherwise you do nothing; your thoughts will pitch upon some other thing, besides God. If you take in but part of the attributes of God, that is no God. It will be some idle fancy that you take in, and not God, if your thoughts are not so comprehensive as to take in the whole discovery of God in those several attributes, by which he makes himself known.

And then in the next place you must labour to have a work of sanctification, and regeneration, wrought upon your own hearts. As there must be a right stating of the object, so there must be a right framing of the subject too; otherwise it will be to no purpose. If there be not a change wrought in the very inward of your souls, so as that your hearts be turned towards God; to love, and delight in him, with all your soul, and strength; alas! your thoughts of God will not be voluntary, but forced; they will never be free, pleasant, and delightful. And therefore you must often go to God, and cry to him, and say; "Lord, I see my thoughts run from thee! I cannot think of God at any time with pleasantness. Sanctify this heart! turn it to thyself! else I am lost, and shall be turned into hell." Cry thus unto God mightily, and incessantly, till you find such a work done upon your souls; for that is the only thing that will procure a freedom, and facility of thoughts, towards God; those holy, pleasant, and delightful thoughts, of which a sanctified heart will be a continual spring and fountain.

And to press all this, I will deal plainly with you. If the case be not thus; if your hearts are not turned, and changed, that you may have such thoughts of God as we have been speaking of, there is no avoiding the misery threatened in the text; but there must of necessity be an expectation shortly of being turned into hell. That must certainly be the portion of those persons that forget God. And is that a thing easy and tolerable to your thoughts? Is it easy and tolerable to you to think of being sent into that place of torment, without remedy and without hope; merely upon this account, because you would needs live without God in the world; and would never have your hearts brought towards him? Many deceive themselves with the opinion of a tolerable hell; and therefore, such a consideration hath no force upon their spirits in the least. But think upon it a little, think what hell is! Why, it is that place of torment, that God himself hath ordained for the punishment of wickedness and transgression against him. He himself is the Author of that state, and of that torment that doth belong unto it. It proceeds from almighty power, omnipotent wrath and justice. And is that, think you, a tolerable thing? That "Tophet (the hell which the text speaks of) is ordained of old—the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it," Isa. xxx. 33. Is this, think you then, a slight matter, for a man thus to hurry and throw away his soul? thus to suffer himself to run into this hell and destruction, and merely because he would live without God; slight, despise, and turn God out of his heart and

soul, while he is here in the world? Hell is appointed and prepared by God, in order to that just revenge that he must take, and will take, upon all those wicked transgressors, that have their hearts thus hardened, and shut up against him. Alas! that is a dreadful thing to think of. Revenge! the revenge of a God! that the eternal and almighty God should design such a thing, as the avenging of himself in such a way upon wicked men! O what heart, that is not made of stone or a rock, can choose but tremble? To think, "I shall shortly be subject unto the wrath of God, because I have forgotten him, and have lived without him in the world; unless my heart be wrought upon and turned to him as the God of my life;" how dreadful is this! Let me then recommend to you, in the close, that one scripture, partly touched on before, which is at the end of the fiftieth psalm. "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you to pieces, and there be none to deliver," Psal. l. 22. What! are those who forget God wicked persons? must wicked persons be turned into hell? is this hell, and is this place appointed for the torment of such wretches, by the eternal and almighty God; that he may take his revenge upon them, for their slighting and neglecting of him, or for what they have done in this world? Why then consider this, all ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you. And so much shall suffice to be spoken to this text.

SERMONS.

I. ON THE GOSPEL RECOMMENDING ITSELF TO EVERY MAN'S CONSCIENCE. SEVEN SERMONS, FROM 2 COR. IV. 2.

II. THEY TO WHOM THE GOSPEL IS HID, ARE LOST SOULS. SIX SERMONS, FROM 2 COR. IV 3.

III. ON HOPE. FOURTEEN SERMONS, FROM ROM VIII. 24.

IV. FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD. TEN SERMONS, FROM JAMES II. 23

V. ON REGENERATION. THIRTEEN SERMONS, FROM 1 JOHN V. 1

PART I.

CONCERNING GOD'S EXISTENCE, AND HIS CONVERSABLENESS WITH MAN.

AGAINST ATHEISM, OR THE EPICUREAN DEISM.

SERMON I.*

2 CORINTHIANS IV. 2.

COMMENDING OURSELVES TO EVERY MAN'S CONSCIENCE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

These words, joined with what goes before, run thus: "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience." The import of this text and context is exceeding plain. The apostle gives an account in them of his way in managing that work of the ministry, wherein he was engaged; that is, that his way of managing thereof was suitable to his end; his method to the design he drove at: he gives in the whole verse a double account of his way in managing his ministerial work—A negative account, and a positive.

1. A negative one, we have nothing to do in it, (as if he had said,) with the things of dishonesty or shame. Those things we have renounced; those hidden things that are wont to be accompanied with the pungent stings of shame and disgrace (if they should not be hid.) That is, we have nothing to do with any thing whereof we have cause to be ashamed. Let them hide themselves, and their designs, and work in the dark; let them wear masks and vizards, and transact their affairs under-ground, and with all possible privacy, who drive designs that they have reason to be ashamed of; whose business is either to trifle, or to do hurt; whose designs are either too low or little for wise men, or too base for good men. We, for our parts, design nothing but the service of God, the honour of Christ, and (as that which is subservient to these) the welfare of men. This is all that we aim at, that we may serve God, honour Christ, and bring in as many souls as we can unto him. We intend no worse to the world and the inhabitants of it, than to our utmost to make them good and happy Christians in this world, and glorious creatures in another world.

And, therefore, all we have to do may very well be transacted above ground, and upon the square; we have no occasion to walk in craftiness, to use fraudulent arts or tricks; our business requires it not; nor do we need to handle the word of God deceitfully; we do not falsify (so the word signifies) it, disguise it, clothe it with other colours; for as it naturally looks with its own, it serves our purpose best of all, if we give it no other appearance or representation, than that which is still genuine and most proper to itself. We do none of these things that are mentioned in the former part of the verse. And then comes,

2. The positive account in the latter part of the verse. "By manifestation of the truth," we make it our business to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Where the last of these words do sufficiently express that sense which I design to insist upon in some following discourses. And herein we see there is a principle in man, (here called conscience,) that renders him, in some measure, capable of judging what is proposed to him in the name of God, or under the notion of divine, —whether as such it ought to be received, or refused as not such. And here we have it signified to us, that there is in the great things of God, contained in the Gospel, or which the Gospel revelation doth suppose, a self-recommending evidence, by which such things do (as it were) approve themselves to that principle: and he lets us see that the faithful preachers of this Gospel have the whole business directly and immediately lying with the consciences of men; or that they are to apply themselves to that principle in man called conscience. And further, that this treaty with the consciences of men is to be managed under Divine inspection, under the eye of God.

And this being the import of the words considered in themselves; if also you consider them in their relation to what goes before; so the import of the context, and of them, as they fall into it, will be most plain. In the close of the foregoing chapter, the apostle having spoken above of the Gospel ministration, as contra-distinguished to that of the law, and most highly excelling it in point of light, and in point of efficacy; both of them glorious things, and in respect whereof he calls it the ministration of glory; so that, though that of mount Sinai was very glorious, yet this did so much excel it in glory, that the very glory of that was no glory, in comparison of the glory of this; for that by it we, as in a glass, (he so concludes the chapter,) beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. That *as* is not *similitudinis* but *identitatis:* it doth not signify likeness, but sameness: that is, there is so transforming a work wrought by the glory of the Lord shining through the glass, as doth speak its author to be the Spirit; such a work is done as none but the Divine Spirit could do; so that any one might see there was such a transformation wrought, as by the Spirit of the Lord is wont to be wrought: the Spirit doth like itself, as itself, it works as a Divine Almighty Spirit might be expected to do in this case. This is the account which he gives of the ministry, wherein he was engaged.

Now, in the beginning of this next chapter, it runs thus: —having received such a ministry as this, (so apt and so animated to serve its proper end and purpose,) "as we have received mercy, we faint not;" he resolves the vigour, and fortitude, and undauntedness of his heart, in this great work that was put into his hands, into the nature and kind of this ministry wherewith he was intrusted; considered in its own aptitude to serve its end, as it was managed and replenished with power and efficacy from the Divine Spirit. Having such a ministry, we faint not, we go on with all vigour and resolvedness imaginable in our work. And, thereupon, renounce all the hidden things of dishonesty, we go on with open face, as being well assured we shall be owned in our work one way or another; and make it our business hereupon, to apply ourselves immediately and directly to the consciences of men in the sight of God. And these several things, upon the whole, may be observed and taken up for our instruction and use from this portion of Scripture.

1. That the great things of the Gospel, or of religion in general, do carry with them a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men.

2. That the business of the faithful ministers of this Gospel lies, first and most immediately, in a transaction with men's consciences about these things.

* Preached January 11th, 1690.

3. That this transaction with men's consciences about such things, is to be managed in the sight of God, under the inspection of the Divine Mind. And,

4. That thereupon, such as are engaged with uprightness and fidelity in this work, have the most vigorous and unfainting resolution and fortitude in it.

I begin with the first.

1st Doctrine. That the great things of the Gospel, or of religion, do carry with them a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men. Here,

1. It will be requisite to say somewhat concerning the principle of conscience. And,

2. Then to evince the truth of the assertion, that the great things of the Gospel, or religion, do carry with them a self-recommending evidence to men's consciences.

1. It is requisite to be said concerning conscience, thus much briefly; to wit, that it is a principle which is to be appealed to about such matters; and this doth, in the general notion of it, import an ability to judge, a certain dijudicative power. And it must be looked upon according to a double reference which it bears;—1st, To the matter which it is to judge about. And, 2ndly, To the Supreme Ruler under whom it is to judge, such things being to be judged of in the sight of God: for the latter of these references we shall come to speak to it under another observation; but for the former, we are to consider of it now.

Conscience, it doth import a power of judging, or an ability to judge about such and such matters; but what those matters are, we are more particularly to consider. In the general, it is a matter of duty about which conscience is to judge, or such things in reference whereunto we are one way or other under obligation to do, or not to do. And so it is the actions of men, that conscience is to judge about; as they are measurable by laws and rules to which they are properly and truly obliged. And so our actions may be considered two ways—either as to be done, or as done. And they come under the judgment and cognizance of conscience both ways—either as to be done, or as done: and so the judgment of conscience is two-fold, either concerning things, or concerning ourselves; for conscience hath both its prospect and its retrospect:—its prospect, that is, as it is to see our way before us, and to judge for us, Am I to do this, or am I to do that, or am I to let it alone; and decline doing such and such things? Here is the prospect of conscience; it is to discern and make a judgment aforehand, concerning the way that we are to take, to see our way for us. And then it hath its retrospect; when we come to make a stand, and look back upon our former course in general, or upon this or that particular action, Have I done well, or have I done ill? have I held a strict and regular course? or have I made a wrong or false step?

Now for conscience under this latter notion; that is, for the retrospect of conscience, I have had occasion to speak to it at large, in the hearing of many of you, from another scripture, that of 2 Cor. i. 12. This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience;—here is the exercise of conscience in reference to what is past, in reference to a course transacted already. So that you may plainly see our present subject doth not lead us to consider conscience under that notion at all; but only to consider it according to its prospect, as it doth *prospicere*. As it looks forward to discern and make a judgment;—Is such a course to be taken? or are such and such things directed to be complied with, yea or no?

And so the matter of which conscience is to judge is of this kind; to wit, what we are to do, or our actions as they are future, or to be done, must be taken with a latitude; so as not barely or chiefly to concern our external actions, the actions of the outward man; no, nor merely or only to concern those actions of the inward man, that proceed immediately from the will and from the affections, and from the executive power in the first rise of it; but also so as to comprehend and take in too, the actions of the mind and understanding;—all this is within the compass of this matter, about which conscience is to be exercised. We are not to consider what is to be done by the reflective faculty, but what is to be done by the directive faculty, the mind and understanding itself; that is, whether such and such things propounded to us, be to be assented to, yea or no. This is as much matter of conscience as any thing else; that is, the assenting or not assenting of our minds and understandings to such and such things; supposing they are things in reference whereunto we come under obligation; suppose that they are not such things wherein we are left at liberty to judge and think as we please, as we are in multitudes of theological speculations, wherein we are not laid under a law, as a main duty, to know, and understand, and observe, and mind such things. But this refers to such things wherein our giving our assent so and so, it is made matter of duty; or in reference whereunto, we are laid under an obligation. All that doth come as much within the compass of that matter, wherein conscience is to judge, as any thing else: that is, these acts of our minds, which are to be exerted and put forth immediately there, as they are part of our duty, about which we are accountable at last; so they are matters of conscience, and in reference whereunto conscience must, and ought to have too, a present exercise beforehand. Am I so or so to assent, or am I not? Thus, by manifestation of the truth, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

And so much is all that we need to say concerning the former of these heads, the principle that is to be applied unto, and to which the things of religion do, by a self-recommending evidence, approve themselves.

2. The second thing we have to do, is to evince and clear this to you, that there is such a self-recommending evidence in the things of religion, by which they become approved, or do approve themselves, to the very consciences of men. And here, that you may understand this aright, what it is that I am to prove and make out to you,—you are not to take it thus, as though every thing that lies within the compass of truth, and which we are accordingly to embrace and close with, were self-evident; so as at first sight it must necessarily beget a conviction in a man's judgment and conscience, that it ought to be entertained and closed with: that is not the meaning; every thing in religion that hath competent evidence with it, hath not that primary evidence as immediately, as soon, as it is heard and proposed, to command the mind to close in with it. But the meaning is this, that whereas there are some things of that kind that carry their own light so apparently in them as to captivate the mind into a present consent; there are many other things which are capable of being clothed with that light, or having that evidence added to them, by which they also may be enabled to recommend themselves. Every truth is not a first truth; but there is nothing which God hath made it necessary to the salvation of our souls to give entertainment unto, but that, if it be not evident in itself, it is capable of being so evidenced, as that it may, by that evidence (at least) that shall be added thereto, come to recommend itself to men's consciences, unless they be men so under the power of a vicious prejudice, and abandoned by God for their indulgence thereunto, that (as it follows in the next words) the Gospel is only hid to them because they are lost. "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." And it is hid to them for having rebelled and sinned against the light of it so long; and this being the point, we come now to make it out to you, that the great things of religion which we are to give entertainment to, as necessary to our final welfare and blessedness, they are things that carry with them such a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men; they carry it with them, either as being primary self-evident truths, or as being capable of being evidenced by such things as are so; that is, either by their own light, or by such a light as may be imparted to them, and wherewith they may fairly admit to be clothed.

And the way of proving this, will be fittest and most proper, by giving instances; by instancing to you in divers of the most important things which we are required to give entertainment to, in order to our final salvation and blessedness;—and so to submit the matter to your own judgment, whether these things do not recommend themselves to conscience, yea or no; which is the best and most effectual way of proving any thing, when the inward sense of our mind is immediately directed to; we appeal to that immediately, so that you have the judgment in your

own breast or bosom, concerning this or that thing. Is it not clear, doth it not speak itself in my own conscience?

And the instances I shall give, will be especially under these four heads;—to wit, 1st, of Truths.—2ndly, Of Precepts.—3rdly, Of Prohibitions; and 4thly, Of Judgments.

I. Of Truths, you must understand that I am only going to give instances under each of these heads; otherwise, you must suppose that the whole body of theology would be the subject of our present discourse, as every thing would come in here that belongs to the substance of a theological treatise. And that (as I was saying) I may instance, first, in truths propounded to us, they will be of two sorts,—Positive and Argumentative;—Positive, those that we simply lay down; or Argumentative, those that in the way of argumentation may be annexed to the former, either, first, as reasons to prove them; or, secondly, as inferences and deductions proved by them. And this order and reference, which one truth may have to another, we are not to understand it so, as if there must be constantly that methodical relation, or a relation in that method; for the relation may be transposed, according as this or that particular discourse may be. But I shall give you instances of these together, or as now they may be represented to relate to one another; and so shall briefly instance to you;—1st, In those truths that do concern the original of all things.—2ndly, That do concern the apostacy and fall of man.—3rdly, Some that do concern the redemption by the Son of God; and 4thly, Some that do concern the final issue of all things.

I. For those that do concern the original of all things, take these,

(1.) That this world, (look upon it as one system, one complexion,) it is all a made thing.

This whole universe, it is all a made thing; why sure, either this hath such light with it, that any conscience of a considering man must presently say, it is true, in my conscience it is true, or it will easily be made evident. It is one of the great things (as being of natural revelation) that is mightily insisted upon by philosophers, as fundamental to all things else. You find that so the Deity was proved by the apostle in that text we so lately insisted on, Rom. i. 20. "The invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen by the things that are made;" by this whole entire scheme and frame of made things. "By faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God," Heb. xi. 2. Thus largely too, doth the apostle discourse the efficiency of the Creator, Acts xvii. in a very great part of that chapter. And so the account is given in the very beginning of that revelation of the mind of God to man contained in the Bible, Gen. i. 1. It begins with the beginning of all things. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." And so too doth that Gospel, (John i. 1-2.) wrote by the evangelist John; "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God; by him were all things made that were made." Now this is a matter that will let its light appear, if you will but revolve it a little in your minds, and think of it; for you manifestly see that all this world is full of changes; but there can be no change of a necessary Being; of a self-existing Being; what exists necessarily, and of itself, must be always as it is; whence that goes for a maxim with all that have set themselves to consider, *Eternum non patitur novum:* That which is eternal, admits of no innovation, nothing of new in it. And the matter would yet carry more convictive and clearer evidence to those that are less apt or less used to the exercise of thoughts, if they would but bring it to their own case; that is, suppose it be told you in particular, you are a creature, you are a made thing; let this be said to any body that hath the use of the ordinary understanding of a man with him, and it presently strikes the conscience; it is very true; I, in my own conscience, judge it true, I am a made thing. If any should hesitate at it, do but take a turn or two in thinking, and the matter would strike you with fresh light again and again. Why, what? Do not ye know that you have been in being but a little while? It is but so many years ago, and you were not; no such one as you was heard of in the world. Whatsoever began to be, must be a made thing. You did but lately begin to be, it is plain then you have been made; for nothing could of itself begin to be, or arise out of nothing of itself. That strikes every man's conscience that considers. Do not you, in your consciences, think and judge, that if nothing were in being, nothing could ever be in being? It is impossible that any thing should arise up of itself out of nothing. Therefore, if you begin to be, you are a made thing. And then,

2ndly, There are truths that will belong to this, by way of revelation and deduction. As then,

(1.) You have a Maker; every made thing must have a maker; do not your consciences tell you that this is true? In my conscience this is true, if I be a made thing, then I must have a maker. And then, again,

(2.) You may collect what kind of maker that must be. What kind of thing am I? I said, (among other things belonging to me,) there is a power of thought belonging to me; I have then a spiritual intellectual nature belonging to me; and therefore, certainly, such excellencies as I have in me, and as I find the rest of the creation hath in it, must be in the Maker of them all, much more eminently, and much more transcendently. And, therefore, as the apostle speaks, when he had said from a pagan,—"In him we live and move, and have our being; and we are all his offspring;" he immediately subjoins, (Acts xvii. 28, 29.) "For as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto silver and gold, or stone graven by the art of man." If there be such and such things that are the effects of an invisible Divine power of the Godhead; that is, if there be intellectual and spiritual beings, then he must be such a one; and then we are no longer (saith the apostle) to amuse and mislead ourselves with the foolish misconceit of a golden deity, or of a wooden and stone deity. The Deity must be such a being as hath such excellencies belonging to it, as we find are in his offspring. We find he hath an offspring of an intelligent and spiritual nature, and therefore, sure, such must he be. And again,

(3.) It will be further recollected, that if I am a made thing, a creature, and thereupon have a maker, I have also an owner too, as well as a maker; he that made me, must be my owner and proprietor; and to him I must belong, and in his power I am; and I must be at his disposal; and he may do with me what he will, and I am to do with myself only what he will have me do. Doth this not also strike conscience? Doth not this approve itself to every conscience of man? Am I a made thing? Then he that made me, owns, and he is to use me as his own. And again,

(4.) Am I a made thing, and do therefore appear to have a maker, and to have an owner? Then I have a ruler too; one that is to prescribe to me, and give me laws; to tell me what I am to do, and what not, through the whole of my course. This speaks to every conscience of man: every man that will use conscience in the case, must needs say, in my conscience, this is true; it cannot but be true. And again,

(5.) If I have such a maker, one that is the author and original of my life and being to me; he that is the author, must be the end of it; he that is the first to me, must be the last also. I am a creature, and a made thing; I did not come of myself into the world; and what could not be by itself, must not be for itself. Will not any man's conscience say this is true? Is not conscience smitten with light in this case? Methinks this doth recommend itself to my very conscience. I, that could never have come by myself into this world; I must not live in it for myself; it is inconsistent with the state of a creature to be its own end. Thus, in this kind, you may find there are things that concern the original of all things, that do by their own light recommend themselves to the consciences of men. And then,

2. Concerning the apostacy of man. To instance briefly therein, man is a fallen creature; he is not in the state that was original to him, or primitive, or wherein he was made. This, (one would think,) in the first speaking or hearing, should strike conscience with its own light; but if it should not with any that are more stupid and less considerate, let men but refer themselves to their own original state and nature, consider their nature abstract, and

then compare themselves with what they may easily discern and find of their present state and case.

The most general consideration that you can have of or concerning your own nature is, I am a sort of creature, that can think, that can use thoughts well; do but look to your present state, the common state of men according to that representation and description that is given us of it; "all the imaginations of the thoughts of man's heart are only evil, and that continually," Gen. vi. 5. What? can any man imagine that God did make a thinking creature; endowed a creature with a power of thought, originally from the beginning, to think nothing but what was evil, and continually evil? And let but men see whether this be not a true account of themselves, that the Scripture gave so long ago. If they would but inspect and look into themselves, would they not be enforced to say, Have I not thoughts full of vanity, full of earthliness, full of impurity, from day to day? And, unless they be imposed and thrust in upon me, am I not a stranger to serious thoughts, to divine thoughts, to heavenly thoughts? Therefore the matter will again strike conscience with its own light. I am not only a creature, but a fallen creature; sure God never made me such a creature as I am become, as I have made myself; a creature, endowed with so noble intellectual powers, to debase myself; to make so sublime a thing, as an intelligent immortal mind, perpetually to grovel in the dust, and enslave itself to sensual and brutal lusts, and to mean and base designs that time measureth; and to leave myself to sink and perish eternally at length; so that to this very soul and spirit, for want of being employed about a good suitable to itself, and means and methods of compassing that, nothing but misery can be its portion. The thing speaks itself; I am a fallen creature, and as long as this continues my posture, and the state and temper of my mind and spirit, I may see the matter will issue ill at last. I am a degenerate creature, especially if it be considered how the stream and current of my thoughts and affections run out towards other things, as they stand in competition with the eternal, ever blessed God; for can any man think God made a creature to despise himself? to neglect himself, and to prefer the most despicable vanities before himself, when he hath made him capable of knowing, minding, adoring, and serving him? Thence also it would be collected, I may hence judge, whether also my present state is a safe state, or a bad state. It is a lamentable thing to be a fallen creature, fallen from its pristine excellency; and it may easily be collected hence, it is an unsafe state; for if I am fallen low already, I am still liable to fall lower; and I cannot tell whither I may fall, how low I may sink, and what finally will become of me; for I am falling lower and lower all the while I am a stranger to God, and a vassal to sensual inclinations. And I here again appeal, doth not all this speak to conscience? And doth not every one find in himself somewhat to which all this doth approve itself, and commend itself; so that he must needs say, In my very conscience this is true? I cannot now run through what I have to say hereupon. Pause hereupon a little, and consider what this is like to come to at last. If a man do, in a stated continual course from day to day, and from year to year, run counter to the judgment of his own conscience; if he lives continually a rebel against conscience, (for that is to be a rebel against God too,) what will it come to? Oh! might that be but seriously considered of, sure it would be of use to us, to bring us to a suitable disposition to hear of other things that will be of the greatest following concernment to us, in order to our future and eternal welfare.

SERMON II.*

2 Cor. iv. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience.

THAT which we have in hand of the several things observed to you from the text and context, is, That the great things of religion do carry with them a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men. And we have shown, first, what that principle is, here called conscience. And, secondly, have touched upon the proof of the assertion.

The principle itself which is to be applied and appealed to, was considered as to its prospect and retrospect. As to the former, it is the business of conscience to see before us, to discern the way we are to go. If a man do not, with good conscience, proceed in his way; if he go wavering, and with a suspenseful mind, and in continual doubt, shall I, in so doing, do right or wrong? Such an one can never steer his course acceptably to God, or comfortably to himself; and, according to its retrospect, conscience is to make a stand, look back upon the way that a man hath taken, and thereupon make its judgment; whether he hath done aright, or wrong, in either respect, conscience is to judge; to judge of practice both as to what is done, and what is to be done: and it is principally conscience, in reference to its prospect, that we have to do with here: though it is one and the same principle that doth both; and the turn is quick and easy, from looking forward to what we are to do, to looking backward to see what we have done; and to see what may belong to us by way of reward, or by way of penalty hereupon.

And so we proceed to prove the assertion; and here again you were told, that both such things as are within the discovery of natural light, and which relate to religion; and such things too, as are supernaturally revealed one way or other, come to have this self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men; and this we proposed to prove to you, by some instances, upon which such an appeal is to be made to conscience itself, which is the clearest and most convictive way of proving any thing in the world; when we therein speak to the very inward sense of a man's own mind. And we propounded to give instances, under these four heads; to wit, of truths, of precepts, of prohibitions, and of judgments, or divine determinations concerning what is due unto a person, as he is found complying, or not complying, with the Divine preceptive will, in point of penalty or reward.

We did propose to give instances of truths which concern—1st, The beginning of all things.—2dly, The apostacy of man.—3rdly, His redemption by Christ;—and 4thly, The final issue of all things. And as to the two first of these, you had instances the last day. Now to go on,

3. To instance somewhat concerning the redemption of man by Christ; as that man, being in so lost and forlorn a condition, God did send his own Son down into this world to be a Redeemer and Saviour to him. This is a thing, not evident at first sight; it was not upon the first proposal discovered; it is not as soon as we hear it evident to any of us; but it may admit to be clothed with that evidence wherewith it must recommend itself to the consciences of such as shall consider. There is enough to make it plain, both who he was that came under the notion of a Redeemer into this world, and what he came for; that doing the part of a Redeemer, was really the design and end of his coming.

1. Who he was. That he was what he gave himself out to be, the Son of God; that he came down as a God, to dwell awhile in this world among men, having made himself like us, and become one of us. Though this, I say, was not evident at first view, there was enough to make it evident; that is, that he who was spoken of under the name of the Son of God, a thousand years before he came, accordingly came about such a time which was foretold: any man that should consider it, must needs say, In my conscience this is so; this is the Son of God. Psalm ii. 6. "I will declare the decree, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." This was said one thousand years before he came: and whereas, it was so plainly said, he should come about such a time as he did, within the time of the second temple, and that he did appear under such a character as could agree to none but this very person; when he come, his glory immediately shone as "the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14. It sparkled round about wherever he came, in whatsoever he spake, in whatsoever he did. We beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of

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the Father: this could be no other but the Son of God; this could not but speak itself; and this still cannot but speak itself in the consciences of those that do consider; and that he was afterwards testified unto, by a voice from heaven, from the excellent glory, again and again, in the hearing of a competent number, and at some other time, of very numerous witnesses;—This is my Son, my beloved Son, hear him; I recommend him to you, I set him over you, I make him arbiter of all your affairs, attend him, submit to him (hearing him imports so much.) This must speak in every conscience of considering men: this is very true, that he must be the Son of God! He that wrought such wonders in the world; restoring (upon all occasions as they occurred to him) hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind, soundness to the maimed, and life to the dead, even by a word speaking; all these things being purposely recorded, that we might know that this Jesus was Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing, we might have life through his name, John xx. 31. He certainly was the Son of God. Here is sufficient evidence that doth speak the thing to any man's conscience that doth consider;—yea, he that did display such beams of his majesty and glory, living in flesh, that even the devils themselves were constrained to do him homage, under that notion, "the Christ, the Son of the living God;" surely this must tell any man's conscience, this cannot but be so, it must be so; he, whose death in the circumstances of it, (the sun darkened, the earth shaken, the graves opened,) extorted an acknowledgment from that pagan captain; "Verily, this is the Son of God:" he that afterwards was declared to be the Son of God, with power, by the Spirit of holiness that raised him from the dead; upon all this, the matter speaks itself to the consciences of considering men;—this cannot but be the Son of God. And then,

2. That this great Person, this glorious Person, should die (as we know he did) upon a cross; that certainly speaks the end of his coming into the world, as a Redeemer; it could not be that one who was so plainly demonstrated to be the Son of God, should die for his own fault, or otherwise, than by his own consent, when it had been the easiest thing in the world to him to have avoided that fate, of dying like a malefactor on a cross. He had legions of angels at his command, and ways enough to have warded off the blow: it was neither by his default, nor without his consent, that he did die; this speaks itself evidently to every conscience of man. Then what was it for? It could be upon no other account than to redeem and save lost sinners: so that the design is thus generally evident; that is, is capable of being evidenced, made evident to any conscience of man that doth consider; and more especially that he died to procure the pardon of sin for poor sinners; died that they might be exempted and saved from the necessity of dying, that is, eternally: and that he died to recover men from under the power of sin, nothing is in itself more evident, if you consider this in the place wherein it stands, and which belongs to it in the series of Gospel doctrine; that is, it can never be, that so great, so wise, so holy a person as the Son of God was, should die to procure pardon for men, and yet leave them slaves to lust and sin. It is evident to every conscience of man, that if he died to save sinners, he died to sanctify, as well as pardon them and that he was exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins both together, Acts v. 31. That his dying could not but have that design; that "he bare our sins in his body on the tree; that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness," I Peter ii. 24. Being healed, by his stripes, of the wounds, and distempers, and diseases, that infested our spirits; and this all carried so much evidence with it, that (as the apostle saith to the Galatians) they must be bewitched, that do not see and look into the inmost verity that lies in such truth; the very inwards of that truth. There is a centre of truth, a centring of truth, and if you do not refer the beams of that truth to the centre they proceed from, truly they are insignificant little things, and as little capable of subsisting apart, as the beams of the sun would be, cut off from the sun. You must make a rational design of this whole business, suitable to the wisdom of a Deity, and suitable to the vast comprehension of a Divine mind, or you do nothing. Then, I say, look upon these things as they do refer to one centre and juncture of Divine truth; and all runs into this, That Christ died upon this account, and with this design, that he might pardon and transform men together; that he might pardon them and renew them; pardon them and make them new creatures; pardon them, and divest them of the old man, and put on them the new man: for can any considering conscience of man admit the thought, that he died for sinners to procure them pardon, leaving them enemies to God as they were; leaving them with blind minds as they were; leaving them with natures poisoned with enmity and malignity against the Author of their beings as they were; and yet design these persons to blessedness? That were to design an impossible thing; to design that man, or that sort of men, to a blessed state in heaven, that have at the same time a hell within them. One that hath not a holy nature, hath hell within him. This speaks itself to any conscience of man that doth but consider;—do but think, and you must say, In my conscience it must be so; so that, if any do not subject their souls to the design of that Gospel that hath revealed this to them, it may be said to them, Oh! foolish creatures, that you should not believe this truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you; (Gal. iii. 1.) that have had such a representation of a crucified Christ, and never made it your business to know for what,—what was the design of it. I pray what did it finally aim at, but to Christianize the world, so far as his design should extend and have its effect? That is, to turn them into the image of that Christ, that was crucified for them; to make them pure, and holy, and heavenly creatures, and devoted to God as he was. And as the apostle adds here,—"If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:" if so plain a Gospel as this, that carries such evidence with it to the consciences of men, cannot yet be understood, it shows what a dreadful character these souls lie under; these must be struck with a penal blindness, and with a diabolical blindness withal, which is equivalent with this phrase of being bewitched; "in whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not," as the next words are in the 4th verse of this chapter.

And so much, therefore, concerning the design of redemption by the Son of God, who came down unto this world upon this account, may be represented with that evidence, as to command any conscience of man that considers, into an assent: This cannot but be so, in my conscience this is so. And then,

4. Concerning the final issue of all: there is such truth shining, as much needs strike conscience, if it be attended to; it is clothed with that evidence, or easily admits to be, as must overpower the consciences of men into an assent. As,

1. Concerning the final issue of things; that this present state of things shall have an end. Any body that considers, cannot but say, in my very conscience it cannot but be so, it must be so; things are not to run on always sure as they now do. This state and posture of things certainly is not to be eternal; for it is a likely thing, that God will perpetuate his own dishonour, that he will have the generations of men in a continual succession to rise up one after another, full of alienation and estrangement from the Author of their being, and always to live upon the earth, while they live to no other purpose than to express their contempt of him that gave them breath? Will not this have an end? Sure any conscience of man must need say, This state of things will have an end, I Peter iv. 7. So that when this truth is spoken to us; "the end of all things is at hand," is approaching; (to that fore-seeing Spirit, that spake those words, and whose breath they were, the end of all things is at hand, just at hand; there is no conscience of man that allows itself to think, but must think so it will be, and this state of things cannot last always; though we are taught that while things do continue thus, it is with design, and it is from patience; and that design shall be accomplished, and that patience must have its limits and bounds. We are told it is not from negligence, but from patience; it is not that God doth neglect or disregard the state of things; it is not from supine ossitancy, but Divine patience. Why, in my very conscience, this is true, must every one say that considers; He that hath made such a world as this, and been the immediate Author of such a

sort of intelligent creatures in it, who are to have immediate presidence and dominion here in this present lower world; it is not to be imagined that he doth neglect the creatures that he hath made, and made after his own image; stamped with his own likeness; it is not likely he should be indifferent how they live, what they do, and what their posture and dispositions towards him are: any man that thinks, must needs say this is very true, it is God's patience, not his negligence, that such a sort of creatures are so long, from age to age, suffered to inhabit this world, and breathe upon this earth. Therefore when it is told us from the divine word, "The Lord is not slack concerning the promise of his coming, as some men count slackness; but is patient and long-suffering towards sinners, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" (2 Peter iii. 9.) such truth when it is laid before us, is so con-natural, so agreeable to the very conscience of man, that he must say, This sure is true, it falls within my mind; my mind gives it, it cannot be from negligence, or unconcernedness; but from wise designing patience, that things run on in this course so long. And then again,

2. This cannot but be evident concerning the end of all things, to those that consider, that sure their end will be glorious, suitable to their glorious beginning and glorious Author; that God will, in putting an end to things so like himself, and so, as it is worthy of God, there is no doubt but he will: any conscience of man must needs say so. God will do at length like himself; men have done all this while like themselves; they, like men, have transgressed, and perpetuated, to their utmost, their rebellions in this world against their rightful Lord; thus they have been in all things while doing like men; and God will at length do like God, no doubt but he will. There can be in him no variableness, nor shadow of turning; his nature alters not; he is the I Am, and is what he is; and therefore, there will be an issue of all things, that will demonstrate, to all apprehensive creatures, the glory of the great Lord of heaven and earth; even to the highest, and in ways most suitable to himself; that is, it shall go well with all that have been sincere lovers of him—devoted to him, studious to please him; that valued his favour, and despised it not as the most do; but for the rest, this world, the stage of their wickedness, where they have been sinning from age to age, is reserved on purpose for the perdition of ungodly men; and reserved unto fire for that end and purpose, 2 Peter iii. 7. That things will end thus, as to all those that know not God, and were in conspiracy against him and his Messiah; saying, "Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us," Psalm ii. 3. And that never turned, never made their peace; that the day that comes for them, it must be to consume them in the common ruin, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with ferveat heat, and the earth and all things therein be consumed and burnt up; for this world is reserved unto fire, for the perdition of ungodly men as we see the expressions are, 2 Peter iii. 7. And thus are they to have their perdition in those flames, that is, that the fire of the Almighty, which will at last catch hold of this world, whereby the heavens shall be shrivelled up as a scroll, and pass away with great noise; then it will be seen, that both ways God hath done like himself; he hath done suitably to an excellent, great, and glorious majesty, long despised by the work of his own hands.

Now, when these things come to be represented, they do carry in them that evident appearance of verity and truth, that more than very similitude, that every conscience of man must say, These things are very agreeable to truth, cannot but be true. There is a con-naturalness between the soul of man and truth, between the mind of man, the conscience of man that is to judge of truth, so that any must say that consider, It cannot but be thus; in my very conscience it will be so. Then to go on,

2. To the next head, that of precepts; wherein, as in reference to the former, it was the business of conscience to discern of truth and falsehood; so in reference to this, it will be the business of conscience to discern of right and wrong; but here we shall only mention those two great comprehensive precepts,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might, and with all thy mind, and shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," Deut. vi. 5. Matt. xxii. 37. Precepts (as our Herbert said of them) as dark as day; having no more of darkness in them than is in the brightest day, or the clearest light. What? do not these prove themselves to every conscience of man? that He who is most good, and contains in himself all excellency, all perfection, all glory, all blessedness; and which he is ready to communicate to receptive capable subjects, should be loved by me with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my might, and with all my mind; for in my heart and conscience it ought to be so, any conscientious man will say.

And then, that he whom God hath set in a certain order and rank as a fellow-creature; a creature of the same order, having the same nature that I have, and the same natural capacities, both as to knowledge and enjoyment; should be loved by me as myself: Do not my fellow-creatures of the same order deserve as much love as I do deserve? And, therefore, can it be a reasonable thing that I should cut off myself from the community to which I do belong? that order of creatures in which I am, and live only within a private course of my own, apart from the rest of mankind? It cannot be, I must love my neighbour as myself; whatsoever there can be in my nature, that must draw and attract love, must be in them that have the same nature, that have the same capacities that I have; so that every one that considers, must say, this is true, even to the light and sense of my own conscience; thus it ought to be; this is the very right of the case; and he that laid this law upon me, doth by this law require no more than the very nature of the thing requires.

But then considering that apostate, lapsed creatures cannot arrive hither to this loving of God above all, with all the heart, all the soul, all the might and mind; neither can there be that redintegration of kind dispositions and affections, mutually towards one another, that is required in that other precept; having all lapsed and fallen, without a reparation and renewal of their frames, without having their frame repaired towards God and towards one another; this makes the Gospel necessary to come in, in reference to fallen lost creatures. This was the original duty of man, and still is incumbent upon him as a just duty; but he cannot come at it till there be a reparation and renewal of his nature; and for this the Gospel (as was hinted) doth contain prescriptions, or a prescribed course. Now as to God, the Gospel runs upon duty, suitably to our lost state, under two heads,—Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; this law lying with its eternal invariable obligation upon all intelligent nature, upon every reasonable creature,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."—Aye, so I ought, saith conscience; but I have not done it, I have been a rebel against him; a thing very inconsistent with dutiful love. I have been a stranger and an alien to him, alienated from the life of God; a very inconsistent thing with communion love, with conversible love. What then is to be done? here is no returning to my duty and pristine state again, for a fallen creature, for one that hath degenerated and been in a state of enmity and rebellion against God, (as I have been,) but by Repentance. I can never come to love again till I repent. Here is that, therefore, which the Gospel does enjoin in the first place,—Repentance towards God. I was under an obligation to him, as I was the work of his hands; and as a reasonable creature, I was to love him with all my heart, soul, might, and mind, and I have been a rebel to him, and an enemy against him; but through his grace I repent of it; I repent of it with all my heart, and with all my soul. And by repentance, it is, that the soul is to return into the exercise of this vast all-comprehending love, towards the all-comprehending good; it comprehends all our duty towards him, who comprehends in himself all excellencies, majesty, glory, and felicity. Now will not any considering man's conscience say to this, It cannot but be so; that he who was under so natural an obligation to love God with all his heart, soul, might, and mind; and hath been disloyal, an enemy and false to him, and a rebel against him, ought to repent of it? In my very conscience he ought; every man that considers will say so. What? have I been a traitor to him that gave me breath, and shall I not repent of it? or doth that Gospel enjoin me a wrong-

ful thing that calls me to repentance? And shall I not be a vile creature if, being so called, I will never repent; but bear within me an impenitent heart, a heart that cannot repent, as that fearful expression is, Rom. ii. 14.? The words carry that in them, which may affright a congregation, and strike the hearts of all that hear them with terror. A heart that cannot repent! A heart that could sin, that would offend and affront God, but that cannot repent; repentance is hid from it! To the sense of any man's conscience, this is a horrid creature that hath been an offender all his days, but will never repent. The Gospel calls him to repentance; the gentle alluring voice of the Gospel; but he will not repent. This carries evidence with it to the consciences of men, what there is of right, and what there is of wrong, in this matter.

And so for Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, doth not the thing carry evidence with it to the consciences of men, That he who is to make up (upon such terms as you have heard) that which otherwise must have been an everlasting breach between God and the sinner, should not have the soul, when called thereto in the Gospel, and being now in its return to God, take him in its way, and pay a dutiful homage to him whom God hath set over all the affairs of lost souls, to be to them a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins? But in order thereunto, here it must be begun, for the poor soul thus to own him in the high authority of his office. This is the homage, which is, in sum, the meaning of faith in Christ; the paying deference to him whom God hath set over all the affairs of souls: that is, by resigning themselves up to him: that is the homage that you owe him. And herein lies the substance of faith,—Gospel faith, self-resignation, a self-surrender, whereby you put yourselves absolutely into the hands of Christ, and own his high authority, as he is a Prince and a Saviour. And is not this the most reasonable thing in all the world? Doth not every conscience of man say so when he considers, If ever I will be reconciled to God, it must be by the blood of Christ; and he hath an office over this lost world, founded in his blood? And shall I not come and pay my deference to him at the footstool of that throne which God hath set up for him? When he hath said to the Son, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," shall not I come and pay my homage to this Son of God, at that throne? (Psal. iv. 5.) the Redeemer's throne; and say, Lord, being now convinced of this state of my case, and being reduced to this, to bethink myself of returning to God, and I know there is no coming at him but by thee; and this throne is set up in the way for returning souls; I therefore come and pay my homage at this throne; that is, I come and resign my soul, give up myself, put myself into thy hands to be under thy conduct: thou didst die the just for the unjust to bring them unto God; and now I come to thee to be brought, I submit to thy authority, I commit myself to thy grace. This is faith, Gospel faith, and can any thing more approve itself to the conscience, than the right and equity of doing so? Is it not a righteous thing, and a just thing, that this law should be laid upon returning sinners? If you go to God immediately,—No, saith he, go and do homage to my Son; there is no coming to me, but in him; and when you do so, when you thus receive the Gospel, take hold of the Gospel covenant, take him for Lord and Christ, and resign and give up yourselves. This sums up that duty, and the subservient duty of repentance towards God, as the way that leads to the end. And see now, whether the Gospel of our Lord, both as to the truths of it, and as to the precepts of it, do not carry with it a self-recommending evidence unto the consciences of men.

SERMON III.*

2 Cor. iv. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

THE matter is in itself so obvious, that this self-recommendation is not thus spoken of the persons, personally considered, but with reference to their work of dispensing the Gospel of Christ, and holding forth the great things contained in it: that that laid our ground fairly enough in view, for that which I mainly intended to insist upon from these words, and that is,

That the great things of religion do carry in them a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men. And here, having shown you what is meant by conscience, what that principle is that is to be applied unto, appealed unto, in this work of ours; we come to evince to you the truth of the thing, that there is that self-recommending evidence in the great things of religion, even to the very consciences of men. We propounded (as you know) to prove it by instances, and we have proved it,

1. By instances under the head of truths, or the doctrines unto which assent is to be given; and we have proved it,

2. By instances under the heads of precepts, duties, enjoined to be done;—and now we shall further prove it,

3. By instancing in prohibitions of sin to be avoided; and in them you will find the same recommending evidence to men's consciences, if such prohibitions, as do but come under your notice, be considered a little; as that general one, "Oh, do not that abominable thing which I hate," Jer. xliv. 4. What convictive light doth it carry to every conscience of man, that allows himself to think and consider! I, a creature, the work of God's own hand, in whose power and pleasure it was, whether I should ever be or not be, whether ever I should draw a breath, or see the light in this world, yea or no; that I being lately sprung into being, by his pleasure and vouchsafement, should allow myself despitefully to do the thing he hates, and that he hath declared himself to hate? How can this, (if men do think,) how can it but strike conscience? What! to spite the God of all grace; Him, whose nature is love itself, goodness itself, kindness? For me to do the thing that I know he hates, how is it possible but this should recommend itself to conscience, if men do not shut the eye and stop the ear of conscience, that it shall not be allowed to discharge any part of its proper office and work?

But to descend to more particular prohibitions, there the thing will be still plain; do not live after the flesh, if you do, it is mortal to you! "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die," Rom. viii. 13. What evidence doth this carry with it to conscience! Take the prohibition and the enforcement together, as we should do in the former instances; Do not this, do not the thing I hate. When we do know ourselves to be a sort of compound creatures, made up of flesh and spirit, can we be ignorant which is the nobler part? Can any man's conscience allow him to think, that flesh ought to rule; that it belongs to the baser flesh to be the governing thing? "Do not walk after the flesh;" doth not the thing carry its own evidence with it, that we should not; that the mind and spirit should not be enslaved to so base a thing as flesh?

Again, "Do not grieve the Spirit of God, do not quench the Spirit; (1 Thess. v. 9.) what evidence doth this carry with it to any conscience of man! Our own hearts tell us, if we consider, we need a guide in this wilderness; we need an enlightener, we need a sanctifier, we need a quickener, we need a comforter within, an internal one of all these. What? is it reasonable to think; doth not the matter speak itself to our consciences; when it is said to us, whatsoever ye do, do not grieve the Spirit? (Eph. iv. 3.) You are lost if you do; what desolate creatures will ye be if you do! what forsaken wretches! You will run yourselves into a thousand miseries and deaths, if you be forsaken of that Spirit; your end can be nothing but perdition, if you be not under the constant conduct of that Spirit. I might preach to you thus, upon as many several texts as I give you instances in this case, to show the truth of this one thing, how God doth speak to men's consciences in the Gospel dispensation.

When again he saith to men, Love not this world, nor the things of this world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; (1 John ii. 15.) that is, do not so love this world, as thereby to stifle, as thereby to

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exclude, the love of God, that it shall and can have no place in you. Doth not this carry its own light with it, its own evidence? What a foolish wretch art thou that thinkest this world can be to thee in the room and stead of God! Can this world be a god to thee? Can this world fill up God's vacant places? What a pitiful, sorry god wilt thou find it in a few years or days? Thou who dost turn God out of thy soul, and wilt have it filled and replenished only with this world, doth not this carry with it conviction to conscience? What can, if this do not?

Again, do not take more care for this temporal life, than for spiritual and eternal life; or to give it you in the words of our Saviour, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth; but for that which endureth to life eternal, which the Son of man shall give," John vi. 27.

Doth not this carry its own evidence to you with it? That is, when I know I have but a short temporal life; which, do what I can, will soon come to an end; and there is an eternal state of life which must come afterwards. I know I am a creature made for eternity, and for an everlasting state. Doth not this carry its own evidence with it, when I am forbid to take more care for this mortal life, than for life eternal? when I am forbidden to make more solicitous provision for this perishing life, than an immortal life? Doth not the reason of the thing speak itself in my conscience? But I go on,

4. To the last head which I proposed to give instances of. We have gone upon Divine truths, Divine precepts, Divine prohibitions; we shall only instance further, upon the head of Divine judgments, or judicial determinations. I cannot call what I intend by a fitter name, or nearer to that of the apostle, who knowing the judgment of God, that they who do such things are worthy of death,—here is the Divine judicial determination, *de debito retributionis*, what is justly to be retributed to those that are found to disobey the stated known rules of his government. His judgments in this sense, they are a light that goeth forth, Hosea vi. 5. (to borrow that expression;) they carry their own convictive evidence with them to the consciences of men. How equal they are! take those two in the general, that we have confronted to one another. "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings: Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him," Isaiah iii. 10, 11. Doth not this speak itself, that when we know the world is divided into good and bad, into righteous and wicked, it should fare ill with them that did ill, and well with them that did well? Doth not this carry its own evidence with it to conscience, that God should render to every man according to his works; that is, the course of his work, and, consequently, the habitual inclinations from whence they proceed: every thing working as it is, and men working, as they are, either according to what by nature they were, or according to what by grace they are become; so they ought to be judged? When we know the world is divided into two parts, under two great parents, as the apostle calls them the children of God, and the children of the devil, herein are the children of God manifest, and the children of the devil, 1 John iii. 10. These two families, these two sorts of posterities, do divide the world to every man's sense; and the world being so divided, is it to be expected that God should deal with his own children and the devil's children alike? Let conscience be appealed to in this case; they that live here all their days in this world under the law, and according to the dictates of the prince of the darkness of this world, despising God, hating his ways, throwing him out of their thoughts, making it only their design to please themselves, and do the devil's work; when we know there is such a sort of men in this world, and that there is another sort that have given up themselves to God in Christ, have taken hold of Christ and of God in him, to be theirs; being born, "not of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" (John i. 13.) as all they that do receive Christ are: when we know, I say, there is such a contradistinction between a race and a race, a family and a family, can any man in his conscience expect that God should deal with all alike? And therefore, when you have particular determinations to the particular distinguishing characters of the one sort, and of the other, the equity and reasonableness of the determination cannot but speak itself in every man's conscience that doth consider the case. As, for instance, the love of Christ: it is determined on the one hand, "Grace be upon all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," (Ephes. vi. 24.) and, on the other hand, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha;" (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) an execrable thing, an accursed thing, till the Lord come to plead his own cause and quarrel himself. To what conscience of man doth not the equity of this determination or distinguishing judgment appear and recommend itself? What! do we think (when men must have their final felicity from the blessed Judge, if ever they be happy) that he is to dispense equally to them that love him, and to them that hate him? And so, when the business of obedience to his Gospel, the laws of his kingdom, is mentioned as the contradistinguishing character to that of disobedience and rebellion. He will be "the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him," (Hebrews v. 9.) and will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that obey him not, 2 Thess. i. 8. Doth not this distinguishing judgment approve itself to any man's conscience? That when every man must be beholden for this salvation to Christ, the eternal Son of God, into whose hands and power this world is put, the whole universe, indeed, all the affairs of heaven and earth; do you think he will make no difference at the last between them that obeyed him, subjected themselves to that vast just power of his, and they that lived in continual rebellion against him, and defiance to his power and authority?

And so, if we should take the determination which is given us, concerning the stated method of God's final procedure in that which is called the day of wrath, and the revelation of his righteous judgment; to wit, that to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, he will give eternal life; (Rom. ix. 7.) such as, by patient continuance in well-doing, do steer their course answerable to so high a hope and expectation of honour, glory, and immortality, said God, nothing but eternal glory and blessedness will answer the enlargedness of the capacity, desires, and aspirings of these souls; they shall have their seeking. These are a sort of souls that breathe after nothing but the celestial glory and felicity, being refined from the mixture, dross, and baseness, of this earth: no terrene good will satisfy them, or serve their turn; for they are all for heaven, all for glory, and immortality: I will give them eternal life. This is the judgment that is made aforehand; eternal life shall be theirs. But then there is another sort, that are contentious, and will not obey the truth; (Rom. ii. 8, 9.) that is, that are contentious against the truth they should obey, and that should govern them: no, they will not be governed by truth; they will be governed by lust, by terrene inclinations, which bear them downwards towards this earth: "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man:" it will be upon them, every soul of them, that do evil, whether Jew or Gentile; because there is no respect of persons with God, Romans ii. 11. What can more approve itself to the judgment of conscience than this determination doth? Yea, God hereupon makes his appeal to men: Are not my ways equal? Ezek. xviii. 25—29. Be you, your very conscience itself, in the judgment-seat, and let that pronounce, Are not my ways equal? what conscience of man but must submit here, and fall in with the choir of them that say, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways," Rev. xv. 3. There is nothing to be said against all this; every conscience of man must yield and submit to God in this case.

It remains to say somewhat by way of use.

1. We learn hence, that upon the whole there cannot but be much sinning against light in this world; and especially under the Gospel, where there are those so clear, evident, and convictive things, that are insisted upon so much from time to time, which even make their own way to men's consciences; though through them they do not make their way to their more abstracted hearts. Do but appeal to yourselves; what are the things that you hear of in these assemblies from one Lord's day to another? Are they not the things as I have now given you instances

in, and in former discourses? Do not you hear of such things most? And do not these things speak themselves in your very consciences? Yet is it not apparent that the course and tenor of men's lives run counter to the tendency of all these things? Oh, then, how apparent and insolent sinning against light is there among us in our days! A fearful thing to think of! that men should in their consciences know that such and such things are true; and that, if they be true, they must be considerable; if they be true, they are as important truths as can be thought of; and yet they will not think of them. They know such and such things are commanded; but they never set themselves about them. Such and such things are forbidden, but they take no care to avoid them. Such and such judgments are fixed and determined by the righteous will of God, and they take no care; have no forethought to make a title clear to the reward that is promised, or to avoid the penalties threatened. What sinning against light is all this! And what is the issue of all this like to be?

2. You may further see hence, that if man be so capable a creature, through his having that principle settled in him of judging of things; to wit, truths, precepts, prohibitions, divine determinations or judgments, as you have heard, then he is as capable a creature, by the same principle, of judging of himself, and of his own case hereupon. I pray consider it, it is one and the self-same principle by which I am first to judge, Is such a thing a part of divine truth, and to be received accordingly? and afterwards to judge, Have I received it accordingly; yea or no? And so, in reference to the other several heads, it is but the same principle that I am to use, and put in exercise both ways. If I am a creature capable of judging of truth, of duty, of sin, of desert in general; then I am capable of judging somewhat of the state of my own case hereupon, in reference to all these. And pray let that be considered only in the way to what is further to be considered.

3. It is, then, a very strange kind of stupidity, that men do not more generally lay themselves under judgment, one way or another, when they have this principle in them, that is so capable of doing, and the proper direct use whereof (at least) is to do it. It is strange that men should spend all their days amidst the light by which they must be finally judged, and never go about such a thing as the forming of a preventive judgment concerning themselves. And yet we are told that this is the only way of escaping the severity of a destructive doom at last from the Supreme Judge. "Judge yourselves, and ye shall not be judged." That people should pass away their days, and under a Gospel, and never find time (as it is, God knows, with too many) to ask themselves the question, Into what sort and class of men am I to cast myself? There are those that do belong to God as his own children, the members of his family, his special domestics. Am I of that family, or am I not? Do I belong to God, or do I not? Do the characters of a righteous person or a wicked one belong to me? Am I one that fears God, or one of them that fear him not? that love him, or that love him not? Am I (in short) a regenerate person, or an unregenerate? a convert, or an unconverted one? It is strange how men can dream away their time under a Gospel as we live, and never ask themselves such questions as these are, in reference to so great and important a case; let one day come and go after another, and take it for granted that things are well, without ever inquiring. To what purpose, I pray, is there such a principle in the souls of men as conscience, when this signifies nothing? It is thus tied and chained up from doing any thing of its proper business in their souls. If it be brought into true light, (as it may be with some, if their case do infer so,) it will speak comfortably to them, if their case doth admit it. But if you have no converse with your own consciences, have nothing to do with them, never converse with them, never commune with them, they never speak to you one way or other; you have neither comfort from them, nor are awakened by them. But again,

4. We further note to you, that sure, upon the whole matter, man is become a very degenerate creature. The state of things with men living under the Gospel, gives so much the more clear and certain judgment of the state of things with men more generally and indefinitely considered; for if they that live under the Gospel, notwithstanding the clearer representation of things there which are of the greatest concernment to them, and the most earnest inculcation of such things by them who have that part incumbent on them to open and preach the great things of the Gospel among them; I say, if among these there be so deep a somnolency, the spirit of a deep sleep poured out; if even these men are generally unconcerned, and do not care what becomes of their souls, and what the state of things is between God and them, certainly upon the whole matter, man must needs be a very degenerate creature, to have such a principle of conscience in him to so little purpose, so much in vain, which was designed in his original and instituted state to be his guide and conductor all along through the whole of his course; but now-a-days it doth not, for the most part, or at least not in reference to men's greatest concernment, the state of their affairs and case God-ward, and as things lie between them and him. And again,

5. We may learn wherein the degeneracy of man doth generally and principally consist and lie, and what is the most mortal ail and evil that hath befallen men by the fall, that is, the interruption and breach of the order between the faculties, that which should lead and guide, and those which should obey and follow; here lies the principal maim and hurt of the soul by the fall; it lies in this chiefly, that the order is battered and broken between faculty and faculty, between the practical judgment (which is the same with conscience) and the executive power, which should act and do according to the dictate of that judgment or conscience: here is the maim; it doth not lie so much in this, a mere ignorance, or (suppose that) in a mere inaptitude to know, or an incapacity of knowing the things that are needful to be known; but it lies chiefly in this, that the things we do know, they signify no more with men, than if they knew them not; the inferior powers do not obey and follow the superior: as, for instance, now, among us, who believe the Bible to be the word of God, and who do profess the Christian name, take a man that is under the dominion of this or that particular lust in his nature, it is plain this lust carries him against a thousand texts of Scripture; What will a text of Scripture signify to a man that is under the violent hurry or impetuosity of a lust? Though conscience tells him, at the same time, this is a divine word, a divine dictate; this word is from God, and it speaks like itself in my conscience, that it is a divine word. Alas! how little doth a text, or multitudes of texts of Scripture, prevail in such a case, when a man's heart is carried by the power of such a lust? "The lusts of your fathers ye will do," (John viii. 44.) as our Saviour told the Jews; so that is the true state of man's case, naturally: a degenerate creature he is; and herein lies his degeneration, or principal maim, that he hath got by his fall; the order is broken between the faculties, insomuch that now a man's knowing, or having the notion of this or that thing to be done, or not to be done, signifies no more to him, than if there were no such notions, no such knowledge; when there is a competition between the judgment of conscience, and an inclination of heart, you may lay a thousand to one on the side of the inclination, that it carries it: here is our maim, and it is fit we should understand, and needful we should consider, where it is, and what is our hurt by the fall: we see our way, but have no inclination to go in it: we see what we should do, but we do not do it; like here in the poet,—"*Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequar*;"—the same maim that pagans have complained of, I see the better, and do the worse. It were a sad case if we should lie under such an evil as this is, and never know it, never take notice of it, where our hurt lies, and where our cure must be wrought. And that is the next thing,

6. I would infer, to wit, wherein regeneration most principally lies: when a man understands what it is to be degenerate, he will the better know what it is to be regenerate; it must lie in this, in the exalting the law of the mind into its proper dominion and government, the placing that upon the throne which is to beget a man spirit of spirit; whereas, before, he was only begotten flesh of flesh; for when flesh is a ruling and governing nature, then

the man is called flesh; but when the spirit is become the ruling and governing thing, (which is the new nature,) then he is called spirit; and he is made spirit before he ought to be called so. And this is the effect of regeneration, the creating of a man's spirit again, that is, restoring him to himself. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit," John iii. 6. When a man's light becomes a vital thing, a powerful efficacious thing, then he is a child of light. "You were darkness, now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light," Eph. v. 8. And we are never to look on ourselves as regenerate, till it comes to this; till the Divine Spirit have exalted our spirits into their proper dominion; till there be a principle begotten that shall make divine discoveries significant; when it may be said, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death," Rom. viii. 2. And thereupon we may infer,

7. That a degenerate and an unregenerate man is a miserable creature; as he is a most depraved creature, so he is a most wretched creature; for, take the state of his case, as things are with the unregenerate man, his soul is the seat and stage of a continual war, to no purpose. Indeed, the soul of a saint in this world is the seat of war, but it is a war to a good purpose; a war wherein he finally prevails, and wherein he is habitually victorious all along. But the soul of an unregenerate man is the seat of war in vain; for the right principle is always worsted, perpetually worsted; there is not a war as there is in the regenerate, in the faculties taken separately and apart, as in the very heart itself, and in the will itself. The regenerate person hath a war; there is a love to God, with its opposite; but that love is the prevailing inclination; there is faith with unbelief; but then faith is habitually prevailing in the regenerate person. In the unregenerate person there is no such thing as faith in the heart, love in the heart; but a total unbelief, a total enmity, and total fearlessness of God, and a total vacancy of desire after him, and delight in him; but there is light in his conscience: his conscience tells him God is worthy to be loved, worthy to be desired, worthy to be delighted in, but there is nothing in his heart correspondent, so that this soul is a continual seat of war, in vain, and to no purpose; for the bent of his heart always carries it against the light of his mind and conscience; so that, although he doth acknowledge in his conscience that God is the chief good, he always keeps off from him; that he is the highest authority, yet he always disobeys him; never fears him, never stands in awe of him; as such, therefore, this sort of creature is a miserable creature, he is a creature composed for torment, having a principle in him that always tells him what he should do, but no principle to enable him so to do; so that continually he doth against what he should do. This is as much as is possible to be made for torment; but then remember, it is self-composed; you have made yourselves so: if this be the case with any of us, we have fought against the grace and Spirit of Christ, by which this sad case should have been redressed: and we have habituated ourselves to a course of living after the flesh, by which flesh hath got dominion over conscience; whereupon conscience can never come to rule it, but dictates to it always in vain. Again.

8. They are very happy souls in whom there is a reconciliation brought about between the light of their consciences and the temper and inclination of their hearts, by the conforming of the latter to the former. This creates a heaven within them, when a poor soul sees its way, and walks in it; sees that God ought to be loved, and he loves him; that he ought to be trusted, and trusts in him; that he ought to be delighted in, and delights in him: this is heaven on this side heaven, this is heaven under heaven, when conscience is the governing thing in his whole conversation; so that he doth not consider, Wherein shall I advantage myself by this and this negociation and affair? increase my estate and my condition in this world? He doth not, finally and ultimately, consider that, but how shall I manage this affair to please God, so as I may approve myself to him, and so as that my own heart and conscience shall not reproach me about it? O happy man that walks by this rule! This is the new creature's rule; they that walk according to it, peace shall be upon them, and mercy upon the Israel of God, Gal. vi. 16. When a man hath been busy about his affairs, he may be abroad all day, and can come home and visit his tabernacle at night, and not sin, Job v. 24. Oh blessed thing! What can be the meaning of that? Can any man suppose it a sin to go home to his own house? No, but that he can visit his tabernacle without conscience of sin. I have kept a good conscience this day, blessed be God: it may be I have met with temptations, to be in a debauch by those that would have insulted over the weakness of my flesh; it may be I have, but God hath kept me. Blessed be God, now I can visit my tabernacle without sin, and lay me down in rest and peace; I can visit my tabernacle without spot, without any such spot. What a blessed thing is it, when God brings about that reconciliation between him and them, and where the peace is kept and continued between a man and his own conscience, not by stupifying of conscience, (a fearful thing that is,) but by the conforming of a man's heart and inclinations and ways thereunto.

SERMON IV.*

2 Cor. iv. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

WE have had occasion several times of considering the context; "We all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord;" so ends the foregoing chapter. "Therefore, (so begins this chapter,) seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." You know what observations have been recommended to you from this portion of Scripture, principally from these last words, but relatively considered, as well as absolutely. As,

I. That there is such a principle in every man, as that of conscience, unto which the great things of religion do carry with them a self-recommending evidence.

2. That the business of the Gospel ministry doth lie very principally in a transaction with the very consciences of men.

3. That this transaction is to be managed in the sight of God. And,

4. That from all this proceeds, in very great part, the unfainting vigour and resolvedness of faithful ministers in their work.

We have insisted upon the first of these; we will now proceed as far as we can with the rest, and begin with the next in order; which is,

2d Doctrine. That the great business of the Gospel ministry doth very principally lie in a transaction with men's conscience. We are here to show you, 1st, wherein this transaction lies; and 2dly, to show that the work of the ministry lies in it, and must so do very principally.

1st, Wherein this transaction with the consciences of men doth lie. Why,

I. In dealing with men about such things chiefly as do most directly come under, and as are most apt to take hold of, their consciences; in insisting (I say) chiefly upon such things are as most likely to fasten upon conscience, and take hold of that.

2. In endeavouring to set such things in as clear light as may be, to represent them as advantageously as we can, that conscience may have nothing to do but to discern the very evidence of the things. This is plain, this is clear: to represent things so that at first sight they may be assented and, submitted unto as much as in us lies. And,

* Preached February 8th, 1690.

3. To appeal hereupon to conscience about it; that is our business, recommending ourselves to every man's conscience; that is what we have to do, *provocare*, to call unto conscience: "Come, do thy part; see if there be not evidence in this and that truth; see if there be not equity in this or that precept; see if there be not wickedness or darger in this or that sin; see if there be not righteousness and reasonableness in this or that judgment or determination, that we find recorded in the word, and pronounced in reference to such and such cases." These (you know) were the four heads instanced in, to let you see the things of religion that do carry in them a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men. Our business must be to appeal to conscience about such things; to call upon it to do its office, to judge and pronounce, Are not these things so? And,

4. To endeavour to awaken conscience, supposing it drowsy and somnolent, as, God knows, it is too much with the most; when we have appealed to conscience, to appeal again, as that petitioner did to that great prince: "I appeal from thee," said she.—"From me! (said the prince.) Whither will you appeal?"—"I appeal (said she) from you, asleep: you were asleep just now, while I was telling my story: I appeal from you asleep, to you awake." So we are to appeal from conscience to conscience; from conscience asleep to conscience awake. That must be our business, to endeavour, as much as in us is, to awaken conscience to the exercise of its office in that great business, that we recommend ourselves to it about. And,

5. To answer what we can the cavils and foolish counter-reasonings of carnal hearts against truth and against duty, or in favour of any way of sin, that the litigating humour may (as much as in us is) be repressed, and men's spirits be subdued, that they may have no more to say; that their mouths may be stopped, and they laid under a restraint to lie down silenced and convinced before the Lord. And,

6. To urge conscience to its final answer, to its determination upon the whole, as there is such a thing as an answer of conscience to be finally given in particular cases, that we may apply ourselves to men about. And if conscience be rectified and sanctified, and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, it will be brought at length to give a good answer, a complying answer, a yielding answer; as that which the apostle speaks of: "A like figure whereunto, (having spoken of the ark before, that saved Noah and his household from perishing in the universal innndation,) even baptism, doth now save us; not the putting away the filth of the flesh, (not the external sign,) but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," I Pet. iii. 21. The main and principal thing that we do apply ourselves to men, and the consciences of men, about, is, to bring them back to God; that is, whereas the bond was broken between God and men, we would fain have them under new bonds, we would fain there should be a redintegration, that they may come into a covenant relation to God, through Christ again; of such a covenant entered into between God and the returning souls of men, baptism was a seal; the confirmation. It is not the external part of baptism that will avail a man any thing, not the washing away the filth of the flesh; why, will not that do? No, but that whereunto baptism is to seal; that is, the answer of a good conscience. When sinners are dealt withal, 'Come, will you yet have God to be your God,—God the Father, Son, and Spirit, to be your God?' And the soul is brought at length to yield a ready, free, complying answer; 'Aye, with all my heart.' This is that will save a man; this brings him as into an ark, to save him from the common deluge of wickedness and wrath that do overwhelm this world. Then he is safe, then he is in the ark; that is, when his conscience hath given a complying answer, with a sincere conscience, 'I do take God to be my God.' The sign (it may be) that was applied many years ago, avails nothing, without the thing signified; but if the thing signified do come to obtain, to take place, here is one that takes God to be his God; then the business is done; then the man is safe, when the sign before applied is now answered and filled up; there is that which is correspondent to it; the soul is now won, and brought to give its answer; the covenant stands between God and it, it is a sealed covenant; and so is such an one marked out for safety and preservation from the common ruin. And this is that which we have to deal with the consciences of men about, to bring them to a final answer. Sinner, wilt thou still live without God in the world? Wilt thou still wander from God? go astray from God? Dost thou still think it safe to live in estrangement from God, and neglect of him? never thinking of worshipping him, trusting on him, loving him, and delighting in him, from day to day? Or wilt thou yet at length be brought, upon the many applications that have been made to thy conscience, to answer, with a sincere conscience, 'Now I am willing, from my very soul, that God shall be mine; and I will be his in and through Christ.' It is herein that our transaction doth receive its happy issue. This is the issue we drive at to bring conscience to a final answer, if it be possible, 'I am won, I am overcome; I do answer, in my very conscience; I judge it best and safest, most equal, most dutiful, and most comfortable, to fall in with the Gospel offer, and take God in Christ for my God.' But,

2dly. Why must our business thus lie in a transaction of men's consciences? To that I shall need to say very little, because the thing speaks itself. That is,

1. That there being this principle in man, which signifies nothing else but a power to judge in such matters, relating to such practices as shall be laid before him. And,

2. The objects carrying in themselves (as you have heard) a self-recommending evidence to this principle, nothing remains, nothing is left, but that in the course of our ministry, in the way of our dealings with men's souls, that we do thus apply ourselves, do thus deal with this principle of conscience. Touching these objects, it is the office of conscience to judge of things, and the things themselves carry with them an evidence that comes under the notion, cognizance, and judgment of conscience; even by that very light wherewith they are clothed, and therefore the matter speaks itself; our business must lie there or no where; if we do not in these matters apply ourselves to the consciences of men, and treat with them, we had as good talk with stones and pillars.

Therefore I shall leave that, and speak somewhat to the third observation, the use of which too will best fall in afterwards together.

3rd Doctrine.—This transaction with the consciences of men must be in the sight of God,—there it must be made. I shall here briefly show, 1st, what this means; and 2ndly, why it must be so.

1st, What meaneth that such a resolution should be taken, and such a course held, we will transact, and do transact with the consciences of men in the sight of God? What can the meaning of that be? Why,

1. Negatively, the meaning of it is not, barely, that God shall see, or will see, how this transaction is managed. That is not all that is meant by it, for it is very manifest that the import of this speech holds forth to us somewhat electively done in this matter; but God's seeing us is not a thing subject to our's or any man's choice, he will see whether we will or no; and if that were all that were resolved in the case, it were to resolve God's part, and not our own part; and this were idle and foolish for us to do, he will do his own part, and this in particular; he will see, look on, and behold whatsoever we do, and whatsoever you do. "All things are naked and manifest to his eye, with whom we have to do," Heb. iv. 12. And, therefore, it were a piece of very impertinent officiousness for us, to take upon us to determine and resolve, that God should see what we do in this matter, should look upon you and us, and see how the transaction between us and your consciences is ordered, that he shall take notice of it; that cannot be the thing meant: as if any man should say, I will do such or such a thing in the light of the sun; nobody will understand the meaning of that to be, I will make the sun shine, or cause the sun to shine while I do such a thing; he can resolve nothing, but in reference to his own act, and in reference to his own part. And so it is here, it is only in reference to our own part, that we resolve such a transaction in the sight of God. Therefore, positively,

2. There is a part or act of our own implied in this, that we will do such and such a thing, and this in particular in

the sight of God. And what is that? That is, we will appeal to the sight of God, and to his judgment, about what we do in this matter. And this is a thing electively and voluntarily done, as a matter of choice, that we will appeal to his eye; it is true, it is no matter of choice that God will see, but it is matter of choice that we will appeal to that eye of his. And this is the great character of sincere ones, often mentioned in Scripture; that is, that as they know God beholds and sees them in every thing, so they do study and labour to approve themselves to his eye, and (as it were) invocate his observation. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting," Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24. It was a dignostick of sincerity, that was enjoined as a test upon Abraham; "I am God all-sufficient, walk before me, and be perfect or upright," (Gen. xvii. 1.) Walk before me, walk so as apprehending my inspection, and so as to approve thyself to the observation of mine eye, through thy whole course; and with this, there is a conjunction mentioned of his uprightness; implying that to be a dignostick of this: "Walk before me, and be upright;" walk as in my sight, (as only the upright man will do,) and therein show thyself an upright man. So the Psalmist, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living," Ps. cxvi. 9. I will studiously approve myself, through the whole of my walking, unto the view and judgment of his observing eye. And so it is said of them who do truly, or that do the truth, that they bring their deeds to the light, "that they may be manifest that they are wrought in God," John iii. 21. They do willingly expose their deeds to be viewed in the light, from the secret consciousness that there is a Divine power and presence with them that doth help them on in their way and course; and this, they desire, should be made manifest, that they do not live at the common rate; that they do not walk as men (as the expression is, 1 Cor. iii.) That it may be seen that their course is managed in the power of a divine principle, that their works are wrought in God. Here is an elective appeal all along to the Divine eye; which hypocrites and unsound persons would decline and shun even to the uttermost; "they will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved," John iii. 20. And when it is said, "there is no darkness or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves," it implies, fain they would keep in the dark from the eyes of the looker upon the ways of men, who sees their goings. They are for the night, for a corner, for darkness, but they can find none; they vainly seek it, though this be the wish of their hearts, as the poet expresseth it, "*Da mihi noctem, da mihi nubem;*" Oh for a cloud, oh for a dark night! We do appeal to the consciences of men, in the sight of God; we appeal to his eye, voluntarily and freely desiring him to be judge when we deal and treat with men upon this account, whether we do not sincerely desire their best good, and highest glory, in this negociation of ours. This, therefore, is the plain meaning of doing what we do in this case "in the sight of God;" that is, as electively appealing to the eye of God, in the transaction and management of this affair.

And so there are now two parts manifestly distinguishable; that is, God's part looking on, and man's part in appealing to his observing eye, and expressing a desire of his complacency in reference to those things he is looking upon; but then, as to our own part, or man's part, wherein we are concerned, which lies under our present consideration, that you may also see is two-fold; that is, there is the preacher's part, and there is the hearer's part; it is the former of these that is directly here meant; and the latter implicitly and by consequence.

1. The former is meant directly, that is, they whose business it is, as ministers of the Gospel, to treat and deal with the souls of men; their part is directly there expressed, to appeal to the eye of God, concerning their own integrity and the uprightness of their aims, in all the applications they may make from him, and upon his account to souls. But then,

2. The hearer's part is implied; not as that in reference whereto we can undertake, but as that in reference whereto we do and must endeavour; that is, that they also may be brought to appeal to the eye of God, in this transaction that is between us and their consciences. This is that we must endeavour. As,

1. We must endeavour to make them sensible of the Divine presence, in which we are at such times as these. That is incumbent upon us on our part, that we engage you as much as in us is, to do your part; that is, to appeal jointly with us to the eye of God, about that for which we appeal to you and your consciences: our business must be to make you apprehensive and sensible, that we are in the presence of God; that there is a Divine eye inspecting us, looking upon us; we must put you in mind of this, that we speak and you hear in the presence of God, and under the observation of his eye, his piercing eye is upon us, he sees with what mind and design the speaker preacheth; he observes with what temper and disposition of mind every hearer heareth. This we are to our utmost to make you apprehensive of. And,

2. Supposing deviations and wanderings, (to which we are always too prone,) we must summon you into the Divine presence, so as to let the matter we deal with you about, be transacted as in that presence; we must deal with you as upon such a supposition as this, It is an easy thing for you to put off a man that speaks to you;—you think you may boldly and safely slight the words of a poor mortal man; but we must have you into the presence of God, and all this affair must be transacted as under the eye. If you do disregard what a poor mortal man saith to you, come, let you and I go before the Lord now, here he is upon the throne; pray let him have the hearing of the controversy between you and us; give him the hearing of it, let him see the state of the case, submit the matter between us to his judgment, whether you ought not to receive such and such truths, whether you ought not to comply and yield to the authority of such and such precepts, and whether you ought not to dread and shun to the uttermost such and such sins. Pray let the great God have the hearing of the business; we summon you into his presence, and would not have you regard us in what we say, but him. And if we should go to particular instances; it may be, there are such and such sins that divers of you have been from time to time admonished of, and it hath been all in vain; you would never give us the hearing; we have spoke (as it were) to the wind. Suppose a licentious young man have given up himself to walk in the way of his own heart; and we have reasoned the matter with such, and debated it with them, whether it were not safer for them to be under the Divine government, to walk according to Divine prescriptions, than follow the hurry and impetus of sensual inclinations; telling them this will be your death, this will be your ruin, this you will rue for another day; but they will not hear us. Then we only say, in this case, "Come, and let you and I go before the Lord;" and let the matter be reasoned out in his sight, or in his hearing, and let him judge between you and us, whether you ought not to hearken, whether it will be fit for you, a creature, to oppose the will of your Creator; one that was raised out of the dust but the other day, to oppose your appetite and inclination to his authority, to his wisdom, to his good, and righteous, and holy will? Do but try, and see what courage and confidence you can have thus to give the cause to your own will, fancy, and humour, against his will, wisdom, and authority; now you are brought before his throne, and now the matter comes to be transacted immediately as under his eye, between you and a poor messenger of his, that he employs in his work; and so, though we can only directly do our own part in this business, as appealing to conscience under God's eye; we must likewise put you upon your part, that is, must summon you, and draw you in with us, into such an appeal to God, when we are dealing with your consciences in their souls' concerns.

Now, by this time, I hope you see what this transaction with the consciences of men, as in the sight of God, doth mean. And if,

2ndly, You would know why it must be thus, why this transaction should be with the consciences of men in the sight of God, manifold reasons presently offer themselves. As,

1. It is his work that we are employed in, his business that we go about, when we speak to men to turn and live, when we would have them repent and believe the Gospel;

when we would have you come back to God, and pay your homage unto him, it is his work that we are doing all this time. And why should we not, as much as it is possible, aim and endeavour, that we may see how his work is done? That is, that we bring you under his eye as much as in us is.

2. We go about this work of his continually in his name. It is his work, and done in his name; by his authority we continue in it, being sent of him. Why should not what is done in his name, be done under his eye, even of our own design and choice, as much as is possible, on the one hand and the other? For whatsoever we are to do, we are to do in the Lord's name; we that speak, are to speak in the Lord's name; you that hear, are to hear in the Lord's name, or hear what is spoken in his name. And why should it not be a matter of choice with us, that all be transacted as under his eye and in his sight? And,

3. He hath equal power over us, and over you; his power obtains alike over all; and where we are sure his power is alike over all, why should we not all endeavour alike to walk under his eye, and labour to approve ourselves to his eye, under which all are? And,

4. He perfectly knows all matters of fact that do belong to this transaction; and, therefore, since we are sure he doth, it is better that we consider it, and accordingly, study to approve ourselves to his inspection; he doth know all the matter of fact; he knows my thoughts, and all your thoughts, throughout this whole transaction, on such a day, and at such a time as this. And,

5. He is the only competent judge of the matter of right; whether you or I do right or wrong, in reference to what is spoken and heard. And lastly,

6. To be sure, he will be the final judge; it is good for us to consent and agree to it, that he shall be the present judge, and that then this transaction be carried on designedly under his eye; he will be the judge at last, when the secret of all hearts shall be laid open, and there is no declining his judgment; certainly, therefore, it is the wisest and best course, as much as possible, by consent and willingly to bring things under his eye, and notice now; and endeavour to approve all this transaction to the inspection, the present inspection of that eye, the final judgment whereof we cannot avert.

And so way is made for somewhat of use, in reference to this two-fold observation, that we have thus far insisted on: many things might be said, but for present take this.

We may see by all this what the case is like, of them that live long disobedient to the voice of the Gospel, under which they live. See a little and judge of the state of their case and affairs. They that live statedly under the Gospel, must be supposed to have many applications made to their consciences, for that is the very business of the Gospel, immediately to apply itself to the very consciences of men; for you that have lived long under the Gospel, (whether successfully or unsuccessfully,) there have been many applications made to your consciences, by those that have been employed in this work about matters of the highest importance and concern; you had best consider with what success and with what effect; but if it hath been with little, that is, if hitherto you have disobeyed the voice of that Gospel, under which you have so long lived, it cannot but have been with very great regret, many turns and reclamations of your consciences: if conscience were not a capable principle of judgment, when it is applied unto, when appeals are made to it,—it would be the vainest thing in all the world to talk of commending ourselves to the consciences of men, in the sight of God, as the apostle here speaks. Why to their consciences? It were as good do it to any thing else as conscience,—if conscience be not a principle susceptible of conviction, when it is applied unto. Therefore now let it be considered, that conscience is a judge wherever it hath place and is applied unto; it doth (as it were) keep its power; and, indeed, it is capable of sustaining several parts: where there is a judicature, there is a registry too; and it is as well capable of recording things as of judging them. It may be, many have made it their business to slur and blot the records that are kept in the court of conscience. But that is a vain thing, this shall all come into view again. Every time that thou hast come, with a vain heart, into the presence of God; every time thou hast offered here the sacrifice of a fool; every time thou hast come like such an one, with thine eyes in the ends of the earth, when they should have been intent upon the Divine Majesty, to pay thy homage to him; every time thou hast opposed resolution against conviction of conscience, thou wert convinced in thy conscience, certainly there must be a change, and a reformation; things must not be with me as they have been; it is not a right way I have been, but thou hast resolved, I will not reform,—I will live as I have lived, do as I have done: every time that Christ hath been offered to thee, and thou hast refused him, and he hath had cause to complain, as in the prophet, "My people would not hearken to my voice; Israel would have none of me," (Psalm lxxxi. 11.) they that call themselves mine, profess themselves Christians, call themselves by my name, would have none of me: every time thou hast been urged, If thou wilt have life, thou must have the Son; "he that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life," John v. 12. Come, (saith God,) wilt thou have my Son? Thou hast not said, Yea; thy heart hath not consented; and that is all one as if thou hast said, No; when the thing hath not been done so often, hast thou been recorded a refuser of the Son of God? thy conscience hath been convinced over and over, I ought to receive the Son of God; this command being brought to me from heaven, to believe in his name; that is, to resign myself to him, and submit myself to him; but I never did, I never have; this is a most fearful case, that there ever should be such records in a man's conscience against him; to which there have been continual additions, from Lord's day to Lord's day, through a long tract of time, and yet my course hath been the same. Notwithstanding all the reclamations of conscience, there hath been no reformation in my heart, none in my life; I am just the same as I was seven or ten years ago; so many convictions of conscience yet to be answered, for they never have been yet. Oh, think of the state of their affairs that have lived long under the Gospel, disobedient to it. Conscience hath been still applied to, and appealed to in the sight of God, under his eye and notice; and yet there hath been no consent, no compliance given; "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth," Rom. xiv. 22. That carries a dreadful intimation, Cursed is he that condemneth himself in that thing which he alloweth; *that he alloweth*. It was a good thing to have accepted the Son of God, to have turned to God, and come to an agreement with him in and by his Son, and to have broken off every evil way, and to have betaken myself to a strict and regular course of walking with God, a very good thing! what a cursed thing, a dismal thing, is it then to condemn oneself in the thing which he alloweth? I allow all this to be good, and so am self-condemned for not doing it. "If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts," 1 John iii. 29. When a man is condemned in his own heart; when he hath a judgment in his conscience about any matter, indefinitely considered, and his practice runs counter, so as to bring himself unawares under the judgment of it. "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemneth thyself," Rom. ii. 1. Which is spoken in reference to what was said in the foregoing words, "Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but take pleasure in those that do them," Rom. i. last verse. They know that judgment; it stands as a judgment, and a righteous one, in their view; they themselves have judged this judgment to be right. Thou art then inexcusable, O man, that judgest in what thou judgest; thou hast judged such and such a way to be evil, and such and such a determination in reference thereunto to be righteous, and yet by doing that thing, thou dost run thyself under such a judgment and doom. Oh! what an inexcusable creature art thou!

SERMON V.*

2 Cor. iv. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience.

OUR business must be at this time (as you foreknow) the application of two of those observations together which have been gathered from these words; (two doctrines applied together;) to wit, the second, That the great business of the ministry lies in an immediate transaction with men's consciences; and the third, That this transaction with the consciences of men is to be managed in the sight of God. These two have been opened, and are now to be applied together; and there are many things which it is very obvious to infer from the one or the other of them. As,

1. That therefore, in carrying on the ministerial work, such things are mostly to be insisted on, as are most accommodate to conscience, and are apt to take hold of it; and about which we may, with the greatest confidence and clearness, appeal to the consciences of men: when once it is understood what principle in men we are to apply ourselves to in the ministerial work, it is then very obvious to collect what sort of things we are principally to insist upon in the managing of it. And you see what that principle is; it is not that we are wont to call wit, or fancy, or honour, or even the speculative understanding, or a disposition to religious disputes, about little, and doubtful, and less necessary matters; much less is it carnal appetite and inclination, that is to be concerned, so as to be pleased, or (at least) not to be displeased, not to be crossed, not to be vexed, not contended against; and, therefore, the things we have to say to men, in carrying on of our ministerial work, they must be quite of another nature from what would accommodate such principles as these in them. And you may easily apprehend how instructive this inference may be to all of you; and I hope you do apprehend it, though in the direct aspect of it it doth only respect Gospel ministers. And you might very well think it strange, and very little worth the while, that so many hundreds of persons should come together, only to hear ministers preach to one another; but yet, when you do understand what is fit for us to preach, you will also understand what is fit for you to hear, and what is necessary for you to receive, and to expect, and covet to hear most of all, and before other things; and so you cannot but see of how universal concernment what I now infer must be to us all; that is, that you are not to expect from us, (if we will faithfully pursue that which is our proper work, of applying ourselves directly and closely to the consciences of men) you are not to expect (I say) fine and quaint sentences, elegant and well-formed orations; you are not to expect curious airy notions and speculations; and much less are you to expect that we should only prophesy to you smooth and pleasant things, that we may be sure will not offend, that will not bear hard upon any man's inclinations, how ill or irregular soever they may be; you cannot think any thing of this to be our business, when we have conscience to deal with in this matter, and are to apply ourselves immediately and directly thither, and in the sight of God, and under his eye: nor are you to expect that we should entertain you much with perplexed disputes about little and disputable matters; and which, commonly, by how much the more disputable they are, are so much the less necessary, God having so mercifully provided, that those things that should be most necessary, should be always plain, and so should need the least dispute. I know some have wondered, that when divers have very much concerned themselves in this juncture of time, both from the pulpit, and by the press, to propagate disputes about lesser differences, in matters of religion, there should be so great a silence about these things among us; and we must really and freely declare to you, we have no leisure to mind those lesser things, we are taken up about greater, and we think we are bound to be taken up about unspeakably greater things. I do consider again and again, that saying of the apostle, "Study to be quiet, and do your own business," 1 Thess. iv. 11. And for my part, I think this to be our business,—to deal with the consciences of men in the plainest and most important things, such as are most apt to fasten upon and take hold of conscience; for as to those lesser things, there is much that is very disputable about them; some indeed do think those things to be indifferent, which others think to be unlawful in the worship of God; yet this is plain then, by consent on both sides, that they may be safely enough let alone, as to what they carry in themselves; and, therefore, we content ourselves to let them alone. This is plain, they may be well let alone: and when the apostle doth here speak of this thing, "by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God," you see what, and about what things it was, by what follows: —"If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;" why then, by the manifestation of such truth as is necessary to prevent men being lost; that is, as is necessary in itself to their salvation, that they may not be lost; it was by such things, by which they sought to commend themselves to the conscience of every man in the sight of God. I know, indeed, there is a necessity commonly alleged by some for these lesser things; that is, that though they are not necessary in themselves, they may become necessary as being enjoined. It is very true, indeed, if that were agreed on both sides, that they were indifferent,—we could readily say so with them; but they themselves very well know that that is not the state of the case between them and us; while on the one side such things are indifferent, on the other side, it is said, in the worship of God it is unlawful. And though it be true, indeed, that we are bound to obey every injunction of man, for the Lord's sake; yet we are bound to obey none of them against him; therefore, that is plain, about things in dispute, the safest way is to be unconcerned, in matters of which, there is some doubt. And every good man must concur with us in this principle, though the particular application of it to this or that case, the peculiarity and difference of their own judgment, obligeth them to disagree; but we shall certainly agree with all good and serious men, that differ from us about these lesser matters, in insisting principally and chiefly upon such matters as are necessary to save souls from being lost; for it is plain, that good and serious men do so too, and let those matters alone for the most part, and have as little mind to concern themselves about them, as we have; and no doubt, but that when we shall more generally agree to pursue such things most, as tend to promote and propagate the power of godliness, and keep it alive, and prevent (as much as in us is) all from acquiescing and taking up their rest, in any form whatsoever, without it; when we shall all agree to make it our common business, to press the things that do belong to living, real, substantial godliness; and mutually to seek one another's common welfare, as we would do our own; when we agree to press and insist on these two great capital things, upon which hang all the law and the prophets; that is, loving the Lord our God with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our might, and with all our mind, and loving our neighbour as ourselves; I doubt not but as to all these lesser differences, or differences about lesser matters, either we shall come to an agreement about them too, in time; or our disagreement will be, upon the matter, equal to an agreement;—that is, we shall disagree without displeasure, without being angry at one another for our disagreement; or, because that such and such will not make our consciences the measure and standard of their's,—a poor matter of quarrel, and certainly a most unrighteous one, that I should be offended at any man, because he will not make my conscience the measure of his; and it is upon the matter, all one in this our present state, whether there be a full and throughout agreement in every little thing, in judgment or practice; or, whether we can, very contentedly, bear with one another's differences. If we can do so, if we can disagree with one another modestly, and without expecting that another should resign and surrender the judgment of his conscience to the government of mine: if we can disagree with an humble sense of our common, yet remaining, ignorance,

* Preached February 15th, 1690.

and how little do all of us know, and how much yet needs to be added to our knowledge, even about the most important things; truly disagreement upon such terms, so placid, so charitable, so calm, so unapt to offend, and which doth so little offend, will be a good step,—the next step to a perfect throughout agreement. It may be, that will never be in this world, or while our earthly state continues. But if our disagreement be thus managed, it will be less material; whether it be or no unto our peace, it can never be necessary unto them that are of a peaceable temper and disposition of themselves aforehand; but they who are not so, that have an unpeaceable temper and disposition in them, will always find one matter of quarrel and another; and if such things were once composed and taken up, would be sure to find out others; but this we may always reckon upon, that such as will be faithful in the ministerial work, we must expect to hear from them such things (as you have heard) that may carry in them a recommendableness to the consciences of men: in which, when conscience is urged with matter of duty upon them, it will apprehend a *bonum:* my conscience tells me I shall be the better for it if I take this course. if I walk in such a way as the great things which concern the substance of religion direct unto, whereas those lesser matters, when you come to seek in them for a *bonum*, search into them for what they have of real good in them; you think to grasp at them for somewhat, and you grasp at nothing; you go to embrace them, and you embrace only a shadow, and hug an empty cloud and no more. They are things, which conscience cannot feel to have any real and substantial goodness in them;—that then is the first thing hence inferred. Are we, in our ministerial work, to apply and commend ourselves to the consciences of men, and even in the sight of God? We then must deal with them about such things, that are most apt and accommodate to this purpose, to take hold of men's consciences.

2. If the work of the ministry do lie so much about men's consciences, we must reckon that the work of the Holy Ghost (who is to animate this ministry, and make it prosperous) must lie first and most immediately about the consciences of men too; not that it takes up there, but it is through conscience that it must touch men's hearts. "We commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God; but if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not. But God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." If you view the series of the discourse, you will find that that speaks (as well as the matter speaks) itself, that God's way is to shine into hearts through convinced consciences: and this ministration, in all the forgoing chapter that the apostle refers to, is called the manifestation of the spirit, and by it we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord; to wit, as by the Spirit of the Lord." "Therefore," (saith the apostle, in the following words,) "having received this ministry, we faint not;" a ministry, managed by the Holy Ghost. Now, if the immediate first subject of this ministry hath to do with the consciences of men, then the consciences of men must be that which the Holy Ghost must have to do with too; for the supreme Agent, and the subordinate, are both to operate upon the same subject,—as you now that are writing, your hand and pen write upon the same paper, and not your hand upon one, and your pen upon another. It is conscience that is the seat of conviction, and thither the Holy Ghost, by the Gospel ministry, doth apply itself for this purpose; "When he is come, he shall convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," John xvi. 8. The Comforter, (so we read it,) when he is come, shall do so and so; but sure we do much misread it when we read it so. *Paracletos* is the word, the *paraclete;* the proper signification is the advocate or pleader, a pleader as at law. The disciples were here overwhelmed with sorrow, to think what would become of them when their Lord was gone, of which he had been immediately foretelling them; "Because I have told you that I must be gone from you, sorrow hath filled your heart;" that is, they did recount with themselves, since he had told them, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that they should be witnesses for him, because they had been with him from the beginning; then, think they, the whole weight and stress of the Christian cause in this world lies upon our shoulders, and we shall surely sink under it; Who are we that we should think to set up a new religion in the world,—a religion, against which all sorts, both Jews and Gentiles, have so rooted and natural a prejudice? What, are we for this? Why saith our Lord Christ, never trouble yourselves, when I go, the advocate shall come,—that pleader, that mighty pleader; and he shall make strange work in the world when once he comes; he shall take up my cause; whereas I have been traduced and charged as a seducer, and a deceiver, he shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not in me, and of my righteousness and the equity of my righteous cause; and, thereupon, of the very completing and perfection of that righteousness, which is to be had by me, which depends thereupon; and of judgment, when I shall be known to be enthroned, and to have all government, and principality, and power, put under me, or into my hands,—and so the Christian cause shall live, and spread, and triumph, when I am gone, and so much the more for my being so, for if I be not gone, that great pleader will not come, and when he comes, this shall be his great business, conviction,—he shall fasten such conviction upon the consciences of men, they shall not be able to withstand and baffle. Oh, when that mighty Spirit comes among us, then will no man be able to persist in a carnal course and habit of heart and life; but this Spirit will make them weary of it, they will never be able to endure the weight and pressure of his convictions, when through the Gospel ministry he comes to fasten and take hold of consciences, and to implead them upon such an account. What? Is this christianity? Is this like a living union with the Son of God, the Lord from heaven? To live continually like worms of this earth, grovelling in the dust, always minding and savouring no higher and no greater thing? But, again,

3. Is the ministerial work to be managed in the very sight of God, with the consciences of men? Then (this having a very ill look upon the kingdom and interest of the wicked one) it is obvious further to infer, that the devil's work must lie very much too about the consciences of men; that is, to blind conscience, to cheat conscience, to deceive conscience, to disguise and misrepresent things to the consciences of men; so you see it allows, if our Gospel be hid,—if it doth not reach home with convictive and energetical light to the very consciences of men, it is because "the god of this world hath blinded their minds:" it doth reach home with such light, except to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded their minds. If men cannot see what is their way and duty in very plain and evident things; as that a man, who was a sinner even by nature, and under wrath, can never be acceptable to God, but for the sake of a Redeemer; and never for his sake, if he have not living union with him, if he be not in him, and so in him as to be a new creature,—old things being done away, and all things being become new. If men cannot see truth in so plain matters as these, that speak themselves to every man's conscience, it is, because the God of this world hath blinded their eyes. If the work of the Gospel, and of the Spirit that breathes in it, be with the consciences of men, the devil's work must lie there too; if it be possible to blind conscience and disguise things to conscience; that is, to corrupt man's judgments of things, and to make them to apprehend things otherwise than they are. And so it was that he did apply himself to our first parents, only by putting false glosses upon those plain preceptive and monitory words that should have obliged and awed conscience. Oh, never think God meaneth such severity to you, ye shall not die if you eat of this fruit; never think he intended you should die; no, this is that will make you wise and knowing, far beyond what you are, you will be as gods, knowing good and evil. His business was to put a false gloss and colour upon things, to deceive their judgments and consciences, and to lead them into transgression, and this his design is still to keep men in that state of apostacy into which he had

drawn them from returning to God, only by imposing upon and cheating their consciences. Notwithstanding this loose and careless course you hold, never trouble yourselves, all will be well enough, a formal religion will serve the turn, and be less painful and laborious to you than that real one, and that living one that is from time to time so much pressed upon you. It will serve your turn to go to church, or go to a meeting, and hear a sermon on the Lord's day, and live as you list all the week long; you never need concern yourselves further. All the devil's care is to keep conscience from doing its duty and its proper office, that if it be applied and appealed to by us, in the ministry of the Gospel, you may not attend it; it may not be at leisure to hear what we say, that it may be kept asleep, or diverted some way or other, or that it may otherwise attend things than according to the truth.

4. We may further infer hence, that since the business of the ministry is to transact with conscience, from time to time, in the very sight of God; they that live under such a ministry, if conscience ever come to be awakened into exercise, they must live a very weary life, if they live in a course of sin and estrangement from God. They that will, (I say,) under such a ministry, sin on still, and wander from God, still they will lead a very weary life; it must needs be a very uneasy course that such must hold in the world; for if conscience be awakened and do attend, they will be continually hearing things that tend to disturb and disquiet them, and make them apprehend danger, and see themselves like to be ruined, and undone, and lost, in the course that they hold: and therefore, certainly, the case is very deplorable of such persons, who, under such a ministry, do still live in sin, whether they live in a course of very gross wickedness, or whether they keep in a course of vain formal religion, and no more. They must be very uneasy if conscience be awake; and if conscience be not awake, it is worse, and their case more deplorable. And really it is dismal to think of it, that such persons should hear so much, from day to day, that hath a tendency in it to make them to fear and suspect their present way, and present state, with so little effect; for on they go only because (though that be uneasy to them) they apprehend to get that sin subdued and mortified, that hath governed in them and had the throne, will be more uneasy; and since it comes to pass, that, things being brought to this pass, either sin must be mortified, or conscience must be mortified, they betake themselves to the latter. If they cannot be patient of it, that sin must die, and undergo mortification, then, of consequence, they must betake themselves to this, that conscience must undergo this dying and mortification; and so, really, they have a very uneasy task of it, that they must, for their own peace sake, be continually fighting against conscience, from one Lord's day to another, and endeavouring that it may let them alone in their old security, in their old carnality, in their old neglect of God. Here is their business with their consciences. Oh, conscience, let me live in neglect of Christ, and be quiet! Let me live fearless of God in this life, and be quiet! Let me live a prayerless life, and be quiet! But conscience cannot very easily submit to let such be quiet, because there are such courses taken, from time to time, while they live under such a ministry, whereby we must be applying ourselves to their consciences, in the sight of God. This awakens conscience afresh, and then it must be laid asleep again; so toilsome and uneasy a way of it have some to perdition; they are fain to fight their way to hell, even through so many and so great difficulties. And,

5. We may further infer, that if the Gospel ministry is principally to be taken up in dealing with the consciences of men in the sight of God, it can be no shame to any man to be in this way conquered and subdued, and brought under to the foot of God in Christ: it can be no shame to any body to be thus conquered; for to be conquered by conscience is, upon the matter, to be conquered by himself. You have no reason to be ashamed to be conquered by yourself; you yield to yourself in the case; you yield to your own light, that which God hath made your own; you yield to your convinced judgment; you have no cause to be ashamed of that. It is a shame for a man to be cheated, to be imposed upon, to be made to appear a fool, as every sinner is that goes on in the way of his own heart, "disobedient, and deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures," Titus iii. 3. But it is no shame for a man to be undeceived; it is no shame for a man to be brought to exercise a right judgment, once certified and set aright in him. This is a glory, to be thus conquered: you are indeed conquered; you alter you course; you cease to be what you were; but it is brought to that pass, you do but yield to yourself, yield to your own light, yield to your own judgment, and to the power of that conviction you see is no longer to be withstood. And upon the same account,

6. They that do conquer conscience and Gospel light in such a sense, have no reason to boast of their victory; they have very little reason to brag; they that can say and tell their companions, I have heard such and such a sermon, and it put me into a deadly qualm; I knew not what to do; my heart almost failed me, and began to misgive me; and I began to think within myself, I must alter my course, I must become a Christian in good earnest; I had such thoughts as these, and such inclinations, but I have overcome them; I have conquered conscience; I have got the victory over them. Alas! these men have little reason to boast of this, of having conquered their reason, judgment, conscience, and light, and made these to give place to lust and sensual inclinations; when a man hath been summoned and called into the presence of God, and hath had so mighty a load laid upon his spirit, as to have such a thing contested with him in the sight of God, and under the Divine eye, yet he hath conquered it, got the victory; this, certainly, he hath no cause to boast or brag of. A dismal victory! a few such victories as these will undo him quite. If God should let you carry the cause, carry the victory, from day to day, this victory will end in a total and endless ruin. Again,

7. We may further infer, that, since this ministerial work is to be managed with the very consciences of men in the sight of God, it is one of the most weighty, solemn things that a man can possibly go about, to hear a sermon where he is likely to be dealt with at this rate; that is, generally to go to hear a Gospel sermon, according to the true import of the Gospel, and the true design of the Gospel ministry, it is one of the awfullest, solemnest things that a man can go about in the world: for he ought to reckon in this case, I am now going to such a place, and for what? Why, it is to hear a sermon, in which I expect my conscience is to be appealed to all along; and it is to be appealed unto in the sight of God; and the minister will summon me into the presence of God: and if I do not yield,—but my heart hesitates, and stands off,—I expect to hear this from him; Come, let you and I debate this matter in the sight of God, before the throne of God, and see if you know how to baffle conscience, and reject its convictions, in the sight of God, and while God looks on and audits the business between you and me, and between you and your own conscience. It is a great thing to go to hear a sermon upon such terms; many little think what they do, when they run to a sermon as they would to a play, or to such a meeting as they would to a bear-baiting; but if they would but consider what the Gospel ministry is, and wherein it lies, in a transaction with men's consciences, and that transaction to be managed in the sight of God, they would find it an awful thing to go to hear a sermon upon these terms.

2nd Use. And, therefore, now for a conclusion to be added to these inferences, as somewhat of further use, pray let this put you, in the next place, upon reflection, upon considering; you have lived long under the Gospel, under the ministry of it; the very business whereof was to transact with your consciences in the sight of God. Pray do but inquire,

1. Have you been wont to engage your consciences in this transaction? And,

2. Have you been wont to do it as in the sight of God, yea or nay? for hitherto you have been called; your consciences have been applied and appealed to; have you heard their voice answering thus; Why, I am called to a transaction, to my part in a transaction I agree readily, my conscience shall be appealed to? And, further, have you agreed the transaction shall be in the sight of God, answering thus; "I am willing to be judged by the impartial supreme Judge, and if I cannot

approve myself in his sight, I will condemn and abase myself in his sight?" I pray, hath it been wont to be so with you in that long tract of time wherein you have sat under the Gospel? Have you engaged conscience in such a transaction as this? And have you done it in the sight of God, from time to time? If you have not, hence is your not profiting; hence is your sitting under the Gospel, from year to year, to no purpose. Conscience hath been spoken to, and would never answer; you have been careful to keep it asleep, to keep it undisturbed; you have declined the Divine presence; you would not come and present yourselves before the judicature of God; you have laboured to stifle all such thoughts as much as in you was; your case is, then, as our Saviour represents it with the Jews; "Whereto shall I liken this generation; they are like children sitting in the market-place, and calling their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented," Matt. xi. 16. Even so it is with this generation. And is it not so with our generation, too? We speak to the consciences of men, and they do not echo back; they give no correspondent answer; when we would transact with them, they are dead, or asleep. And hence, no good is done; conscience is not engaged; it will not advert to the business in hand; it minds it not: and thereupon the kingdom of God doth not suffer violence, (Matt. xi. 12.) as in that same context; "For until now (saith our Saviour) the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." But now there is a dead calm, a dead flat, and we pipe to men, and they do not dance; we mourn to them, and they do not lament; there is no echo, no correspondent voice. This is now (saith he) the case of this generation. But I might here be a little more particular in my inquiry. And,

1. You know you have been often urged and pressed, as to a thing wherein the very substance of all religion doth inchoatively consist and lie, all serious and living religion; that is, a solemn surrender of yourselves to God in Christ. "Yield yourselves to God," Rom. vi. 13. "Present yourselves to him a living sacrifice," Rom. xii. 1. As it is said of those Christians, "They gave themselves to the Lord," 2 Cor. viii. 5. Hath not this been a thing plain to your consciences, that you ought to have done so? And have none of you lived in neglect of it to this day? You could never find a leisure time wherein solemnly to apply yourselves to God in Christ, and say, Lord, I now come to surrender to thee thine own; I have brought thee back a stray, a wandering creature, myself, my own self: accept a poor wandering soul, that now desires to give up itself to thee, and take thee, in Christ, for mine. A plain thing as any thing can be to any conscience of man; conscience hath been frequently applied to in this case, as in the sight of God, and yet, from year to year, no such thing as this hath ever been done. Again,

2. To consider how often you have been spoken to about solemn preparation for such a day's work as this; to come with prepared hearts, in some measure, at least to design to come prepared to the holy solemnities of such a day. God knows how often you have been applied to and conscience hath been spoken to in this matter; but with what effect, you in great part know, that still are wont to rush upon the sacred solemnities of such a day without considering—It is for my life, for my soul; it is in order to eternity, that I am approaching into the presence of God; and that it is that God that made me I have to do with; him I am going to serve, him I am going to seek.

3. How often hath conscience been appealed to about prayer! a course of prayer! of secret closet prayer, and family prayer! God knows with what effect. A dismal thing, if any of you have suffered a conviction of conscience about this years ago, and yet still live in the neglect of this, against conscience, to this very day. And,

4. About the great business of watchfulness, concerning which we have heard so much of late. Conscience hath been there applied to, as in the sight of God. Pray consider, are any of us become more watchful for it over our spirits, and over our way and course? It will be of great concernment to us, to urge ourselves, faithfully, and impartially, with such questions and inquiries as these.

And then, to close all, pray hereupon let us be persuaded and prevailed upon more to commune with conscience, and to commune with it in the sight of God, seeing we are in the sight of God put upon it. And to comply with conscience, yield to it, comport with it, and if (as was said) we cannot find our case to admit of it, that our consciences should justify us before God, let our consciences condemn us before God, let them judge us before God. If we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged of the Lord: we shall then have the matter thus taken up between him and us; otherwise, we still remain liable to his severe and uncontrollable judgment. And to urge this, pray do but weigh these few things.

1. That conscience, often baffled, will grow stupid. It is the way to stupify conscience to baffle it often; if you get in a habit of that, of running counter to light, and of imposing upon conscience, and bearing it down, it will become so tamely passive, that it will lay no restraint upon you,—you may do what you will; conscience will say no more, but let you take your course.

2. If you do so, the Spirit of God will retire too, and withdraw, and not assist conscience, which (as we are told) it doth in a way of reflex operation; but it doth as much (no doubt) in a way of direct operation, too: it works with conscience; and then conscience ceaseth, when there is a cessation of all such exercise with conscience; the Spirit can no more converse with us, than with that which is dead; when that thing is dead, quite dead, mortified into a total utter death, wherewith the Spirit of God should converse with us, then it retires, and is gone, in displeasure, as being grieved, vexed, and quenched. Oh, what a dreadful thing is that! It is a terrible thing when the Spirit is retired and gone, merely upon that resistance that he hath met with in our consciences. His business was to co-operate with them, to work with them, and by them. And we have made it our business to stupify conscience, to stifle and suppress it: and if the Spirit be gone thereupon in displeasure, this is a fearful thing. And consider,

3. That if, through the mercy of God, conscience should ever yet awake, and the Spirit return, by how much the longer it hath been stifled, so much the more terrible it will roar upon you, when it doth return. And if you be saved at length, you will be "saved as by fire," as I may allude to those words of the apostle. But,

4. If it never awake in this world, by how much the more industriously it hath been kept asleep in you, and by how much the less it hath done the part of an instructor and director, so much the more it will do the work of a tormentor hereafter, an everlasting tormentor. And this is a most dismal thing, for an intelligent immortal spirit to come down into perdition, into the place of torment, with open eyes, and to be asked there, "How camest thou hither?" and to be forced to answer, "It was by running all my time against my light; it was by contending against my conscience, and the grace of the Spirit of God, to the very last; so I made my way to perdition." Then that conscience that could never be heard before, will be heard then, and will be felt; the worm that dies not, gnawing eternally, even eternally upon the soul, amidst that fire, and those flames that shall never be quenched. But, in the last place,

5. Consider, too, the sweet peace and tranquillity that must ensue upon complying with conscience all along; following its light, obeying its convictions, keeping up a correspondence betwixt your judgments and consciences, and the temper of your spirits, and the course of your walking. This is a heaven upon earth. If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. Upon these terms we may look in upon our souls, and behold all quiet: I have seen my way, and walked in it, as the grace of God hath kept me. "This is my rejoicing, the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, I have had my conversation in the world;" which is heaven on this side heaven. How pleasant sabbaths would you keep on these terms, when, looking back upon the last week, you have the testimony of your conscience; I have laboured to my uttermost to exercise a good conscience towards God and towards men, according to the

light that I have received from his word, and by that Gospel ministry under which I am! With how much peace shall a man upon one Lord's day look back upon his course through the foregoing week, since the former Lord's day! This would make sabbaths pleasant days to you, upon the review of that sweet commerce you have had with him in former times, and in expectation of being thus led on, from sabbath to sabbath, to the everlasting sabbath, at length, that remains for the people of God.

SERMON VI.*

2 Cor. iv. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

We have considered the words according to what, in themselves, they do import, and it remains now only to consider them (as we also proposed to do) in the reference to which they bear to the foregoing verse. "Therefore, as we have received this ministry, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, commending ourselves." And so it appears very plain that this course which the servants of God have held, in managing their ministerial work, to apply themselves directly therein to the consciences of men, hath been one of their great preservations against fainting in their work; so that they have pursued it with so much the more vigour and resolution upon this account, that herein they have made it their business to recommend themselves in the very sight of God to the consciences of men. And so we have this observation, as hath been already told you.

4th Doctrine. That the faithful ministers of the Gospel, from their applying in their work to the very consciences of men, have very great encouragement to go on in it without fainting. And hence it will be requisite only,

1. To show, briefly, what this fainting means. And then,

2. To show you how great an encouragement against it this is; to wit, their applying themselves all along directly to the very consciences of men, even in the sight of God.

1. What this not fainting meaneth. Fainting (as was told you) is two-fold, as is obvious to all, either bodily, or mental; and it is manifest, this is mental failing that is here disclaimed and disavowed, such as we find mentioned in Hebrews xii. 3. "Lest ye be weary and faint in your minds." Our minds do not faint in our work, while we are enabled to recommend ourselves in it to every man's conscience in the sight of God; and that fainting of the mind is again two-fold, it signifies either sloth or laziness, or else despondency and dejection of spirit: the word rendered fainting hath this double import in the other places of Scripture, where we find the same word used: "Our Lord spake a parable to such a purpose, to teach us to pray always, and not to faint." Luke xviii. at the beginning. That we neither grow slothful in it, nor despond upon it, so, be not weary of well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not, Gal. vi. 9. If you do not grow worse, if you do not suffer yourselves to be seized with a spirit of sloth, and if you do not yield to a despondingspirit. Now to be encouraged in our spirits doth include the opposite of these; for by how much the more there is of holy fortitude in any man's soul, so much the more there will be of lively and active vigour accompanying and going along with it.

And it is the design of the apostle in this negative expression to conjoin both these, fortitude and diligence, in opposition to despondency and sloth; and that there doth arise a very great spring of such enlivening vigour and fortitude, from this very reflection, that the faithful ministers of Christ may have upon the course of their procedure in their work, *viz.* That they have constantly all along in it, made it their business to recommend themselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God. That is the thing. I am now,

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2. To make out unto you (having shown you what this not fainting meaneth;) and this encouragement (which, from our applying ourselves to the consciences of men we do receive) will appear to be different, or to arise to us in different ways, according to the different consideration we may have of the thing itself, this application to conscience in the sight of God; that may be considered two ways, either in the effect or in the design.

In the effect; the immediate effect I mean, and that is, the conviction of conscience. The immediate effect of such application to conscience, is the conviction of conscience; and the design thereof, that imports our steady aimings at this thing, to fasten conviction on men's consciences, as much as is possible to us: the former of these, therefore, speaks the convictiveness of this application to conscience, and the latter speaks the sincerity of it. The former is grounded on, and referred to, the former words in the text, "commending ourselves to every man's conscience;" and the latter refers to the latter words, "in the sight of God;" for as the convictiveness of this application terminates upon conscience itself; so sincerity herein terminates upon God, or upon the eye of God, who is the only judge of sincerity; hereupon these are the two things that are so very encouraging in this case,—the convictiveness of this application to conscience, and the sincerity of it.

1. The convictiveness of it; that is a very encouraging, enlivening, fortifying thing to the heart of a serious minister, and one who is faithful in his work, and that from a two-fold account; to wit, as considering such a conviction of the consciences of men, (for we are now considering the effect and the aptitude of this application to produce and work it,) I say, considering this conviction of men's consciences,—1st. As the direct way to their conversion. And, 2ndly, As that which however gains for the great God a testimony in their own very souls.

1st, It is a mighty encouraging thing, as it is the direct way to their conversion. If men be convinced, if the words of the Gospel do once take hold of their consciences, this leads to conversion, it hath a tendency thitherward; and though we do not know that we convince the consciences of men, we do not certainly know it, but when we are told: we sometimes are told, some do come to us, and own their convictions, and declare them to us: yet if we do but hope from the very evidence of what we see, that conscience is taken hold of, that some conviction is impressed on the consciences of them that hear us; this hope invigorates, enlivens, animates us, helps somewhat against fainting in our work. "Having this hope," (saith the apostle in the close of the foregoing chapter, and referring to the self-same thing,) "we use great boldness of speech;" we read it plainness of speech, boldness it signifies; having this hope, we use great *parressy*, we use great freedom of speech; we speak as men that do expect to prevail, as those that look not to be baffled, nor to be disappointed in what we are designing in this matter, in our treatics and transactions with the souls, and especially with the consciences, of men. We use great freedom of speech, having this hope, saith he; and so in the following chapter, knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men; we persuade men and are made manifest to God, and we trust, also, we are manifest in your consciences, 2 Cor. v. 11. We trust we are, we hope we are manifest in your consciences; and therefore we persuade with so much the more vigour and so much the more earnestness, as apprehending, as trusting, and hoping, that you do in your consciences believe the things to be true, and real, and important, that we deal with you about: and that this must needs be a very enlivening thing, and tends much to animate a serious minister of Christ, and one who is in good earnest with his work, will appear if you do but consider these two things;—1st, What reason a man hath to hope, that conviction of conscience may end in conversion. And, 2ndly, Consider how encouraging a thing this hope of conversion must itself be. These two things are distinctly to be considered, to make out our present purpose.

1. There is reason to hope, that when conviction hath taken hold of men's consciences, it may end in conversion; and so the hope of this, arising from the very plain evidence of thin s. that there is some conviction wrought in the

minds and consciences of men, it gives ground to a further hope, to a higher hope; if they become convinced, more may become of it. If our blessed Lord Jesus Christ hath by this means made way into their consciences, it is to be hoped he will find a way into their hearts; and sure the hope of converting souls is not altogether without ground, if we may hope that there are convictions wrought in the mind and conscience, and that upon these several accounts, to wit,

(1.) This is the only way by which, ordinarily and according to the constitution of human nature, the hearts of men are accessible. They are accessible but this way, that is, through their convinced consciences—they are not otherwise accessible, than as light is let into their consciences, by which they may discern the truth, the greatness, the importance, the necessity of the things themselves that we deal with them about. And,

(2.) This is the gaining of a soul in part, the convincing of his conscience, the design is an entire conquest of the whole soul; this is a work that consists of parts, and is to be done by parts; and when the conscience is won, here is part of this work done, and there is so much the less behind; there is less to do than if men's consciences were not in the least apprehensive as yet what they were to believe, or what they were to do in order to their being saved.

(3.) The very leading part, the introductive part, of the work is done, when this is done; when conscience is convinced about the great things proposed to men in the Gospel; so that they say, I do in my conscience apprehend this to be reasonable, just, and necessary, which I am required to do by the same Gospel; when this (I say) is done, the leading introductive part of the work is done. As in going about to take a rebel garrison, there is a mighty thing done if a port be gained, and especially if the noblest port belonging to such a garrison be taken. And it is the apostle's similitude afterwards in this Epistle, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, and the subjecting every thought and imagination to the obedience of Christ." The conscience of practical judgment is subjected, so that we have an end of men's counter-risings; they have nothing in their judgment to oppose, their imaginations they are gained, their notions, their thoughts, their apprehensions are certified and set right in these points. This is now a great thing, for it is the leading thing, and the introductive thing, in order to the work of conversion. The judgment, which, (I say,) in reference to matters of practice, is conscience; that is the leading faculty, and when once that is gained, and a conquest is obtained over that, it is as if, in the taking (as was said) of a rebel garrison, the counterscarp is won, or the great port-royal is won, which is a great thing. And,

(4.) Not only when conscience is convinced is the soul so far won, gained, subdued, and brought under; but it is also turned against the rest that hold out, as if in the taking of some principal fortress; besides that the opposition from what part is gained ceaseth, suppose a battery be placed there against the rest that stands out; and this is the case, when conscience is once brought under conviction by the power and evidence of the great things of the Gospel; here is a battery placed against an obstinate will, against perverse inclinations, against unruly, tumultuous affections and passions; so that now the man is made to batter himself, if conscience be once convinced; but if there be an inclination in the sinner still to persist, and go on in his way of sin, he doth it at his own peril, and even at his own peril from himself, for a convinced conscience will infer this, that he must be continually battering himself, and galling himself, and shooting arrows and darts against himself.

And when the matter is once brought to this, there is some hope in the case that the sinner will turn, is like to turn, for there is not only so much of his strength gone for persevering in a sinful course, but it is turned and bent against him. Christ hath now got a party within him, and the colours of our great Lord and Redeemer are displayed in the fort-royal, he is then demanding entrance into the soul. Let the everlasting gates of the soul fly open, that the King of glory may enter in; the kingdom of God is nigh, just at the door, even at the very door, when conscience is convinced about the great things of the Gospel, the very port is taken, and the ensigns of our glorious Lord displayed there, so that it must require a great deal of obstinacy against him; now that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ are so very near at the door, and the voice of the summons sounds at the gate, Sinner, surrender now to thy rightful Lord, yield or perish. If this be said to him, and he is convinced already, I have no other way but to yield or die, and there is hope of safety in yielding; this carries a great appearance that conversion is towards, the matter is drawing to a blessed issue with such a poor soul. And,

(5.) When conscience is thus gained and won upon by so immediate direct application to it in the management of this work, the way is now open for the intromitting and setting in whatsoever considerations besides may be of any use towards the bringing of the soul to a surrender and compliance with the Lord Jesus; that closure with him wherein the work of conversion doth most formally consist and lie; a turning to the Lord, as the expression is in the close of the foregoing chapter. If conscience be convinced, then is here way made for terrible considerations to be let in upon the soul. And if conscience be convinced, here is way made for most comfortable considerations to be let in upon the soul too; the way is open to reach and apply both these great principles of fear and of hope, which are mighty engines, by which the souls of men are turned this way or that; her, are all the tremendous considerations that can be thought of, for which way is open, if conscience be convinced, I am a sinner, a guilty creature, I lie obnoxious to Divine justice and revenge every moment; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, they are my portion; nothing else is due to me. And then, at the same time, if conscience be convinced of the truth of the Gospel, here is an open way made for all consolatory considerations that might move the principle of hope; Christ is represented as ready to receive a returning soul. The sinner must be supposed to believe, in his own conscience, that it is most certainly true, Christ will not reject a poor soul that throws itself at his feet, as ready to perish; "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." In my conscience, must the sinner say, I believe this is true; he would never have come down into this world and become man, and have died on a cross, to save sinners, if he would throw away a soul that returns to him, and casts itself upon him; I believe in my conscience, this is true, that as I am lost if I come not to a closure with the Son of God in believing, so I cannot but be safe if I do. Again,

(6.) There is reason for this hope that such convictions may end in conversion, because that very ministry that is thus directed to conscience, that is levelled at conscience, and hath done it with such effect already, is the ministration of the Holy Ghost, the ministration of the Spirit and life, as it is largely discoursed in the foregoing chapter throughout, and which makes the apostle say, "having this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." This ministry; what ministry? Not a dead letter, but an animated ministry; that is, (as it were,) the very vehicle of life and spirit; therefore, we faint not; therefore we go on with all the vigour which a lively hope can give us in our work; as if he should have said, Why should we not hope to prevail, when we apply ourselves to the spirits of men, of creatures that can understand, that can use thought? Our business doth not lie with stocks, and stones, and brutes; but we apply ourselves to the very consciences of men, the very spirits of men; and we do it under the conduct of the Divine Spirit, whose ministration it is that is put into our hands; why then should we not hope to prevail? Why should we not hope, that they that come unconverted, should go away converted, at least if we can prevail upon them so far as that they are once brought to admit of conviction? And yet,

(7.) There is further reason for this hope, from what hath been done already in the same way, and by the same agency. We have read of thousands that have fallen under the power of this ministry; thousands at once, as in that, Acts ii. 37. who have been pierced to the very

heart, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Heart doth comprehend and take in conscience there; the governing faculty, together with the governed, as is usual in Scripture, to take heart in that latitude. A serious faithful servant of Christ in this work, hath reason to argue thus; *Quicquid fieri potuit potest.* That which hath been done, and by the same agency, that method which hath succeeded to so happy purposes before, the like may be done again in the same way, by the same agency, and in the same method, why should not we expect, why should not we hope for it? especially if we add,

(8.) Lastly, that this ministry, in connexion with the same power and presence, is promised to be continued to the end of the world; "Go and teach all nations;" I appoint you to go and make my claim to all the creation; for all power is given me, both in heaven and earth; and go you and teach all nations; disciple them, proselyte them to me; gather in the world, lay my claim for me, and in my name, to all the world, and tell men every where what I am, the Redeemer, and what I have, by my blood, the price of that redemption, purchased, even an absolute dominion and power over all the world; I died, and was buried, and rose again, that I might become Lord both of living and dead. All power hereby is consigned and made over to me, and by virtue of that power, I commission you: go forth every where, and challenge the world, upon that account, to submit to me, their rightful Lord. And herein lies being converted, when the hearts of men are brought seriously to do so, to recognize the Redeemer's right, and to make an absolute surrender and resignation of their souls to him, and to God through him. Now this ministry, and thus attended, is promised to continue to the end of the world: "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world." We know very well those particular persons were to shut up their time with that age, and yet this work was always to go on till the end of time, and through all ages: and why should not we expect, who come with the same authority and commission, but that when we do, in the business of this ministry, apply ourselves directly to the consciences of men in the sight of God, there should still be some success, even as long as this world lasts, and as long as this ministry lasts, why should we not always hope? But then,

2. Supposing there be ground for such a hope, that our applying ourselves to the consciences of men, so as to convince them, may end in conversion, how doth it appear this hope is encouraging? If there be reason for this hope, is there any reason to be assigned why this hope should give courage, vigour, and liveliness, to those that are employed in this work? The evidencing that there is, will rest upon two things; 1st, That the faithful ministers of Christ do very seriously desire the conversion of souls; and, 2dly, That the hopefulness of what a man desires cannot but be a very enlivening thing to the spirit of any man. Let these two be put together, and it evidenceth our present purpose; that is, that the serious ministers of the Gospel do desire the conversion of souls, and that the hopefulness of any thing that a man desires, must needs be very reviving and consolatory to him.

1. The former of these doth sufficiently speak itself; and I doubt not, in all your consciences, you never knew any minister of Christ, whom you had any reason to look upon as serious in his work, but you could not but apprehend him very much to desire the conversion of souls: for,

(1.) It is the very end of their office. How can it be but we must desire to reach the end for which our very office itself is appointed, and for which we were put into it?

(2.) The desire of the conversion of souls, it is nothing else but spiritualized humanity; that is, supposing we do believe a future state, or (as the apostle expresseth it in the next chapter) do in any measure understand the terrors of the Lord, the terrors of the judgment day, which is there referred to; "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men. And herein we are manifest unto God, and we trust, also in your consciences." You must suppose if we should understand and know any thing of the terrors of the Lord, and of a judgment day, that we must desire the conversion of souls: you will not look upon us as so inhumane creatures, that we should have a prospect before our eyes of so dreadful a destruction as unconverted souls will certainly fall into, and not desire their escape, not desire they may fly "from the wrath to come;" effectually so to fly as to escape that wrath. And again,

(3.) It is a required conformity to our blessed Lord, in whose name we come to you, whom we find to have been a mighty lover of souls. Did not his descent into this world testify it? Was not his death upon the cross the most significant? And is not the remembrance of it a standing testimony hereof? And how can we bear his name, and sustain to be called the ministers of Christ, and not mightily desire the conversion of souls? And,

2. If we do, then the hope of it cannot but be a very enlivening and encouraging thing. The hopefulness of what a man desires, and hath his heart set upon, carries the most invigorating power with it that any thing can be supposed to do. For,

(1.) It is very plain, despair of any design or undertaking damps all endeavours. No man can rationally endeavour that whereof he hath no hope. It sinks a man's spirit to be engaged in a work in which, from time to time, he can hope to do nothing, as common experience and the reason of things do speak. And,

(2.) On the other hand, it is very plain, that hope is the great engine which keeps the world in motion, and at work every where; it is the spring of all action all the world over, and of every kind whatsoever; the intelligent world, I mean. No man propounds an end to himself, but the hope of effecting it is the very thing that sets him and keeps him on work through the whole course of that endeavour that is requisite to it. The merchant trades in hope; yea, and (go to the very meanest employment) the ploughman ploughs in hope, and sows in hope, that he may be partaker of his hope. And sure we are not in our work to deviate from the common rules that guide all mankind in every undertaking whatsoever, and that doth influence them throughout that undertaking. Why are not we (think you) to plough in hope, and sow in hope, that we may be partakers of our hope?

Then, these two things being evident, that it is in the eyes of serious ministers of Christ a desirable thing; and that they that do seriously desire it, must needs be very much encouraged in their design and endeavour of it, when it doth appear to them a hopeful thing; so far as there is hope that the conviction that is taking hold of the consciences of men, may end in their conversion. Then this apprehension must needs contribute a great deal to their not fainting in their work, who are in good earnest engaged in it. I might add,

(3.) That it is an encouraging thing, a heart-strengthening thing, thus to apply ourselves to the very consciences of men in the pursuit of this work, that however it will be as to the former thing, yet we are sure to gain, in men's consciences, a testimony for the great God. If conscience be but convinced, if we can so far recommend ourselves to the consciences of men, as that they come to be convinced, this is truth, this is duty, here lies my danger, there lies my hope. If men are in their consciences convinced of these things, and yet will go on in their destructive ways in the paths that lead down to the chambers of death, we have gained this, however, that, if they will go on, if they will perish, it will be a testimony for God in their own consciences. And this will be a great thing; for, as it follows presently after, in the 5th verse of this chapter, "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." Not ourselves finally, but only ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake; and therefore his interest and his concernment must be greater and highest in our eyes: it is to him, therefore, we owe the principal deference and highest honour. And there will be a convincing testimony for him in your very consciences, whether you turn or not turn. If we can but prevail so far, in applying to conscience, as to convince it, you will go down with conviction into the place of torment, and thereby a testimony will be gained for our glorious Lord, that his overtures were all

easy, all reasonable, all kind, and all indulgent: and this is a great thing we shall have gained, though it be but *secunda post naufragium tabula.* It is a consolation, though it be a consolation against a sad case, a very sad case, that any should descend to perdition, from under the Gospel, with convinced consciences.

But no more of this at present.

SERMON VII.*

2 Cor. iv. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

WE have considered the words, according to what they import in themselves, and we have it now in hand to consider them, according to that reference which they bear to those of the foregoing verse. "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;" whence we have collected,—That the application which the faithful ministers of Christ do make to the consciences of men in the sight of God, affords them very great relief and encouragement to go on with an unfainting vigour and resolution in their work: and we proposed to show that it is so, upon a double account, to wit, the convictiveness, and the sincerity of it: the convictiveness of it towards them, and the sincerity of it towards God. We have hitherto been showing you how encouraging it is upon the former account, in respect of the convictiveness of the thing; and so it is encouraging upon a twofold more particular account.

1st, As thereby there is very great hope conceived of conversion. And,

2dly, As hereby a testimony is, however, gained to the great God and our Lord Jesus Christ in the very consciences of men. The former was fully insisted on; and now I go on further, to the second, to wit, That the convictiveness of such application tends to gain a testimony to our great God and Saviour in their very souls. And this is a very encouraging thing, a heart-strengthening thing, to a serious faithful minister of Christ, that he shall hereby gain such a testimony in men's consciences for God and his blessed Son. They will be obliged to acknowledge and own, that the great truths of the Gospel, upon which the principal weight and stress is laid, as to their salvation, do carry a clear and convictive evidence with them; and that they are required to believe nothing to this purpose, which is not most evidently true; but must be forced to say,—I think, in my very conscience, these things are so; they are as they are represented; I am not imposed upon; there is no fraudulency or artifice used to disguise things, or to make them seem otherwise than they are. And thus it is also with the things we are to do, and we are warned to avoid, as by no means to be done; and likewise, the constitutions and judgments we find settled and declared in the Gospel concerning them that do well, and them that do ill, and that are to be the last measures of the final judgment, are all most unexceptionably equal and righteous; we have nothing to say against them, and so, concerning the whole frame and design of the Gospel, that it is wisely adapted to its end; that it carries that efficacy with it, when once it takes hold of conscience, that men must say, Here is a power not to be withstood; we cannot resist the power and spirit wherewith such and such things are spoken; things come to us in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit and of power; they must say there is kindness and love beyond all that could be expected or conceived in the whole frame and contrivance of it; here is manifestly a design to pluck souls out of death, to reduce backsliders unto God, to save lost creatures from perishing; and upon the whole, therefore, here must be a testimony gained to the truth of God, to his authority, to the equity and reasonableness of his laws and sanctions, to his wonderful wisdom, which he hath shown in methodizing things so as the Gospel acquaints us, in order to the recovery and salvation of souls; and to his kindness, goodness, and mercifulness, towards poor perishing sinners, beyond all that could have entered into the heart of man to expect. It is plain, that when such applications are made immediately, directly, and properly to conscience, such a testimony is gained to the great God and Saviour in all these respects.

And now it is evident, that this cannot but be an encouraging thing to every serious faithful minister of Christ; for you must consider (as they will do) to whom they do belong; they consider whose they are, and whom they are obliged to serve: and if these two things be eyed and looked upon together; to wit, that glorious Lord to whom they are related, and their most entire devotedness and fidelity to him; these two things concurring, cannot but make such encouragement as this arise naturally from the above-mentioned ground.

1. It is to be considered, that the Lord, to whom they are related, he is infinitely more than all this world; the whole creation is but a tittle, a nothing to him, his honour and glory are more worth than all things. If all this world, as it was raised up out of nothing, were presently to be reduced to nothing again, that is a thing little to be mattered, in comparison, if we bring it into comparison with the glory of this great name: which glory will shine satisfying to itself, even to all eternity, whatsoever should become of this created sphere and universal thing; consider this in the state of their case. And then, consider,

2. That in the temper of their minds, there must be entire devotedness and fidelity to this great Lord: and so as the glory of his name is a greater thing in itself than all things besides, so it must be to them; because, with their relation to this great Lord, there is conjunct that most entire affection and devotedness to him, that whatever becomes of all things else, this must always be principal in their eye, the glory of the great Lord: you find, therefore, that this is the main design they drive at, and are obliged to do in all their ministrations; that is, that there be such convictions upon the consciences of men, as from whence a glory may result, "a glorious testimony unto God in Christ," saith the apostle, (speaking of his own labours in the ministry,) "according to my expectation, and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, (that my heart should never sink through shame, nor through fear,) but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death," Phil. iii. 17—20. If one had said to him, What need you toil and harass yourself in such labours, and to run such hazards as you do, in a continual course? What are you to gain by it? Gain, saith he, why I shall gain my point. I shall gain my great design, the only thing I am solicitous for, and the only thing, in comparison, that I aim at; that is, that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death; whether I live, or whether I die, all is one to me; I am content to run through a thousand deaths for the glory of that name;—that that name may be glorified in my living and dying. Here is a continual glory arising to that name out of this application to men's consciences, when all men, out of conviction of conscience, must be forced to own and acknowledge the truth, and authority and righteousness, the power, wisdom, and goodness, which are all comprehended in this great name: and therefore it is, that the ministers of Christ are to make this a measure to themselves, in all their ministrations, to direct them to this very end and mark; that is, the bringing men under such convictions, that a just testimony may result to this great name,—the name and honour of their glorious Lord. The apostle's reasonings do most evidently imply this, which you find he useth in that 14th chapter of his former epistle to these Corinthians, verse 24; he is there directing and ordering how they should order, manage, and methodize their ministrations, so as that they might be most apt to convince; that they should prefer plain instructive words, before strange tongues, though that might very much amuse, and gain to them (it may be) a great deal of applause, that such and such could speak in assemblies so many languages; but, (saith the apostle,) when the business of instruction by prophecy,

* Preached March 8th, 1690.

(as the word must there be used, and it is frequently, when that is attended to,) if there comes in one that is unlearned, such an one is convinced of all, and judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. This, (saith the apostle,) I must have all your ministrations directed unto; you must aim at this, to carry things so, that the hitherto pagan world, (as they shall have opportunity to observe and know what things are taught among you,) from the plain evidence of the things, may be judged and condemned in their own spirits, and may be brought down on the knee, to fall and kneel, and confess God is in the midst of this people; God is in these ministrations of a truth: you must order things so, that this end may be effectually obtained, observably gaining a testimony to God out of the consciences of those you shall have to do with; and if this be any one's end, upon which his heart is set, upon which he is principally intent, according as his success is, in order to this, his great and principal end, so will his encouragement be, and the strength and vigour of his spirit in prosecuting his work: according as his labour is either more actually successful, or hopeful, accordingly is his spirit raised up and kept up within him in his work; and this is a thing which carries its own proper right with it, whether it do fall in with the conversion of souls, or whether it be severed from it.

(1.) If it fall in with it, it adds the greater weight to it, for the poising and bearing up a man's spirit in his work; for then this testimony ariseth so much the more clearly, and so much the more fully, when it proceeds at once from the concurrence of an enlightened mind and convinced conscience; and also, a renewed changed heart, when it is the sense of the mind, and of the heart, together. Oh, how joyful and raised a testimony do convinced and converted ones bear to the truth, and righteousness, and authority, and wisdom, and power, and grace of God in Christ! When hearts are won, with what complacency do they then celebrate all the glories that have shone forth to them with efficacy and success, through the Gospel dispensation! What pleasure do they take to speak highly of his great name, whose power they have felt, whose light they have seen, whose grace they have tasted of, in and by this dispensation! But then,

(2.) If these should be severed, yet so much the greater thing is a testimony to the great God, and his Christ; that there is in that case, more to poise and weigh up the spirit of a faithful servant of Christ, than there can be in the want of the other, to sink and press it down. These two things being compared with one another, the glorious testimony that is borne to this name, and the actual infelicity of a soul, which hath refused to be happy, and did peremptorily choose the way to perdition, that takes hold of hell, and leads down to the chambers of death; so much a greater thing is the former of these, than the latter, that there is more to buoy up the spirit of a faithful servant of Christ in his ministerial work, than there can be to press and sink it down.

And so, upon that former account; to wit, the convictiveness of such an application to the conscience, doth very great encouragement arise to those that are faithful in their work of preaching the Gospel, to go on with unfainting vigour in it, as this convictive application to conscience, both is the way to the conversion of souls; and also, as it tends to gain a testimony to the name of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

But then, as we have to consider to this purpose the convictiveness of this application to conscience, so we have to consider well in the next place,

3. The sincerity of such application to conscience: we apply and commend ourselves to the consciences of men, in the very sight of God under the eye of God; he sees our aim and design, and our whole transaction, from step to step, from point to point; there is no thought in our minds, no word in our mouths to this purpose, but comes all under his immediate notice and cognizance; and hence ariseth our strength and vigour in our work, hence it is we faint not; we serve our Lord Christ, we serve the great God, to whom we have devoted ourselves under his own eye. To the sincere, it is a great consolation their sincerity is known; one may serve a man in great sincerity, and yet never be understood, for he cannot look into the thoughts, he cannot discern the intention and bent of the heart; but when every thing lies open (as we know it doth) to his immediate view, with whom we have to do, and for whom we are concerned, this is a very encouraging thing to the sincere to know that it is known. It escapes not the especial notice of his eye, in whose approbation and complacency we are most of all concerned; for hereupon, these two most encouraging things do most necessarily succeed and follow;—1st, That by this, their sincerity, they are directly and immediately in a good posture towards God, so as to receive the highest encouragement from him. And, 2dly, They are consequentially, by most manifest and direct consequence, in a good state towards men; so as at least, from them, not to receive any hurtful or sinking discouragement: I say, it puts their affairs into a good posture towards God, from whom they are to have the highest encouragement; and it puts them consequentially into so good a posture towards men, as that, from thence, they shall receive no hurtful, heart-dejecting, or heart-sinking discouragement. As to God, 1st, As to the former, the posture and state wherein it puts their affairs towards God, is, 1st, They are sure of acceptance. And, 2dly, They are sure of reward; be the success of their ministration what it will or can be supposed to be, or the worst that can be supposed.

They shall be accepted with God, and shall not lose their reward, whatever the issue of their labour be. Some scriptures do conjoin these together, or give us good ground upon which to apprehend the certain conjunction of them, that they are not severed one from another, as in the nature of the thing we are sure they cannot be. Do but observe to this purpose that known and famous place, Isa. xlix. 5. It is spoken directly and principally of our great Lord himself; but it is applicable, in a subordinate sense, most justly unto all that do serve under him. In the third verse of that chapter, it is said, "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." And verse 4th, "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." That name of Israel is put upon him, as sometimes, elsewhere, the name of Jacob is, as signifying Christ-mystical, and comprehending all his people with him and in him. "Then I said, I have laboured in vain: yet, surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And now saith the Lord, that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob to him; Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength." I shall not stay to dilate (as I might with much point) upon this scripture. Again, look back to the 2nd chapter of this epistle, where our text lies, and you will see, from the 14th verse onward, much to this same purpose. The apostle speaks of the pleasant savour which the faithful ministers of Christ do carry with them in their ministrations, or in respect to the Gospel which they dispense, both in reference to them that are saved, and in reference to them that perish. "Thanks be to God, (saith he,) which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, (and they that triumph in Christ are far from fainting,) and maketh manifest by us, the savour of his knowledge in every place; for we are to God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one, we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other, we are the savour of life unto life." It is true that we are so; a sweet savour of God in Christ to the one and the other, or in reference to the one and the other. And where there is a certain acceptation, there is a certain reward, which, when our Lord himself did eye, we are not disallowed to eye, you may be sure; "for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despised the shame, and is sat down at the right hand of God," Heb. xii. 3. That great and eminent servant of his, Moses, it is recorded of him, not as a blemish, but to his honour, that he had respect to the recompense of reward, Heb. xi. 7. And the apostle Paul tells concerning himself, when he avowed himself to be the apostle and servant of Jesus Christ, (as in the beginning of his epistle to Titus,) he adds, "in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, hath promised;" as if he would by that answer an inquiry, which

(it may be) some, who had heard of his name, might wonderingly make, What should be the matter that Paul, that wise man, that learned man, that man so strenuous an assertor of Judaism, and so devoted to the strictest sect of Pharisaism, should suffer himself to be imposed upon, so as to espouse the despised Christian name and interest? He, it seems, is become a minister of the Gospel of Christ, a servant of him that was crucified at Jerusalem not long ago, as a common malefactor; how comes such a one as Paul to espouse that interest and profess that name? Why, I do it, (saith he,) "in hopes of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised." Here is enough to keep me from fainting and sinking in this work, may a faithful minister of Christ say, notwithstanding whatsoever of labour and toil it carries in it; and, notwithstanding whatsoever inconvenience it may draw after it; it is all in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised. And they know their Master and Lord that employs them, that he who will not suffer so mean a thing as a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, to lose its reward, will never let a devoted life, spent in his service, and in an endeavour of serving that great design of his, which his heart doth so appear to be always set upon, the saving of souls, to lose a correspondent reward; therefore, such sincerity, in applying to the consciences of men in the sight of God, knows who sees it, who judgeth of it, carries in it encouragement enough, directly God-ward, and Christ-ward, from whom they are encouraged, and principally concerned to expect and seek it. But,

As to men. 2dly, It carries enough in it by consequence, to fortify them against every thing of discouragement from men. What is there from men to discourage? Principally two things, reproach and danger. They may be liable to reproach, but sincerity is guard against it. "According to my earnest expectation, and my hope," (saith the apostle,) "that in nothing I shall be ashamed," Phil. i. 20. And so in the words immediately before the text, "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, or shame, (as the word may be rendered,) not walking in craftiness, or handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending," &c. And, as in the close of the 2nd chapter of this epistle, "We are not as many which corrupt the word of God," (adulterate it, *καπηλεύοντες* it,) "but as of sincerity, as of God speak we in Christ." We do nothing we need to be ashamed of, as long as we do but apply ourselves about such things as carry their own evidence in them to the consciences of men. Our work admits well enough to be done above-board; we need seek no corner, no darkness, no shadow of death, wherein to lie hid; we may well go open-faced in all that we do; we have no other design, but to convince men, and bring them back from their destructive ways, and finally, become instruments of their being safe and happy.

And then for any thing of danger; it is true, they may be liable thereto, even from them whom they do convince: convictions do sometimes work that unnatural way, that is, to enrage, to exasperate; we read of some who were pricked to the heart, who cried out thereupon, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts ii. 37. We read of others cut to the heart by that sermon of the first martyr, Stephen, Acts vii. 54. And they, thereupon, immediately gnash their teeth; and their business is to gather up stones, and stone him to death. This, it is true, may be, and admit it to be so, the sincere desire of his glory for whom they so expose themselves in their ministration, approving itself to his very eye, carries enough in it to fortify them against the most formidable appearances of this kind. The apostle makes this supposition, even of running the hazard of a fiery trial; when he is exhorting them that speak, "to speak as becomes the oracles of God," I Pet. iv. 11. And with this same design, that our great Lord, for whom we speak, may be glorified, may have a glorious testimony arising to him. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability that God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ." And the very next words are, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is sent to try you;" never be concerned for yourselves, though there be danger of a fiery trial incurred, if you can but be conscious to yourselves of your own sincerity, that you speak as becomes the oracles of God, with this design, that God and our Lord Jesus may be glorified." And so doth the transaction of all this affair, in the sight of God, carry with it a great matter of encouragement; that is, sincerity puts our affairs directly into the best posture that can be wished, towards God and Christ; and leaves them not in so ill a posture towards men, as that any thing should be feared from them, or can possibly arise from them, to cause dejection or despondency of spirit, in any one who is with such sincerity engaged in this great work.

USE. Therefore, now briefly to apply all:—there are sundry things, which it is obvious to collect and gather from all that hath been said to this point, that may be very useful and instructive to us. As,

1. That such as are sincerely, and with due seriousness, engaged in the work of the ministry, they cannot but be solicitous about the issue of their work, how it will succeed, what will become of it; they do, (it is true,) through the mercy of God, go on in their work without fainting, as it is their business to apply themselves to the consciences of men, in the sight of God; but yet, with very great concern; for what do they apply themselves to the consciences of men about? It is about things upon which their salvation depends,—it is, that they may not be lost. "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." We consider them as perishing creatures, if our Gospel should be hid from them; therefore we make it our business to apply ourselves to their consciences, in the sight of God, that it may not be hid. And hence is our not fainting; it shows in those that do seriously concern themselves, and serve Christ in the work of the ministry: there is great solicitude about the issue of their work, lest souls should miscarry and be lost under it.

2. We may collect, that the true reason of this solicitude is the uncertainty of the issue; they do not know how matters will succeed with them about whom they are concerned. It may be life, it may be death; it may be they will be saved, it may be they will be lost; some may be the one, some may be the other. Seeing that they need support against fainting, it shows that they are solicitous, and whence their solicitude doth arise, and what is the true cause of it; and though it is true indeed, there is support from the consciousness of their own sincerity, and from the aptitude of such means as they use, that souls may not be lost; yet, all this while, the dubiousness and uncertainty of the event doth so much deject them, and make them liable to fainting, that they reckon it a very great mercy that they do not faint: "therefore, having such a ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." It is the mercy of God to us that we sink not, nor faint in our work, to think how little hold is taken upon the consciences of men, and how apt men are to run counter to the conviction of their own consciences. It is God's great mercy we do not faint, and quite give off, and say, we will never speak in this name more, to be so little heard, regarded, attended to, and complied with in the design of all that we say. And again,

3. We may gather hence, that God hath so graciously ordered the matter, that the very cause of a faithful minister's solicitude shall yield him the matter of his relief; that is, his sincerity, his applying himself to the consciences of men in the sight of God. It is a man's sincerity in this case, that makes him be concerned, for they that are insincere, will never be concerned; they care not what becomes of their hearers, if they can but discourse plausibly an hour when they must, they are little further concerned. But then, (I say,) observe the goodness of God, that from the same thing, whence their concern comes, their relief comes; that is, their sincerity; if they were not sincere, they would not be concerned: but, because they are sincere, thereby they are relieved, they transact all in the sight of God; and so, the same thing that gives them trouble, gives them relief.

4. We may further gather hence, that where there is the least need of relief, there is the least to be had. They have no need of relief against any solicitude, and heart-affecting concern, about the issue and success of their work, who are not sincere in it; and thereupon they have

not that relief which otherwise would arise in this case. These things do measure one another: where no relief is needful, none is had. They need no relief, where there is no concern; and they have none, because they are not sincere. And again,

5. It is plain, that the safety of souls that do attend upon the Gospel dispensation, and the comfort of their ministers, do very much depend upon the same thing; that is, the successfulness of the application to conscience in the sight of God. If conscience be first convinced, and those convictions be complied with, and answered in the inclination of the heart, and course of the outward practice, such souls are safe and happy; and, according to the prospect and appearance that can be had hereof, those who are engaged in this great design of saving them, are relieved and comforted so much abundantly the more; their fullest consolation, and the salvation and happiness of the souls they are concerned for, meet in the same point. And therefore, again,

6. If any do miscarry under the Gospel, by which, and in the ministration whereof, applications are still made to their consciences in the sight of God, they perish under a double guilt, as having not only been accessary to their own ruin, but to the discouragement, as much as in them lies, of those in their work, that were intent upon saving them. And this is a double guilt,—guilty of their own ruin, and guilty of the sorrow and solicitude, and afflicting care and grief, of them that would have saved them. And that this consideration doth not weigh nothing, you may plainly see, in that such use is made of it, as we find elsewhere. This apostle urgeth the Christians, Philip. ii. 16. that they would demean themselves "as sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom they lived, and shined as lights in the world:" that, as light was, through the word of God in the Gospel, let into their consciences, it might shine through again in their conversations, that they might hold forth the word of life; and why? upon what design or consideration? "That we may be comforted," that we may rejoice, as not having run in vain, or laboured in vain. Whatsoever greater weight there was to be in the consideration of their own salvation, and eternal well-being, this consideration also was not without its weight; it cannot be said of it, that it had no weight. That we may rejoice, too, and rejoice with you, in the day of Christ, as not having run in vain, or laboured in vain. But, in the last place,

7. We may further collect, that, if there be a final disappointment as to any, so that (as the expression is after the text) they come at length to be "lost;" and here is the utmost cause given, that can be given from men, of discouragement and heart-fainting to the ministers of Christ; yet all doth proceed from men's baffling their consciences: these dreadful consequences do result from thence. If men would but use their consciences, and be true to their consciences; if they would but receive the truth whereof conscience is convinced, and comply with the precepts and rules that conscience doth discern the equity and necessity of, all would be well; we should be comforted, and you would be saved. But if neither of these be, you see whence all proceeds; it is from baffling of conscience, from either its not admitting of conviction, or its not complying with conviction that hath been admitted. Therefore, I shall shut up all with this only double word of counsel; that is,

1. That you labour to keep conscience always awake, and bring it awake to such attendances upon the dispensation of the preaching of the Gospel; labour aforehand to pre-engage conscience; tell your souls beforehand, when you are to come to such an assembly as this, O my soul, thou art going to a place where thy conscience is to be dealt withal, and in the sight of God! there is a great transaction to lie between thee and some or other servant of Christ, and the whole business is managed under the Divine eye; then say to thy conscience, Awake! awake! be in a prepared posture, in a ready posture: let me not carry conscience slumbering, conscience dreaming, conscience in a deep sleep, unto such an ordinance, but labour to have it awake, in order hereunto: and that it may be so, urge upon it those former heads. That you may bring wakeful consciences to these holy assemblies, from time to time, you are very much concerned to keep them awake all the week long: if, from day to day, and from morning to night, you will buy and sell without conscience and eat and drink without conscience, and manage your affairs in your families without conscience, then it is likely you will come without conscience, or with a drowsy slumbering conscience, on the Lord's day, to the assembly too; you will find conscience on those days as you use it on other days. And then,

2. When you are under these holy assemblies, and particularly under the ministration of the Gospel, labour then to keep conscience in actual exercise, endeavour that your consciences may go along with all that is said, and put them on giving their assent, their actual assent: take it from them, that so you may be (as it were) preaching to yourselves all the while the minister is preaching to you; that conscience may be preaching over and over again; that there may be an echo within from conscience, repeating the very voice of the minister in your own hearts; and if this were done, if there were such a conscientious attendance upon this holy ministration, with respect to the eye that observes you, as well as us, and a design all along driven to one and the same purpose, to approve ourselves to that eye, we might hope somewhat would come of our having the Gospel so long continued among us, and of having our holy assemblies, with so much freedom to resort unto. But if nothing of this be, but still conscience must be kept asleep from duty to duty, there is nothing to be said, but that hereafter it will awake for torment.

SERMON VIII.*

2 Cor. iv. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

UPON what hath been so largely discoursed to you from the immediately foregoing words, I know not how to overlook these, that are so immediately and apparently subjoined. Though they have much of terror in them, they may have much use, and may be useful (even as they are terrible) to promote and help our escape from that most terrible issue of things that they import. The reasonableness of their connexion with the foregoing words, is obvious to every eye: "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." The reason of the thing speaks itself. If we do insist upon such matters as do carry in them a convictive self-recommending evidence to every man's conscience; if we do directly and immediately apply ourselves to the very consciences of men, in all our ministrations; if we endeavour to draw them into the Divine presence, and manage all our transactions with their very consciences, under God's immediate eye, and debate matters with their consciences before the throne of God; if this be our way of treating with the souls of men, so as that when they do not hear us,—will not listen to us, we do arrest them, we do arraign them; Come, I must have you into the presence of God, and debate the matter with you under the eye of him that made you, and that made me: if this be the course of our dealing with souls, and they will not hear, and our Gospel remains to them yet a hidden thing, it is all one to them, as if we had said nothing; if it "be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." This is the plain series of the discourse in this context.

And so the import of the words, in themselves, is as plain as any other words a man can make use of. This is the doctrine.

Doctrine. They to whom the Gospel of Christ is a hidden Gospel, they are lost souls.

* Preached March 22nd, 1690—91.

In speaking to this, we are, 1st, to open to you the meaning of the Gospel's being hid, the thing supposed here; and, 2dly, to show what is meant by being lost, the thing asserted upon that supposition; and then to show, 3dly, the connexion between the one and the other of these, upon which the use of the whole will ensue.

1. What is meant by the Gospel's being hid? It may be said to be hidden several ways according to the several ways wherein it may be said to be revealed. And there is a fourfold gradation to be taken notice of in the revealing of the Gospel, or the things contained in the Gospel, unto men, as there is a fourfold principle that is herein to be applied unto. As,

(1.) There is the principle of external sense, unto which the Gospel is first to be brought. "Faith comes by hearing," (Rom. x. 17.) as the apostle tells us. And then,

(2.) There is the principle of understanding and intellect, unto which that hearing is subservient and introductive: men are to hear, that they may understand; and it is a plague and doom upon them, when they hear and do not understand. And,

(3.) There is a principle of conscience, which is the mind and understanding, as it hath to do with practical matters; (as we have formerly told you;) being to judge concerning them, either as things to be done, or as things that have been done. And so we judge, either by way of prospect, or retrospect; as you have heard, conscience is the principle, and as such a principle, it is to be applied unto: so much we have lately insisted upon to you. And then,

(4.) Another principle is the heart, at which the Gospel revelation doth finally and terminatively aim. It aims more immediately at conscience, but ultimately, and finally, at the very heart, as you see afterwards in this very context: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them." But how should it shine into them? or what of them should it shine into? The sixth verse tells you, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts to give us the light;" so that there are these several steps in the revelation of the Gospel, or of the things contained in the Gospel, unto men.

1. By the external sense, that by which that discovery is to be transmitted to the mind or understanding. And that it may be excluded, and shut out from thence, the god of this world is mightily industrious to blind men's minds, that the Gospel may meet with a stop there; not make its entrance so far. And then,

2. It is further aimed at to be revealed to men's consciences, that through the mind it may strike conscience, and fasten convictions upon men there, concerning what they are to do, or what they are not to do, or what they have, or what they have not done, or what they are thereupon to expect God to do, or not to do, against them, or for them. And then,

3. Finally, the Gospel is to be revealed to the very hearts of men. He that hath made the light to shine out of darkness, hath shone into our hearts, wherein the design of the god of this world is defeated and disappointed; so that the beams of Gospel light do strike through, (notwithstanding all the resistance and opposition he makes in the minds and consciences of men,) and, at length penetrating to the heart, hath shone into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And, accordingly, these several ways may the Gospel be said to be hid. As,

1. When it is never preached to a people at all; so the great things that it contains, and unfolds in itself, they remain a great and continued secret, as they may have done long to many a people, and yet do to very many. In that sense, for several foregoing ages, the Gospel had been an unrevealed thing, as we are told by the apostle, Rom. xvi. 25. "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." That Gospel which had been so long kept secret, it became then revealed, when the preaching of it was set on foot, even in all the several nations, by permission, there being no restraint, no prohibition, to preach it to any nation; no nation being excluded, but a commission given to preach it to all indefinitely; that is, to any as there should be opportunity. Now, it is said to be, in that sense, a hidden Gospel, the same thing that we have elsewhere: "The mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but is now made manifest to the saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, (Col. i. 26.) which is Christ in you, (or among you,) the hope of glory." That is one sense wherein the Gospel is a hidden Gospel. Where it is not so much as preached, nor hath been; where the external dispensation of it hath never come, there hath been no application made to men's external sense by it, or concerning it. This is not the direct intendment of the apostle here; he speaks to them whom he supposed to have had the Gospel hitherto, and at this time to have it. We are, in the Gospel dispensation, actually applying ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God, and yet he supposeth the Gospel to be hid. It is not hidden, therefore, in that sense; or its being so hid, that is here meant.

2. It may be hid when it is (though preached) not understood: and though it be revealed to the external sense, it is not revealed to the minds of men; and so, though there be an external light, there still needs an internal end, to make it, in the useful and designed sense, a revealed Gospel. So it often is, that men may sit very long underneath the dispensation of this Gospel, and yet remain very ignorant of the true import and meaning, even of the most principal and noble part of it, and which it is of the greatest concern for them to understand. The frame and scheme of Gospel truth and notions, it may have found no place in the minds of many that have long sat under the dispensation of it. They may have been yet ignorant (as the apostle speaks to those Christian Hebrews) which be the first principles of the oracles of God, though they had the Gospel long with them, whose design it is to acquaint them with, and instruct them in, these things. They may be such as the apostle elsewhere speaks of, as are ever learning and never come to the knowledge of the truth. And though they have this Gospel among them,—they have this book in their hands, yet it is a sealed book, and they have never concerned themselves to get it unsealed: they read it and yet it is sealed; they open it, and yet it is shut; really shut up. If one say to them, Understandest thou what thou readest? they do not. They hear the word as a tale that is told, that passeth through their ears, but enters not into their minds; so may things be said to be hid that get not so far; they pass not the tegument or involucrum of a dark mind, a blind mind that admits them not. The expression is of that import, in reference to a particular thing, that our Saviour had been discoursing of to his disciples often, when he was among them. It is said, that the saying did not enter into their minds, for it was hid from them; "They understood not this saying, and it was hidden from them, that they perceived it not," Luke ix. 45. The business was what he had foretold them of again and again, touching his own approaching sufferings: it met with obstructed minds; they could not endure to hear with that ear. There was the same sense latent with them all, which Peter was more alert and open in owning and speaking: "Master, favour thyself, these things shall not be unto thee." They who had so high an expectation of his temporal reign and kingdom, such a thing as this, though he had told it them over and over, and told them again, in this chapter, upon his transfiguration, or a little after, that such and such things he must suffer, such and such things should be done to him, it entered not into their minds, they perceived it not, it passed as water glides over a rock, that admits it not. And so it is with the greatest and most important truths of the Gospel that can be spoken about, that can be brought under their notice. Commonly they do give them the hearing when they come to such assemblies: they hear of the lost undone state of sinners, as they are such, and that there is reconciliation to be had by a Redeemer; but that Redeemer must and will have the

throne; have their hearts changed, and their natures renewed. God's kingdom must be set up in their souls, and in its power take place in them; and sensual lusts and inclinations must go down, be subdued and brought under. Men hear such things, but they do not enter into their minds, they will not allow them to sink into their minds; and so they hear them as if they heard them not. It cannot be said, they were never told them, that they never heard them. The first passage towards the heart, the ear, there the word goes through; but at the mind, there, with many, it stops. They do not, that is, they will not, bend their minds and understandings to take in so plain and so important things. And,

3. The Gospel, it may be hid from conscience; so, as though it do enter into the mind, there it meets with another obstruction; conscience excludes and shuts it out. Many will not allow themselves so much as to understand any thing of it; as many, too, will not allow themselves so much as to hear it,—keep quite out of the hearing; but if it be heard, and if it be understood, yet here, at this third passage, which it should have to the heart, it meets with obstruction; that is, conscience doth not admit of conviction about it, a conviction of what is to be done, or what hath been misdone, or unduly omitted to be done, and what is due hereupon in point of vindication of the jealous holy God. In this respect, the Gospel may still be an unrevealed Gospel; that is, that it doth not get into the consciences of men, so as to strike them with conviction about these things, and to make them see and determine, and pronounce a judgment within themselves: This and that, and the other thing, a holy righteous God hath required me to do, that I might live, is all equal, and righteous, and good. It is so far an unrevealed Gospel to them, that men will not be brought to see this, though it be never so plain; or again, to see that what I ought to have done, in order to my being in a reconciled state, and a safe and happy state, towards God, I have hitherto not done. I have not exercised repentance towards God; I have not believed on the Son of God; I have not come to a covenant closure with God in Christ; one thing or other, from day to day, hath shifted these important matters off; though I have heard, indeed, such and such things should be done, yet so much of life-time is worn away with me, and I could never find the hour, the leisure time, when to get into a corner, to enter into my closet, and shut myself up with God, and say, I am now come to thee about the affairs of my soul; to make over a soul unto thee, according to the tenor of thine own covenant, and there solemnly to take hold of that covenant, and give up that soul. "They gave themselves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God," 2 Cor. viii. So plain a thing as this is, the yielding themselves unto God, conscience will not see it, and be convinced, that thus it ought to be: but days, and months, and years, are worn out under the Gospel, and so great things as these omitted. Men are continually called upon to turn, that they may live; but they never find a time to turn. They will not settle this judgment with a convinced conscience, I must break off this course, or I am undone; that is, a course of estrangement from God, a living without God in the world. The Gospel is, in this sense, a hid and unrevealed Gospel; it doth not go so far as to take hold of conscience, though conscience is applied and appealed unto, from time to time. And then,

4. It is hid from their hearts, and that is another sense wherein the Gospel may be an unrevealed Gospel, as it is not yet effectually discovered; or the great things contained in it, are not with a penetrating light pierced into the heart, which is the thing the Gospel dispensation doth finally aim at. As you have it in this very context, the thing designed is, that through the ear, and through the mind, and through the conscience, the heart may be at last invaded, and the light of the Gospel may seat itself there, in that very centre of the soul, and so there become vital light, diffusive of power and influence through the whole man; and this is yet a heavier case, when conscience is convinced and yet the hearts of men are not struck, not struck through; the word doth not strike into them, as our Saviour said to the Jews: "My word hath no place in you;" you do not give it a place, it cannot find room; there is a resisting heart, that excludes and shuts it out.

It is in these latter senses that the Gospel must be understood to be spoken of as a hidden Gospel here, as the mind understands it not, or as the conscience is not convinced of it, or as the heart doth not entertain or give reception to it. You find, in the foregoing chapter, that the case of the Jews being spoken unto, upon the occasion of that comparison, which the apostle had been making, in the whole of that chapter, between the Mosaical or Judaical, (2 Cor. iii.) and the evangelical dispensation, he gives the preference (as there was cause) to the evangelical dispensation, far above the Mosaical and Judaical, in this respect, that there was a clearness which went with the Gospel dispensation, which did not accompany the Mosaical one; and, likewise, that there was a power and efficacy that went with the Gospel, that went not with the law. Towards the latter end of the foregoing chapter, he discourseth to them, that, in opposition to the former dispensation, there was a clearness of light in the latter dispensation. Whenever the law was read among the Jews, it was a veiled thing; he refers to that which is a usage among them, at this day, when the law is read, to have a veil covering them, as I have seen, (and it is like many of you have seen,) looking into their synagogues; but the apostle, you see, speaks there of the veil on the heart: which, as the former doth import opposition to the clearness and perspicuity of light, that did shine in the Gospel dispensation, this speaks somewhat opposite to that efficacy and power upon the heart, which did accompany that dispensation too; so as that souls should be transformed and changed by it, into the image and glory of it. "We all with open face, beholding, as in a glass;" so we read it, and we read it with disadvantage, considering the similitude that he had made use of before; for the word we read *open*, signifies unveiled, he having been, a little while before, speaking of the veil. "We all, with unveiled face, (so it should be, to make the matter clearer, though the sense be the same,) behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord;" but, for that poor people, they had a veil not only upon their faces, but a veil upon their hearts, so as that nothing should enter there. But when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away; when *it* shall, the expression is impersonal; when there shall be a turning to the Lord; when the season of the general turning of that people to the Lord shall be, the veil shall be done away. And now we, for the present, with unveiled face, behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image. And when the Gospel is hid in this sense, it is a very dismal thing; that is, that it should go through the ear, and through the mind, and through the conscience, and, after all this, stop at the very heart. A veil enwrapping the heart, shuts it up; light shines, shines round about in the external dispensation, shines into the mind, things are competently understood; shines into the conscience, and that is convinced that those things are true and right which the Gospel doth hold forth; and my practice, in reference thereunto, hath been wrong, injurious, altogether inexcusable, and, consequently, unsafe; and yet the heart holds out; this last fort yet surrenders not, is not taken; the glory of the Gospel is not revealed there, doth not shine into the heart, so as there to take in the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; as the 6th verse of this chapter speaks.

You may be sure, if there be a revelation in the last sense, there is a revelation in all the foregoing senses. If the Gospel be thus revealed in the very heart, then we may be sure it was in the conscience, it was so in the mind and understanding, and it hath been so in the external discovery and dispensation of the Gospel to the ear and outward sense. But if it had not been revealed in the first of these senses, it is in none of the rest. If you speak by way of affirmation, the affirmation of the last implies the affirmation of all the former; if you speak by way of negation, the negation of the first implies the negation of all the consequents.

But as was told you at first, on this occasion, that it is not the hiddenness of the Gospel, in the first sense, as having never been heard and preached, that is intended here; but in the latter sense it is chiefly meant; that is, if persons who hear this Gospel, never understanding it; or, understand it, but are never convinced of it; or are convinced of it, and their hearts are never altered never ef-

fectually changed by it,—then is the Gospel a hidden Gospel to them in the sense here meant.

And so the hiddenness of the Gospel in the intended sense, may be two-fold; or may be considered under two distinct notions, either as sinful or as penal.

1. As sinful. And in the first sense, (which I have told you is not meant,) ordinarily, the Gospel cannot be said to be hid in a sinful sense. Those that live in the remotest parts and quarters of the world, it is not their sin that they have not the Gospel, while there was no means or opportunities of their ever having it; nor will it be charged upon them, where there was a simple impossibility of coming by that knowledge, which the Gospel contains, or is the means of; it will never be imputed as their sin, that they had it not. As it is said in reference to the law, (and indeed by the law there is meant the whole revelation of the mind and will of God,) "They that sin without the law, shall be judged without the law; and so, they that have sinned without the Gospel, shall be judged without the Gospel; they that have sinned with the law, shall be judged by the law; and they that have sinned against the Gospel, shall be judged by the Gospel." Law is there taken in that sense, for that revelation of the mind of God, which is superadded to natural light; "They that have sinned without this, shall be judged without this; and they that have sinned under it or against it, shall be judged by it." There will be no excuse to them from punishment, if they have violated and resisted that law and light which they had; if they go about to excuse themselves, any of them that way, I had not an express written law; when you sinned without law, you shall suffer without law. It will be but a like case with that of the soldier's excuse to the commander, Pericles, the Athenian general, when he charged him with a fault, and asked him how he came to do it, *Invitus feci, invitus ergo pœnas dabis.* "I did it unwillingly," and you shall, therefore, suffer unwillingly.

But the great iniquity is, or then is the Gospel hid in a sinful sense, when men have it among them, or may have it, and will not hear it; or do hear it, and never understand it; that is, never apply or set themselves to understand it; or receive no conviction from it, or receive no suitable impression on their hearts from it. Thus, all the while, is the Gospel hid to him by their own iniquity, that they do voluntarily make resisting efforts against it, as every thing of sin must have somewhat of *voluntarium* in it; it supposeth, that otherwise, a brute agent might be as capable of sin as a rational one, and that cannot be. But here lies the iniquity, that men might understand, and they will not; might consider and be convinced, and they will not; and there is a natural faculty that should turn them, even in their very hearts, but there is a sinful disinclination, and they will not turn: for it is the will that is not turned; "You will not come to me that you might have life." And so, when the Gospel is hid, it is hid, not because men cannot see, but because they will not; they do (as it were) pretend the veil; stretch forth the veil before their eyes, or bind it close over their own eyes, hoodwink themselves that they will not see.

As the case is stated by the apostle: "Alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them; and because of the blindness of their hearts, through the ignorance that is in them," Ephes. iv. 18. But what kind of ignorance is that? See how it is paraphrased,—it is a blindness of heart,—it is a blindness, because they will not see, a voluntary affected blindness: and this makes the hiddenness of the Gospel to be so in a sinful sense, for here is *voluntarium* in the case; the same thing that we find spoken in reference to natural light in the pagan world; that is, that there was that which might be known of God among them, it was manifest in them, for God had revealed it to them, or among them, as the particle there used may signify: but they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, Rom. i. 20—28. As it there follows; That knowledge was ungrateful to them, and an unwelcome thing to them; and, therefore, they fence against it, and exclude it from among them, what they can, as a man would keep off fire from his bosom; such was the light of God which shone to them; "Light shineth in darkness, but the darkness will not comprehend it," John iii. 19. The minds of men do fortify themselves against this light, as much as in them is: so in reference to Gospel light too, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world," John iii. 19. Here was supervening light, accessary light, come into the world; "but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." And so the Gospel is a hidden thing to them, because they do exclude it, even to the very uttermost; stop it where they can stop it, either by not understanding it, or not considering it, or by not admitting conviction about it, or by not obeying from the heart. And then,

2. Being thus far sinfully hidden, it comes also to be penally hidden by a *nemesis*, hidden by a just *vindicta*; ye will not understand, then ye shall not understand; you will harden your hearts against light, against grace, and against the design of the Gospel, and they shall be hardened; that is, God doth only say, "I will let you have your own design;" he doth harden, *non pertirudo Mathiham, sed non impertiendo gratiam*; as Austin's apt speech was of old, to that sense; you do make it your business to harden your hearts, and fence and fortify them against the light and grace of the Gospel; and since you will have it so, so let it be. So long (it may be) a contest hath been driven on with such souls; but at last, God sees fit to recede, to retire, to give off; now you have conquered, enjoy your victory; these are victories, that undo men, that tend to their ruin. We are never to suppose, that the doom passeth before the desert, such a doom as that especially; "Let them that be filthy be filthy still; they that are unjust he unjust still," Rev. xxii. "And when I would have purged you, and you would not be purged, your iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die," Ezekiel. But when that hath been persisted in long and highly, as the case was, in reference to the old world, it comes to this at last, "My Spirit shall not always strive with men," Gen. vi. 3. God did contend long, even by his Spirit, against the wickedness of an apostate world, till at length, a deluge and flood comes; and a little before that, the determination goes forth, "My Spirit shall no longer strive with man;" I see men are intent upon perishing, they will be lost, let them be lost; I have been striving with them so long, and they will have that course that ends in perishing; my Spirit shall give them obstruction in their way no longer. And this was the determination, at length, in reference to that people of the Jews, that peculiar people that he singled out from the rest of the world; he bore their manners long, he contended with them long, while they always resisted the Holy Ghost; (as Stephen tells them;) "As your fathers did, so do ye," Acts vii. 51. Implying this to be, with that people, an entailed war upon their posterity, with the Spirit of God; you do but keep up a war against the Divine Spirit from age to age, as your fathers did before you; "They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit, till he turns and fights against them, and becomes their enemy," Isaiah lxiii. 9. But what did things come to in this contest, between the Spirit of God, and the fathers of this people, to whom Stephen speaks? Why, in reference to them, it comes at last to that terrible doom, which we have in the 6th chapter of Isaiah, and 10th verse. All that goes before in that chapter, is nothing else but a terrible preparation for that awful solemnity, of pronouncing this doom. Here is a glorious appearance of the great God in the temple, in the very year of King Uzziah's death, of which you may read in the known story; "I saw" (saith the prophet) "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple; above it stood the seraphims, each of them had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." One of these seraphims crying to another, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, the whole earth is full of thy glory." Here is a most magnificent, splendid, and glorious appearance; and what was it for? What was the design of it? The prophet is called forth, he is astonished at the sight, and cries out, "Wo is me, I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Well, he is fortified, being almost sunk in his spirits upon the terrible majestic glory of this appearance. One of the seraphims flies to him, with a live coal in his hand, lays it on his

mouth, toucheth his lips, tells him his iniquity is purged away. Well, what is after all this? Now, saith God, "Thou art thus prepared, I have a message for thee to go upon." And what is that? Why, saith he, "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; see ye indeed, but perceive not; make the heart of this people fat, and their ear heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and be converted and be healed." This is the design of this glorious appearance, and this solemn message, after this august manner; a thing, that might even shake the foundation of heaven and earth, to have the case represented and in view, as really it was; and you find that this very thing, this passage in this chapter, it is with the greatest awfulness imaginable reiterated again and again in the New Testament; several times by our Saviour, and at length by the apostle Paul, when finally testifying at Rome against that more perverse infidelity of this people, than ever he met with among pagans; as indeed, it was always observable of them, they were more high, and haughty, and peremptory, and malicious, in their unbelief. Some, indeed, (when the apostle had convened them together at his dwelling-house in Rome,) believed the things that were spoken, and some believed not. "And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed," Acts xxviii. 25, 26, 27. After the apostle had spoken our word; and it is this terrible word repeated and recollected; "Well spake the Holy Ghost, by Isaiah the prophet, to our fathers; Go unto this people, and say, Hear ye indeed, but understand not, and see ye indeed, but perceive not; for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, and they should be converted, and I should heal them." This the matter may come to, conversion and healing; and I am speaking to you, to represent it to you, that it may come to this, on purpose to prevent (if God will) the other ever doing so; and if it be considered seriously, and taken to heart, as the importance of such a case doth require; it will never come to this sad issue among you. If there be none of you that do bend your minds, and fortify your consciences, and obdure your own hearts against the truth, and against the grace, and against the Gospel of our Lord, things will have a better issue with you; they shall issue in things "that accompany salvation, though I thus speak," Heb. vi. 9.

SERMON IX.*

2 Cor. iv. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

WE have shown (and the matter is in itself plain) how these words relate to those that go before; that, in as much as it is the design of the faithful ministers of Christ, in the course of their ministry, to commend ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God; and that the great things that they deal with men about, are therefore supposed to be such as do carry in them a self-recommending evidence to men's consciences, as you have heard they do; that in this state of the case, things being thus, if yet the Gospel do remain a hidden Gospel, those to whom it is so, must be lost souls; and that is it, which is with us the ground of discourse from these words, to wit,

Doctrine. That the Gospel being hid to them, who continually live under it, is a very sad token of their being lost; it was propounded, in speaking of this, to open to you,

1. In what sense the Gospel may be said, and is here meant, to be hid.

2. To show what this being lost must mean.

3. What connexion there is between these two,—The Gospel being hid to any, and their being lost. And then the use will ensue.

The first we have showed already, what is meant hereby, the Gospel's being hid. We are now next to show you,

2. What this being lost doth signify. In general, it is not an external or temporal ruin that is here spoken of, but a spiritual and eternal one: it is the soul's being lost, and lost for ever, which is manifestly the thing here meant; that being lost, which doth certainly ensue upon blindness of mind, infidelity, and exclusion of the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, as the following words show; and which, therefore, shows that it must be a spiritually eternal ruin that is here meant. But that being the meaning in the general, we must know that men may be lost two ways; that is, either actually, as it is with them who are already in hell, on whom the infernal pit hath already shut its mouth; or else as they are liable and tending to such a ruin. And it must be in this latter sense that they are spoken of as lost here, to whom the Gospel is a hidden Gospel. It is spoken for the warning of survivors, and to make such look about them that do as yet live fruitless lives, and are unimpressed under the Gospel, which in the name of the eternal God is from time to time preached to them. And nothing is more ordinary, either in Scripture or in common speech, than to speak of men as lost who are in visible tendency unto destruction, though they are not yet actually destroyed. Now for this liableness to be lost, or this tendency to destruction that is here manifestly meant, and in respect whereof those here spoken of may be said to be lost; that may again be two-fold; that is, either it may be such a liableness to destruction as is common to the apostate children of men as such: or else that liableness to destruction which is special with some more than others, or as having somewhat peculiar in it which renders their case worse than the common case. In the former sense all the apostate world is spoken of as lost; all the apostate world that remains yet unreconciled, unconverted; "The Son of man came to seek and save that which is lost," Matthew xviii. 11. Every unconverted sinner is in this sense a lost creature. And so indeed they may be said to be all lost; (Luke xix. 10.) the whole apostate world yet continuing in their apostacy upon a double account, 1st, In wickedness; and 2nd, Under wrath.

1st, In wickedness. So all unconverted sinners are lost creatures, lost in sin; nothing is indeed more ordinary than to speak of a wicked person (even as he is such) under the notion of a lost person. Even among pagans themselves, of a very wicked man, a debauched person, they say he is a *perdite nequam*, and that he is a man *perdidissimus moribus;* a flagitious person is a lost person, and the word that is commonly used in the Greek in profane authors (as you have it used again and again in Scripture too, *Asotos* and *Asolia*) signifies one that is lost, or one that is unsaved, or cannot be saved. So all the ungodly world is lost in sin and wickedness; which sin is death began, being in its prevailing power over them, they, being under the dominion of it, are dead. "To be carnally minded is death," that is, to be under the dominion of a carnal mind is death; he is a dead man, he is a lost man, that is under the dominion of a mind habitually carnal, not capable of savouring divine things, the things of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 5, 6. "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. ii. 1. who were dead, lost in death. Death hath a present and actual dominion over all this apostate and unreconciled world; reigns over it in conjunction with sin. That is not to be understood barely of liableness to natural death, that is a low diminishing sense of that reign of death spoken of Rom. v. The restitution of that life is meant which was lost in Adam's transgression, by which not only did men become not only mortal but sinful; not only mortal as to their bodies, but sinful (and so under death) as to their souls; which was also the plain meaning of their being all dead: "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if Christ died for all, then we were all dead," 2 Cor. v. 14. A universal death stretching its wings over all this world, and covering it with a deadly shade every where; and all were alienated from the life of God, destitute and forsaken of the Divine, the vital presence; God departed and with-

* Preached March 29th, 1691.

drawn and gone, as he is from this apostate world yet unreconciled: and so are all said to be lost in wickedness, *perdite nequam*, as the common phrase is.

2dly, All were lost in wrath too, or under wrath; "The wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," Rom. i. 17. who hold the truth in unrighteousness, as men universally do. And so, in this double respect, men being generally said to be lost; lost in sin, and lost under Divine wrath; the phrase of their being lost is so applicable to them as the like phrase would be to any man in this case, supposing these two things to concur in the particular case of any man; 1st, That he is a person dreadfully diseased, that some mortal disease is upon him that is likely to be the end of him very soon; and 2nd, That he is an offending criminal besides, that he hath fallen under the sentence of the law that condemns him to die. When these things concur in any particular person's case, that is, he is a most dangerously diseased person, hath a mortal disease upon him, and that he is under a sentence and doom to die at the same time; who would not say the man were lost? It is a great question whether his disease or the halter will despatch him soonest. But he is lost the one way or the other: so it is with the apostate world; they are lost in sin; this is their disease which carries death in it. "To be carnally minded is death;" these men carry their own death about them wherever they go: and then they are under a doom besides; that is, all the impenitent unbelieving world lie under a doom, under a sentence. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," Rom. viii. 1. What doth this imply, but that there is condemnation to all the rest, only those are excepted from condemnation who are in Christ, walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit? all the rest then are condemned men, dead men, all lost? This is one notion wherein those not actually destroyed, or on whom the infernal pit hath not already shut its mouth, may yet be said to be lost, as being liable to be lost, and as in a visible manifest tendency to destruction, that being continually impendent and approaching. But then,

Besides this common case wherein men may be thus said to be lost, there is somewhat special in the case of some that renders their case far worse than the common case; so as that if all may (in the fore-mentioned respects, till redeeming mercy have taken place in reference to them) be said to be lost, they much more, as having somewhat in their case much more dismal, much more frightful, than is or can be in the common case of unreconciled sinners merely as such. You would think the case to be very dismal of Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed by vindictive flames that caught hold of them from heaven; hell rained down upon them (as it were) out of heaven, fire and brimstone and a horrible tempest. Yet our Lord tells us of some whose case was much more dismal than that of Sodom and Gomorrah; some that were under his own preaching, under his own ministry, from day to day he was preaching grace and life among them in that Gospel which was designed the savour of life unto souls. Many that heard it were surprised and admired, "wondering at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth," Luke iv. And yet even among these, there were some whose case was worse by far, and more dreadful, than that of Sodom and Gomorrah; and it is easy to apprehend in general wherein. I shall not descend to particulars now, but reserve that to a further place afterwards in our discourse. It is very evident that among those that are lost in the sense and intendment that hath been mentioned; that is, as being liable to perish, and whose destruction is approaching and impending; among these some are yet, though lost, recoverably lost, others are irrecoverably, of the common case of the apostate world as such; though it be said of them they are all lost, yet they are recoverably lost; that is, if you consider no more than the common case as such; for there are proper apt means appointed for recovery and salvation which may probably have their effect upon them, their blessed effect, to recover and save them. And though there be degrees, very different degrees of danger, some may be more in danger, some are less so; yet the case admits of very vast difference when the Gospel first comes among a people, and when it hath long continued among them.

(1.) When it first comes among them, here are the proper apt means set on foot for the saving that which was lost: the Redeemer approacheth them, makes his first trial upon them: Have you a mind to be saved, have you a mind to accept of a Saviour, of a Redeemer, to put yourselves under his shelter, and under his government, which you must do at the same time? Here are hopeful appearances in these men's cases. It is true the Redeemer comes to them as a company of lost creatures; but he comes on purpose to propose to them the certain means and methods of their being saved. And you that now have a mind to fall in with the Redeemer, you may have him; you must then take him to be yours, and give up yourselves to be his: and if this agreement on your part be cordial and vital, and you are in good earnest in it, you are safe in the midst of danger; yea, though you live in surrounding deaths that do ingulf and are ready to swallow up, and are sure to swallow up all that do not so. But consider here,

(2.) That a people among whom the Gospel hath long continued, and it may be with happy success as to many, many have been gathered in; but there are also such as yet stand out: they have heard the words of grace sounding in their ears often, which have sounded to them like a tale that is told. All that hath been said to them of the Son of God's having come down into this world to die a reconciling sacrifice for lost sinners, that he might bring about union and peace and friendship between the offended Majesty of heaven and them, hath made no more impression on them than so many breaths of air would do upon a rock. Sure the case is far worse with these men than the common case of sinners, as such, can be supposed to be. There may be even of these yet some whose case is not altogether desperate; we do not know what wonders the power of grace may yet work, but there may be among these some also that are lost irrecoverably, upon whom an irrevocable doom is past; so as that repentance is hid on both sides, both from God's eye and theirs; they will never repent, and he will never repent: they have a heart that can never repent, and God hath passed his doom that he will never repent. And now, as touching this case, that such a case there is, plain scriptures put us out of all doubt; some that are never to be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come. I need not tell you for what crime. "All sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men, excepting that one, the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall never be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come." Matt. xii. 31. But I say as to their case, who may be thus said to be irrecoverably lost, while they are yet on this side hell, whether it may be known to others, or even to themselves that they are so lost, I shall say nothing now; I have spoken my mind to that very publicly another way in that book called "The Redeemer's Tears;" and may say somewhat more to it in the use, before I pass from this subject. But that there are some (I say) so irrecoverably lost, while they as yet are under the Gospel, is out of all doubt; whether they can know it or others know it, which is less to be supposed, I shall say no more now. But concerning them, of whom this is not to be said of them, that they are irrecoverably lost, though their case be much worse than the common case: yet there may be degrees in it of greater and less probability of their yet being wrought upon to their recovery and salvation. And that we shall come to and consider by and by, when we speak of the connexion between these two, the Gospel's being hid, and their being lost.

But as to the import and meaning of the phrase here, it is plain it doth chiefly refer to the latter sort of men, that is, that are lost in a worse sense than the common case doth amount to. It is not to be supposed that men's being lost in the common sense, can be the thing here intended in this Scripture, "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:" why, all are lost! it must therefore be meant in a peculiar sense. It is evident then he doth not speak here of men's being lost in that sense wherein all are lost by nature; but he speaks of them that live under the Gospel and are not yet recovered and saved by it, whether these may be said to be recoverably or irrecoverably lost, yea

or no; whether it be the one or the other of them, the thing is sad; and because the determination is so very distinct, how to bring a determining line between those that are, under the Gospel, lost irrecoverably, and them that are lost recoverably; and since we cannot tell among all, those who belong to the one rank, and who belong to the other rank, and it may be no one person can tell concerning himself, that he doth most certainly belong to that more horrid view of such as are lost irrecoverably; therefore we shall only take the matter indefinitely concerning those that are lost, in a worse sense than men in general can be said to be. And so we pass on in the next place,

3. To show the connexion between these two, the Gospel being hid and such men being lost; for I told you in the doctrine that the Gospel being hid unto such, is a sad token of their being lost, that I may state this connexion to you; you may in the general take this for a ground, that those are to be reckoned the significant tokens that do belong to the thing they betoken, either as causes or effects of it; or whatsoever things are connected with one another as cause and effect, the one of these doth significantly betoken the other. Now that connexion which there is between these two, the Gospel's being hid, and the soul's being lost, is a connexion of cause and effect. And this connexion may be mutual and interchangeable; that is, something of the Gospel's being hid, may be the cause of the soul's being lost; and again, the soul's being lost may be the cause of the Gospel's being hid. And so they may change places; they may be alternate, as it were, in the matter; they may be mutual causes and effects to one another. We shall consider,

1. The connexion between these two the former way, that is, the Gospel's being hid being the cause why they are lost. And if it be hid it must needs endanger their being lost by a casual contribution that it hath thereunto, whether we can say they are recoverably lost or irrecoverably; the Gospel's being hid to them is a cause of it, a manifest cause of it; if they are at last lost, into this it most manifestly results, the Gospel was hid from them. If it be always hid they are surely lost; if it be so hid that at length the veil be done away, it will appear, that though they were lost they were not remedilessly lost, but upon a two-fold account the Gospel's being hid must be the cause of the soul's being lost. 1st, As the Gospel's being hid doth include in it the want of somewhat that's necessary to salvation; and, 2ndly, As the Gospel's being hid doth include somewhat in it that promotes their destruction. These two ways the Gospel's being hid is the cause of their soul's being lost.

1. As it carries in it the want of somewhat that was necessary to salvation is the Gospel hid to them, then they must want that without which they cannot be saved so long as the Gospel is hid to them. The knowledge and belief of Gospel truths, the acceptance of Gospel offers, and subjection to Gospel commands, are things without which they cannot be saved. But while the Gospel is hid to them, these things must be wanting: they must want the saving knowledge of Gospel truths; they must want true acceptance of Gospel grace and offers; they must want entire and sincere obedience to Gospel commands; and without these they will be lost: these they can never attain to while the Gospel remains hid; while it is a hidden Gospel all things contained in it may be represented to them, but they are all so many parables, they understand nothing of the meaning of them; all that is said to them is only as a story told to a man asleep, or between sleeping and waking, and whereof there is no more perfect sense begot in their minds than there is of any thing that you mutter to the ear of a man asleep. They cannot believe what they do not understand, and they cannot accept those offers that depend upon truths which they do not believe; and they can never yield obedience to those commands which stand in conjunction with such offers, and their obedience and subjection thereunto must be in equal connexion with their acceptance of those offers. I cannot take Christ to be my Saviour, but I must take him to be my Lord at the same time; and he that takes him to be his Lord, doth it without despair; but with hope that he shall be entertained by him, and treated by him as a Saviour. But nothing of this can be where the Gospel is hid, and while it remains still a hidden Gospel. So all this, while these souls do yet continue lost souls, even for this very cause, for this as the cause, that the Gospel being a hidden Gospel doth imply the want of things necessary to salvation. But also,

2. The Gospel's being a hidden gospel doth imply also that which manifestly tends to promote their destruction. And under that head two things do come to be considered, indisposition on their part, and provocation on God's part; and both these growing so much the more, by how much the longer they continue void of impression under the Gospel.

(1.) An indisposition on their part to all the duty they are to do, and to all the advantages they are to use and enjoy in order to their salvation; they grow more and more indisposed the longer they live under the Gospel as a hidden Gospel. It is necessary, in order to their salvation, that they should exercise "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." But they grow more and more indisposed to these, by how much the longer they continue under the Gospel as a hidden Gospel to them; and that in several respects.

1. The great things contained in the Gospel that should influence them hereunto, they grow from time to time less and less considerable to them: what should have influence to the turning of a soul through Christ to bring him to exercise "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," grows from time to time less considerable. These mighty, weighty motives are contained in the Gospel. Sinner, if thou dost not turn thou diest! If thou dost not fall into a closure with the Son of God as thy Redeemer, Saviour, and Lord, thou art a ruined creature to all eternity. Lo, here is a glorious heaven before thee, that will be the reward of thy Gospel obedience. Here is a place and state of torment, a fiery gulf, a flaming hell before thee, and in view too, that must determine thy place, and the state of thy eternal torment and punishment, if thou turn not, if thou do not obey the Gospel, if thou becomest not a serious, penitent and sincere believer, a faithful dutiful subject to God in Christ. Here are the great considerations which the Gospel presents men with, to influence their turning, their renovation and conversion to God through Christ. Now the longer men continue under the Gospel, while it yet continues a hidden Gospel to them, the less do these considerations signify with them from day to day; because the force of them hath been spent upon them (as it were) heretofore, and now they signify little, still less and less. Such considerations as these, though they are the weightiest and most important that can be imagined, yet they have been blown upon; and, saith the obdurate sinner, I have learned long ago to make light of these things; and, what? do you tell me of these things now? These are the greatest things that can be told them, or mentioned to them. But these things they have learned long ago to make very little of, so as they can say, in case you talk of heaven to me now, pray what doth it signify more now than it did ten or twenty years ago? Is heaven grown a better thing than it was seven or ten years ago? and I made light of it then. And is hell grown a more terrible thing now than it was seven or ten years ago? and I made light of it then; and, pray, why cannot I as well do so now? These considerations, which should have the mightiest power upon the spirits of men, may still signify less and less, when they continue long under the Gospel, while it remains still a hidden Gospel to them; for these are blown upon, and men have taught themselves to make light of them, and to have them signify little or nothing to them:—if you cannot speak to me of somewhat greater than heaven and hell, eternal blessedness and eternal misery, you move not me, for these things I have heard and made light of long ago. And,

2. The longer the Gospel is hid, the minds of men grow the blinder; as if there be no ability to face the sun without prejudice, the longer you face it the more your prejudice will be. There is a way of beholding that glorious light which shines in the Gospel without prejudice, and with the greatest advantage, its beams being refracted as they are allayed by grace; and so it is not an amazing astonishing glory, but a cheering, reviving, heart-exhilarating glory, that shines through the glass of the Gospel

dispensation. But if the Gospel be so hid from men that it cannot be thus looked upon, then their minds grow blinder and blinder. The sun hath put out their eyes, as the God of this world is said to do in the very next verse. It is a very dreadful thing to be struck blind with Gospel light; but that is the case with many,—Gospel light strikes them blind, and their minds grow less and less receptive, the longer they remain under this Gospel without effect, without receiving the proper impressions of it. The proper impression of it would contemper the eye to the object, the visible power to that glory that clothes the object; but while nothing of this is done, the longer the light of the Gospel shines, the less perspicuity there is in the eye of their minds, it is less perceptive, less capable of taking it in. And,

3. Conscience is grown weaker; and so they are more indisposed to all the duties, and the use of the advantages that are requisite to their salvation. Conscience, it grows weaker, and is more debilitated for the doing its proper office. The context shows us plainly how the state of this case must be understood; that is, that in the ministration of this Gospel, they, whose work it is, do apply themselves to the very consciences of men in the sight of God; and that truth which they preach carries in it (as you have heard) a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men. Hereupon there is a close grappling between such truth and conscience; for they do apply themselves in the sight of God, in preaching such truths to the consciences of men, that they do, and that they must do; truth then is insinuating, and gets within; as it must be supposed to do when it is held in unrighteousness. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, (Rom. i. 18.) who hold the truth in unrighteousness." They that hold the truth in unrighteousness do hold it; it is got within them. Then, I say, there is a close and immediate grapple and tug between truth let in, truth intermitted, and conscience; but they have got the victory. Truth, so far as conscience receives it in, is engaged against corrupt inclinations, against vicious appetites, against the carnal heart that is averse and disaffected to God. Here lies the grapple between truth in the conscience, and the power of corrupt inclination in the heart. Well, vicious inclination hath got the victory; every such victory makes the next easier; every former victory makes way for a following one, with so much the greater facility; and conscience having been baffled once by the power of corrupt and carnal inclination, can the more easily be baffled again. As you know, if there be two combatants engaged with one another in a very close tug and grapple, he that is conquered and receives the foil hath spent a great deal of his strength, and is grown weaker, and so is the more easily thrown again if there succeed another grapple. So it is in this case, when men have once brought conscience to yield, when they have succeeded so far in the design of mortifying conscience, further conquest is the more easy; for (as it hath been heretofore told you upon some occasion) when these two are engaged against one another, carnal inclination in the heart, and light in the mind, or conscience, they being opposite one to another, and mutually engaged one against another, the one must die; either conscience must be mortified, or corrupt inclination must be mortified. And whereas, the design, intendment, and tendency of Gospel truth is to enforce a mortification of corrupt inclination, but the Gospel is hid and doth not prevail in order thereunto, then the other part is doomed to death. There can be no consent, no yielding to it, that corrupt inclination should die: then that of course must be yielded to, let conscience die; if there must be a mortification, let it be upon conscience, and not upon appetite, not upon corrupt inclination, let that live, and let conscience die. And so much now is done towards the killing and mortifying of it; and so it grows weaker and weaker still, by how much the more the resistance to a Gospel yet hid hath been continued and kept on foot. And so the indisposition grows more and more, the longer the Gospel is hid; and so there is so much the more likelihood to be a being finally lost. That such will be finally lost, are in the way and tending to it apace, in the concurrence of such things as do now meet in their case; as we would say of a vessel in a storm, and as was said of that wherein the apostle Paul was, all hope that they should be saved was taken away, Acts xxvii. 20. No hope left of being saved. You may suppose such a concurrence in such a case, that there shall appear very little hope; here are so violent storms upon the soul that hath abandoned and surrendered itself, against conscience, to the government of lust and corrupt inclination.

And here is the Spirit of God gone; as we shall have occasion to show more hereafter. And here is the devil let loose upon a man. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded their eyes." Any one that looks upon this endangered vessel would say the ship were lost, it doth not obey the helm; for so the man doth not whose conscience hath no power over him, doth not govern him; she doth not answer the helm; she falls from the helm; she is lost, would we say of such a vessel. The storm is violent upon it; corrupt inclination grows stronger; God is gone, and the devil hath seized it, and taken possession, and is putting out the eyes of the poor creature as fast as he can. The man is visibly lost. We do not know what miracles God may work; we know not what he may do, but in all appearances the man is lost.

There are other things to be said concerning the growing indisposition upon such a soul, as to the things that are necessary to its being saved; and many things that will show the provocation grows on God's part while this indisposition is growing on man's part. And, take all together, and it seems a very hopeless case, if it be not altogether desperate. Truly there is very little hope left in such a case, that they should be saved at length to whom the Gospel doth thus remain hid.

SERMON X.*

2 Cor. iv. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

I have already opened unto you what is meant by the Gospel being hid, and what is meant by their being lost to whom it is so; and shown you in what peculiar sense both those must be taken, different from what is the common case of the apostate unconverted world; that both here must be understood to superadd somewhat to that common case, wherein men as sinners in the state of apostacy, in the most general sense have the Gospel hid to them, and are themselves in a lost state.

We have from hence gone on to show you the connexion between these two, the Gospel's being hid and their being lost; and you have heard the one of these may be spoken of as betokening the other, and so they are manifestly put together here; and that these tokens are most significant when the token and the thing betokened have the relation of cause and effect one to another; that these two may be understood to have that mutual and reciprocal relation to one another.

That is, that the Gospel being hid may be the cause that such are lost to whom it is so hid, and their being lost the effect; and back again, that their being lost may be the cause, and the Gospel's being hid the effect; and accordingly, with some difference may this context be understood, according to that two-fold sense, or reference, that one of these may have to the other. Take the former reference or habitude of these to the other, and the sense will run thus; that is, that since the great things of the Gospel, about which we apply ourselves to the very consciences of men in the sight of God, are so very plain, and do carry so clear and convictive light with them, as they do, if yet the Gospel shall remain hid to such as are thus dealt with from time to time, their minds will grow, in all likelihood, more and more indisposed to comport with the design of it; God will grow more and more displeased, his displeasure will rise higher and higher; their guilt will grow greater and greater, and they will be more visibly in

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danger of being finally lost; or, according to the latter reference, the sense will be thus, that the great things of the Gospel are of such evidence, and of such manifest importance, that the consciences of men being applied to, and dealt with from time to time about them, it is hardly conceivable such things can be hid to such persons unless they be lost. The matter is otherwise unaccountable, why such things should not take hold of men; surely they are lost that such things will not fasten upon them. You know, according to the former reference, as being hid is the cause, being lost is the effect; this we have spoken already, and showed you that the Gospel being hid must be the cause of their being lost to whom it is so; both as its being hid doth exclude what is necessary to their salvation, and as it doth include what contributes to their destruction.

And now we go on to the other reference that the one of these hath to the other; that is, as being lost may be the cause, and the Gospel's being hid may be the effect: and it is exceeding agreeable to the design of this context to understand the matter so. We do, saith he, in this ministry of our's commend ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God. This is plain; and this is our constant course. And what? is it a supposable thing, that our Gospel should be hid to them while we do so? How can it be? It can be upon no other account but that they are lost; it must needs argue and suppose them a lost sort of men, upon whom a Gospel, so applying itself to conscience, doth not fasten, takes no hold.

But then, (will you say,) How must being lost be understood? I have told you already how it must be understood in this place; you are sure it cannot be that they are eventually lost, or already in hell; it cannot be understood so; and it cannot be understood that they are lost in that sense that is common to the apostate world, in respect whereof the Son of man is said to have come to seek and "save that which was lost." But there are two things besides that it may and must mean in this case.

1. That they are sinfully lost; they are lost in sin; they are lost in carnality, and that in a deeper degree than is common to the rest of the world. There is a greater and more confirmed dominion of sin in them, in their several faculties and powers, than in the generality of the unconverted world, as such; greater, deeper, blacker darkness upon their minds; the god of this world (as it follows in the next verse) hath put out their eyes, hath blinded them, so as they have less light, less eye-sight than before they had, (so it must be understood,) or than men commonly have, otherwise there were no peculiar reason in the case why this should be said of them. But we find it said. If it were to be understood that the god of this world hath no otherwise blinded them than he hath blinded the unconverted world, why should it be said that they are lost more than all others upon that account? That would argue and be a reason that all are lost alike, if all were blind alike. But he hath "blinded the minds of them that believe not;" he hath been dealing with them all the while they have been otherwise dealt with by another hand, to be brought to faith; he hath been endeavouring to confirm them in their unbelief, and hath made their minds more blind than ever they were; and they are at a remoter distance from believing than ever, as that fascination by which he hath possessed their minds, hath more and more taken hold of them. And it must be understood that they are lost more in heart-sins; disaffection to the holy designs of the Gospel, enmity against God and against Christ hath prevailed to a greater height in them, and so they are lost, lost in sin. And,

2. They must be understood hereupon to be lost under deeper guilt and a heavier doom, that is from God, penally upon them; so that he hath been even provoked to "swear against them, in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest;" as in that Heb. iii. 11. quoted from the 95th Psalm, that was sworn against them that believed not; as it was here in this context said, the minds were blinded of them that believed not.

But this (you may say) is very severe. And truly it is so. But how can we help it? We cannot by our thought, this way or that, alter the nature of things. They will lie as they do; but we may, by a due use of our thoughts, and according to that light which the Holy Scriptures afford us, come to understand things more to advantage. And some things I shall offer to you that may tend partly to justify, and partly to mollify, this severity. It is indeed very severe, that men under the Gospel should arrive to that state, to that pitch, to be so far lost, as that to suppose them now to continue never so long under it, they shall never be the better for it. Let the plainest things that can be thought or spoken be said to them, they shall be always hid to them, because they are lost. A fearful thing! But do but consider a little what I shall offer to you, which may have that double tendency, that I spoke of, partly to justify this severity, and partly to mollify it. As,

1. Consider this, that those that are thus lost, hereupon is likely to be still a hidden Gospel to them, let them hear it never so long, they are like to be never the better for it. I say, consider, that if any are thus lost, they were not always so lost. This is a thing that is come upon them, and which they have drawn upon themselves. It must be understood with reference to a former day which they have had, wherein the matter was otherwise, wherein they lay not under that dreadful stupefaction, and that heavy doom which now will come upon them. They had their day; those had so in that 95th Psalm, who are given us for a sort of paradigm, they against whom God "sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest." He bare their manners in the wilderness forty years, as the expression is, in the 7th of Acts, of dying Stephen. There is time supposed to have been afforded to such under the Gospel, to whom the matter is come to this. They had their day; those that live within the compass of that light which revelation adds to the common light of natural reason, they have their more special day, and have always had so. There is a time, concerning which it is said to sinners, "To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts." He limits a certain day, a certain now; and this is a more critical now. There is a more peculiar crisis of time with such as live under the Gospel, than is with other men that have not that peculiar light which is afforded to the church of God in the world. God did, in a sort, connive at the nations of the earth that went every one in their own way, as it is said in the 17th of Acts, did overlook them, did not look upon them with so curious, so narrow, so inquisitive an eye; (as it were, speaking of God after the manner of men;) "but now (saith the apostle) he commandeth all men every where to repent." As that Roman consul, who, treating with Antiochus, (who made war upon some allies of the Roman state,) demanded of him in the name of the senate and commonwealth of Rome to withdraw his forces from molesting such a place. Saith the king, What time do you allow me to think of this, or consider it? He immediately draws, with a rod he had in his hand, a circle about the king, and tells him,—Now, before you stir out of this circle, declare whether you will be a friend to the senate and people of Rome, or an enemy:—so doth God circumscribe men, and set them limits. Now, out of hand, it may be in reference to some of us here in this assembly; the determination may be now, before you stir out of this place, Declare whether you will be reconciled, or persist in your enmity and unreconciled state. How many passages of scripture do speak to this sense! "Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon," Isa. lv. 5, 6. Now or never; now you have time for it; it may be, shortly you will have none, nor any ever after. It is a great thing which you find in that somewhat parallel text, (Luke xix. 42.) our Saviour beholds Jerusalem with weeping eyes, in his approach to it, being then upon the opposite hill, the mount of Olives, between which and that whereon Jerusalem stood there was a valley, in which ran the brook Kidron; when he was on the opposite hill, and on his descent of that, he having a convenient view of Jerusalem, as it lay before him, he weeps over it in such words as these, (mingled with tears,) "Oh! that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes." Tears intermingle with and at length interrupt the words, and cause that

apotheosis, so as that the sentence was not filled up. "If thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace." It is filled up with a more speaking silence, by a silence more emphatical than words could be,—"If thou hadst known;" we are only left to conceive what had been if they had known the things that belong to their peace in that their day; "but now they are hid from thine eyes!" Oh, how terribly emphatical is that now!—Now they are hid, a little while ago they were not hid; now they are. The curtain is drawn that creates (for ought we know) an eternal night; that curtain being drawn between the wretched soul and that glorious light that did shine upon it; "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. There is such a now, and there is another now; wherein this now is over, as in that 2 Cor. vi. 2. referred to that of the prophet Isaiah, xlix. 8.; supposing then, any to be thus lost, they were not always so lost; the case was in this respect sometimes otherwise with them. And then,

2. Supposing them thus lost, and the Gospel thereupon thus hid, permanently hid, this must refer to the former provocation; with many of them God was not well pleased, they who had that day in the wilderness, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. If our congregations be full of carcasses, if there be so many walking carcasses that fill our streets from day to day, God is not well pleased; if the Gospel be a lifeless Gospel, God is not well pleased, he is provoked. But, further,

3. The causes of that provocation are high and great, so that we have no reason to think it strange if the effects that ensue have very dreadful severity in them. Let me but instance to you, in some concurrences that do make the cause of such displeasure and provocation. As,

(1.) That when men let themselves thus be lost under the Gospel by their neglect of it, and their non-attendance to it; they are the greatest things imaginable which they did neglect, to which they refused their attendance, which they would not regard. When the Gospel did in the first age of it begin to shed its light upon the world, (though in that more wonderful manner the things were not more wonderful than now,) you hear in that, (Acts ii. 11.) that when that gift of tongues was so amazingly, by miracle, first conferred, all the people in that vast confluence at Jerusalem, at that time, from so many several countries, each one heard in his own tongue.—What did he hear?—"The wonderful things of God." The Gospel is not another Gospel from what it was then; it acquaints us with most wonderful things still. This was the aggravation upon Israel of old, upon Ephraim; "I have written unto them the great things of my law, and they have accounted them a strange thing," counted them strange to them, Hos. viii. 12. That might have been more commodiously expressed according to the significancy of the word there used, "were counted to them an alien thing," a foreign thing; a thing that concerned them not, which they had nothing to do with, which they looked upon as we used to look upon strangers, men that we never saw or knew before; we look upon them wistly: so they looked upon the wonderful things of the law of God, and so those do here upon the wonderful things of the Gospel; whereas they are great and wonderful, they should command a man's ears, and engage the attention of his mind to consider and take notice of them; they look upon them as strange things, as alien and foreign to them, and which they had nothing to do with. This is very provoking, when such things are brought to our notice, as "angels stoop down to look into." The descent of the glorious Son of God into the world, how did it amaze the glorious angels above! What is the meaning of this? say they. They look down after him. What is the intention of this strange descent? What is it for that the heir of heaven should go down into that lost, forlorn, wretched world? He that was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, is going down to visit that dark region of death. What means he there? What would he do there? Did they think he went down to die? Did they think he went down to be a man? Did they think he went down to offer himself a sacrifice upon a tree for the redemption and salvation of such? When so wonderful things as these are made known; and about these things (saith the apostle) we apply ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God; we appeal to their consciences about the rights of the Redeemer, and what duty, and what homage, must be owed to him from the redeemed. And, if our Gospel be hid you are lost; if you will not regard such a Gospel, though having in it so great things, you must be lost. And then,

(2.) These great things are set in the Gospel dispensation before men in the clearest light. They are not represented darkly and unintelligibly, and in parables; but the most important things, and those about which they are most of all dealt with, are the plainest things, that every one that runs may read. What? is there so much of mystery in "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," and in loving the Lord our God with all our hearts, and souls, and might, and our neighbour as ourselves? Is there so much of mystery in these, that men will not regard the greatest things, and clothed with the clearest light? What else doth that mean—We recommend ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God? They are such things, as every conscience of man may be expected to admit conviction about out of hand, without more ado; then, sure, if the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. It comes from hence that they are a lost sort of men, otherwise such things could not be hid from them. And,

(3.) They are things that men are dealt with about in the highest name; for, when we come to you, to deal with you about these things, we do not come upon our own errand; we do not come to you in our own name; but the ministers of this Gospel are ministers of Christ, and they come to you in the name of Christ; and he hath expressly said; "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that heareth me, heareth him that sent me." This same Gospel dispensation is the ministry of the Son of God, as the case is plainly stated before us in that 1st of Hebrews. beginning, "God, that spake many other ways in former times, hath now spoken to us by his Son;" and continues speaking to us by his Son; and (as he represents the case in the next chapter) "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him; God bearing them witness?" And afterwards, in the 12th chap. and 25th verse, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." This is said, when we are told that our Lord was at the right hand of God on the throne of the Majesty on high; as in the 3rd verse of that chapter, having given an account of our being under this ministry of the Son of God; though we are told, that "he, having purged our sins by himself, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" yet still we are under his dispensation, and still he is the great Speaker to us; so that now, when any suffer themselves to be thus lost under the Gospel, in their own sinful and chosen deceiving blindness and enmity against it, no wonder if it be determined that it shall be a hidden Gospel to them, and they lie long enough under the dispensation of it, and be never the better; for they have been affronting the Majesty of the son of God under the dispensation all this time. He that did seek and command greater attention, and greater reverence, and greater subjection of spirit, and upon higher right and title than when there was that terrible appearance upon mount Sinai, that shook the earth, and that seemed as if it would have put the creation into a paroxysm; there hath been a greater obligation to the deepest reverence and veneration upon them. And how just is the provocation when this Gospel is neglected, and men lose themselves under it, for him to say and determine this,—Well now, as to you it shall always be a hidden Gospel! And again,

(4.) There is this further in the case, that these great things in that great name, in that most excellent name, have been hinted, not once but often; and often inculcated and urged over and over again in the authority of the same name. What a mighty weight doth this add to the same load of guilt! and how much matter doth it supply to feed the indignation, to heighten the provocation, that such were applied to from time to time, in a continued

course, for many years together. "The earth, that drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and brings forth herbs meet for him by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: if there be fruit, a blessing comes upon it, and follows it; if there be no fruit, nothing but briers and thorns, then it is followed with a curse, and a dreadful curse,—"It is nigh unto cursing, and its end is to be burned," Heb. vi. 7, 8. "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," Prov. xxix. 1. A fearful thing, when the gospel itself shall not be my remedy!—shall be destroyed without remedy; no remedy shall remedy your case. And,

(5.) We must suppose the Spirit to have often been at work in this time, and while such things were from time to time inculcated; so it was with the people of Israel; "you do always resist the Holy Ghost," Acts vii. He was then always striving, more or less, otherwise there could not always be a resistance. That is doing "despite to the Spirit of grace," Heb. x. 29. And herein is the greatest provocation, as I have told you heretofore, there is a remarkable accent in that expression, "the Spirit of grace." Oh, that Spirit of kindness, and grace, and sweetness, and benignity! to despite him, what an high provocation is this! When he comes and toucheth any of your minds, and makes some impression on your hearts, saith he, secretly and inwardly: "Sinner, wilt thou yet return? Hast thou yet no desire after God?—no inclination to know a Redeemer, and choose and close with him? Now to spite a Spirit of grace, when he speaks to you so kindly, and so sweetly, and so tenderly,—Oh sinner, do not go on, and perish for ever!—here is the very height of provocation. The word, in the original, signifies to injure inwardly the Spirit of grace, to make the injury enter into him, as it were; it imports to sting a man to the heart, to the very soul; as if it had been said, your injury pierceth into that Spirit of grace, that Spirit of love, kindness, and goodness; it enters into it. Thus it must be, when in such days, and at such times as these, the great things of the Gospel are heard with no effect. And,

(6.) It must be supposed, conscience was in some measure convinced at this time; for applications were made to it in the plainest cases. We have applied ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God, saith the apostle. And now if our Gospel be hid, it is that you are lost. And,

(7.) It must be supposed too that affections have been stirred in some measure and variously; there have been some desires enkindled, and some fears awakened, and some hopes and joys possibly raised, and some tastes, and relishes of the sweetness that is in this Gospel, and of the things contained therein; as it is supposed in that Heb. iv. 4, 5. after all this, to lose yourselves in darkness and wickedness; now if the Gospel be hid, there is no recovering such by repentance, as he there afterwards speaks. But,

(8.) This adds weight to all the rest, that they were very light matters for which men have exposed themselves to this fearful loss, even of themselves, of their very souls; a loss that nothing can recompense, nothing can make up. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt. xvi. 26. What hast thou had in exchange for thy soul? The smallest matters imaginable, the temporary satisfaction of a lust. I sold my soul (may one say) to please my friend. I sold my soul (may another say) for the love I had, for the lust I had, to a cup of drink. I sold my soul (may a third say) for the pleasure I took in a vain idle companion. These are the things that kept me from closing with God, uniting with my Redeemer, and from engaging and persisting in the way of life. O that God, and Christ, and heaven should be set so low! Thou didst break with me, (must the great God say, and must the Redeemer that died for you say,) thou didst break with me for a trifle, for a thing of nought; yea, thou didst prefer before me the vilest things, the most odious things. Thou didst rather choose to be a vassal, a slave to lust, than to live under the easy yoke and government of a compassionate and merciful Redeemer and Saviour. The deformities of wickedness were more amiable in thine eyes than the beauties of holiness. What can be said in this case, when the story comes to be told, and the matter is to be represented just as it is, that it is, thus as you have heard?

And that is the third thing to be considered in this case:—That as former provocation must have been supposed, so that provocation must have been very high and very great upon these sundry mentioned accounts. But then I add upon all this,

4. That if any hereupon be thus lost, (as you have heard,) it is only that God hath retired from them, withdrawn from them. He hath not positively hurt them; he never put any ill thoughts into them, or any ill disposition of mind. If it be severe in itself, and dreadful to you, that you are now a lost creature, God hath no hand in it, otherwise than as he retired from you: "Thy destruction is of thyself, but in him is thy help found," Hos. xiii. 9. He was ready to help thee, and to save thee, thou only destroyed thyself; he only withdrew that presence for which thou didst not care, that Spirit which thou didst vex and grieve; that is all: he never put any ill thought or inclination into thy mind and heart, thou destroyedst thyself; he did but say, These wretched creatures do not care for me, do not care for my Son, do not care for my Spirit; well, I will retire, I will let them alone, I will let them have their own way. He had said to you, "Turn ye at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you; I called and ye refused, I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded," Prov. i. Well, I behold your destruction now. It is not said, I will destroy you, but "I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh;" and it will certainly come. God tempteth no man, neither is he tempted by any; but every man is "tempted when he is led away of his own lust and enticed," James i. 14. And then I would add, lastly,

5. That although all this be very certain, yet we cannot suppose the apostle here to be absolutely decisive in his judgment concerning the final states of particular persons; such may be more lost, and in a worse and more dreadful sense lost, than many others in the world, than the generality of the pagan world. But though they are so, it is not for all that determined that they are so lost as that they cannot be recovered. And we are sure they are not so lost as that they cannot be recovered, if they have not sinned that sin which cannot be pardoned; and which I do in the general believe that no man hath ever committed, or is guilty of, that is afraid he hath; indeed, your case is more dangerous than before, which should awaken you so much the more, because it is dangerous, and you are upon hazardous terms. They may be said to be lost, as being more out of the reach of the ordinary methods of grace, who yet are not absolutely lost, not sure to be finally lost. And no man hath reason to apprehend he is so lost, finally lost, irrecoverably lost, that comes once to be solicitous about it. No, if our God hath brought you to consider and bethink yourself; I am in danger to be lost, I know not what will become of me, or of my case at length, if I that have been such a stranger to God should continue much longer a stranger to him; if I that have neglected to capitulate with the Son of God should much longer neglect it; I know not what will become of this, it may be bitterness in the end. If you begin thus to consider, I hope the issue will prove thus, that it will be said of you as it was of the prodigal son, "This my son was dead and is alive, he was lost but is found." But more to this purpose, (as I have partly intimated already,) I shall speak in the use.

SERMON XI.*

2 Cor. iv. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

THEY are lost souls to whom the Gospel is a hidden Gospel. This (you know) we have been upon from these

* Preached April 19th, 1691.

words; and we have in this showed you what is meant by the Gospel's being hid, and what is meant by the soul's being lost; and that both these are to be understood in a sense peculiar and different from the common case of men: and in what reference the Gospel's being hid, and their being lost, doth differ from the common case, we have particularly shown you: and have further shown the connexion between these things, the Gospel's being hid, and soul's being lost, to whom it is so; the one doth betoken the other, and they are the most significant tokens which have connexion with the thing betokened; as causes and effects, the one to the other. I have shown this is the case here: that the Gospel's being hid, it is a cause of the soul's being lost, both as it excludes what is necessary to their salvation, and as it includes what promotes their destruction. I have again showed you too, that being lost may also be the cause of the Gospel's being hid; and shown how being lost is to be taken in that case: lost in wickedness, as men more extremely wicked are said to be, and lost under a Divine doom. So they must be understood to be to whom the Gospel is therefor: hid, men given up and forsaken of God, and then the God of this world blinds them.

And because this appears very severe, therefore I did by sundry considerations endeavour partly to justify, and partly to mollify, this severity; now I come to the use of this important truth. And it will be useful,

Use 1. To inform us of sundry truths that by way of inference may be deduced here. As,

1. That it is no sufficient ground upon which any may conclude their state to be safe and good, that they live under the Gospel: I pray consider it. It is not enough hereupon to ground a conclusion concerning your good and safe final state, that you live under the Gospel. No, though you had apostolical preachers among you, for such these Corinthians had to whom this is with so much terror spoken. No, though you had angelical preachers, such as could speak to you, not with the tongues of men only, but of angels; for the Jews had that word before that was given to them as a Gospel; (as the apostle takes notice, Heb. iii.) unto them was the Gospel preached, as well as to us. And their Gospel was called the law, as that whole revelation went under the name of the law: "They that have sinned without the law, shall perish without the law." In those days when the law was the more conspicuous part of it, they had it "by the ministration of angels, but they kept it not," Acts vii. 53. Nay, though it were by the most divine preacher, our blessed Lord himself; "How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which began to be spoken by the Lord himself?" (Heb. ii. 2.) even that Gospel was preached by the Son of God himself, and as it was, so was a hidden Gospel to many, and they lost souls under it. A man may perish as well under a hidden Gospel, as under no Gospel. And again,

2. We are to infer, That the proper design of the Gospel is the salvation of souls. If the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; if it were not hid they would not be lost, that is plainly implied: but that which hath no design or tendency to save would not save, whether hidden or not hidden. But there is no interveniency in this case to hinder a person's being saved by the Gospel, but only its being hid: therefore that which would save souls if not hid, must have an aptitude and designation to this purpose. Here is nothing to hinder a soul being saved by the Gospel if it be not hid: by this you learn therefore that the true and apt tendency and design of the Gospel is, to save souls. How often is it called by names that signify so much! "To you is the word of this salvation sent," Acts xiii. 22. "After you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation," Eph. i. 13. "How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which first began to be spoken?" Heb. ii. 3. What doth the words of this Gospel speak?—*It* speaks salvation. It is a great matter to know the Gospel by its true name, and to understand it accordingly: to think what God hath sent among you, when he hath sent his Gospel among you; and that which is its end and design, ought to be yours in attending it. The Gospel would make great and glorious work (I doubt not) among us, if it were more generally come to this, that the true end of the Gospel were our end, were convinced when we come to attend; how would it confound many a one if they were to give an account of their end in coming to attend, and wait on the ministry of the Gospel! I am going to such a place, such an assembly, such a church, such a meeting-house. Well, saith one, and what are you going for? I am going to hear what such a man can say; I am going to please my fancy and curiosity, to gratify my novel humour. God knows how few come to such assemblies with that temper of mind so as that they can truly say, being asked, He that knows all things, knows I go to look after the salvation of my own soul; it is a Gospel of salvation that I go to attend upon, and I go to attend upon it as such, on purpose that I may be saved, that I may in this way be working out my own salvation. But what an affront is it to the great and glorious Lord of heaven and earth to pervert the design of this Gospel. What? Have men nothing to play with but sacred things; things that carry the stamp of the authority and majesty, as well as the grace and goodness, of heaven upon them? Is there nothing else to be trifled with but things of that sacred and awful import? No wonder if the Gospel be hid, and no wonder if souls be lost by multitudes at this rate. But again,

3. We may further learn, That while a man lives under the Gospel, the great question that depends concerning him is, Shall I be saved, or shall I be lost? Here is the great question that depends concerning every one, and which they ought to recount with themselves over and over again. Here is this case depending concerning me; shall I be finally saved or lost? Oh! what an awful thought is this, that every day that goes over my head, and every time I go to hear a sermon, still this question lies under consideration; shall I in the issue, or end of my course, be a saved or a lost man? Sure at this rate we should be working out our salvation with fear and trembling; nothing becomes us more, nothing is more suitable to the state of our case. And,

4. We further learn hence, That men may be lost on this side hell. If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that *are* lost; hid before they reach hell, whither no Gospel comes; and so lost before they reach thither. And then again,

5. By parity of reason, Men may be saved on this side heaven, as well as they may be lost on this side hell. We know the great Emmanuel was otherwise called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins. If this blessed word hath taken effect upon thy soul, it is saved; that is, it is so far saved now from sin, as that it governs now no longer. Its empire is broken, its throne is thrown down in the soul. Here is salvation on this side heaven: salvation is this day come to this house, to this soul, he is already a saved one. There is inchoate salvation; salvation begun that ascertains consummate salvation, and from which that will not be separated. The New Jerusalem, that glorious city that comes down out of heaven from God; Rev. xxi. 4. (supposing that be meant of a state of the church of God on earth;) the nations of them that are saved, walk in it. As soon as they enter into it, there they walk as saved ones. The nations of the saved, there they dwell, there they inhabit the city of God.

6. They to whom the Gospel is not hid are not lost, or are of these saved ones; if they to whom the Gospel is hid be lost, they to whom it is not hid are saved. They are in this state of salvation already. Oh! happy creatures and blessed state that you are come into. The Gospel is no longer a hidden Gospel to you, though it is to many a one beside. With what admiration may you say, "I thank thee, Oh Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that when such things have been hid from many a wise and prudent one, thou hast revealed them unto me!" Matt. xi. 24, 25. hast caused thine own bright light to penetrate, to strike through into my very soul, to shine into my heart, as it follows in this context: "And thereupon, though I was a wanderer, a stray and lost creature, thou hast sought thy servant. I went astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments," Psal. cxix. last verse. Thou hast sought thy servant, and found him out. And thou mayst say of thy soul, as the father of his prodigal son; "This my soul was lost and is found," Luke xv. last verse. "We all went astray as lost sheep, and he

bare the iniquities of us all," (Isa. liii. 6.) that we might be recovered and saved at last. Oh you that find Gospel light to enter into your souls, bless God, and admire! The Gospel is not hid from me, I am therefore saved out of my lost state.

But besides these inferences of truth, there is a further and another sort of use that I must proceed to.

Use 2. It may be (upon what hath been before said in opening the doctrine of this text to you) some awakenings may be upon the spirits of some, perhaps some may have been in a going among us, and may say in their hearts, And what is likely upon all this to become of me? What is my final state like to prove? Shall I be saved, or shall I be lost? I would fain give some help in this case, and would in order to it, lead such into some distinction of thoughts, that they may not be confounded in their inquiry. Now this inquiry in general may be capable of being formed into three questions. Either, 1st, The meaning of their inquiry may be, Shall I be certainly saved at last? or, 2ndly, The meaning of their inquiry may be, How shall I do, certainly to know if I am certainly to be lost? or, 3rdly, The meaning of their inquiry may be, How shall I evidence it to myself, or have it evidenced to me, that there is any thing of hope in my case? That going on in the use of prescribed and appointed means, things may be brought at length to a happy issue? That I may have such a present view of my case, as to judge and think of it, that it may be possible that I may be saved at last?

I. Now as to the first of these questions, supposing it to be the question of any whom God hath begun lately to work on; of any that he hath begun lately to awaken:—then I must needs say to that question; Friend, you are too hasty, you make too much haste to think, that when God hath but newly begun with you, you should presently be at a certainty that you shall be saved. This may be more haste than good speed. When you have gone on a considerable tract of time in a serious endeavour of working out your salvation with fear and trembling; and giving all diligence to make your calling and election sure, it will be time enough to put this question then; it is yet unseasonable for you. And then,

2. Supposing that the next be the question with any, How shall I know that I shall be certainly lost? As the former question is an unreasonable one, this is a vain one, altogether vain. If you shall certainly be lost, what can it avail you to know that you shall? or do you think it is possible you should ever come to know it on this side being in hell? It must be by some revelation from God, mediate or immediate; but God doth not use to do vain things, to reveal any thing to no purpose: and this can be to no imaginable purpose. If you shall certainly be lost it can do you no good to foreknow it; and therefore the revelation of it is not to be expected from God any ways, mediately or immediately, and consequently it is a foolish vain question. But,

3. It the question be, How may it appear that there is any thing of hope in my case, that in the use of the prescribed and appointed means, I may, through the grace of God, possibly be saved at last? This is a sober question, and becoming a serious and considerate man, and one that hath a value for his soul, and a reverence for God, the great Disposer of our everlasting soul's concernments. And therefore in reference to this I would be assisting the best I can, and as God shall enable me. And there are many things that are to be said to it. As,

1. That you always ought to hope till there be most apparent reason for total despair. If there be not a reason for total despair, then you are under obligation to admit of some hope; nothing is plainer, that a reasonable creature, capable of futurity and of another state, he hath it as a law in his nature to use prospect, and to exercise hope, in reference to futurity. And I cannot but recollect a noted passage of that Platonic Jew, Philo Judæus, "That hope towards God, in reference to men's future concernments, is of the very essence of man; and he is not to be called a man, a human creature, that hath not hope in reference to his future concernments." And there is a great deal in it: it is to be looked upon as somewhat else than a lavish expression, for God hath (no doubt) contemplated the frame of all his creatures to their state: and having made man capable of futurity and eternity in another state, hope cannot but be an essentiating principle in his very nature. And therefore it is very unnatural and a doing violence to ourselves, to endeavour to take away all hope in reference to that futurity which is yet before you, and which you have yet in prospect. You ought to hope while there is no apparent cause of total despair; for whatsoever doth not admit totality, there must be somewhat of the contrary, by reason whereof it doth not so. There can be no imaginable ground upon which a man should not admit of a total despair, but as there is some hope. If there were no hope, despair would be total; if there be found hope, despair cannot be total. And it is matter of duty to you, always to entertain and cherish some hope when there is no apparent reason for total despair. That I fore-lay in the first-place.

2. There can be no reason for a total despair while the Gospel stands unrepealed; while it is neither generally repealed, nor repealed particularly as to you. All that while the connexion remains between faith in Christ and salvation; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. While this Gospel that makes this connexion between believing in the Son of God and not perishing, not being lost, but being saved, stands unrepealed, we have no reason for total despair. Still if I believe, I shall be saved; if I believe in the Son of God, I shall live. I have been a vile creature, it is true; a great rebel, not only against the authority, but against the grace of God; and I have deserved to perish a thousand times over, and to be given up as lost without remedy. But the Gospel is not yet repealed that saith, Whosoever believes in the Son of God shall not perish, shall not be lost, but have everlasting life; it is not repealed in general, nor shall be to the end of the world. And what? will any man say it is repealed as to him? It is repealed as to me? Pray show that repeal! you cannot say that it is repealed as to you, unless you had a Bible reached down from heaven that saith, whosoever believeth shall be saved, whosoever believeth on the Son of God shall not perish, but have everlasting life, except John such an one, or Thomas such an one, or Elizabeth such an one. Show me such a Bible that saith the Gospel is repealed as to you; though I believe never so much I shall not be saved, I am an excepted person. Where is the exception? Show me the Bible wherein is that exception.

Aye, but you may say, It is very true, I doubt not, that if yet I believe I may be saved; but alas! what reason have I to hope that I shall ever be brought to believe, ever be enabled to believe, who have resisted the grace of God, and the Spirit of God so long, so often, so injuriously, so insolently, as I have done? What hope is there that I shall ever be brought to believe? I add therefore,

3. That there is not only hope, nay, I may say ground of confidence, that if you believe you shall be saved, but there is also ground of very great hope, if you do indeed set your minds to inquire and consider about this matter, that you shall be brought to believe. For that is the head which I lay down here as the third in order; that all the while the command, the law, stands in force as to you, that obligeth you to believe, all that while there is a ground and reason left you to hope, that you shall be enabled to believe, when the evangelical law doth particularly oblige you amongst the rest that live under the Gospel, to believe in the Son of God, that you may not perish but have everlasting life, as much as if there were a law made in your case alone. If there were a particular law made concerning you, and laying the charge upon you—Do thou believe on the Son of God, that thou mayst not perish but have everlasting life; I say, you are as much obliged to believe on the Son of God, as if there were a particular law made concerning you, and none but you, concerning you alone. This is the command of God, this is the law, "that we believe on him whom he hath sent," John iii. 33. It cannot be said that because there is such a law that obligeth you to believe in Jesus Christ, therefore you certainly shall believe; but it is to be collected with the greatest clearness imaginable, that there being such a law obliging you to believe, you have reason to hope you shall be enable to believe if

you do seriously design the thing. Is it to be thought that God should come (as it were) directly to you, that the Son of God should apply himself directly to you, sinner; I charge thee, accept my Son, believe in my Son, take him to be thy Redeemer, thy Saviour, thy Lord; and that there should be no hope that ever you should do so, or that he will give you any help in order thereunto? This is the most unimaginable thing in all the world.

Question. But you may perhaps say, How shall I do to understand this, that I am under obligation to believe on the Son of God, that I may not perish, that I may not be lost!

Answer. To that I say, (that I may leave this a clear and undisputed thing in your thoughts,) either you must be so obliged to believe in the son of God, to receive and take him for yours, your Lord and Saviour, or else, your not doing so is no sin. Now, where is that person that dares to produce himself, and say, I live under the Gospel, that Gospel is come to me, whereof this is the great fundamental law, the command of the great Author of it, even of the God of heaven; this is his commandment, that we believe on his Son; but it is a commandment that doth not oblige me? Where is the man that dares say, If I live an infidel under the Gospel all the rest of my time, I am no sinner in it? If believing be not your duty, not believing is not your sin. But what? is there any body that can say, or dare say, that to refuse Christ is not his sin? Then to accept him is duty. Therefore doth this Gospel, still as you live under it, urge it on you as a duty out of hand to come to an agreement with the Son of God; resign thyself up to him, put thyself into his hands, and at his feet; into his hands to be saved, and at his feet to be subject and to obey him. This the Gospel chargeth on you; and while it doth so, while it calls you to repentance, and calls you to faith, you have reason to hope still: I have God's warrant, why should I not expect his help? If he calls me, why shall I not think he will help me, help me to repent, and help me to believe in his Son, that I may not be finally and for ever lost! And again,

4. You can do nothing in your circumstances more pleasing and grateful to God, than to hope in his mercy; thus to state your case, I am naturally a lost creature, a perishing creature, I have deserved to perish over and over; that a Spirit of divine light and grace should never visit my soul more, or look after me more, I have highly deserved it; but yet I have heard of the nature of God, that he is immensely good and gracious; his name hath told me his nature, "The Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, pardoning iniquity, trangression, and sin," Exod. xxxiv. 5. I will throw myself upon that name, I will cast myself on his mercy; I have nothing to do but that; and that, why should I stick to do? Now, I say, you please him, you please him beyond all things that in your circumstances you are any way capable of doing. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him and that hope in his mercy.—Pleasure in them! Strange that any act of an abject, guilty, impure, perishing wretch should be pleasing and grateful to the pure, holy, glorious, ever-blessed God; that he should be pleased with any act of mine. Why, it is not as it is yours, but it is with reference to the object, as it is a thing suitable unto him, a tribute due to his great and glorious name. It is the best acknowledgment you can make of his deity, of his godhead, of his most excellent perfect nature, comprehensive of all perfection, but wherein we are taught to conceive this as the most eminent, when we are told that God is love. Here is a poor creature, as insolent as he hath been, (saith God,) as proud, as full of enmity and malignity against me, now I see he comes to acknowledge me to be God, that is, acknowledgeth me to be merciful, infinitely, immensely merciful, beyond limits merciful, beyond expressions merciful. He takes pleasure in them that hope in his mercy. Now (saith he) they give me my due, now they acknowledge me to be God, that they will yet hope in my mercy. Remember all this while that it is hope that I am encouraging you to, without security; you have reason to hope, but you have no reason to be secure, no more that he hath who in a battle encompassed with thousands about him alive yet, yet alive, but still deaths are flying about him as thick as hail. You have reason to hope, but no reason to be secure; but, if you hope, you do the most grateful thing to God, you pay him the most pleasant grateful tribute that such an abject creature as any of us is capable of rendering to him; you give him the proper glory of the Deity, boundlessly good and gracious, rich in mercy. This is to own him to be God, to own him to be infinite, to own that his ways do as far exceed your ways, and his thoughts your thoughts, as east and west, and heaven and earth, are asunder, Isa. lv. 8, 9. Again,

5. Know that it is not for you to prescribe limits to the exercise of this mercy, it is not for you to set bounds to it. If God limit himself, and any way signify that he hath done so, so be it; but that he hath no way signified. But it is great insolency for any of us to talk of limiting him; to say, so far the patience of God shall extend, and no further; beyond such a sermon he will never give me one minute's addition to the day of grace. It is not for you to limit him; if he limit himself, you have nothing to say to that, but that he hath never told you he hath done, or will do, in reference to your case. But I would have you to be possessed with the apprehension how uncreaturely a thing it is for any of us to take upon us to limit God, and set a day to the exercise of his patience, his sparing mercy, his bounty, and his saving mercy. If you do rightly take up this matter, you will understand, that there is in despair the highest presumption. There is not in any thing higher presumption than there is in absolute despair. If you allow yourselves absolutely to despair, and say, God will never look after my soul; then nothing remains to me but to abandon it to perish. I say, you cannot be guilty of a higher presumption than doth lie in this despair; for it is for you to take upon you to limit God, to measure God; you take upon you hereby to determine what infiniteness can do, and what it cannot do. This is very bold presumption. This is most uncreaturely arrogance; for you to take upon you to set God his limits and bounds. No; say I will always wait, and always hope, let him defer as long as he pleaseth; but let me lie a prostrate creature at his foot, still in fears, and tears, and tremblings; though it be till I perish, I will perish in this posture, rather than ever to say he cannot help me, he will not save me; it will not consist with the limits of his patience and bounty towards a poor wretch to save me. Take heed of saying so. There is high presumption in this despair.

There are many other things behind.

SERMON XII.*

2 Cor. iv. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid.

We have the use in hand of this terrible word; sundry inferences of truth we recommended to you from it; and proceeded to other uses, wherein the design was to speak suitably to the case of awakened souls among us, that have made known their case, and their solicitous sad thoughts. We have had regard to this great inquiry, What shall we do that we may understand our own case, and how matters are like finally to issue with us?—Shall we be saved, or shall we be lost? And several things were spoken to that which we stated as a sober question; which answers were general, and more fundamental to what was to ensue. And those things being forelaid, we shall now go on to give some characters that may be distinguished somewhat of the state of persons under the Gospel; so as that, if they be found, will give ground of hope; if they be not found, it will administer much ground of fear.

But here you must take the matter thus: that, for such characters as those which I shall mention, the discerning of them actually upon yourselves is never intended so to encourage your hope as if no apprehension of danger should still remain; you are not to hope without apprehension of

* Preached April 26th, 1691.

danger; and if such characters are not found, you are not to fear without apprehension of remedy; because (as hath been told you) the design is not to tell you who shall certainly be saved, or who certainly lost; but only to show what cause there is, or may be, of more or less hope or fear, in reference to the final issue of things with you. And so,

1. It gives much ground of hope when any do find in themselves a formed desire of understanding distinctly the terms of life and death; when any would fain know upon what terms they may expect to be saved or perish in the final issue of things; when they do not desire to be unacquainted with the true tenor of the Gospel as touching these matters; but accurately to know what is required, that they may live, and escape the wrath that is to come. That hiddenness of the Gospel that is in connexion with the being lost, is with those with whom it hath this fatal event, a chosen thing, a voluntary thing; it is hid by an affected blindness of heart. Men are blind, as being unwilling to see, Ephes. iv. 18. "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." If thou hadst known; it is plain, that that not knowing was faulty, inasmuch as their being afterwards hid was penal; and it could not be faulty but as being voluntary,—that they did not desire to know the things of their peace; whoever of you can avow it before the great Searcher of hearts, and speak it to him as the sense of your souls, "Lord, thou that knowest all things, knowest that I do desire to understand what the tenor and import of that rule is by which souls are to live or die for ever; I desire to understand it as it is,—not to have it disguised to me, —not to have it misrepresented, according as the foregoing expressions are; wherein the apostle protests against the disguising of the word, and clothing of things with specious false colours; but approving and commending themselves in the manifestation of the very truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God, 2 Cor. iv. 1, 2. They (I say) that can avow this have ground of hope; and they that would not have it so, they are persons to whom the Gospel is hid, and are lost, as the series of discourse shows. You have much cause to hope God will drive things to a good issue with you at length, if you do seriously desire to understand his mind in the Gospel, what it doth determine concerning the way of saving sinners; which, if they take, they are saved; if they do not, they are lost. When this is your sense, "For thy name's sake lead me and guide me; show me thy way, I would fain walk in thy truth!" But for such as desire only to have smooth things said unto them; and if the true doctrine of the Gospel will be terrible; if it will look with an unfavourable aspect upon my vicious inclinations,—Let me never hear it. If any say to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" (Job xxi. 14.) "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from among us," Isaiah xxx. 11. They say to the prophets, Prophesy not; we do not desire to have that bright light stand so directly in view before our eyes; oh, might it cease! oh, might it disappear! This is a dreadful token; a very dreadful token; and if any, more than others, are in danger of being lost under the Gospel, these are the men. They that receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved, (their spirits could by no means comport with the truth,) are given up that they might perish,—that they "might be damned," 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. And,

It is very hopeful where there is a great sense of remaining ignorance; when any do think very meanly of the knowledge that they have of those great and important things of God, that do concern souls so very nearly. Agur is brought in saying, "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man;" (Prov. xxx. 2.) when there is a very humble, self-abasing opinion taken up and maintained of our own meanness, blindness, and darkness, the great imperfection and defectiveness of our knowledge in the most needful things. This looks very hopefully; and on the other hand it is a very dreadful token, when any think themselves so wise that they need be taught no more. There is more hope of a fool than of such a one, that is wise in his own conceit; he seems marked out for destruction, that thinks he is so well acquainted with all the great secrets and mysteries of godliness that he needs no further instruction; and thereupon despises and hates it. "He that hateth instruction shall die." They are plain, peremptory words; and nothing is in the nature of the thing of a more destructive tendency. As the moralist said, *Multi pervenissent ad sapientiam, &c.* many might have attained to wisdom if they had not thought they had attained to it already. So many might have attained to the saving knowledge of God in Christ, if they had not thought they had already attained. Again,

3. It is a very hopeful token, when there is any perception of knowledge growing in these great things; when we can apprehend that light doth come in by the appointed means; that God hath shined into our heart, as it follows in this context: "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them;" but "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts," 2 Cor. iv. 5, 6. That is a sign then the Gospel is not quite hid, if some beams of light be darted in, be injected. If you find there is an increase, it is to be increased with "the increase of God," as the apostle's expression is; (Colos. ii. 19.) for this is divine knowledge that we are speaking of, the "knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And it is to them that do observe themselves a perceptible thing, and a thing to be perceived with pleasure, when there is an increase. How grateful is the appulse, the first arrival of any new beam of light, any new thought; when the mind comes to be more and more opened, and things let in upon it, which it is of concernment to it to understand and know. And do but consider, such of you as are more solicitous about the state of your case, and what is like to be the final issue of things with you: You have lived a considerable time under the Gospel; and, what, have you gained no acquaintance with the great contents thereof? There are many things discovered concerning the state of man by nature, do you understand nothing of them? Do you not know that he is a degenerate creature, that he hath a blind mind, a corrupt, depraved heart? That he is wrapped up in guilt, and exposed thereupon to divine displeasure? It reveals much of a Redeemer; do you understand nothing of that?—who this Redeemer is, the eternal Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, the heir of all things; that he came into this world, took human flesh, and died a sacrifice for sin? Do not you understand this? and that hereupon God is well pleased with him for his righteousness sake, that Divine justice acquiesceth, expects no higher, no other sacrifice?—That, whereas there must be a great change wrought in the temper of men's spirits to make them capable of the duty of time, and the felicity of eternity; an Almighty Spirit is obtained by the blood of that sacrifice, that it should go forth to do this great work upon the souls of men; so that you are not to be left hopeless, struggling in your own impotence to attempt and undertake (as it were) a new creation in your own souls; but that Spirit will be given to them that ask it, and you may draw in its influences as so much vital breath. These things the Gospel acquaints you with; and do you understand nothing of them? Hath no light come in by all this discovery all this while? Indeed it is a fearful token where there is no knowledge by long-sitting under the Gospel; when any man's case doth admit it to be said of them, they are "ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth;" a sort of persons marked out for separation from God and all good men; from such turn aside; such as have a form of godliness, but deny the power of it; (2 Tim. iii. 7.) and are "ever learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth;" it is a people of no understanding, "therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour;" (Isaiah xxvii. 11.) for, (as hath been said,) ignorance under the Gospel, of that it hath made necessary to be understood, and done in order to salvation; it is most voluntary, and therefore comes to be punished by the Gospel's being hid, and their being lost, if they finally prove to be so. And again,

4. It yet will look well and hopefully, if you find that you have a real value for the Gospel; if you esteem highly

of it; if you consider it as the "word of life," as the Gospel of your salvation; and if such notions as are given you of it, and under which you are taught to conceive of it, have recommended it to you, and you look upon it as a sacred and venerable thing; if you do not come to hear a sermon as if you were to hear a story told you; to hear the word of God as a tale that is told; but the word of it recommends itself to you as a majestic thing, as carrying a divine stamp and impress upon it; if you be in any measure awed by it, so as to tremble at the divine word,—this is a most comfortable character where it can be found. It is towards such that God is looking with favour, when any come and sit trembling under his word. He will not look with slight and despising eyes upon such; he looks upon them with indulgence and a favourable regard,(Isaiah lxvi. 2.) and you may look upon it, that he is in the way with you, while you find that disposition in your own spirits towards his word. That he may reckon, I will speak to such, and not be disregarded in what I say. If there be not so pleasant a relish of divine truths; if yet there be an awe of them; though they do not appear amiable to you, if yet they appear awful and majestic; and you consider, when you attend upon Gospel dispensations, you have to do with divine things; and you consider the word that you do hear, not as the words of men, but as they are, indeed, the words of God; there is hope in this case: this hath a good aspect, looks promisingly towards a good issue. But when the Gospel itself is looked upon as a contemptible thing, as much regard would be showed to a fable; this is of most dreadful import; when the very means of our salvation is come into contempt with us, as they that in a dangerous sickness are brought to despise the only proper remedies that can be thought of, as capable for recovering them, and saving their lives, this is a dangerous token. Again,

5. It looks hopefully, if you find that the intention of your mind is much engaged in hearing the word; it is a natural consequent of your having awful thoughts of it, of your esteeming highly of it as a divine revelation; that which should be immediately consequent hereupon must be a very earnest intention of spirit in hearing of it, to attend it as that wherein my very life is concerned; the word saith, "Hear, and your souls shall live," Isa. lv. 3. Thereupon you must say, I will hear, that my soul may live. If this be your design in hearing, it is very hopeful indeed, that you are not likely to be lost under the Gospel. If this be the temper of your minds, I come to hear that my soul may live; and so you watch every word; you observe and bend the strength of your minds, as much as in you is, to attend and listen to what you hear; as the eyes of the assembly are said to be fastened on our Lord when he took the book of God, and expounded and opened it to them, Luke iv. 20. But if there be no attention in hearing; if persons come to such assemblies as these to see, or help to make a show only, to see a reed shaken with the wind; if this be your errand, you come to please your fancy, or you come because you do not else know what to do with so much time; you do not know how to employ an otherwise waste hour, and therefore go to this or that church or meeting, (as it happens,) throw yourself in here or there; this is of very threatening import. If this temper of mind should continue with you, it looks as fatally as any can be thought; that a man will be lost under that Gospel at last which he never regards, to which he gives no attention. It may be, you are not at leisure, your thoughts are otherwise taken up; as it was with Ezekiel's hearers, "They sit before thee as my people," (Ezek. xxxiii. 31.) and with their mouths they show much love; (with their countenances they do, they carry the appearance and show of those that come out of love to my worship, and to exercise devotedness to me;) but their hearts go after their covetousness; their heart was wandering all the while. I do not speak, in this case, of the incursion, the surprising incursion, of vain and unsuitable thoughts, the wanderings which we sincerely bind and set ourselves against, and cannot totally hinder; but I speak of letting our spirits at liberty to wander, keeping them under no restraint, letting our thoughts rove for such an hour or two together, when we are to be attending to things that concern the life and death of our souls. This is a very dismal token, wheresoever it is to be found. If it be thus usually with any, none more likely to be lost under the Gospel than such. And again,

6. It looks hopefully, if, so far as you have understood, and, by earnest attention from time to time, come to know the true meaning and import of the Gospel, and what the terms of life and death for souls really are; you do thereupon desire to have your hearts wrought up to those terms; and there is no wish entertained with you, that you give harbour to, that the tenor of the whole Gospel were otherwise than it is; you do not desire that the terms of life and death should be brought down to a compliance with your inclinations; but you desire your hearts may be wrought up to them; and say, Do not make me a Gospel like myself, but make me like the Gospel. Is that your sense? It looks very encouragingly; I would take this Gospel just as it is; I find it requires the receiving Christ Jesus as a Saviour and as a Lord; I am willing it should be thus; I do not desire there should be any change to gratify any ill inclination of mine in this tenor of the Gospel. I find it forbids all manner of sin; and reigning sin, under the severest penalty; that wherever it reigns it dooms too. I submit to this state of the case; I desire to have every thing of sin down, not to be in dominion. It may be, there are some fainter desires of this kind having place where a real thorough work is not yet wrought. But it is well there is so far a tendency towards it; that you are right in your aims and designs, and that you have the true mark before your eye; that is, to have the great and proper impression of the Gospel inwrought into your souls, and they made agreeable to it; and that you do not wish to have a Gospel formed on purpose to be more agreeable to you. When once a soul is transformed into the likeness and image of the Gospel; this is it that doth most certainly characterize it for heaven and eternal glory. You have "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you," (or into which you have been delivered, as that may be read, Rom. vi. 17.) this is to have that "fruit unto holiness" habitually first, the end whereof will be "eternal life," as it follows in the same chapter; and while you are aiming at this, and tending to this, the matter carries a very hopeful aspect with it. As on the other hand, it is very dreadful, when that, whatsoever wit and skill any have more than others is all employed this way, to wrest, and torture, and mis-shape the rule by which their present practice is to be measured, and by which God's final judgment is to be measured concerning them. When the Gospel is not to transform you, but you to transform the Gospel; you would not be shapen according to it, but you will fain shape it according to yourselves, according to your own hearts; nothing doth look more like one to be lost and perish under the Gospel than this. And,

7. Whereas, that Gospel by which you are to be saved, (if ever you be saved,) is a Gospel of reconciliation; it is a very hopeful character if you do really desire and value friendship with God; if his love and favour be of real value with you; when you can speak this as the sense of your souls, "In his favour is life;" (Psal. xxx. 5.) which you must understand did not only hold forth the truth of the thing, but the sense of a good man, a well-minded man, concerning that truth. It is very true, indeed, that, if you consider the thing itself, objectively taken, in the favour of God stands the life of every one; but this doth not only speak the truth of the thing, but it speaks the sense of a good and honest heart; that he accounts that in the favour of God stands his very life. And, do you really account so?—so as whatever you have to enjoy in the world besides that, cannot satisfy you, if your hearts yet hang in doubt within you concerning your state God-ward. It is not corn, and wine, and oil, that you wish for, and can satisfy yourselves with; but, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance, and that will put more joy into our hearts than when corn, and wine, and oil increase!" Oh, there can be no worse character, than when it is a matter of indifference with any, whether God have a favour for them, or no favour! His friendship and his enmity is all one to them. Under a Gospel of reconciliation, how likely are such to be lost, when the very end of this Gospel of reconciliation between God and them is a disregarded, despised thing; when men can go all the day long through the hurry

of their affairs and businesses, and their thoughts are filled and taken up with vanity and with impertinences, in comparison, but no room is left for one such thought throughout a whole day, How stand things between me and heaven? Am I under the Divine favour or disfavour? How fearful was the case of those Israelites, when they had, at the same time, meat in their mouths and wrath upon their heads? God "gave them quails for their use, and they did eat, and the wrath of God came upon them while they were eating," Psal. lxxviii. 30, 31. "On the wicked he rains snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest," Psal. xi. 6. "He is angry with the wicked every day," Psal. vii. 11. They that concern not themselves about any such matters, it is all one to them, Give me what will please my appetite, sense, or flesh, and let God be pleased or displeased. I am willing to run the hazard of that. This looks very fatally, when it is so.

And then again, as consequent to this,

8. Truly, fear itself doth give much ground of hope. It is a very hopeful character upon you, when you are really afraid lest a controversy should still depend, and not be taken up between God and you: "Blessed is he that (thus) feareth always," Prov. xxviii. 14. And so it is, on the other hand, a very black character, where there is no such thing. He that hardeneth his heart against such fear, shall fall into mischief. And again,

9. Where there is much consideration about the affairs of your souls, and your hearts are much taken up in musing and meditating on these matters, it is a hopeful sign. An unconsidering soul is a perishing soul,—hath the character upon it of a lost soul. But if your mind be full of thoughts from time to time; or, if there be many times when you can set yourselves on purpose to consider the state of your souls, and your case God-ward, this looks very hopefully; that is, that God is at work with you, that he is dealing with your spirits; for you are not to assume it to yourselves that there are any such good thoughts, any which have that tendency, which have that look. "We are not sufficient to think any thing as of ourselves;" (2 Cor. iii. 5.) that is, which is good. Indeed, one ground why many are so apt excessively to torture and disquiet their spirits with the apprehension of an irrecoverable lost state, is from too much arrogance; that is, they are apt to arrogate to themselves such things, which, upon reflection, they cannot deny are in them; for you must know there is common grace that leads to special. If it hath not reached up to special, it hath a tendency and leadingness thitherward. If God be dealing with spirits by his common grace, it looks hopefully if it be comported with; and when thoughts do throng in from time to time with you, that you cannot do as the most do, that is, throw away all concern about your souls, as it may be the generality, so far as you have opportunity to observe, trouble not themselves (as you can discern) with any thoughts at all, what shall become of them hereafter. But there have been such thoughts which have been struck in as so many darts and arrows into your hearts. You are not to think that you have been the authors of them to yourselves, but that God is at work with you, is dealing with you, is in the way with you; and this (I say) looks hopefully, if it be duly comported with. And yet, again,

10. It is a very hopeful, encouraging character, if you should find upon consideration that you have arrived no further, and that you have not gotten to a firmer, more settled state in holiness and walking with God, yet you do also find a great disposition in yourself to self-accusing; that you are apt to criminate yourself, to find fault with yourself, and to lay load on yourself with blame; to wrap up yourself (as it were) with shame; that your proficiency hath been so slow and little all this while. This looks very hopefully; when this is the sense of your souls, looking in, and looking up at the same time, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" The publican's character was a good character, and a hopeful one, compared with the opposite one of the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 13. The Pharisee and the publican both go up together to the temple to pray; the Pharisee hath nothing to take notice of in himself but his good deeds, (and very pitiful ones they were,) "I fast twice in the week; I give alms of all I possess;" I pay "tithes, mint, anise, and cummin;" (we are told elsewhere they punctually paid these tithes;) "I am not as other men, nor as this publican." The publican hath nothing to say; but, standing at awful distance, cries out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And the publican (it is said) "went home to his house justified rather than the other." Such as are full of self-accusing thought, they live with perhaps too tormenting fears concerning their state God-ward, yet there is that of intermingled good with it that leads towards a good issue at length, and which carries a plain indication, that they are not to look upon their state as a lost state. And, especially,

11. If there be any relentings towards God, any tender relenting and self-bemoaning. There may be self-accusing without these kindly genuine touches of remorse that there should be; and there may be of them too, and in too low a degree, and in too transient a manner. But while there is any thing of them, there is real ground of hope that God is dealing with you, and is likely to carry on the work further, according as you duly comport with him in what he hath begun, and is yet doing. "I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself," Jer. xxxi. 18. Refer that to what goes before, and you will see there is "hope in their end." "I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself;"—things are like to have a good issue yet, though he hath been wayward, cross, perverse, and rebellious; yet, let me listen to him; do not I hear him bemoaning himself?—"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, and secretly saying, Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." There is hope in the end, as to this case. It looks as if it would have a good end at last. A heart hard as a rock under the Gospel, is a dreadful thing; the impenitent heart, the heart that cannot repent. And I add, lastly,

12. If there be yet a resolution to persist, to go on in the way that leads towards life, this looks well; you have not yet attained; you are not yet at a certainty; but yet you are resolved to go on, to hold on your course according to that warning given by good Samuel to the people of Israel, that were now set a trembling, and in a most dreadful consternation, what would become of them; they dreamed of nothing, when God thundered upon them, and when the lightning from heaven testified divine displeasure; they, I say, thought of nothing but destruction. Well, (saith Samuel,) do not you, for your part, "turn aside from following the Lord;" he will not cast you off if you persevere in your way, and turn not aside from following him. He will not cast off his people, because it hath pleased the Lord to make them his people; he will cast off none that do not first cast off him. And many such, too, he may recall and recover; but while there is a resolution with you, come of it what will, I will never forsake the holy way; I will spend my days in prayers and tears: I will never give over waiting and seeking, whatever comes of it. Oh! what an emphatical benediction is that we find pronounced in this case! "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors; for whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord," Prov. viii. 34, 35. There is a blessing upon all waiting ones. Pray, take that blessing home, whosoever of you are yet trembling ones, suspenseful ones,—you that have hearts full of doubt, you know not what will become of things with you; if there be that resolution to wait and persist in a known prescribed way of duty, he that so doth, hath a blessing pronounced from the God of his salvation; there is a blessing over his head from the God of his salvation, to show you how little liable he is to the heavy doom of being irrecoverably lost. That God, who glories in the title of the God of our salvation, he is breathing down a blessing upon you all, while that you are resolved upon a course of waiting; I will wait till I die; "I will call upon him as long as I live;" I will never give over following him, let him do what he will with me. This is the course that is never likely to have an ill end.

SERMON XIII.*

2 Cor. iv. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

WE are, upon the use of this, and the last we insisted upon was of inquiry; or, we intended therein to assist their inquiry who may be solicitous touching the state of their own case, whether they are not lost irrecoverably while they live under a Gospel that alms at the saving of souls, but which they apprehend doth them no good, and they fear never will. I have in reference to such, the last time, given sundry characters that will bespeak their state upon whom they are found, not to be hopeless; that it is such, as concerning which they ought by no means to conclude that they are lost, that they are out of the reach of mercy.

And, as to what thereupon remains, I have only this further to do, that is, to lay down two conclusions, in which I shall sum up much of the meaning of what hath been said; that is,

1. That there can be no hope that their state shall be good and safe at last, who continually live in the neglect of those methods which the Gospel they live under prescribes in order to their salvation. And,

2. That there can be no ground for them to fear they shall be finally lost, who, with dependance on the grace of the Spirit of Christ, are resolved, to their uttermost, to use the methods which the Gospel doth prescribe in order to salvation. The one sort have, in their present state, no reasonable ground to hope; the other, in their present posture, have no reasonable ground of despairing fear. These two conclusions sum up what I would leave with you upon this subject. And thereupon I shall say somewhat, 1st, By way of warning, and (if that will not do) by way of lamentation, to the former sort. And, 2dly, somewhat by way of exhortation and encouragement to the latter.

1. As to the former, I must repeat it to them, that they have no ground for a present hope that they shall be saved, in the continued neglect of those means and methods which the Gospel hath prescribed for salvation. And I would recommend to such, for their warning, those plain and awful words, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for God worketh in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure," Phil. ii. 12, 13. There is an injunction with the reason of it, and both the injunction and the reason have their distinct parts. As to the injunction, there is the substance of it, with its modification. And the enforcing reason thereof hath in it considerable too of the substance thereof, and its modification, each of the latter corresponding with each of the former: Work you; why? for God works; do you work with fear and trembling, for God works at will and pleasure. You have reason to work, because God works. You have reason to work "with fear and trembling," because he works under no obligation, but at absolute liberty, so that he may desist when he will. If you resist, if you withstand, if you work not in subserviency, in subordination to his gracious work, he may retire and leave you to perish when he will; he works at will and pleasure, therefore do you work with "fear and trembling." And since we find the Scripture doth speak after this tenor, here and in many other places, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate,"—"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure,"—"They that run in a race, run all, but one obtains the prize; so run that you may obtain:" as if he should say, Do you so run as if you were the only person in all the world that should be saved, and you might be that one; that is, as if you did know, that but one person in all the world should be saved, and you might be that one. "But one obtains the prize;" run as though there were but one that should be saved, and that you may be that one. Since (I say) this is the tenor of Scripture in reference to the great affairs of our salvation, or that we may not be finally lost under this Gospel; there can be no present hope, no ground for a present rational hope for them that do counterwork these stated methods that God hath prescribed for the saving of souls. I will not say, that God will never reclaim you; we know not what boundless immense goodness, and the riches of mercy, that are with him may do;—but, I say, you have not a ground for a present rational hope; the way you are in takes hold of hell, and leads down to the chambers of death. You are in the way to perish. Such as have determined within themselves they will continue in a sinful endeavour of pleasing their flesh, and in a sinful neglect of saving their souls, and will admit no thought that tends to their disquiet, and to cross them in their sinful course; but they live under the Gospel. They (I say) that do so conjoin with the profession of the Gospel the contempt of it, are never to expect that they are to be saved by the Gospel they despise; or that the grace of it shall save them, while the authority of it doth not rule them. They have no reason to expect that. Therefore, if this should be the continued resolution of any; (I hope better things as to you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak;) but if this should be the continuing resolution and posture of any soul, nothing remains but to lament their case.

I would take up a lamentation for such, and invite all that are serious to join with me in lamenting the wretched forlorn state of such as are perishing upon these terms. Sundry things concur to give us here the representation and prospect of a most dismal and deplorable condition; a stake that doth even claim and challenge from us to be lamented; that we lament, while all endeavours of remedying it seem still frustrate and in vain. Why,

(1.) Such are perishing under the Gospel; that is, they are benighted at noon; they have created to themselves a horrid darkness in the midst of a bright and clear day;—they are lost in a day of salvation. This is the day of salvation; it is so (it is to be hoped) to many others; and, oh, what a fearful thing it is to be lost, and perish amidst a company that are taking hold of salvation, or of whom salvation is taking hold? And,

(2.) They are the more fearfully lost, not only under the means of salvation, but by them; Gospel light strikes them blind: "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light;" the sweet vital savours of the Gospel strike them dead; become to them the "savour of death unto death." They are so much the more miserably lost, by how much the more there is of apt and suitable endeavours used in vain for the saving of them. The blessed God opens to them the design he hath in hand of saving sinners; he hath sent his Son with direct application to them, "to seek and to save them that are lost;" his Spirit strives with them, and against all its motions, all its convictions, they are breaking their own way to eternal ruin. How dismal is the case, to think that they are so often invited, yet are lost; warned, and yet lost! lost! Exhorted, and yet lost! Besought, and yet lost! Wept over, and yet lost! They descend, and go down and perish under the entreaties, and against the prayers and cries, of friends and relations, and of such to whom their souls are dear even as their own souls. And again,

(3.) It is to be considered that it is their souls that are lost. This is the subject of the loss. Ah, poor wretch! if thou hadst only lost an estate; if thou hadst only lost an eye; if thou hadst only lost a limb, a hand, a foot, a leg, an arm, here had been either some remedy, or some relief for this loss; but to lose a soul, an immortal spirit; to have that precipitated and plunged into an eternal ruin,—what reparation, what remedy for this loss? And,

(4.) Such are lost when they never thought of it, or, it may be, when they had the positive thought all the while of being saved; when they speak Peace, peace, to themselves, sudden destruction, a sudden destruction, comes upon them. Wast thou not wont to say, I shall be safe in my neglect of God? I shall live a prayerless life, and be safe? I shall live a vicious life, and be safe? I may please my flesh, and gratify my sense all my days, and be safe? Are they not wont to think so? They perish when they think not of it; they are ingulfed and swallowed up in an unfeared ruin; sunk the worse, and so much the

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more dreadfully, by how much the less it was dreaded, the more fearfully the less it was feared. And,

(5.) It is very deplorable, in their case, to think of the companions that they have been formerly associated with, and that they are associated with now. Such as have been companions with them in exercises of religion, such as have been companions with them in acts of wickedness, and such as are now companions with them in torments, fearful aggravations of their being thus lost, arise from such. Those that they have been wont to hear sermons with, and that they have been associated with in the drunken debauches that have drowned all the remembrance of them. Those that they have been with (it may be) under convictions, under some good impressions; and with them in those acts of wickedness that have stupified their souls, and bereft them of sense, and abolished and obliterated all the impressions that were made on them before. What heightenings will here be of the wo!—what enforcement of the torment of that state, when the wretched partakers therein together shall fall to mutual upbraidings, criminations, and recriminations of one another!—when one shall say, Oh, cursed be the day that ever I saw thy face! and the other shall retort, and say, Oh, cursed be the day that ever I saw thine!—that we who did sometimes pray together, and sat under the word of God together, could encourage and heighten one another to that pitch of wickedness, to be sensual together, debauched together, vain together, drunken together, wicked together, in affront to all that light that shone in our faces, and that shone in our very consciences! And,

(6.) What a mighty addition will it make to be perpetually reflecting, in that state wherein thou canst not choose, canst not cease to be an everlasting companion to thyself?—when one is to be but his own companion, as he hath made himself very ill company to himself, he cannot but be much worse in the infernal state, when there shall be an everlasting self-consciousness of former wickedness and present resentments that cannot be avoided, and against which it is impossible his soul should now be able to fortify itself. Oh, the pitiable state of going down to perdition with an enlightened mind! Consider that. Think of it over again. The pitiable state (I say) of going down to perdition with an enlightened mind; to descend with rational principles in a man's soul, which by how much the less heretofore they did serve for government, do so much the more effectually now serve for torment;—that light that did not govern, did then condemn, and doth now torment. The clearer the light the more fervent the fire, when that light turns all into flames, and tormenting flames; so much the more light, so much the more the fervour of that flame. To reflect in that cursed society, that every man shall be to himself his own cursed companion in the place of torment, upon the rational principles that he had admitted, understood, and assented to before; and to think then how very reasonable (oh, how very reasonable!) were such sentiments as these, often inculcated on me in my former state, that a creature can never have been made to be his own end; that it could never be supposed that a reasonable, intelligent, immortal spirit, was principally designed to serve a piece of clay; that a religion, that could never suffice to govern a man, would never suffice to save him; that that which doth not sufficiently distinguish one from a wicked world, shall never distinguish him from a perishing world. How often have such things as these been inculcated! and who sees not the reason of them now? But when they shall be revived in the future state, in that state wherein the wretched creature finds himself finally and irrecoverably lost, how will the light of all these rational principles glare in his face! Then what a stupid foolish creature was I that could not consider these plain things before, when I saw how plain they were! When one shall reflect and bethink himself, How often was I told that that religion, which should end in felicity, must begin in transformation! If it shall make my soul happy hereafter, it must change me now, it must have changed it in the former state; it must have implanted the love of God in it,—it must have inwrought into it the prædmordial principles of the Divine likeness, otherwise the temper of my own soul must banish me from the Divine presence, and associate me with devils and damned spirits, throughout a long eternity. How often did I hear these things! How plain were they and unanswerable! How impossible to oppose any thing to the light and evidence of them! These are things wherein the Gospel doth recommend itself to the very consciences of men that sit under it, as the foregoing words speak, "we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." They have done so, who have spoken to you at this rate, and about such things as these. If such a Gospel be hid; if the things contained in it that carry so convictive cogent light and evidence in them; if these things (I say) be hid, what can the issue be but to be lost? And how terrible will that be! How dreadful must the case be, when any find themselves finally lost, and to have nothing to do in a vast immense eternity, but to revolve these plain convictive thoughts in their own wretched minds! And again, it may be added,

(7.) What an additional weight of misery will there be from reflecting upon those that were companions with many such in their former state, and did take the right and safe way, and persisted and persevered in it to the end! What tormenting resentments will arise from the thoughts of such! To think of such and such a one, we have gone to the assemblies together, we have set together under the same sermons. It may be such a one was convinced, and so was I; perhaps we compared thoughts with one another. the convictions with such and such issued in a thorough work. Such and such a one being convinced did shut up himself in secret; he wrought out the matter in prayer with the blessed God. The thing issued at length in a solemn covenant between him and the Redeemer; he gave up his soul, infolded in the bonds of an everlasting covenant, into his hands who is the great and only Saviour of souls. And why did not I do so too? We have had the same warning; "My son, when sinners entice thee, consent thou not," Prov. i. 10. Oh, why did he take warning, and why did not I? Why did he pray, and why did not I? Why did he covenant with God, and why did not I? Why did he say God should be his God, and I would never be brought to say it? And, why was he true and steadfast to that covenant, but I was false and unsteady? And.

(8.) How will it wound to think how near the matter was to a determination the other way, at some particular juncture of time; sometimes, when I was deliberating, the balances seemed to hang even, and I was just upon resolving the safe and happy way! O wretched creature that I was! what came into my mind that I should recede and revolt, and fly back when I was urged to it, to come just now to a closure with God in Christ: accept and resign, take him, and give up myself? What madness possessed me, that, when I was just going to do it, I did it not? What plucked me back? Oh, to think how very light matters turned the scale! the other season of sensual delights; this and that vainly to be tried once again; less than a feather cast the balance against my God and my soul, and my eternal well-being; what will these things do in an eternity, when a man hath no other employment for his thoughts? And, lastly, to think,

(9.) That I took him for my adviser whom I might easily have known to be the destroyer of souls, and against whom I know to be the Saviour of them. The counsels that come from our blessed Lord and Redeemer, and the temptations of the wicked one, they carry their own differences so manifestly along with them, that nothing could have been easier than to have discerned and perceived the difference; whose was the voice in the one, and whose in the other; whose language was now spoke, and whose language then. How easy is it to discern the difference when there are suggestions thrown into the mind, "Soul, take thine ease," pursue thy pleasures, admit of no disturbing disquieting thoughts; what were thy faculties made for but to be gratified and indulged? And when it is on the other hand said, Thou dost not know how long thou shalt live; thou hast no command of another breath; thou art to make no boast of to-morrow, for thou dost not know whether ever thou shalt see a to-morrow. "Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is nigh;" turn to him while he invites thee to turn, and while thou mayst turn and be accepted. How easily are these

voices distinguishable! But for a man to have given himself up to be led captive by Satan at his will, so as he hath no other will but the devil's will; it is the devil's will I should neglect God, I should forfeit my soul, and throw off all thoughts and cares about my eternal concernments; and he hath signified his will in such and such temptations. Oh, that a man should be so infatuated as to comply with the known will of the devil, who is a murderer from the beginning; a liar, and a destroyer of souls; and that against him who is love, and kindness, and goodness itself, and the Redeemer and Saviour of souls! If there be reason to apprehend there are any sitting under the Gospel; under its daily teachings, solicitations, warnings, and counsels; that will yet perish in their own way, till they finally perish; if they will perish unreclaimed, let them not perish unlamented; let us throw tears over ruining and perishing souls; follow them with lamentations to the brink of the pit, though we cannot save them from precipitating themselves into it.

2. But I must change my voice, somewhat turn my style, and apply myself a little to that other sort, such as are full of solicitude lest they should at length perish and be lost under this Gospel, as having it still a hidden Gospel to them, that hath never done them good, and that they are afraid they shall never be the better for. I must repeat to such, that, in the way of your duty, and while with dependance on the grace and Spirit of Christ you are resolved to comply with the prescribed methods of the Gospel, you have no cause to fear you shall be lost; you have as little cause for that fear as the others have for their mad presumptuous hopes. I must leave some things with such, the more fully to convince them of this. As,

(1.) You are in the present way of salvation; the way you are in hath a good tendency; it looks well: it looks towards a good end; it hath a pleasing aspect with it: never fear you shall miscarry while you are in this way; it is the way of life, and the way that tends to life; that is, there is life in the beginning of it, and the further any one makes progress in it, the more and more he penetrates into the regions of life. There is a continual tendency to life in that way; that is, as any do persist and go on further, they do come into fuller and fuller vitality, till they arrive to the present fulness thereof; for eternal life, and the inchoate life of this present state, are both of a piece. There are some previous essays tending to life that you are under the present seizure of, even now, while you are looking heavenward, looking God-ward: it is somewhat of life, or of preparatory workings that have that tendency, and that cognation have taken hold of you, because that it is plain such thoughts are internal, and so are the springs of an internal motion; and there is no internal motion, or from within, which is not to be looked upon as a kind of vital motion; though it is true, indeed, there are fainter beginnings that are extinguishable, yet there is a great matter to have some beginnings; for if they are yet such as are extinguishable, they are yet also such as are improvable, and may rise and come higher, till they come beyond the sphere and verge of common grace, into the verge of special grace, which two spheres do very closely border and touch upon one another; and he that is upon the extremity, the extreme verge (as I may speak) of common grace, is often upon the very verge and brink of special grace. And,

(2.) As you are in the way of God, a way that hath a good look and tendency, God is in the way with you; it cannot but be, but that he is with you, and will be with you, while you are with him; you find him with you; you are to impute it to his being with you, to his presence with you, that there are inclinations and dispositions that tend heavenward, that tend towards that good and blessed state. You are to take heed of arrogating any thing in this kind to yourselves. Suppose it be yet but common grace,—common grace is grace; and if it be grace, it is not nature; it is not to be attributed to you,—you are not to arrogate and claim it to yourselves; This is of me. The thinking of a good thought, we have not a sufficiency for, as of ourselves; we are not to claim that: and there is many a good thought that may be short of saving grace; but we should take heed of assuming it to ourselves; and therefore, if there be inclinations and dispositions towards that way and towards that state which you are to design for, and professedly bending your thoughts towards, yet say, you have a Divine presence with you: for these things are to be ascribed to him. All such previous workings and dispositions, you must say, they do all lay claim to a Divine author; such a wretch as I must lay claim to nothing that hath any the least appearance of good in it. And,

(3.) You are to consider for excitation and encouragement jointly, that this is the proper state of conflict wherein now you are; your present state is a conflicting state. You are with great and earnest contention of spirit to make your way to heaven and eternal life; it is the business of the state wherein you are; a state of probation, and a state of preparation for a final eternal state. Resolve upon doing suitable to your state. And consider,

(4.) That it will not last long. The time of trial will soon be over; rest, and enjoyment, and rejoicing, and triumph, will ensue. Conflict and fidelity therein to the death. Entertain yourselves with such pleasant words as those which have come from that mouth into which and by which all grace is poured, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved," Matt. xxiv. 13. "To him that overcometh shall be given to sit on my throne, as I have overcome, and am sat down with my Father on his throne," Rev. iii. 21. "He that overcometh shall be a pillar in the house of my God, and shall go no more out," Rev. iii. 12. "To him that overcometh shall be given the new name in the white stone, which none knoweth but he that hath it," Rev. iii. 17. "He that overcometh shall be fed with the heavenly manna. And he that overcometh shall inherit all things," Rev. ii. 17. Strive and labour now as one that designs and expects to overcome; and never fear you can be lost in so doing. It is unreasonable to fear a being lost in that only method which is prescribed for salvation. For, what? Do we think the blessed God hath prescribed inaptly, unsuitably, vainly, and with no accommodation or subserviency to the design for which he hath professedly prescribed it? And again,

(5.) As that which should excite you greatly, consider that the contest is for your souls; it is for eternal life; there is no giving out so long as you can say I am on this side eternity, my life is yet whole in me; I have this spirit, this soul, that was infused by the Almighty, yet in me; I am never to throw away this soul so long as I have it; so long as I find this spirit is in me, that inspiration of the Almighty that first gave me understanding. I am never to abandon this soul; and it is abandoned if you should throw away all hope; you can do nothing for your souls if there be no hope; despair binds up all rational endeavours. There is not one step more ever made, in order to salvation, after it becomes totally despaired of; that is an actual participation of hell. You put yourself into the infernal state too soon, and without warrant, while you have no pretence, no ground for it. Why should a man devilize himself, when God hath not done it? He doth distinguish your state from that of devils, why should you make it the same with them? There is no such thing as praying in hell; no such thing as supplication for mercy, or expectation of it; no possible expectation. Why should a man turn his present state into a final state, and that which is so accursedly final. Your present state is in order to another that admits of no change, and which can refer to none beyond it. And consider, too,

(6.) That your business lies with God, who is pleased to make himself known by most sweet and pleasant titles, —"The God of all grace,"—"God who is rich in mercy;" —and as by such a name as, "The Lord, the Lord God, gracious, and merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; though he will by no means clear the guilty;" that is, those that will have none of his mercy; they that by impertinency and infidelity bind down their own guilt upon their own souls, he will never clear them; but he is most ready (even from what he saith to be his nature) to receive returning souls, complying souls, those that are willing to take his way, and fall in with his methods; otherwise he must forego his own name, and no longer be called gracious, merciful, abundant in goodness. Will you not believe him when he protests and swears by his own life? "As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of a sinner, but that he return and live. Turn ye, turn ye, for why

will ye die, oh house of Israel?" Do you think that God trifles with men, when he bespeaks them at this rate? Do not these words carry a signification with them, the most pleasant, the most emphatical that can be thought, to any soul that is inclined to turn to him? They import nothing of encouragement to those that will not turn, or to them that securely and resolvedly go on in the way of their own hearts, otherwise than as they do still invite their return: but supposing no returning disposition, there are other words that speak the mind of God towards that other sort of men "He will wound the hairy scalp of them that go on still in their trespasses," Ps. lxviii. 21. "He is angry with the wicked every day," Ps. vii. 11. "He rains snares upon them, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest. This is the portion of their cup," Ps. xi. 6. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." So he represents himself towards them who are resolved to continue the contest with him, and will "rush upon the thick bosses of his buckler," Job xv. 21. But if any will take hold of his strength, and make peace with him, they shall make peace, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. Fury is not in him, but though he can easily, as a devouring fire, burn up briars and thorns, yet if any will take hold of his strength, and make peace with him, they shall make peace. This is God-like, this is suitable to his present nature, every way suitable to the perfection of the Deity. Consider with what a God you have to do: you have no cause to fear having to do with such a God, as will not let you be lost and perish finally: you have no cause to fear that he will, when you find in your heart a disposition to comply with him, and a desire to do so; fain I would do so, fain I would be what he would have me be, and do what he would have me do. It is a blasphemy against the Divine goodness, against the very nature of God, to suppose that he will throw away a soul that so inclines towards him. And,

7. It is against the express word of Christ to suppose that he will let such a soul be lost. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28. "He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37. And what? will you not believe him? What cause did he ever give you to disbelieve him? To whom did he ever show himself guileful or apt to deceive? He that came into this world, full of grace and truth, how horrid is it to take up a suspicious thought of him! And lastly, consider,

8. That it is not only contrary to his word, but it is contrary to his nature and design, to let such a soul miscarry, be lost and perish in his sight, and under his eye, that desires to comply with the methods that he hath prescribed in his Gospel. It is against his nature, his nature is expressed by the divine name which is in him; "My name is in him," as we are told by God himself, concerning Christ, the great Angel of the covenant. Exod. xxiii. 21. "Provoke him not, for my name is in him." And what is God's name? The Lord, the Lord God, gracious,—as you heard before. My name is in him, that is, my very nature is in him, whereof that name is expressive.

And it is contrary to his design: for what? do you think he came on purpose into this world to save sinners, and yet to let them be lost, when they are willing to take his prescribed way, and comply with his methods? How can it be so? What, is he not true to himself? Doth he not agree with himself? consist with himself? Hath he forgotten what he died for, what he took human nature for, and what he hung upon an ignominious cross for? All the difficulties he had to contend with for the saving of souls are all overcome and over already. He is to be scourged no more, buffeted no more, crucified no more, to be in travail for souls, and in agonies under the divine anger no more, he hath done all that was toilsome, laborious, and painful, borne all that was grievous and bitter; he hath nothing now to do but what is pleasant work, to emit the influences of life and grace to craving and desiring souls; and so he will do, if the desires of our souls be indeed towards him; he cannot forego himself, and quit his own design; he was so intent upon that design of saving, as to run through the greatest difficulties imaginable; all the terrors of death, and all the powers of hell and darkness, could not stand in his way; no, he would make through them all to save souls. Will he then let yours be lost, when you are crying after him, and reaching towards him, to put yourselves into the hands and arms of his saving mercy? It cannot be.

And so as I have shown how reasonable it is to hope, I shall (God willing) the next time take a text on purpose to show you how necessary it is to hope; that as from what has been said, you may understand somewhat of the ground of hope in this case, (for you are not to hope without ground,) so you may understand somewhat of the great importance of hope in it too. I shall therefore next (God willing) make it my business to show of how mighty influence hope is, towards bringing about that great work which is to be done upon souls, in order to their eternal well-being.

SERMON XIV.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

I DID let you know the last time, that I intended to speak on these words; that as I had shown you what ground there is of hope for solicitous, awakened souls, that they shall not finally be lost; so they might from thence see of what importance it is to them to hope that they shall be saved. Their very salvation itself depends very greatly upon their hope of it. If there should be any here (which God forbid!) to whom salvation itself is a little thing, the hopes of it cannot but be less. If there should be any with whom it is inconsiderable, and who do not use to trouble their thoughts with any such matter, whether they be saved or not saved; the hope of being saved cannot with such, but by consequence, be very inconsiderable; a thing that will weigh very little with them.

But for such whom God hath awakened, and made to hestir themselves, such as are afraid of perishing, and to whom destruction from the Almighty is a terror, such whose hearts tremble within them, to think of any possibility or hazard that they may yet be lost under a Gospel of salvation; to such (methinks) these words should carry a grateful reviving sound.

And as they must be supposed to have this their wont, to revive this great question upon their minds, and be at it upon their hearts; What (oh what!) shall I do that I may be saved! Methinks it should be grateful to them to have so apposite and present an answer to their question,—why, you are to be saved by hope. The hope of being saved must do something to save you.

We know by common experience, that hope is that mighty powerful engine, which moves all the intelligent world, and rules and governs the whole frame and course of rational nature every where; so as that no design is driven on, no undertaking ever set on foot, but as men are influenced and led on by hope. In reference to any thing whereof they have no hope, they sit still and do nothing.

And as it is so in reference to common affairs, it would be proportionably so too, in reference to the affairs of our salvation, if this great engine, which is planted in the very soul of every man, were but rightly and duly managed and turned this way. And so much the more effectual it must be, and work with so much the more energy, by how much the more its ground is better and firmer, in reference to those affairs that do relate to our souls, and to our final salvation. God hath set no such connexion between the most earnest endeavours and answerable success, with reference to external and secular affairs. He hath given men no ground to be confident, that if they labour to be rich, they shall be rich; if they labour to be great and honourable in the world, they shall be so; but he hath given sufficient ground to be confident, that no man that seriously mindeth and manageth the affairs relating to his salvation, shall be lost. Therefore, whereas in reference to other affairs, hope is the *causa sine qua non*, here it is the *causa sine qua non et cum qua*; that is, in reference to other

* Preached May 17th, 1691.

affairs, hope is the principle, without which nothing could be done or attempted; but in reference to those affairs that relate to our final and eternal well-being, not only the attempt, but a good issue, will ensue upon the use of a true hope.

And that is it therefore which I design to insist on from this scripture; That is, to show you, (which you must take for the ground of our discourse,)

Doctrine. That whosoever are finally saved, are saved by hope. And in speaking to this I shall show,

1. What this hope is, of which this is said.

2. What influence it hath towards our salvation.

I. What this hope is. It would be a very useless thing to discourse philosophically to you about hope in general; which every one doth better understand by feeling, by the sensation he hath of it in his own mind, than he could do by the most accurate definition of a philosopher. It is easy to be collected what hope in general is, by considering the nature of man, and his present state, in comparison with one another. The nature of man makes him covet to be happy, and he finds his present state admits of no such thing; whereupon hope is that passion which must of course arise from such a complexion of the rational nature, and such a state of the common case of men. "It is that passion of the soul, by which it reaches forth itself to the uttermost, in the pursuit of somewhat that appears to be good, and likely to better its state, and that is attainable, possible to be attained, but not to be attained without difficulty." This is hope in general.

But when we have this account of hope in the general notion of it, we are yet to seek of what hope this is said, that it saves, that we are saved by it. We are sure this is not universally true of all hope. There is much hope in the world that signifies nothing to men's salvation; yea, much that signifies a great deal to their destruction. Many are not only lost, notwithstanding their hopes, but they are destroyed by them; they might have been safe and happy if they had had no such hope.

And therefore, what this hope is, concerning which this is said, we are more narrowly to inquire; and we do not find that the text itself doth suffice to give us a distinguishable account of it. It doth not assign its proper characters; it describes it no way, but only by its remote final issue,—We are saved by it.

But since it is manifest that all hope doth not save, and that much hope doth destroy, it is sufficiently intimated to us, that there must be somewhat very particular and distinguishing in the nature of that hope, to which this effect is ascribed, when we are told we are saved by it. It is intimated to us, that there is a hope that is saving. We must consider in what sense therefore hope may be said to be saving. It is in a two-fold sense that hope may admit to have this said of it, in opposition to such hope of which it cannot be said.

1. As salvation hath a certain connexion with it. There is a hope with which it hath a certain connexion; a hope true at first, and which therefore continues, and which being continued, doth terminate upon salvation, and takes hold of it, as all of a piece with it. "Gird up the loins of your minds, and be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that shall be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ," 1 Peter i. 13. When we are there told of "receiving the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls;" (verse 9.) and are told of "them that believe, to the saving of the soul;" (Heb. x. last verse;) we find this believing, or that faith, described in the very next words, (Heb. xi. 1.) "to be the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" so that faith and hope (we may show you hereafter with what difference) have their exercise upon one and the same object, till they actually end in salvation, with which therefore they have a firm and immediate connexion; even as a thing hath with itself; as that which is begun, and is yet imperfect, has with the same thing having arrived to its consummate and perfect state. But then,

2. Hope may be said also to be saving, not where it hath an immediate connexion only with salvation, but where also it hath a leadingness and tendency thereunto, though that effect may not certainly ensue. And accordingly there must be a two-fold hope. There is a hope that we are to reckon an effect of the Spirit of holiness, a real part of the new creature, a divine production in the soul. "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Ghost," Rom. xv. 13. There is such a hope as that; and there is also a rational human hope, which may have its exercise about the same thing, about the same final object, and about many things that lie intermediate thereunto, as means for the attaining of it; and which, being assisted by the common grace of the Spirit, may end in the former hope, and consequently in salvation. Now it is the former hope that must be aimed at, and for this latter hope it is neither to be rejected nor rested in. It is not to be rejected—A rational human hope, as such, when it is employed about divine objects, while we have no more in us, if any have nothing more, yet in him; this he ought not to reject, nor ought he to rest in it by any means; but labour to cherish it as an improvable thing, as that which by the influence and operation of the Divine Spirit falling in, may be heightened and raised up into that which shall be certainly saving hope; or the hope that shall be in immediate next connexion with salvation. And both these are very distinguishable from the hope that hath no tendency to save, but hath a most direct aptitude in it to destroy, ruin, and undo souls for ever. They are both of them very distinguishable from that. And to speak a little more particularly, I shall therefore here,

I. Show you what hope it is that hath not this tendency, and is not like to have this end of saving. And,

2. Then shall show you what it is.

I. What hope is not saving? It is not that which is quite wrong and false, both as to its object, and as to its ground; or in reference to the one or the other of these. Take them distinctively, that hope which is wrong, either as to its object or as to its ground, is none of the hope that hath any tendency to the saving of us.

I. If it be wrong as to its object, its material object, the thing we hope for; if that be quite alien, and of another kind from the business of our salvation, and final felicity, it can contribute nothing thereto: all that hope wherein the minds of men do go besides the proper business, and run into things of quite another kind: it is plain that hope can do a man no good, in order to his being saved. That hope whereof the object is a worldly felicity, or prosperity, whether it be for oneself, or whether it be the felicity or prosperity of any party of men in secular respects, to which he hath thought fit to adjoin himself, and to make one with: this can signify nothing, it is plain, to the saving of him. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," 1 Cor. xv. 19. This hope doth not only not save, but it destroys, carnalizes men's minds, habituateth them to this earth, and transforms them into the image of it. And do men think to carry a piece of earth with them up into heaven, when that is all their hope terminateth upon, or is concerned about? No; this is so far from helping to their salvation, that it hurts and hinders all that can be. It is by such an inclination of mind as this, that men run themselves into snares and temptations, and come at length to be drowned in perdition and destruction, 1 Tim. vi. 9. The root of all evil is that very desire that is twisted into this hope. And suppose it be a good state of things in this world, from any community or party to which they have adjoined themselves, so as that their minds and hopes fly no higher, but only that things may go well with them and their party, here in an earthly state. This signifies as little to final, eternal salvation: yea, though the party and design be never so right with which any such have united themselves. It is very true, it is no unlawful thing, yea, it is a highly commendable thing, a praiseworthy thing, to have one's mind very much concerned and taken up about the prosperity and success of a just cause, of a good and honest interest in this world, supposing these two things be provided against.

(1.) That we do not mind and employ our thoughts and hopes about things of that nature finally and terminatively, so as to exclude the great things of the other world, and that last end that runs into eternity. An everlasting felicity to ourselves and the church of God, wherein he is to have out of us, and from all, his entire, complete, and consummate glory. Supposing that the intention of our minds

and thoughts, and the exercises of our hopes about these temporary things, do not exclude and shut out their higher and more vigorous exercise, proportionably to the higher excellency of the things themselves, about these superior things. Supposing that in the first place. And,

(2.) Supposing too, that we do not so mind such concernments, as thereby to debase and weaken religion. It is a very usual thing, and hardly to be avoided, and which is actually avoided (I doubt) by a few, where there is a complication of secular interests and religious interests, together with one another, so to let our minds be involved and run into the one as to look off from the other. And thereby in that very complication, religion suffers, 1st, A debasement; and 2nd, A defilement, an enfeeblement; it is made a weak thing first, and thereupon a feeble and impotent thing. But how few are there in the world that do mind the concernments of it, in reference to the concernments of another world; and that do exercise their thoughts about its present concernments with a universalized mind, a truly enlarged mind, that takes in the interests of God and Christ as the main thing, and the interests of men as men, and of Christians as Christians, under a common notion! But how mean is it, and debasing to the spirit of a man, and how enfeebling to religion itself, when all the intention of men's souls runs about the little separate interests of this or that party, even as it is such, without considering the reference of things to God and the Redeemer! It is this that hath made religion a mean, sordid, terrene, and earthly thing. A political religion is that which, of all things, I cannot but consider with dread, according as I find verging, degenerating, and declining more and more into that. Let each orb be kept apart, and distinct from one another; and religion for the proper ends and purposes of religion, to refine men's minds, to bring them nearer to God, to make them capable of his converse and enjoyment, and to fit them for a blessed eternity. Let religion do its own work as such; and let all secular concernments be only minded in subserviency hereto, as they serve to promote the interest of such religion, as is really worthy the name, and will do the work of religion. But in the mean time, hopes that do fill the minds of men with thoughts about, whether their own private, or more common and public secular affairs, so as to eat up the thoughts of heaven, and to emasculate the strength and vigour of their spirits, that should work thitherward; all these hopes signify no more than a dream towards their salvation; and have no more reference to it, but to prejudice and to hinder our pursuit of it, and our final attaining of it. And,

2. Suppose that hope be placed on salvation itself, (and certainly that hope must subserve to salvation, must be the hope of salvation, as it is called, 1 Thess. v. 8.) yet if the ground of it be wrong, it can signify nothing to this end. If a man hope to be saved upon no ground that will bear the burden of such a hope, or that can rationally support it. That is,

(1.) If men do hope in themselves, if they hope to be saved from their own worthiness, through the apprehensions they have, whether of their own excellency, or if it be but of their own innocency; here is a hope that will betray them to perdition, while it is with them the hope of salvation. Or again,

(2.) If they hope in Christ, but not upon his terms. Many are very full of hopes that they shall be saved; and confess themselves to be sinners, and pretend to despair of being saved for their own sakes, or upon their own account; but it must be for Christ's sake, and upon his account. But then they hope for it upon none of his terms: as if a man hope to be saved by Christ, without ever being made holy by him. "He that hath this hope, purifieth himself," 1 John iii. 3. It must be a hope right, first, as to its end, as to its final object; that is, a hope of seeing God as he is: and then right as to the way; that is, of being made like him, as that which only can agree with such a vision, or make the soul capable of it. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one that hath this hope in him, (it may well enough be understood of Christ, to have reference to him,) purifies himself, as he is pure:" that hope, it will attemper the soul to the final object. It is exercised and taken up about a state wherein men are to be like God, upon their seeing of him as he is; "every one that hath this hope, purifies himself." It drains the soul from terrene dross, and from every thing that is defiling and impure: a man cannot converse with so glorious objects but by a hope that carries (as it were) a primitive power and property with it; for it is by hope that we do enjoy the object hoped for at a distance. This, I say, cannot be, but that objects will impress their image, and beget somewhat like themselves in the soul. The soul that is directed and carried, by the power of its own expectation, to a continual converse with God, as him whom he expects to see as he is, and to be made perfectly like him, by the power of this hope, it will be growing liker and liker to him, and will be purifying itself as he is pure. But he that hopes to be saved, without ever undergoing any such change in the present temper of his spirit, he that hopes to be saved without ever being regenerate, he that hopes to be saved against the plain word of Christ, is so far from hoping upon his terms, that he doth hope against the terms which he hath expressly laid down in the Gospel; whereas he hath said in his Gospel, "Except a man be born again," (John iii. 5.) except a man be regenerate, born from above, (as the word admits to be read,) he can never see, or enter into the kingdom of God. Yet I will hope that I shall enter into that kingdom, and possess that kingdom, though I never be regenerate, though I remain the same man I was all my days.

And whereas Christ hath said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," (Luke xiii. 3.) yet men will hope they shall be saved, though they never repent. And whereas Christ hath said, they that believe "shall not perish, but have everlasting life," (John iii. 16.) they will yet hope to be saved without Gospel faith; and that, notwithstanding the Gospel itself so expressly saith, "He that believeth not shall be damned;" (Mark xvi. 16.) "he that believeth not is condemned already;" (John iii. 18.) "he that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii. 36. And whereas, again, the word of the Gospel hath said that Christ will be the "author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him," (Heb. v. 9.) men will yet hope that he shall be to them the author of eternal salvation, though they continually disobey him, and live in affronts to him, to his known laws, and the sceptre of his government; and that, also, notwithstanding he hath so expressly said that Christ will "come in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon all that obey not his Gospel," 2 Thess. i. 8. Such as do hope for salvation by Christ altogether without ground, are never to think that that hope will save them, but betray them into perdition, or, at length, be the very instrument of a self-destruction to them; their own instrument, and of their own destruction. This is a hope that will never save, but will do more to destroy than to save them. That hope, that is first totally wrong in its object; and, secondly, is altogether without ground, be the object what it will, yet it rests upon no ground that can sustain such a hope. But then,

2. We shall briefly show what the hope must be that hath this tendency to save; hath (at least) a tendency to it. It must,

(1.) Be a hope rightly terminated as to its object. As I told you before, it must be the hope of salvation, which is said to be that part of the spiritual armour, which is thought fit to be expressed by the name of a helmet. The helmet is to defend the head. You all know the head is the seat of design, where projects are formed, where counsels are laid. Now no man (as you heard before) designs for that of which he hath no hope; that confounds all designs. If a man hath formed in his head never so specious models; when once any thing appears in view which shows the whole business to be impracticable, so as there is no hope of succeeding, all those models are confounded and lost; there is an end of them. Therefore, there needs a helmet to protect the head, the seat of counsels and designs. And this is that which doth it,—"the hope of salvation." If there be a firm, well-laid hope of salvation, this keeps the mind clear, and in a composed posture, ready still for deliberation, and to contrive the way, and course, and method, that may best serve on the one hand; and to countermine whatsoever may obstruct, and hinder in the prosecution of it, on the other hand. This hope

must have for its final object the divine glory and likeness, as that which we are to behold, as that which we are to bear, as that into which we are to be transformed; as above in this chapter; "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." And it is the hope of this that saves, taking in the other requisites, of which you will hear more hereafter. So, (Rom. v. 1, 2.) "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, and rejoice in hope"—of what?—"of the glory of God." The great thing that terminates this hope must be "salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, with eternal glory." As the apostle conjoins the private and positive expressions there; whereas, when there is no such conjunction, either put alone serves for both, when a man's hope is pitched upon this final term and end; that (as was intimated before) draws his heart, and keeps it under the transforming influence of the object which the Divine Spirit accompanies. The Divine Spirit doth the transforming work, even at first, and progressively afterwards; but it doth it by objects, by glorious objects, by objects blending in the Gospel. We are first changed, and continually "changed into the same image, from glory to glory;" but it is "by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. last verse. And then,

(2.) This hope must be right as to its ground, as well as in reference to its object; and that can be nothing else but the covenant of God in Christ,—God in Christ to be apprehended and closed with in a covenant; or, as he is pleased to give a sinner the advantage of taking hold of him, as he hath brought himself under the bonds of a covenant. I will be such and such to you; my Son shall be such and such to you. I engage in a covenant: it shall be so, if you take hold. Here is the only firm, secure ground of such a hope; and this is that which the soul actually must do, or must (at least) be actually designing to do: and accordingly may its hope be either certainly saving, or have a leadingness and tendency thereunto, as was told you before. If the heart can bear record in the sight of God, I have taken hold of the Gospel covenant, and therein of God in Christ upon Gospel terms, my heart regretting nothing of them; but readily, and with good liking, falling in with every thing; then I have that hope in me, that, while it lasts, is a piece of salvation; salvation and it are of a piece.

But suppose I am not arrived to that pitch yet, that I dare avow it before the Lord, that I have come to such a closure; I am not sure of the sincerity of my own heart; yet, if this be the thing I design, I abandon all other hopes, and all other grounds of hope; and this is that I am aiming and driving at, to come to a sincere closure with God in Christ upon the terms of the Gospel. I do not yet know whether I am come up to it fully or not: but I am aiming at it, making towards it as I can. This, even this is saving hope, in one of the senses before explained; that is, as having a tendency and leadingness to salvation; and which, as it is not to be rested in till it come to a plerophery; so, nor is it to be rejected neither; it is to be cherished and complied with. God may make somewhat of this more trembling hope, though my anchor be not yet so firmly cast within the veil, or I do not know that it is; while I yet abandon and renounce all other hopes, and look to be saved in no other way, and am aiming to be saved in this way, it is a good sign, for there can be no aim without some hope; total despair throweth you off from every thing of endeavour, and every thing of design, for heaven and eternity; gives you up to perish, and delivers you up to eternal perdition. But while you cannot say your hope is saving, as that which will certainly save you at last, yet it may be said to be saving while it is tending towards a state of salvation, and carrying your hearts forwards towards that state. And this account, that is, that though you are not sure you have actually built upon the proper ground, yet you have the proper ground in view before you, and there you design to build, and you will build no where else. Why all this, while there is that hope which hath a leadingness and tendency to salvation, and which ought to be cherished, that it may save. When it is so far (as hath been said) right, as to its object, and when it is so far designedly right, as to its ground. This, in the one sense or the other, is the thing whereof the text speaks; "We are saved by hope." Then,

2. The second thing is, to show the influence that such hope hath upon, and towards salvation; and that would be very easy to show you by representing to you what it is that is necessary to salvation; or what are the certain characters of the saved ones. They do make a select community, distinct from all the rest of the world. The nations of them that are saved, (as they are called Rev. xxi. 24.) they are all gathered into that city of God; they make a very distinct community from all the rest of the world; and must be understood to be distinguished from them by that which is characteristical of them that are saved ones. And so the distinction must consist in something or other that doth notify them to be the subjects of salvation. If it doth appear that such a hope be necessary to that, it must be concluded to be necessary to salvation too. That that is necessary for that which is necessary for salvation, is itself too necessary to salvation: *Causa causæ est causa causati*; do but agree what thing or things are necessary to salvation, and if hope have a necessary influence upon these things, it must itself be in the way to salvation also. And if it be productive of those things, it will be productive of salvation too; and not only be the cause without which salvation cannot be, but by which it will be.

Now it is very plain that these two things are necessary to salvation:

1. Thorough conversion; the bringing of a person into a state of grace:—And,

2. Continual perseverance therein unto the end. Both these are necessary to salvation. And if such hope as we have already in some measure described to you be necessary to both these, it must be necessary to salvation too. And that is it which, in future discourses, I shall labour to show you; that hope is necessary to conversion first, and then to perseverance. The soul's conversion; its turning to God in Christ, it is with hope; it is not the act of a despairing soul; it cannot be; it is no more possible for a despairing man than for a despairing devil to repent and turn to God, and to close with Christ. I do not speak of the difference of the law; that signifies nothing in this case; but I speak in reference to the complexion of the mind and spirit; and in respect of that, despair would as much keep a sinful man from turning to God through Christ, as it doth an apostate devil.

SERMON XV.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

THAT which I proposed to you in discoursing to you from this passage was, 1st, to show what hope that is of which this is said, inasmuch as it is apparently not to be said of all hope. There is a hope that will not save. There is a hope that will destroy; and to that head we have already spoken. We have shown you what hope it is not; and then have positively showed you what hope it is, concerning which this is spoken, that it saves. And now,

2. Our further business is to show you which way hope doth operate towards salvation, or what influence it hath in order thereunto. We told you (entering on this head last time) that the understanding of this matter will depend upon our conceiving aright what is more immediately and certainly necessary to salvation; for if hope will be found to influence such things as are of most apparent confessed necessity unto salvation, it will be then found to have a necessary influence on salvation too. If it be necessary to that which is necessary, it must be itself also necessary. And it must be somewhat in itself exceeding great, and so that needs all the suitable and proper influences imaginable to bring it about, that shall distinguish them that are

* Preached May 24th, 1691.

saved from them who shall perish; or, in short, the things that are more immediately necessary to salvation, must be understood to be very great things, and things that are not to be wrought at an easy rate, but which will require the help and concurrence of whatsoever may have an apt subserviency thereto; for the differences of them that are to be saved from them that will be finally lost, must be understood to be fundamental to the eternal differences of heaven and hell. And think how vastly different are the states of men hereafter, who shall be plunged and sunk into an abyss of wo and misery to eternity, and of them who shall be eternally rejoicing and exulting in the highest and most perfect felicity and glory.

There is the embryo of heaven and hell in the very hearts of men on this side both; and therefore the differences must be vastly great, even here in this world, between them that are in a state of salvation and them that are not in that state. The inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, that comes down from heaven, they make up the community of them that are to be the saved ones, as was noted from that 21st chapter of Revelations, 24th verse; "The nations of them that are saved do walk in the light thereof." How vastly another sort of men, in all reason, are they to be from the rest of the perishing world, who are to be exempt from the common ruin, who, when the rest of the world must perish in vindictive flames, are to be caught up in the clouds, and meet their Redeemer in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord! How vast (I say) must we suppose the differences between these two sorts of men, when there is the seed, the very *primordia* of heaven and hell, the very beginnings of heaven and hell, to be found on earth in these two sorts of men! Therefore the distinction of the saved ones must be great and eminent from those that are not to be saved.

And what is their distinction I have generally told you already. It lies in these two things; in thorough regeneration, or conversion to God, by which they are brought into a good and safe state at first; and then, in their perseverance herein unto the end.

1. They are such as are "born from heaven,"—"from above;" and the expression (John iii. 3, 4.) may as well be read "born from above," as "born again;" they are a heaven-born sort of men; a community of persons that are all of a divine family,—of the family of God, to be the sons and daughters of the Most High; not by adoption only, as if their sonship were no more than a relative thing; but by regeneration too, which is a real thing, and which makes an internal subjective change, the greatest that can be wrought in this world upon the subject where it hath place. By that regenerating impression on them they are turned to God; a divine touch upon their spirits inclines them to him; and now they turn to him with all their hearts and with all their souls. By being turned they turn; passive conversion and regeneration are the same thing. That turning influence by which the whole soul is brought about towards God, is nothing else but the regenerating influence that puts a new nature into them; for it is not a violent turn, but a spontaneous turn; a turn from the inclination of that new nature that is now in them; and in respect of this communicated divine nature are they said to be "born of God," to be "children of the Most High;" or otherwise (as the same thing is elliptically expressed) "they are of God;"—"we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness," I John v. 19.

2. And being brought into this state, they must persevere in it. It is absolutely necessary that they do so; "he that endureth to the end shall be saved," Matt. xxiv. 13. "They that are born of God must overcome the world;" which, indeed, some way or other, sums up all the enemy's power that they are to contend with; for the great destroyer of souls tempts men by this world, and their own flesh is tempted by it; so that, take one of that ternary of enemies, and you take them altogether. They cannot be severed; and he that is born of God must overcome these; in overcoming one, he must overcome all of this ternary of enemies, these adversary powers; and, overcoming, shall sit down with Christ on his throne, as he overcame, and is "sat down with his Father upon his throne." They are such, as, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for honour, and glory, and immortality," till they actually "obtain everlasting life," Rom. ii. 7. And they are to continue believing, which sums up the whole of that duty which the Gospel makes necessary to salvation, till they actually receive "the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls," 1 Peter i. 9. "They must not be of them that draw back to perdition, but of them that believe, to the saving of their souls," Heb. x. last verse.

Both these are of most absolute necessity to being saved. This is plain, and out of all question; and they are necessary to salvation two ways, both of them, as in their own nature they do dispose and suit the soul for the heavenly state; both for the work, and for the felicity of it. If it were possible that one should come unchanged, unconverted, and unrenewed into heaven, what an exotic thing would he be there? He could have no business there; there is nothing there to be done that he could do; there is nothing there to be enjoyed that he could enjoy. Suppose one in heaven, that were no lover of God, that can take no pleasure in the Divine presence, that hath nothing in him of the Divine image, what could he do there? And if we could suppose the wisdom of heaven to do so inapt a thing as to admit him thither, to what purpose would it be? Therefore, upon the account of internal, subjective qualification, both these are necessary.

1. There must be a new nature given, that such a one be regenerate, born of God, turned unto him with the whole heart and soul. And that there be a new creation raised up in him, to attemper and suit him to the heavenly state; that is, that there be (as it were) the epitome of a new world, new heavens, and a new earth, in that soul which is designed for that blessed state above. A new creation is to rise up, which is to top heaven, to wit, to lift up its head into heaven, and a blessed eternity. That work is to be wrought in him that is a congenerous thing unto heaven; "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, (saith our Lord,) shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into eternal life," John iv. 14. The regenerate frame and nature is so much akin to heaven, that in nature and kind they are not different things; and so there can no man ever come into heaven, that hath not somewhat of heaven aforehand come into him. He must have the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, within him, which consists of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, (Rom. xiv.) which are the very *primordia* of heaven: righteousness, universal rectitude; and peace, universal tranquillity resulting from most perfect and unexceptionable order; and then joy in the Holy Ghost, that state now taking place, that consists of "fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore," Psalm xvi. last verse. All these together are inchoate heaven, and so must, in the work of regeneration and conversion, be inwrought into the soul, to prepare and qualify it internally and subjectively for salvation, or the heavenly state, which is all one. And then,

2. Perseverance is equally necessary upon the same account, and for the same purpose, under that very notion; for, if it were necessary that such a thing should be, to qualify such and such as subjects for the heavenly state, it must be, for the same reason, necessary to continue and remain. This seed of regeneration must abide; it must continue even to the very last; for the soul is not qualified for the heavenly state by what it was ten or twenty years ago, but by what it is when it comes into it; when it comes actually to possess it, and partake of it.

And then, both these are necessary, not only in the nature of the thing, as internal qualifications of the subject; but they are also necessary as things required by the tenor of the evangelical law of grace, which entitleth none to heaven but those that are regenerate; those that are born of God; and those that, being so, do continue adhering and cleaving to him to the very end; that is, those (as was said before) who do believe in the very saving of their souls.

And you must consider here, that this second necessity of both these things, arising from the Gospel constitution, or the constitution of the evangelical covenant, or the law of grace, it comes in this kind to supervene and to be superadded to the other; to wit, considering salvation at length as the effect of the Gospel grant; for it is not merely to be looked upon as a natural product, (though

you say spiritually natural, or you mean so, it is not to be considered under that notion, (though it is partly to be considered under it,) but it is withal to be considered under the notion of a gift. "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is not a mere natural product, nor the product of the divine nature, the spiritual, the holy nature, that is wrought into the soul. It is not (I say) merely such a natural production, but it is to be considered morally too, as the effect of a free donation. And being so a given thing, a thing conferred, then it must be understood to be conferred upon the donor's own terms, the terms that he chooseth, that he is pleased himself to enact and appoint. And these terms are those terms which I have told you of already; "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;"—"except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot be saved;" and (as was told you before) "he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." And the righteous Judge of all the world, "who will render to every man according to his works;" (Rom. ii 6.) "he hath determined this, that to them that by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality," he will give "eternal life;" and for the rest, "to those that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath."

So far it was necessary to clear to you the immediate requisites to salvation, these two summarily, conversion and perseverance. And now, hereupon, I am to evince to you, that hope hath an influence upon both these; that a man would never turn to God if it were not from the influence of hope; and that being turned, he would never walk with God to the end, never cleave to God to the last, if it were not still from the influence of hope.

I hope you have all so much of Gospel understanding with you, as to think, that the asserting such and such a means as necessary, doth not make the end less necessary. We are not to suppose the end (eternal salvation) is less certain, because such means have a certain subserviency thereto; for he that hath appointed the end hath appointed the means too, and settled the connexion between them; that is, that there shall be such faith, such a new creature, such holiness; and these shall be continued and maintained till the end be attained; and the end shall be attained hereupon. The necessary subserviency of such means doth not make the end less certain; but more rationally certain, more certain to us, more evident to us, when we see the way chalked out more plainly that leads to it, and in which it is brought about. I say, that nothing is plainer, than that both these are brought about by the influence of hope; both the soul's first conversion and turning to God, and its continuance and perseverance to the end. And, that I may evince the influence of hope as to both these, with the more clearness, there is somewhat that I must premise to make my way the clearer thereto. That is,

1. That God, in his dealings with the souls of men in order to salvation, doth work very much upon a natural principle of self-love in them. I say, that in order to the saving of souls, God, in his dealing with them, doth very much apply himself to a principle of natural self-love. This is plain, and out of all question. And the precepts, with their sanctions, (the great instruments that he works and moves them by,) do all suppose it. The great Gospel precept, "believing in the Son of God," with its sanction admixt, doth plainly suppose it. "Go, preach this Gospel to every nation."—What is this for? In order to believing in general. What is the sanction annexed to this precept?—"He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." These are direct applications to the principle of self-love. What can either of these signify by way of argument, but as they do accommodate this principle, and are some way suited thereunto? What doth it weigh to tell such a one, You shall be saved if you believe with a true Gospel faith, if he do not love himself; if he have no love for his own soul? And what doth it weigh to tell such an one, If you do not believe you shall be damned, if he love not his own soul, if he care not what becomes of his soul? Nothing is plainer, than that God doth apply himself to the natural principle of self-love in us, when he comes to deal with us about the affairs of our salvation and eternal well-being. What are heaven and hell laid in open view before us for, in so much amiableness, and in so much terror, but to move this principle of self-love? And then I would premise,

2. Supposing the principle of self-love, the end that every one must design thereupon must suit and answer that principle. And thereupon it will be consequent, that he who is to be saved must be made to design his own salvation; which also the plainest and greatest Gospel principles do most significantly and manifestly hold forth to us as matter of indispensable duty; that is, that we are to design our own salvation; to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" what doth that signify else? what doth it signify less? "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure;"—"strive to enter in at the strait gate;" be ye in agonies in order to it; that is the English of that expression. If the principle of self-love is to be set on work; and if, from that principle, our own salvation is to be designed as our end; then it will be most apparently consequent, that the hope of attaining our end, must needs be the great influencing thing upon us, in reference to whatsoever is necessary thereunto. And so,

3. The whole business of conversion we must understand to be influenced by hope, upon the supposal that the person that now lies under the converting work, is all the while designing his own salvation. And here my business is, and will be, to let you see how the many things that are incident, and do fall in together in the business of a man's serious and thorough conversion and turning to God, must be understood to be influenced by hope throughout. The turning soul is, in its turning, a hoping soul, and would never turn if it did not hope; because it hopes, therefore it turns. The Divine Spirit works all, (it is true,) but it works accommodately and suitably to our nature, to the reasonable intelligent nature in which it works. Do but consider the plain and great things that are carried in this turning, when the soul hath received the impression, or doth now actually receive the impression from God that turns it; and see how manifest it is, that the influence of hope runs into every one. As,

(1.) In this turn wrought upon the soul there is conviction of sin, (as is obvious to every one,) accompanied many times with very great terrors, which have much participation even of hell in them, an affinity with it, a nearness to it. The soul in order to its being raised and brought as high as heaven, is first (as it were) dipped into hell, brought as near hell as it can come without being plunged and irrecoverably lost and swallowed up of it. And you must consider the soul as an apprehensive thing all the while. You must consider the Divine Spirit working upon an intelligent, rational subject, in this its descent. The soul descends with open eyes, and it descends with a kind of consent, let me go down and visit my own deserved portion and lot. It descends an apprehensive thing, an open-eyed thing, and voluntarily; there is a voluntariness in it; but that there could never be if there were no hope. I am content to go down and descend even to the very brink and verge of the infernal pit; but I go down with hope, that God will not plunge me in it; that he will not lose me, and let me be swallowed up there; even while it is beset with amazing terrors, they are not the terrors of total despair, then it were to be turned into a mere devil; total despair would make it so. But though there may be so great fear, the soul seems it may be, to itself, a composition of fear; there is, however, a secret influence of hope; though he shake me over hell, he will not throw me into it; he will, in mercy to my soul, "save me from going down into the pit:" while it is convinced, it hopes; and the more it hopes the more easily it admits of conviction: As vile a wretch as I am, as any representation could make me, I hope God will not utterly cast me off. The convictions that are accompanied with terror are not accompanied with hope; it is undespairing terror.

(2.) There is in this converting work deep and serious humiliation, which is a further thing than mere conviction of the evil of sin, and of the deserts of it; which hath for its seat and subject of it, the heart, a tender heart, a relenting heart, a broken, melting heart. This is carried in the work of conversion; but this can never be without hope. All the terror in the world will never melt a soul,

but hope will. Hope makes it to dissolve, makes it to relent; he puts his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope, Lam. iii. 29. Is there hope for me?—then I care not how low I lie; then let me humble myself to the lowest that is possible at the footstool of the mercy-seat; for I see there is hope for me. Despair would harden the heart, and render it as a rock, impenetrable, inflexible. But hope makes it to melt and dissolve. There is the greatest horror (to be sure) in hell itself, where there is the most absolute perfect despair; and so that fire, even the fire of the infernal pit, that scorches, that enrages, that exasperates, that enflames the soul with enmity, malignity, and hatred against the very Author of its being. But it is another kind of fire that melts. Hell fire will scorch, but it will not melt. It is the spirit of divine love in the Gospel that only melts; and if it melts it gives ground of hope, as God is revealed reconcileable and willing to be at peace. When the Gospel saith so, and the Spirit breathes in that Gospel, and declares to the soul immediately, God is reconcileable; now is the heart clothed with shame and confusion, and lies low in self-abasement, even to the very lowest it can lay itself; "that thou mayest be ashamed and confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord," Ezek. xvi. latter end. That is, when I have shown thee how willing I am to be reconciled, revealed myself so pacifiable, reconcileable, and given thee hope of pardon, mercy, and grace, then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I have discovered myself so placable towards thee, and so willing to be reconciled. And again,

(3.) There is in this converting work, a mortification endured and undergone, even of the most connatural corruptions and evil inclinations. The soul endures the cutting off the right hand and the right foot, and putting out the right eye; and submits to the command, *Ure, Seca*, as that Father is brought in saying, Lord, burn me, wound me, cut me, so thou wilt but save me! I matter it not. What? cutting off the right hands and feet, and plucking out the right eyes?—this would never be endured if it were not for hope. Here is in this turn a denial of all ungodliness and worldly lusts whatsoever, under the instruction of grace, under the instruction of *that* grace, which appears bringing salvation, and that teaches us this denial of all ungodliness and worldly lusts. And how, and in what way?—"Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." While I yield and submit to such things as these, to be pulled away from all ungodliness, and to have all my worldly lusts torn from me, it is in the contemplation of that blessed hope. Oh, how comfortably shall I behold Christ, and will he behold me, who have endured all this for his pleasure! The pleasures of sin are abandoned, which are but for a season. And why?—Because there is an eye had to the recompense of the reward; and because that faith begins now to take hold of the soul, that is, "the substance of things hoped for," Heb. xi. 1. compared with what is mentioned in the 26th and 27th verses. And again,

(4.) There is in this work of conversion a forsaking of all the world; that is the term the soul turns from, when God is the term it turns unto; a forsaking of all this world, as a most despicable thing, a composition of idols; and what have I to do with idols? saith the turning, the returning soul. What have I any more to do with them? "Love not the world, nor the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15. And what can make a man abandon a thing he hath loved, but the hope of a better?—I shall meet with something better, something that will be a rich compensation for all that I abandon and throw away. We find those converts to whom the apostle Peter writes his first epistle, that they were thrown out of all for Christ and the Gospel's sake; elect strangers, scattered throughout the several quarters of Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, and wherever else scattered they were; driven from their own home and inheritance. And how came they to yield to all this; to quit all they had in this world, and betake themselves to wandering? Why, it was for the sake of Christ. You have "been begotten (saith the apostle) to a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." This was in their very regeneration; this was among their *natalitia*, the principles of their birth, their new divine birth. A certain hope of better things than they were to lose for the sake of Christ and the Gospel. They were to lose all their earthly inheritance; no matter for that, "we are begotten again to a lively hope" of such an inheritance; and we shall be kept to it,—"kept by the mighty power of God through faith to salvation;" as there it follows in the same context. And,

(5.) Here must be in this work of conversion a serious, solemn taking of God for our God, when the soul is so far loosened and unhinged from sin, and from this world, to which it did cleave by sinful inclination. Then are things so prepared and made ready for its unitive closure with that great object, from whom it hath injuriously withheld itself all this while; and unto whom, out of the state of apostacy, it must now betake itself, and is now betaking itself. Now having thrown off this world, and being loosened, and saving myself, by the help and power of thy grace, from the bands and cords of my own iniquity, I come, blessed God, to accept of, and unite with thee, to take thee for my Lord and my God. Here is the term to which the soul turns, when sin and the world were the terms from which it did turn. But now, I pray, do any of you think that a soul ever took God for its God with despair?—or doth it ever take God for its God without hope? To be without God, and with out hope, they come together; and to be with God, and with hope, must paincam be joined together too. "Ye are without hrist and without God in the world," (saith the apostle to the Ephesians, referring to their natural unconverted state, Ephes. ii. 12.) when the case herein is changed, that the soul is no longer without God, then it is no longer without hope. It would be without God, if it still were without hope; but it having conceived a hope, that God is graciously and most condescendingly willing to be embraced by such a poor wretched thing as I am, he will permit himself to be embraced; I hope he will, I say; because it hopes, therefore it chooses, therefore it accepts him, therefore it takes him. This God shall be my God; he takes him under hope; he covenants with him under hope.

You see how the case was with apostate Israel; they were gone off from God, and he threw them off, when he abandoned them to the captivity. Well, he hath, at length, gracious inclinations towards them, and within the appointed limits of time revisiteth them, releaseth them, and bringeth them back into their own land. And then the great assembly of them, in the posture of penitents, (as you read in the tenth of Ezra,) is gathered together; and the result is, "Come, now, and let us make a covenant with God." They are for covenanting with him; they have a mind to have this God for their God again. But how is this introduced? Now, because "there is hope in Israel concerning this thing," therefore let us make a covenant; since there is hope, let us do this; since there is still some ground for hope, that God is taking up the controversy, and will not abandon us finally, and quite throw us off, and cast us away from being his people; "because there is hope in Israel concerning this thing, therefore let us make a covenant." Every particular soul, upon its return to God, hath in it the epitome of this very case; I have been a wandering wretch, a revolted creature, an apostate rebel; God hath discovered himself, however, placable and willing of my return, and that I strike a covenant with him anew; and he hath published this to be the tenor of his covenant, "I will be your God;" and I am to give my consent to it, and take him hereupon for my God. Now this (I say) the soul only doth because there is hope; I will make a covenant because I see there is hope in this thing. If I make none, I am lost; if I do not covenant, I am undone; if I will be still a stranger to God, there is no way but to perish. But because there is hope I will covenant, I will take him for my God; because there is hope he will accept a poor returning soul. And,

(6.) In this work of conversion there must be an absolute self-denial, self-abnegation, and abandoning oneself. This is the plain state of the case; conversion being the

by which the soul enters into the Christian state of discipleship to Christ; and Christ himself hath determined the matter; 'Except a man deny himself, he cannot be my disciple;" he can be no disciple of mine except he deny himself; because Christ's business with all that he christianizeth, that he admits and takes to be his disciples, is but to take and lead them back to God: and that they are never capable of till he takes them off from their rival god. Self is their rival god; and in this converting work the soul must abandon itself, must deny itself, so as no longer to live according to its own will, as its rule; nor for its own interest, as its end. I am to live (saith the soul) a self-governed, a self-designing creature no longer. I told you before of a very lawful and necessary self-love; that is, a love to a man's soul, and a true desire of his own felicity; but that self that is to be denied is a carnal self, a brutal self, that is now become ourselves, become the whole of us; and so it comes to this with every returning soul; I am not I; *Ego non sum Ego*. There is a self to which it doth adhere, and there is a self the which it doth abandon and forsake; but, through the influence of hope, because I have hope in losing myself, I shall find myself; because I have hope, that, in throwing away this base, sordid self, I shall find and gain a rich glorious hope, self-conformed to the Divine likeness; and, finally, made happy in him. Therefore I endure such severities as these; and I do endure all in hope.

Here is in all this sowing to the Spirit, which sowing requires the breaking up the fallow ground beforehand, and the tearing out of weeds and roots, that did infest. And this is in order to such sowing to the Spirit, and that is with expectation of reaping of the Spirit what shall be suitable to it; and "they that sow to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." But now you know, (as the apostle teacheth us to conceive, and to speak elsewhere upon another account,) every one "that soweth, soweth in hope; and he that plougheth, plougheth in hope," that he may be partaker of his hope, I Cor. ix. 10. When I give over sowing to my own flesh, pleasing and indulging of that, and begin to sow to the Spirit, as my ploughing before was ploughing in hope, my sowing now is sowing in hope. I would neither plough or sow, but only in hope; so it is in a spiritual sense. And hereupon,

(7.) There is in this work of conversion, a giving oneself up quite unto God, absolutely to be his: you have taken him to be yours; you abandon self thereupon, and therewithal; and now you give up yourself to be his. And is this an act of despair, when a man gives up himself to God? "Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead," as the charge is, Rom. vi. 13. Is this giving or yielding ourselves to God a yielding oneself to perish?—or is this the act of a despairing soul, when it saith, I will be the Lord's? Though he saith, absolutely, Let him do with me what he will, yet it always apprehends he will not destroy me. When I yield myself to him, when I put myself into his hands by my own act and deed, by my free and voluntary surrender, I know he will never destroy what I so voluntarily resign. And again,

(8.) There is hereupon a resolution of walking in the way of holiness; I have chosen the way of truth; that I will do whatever it cost me. And this cannot be but in hope neither. I shall find a pleasure in this way, though it seem uncouth at the first; I shall find safety in it at length, at the latter end. Because I hope, therefore I choose. And there is, hereupon,

(9.) An abandoning of all associates that any have united themselves with in an evil way; a forsaking of them all; a breaking off from them. They that have been my companions in wickedness shall be my companions no longer, unless they will accompany me in the ways of God. This cannot be but in hope. There is an irksomeness in it, parting with those with whom we had all pleasantness of wit and raillery, and a delicious conversation, according to the gusts and relishes of impure imagination. And these relishes cannot be forsaken and abandoned, but upon the hopes of better. Now I shall be the associate of the blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom by baptismal vow I have been given up, and to whom now also I have afresh given up myself. Those that know, not only what it is to leave the ways of sin, but their accomplices in wickedness, do know with al that there is difficulty in it, to which they need this powerful inducement of hope, that there will be that at length which will recompense and make up all to me.

SERMON XVI.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

THERE is one and a main thing yet behind, which I reserved to the last place, because there is most to be said to it. That is,

(10.) That in this converting work there is a solemn closure with Christ; a passing quite into a vital union with him, so as that the soul comes thereby to be in him, and Christ comes to be in the soul. And this transaction could never be brought about but under hope. Christ will never come to be in that united state with you by your own consent and choice, if he were not eyed by you under this notion, "Christ in us the hope of glory;" Christ is to be mine, as my great hope, for eternity, and another world. And this transaction and contracting with Christ I reserved to the last place, not as if it were the last in time in the great work of conversion, but as that which I design to speak more largely unto.

As for the method and order wherein all these mentioned things lie to one another, and wherein they may be effected and wrought in the souls of men, it may vary, and not be always the same. Some thoughts may be injected into some minds first, and others first into others. And though suitable and correspondent impressions be made according to injections of thoughts, yet the Spirit doth not always keep one way; though some things must, in their own nature, precede, yet there is certainly an intention of an end always before the use of the means. With all rational agents and movements the end must be propounded that they design for; and then the way taken that is accommodated to that end. And so the eye of the soul must be towards God finally; first, as him that I am to return to, and then come to a closure with him, in whom he only is accessible. In reference to that, singly considered, that peculiar method is observed, though there are other things that have been mentioned which may partly precede and partly follow.

But this is that I would now insist upon, and make out to you, that as in the work of conversion and regeneration, the soul is brought to an agreement with the Son of God, as the Redeemer, Saviour, and Ruler of sinners; so it is brought to this by the influence and power of hope; and it could never come to this agreement with Christ otherwise, but as its hope doth influence it hereunto. Most plain it is, that, wheresoever a work of conversion is brought about, and any do become Christians, indeed, they are brought into Christ, they are brought to have an in-being in Christ, (as the Scripture phrase is, and that we must keep to, and labour to understand the mind and meaning of the Spirit of God in it,) Christ is nothing to us, till we be in him; "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," I Cor. i. 30. That is, he is every thing to us that our case requires and needs, if once we be in him; and nothing if we be not in him: whereas we are foolish creatures, he is made to us wisdom; whereas we are guilty creatures, he is made unto us righteousness; whereas we are impure creatures, he is made unto us sanctification; and whereas we are enslaved creatures, he is made unto us redemption, if we be in him; but nothing of all these if we be not in him. When God deals with souls in order to the renewing of them, they are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, to walk in them, Eph. ii. 10. When he creates the new creature, it is said,

* Preached April 28th, 1691.

'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are done away, and all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. This is the great thing that is brought about in the work of conversion or regeneration, or the work of the new creation, which are various Scripture expressions of the same thing. The giving the soul an in-being in Christ; inverting, implanting it into him, or (which is all one) bringing about a union between Christ and the soul; in respect whereof that union is so intimate, that he is sometimes said to be in it, and it is sometimes said to be in him. They are mutually in one another. This we must consider is the thing effected in conversion, and which we are to show you, cannot be effected but by the influence of hope.

Nothing can be more suitable to the apostle's present scope, than to insist upon this, and evince it to you; for do but observe how he begins this chapter, and take notice how the whole series of his discourse proceeds upon the supposition of this one thing, their being in Christ; having spoken in the foregoing chapter, of the conflict, the war that is between the fleshly principle and the spiritual principle; and the victory of the Spirit over the flesh, in all that are sincere, and where there is a thorough regenerating work wrought, thereupon he begins this chapter thus, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" whereby he plainly signifies to us, that the fleshly principle ceaseth to govern, and it ceaseth to condemn at the same time; when sin doth no longer reign, it no longer condemns. This mighty turn and change is brought about in the state of such a person, and in the frame and temper of such a one's spirit, at one and the same time; to wit, he is now no longer condemned for sin, and he is no longer governed by it. There is no condemnation, and they no longer walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit. But whence is it, that he hath this double privilege, or that this mighty turn and change is made in the state of his case? Why, now he is in Christ, he hath been instated in Christ, and now he is neither condemned for sin, nor governed by it.

And upon this supposition of persons being once in Christ, proceeds all the following discourse, through the residue of this chapter. So that now take such a one, suppose him giving (as it were) his account, standing on the brink of that rapid gulf, out of which he newly emergeth, and by grace enabled to spring forth, and make his escape; suppose we such a one, giving an account of his deliverance, and how it was brought about: You that were plunged in so deep and horrid a gulf, and so dreadful impurities, how comes it to be otherwise with you now? Why, I have been brought into Christ, and so, through the grace of God, is my state safe and comfortable. I was tossed in the common deluge and inundation of wickedness and wrath, that had spread itself over all this world; and this was my case, till I came to be in-arked in Christ, and so I became safe. But how came you unto him? or what made you offer at any such thing? Why, I can give you but this account in the general, I am saved by hope: if I had no hope, I had been lost, sunk, and perished for ever; but here was the offer made me of a Redeemer and Saviour, and I hoped it was by one that had no design to deceive me; and there I cast my anchor, and I am come to an agreement with the Son of God, the Saviour! And thus I come to be in this safe state. Safe I am through grace, and I own it, I am safe through hope.—I had been lost else, if I had no hope, and should never have looked after Jesus Christ;—but I had hope when the Gospel discovery and representation, and offer of Christ, was made to me, that it was by one that could not fail, and would not deceive; one that was not impotent, and too weak to save me, and one that would never be false and untrue to me, if I ventured upon him; and because I had hope, therefore I ventured, and so I am come to this safe state. It is by the influence of hope, that souls are brought into that agreement with the Son of God, upon which their eternal salvation and well-being depends. This is that I have to make out to you, to wit, that the soul in its first eyeing of Christ, doth eye him as the only hope of sinners.

It is observable how the apostle begins that first epistle of his to Timothy, in which a little after the beginning, he tells us in that great transport of spirit, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." But see (I say) how he begins that very chapter and epistle; "Paul, an apostle of God, and of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God, and our Saviour, who is our hope." His heart was full of this thing,—That Christ was the great hope of sinners;—and naturally breaks forth into such expressions as those that do afterwards follow: and being replenished with this sense, having his heart full of it, saith, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." He is represented and held forth in the Gospel, under such a representation as doth signify him to be the great and only hope of souls: so he is closed with, so he is received, so the soul resigns and gives up itself at length unto him.

We see that under that notion, he is laid hold on. Look to that; Heb. vi. 18. "By two immutable things, by which it was impossible for God to lie, (to wit, the oath of God added to his word,) the heirs of promise might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them." An allusion to the manslayer, one that had by casualty (but within the meaning of the law that gave immunity in such cases) slain another, for whom the cities of refuge were appointed and provided, with respect to the several tribes. This is the representation of the case of a sinner frighted and pursued by the *vindicta* of the divine law and justice; such have no way of escape remaining to them, but to fly for refuge to that hope that is set before them: that is, to Christ, the great antitype to those types,—these cities of refuge were so many types of him. But where is he to be eyed and followed now? He is entered as a forerunner into the holy of holies, he is gone within the veil, and thither our hope must follow him, as you may see in the close of that chapter; "Which hope we have, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil; whither Jesus our forerunner is for us entered." I can have no hope (saith the pursued soul) but in Christ. But where will you find him? He is gone far enough out of sight, he is entered within the veil, the heavens have received him. But yet (saith the soul) I mean to follow him thither, and my hope shall enter there, even within the veil, whither Christ is for me entered; I will not be held off from him. So this laying hold upon this hope is to be understood; hope is objectively taken there, the hope set before them; it is coming to an agreement, a contract with Christ. It is that by which we actually become entered into the covenant of God by Christ, we can take hold no other way but by the covenant; taking hold of the covenant, and taking hold of him, whom that covenant doth (as it were) inwrap and give us the hold of; they are equivalent expressions, and mean one and the same thing. But then understand under what notion is he to be taken hold of; you see that text speaks the matter plainly; he is to be taken hold of, under the notion of the hope set before them. And so when the soul comes into such a union with him, as to have his entrance into it, so as that he is said to be in the soul, to be, by an internal presence, actually indwelling in it: under what notion is that? Why, that scripture tells us, Col. i. 27. "Christ in you." How is he in us, under what notion is he in us? As the hope of glory, he makes his way into the soul, under the notion of the soul's hope. The soul receives him, admits him, unites with him under that notion as its great hope; Christ who is our hope, as that mentioned introductive passage of the epistle to Timothy speaks.

And here I must note to you, that speaking of the influence of hope, upon this great transaction of the soul with Christ, I speak not of the hope which doth follow the receptive act, or the self-resigning act, but of a hope that doth precede it. It is true, there is a hope which follows it, by which every believing soul is to continue hoping to the end; often repeating that act, through its whole after-course. But there is a hope that doth precede it, of which I now speak, that is, that leads to this reception of Christ, and self-resignation to him; and under the influence whereof, the soul doth receive Christ, and resign itself, and which therefore must be understood to precede: and that is only the immediate product of the Gospel re-

presentation that is made of Christ; he is discovered to us in the Gospel in those capacities, and under those notions, in which he is to be received. This representation of him, so believed on, I believe (saith the soul) this is true, which the Gospel speaks concerning Christ, I assent to the truth of this word. Hence ariseth this hope in the soul, which intervenes between the assenting act of faith, and the relative act of faith; the soul having thus assented to the truth of the Gospel revelation, it hereupon hopes, surely I shall run no desperate hazard if I do receive Christ, and resign myself to him according as the Gospel doth direct; and so by the influence of this hope accordingly doth receive, and doth resign.

And so the matter being so far stated before us, which we are to clear to you; I shall first argue it out by some more general considerations very briefly, and shall in some particular heads that do concur in this transaction with Christ, discover to you the influence of this hope to this purpose, the bringing about such an agreement and closure of the soul with Christ.

1. It may be argued out to you, from such general considerations as these.

(1.) That the soul's contracting, or coming to such an agreement with Christ, is most certainly a very wise act, the wisest thing that ever any soul did for itself in all this world. As certainly they cannot but be great fools, who when the Gospel reveals a Saviour, will perish by neglect of him; will rather perish than receive him, when they have the Saviour in view, and the terms in view upon which he is to be received.

(2.) Wisdom in any such action is to be estimated by the reference thereof to the end, which is to be designed therein. There is no wise action, but is designed for some end or other, as aptly serving and contributing to the attaining of that end. That is a succedaneons consideration, which is plain in itself. And then add,

(3.) That the proper end, which in such a reception of a Saviour must be designed, is salvation. Nothing can be plainer, than that the end I am to design in receiving a Saviour is, that I may be saved by him. What else can it be? To which I subjoin,

(4.) That there can be no design without hope. It is naturally impossible to me to design my own salvation by receiving of a Saviour, but it must be with hope of success in this way. There can be, in all the world, no such thing as a design laid without hope of compassing it; no end proposed without hope and expectation, that at last it may be brought about. It is not needful that there should be a certainty that it shall, but there must be a hopefulness and probability that it may, otherwise there can be no design at all. It is not agreeable to the human nature to design for that, of which there is no hope. These are general considerations, which do plainly enough evince, that this transaction of the soul with Christ, in order to its own salvation, must be under the influence of hope. But,

2. I shall go on to show, from several particulars, which lie within the compass of this great work of transacting and agreeing with Christ according to the terms of the Gospel covenant, upon each of which it cannot be but hope must have influence. As,

(1.) In such a transaction with Christ, or when the soul is coming to an agreement with him upon Gospel terms, it must renounce any other saviour or way of salvation that either is co-ordinate with him or much more that shall be opposite to him; whatsoever indeed shall be subordinate must be taken in, but to think of any thing co-ordinate of any such thing, there must be a most absolute renunciation. The soul must speak its own sense in such words as the church speaks here; "Asher shall not save us, nor will we say to the works of our hands, ye are our gods; for with thee the fatherless find mercy." There must be an exclusion of all things else, that shall be co-ordinately joined with Christ, or that shall be brought into any kind of competition with him, in this his saving work, and offer. I abandon all other saviours, (this is the language of the soul,) and all expectations from any other.

Now, whereas it is manifest the soul must be brought to this, if ever it come to a closure and agreement with Christ, so it can never be brought to this, but by the influence of hope concerning him. A drowning man will never let go his twig, but in order to a surer hold of something that may be stronger, and that he may better trust to it. If men have nothing else to rely upon, but their own imagined innocency, or their righteousness, or their performances, that they have performed such and such things in a way of duty, or withheld themselves, and abstained from such and such things in a way of sin. If men have nothing else to rely upon here, they will hold till they have a better hold. It must be the influence of a better hope, some better hope introduced, that must make the soul willing to let go this hold: they will never quit the twig, till they have in view somewhat better and stronger to take hold of. There must be this, in the first place, in the soul's transacting with Christ, a renouncing of any other Saviour, or any other way of salvation.

(2.) There must be the taking on of Christ's yoke; in this transaction with him, the soul must agree to take his yoke upon it, submit its neck thereunto. The Gospel is plain and express in this, even in those words of grace themselves, than which the Gospel did never breathe swecter and more grateful ones; "Come unto me, all ye that are weary, and heavy laden, and I will give you rest; learn of me, and take my yoke upon you, and you shall find rest to your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." But such as it is, take it you must; or you are never to expect rest from me, safety, or relief from me. If I give, you must take. If I give you pardon, if I give you peace, you must take my yoke, my burden, upon your necks and shoulders; in short, the soul must submit to be governed by Christ, subject itself to his governing power, and the sceptre of his kingdom. This must be its fence, "Other lords have had dominion over me, but now I will make mention of thy name, of thine only." It must be subject to the government of Christ, both negative and positive; that is, must submit, and be bound up from every way of sin, and it must submit and yield to be bound to every way of duty: and this is taking up of Christ's yoke, and this it can never do but with hope, but under the influence of hope.

It is upon the declining of this, that many a soul comes to break with Christ after a treaty begun, and (it may be) carried on far; they may be content to entertain those pleasant thoughts which the Gospel gives some intimation of, and by its first overtures doth (as it were) suggest and offer to the soul, of having sin pardoned, and God reconciled, and being saved from the wrath to come, and of being entitled to future felicity, and a blessed state. These are pleasant thoughts, and the first aspect of the Gospel doth suggest them; and while the soul looks upon these alone, and doth not look upon what there is of conjunct duty with it, it may go on far, and there may seem to be an agreement entered, or very near to be entered, or which the soul is in a great disposition to enter into with Christ, while it is only expecting much from him, and thinks of bending itself in nothing to him. But when that part comes to be reflected on too, then the soul begins to recoil, to revolt, and to fly off. It can be contented with every thing but to be yoked, to come under restraints from such and such ways; No, (saith the soul,) I will never endure to be yoked, to come under obligation to such and such things as have displeased me, and I could never yet like. Yes, but this Christ insists on. If ever you expect rest from me, I expect you will take on my yoke; that you willingly submit to be yoked by me; it is indeed an easy yoke, and I would have thee understand the matter so, and thou wilt find it an easy yoke, when once thou hast tried it; but a yoke it is, and as such it must be received. But here is the great matter of hesitation, the wretched soul sticks at this, No, I will not endure thy yoke! It is as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, as Ephraim is represented, Jer. xxxi. 18. and if ever they come to be made sensible, they will speak that sense truly, "I was like Ephraim, thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised; I was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned." This is their sense, if ever they become truly and thoroughly sensible; but in the mean time, here is the stick, because they have not been accustomed to the yoke, and cannot endure to be yoked, therefore doth many a one part with Christ, and give up all; all treaty is quite broken off between Christ and them.

And if it be, pray what is the reason of it, thou wretched soul! If one may speak thy own sense in the case, if thou wouldst but reflect and see, whether it be not so, this will prove to be it, to wit, thou hadst no hope. I believe I may speak the heart of many a one in this case, if they could but tell how to speak their own, and to observe so much of their own heart.

I would have such to consider it, as are yet in their youthful days, whether sometimes, having been struck with convictions, and having taken up thoughts of providing for their own safety, and eternal well-being, they have not thereupon come to some kind of deliberation: The Gospel is plain, here I have the Redeemer fully represented to me in it. And then this hath been your sense, Lord, I begin to take up thoughts of coming to an agreement with thee upon the terms proposed to me in thy Gospel. It may be the soul hath seemed to itself willing to submit to them, rather than perish; but afterwards, through want of watchfulness, or too much self-confidence, or too little dependance upon the grace of God, a temptation hath proved victorious in some or other particular instanees, and here hath been a relapse into somewhat (it may be) of a gross sin; I inquire of such, whether this be not the truth of the case, whether hereupon their souls have not grown hopeless? Well, I shall never overcome; here are my corruptions that are too hard for me, and I shall never prevail! It may be, thoughts have been resumed, and trials have been renewed again and again, and returning temptations have prevailed, and got the upper hand. Well, saith the soul, I shall never do any good at it, I shall never make any thing of it; and thereupon all hath been given up, and the reins have been laid freely on the neck of lusts, and that resolution hath been taken, "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go;" and why it was taken, so that text tells us, Jer. ii. 29. Thou hast said, there is no hope: and what then? "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go."

So very contiguous and bordering are despair and presumption upon one another, when the soul absolutely despairs, then it most highly presumes. There is no hope; well, what then? "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go;" I will let corruption and sensual inclinations have their swing, I will obey the lusts of it, for there is no hope. And then how lamentable a thing is it, that a soul should be lost so; for if there be no hope in the case, there will be no repetition of endeavours, no further strugglings, no further contests; and then all is lost, all is gone, which is the forlorn case of those, (as I have had occasion at large to show,) who had in some measure escaped the corruptions of this world through lust, by the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and are again entangled therein and overcome; their latter end with them is worse than the beginning. And whence is this? Because they have been entangled and overcome, therefore they throw away all hope. They should indeed throw away all hope of being saved, while they are overcome, and remain so, and are slaves, vassals, and captives, to corrupt inclinations; they should throw away all hope of ever being saved in this state; but they should not throw away all hope of being saved out of it. They should throw away hope of being saved without overcoming; but they ought to entertain hope that they shall overcome; that yet they shall overcome, if yet they watch, and yet strive, and yet pray, and yet depend; and there is no other thing to be done. It is not to lie down and perish thus, and say there is nothing more to be done. That is another thing to be done in this coming to an agreement with Christ, upon which hope hath influence, namely, taking on his yoke. And,

(3.) Taking up his cross, that must be done too; and you can never come to a closure with Christ, to an agreement with him upon other terms; you cannot without it be a disciple, (Luke xiv. 20.) that is, cannot be a Christian; he only makes feint offers at being a Christian, but is none till he comes to this, to take up the cross, that is, willingly to submit to these terms, that it shall be laid upon him whenever Christ pleaseth, whenever his word and providence together so state the case, that either I must embrace sin or the cross.

And as it is plain, that thus it must be whensoever the soul transacts with Christ, so it is most highly reasonable that thus it should be. Do not murmur at it, do not think it hard that you are to go (if Christ will have it so) a suffering Christian to heaven and glory; for pray, did he not bear a worse cross for you? and do not you expect to be saved from worse things by him? Did not the death that he suffered upon the cross import unspeakably more of grievanee and of horror, than any thing you are capable of suffering in this world? And as to what you are capable of suffering for him, and upon his account, is it at all comparable to the sufferings you expect to be delivered from by him? Is it not reasonable then, that a state of most absolute devoting to him all your external comforts, and your very life itself, (if it should be called for,) should come in, and be made part of those terms, upon which Christ will conclude with you, that you shall be his, and he will be yours? Never mutter at it, the reason of the thing speaks itself, that you in eoming to him say, Lord, I am come to make a most absolute contract with thee; take me, my life, my estate, my eoneernments, all that is dear to me in this world, I am willing should become a sacrifiee to thee; do with me, and what belongs to me, as thou wilt, only save my soul; it is for eternal life I am come to thee, and for no temporal immunities or enjoyments.

(4.) Another thing considerable in this eontract and agreement with Christ, and which is the essential thing, is the vital union that the soul must enter into with him. If ever you come to an agreement with Christ, you must be vitally united. There must be that union of life between him and you, as whereupon spirit may be said to touch spirit, and life, life; as in that 1 Cor. vi. 17. "He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit."

Oh! that this might be understood, and enter into all our hearts! I am much aware of it, how easy a thing (in comparison) an external and outside Christianity is, and how apt men are to take up with that. A religion, a Christianity, that consists but in externals, or any thing of that kind, is incomparably easier than this venturing, or adjoining of ourselves with Christ. The affrighted soul when once it is awakened in any measure, and apprehensive of the danger of its case, it readily submits to any thing but this, which is a thing partly not understood, and partly irksome and grievous to flesh and blood; it recoils at the very thought of it. Any thing is easy in comparison of this; any thing that shall only be an exercise to the outward man, or, (as I may say,) to the surface of the inner, to wit, the soul when it is under an affright, then it may yield; I will comply with any external abstinences, I will submit to any external performances, I will abstain from what you will have me, I will perform what you will have me, as to the outward man; only let me be excused from such efforts of the inner man, as I partly do not understand, and partly as I do understand them, I cannot but regret, and have an aversion to them.

Here it is that many a one breaks with Christ, because they will not endure those paroxysms, which they must pass through in passing from death to life; in turning the very vertical point. It is being created in Christ, coming to a vital union with him, that is the great thing at which the heart startles and revolts. This was the very ease we read of in that 6th chapter of John, when our Saviour had said and inculcated again and again, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." And he observes the tumultuations and mutinies of their minds at the spiritualities of his foregoing discourse: thereupon saith he, Do not murmur at this, for I tell you, that "no man can come to me, except the Father draws him." And in the sequel of that discourse, (verse 65th,) Did not I tell you before, "No man can come to me except it be given him of my Father?" They were willing to comply far in externals; you see they followed Christ from place to place, with mighty complacency attended upon his Gospel, were pleased with his doctrine; when they miss him in one place, they run to another part of the country, they take ship and follow him; when they understood he was gone to the other side of the sea of Tiberias, they throng after him in great multitudes; they leave the affairs of their callings to go from place to place after him; but yet, when they heard this from him, many wen back, and walked no more with him. This is the sense of many a one towards Christ; Lord, we will follow thee all the

country over; we will go from place to place, wheresoever we may meet thee, or hear any thing of thee. And these persons, while they did thus much externally, did also abstain from much, you may be sure, where they could have no opportunity of indulging and gratifying their appetites; being thus hurried from place to place, pursuing and following Christ; yet they did it. So it may be with many a one besides, in our days, when they are awakened, and in some terror, there are no external abstinences that we think or know will offend; we will no more be drunk with the drunken, nor scorn with the scorners; no, by no means; we will undergo any restraint and severities in this kind, rather than run the hazard of our souls; and we will stick at no external performances; nothing that hath but bodily exercise in it. We care not how many sermons we go to hear; we will go any where to the church, or to the meeting-place, where we may hear the most serious ministers; we will be sure always to stick close to the honest side, and to the best cause; we will be true to the last, to the protestant religion and government, and to that party that adhere thereto. All this is fairly and well overtured; but tell them, that besides all this you must have a work wrought in your heart and soul, which is to be done by a divine power. By a divine power, say ye? Then where are we? Can we command the Divine power? This is the foolish cheat and deceit that many put upon themselves; and they make the matter to be hopeless from such expressions; "No man can come to me, except the Father that hath sent me draw him," and "except it be given him of my Father." Here are true and just premises, from whence many times men allow themselves to infer the falsest conclusion imaginable. That, therefore, they have nothing to do, and therefore they have nothing of hope remaining to them; considering that which is only in the power of another, not in their own. But upon serious and sober thoughts;—is it not all one, whether you have that power of your own, or may have it from another, if it be duly sought in the prescribed way that plainly lies in view before us all? Doth not the same Gospel, the same word, that saith, "no man can come to me except the Father that hath sent me draw him," or "except it be given him of my Father," say also, that he "will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him," as readily as parents will give bread to their children rather than a stone?

This doth not difference the case; it is only a reservation that the great God doth think fit to keep to himself, as suitable to the majesty of a God in the way of his dispensations towards perishing creatures, offending creatures. Mercy you shall have; help you shall have; power you shall have to do what is necessary to be done in order to your being made safe and happy. But you shall know you are to receive it; you are to seek it; you are to come upon the knee for it; you are to be in the dust for it; to wait, and be prostrate at the foot of a mercy-seat, and before a throne of grace. This is suitable to God, and it is suitable to you; to an offended Majesty, and to offending creatures; but it doth not infer that there is therefore no hope, because there is such a vital union to be brought about with Christ, as can only be brought about by a divine power; for there is still hope that you may have that power afforded you, and exerted in you, both from the gracious nature of God, to which it can never agree to let a soul perish that is aiming at a compliance with him, in his own way, and upon his own terms. And there is encouragement from most express words of Scripture, that carry such sweet alluring breathings of grace in them; "Turn ye at my reproof; I will pour out my Spirit upon you; I will make known my words unto you," Prov. i. 28. And do you think these words signify nothing? "As I live, saith the Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel? Turn, and live." There must be offers of turning, aims to turn, aimings to come to his closure, reachings forth of the soul towards Christ, to come to a living union with him; and in that way you are to expect help.

Objection 1. But it may be said, what hope yet can there be, when, upon the whole matter (as we have lately been taught) there are very few that are saved, and when it is so apparent that the generality do perish, do walk on in destructive ways,—ways that take hold of hell, and lead down to the chamber of death? What hope is there for us, that we that are here in this assembly, when there are so few that are saved; what hope (I say) can there be given to us, that we shall be of those few?

Answer. To this let me say but thus much at present; that, as few as they are, who have you heard of concerning whom you have ground to think, to admit a thought, that they did perish, or were in likelihood to perish, taking the course that hath been directed? That is, having the terms of the Gospel in view before them, and aiming and striving to their uttermost, and accompanying their endeavours with earnest supplication to the God of all grace, for help to comply with those terms, and come up to them? As few as they are that are saved, they are certainly much fewer that ever perished this way, if ever you can suppose that any one perished that doth thus. If there are few that shall be saved, do but consider how much fewer a number you have here to oppose of such as perish in such a way, and upon such terms: incomparably fewer, if ever it can be thought that any at all have thus perished. And no more needs to be said to this now.

Objection 2. But it may perhaps be said,—it seems, however, a very mean thing, that the soul, in coming to a closure with Christ, should be influenced hereunto only by the hope of being saved; I come to him, because I hope I shall be saved by him; I have terrible destruction in view, and I find myself beset with dangers and deaths, and I have no other way to escape; but the hope of escaping brings me to Christ. This (it may be said) is mean.

Answer. Mean, say ye? And to whom is it mean? Is it mean to you, or is it mean to Christ? It is very true indeed, to you it is mean, and it is fit it should be so; for a company of offending creatures, must they stick at any thing that may be mean to them in order to their being saved? Why, man, it is in order to thy being saved from eternal death and destruction; and wilt thou grudge at any thing, because it is mean, that tends and is necessary to the saving thee? No; it is fit for us to put our mouths in the dust, (as was said,) "if there may be any hope." They that have forfeited their lives, and deserved a thousand hells, is it for them to stick at any thing because it is mean? But when to you it is mean, to Christ it is not mean; that he should be the hope of sinners, to him it is honourable; to him it is glorious. And by how much the more it is debasing to you, it is so much the more exalting to him, magnifying of him in his office, and magnifying of him in the great and high excellencies of his nature and person.

SERMON XVII.[a]

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

But now there doth somewhat need to be considered in reference to all that hath been opened, which may, by way of objection, occur and offer itself to the thoughts of many. As,

Objection 1. This may be objected; that it seems not so intelligible how hope should have influence upon conversion; for, can there be any thing good in the soul before conversion? And inasmuch as by conversion itself the first grace is given, can there be any grace before this first? Why, there are several things that may be said to this, which it will be of very great use to us to consider; and which (this being a fit way of introducing them) I choose to introduce this way. As,

Answer 1. That there is always a difficulty in fixing the beginning of things. The very *transitus* of any thing from its *non esse* to its *primum esse*, from its state of nothingness to its beginning to be, is always a matter of real difficulty, and which cannot but carry somewhat of obscurity and dubiousness along with it. But,

[a] Preached June 14th, 1691.

Answer 2. It was upon the foresight of what I tell you now is liable to be objected, that I told you formerly of a two-fold hope, which we are to consider in reference to the present case; to wit, of a human and rational hope, and of a holy and gracious hope. The former whereof is leading, and introduced to the latter; and, indeed, to be pre-supposed to it as a foundation, according as the human rational nature is unto the holy gracious nature; every one must be a human creature before he can be a holy creature; the being of the man precedes the being of the saint, or holy man. So it is in this case too; the very being of a human rational hope must precede that of the gracious and holy hope; and as such, it is not without the influence that hath been mentioned to the mentioned purposes. If any yet cannot hope as a saint, they ought according to the grounds they have in view before them, to hope as a man. If you cannot yet hope as a holy creature, you ought to hope as a reasonable creature, according to those grounds that God hath laid in view before you. And,

Answer 3. To hope as a human and reasonable creature is to hope, upon the consideration of such things as have that tendency in themselves to found and raise a hope in us; that is plain and obvious in itself; for consideration is nothing else but the exercise of our reasoning faculty; a communing with ourselves; a discussing matters with our own souls, or in our own minds, according to the concernment that we may apprehend them to be to us. And in that way, (if there be a real ground,) hope ought to be excited and raised up in us. And we ought to be active, in order to its being so. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope; (Lam. iii. 21.) recollecting and calling to mind such things as are proper matter of hope, ought to excite and raise such hope in us. And again,

Answer 4. This God himself doth point out to us as the proper method of conversion; to wit, the engaging and setting on work our own considering power, which, being duly engaged, hath a tendency that hath been noted to raise hope. It is marked out as the great bar and obstruction to conversion, when people will not consider: "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people will not consider," Isaiah i. 3, 4. "Ah, foolish people! a sinful nation; a people laden with iniquity; a seed of evil-doers; children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord," Isaiah i. 16. And afterwards, he reasons with them to turn; "Wash ye, make ye clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes;" as you find throughout the series of that chapter. He calls upon his apostate people, (when they have revolted and gone back from him, and when therefore the exigency of the case makes their conversion and return necessary,) he calls upon them to show themselves men; "remember this, and show yourselves men; bring it again to mind, (oh,) ye transgressors!" Isaiah xlvi. 8. And for that very reason, he discovers himself ready to show mercy; when he hath at any time the opportunity given him of observing such a temper and disposition of spirit to consider and return. "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness which he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive," Ezek. xviii. 27, 28. "Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die." "Because he considers and turns;" if he do not consider, he will never turn. If he do consider, he may, especially when he doth consider such things as tend (as was said) to found and raise a hope for him of mercy in returning. Again,

Answer 5. Such things as ought to be considered in such a case, they do more clearly and distinctly present themselves to view with them that live under the Gospel. That gives mighty advantages to such considerations as carry matter of hope with them; and God will deal with all sorts of people according to that measure of light which he affords them. For those that live under the Gospel, they must be dealt withal according to what discovery is extant before them of his mind and will by that; for those that have no Gospel, they will be dealt with by other measures. But, for those that live under the Gospel, to whom that bright, and morning, and pleasant light hath shined, they ought to judge, and make, and estimate of their own state and case accordingly; and think, I am not a creature turned loose into the world to wander in it as in a wilderness; but I am by special, peculiar, divine favour placed under the dispensation of an everlasting Gospel, in which he speaks his mind distinctly to men about the ways and methods of recovering and saving lost and perishing souls; so that whatsoever hath a tendency to administer any matter of hope, it lies in view with the greatest advantage imaginable, before whom this divine and express revelation of the mind of God about these concernments is come. And,

Answer 6. That hope that shall (upon consideration of the things that have that tendency) arise in the souls of any in order to their conversion, and before that work be as yet done, we must understand it to be greatly improved and assisted by those greater measures of common grace, that are afforded to them that live under the dispensation of the Gospel. And so, I told you at first, that human rational hope, assisted by common grace, may have a great and very significant influence towards this blessed change that is to be wrought upon the soul. And though it be very true, therefore, that there can be no special grace before the first special grace, (as the matter speaks itself,) yet there may be common grace before special grace. That grace that goes under the name of common, it is leading, it is preparatory, it is antecedent to that which goes under the notion of special. And so the doubt is answered, what grace can there be before the first grace? Before the first grace, there may be other grace,—grace that is not special grace; that is common, and that is in a greater measure afforded to them that live under the Gospel. And thereupon I add,

Answer 7. That there are sundry obvious considerations that tend to raise hope, which, as common grace falls in with it, (though it be but merely human and rational hope otherwise,) may have a mighty hand in the soul's first turn to God, or an influence upon it; considerations that tend partly to awaken in the soul a sense of its own case; and that tend thereupon to erect and lift it up towards God in hope. I do not confine the discourse I am upon, nor would I confine your thoughts, to such considerations merely, abstractedly, and singly, as tend to beget hope: but such as tend to beget a sense first, and then to beget hope; that is, when the soul is made to feel its own distress, and perceive sensibly its own forlorn wretchedness; this makes it the more susceptible of that hope that must have influence upon this great turn to God through Christ. And those will be such considerations, as they who live under the Gospel have their present and constant advantage for. It is for one to sit down with himself, and think; and we may be sure the Gospel will never do that soul any good that never thinks, that never considers. But if one under the dispensation of the Gospel will set himself to consider, he hath such considerations as these obvious to him:—

"I am an apostate creature; a poor wretch fallen from God, cut off from him by mine own iniquity, who hath been the Author of my life and being to me, and from whom alone I can expect a blessed eternity. I have by apostacy incurred his displeasure, fallen short of his glory, fallen under his wrath; I am, by nature, a child of wrath, as well as others are; I know there is a satisfaction due to Divine justice from me, for the injury and wrong I have done to the majesty and authority of his government over me, who gave me breath; I know I am never capable of making that satisfaction myself; if I were to lie everlastingly in consuming flames I should be always satisfying, but I should never have satisfied. But I find withal (and the Gospel tells me so) God doth not expect from me that I should satisfy for my own sin; he hath devolved that matter wholly into another hand; and the Gospel having declared to me his mind and pleasure herein, it would be the greatest presumption imaginable in me to offer at being a satisfier for my own sin; to offer at that were to offer an affront instead of a satisfaction; to suppose I could satisfy, were for me to measure arms with the Almighty; it were to take upon me as if I were a God,—as if I were the man his fellow; as if any thing that could be done or suffered by me could bear proportion to the rights and dignities of the Divine government, when they have been invaded, usurped, and violated, as they

have been by me. But I find by the same Gospel, that though I am not required to make satisfaction to the justice of God for my own sin myself, yet I am required to return to God, and to receive his Son, who hath made that satisfaction; and to receive him with a dependent and subject heart, casting myself upon him for salvation, and subjecting myself for government, even unto eternal life. I find this is required; every one that lives under the Gospel may consider so, and ought to consider so. This light shines into every one's face that lives under the Gospel."

And then hath every one of us to consider further,—"But for this mighty turn I find for myself no power; I ought to turn to God through Christ, but I cannot; not through natural impotency, but moral; for this can be resolved only into disinclination of will. My will is disinclined, bent another way; I must tear myself off from those ways of sin that I have run in; I cannot alter the bent of my own heart, no more than a leopard can his spots, or a blackmoor his skin. Here is the great stress and hinge of this case. That must be done, or I am lost, which I myself cannot do. But such a one hath yet further to consider; I find it is charged upon me to return, to come back to God through Christ; to repent towards God, to believe in his Son. I find these things are charged upon me; and my reason and conscience cannot but tell me, that that impotency which only lies in a disaffected disinclined will, can never excuse me from such duty. This is the very sum of all malignity itself; a will against my duty; a will against the good and acceptable will of God: this carries all the malignity of hell in it, to have such a will. Therefore this ill habit and bent of my will can by no means in the world invalidate the obligation of those laws and precepts, that bind me to repentance and faith in the Son of God; they lie upon me as a matter of indispensable duty still." That such a one hath to consider and think that,

Then nothing can be more obvious than to consider further,—

"If I have such things lying upon me as matter of most apparent and indispensable duty, for which I have no present power, nothing remains to me but to offer at my duty; otherwise I lay myself under the manifest guilt of most insolent rebellion; for I cannot but say, that a sinner is righteously enjoined to repent. If it were great iniquity in me first to offend, it is most apparent duty to repent of my having offended: and if God offer to me his own Son to be to me a Saviour and a Ruler both together, surely it is most justly enjoined upon me that I receive him as such, that I rely upon him as a Saviour, and subject myself to him as a Ruler. I have nothing to say against the equity, reasonableness, and obligingness of these laws of his. Why, then, if they do lay actual obligation upon me, and I feel no present power in my own soul to comply with them; but cannot but be sensible of impotency, to wit, a disinclined heart. What? I offer at turning to God? I may as well offer at removing a mountain. Here is a difficulty invincible to me; a power that I can by no means overcome; a carnal, corrupt inclination, carrying me another way, and that strengthened by all the infernal powers of hell and darkness too; for every one that is turned is "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," Acts xxvi. 18. And who hath "delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," Coloss. i. 13. A mighty turn this is! And when the law saith to me, Repent; when it saith, Turn, believe, receive Christ; subject thyself to him; rely upon him. If I look into myself I find myself dead; "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins!" (Eph. ii. 1, 2.) where all have naturally their conversations, "according to the course of the world, and the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." What shall I do in this case against all the power of my own indwelling corruption, and all combined powers of the hellish infernal kingdom, that labour to the uttermost to keep me off from God, to keep me off from Christ, that I may never come to a closure? What is to be done in this case? Why, the mentioned considerations are most obvious; to wit, those great evangelical precepts requiring nothing but matter of most plain and indispensable duty, from which a disinclined will is no excuse, but rather the highest aggravation imaginable of my iniquity and guilt, if I comply not; so as that I am held under a strict tie to do what the evangelical law requires and charges upon me. Nothing is (I say) plainer, and more distinctly in view, than that I am to offer at what I cannot myself effect; otherwise I add insolent rebellion to all my former indisposition. And I find this is the plain meaning of the commands, as they are explicated by superadded promises. "Turn ye at my proof," Prov. i. 23. What, I alone? What, I by myself?—No; do you turn; do as much as in you is; put yourselves into a turning posture; and "I will pour out my spirit upon you; and I will make known my words unto you."

And to excite and raise hope higher in this case, the poor wretch hath to consider this;

"It is the God of all grace that I am now to apply myself to; the God that is rich in mercy, and that is the Father of mercies; and again, I am to apply myself to him for the concernments of my soul; of an immortal spirit, that he hath put into me, who is himself the Father of spirits. Why should I not expect he should be kind to his own offspring?—a poor wandering soul; a degenerate, apostate spirit, that is sensible of having apostatized, that is now aiming to return and to come back to him? Why should not I expect him to be merciful, to be helpful to a poor soul that sees itself lost if he do not help,—if he do not put forth his hand and draw me into union with him, and with his Son, in whom he knows only I must live, and without which union I am left still under a necessity of perishing? And here is this to be considered,—he is more nearly related to this spirit of mine than to my flesh, more nearly to this soul of mine than to my outward man. I have found him kind and compassionate to my flesh and outward man. This is fit to be suggested to any man's soul that begins to awaken and consider his case; and, further, to say within himself, Thou hast nothing to do but to hope in the divine mercy; and thou hast already found the Father of mercies merciful to thy meaner and baser part. How hast thou lived all this while in this world? It was by him that thou didst live, and through him thou wast born; and thou hast hung upon him ever since thou hangedst upon thy mother's breast. Where hast thou had thy bread for a day, and day by day, but from him? Where hast thou had thy breath every moment? thy breath was continually in his hand. He that hath been so compassionate to that flesh of thine without thy seeking, will he not be compassionate to thy soul, if thou dost seek him,—if thou dost crave,—if thou dost cry, and tell him, Here is one of the souls that thou hast made, ready to perish under the tyranny of a carnal inclination, and under the power of the great destroyer of souls? Is there no place for hope in this case? though the case be a distressed case, it plainly speaks itself not to be a desperate case; will not he, who is the God of all grace, show compassion to a soul that is aiming to come back to him upon his call, and when he calleth him, though he can come but faintly, struggle but weakly; though he can but aim to come?"

And, again, you have this to consider to found and raise hope; that you do him the highest homage that in your case and circumstances you are capable of doing, when you throw yourselves upon his mercy; and it is that which he is most highly pleased with. "He takes pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy" a scripture, that any soul which begins to have an awakened sense of the state of his own case, ought to have as a frontlet before his eyes, and engraven (as it were) upon the palms of his hands. This ought to be considered; Though I cannot comply with him as I should, I cannot do such things as are just and righteous, (which a most unexceptionable, evangelical law doth ask for, and require, and challenge,) yet I am willing to do him all the homage I am capable of, by casting myself upon his mercy, and by making him my ultimate and last hope. Say you so? (saith God;) is this your posture? Now you please me beyond all things that you were capable of doing besides, or any other way. "He takes pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy." This is to acknowledge the divine mercy to be a bottomless abyss,

never to be fathomed; you hope in his mercy, when otherwise you had no hope in any thing else. This is that wherein he takes pleasure; this is to acknowledge him to be God, to give him the proper glory of his Deity; and own him to be infinite and immense even in goodness, that great excellency and perfection of his nature.

And admit that all considerations, all the actual thoughts you have of all these things, and your revolving them to and fro in your own minds, are all, as yet, but within the compass, enabling you to raise a hope upon so plain grounds as these are, which lie in view before you; yet every one sees that these things have a manifest tendency to the soul's turning to God through Christ; and so lie in your way to that special grace, wherein the great turn itself doth lie. And then I add again, in the last place, that,

Answer 8. That, whenever that great turn is brought about wherein is the great effort of grace, which is most special and peculiar, it is manifest that a holy hope is one of the things that doth first appear and show forth itself in this great turn. For the soul is to close with God in Christ; but this is impossible to it, but as it hopes for acceptance. This can never be the act of a despairing soul. If the soul look upon God and Christ with absolute despair, it is hardened with a diabolical hatred; and can never close, can never unite with him but when it opens itself to receive Christ, and all the fulness of God. It is hope that opens it, and hath the great influence into the sincere covenanting act, the vital covenanting act, by which the soul takes God in Christ, and surrenders and gives up itself to God, through Christ. And that is sincere, and so continues, or doth not continue, according as the soul hopes or hopes not, or hopes truly and fully, or otherwise.

The expressions to this purpose are worthy to be written in letters of gold, which we find in Psal. lxxviii. 7, 8. Where we have the very root of sincerity, and the very root of apostacy, pointed out to us both together, even with manifest reference to the truth of the thing I am now inculcating to you: "That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments; and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their heart aright; and whose spirit was not steadfast with God." The design of all this is to signify, that God would have a people to succeed from that root and stock that should be better than their fathers: but wherein should they be better? or should they come to be better? Why, their fathers were stubborn and rebellious; they were false and unsteadfast in the covenant of God; they did covenant, but it was on terms: "They did but flatter him with their mouths, (as is afterwards expressed,) and lied to him with their tongues." Their hearts were not sincere; there was no fixedness and stability in the covenant of God. And wherein should their children be better? Why, I will have them be taught and instructed, and to learn, from all the methods of the dispensations of God towards their forefathers, to set their hope in God. This was the great thing their fathers did not; and therefore continued rebels still; and when they seemed to covenant were false and treacherous, and unsteadfast in their covenant with God. But if ever there come to be sincere covenanting, it must come from their setting of their hope in God as the "God of all grace;" as the God "rich in mercy;" to whom, as such, (each must say,) "I do, through his Christ, adjoin my soul, and tell him, Here I will live; here I will die; I am come to this point, brought to thee by the invitation of thine own word and Gospel. It hath bid me repent and believe, and required me to yield myself to God, and to take God for mine. I do all this upon the warrant of, and in obedience to, the authority of the law of grace, that supreme, that benign law." This is that which makes the soul steadfast; brings it to a point; now it finds this is a work that will hold, when the soul is setting its hope in God, and unites itself by covenant with him.

And so much with reference to that first objection, which served me to introduce these sundry things, which I hope will be of use to those that consider them.

Objection 2. But, in the second place, it may be further objected: If hope,—the hope of being saved, will have such an influence upon conversion in order thereunto, how comes it to pass, that when the most do so generally profess a hope of being saved, yet so few are converted thereby? Is hope like to have such an influence upon conversion in order to salvation, when we find that men do very generally hope to be saved, and have very great hope of being saved; yet many of them (the greater part of them it may be) are never converted?

Answer. To that there are some things to be said, also, that it may be of equal use to us to understand and consider. As,

I. Therefore it is, that many hope to be saved who are never converted by their hope, because they do maim the object of their hope; that is, whereas they should hope first to be converted, and then, secondly, so to be saved, they hope to be saved without being converted. And so one great part of the object of their hope is left out; and their hope, therefore, is not only not subservient, but is obstructive to their conversion; and so, consequently, to their salvation too. It doth (I say) not only subserve it, but hinders it. They hope they shall be saved,—that they make the abstract and separate object of their hope, excluding and shutting out from that salvation all considerations of the sanctity, the purity, the holiness, which the conversion, that they should conjoin therewith, carries in it. And this doth not only not help, but hinders both their conversion and salvation. It doth not help it, because the hope of being saved without it is never likely to make them look after being converted. And it hinders it, because it cannot but provoke God to keep at a distance from them, and move his displeasure to the highest against them; for they do in this kind of hope, not only not hope according to his word, but they hope against it, so as that their very hope is the giving him and his word the lie; the worst and most provoking thing that can be thought. Their very hope is saying to themselves, "Peace, peace," though they walk after the imagination of their own hearts; though they never alter their course, and though their hearts be never changed, yet they shall have peace. This (I say) is to give the lie to the divine truth, and the word of his truth; and so carries in it matter of the highest provocation; as that scripture expresseth it, "If any man think" and speak, though it be but in his own heart, though he do but mutter it inwardly, though he do but whisper it to himself, "I shall have peace though I walk in the way of my own heart, and after the imagination of my own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst;" to add the act of sin to the desire of sinning, Deut. xxix. 18, 19. My jealousy shall smoke against that man, (though he doth not speak out, though he doth but say it in heart,) for he doth me the greatest injury in his heart imaginable; his conceptions of me are ignominious; he makes me an impure deity, that will give peace to him that walketh on in his wicked ways; so that I should not only be reconciled to him in his wicked way, but I am supposed to be reconcileable to his wickedness,—to that wicked way in which he walketh. I am supposed untrue to myself; he makes me a foolish deity, that all the threats and menaces that are in my word against daring, insolent sinners, are only indeed *terrica lamenta*, bug-bears, to frighten children and fools with; therefore (saith he) my jealousy shall smoke against that man; I will not spare him, I mean to paradigmatize such a man as this, and to let all the world know, by the severity of my vengeance against such a one, that I am what he did not think me to be, a true, a holy, a just, and jealous God. That hope that men have of being saved without ever being converted, or turned to God through Christ, and breaking off from the way of sin, it is of this import, as you have heard. It carries this secret aspect and language in it, so detracting, so reproaching and ignominious to the true, and holy, and jealous God. And therefore it is not to be thought strange, if men have such a hope as this, and it never doth them good. They will never be the better for it; it never makes them good men in this world, nor happy in the other. And then,

Answer 2. Besides this horrid maim and flaw, which is in the object of their hope, (separating therefrom what should be conjoined therewith,) there is an equally great defect in their very hope itself, which makes it not strange, that it should not have an influence into their conversion:

for, if the matter should be examined, what are these men's hopes? It resolves into this; to wit, it is nothing else, but only no fear; it is a negative hope, and no positive thing; a hope that consists in nothing else, but only not fearing. They find they do not fear their being miserable, and that is all. It is very true, indeed, there is nothing that is more common language in the profanest mouths, than that form of asseveration, as they hope to be saved. But let the meaning of those very words be examined and inquired into, and it dwindles into nothing:—Hope to be saved? What do you mean by this hoping to be saved? Let the matter be but grasped, do but grasp at it, and you find this hope signifies nothing but only no fear. There is many a one with whom, in reference to many things, there is neither fear nor hope; and it is so here: as from a country that is either merely imaginary, or that you know nothing of, you never hope for good, or fear any evil from thence; you are equally void of any hope, or of any fear: who doth either hope any good, or fear any evil from an Utopian land? This is the case with most of these confident persons, that will briskly say, upon all occasions, As I hope to be saved, it is so and so. And what is this hope to be saved? It is only their no fear to be damned. It is true they have no fear of being damned; and this no fear they call hope, as if nothing must signify something. This is a plain state of the case; that hope that is to influence salvation, and, in order thereunto, conversion must be a real, active, vigorous principle in the soul; not a mere nullity, not a nonentity,—as no fear is,—never to fear is.

But you will say, Where lies the difference between these things? I answer, it is manifold and vast. As,

1. As to the positive hope that there should be, it is grounded in faith; but this (no fear) is grounded in infidelity; that is grounded in religion, this is grounded in atheism and irreligion. A vast difference! He that seriously hopes, hopes because he believes the word of God is true, and that such and such things have a real foundation there; and because he hath an inward reverence and adoration of God; and therefore, upon such and such discoveries of him as he is pleased to make of himself and the impression on his heart suitably, there is a temperament in the soul towards him, made up of reverence and love, with some kind of dependance and trust. This is all founded in faith, and in religious sentiments; but this same [no fear] is founded in nothing but atheism and irreligion; they have no fear of that which they really believe is nothing, or they think will never be. And then again,

2. This [no fear] is nothing, whereas this hope that is required is a most positive thing, a principle of great liveliness, vigour, and activity, in its own sphere. That which is nothing can work nothing, effect nothing, in order to conversion or salvation. And again,

3. This [no fear] may signify nothing at all more than only the soul's unconcernedness for any such matter; whereas, real hope signifies its great concernedness, its deep intention of mind and thought about such things. There is nothing does more intend a man's thoughts towards any thing than real hope doth; but this [no fear] may signify his not minding any such concernments at all; his being totally unconcerned about them. So it may in many things, in which one apprehends himself to have no real interest one way or other, and so, accordingly, is in the temper of his mind indifferent in reference to such things. There are many such concernments of which we are totally ignorant, have no real knowledge or thought; the concernments of some remote countries, at the uttermost ends of the earth, which we know nothing of, understand nothing of their affairs; we are accordingly altogether unconcerned what is done there, and utterly without the exercise of hope or fear, as to the events of things among them. But it is not so with us in reference to the concernments that are under our notice. There is nobody so indifferent in reference to France, Germany, Flanders, and Savoy, as to the occurrences there, and in the conclave, and nearer home in Ireland. There is nobody that useth thought in those things that is so unconcerned about them, but that there will be various agitations of hope and fear this way; and that, according to the aspect of things among us, nobody can be supposed so indifferent among us, that there should be, in reference to these things, neither hope nor fear. But every one, according to the wish and inclination of his own mind, hath his hope or his fear variously stirring in him thereunto. But it is possible there may be a total vacancy of fear where there is no concern at all. And as there is no fear, so there is no hope; that is, the things are never minded, never thought of.

And this is the true state of the case with the most in reference to the concernments of another world, as if it were a mere Utopia. They have, in reference thereunto, nothing of hope or of fear, but lie all their days in a stupid dream. And these are the persons, I confess, about whom I have the least hope, and the most fear; to wit, they who in reference to the concerns of their own souls, have neither hope nor fear; but lie in a drowsy sleep all their time, and dream away all their days; and whereas they talk of hoping to be saved, that hope is nothing else but only a not being afraid to perish, because they apprehend no danger, because they have nullified to themselves the great objects of hope and fear.

This, therefore, doth not signify the no influence of hope, but it signifies only the inefficacy, or no influence of no hope; for that hope is no hope which they miscall by that name. The most that they can make of it is, that it is no fear; but, as it is no fear, so it is no hope neither; that is, there is a vacancy equal both of hope and fear; and nothing makes their case more deplorable than this, that they are likely to perish even while there is hope, for want of hope. And this is the forlorn, dismal state of many that live under the Gospel; they cannot hope without the intention of hope; there can be no rational or human hope, much less that hope that reaches to the pitch of common grace; without the intention of thought, their thoughts will not be engaged; and one day passeth with them after another, and not a serious thought taken up, Shall I be saved, or shall I perish? What will become of me when I die?

But I hope it is not generally so with you. It would be very sad if it were; when you hear so many Lord's days together, one after another, so much of salvation; one comes and preacheth to you upon that great question, "Are there few that shall be saved?" and another comes and preacheth to you upon that expostulatory passage, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" and a third, he comes and preacheth to you upon this assertion, "We are saved by hope:" nothing but being saved, nothing but salvation, rings in your ears from one Lord's day to another. And it will be an amazing thing, if, after all this, we have no concernment about being saved; so that we find no room, no place for the exercise of hope or fear; hope of being saved, or fear of perishing by not being saved.

But if the true import of the word salvation were understood, and received into our souls, it would make work among us; it would find us exercise either for hope or fear; when we have so much spoken of salvation as we find in Scripture; and when the name of the Son of God is signalized to us, and celebrated among us as a Saviour, (he shall be called Jesus, for he shall be a Saviour to save his people from their sins,) why, every one that would but use his understanding, would say, What doth this word signify! What is the meaning of all this talk of salvation; of a Saviour, and of being saved? what doth it signify? It plainly signifies that all this world is likely to be shortly in a great flame, and that the Judge is at the door; that hell will shortly swallow up all a whole world of ungodly men, except that residue that shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet their Redeemer in the air, and so to be for ever with the Lord. And if we would but allow the word salvation its true import and significancy, it would be far from us to be without hope, in reference to being saved. And then we should come to understand somewhat of the significancy and of the influence of this hope, the hope of salvation, in order to our conversion first, and then to our salvation itself in the final state.

SERMON XVIII.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

HAVING proposed to show the influence that hope hath unto salvation, by showing both what influence it hath upon conversion, that brings us into a state of salvation; and then what influence it hath upon the Christian's perseverance even to the end, by which we are continued in that state, and so finally saved. We have hitherto insisted upon the former, and are now to proceed to the latter; to speak to that influence which hope hath upon a Christian's perseverance in that holy course through which he is to pass on to the state of final glory and blessedness. And here it cannot but be obvious to you, from what hath been formerly said, that hope, as it refers to the perseverance of a Christian, must needs considerably differ from hope as it hath at first influence into conversion; or a person's entrance into the Christian state, both in the nature and in the object; or in respect of the object of the one and of the other hope.

1. In respect of the nature of the one and the other, that hope that doth influence conversion, and is necessarily presupposed to it, (if you consider the nature of it,) hath no more in it than what doth belong to a merely human, rational hope, assisted only by common grace; for special grace cannot be supposed to be before conversion or regeneration; but even that human rational hope, it hath its influence and usefulness towards conversion, as other things belonging to the human nature have; not only our minds and understandings, by which we are capable of thinking and considering of things that are to affect, and by which we are to be wrought upon, in order to conversion. But even to go lower than that, our very external senses themselves; "faith cometh by hearing," and so it may come by reading the word and Gospel, which is to be the means of conversion and salvation to our souls. But if you look to the nature of that hope which is all along to influence the course of a converted person, one that is become sincerely a living Christian, that hope must needs be a part of the new man, or of the new nature, which is in regeneration communicated and imparted to the soul. And, accordingly,

2. The object of the one and the other hope must needs very much differ, even supposing the soul to be awakened, and that God is beginning to deal with it in order to conversion; it must be supposed to have some hope concerning the issue of this treaty, wherein it is now engaged with the great God about so important a matter. Otherwise (as hath been inculcated unto you again and again) it is impossible it should ever turn; converting and turning to God is not the act of a despairing but of a hoping soul; and the dispositions thereunto do suppose some hope. And the object of this hope must be understood to be God as now to be reconciled. The object of the other hope that doth influence a Christian's after-course unto final salvation, is God hereafter to be enjoyed. God to be reconciled is the object of that hope, which a person hath while God is dealing with him in order to conversion; to wit, we must suppose him awakened; and being so, considers and bethinks himself, I am an offending, guilty creature: the God that make me hath just matter of controversy with me; will he be reconciled, or will he not? will he always hold me guilty, will he bear himself as an enemy and an avenger to a poor guilty creature as I am? or will he pardon? Will he forgive? Will he show mercy? I hope he will, saith the poor trembling wretch. And then he turns at length. When God is dealing with the soul in order to conversion, it hath this hope in the midst of a great deal of fear and doubt,—Who knows but God will show mercy to a returning soul? And thereupon it turns. So the object of his hope is now God to be reconciled,—present reconciliation.

But the object of this hope after conversion, all along, through his succeeding course, is God to be enjoyed in the final state; now more and more, and perfectly hereafter in that state, which is to be final and eternal.

And this the very state of the case itself doth plainly enough suggest to us. There must be this difference also, as to the object of the one hope and the other, according to the difference in the very nature of this and the other hope. The soul before regeneration, it can generally affect and covet to be happy, (which is natural to man,) and dread to be miserable; it is capable of being afraid of wrath and torment; and being so, the state of the case, as it is in view before it, not excluding hope, it can entertain some hope, a human rational hope amidst all that fear. And hereupon, the main thing that it is exercised and taken up about, is the present state of its case, whether God will be reconciled or no; but with final reference too, to its future state, that is, especially the privative part of it, salvation and escape from eternal wrath. It can very well entertain hopes, and admit of agitations of affections to what goes no higher than so, from the very nature of such a subject, an intelligent, reasonable soul, that is capable of happiness, and in general of desiring it; and that apprehends itself liable to misery, and that cannot, without dread and abhorrence, think of that.

But in the mean time, before regeneration it is incapable of any such workings and dispositions as do belong to the holy divine nature. It cannot yet love God; it cannot yet desire a felicity in him; it cannot covet to be like him, or to have that happiness in view which consists in the vision of him. This only belongs to its state after it is regenerate. When once a person comes to be a son, is brought into a state of sonship, and hath a divine nature imparted and communicated to him in regeneration; we see what his sense is, what a kind of happiness he is capable of relishing, and what, accordingly, his hope is, 1 John iii. 1. When the apostle had told us in the close of the foregoing chapter, "Every one that doth righteousness is born of God;" every one that hath the same holy nature, which belongs peculiarly, and in its highest perfection, to God alone; every one that hath any participation of that nature, doth thereby appear to be born of God; (or as the same matter is elsewhere otherwise expressed, to be of God;) why, that being supposed, in the beginning of the next chapter, he breaks out into that transport and admiration, wherein we find him introducing the matter that follows: "Behold, what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God!" How come we to be called so? not as having a mere title, a name conferred upon us, and no more, but by having a new nature, a divine nature imparted. Adoption is founded in regeneration. There is no such thing as adoption that doth not presuppose regeneration, and the participation of a new, divine, holy nature from God.

Now, this being communicated, the happiness that such are hereupon capable of is, and so much (though we do not know what it will be in the perfect state fully yet) we do know concerning it, that we shall be like him, (as it there is,) "for we shall see him as he is." This they who are his regenerate sons, are capable of understanding, and relishing. And thereupon you see what their hope is; "every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, as he is pure." The hope that a regenerate person, a son, hath concerning him, is, that "he shall be like him, and see him as he is."

This is a very considerable difference; though there is a hope (as hath been said) that hath influence upon conversion and salvation itself, yet there is a hope that afterwards hath influence upon the Christian's perseverance through the whole of his after-course. These two do very greatly differ, according as the state of the case doth; the one being part of the new creature, or of the new man, or principle belonging to the new nature, which is now regenerated. The other may be only a human rational hope assisted by common grace, tending towards, and improvable in the methods of God's gracious communications unto the other, heightened up unto the other; so, whereas the principal exercise of the soul under these previous workings, which lead and tend to conversion, is taken up about a present peace and reconciliation with God; but its workings afterwards, under the influence of that nobler

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and more sublime hope, is taken up about a final felicity and blessedness in him; and so "rejoices in hope of the glory of God," as the matter is expressed, Rom. v. 2. and "obtaining of salvation by Christ Jesus, (1 Tim. ii. 10.) with eternal glory;" that being the thing whereunto such a one finds himself actually called. That cannot but be his hope, that is called to an everlasting kingdom, and the glory of God by and through Christ Jesus; the call proceeding from the God of all grace: "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect," 1 Pet. v. 10. That which is the final term of his calling, is the hope of it, as the apostle speaks, where he prays for the Ephesians, that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that the eyes of their minds might be enlightened, and that "they might know the hope of his calling," Eph. i. 18. Is another kind of knowledge they are capable of having concerning the "hope of their calling," or what they are to hope for in the state to which they are called after regeneration, and which proceeds from that divine light which is suitable to a regenerate soul, as such. I say, it is quite another sort of hope from that, which it was capable of before; and so they are quite another sort of things about which the soul is exercised and taken up.

And, in short, that which a person once converted and brought home to God, is entertained and taken up with through the remaining part of his Christian course, is the future state of things; the invisible state. As he is to be saved by hope, (as the text speaks,) brought on to final salvation by the continual influence of hope; and to have this influence upon his whole course unto final salvation, is the immediate product of faith; the soul believes the word of God revealing such and such things that are out of sight, and that come not within the view of common eyes; and believing the word of promise, it hereupon hopes for the things promised, reacheth forth in vehement aspirings towards these things, and contends against the difficulties that lie in the way of attainment. And so we are told the holy soul, the just one, is to live by his faith, Heb. x. 37. And that we are told in the very beginning of the next chapter, is, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of the things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. Agreeably to what the text saith, "we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope." It is hope pitched upon unseen things, upon the invisible state of things by which a person is sustained, borne up through the whole of his course in this world, unto final salvation. "What a man sees, why doth he yet hope for?" It is a matter relating to an unseen state of things, the heavenly state, which is to influence a Christian all along till he reach heaven.

And so much being premised, I shall now for the clearing of this to you, (that as hope hath an influence, in order to conversion, so it hath afterwards a continual influence upon perseverance, unto final salvation,) do these two things; 1st, Show how, and in what way, hope hath this influence. And then, 2dly, Show you how necessary this influence is to this purpose; to wit, a Christian's perseverance; his holding on the prescribed course, till he reach the blessedness of it in salvation.

I. I shall show you what influence it hath, or how it comes to have influence, to this purpose. And whereas it is plain and evident, that hope cannot sustain a Christian in his course, if it be not sustained itself; I shall upon this head, more distinctly, do these two things; 1st, Show what advantages such hope, kept up in life and vigour in the soul, doth afford a Christian's continuing in his course, in the ways of God, till he reach the end of it; and then shall, 2dly, Show what encouragement a Christian hath so to hope; or what it is, whereupon all along his hope is to sustain itself, that it may sustain him.

1. For the former of these, What advantages such a hope, kept up in life and vigour, is apt to afford a Christian, for the continuing of him in his way, or that he may persevere unto the end. Here I shall let you see, that it hath influence upon the many gracious dispositions, which it is necessary should be, and should be continued in the soul, in order to its persevering in the way of life. I shall instance in such things as do most directly refer to this very purpose, the keeping of a person with God, in that holy course into which, by conversion, he hath been brought. As,

(1.) An habitual seriousness. This is a gracious temper and disposition of spirit, that conduceth greatly to perseverance, and which is continually influenced by hope. By a serious temper of spirit, I mean (as the thing itself doth sufficiently speak to any one's understanding) a considering temper of mind; that is, a serious mind or spirit, that can consider, and is apt to consider things; nothing is more necessary to a Christian's perseverance in his course. Apostacy and defection from God is never so likely to prevail, as when persons do begin to remit the intention of their minds, as to the considering of things which they are so much constantly concerned to consider, in reference to their present states God-ward, and their future and final state. When once the soul is relaxed and loosened from the objects, which it should be principally exercised and taken up about, then comes its danger. The unthinking soul falls into mischief, is liable to be caught by this, and that, and the other snare. If there be a disposition to ponder things, while a considering frame of spirit is preserved, the soul is safe. But what shall oblige it to consider those things that are most preservative of it, which have greatest aptness in them to its preservation, and its being kept from destructive snares? What can engage it hereunto, so probably and so strongly, as a continual, lively, vigorous hope?

You may see what that will signify to that purpose, by that of the apostle, "Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end," 1 Peter i. 13. "Gird up the loins of your minds," a most emphatical expression, to signify a temper of spirit most intent upon consideration. Then is the soul in a considering posture, when the loins of your minds are girt up, when fluid thoughts are collected, as more fluid garments are collected, and bound about a man by a girdle: when the more volative thoughts are drawn in, and made to centre upon the things that we are more deeply concerned to consider. Then may we truly say, this soul is composed to a special sobriety. These expressions do expound one another, Gird up the loins of your minds and be sober; a mind girt up in its loins is a considering mind, and that lies in nothing more fitly and more truly, than in a certain sort of spiritual sobriety. And how is this influenced and maintained in the soul? Why, by a continual hope,—hope to the end. This is naturally so, that the hope we have of any design whatsoever, intends our minds, and collects them to the business: but if we have no hope, we are off from it. Whatsoever we have no hope of we abandon, we lay aside thoughts concerning it; it is to no purpose to consider, or think any longer about a business, in reference to which we have no hope. But as long as there is hope, there will be an agitation of thoughts, and the mind will turn itself this way and that, revolving things over and over. There will certainly, therefore, be a considering habit of mind preserved as long as hope remains in any liveliness and vigour, in reference to the great concerns of eternity that we have before us. And,

(2.) To our continuing in our course (if we be by conversion and regeneration brought into a truly Christian course) a steadfast resolution is of most constant necessity. That we may continue our course, we must be most steadfastly resolved that, through the grace of God, we will not be put out of our way. There must be a "cleaving to God, with full purpose of heart," Acts ii. 23. And it is plain that a continual hope must influence this resolution: Why will I not forsake this way? Why am I (with dependance upon the grace of God) resolved to persist in it, that nothing shall turn me out of it? Why I have a great hope before me, I hope for great things by persisting in this way. It is a way that leads to a blessed end, an end which the grace of God hath encouraged me to hope I shall in this way attain unto. The apostle exhorts the Colossians that they continue in the faith grounded and settled, and not moved from the hope of the Gospel, Col. i. 23. Why was this new faith (as it was a new thing in the world at that time) to be so steadfastly stuck unto? why must there be so resolved an adherence to it? Why, there is the highest, and greatest, and most glorious hope held up in view in that Gospel, or by that Gospel which is the object of this faith; and which therefore claims and challenges

this steadfast adherence to the thing which it represents. Therefore you are not to be moved from what is contained in the Gospel, because it contains the matter of so high a hope.

It is not tempting you by trifles, or shadows, by small or little things; it is your hoped advantage, lying in this Gospel that is now held up in view before you, which is to keep you unmoved. The object contains in itself the reason of the act, and the frame and disposition of the heart required in reference thereunto. And,

(3.) Love to God will certainly have a most powerful influence upon a Christian's perseverance;—I cannot leave the ways of God, because I love him, he hath won my heart, I cannot think of departing from those ways in which I have met with him, and an acquaintance hath been brought about between him and me. And nothing can signify more to preserve and keep alive the love of God in the soul, in strength and vigour, than such a hope God-ward. I hope I shall see him ere long, and be made perfectly like him, and see him as he is. And whence is this to be hoped for, but from gracious communications from himself? I know it must be from his mere kindness, a good-will to me, if ever I come to be finally happy in him, and enjoy him. The hope of so high and great things from him, how highly doth it endear him to us? Can I forsake that God, turn aside from following him or walking with him, from whom I hope for great things? "He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, as he is pure." He makes it his business, so to work out that sin, that is, a departing from God; (for that is the notion of sin, aversion from God, turning off from him;) the soul would be rid of that: and hope maintains and keeps alive the love of God in the heart. I still hope for more and more from him, and therefore still love him more and more: this holds the soul to him. "Experience begets hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost," Rom. v. 4, 5. We love him. Why? "Because he first loved us," 1 John iv. 19. What doth that mean? Is the meaning, that nobody loves God, till they are assured, or have assurance of his loving them? No, that cannot be, there is many a sincere lover of God that hath no assurance of his love. But what must it mean then? Why, that (at least) they have the hope of it; for it is most certain, that with absolute despair, there must be most conjunct, pure, unmixed hatred. If there be pure despair, there will be pure hatred:—nothing but hatred of God, where there is nothing but despair of his love. As it is in hell, there is despair in perfection, and so there is hatred in perfection, (as one may speak,) in that horrid kind. The meaning therefore can only be, "we love him, because he first loved us," to wit, because we hope so. It is not to be understood, that every one that loves God, hath an assurance that he is beloved of him: but he hath the hope of it, otherwise he could never love him; and if thereupon, the soul doth love him, then it saith, I must never leave him, I must cleave to him as long as I live, and for ever, through all time, and to all eternity: nothing shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord; nothing shall break those bonds. And most evident it is, that as that love is drawn out into continual exercise, it still doth, in all its exercises, run on with the exercise, and under the influence, of a continuing hope. I am still expecting greater things from him, and the more I expect, the more I love him; and the more I love him, the more I am resolved to cleave to him, and never to leave him. And,

(4.) Patience is another requisite to perseverance: and hope hath a manifest influence upon that. Patience is nothing else but a suffering power, an ability to suffer; by which our Saviour tells us, we possess our souls, that is, save them. It signifies indeed, both, present liberty, and final safety; and that that possession of our souls in patience, preserves them. Possession, in that two-fold sense, signifies liberty and self dominion. He is subject to another's power, that can suffer nothing; but he is master of himself that can suffer. If he have an ability to suffer, then he keeps his self-dominion. He can be master of his own mind, of his own reason, of his own conscience, of his own judgment, of his own faith: but if he can suffer nothing, he must resign all, and admit another master, he must enjoy his own thoughts, his own sentiments, his own reason and his own conscience no longer. Thence comes apostacy, declension from God, his truths, his ways; I cannot suffer, I have no patience, no ability to suffer: then I must quit truth, holiness, and every thing, which, by my adherence to them, will expose me to the danger of suffering. But if there is patience, therein you possess your souls, you will thereby keep your liberty and self-dominion; so you secure to yourself final and eternal safety: and so keeping and possessing the soul, is in opposition to the final losing, or its being destroyed, and undone for ever.

And very plain it is, that hope is of most constant use and necessity, to the preserving and continuing this ability to suffer, this power of patience, or this passive power; nothing doth so much maintain it as hope. The occasion will not last always: I have the prospect of an end, and the hopeful prospect of a comfortable and good end. Therefore we both labour, and suffer reproach, because we trust, or have trusted, (so we read it, but it is in the original, because we have hoped,) in the living God, 1 Tim. iv. 10.

What a strange sort of men are these, that will endure to be so exposed, so scorned, so trampled upon, as they that bear the Christian name commonly are! What is the reason of it? What account will a reasonable man give, why he will so expose himself? I will tell you the reason; therefore we labour and suffer reproach, because we hope in God, in the living God, and we are pretty well persuaded we shall not finally be losers; we shall not have an ill bargain of it at last. As the same apostle, when he writes himself "an apostle and servant of Jesus Christ," seems to allow, that he was to doom himself to all the sufferings and calamities, that the enemies of the Christian cause could load him with, and lay upon him, for his assuming to himself such names of an apostle and servant of Jesus Christ. But why should Paul, that wise and prudent man, that learned man, that man of so considerable reputation among his own countrymen, why should he come to be written among the apostles and servants of Jesus Christ? Why, saith he, it is in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised, Titus i. 1, 2. I avow myself an apostle and servant of Jesus Christ upon this inducement, and for this reason, and so I mean to continue unto the end. It is the hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised to me. He whose nature doth not allow him to deceive, to whom it is impossible to lie, I firmly and securely hope in him; and therefore I will readily dispose myself to encounter all the difficulties and hardships, which the service of Jesus Christ can lay me open to. Again,

(5.) Contentment with that portion and allotment which God affords us in this world, is another great preservative from apostacy, or requisite to perseverance. And this is very much maintained by hope. If persons decline, and turn off from the holy way of the Lord, it is generally this world that tempts them. "Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world," 2 Tim. iv. 8. But if a man be well enough satisfied with the portion (whether it be more or less) which God hath alloted him of the good things of this world, then he is safe from temptation. But how shall he come to be satisfied with a lesser portion of the things of this world? Why, it is the hope of enough hereafter that satisfied him:—I have no great things now, nor do I matter that, I am not solicitous about it, I hope for greater and a better state.

What made Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, expose themselves to continued wandering, and to dwell in tents; when God had given them a country (one of the best in the world) by special grant, to have it as their inheritance, yet they lived as strangers, even in their own country, dwelling in tents; so as that they declared themselves pilgrims and strangers upon earth? What doth this signify and mean? Why, this declares plainly, that they seek a country, they hope and seek for a better country than all the world can afford them; (Heb. xi. 13.) therefore they tell the world, and tell it plainly, while we are upon earth, we are but pilgrims and strangers here; the world can tempt us with none of its baits: let the things it presents to our view, and makes us an offer of, be never so great, never so

special, they signify nothing with us, for every thing we can touch, that we can handle, or have to do with, smells of earth, and we are strangers and pilgrims here upon earth. And this was a plain declaration, their minds were higher, carried to somewhat in a higher region. They declare plainly, they are seeking a country. And what country is that? Why, a better and a heavenly country. And therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, Heb. xi. 16. It was the hope of those high and great things above, that drew up their hearts, and therefore this world could not entangle them.—Their way was above, (as the way of the wise is,) to escape from hell and death beneath. But it was hope that carried them up into those higher regions, so far out of the reach of deadly snares; the snares of death, as the wise man calls them. And again,

(6.) As contentment is a great preservative from the danger of apostacy, or a great requisite to perseverance; so is the desire of the better things of the better world, that better country, a very good preservative too. We must know that the spirit of man must of course, when it is drawn off from one sort of objects, apply and turn itself to another sort. It hath not its good within itself, it cannot be a deity, a god to itself; it must have a good to satisfy itself, *aliunde* out of itself. If it be not from this world that it looks for this good, it must find elsewhere that which may be more suitable and more grateful to it. Its desires, when they are confined, limited, and moderated by contentment, in reference to this world, are then removed and transferred to the things of the other world; and so it is kept in a steady, composed state. When it sees that the things of this world are not suitable, will not satisfy, it is not at a loss what it shall do next. A superior good presents and offers itself, and the new nature in it doth attemper, and suit its desires to that. And if it do desire things of that higher and upper region, it is in no danger of being drawn off from God, while that desire remains, lives, and flourisheth, and is in any power with it.

But now it so much the more desires, by how much the more it hopes; desire languisheth if hope fails, as it is in reference to any thing else, whereby as to the first appearance of good, it comes to its object. Is there any drawing forth of desire towards it, and we come to consider, and contemplate the matter, and we find it to be an unattainable thing, a thing to be despaired of, then we desert, desire fails, and grows flat of course. It is a thing rarely to be found, that desire remains in any vigour, to any object, in reference whereunto there is no hope, or in reference whereunto there is nothing but simple despair. Indeed, the first appearance, or view of goodness, or amiableness, in the object, may draw forth that which we call simple desire, so far as to put us upon the inquiry, is such a thing to be gained, yea or nay? And if we find it is not, desire fails, the hopelessness of the thing makes us lay aside the thoughts of it, and accordingly there is no more desire. If the desires of heavenly felicity live in our souls, this earth will never pluck us off from God; but that desire will last no longer than hope lasts, that such a state is not unattainable. We shall, by the grace of God, be enabled to reach the felicity of that state, we shall not be frustrated or disappointed at length:—then saith the soul, I will hold on my course. And then again,

(7.) Watchfulness is requisite to a Christian's continued progress in his course to final salvation. But there can be no such thing as watchfulness without hope. Watching imports a continual design, and of self-preservation; but when the hope of that fails, then all subordinate and subservient means are laid aside. But this is a thing enjoined us, in order to preservation, to watch always. And to this I might add,

(8.) Pray always too. This is requisite, as most conjunct with the other. And sure we are, as there can be no watching, so there can be no praying, without hope; this is most evident. And,

(9.) A complacential doing of good, or a disposition of doing good with complacency. This makes the ways of God pleasant to men, so as they will never leave them, nor turn aside from them: but it is hope that induceth them hereunto. It is a sowing to the Spirit, when we are doing good. The apostle calls it so. "They that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," Gal. vi. 8. Then immediately follows, "As ye have opportunity, do good unto all, especially to them that are of the house hold of faith." This is sowing to the Spirit suitably or subserviently to the kindness, and goodness, and benignity of the Divine Spirit. But whosoever sows, soweth in hope, that he may be partaker of his hope. That course of well-doing is continued, and the soul is held on in it, by the power and influence of a continued hope. "It is by patient continuance in well-doing, that we are to seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, unto eternal life," Rom. ii. 7. I add again,

(10.) Fervency in a course of duty is a very great requisite to continuance in it. We shall soon grow weary of that course of duty, wherein we have no fervour in our own spirits. It is a wearisome thing to pray continually, without any fervour; and for such work as this we are now engaged in, to preach or hear, if there be nothing of fervour in us in these exercises, it is very dull work, and such as we shall not be well pleased to hold on long in; now it is plain, that hope maintains the fervour of the spirit in duty. "Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," (Rom. xii. 11, 12.) and "rejoicing in hope," are words immediately connected. And,

(11.) Christian temperance is a great thing to preserve us from apostacy. There is nothing that doth more effectually betray a soul into, and ingulf it in, final ruin, than the letting loose sensual inclinations. And you find it is the great design of the Gospel under which we live, and of the grace that appeareth in it, bringing salvation, "To teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," Titus ii. 11, 12, 13. And how are we induced hereunto? "Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." There is nothing that in common experience proves so fatal to many, that had begun well in a course of religion. Some hopeful young ones, that have been struck with convictions, God hath begun to awaken them, to take hold of their spirits; and they have had some tastes and relishes of the word of God, and of divine and heavenly things; but we have found them recede, and go off again. And how came it to pass? Why, they lost all in a debauch, that extinguished the convictions of conscience and the desires of heart that begun to be stirred in them God-ward and heaven-ward.

Now it is the hope of a soul which is its safety in this case. What? shall I lose so great a hope, for the pleasure of an hour, or a moment? It is because that I have great hope concerning this soul of mine, and concerning that vast, immense eternity, that is in view before me, and whereof I have the prospect, that I will not do so; I am born to great hopes, and therefore I will not destroy them by so mad a folly as this, to throw away a soul, and to throw away so great hopes, to please two or three fools, that would only have me go to hell in company with them, or to keep them company there. No, if persons have any apprehension, that God hath been at work with them, about the affairs of their souls, in reference to eternity, this may be the beginning of a new birth, of a divine birth; and if so, whatsoever parentage one is born of, his hopes are suitable to his parentage. If I am under the regenerating, divine influence, born, or shall be born, (if things come to a good issue,) a son of the greatest of fathers, a child of God: then if a child, an heir, an heir of God, and joint-heir of Christ. Then how high and great are my hopes! How glorious expectancies are those that I have in prospect before me! And what? to lose all this for the pleasure of a debauch? It is hope that makes the mind sober, (as was before hinted,) "Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end." That you may be sober, that you may have sobriety of mind, of thinking, and of judging reasonably of things, keep hope in exercise; do but consider what you hope for, and you will be safe. And lastly,

(12.) Joy is a great requisite to perseverance, and will be of great use to us, in order thereunto. "The joy of the Lord is his people's strength," (Neh. viii. 10.) to carry them through the duties and difficulties of the Christian state. And how is that joy to be maintained? "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God," (Rom. v. 2.) and our rejoicing

is to be in hope, Rom. xii. 12. It is hope that feeds joy in reference to things, while we are in this present state which doth not afford much of immediate enjoyment, otherwise than that we have by anticipation. It is hope that directs to that which is within the veil, (Heb. vi. 19.) takes hold of invisible things, and so is as "an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast." The soul rejoiceth to find itself upon sure terms, rejoiceth in hope, in the strength and power of that hope, which, as its anchor, is thrown within the veil, and takes hold of the unseen things there. "The God of peace fill you with all joy and peace in believing," (Rom. xv. 13.) as the apostle prays for the Christian Romans. The more joy, the more vigour in your course, the joy of the Lord will be your strength; and the more hope, the more joy.

You see these many ways hope cannot but have an influence unto Christians' perseverance in the way and course, into which regeneration and converting grace hath brought them.

The next thing will be to show you, what encouragements a Christian hath thus to hope for, while his hope is to be sufficient for him all along in his course, something or other must be sufficient unto it, something or other must sustain it, that doth sustain him.

SERMON XIX.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

HAVING shown what advantages hope gives a Christian's progress in his way, we now come to let you see what ground a Christian hath for such a hope, to wit, that by the grace of God, and the assistance to be given continually from him, he shall be kept and preserved from the great danger of fatal, destructive backsliding and apostacy from God, and a departure from his ways; from turning aside into crooked paths, with the workers of iniquity: (Psal. cxxv. 5.) and from returning into those ways at length, "which take hold of hell, and lead down to the chambers of death," Prov. v. 5. But before I come to show you what ground a serious Christian hath for such a hope, something I must premise unto you. As,

1. That the grounds which he had for his former hope before his conversion, and which had influence thereupon, do still remain, and are equally grounds to him of this continuing hope that is to influence his whole after-course, and with much more advantage. We are not to suppose that the grounds of the hope that I am now speaking of, do make the former grounds cease. The grounds of the former hope, that which I told you might be only (and indeed must be before conversion) no more than a rational human hope, assisted by common grace; what ground there was for that hope doth still remain, and is still improvable to more advantage: and the grounds of this following hope are not, in reference to those grounds, privative, but cumulative, (as is wont to be said in such cases,) that is, they do not take away the former, but add thereunto. Whatsoever ground of hope there was before, for a poor wandering sinner to return, and come back to God, and seek reconciliation and peace with him, to wit, from the gracious nature of God, from the rich fulness of Christ's sacrifice, from the freeness of the Gospel tender, and invitation, and from the power, and grace, and office of the Holy Ghost: these grounds do still remain, in reference to the present case, and are improvable, even with more advantage, as you will see in reference thereunto. And again,

2. This is to be noted by way of premise, That the hope which they are to take encouragement for, is not to be a rash, fearless hope. It is not to be a hope without fear, pray do not mistake the matter as to this, we are not to aim at any such hope as shall be exclusive of fear, or that shall make that a useless thing, a useless principle, a useless grace in the soul. We are told, "They are blessed that fear always; (Prov. xxviii. 14.) but he that hardens his heart, (that is, in opposition to such a fear,) shall fall into mischief." And elsewhere we find such oppositions of fear to hardness of heart, made to one another. "Why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our hearts from thy fear?" Isa. lxiii. 17. and we are directed to "perfect holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 3. and warned "not to be high-minded, but fear," Rom. xi. 20. and charged "to work out our salvation, with fear and trembling," Phil. ii. 12. Even they are so charged, whom the apostle had a little before expressed his confidence concerning them, that "God that had begun a good work in them, would perfect it unto the day of Christ," Phil. i. 6. And yet he requires and charges them in his name, and by his authority, whom God had exalted to so high a pitch, as to give him a name above every name, wherefore, (saith he hereupon,) this charge I solemnly give you, that his name and authority may be owned, not only in "my presence, but much more, being absent, you work out your salvation, with fear and trembling."

There is no such state of a Christian attainable in this life, that ought to make fear a useless thing, and to supersede it. I say there is no such state as this; no, nor undoubtedly in heaven itself, where reverence of God is higher than now we are capable of, infinitely, unspeakably, exceedingly higher. It will be part of that homage, that we shall be eternally paying to his throne, and part of our felicity too, because of the pleasantness of that temper, the suitableness and congruity of it to a right mind, apprehensive of what is due to the Eternal Being; and besides, we are told this is the very means of our preservation. He that hath promised to keep his, hath promised to keep them thus, "I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." I mean to make use of that as the great preservative principle in them, Jer. xxxii. 40. Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

Indeed the understanding of all this doth but depend upon one plain thing, that it is fit and needful that every one should have a distinct notion of in his own mind, to wit, how vast the difference is between fear and fear;—the fear of reverence, and the fear of horror, (as I may fitly enough distinguish it,)—the fear of a saint, and the fear of a devil:—the fear of heaven, and the fear of hell;—so vastly different they are. The one fear doth involve hatred in it essentially *odimus quem metamus*, we hate him whom we so fear, we cannot but do so; but the other doth essentially carry love in it. The fear of reverence carries a complacency in the dignity, honour, and exaltation of him, towards whom we exercise this affection; and yet it hath a collateral and secondary respect to our own interest too, and so ought to have, and must have; as the love we bear to God, and our true love to ourselves; the love by which we design glory to him, and the love by which we design blessedness in him, are the same love. That therefore is a further thing, that thereupon we are to consider. Again,

3. We must hereupon note this too, That the hope unto which we are to be encouraged of being kept from apostacy, and enabled to persevere, and hold on in the ways of God to the end, it must consequently be such as shall admit of, as shall not exclude, but infer all the subsequent cares and endeavours, that are most agreeable and correspondent to such a fear, as hath been before expressed, to wit, our continual watchfulness over ourselves, our abstaining from known gross evils, our endeavour to repress the beginnings, the first motions and stirrings of sin, our giving ourselves to prayer, our meditating upon the things of God, our attending duty, and waiting on God in his ordinances, our avoiding temptations, and shunning the society of them that walk in pernicious and destructive ways. Our hope of being kept, it must not exclude, but infer, all this care and endeavour of our own, in order to our being so kept. As a man's hope of having his natural life, and health, and strength, and soundness preserved, ought to be with a conjunct care of himself all along. It were a mad hope, if a man should then hope that his life, strength, and soundness, should be preserved, if he starve himself, or stab himself, or poison himself, or run into houses infected with

* Preached June 28th, 1691.

the plague, or associate himself with persons that have pestilential diseases upon them, and the like: this were a mad hope, that I should be kept well at this rate. And it is easily apprehensible how this is to be applied to our present case; we are to hope we shall be kept, but we are not to hope we shall be kept in a continual neglect of ourselves; if we will famish and starve our souls, if we will stab them in a liberty of known acts of sin, if we will infect them by running into contagious company, if we will associate with such, and familiarly converse with them, that have the plague upon them, if we are not afraid of drawing contagion from so mortal breath, our hope will be a very foolish hope, and not the hope I am now to encourage. And,

4. We must note further, that, supposing that many, or any be in doubt whether they have yet a holy, good principle in them; whether they are yet come into the regenerate state, have that already inlaid in them, which the Scripture calls the seed of God, and a divine nature; if (I say) any be in doubt about it, it is not needful that they should stay for a resolution, in order to the receiving any encouragement from what I am further to say; though they cannot so certainly say that the things that are after to be said do concern them as regenerate persons, as those that are already in a state of grace: yet they will find that there may be encouragement taken from thence, though not so directly in order to the bringing of them into it; and so none should think that what is said doth no way concern them, because they are not yet certain that they are regenerate.

Whatsoever is received, is received according to the disposition of the recipient. If there be a regenerate principle, that will so much the more readily entertain and close with what is spoken for its own strengthening, and further invigorating, and for its nutriment. But if there be not, yet if there be a tendency that way, any seriousness of spirit about any such thing, and with reference thereunto we must know that is a true maxim in spirituals, as well as in naturals, *Eisdem nutrimur exquibus constamur;* we are nourished, and do consist of the same thing, the very same thing. And that which is suitable to the maintaining, enlivening, improving, and growth of a principle of divine life in the soul, is suitable, in some measure, to the begetting of it too. Even the same word, in the sum and substance of it, by which we are to grow, and which we are to receive as "sincere milk," for that design, that we may grow, and may be strengthened by it; by the same word, also, are we "begotten again by the word of truth," James i. 17. And by "the incorruptible seed," the "word of God," I Pet. i. 20. "Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth," John xvii. 17.

Now these things being thus forelaid, all that I shall say for the encouragement of such a hope as I am now speaking of, will be reduced, and is fitly enough reducible, one way or other, to this one ground, the Gospel of the covenant of God in Christ. That lays before you the firm and sure foundation of such a hope; and it will indeed somewhat diversely give encouragement according to the different states of men, (though principally I intend now the regenerate state,) if you do but accordingly consider the different notions under which we may look upon this covenant; in short, we may look upon it either as proposed, or as actually entered. As proposed, so it gives a ground of hope to enter it; and thereupon gives a ground for all the consequent hope whereof I am speaking.

But if it be actually entered, and that can be distinctly and with clearness reflected upon, then you have the nearer, the more immediate, the firmer and surer ground, for such a hope as I am now to speak of. And your hope ought to arise to proportionable degrees of life, strength, and vigour in you. But the great foundation of this hope lies here in the Gospel covenant, whoever of you have any concern for your souls; whoever of you are bethinking yourselves how not to perish, how at length to be saved; lo, here you lay your hope upon the Gospel covenant, the coveoant of God in Christ.

For do but consider, that the apostle, speaking of the case of the infidel pagan world, and of the case of the Ephesians, when they were such, he saith, "Ye were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise; and without Christ, and without hope, and without God in the world," Ephes. ii. 12. All the while that you were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and from the covenant of promise; all the while that you were as a people of another country, (as the expression signifies,) in being "strangers to the covenant of promise, and without Christ;" you were without hope too, and "without God in the world;" atheists in the world.

The ground of the Christian's hope as to perseverance, is the Gospel covenant, Christ being the great agent that was to bring about a relation; and in order thereunto to bring you into covenant with God through himself. If you know nothing of the covenant of promise, you are without hope. This is the sum of all; here must your hope be laid, upon this great foundation.

And this is not a new thing, but as old as faith hath been in the world, and as holiness hath been, or any thing hath been of the divine life. This covenant of God in Christ, it is said even to be but confirmed when the law was given by Moses on mount Sinai; the covenant that was confirmed of God in Christ to Abraham. It was even confirmed before to Abraham; it received a new confirmation there; it was not made with Abraham then, Gal. ii. 16. It was then but confirmed to Abraham. This covenant of God in Christ being of a much more ancient date. David, when he lay a dying, here was the ground of his hope; "Thou hast made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; and this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although thou make it not to grow;" (2 Sam. xxxiii. 5.) to wit, his house, spoken of before, "although my house be not so with God." God had said many things to him about his house and family heretofore, a great deal more distinctly and expressly than he doth usually to men about their houses and families, when they are to be extinct and gone. But David's mind was upon something else,—something greater and more considerable than all this; "Although my house be not so with God, (come of my house and external concernments what will,) here is "all my salvation, and all my desire," that thou hast "made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure;" which had an aspect upon higher and greater things than that of a temporal kingdom in this world, how big soever that may look in many an eye.

And, concerning David's understanding and knowledge in the mystery of Christ, (as I may use those words well enough in reference to him,) when we hear him speak so often of his hoping in the word of God, this must be the word which he is to be understood principally to mean, the word of this everlasting covenant; "I had fainted for thy salvation, but I hoped in thy word," Psal. cxix. 49. Intent he was upon salvation; and sometimes being ready to faint about it, his hope in God's word kept him from fainting; "Thou art my hiding-place and my shield," Psalm cxix. 114. I do hope in thy word. You have that which is agreeable, in another place, where he again professeth his hope in God's word, and invites all Israel to join with him in waiting for the Lord, (Psalm cxxx. 6, 7.) from day to day, more than that they wait for the morning; "Let Israel wait on the Lord, for with him is mercy and plenteous redemption, and he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities." This is the summary thing, the Gospel of the covenant of God in Christ, which is the great ground and foundation of this hope.

But to speak more particularly and distinctly to it, you will have several grounds of hope some way or other reducible hither, if you will but consider sundry things that we have to reflect upon relating and belonging to this covenant. As,

1. The Author of this covenant is to be considered. It is God's own covenant; he is not only a covenanting party, but he hath formed the covenant, and is the first in the covenant. It is he that hath ordained and contrived the model of it; and doth propose it to us, and enjoin it upon us, as to what is our part in this covenant of God in Christ. And concerning him, though I might insist upon many things, I shall only mention these two, to show how firm a ground of hope you have from the Author of this covenant, to wit, his all-sufficiency, and his faithfulness.

(1.) His all-sufficiency. When he was drawing Abraham into the covenant, or designing to confirm him in a covenant state, so he mentions himself, I am God all-suf-

ficient; that was enough for his part. "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," (Gen. xviii. 1.) that would be also enough for Abraham on his part; as you know, if you have occasion to transact affairs with a man, to contract a covenant with him about matters of importance to you, the great thing you will have your eye upon is, Is the person I deal with sufficient? If you are sure that he is, you traffic with much more security, he being a man of known sufficiency. Saith God, I am an all-sufficient God; come, who hath a mind to deal with me? to transact with me, and traffic with me? who will come into my covenant? And,

(2.) His faithfulness is a most firm foundation of hope: such faithfulness as wherewith consists no possibility of being false; "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised," Tit. i. 2. "And by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, the heirs of promise might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them," Heb. vi. 17, 18. You say you shall one day sink, you shall fail, you shall perish, you shall be lost after so many stops in the ways of God. Think who hath promised you. The God, all-sufficient: and that he is faithful that hath promised.

And consider these things in reference to one another, his faithfulness to his all-sufficiency: he is therefore faithful because he is all-sufficient. It is a great matter, rightly to understand this. It is impossible to the perfection of the Divine nature to lie, because he is God all-sufficient. Honesty, veracity, and truth, are not things of so ill repute among men, but that men would preserve their credit in the world, if they were not put to shifts, if they were not reduced to straits. They are commonly false, because they know not how to compass their ends; either they have not wisdom enough, or they have not power enough; but he that is all-sufficient hath nothing to tempt him to falsehood. His perfect nature abhors it;—his all-sufficiency speaks his universal perfection, as you have formerly, at another season, been told. The matter is obvious, if we do but allow ourselves to argue upon it, (though indeed the thing little needs it,) even upon grounds that will be clear to every body.

There is no intelligent agent that doth any thing without design. As an intelligent agent, every human action is done for an end, for a proposed end. He that is the most perfectly intelligent Being, can do nothing but for some end. Now what end can he propose to himself to deceive a creature that he made out of nothing, but the other day, and can throw into nothing, the next moment, if he pleaseth? What end can he propose to himself, in deceiving a creature that he hath absolutely in his own power? Those words of our Saviour, how much of spirit and life do they carry in them! "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; If it were not so, I would have told you." You may trust me; do you think I intended to make fools of you, when I persuaded you to be Christians? Have I made you leave all this world, and made you give up yourselves to me, and put yourselves under my conduct, in expectation of great and glorious things hereafter, in another state? I tell you it is as I have said, "In my Father's house there are many mansions, and if it were not so, do you think I would not have told you?" would not I have been honest to you? would I have cheated you into a vain and false hope? so much reason you have to believe me from my word, that you may even believe from my silence; "if it had not been so, I would have told you;" I never yet said to you, shift for yourselves, I have never a heaven for you, I have never a ground of eternal hope for you: all that is banished and gone. "No, if it were not so," as I say, "I would have told you." The divine all-sufficiency, and his fidelity, taken together in the consideration we have of him, as the great Author of his covenant, upon which you must depend for eternity, how firm a foundation of hope is this! and whatever of encouragement it gives to them who have entered this covenant, and can say, This God is now in covenant with me, and I in covenant with him. They have proportionable encouragement who are invited to enter it, for if I close with this offer, this is my case presently, and I have the same interest that any other hath had before me, who hath entered into it before. But again,

2. Consider the Mediator of this covenant. It is a covenant established in the hands of a Mediator, contracted by a Mediator, on purpose that it might be sure and firm; that it might have more stability, and might better hold than that covenant made with God immediately, or without a Mediator coming between God and man. And we are to consider Christ the Mediator of this covenant, as giving stability to it, and giving us ground of firm hope from it, under a three-fold notion, to wit, As dying for us; As living in us; And as gone into heaven before us.

1. Consider him as dying for us. And if his death be considered in respect to this covenant, so it may be looked upon two ways, as *principium essendi*, and as *principium cognoscendi*; it may be looked upon as a ground of the being of this covenant, and it may be looked upon as a ground of the knowledge of it, that knowledge which we may have concerning it; both which are necessary to be the foundation of our hope.

(1.) As a ground of the being of this covenant. If it had not been for the death and sacrifice of the Son of God, there could not have been such a covenant, Psalm l. It is a covenant by sacrifice. As covenants have their ratifications, even among men, by sacrifice, and the Jews have a notion *de sanguine sancisa sunt non abroganda*, those arguments that are ratified by blood, become most sacred and inviolable, never to be abrogated. The blood of Christ is called the blood of the covenant again and again: "And have counted the blood of the covenant an unclean thing," Heb. x. 29. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered himself to God, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect," Heb. xiii. 20, 21. And when he instituted his own supper, he calls it the cup of the new testament in his blood. The word testament is the same used for covenant. How firm a covenant is that, that hath its foundation in the blood of the Son of God! His blood, who is the great Emmanuel, "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," who came down on purpose into this world, and united himself with the nature of man, purposely that he might have somewhat mortal about him, somewhat that could die, and that by that death of his, he might ruin the designs of him that had the power of death; and might procure that stability should be given to the covenant of life and peace, even this covenant. And then,

(2.) The death of Christ is not only a principle, or ground of the being of this covenant, but of our knowledge of it too; upon which also depends our hope therein; that is, we know, being informed concerning the death of Christ, how it comes to pass that there can be such a contract and agreement between an offended God and offending creatures. How comes it to pass? how was it brought about? Why, God hath set him forth, "to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness; (to testify to all the world his righteousness;) that he may be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus," Rom. iii. 25. This powerfully controls the objection of any unbelieving heart. How can it be, that the just and holy God, and glorious Majesty of heaven, should be offended by an impotent worm, and should threaten death for the offence and yet forgive it? How can it be? Why, God hath set forth his Son, to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness, to let all the world know, that now he can righteously pardon sin, and be reconciled to sinners, and take them into favour. What an encouragement is this to a returning soul, a returning soul, a soul that hath returned, or that hath a disposition or mind to return! God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation, he lifted him up upon the cross, and he is lifted up in the Gospel dispensation, to tell the world, Now, sinner, the matter shall not lie on me, or on my part; if there be still a breach between me and thee, it is not because I cannot be reconciled, but because thou wilt not be reconciled; I can be reconciled, I have my satisfaction in my Son, and if there be a continuing breach, it is because thou refusest, and despisest the terms of peace that are offered, and dost trample upon the blood of the covenant, as if it were a profane thing. But to a serious considering soul, one that hath returned, or is upon his return to God in Christ, how

firm a foundation of hope is this! I know the justice of God, (the only thing I had to dread, as that could never be reconciled to me,) is satisfied if I return, and shall never have any quarrel with me, if I keep on in the prescribed way that leads to life. Saith the apostle, "Abide in him, (that is, in Christ, who is the great reconciling sacrifice,) that when he shall appear, you may have confidence, and not be ashamed at his coming," 1 John ii. 20. But then,

2. Consider Christ the Mediator of this covenant, as living in us, as well as dying for us. He gives stability to this covenant, and so is the ground-work of our hope, as he hath been pleased to unite himself with our souls and take up an indwelling and abode there. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that you being rooted and grounded in love, may comprehend with all saints the height, and breadth, and depth, and length; and may know the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge," Eph. i. 3, 17, 18, 19. He testifies his own love by his indwelling presence, and that way he secures you, that the covenant remains stable and firm between God and you. I dwell in you, to keep this always a clear and indubitable thing with you, that God is yours and you are his, by the tenor of his own covenant. And again, you are to look upon Christ in reference to this covenant,

3. As ascended, and having entered the heavens on our behalf, upon our account, together with all that is connected therewith, and consequent thereupon. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, and is at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us," Rom. viii. 33, 34. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John ii. 1. So he is said to mediate for us, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life, Heb. vii. 18. And it is said, "He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Being seated and enthroned in glory, with that very design, that though there may be many offences on our part against the tenor of our covenant, yet they shall not make a final breach; but that still the returning soul shall find mercy, and that still that mercy shall be free. "Return, ye backsliding children, for I am married to you, I will heal your backslidings, and receive you graciously, and love you freely," Jer. iii. 12, 14, 22. I might add,

4. The immediate Agent for bringing of souls into this covenant state, and continuing them there. And how great a ground have you of hope from thence; that is, that the Holy Spirit is appointed purposely by office, to transact this affair with souls; at first to bring them into covenant with God in Christ, and then, from time to time, to confirm their standing, and preserve them in the covenant state. This is that to which he is appointed, to which his very office leads to; that which we find him concerned to do, not occasionally, not on the by, but *ex officio*. A greater ground of hope cannot be conceived than this. How intent is God upon it, that his covenant with souls shall be a firm, stable, continual thing!

SERMON XX.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

IT remains now to show you, that the influence which hope hath to this purpose, it is not merely necessary to a Christian's better progress in his way and course, but to his progress at all, to any progress which he could make in such a course; to wit, it is not only requisite to the better being, but to the being itself, of continued Christianity, so that without hope, there would certainly be a failure; and God who hath absolutely determined this end, (that his elect shall hold out through the whole of their course,) hath also determined this means, *viz.* that he will preserve and maintain that hope in them throughout, by which they shall be enabled to hold out to the end: and therefore the certainty of the necessity of the influence of hope to that purpose, is what we have now to make out to you. And in order thereunto, we need but to consider in general, 1st, The course of our own operations, such as are internal, and wherein our spirits within us do exert their power and vigour day by day. And then, 2dly, to consider the special and most natural and proper work of hope. If we do but consider our own nature, and most connatural operations; and if we do but consider the nature of hope, and what its special and connatural work is, it will be plain, that such a continued course could not be held, but by the influence of hope.

1. Let us reflect upon the proper connatural operations of our own spirits. This will be of real use to us, not only as it serves the present purpose, but as it may give us a clearer and more distinct notion of ourselves, which we do need to have our minds furnished with. There are many that do use this body, (for a whole life-time that they live in it,) and the several parts and members that do belong to it, they do their proper offices with them day by day, and yet seldom, or ever, allow themselves to make a reflection, what a sort of creature is this body of mine? and how, and by what means, do the several parts of it serve for those several purposes for which I use them daily? Among all those that do use the body, and the several organs and instruments of action that do belong to it, how seldom do the most that do so, ever take notice what a sort of structure this is, and how it comes to be framed for such uses as the several parts of it serve for! That argues a great deal of stupidity among us, that we should move our hands, and feet, and eyes, as we do from day to day, and never consider with ourselves how these come to be moving things, or which way, or by what means, they are moved; as to think of the many instruments of this body that serve the purposes of motion, with what curiosity all those muscles are contrived and framed, without which there could be no motion, and which if there were not such variety of them, there would not be that variety of motion that we find, so many several muscles, no less than six belonging to each eye, that it may be capable of moving this way and that way, upward, downward, obliquely, and transversely. There could be no motion, if there were not such instruments lodged and placed on purpose to subserve this end.

And as little do the most consider the movements of their own spirits, of their inward man; what kind of inducements they are that the mind of man is carried by, this way and that; how it is enabled to form designs and to contrive methods for the accomplishment of them, and to take such and such courses to bring them about. We use these noble powers and faculties every day, which we never consider, never contemplate. If we did allow ourselves to reflect and look a little inward upon ourselves, especially upon the powers of our own minds and spirits, and consider how they come to be engaged in action, this way and that, it were impossible but that such contemplation as that would carry up our souls to adore their own Father, the Father of spirits, and the Father of lights: He that had the fashioning of the spirit of man within him, and who doth order the course and current of all its motions, together with the inducements by which it should be made capable of moving this way and that, with so singular and profound wisdom, as that, if we did but more in this respect consider ourselves, we could not but more admire him.

But this is plain and evident, that whether you look upon the spirit of a man as rational, or as regenerate and holy, it cannot but move towards an end. There is nothing that a man doth as a man, no human action, (as such,) but is done for an end. And there is no end that any can propose to himself, but under the notion of attainable; and there is nothing that a man can design or project as attainable, but it must be also inasmuch as it is attainable and hopeful; hopeful, inasmuch as hope hath reference to that which is good, and that which is future; inasmuch as that which one proposeth to himself, under the notion of

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an end, must be a good. That which is apprehended as an evil, we avert, we shun, we fly from naturally, by the natural constitution of our own souls; and that which we apprehend as good, we pursue and press towards it. Hope having for its object only that which is good, and that which is future, a distant good that I am not possessed of yet. It is impossible I can propose any thing to myself as my end, but at the same time, when I make it my end, I make it the object of my hope; and while I am pursuing it, all the series and course of the actions which I do in the pursuit and prosecution of it, I do continually, as having my mind all along influenced and animated by the hope of attaining it; for if I did not hope, I would give it over, never make one step more towards it. That whereof I simply despair, I must by the necessity that my own reason lays upon me, (as I am a reasonable creature,) give it over, and do no more towards it.

This is the state of things with man as he is a reasonable creature. Look upon his soul as it is rational; thus it is with him; and look upon it as regenerate and holy, that spoils nobody's intellectuals. A man is not less rational for being regenerate, but the more; it mends his intellectuals. Them that were before foolish, and deceived, and disobedient, and serving divers lusts and pleasures, when by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, they are (as it were) new made; now they recover their understanding, and a rectitude of mind to that degree, that they now act more like men than ever they did before. And therefore, whether you look upon the soul of man as rational, or as regenerate, the influence of hope is of most absolute necessity to his pursuing any end or design whatsoever. But then,

2. If you do also consider the nature of hope, and its most proper and connatural work, to wit, to bear up the soul in a continual conflict with the difficulties it meets with, or is liable to meet with, in the way to its end. Therefore (as I told you before) as the objects of hope is somewhat good and future, so it is also attended with difficulty. So moralists usually give the notion of hope, and add that as the proper distinction of it from mere desire; for the object of desire is also somewhat good and future, appearing to be good and at a distance. If it were good, and not future, it would be the object of delight and joy; that is the exercise of the soul towards a present good, and wherewith it hath actual union already. But a distant good, both that which is apprehended to be in itself good and desirable and good for me, and which is at a distance, the affection that the soul exerciseth towards it, is desire, unto which if you superadd that further character of the object, to wit, an arduousness and difficulty of attaining the thing I purpose to myself, then it becomes the object of hope. It is the proper and connatural work of hope to contend with difficulty in attaining, or in the way towards the attaining that good, which we propose to ourselves to enjoy.

Therefore now, this being the office and work of hope, its proper and specifying work, that by which it is distinguished from mere desire, to cope and contend with difficulties that lie in the way of attaining my end; the many difficulties that do fall into the course of a Christian, do give him that constant exercise through the whole of his course, that if there be not a hope maintained in him, proportionable to those difficulties, and that may enable him to keep on the conflict with them, the whole design of Christianity must needs be laid aside, and given up. It is not possible, that according to the constitution of the human nature, (and especially taking it in its regenerate state, which makes it so much the more reasonable and intelligent thing, than it was before,) I say, it is impossible it could hold on that course, were it not by the influence of this hope.

And that leads me to consider, particularly, the many difficulties that occur in the course of a Christian, which are only superable by that principle of divine hope which God hath planted in him for this very purpose, to keep him in that course which he himself hath prescribed to him, and which leads to that glorious, blessed end, his own salvation.

I shall but mention to you, to this purpose, some of the greater and more observable of those difficulties which a Christian's hope is to contend with, and must conquer for him, that he may be finally saved. As,

Difficulty 1. The invisibility of those objects, about which he is to be principally exercised through the whole of his course. When this is the state of one's case, that the objects wherewith we must have most of all to do; and wherein the sum of our felicity lies, and from whence all our present vigour and liveliness, and the continued strength of our souls for all the exercises of the Christian life, is to be drawn forth; when they are all things that lie quite out of sight with us, what should a man do in this case if it were not for hope? That hope which has a preapprehension of such things, and makes a representation of them to me, though they are unseen things. Herein lies the peculiarity and glory of hope, that it can do so. With that sort of objects doth its chief business lie. As in the remaining part of this verse, "We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" If there were not such a principle and power in a Christian as hope, referring to things unseen, whereas all his support, and all his vigour, and the liveliness of his spirit, through the whole of his course, must be derived and drawn from such things, what would become of him, if he had not that principle in him, by which he could converse with things that are out of sight?

You have been formerly told, that hope, in all its exercises with reference to the final felicity of a saint, it grounds upon faith. I first believe the divine word, and that word becomes to me a clear and vivid representation of all things whereby the soul goes forth, in all the power of hope, to contend forwards towards them. It reaches forth to them by hope, when once it hath believed the reality and truth of them by faith. And so you come to have these two twisted together. Their object is the same, and their exercises conjunct, though they are distinct. "Faith is the substance (the hypostasis) of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1.

To tell a Christian that hath engaged in a new and distinct way from that which is held by the universality of men besides, "You are now launched out upon a peculiar bottom of your own, pray what are the things that you design to entertain yourself with from day to day through the whole of your course? Why, they are things (saith he) that lie quite above this sphere,—things quite out of sight to you, and things that are quite out of sight to myself, as to any such eye as is common to me and to you. But, then, how will you come at these things?—What commerce have you with them? Why, I have that hope within me, grounded upon a steadfast belief of the Divine revelation of such things as I am sure cannot deceive me, by which my view of these is as clear as the things that are seen are clear to your view. And I should disdain to have my principal converse with them, or that they should be the chief object of the exercise of this soul of mine, now by Divine grace renewed, filled with new light, and with new inclinations, if they were not things of that peculiar and distinct kind that they are of, that is, invisible. If they were things that could be seen; if they were things that lay obvious to the notice of so mean a principle as your sense is, they would be too base things for me, I could not tell how to warrant myself, to justify myself; I could not answer it to myself, much less to him that hath given me the new law that I am to be governed by, if I should longer confine myself to so mean things: but because they are things not to be seen, quite out of sight, therefore doth my soul choose that noble employment, to be taken up about these things peculiarly from day to day. If they were not so high as to be quite out of sight, they were too low and too mean for me." So saith the renewed soul.

But here is a difficulty not superable by any thing but a divine hope; that the best of the things which the soul is to be conversant about, and taken up with every day, lie quite out of sight; what could we do in such a case, if it were not for such a hope as can see, and discern, and anticipate, and give a preventive enjoyment of things that cannot be seen? And,

Difficulty 2. The suitableness and gratefulness of things of sense, of sensible things, is another great difficulty, that

our hope is continually to conflict with, and to carry the Christian over. Things that are more suitable to an animal life and the sensible nature; they are things that lie under view continually; they are present and obvious; they are pleasing and entertaining to the sensitive nature that we carry about with us. And yet the soul must be under continual restraint as to whatsoever complacential relishes it can ever take in such things. Here lies the difficulty; here are things suitable and pleasing to sense, to flesh and blood; and in reference to these things the soul can exert no desire, no delight; can take no grateful complacency in them, but is under continual restraint. The regenerate soul cannot wallow in sensual pleasures; it may not do so; it hath a law laid upon it, and a law put into it, by which it finds itself to be under a prohibition. And therefore is this sort of men a wonder to the rest of the world; they think it strange they do not run with them "into the same excess of riot," 1 Pet. iv. 4. They cannot allow themselves to be sensual with the fleshly, worldly with the worldly, covetous with the covetous. If they do, they call their own state and standing in Christ under dreadful suspicions. If they can be ambitious, and covetous, and voluptuous, men grossly voluptuous, they draw their state into question. But what is it that restrains them, and composes them to a holy kind of severity in this respect, but the power of divine hope? "Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end," 1 Pet. i. 13. Here appears the necessary influence of this hope to preserve a just restraint on the soul through the whole of our course, while our way lies amidst so many sensible things, that are so entertaining and tempting to our natures. We are to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," Tit. ii. 11, 12.

It must be considered, that regeneration and the participation of the new nature (as I have told you before) did not spoil any man's reason, nor his intellectuals; so, nor doth it spoil his sensitive faculties neither. Such a one you must understand still to have as good senses as other men have, and senses as apt to entertain and please themselves, on proper suitable objects, as other men. Do you think they cannot taste the relishes of meats and drinks, as well as others can, or what else may be pleasing and grateful to the bodily sense? But they may not, they are under a restraint; they must converse shyly and cautiously, and with great circumspection, with all such kind of objects. And what doth enable them to do so? They are enabled to be sober, because they "hope continually,"—hope on to the end "for the grace that is to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ;" and their "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." And in the power of that hope they live, not only righteously and godly, but soberly, in this present world.

Though that is an argument, indeed, of the general languor of Christianity at this day, and particularly of Christian hope, that greater latitudes are commonly taken among those that profess religion, in these our days, than have been heretofore. And it is sad to think it should be so as to meats and drinks, and apparel, and whatsoever borders upon luxury. Truly reformed Christendom is not itself; England is not itself; London is not itself; the families of persons professing godliness are not what they were in these respects. And certain it is, by how much more sensual inclination doth prevail, Christian hope doth proportionably so much the more languish. And,

Difficulty 3. Another difficulty, that the hope of a Christian has to contend with, is his foregoing all that he hath in this world for Christ's sake, whensoever he is thereunto called, by the concurrence of Christian precepts with present providences. When those so state his case to him, as that it comes to this present posture; things stand thus with him, and towards him, as they lie under his present view in such a juncture. "I must now disobey Christ, or I must lose and forego what is most desirable and delectable to me in this world, it may be, this very life itself. So hath the Divine rule, and the Divine providence, taken together, stated my case, as to bring matters to this pinch, this necessity. I must forsake all, abandon whatsoever is most pleasing to me in all this world, even life itself, if that be required and called for upon the same terms."

There is a mighty difficulty in this case upon persons that dwell in human flesh, and that have faculties about them which do contemper and suit them to this sensible world in which they live. They have not only the difficulty upon them, that, while they enjoy such things they must enjoy them under a restraint; (as you heard before;) but whensoever they are called for, they must part with them without regret; willingly part with, and forego all. They cannot enjoy them, but under restraint; and they must part with them, and that without regret, if they be called for. As it is not more the commendation than it was the duty of those of whom the apostle speaks: "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods," Heb. x. 34. And why did they so? They did it in the power of this same Christian hope, as knowing they had in heaven "a better and more enduring substance." It was the hope of that which made them willingly part with, and forego, all that they had and enjoyed here.

And this is the tenor of the Christian law that lies upon them, as you have it from the mouth of our blessed Lord himself: "If any man doth not forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple;" (Luke xiv. 33.) he cannot be a Christian, unless (*suppositis supponendis*) supposing such things as may be supposed, he doth forsake all, when the particular juncture happens; he doth now discover that he hath not the root of the matter in him, if be be not content to forsake all for my sake. But it is a Christian hope that enables him to do so; because that hope possesseth him with a persuasion that he shall gain by it more than all he loseth. "We have forsaken all and followed thee," say the disciples unto Christ; and you shall be no losers, saith he to them. Take but my word, and you will have ground enough for that hope, that it shall not turn to your final loss. None that forsake houses, or lands, or father, or mother, or brother, or sister, for my sake, and for the Gospel, but shall have in this world a hundred-fold, and hereafter eternal life. And it is the hope of this that makes a Christian willing to say, Then I can be content to let all go; aye, even let all go; he hath not deceived me that hath told me, and he will never deceive me that hath told me, that I shall not be a final loser by it at length. And,

Difficulty 4. There is this further difficulty in it, that he must, in some cases, not only lose all that he enjoys, but he must suffer all that it can be in the power of men to inflict, as to positive miseries and evils, that are of the greatest pungency unto the flesh and the sense that we carry about with us. All must be willingly undergone that is evil to our flesh, as all must be forgone that is good and grateful to it. And what shall enable any to do so, but the power of this hope?

How full is the Scripture and history of these instances! As full as it is of instances of the continual persecutions of Christians and Christianity itself, from age to age, ever since there came to be any such thing obtaining in the world. And it is proportionably full of instances of the power of this hope, carrying them whose hearts it did animate, through whatsoever difficulties they had to encounter in this case. That "cloud of witnesses," (which the apostle sets before our eyes in that 11th chapter of the Hebrews, and that we referred to but now,) so he calls those many witnesses, a cloud, a mighty cloud of such witnesses, all testifying to this one thing, to wit, to the power of that faith, and consequently to that hope, by which these mentioned were carried through such sufferings, calumnies, as there you read of: "They were tempted, they were slain with the sword, they were sawn asunder, they wandered up and down in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented;" men "of whom the world was not worthy." And amidst all these things they despised deliverance. And why? Because they hoped for "a better resurrection." It was that faith which carried them through all, which is described at the first verse, to be "the substance of the things not seen, and the evidence of the things hoped for," Heb. xi. 1. The great things we hope for are made substantial to us; we have that clear and substantiating representation of them before our eyes.

And therefore, how many thousand deaths can we go through by the power of this hope;—that hope itself being upheld and maintained all along by an immediate Divine power!

And therefore is it that we read of such joy, and triumph, and exultation, in the midst of all these sufferings, which it was possible for human wit to invent, and human power to execute. It was not yet more than what they have been enabled to bear, and bear with a great deal of triumph many times; so as that it appeared that they had all under their feet; they could trample upon dangers and deaths, and were superior to them; they could not fasten upon them, they could take no hold of their spirits. If one should lead you through the sufferings of Christians in the ten persecutions by pagans; their sufferings afterward by the Arians, who were not less bloody and cruel than the former; their sufferings more lately by the papists, which after followed, from age to age, for twelve hundred years together; sufferings in this kind in this land, and sufferings in several adjoining countries. How numerous instances have we of the power of this hope in carrying the poor sufferers through, so as that not only have they not been removed from their Christian profession by all that they have suffered and endured; but not from their alacrity and cheerfulness of spirit: yea, that hath not only continued, but increased, and grown higher, more and more vigorous and glorious in them, by how much the more the approaches of trouble and danger were nearer. The speeches that have been uttered by many of them, even in the midst of their sufferings, have shown a triumphant glorying joy in their hearts, which is the continual issue of this hope: "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" and thereupon "we glory in tribulation," Rom. v. 3, 4. They gloried in tribulation, because they did rejoice in hope of the divine glory.

And therefore have they been enabled to brow-beat their enemies, their tormentors, the executioners of all those tragical things upon them which they suffered; as when one should be able to tell the tyrant, after he had received so many wounds in his body, I thank thee, (oh tyrant,) that thou hast made me so many mouths wherewith to preach Christ; for I take every wound thou hast given me to be a new mouth wherewith to utter the divine praises, and wherewith to preach and magnify my Redeemer. With multitudes of instances that one might give of the like kind; which show that the hope that lived in their souls, whilst they were even dying, did not only keep them from denying Christ,—did not only maintain religion, and keep that alive in them; but made it triumph in a high degree of liveliness, vigour, and joy, that showed itself more exalted amidst those exercises, than when there were no trials, no danger in view. And again,

Difficulty 5. The many temptations and buffetings in their spirits, which Christians do more ordinarily experience in their course through the world. Nothing could carry through the vexation of this, (which cometh nearer, a great deal nearer, than what men can do when they only torture the outward man,) but only this hope; "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Though we be vexed with his suggestions, and very vexatious ones sometimes they are, when blasphemous thoughts are injected and cast in; there is an endeavour to fence against them, but they cannot keep them off; the tempter indeed cannot make the soul close or comply with the design of his temptations, but he doth vex by tempting; and that temptation cannot but be vexing, when the soul is solicited to think all the evil thoughts that the wicked one can be author or parent of to him, concerning God, and Christ, and religion, and many false ones concerning himself. All the continual vexing temptations that the soul is followed with from day to day, it is only the hope of final victory that carries it through. I hope it will not be so always; I hope God will give me a complete victory at last; he will bruise Satan under my feet ere long. And,

Difficulty 6. The complication of bodily and spiritual distempers together, so incident even to the generality of Christians; a great deal of lassitude and dulness upon the outward man; the prevalence of melancholy fumes and vapours, which fall in with a dark mind and dead heart; and for those continual outcries "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Rom. vii. 24. It is only deliverance in hope that carries through all this difficulty; "Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv. 57. I have conquest and victory in Christ, that hath loved me; I am many times in myself overcome, but in him many times I do overcome, and shall finally overcome. And,

Difficulty 7. Divine desertions; when all these happen to meet together upon a poor creature, and God is withdrawn over and besides,—what a difficulty is here! The withdrawing of such a presence as even that wicked Saul was capable of, how distressing was it to him when he was sensible of it! There was a presence of God, whereof he had experience; but far beneath the excellency and delectableness of that gracious divine presence that he affords to his own, those that are peculiar to him; yet when Saul had lost that more exterior divine presence, saith he to Samuel, (when he had procured him to be raised from the dead, as that text doth please to express,) "I am greatly distressed; the Philistines make war upon me, and God is departed from me," 1 Sam. xxviii. 15.

And it is so with a poor Christian; many times men are let loose upon him; the devil is let loose upon him; there is a great deal of distemperature and deadness within; and at the same time God is gone and withdrawn from him; in his sense and apprehension gone; to appearance gone. And in that case, as to actual comfort, *idem est esse et apparere; idem non esse, et non apparere;* to seem and to be, as to comfort in such a case. Here is nothing to bear up now but hope. I hope all this darkness will be over; all these clouds will vanish and flee away; "I will hope in God, that I shall yet praise him; for he is the health of my countenance, and my God;—why art thou cast down, O my soul? Trust in God, for I shall yet praise him," (Psalm xlii. and xliii.) I shall yet see a morning after so black and tempestuous a night. And,

Difficulty 8. The wearisomeness of duty and exercises of religion, in the midst of all this, is yet a further difficulty to a poor awakened soul. That is, he finds this to be the state of his case, that, in all the mentioned respects, let it be as ill with him as it can be supposed, yet he must not turn aside from following the Lord. I am in the way wherein I must persist; I must pray still, and bear still, and approach his table still. To go on in such a course of duty as this, when the mind is dark, and the heart is dead, and there is a great weight and pressure lying upon the soul, and God is withdrawn, and I come to one duty after another, and one ordinance after another, and get nothing; this is hard and heavy work; still to be (as the case is represented with the disciples) fishing all the night, and nothing taken. Now it is nothing but hope that can support and bear up in this case; this is the way of the Lord in which I am, and this way I hope will have a good end. Though I walk heavily, and the chariot wheels seem to be taken off; though my soul is not the chariot of a willing people, as sometimes it hath been; yet I must hold on my course; I must persist in it. There is that in him all this while, that will not let him desist, will not let him give over; no, by no means; he hath that sense of duty, that conscience towards God, that light concerning the equity and reasonableness of the thing, that keeps him to it. God must have his homage, however it is with me, whether it be better or worse; I must not defraud God; I must do such and such acts, as acts of duty and obedience to the Lord of my life and being, whatever becomes of me. He hath a secret hope, that all will issue well; and therefore holds on in his course. Fear will not let him go back; and hope draws him forward; for we are not to suppose that the asserting the necessity of the one of these is a diminution of, or detraction from, the necessary influence of the other. We need all God's means and methods to help and urge us on in our way and course. And I might add to all this,

Difficulty 9. The continual view of prevailing wickedness; a most afflicting and discouraging thing! When a Christian's way towards the end God hath set in view before him lies in a world overrun with wickedness, and wherein they that curse God are secure; he can turn his eye no way but he sees a world full of atheism, full of in-

fidelity, full of contempt of God, and full of rebellion against him. I hope (saith he) truth, and righteousness, and religion, and the love and fear of God, will triumph over all this at last. And because he so hopes, he persists and goes on in his well-chosen way. And in the last place, which I will close with,

Difficulty 10. The slow progress of the Christian interest, and the diffusion of the knowledge of Christ in the world; a most afflictive discouraging thing to all that are lovers of "our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Indeed, it is that which would have a more particular aspect upon the condition of the faithful ministers of the Gospel to see that the most part of their labours is labour in vain.

And you know how far the temptation as to this hath prevailed; I said, I will speak no more in his name, (saith the prophet,) "but thy word was as fire in my bones," (Jer. xx. 9.) that was not to be restrained. It is a very uncomfortable thing to labour in this kind, with the souls of men, which we apply ourselves to as reasonable, as intelligent, as capable of understanding us, and understanding the value of souls, and the differences of time and eternity, of present and everlasting things; to deal with such upon agreed principles between them and us; so as that they say, whatsoever we speak to them in the name of the Lord, it is all true. They grant as much as we would have them grant, and acknowledge whatsoever, as to every thing we propound to them, especially in the greatest and most important things, which are also things of the greatest evidence and clearness, so as to force an acknowledgment; and so as that, when we deal with men about these things, (as you heard from that scripture lately,) we have nothing to do but to commend ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God. We appeal to you, whether these things be not true that we say to you, in the name of the Lord, yea or no. And they are generally acknowledged to be so. It is acknowledged that there is a world to come; that there is a state of retribution; that there is a judgment day, when men are to receive "the things done in the body, whether they be good or evil;" and wherein only a spiritual holy life, begun here in this world, will end in eternal life; and prevailing wickedness, continued in, will end in eternal death.

These things we represent and lay before men in the name of the Lord, and they say it is all true. And yet they are the same men, *Non persuadebis etiamsi persuaseris*; though we have convinced men, we have not conquered them; we have persuaded, and all signifies nothing; and it is because they have no hope. It is an observable expression, that, in the 18th of Jeremiah, (I have formerly told you of another like it, chap. ii. 25. and it is worth our notice,) "Return ye, now, every one from his evil ways, and make your ways and your doings good," Jer. xviii. 11, 12. So God bespeaks them by the prophet, or the prophet bespeaks them in the name of God: "But they said there is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and will every one do the imagination of his evil heart." Because there is no hope; we have no hope that ever we shall be able to alter our course, or that ever we shall be able to do good of it in an attempt of reformation; and therefore, we will go on as we have done.

Truly then, this is the sense and posture of them that we have to deal with in the name of the Lord; they will not turn, because there is no hope; the case would be the same with us now, who so deal with men; that is, we should give over treating with them if we had no hope; we would speak to them no more in that name, nor open a Bible in our solemn assemblies, if we had no hope; but, because we have this hope, we use great freedom of speech, we hope we shall prevail at length; and we hope, however, that our blessed Lord Jesus shall have a glorious body out of this world before he hath done; a glorious community, that shall be associated to "the general assembly and church of the first-born, written in heaven; the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect;" whether men we speak to now in his name do hear or forbear, he shall have a glorious assembly above. "He will be glorified in all them that believe," because the Gospel testimony was received. That will be a triumphant day; and our hope of bearing a share and part in the triumphs of that day carries us through; and we go on, notwithstanding this great difficulty; a principal difficulty it is to us. But it is a common difficulty to "all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" according as it is the common desire to have the Christian religion, in the power, life, and vigour of it, spread; and that more souls may be proselyted and brought in: all that love Christ, and all that love the souls of men, cannot but have this desire; and accordingly the difficulty and trouble is great that they have continually to conflict with, that so little is done in this case, and that they see so little done in their day. But the hope of a glorious issue must carry you through all these difficulties. This will have a glorious end at last.

SERMON XXI.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope

We have insisted largely in opening to you the great important truth contained in these words; and now, our yet remaining business is to make some use of it, which will be,

Use 1. In divers instructive inferences that this truth will afford us. As,

Inference 1. If we are saved by hope, then we are lost by despair; no inference can be more plain.

If the souls of men are to be saved by hope, they are liable to be lost by despair. And it hath been my great design, from this and some other texts, to do what in me should lie to keep you from that horrid gulf. But I must in faithfulness tell you, that there is, as to this, most danger where there is least apprehension or suspicion of it. There is a raging despair, and there is a silent dead despair. This latter is the fullest of danger, according as it is less obvious unto observation, and lies as a mortal disease in wrapping the hearts of them who suspect nothing less than that they should be despairing creatures. But when we are told that we are saved by hope, it cannot be understood by any hope whatsoever; for there is a hope that will undo, that will destroy; and so you may, ere long, have opportunity to know too, that there is a despair which is as necessary, as there is a hope that is mortal and destructive; but there is with all a deadly despair, that kills and destroys when it is never felt.

When we say we are saved by hope, it must be meant by the truly Christian hope; that hope that is vital, lively; the *terminus productus* in regeneration: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," 1 Pet. i. 3. We are begotten to a lively hope, a hope that lives. The want of this hope is the despair I mean; and it would not be despair in every subject; but in such a subject as is capable of that hope, and where that hope ought to be, it is despair. As the want of life is death in a man, but not in a stone; when there is not a lively hope terminating upon God, and upon a blessed eternity, and an unseen glory; when there is not such a hope, where that hope hath not its proper place, there lies and lurks this deadly despair. A vacancy of hope towards God and the blessedness of the other state, where it ought to be, and which indeed doth carry much of the essence in it (as we shall have further occasion to note) of the new creature; and it is the very perfection of human nature itself; to wit, to have a soul directed towards God by the power of a vital hope, continually expecting felicity and blessedness from him; I say, the vacancy of it is despair. But that perfection of our nature, regeneration brings in and supplies. "We are begotten again to a lively hope;" as the degeneration, deformity, and depravedness of human nature expels and keeps it out. But it so much belongs to a man as a man, that, as Philo Judæus (who speaks but as such a one) doth fitly enough say, Hope in God is so

* Preached July 19th, 1691.

much of human nature, that he is unworthy to be called a man that is destitute of it. Now that soul is destitute of it that hath no commerce with God, that hath nothing to do with him day by day. Where there is no hope, there is despair God-ward, "without God, and without hope," Eph. ii. 12. You (whoever it be) that transact all your affairs without God, have nothing to do with God from morning to night, you have no hope; none of this vital hope, this living hope, by which we are to be saved. Do you hope in God, when you have nothing to do with him, when you mind him not, when no thought of him comes into your heart?

I pray, let none so deceive themselves as to think that there is no such thing as despair when they feel not the flames of hell in their souls; for, sure a lethargy may be as mortal as a burning fever; when there is such a stupidity upon the soul, such a mindlessness of God, that there is in reference to him neither fear nor hope. And as our present state is, even in reference to the business of salvation, there cannot be hope but there must be fear too; there is no such hope as to exclude fear in the present state, nor such fear as to exclude hope. But here is the dismal state of the case, as to the most, that they have neither hope nor fear in reference to the affairs of their souls, and their everlasting concerns; wherever they are, they have no thoughts of such matters; there is neither hope nor fear. And where, then, is that which should save you? If we are indeed to be saved by hope, we are lost by the vacancy of it, and when there is no such thing as fear also. But doth such a supine neglectfulness and oscitancy, with reference to the concerns of our souls and our everlasting state, agree with the common notion of us all; that this present state is but a state of probation and preparation, in reference to a final and eternal state? Is it so indeed? And have we in reference to that final state, neither hope nor fear? What is like to be the issue of this? But,

Inference 2. We again infer, that the happiness of a Christian is future; for it is the object of hope,—that hope which is to have a continual influence upon his salvation. Now the object of hope is somewhat future and unseen; somewhat that lies out of sight as yet. "We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it;" as the following words of the text show us. Understand and consider aright then, the state of one that is a Christian indeed. He is one that hath his best and supreme good lying in futurity, and out of sight. He lives by that faith "which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. He is one that hath not his good things here, Luke xvi. 25. This is a true account of his state; his portion is not in this life, Psal. xvi. 1. His estate lies in reversion; it is somewhat expected, somewhat looked for; he takes hold of it by that hope which is cast, "as an anchor of the soul, within the veil; (Heb. vi. 19, 20.) whither Jesus, the forerunner, for us entered;" and so his title is sure, for there is such a one gone before, who, having procured, is thereupon gone to take possession of his inheritance for him.

Then, if you are to make an estimate or judgment of the condition of a Christian, a saint, a child of God, do not judge of it by present appearance, and the external state of his present case, while he is here in this world; so it may be an appearance, not only mean, but frightful;—you may behold him not only a despised one, but a hated one, persecuted, trodden under foot by an injurious, angry world;—angry for this, that he seems not to have his satisfaction in the same things that they have, but to be aiming at somewhat else above and beyond them. This is displeasing; this is ungrateful. The world doth not understand such a sort of men; "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!—therefore the world knoweth us not, (1 John iii. 1.) because it knew him not." It knows nothing at all of this race, neither father, nor children. The world knows nothing of them; it cannot tell how to form an idea, a distinct notion, of this sort of men, that are so descended, and of such a parentage. They are men of another genius, another spirit, another kind of design. The tendency of their course is another way, and they know not what to make of it; "therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not;" and because it doth not know, it hates. And all the effects of hatred many times appear mighty conspicuous towards that sort of men; and would do more, it is likely, if they did appear more like themselves, and did more plainly avow their unrelatedness to this world, and their relation to and expectations from an upper world, a higher world. But as it is, as the divine nature that is in them doth more or less speak forth, and show itself, so it stirs the indignation of a deserted forsaken world against them, in whom that nature is and doth appear. And then, by this means, they come to be counted the scum and offscouring of all things.

Therefore their condition is not to be judged of by such measures as these; do not judge of the *bonum*, the *optabile*, what is good, and what is desirable in the state of a sincere living Christian, by these present appearances, that lie under common view, as now he is a mean, despised, hated thing, but consider him in that state which his hopes do aim at and tend to, and then you will behold him arrayed with the garments of salvation; for it is the hope of salvation that aids him, animates him, and carries him through his course, and which finally will actually save him. Behold him as he is crowned with a diadem of glory, and associated with that blessed community of saved ones, as one that comes to bear his part in adorning the triumphs of his great and glorious Lord and Redeemer, in that day when he shall appear to be "admired in his saints, and to be glorified in all them that believe;" because the Gospel testimony was received among them in the proper day and season thereof. And judge now what it is to be a Christian; take your measures of the state of a Christian by what he hopes for; not by what he is, but what he reasonably and groundedly hopes to be. And again,

Inference 3. The futurities of a Christian are far more considerable than all the present enjoyments of this world. "We are saved by hope;" and, for this world, it is well if we can be saved from it; but we are never to expect being saved by it; but by the hope of these great futurities we are saved. Then, certainly, a Christian's futurities are far more considerable, and far more eligible, than all present worldly enjoyments whatsoever. And you may judge so by this, that such a one is inspired from heaven itself with such a hope as this, that makes him neglect all this earth, and breathe and tend continually upwards. That is a true judgment which proceeds from the directions and operations of the Divine Spirit. He that hath made them hope hath made them thus judge, (for they do not hope irrationally or brutishly,) that the enjoyments of this world are not comparable to the expectations of believers in reference to the other world. You may trust to that judgment which is made in the virtue and by the special direction of his Spirit, who is the God of hope: "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing," as the apostle's expression is, Rom. xv. 13.

Therefore, if you would make a judgment in this case, which is the most desirable thing, a large, full, and opulent portion here in this world, or "an inheritance with the saints in light," guide your judgment, (if you cannot judge by an immediate light of your own,) by theirs, who may best be presumed to have light in this matter; to wit, that have this divine principle put into them by God himself, which looks with neglect upon all present things, and waving and overlooking them, turns away from them, and tends its eye and course forwards towards an unseen glory and felicity elsewhere. We do commonly take that as likely to be true, which the wisest and most judicious commonly agree in. Now this is the agreed sense of all the children of God in all times and ages; and thereupon they are carried, according to judgment and choice, to waive a present portion and felicity in this world, and seek it elsewhere; we may certainly conclude, that the heavenly felicity, which is hoped for by this sort of men, is every way more considerable, eligible, and desirable, than the best wordly portion that can be had here on earth. But it is a great matter when we assent to this, (which we shall do notionally, as soon as we hear it notionally,) to have also the living sense thereof wrought into our souls, so as to be able to say, I not only know it to be so, but I feel it to be so. But again, further,

Inference 4. We may infer that hope is the life of all true and serious religion. If there be any such thing as living Christianity among us, hope is the life of it. You will easily apprehend that religion is the way to felicity, the means to the blessed end. But what kind of religion must it be? Not dead religion, but living; and there can be no living religion but what is animated by hope, and by the hope of that very end, to which it is itself in a tendency. The religion of the present state is nothing else but inchoate felicity; it is heaven begun; it is a coming to God, and tending towards him. It is one and the same principle by which any thing doth move and rest. The same nature which is the principle of motion and of rest. If religion be a principle of motion to carry us unto God, it will be a principle of rest, to give us the actual repose and satisfaction and solace of soul, that being in him consists in. But this must be living religion, and not dead. And there can be no life in it, but as it is continually inspired by hope.

Religion being an aiming at God, a tendency towards God, to wit, the religion of the way; the religion of the present state; it must continually be influenced by such an apprehension as this, that he is willing to be a "rewarder of them that diligently seek him," "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. xi. 6. And it is this faith that is the immediate foundation of hope. I hope I shall find him the rewarder of my soul. I hope my labour in the Lord will not be in vain. This is that that doth inspirit religion, and make it a living thing. There is indeed a religion in the world that hath no life in it, that lies all in empty show, and form, and external appearance. But, if there be life in it, hope is the life of it. I hope I shall reach a blessed end at last in this way. The business of religion is to seek God; in seeking him I hope that I shall find him; I find life, and satisfaction, and felicity, and eternal blessedness in him. This hope is the soul of religion, and the very life of it.

And you ought to consider it so; that accordingly, the several parts of your religion may be animated and influenced by it. Those are dull duties, that are not considered as your way to your end. Every such duty as we are now engaged in at this time should be considered thus: this is part of my way to heaven, part of my way to a blessed eternity; we are now met here with an expectation and hope, that we shall, ere long, be taken up to the "general assembly and church of the first-born; to an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect." Heb. xii. 23. This would make the duties and ordinances of every Lord's day lively things with us, when we are all aiming to take hold, in every such duty, of "the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls." But if we come together here only to see one another's faces, or to hear the sound of a few empty words, without knowing whither they tend, without minding to what end they serve, or what they aim at, or because we know not how else to spend so many hours of a day that is not allowed for our common labour; we shall make but a flat thing of our religion. But if our religion be a living thing, hope is the end of it,—I hope my way will end in eternal felicity at length; this is my way to God and glory, and to a blessed eternity. And,

Inference 5. You may further learn that all serious religion doth involve and carry in it a design for salvation and eternal blessedness: for we are saved by the hope of this, and there can be no hope of it without the design of it; what we hope for we design for, otherwise our hope is altogether a useless, inactive thing in us. We are only saved by hope, as by hope we are prompted to design salvation, and are made lively and vigorous in the prosecution of that design; which way else should hope save us, but as it engageth to lay a design for salvation, and as it enables us with life and vigour to prosecute that design, as a compassable thing, as a thing that may be brought about, and, by God's gracious vouchsafement, will and shall?

And it is therefore deeply to be considered, that our hope of being saved, and our design for salvation, must measure one another; he that drives no such design through the whole of his abode in this world, he must be looked upon as one of those (of whom I have told you before) that hath no hope in him; no living hope; was never begotten to a lively hope. If he have a living hope in him of a final felicity in God, that will continually prompt him to design, and to prosecute his design with strength and vigour, for a blessed and a glorious eternity. And I pray let us make our reflection seriously upon this, as in the sight and presence of God. Do we carry it from day to day as those that are striving a design for salvation and eternal glory? as those that are going to heaven? as candidates of eternal heavenly felicity? Do we live like such? Then should we be every day on the wing, reaching forth (as it is the nature of hope to do) with fervent, raised aspirings towards the heavenly state. We that have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, (as it is spoken in the immediate foregoing verse in this context,) waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body; for we are saved by hope, so the words are connected. We are saved by the hope of that very state, wherein we are to be owned openly of God, as his children; which is here called the adoption.

There was among the Romans a double adoption; there was a private adoption; that is, the foundations were laid by some private act. But afterwards it came to be declared *in foro*, and to be enrolled, that such a one did adopt such a one to be his son. And it is in reference to this latter sort of adoption, or the complement and solemnization of it, that we are said to wait for the adoption; that is, the children of God, they that were adopted before fundamentally; they yet wait for the solemnization of that adoption, when the manifestation shall be of the sons of God, when it shall be declared before angels and men, as it will, in the judgment of the great day, These I take for my sons and adopted ones; and it is by the hope of this we are saved, for we are saved by hope, as immediately there followeth. And I say, that this hope can no otherwise save them, than as it doth continually influence a design of that salvation. But if our great business here in this world be from day to day nothing else but to feed upon the dust of the earth, and to please and indulge self and the flesh; if this be the design we are daily striving, we have none of this hope that saves souls; where that hope is, a correspondent design cannot but be. The religion of such involves and carries in it a continual design for the blessedness of the heavenly state; therefore nothing can be more incongruous and absurd, than to keep up a show and face of religion, while yet the hearts of men, if they will but reflect, are conscious to themselves of no such design: they are not aiming at God, or at blessedness in God; the possessing of a future felicity and glory in him, and with him. They cannot justly and truly pretend to such a thing. Then (I say) is a course of religion the greatest absurdity in the world; to do in a continued course those actions that have only reference unto such an end, and never to refer to that end. To be religious without design, to wit, the proper design of religion, (which is felicity,) nothing can be more absurd.

Objection. But it may be said, how is it possible that a man should be religious without design? A man doth not act in religion, but it must be done voluntarily; and if it be done voluntarily, it must be done for an end, so there can be no such thing (you will say) as keeping up a course of religion without a design.

Answer. Very true, indeed, there could be no such thing as keeping up a course of religion without a design; but that is not the matter I speak of, a design in general. A man cannot do a series of merely human actions without some design or other, or simply without any design; but when the actions that make up a course of religion are done, we cut this design for the proper end of religion. Here lies the absurdity and incongruity that I now state, to tear a series and course of actions from their proper end, and not refer them to that end, this is most irrational trifling. As if, when all the other actions of a man's life are done for a certain determinate end only in the great business of religion, he plays the fool, he doth the thing, but never minds the end; keeps such days as these; comes to church; attends upon the public solemnities of God's worship; but never thinks of heaven, never minds eternal glory, as the thing in this way to be designed for. And so his religion, and the duties of it, bear no proportion to his end, to that end that they were made for. There is a two-fold design driven by religion, or by carrying on a

course of religion, by very different sorts of men. That is, a design for this world, and a design for the world to come: some are religious only with a design for this world; to wit, that I may carry it fair with men in this world, or with that sort of men which I think fittest, and have some inducements which lead me to associate with, to apply myself to them, and to have their good opinion, and have a good reputation among them; I am willing, therefore, to be as they are, and to do as they do; here is a design for this world driven in religion, and the actions and duties of it; not (it may be) to gain; but there may be many worldly designs, besides that of gain; worldly repute and credit among those whose opinion I most esteem, and put a value upon, and to whom, therefore, in such a way, I think to approve and recommend myself.

But there is also a design driven in religion for the world to come. And this is the true and proper design of religion. And where the former only is designed, we can hardly ever comprehend in our thoughts a more horrid frightful case; when a man is doing the great sacred acts of religion, without a design for their proper end, and in mere subserviency to some mean and inferior design, by how much the less that is, or the lower the design is, or by how much the less is to be got by it, so much is religion the lower debased; being thereby put into a subverviency to that which, it may be, shall be worth nothing to men; that I shall never gain by one way or other: and yet, I choose to do acts of religion; or to do these, and not take other acts thereof; or, to do these I do in this or that form; and do all in accommodation to some secular purpose and design: but the eternal purposes of religion are forgotten, neglected, and never thought of by me. This is to prostitute the most sacred, venerable thing imaginable, (religion,) to the meanest and most despicable end.

How is this to be answered for, or wherein can we possibly conceive a more horrid sort of sacrilege than this? The acts of religion have a sacredness in them; but I aliene them from their proper end. This I do not, in order to the serving of God; not in order to the saving of my soul; or not in reference to an eternal state; but I do it to please my own present humour, or my friend's humour. Is this that indeed which we will resolve our religion into? Such trifling with religion is that which will be dearly accounted for at the last day. To do that which we ought to do for pleasing and glorifying of God, and saving our souls in the day of the Lord Jesus, we cannot tell why, or for what reason, will come to a fearful reckoning at last. We ought to bethink ourselves at all such times, when we are thus assembled; What am I here to-day for? Why did I come to this place this morning? Why did I take upon me to make one, and bear a part in a Christian religious assembly? Did I do it as one that hoped for salvation, and expected eternal life in this way? Was it that I might draw so much nearer to God, and be so much the more acquainted with him, and fitted for that state which I profess to hope for? But again,

Inference 6. We may further learn, that there is a very great sagacity belonging to the new creature, and the regenerate state; we are saved by hope; this imports the new creature, those that are born of God in order to eternal life, to be a very sagacious sort of creatures. The new creature is a very foreseeing creature; it is in this, eminently distinguished from other creatures, even of the same rank and order in God's creation; to wit, merely human creatures: whereas others look merely, or only, to the present, here is a strange foresight in this sort of creature that is born of God, by which it eyeth and looketh towards salvation, and eternal blessedness. As soon as it is born, "It is begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance reserved in heaven for it," 1 Pet. i. 3. The new creature hath a hope belonging to its essence; as soon as it begins to be, and breathe, it begins to hope. It is born to the hope of immortality and eternal life.

We ought to consider this, and a great judgment is to be made of our own state, by what we find instilled into ourselves of that spiritual sagacity and foresight. There are many that are apt to be foreseeing (and value themselves greatly upon it) of temporary events, the probability of such and such events, and love to discourse and reason thereupon; as politicians, or as prophets, they can value themselves greatly upon such foresight; but here is the true foresight that sees into eternity.

That is the best, and clearest, and strongest sight that can see furthest; that overlooks (it may be) the concernments of to-morrow, of this year and the next, within the bounds and compass of time; yea, looks beyond all time, penetrates into eternity, beholds the judgment-seat, the Judge sat, the books opened, the dead raised, and men disposed severally to their eternal states. The new creature, that divine birth, which fetcheth its original immediately from God, this is its sagacity; with such sagacity and foresight it is endowed. "We are saved by hope," we have a hope by which we expect to be saved, which penetrates into the unseen futurities of an everlasting state. And,

Inference 7. We may hereupon conclude too, That there is a certain generosity, a nobleness, a greatness of mind, that doth belong unto a regenerate person. The new creature, one that is born of God, by which he is borne up above all this world, tramples upon it, scorns its smiles, smiles at its frowns, and scorns, despiseth its threats and terrors, looks still beyond it and above it. What is all this world to me? A shadow, a despicable vanity! My great concernments lie above in a superior world, in a remoter world. This is generous and great. Oh! saith one that is born of God, I cannot live at the common rate, I cannot live upon this country fare, I must fetch in all the provisions I live by, from day to day, from heaven; eat heavenly food, and drink heavenly drink, such meat and such drink as the world affords not; for such a prepossession, and such a pre-occupation, there is by hope of the felicity of heaven, and of the heavenly state. They do support this frail mortal life as others do; but they have another life that is to be supported in another way, and by other means; and in reference to which they find an unsuitableness in all things under the sun, as we should in gravel for our meat, and puddle for our drink; so that if you ask such a one, what he lives by, as to the maintenance of that nobler life that is in him, he will answer, by hope.

You may possibly (some of you) have heard and read of a great prince and general, who, upon a conquest, dispensing great largesses among his soldiers, was asked, And what, sir, do you reserve for yourself? Why, hope, saith he. I, for my part, live upon hope. I give away all that I have now got, and live upon the hope of more. This is the generosity and nobleness of mind that is in-wrought into a regenerate person. When he becomes so, he despiseth all things under the sun as a portion, as a final terminative good, and lives upon hope. And this we must come to, if ever we come to know what it is to be Christians. It is too little understood (I am afraid to this day) what it is to be a Christian, though we have long borne that name. Are not we told, they are a sort of people called out of the world? "They are not of this world," (saith our blessed Lord, in that concluding solemn prayer of his, when he was going out of the world,) "even as I am not of this world," John xvii. 16. Oh, what a horrid thing would it be to contradict our blessed Lord, in the sense of our own hearts! He saith, "they are not of this world;" but here is one answering, Aye, Lord, but I am of this world; one with this world, united to it: I savour the things of the world, as the men of the world do; I choose with them, and enjoy with them: a fearful thing from the sense of our hearts, to contradict our blessed Lord! to have him say, "They that are mine are not of this world, as I am not of this world;" and we be forced to say, concerning ourselves, Yes, but we are of this world, and related to this world more than any other, and savour the things of this world more than any other.

There are sundry other inferences more that I intend now to go through, but there is one thing for the present I would shut up with, though I do therein anticipate and prevent myself; that is only to recommend this one thing to you, as a piece of solemn counsel and serious consideration, that you will labour to get your souls possessed of this principle, and direct it towards its final object; let it reach forth even unto the very last of the object that it is to be taken up about; for this we must know, that there are intermediate objects, and there is that at length which

is most finally final. But hope hath its strongest and most powerful influences, as it doth reach furthest, reach into a most glorious eternity; and makes us say within ourselves, I hope to be there ere long. What a wonderful thing would it be, if we could always worship under such a hope! what mighty vigour would it infuse into our religion, to say to every one that meet together in such an assembly; We meet together in hope and expectation of having our eternal abode with that blessed society above, in the mansions of glory that are prepared already in our Father's house! To have this hope live in us, what life would it not transfuse through all our duties, and through the whole course of our religion!

And what a pleasant relish would it give to all our present mercies, such as we have greater occasion more solemnly to bless God for; when we have matter of praise laid before us, and offered to us, as we have at this day! We have heard of the great success God hath blessed and crowned them with, who have been fighting his battles of late, especially in a neighbouring kingdom. It is a great thing to say, Blessed be God that hath done so much, and I hope will do more, and will enable them to carry on the work further; and I hope beyond all that, that I shall be one of the saved community at last. What spirit and life would that add to our prayer and praise!

And on the other side, what a damp and diminution would it be to all our matter of praise, and to the praisefulness of our spirits, to say, I have heard, indeed, that things have gone pretty well of late in Savoy, in Germany, and greatly well in Ireland; but all this while I have no hope of being saved; I have no hope of things going well with me hereafter; things may go well here, for aught I know, with them to whom I wish well; but I have no hope that things will go well with me for ever, or in an everlasting state. What a damp is this to the great praisefulness of a man's spirit, and what a diminution to the present matter of his praise! It is an insignificant thing for me to put in my rejoicing with their joy, who are pleased with any such good successes as these; and in the mean time to be forced to say, Alas! there is a dreadful doom hanging over me, and over my soul; I have nothing in me that looks like a principle of the divine life; and yet I am sure that life must be now begun in me, that must be connected with eternal life. A present spiritual death hath no connexion with eternal life, it must be a spiritual life, of which this hope (as you have heard) is so great a principle, that shall end in life eternal.

SERMON XXII.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

I HAVE made some progress in the use, and some instructive inferences I have recommended to you; and more I did intend to add, but I shall now waive them, intending to make all the haste I can to go through what I most principally intended on this subject.

And, that which remains is to direct to the serious and most earnest (in that way which may be the most probable) endeavour of getting this noble principle implanted, cultivated, and improved, amongst us towards this its high and glorious end, our own salvation. And, because (as hath been largely shown you) this great principle (Hope) contributes thereunto, both by the influence that it hath in order to the conversion of the unconverted, and by the influence that it hath upon the perseverance of the converted; therefore the tenor of my discourse herein must be suitable hereunto, and must respect both these sorts of persons; but so as that I do hope each may find their own concern in each part of the following discourse, while yet the several parts may more principally and directly respect the one sort or the other. And,

Direction 1. The direction I shall give you, (and which will certainly concern us all,) is, that we may all more seriously and earnestly mind the great business of our own salvation, and more deeply concern ourselves about it. I am sure such hope can never signify any thing with them, in order to salvation, who are not concerned about their salvation, that mind no such matter. I am very little willing to be much in repetition of any thing that hath been said to you formerly; but, if I would repeat any thing, I can do nothing that is more fit to be reconsidered, than what I told you upon the first inference; that, if hope have such a tendency to our salvation, despair must have a like tendency to our destruction. If souls are to be saved by hope, they are in greatest danger to be lost by despair. I say, what I told you upon that head, to wit, that there are two sorts of despair; a silent, calm, stupid despair, and a strong, raging despair.

There are a great many that are in despair about their salvation, who never think they are, and in whom it makes no noise; to wit, that are without any real vivid hope concerning their salvation; and the vacancy of hope, right hope, in a subject to which it belongs, is to be called by the name of its contrary, despair. According to the known and most common agreed rules of reasoning, in such matters; those souls that are dead towards God, and their own eternal concernments, have no hope in God, and are really sunk in despair, and are likely to be lost and perish by it, if mercy do not seasonably mend their case.

And, in what I am now pressing you unto, hope, to get it implanted and improved to its proper purpose; I would be loth to be mistaken, as if, in pressing to hope, I pressed to security. And indeed I would hardly think that any one that hath the understanding of a man, that will use thought, can be guilty of so gross a mistake; for sure there is the widest and broadest difference imaginable between security and hope. The hope of salvation, of eternal life, and eternal well-being! What! is there any thing in this like security? Such a hope is a positive thing, a real and great something; security is but a vacuity of fear and care about a man's own concernments; and that is a mere nothing. What? I beseech you, is there no difference between something so great, a something and nothing? Such a hope is a most lively, powerful, active principle, wheresoever it is; and mightily stirs in the soul, and makes it mightily bestir itself, in the pursuit of its end: security, as it is nothing, so it doth nothing; it puts the soul upon doing nothing, lets it still be dead, and unconverted; care for being saved who will for them, for their parts they do not. There is no likeness between these two things, security and such a hope.

But now if I do not prevail with you, as to this first direction, the throwing off security, and minding more seriously, and in good earnest, the concerns of your souls; my labour is lost, and your souls are lost; and if I gain not this first point among you, all that is said and designed is to no purpose. But can any, upon sober consideration, think that it is a likely matter that salvation is so common as the neglect of it is? Or, are men in a likely way to be saved, that so generally disregard any such thing, think of no such matter from day to day, and from year to year? Is that imagination agreeable to Scripture calls and warnings? Strive to enter in at the strait gate, that leads to life. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. What! are all such words from the mouth of God, and by his inspired servants, only sown to the wind, thrown among men into empty air?

If we would consider things reasonably, and with sober understandings, nothing would be more obvious to us than to bethink ourselves, that contraries have all their place in the same subject, not in divers: and thus in this case so it must be, so it ought to be; this being a matter of moral consideration, that wherever there ought to be hope, there ought to be fear too; the exigency of the case requiring it. And while matters do yet hang dubiously, (as they will do more or less, with all of us in this region of mortality,) we shall never be past all danger, nor all appearances of it; there will be no more perfection of assurance, than perfection of holiness. Doth the Scripture say in vain to us, that we are to be saved by hope? And doth the same Scripture, the same word of God, say to us, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling? Sure there

* Preached September 13th, 1691.

is no repugnancy between these things, but a necessary agreement, a most necessary agreement.

And, as contraries do always exist only in the same subject, so in lower degrees they do always co-exist in it, exist in it together: and therefore, where there is hope, there ought to be fear, in reference and respect to the concernments of our salvation; for we are not to think, that the one of these scriptures doth exantlate the other, and make it lose its force and signify nothing; this being a word given to men in mortal flesh, this divine word that we have in this book, we must know that it concerns men, and is to be applied to them in accommodation to the state in which they are; and in reference whereunto it is written. And, therefore, the state of none is so desperate as theirs, who, in reference to the affairs of their salvation, have neither hope nor fear; as they that mind it not, have neither the one, nor the other.

And, because of the weight and mighty importance of this thing, I shall insist upon it; and press this a little, before I go further, by some considerations. As,

1. That to be unconcerned about the affairs of our salvation, is continually to stifle a most natural principle; we have no principle, no notion, that is more natural to us, than that we have something about us that cannot die, that is made for eternity, and for another state after this. I cannot now stand to prove to you the mortality of the soul; my subject doth not lead me to it: but it is that we all profess to believe, and which we pretend to believe of ourselves, unless we could disprove it and plainly evince the contrary; and, I would fain know how any man would go about to disprove that he is a creature made for another state after this. How will he prove himself to be nothing but a mortal creature? How will he prove, that let him be never so like a beast, he shall die like a beast too? How will he prove that? And that the ultimate end, which man was made for, is attainable in this earthly state? How will any man go about to prove this? If he would prove himself a beast, the evidence of things will repugn, and fly in his face. It is only not thinking that makes men adventurous in a matter of this import. Oh! how dismal a thing is it, when, instead of the hope of salvation, all that a man hath to relieve himself is, the hope of annihilation, a hope of his running into nothing; that instead of blessedness, he hath no other hope, but only of no being!

But consider (I say) that by this, here is a continual stifling of a most deeply natural principle; for there is no man that would fain abolish the thoughts of that immortal nature he hath about him; but still they will recoil upon him. This spirit that God put into man by his own inspiration, carries with it a secret consciousness of its own immortality; and there can be no disbelief hereof, or opinion of the contrary, that is not conjoined with a great *formido* opposite, a certain misgiving and fear that it will at last prove otherwise; but, in the mean time to own such a principle as that, (as among us it is generally owned,) and yet to have the habitual temper of a man's soul be directly opposite thereunto; to wit, in an unconcernment what shall and may become of him, in an everlasting state; this is the most intolerable thing that we can suppose the human nature liable to. A most unsufferable absurdity, that I should have such a fixed apprehension and sentiment about me that I know not how to get rid of, and yet the habitual frame of my mind, and the whole course of my practice, run directly contrary to it. And then,

2. As unconcernedness about our salvation doth oppose this principle in the very nature of man, (than which none is more deeply fundamental,) so it doth reproach the dignity of the human nature, as well as oppose the light of it. It reproacheth the dignity and honour of the human nature. They are continually throwing contempt upon their own nature, that live unconcernedly about their future state and eternal salvation. If we would but consider this matter seriously, who is there that would not be ashamed to have this written in his forehead, I do not care what becomes of my soul to all eternity? Who would not be ashamed to carry that character visible to every man? To proclaim himself one that thinks he is of no greater or nobler allay in the creation of God, than a brute creature? Whence is there a regret to avow and own such a principle, but only that we think it to be ignominious? If there be not these explicit thoughts, there is such a secret sense, that it would be an ignominious thing, a reproachful thing.

But how accountable is this, that a man should not be ashamed of the thing, and yet he is ashamed of the profession of it? Men are not ashamed of the thing; to wit, to be careless of, and unconcerned about, their own souls, and their eternal salvation; they go from day to day without any suitable regret within themselves for their own carelessness and negligence, and yet they would be ashamed to avow an unconcernedness to all the world. There is no rational account to be given, why men should be ashamed of the profession of such a thing, and yet not be ashamed of the thing itself. To go every day from morning to night, without any care, thought, or concern, what shall become of my soul, as to eternal salvation hereafter; never to have the soul smite them about this thing, from day to day, and from week to week; and be ashamed, to feel a loathness in their own minds, to avow infidelity, and profess mere brutality, that I am nothing but a mere brute animal; how unaccountable is this!

Indeed, the great iniquity in this matter is this: that men do not more allow themselves to study and contemplate themselves; that they do not labour to have more reverential thoughts even of the very nature of man; I mean the primitive nature of man. There is nothing indeed more despicable and hatefu. than corrupt and vicious nature. That precept of that noted heathen, that we reverence ourselves and our own nature, it needs inculcation. And, as to this very particular thing of hope towards God, (with which unconcernedness about our salvation and future felicity it is plain cannot consist,) there have been higher and more raised thoughts about it, and about the nature of man, in reference hereunto, with some from whom one would little expect it, than is usual among Christians themselves. I cannot but reflect again and again upon that of Philo the Jew, who tells us, that hope towards God is that which doth most properly belong to the nature of man: so that, (as he speaks,) (the *euelpist*,) he that hath this hope easiest and most familiar to him, is only to be counted a man; but the (*dyselpist*,) he that finds an aversion in him to such actings of hope towards God, is scarcely to be counted a man; hardly to be looked upon as one that is partaker of a rational nature; so high was the notion of human nature laid with some such in those days. But now, where there is nothing else but a daily stupid unconcernedness in men about the affairs of their souls, and their everlasting state, there is even among such (though they bear the name of Christians) such a contempt of themselves, and such an indignity done to the nature of man, as many that have not been Christians would have been ashamed of. And,

3. Such an unconcernedness about our salvation, it is a continual disobedience to a most natural divine law. We ought to account, that where no other law than that of our own natures is, that yet such do live properly under the obligation of a law: for I beseech you consider, do you think that God is not governor of the rest of the world, as well as he is of Christendom? And how doth he govern reasonable creatures without a law? "They that have not a written law, are a law to themselves," Rom. ii. 14, 15. And heathens tell us of a *nata* and a *scripta lex*, and where there is not a *scripta* there is a *nata:* a law that is born with us, a law written in our hearts, are expressions common to Cicero, and to the apostle Paul; and therefore light about this matter in some degree hath been common to men. There is no more deeply natural law upon men, than that of self-preservation; and if the soul of man be the man, or the chief of man, the principal thing in man, do you think it doth not lie under the obligation of a law to preserve itself, to endeavour to save itself, to keep itself, as far as it can, from being lost and miserable to eternity, since it is capable of eternity? And therefore consider,

4. That God cannot but be highly provoked, when the authority of this law, of which he hath impressed on the very soul of man and wrought into his nature, is continually violated. Consider it, for he cannot but be highly provoked with it; "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;" where the apostle's discourse is about natural truth, about those dictates of

truth that lie naturally and universally in the minds of men; as the notions concerning God do, that he instanceth in, in what immediately followeth; and concerning right and wrong, even unto men; with which is contempered the obligations that lie upon every man in reference to himself; because the duty we owe to other men is measured by that which we owe to ourselves, the whole law being comprehended in love. And that comprehensive principle being thus given by our Lord himself, to wit, "We are to love the Lord our God, with all our hearts, souls, minds, and might; and to love our neighbours as ourselves;" which therefore involves, firstly, and in the highest place, this care for ourselves. And since in the common acknowledgment of all, our souls are our most principal and chief selves, a love to our souls, and care for them, must needs be one of the great principles of natural truth; for the violation whereof the wrath of God is revealed; to wit, against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold this truth in unrighteousness. To have such truths as these, always lying in my mind and soul, and continually to run counter to them, how provoking is it!

When I consider the law of nature as God's law, and that by which he governs that part of the world which hath no other law, and that the obligation thereof is perpetual and eternal, and can cease no where; to be guilty of continual violations of this, is to tear the foundations of the Divine government. And therefore it is not strange that wrath should be revealed from heaven against men, upon such an account; that they hold such truths in unrighteousness, and stifle and counteract it, through the whole of their course, from day to day. And to bring this down to our own particular cases and concernments: to wit, if a man arise in the morning, and all his care for the following day is, what shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and what shall I put on, and how shall I make a gainful bargain for this world, to advance my estate, and the like? and no proportionable care or concernment is taken for his soul, or its salvation, all the day. This (I say) is to live in a continual violation of one of the most deeply fundamental laws of his own nature, for which the wrath of God is provoked and revealed against men, for such ungodliness. There doth not need a Gospel to bring such men under a doom, but it doth bring them under a heavier doom being superadded. That Gospel wherein life and immortality are brought to light, to wit, into a closer and brighter light; that is, whereas the light of the pagan Gentile world is but a twilight, a dubious light, in comparison of that which we have in the Gospel, concerning the future eternal states of men; therefore this super-addition must heighten men's doom. And then again,

5. This is to be considered too, That in such an unconcernedness about our salvation, we do not only offend against the authority of the Divine law; but against the goodness and kindness of it, which is an unspeakably higher and more aggravated offence. Oh! that this might but enter into our souls, to consider how much there is of goodwill towards men in laying upon them the obligation of such a law, which as it was first written in our own nature, so it is over and over, and more expressly, written again in his word! "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." A law in various forms and expressions so often repeated. Oh! that it might be considered, how much there is of kindness and benignity in it towards them, whom it doth so much concern! how much there is of good-will and favourable propensions expressed, when the primary design of the Divine law is to bring us to be happy creatures; that we should have laws laid upon us to be happy. This is the purport of the whole, as if the merciful Lawgiver should but speak this sense, (as indeed he hath spoken in his word, often and often, over and over, most fully,) Oh! be kind to yourselves! do not give up yourselves to perish. You have intelligent immortal spirits about you, that are capable of the same felicity with angels, those glorious creatures above. Do not abandon these spirits of yours unto remediless ruin, in a total neglect and unconcernedness about the salvation of your souls! do not plunge and sink them into an endless and incurable misery!

We are taught to account, that the very patience that God doth exercise towards men hath this kind design with it, that they might be saved. See his expostulations with sinners about this: Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering? not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance: but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works?" Rom. ii. 4, 5. The patience of God is intimated to have generally that aptitude in itself to induce men to consider and take up thoughts of returning; and most expressly, when the Gospel commenteth upon it, and tells men of its design. Why was not thy careless soul, that heard the Gospel the last Lord's day, cut off before this Lord's day? Why? the patience of God is leading it to repentance: so we are directly instructed to interpret. "My brethren, (saith that other apostle,) count the long-suffering of God salvation," 2 Peter iii. 15. Do you put that construction and sense upon it? Make that interpretation to yourselves, Why am I spared? I have been careless of God and my own soul so long, year after year, why am I spared? The apostle doth teach you to reckon, and make an estimate, why it is, what you are to count it is for; "Count that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation," (2 Peter iii. 15.) to wit, that he is designing your salvation in all this indulgence, and sparing mercy, that he exerciseth towards you. And it is highly aggravated guilt, when there is not only a continual resistance of the authority, but an offending constantly against the kindness, of a divine constitution. And,

6. You ought to consider, you are not your own. And though every one is obliged to intend, with the greatest earnestness, the salvation of his own soul, yet he is not to do it principally and supremely as his own; for God's interest is higher, and more principal in us, than ours can be in ourselves. And therefore, whereas we have a trust incumbent upon us from God, about ourselves, and the affairs of our own souls, he hath required us (though he be our supreme Keeper) to keep ourselves, to keep our own hearts with all diligence. Though our Lord Jesus Christ be our supreme Saviour, our great Saviour by office, yet we are required to save ourselves. Though God in Christ is our supreme Ruler, yet we are told too, that "he that hath not rule over his own spirit, is as a city broken down, and without walls." We have, by Divine charge and command, a care incumbent upon us about our own selves, about our own souls; but he is our owner, we are not our own owners.

It is a most horrid thing, when men will not be brought to know their owner. "The ox knoweth his owner," Isa. i. 3. And what? will not man know his owner? Will not these reasonable intelligent souls of ours know their owner, to whom they belong, who he is that styles himself the God of spirits, even of the spirits of all flesh? So that our having spirits in flesh, embodied spirits, is no diminution to his interest in us, and detracts nothing of it. When these spirits of ours are sunk into flesh, yet he is the God of the spirits of all flesh: they are his, he is the God of them. Then are we to consider besides, that inferior, secondary, subordinate interest that we have in ourselves, and our own souls: we are (I say) to consider God's superior interest in them, whose creatures we are. Then they who live in a total neglect and unconcernedness about the salvation of their souls, what answer will they be able to make to the most high God, when he comes to demand of them; "What have you done with my creature that I put under your care, in so great a measure? I trusted thee with the keeping and care of a soul, an immortal soul, an intelligent, spiritual being, stamped with my own natural image. I gave thee a soul capable of loving me, capable of being finally happy in me, capable of being, throughout an eternity, employed in the adoration and love of the eternal God. I gave thee such a soul, what hast thou done with it? What! hast thou made that soul all the time it dwelt in that body, only a drudge to vanity, only to serve as a slave to sensual and brutish inclination?"

God was to have eternal honour from those souls of ours, by our eternal love and adoration and praises of him, and joining with the glorious assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, in

these exercises. And when the wretched creature comes to give an account to God, as he must do; "Why hast thou robbed me of the eternal honour, glory, and praise that is due to me from this creature of mine? Why, instead of taking that way, by which it might be associated with the glorious inhabitants in heaven, hast thou taken that way by which it must come to herd itself with devils, and go to be employed an eternity, in cursing and blaspheming its Maker? Why hast thou thus used a soul which I gave thee, who am the Father of spirits? Was that soul of thine, while it dwelt in a body of flesh, capable of nothing but gratifying and pleasing brutish desires? capable of no higher thoughts than what are suitable to the body, to eat and drink, and to be clothed with? Was it capable of no thoughts of God? no thoughts of a future felicity? Why hath that soul been so injuriously, so abusively treated? I must have an account of my own creature, that should have honoured me, by the eternal love and fruition of me."

Sure these considerations should awaken us a little to that which I first recommended to you by way of direction, that we may, through the grace of God, agree in a resolution, more to mind the concernments of our salvation, than we hitherto have. It may be a great many will think themselves very innocent as to this matter, and not apprehend that there needs so much care about their souls and eternal concerns; but is not that to make our own imaginations superior to the determinations of God's express word? Doth that look as if he thought such a matter could be overcome, when he bids us, (as you have heard,) "Strive (the word signifies, be in agonies) to enter in at the strait gate." When any in that but now mentioned Scripture, have it made as the distinguishing character between them that shall finally be saved, and them that perish; that the one sort do, by patient continuance in well-doing, "seek for glory, honour, and immortality," till they actually have eternal life: and the other sort "do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness," are contentious against the truth; and therefore are to expect nothing but "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," for ever.

And is it not a very strange thing, that about inferior ends, men should think themselves concerned and obliged to use very great diligence; and every man is praised and commended among his neighbours, as he bears the character of a diligent man, an industrious man in his business? but that in reference to our last end, the universal end, the end of ends, that men should allow themselves in a universal carelessness and neglect, when every thing is greater as it approacheth nearer to the last end? There is a subordination of ends, but as any end comes nearer to the last, so it is greater, and the last greatest of all. Now that men should think it very reasonable to be very careful to get estates, to preserves their lives, and live well in the world, and yet think it reasonable to be negligent how they shall live for ever; what inconsistencies are these! There wants nothing but communing with ourselves, to make us apprehend and understand this, and to make ourselves uneasy to ourselves, till we find a redress. And this word would be an everlasting witness against us, if we should not depart now with a resolution (in dependance on the grace of God) more to mind the concernments of our salvation than ever we have done.

SERMON XXIII.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

I SHALL now proceed in giving you further directions for the getting this noble principle cultivated and improved. And to that end, in the next place,

Direction 2. We should labour to extend our hope to its highest and utmost object, its supreme and ultimate object. According as we stretch it further, it works more, and it becomes so much the more a lively and potent thing in us. And do I need to tell what its supreme and ultimate object is? Our best good must be our highest hope, and you can be in no doubt what that is. "And now (Lord) what wait I for? my hope is in thee," Psal. xxxix. 7. "Why art thou cast down, oh! my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God," Psal. xlii. 5, 11. and xliii. 5. He must be to us, in respect of our hope, (as in respect of our choice, and love, and delight,) our only one. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee," Psal. lxxiii. 25. This is plain and out of question, God is to be our highest hope.

But concerning this, we are to note further, That it is God, as he is, most perfectly to be enjoyed in the most perfect state, that is to be the object of our hope: some shadow of which truth was in the mind of that noted philosopher, when he speaks of felicity, as that which is to be enjoyed in the most perfect state of life. But it is that which we are most deeply to consider, when we design God for the great object of our hope. It must be as he is to be enjoyed most perfectly, to wit, in the best and most perfect state. It is plain that that state is here referred to in this context, and in the text itself, if you will judge its reference by the context. Look to the words that do immediately precede; see whither their aspirings do aim and tend. "We who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies; for we are saved by hope." The hope of the final felicity and blessedness of that state, when there should be a perfect redemption of the body. It is a hope of felicity, which will be in its perfection, after being raised from the dead.

And this the apostle, by another significant name, calls the adoption; to wit, the solemn manifestation of the sons of God, as was the expression a little above, and as is intimated in another place. "Now we are the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be," I John iii. 1. Our sonship, and the glory and dignity of our adopted state, is not yet displayed or discovered what it is; but it shall be; and the time is coming when it shall: so that the like thing is intimated here, as did obtain among the Romans, to wit, that adoptions were with them two-fold. There was a private adoption that was preparatory, and leading to a following public one. Such a one doth first in private pitch upon such a person as he adopts for his own son, and afterwards there is a public notification thereof *in foro*; here it was declared with public solemnity. And it is in this latter sense, and in accommodation thercunto, that this perfect state of the sons of God is called the adoption.

And as we are to take heed lest any temporary or terrenc thing should be designed by us, as the main and terminative object of our hope; so that that which is in its kind higher and better, and most noble and excellent, we must take heed lest itself be made the final term of our hope, in any state of imperfection, that things even of that kind do yet lie under. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are miserable creatures," I Cor. xv. 19. Our hope must shoot forward into another state, we must cast anchor into that which is within the veil, Heb. vi. 19. Even this anchor of hope. And again,

Direction 3. We must labour to have our minds well informed concerning that state which our hope is finally to terminate upon; not to content ourselves with a confused general idea of some great felicity hereafter, in another world, and after this life; but we must labour, as distinctly as we can, to apprehend what it is, and wherein it consists and lies; for our hope will be in its operations proportionably lively and vigorous, as our apprehensions concerning its objects are distinct and clear; our souls cannot be attracted, and drawn, and enlivened, and raised, by obscure and shadowy apprehensions only of that which we make its final object. And we are not in greater danger of wronging ourselves in any thing more than here, and about this matter.

The generality of men, the generality of them that live under the Gospel, and that call themselves Christians; oh, how little is understood among them of the truly Chris-

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tian hope! The apostle prayeth for his Christian Ephesians, that they might know the hope of their calling; that they might understand what they are to hope for, what they are called to, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, that that might be understood. Men of carnal minds, they are apt accordingly to form the notion of all things, and where there is yet a prevailing carnality, even under the Gospel, men do take their measures of future felicity and misery, according to what notions they have of perfect good and evil; and their notions of present good and evil, they are taken only from the dictates of sense. Good and evil are estimated by us according to their accommodations or disaccommodations to flesh and sense; that is taken for good which is grateful to carnal sense; and that for evil that is ungrateful to it. And no higher are they wont to go; but what would be good or evil to an intelligent immortal mind and spirit, herein they little concern themselves for the most part.

And hence are the notions too common even among Christians of Mahometan paradises hereafter, or of paganish elysiums; indeed usually they go no further, when they are forming their notions of what is meant by salvation, than only to think of the privative part, and by that privative part, they mean only being freed from that which they think would be tormenting to the flesh; and because the Scripture doth make use of such phrases and forms of speech for our help, therefore are we wont to abuse them to our hurt, and to the depraving and narrowing of our minds and understandings touching these things; all the salvation that the most concern themselves about is, to be freed from fire and brimstone, that they think will torment the flesh; and the apprehension is dreadful, when they are told of such a state of torment as eternal and everlasting; but how much the more the mind and spirit of a man is a greater, and nobler, and more excellent thing than a little animated clay that he carries about with him, so much the more must the good and evil of the future state, which is accommodate to the mind and spirit, be greater and higher than any thing that flesh is capable of, in point either of enjoyment or suffering.

And it ought to be considered, that, whereas the happiness of an intelligent creature can only be in the fruition of God; I say it ought deeply to be considered, what it is to all eternity, to lose this enjoyment, and to be cut off from him: and this is the greatest of your salvation, to be saved from that misery which must of all things be most tormenting to an intelligent mind and spirit; to wit, I am cut off everlastingly from the enjoyment of that highest and best good whereof I was capable; I was capable of it, and have lost it.

Here is the sting and the fire of hell, its hottest fervour, and by this it is, that the soul must be the everlasting tormentor itself. This is it that gives the ground for those (*morsus*) bitings, wounds, and gnawings of the worm that never dies. Oh, that I should debase a mind, a spirit; so noble a thing, so excellent a thing; to a capacity only of converse with earthly things, and thereby to lose for ever the enjoyment of the blessed God, as having lost my capacity for it, stifled it myself, and therewith lost my interest in it: and so as that thereupon Divine justice might do an equal thing, and a becoming thing, and that God might do like himself, as became himself; I should therefore hear from him, "Depart from me, accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" Go, accursed creature, into the state which thou choosest.

A salvation from such misery as this, you must labour distinctly to understand, to be the great object of your hope. I hope through the grace of God I shall be saved from this, from ever having things brought to this sad and forlorn pass with me. And so by salvation, though it sound privative, yet is chiefly meant that which is most highly positive; and lest we should mistake sometimes, we find this positive added in express terms, "salvation by Christ Jesus, with eternal glory," 2 Tim. ii. 10.

This (I say) we must labour to understand distinctly, that so our hope may operate strongly and vigorously, as it will according to the apprehension that we have of the object of it, when this comes to be distinctly understood; (inasmuch as the way of the Spirit's working upon the minds and souls of men is suitable to their own intelligent and rational nature;) the life and vigour that Spirit doth exert, and put forth in this way upon the souls of men, it is so much the higher, and so much the more efficacious, by how much the apprehensions are clearer about the things in which I hope, or for which I hope.

When once this is understood, then will the soul say, (if once it be reduced to a capacity of acting like itself; to wit, like an intelligent thing,) What? shall I for a trifle lose so great a hope? Then the Gospel looks big, and appears great in our view. And what? shall I lose all this? all this glory, all this felicity, and all that fulness of joy that is to be eternal, for a trifle? for the gratifying my own lust, or pleasing my own fancy, or the fancy of a friend, as he calls himself? But he is, indeed, my greatest enemy, as I am in truth the greatest enemy to myself, while I am apt to be imposed upon by such delusive appearances and semblances of things, against my own good and interest. Shall I for the pleasure of a debauch in company, as vain as I can be, ruin so great a hope as this? "He that hath this hope in him purifies himself as God is pure." But then also,

Direction 4. You must take this further direction, to wit, when you have got the notion in any measure competently clear, concerning the state of salvation, the felicity and glory of the future state, then labour most firmly and steadfastly to believe it. You must have a right notion of it first, else you believe you know not what. But let me have never so distinct a notion of the best and most delectable state that can be thought of, it never affects me, nor can rationally, unless I believe it to be a reality. The most pleasing ideas cannot draw forth rational endeavours, unless I be possessed with the apprehension, that it is a real attainable good that I am to act for.

Therefore, to that purpose, consider, I pray you, what the apostle gives us of the notion of that faith which is to be indeed immediately fundamental of our hope, Heb. xi. 1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; if one have never so clear a notion of the most delectable state that it is possible for any one to form and conceive in his own mind, and he doth not look upon this as substantial, as an actual substance, it cannot affect him, it cannot attract him, and draw forth the strength and vigour of his soul in a pursuit after it: therefore, here the work of faith comes in; and that is to substantiate, to be to us the very substance of that which we are to hope for, and to be the evidence of that which yet we do not see. And how could faith do this? Why truly even by that which is intrinsical and natural to it; reliance upon his testimony whom we believe. Human faith is a reliance upon a human testimony; divine faith is a reliance upon a divine testimony. I take the word of God about the truth of that I have not seen with my own eyes; and his word representing to me a lovely, pleasant, amiable object hereafter, perfectly to be enjoyed; believing the revelation to be true, I thereupon hope for the thing revealed.

As suppose an overture were made to any of you of making a purchase of an estate in lands where you have not been, or which you do not know; it may be you may have some friend or other that hath been there, and that can give a true and distinct description, and tell you how all things lie; he tells you how very commodious and pleasant a seat there is, or may easily be had: why according as you believe, or disbelieve this man's report, this testimony of his, so is your hope of doing well, and living happily in such a place, lively or not lively, vivid or faint and languid; according (I say) as you believe him, or do not believe him, you having not seen the thing with your own eyes.

This is the case here, God hath told us how it is above, in that state where we have not been, what is to be enjoyed there, what our employments are to be, what our company, and what our state every way. Saith the considering soul, It is true, I have not been in the third heavens, I do not know the order of things there by any experience of my own; but I believe in him that hath told me this; I know he can have no design to deceive me; what can he get by imposing on a worm? when he hath made such a discovery and sworn to it; As I live, so and so it is, and so it shall be. By these two immutable things I apprehend

it to be impossible for God to lie: therefore here is strong consolation for them to fly to for refuge, who have this hope set before them, Heb. vi. 18, 19, 20.

But how much another thing is that faith which thus relies upon, and resolves itself into the authority of the Divine word, over-awing the soul into an entire acquiescence in the truth of it, and so as to still and silence all abmurmurations and mutterings to the contrary: I dare not think otherwise but that thus it is. How much more (I say) another thing is this faith, which so substantiates its object in this way and method, from that which vulgarly goes under the name of faith among us! The common opinion that men have, that there is a world to come, and so and so men may enjoy or suffer in that other world, that is a mere traditional belief of these things, without ever considering the true and proper grounds why we admit any such belief into our minds and hearts at all; but we believe, because such and such have so told us. It is the common belief, all the people of our country were of this mind, all our forefathers were of this mind; but God, and the authority of his revelation, comes not into the case, never falls into consideration at all.

And this faith, as it is groundless, so it is fruitless; for the ground of faith, and efficacy of it, measure one another; faith is always proportionably efficacious as it is grounded well and strongly; that which depends upon nothing doth nothing, effects nothing. It is very plain, that for this common faith which men have about a future state, and which is nothing else but opinion, mere opinion, and nothing more; it effects nothing, operates nothing, it leaves men's hearts the same; and accordingly the course of their practice is the same too, as if they were of quite a contrary belief. What a strange faith is that which, instead of power and efficacy, for the forming of the heart and governing the life, is just the same thing with infidelity, not distinguishable from infidelity; but in point of efficacy, faith and infidelity are the same! This man's heart is as terrene as it would have been if he had been of no such belief, or of a quite contrary belief: and his practice as loose and irregular, having as little tendency in it towards the attainment of such a blessed state as he pretends to believe.

Pagans have seemed to have higher thought of faith than we have. Cicero tells us that among them (the Romans) there were shrines and temples dedicated to faith and hope, as being certain tokens that God did dwell in those minds where these are; so he speaks of them; whereupon they dedicated temples to them. When in those minds faith and hope did dwell, they looked upon these as certain evidences that God did dwell in those minds. But I beseech you, what argument is there to be taken from the faith and hope of these great futurities that are commonly pretended to among us, that God dwells in these minds? What evidence is there of an in-dwelling Deity, who raised these men, so sublime, so full of heaven, so full of holy aspirings? What is there like this, as the fruit of that faith and hope which are talked of, and pretended to amongst us? And then,

Direction 5. Take this direction, see that when you understand and do believe what the word of God informs us of, concerning the state of salvation, that is to be the final object of our hope, see (I say) that you do seriously desire it; that it is that which the inclination of our minds carries us to, so as earnestly to long for and covet it. Oh, that I were there! Oh, that I were possessed of the felicities and glories of that state! Otherwise, if you talk of hope of such a state, for which you do not find you have any real lively desires in your souls; you impose an impossible task upon yourselves, and a contradiction. It is a perfect contradiction to hope for that which we do not desire, or to which the temper of our mind agrees not. If there be not an agreeableness in the frame of the heart and spirit unto such a state understood and believed, it can be no object of our hope. I may desire many things that I do not hope for, but I cannot hope for any thing that I do not desire; for hope always involves desire, though desire doth not always involve hope in it. There may be despairing desires, but hope hath for its object a future good, the same that desire hath; only hope doth superadd something to its object; (though that alters not the case as to this;) to wit, an apprehended difficulty, an arduousness as to the thing hoped for; otherwise desire and hope would be all one.

And about this it concerns us to deal very seriously and closely with ourselves, when we speak of hope as that mighty principle, which is to have influence towards salvation, by the influence whereof we are to be saved; (and are lost if that influence fail, and continue not;) we are to consider what we are to aim at, when we are to aim at the getting our souls possessed with such a hope; we must get them made suitable to the state hoped for; that we may be capable of desiring it; that our souls may fall in with it; that whereas that state commenceth at the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, we may be of those that love his appearing upon that account. And whereas it is the hope of a future felicity, by the power whereof grace teacheth men effectually to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world;" that hope may be looked on by us as a blessed hope, "looking for the blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," the very thought whereof (for their hope is taken objectively) is reviving to our souls, makes our hearts spring and leap in us. If you do not desire the thing hoped for, it can never be a blessed hope to you; you cannot look upon it as such: one thought of that hope, that hope but thought of, doth even bless my soul, doth make it live, diffuseth a vital influence through it.

That which is inconsistent with this is a terrene frame that continually carries us downward, a minding earthly things, that upon the account whereof the apostle speaks with tears concerning many of those Philippian Christians, to whom he writes. "I have told you of them, (saith he,) and I now tell you, weeping, they are enemies to the cross of Christ;" that is, to the very design of his dying, which was to establish an eternal kingdom, a kingdom that is not of this world; they are enemies to his very cross; why, what doth characterize them as such? Their minding earthly things. The design of his dying runs into eternity, into heaven; our conversation is in heaven, as the next words speak; but these men are all for this earth, nothing else is pleasing and grateful to them. If you give them hopes of great honour, and dignities, and riches in this world, you take them by the heart; but tell them of the felicity of another world, you do but speak to them the words of a dream, they are mere shadows you present to their imaginations, things which they affect not, in which they feel no substance; there is nothing grateful to them in these things.

Always carry this about with you, that it is a most perfect mockery to talk of hope of that which you desire not. "I desire (saith the apostle) to be dissolved and to be with Christ:" this is their strain who are under the power of the truly Christian hope: not as if such actual desires were the constant character of a regenerate soul, because there may be some accidental interveniences that may damp that act of desire, may interrupt and hinder it; to wit, they may be in doubt about the state of their case God-wards. Therefore, they cannot be positive in desiring to be unclothed and dissolved; but if the competition be between the felicity of the future state, and the felicity of the present state; and their no desire doth proceed from the greater love that they have to this world than they have to God, and to heaven, and the purity, and sinlessness, and blessedness of the future state; this is a mortal character; and concerning such we can pronounce nothing but that "they are enemies to the cross of Christ," the design of his dying, as if he died for men only, to procure for them an earthly felicity; as if his dying were only to terminate upon an earthly happy state, than which a greater hostility to the cross of Christ, and against the design of his dying, cannot be. And again,

Direction 6. Take this further direction; to wit, when you have that object before you, in its clear and distinct state, which is to be the final object of your hope, never hope for that abstractly, and separately by itself, so as to disjoin in your hope the end from the necessary means to that end, salvation, the state of the saved; here is the final object of hope; but then we are told by the apostle, of things that do "accompany salvation," Heb. vi. 9. Never

hope for salvation abstractly and apart from the things that do accompany it, and because that is to be considered as the final object of your hope, the things that are intermediate to it, are to be hoped for too; for there can be no connexion besides between the end and the means; but that connexion lies in the aptitude such means have to this end, and the certainty of the consecution of this end, upon the use of such means. You are told of several things in Scripture that have certain connexion with salvation, so that without them it cannot be; with them it cannot but be. As to give you only the Scripture terms of the several things, that it doth connect with salvation as inseparable from it, without explaining the things to you: as repentance, it connects with it; "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" (Luke xviii. 5.) ye shall not be saved. "Repent, that your sins may be blotted out," Acts iii. 19. by it you shall be saved.—Faith; God so loved the world, that "he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 18. "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii. 3, 5.—Regeneration, without it there is no entering into the kingdom of God, there is no seeing of it; but if men be regenerate, they are the children of God; and if they are children, then heirs, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, that, suffering with him, they may be glorified together," Rom. viii. 17.—Obedience; Christ will be the author of salvation to them that obey him, Heb. v. 9. "And will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know him not, nor obey his Gospel," 2 Thess. i. 8. These are the plainest connexions that can be in the world, nothing can be more plain; so sanctification which falls in with many of the fore-mentioned things: "We give thanks to God for you, that he hath chosen you unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," 2 Thess. ii. 13, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14.

This is the direction then, that at present I would leave with you; never be so vain as to hope for the end apart from these things, God having made a necessary connexion between it and them, as means thereunto, with which it shall certainly be attained, and without which it cannot. There are means indeed that are foreign and external, (as divines are wont to distinguish them from these,) which have no certain connexion with the end, as these have; but for those which have so certain a connexion with it, it is to murder your own hope, to hope for the end without regarding the means; to hope I shall be saved, whether I repent or no, believe or no, turn to God or no, be regenerate or no, be sanctified or no, whether I obey or disobey. This is to hope without, and to hope against it; and it is the greatest foolery in the world, for a man to hope against God's word, for that which depends wholly on his pleasure, whose word it is. Who can save me if he do not? Who can bring me heaven if he do not? So that to hope in this case, not only without his word, but against it; no greater madness than this is conceivable, or can be, among men.

SERMON XXIV.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

Direction 7. I shall now go on with some further directions, and in the next place, take this.

That such need to make it much their business to understand aright the nature of those things which are so absolutely necessary to being saved; to wit, not only to know that such and such things, so and so called, are requisite; or to understand the names of such as are requisite unto salvation, without distinct understanding of the things themselves, signified by those names. There is nobody that understands any thing of the Christian religion, but hath been informed, and will readily assent, that repentance is necessary to salvation; that faith is necessary to salvation; that a man if he be not regenerate cannot be saved; that if he be not converted he is not in the state of salvation; that if he do not mortify sin he must die, he must perish, and cannot be saved; that if he do not lead a life of holiness, he can never see God, must be excluded his presence for ever. Every one that lives under the Gospel and understands the first elements and principles of it, readily assents to all these things; but in the mean time if one do inquire what they do understand by the things signified by such names, here they are at a loss, and to seek, and give such confused and uncertain accounts, or have so indistinct apprehensions of them, that they are never the nearer being saved for having heard of those names; but I beseech you, what can it signify, if, when God saith, they that do not believe, his wrath abideth on them; and he hath "so loved the world, that he hath given his only-begotten Son, that they that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" you do agree to the faith of this that God hath said in his word, you say so too; but in the mean time you intend one thing by believing, when God, it is manifest, meaneth another. You put the name of faith, the name of repentance, the name of conversion, and the name of regeneration, upon quite another thing; What! will the names of these things save any body? Will any be the nearer salvation for something miscalled faith, that is not so? something miscalled repentance, something miscalled regeneration, that are not so?

If you would rationally hope for salvation, so as that hope should really signify any thing for that end, you must understand the real influences and import of such things as these, that God hath put as necessary to salvation, and in immediate connexion with it. That is, you must understand faith in Christ to be that which brings your souls into a vital, living union with him, so as that thereby you have him, and have life; such a receptive act as adjoins you to him, so as that he thereupon becomes an immediate spring of life to your souls. If you do not understand by repentance, that mighty turn and change of the whole soul, by which, when it was a stranger to God before and alienated from him, it is now entirely turned to him, and therefore it is called repentance towards God; the whole bent of the soul being turned about towards God, as its best good, and as its sovereign Lord, to whom it was a stranger and rebel before; you do not apprehend aright. It is a vain thing for us to go about to delude ourselves with names; the great thing will be, what will be taken for faith and repentance, and the rest of the mentioned things, in the judgment day; and we may know now, if we will make it our business to know, and compare Scripture with Scripture, one thing with another. Those that will yield the necessity of regeneration, understand nothing (it may be) by being regenerate but being baptized; when the Scripture elsewhere tells us in other words, it signifies our implantation into Christ, we are born again, as we are inserted into him, and being in him, become new creatures; old things being done away, and all things being made new; such things as these, that you will in certain immediate connexion with salvation; you must understand what they are, if you will ever think of entertaining hope of salvation, for such a purpose as that it shall contribute to your being saved. And,

Direction 8. Take this further direction, if you will ever hope to purpose in reference to the business of salvation, begin your hope with despair: despair, that you may hope, that is, that you may hope to any advantage. There is none in whom this hope comes to live, (as it is a living hope that we are speaking of, and that the Spirit of God intends,) but there must be a death past upon that soul, before such living hope doth obtain, or hath place in it; such must die that they may live; must be slain, that they may revive. All false hope must die, they must see themselves dead, lost, and perishing, before any such hope can have place in them: but here I must be a little more particular, and tell such of some things, whereof it is most necessary that they do despair. As, first, they must despair of ever being saved without those things, which you have already heard are necessary to salvation. And then,

* Preached October 11th, 1691.

secondly, they must despair of ever being saved, *for* such things as are to be wrought in them, or done by them. And, thirdly, they must despair of ever attaining those things by their own power.

1. They must despair of ever being saved, without those things which have been already mentioned to you, that must be wrought in us, and that, thereupon, must have an exercise from us in order to our being saved; to wit, such as are repentance to God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and the like; despair of ever being saved without these, and what goes accompanied therewith, (about priority I have no mind to trouble you with any discussion,) the full entire work of conversion, which, consider it seminally, is the same with regeneration: consider it progressively, it is the same with continued sanctification, proceeding hereupon; a dying to sin, and living to righteousness. The same design for which Christ died, and bare our sins in his "body on the tree;" (1 Peter ii. 24.) that we might "die to sin, and live to righteousness," being healed by his stripes, Isa. liii. 5. Now without these things, we must despair of being saved, if ever we would hope for salvation upon good terms.

This I know is that way which a heart yet habitually carnal cannot but deeply and inwardly regret; but that is not to give us laws. The carnal heart was not consulted in framing and contriving the model of the Gospel. God did never ask such the question, what will please you, that I may contrive the form and model of life and death, according to your inclination? Such may be apt to say, when they are urged, You must break off from every evil way; you must hate every thing of sin, how much soever you formerly loved it; you must deliver yourselves absolutely to the governing power of Jesus Christ as your Redeemer and Lord, both at once; when persons (I say) come to be closely thus urged, they will be apt to tell you, We have flesh and blood about us; what would you have us do? Why, I would put such upon considering seriously, Pray, for whom was the Gospel composed? To what sort of creatures was it sent? Was it ever designed or intended to be sent up into heaven, to be preached to angels and glorious spirits above? Was it ever intended to be sent down into hell, to be preached to devils and damned spirits there? No; it was meant for none but those that have flesh and blood about them; for none but them whose dwelling is in flesh. And would any excuse himself from repenting towards God, which is turning to him with the whole heart and soul; from believing in Christ by such a faith, as by which a vital union shall be contracted between the soul and him; with this, that he hath flesh and blood about him? That is by the same excuse too, to excuse yourselves from being saved: I am not to be saved, because I have flesh and blood about me. For it is a vain imagination to think that God is at this time to alter his Gospel, and make new terms of life and death for sinners; when as this Gospel, as it was only made for such as dwell in flesh, or have flesh and blood about them. It is true, that hath inferred a necessity, that that in which you dwell should not rule you. If we live after the flesh, we shall die; but if through the Spirit we do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live. How plainly doth the word of God speak his mind to us, if we will attend to it! That, therefore, is one of the things that you must despair of, if you will hope to purpose; despair of ever being saved without such things to be wrought and done in you, as God has put in immediate and certain connexion with salvation. And,

2. Despair too of ever being saved for those things that are to be acted by us, or wrought in us: though they are works of the Holy Ghost, yet the Holy Ghost was not intended to merit for us; the Holy Ghost was not to be our High Priest, we must not think to invest the Holy Ghost with the offices of Christ, and to confound their offices, and the works of their offices. Therefore, let repentance be supposed never so sincere; and faith, conversion, and regeneration, never so true in their own kind; we must despair of being saved for these things, though we must also despair of ever being saved without them. "We through the Spirit do wait for the hope of righteousness by faith," Gal. v. 5. The Spirit doth frame souls to an absolute reliance upon that righteousness that is by faith, that and no other, and so accordingly to wait for the hope of that righteousness. And,

3. Despair of ever attaining to any of these things that are so necessary by your own power; despair of ever being able to turn yourselves, or to beget faith in yourselves, or to regenerate yourselves, or to mortify sin yourselves, which you are told must be by the Spirit. The Scripture will not misguide us if we will attend to it: how plainly hath it told us, that our Lord Jesus Christ "is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins!" Acts v. 31. And that it is God that gives men repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, "who are led captive by him at his will," 2 Tim. ii. 26. And faith we are told is the gift of God, and it is reckoned among "the fruits of the Spirit," Gal. v. 22. And regeneration we are told is by the Spirit. If a man be not born again (or born from above) by the Spirit, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John iii. 3, 6. "And if we by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live," Rom. viii. 13. And we are likewise told, that "God hath chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," 2 Thess. ii. 17.

Therefore are we to despair of our reaching of those things, that are so necessary to our salvation, by any power of our own. And so to despair is the way to hope; that will not lead to absolute despair, but it only leads to this respective necessary despair, which doth itself lead to hope. It doth not make the case hopeless, that such a thing is out of my power, when it is not to be expected, except in that godlike way that is honourable to him, and becomes the enthroned Majesty of heaven, that he should be owned and applied unto as the author and donor of every good and perfect gift, and perfect giving. And we shall miserably cheat ourselves, if ever we think or hope to be saved by a repentance, or faith, or conversion, that are self-sprung things, self-created things. That repentance which is only the product of our own power, or that faith, or that conversion, will lure us, will lead us to perish; but you have heard often, again and again, that the thing is not the less matter of hope, because it is not in our own power, when as the Divine power that is to effect such things is upon such sure and firm grounds to be expected and looked for, that it should exert itself for such and such purposes; but to that purpose more will come in our way by and by; these are things that it is fit and needful that you should despair of that you may hope. And,

Direction 9. Take this further direction hereupon, That you are to put forth all your power to the very utmost, in order to the attaining those things that do accompany salvation, and that are in so necessary and certain connexion with it. Your life lies upon it:—without these things you must perish. There is no remedy, but you must perish. What remains then? but that you do, to the uttermost, put forth all the power you have, in order to your serious repentance, in order to your believing with the faith of God's elect, and with a faith of the operation of God; and that you may have new hearts and right spirits created and renewed in you.

Objection. But it may be said, Doth not this contradict the former head? Are we to use all our power, even to the uttermost, in order to the obtaining true repentance, and true faith, and that we may be truly regenerate and turned unto God, when yet we are told, we must utterly despair of ever attaining these things by our own power?

Answer. Pray labour to understand matters that are in themselves plain. What is easier to understand, than the distinction between use and trust? Doth it follow, that because you are to distrust your own power, that therefore you are not to use it? May not a man lawfully use his money, and use his estate, because he is forbid to trust in uncertain riches? And because some do sinfully trust in chariots and horses, is it therefore unlawful to use a chariot or a horse? Consider that the natural faculties and powers that God hath given you, you are to be accountable for the use of to him. And what? are you not then to use them? Your understandings, your considering power, your thinking power, are these exempt, from under the divine government, because you are not to trust them, as what were sufficient to do all your business? If you would but con-

sider things with the understandings of men, you might easily know, that it is most indispensably incumbent upon us to do our uttermost, to strive as for our lives, to exert all our powers, while, in the mean time, we acknowledge all our power is an insufficient thing. And therefore we are to cry and supplicate, to crave and implore heaven, for the addition of a higher and greater power than ours. This is just, this is rational, and suitable to the order of things between God and his intelligent creatures. And then again,

Direction 10. Let this further direction be considered, to wit, Constantly hope, that, by the Divine power, you shall be enabled to reach and attain to those things that are, and he hath made necessary, for your salvation. And this hath two branches,

1. Constantly hope you shall attain them otherwise, if you do not hope that hope, all is lost, and you are presently at a stand, and cannot move one step further towards being saved, or towards salvation as your end. All is lost if that hope fail, that you shall attain those things that are necessary, by divine appointment and constitution, for salvation. For pray consider, if a man take a journey, (supposing of a hundred miles,) if he did not hope he should go through that journey, he would never begin it. It is the hope he shall go through, that doth excite and engage to begin, otherwise he would sit still at home; but then, if he doth hope that he shall go through this journey of a hundred miles, and reach such a place at length, he must hope, in order hereunto, that he shall go through the first mile. He cannot hope that he shall go the whole hundred miles, if he do not hope he shall go the first. So if you do hope you shall be saved, you must hope that you shall do things, be enabled to do things, that are necessary to being saved. He that doth not hope to reach a place but a mile off, that is his certain and direct way to a place a hundred miles off, and there is no other way, will never make one step at all towards that place. And this is your case, when God hath made it so absolutely necessary in order to your being saved, that you repent, that you turn to him, and come into union with his Son, and deliver yourselves up to him, take him to be yours, and give yourselves to be his; if you hope not you shall reach these things, your hope of being saved will be a mad hope; as his must be a mad hope that he shall reach his hundred miles, when he doth not hope to reach the first mile, when there is no other way to such a place a hundred miles off, but by that a mile off. And therefore this hope must be fixed and kept alive, though I cannot say I have been brought to repentance yet, and to faith in the Son of God, yet I hope I shall. You must hope first for such a thing. And then,

2. Hope that it shall be brought about by a divine power, for otherwise, (as you have heard,) you are not to hope for it. And positively, you must hope for it in this way, and no other way. "According as his divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness; and given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by them we might be partakers of the Divine nature," (2 Peter i. 3, 4.) which carries all this in it. Here must be your hope. Such things have not been wrought and done in me yet, but through the grace of God, I hope that they shall. And,

Direction 11. Take heed that defeatments and delays do not subvert and overthrow in you this hope. Of this there is the greatest imaginable danger; and these two expressions (defeatments and delays) I purposely intend to refer to two sorts of persons, who may have their different concerns in this direction, to wit, especially, a younger and an elder sort.

1. A younger sort, such as may be in a very great struggle between strong youthful lusts, and strong convictions, which may in some measure have taken hold of their souls. This is sometimes the case, discourses that I have had with divers, and bills that I have received from more, do assure me that this is a case that requires a great place and room in our consideration and discourse. There are those who now and then (who in that age wherein lust and concupiscence have greater advantages to he predominant) are taken hold of by the word, and it strikes conscience, and gets some advantages upon them. They are in a great loss in their own spirits. Vicious inclinations are strong; conviction upon their spirits hath some strength too. It may be, some such have found, that whereas here is a struggle, a strong earnest struggle, the conquest is easier over conscience than over inclination: it is an easier matter to overcome there; they easier baffle their light than they can their lusts. And when they have considered, under the power of conviction, that there was some necessity upon them to change their course, it may be, they have come to some resolution upon that consideration, that they would become other men; that they would lead another sort of life. It may be, the next temptation, or the next insinuation of a lewd, idle companion, hath proved too hard and too strong for them; they could not withstand; and the bonds of iniquities have held them faster than the bonds of their vows, and covenants, and solemn engagements, that they have taken upon their souls. They have broken loose from these bonds, and are held so much the faster by those former bonds: and hereupon, having once found themselves at liberty, they sell themselves to slavery, sell themselves to do evil; and the Spirit of God that was at work in them, is receded and gone; they began in the Spirit, they have ended in the flesh. There are now no more gales, not one breath of that Spirit upon their spirits any more. A hopeful gale they had, that brought them near to a safe harbour; but they are, all on a sudden, hurried back again to a raging sea, that casts up nothing but mire and dirt. What a fearful case is this! If they reflect upon themselves, they will be ready to say, What is to be done in this case? And truly if any one should say to me, I should return the question, What will you do in this case? or what do you think is to be done in this case? Do you think there is no hope in the case? Will you say that? or if there is to be any hope, what shall that hope be of? or what are you to hope for? Such a thing I would consider and debate with any such a one. Are you to have any hope at all? Are you to abandon all hope? Truly that is not like a reasonable creature to say so, that you are to abandon all hope, while you are yet on this side hell, and infernal flames have not yet seized you; you are not to put yourself into the state of a devil, whilst as yet God hath not put you into that state. But if you are to hope at all, what are you to hope for? Are you to hope that God will save you upon other terms than he hath declared in his Gospel? Are you to hope that he will make a new Gospel, to comply with your humour and lustful inclination? Are you to hope for that? That certainly were the maddest hope that ever was taken up by any one. All hope you are to have is, that if you have any apprehension of your case, the grieved Spirit may return, the affronted, resisted Spirit, if you cry for its return; if you supplicate as for life, that Spirit that carries all the treasures of Divine light, and life, and grace in it, may yet return. There have been instances of its having done so.

How famous is the story that we meet with in Church History, concerning that vicious young man, that was at first reduced by the ministry of the apostle John, and brought to a great degree of seriousness! The apostle, having occasion to absent himself from the place where he was, leaves him under the care of such a one, charging him with his soul; "Look (saith he) well to the soul of this young man." After the apostle was gone, the young man breaks out into his former excesses again, and herds himself with a company of thieves and cut-throats. The apostle being returned, and inquiring after him, saying, What is become of that young man? The answer that was made him was, He is dead, dead in sin, dead in wickedness again: much like the usage that was in Pythagoras's school, where if any had been in that school of virtue, and made some proficiency there for any considerable time, and relapsed into vice, they were solemnly cast out, and a coffin was brought into the place to hold a funeral for them as dead; so it was said of this young man, he was dead. But the apostle makes inquiry after him, and finds him out, brings him to his feet, takes hold of him, down he falls, and by the power of prayer and holy counsel, he was effectually reduced, and brought back again.

So it may yet be with some such horrid decliners and backsliders from the ways of God. If they apprehend whither they are going, whither their way leads them, and

ery for the returning of the Holy Ghost as for life, as apprehending themselves lost if he return not, there is yet hope in this case. And it is by no means in the world to be thought of, that such are to abandon all hope; for that is to make devils of themselves above ground, and to create to themselves a present hell on this side hell. You are within the reach of the Gospel while you are on this side of the infernal regions; and it is a Gospel of grace, crying to you, Return,—return. These are they to whom I had reference in that word defeats; do not let your hope be destroyed by the defeats you have met with. But then,

2. There is another sort that I had a more distinct reference to in my thoughts, in using the word delays, in this direction, Take heed lest defeatments and delays destroy your hope. Now that of delays I meant in reference to such as have sat long under the Gospel, even to a grown age, and never have found any good effect by it; it hath wrought no change, made no impression. There may be many such, that were never vicious persons at all, never grossly vicious; but then they have lived in a place where some exercises of religion were a fashionable thing. They have had religion enough to carry them to a sermon on the Lord's day in some Christian assembly, and perhaps to engage in somewhat of family duties; perhaps so, but they have sat with mere formality the greatest part of a lifetime, under the Gospel, and never felt any real good by it, never expected any, never designed any; but come to a church, or a meeting-house, and spend an hour or two with the rest, in solemn attendances upon the worship of God, and never look after it more, (it may be,) till the week come about again. All their business is driving designs for this earth; "They mind earthly things," as the apostle's character is of them, of whom also he saith, "their end is destruction," Phil. iii. 18, 19. What it was to have their souls turned to God, to come to a solemn closure with Christ as their Redeemer and Lord, or to exercise themselves unto inward heart-godliness in any kind, they know not what belongs to it. It may be, they are just and upright in their dealings with those with whom they have to do; and they reckon that their justice towards men must expiate all their injustice towards God, their neglect of him, their slighting him, their casting him out of their thoughts, out of their fear, and out of their desires.

This seems to be a very sad case, that a man should have lived all his days under the Gospel, and it hath never made any impression on him as yet: the Spirit of God hath not as yet sensibly breathed, so as, at least, to beget any permanent and abiding effect; here hath been a long deferring, a long delaying of taking hold of these souls to purpose; and it may be, now their long delay may make such persons think, No, there is no change to be hoped for, nothing to be expected, none to be looked for; I have sat so long, so many years, ten, twenty, or thirty, (it may be,) forty years, under the Gospel, under such a ministry, and never hath there been any such effect wrought upon me, and I do not think there ever will.

Oh! take heed, lest the having any such work upon you deferred so long, do destroy hope that ever such work shall be done; for then again, all is lost if you be hopeless; if there be not a vital hope and expectation, from time to time, in such and such a word, that some good may be done in my soul, that I may hear somewhat that I may feel, that the word may yet drop that may have life in it, that may have power in it. If you do not hope for this, if you do not expect such a thing, you are, as much as you can, putting yourselves quite out of the way of being saved, or having the reasonable hope of it; for still I must say, you are not to expect a new Gospel, that God will save you without those necessary pre-requisites to salvation, without repentance, without faith, without conversion, and without sanctification. And therefore in the last place,

Direction 12. That which I would lastly add, by way of direction to this sort of persons, is, that you would see to it, that though hope in these cases must not be thrown away, that yet it be qualified with such concomitants as are proper and suitable in such a case. They are such as these; I will but name them, that the next time my discourse may directly respect the other case, that of perseverance.

1. *Prayer.* Your hope in such a case as this must always be accompanied with prayer. It must be praying, supplicating hope. It is suitable to your case, if you hope to pray; and never hope without prayer. When we are exhorted to take to ourselves the "helmet," which we are told "is the hope of salvation," it is presently subjoined, "praying always with all prayer and supplication," Eph. vi. 17. with I Cor. v. 8. These must be conjunct; if we hope, we must continue to pray. Give yourselves to prayer, to all prayer and supplication, otherwise we do (as much as possible) blast all our hope, and it can never be a helmet to us; it will betray our head, not cover it, not protect it.

2. *Deep humility.* Join deep humility with your hope. Let it be humble hope. Such a one should "put his mouth in the dust, if there might be any hope," Lam. iii. 29. And,

3. *Self-loathing.* Join with it self-loathing, self-abhorrence; not only of yourselves as mean creatures, but as vile and odious; and yet hope, join hope with that self-abasing temper, self-loathing of the publican: then will your sense be, (as his,) "God be merciful to me a sinner," who it is said at last went away justified and accepted. If you be fair in your own eyes, if your sense be that of the Laodicean church, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked;" you have no place in you for that hope that will do you any good; but such self-reviling thoughts, "If I were perfect, yet would I not know my own soul, I would despise my life;" how well doth hope do in such a tempered spirit as this! How suitable a soil is this for that heavenly hope to grow and flourish in! And,

4. *Watchfulness.* Join to your hope watchfulness and vigilancy. Watchfulness may respect both God and yourselves. Watchfulness respecting God is exercised in continual looking towards him; when shall that happy time come? when shall any beam of light descend? when shall any influence of grace flow in? Watchfulness respecting yourselves is exercised in watching over a treacherous heart; and know, that whencver you are to design such a thing, as your own salvation, and so accordingly to hope for it, a main, and principal, and immediate object of your hope must be, that you shall be saved from yourselves; and thereupon indeed, it is a most self-contradicting hope, to hope I shall be saved, without hoping that sin shall be overcome. I shall gain the conquest at last over predominating corrupt inclinations, whether more grossly sensual ones, or whether avaricious ones, or ambitious ones, and the like; for do not you know, that our Lord Jesus Christ hath therefore his name of Jesus, a Saviour, because he was to save his people from their sins: and do you think you shall be saved, without being saved from yourselves, your sinful selves? This is to hope you shall be saved without salvation; this is to hope with such a hope, as wherewith you shall tear a thing from itself, to hope you shall be saved without being saved. If ever you are to be saved, you are to be saved from yourselves; and therefore, yourselves are to be the great object of your watchfulness, your continual vigilancy; watching over yourselves, as your worst and most dangerous enemy. I am to fear hell from myself, death from myself, a curse from myself; and lest I be a continual spring of all misery and wo to myself, there must be a continual watchfulness over ourselves, to repress all ebullitions of corrupt nature at the first. Oh this lustful heart! this proud heart! this ambitious heart! this sensual heart! A severe self-inspection into, and watchfulness over ourselves, is that which must be in conjunction with hope. Watch and hope, be sober and hope to the end. That spiritual sobriety carries vigilancy in it, a continual watchfulness over yourselves. And again,

5. *Patience.* This hope must be accompanied with patience. Doth not the context tell you so? "We are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope: but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." God is not bound to your time, he hath not come in yet; suppose he do not strike that stroke upon your heart this day, that is necessary to your being saved. Why hope that he will the next day, or the next after that: "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." "Blessed is he that watcheth at the doors," that waiteth

at the posts of wisdom's gates; "for he that findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour from the Lord," Prov. viii. 34. 35. I have not met with him that is to be the life of my soul yet; but I will wait, I will miss no opportunity, I will be always at the posts of wisdom's door, I may find him at last, who will be the life of my soul; and there all my hopes and all my concernments are involved and wrapt up together. And in the last place,

6. *Diligence.* You must join diligence with hope; an industrious, laborious diligence. It must be a working, operative hope, like that of the husbandman, who plougheth in hope, and soweth in hope, that he may be partaker of his hope, as the apostle's allusion is; so must you, as to this spiritual husbandry in which you must be engaged, you must strive in hope, and labour in hope. And if yours be not a hope that will put you upon striving and labouring, it is a dead hope, a useless hope; and such as can contribute nothing to your salvation. And so I have done with those directions that are requisite as to the former sort, the unregenerate and unconverted; the next will respect the other sort, and their case, to wit, that of converts, so as to influence their perseverance unto salvation

SERMON XXV.*

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

THE order of discourse upon this subject hath brought me now at length to say somewhat, by way of direction, to those, who, being regenerate, and turned to God, are on their way towards him. That the principle of hope, which doth more especially belong to their regenerate state, may be improved by them, to their cheerful and more comfortable progress through the whole of their course and way to their end. We having spoken by way of direction to a former sort, and to a former case, to wit, to direct how hope may be improved, in order to conversion and regeneration itself: nor am I solicitous, that the course I have taken upon this subject hath obliged me to be long upon it; for I both consider the great importance of the subject, which I cannot but know, as you, any of you, may, and must, when you seriously bethink yourselves of it. And also, I know not that any have purposely and designedly treated upon this subject; that is, to show the necessary influence of hope upon the whole business of a Christian's life, from first to last, from the beginning of it till it end in eternal life.

I shall repeat nothing of what hath been said by way of direction, in reference to the former case, to wit, to persons yet unregenerate, what improvement is to be made of hope in order to their regeneration, and their being born of God; to which nothing is more plain, than that it would never be, but as even then they begin to have hope God-ward. But my present and remaining business is to show the continual influence that hope may be improved unto for a Christian's progress, to help on those that are regenerate, and born to God, in their way to him. That so, upon the whole matter, you may see the new creature, it is from first to last a creature (as it were) made up of hope; its very make and constitution are suited to the state which it is successively made for. In this present state, while its great supports do lie in unseen and expected good things, there cannot but be a continual exercise of hope necessary from first to last; but in the other state, hope naturally turns into joy; when the things that were before matter of expectation, are now come to be the matter of actual fruition. In the mean time, its make and frame suit it to the present state of its case. That whereas, such as were before strangers and aliens to God, in a state of apostacy from him, they begin to be prompted and stirred up to look after God; as soon as any such instinct is put into them, it is put into them in a way of hope.

God hath a design in hand to restore and recover apostate creatures; saith the soul, I own myself to be such a one; I am miserable, and lost for ever, if I do not return to God, and if God accept me not. I have hope I shall: I have hope he will. And so the soul is (as it were) begotten to God, even by the power of hope; and being reconciled, the great remaining expectation is, of being saved, of being brought to a safe and happy state at last. Hope runs through the course of such a converted, regenerate soul, even to the attainment of its end, which is actual salvation.

And whereas the Gospel is the great and stated means by which souls are both begotten unto God, and enabled to adhere and cleave to him, even to the end; where that Gospel hath long been, there is great reason to think that God hath much such work to do; many such blessed effects to bring about upon souls; and that much such work is done. that with us, God hath touched many souls, turned many hearts, implanted that new and divine principle in many, that will certainly end at last in eternal life. It is not to be thought (or at least one would be very loth to think or imagine such a thing) that a bright and blissful heaven should have been opened among us, so long, so continually, by the Gospel, whose design it is to bring life and immortality to light, that we, amidst all the impurities, and darkness, and wretchedness, of this our present state, should have such a glorious prospect given us, and set before our eyes; heaven opened in all the glories of it; (as in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ it is;) and that we, after all this, should agree in it as our common sense and sentiment, that it is better always to dwell in this dungeon, so as to have no aspirings, no hope, directed upward, towards that glorious state of things; one would be loth (I say) to admit such an apprehension as this; that this should be our common sentiment, that it is better to dwell in a dungeon always, than amidst all that divine light and glory above, whither we are called, and whereupon the hope of our calling doth finally terminate; yea, and though we know that dungeon is to fall upon us ere it be long, and that they who have affected that dwelling, must certainly be overwhelmed with its ruin. It is meet for us to judge that there are sundry, whose souls God hath, by the power of his Gospel animated by his Spirit, possessed with another sense.

And if there be many such, or any such, that are looking higher, that have their expectations and hopes placed upon some other sorts of things, things of a higher excellency and value than this lower creation can afford; the greatest care imaginable then must be had, that their hope be kept alive in strength and vigour; if it fail, if it should languish, if it were possible it should, and it were ever so certain, that it should never expire and fail; yet means must be used, that it may not; but (I say) if it should fail, (and the dread ought to be upon our spirits, that it may not fail, that it may never fail,) then are such poor creatures ingulfed again, sunk in, and swallowed up by the spirit of this world; and so exposed, and left to be involved with it in its fearful ruin. That it may not be so, and because it shall not be so with those that do peculiarly belong to God, and are the children of the kingdom, begotten to the eternal heavenly inheritance, all endeavours must be used that hope may be preserved and kept alive in them. And in order to it, pray take these following directions.

Direction I. See that your spirits be deeply and seriously engaged, and taken up in the meditation of that glorious state of things which you profess finally to hope for, and which you expect should be your eternal state. See (I say) that your spirits be deeply exercised in the meditation of that glorious state of things. The way to keep hope alive, is to keep its glorious, blessed object in view. The hope of the greatest things imaginable can never live, or be influential in any of us, if we do not preserve the remembrance, and have not the actual thoughts of them. If there be such a thing as the habit of hope yet left, it will be a languishing thing, and afford us no support: it will be as dead within us, if we have not frequent views of that glorious object of it; if we do not look towards that object, take it in its comprehension, and compass even the whole state of things, that we expect and hope for as our final and eternal state.

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I pray, let us labour, not only to realize but to familiarize to ourselves the unseen world. It is a shame that we should be called Christians, and that our thoughts should be taken up chiefly, and principally, about things that are seen. Christian hope lies beyond and above those things; we forfeit our names while we confine our thoughts so much to that which is present and sensible. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, as Christians, we make ourselves the most miserable of creatures; we are made up of contradictions, we are in a continual war with ourselves, we do not act and carry so consistently with ourselves as other men do, who do not pretend to Christianity; we are more miserable than they.

And, that I may the more fruitfully enlarge upon this, as that without our hope is a languid and insignificant thing, and in a direct way to be reduced to nothing; let me desire you to give compass and scope to your thoughts about the invisible world, and the expected state of things, which is to be the great and final object of your hope. The context, which hath so immediate reference thereunto, would afford you very great help for the managing and directing your thoughts in the contemplation of the invisible state. You see it is spoken of a little before the text, under the notion of glory; a glorious state, a state of glory. "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us," verse 18. And that glory is spoken of under the notion of an inheritance. They that are the regenerate sons of God, and now actually under the government of the Divine Spirit which begot them unto God; they that are so children, are also heirs, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," verse 17 "That after having suffered awhile with him, they may be also glorified together with him." As to the invisible world, (that happy part of it, where "the heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," have their eternal concernments lying,) that happy part of it is to be looked upon as a region of glory, all glory. And that you may give latitude and scope to your thoughts about this, which is the very hope of your calling, the final hope of it, I pray consider such things as these more particularly concerning it. Considerations to enforce this first direction.

1. Contemplate the vast amplitude of that glorious region, where you (if you be regenerate, and born of God, and heirs of the celestial kingdom) are to have your everlasting abode. Think (I say) seriously and often of the vast amplitude of it, that you may give scope and room to your thoughts; it is mean to be confined in our apprehensions of things to this little spot of our earth, wherein we breathe; think if you were ascending from it, if you were ascended but a little way, into how vastly larger and more spacious and roomy a region do you come but by a little ascent! but if you were ascended as high as our vortex, as the utmost confines of this vortex of ours, to which this earth, and the sun, and the moon, and other planets do belong; how inconsiderable a point is all this earth, in comparison of that vortex to which all these do belong? But if you were beyond that, beyond that circuit and those confines within which all this planetary region is limited; then how vastly spacious are all the supernal heavens above the regions in which the sun, and moon, and other planets, do move! So as we are even lost in the thoughts whither we should then go: and it is pleasant to be so lost.

And to consider how despicable a nothing this earth of ours is in comparison; so as it may be lost, it may be consumed, and burnt up, and that it is an insignificant thing to the universe; no more than the burning of one single little cottage would be in a vast empire, containing two hundred and twenty-seven provinces as Ahasuerus's did; one that is an heir of heaven, and of the inheritance of the saints in light, when he thinks of the burning of this world, may say, What is it to me? my concernments lie not here, it is a despicable, inconsiderable trifle; it is no more loss to the creation and no more loss to me, than the dropping of a hair, one single hair. Labour to aggrandize to yourselves so much as this comes to, of the object of your hope; to wit, to consider the vast amplitude of the region of glory; we must think with ourselves, that as to what doth more subside in this creation is baser and meaner fitter for baser and meaner inhabitants; it is but a very little, inconsiderable part, incomparison of the ample and spacious regions of the incircling heavens above, that seem all appropriated to the heirs of the eternal kingdom. And then,

2. When you are laying before your eyes the object of your hope, that that may be lively and strong in you; consider too the numerous multitude of the inhabitants of those glorious regions, or, to speak collectively, of that region of glory. It is true, in this little inconsiderable world of ours, we find the inhabitants are generally very numerous; (as there will be more occasion to speak bye and bye;) but, alas, what is this little perishable thing, (this world of ours,) to the universe? And it is a very unreasonable foolish thought to think the nobler parts of the creation of God to be less destitute of inhabitants than our earth is. Do but turn up a clod of earth, and you see every little clod inhabited with somewhat or other that hath life in it, little insects and *animalcula* that have life in them. It is a foolish thought to think that the nobler parts of the creation of God should be less full of inhabitants, though still meaner the nearer this earth; but if you ascend higher, you are to suppose all filled with living inhabitants; and (as we have reason to apprehend) with creatures innocent and upright with God, angel-like creatures.

It is true many angels fell, many, if you consider them abstractedly; but take them comparatively, and we have no reason to think but that they were a very small part of the host of heaven, in comparison with them that stood, and retained their integrity; and if the upper regions be replenished with innocent creatures, full of the love of God, and of the knowledge of God, and who stand in absolute devotedness to him; then you must consider the blessed society, the society of the blessed, to be a most numerous thing. The innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of men made perfect; so that the angels that have fallen, and the apostate sons of men that shall not be recovered, and that finally persist in enmity against all the methods of reconciliation, though they will be numerous, yet a little inconsiderable number they must be, in comparison of all those glorious creatures that inhabit the more noble parts of God's creation: and it would make a man's hope revive, and spring, and flourish mightily in him, to think of being ere long one of that vast and numerous assembly, that blessed glorious assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. And,

3. Consider, again, the high and admirable perfection of these blessed creatures, of whom you are to be one; their bodily perfections, (which are not nothing,) and their mental spiritual perfections, which are incomparably more, are to be considered. As to the former, the words immediately foregoing the text, do directly cast back our thoughts upon them, upon those perfections that are more properly corporeal, and that belong to the body: not only they, (that is, the rest of the creation,) but ourselves also, which have received the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting (which carries hope in it as you do well know) for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies; for we are saved by hope. We that now dwell in these bodies so cumbersome, so tiresome, that are such an annoyance to us, and so great a depression to us; we are hoping, hoping for a time and state of things when these bodies are to have an entire, complete redemption from every thing which is gravanimous and burthensome to them, and by which they are gravanimous to our spirits, to ourselves; and it is by the hope of this, that we are saved. Here we are depressed and sunk very low; these bodies are prisons and dungeons to us; they are so, but we are saved by that hope of the day of our redemption; the redemption of our bodies, which is also the day of our adoption, or solemn adoption.

I have told you upon this occasion formerly, of a double adoption among the Romans, private and public. It is the public adoption that is here referred to. In the private, every good soul is adopted when it is regenerate; but the public adoption, or the manifestation of the sons of God, (as it is afterwards called,) it is referred unto that day when all are to be visibly invested with their glorious bodies, conformed to the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To have such an agility of body as that it shall never be a clog; such refined spirits that will never cloud our thoughts, that will never obstruct the notions of the soul. And that shall be, with respect of aptitude to speedy motion, so little cumbersome, that, as Austin's celebrated expression is, *ubi voluerit animus, ibi protinus erit corpus*; wheresoever the mind wills or wishes to be, there the body shall be in a moment. Its motions, and (for ought we know) its texture, (as that of the sun-beams,) gliding as quick as a thought, this way or that; and (for ought we know) as fine; it being very easy to make the grossest earth as fine as the purest ether, to him that made all things out of nothing; and since chemistry performs a great deal this way by human art, much more may divine.

So as that these bodies that we are afterwards to inhabit, are said to be from heaven, the terrestrial to be all gone; for in this we groan, "earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house that is from heaven," 2 Cor. v. 2. All of a piece with heaven, contempered unto heaven, the earthly house of this tabernacle, changed into such a one.

2. And it is very material, and seems to be glanced at in that which is said by our Saviour; "The righteous shall shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father," Matt. xiii. 43. The sun in the firmament is (as it were) the resemblance of a glorified body, and how near it may be of the same materials we cannot tell, all our earth being refined into so pure and celestial a matter. And,

3. And then, if you consider again the spiritual and mental perfections (which is incomparably a great thing) of the happy members of this glorious, blessed, numerous society. There you must understand his knowledge in perfection, his holiness in perfection, and his love in perfection. It cannot be expected that in this subject, I could stay to dilate upon every one; but it is a great thing to think of the matter of our own hope in this: I hope to be one of them, I hope to be such a creature, inhabiting such a mind, in such a body, to be one of those *Isangeloi*, (as they are called,) angel's fellows, equal to the angels of God: Oh! that we should have such things as these in view, and obvious to our thoughts, and yet have no thoughts about them, or few thoughts about them! Live with minds (as it were) confined to this earth, and continually grovelling in the dust of it! This is mean, this is dishonourable to our Father, who hath begotten us to a lively hope of a glorious inheritance; and it is most injurious to ourselves. To think that I shall have a mind, a spirit, ere it be long, (as mean and abject a thing as I now am,) all (as it were) composed and made up of knowledge, and of purity, and of love; what a glorious thing is that! And that I shall have a spirit inhabiting a body, (since I was made to join with a body,) that shall be no hinderance, no burthensome thing to me, no tedious, irksome companion to all eternity. And again,

4. Consider about this state, the universal harmony that must hereupon be in all this glorious, blessed society, as vastly numerous and extensive as it is through the spacious heavens, those regions of light and bliss; come wherever one will, the same order universally obtaining every where; all animated by one and the same spirit; for they "that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," Gal. vi. 8. That immense almighty Spirit (as the living creature in the wheels) acting in every mind, be they ever so numerous, and never so vastly extended through the regions of light and bliss; all everlastingly under the dominion of the same blessed, almighty, and omnipresent Spirit; so that there is here among them, wheresoever they be, not one dissentient thought; all have the same sentiment, the same mind, the same inclination, and all centre in one and the same design: no jarring, no disagreement, no darkness, no obscurity, no error, much more no animosity, having the least place in any member of that glorious society. And again,

5. Consider the glorious visible residence of our great Redeemer among them, who can render himself every where present, and every where appearing in conspicuous glory. How grateful and entertaining a thought must that be to them, who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, that they are to be for ever with the Lord, when that happy season comes, that the Lord descends with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ are first raised and caught up into the clouds, and do meet their Redeemer in the air, then are they ever with the Lord, (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.) never out of his company, though their company be so vastly numerous and great; for he is the head of all principalities and powers, the head of all things to the church; and yet he must be every where present to every one, for they are all to be ever with the Lord. And when so much is plainly enough expressed and declared to us, we need never trouble ourselves to think how it shall be; he that we know to have done so great things already, can easily add to this all the rest; make himself present to those vastly numerous, innumerable myriads of glorious creatures, that do every where delight in his presence, and cannot but externally do so.

And to this also, the context here refers us, still leading us to the final object of our hope; they are to be the heirs of the eternal glory, as their inheritance; they are to be "joint heirs with Christ," they are to inherit with Christ, "and, after having suffered with him, are to be glorified together with him," verse 17; after we have suffered awhile; he and we having been suffering together, he and we shall be glorified together. And to the same purpose is that admirable contexture of discourse, 2 Cor. v. from the beginning of the chapter to the 8th verse; but I cannot stay to run it over with you. Take notice, I pray you, what you find there, in that 8th verse: we are confident, (saith he,) and willing rather to be absent from the body, (this terrestrial body,) not any body at all not altogether to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon; this terrestrial body being reformed, refined, clarified into another thing: for that body we are now in, this terrestrial body, we covet rather to be absent from it, and to be present with the Lord. According to that, Phil. i. 23. I desire rather to be "dissolved and be with Christ, which is far better." We are to be in his presence, and to have him present among us, as soon as we are loose from this base, mean thing, this vile body that we are now linked and clogged with. And the expressions are very observable, that are used in the mentioned place, 2 Cor. v. The words used, signify to be peopled with, or unpeopled or dispeopled from. The expression of being present with the Lord, do... ...timate the Lord our blessed Redeemer to be the hea... ...e president of that dispeopled sort of people, whose d...lling is not with flesh; they do not inhabit and dwell ... such bodies as those are, in which we now dwell; and ... long (saith he) to be dispeopled from this bodily so... ...f people; and to be taken into the communion of that people ...at dwell out of such bodies with the Lord; to be peop...d with that people, of which he is the immediate, visible, glorious head; there I long to be. I would fain be absent from this body. I desire it rather, I choose it as a more desirable thing, to be dispeopled from this bodied sort of people; and to be peopled with them, to make one amongst them, who do people the glorious regions above, which are peopled with another sort of inhabitants, and with them do I covet and hope to dwell, and long to dwell. And then,

6. Consider too the Divine presence universally replenishing all, for in that everlasting state God is himself to be immediately all in all; and so all to be universally transformed into the image of that bright glory, which shines upon them from his blessed face, and all to inhabit that one and the same Divine presence, where there is fulness of joy, and where there are "pleasures for evermore," Psalm xvi. last verse. Oh! for such mean creatures as we, to have such a thing in hope, to make one in that glorious, celestial community, among whom, the blessed eternal God shall, by immediate communication, be all in all to every one! Every soul as full of God as it can hold, and be made capable of beholding unspenkably more, than we can now so much as conceive of; for the design is in our present state, (and very much by the influence of hope,) here to have us refining, and be made more capacious and larger vessels of glory. They that are to be vessels of mercy first, are to be vessels of glory afterwards; here they are to be gradually greatened and enlarged, (and very much by the influence of hope,) in order to their being more receptive vessels, that they may hold more, and be capable of larger and fuller communications from that immense fulness, that filleth all in all. And hereupon,

7. Consider the high satisfaction that every one of those

blessed creatures must have in himself, for there is to be a glory revealed in us (as a little above the text.) The context is full of accounts of the final object of our hopes, and gives us frequent occasion to consider what it imports, and carries with it; "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Every one of these glorious creatures is to be glorious within. As it is said of the king's daughter, the spouse of Christ, "She is all glorious within," Psalm xlv. "She will be perfectly so; for he gave himself for his church, to sanctify it and to cleanse it, and to present it a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," Ephes. v. 25, 26, 27. And sanctification is implied to be the very beginning of that glory, the foundation of it. That glory consists in perfect sanctification. He gave himself for it, to sanctify and make it a glorious church; every one of it is then a glorious creature, and eternally glorious, by glory revealed in the Divine image shining in him, in perfect and consummate glory. That image which stands all in knowledge, and holiness, in the greatest amiableness, loveliness, and love that is possible.

How infinitely satisfying must such a one's own frame, and the complexion and temper of his own mind, be to himself, when, through a boundless and immense eternity, one shall never have occasion to reflect upon one disorderly thought, or say I wish that thought had never been thought; never have occasion to reflect upon one irregular wish! Oh! the holy order and rectitude that will be within, when every faculty and every power shall be under the dominion of that Almighty Spirit of Divine light and grace; when it shall be as impossible to be the author of one wrong or misplaced thought, as it would be to any of us to be the author of another world, of a world that should be excentrical to this! What a satisfaction is this, and must be, when a person shall so everlastingly agree with himself, as to have no war within him, nothing of reluctation, nothing of contrariety, against what he knows to be equal, and congruous, and fit, and comely: but every thing just as it should be. And then, thereupon,

8. The mighty complacency that such must take in one another; the everlasting complacencies that they must take in one another, when they are all alike, not equal; it is plain enough there will be different orders; but all alike, all of one mind, all of one sentiment, all conspiring in one and the same design. And then consider,

9. The pleasantness of their perpetual work, wherein they are all to be united; to wit, joyful and everlasting adoration: every one pleased with another, upon this account that he knows him to be pleased with exalting God and the Lamb, for ever and ever; when every one knows his fellow to have the same pleasure that he hath in prostration, in falling down before the throne, in ascribing all praise, and dominion, and glory, to him that lives for ever and ever; the eternal Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit. When the comeliness and equity of the thing recommends itself so fully to every mind, and all agree in one sense, "Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive blessing, and power, and dominion, for ever and ever," and all say Amen, all proclaim their joyful amen. The vast and spacious heavens continually resounding with this sort of melody, all giving their joyful, grateful amens, to one and the same thing. And this eternity goes on, never wearisome, never grievous; because all this employment, and the exercise, is so suitable to the complexion of every one's mind, none can ever disagree to it, and all things do conspire and concur to make these associates in bliss, and glory, and adoration the most grateful company to one another. We experience something what pleasure and sweetness there is in conversing with such as are wise, and learned, and good, when these things are in conjunction; but when they are in perfection, in absolute perfection, oh, the pleasure that will be taken in being associated with such ones! Lastly,

10. The perfect assurances that all have of the perpetuity of their state, and that there shall never be an end of it. "The light afflictions that are but for a moment work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" it can never lose its weight; there will be no detraction, no diminution from it, to eternity. Therefore there is an impossibility, an utter impossibility, that ever there should be a cessation.

And that is one direction to this purpose, to keep alive this hope, contemplate much, and as distinctly, and with as clear and formed thoughts as you can, the glorious object of it, the final and eternal state; and be ashamed of having such things in view, and of having so few, so unfrequent, and dull, and sluggish thoughts about such things.

SERMON XXVI.*

Rom. vii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

But now go on with the further directions that are to be given for the mentioned end.

Direction 2. That we compare with that expected heavenly state the present state wherein we are; and with the blessedness of the one, the wretchedness of the other. For if there be any ground for a better hope, there is nothing more likely to awaken it, (supposing we have such a ground before our eyes,) than to have our spirits effectually stung with the sense of the present evils wherewith we are beset, and with which we are continually infested. If we like our present state well, there is no place for hope, no room for it, or if it can have any place, it can have no effect; it will be a very faint, languishing hope, that we shall have for another state, if we are very well pleased with that wherein we are already; and therefore, as to our present state, we should bethink ourselves, and consider, whether, having such a future one in view as hath been represented already, as the ultimate, final object of our hope, we have reason to take up with that wherein we already are.

And this we are manifestly led to by the context, which, when the text tells us, "We are saved by hope," doth conjunctly tell us, what the present state of our case is, in a two-fold respect; in respect of this world, in which we live; and in respect of these bodies, to which we are now confined. The former whereof draws our thoughts to consider the remoter evils which do beset us; and the latter, those nearer and more pressing evils which are closely and continually urgent upon us

1. In reference to the state of this world, can we think it a covetable thing, long to continue in such a world as this, when we have any ground in view, of a better hope, or the object of a better, represented to us? See how the state of the world is represented in what goes before, and which the text refers unto, that is, the creature (this inferior creation it must mean) is all subjected unto vanity, and is all groaning under the bondage of corruption, and travailing in pain together, until now. This being the case in this respect, saith the apostle, "We are saved by hope." We are here ingulfed in a world of miseries and sorrows; and all things round about, they are (as it were) in one degree or another, under a pressure and languor; do not we behold the creation drooping? This lower world in which we are, may be seen (as it were) hanging the head, that a languishment is upon all things, the shadow of death hovering over all in every part, and yet subjected unto this state in hope; hope being in reference to the inanimate or irrational part to be understood but objectively. It is subjected to this state of things, but in hope; there being a prospect that it shall be redeemed, shall be recovered, so as to partake of the glorious liberty of the sons of God, whose manifestation doth approach. Now, when all this world is hoping for a better state of things, shall not we hope? We that have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, as it afterwards follows: or what? is impurity, misery, and wretchedness, become so much our element, that we are content to live still there, whilst all things are (as it were) expressing a sense round about us, groaning and travailing; and we pleased, we only pleased, to remain in such a state as this is? But to look upon the state of things in this world more particularly,

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(1.) We find it replenished with inhabitants, over whom Satan hath universal dominion; he is called the god of this world, (the usurping god of it,) the "spirit that works in the hearts of the children of disobedience," 2 Cor. iv. 6. and Eph. ii. beginning; as you know the Scripture speaks in those places I refer unto. This is that which puts the world into paroxysms every where; it is under the power of the great destroyer, the Abaddon, the Apollyon, he whose business it is to destroy, to tear all to pieces, as much as in him is. And hence, by consequence,

(2.) We find this world to be replenished with inhabitants full of atheism, and enmity against their Sovereign, and rightful Lord. All affecting to be without God in the world. And,

(3.) They are full of all unrighteousness, malignity, deceit, envy, wrath, as experience shows, from age to age, and from generation to generation; and never more than in this age. A world replenished with inhabitants, that are tearing one another to pieces every where, as they can have opportunity; such an account as is given of the inhabitants of this world, (Rom. i. latter end,) how exactly doth it suit the present state of things? and indeed, the ordinary state, more or less, in all times and ages! And again,

(4.) They are still more liable to disturbance from it, who would have least to do with it; to wit, those that are most intent upon wickedness, every where are most mischievous to them who have any savour or impression of goodness upon them, so that it is to them that are such a very hell. It is to themselves very much their own element. The world is such as they make it themselves, and in very great part affect to have it; but to them that have received an impression from above, and are begotten with a principle that suited them to be inhabitants of another world, it is of all others most troublesome, mischievous, and disquieting to them; and therefore, they of all others have much the more reason to be weary of it, and to cherish the hope (when they have any ground for it) of being in a better state, a better world, ere it be long. And if we lastly consider,

(5.) The dreadful ruin that will befal this world, in the tract of time, and before a perfectly good state can obtain or have any place; how much soever things may be better in the mean time; yet there is a universal ruin to be before there can be a perfect and thorough restoration. And the world is groaning, and travailing in pangs, and will be more or less so, even to that end, that consummation of things, that day, when all is to be (as it were) purged with fire, "and pass away with a great noise." "When the heavens shall be rolled up as a scroll, (these lower heavens,) and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth, with all things therein, be consumed and burnt up," 2 Peter iii. Notwithstanding all such ruin, we look "for a new heavens and a new earth;" according to God's own promise, we look for new heavens, and a new earth, a new universe (as it were) composed and made up of heaven and earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell. Now the wretched state of things, in the mean time, should mightily sublimate, and heighten, and invigorate the hope of that glorious state, that is to be expected afterwards. And then, if we consider,

2. The nearer and more closely pressing evils that are upon us, as we are in such bodies as these we do now inhabit and dwell in, even that should mightily enliven hope, and put it upon a more vigorous exercise, for those are the evils that we are stung with continually; and to these we find there is a more immediate reference, in what goes before the text, not only they, (the rest of the creation which are, by an elegant rhetorical *prosopopeia*, represented as having sense, and having hope; a sense of the present evils, and a hope of a better state, not only they,) "but we ourselves also, (verse 23.) who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit; even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption; to wit, the redemption of our bodies; for we are saved by hope." These are the next following words: not only they, not the rest of the creation only; but we ourselves also, (much more, it must be understood,) who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, do groan, waiting for the adoption, that is, the manifestation of the sons of God, mentioned before in the 19th verse, when our adoption shall be declared, when the sons of God shall look like themselves, and like their Father, whereas now they look very unlike him. It is as if the apostle had said, Do you think they shall always dwell so meanly as now they do? No; they are waiting for the adoption. What is that? To wit, the redemption of the body; the time when their bodies shall be redeemed from under all the evils by which they are now, continually, from time to time, infested, and by which they are debased, and made mean, and vile, as they are called "vile bodies," (Phil. iii. 28.) or the bodies of our humiliation. As if he should have said, What? Do you think that the sons of God, when they are manifested, and declared to be his sons, shall dwell so meanly as now they do, in such cottages as these, such vile bodies as these? No; we groan within ourselves, (under the present pressures, while we are in these bodies,) waiting for the adoption; to wit, the redemption of our bodies from under all those evils that make them so mean and inglorious things, and so unsuitable to the state of the sons of God. And if we consider those nearer evils, which partly we suffer in these bodies, that is, whereof they are the immediate subjects, and which partly we suffer by our being in them, they ought to have that pungency with them to our sense, as to awaken hope in us, if there be any such thing, and if we have any ground of it in view.

1. For the former sort of these evils, which we suffer in these bodies, to wit, which they themselves are the immediate subjects of; truly, while we have the prospect of a better state than that, and the hope of it in view, it is mean, and vile, and unworthy, not to have that hope of it live, and be often excited and raised up in us. For what infirm things are these bodies! How much infirmity do they suffer in themselves! How are these earthly tabernacles shattered from day to day? Shaken with agues, burnt with fevers, drowned with dropsies, harrassed and torn in pieces with stones, stranguries, colics, and such kind of painful diseases! Though these are lesser things, they are not nothing. The sons of God are to wait in hope, and with groans, (groans full of hope, not of despair,) for the adoption; that is, the redemption of these bodies; and are in great part to be saved by this hope; it is the hope of a better state even in this respect, which must draw us off from the present bodily state.

What we feel is not enough, if we do not hope too; for though we feel very great grievances and pressures in these bodies, which they themselves are the immediate subjects of; yet, notwithstanding, we are so much naturally in love with this flesh, and this bodily state, that we shall rather endure all this, than change, if we have not a better hope in view; if our souls be not erected and raised up within us, to consider, What! I was not made for an eternal inhabitation in such a body as this; and though I am to be patient of an abode in it, I must not be fond of it; I must endure it, but not take pleasure in it, when I know it belongs to me as an inheritance; and as I am an adopted one, one of God's sons, to be otherwise provided for, in point of habitation, hereafter. "We know, that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and therefore "we groan within ourselves, not to be unclothed, but clothed upon." They are not so much groans of sense, as of hope: though they are excited, and raised by sense at first, they are heightened and improved by hope. If it were not for hope, we should groan like beasts under such a burden; but when we have so great hope in view before us, that doth quite change the nature of these groans, and maketh them, not only rational, but holy ones; groans of men, and groans of saints, to wit, for such a bodily state, or such a state, as to these bodies, as wherein we shall be more capable of serving and enjoying the blessed God for ever, the great object of our worship and hope. But then,

2. For the evils which we suffer by our being in these bodies, they are of a far higher nature than those that we suffer immediately in them, or whereof they are the immediate subjects themselves. How mighty an influence hath the very temper of these bodies upon our minds, to pervert, corrupt, and deprave them, to bring in upon us, and to continue and renew from time to time in us, whatsoever

is most pernicious and prejudicial to the nature, and the proper and the genuine operations of an intelligent, immortal spirit. For,

(1.) It is by our being in these bodies, that our minds are diverted from those noble employments and exercises, wherein we should be continually taken up about higher things; these very bodily senses, which let in divine light and glory upon us, let in vanity, and befool and betray us from day to day; so that we have cause to complain, (as a worthy person whom I knew did,) Oh! how are we deafened by these ears of ours! and how are we blinded by these eyes of ours! that we cannot hear the voice of God calling us to heaven, to his eternal kingdom and glory; that we cannot behold the divine light that shines through all things! How are we, by these very senses of ours, made insensible, may we truly say! To our very tastes, the best and most valuable things are rendered tasteless, and without savour and relish to us. This is what we do immediately owe to these very bodies, and our bodily abode, our being confined for this time to these bodies. And again,

(2.) Not only are our minds diverted, but darkened by an influence from these very bodies, in very great measure, so as that all our apprehension of things, which are of a spiritual and divine nature, they have a terrene tincture upon them; our thoughts are gross, our conceptions are carnal, they smell and savour of the earth in which we dwell, and which makes up our house and habitation for us, encloseth these intelligent, immortal spirits of ours. While it encloses them, it imparts a terrene tincture to them, and makes all our thoughts and conceptions of things gross, earthly, and carnal, like themselves, in which these souls of ours are rather indeed prisoners than inhabitants. And,

(3.) Hence it is also, that our affections become alienated from divine and spiritual things, and in so great a measure, dead to them. The things of this earth we can savour, bodily things we can affect, we can love them, we can desire them, we can delight in them; but things that are of a divine and heavenly nature, towards these we are all dead. A total death passeth, and binds every affection of our souls, till divine grace comes to show what miracles it can work. Saith God, I can make a clod of clay love me, I can put the tincture of heaven even upon earth itself. Till (I say) a divine, almighty power be exerted, every thing that is of a spiritual and heavenly nature will be disaffected perpetually by us. I can taste no sweetness in any such thing, might the poor soul be forced to say, even from its own continual experience, and often renewed trials of itself. They that are after the flesh, will only savour the things of the flesh, and not the things of the Spirit: and it is only the exertion of almighty power, by the Divine Spirit, that gives victory to our spirits, so as that they shall not be always under the dominion of the fleshly principle; where these spirits come to recover their own dominion, where light, and reason, and judgment come to be efficacious, and to have their proper power and government restored.

It is by the influence of the Divine Almighty Spirit, that any are regenerated into this state, otherwise we should be mere compositions of flesh, and nothing else, as is expressed concerning the state of unregenerate men, compared with the state that they are brought into by regeneration. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh," (speaking of whole human nature,) it is but flesh; "but that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit," John iii. 6. There is nothing in us (as it were) that doth deserve the name of spirit, till such time as the regenerating power of the Divine Spirit comes to be exerted, and put forth in us: that, indeed, will create something in us that is fit to be called spirit. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit:" there is spirit producing, and spirit produced; otherwise, and not till then, a man deserves to be called nothing but a lump of flesh, and so towards things that are spiritual and divine there is no inclination at all. But then,

(4.) There is strong and unitive propension in these souls of ours, and by their abode in this flesh, to those things that are terrene and carnal, of a nature like their own. And that completes the wretchedness of our case, that to all things that are most suitable to us, we are dead; but to those that are most unsuitable, and furthest beneath us, to them only we live, to them we are alive; and it is a miraculous work of Divine power and grace to make it be otherwise with us, while we are in these bodies. This is that which is certainly to be considered by us with the bitterest regret. Have I that affection in my nature, that is capable of being placed upon God, upon heaven, and upon unseen glory? And what? is it drawn down by this bodily abode, and union with this body, to terrene and earthly things? Into what agonies should it put us to think of this? Have I that love in my nature, that is capable of uniting to my highest and best good, and instead of that, doth it only unite me with a clod, with a piece of clay, with this base and impure earth? How unsufferable a thing, how little to be borne by them, who understand themselves, to be born of God! and who, though they are to live awhile in these bodies, yet it is but a life that hovers continually upon the shadow of death, a kind of dying life, they are (as it were) between death and life. Life there is, and that life, if it be, or wherever it is, will commence, will be eternal life at length. But in what a faint image, in the mean time, and in what a continual struggle, so that there is always reason for those outcries, "Oh, wretched men that we are! who shall deliver us from the body of this death?" That pathetical self-bemoaning of the apostle suits our common case, though we have not that sense of it that he expresseth, Rom. vii. 24.

Now mark the connexion. What we have hinted to us of this sad present state of our case, doth immediately precede here. We are groaning with the rest of a groaning world, that are all in travailing pangs, being subjected in hope unto vanity, and corruption, and bondage. "We also that have received the first-fruits of the Spirit," we are groaning too, with the rest of the world, "waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body," when we shall dwell like the children of God. It is our consideration of the wretchedness of our present case, in these respects, that must awaken hope in us, and make the exercise of it more lively and vigorous: that the being gradually habituated to so low, and mean, and abject a state as this is, may not quite sink us, as it must do, if hope be not kept alive, and maintained in us; a hope, that though things are in these respects very sad and grievous, yet they shall be better; the case shall be mended; we shall be in a better world, and in better bodies than these are; bodies that shall have more favourable influences upon intelligent minds and immortal spirits, or less noxiousness than these bodies have.

That is the second direction; with the representation which we have of the heavenly state, let us consider and inspect the wretchedness of our present state on earth, as we dwell in this lower world, and as we dwell in such bodies as these that we now inhabit. And,

Direction 3. That this hope may be cherished, and kept alive in us, to our actual salvation, let us carefully avoid unsuitable and unscriptural, horrid thoughts of God, upon whom this hope of ours must terminate. Nothing will so depress and stifle this hope, upon the influence whereof so much depends, as to have black, and dark, and horrid thoughts of God, beyond and contrary to what his own representation of himself in his word gives ground for. Now nothing is more natural than,

1. For persons that are yet altogether in their sins, impure creatures throughout, to represent to themselves an impure deity. Nor again,

2. Is there any thing more natural, when souls begin to be a little awakened, and stirred to mind their own concernments, than to entertain and admit thoughts of a horrid and dreadful being, which they put the name of God upon, and which (as they know God is to be the object of their worship) they clothe with such apprehensions of him, as makes their worship savour of nothing else but a kind of dread, that always possesses their spirits, so as that they worship only like slaves; not like the children of God, not like his sons, but as those that are afraid of a tormenting lash perpetually; that are allured by no love, no goodness, no kindness, no apprehension of his love. And nothing doth more directly tend to destroy the hope that should be in us, and whereby we are to live.

And pray do but consider this one passage, "Be not thou a terror to me; thou art my hope in the evil day,"

Jer. xvii. 17. I only note it to show the inconsistency of these two things, God's being a terror to us, and his being our hope. While we make him a terror to ourselves, we cannot make him our hope: the prophet prayeth, "Be not a terror to me," for then my hope in thee is lost, thou art to be my only hope in an evil day. And what will become of me, if he that is to be my hope should be my terror? and if that be a thing so much to be deprecated, that God do not make himself a terror to us, truly it ought to be avoided, our making him a terror to ourselves; and for the same reason; because he is our only hope, and he cannot be our hope, while he is a terror to us. And then,

Direction 4. The next direction will be, that which I hinted at the last time, and I told you upon what occasion, to wit, that we maintain in ourselves a just love to our own souls, and a desire of their salvation. This the series of the discourse naturally leads to; and I have found it necessary to speak very distinctly to it, as having met with bills, once and again, that suggest this case; a fear that all that is done, in a way of obedience, should be from a motive of self-love, and a desire and design of their own salvation; and not so, principally, for the glory of God therein. Now what I shall say of this, will lie under these two general heads.

1. To evince to you, from the ground in the text, ("We are saved by hope,") that there ought and must be in us a principle of self-love, to wit, love to our own souls, maintained, and kept in exercise all along. And,

2. I shall say somewhat to the doubt, and show whether this self-love be the principal mover, yea or no, of hope in these souls; or how they may yet discern that it is not the principal mover. For the

I. That there ought to be such a principle of love to our own souls, that must be exercised in us, through the whole of our course, upon the very ground here expressed in the text, that "We are saved by hope," consider the following things.

(1.) If there be not such a love to our own souls, that shall put us upon this earnest desire and endeavour of their salvation, there can be no hope of it; for there is no hope of that which we desire not. What a man desires not, he cannot hope for; therefore hope with reference to the business of our salvation, would be simply impossible, naturally impossible, if there were no such love to ourselves, or to our own souls, as should make us to desire salvation; for that which we desire not, it is naturally impossible we should hope for. And,

(2.) Supposing such love to ourselves as should make us desire our own salvation were an unlawful thing, it would by consequence make the hope of our salvation an unlawful thing too: and so to say, we are to be saved by hope, were to be saved by a sin, and the whole business of our salvation were to be carried on continually by a continued sin, through the whole of our course; than which, you may easily apprehend, nothing could be imagined or spoken more absurd.

(3.) We are bound to endeavour, in hope, the preservation of the health and life of these bodies: and much more are we to endeavour, in hope, the eternal life and salvation of our souls.

(4.) We should in our whole course (if we should make it our business to suppress such desire and hope as this) counteract the law of our own nature; and we must know the law of our own nature is God's own law: he that is the Author of our nature is the Author of the law of nature; and there is no principle more natural to us than ove of ourselves. And,

(5.) We should not only contradict the law of original nature, but we should act against the continual dictates of the new nature, wherein the principle of this self-love is a governing thing. "He that is born of God, keepeth himself, that the evil one toucheth him not," 1 John iii. 18. He loves his own life, is careful for his own life; he keepeth himself, that he may avoid mortal touches from the evil one, who is continually seeking to destroy that precious life, that is now from God himself sprung up in the soul, and in respect whereof he is now said to be born of God. And again,

(6.) It were quite to subvert the whole Gospel constitution, which doth apply itself directly to the principle of self-love in the whole dispensation of it, as supposing that natural to men, and that they should be unnatural, and monstrous towards themselves, if they act not according to it. What mean all the Gospel invitations, and promises, and threatenings, but to apply themselves immediately and directly to the principle of self-love in men, apprehending that they should have some regard to themselves, and to the concernments of their own souls? It supposeth this, when our Lord breathes forth such sweet and alluring invitations as those; "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. latter end. What would that signify, if a man were not to desire rest for his own soul, and life and blessedness for his own soul? "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come and drink of the water of life; incline your ear, and come unto me, hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David," Isaiah lv. 1. What would all this signify, if I were not to take care for, and desire the life of my own soul? And so also all the threatenings of the Gospel were lost upon men, if they were to have no dread of perishing; and no hope, no desire, of being eternally saved. "He that believeth hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." All these were thrown away upon them, who were not to allow themselves, either in a desire or dread, in reference either to the death or life of their souls. But then,

2. To answer the doubt, I will only say these things very briefly to you; that is, whether self-love be the predominant principle, so that any have reason to think all their obedience proceeds from self-love, more than from a desire of God's being glorified in their salvation. Why,

(1.) I would desire such to consider, that the blessedness of heaven doth very principally lie in perfect sinlessness, in being perfectly free from sin. And so, in being as perfectly like God as we are capable: "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. That implies perfect sinlessness; consider that in the first place. And,

(2.) Sin is the only thing by which God can be dishonoured. "In breaking the law, dishonourest thou God," Rom. ii. 13. He can be dishonoured by nothing but sin. And,

(3.) Let us consider, do they desire perfect sinlessness? yea or no: and let them deal faithfully with their souls in that particular. Do I desire to be perfectly free from sin? or do I hate every thing of sin, so as to long for nothing more, than perfectly to be free from it? Let their own conscience give an answer to them concerning this, whether they can sincerely say, they do desire nothing so much as perfect freedom from sin; they do desire to be rid of that, by which alone they do dishonour God. And you must know, that sin, in the very nature of it, is more dishonourable to God, than it can be hurtful unto them: it is both dishonourable to God and hurtful to us; but the principal thing is a dishonour to God, as it is against him first. It is against us but secondarily, and in the lowest place. Let them then bethink themselves; Suppose sin did not hurt me, yet do I not hate it, and do not I desire to be perfectly free from it, as a thing that dishonours God, and as it inclines me to dishonour him? And it is an uncreaturely thing, as it is a vile thing, to have that in me which is an opposition and contrariety in its own nature to the best of beings, the most perfect and most excellent of beings. And then,

(4.) That the blessedness of heaven further lies in the soul's entire satisfaction, and acquiescence in God, which is the thing we mean by enjoying him. Fruition is the soul's rest. The blessedness of the heavenly state lies in the soul's perfect rest and acquiescence in God, as the best and most satisfying good. And hereby it is plain, that we honour him the most that we are capable of doing, for if the soul do perfectly rest satisfied in God, as the best and most excellent good, we do thereby voluntarily acknowledge him in the most significant (to wit, in a practical) way, to be (what really he is, as he is God) the best good, the most comprehensive, and the most absolutely perfect good. The soul doth most honour him, in enjoying him,

more than it is capable of doing any other way; for my continual enjoying him, to wit, my continual rest and satisfaction in him, as the best good, is my practical owning him as such. And that is honouring him, when I draw off from all things else, and say, You are not good enough, you have not that excellency in you that is suited to the nature, excellency, and capacity of my soul. Then you betake yourself to God, and there you eternally acquiesce, and take up your satisfaction and rest. This is to confess, actually and practically, that he is all that, which all the creation besides is infinitely short of to you. And so to do, is to glorify and honour him, the most that you are capable of as creatures. In our enjoying him, we glorify him most. And then, lastly,

(5.) As that which is so clear and sure (as I think) to put all out of doubt, if any can say that they hate sin, as the worst of all evils that can exist, or be in being; and do love God as the best of all good, as can also exist, and be in being; this hatred of sin as the worst evil, and this love of God as the best and highest good must proceed from the operation of his own Spirit; none could ever hate sin as the worst of evils, and love God as the best of goods, but by the peculiar operation of the Holy Ghost. Now if the Holy Ghost does produce these great effects in any, you may be sure he can do God no wrong in these productions of his: he governs his own productions equally. The Spirit of God can never be the author of any one's doing God wrong. That you should desire a good for yourself, more than for glory to him, when such operations in you, as hatred of sin, and love of God, do proceed from his own Spirit, that Spirit will never be the author of irregular motions, so as that you should desire your own felicity more than the glory of God.

And, therefore, though these things lie mixed in you, there is love to God, and love to yourselves: and there ought to be both, but you cannot tell which is predominant, by an immediate inspection and view of the effects; look to your cause, and these effects could proceed from no other cause, but the operation of the Divine Spirit; that is, you could never hate sin, but from the Spirit of God. You find that you do hate it, but you do not know whether it be because it is most dishonourable to God, or because it is hurtful to you: yet, I say, your hatred of it proceeds from the Spirit of God. And again, you do love God, but so love yourselves, and your own salvation, that you have one interest in the matter: you love him, in order to your enjoyment of him; you love him, in order to your fruition of him, which is a good to yourselves, and so it ought to be. But you know not which desire is more predominant, which you desire or covet more, that you may be happy, or God be glorified, in your fruition of him; I say, this supreme love to God is not the work of your own spirit, you could not love God above all, (if it were even for your own enjoyment of him only,) but by the help of his Spirit. And the Spirit of God, when that is immediately at work, will be sure to do right between him and you. It will not let you love yourselves more than God, when that love is the immediate production of that Spirit, living and acting in you. And we can be surer of nothing than we are of this, that there can be no hatred of sin, as the worst of evils, nor love of God as the best of goods, but from the Divine Spirit. And if it be from a Divine Spirit, that Spirit will not be the author of so irregular a motion in us, that we should design ourselves, more than him, in these things. And so much I take to be exceeding clear and plain, in reference to this doubt; and it is very unreasonable that any should trouble themselves much about it, but fall admiring and blessing God, that hath made them hate sin as the worst of evils, and a thing by which he is dishonoured; and to love God as the best good, which is as inseparable from the eternal enjoyment of him, as that enjoyment is from their eternal adoring and glorifying of him in that state. There are many other directions remaining, but no more at present.

SERMON XXVII.[a]

Rom. viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

Now to go on, the next direction to be given is,

Direction 5. Ponder well and thoroughly the capacities of your own natures. I know not what should do more to raise and cherish this hope in you, of which the text speaks, for you have been told it doth not speak of hope, as hope; to wit, all hope. There is a hope (as was said) that is so far from saving men, that it destroys them. There are many that are ruined, and not saved, by their hope; but it is the truly Christian hope terminating to the last end of it, in a glorious eternity, that we are to be saved by; that which is truly the hope of salvation, and which is spoken of under the notion of a helmet, the seat of counsel and design; and it is impossible there can be any design for salvation without hope; or indeed any design at all, whereof there is no hope; and therefore I say, in order to the heightening and improving of this hope, the truly Christian hope, it is of the greatest necessity and use imaginable, to study much the capacity of our own natures; to wit, often to recount with ourselves, What is such a creature as I, a human creature, capable of? What are the limits and bounds of my capacity, the capacity of my nature?

Nothing will be plainer, (if it be considered,) than that our natures are capable of greater and more enduring things, than ordinarily we employ our minds about. The usual exercise of our minds is far from reaching the capacity of our natures: from any body that allows himself to think, this acknowledgment will be extorted, at the first sight or hearing, that spiritual things are greater, more excellent, and more noble, than earthly and carnal things are. And do not we find there is a capacity in our natures of conversing with such things? Are our natures capable of conversing with nothing but earth and clay? Can they look no higher? Can we form no notions of objects of a more noble and excellent kind?

And they are capable of more enduring things than we employ them about, that is, of eternal things; nay, so far it is from us to be incapable of having any thought of eternal things, that if we could impose upon ourselves, we cannot possibly avoid that thought: our minds will run into an endless and eternal scheme, do we what we can; that is, we cannot so much as by a thought fix to ourselves any utmost bounds, or periods of things; and therefore, our minds do naturally run into eternity. And more than that, we are not only capable of knowing much of spiritual and eternal things, things that are more noble and excellent in their kind, and more lasting in duration, than the things are which we commonly employ them about.

But we are capable of understanding this higher and larger capacity; we are secretly conscious to ourselves, that there is nothing terrene and temporary, that can measure the capacity of our nature, and fill up, and correspond to it; every man is conscious to himself of this, that allows himself to think; we are not only capable of knowing that there are spiritual things above the sphere of sense, and eternal things above the bounds and limits of time; but we are capable of knowing that we know it; to wit, we are conscious to ourselves of the greater and larger capacity of our natures.

And that being supposed, truly it must be said of us, we know too much to enjoy no more. If we are not to hope for more, we know too much: we know that there is a glorious sphere of spiritual objects, that lie above the reach of our sense; we know there is an eternal state beyond the bounds and limits of time; and knowing this, we know too much, if we are not to hope for more. And if that indeed were the state of our case, that we are to hope for no more than what lies within the compass of our present state, it might make a mere philosopher to curse his nature, that ever it should be capable of prospect, that ever I was a creature capable of prospect, and yet so doomed and con-

[a] Preached November 8th, 1691.

fined to the strait and narrow bounds of this base earth as to have nothing to enjoy, higher and greater than this can afford me. Study the capacity of your nature, and think with yourselves, this immortal mind and spirit that I have in me, is it to be supposed it could have been put into me only to sustain a mean, vile flesh, that after the greatest and utmost care, must at length rot in the dust? Had I a reasonable immortal soul put into me, only to enable me to eat and drink, to please and indulge sense? A brute is furnished for such purposes as these, as well as I.—What did I need a mind, an intelligent mind, an immortal mind, for such purposes as these?

A man may confirm it himself, that he is not in a dream about the larger capacity of his own nature; for when he finds he hath in him a mind, is that a dream? Do not I know I can know? Do not I understand that I can understand? and that I have that in me that can think? And I beseech you, what proportion is there between a thought and a clod of clay? between a mind, and a piece of earth? That the capacity of this mind should be filled up with any earthly thing, what proportion is there in that?

And then, that this mind of mine must be an immortal thing, and so exist in an eternal state; I cannot be in a dream about this; for I beseech you, what proportion is there between a thought and death? Is it a likely thing, that a thing that can think can die? If I have that in me that can think, I have that in me that cannot die.

And then, reckon it unworthy to hope beneath the capacity of your nature; to let your ordinary hope, the hope that is to live in you, and guide your course, to let that (I say) sink beneath the capacity of your nature. And again,

Direction 6. Consider much the large and immense goodness and benignity of the Divine nature; and do not think it agreeable to that, (as it is certain it cannot be,) that there should be such a sort of creatures endowed with a spiritual, immortal mind, that should not be accommodated and suited with proportionable objects. Consider the goodness of God to this purpose, as it appears in other instances. You see that all other sorts of creatures he doth accommodate with suitable objects. Look to yourselves, consider his goodness to you in other respects all your time hitherto. He is that God (as good Jacob when dying said) "that hath fed me all my life;" through him you were born, and through him you have lived; did he give you the appetite of meat and drink, and hath he not given you meat and drink too? If he hath given you faculties in your inferior nature, he hath assigned you their particular suitable objects. And do you think that if he hath given you also rational and immorta. minds, it could stand with so vast goodness, not to suit them with proportionable objects too? Is that like his other methods? When the whole earth is full of his goodness, this region, this seat of apostacy and wickedness, all the creatures looking up to him with craving eyes, and he satisfies them all: therefore it cannot be on his part that ever there should be such a flaw, such a defect, in the order of things in his creation, that he should have made an intelligent immortal mind and spirit, and never have provided for it a suitable good, that may answer the capacity of his nature; and you already know, that there is no terrene or temporary thing, that is a suitable good to it.

And thence it cannot but be, (for the matter must not be refunded upon the Creator,) I say, it cannot but be, that if souls be miserable, it must be by themselves; their aversion from God, their refusal to return to him, their resistance of the methods he hath used for the gathering back of wandering souls: they will not return, they love earth and vanity more; and if this, indeed, be the habitual temper of any soul under that Gospel, which is designed on purpose for recovering and reducing souls unto God, and this disaffection of theirs cannot be overcome, this is the highest provocation that can be given to goodness itself; and goodness itself must most highly justify and gratify itself in the ruin of those souls, who have had the offers made them of a suitable correspondent good, but lived all their days while here in the flesh, in the refusal, and contempt, and defiance of these offers. And again,

Direction 7. Consider the confirmation that God hath so expressly given of his special good-will to his own, besides what may be collected of his common goodness towards the generality of his creatures; think how he has confirmed to them, that are become peculiarly his, his peculiar kindness and favour, and their right and title to that heavenly inheritance which they are finally to hope for: he hath sundry ways confirmed it to them.

1. By their regeneration; by which he hath in a great measure cured (to wit, in a prevalent degree) the depravity of their sensualized nature. And even in the work of regenerating them, begotten them to this very hope, or to the hope of this very state. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope," 1 Pet. i. 3. To what living hope, or the living hope of what? Why, "of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, reserved in heaven for us." It is true, you had a capacity in your natures, of higher and greater things than this earth affords; but what signified a mere natural capacity, that was overwhelmed with vicious inclinations, when there was a capacity of greater things, but no habitude? But now there is a gracious habitude in the work of regeneration, added to the natural capacity which repairs the natural powers to those exercises, which that capacity comprehends and means. The understanding is, in some measure, rid of the cloudy darkness, that hovered oft over it before: "They that were darkness" in this work of regeneration, are made "light in the Lord," Eph. v. 8. They are become light;—they were dead in trespasses and sins; here is a divine life made to spring up in them, that aims at God, that aims at heaven, that aims at immortal things; and whatever is born, must be fed; here is a new creature born, that cannot be fed at the common rate, how should this heighten and raise hope!

2. He hath taken them into union with his own Son, who is the primary great heir, and in whose right they come to be sons, and so come to be heirs; how should this raise hope in me! I am taken into union with the Son of God. If you receive him, you are so; that is the *amplexus* of the soul; that faith by which the soul receives him, thereby it comes to be adjoined to him, and so to be invested secondarily with his right. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," John i. 12. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." If you share with him in the sonship, then you share with him in the inheritance too. You have a right, even as the sons of God, to this inheritance; this heavenly state, in all the blessedness and glory of it, belongs to you by right of inheritance; or as you are heirs of it, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ," and so you are to be glorified with him. And what? are you not to hope for your own inheritance? That which doth belong to you by right of inheritance, are you not to live in the hopes of it? And,

3. There is God's special promise superadded to all this; to wit, that he will give grace and glory; and that the things that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, are all prepared for them that love him." And,

4. He hath added his oath to his promise, that the heirs of promise might have strong consolation from the two immutable things, the promise and the oath superadded, by which it is impossible for God to lie, Heb. vi. 17, 18. And why should not hope live and flourish, in reference to this inheritance, the heavenly state you are finally to look for upon all this? Therefore, take that for a further direction, often to recount with yourselves the express confirmations and assurances, which God hath given of his special kindness to his own, and of their right to the heavenly inheritance. And again,

Direction 8. Often renew your covenant with God, that so this hope may be cherished and live in you. Renew your covenant with God often, by which he becomes yours, and you his; by which he once became so, that so you may have a constant, explicit notion, or apprehension of him, as such; that you may not look towards him as a stranger, as an unrelated one. There is nothing needful to make him yours, and you his, but this mutual agreement by covenant between him and you. The matter is unalterable on his part; and you may be sure that nothing is more requisite on your part; nothing can be more requisite, than that you often commune with yourselves about this

matter; Do I stand to my covenant? I once said I was willing that God in Christ should be mine, and that I in Christ should be his; am I still willing? Do I stand to this covenant with God in Christ; yea or no?

Then consider, whence are your expectations to be? I am not to have my great expectations from a stranger, from a strange god, but from a God of my own. "This God is our God for ever and ever, and he that shall be our guide even unto death," Ps. xlviii. last verse. How great a thing is it to be able to say, "God, even our own God, shall bless," Ps. lxvii. 6. Your hope will languish if you let the apprehension dwindle of the relation between God and you; so that you look not towards him from day to day, and at all times, as a God related to you, upon the terms, and by the tenor, of an everlasting covenant; how wisely will that man look about him in his wants, and in his languishings, that hath no one to expect help and relief from; from one no more than from another! That is, if all about him, or with whom he is to expect, are equally strangers to him, and he can have no more expectation from one than from another. To hear of the name of God, that he is a great God, a bountiful God, and that there is an immense fulness of goodness in him; but what is that to me, when I have no concern with him, nor he with me? But when you know, that there is nothing requisite to bring about a fixed relation between him and you, but your consenting to the terms of his covenant; "I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine," Ezek. xvi. 8. If that be from time to time recognised, be made more and more explicit, then are you to walk in this sense from day to day. This God is my God, and I am his. And then what may you not hope for? what may you not expect from him, in reference to present support, and final blessedness? And again,

Direction 9. Keep up a continual intercourse with God hereupon, walk with him if he be yours and you be his, and that is ascertained by a sure covenant often recognised; then accordingly, walk with him continually, keep up an intercourse by acts of reverence, and trust, and love, and subjection; so is the intercourse to be kept up, for you must consider, it is not an intercourse *inter pares*, between equals; but it is an intercourse between an all sufficient God, a self-sufficient God, a sovereign Lord and Ruler, and a mean indigent object, and (who ought to be) a subject creature; and so only ought the intercourse to be kept up. "As the Father loveth me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love," John iv. 9, 10. And so are we directed to keep ourselves in the "love of God," Jude, ver. 21. This is the way to maintain hope, waiting for his mercy by Christ Jesus to life eternal. Be in his fear all the day long, keep your hearts in a subject frame and posture towards him; keep you in a depending frame; keep you in a complacential frame, always apt and ready to exert acts of love, kindness, and good-will towards God. Oh! that I could do more for thee! I love thy name, thy honour, thy interest, thy presence, thy communion. In this way let intercourse with God be kept up, and so hope will flourish, will do its part towards the saving of you; even the saving you out of the gulf in which you now lie, almost swallowed up, only to be saved by this hope, such a hope as is subservient and conducing thereunto. Again,

Direction 10. If such an intercourse should be intermitted, (as can never be, but by slips and failings on your part,) hasten the restoring of it. As you value the life of your hope, and as you value the life of your souls, hasten the restoring of it. That is not to be borne, for one to say, Now the intercourse ceaseth between God and me! What? that there should be a discontinuance of my commerce with God, this is not to be borne. Oh! hasten to get all rectified, and set aright, by renewed applications of the blood of Jesus; by speedy and serious turning to God with all the heart, and with all the soul. By any such more observable slips hope hath got a wound, and it is to be healed, recovered, redintegrated, by such a return; your return to God in Christ speedily and betimes.

Direction 11. After that walk more "circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise," as knowing you are to live and be saved by hope; and your hope is to live, and be maintained, by your continual commerce with God. Walk accurately according to the Gospel instructions; to wit, according to the instructions and teachings of appearing grace. The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared, teaching us, what? that "denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we do live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world;" and what is the consequent hereupon? "Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Now, as being taught effectually by the grace that hath appeared bringing salvation, oh, deny "all ungodliness," and every thing of ungodliness; deny it as an abhorred thing, and a most abominable thing. What? should I bear an ungodly frame of heart to him, whose grace hath appeared to save me? And all "worldly lusts;" shall worldly lusts rule in me, and govern me, who am a disciple of grace, and under the teachings of grace? And it teaches me to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Oh! let us comply with these teachings, when we see what will be the end of it, what will follow, then we shall live "looking for the blessed hope." How reviving will our own hope be to us then! how full of vigour, how full of sweetness, and how full of power and life! Every thought of that blessed state will even bless our souls, and make them flourish as a field that the Lord hath blessed. And,

Direction 12. Converse much with them that have the same hope that you have That is a very heart-strengthening thing, mightily animating, to have much conversation with them that will give you a reason of the hope that is in them, "with meekness and fear;" (1 Pet. iii. 15.) and to whom also, you may give a reason of the hope that is in you, with the same meekness and the same fear. That is fruitful, edifying conversation, to converse with them that will interchange accounts with you of the reason of their hopes, which you can give them, and they can give you. But if there be any that care not for that society, that can take a thousand times more pleasure to talk two or three hours over a glass of wine in a tavern, with impertinent, idle fellows, from whom there is nothing of good to be gotten; this is that they rather choose, which they can savour, can take complacency in; but all discourses about God, and the things of God, and the world to come, and the matters of an eternal hope, are unsavoury and unpleasant. If this be with any an habitual frame, from week to week, and from month to month, and from year to year, and yet they will tell you they hope to be saved; oh! the monstrous stupidity of these wretched souls! What are they sunk into, and what under this very Gospel, which makes all things so very plain!

I tremble to think of the case of such, when they have nothing at all to keep off terrors from their hearts, but either a present peremptory refusal to think, I will think of no such thing; or the vain hope of a death-bed repentance at last, that shall expiate for so sensual and unchristian a life. I tremble (I say) to think what the case of such men will be at last. They may have some confidence in a death-bed repentance at a distance, while they put off from them the evil day; but that repentance may be far fled, removed, and hid from their eyes, when the dying hour is come, and when they are stretched out on the bed of sickness and languishing. And will God overthrow his own design, merely to comply with the brutish inclination of this or of that man, when his design is to have a people in this world, that shall in their continual, holy heavenly conversation, testify against the wicked conversation of it? But he shall dispense with them, and let them live like so many brutal sots all their days, and save them at last, because they say they will repent upon a dying bed; but how such will dare to die, God knows; when in the mean time they hardly dare to come to an ordinance of God, but make all the shift they can to avoid serious and searching preaching; and think it a great gain to them, if they can this or that day avoid a blow. Thou that hast lived so long in the indulgence of sensual and brutish inclinations, that art afraid to come to a sermon, or come to the Lord's table; or the like guilt stares thee in the face; how wilt thou not be afraid to die, and to appear at last before the tribunal of thy judge? Will God alter his Gospel for you, and determine that a man may live an earthly and carnal life in this world,

and be saved at last; though he hath told us, that they who mind earthly things, (the gust and relish of their souls lies there, they savour them,) their end is destruction, and they are enemies to the cross of Christ? They counter-design the end of Christ's dying, and so their end is destruction. And I add,

Direction 13. Take heed of too impatient a sense of the tediousness of your expecting state, while you are expecting; we must be expectants here; we are saved by hope. There needs a great deal of patience; not only in order to bearing, but in order to expecting; not only in order to the bearing of evil things, but in order to the expecting of good things; "ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, you might receive the promise," Heb. x. 36. And see what immediately follows the text; "We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man sees, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it:" so we read of "the patience of hope," (1 Thess. i. 3.) as that which the apostle blesseth God for, on the behalf of those Thessalonian Christians, having heard of their patience of hope, how cheerfully they did endure in an expecting state. And,

Direction 14. Labour to fortify yourselves against the fear of death, that so your hope may live and flourish. That inasmuch as the final object of your hope lies beyond time, and beyond this present world; it is a sad thing there should be that gulf between you and the last object of your hope, which you dare not shoot; but are afraid of that which you supremely are to hope for. How very uncomfortable a case is that, that the highest matter of your hope should be also the matter of your fear, the going into that estate wherein mortality is to be swallowed up of life? What? are we afraid of becoming immortal? To be angels' fellows, equal with the angels of God, gathered up to the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect? Are we afraid indeed of that which we are chiefly to hope for? Oh! labour to overcome that fear; know that Christ died for this end, that you might do it. He was partaker of flesh and blood, he took a human body as we have here; that "by death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject unto bondage."

It is not only an uncomfortable, and an unchristian, but it is an irrational thing, and an unmanly thing, to live under the continual dominion and government of the fear of that which cannot be avoided. That is irrational; no man can give account of his own reason, why he should do so. It is a scandal even to the reason of a man, to be engaged in a continual contest against impossibilities; that which cannot be avoided, it is impossible I should avoid it. And to be in a constant war with this, is what no man can reconcile to his own understanding, if he do but use the understanding of a man.

And, therefore, there is nothing to be done in the case, but to fall into a speedy union with the great Prince and Lord of life, and then never fear death; that being the state of our case, that this death lies between us and our great hope, our final hope; when we think what we are to enjoy after death, one would go through a thousand deaths to enjoy that; and much more to die once to escape a thousand deaths. We die here every day; we are killed a thousand times over, from day to day, and from week to week; and if we would die a thousand deaths that way, to avoid one death, sure we may die one death, which we are to suffer unavoidably, that we may enjoy what we are to enjoy afterwards. Then I add,

Direction 15. That if we are to hope for the blessedness of the other state, as our last end, we are to hope too for whatsoever is certainly intermediate to the universal introduction of that state; and, therefore, so far as any better time or state of things in this world is ascertained to us, we are to live in the hope of it, as that which shall antecede our end; for it is the last end that our last hope terminates upon. But then, in the last place,

Direction 16. Take heed of letting your hope ultimately pitch upon any thing but what is itself ultimate; that is, take heed of letting your hope settle upon any thing on this side a blessed, glorious eternity, or upon any other state of things; take heed of having your spirits so deeply engaged upon any better state of things on earth, that you mind less, or with much more coolness, and indifferency, the concernments of the eternal state. Be not so much taken up in the thoughts and expectations of a better scene of things in this lower world, that the very thoughts of heaven, and a blessed eternity, should be unsavoury, and unpleasant.

This a very grievous, (I might say,) a mortal evil; so preposterously doth it invert the course of things; it takes down the supreme end, and substitutes somewhat inferior in the room and stead of that. And though this spiritual distemper may be indulged by many, under a spiritual pretence, I would fain see religion thrive more, and God be honoured and better served in this world; yet there is this to be said to it, it is well, if seriously we desire such things indeed; but if such desires after the best state of things that is supposable in this world do grow superior to the desires that we have of a perfect, blessed state of things in the other world; this is (I say) to set the means against the end; and so is quite to invert the order of things.

Live in the glorious expectation of eternity; and live also in the comfortable hope, that all things in this world in order thereunto shall be managed suitably and subserviently, by that wisdom that cannot err, or make a false step, and by a power that cannot be resisted, or disturbed; but there is a great deal of carnality under that pretence of spirituality; and hence comes that contestation of interest and parties; party against party, and interest against interest. There will be perpetual quarrels, while all men are not of a mind about things within the compass of time; but in reference to the glory of the eternal state, there can be no possibility of such collision, but all will adoringly and joyfully fall into everlasting adoration and praise.

And this must be the matter of our last hope. And so I shall shut up all with the prayer of the apostle; "Now the God of peace, that hath given us eternal consolation, and good hope through grace, fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost," Rom. xv. 13. Amen.

SERMON XXVIII.

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God.

In recommending to you several requisites for a continual course of friendship with Christ, I did not mention that of trust, than which there is not a greater requisite to friendship. But that I intend to be spoken to by itself. And therefore have pitched upon this text. Now to proceed gradually, and in some method. There are four previous things which I shall premise. As, 1. Where do we find Abraham to be called the friend of God? for it refers to a former scripture, as fulfilled, that God did treat him as a friend. We find him expressly so called, 2 Chron. xx. 7. There was a numerous, potent enemy that did seek to keep out the people of God from possessing that land which God had given to the seed of Abraham his friend. And Jehoshaphat urgeth this to God in prayer. So we have it again, Isa. xli. 8. where there being an occasion to mention Abraham, he is spoken of also as the friend of God; "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend." But, 2. We are to consider and take notice under what notion Abraham is spoken of by that glorious title of the friend of God. It is true he was an eminent saint. But was this spoken of him under that notion? or is it not under a common notion as a believer? So it seems to be in the text. "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God." This is a notion common to him and to all believers; and this still must

then agree with the rest of believers. Then, 3. We are further to consider what sort of faith this was in which Abraham is accounted a righteous person and called the friend of God. It is plain that that faith did not consist only in believing the general promise of having a numerous seed. It did not terminate on God, abstractly, without a reference to Christ. It did not stand in a cold and ineffectual assent to any divine truth whatsoever—for the whole context shows the insufficiency of such a faith. But to speak to this positively, and briefly, we shall consider the object and nature of this faith. As,

I. For the object of it, it is evident that it did comprehend and take in four representations of Christ. How distinct and explicit his understanding thereof was we cannot determine. But he had some notion of it; for our Lord himself saith, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad," John viii. 56. And this must be a truth with us which none can question. And we are told, that very good promised to Abraham did eminently intend that one seed, which was Christ, Gal. iii. 16. And we are there also told, verse 17. that the covenant, that was not at first made but renewed with Abraham, was the covenant of God in Christ. And we are likewise told that this seed of his was to possess the gates of their enemies; and that nations should be blessed in him. So that his mind was directed, that from this seed of his, himself should expect blessedness. And it cannot otherwise be supposed. And ergo, that as the eye was fixed upon Christ, as his seed by promise, and through that to be blessed himself. The prophets themselves did not fully understand their own prophesying of him. Some prophecies they must be supposed to have, though not most distinct and clear to themselves. So we find, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." And,

2. As to the nature or kind of that faith, in reference to the object, it must be such as, according to his understanding of the discovery he had there, must be an embracing of his heart and will towards this object. He doth close with Christ according to the representation he had of him. Christ was the sum and substance of the Gospel—faith in the mind and heart of Abraham, as far as the discovery was made to him.

And now the way is plain to that which I principally intend for the ground of discourse from this text, to wit:

Doctrine. That there is much of friendly commerce between the blessed God and souls of men in and about the production and exercise of that faith upon which he counts them righteous, and doth justify, and will finally save them. This is the substance of what I intend to insist upon from the whole of this text. I take it to be clear that Abraham's faith was the same for kind and nature with that by which all believers are justified and saved. And he was called the friend of God. And then I say there is much friendly converse between God and souls in the production and service of that faith which justifies and saves. Now take notice,

1. That I do not consider that discovery of friendship in the single act of faith, but take a further latitude, as to the production and exercising of that faith. There is a friendship in that whole ingratiation between God and souls, when he is about producing, and they about the exercising, of that faith. And again,

2. Take notice, that I do not speak of faith here as justifying only, but of faith as saving also, being led thereto by the context, and by my own design. By the context, which speaks of faith under both notions: as *justifying*, in the words next following; and as *saving*, in the 14th verse: Can such a faith save him? and upon account of my own design, *i. e.* of discovering the friendship which appears in this matter, which certainly is eminently seen at the last in salvation, as that is the result of all the transaction between God and the soul in these matters. And again,

3. Take notice that hereupon this friendship is not to be considered merely as begun, but as continued unto the last: for friendship doth not lie in a single act, but a state. And ergo, there must be a continued course of friendship, frequent repetitions of such a kind and manner as there was in the inchoation, the beginning of this friendship. There may be intervals of it, after some notable failure on the one part or the other. And there must be somewhat done to the keeping of it on foot throughout; for that it never be totally broken off with them whom the end, the perfection, the consummation of it, shall take place at last, to wit, their final and eternal salvation. And,

4. Further consider this, that wheresoever there is true friendship (admitting it to be called so in the best and proper sense) it must be mutual. A man cannot truly and properly be said to be a friend with an inanimate subject, and there may be a disparity both natural and moral. As I can have no friendship, or there can be no entire and full friendship between me and a stone; so neither can there be between me and an enemy. Though I may have friendly propensions towards such a one, yet an actual, friendly intercourse there cannot be, if there be an incapacity in the other subject, either natural or moral. Ergo, to speak to the subject of the intercourses of friendship, that are in this transaction between God and the soul in and about this production, and exercising of that faith by which he justifies and saves, it was fit to premise these things. And these things being clear, I am to show,

I. What there is of a friendly propension on God's part towards the souls of such with whom he so negociates, in the management and conduct of this matter. And the friendship herein, on his part, appears in general in these two things.

1. In friendly instructions and counsels; and,

2. In friendly performances, or actual communications.

1. In friendly instructions and counsels: so he is a wise friend; as in the other he is a powerful one. His wisdom appears in his instructions and counsels; and his power in his performances and communications; but neither of these exclusively of the other. And,

(1.) It is much of friendly propension that God discovers to men in bringing about that faith which is justifying, in the friendly instructions and counsels he affords them in order hereunto. And we must take in this, that what as to his purpose he speaks by his word to them, he doth by his Spirit impress upon them. This is as the seal to the wax, which makes and leaves its impress thereon. What he speaks outwardly by his word, he speaks internally by his spirit, which makes use of the word to enlighten their minds with, and begets correspondent characters on the soul, so as to make the word effectual. And,

He instructs them concerning their undone and miserable state while they remain strangers to him, and enemies against him. He speaks copiously to them of this by his word; and must be understood to speak correspondently hereof by his Spirit. Thou art in a state of separation from me, who am the Author of thy being and blessedness. Thou art insensible of this state, and thou thinkest that thou needest not God, thou canst live without him in the world. Whereas thou art lost, a guilty creature, liable to wrath: and thou art an impotent creature; thou canst not escape or deliver thyself: and what will become of thee, thou hast not righteousness nor strength! It is necessary that the soul do apprehend and feel this, and the misery of his state while he hath no God, no interest in him, nor righteousness to recommend him to God. Men have not a word to say for themselves in this case. The power of God is engaged against them. Against his justice they can say nothing, and against his power they can do nothing. When there is a design of friendship on foot, then God takes the soul aside, and shows it all this, to convince it. God now brings things home with a strong hand, and makes the soul consider what it may expect, if it continue in a war against Heaven. Then,

(2.) He instructs them (and there is much friendliness in it) concerning his own reconcileableness to sinners. God declares it in his word, and he speaks it over again to their own ears and hearts. Men will not mind what is said in the word. They might easily see that he is placable and willing to be reconciled; his giving them much of his goodness, and his exercising patience and long-suffering towards them, and all this to lead them to repentance. He expostulates the matter with men on plain evidence of the

things themselves: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Rom. ii. 4. But he hath spoken out to men in the Gospel, wherein he opens his heart, and declares his counsels to them. But all this needs to be spoken to men inwardly. He urgeth and inculcates his mind and will to them; reasons and argues with their souls. Why hast thou not understood all this hitherto? but thou understandest it now that I am a reconcileable God, if thou now fall not in with my method for this end. This is of mighty importance for bringing about such a friendship; for while men apprehend God to be irreconcileable, that will lead them to despair, and be a hell upon earth. But to behold a Gospel of grace and reconciliation, and having it set on so as to apprehend the thing indeed, this engageth the intention and mind to consider the terms offered. And then,

(3.) He instructs such souls about the great reconciler and mediator of their peace, into whose hands he hath put all this affair; unto whom they must be beholden, from whom they must receive all that grace that is requisite, either to the changing of the state, or the changing of the frame. And if men be not inwardly and with efficacy instructed concerning all this, the very doctrine of reconciliation itself would very slowly enter against those mighty objections, which it might meet with in a considering mind. For any one that understood the nature of God, and considered him as a being absolutely perfect, and so apprehended his holiness and his justice to be in the highest perfection in him, as well as his other governing attributes; if one thought should arise in the mind of such a person, about contracting a peace and friendship with his God, oh, how shall he answer it to himself, when his own mind tells him, *his* nature admits of no change, and my nature, by any power of my own, admits of none. God will not change his nature, and I cannot change mine. This very nature and natural state put me into a posture of direct hostility against his sovereign authority, against his justice, and against his holiness, all at once. If a man in this case hath no way in view how God can consistently with the honour and dignity of his authority and government, and the unalterableness of his eternal law, be reconciled to a sinner, and lead him into communion with himself: here lies an objection in the mind of such a one, against the sum of the Gospel, if that were held faith only in general. That is, that God is willing to be reconciled to sinners. For what? is he willing to deny himself? To come down from his throne, to quit his government? or is it possible to him to change his nature, to be less just and less holy than he essentially is? But when there cometh to be a distinct explication of the way and method wherein God can honourably, and consistently with his truth, justice, and holiness, be reconciled to sinners; to wit, by the discovery of the doctrine of the Mediator; and when this discovery is inwardly applied and brought home; that which was before a stumbling-block, and a mountain of opposition raised up in the soul against the truth and purpose of the Gospel, vanisheth, and the way is plain, smooth, and open to it; and so nothing remains but to fall in with it. But oh, how friendly is this, not only to speak this in an unregarded, external relation, but to speak it internally to the mind and soul, and make it apprehended and understood. To show unto man his righteousness, who it is that he must be beholden to for all that is requisite for the changing of his state, and for changing his natural frame and inclination, when he must have righteousness and strength. To declare all this by inward, internal light, oh how friendly is this converse! These things are spoken thousands of times over, to the stupid and inadvertent generally, and they never take notice of it. But when he comes to make light, and to shine through that darkness which inwrapt the heart, then hope begins to take place. Then saith such a soul, "I see it is a feasible thing, a practicable thing, that the Gospel proposes; I see God hath put the management of all these affairs into such a hand as can at once both reconcile his attributes to one another, and reconcile him to us, and us to him. And then,

(4.) He instructs concerning the way and method of coming to have an interest and part in Christ. So as to have both righteousness and spiritual life in him and by him, *i. e.* upon being united with him. This is the way; and he instructs the soul that there is not only a fulness of all grace in his Son, from whom they are to receive righteousness, and the regenerating Spirit also; but there is a way of coming to be interested in all his fulness, and in that renovating Spirit; and we then must be united to him. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom." Then we are told there must be union. And how is that to be brought about? Why, thou must be in him, in order to this interest and participation from him. This wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption, which are in Christ, are nothing to thee that hast no part in him; but his wisdom is thine, his righteousness is thine, his sanctification and redemption thine; but all this upon supposition that thou art in him. There must be such a union in order to that participation. But how is this union brought about? Why, he that is the author of the whole design, is the author of this union: "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom," 1 Cor. i. 20. Thus this union must be of God.

But then you must consider this to be very proper and wholesome counsel to you. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee," Job xxii. 21. She to him for all such counsels as any wise man would take and follow. As Luke xiv. latter end. "Or what king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace." This is good counsel, which is secretly prompted unto that. Oh, sinner, sue for peace. Thou canst never, with thy feeble power, oppose and contend in a war against Almightiness itself, that comes armed with terror and vengeance against thee. This cannot be: it is thy way to sue for peace. And we are told in what way God will be reconciled, if ever to be reconciled; that is, it must be in and by the Mediator. Here is suitable counsel given thee. He counsels thee, Rev. iii. 18. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." You are externally counselled to all this in the Gospel. And it may be there are such direct intimations given to minds too; it is likely very often but little regarded. But that such counsel should be given is very friendly. What wilt thou do, thou undone, lost creature? Thou hast no clothing, but must appear naked before the Divine vindictive justice; nothing to fence thee, nothing to arm thee against the stroke of vengeance. Thou art running on blindly upon thy own ruin. I tell thee where there is eye-salve for thee, and where there is clothing for thee, and where there is every thing that thy necessitous, indigent, undone state requires and needs; I counsel thee to betake thyself to him, to apply to him. This is very friendly counsel. It is friendly in the design, and aspect, and tendency of it, as it presents itself to thee in the external word; but much more when it is inwardly suggested, when the thing is inculcated inwardly to the mind and heart, and thou art beaten upon by these things, thou art so and so counselled. Why dost thou not hearken to counsel? Why, in such things as these, there appears much of friendship on God's part; that is, in the friendly instructions and counsels which he is pleased to give, especially internally and correspondently, as it must be, with the external revelation of his mind concerning these things.

SERMON XXIX.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

2. THE friendship of God appears in his friendly performances and effectual communications. We are to know that his friendly design towards souls doth not terminate here; it reacheth further. That is applicable enough in this case which is spoken in reference to lower and inferior cases in the 15th and 16th verses of this same chapter; "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" It would profit as little if God should himself but at the same rate treat men's souls; give them good words, though very apposite and suitable to their case; say to them, Be warmed, be filled; but not give them the things requisite to their souls; what would that profit them? Compare that with 1 John iii. 17. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" What he may show of kindness and good-will is nothing like the love of God. God's friendly propension towards miserable, necessitous souls, did show itself at another rate than merely in advising and counselling them, or seeming to wish them well; his friendship exercises itself in the most considerable acts of external benefaction, in doing them good, and rejoicing over them to do them good, "with all his heart and with all his soul," as the expression is, and his own words are. But as to this also, I shall give you instances how this kind of friendship, by way of communication and performance, on God's part appears. As,

(1.) That he ingenerates this faith; he works it in us. It is called a "fruit of the Spirit," Gal. v. 22. And it is said to proceed from the "Spirit of faith," 2 Cor. iv. 13. We are told that "by faith we are saved, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. That faith we are not to take separately and alone; but it heightens the love and gift, that we do believe and are saved by faith, "and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God." It is by this faith that the soul is brought into union with his Saviour; by it, it comes to him; by it, they receive him, (John i. 12.) and it is by this they come to the Son, and to have life, 1 John v. 11. It is in order hereto, that God the Father is said to draw souls to Christ, and they are said to come to him. John vi. 44. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him." What friendliness is this to induce and draw souls to Christ! We must understand that drawing aright. It is not dragging by violence, but as himself expresses it, that, (Hosea xi. 4.) "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love! and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them." It is by a gentle but effectual allection, drawing you to him; making it by reason and love in conjunction, to appear to be your interest and concern; and so working on love to yourselves that it may be improved into a love to him too. When they are brought in with a love upon indigency first, they may grow into a love of complacency and highest delight afterwards; one love being the loadstone of another—loving because you are first loved. But look into these acts, and you will see what a friendly design there must be in faith which is produced by union with Christ. By the result of that faith, you will see the kindness of it. There must be friendship in him that will engage my trust when it is nothing to him: he gains nothing by it, but it is necessary and beneficial to me. I do in this case take pains with myself to trust in him, working, but only so as one man may upon another in order thereunto; for they cannot immediately touch, and attract, and turn, and draw hearts. They can but use apt and suitable methods in order hereunto: but if they do that, there is much of kindness in the design; when one takes great pains, and uses industrious endeavours to induce to trust in him, he himself having no advantage by it, but I gain by it the greatest things. That the blessed God should induce and engage souls to trust in him, when it can be of no advantage to him; but he knows that without it they must perish and be lost; when he doth not only invite them to trust in the Lord, stay themselves upon their God, rely upon him and upon that truth and fidelity that never failed any; how friendly is this! To insist on it from time to time, not to give over the soul that hath often neglected him in making these overtures; this is wonderful friendly. To draw the soul into union with Christ, and with himself in and by him; this is to bring such into a state of blessedness. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus," &c. You are foolish creatures, but he will be wisdom to you; you are guilty creatures, but he will be righteousness to you: you are impure creatures, but he will be sanctification to you; you are enslaved creatures, but he will be redemption unto you: all this is of God. And whereas he doth manifestly design to reunite souls to his Son, and by him to himself; how friendly is this design. He intimates hereby that such and such can never be too near to him, or be too close with them. But,

2. This divine friendship appears in his hereupon counting them righteous, and imputing righteousness to them, as the text expresses it; "he believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." This faith was given Abraham, and thereupon God counts him righteous; and so he does every believer besides. And is not this a most friendly estimate? is it not to count as a friend, to count us righteous who were far from righteousness? He not only pardons, but accepts as righteous. We should count this wonderful friendship, when we consider our state; we were creatures under a law that cursed every one that "continued not in all things written therein to do them;" and we had broken that whole law, in every part of our duty as to love of God, and our fellow-creatures of the same order. From the depraved nature of man, being carnalized into enmity against God, and hatred one of another, "the carnal mind is enmity against God," Rom. viii. 7. This is more than the breach of every command; for my quarrel is not against this or that precept, but against subjection; and so my design is against the divine government; now, is not this friendly when he will thus give faith to such, and reckon and impute righteousness to them? I know there is, as to this, commonly introduced a very unnecessary and trifling dispute. What it is that is counted for righteousness? When the matter comes to be thus stated—is it the act of believing or the object believed on? and the question will be easily answered by putting another question:—Suppose it be asked, What is that which clothes a man?—is it his garment, or his putting it on? Sure a very ordinary understanding would find no difficulty to answer it. The garment would never clothe a man, if it were not put on; and the action that a man uses in putting on a thing would not have clothed him if he had not the garment; and ergo, these two must contribute together for this end, of being clothed, but in different kinds—it is the garment when put on that clothes him, and the action that is used in putting it on is no part of the clothing, but it was requisite thereunto, and that without which he could not have been clothed. All this is so obvious, that I might save the labour of applying it to the case in hand. What is it upon which a man is counted righteous in the sight of God? Why, he puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, and God puts him on, as it were, so that the Scripture phrase is intelligible enough. It is that which is put on which is the matter of this clothing, and the action that is used here is no part of that matter, and yet it is such a requisite as without which he would never be clothed.

What is it upon which a man is counted righteous before God?—why he puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, as was said. But how friendly is it that such men should upon such terms, and in such a way and method, be brought into that state of righteous persons, when, if they were not so clothed, they stood exposed and naked unto vindictive justice armed with power even to the highest. But now the sword of vengeance cannot touch them; otherwise,

* Preached Sept. 24th, 1693.

thou wert every moment liable. Oh, what friendliness is there in all this! Again,—

3. This friendship appears in this matter herein, that when God imputes righteousness to the believer, he imparts his Spirit; and this is wonderful friendliness, if the distress of the case be considered. Plain it is, that the miserable sinner did need somewhat else besides cloathing, and without it he must have been miserable for ever. And most certain it is, that the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ was never designed to be the cloathing of a carcass. The soul that was "dead in trespasses and sins" is made alive when made righteous. There is no need of disputing about priority here; the righteousness and Spirit of Christ are given together; they are simultaneous gifts; he doth not give life by the Spirit to such souls because he hath made them righteous; nor doth he make them righteous because he hath given them life, or given his Spirit; but these are co-ordinate streams from the same fountain of Divine grace. "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11.—And a horrid catalogue of wickedness was recited in the foregoing 9th and 10th verses, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,—nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Righteousness and Spirit are given together; and should we suppose these gifts to be separate, the former would avail little without the latter; for heaven would never be heaven to a dead soul; if it were possible for such a soul, upon the account of Christ's righteousness, to be admitted into heaven, what would a dead soul do there? Therefore, they are gifts of Divine grace conferred together. It would be a horrid reproach and contempt that the righteousness of the Son of God should be made a covering for continuing the deformity and loathsomeness of a carcass that should be only hid, and not cured. This is a most unsupposable thing, and, than which, nothing would be more ignominious, not only to the wisdom of God, but to his grace too; for sure it is more abundant grace to cure these two evils together, than one alone; to heal him inwardly and cloathe him outwardly at the same time. And again.

4. This friendly inclination on God's part doth further appear in giving repentance to the sinner, which is comprehended in the gift of the Spirit, as every other grace is; only here I must, before I speak more distinctly to this of repentance, enlarge somewhat to show you under what distinct considerations we are to look on this gift of the Spirit that comprehends all the rest.—The Spirit is given in order to its first working, and in order to its after-employment and work that it hath to do in the souls of men. It is not otherwise capable of being given at all, than only relatively and effectively in respect of the relation and effect. But it is not hard to understand in what sense (when a person is the thing spoken of) one can be said to be given to another: it is not the one's being made the other's being; there is nobody so absurd as to understand the matter so; but only such a one becomes related who was unrelated before, and upon that relation doth such works to which relation obligeth, and that he was not obliged to do before. This is the meaning of giving one person to another, in common language amongst men; and so must be the meaning of the Spirits's being given to any of us, that is, that it becomes now related by covenant to us, having been unrelated before; for, when by covenant we take God to be our God, what do we take? not the essence of God abstractedly, but we take God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, who all become related to us for several purposes—God to be the prime author of being to us, Christ to be our redeemer, the Spirit to be our enlightener and sanctifier; and all as comprehended in the covenant by which God is said to be our God and we to be his people; as is sufficiently and expressly enough signified by the baptismal form; which baptism brings a signal, a token, a seal, of this covenant. We are ergo baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be continually our God. And now hereupon the Spirit becomes ours by covenant, or, we having a covenant interest in him, he comes to do such work, or to work such effects in those to whom he is now become so related, as he works no where else. And so he is with them, and in them, to that very purpose. It is true, the Spirit is all the world over in every man, in every creature, in every thing; "Whither shall I flee from thy Spirit?" Psalm cxxxix. 5. But he is in such as these, for such and such special gracious purposes as he doth not effect and bring about in any others, but those to whom he is in covenant so related. And this being so far clear then we must distinguish between his first operations upon souls, and the consequent operations for which those former do prepare and make way. Whatsoever was necessary to be done previously, all that enlightening, all that conviction, which must immediately accompany, and, in some respects, in order of nature, but not of time, be before saving faith, if these do come within the compass of saving *grace* (for there are operations that be only within the compass of common grace, which may be before, and long before, in time.) But whatsoever lies within the compass of saving grace they are all at once. There must be very great exertions of the power and influence of the Holy Spirit in bringing men to believe; and in doing so he does, as it were, work as a visitant, but afterwards he works and operates as an inhabitant; having by his former operations prepared his own habitation, built his temple, now he comes to inhabit this temple, to dwell in it, and to exert himself in all suitable communications and operations from time to time there; as in that 1 Cor. iii. 16. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" There never would have been any act of saving grace at all without his Spirit; but there be such acts as are antecedaneous to its indwelling presence, and which he doth as a visitant; whereas there are continual exertions of the grace and power of the Spirit to be done by it afterwards. And how marvellous friendship is this, that God should give his own Spirit to inhabit (with kind designs, and in order to such gracious purposes and ends) such wretched creatures as we. Of all ways you can think of whatsoever to express friendship to another, if it were within the compass of your power it would be in giving them the same mind, the same spirit, the same sentiments of things that you yourself have, wherein you suppose them to be right; you would have them to have every thing of your mind and your spirit (except what you could of yourselves apprehend to be imperfection, infirmity, and defect:) and there was no possible way, if that were in our power, to express kindness and friendship so significantly as this way. If a wise man, a good man, could convey to a son, not only his lands, his tithes, his honours, his dignities, but could convey his wisdom, his goodness, his integrity, certainly here were the greatest kindness showed in this that it were possible for a creature to express. If I would do the part of a friend to the uttermost, (and this lay within the compass of my power,) wherein I thought my friend and my spirit to be right, I would impart to such a one my mind and spirit, that he may be of the same mind. Herein would be the truest friendship; for where there is the truest friendship, and there is the most agreement in minds, they do insensibly mould and form one another, and impress one another. But hereunto there must be a divine power, according to which all things are given pertaining to life and godliness, and the participation (comprehensive of all the rest) of the Divine nature, as it is expressed 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. "According as his Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." There is a Divine Spirit, and thereby we are made partakers of the Divine nature,—of all gracious principles and dispositions of one kind and another. How admirable friendship is there in this, that the holy God should give into the breast and bosom of a man, that pure and holy Spirit, to be an inhabitant and indweller there, to chase away the darkness that inwrap that wretched soul, to inspire it with a new and holy life, to implant the principles most connatural to such a life, and which are to have their constant exercise through

the whole of a man's course. Oh! the friendliness that doth appear in this! But when all this is done, and the soul is made capable of acting, here cannot but be, as I said, in the fourth place—

SERMON XXX.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

4. THE exercise of repentance towards God; and the bringing of the soul to this hath the most of friendliness that can be expressed. It is he that brings the soul to the necessary exercise of repentance and godly sorrow, whereby men are brought off from sin, and brought home to God. I would now have you to understand, that I do not, by mentioning these things in this order wherein I do, say that there is such an order punctually observed by God in the effecting and bringing about these things. But where there are many particulars to be mentioned to you, it is impossible they can all be mentioned in one breath; we can but mention one after another. But God's order of doing things may not be always the same. Some acts may be produced first in such an order, and (for ought we know) afterwards in another. And most certain we are, that for the substance of all that is requisite to the salvation and blessedness of the soul, it may, and for ought we know, always is done in one and the same moment, when God regenerates it, visiting it with his Son, and so pardons and justifies it, and entitleth it to eternal life. And it is very possible, that that very moment wherein he first applies himself to the soul to unite it to Christ, may be at the moment of its separation from this body. And so all that is necessary to salvation must be done in that moment, or the soul must be lost, and for ought we know, it may be always so. But, I say, notwithstanding that when there are many things that are distinct in themselves, that is, that are capable of distinct conceptions in our minds, none of these things are to be overlooked; we must distinctly mention things that do occur, though we cannot mention them all in one moment or breath.

But most certain it is, that there is in this very case repentance necessary; and there is the exercise of repentance necessary. So faith is necessary, not only the principle of faith, but the act and exercise too; for when we are said to be justified by faith, what is the meaning of that? By a disposition to believe: the mere disposition to believe is not believing. We are said to be justified by faith, Rom. v. 1. so Gal. ii. 16. it is said we have believed, that we might be justified. We have believed, not have been disposed only to believe, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ. Why so, after the same manner, when it is said, "Repent, that your sins may be blotted out;" the meaning cannot be, that there be some disposition in you to repent, Acts iii. 19. "Repent, for the remission of sins," Acts ii. 38. The meaning cannot be, that there be in you some essay, some tendency, some inclinations to repentance; but, repent, except you repent (not except you be some way inclined to it) ye shall all likewise perish. Herein, I say, inasmuch as such a repentance is so conjunct a thing with a safe state for a sinner, there appears most admirable friendliness in this matter. That a heart that was most adverse and disaffected to God before, should be turned to him; that a heart that was before a stone, a rock, should be so relenting; how admirable a thing is this, if you consider at once both the necessity and the excellency, and the rarity of such a repentance. Take these things together, and it is most admirable friendship that appears in giving repentance. It is spoken with admiration, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life," Acts xi. 18. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins," Acts v. 31.

1. Consider the necessity of it, and you acknowledge the friendliness of it. Any one that understood the state of his own case, if he had but so much sense about him as to consider what he should do, and how incapable he is of doing it, would say, Lord, what shall I do with this wretched heart of mine? I can as soon dissolve a rock as melt it down. I cannot make it relent or bleed. The most proper, the most weighty, most important thoughts I can take up, do all hover on the surface, and never enter, have no mollifying influence, are productive of nothing; well, now for God to say, this is a thing that shall be done—I will take away the heart of stone; this soul of thine it must dissolve or perish; thou must repent or die. Thy faint strugglings prove thy impotency; I will relieve in this distressed case. Oh what friendship is here! And,

2. If we consider the excellency of the thing wrought in this case, it is a most friendly work. It restores the lost creature to itself, and brings it to God. A most glorious work! Thy wretched soul is not itself till it repent. Repentance is a becoming wise. It is a soul's return to a sound and sober sense of things, of which it was destitute before. The character that Ecclesiastes gives of the hearts of men generally, which we heard opened heretofore, is—madness is in their hearts. Repentance is the cure of this madness. It is by it they return to a sound mind; and it is by it they return to God. "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;" you find how they are conjoined, Acts xx. 21. A wandering creature, that hath spent its time hitherto in perpetual deviations from the living God, now comes back to him. Admirable friendliness, to produce and bring about this return! Long it was and not such a thought taken up, Where is God my maker? There was no miss of God. How is the soul, after the Divine touch and impress put upon it, impatient of longer distance! I can live without God no longer; where is God my maker? This resolution possesses it; "I will arise and go to my father, and say, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Perhaps there were some cold relentings before, but now that matter is resolved; and it is the power of Divine grace, giving repentance, that resolves and determines it. Now a deceptation is out of doors, laid aside. And whereas the matter was long at this pass, Shall I? Shall I? Shall I break off from this way of sin? Shall I abandon that lust which did domineer, and unto which I did enslave myself? Now the soul will be no longer at this pass; Shall I? Shall I? But when God gives it repentance, he brings the matter to this: the soul says, "I will arise and go to my Father," and throw myself at his feet, and cry for mercy, as that which I can no longer live and be without. I can remain in this irresolution no longer. This is giving repentance, and oh, how friendly! When by it the soul returns to itself and to its God at once. And again,

3. If you consider the rarity of such a work, it is wonderful friendliness. How many are there, who sit a life's time under that Gospel, which is Christ's call continually to repentance! "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Many live a life's time under that Gospel by which he calls, but his call is regarded no more than the whistling of the wind among the leaves of the trees. "I called, but they gave me no answer: I called, but ye refused: I stretched out my hand, but no man regarded," Prov. i. 24. And what proves the issue of this with, God knows, too many? Ye shall call, but I will not regard; ye shall make many prayers, and I will not hear; "I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh." Consider this as the common case, and what wonderful friendliness is it when he gives repentance! When he enables a poor creature to fall before him in the dust, with self-loathing, cloathing itself with shame and confusion before him; when he hath made it feel wounds and plicating posture; when he hath brought it to a supremorse within itself, which the most never feel;—let but these things be considered together, the necessity, the excellency, and the rarity of serious repentance, and it is wonderful friendliness when God worketh a soul to it.

5. Great friendliness appears in his begetting in the soul a universal frame of holiness and rectitude, that is spread through all the powers and faculties thereof. Though this, for ought we know, may be done in the same instant of

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time wherein he is said to regenerate a soul; yet it is capable of a distinct conception, and so ought not to be altogether confounded with that: for whenever it pleaseth God to touch a soul with a saving divine touch, that touch must be supposed to be vital. He toucheth it, and makes it live. He, by that touch, draws it into union with his Son, to him, so as that it comes to possess him, to have him (in the Scripture phrase;) and in having him it hath life, I John v. 12. Yet, for all this, the having a distinct, explicit frame of holy rectitude laid out through the soul, is a diverse thing; it is to be distinctly considered, supposing that that be by so quick and speedy an operation effected, as to be in the same moment of time. And so, though these be not separable things, they are distinct things. As, when the rational soul is first united with the unformed matter of a human body, there may be said to be a man virtually, though the several parts of the human body are distinctly formed by degrees. It is very true indeed, that where a spiritual being is the subject of an operation, there it may be quick, and, for aught we know, momentary; it may be done, for all we know, in a moment. Spirit being said to be the production, the thing produced in the case, as John iii. 6. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Why, supposing that, yet that first vital touch, by which it may be said to be regenerated, may be distinguished, though not separated, from this entire work of regeneration, by which the frame of holiness is superinduced—that work of sanctification. And so the most do distinguish regeneration from sanctification; as the former is the latter virtually, and the latter is the former actually and completely. And this frame consists of that concurrence of gracious principles that do belong to the new nature, now become explicit in the soul. They were all actually in the new nature when first given, but yet make a formed new man, as the Divine Spirit lays out the several lineaments thereof by his own operation and influence. And whether that be instantaneous, or whether it be in a continued succession of time, is a matter altogether so unknown, and so unknowable to us, that it would be lost time and labour to go about to dispute it. Besides, that the determination would be as little useful as it is possible. But certain it is, that besides the communication of the new nature and the new life, which virtually contain all holy gracious principles in it, there are holy gracious principles given themselves, which actually and formally obtain and have place in the soul, and are the fruits of the Spirit, which we find mentioned in distinct terms, Gal. v. 22, 23. and in divers other places.

6. With this falls in the mortifying and destroying the body of sin; and it is indifferent whether this be mentioned before the other, or after. It is altogether indifferent. For this work of the Divine Spirit, it may be very well wrought, by the opposite thereunto taking place in the soul, and making its own way, and expelling the former form, as this latter is itself introduced. As fire seizing upon any combustible matter, it doth at the same time expel the form of the wood or seal, and introduce its own form of fire. But that is a thing that must necessarily fall in, be the order what it will, and it makes little what the order be. But when there is a new man to be put on, there is the old man to be put off, and there is the body of sin and of flesh to be destroyed, so as that the soul is no longer to serve sin. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus is to free it from the law of sin and death, Rom. viii. 2. It is altogether an unconceivable thing, that when the soul is in union with Christ, and entitled to a righteousness by him of his working out, that it should at the same time continue in a stated rebellion against God, and under the governing power of reigning sin; of sin still in the throne, and still giving law, or still being a law in the soul,—the law of sin and death. These things can no more consist. The reign and power of sin is broken in the same instant that any one's state is changed. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace;" under the law, as it is a condemning law. Why, then, at the same time that the sinner ceases to be condemned, sin ceaseth to reign. If it hath no condemning power, it hath no dominion. To be under the condemning power of sin, and to be under grace, these are inconsistent. And to be under grace, and to be under the power of sin regnant, are equally inconsistent. "Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." It will not consist with your state, with that state which you are to conclude is yours, and is proper to you now, that is, a state of holy life into which you are regenerated. "Reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ," Rom. vi. 11. The apostle is not teaching these to make a false judgment. He would not have them reckon themselves alive unto God through Jesus Christ, if they were not alive, or if they were still dead. But if they be so alive, if the life of grace doth come to have any place in them, the reigning of sin is at an end, as the next words show. Sin is no longer to reign in their mortal bodies. And in the 14th verse, "it can have no dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." And you are resigned, (as the intervening 13th verse says,) "yielding yourselves to God, as those who are alive from the dead."

Now how admirable friendship is there in this too, considering the base servitude that all were naturally in unto sin before. With how kind an eye doth the blessed God behold from his throne above, the enthralled, miserable state of wretched souls serving divers lusts and pleasures; drudging to the devil for the wages of death, and no other. Not dictated to by those lusts of theirs, which, being fulfilled, destroy them. "The wages of sin is death." It is only then when men come to have their fruit unto holiness that they have for their end everlasting life, Rom. vi. 22. That there should be so compassionate an eye cast upon the miserable state of forlorn souls upon this account, seeing them so injuriously imposed upon, held in so vile a vassalage, so ignoble a servitude, which hath so destructive a tendency, that they are led as so many slaves in bonds and cords to their destruction and final ruin, to which their course and state do naturally tend;—that God should look down with so compassionate an eye upon the distress of these wretched creatures, and determine with himself; lay the design in his wise and good counsel—I will work the freedom of these wretched souls; I have appointed a Redeemer for them, that is proper for their state of slavery;—the notion of redemption most appositely answers the notion of the enthralled state of sinners before. And ergo, it is observable, Tit. ii. 14. that our Lord is said to give himself for us "to redeem us from all iniquity." Not only to redeem us from wrath and from hell, and final ruin, but "from all iniquity."

And that is one consequent of our being in Christ, or our union with him. If ever we are said to be in him, then he is made to us redemption. Sanctification you have heard of; (and you have heard of the other before;) that stands in investing and possessing the soul with an entire new frame of holiness. And redemption, which stands in the divestiture of the power of sin, that had introduced into it a universal irrectitude, and which is wrought out or wrought off, *eadem opera*, by the same work by which the new man or the divine image is superinduced. There is great friendliness in this: These wretched souls (saith God) they shall be slaves no longer, I will assert them into a state of liberty. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. That Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of the Redeemer and Mediator, when it makes its seizure, and takes possession of them for him, it becomes the law of the Spirit of life in them, making them free from the law of sin and death. And that is a further expression of the friendliness of the blessed God to a soul, in and about the matters that here lie under our consideration.

These are his ways with the sons of men, when he is about saving them from going down to the pit—when he hath found out a righteousness and redemption for them; or when he is showing man his righteousness that he may deliver him from that state of death and destruction into which he was continually ready to precipitate himself.

There are many more instances of this friendliness on God's part yet behind. But as to what has been thus said, let us make some reflections on ourselves. What have we found of this friendliness between the blessed God and our souls, in any such instances as these? Hath there been any such transaction set on foot between him and us? Do we find any applications have been made to our spirits, such

as we have attended to? Indeed God speaks to men inwardly, and often, but they perceive it not. He speaks, but they know not his voice that speaks to them. It is often a whispering voice, which they can easily neglect, and against which they shut and stop their ears. We are not to conclude, ergo, that he hath never made any application to us, if we have had no distinct reflections thereon. But we may conclude, if there have been any application made to us to any valuable purpose, then we have been capable of reflecting and taking notice that it hath been made; our attention hath been engaged, and we must have been brought to consider that God is dealing with my soul about the very life of it; and salvation or destruction will be the issue of the treaty, according as I now comply and cooperate (in a subordinate way) with his motions in me and upon me; or do resist them, and comply not. But how awakening should it be to us to consider that these are matters of life and death; that such a treaty with the souls of men hath this design, to invest them with a righteousness in which they may be capable of appearing safely before the tribunal of the supreme and final Judge. And we are each of us to consider with ourselves, Have I yet such a righteousness, yea or no? Such a righteousness I cannot have of myself, I must be beholden for it, it must be an imparted thing. Have I any of those characters in me by which I may conclude, or whence I may gather, that such a righteousness will be reckoned to me, will be accounted to me, and so answer the exigency of my case as certainly as if I had wrought it out myself?

Why, perhaps, though we have often heard our case thus stated, yet the thoughts of this state of our case may be rarities with many. And are there any among us that never think of any such thing, but just then when we are told of it? Do we believe ourselves to have souls made for eternity and an everlasting estate? And do we apprehend it enough for us to think of such matters as these once a week? We cannot help having some thoughts of this kind when the sound of words that import them beats upon our ears. That we cannot help. But is it enough (I say) for things that do concern us with reference to eternity, to be thought of but once a week, when we cannot help it? when things are borne in upon us, and inserted, and we have no way to keep them off, unless we would stop our ears? Is this like persons designing for eternity, and for an everlasting well-being? If I would throw away all thoughts of these matters till the next season return of hearing of these again, how do I know when my soul will be required? Sure, methinks, I should consider with myself every time I lie down, have I a righteousness about me in which I may safely lie down? To lie down this night under guilt, when I do not know but this night my soul may be required, this is desperate. Who can answer to himself his having such a resolution as this! I will neglect it, I will throw away all thoughts of it. I will run the hazard, I will try what will come of it? But if, instead of engaging our spirits in the serious thoughts of what doth so deeply concern us, there should be not only a not considering but a continual running in the course that tends to involve us in new guilt, so that the person that doth not know but the next night, or the next hour, he shall be required to surrender and give up a loathsome, guilty soul, how amazing is it that a reasonable intelligent spirit should be sunk into this pitch and degree of stupidity, so little to consider, I have a soul about me that is capable of eternity, and of eternal felicity in that state which lies before me! how amazing is it (I say) that an intelligent spirit should be so low sunk, as not to be capable of considering the difference between the pleasures of a moment and an eternity of misery and wo, if such moment be mispent in this world; and an eternity of blessedness, if it be employed, as it may be, to purposes which it is possible and capable it may!

I would leave a resolution, if it might be, with each one to consider their case. To have a righteousness that will bear me out before the tribunal of the Supreme Judge is my present and most indispensable concernment. And ergo, shall all of us go away now with the resolution, never to be at rest till we can say this righteousness is ours by the friendly vouchsafement? We could never work out such a one to ourselves. But by friendly vouchsafement we find such characters to be upon us that speak his righteousness is ours. Then shall we live the rest of our time, rejoicing in the hope of that glory which is also the hope of righteousness by Jesus Christ, through faith, as the apostle calls it, Gal. v. 5.—But now I go on to add in the next place—

* Preached Oct. 15, 1693.

SERMON XXXI.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

7. THAT God doth effectually make such souls to understand, that in his return to them he will be reconciled without expecting satisfaction from them for all the injuries that they have done him. Turn they must, there is an absolute necessity of it. But he makes them understand that this their turning is not for any recompense to him. It is a friendly signification when he doth (as it were) say to them, You are lost if you do not turn, if there be not serious, unfeigned, evangelical repentance; but know that this repentance of yours is no recompense to me, it is not the thing that shall make me your friend. That cannot be, for he gives this repentance. He hath granted (it is said) to the Gentiles repentance unto life, Acts xi. 18. But it is necessary to make you capable of relishing the pleasures of my friendship, which you never can do if you do not turn to me. If your hearts still remain strange and disaffected, there cannot be a friendship between you and me. Not that your repentance signifies any thing to induce me to be your friend; but only to make you capable of relishing my friendship, and of entertaining a friendly commerce with me. As men can have no friendly commerce with one another, unless there be a mutual inclination of mind towards each other; if there be but a disinclination on one side, there can be no friendly converse.

And as much as the Gospel speaking thus, and it is the constant tenor of it, that God in being reconciled to sinners expects from them no satisfaction for their own sin, it must needs be that whenever he deals with a soul, in order to the settling a friendship between him and it, he must impress this (which is the very sum and sense of the Gospel) upon their spirits. They must be Gospelized by it; have their hearts framed according to this import of the Gospel, which is, that he never expects from a sinner satisfaction for his sin. Nay, so far from that, that it may be understood, and must be understood, if the Gospel be understood aright, for the highest affront imaginable to the Redeemer for any man to offer at making satisfaction for his own sin; yea, and the highest affront imaginable to the offended Majesty of heaven, to suppose it possible that such a wretch and worm as I can make a satisfaction to the eternal God, for having wronged him by the least wrong that I ever did him. It is to make the Majesty of heaven cheap to suppose that possible; and therefore by the tenor of the Gospel that must be the remotest thought in all the world.

It is to usurp upon and invade the Redeemer's office, 1 Pet. ii. 24. quoted from Isaiah liii. 8. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "He appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Heb. ix. 26. And having by himself purged our sins, expiated our guilt, (for that is a grand part and a fundamental one of their wanting of that purgation,) he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having done this by himself. So that if a sinner should offer at such a thing to make satisfaction, what will he say? Dost thou touch him with thy work? This is a thing I do by myself. This is part of my sacred office; dost thou touch my work? Hands off, it belongs to me.

And it is to suppose the Majesty of heaven cheap and mean, and to suppose the Redeemer impotent, to think that the sinner should expiate his own sin and make God amends, when he hath committed this thing entirely to his

own Son. Thus it is that he doth Gospelize the spirits of sinners, when he is designing to make them his indeed, to bring them into a state of friendship with him. That though there be most tender relentings, and deepest debasement and humiliation, and they could lay themselves even as low as hell at the foot of the mercy-seat, yet for all this, it is the remotest thing in all the world for them to imagine they can satisfy the Divine Majesty in the least, give the least satisfaction for the least offence or wrong that they have done. Therefore whereas this is the voice of the Gospel, "Turn and ye shall live," and, I expect no compensation from you for any of the injuries you have done me, you that have lived in continual neglect of me all your days, wandering from and rebelling against the God of your lives,—if you turn I will be reconciled to you freely; I will most freely forgive you; the pardon and the peace that I am ready to afford you shall cost you nothing; and whatsoever is requisite to your present safe, and future happy state, shall be without the least expense to you. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," Isaiah lv. 1. Never trouble yourselves for money, for it shall cost you nothing. Those mercies, that flow as waters from a most exuberant and abundant fountain; those gracious, those spiritful communications meant by milk and wine, these shall all stand you in nothing; you shall have all freely if you will come. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Why this is a strange way to induce men to be reconciled to God, and to become friends with him. You will say, I have offended him highly, lived long in continual neglect of him and rebellion against him; how shall I see his face? How shall I hold up my head before him? What shall I render to him by way of recompense? Shall it be thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Alas! I cannot command them, and they would signify nothing if I could. If this whole world were mine, and I could make it one flaming sacrifice to his offended wrath and justice, it would avail nothing. Oh! to have any such objection seasonably and aptly obviated! Why all that you need, it shall be given without price. Without price! what, such precious things as I need, and must have, or I must perish? Yes, be they never so precious. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Do not think it will reach but to a few. Be they never so many, it is a ransom of sufficient value. "He gave himself a ransom for all, (see 1 Tim. ii. 6.) to be testified in due time." That is, he offered so full a ransom, that if there were never so many to be saved, there needs no addition to the value of the ransom. And none can fall short of being saved, for that reason, because the ransom was too little, because it would not answer the exigencies of the case. That can never be objected.—"To be testified in due time." I rest on that passage, too faintly rendered, and so as to hide us from the true and full significancy of it; "he gave himself a ransom, a testimony;" there is no more than so; which being read as a parenthesis, those words (in due time) are connected with the former, he gave himself a ransom in due time, in the proper appointed time. A testimony; yea, a wonderful testimony. Christ upon the cross! What a testimony is this of the reconcileableness of God to sinners! What pretence hath the unbeliever, or any heart, against the speakingness and significancy of this testimony? When you see Christ dying, and Christ a ransom to redeem sinners by a reconciling sacrifice, is not that a sufficient testimony of the Divine good will? You see this in far lower instances: he did not leave himself without witness, when there was no more to be seen of his kindness, propension, and good will to men, but giving rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons. But, oh! what a witness is this, when he gives his Son to die as a ransom upon the cross! when he is set forth (as the expression is) "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," Rom. iii. 25. A mighty testimony to the grace of God, and a mighty testimony against the unbelief of men. He gave himself a ransom; and here was the testimony that God is ready to receive returning sinners, and to be reconciled to them without any price paid by them. Having such a ransom, such a price paid down already for them; so that now, sinners, whoever you are, that live under the Gospel, you have not this pretence left against making haste to be reconciled unto God—"I have highly offended him, I have wronged him; I can make him no recompense, no satisfaction." This is to add wickedness to your sin, to think of making him a satisfaction. He never leaves that upon you; you have not that to say against returning presently, and falling with a broken heart at the footstool of the throne of grace. You are not to insist upon this; it would be wickedness to stand upon it, to think of making him satisfaction. No, you have nothing to do, but only to fly to him for mercy, implore his mercy, be at his foot; there will be peace between him and you. He is willing to be reconciled, and it shall cost you nothing. And then lastly as to this former head, in the 8th place,

8. He thus at length brings about actual covenanting between himself and the sinner. That covenant into which they enter is a covenant of reconciliation, a covenant of peace, a league of amity, in which they take him for their reconciled God, through Christ the great Mediator of this covenant, and give up themselves as reconciled ones to be of his people. He brings them to this, desists not, gives not over the treaty with such as do believe to righteousness and salvation, till matters be brought to this issue and result. A covenant is struck between him and them. The sinner seeing this state of the case, I must perish if I do not turn; if I do turn, reconciliation and pardon and acceptance with God will cost me nothing, I shall have all freely; then I have no more to say, but to resign and say, Lord, I take thee for my reconciled God; I give up myself to thee as a reconciled one, to be of thy people. Here is the issue and result of things between God and sinners. Then, when he is dealing with them, in order to the producing of that faith in them, upon which they are justified and saved..... Now the state of friendship is settled, and all things are concluded between him and them by a solemn covenant. "Now (saith he) I have the sinner reduced and under bonds, safe and happy bonds, I am content to be under bonds myself to him; at the same time I require him to be bound, I bind myself. I will be a God to thee, though thou hast been an offending creature." And so the poor soul it hath no more to do but to accept God for his God, and to resign himself to him as a reconciled one, to be of his people. Now, I say, the state of friendship is settled by all this between God and the sinner; and being so, there are sundry other great expressions of friendship consequent upon the settlement of this state. As,

1. That God takes possession of such a one as his own. He takes an entire possession of him. Now thou art mine; not in right and title only as thou wast before, and as all the creation is, but mine by consent, mine by covenant; mine by claim, and thy own solemn act indeed. He accordingly takes possession of the soul as his own; comes in upon it with the fulness of that Spirit that designs here to fix his abode, and vouchsafe its constant inhabiting presence.

I told you, before, the distinction between the Spirit's visiting and the Spirit's dwelling; and, if you will, of its building and its inhabiting. In all the former work it did visit, and it was a building preparing for itself. Whatsoever was done or wrought in the soul in all the fore-mentioned kinds, it was all the work of that Spirit approaching the soul, and forming it for the purposes for which it was designed. And being so prepared and formed, now it comes and inhabits the soul so prepared and brought into such a state by the Spirit: for it is now its temple. It is become a temple. He was to build first; he finds all in ruins and rubbish; the ruins of an old temple. But now there is a new fabric erected. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor. iii. 16. In whom we are builded together, that is, in Christ; in whom the foundations are laid of this temple, and who is himself the original temple, replenished with the fulness of God. "Destroy this temple, (meaning his body,) and in three days I will raise it up again." Here, I say, was the original temple, and the model and platform of that temple, which every regenerate person becomes upon union with him. All are brought as so many

lively stones to that "living corner-stone, and so built up a spiritual house," 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5. And so that, "In whom ye are also builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit," Ephes. ii. 22. Here, ergo, now the Holy Ghost is to dwell—a mighty friendship! I will have my very Spirit be in you. "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them," Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. I will put it into you, so that there it shall have a fixed abode. Hereby we know that he dwelleth in us and we in him, by the Spirit that he hath given us. This is the mutual indwelling which speaks the nearness of the union, and is indifferently expressed by God's dwelling in us and our dwelling in him. We could know nothing of this, but by the Spirit in its vital and discernible operations. By the Spirit that he hath given us, (which is an active, powerful principle in us,) we know that he dwells in us and we dwell in him; it speaks itself by efforts that may be felt, that are most perceptible. And,

2. He hereupon holds a continual communion with such souls: that is it for which he will dwell with them by his Spirit, in order to constant converse; as they that cohabit can converse together more freely and more constantly than others. Indeed, cohabitation is not fully expressive of this case, of this mutual inhabitation, which comes a great deal nearer; so that the conversation that can be between them who inhabit in the same walls, and under the same roof, is too defectively expressive of vital communion, that living intercourse which is between God and such souls: for as he doth inhabit by his Spirit, he converseth by his Spirit. This fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, but by the Spirit, called the communion of the Holy Ghost. Compare 1 John i. 3. with 2 Cor. xiii. 14. That fellowship which believing souls are said to have with the Father and with the Son, is called the communion of the Holy Ghost: the immediate agent between the blessed God, Father and Son, and the soul, that must move and work towards him. And so this communion is not like that between men and men, be they never so near and never so dear to each other, never such friends; they cannot converse but by words or by external signs and tokens. But here is an immediate converse of spirit, a vital converse; the Holy Spirit moving the soul inwardly, and making it move under its motions back again towards God in Christ: for God is not to be conversed with otherwise than in his Christ. And so the matter differs as to this sort of operation by the renewed soul, from the operations that are exerted and put forth in it, by way of preparation and introduction unto this state of friendship; for in those the soul is but passive, barely passive, it is wrought upon; but now it comes to be active; it is so acted upon as to procure a continual re-acting, and it is so in every gracious act. Such is the vouchsafement of grace on God's part, and such the exigency of the case on the soul's part, that there shall not be one act but, saith God, I will have a hand in it. He mingles with the renewed spirit in every gracious act that this communion speaks. As it is in playing on a musical instrument, there is no string that sounds untouched, and every string as it is touched; here is action and re-action throughout; so it is in this communion between God and the soul through Christ and by the Spirit.

Here is the greatest friendliness imaginable on his part to bring it about and procure that a soul which was alienated from him, and a stranger and disaffected to him, which chose to live at the utmost distance from him, now acts all in God. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be manifest, that they are wrought in God," John iii. 21. There are such works, such motions, such modencies, such suspirings in the soul, as speak him to be the author; as carry their own proof, their own evidence in them, that they are wrought in God. Men would be no such thing if God were not in the matter. But O! what friendliness is this, that he will procure that there should be such a converse, such an intercourse; his own blessed Spirit mingling with the spirit of a poor soul, which he hath now put his own impression upon, and gives his vital formative touch unto.

3. His friendship appears upon all this, that now he taketh all due care of their growth, of their improvement in all spiritual excellencies. He takes continual care, I say, of their growth, all due care, all that it befits and becomes him to take. And you must know, that his friendliness in this thing is not to be estimated merely by the success, by their actual discernible growth and improvement; because his care and his agency must be suitable to the subject. This the divine decorum doth require, that his agency should be suitable to the subject, and the subject must be considered as an intelligent subject. And, ergo, how are such to grow? They are not to grow as the lilies of the field, not to grow as the grass and trees grow, without any thing of care and concern. Indeed, we are directed by our Saviour, in reference to our external concerns, to be void of all perplexing care, considering how the lilies of the field grow without it. But there is no such thing directed with reference to our souls and spiritual concernment. But we are there put upon seeking and striving to the very utmost. Seek first the kingdom of God, principally, with all the intentions of your souls. That kingdom of God, which in its first and inchoate state must be within us, that we are to intend and take care of, and to labour every day to have our spirits near, and more cultivated and wrought into a compliance with, and subserviency to, the laws and rules of that kingdom: this must be our business. Our souls ought to be a garden, a paradise, which we are to till and cultivate, and to take a continual care of. Therefore, I say, that the friendliness that is to be seen in the care of God for our growth, is not to be estimated merely by our discernible growth, but several other ways. As,

1. By the kindness of his design: he designs our spiritual increase. And,

2. By the aptness of the means that he useth thereunto, both internally and externally.

(1.) Internally. He hath implaoted vital principles capable of growing, capable of improving, a new life, a new nature, whose tendency is to perfection.

Natura intendit perfectissimum. It is a universal law, concerning all nature, that it ever intends that which is most perfect. And certainly the new nature is not most unnatural, it is not the least of all natural; it doth not deviate from and fall below the rules of universal nature. He hath implanted principles which naturally tend to perfection, and that affords continual influences to co-operate with, and cherish those principles from that Spirit; from which it is possible he may retire, may be grieved, and so infer miserable infeeblements and languishments upon the deserted soul, deserted in a degree, and deserted for a time. And,

(2.) He affords the most suitable external means. The sincere milk of the word is to be received for that very purpose, that we may grow thereby; and we are directed continually to supplicate and draw down by believing, by the exercise of that principle of faith, influences from above that may cherish all the rest, and to have that faith exercised and breathing in all the external duties and acts o worship, which from time to time are to be performed. And herein there is a great appearance and demonstration of God's friendliness towards regenerate souls. He so far takes care of their growth, doing what becomes and befits the wisdom of a God to do in his dealings with intelligent creatures, reasonable spirits now inspired from himself, and planted with new principles from above; yea, and in this matter his friendliness must be owned to appear,

(3.) In the very rebukings themselves, which he gives, when, through slothful neglect, languishings do ensue. For we must know, that such decays as are consequent upon the Spirit's being grieved, and retiring and withdrawing in a degree, are at the same time faults and chastisements. If my spirit languisheth, be faint and feeble, this is a defect,—the want of that spirit and liveliness that should be in me, and, ergo, blameable. But it is corrective also; "thine own backslidings shall reprove thee," Jer. ii. 19. See now "that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken me," that thou hast withdrawn thyself, that thou hast retired and neglected me: "thy own backslidings shall reprove thee." And then,

(4.) The friendliness that appears in that care which God takes of our spiritual growth, is seen in the excellency of the plant that is to grow, or whose growth or improvement he takes this care of. And what is that? A divine and

heavenly principle, and all additional degrees, by the accession whereof it is said to improve and grow. They hold to the kind, they are congenerons, and are of the same kind. So that if there be growth, there is always a suitable communication from heaven, from God, which is in its own kind and nature a divine and heavenly thing. That grace which is to grow, is a heaven-born thing; a thing born of God. It is God's own production; yea, it is his very image; for the creation is his production—he hath made all things. But this is a production of his own image, his very likeness. The new man is created after God. He is himself at once the author and exemplar of this work and production. Eph. iv. 24. "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him," Coloss. iii. 10. God is now introducing his own image into the soul, when he is new-creating it. And this is a work not to be done in the dark; it "is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Now, (as if he should say, I am now going to raise up a new creation in a dark, dead, ruined, desolate, forlorn soul: it is a glorious work I am about, let it be beheld, let it come into the light. I will have the soul itself know what I am doing upon it: it is renewed in knowledge, a light shining upon the soul, by which it may perceive that God is bringing in upon it his own likeness. Mighty friendliness this is. As it is often a way wherein a man expresses his kindness to his friend, by giving him his picture, so doth God express his friendliness, gives his picture, and gives it so inwrought into the soul itself. Wherever thou goest, I will have thee carry my picture, even in thy breast. Great friendliness. And this is an image that can grow; for it is a living image, not a dead show. It is a vital image that is capable of improvement, and growing liker and liker, and still of growing liker and liker, as the image is. "By beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. What a mighty friendliness is this! But then I should come, in the fourth place, to show,

4. What friendliness he expresses towards the soul, upon its backsliding, after all. How graciously he recalls the backsliding soul, and what his workings towards it are herein and hereupon. But methinks the hearing of all this should set many a heart on work among us. Oh, who would not have such a friend? Who would want such a friend, if he be to be had? If friendship with him be a possible thing, oh, why should I live upon earth without it? They are dark and gloomy days wherein generally men go from morning to night, and know nothing of this friendly converse with him. Oh, why should not my soul be open to the entertainment of such a friendly overture? Why should not I fall in with it? Why should such a day be lost to me? Why should such a day as this be past over? the day of treaty betwixt the blessed God and wretched souls. Why should I lose such a day, and not be immediately and out of hand taken into this blessed state of friendship with God, and give up myself absolutely and entirely to him? But now to proceed:

SERMON XXXII.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

4. It is a further expression of friendliness on God's part, towards these believing ones, that when they wander and backslide from him, he recalls them and recovers them—takes a course for their reducement—will not let them go so as at length to lose them, by not using the most apt and fit means for their recovery and final salvation. How often is his voice heard crying out, "Return, return, ye backsliding children." How full of affection to this purpose are there many verses in Jeremiah iii. Pleading, striving with backsliding wanderers, that they would return. Indeed it is such an aggravation to the sinner, as it might make it astonishing to us, that such as have been treated with such kindness and friendliness as doth appear in all the fore-mentioned instances, should yet be so prone to backslide and deviate. How might it confound us to think that such a spirit should be in us, that no enticements, no endearments, will stay or hold us in with this our great and blessed friend, but that we should still be so apt to make excursions. What with convictions we have continual reason to discern, and with sorrow and shame to confess in this kind, is what we find in the word of truth, and in the sacred records often. "My people are bent to backslide from me," Hosea xi. 7. A people that might call themselves his, and whom he calls his, that there should be such a bent in them, not a weak inclination only appearing now and then, and usually overcome, but a stiff and steady bent, as the expression signifies: this is very amazing. And that there is a continual bent and proneness this way, the apostle's caution to Christians doth too plainly signify. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God," Heb. iii. 12. They who believe have still reason to say, "Lord, help our unbelief." They who have that for the nature and kind of it which was the faith of Abraham, and whereupon God imputes righteousness to him, they are not throughout always of his practice, do not constantly walk by that faith. Though that faith, in the nature and kind of it, was spoken of as so common to him with all believers, that it is designedly represented and held forth to us, as neither confined to the circumcision nor to the uncircumcision. And, ergo, so mighty a stress is laid upon this thing, that he had this upon which God judged him righteous before he was circumcised; that so it might be understood that this faith, and the justifying, saving effects of it, were not confined to the Jew or Gentile, but common to believers of both sorts by the same faith; God justifying the circumcision and uncircumcision too, through the same faith, as you find Rom. iii. 30.

But this faith hath its remission, (as to degree, and as its exercise,) its great and sinful intermissions; for all intermissions of acts are not sinful; but there are sinful intermissions too of the exercise of faith very frequently, and then what is the issue and effect? Departing from the living God, backsliding, drawing off from God, as faith is a coming to him. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Believing is coming; disbelieving, not believing, ceasing to believe, that is departing from him—going off. Take heed of "an evil heart of unbelief," which lies in that departure from the living God.

But as that is indeed on their parts a most unfriendly thing, oh, how friendly is it, that, when they depart, he calls after them, "Whither are ye going?" Rather might he have said, and with infinitely higher reason, "Be gone then. Will you be gone?—then depart for ever." I say with higher reason, than he who once said somewhat like it. It is said of that morose philosopher, (who was wont to be called the Cynic,) that his servant Manes was leaving him, withdrawing himself from him, and was gone. Some of his friends would have had him send after him, to have reduced him. 'Fetch him back? No, (saith he,) that is a mean, that is a turpid action. It is very mean and dishonourable (saith he) that Manes should think that he could live without Diogenes, and Diogenes should not live without Manes: never send after him.' Oh! with how infinitely higher reason might God have said so. "That is mean, that they should think they could live without me, but I cannot live without them. If they will be gone, let them go." But he doth not do so; and, ergo, you may understand it is pure friendliness towards them, that when they are departed and gone, he ever calls after them; that he should direct his proclamation to be made in such cases. Go and proclaim these words, "Return, return, O ye backsliding children," as it is in Jeremiah iii. That he should insist upon it, urge and inculcate it, as he doth. You have the same thing again, Hosea xiv. 1. "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen

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by thine iniquity,—I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him," ver. 4. How gracious an invitation doth he send after such as are backsliders, revolted and gone, to return and come back again. He orders that they "shall hear a voice behind them, a word (as Isa. xxx. 21.) saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." As if he should have said, Alas! you mistake your way, whither are you going? This is the right way. You are going away from your God;—you seem most dangerously to mistake your way, when you are going to the right hand, or going to the left hand. This is not your way to God, and to rest, and blessedness, and peace, and a finally good state. And by many media, and sometimes immediately, he causeth, and he maketh such a voice to be heard, "a voice behind them," or that shall, some way or other, reach their ears, and reach their hearts. Sometimes he takes care that they shall meet it in the Bible; drops a word into their minds, which they have heretofore read, or providentially puts it under their eye. How many such seasonable voices have there been to poor wanderers, that if they have taken up this Book (and sometimes it may be very carelessly, and without design) they have met with a passage that hath struck them. I am out of the way, I must go back to my God again. Sometimes they meet with it in a sermon; sometimes in the conversation of a pious friend; sometimes in a providence, in an affliction, a loss, a sickness, a pain. Sometimes stroke comes upon stroke, in such kinds: and if they will wander in by-paths, God hedgeth up the way with thorns, and they are constrained to retreat and go back: they can find no other way but to return. It is the world, commonly, that insnares and entices away men's hearts from God, that he imbitters to them. And sometimes they meet with so great losses in worldly respects, that thereupon they begin to say, Why at this rate I may lose all, sure it concerns me to ascertain to myself somewhat that cannot be lost. And the effect is sometimes such that they must say, If I had not that loss, I had lost myself. If I had not lost such and such a part of my estate, in all likelihood I had lost my soul, that was going.

God hath by such a means reduced me, recovered me, made me bethink myself. I must make sure of my relation to God, of a portion in God, or be ruined for ever. But whatsoever the means be, there is wonderful kindness and friendliness in the thing.

Sometimes this voice comes more immediately. And indeed if it do not so, he doth afford media; if he by these doth not himself work the effect and touch the heart, it is never brought about. He speaks inwardly by his Spirit, striving by that; striking the soul by convictions, rousing it by terrors; and when it is seasonable allures it, and by pleasantness and sweet relishes of better things than they can gain by their wanderings. And then also he sets conscience on work, and makes that to fall out and fight with themselves, and they are engaged in soliloquies and in discoursing and debating the matter with their own souls. What shall I get by this course of wandering, to which I seem to have indulged myself a liberty? what will come of it? He makes their own hearts and reins to instruct them in the night season, and then to commune with themselves on their bed, and be still, in great silence, to discourse and reason the matter with their own souls; and so one way or other reduceth and calls back the poor wanderer. Oh how great is the friendliness of all this. And then,

5. It is great kindness and friendliness, when they do return, and are reduced, that he so freely forgives them; that he pardons so copiously, so plentifully. As there is plenteous forgiveness with him, he is ready to multiply pardons beyond what they can have the confidence many times to ask; that when they must upon occasion, and when their hearts are touched with a lively sense of their own disengenuous dealings, when they come to present and prostrate themselves before the mercy seat, they must be in such postures as that holy man—"I blush, I am ashamed, I am confounded, and not able to lift up my face before thee." He is in this case more ready to forgive than they can be to ask forgiveness. Not unto "seven times, but unto seventy times seven." They would be soon ashamed to ask at that rate. And when they are convinced thoroughly, and in good earnest, they are very unapt to forgive themselves as God is apt to forgive them. And indeed he is so much the more ready to forgive, by how much the less apt they are to forgive themselves. Self-loathing, self-accusing, self-abhorrence; they are the best part of the claim that they can make to forgiveness; to say, that to them belongs shame and confusion of face, but to him righteousness. As to any thing that is in them, or can have place there, there is nothing that hath more an aspect and look towards forgiveness from God, than their severity towards their own souls. They think with themselves, taking measure (as they are too prone to do) of God's greatness by their own littleness, of his immense goodness by the narrowness of their own spirits; and what they find their own inclinations to be towards others that offend them, implied by that question of Peter to our Lord, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but until seventy times seven," Matt. xviii. 21, 22. On hearing this, the disciples say altogether, "Lord, increase our faith," Luke xvii. 5.

We do not know how to conceive of so large and so copious a forgiveness, or promise to forgive, as this, Lord, increase our faith, if such a thing as this be looked for from us. We know not how to comprehend it. So much more incomprehensible and inconceivable is that readiness to forgive which resides in the fountain, in him who is the Father of all mercy, and of all compassion, and who hath made himself known by the name of "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin," Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Men do not know how to conceive this of God, and ergo reason thus with themselves, I should not know how to forgive another offending me so oftentimes. Alas! saith God, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than yours, and my thoughts than your thoughts," Isa. lv. 8, 9. They are apt to measure God by their span and inch. As the distance is, and infinitely more, between heaven and earth, "and as far as the east is from the west, so far he removeth our transgression from us." It is in the same context we are told he multiplies to forgive, or be abundantly pardons. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," or will multiply to pardon, that is the emphasis of the Hebrew expression. But how can this be understood, that God should pardon so numerous, so multiplied transgressions as ours? Why ergo, those words come in, My ways are not as your ways, &c. Indeed if any should think hereupon to turn this grace into lasciviousness, that is to turn themselves quite out of it. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace," Rom. vi. 14. These are inconsistent terms, to be under grace and under the dominion of sin. Most certain it is (as hath been told you before) that God doth impart the righteousness and the sanctifying Spirit of Christ together, never separately. "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11. If any should say in their own hearts, Now I may sin freely, grace will abound. Let us sin, because grace abounds, or that it may abound. "God forbid (saith an apostle.) How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Rom. vi. 2. To reason so is to reason yourselves quite out of all interest in grace at all. To leave yourselves nothing at all. Because that grace is in those streams and communications of it inseparable from itself. That is pardoning grace, and renewing, sanctifying grace, they run together *pari passu*. And God justifies none in their rebellion. I will pardon you; I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely. Only acknowledge thine iniquities, Jer. iii. 12, 13. and thence to the 19th verse. Here you have God pleading with himself on the behalf of these backsliding ones, what he shall do with them. How shall I put thee among the children? How shall I ever look upon thee as a child more? Why, saith

he, thou shalt call me "My Father," and not turn away from me. How shall I do this? Why, I have but this one way, to do it inwardly, to touch their hearts. How shall I ever treat you as children again? Why, I tell you the truth, I must inwardly prompt you to betake yourselves to me with inward, child-like, filial humiliation, contrition and repentance, so as to make you own me for your Father with relenting, tender, broken hearts. Then I shall assign you the pleasant portion among the children, not disinherit you, not put you out of the family. But these works of grace must be carried on towards you conjunctly, or not at all. Therefore, that soul which remains under the power of sin reigning in it, and wherein it hath a throne, that soul hath nothing to do with pardoning mercy, while this is his case; for he hath nothing to do with pardoning mercy out of Christ. And if he be in Christ, then Christ is made unto him "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 2 Cor. i. 30. But again,

6. Friendliness appears towards those that have made a defection, and in great degrees gone off from God, that he doth not (while it is but in such degrees) withdraw his Spirit. "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me," says the penitent Psalmist, Ps. li. 11. "and cast me not out of thy presence." The Spirit is all this while not yet gone; it doth not desert them. It hath formed such into habitations for itself; "made them habitations for God through the Spirit," Ephes. i. 11. Temples they are of the Holy Ghost. He will let it appear that he is not easy to remove; not apt to withdraw and quit his habitation, and to make a sacred habitation or temple desolate. Ergo, prays the Psalmist, "O do not take thy Spirit from me, nor cast me out of thy presence!" The Spirit was not totally withdrawn, even as to his sense; he apprehended it to be with him still. When he saith, "take it not away," he apprehended he then had it; and when he saith, "cast me not away from thy presence," he apprehends himself to be in God's presence; I am yet with thee. And yet there was a seemingness, a look, an aspect, in the present state of things between God and him, as if he was about to cast him out, according to "O do not cast me out of thy presence!" that's death, that's deadly to me. Oh! he dreaded to be cast out; but at the same time he apprehends himself not cast out, according to that in Ps. lxxiii. 23. "Nevertheless I am still with thee; thou holdest me with thy right hand." "I am ever with thee," saith he in one place; and saith in the other, "cast me not out of thy presence." And lay this together, and they carry this signification and sense with them, that the hand which seemed to thrust, held at the same time. The hand (I say) that seemed to throw them away, it held them to him at the same time.

And such semblances there are between friends, when on the one part there is occasion given to resent unkindness; one may thrust at such a one, as if one would have him be gone, yet hold at the same time, as loth to let him go. And again,

7. This friendliness further appears in the same case in the recomposing of the frame of your spirits, when all was miserably shattered and discomposed. In the wanderings of such, they waste their strength: they fall and break their bones. All things are put out of frame with them. Oh! what kindness it is to recompose that shattered frame! It comes to this sometimes, that Christ is to be formed again in the soul, as in that, Gal. iv. 19. "Of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." The work of the new creation is (as it were) to be done over again. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," Ps. li. 10. Here is more creating work to be done again, new creating work to be done. Not as if there were nothing left, as though there were no residue; but there is much to be done *de novo*. "I create the fruit of the lips peace, peace." Whatsoever is to be produced out of a foregoing state of nonentity, this must be still creation. This heart was become unclean; there must be a cleanness now wrought in it by creation. "Create in me a new heart." The frame of my spirit was all wrong—"renew a right spirit within me," saith the Psalmist.

And how much of friendliness is there in this. The backslidden, wandering soul hath, in its departure from God, put all out of joint and frame; every thing is amiss. The heart was inwrapt in darkness, and he enlightens, and with his beams penetrates that darkness. It was dead, and he quickens it. It was grown a vague heart, and he makes it serious. A hard heart, and he mollifies it, softens it again, makes it tender. The conscience was stupified, but he awakens it to the work and business of its office. Love was grown cold, he makes the fire glow again. Desires faint and languid, they become now strong and vigorous. The soul was grown terrene and worldly, thinking to compensate and make up to itself out of this world what it had lost in God, and in his communion, and in the enjoyment of his Christ, and so was fallen into a friendly treaty with God's enemy. "Know ye not that the friendship of this world is enmity with God?" He opportunely breaks this league, renders this world again a contemptible thing, brings the poor soul to overcome it. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world," gets it under his feet, triumphs over it; so that the soul is enabled to say, What a vile, despicable thing is all this world, to become (as it were) the competitor and rival of the great God, for an opposite and a ruling interest in my heart and soul!

This is wonderful kindness, to recompose the frame of the soul when all is out of course. He finds the poor creature wounded, and he heals the wound; doth the part of the good Samaritan, pours in wine and oil; when the wretched creature was fallen among thieves, got into bad company, and there wounded and broken, maimed, and made miserably decrepid, he heals all. If you turn I will heal your backslidings. "Heal my soul that hath sinned against thee," saith the Psalmist, Psalm xli. 4. I am sensible of wounds, bruises, and broken bones; heal my soul. Experience makes such say as they come, "Let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up," Hosea vi. 1. This is still great friendliness. And,

8. When it is most seasonable, he restores them peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; "the joy of his salvation," which the Psalmist supplicates for in that penitential Psalm li. And,

9. He helps them in conflicts all along. Their life is to be a continual conflict. This is friendly to stand by them when they are in conflicts with flesh and blood, and conflicts with principalities and powers. "Satan hath desired to have you," saith our Saviour, speaking directly to Peter, but in the plural number, Luke xxii. 31. "but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." He would have you; Satan hath a mind to you, he covets you; but I have prayed. God hath put these believing ones out of doubt concerning his kind propensions towards them in reference to this case of their being tempted, by this, that he hath set over them "a merciful and faithful High Priest, who himself having suffered, being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted," Heb. ii. 17, 18. and ch. iv. 15, 16. And in the last place,

10. This friendliness appears on God's part in introducing them at last into the heavenly society, who are all to be associated with himself and his Christ for ever. He enables them to overcome, and they then must sit down with him upon his throne. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years," Rev. xx. 6. This is great friendliness indeed, that can never be satisfied, but with eternal converse, to be everlastingly of the same society. Then those that were of Abraham's faith, with those other great worthies that we find mentioned together often, and particularly in Hebrews xi. are all now gathered to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, where all these friends are to be entertained together in one society. This is an agreed thing, and the known and declared pleasure of God and Christ; a matter concerted between him and his Son." I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am in glory." And he tells us elsewhere, he is always heard; ergo, the matter is agreed between him and his Father. So that this faith, upon which persons are counted or called (as Abraham was) the friends of God, who do believe as he did, doth not only now justify, but finally

save. And that indeed ought to compose our minds, and lessen the wonder with us, when we find that God is so frequently gathering and drawing up, one after another, out of this world of ours, divers from among ourselves, gone into the bosom of the earth, and into Abraham's bosom, being believers with Abraham's faith, and now got into possession of the same blessedness that he hath been so long possessed of. Let us all wait: God will gather us up all in time. For those who have lived by this faith, they are all designed to one and the same state. They must be for ever together with the Lord; and ergo, we ought to comfort our own hearts, and to comfort one another, (as the apostle concludes, I Thess. iv.) with these words; "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

SERMON XXXIII.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

Now we have spoken of the former part of God's friendliness towards believers; and in reference thereto we have considered this friendship objectively and passively. Abraham was called the friend of God; that is, one towards whom God did express a great deal of friendship. We are now to consider this friendship subjectively on our part, as that whereof we are the subjects, if we be believers; and to consider what appearances there are in the exercise of such a faith of a friendly mind towards God.

What hath formerly been noted to you, must still be remembered, that there can be no true friendship between God and man, but with the reservation of the order of superiority and inferiority between him and us; for such friendship as shall be inconsistent with that, we must still reserve this always in our thoughts, that he is infinitely above us; and we are upon all accounts most inconsiderable, mean, and little, (next to nothing,) in comparison of him; that he is a friend to us, as he is all-sufficient, infinitely full, and self-communicative; but that our friendship towards him is such as belongs to indigent, craving, necessitous, empty creatures, that can at best only be brought into an aptitude to receive and take in his communications. And indeed that faith is the receptive principle upon which Abraham was said to be accounted righteous.

This must be always remembered; and being so, then I say such friendliness towards God as can consist with our state, and with a state of things between him and us, doth eminently appear in many great indications, in or about the exercise of that faith towards him, upon which he justifies, and is finally to save.

There appears to be much of a friendly mind towards him in this matter upon this account, that the world is so generally obdured and set against God by infidelity; so that such a faith in him is a very singular thing in the world. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" as the complaint is, Isa. liii. I. when the design was to give a representation of the Son of God in his descent into this wretched world of ours, and that low and mean state of humiliation which he submitted himself to here, when he became a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs. Here is a report to be made of these things unto the world. But who believes our report? Where shall we find those that will believe or regard it? We speak every where to deaf ears, and represent these matters to blind eyes; hearts obdured and shut up in unbelief. But where any eyes and ears are opened, hearts made attentive and flexible, though this be of God's own promising, he looks upon it with a kind eye. Well, now I find then there are some among men that are not so under the power of a vicious prejudice, but they can hear and receive what is reported and revealed to them about those great and glorious things which the Gospel contains. "They have not all obeyed the Gospel," as the apostle speaks, Rom. x. 16. referring to and quoting this passage, Isa. liii. I. "For Esaias saith, who hath believed our report?" We may go whither we will, and scarce can find any one who believes what we say, though we speak the greatest and most glorious things, things of the most pressing necessity and highest importance to the persons themselves to whom we speak. If there be here and there some in a corrupt and degenerate world that will give ear and any regard to what is spoken from heaven in the name of the Lord about the great concernments of souls, these are the persons that have found favour in his eyes; he looks upon them with a kind eye, as he did upon Noah in such a corrupt state of things. "Thee have I found righteous before me." Therefore, for thee I am resolved there shall be an ark prepared, that thou mayest be so far subservient to that design of thine own preservation, as to be employed in preparing that ark. And whence came it that he did so? It is referred to his faith. "By faith he being warned of God, and moved with fear, prepared the ark, to the saving of his house." Whereas ergo, it is said, Gen. vii. I. "Thee have I found righteous before me in thy generation." I will take care of thee; thou hast borne a friendly mind towards me, and I will do the part of a friend towards thee. I say, wherein this is said, we find wherein this faith stood. Wherein it was (*i. e.* in reference to the productive principle) that Noah did come to approve himself one that bore a just mind towards God. It is referred all to this principle, and resolved all into this as the productive principle, to wit, "that Noah would believe God," would take the word of God when no one else would; "all flesh having corrupted their ways;" for it is said, "he being moved with fear, and warned of God, prepared an ark." There was the same previous warning given to the generality, of God's intention to animadvert upon the wickedness of the world; and Noah was made use of as a "preacher of righteousness" to warn men hereof, to give them premonition; but nobody regards it but he and those few of his family that were saved with him. This, in general, God looks upon as a piece of friendliness towards him, when any (though first taught and influenced by himself) do single and sever themselves out from an infidel world, and do receive the report he makes from heaven of the great things he hath designed, and hath put into a method in order to the recovering and saving of lost souls.

But this I do only pre-lay as a general. That I may more distinctly speak to this matter, I shall show you what friendliness is shown towards God in and about the exercise of this faith, the faith that will justify and save in such things as, I. Faith doth suppose, 2. Such things as it includes, and 3. Such things as it infers and draws after it. Things of all these sorts will appear to have in them great indications of a friendly mind towards God; and such as are indeed the peculiarities of those few believers, in comparison, that are to be found among men.

1. Such things as this faith doth suppose. And when I speak of this faith, I especially mean that very unitive act of faith by which the soul closeth with God in Christ, and so whereupon it is mediately in a justified estate, and entitled to a final and eternal salvation. Speaking of that very act which is formally unitive betwixt God in Christ and the soul, there are several other acts that may come under the general notion and name of faith, that are among the things presupposed unto this act, and so are to be spoken to under the head of things supposed; but I shall begin somewhat lower, and at what is more remote, as,

1. The soul's listening and inquiring after God, which this believing in God must needs be understood to suppose, in an ordinary course at least. They that at length come to believe in him as Abraham did; they must be supposed, however inwardly and secretly prompted hereunto, to have made some inquiry after him first. The most content themselves to be as without God in the world: but when he hath once touched a mind with a vital touch, it begins then to rouse and stir itself. Why, what? Must it not have been some infinitely good and absolutely first Being that hath made me and all things? Why have I lived in

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that contented, voluntary ignorance of him so long? The most are habitually "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart," as the expression is, Eph. iv. 18.—"They are willingly ignorant of God," 2 Pet. iii. 5.—"They like not to retain God in their knowledge," Rom. i. 28. It pleaseth them not, it is not grateful to them; "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job xxi. 14. But when he secretly prompts a soul and saith to it, "Seek my face," there is immediately an answer in the heart,—"Thy face, Lord, we will seek:" we can live without God in the world no longer; this is a wearisome, gloomy sort of life. Why, then, the soul is awakened to inquire, when it saith, (what so few say,) "Where is God my maker, that giveth songs in the night?" Job xxxv. 9. Here is the first appearance of a friendly mind towards God, when the soul grows impatient of distance from him, unacquaintance with him, and ignorance of him. The most can go from day to day and have nothing to do with God; they can open their eyes in the morning, when the eyelids of the morning open upon them, and never say, Where is God?—walk all the day long, and never concern themselves with him, as if they were a sort of absolute beings, and that this were the sense of their hearts; "We are lords, we will come no more unto thee," as in Jer. ii. 31. Full of themselves, and full of the emptiness and vanity of a world made subject to vanity; and so there is no room for God, and they have no business with him. Why, when this habitual aversion so far wears off, and is counter-wrought, as that the soul begins to inquire and look out and think with itself, How came I into this world? and how came there to be such a world, when neither I nor it could be without a Maker, nor that Maker without a ruling power over all; why then, "where is God my Maker?" he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, that they might feel and find him out; and when this end in designing, and making, and sustaining such a world, and such an order of creatures in it, is so far advanced and comported with, Now, saith God, my creature begins to rouse and look after me; then, he reckons, is the first appearance of a friendly mind towards him, when souls grow impatient and say, I can live without God no longer. I pray you consider this; with such as never had to do with God, and never intend to have, all this will signify nothing; but with those that have such a design, and would fain have a friendship established betwixt God and them, these things will signify much, they will have their weight; they can weigh nothing with those whom they do not concern. But whosoever can apprehend these as my concernments, they are things that concern me, my soul, my life, my welfare, my eternal hope; with such, what I say will be considerable. And wheresoever there hath never yet been any friendly concern between God and the soul, it is high time to look after it; and if ever you will on your part, it must begin to express and show itself in such a thing as this, to wish that a solicitude be awakened in you, How shall I do to find out God, that he should have given me breath and being, that I should continually have lived, and moved, and had my being in him; and yet all this while not be seeking after him, to feel and find him out? this is the greatest enmity imaginable. And ergo, to have a contrary frame and disposition of spirit beginning to express itself, must be somewhat of friendship.

2. There is a certain friendliness towards God in this matter, in the acknowledgment and entertainment of that revelation that he hath made of himself in his word as true and divine, upon those characters and concomitant evidences of the divinity thereof appearing and manifestly offering themselves to view. To a soul that hath been stirred up to inquire and bethink itself, How shall I come to some knowledge of him that made me and made all this world, and in whom alone that satisfying goodness is to be found that will be an adequate and suitable portion and rest for my soul? When any are awakened thus to inquire and look about, and, looking about them, to see in the midst of all that darkness that doth spread itself over all this world, a collection of Divine light, shining forth as in this revelation and discovery of God in his word—Oh, how grateful is the first appearance thereof!—when the glimmerings and glimpses do shine in this discovery, this revelation of God, how grateful is it, wheresoever there is a friendly mind towards God. And if now hereupon the soul doth receive the testimony that is contained in this word, in this Scripture-revelation, this God esteems friendly. The generality of men do not receive it; this is their condemnation, that "light is come into the world, [that light which shines in the Gospel discovery,] but men love darkness" more. If any do love the light more than that darkness, though it be from God, it is nevertheless kindly accepted, and taken by him as an indication of friendliness towards him. And we are to consider to this purpose, that however there be justice in this towards God, there is nothing the less of friendliness; for that wheresoever there is justice towards men, the acts and exercises thereof signifying nothing if they do not proceed from love; for love comprehends all that duty that men own towards one another, and it is "the fulfilling of the law." If I do a just act towards a man, and do it not from a spirit of love, there is but a mere carcass of that which is really and truly a duty, the life and soul thereof are wanting. It is love that fulfils the law in the whole extent of it; love to God fulfils all the precepts that enjoin my duty towards him; and love to man, all the duties I owe to man. And ergo, do not think that is no friendship towards God to receive the discovery he hath made of himself in his word as from him, because it is right, or because it is but justice towards God; for it must be a spirit of love that must animate all the duty I do, whether towards God or towards men; else it is all worth nothing. As there is malignity and malice in infidelity, so there is love and kindness in faith; in the assenting act of faith I mean; for the unitive act (you have been told) I am to speak to afterwards; and what I am now speaking to I put in under a distinct head of things presupposed unto that. But let it be considered that the main thing that doth keep off souls from God in infidelity, (comprised even in the nature of infidelity,) is the enmity that it carries in it. How observable is the expression in John v. verses 42 and 43, compared together; "But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." What is the reason of this partial disinclination to receive that testimony of God, when there is no such aversion appearing to receive and rely upon the human testimony of such at least, as are not known to have forfeited the credit of their word? What is the reason? Why, that the love of God hath no place in such hearts. They do not bear a friendly mind towards God; ergo, they can believe one another, but will not believe him; they have so much kindness for one another, that they will take one another's word; but they have so little kindness for God, that they will not take his word. A most horrid case; but yet a plain one. So it most manifestly is—"Ye will not believe my word, because the love of God is not in you." Ergo, it is a sure indication of a friendly mind towards God, when there is any aptitude to entertain that revelation he hath made of himself and his word, and to acknowledge the characters of divinity that do appear upon it, rejoicing to behold any beams of heavenly light shot down into the midst of that horrid darkness which hath spread itself over this world. But again,

3. There is yet a further and more particular appearance of such friendliness towards God, when his reconcileableness to man declared in this revelation of his, is received as a true discovery of him. When the souls of men come to entertain such notices concerning him, that though he is offended (and most justly) against a sinful world, he is yet willing to be reconciled to sinners, bears a placable mind towards them. This is that which the most will not believe. There is such ill will towards God, as seals up the hearts of men in obduration, and ergo, this discovery will not enter. It is one thing to have a notion of it in the mind, and another thing that it have its seat and place with effect and power in the heart; (for as there will be occasion more fully to discourse hereafter) there's the principal seat of that faith upon which God accounts men righteous and doth finally save them. There its principal seat is to be sought and found. Therefore, when we tell men from the word of God, and out of the Gospel of Christ, that God is willing to be reconciled to sinners, they can give us the

hearing, and give a faint assent; this notion is received into the mind (as a great many others are that belong both to the natural and prenatural parts of religion) without distilling any influence upon the heart and will. But if this discovery of God, that he is reconcileable unto sinners, once come to touch the heart, the reception and entertainment that is given it there, speaks the greatest friendliness towards God. It is with the heart that this must be believed, and the believing heart is in this point a friendly heart towards God. It is because this belief doth not obtain and take place there, that God hath so many irreconcileable enemies. They will not believe him reconcileable, and ergo, they will not be reconciled themselves. There is a consciousness, a guiltiness, which is seated in the natural conscience, that poisons the soul with enmity against God. Such a thing as was found in the spirit of Cain; "My sin is greater than can be forgiven." And what was the product of that flat aversion from God?—self-banishment. Let me get to the utmost distance from him that I can, and keep at the utmost distance;—I have offended him, there is a nemesis, a doom, a judgment that hangs over my guilty head, and he will not be reconciled. Thou saidst, There is no hope, Jer. ii. 27. What then? I have loved strangers, and after them I will go. Because men do despair of God's being reconciled to them, ergo, are they living a perpetual warfare and wilful wandering. I have loved strangers, and after them I will go. There is no hope in God that he will ever be reconciled to such a wretch as I. But if reconcileableness towards sinners be entertained, then that soul can be persuaded of it, that his word doth in this respect represent him truly. This is from the friendliness of his heart, that hopeth all things, believeth all things, and thinketh no evil.

As it is with love towards men, it doth not allow us to entertain suspicions and surmises concerning them that love us. It will not allow us to think them false, perfidious, treacherous, hypocritical. So much less will this love to God allow us to think so of him, that when he publishes his reconcileableness to sinners unto the sons of men, so expressly in a Gospel sent into the world for that very purpose, if there be a friendly mind towards God, it will never allow a man to think he will but deceive in all this; all these are but false colours, they are but deceptive disguises that he hath put upon himself to make himself look speciously, and be well thought of in that world, that he hath even now forsaken and left. A friendly mind towards God banisheth all such thoughts as blasphemies of the Divine goodness, and can allow them to have no place. And ergo, whereas his Gospel proclaims "glory to him in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men;" a friendly disposition towards him shows itself in the joyful reception of this revelation of him, as most certainly and infallibly true.

4. And this friendliness towards God further appears in the soul's deserting and coming off from this world, upon that discovery that God hath made of himself. As there is nothing can draw off a soul from a suitable good unto the sensitive nature that now prevails in the state of apostacy, and is growing in degenerate natures, nothing can draw it off from an adherence and addictedness to such a world, the sensible objects whereof are grateful and suitable to a soul lost in sense and buried in carnality, but the revelation of something greater, and better, and more suitable. And wheresoever there is faith in God, beginning to obtain and take place, by what degrees it doth take place in the soul the world loses its place; these two being directly opposite to one another, standing as rivals and competitors, God and this world. Therefore by what degrees soever the soul approacheth God, it draws off from the world. And whereas the friendship of this world is enmity to God, by how much the more the soul inclineth to a state of friendship with God, so much the more it is enmity with this world, as God's rival and competitor for the heart and soul. Under that notion it cannot endure it, but abhors from it. This friendship with God, which faith doth so directly tend to, and consist in, in so great part, must infer a continued and habitual enmity against this world, not abstractly considered in itself; (for every thing that God made is good;) but as it is now become an idol of jealousy set up in opposition to God, that doth, as it were, appear as a substituted deity put in God's room. The world and that carnality appear together, which entertains it and embraces it. They do share deity between them, which belongs only to God. Men fall into a league with this world for themselves, to gratify themselves, and their own carnal inclination out of it. But so the world and self, complicated and being in a combination, they engross the deity to themselves, which was due to the Most High. And under this notion, that when the soul begins to fall in with God, it falls out with the world; and ergo, it is expressly said in that fore-mentioned place, that the friendship of the world is enmity against God. And so friendship with God must consequently be, under that notion, enmity against the world. But this is great friendliness too, towards God, when the soul retires and recedes from all that was dear and delightful to it before on this account. Now it finds him placable, reconcileable, willing to be at peace; I may come back to my God again, he invites me, he recalls me. What have I any more to do with idols? What is that base corruptible world now to me? It abandons all that it loved, all that it took pleasure in, upon his account, and for his sake. "We have forsaken all, and followed thee," (said Peter in the name of the other disciples, Matt. xix. 27.) "what shall we have therefore?" It is not to be thought he could suppose that the forsaking their little all could deserve any thing, if it were a thousand times more than it was. But yet from the Divine goodness apprehended, it raiseth expectation. Surely there is something to be got, though we have little to lose. And if we had all the world in our power, and were to abandon and throw it away, it were a contemptible, despicable nothing, in comparison of what we expect to find in him. But yet there is an expectation raised from the immense goodness and benignity of God, that he will never permit any to abandon former enjoyments to their loss. It is a thing that in itself deserves nothing; but that doth, as it were, carry in itself a promise of much of all that can be expected and thought of, inasmuch as it hath in it a friendly mind towards God, which having to do with a being of infinite goodness, can never be without acceptance, or without its reward. Nay, by how much the more we do despise our all of this world upon this account, (and ergo, must apprehend our doing so, to have so much the less of merit in it, because the things we leave and forsake we judge at the same time to be worth nothing,) yet so much the more is there of a friendly mind in it towards God; for he is so much the higher in our estimation and affection, by how much the more any thing that is opposite is lowered and depressed there. But then,

5. The reception of that particular testimony that God hath given us in his Gospel concerning his Son, that hath peculiarly much of a friendly mind towards God. That we entertain the discovery which he makes to us of his Christ, the immediate object of that unitive act of faith which comes next to be spoken to. But this must be previous and supposed to it; *i. e.* that we receive the discovery that God hath made of Christ. This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased, I recommend to you, hear him as one sent forth from me. The voice came from the excellent glory giving this testimony concerning the Son of God. Now as the rest of the world who have this revelation, but believe it not, do by their unbelief make God a liar, they that do believe this testimony set to their seal that God is true: this he takes as an expression of friendliness towards him. The rest of the world they are in a conspiracy, a confederacy to make him thought a liar, that he treats them with deceit. This notion of him men do so propagate as that it insinuates into their hearts, though in their minds they have no formal notion of it; they carry it towards him, as if they took him to be a deceiver, an impostor, one that intended to delude them by that representation, and by that scheme and model of things which he lays before them in the Gospel of his Son. But they that receive this testimony, do now give an open proof before all the world of the regard and reverence which they have to that recommendation that God hath given of his Son to the children of men. Look to those expressions, John iii. 33. "He that hath received this testimony hath set to his seal that God is true;" (where he is speaking of

the testimony given in the Gospel concerning Christ;) and that other, I John v. 10. "He that believeth not the Son of God, hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son, (as the next verses tell us,) He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." So that he stands forth as a visible example and witness for God against the infidelity of a wicked world, that will not entertain this discovery which carries such bright lustre and glory with it, made unto men concerning his Son, and his design of saving sinners by him. This is friendly towards him, to give him the glory of his truth; and it will be matter of triumph and glorying at the great day, (as in 2 Thess. i. 10.) "When our Lord Jesus Christ shall appear with his holy angels, he shall be admired in his saints, and glorified in all them that believe, because our testimony was received in that day." Upon this account will he appear glorified in the eyes of men, when he hath such a remnant to produce and show before the world. Here are these that would believe me when the generality of men would not. These are they with whom my truth was a sacred and adorable thing, when it was turned into a lie by the wicked, infidel world. Here is a peculiar friendliness towards God in this remnant, when the minds of men are generally so disaffected towards him by that infidelity which carries dislike and enmity in the very nature of it.

And this leads to the unitive act of faith itself, wherein we shall show there is much of friendliness towards God and his Christ essentially included.

SERMON XXXIV.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

WE have showed what this faith doth suppose. Now we come, in the second place, to show what it doth import. And this we shall let you see by showing you, 1. What this faith doth more essentially include and denote; and then also, 2. What things it doth connate, that do go along with it, and which must come into consideration, as ordinarily this faith is to be expressed God-ward; and so will greatly heighten this friendship towards God, and represent it so much the more a generous and a glorious thing.

I. Consider as to the import of this faith what it more essentially includes and carries in it. As,

1. Such an assent to the Gospel as draws the heart along with it. That faith upon which God doth justify and save, is not a dead, inanimate thing. "It is with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," Rom. x. 10. Such a faith as doth not carry the heart along with it signifies nothing, doth nothing any more (as the apostle speaks in the close of this chapter) "than a carcass would do without the soul." And this matter, if it were well considered, would easily reconcile these two great apostles, which do both of them discourse so distinctly and designedly about Abraham's faith as the precedent to the whole community of believers in reference to the matter of justification. It was far from the thoughts of this apostle (as is most evident) to think that faith, be it never so lively, so active and operative, could signify any thing to procure acceptance, or cause God to look upon a believer with so much the more favourable and propitious an eye. If it be never so much a living thing, it signifies nothing, as to obtaining divine acceptance. Nor did it ever come into the mind of the other apostle, to suppose than an unactive, dead faith, would serve the turn to bespeak a man accepted with God. It is very plain this one thing agrees with them both. And it is the apostle Paul's expression, mentioned to you before, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Not that when he believes unto righteousness, his faith procures that righteousness to be reckoned to him, or that is any cause of it. But God will never clothe any such one with righteousness, whom he doth not also inspire with a spirit of faith, with a vital faith, with a faith full of vital power, that accompanies it and goes along with it. Both being from the same fountain of grace, in two distinct streams, the collation of righteousness, and the communication of faith. And these do not cause one another; but the grace of God in Christ causeth both. As when two streams go from one fountain, one stream doth not cause the other stream, but the fountain causeth both.

And it is very observable to this purpose, how joint a testimony these apostles bear to one and the same thing, in that (Acts xv. 9.) "God put no difference between Jews and Gentiles, purifying their hearts by faith." He accepts a Jew as well as a Gentile, and a Gentile as well as a Jew, without difference; makes no difference, purifying their hearts by faith. If they have such an operative faith as shall be accompanied and followed with heart purity, there shall be no difference that one was a Jew and the other was a Gentile. And it is to be considered to the present purpose, that both these apostles were in this synod at the same time; and there was nothing but the fullest consent among the holy members; all inspired by the Holy Spirit of that assembly at that time. These, indeed, were Peter's words; but you find James speaking afterwards. And Paul was sent from Antioch thither. But what was agreed there, seemed meet to the Holy Ghost and to them, as the matter is concluded and shut up. No difference was put between one and the other, a Jew and a Gentile, faith purifying their hearts. If they did agree in that, they could differ in nothing considerable besides. And God will make no difference, purifying their hearts by faith; that must make and argue this faith to be a moving, active thing in them. Stagnant waters are dead, springing waters are wont to be called living—*aquæ salientes.* It is such a faith that carries an agitation with it in a man's soul. So that whereas it is a fountain agitated by that faith, it will be a self-purifying fountain. Fountains purify themselves—standing waters do not so. This fountain it hath a self-purifying power put into it; not as if it hath this of itself, but as the Divine Spirit, moving the fountain by a vital principle put into it, purifies it; and this was the agreed concurrent sense of these godly inspired men met at Jerusalem at this time. A mighty testimony it was against that dead, spiritless faith, in which a great many place all their confidence for eternity and another world. I am a believer, and, ergo, I am safe, I am well. What a believer are you? What doth your faith do? Doth it move your heart? Doth it carry your soul with it? Is there a spirit or power of faith working in your faith? Doth it operate? Doth it transform? It is with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. But when any must say, My faith lets my heart lay as a dead thing still, as dead as a stone; an impure thing still,—as impure as a heap of mud;—is this, indeed, the faith upon which you will venture for eternity? A faith that effects nothing, a mere negative faith; to wit, a faith which only stands in not believing the contrary, or not disbelieving such and such things. You do not disbelieve such and such things. No more doth a brute disbelieve them. If that be all your faith, a brute may have as good a faith as you; that is, that you do not believe the contrary, or you do not believe such and such thing.

But then you are to consider what it is that faith, which avails to justification and salvation, doth believe; or what it is the belief of, as well as what sort of believing it is. That is, that representation which God makes of himself in Christ, as willing to become our God. See how he did represent himself to Abraham, when it was said, that Abraham believed God, upon which he was counted righteous. Why he tells Abraham he would make him a blessed man, make him a blessing, make all the nations of the earth blessed in him. He tells him of a seed, by which seed eminently and most principally the apostle tells us, Gal. iii. 16. was meant Christ. "Not to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." Christ, as comprehending the whole community of living believers in himself. It was such a faith, ergo, as Abraham had, as by

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which he apprehended God in Christ, and was thereupon drawn into covenant with him. "I will establish my covenant with thee." And that covenant the apostle to the Galatians also tells us, was the covenant of God in Christ, which was but then confirmed with Abraham. Not first made; it was but confirmed when it was made with Abraham; so as that the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after it, could not disannul it. It was a covenant not to be disannulled, being a covenant of God in Christ, and, ergo, must be understood to be made from the beginning, from the first apostacy. But with Abraham it was confirmed. It was the representation of God in Christ that was the object of this faith. And this faith was a thing full of life and spirit and power, in reference to this object, God in Christ. Our Saviour himself testifies that Abraham saw his day, at that great distance of time, and rejoiced in the sight. "He saw it, and was glad." It is such a faith of this discovery of God in Christ, as doth affect the whole soul, and mightily operate to the centre of the heart itself. It is such a faith upon which God justifies and saves. But such a faith cannot but carry great friendliness in it, when it carries a man's heart towards God; and that you know is the seat of friendship. How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy heart is not with me? When the heart is attracted and drawn to God in Christ, here is friendship. It is carried in the very essence of this faith. It is faith that raiseth desire in the heart. Oh, that I might have this God for my God in Christ, and come into most inward union with him. It is a faith that raiseth hope in the soul; such an assent to the truth of the representation upon which the soul doth not only desire, "Oh, may I have this God for my God;" but hope too that it shall, that it may. As no doubt there were such affections raised in Abraham's heart upon that discovery which God made of himself to him. I am God, all-sufficient, walk before me, and be thou perfect, and I will establish my covenant with thee. Such a treaty, such a transaction as this, when God did thus represent himself, and the representation was believed, could not but raise such affections in such a soul. Now here is the very heart and soul of friendship in all this. All this speaks a friendly mind, a propense mind toward God in Christ. And,

2. Upon such a vivid, lively, operative assent, there ensues (as what is most essential to this faith too) an appropriation of God in Christ for ours. This is the *complexus fidei* by which it doth embrace its object. "And herein this faith works by love," Gal. v. 6. And love, you know, is the very form and essence of friendship, the vital form of friendship. It is a faith that works by love, wherewith the soul takes hold of God in Christ. We must suppose; in order of nature, desire and hope to be raised before. But now here is the entire consent of the will animated by love, and closing with the amiable object, God in Christ. What a representation is here! saith the transported soul. And nothing now remains but to take hold; for I find here is a free offer made, and if I will have this God to be mine, I may; and if I will have this Christ to be mine, I may. What remains but to accept them? Nothing is more essential in this faith, than this appropriative and acceptive act, by which we take God for our God, and receive Christ for our Lord and our Jesus." "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord (this is the imitation of the Christian course) so walk ye in him," Col. ii. 6. And again,

3. There is the soul's self-resignation carried also, as most essential in this faith. And that is the most friendly thing too that can be conceived. As there is the greatest friendliness in accepting, sure there must be equal friendliness in giving, when it is oneself delivering up oneself. When the soul accepts, appropriates this God, this Christ, falls before him, saith, My Lord and my God, it hereby comes into that vital unitive closure with him that speaks, as much as any thing can, the very heart and soul of friendly love, as hath been said. But then also, when at the same time it doth receive and give, takes God in Christ, and gives itself, delivers up itself; What? can this be the act or part, or heart of an enemy? Will I give away myself to an enemy? or to whom do I bear an enemy-mind, a disaffected mind? This can never be, I received God in Christ from the apprehension I have of the great and glorious excellencies and suitableness of the object, To as many as believe, he is precious, 1 Pet. ii. 7. So saith the soul concerning Christ, who is the immediate object of this faith. And it hath the like apprehensions concerning God, who is the final, terminative object of it. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," Psal. lxxiii. 25. These do both of them equally influence this accepting and this giving. I take God in Christ for mine, because I have those high and great and honourable thoughts of God in Christ. I give myself to God through Christ, for the same reason, upon the same account, as having the highest and most honourable thoughts of them both. And in this resignation, or surrender, we are to consider that as friendliness hath the plainest part that can be, so trust and faith have an essential ingrediency hereinto. Or (which is all one) that resignation hath an essential ingrediency into such faith. For when I give up myself, with what temper of mind is it? I do not give up myself to destruction, but I give up myself in order to salvation. This resignation is in trusting or committing of ourselves. "I know whom I have believed, and that he will keep what I have committed to him to that day." That committing of ourselves speaks a most friendly mind. Would any one commit himself to an enemy, or to one towards whom he bears the heart of an enemy? And,

4. This faith doth most essentially include a heart-quieting recumbency, so far as this faith prevails. It is not in degree perfect; but we speak of the nature of it, of the kind of it. It carries with it a heart-quieting recumbency, so that the soul doth abet its own act in what it doth herein, as the mentioned expression imports. "I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed." Not ashamed, why, what room or place can there be for shame in such a case? Yes, if a man hath mistaken, if he thinks he doth the part of a fool, he hath reason to be ashamed. But saith he, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed: therefore he abets his own act in this matter. It was the wisest course that ever I took in all this world, to dispose of myself so, so to commit myself: it is a thing wherein I can justify myself to the highest, that I have made this venture. It hath not been a rash, inconsiderate act. It is not a thing I am ashamed of, I shall never repent of it. Repentance carries shame with it. Whatever act I repent of, I am ashamed of it, as having done a foolish thing, betrayed weakness and impotency of mind in what I have done. But I shall never be ashamed of this. For I know whom I have believed, that he will keep, and is able to keep too, with an engaged ability, that I have committed to him (my pledge, my depositum) against that day. Still there is in this the greatest friendliness; that I can repose myself in the faithfulness and truth of him to whom I have committed myself, and upon whom I have placed my reliance in reference to the greatest concernments that can lie upon my heart.

II. Consider as to the import of this faith. Not only what it more expressly denotes, but (as the case is) it must connote. And it doth indeed connote many great and concurrent difficulties, which render the friendliness that is in it so much the more generous and glorious a thing. As,

1. This trust is placed upon one whom we never saw, I trust to one altogether out of sight. Look to the final object, God himself; the invisible God, whom no man hath seen, nor can see. And for the intermediate object, Christ, as to the most parts and most ages of the world, hitherto unseen. Even in that time wherein he might have been seen on earth, yet to a great many Christians he had not been seen. As Peter writes to the scattered Jews, though he lived and died in their country. But they were scattered, and in a dispersion, yet he saith, "Whom having not seen, ye love," &c. A glorious thing, and speaks a friendly mind. So far to trust one I never saw, and never can see. If you were persuaded to put your trust in such and such a one that you hear of, you would say I never saw his face. Trust him! Why should I trust one I never saw? That is no argument against this trust. I will trust him (saith the believing soul) though I never saw him, nor can see him. I have such an account of him, and know so much of him in a way wherein I cannot be

mistaken, cannot be deceived, though I never saw him, nor ever expect to see him, (to wit, the invisible God with eyes of flesh,) yet will I trust in him without a suspicious, misgiving heart. Here is glorious friendliness. And,

2. Here is this in the case too—it is trusting in him when one hath offended. This makes the difficulty the greater, and so the friendliness that appears in it is the more considerable and glorious. Any body that considers will easily apprehend how hard a matter it is to trust a person you know you have offended. I know I have displeased such a one, and yet to trust him, yet to place your trust in him. This is arduous, and so speaks this friendliness of mind so much the greater a thing.

3. It is trusting him with your very souls. This is yet higher, when my own convinced conscience tells me I have offended him, I have given him the highest and greatest cause of offence imaginable, and yet I will trust him, and trust him even with my very soul—the greatest and most considerable thing I have. This is high friendliness. The trust one placeth in any one is so much the more considerable and great, as the things are greater he trusts him with. As I say I trust such a one with such a sum of money, or I trust such a one with the management of such a part of my estate, or I trust such and such commodities that I value in his hands: this argues a kind and friendly propension that you will trust him so far. When you say I dare put my life into such a man's hand, this is a great trust and great friendliness. But when it comes to this, the intrusting your very souls, this is the highest friendship that can be thought. And you have nothing else to do with your souls, you must intrust them. Men's hearts must be won to Christ thus far, that they may intrust their very souls with him. "Into thy hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth," Ps. xxxi. 5. And,

4. There is this further in the case, that you are to put your trust there only. That he is to be the only object of your trust. So that if this trust fail, you are lost. For you must not have another object of your trust. This is still the so much more glorious. Trust in him will consist with no other dependencies. It is the highest act of worship that can be performed, and it is a glory that God will not give to another. He will have no rival in his honour. It is the prerogative of Deity to be the object of trust even of the whole soul. Therefore, so much the greater thing is this trust.

5. You are to consider great humiliation, and self-abasement, accompanying this trust, which makes it so much the more generous a thing; for when you are to trust him alone, you are to distrust yourself. When you are to place a confidence in him, there must be a most absolute diffidence in yourself. I am nothing, I am vile, my own righteousness is but filthy rags. Whatsoever I might pretend to under that notion, it is all loss, and dross, and dung, in comparison of what I expect, of what I seek, and what I am to rely upon, as the apostle's expressions are, Phil. iii. 5, 6. There is the greatest submission in this trust. Observe that in Rom. x. the apostle gives the true reason why the proud Jews were so much hardened in infidelity, that they would not submit to the righteousness of God: They knew not how to submit. There was so much of submission in it to comply with God's way and method of justifying and saving sinners, that they would no way in the world comport with. Their proud hearts could not endure it. If I place my trust, my sole trust, so and so, I must nullify myself; I must diminish myself to nothing; I must throw away all hopes in myself; I must allow myself to be a lost creature, a perishing creature, one deserving and worthy to perish, and to be thrown away for ever. Why, one would not do so but towards one to whom we have a friendly mind! one may endure so to humble himself, to nullify himself towards a friend; but one would be loth to do so towards an insulting enemy, or to give him that occasion of insulting over us. And again,

6. This trust is placed upon one who will surely vindicate all inclinations to place trust any where else. He is one that I have offended, and if I falter in my trust, if I grow suspicious of him, and think of placing my trust elsewhere, he will be offended a thousand times more. He thunders out curses if I decline, if my heart prevaricate, if I lean towards any other trust. "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the living God." This is a great adventure, and that which only a friendly mind would carry one to, where there is so much hazard in the case. I trust when I have offended, I trust when if I be not right and steady to my trust, I offend a thousand times more; and yet I will venture, for my heart is towards him. Nothing shall discourage me, nothing shall keep me off from him.

7. It is trust to be placed without any favourable appearances to flesh and sense; for he promiseth me nothing that will be grateful in these respects: promiseth me nothing to which my flesh and sense have an aptitude and propension, or are like to receive any gratification by. If I do unite myself with him, intrust myself unto him, list myself one of his disciples, a devotee, one given up to God in Christ what shall I get by it? He doth not promise houses and lands, or great things in this world; no such matter. But yet the believing soul will trust and unite with him, and give up itself unto him: this is great, and argues a strong propension of a friendly mind. And,

8. It is not only without such favourable appearances, but is against most formidable appearances. If I intrust myself here, and so dispose of myself, (as the disposal begins in the union of heart with God and Christ,) I expose myself, at the same time, to all that a wicked world can do against me. When I make this venture, I must venture with him upon a raging and tempestuous ocean. I have all the troubles in view that this world, and the God of this world, the usurping God of this world, can give me. I am to expect nothing but storms, and tempests, and death, on every hand. Yet the soul will believe not only without hope, (as such was Abraham's faith,) but against hope, (Rom. iv. 18.) which makes it so much the more glorious thing. And again,

9. This trust is thus placed, notwithstanding, not only against what is feared, but against what is felt by the believing person himself, in reference to himself, and generally to the whole community of believers. He meets himself, it may be, with a great deal of affliction; yet he will trust. Rough severities of providence many times, and the appearances of an enemy, are put on. God marshals up his own terrors as the world marshals up its terrors in battle-array against him. But, saith a believing soul, "though he kill me, yet will I trust in him," Job xiii. 15. I will die at his feet; I will never leave him. Though "we are killed all the day long, and counted as sheep for the slaughter," nothing shall part us, Ps. xliv. 11. quoted Rom. viii. 36—39. Though we be trodden down into the place of dragons, and covered with the dust of death, no matter for that; we will never leave thee. We appeal to him, whether he yet see an inclination in us to deal falsely with him in his covenant. No, we will run through a thousand deaths for his sake, with confidence "that neither tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, neither death nor life, nor any other creature," shall ever work a separation. And this is high friendliness; sure the persons must needs be understood to be of a friendly mind towards God. And though not only this be their own experience, but they see it to be the common experience of the whole community of believers. Look upon former times and ages. There are whole armies of glorious sufferers and martyrs, whose records they can see and read over. What have these people endured and suffered for his sake! And yet they would trust him, yet they would cleave to him, and nothing would make them turn aside from following him. When you look back upon such an age and such an age, you find there have been multitudes could show their scars, their wounds, their blood: This we have endured for the sake of God and Christ. And yet they would trust him still. "Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," and are gone before into glory. Here is "the faith and patience of the saints." Where are they that have kept the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus, the faith of Jesus, "that have overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of his testimony, and loved not their lives unto the death?" as we have it in Rev. xii. 11. There is great friendliness in such a trust as this. Especially when, as,

10. We shall consider that they expect no recompense for all this. See their fidelity, all their love, all their sufferings in this world; they never look to be recompensed here. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." It is not in this life that they have hope of recompense; their great hope of recompense is hereafter. When Abraham in the power, and in fruit of such a faith, quitted his all in this world, Abraham, saith God, "get thee up from thy kindred, from thy country, and from thy father's house." It is by faith, it is said, he obeyed, and went, he knew not whither. Into what unknown country must I go? (he might say.)—It is no matter for that, whether you know or not; but follow God's call: and he abandons all, and follows. He trusts, makes a venture in the dark. This is the very nature of faith. Some pagans have understood so much about it. So our noted Voagan among the Platonists speaks of a faith above knowledge, that unites the soul most intimately with the supreme good; and which when a man doth act and exercise, they that have this faith, and are in the exercise of it, they do express it (as his expression is) shutting their eyes. They shut their eyes and trust, wink and trust. So doth Abraham in this:—Go your ways into a country you know not—he goes by faith, he obeyed, and went he knew not whither. I can (as if he had said) give no man an account whither I go; I am only obeying and following the divine call. It is in an unknown country that we all, who are believers indeed, are to expect our recompense. Where was it that he expected this? was it any interest in a terrestrial Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey? No: he deemed himself when there but in a strange country, to which he had such a right, as we nor any man in the world had before to any spot of earth, by an immediate divine grant, a grant from heaven: the great possessor of heaven and earth assigns this spot for him and his posterity, and yet he behaves himself there as in a strange country; he, and Isaac and Jacob, that were heirs with him of the same promise, they declared themselves to be pilgrims and strangers upon the earth. The believer will say, Set me down any where upon earth and it is none of my country, whatsoever right I may have, as they had in that land. No; their faith was to cast anchor for them. But where? within the veil; within such an intexture as kept every thing from their view; an interjected veil; a veil cast between, and woven between them and the great object of their hope. But yet for all that, they trust and they venture; they cast their anchor upon that "which is within the veil, whither Jesus the forerunner is for us entered." This argues a strong propension of a friendly mind towards God, and towards his Christ, and towards this state of things, which they make the discovery and offer of. And in the last place,—

11. It is to be considered too, as that which signifies so much the more the friendliness of this faith; that it is a venture for eternity; such a sort of venture, that if I mistake, there is no correcting the mistake. If I misplace my trust, the matter admits of no alteration, no remedy: it is a trusting of my soul, and a trusting it for somewhat that lies out of my sight, and whence there is no return, no coming back for me to make any terms with this world to any advantage, if I have misplaced my trust. No, here is an adventure made, never to be altered. And the soul doth it with this apprehension, with this prospect. Here I must venture my all, and for eternity, for an everlasting state.

It is fit we should understand what such a faith as the faith of a sincere Christian is, that we may not delude ourselves with names and shows and false appearances. There must be the nature of this faith in all those that believe as Abraham did; and his faith was spoken of as a precedential faith; and as he was the father of believers, the great example. He was not to be justified and saved by one sort of faith, and we by another, but he and we by the same faith. So much it carries with it of a friendly mind towards its blessed object. But let us now observe in the close of this present discourse, before we enter on the third head, what this faith inferreth. I have hitherto observed only what it imports, either as directly noted, or as connoted. I pray let us bethink ourselves. Are not we strangers to these exercises of mind and spirit?—is not this a region and sphere of things that we are unacquainted with, and wherein we are little wont to converse?—do we know what belongs to such applications of mind and spirit inwardly towards the blessed God, and towards the Lord Jesus Christ? If we altogether are so, our religion, our Christianity is a name, a show, a figment. If we are strangers to such applications of mind and spirit to God in Christ, and we have nothing that belongs to this friendly intercourse, I pray why is it? We would be loth to call ourselves God's enemies and Christ's enemies for all that. But yet he hath told us, he that is not with him is against him; and if we be indeed such friends to God and his Christ, such is to be seen in inward converse of heart and spirit with them; and nothing can excuse my not conversing with a friend, a great friend, a sincere friend, a wise friend, and a most obliging friend, but such things as these, for instance—Why, he is at a great distance, I cannot come at him. That is none of the case. He is not far from any one of us: "In him we live, and move, and have our being." What can excuse our not conversing with him who is so constantly nigh? That request which you have heard so much of, "The Lord Jesus be with thy spirit," shows he continually may and can be so. It is as possible as it is desirable, to have him with our spirits. What can excuse our slighting of a friend that we may be with every hour of the day, or every moment of the hour, if we will? What can excuse strangeness there, shyness there?

It cannot be said he is inaccessible: that would excuse: but there is no such thing. There is a throne of grace appointed on purpose, whereto we may freely approach. "there is a new and living way consecrated by the blood of Christ," leading into the divine presence. You cannot say you have no business with him: that would excuse you that you do not converse with such and such a friend.—I have other great business in the world, but with him I have none. You cannot say so as to God; you have constant business with him, and he hath constant business with you. It is he with whom you have continually to do; "all things are open to him with whom you have to do." It is spoken in the present time, to show that we have to do with him always; Heb. iv. 13. You cannot say your friend is so busy that he is at no leisure to mind you, if you come to him: no such thing; for you are directed "wherein soever you are called therein to abide with God," I Cor. vii. 24. Ergo, if you should find leisure, he would be always at leisure; he can mind every one, and will do so to those who apply themselves to him; "his eyes are ever towards the righteous, and his eyes are open unto their cry." What can it signify but a disinclination and unfriendliness, that we have so little to do with God and Christ from day to day? It must signify, that other things so engage and take us up, that our concernments with God can have no room, no place in our hearts. They are things of another sphere, which we are most taken up about, and which appears to us more considerable—either the public affairs and concerns of a present world, or our own private ones. With a great many, we have too much cause to apprehend, the session of this present parliament is a far more considerable thing than that glorious concessus with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. Those vast and glorious multitudes which are to make up that concessus. Oh, what friends are any society of men in comparison of the glorious society above! The affairs of this present time, let them be but considered in reference to the tract of time, what a little inch in the series of time is the present time of ours, about which many are so intensely engaged and taken up. When this juncture of time is over with us, look upon the affairs but two or three months after, and what do they all appear and signify then? And yet the matters that be within our inch of time are, with the most, more considerable than a vast and endless eternity, and have more of their serious thoughts. The great question is, What will become of me in the great day when all the children of God are to be associated together to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, there? Here is the great question, and it will be determined upon this single point—Have I that faith that belongs to that society as their characteristical note, as that by which they that belong to God are to be known from them who do not belong unto him, a heavenly from an

earthly race and offspring?—Let me look into myself, and discern my own state and character, and see if I have any such faith in me as includes and draws the whole frame and current of my soul and all its powers towards God, and Christ, and heaven, and an eternal state of things.

SERMON XXXV.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

THE third thing which remains to be spoken to is,

III. To show you what such a faith doth certainly infer. This also hath much of friendliness towards God in it; and it infers divers things that are so: as—

1. What is indeed very general, an entire living to God. If any soul do believe unto righteousness and salvation, so as now to be justified, and finally saved, that very faith of his will certainly infer the most entire living unto God; the most friendly thing towards God that can be thought. It is impossible that I can bear more of friendliness in my mind and soul towards any one, than when I consecrate my life to him—devote my life to him—devote myself to him. This is certainly inferred by that faith which avails to justification and salvation. I pray observe, that where you have that phrase of "living to God," Gal. ii. 19. that the whole context speaks of this very subject; justifying faith which is mentioned in this so expressly. Look at Gal. ii. from verse 16 to the end; "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Here is a most positive and delucid assertion of the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone, exclusive of works. But the apostle objects to himself, or obviates the objections of others, in verse 17. "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." This looks like a doctrine that serves the purposes of sin, and as if Christ came into the world to minister unto sin, to promise indulgences for it; not that men might cease to sin, but that they may sin with less danger and more safety. "God forbid," saith he—abhorred be any such thought, "if I build again the things which I destroyed, [and to admit this will be building what I had been aiming all this while to destroy,] I make myself a transgressor," I fight with myself. All my doctrine causes nothing in it but inconsistency and self-repugnance: "For (saith he) I through the law am dead to the law." But, with what design? upon what account?—that I might live unto God: "I through the law am dead to the law." The law hath killed all the hopes and expectations I had of life, or justification by it, and hath as a severe, but as a faithful, dexterous schoolmaster, driven me to Christ, (as it is afterwards spoken in the same chapter,) and constrained me to have recourse to him, to seek righteousness and life there. And what then? Is it that afterwards I might live as I list? No; far be it; it is only that I might live unto God; a life more entirely holy than it was possible for me ever to have lived upon other terms. And this living thus to God is manifestly spoken of as an inferred, consequential thing unto justification, as a thing that naturally and necessarily ensues. But it is the most friendly thing towards God that can be imagined and thought of, that I should dedicate my whole life to him; and this doth not belong to friendship as friendship, but it belongs peculiarly to friendship with God. If any other friend should lay claim to the whole of my life, that my life should be spent entirely for him, and I should do nothing but for him; it is the highest insolence for him to expect or require it; but in this case it is the highest insolence to deny it unto this friend, for do not I owe my whole life to Him, if he hath justified me, if he hath imparted a righteousness to me? For what was I before, but a condemned lost creature. My life was forfeited. When he hath given me righteousness, he hath given me my life. The case cannot be thus among other friends. There is usually some sort of parity; but here is the greatest imparity and disparity. Another friend may have obliged me, perhaps I have at some time or other obliged one as much. But here the obligation lies all on one side; and it is the deepest obligation that can be thought. So that what was an hyperbole in the apostle to Philemon, "thou owest thy very self to me," (and he expresseth it with a diminution, not to say it,) it is no hyperbole here. Every justified person owes himself to his justifier, his whole life. For do not we know it was forfeited, entirely forfeited? If it be a state of justification, how did we come into it? It was a state of condemnation out of which we did pass. This is nothing to the ordinary friendship that is between man and man. But if an offended prince do take a condemned wretch out of his cage and chains, and from the dungeon and gibbet, into his arms, and embraces him; gives him life and his favour, and all the dignities and honours he can load him with; here is one owes his very self, in a subordinate way, as much as it is possible a creature can to a creature. Though the prince claims that life which he cannot preserve; for when he hath given it in one moment, a disease may take it away in the next. But here it is the most reasonable thing in all the world, that I should give my life to him who hath justified me.

And whereas all were under condemnation before; when a person is justified, he is made to "reign in life," as that most emphatical expression is, Rom. v. 17. Death had passed over all by one. By one man's offence death reigned. But now they that receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, do reign in life by one Jesus Christ, or they shall do so, as some copies read it. "They shall reign in life." The life of a king is reckoned a sacred thing, inviolable—not to be touched. He hath made us kings and priests unto God, having "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Rev. i. 5. Then such lives are not to be touched. "Touch not mine anointed." They are all anointed ones, who have this life imparted to them.

I beseech you consider this case according to the mighty weight of it, and consider it as your own case, or that which is your case, or may be. For we are all of us here before the Lord, either in a state of condemnation, or in a state of justification this hour, at this time. If we have any of us cause to suspect that fearful state to be ours, a state of condemnation, I hope you do not intend to continue there; you think not, sure, of abiding so, in such a state as abiding in death, a condemned person in death, under death. Take we the state of our case as it is. Let every one view himself about this matter. Oh, my soul, what dost thou think of thy state? Either thou art a justified or a condemned man. What dost thou think of thy state? If thou thinkest thou art condemned, what is to be done in this case? It is dreadful to think of taking up and abiding here. But we are told what is to be done. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved," John iii. 16, 17. Believe in the Son of God, and this brings you under his righteousness, under his shadow, and the protection of it. It shelters you, covers you. "He that believeth in the Son of God, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already." The sentence is past, though yet a reversible sentence—a sentence that may be reversed. Here our case is plain, to

* Preached January 28th, 1693-4.

wit, that our main business must be to consider, do we believe in the Son of God? with such a faith as the Gospel meaneth, with a lively, Gospel faith. For if the Gospel do mean one thing by faith, and I do understand quite another, it is not my mistaken notion that will save me. Do I think to be saved by a false notion? By a faith that is not only but notional, but my very notion also is false. That will not do. I am to consider, ergo, what this faith of mine infers. It signifies, or infers, my living to God, or it signifies nothing. How earnestly and emphatically is it inculcated in this chapter, where the text lies, that a dead faith cannot justify, and cannot save. A faith that hath no life in it, no spirit, no energy, no operativeness. It is not the works that proceed from faith that do justify, but it is a workingness in faith which is requisite to justification:—a faith that will work, not a dead faith. And we are, ergo, to know, that in the same instant when a man's faith is available for the obtaining of righteousness for him, it is available for the obtaining of life too, of a vital principle. God doth never give these separately, he always gives them together. This faith unites the soul with Christ. He is righteousness and life to it at once. His righteousness (as hath been told you) never continues one moment the clothing of a carcass, of a dead soul. It is never designed to be the habit and apparel of such a soul. It is too rich a thing, too glorious a thing, to be so. There is no righteousness without having of a Christ. "But he that hath the Son, hath life," at the same time when the soul is caught into union with him. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." He is made unto us holy life upon our being in him, as he is thereupon made righteousness to us, 1 Cor. i. 30. This is plain, intelligible truth to any that will use their understanding, and apply their minds to consider it. But to speak a little more distinctly of this matter of living to God, as it is a thing inferred from, and consequential upon, the faith that justifies, I shall note unto you a few particular distinct heads, under this first more general one, as,

(1.) That whenever the soul is brought to believe unto righteousness, (Rom. x. 10.) it is a heart principle, a heart exercise, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." And whenever he doth so, he then receives a new spiritual life, a divine life. He was alienated from the life of God before, but now he comes to participate in a certain sort of divine life. This is so plain, that nothing can be more. "He that findeth me, findeth life." There is a blessing pronounced upon waiting on this account. "Blessed is he (saith Christ, the Son of God, the eternal Logos, or Wisdom, Prov. viii. 34.) that waiteth, that is continually waiting at the posts of my house; for he that findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." Findeth life; what doth that signify? It signifies that life in this world is a great rarity. A man may be long in quest of it, and not find it. It is a world lost in death. "Death hath passed upon all by one, inasmuch as all have sinned," Rom. v. 12. It a poor soul that dwells in the shadow of death, casts about its wondering eyes and thoughts this way and that way, and saith, Where shall I find life? Why, (saith our Lord,) he that findeth me, findeth life. All thy inquiries are in vain, and lost, and to no purpose, till thou meet with me. And you shall find me if you seek. "He that seeks me early, shall find me," ver. 17. "But if he finds me, he finds life." The very first meeting proves vital to him. For do but consider what is said in that same context, Rom. v. 12, 16, 17. Death had passed over all, reigned over all, unto condemnation. "All were dead," as the matter is also expressed, 2 Cor. v. 14. "If Christ died for all, then were all dead." Death passed over all. But how? Not only in law, but in fact. Pray observe it, all were dead, not only in law, but in fact too. Dead in trespasses and sins. Death did prevail, spread itself and its dismal horrid shadow over the very souls of men universally. And that by one—that one who first sinned, and so let in sin and death into the world. But then observe what is said in the 14th verse, that "that one was the figure of him who was to come." Which might signify, that as the former Adam did let in sin, and by it death, upon all, so as to bring all not only under condemnation, but under an actual death, in the moral and more horrid sense, as death stands in opposition both to sanctity and to felicity. So as that in these respects it should reach the very souls of men, which, though they are naturally immortal, are morally (it is too plain) mortal; and not only mortal, but dead in the moral sense; to wit, as death stands in opposition to holy life, and as it stands in opposition to blessed life. So all were actually dead, as well as in law. Now if that first Adam was the figure of Him that was to come, pray consider in consequence what the second Adam was to be, and what he was to do. We are told that, "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; the last Adam was a quickening spirit," 1 Cor. xv. 45. So that now if you touch him, you touch life. If you meet with him, if you are joined with him, you are delivered by it. You have life not only in right, but in fact. As under the other Adam there was death, not only deserved, but as actually incumbent, death had passed over all. That is, here were the beginnings of eternal death, the beginnings of hell. Christ is the Lord from heaven. If once you unite with him by that faith, that true faith of the Gospel, you have not only now a right to life, but you have the beginning of it, the inchoation of it in fact, as there was the beginning of death and hell in souls by the former Adam, the figure of this latter. And you are to reign in life by Jesus Christ. Life exults in you, springeth in your hearts, and is gradually springing up more and more towards eternal life. At least where that is not so perceptible, there are springings which import life, strugglings, and impatience of deadness. Whereas one that is entirely dead, is impatient of nothing—feels nothing. But if there be aimings and strugglings for life; oh! this dead heart of mine; that I could find it to live more! this speaks life, a new life, which is working in you, and strugglingin you, towards its perfection. And then you must not only gather here, that this living to God implies being made alive spiritually, a participant of a holy, divine life; but that it doth, in the next place,

(2.) Directly terminate on God. Here is life, living; and it is living unto God, which is the certain result and consequent of that faith that justifies and saves. It is, I say, a life that points at God; tends and works directly towards him. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vi. 11. I pray note the appositeness and the emphasis of these words: "Dead to sin," having no mind to live a sinning life any longer. "But alive to God:" here is a new life now given—a spiritual, divine life. But what is it? a loose and a vagrant thing, that works at random, no one can tell how or which way? No, far be it from thinking so. It is a life directly pointing upon God; carries the soul in all its powers and thoughts, and affections and inclinations, in one current towards God. "Alive to God through Jesus Christ." There was nothing but deadness towards God before; life enough to every thing else, but only no inclination towards God;—no inclination, no concern with God. But now here is being made "alive to God through Jesus Christ." And this is the effect and consequent of union to Christ by faith; when we are planted together with him into the likeness of his death, and into the likeness of his resurrection, and by a certain kind of conjunction, or being married to him, we come to bring forth fruit unto God. As i is in the foregoing verses of Rom. vi. And,

(3.) This is further to be noted concerning this living to God, as inferred by and consequential upon that faith that justifies and saves; that the workings and stream and current of this life, and of all the powers of the soul so enlivened, are directed towards God, and by a friendly affection. I pray note that further: they all work towards God; this life, and every thing that belongs to it, tends and works, and beats and contends God-wards. And what is that which makes it do so? A friendliness of inclination towards him, and a suitableness of spirit unto him. They are, therefore, whenever they come to believe unto righteousness, to be called the friends of God; for now the whole life, from the power of friendly inclination, comes to be directed God-ward. And so living to him is not from necessity and terror and dread, but from choice and kind propension. And,

(4) It is hereupon necessarily consequent, that the soul is obliged to be very much in the exercises of religion; because in all the acts of religion there is a direct and immediate application unto God. If it be brought by the power and tendency of that faith which justifies into a course of living unto God, my life must be a thing, in the whole of it, sacred unto God; then it cannot be but it must be taken up in the exercises of religion, because therein it hath to do with God directly and immediately, but more remotely and collaterally when one is otherwise employed. The exercises of religion must thereby be delectable to such a one, for he liveth unto God; that the faith that justifies him hath inferred: from that very inclination of mind (saith he) I must be with God. And hence it will be the most remote thing in all the world from such a one to count the exercises of religion wearisome. But he will surely have that habitual estimate; though the flesh may be many times weak and wayward, the spirit will he willing so far as it is influenced and animated by such a life. And, therefore, amoog the other exercises of religion which such a life, and that faith which hath justified a soul, must imply, those exercises of religion which I have been so lately pressing upon you will be looked upon as no cumbersome imposition. The exercises of family religion, as well as those of the closet and those of the church, they will all carry a pleasantness, a felicity in them, proportionable to the measure of life received.

And I would have you now to consider the providence of God. It is observable to you and me that I was called off from this subject by a general agreement of my brethren to speak to you of that about family religion before I had finished this. So that that discourse did even fall into this before I had concluded it. Observe the providence of God in it. For by this means it comes to pass that I am cast upon it to give you the shortest and fullest directory how to manage that business of family religion, as well as other exercises of religion, faithfully, pleasantly, and to purpose. Thus in general, whenever you are to do acts of religion, I pray consider your state. What is my state, wherein I am now to appear before God in this or that religious performance or exercise? Shall I appear before him as a justified person, or as a condemned person? Oh what shall I do if I am to appear ordinarily under the latter notion, as a condemned person? I come with my family (whatever they be) myself a condemned wretch. It is true it is a case that needs prayer; but it is a very uncomfortable case, for all that, when a person must do so from day to day. And therefore look well to your state. This is a state (as was told you before) that is not to be rested in, upon any terms. Though you are not to throw off the exercises of religion because you suspect your state to be bad, but in continuing of them to hope and expect it will mend and be better. But I would have you consider what it is. If you must come always in approaching unto God as a condemned person, or being a condemned person, (whether you apprehend it or no,) you will always approach to him either with the heart of a slave or the heart of a stone. Either with a misgiving, affrighted, amazed heart, the heart of a slave; or a stupid senseless heart, dead and cold as a stone. And therefore, especially see that such exercises of religion, as well as all other, do proceed from the conjunct principles of faith and love, or faith and godliness, towards God, the very things that the text hath in it, as you see, believing and being the friend of God. See that such principles animate all your religion, your family religion, and all other; otherwise it goes all for lost.

[1.] The principle of faith. Without that it is impossible for you to please God in any thing you do, Heb. xi. 6. By it you come to offer an acceptable sacrifice. By faith, Abel offered up a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain; a more acceptable one. The word is a fuller one, a sacrifice which had a fulness in it compared with Cain's. Without it all your sacrifices, all your duties, will be dead formalities and nothing else; neither pleasing to God, nor pleasing to you; there can be no pleasure in them on the one hand, nor on the other. It is true you must go on in a course of such duties, for the law of nature (as was told you) obligeth you thereto, and stands unrepealed: for (as hath been said) to suppose a repeal of the law of nature, is to suppose that God would divest himself of his deity, and you should be divested of humanity, both at once. As long as God is God, and man is man, this part of the law of nature, which concerns this state of things between him and man, must be unalterable, and can never be repealed. It is that which his law requires of you most indispensably. You must go on yet, still aim at bettering your state, and getting into that faith by which you shall be exempt from that condemnation. Into it, (I say,) into the power and spirit of it. Indeed here lies the snare and danger, that when people first find themselves urged, and possibly are brought to apprehend the reasonableness and necessity of going on in such a course of duty, they expect to be justified in that way. No, never till you reach that faith which unites you to Christ. But this may be your way towards that faith. If you should think that your dead spiritless duties are to supply the room of Christ, vital faith, and a living religion proceeding from thence, this is all a mistake, and the most dangerous one that can be thought. To be justified by our own works, and such pitiful dead works, it speaks, as the apostle's determination of the matter is, Gal. v. 4, 5. that "Christ is become of none effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." There is an eternal law binding you to such duty, and which is invariable and unalterable. But what then? must you think of being justified by it? No; then Christ will be of none effect, and ye are fallen from grace. But we, through the Spirit, do wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. The great hopes of righteousness we wait for by faith, and by that alone, through the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, prompting and teaching us so to do. But this is the stupid, senseless absurdity which hath seized the minds of multitudes, that when their works are least worth, then they expect most from them. When they are all worth nothing, they account of being justified by them; when they are all dead works. When a man's soul comes to be made alive, by how much the more he lives so much the more he sees that the best works he is capable of in this state and region of mortality, can have nothing in them (though they have never so much of spiritual and divine life) unto the purpose of justification; for they never were designed to justle Christ out of his office. Nor are the offices of Christ and the Holy Ghost to mingle or be confounded, and made to interfere with one another, upon any terms. Such living works (when living) serve for other necessary and most excellent purposes, but not to justify us. They serve to qualify us for communion with God, and to enable us to serve and glorify him in the world, and to carry on a preparedness for us more and more for an inheritance among them that are sanctified, or with the spirits in light. See to that, that in all the exercises of religion, (though while it is not so, they are not to be forborne and laid aside in families, closets, or otherwise yet,) you aim to get that principle of faith which may mend your state, and make that good, and make you capable now (having your consciences sprinkled by Jesus Christ from dead works) of serving the living God, of living service suitable to the living God. And,

[2.] That other conjunct principle, love. Friendly affection, see that animates all your worship too, that your souls be carried towards God by friendly inclination: as was said, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." If you have that faith by which you believe unto righteousness, it will work by love; it carries your souls unto God by a mighty power of love. This is living to God, the certain consequences of that belief unto righteousness; or unto which God doth impute righteousness. And how applicable is this to the purpose afore-mentioned, *i. e.* that all the exercises of religion, and especially of family religion, be animated by that principle of love to God, or friendliness towards God, faith. Do but take notice, whereas the text speaks of Abraham, (he was the instance,) "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God." Pray see what the inclination was that carried him to take that care of his family that he did, (Gen. xviii. 17, 18, 19.) "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I intend to do?" He is my friend, I cannot hide things from my friend. And why should he be looked upon as such a friend? "I know him, that he will command his

children, and his household after him, to serve me." Abraham will take this care of his family, because he is my friend.

See, therefore, that this principle goes into it, otherwise all goes for lost. Why are you so careful? Why it is kindness to my friend, my greatest and best friend. I see his interest low in the world, he is little called upon or sought after. There are few among men that will own him. But I do it because he is my friend, and because he hath captivated my very heart, and made that in some measure friendly unto him. That I may preserve, and that I may revive to my very uttermost, his languishing interest in a lost world. He hath but a few friends, but I and my house will serve him; we will show our friendliness towards him, whosoever do or will not do.

It comes in my way to give you this short, but full, directory in reference to the great subject we were so lately on. See that it be managed by that faith which will always justify. And see that it be influenced by a principle of love and friendly inclination towards God, and because you cannot endure his interest should be lost by your neglect, at least so far as you can signify any thing to the promoting and preserving it.

But here it may be said, that all the performances of an unjustified and unregenerate person are sin. But what? are men obliged to sin? And should we urge them to sin? This admits of a very plain and easy answer. For,

1. There can be no declining of such performances when the injunction is in the law before us; but it must be upon a resolution not to do them. A resolution must be taken; I will not do them. There will be sin in doing, but there will be far greater in resolving not to do. The sin that is in doing, is only in the wrong manner, that I do not such a thing aright. But resolving not to do, is sin even in the very substance of that resolution.

How vast is the dificrence between that which is in the very substance sinful, and that which is only sinful in the circumstance. And,

2. This is to be said too, that not only the praying, the hearing, and the other acts of natural worship done by an unjustified, unregenerate person, are sin, but all their other actions too. The very ploughing of the wicked is sin. And what, therefore, must the whole unregenerate world do nothing? Are they all to sit still? If they eat they sin; if they drink they sin. Must they, therefore, starve, and neither eat nor drink? So absurd is such a pretence against doing such a duty, though it have no tendency at all to recommend us to God. And, indeed, were the duties of regenerate persons themselves never so entirely vital and holy, they would signify nothing for the purpcse of recommending us to God. They do proceed from the Holy Ghost, but we must not confound the offices of Christ and the Holy Ghost. It is the work of the Holy Ghost to sanctify us, and qualify us for communion with God. It is the work of Christ to justify us by his blood, and by his righteousness applied to us. It was Christ that was crucified for us. And, indeed, in reference to the matter of jnstification, even the most holy lives of the best of saints, they do more by positive iofluence for the justifying of Christ, than for the justifying of us. He is the eternal wisdom of God. And wisdom is justified of her children. We justify him; we show that he did not undertake a vague thing, or come upon a vain errand into this world, when he gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." When his end and design is so far answered, wisdom is justified. This appears to have been the work and design of wisdom, that it was not a foolish undertaking; for it hath succeeded, it doth prosper, and shall more and more do so. By positive influence, it more justifies him than it does us. Our justification comes quite another way, being justified freely by his blood. All the holiness in the world could never make him amends for my having been once a sinner, and thereby incurred the divine wrath. It is true we have communion with God, walking in the light as he is in the light. But it is "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, that cleanseth us from all sin," so as that we may come guiltless into that communion, 1 John i. 7. The truth is, that the doctrine of faith, and righteousness, and justification, have been talked of, and tossed into mere airy and insipid notions. Though so excellent, so glorious doctrines, Christians have learned to dispute them into nothing; even as rich and generous wine, thrown from vessel to vessel till it becomes vapid and spiritless, and even without savour. It is the greater pity and shame it should be so, when the truth in these matters is so very plain and so very easy, that he that runs may read it. But many have had a greater mind to dispute and contend about these things, than to draw spirit and life and nutriment to their souls out of them.

In the exercise of religion, there is that in the faith by which they are justified and saved, that will prompt unto them, if that faith hath place in them. And we are concerned to see to it that it have, that is, to look to our state. And if we cannot conclude it to be for the present good, not to sit down there; for to sit down destitute of such a faith, is to sit down in the midst of death and under condemnation. That is the fourth thing which living to God, as a consequent of that faith which justifies ano will finally save, doth carry in it of friendship towards God. Living to God, inferred by such a faith, doth include in it a continual disposition to the exercises of religion, as the result of that faith, and as proceeding from an amiable and friendly affection towards God. But,

(5.) This living to God, as it is consequential of faith which justifies and will save, continually obligeth to do nothing against him to our uttermost or with self-allowance. Herein the reason of the thing speaks itself; if my whole life be a dedicated, devoted life, and all the powers and properties and actions belonging thereunto be so devoted, then there is nothing to be done against him who is the end and terminus of this life. I can allow myself to do nothing, I am surprised if ever I do any thing; it is an unintended indeliberate thing, if any thing be done to the prejudice of his interest, that any thing diminisheth or soils his glory, or obscures and darkens it. It will be a grief to the soul, if it be a believing soul, (if it believe, by that faith which he justifies and saves,) that he is offended. For there is hereupon that entireness of self-dedication to him, that there is nothing of us left excepted from obligation, or that can be directed against him or his interest in any kind. I can do nothing (saith the apostle) against the truth, but for it. I can do nothing; it is a certain sort of powerful impotency, an impotency that speaks power. I can do nothing against the truth; there is a positive principle obliges and prompts me otherwise. So the apostle, Gal. v. 17. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would;" indeed in neither kind. But it is plain the latter by the scope of that context must be meant, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh;" that is the thing there to be proved, that walking in the Spirit is a certain remedy against fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. How is that proved? Why, saith he, though it be true that the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, yet the Spirit doth so strive and lust against the flesh, that ye cannot do what, according to your carnal, corrupt inclinations, you otherwise would. You cannot, you are inhibited; for you look upon yourselves as devoted ones; your life is consecrated, and all the powers relating thereto. And therefore, they cannot be used to counterwork the great design you have undertaken and engaged to serve. If I live unto God pursuantly unto faith in that Gospel, then I cannot deliberately do any thing which hath a direct tendency to depress his interest or darken his glory.

(6.) This faith, as it infers our living to God, allows us not to have any separate interest from him. The maxim of that great pagan, "All things of friends are common," obtains strongly in this case. There is a friendship between God and me. I must not have a separate interest. His interest is mine, and my interest is his. So that if my life be a sacred, devoted life, when I buy, when I sell, when this and that way I am employed in secular and civil negociations, it will be looked upon as a most unlawful and wicked presumption to make myself mine own end in all this. No, God is my end; I live unto God. And that faith by which I am justified, obliges and prompts me hereunto; that is, so and so I do, that I may glorify God. Not finally that I may please myself, and

indulge my own inclinations, and satisfy any appetite of mine; whether it be an appetite to live in pleasure, or whether it be an appetite to grow rich and great in the world. No, by no means; my life is a sacred thing, a devoted thing. "To me to live is Christ;" and so all the actions of human and civil life must terminate in God, as the end, if indeed I live to God. For if that be my end, it is my last end; and the last end is that into which all others do run. And whatsoever doth not serve the last end, doth really and finally serve none at all. And so all those actions are lost actions; *i. e.* they cannot come properly under the notion of human actions. If they do not refer to the last end, they are beside any end. It is the last end that infers whatever there is of order in this world; all runs into confusion that is not referred to the last end.

We are concerned to look carefully to our hearts about this, that we suffer not any secret dispositions and workings of spirit contrary hereunto. To go from day to day, and I cannot answer it to my conscience, that it is God that I have been serving; serving him in my calling, and not myself; oh, in what peace can such a one lie down at night, when he hath been playing the idolater all day, and usurping upon majesty—the Majesty of heaven? For it is God's prerogative to be all things, the last as well as the first, "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." For a creature born but the other day, lately sprung up into being, to rival the universal Lord of heaven and earth, and to take upon him as if he were God—I will be my own end, pursue an interest of my own, separately and apart from God—this is to pluck himself from under the rule of the Universal Ruler, and to say, I will have no Lord over me; I am my own, and not his. But a man's having devoted his life, so as that he can be said to live to God, is necessarily exclusive of all this. And thereupon again,

(7.) This living to God, consequent upon justifying and saving faith, will oblige and prompt us to take in God with us in all our affairs; to go about nothing without him; for we are to act dependently in every thing; to commit our way unto the Lord. Committing is believing; committing is trusting. And we are to cast all our burden upon him, and all our care upon him, expecting he will care for us. This living to God includes. Every man, as he is called therein, let him abide with God, I Cor. vii. 24. Implying, you have nothing to do in all this world, which you cannot better do with God than without him. You have no business to do in all this world, wherein you need to sever and part yourselves from God. No, take him in with you, as your first and last. And if we design him as our end so as that he be our last, it will necessarily infer the other too. If I am to act for him in every thing, I must act from him; otherwise I act unproportionably. God cannot be served but with his own. What is to be done for his glory, is to be done by his power. This is that trust in God which allows us not to lean to our own understanding, but to commence with him in all things, and have our eye keep quick turns with him; ever and anon to look up and apply ourselves to him, and appeal to him; Lord, thou seest that I am aiming at thee, as I do depend on thee for conduct and support all along in my way. And,

(8.) This living to God, as it is consequent of such a faith, implies, and must bring about, our enjoying of all things in him and with him, and in order to him. As well what we enjoy, as what we do, is all in him, if our life be once a devoted life. For we are to consider life, not only as an active principle, but also as a fruition. And a life devoted to God, doth as well enjoy all things in God, whatsoever he doth enjoy, as all for him. So that this will be the sense of a believing soul, (which is prompted by that faith to a course of living unto God,) "I have no enjoyment under the sun, that carries any taste or relish in it without God." Many will say, "Who will show us any good?" But, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me, and this shall be more to me than the increase of corn and wine and oil. When men can please themselves with the creature, (excluding God, setting God aside,) solace themselves with this and that creature-comfort apart from God, neglecting and disregarding God; this is quite beside the genius of a life sacred to God,—most contrary to the notion of living to him. For life is the principle by which we enjoy what is enjoyable, as well as the principle by which we do or practise what is practicable. And that is one thing which that faith which is justifying and will save doth infer, which carries very great appearance and expressions of friendliness in it, living to God. The most friendly thing we are capable of doing. And it appears so, if we consider the several mentioned things that do concur in it. But,

2. It infers too, in the next place, liberty towards God, as well as living to him. The next thing to life, is liberty. A life dedicated to God, is inferred by a vital faith; and liberty is as certainly and necessarily inferred. That is a liberty and freedom towards him,—and what is more friendly? By that you estimate friendship; to wit, by liberty and freedom towards one another, which is the certain effect and consequent of vital trust. There is no such thing as real living faith, but from a spirit of faith, of which we read, 2 Cor. iv. 13. "We having the same spirit of faith," the same that David had; (he is quoting David there in that place;) "I believed, therefore have I spoken," saith the apostle Paul, as David had said so many hundred years before. We also believe, and, therefore, speak, having the same spirit of faith. So that there never was faith in the world, among them that did really and truly believe in God, but it was from one and the same spirit of faith, working uniformly in the several ages and successions of time. The same spirit of faith which David had in his time, the apostle had in his time. And he doth not speak of himself separately, but including other Christians, "We having the same spirit of faith." Lay this scripture to that other in the foregoing chapter, 2 Cor. iii. 17. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Where that Spirit is not, the soul is in bonds. They that are not under grace, but under a condemning law, (which they must be, by standing under a covenant of works,) they are slaves; that covenant "genders to bondage," (Gal. iv. 24.) the covenant of grace unto liberty. And so all that are of the spiritual seed, born of the Spirit, (as all true believers are,) they are the children of "that Jerusalem which is free, and is the mother of us all." Hence, from that faith which instates a man in the grace of the covenant, he hath a freedom in his spirit towards God. And do but mark hereupon the connexion between these two things, in that of the Psalmist, Psalm lxii. 8. "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before him." He that hath no vital trust in God, is shut up towards God, his spirit is pent in, he hath no liberty towards God. When he goes to pray, or applies himself to any other work, he is like a man that cannot find his hands. He is manacled and bound, hand and foot. The spirit that rules in him, is a spirit of bondage; but the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of sons, is a Spirit of liberty and freedom. He can be free with God, as a man can be free with his friend. And it is friendly when he can be so; when he can pour out his soul to him, make his complaint, spread his desires, and represent his grievances. You can do so towards such a one, towards whom you bear a friendly mind, but not to a stranger. And,

3. Such a faith as justifies, and will save, infers a communication of secrets. This it infers, that you do not affect to cover or keep any thing secret from God. You cannot only use a liberty in expressing your desires, and making your complaints and moans to him, but you have nothing at all that you would reserve and hide from him, or make a secret to him. This faith prompts unto. You very well know, that when we communicate a secret, that which we would have be a secret, we seek to commit and intrust it to a friend. I trust such a man with my secrets; that is friendship. Such a friendly mind accompanies faith towards God. I do not desire that any thing should be a secret with me from him. A guilty soul that hath none of this faith, cries, Oh, give me a corner, give me a cloud, give me darkness, in which I may be wrapt up. When it is said "there is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves:" it is the thing they seek,—that is the thing they covet. But the believing soul saith, I would have no secret between me and this great friend, nothing that I would reserve as a secret from him. So he is pleased to express friendliness to us, by communicating his secrets, by unfolding to us that Gospel which was a secret from ages, and from generations by-past. So our Lord Christ argues his own friendliness to his disciples: "I have called you friends; for all things that have

been made known unto me of my Father, I have made known unto you," John xv. 15. As you have largely heard. The same way are we to express friendliness to him. And faith will infer it, that we can freely open to him all our secrets, and never be upon our reserves towards him. And not only because we cannot help it, but because we choose it. It is not a thing unavoidably imposed upon us; but it is a thing that a friendly mind prompts us to, to tell him all our hearts. We would have no design which should not be under his eye, and about which we would not communicate with him. This the faith that justifies will infer. I should have insisted a little in the next place upon this,

4. That it obliges to the strictest watchfulness against the insinuations of this world into our hearts; because the friendship of this world is enmity against God. I pray bear it away with you. I must in faithfulness warn you of it. If you consider it not, all friendly concern with God is at an end. To have the world follow you into your closets, and into family duties, and into the public solemnities of worship, and you still carry the world with you, a worldly heart, a worldly mind, and worldly desires—this is very dangerous; for, know ye not that the friendship of this world is enmity against God? When it is said, "Let your conversation be without covetousness," it is added, "for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5. There are five negatives, never, never, never, never, never. What doth that imply? It implies thus much,—that if yet I will allow, and indulge and cherish in my soul a predominant worldly inclination, I care not for the Divine presence, in comparison of this world. It signifies, that the world is more to me than God and the Divine presence, and the glory of it; and that I had rather he should forsake me, than I should forsake this world. A worldly inclination is for this a less tolerable and more unallowable thing, because it contributes nothing to a man's enjoying more of this world, for there is nothing to be done in the pursuit of any honest design in the world, but I may better do it in subordination to God, than in opposition. I may use my understanding as well, and take in God with me, and keep myself in the Divine presence, and continue united and cleaving to him in heart and spirit. And, therefore, if a worldly mind do draw a soul off from God, this is to be worldly for worldliness sake; it profiteth a man nothing, it plucks him away from God to no purpose. Any thing that were lawful and honest and just, might as well have been done, designed, and enjoyed, notwithstanding my intercourse with God. Faith is our victory over the world; that faith, therefore, which doth justify a man, and set all things right between God and him, it must needs fortify against worldly inclinations, and make this world despicably little, and render God always gloriously great in mine eyes.

SERMON XXXVI.*

James ii. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

THUS I have evinced the truth of the doctrine of this text, by showing you at large what there is of friendliness in this matter on God's part, and what there is on their part whom he brings to believe. It is the use of all which remains to be insisted upon and recommended to you. Wherein I shall not be diffuse, having had occasion to insist very largely, by way of use, upon a subject which you know was very congenerous to this, and of great affinity to it. But very instructive inferences it very obviously affords us. As,

1. We may collect hence, That bad as this world is, God hath yet some portion in it, to wit, a people peculiar to himself. Here he hath some that do believe in him, that he counts righteous, that he calls and treats as his "friends." And these are great peculiarities. You may see it is not his design (though this world have been all in a dreadful apostacy from God) to quit his interest in it, or quite to abandon it, and lay aside all kind thoughts towards it. This, you may see, is remote from him. It is not his intention, that though all have been in transgression against him, yet that all shall be involved in one condemnation, and in one ruin. But he hath his portion, that he doth and will exempt out of the common ruin, that shall not lie under an everlasting doom and condemnation with the rest of the perishing world. Those that "shall not be condemned with the world," as the Scripture expression is, 1 Cor. xi. 32. He hath in this world some friends that he will treat and deal with as such, and these must not lie under everlasting condemnation. His friends are such as do believe him, and as believing in him are not condemned, as John v. 24. And they "shall never come into condemnation," for they are "passed from death unto life." He justifies, he imputes righteousness to them, as is expressed here. And "Who is he that condemneth" when God justifies? Rom. viii. And see what triumphs are erected in that chapter to the grace of God. "Who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?" No tribulation, no affliction, no principality; nothing that is present, nothing that is to come, shall ever separate them.

Methinks it is a comfortable, pleasant thought, that, taking a prospect of this world, beholding it so generally with a dark, dismal, and gloomy shadow of death; beholding it lying in wickedness, and under the power of him who is called the god of this world, that yet God should have a select and peculiar people in it. What a glorious design was this, the forming of a society out of such a world as this, as should be called the friends of God. It is pleasant, and it ought to seem a great thing to our thoughts, that it should be so. And sure it must put us upon reflection: Oh, am I of that happy society, of that select society? Such a society God hath in this world, that is out of doubt; a society of men that he calls his friends, that bear his character. That (I say) is out of all doubt. Whether we be of that number or no?—it is pity that should be a doubt? And methinks it should not be very easy to our minds while it is so. While this is with us a doubtful case, and we cannot speak clearly to this question. Am I of that society justly called the friends of God? But,

2. We may further collect hence, that as God has such a peculiar people in this world, who do specially belong to him, so this people are distinguished from the rest of the world by some very peculiar excellencies. Here is not a distinction without a difference. But there is a mighty difference, not which he finds, but which he makes, between man and man, that people that are peculiar to him, and the rest of the world. There are two differing excellencies by which they are distinguished in the text: Believing in God, and friendship towards him. For the matter is plain enough in itself, and you have heard it largely evinced, that this friendship cannot but be mutual; that they are not merely passive in this friendship, or the objects of it, but the subjects too. Here is this great distinguishing excellency to be found in these sort of men, that they are such as do believe in God. Abraham believed God; this is not spoken of him as a single person, but as the father of the faithful, as we may have occasion to take notice, the Scripture speaks expressly, again and again. And this is one of the characters of this people, the society of God's friends: they are a society of believers. A very great excellency, in such a world as this.

Object. But some may say in their own minds, What is there in it that doth notify and signalize such a people, as if they were upon that account more excellent than their neighbours? Methinks this believing it is but a light and trivial matter, that that should be the dignification of such a peculiar people which shall be called God's own, select and severed from all the rest of the world. What a small matter does this believing seem to be.

Ans. Indeed it cannot but seem so, according to the notion that too generally prevails, concerning believing. With many it is but a notion, an airy thing, that hovers in their minds, but makes no impression, no more alters them than a puff of wind would do a stone wall. With

* Preached February 13th, 1693-4.

many others it is not so much as a notion. What multitudes are there that will be called Christians, but have no notion at all in their minds, correspondent to that name! No notion of the things they profess to believe. Their minds are wrapt up in a total ignorance of all the things that are to be the peculiar and most special matters of their faith. I do not wonder (when we consider what is made of faith in so great a part of the Christian world) that that of solifidian should go for so ignominious and reproachful a name. Men have made so very light and small a matter of faith, that it may very well go for a very diminishing character to be a solifidian, to be only a believer. Indeed men have reduced the business of faith to so little a trifle, that I know no reason, as to them, why solifidian and nolifidian should not signify alone to be only a believer, and no believer at all. Men have diminished even to nothing, a thing which with the most hath no object, and with the rest too generally no power, no efficacy, no spirit, no life; and it had as good be nothing, as do nothing, make no change upon their hearts.

But if it were considered what faith (the faith of the Gospel, which God calls faith, and upon which God calls believers his friends)—If (I say) it be considered what it hath in it, and what goes along with it, what it carries in it, and what it carries with it, it will appear a mighty thing, a glorious thing, and such as that one would not wonder that such a select peculiar people of God should be distinguished by it; that it should be the differencing thing, one of the main differences from the rest of the world. For it is such a thing as plucks a man quite off from all this world. Men are all ingulfed naturally in the spirit of this world. This faith severs them, raises them quite into another sphere, into an invisible world; and it is to them (wherever it is) the substance of the things that they hope for, and the evidence of the things which they see not. It plucks men quite off from themselves. It is a self-emptying thing. Divides and severs a man from himself. It is that by which he ceaseth to trust in himself, to depend upon himself, to have any confidence in himself, and so come to think the most debasingly of himself, yea, the most terribly. So that he not only despises, but he dreads himself, and flies from himself, and out of himself. And then it unites him with God and with Christ, by whom only he can take hold of God. Through Christ we believe in God. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Faith passes through Christ unto God, as the Spirit speaks, 1 Pet. i. 21. and John xiv. 1. It is that, therefore, whereby the soul seizes and possesses (according to its capacity) the all-comprehending good communicable and communicated in and by Christ. That is, Christ dwells in the heart by this faith. And thereupon souls being rooted and grounded in love, are filled with all the fulness of God. If you think but of what is carried with it, (the many things that were formerly instanced in,) they make this faith appear to be a most glorious thing in the soul wherever it hath place. It is that by which a person commits himself, intrusts himself, wholly and entirely into the hands of another. That by which it trusts one that it never saw, even with the very soul, and all its concernments. It is a venture for eternity upon this apprehension and knowledge, that if there be error or mistake in the case, it is never to be corrected, a matter never to be altered. It is a trusting with one's soul one whom we know we have offended; one of the most difficult and arduous things in the world, when we know we have displeased him, yet to trust him and cast all our care upon him; yea, upon one that doth afflict us, doth things very ungrateful to us, and who we know will at last bring us down into the very dust of death. And yet the soul saith, Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him. It is such a thing as governs the whole life of them that have it; for the just do live by it. As others live by their senses; those live by their faith upon an invisible God, an invisible Christ, and an invisible world. We know not what belongs to believing, if we understand nothing of all this, and then this faith is a riddle. It is not to be wondered at that this should be one of the peculiar and characteristical excellencies of that people whom God doth sever and make peculiar to himself from the rest of men. And their friendliness to God is another of those excellencies. And by how much the fewer his friends are, so much the nobler and more glorious a thing is it to be one of them. To bear a friendly mind towards God in a world where he is invisible, almost forgotten, and where so few regard him, look after, or concern themselves with him, this is a very peculiar excellency. That when the generality of men have their minds and hearts, their thoughts and affections, wholly engaged and taken up about things of sense, there appears so much the more of a nobler temper and spirit in these men: No, I must have somewhat else for the object of my friendly love, the love of my delight, (which is friendly love,) I must have somewhat else to delight in, and wherein to solace and finally to satisfy myself. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and whom do I desire on earth besides thee?" Ps. lxxiii. 25. That people that do peculiarly belong to God are distinguished from the rest of the world by very peculiar excellencies.

3. We may further learn hence, that a justified state, and a state of friendship with God, are commensurate, or do measure one another. They are of equal extent; God hath no friends but whom he justifies. And he justifies none but who are his friends. That is, he doth actually account or actually render them righteous, by imputing righteousness to them who are brought into actual friendship with him. To wit, he is then statedly in friendship with them, when there is a friendship inwrought, even in the same instant, in their hearts towards him. It is very true, indeed, we have such an expression as that of justifying "the ungodly," Rom. v. 6. So you have abundance of expressions in Scripture which must be understood just as that must. That the blind do see, the deaf do hear, and the lame do walk, and the like. That is, they who immediately before were such, are now made capable of all these acts which do bespeak another state. An ungodly man is justified; we are told in the same context that he is justified by faith: faith is not the act of an ungodly man continuing so; but as the blind are said to see, that is, sight being given to them when they were immediately before blind. And the lame to walk, to wit, who were immediately before lame, but now are made to walk. So an ungodly person is justified; one that was immediately before ungodly. But in the same instant when God imputes righteousness to him, he gives light, a new spirit, a new nature to him; for he justifies him as a believer. The word rendered "ungodly" there signifies an unworking man; but faith is the highest act of worship that the human soul is capable of. For therein I actually acknowledge and adore the truth, and wisdom, and power, and goodness of that God unto whom I intrust myself. There is no higher worship than that which is carried in faith. And therefore, that such a one should be at the same time a believer and an unworshipping person, is to say and unsay the same thing with the same breath, and even in the same words. Therefore understand the matter so, that a justified state is a state of friendship with God; which includes a friendly disposition introduced in the same instant, inwrought into our souls towards God. That faith being inwrought which would take in love, which virtually comprehends love in it, so that it doth not do its first and most essential act without the ingrediency of it; to wit, unite the soul with God in Christ. When the soul comes into that union with God in Christ, that is its conversion and union at the same time. Doth it unite with him, and retain an aversion at the same time? That is impossible. But that aversion is turned into propension, and that propension is only faith working by love. "The grace of God was exceeding abundant towards me saith the apostle, (1 Tim. i. 14.) with faith," &c. He being the fountain of all grace, and the object too of these graces. If any dream, therefore, of being in a justified state, while as yet they retain an habitual fixed aversion from God, and bear no friendly mind towards him, this is a very idle dream, a very delusive dream, a dream which, if a man awake not out of it betimes, will prove a delusion unto his ruin and destruction. It is a misrepresenting of the Christian religion throughout, to suppose that it should be only a provision made to change the states of men, without changing their hearts; to bring men into a justified estate, and yet to leave them in a state of enmity to God, and disaffection towards him, that they care not to come at him to know him, to converse with him.

This is the notion that hath so vastly spread through the

Christian world. Men think that they are justified by Christ's dying, and that they need not care, nor concern themselves, whether there be any change made in them, yea or no. But as I told you formerly upon this subject, Christ's righteousness is never the clothing of a carcass continuing so. But when he doth clothe and invest any with his righteousness, he doth put a spirit of life into them at the same time, and that spirit of life breathes in a friendly love. Men are generally justified under the Gospel upon the same terms and in the same way wherein the great father of believers was, to wit, upon their believing God. He hereupon immediately counts them righteous, but at the same time inspiring them with that friendly love towards him, which as a new vital principle habituates them and facilitates them unto all the duties and actions of that holy devoted life, that life of friendliness towards God wherein they are to spend the residue of their days.

In his first treatment with Abraham, he propounds himself to him as God-all sufficient, and at the same time draws his heart to close with him, and puts into him such a disposition with it to walk with him, and be perfect. I am God all-sufficient, "walk before me, and be thou perfect," or upright, Gen. xvii. 1. He doth not vary his method; this is his way of treatment with all others. As he dealt with the father of believers, so he hath with all believers besides. If once they are willing to abandon and quit all things else to which their sense had addicted and inclined their hearts, so as they now resolve on and close with the great objects of faith, they pass into that sphere that is composed and made up of invisible objects, such as faith hath to do with, and principally himself as he is in Christ; hereupon he imputes righteousness to them, that faith carrying in it that propension and inclination of heart to him, whereby they are made his friends, and inclined to all friendly deportment towards him afterwards. Therefore, take we heed lest any impose upon themselves with an imagination that they shall be justified, saved from condemnation, and entitled to eternal life, by only an external righteousness imputed to them without the concomitancy of a friendly disposition of heart inwrought in them towards God through Christ. And again,—

4. We may further collect hence, that by this measure a great many have very great cause to doubt and to dread their state; to have not only doubtful, but very dreadful thoughts concerning their state; for how plain a thing is it, that as God hath some friends in this world, so plain a thing is it, that he hath but few friends in this world. And then if friendship towards God and a justified state do measure one another, and are commensurate, there is too much cause for multitudes, not only to have doubtful, but very dreadful, thoughts about the state of their case. They are to make their estimate by two such things as are most eminent and obvious to any one's thoughts in friendship; that is, converse with my friend, and service to my friend: if these two things are to be the measure by which we are to make an estimate, how few friends has the blessed God in this world.

(1.) How few that care for his converse. Is not this the common account given of the temper and genius of the sons of men, and of their state together, Eph. ii. 12. "without God in the world." Let every one consult his own heart, lay his hand upon his heart, and consider;—Is not this still my case, to be without God in the world from day to day? Do not I transact my affairs without God? Do not I begin my days and end them one after another as they pass, without God? or, if I have any thing to do with him, is it as a friend? If I have any thoughts of him, are they friendly thoughts, pleasant, complacential, and reverential ones? for I can only have such if I have those that are due toward such a friend; adoring thoughts, that are thereupon grateful and pleasant as they are full of duty towards him. Do I love his presence, delight in approaching to him? Can I please myself to shut myself up in a corner, in a closet with him, to pour out my soul to him, and to receive his communications to me? How little of this is there among us! And then,—

(2.) If we consider the other thing mentioned, most eminent and obvious in friendship, service to one's friend. All that I can do is too little for my friend; his interest is my interest. He with whom I am entire in friendship, I cannot have a separate interest from. I cannot serve an interest of mine own with the neglect, much less with the disservice, of the interest of my friend. What expression is there among us of a friendly mind towards God in this kind! as the apostle speaks concerning Christ (and we cannot consider him but we must consider God in him)—"For me to live is Christ," Phil. i. 21. I have no business to live in this world but for God; I have devoted myself to him, from a principle of friendly love. This world is nothing to me, but for him; I would not covet to live in it, but upon his account, that I may know him more and serve him better, and be more conformed to him, and fitted to dwell with him for ever. Therefore serving of his interest is your business, your life is a living to God. The whole stream of all the designs and of all the actions of your life running directly towards God, that you may live to God; which doth comprehend the whole business of life; Gal. ii. 19. "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." All my life is to run into him, to terminate in him; so it cannot but be, where there is a friendly mind towards him. These are trying things, and they lie in a very little compass, so that we do not need to go far if we make our judgment or estimate by the measure that hath been mentioned, what things they are that do distinguish the peculiar people of God from other men; certainly this will bring the matter to a very narrow and short issue. We say, none are in a justified state but God's friends; that friendship to God cannot be an empty name; it must signify nothing if it doth not signify these two great things, to wit, a desire of his converse, and an inclination of mind to do him all the service that we are capable of doing him, from the dictate and instinct of friendly love. I cannot be kept from him, because he is my friend. I must do for him all I can, because he is my friend. Upon all this you may also gather, what in the close and conclusion of so copious a discourse I am by way of exhortation to recommend to you, to wit, these two great things contained in the text, Faith in God, and Friendship with him.

SERMON XXXVII.*

James ii. 23.

And the Scripture was fulfilled, &c.

I TOLD you the last time, that I intended to put a period to the long discourse on this subject at this time. And herein by way of summary, I have these two great things contained in the text, seriously to recommend unto you,—faith in God, and friendship with him. I cannot suppose that, foreknowing the subject, so many should come together without a design, that if any thing should be said applicable to so great and high purposes, they will lay it up in order to future use and benefit. It would be a hard supposition, and have too much of uncharitableness in it, for me to give any place in my thoughts that you should be generally come together without any such design; I hope there are none come with so vain and wanton a mind, as only to throw away an hour here that they know not what else to do with; or to gaze at one another, or to criticise, or spend their judgment upon what they hear, without any more ado, and to go as they came.

If any two things should be pitched upon in any of our thoughts, of greater importance than other, what can you think of greater than these two which you find comprehended together in this text—faith in God, and friendship with him. It cannot be, if we have any design for eternity and another world, that we can look upon these things with neglect. Nothing can be of greater concernment; even to the judgment of your own consciences, they must appear so as they really and truly are: and, methinks, we should be all within ourselves about it. Do we think it

* Preached February 25th, 1693 4.

can go well hereafter with unbelievers, or with God's enemies? In reference to each of these, somewhat in the conclusion of this discourse is to be said, by way of direction and exhortation.—

I. As to the former, faith in God. You are not to understand this (though it be believing in God that the text speaks of) exclusive of Christ, but as including him; that is, implying and supposing him to be the mediate object of your faith, while God is pointed at as the final and ultimate object: according to the apostle, 1 Pet. i. 21. "Who through him (meaning Christ) do believe in God." Those that are believers in a Gospel sense, who through Christ do believe in God, their faith being carried through Christ as the mediator and the mediate object, unto God as the terminative and ultimate object. It was this believing in God through Christ the promised seed, that Abraham the great father of believers is characterized by in this text, and in divers other places of Scripture. And such a faith as his was you are to endeavour that you may find alive and in exercise in each of your souls. For it is not a dead faith that will pass for faith in the divine estimate, as this chapter more expressly and largely discourses. With what contempt doth it speak of a dead faith, making it but a carcass. "As the body without the spirit is dead," so as that faith that is not working, that is not energetical, that hath no energy, no life with it. So, you know, the chapter closes.

With some, I told you, it is but a notion. I fear with many besides (it may be many more) it may be less than that. Men call themselves believers when they have not such a notion in their minds of the things that they pretend to believe. With some a notional faith serves their turn; with others what is less, a mere nominal faith. It will do us no good to have that in us which we call faith, unless God calls it so too. And know, therefore, that those who have not that faith which in the evangelical sense, and by that test, will go for such, they must go among the unbelievers, let them call themselves, or let other men call them, what they will. And then for excitation in this matter, let me but offer these two awakening things to be considered.

1. That considering a man to be found an unbeliever under the Gospel, which claims and challenges his faith, that is, which claims to be believed by a correspondent faith unto what it contains and carries in it; he hath the guilt of all his other sins still continuing, and bound down close upon him. An unbelieving person is an unjustified person. So such must understand the state of the case. I have all the weight of that guilt upon me, which I have been contracting all my days. "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness." Righteousness is not imputed upon other terms. Will any man think to make for himself a new Gospel, to confront that Gospel which our Lord hath sent among us? An unbeliever, and unjustified. So represent the case to yourselves. And what doth that signify? It signifies, that the holy jealous God holds me guilty of all that I have been doing against him all my days. I have lived long as "without God in the world," and he holds me guilty. I have lived to myself, and not to him, and he holds me guilty. Neglected him, disobeyed him, and lived in affront to him, and he holds me guilty. Every thing that I have used and enjoyed in this world, it hath been by usurpation; it hath been without right, as to him, without allowance. I ought to have eaten and drank, and looked up, acknowledging and adoring him whose fulness filleth all in all; but God was not in all my thoughts: and for all this he holds me guilty. I have lived a prayerless life, an ungodly life, alienated from the life of God; this hath been my way and course, and he holds me guilty. What an amazing thing is this! As long as an unbeliever, still under guilt. You have no righteousness to shelter you, to protect you, to keep off wrath and vengeance from you. But,

2. That is not all, you have a superadded (and that the greatest) load of guilt imaginable, by not believing. "He that believeth not, is condemned already," &c. That is, he to whom there is a sufficient proposal made; the object is not concealed, nor wrapt up in darkness, but set in clear and open light before your eyes, and yet you believe not. Upon how fearful terms doth such a one perish. When his case comes to be stated at the last, in the judgment of the great day, Why is such a one cast? Why is he held guilty? Why is he abandoned to perish? Why is it said to him, "Depart, accursed?" It is because he would not believe in God. He had many other sins upon him, but they would all have been forgiven him if he would have believed, if he would have taken God and his Son; then would have been a perfect peace between God and him. If his sins had been never so great, they had been all done away. But this man perisheth, because he would not believe him against sensual imaginations—against carnal inclinations. God told him it was best for him to abandon his sins, and put himself under his government, and live by his rules and holy laws; but he would not believe this, but thought it better to obey the lusts of his own heart, and walk according to his own imagination. He perisheth, because he would not believe God; because he made him a liar in that plain testimony and record he had given, concerning the way of salvation unto sinners by his Son. Against whom did "he swear in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest, but them that believed not? So we see they could not enter in, because of unbelief?" This was the great provoking wickedness of that people all along. How long will ye provoke me? How long will ye not believe me, notwithstanding the mighty noble works that have been done in the midst of you? God was manifesting himself in several and many great and remarkable instances; but yet they would not believe. They despised the pleasant land;—they believed not his word. All their wickedness was rooted in infidelity—they could not take the word of God. How fearful a case is this! When a reasonable creature, one that hath an intelligent mind and spirit about him, part of the offspring of the great Father of spirits, he would not be governed by the divine dictates, but opposed the inclination and imagination of his flesh, unto the express word of the Father of spirits. He tells me, I must live so and so, that I may do well—that I may die happy, and live eternally. But I will not believe it. I will believe the lusts of my own heart; rather run the hazard—venture it—try what will come of it. Oh! to perish on these terms is dreadful perishing, because I give the lie to him that gave me breath.

But then I must say somewhat too, by way of direction in this important matter. Is it so fearful a thing not to believe? Will not any thing that may carry with it the shadow of believing, serve the turn? But it must be faith indeed, and such as will answer the intendment of the Gospel: that I must have, or I perish as an unbeliever, whatsoever character I have gone under, or have thought myself to have. Why, how shall I do or know? Pray direct me in this, what kind of faith I must aim at, and not satisfy myself short of, or to be without? Why it must be,

1. Such (and pray, therefore, aim at such) a faith as shall admit the Gospel revelation into your hearts. This is not so obscure a thing as many, upon the first hearing, may account it. Do not you know the difference between receiving a report by your ears only, and taking it into the heart? Suppose it were of some very great good news which you hear of in any uncertain way, so as that you apprehend no reason to believe it true? It enters your ears, but goes no further. But if it be a great thing, and it comes with certainty, so as that no room of rational doubt remains concerning the truth of the matter; then it goes into your heart, and fills that with joy and pleasure and complacency. You sensibly find it exciting and raising an affection in you suitable to the import of the thing, if the Gospel be received, so that reception makes its own distinction visibly in it. "I tell you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." When the Gospel comes among you, and tells you that the great Majesty of heaven, whom you have offended, is willing to be reconciled to you, and hath sent his Son into the world on purpose to be the reconciler, and he died upon the cross a reconciling sacrifice; it is discernible, (if you will inspect and look into yourselves,) whether that which you call faith in you, of the Gospel and the Gospel revelation, make any such impressions upon your heart as is correspondent of so great a thing. It is "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." That is the great business of inquiry.

What kind of faith will serve me unto righteousness, that I may be justified—that I may be counted righteous thereupon? Why, it is "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. x. 10. And saith the apostle, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief," 1 Tim. i. 15.

Have you received the Gospel revelation so, as "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation?" Is it acceptable, do you judge it worthy of your acceptation, of all acceptation? Then your heart and soul embraceth it, and closeth with it. This the apostle speaks in that great summary of the Gospel, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, (even the chief of them,) of whom I am chief."

2. Labour for such a faith as may inwardly unite your souls to Christ, revealed in this Gospel, and with God in him. Your faith is to take hold of him, and of God in him, so as thereby to come into a united state, a state of union with him, that you may thereupon be in him. It must be such a faith as whereby Christ may dwell in your hearts. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," Eph. iii. 17. That is not spoken exclusively of God, for it is presently subjoined, "that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." All which fulness is in him. Do not satisfy yourselves without such a faith as that by which you may say you have now the son of God. God in him, in you, and with you. He hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true. That understanding, to know him that is true, is faith, as it resides in the mind. But though it hath its first seat there, it doth not terminate there, for this immediately ensues, and we are in him. In whom? In Jesus Christ the Son, who is the true God, and eternal life. We pass into union by this intuition, even into union with the true God, who carries eternal life in his very name. Such a faith as leaves you still at a distance from God and from Christ, do you think that can avail you? All that is in Christ is yours, as you come to be in him. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. In him once, and all is yours; whatsoever you need, whatsoever is suitable to the exigency of your state. Are you foolish creatures, he is wisdom to you. Are you guilty creatures, he is righteousness to you. Are you impure creatures, he is sanctification to you. Are you enslaved lost creatures, he is redemption to you, if you be in him; but nothing at all if you be not in him.

3. Labour for such a faith as may be transforming to your whole souls. Consider that the whole economy of the Gospel aims at this, the bringing of all, upon whom it shall have its effect, into the unity of the faith, so that all come to unite in one faith, Eph. iv. 13. And what is to be consequent thereupon, the apostle tells you in what follows there, supposing this once to be done, and that you are brought with the rest of sincere believers into the oneness of faith, the unity of the faith which is common to serious and sincere Christians. As such then, I testify to you, that you are not to walk like other Gentiles, as if this faith, in which all sincere Christians were to unite and be one, should leave you but just like other men in your habitual frame. "I say it, and I testify to you in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind," Eph. iv. 17. You had a heart alienated from that life. Will you keep that heart still, and call yourself a believer, and pretend to be come to unity of the faith? still to live with an habitual disinclination in your heart towards God? This can never be. But if you have learned "the truth as it is in Jesus," I tell you (saith the apostle) what that must be: it must come to this, the "putting off the old man, which is corrupt by deceivable lusts," and "being renewed in the spirit of your mind," Eph. iv. 22, 23. You are never come into the unity of that faith which belongs to all that shall be saved, till there be thereupon a divestiture and total investiture. A divestiture and "putting off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceivable lusts;" you must cease to be the man that you were before, and (as that which is intervening and central in the case) there must be a renovation even in the spirit of your minds, a new heart and a right spirit being created and renewed in you, being renewed in the spirit of your minds, the inward seat of vital governing principles. If the spirit of the mind be renewed, that spreads influence through the man, then there is a new man put on. Not some slight, superficial change in this or that particular respect, but an entire new man. As he that is in Christ is said to be a new creature. There is a new creation introduced, the man is new. This must be, if your faith be to any purpose. The apostle blesses God for the Thessalonians, in that he could look upon them, as those that were chosen to salvation by the remarkable and observable effects. The way that God had taken with them was, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; such a believing of the truth as had been accompanied with the sanctification of Spirit. Agreeably to that of our Lord himself, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," John xvii. 17.

4. See that it be such a faith as doth and shall govern your lives, so that you live by it, and thereupon cannot only say, I did believe seven, or ten, or twenty years ago, but I continually live by my believing. A man is not said to live by that which rarely happens to him, or once or twice in a life-time. We are to live by breathing, but we cannot do so if it be not continual. So we are to live by believing; "the just shall live by his faith." That he is continually to live by all his days. Can it be thought that such a one shall be said to live now, because he drew breath twenty years ago? But that belief which is true, real, vital, will be continually repeating its acts and exercises. "The life that I live in the flesh (says the apostle) I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20. That is, if your faith be a right vital principle, and such as the Gospel means and signifies by the name of faith, it is such a thing as carries up the soul into a continual course, into an invisible scene of things. There you have an invisible God, and an invisible Christ, and an invisible glory, still in view. There are some that talk of such a thing as a double sight, or a second sight, so as that they who have it have a visible world and an invisible world in view at once. I know no second sight like that of faith. That, indeed, will present an invisible world, and keep it in view before you, so that by it you will be more conversant in the world of spirits, with the Father of spirits, and with spiritual and invisible things; more conversant in your hearts, more with delight, more with savour and relish, than in this shadowy scene of things which you have within the view and under the notice of your sense. You will look upon this world "as that the fashion thereof passeth away;" but by your faith (which is to you "the substance of things hoped for," &c.) you will live above, you will live with God, you will live with Christ, you will live as on the brink and borders of eternity, ready to enter in, only waiting for a dismission hence—a call and translation thither. This is living by faith.

For, the apostle having told us, Heb. x. 38. that "the just shall live by faith," (repeating the ancient maxim out of the Old Testament, to signify to us that that is not the way of living for the saints at one time or age of the church of God only; but it is from age to age, through all the successions of time, this must be the way of believing,) then he tells us in the beginning of the next chapter, what that faith is by which such a man must live; to wit, "The substance of things hoped for," and "the evidence of things not seen." Such a faith as represents God, and Christ, and heaven, and the invisible things, all as great and most substantial realities; clothed with a clear light, and so set and continued in view before your eyes. This is, that we are to live, not to have such representations now and then, but to have them statedly before us, and so to live and direct our course accordingly. But,

2. I am also to recommend to you this other great thing, friendship with God. And in reference to that, I would also say somewhat both by way of excitation and direction. I can speak but briefly to many things. For excitation consider,

1. Is it not your great privilege to live here in this world in a state of friendship with God? for what more exalted privilege is there to poor creatures living in mortal flesh?

Here I live in flesh, dwell in flesh; but it is in friendship with God. In low circumstances, amidst a great many troubles and difficulties, but in friendship with God. Who would not choose this way of living, when it is represented to our option, when it is propounded to us as matter of choice?

2. Consider there is no middle state (for you to whom this overture is made) between these two, a state of friendship with God, and a state of enmity to him; you must be either his friends or his enemies. There can be no neutrality in this case; and will it not make a man's heart sink within him to think of this? I must either live God's friend or God's enemy. Dare I venture when the matter is laid before me as a matter of deliberation, to say, I will live the latter, I will live his enemy? you that were alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works; you see how the case is stated: you must still be enemies in your minds, through wicked works, till you are reconciled and become friends. There is no neutral state, you must go from day to day, up and down in this world, either as God's friends, or his enemies.

3. Consider that this friendship with God which we recommend to you, and into which the Gospel continually calls you, is no impossible, no impracticable thing, for it is prescribed to us as a matter of duty: "every man as he is called, let him therein abide with God," I Cor. vii. 24. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (John iv. 20.) which speaks this living in the love of God to be therefore more difficult, because we see him not. But the strength of the argument goes upon that supposition, that it is a thing which cannot be dispensed with, notwithstanding the difficulty: and be it as difficult as it will, it must therefore be supposed not to be impossible to live in the love of God, and in a state of friendship with him, though he be invisible. "How shall he love God?" implying that it is a thing, the thought whereof is to be abhorred, that a man should think of living in this world, and not to live in actual commerce and intercourse, to be kept up, and continued, with God in love. How shall he do it? It implies, that he must do it, and therefore the thing is by no means to be looked upon as impossible. And to pretend that it is impossible, is to pretend that we have gone below our own kind, that we have lost human nature, which, if it remain with us still, though we have flesh about us, yet our nobler part is spirit. And what, is it an impossible thing for a mind, a spirit, to converse with the great Father of spirits? Is flesh more akin to us than spirit, that supreme Spirit, that universal Spirit, that Spirit that diffuses influences every where throughout the world? Are we more akin to flesh, and fleshly things, than we are to this Spirit, whose offspring we are, and who is our Father? Therefore, it is not to be thought or looked on as an impossible or impracticable thing to come into and continue in this state of friendship with God. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for his mercy in Christ Jesus, unto life eternal," Jude 21. What is matter of express precept, is not to be looked upon simply and absolutely impossible by a natural impossibility. It is only so by a moral impotency, against which the aids of grace are to be expected and sought. And,

4. Consider that this friendship with God, as it is not an impossible or impracticable thing, so it is to be maintained in the easiest and most unexceptionable way. Consider, that to enter into this state is but to obey the Divine call, the very meaning and import of the whole Gospel of reconciliation. We have the greatest assurances in all the world, that God is not difficult or hard of acquaintance; for he invites. Will he refuse whom he invites? The Gospel is sent to us to beseech us, in Christ's name and stead, to be reconciled unto God. Will he refuse that which he seeks? decline that friendship into which he calls us? He is "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, that sin might not be imputed," or (which is the same thing) that righteousness might be imputed, 2 Cor. v. 19. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We are commissioned, and sent, and do in Christ's stead beseech you to be reconciled unto God. You may conclude, with the greatest assurance imaginable, that God is willing, and not difficult, as to entering into this state of friendship with us. And then there is as little supposable difficulty of continuing in it; for do but consider to that purpose these two things, I. That he is never far off; and, 2. That he is easy to forgive.

I. That he is never far off. You will say, How shall I keep friendship with God? he is in heaven, I am upon earth. In heaven, yes, as to his more glorious manifestation of himself. But he is not far from any of us, for "in him we live, and move, and have our being." And this is told us, that we may seek and find him out, insomuch as he is far from none of us. So that now you may be with him as soon as you can think a thought. How easy is the way to keep up this friendship: only to be now and then at the expense of a thought. Where is God my Maker? that will not cost you dear. You have no cause to say, What shall I do for my friend? Who shall go up to heaven to fetch him me down from thence, or who shall go to the uttermost ends of the earth to fetch him me up from thence. No, he is with you; turn you but to him, and you will find him with you. Do but direct your mind, turn your thoughts inward, and you will find him with you. Indeed he often passes by, and we perceive him not. "Thou dost compass me behind and before, (saith the Psalmist,) and art acquainted with all my ways." O how unaccountable is it to keep off ourselves, unacquainted with him and his ways! And,

2. He is easy to forgive. Ay, but breaches may happen. I forget and neglect him too often, and am ashamed and confounded in my own sense; I am afraid to look towards him any more. That must not by any means be. You must return, though it be with weeping and humiliation. And if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, if it be not done triflingly, if it be not done without sense, if it be not done with an inclination and resolution to persist and go on in sin still. "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin," Psal. xxxii. 5. The injustice of it. And then it is added, "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him," Psal xxxii. 6. Who would decline such a friendship with him who is so easy to be reconciled at first, and still willing to forgive where there is not a wilful perseverance in obstinate rebellion against his rightful authority, and his abundant love and goodness? And consider,

5. It is the way to bring your minds to ease in reference to all your more private concernments. You have difficulties in the world, you have troubles and straits, and know not which way to turn yourselves. Oh what a great thing is it to have such a friend, who invites you to cast your care upon him, for he will care for you. And then the peace of God shall hereupon keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

6. It will keep you quiet in reference to public concernments. This is a very pitiable case, that when they see things run counter to their expectations, their aims, their designs and inclinations, they are full of anxiety, full of concern, full of dread and fear. They know not what will become of things. Oh what a heart-quieting thought is it, that all is in the hands of your friend, your great and wise friend, who doeth as pleaseth him in heaven above, and in the earth beneath. And he will never manage things so, as that his true friends shall at last have any cause to complain. And then consider,

7. That all will be well for ever when you are caught up in the clouds to meet your Redeemer in the air, and to be for ever with the Lord. That being his declared pleasure, that he will have all his friends together eternally with him in one society, in one assembly, made up of an innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. That they that have lived by the faith of Abraham, and been friends of God, as he was, may sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in his kingdom, and there reside for ever. In this Scripture we are told that "Abra-

ham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness."

But some may say, What is that to me, who live in the world so many ages after? Why the Scriptures, as if it were on purpose to obviate any such thoughts, tell us, (particularly the apostle, Rom. iv. latter end, where he had been speaking of the same thing,) Abraham believing God, and its being imputed to him for righteouness, it was not for his sake that this was written, not for his sake alone, but for all that should believe with the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, *i. e.* as believing under the common notion of believers. Not as if our faith were to be produced, or to be maintained, by any influences from him. But he is called the father of believers upon the same account upon which any one great and eminent in a profession, is said to be the father of such, to wit, a great example, as Jabal is said to be the father of them that dwell in tents, and Jubal the father of them that handle the harp and organ. What was said concerning Abraham and his faith, and his friendship with God, thereupon, was not written for him alone, but for us too, that we are to live in the same faith and the same friendship with God as he did.

I shall shut up all, by way of direction as to this, with only two words in general. You think it a very desirable thing (I doubt not but you do) to be in this state of friendship with God. Surely every one among us must say, if it be a desirable thing to live in a state of friendship with God, who would not live at this rate every day in a state of friendship with the great and glorious God of heaven and earth! I shall only say these two things by way of direction in reference hereto.

1. Give yourselves up entirely unto this friendship with God; and do it with solemnity: so great a thing as this, entering into friendship with God, the great and glorious Lord of heaven and earth, the matter speaks itself that it ought to be done with solemnity. Make a solemn business of it; apply yourselves purposely to him, and tell him, Lord, I have heard thy mind, thy pleasure, thou wouldst have souls that have wandered from thee, and been alienated, come into thine acquaintance and friendship. The Gospel under which I live hath told me so; I believe thy word; I come now to offer myself up unto thee, to be thy reconciled one, thy devoted one, thy servant, thy friend. "Thy servant, thy servant; O Lord thou hast broken my bonds," Psal. cxvi. 16. But our Saviour would have us know, that the notion of a servant is not to exclude that of a friend, as that of a friend is not to exclude the notion of a servant, but only to prevail and predominate in the state. The notion of friendship is in the Christian state to be predominate, and to be the principal thing. Tender yourself to God accordingly. We hear many discourses to this purpose; but with too many the matter comes all to nothing, because we never make a solemn business of it. The entrance into such a state, so sacred a state, if it were done with solemnity, there would stand a remark upon it, I have engaged myself in a state of friendship with God, I must live pursuantly hereunto. I hope you will think of this; such as come to learn how you might live in a state of friendship with God. Such as have any such design, I hope will think of this another time; *i. e.* that when this state of friendship with God is once entered into, we must give ourselves up to it. And then,

2. Mind it is a continued course; otherwise, you trifled at first; never meant sincerely, never meant as you did pretend. Mind, I say, it is a continued course; And through your whole course. These are but generals; I have mentioned many particulars, at former times, to this purpose; that, if you recollect yourselves, would be of stated use to you. But all will come under this general; mind this often, that there is a friendship settled between God and me; I must in all things hereupon demean myself towards him as a friend; that is, I must consult him in all, resign all things to him, cross him in nothing; for friendship between him and us carries a peculiarity in it. If there were an equality between him and me, then it were something as between human friends, it may be. They may be equally wise, they may be equally great or equally mean; equally able to do for one another. But this is not the case here; this is not like common friends, as I formerly showed at large; and, therefore, there must be a constant reference to him in all things. We are in all things to yield to him, to cross him in nothing. And so, when in all things we are to consult him, we are to take his counsel in all, and to stand in his counsel. Not to be self-willed, not to say, we will walk in the way of our own hearts, whatsoever becomes of our friendship with him. You must always be true to him; you must always believe him true to you. You must never be strange to him: always be free, unreserved, open-hearted. You must willingly agree to it, that he be privy to all your affairs. He will be so, whether you will or no, but it is that to which your hearts should consent, and in which your hearts should rejoice, so as to be able to say, Lord! I know I can hide nothing from thee, and I would not if I could; I desire all things may lay open between me and thee, that there may be nothing hid, no veil drawn between thee and my soul. Search me, try me, look into me. It is the pleasure and advantage of this friendship, to know that he can behold sincerity, and accept it, and reward it, and delight in it. And, therefore, you must resolve never to break off this friendship, but look upon him as your inseparable friend, and from whom you are never to depart. And say to yourself, this God shall be your God; *i. e.* your friend, your friendly ruler, for ever and ever, and shall be your guide even unto death. So that you can never any moment of your life suffer an elongation from him that he should be far off, or keep long from you, but presently your hearts will miss him. And you will say, Oh! where is my friend? I will seek him, pursue after him, as the spouse in the Canticles is represented to pursue after him whom her soul loved. This is my friend, where is he? where is he? You will be presently upon inquiries, if he have hid himself, and seem to have withdrawn and retired from you; for this hath been the state of things between him and you in contracting this state of friendship, that this God shall be your God for ever and ever, and your guide even unto death.

SERMON XXXVIII.*

I John v. I.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

THE subject that I last finished, you find did connect faith and friendship with God. This connects faith and sonship to God. And the one and the other must be understood (by them that will consider) to be of the greatest importance to us imaginable; so great that it is to be hoped the former is not forgotten, and this latter will not slightingly and negligently be attended to.

The words in themselves are an express doctrinal assertion, which I shall not need therefore to vary into other terms; "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." It needs only to be explained and applied; for the explication of it, that you cannot, upon the first hearing of such an assertion as this, but think very necessary. For it may seem strange to unaccustomed ears, at least, that such a thing as this should be affirmed so generally, concerning believing Jesus to be the Christ, that every such a one should be said to be born of God. How amazing a sound may this carry with it to many who do less consider, or who understand less what the meaning of these terms is, to "believe Jesus to be the Christ," and to "be born of God;" the latter of these doth indeed, at the very first hearing, appear a very great thing—be born of God! It might even swallow up a man's soul to think of such a thing as this, affirmed, of such worms as we are. We, that might "say to the worm, Thou art our father, and to corruption, Thou art our sister and mother;" to speak of such creatures as we, as of a divine offspring and heavenly progeny, as of persons born of God; how wonderful and transporting may it be to us!

But that only which can make such an assertion as this

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seem strange is, that while this is apprehended (as it is to be really and truly) a very great thing; for the most part, such believing is reckoned a very little thing. It may, indeed, seem a great thing to be a son of God, one born of God; but the name of believing is become so cheap amongst us, and carries so little and so diminished a sound with it, that we are too generally tempted to look upon it as a slight, and small, and trivial matter. But when these terms come to be opened and understood, it will be found that there is such a near affinity between these two things, being "born of God," and "believing that Jesus is the Christ;" that the one will be easily understood not to have any place at all where the other hath no place; that they can never be apart, but wheresoever the one is the other must be too.

Our business therefore in the explication must he to do these two things; first, to consider the parts of this assertion; and then, secondly, to show their necessary connexion with one another.

I. We are to open the parts of this assertion severally, which you see are these two, concerning Christ and a divine birth; "believing that Jesus is the Christ," and being "born of God." And,

1. For the former of these, what the import is of "believing that Jesus is the Christ." And as touching that, there are again, more particularly, two things to be stated. First, the thing to be believed, that Jesus is the Christ; and, secondly, the believing of this.

(1.) The thing to be believed, that Jesus is the Christ. I pray you attend to it. Much of the greatness of this thing, which is our present subject, to wit, faith concerning him, depends upon a right understanding what it is that must be the object of this faith, and which is stated as the object of it here. The thing to be believed is, that Jesus is the Christ. It concerns us greatly to understand this aright. It is not a trivial matter that is here represented to us as the object of our faith, or the thing we are to believe. And that we may more distinctly apprehend it, we are yet to go lower, and to consider, first, the subject of this affirmation unto which we are to yield our assent, and give up our faith, which is represented to us only under one single term, Jesus; and then, secondly, what we are to believe of this subject, that he is the Christ.

[1.] The very subject itself must be truly stated; we must in our own thoughts determine of the person here spoken of, and concerning whom this affirmation is pronounced, otherwise we do nothing. Why, who is this Jesus of whom we are to believe that he is the Christ? Take we heed that our thoughts do not wander here; for that would be fatal if they should, if they should wander to another subject. This, which is so peculiarly said concerning him, must be understood exclusively of any one else; it is not spoken of any other, nor to be thought of any other. That there should be here an error *personæ*, a mistake concerning the person spoken of, it may prove a most destructive error. "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" This is the question which John directs his disciples to put to Christ for their information, not for his own, that he might gain them an opportunity of being convinced and satisfied in the great and important question of that age; which yet could not be of greater importance to that age than it is to our own, nor of greater to John's disciples than it is to every one of us: and we see what our Lord saith to it, "Tell John what you hear and see;" such and such wonders are wrought and done. And he adds in the close of all, "Blessed is he that is not offended in me;" which words would carry a kind and benign import with them beyond all that can be expressed. But they carry withal an intimated menace, as any one may apprehend—"Blessed is he that is not offended in me;" as if he should have said, Such a one hath a merciful and wonderful deliverance, "he that is not offended in me." But it is also as if he had said, Wo be to him that is; when so clear a light shines concerning me, and when there is so bright and so express a discovery; blessed is he that doth not stumble, blessed is he that doth not mistake, that doth not take one for another. The intimation is plain, nothing but wrath and vengeance and wo must hang over the guilty heads of them that do take one for another in such a case; and when the light that shines is so clear, so as that none can be guilty of a mistake, but it must be a wilful mistake if any should take another for me.

And you see how this one person is notified here, only by the name Jesus, as the subject of the affirmation, the Saviour. A name that signifies the aptitude of the person unto the office that he was to bear and manage. You know it was foretold and directed by the immediate counsel of Heaven, that he should be called Jesus; "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins," Matt. i. 21. It was a rivalling of the hero of the world, who did affect such titles, and even that very title, which the pagans did therefore bestow sometimes upon their gods, and sometimes upon their kings, to wit, Saviour; the usual name among them of Jupiter, and with which some of their great princes did dignify themselves, and affected to be dignified by, as particularly Demetrius Soter. This was an affectation among the great ones of the world to claim this very name. Well, our Lord will be known to be the Jesus. This name is his, appropriated to him, to signify to persons one that is to save as no other could, that was to be so eminent and so glorious a Saviour; that person distinguished from others by the specifying circumstances (or the individuating circumstances rather) that did attend him. That Jesus who was born at Bethlehem, and lived at Nazareth, and was crucified at Jerusalem, commonly known there by this name, the name Jesus. It is of him peculiarly and alone that this is said, he is the Christ.

[2.] And that is the thing that is to be believed concerning him, that he is the Christ. The former was the personal name, this the name of office, and speaks of the person as invested with his office, or affirms that investiture concerning his office that he is invested therewith. This indeed is variously expressed, that is the attribute given to the subject under this latter name. Sometimes the same thing is said concerning the believing this Jesus to be the Son of God; that doth equally entitle to the same great privilege, and brings a man into the same safe state, implies the same change and transformation upon his soul, as you see in the foregoing chapter of this epistle at the 15th verse, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Sometimes the meaning and import of this expression, "is the Christ," is signified by that conjunction with the other, both conjoined, that is, that he is the Christ, and that he is the Son of God. When our Lord demands of Peter, "Whom say ye that I am?" (Matt. xvi. 15.) the various opinions are given, some saying he was Elias, some saying some other of the prophets. Well, but what say you, Peter, and the rest, that I am? "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," saith Peter. So you have both conjoined in reference to the same person, as in John xx. 31. "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." These passages plainly intimate to us thus much, that to affirm that Jesus is the Christ, and that he is the Son of God, comes all to one, it amounts to the same thing. To say concerning this person believingly that he is the Christ, or that he is the Son of God, there is an equivalency in the one of these to the other. Sometimes a third expression, of equal import to either of the others, or both the others, is used; "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." A strange saying too, as this of the text seems to be, 1 Cor. ii. 3. there "Lord" is the name of the office too; the usual style by which he is spoken of in the New Testament, and in some places of the Old too; "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," Psal. cx. 1. It only imports that universal and sovereign dominion that did belong to the mediatorial office, the thing signified by the name of Christ. "He is Lord of all," Acts x. 36. A thing that seems slid in by the apostle in the stream and current of his discourse; "he is Lord of all," saith he, in a parenthesis; and so he goes on, dropping that by the way; and no man can say that he is so "but by the Holy Ghost," to wit, with a correspondent disposition of soul internally, vitally, and practically acknowledging him, and subjecting his soul to him as Lord of all, as the Lord,

he into whose hands all power is put both in heaven and earth.

But when this is said, "that Jesus is the Christ," and this again is used as an equivalent expression, "that he is the Son of God," or, "he is Lord of all," this only represents and gives us an intimation of the state of the case at that time. He appearing now in the fulness of time upon the stage of this world, various opinions there were of him, some mistaken ones, some very malicious ones, and some that were right and true; this begat a great controversy; it was the question of the time, and the determination of it the right way called the present truth; to wit, the great question concerning this Jesus, who, and what he was; "I speak these things," saith the apostle, "though you know and are established in the present truth." The main dispute lay between them on the one hand, who believed him to be the Christ, or the Son of God; and them on the other hand, who apprehended him to be a deceiver, an impostor and blasphemer, for saying truly who and what he was. This was the true state of the question, he giving out himself to be the Son of God, calling the great God upon all occasions, Father—"My Father" hath directed me to do so and so, and to say so and so: he giving this out concerning himself, that he "came down from heaven," that he was "the Son of God," in a most peculiar and appropriate sense; and reporting concerning himself too, (which was of most absolute necessity unto the end and design of his coming,) that he might bear the office of Christ and the Messiah, and that he was the Son of God, the determining the one of these on his part would determine and conclude the other. Whereas he did upon all occasions intimate that he was the very person that should come, the Christ, the Messiah, and also that he was the Son of God. If it were true that he was the Son of God, it was impossible that could be false that he was the Messiah, that he was the Christ. For no one could imagine that the Son of God should bring down a lie from heaven and diffuse it among men: therefore to say he was the Son of God, was to say he was the Christ too; that is, it plainly implied that whereas he said both, it was impossible he could be the author unto men of a false affirmation concerning himself: and therefore, if he were the Son of God, he in whom the Divine nature was in conjunction with the human, in whom the glory of God shone so as to characterize him the only-begotten of the Father, (John i. 14.) if it were so avowing himself to be the Christ, the Messiah that was to come, that had been so long expected, even at that very time, he must truly and really be so. And so there was no medium between these two, his being the Son of God, and his being a deceiver and impostor; no medium, for if he was not the one, he was the other; if he was not the Son of God, he must deceive in saying he was the Christ. But he being the Son of God, that being sufficiently evinced, or evident that he was so, must give sufficient credit to this affirmation concerning himself, that he was also the Christ, he that was to come, so as that there was not another to be looked for.

Now what this Christ signifies, and what the affirming this Jesus to be the Christ must import, have been hinted to you already. But it is to be more distinctly considered. It is (as you have heard) a name of office, as the other is a personal name. And this word signifies his unction to that office; so Messiah signifies, in the Hebrew language, and Χριστος in the Greek, an anointed person, and the import of that must be collected from the known usage of this and of former ages, and the continued usage of the same thing, even to this day, in all successive ages since; that is to invest and inaugurate persons into high and great offices by unction or anointing. And two things, as to this person, this unction must signify, when it is said he was anointed above his fellows with joy and gladness, to wit, with triumph, (as high triumphs have been always used to attend the inauguration or coronation of princes,) two things as to him this unction must signify: 1. Authorization, and, 2. Qualification. The former of these is relative, and the latter real.

First, Authorization; the conveying to him all the authority belonging to the high office of Mediator. He is the person authorized, (as the inauguration of princes signifies that,) either conferring or acknowledging the high authority in them belonging to their high office. Him hath God the Father sealed. He carries the signature, the character of the great God upon him, as his anointed one, his sealed one, marked out for the great work and office which he was to sustain and bear. But,

Secondly, It signifies qualification too. A real endowment, as well as that relative one. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me," Isaiah lxi. 1. It signifies that mighty plenitude of the Spirit which descended and flowed down upon him, whereby whatsoever was requisite to the faithful and successful discharge of the work and business which was conferred upon the man Christ, the Divine nature being so intimately united with the human, it signified that all the fulness of Godhead did come to inhabit this man, and so to suit him every way for the great affairs of that high and important office into which he was now put.

And this was the thing to be believed in opposition to the opposers of that time, and of all after-times; who were of two sorts then as they have been continually since, to wit, pagans and Jews; the former whereof did disbelieve that there needed to be any Messiah at all; and the latter disbelieved that this was he. The former could have no apprehension that there was any need of a Messiah or a Christ at all. That was the case of the pagan world; and much less could they believe that this Christ should ever need to be crucified: and therefore the doctrine of him, and especially of his cross, was to the wise pagans foolishness. What needs any such transaction between God and men in such a way as this, that there were come down one from heaven into this world, to die upon earth a sacrifice to the justice of Heaven? Who can imagine such a thing as this, say the wiser pagans. There is no need of any Christ at all, say they.

The Jews, they were taught long before to apprehend and believe there was need of a Christ; though they mistook much here what he was to do, and what the business of his office and coming was; but yet they had that Gospel among them, under veils and shadows and typical representations, which did only hold forth to them what was the business and errand upon which Christ came into the world. All their sacrifices taught them, and no doubt to whom an understanding was given, as this apostle's expression afterwards is in this same chapter, "They who had the given understanding to know him that is true," verse 20. they did understand that the sacrifices under their law, and offered according to the direction of it, must terminate in one greater sacrifice. They had that volume in their hands concerning which it is said, Ps. xl. 6, 7. "In the volume of the book it is written of me, that when sacrifices and offerings will not serve the turn, (that is, of mean, abject, brute creatures,) I must come after all to do thy will, O God." That is to be performed and done by me which those sacrifices were useless and insignificant for; no other way useful but as they did point out me, who was to come, as the substance and fulness and accomplishment of them all. It was a thing generally taught, (whether it were understood or no among the Jews,) that there was to be a Christ, a Messiah, an everlasting high priest, as his office is sometimes dignified by that title, more eminently and principally in Psalm cx. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." This the Jews found in the sacred records which they had among them, and in their hands. But yet when he came, they did not think this was he. And so as that was a question between the pagans and Christians, whether there ought to be any Christ or no, so it was a question of equal importance between them and the Jews, whether this were the person. And therefore that he doth with so much authority and severity charge upon those that he conversed among in the days of his flesh, If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins. It is not believing an indefinite Christ or Messiah to come, that will serve the turn now, now that there is a sufficient notification of the person; but now you are not only to believe that there is a Messiah to come, but now if you do not believe that I am he, you are lost creatures, you die under the unatoned guilt of all your other sins, and under the superadded guilt of this sin, not believing the revelation that is made by the great God of this his Christ, when it was made with so much clearness that it was im-

possible any discovery could have carried more convictive evidence with it than that did. This now was the thing to be believed concerning this Jesus. But then, you will say,

(2.) What doth the believing of this import? What is it to believe it, so as to give a ground for this affirmation concerning the belief of it, that he is born of God? Why, for this it is plain, in the

First place, this believing that Jesus is Christ must carry with it an understanding and a judicious assent of the truth of the affirmation that so he is; that he is indeed the Christ. An understanding and judicious assent: it cannot be less. Faith concerning this so important a thing is not the act of a fool, it must be an act suitable to an intelligent, apprehensive mind; and therefore if this be not assented to with the understanding and judgment, it is as if it were not assented to at all. To assent to this, understandingly and with judgment, is to apprehend some valid and sufficient ground upon which it is to be assented to. I pray consider this well; ungrounded faith is no faith: if there be never so clear and demonstrative ground upon which this truth is in itself founded, that Jesus is the Christ; if it be not at all apprehended by me, if I believe this at random, if men will call that believing when I believe and I cannot tell why, and I care not why, I believe as a matter of common hearsay or of uncertain report, I take it up from the people amongst whom I live. Such an ungrounded faith as this is a nullity, a perfect nullity, it goes for nothing; it is not believing, it is but a hovering, fluttering opination, a vague opinion only I met with by chance, a thing that falls in my way; my religion, as I am a Christian, is to me a casualty. I am a Christian, but upon the same terms upon which they who live in the same country are Mahometans; and of the Jews, where they are of the Jewish faith, or infidelity rather. And this is all that the most have to say for their being Christians: that religion which was the religion of my forefathers, which is the religion of the country where I live, which is the religion established by law, which is the religion that most suits my external conveniences to profess. I could not commodiously (it may be not safely) live in the country where I live, save on this profession, and not continuing this profession. That which is the ground of the belief of the most that go under the name of Christians, is but just the same, *mutatis mutandis*, that is the ground of their faith and religion who inhabit the pagan world, in all the most dark and dismal quarters of it; they take their faith the same way. The Mahomedans, though less gross pagans, take up their faith the same way. And so have the Jews done their faith the same way ever since Judaism came to be opposed to Christianity: therefore there must be some great flaw in this matter.

Most certain it is, that such grounds as do equally serve to infer falsehood and truth must be in themselves false. From truth nothing but truth can follow; but from falsehood sometimes that which is true, and sometimes that which is false (as circumstances may be varied) will follow. And it is plain, that from this ground a falsehood doth follow many times and often, yea oftener than truth. To wit, when the ground is that my religion is descended from my ancestors, it is the religion of the country where I live, it is established by law, it makes for my conveniency to be of this religion, it would be a great prejudice or reproach to me not to be of it, or profess the contrary. These grounds will as well infer a falsehood, as they happen to do truth in the present case, because they are common grounds upon which all the mistaken and false religions in the world are equally founded as well as the true.

But then if the matter be so, see what you are to account or reckon concerning such an ungrounded faith, be the matter of it what it will; if the grounds of it be false and wrong it is vain faith, as it is intimated by the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2. "I declare unto you the Gospel which ye have believed, which you have received, which hath been preached to you, and wherein you stand, and by which also you shall be saved, if you keep in the way that I have preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain." The Greek word there used signifies sometimes *temere*; sometimes *frustra*; when it signifies the former, it is believed without ground; when it signifies the latter, it is believing without effect. Both ways faith may be vain. When I believe a thing without any ground, or without any proportionate ground, that is, I believe a divine truth, but with no divine faith, or not relying in my belief upon a divine testimony, which is the thing that specifically distinguisheth divine faith from human faith. The faith is as the ground of it is. If my faith rest upon a human testimony, it is a human faith; if it rest upon a divine ground, then it is a divine faith, and the efficacy of it is proportionable to the ground of it. Do but observe that, I Thess. ii. 13. the apostle gives thanks for those Thessalonians, "that they received the Gospel not as the word of man, but as it is indeed the word of God, which effectually works in them that believe." We can never believe aright that Jesus is the Christ, but as taking it upon the authority of a divine testimony. "He that believeth not hath made God a liar, because he believeth not the record he hath given of his Son." Why do I believe Jesus to be the Christ? because the eternal God hath given his testimony concerning him that so he is. This never enters into the minds of the most. They never consider who testifies this; only this is a common opinion, and they have happened upon it. But a testimony from heaven concerning him, hath averred and affirmed him to be the Christ, is that which must take hold of men's souls, and come with power upon them, if ever they do in truth believe that Jesus is the Christ. A man's believing comes all to nothing without this, that there is a divine testimony. But how such a divine testimony is to be evidenced to be divine, or may appear to be so, will be matter of after-consideration, as that also will, what is imported in being born of God. Such a faith as the Gospel requires, and challenges to this truth, that Jesus is the Christ, it carries that mighty and marvellous power along with it as to transform a man's soul, to make him a new man. Any man that pretends to this faith, he is but just as he was before; the same man that he was, as vain, as earthly, as carnal, as strange to God, he lives at the same rate of ungodliness that formerly he did, or that other men actually do; for this man to pretend he believes that Jesus is the Christ, it is a pretence that carries its own confutation and shame in it.

He that understandingly believes Jesus to be the Christ, to wit, that understands why he believes it, and what this Christ was appointed for, to reconcile, to reduce us, and bring us back to God, to entitle to the divine favour, and to engage us in the divine communion; such a man as doth in good earnest believe this, is quite another man, as if he were but new born. Here is a creature produced that was not before; it is as if you were newly come into the world, and into being. If you do sincerely and truly believe that Jesus is the Christ, it is a thing that speaks you just new born; that is, you are born quite another creature; as we shall have occasion further to show. "Old things are done away, and all things are become new." This faith cannot be unaccompanied with such an impression on the soul, that makes a man a godlike creature in comparison to what he was before; for every one that is born of God is like God by that very birth. It is true, that a thing may be made by another that is not like him, but what one begets or is born of him that hath the same nature, that bears his natural image; it is a creature new-produced, that intimates God, that resembles God, in whom this faith obtains concerning Jesus that he is the Christ.

I have chosen to insist upon this subject upon that account, and with this design, (as many things have been spoken of the same import, and upon the same design from time to time,) that we may not impose upon ourselves, and be cheated by the name of faith instead of the thing. Will the shadow of faith save a man? Will it save a man to be called a believer, and to be no such thing? That faith that terminates upon Jesus as the Christ, which will save a man, must so transform him too, so as that he may truly admit to have it said of him, this is a man born of God. I see his faith makes him quite a new man throughout; for he was a stranger to God, an enemy to God, lived in all manner of ungodliness; but O! what a change is wrought! Now he resembles God, now he doth like God; he makes it his business to do good; the divine excellencies shine in him, and are conspicuous wheresoever he goes, and in whatsoever he does. To talk of one believing Jesus to be

the Christ, who doth not appear to be born of God, doth not appear to be of a heavenly descent or birth, you may as well say such a one is a star, or an angel, as a believer. A believer, and one born of God, are expressions that do signify alternately one another as broad as long; so that every believer is born of God, and that every one that is born of God is a believer.

SERMON XXXIX.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

I HAVE spoken to the general ground of this believing Jesus to be the Christ, to wit, upon that testimony which God hath given concerning him, that so he is.

But then there are many subservient grounds which have that use to notify us to the divinity of this revelation, or of this record; or whereupon we have reason to judge the testimony divine. And they are such as these:

[1.] The many prophecies that went before of him. The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy, Rev. xix. 10. God speaking by the mouth of all his prophets (as if all had but one mouth) concerning his Christ; so conscient and agreeing was their testimony, though in several successive ages. "Of him bear all the prophets witness," Acts x. 43. "And which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One;" as dying Stephen speaks, Acts vii. 52. It would be a long business, and (I hope) among you not necessary, to recite all the prophecies, more ancient and more late, which were in the several ages given concerning Christ before he came. He refers himself to all the Scriptures that were then in his time extant, to wit, those of the Old Testament, and those particularly of Moses. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think to have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me," John v. 39. He must refer there principally to the prophetical writings contained in those writings. And he afterwards runs back as high as Moses, the penman of the first sacred writings. Moses (saith he) wrote of me, verse 46. But if ye will not believe Moses' writings, how will you believe my words? Great prophecies there were concerning him, even in the writings of Moses; and he wrote of times far back, even from the beginning, for he spake of 2000 years and upwards, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head; a plain prophecy concerning this same Jesus, and that he was to be the Christ. That the sceptre should not depart from Judah till Shiloh should come; and that to him the gathering of the people should be. And how many express prophecies do you find concerning him afterwards in the books of the Psalmists. "Why do the heathen rage?" The most express quotation that we have out of the Old Testament, that we have any where in the New, as to what afterwards follows in that Psalm, the apostle, Acts xiii. quotes particularly the second Psalm, saying, concerning this his Christ, against whom the heathen did rage, even as they did against the Father; "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." The things that were said of him after he did come, to wit, that he was Lord of all. This was predicted and foretold concerning him so long before, that the heathen, and all the ends of the earth, should lie within the compass of his vast territory and dominion. Too great indeed to be called a territory: for all power was given him in heaven and in earth. He is Lord of all. It would be endless to recite all the passages to you which have this manifest application. It was foretold concerning him by the prophets, that two natures were to meet in his person. An admirable discovery, and a most express and plain one, that is, that one and the same person was to be born a child, and to be the mighty God. Isaiah ix. 6. "To us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and he shall be called Wonderful, The mighty God, The everlasting Father." In reference to us, he fitly hath that title too. Not in reference to the Trinity, but in reference to us. His divine original was plainly there presignified to us, as in other texts of the Old Testament. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand." And the land which he had a more peculiar relation to, is called "Emmanuel's land, God with us." That his goings forth are said to be "from everlasting," even his, who was to be born at Bethlehem, Mic. v. 2. Many most circumstantial things, as well as those great and substantial ones, were predicted and foretold; the punctual correspondence whereunto of the event did most plainly declare the divinity of the testimony. That is, that those were most divinely inspired prophets, who could at so vast a distance of time testify such and such things concerning him. Well might the Spirit of prophecy, working in those prophets, be called the testimony of Jesus. As when the parting of his garments by lot, before spoken of, the piercing of his hands and feet, the giving him gall and vinegar to drink, with many more such things; and that he should be born at Bethlehem, when, as that was a casualty, humanly speaking it was no more than so, his mother being surprised upon a journey, and passing through that place. But these things I must not insist upon.

[2.] It speaks the divinity of that testimony given concerning him, that he entered in so extraordinary a way into this world. I may in the highest sense say, that he had so illustrious a birth. Illustrious, not by any thing of lustre derived and borrowed from this earth; that was too mean a thing to make his birth illustrious; but as he was of heavenly descent, the illustriousness of it was by a light and glory which did accompany it from heaven. His birth was not signalized by the state and pomp of embassies from the courts of we know not how many princes; but by the descent of multitudes of glorious angels, proclaiming it as "glad tiding of great joy" which should be to all people; and an extraordinary star, which signalized this, and which was the guide to those wise sages who by special divine instinct came to do a homage to him, not without a secret signification of that right he was to have in the remotest parts of the world, and all the world over. They came from far to pay that homage, and to signify that his dominion should be far and near. And,

[3.] His most divine and heavenly doctrine was mightily subsidiary unto this record of God concerning him, that he was the Christ and his own Son; for how did he often, when he spake, transport his hearers! How were they astonished sometimes at his doctrine, (as Matthew vii. latter end,) for there were such characters did attend it as manifestly did distinguish it. He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes, though they were authorized teachers among that people too. The ear that heard him blessed him, and the eye that saw him bare witness to him. You find, Luke iv. 17. that when he had pitched upon a text in one of the synagogues, to wit, that of Isaiah lxi. 1. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor;" when he came to dilate upon that subject, all the assembly are amazed, wondering at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. And when the officers are sent to apprehend him, and bring him before the judicature at Jerusalem, they come back confounded men, without their errand's end; they are examined, and inquired why they had not brought him? say they, "Never man spake as this man; a divine person, we dare not touch him, we dare lay no hand upon so sacred a one as he appears to be." And,

[4.] The wonderful works, which, through the whole course of his ministration, after he began, he continually did to testify and bear witness to the truth of what he repeatedly affirmed concerning himself, that he was Christ. When John's disciples were sent to him (not for John's sake, but their own) to know, "Art thou he that shall come, or shall we look for another?" (Matt. xi. 3.) he

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gives them an answer from what they might see and hear, "Go and tell John the things that ye see and hear; (that is;) The blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who shall not be offended in me." Implying all this to be a sufficient testification who he was. And those words, (though they are mild and soft, and palmy and pleasant,) "Blessed is he that is not offended in me," yet they carry a sting in them—they breathe terror too; for this plain intimation is carried in them, "Wo to him that is offended when so clear light shines, when there is so plain and manifest a discovery who I am: fearful is the case of that man who stumbles, takes offence, and cannot see when so bright light shines upon him, revealing me." Unto these words of his he makes his frequent appeal, in his many conflicts with the Jews, when they charge him with the solitariness of his testimony. "Thou bearest witness of thyself, thy witness is not true." That he disclaims; though justly tells them too, that if he did bear witness of himself, yet his witness was true. But he did not bear witness of himself singly and alone; "My Father beareth witness of me, and the works that I do they bear witness of me." And he returns it upon them, "If another comes in his own name, him will ye believe: I come in my Father's name, and ye will not receive me," John v. 43.

[5.] The express vocal testimony (besides that stated one that we have in the sacred records) given again and again from heaven concerning him, at three noted times, his birth, his baptism, and his transfiguration. At his birth, by the embassy of angels, of which you have heard so much already; at his baptism, when the Holy Ghost descended as a dove lighting upon him, and that voice was heard, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." To be that Son of God and the Christ, (as the case is stated,) you have heard, must signify the same thing. They are put together often, "Christ the Son of the living God," Matt. xvi. 16. "Christ, the Son of God," Mark i. I. That being the great question of that time. He avowing himself to be the Son of God; they charging him, who were his enemies, to be a deceiver and impostor: when that point indeed was gained, that he was the Son of God, no deceiver, no impostor, that must consequently include necessarily that he was the Christ; because that he always testified concerning himself. And if he were the Son of God, he could not be the author of a false testimony, or of an injurious usurpation of a dignity and office that belonged not to him. And at his transfiguration, how solemn and how glorious was the vocal testimony from heaven concerning him, when he took up, not all the disciples, but a competent number, (in common human estimate two or three being sufficient to prove the truth of a matter of fact in such a case,) he takes such a number as might certify the rest, and so publish the whole business to the world, when it should be seasonable and consistent with the design of such a manifestation as that was. When he had Peter, James, and John with him in the mount, where he was transfigured before them; and then, as the apostle Peter (who was one of the number, and an eye-witness) doth himself testify, 2 Pet. i. 17. and tells us what he had seen with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears. Many of you may remember I insisted largely heretofore upon that context. "We have not followed (saith he) cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came to him such a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." What place could there be left for reasonable doubt, whether God did not sufficiently own this Jesus to be the Christ, when there came "such a voice from the excellent glory" concerning him, to this same purpose, notified and testified as any matter of fact ought to be. And then,

[6.] His most amazing death, with so tremendous circumstances as the Gospel reports it; such as that, though he could not be brought to it but by consent, till he was pleased in order thereunto to retract the glorious beams of his Majesty, that they might not withhold and frighten those, that were to be the executioners of that horrid tragedy, from doing the thing itself which the hand and counsel of God had determined should be done. He is therefore said not to have his life taken from him; to wit, whether he would or no, but "he laid it down." There must be consent in the case; otherwise, had he let out those beams of majesty continually that shone so illustriously in him, even in the very confines of that hour and power of darkness that was coming upon him, they had not dared to do it. You see that the assassinates, that they are even at the first attack beaten aback by those appearances of him, those characters of divinity, that some way or other appeared, and their own dread, that they fall flat to the ground; so that he is constrained to veil himself, and draw some kind of cloud over that glory, that they might not be withheld from going on; though it was a thing that he must spontaneously yield to, or it could not have been done. But when he did yield to it, and it was done, with what amazing circumstances was it attended, that all might know how extraordinary a person he was! Immediately the sun withdraws his head. Such an eclipse ensues, the like whereof was never know in the world besides; and of which some noted pagan writers give an account with wonder. The powers of heaven are shaken, so as that from that great pagan these words were extorted, "That either the God of nature suffered, or the whole frame of things is suffering a dissolution." The earth is shaken and torn; the graves are opened, and the dead arise, many of them, and go into the holy city. The Roman centurion, a pagan, (who was by office to superintend the execution,) upon the sight of all this, gives him the cause against the assassinates and murderers; to wit, that whereas this was the question, Is he a deceiver, or is he the Son of God? This was the question on which he died. He gives him the cause, saying, "Verily this is the Son of God." He speaks it in reference to the controversy then agitated and on the stage. What is this man, that here is dying, affixed to this cross? Was he what the Jews averred him to be? or was he what he averred himself to be? Why that is decided on his side by this impartial pagan. And,

[7.] His glorious resurrection, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and that upon which the stress of the whole cause was all along after laid. And it was the whole business of the apostleship to bear witness to his resurrection. They were twelve of them. A sufficient number to testify that they had often seen him when arisen. The highest testimony that God could from heaven have given concerning him; that when he died under that false and malicious imputation, as a deceiver and blasphemer, that Heaven might own him to be what he said he was. Though it was necessary he should be permitted to die, yet he recovers, and is raised up from the dead, and made a glorious triumph over death; the pangs whereof it was impossible should hold him, and therefore they are loosed; the pangs and bonds of it could hold him no longer. And,

[8.] The wonderful fortitude and boldness wherewith his inspired disciples and apostles did testify concerning his resurrection afterwards, and that he was the Christ. That was the business of the apostolical office, to bear witness to his resurrection; Matthias was chosen to fill up the number, and join with the rest to bear witness to the resurrection of our Lord, that all the world that way might know who and what he was. With great boldness did the apostles bear witness to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, and a divine presence was with them herein. They testified it from time to time, even to the very faces of those powers under which he suffered; by whose instigation, at least, if not by their authority. The sanhedrim, the Jewish magistracy, could not put a man to death at that time, they being wholly under the Roman power. But they were the instigators; and yet from time to time, to their very faces, do these poor illiterate men testify, that God had raised him from the dead whom ye have crucified, and him of whom ye were the betrayers and murderers. And this was the thing that stung them and cut them to the heart. You think to bring this man's blood upon us. But that they never spared to do. A most divine fortitude. That to the face of these powers, by whom such things were acted against our Lord, these men should, at the utmost peril of their own lives, so oppose themselves and their testimony, who but a little before did creep and sneak

to the denial of our Lord, as you know Peter himself did. Before he was crucified, he did not know the man; afterwards he tells the greatest of them to their faces, You have been his betrayers and murderers. And,

[9.] The terrible vengeance that hath followed hereupon, upon the nation of the Jews. A mighty subsidiary testimony. "Your house is left unto you desolate." Our Lord foretold them how it would be. "Not one stone should be left upon another, even as to their temple, (the thing wherein they so much gloried,) that should not be thrown down." He weeps over self-desolating Jerusalem. "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets," when he saw the calamity that was coming; but it came, and not a tittle failed of what was foretold, and according to what the prophets of old did foretell. "My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him; and they shall be wanderers among the nations," Hosea ix. 17. That people, while they are yet in being in that scattered dispersed state, (wherein the world knows they are unto this day,) are a perpetual testimony, throughout all succeeding ages, of the truth of that Gospel and Christianity which they with so horrid malignity opposed themselves unto. And,

[10.] The marvellous success which the Gospel had since. That success it had immediately after the resurrection of our Lord: for he that descended, the same ascended, "that he might fill all things." Upon that ascent of his, what a mighty descent was there of the Spirit and power of God, that bore down all opposition! The Gospel was preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. And in this and that part of the world, you find there are solemn appeals. Do you not know what manner of entrance we had in this place and that place, and how men "turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son Jesus, who saveth from the wrath to come?" 1 Thess. i. latter end. How did the Gospel fly like lightning from one part and quarter of the world to another! How soon did it run through Judea and Samaria, and after that into remoter parts! A vast circuit in that age, and by the ministry of these very apostles. A Gospel that began to be spoken by the Lord himself, but was confirmed by them that heard him; "God bearing them witness with signs and wonders, and by divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost," Heb. ii. 4. That by which the apostle doth enforce the solemn caution, to take heed of letting slip the things that they had heard. For, saith he, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation which began to be spoken?" And I may add,

[11.] The strange preservation of the Christian cause and interest through all successive times and ages. That when all the powers of earth and hell were combined to root and raze out Christianity, and all the vestiges and memorials of it, that could never be effected to this day. That as the spreading of the Gospel was by no human power, so no human power could prevail to extinguish it.

It was not in the way wherein the Mahomedan empire and religion did propagate themselves together, that this was propagated, to wit, by force and arms, and by the temptation of secular advantages, but by its own native and self-recommending light and lustre, and great design. And as it was propagated by no human means, so by no human means or power could it be extinguished, but hath grown upon the world in spite of the world, except the assigned foretold time of the apostacy, that dark and dismal interval wherein that work hath been so long at a stand, and out of which we are to expect its glorious revival.

All these things do concur to evince that that Revelation which hath been made to us concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ, is from God: and so carries an indubitable truth in it to be relied upon. And it is upon that main and principal ground that our belief concerning him, that this Jesus is the Christ, must be built and rest, otherwise it is none of the faith which the Gospel claims to it. And it is all one to say the Gospel is a fable, and to believe it to be true and upon no ground, we cannot tell why or how.

SERMON XL.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

WE have gone on to show, what the believing Jesus to be the Son of God is. And so much having been said concerning the grounds, both principal and subservient, of this belief, I shall superadd hereunto in the

Second place, what I reckon is not less necessary concerning the properties of it, that you may the more distinctly understand what sort of relief this must be that is to be given unto so great and important a truth, Jesus is the Christ. And I shall so state the properties of this belief as that they may visibly stand in that opposition wherein is requisite they should be set, to that common false belief which multitudes do satisfy and deceive themselves by at once to their destruction. You may, *eadem opera*, by the same cast of your eye discern the properties of that common false belief, and of that sincere faith concerning this truth, that the one may be avoided and declined, and the other may be aimed at with a restless endeavour and pursuit; so as that none may satisfy themselves till they can say, I find the belief of this great truth hath now its place in my soul, which will be finally saving to it.

There needs both much caution and much light to avoid the mistaken false faith of the multitude concerning this thing. I call it false, not doubting any of you apprehend that it is too possible a thing that there may be a very false faith of the greatest truth. One may believe the most important truth that can fall under human faith with a false faith. The thing is true that is believed in such cases, but it is not believed truly. And that is the sort of faith which I would have you know and avoid. And when you know what you are not to rest in, you will with the same light discern wherein you may safely rest. About a matter of such importance as this, it very much concerns both speaker and hearers at any time to speak and hear in agonies, and with hearts full of solicitude, lest we should mistake ourselves in a matter upon which eternity doth so immediately and entirely depend. Now,

I. The deceiving false faith of the multitude in this matter is but negative; but the sincere belief of this great truth, that Jesus is the Christ, is a most positive act of the soul. The common belief in this case is but a negative belief. Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? Yes, shall one tell you off hand, without deliberation or doubt, I do believe it. And what is the meaning of that? He believes it only thus, he doth not believe the contrary. He hath no formed opposite belief in his mind, and therefore thinks himself a very good believer. Whereas his believing is nothing else but a negation, an utter negation; to wit, he doth not disbelieve it. As if he should say, your question is to me upon the matter a new one, a new question, I never thought much of the business. I never asked myself whether I believed Jesus to be the Christ, yea or no. And for my part I have no contrary belief, and therefore hand over head he concludes himself a very good sound believer of this matter. But that faith which the Gospel claims, and which the necessities of souls do require and challenge, that they may have life by Christ, it is a most positive act of the soul, wherein the soul hath a real exercise. There is an exerted power of the soul put forth in this act, so that nothing can be more positive than that is. It is a substantial act of the soul, according as substance doth signify positive entity. And so is this faith called, it is the very substance of the thing believed, whatsoever that be, Heb. xi. I. This other common faith hath no substance in it. Grasp it, feel it, it is but a shadow, hath nothing of substance. Do you believe Jesus to be the Christ? Yes, I do believe it; that is, there is as much substance in it as their saying so; as much as there is in the sound of a word, and no more. It is a mere negative thing, there is nothing positive in it.

2. The former of these is an ignorant, but the other a most intelligent act, proceeding upon knowledge. The de-

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ceived multitude, when they pretend Jesus to be the Christ, they believe they know not what; they say they believe Jesus is the Christ, but they never consider what they mean by Christ. When they say this Jesus is the Christ, what the signification of that name is they never trouble themselves to understand, they were never at leisure to think of such matter. Indeed they have often heard the word, but they have not a meaning in their minds correspondent to that word (Christ) what it imports, what signification it carries with it; and so what is affirmed concerning this Jesus when he is affirmed to be the Christ, they neither have what we speak nor whereof we affirm about it. Jesus is considered by them as an ordinary person that lived so many years ago; but to say of him, that he is the Christ, you might as well have said nothing: they believe hand over head, but they believe they know not what.

But, now, when any one doth sincerely believe Jesus to be the Christ, he, believing it, understands what this Christ is, and what the name Christ signifies, the anointed one of God unto that great office of meditorship between God and man; and was therefore every way qualified for the high and great work of that office, invested with that full authority which belongs to such an office. All power is given to him, both in heaven and in earth: one full of grace and truth: in whom all the divine excellencies were resplendent and most conspicuous, which were to have their exercise in the discharge of the work of this mighty office. So that the apprehensive mind of a sincere believer in this thing runs a vast compass; when it hears the name of Christ, it traverseth heaven and earth; it runs through all the creation; for as such a one Christ is considered "over all, God blessed for ever." One that descended; the same that afterwards ascended, that he might fill all things. And he could not be Christ else: one that must have a universal power over all minds and over all creatures: and one that can do whatsoever he will, both in heaven and earth, and all deep places; but whose kindness and benignity inclines him to the doing of all the good that any receptive and capable subject shall admit of; and to make many a one capable and receptive that is of itself quite otherwise. When such mighty texts as we find upon record concerning Christ, these many glorious things that are spoken of him come in view, O how is such a one enlightened by the lustre of any such text that speaks concerning Christ! Yes; that represents him to me, concerning whom my faith hath its present exercise, that it is for Jesus to be the Christ, to wit, that Child born for us, that Son given to us, whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Jesus is the Christ; that is, he is the wonderful counsellor. When again we are told in Scripture that this is he who was in the beginning with God, and that he was God, and by whom the worlds were made, and that without whom nothing was made that was made; that came and descended, the eternal Word and Wisdom of the Father, and was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and his glory shone as the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. Yes, this is my Christ! I believe that that Jesus who dwelt at Nazareth, born at Bethlehem, was such a Christ. He by whom all things were made, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, things in heaven and earth; this is my Christ. He that is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the Lord God Almighty. He that was dead and is alive again and lives for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and death. This is my Christ. The name Christ fills such a man's soul with light and glory, even in that very instant when he believes this Jesus to be the Christ; so as that admitting him into the mind under this notion, it insensibly admits a deity in his all-comprehending fulness.

He doth not believe a trivial thing concerning this Jesus, when he believes him to be the Christ, but believes him to be all in all. This is my all, and the universal all unto whosoever they are that shall come to partake felicity by him at length. This is nothing like the mock faith of the multitude, that think themselves well if off-hand they answer you the question when you ask, Is Jesus the Christ. Yes—But they neither know nor consider what Christ means, nor what they attribute to this Jesus, in calling him the Christ. Again,

3. That former belief concerning him, it is a dubious, hovering, and fluctuating thing. The sincere belief of this, that Jesus is the Christ, is peremptory, and full of a concomitant certainty, and thorough persuasion of mind concerning him that so indeed he is. As to the former, what do you think? "Was that Jesus the Christ, or are we to look for another?" Here the mind hangs in a dubious suspense, and they rather say, No sure, we are not to look for another, because he came so long ago, and there hath no other appeared since. But concerning the sincere believer, this is the character under which we may conceive of him, John vi. 68. "We believe and are sure that thou art Christ the Son of the living God." Many minds in those days hung in doubt; and less of doubting may appear among us, because we seldom hear the question asked. With many, the mind hangs on a suspense and indifferency. Is this the Christ, or is another to be he? Why, this is as good as another; this may do as well as another; and for many years we have heard no talk of another, nor do we hear that for many an age by-past. But, saith the sincere believer, we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. A sincere belief in this matter determines the mind, so that there it pitcheth. As it is when the balance is cast, and gives over quivering, here we are at a point. "Whom say ye that I am?" saith our Lord to them, Matt. xvi. 16. And Peter answered for the rest, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." See how our Lord owns and accepts his faith, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Thus it is when a divine revelation shines into the heart. I am afraid that that belief is too great a rarity in our age, concerning which it may be truly said, it is not by the product of flesh and blood. O! how few are the souls that may avow it before the Lord, I have that belief in me, of Jesus being the Christ, that comes not from flesh and blood. It is not flesh and blood that hath prompted to this, but a divine light and mighty power from above upon my soul. And it is such a faith that makes a blessed man. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona." "O! blessed man, that such a faith as this hath entered thy soul, that such a beam of heavenly and divine light hath been struck down into it." It is a great thing if, laying our hands upon our hearts, we can apply this pronounced blessedness to ourselves, as much as if it had been said to us by name. O! blessed, thou such a one, thou John, Thomas, flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but the eternal Father, he hath revealed his own Son, he hath taught thee to own him for his Christ, and his own Son. We believe and are sure; such a belief as carries a certainty with it, not that doth altogether exclude, at some certain intervals, a *formido oppositi*. There may be that which morality and policy is wont to style a *plena voluntas*, where there is a determination strong enough to carry a man to consequent acts. And so there may be a *plenum judicium*, not that totally excludes every degree of the contrary, but that prevails over every such degree; and so is determinative, carries the course and current of a man's practical power with it, consequently and agreeably thereunto. So we are to conceive concerning this certainty, that I am not in that dubious suspense, whether this Jesus be the Christ as thereby to surcease and desist from that which ought to be consequent thereupon, to wit, venturing my soul upon him, devoting myself to him, paying obedience to his laws, laying the stress and weight of all my concernments upon his faithfulness, love, and fulness. It is certainty in such a sense, that prevails so far as to govern my consequent resolutions and actions. And,

4. The false deceiving faith of the multitude in this matter is cold and dead, unoperative and without efficacy; let their hearts remain as stones or clods of clay under it, unaffected and unmoved. But this belief, when it is sincere, is vivid, lively, affectionate, and most efficacious; productive of whatsoever is suitable and correspondent hereunto. A vast difference there is in this respect also! I am sure the difference cannot be greater than the importance is. But it is a very great difference that appears here between belief and belief. A belief that never moves my soul, and is as if it had never touched it. According as some fantastically speak (your enthusiastical writers

among the papists, some of them) concerning theoretical knowledge, wherein they place the sum of all religion, that it doth *tangere intangibiliter*, it touches the mind as if it never touched it; indeed this is the deceiving belief of the multitude, they have a belief that so toucheth their minds that it cannot be perceived it ever touched it, it never touched their minds at all, but leaves them unimpressed; there is no signature left behind, no mark, no character, by which it can be said such a faith was ever there. That is, notwithstanding all the belief they pretend to concerning this Jesus, and concerning the great things of the Christian religion, (whereof this is the sum,) their hearts are as dead, as cold, as terrene, as unaffected, as if they had never heard of any such thing, void of all kind of impression. Dost thou believe Jesus to be the Christ, and retain a hard heart, a dead heart, a stupid heart, touched with nothing, having no sense, no feeling of any thing that this great truth carries so plain a signification of in it? What doth this Jesus being the Christ signify? It plainly signifies the lost, undone state of souls, the miserable condition of men in this world, that there needed such a Jesus, such a Christ to descend and come down from heaven with such fulness and divine power. When a man can believe Jesus to be the Christ, (as he said he doth,) but it never moves his soul one way or other; his faith makes no more impression upon him than if he had never believed or heard of such a thing, or than if he had believed the quite contrary. Be no more affected with Christ by believing him to be the Christ, than if he had believed him to be a deceiver and an impostor; his heart as little touched or moved with any suitable, correspondent impression of such a belief of his being the Christ, as if he had never heard of any such thing, or had believed concerning him the quite contrary. Will we call this believing Jesus to be the Christ with a Gospel faith?

On the other hand, the sincere belief of this, that Jesus is the Christ; it worketh through and through a man's soul—works down into every power and faculty. It is a faith that hath spirit in it, that penetrates and spreads itself into all the regions of a man's soul; as we read of a spirit of faith, 2 Cor. iv. 13. "We having the same spirit of faith," (speaking of what had been said by David many an age before,) what doth that signify when he quotes him professing faith in reference to such a thing so long ago: and the apostle now resumes the matter, and saith, "We have the same spirit of faith." It signifies that faith, wheresoever it hath been sincere and true, even in the most distant times and ages, that may be supposed it is a spirit of faith, or it is a faith full of spirit. Sincere faith is a spiritual thing, a thing that carries life, and spirit, and power with it, wherever it is. Pray let us not deceive ourselves about this. They are mighty affections, which the belief of such a thing as this must excite and raise in those souls in whom it truly is; especially those two most correspondent unto the person concerning whom we have this belief, that he is the Christ; to wit, reverence and love, and especially that love which rises unto delight and high complacency, the joy taken in him of whom we have this apprehension or this belief.

(1.) Reverence. This belief concerning Jesus, that he is the Christ, it fills the sincere believer with the profoundest reverence of him; so that he falls before him, saying, "My Lord and my God," John xx. 28. He is acknowledged in his glorious greatness when any do sincerely believe this concerning him; he is beheld as on the throne; he is considered as one that having purged our sins is ascended and sitten down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is a great thing to have this belief concerning him, answerably forming a man's spirit into adoring postures. He is now great in our eyes; a glorious one; one that we think it profane ever to look towards but with veneration. We dare not lift an eye towards him but with an adoring soul. O! my great, glorious, and exalted Lord. This is he whom God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. Him whom he hath sealed, to whom he hath given power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as God hath given him. With such a reverence must this belief be accompanied concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ. And then,

(2.) With complacency; that love that hath heightened itself into a complacential joy thereupon. Do I believe this Jesus to be the Christ? O! how can a pleasant joy be thereupon but spread in my soul! As we find it was when this belief first began to obtain concerning him, John i. 35. We read, that the two disciples of John having received the account, and being satisfied concerning this blessed one, having had John's testimony, that he bare record that he upon whom ye shall see "the Spirit of God descending like a dove is the Son of God;" he having seen this satisfactory sight, and acquainting the other two of his disciples, they run away with it. Oh we have found the Messiah, who by interpretation is the Christ; so say they in transport. What a joy were these good men in, and how did it diffuse and spread among others! They run and tell others, Oh we have found Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ. It flies like lightning from one to another, every one being the ready instrument to convey the pleasant notice which they had got concerning this great thing. The joyful Εὕρηκα runs from mouth to mouth, and from ear to ear, and from heart to heart. Εὕρηκα, Εὕρηκα, saith one to another, we have found, we have found the Messiah, the Christ. Have we indeed found him? Is it found among us that this Jesus is the Christ? O, what multitudes of transported souls would there be among us! For it is no excuse that this is no novelty among us: for it is a thing that never ought to grow old. As he is the way of returning sinners to God, that is always new and always living. It is a reproach to us to say that the notion is grown stale among us, of Jesus being the Christ. Instead of being grown old, it is grown to nothing, dwindled away to nothing. It looks but like a notion without any thing at the bottom, that we seem to account hath nothing of reality in it; from our apprehensiveness of the state of the case, and what the design of Heaven was in constituting such a one in that high and sacred office that is notified by the name Christ, it is thus become such a notion. But, what? are not the necessities free and urgent upon us every day for which we did need a Christ? Nay, can we go to God without him? And can we live comfortably in this world without God? Nay, can we draw a breath without him? Are not all things delivered up into his hand? And is not he constituted Lord of all? By the same thing by which we would pretend the commonness of this belief, and the ancientness of it, as a reason why it affects no more, we do (as it were) proclaim the nullity of it, that it doth not only signify little with us, but it signifies nothing; it is an unoperative thing; and to be a dead thing in this kind is to be nothing: as a dead man or the carcass of a man is equivalent to no man, and so is that faith (in the apostle James's phrase) which is unoperative and works not, dead also. This faith that doth not affect the heart is but as a carcass without a spirit, which is for no valuable purpose and use to be reckoned otherwise of than a mere unformed piece of clay. An unformed piece of clay signifies as much for any valuable purpose as that which is formed into the shape of a human body where there is no spirit, and when it is but a breathless thing.

This of the operativeness and efficacy of this belief in contradistinction to the dead cold faith of the multitude in this matter, leads to what is yet further and more deeply to be considered concerning it; and that is, the residence which this faith hath in the will: for, being so efficacious a thing, it works itself into a government, a regency, a ruling power, into that which is the imperial faculty of the soul; to wit, the will, there it comes to have a throne erected, or rather there it doth enthrone Christ, so as that he comes to be exalted in a subject-will, and is actually entertained there according to that discovery the Gospel makes of him. And so next to this persuasion of the mind, which is to be distinguished from that which carries with multitudes the same deceiving, insignificant name—I say, besides and next to that persuasion or assent of the mind, there is a compliance of the will that belongs to the essence of this faith. We believe this Jesus to be the Christ, so as to will him accordingly; or by our will to entertain him in a correspondent admission unto the design of the revelation. We acknowledge him, we own him suitably according to the import of this name Christ.

SERMON XLI.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

I SHALL now go on to clear the efficacy of this faith, which, if it be right and such as it ought to be, will diffuse a mighty and efficacious influence through the whole soul. It will be as a great vital spring in the heart, that sets all the wheels in motion, and acteth every faculty and power. But its next and more immediate operation must be upon the will. So doth this belief, (as it were) transire, pass over from the mind into the heart, into the very centre, and therein especially and most principally the will, which is the chief thing that goes under the name of the heart in Scripture phrase. Its great effect is, that the will is proportionably framed, inclined, bowed, made to comply, according to this discovery and revelation that is made of so great and glorious an object; one in whom the soul hath so near and great a concern—"The Christ of God," as he is called. This is the representation that is made in the mind, this Jesus is the Christ. "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter answers, (Luke ix. 20.) "Thou art the Christ of God." Such a truth as this cannot be received aright into the soul, but it must turn the whole soul, and especially the governing faculty, the will, so as that it shall be inclined and bowed to him accordingly. For it is never to be thought that there should such a revelation be made, not only in the Gospel, but in the mind, concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ, but it is in order to some further purpose. He is not so revealed to be gazed upon, to be looked upon, but that the soul should be acted towards him and be carried towards him, according to that revelation and belief. Therefore the great effect that is wrought by such an efficacious belief, is, the will's consent that he shall be such to me, as this name (Christ) doth import; I consent to it, that he shall be Christ to my soul, and that consent takes in two things, reception and resignation. These two things I shall distinctly open to you, reception of him, and resignation of ourselves to him.

But consider we first what is more general here. This consenting act of the will, how that is the consummation of faith; this is faith perfected. The bare assent or belief, that this is he, is inchoate faith, faith begun, faith tending to its end and perfection; but this is faith in its end. The other is faith moving towards Christ, this is faith resting in Christ. It is the acquiescence of faith by which he comes to have an inbeing in the soul, and the soul hath a possession of him. He dwells in the heart by faith. It is by faith, thus considered, that he comes to dwell even in the very heart, in the centre, as the expression is, Eph. iii. 17. The soul hath possession of him, and is said to have him; "He that hath the Son, hath life," as in the 12th verse of this chapter. This is the unitive act of faith, by which the soul closeth and falls in with him, as in the 20th verse of this chapter. He hath given us an understanding (there's faith in the mind, a right belief or apprehension of him) to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ, who is the true God and eternal life.

There are considerable the same gradations in faith, as it relates to Christ, as there are commonly observed to be in faith as it relates to God, that is, *Credere Deum, credere Deo*, and *credere in Deum*. To believe that there is a God; to believe God speaking to us in his word, revealing this or that to us; and to believe in God or into God: to wit, to unite with him as our God, take him for our God. The same gradation is in faith as to Christ: you "believe in God, believe also in me." There is a *credere Christum, credere Christo*, and *credere in Christum*. To believe, first, that there is a Christ, in opposition to the pagan world, that never thought of any such thing. Then to believe him to be revealing himself to be he, "I am *he*," (if ye believe not that I am he,) in opposition to the Jews, who indeed believed that there should be a Christ, that there must be a Messiah; but who did not believe that this was he. And then, again, to believe in Christ, or to believe into Christ, (as the prepositions used signify,) to believe into a union with him, in opposition to the formalists, or *pseudo* Christians, the mere nominal Christians, that can believe (or say they do) against pagans, that there is or must be a Christ; or against the Jews, that this is he, but never believe into him for all that, so as to close with him, as my Christ; unite with him, admit him into my heart and soul, so as that he comes to have his throne, not only his dwelling, but his seat of government in my very will; as the will is the governing faculty in the soul, Christ is the governor, the ruler there in that seat of government. So (God knows) he is believed in but by few even of them that bear his name, and call themselves Christians. We are as much concerned to have a faith concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ, in opposition to formalists and nominal Christians, as we are to have a faith in this matter, in opposition to pagans and Jews: for it is all one how we perish, whether we perish under the name of pagans, or Jews, or false Christians, that never had the power or spirit of faith in Christ in them.

And so much of this consent of faith in general. But more particularly, it carries (as I said) these two things in it, reception and resignation: reception of him, and resignation of ourselves to him. There is in that faith, that will avail us unto salvation, taking and giving at the same time, complicated with one another. When we give we take, when we take we give. When we take him, we at the same time consent that we will be his, and that he shall be ours. This constitutes the covenant between him and us. And considering that he is to be covenanted with but as a Mediator, as Mediator of the Gospel, and that through him we finally and ultimately covenant with God, according to that, "ye believe in God, believe also in me:" you must believe me in your way to God. Why it is this that doth make up the entire covenant between God and us in Christ. We accept him, and God in him; we give ourselves to him, and to God through him. This is consummate faith, as you will see more, when we have (as we intend) opened further to you what it comprehends.

And that we may more clearly and distinctly apprehend that, there are several things yet more particularly to be spoken to; to wit, to let you know that this same faith concerning Jesus as the Christ, must carry with it,

I. Suitable apprehensions concerning ourselves and concerning him.

2. It includes in it some correspondent actings yet further to be considered.

3. It must be attended with some suitable qualifying adjuncts. And,

4. It must be attended with some concomitant dispositions and affections that are proper hereunto.

1. It must have with it suitable apprehensions both of ourselves and him: for you see here is the most immediate transactions in this matter imaginable between us and him, when we are to accept him, and resign ourselves to him. Here must be then necessarily suitable apprehensions both of ourselves and of him.

(1.) Of ourselves. When one goes upon such a transaction as this with Jesus as the Christ, I must consider with myself what I am, and what my state is. And, what am I, upon my most serious and inquiring thoughts? Why,

[1.] I find myself a creature under obligation to be governed by him that made me; and who shall be further obliged hereunto, if he that made all will further be favourable to me.

[2.] I must understand myself to be a miserable creature. It is as such I must have to do with this Jesus as the Christ. An undone creature, a lost creature. I do but touch upon these things.

[3.] I must consider myself an offending creature, as one that am miserable by my having broken laws and rules, and who that way have brought myself under guilt. A miserable creature, without the apprehension of being a guilty creature, is an insolent and proud creature. I am miserable, but I am faultless. If any should bear that sense with them, they can have nothing to do with Christ, he is nothing to them. And,

* Preached April 15th, 1694.

[4.] I must apprehend myself to be a depraved creature, habitually depraved; destitute of any good principles, either of duty towards God, or that have any tendency to felicity for myself. And I am under the possession and power of the most pernicious, radical principles of all iniquity and injuriousness towards God, and misery to myself. So I must apprehend the state of my case when I apply myself, and when my soul moves towards this Jesus as the Christ. And,

(2.) I must have suitable apprehensions of him too; here I am to consent to accept of him for mine, to resign myself to him as his. Both these, reception and resignation, do require that I should have suitable apprehensions of him; that is,

[1.] I must consider his original power over me, as he is the beginning of the creation of God; "as by him all things were made, visible and invisible," Col. i. 15, 16. As by whom God made the worlds, Heb. i. 2. As originally invested with a sovereign, governing power, which, because it was original and natural to him, can never be lost, more than the Godhead. He is the Lord my maker, whom I am to receive, and unto whom I am to resign. And,

[2.] I must consider him as a constituted Ruler. So he is as Mediator. Consider him abstractedly, as he was the eternal Son of God, so he hath a natural power of government over all. But as he is Mediator, God-man, he is a Governor too by constitution. All power is given him both in heaven and earth. The Father hath given all things into his hand, John xiii. 3. "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as God hath given him," John xvii. 2. So I must apprehend and conceive of him.

[3.] I must conceive of him as a Saviour; and thereupon as a Redeemer, as a Reconciler, that was to save, by redeeming and reconciling perishing, lost, guilty creatures, to an offended God. This is the apprehension one must have in consenting to him. And the soul that hath believed aright that this Jesus is the Christ, it will be full of this sense in this transaction: Aye, this is just such a one as I need; for I find myself miserable, I find myself lost, I find myself undone, by my having offended, and involved myself in guilt, against my sovereign, rightful Lord. There can never be any reception of him, or resignation to him, without this. And,

[4.] He must be understood and apprehended as a vital head, replenished with spirit and holy influence; so as that all that shall come into holy union with him, shall thereby derive spirit, and life, and grace, and holy influence from him: the thing which the exigency of the case so much calls for, as we are creatures so miserably depraved, and dead in trespasses and sins, disinclined to the doing and enjoying good in point of felicity. Such a one I need; and so I must consider Christ as one given to be "the head of all things to the church," Ephes. i. 22. He hath a universal political headship over all. But a vital headship over the church, (to wit, that is truly such,) that is, his body, his living body. And such a one must the soul, that is treating and transacting with him, apprehend him to be even in this closure, this unitive closure; I am a most wretched, deformed, depraved creature; I believe this Jesus to be the Christ, I believe it belongs to the office of this same Christ to be the fountain and spring of life and renovating grace to poor souls that shall come into union with him: and I come unto him as such, I receive him as such, and resign myself to him as such. Every one that is in Christ is a new creature. I need to be new made throughout, new created; I am lost and undone for ever if I be not so; I come to him, unto this union with him, to be made anew throughout, according to that, 2 Cor. v. 17. and that, Ephes. ii. 10. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." He is a new plastes; we had a miserable protoplast; we have another former now, a reformer. Christ is to be formed in us, his own image is to be formed in our hearts. He himself can only form his image, and draw it upon us: and that is our business with him. And blessedness itself can never make us blessed, if we be not made new, if we be not made over again, another sort of creatures than we were before. Thus there must be in this belief (as it comprehends our reception of him and resignation to him) suitable apprehensions both of ourselves and of him in this transaction, otherwise all will turn to nothing. And again,

2. There must be suitable included acts, even in those of receiving him and resigning ourselves. First, there must be the act of trust: and, secondly, the act of subjection: otherwise we do not receive him, and resign ourselves to him, suitably to the apprehensions that are given to us of that object. When we do receive him, how do we receive him? We receive him as Christ Jesus the Lord, Col. ii. 6. You receive Christ, (that is, the name of his office, that we are to believe Jesus to be invested with,) the anointed one of God. But what is he anointed to, or what is he anointed for? To be to us both Jesus and the Lord. Jesus is a Saviour, Lord is an owner and ruler. It cannot be, then, but that our receiving him, and our resigning ourselves to him, must comprehend in them,

(1.) Trust, an absolute trust. When we receive him, we receive him as one in whom we trust; and when we resign ourselves to him, we resign ourselves as committing ourselves, in trusting ourselves. We receive him under the pleasant notion of a Saviour, and so we resign ourselves to him, to be saved by him, confiding in his saving mercy, encouraged by his word," "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." I will cast myself upon him, without any suspicion that he will ever cast me out; he will ever be as good as his word. Who ever did venture upon him, and perish? I will throw myself into those safe arms. This is included both in receiving and resigning; for I receive him as a Saviour, as Christ Jesus; and I resign myself to him, I commit, I intrust, I can credit myself to him accordingly as such. And then,

(2.) As both these together do carry in them trust, so they carry in them subjection; there is not only committing ourselves, but there is also submitting ourselves. We commit, and submit, and subject ourselves to him at the same time; for he is received as Christ Jesus the Lord, and according as the Gospel represents him. "For all the house of Israel know, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ," Acts ii. 36. This must go for a known thing all Israel over, and all the world over, wherever he comes to be revealed; "That God hath made him both Lord and Christ. And him hath he exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, (Acts v. 31.) to give repentance and remission of sins." Repentance, wherein we humble ourselves before him as a Prince, prostrate ourselves, throw ourselves down at the footstool of his throne; and remission of sins, which he gives as a Saviour. Now are all sins forgiven to you, go away and be white, you are accepted, you are pardoned. Your scores are taken off; all things set right between him and you. God hath exalted him to be a prince, and so he humbles and gives repentance; and as a Saviour he forgives you. These are the acts correspondent to this two-fold notion. Not that the one is any cause of the other, or signifies any thing for the obtaining of them. But these are conjunct things by divine constitution and the exigency of the case itself. As a Prince, he humbles them to repentance: and as a Saviour, he forgives them, wipes off all scores, takes off their guilt, and sets all things right between God and them. We here must then be at once both trusting in him as a Saviour, and subjecting ourselves to him as a Prince; devoting and dedicating ourselves, so as determining henceforth not to live to ourselves; no, but to him that died for us, and rose again. This is the judgment of a soul brought under the constraint of the love of Christ, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. So that hereupon this becomes the sense of the soul, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," Phil. i. 20. While I live, I have no business to do but for Christ; my gain comes to me when I die—then I gain him. In the mean time, the business of my life is Christ, to live up Christ, live up his interest, serve him as a devoted one. My life is sacred to Christ, a hallowed and devoted thing. This is receiving and reigning, as comprehending acts suitable to the state of the case to what he is, and what we are. We are not to think of receiving and resigning blindly, and in the dark, and as those that know not for what; but upon such accounts, and with such actions of heart and soul as these, committing and submitting ourselves most absolutely to him. And,

3. Here must be some qualifying adjuncts of these acts of receiving and resigning, especially these two, totality

and vitality. It may be, you will remember them the better for the sound's sake. But they are expressions that speak the importance of the thing more plainly than any other can that occurs to my thoughts.

(1.) There must be totality with these acts of the one part and the other, to wit, with reference to the object, and with reference to the subject. Consider the act of reception with reference to the object, we are to receive a whole Christ; consider the act of resignation with respect to the subject, and we are to resign our whole selves. Reception must be with totality, a reception of a whole Christ; resignation must be with totality, a resignation of our whole selves. To take Christ but by halves, will not do the business; to resign ourselves but by halves, will not do the business neither. To take Christ only to serve a turn, that he may save me from wrath, without renewing my nature, and bringing me into a union and communion with himself and with God through him; this will not do; neither will it do for me to resign myself, and not my whole self,—my whole soul. Will it content any one to be saved by halves, to be half saved, and half lost, if this were possible? But then,

(2.) There must be vitality as to both these, as well as totality. There must be vital reception, and vital resignation; life must accompany these acts. "He that hath the Son hath life," as it is afterwards, ver. 12. of this chapter. I must so take him and receive him, as that, by a vital act of my will, I become united with him as with a living thing; for I find new life hath entered into my soul. I must so resign myself to him that life may go into that act of resignation. "Yield yourselves unto the Lord as those that are alive unto God. And reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ," Rom. vi. 11, 13. There must be life springing in my soul towards God and through Jesus Christ. The cold, dead indifferency and aversion towards God is gone, and with the spirit of faith a spirit of life enters. And so when I come to give myself up, it is not as a dead thing. "Offer up yourselves living sacrifices, acceptable unto God through Jesus Christ," Rom. xii. 1. But then,

4. There must be suitable concomitant affections, especially these two, reverence and joy.

(1.) Reverence. Whom do I receive? and to whom do I resign? The great and glorious Lord of all. Think what this name (Christ) doth import. The Christ of God, as you heard. He to whom all power is given in heaven and earth. When I receive him, how great a one is now to enter my soul! This sense is now to possess it, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, for the King of glory is entering in." He is to come and take up his dwelling in my soul by faith, as in the 24th Psalm, latter end. It must be with a prostrate soul that I am to receive him; let the everlasting doors fly open: here is a mighty one to come, him, the Lord of glory. Lord, I am not worthy thou shouldst come under my roof; I know if thou comest thou bringest life with thee, and salvation with thee to my soul. But O in how humble and reverential a posture must the soul be in this thing! And,

(2.) Joy. He is to be received and resigned unto with highest complacency; with a most complacential reception and resignation. The soul is glad things are brought to that pass between God and him. Oh, blessed be God for this day, that he hath revealed his Christ, and hath revealed him in me; and that I have found him, and in him found according to his own word, "They that find me find life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." O! what a blessed day is this! How hath God signalized this day with my soul, in bringing about this union and commerce between this Christ and me!

This is believing Jesus to be the Christ. If you believe it to purpose, this is it. And pray think with yourselves; can it be any thing less than this? That faith that is short of this is both a nullity and an affront. A nullity, a vanity as to you, and an affront as to God and Christ.

To you a nullity, a vanity, a nothing: for can that faith, that belief, signify any thing, that doth not reach its end? I pray what is the end, think you, of this revelation of Christ, that there should be such a record extant concerning this Jesus that he is the Christ? Why should it be revealed? Why should it be declared? why am I required to believe it? to be persuaded in my heart of the truth hereof? Can it be for any end, but that my soul may be brought into a vital, unitive closure with him hereupon? If it doth not effect this, it effects nothing. It is from hence my Christianity commenceth. It is but now that I become a Christian, any thing besides a name. When my soul passeth into this union with him by consent, by reception, by resignation, now I become a Christian, now I am in Christ, now the spirit of faith hath exerted its power in my soul, without which there is no believing. "We having the same spirit of faith, believe," 2 Cor. iv. 13. There can be no faith to purpose without a spirit of faith. Here doth the spirit of faith exert itself, and so it is but now that I do begin to be a Christian; for he that hath not the spirit of Christ is none of his, he is no Christian; let him be called what he will, let men call him what they please, he is none of Christ's. And what, will my Christianity without a Christ save me, or do me any good? To have a Christless Christianity, what shall I be the better for that?

And it is indeed not only a nullity as to myself; but it is an affront and provocation to God and Christ, if in believing and assenting to this truth, that Jesus is the Christ, my soul do not hereupon unite and close with him; for it is a refusing him in the face of light. It is a refusing him, when I know and profess to know who he is. I profess this Jesus to be the Christ, and yet my soul stands out against him. For I must be either a consenter or refuser. To refuse him when I know who he is, when I profess to believe who he is, this is higher wickedness than the Jews were guilty of when they crucified him; for if they had known him to be the Lord of glory, they would not have crucified him. But I know this Jesus is the Christ, yet I will him not. "You will not come to me, that you may have life." Here is a knowing and denying at once. "He that denieth the Son, hath not the Father," 1 John ii. 23. But he that doth acknowledge that this Jesus is the Christ, hath the Father and the Son both together. If it be vitally acknowledged, so as that the soul pass hereby into union with both, then be hath both.

I hope we speak and hear of these things with a design to be and do accordingly, otherwise here is time the most unhappily thrown away that could have been. We had been better treating of any trivial subject, if such a thing as this should have been spoken or been attended to slightly, and with neglect. All lies upon this, depends upon this: all for our present comfort in this life here in this world, and our future happy blessed life in the other world.

SERMON XLII.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

AND thus, what this faith, concerning Jesus's being the Son of God, or the Christ, doth in itself import, hath been largely shown. And now,

II. What is said of such as do believe this with this faith, we are to open to you, to wit, what this being "born of God" imports. And concerning it, I shall first note to you two things in general; and then come to give you a more distinct and particular account of it afterwards. In general,

1. That this must needs be a very great difference, which such a work as this makes between men and men, this being "born of God." The difference cannot but to every one's understanding appear very great, between one that is born of God, and one that is not born of God: especially too, when you consider, that every one that is not born of God, is of the seed and offspring of the worst father that ever was. For there are but two great fathers whose posterity divide all mankind; they that have not

* Preached April 22nd, 1694.

God for their Father, as being born of him, our Lord tells them, "You are of your father the devil, and his works ye will do," John viii. 44. "And by this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil," I John iii. 10. It hath enough in it to amaze a man's soul, to have this matter represented as a thing doubted of, and to be inquired about, To which of these fathers do I relate? If the one of them be not my father, the other is. This must be understood (as any ordinary understanding will easily apprehend) not concerning a person's naturals but his morals. When a man is said to be a child of the devil, it is not as if there were any thing of positive natural being wrought in him by the devil, but only a moral depravation. And so when any are the children of God, it is not that any new natural faculty is created, but the faculties that were created at first, and that are depraved, and upon which the image of the devil is impressed, are sanctified; defaced, and purged of that impurity, and stamped with an impression from the Spirit of holiness, which is the regenerating Spirit.

That is one consideration, and a mighty one it is; and very obvious, one would think, to every one's thoughts, that this must make a very vast difference between men to be born of God, and not to be born of him, and to be either of his, or of the devil's seed. And,

2. This is to be generally noted too, that this difference is universal upon all believers. The greatness of it, and universality of it, are the two things that I would have previously noted. And this latter you have expressly in the text, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Every one, without exception. So that there is no room left for such an imagination to any one, Is it not possible that some or other may pass for believers, without having this work pass upon them, so vastly differencing men from one another, as this being born of God is? A great thing indeed! What? may none pass for a believer but such as are born of God? May not in the census some or other escape without that mark upon them? No, saith the apostle, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Let him call himself whatsoever he will, he is real infidel; let him be never so much a nominal believer, if he be not born of God, his believing of this, that Jesus is the Christ, is as nothing; it is no believing. As in another case, circumcision goes for no circumcision, if it be not of the heart and spirit, and not only of the letter. As circumcision will go for no circumcision (where there is the very thing figured and represented) if it be the figure and no more, so doth such a pretended faith go for no faith, (let men say never so long we believe Jesus is the Christ,) if they be not born of God, they will never pass in the divine estimate for believers.

And now these two generals being noted, we must come to give you a more distinct and particular account what this being "born of God" doth import. And that we shall do in this two-fold gradation: 1st, Speaking to it as it is a birth; and 2dly, As it is a being born of God, as it is a divine birth. As it is a being born; and as it is a being born of God. The latter whereof, as you may easily apprehend, doth greatly sublimate the former, and raise it higher, and should raise our thoughts and apprehensions proportionably higher about it.

(1.) As this work done upon the soul is called a birth, let us consider it so. And that is a more general consideration, and a lower one; and as a fountain and substratum to what is afterwards to be added under the other more specifying notion. Why, as it is said to be a birth, it signifies such things as these,

[1.] A real new product in the soul, that there is somewhat really produced anew in it. This must be signified by being born. Being born is not a fiction, is not a fancy; it is not an imaginary thing. Being born signifies a real new production, that there is really somewhat new brought forth into being, that before was not; and so as to make the subject so far another thing from what before it was; or works such an imitation, as that the person in whom this work is wrought, is not what before he was. It brings the matter to this, that he may truly say, *Ego non sum ego*, I am not the same (I) that I was. As the apostle saith of himself, 1 Tim. i. 11. "I was a blasphemer, I was a persecutor, I was injurious, but I obtained mercy." And that mercy which he had obtained, had made him quite another man. And this he doth not speak of himself as a single person separately considered, but he speaks of himself as a pattern to all that should thereafter believe; that he was taken herein as set for a pattern (as the expression is in the original) what mighty changes the power and spirit of grace could work in the souls of men, so as to make them so much other men from themselves. Is it very true indeed, that for those that hitherto continue in their natural and unregenerate state, they are not all sinners alike, they are not all sinners in the same kind. Every such sinner is not a persecutor, is not a blasphemer. But every such sinner is a carnal wretch, a stranger to God, alienated from him, unacquainted with him; one that hath no love to him, no fear of him, no delight in him, no desire to please him, no design to serve him. "No, as to what change is made in me, (saith the apostle,) I am not here to speak of myself as a single person, but I am to speak of myself as a pattern, what the Almighty Spirit of divine grace can effect upon the soul of a man, to make him quite another sort of thing from what he was." There is somewhat common to all unregenerate persons, and to all regenerate persons, wherein such a pattern may very well reach and suit every one's case. Every one that is unregenerate, is a stranger to God, unacquainted with him; one that lives as without him in the world; that hath no design to know him, or love him, or please him, or serve or glorify him. Every one that is regenerate, his dispositions are changed in all these respects. Now what is common herein, must the apostle be understood to mean himself to be, a pattern to subsequent believers; those that should come hereafter to believe. Wherever that believing is, there is this change; there is that imitation in the subject, as will speak this person to be new born. There is a new production in him, by which he is quite another sort of man from what he was. "Every one that is in Christ (as every one comes to be in him by believing) is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17. It is the great design of our Lord Jesus Christ (as he is the restorer and repairer of the ruins of a lapsed world, and of a corrupt nature in man,) to make all things new, so far as his design takes place and succeeds. "Behold I make all things new," Rev. xxi. 5. That is my business upon which I am intent; so that there is a real new production every where, where there is faith in Christ wrought, in every such person, which makes him truly differ (and not in imagination only) from what he was, and from what others are. And again,

[2.] As this is a real production to be thus born, new born; so it is a spiritual production, in contradistinction to such productions as lie within the sphere of nature. It is an extra-natural production. For, as I told you before, this makes men differ from what they were, not in mere naturals, but morals; and so it is an extra-natural production. It doth not lie in the sphere of nature, but lies in the sphere of grace. You may collect it to be an extra-natural production by two things: 1st, The principal seat of it; and 2dly, The great agent that is employed herein. The prime subject of it is the mind and spirit. The great agent employed herein is our Lord Jesus Christ, as it appears to be the immediate result of believing this Jesus to be the Christ: then he is born of God. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

First, Consider the former of these; it is a work, the primary subject whereof is the mind. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Here is a transformation to be wrought, by which men cease to be conformed to the world, to be like the world as they were. But where is the seat of this transformation? "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans xii. 2. and so Ephesians iv. 22, 23. "We have not so learned Christ: if ye have heard of him, as the truth is in Jesus," that is, "to put off the old man which is corrupt by deceivable lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind." If you have heard and learned Christ, or the truth as it is in Jesus, this is the effect of it, that you "be renewed in the spirit of your mind." It is an expression that hath somewhat more of emphasis in it, than that last mentioned expression. Transformed by the renewing of the mind, doth represent the subject not merely, not only as a knowing thing, but as an active thing; as the

very action of spirit speaks activity or active vigour. And so it is not a mere contemplative knowing which belongs to the mind alone, abstractly considered; but there being spirit in that mind, that turns all that knowledge into vital principles, suitable for present actions and operations. And this is the very centre of that subject, or seat of this renovation, or transforming change. You must be renewed in this faculty, not only as it is cognitive, but as it is active; as there is a spirit suiting it for vigorous acting centring in it. Here is the seat of this renovation. This plainly speaks this to be an extra-natural production, as well as it speaks it to be a real one, as before was said.

Secondly, If we consider Christ as the ministering agent here, and as he was the prime minister of the Gospel by which this work is effected and done upon souls. It did not belong to him in this capacity, as he was Christ, merely to bring forth a new natural production into the old world. It is true that belongs to him too, but under another notion, as he was the Creator of all things, things visible and invisible, things in heaven and things on earth; all were created by him and for him, to wit, if you consider him in his abstract Deity. But the name Christ is the appropriated name of his office, as he is the Mediator. Every one that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. Believing him to be Christ, that is, to be the restorer of a lapsed, perishing world, not the creator of it, as he was at the first, which belongs to him in that distinct natural capacity; but look upon him as a constituted Mediator, a restorer and repairer of fallen, ruined, perishing creatures; look upon him so as the name Christ signifies him to be, and so he is the agent in this great work. "He that believeth him to be the Christ, is born of God." "And he that is in Christ, is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17. and again, Ephes. ii. 10. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Whatsoever lay within the confines and limits of nature, would do us no good, that is all but self. We are not saved by ourselves, but we are saved by grace, and not by nature, or any thing natural, as you have it in that context. How is that? Why, we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Now the agency of Christ Jesus as he is the Christ, it lies within the sphere of grace, (by which it is said we are saved,) not within the sphere of nature. And therefore it is not nature that doth the business. We must look upon this as an extra-natural, supernatural production, both as it is our mind, and the very spirit which is to be the seat and subject of it; and as our Lord Jesus, even as he is the Christ, that is to be the great agent therein. But again,

[3.] As this is a birth, so we must consider it to be a total production, such a one as carries an entireness with it: for so it is too with all such productions that are properly called births. A birth is not the production of a leg, or an arm, or an eye, but it is the production of an entire human creature. And so is this work represented: it is called the putting on of a new man. I pray consider this; the words of God are weighty words, and claim to be pondered with serious and deeply considering thoughts. I beseech you, why is that change wrought in regeneration, signified by putting on of a new man? What can it signify less than this, that it must be a total change? The production carries an entireness in it. As you do not call a finger or a toe a man, but the whole fabric and frame animated by a human spirit; this is the man. Now here is an old man "put off, that was corrupt by deceivable lusts," and then a new man put on, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Some way or other, indeed, this renewing work lies bespread through the whole man. Therefore the apostle prayed for the Thessalonians, (1 Epistle, v. 23.) that they might be sanctified throughout in their whole spirit, soul, and body; meaning by the first, the higher and nobler faculties, or, as we may call it, the upper soul. By the second, the lower soul, as it is that seat of internal sense, imagination, appetition, passion, fancy. And then the body, according as that may in a secondary sense be said to be the seat of a sanctifying impression, the several parts of that being now more governable by a rectified mind and spirit, more useable for God, the several parts thereof being so made instruments of righteousness for the serving of God, as the expression is, Rom. vi. 19. It being evident, that where the Spirit of holiness doth obtain and take place, or where the regenerating work is really effected, men do thereupon more make it their business to govern the outward man subserviently to the inner, and the lower soul subservient to the upper; and the very parts of the body, too, subserviceable to both, that they may be instruments for the serving of God. Wherever there is more of the regenerating power and spirit of grace residing and ruling in the inner man, so much the more there will be of a severe restraint, from a divine principle. So much the more there will be of a severe restraint upon licentious, unbridled appetite: so much the more careful such will be to preserve their bodies in a useable posture for the service of God, remembering that even their bodies themselves are the outward temples of a deity. "Know ye not that ye are the temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor. iii. 16. And every man is therefore taught and required to possess his body in sanctification and honour, remembering that even his very flesh itself hath undergone a dedication, being washed with pure water, to signify its being prest into a subserviency to the great God and the Redeemer, under the conduct and government of his Spirit. "Let us draw nigh (we that have lived at a distance, and strangers) with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, to signify, that in body and spirit we have been devoted, Heb. x. 22. agreeing with that 1 Cor. vi. latter end, "You are not your own, you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your spirit, and in your bodies, which are both his." And so by participation, and secondarily, the sanctifying impression comes to obtain in that which is the lowest in the nature of men. They are to be sanctified throughout; therefore this is a total production: that holy rectitude which is effected by regeneration, or this new birth, takes place in every thing belonging to the nature of man. Therefore be not so vague as to imagine, that if there be somewhat done in some one faculty, this is regeneration, or that this speaks a man new born. If now and then there be a right thought injected and cast in, if there be an inclination, some motion or desire; if something of convictive light be struck into a man's conscience; is this regeneration? Is this being new born? No, that makes all things new: "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are done away, all things are become new." There is a new mirth, a new judgment, a new conscience, a new will, new desires, new delights, new love, new fear, every thing new. And,

[4.] This birth, as it is a birth, signifies a permanent production, an effect that is permanent, lasting, and continued. This is obvious to every one that considers the common notion of a birth: for whatsoever it is (as to essentials) that any one is, (as he is born,) the same he is to be as long as he lives. Whatsoever he is by birth, as to the essentials of that being which by birth now comes to take place in this world, he is the same thing all his days. Therefore, this must be some permanent, lasting, abiding work and impression upon the soul. It is not some light subetaneous passion that is raised in a moment, and gone in a moment. There may be many such subetaneous passions raised in the souls that live under the Gospel, which vanish and come to nothing; soon raised and soon gone. A sudden thought injected, a beam of convictive light that strikes into the conscience, a pang of terror that seizeth, some sudden rapid workings of desire: O! that my sins were pardoned, O! that there were a peace between God and me! Is this being born? That signifies a work done, which lasts and continues. They that give us an account of qualities, do distinguish between these two things, *patibilis qualitas et passio*. Implying, that the latter of these, though it may be a real thing, yet it may be so sudden a thing, so soon up, so soon down, that one is capable of denomination from it no more than a man is to be known by a sudden blush in his face, or that he should grow unknown because he wants it. This is a continuing thing. He that is by this birth to be denominated to be a believer as to the great faith of the Gospel, that Jesus is the Christ. Is such a one born of God? Yes, as long as he is a believer he is born of God. Doth he believe to the saving of his soul? This impression, by which it is said he is born of God, it is coextensive, it is commensurate; so that it signifies some

other kind of impression than what a man can have to-day and lose to-morrow; or what may vary and alter with him (it may be) twenty times in the same day. For, do but consider the reason of the thing: what a man is when he is born, that he is when he dies; as to essentials he is the same creature all his time.

These are things that plainly and evidently belong to this great production in the soul, even as it is signified by the name of a "birth." That is only taking in that it is a secondary birth, and such a one as whereof our Lord Jesus Christ is the author and immediate agent, and in a pre-existing subject that is changed, and influenced, and wrought upon thereby. But then,

2. There is yet a further and fuller account to be given of this effect and work upon the soul, as it is here signified to be a divine birth; or as he that is said to be a believer with this faith, that Jesus is the Christ, is not only said to be born, but said to be born of God. Accordingly to what we so expressly have by the same apostle in his Gospel, John i. 12, 13. "To as many as have received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And observe this, for it is most observable. "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God," so saith the text. And that other text first saith, "they that believe on his name," receiving him with such a faith as I have opened to you at large, doth signify such faith by which we truly believe Jesus is the Christ; they are the sons of God, born of God. But do you think any are the sons of God that are not born of God? Therefore, the next words immediately subjoin, "who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Here is a divine birth immediately depending upon God. Wheresoever the spirit and power of this faith doth obtain and take place in the soul, so that if any do believe on his name and receive him as Christ, they are the sons of God; because they are born of him. Why should they not be called sons, that have the divine nature in them, resembling God's own? Theirs is not like a human geniture or birth. It is not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. They are heaven born, an immediate divine production.

O what deep thoughts of heart doth all this claim for us! and pray let us bethink ourselves. We here meet as a Christian assembly. You see by this what a Christian is. And all will agree (no doubt) in the common notion, a Christian is one that believeth that Jesus is the Christ. But you see who are reckoned to believe to this purpose, such as are born thereupon another sort of creatures from what they were, and so continue as long as they live: and such as are heaven born, born of God by immediate divine operation and influence, a mighty power from God coming upon their souls, conforming them to God, addicting them to God, uniting them with God, making them to centre in God, taking them off from all this world; so as that it may appear it is not the spirit of this world that hath done this work upon them. We have not received the spirit of this world, such a spirit as unites us with the world, but the spirit that is from God, that suits us to God and to divine things, and makes us savour the things of God, take delight in them, and that attempers us more and more to that state wherein God is to be all in all with us. So as that we are dead in this world. In this sense, to be born is to die. Every one that is thus born, dies at the same time: that is, when he is born to God, and made alive to God through Jesus Christ, he is dead and crucified to the world: it becomes a despicable thing. Hereupon he can be content to stay a little while to serve God, but he cannot endure to be without God in this world. And he hopes not to be in it long neither, but to be with him immediately who is to us our all in all.

It is a great thing to be a Christian! O that it were more understood what the Christian names signifies. If Christianity be not a shadow; if it were not a design unworthy of the descent of the Son of God into this world to bestow upon men a new name, but let them be the same men under that new name, earthly, terrene, impure creatures, and strangers to God as much as ever, only called Christians, as full of carnality, as full of enmity to God and godliness, as full of distempered affections towards one another; in wrath, animosity, envy, self-design in opposition to every thing that stands in their way, ready (if it were in their power) to ruin every body that opposes their secular interest; then Christianity is a great thing. For is this God-like, is it like one born of God, "who is love!" Addictedness to a party, is that to be born of God? Do you think it to be of this or that party is to be born of God? It is to be made a good man, a holy man, a lover of good men and of goodness, be his denomination or name what it will. To be born of God signifies a universalized mind and spirit, that bears some image of the Divine Infinity; not in essence, not in being, not in presence, not in power; that is impossible; but in aim and design, that is, that as He cannot possibly be confined any way, so I will not confine myself. To have a universalized mind and spirit, co-existent (as it were) with the creation, labouring to do all the good that is possible every where, so far as any power of mine can extend; and where no power of mine can extend, thither my desire and prayer shall extend. Such a one as is born of God is like God, ready to scatter every where divine blessings through the world. This is one born of God; that as He fills the whole earth with his goodness, so I would by all acts of benefaction, as much as lies in my compass; never limiting myself in aim or design, though my capacity do never so much limit me.

But these are things that must be enlarged on hereafter. Only let us consider now, how high a pretence it is for any man to pretend himself to be a believer, or a Christian; one that believes Jesus to be the Christ: If I should ask any one this question, Do you believe Jesus to be the Christ? And he answer me suddenly, and without consideration, Yes, I believe Jesus to be the Christ. I would not be so uncharitable as to censure any body that so answers; I would hope that he answers considerately, and as the truth of the matter is. But I would give him all the occasion I could of considering himself and of judging himself, though I will not judge him. Pray think with yourselves what you say, when you say you believe Jesus to be the Christ; for every one that so believes is born of God, and hath that mighty universal change wrought in the very habit of his soul, that makes him imitate God, that conforms him to God, and inclines to God, and makes him value communion with God above all things in this world.

SERMON XLIII.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

BUT now, to speak more distinctly to this work as it is signified by a divine birth, or being born of God, there are two things of which we must have a distinct consideration: First, the influence by which it is produced; and secondly, the product itself.

(1.) The influence by which it is produced. And that we must carefully distinguish from these two things: First, from what is superior to it in the kind of influence; and secondly, from what is inferior.

[1.] From what is superior to it, and ought to be conceived infinitely superior. And that is the influence by which the eternal Son is begotten of the Father. That cannot be called a created influence, as that which is common to this work with all other creatures must be. But it may be truly procreated, because he is said to be begotten; the only-begotten Son of the Father. Begotten he is, but so begotten as none besides: not so begotten as a creature is. We shall show you the difference by and by. But we are to consider these as infinitely different. The manner by which God is said to beget his own eternal Son, and that by which he doth beget all that are, in the sense of the text, born of him, differ: and especially in these two things lies the difference; first, that the former is eternal, whereas

* Preached April 29th, 1694.

the latter is temporary; and secondly, the former is necessary, whereas the latter is arbitrary. And pray note these two great differences. The former, I say, is,

First, Eternal. He that is said to be the only-begotten Son, "We beheld his glory as the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14. He is the only-begotten Son in that peculiar and most noble sense, to wit, that he was begotten from eternity. So you find, Micah v. 2. "his goings forth were from everlasting; of old, and from everlasting." So that there was no moment conceivable, not only in time, but in all foregoing eternity, wherein he was not by an everlasting resultancy (as we may speak) from the Father. His goings forth were from everlasting. It is not thus as to creatures; not as to the most excellent sort of creatures, this same more noble creature, the new creature, the divine creature, (being yet but a creature;) it had its beginning, and may have its very late beginning, as all creatures do begin to be at one time or other. And,

Secondly, The influence in the former is necessary; in reference to the latter, this and all other creatures are but arbitrary. Whatever is created is created by an arbitrary influence. "For thy pleasure, or by thy will (as those words, Rev. iv. 11. may be read) they are and were created." Whatsoever is created, is the product of the Divine will, depends upon an antecedent act of will, determining whether it shall be or not be. But this could not be the case as to the eternal generation of the Son, even from thence, (as it hath been said,) that it was "from everlasting:" for whatsoever did depend upon an act of will, determining whether it should be or not be, that is an antecedent of will; not concomitant, but antecedent; and so whether it should be or not be, must have had a beginning, and could not be pre-existent, could not be from all eternity. Though indeed such productions may be to all eternity, (as it is with the spirits and souls of men,) they cannot have been from all eternity, if it depend upon choice whether they should be or not be. But the other was a generative influence, that did not depend upon choice, but necessity of nature. He was the Son by natural, necessary, eternal promanation; as necessarily the Son, as the Father the Father; he resulting from him as his everlasting substantial image. As if the sun in the firmament, instead of projecting its beams round about, did invert them, and so there were a necessary production of a sun in a sun, not depending upon choice, but from an everlasting necessity of nature; so he is said to be the only-begotten Son of the Father. Though he hath many sons, as you that are said to be begotten, and born of him; but in an inferior sense, as a greater difference cannot be supposed than to be from necessity of nature, and to be from arbitrary choice, at will and pleasure. "Of his own will begat he us, to be the first-fruits of his creatures;" James i. 18. he did it when he might not have done it. That is one distinction that is necessary to be made in this case, between this begetting and what is infinitely inferior to it, to wit, that of the only-begotten Son of God. But then,

[2.] We are to distinguish it too from that which is unspeakably inferior to it, as well as that which is superior; that is, we are to distinguish it from the production of inferior things, that are of a lower nature and value, which though they are called God's creatures, yet are they never in any sense to be called his sons. And we must therefore consider the special kind and nature of this productive influence in this respect, as it is to be distinguished from all that which is merely creative, and not generative at all. It is true, indeed, that the generative influence is creative too within the universe of created beings, so as that God's children as such are his creatures: for they are called new creatures. But though all his children are his creatures, yet all his creatures are not his children. There is somewhat peculiar not only in respect of the thing produced, but in respect of the productive influence too. And so we must note to you these differences:

First, that this difference is spiritual, I say; it is purely spiritual. It is called so, both in respect of the cause and of the effect. As it is from the cause, and as it terminates in the effect, so we are given to understand that it is spiritual; it hath the name of Spirit put upon it, John iii. 6. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." There is Spirit producing, and spirit produced thereby. The influential cause, as such, is the Divine Spirit, (for we consider now the spirituality of the influence, not of the thing produced thereby.) "Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, (or the Holy Ghost,) he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It is not enough (as if he should have said) that a man be baptized; that will not do the business, that may leave him short of regeneration, of heaven, and the kingdom of God. It is spoken by way of allusion to the Jewish baptisms that were before the Christian institution; for there were two sorts of proselytes among the Jews; (long before Christianity under that name came to obtain in the world;) those that were called proselytes of the gate, and those that were called proselytes of justice. And for the latter sort, they were always admitted into the Jewish church by baptism; and therefore doth our Saviour justly upbraid it to Nicodemus, that he being a master in Israel, should understand so little of the mysteries of regeneration. "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" Dost thou not understand the meaning of a usage so common among yourselves? For at those baptisms they used to have a new father and a new mother, new kindred, new brethren, new sisters, declaratively. This was a thing wont to be declared in the solemnity of those baptisms, as their own records inform. Now, saith our Saviour, dost thou think this thing, so used among yourselves, had no meaning? Art thou a master in Israel, one of the teachers and doctors, and dost not understand this thing; that besides the external, significant baptism, there must be a signified internal baptism? And what could that be but the baptism of the Holy Ghost, renewing the nature, transforming the soul, altering the habitual inclination, creating a new man, a new divine creature? So that it must be a mighty penetrative, spiritual influence, full of vital life and vigour diffused through the soul, that makes this birth, when one is said to be born of God. There is a spiritual production, and it is of Spirit. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit: under that notion, and as such we conceive it in relation to action, it speaks a mighty vigour, and vivacity, and operativeness. For matter, as matter can effect nothing, work nothing, it hath no operativeness, no *vis*, no energy in it, it is a mere passive thing; but the fountain of all activity, life and vigour, is Spirit, a spiritual being; and the generative influence in this work is such.

Secondly, It is intellectual as well as spiritual; such as carries mental light in it. For when God doth this work upon souls, he is said to shine into them. God that commanded light to shine out of darkness, "hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of his own glory in the face of Jesus Christ." He doth this work as the Father of lights. "Every good gift and perfect giving proceeds from the Father of lights," James i. 17. Even as it is such; whereupon (as we shall in the proper place come to note to you) these children are called "children of light," as he is the "Father of lights." And whereas the thing produced is the Divine image, this is to be renewed in knowledge, or, "they are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created them," Col. iii. 10. After the image of their Creator, who is the fountain of all knowledge and wisdom. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are originally and essentially in God, and communicatively and derivately in Christ, they are all hid in him. And so there is a derivation even in this work, unto the effect produced; and therefore it must be considered in the productive influence. Here is a radiation of light into the soul. He hath "called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." The light of divine truth, by which these great things that do concern us God-ward are revealed which were all his before. Therefore as to the matter of the production, or the productive influence, these are said to be "born of God." These children of God are said to be born of Divine truth; which is that light which shines into the soul, exhibiting to us such things, not as will satisfy curiosity, but necessity—answer the necessary purposes of our souls. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we should be to him the first-fruits of his creatures." And, I Pet. i. 23. "Being born, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God," Divine truth: "seeing you have purified your souls (as it is said

before) in obeying the truth." They had received that truth which carried with it a transforming power, by which they became subdued thereunto, and were made to receive the impression thereof, according to that of our Saviour, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," John xvii. 17. "And we give thanks always to God, for you, (saith the apostle to the Thessalonians,) that God hath chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," 2 Thess. ii. 13. So that divine truth and light is the immortal seed out of which this divine production springs in the soul. The productive influence is illuminative; divine truth, in the light and lustre and glory of it, being darted into the very heart, hath made light to shine into the heart, even the light of the knowledge of God's own glory, 2 Cor. iv. 6. And again,

Thirdly, It is a powerful influence which is productive of this blessed work. It is true, that whatsoever work is done by God, is done by an omnipotent agent, but not always as such; for we must not look upon him as a merely natural or involuntary agent, that doth in every thing what he can; as the fire burns all that it can, and the sun shines as much as it can. The case is not so in the matter of divine agency; but he doth exert more or less of his power as it seems him good, and as the matter doth require. It is power, being under the regulation of his wisdom and his will in every thing he doth; for it would be very unreasonable and absurd to think there should be the same emission of Divine power and virtue in the production of a worm as in the production of an angel. Therefore, the almightiness of his power he attempers and proportioneth, by his wisdom and choice, to the effect to be produced. But there is a mighty exertion of power in this work, when he begins the new creature; when he is not only to bring a thing out of nothing, but, (which requires a greater exertion of power,) he is to bring a contrary out of his contrary, light out of darkness, holiness out of the greatest impurity, love to himself out of the highest enmity. This is a mighty egression of Divine power; when there are but additions to be made in this kind in the soul, we find what it requires by what is prayed for. "We pray for you, (saith the apostle, Eph. iii. 16.) that God would grant you to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit in the inner man;" and that he will do so "according to the riches of his glory;" implying that there must be a mighty exertion of the glory of the Divine power, in order to an additional work, in order to the superadding some further degree unto what hath been wrought powerfully already; "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you." And the expressions are of equal import, to the same purpose, which we have Col. i. 11. The apostle there prays for the Colossians, that in order to their walking worthy of the Lord to all well pleasing, and in order to their being fruitful in every good work, and in order to their increasing in the knowledge of God, to wit, their religion, (that being a periphrastical expression thereof, the knowledge of God being a periphrasis of whole Christianity,) that they may be "strengthened with all might according to his glorious power." There needed a continual exertion of all might, and such as should accord to and agree with the glorious power of God himself, in order to their progress and increase of grace and holiness; and therefore much more must the first beginning of such a work as this in the soul require a very glorious exertion of Divine power.

And whereas therefore in this work there is a communication and participation of the Divine nature, this is signified to be his divine power. If you look to 2 Pet. i. ver. 3, 4. compared, "According as his divine power hath given us all things appertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the Divine nature." Here is a divine nature to be communicated and imparted in this great and glorious work. How is it to be communicated? It is true it must be by apt and suitable means; to wit, by the great and precious promises given us in the Gospel. But it must be by the exertion too of a divine power. Though God do work suitably to an intelligent nature when he works upon such subjects, yet he works also suitably to himself, "according as his divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness," or to the godly life; in order to the ingenerating the godly life his divine power hath given us by the exceeding great and precious promises, a divine nature. The instrumentality and subserviency of these "exceeding great and precious promises," is greatly to be considered, God working herein suitably to the nature of an intelligent subject. Here is a change to be wrought in his nature, a nature that is corrupt, depraved, averse from God, alienated from the divine life; this nature is now to be attempered to God, made suitable to him, made propense and inclined towards him. This might be done, it is true, by an immediate exertion of Almighty power, without any more ado. But God will work upon men suitably to the nature of man. And what course doth he therefore take? He gives "exceeding great and precious promises," and in them he declares his own good will, that he might win theirs. In order to the ingenerating grace in them, he reveals grace to them by these great and precious promises. And what is grace in us? Truly grace in us is good will towards God, or good nature towards God; which can never be without a transformation of our vicious, corrupt nature. It will never incline towards God, or be propense towards God, till he make it so by a transforming power. But how doth he make it so? By discovering his kindness and goodness to them in "exceeding great and precious promises," satisfying and persuading their hearts; I mean nothing but kindness towards you, why should you be unkind towards me? I am full of good will towards you, will you requite it with perpetual ill will, and everlasting enmity towards me? Thus the "exceeding great and precious promises" are instruments to the communicating a divine nature to us, though that divine nature be ingenerated by a mighty power. God doth work at the rate of omnipotency in the matter by the exertion of almighty power; but yet suitably to our nature, so as to express his mind, and kind design, and good will, by the exceeding great and precious promises contained in the Gospel.

And if it were not so, he might as well make use of any other means as the Gospel, to work upon souls by. But the Gospel is the word of his grace. "To testify the Gospel of the grace of God," that is my business, saith the apostle, as a minister of Christ, and for which he did not reckon his life too valuable or too costly a thing to be sacrificed; "That I may testify the Gospel of the grace of God, my life is not dear to me," Acts xx. 24. I can be contented to throw away a hundred such lives as this, in testifying the Gospel of the grace of God. But what was it to be testified for? That God by this testimony might insinuate into so ill-natured hearts and spirits, and set them right towards him; plead effectually with them, and expostulate the matter. Why should you be everlasting strangers to me, who mean nothing but kindness and good-will towards you? Why should you choose to live as without me in the world? Why should you be always alienated from the life of God, when he is seeking after you, and would impart his grace and glory to you? It is in this way, and by such means, that the Divine power works, in order to the production of a divine nature; a nature that will incline towards God, work towards him, as it carried men away from him before. And then,

Fourthly, The influence by which this work is done, it is a merciful, compassionate influence; an influence of grace exerted and put forth, with the height of divine pity towards miserable creatures that must be lost and undone; being liable to an eternal hell, and who are a present hell to themselves, till such a work as this be done in them. For though, alas, such poor creatures will not consider it themselves, God doth consider with compassion the horrid, forlorn state of unrenewed souls: where his regenerating influence as yet hath had no place or effect, they are not only liable to eternal wrath (whereupon they are said to be by nature the children of wrath) by the inclinations and propensions of their own vicious nature, that hath set them at enmity with God, at enmity with one another, and set them at enmity with themselves. They are not only, I say, liable to eternal wrath by the inclination of their own nature, to which that tends to carry them, and to

which it suits them; but they are a present hell to themselves, as every unrenewed soul is. If you consider the constituent parts of hell, loss and torment; loss of the best good, torment by the worst evil; there are both these in kind in this present state, though they are both higher in degree hereafter. But in kind, both do fall into the present state of an unregenerate soul.

i. The misery of loss. They are without God in the world: Ephes. ii. 12. "without Christ, and without hope, and without God in the world." They do not reflect upon this; but if occasion were given them to consider the state of their case, and they would truly consider it, whatsoever their straits and necessities are, they must needs say,—I do not know which way in the world to turn myself; I have no God to go to, none to whom mine heart inclines, none in whom I can justly pretend myself to have a present interest; I must bear all my burdens alone; in the midst of my wants I have no God; in the midst of my enjoyments I have no God; no God to supply my wants, no God to sweeten my enjoyments. This is their forlorn case. And if,

ii. You look to the misery of torment, which is the other constituent part of hell, there must be that in degree in every unrenewed soul. And so they have the same misery in kind that they shall have hereafter, for all degrees are comprehended in the kind. And therefore the lowest degree speaks the true kind, the same kind. Some degrees they have of it now, even of that torment which belongs to the present state, that of an unrenewed soul as such; for, being unreconciled to God, they are not capable of being reconciled to themselves; that is, the power and faculties of their souls with one another; but light prompts them one way, and inclination carries them another way. It is true there is somewhat of this warring in the regenerate too; but then the prevailing principle doth agree with their light; the prevailing principle in their hearts doth agree with the light in their minds, and is the victorious principle. There is a disposition to contend against light; but the holy gracious principle there doth ordinarily and habitually prevail against the corrupt and sinful principle. But the case is quite otherwise with unregenerate souls; to wit, in the stated course and current of their lives, they run counter to the judgment of their consciences; as no man's conscience but must condemn an ungodly life, living as "without God in the world;" but so they live their lives, and transact the whole course and current of their lives at that ungodly rate, without fear of God, without the love of God, without praying to him, without depending on him, without designing for him in a continued course. Why here is the self-tormenting principle laid asleep only in such souls; that is, if ever they should reflect, they must consider themselves in a state of war with God, and with their own consciences, which are God's vicegerents, and are to govern over them in his right. If conscience were awake, and would do its office, that self-tormenting principle would presently and repeatedly tell them, Thou art a rebel against God and me; thou dost what thy light condemns thee for; God is cast out of thy soul, thy thoughts, thy affections, thy mind and heart; thy life is a continual war and rebellion against Heaven. It is true, instead of mortifying their corruptions, they make a shift to mortify their consciences, and so they are not clamorous, nor do give them actual torment; but the tormenting principle is there, and needs only awakening, and will awaken sooner or later, too late, if God be not merciful. But because he is merciful, therefore is such a transaction set on foot between him and them. And it is a compassionate influence suited to the sad and forlorn case wherein men are liable to hell, and are a present hell to themselves. It is a merciful influence which is vouchsafed in such a case.

Do but look back to the 2d Ephesians, where men are said to be "children of wrath by nature," one as well as another; it is immediately subjoined in the next words, "But God, who is rich in mercy, according to his great love wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ;" hath inspired us with a new life, a divine and holy life, which is another expression of the same thing signified by "the divine nature." This is an influence in which grace breathes, in which mercy governs. "God, who is rich in mercy," hath saved us by quickening us together in Christ, infusing a new divine life into us, which will be eternal life, as certainly as a vicious, corrupted, depraved nature, continuing unrenewed and what it was, will end in eternal death. So that as they are children of wrath, and sinners of hell by that very nature, so, by this divine nature now imparted by God's rich mercy, there is a sacred and sure pledge of life eternal, wherein that will end. And to the same purpose is Tit. iii. ver. 3, 4, 5. The apostle speaks of what naturally we all were; "We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures; living in malice, hateful, and hating one another: but after the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." This then is a most merciful influence that is given forth in the regenerating work. It is as if God should have said, I see these poor creatures are perishing, not only tending to hell, but carrying with them their own hell into hell, "hell being at last cast into hell," (as the expression in the Revelation is.) It is a throwing hell into hell, when a wicked man comes to hell; for he was his own hell before. God beholding this forlorn case of wretched creatures, saith, I must either renew them or loose them; I must either transform them, or they must perish; they are in fire of hell already. Such and such we were, but of his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing by the Holy Ghost. O! the compassionate influence that is shed upon a soul in this case! The balmy dews that descend from heaven upon a distempered soul, which quench the flames of lust, and which implant and invigorate (after their implantation) a divine principle, in-create a new life, that leads to God and Christ, and the way of holiness and heaven at last. This "being born of God" must imply, if we consider the productive influence by which this blessed work is effected. We are afterwards to consider the effect itself produced: in general God's own image inwrought into the soul, which we must understand by an influence, or exerted virtue, suitable to the thing to be produced, as well as suitable to the productive cause.

SERMON XLIV.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

AND now, besides the peculiarity that appears in the productive influence, we are to show you what peculiarities there are in the thing produced. It is the divine image itself, the permanent divine image. The influence is transient by which the effect is wrought, not only as it doth *transire* from God, but as it doth pass into the effect which it doth leave behind it. It doth *relinquere post se opus*, it leaves behind it a work wrought and done; and the work wrought and done hath a fixed permanent divine signature or impress upon it, by which it may be seen this is a divine production. Here are such resemblances of God in this work now done, that it may be plainly seen here is one born of God, or there is somewhat born of God in this soul, or in this person, as the matter is most emphatically expressed, to wit, in the neuter gender, afterwards in this very chapter, "Whatsoever is born of God," the thing born of God; to signify to us, that it is not the person as such; (for then Nicodemus's question could not have been answered, "How shall a man enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?") but there is something done in the person which is a divine product in this work. "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world." The same thing that is signified before in this same epistle "by the divine seed," permanent and remaining in such a one, chap. iii. 8.

* Preached May 13th, 1694.

Whence it is that he cannot commit sin, that is, as such he cannot, as such he never can commit it; be a doer of it in a continual course, as such it is impossible he should. The seed remaining inhibits, withholds him from it. Here now our thoughts are to stay and take up in contemplating this fixed, permanent, divine image, that comes into the soul by this productive influence in regeneration, or when a person is said to be born of God.

And for this now you must know, that two things do concur and meet in this work, when it comes to be entered into its fixed state, passing from the *fieri* to be *facto esse*; that is, from its being a-doing, and its being actually and fully done. Two things, I say, must be considered as concurring; to wit, first, the working out of a former image, and, secondly, the introducing and working in of this. The working out a former: it is in the sphere of grace, as it is in the sphere of nature, that *generatio unius* is *corruptio alterius*. The introducing of a new form is the expulsion of an old; the putting on of a new man is necessarily accompanied with and led on by "the putting off the old man, which is corrupt by deceivable lusts." But when we consider what the former image was, that is to be abolished and razed out, that will very much make way for the more full and distinct understanding what sort of image it is that must intervene and be introduced. And for that reason it will be requisite to say somewhat to that too.

And we may easily apprehend, if we do but reflect in our own thoughts, the two terms between which the soul of man doth move from the one to the other. The soul in its state of apostacy from God, there were somewhat or other when it left him, which it made defection to. And so in its return to God, there is somewhat it goes off from, when it comes into a state of union with him. And according as the terms are of recess and approach, so the *exemplaria* are, the exemplars, according to which the soul is formed and moulded; for it will bear the image of that which it doth converse with, and most converse with. The two terms between which it was always divided were, this world and God; the inferior creature and created good on the one hand, and the supreme and uncreated good on the other hand. Here is an impress or image of the former to be abolished, when the image of the latter is to be introduced. The soul did adhere to this world as its only best good, before regeneration; there was hereupon a worldly image on it; that is to be abolished, it is to return to God; and by regeneration, therefore, must be suited to God, and so have a divine image impressed upon it in order thereupon.

These are the two terms between which the motions of the soul are, this world and God; when it left God, it betook itself to this world; when it returns to God, it leads and comes off from the world, and accordingly are the images which successively obtain and take place in it. Therefore you have that strict interdict upon all them that would make a tender of themselves to God, in order to which that great work of being renewed in the spirit of their minds must pass upon them. "Be not conformed to this world," Rom. xii. 2. Here is a tender to be made of ourselves to God, not as a dead thing, but as living; we are made alive in the work of regeneration, of which he there speaks, "be ye renewed in the spirit of your minds," or "transformed in the renewing of your minds." But here is a foregoing form that they must be divested of, "be not conformed to this world," if you pretend to God, if you will be for him; if you offer yourselves to him as "a living sacrifice, be not conformed to this world;" that is an inconsistency to offer to God a mundane thing, a worldly thing, that which carries the impress of this world upon it; you offer to him an abomination, that which he must abhor—you offer him a sacrifice that smells of impure earth, that hath (as it were) the reek of a dunghill;—what, will you offer that to him? No; "be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed in the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable will of God," as there it followeth. This is a great thing; and we do nothing in considering either the work of believing in Christ as the Messiah, or in considering, much less in experiencing, the work of regeneration which is conjunct therewith, if we understand not what it is to come off from this world, and to have the worldly image and impress abolished and defaced in us, so as that it shall not be a prevailing thing, a regnant thing, any longer. And to this purpose you must know that the image which we are to bear, or which we have borne, it is not superficial only, it is not an outside thing; but if we have the image of this earth upon us, we have it in our very souls, the world is set in our hearts, it is in us another nature, a worldly and terrene nature; that is it wherein the image lies; not in an outside, but we are in spirit, and in our very natures, contempered to this world. We read therefore of a spirit and a spirit opposite to one another in this matter. As there are those two terms between which the motion of the soul lies, so there are two motive principles, and each of them called spirit, the spirit which is of this world, and the Spirit which is of God; it is this spirit that operates either to work the one image or the other. The spirit of this world, that forms us to the world; the Spirit of God forms us to God, and suits us to his communion and converse. You find, 1 Cor. ii. 12. that so the state of the case is represented, that a contest is continually kept up, and will be kept up by the Spirit of God against the spirit of this world; and is kept up till there be an overcoming by the spirit of this world against the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is from God. It is not a mundane spirit; that spirit that now comes upon us is another spirit, and is to work out the former impress, and introduce a new one. And so is the case again stated in the fourth chapter of this epistle, at verse 4. that the spirit that is in this world and the Spirit which is from God are engaged, as it were, in a war one against the other: "Little children, ye are of God, and have overcome the world; because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world;" and he that is the greater, he that is in you, is to work out the former worldly impress and to introduce the new one; and he will do so in all that are regenerate. And therefore, these two things in reference to this wordly spirit and image must be understood to be done; and pray consider it, for it concerns the souls of us all.

First, there must be an opposition by the Divine Spirit unto the spirit of this world, the worldly genius, so as thereby gradually more to work and wear off the worldly impress from such a soul. You see there is a war, an opposition; "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." The spirit that works in this world doth lift up itself; but there is a greater power that is exerted and put forth; he speaks of a contest that is between spirit and spirit. "Hereby ye know the Spirit of God;" and by a contrary character it is implied we are to discern and distinguish the spirit of this world; but these are militating and warring one against another. In short, this is the matter of contest, God would have our hearts and souls, this world it would retain them which before had them; and this is the case with every one of us, every one that hears in this assembly; either this world hath your hearts, or God hath them. Where the Spirit of God comes to work, (and it worketh by the Gospel of his Son,) the great design of its striving and working is to draw off the hearts and souls of men from this world, that they may be united to himself; and in order thereunto, to work out the worldly image, their likeness to this world and their conformity to it. They that are of this world bear its impress; and nothing is gustful and savoury to them but what is worldly and terrene. As God makes his own way, he introduceth a new savour of things; as they are made less like to this world, and more like to God, accordingly they do less savour the things of this world, and do more savour the things of God. They are emphatical expressions you find to this purpose in some passages of Scripture, which you do well to compare with one another. In ch. iv. v. vi, of this epistle, you will see how men are distinguished; there is one sort of whom it is said, "We are of God," born of God, regenerated ones, (as you have heard that passage is sometimes contracted.) We are of God; well, but how doth that appear? "He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." And hereby it is that spirits are distinguished, which spirit is regular; they that are regenerate are of God, and then they hear the things of God, the word of God with gust, with

savour and relish; it is according to the image, the impress, they have upon them; if they be like this world they can savour nothing else but the things of the world. "They that are of the world, speak of the world, and the world heareth them," as at verse 5, of this chapter. Worldly minded men can discourse with one another of the things of the world all the day long with gust and relish, and never be weary; but the things of God they have no relish, no savour of. Therefore there is a diverse impression upon the mind and spirit of the one and of the other. To the same purpose is that John viii. 43. "Why do ye not understand my speech?" saith our Saviour, "even because ye cannot hear my words." You cannot hear them; there is another gust and relish of things with you; they cannot enter into you, as he saith a little before in the same chapter; "My word hath no place in you." There is no likeness, no similitude or agreement between the impression, influence, and tenor of my words and your minds; your minds disagree, are otherwise impressed and otherwise tinctured. So in verse 47 of the same chapter, "He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." You have nothing divine in you, nothing of the distinguishing work, therefore you cannot hear the words of God. This is one thing concerning this image to be abolished, to wit, there must be an opposition to it wherever the contrary image is to be introduced. And,

Secondly, There must be a victory over it, to which that opposition tends; and it is to no purpose if it have not that glorious end, if it do not end in this. Indeed there may be strivings that have a worse end, as in that 2 Pet. ii. 20. some that do escape the pollutions of the world through the knowledge [oh, sad word] of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, (in a degree,) who are again entangled therein, and overcome, and their end is worse than their beginning. But this regenerating work doth effect and bring about actual victory over this world and its spirit, so as to disentangle a man's heart from it. And pray observe to this purpose what you have in the context where the text lies, that, as in this verse, you hear what is said, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God;" so it is also told us at verse 4. that "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." And that he might give to understand that he speaks consistently with himself, pursuantly to his design in verse 5. he adds, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" He that hath this faith in him is a conqueror over this world; if it be this faith indeed, not the name, not the show, not the mock show of it only. And let this now be gladly thought of, "He that believeth Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God; he that is born of God, overcometh the world;" first taking this sound and sense of it, that is, that whoever is born of God, is by the new birth become so noble, so raised, and so altered a creature, that he can be no longer a slave to this world only. What, are the sons of God, his children, to be slaves? If they are born of him, he is their Father, and they are his sons. What more monstrous absurdity can be conceived, than that a son of God, and born of God by a divine birth, should be held afterwards to so base a thing as this world is? What, do you think that the sons of God are to be in a state of slavery? No; so soon as they are born they conquer, they overcome. That is, the Divine principle in them is a victorious principle. And so the other image (though there be fragments of it) is not entire, it is broken, and there can be but fragments. It is not the spirit of this world that is reigning and governing, but another spirit; and hereupon this is observable in the very complexion of their spirits, they can use the things of this world as other men do, but they do not entirely enjoy them, so as to rest in them, or to get their rest from them; but their tendency is higher; they in the most true sense possible possess them, but are not possessed by them; they are proprietors in the truest sense of the things of this world, to wit, by a restored right from God; he hath renewed their right, hath given them a right that was forfeited and lost; and so are they in a true sense owners of what portion he allows them in this world; under him they are owners and possessors; they do possess, but are not possessed; other men, unregenerate men, do not; they do not so truly and properly possess this world as they are possessed by it; those that are ignorant, are lords and masters of it; but for great men, that is master of them, they are slaves to it; worldly desires, worldly inclinations, worldly interests, worldly designs engross them, and swallow them up; they are ingulfed of this world, and possessed by it; they have not a power over it, but it hath a power over them. See what a spirit of liberty as to this the apostle describes, I Cor. vi. 12. "All things are lawful unto me," (speaking of such things as he refers to, the lawful use of the creatures,) any thing to which I have an inclination; this or that sort of creature that I have need of, I may lawfully enjoy them; but nothing hath that power over me that I cannot distinguish between expedient and inexpedient; but I may covet too much of that which is in itself simply a lawful thing, and so turn it into unlawful. And how doth he expound it? why, thus—that he kept himself from being under the power of any thing—"all things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient." And even among these things it is that he resolved he would be under the power of nothing. Here is the difference in reference to the state of the two, between the regenerate and unregenerate, and that with relation to this world. Whatsoever the unregenerate man's heart is set upon in this world, it hath him under its power; it hath power over him, so that he shapes and grounds his course accordingly; doth not consider whether he shall walk by rule or not by rule, whether he shall please God or displease him, but only considers, shall I please myself? or is this a thing which I find suitable to my purpose? will it serve my end? I find it will be grateful, will it be otherwise serviceable to me? And so are the questions determined; all disputes end and are decided in this manner; and so this world hath him continually under its power. They are lords and masters of nothing of it; though every thing that is grateful and most suitable to them is master of them, and hath the power over them. But whatsoever "is born of God overcometh the world," brings it under, prevails, and tramples over worldly inclinations; that is, the Divine and heavenly principle, so far as it does obtain, is a victor. It is a hero, a divine birth that is produced. It was said of that great hero among the pagans, (Hercules,) that in his cradle he strangled two serpents. They are the things of this world that the old serpent tempts by, and preys upon the souls of men to their destruction. But one that is born of God overcomes. When the regenerating principle takes place, it makes the slave a victor; he that was a slave to this world before is now a conqueror. There is then a worldly image wrought out, that was inwrought by the spirit of the world, and maintained till the work of regeneration be found to take place; and then is the Divine image introduced: which is the next thing here to speak of, and to show the resemblance of God in that which will appear in many particulars hereafter to be mentioned.

Only methinks upon what hath been said, this should be considered: A believer as to this truth, Jesus is the Christ, is one born of God. Methinks it should make every one lay his hand upon his heart, and say, Will I now adventure to call myself a believer, to avow and profess myself I am one that believeth Jesus to be the Christ? Take heed of compounding together inconsistencies. We shall compound together perfect inconsistencies if we do but admit the notion into our minds of an unregenerate believer? An unregenerate believer? To say so is to speak falsely, to say that which overthrows itself. There can be no such thing as an unregenerate believer, otherwise than in sound. You compound together impossibilities, incompossibilities, things that cannot consist. Every one that believeth Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God. Upon the whole, then, it is a great assuming to say, I am a believer; yes, it is a great assuming. It is a great thing for any one to say so. God forbid but that there should be many, that many may hourly say so. But they that say so, say a great thing; and they had need weigh and consider what they say when they say this, I am a believer; for in this same breath you say, (or imply it, whether you say it or no,) I am born of God, I am a heaven-born creature, I am of a divine original, I am of God, because stampt with his image, and governed by the

Holy Ghost. Either blot this text out of the Bible, or own the truth of this, that it is a great assuming to say, I believe Jesus to be the Christ. Do you say, I believe so. I pray thou thinkest with the next thought, Am I born of God? Do I find the springings of divine life in me? Do I find the worldly spirit abolished, vain self brought under in me? I say again, either blot this text out of the Bible, or own it a mighty thing to say thou believest Jesus to be the Christ; for to say that, is to say, I am a divine and heaven-born creature. And if it be not to say that, Christianity is the greatest fable in the world. It is to no purpose to believe Jesus to be the Christ, if this be not the effect of it, that God have thereby a regenerate seed raised out of this world, and fitted for him, to serve him in this world, and enjoy him in the next world.

SERMON XLV.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

But now to proceed to the second part, the product of itself, which is much more a distinguishing work, and that whereof he himself is the exemplar and pattern, as well as the author. He is not only the efficient but the exemplary cause of it; for this divine product is not only a new creature, but it is a creature formed for God. As it is a creature, it must be made by him; for there is but one Creator; but it is not only of him, but after him; a creature made after God's image, that carries his resemblance in it. And for opening of this we proposed to show you, that there is in this work a suitableness to God. Whether, 1st, you do consider the productive influence; or whether, 2d, you consider the effect produced. We showed that it cannot but be (as to the productive influence) most peculiarly God-like in several respects. Though here also we distinguished it from the eternal generation of the only begotten Son of God, as it was necessary we should. But we told you in what respects the influence is peculiarly divine by which the work is done. And then,

(2.) We mean to show, that there is suitableness to God in the thing produced. The influence is transient, the effect is permanent; and then show there must be a permanent abiding influence of God upon that soul that is regenerate and born of him.

And whereas this word (as you see) expressed by being born, it therefore necessarily enforceth relation (as the latter part of this text speaks) between him that begat and them that are begotten of him. There is paternity and filiation, fatherhood and sonship. He becoming hereupon a father to them and they children to him, for the relation is mutual, as it cannot but be. And you see it is supposed in the close of the second chapter, and beginning of the third chapter, of this epistle. Every one that is righteous is born of him, so the second chapter ends; and thereupon doth the third chapter begin thus, "Behold, what manner of love is this that the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God?" Upon their being begotten of him, he is a father to them, and they are sons and children to him. So the matter is more definitely explained, 2 Cor. vi. last: "I will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Why, now upon this must be a suitableness to God in this product itself.

1st, He is a father to them; and, 2d, As they are children to him. Then with such things in the frame and constitution (as I may speak) that corresponds to God as having been their father, and that corresponds to their being his children. And you plainly see afterwards, that these things are widely different, according as paternity and filiation are different; they are not the same relation, though they are both a resemblance of each other.

[1.] You must therefore expect to find in them that are born of God several things suitable to him, as he is a father to them, or (as the latter part of the verse expresseth it) as it is he that begat them, hath propagated and communicated a certain divine nature to them, 2 Pet. i. 4. And these things are not to be considered with neglect, for eternity depends upon it. According as there is a real God-like communication unto souls in this world, so they are to be disposed of in the other world. The thing speaks itself. This is not a new and singular notion; but common to all Christians, of whatsoever denomination and persuasion, as it is most expressly in the word of truth, that without being thus born, born of God, born of the Spirit, there is no entering into, no seeing of the kingdom of God, John iii. 3, 6. And you have it under the eternal seal of our Lord's amen, four times affixed in those two verses. I say unto you, he that is the Amen hath given it under that seal, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into (he cannot so much as see) the kingdom of God." Therefore we had need to take heed how we hear such matters of such weight and importance as this. God is not trifling with us when he sends to deal with us in the ministry of his word. Consider then wherein the divine character is impressed suitable to God as a father must appear in them that are born of him. And as that which is most fundamental,

First, There is a resemblance of God in this divine product, in a refined spirituality; in such a spirituality as by which the soul is refined from the sinful prevailing carnality of mind that is common universally to the unregenerate world. It is plain concerning the generality of unregenerate men, that their minds are habitually carnal, and a carnal mind doth actually govern their lives and hearts, and influence all their actions and designs. It is quite otherwise with them that are born of God. You are now here to consider,

i. That this similitude to God is not corporal, which was the vague and gross notion of the Anthropomorphites of old; they understood that there must be in man a likeness to God, they imagined God to be in a human shape; and so that men are made therefore like unto that, and must be made more and more like; and so they did not make him a model to us, but made us a model to him; instead of having made us like God, they made God altogether like themselves. Nor,

ii. Doth this similitude to God in this respect stand, on the other hand, in being exempt from having any body at all, or any corporeity. It is not in that we are to resemble God. That is the opposite doctrine of them who of old denied the resurrection of the body; as if that must be too mean a state to have a part after any body at all; and so we should never be perfectly like God till we were perfectly free from having corporeity about us. Nor again,

iii. Doth it stand in having a spirit in us; for that is not a distinguishing thing, so have all the sons of men. As the regenerate have all of them flesh, so have the unregenerate every one of them a spirit in the natural sense. But,

iv. This similitude doth stand in reference to this thing, in having the spirit exalted into dominion, a regency, a governing power. Whereas in the unregenerate world it is the fleshly principle that governs every where. They have a spirit in them, but that spirit is a slave to the flesh, made to serve divers lusts and pleasures. That is all the business in which men do generally employ that intellectual spiritual being that is in them; a reasonable, immortal spirit is used in serving and making provision for this flesh, to fulfil it in the lusts thereof. And because the fleshly principle is the governing principle in the generality of men, therefore they are called nothing but flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Their very minds are said to be carnalized, vainly puft up with a fleshly mind, Col. ii. 18. Their very minds and consciences are impure, tinctured with the vain tincture of carnality upon it, Tit. i. 15. This is the great thing then to be effected by regeneration, or in this divine birth; God doth in compassion to the work of his own hands, to the spirit which he hath made, restore it out of that state of base servitude wherein it was. It was a servant to base lusts and pleasures, Tit. iii. 3, 4. But when the kindness and love of God towards man appeared, according to his mercy he saved us by the washing

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of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Whereby it is that he exalts this sunk, depressed spirit, that was immersed in flesh, buried in flesh, where it should but dwell. Flesh should have been its mansion, but it became and was made its grave, its dormitory. But by regeneration this spirit is raised into dominion; it is the spirit that is fetched out of the grave, and made a governing thing over the flesh, over all natural appetites and desires. That is the product in the work of regeneration, this is the thing produced and brought forth. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," John iii. 6. Signifying that the spirit of a man, whilst it remains a servant and slave to natural inclinations, hath even forfeited its name; it is no more worthy to be called spirit.

The denomination is taken from what is prevailing and governing. If the natural principle do prevail, this compound now is called nothing but flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." But when the spiritual principle is revived and authorized, made the governing principle of the man, it then regains its name, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

For that it signifies nothing unto that conformity to God, which being born of him doth import, that there is such a thing as a natural spirit in man, when that natural spirit doth not do its office, or retain its state, doth not keep the throne, but is become basely and meanly servile. And the tragedy is so much the greater in this respect, and the more deplorable, by how much the less apprehensive and sensible the unregenerate soul is of the state of its own case. By how much the more excellent and noble powers it hath belonging to it, it is so much the more fearful spectacle to behold and look upon, to see it enslaved to sense, and brought into the state of so vile a depression, and is become so mean and abject a thing. As the son of a prince captured in his infancy, and made a base drudge, he is so much the more a deplorable thing, by how much the more his spirit is depressed and sunk into that state into which he is brought; so as that he likes his servitude, his spirit is grown hard, perfectly (perhaps) ignorant of his true original. So it is with the souls of men generally; they are unapprehensive of their own original excellency and dignity, and are content to serve and be voluntary slaves to divers lusts and pleasures, till regenerating grace be vouchsafed. But now it becomes a God-like thing again. When, however, it dwells in flesh, that flesh is not a sepulchre to it as before, but a mansion; here it dwells still, but here it governs, governs over that, and is itself immediately subject to God. That is the thing wherein similitude to God consists, and which must be found in every one that is born of him, a governing, prevailing spiritually, so as that the soul is alone made like itself, and like God; it is made like one and the other all over, like what it once was, and like him from whom it was. But there is in others a spirit too, but ingulfed and swallowed up in a regnant, prevailing, and domineering carnality. A spirit, but employed only in serving this flesh, and the fulfilling the divers lusts thereof, till regenerating grace take place.

Secondly, That which is con-natural, and consequently necessary, this similitude stands in life; divine spiritual vigour. There is life, as it is a spirit, in the natural sense in unregenerate ones too; but in the mean time this is given as the common character, alienated from the life of God. They have no participation of the divine life, Eph. iv. 18. There are two things wherein an apparent difference lies, and may be seen: that is, whether you consider the tendency, or whether you consider the aliment of that life, in the one and in the other way.

i. Whether you consider the tendency hereof. Here is life and vigour in the regenerate man, so there is in the unregenerate too, and (it may be) a great deal more of natural life and vigour: but in the unregenerate where doth it tend? which way is it directed? still in the pursuit of vanity: the operations and actions of life in him are perpetual, everlasting triflings. But consider life now morally, and things morally considered are to be estimated by their end. The end is morality, *habet ratione formæ*, is specifying and distinguishing. Here is life, but which way doth it work? He who to the regenerate is the immediate prime author of life, is the object too. They are "alive to God through Jesus Christ," Rom. vi. 11. Dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is a great deal of vitality, liveliness, and vigour in an unregenerate man, perhaps. And which way doth it work? Either towards forbidden, or towards mean things. They are either alive to sin, to that which is forbidden; or towards things that are contemptibly mean: Alive to the world, towards which they should be mortified, crucified, and it crucified to them, so as that the world and they should be dead things to one another. When the great regenerating work is wrought, God is the great *terminus* of that life that is then begun. That is a life that is sanctified, is infused, added to a pre-existing thing. In regeneration a man is not in all essentials created anew; then what could be said to Nicodemus's question? "Can a man enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" No, it is only a holy, sanctified influence that is infused, and doth supervene, as what was grafted upon nature, upon that stock; and so that life becomes a holy life that was but a natural life before. It rested before in all its tendencies in self; in flesh, in this world, in vain or prohibited things, as was said; but now it tends to God, and acts all in a divine sphere, and therefore is called a divine life, the life of God. And so look,

ii. To the aliment of this life, that shows this to be a divine creature that is now produced, that nothing will serve it to live upon but divine things: it must live upon immediate communications from God. And I pray you, as we go along, you will consider with yourselves whether there are any such workings and strivings in you as must have God for your continual support. Are there any constant aspirations towards him? "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." This is the sense of the regenerate soul, I cannot live without God. The same as in Gal. ii. 19. That life that is peculiar to a regenerate person is, that he is through the law dead to the law; in order to a new life springing up in him, that he may live unto God. But how then afterwards is this maintained? Look to the twentieth verse, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And the life I live in the flesh; whilst I live so meanly in this base flesh, I have a life springing and flourishing in me that is maintained continually by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. This is the regenerate life. By its tendencies, and by its aliment, it appears to be a divine thing, and that this is a creature born of God. For which way doth it work? and what supports doth it seek, and is it continually sustained by? This is most agreeable to the former: "for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and pence," Rom. viii. 6. So long as the soul is under a prevailing carnality, so long is it dead to every thing that is good. But when regenerating grace takes place in it, as it is in that work spiritualized, thence it is consequent, that life springs in it agreeably to such a divine nature as is put into it. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace;" and a most significant adjunct that is; to let us know that this life is not the life of a fury, or that peace is not the peace of a fool; but both these are in conjunction, complicated with one another, peaceful life, and vital peace; a steady principle that works sedately and calmly, and with such regularity towards the objects and in the business that it is to be engaged and taken up about. It is not an ungovernable principle, but as there is life belonging to that sedate and peaceful frame that now takes place in the soul, so there is peace and calmness and tranquillity belonging to that life which springs up in the soul. And this is one part of its likeness unto God, called the life of God, or living unto God, that is part of the work of regeneration in such as are born of God. But then,

Thirdly, There is a divine power that appears and is put forth in such as are born of God. And this also is to be understood accommodately to the sphere of grace into which such a one is translated out of the order of quite natural production. It is raised into a higher sphere. The schools do commonly distinguish, in speaking to this matter, of those things that are of the order of nature, and those that are of the order of grace; speaking of them as two distinct spheres. And according to what was said concerning that life in the one and the other, so must we

speak concerning that power that exerts itself in the one and the other sort of men. It was a Divine power to which the production was owing of the divine nature. "According as this Divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness, wherein there is given us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. A God-resembling nature! These productions carry the divine impress upon them in this respect, that there was an appearance of a divine power in the effect, which is a permanent thing. As we told you the influence did pass away, but it did *relinquere post se opus*, it left a work behind it, wherein are permanent, abiding signatures of a divine hand, that show it to be a thing to be produced by God himself; whereupon you read of a certain power belonging to godliness. And that spirit that is given is said to be a spirit of love and power, and of a sound mind. To us a spirit is given, imparted and communicated. As in that John iii. you read of a Spirit producing, and Spirit produced. The Divine Spirit ingenerated is there called by the name of Spirit. And that spirit that is capable of being given, of abiding, and being permanent, is said to be a spirit of love, power, and a sound mind. That which is born of God in a regenerate person, it is a powerful thing: and therefore is a principle of divine power which animates that form of godliness, so as that it is not a mere spiritless form. "From them that only have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof, (practically deny it, understand it not, know no such thing, look after no such thing, as if they did in plain words deny the reality of it, as if it were only a fiction, a fancy,) from such turn away, as a living man would from a putrifying carcass," 2 Tim. iii. 5. There is no society between the living and the dead. A regenerate man can take no pleasure in such conversation; with such as savour of nothing else but carnality and death in all their conversation; from such turn away. The divine principle in them as well as their rule bids them to turn away from them. There is none but impure, putrid breath that comes from them. They smell of a grave, turn away from them.

It is very true indeed, that when the regenerate work takes place, there is very often great complaints of much weakness; the good that I would, that I cannot do; and when I would be doing good, evil is present with me. But there is a great deal of difference between weakness and death, between an ability to do much and a disability to do any thing at all. There is nothing can be done by the unregenerate person in vital and real religion; to every such good work he is reprobate. It is one thing to be impotent and feel, another to be impotent and feel nothing. A carcass doth not complain that it can do nothing, but a sick man doth; he complains of impotence if he be sick only. But if there be a total death, it is impotency, of which there is no complaint. And what there is of power, (as there is always some power always going with the regenerate life and principle,) it is a power of a higher kind and order than that which doth belong to the rest of men, wherein they do something, though but little, yet above all that the unregenerate world can do. They can love God, though it is too weakly, too faintly; they can desire after him, can pant for him. The rest of the world are strangers to such desires, to such designs. The practical workings of the powers that belong to them still terminate in an inferior orb, they never reach God, there is no working of power that way. And therefore it is said of such unregenerate men in common, that they are without strength. It signifies total destitution. They are without any strength of that kind; in that kind they can do nothing at all. When a man shall make an essay upon itself, try himself before his own soul, say to it, Oh! my soul, what canst thou do in a design for God, for heaven, for eternal life? When all a man's natural powers are bound *quoad hoc*, as to this. It is true he hath powers in him belonging to his nature; but they work not at all this way. Why, here is a manifest difference between the regenerate and unregenerate world in this respect. In the regenerate there is a principle of divine power that works in them towards God, and can employ itself about divine things.

Fourthly, This similitude unto God appears in the knowledge which such as are born of him have of divine things. To wit, that gustful knowledge, that practical knowledge, that transmutative knowledge, which will most manifestly appear to be peculiar to them from the rest of men. In the 19th verse of this chapter, where the text lies, "We know that we are of God, (an elliptical expression of being born of God,) and he hath given us an understanding to know him that is true." Are we born of God? Then we have a spiritual eye-sight, a cognitive power, enlightened towards God so as to make us capable of knowing him, and of knowing him with so active and operative a knowledge as to give us a union with him; he hath given an understanding to know him that is true, so as to be in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God and eternal life.

Consider the matter reasonably. Do you think that they who are born of God are born blind? Are they born blind towards God, and towards the things of God? Doth he emit from himself any so imperfect, and mean, and maimed a production? "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father," 1 John ii. 13. As soon as they are children, as soon as they are so born, born of God as their Father, there is a disposition of mind to him to receive the knowledge of him. The rest of the world do not like to retain God in their knowledge, they are ignorant of God; not because he cannot be known, that that knowledge should take place in or should centre in them. That knowledge is our notion of divine light, though it hath a further notion, as you may hear hereafter. They have a light darted into the inmost centre of their souls. Indeed a superficial light there is in every unregenerate mind too; some natural notions of God; light that is morally, objectively divine, conversant about God. For I do not think any man can totally abolish and rend off the characters of God from his mind, tear out the ideas. They that have set themselves most industriously to do so have been able to effect nothing therein to satisfy themselves, but so as still there would remain a *formido oppositi*, a dread that he is whom they would fain make themselves believe not to be. Therefore the fool's saying, of what we find Psal. xiv. 1. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," it is not an assertion, but it is a wish. The copulative in the text is wanting, which we supply needlessly. The fool hath said in his heart, No God. Let there be none, oh that there were none! It is not what they put into a proposition, there is none that can obtain so much of themselves, but they have their secret wish, Oh that there were none! So they are willingly ignorant of God. "Alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts," Eph. iv. 18. Such a blindness as consists only in a resolution not to see, or in an unwillingness to see. But that knowledge of God, and of divine things which belong to the regenerate state; it is not that superficial knowledge which hovers in the soul and surface of the mind; but it is central, it centres in the soul. "God, that commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts." So that this light which is in the heart, must be understood to carry a liking and complacency in it. That as the unregenerate soul doth not like to retain God in its knowledge, the regenerate liketh this knowledge; it is lightsome to them, and carries a pleasant savour with it: whence it comes to be operative and unitive, and unites the soul with the object known. And,

Fifthly, Another signature of God upon this same product, a regenerate soul, is spiritual wisdom, which superadds much, in the ordinary notion of it, unto mere knowledge; for many may know much, that are not wise. But wisdom is the parent of this seed and offspring; therefore, it is said to be justified of its own children. All the unregenerate are fools. "For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour," Titus iii. 3, 4, 5, 6. There are not greater instances of folly and madness among them who lie under cure in houses set apart on purpose for that

end, than are generally to be found (though not taken notice of because they are common) in the generality of the unconverted world. They that in so clear light spend their strength for trifles, will not get understanding of what is their best good. They that throw away their souls for nought, that rush upon armed vengeance and are not afraid to perish; they continually run counter to principles, that are secretly conscious of the immortality of the soul, profess to believe there is a heaven and a hell, yet they run away from the one, and run into the other in sight. Greater instances of madness and folly are not conceivable than these.

It is only the regenerate that do become wise. A "spirit of wisdom and revelation is given to them, that they may know the hope of that better calling, and what are the riches of that glorious inheritance which God makes common among his saints," Eph. i. 17, 18. And so, indeed, do the regenerate seed justify that wisdom that is their parent; "Wisdom is justified of her children;" so that it may be known even to the world, that these are the children of it. They are not a generation of fools. See how wisely they do design, and how wisely they pursue their design, to wit, by patient continuance in well doing, seeking for honour, and glory, and immortality, to the actual enjoying of eternal life. No lower things do they design, nor a less suitable course do they take in pursuance of it, than by patient continuance in well doing to seek it. Their design is high and great, and their pursuit apt and suitable. This shows the only wise God is their Parent; they discover of what seed and offspring they are.

It is true, the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light; with reference to the things that their generation can reach, they are wiser—wiser for this world. In reference to worldly matters and designing, they pursue them with more constancy, because they have no other. But the children of light show themselves to be so in their higher and more excellent end, and in their more regular course which they take in order thereunto. But now I add, in the next place,

Sixthly, The great resemblance wherein this creature appears to be a divine production, is the divine holiness stampt upon it, and imparted to it. It is a holy creature. It doth most eminently bear the image of him from whom it is, upon that account. And that makes it a glorious creature, as he himself is glorious in and by his holiness. "Who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness," Ex. xv. 11. They are changed into the same image, and thereby become glorious creatures, as he is their glorious Creator and Father. "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of God, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. Here is this work in its inchoation and in its progress; that work by which souls are at first made God-like creatures; and then promoted and carried on towards a state of maturity, and made ripe for the regions of glory into which they are to be translated at length. This impression of holiness upon them is by the regenerating Spirit which is therefore called the Spirit of holiness, and the Holy Ghost, as you know nothing is to be more frequently noted in the Book of God. This is a creature, born spirit of Spirit; that Spirit of which it is born is the Holy Spirit or the Holy Ghost, even as such. And therefore, such must this production be. You find (1 Pet. i. 3.) that God is adored upon this account, as having begotten such as are truly appertaining to him upon this special account, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled. Nothing could be more agreeable than that they who are born of him, should inherit from him; that they who are his children should be his heirs also. But having once made mention of them, and of him, upon this relative account, as they are begotten of him, and as he is their great Parent, and the author of this spiritual and new divine being to them. Thereupon it follows, (as you may see in the same chapter,) "As obedient children ye are no longer to fashion yourselves according to your former lusts, in your ignorance; but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of holy conversation and godliness." And by the way, you must know that efficacious calling and regeneration is all one, God calls when he creates; when he creates, he regenerates. His calling that which was not to exist and he. And this is but another name for the regenerating work, in which respect any are said to be born of God. Now inasmuch "as he which hath called you (that is as much as to say, as he that hath begotten you, he of whom ye are born) is holy, so be ye also holy in all manner of conversation;" which is but to make your conversation correspond to the very principles of your birth; for you cannot be his offspring if you be not a holy seed. Because he is holy, so you must be supposed to be holy in your very constitution and frame. And therefore see you to it, that you express what is correspondent hereunto in all your walkings, that in all manner of conversation you discover yourselves to be the children of such a Father, holy ones as he is. It is upon this account, that they that are born of him are said to be "children of light." When I told you last time, that according to our notion of light it meaneth divine knowledge, taken in the borrowed and metaphorical sense, (for every one knows what it is taken in the proper and literal sense,) I then hinted, that taken in the metaphorical sense too, it hath a further notion, to wit, to signify holiness as well as knowledge; and indeed knowledge is no further to be called and counted divine light, than as it tends to holiness, and is productive of it; and from thence it comes to be denominated light. It is light, as it terminates in that which is itself so splendid and illustrious a thing, holiness; a bright, a shining, a glorious thing. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works;" that is, not knowledge, that they may hear you talk fine notions; but that they may see your good works. That is the light, the divine peculiar light, that distinguisheth the children of God from another seed. See how light is taken principally in that, I Epistle John i. 5, 6. How is the solemnity of a message sent unto the children of men on purpose to make discovery to them of the nature and excellency of God. And, saith the apostle, "This is the message which we have heard, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." The words that follow do plainly enough show what is meant by light and by darkness here. By light is meant purity and holiness, as we cannot conceive any thing more pure and simple than light; and therefore not any thing more expressive of holiness than light. "God is light;" as if he should have said of himself, I would have all to conceive so of me; and therefore I send this message unto men, to instruct them how to form their notions and conceptions of me. I am light, and with me there is no darkness at all. And now, saith the apostle, "If any say they have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, they lie, and do not the truth." If any say they have a participation with God, that they partake and communicate with him in any thing divine, and walk in darkness, they tell a most gross and insolent and absurd lie; "they lie, and do not the truth." It is a practical lying, their practice gives themselves the lie; they do (as it were) proclaim themselves liars. And what is the meaning of all this, but to show that light is holiness. If any say they have fellowship with God, and live wickedly, show themselves to be impure and unholy creatures, that is a great lie, a gross lie, a lie most injurious to God, and no ways advantageous to themselves; they can gain nothing by it, but they wrong him by it infinitely, to make it to be thought as if he were an impure one, like them that pretend to him, to be acquainted with him, to be conversant with him. It is to make a wrong and false representation of him to the world, so that they gain nothing by it but shame retorted into their own faces; for at the same time when they do so, they (as it were) virtually call themselves liars before the world. Because they who know any thing at all of God, know that he cannot be such a one; "He is light, and with him is no darkness at all."

The same notion we have of light as it signifies holiness, in that Eph. v. 8. "Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord;" speaking of that mighty turn and change wrought upon the soul in the work of regeneration. Ye were darkness in your unregenerate state, now are ye light in the Lord. You not only have it, but are light; as before ye not only had darkness in you, but ye were

darkness, as it were so many lumps and masses of impure, gross, and consistent darkness. But now you are light. Indeed there may be light in an unregenerate mind; but though such a one may be said to have it, he is not said to be it. And that light, though it may have a tendency to some suitable disposition in the heart, yet it prevails not to effect, to bring it about. Though there be a weak tendency thitherward, the thing is not done. And therefore that light doth forfeit its name, and is still called "darkness;" (as our Lord saith;) and you may take his judgment in the case without wavering: "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" The very light that is an unregenerate person, is rather to be called darkness. As in the natural world there is no such thing as *puræ tenebræ*, no pure darkness, no darkness without a mixture of light; but the denomination is taken from that which prevails; otherwise, we should never say it is night, never say it is darkness. We can never say so, as supposing no admixture of light at all; but when darkness prevails, then we say, concerning the region and horizon, it is dark. And so it is with the unregenerate soul: till the Day-spring from on high doth visit, and till the Sun of righteousness arise, that soul is a region of darkness, impure darkness, such a darkness as wherein men work all manner of wickedness, living still under the power and dominion of the prince of darkness: for he governs in that region. And therefore the work of regeneration too is elsewhere expressed by "being translated out of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son," our Lord Jesus Christ; and "out of the power of darkness into his marvellous light;" to signify that we were under other government, other power, before. They that are born of God therefore (as he is the Father of lights) are children of light; that is, holy ones. There is that frame of holiness that invests them, and is put upon them, which carries a lustre, a glory in it, as you have heard, and this must still shine brighter and brighter, in those that are truly righteous, unto the perfect day. And as they gradually approach nearer and nearer the land of light, and thereby are made more and more meet to partake at length of "the inheritance of the saints in light," Col. i. 12. But,

Seventhly, Another divine character of those that are born of God, wherein they resemble him, is Truth. He is the God of truth, who is their Parent and Begetter; and they are accordingly the children of truth. Understand me here to mean truth in the moral sense: I speak not now of the truth of propositions, or of the truth of things in their nature, logical or metaphysical truth; but that which is in the spirit and proper sense moral, and that lies in two things; 1. In speaking as we think, and, 2. In doing as we speak: these two make up the notion of moral truth. Herein God is himself a great exemplar and pattern to us; and his image is most eminently conspicuous in all that are born of him in this also. He glories to be called the God of truth. Moses in that dying song of his, Deut. xxxii. 3, 4. when he tells us he will now publish the name of the Lord, he therefore exhorts all to ascribe greatness unto God. "Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." It is the same thing that is spoken of him so often in Scripture under the name of faithfulness: the divine faithfulness, that takes in part of the meaning, though not all of what is carried in the notion of truth; for faithfulness doth particularly refer to the promises he hath made, or the covenants that he hath promulgated and entered into. It is, generally speaking, the same thing with sincerity; that is another comprehensive expression, that takes in the full of what is signified by the name of truth. They that are born of God are true, the children of truth, sincere, upright, without deceit or guile; when they speak, speaking the truth from the heart; when they act, acting according to what they have spoken, especially wherein they have obliged themselves by promise. And that is the proper notion of fidelity, one great branch of this truth. That is a glorious attribute of God, wherein he is pleased frequently to represent his excellency to the children of men; his faithfulness that reacheth to the clouds. Look as high as heaven, look all the way between this earth and up to the heavens, and you have continual instances throughout of the faithfulness of God; all things being conserved through this vast and spacious universe according to the tenor of his word, and those ordinances that he hath settled in this great creation of his. And so the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the substantial, consubstantial image of God, and the brightness of his glory, this is his great character too, the Amen, the faithful and true witness. It is a peculiar name that belongs to the Son of God, "he that is faithful and true." Often he is spoken of by those distinguishing titles; and well they belong to him, as he was the original, substantial image of God. The image of God in the regenerate, those that are born of him, it is true, is much inferior in them, (as we have heard about the generation of the only begotten-Son,) to what it is in him; but it is not contrary, it is a true image, though it be not so perfect an image. It doth not make a false representation of God: it represents him truly, though not so perfectly as in the first and original impression of it in his only eternally begotten-Son; of whom it is said, Isa. xi. 5. "That faithfulness is the girdle of his loins:" they are girt about with truth. And observe, after the same manner, and under the same notion, is that truth which is said to be found in the children of God in this world spoken of too. "Take unto you the whole armour of God, having your loins girt about with truth," Eph. vi. 14. This keeps men steady, keeps them in an equal temper, so as they do not vary from themselves. Being once made like God, then they are to be continually in a uniformity and agreeableness to themselves; their course equal, and the temper of their spirits steady, true, and not apt to swerve or prevaricate this way or that, but like his children. Therefore, inasmuch as he always counts it the glory of his own being, his own nature, that falsehood is incompetent, incompatible, yea, impossible to him, a God "that cannot lie;" so if he hath any children in this world, see how he speaks of them, "They are my people, children that will not lie: therefore he was their Saviour," Isa. lxiii. 8. Put away lying, (saith the apostle,) and let every man speak truth with his neighbour. Put away lying in reference to narrations, and lying reference to promises. It hath the same distinction that oaths are wont to have, which are usually different by those terms, of assertory and promissory. If one should be guilty of perjury, it may be either of these two ways; and if one be guilty of lying, it is one of these two ways too; either by representing a thing otherwise than it is, or by promising to do that which was never intended, and therefore, accordingly is never done. But the one way or the other, there is that which is contrary to sincerity, and to that truth which is the divine glory, the glory of the Divine Being, and wherein he doth exalt himself so infinitely, the God "that cannot lie." And if I have a people in this world, if I have a seed, a race, a progeny, though it cannot be said of them, they are those that cannot lie, (that is the divine prerogative,) yet it may be said of them, they will not lie, "children that will not lie, so he was their Saviour."

It is said concerning the inhabitants of Sion, (which Sion represents, in a borrowed, transferred sense, the church on earth first, and then the church in heaven in the highest sense,) the inhabitants of Sion, (into which none come but by the divine birth, they are come into it whoever are of it,) that they are such as speak the truth from their hearts. And never doth any man come into the forgiving state, till he come into the regenerate state. Then it is that God pardons, when he receives and regenerates. He gives righteousness and the Spirit of his Son both at once. By the one of which he doth one work, by the other of them he doth the other. They are never separated. When any are forgiven, it is a blessed state they come into. Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. But then observe the character of that person that is the subject of forgiveness, he in whose spirit there is "no guile." What? a forgiven man, a regenerate man, one born of God; and a false man, a deceitful man, a guileful, a fraudulent man? He that shall talk at this rate speaketh inconsistencies; he compounds impossible things. A regenerate man, and one made up of falsehood, deceit, and guile; this cannot be. He that is born of the God of truth, there is the image of him as such upon such a man. He is born of the Spirit; and "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth," Eph. v. 9.

And while I urge faithfulness and truth as the character of the regenerate, those that are born of God, give me leave myself to be so far faithful to you as to declare, and testify in the Lord, that whoever they are that can allow themselves in falsehood, insincerity, deceitfulness, and guilefulness any way, let their profession be never so splendid, they do but belie themselves in it. They the children of God, they born of God, they who are the sons of the God of faith, and yet children of falsehood, is a thing that I will not only say is not, but cannot be. It is an impossibility. God hath no such children; they that are born of him, carry this image of him upon them, they are children of truth, sincere and upright; so that if they speak they speak the truth in their hearts, just as they apprehend things to be; if they promise, they promise what they intend to perform. They are as they speak: if they have spoken to their hurt, they will not change. Their word is a sacred thing with them, as God's word is with him.

It is true, indeed, there may be much of this seen in the unregenerate world: truth hath been highly magnified among many of the more refined pagans; and it may have place with many among us, (oh, that it had more,) in whom the divine nature hath no place. But here is the distinction, when men are true to one another for God's sake and for conscience sake; not for reputation's sake, but for God's sake, and because of their devotedness to him, and because they must truly represent him to the world; this is that which is distinguishing; and, indeed, if men be true to one another, and untrue to God, leave out him as the centre in whom they unite, and upon whose account and for whose sake they are true to one another; all their truth to one another is but such a combination as that of several conspirators against their lawful and rightful prince, who may be true to one another, while they are all false to him. But there is no such thing as truth in the right sense, and that which will turn to their true advantage at last in whom it is found, but when God is made the centre, and they are true to God; if they be true to one another, and not true to God, it is a casualty; they have a disposition in their minds to be false to one another if there be occasion; if they be not true to God, if they be not steadfast in his covenant, if they be towards him "as a deceitful bow," (as it is said of Ephraim,) they will not be always true to one another.

And pray let this be deeply considered; supposing that truth have its primary reference to God, I am devoted to him, and I must be true and faithful; this is then the character of them that are born of him; they that are with the Lamb are chosen and faithful and true; and he saith, "Be thou faithful unto the death, and thou shalt receive a crown of life." Here is their character, they must be faithful to him first, and then by consequence to one another in all their dealings, transactions, conversation, and affairs. Take this for an invariable character of an unregenerate person, he is one that can be false, if it will consist with his interest; if it will serve his other purposes, he can allow himself to be so. If he be true, it is (as was said) a contingency. But take this for the character of a regenerate person, he is true to God first; and because he is so, he dares to be false to no man. And it hath been a method observed by some of the wiser and more refined pagans, *Qui deus non timet, non verat homines.* (*Cicero.*) They are liable, one time or another, to prove false to man, that do not fear God. But if the matter do begin there, then is truth a derivation from the Divine nature upon such a one; that as God is the God of truth, from whom it comes, and by whom it is inwrought into man, so the children of God, who are born of him, it may be consistently said of them they are children of truth, they are such as have a reverence for truth; it is with them a venerable thing. I would not speak otherwise than I think, or do otherwise than I have said, notwithstanding the lie might be rewarded with the gain of the world. Truth is with them a sacred thing. They that find no such restraint upon their spirits, have nothing of the divine nature in them. I cannot say or do so or so, say otherwise than I think, do otherwise than I have spoken; I find there is a nature in me that withholds me, that prompts me quite otherwise; I can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth, (according to another larger notion of the truth,) I must not, I may not.

This I reckoned of great necessity to be stood upon, fearing that too many may very much misunderstand the notion of religion, while they limit and confine it to the first table only, without letting it have a governing influence upon the affairs that relate to the second. But we are to take both in conjunction. And the error would be the same if men should again confine all their regularity to the rules of the second table too, and think very well of themselves, because they do not transgress those rules. Here is the same danger, and the same fatal error and mistake. But if we will deal safely and righteously, safely for ourselves, and righteously with God, then, I say, we must take the connexion of both together; and take all the rules of duty which belong to the second table, as they have their foundation in the first, to wit, in "the love of God, with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our might, and our neighbour as ourselves." These two make up the law and the prophets, and this is nothing else but the work that is abridged and epitomized in regeneration, when the law of God is written in the heart, and transcribed in the inner man, put into "fleshly tables (as the apostle speaks) not by ink and paper, but by the Spirit of the living God," 2 Corinth. iii. 3. That is it which is done by regeneration; when God doth beget out of an impure apostate world a holy seed, a divine offspring for himself. Whereas their defection and apostacy lay in the violation of the whole entire law of their creation, their regeneration lies in the renewing the impression of it, turning it into a living law within, not into an audible law or a visible law, that they can hear with ears or read with eyes, but a living law, which they feel and relish with their hearts; their hearts being contempered to it. And the Spirit of God makes no maimed impression, it makes the impression entire and full, so as that all the several parts of that law are expressed together. There are characters that signify each several part, and these are but the several lineaments of the new creature, or the new man, portrayed in the soul by the regenerating Spirit of God.

It greatly concerns us when we consider that the Gospel (under the dispensation whereof we live) is the Spirit's instrument in regeneration; and that is part of which we now hear. It is greatly, I say, to be considered, what there is done to this purpose by this Gospel upon our souls. If we never be regenerated by the Gospel, we are very unreasonable to expect that God should use any other methods with us. This is the word of the kingdom into which all they that have a real place in it are regenerated; they are born into it, *in regno nati sumus*, as that moralist speaks upon another account. We are born members of this kingdom; and by what means hath he begotten us again? even hereby, by the word of truth. I beseech you let this be seriously and deeply considered. If there be any such thing as regeneration, that is, if there be any such thing as the raising up a divine offspring to God out of this world, that shall not perish when the rest of the world do, it is by this means that the things is to be done; "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you," 1 Pet. i. 23, 24, 25. Is the Gospel preached to us for this purpose, and is the proper design of it to regenerate at first, and nourish afterwards unto eternal life? For *ex iis nutrimur ex quibus constamur*; the same Gospel is to both. Methinks it should beget in us the most deeply serious and solicitous thoughts imaginable. What is done upon us to this blessed purpose? Hath any thing heretofore been done? Or do I find any thing yet a-doing? Was nothing done the last year? May it be hoped that any thing shall be done this year? Was nothing done the last Lord's day? Is it not yet to be hoped that somewhat may be done to-day? Do I find my spirit altered? There are great previous dispositions in natural productions, before there is a complete product: What disposition do I find? What tendency towards such a

birth? What strivings, what agonies, what pangs are in my soul? Do I reckon I am to be born again, born of God, born from heaven, and never feel it? Can so mighty a change pass upon my soul as amounts to another birth, to a divine birth, and I never be sensible of it? If such a day as this pass with us, and we feel no such thoughts in our spirits, and are unconcerned, what have we to justify our unconcernedness? Wherewith shall we justify our being unconcerned? We can have nothing as a ground on which rationally to justify us, unless we could tear the whole Gospel constitution, unless we could ascertain ourselves there is no such thing as a heaven or hell; for if there be, and there will be so vast differences in the final states of men, certainly those eternal differences must have their foundation here: as men are distinguished by being regenerate and unregenerate, so they will be for heaven or hell. Sure if there be such two distinct states into which men are to be disposed of by the Supreme and Universal Judge, who cannot but do wisely, and righteously, and holily, it cannot be that men should be disposed of into those states promiscuously, whether they are his children or not his children, as if he would make no difference between those that are born of him, and those that are not born of him, but have lived and died in perpetual rebellion against him, full of enmity and perpetual malignity towards him, whereby they testify themselves never to have begotten of him, and that they are not like him; as the following words after the text, "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth them also that are begotten of him." If he begat us, we shall be sure to love him. They that have all their days chosen distance from him, is it a supposable thing God should have begotten any according to his own nature, and they should not love him? Not love to converse with him, love not to be in his presence, to open their hearts to him, to unbosom and pour out their souls before him. Hath God begotten any such unnatural children that can live without him all the day, never come near him, never look towards him, never think of him, that know not what belongs to prayer to him? What can men have to preserve peace and quiet in their souls, but the apprehension—that sure there are no such things as heaven and hell, of which we have heard so much?

But who would run the danger of it? If men do but apprehend the possibility, if they have allowed themselves to attend to that light that makes so clear and bright a discovery of another world, and of those distinct states in it; if, I say, they have not allowed themselves to attend to the light, so as thereby to be ascertained in their own hearts, there is as surely a heaven and a hell as there is an earth, (and we have as much reason to be ascertained of the one by believing what is plainly testified, and what the reason of the thing doth evince to us to be true, as we have to be certain of the other from our eye-sight,) then all is vain that we say to them.

But if men would but believe all this, then there can be no more reasonable thing in all the world, than to be full of inquiring thoughts concerning our state, till we arrive to some proportionable certainty concerning it, till we can say, Blessed be God, now I find some of those characters upon me, that speak me one of his children, that spirituality, that life, that power, that knowledge of him and divine things, that wisdom, that holiness, that truth, that will justify me in enumerating myself to the children of God, his family, counting myself among them, and believing that he will count me among them too. But if we find no such characters as these, and yet say we are children of God, we pretend to him, we profess him, that very profession itself is a lie; as is said concerning those false pretenders, Rev. iii. 9. that said, "they were Jews, (that is, Christians,) and were not, but of the synagogue of Satan, they do lie." It is a very fearful thing when even a man's profession is a lie. I call myself a Christian, but it is a lie; one that believeth Jesus to be the Christ, but it is a lie; for whosoever believeth this, is born of God; but of this I find nothing in myself

SERMON XLVI.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

But now I might add in the next place,

Eighthly, It is a creature endowed with a most generous liberty, that disdains, that cannot be patient of servitude; the sons of God must be free born. This is evident, and hath been elsewhere spoken to and opened. But then,

Ninthly, It is a creature of a very peculiar benignity and goodness. Who would expect it to be otherwise? When you hear of a God-like creature born into this world, what would you look to find it, but a creature made up of goodness? The Spirit is the immediate regenerator, the great agent in this work. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," John iii. 6. And we are told, Ephes. v. 9. "That the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness." It lies in a universal goodness; here is the product, this is that God-like thing that is now produced. When one is said to be born of God, he is a creature made up of goodness; it is the production of the Holy Ghost, the Divine Spirit; "and the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness." And it is added, "righteousness and truth too," which we have spoken of before. Every one that doth righteousness is born of God, and the children of God are children that will not lie, but abhor falsehood. But they are also an offspring of great benignity, of most extensive and diffusive goodness.

I apprehend it may be worth the while to insist upon this, because that there is not another thing wherein the divine nature and likeness are more expressed and held forth in the work of regeneration than in this thing; in no other respect rather or more than this is God said to be the Father of such, or they to be born of God. And, oh! that we may, I for my part speak, and you hear, as those that apprehend the weight and importance of what is now to be spoken; we are in all these things distinguishing the divine seed and offspring from the children of the worst of fathers; and there is no middle state between these two; we must either be born from above or born from beneath; no middle state, speaking of morals: when we speak of naturals we know there can be but one author of nature; but as to morals, two great parents and fathers divide the world, and one of them you must call so. They that are not born of God, his own word concludes concerning them, "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do," John viii. 44. But now see wherein a divine production appears and shows itself to be such; here is somewhat begotten, born of God, that appears like God in this, as a thing made up of goodness. And here I shall more distinctly consider,

i. What objects this goodness hath reference to in them. And,

ii. Wherein, or in what exertions, it shows itself towards such objects.

i. What objects it refers to. You must still consider that an imitation of the divine goodness; that supposed all along as that wherein this creature is a God-like creature. It is a God-like creature as it is a most beneficent creature; and it being the goodness of beneficence, or beneficent goodness, that we are to speak to under this head, we shall have somewhat further under another order of heads, to consider what may admit of the same name, but will be of somewhat a different kind. But our present discourse it is to be confined unto a beneficent goodness, and being so, we are not now at this time to consider God as one of the objects that this goodness hath reference to. "My goodness extendeth not to thee," saith the Psalmist, (speaking of such goodness,) Psalm xvi. 2. but, as was said, it being an imitation of the Divine goodness, it must respect such objects as Divine goodness, which is beneficent, doth respect, and they are of two sorts; there is a more general and there is a more special object of the Divine goodness, as hath been largely shown upon another occasion. God's goodness hath,

* Preached June 10th, 1694.

(i.) A general object. "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works;" so diffusive, so flowing is his goodness, the whole earth is full of it. The whole earth—a more surprising instance of the extensiveness of it could not have been given. The whole earth—this stage of wickedness, where constant rebellions against the Majesty of Heaven have been in continued succession from age to age, and from generation to generation acted. The whole earth is full of his goodness; a thing that should not only convince, but amaze that it should be so,

Why, such is the goodness of this creature that is born of God proportionally extensive—"As you have opportunity, do good unto all men," Gal. vi. 10. a goodness that must flow every where, as far as one can, that must diffuse and spread itself to our very uttermost. As you have opportunity—supposing there be an ability and power, then there needs nothing more than opportunity. If there be opportunity, let this goodness exert itself; this shall show you a God-like sort of creatures, born of God, bearing his image; he doth good to all—"as you have opportunity do you do good to all."

When he had it in design to raise up to himself a seed, a new creation in the world, it must be understood it should be such as it was fit for him to own as the peculiar parent of this offspring. What? shall I raise up a new seed to be but like other men? Is this like to God? when he was to do a new thing in the world, to raise up a new sort of people, that they should be but just like the old? Think what men are naturally, and as they grow up from the old stock; every one minds his own things, every one is for himself, cares not what becomes of others, what becomes of this world. But this creature, born of God, is of a large comprehensible spirit, it measures with the universe, not narrow, not clung, not contracted; it bounds (comparatively) private interest, my good is the good of the creation. It is spoken as a most peculiar character of this seed, that when all else do naturally mind their own things, as the apostle speaks concerning Timothy, he doth as naturally mind the things of another, of his neighbour, as if he had no private interest of his own at all. God will have it known that in this second creation of his, this new attempt, when he was to raise up a people, a seed out of a common universal ruin, I will do such a thing in the world as shall make the world look about them, and wonder to behold what new sort of people are sprung up among them. That whereas they have ever himself for his end, himself for his measure, every one being for himself; here is a people that are off from self, a self-denying people, a self-abandoning people, made up of goodness, and making that goodness to flow as far as ever it can; for it is a divine goodness, and they make this goodness disperse like God's, they make it to flow to the uttermost they can.

It must be so, when you consider that this being born of God, and that every such divine birth, doth spring out of believing Jesus to be the Christ: whoso believeth, is born of God, and is a Christian indeed, and honours the Christian name. What, shall the world be Christianized and made nothing the better?—made Christians, and not made good? How unlike God were this!—how mean and low a design would that be! If they be Christians, they must be good men, and so appear born of God: when they are changed, when they become Christians, they become imitators of his goodness: otherwise, how despicable is the performance of the Son of God in this world, when he is to raise up other sons that shall be just as the rest of men are? But then,

(ii.) This goodness it hath a special object too, even as the Divine goodness which it imitates hath—"My goodness extends not to thee"—but to whom then? eminently, principally, to the saints that are in the earth, those excellent ones "in whom is all my delight," Psalm xvi. 3. God takes pleasure in his people; he loveth the righteous; he hath a peculiar love, good will, and kindness towards those that he doth regenerate, that are born of him. And so they that are born of him have a peculiar kindness and good will unto one another, as the text speaks—"Whosoever loveth him that begat, loveth also them that are begotten of him." It cannot but be so, as there is opportunity to do it, good must be done to all, but "especially to those who are of the household of faith," Gal. vi. 10. They that bear the same image, that have the same nature, that spring from the same father, and are of the same seed, this goodness must have a more peculiar reference and tendency to such; and it will argue our not being of his seed, not being children of this Father, if all be alike to him, if his kindness be not distinct, if he be as well pleased with the conversation of the one sort as of the other. But then,

ii. Besides the consideration of the objects of this goodness, we must consider wherein it shows itself, and in what exertions it appears towards its object—why,

(i.) It appears in sundry negatives; and they are not to be overlooked, for there are great appearances of this goodness in them, as you will have cause to judge: As,

[i.] In not being apt to harm others. This is goodness, when there is not an aptness to harm another. What, is it to be thought that this creature, born of God, is a mischievous creature, as it were, born to do mischief? how is that possible? As our Lord was holy, harmless, separate from sinners, so are they to be,—"Be ye harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke," Phil. ii. 15. Mark the connexion, "the sons of God"—and harmful? mischievous?—that cannot be: hath he begot such a sort of creatures into the world to do mischief in it? no; such are not of this seed.

[ii.] Much less are they apt to take pleasure in another's harm: so it is with many other men—it is a pleasant sight to them to behold the mischiefs and misdeeds of others; but it cannot be so with them that are of this seed. Again,

[iii.] This good appears in an inaptness to do evil for evil. They do not think themselves warranted, Because such a one hath done evil to me, therefore I will do evil to him; "not rendering evil for evil," no, by no means, this cannot agree to this seed, this God-like sort of creatures. Again,

[iv.] They are very inapt to be provoked: this sort of creature is not apt to provocations, as is the character 1 Cor. xiii. 5.—"not easily provoked," which is a great imitation of God, who is "slow to anger;" so must they be, and so they habitually are, "swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath."

[v.] Much less can they suffer anger and wrath upon provocation to arise to a fixed hatred; they are quite another sort of men from the men of the world, of whom this is the character, "hateful, and hating one another," Titus iii. 3. This cannot belong to this God-like sort of creature, to have a fixed hate for any one, whosoever they be; no, not the worst enemy in all the world; the contrary is expressly commanded, and is a law in their very natures, even in reference to the very worst enemy. And,

[vi.] They are not habitually vindictive: not only do they not in fact render evil for evil; not only do they abstain from this, or not do this; but much more are they alien from an habitual vindictiveness: to be in the habit of their minds revengeful, oh, this cannot be in this God-like seed! And,

[vii.] Much less is it possible for them to be implacable: this is again the worst sort of mankind, which is described by this character, implacable; that cannot be reconciled; if once there be a grudge it is everlasting, a fixed thing. Oh, this cannot belong to this God-like seed, to be of an irreconcileable spirit, it hath the sum of hell in it, the devil as the parent of it appears in this countenance, nothing more plain; the very show of that countenance discovers who is the father, an implacable spirit, malicious, vindictive, and then implacable. With this are conjunct other things that we might mention: as envy at the good of another: it is the notion of envy to grieve at another's good; as it is an argument of a most diabolical spirit to rejoice at another's hurt, to take complacency in the harm of another; so to grieve at the good one hath in himself, or doth possess and enjoy, such a one is better than I, and that grieves me—or such a one doth more good, or possesseth more good than I, and this I am grieved at; this cannot consist with the divine goodness that appears in this God-begotten creature. But then,

(ii.) This goodness shows itself in positives too, and that more eminently,

[i.] In actual doing good as there is opportunity, and towards both sorts of objects. "To all as there is opportunity, but especially to the household of faith," Gal. vi.

10. So doth this goodness imitate the Divine goodness, he is good and doth good. Never talk of being good if you do no good when there is opportunity. And again,

[ii.] In an habitual propension thereunto, so as to do good with complacency and delight; so this goodness imitates the Divine goodness; he exerciseth loving-kindness in the earth, because he delights therein; so doth the good man do good even with delight, tasting and relishing his own act in what he doth. Oh, how sweet is it to do good! he tastes the relish of it more than the receiver of it doth, incomparably more; according to that motto of our Lord, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." A more blessed thing, a thing that carries more sweet and savour in it. A man finds a blessedness in it; he tastes the fruits of his own doing as a grateful relish. God enables me to do good, to imitate his goodness, and this is refreshing to my soul, this is fruit which, by divine vouchsafement, I am enabled to eat and feed upon; such a one feeds upon his own act, in what he doth in this kind, owing all to grace, as that is called grace that was bestowed on the church of the Macedonians and those Corinthian Christians to whom the apostle did write; he propounds it to them that they might abound, or would labour to excel in the same grace too. Oh, what a pleasant savour hath grace and goodness! Oh, the sweet relishes of it! It would make one wonder indeed to take notice of some expressions of pagans about the pleasure of doing good; in what transports do they sometimes speak of the delights of friendship upon this account, placing all the sweetness of it in the obliging another, so as that it should be impossible for the person obliged to have so pleasant relishes as he that doth oblige. But this must be most peculiarly so in divine goodness; when regeneration makes a good man, produceth a divine creature, his delight is in doing good as God's own is. And hereupon,

[iii.] He doth good for goodness sake; it is its own reward. It is not for vain glory, not for applause, not that he may draw on a good turn afterwards; it is not to gratify such and such, as hoping they may have opportunity afterwards to gratify him; but it is doing good because it is good, for goodness itself's sake. This is simple goodness, pure goodness, incorrupt goodness, unbribed goodness. And,

[iv.] It appears in easiness to forgive. If any do evil to me, it is not a task, it is not a difficulty, it is not a penalty to forgive, but as an act of nature when it comes from a good man, from one born of God; for he hath the nature in him that prompts him thereunto, a divine nature imparted to him, so that it is far easier to forgive than to revenge; revenge indeed must needs have upon a rational account more difficulty with such a one, because that requires contrivance, and waiting for an opportunity, and, it may be, setting many instruments on work to effect it. But goodness flows immediately into this act, it is done of myself; but I must employ many others in revenge, and that may be contriving long; but a man never needs any contrivance to forgive, it is a thing done out of hand, the product of a man's soul: this is the goodness of the children of God, those that are born of God with a nature like his own. The regenerate soul, oh, what enmities does he forgive, and what enemies! How continued, how inveterate, how often exerted with many through the course of their lives, even almost to the last end of them, so as to leave scarce time of repentance and returning! This readiness to forgive, it is sure a great participation of the Divine nature, a direct imitation of God. And then again,

[v.] An aptness to return into amity; for that is a great deal more. There are some that can forgive others, but will never be friends with them any more; an everlasting pique remaining, and they cannot but discover a shyness, a great shyness, shun them, balk them, decline them, and are apt still to think hardly and speak hardly of them upon all occasions. But the divine nature in the regenerate makes a person apt to the renewal of friendship; they can easily fall in again, who are regenerate; if there have been breaches, if there have been strifes, if there have been fallings out, they can presently fall in, because they have been so taught by nature, by that nature which is imparted to them in being born of God.

These are great things, and they are plain things; it is impossible if there be such a seed born of God but it must imitate the Divine goodness, and if it imitate that goodness it must appear in such instances as these—"Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" So we very faintly and defectively render those emphatical words, "will harm you," as if there were a denial of the design or intention or inclination; but it is only a sign of the tense—"who is he that will harm you?" who shall eventually harm you? do that which shall procure you real harm? They shall never (if it be understood aright)—who is that? [you]—not a lump of flesh, but a mind, a spirit, a soul; a being it is true, a body which may be hurt; and yet—*that* not be hurt: "who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers?" What is meant by followers? There is a following by prosecution, as an end; and there is a following by imitation, as a pattern. The word tells us which is meant there; if you be imitators, it shall be in the power of none eventually to do you any harm. Imitators of what? we read of that which is good; it is (of the good) that which is good carries a man's mind presently to apprehend that it is some created goodness that is there spoken of, that we are to follow; but the following being imitation, it is not enough for a man to imitate any created good, be it never so great, never so high, of never so excellent a kind, I must not imitate that good, but be it, have it, possess it. But the expression is of the good, and so there is none good but God, "none good but one, that is God." I will take care for my own divine seed and offspring that I have in this world; I will save them from harm, as far as is needful, so as to bring them safe to the everlasting kingdom that I design them to. And why? and upon what account?—Because they are mine; my image is upon them; they are imitators of the good, they resemble the good, they may call the good, Father.

Objection. But all this while it may be said, What sort of thing are you describing? a thing fled from our world? Why, sir, you do but describe an idea, a chimerical thing; where is there such goodness? or, where is there such a good sort of creatures to be found? Sure we must go as high as the regions of bliss to see such a sort of good people.

Answer. Yes, it was this apprehension that made me the more intent to enlarge upon this head, and spend this discourse upon it. This is looked upon as if it were a thing exiled from the world, fled from the earth. But oh! what a dismal mistake and delusion is it if men will entertain such an imagination, that such goodness is to be found no where but in heaven? No, heaven must be let down into our world, or else it will never have any inhabitants out of it, it prepares its own inhabitants first; they that are born again are born from above, from heaven. There must be a heavenly descent, a descent of the Divine Spirit from above entering the souls of men, forming them, moulding them, renewing them in the spirit of their minds, writing the divine law there; which in reference to the second table of it is all summed up in this, Love thy neighbour as thyself. Harm another? Why, I can no more do it than I can harm myself. Take pleasure in another's harm? I can no more do it than I can take pleasure in my own. Be spiteful towards another? Am I ever spiteful towards myself? Full of malice towards others? Am I ever malicious towards myself? or vindictive or implacable? Regeneration is the writing of the law of God in the heart, impressing the Divine image there; love to God will come into another order of heads. But this love, wherein we imitate his, is love to others. Love to men, if it have place in no inhabitants of this earth, there is no more going from earth to heaven. Heaven must make inhabitants for itself in our world, who are to be so prepared and formed as to be made meet for an inheritance with the saints in light. In this sad degenerate age wherein we live, indeed, such goodness is apprehended too great a rarity to be thought a reality; it is too rare a thing to be taken for a real thing. A very sad case! as indeed conversions are very unfrequent, and it is a fearful thing to consider how long the Gospel may be diffused (which should evangelize the world, and transform men into the Divine likeness) before it proves the savour of life! How generally it is a deadly savour is dismal to think! And proportionably instances of a rege-

nerating work are rare and unfrequent. And the regenerating principle (where it is) is low and languishing, is not conspicuous, doth not shine forth. The contraries to it do show forth themselves in so obvious and frequent appearances, that these evidences and fruits of the divine goodness cannot be seen, as it is a very rare thing for persons to come as returning prodigals, renewed, converted, changed, and transformed, and to pour out their tears and lamentations and self-bemoanings into a Redeemer's bosom, and by him to their heavenly Father, so it is proportionably rare for Christians to make such discoveries of a good spirit towards one another, to pour out complaints and tears and self-bemoanings into one another's bosoms; as if there was no such rule as that, confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another; as if that text were thought to have come into the Bible as a casualty, and stood there for nothing. How rare are instances of any such fruit and exemplification of the divine goodness, as to hear it said by any; Oh! friend, Christian brother, I have offended you, I am grieved for it; it grieves me that I have grieved you! Where is this to be found? These things are just such rarities as the return of wandering sinners into the bosom of God through Christ. A sad token of a departing Divine Spirit! in a great measure sadly departing, almost gone. Religion would otherwise be another thing; the rules and precepts of it would turn into example more frequently.

But this is one thing, and so great a thing, that it ought not to have been passed over. They that are born of God, bear his image even in this thing, beneficent goodness, a goodness of temper, a benignity which speaks them the children of this Father, so as that their temper cannot change by the greatest malignity that they have experienced, and are many times the subjects of from others. It spends itself upon them, "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you;" bless them while they curse you, express the greatness of your kindness, love, and concern for them, when they are designing to ruin and undo you. And for what? that ye may be the children of your heavenly Father, that you may appear so, that it may be seen that he hath a divine offspring in this world, Matt. v. 44, 45. He doth good to enemies, otherwise what might become of you? Might it have been said of any of you, Oh, if he did not know how to spare an enemy, nay to oblige an enemy, and conquer an enemy by kindness and goodness, what would become of any of us all.

SERMON XLVII.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

Now, if after all that hath been said upon this account, I would give you an epitome, or a description of one born of God by this peculiar character, I could not more fitly give it then out of that thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. If it should be inquired what sort of thing is this divine birth, whereof we heard so much which is to be sought out in this world? Since we hear of such productions among men, what sort of thing is it? or what sort of person is he whom it will denominate to be born of God? a divine and heaven-born creature? If any should imagine with themselves a divine creature among men, what must he be? Is he one that doth excel in eloquence more than human, even seraphical, angelical itself? Is he one that can speak with the tongue of men and angels? Is this he? or is it a man of profound speculation, that can search and penetrate into all mysteries? Is it one that abounds in knowledge, so as to comprehend (as far as it is possible to humanity) all knowledge? Is it he that hath so extraordinary a faith that he can work you miracles every hour of the day, and remove a thousand mountains with a breath? Is it one that is a greater miracle himself in this world in respect of the extraordinary good works which he can induce himself to do? and the greater miracle, for that he can do them without any principle, bestow all that he hath, all his goods, to feed the poor? Is it one that burns in so hot a zeal for this or that private opinion, this conceit or fancy of his own, that it hath even set his whole soul on fire, and when that is done can be content to sacrifice his body too, and throw that into flames in defence of his opinion? Is it such a one as this, or is that such a thing, a thing born of God? No; it is such a thing as without which all these are mere nothings, will make a man no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, will turn to no account to him in all the world, profit him just nothing, as the apostle there speaks.

Well, what then is it? It is a habit of soul made up of Goodness. It is when a propension to do good is (as it were) all a man's soul. It is such a sort of thing as whereof divine love (which cannot but be from above, from God himself, who is love) is the internal constituent form; which therefore runs out into all suitable exercises, appearances, and demonstrations of itself upon all occasions; it is such a sort of thing as suffereth long, and is kind; the wonder lies in the connexion, suffers long and is kind; that being long (as all good men must expect to be more or less in such an evil world as this is) in a suffering state is not soured thereby, not imbittered, not turned into acrimony; suffers long, and is still kind, full of benignity, patient of any evil done him, but inclined to do none to any other.

It is such a thing that envieth not another man's excellency, nor doth boast his own; envieth not, vaunteth not itself, nor is puffed up: it is such a thing that doth not behave itself unseemly, keeps on a steady course, agreeable uniform course, self-agreeable, and therefore cannot allow itself in that which shall be unseemly, unbecoming, unto a discerning judicious eye: it is such a thing as will suffer a man to have no private interest of his own in opposition to the common interest of the universal Lord of all, or that shall be in a real or actual competition with the rightful good of any other; seeketh not its own things, is not easily provoked, not apt to take offence, not humoursomely captious, so as that none knows how to converse with it or take hold of it: it is such a thing as thinketh no evil, neither thinketh evil of others, nor thinks evil against others; neither apt without cause to take up an ill opinion of another, nor lay designs to do him hurt: it is such a thing as rejoiceth not in iniquity, cannot do so, looks upon the evil of other men with regret, wishes it not to be, and never indulgeth any evil inclination of its own unto private advantage, so as to have the occasion of glorying, this or that I got by an unlawful act, or by pursuing or prosecuting an unjust design and in an undue course, but such a thing as rejoiceth in the truth, in walking uprightly, in a plain and unexceptionable way. It is finally, such a thing as "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." This needs no paraphrase; in sum, it is such a thing as carries eternity in its own nature: to wit, when many extraordinary gifts, glittering excellencies, that were designed but to be temporary and to serve some present purpose, shall fail and vanish and fade away; the gift of tongues, of speculative knowledge, miraculous faith, zeal for opinions, and the like; when they shall all fail, this shall never fail, but go into eternity, hath its glory perfected there, as being the greatest of the three things that are here concomitant, faith, hope, charity; but the greatest of these is charity.

I thus insist that among Christians such a thing as this may not be lightly thought of, as if it were an indifferent and dispensable matter, about which we did not much need to concern ourselves; which is indeed the reproach of the Christian name, and that than which nothing doth more to obstruct and hinder the diffusion and progress of Christianity in the world.

It must recommend itself by its own goodness, and by telling men to their own sense, that it is a thing that betters the world, and which (so far as it doth obtain and take place) brings men discernibly and tends to bring them into a good and happy state, would make this earth a very heaven might it but generally take place in it. And the consideration of other scriptures makes me think this

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ought to be the more pressed and insisted upon. I shall turn you to a few (but they are most weighty ones) to our present purpose; and I desire you therefore to weigh them accordingly.

If you look to Gal. v. you will find the contraries to this divine principle strangely matched and sorted; to wit, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, in the 20th and 21st verses; you find them sorted with idolatry, witchcraft, adultery, fornication, heresies, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. These do keep company; it seems they are not unfit company, for one another, or to be sorted and put together.

Let me carry you to another epistle of this same apostle, Eph. iv. 30, 31, 32. when he had given that great and tender charge, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption;" he immediately subjoins, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all lying." What is the import of all this, but that these things do most directly tend to grieve that Spirit by which we must be sealed (if ever we be sealed up) to the day of redemption; we grieve him whom we expect to comfort us: that is his peculiar title and style, the Spirit of Grace. The pseudo-christians, or apostates from Christianity, (that the apostle speaks of with so much severity in divers places of that epistle to the Hebrews,) they are such "as crucify to themselves afresh the Son of God, and put him to open shame, and do despite to the Spirit of grace." The most wicked and mischievous thing in all the world, to spite the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of all kindness and love, and goodness and benignity. Wherever this work is done, the regenerating work, wherever any are truly said to be born of God, the Spirit is the immediate agent, they are born of the Spirit; being born of water signifies nothing without this. What do you tell me of mere figurative Christianity, mere symbolical Christianity, the sign without the thing? except, besides the being born of water, there be the being born of the Spirit too, (signified by that water,) you can never enter into the kingdom of God, can never so much as see it: whatsoever tends to spite this Spirit which regenerates, doth certainly very ill agree with the regenerating principle, with the work of regeneration itself; nothing can be more unsuitable to our being born of God, than to cherish and indulge that in himself which spites, and vexeth, and grieves that Spirit which is the immediate agent in his regeneration.

If I should carry, you yet a little further to another of that apostle's epistle's, Col. iii. "Having put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him;" then put on "as the elect of God (holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. But above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, unto which also ye are called in one body; and be thankful." It is a rebellion against the divine call by which we are called in one body to indulge ourselves in the contraries to the before-enjoined things, bowels of mercy, kindness, forgiveness, and the like.

And you may see how agreeably the holy men of God speak about these things one to another. Let me but lead you to what we find from another apostle, James iii. 13. "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace." Here are two opposite principles, that which makes the import of this context the more apparently weighty, and of the greatest importance imaginable: the one is said to be from above, and the other from beneath; the one is therefore the regenerate principle, belonging to the new nature unto this divine birth; and the other fetcheth its parentage from hell, so vastly disagreeing, so directly opposite are these two, not as heaven and earth, but as heaven and hell itself. If you have bitter envyings and strife in your heart, glory not, this wisdom is not from above, (this same genius, this spirit, wisdom and folly being the characters of good men and bad in the ordinary language of Scripture,) this wisdom that is cognate with evil. Envy and strife, and wrath and bitterness, is of no heavenly descent, it descends not from above, it hath no kindred, no alliance with those calm, serene, pure, and peaceful regions. No; quite contrary, but it is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; so that in contests there will not be a perpetual insisting, inflexibly, I am in the right, and I will not yield a hair: and the other as stiff as he, No, I am in the right, and I will yield as little as you. This wisdom is not from above, it is from beneath; that which is from above is easy to be entreated, can tell how to yield when it is opportune, and when the case manifestly requires it. And so the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace (that hath agreeable soil wherein it will take) with them that love peace.

And to bring you back at last to this same apostle from whom we took our text; do but look back to the third chapter of this epistle, how mighty a stress is laid upon this one thing, divine love among Christians as brethren. "We know that we have passed from death to life, in that we love the brethren; he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." And I have told you in the beginning of this discourse, that it ought to be remote from us to think him only a brother that is of our own opinion, or persuasion, or party. But as all are brethren upon one common account, so go to the more peculiar and special account, all good men are brethren upon that account, all that bear the same divine image, all that do appear born from above. And he that so loveth not his brother, abideth in death. A killing word it should be unto the contrary principle, that is apt to break forth in continual vexatious and grievous things towards them that are brethren.

And if you look back in the same chapter, to the tenth verse, you see what his theme is: he is distinguishing those that are born of God from the rest of the world. "Whosoever is born of God," verse 9. doth not commit sin; doth not industriously set himself to pursue or persist in an evil and forbidden course; doth not make sin, is not a worker of iniquity, that is not his trade, (as many men's callings are denominated from the things they make,) one in whom wickedness is the governing thing, and with whom it is an habitual thing, it runs through his life: but he that is born of God is no sin-maker, is not a worker of iniquity. But how are such distinguished from them that are not such? Why in this the children of God (that are born of God) are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. Taking this in as a matter so intimately conjunct with the divine life, wheresoever it is, love to one's brother, the children of God, and the children of the devil, are manifest in this; to wit, that they who are the children of God, they do work righteousness; he that doth not so is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother; he hath that principle in him that speaks him to abide in death the divine life hath not yet obtained, hath not yet a place in him.

Objection. But it may be said, It is impossible that the regenerating Spirit should exist and have being at all where these contraries are to be found?

Answer. In short, it must be said, not where they govern, not where they ordinarily prevail, this divine creature of which I am speaking, this creature born of God, take it in the whole complex of it, it is so Christ-like a thing, that sometimes in Scripture it bears his very name, it is called Christ, "Christ in you the hope of glory," Col i. 27. And if you will consider it in its similitude to Christ, and under that name, (as the Scripture doth warrant us even to place the very name upon this thing,) then where it is amidst these prevailing contraries, (as they may be for the present prevailing, though they do not habitually prevail,) it may be, (as I may say,) Christ crucified, Christ in torture, Christ nailed on the cross, and Christ put to open shame, where such things do appear, break forth, and come in view; nothing is more plain. So that of all things in the world

that can come under common notice, this is what Christians should abhor from, and studiously take care of, that if they will name that worthy name, if they will court to be denominated by it, they may not reproach that name, and throw dishonour and infamy upon him whose name they bear; as if Christianity were to get nothing but ignominy by their being called Christians.

This, therefore, is a further resemblance of God that is to be found in them that are born of him; or that we must expect to be impressed upon the Divine birth; it is a creature (as it were) made up of goodness.

I shall go on with some other that yet remains to be spoken to.

Tenthly, This creature, born of God, it is evidently characterized by its constant aspirings to the perfection of the heavenly state; and therein it hath the image on it of his Divine Parent, whom we are taught to consider and conceive of as having his glorious residence above, as the remanifesting and displaying his glory, and most fully communicating himself; and are taught when we apply to him, to apply to him under that notion, as our Father who is in heaven. And this same divine principle is itself from above; he that is born (ανωθεν) from above, it is he only that can see, can enter into the kingdom of God; this divine principle prompts them to look upwards.

There is therefore a character of heavenliness upon this creature. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (says the apostle Peter,) who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope (hope is there objectively taken, as the next words put in opposition do show) to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us." This creature, as it is born from heaven, so it is born to heaven, or for heaven. There is a heavenliness imprest upon it, thither it tends, thither it breathes, thither it aspires, flies upwards as the sparks do, it labours to be gathered up into the region of good souls and spirits, where all are perfected together. They that have received the first-fruits of the Spirit do groan, (aspire within themselves,) waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body, that is, waiting for the ultimate perfection of the state they are born for and designed unto. They that have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, to wit, all the regenerate, as soon as they come to be regenerate, they have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, then they begin to aspire, as soon as they are born they breathe, and as soon as they breathe they breathe upwards, heavenward. They that have received the first-fruits of the Spirit do groan inwardly, or within themselves, for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body; they aspire for this, and for the state that doth belong to them as sons, and the perfection of it.

It is to be observed that adoption in the theological sense of it may be taken two ways, as in the civil we find that among the Romans there were two sorts of adoptions, or two degrees of it rather. There was first the private adoption, when any did give but some private intimation or signification that he intended to take such a one for his son, but there was afterwards the public or forensic adoption, when the person was adopted by such a one *in foro*, when it was made a public act, and accordingly enrolled in their public records. And so is the complete and consummate glory of the resurrection, of the risen state, here called the adoption. Another verse in that viii. Rom. —19. compared with verse 23. calls it the manifestation of the sons of God, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the time and season for the manifestation of the sons of God; when they shall be owned to be his sons, when it shall be openly declared and known who they are. And this is the state that they who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit do aspire to; so as to be content with nothing beneath, or on this side that; I am born an heir to glory, or the ultimate perfection of that state to which I am born, and whereof by divine designation I am capable, to that I aspire, and can take up with nothing beneath it, nothing short of it. They that continually grovel in the dust of this earth, never think a higher or a nobler thought, are these born of God? are these of the Divine offspring? what an inconsistency and absurdity is that! They that perpetually mind earthly things, have no business in this world but to feed, and dress, and please their flesh, without any thought or concern for the immortal spirit. Are they born of God? No; they that are so born, so well born, have aspirations suitable to the nobility of their birth and parentage, thither they aspire.

But as the things hitherto mentioned are imitations or resemblances of God, in respect of such of his excellencies as are wont to pass under the name or notion of communicable for the most part, I shall name some more that go under the notion more strictly of incommunicable, wherein, though there is not that similitude, yet there is some correspondence; as with respect to the infiniteness of God, I shall give an instance therein. And with respect to his self-sufficiency, under that head I shall only speak to these two things; and though there is not so proper a similitude and likeness, yet there is some correspondence in this Divine birth, as such things as these belonging to the very being of God. As there is,

Eleventhly, An unlimited largeness of spirit; not infiniteness in the positive sense, but a negative sort of infiniteness, of unboundedness, in particular respects that I shall mention to you.

i. There is an unlimitedness, so as not to be confined to this present world. No, saith one that is born of God, it is too little a thing, too scant a thing. One born of God hath thereupon a spirit too big for all this world. As that worthy said, I earnestly protested I would not be put off with such a portion. This earth is too little a thing for me, (saith one that is born of God,) I cannot be confined to it. Nor,

ii. Can such a one be confined to time; his prospect is still larger, he looks forward, "he seeks for honour, and glory, and immortality, and eternal life," Rom. ii. 7. And,

iii. He is not confined in respect of any degrees of truly divine knowledge and grace, he never knows so much in that kind but he still covets to know more; and he never hath so much of grace and the image of God, but he still affects to have more. And,

iv. He is unconfined in respect of service unto him whose he is, unto his Divine Parent. It is his interest, I must serve while I have any being. And he always thinks he hath never done enough if he hath done much, for he reckons himself still under obligation to do more. So it is with one that is born of God. And then,

Twelfthly, He resembles God in his self-sufficiency. This most incommunicable attribute of the Divine Being, to be self-sufficient. One that is born of God hath a subordinate self-sufficiency, to wit, by gracious vouchsafement he hath that in himself, with which he is content; not in exclusion to God, but to inferior things, to the creature. The good man is satisfied from himself, he is constituted a fountain to himself, Prov. xiv. 24. A fountain fed from a higher fountain. God hath made him a living spring within himself, so that he needs not another; doth not need to depend upon this, or that, or the other creature; so as to reckon that if he lose that he is undone. As that wretch cried out, "Ye have taken away my gods, (meaning his idols,) and what have I more?" Every unregenerate person hath some such idol or other, which he reckons his all. Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? When the world is gone, when honour and grandeur are gone, when wealth and riches, this or that pleasant seat gone, Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? No, the regenerate soul hath learnt that doctrine, *ne* . . . . . I do not need to range, to forage; if I can enjoy God at home in my own soul, I have enough. Such a kind of self-sufficiency as that of Jacob, he had all; when Esau compliantly said to him, "I have enough;" but I, saith he, have all. So the apostle, Phil. iv. 18. "I have all, and abound." Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee; there is the emphasis. Thou shalt have my presence, God will always render himself present, will never leave them, nor forsake them. Therefore be content with what you have. There is a self-sufficiency belonging to a good man, in exclusion to external good things, he can live without them.

But how will your body live without them? Why, may such a one say, I can live with that, I am such a sort of creature, as can be in the body, and be out of the body; it

is not necessary for me to live in this flesh, my God is my all, and he is pleased to join himself intimately, inwardly to me, and in him I have all. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is nothing in earth that I desire besides thee.

These are so many manifest imitations and resemblances of God that are to be found in this divine creature, who is born of him; and all these things (as you might take notice) do belong to his regencrate, heaven-born soul, as God is his Parent. But (as I told you) the relation is mutual, out of this divine birth results the relation, and relation is mutual between God and them. He is a Father to them, and they children to him; paternity and filiation do enforce one another. Is God a Father to them? Then he must in begetting them, and when they are born of him, impress on them such characters as resemble him. But then are they also his children, then must there be also such things found in them as do answer their relation to God as such; there must be child-like dispositions towards him of whom they are begotten. Several things will come under that head; as the dependance of children, the love of children towards their Father, they love him that begat, there is love immediately towards him that begat them. To pretend to be born of God, and not love him, is of all things the most contradictious, absurd, and self-confuting pretence. Then there is the reverence of him as their Father; honour thy father and mother. If I be a father, where is my honour? There must be obedience to him as their father. Children, obey your parents in the Lord; and be subject to the Father of spirits, that you may live. It is mortal to you not to be subject; to rebel is to die; to disobey is to declare yourself none of the family, it is even to protest against the relation.

The mentioning of all these things, one would think, should occasion many throbbing hearts among us. If God have such a work as this to do in this world, to raise up a divine offspring to himself among men; and if that Gospel which he hath sent is to be the regenerating instrument. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth," Jam. i. 18. that we might be a nobler sort of creatures. A more glorious sort than the rest of the miscreant world are: if the case be so, then while I live under the Gospel, which is appointed on purpose for begetting children to God, what do I find done upon my soul? What impressions are there, wherein I do differ from other men? Is there no difference between the children of God and the children of that other father, that worst of fathers? Is there no difference between heaven and hell? Some do think we can confound and mingle them. Oh, methinks, it should cause great palpitations of heart. What do I find inwrought into my soul, that looks like a divine nature? one born of God. and that may suit and answer the end for which he sent his Son to be a Jesus, and Jesus to be a Christ in this world, by faith to be acknowledged and owned as such? That must be a high and noble design! It challengeth very deep and searching thoughts of heart to be employed about it. What is doing of it in my soul? When we see how little is done, how little effect the Gospel hath, what a miscarrying womb it is for the most part, it may make many a sad misgiving heart among us. What, hath God no children to raise up in our days, and in this part of the world? Hath he done with the converting of souls? begetting and regenerating them in his own image, when they go from day to day, from week to week, and from year to year, with the same unregenerate hearts, just what they were under the ministration which is appointed to minister life and spirit to souls? To remain still the same that one was, what will the issue of this be? What, if time should expire with us now?

SERMON XLVIII.*

I John v. i.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

I SHALL now return to what was the last time only intimated; to wit, That as this being born of God doth not only infer that he is a Father to them, and that, therefore, he must in this work beget such things in them as do resemble him; so herein also they become children to him; and therefore in this work there must be such impressions made in them, and upon their spirits, as are suitable to their relation as children; child-like dispositions towards him as their Father, must be understood to be inwrought; and they are such as these.

First, A high honour and reverence for him. This is suitable to their state as children born of God, that they have high and honourable thoughts of him. If parents, as such, do claim this from their children, most of all the supreme Parent must. It is even, in reference to inferior relatives in this kind and under this denomination, a law of nature. Honour thy father and thy mother. It cannot be supposed, that they that are born of God should be so unnatural children to their Divine and heavenly Parent as not to have him in the highest honour. "If I be a father, where is mine honour?" saith he, Mal. i. 6. It requires to be deeply and sadly considered under what notion are we here: Is it not under the notion of God's children? To pretend ourselves to be such, and not to have the highest veneration and honour for our Divine Parent, is a contradiction and a mockery; it is an interpretative disowning and disclaiming the relation. It is more than saying, it is a signifying practically, that we are none of his children, if we most highly honour him not in our hearts and souls. What must be said in this case by them who go from day to day, and not so much as a thought, least of all a great thought, an adoring and honouring thought, of that God whose children they pretend to be!

Secondly, Another child-like disposition towards him that must be in them that are born of him, is a depending disposition; their hearts being formed to dependance. There is nothing more child-like than to depend upon a parent, the wisdom of a parent, the care and conduct of a parent; this is child-like. Do I say I am born of God? Do I then live a depending life? How is the habit of my soul? Is it formed to dependance if I in every thing contrive for myself without reference to him; never thinking I have a Father above that concerns himself in my affairs? Doth this speak being born of God, or doth it not speak quite contrary? Trusting him with all our concerns, is that which such a relation claims, and doth involve and include in it, which therefore implies, that nothing can be so agreeable and (as it were) connatural unto the spirit of one born of God, as a praying disposition; for that is a depending disposition; if prayer be not a mere form, and nothing else, a piece of empty formality, it must carry dependance in it. It is no prayer wherein there is not dependance and expectation still included. To them that are God's children nothing can be more agreeable than to live a prayerful life, to be much in prayer; this is dependance, this speaks dependance, in every case presently to run to our Father. "I will go and spread all before him: for my love, they are my enemies, but I give myself to prayer, saith the Psalmist," Psal. cix. 4. So we translate it, but there is no more in the Hebrew text, but "I prayer," as if he were all composed of prayer, made up of prayer; let other men take their own courses, (as if he had said,) this is mine, I am for prayer.

It is under this notion that our Saviour directs prayer, (which also in the days of his flesh he so much practised himself,) "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut the door, and pray to thy Father that seeth in secret, and he shall reward thee openly," Matt. vi. 6. What, have I a Father, and shall I not pray to him? A Father in heaven, a heavenly Father, and not pray to him? What a self-contradicting pretence is that in them that say, God is their Father, that they are born of him, but know not what belongs to prayer, and to that dependance upon him which is express in prayer! And there are two things, or two heads of things, in reference whereunto this dependance is to have its exercise, to wit, in reference to our present and temporary concernments, and in reference to our future and eternal concernments.

i. In reference to our present and temporary concernments here in this world: The dependance of a child will not allow him to be excessively solicitous; so to torture himself with vexatious cares, to take thought with anxiety

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what he shall eat, and drink, and put on; for after all these things do the Gentiles seek: to wit, with anxiety, as if the press and weight lay wholly upon themselves, "but your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things," Matt. vi. compared with Luke xii. 36. Why, have you not a Father, and doth he not know what you need? You are to use a prudent care in the way of your duty; but you are not to use a tormenting care, a care that doth no good, but hurt only; a care that cannot add one cubit to your stature. Take heed of such a care, it doth not consist with the relation of children to a heavenly Father. And,

ii. In reference to our eternal concernments. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Do not fear. Are you the children of such a father, and will not your father provide for you as his own children? Yes, he will provide for you after the rate of a kingdom; he will make you communicate in the kingdom, if you depend upon his pleasure. And it is a thing he doth with pleasure. He pleaseth himself in it, in that display and manifestation of his glory, and munificent bounty. I will now declare openly to the world that I own these for my children; then is "the manifestation of the sons of God," (as the expression is Rom. viii. 19.) When all the sons of God are to have an open, complete, formal, magnificent adoption declared before angels and men. This is that which the depending spirit of his children prompts them to expect. And they exercise dependance this way, and exert it upon this account in reference to their eternal concernments. I find there are no great things to be had here in this world, by which God distinguisheth his children from other men; he doth not distinguish them by what they are to possess and enjoy of external good things here; and they are taught to lay no great stress upon any such things; but they are taught to depend upon a kingdom for ample provision hereafter, wherein he will deal with them like a God. And it is their Father's pleasure to give them this kingdom, and upon this they are to depend. It will go well enough with me hereafter, and therefore I am little solicitous what occurs to or befalls me in my present transient state. Again,

Thirdly, Another child-like disposition that must be found in them that are born of God, is love. Love to him as their Father. He is an unnatural monster, and not a child, that doth not love his father and parent: and you see how express the words of this very verse are to this purpose, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. And every one that loveth him that begat, loveth them also that are begotten of him." You see how this is connected with what goes immediately before, taking it for granted, that he that "is born of God, loveth him that begat him." It is not affirmed, but supposed; it is not directly affirmed, as if it needed an affirmation. This being obvious to every one's view and thoughts, that for all them that are born of God, they must love him that begat them, a thing that follows of course. Are you born of God? Then you do love him that begat you.

And whereas we are told, (as you have had sometimes occasion given to take notice, chap. iii. of this epistle,) "by this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." The children of God cannot be manifest in distinction from them that are of another parentage, in any thing more than this, their "loving him that begat." Loving him of whom they are born, as it is a trying, so it is, and ought to be, a satisfying character in them in whom it is found. If they are to judge of their estate, Am I one born of God, yea or no? They may comfortably conclude well concerning this, I find a divine love springing in my soul towards him, my love working Godward, working upward, shows me my descent, of whom I am, who it is that begat me. Oh, the wretched case of those souls that cannot evince their relation to God as their Father, as being born of him, by such a character as this. Do I say God is my Father? Alas, I love him not, I have no love for him. If it be said, as Christ tells the Jews, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you," how must that sink the soul and spirit of that man, in him that pretends to that relation to God as a father, when his own heart testifies that he loves him not!

Love to the most obvious exertions of that love, wherein it discovers and manifests itself. Many might be spoken of, and have been heretofore. I shall only mention these two at present, delight in his converse, and concern for his interest: these are expressions of a child-like love to God as a father.

i. Delight in his converse. Have I any love for him as my father, when I cannot endure to be conversant with him? when I decline his presence, I keep up no intercourse with him, I live a wandering life. Is this like a child of God, one born of God? Oh, sadly consider it, and take it to heart! We hear this day of such trials as these; but we shall know and see a trying day at last, that must put the everlasting differences between those that were born of God, and those that were never born of him And even now, if we do but state a judgment day in our own souls, and erect a tribunal there, what can carry more evidence and convictiveness in it than this, if we would but deal impartially with ourselves. Upon this question, do I love the Divine presence, yea or no? is he my father, and do I flee his presence, and care not to be in it, when I have no pretence of necessity? I cannot pretend a necessity to be out of his presence, as a child may have to be out of his earthly father's presence. He cannot always be there; but the matter admits of no excuse or pretence,—it can be resolved into nothing but disaffection. I may be in the presence of God more, but I will not. You may be with him as soon as you can think a thought. Here is nothing to be said in this case, but an aversion of heart keeps you off from him. And what? is he your father, and will you say you are born of him? How can a man satisfy his mind, his judgment, and conscience, in such inconsistencies and contradictions as these. And,

ii. Concern for his interest. This is child-like love, to be deeply concerned whether he be feared or no, honoured or no, obeyed or no, in those that are indeed his children. How doth such affection as this, a filial affection, child-like love, discover itself? How is it wont to do so? "Horror hath taken hold of me (saith the Psalmist) because of the wicked that forsake thy law. I saw transgressors, and was grieved. Rivers of tears run down my eyes, because of the wicked that transgress thy law." This is a filial sense, the sense of a child, of one born of God; but to feel no regret in a man's spirit, when the contempt of our Father discovers itself openly in the face of the sun, when we are so repeatedly told every day, which way soever we look or listen, our Father hath little interest in the world, he is little regarded, men little concern themselves whether he is pleased or displeased; for men to have hearts as stones, unconcerned, never affected in such cases as these, is this child-like? Doth this carry the signification with it of my being a child of God, born of him? Again,

Fourthly, Another child-like disposition towards God as a father, which must be in them that are born of him, is a subject-spirit, an obediential frame of spirit towards him. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord," Eph. vi. 1. A due obedience even to earthly parents, the fathers of our flesh, not of our souls, (they were never capable of producing such a thing in us as an intelligent immortal spirit,) yet this is a right challenged unto them. And what? is it not a right to our celestial Father, to obey him and to be subject to him? to be willingly and of choice under his government, under his rule and law? He that is the parent of our life and being, he that hath given me a being, shall not he give me a law? He that hath given me a spirit, shall not he give me a command to be received from his mouth? Oh, when a man's life is nothing else but rebellion, insolent rebellion, will not such a one be confounded within himself, if he be put to answer the question, Is God your Father? Are you one of his children, or are you not? "How much more (saith the apostle, Heb. xii. 9.) shall we not be subject to the Father of spirits and live?" You have had fathers of your flesh, (saith he,) and they chastised us, and ye gave them reverence; shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? How came I to have a spirit in me, an intelligent immortal spirit, such a sort of being as can think, that is by so noble powers distinguished from a clod, a piece of clay? How came I to have such a being? And if there be a superadded divine principle, so as that God is my father, not only having fashioned my spirit in me, put an im-

mortal understanding spirit in me, but by giving a principle of holiness also in superaddition thereunto; I am under a double obligation to him to own him as my Father; and then shall I not be in subjection to the Father of my spirit? And when life lies upon it, shall we not be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? What doth that imply, but that it is mortal to disobey, mortal not to be subject? If you will not be subject, ye die for it; every one must be subject or perish. Subjection and perdition, they are the disjunctive, and between them any one may make his choice. Oh, what shall they say, that have never yet had hearts taught to obey, formed to subjection? That despise to be governed, that live after their own will, that contest for the governing power with him that gave them breath, saying in practice, I will not obey, I will live as I list, I will choose my own way and course. This cannot stand with this relation; it cannot stand with being born of God; it cannot stand with the foregoing character last mentioned, love to him, filial love to him; "For this is the love of God, (as you see presently in the context,) that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous." This is the sense of a child, one born of God, (as the next words again do import,) "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world." Therefore his commandments are not grievous to such a one; he is "born of God," he hath a divine nature in him, that contempers him to the law and commands of God, so that he counts nothing grievous that God commandeth. When every thing that he commands, and the whole state of his government, is looked upon as a grievance; it is a grievance to be under the restraint of his law, that I may not live as I list, that I may not indulge inclinations, covetous inclinations, wrathful inclinations, envious inclinations, vindictive inclinations; no, I cannot be governed, I must have my will. Then you are no child, then you are not born of God. He is not your father, if you will not be ruled; indeed he despiseth that obedience that proceeds not from love. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments;" to obey him placidly and of choice, so that this is the sense of the soul, I had rather obey than not obey. It is a privilege to be under his government. If this be not the sense of the soul, it is the absurdest contradiction imaginable to pretend to be born of God; it is a pretence that overthrows and destroys itself, to say I am born of God, but I will not be ruled by him.

Thus far you have an account what this being born of God imports; and now you have both parts of the text in some measure opened—what it is to believe Jesus to be the Christ, and what it is to be born of God. Now, that which in the next place was proposed to be also spoken to according to the order of discourse, is,

II. The connexion between these two. And I shall upon this head endeavour these two things,

1. To show that there is a connexion, a most firm connexion, between them. And then,

2. To show you the grounds of it.

1. That there is such a connexion; which is but indeed to evince the truth of the assertion which the text contains, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." To evince to you the connexion between these two, is but to evince the truth of the thing asserted, and which is but the same thing in sense with this, that there is no such thing as an unregenerate believer; that with true believing, regeneration is co-extent. Nobody doth justly bear the name of a believer of this, that Jesus is the Christ, of a believer in Christ, but one that is born of God; or that any other believing that Jesus is the Christ, not accompanied with regeneration, goes for nothing, if I should never so peremptorily avow it, that I believe Jesus to be the Christ, and yet am not born of God, it avails me nothing, it signifies nothing to me. I had as good have said nothing, as to say I believe Jesus to be the Christ, if I be not born of God; nothing as to any valuable purpose that can serve. This is that, in the first place, I am to evince to you, that there is such a connexion between these two, and it is to be evinced by sundry considerations, which I shall endeavour to set before you. As,

(1.) Other scriptures do most expressly say the same thing. Look at John i. 12, 13. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Again,

(2.) The relation of sonship to God is connected with this faith, and therefore the participation of that nature in respect whereof we are said to be born of God, must be connected with this faith also; for it is not to be supposed that adoption and regeneration can be separated; whom God adopteth he regenerateth; whosoever believeth, he adopteth. This is the strength of the argument of the consideration that I am now offering to you. Do but look back a little to the 23d and 24th verses of the 2d chapter of this epistle, and you find that it is upon this faith that God owns us as his children, or our having an interest in him as our father doth depend, to wit, "that Jesus is the Christ." Upon our owning of this truth (if it be sincerely and truly owned) this is the consequence, that we now have God for our father; "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the Son (this is manifestly meant though not expressed in our copies, and therefore you have it subjoined in a different character) hath the Father also." That acknowledgeth the Son—How? That he is the Christ, (as all the drift of the apostle showeth) he hath the Father, he hath God for his father, he hath no father else; but with having an interest in God as his father, his being related to God as his child, is the participation of the divine nature, connected; as you see in the close of the same chapter, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Whereupon it immediately followeth, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." See the series of discourse here; in the latter part of that second chapter, "he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also;" God is his father; he may say, I have a father, a heavenly Father, I have God for my Father; if he acknowledge the Son, believe him to be the Christ, if he sincerely do so. But observe, what the character of such a one must be, he must be able to evince that he is born of God, by doing righteousness as he is righteous; that he hath a holy rectitude inwrought into his spirit, which is become the fixed habit of his soul; otherwise it is an absurd pretence that he is born of God, or that he hath God for his father. And the same thing is as manifest in that mentioned John i. 12, 13. he that receiveth him hath the privilege presently to be called the son of God. But doth that privilege go alone? or, is sonship to God an empty relation? or, hath that relation no foundation? Yes, it hath a foundation—"which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." If they are believers in his name, they are sons, they are called sons, they are presently in that relation. But how in relation? is it a nominal relation only? No; but a real one; founded upon being born of God, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." That is a second consideration to evince this connexion, to wit, that relation goes with this faith, and therefore the participation of a suitable nature must go with this faith also; for adoption and regeneration cannot be separated. And,

(3.) Exemption from condemnation—that hath a certain connexion with the sincere belief of this, that Jesus is the Christ; and therefore regeneration must be certainly connected therewith too. They that have this faith are exempt from condemnation, "shall not come into condemnation, but have passed from death unto life," as our Saviour speaks, John iii. 24. And who are they that are exempt from condemnation? According to the determination we have so positively set down, Rom. viii. 1. "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." You know that there is no being in Christ Jesus, but by believing in him, believing him to be the Christ with such a faith as thereupon drawing the soul into union with him. But do you think that any are exempt from condemnation besides the regenerate, or those that are born of God?

(4.) Title to eternal life and glory is connected with this faith; and therefore regeneration must be connected with it too; "He that believeth in the Son of God, hath everlasting life." He that believeth with this faith hath that life in possession which shall be everlasting life, as one end of the thread that runs into eternity; that life that

admits of no intermission, but hath the beginnings of it already—" he that believeth in me shall never die," as our Saviour saith, John ii. 26. He hath that life in him that shall never expire. But can any think they have an actual title to eternal life, to the glories hereafter to be revealed, who are not sons, who are not born of God? It is an inheritance, and who shall inherit but sons? it is called so many and many times. 1 Pet. i. 3. the apostle solemnly blesseth God for "having begotten them again unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." The title to this everlasting blessedness and glory and life is connected with this faith; but it is plain it is also connected with sonship to God; and therefore it is equally connected with regeneration, wherein the sonship hath its foundation, for none can be sons that are not born of him.

(5.) Both this faith and regeneration do owe themselves to the same primary sovereign cause, the Divine Spirit, which shows them most strictly to be connected. This faith is from the Holy Ghost, and this new birth is from the Holy Ghost also; there is but one cause of both, they are produced by the agency of one and the same Spirit, and therefore cannot but be connected. This faith, wherever it is, is a God-begotten thing; it is a thing that is of divine descent. When the apostle Peter owns Christ so expressly, Matt. xvi. 16, 17. "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," (which is the faith the text speaks of,) —"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And how plainly are we told, 1 Cor. xii. 3. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, (which is the same thing as to say, he is the Christ; Lord being the known title of the Mediator's office, and of the Messiah in the New Testament, and in many places of the Old,) but by the Holy Ghost." And is not the same Holy Ghost the immediate author of the work of regeneration? "Except a man be born again" of the Spirit, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The same Spirit that begets faith, the same Spirit regenerates the soul into the Divine image and likeness by which they are born of God. And,

(6.) The same Gospel is the means of the one and the other, of begetting this faith, and of this same divine birth, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," of the Gospel; and it is the same Gospel, as the means, that souls are regenerate and born again. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth," James i. 18. and 1 Pet. i. 23. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God," that word "that liveth and abideth for ever"—when all flesh, as the grass, withers; "and this is that word" (saith he) "which by the Gospel is preached unto you." It is by it you are born again, so that there is a connexion too in the secondary or instrumental cause, the Gospel, as well as in the first and most noble cause, the Spirit of God.

(7.) There is a connexion in one and the same effect, as for instance, victory over the world. Every one that is a sincere believer is a victor over this world too. You may see both a little below the text in this same chapter, "Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? or, the Christ, which is all one. And then there is,

(8.) A connexion in respect of the end of the one and the other. What any are supposed to be brought to by this faith, it can never be brought about, or the end at which that agency can never be attained, but by intervening regeneration. Why is God so solicitous to have men brought to this faith in this world? Why were there commissions so early given forth for Christianizing the world? "Go, and teach all nations"—and let this be the sum of what is taught—"Repent and believe the Gospel." Why is this faith to be spread through the world? It was certainly for the honour and glory both of the Father and the Son; but shall either be glorified by having in this world only an unregenerate race, professing faith in Christ, but being like other men? More may be said of this hereafter. But, oh! that in the mean time it might be seriously thought of, what we live under the Gospel for, and what we are called unto the profession of the Christian name for. No valuable end can be so much as thought of, that will even be reached without being born of God. I know not what God is doing among us at this day; we hear little, in comparison, of his ways on souls, what is done upon the hearts and spirits of men; we know the Christian name is generally professed among us, we all go under one denomination of Christians; but, oh! think, think again and again, what an unregenerate Christian will come to at last! a Christian, and not born of God! a Christian, and nothing of the divine nature in me, no likeness to God, no filial disposition towards him. If we have a Gospel amongst us that hath made us nothing else but Christians in name, nominal Christians, shall our felicity hereafter be like our Christianity here? Will we be content with that? Will the shadow of heaven serve our turn? That will prove a real hell. And there will be a like reality in our heaven as there is in our Christianity.

SERMON XLIX.*

1 John v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

We shall now go on to show in the next place,

2. What connexion this is; or, to let you see how these two are connected with one another—Believing "Jesus to be the Christ," and being "born of God." And, to any thinking, considering mind, this cannot but be a very desirable thing, when we meet with such a positive affirmation as this, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God," to be able to perceive the very juncture, the very point of coincidence, between these two, wherein they do meet, and (as it were) run into one another; for otherwise it may seem strange to have the one of these so expressly affirmed of the other. And one that hath no discerning of this same juncture may say, How should this be, that there should be such an assertion of so great a thing concerning them that do "believe Jesus to be the Christ?" This seems to be one of the easiest things in the world, to believe Jesus to be the Christ. And I would fain know (may such a one say) how it should come to pass, that a man cannot believe Jesus to be the Christ, but he must have so great a thing as this said of him, that he is born of God? Wherein hath the one so much to do with the other, believing Jesus to be the Christ, and being born of God?

That alone which makes the matter seem strange and difficult is, that men generally have too low thoughts of this same faith. This believing, in particular, Jesus to be the Christ, the difference lies here, whether this believing is to be reckoned a divine, or merely a human thing. If it be looked upon as a thing of mere human original, then any body would wonder that upon one's believing Jesus to be the Christ, such a thing as this should be said of him, he is born of God, the greatest thing sure that can be said of a mortal creature! But we are taught to reckon this faith to be a divine thing, of divine original. When the apostle Peter, in the name of the rest of the apostles, professeth this faith, Who am I? saith our Saviour; whom do ye say I am? (when there were various opinions of the people about him at that time, and some said one thing, and some said another;) but "whom do you say that I am?" Why, saith Peter, "thou art Christ the Son of the living God," Matt. xvi. 16. And then in verse 17. our Saviour replies, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona;" thou art a blessed man. Why is he blessed for this? "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." All the question is, whether this faith we have about this thing be a self-sprung faith, or a heaven-sprung faith; if it be self-sprung, then it is

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only the product of flesh and blood, but flesh and blood cannot reach so high as to produce any such faith as this: neither his own flesh nor blood, which signifies his human nature; nor the same nature as it is among others, by transmitting whereof from one to another this faith would only be a traditional thing; but the product of flesh and blood which cannot reveal such a thing; but if it be such a faith as is immediately from himself, then blessed art thou that so believest; this faith is not from thee or other men, no way from flesh and blood, or human nature, but from my Father which is in heaven.

And then it will cease to be thought a strange thing, that he that so believes should be said to be born of God; for this being born of God, it is but the work of the Divine power working the soul to a conformity to himself, and impressing it with its own image. And this faith it seems is from God too, as well as the great conforming change that then passeth upon the soul when one is brought to believe. And this will make it appear the most reasonable thing in the world, that he that by the Divine power and grace is brought to believe, is born of God; for if it be from God that men are made so to believe, it is not faith from itself, but of God's own ingenerating in my soul. Then it must be considered, if God do this work to make me believe with this faith, he doth it for some end worthy of God, for there is no rational agent but works for an end; and he that is the most perfectly intelligent, the most absolutely perfect and all-comprehending mind, cannot but have the greatest and highest designs in what he doth by his own immediate operation. And therefore he must be understood to have done this work, in making a man thus to believe for an end suitable to himself, worthy of God. And then, I pray, what end worthy of him can be attained, by making a man to believe, if he do not (as it were) new beget him at the same time? He is capable of serving no end, no valuable end, no great end, no end wherein he shall at once be serviceable to God and happy in himself, if God do not regenerate him.

But look to these two things more narrowly, and you will see how they meet, and how close a jointure there is between them, so as the matter will be above dispute. It will make its way into every mind that considers the case duly and aright, "That he that believes Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God;" and in order hereunto, (that this may make its way with more advantage,) you may consider how fully that which is equivalent is said of the same thing. Do but look to chap. iv. of this epistle, and the 15th verse, "Whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Pray consider it; what is this less than that such a man is born of God? The divine fulness is come in upon him. God and he do indwell one another. Whoever he is that confesseth, believingly confesseth, that this "Jesus is the Son of God;" for this is all one as believing Jesus to be the Christ. We find them often put together to signify the same; that if one he expressed, the other is implied, as in that Matt. i. 16. "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God;" and so John vi. 69. "We believe, and are sure that thou art Christ the Son of the living God." And again, John xx. last verse, "These things are written (this book I have now written—this Gospel is written all for this purpose,) that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life through his name." And you may easily apprehend, that confessing this implies the belief of it. No man that is sincere will confess what he doth not believe; "Whosoever doth confess so much that this Jesus is the Son of God, dwelleth in God, and God in him." This is no less a thing than being born of God.

And that we may pursue our scope the more closely, let us but cast our eye upon the two parts that are said to be conjoined. And here I must remind you only of what in general was said about this believing "Jesus to be the Christ;" to wit, that it is not one single and incomplex thing, but that it is complicated of more things than one. As,

(1.) This believing Jesus to be the Christ, it speaks a vivid, strong, heart-assured persuasion, that the thing is true; of the truth of the thing, not as taken up at random, but as taken up from the divine testimony. And because (as it followeth in the same chapter) this is the record that God hath given us of his Son, it is believed that Jesus is the Christ, not because men have told us so; it is received "not as the word of man, but as the word of God," 1 Thess. ii. 13. And in the 10th verse of this chapter, "He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself." And,

(2.) This believing doth by consequence imply the opening of the heart to him, to receive him as such. Believing and receiving him are inseparable; as you see when the same thing is predicated of this same subject, John i. 12. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." Pray, why do they that so believe in his name as to receive him, bear the title of "the sons of God?" He gives them all the privilege to be his sons, why is that? The next words tell you, without which it had been very absurd to have such an appellation. Why are believers so called the sons of God? Is it an empty name and title? No, they are born of God, who were "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Sure they must be his sons that are born of him; but they that believe in him, so as to receive the Son of God, that faith opening its way into their hearts, they are said to be born, not of the will of man, but of God. That heart-assuring persuasion concerning him, presently makes the soul open to him, and entertain him; take him in and appropriate him, and say, "My Lord and my God," so as that he comes to have an indwelling in the soul by that faith.

And then do but consider what was generally said concerning being born of God, that it makes that person of whom this can be truly said, a God-like creature. He is transformed by it into the Divine image and likeness; it is a universal change, and a permanent one passing upon the soul, and continuing in it even to the end, by which he is made a God-like creature; to wit, by which his image is anew impressed and restored in this soul. And these things being finished, let us now consider how inseparable these must needs be, so believing Jesus is the Christ, and being born of God.

Take this faith, as it is such a firm persuasion, a heart-assuring persuasion, upon the authority of God himself, that this Jesus is the Christ, or is his Son. Take it thus, and there are two things in the matter believed, that gave it the advantage to be so powerfully operative in the soul when so believed, as you have heard. Therefore consider distinctly the matter believed, and the nature of this believing it so as it hath been opened to you. The matter believed, when a man believeth this Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God (for believing him to be the Christ involves the belief of his deity, of his divine nature, in respect whereof he is said to be God's own Son, in the most eminent sense, the only-begotten Son of God, which can signify no less than that he is God.) Why, about this you have two things to consider, that will let us see how mighty an advantage such a matter must have, to be thus operative and transforming upon the soul, that it shall be said hereupon truly to be born of God; to wit, first the greatness of the thing itself, and, secondly, the kindness of the design.

[1.] The greatness of the thing, that this Jesus should be the Christ, the Son of God. This Jesus was then lately seen upon the face of this earth, a man like other men. What is believed concerning him? Why, that he is the Christ, the Son of God. That deity did inhabit and dwell in the flesh of this man, here is God manifested in the flesh. How great a thing is this! The serious, vivid belief of it, cannot but affect wonderfully; even in an ordinary way, it cannot but have a mighty aptitude to affect the soul deeply that so believes; for, as was said, to believe this with a divine faith, it is to believe it because God made me believe it, not only by his authority, upon which this faith relies, but by his power, by which this faith is wrought, and then I consider the thing believed accordingly. This Jesus is the Christ; he that appears to other men but as an ordinary man, appears to me the Son of God. The Divine glory shines in him to the eye of my soul. He was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory as the glory of the only-begotten Son of

the Father, full of grace and truth. To believe this with such a heart-assuring faith and persuasion, is to believe the greatest thing that ever was heard of. That this Son of God should be a man, or that this man, lately seen with eyes in the world, and handled with hands, is the very Son of God, this tends to form the soul to veneration by the very greatness of the thing itself. And God, when he works this mighty work of regeneration upon the soul, he works by means, by apt and suitable means; means suitable to the work to be wrought, and suitable to the subject to be wrought upon. Now what can be so apt a means to work such a transforming work as this upon an intelligent subject, (as the soul of man is,) as to possess it with the belief of such a thing: here I have sent my own Son among you, he that was the brightness of my own glory, and the express image of my own person; I have here wrapt him up in human flesh, and he is in the flesh, to live among you, and at length to die among you, like one of you, as a human creature. What work must this make in the soul of a man, when believed in such a way as you have heard? It disposeth to veneration of that deity inhabiting in human flesh, and so works somewhat naturally upon the soul of a man, (as it is God's way, he doth apply himself to our natural faculties,) to enlighten the mind, to mollify, change, and subdue the will. These are natural powers in us; but these would do nothing to the pleasing of God, or saving us, if not wrought upon by a Divine almighty power. Now God doth sublimate the natural principle by this means.

There is such a thing as natural religiousness, man having been born of God at first, and his soul the very divine offspring, (whereupon God is said to be the father of our spirits,) he hath a natural impression of God upon him. But it governs not but where regeneration takes place; it is a principle laid asleep: but such a faith of this thing brought in upon the soul, revives the principle of a natural religiousness and veneration of God. You see how far the same notion once did work upon a mistake in that Acts xiv. 11. when Paul and Barnabas had wrought miracles upon the impotent man, and preached such admirable divine doctrine that ravished and astonished the souls of their hearers, they immediately cried out, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." And Paul, because he was chief speaker, he is called Mercurius, and Barnabas was called Jupiter, two of the most famous deities. And they are intent upon the business of sacrificing to them as incarnate deities. And the apostles had no small difficulty to withhold them from worshipping, and offering solemn sacrifices to them. So mightily did this mistaken notion operate.

Now, then, that which is the very truth of the thing comes to be believed in good earnest, as certain, concerning this person, this Jesus. Here is God come down in the likeness of a man, he that was in the form of God, found in fashion as a man, made in the likeness of man. Christians must be more stupid than those pagans, if it affect not and make no motion stir in their hearts, so as to say and think, What a wonder is this! What a great thing! That God should have come down in the likeness of man, that we should have had an incarnate God dwelling in this wretched world among us! How amazing a thing is this! This, I say, tends to excite even in the very nature of the thing. And God, when he works, works by suitable means. In the nature of the thing there is a suitableness to excite that natural religion that's in the souls of men, which cannot be totally abolished, but is suppressed. And such a thing as this hath a tendency to awaken it, when the Divine Spirit sets in (as it will set in with truth, when it would not with falsehood) to restore in man that worshipping, adoring disposition towards God.

This is the first and most considerable thing in the work of regeneration, or the new creature; for what are men regenerated for? What makes the necessity of regeneration? It is that men were alienated from God, cut off from God, and therefore must have a nature put into them that would incline them unto God; they were alienated from the divine life. Regeneration is necessary for this, to incline the souls of men to live that life; to live upon God, and to God, and for God. So that when you consider what the work of regeneration is necessary for, you will think that whatsoever will serve that end, to wit, inclining men unto God, fitting them for his communion, and for a state of subordination and absolute devotedness to him, must be the principal aim of regeneration. It is to set the spirits of men right in their disposition and posture towards God, to whom they were strangers, and from whom they were gone off. And you see how the greatness of this thing did very much impress the minds of those pagans; they thought the gods were come down in the likeness of men, and now they are all for worshipping them. But besides the greatness of the thing, which is first to be considered in the matter believed, consider also,

[2.] The kindness of the design. This Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, a deity, inhabiting under this flesh. What is this for? What is the design of it? A great thing, as such tends greatly to affect the heart of a man, if it be not stupified into a stone, a rock, a clod. But when a great thing appears to be in conjunction with the kindest design towards them, this gives it a most important additional advantage, to affect the spirits of men beyond all that can be thought. What should be the meaning of it, that God should come down and put on man, and that this man should be God? Why, it was in order to his being Christ, the Messiah, the Mediator between God and man, as that name imports, so that this was with a particular reference to us, and with some very gracious intendment towards us. And therefore look upon this truth to be believed, this Jesus is the Christ, according to that kind and benign aspect which it hath upon us; and so it tends beyond all that can be thought to work with the greatest efficacy as means, though the thing would never be done without the Divine Spirit upon the spirits of men, to renew and regenerate them, so as that thereupon they should be said to be born of God.

God works upon the nature of man as he is a creature made up of reason and love, according to his natural state; and so he is according to what remainders there are in him of that nature which was first given, and which is still human nature; "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love," Hosea xi. 4. If there be such a thing as love in the nature of man not quite abolished, not quite erased, which by such means as this, that Holy Spirit shall apply itself to a man's spirits to draw him by these cords, that love which he hath in him being taken hold of by the divine love appearing in this design, this gives it advantages to operate with the greatest efficacy that can be thought.

And do but see how this is cleared, by considering that passage I mentioned to you but now in the fourth chapter of this epistle and verse 15. looked upon in reference to what immediately goes before in verse 14. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Now look upon the foregoing words, and you will see which way this works to open the soul unto God, so as that he comes to have an indwelling in that soul, and that soul an indwelling in him. "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." I pray regard this, a mighty stress lies upon it, "We see and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world;" and now it is subjoined, that "whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, dwelleth in him, and he in God." Why? because this can be understood or believed under no other notion than as a Saviour to it, a Saviour to men; he came upon a saving design; this lets him into the soul, "God dwelleth in him, and he in God;" and do you think that this person must not be regenerate? what can it be but that he must be born of God, when God is come into so near a union hereupon? And what lets him in and brings about this union? why, believing that he came as a Saviour into the world, we believe and testify that he came to do the office of a Saviour, and then God dwelleth in us, and we in God. There is that union hereby brought about between God and you, that it is impossible you should not be born of God. A new nature must hereupon come upon you, making you God-like.

And this will most distinctly appear, if we consider what his coming as a Saviour implies: as his name signifies Jesus, Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour is anointed and authorized to this work of saving. When Christ was to come

you know what was said by himself, and by such as gave testimony concerning him, that he "came a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in him should not walk in darkness." That same light that lets us see what he was, lets us see what we were too; the same light that we discover him by, we discover ourselves by. And what have we to discern of ourselves, but that we are a company of lost creatures, impure, guilty wretches, that have inhabited darkness and death? that are cast off from God, have lost all interest in him, and all inclination towards him? darkened creatures, in every faculty and power? under the dominion of sin, and in captivity to Satan, the evil one, the prince of the darkness of this world, and he that hath the power of that death that hath spread itself in all the gloominess and terrors of it over souls? The same light that reveals him, reveals this, and discovers our state, and thereupon shows that he as a Saviour hath to do such things as these.

First, That he is to take away our sins, the great make-bate between God and us. This to be believed, when we believe Jesus to be the Christ, that he came and was manifested to take away our sins. In him there being no sin, as in the third chapter of this epistle, verse 5. Oh, how will this transport a soul that hath once had but the convictive light (the thing before supposed) let in upon it to reveal Christ to it, and to reveal it to itself. Take away sin and I am a happy creature indeed, the only thing that ever hurt me, ever did me any harm. This Jesus was manifested for to take away sin; he is a Saviour for that, a Jesus for that, to save his people from their sins. And that is the reason of his name, Matt. i. 21. And,

Secondly, To vindicate us from under the power of the devil; for we were all led captive by him at his will. And this world did lie in the wicked one, that first apostate, that great enemy that hath trained man in to be accomplices with him in a rebellion against heaven; we are led captive by him at his will; and we followed naturally the course of this world, and "the power of the prince of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2, 3. It is Christ's design as a Saviour to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. If a man be apprehensive of this, as when there is such light concerning Christ (there is such light concerning our state too) in this respect, he will be ready to cry out, Oh wretched man that I am! a vassal to the devil! he hath led me captive at his will, could do with me what he would, hath had his will upon me! Oh then to be rescued out of this captivity! Oh blessed Jesus! when Jesus is believed to be the Christ in order to this, it is not strange it should work such a work in the soul of a man. And,

Thirdly, His business, as a Saviour, is to reconcile us to God, to bring about amity and friendship between God and us. When light is let into the soul to see its state, this is the most covetable of all things that can be thought of. There hath been a distance and strangeness and enmity between God and me: he shall be the welcomest in all the world to me that shall make peace, that shall reconcile me to God, that shall procure me his favour, wherein stands my life. Jesus, as a Saviour, is to do this. He came to be a Saviour, a Jesus, with this kind design, and to make this overture to the soul; Come, there is a warfare, and hath been of long continuance between God and you; I will be a reconciler, I will make peace. O blessed Jesus! "blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," upon such an errand as this; for in his favour stands my very life. And,

Fourthly, As a Saviour, his design is to renew the divine image in the soul: Come, thou art a ruined creature, I will repair thy ruins; a degenerate creature, I will make thee a new creature, to learn the truth as it is in Jesus, to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put off the old man which is corrupt, and to put on the new man; I come to new create thee, I come to put a new frame upon thee throughout. And,

Fifthly, He hereupon must have this for his design, to unite us to God, to bring about a union between God and us now that the reconciliation of him to us, and the transformation wrought in us, make us capable of it; his design is to bring things to that pass with us, that our souls shall now run into union with God. Having the Divine stamp put upon them, and a divine nature put into them, they cannot be held off any longer, they must unite with him, for they are become God-like; this is Christ's work as a Saviour, and he makes the soul apprehensive of it, and to apprehend this as the most desirable thing in all the world. As disconformity to God is the most heavy pressure upon the enlightened soul, which he hath in some measure made apprehensive. "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden." It is he that makes the soul weary of its deformity, and the ugliness that was upon it. Oh what an odious creature am I! what a pressure doth this lay upon me! that now I am become a hateful creature, who once had the divine image upon me, hereupon nothing could ensue but distance between God and me: Well, saith he, I will put an end to all this, I will make up all this matter, I will put a new heart and new spirit into thee, I will write my law in thy heart, I will incline it to God, I will unite it to God; and in so doing, there shall be such a distance and such a strangeness between God and thee no longer. And,

Sixthly, It is by consequence hereupon his work (by doing all this) to perfect the nature of man within itself; gradually and inchoatively now; perfectly and consummately hereafter; he will absolutely perfect it at length. Is he restoring the Divine image in us, making us who were darkness to be light in the Lord, making us, who had the image of hell upon us, to bear the image of God and heaven? Is he not then perfecting our nature by all this? making a new man? "Behold (saith he) I make all things new." That is the Mediator's great undertaking; that is the undertaking of this Jesus, whom we believe to be the Christ. And hereupon,

Seventhly, He brings about (and that is part of his kind design) a continued communion and intercourse between God and us, so that we may live with God every day. Thou shalt not live a wandering creature, and a vagabond, upon the face of this earth, as thou hast done; thou hast now the privilege that thou mayst walk with God every day. Sin is taken away, thou art fetched from under the captivity of the devil, thou art reconciled to God, his image is renewed in thee, thou art re-united to him, thy nature is in a degree perfected, and shall be absolutely perfected; and thereupon thou art to have daily commerce with God in continual communion. This thy kind Saviour is doing for thee: believing this Jesus to be the Christ, thou believest all this, if you understand yourselves in what you profess to believe, and what lies before you as the object of your faith. And then in the last place,

Eighthly, All this in order to his introducing you into the presence of the Divine glory at last, all doth but tend to one end, to make you participants of the "inheritance of the saints in light, and to present you holy and unblamable, without spot and faultiness, before the presence of the Divine glory with exceeding joy," as it is in the latter end of the epistle of Jude. In that conspicuous glory of his, or before his glorious face, where you are to have your abode statedly and everlastingly. This is his design. They believe Jesus to be the Christ, understandingly, as they are made to do so by the Divine Spirit. They believe all this by consequence, this is their notion which they have concerning this Jesus that they believe to be the Christ; he is to do all this for such souls as mine, and upon my soul upon believing in him.

And then the soul, receiving him upon believing all this concerning him, being hereby opened to receive him, he hereby first acquires a right to all gracious communications from him; and then, secondly, hath the actual possession of those communications themselves; for all must be in and through Christ, that Spirit of Christ which is to do all is given upon his account and for his sake, upon being united to him; to wit, the soul is brought into union with him by that Spirit; and upon that union it diffuseth its influences through the soul, and possesses it for God, takes it for his temple. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Holy Ghost dwelleth in you?" I Cor. iii. 16. And this cannot but infer then, that there should be such a regenerating work by which a foundation is laid for the truth of this assertion, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." For all these things

to be done by Christ are matter of promise, and all the promises are yea and amen, only in Christ, 2 Cor. i. 20. And what are these promises for? we are made partakers of these exceeding great and precious promises, or they are given to us, that by them we might be made partakers of the divine nature which is the very work of regeneration itself, the imparting that divine nature to us; all this promised good is in and by Christ; and believing him to be the Christ, we become entitled to all these promises, and they come of course (we having such a title) to be accomplished and made good.

And thus nothing is more manifest than that which to men might seem strange at first, that it should positively be said, "Whosoever believeth Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God;" it cannot but be so, if you do but observe the coincidency how these two things, believing Jesus to be the Christ, and being born of God, run into one another.

A SERMON,

DIRECTING WHAT WE ARE TO DO AFTER A STRICT INQUIRY,

WHETHER OR NO WE TRULY LOVE GOD.

THE EPISTLE.

You may remember what a solemn awe was upon our congregation lately at the preaching of the ensuing sermon, and that not a few tears dropped at the hearing of it. This engaged some of us to entreat our reverend pastor to give way, that by this publication it might be accommodated to your review. We know it is no more than one single thread that belongs to many other discourses upon the same subject which have preceded, and to others which we hope will follow; but such as by your notes and memories may easily be wrought into the whole piece. It is but a thread, yet a golden one, and may contribute to the service of the tabernacle, as in Exod. xxv. We know it is a great condescension in him to suffer such an imperfect piece to come abroad, but when the reverend dean of C. and other learned persons of the church of England, have denied themselves by suffering such small prints for the general good; we are persuaded, though he gave not a positive judgment for it, he will not dislike that which is for your service, and is intended to go no further. Receive it therefore, read it over and over, and allot some times for the putting in practice the grand examination urged upon us, and do your utmost to persuade all under your roofs and commands to do the like; that that which was preached with so much holy fervour and affection, may beget in us and ours a bright flame of divine love to our good Lord, to whom we commend you, and are

Your affectionate brethren

and servants, &c.

JOHN V. 42.

BUT I KNOW YOU, THAT YE HAVE NOT THE LOVE OF GOD IN YOU.

You have heard several discourses from this scripture, and from another in the same Gospel, that we spoke to alternately with this at several times; "Thou knowest all things, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," ch. xx. 17. And that which after doctrinal explication hath hitherto been insisted on, was an inquiry into the state of our own case in reference hereunto. Are we lovers of God in Christ, or are we not? There have been many things signified to you, by which this case might be discerned; and that which remains, and most naturally follows hereupon, is to direct you what you are to do, supposing your case, upon inquiry, to be this or that. Why such an inquiry, if it hath been attended to at all amongst us; it must have signified somewhat, it must, one would think, have some or other result, and what should we suppose it to result into, but either this, I do not love God, or I do. These are most vastly different cases, it's a trial upon the most important point that could have been discussed among us; and supposing there should be two sorts among us, the effect of it is as if a parting line should be drawn through a congregation, severing the living from the dead; here are so many living, and so many dead souls. Indeed it is a very hard supposition, to suppose that there should be any one in all this assembly that doth not love God; a very hard supposition, I am extremely loth to make such a supposition; I would, as much as in me is, not suppose it. For truly it were a very sad case that we should agree so far as we do in many other things, and not agree in this; that is, that we should agree so many of us to come all and meet together here in one place, agree to worship God together, agree to sing his praises together, to seek his face together, to call upon his name together, to hear his word together, and not agree all to love God together; the God whom we worship, whom we invocate, whose name we bear, and unto whom we all of us pretend. For who is there among us will say, "I have no part in God?" And it were a most lovely thing, a most comely, desireable thing, that all such worshipping assemblies, even this worshipping assembly, at this time, and all times, could still meet together under this one common notion, truly and justly assumed, as so many lovers of God. We are sure there will be an assembly, a general assembly, in which no one that is not a lover of God will be found; an assembly of glorious angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, a numerous, an innumerable assembly, in which not one but a sincere lover of God. What a blessed thing were it, if our assemblies on earth were such! But we cannot speak more gently, than to say there is cause to fear they are not such; it hath been actually otherwise among a people professing the true religion; "They come before thee, and sit before thee as my people, and with their mouth show much love; with their face, or in external appearance and show, (*ore tenus*,) they are lovers of God, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. If such a case hath been actually, it is still possible, and is still too much to be feared to be but too common a case.

But now supposing that there be different cases among us, in reference to these different cases there must be very different deportments, and a very different management of ourselves. This text more naturally leads me to direct what is to be done upon the supposition of the sadder case,

most deplorably sadder, that one is no lover of God; though we must be led on thereto by some things common to both cases.

Therefore that I may proceed by steps, this is requisite in the first place, that is, that we make one judgment of our case or another; that is, that we bring the matter some way to a judgment, not let so great a thing as this hang always in suspense. It's very plain (a little to press this) that,

First, While the case hangs thus in suspense it suspends the proper subsequent duty too that should follow hereupon. What canst thou do that is certainly fit and proper for thy own soul, when thou dost not understand the state of its case? How canst thou guide thy course, or tell which way to apply or turn thyself? And,

Secondly, To press it further, consider that the not bringing, or omitting to bring, this matter to a judgment, if it proceed from indifferency and neglect, speaks the greatest contempt that can be both of God and thine own soul, the greatest that can be; that is, now supposing the question be asked, Dost thou love God? or dost thou not? And thou unconcernedly answerest, I can't tell, I don't know; why, what to be carelessly ignorant whether thou lovest God, or lovest him not, there could not be a more concluding medium against thee, that thou dost not love him. It speaks thee at once to despise both God and thyself; what, to have this matter hang in indifferency through neglect, whether thou lovest God, or lovest him not? It shows that neither regard to God, nor a just value of thyself, makes thee care whether thou art a holy man or a devil. For know, that the loving God, or not loving him, does more distinguish a saint from a devil, than wearing a body or not wearing it can do. A devil, if he did love God, were a saint; a man that doth not love God, he is no other, though he wear a body, than an incarnate devil: It's the want of love to God that makes the devil a devil, makes him what he is.

Secondly, For further direction, take heed of passing a false judgment in this case, a judgment contrary to the truth. For,

First, That's to no purpose, it will avail thee nothing, you can't be advantaged by it, for yours is not the supreme judgment. There will be another and superior judgment to yours, that will control and reverse your false judgment, and make it signify nothing; it is therefore to no purpose. And,

Secondly, It is a great piece of insolency, for it will be to oppose your judgment to his certain and most authorized judgment; who, if this be your case, hath already judged it, and tells you, "I know you, that you have not the love of God in you." It belongs to him by office to judge, "The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son," as a little above in this chapter; from what will you depose him? dethrone him? disannul his judgment? condemn him? that you may be righteous? (to borrow that, Job xl. 8.)

Thirdly, It's most absurd, supposing such characters as you have heard do conclude a man in this case, yet to judge himself a lover of God. If against the evidence of such characters a man should pronounce the wrong judgment, it would be the most unreasonable and absurd thing imaginable; for then let us but suppose, how that wrong judgment must lie related to those fore-mentioned characters, that have been given you. Let me remind you of some of them,—he that never put forth the act of love to God, cannot say he hath the principle,—he that is not inclined to do good to others, for the sake of God, 1 John iii. 17.—he that indulges himself in the inconsistent love of this world, 1 John ii. 15.—he that lives not in obedience to his known laws, John xiv. 15. 1 John v. 3. (with many more.) Now if you will pass a judgment of your case, against the evidence of such characters, come forth then, let the matter be brought into clear sight, put your sense into plain words, and this it will be: "I am a lover of God, or I have the love of God in me, though I can't tell that ever I put forth one act of love towards him in all my life; I have the love of God in me, though I never knew what it meant to do good to any for his sake, against the express words of Scripture: How dwelleth the love of God in such a man? I have the love of God in me, though I have constantly indulged myself in that which he maketh an inconsistent love, Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. I have the love of God in me, though I would never allow him to rule me, though I never kept his commandments with a design to please him, and comply with his will. I have the love of God in me, though I never valued his love. I have the love of God in me, though I never cared for his image, for his presence, for his converse, for his interest and honour." I beseech you consider how all this will sound! Can any thing be more absurdly spoken? and shall it be upon such improbabilities, or impossibilities as these, that any man will think it fit to venture his soul? "I'll pawn my soul upon it, I'll run the hazard of my soul upon it, I am a lover of God for all this?" Would you venture any thing else so besides your soul? Would you venture a finger so, an eye so? It's to place the name, where there is nothing of the thing; it's to place the name of the thing upon its contrary. The soul of man can't be in an indifferency towards God, but if there be not love and propension, there is aversion, and that's hatred. And what! is hatred to be called love? If you bear that habitual disposition of soul towards God, to go all the day long with no inclination towards him; no thought of him; no design to please him, to serve him, to glorify him; if this be your habitual temper, and usual course, will you call this love? Shall this contrariety to the love of God be called love to him? You may as well call water fire, or fire water, as so grossly mis-name things here; and therefore again, in the

Third place, that we may advance somewhat, Plainly and positively pass the true judgment. If the characters that you have heard do carry the matter so, come at last plainly and positively to pass the true judgment of your own case, though it be a sad one; and tell your own souls, "Oh! my soul, though I must *sadly* say it, I must say it, all things conclude and make against thee: the love of God is not in thee." Why is it not as good this should be the present issue at your own bar, and at the tribunal of your own conscience, as before God's judgment seat? Why should you not concur and fall in with Christ the authorized Judge, whose judgment is according to truth? Why this is a thing that must be done, the case requires it, and God's express word requires it, 1 Cor. xi. 31. Other previous and preparatory duty plainly enjoined, doth by consequence enjoin it, and requires that it follow, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. What is examination for, but in order to judgment? It must therefore be done, and I shall show how it must be done, and proceed to some further directions.

First, You must do it solemnly. Take yourselves aside at some fit season or another, inspect your own souls, review your life, consider what your wonted frame and your ordinary course has been. And if you find, by such characters as heretofore were given, this is the truth of your case; then let judgment pass upon deliberation: "Oh my soul! thou hast not the love of God in thee, whatsoever thine appearances hitherto have been; and whatsoever thy peace and quiet hath been, thou hast not the love of God in thee:" let it be done with solemnity.

Secondly, Do it in the sight of God, as before him, as under his eye, as under the eye of Christ. That eye that is as a flame of fire, that searches hearts, and tries reins; arraign thyself before him. "Lord, I have here brought before thee a guilty soul, a delinquent soul, a wretched and horrid delinquent, a soul that was breathed into me by thee, an intelligent, understanding soul, a soul that hath love in its nature, but a soul that never loved thee."

Thirdly, Judge thyself before him, as to the *fact*, and as to the *fault*. As to the *fact*: "I have never yet loved thee, O God, I own it to thee; Lord, I accuse, I charge my soul with this before thee, this is the truth of the fact, I have not the love of God in me." And charge thyself with the *fault*. "Oh horrid creature that I am! I was made by thee, and don't love thee; thou didst breathe into me this rensonable immortal spirit, and it doth not love thee; it is thy own offspring, and does not love thee. It can never be blessed in any thing but thee, and it does not love thee." And then hereupon, in the

Fourth place, Join to this *self-judging*, *self-loathing*. That we are to *judge ourselves* is a law laid upon us by the supreme Law-giver, the one Law-giver, that hath power to save, and to destroy. And his word that enjoins it as plainly tells us what must go with it, that this self-judging must

be accompanied with *self-loathing*, Ezek. vi. 9. chap. xx. 43. and xxxvi. 31. Do God that right upon thyself, that thou mayest tell him, Blessed God! I do even hate myself, because I find I have not loved thee; and I cannot but hate myself, and I never will be reconciled to myself, till I find I am reconciled to thee. This is doing justice: doth not the Scripture usually, and familiarly, so represent to us the great turn of the soul to God; when poor sinners become penitents and return, that they are brought to hate themselves, and loathe themselves in their own eyes? And is there any thing that can make a soul so loathsome *in itself*, or ought to make it so loathsome *to itself*, as not to love God, to be destitute of the love of God? And then,

Fifthly, Hereupon too, *pity* thyself, *pity* thy own soul. There is cause to *hate* it, to *loathe* it; and is there no cause to *pity* it, to lament it? Doth not this look like a lamentable case? "Oh! what a soul have I that can love any thing else, that can love trifles, that can love impurities, that can love sin; and can't love God, Christ, the most desirable good of souls. What a soul have I! What a monster in the creation of God, is this soul of mine!" Methinks you should set yourselves, if any of you can find this to be the case, to weep over your own souls. Some may see cause to say, "O my soul, thou hast in thee other valuable things, thou hast understanding in thee, judgment in thee, wit in thee; perhaps learning, considerable acquired endowments in thee; but thou hast not the love of God in thee. I can do many other commendable or useful things, I can discourse plausibly, argue subtlely, I can manage affairs dexterously, but I can't love God. Oh my soul, how great an essential dost thou want to all religion, to all duty, to all felicity! the one thing necessary thou wantest; thou hast every thing but what thou needest more than any thing, more than all things. And oh my soul, what is like at this rate to become of thee? where art thou to have thy eternal abode! to what regions of horror, and darkness, and woe art thou going? what society can be fit for thee? No lover of God! No lover of God! what, but of infernal accursed spirits, that are at utmost distance from him, and to whom no beam of holy vital light shall ever shine to all eternity! Thou, oh my soul, art self-abandoned to the blackness of darkness for ever. Thy doom is in thy breast, thy own bosom; thy no love to God is thy own doom, thy eternal doom; creates thee a present hell, and shows whither thou belongest."

Sixth place, Let a due *fear and solicitude* hereupon be set on work in thee. For consider thyself as one shortly to be arraigned before the supreme tribunal, and then here is the critical, vertical point upon which thy judgment turns; lovers of God, or no lovers of God. All are to be judged in reference to what they were, and did in the body, whether good or evil. As in 2 Cor. ch. v. ver. 10. What wast thou as to this point, while thou wast in the body? For the last judgment regards that former state, what thou didst, and what was thy wont as to this, whilst thou wast in the body. Therefore by the way no hope, after thou art gone out of the body: go out of the body, no lover of God, the departing soul, no lover of God, and this will be found your state at the judgment day. You are not to expect after death a Gospel to be preached, that you may then be reconciled to God. No; but what did you do in the body? According to that you are to be judged. Did you love God in this body while here, yea or no? And this is a trial upon the most fundamental point, for as all the law is comprehended in love, as was formerly hinted, if you be found guilty in this point, that you were no lover of God, totally destitute of the love of God; you were a perpetual underminer of his whole government, of the whole frame of his law, a disloyal creature, rebellious and false to the God that made you, to Jesus Christ that redeemed you by his blood. All disobedience and rebellion is summed up in this one word, *Having been no lover of God*; and won't it make any man's heart to meditate terror, to think of having such a charge as this likely to lie against him in the judgment of that day; that day, when the secrets of all hearts are to be laid open? Every work must be then brought into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good or evil, Eccles. xii. 14. And it will be to the confusion of many a one. It may be your no love of God was heretofore a great secret, you had a heart in which was no love of God; but it was a secret, you took not care to have it wrote in your forehead; you conversed with men so plausibly, nobody took you to be no lover of God, to have a heart disaffected to God. But now, out comes the secret, that which you kept for a great secret all your days, out comes the secret; and to have such a secret as this disclosed to that vast assembly, before angels and men! Here was a creature, a reasonable creature, an intelligent soul, that lived upon the Divine bounty and goodness so many years in the world below, and hid a false disloyal heart by a plausible show, and external profession of great devotedness to God, all the time of his abode in that world: Oh! what a fearful thing would it be to have this secret so disclosed! And do you think that all the loyal creatures, that shall be spectators and auditors in the hearing of that great day, will not all conceive a just and a loyal indignation against such a one when convicted of not loving God; convicted of not loving him that gave him breath, him whose he was, to whom he belonged, whose name he bore? What a fearful thing will it be to stand convicted so upon such a point as this! And sure, in the mean time, there is great reason for continual fear, why a man's heart should *meditate terror!* One would even think that all the creation should be continually every moment in arms against him! One would be afraid that every wind that blows, should be a deadly blast to destroy me! that when the sun shines upon me, all its beams should be turned into vindictive flames to execute vengeance upon me! I would fear that even the very stones in the street should fly against me, and every thing that meets me be my death! For what! I have not the love of God in me! What, to go about the streets from day to day with a heart void of the love of God! What a heart have I! *Fear* ought to be exercised in this case; we are bid to fear if we do evil against a human ruler; If thou do that which is evil be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain, Rom. xiii. 4. But if I be *such an evil-doer*, against the supreme Ruler, the Lord of heaven and earth; have I not reason to be afraid? and to think sadly with myself what will the end of this be? But yet I will add, in the

Seventh place, Don't *despair* for all this; God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, as in that, 2 Cor. ch. v. ver. 19. that sin might not be imputed. He is in Christ to reconcile you, to win hearts, to captivate souls to the love of God; for what else is reconciliation on our part? He is in Christ to reconcile, to conquer enmity, to subdue disaffected hearts, to make such souls call and cry, "My Lord, and my God! I have been a stranger to thee, I will through thy grace be so no longer." Therefore don't despair. Despair that ever you should do well without loving God, but don't despair you shall ever be brought to love him, by no means. You have to do with him that is the element of love, the God of love, the fountain of love, the great source of love, the fountain at once both of loveliness and love, whose *nature* is love, and is with his *name* in his Son, who was manifested in the flesh, full of grace and truth, *i. e.* sincerest love. He was incarnate love, love pointed at us, and is upon these terms able to transform all the world into love; the nature of God is love, 1 John iv. 16. and in Christ, he is Emmanuel, God with us, so the divine love hath a direct aspect upon us. Why then apply yourselves to him, turn yourselves towards him, open your souls to him; say to him, "Lord, flow in with all the mighty powers of thine own love upon my soul, thou that canst of stones raise up children and make them the true genuine sons of Abraham; (and there can be no such children without love;) oh dissolve this stone, this stone in my breast, mollify this obdurate heart, turn it into love!" How soon may it be done upon due application. He can quickly do it, draw thee into a love union with himself, so as that thou shouldst come to dwell in love; and dwell in God who is love, and he in thee. Then the foundations are surely laid, for all thy future duty, and for all thy future felicity. Then how pleasantly wilt thou obey, and how blessedly wilt thou enjoy God for ever! But such application must be made through Christ, and for the Spirit; which Spirit is the Spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind; as you have it in that first of the second to Tim. v. 7. But these things I can't now further insist upon.

A SERMON

ON THE THANKSGIVING DAY,

DECEMBER 2, 1697.

TO THE

RIGHT HONORABLE THE LORD HAVERSHAM.

I OFFER this discourse my honoured lord to your perusal, in confidence that the subject and design of it will be so far grateful to your lordship, as in some degree to atone for the imperfections of the management. I believe it will not offend against your lordship's very accurate judgment of things, that I have not been so swayed by an authority which hath signified much in our age, as to represent the natural state of man as a state of war; which either must signify man in his original constitution to have been a very ill-natured creature, or must signify his nature to be less ancient than himself. For I cannot doubt, but the author of that maxim would have disdained their way of speaking, who by nature mean vice; or to have been guilty of so pious a thought, that God at first made man any better thing than we find him. I shall the less passionately lament my infelicity, in losing the good opinion of men of that sentiment, if I stand right in your lordship's: not knowing any of your rank and figure in the world, with whom I count it a greater honour to agree in judgment, or do less fear to disagree.

In matters of secular concernment, it becomes me not to profess any judgment at all, besides the public; unto which in things of that nature, every private man's ought to be, and is, professedly resigned. Yet within that compass, notwithstanding the just esteem your lordship hath of the noble endowments, which do then illustriously shine in the military profession when there is a necessity of their being reduced to practice; I apprehend, that otherwise, your lordship hath no more grateful thoughts of war than I, nor more ungrateful of the necessary means of preserving peace. That which is the reproach of human nature, could never originally belong to it; nor can any thing more expose its ignominious depravation, than it should ever be necessary the sword should dispute right, and the longest decide it.

In the matters of religion, which is every man's business, and whose sphere as it is higher must be proportionably wider and more comprehensive, I hope it is your lordship's constant care to add unto clearness and rectitude of thought, the pleasantness of taste; and that you apprehend it to consist, not more in a scheme of notions, than of vital principles; and that your love to it proceeds from hence, that you relish it and feel you live by it. You are hereby fortified against the reproach that attends it from their contempt of it, who are every day assaulting heaven, and would have the war not ended, but only transferred thitherward. That which though some vent, and others admire, as wit, even paganism itself has condemned as foolishness. Your lordship is in no more danger to be altered hereby from your chosen course, than a man in his health and senses, by satyrs, against eating and drinking. I reckon your lordship is so taken up with the great things of religion, as to be less taken with the adventitious things men have thought fit to affix to it. I do not more emulate your lordship in any thing than a disdain of bigotry, nor more honour any thing I discern in you than true catholicism. And recounting what things and persons do truly belong to a church, I believe your lordship is not professedly of a larger church, as counting it too large for you, but too narrow; and that you affect not to be of a self-distinguished party. Nor, besides the opportunity of avowing the just honour and obligations I have to your lordship and your noble consort, with my sincere concern for your hopeful and numerous offspring, did any thing more invite this address to your lordship, than the agreeableness of such your sentiments, to the mind and spirit of,

My most honoured lord,
Your lordship's most justly devoted, and
most faithful, humble servant,
JOHN HOWE.

PSALM XXIX. 1.

THE LORD WILL BLESS HIS PEOPLE WITH PEACE.

You so generally know the occasion of this our solemn assembly at this time, that none can be in doubt concerning the suitableness of this portion of Scripture, for our present consideration. Our business is to celebrate the Divine goodness, in preserving our king abroad, and restoring him home in safety, after he had been the happy instrument of bringing about that peace, which puts a period to a long continued, wasting, and dubious war; under which we, and all Europe, have groaned these divers years. And if we find the favourable workings of Providence to concur and fall in with a divine word, pointing them to God's own people; as this for instance, The Lord will bless his people with peace; *i. e.* he will vouchsafe this blessing to his own people in the fittest season, as it must be understood; this adds so much the more grateful and pleasant relish to the mercy we are this day to acknowledge. It cannot but do so with right minds, unto which nothing is more agreeable than to desire and covet such favour, as God shows to his own people; and to be made glad with his inheritance, (Ps. cvi. 4, 5.) from an apprehension that there must be somewhat very peculiar in such mercy, as God vouchsafes to his own, to a people peculiar and select, severed and set apart for himself from the rest of men 'Tis true indeed that peace, abstractly considered, is

neither the appropriate nor the constant privilege of such a people; they neither alone enjoy it, nor at all times, when it is brought about, even for them, they have other partakers: but yet, such favours of Providence as are of larger extent, and reach to many besides God's own people, have a more peculiar, benign aspect upon them; and are attended, with reference to them; with such consequences, as wherein others, without being made of this people of his, are not sharers with them. Some intimation there is of this in this psalm, which the title speaks, a Psalm of David; and which some think to refer unto the wars managed by him in his time with the Moabites, signified by the wilderness of Kadesh; and the Syrians, signified by the cedars of Lebanon, of whom he speaks in the prophetic style, as if, by the terrible and amazing appearances of God's power against them, they were thunderstruck, like the trees of a forest, or as the hinds that are wont to inhabit amongst them. And so it is concluded, and shut up with this epiphonema in the end of the psalm; The Lord will give strength to his people, the Lord will bless his people with peace, *i. e.* he is in war their strength, and their felicity in peace; in war, he is the author of all that power wherewith they are enabled to oppose and overcome potent enemies; and in peace, he is their truly felicitating good, and makes them by his own vouchsafed presence a truly blessed people.

It is the latter of these, peace, unto which the present occasion confines us. And concerning that, we might in the

I. Place, note from the text, that wheresoever it is brought about, God is the author of it, "God will bless his people with peace." That title which the Scripture gives him, the God of peace, with the many expressions of like import, wherewith it abounds, can leave them in no doubt, concerning the Divine influence and agency in bringing about the grateful intervals of peace, after desolating bloody wars, who have any reverence for the Sacred Oracles. And indeed, to insist upon such a subject as this, in a case so plain, so acknowledged amongst men that believe the Bible, were to reproach the auditory, as if it were made up of sceptics and atheists, or of them that did not believe this world was made by God, or that it was made by him only by some casual stroke and without design; that he cared not for his reasonable, intelligent creatures, when he had made them, what became of them, nor did at all concern himself in their most considerable concernment. I shall not therefore insist upon this, which seems rather slid in, and supposed in the text, or taken for granted; for among a people in visible relation and subjection to God, it had been as great an incongruity industriously to assert and prove such a thing, as it would be, by an elaborate discourse to prove that there is a sun in the firmament unto men that continually partake and enjoy his light and influences; and to whose sense, the vicissitudes and distinctions of day and night by his presence and absence are brought under constant notice every twenty-four hours. I shall therefore, I say, pass on to what appears more directly to be the design of the text, and that seems to be twofold: first, to represent to us in general the great blessing of peace, wherein, when God sees it fit, he is pleased to make his own people partakers with others; secondly, because it is not without design that it is said, he will bless his people with peace, unto whom 'tis plain, this alone is not an appropriate privilege; it seems further designed to intimate, and couch in the concurrence and concomitancy of such things, as, superadded to peace, will make it a complete blessing. "The Lord will bless his people with peace." He will give them peace so and upon such terms, and with such concomitants and consequences, that to them it shall prove a real and a full blessing. These two things, therefore, I intend to insist upon—1. To show you how valuable a good and (in the large and common sense) a blessing peace is, as it stands in opposition to bloody and desolating wars. And then—2. I shall show you, what additions and concomitants are necessary to make it a complete blessing, such as may be appropriate and peculiar to God's own people, and so make use of the whole.

I. I shall show you briefly, how valuable a good peace is in itself, as it stands opposed unto bloody and destructive wars. And this will best be seen, by stating and viewing it in that opposition, and by representing to you somewhat of the horror of war; which we may do, by viewing it in its causes, in itself, and in its dismal consequences, wherewith it is wont to be attended. Consider it in its causes, and they are principally these two, the wickedness of men, and the just vengeance of God thereupon. These two concurring, and falling in together, must be understood to be the causes of so great a calamity among men in this world; and I shall only consider these two in their complication, and not speak to them distinctly and separately. Very plain it is, that war is a mark of the apostacy, and stigmatizes man as fallen from God, in a degenerate revolted state; it is the horrid issue of men's having forsaken God, and of their being abandoned by him to the hurry of their own furious lusts and passions; the natural and the penal effect of their having severed themselves and broke loose from the Divine government. From whence are wars? Are they not from your lusts? Jam. iv. 1.—God most justly punishes men's injustice, not by infusing malignity, which he needs not, into their minds and natures; and which it is impossible he can be the author of, whose very nature itself is goodness, and purity, and love; but having forsaken him, rebelled against him, disclaimed him as their Ruler, refused any longer to be subject to him, they are forsaken of him, and left to take vengeance for it on one another; of which there cannot be a greater instance, than that when controversies do arise between men and men, between nation and nation, kingdom and kingdom, one people and another, it is presently to be decided by a bloody sword. This speaks a monstrous degeneracy in the intellectual world, and from the original rectitude that belongs to the nature of man, which in his primitive state did stand in a temperament of reason and love. That there should be differences about *meum and tuum* in a creature of that constitution is itself a horrid thing; but then that such differences are to be determined only by violence, that presently they must hereupon run into war! Good God! what an indication is this, that reason, wisdom, justice, and love, are fled from this earth! And it speaks rebellion against God in the highest kind, 'tis a subversion of the most fundamental law of his kingdom over the intelligent world; Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy might, and thy neighbour as thyself.

'Tis impossible there should be any such thing as war in the world, but by the violation of this most fundamental divine law, the principal and most important thing that this government does as it were consist in over reasonable creatures, their loving him above all, and one another as themselves. This law observed must make this earth another heaven; this law violated and broken, makes it another hell. Men being fallen from God, and having lost their acquaintance with him, and all relish of divine things, think to repair their loss out of this sensible world, whereof no man thinks he hath enough; desire of more blinds their eyes, that they cannot judge of right and wrong. Hence every man's cause is right in his own eyes; appetite is the only measure they judge by, and power (whatsoever of it any one can grasp) the instrument by which they execute their perverse judgment. A dismal spectacle and subject of contemplation to the inhabitants of the purer and more peaceful regions! To behold a divine offspring, the sons of God, now transformed into sons of the earth, and tearing in pieces one another, for what some possess and others covet! Yea, and to a calm uninterested spectator on our own globe, this can be no grateful prospect, to view the history of all times, and nations, and take notice how full it is of such tragedy: countries from age to age made Aceldumas, fields of blood, on this account of extending or confining empire and dominion; of invading another's or defending one's own: but hereupon it is not strange when a world of intelligent, reasonable creatures are thus gone off from God, and in rebellion against him in the most fundamental part of his government, that he suffers them to be the executioners of his just wrath upon one another. And if we thus look upon war, first, in this its complicated causes, it is the opprobrium, the reproach of human nature, of intelligent reasonable creatures. But next look upon it in itself, and what is it but the destruction of human lives, of creatures made after the image of God? of whom he has so high a value, and whose lives, even for that very

reason, he is pleased to fence and secure by a severe law; Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man. But here is a formed design of destroying human lives by multitudes, lives of creatures bearing the image of God. And by how much the more necessary this is in many cases, so much the more grievous and calamitous a thing it is, that when to cut off and destroy by multitudes so precious things as human lives is tragical and horrid, not to do it is so much worse! Yea, that war itself is become an art, and that the valour and skill which belong to it are laudable excellencies, is all aggravation of the sadness of this case.

And if we do consider the consequences and effects which do ensue upon such war, how full of horror and frightfulness are they! and those most of all, that are least of all thought on, and that lie most out of view; for besides that property is gone, and no man knows what to call his own, laws lose their force, magistrates their authority and reverence, civil government is disobeyed and despised, common order is violated and turned into confusion, families torn in pieces, countries laid waste and desolate, towns and cities sacked, ravaged, and made ruinous heaps; besides all this (I say) the sacred rites and mysteries of religion are neglected and profaned, its holy solemnities interrupted, worshipping assemblies are broken up. Men have little opportunity left them to mind their great concerns with God, and for another world; care for immortal souls, when it is most necessary, is thrown out of doors, and reasonable creatures, that should be employed in adoring and worshipping their great Creator, the God of their lives, are employed in designing the mutual destruction of one another's lives; and it may be that is least considered which carries the most of horror in it, that multitudes are hurried down to perdition, neither dreaded by themselves, nor apprehended by the destroyer; souls are passing in shoals into eternity, they not considering it who are sent, nor they that sent them! And what sport does this make for devils, those envious apostate spirits, that first drew men into a like apostacy; that when God had given this earth to the children of men, assigning to themselves a worse abode amidst infernal darkness and flames, they should be tearing one another in pieces about this their portion under the sun, making God's bounty to them the occasion of their doing all manner of violence to one another! That the prince of the apostacy, the usurping God of this world, should have the opportunity of beholding man, sometime by divine grant the lord of it, now its slave and his captive by it! Led by him at his will into whatsoever is most repugnant to the will and the very nature of his Maker. That whereas he was at first made after God's own image, a God-like creature resembling his Maker, especially in spirituality and love; he now more resembles in sensuality beasts, and in malignity devils, and both by an inordinate love of this world; the friendship whereof, and a mind carnalized by it, is enmity against God, Jam. iv. 4.—Rom. viii. 7.) and whereof also, because every man thinks his own share too little, he becomes any one's enemy that hath more of it than himself.

And thus have devils the pleasure of beholding men, by this very gift and expression of God's love and kindness to them transformed into enmity, and hatred of himself, and one another; forsaken of him, and destroying each other, and hastening once more into their horrid society, that as they were accomplices with them in their first rebellion, they may be partakers and associates with them in woe and torment. The most dismal part of the story, is that which lies most out of sight. Now let all this be considered and put together, and surely peace is a valuable thing, it speaks man in some degree returned to himself, and in a right mind, when he can agree and be content to let another live quiet and unmolested by him, one man another man, and one nation another nation. Thus far does peace appear a blessing apart and by itself, a valuable good, and according to the common notion and estimate, it may be called a blessing where with God blesses his people in common with others. But we are further to consider,

2. What things are requisite to make this a real and a complete blessing, capable of being appropriated unto God's own peculiar people; which seems also to be intended here. The Lord will bless his people with peace. In speaking to this I shall do these two things. 1. Mention the requisites themselves—1. Show their requisiteness, or show what is requisite to make eternal peace a real and peculiar blessing. And then show you upon what account the addition and concomitancy of such things are requisite.

1. I shall show you the things that are requisite.

1. Such peace, as we have hitherto been speaking of, is then truly a blessing, when there is, in conjunction with it, a very copious effusion of the Spirit of God; in such a concomitancy, peace will make a people a blessed people. When, after such a calamitous dispensation was over and at an end, as we read of Ezek. xxxix. wherein, ver. 23. God is said to hide his face, and many of his people were carried into captivity, and many fell by the sword; it comes at length to this, he will no more hide his face, or cover it with so ireful and gloomy aspects and appearances that it cannot be comfortably beheld. 'Tis for this very reason, because he pours forth his Spirit upon the whole house of Israel, as it is in ver. 29. of that chapter. Pouring forth signifies a copious communication; and if the Spirit of God be copiously communicated, the best of blessings are in great abundance contained in it, which will infer, or countervail whatsoever is valuable or needful besides, to make the state of such a people a blessed state.

2. It will be so, when the Gospel of peace has its free course, and a large spread in the world. When, in conjunction with beating of swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks, the law goes forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and nations shall say, Come let us go up to the house of the Lord, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his statutes; as in that of Micah, iv. 2, 3. And,

3. When, according to the dictate of Divine wisdom, kings do reign (as Prov. viii. 15.) and princes decree justice; when God's people have judges, as at the first, counsellors as at the beginning, Isa. i. 26. able men, men of truth, fearing God and hating covetousness, Exod. xviii 21. When he is pleased to set kings on the throne, that scatter the wicked with their eyes, and so to establish the throne in righteousness; when there is a design, driven by those that bear the civil sword, the sword of justice, to be a terror to evil-doers, but a praise to them that do well; so as it may be said upon this account, they are the ministers of God for good, whom he has been pleased to set in such stations.

4. When God gives pastors after his own heart that are able, and do make it their business, to feed his people with knowledge and understanding. When he inspirits such to cry mightily, to warn men off from sin, when watchmen, set over his people, are faithful in the business of their station, at once both to save their people and themselves, from having their blood required at the hands of either; this will make a peaceful state, a happy state; it will contribute a great deal towards it. And again when here upon, in the

5. Place, wickedness languishes, the lusts of men droop and wither. There is some visible restraint, if there be not a universal mortification of such fruits of the flesh, as those that are spoken of Gal. v. 19. Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like, that are inconsistent with a share in the inheritance of the kingdom of God, as it after follows. This does much to the making a peaceful state of things a blessed state; it takes away much of the occasion of further controversy between God and such a people. But,

6. When there is a very great diffusion of a holy new nature, which carries the matter higher, and is a great addition, though in certain conjunction with the former; as it is when the lusts and works of the flesh do cease to be reigning and rampant among them who live under the Gospel, through the victorious and more powerful operation of the Spirit of grace breathing in it. For then by the influence of the same Spirit, not only such vicious inclinations are plucked up by the roots, as certainly withstand a people's felicity; but such positive principles are implanted, as tend to promote it. Yet since this conjunction is not constant, but such insolences of wickedness, as more directly tend to make a people miserable, may be repressed by inferior causes. I therefore more expressly add, that then peace may be reckoned a certain and a full blessing, when

with it we behold a divine offspring continually rising up, of men appearing to be born of God, and to have received a God-like nature, apt to do good, and become blessings to the world. When there is a rising generation of such, not proselyted to this or that party, but to real substantial godliness and Christianity. When multitudes are thus turned unto the Lord, when there are numerous conversions, a new creation is springing up in visible and multiplied instances, so as that holiness comes to be both an extensive and illustrious thing. When multitudes come to give reputation to serious religion, when it is no longer a reproach to be a visible fearer of God, because generally men are so. When it is looked upon as no fashionable thing to be a despiser of God and heaven, and to breathe out contempt of the Divine power, that gave us breath. And,

7. When, hereupon, the divine government obtains and takes place in the minds and consciences of men, when his authority is owned with reverential submission. Then God does bless a people, when his fear spreads far and near; God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him; as in that Ps. lxvii. the latter end. And again,

8. When there is a manifest power and prevalency of divine love amongst men, that bear the same name of Christians, when that peace of God rules in their hearts, unto which they are all called in one body. When they observedly keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, when they have peace one towards another so as that it may be seen that they are all the sons of peace, the children of the same Father who has conveyed it into them, as part of that divine nature which he communicates to the regenerate seed; when there is a natural propensity to one another, that they can no more violate and tear that vital bond of love and peace that is among them than they can endure to tear their own flesh, or pluck out their own eyes. When peace among Christians appears to be a connatural thing, not the product of conveniency and prudential considerations only, but a nature which none can more endure to counteract than to offer violence to themselves; a thing which nature admits not, whose laws never allow it to act against itself. And,

Lastly, When, upon all this, God appears to be reconciled unto such a people; for in his favour is life. When all these things do concur, as so many indications of his being at peace with them, *i. e.* that he has entirely forgiven them all former offences; that their sins and iniquities he remembers no more; and these concur with such things as partly make, and partly argue them, the objects of his delight, that he has written his law in their hearts, he has put his Spirit into them, he has made them a company of God-like creatures like himself, whose very nature is love; they are his living resemblances in that very respect, expressing herein his virtues, who has called them out of darkness into his own glorious and marvellous light. Hereupon such a people may reckon themselves secure of God's own presence, he is in the midst of them, and his glory ceases to hover, becomes with them a fixed thing, settles its station, as not about to discontinue or remove; their land may now be called, The land of Emmanuel, and bears the inscription, God with us. The tabernacle of God is with them, and he is resolved to dwell with them, and be their God, and avow them before all the world for his peculiar people. After the many things that do concur together, in an inferior kind, as the concomitants of a merely external peace, as that their sons grow up as plants, their daughters as so many polished corner-stones, that join together the walls of a palace, that their garners be full, their sheep numerous, their oxen strong, and that there be no complaining in their streets; after all these things, it is subjoined, Yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord. All the fore-mentioned things alone, will never make a blessing worthy of a people peculiar to God. But when it can be said that the Lord is their God, they are a happy people indeed, Ps. cxliv. 12, 15. Such as these are the things requisite to make peace a complete blessing. But now we are,

2. To show you the requisiteness of the concurrence and concomitancy of such things, to the mentioned purpose; or how it may appear, that such things as these are necessary to complete this blessing, or to make it a truly valuable or a special blessing. In order hereto note,

I. That there is such a thing as a special blessing, very distinguishable from such blessings as are merely common We read of one Jabez, 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10. said to be more honourable than his brethren; and somewhat very remarkable (as we are to reckon, when to the Divine wisdom it was thought fit to be inserted amidst a genealogical discourse) is further said of him, *viz.* that he called to the God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldst bless me indeed, &c. and 'tis added, God granted what he requested. It seems, besides what goes under the common notion of blessing, he reckoned there was somewhat more peculiar which he calls blessing indeed. There is a known Hebraism in that expression, what we read, bless me indeed, is, bless me in blessing me; *q. d.* let me have a blessing within a blessing; let me have that blessing whereof the other is but a cortex, the outside; let me have that blessing that is wrapt up and enclosed in the external blessing. And because it is said, And God granted his request, we have reason to understand it was somewhat very peculiar that God vouchsafed unto him; and that account which some give us, has a look that way, that God vouchsafed him somewhat more extraordinary in the kind of mental and intellectual endowments: for we are otherwise informed, that this Jabez became a noted doctor among the Jews, and that the city, called after his name, was thereupon afterwards the residence of such as were most learned in their laws, Vatabl. apud Critic. That is to be blessed indeed, to have these things conferred, that do reach the mind and affect the inner man; to be blessed with spiritual blessings from the heavenly places, as in that Eph. i. 3. There is a spiritual sort of blessing, that may be enclosed in the external blessing; and particularly in this of peace, which while it is common to the people of God with other men, is itself not common.

2. I further note, that the things I have mentioned to you, they are of that special kind, they are either immediate spiritual blessings, or subservient to such; whereupon now we may, from several considerations, evince to you, that without them such an external good, as this of peace, is not a complete blessing.

1. It is no argument of God's special favour. The best and most valuable blessings are from the Εὐδοκία θελήματος, *the good pleasure of his will*, Eph. i. 3, 4, 5. Other men may enjoy external benefits, may both prosper in war and flourish in peace, as well and often more than God's own people. You read of a time, wherein the whole earth is said to be at rest and quiet, Isa. xiv. 7. Therefore mere peace is no mark of special divine favour, and so is not, abstractly considered, a complete blessing, not a self-desirable thing.

2. Men are not made by it the better men. They may enjoy peace, and being carnal-minded men before, may still continue so, as great strangers to God as they were, as vain and sensual, as profligate and licentious, as useless in the world, as mischievous, every way as ill men as ever. And,

3. They may, by mere external peace, become so much the worse men. That may be an occasion to them of their growing worse and worse, the prosperity of fools (*i. e.* of wicked men) slays and destroys them, Prov. i. 32. 'Tis an observation that runs through the course of time, that as wars at length beget an enforced peace, so peace infers free trade and commerce, and that plenty, and that pride and wantonness; so these run us back in an easy but unhappy circle, to be as we were, in war again. And if that prove not the present or the speedy consequent, that ensues which is worse than war; unless God vouchsafe that other sort of blessing, which will influence and better men's minds. Vice springs up in the more fattened soil, men's lusts will soon prove more oppressive tyrants than they can have freed themselves from, by the justest and most prosperous war; and will subdue them to a far viler and more ignoble servitude. An ingenious writer of those affairs observes, that the former Scipio[a] opened the way to the Roman power, the latter to their luxury; their virtue languished, and they were conquered by their own vices, who before could conquer the world.[b] That noted moralist says, *Infirmi est animi non posse pati divitias*, 'tis a *weak mind that cannot bear a prosperous condition*; but where are there minds strong enough to bear it, if they be

a Vell. Paterc.

b Sen.

not blest from above with somewhat better than that prosperity itself?

4. Men may, notwithstanding mere external peace, be as miserable in this and in the other world, as if they had never known it; and much more, if by it they have been the more wicked. I beseech you consider, are they a blessed people, or is that a blessed man, between whom and eternal misery there is but a breath? He may but breathe another breath, and be in the midst of flames; is he happy this moment, that may be as miserable as any devil the next? Those things can only be complete blessings to any, that are inseparable ones, and that will make them for ever blessed. For me to have but such a blessing as does not make me blessed; what an unblest blessing is this! A philosopher can tell you, blessedness cannot be a thing separable from myself; not a *χωριστόν τι*, *Arist.* It can much less be such a thing as may leave me miserable to all eternity, least of all what may make me so, by degenerating into a curse, as Malachi ii. 2. Therefore these are demonstrations, that mere external peace, without such additions as you have heard of, can never be a complete blessing, nor such as can be understood vouchsafed to the people of God as their ultimate and consummative felicity. It must in the mean time be acknowledged, that as a people may belong to God externally, more than another people; and may sometime he externally more reformed than at other times, so peace, with other external good things, may thereupon be afforded them, as less expressive marks of God's favour, and approbation of their more regular course: and by the tenor of God's particular covenant with the people of Israel, might more certainly be expected so to be. Yet this is a state wherein it is not reasonable or safe for any finally to acquiesce.

I therefore now come to the promised use, which will correspond to the two general heads I have been discoursing of: First, to let you see—what cause of thanksgiving we have in reference to the former, the blessing of peace abstractly considered, and—Secondly, what sort of supplication we have in reference to the latter, the additions that are requisite to make it a complete blessing.

1. As to the former. Since peace is so valuable a thing considered apart, as you have heard it is; this points out to us the matter of thanksgiving, for which this day is appointed, that God has preserved our king, amidst so innumerable dangers abroad; that he has brought him home to us in safety; that he has made him the instrument of that peace that we find is at length brought about, wherein he is returned to us a greater conqueror then if he had routed and destroyed never so potent armies of our enemies in the field. We have reason to understand the matter so. By prevailing in war, he had only conquered by force; by prevailing for peace, he has conquered by wisdom and goodness. By prevailing in war, he had only conquered the bodily power of our enemies, or their baser part; by prevailing for peace, he has conquered their minds. By prevailing in war, he had brought about the good only of one side; by prevailing for peace, he has brought about the real benefit of both sides, a far more diffusive blessing. By prevailing in war, he had conquered enemies; by prevailing for peace, he has conquered enmity itself. By prevailing in war, he had overcome other men; but in prevailing for peace, considering his martial spirit, and his high provocations, he has done a far greater thing, he has conquered himself, whom none ever conquered before. Besides what this great blessing of peace, generally considered, contains in itself, we ought to amplify it to ourselves; being brought about by such means, wherein we have so particular a concern. This ought to add with us a very grateful relish to it, for it is a glory to our nation that God has set a prince on the English throne that could signify so much to the world; the beams of that glory God hath cast on him, reflect and shine upon his people; to be made the head among other nations, and not the tail, God hath in his word taught us not to count it an inconsiderable thing. And it is our more peculiar glory that our king is renowned, not by throwing death and destruction every where round about him, but by spreading the benefits included in peace through the neighbouring nations; and is returned to us, leaving the rest of Europe only to lament that they all live not under his government. I pray God he may meet with no ungrateful returns, and that none may be so ill minded as to grudge at power so lodged as to save us, who were less concerned at its being lodged where it could only be designed to destroy us. In the mean time, it might excite us to the higher pitches of thankfulness to Almighty God, for this blessing of the present peace, if we did consider—both what it hath cost, and —whereto it is improvable. But the former consideration I shall not insist upon, lest any should make an undue use of it; and the latter I leave to the following head, which we are next to proceed to, *viz.*

Secondly, To show what matter of supplication remains to us, upon the latter account. That is, with reference to such things as are yet wanting to make this blessing of peace a complete blessing, and without which it cannot be understood to be such; but we may be left at last a most miserable people, and so much the more miserable, by how much the higher favours we have to account for, that not being improved must have been thrown away upon us. The mercies included in the peace, will be unimproved and lost, without the mentioned additions. Whereof all the several heads that were recited belong to one, *viz.* that of spiritual blessing. That therefore, in the general, we have to pray for, that God may be said to bless us indeed, to bless us in blessing us; *viz.* that he would bless us with spiritual blessings, in the heavenlies (*i. e.* in heavenly things or from the heavenly places) in Christ Jesus, as Eph. i. 3. Let us, I pray you, learn to distinguish between a self-desirable good, that in its own nature is such, so immutably and invariably, that it can never degenerate, or cease to be such; and what is only such by accident, and in some circumstances may be much otherwise. Spiritual good, that of the mind and spirit, and which makes that better, especially that which accompanies salvation, (Heb. vi. 9.) that runs into eternity, and goes with us into the other world, is of the former sort. External good is but *res media*, capable of being to us sometimes good and sometimes evil as the case may alter. Blessings of this kind may become curses, Mal. ii. 2. I will curse your blessings, yea I have cursed them already. A man's table may become his snare, and that which was for his welfare, a trap, Ps. lxix. 22. Merely external blessings are curses, when they become the fuel of lusts, when they animate men unto contests against Heaven, rebellions against the Divine government; when, like Jeshurun, men wax fat by them, and kick against heaven, Deut. xxxii. This we are always liable to till spiritual blessings intermingle with our other blessings; and nothing should more convince the world, that the kindest and most benign part of the divine government lies in immediate influences on the minds of men; and that consequently their own felicity depends thereon. Let all things that can be imagined concur in the kind of external good, and they can never make him a happy man, that has an ill mind; he will always be his own hell, and carry that about with him wheresoever he goes; he will be a constant spring and fountain of misery to himself, misery and he cannot be separated from one another: There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God; but he will be always a troubled sea, whose waters cast forth mire and dirt, Isa. lvii. 20, 21. The philosophy of pagans would have made them ashamed to place their felicity in any thing without, or foreign to themselves.

But we are Christians, and shall we not much more be ashamed to take other, or even opposite, measures of blessedness, to those which are given us by our Divine Master! To be poor in spirit, upon just accounts mourners, meek, hungry and thirsty after righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peace-makers, to submit to be persecuted for righteousness sake, these are his characters of a blessed man; and he places that blessedness itself in congenerous things, Matt. v. 3, 4, 5, &c. Let us learn from him, and collect that nothing but wickedness can make us miserable. What an overflowing deluge have we in view! tending to subvert our religion and our civil state together! nor have we another effectual remedy in view, but the Spirit of God, if he will vouchsafe to pour it forth. The great enemy of mankind is come in upon us like a flood, and only the Spirit of the Lord can lift up a standard against him, Isa. lix. 19. The Spirit of the Lord would be to us as a puri-

fying flame, to burn up our filthiness, and enkindle in us that divine love, that would make us zealous of good works. And this should be with us the matter of earnest and incessant supplication, not with diffidence, for he will give his Spirit to them that ask him, Luke xi. 13. Nor with diminishing thoughts of the necessity and value of the gift; take heed of that, for that were to be miserable, and undone by a principle; to be misled, by a profane false judgment, into the contempt of the most highly valuable things, that are most necessary to our true welfare; and which are all contained in the gift of the Spirit, as you may see by comparing Matt. vii. and Luke xi. with one another. In the one place it is said, he will give good things to them that ask him, in the other place it is said, his Spirit; implying, that the gift of the Spirit involves in it all good things. And certainly nothing can be good to any man, till he hath that Spirit, that makes him good; and we are greatly concerned to supplicate mightily for the effusion of that blessed Spirit, for these two purposes especially. First, that there may be a larger diffusion amongst us of vital religion, whereby we shall be at peace with God. Secondly, that Christian love may more abound, whereby Christians may be composed to mutual peace, and more disposed to mutual communion with one another.

1. That there may be a larger diffusion of vital religion. Wherein stands indeed their being at peace with God, when there is a mutual amplexus between him and them, mind touching mind, and spirit spirit; when he does, by his Spirit, embrace the spirits of men, and infuse light and life into them, and adapt and suit them for his communion. To this purpose, we have great cause to beg and supplicate earnestly, for a greater pouring forth of his Spirit, that this living religion may spread amongst us; for we appear to be under a doom, while it does not so, that seeing we should see, and not perceive, &c. Isa. vi. O the fearful guilt incurred, one Lord's day after another! When great assemblies meet together, multitudes are besought and supplicated that they would be reconciled to God, but too few listen; peace with God seems not a valuable thing with us, his favour, in which is life, is little set by. When with many a one a treaty is continued, in order to peace, through many years, seven, ten, twenty, thirty, nay forty years, and yet this treaty brings not about a peace at last; but they stand out still hardened in their impenitency, infidelity, obstinacy, enmity against God and his Christ, through the power and dominion that an earthly, vain, carnal mind has in them, and over them; what can our peace with men signify in this case? What, do we not know, that the friendship of this world is enmity against God? Jam. iv. 4. I John ii. 15. And that it is as impossible for a man to be a sincere lover of God, and an over intense lover of this world, as to have two Gods; *i. e.* two supreme powers to govern him, two supreme goods to satisfy him. This must breed a perpetual war, till the case alters between thee and him that made thee; and wo to him that strives with his Maker. To have the wrath of God, armed with omnipotency, engaged against thee; and yet that thou shouldst not covet peace, that yet thou shouldst not cry for peace! To have the peace-making blood of thy Redeemer crying to thee, O be at peace with God! to have him that shed it thus bespeaking thee, I am ready to do the part of a days-man, I have died upon the cross that I might do so, that I might effect, and bring about a peace between God and thee; I am ready to mediate, make use of me; I will undertake on God's part, that he shall pardon thee, that he shall forgive thee, and let the controversy fall, if yet thy heart on thy part will yield, melt, and relent, and thou cry for mercy. He came with this design into this world, the proclamation of angels at his coming spoke his design; Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, and goodwill towards men. Shall not all this be believed? or shall men pretend to believe it, and not consider it, or not look upon it as a considerable thing?

2. And there is as much need too, that we supplicate for this Spirit, as a Spirit of mutual love among Christians, to reconcile them to one another. Which indeed is also but to Christianize them, to make vital religion take place with them; for that same Spirit of Christ, which animates his body, and makes them his living members, makes them such to one another. And the matter speaks itself, that opposite spirit unto truly Christian peace and love, which appears amongst us, nothing but the Spirit of Christ can overcome; we are not to expect a cure of our distempers in this kind, but by the pouring forth of this blessed Spirit. And if there be not a cure, we are certainly to expect the pouring forth of his wrath; and things look with a threatening aspect upon us to this purpose. Now that opportunity is so inviting, God's call so loud, and the way so plain; that yet an indisposition to peace should be so obstinate, that breaches should be kept open by trifles and unaccountable things of which no man of sense can pretend to give an account; that there is strife too manifestly, not from the love of truth, whereof not one hair needs be lost, (nor of any other valuable thing,) but merely from the love of strife; when as to the most material and important truths, men are agreed, but would seem to disagree, they mean the same things, but impute to one another a different meaning, and pretend to know the others' mind better than themselves, that on that pretence they may quarrel with them: all this looks fatally. And our unjust angers at one another are too expressive of God's just anger with us all; that his good Spirit, that Spirit of love, peace, kindness, benignity is so notoriously resisted, vexed, grieved, and despited by us. And the consequences are likely for some time to be very dismal; though when God hath proceeded in a way of punitive animadversion, so far as he shall judge necessary for the vindication of his own name, and the honour of our religion so scandalously misrepresented to the world, it will be easy to him by one victorious effort of that spirit to reduce the Christian church to its original genuine temper, and make it shine again in its own native light and lustre. But in the mean time, I cannot see that there is greater need of an overpowering influence of the Holy Ghost to draw men into union with Christ, and thereby to bring back apostate souls to God, or to work in them faith and repentance; than to bring them into union upon Christian terms with one another. Or that the love of this world, or any of the most ignominious sensual lust, or vice, (drunkenness, gluttony, or any other,) are more hardly or more rarely overcome, than the envy, wrath, malice, which Christians ordinarily are not at all shy of expressing toward one another.

I speak upon some experience, lamenting that having this occasion (which sense of duty will not let me balk) I have also so much cause to mention that foregoing observation. For I cannot forget, that sometime discoursing with some very noted persons, about the business of union among Christians, it hath been freely granted me, that there was not so much as a principle left (among those the discourse had reference to) upon which to disagree; and yet the same fixed aversion to union continued as before, as a plain proof they were not principles but ends we were still to differ for. In this case what but the power of an Almighty Spirit can overcome? To quote texts of Scripture upon such occasions signifies nothing even to those who profess a veneration for those holy oracles of God. Let such places be mentioned as are expressly directed against division, wrath, strife, slandering or backbiting one another, and they avail no more, than if the vice were the virtue, or the virtue the vice; no more than if it were a command to Christians to malign, to traduce, to backbite one another. To urge so plain and numerous scriptures in these cases, it is to as little purpose, as to oppose one's breath to a storm; it is the same thing, as if all scriptures, that had any aspect or look this way, were quite put out of the canon; and all this, with men zealous for the divine authority of the Scripture. And indeed it is come to that pass, as to look like a jest to expect that any man should be swayed by Scripture, or the most convincing reason agreeable thereto, against his own passion, or humour; or against the (supposed, though never so grossly mistaken) interest of his party.

Nor is it mere peace that is to be aimed at, but free mutual Christian communion with such, as do all hold the head, Christ. As peace between nations infers commerce; so among Christian churches, it ought to infer, a fellowship in acts of worship. I wish there were no cause to say this is declined, when no pretence is left against it, but false accusation; none but what must be supported by lying and calumny. Too many are busy at inventing of that which is no where to be found, that exists not in the

nature of things, that they may have a colour for continued distance. And is not this to fly in the face of the authority under which we live, *i. e.* the ruling power of the kingdom of Christ, the Prince of peace? 'Tis strange they are not ashamed to be called Christians, that they do not discard and abandon the name, that can allow themselves in such things! And 'tis here to be noted, that 'tis quite another thing, what is in itself true or false, right or wrong; and what is to be a measure or boundary of Christian communion. Are we yet to learn that Christian communion is not amongst men that are perfect; but that are labouring under manifold imperfections, both in knowledge and holiness! and whatsoever mistake in judgment, or obliquity in practice, can consist with holding the head, ought to consist also with being of the same Christian communion; not the same locally, which is impossible, but the same occasionally, as any providence invites at this or that time, and mentally in heart and spirit at all times. And to such peace (and consequently communion) we are all called in one body, Col. iii. 15. We are expressly required to receive one another, (which cannot but mean into each other's communion,) and not to doubtful disputations, Rom. xiv. 1. If any be thought to be weak, and thereupon to differ from us in some or other sentiments, if the difference consist with holding the head, they are not, because they are weak, to be refused communion, but received; and received because the Lord has received them, ver. 3. All that we should think Christ has received into his communion, we ought to receive into ours, Rom. xv. 7. Scriptures are so express to this purpose that nothing can be more. And indeed to make new boundaries of Christian communion is to make a new Christianity, and a new Gospel, and new rules of Christ's kingdom; and by which to distinguish subjects and rebels, and in effect to dethrone him, to rival him in his highest prerogative; *viz.* the establishing the terms of life and death, for men living under his Gospel. It is to confine salvation, in the means of it, to such or such a party, such a church, arbitrarily distinguished from the rest of Christians; as if the privileges of his kingdom belonged to a party only; and that for instance, the Lord's table were to lose its name, and be no longer so called, but the table of this or that church, constituted by rules of their own devising. For if it be the Lord's table, they are to keep it free, to be approached upon the Lord's terms, and not their own. In the mean time, what higher invasion can there be of Christ's rights? And since the Christian church became so over-wise above what is written, in framing new doctrines, and rules of worship; how miserably it hath languished, and been torn in pieces, they cannot be ignorant, who have read any thing of the history of it.

And indeed there is not a difference to be found, amongst them that hold the head, but must be so minute, that it cannot be a pretence for refusing communion; for true Christian charity will, at least, resolve it into weakness. And men are generally so kind to themselves, that he from whom another differs, will be very apt to think himself the stronger; then does the rule conclude him. You that are strong bear the infirmities of the weak, and do not dispute with them, but receive them. This obligation immediately lies on the strong, and therefore must take hold of them that think themselves so, not to dispute with the others, but receive them; because the Lord has received them. Does he take them into his communion, and will not you take them into yours? To profess want of charity in excuse is to excuse a fault by a wickedness; it is to usurp Christ's judgment seat, and invade his office, Rom. xiv. 4, 10. Therefore wheresoever there is any such case to be found, that let a man be never so sound in the faith, never so orthodox, let him be in all things else never so regular through his whole conversation, if he do not submit to some doubtful thing, thought perhaps a matter of indifferency on the one side and unlawful on the other; this person must be excluded Christian communion for no other known pretence, but only that he presumed to doubt somewhat in the imposed terms: for this very doubt he is to be treated as a heathen or publican, or indeed no more to be received into our communion, than a dog, or a swine. How will this be justified at Christ's tribunal? But how much less justifiable is it, if not only communion be refused, but ruin designed, to such as differ from us, about those our arbitrary additions to Christ's rules, and boundaries of Christian communion! And scarce can very serious persons (even in so serious a matter) forbear to smile, when they see them that have done so much harm to their fellow-Christians attempt to justify it, only in effect from their having power to do it; which would as well justify any thing, since no man does what he could not do.

Nor yet do I look upon this proneness to innovate, and devise other terms of Christian communion than Christ hath himself appointed, as the peculiar character of a party; but as a symptom of the diseased state of the Christian church, too plainly appearing in all parties: as I also reckon it too low and narrow a design, to aim at a oneness of communion among Christians of this and that single party and persuasion; which would but make so much the larger ulcus and tumor, a greater unnatural apostem or secession, in the sacred body of our blessed Lord. Nothing in this kind can be a design worthy of a Christian, or suitable to the Spirit of Christ; but to have Christian communion extended, and limited, according to the extent and limits of visibly serious and vital Christianity. And hereof, that distinguishing judgment, which is necessary, is as little difficult, as in private conversation between a visible friend and a visible enemy; or in public and political, between a visible subject and a visible rebel. So far as a discrimination can, and according to Christ's rules (not our own unbounded fancies) ought to be made, any serious living Christian, of whatsoever party or denomination, I ought to communicate with as such, and with only such. For living Christians to sever from one another, or to mingle with the dead, is an equal transgression; nor must our judgment of any such case be guided by mere charity; but must guide it, being itself guided by the known laws of Christ.

To sum up all; then shall we be in happy circumstances, when once we shall have learned to distinguish between the essentials of Christianity, and accidental appendages: and between accidents of Christ's appointing, and of our devising; and to dread affixing of our own devices to so sacred an institution. Much more, when every truth or duty, contained in the Bible, cannot be counted essential or necessary; when we shall have learnt not only not to add inventions of our own to that sacred frame, but much more not to presume to insert them into the order of essentials or necessaries, and treat men as no Christians for wanting them. When the Gospel shall have its liberty to the utmost ends of the earth. When the regenerating Spirit shall go forth with it, and propagate a divine and God-like nature, every where among men. When regeneration shall be understood to signify the communicating of such a nature and such dispositions to men. When the weight of such words comes to be apprehended. (He that hateth his brother, abideth in death, 1 John 2.) When to be born of God, ceases to signify with us, being proselyted to this or that church, formed and distinguished by human device. When religious pretences cease to serve political purposes, when the interest of a party ceases to weigh more with us, than the whole Christian interest. When sincerity shall be thought the noblest embellishment of a Christian. When the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together. And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, Isa. xi. 6, 7, 8, 9. Then will our peace be as a river, and our righteousness as the waves of the sea, Isa. xlviii. 18. And the glorious Lord will himself be to us a place of broad waters, ch. xxxiii. 21. Where straits, and rocks, and shelves, shall no more affright or endanger us. But if these things take no place with us, then have we cause to apprehend, that the things of our peace are yet hid from our eyes.

A SERMON

FOR THE REFORMATION OF MANNERS.

ROMANS XIII. 4.

FOR HE IS THE MINISTER OF GOD TO THEE FOR GOOD.

The temper of this our present assembly ought to be not only serious, but also mournful; for the occasion it hath reference to, is both very important, and most deplorable, and requires to be attended to, as with very intense consideration, so with deep sorrow. Even rivers of tears running down our eyes, as the words are, Psal. cxix. 136. could not more than equal the sadness of the case, *i. e.* the same there mentioned; because men (as is meant by the indefinite they) kept not God's law. That there should be such disorders in the intellectual world! That reasonable creatures should be so degenerate, that 'tis become hardly accountable why they are called so! They are said to be constituted and distinguished by reason, but disdain to be governed by it, accounting their senses and their vices their better and wiser directors. With us the case is yet worse! that in a Christian city and kingdom the insolencies of wickedness are so high, tumultuate at such a rate, and so daringly assault heaven, that the rigour of laws, the severity of penalties, the vigilancy and justice of magistrates, with the vigorous assisting diligence of all good men, in their several stations, are more necessary, than sufficient to repress them. The same considerations that should excite our zeal, ought also to influence our grief; and the more apparently necessary it is that all possible endeavours be used for redress, and the stronger and more convictive arguments can be brought to evince it, the deeper sense we ought to have of the evils that create this necessity, and the more feelingly we should lament them. And if this be the temper of this assembly, and of all other, upon this occasion, this would give us measures, and set us right, as to the whole business of such a season. Nobody will then think it should be the business of the sermon, to please curious ears, or of the hearers to criticise upon the sermon, or that it ought to be my present business to compliment the worthy persons that have associated on this account, how laudable soever their undertaking is. But it will be the common agreed business of us all, to take to heart the sad exigency of the case, to be suitably affected with it, and quickened to what shall appear to be our duty in reference thereto. And though the words I have read do more directly respect the part and office of rules, yet since there is that relation between them that govern, and those that are under government, that the duty of the one will plainly imply and connote the duty of the other; I shall so consider the words, as they may have a direct or collateral reference to all sorts of hearers; and do point out the duty, as well of them that live under government, as of them that govern.

We are therefore to take notice, that the text admits, either of an absolute consideration, or a relative. *Absolutely* considered, 'tis in *assertion; relatively*, it is in an *argument*, as the introductive particle, *for*, shows. 1. For the *absolute* consideration of the words, as they are an assertion, we are to see what they assert. The person spoken of under the term *He*, is any ruler, supreme or subordinate, as in that parallel text, which we may take for a comment upon this, is expressed, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors sent by him, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. The words ἐξουσίαι, and ἄρχοντες, used in this context, admit of the same extent. So, among others, that great man Grotius understands this place also, not only of kings and princes, but whosoever are the *Tutores status publici*, (borrowing that expression from Seneca,) any that are to take care of the public state, by whatsoever name they are designed. Indefinitely, any magistrate whatsoever. That which is said of such a one, contains an account of the original, and the end, of his office and power. The *original* of it, that he is the minister of God, which signifies he is, as such, to act only by his authority, derived from him; as ver. 1. There is no power but from God, and the powers that be, are ordained of God. Which also implies, that such power is to be used for God, and that consequently God is to be the ruler's first and last; and he is to be subordinate to God, both as his principle and end. Acting by his authority, he is by consequence to act for his interest; his minister, or servant, is to serve him.

But besides what is thus implied of the general and ultimate end of the magistrate's power, in what is more directly said of the *original* of it; we have also a more explicit account of the *end* of it, *viz.* the next, and more particular end, which is two-fold. The end for *whom*, indefinitely expressed. For thee, *i. e.* for every, or any one that lives under government; and by consequence, the whole governed community. For all the parts make up the whole. And further we have the end for *what*, *viz.* for good, the good of each individual, and of the whole community, as comprehending all the individuals. Thus we see what the words contain *absolutely* considered, as they are an *assertion*.

2. We are to consider them *relatively*, as they are an *argument*. So the particle, *for*, shows their *relation*, and directs us backward, where we shall see what they argue. And we find they are brought in to enforce the duty before enjoined, which is two-fold.—Primary, and more principal. —Consequential, deduced from the former.—The *primary* duty is that ver. 1. Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, or to the powers that are above us. Some blame the comparative expression, *sublimioribus, higher*, for which there is no pretence, from the word ὑπερέχουσαι, that only signifies the powers mentioned, to be over us, whether in a higher or lower degree. Let them be less or more above us, we are to be subject to them.—The *subsequent* duty is double: first, that they are not to be resisted. A doctrine which from the terms of the context is capable of being so stated, as neither to be just matter of reproach or scandal to the wise and good, nor of sport and laughter to another sort of men. But that is not my present business. And secondly, that they are not to be (unduly) dreaded; or apprehended as a terror, *i. e.* not otherwise, than (in the design of their appointment) they are so, *viz.* to evil works and the workers of them, not to

the good, ver. 3. A fear of reverence is indeed due from all to their character, and the dignity of their station: a filial fear, that of children, for they are the fathers of their country; not a servile, or that of slaves, except from such as are so; evil-doers, who are slaves of the vilest and more ignoble sort; to their own lusts, that enslave their minds, which might otherwise enjoy the most generous liberty, under the meanest and more oppressive external servitude. The text, according to its immediate reference, is but an amplification of the reason alleged, why the magistrate is not to be looked upon with terror and affright, by any but such as resolve upon a profligately wicked course of life, not by such as intend only a course of well-doing. For, if thou be such, he is the minister of God to thee for good; his sword is only formidable when it fetches its blow from above, when it is bathed in heaven, as we may borrow the words, Isa. xxxiv. 5. when it is wielded according to divine appointment, and God and he concur in the same stroke. When it is otherwise, 'tis true that the fallible or unrighteous human ruler may for well-doing afflict thee, and therein do thee wrong, but he can do thee no hurt, even though the stroke were mortal, Luke xii. 4. for our Lord forbids the fear of what is no worse; so said Socrates of them that persecuted him to death, They can kill me, but cannot hurt me. Who is it that can harm you (saith a great apostle) if ye be followers of that which is good? I Pet. iii. 13. And 'tis added, ver. 14. If ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye——And hath any man reason to be afraid of being happy?

But though this be the more immediate reference of these words, "He is the minister of God to thee for good," and is, therefore, not to be unduly feared, they do yet ultimately and more principally respect the grand precept first laid down, of being subject to the powers over us. Which is evident, for that upon this very ground, and the intervening consideration, which further illustrate it, this same precept is resumed and pressed upon conscience, and a necessity is put upon it, on the same account, *viz.* that because the magistrate is the minister of God for good, and is to be a terror to evil-doers, and hath a sword put into his hands for that purpose, which he is not to bear in vain, but must be the minister of God in this kind, *viz.* as a revenger, to execute wrath, upon such as do evil; that therefore we must needs be subject, and that not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. This is therefore the principal relation of these words, *viz.* as an argument to prove that he, the magistrate, is the minister of God to us for good; that therefore we ought not only not to resist him, when he is doing his duty, nor be afraid of him when we are but doing ours; but that we also ought to be subject to him; and that, not only that we may escape wrath, but that we may satisfy conscience. This is therefore the relation, according whereto we shall consider these words, *viz.* as they are an argument to enforce the required subjection. Which subjection, that we may the more fully apprehend, 'twill be requisite with the more care to consider the propriety of the word used to express it. It is a word that carries order, τάξις, in the bowels of it, ὑποτασσέσθω, ver. 1. and ὑποτάσσεσθαι, ver. 4. and with the preposition ὑπό, it signifies order under another, as of inferiors under superiors; it imports therefore not to be subject only, but subordinate and subservient. And the form wherein it is here used, admitting of its being taken not strictly in the passive sense, but in the middle, wherenpon it may be indifferently capable of being rendered actively, *viz.* not only to be subordinate, but by your own act, and with your own design, subordinate yourselves to the magistrate, come into order under him, as he is God's minister invested by him with power for such and such purposes. This, without straining, carries the sense yet higher.

And whereas τάξις is a word of known military import, and signifies the order of an army formed for battle, wherein every one knows his own rank, place, and station, 'tis as if it were said, take your place, come into rank, that you may, under the commander's conduct, *in acie stare*, stand in order of battle; as the word ἀντιτάσσεσθαι, rendered to resist the ruler, is *ex adverso in acie stare, to stand in rank, or in battalia, against him.* You are not only not to resist, but you are to assist, and in your place and station stand by him, whom God hath deputed to be his minister, as he is to promote common good, and be a terror to them that do evil. This was the just claim and demand of that excellent prince, Psal. xciv. 16. Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers, and stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? This, according to lexicographers of good note, is the import of that word, which we lay such weight upon, and accordingly very valuable expositors understand this place. By this time therefore you may see what place and order these words, I pitched upon, have in the series of the apostle's discourse; and thereupon what aspect they have upon the design for which we are met; pursuant whereto, they admit of being thus summed up.

That for this reason, and under this notion, as the magistrate is to be a terror to them that do evil, and therein God's minister for good to them over whom he is set; it belongs to every soul, or to all persons under his government, to be each one in his station, and according to his capacity, actively, and with their own design, subordinate and subservient to him herein.—In speaking to this I shall show,—I. That the magistrate is God's minister, upon the mentioned account. II. That therefore such duty is incumbent upon all that live under government. The former whereof is a doctrinal proposition, the other the use of it.

I. That the magistrate is the minister of God for the good of them over whom he is set. This we are to consider by parts.

That, 1. He is God's minister. Hereof none can doubt, who doubt or deny not the being of God. His being God's minister, signifies his deriving his power from him. Who else can be the fountain of power, but he who is the fountain of all Being? 'Tis true, the governing power hath not been always derived the same way, but it hath been always from the same fountain When God was pleased to have a people within a peculiar sort of enclosure, more especially appropriate to himself; he was very particular in signifying his will, concerning all material things that concerned their government. What the form of it should be. What persons should govern, or in what way the power and right to govern should descend, and be conveyed to them. What laws they should be governed by. What the methods should be of governing, according to those laws.

Since it is very evident much is left to the prudence of men, always to be directed by general rules of equity, and as these allow, by immediate interpositions of his own providence; I resolve this discourse shall be involved in no controversies, and therefore shall not determine, nor go about to dispute as to what is so left, how much or how little that may be. But it is plain and indisputable, that the governing power he reserves, and claims to himself; *i. e.* not to exercise it himself immediately, in a political way; but to communicate and transmit it to them that shall. So that in what way soever it is derived to this or that person, or under whatsoever form, the conferring of it he makes his own act: as we find it said to Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. ii. 37. The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom. And he is told, ch. iv. 32. The Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomsoever he will. And so much, you see, is in this context asserted to him over and over. Two things are plain in this matter—That it is the mind of God there should be such a thing as magistracy and government in this world—And again, that men shall be governed by men, by some or other of themselves; who shall be, as the text speaks, God's ministers. As he is the original of the governing power, the administration shall be in them. And of the mind of God in both these there is sufficient indication by the very law of nature; how is it conceivable such sentiments should be so common, if they were not from a common cause? He seems to me to have determined well (if it be considered in what way the course of nature is now continued, and by whom all things consist) that makes the governing power to be from God, as the Author of nature;[a] and that though government, as it is such and such, be *juris humani*, it is *juris divini* absolutely considered, or as it is government. It was most apparently a thing worthy of God, when he peopled this world with such a sort of creatures as man, to provide for the maintaining of

[a] Suar. de Leg. Lib. 3. C. 3, 4.

common order among them; who without government were but a Turba, a Colluvies, as a noted heathen speaks on a different account, a rout of men. Had man continued in unstained innocency, 'tis concluded on all hands there must have been a government among them; *i. e.* not punitive or coercive, for which there could have been no occasion; but directive and conservative of superiority and inferiority, as it is also even among the angels of heaven, where are no inordinate dispositions to be repressed. Much more is government, in the severer parts of it, necessary for lapsed man on earth; the making of restrictive laws, and governing by them. And that God should design the governing of men by men, was also most agreeable to the perfections of his nature; especially his wisdom and his goodness, considered in comparison to the imperfection of this our present state. When the government over Israel was a theocracy, God used the ministry of men in the management of it. That it should be his ordinary stated course to govern by voices or visions, or by frightful appearances, such as those on mount Sinai, had been very little suitable to this our state of probation; as his accurate wisdom we find hath determined; and was less agreeable to his benignity and goodness, which would not amazingly terrify, where he designed more gently to admonish and instruct. Hence had he regard to their frailty, who so passionately supplicated; let not God speak to us lest we die; and this his compassionate goodness we are led to consider, being next to treat of the end of this his constitution, *viz.*

2. That the magistrate is God's minister to men, for their good. Next to the sweet airs and breathings of the Gospel itself, where have we a kinder or more significant discovery of God's good will to men? Here we are to stay and wonder, not to assent only, but admire! To behold the world in a revolt! The dwellers on earth in arms, against heaven! And the counsels that are taken above are how to do them good! How God-like is this! How suitable to magnificent goodness! or beneficent greatness! being secure from hurt by their impotent attempts, and when revenge was so easy, to study not only not to harm them, nor also how they might less harm and mischief themselves; but how to do them good: this was every way great and most suitable to the greatness of God; wherein it falls into conjunction with so immense and absolute goodness, as doth beyond what any created mind would ask or think. This imports not implacableness, or destructive design towards the generality of mankind; but great benignity even to every soul, in as full extent as the command runs to be subject to the higher powers. This is, we find, another medium by which God testifies, or leaves not himself without witness, besides what we have elsewhere; that he gives men rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons.

The most compassionate eye of God beholds men, under the power of vicious inclination, bent upon destructive ways; whereas by the course of nature, which he hath fixed, he should give them ordinarily competent time, as he hath given them breath and being, and all things, Acts xvii. that they might seek after him, and labour to feel and find him out. They live in a contemptuous neglect of him, and are cruel to themselves, oft shorten their own time, live too fast, and make too much haste to dig their own graves, and turn their habitation into a charnel house; yea even bury themselves alive, in stupifying sensuality and vice. God, though provoked, hastens not their destruction by sudden revenge; he animadverts not upon them by flames and thunderbolts, nor amazes them by astonishing appearances; his terrors make them not afraid. He only clothes some, from among themselves, with his authority, who shall appear on the stage with them, as gods among men, resembling themselves in human nature, and God in power, as they should in other God-like excellencies; if men would so far co-operate towards their own welfare, as they ought, that by such gentler methods some stop might be put to the stream and flood of miseries, wherewith otherwise unrestrained wickedness is continually ready to deluge the world. The magistrate is herein an instrument of good and of wrath at once; these two things disagree not, to be a minister for good, and to execute wrath. This latter is said, in conformity to vulgar apprehension, because when men afflict one another, 'tis usually the effect of wrath; when a fixed, though most sedate and calm resolution to punish hath the same effect, this most different cause is called by the same name. In this allusion is wrath ascribed to God, the most serene and dispassionate of all beings; and hence they who represent him among men in authority, ought in this respect to be God-like too. *Magistratus non debet irasci*, judges (as Cicero most aptly speaks) ought to be *legum similes, like the laws themselves*, which are moved by no passion, are angry with no man, but keep one steady tenor, so as neither to despite an enemy, nor indulge a friend. To this temper it well agrees to design good (as in lancing a tumour) where one does a present hurt. Two ways may punishment be a proper and apt, though it be not always an effectual, means of doing good.

1. As it may work the good of the offenders themselves. To which it hath in itself a tendency, if the disease be not so strong and stubborn, as to defy the remedy; as it puts them upon reflecting, and should awaken in them their considering power. As in the matter of treason against a rightful power, *deliberasse est desciviss, to deliberate whether to be loyal*, or no, is to revolt, so it is in the just and glorious rupture that is to be made of the bonds of vice, whereby men are held as slaves under the usurped power of the devil's kingdom. If once they come duly to consider, they will disdain so vile a servitude; when they meet with a check in their way, it may occasion them to check themselves, and consider their ways. No external means do any good to the minds of men, otherwise than as they themselves are engaged, drawn in, and made parties, in some sense against, but (as we are compounded) in a higher and nobler for, ourselves. This comes in as one among external means of that kind, as do give some present uneasiness, but in order to after-advantage; it afflicts, 'tis true, and no affliction is for the present joyous but grievous, but yields afterwards a peaceable fruit. When the magistrate's power is called a sword, it signifies its business is to wound; but as wounds are generally painful, some are sanative healing wounds, and so are these designed and apt to be. They vex a while, but *vexatio dat intellectum*, it rouses the understanding, and is most apt to do so to good purpose in plain and undisputed cases; and where there is no pretence for conscience, in the cause one suffers for.

Where indeed a formed and fixed judgment of conscience once hath place, for the practice which exposes a man to suffering; mulcts and prisons, gibbets and fagots, are very improper means of illumination, or of public utility; if the civil peace, and the substance of religion, be not hurt by such practice. And the sincerity of that conscience is much to be suspected, that is ever altered by such methods; but no man will pretend it is against his conscience, not to be drunk, not to debauch, or to be sober, chaste, and virtuous. Therefore a man's way lies open to that consideration which is most immediately to influence his practice, to correct a lewd, and begin a regular good course. He needs not be detained with any subtle disputes, or be put to solve perplexed doubts, or answer specious arguments and objections. It is obvious to him to bethink himself: "What a strange sort of anomalous creature am I become, whom the law of mine own nature remonstrates against! How degenerate a thing! that have forsaken my own noble order of intelligent creatures, to herd with brutes! That have made myself unfit for human society, otherwise than as one that must bear a mark, wear a disgraceful scar, from the wound of a sword, not that of a public enemy, or my own; but a sword drawn in defence of the sacred rights of God, and to vindicate the honour of mankind!" And hereupon, if the crime be not capital, with the concurrent use of other appointed means, and the blessing of God upon all, (from whence only the good issue can be hoped for,) may a vicious person be so reclaimed, as to become of great use in the world. Yea, and if the crime be capital, such as that the criminal survives not the punishment, but the sword of justice must cut him off from the land of the living; our charity will not let us doubt but there have been instances, wherein a prison and arraignment, and the sentence of death, have been the best effectual means to the offenders, of their escaping the more terrible sentence, and

of obtaining eternal life. But however, though the ministry of civil justice doth often fail of its most desirable effects, as to the particular persons that suffer it; (as even the ministration of the Gospel of grace proves also ineffectual to many;) yet,

2. It is not only apt, but effectual, to do much good to others, and generally to the community. Punishment is justly said to be, in its proper design, medicinal to the delinquents; yet not always in the event.[b] But the common good it may serve, when contumacious offenders perish under the deserved infliction of it. This was the thing designed by the righteous Judge of all the earth, when he gave so particular directions how to punish offenders in such and such kinds, that others might hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly. And in all equal government, it is the design of penal laws that the terror might reach to all, the punishment itself but to a few. And when the utmost endeavours that can be used, shall have had that happy success to reduce a vast number of offenders to a paucity, we should rejoice to see that there needed to be but few examples made in such kinds. In the mean time where this sword of the Lord, in the hands of his ministers of justice, is unsheathed, and used according to the exigency of the case; it is an apt and likely means to have a happy effect, for the good of the community; both as it may put a stop to the prevailing wickedness of men, and may avert from a nation the provoked wrath of God.

1. As it may give some check to the daringness and triumph of unrebuked wickedness, which, indeed, naturally carries in it a pusillanimous meanness, and a vile abjection of mind, so as no where to insult, but where it meets, in those who should oppose it, a timorous fainting and succumbency; it so far resembles the devil, whose offspring it is, that being resisted it flees. When men find that while they dare to affront the universal Ruler, and offer indignities to his throne; there are those, that, clothed with his authority, and bearing his character, dare to vindicate the injury; when they feel the smart and cost of open wickedness, it will, no doubt, become at least less open, and seek closer corners. They will not long hold up the head, in so hopeless and deplorate a cause, that can afford them no support, no relief to their abject sinking spirits, in suffering for it. What encouraging testimony of conscience can they have, that not only act from no direction of conscience, but in defiance of it? What god can they hope will reward their sufferings which they incur by highest contempt of God? And if such gross immoralities be somewhat generally redressed, as more directly fall under the magistrate's animadversion, how great a common good must it infer, inasmuch as those evils, in their own nature, tend to the detriment, decay, and ruin of a people where they prevail! They darken the glory of a nation, which how great a lustre hath it cast abroad in the world from the Romans and Spartans, and other civilized people! when their sumptuary and other laws were strictly observed, that repressed undue excesses; and when temperance, frugality, industry, justice, fidelity, and consequently fortitude, and all other virtues, excelled and were conspicuous among them. It were a great thing we should have to transmit to posterity, might we see England recover its former, or arrive to the further glory, which it is to be hoped it may acquire in these kinds!

Yea, and the vices which are endeavoured to be redressed, are such as not only prejudice the reputation, but the real welfare of any nation. Profane swearing tends gradually to take away the reverence of an oath; which, where it is lost, what becomes of human society? And more sensual vices tend to make us an effeminate, mean-spirited, a desident, lazy, slothful, unhealthful people, useless to the glorious prince and excellent government we live under, neither fit to endure the hardships nor encounter the hazards of war, nor apply ourselves to the business nor undergo the labours that belong to a state of peace, and do consequently tend to infer upon us a deplorable, but unpitied, poverty; and (which all will pretend to abhor) slavery at length. For they are most unfit for an ingenuous, free sort of government, or to be otherwise governed than as slaves or brutes, who have learnt nothing of self-government; and are at the next step of being slaves to other men, who have first made themselves slaves to their own vicious inclinations. Thus are such liable to all sorts of temporal calamities and miseries in this world. Besides, what is of so far more tremendous import, that the same vile and stupifying lusts tend to infer an utter indisposition to comport with, or attend to, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God; and so to ruin men's hopes for the other world, and make their case unconceivably worse, in the judgment of the great day, than theirs of Tyre or Sidon, Sodom or Gomorrha. But how much may a just, prudent, well tempered vigilancy and severity do, towards the prevention of all this! and so much the more, by how much public animadversions, shall render the things men incur punishment for, not only in common estimate unrighteous, but ignominious things.

That principle of shame in the nature of man, if by proper applications it were endeavoured to be wrought upon, would contribute more to the reforming a vicious world, than most other methods that have ever been tried to that purpose. 'Tis a tender passion, of quick and most acute sense; things that are thought opprobrious, have so sensible a pungency with them, that (though all tempers are not herein alike) many that can feel little else, reckon a disgrace an unsufferable thing. And I little doubt but if punishments for grosser vices were more attempered to this principle, they would have much more effect. This hath been too much apprehended by the usurping god of this world; this engine he hath made it his business to turn, and manage to the contrary purpose, to drive or keep serious religion out of the world; yea, to make men ashamed of being sober, temperate, and regular in their conversation, lest they should also be thought religious, and to have any thing of the fear of God in them, and make them debauch, to save their reputation. A plain document to such as covet to see a reformation of manners in our days, what course ought to be endeavoured in order thereto. A great apprehension to this purpose that noble pagan[c] seems to have had, who inquiring whence legislations had its rise, from some man or from God? and determining from God, if we will give the most righteous judgment that can be given; doth elsewhere write to this effect: that[d] Jupiter pitying the miseries of men, by their indulgence to vice, lest mankind should utterly perish, sent Mercury to implant in them, together with justice, shame, as the most effectual means to prevent the total ruin of the world.

And so inseparable is the connexion between being wicked and being miserable, that whatsoever molestation and uneasiness tends to extinguish dispositions to wickedness, ought to be reckoned given with very merciful intentions. It is no improbable discourse which an ingenious modern writer[e] hath to this purpose, (for I pretend not to give his words, not having the book now at hand,) that though the drowning of the world was great severity to them who did then inhabit it, yet it was an act of mercy to mankind. For hereby (he reckoned) the former more luxuriant fertility of the earth was so far reduced and checked, as not, so spontaneously, to afford nutriment to vice; that men in after-time must hereby be more constrained to labour and industry, and made more considerate, and capable of serious thoughts; and that when also they should find their time by this change of the state of the world naturally contracted within narrower limits, they would be more awakened to consider and mind any overtures should be, in following time, made to them in order to their attaining a better state in another world; and consequently the more susceptible of the Gospel, in the proper season thereof. If God were severe with so merciful intentions, what lies within the compass of these ministers of his justice, appointed for common good, ought certainly to be endeavoured; in imitation of him, whom they represent.

2. The administration of punitive justice, when the occasion requires it, tends also to the common good; as it may contribute towards the appeasing of God's anger against a sinful people, and the turning it away from them.

b Aquin. Sum. 1, 2dæ. q. 87. c Plato. d De Leg. Lib. 1. e In Protag. f Dr. Woodward's Essay.

What may be collected from that noble instance of Phinehas's heroical zeal, upon which a raging plague was stayed, compared with the effect which Ahab's humiliation and Nineveh's repentance had in averting temporal judgments, would signify not a little to this purpose. But I must pass to the

Second head of discourse proposed, *viz.* To argue and enforce from hence the duty incumbent upon all, under government, as their several stations and capacities can admit, to be, in due subordination, assisting and serviceable to the magistrate, as, in executing punitive justice, he is the minister of God for good. And this (as hath been said) is to be the use of the former part of the discourse, which will answer the design of the apostle's discourse, and agree to the natural order of the things discoursed in this context. For, The magistrate is the minister of God for good to us, is a doctrine; and, Let every soul be subject or subordinate to him, accordingly; an exhortation, which was at first proposed, and is afterwards resumed and pressed, ver. 5. as of absolute necessity from that doctrine. Wherefore 'tis necessary that we be, or we must needs be, subject. There is an ἀνάγκη put upon it, a cogent ineluctable necessity, arising even from hence, *viz.* from this doctrinal assertion as it is proposed, and as it is afterward applied to this purpose; we are not to be dispensed with in the case, but we must every one do our parts in subordination to the magistrate, and that not only for wrath, but for conscience sake. We shall therefore show,—I. What duty we who are in private capacities are exhorted to, and—2. Show the strength of the apostle's argument, as it is proposed in the text, and amplified in what follows, to engage us to that duty.

First, For the duty we are exhorted to, that we may understand what it is, I shall only premise some few plain things, and then leave it to yourselves to judge, and conclude what it is, and cannot but be.

1. It is plain, private persons are not to do the magistrate's part, are not to invade his office, nor usurp his authority; they are to act but in subordination to him, as their charge given them plainly imports.

2. They are not only not to oppose him. As the former would be too much, this would be too little; the arguments used to enforce it, import much more. What, because he is the minister of God for good, and to me, am I therefore only not to oppose him? Can it be thought there should be such an apparatus of argument, to draw from it so faint and dilute an inference? Ought not every man so far to reverence God's authority as to endeavour it may not lose its design? And ought not every man to co-operate to a common good, wherein each man claims a part?

3. It is not only to save myself from punishment, by not doing the evil which would expose me to the stroke of the sword; for my duty I am to do, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake, which plainly respects God and his authority and interest which I am to obey and serve. And I am to endeavour not only that he may not be a terror to me as an evil-doer, but that he may be a terror to them that are such.

4. Somewhat positive is manifestly carried in the word ὑποτασσέσθαι, to subject or subordinate myself to him, under this very notion, as the minister of God for good. Is this doing nothing? He is plainly said to be the minister of God for good, under this special notion, as he is the administrator of punitive justice, *viz.* as he bears the sword, and is to be a terror to evil-doers. I am so to subordinate myself, as that herein he may effectually serve the end of his office, and not bear the sword in vain. Now upon all this, judge you yourselves what is it that is left to be my duty in a private capacity, that is less than the magistrate's part, more than the mentioned negatives; and yet so much, as whereby I am to take care to my uttermost, that he may do good in his office of punishing wickedness? So as that his doing his duty must some way depend upon my doing mine, and be the effect of it, or of theirs who are in like circumstances, and so but under the same common obligation with me; so that ordinarily his duty cannot be done, without any care or concern of theirs or mine. What, I say, can it be less than to bring punishable matters under his cognizance? Otherwise, if no obligation lie upon private persons, to this purpose, he will only be to punish such wickedness as he beholds with his own eyes; and then how narrow will his precinct be! What multitudes of magistrates must there then be! And what a monster thereupon would the body politic become!

But here if any man ask me the question, (because what is to be done herein is to be done for conscience sake,) Am I bound in conscience to discover to a magistrate all the evil that I know by any man that is justly punishable by law? To this I shall only at present say, that cases of conscience can only be with judgment resolved in hypothesi, and with application to this or that person, when material circumstances, relating thereto, are distinctly known. I must have clear grounds if I will conceal such a man's punishable fault, upon which I may judge, that more good is likely to be done to his soul, that the honour of God and the public good will be more served by the concealment than by the discovery, and the government not hurt or endangered. But if the crime be such as is national, and imports contempt of God and his laws, and in reference whereto the offender expresses more shame of the punishment than of the fault, and I will yet, upon private respects, to him or myself, conceal it, I shall herein, while I pretend conscience in the case, cheat my conscience and not satisfy it. And I add in reference to this case, let any man that would exempt his conscience from any sense of obligation to endeavour the punishment of offenders in the mentioned kinds, take great care he do not ground his concealment upon other than very peculiar grounds, or not common to him with any other man in a like case. Is it because such a one is my friend? or he may bear me a grudge? or I may lose his custom, &c.? These are things so common, that guiding myself by such measures, is both to overthrow magistracy and conscience too. Upon the whole, therefore, what is ordinarily a private man's duty in such cases, is sufficiently evident. Therefore,

Secondly, Let us see the force of the apostle's arguings, to engage us to it.

1. That the magistrate, as he is the dispenser of punitive justice, is God's minister. 'Tis the authority of God that he is invested with, he bears a sword which God hath put into his hand. Is that authority to be eluded, and made to signify nothing? Is that sword to be borne in vain? What an awe should this lay upon our spirits? It is therefore to be served for conscience sake, which hath principal reference to God. We need not here dispute, whether human laws bind conscience; no doubt they do, when they have an antecedent reason, or goodness. If men command what God forbids, the apostles make their appeal to enemies, as judges whom they were to obey. He is the minister of God for good, not for hurt, or for no good; 'tis a perverting of God's authority, to do mischief by the pretence of it, a debasing it, to trifle with it. But the question is out of doors, when human laws are but subsidiary to divine, and enjoin the same thing. And as that celebrated saying of St. Austin is applied, by him, to the former case of a supposed contradiction of the pro-consul's command to the emperor's for disobeying the inferior; 'tis equally applicable, as fortifying the obligation to obey both, when they are coincident.

And this consideration can be insignificant with none, but such as say in their hearts there is no God, that think this world hath no universal sovereign Ruler, or no Lord over it; and it might as well be supposed to have no intelligent Maker, to have become what it is by chance; an imagination which the most vicious, that make any use of thoughts, begin to be ashamed of; and have therefore thought fit to quit the absurd name of atheist for the more accountable, as well as more convenient, name of deist. But then it's strange they should not see the consequence from Maker, to Ruler, and from God's having made this world, to its being under his present government, and liable to his future judgment: or that from any just apprehension of the nature of God, they should not collect so much of the nature of their own souls, as to judge them capable of subsisting out of these bodies, and in another world; and consequently of their being liable to a future judgment, for what they have been and done in this! Or that a being of so much wisdom and goodness, in conjunction with power, as to have made such a world as this, and such a creature as man in it; should not have made him for nobler ends, than are attainable in this world!

If any of themselves had power enough to make such another sort of creature, and furnish him with faculties capable of such acquisitions and attainments, only to fetch a few turns in the world, and form plots and projects in it, that must, with himself, shortly come to nothing; they would have little cause to boast of the performance: they would have cause to be ashamed of it, to use so unconceivable power only to play tricks, that neither themselves nor any one else should ever be the better for! And though they might, hereby, awhile amuse the world, they would gain little reputation of wisdom or goodness above other men, by being the authors of so useless a design, that would at length appear to have nothing of design in it; for finally it terminates in mere nothing. But the great God hath not left himself without witness, the illustrious characters of his Godhead shine every where. He doth insist upon, and will assert his rights, in this lower world; 'tis a part of his creation, though a meaner part; he rules in the kingdoms of men, and he that rules will judge. The jests and laughter of fools will not overturn his throne; they that have taught themselves to turn his laws, and the whole frame of his government over the world, into ridicule, (because 'tis to be hoped they do not use to laugh always,) should be advised by a wise and great man in his time, than to judge of their jest, when they have done laughing;[g] sometime they will have done, and shall consider that he, to whom it belongs, will judge over their heads, as he will over us all.

And if his throne and government are as insolently as they are vainly attempted against by many, and the most connive; we shall all be taken for a combination of rebels against our rightful Lord. It will be a heavy addition to be partakers of other men's sins, when every one hath more than enough of his own. Let me ask, would you not dread to be found guilty of misprision of treason, against the government under which we live? Why doth the fear of the great God, and the dread of being found accomplices against him, signify less with us? And what means it, that the charge of punishing great offenders is given to the community; thou, every individual, as in the text; thee, all the individuals making up the community; Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live, Exod. xxii. 18. And so for the idolater, Thou shalt bring forth that man or woman, and stone him, Deut. xiii. 13, 14. ch. xvii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Is it that all the people were magistrates? No, but that it was not to be supposed that so horrid impieties could long escape unpunished, but by the people's, as well as the magistrate's neglect; upon which all would be taken as conspirators against the great Lord of all.

2. Take the other part of the argument, that the magistrate is God's minister, (for good to us,) is it enough for us not to hinder? Are we not all obliged, in our stations, to promote our own, our neighbour's, and the common good? Our own, as we keep ourselves from being accessaries. Our neighbour's offending, as we contribute our endeavour that they may be less wicked and (which we should further design) that they may become good. Our unoffending neighbours, for if grosser wickedness rule without control, who that are pious, sober, and virtuous, can long live in peace, by such ill neighbours? We are for this directed to pray, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. for rulers, even all that are in authority, that we may live peaceable and quiet lives, in all godliness and honesty. And what we are to pray for, we do that ludicrously, if we endeavour it not too. Besides that the untainted, as yet, are liable to worse hurt, by the contagion of their example; and the common good is many ways to be served, as hath been shown. How laudable an excellency, among noble-minded pagans, was love to their country! And even in this way to serve the common good, was reckoned by them a praiseworthy thing. He (saith one of them) that doth no harm, is honourable; but he is worthy of double honour that prevents it; and he that assists the magistrate in punishing it, is most honourable, and far excels all his other citizens.[h] So far were they from thinking it an ignominious thing, to bring offenders to punishment, and especially for impieties, or whatsoever signified a contempt of religion; such regard they had to the honour of their gods, who were no gods. Shall we reckon the true and living God to deserve from us less regard to his violated honour? The common good, which in this way we are to promote, is so common, as all good men can, without scruple, concur in the design; and blessed be God, they so generally do so. We have the greatest encouragement hereto, by considering the immediate fountain of the magistrate's power, and office, our glorious and ever blessed Redeemer, and Lord; to whom all power is given in heaven and earth, by whom kings reign, who is head of all things to the church; and through whom the divine goodness flows towards a lost world. This infers an obligation upon all, that bear the Christian name, to serve the proper ends of this branch of his power; as they have in general, to acknowledge him for Lord and Christ.

They who therefore make it their business to promote this design, do not herein serve the interest of a party, but the interest of the universal Ruler of our blessed Redeemer, and of mankind. And they who are agreed, with sincere minds, upon so great and important an end, as the serving this most comprehensive interest, are agreed in a greater thing than they can differ in. To differ about a ceremony or two, or a set of words, is but a trifle, compared with being agreed in absolute devotedness to God and Christ, and in a design, as far as in them lies, of doing good to all. An agreement in substantial godliness, and Christianity, in humility, meekness, self-denial, in singleness of heart, benignity, charity, entire love to sincere Christians, as such, in universal love to mankind, and in a design of doing all the good we can in the world, (notwithstanding such go under different denominations, and do differ in so minute things,) is the most valuable agreement that can be, among Christians. They that are thus agreed, are more one, and do less differ in the temper and complexion of their minds from one another, than they who are never so much agreed in being for or against this or that external form or mode of religion; but are full of envy, wrath, malice, bitterness, falsehood, do differ from them all, and from all good men. And I doubt not, when God's time comes of favouring Zion, we shall have churches constituted, by congregating what is of one kind, such as (for the main) are of one mind, spirit, character, and temper; and serving whatsoever is of a different kind, and quite alien hereto; and cease to have them constituted by what is unnecessary, much less by what is inconsistent with their very being. Pride, ambition, vain-glory, and a terrene spirit, with carnal self-design, will not always prevent this. Heaven will grow too big for this earth! And the powers of the world to come, for those of this present evil world.

In the mean time let us draw as near one another as we can, and particularly unite in the most vigorous endeavour of carrying on this excellent design, which is now before us. And let it be with a temper of mind agreeing with God's kind design towards men, in appointing the magistrate to be his minister to them, *i. e.* for the doing them good. Let it be with minds full of all goodness, in conformity to the original first good, from whom, as such, this constitution proceeds. Despond not, as apprehending the stream is too strong, and there is no good to be done. That is to yield the day to victorious wickedness. It is to give vice the legislature, to let it be the law of the age, and govern the world: and it is to give up ourselves and our nation to perish as a lost people. Let us not be lost before we are lost. Much good hath been done in this kind heretofore. There was a time when (at Antioch) the severity of the magistrate was much regretted in the reign of that great prince Theodosius, and upon an ill occasion, the contemptuous subversion of his statutes. This cost Chrysostom divers orations or sermons to the people while yet presbyter there; in one whereof he asks them, what hurt had the terror of the magistrates done them? It hath shaken off our sloth, made us more honest, diligent, industrious.[i] He had told them above, and tells them after, they ought to give God thanks for it, that now there was not one drunken person, or one that sang lascivious songs, to be seen. Their city was become as a chaste matron, where great wantonness before did generally appear. Your experience hath told you, much hath been done, you are still getting ground; God hath, we are to hope, effectually

[g] Lord Verulam's Instaur. Mag.

[h] Plat. de Leg. lib. 5. συγκυλιζων τοις αρχουσι.

[i] Hom. 6. ανδριαντων.

engaged the government in this blessed design; in subordination thereto, go on with alacrity.

Let me finally set before your eyes the instructive practice of that excellent prince Jehoshaphat, in a like case, 2 Chron. xix. when he was bringing back the people to the Lord God of their fathers, *v.* 4. And had set judges in the land, warning them to take heed, as being to judge not for men, but for the Lord, *v.* 6. which showed they were not mere matters of *Meum* and *Tuum* only, they were to judge in, but matters immediately relating to the interest and honour of God, for he distinguishes the judgment of the Lord, and controversies, *v.* 8. He charges all to whom he spake, as they were severally concerned, (and they were not concerned all alike,) to do their work, *v.* 9. in the fear of the Lord faithfully and with a perfect heart; and concludes as I do, with these words, *v.* 11. Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good.

A TWO-FOLD DISCOURSE.

FIRST.—OF MAN'S ENMITY AGAINST GOD.

SECONDLY.—OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

COLOSSIANS I. 21.

AND YOU, THAT WERE SOMETIME ALIENATED AND ENEMIES IN YOUR MIND BY WICKED WORKS, YET NOW HATH HE RECONCILED.

IT is a great and wonderful context, whereof these words are a part, which the time will not allow me to look into; but presently to fall on the consideration of the words themselves, which briefly represent to us, the wretched and horrid state of men, yet unconverted and not brought home to God; and the happy state of those that are reduced, and brought home to him. The former in those words, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works." The latter, in these words, "Yet now hath he reconciled." I shall apply my discourse to the former part of the words, and thence observe,—that men in their unconverted state, are alienated from God, and enemies to him by their wicked works. This I shall endeavour,—1. To explain, and show you the meaning of it;—2. To evince, and let you see the truth of it;—3. Apply it.

1. For the meaning of it, 'tis evident that it is the unconverted state of man that is here reflected upon and referred unto. You, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works. They were so, before they were turned to God; he writes to those Colossians as to converts, to them that were saints, and faithful brethren in Christ, (*v.* 2.) to them that were now believers in Christ, and lovers of the saints, (*v.* 4.) telling them, they sometime had been enemies by wicked works. Before conversion, they had (as is elsewhere said) their understandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God; walking as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Ephes. iv. 18. compared with the preceding verse. This is the deplorable condition of the unconverted world, they are alienated from, and enemies to, God by wicked works. We are to consider what this *alienation* from God doth import. It signifies estrangement, unacquaintance with God; and that without any inclination towards him, or disposition to seek his acquaintance. The word is emphatical, it signifies people of another country, you were like people of another country. Of such a different language, manners, and behaviour they that are converted are to you, and you to them; you are estranged to their speech, customs, and ways. All that is of God was strange to you, men in their unconverted state are strangers to God. Wicked men do not understand the words of the Gospel, John viii. 43. What relates to the kingdom of God, the unconverted man dislikes, Job xxi. 14. They say to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Man, who was originally made for the service of God, and communion with him, is now so degenerated, that he is become a mere stranger to him. The next word to be taken notice of, is *enemies*, which may seem to add somewhat to the former word, alienated; there is not only no inclination towards God, but there is a disinclination; not only no affection, but a disaffection. The carnal mind is enmity to God, and the effects of this enmity are obvious. This alienation from God is voluntary, affected, and chosen: men, in their unconverted state, are not only strangers to God, but enemies against God, and that in their minds. A most fearful case, full of astonishment, that the very mind of man, the offspring of God, the paternal mind, as a heathen called him, that this most excellent part or power belonging to the nature of man, should be poisoned with malignity, and envenomed with enmity against the glorious, ever-blessed God! that the mind of man, his thinking power, the fountain of thoughts, should be set against God, who gave him this power to think! Yet into this reason must every man's unacquaintance with God be resolved, they know not God, and converse not with him, only because they have no mind to it. That noble faculty in man, that resembles the nature of God, is turned off from him, and set on vain things that cannot profit; as also upon wicked and impure things, that render them more unlike to God, and disaffected to him. *By wicked works*, which must have a double reference: 1. Former wicked works, as done by them: 2. Future wicked works, as resolved on by them.

1. The former wicked works, which they have done, have more and more habituated their souls unto a state of distance from God. The longer they live, the longer they sin; and the longer they sin, the more they are confirmed in their enmity against God.

2. Future wicked works, as resolved on to be done. They purpose to live as they have done, and give themselves the same liberty in sin as before, and will not know God, or be acquainted with him, lest they should be drawn off from their resolved sinful course. For the knowledge of God and a course of sin are inconsistent things, 1 Cor. xv. 34. Awake to righteousness, and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God. This is the condemnation, (John iii. 19.) that light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. They hate the light, because they will not have their

course altered, they resolve to do as they have done, and that light, which brings with it a tendency to the obeying of God, they cannot endure. But then, as this alienation of mind and enmity are against the light that reveals God, they finally terminate on the blessed God himself: as God is the term of reconciliation, so he is the term of this enmity and alienation. Wicked men look on God with enmity of mind, under several notions.

1. As he claims to be their Owner, when he claims a principal propriety in them, when he insists on his right in them as their Creator, as having made them out of nothing. When God owns or claims them as their Lord, that first signifies he is their Proprietor, or one to whom they belong; but they say they are their own. If we have to do with God, we must quit claim to ourselves, and look on God as our Owner; but this is fixed in the hearts of men, We will be our own; we will not consent to the claim which God makes to us. Our tongues are our own, Psal. xii. 4. Wicked men might as well say the same thing of their whole selves, our bodies, strength, time, parts, &c. are our own, and who is Lord over us?

2. If you consider God under the notion of a Ruler, as well as an Owner. Why should not God rule over and govern his own? But this, the spirit of man can by no means comport withal, though 'tis but reasonable, that he who gave men their beings, should give them laws; and that he who gave life, should also give the rule of life; but this man, in his degenerate state, will by no means admit of. There are two things considerable in the will of God, which the mind of man cannot comply withal. The sovereignty and the holiness of it.

1. The sovereignty of God's will. We must look on God's will as absolutely sovereign, man must look on God's will to be above his will; so as that man must cross his own will, to comport with a higher will than his. But this apostatized man will not do, and therefore he is at enmity with God; he will not submit to the will of God, as superior to his will. And then,

2. There is the holiness of God's will. His law is a holy law; and the renewed man therefore loves it; but because 'tis holy therefore the unregenerate man dislikes it.

3. Lastly, God is considered under the notion of our end, our last end, as he is to be glorified and enjoyed by us. There is a disaffection to God in the hearts of unregenerate men in this regard also. The spirit of man is opposite to living to the glory of God, every one sets up for himself; I will be my own end, it shall be the business of my whole life to please myself. Therefore when God is represented as our end, as in the 1 Cor. x. 31. Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God; and as it is in the 2 Cor. v. 15. No man is to live to himself, &c.—The great design of our being delivered from the law, (*viz.* as a cursing, condemning law) is that we may live to God, (Gal. ii. 19.) I am dead to the law, that I might live to God; this the unrenewed heart cannot comport with. The last and great design of all our actions must terminate on God; now self is set up, as the great idol in opposition to God, all the world over; and the spirits of men grow, by custom, more and more disaffected to God, in this respect. Again, God would be owned by us for our best good. This should he the sense of our souls towards him, so it was with the Psalmist, Ps. lxxiii. 25. Whom have I in heaven but thee, &c. but says the unregenerate soul, the world is better to me than God. And it is upon this account that when overtures are made of changing this state, the unregenerate mind opposes it. Thus have you this doctrine explained and opened. I come now in the

2nd place, To evince the truth of this doctrine, and that by two heads of arguments,—Partly from ourselves, and partly from God.

1. From ourselves, 'Tis an alienation and enmity of mind that keeps men off from God, and reconciliation with him; which will plainly appear,

1. If we consider that our minds are capable of knowing God. Such a thing is the mind of man, which was originally made for such an exercise, as to be taken up, principally, with things relating to God. Our minds can apprehend what is meant by the nature of God, as a Being of uncreated perfection, in whom all power, wisdom, and goodness do meet; who fills heaven and earth, and from everlasting was God. Our minds tell us, that we have a capacity thus to conceive of God; 'tis in the capacity of man's nature to mind God, as well as to mind vanity; but doth it not. And whence doth this proceed, but from enmity, an alienation of the mind from God?

2. This appears, in that men are wilfully ignorant of God, and are destitute of the knowledge of him out of choice; ignorant, and are willing to be so. This speaks enmity and alienation of mind more expressly and fully. That they are capable of knowing God, and yet are ignorant of him, leaves no other cause assignable; but their desiring so to be, plainly assigns this cause, Rom. i. 28. They liked not to retain God in their knowledge. 'Tis not grateful to them, Job xxi. 14. We desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Men are ignorant willingly of that God, who made the world, and all things therein, 2 Pet. iii. 5. For this they are willingly ignorant of, &c. They will not know God, though his visible works show his invisible power and Godhead, Rom. i. 19, 20. Now this can signify nothing but alienation, and enmity of mind. Men are willing and industrious to know other things, and labour after the knowledge of them; but they decline the knowledge of God, and his ways, being alienated from God, through the blindness of their hearts, Eph. iv. 18. This heart-blindness is chosen and voluntary blindness, signifies their having no mind or will to things of that nature. But now the voluntariness of this ignorance of God, and the enmity that is consequently in it, appears evidently in two sorts of persons.

1. In many that are of the more knowing and inquisitive sort, who do all they can to make themselves notional atheists; to blot or rase the notion of God out of their minds. Of them I shall say little; here, they do their utmost, but in vain; it will stick as close to them as their thinking power. But their attempt shows their enmity, for they are content to admit the grossest absurdities into their minds, rather than permit that notion to remain unmolested there: rather imagine such a curious frame of things, as this world is, to have come by chance; than that it had a wise, just, holy, as well as powerful maker. They would count it an absurdity, even unto madness, to think the exquisite picture of a man or a tree to have happened by chance; and can allow themselves to be so absurd, as to think a man himself or a tree to be casual productions. Is not this the height of enmity?

2. In the unthinking generality. Of whom, yet unconverted out of the state of apostacy, 'tis said they are fools, as is the usual language of Scripture, concerning wicked or unconverted men; and that such fools, though they never offer at saying in their minds, much less with their mouths, yet they say in their hearts, no God; *i. e.* not there is none, for there is no *is* in the Hebrew text. The words may rather go in the optative form, than the indictive, O that there were none! The notion is let alone, while it reaches not their hearts; if it do, they only wish it were otherwise. This speaks their enmity the more, for the notion lays a continual testimony against the bent of their hearts, and constant practice, that while they own a God, they never fear nor love him accordingly. And they grossly misrepresent him, sometimes as all made up of mercy without justice or holiness; and so think they need no reconciliation to him, he and they are well agreed already. Sometimes think of him as merciless, and irreconcileable; and therefore never look after being reconciled to him.

3. It appears hence, that men do seldom think of God, when as a thought of God may be as soon thought as any other, and would cost us as little. Why not as well on God as upon any of those vanities about which they are commonly employed? 'Tis a wonderful thing to consider, how man is capable of forming a thought! how a thought arises in our minds! And how sad is it to consider, that though God hath given to man a thinking power, yet he will not think of him! God hath given to man a mind that can think, and think on him, as well as on any thing else. My body cannot think, if my mind and spirit is gone; though God gave man the power of thought, yet men will not use or employ their thoughts otherwise than about vain or forbidden things. God forms the spirit of man within him, hath put an immortal spirit into him, whence a spring

of thoughts might ascend heavenwards. When we have thousands of objects to choose of, we think of any thing rather than God! and not only turn this way or that, besides him, but tend continually downwards in opposition to him. Yea, men cannot endure to be put in mind of God, the serious mention of his name is distasteful. Whence can this proceed, that a thought of God cast in, is thrown out, as fire from one's bosom? whence is it, but from the enmity of mind that is in man against God?

4. It further appears hence, that men are so little concerned about the favour of God. Whomsoever we love, we naturally value their love; but whether God be a friend or an enemy, it is all one to the unrenewed soul, if there be no sensible effects of his displeasure. The men of this world only value its favours, the favour of God they value not; whereas in his favour is life in the account of holy and good men, (Ps. xxx. 5.) yea, they judge his loving-kindness is better than life without it, Ps. lxiii. 3. When men shall go from day to day, without considering whether God hath a favour for them, or not; whether they are accepted or not, whether they have found grace in his eyes or not, &c. What doth this declare, but an enmity of mind, and alienation from God? If men had true love for God, it could not be, but they would greatly value his love.

5. That men do so little converse and walk with God, doth speak a fixed alienation of mind, and enmity against God. Walking with God includes knowing and minding him; but it adds all other motions of soul towards him, together with continuance, and approving ourselves to him, therein. Now agreement is required to walk with God, (Amos iii. 3.) Can two walk together unless they be agreed? Hos. iii. 3. Men walk not with God, because they are not come to an agreement with him; God's agreement with us, and ours with him, is that we may walk together. It we walk not with God, it is because there is no agreement; and what doth that import, but an alienation of mind from God? Says God, I would not have you live in the world at so great a distance from me, I would walk with you and have you walk with me; and for this end I would come to an agreement with you. But sinners will not come to any agreement with God, and thence it comes to pass that they walk not with God; they begin the day without God, walk all the day long without God, lie down at night without God, and the reason is because there are no agreement, and that denotes enmity, especially considering,

6. That daily converse with God would cost us nothing. To have any man's thoughts full of heaven, and full of holy fear, and reverence of God, &c. (which is included in walking with God,) what inconvenience is in this, what business will this hinder? When a man goes about his ordinary affairs, will it do any hurt to take God with him? No business will go on the worse for it, it will not detract from the success of our affairs. 1 Cor. vii. 24. Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. Let your state be what it will, there can be no business in this world, but what you may do with God, as well as without God, and much better.

7. Which makes the matter yet plainer, how uncomfortably do men live in this world, by reason of their distance from God, and unacquaintedness with him; Job xxxv. 10. But no one saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night. They choose rather to groan under their burdens alone, than to cry to God their Maker, as at the 9th verse of that chapter. When men will endure the greatest extremity, rather than apply themselves to God, what doth this resolve into but enmity against God?

8. That men do so universally disobey God, bespeaks alienation and enmity of mind. As obedience proceeds from love, so disobedience proceeds from enmity. And for this I shall only instance in two great precepts, wherein the mind and will of God is expressed which I mention, and insist upon (though briefly) as things that concern the constant and daily practice of every Christian—1. a course of prayer to God, in secret,—2. and having our conversation in heaven. How express are both of these precepts, in the same chapter; the former, Matt. vi. 6. the latter, ver. 19, 20, 21. Now consider, whether our disobedience to these two precepts do not discover great enmity in our hearts against God. What, to refuse to pray, and pour out our souls to him in secret; to refuse placing our treasure and our hearts in heaven; what doth this signify, but aversion, and a disaffected heart? Let us consider each of them severally and apart by itself. We are a Christian assembly, how should it startle us to be (any of us) convicted of enmity against God, under the Christian name, in two so plain cases?

1. For prayer, 'tis a charge laid upon all persons considered in their single and personal capacity, Matt. vi. 6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret. I fear that most of them, who bear the Christian name, carry the matter so, as if there were no such place in the Bible. When the mind and will of God is made known to us by his Son, who came out of his bosom, that he will be sought unto; and that not only publicly but secretly and daily; that as we are taught by our Lord himself, to pray for our daily bread, and the forgiveness of our daily trespasses, we are also to pray in secret, to him that sees in secret; can such commands be constantly neglected and disobeyed, and not signify the contrary bent of our will; especially when we consider, that it is enjoined us for our own good? It would be profane to say, What profit is it to us to call upon the almighty? but it is most justly to be said, what profit is it to the Almighty, that we call upon him? It is honourable to him, but very profitable to ourselves. If we know not how to pray in a corner, confessing our sins, and supplicating for mercy, we cannot but live miserable lives. When therefore this is not done, whence is it, but from an enmity of mind? To a friend we can unbosom ourselves, not to an enemy.

I might also enlarge upon family prayer, but if closet prayer were seriously minded, you that have families would not dare to neglect prayer with them too. But it either be performed with coldness and indifferency, it makes the matter worse, or more plainly bad; and shows it is not love, or any lively affection, that puts you upon praying, but a frightened conscience only. And a miserably mistaken, deluded one, that makes you think the God you pray to will be mocked or trifled with, or that he cannot perceive whether your heart be with him, or against him. And so instead of worshipping, or giving him honour in that performance, you reproach and affront him; and all this while, how vastly doth the temper of your mind disagree with the mind of God! I would, saith the blessed God, have a course of prayer run through the whole course of your lives; and all this that your hearts may be lifted up from earth to heaven, that your hearts may be in heaven every day, according to Matt. vi. 19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth; but treasures in heaven, &c. Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also. And so we are led to the other precept mentioned before.

2. As to a heavenly conversation, God would not have reasonable creatures, who have intelligent spirits about them, to grovel and crawl like worms in the dust of this lower world, as if they had no nobler sort of objects to converse with, than the things of this earth; nothing fitter for the contemplation, exercise, and enjoyment of an immortal mind. The saints are finally designed for an inheritance in light, (Col. i. 12.) and their thoughts and affections ought to be there beforehand, that they may become meet for that inheritance. Will it do a man any harm to have frequent forethoughts of the everlasting joy, purity, and bliss of the heavenly state? How joyous and pleasant must it be! And why are we called Christians, if he, who is our Lord and Teacher, revealing his mind to us, and expressly charging us to seek first the kingdom of God, to set our affections on the things above, &c. shall not be regarded? Why is not heaven every day in our thoughts, why will we lose the pleasure of a heavenly life, and exchange it for earthly care and trouble, or vanity, at the best? Why is it? No other reason can be given, but only an alienation of our minds from God.

9. Another argument to prove this alienation, and enmity against God, is the unsuccessfulness of the Gospel; which can be resolvable into nothing else, but such an enmity. The design of the Gospel is to bring us into a union with the Son of God, and to believe on him whom the Father hath sent. Christ seeks to gather in souls to God, but they will not be gathered. This is matter of fearful consideration, that when God is calling after men, by his

own Son, that there be so few that will come to him. How few are there that say, Give me Christ, or I am lost? none can reconcile me to God, but Christ? You are daily besought, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled, (2 Cor. v. 20.) but in vain! What doth this signify, but obstinate, invincible enmity?

2. Another head of arguments may be taken from several considerations, that we may have of God in this matter: whence it will appear, that nothing but enmity, on our parts, keeps us at that distance from God, as we generally are at. And consider to that purpose,

1. That God is the God of all grace, the fountain of goodness, the clement of love. Why are men at that distance from him, who is goodness, and grace, and love itself? The reason is not on God's part, 1 John iv. 16. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. What can our so great distance from this God signify, from the most perfect, the most excellent goodness, but the most horrid kind, and the highest pitch of enmity? Did men apprehend this, what frightful monsters would they appear to themselves! This is not only a plain, but a terrible declaration of a most unaccountable enmity, on our part.

2. God is still pleased to continue our race on earth, a succession of men in this world, from age to age, made after his own image, with minds and spirits that are intelligent and immortal; which declares a strong propension in God towards such a sort of creatures, the inhabitants of this lower world, though degenerated, and fallen from him. Notwithstanding all their neglect of him, in former ages, yet new generations of men still spring up, capable of knowing and serving him, Prov. viii. 31. In the foreseen height of man's enmity, this was the steady bent of his mind towards them, to rejoice in the habitable parts of this earth, and to have his delights with the sons of men. Thus also in the 2 Chron. vi. 18. do we find Solomon in a rapture of admiration, on this account: But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth, &c. And the Psalmist, Ps. lxviii. 18. That gifts are given to the rebellious, (the most insolent of enemies,) that the Lord God might dwell among them. How admirable and unconceivable a wonder is this! The heaven of heavens cannot contain him, and will he yet dwell with men on earth! And we yet find, notwithstanding God's great condescension, that there is still a distance; whence can this be, but from man's aversion, and enmity of mind against God? Thus are men still requiting God evil for his goodness; God will dwell with men on earth, but men will not dwell with him, nor admit of his dwelling with them; they say to him, Depart from us, Job xxi. 14. 'Tis thus, from age to age, and generation to generation, which shows God's goodness on his part, and the enmity on man's part. See to this purpose, Ps. xiv. and liii. the beginning of each.

3. Consider the forbearance of God towards you, while you are continually at mercy. With what patience doth he spare you, though your own hearts must tell you that you are offending creatures, and whom he can destroy in a moment! He spares you, that neglect him. He is not willing that you should perish, but come to the knowledge of the truth, that you may be saved; by which he calls and leads you to repentance, Rom. ii. 4. On God's part, here is a kind intention; but on man's part, nothing but persevering enmity.

4. Consider God's large and wonderful bounty towards the children of men in this world, and the design of it, Acts xvii. 25, 26. He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, that they might seek after him, Ps. lxviii. 19. He daily loadeth us with his benefits. He gives us all things richly to enjoy, Acts. xiv. 17. God leaves not himself without witness, that he doth men good. He gives men rain from heaven, when they want it; and, when unseasonable, he withholds it. 'Tis a great thing to understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, (Ps. cvii. 42.) his wonderful works towards the children of men; to understand our mercies and comforts, and what their meaning and design is. By mercies to our outward man, God designs to draw our hearts and minds to himself. Mercies are bestowed on them that have the power of thought, to consider the end of all God's mercies; 'tis bespeaking, and seeking to win our hearts to himself, Hos. xi. 4. 'Tis drawing us with those cords of a man, with bands of love: which plainly shows what the case requires, that the minds and hearts of men are very averse, and alienated from him, and therefore need such drawing.

5. And that which is more than all the rest, is God's sending his Son into the world, to procure terms of peace for us, and then to treat with us thereupon; and that in him he is reconciling the world to himself, 2 Cor. v. 19. Doth not reconciliation suppose enmity, as here, and in the text: You that were enemies in your minds—yet hath he reconciled. As we have noted that on our parts our withstanding, and too commonly frustrating, its overtures, speaks enmity and obstinacy therein; so on his part those overtures themselves speak it too. Here is the greatest kindness and good-will on God's part, that can be conceived: but it supposes, what we are evincing, ill-will in us. Christ came to seek and save that which was lost. What a lost state was our state! what to be engaged in a war against him that made us! Wo to him that strives with his Maker, Isa. xlv. 9. Fallen man is little apprehensive of it now, if we continue unreconciled to the last, at death it will be understood what a lost state we are in. Upon this account it will then appear, but this was our state before, when it appeared not; in this state Christ pitied us, when we had no pity for ourselves. Christ came not into the world to save men only at the hour of their death, from hell; but to raise up to himself a willing people, that may serve and glorify God, in their life on earth. He is, for this purpose, intent on this reconciling design; and how earnest, how alluring were his solicitations, in the days of his flesh? Come to me all ye that are weary—He that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out. How pathetical his lamentations, for the unreconcileable! O that thou hadst known the things belonging to thy peace—And his blood was shed at last, as the blood of propitiation, of a reconciling sacrifice, to reconcile God's justice to us; and thereupon also, as in this context. Having made peace by the blood of his cross, (ver. 20.) to vanquish our enmity, to reconcile us who were enemies in our minds—ver. 21, 22.

6. Consider Christ sending, and continuing, from age to age, the Gospel in the world; the design whereof may be understood by the manifest import and substance of it, and by the titles given to it, as it reveals Christ, the Mediator, the Peace-maker, in his person, nature, offices, acts, sufferings, and performances. As it contains the great commands of repentances towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, with the promises of pardon, and eternal life, with whatsoever is requisite to our present good state God-ward, and our final blessedness in him, as also the various enforcements of such precepts, and confirmations of such promises, with copious explications of the one and the other. And as it is called, the ministry of reconciliation, 2 Cor. v. 18. The word wherein peace is preached, by Jesus Christ, Acts x. 36. The Gospel of peace, and of glad tidings, (Rom. x. 15.) as that very word Gospel signifies.

This Gospel was, in its clearer manifestation, at the fulness of time, introduced with great magnificence and solemnity into the world, as the law had been, by the ministry of angels. When the Son of righteousness, the light of the world, was arising, and dawning upon it; then did a multitude of the heavenly host appear, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men, Luke ii. 13, 14. But this Gospel is not a more express declaration of God's good-will towards men, than their deportment under it, their continuing to live as without God in the world, is of their ill-will, disaffection, and enmity against God.

7. And lastly, the strivings of the Spirit, in the hearts of ministers preaching the Gospel, and with the souls of men, to whom it is preached, show that there is a mighty enmity to be overcome.

1. God's giving forth his Spirit to ministers, enabling them to strive with sinners, to bring them to Christ according to the working of that power, which works in them mightily, Colos. i. ult. What need of such striving, but that there is a great enmity in the minds of people to be conquered and overcome? Sometimes we read of ministers of the Gospel weeping over souls, who, for their too intent minding of earthly things, are called enemies to the cross of Christ, Phil. iii. 18. Sometimes they are ready to

breathe out their own souls towards them, among whom they labour, I Thess. ii. 8. Sometimes represented as travailing in birth, with them that are committed to their charge, Gal. iv. 19. There are ministers, whose hearts are in pangs and agonies for the souls of sinners, when the things of God are too apparently neglected, and not regarded by them; and when they see destruction from the Almighty is not a terror to them; and while they visibly take the way that takes hold of hell, and leads down to the chambers of death. They would, if possible, save them with fear, and pluck them as firebrands out of the fire; the fire of their own lusts, and fervent enmity against God, and godliness, and save them from his flaming wrath. Is all this unnecessary? and what makes it necessary, but that there is a counter-striving, an enmity working in the hearts of men, against the Spirit's striving in the ministry, to be overcome?

2. The Spirit also strives immediately with the souls of sinners, and pleads with them; sometimes as a Spirit of conviction, illumination, fear, and dread; sometimes as a Spirit of grace, wooing, and besecching; and when his motions are not complied with, there are complaints of men's grieving, vexing, quenching, resisting the Spirit, Acts vii. 51. Which resistance implies continual striving. No striving but doth suppose an obstruction, and difficulty to be striven withal; there could be no resisting, if there were not counter-striving; and hereby despite is done to the Spirit of grace. O fearful aggravation! that such a Spirit is striven against! 'Tis the Spirit of grace, love, and goodness, the Spirit of all kindness, sweetness, and benignity, which a wicked man doth despite unto, Heb. x. 29. How vile and horrid a thing, to requite grace, love, and sweetness with spite? As if the sinner should say, Thou wouldst turn me to God, but I will not be turned! The blessed God says, Turn at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, Prov. i. 23. There are preventive insinuations, upon which, if we essay to turn, plentiful effusions of the Spirit may be hoped to ensue; for he is the Spirit of grace. When we draw back, and resist or slight those foregoing good motions of that holy Spirit; this is despiting him. And doth not this import enmity, in a high degree? That the Spirit needs strive so much, that it may be overcome, as with some, at his own pleasure, he doth; with others, in just displeasure, he strives no more, and so it is never overcome.

We come now to the application, wherein the subject would admit and require a very abundant enlargement, if we were not within necessary limits. Two things I shall take notice of, as very necessary to be remarked, and most amazingly strange and wonderful, by way of introduction to some further use.

I. That ever the spirit of man, a reasonable, intelligent being, God's own offspring, and whereto he is not only a Maker but a Parent, styled the Father of spirits, should be degenerated into so horrid, so unnatural a monster! What! to be a hater of God; the most excellent and all-comprehending good! and thy own Father! Hear, O heavens—and earth, saith the Lord, I have nourished, and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me, Isa. i. 2. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this! and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate! As if all the blessed inhabitants of that upper world should rather forsake their glorious mansions, leave heaven empty, and run back into their original nothing, than endure such a sight! An intelligent spirit, hating God, is the most frightful prodigy in universal nature! If all men's limbs were distorted, and their whole outer man transformed into the most hideous shapes, 'twere a trifle, in comparison with this deformity of thy soul.

2. That it should be thus, and they never regret, nor perceive it! What self-loathing creatures would men be could they see themselves! so as never to endure themselves, while they find they do not love God; but men are generally well pleased with themselves for all this. Though the case is so plain, they will not see it; when all the mentioned indications show it, they never charge or suspect themselves of such a thing as this enmity against God. God charges them, and doth he not know them? The pagan world, they are God-haters, (Rom. i. 30.) even with a hellish hatred, as the word there signifies. They that profess his name, are apt to admit this true of the Gentiles: but do we think our Lord Jesus did injuriously accuse the Jews too, that they had both seen and hated him and his Father? John xv. 24. How remote was it from a Jew, who boasted themselves God's peculiar people, to think himself a hater of God! And what were they, of whom he says by the prophet, My soul loathed them, and their soul abhorred me, (which is pre-supposed,) Zech. xi. 8. and most justly, for can there be a more loathsome thing, than to abhor goodness itself? What the most perfect benignity! And those Cretians had received the Christian faith, whom the apostle exhorts Titus to rebuke sharply, that they might be sound in it; and of whom he says, that professing to know God, in works they denied him, being abominable, Tit. i. 16. Hence is our labour lost, in beseeching men to be reconciled in God, while they own no enmity. Since this matter is so evident, that this is the temper of the unconverted world God-ward, that they are alienated from him, and enemies in their minds towards him, by wicked works; it is then beyond all expression strange, that they never observe it in themselves, (as the toad is not offended at its own poisonous nature) and are hereupon apt to think that God observes it not, nor is displeased with them for it. It is strange they should not observe it in themselves, upon so manifold evidence. Do but recount with yourselves, and run over the several heads of evidence that have been given. Can you deny you have minds capable of knowing God? Cannot you conceive of wisdom, power, goodness, truth, justice, holiness, and that these may be, either more manifest, or in more excellent degrees, even among creatures, in some creatures more than in others; but that being, in which they are in the highest and most absolute perfection, must be of God? Can you deny that you have lived in great ignorance of God much of your time? that your ignorance was voluntary, having such means of knowing him, as you have had? that you have usually been thoughtless and unmindful of him, in your ordinary course? that the thoughts of him have been ungrateful, and very little welcome, or pleasant to you? that you have had little converse with him, little trust, reverence, delight, or expectation placed on him, as the object? that you have not been wont to concern him in your affairs, to consult him, to desire his concurrence? that you have not thought of approving yourself to him, in your designs and actions, but lived as without him in the world? That you have not designed the pleasing or obeying of him in the course of your conversation? that the Gospel, under which you have lived, hath had little effect upon you, to alter the temper of your spirits towards him? That if his Spirit hath sometimes awakened you, raised some fear, or some desires, now and then in your souls, you have suppressed, and stifled, and striven against such motions? Do not these things, together, discover an enmity against God, and the ways of God? And is it not strange you cannot see this, and perceive a disaffection to God, by all this, in yourselves? What is so near a man, as himself? Have you not in you a reflecting power? Know ye not your ownselves? as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Yea, generally, men never find fault with themselves, upon any such account; and consequently, think themselves, in such respects, very innocent in the sight of God, and think he finds no fault with them. Now these two things being premised, will make way for the following uses. We infer therefore,

I. That whereas it so evidently appears, that men are at enmity with God, it cannot but be consequent, that God is not well pleased with them. No one is well pleased to have another hate him. God discerns that, in the inward temper of men's minds, wherewith he is not well pleased; *viz.* this alienation of mind from him, this wicked enmity, that is so generally found in them. They are wont to make light of secret, internal sin; the ill posture of their minds they think a harmless, innocent thing. But this he remonstrates against, takes notice of with dislike and displeasure; and is counterworking this spirit of enmity, not only by his word, but by his Spirit of love, and power. Though he doth not testify his displeasure by flames and thunderbolts; yet he observes, and approves not the course and current of their thoughts and affections; though he permit them, sometimes without sensible rebuke, to run on long in their contempt of him; yet he declares it to be wickedness: The wicked have not God in all their thoughts,

Ps. x. 4. He expostulates about it, Wherefore do the wicked contemn God, v. 13. threatens them with hell, for their forgetting him, Ps. ix. 17. yet sinners are apt to conclude, that God doth not see, or disallow any thing of that kind, Ps. xciv. 7. How unapt are they to admit any conviction of heart-wickedness! though 'tis more than intimated to be destructive, Jer. iv. 14. Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayst be saved: *q. d.* thou art lost if thy heart be not purged. Yea, when it is so plain in itself, that enmity against God, which hath its seat in the heart, makes a man's soul a very hell, yet they seem to think themselves very innocent creatures, when they are as much devilized, as a mind, dwelling in flesh, can be! This is the common practical error and mistake men lie under, that they think God takes notice of no evil in them, but what other men can observe, and reproach them for. But he knows the inward beat and inclination of their minds and spirits; why else is he called the heart-searching God? and knows that this is the principal and most horrid wickedness, that is to be found among the children of men, an alienated mind from God, and the root of all the rest. The fountain of wickedness is within a man. Simon Magus's wickedness lay in his thought; it is said to him, Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee, Acts viii. 22. And when the prophet exhorts (as before) Jer. iv. 14. to wash the heart from wickedness, he adds, How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee? And our Saviour tells us, Out of the heart, first, proceed evil thoughts, and then all the other wickednesses after-mentioned; murders, adulteries, &c. Matt. xv. 19. And that enmity and alienation of mind, that turns off the whole current of a man's thoughts from God, is the original evil; and, by consequences, lets them loose to every thing else that offends him, and ruins themselves. Yet when their very hearts are such a hell of wickedness, (as what is more hellish than enmity against God,) they are notwithstanding wont to say, they have good hearts.

2. Hence see the absolute necessity of regeneration. A doctrine, at which most men do wonder, which our Saviour intimates, when he says, John iii. 7. Marvel not at it, *viz.* that I said you must be born again. But who may not now apprehend a necessity of being regenerate? what will become of thee, if thou diest with such a disaffected mind God-ward? Do but suppose your soul going out of the body, in this temper, full of disaffection towards the ever-blessed God, before whose bright glory and flaming majesty (to thee a consuming fire) thou must now appear; though most unwilling, and as full of horror and amazing dread! How will thine heart then meditate terror! and say within thee, "This is the God I could never love! whom I would never know! to whom I was always a willing stranger!" whose admirable grace never allured, or won my heart! who, in a day of grace, that is now over with me, offered me free pardon, and reconciliation; but I was never at leisure to regard it. The love of this world, which I might have known to be enmity against God, had otherwise engaged me. It hath been the constant language of my heart to him, Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways; I must now hear from him that just and terrible voice, even by the mouth of the only Redeemer and Saviour of sinners, Depart from me, I know thee not. And into how horrid society must I now go! The things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, more glorious things than ever entered into the heart, are all prepared for lovers of God. And for whom can everlasting fire be prepared, but for the devil and his angels, and such other accursed God-haters, as I have been? Matt. xxv. 41. Recollect yourselves, consider the present posture and temper of your souls, and what your way and course is. You care not to come nigh to God now, but love to live at a distance from him, through enmity against him, from whence proceeds your departing from him, and saying to him, Depart from us. But another day, you will have enough of departing from God; a wicked man's life is nothing else but a continual forsaking of God, or departing from him. I appeal to your own hearts, concerning the justice of that mentioned repartee: They say now to God, Depart from us, Job xxi. 14. and God will then say to them, Depart from me, Matt. xxv. 41. That man's soul must thus perish, that lives and dies at enmity with God. Regeneration slays this enmity, and implants in the soul divine love. Therefore we must be regenerate, or we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, John iii. 3, 5. A man must have a new heart and a new spirit created in him, in which heart and spirit the love of God is the reigning principle. And therefore I repeat to you, The things which eye hath not seen—and a crown of life are prepared, and promised to them that love him, I Cor. ii. 9. James i. 12. You may yourselves collect the rest.

3. Hence take notice of the seat and subject of this regeneration and change. It is the mind of man; for you are enemies in your minds by wicked works. We are to be renewed, in the spirits of our minds, (Ephes. iv. 23.) to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, &c. Rom. xii. 2. You that have not considered what regeneration is, I tell you, 'tis to have your minds altered and changed; that whereas you did not mind God or Christ, your minds being changed, you savour and delight in the things of God, Rom. viii. 5, 7. They that are after the flesh, savour the things of the flesh. The carnal mind is enmity against God. It is the mind, therefore, not as speculative merely, but as practical, and active, that must be renewed. Inquire, therefore, what change do you find in your minds? Are you in mind and spirit more holy, spiritual, and serious? And are your minds more delightfully taken up with the things of God, than formerly? Till your minds are thus changed, they cannot be towards God; but will be perpetually full of enmity against God. You will only mind earthly things, (Phil. iii. 19, 20.) with the neglect of God, and heaven, and heavenly things. If ever the Gospel doth us good, it must be by the change of our minds.

4. And in the last place, hence understand the absolute necessity of reconciliation with God; because you have been alienated and enemies against him by wicked works. Regeneration cures in part your enmity, but makes no atonement for your guilt, in having been enemies; for this you need a reconciler that could satisfy for you. What will become of the man that is not reconciled to God? If you be God's enemy, can he be your friend? And if God be your enemy, he is the most terrible enemy. How can we lie down in peace, in an unreconciled state? or without knowing whether we are reconciled, or not? Let not the sun go down this day, and leave you at enmity with God. If you have fallen out with a man, the sun is not to go down on your wrath; and is your enmity against God a juster or more tolerable thing? O let not the sun go down before you have made your peace. And for your encouragement, consider that it is the office of the Son of God to reconcile you to him. He is the reconciler, the peace-maker, the maker up of breaches between God and man. He is, if you resist not, ready, by his Spirit, to remove the enmity that lies in your minds against God; and by his blood, he causes Divine justice to be at peace with you. If you find the former effect, that assures you of the latter. Bless God that he hath provided, and given you notice of such a reconciler, 2 Cor. v. 19. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Bless God that he hath sent and settled one among you, on this errand, to beseech you to be reconciled to God, v. 20. Blessed is the man, whose iniquities are forgiven; and blessed is the man who can say I was once an enemy, but now am I reconciled; formerly I saw no need of Christ, but now I cannot live without him. How fearful a thing will it be to die unreconciled to God, under a Gospel of reconciliation! while the voice of the Gospel of grace is calling upon you, Return and live; Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? beware of dying unreconciled, under such a Gospel. When you return hence, retire into a corner, and consider what a wicked enmity of mind you have had against God and Christ; and pray that you may be renewed, in the spirit of your mind, Eph. iv. 23. Let a holy resolution be taken up at last, (after many neglects,) as was by the poor distressed prodigal, after he had long lived a wandering life, (Luke xv. 18; and onward.) I will arise and go to my Father, &c. and you will find God a merciful Father, ready to receive you, and with joy. Oh the joyful meeting between a returning soul and a sin-pardoning God! When once your strangeness and your enmity are overcome, and you

are come into a state of amity and friendship with God; then will the rest of your time be pleasantly spent, in a holy, humble walking with God, under the conduct of grace, till you come eternally to enjoy him in glory.

OF

RECONCILIATION

BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

Col. i. 21.

And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.
Verse 22. *In the body of his flesh, through death, &c.*

We have, from the former words of this text, shown the fearful, horrid state of unconverted sinners; that as such they are alienated and enemies in their mind, by wicked works, and come now to show, from the words that follow, the blessed state of the converted. You now hath he reconciled, &c. Here is instance given of the happiest change that ever was made, in the case of sinful wretched creatures; and far above all our expectations, if we had not been told, that as far as the heavens are above the earth, so far, in the acts of mercy, are God's ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts, Isa. lv. 9. Otherwise, when we hear of a sort of creatures that were fallen from God, and gone into rebellion against him, that were alienated and enemies to him in their minds by wicked works; one would be in suspense, and say, Well, and what became of the business? how did it issue? what was the event? and would expect to hear, why fire came down from heaven upon them, and consumed them in a moment; or the earth opened, and swallowed them up quick. Yea, and if the matter were so reported to us, if we did hear fire and brimstone, flames and thunderbolts, immediately came down upon them, and destroyed them in a moment; who would not say, So I thought, who could expect other? But that it should be said, such as were alienated from God and his very enemies in their mind, by wicked works, those hath his own Son reconciled! into what a transport of wonder and praises would this cast any considering mind! with what amazement would it make us cry out, O what hath God wrought, what wonders can the power of Divine grace bring about! How unexpected, how surprising a thing is this! Especially when we also consider how this was brought to pass, the Son of God effected it in the body of his own flesh, through death. He died for it! rather than such impure venomous worms, and that were as weak and defenceless as they were vile and wicked, should at last suffer the dreadful consequences of so desperate and unequal a war against the Almighty; which could not be other than their own ruin, and eternal death; he chose himself to die for them. This is the strange amazing subject we have to consider; and we cannot but confess and consider it as a strange thing, if we were only told it as that which had fallen out, in some other country, in any remote part of the world, or in some other world. But when we understand, as for the former part, this is the common case of men on earth, and therefore that it was our own case, to have been alienated from God and enemies to him in our minds by wicked works; and as to the latter part, that to us the proposal and offer is made of being reconciled, in this strange way! in what agonies, in what consternation of spirit should we be, when we can with greatest certainty say the former; if we cannot say the latter! And if we can, in what a transport! in what raptures of admiration, joy, and praise, should we say it! Any of us who hath heard, or now reads these words, even me who was alienated, and an enemy in my mind, by wicked works, yet me now hath he reconciled! Can you say so? how should your heart leap, and spring within you, at the reciting of these words! And if you cannot as yet say this, with particular application, and it does not therefore raise a present joy, yet it may beget hope in you; for think with yourself, if with some the matter hath been brought to this blessed issue, why may it not with me? and upon the one account, or the other, now set yourself seriously to consider these latter words. And that you may do so with the more advantage, take distinct notice of these two things, that are to be severally treated of.—1. Of this blessed work itself, brought about by your merciful and glorious Redeemer: reconciliation with God. "You hath he reconciled."—2. The wonderful way wherein he hath effected it: "In the body of his flesh, through death."

1. Consider this reconciliation itself. Which that we may do with just advantage, both to the truth and ourselves, we must take heed of too much narrowing so important a subject; but take it in its due extent and compass, as comprehending all that truly belongs to it; and so it must be understood to be mutual between God and us; and to include both our reconciliation to him, and his reconciliation to us. Thus the proper import of the word, the scope of the apostle's present discourse, and the nature of the thing, lead us to understand it. The word being used when two parties have been at variance, not only signifies the laying down of enmity on the one side, but to be received into grace and favour on the other; as might be shown of the original words, that are wont to be thus rendered, if it were needful, or at this time fit. But it sufficiently appears, in the common use of this way of speaking among ourselves. And if we consider the scope of the apostle's discourse, nothing can be more agreeable to it; which is manifestly to exalt and magnify Christ, first as Creator, affirming that all things visible and invisible were made by him, and for him, as ver. 16. And then afterwards, there having been a rupture and breach in the creation, by the apostacy and revolt of some creatures; others, also, being in an uncertain and mutable state, liable to a like failure and defection, he is further magnified, as the Reconciler of such as were thought fit to be restored, and the Establisher of such as stood, ver. 17. Now the representation of his performance, as a Reconciler, had been very imperfect, if he had designed therein only to signify a reconciliation, effected by him on one side, leaving the other unreconciled. And though it be true, that taking this reconciliation, in reference to the immediately foregoing words of this verse, you that were enemies, might seem to limit it to that one sense, as if it meant only reconciliation on our part, consisting in the laying down of our enmity; yet the following words, that show how this reconciliation is brought about in the body of his flesh through death, signify as much for the extending of it to the other reconciliation also; *viz.* on God's part towards us. For they plainly mean that this reconciliation is brought about by sacrifice, *viz.* by our Lord Jesus's offering himself upon the cross for us (as hereafter we shall have occasion more largely to show.) Now a sacrifice is offered to God only, not to men, and being for reconciliation, must principally, and in the first place, intend the reconciling of God to us; though it secondarily hath its great use, for the reconciling us to God also; as hereafter we shall show. And it is in the nature of the thing very evident; reconciliation supposing a difference and displeasure between two parties, as what hath been, it must include the agrement of both, as that which now is. A willingness to be reconciled there may be on one side, when there is none on the other, as it is often and long between God and men; but if there be actual reconciliation it is always mutual; unless the one party deceive, or impose upon the other, pretending to be reconciled when he is not; which, in the case between God and us, can never be; for neither can we deceive God, nor will he deceive us. Therefore we shall treat of both the parts of this reconciliation, of men to God, and of God to them.

1. Our reconciliation to God. And though that be proposed to be first insisted on, let none think it is therefore looked upon as deserving, or as being any way a cause of his reconciliation to us. For as our enmity and rebellion against him cannot do him real hurt, though it does him infinite wrong; so our love and obedience, though they are most due to him, can profit him nothing. Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself; is it a gain to him, if we be righteous?

Job xxii. 2, 3. What givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man, as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit a son of man, *ch.* xxxv. 7, 8. But by neither can we do the one or other to him. It should therefore be far from us to imagine we can procure his favour or reconciliation, by any thing we can do. And know, sinner, he is before-hand with thee, in the offer of reconciliation and in real willingness to be reconciled; for his offer is most sincere. When, therefore, out of a state of enmity, thou art brought to love him, it is because he loved thee first, 1 John iv. 19. But take this aright, that thou mayst not deceive thyself, nor wrong him. Before our reconciliation to him, his Gospel truly speaks him reconcileable, and offering us reconciliation; when his offer is accepted and complied with, then his Gospel speaks him actually reconciled. His offer of reconciliation shows his compassion, which is love to the miserable; herein he is before-hand with them whom he finally saves, he loves them with this love while they yet hate him and are full of enmity against him. From this love it is that he is reconcileable to them, willing to forgive all their former enmity and rebellions; if yet they will be reconciled, and turn to him with their whole souls. And this he testifies to them in his Gospel; and hereby his Spirit, working in and by this Gospel of his grace, he overcomes them, conquers their enmity, and causes them to love him, whom before they hated. But this actual reconciliation is always accompanied with delight, which is love to the amiable, such as he hath now made lovely, by transforming them into his own image, who is love, 1 John iv. 16. This is friendly, complacential love, that freely converses and holds communion with the beloved, so that they dwell in him, and he in them, as in the same place.

It is profane, therefore, and an insolent presumption, for any to say, God is reconciled to me, he delights and takes pleasure in me, while they are unreconciled to him, and have hearts full of wicked enmity against him. They do even weary him with their words, when they say, Every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them, Mal. ii. 17. 'Tis an affront to his excellent Majesty, a reproach to his glorious holiness and the purity of his nature, a defiance to the justice of his government, to think him well pleased, when they persist in their rebellions against him; or that he will be reconciled to them, when this is still the temper and posture of their souls towards him. He is not a God that takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with him; he hates the workers of iniquity, Psal. v. 4, 5. Any such thought he will severely and terribly avenge. If any man bless himself in his heart, and say, I shall have peace when he walks in the imagination of his heart, God will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that man, Deut. xxix. 19, 20. And it is, on the other hand, a wicked, provoking unbelief, a high affront to him, a giving him the lie, if one, really willing to be reconciled, do apprehend him irreconcileable, or say in his heart, God will never show me mercy. It is as much as to say that the word of his grace is nothing but deceit, and his whole Gospel is made up of falsehood. Therefore, though our reconciliation to him is no cause of his reconciliation to us, yet (according to the method which he hath settled, as most agreeable to his glorious majesty, to his pure holiness, his hatred of sin, the justice of his government, and the truth of his word) we cannot say he is actually reconciled to us, till we are reconciled to him. It may be said he pities us before, and is upon Gospel terms reconcileable to us, not that he delights in us, or is reconciled. And we may the better understand this, that our reconciliation is no cause of his reconciliation to us, though it go before it, inasmuch as he works both reconciliations, in and by his Christ; so the text speaks of both; You hath he reconciled—not we ourselves. And 2 Cor. v. 18. All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself, by Jesus Christ; but in this way, order, and method, that first he overcomes our enmity, changes our hearts, and turns them to him; then is reconciled to us, as believing in his Son, and accepts us in him, as the beloved one.

Hereupon therefore we are first to consider, and open to you, our reconciliation to God; which we shall consider and speak of, not merely by showing the very point wherein it lies; but more largely, by letting you see what it comprehends in the compass of it, or what belongs to it, and in what way it is brought about. We are indeed to consider that this, in the text, "you hath he reconciled," is an historical passage, signifying somewhat past, a *res gesta, a great thing* effected and done. Whereas therefore some have taken much pains (and not to ill purpose) to write histories of nature, and give account of natural productions; we may call this a history of grace, giving some account how this gracious production is effected, and wrought on the souls of men. And for you that are reconciled, it is but to repeat to you your own story, and show you what God hath done for your soul, in this blessed work. We might have carried the same notion backward, and in the former part have considered your case, as the history of a man's unregenerate state; but those days, I believe, you would rather should not be numbered amongst the months. We therefore go on, to consider what will be of a more grateful, as well as most useful remembrance to you; *viz.* how God hath dealt with you, in bringing about this happy change. And doing it, in some sort, in the way of a history, it will be the more suitable to put you in mind, in divers particulars, of the manner how it was wrought; it being useful, in historical relations, not only in short to say that such a thing was done, but more at large to relate how, and in what way it was done. Though yet we cannot certainly say, that the several things we shall mention, were all done in that order wherein we shall set them down; for God's method may vary, or not in every respect be the same, with every one he savingly works upon. But because there are several things to be spoken which cannot all be mentioned at once, or in one breath, and some order or other must be used in reciting them; we shall repeat them, not merely as they occur to our thoughts, but also as they more aptly lie in order to one another; not doubting but if you have been reconciled to God, you will say, when you hear them, these things have been wrought in you. Or if you have not, I must say, these are things you are to look after; and must at one time find in yourselves, if ever you shall be reconciled. And so this reconciliation hath begun with you, or must begin in,

1. A thorough conviction, with deep and inward sense, wrought into your hearts, of your former enmity. There must have been a charging oneself, particularly, with this matter of fact, I have been alienated from God, and an enemy to him in my mind; I see it, I confess it, thus it hath been with me, this hath been the temper of my soul, towards the blessed God! Here lies the great difficulty of reconciliation, on our part, that men are so hardly brought to see and own this; because they feel not an enmity boiling in their hearts against God, therefore they will not yield there is any such thing. But they might take notice, they as little feel love burning in their breasts toward him. And they the less apprehend the truth of their case in this respect, because by the same external show and appearance, by which they may deceive other men, they endeavour to cheat themselves too; that is, because they sometimes bear a part in the solemnities of God's worship, and sit in an assembly as his people, hear his word, and with their mouth (*ore tenus*, or in *outward appearance*) show much love, they therefore think all is well, though their heart run after their covetousness, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. But what can be said to that convictive query; How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy heart is not with me? when in reference to creatures it is required that love be without dissimulation, and that we love not in word or tongue, but in deed and truth: Will an outward appearance, and show of love, be sufficient towards the most amiable and most excellent One, the ever-blessed, heart-searching God? Let this be laid as a ground most firm and stable, that if the subject, thy soul, be capable, and the object, the ever-blessed God, be made known and set in view to the eye of the mind; if then there is not love towards him, there is hatred. What, can a reasonable soul be indifferent towards God! the all-comprehending Being! and with whom all have to do! the first and the continual Author of our life and being, whose invisible and eternal power are manifest in the visible things which he hath made; so that heaven and earth are full of his glory. To-

wards some remote foreign prince, multitudes may be void of love and hatred alike, of whom they have no notice, with whom they have no business. Can it be so with us towards God, who is God alone, besides whom there is no other, in whom all live, and move, and have their being, who is, therefore, not far from any one of us; and whom all are obliged to take for their God, and must, if they accept him not, be taken for refusers? A thing that carries with it most horrid guilt! and carries in it downright enmity; and the more heinous, when, with any, it is covered with lying lips, with the cloak of a profession, *viz.* that they have taken him for their God, when such as say that he is their God yet have not known him, as John viii. 54, 55. For that ignorance must proceed from enmity, a not liking to retain God in their knowledge, as Rom. i. 28. Of which ignorance from disaffection, if heathens might be guilty, as they were, the apostle there speaks of; much more deeply guilty are they, who being his professing people, yet know him not; as they were, whom our Lord so charges in the fore-cited John viii. 54, 55. For these hide their hatred with lying lips, which is much more an abomination to the Lord, Prov. x. 18. If you never so confidently pretend love to God, and he that knows all things says, I know you that you have not the love of God in you, as our Saviour tells the Jews; who is more likely to be mistaken? John v. 42. And can you be more confident, or more highly boast your relation to God, or your love to him, than they who were so peculiarly his people, chosen out from all nations? If you say you are lovers of God: and the Son of God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and who searches hearts and reins, (Rev. ii. 18, 23.) says, I know you that you have not the love of God in you; how must it appal and dismay your hearts, to have his certain unerring judgment of you, thus to control your partial, self-flattering judgment; and if this be indeed the state of the case, with any of us, and he know it to be so, it is enough for our condemnation; but for our saving conviction it is necessary that we know it too: therefore let us search our own hearts, and try them impartially, by all the several evidences, and aggravations of enmity against God, in the foregoing discourse, from p. 939. to p. 942. And to all these, I add here some enlargement, upon what was more lightly touched, (as within the narrow limits of time, wherein that discourse was delivered, it could not be otherwise,) p. 940. 2. *viz.* disobedience to that plain, express command of our Lord: to lay up our treasure, not on earth, but in heaven, so as to have our hearts also there, Matt. vi. 19, 21. This I choose to insist upon, in reference to our present purpose, that where there is a remaining and a reigning enmity against God, there may be a thorough conviction of it, in order to reconciliation; both because as to this thing, the rule we are to judge by is so very plain in the word of God; and because the temper and bent of our own hearts, in this respect, is so easily discernible, to them that will diligently and faithfully observe themselves.

Scripture is most express herein, as in the place last mentioned, that they whose hearts are on earth, and not in heaven, have no treasure in heaven. And what can be a greater evidence of enmity to God, than to have the bent and tendency of your heart and spirit directly contrary to the mind of God concerning you, or to what he would have it be, and it must necessarily be, that you may not be lost, and miserable for ever? The enmity to him, which he so much resents, is not your designing any hurt or prejudice to him; but the contrariety of your temper to his kind and merciful design towards you. Therefore they that mind earthly things, that is, that savour them most, (as the word signifies,) and it must be understood as excluding the savour of better things, that is, who only savour them, and taste no pleasure or delight in spiritual or heavenly things; such are said to be enemies to the cross of Christ, *i. e.* to the design of his dying upon the cross, which was to procure for his redeemed a blessed state in heaven, and to bring them thither, not to plant and settle them here on earth. They are enemies therefore, because his design and theirs lie contrary, and oppose one another. He is all for having them to heaven, and was so intent upon that design, as not to shun dying upon a cross to effect it; they are all for an earthly felicity, and for a continual abode upon earth, to enjoy it. This is an opposition full of spite and enmity, to oppose him in a design of love, and upon which his heart was set with so much earnestness! Therefore is the carnal mind said to be at enmity against God, Rom. viii. 7. even as it is death, *v.* 6. But to whom? not to the blessed God himself, which you know is impossible, but to us. It is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be; for that is spiritual, *ch.* vii. 14. and the best on earth find themselves, in too great degree, carnal; and here lies the contrariety, much more when this carnality is total. And this law is the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, which directly tends to make us free from the law of sin and death; (*ch.* viii. 2.) which it doth when the Spirit of God prevails, and gets the victory over this carnality of mind, so that we come to walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. In the mean time, they that are after the flesh, do only savour the things of the flesh; as they that after the Spirit, do the things of the Spirit, *v.* 5. And they that are after the flesh shall die, but they that by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh shall live, *v.* 13. Therefore we see the reason why it is above said, they that are in the flesh, or under a prevailing carnality, cannot please God; for he takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that he should turn and live, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. You cannot please him, because the bent of your carnal mind lies cross to his saving design, you are enemies in your mind to him, for your mind is most opposite to his mind; he is for saving you, you are for self-destruction, you hate him, as you love death, Prov. viii. 36. Therefore also they that love this world, the love of the Father is not in them, 1 John ii. 15. He would have them do his will, and abide in a blessed state for ever; but while they love this world, their hearts are set upon a vanishing thing; for the world and the lust thereof must pass away and be gone, *v.* 17. They cannot love him, while in mind, and will, and design, they so little agree with him. And hereupon is the friendship of this world said to be enmity against God, and he that will be a friend of this world, makes himself an enemy to God, James iv. 4. The design of his amity with you is disappointed and lost, therefore he can look upon you no otherwise than as enemies to him.

And now, if this be the temper of your mind and spirit, how easily, by looking into your own hearts, might you discern it? Know you not your ownselves? 2 Cor. xiii. 5. As if it were said, it is a reproach to be ignorant or without this knowledge! What is so near you as yourselves? Do you not know your own minds? whether you had rather have your portion for ever on earth, or in heaven? whether you more value a heavenly treasure or the treasures of this earth? If you chiefly mind earthly things, how can you but know it? Do but take an account of yourselves, where are your hearts all the day from morning to night, from day to day, from week to week, from year to year? what thoughts, designs, cares, delights are they that usually fill your souls? are they not worldly, carnal, earthly? Trace your own hearts: how canst thou say, I am not polluted? see thy way, (Jer. ii. 23.) mark thy own footsteps, see what course thou hast held, years together, even under the Gospel; and when thou hast been so often warned, even by him who bought thee by his blood, to seek first the kingdom of heaven—to strive to enter in at the strait gate—and told how precious a thing thy soul is, even more worth than all the world; and how fearful a bargain thou wouldst have of it, if thou shouldst gain the whole world, and lose thy soul! And if all the neglects of his warnings and counsels have proceeded from the worldliness, earthliness, and carnality of thy heart and mind, and all this is declared to be enmity against God; then cast thyself down at his foot, and say to him, Now, Lord, I yield to conviction; I now perceive I have been alienated, and an enemy in my mind by wicked works, though I never suspected any such thing by myself before. And know that till then the Gospel of reconciliation will do thee no good, thou wilt never be the better for it, though thou livest under it all thy days; all exhortations to be reconciled to God, and to get this dreadful disease of enmity against God cured, will avail no more than physic, or a physician, to one that counts he is well, and feels himself not at all sick. All thy Redeemer's calls will sound in

thine ears, as if he called the righteous, and not a sinner to repentance. But that such calls might, or may yet signify the more, know that reconciliation not only comprehends a conviction of the fact, that thou hast been an enemy; but will also contain, in thy case, if ever thou be reconciled,

2. A clear and lively apprehension, with dread and horror, of the monstrous iniquity and wickedness thereof. This hath been or must be wrought in thee. And when thou art convicted in thy conscience of thy being an enemy to the ever-blessed God, how canst thou but see thyself to be a vile and wicked creature, upon this account? This is thy case, and thou must apprehend it accordingly, that thou art an enemy in thy mind, and by wicked works. For what can be more wicked, than to hate the God of thy life! even him who is love and goodness itself in highest perfection! What, to hate the God of all grace, he that is the Lord, the Lord gracious and merciful, abounding in loving-kindness goodness, and truth! Bethink thyself, make thy reflections, view the face of thy soul in the mirror of that most righteous law, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and might, and mind. And doth it not astonish thee to behold enmity filling up, in thy soul, the room and place of love! that thou findest thou hast, in thy soul, a power of thinking thoughts, but canst take no pleasure to think of God! Thou hast in thy nature a principle of love, and thou canst love thy friend, thy child, yea, thy money, and (what is worse) thy lust; but canst not love thy God! How fearful a case! that when thou hast a mind and spirit in thee, made up of reason and love, it should against all reason love things less lovely, as earth and vanity; yea even most hateful, as sin and iniquity; but cannot love its own Father, even him whose offspring it is, and to whom alone the title belongs of Father of spirits![a] How monstrous a deformity is this! How fearful a transformation of a reasonable, immortal mind and spirit! If thy body were wrested into never so horrid and hideous shapes, there were nothing, in point of horror, comparable to this deformedness of thy soul. Nor canst thou ever be reconciled to God, till there be unreconcileableness to thyself, as thou art in this state; and till thou be the most frightful, hateful spectacle to thyself, on this account. Thou wilt never look upon thy own carnal mind, or thy friendliness towards this world, which is declared to be enmity against God, (Rom. viii. 7. Jam. iv. 4.) with a kind, self-indulgent eye any more; but as having in them the most amazing wickedness, such whereby a reasonable soul, an understanding mind and spirit, is brought to love a clod of clay, a lump of earth, yea even sin itself, rather than the ever-blessed and most holy God of heaven! Let no man ever think himself in a way of reconciliation to God, till he find in his soul a very deep sense of so hateful an evil as this; and have expressly charged himself with it, before the throne of the Most High. If you find there is a difficulty in it, and that your hearts are hardly brought to it, that they fly back and recoil, and will not yield that any thing so bad is to be charged upon them; take so much the more pains, labour and strive with them the more to bring them to it; because the whole business of your peace and reconciliation with God depends upon it. You can never be reconciled, till you see your not being so, or your continuing enmity is a thing not to be endured: that if thou couldst be truly charged with hating thy own father or mother, or wife or child, or thy prince or country; none of these, though monstrously bad, are by many degrees so ill things, as the hating of thy God.

Therefore since this charge cannot be denied, it must be aggravated upon thy own soul, till thou feel the weight and burden of it; and that now at length thou art brought to say, I cannot endure to dwell with myself, I cannot keep myself company, nor eat, or drink, or sleep, or converse with myself in peace, till my heart be changed, and the case be altered with me in this respect. If thou canst truly say, Christ hath reconciled thee, thus thou hast felt and found it, or thus thou wilt find it, if ever thy reconciliation be brought about.

3. You that are reconciled, may reflect and take notice of this, as a further very remarkable thing in your own story, that you have been made deeply sensible of your great sinfulness, in other respects. And for others, that are yet to be reconciled, know that this belongs to the reconciliation, which you are to endeavour and seek after, a deep sense of sin, in the full extent of it. As love is the fulfilling of the law, and is therefore to be considered, not in one single duty only, but as the spring and source of all other duty; so enmity is to be looked upon not as one single sin only, but as the spring and fountain of all other sin. Therefore when you are convinced, and made sensible of your enmity against God, you have been, or must be, led on, from this fountain to the several impure streams and rivulets issuing from it; and have a like conviction and sense of your sinfulness, in the larger extent and compass of it; and that in such respects, whereof slighter penitents take little notice. As for instance,

1. You have had or must have a sight and sense of sin as sin. Many apprehend little of it besides the sound of the word, and make a light matter of it. I am a sinner, is soon said, when it is little understood what sin is, or what it is to be a sinner. But you have, or must conceive of sin, as a violation of the holy law of God; an affront to the authority of your Maker and sovereign Lord, a setting of your own will above and against the supreme will of the Most High. Hereupon you must consider, if yet you have not, what a fearful thing it is to be a sinner, and say with yourself, "O what a monstrous vile wretch am I! that was nothing but the other day, and now being raised up into being a reasonable creature, capable of subjection to a law, to rise up in rebellion against him that gave me breath!" What, to contend against him who is thy life, and the length of thy days, how horrid must this be in thy eyes!

2. You must have a thorough conviction and sense of the sinfulness of your nature, as having been sinful from the womb, born in sin, conceived and brought forth in iniquity, Psal. lviii. 3. Psal. li. 5. Hence you are to bethink yourself, "What a loathsome creature have I been from my original! to have come into the world with a nature poisoned and envenomed with sin! What a wonder was it that the holy God would suffer me to breathe in the world so long, and feed and sustain me so many days!" Many may have some sense of wicked acts, that have no sense of the impurity of their natures. This should fill thee with confusion and self-abhorrence!

3. Of such sinful inclinations and actions, as were most directly against God. Many can be convinced of wrong done to a neighbour, that have no sense of their having wronged the God of their lives, by continual neglects of him, casting him out of their thoughts and hearts, and living as without God in the world; and as if they had been made to please and serve themselves, and not him.

4. But there must also be a deep sense too of sins against thy neighbour. For on the other hand, there are too many that are so taken up about the commands of the first table, as to overlook those of the second; that if they cannot be accused of gross idolatry, or of the neglect of God's external worship, think themselves very innocent, when in the mean time they live, as to their neighbours, in envy, hatred, malice, hateful, and hating one another; make no scruple of cozening or defrauding a neighbour for their own advantage, or of bearing him a grudge, of harbouring thoughts of revenge against him. Whereas we are plainly told, that if we forgive not our offending brother, neither will God forgive us; and are taught to pray for forgiveness to ourselves, but as we forgive others. And that he that hates his brother, abides in death, 1 John iii. 14. Yea, and that when the law of God requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, we are obliged not only not to harm him, but to do him all the good we can, as we have opportunity, and as we are able, when we see him in distress, to relieve and help him. Especially if we see him go on in a sinful course, to admonish and reprove him, with prudent friendliness, and not suffer sin upon him; otherwise thy righteous Judge will reckon that thou hatest him in thy heart, Lev. xix. 17.

a. Some heathens have conceived of God, as the νους πατρικος, the *paternal mind*, Hierocl. And so the apostle quotes a heathen poet, speaking of ourselves as God's offspring. And thereupon adds that the Godhead is not like silver and gold, whereas he is like our minds or spirits; whence he might collect how unreasonable it is not only to love silver and gold, which is unlike him, but even sin, which is most contrary and hateful to him.

5. And thou oughtest to be sensible too of sins against thyself. For when God's law requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, it implies there is a love which we owe to ourselves; not that inordinate self-love, which excludes both love to God and our neighbour; but such as is subordinate to the one, and co-ordinate with the other. Consider therefore, whether thou hast not been guilty of sinning against thyself: against thy body, in gluttony, drunkenness, fulfilling the lusts of it: against thy soul, in neglecting it, in famishing it, letting it pine and waste away in thy iniquities; in ignorance, worldliness, carnality, estrangedness from God, never looking after a Saviour for it, not using the appointed means of thy salvation. What multitudes live all their days in sin of this kind, and never accuse or blame themselves for it?

6. And you must labour to be sensible of all such sins against your neighbour, and yourselves, as sins, though not immediately or directly, yet principally against God himself; because he is the supreme Lawgiver, and 'tis he, who by his law hath settled that order in the world, which by such sins you have violated and broken. Therefore doth that great penitent thus accuse himself, in his humble confession to the great God: Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, (Psal. li. 4.) reflecting upon the transgressions, by which he had highly wronged Uriah, Bathsheba, and his own soul; because there is but one sovereign Lawgiver, (James iv. 12.) by whose authority only, either put forth immediately by himself, or derived to his vicegerents, all just laws are made, by which there comes to be any such thing as sin or duty in the world. Therefore you must charge yourself as having offended him, by all the sins that ever you were guilty of; though man was the object, God's law was the rule, sinned against.

7. You ought therefore to be sensible of secret sins, which he only knows; as well as open, and such as tend to bring reproach upon you amongst men.

8. And (amongst them) of the sins of your heart, and inward man, evil thoughts, designs, affections, inclinations; as well as of such as have broken forth into outward actions.

9. Of sinful omissions, as well as commissions; you must be sensible, not only of the evil which you have done, but the good that you might and ought to have done, which you have not done. The judgment of the great day, as it is represented, Matt. xxv. from ver. 31. to the end of the chapter, runs, you see, chiefly upon the omissions of the condemned, in opposition to the performances of them that are absolved, and adjudged to life everlasting. And before, in the same chapter, he that made no use of his one talent, is doomed unto utter darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth, under the name of an unprofitable servant, ver. 30. that is, a wicked and slothful servant, as he is called, ver. 26. For though, when we have done all we can, we are to count ourselves unprofitable servants, and to God we are so; yet we ought, and are capable, to be profitable to ourselves, and to other men; and to God we ought to be faithful servants, though we cannot be profitable. But will you count him a faithful servant, who can only plead for himself to his master; "I have not embezzled your goods, destroyed your cattle, or burnt your house;" when yet he never did him real service? If ever therefore you be reconciled to God, you will be or have been in bitter agonies of spirit before him, in the review of your former fruitless life, and that you have lived so long in the world to so little purpose!

10. You must have been, or will yet be, deeply affected with the sense of sins, not only against the holy, righteous law of God, but against the Gospel of his Son; not only that you have swerved from the rules which were given you, and neglected the ends you were made for, as you are God's creatures, and the work of his hands, thereby exposing yourselves to his wrath and justice; but that you have slighted the only remedy tendered you in the Gospel, neglected the great salvation that was wrought out, and began to be spoken by the Lord himself, Heb. ii. 3, 4. Consider, were you never in dread, did you never cry out affrighted, "How can I escape, who have neglected such a salvation, such a Saviour?" It must at one time or other cut and wound your souls to think how many serious warnings, earnest invitations, affectionate entreaties, heart-melting allurements, have I withstood! How often have I been besought, in the name of a crucified, dying Redeemer, to resign and surrender myself to him, to submit to his authority, to accept his mercy, and have refused! The heavy yoke and burden of sin and guilt have been more tolerable to me, than his easy yoke and light burden. I have more busied myself to increase my interest and share in this present world, than to gain a part in that fulness of grace, righteousness, spirit, and life, which is treasured up in him. Your reconciliation can never be brought about, but upon a heart-wounding sense of your being so long unreconciled, and your having disregarded the great and merciful Reconciler.

4. If Christ hath brought about, in you, a thorough reconciliation to God, this further belongs to the story of his dealings with you, as that which he hath given you to experience; or if he have not yet reconciled you, 'tis that which, if ever you be reconciled, you are yet to expect; *viz.* a deep inward apprehension and sense both of the dreadfulness and dueness of divine displeasure towards you, for your former enmity against him, and for all the other wickedness that hath accompanied it.

I. Of the dreadfulness of his displeasure. You could no longer make light of it, or eat and drink and sleep in quiet, and give yourself the liberty of mirth and jollity, while you still lay under it. God is said to be angry with the wicked every day, Ps. vii. 11. and to hate all the workers of iniquity, Ps. v. 5. You will count it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when he saith, vengeance belongs to him, and he will repay it, Heb. v. 30, 31. And when you have reason to apprehend him, as lifting up his hand to heaven, and saying, I live for ever; as whetting the glittering sword, and his hand taking hold of vengeance, Deut. xxxii. 40, 41. You must have thought, or will yet think with yourself, who knows the power of his anger! Ps. xc. 11. And by how much the less you can know it, so much the more you must have dreaded it. For all the while you have been abusing his patience, long-suffering, and forbearance, not considering that the goodness of God did lead you to repentance; so long as you were despising the riches of his goodness, you were treasuring up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of his righteous judgment, Rom. ii. 4, 5. And to have treasures of unknown wrath, far beyond what you could conceive, laying up in store against you, how amazing must this be to you! Destruction from the Almighty! What a terror must that be to you! Job xxxi. 23. To eat and drink under wrath! to buy and sell, to plough and sow, and all under wrath! and with a curse from God, covering you as a garment, cleaving to you as a girdle, flowing as oil into your bones, mingling with all your affairs, and all your comforts, with whatsoever you do, and whatsoever you enjoy! And to be, all the while, upon the brink of eternity, and not, for ought you know, to have a hand-breadth, not more than a breath, between you and eternal woes and flames, and none to deliver you from the wrath to come! This cannot have been an easy condition, and the less when you considered,

2. The dueness of God's wrath and displeasure unto you; that how terrible soever it is, 'tis all most justly deserved. You must have been made to see and say, "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, did most righteously belong to me, as my most proper portion; to me, an enemy to the God of my life, who gave me breath and being, upon the treasures of whose bounty I have lived all my days; to whom, when he filled my house with good things, yet I often in my heart said, Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job xxi. 14, 15. And as the law of love to God, the great original law, had engaged me to keep all his other commandments, so my enmity against him, hath made me break them all; so that I have lived a life of disobedience and rebellion all my time thus far. And though he hath offered me terms of peace, and I have been often earnestly besought, by those that have spoken to me in Christ's stead, (my bleeding, dying Redeemer and Lord,) to be reconciled to God; yet I have hitherto borne toward him an impenitent, implacable heart. If there were ten thousand hells, they were all due to me, I have deserved them all.

5. Such as have been reconciled, have been brought, by believing, to apprehend God's reconcileableness to them, in and by his own Son. This also belongs to the history of God's dispensation towards them, and may instruct others, by letting them know what must be wrought in them, that they may be reconciled. It is their special advantage, that live under the Gospel, that therein they behold God reconciling the world to himself, by Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. This is the sum of the Gospel, that God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have life everlasting, John iii. 16. Hereby they may know and believe the love God hath to them, 1 John iv. 16. And that, though they have been alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, yet he is not irreconcileable. This is the Gospel of the grace of God, which he testifies and they are to believe, unless they will make him a liar, 1 John v. 10. And therefore notwithstanding the sense they ought to have of their having been enemies, and of the horrid wickedness hereof, and of their sinful temper and course in all other respects, together with the terrors of God's wrath, and their desert of it to the uttermost; they are yet to conjoin therewith, the belief of his willingness to be reconciled. And hereby he melts and breaks their hearts, *viz.* by this discovery of his good-will, believed; for disbelieved, it can signify nothing, nor have any effect upon them; the Gospel is his power to salvation, to every one that believes, (Rom. i. 16.) and works effectually in them that believe, 1 Thess. ii. 13. So it is the immediate instrument of their regeneration, after that the love and kindness of God to men appears, *i. e.* so as that they believe it, he saves them by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. iii. 4, 5. And then he makes them know it is not by works of righteousness, which they have done, but by his mercy, as it is there expressed. They are not (as was formerly said) the objects of his delightful love, before their regeneration; but they may be of his pity or mercy, his compassionate love; and this they are to believe, as the general proposal of his Gospel declares it: and by the belief hereof, he conquers their enmity, and subdues them into compliance with his good and acceptable will. These glad tidings, that he is truly willing to receive any returning soul, vanquishes their disaffection, and overcomes their hearts; makes them say with themselves, why should I still continue alienated from the God who is so gracious and merciful, abundant in loving-kindness, goodness, and truth, as his name signifies, (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) though he will by no means clear the guilty; *i. e.* the obstinate, impenitent, and implacable. But if this discovery of the grace of God can find no entrance, sinner, into thy soul, if it remain shut up in unbelief; or if, when he tells thee over and over, that he takes no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they turn and live, thou wilt not believe him, but still think him implacable, and, Cain-like, say thy sin is greater than can be forgiven; this hardens thy heart in enmity against him, and makes thee say, as Jer. ii. 25. There is no hope, I have loved strangers, and after them I will go. Therefore if ever thou hast been or shall be reconciled to God, as thou hast not been left in a stupid insensibleness of thy former wickedness, so thou hast been kept from sinking into an utter despair of God's mercy; thy reconciliation is brought about by thy believing his reconcileableness.

6. Hereupon thou wast brought to entreat his favour with thy whole heart, and that he would be merciful to thee according to his word, Ps. cxix. 58. When thou sawest, though thy case was very horrid and dismal, yet it was not hopeless, and that there was a ground for prayer in the hope of mercy; then didst thou, or yet wilt, set thyself in good earnest to supplicate, and cry mightily for pardoning and heart-renewing grace. Where is no hope, there can be no prayer; this posture of soul thou hast been wrought up to, or wilt be, if ever thou be reconciled. Hope gives life and breath to prayer, and prayer, to peace and friendship with God. When God promises to take away the stony heart, and give the new one, the heart of flesh; he declares that even for this he will be inquired of, and sought unto, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 37. Nor doth the soul, when hope of mercy, according to God's word and promise, gives it vent, breathe faint breath in prayer; but the whole heart is engaged, all the powers of the soul are put into a fervent motion. Despair stupifies, hope fills the soul with vigour; the favour of God is sought, not with cold indifferency, but as that wherein stands thy life, (Ps. xxx. 5.) and which is better than life, (Ps. lxiii. 3.) without it, can be. But then, whereas the Gospel under which thou livest informs thee that God cannot be approached by a sinful creature, as men are, and as thou must own thyself to be, but through Christ, the only Mediator between God and men; and that thou canst not approach him in and by Christ, if thou be not in him.

7. Thou art hereupon led to Christ, and brought to receive him with all thy heart and soul, (John i. 12. Rom. x. 10.) and to resign and give thyself up wholly to him, (2 Cor. viii. 5.) not knowing in thy distress, what to do with thyself, and he compassionately inviting thee, O thou weary, heavy laden soul, come unto me, and I will give thee rest, (Matt. xi. 28.) and assuring thee, that whosoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast out, John vi. 37. Thou thereupon with a humble, thankful, willing heart art brought to comply with his merciful offer, acceptest him and yieldest up thyself, no more to be thy own, but his; and thus believing in his name, thou ownest him in his office, as the great peace-maker between God and thee.

8. Whereupon thou hast been brought to apply thyself, through Christ, to the blessed God, and humbly to take hold of his covenant, Isa. lvi. 2. Thou hast come to God the Judge of all, having come to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, Heb. xii. 23, 24. And been enabled to covenant with him, according to what he himself hath declared to be the purport and sum and substance of his covenant, that is, if thou art reconciled, thou hast taken him to be thy only God, thy supreme and sovereign good, thy chief and only satisfying portion, (Ps. xvi. 5, 6.) whom thou art most pleasantly to enjoy, and in whom thou art to take highest delight, above all things in heaven or earth, (Ps. lxxiii. 25.) and whom thou art to believe willing, according to this covenant, to do for thee, in outward and temporal respects, what he judgest fittest and best; and for thy soul, in his own way and method, all that is requisite for thy present support, and future blessedness. And to be thy supreme and sovereign Ruler and Lord, whom thou art to thy uttermost to please, serve, fear, obey, and glorify above all other. And to whom thou must reckon it belongs, according to this covenant, to forgive thy iniquities; and by it, as well as by natural right, to govern and dispose of thee in all thy thoughts, actions, inclinations, and affairs, according to his own holy will. And thou givest up thyself absolutely and entirely to him, to be of his people, to be taught and ruled by him. This is the covenant which in thy baptism thy parents, who had nearest natural relation to thee, entered into for thee; (as children do, in their parents, stand obliged to the government under which they live;) but which, when thou art come to use an understanding of thy own, thou art to enter into with the great God, for thyself, (as persons come to a certain age of maturity, are called to avow their allegiance to their secular rulers.) And because it is made with sinners, such as had been in rebellion against the Majesty of heaven, and therefore by a mediator, and by sacrifice; it is therefore a covenant of reconciliation, and the sacrifice by which it is made, is a propitiation or a reconciling sacrifice. If therefore Christ hath reconciled thee to God, or if ever thou shalt be reconciled, this covenant must pass between him and thee; this is to come into the history of his dealings with thy soul. And it ought to be with thee a great solemnity, and to fill thy soul with a wondering joy, that the great God, whom thou hadst so highly offended, should ever vouchsafe to covenant with thee a sinful worm! But because the manner of this covenanting is so fully set down, by Mr. Joseph Allen, and in a little treatise called Self-dedication, and in another of Yielding Ourselves to God, I shall not further enlarge upon it here.

9. If thou be reconciled, the frame and bent of thy soul is so far altered and changed, that thy carnal mind is become, in a prevailing degree, spiritual; and thy worldly heart is taken off, in a like measure, from this present world, and set upon God and heaven. For the carnal mind is enmity against God, and they that love this world, the love of the Father is not in them; and he that will be a

friend of this world, is the enemy of God, Rom. viii. 7. 1 John ii. 15. Jam. iv. 4. But canst thou be reconciled, and still be an enemy? And how canst thou not be an enemy, when not in this or that single act only, but in the main bent and frame of thy soul, thou resistest his will, and in thy whole course walkest contrary to him?

10. If thy reconciliation to God have been brought about, there must be suitable walking afterwards, which includes two things.—1. Amity must be continued, that is, there must be a very great care that there may be no new breach. 2. There must be much uneasiness of spirit, if there have been a new breach, till it be composed and made up again.

1. Where there is a thorough reconciliation, amity must be continued, care taken of giving any new offence, or the making any new breach, by not doing what will displease, and by a friendly intercourse continued and kept up. For there may be a new breach, or a new offence may be given again, either of these ways; either by breaking out into any fresh quarrel or contentions, or by breaking off friendly intercourse. As if there have been a war between two nations, when a firm peace is made, there ensues both a ceasing from hostilities, and free commerce; so if thou hast made peace with God, and hast entered into a league and covenant of reconciliation with him, thou must take great care, to thy uttermost, to sin no more; not deliberately to do any thing, that thou knowest will displease him. Thou must say, as is said in Job xxxiv. 32. If I have done iniquity, I will do so no more. And again, thou must take great heed of growing strange to him, of giving over, or of becoming slack or cold in thy converse with him; for when he inquires, "Can two walk together if they be not agreed?" he thereby intimates, that if they be agreed, it is that they may walk together. And it is to be considered, that in the text the unreconciled state consists, not only in the enmity of the mind by wicked works, but also in being alienated from him, or strange to him; by either whereof thou givest him also cause of just offence, even after reconciliation.

2. But if thou findest thou hast made a new breach, either of these ways, by doing any thing that thou didst apprehend to be displeasing to him, or by estranging thyself from him, there must be an uneasiness in thy spirit, and thou must be restless, till it be composed and made up again. This is walking suitably to a reconciled state, to resolve with thyself, upon any new offence, not to give sleep to thy eyes, nor slumber to thy eyelids, till thou have humbled thyself before thy God, and sought his pardon, by faith in the blood of his Son; with a resolution, in dependance on his grace and Spirit, to walk more carefully and more closely with him in thy future course, accounting always that in his favour is life. Such things as these if thou be reconciled to God, will compose and make up thy story of it. Such a narrative thou couldst give of it thyself, upon recollection, or at least thou canst say, when thou readest it thus put down to thy hand, thou canst say these things thou hast found God hath wrought and done in thee. Though perhaps they may not have come into thy mind in the same order wherein they are here set down, which is less material, if thou canst truly say such workings as these thou hast really felt in thine own heart, while God was dealing with thee, for the bringing about this reconciliation. But if this work be not yet done, if it is yet to be done, then know such stages as these thou must pass through. And thou art to be restless in thy spirit, while thou canst yet say, such and such of these things are still wanting in me; I have not yet found them, my heart agrees not in such and such points with this narrative: I can give no such account of myself. But wait and strive, in hope that thou shalt yet find them, if thou persist, and do not grow negligent and indifferent, whether any such reconciliation to God be effected in thee or no. And when thou hast found it, then art thou led to consider, in the next place,

2. God's reconciliation to thee; and inquire what that includes and carries in it. But here now, because his part lies in himself, and may for some time have no discernible effects upon thy soul; therefore the account hereof is not to be carried on in the way of the history, as the other might. It is doctrinally written in his own word, and so is the matter of thy faith, not of thy present sense, as the other is. But as it is indefinitely propounded in his word, so it ought to be firmly believed, and without wavering, as a sure part of the true and faithful sayings of God, who is truth itself, and cannot deceive nor be deceived. And it ought to be believed, with particular application to thyself, that thus and thus he bears himself towards thee, as thy reconciled God; according as thou findest thy own soul thus truly reconciled to him. For though thy reconciliation to him be no cause of his reconciliation to thee, yet it is a most certain evidence of it. Otherwise,

1. You would be beforehand with him in love, when as his word expressly says, he loves us first, 1 John iv. 19.

2. It would be true, that he made us love him, having himself no love to us; when as the same word says, we love him, because he first loved us; *viz.* with that compassionate love whereof you formerly heard.

3. You would hereupon outdo him in point of love, and be better affected towards him than he is towards you.

4. If any could be reconciled to God, and yet God not be reconciled to them, and they die in that state, it would be possible there might be lovers of God in hell. And what can be more absurd in itself? or more contrary to the plain word of God, that hath said, the things which eye hath not seen are prepared for them that love God, (1 Cor. ii. 9.) and that he hath promised the crown of life to them that love him, Jam. i. 12. All which you cannot but apprehend to be intolerable absurdities, and they would all follow, if upon such grounds as have been mentioned you should apprehend yourself to be reconciled to him, and yet disbelieve his being reconciled to you. Therefore having so sure a ground, upon which to apprehend he is reconciled to you, when you find you are reconciled to him; let it now be considered what his reconciliation to you imports. Wherein, as in all that follows, I shall be very brief; that this part be not too unproportionable in bulk to the former gone out before it. And here two things in the general must be understood to be included in God's being reconciled to us.—1. His forgiving to us all the sins of our former state of enmity against him: 2. His receiving us into a state of amity and friendship with him. How great things are both these! And if you cannot as yet with certainty conclude that you are reconciled to God, as thereupon to have a present assurance of his having thus forgiven, and accepted you; yet you are however to apprehend both these as most certainly belonging to their state, who are reconciled to him, so as to make you most earnestly to covet, and endeavour to get into that state; as perceiving how desirable a thing it is to have the eternal God no longer an enemy to you, but your friend.

1. Therefore you must apprehend God's being reconciled to you, includes his forgiving you all the sins of your former state, wherein you lived in enmity against him. And of how vast compass and extent is his mercy towards you herein! when you consider what you were doing, and what manner of life you led all that time; always sinning from morning to night either by acting against him, or by not living with him, and to him! not minding him, not fearing him, standing in no awe of him, never aiming to please, or serve, or glorify him in any thing you did, as if you were made for yourself, and not for him! And that your disobedience to him, your neglects of him, were all summed up in enmity! And how monstrous a thing it was to be an enemy, a hater of the ever-blessed God! And to have all this forgiven! So his own word plainly speaks: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon, Isa. lv. 7.

And here you must understand aright what sort of pardon and forgiveness that is, when God is said to forgive; which you must conceive of, by considering what sort of enmity yours was against him. The case is not as between equals, falling out and forgiving one another; but your enmity was that of an offending inferior and subject, rebelling against your sovereign, rightful Lord, who hath both right and power to punish you. And then think how terrible punishment you deserved, and were liable to! even an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, 2 Thess. i. 9. Whereupon

consider what it signifies for him to forgive you: and see now whether you do not savour those words, Blessed is the man; or whether the sense of your case do not make you cry out, as those words may be read, O the blessednesses of him, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! O the blessednesses of him, to whom the Lord doth not impute iniquity! Of how mighty a load must it ease and disburden thy soul, to have thy offended Lord say to thee, Thou hast been sinning against me hitherto all thy days, when I have been all thy days doing thee good; thou hast done evilly against me as thou couldst, slighted my authority and despised my mercy; I could plead my rebukes against thee, with flames of fire; if I should whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold of vengeance, how soon could I ease myself of so feeble an adversary, and avenge myself of so contemptible an enemy! But I forgive thee: now upon thy repenting and turning to me with thy whole soul, I forgive thy ungodly prayerless life, thy having been alienated and an enemy in thy mind by wicked works. I forgive it to thee all! Thy iniquity is all pardoned, thy sin covered, I no more impute any thing of it to thee. What rock would not this melt! what stony heart would it not dissolve, and break in pieces! And what! canst thou now be any longer an unreconciled enemy, to such a sin-pardoning God? Consider here more particularly,—the properties and consequences of this forgiveness.

1. The properties of it, as that,

1. It is most compassionate, an act of tender mercy and pity; so says his own word: I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, Heb. viii. 12. In his love and pity he redeemed, and he bare them, Isa. lxiii. 9. And being full of compassion, he forgave their iniquity, Ps. lxxviii. 38. For he remembered they were but flesh, *v.* 39.

2. It is perfectly free, and of mere grace. We are justified freely by his grace, Rom. iii. 24. He invites sinners to come to him, even without money and without price, Isa. lv. 1. A great price indeed hath been paid, but by another hand, as we shall show when we come to the second head, the way wherein our Lord effects this reconciliation, in the body of his flesh through death. But no price is expected from us, he doth it for his own sake, as Isa. xliii. 25.

3. It is full and entire. And that both in respect of the object, the sin forgiven: All manner of sin (that can be repented of) shall be forgiven unto men, Matt. xii. 31. I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me, Jer. xxxiii. 8. And in respect of the act of forgiving, it shall be so full as to leave no displeasure behind: for (as he speaks) I, even I am he that blotteth out thy iniquities, and there is not so much as a remembrance left; I will not remember thy sins, Isa. xliii. 25. Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more, Heb. viii. 12.

4. 'Tis often repeated. He being full of compassion forgave their iniquity—yea, many a time turned he his anger away, Ps. lxxviii. 38.

2. The consequences of this forgiveness.

1. Cessation of all acts, that have either destruction for their end, or enmity for their principle. In the very covenant of reconciliation, God reserves to himself a liberty of chastening his reconciled ones; yea, the case requiring it, he not only reserves the liberty, but takes upon him an obligation hereunto. For he expressly declares, that if his children forsake his law, and walk not in his judgments; then he will visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes; but that, nevertheless, he will not utterly take away his loving-kindness, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail, nor break his covenant, Ps. lxxxix. 31—34. implying that otherwise his faithfulness would fail, and his covenant were broken on his part. And therefore when he deals not with a people upon covenant terms, but as cast-aways, and as people given up, he declares: I will not punish your daughters, Hos. iv. 14. And why should they be smitten any more? Isa. i. 5. And they themselves own; It was good for them to have been afflicted, Psal. cxix. 71. and that he had done it in very faithfulness, *v.* 75. And his correcting them is signified not only to consist with love, but to proceed from it; for 'tis said, whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, Heb. xii. 6. And those afflictions are properly punitive, as they import warning to others; but not vindictive, as tending to the destruction of themselves; but corrective, as intending their own amendment, besides warning to others, which also those that are destructive might do. But these afflictive strokes upon his own, as they intend warning to others, have the general nature of punishment in them. But they differ in their special kind, as being to themselves corrective only, not destructive, or vindictive. But upon the whole, when once he is reconciled to you, he no longer treats you as enemies; if sometimes he see cause to afflict his own, he smites them not as he smites those that smote them, Isa. xxvii. 7. Your carriage doth not always please him, therefore 'tis not strange, if his dealings do not always please you; but after forgiveness he intends your real and final hurt no more.

2. A second consequent of God's forgiving you all your sins, is his seasonable manifestation hereof to you. He may have forgiven you, and not judge it seasonable suddenly to make it known to you: he may judge it fit to hold you, some time, in suspense. And when by his grace he hath enabled you to exercise repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, whereupon you are in a pardoned state; you may yet sometime remain in doubt, whether you were sincere herein or no. And may not on a sudden put you out of doubt, but keep you a while in a waiting posture; as that which is more suitable to his own majesty and greatness, and to your own infirm and less established condition. He waits to be gracious, and is exalted even in showing mercy, for he is a God of judgment, and doth show mercy judiciously, when he judges it the fittest season; therefore are they blessed that wait for him, Isa. xxx. 18. Assurance is the privilege not of all his children, but of them that are come to a more grown stature; but in the mean time he sustains you, by hope in his mercy, and lets not your heart sink within you. And when he sees it fit, lets you know he hath accepted the atonement for you, which he hath enabled you to receive; and speaks that peace to you, which is the fruit of his lips, and which he only, by speaking it inwardly to your heart, can create; that peace which passes all understanding, Isa. lvii. 18. Phil. iv. 7. and which belongs to his kingdom in you; with joy in the Holy Ghost, when once the foundation is laid in righteousness, Rom. xiv. 17.

2. This reconciliation, on God's part, not only includes the forgiveness of your former enmity, with all the sins of that fearful state wherein you then were; but also his receiving you into a state of amity and friendship with himself. And this you are to take for a great addition to the former. A prince may pardon to a malefactor a capital crime, spare his forfeited life and estate; and yet not take him for a favourite and a friend. But when the blessed God forgives his enemies, he also takes them for his friends; though those are distinct things, yet they are most closely conjunct; he always adds this latter to the former.

Abraham was called the friend of God, Isa. xli. 8. *i. e.* not only in the active sense, as now bearing a friendly mind towards God; but in the passive sense also, as now God hath a friendly mind towards him. And upon what account? Some may think Abraham being a person of eminent sanctity, this may be said of him only upon that peculiar account. But see how the matter must be understood, from what we find, Jam. ii. 23. Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God; this is spoken of him, not as an eminent saint only, but under the common notion of a believer; so that the same thing is truly to be said of every one that believes, with a justifying faith. So saith our Saviour to his disciples in common: Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you, John xv. 14. And—I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you, (*v.* 15.) which signifies his own friendly mind to them. And now consider what this friendliness towards them includes. It must include,

I. Love, which is the very soul of friendship. So our Saviour expresses his own friendliness towards them that are his: As my Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love, *v.* 9. And the height of that love, *v.* 13. Greater love than that hath no man, that

a man should lay down his life for his friends; though 'tis elsewhere further heightened, from our having been sinners and enemies, Rom. v. 8, 10. though it was then in view to him what he designed to make of them, *viz.* friends to him too. And so his friendship must signify further, not love merely, but also after-reconciliation, there mentioned, *v.* 10.

2. A delightful, complacential love. For such is the love of friends, a love of delight, which they take in one another; as if he had said, "Now I have overcome you, and won your hearts, I love you with that pleasantness, that delightful love, which is proper to the state of friendship." So such friends are spoken to, Cant. ii. 14. O my dove, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance comely: and that book abounds with expressions of that import: Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse. How fair is my love! chap. iv. 7, 9, 10, &c. But besides what this friendship, as such, or as it hath in it the general notion of friendship, includes; consider further some particularities belonging to this friendship, as,

1. How infinitely condescending it is on God's part. That the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, who hath infinite fulness in himself, and could with delight live alone to all eternity, as he did from all eternity, that he should vouchsafe to take from among his own creatures, such as he would make friends of; how admirable! much more of such creatures, apostate revolted creatures, impure and vile creatures! such as he hath so much to do upon, to make them kind and holy, that they might be capable of his friendship!

According to the usual measures of friendship, 'tis with those that are like, yea with equals. How transporting should it be to thy soul, that the great God should entertain and strike such a friendship with thee, so vile, so rebellious and abject as thou wast! Solomon speaks of it as a wonderful thing, and even exceeding all belief, that God should dwell, (which dwelling signifies friendly society,) saith he, In very deed will God dwell with men! such creatures as men are now become! and with men on earth! in this their low and mean state, and on this narrow, little, base spot; when even the bright and spacious heavens, yea the heaven of heavens, cannot contain him, 2 Chron. vi. 18. How wonderful a thing is this! and even surpassing all wonders! Is it after the manner of men? how far, herein, are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts! even as the heavens are above the earth, Isa. lv. 8. Consider,

2. How beneficial this his friendship to us is! Many friends can only wish well to one another, have neither wisdom nor power really to befriend them; his friendship is most beneficial to them on whom 'tis placed, having all-sufficient fulness in himself to counsel, to support, to relieve, to supply them as the matter shall require.

3. How conversable he is with these his friends, being,

1. Always present. One may have a wise and potent friend, but perhaps he is far off when there is greatest need of him.

2. Being intimately present, with our minds and spirits. The Lord Jesus be with thy spirit, 2 Tim. iv. 22. He can be always so. The most inward friends, among men, can have no immediate access to one another's spirits; but this is the peculiar advantage of this friend, that he can enter into our very souls; nothing is shut up from him.

4. How constant is God's friendship! He loves with an everlasting love, and to the end, (Jer. xxxi. 3. Isa. liv. 8. John xiii. 1.) when other friendships are upon slight grounds, easily, and often broken off. Thus far we have seen what this mutual recollection imports, on our part, towards God; and on God's part towards us. We now come to consider,

2. The way wherein our Lord Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and us, brings about this reconciliation; *viz.* In the body of his flesh through death. The same thing is expressed in the 20th verse, by his making peace by the blood of his cross, or his shedding his blood on the cross. The meaning of both expressions is, that he brought about this reconciliation, by suffering death for us, upon the cross. Now because this reconciliation, as you have heard, includes both God's reconciliation to us, and our reconciliation to God; and that both are effected by his dying upon the cross for us; we are to show how each of these are brought about this way.

1. How God's reconciliation to us is wrought, by Christ dying for us. You may say, why was this the means of reconciling God to us? for you may think with yourselves, if God had a mind to be reconciled to sinners, could he not have been so, without letting his Son die for it? There are, indeed, difficulties in this matter, which are not fit to be brought into such a discourse as this; but I shall here say nothing about it but what is plain, and easy to be understood.

1. You can easily apprehend, that God saw it was necessary his Son should die, in order to the saving of sinners; for who can think he would ever have consented to the death of his most beloved Son, if he had not seen it necessary. Therefore you must conclude it was necessary, whether you discern the reasons upon which it was so, or no.

2. You can easily apprehend that the sins of men deserved eternal death, and that God threatened them with eternal death accordingly; for what death but eternal death can that be, which is opposed to eternal or everlasting life? (Rom. v. 21. vi. 23.) and which is executed upon all that are not reconciled, according to the sentence of the last judgment, Matt. xxv. ult.

3. You cannot but know that there were sacrifices under the law of Moses, appointed to make atonement for sin, and that without shedding of blood there could be no remission, Heb. ix. 22.

4. 'Tis easy to be understood, that the blood of those sacrifices could not take away sin, as is expressly said, (Heb. x. 4.) and therefore that they could not otherwise signify any thing, to the taking it away, than as they were types and shadows of that great sacrifice, that once for all was to be offered up for that purpose. Once in, or towards the end of, the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. ix. 26.

5. You can understand that as this could never have been, without the consent of the Father and the Son; so by their consent it might be, that the innocent might suffer for the guilty: as one may be bound, body for body, for another.

6. And it is plain they did consent, God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have life everlasting, John iii. 16. And our Lord Jesus Christ himself says, no man could take his life from him, *i. e.* against his will, for he could have twelve legions of angels to defend it, but he did lay it down, (John x. 18.) and gave his life a ransom for many, Matt. xx. 28.

7. So it came to pass that our Lord Jesus suffered once, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. And he was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in him.

8. And hereupon when God is reconciled to sinners, he doth not only forgive them, but he justifies them, there being an equal recompense made to him; but of his own providing, and therefore to us it is most free, though it was very costly to Christ. So both these expressions, of the same thing, are put together: We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins—that God might be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus, Rom. iii. 24, 26.

9. Thus God becomes reconciled to sinful men (not to every one, but to them that sincerely repent and believe) in a just, regular, and orderly way, most becoming his excellent Majesty. For though he forgive sinners, that had affronted him, and rebelled against him; yet it is not without a sacrifice, and that of his own Son, a sacrifice of infinite value; most becoming his grace and mercy, for that sacrifice was of his own providing. Most becoming his justice, for though sin be forgiven, it is punished too; forgiven to us, but punished in his own Son, who consented to bear our sins in his own body on the tree, 1 Pet. ii. 24. Most becoming the truth of his word, for, as that said, without shedding of blood there could be no remission; the most precious blood was shed that ever was, in order to our remission. Most becoming his infinite

wisdom, that found out this way of answering all purposes; that both he might be glorified in the highest degree, and yet sinners be saved. Grace hath herein abounded in all wisdom and prudence, Eph. i. 6, 7, 8.

2. We come now (having thus far seen how Christ's dying on the cross works God's reconciliation to us) to show also how it brings about our reconciliation to God. And here you may observe, we changed the method of speaking to this two-fold reconciliation, considered in itself, and as the effect of Christ's death. For though God is not actually reconciled to us before he hath disposed our hearts to a reconciliation unto him; yet the foundation of his being reconciled to us, is first laid in the death of his Son, or in the prospect and foresight of it; before there can be any disposition on our parts to such a reconciliation. And that being done, and it being thereby seen what this great sacrifice signifies to his being reconciled, whensoever that shall be; it comes, in the proper order, next to be considered which way it works, to bring about the reconciliation also. And it works, in order hereto, these two ways.

1. By preparing the ground of preaching the Gospel of reconciliation, or of Christ crucified; which must first be, or have been resolved on, before there could be any Gospel to reveal it. In this Gospel Christ is set forth as a propitiation, through faith in his blood, Rom. iii. 25. And this is the proper and most apt means to work upon thy heart, sinner, to persuade thee to be reconciled to God. Looking upon him whom thou has pierced, is that thon mayest mourn over him, Zech. xii. 10. What should so melt and overcome thy heart, and make thee yield to the terms of reconciliation? But he must be represented, that he may be looked upon; and therefore is the preaching of Christ crucified, unto them that are called, the power of God, and the wisdom of God, (1 Cor. i. 23, 24.) the most powerful and the wisest method; and which God hath thought fittest to win souls, and reconcile them to himself. Therefore it is reckoned no less than a witchery, if they obey not the Gospel, who have Christ set forth before their eyes, as crucified among them, (Gal. iii. 1.) which setting forth could not be otherwise, than in the Gospel representation. For you know Christ was not actually crucified in Galatia, but at Jerusalem; therefore, saith our Lord himself, But I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me, John xii. 32. This was said, (as it follows,) signifying what death he should die, *i. e.* by being crucified. And this, supposing a due representation of him in the Gospel, was in point of means to draw all men. But it could only be sufficient, as a means; when yet it could not be a means sufficient, if there were not an Agent able to use it to that purpose. Therefore,

2. Our Redeemer's dying upon the cross did work towards our reconciliation, by procuring the Spirit to be given, in order to the making this most apt means effectual to this end. And if this sacrifice of Christ on the cross was necessary to the obtaining forgiveness of sins, it was, at least, equally necessary to obtain the giving of the Spirit, without which all the rest were in vain. When Christ had died to reconcile both (*i. e.* Jew and Gentile) in one body, by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and thereupon preached peace to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh; yet it was still necessary that by one Spirit both should have access to the Father; otherwise they would never come at him, they would still, with implacable hearts, have kept at a distance. Therefore looking upon a crucified Christ would never have had this effect, to make them mourn over him, whom they had pierced; if the Spirit of grace and supplication were not poured forth, Zech. xii. 10. They would with hard hearts have gazed long enough on this doleful spectacle, far enough from mourning; if the Spirit of Christ were not poured forth, as well as his blood.

And do we think that holy and pure Spirit would ever have been poured forth, on so impure and unholy souls, if the precious blood of that invaluable sacrifice had not been poured forth to procure it? Those words of the apostle make this plain, (Gal. iii. 13, 14.) Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, (for cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree,) that the blessing of Abraham might reach further, come upon the Gentiles; that they might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Or in their being made to believe the ever-blessed One was so far made a curse, that you might be capable of this blessing; and by it have your own enmity overcome, and your reconciliation brought about. Therefore doth our Lord direct us to pray for the Spirit, assuring us our heavenly Father will give that Holy Spirit to them that ask him, (Luke xi. 13.) as well knowing, his pouring forth his blood had deserved it should not any longer be an enclosed blessing; but which might be communicated to Jew and Gentile, and in his way and season be poured out on all flesh. Thus doth our Lord, in the body of his flesh through death, work out this two-fold reconciliation, both of God to you, and of you to God.

And now the use follows, which must have reference both,—1. To the mutual reconciliation itself, You hath he now reconciled; and—2. To the way wherein our Lord Jesus brings it about, In the body of his flesh through death. The use we shall make of the former will be two-fold, (according as *this* reconciliation itself is two-fold, *viz.* God's reconciliation to us, and our reconciliation to God) *viz.* to persuade us from sundry considerations,—

1. To believe God's reconcileableness to us.—2. To be willing, hereupon, to be actually and speedily reconciled to him. And the use which is only now intended to be made of the latter, is to draw from it divers additional considerations, by which to enforce and give further strength to both those mentioned exhortations.

1. For the use of the former, the doctrine of the reconciliation itself. Inasmuch as we have shown that it contains reconciliation, on God's part towards us, and on our part towards God, we must understand,

1. That God's reconciliation is asserted here, to the persons whom the apostle now mentions; and whom he had before described as converts, saints faithful in Christ, (*ch.* i. 1.) that Christ had reconciled them, *i. e.* restored them into a state of grace, favour, and acceptance, though they had been alienated, and enemies in their minds. Therefore, if when they become saints, faithful, &c. God was reconciled to them; while they were yet in their state of enmity, he was reconcileable. The plain use to be made of this, is—that we be persuaded to *believe* God's reconcileableness to sinners, offending creatures, such as had been strangers to him, and enemies; whatsoever bar was in the way, is so far removed (as we shall show from the second head) that he can be reconciled to such enemies, and will actually be so, whensoever they turn to him. This, sinner, is the sum of the Gospel, which thou art to believe upon sundry considerations, which have their ground here; as,

1. This Gospel could never be intended for these only, to whom the apostle now writes. Can we think there was one Gospel meant for Colossians, and another, or none at all, for Englishmen? Yea, when the apostle himself was converted and obtained mercy, it was for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe, 1 Tim. i. 16. You have the same warrant to believe, that turning to God and believing on his Son, God will be reconciled to you as he was to them.

2. This is the Gospel which God hath ever declared to the world, without accepting any person, wheresoever his written word hath come, (Isa. lv.) Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, even he that hath no money, come without money, and without price, *v.* 1. Incline your ear, and come to me, hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *v.* 3. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy; to our God, and he will abundantly pardon. For my ways are not as your ways, *v.* 7, 8. So the tenor of his word hath always run, "Turn to me, and I will turn to you," 2 Chron. xxx. 6. Jer. iii. 12. Zech. i. 3. Mal. iii. 7. And is it not to be believed?

3. It is the Gospel which he hath confirmed, by his own solemn oath, (as I live saith the Lord,) having plainly propounded it, (Ezek. xviii. 21, 22, 23, 31, 32.) He swears to it, (*ch.* xxxiii. 11.) and wilt thou not yet believe him?

4. When after the fulness of time, it was more expressly revealed, that there could be no turning to God, but through Christ; this was the Gospel which he himself

preached, (Mark i. 14, 15.) and which, when he was leaving the world, he required should be preached to all the world, Mark xvi. 15, 16.

5. It is given as the sum of all the counsel of God, Acts xx. 21.

6. It is the everlasting Gospel, which is to continue through all ages, as the stated means of regenerating and renewing souls, 1 Pet. i. 23, 24, 25.

7. It is this Gospel which God blesses, and makes effectual to this purpose. When, herein, the love and kindness of God to men appear, then (not by works of righteousness which they have done) but of his mercy he saves them by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. iii. 4, 5. His mercy revealed, softens and changes their hearts; so that by the exceeding great and precious promises, contained in this Gospel, they are made partakers of a divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4.

8. But it is by believing it becomes effectual to any blessed purpose. It is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believes, (Rom. i. 16.) but to them that believe it not, it is without power, and effects nothing. It works effectually on every one that believes, (1 Thess. ii. 13.) but hath no efficacy when it is not believed. Much people, believing, were turned to the Lord, (Acts xi. 23.) but where there is no believing there is no turning.

9. Where it is not believed it hardens. We are therefore warned to take heed of the evil heart of unbelief, lest we be hardened. (Heb. iii. 12, 13.) and are told those hardened ones that fell in the wilderness, were such as believed not, and that could not enter into Canaan (the type of heaven) because of unbelief, (*v.* 18, 19.) and that the Gospel could not profit them because it was not mixed with faith, *ch.* iv. 2.

10. It is in the same context mentioned, as a most provoking wickedness, to disbelieve this Gospel of his. That sin was therefore said to be the provocation, (Heb. iii. 15.) and referring to the same time, the great God says; How long will this people provoke? how long ere they believe me? (Numb. xiv. 11.) when their not believing his willingness to do better for them, than only to bestow upon them an earthly Canaan, was their most provoking wickedness.

11. The not believing of this Gospel of his, is understood to be giving God the lie, (1 John v. 10.) as believing it is setting to our seal that he is true, John iii. 33. But what inducement is it possible he can have to lie to his own creatures, who is himself all-sufficient; and who hath them absolutely in his power? Or what man would lie for lying sake, having no inducement? It is therefore impossible for God to lie, as being inconsistent with the universal perfections of his nature; and therefore to impute falsehood to him, is highest blasphemy. And after all this, sinner, darest thou disbelieve God's reconcileableness to thee, upon his own declared terms; when here the whole business sticks, of reconciliation between him and thee? But there are yet other considerations to this purpose, to persuade thy *belief* of God's reconcileableness to thee, from the

2. Head of discourse, the way of our Lord's bringing about this reconciliation, *viz.* in the body of his flesh through death. And here his reconcileableness must be understood to signify two things:—the possibility of God's being reconciled to sinners,—his willingness to be reconciled. And the death of his Son upon the cross, in order hereto, affords considerations to evince both.

1. The possibility of the thing, which this sacrifice proves to be possible, because it makes it so. When the apostle asserts, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, (Heb. ix. 22.) and that it was impossible the blood of bulls and goats should take it away, (*ch.* x. 4.) and that, therefore, our Lord came to take it away, in that body prepared for him, (*v.* 5, 6.) he therein implies it to be impossible to be otherwise taken away, than by this blood shed upon the cross; nothing, indeed, being possible to God, which becomes him not. And it became him not otherwise to effect this design, and bring many sons to glory, but by the sufferings of this his Son. It was, therefore, not possible upon other terms, (Heb. ii. 10.) but in this way it was possible, upon the account of these several things concurring;

1. The rich and infinite value and fulness of this sacrifice. The blood that was herein shed, and the life that was laid down, though of a man, yet were the blood and life of such a man as was also God, (Acts xx. 28. 1 John iii. 16.) a man that was God's own fellow, Zech. xiii. 7. As it was God that was offended, so it was God that did satisfy for the offence.

2. He was nearly allied to us, as a Redeemer ought to be. Because we were partakers of flesh and blood, he took part with us of the same, (Heb. ii. 14, 15.) therefore as man did offend, man suffered for it.

3. He freely consented hereto, both to become man, and to suffer for man, Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. John x. 18.

4. He had no sin of his own to suffer for, 2 Cor. v. 21. and as many other scriptures speak.

5. He was, by a special, divine law, commissioned hereunto. Therefore his laying down his life, was in itself no illegal act. He had power to lay down his life, having received a commandment for it from the Father, John x. 18. He came, having God's law, to this purpose, in his heart, Psal. xl. 6, 7, 8.

6. He was fully accepted herein above, his sacrifice having a sweet-smelling odour with it, unto God; because satisfying his justice, it made way for the free exercise of his grace and love, Eph. v. 2. Therefore, sinner, canst thou disbelieve or doubt the very possibility of God's being reconciled to thee, upon his own declared terms; when so extraordinary a course was taken that he might be reconciled?

2. And thou hast as great reason to believe his willingness to be reconciled, considering that this was consented to on purpose. God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, John iii. 16. Now consider, was his own Son given for what he was not willing of? his only-begotten Son! his very image! (Heb. i. 2.) the Son of his delights, always dear to him! (Prov. viii. 30.) and who was especially dear to him for this very reason! John x. 17. Yea, and that it was the very cry of his blood from the cross, O forgive, forgive this repenting, believing sinner, be reconciled to him, O Father, for the sake of thy dying Son! And yet was he unwilling? What could induce him who is love itself, to give up such a Son, to so bitter, bloody, and ignominious sufferings, but his willingness to be reconciled to sinners? It were a blasphemy against the ever-blessed nature and being of God, to imagine he would have his most beloved Son suffer for suffering's sake! And for what other end could it be? And there is as little reason to doubt the issue, but that, being an enemy, thou wast reconciled by the death of his Son; being reconciled, thou shalt be saved by his life, Rom. v. 10. It therefore remains to press the

2. Exhortation, which you may take in the apostle's words, (2 Cor. v. 20.) We, the ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, do pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Now that is put out of doubt, that God justly and honourably can be reconciled to you, (without which it had been impossible,) and that he is most unquestionably willing; are you yet unwilling to be reconciled to him? Consider both this reconciliation itself, brought about with some, You hath he reconciled; and the way of it, In the body of his flesh through death.

1. Some have been reconciled, that have been alienated and enemies in their minds by wicked works. Whereupon bethink yourselves,

1. Have you any greater reason to be implacable towards the blessed God, than those Colossians? why should you be more wicked enemies?

2. Can you better maintain your cause against God? are you more able to stand against all the power of his wrath which you so little know? Psal. xc. 11.

3. Can you better bear the loss and want of the comforts of his love, while you live? to have the great God for your friend? to whom you have free recourse, and may pour ont your souls daily? upon whom you may cast all your cares? with whom you may walk in friendly love, and may converse with him every day?

4. Can you less need his supports in a dying hour? Will it be easy to you to die unreconciled? and afterwards to appear convicted, unreconcileable enemies before the tribunal of your Judge? and then to have no advocate, no

intercessor to plead for you? When he himself must be your condemning Judge, and shall only say, O that thou hadst known, in the day of thy visitation, the things that did belong to thy peace? but now they are hid from thy eyes, Luke xix. 42, 44.

2. But we are further to persuade this reconciliation to God, from the way wherein our Lord effects it: In the body of his flesh, through death, or by dying a sacrifice upon the cross. And now you know this, will you not yet be reconciled to him? Consider,

1. You will herein frustrate and make insignificant to yourself, the highest demonstration that could be given of God's good-will towards you. God so loved the world, &c. (John iii. 16.) and what could our Lord himself have done more to testify his own love? For greater love hath no man, than to lay down his life for his friends, John xv. 13. Yea, for those that were not so before, but wicked enemies; only that thereby they might be made friends, Rom. v. 8. And what could it signify to you, to represent the divine love to you by so costly a demonstration, if it do not gain your love?

2. And what could be so apt a means, sinner, to break thy heart, and conquer all thy former enmity, as to behold thy Redeemer dying upon the cross for thee? They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn, Zech. xii. 10. And I, if I be lift up, will draw all men to me; which our Lord said, signifying what death he should die, by being lift up on the cross, John xii. 32, 33. Now what dost thou think of thyself, if such a sight will not move thee? An earthly, carnal, worldly mind, is declared over and over to be enmity against God, Rom. viii. 7. James iv. 4. But how remarkable is it, that such a temper of mind should be so peculiarly signified to import enmity to the cross of Christ! Phil. iii. 18, 19. I tell you of such, weeping, saith the apostle, that do even continue their enmity even in the face of the cross! and who even by that itself are not overcome!

3. If thou wilt not be reconciled, Christ did, as to thee, die in vain, thou canst be nothing the better. Think what it must come to, that so precious blood (infinitely exceeding the value of all corruptible things; silver and gold, &c. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.) should be shed, to redeem and save such as thou, and yet do thee no good!

4. If thou continue to the last unreconciled, it not only doth thee no good, but it must cry and plead most terribly against thee. Blood-guiltiness is a fearful thing? What must it be to be guilty of such blood! If thou wert guilty of the blood of thy father, thy child, or of the wife of thy bosom, how would it astonish thee! But to be guilty of the blood of the Son of God! How canst thou live under it? If thou wert guilty of all the innocent blood that ever was shed, since the creation of the world, it were not comparable to the guilt of this blood!

5. But if thou come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than the blood of Abel, as a reconciled believing penitent; thou wilt also come and be adjoined to the general assembly, to the church of the first-born written in heaven, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24. O the joy in heaven that will be concerning thee! And O the fulness of thy own joy, into which thou shalt enter at last: for consider,

6. And in the last place, what follows in the latter part of this verse, that is, that thou wilt be presented, by thy Redeemer, holy, and unblamable, and unreprovable in the sight of God, as if thou hadst never offended, and never been an enemy. All thy former transgressions, that have overwhelmed thee with just sorrow, shall all be overwhelmed in that kind, paternal joy, as for the returning prodigal; This my son was lost, and is found. And thy having been so long alienated, and an enemy in thy mind by wicked works, will all be forgotten and swallowed up in the embraces of infinite, everlasting love!

A SERMON,

PREACHED ON THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER, 1703.

READER,

This discourse was preached without any the least thought of its being made more public; and a considerable time passed afterwards, without any such intention. I thought it, indeed, too uncomposed to appear in the world; but in a matter of no worse consequence, I make no difficulty of acknowledging, that I at length chose rather to follow the judgment of the many hearers, that moved for this further publication, than my own. Therefore, amidst much other business, and great infirmities, that are sufficiently monitory to me to be unconcerned for the gratifying of curiosity, in myself, or in any others, I so far revised it, as very imperfect memorials would enable me. If any where it be somewhat enlarged, that can be no prejudice to them that heard it; and much less to them that heard it not.

That it may be of some use to direct our thanksgivings, (and supplications also,) so as, without the neglect of lower and subservient mercies, they may have principal respect to blessings of the highest value, is the serious desire and prayer of an earnest well-willer to the true prosperity of the Christian church,

J. H.

COLOSSIANS I. 13.

WHO HATH DELIVERED US FROM THE POWER OF DARKNESS, AND HATH TRANSLATED US INTO THE KINGDOM OF HIS DEAR SON.

You already know, that the occasion of our assembling together this day is two-fold; to commemorate some former national mercies, and deliverances from certain very considerable efforts of that power of darkness, which is peculiar to the devil's kingdom; and also, to prepare for the commemoration, at the approaching season, of the much more general mercy of our common redemption, in the observation of a solemn rite belonging to the kingdom of Christ.[a] The two parts of this text give us an apt and suitable ground for each of these. For giving God thanks, for great former mercies; and preparation for that designed holy solemnity.

We begin, for the former of these purposes, with the first part of the text, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness." And that we may see how accommodate this will be to the former mentioned purpose (as comprehended within the import of this clause, and but comprehended, it being of much greater latitude) some things I must previously note to you. As,

1. That there is a kingdom manifestly implied in these words, "The power of darkness," unto which the kingdom of God's dear Son is opposite. And,

2. That this kingdom can be no other than the devil's kingdom, whom our Lord himself doth own to have a kingdom. If Satan be divided against himself, how then can his kingdom stand? Matt. xii. 26. These are our Lord's own words, and joined, in that context, with what sufficiently intimates that kingdom to be directly opposite to his own.

3. That the distinguishing characters of these two opposite kingdoms, the kingdom of the devil, and the kingdom of God's dear Son, are darkness, and light; the one is a kingdom of darkness, and the other is a kingdom of light. The devils are called the rulers of the former, so stigmatized, Eph. vi. 12. principalities, and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Our Lord's is implied to be a kingdom of light, in the words immediately foregoing; Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, &c. It is a kingdom they are to inherit, Matt. xxv. 34. In its most perfect state it comprehends brightest light, purity, and glory: as the opposite kingdom, consummate, is utter darkness. And so are the beginnings and first principles of each. Ye were darkness, now are light in the Lord—Eph. v. 8. Both are seen, in the unconverted and converted state; to turn them from darkness to light, and (which shows that darkness to be satanical) from the power of Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 18. As what their inheritance is hereupon to be, the next words show, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified. And yet again,

4. That the darkness, which characterizes the devil's kingdom, includes those things that are directly opposite unto those included in the light, which characterizes the kingdom of Christ. The light that characterizes the kingdom of Christ, includes these two things, truth and holiness.

These are the principal things comprehended in the notion of light, as it is characteristical of the kingdom of the Son of God. The light of truth, objectively revealed, and subjectively received, the frame of Christian doctrine, with the knowledge and belief thereof; and the light of holiness, so shining in the lives of Christians, that men may see their good works, Matt. v. 16. Accordingly the darkness, that doth characterize the devil's kingdom, doth comprehend it in falsehood and wickedness.

It comprehends in it all manner of falsehood, truth obscured and perverted, ignorance, error, deceit, blindness of heart, (Eph. iv. 18.) a wilful overlooking of the great and most necessary truths, which the souls of men are, above all other, concerned to take in, and admit into, their inward parts. And it comprehends wickedness in the whole compass of it; wickedness against God, all manner of impiety, idolatry, blasphemy, neglect and profanation of the ordinances and institutions, wherein he claims to be worship-

[a] It being our usual monthly season of preparation for the Lord's supper.

ped, in the proper seasons thereof. Wickedness against men, all comprehended and summed up in their hatred of one another. He that hateth his brother, is in darkness, even diabolical; for they who emerge, and are recovered out of it, are said to have overcome the wicked one, 1 John ii. 11, 13. And both these sorts of wickedness are put together, Rom. xiii. 12, 13. Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. And those works of darkness are said to be chambering, wantonness, rioting, drunkenness, strife, and envying. And Eph. v. 11. We are warned to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Which works are (ver. 3. and 4.) said to be fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, (which is also said to be idolatry,) filthiness, foolish talking, &c. as things that bar us from any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, or of God. And Christians are therefore forbidden to be partakers therein, (ver. 7.) because they are light, and children of light, ver. 8. And as 'tis, 1 Thess. v. 5. of the day, not of the night, nor of darkness. They are of the opposite kingdom, and must walk conformably thereto. Our way being thus far plain, we go on to add,

5. That the power which the devil exerts and exercises, in this darkness, is two-fold: first, spiritual and internal; secondly, secular and external.

1. There is a spiritual power which he exercises in this darkness, acting more immediately upon the minds and spirits of men. The God of this world blinds their minds, who believe not, 2 Cor. iv. 4. And he is said to be the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, Ephes. ii. 2. And the impenitent, such as have not hitherto repented and turned to God, it is said, He leads them captive at his will, 2 Tim. ii. 26. And,

2. There is a secular power which he also exerts, in the midst of that darkness that he hath brought upon this world, relating, as far as he can obtain leave, to the bodies of men, and their external concernments and affairs; and not only of particular persons, but of nations and kingdoms, especially where he observes any design to be more directly formed against his kingdom, and interest in this world; he thereupon comes to be engaged in a more open and explicit opposition. And so when he is the author of this or that bodily or outward affliction, to a particular person, as he can obtain divine permission; this is an effort of his power, in the midst of that darkness. Such as are rescued out of his kingdom, his design is to vex, because he cannot destroy them, whom he cannot mortally touch; *viz.* such as are born of God, and have a new creature, by that divine birth, the wicked one touches them not, (1 John v. 18.) *i. e.* not mortally, to make them sin unto death, as ver. 16. But if he can however have leave to touch them in their bodies, or external concernments, he will rather do that than nothing; ruin them he cannot, but he will afflict them as he can. Therefore is he said to go about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; which is there meant, immediately, in reference to their external concernments, as will appear if you observe the context, 1 Pet. v. 8. For it follows in the 9th verse, Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren, that are in the world. 'Tis true, being uncertain of the event, he hath a further aim, to overthrow their faith, and by his roaring to fright them out of their religion; therefore 'tis said, Whom resist steadfast in the faith, defeat his final design. But as the means to his end, when he roars like a lion against any of the servants of Christ, it is with design to bring them into the most afflicted condition he can: that so he may, at least make them signify the less in that state of opposition wherein they are engaged against him, in the world. So you find the imprisonment of Christ's servants imputed to Satan, Rev. ii. 10. The devil shall cast some of you into prison, and you shall have tribulation for ten days, which some understand of the ten persecutions. Whatever the devil meant, God intended their trial, as 'tis there said, and the demonstration of the victorious power of the divine principle, their faith, and his Spirit in them, that being tried, it might be found unto praise and glory—1 Pet. i. 7. And we cannot but doubt he let Job come on the stage, as his champion to combat Satan, who was the prime author of his manifold calamities; his accuser first, and his persecutor afterwards. He accuseth him of want of integrity, Doth Job serve God for nought? (chap. i. 9.) and at the same time complains of his own want of power to come at him: Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? ver. 10. Wherenpon, for the trial of Job's fidelity and patience, God puts all he had into the devil's power, his person only excepted, which as yet he must not touch; manifest therefore it is, the devil animated the Sabeans and Chaldeans to take away his oxen and asses, and to slay his servants with the edge of the sword; (ver. 14, 15, 18.) that kindled the fire in the lower heavens, that burnt up his sheep and servants; (ver. 16.) that raised the storm from the wilderness, that smote the four corners of the house, where his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking, and buried them in its ruins, ver. 18. And we are expressly told that it was the devil, upon his enlarged licence, that smote him with those venomous boils, chap. ii. 7. It was the devil that bound that daughter of Abraham eighteen years, Luke xiii. 16. It was the devil that brought upon the Christian church, the famed ten persecutions, under the pagan Roman empire, understood to be meant by the great red dragon, Rev. xii. 3. Whence, also, he wears that very name, ver. 9. The great red dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil, and Satan.—These are some of those efforts, amidst that darkness, wherein the devil hath and uses so great power. But yet further,

6. It is manifestly a far greater deliverance to be freed from his spiritual power, and the horrid effects thereof, than from that which he may use in reference to our outward concernments.

Therefore now, upon these mentioned considerations, on this former part of the text, that we may apply it suitably to our present purpose, these two things are to be asserted and evinced—1. That to be delivered from the devil's power, in external respects, is a real and great deliverance: But that—2. To be delivered from his power, in spiritual respects, is a much greater deliverance.

1. That to be delivered from the devil's power, in external respects, either personal or national, is a real and very great deliverance. We are to look upon that deliverance, which this day we more particularly commemorate, now almost a hundred years ago, as a defeated plot of the devil. It carries that manifest aspect with it to every eye, a contrivance formed, and designed to be executed, by the subtlety and power of the prince of the darkness of this world. I need not repeat the narrative of it, being sufficiently known to you, or may be read in our histories; but nothing can be plainer, than that here was a design and plot of hell and devils, contrived in the dark, and so to have been executed, till the execution itself should have brought it to light. For what darkness, but that of hell, could have so much fire in it? so much of destructive rage and fury? And though there was hazard in the undertaking to the instrumental actors, what did the devil care what became of them? If his main design succeeded, he had been a great gainer, and glutted his ravenous appetite; if it succeeded not, but turned upon the heads of the undertakers, he had been no loser, but only less a gainer, having some prey however to feed, but not satiate a devouring appetite, which must be eternally insatiable. And what can be more devil-like?

And what was the deliverance, by which God did again signalize this very day fifteen years ago, but a repetition of the same mercy? The same in substance, though different in circumstance. It was from the same enemy, the same invisible and the same visible enemy, that we were preserved then, and more lately since. And what is our continued peace and quiet hitherto, but the same mercy continued, under the care and conduct of our present sovereign? It is preservation from the same enemy, and from the powers of the same darkness, that we continue hitherto to enjoy. And this mercy is not only real, but great, both in itself great, and great in respect of what it encloses, and subserves. In itself, for it is preservation from a great enemy, the greatest in all the world: a daring one, that feared not to contend perpetually with the Almighty, and without hope of self-advantage; who loves mischief therefore for mischief's sake, and working with mighty power, and power that works in such darkness, as to us mortals

is impenetrable. And great in respect of what it encloses, and is subservicut uoto; for it encloses the precious Gospel of our Lord, yet continued uoto us, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the gracious communications we partake in, by, and through them; and is subservient to their true and proper design. And therefore mercy, of that kind, ought to be looked upon as real, and very great, which way soever you consider it. We should therefore take heed of being guilty of so vile ingratitude, as not to commemorate, with a suitable impression upon our spirits, this sort of mercies, which were the foundation of the mercies we have in so long a course enjoyed; for former mercies are fundamental to later ones. The expression is very emphatical, and worthy our most serious regard, which we have, Psal. lxxxix. 2. For I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever. And how is mercy said to be built up, but as former mercies are fundamental to later ones? Thus are the present mercies, that we enjoy this day, founded upon the mercies of former days, such as we ought joyfully and thankfully to recount, with delight and praise; remembering the years of the right hand of the Most High. But yet,

2. I must also note to you, that however we are to esteem mercies, of that kind, *viz.* deliverances from the external power of the prince of darkness, real, and very great mercies; we are yet to account deliverance from the spiritual power, exerted in that darkness, much greater. I hope all your minds and hearts will close with me in this, as soon as you hear it, it carrying its own light and evidence in itself. For if you do but compare the cases of them who have been all along the authors of those great calamities and miseries, to the inhabitants of this lower world, and especially to the church of Christ in it, with theirs that have been the sufferers, upon the most peculiar account; you cannot but say, the portion and lot of the sufferers is most unspeakably rather to be chosen. We know who have been the authors of those great calamities in the world, and in the church of God in it, for many ages bypast; the same who were to have been the authors of our intended destruction. And in taking a view of their case, let us consider both their character, and their doom; both which you may find set down together, in one place, viz. 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12.

1. Their character, which is really enough to fright any man that is but master of his own reason, to see how and in what way they have abandoned and lost theirs, to behold men so stigmatized, as indeed they have marked out themselves: they whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power; here is the devil's power at work in them, the horrid cause of their stupendous dementation. The effects do follow: and by them in signs, and lying wonders, among all which wonders the greatest wonder is themselves; that the thing called man in them should be so metamorphosed, and transformed into so brutal and diabolical a monster! so destitute of understanding, so full of malignity, (as we shall further see, by and by,) and all deceivableness of unrighteousness. So far their character is continued, and it partly further follows, interwoven with some part of their present doom; as also their final doom is both interserted, and distinctly expressed. Therefore take into their character, their being under strong delusion, the energy of deceit, as the Greek signifies, to believe a lie; spoken indefinitely, to note that any the most absurd figment they can be imposed upon to believe, that God sends them, as belonging to their doom, we shall consider afterwards. And we might enlarge their character, by taking in from ver. 3. that they are apostates, such as were fallen away from a state of excellency; and spoken of as one person, from their oneness in spirit and design, as a man of sin, a son of perdition (capable of the active, as well as passive sense.) And ver. 4. who opposes, exalteth himself above all that is called God, sits in his temple, is worshipped as God. And ver. 8. the wicked or lawless one. This is their character that are, and have been, through many centuries of years, the authors of the miseries and calamities the church of God hath suffered, and partly doth suffer, and is endangered by at this day. In this their character, I shall take notice of two things.

1. Of the great infatuation that is upon their minds. 2. Of the monstrous degeneracy, not from Christianity only, but even from humanity too, that is to be found in the temper of their spirits.

1. The great infatuation that is upon their minds. It appears that they are under strong delusions, potent, efficacious ones, they are most effectually deluded. And of this I could give many instances, but shall content myself only with the mention of two.

1. That great fundamental wild conceit, which they have laid at the bottom of their whole enchanted fabric, by which one would wonder, how they could hope to impose on any part of the rational world, or could be imposed upon themselves, that all the power they claim, and use, to the disturbance of mankind, and oppression of the Christian church, they pretend to have by deputation from our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and by succession from the holy apostle Peter. By deputation from Christ, as if they were his deputies, in doing such monstrous work as this! as if Christ had deputed them to destroy Christianity, to render it a ridiculous thing, by their inserted fooleries; and odious, by their barbarous cruelties. That he, who was the light of the world, should appoint them to overspread it with darkness! That he, who so freely shed his blood to redeem it, had commissioned them so copiously to shed human and Christian blood. To make even his church, the temple of the living God, a shambles and slaughter-house, and affright the rest of mankind from coming near it; who yet could be as little safe in declining it, if they were within the reach of their arm! What fearful havock did they make, unprovoked, in America, as soon as they could get any footing there; destroying multitudes of (towards them) harmless, innocent creatures, and who (as strangers) received them with all possible kindness, even to the number of no less than forty millions; as hath been acknowledged by some of their own historians. [b] Their kings and princes were put to death, with most exquisite torture, upon the unjustifiable pretence of their being infidels; but with design to make them confess their gold and treasure, which they did but suspect they concealed. By these inhuman cruelties they laid waste whole fruitful countries, and turned well-peopled lands into mere deserts. And what other tendency could this have, than to engage the nations of the earth against Christians, and Christianity itself, as a thing by no means to be endured in the world; and were such multitudes destroyed by Christ's direction, and to propagate the Christian faith! And what commotions, wars, and bloodshed did they introduce into that large country of Habassia, disturbing that quiet and peaceful empire, though Christian, only because it would not be Roman [c]! And have we not reason to add the many horrid tragedies acted by them, more within our near notice, in the several parts of Europe, and in this kingdom particularly; and that all this should be pretended to be done by a power derived from Christ! in so open and contemptuous opposition to the laws and spirit of Christ! the design of his coming into this world! and the very genius and natural tendency of Christianity itself! The things themselves are full of black horror. But that they should be said to be done in that name, speaks the most monstrous impudence and infatuation! As if Christ had changed names with the devil, and laying aside that of a Saviour, had chosen to be called Abaddon, or Apollyon, the common destroyer of mankind. And having changed his mind, and his very nature, did now set himself to counteract and defeat the design for which he came into the world!

And that they have this power, by succession from St. Peter, is as idle and absurd a pretence. If he were their predecessor, they were sure very unsuitable successors. Did he ever go before them in such work? What precepts, what footsteps of his have they followed? Did he ever claim a power to annul, at his own pleasure, the laws and ordinances of his Master and Lord? to amass treasures, to accumulate dignities, acquire ample revenues, to dispose of crowns and sceptres, and, as he should think fit, to dethrone or unthrone the princes and potentates of this earth?

If he had such power, what is that to them? How came they by it from him? was it because he was bishop of Rome, that therefore the assumed, usurped name, without

b D. Barth. de l. Casas B. of Chiap.

c Of which see Ludolphus, and at large, D. Geddes Ethiop. histor.

the apostolical office, and the (inseparable) spirits, and spiritual power, acts, and design, could create them such? As well might the habit make a monk, or a beard a philosopher; by their fruits and works they are to be known. Our Lord reckoned himself sufficiently to have refuted their vain pretence, who gloried in being Abraham's successors, by telling them, So did not Abraham, John viii. 40. But all their learning, wit, and sophistry will never answer what hath been written,[d] to make it highly probable that St. Peter was never at Rome, much less sat twenty-five years there. It must therefore be a strong delusion must make them build so mighty a fabric, upon so infirm and weak a foundation.

2. The other thing I shall instance in, is their worshipping a piece of bread as a deity. What a strange infatuation is that, that one cannot distinguish a piece of bread from a god, or an object of worship! And to believe this against the most irrefragable reason, and common sense, and without any pretence from Scripture, more plausible than it would be to say, the sun in the firmament is a god, or that a buckler, which one turns with his hand this way or that, and wherewith men defend themselves in battle, is a deity, or an object of worship; because God is said in Scripture to be a sun and a shield: with a thousand like instances that might be given.

2. But we are to coosider also, as we proposed, and as belonging to the character of these men, the monstrous degeneracy, not from Christianity only, but also from common humanity itself, that appears in the temper of their spirits. This depends upon the former, which could not be spoken of, without some excursion into this; but they are distinct things, and therefore the latter requires to be distinctly but briefly touched upon. And this depravedness of their spirits is that which is unspeakably more horrid, (if any thing can be thought to be more so,) that men, and who profess themselves Christians, could impose it upon themselves to be so barbarously bloody and cruel, to every one that is not so stupidly foolish in these things as themselves, that they would destroy all the rest of mankind, if it were in their power, for not agreeing with them in the same sentiments; though to agree with them, I must disagree with myself, and with all other men that have yet their reason and their senses left them, and the faith of Christians, in other points, most essential to religion. If I will not believe that they are deputed by Christ, as the successors of St. Peter, to do what they please, in secular governments, and religion; if I will not believe a piece of bread ought to be worshipped as God; I am to be tortured to death, for this my disbelief! which is so horrid a transformation of a human creature, as no power of thought can frame an idea of any thing more monstrous, throughout the world! *viz.* a Christian, because he is so, must be made the common butcher of mankind! to destroy as many human lives as he can reach! For if this treatment be for this reason deserved, it ought to take place to our utmost every where. Whence also is to be collected; that men might, had they not been Christians, have been sociable, kind, friendly, and have lived quietly and pleasantly with one another! So that Christian religion is the transforming principle, and obliges men to be the destroyers of their brethren, as much as in them lies; and with exquisite torment, that of burning alive, such as common humanity would abhor to use towards a beast. And besides, the tortures of their inquisition must be thought a thousand times worse than burning for an hour or two! And let now this matter be impartially considered, doth it not already appear, that the authors of such miseries and calamities to the rest of men, and the rest of Christians, especially such as are sincere, are in much worse case than the poor sufferers? We cannot but judge so, on the following accounts.

1. Here is a transformation of minds. The minds of men, of reasonable creatures, are transformed into the most horrid things; *i. e.* they are turned, excepting the mere human shape, (and every one that understands what belongs to the human essence, easily apprehends how little mere external shape doth, to the making of a man,) they are turned into ravenous wild beasts, into lions, tigers, bears, wolves, destroying and tearing in pieces whatever comes in their way. And do but consider, were it not a much more eligible thing to have the nature of man, the understanding of man, common humanity remaining, though the external shape were altered; than to have the shape of a man remaining, but to be in the temper of one's mind a tiger, a bear, ravaging and destroying wheresoever one goes? Such are set up as potents, prodigies, and as monitory signs, both to astonish mankind, that the impression may be deeper and more permanent; and thereupon to warn them, seasonably to repress the beginnings of any such disposition, fearing whither it may grow. And therefore to consider, with dread, how fearful a thing it is that there should be such a sort of creatures, in human shape, as can take delight in tormenting them that never did or wished them harm; as with pleasure can torture others, for no other cause but merely because they take the same liberty of thought, which as a common right themselves assume; and cannot be of their opinion, against common sense, and the common reason of mankind, and without pretence any way. If a man were to express his sense as to this matter, in a solemn prayer to the Almighty, would he not say: Lord, let me rather be the most monstrous deformed creature, in external shape, that ever was produced in this world; only let me have in me a right, nor give me up to a reprobate, mind! And what can we conceive more essential to man, than these two things, reason, and love; and both these are abandoned and lost, in those men whose character hath been given. Their reason and love do, at least, suffer the highest violation both together. They believe themselves, and would have all others believe, against the common reason and sense of men; and are become haters of mankind, otherwise than as they shall fall in with their absurd sentiments, and will be subservient to their cursed designs.

2. We shall easily be induced to look upon the author's case, as much the less eligible than the sufferer's, upon this further account; that this horrid degeneracy, and depravedness of spirit, is most entirely voluntary, and proceeds from their plenary consent with the devil, as an inactuating spirit in them. Such is the import of those tremendous words (that would make one shrug to thing of them)—that spirit that inworketh (or hath energy) in the children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 2. Their perfect voluntariness appears, in their most complacential self-approbation, under so direful a transforming change, from man, into part brute, part devil. Others feel in themselves some disaffections, and distempers of spirit, which they deplore, lament, and contend against. These men glory in their own shame, and what ought to make them a hissing,[e] and reproach to the nations of the earth, they applaud them for. They declare their sin, as Sodom, justify the prodigious deformities of their own spirits, write volumes to defend them, and put on a countenance, unaccustomed to blushing; as if in good earnest they expected other men should think their cause to be good! And to what a stupendous height doth this raise the horror of their case!

But hence also it is that the devil hath that access to the inward parts, into the more secret receptacles, and chambers of their souls; unto which he could have none, if their consenting will did not open him the door. Nor that there is any formal bargain or contract between him and them, for his power, you find, works in darkness; but he and they agree upon the same things, so doth the devil lead them captive at his will, 2 Tim. ii. 26. The sufferers, in the mean time, are only such; and as they endure evils, in themselves incomparably less, they do but endure them; not being active to procure them, otherwise than by being and doing what they ought. And so they have, in their suffering, that great matter of relief and rejoicing, the testimony of their conscience, (2 Cor. i. 12.) besides the expectation of a glorious reward; while, for the authors of their sufferings, is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, Jude 13. Which leads to the consideration of,

2dly, Their doom, (for hitherto we had chiefly considered but their character,) and this is partly present, partly final.

d In the Modest Inquiry, upon that subject; a work that, though anonymous, the author needed not be ashamed of: besides what hath been said by divers others.

e —— Populus mihi sibilat.

1. *Present.* That for the cause, God sends them strong delusions, (2 Thess. ii. 11.) not by active infusion of malignity, whereof, on God's part, there was no possibility, nor on their part, any need. They have enough of their own besides the addition of what that text notes, that their coming is after the working of Satan with all power. These are a sort of men abandoned of God, delivered over to Satan, under, whose conduct they have put themselves. A fearful case! They are, not by divine commission, but permission only, left in his hands; and now, the lusts of their father they will do, John viii. 44.

2. *Final.* That they all might be damned—A severe sentence! but justified by what went before, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; but struck off from the Christian religion, what should make it amiable and self-recommending, (and by what follows,) that they took pleasure in unrighteousness; hence they are left of God, in order to their future damnation. Not that God made any men on purpose to damn them; but when they had contracted such guilt, by sinning against the clearest light, against the law of their own nature, and against the law of Christ; they are damned, as having marked themselves out for hell, and the society of devils, whose associates and subjects they were before. And if it be said, of them who do evil that good may come, "their damnation is just," much more of them that love mischief for mischief's sake. And who would not now choose the tortures of a flaming fire, for an hour or two, rather than be turned into hell, to endure infernal flames for ever!

And we may add, (to show how much greater this spiritual deliverance is, than deliverance from the external powers of darkness,) that the fearful tragedies that these men act, being by the sn manifest and immediate power of the devil, he is therefore most highly gratified, by having his will so far of them. Nothing could be more grateful to him, than to have made them his tools, his instruments, to fill the world and the Christian church with such miseries and calamities, as they are the voluntary authors of; and hereupon they will be the subjects of his triumph and scorn at last. And here, if you would but pause a little and consider, "What would I not rather choose, than to be the subject of the scorn and insultation of devils!" This is the case of this very generation of men. How will the devils insult over them! "See what fools I have made of so great a part of mankind, how ready have they been too serve me, and my most horrid designs! There is nothing that I would have them believe, be it never so absurd, but I could make them believe it; there is nothing so horrid to act, but if I bid them, they are ready to act it!" And how much the greater will the matter of their insultation be, that such could be found, even in the Christian world, that should be made to serve his vile and horrid purpose, and so render Christianity hateful to mankind! How hath the extent and growth of it, by this means, been hindered! And it can never spread, till it have another kind of representation than is given by this sort of men. And consider that, in opposition to what was last mentioned, from the spiritual power of the devil, which he acts in this darkness, all the sincere are truly, and shall be fully delivered; whereas from his external power they are many times not delivered. It is not ascertained to them, that they shall not be impoverished, that they shall not be cast into prison, that they shall not be put to death; but it is certain that Satan is dethroned in their souls, and that God will bruise him under their feet shortly, and they shall have opportunity and ground for eternal triumph, over all his power and malice. Therefore, upon all these accounts, this must be far the more eligible deliverance; though deliverance, in the former kind, is by no means to be made light of. They that are sincere, are sure at last of a most glorious victory over the devil. They shall overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of his testimony; not having loved their lives unto the death. And that is certainly the most desirable course and state, that hath the most desirable and valuable end.

And according hereto should the temper of our spirits be, in reference to such deliverance from the power of darkness, which we have occasion to make mention of, this day. We ought to remember, with great gratitude, our preservation from those efforts of this power, wherein it is exercised with reference to the external secular concernments of particular persons, and of nations, more especially our own. We have reason to bless God for that deliverance, that hath been wrought out for us in that kind; and that it hath been so often repeated, and so long continued. We ought to take much to heart the mercies of God herein. And although we are here met under somewhat a distinct character, to bear a part in the solemn thanksgivings of this day; we are not the less obliged to be very serious herein; and however, have for our part great reason not to expect any thing hard or grievous from such, differing from us, as understand religion; between whom and us, there is an agreement in all the substantials thereof. We have the same articles of doctrine, the same institutions of worship, and the same rules of life, conversation, and practice towards our sovereign, and fellow-subjects. And when there is so great an agreement, that which is left to be the matter of disagreement, can be only very little circumstantial things; and which they, from whom we differ, professedly call indifferent, not tending therefore, in themselves, to make either better men, or better Christians. And whereas some of us do not think so, throughout, that disagreement is, we hope, the rather to be pardoned, both because it is little, so little that there are few men of considering minds that, upon strict inquiry and comparing of thoughts, will not be found to differ in much greater things; and very consistently with most entire mutual love, or at least no design of hurt to each other. And yet the difference is real, and not to be dissembled, nor thrown off at pleasure; it being in no man's power, that would keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man, to form his judgment this way, or that, as he will.

And whereas there are churches abroad, and at home, wherewith we agree, and from which we differ, in these smaller things; we are not willing quite to disjoin ourselves from either sort, in which the substance is visible of our common religion; for they are, in their nature and kind, one and the same. Nor can we apprehend how a church, or a society formed for the purposes of religion, can be constituted, and distinguished for sole communion with that, and no other, by such things as are confessed, on all hands, to be no parts of religion; nor to have any necessary connexion with it. The more truly catholic the communion of Christians is, it is the more truly Christian. There is a mental communion, which is more intimate than merely local; which yet we cannot have, with them with whom we judge it unlawful to have actual, local communion, if there be occasion. But one may have both, wheresoever the essentials of Christianity do appear; not subverted by the addition of other things, that are inconsistent with any of those essentials: as the case is with them, whose black character hath been given, in this discourse.

But though we are not to expect hard things from friends, we are to remember the same common enemy, to them and us, is still in being, and hath great power in the world; and that prince of darkness, that animates them, is still powerful, and as full of mischief as ever. And we know not what advantages our too common iniquities may, from the justice of a righteous God, give the common enemy against us; whereupon we have no reason to be secure. If things therefore should be brought to that state, that Smithfield fires should be kindled again, so as that we shall not be delivered from that sort of the powers of darkness; let us labour to get into that good state, as to be able to bless God, even in the midst of flames, that we are delivered from the worst sort of the powers of darkness; that the prince of this world is dethroned in our souls, that he is judged there. And let us labour to have that temper of mind, towards such as may be the authors of those sufferings to us, that our love towards them may not be extinguished. Labour that every one of us may say from our hearts, Let them discover what hatred they will towards me, God forbid that I should not exercise true love towards them. If they curse me, I will bless them; if they despitefully use me, and persecute me, I will pray for them.

But we have also the second part of the text to be briefly reflected upon. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Our present limits allow us not to enlarge upon

this part. And it cannot but be thought reasonable, that this occasion being monthly, and often considered, the other but annual, and rarely returning, we should choose to insist more largely upon it. But how great a privilege is this translation, and how amazing! that it should be represented to us by so endearing an expression! "Because my Son is dear to me, I will take you into his kingdom. He is not so dear to me, but I can be very well contented to make you partakers of all the blessings that his kingdom carries in it."

And you know that there is no kingdom but what hath its particular laws, and statutes, and ordinances, and privileges belonging to it. There is one great ordinance, belonging to this kingdom of our Lord's, that we are solemnly to attend, the next Lord's day. If we look upon ourselves as not only delivered from the power of darkness, but translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, this is indeed a great privilege; but there is no such privilege which hath not its duty belonging to it. We ought to consider how we shall carry the matter upon this translation, being translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; and being to partake in the privileges that belong to his kingdom, how shall we deport ourselves suitably hereto, with what temper of spirit?

1. With an admiring temper of spirit, considering the state out of which we are delivered. He hath delivered us from the power of darkness, he hath turned us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. This is that I am sent for, saith the apostle Paul, as a Gospel minister, Acts xxvi. 18. To open your eyes, and turn you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Then into what a transport should it put us, to think that we should have been under the power of the devil unto this very day, the power of the prince of the air, that works in the children of disobedience, that works energetically, as the word signifies, his work in them hath an energy in it, Ephes. ii. 2. Oh frightful thought! to have such a horrid fiend lying continually in my bosom, preying upon the very vitals of my soul, leading me captive at his will! What the devil would have me be and do, that I was and did most readily!

2. We should recount, with great thanksgiving, our admission into this kingdom. Think we, first, whence we are delivered; and then into what state we are admitted, into the kingdom of his dear Son. Into what an adoring thankful frame should that put us, that our blessed God should translate us into his own Son's kingdom! You shall hereupon be so provided and cared for, as none else in the world are besides. He will watch over your spirits, your souls shall be bound up in the bundle of life; you shall have all the supports and comforts too, that, in infinite wisdom and love, he shall judge necessary for you, in this world; and at length be brought into the presence of the Divine glory, with exceeding great joy!

3. Consider that the particular ordinances of this kingdom of his, are aptly designed for your advantage. This that we are now to prepare for, is an ordinance belonging to that kingdom; I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, saith our Lord, Luke xxii. 29, 30. that you may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom. We are to eat and drink with him, in his kingdom; and that ordinance, wherein we are to eat and drink with him, is the emblem of what is there finally designed and meant, when we are to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.

4. We should consider what faith is required, on our part, being come into such a kingdom, and having the privileges thereof secured unto us, by such a sealing ordinance. There ought to be no dubious thought of him, who so kindly invites us; especially when we are, in so friendly a way, eating and drinking together.

5. It is to be considered what fidelity is required of us. We are to swear fealty to the king of this kingdom. Never let it be said, we, that eat and drink at his table, have lift up our heel against him.

6. With what joy should we consider our state, in our approach to such an ordinance; we are received as friends to the King's table. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him, let the children of Zion rejoice in their King, Psalm cxlix. 2. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, thy King cometh, meek and lowly, Zech. ix. 9. How infinitely condescending, when he treats such as we for his welcome guests!

And take both the parts of the text together, and they will give us this two-fold hint of use.

1. Consider how solicitous we ought to be, till we know that we are got out of that dark and horrid kingdom, and brought into this kingdom of light and grace. When we know that these two kingdoms divide the world, and how fearful a thing it is to belong to the former, and how desirable a thing to belong to the latter kingdom; who would not be solicitous, till he knows that he is got out of that horrid kingdom, into this blissful one, and into so safe and happy a state? And how stupid negligence is it not to know or be concerned to what kingdom I belong! Dost thou not know who is thy king? whether the dear Son of God, or that accursed king, I hope you will labour not long to be ignorant, in a matter of so great concern, but drive it to a speedy issue.

2. With reference to both these, if you have a comfortable ground to hope that you are delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; be serious in your thanksgivings, and endeavour to arrive at greater degrees of gratitude, that your hearts may be more warm and raised in your thanksgivings. And such thanksgivings ought to be gratefully expressed, in acts of mercy to the poor and needy. Blessed are the merciful, for they have received mercy, and shall receive it.

FUNERAL SERMONS.

A FUNERAL SERMON,

FOR THAT FAITHFUL AND LABORIOUS SERVANT OF CHRIST,

MR. RICHARD FAIRCLOUGH,

WHO DECEASED JULY 4, 1682, IN THE SIXTY-FIRST YEAR OF HIS AGE.

TO THE

REVEREND MR. SAMUEL FAIRCLOUGH, MR. JOHN FAIRCLOUGH, MR. GEORGE JONES, MR. RICHARD SHUTE, WITH THEIR PIOUS CONSORTS,

THE BRETHREN AND SISTERS OF THE DECEASED MR. RICHARD FAIRCLOUGH.

My worthy Friends,

It is, I apprehend, a grievous thing to you, to be destitute of the wonted solace you have taken in those your most delectable relatives, the father and the elder brother of a family, whereof you were the genuine or the ingrafted branches. Whether nature or choice gave you your interest, you had a common concern and comfort in it; and indeed, from a love too little common to the rest of the world. The love that hath so observedly flourished among you, and been your collective, unitive bond, as it hath shown itself to be of a higher than the common kind, demonstrated its own divine original, and that it had its root in heaven; so have its effects been a demonstration what such a love can do, for the cherishing of union, not only in a private family, but in the church and family of the living God also. And how little necessary it is unto a union, even there, that there be a sameness of sentiments and practices in every little punctilio; for a disagreement wherein, too many have thought themselves licensed to hate, and even destroy one another. As God himself was the fountain, so he was the first object of that love with you. And as your love to him caused your entire devotedness to his interest, so your mutual love united your hearts (according to your several capacities) in serving it; without grudging, or hard thoughts, that each one served it not exactly in the same way. By that love you have been undivided in your joys and sorrows, in reference to one another. While your very eminent father survived, how gladly did you pay a joint reverence and duty to him! what a glory was his hoary head unto you! This your worthy brother was the next resort and centre of your united respect and delight. I doubt not you feel your loss as to both, which (though God had made a former breach upon you) the longer continuance, as well as the pleasantness of the enjoyment, cannot but have made the more sensible unto you. We are somewhat apt to plead a prescription for our more continued comforts, but you know how little that avails against a statute, as that (for instance) by which it is appointed that all must die; nor is it to be regretted that the absolute Lord of all should pluck in pieces our earthly families, for the building and completing his own, in heaven.

What I have said of this your excellent brother, in the close of the following discourse, is but a small part of what you know. It serves for the solace of the survivors, not the advantage of the dead;* and the solace is real, and great, when imitation makes all that is commendable our own, and most intimate to ourselves. It is, otherwise, but a faint comfort to have been related to an excellent person; when a limb is cut off, the soul retires to the remaining parts. May a double portion of the spirit and life, which were so copious and vigorous in the deceased, abound unto you! And I should be very faulty, if I put not in for some share with you, who must profess myself a great sharer in your affliction and loss; and

Your very affectionate brother,
and servant in our Lord,

J. H.

* August. de cur. pro mort. gerend.

MATTHEW XXV. 21.

HIS LORD SAID UNTO HIM, WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT; THOU HAST BEEN FAITHFUL OVER A FEW THINGS, I WILL MAKE THEE RULER OVER MANY THINGS: ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD.

It may seem somewhat incongruous, and an indecency, that this memorial of our worthy friend, should be now solemnized so long after his very remains are gone from off the face of the earth. But two things concurred to make the delay necessary and unavoidable: *viz.* that his own desire, expressed in his will, limited the performance of this office to the person upon whom it now falls. And that my own great infirmities, before the time of his sickness and death, (which made it more likely he should have done this part for me, than I for him,) had obliged me to begin a course, for the repairing of languishing health, which required some weeks' attendance abroad, and which

could not be sooner over. But if our business were only to mourn and lament our own, and the more common loss, it were not yet too late. The mention of his name, the worthy Mr. Richard Fairclough, is enough to open fresh springs, calling to remembrance such a brother, such a friend, such a preacher of the word of life, as he was.

And it should do it most of all upon the most common account; whom would it not induce to mourn over this forlorn world, to see that every thing that is more excellent, more pure, more desirable, more capable of being useful in it, God is gathering up out of it? O how much of spirit and life is gone from it, when one such man dies! how are we to mourn over the world, as dying gradually the worst sort of death, when the holy, divine life is thus exhaled out of it, and is expiring by degrees! But come, we have somewhat else to do than mourn: all this tends to make a glorious heaven, one bright star the more is now added to it; there is nothing of this holy life lost; whatsoever of excellency, purity, goodness, life, loveliness, and love of that divine kind vanishes from among us, is but transferred to its own native place, returns to its proper element, as the forsaken dust hath to its own. Heaven hath its part out of every such person, the seat of all life, purity, and goodness; as the earth draws into its bosom its own terrene part, not without a sacredness, and a rich perfume adhering to that also. And as it is not our only or more principal business to mourn; so nor is it to relieve and fortify ourselves against mourning. We have somewhat to do, divers from them both, and that is more considerable than either of them. We are chiefly so to consider his death, as may best serve the purposes of our own yet-continuing life, which was the scope of that desire of his, signified by his will, that an instructive sermon might be (upon that occasion) preached to the people. We are to set ourselves to learn from it what doth most concern our own daily practice and hope; so to acquit ourselves as not to neglect the duty of good and faithful servants to our common Lord, nor to come short of their reward.

And to this purpose we are more to consider his life, than his death; the life which he hath lived on earth, and the life which (we have reason not to doubt) he doth live in heaven. Nor could my thoughts reflect upon any portion of Scripture more fit for our purpose, or that was more suitable to him and us, *i. e.* that could more aptly serve to describe him, and instruct ourselves; nor have I known any person to have left the world, within my time, to whom this text of Scripture might more fitly be applied. I shall only observe, and insist upon these two heads of discourse from it,—the character of such a servant, and—the treatment which he finds at last, from his heavenly Master.

I. His character. He is said to have done well, or 'tis said to him, εὖ, *well*, (no more is there in the Greek text,) and then he is further bespoken as a good and faithful servant, more generally, and particularly, his fidelity is commended in reference to the special trust and charge, which is implied to have been committed to him; Thou hast been faithful in a few things, I have not over-charged thee, and thou hast acceptably discharged thyself. Some think this (and the whole parable) to belong only to the ministers of the Gospel, the servants of Christ in that special sense. I do not see a reason for that restriction, the words are of themselves capable of being extended further, to the faithful servants of Christ, in whatsoever capacity; though being spoken to the disciples, as from the continuation of the discourse (with this evangelist) from the beginning of the foregoing chapter may be collected, it seems not unfit to allow them a more particular reference to their special office and trust. And here we must note that these words of commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant," do speak both the *truth* of the thing, and the *judgment and estimate* which his Lord makes thereof accordingly. We are now to consider them under the former notion, as they express the *truth* of the thing, the matter of fact, whereof we cannot have a more certain account than (as here we have it) from his mouth, who employed him, was his constant Supervisor, must be his final Judge, and will be his bountiful Rewarder at length. We shall here, in opening his character, note—First, some things leading and introductive, or that belong to his entrance into this service: and—Secondly, some things that belong to his performance, afterward.

First, For the introductive, supposed part of his character. He is,

1. One that hath disclaimed all former and other masters, all in co-ordination, for of such, no man can serve two; other lords had dominion over him, but by their usurpation, and his unjust consent, who was not his own, and had no right to dispose of himself. The faithful servant repents, and retracts those former engagements as bonds of iniquity, by which he will be no longer held, renounces any former inconsistent master, or service. A truly subordinate master, he must own, for the same reason upon which he acknowledges the supreme, and do all that such derived authority challenges, by his direction who gave it; otherwise, he hath learned to call no man master on earth.

2. He is one that hath, by covenant, surrendered and resigned himself to this great Lord, and his service. Some relations have their foundation in nature, this of servants to a master (we except slaves) in their consent, or in mutual contract. And though this general relation between God and man, have the most deeply natural foundation imaginable, whereupon all are his servants; yet the special relation must have the other ground, *viz.* that of consent, or contract superadded; not to give God a right to our service, but more expressly and effectually to oblige ourselves to it, and that we may have a right to his rewards. 'Tis but acknowledging and recognising his former right in us, which is part (and the initial part) of our duty to him. He requires and justly insists upon it, to be acknowledged as our only rightful Lord; which till we do, we are in rebellion against him, and in the condition of servants broken away from their masters, runaways, fugitives, and who keep ourselves out of the family; and though that cannot however destroy his right, yet it is inconsistent with our duty, for our service must be throughout voluntary; and with our reward, for nothing that is not voluntary is rewardable. Therefore the good and faithful servant in the text, is one that effects and chooses the state, first, and says with the Psalmist, (Psal. cxix. 38.)—Thy servant who is devoted to thy fear. And, (Psal. cxvi. 16.) O Lord truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, the son of thy handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds. He doth as is required, Rom. xvi. 13, 19. Yields himself to God, and all his parts and powers servants of righteousness unto holiness. He reckons it neither dutiful towards God, nor comfortable to himself, to do him only occasional service, but *ad libitum*, and as an unrelated person. He thinks it not honourable to the great Lord of heaven and earth, but to borrow (as it were) another's servant, nor can he satisfy himself not to be of the family; therefore he consents first to the relation, and enters himself his covenant-servant. Faithfulness supposes having covenanted, and hath the same reference to our part of the covenant, that God's faithfulness hath to his.

3. He is one that hath thereupon made it his earnest study to know his Lord's will. His first inquiry is, What wilt thou have me to do, Lord? he is solicitous to understand the duty of his station. Psal. cxix. 125. I am thy servant, give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies. To enter oneself the servant of another, without any concern to know the business of his place, shows an insincere mind, and argues he hath more a design to serve himself upon his master, than to serve him.

4. He is one that hath an inclination to the work he is to do, when he knows it, a προθυμία, an inclining bent of mind to it: that which the Scripture means, by having the law of God written in the heart, spoken of our Lord himself, in reference to that peculiar service he was to perform; Lo, I come to do thy will, O God, thy law is in my heart, Psal. xl. 8. Who though he were a Son, yet taking the form of a servant, applied himself to that severe part assigned him, with a most willing mind; and had, hereupon, the highest approbation imaginable, Isa. xlii. 1. Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. And it is spoken of all the inferior true servants of God, besides, Jer. xxxi. 33. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. 'Tis the same thing with being God's workmanship, (Eph. ii. 10.) created unto good works; and with that readiness to every

good word, ἑτοίμως εἶναι, Titus iii. 1. If a man's heart be not so framed to God's service, how awkwardly and untowardly does he go about any thing that is enjoined him, he is habitually disobedient, and to every good work reprobate, Titus i. 14.

Secondly, And for that part of the character, which being a good and faithful servant includes,

1. He is one that endeavours to extend his obedience to the whole compass of his duty, hath a universal respect to all God's commandments, is not partial in the law.

2. He peculiarly minds the work most of his own station. Thinks it not enough or possible to be a good Christian, and at the same time an ill magistrate, minister, parent, master of a family, or servant in it, if it be his lot to be in any of these capacities.

3. He is diligent in all the service that belongs to him, any way; not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, Rom. xii. 11.

4. He is, with most delight, exercised in the most spiritual part of his work. In the great, vital acts of faith, love, self-devoting; and those most immediately proceeding from them, meditation, prayer, and praise.

5. He balks not the most hazardous or more costly part. Thinks it mean to serve God at no expense, or with what costs him nothing. Measures not his duty by the advantage or safety of his own secular interest; so as to decline it when nothing is to be got by it, or if any thing he in danger to be lost.

6. He grudges not that others are less exposed to danger, in their work, than he; and have that liberty of serving God, which he hath not. Let me seriously recommend this property and disposition, of a faithful servant, to my brethren in the ministry. While some have opportunity of serving our great and common Lord, without fear of the interruption and suffering to which we are liable, and when we have reason to judge they do it with sincerity, (though we may think they gained their greater liberty by their mistake,) there can be no more genuine expression of our fidelity, and sincere devotedness to our Master's interest, than to behold, with complacency, all the good which we observe done by them. If the great apostle (Phil. i. 15—18.) rejoiced, and declared he would rejoice, that Christ was preached, though not sincerely, (and whether in pretence, or truth,) much more should we, when we ought to judge that he is sincerely preached. And if he envied not those that preached Christ, even of envy, how horrid would it be, should we behold with envy, what we are to suppose done out of love, and good-will! They are great admirers of themselves, and lovers of some interest of their own more than his, that cannot endure to see his work done by other hands than theirs; or that have nothing of that disposition in them which those words express, Let him increase, and me decrease.

7. He is much less apt to smite his fellow-servants, or hinder them in their work unless they will work by his rule and measure, unprescribed by their Lord himself. He takes no pleasure to see the hands tied up of useful labourers in the harvest, wishes not their number diminished; but, because the harvest is really plenteous, but the labourers are few, rather prays the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into his harvest, Matt. ix. 37, 38.

If any, of their own private inclination, would have the necessary work of their Lord hindered, and take pleasure in the exclusion of industrious labourers, for their conscientious disuse of things, by their own confession, not necessary; good Lord! what are they of? I understand it not, nor let my soul enter into their secret! I had rather a thousand-fold bear their anger, than be of their spirit! Would any faithful servant rather wish his master's work should be in any part undone, than done by those he dislikes; upon no more important reason than that their clothes, perhaps, are not of the same colour with his?

But thanks be to God that, among those that differ from each other in the lesser things, there are so many that rejoice, being under restraints themselves, for the liberty of others; and that mourn, while they enjoy themselves ar ample liberty, for others' restraints, and among whom there is no other contention, but who shall think, and speak, and act with most kindness towards one another: and that not whole parties, but an ill mind and spirit, only in some persons, can be charged with what so much unbecomes faithful fellow-servants.

8. He is less at leisure to mind what others do, or do not, than what he is to do himself. Is above all things solicitous to prove his own work, that he may have rejoicing in himself, and not in another, Gal. vi. 4.

9. He esteems the utmost he can do but little, and counts, when he hath done his best, he is an unprofitable servant.

10. He approves himself, in all that he doth, to the eye of his great Master. Here we cannot serve too much with eye-service, or be too apprehensive of the constant inspection of our heavenly Lord. One may be too much a pleaser of men, but no man can too much study to please and approve himself to the eye of God.

11. He laments lost time, and labours to redeem it.

12. He greatly rejoices in the success of his work. If, for instance, it be his business to bring home souls to God, nothing is more grateful to him than to prosper in it. My beloved, my joy, and my crown—Phil. iv. 1. So he counts such as he can make proselytes to Christ. I have no greater joy, than to hear that my children walk in truth, John iii. 4. 'Tis said of Barnabas, (a great number believing, and turning to the Lord, Acts xi. 22, 23.) that when he saw the grace of God, he was glad; for ('tis added) he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost.

13. He loves his work, and his Master, is willing to have his ear bored, and serve him for ever. If any thought arises of changing, he presently represses it, by some seasonable check and counter-thought,[a] and confirms his resolution of cleaving to him unto the end.

14. He puts the highest value upon such present encouragements, from his Lord, as are most expressive of peculiar favour. The blessed God knows what is most suitable to the genius and spirit of his own new creature. They who are his sincere servants, are his sons too, born of him; and to the divine and heavenly nature in them those things are most agreeable that are most spiritual, and whereof others, of terrene minds, no more know the value, than that dunghill-creature did of the gem it found there; they must have great stores of corn, wine, and oil. His better born servants are of a more excellent spirit, and better pleased with the light of his countenance; he differently treats them accordingly. As that victorious Persian monarch, (Cyrus,) entertaining at a feast the principal men of his army, gave among them costly gifts; but for *Chrysantes*,[b] a more peculiar favourite, (ἐφίλησε προσαγαγόμενος,) he only drew him near to him, and gave him a kiss; which was intended by the one, received by the other, and envied by a third,[c] as an expression of more special kindness. And of the divine love, which that borrowed expression signifies, pious souls upon all occasions show their highest value, Cant. i. 2.

15. He trusts his master for his final reward, and is content to wait for it, as long as he thinks fit to defer. St. Paul professes himself a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, in hope of eternal life, which he that could not lie had promised; and hereupon resolvedly encounters all the difficulties of that hazardous service.

II. The acceptance, and reward which such a servant finds above. His acceptance is expressed in the same words (as was said) which have generally given us his character; not only showing what he was, and did, but that his Lord esteemed, and passes an approving judgment of him (as it was not to be doubted he would) accordingly. Concerning this judgment we are to note, both what it *supposes*, and what it *includes*.

It supposes both an account taken how this servant demeaned himself, and a rule according whereto the matters, to be accounted for, were to be examined and judged of.

I. That our Lord calls his servants to an account, so we

a As holy Mr. Herbert.

——Well, I will change the service, and go seek
Some other master out.

Ah, my dear God! though I be clean forgot,
Let me not love thee, if I love thee not.

b Xen. de Ped. Cyr.

c Artabazus, who had a goldeo cup given him at the same time.

find it expressly said, ver. 19. After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And here 'tis implied, when he says, Well done—it implies he takes cognizance, and inquires whether they have done well or ill, he is not indifferent or regardless how they quit and behave themselves; nor doth he pronounce rashly and at random, without searching into the matter. So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God, Rom. xiv. 12.

2. That there is some certain stated rule, by which their doings must be measured. Well-doing stands in conformity to some rule or other, and what is the next and most immediate rule of our duty, is also the rule of God's judgment; such a rule it must suppose, as according whereto a true judgment is possible of our having done well. That cannot be the law of works, according whereto no flesh can be justified in his sight; it must therefore be the law of grace: and so this servant is only said to have done well, according to the *ἐπιείκεια, evangelica*. The *indulgence of the Gospel* can say, *εὖ*, it is well, to that which the rigour of the law would condemn. *Bonum oritur ex causis integris, &c. Well-doing arises out of the concurrence of all requisites, evil from any, the least defect;* and so indeed whatever the rule be, all things must concur that are requisite to acceptance, by that rule. But here simply every thing of duty is requisite, so that the condition of acceptance and life was not to be distinguished (as a thing of less latitude) from mere duty, in its utmost extent, Jam. ii. 10. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them, Gal. iii. 10.

2. This judgment includes,

1. Well-pleasedness, *εὖ*, 'Tis well, *q. d.* I like well thy way and work, it pleases and is grateful to me, and so art thou.

2. An acknowledgment of his title to the designed reward, according to the Gospel constitution. 'Tis said to be well, not only according to the absolute and abstract consideration of what was done; but according to its relative consideration and prospect to what was to ensue; and therefore follows, in the subjoined words, the collection of the reward, of which reward we have here a two-fold expression; I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

1. I will make thee ruler over many things. In the evangelist Luke's account of this parable (if this account refer to the same thing, as spoken at the same time, which some of old, upon the manifold diversity, have doubted, how reasonably I shall not here dispute) 'tis said, Have thou authority over so many cities. Either expression represents the remuneration here vouchsafed, by a metaphor which nearly approaches that very usual one, by which the felicity of saints is represented under the notion of a kingdom, *q. d.* Thou shalt have an honourable prefecture, be a glorious viceroy, shalt, according to thy capacity, share with me in the dignity of my royal state. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him, 2 Tim. ii. 12. This I pass, and shall stay a little more upon the other expression, which is plainer, and without a metaphor.

2. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Wherein, as expositors observe, our Lord slides insensibly out of the parable, into the thing designed by it; using words indifferently applicable to either, but such as wherein he might be easily understood ultimately to mean the joys and glories of the other world or state. Expressions serving to signify, as an d ancient speaks, *τὴν πᾶσαν μακαριότητα, the sum of all felicity*, as what can more fitly signify that, than joy, the joy of his Lord, and whereinto he was to enter? Let us consider these severally, though but briefly.

1. Joy, *q. d.* The laborious part is over with thee, now follows thy rest and reward. Joy, the very notion whereof is rest, *quies appetitus in appetibili*, e (as it is aptly defined,) *they that sow in tears shall reap in joy.* When the dark shady vale is past over, with much toil, the path of life leads into that presence where is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore, Psal. xvi. 11. The fulness of joy speaks the purity of it, that is pure which is *plenum sui, &c. full of itself*, and without mixture of any thing else, which hath so entirely all degrees of itself, as not to admit the least degree of its contrary; such is this, 'tis joy, and no sorrow with it, perfect and most complete joy. This cannot, therefore, be meant of a slight and momentary act, but a perfect and permanent state of joy; which state is made up by the continual concurrence of a two-fold everlasting perfection, *viz.* objective, and subjective.—1. *Objective.* That there be a perfect and never-failing good to be enjoyed.—2. *Subjective.* That there be a perfect and immutable contemporation, or a thorough undecaying disposition of the subject to the enjoyment of it. From these two cannot but result a most permanent, everlasting state of joy. And of the concurrence of these two, the Holy Scripture sufficiently assures us, when it makes God himself to be the object of our eternal vision, in that other state; and tells us, that in order thereto, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is: signifying all that proportion and agreeableness of the blessed soul to the beatific object, which is requisite to a most pleasant, perfect, and perpetual enjoyment.

2. This joy is more expressly specified, by being called the joy of our Lord; which signifies it to be not only, —1. The joy whereof he is the object, a joy to be taken in him, (as before,) but,—2. Whereof he is the author. As he now puts gladness into the heart, Psal. iv. in this our imperfect state, he is not less the author of our most perfect joy. And—3. Also that, whereof he is the possessor, *q. d.* enter into that joy that is now to be common to me and thee, and wherein thou shalt partake with me. So one glosses the words: f Be thou partaker of the same joy with thy Lord, enjoy thou the same joy that thy Lord enjoys. Amazing thought! yet so Scripture speaks: Where I am, there also shall my servant be, John xii. 26. The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them. And ver. 24. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me. And that beholding cannot mean a merely contemplative, but a fruitive intuition. If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together, (*συνδοξασθῶμεν,*) Rom. viii. 17. Other joys are in comparison mean and sordid, this is the highest and most excellent, for it is the divine joy.

3. 'Tis that they are to enter into; which notes both the plenitude of their right, their Lord bids them enter; and the plenitude of this joy itself, they are to enter into it; and the dominion it must for ever have over them, they are to be absorpt of it, lose themselves in it, not so much to possess it, as be possessed by it. And the perpetuity is intimated of that possession, we are told of their entrance into it, nothing of their passing out of it any more; the last thing we hear of them is, that they are gone into joy.

Now let us see what brief useful reflections are to be made upon all this. And,

1. How blessed a thing is it to be a faithful servant of Christ! if any have not yet learned to value his service for itself, let them make their estimate by the end of it, and by what is even at present most certainly annexed to it. To be accepted with him, to appear gracious in his eyes! An *Euge* from such a mouth! where the word of a king is, there is power. How joyful a sound do these words carry from the mouth of God: Well done, good and faithful servant! The Persic version (as it is rendered) most significantly paraphrases this passage: *The owner of the money received him pleasantly, and uttered words to him grateful to his heart, saying, Well done, O thou good and faithful servant, &c.*g What can be more grateful and reviving to the heart of a good man, than that the glorious Lord of heaven and earth should say to him, Well done! to have him say to us, as to Moses, Thou hast found grace in my sight; (Exod. xxxiii. 12.) to have gained this testimony, as Enoch did, (Heb. xi. 5.) that we have pleased God; and that our case might truly admit of such an angelical salutation, (though upon a less peculiar account,) Hail, thou that art highly favoured! how great a thing is it! So great a thing, in the apostle's account, that living or dying, being in the body or out of the body, seemed little things to him, in comparison of it: he was willing rather to

d Chrysost. in loc.
e Aquin.
f Esto particeps, &c. Luc. Brugens. in loc.
g Dominus pecuniæ illum blande excepit, et cordi verba grata dedit: Euge, inquit, O bone et fidelis serve, &c.

be absent, but is more solicitous, whether present or absent, that he might be accepted of him, 2 Cor. v. 8, 9. Yea, and the more abject spirit of a very Cain resents so deeply his not being accepted, that his troubled mind imprints characters of sorrow in his face, shows itself in a fallen countenance, and dejected looks.

What ingenuous mind but knows how to value even the (unprofitable) kindness of a mean friend? Can the love of a God seem little with us? It adds greatly to the value of mere kindness, abstracted from beneficence, if it be borne me by a judicious, wise person; such a one honours whom he loves; we less esteem the love of a fool. There can be no greater contempt of God, than to make light of being accepted with him. But how transporting a thing should it be, besides the present sense of such acceptance, which (with more or less expressness) accompanies diligence and fidelity in his service, to have it judicially declared, with solemnity, and publicly said to us before angels and men, Well done, good and faithful servant! when so great consequences depend, and are to ensue upon it, as that it should be further said, Come, be thou ruler over many things, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, enter into the joy of your Lord. Who would think meanly of being the accepted servant of the most high God? They that finally despise so privileged a state, will see it with their eyes, (exemplified in others,) but shall never taste the sweetness of it.

2. How easily accountable is it why our Lord lets his servants suffer hard things in this world awhile! He may permit it to be so, who hath it in his power to make their sorrow be turned into joy. It is not strange if weeping endure with them for a night, unto whom such joy is coming in the morning; it is unworthy to repine in this case. 'Tis want of foresight that makes any wonder and censure. Consider well those weighty words, (1 Pet. iv. 12, 13.) Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

3. How wicked and foolish a thing is it to refuse this service! 'tis horridly unjust towards our most rightful Lord, and most imprudent for ourselves. Do men know what they do in this? whose right they invade and resist? and what cruelty they use towards their own souls?

4. How much to be lamented is the condition of the sinful world, who so generally decline this service, and make themselves slaves, in the mean time, to the worst of masters! how do men drudge to the devil! what slaves are they to themselves, and their own vile lusts! As indeed no man serves himself, but hath a fool and a mad tyrant (as one well says) for his master. We do not enough live up to the principles of our religion, while we consider not, with more compassion, the condition of infatuated mankind, in this respect.

5. What may be expected by unfaithful negligent servants that hide their talent in a napkin? The other's joys serve to measure their sorrows. What a killing word will it be, when instead of, Well done, good and faithful servant, it shall be said, Thou wicked and slothful servant! and instead of enter thou into the joy of thy Lord, they must hear, and feel, Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, ver. 30.

6. See what estimate we are to make of the nature of God, especially of his large, munificent goodness (which is his nature, God is love.) For consider the various emanations and discoveries of it, which may here be taken notice of.

1. That he should seek to have any for servants (which the text supposeth that he doth) in this world of ours! A world of apostate, degenerous, impure, impotent creatures, disaffected to him and his government, hating him, and (as in themselves they are) hateful to him. He who hath so little need of servants for any real use! who can do all things with a word! and if he thought it fit to have them for state, and as a thing becoming his majesty and greatness, is attended above by so excellent God-like creatures! so suitable, and obsequious! so powerful, and agile! those ministers of his that do his pleasure, hearkening to the voice of his word. A world of ministering spirits, that might be used for purposes less kind to us than they are! that he should seek servants among us! (for his having them implies it; whoever served him unsought unto?) invite men into his service, with so importunate solicitation! whom he might despise for their vileness, and destroy for their rebellion, which he can in a moment! And that he should seek such to become his servants, not with indifferency, but with so great earnestness! and use afterwards so various endeavours to retain them in his service! When they gradually decline, that he so graciously upholds them; when ready to break faith with him, and quit his service, that by so apt methods he confirms them; when they actually wander and turn vagabonds, that he should be so intent to reduce them! How admirable is all this! View the whole case at once. They neglect his first invitations, he repeats and inculcates them; they faint, he encourages and supports them; they revolt, he follows to bring them back; the cause of our admiration still rises higher and higher. How much is it, in this last instance, above all human measures! Most men would disdain so to sue to servants that forsake them, and are loth to confess their real need and want of them (were it never so great.) The Cynic [Sen.] scorned to look after his servant that left him, counting it a disgrace, when Manes thought he could live without Diogenes, that Diogenes should not be able to live without Manes. The all-sufficient Deity stoops to that, which indigency and wretchedness think even too mean for them!

2. Consider the frankness of his acceptance, even of the least. For how many omissions, how much laziness and sloth, how many incognitances and mistakes, how much real disservice must he forgive, when he accepts them, and says (yet) 'tis well done! How little is it they do at the best! and how unprofitable to him! and yet that little also he forms and even creates them to, and continually succours and assists them in it, works in them to will and to do, otherwise nothing at all would be done; and how full, how complacential his acceptance is!

3. Consider the largeness and bounty of his rewards, too large for our expression or conception. So that we even say most to it, when (even lost in wonder) we only admire and say nothing.

4. Consider the kind of the service which he thus bespeaks, accepts, and rewards. The best and most acceptable service, any are capable of doing him, is, when they accept him, take and choose him to be their portion, and blessedness. Trust, love, and delight in him as such, live upon his fulness, and (according to their several stations) persuade as many as they can to do so too. They that, in the most peculiar sense, are his ministers or servants, as they are more earnestly intent upon this, and win more souls, are the more amply and gloriously rewarded. They that turn many to righteousness, shine as stars. And for all the rest of his servants, wherein do they serve him most, but when by their converse, and example, they induce others to entertain good thoughts of God, and religion, and thereupon to make the same choice which they have made, and become seriously religious; which is most certainly connected with their being happy, and indeed, in greatest part their very happiness itself? And when they relieve, support, encourage, and help on those that are in the way, or whom they are endeavouring to bring into the way, of final blessedness! We as much need our servants, as they can us; they are our living, reasonable, but most necessary instruments. The whole universe of created beings subsists by mutual dependencies, the uncreated Being without any; creatures are made to need one another. Infinite self-fulness, not capable of receiving additions, is most highly gratified by our cheerful reception of its communications.

Let us learn now to conceive of God answerably to all this. We do him not right, that we consider not his admirable goodness, in so plain instances of it, with more frequent seriousness, and intention of mind and spirit, and show ourselves stupid, unapprehensive creatures. Have we a thinking faculty about us? a power to use thoughts? and can we use it upon any thing more evident, more considerable, or that more concerns us? or do we never use it le s pertinently?

7. How unreasonable is it, either to quit the service of our blessed Lord, or to serve him dejectedly! Quit it! Who hath more right in us? or where will we mend ourselves? O the treacherous folly of apostacy! and how severely is it wont to be animadverted on! 2 Chron. xii. 1. 'Tis said Rehoboam forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him; and what followed? Shishak, the king of Egypt, comes against them with a great power, and God sends them this message, by Shemaiah the prophet; that because they had forsaken him, (ver. 5.) therefore he also had left them in the hands of Shishak. And afterwards, that though, upon their humbling themselves, he would not quite destroy them, but grant them some deliverance; yet he adds, Nevertheless ye shall be his (*i. e.* Shishak's) servants, that ye may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries, ver. 8. Since they would abandon God, and the true religion, he would, by a very sensible instruction and costly experience, teach them to distinguish, and understand the difference, and make them know when they had a good master. And if we serve him despondingly and with dejected spirits, how causeless a reproach do we cast upon him, and his service! 'tis a greater iniquity than is commonly considered, implies dislike of his work, and the rules and orders of the family, impatiency of the restraints of it, distrust of his power to protect or bounty to reward us; and we may expect it to be resented accordingly. So we sometimes find it hath been, Deut. xxviii. 47, 48. Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God, with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things, and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.

8. How are we concerned to follow the example, and expect the acceptance and reward, of any such faithful servant of Christ! And that we may imitate such a good and faithful servant, let me briefly set the example of such a one before you, in this excellent person lately taken from among us; which, were it possible to represent entirely, were one of the fairest copies to write after, that this, or perhaps many former ages could afford us. That indeed, which it is fit should first be noted of him, is least of all imitable; I mean his natural temper, (with its more immediate dependencies,) which no man can have the privilege to choose. His indeed was one of the happiest that I ever knew, and did so set off all that was superadded and inserted into it, by human culture or divine grace, as an advantageous setting doth the lustre of a diamond. He had all the advantages of education from his childhood, which the pious care of an affectionate, prudent, learned father could give him, that were proper and preparatory to the function he was intended for; *viz.* that of the sacred ministry. An office whereof his excellent father (the eminent, holy, heavenly, reverend, ancient, Mr. Fairclough, of Suffolk, whose name in that country hath still a grateful savour with all good men, of whatsoever persuasion) showed his high esteem and love, not only by the most diligent discharge of it himself, but by dedicating all his sons (which were four in number) to it; and giving his two daughters in marriage to such also. So that he was the father of a sacred tribe, an offspring and race of ministers, or that (even naturally) united with such. This was the eldest of his children, and of whose education the first care was to be taken. Scarce any mind could be more receptive of the proper impressions, from an ingenuous institution. About twelve years he continued a student (whereof divers, a fellow) and great ornament of Emanuel-College, in Cambridge, as he was also much adorned by it. He went from it furnished with such a stock of rational, substantial, as well as polite literature, that showed him to have been no loiterer there. He was a man of a clear, distinct understanding, of a very quick, discerning, and penetrating judgment, that would on a sudden (as I have sometimes observed in discourse with him) strike through knotty difficulties, into the inward centre of truth, with such a felicity that things seemed to offer themselves to him, which are wont to cost others a troublesome search. Nor were his notions merely book-learned, borrowed from systems, and taken on trust, but formed by a due (but more speedy) comparing of things; as if truth were more akin and connatural to him than to most others, sooner digested, made his own, and inwrought into the temper and habit of his mind. Which afterwards, he liked not to muddy and discompose by busy agitations with others, about that truth which he found himself in a pleasant secure possession of; nor to contend concerning that which he had not found it necessary to contend for. He declined controversy, not from inability, but dislike; for as he less needed it for a further good end, so he was most remote from loving it for itself; he was satisfied to have attained his end, and was better pleased to know, than to seem to others that he knew. He was of curious sublime fancy, and a lofty style both in speaking and writing even in his most familiar letters; though he industriously depressed it, in his popular sermons, and other negociations with those of meaner capacity.

But his moral and holy excellencies were his chief lustre, being in themselves of a more excellent kind, and shining in him in a very eminent degree. The bent of his soul was towards God. I never knew any man under the more constant governing power of religion, which made it be his business both to exercise and diffuse it to his uttermost. He was a mighty lover of God and men, and being of a lively active spirit, that love was his facile, potent mover to the doing even of all the good that could be thought (in an ordinary way) possible to him, and more than was possible to most other men. To give a true succinct account of the complexion of his soul, he was even made up of life and love. Such was the clearness and sincerity of his spirit, his constant uprightness and integrity, so little darkened by an evil conscience, (and indeed, little overclouded with melancholy fumes,) that he seemed to live in the constant sense of God's favour and acceptance, and had nothing to do but to serve him with his might; whence his spirit was formed to an habitual chcerfulness, and seemed to feel within itself a continual calm. So undisturbed a serenity hath, to my observation, rarely been discernible in any man; nor was his a dull, sluggish peace, but vital and joyous; seldom hath that been more exemplified in any man, (Rom. viii. 6.) To be spiritually minded is life and peace. Seldom have any lived more under the government of that kingdom, which stands in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. xiv. 17. His reverence of the Divine Majesty was most profound, his thoughts of God high and great, that seemed totally to have composed him to adoration, and even made him live a worshipping life: he was not wont to speak to God, or of him, at a vulgar rate, he was most absolutely resigned and given up to him; devotedness to his interest, acquiescence in his wisdom and will, were not mere precepts with him, but habits. No man could be more deeply concerned about the affairs of religion, and God's interest in the world; yet his solicitude was tempered with that steadfast trust, that it might be seen the acknowledged verities of God's governing the world, superintending and ordering all human affairs, by wise and steady counsel, and almighty power, which in most others are but faint notions, were with him turned into living sense, and vital principles, which governed his soul! Whereupon his great reverence of the majesty of God, falling into a conjunction with an assured trust, and sense of his love and goodness, made that rare and happy temperament with him, which I cannot better express than by a pleasant seriousness. What friend of his did ever, at the first congress, see his face but with a grave smile? When unexpectedly and by surprise he came in among his familiar friends, it seemed as if he had blest the room, as if a new soul, or some good genius, were come among them.

I need not tell them that survive, who were nearest to him, how pleasant a relative he was, nor doth any man need to tell me how pleasant a friend! No man ever more understood, than he, the ingenuities and delights of friendship, especially the high pleasure of gratifying and obliging another; the relishes whereof were so delicious to him, that no festival could be so grateful to any man as the opportunity was to him of making another taste and feel his kindness. Nor did I ever observe any thing so like a frequent fault in him, as an aptness to overvalue his friend. He was a man of most punctual scrupulous fidelity, his word was ever with him so strictly sacred, that, in the

smallest matters, his appointments, though numerous, were through his great prudence so sure, that one might, without the intervenience of extraordinary providence, as certainly expect them, as the returns of day and night. So that they that knew him, though most delighted with his society, were never wont to urge for his stay with them, beyond his prefixed time, (which he commonly mentioned at his first entrance,) knowing it would be in vain.

He was of a large and great soul, comprehensive of the interests of God, the world, the church, his country, his friends, and (with a peculiar concernedness) of the souls of men, ready to his uttermost to serve them all: made up of compassion towards the distressed, of delight in the good, and of general benignity towards all men. He had a soul, a life, a name, darkened with no cloud but that of his own great humility, which clouded him only to himself, but beautified and brightened him in the eyes of all others: an humility that allowed no place with him to any aspiring design, or high thought, that could ever be perceived by word, look, or gesture; except the high thoughts and designs which neither ought to be excluded, nor repressed. His greatest ambition was to do good, and partake it in the highest and the best kind of it; to make the nearest approaches he could to the pattern and fountain of all goodness. And now looking upon so qualified a person, as engaged by office in a peculiar sort of service to Christ, to gather and draw in souls to him, and prepare them for a blessed eternity; how great things may we expect! What do we not find? Mells in Somersetshire was his first and only (public) station. Thither he was brought, by so peculiar a conduct and direction of Providence, as seemed to carry with it some signification what great use he was afterwards to be of, in that place. The very reverend Dr. Whichcot, being also at that time fellow of the same college in Cambridge, and presented to a living in that country, that was in the disposition of that college; obtained of him to accompany him in a journey to visit, and make some trial of the people, he had been designed to take the charge of. Where that so accomplished person expressed a resolution fit to be exemplary to others, of profoundest learning, (and which was strictly afterwards followed by this his chosen companion,) preaching his first sermon (as himself was pleased to tell me) upon those words, I determined to know nothing among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. After some time spent together here, the Doctor's affairs recalling him for the present to Cambridge; he prevailed with our worthy friend to stay behind, and supply his absence among his people.

What follows, I was informed of by another hand, but one so nearly related to this our deceased friend, and so well acquainted with the more desirable occurrences of his life, as not to leave me in doubt concerning so momentous a thing, as how he came to be settled in a country so remote from his own, and where he was so mere a stranger. And it fell out thus. During his abode upon this occasion, in those parts, a noted gentleman, the patron of the rectory of Mells, being at that time high sheriff of the county, sent to Mr. Fairclough, (of whose worth, fame had not let him long be ignorant,) desiring him to preach the assize sermon; some circumstances having also brought the matter within so narrow a compass, that the straits of time made it necessary to press the request with more importunity than could admit of a denial. That performance was so highly acceptable, and so newly over, when the patron was surprised by the tidings of the former rector of Mell's death; that he immediately told our worthy friend, he could not otherwise so fitly gratify him for his sermon, as by conferring upon him such a living, which, if he pleased to accept it, was his.

The opportunity of stated service, in a calling to which he had most seriously devoted himself, more than the emolument, (as did afterwards sufficiently appear,) soon determined his thoughts, and fixed him in this station. There he shone many years a bright and a lively light, a burning as well as a shining one; it was soon observed what a star was risen in that horizon, and a confluence was quickly gathered of such as rejoiced in the light of it, which made an obscure country village soon became a most noted place; from sundry miles about, thither was the great resort, so that I have wondered to see so thronged an auditory as I have sometimes had the opportunity to observe in such a place, that did usually attend his most fruitful ministry. And O how hath that congregation been wont to melt under his holy fervours! His prayers, sermons, and other ministerial performances, had that strange pungency, quickness, and authority with them, at some times; that softness, gentleness, sweetness, alluringness, at others; that one would think it scarce possible to resist the spirit and power wherewith he spake. And the effect did in a blessed measure correspond; they became a much enlightened, knowing, judicious, convinced, reformed, even somewhat generally, and in good part a seriously, religious people. His labours here were almost incredible. Beside his usual exercises on the Lord's day, of praying, reading the Scriptures, preaching, catechising, administering the sacraments, (as the occasions or stated seasons occurred,) he usually five days in the week, betimes in the morning, appeared in public, prayed, and preached an expository lecture upon some portion of the Holy Scriptures, in course, to such as could then assemble, which so many did, that he always had a considerable congregation; nor did he ever produce in public any thing, which did not smell of the lamp. And I know that the most eminent for quality and judgment, among his hearers, valued those his morning exercises for elaborateness, accuracy, instructiveness, equally with his Lord's-days sermons. Yet also he found time, not only to visit the sick, (which opportunities he caught at with great eagerness,) but also, in a continual course, all the families within his charge; and personally and severally to converse with every one that was capable, labouring to understand the present state of their souls, and applying himself to them in instructions, reproofs, admonitions, exhortations, and encouragements, suitably thereto: and he went through all with the greatest facility and pleasure imaginable; his whole heart was in his work. Every day, for many years together, he used to be up by three in the morning, or sooner, and to be with God (which was his dear delight) when others slept. Few men had ever less hinderance from the body, or more dominion over it; a better habited mind and body have rarely dwelt together. No controversies arose among his neighbours, within his notice, which he made it not his business to get presently composed; and his help and advice was wont to be sought by persons of eminent rank, and in matters of very great difficulty, and importance, for that purpose. His own love of peace always inclining him, and his great prudence well enabling him, to be exceedingly useful, in any such case. Nor were his labours confined within that narrower verge, his name and worth were too well known abroad, to let him be engrossed by one single parish; in how many places did he scatter light, and diffuse the knowledge of God, wheresoever, within his reach, the opportunity of a lecture, occasional or fixed, did invite!

The state of things, in those days, making it necessary (and not hindering) that what was to be done for the preservation of common order, must be by the spontaneous associating of the pastors of many congregations; how did he inspirit those assemblies! The deference that was given to him, even by very reverend persons of great value, and much exceeding him in years, with the effectual influence he had upon all their affairs, (manifestly aiming at nothing but the promoting of religion, and the common good,) were only arguments of the commanding power of true worth. And the good effects upon the people, showed how much could be done by a naked, undisguised recommendation of oneself to men's consciences, in the sight of God. Nor would his brethren, of greatest value, (and divers there were, in those parts, of very great,) think it any detraction from themselves to acknowledge much more to the wise, modest, humble activity of his spirit, in their common concernments, than I shall be willing to arrogate to him. He was, upon the whole, a very public blessing in that country, while he kept his public station in it; and when the time approached of his quitting it, he eminently showed his constant, great moderation in reference to the controverted things, that occasioned his doing so, in all his reasonings with his brethren about them. And it further appeared, in the earnest bent of his endeavours to form the minds of his people, as much as was possible, unto future union, under the conduct of whoso should succeed

him, in the serious care of their souls; and to a meek, unrepining submission to that present separation, which was now to be made between him and them; whereof the extant abridgment of sundry his later sermons to them are an abundant testimony; though such a repression of their sorrows it was not possible to them to receive, otherwise than as dutiful children are wont to do the exhortations of an affectionate, dying father, not to mourn for his death. In the substantial things of religion, no man was more fervently zealous; about the circumstantials, none more cool and temperate.

But he could in nothing prevaricate with his (once settled) judgment, or depart in his practice one ace from it; yet such was the candour and softness of his spirit, that nothing could be more remote from him, than to pass any harsh censures upon those that received that satisfaction in the scrupled points, which he could not; but he continued a most entire undiminished friendship with many of them (and several of eminent note, by whom also it was equally cherished, on their parts) even to the last. His great contempt of the world, and remoteness from making the sacred office subservient to secular interest, a design of enriching himself by it, or more than to subsist, too soon appeared in the mean condition to which he was brought, by that deprivation. For though the annual profits of his living were very considerable, yet his free (but well regulated) hospitality, and large diffusive charity, (wherein his excellent consort, one of the most pious, prudent, well accomplished matrons I ever knew, most readily concurred with him,) kept them from being superfluous, or flowing into coffers. He had laid no treasure, but in heaven; and was the son of a no way unlike father, from whom the expectancy of a patrimonial estate could not be great; and whom (to his no small joy while he continued) he survived but a little. So that for some years (as I have heard him say) he did owe much of his subsistence to the bounty of some worthy citizens of London, whose temper it is to take more pleasure in doing such good, than in having it told the world who they were. His usefulness was such, since his deprivation, (not in serving a party, a thing too mean and little to be ever thought of by him, without disdain; but,) in pressing the great, and agreed things, that belong to serious, living religion; that it even melts my soul to think of the overwhelming sorrows wherewith the tidings of his death must have been received, by multitudes in the west, that were often wont with greatest delight and fruit to enjoy his most lively, edifying labours.

His decease confirms it to us, once more, that nothing, belonging to this world of ours, is too good to die. But it is a great argument of God's kind propensions towards it, and speaks much of his good-will to men, that now and then such heavenly creatures are permitted to inhabit it, and such *specimina* and efforts of the divine life to appear, and be put forth in it. It shows God hath not forsaken the earth, and that his tabernacle is with men, when any such are to be found here.

h Chrysost. Panegyr. i Philogonius.

It ought to be reckoned very monitory, and a great rebuke, when such are (earlier than according to natural course) taken away. It should make us love heaven so much the better, that such as he are gathered thither; not that it needs any thing to better it in itself, but that we can now better relish the thoughts that arise out of our own present knowledge; and having seen true goodness exemplified, may thence more easily take our advantage to apprehend what that state is, wherein there will be so vast a collection of excellent creatures, so perfectly good, by most liberal eternal participations from the first and uncreated good. How taking is this notion of heaven! I especially pronounce this holy man blessed, saith a great man in the ancient church, speaking of an excellent person deceased, for that he hath passed from one order to another, (*μετατάξατο*,) and leaving our city, hath ascended to another city, even that of God himself; and leaving this church of ours, is gone into the church of the first-born who are written in heaven; and hath left our solemn conventions for that of myriads of angels; referring to that of the apostle, Heb. xii. and magnifying (that *πανήγυρις*) that glorious convention, not for the multitude of the powers above only, but for the confluence of the good, with a perfect vacancy of envy, and an abounding perpetual joy and satisfaction of mind—love, peace, goodness, &c. and every fruit of the Spirit in most plenteous fulness, (to this purpose he speaks,) and what an amiable heaven is this!

Yea, and it may incline us to have somewhat the kinder thoughts of this our meaner native element, and less to regret that our earthly part should dissolve and incorporate with it, to think what rich treasure, what shrines of a lately inhabiting deity, (now become sacred dust,) it hath from time to time received, and transmuted into itself. How voluminously have some written of *Roma Subterranea*! of the tombs of martyrs, and other excellent persons, (as many of them were,) collected in one little spot of this earth! And if there were as particular an account of the more refined part of the subterraneous London, much more of all places where just and holy men have dropped, and deposed their earthly tabernacles; how would our earth appear ennobled (and even hallowed) by such continual accessions to it, in all times and ages? What a glorious host will arise and spring up, even out of one London! Is not the grave now a less gloomy thing? Who would grudge to lie obscurely awhile, among them with whom we expect to rise, and ascend so gloriously? It should make us diligent in the remaining time of our abode here; what should not the expectation of such a welcome carry us through? Well done, good and faithful servant, &c. How studious should we be, so to acquit ourselves, as he hath done? Blessed is that servant whom the Lord, when he comes, shall find so doing. Let us then be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

k Jo. Severanus, P. Aringhus, &c.

A SERMON

ON THE MUCH LAMENTED DEATH OF THAT REVEREND AND WORTHY SERVANT OF CHRIST,

MR. RICHARD ADAMS, M. A.

SOMETIME FELLOW OF BRAZEN-NOSE COLLEGE IN OXFORD, AFTERWARDS MINISTER OF SAINT MILDRED, BREAD-STREET, LONDON, MORE LATELY PASTOR OF A CONGREGATION IN SOUTHWARK,

WHO DECEASED FEBRUARY 7TH, 1697-8.

TO MRS. ANNA ADAMS, WIDOW, AND COLONEL JOHN ADAMS, BROTHER, TO THE DECEASED MR. RICHARD ADAMS.

My Honoured Friends,

Death is too common a theme, and too obvious to our sense, to be thought strange, any more than that we live. But that the course of our life, as to the rise, progress, and period of it, is at the dispose of one common Lord of all, because it belongs to a sphere above sense, is little considered by the most. To you, I doubt not, it's far from being a new or unfamiliar thought. And thereupon, that the precious life you have lately seen finished, was measured by him who could not therein be unkind to him who is gone; or to you who stay behind.

We do, indeed, tempt ourselves, if we expect from his kindness unreasonable things. As that he should, to gratify us, alter the course of nature, or recall the universal commission of death, or only let it stand in force with an exception, as to ourselves, our relatives, and friends, or that he should tear his own most inviolable constitutions; by which the present state is to be but transitory, and the future the only fixed state; which were to subvert the whole frame of religion, to nullify the design of redemption, to take down his tribunal, to abolish and lay aside all thoughts of a judgment to come, and finally to make the kingdom of his dear Son to terminate in a dunghill. While no such wish hath place with you, your reconciliation is easy to the providence that hath for the present bereaved you of so delectable a relation. And the love of God, which, prevailing in you, will prompt you to compliance with his will, must be the evidence of your title to the best blessings of both worlds. For both the things in the other state, the eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, &c. And the concurrent operation of all things for good in this present state, do all belong to persons of the same character, the lovers of God, I Cor. ii. 9. Rom. viii. 28. Which that you may constantly and fully experience to the end, and in the end, is the serious prayer, for you, of,

Your very respectful
and affectionate servant in Christ,
JOHN HOWE.

PHILIPPIANS I. 23.

HAVING A DESIRE TO DEPART, AND TO BE WITH CHRIST; WHICH IS FAR BETTER.

If you should have no other subject for your present consideration, than only, that one in your neighbourhood is lately dead; even that itself would deserve your very serious thoughts. The translation of human souls from world to world, and out of this present into their eternal state, is no light matter; and does claim and challenge more serious thoughts, than it is commonly wont to find and meet with. Nor does the commonness of such an occasion at all excuse the slightness of men's thoughts upon it; but rather aggravate it unspeakably more. That which we find to be so common and universal a case, we may be sure will shortly be our own: and as it is now matter of discourse with us, that such a one is dead, we shall, ere it be long, according as we have been more or less regarded in the world, be a like subject of discourse to others. But it is a greater thing, when it can be said, a good man is gone; there is a more special remark to be put upon the decease of such a one, Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, the end of that man is peace, Psal. xxxvii. 37. There is that agreement between his way and his end, they are so much of a piece, and do so exactly correspond; a course transacted in a constant serenity and peace, meeting at length with peace as the end of it; an even course, still, uniform, self-agreeable, ever equal to and like itself, ending at last in peace: Mark this! how he goes off, mark such a life so ending! But it yet challenges more intense consideration, when such a one is taken away from amongst us, and the progress and period of his course come to be viewed together, whose life was a continued series of labours in the Lord's vineyard, from the earlier to the later hours of his day; when such a one has finished his course, and fought out the good fight of faith, and is entered into his rest; by the vouchsafement of his indulgent Lord and Master is made to rest from his labours, and receive the reward of them, the reward of grace, with a Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord!

And sure it cannot be ungrateful to you, to be desired here to stay a little, to make a stand, and pause, and entertain yourselves awhile with the consideration of such a

theme and subject as this. Especially it cannot be an ungrateful contemplation, to such as have known the doctrine, and purpose, and faith, and charity, and manner of life, of such a one, as the apostle speaks; so as to be told of nothing, but what you knew before: and so they are not dubious and uncertain thoughts, that you are to employ upon such a theme; you are well assured of the truth of the fact, and when you know it to be true, you cannot but discern it to be very considerable and important truth, and of very great concernment to you. What the spirit of such a one has been through his whole course, you have a very high example of in this blessed apostle; and a copy has been written out fair, after such a pattern, by this lately deceased worthy servant of Christ. Besides the many straits and difficulties that great apostle met with in the course and current of his time, he meets with this towards the end of it, to be in a strait between two, and he does not know what to choose, *viz.* between these two things, the consideration of what would be the best and most valuable good to himself; and the consideration of what would be the more valuable good unto the Christian church; and particularly unto these Christian Philippians, to whom he now writes. He had no doubt at all in the case, but that to depart, and to be with Christ, would be the best and most valuable good to himself: and it was as little to be doubted of, but that his continued abode and stay in this world, would be much more a valuable good unto the Christian church; and unto this or that church in particular, that had enjoyed, and might further enjoy, his most fruitful labours. His difficulty and strait was not either what was best for him, or what was best for them; but which of these two he should, upon the whole, prefer; whether he should prefer his own private interest, or prefer the common interest of Christ in the world. And upon weighing and pondering the matter with himself, he does prefer the latter, so as, without any kind of hesitation to express a great complacency in it, that he should be continued yet longer, some time longer, for common good, in this world. And it was a most noble piece of self-denial that was exercised herein, if you consider what the apostle's privileges had been. He had been caught up into the third heaven, he had there seen unutterable things; nor could he doubt his interest in the felicity and glory of the heavenly state. On the other hand consider, his life here on earth was no voluptuous life, it was not a life of ease and pleasure. See the account that he gives of it in 1 Cor. iv. and 2 Cor. vi. and in chap. xi. of the same epistle. And to find, amongst how many deaths he conversed as it were every day of his life, how familiar labours, and fastings, and watchings were to him; yea stripes and imprisonments; and that he was now at this time a prisoner, as we see in some foregoing verses of this very chapter, *viz.* ver. 13, 14, 16. even in the very lion's paw, in the continual expectation of being devoured, and not long after to be offered up, as he elsewhere speaks. Yet he seems to take great complacency in the thoughts of having some addition made to his time in this world, on the common Christian account; and that his own blessedness and glory should be, for this reason, a little while deferred; he was patient of this, he could endure it, out of his love to Christ and the souls of men. But as to himself, for what he esteemed, and desired accordingly, as his best and most valuable good, he was in no hesitation or doubt concerning that; but pronounces without any more ado, that he did desire to be dissolved, or depart, (the words may be read either way,) and to be with Christ, which is far better; only he distinguishes what was his own most valuable good, and what was the most valuable good of the Christian church. And though he give this latter the preference, as in itself the more considerable thing; yet as to himself, and his own concerns, to depart, and be with Christ, he reckons far better: and accordingly he did desire it as such, as better for him; as having nothing to detain him, or nothing which, on his own private account, he could so much mind or covet, as that.

Now in this comparison, 'tis this one side of it which the words that I have read to you do call us to consider, and confine us to at this time. As to that other part, it lies within the compass of the context, but not of the text; and so we shall not treat of that at present: but consider, what is the genuine temper and disposition of a Christian, and more particularly of a minister of Christ, in reference to what he is to eye and look upon as his own best and most valuable good; and that is, to depart, and to be with Christ. This indeed the apostle speaks of himself, a great and eminent minister of the Gospel of Christ. But though this temper and disposition of spirit was agreeable, it was not appropriate, to such a one. It is indeed very agreeable, it is very suitable to the spirit of a faithful minister of Christ in reference to himself, and any interest and concern of his, to desire to depart, and to be with Christ: but it is not so agreeable to such a one, as to be appropriate to him, or to exclude the generality of serious and living Christians; because it is upon one account, principally common to ministers and to other Christians, that this judgment is to be made, and this desire is to have place in reference to that judgment. And therefore, that is what I will, for the little time that remains, chiefly insist upon:—That it ought to be, and in very great measure is, the temper and character of gracious persons, or sincere Christians, but principally of the faithful ministers of Christ, with reference to any interest or concern of theirs, to desire to leave this world, and to be with Christ.—And in speaking to this, I shall briefly, I. Explain what requires to be explained in it; and then, II. Show you upon what grounds this temper and disposition of mind is agreeable, in the general, to sincere Christians:—III. Upon what more peculiar grounds it is more especially suitable to the faithful ministers of Christ: and so make use of the whole.

1. As to what requires explication. Here we must show you what the object of this desire is in the first place; and then, secondly, show you what this desire, with the judgment unto which it is conformable, imports and carries in it. Then we shall proceed to consider the grounds, both with reference to Christians in general, and the faithful ministers of Christ in special, of their having this as an habitual temper of spirit belonging to them.

* 1. We are to consider the object, which this disposition of spirit, here described, has reference to. And that is two-fold, privative, and positive. There is,

(1.) The privative object, that this disposition has reference to; and that is, departing from hence. Their desire is to be gone, not to stay always here, *i. e.* as to any concern of their own. Indeed upon other accounts, abstracted from their own and more important, there may be considerations that may induce their willingness to stay; but as to their own concerns, the privative object of their desire, is, to be dissolved, or to be gone, εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι, they would fain be dissolved; take that reading, and this is such a one's sense, I would fain have my bonds and shackles taken off, I would be loose, not be always confined to a body of sin and death, and to a vain and wicked world; for these are the things to which we are united: or take the other reading, that are to be left, in this departure. To depart, what are we to depart from? Why, the *gravamina;* the most grievous things are, a body of sin and death, and a vain and sinful world. When God sees good, I would depart says, such a one, from these irksome grievous things, that, while they detain me, torment me every hour. And then,

(2.) There is the positive object, that this disposition has reference to; and that is, to be with Christ. This is a mighty thought, if we had time to stay upon it. It is generally to be considered here, with reference to what state of our Lord Christ, this was spoken, and then what it is to be with him in that state.

First, With reference to what state of our Lord Jesus this was spoken, I desire to be with Christ. Christ was not at this time in his state of humiliation; he was not now in the form of a servant; he was not now going to die, and sacrifice himself upon an ignominious cross, as it was mentioned he had done, in the next chapter, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was obedient to death. It is not in reference to this state, but what follows, that this is spoken; Wherefore God has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name; that at his name, or in his name, every knee shall bow, both of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth

It is that state of glory, in which he was enthroned, and was receiving the homage of all ranks of creatures, according to their capacities. It is this state, that is here referred to.

And then, What it is to be with him in this state, that we are to consider; and plain it is, it is not to be with him as spectators only, but in some sort as partakers; not barely as spectators. Indeed, to be so, is a most desirable thing, to all the lovers of Christ; to behold him upon the throne, invested with glory, the highest glory. But this is not all. Indeed, participation with him is sometimes expressed by beholding, as in John xvii. 24. Father, I will, that they whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory that thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world was laid. But that beholding, is fruitive vision; the vision, not of mere spectation, but fruition, by which we enjoy what we see. And so we are taught to reckon concerning this being with Christ in the state of glory. If we be dead with him, we believe we shall also live with him, by participation of the same glorious, blissful life, Rom. vi. 8. and chap. viii. ver. 17. If we are children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; that if we suffer with him, we might be also glorified together. Glorified, is to be made glorious, to be participants of the same glory with him, and not spectators merely. We are not to be glorified merely by a glory that we are to behold, but which we are to bear; not which we are to be the witnesses of only, but the subjects, whereby we are to be made glorious, in conformity to him, and in communion with him. And here, that we may more fully conceive the sense of this being with Christ, in the state of perfect felicity and glory, 'tis requisite that we consider these two things,—[1.] The highest perfection of the object; and,—[2.] A suitable perfection of the subject, according to its capacity, by which it can converse with, and enjoy, what continually rays, and is communicated, from so glorious and blessed an object.

[1.] The object in highest perfection; when our Lord Jesus Christ, not considered merely as God, but as God-man, is exalted, and made as glorious as glory could any way make him, when he is exalted, by way of remuneration for what he had done, for what he had suffered, for what he had achieved and accomplished by his doing and suffering, and he is now in all that most perfect dignity and glory that belongs to him on that account; this consideration we are to have of the glorious object. We are to consider the high and most absolute perfection of that person, the most wonderful one that ever was, and of which neither created nature, nor uncreated, affords the like; that is, such a person, in which all the excellencies of created and uncreated nature did meet, or were united; and all that felicity, and glory, and blessedness, that this person, according to either nature, and both together, doth enjoy. Here is the object wherewith we are to communicate.

[2.] And then to be with him, as participants, implies the connoted and consequential perfection of the subject in itself, the highest that it is capable of, the perfection of all the powers and faculties belonging to a creature of such a nature. A mind apt to employ itself about things of highest value and excellency, able to comprehend whatsoever is needful and fit to be known of such things; contented not to know what is unfit. A will refined from all terrene tinctures and propensions, enlarged and attempered to the best and highest good. Whence must proceed the liveliest and purest desires, the noblest and most grateful perceptions and delights, the pleasantest and most satisfying relishes and fruitions.

For (the high perfection of the object being supposed) the subject is the spirit of a just man made perfect, (Heb. xii. 23.) of one arrived, out of an imperfect to a perfect state. No supposable allusion in this text needs to exclude the real subjective perfection, which is so proper to such spirits and to such a state as is then finally referred to. The satisfaction itself, which results, cannot but be proportionable; according to the perfect excellency of the object, and the perfected capacity of the subject, a most entire satisfaction. These two, meeting together, the most glorious object, and a glorified spirit made capable of conversing with it, and enjoying it to the full. This makes that fulness of joy, those pleasures for evermore, that are at God's right hand or in his power, to dispose of, in eternal communication, Psal. xvi. ult. Thus you have some account of the object, privative and positive, what is to be left, and whom we are to come to; a sinful, mortal body to be left with a vain and wicked world; and a glorious Lord to be approached, so as to be with him, in actual, and complacential, and eternal communion; to be with him, not as spectators only, but partakers of that glory wherein he is. Then,

II. We are to consider the temper and disposition itself, of serious Christians, and of the faithful ministers of Christ especially, in reference to this state of the objects. And it is made up of two things,—1. Desire; and—2. Estimation, or judgment; that is the measure of the former, and according whereto that desire is directed.

1. This desire is *ἐπιθυμία*, intense desire, earnest desire, the fervour of desire. That is, as to myself, and as to any concern of mine, I do most earnestly desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ; *ἐπιθυμία* signifies not less than that. And then,

2. The judgment that is made of the case, unto which this desire is conformable. That is, that to be with Christ is far better, far better! It is a strange emphasis, that is used in the Greek text, to express this; for there are two comparatives, *μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον*; more better, with a mighty surplusage besides in the word conjoined, *πολλῷ*. I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ; which is better, better by much; or incomparably better; better above and beyond all comparison. One comparative would not serve the turn, but he adds another, and then superadds a vast surplusage over and above. This is the judgment of the case, according to which this desire is directed and measured. And now for the reasons of this temper and posture of soul, in reference to this state of the case. There are divers very obvious.

(1.) That this is most agreeable to the law of our creation, to desire and covet the most perfect state, whereof we are capable. It is an unnatural thing not to do so, not to covet the perfection of that state, that we can finally attain to. Nature, in all creatures, tends to perfection; it is a monstrous disorder in nature, for any creature, if it be capable of choice, to choose a state beneath the highest perfection whereof it is capable. And,

(2.) It is most suitable to the design of our redemption, whether we consider the private object, unto which our redemption refers, or the positive. The privative object, this world, that we are to forsake and leave, with this flesh, that con-naturalizes us to this world. Christ gave himself for us, to deliver us from this present evil world, Gal. i. 4. As for his redeemed ones, those for whom he gave himself, he is willing they should be here awhile; but he gave himself for them, that they might not be here always; that he might fetch them out of this horrid abyss of darkness, impurity, and death.

And if you look to the positive object, our Lord died to bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. He suffered once, the just for the unjust, for this purpose. He will never desist, till he have brought us quite home to God. And it became him, by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect by sufferings, Heb. ii. 10. He suffered, and those sufferings he underwent were the price of our redemption; and for this, to bring the many sons to glory, that were to be brought. And it becomes him, that made all things by himself, and for himself, to bring about his great and glorious design this way; to make the Captain of our salvation perfect, that is, perfectly master of his design. And Rev. v. 9. we are told, that the Lamb that was slain, was slain on purpose, that he might redeem us to God by his blood; that he might be capable of saying at last, I have shed my blood, and it has not been in vain; here I have brought back thy wandering strays to thee, that were separate, that had gone off. He has redeemed them to God by his blood: they were gone off from God; and he, in this way, fetches them back to God; never reckoning his work finished, till he can say, Here am I, and the children thou hast given me.

(3.) This most fully answers the Gospel call, under which we continually are, as to both the parts of the object, the privative and positive. By the Gospel we are

called out of the world. This is carried in the very notion of the church, it consists of a people called out of the world. And that call is not finished till we are quite out; but we must be out in the inclination of our minds; to be gone from this world, that we may be with the Lord. And as to the positive part of the Gospel call, the final term of it is the eternal glory. The God of all grace has called us to his own eternal glory by Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. v. 10.

4. This is most suitable unto the aim and tendency of the new creature, which is indeed the effect of the Gospel call; wheresoever it comes to be effectual calling, the new creature is the product. This is the genius of the new creature, to aspire upwards. They that have received the first-fruits of the Spirit groan within themselves; groan as under a pressure, or burden; to be loosened from this world, from this earth, and from these bodies; and to partake in the glory of the sons of God, manifested in the proper season of their manifestation, Rom. viii. 19. compared with the 23rd. And as they, that in the work of the new creation are what they are, new creatures as being born from heaven; so they are born for it. Except a man be born ἄνωθεν, from above, he cannot enter into nor see the kingdom of God, John iii. 3, 5. He is born for this heavenly state, when he is regenerate, when he is made a new creature, that he may be capable of entering into this kingdom. And, 1 Pet. i. 3. Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has begotten us again to a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. There are principles inlaid in the work of the new creature, which dispose the soul God-ward, and heaven-ward. Hereby they are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, as that in Col. i. 12. And to suppose that there should be a new creature without such a disposition as this, is to suppose the new creature to be the most unnatural creature under heaven. It must have dispositions in it suitable to its nature, and to that state that it is designed ultimately for; as every other creature is suited to the place and state it is to hold in the creation of God.

But then as to what is more peculiar to ministers, they have more reason than others for this temper and disposition of spirit, both as they know more, generally, of the difficulties of the world, and should be supposed to know more of the state of the other world, than the generality of other men do. Their toil, and labour, and travail, while they are here in this world, is like to be more: read at leisure 1 Cor. iv. 9—13. with 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5. They have many more uncomfortable things to exercise them; especially the small success of their labours, that they often do but sow the wind, and sometimes reap the whirlwind, and may be glad to depart on this account. And it is to be supposed too, that they should know more of the other world; for they are more obliged to be daily conversant there; their constant business has a steady direct tendency thitherward: and therefore as this cannot but be the temper of serious Christians, it is to be much more so of the faithful ministers of Christ.

And therefore to draw to a conclusion, and shut up all with some use, we may,

1. Infer from it, the greatness of that capacity which belongs to an intelligent immortal spirit, that it is capable of such a state, as being glorified with the Lord Jesus Christ in that high exaltation of his; 'tis a state, whereof the human spirit is capable. It is indeed very unapt, very indisposed, till the regenerating work take place, till the Divine Spirit have moulded it to that state; but then, in the mean time, there is a capacity, a ground-work, upon which the Divine Spirit does operate, by enlightening the mind, and enlarging the will, and refining and defecating the affections, and implanting celestial principles, that do all dispose it heaven-ward. But in the mean time, it is a useful reflection for every intelligent spirit, that inhabits mortal flesh, to consider, what do I here? While it is my lot to be yet inhabiting this flesh, am I only to mind the things of the flesh? I am capable of an abode above, with the blessed glorious Lord of all; with him my greater concernments do now lie, Col. iii. 1, 2. And,

2. It further lets us see the wonderful love of God in Christ, that he should design such mean abject creatures as we to such a state; that is, that when we depart, and leave this world, we are to be with Christ. O kind design! What admirable love is this, that he will not have his own to be always at a distance and far from him! When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory, in that of Col. iii. 4. And again, further,

3. We may infer hence, that holiness, wherever it comes to have place, does comprehend and include in it divine wisdom, so as to make persons capable of judging right, or making a true estimate of things, which are more valuable, and which are less. Till the sanctifying work of God's Spirit take place in the minds and hearts of men, they judge like fools; they say a portion here on earth is better, let us dwell always amidst the darkness and death of this lower world, and let them be with Christ that will. But says a gracious spirit, to be with Christ is far better, incomparably, beyond all comparison better, and therefore let us depart, and be with him, as to any interest and concern of ours. And this being so, it is of the greatest consequence to us imaginable, for all of us to endeavour to get this temper of spirit made habitual to ourselves; for it is a thing of dreadful importance, to find the temper of my mind and soul differ from that of all good Christians that ever were, or ever shall be. It is one thing indeed, to be willing to have the height of our happiness deferred for common good; but it is quite another thing, to desire to stay here, because I love this world better, and when the practical judgment of our souls is, I had rather be here; when not any concern for the interest of Christ, or design of doing him service here, does reconcile me to an earthly state; but my own temper and spirit is such, that I cannot endure the thoughts of a remove. And let me insist here a little. When the best are continually going; and though the worst do not go the same way, they are going hence too, departing from hence; not to be willing to follow! To have a desire running counter to the stream and course of nature, in all, and the current of grace in the best, is very unaccountable; and wherein we should by no means tolerate ourselves. An irrational desire of what we see to be impossible; a desire that fights against necessity, which will be too hard for us, and will overcome at last, as to the term from which, an abode here; and an unholy desire, in respect of the term to which, *viz.* not to be with Christ; such a desire we should no more endure in ourselves, than fire in our bosoms. To have such an excellent person gone from amongst us, as is lately gone; but to have no disposition to follow! You loved him well, and you loved to hear him preach of heaven, but you cannot endure the thoughts of going where he is gone! Is this well? The world is dying, and you would live! *Miser est quicumque non vult mundo secum moriente mori*, Sen. Trag. What a wretched miscreant is he, that would be an exception from all mankind! and cannot be content to die, when the whole world is dying with him! And for Christians united with Christ, they are such in whose hearts there is a rooted propension towards him, so as to covet his presence above all things, Rev. xxii. The Spirit and the bride say, Come, come, Lord Jesus; either come and take us to thee, or come and manifest thyself to us. Consider then, how absolutely necessary it is, if there be this terrene temper of spirit, to get it changed. For,

(1.) While it remains, it countermines the sum of religion. All Christianity runs counter, in the whole design of it, to this temper of spirit, for it terminates on the other world. But when all our thoughts and designs terminate on this world, what a dismal thing is it! to have a temper and disposition in me, wholly repugnant to the design of the Christian religion, which is but to draw people off from this world, and to fit them for another.

(2.) It will infer, in the next place, that whenever any die, they must die just after the same manner that wicked men do, a violent death; be torn away from their earthly station. He shall pluck him out of his dwelling-place, and root him out of the land of the living, as the Psalmist speaks, Psalm lii. 5. This is dying a violent death; our hearts do not consent, we cannot go but as we are torn up by the roots, and plucked out of our dwelling-places. This is quite another thing from that, Now lettest thou thy ser-

vant depart in peace; and this desiring to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. And it signifies,

(3.) Our not yet having taken God for our God; for our taking him to be our God, and to be our best good, is the same thing. If God be not our best good, he is not our God: and can we choose to be willing to be at an eternal distance from our best good? It must signify, that the love of God has no place in us, sincere love, true love to Christ, for it is never true, if it be not supreme. But it is the greatest absurdity imaginable, that I should supremely love one, that I desire never to be with, or enjoy. I shall only add, with reference to the sad occasion that lies in view before us, that what instances we meet with of this kind, should leave their several correspondent effects and impressions upon our spirits, partly of lamentation, and partly of imitation, and partly of peaceful submission and satisfaction in the issue, however grievous it be to us.

1. Of Lamentation. It is a much to be lamented thing, when such go, as that reverend and worthy person that is lately gone from amongst you. For this temper of spirit being supposed, by how much the more there was of the conjunct disposition to have been content to have staid longer for public good; this speaks so much the more of an excellent spirit: when desires are so fervent after the purity and perfection of the heavenly state, that nothing but sincere devotedness to the interest of God in Christ, could make them patient of longer abode on earth. 'Tis a respect to God that either draws, or detains them, nothing but what is divine inclines them either way: either the enjoyment of God above or his further service here below. That is an excellent spirit that lies under such influences. And the higher was the excellency of such a man, the greater is the loss of him. The more he desired heaven, within such limits, the greater was his value, and with so much the brighter lustre he shone on earth. There is much of God conspicuous in such a man. And it was not a little of him that was observable in this worthy person. Such a course as his was, that even course, that peaceful course, wherein was so eminent devotedness to God, and benignity towards man, showed his spirit was touched by the one, for the other. It could not be, but by influence from heaven, that he so steadily tended thitherward himself, and was only willing to stay so long out of it, that he might invite and draw on as many as he could with him thither. Hereby he appeared so much the more attempered to the heavenly state, and that world where divine love governs, making a man by how much the more strongly he was attracted himself by it, so much the more desirous to attract others. It is what such a one has about him of God on earth, that makes him a desirable thing to us here; it is not what men have of the earthly spirit, but what they have of the Divine Spirit, that makes them useful, both by their labours and examples, to this world of ours; as was this eminent servant of Christ. It is a great thing, to have one pass so long continued course as his was, with so equal a temper. It is like I may have known him longer than many or most of you that were not related.

About fifty years I remember his course, and our conversation was not casual or at a distance, as that of mere colleagues, chosen by others, but as friends inward, and chosen by ourselves. Many a day we have prayed together; conferred and taken sweet counsel together; when he was at once an example and ornament to his college, where he lived respected and beloved of all, but of them most, who most knew him: that constant serenity, and equality of mind, that seriousness, that humility, wherein he excelled, rendered him amiable to observers; and therewith that industry and diligence that he used in his younger days, by which he laid up that great stock of learning and useful knowledge, that made him (when Providence called him to the city) a well-instructed scribe, capable and apt to bring out of his treasury things new and old, whereof there is and will be a long extant proof in his judicious and dilucid expositions of the epistles to the Philippians and the Colossians, which was the part he bore in the supplement to that most useful work, the English Annotations on the Bible, by the Reverend Mr. Matthew Pool. In the great city he shone a bright and burning light, till many such lights were in one day put under a bushel. I need not tell you what, or how black, that day was. And then, though he was constrained to desert his station, he did not desert his Master's work; but still he was with God, and God was with him; and you know it, I doubt not, many of you, what it was to live under so truly evangelical a minister; to have doctrine from time to time distilling as the dew, and dropping upon you, such, as from which you might perceive how great was his acquaintance with the mysteries of Christ: in reference to those, over whom he had opportunity to watch, it was undoubtedly, if it were not their great fault, their very great advantage.

As to his domestic relations, knowing so much of him, I cannot but so much the more lament their loss: God will, I doubt not, be the bereaved widow's portion; but it ought with tenderness to be considered, what it was for one person to lose successively two such helps, as this and her former husband were, (who was also in another university, my former and most inward friend, that worthy man Mr. Thomas Wadsworth,) both eminent instruments in the church of Christ. And this has been more eminently remarkable concerning him that is lately gone, that the relations of the family, to whom he was not naturally related, the branches from another root, yet had that apprehension of his love and care of them, and of their own loss, as to desire this public testimony might from them remain of him, that he was to them as tender a father, as if he had been a natural one: such fathers-in-law are seldom known, and therefore it ought to be mentioned, as that which may signify somewhat towards the embalming of his memory among you. Graces, when diffused, give their pleasant relishes to all that any way partake of them.

What follows was delivered in writing into my hands to be inserted, by a dear relation of his.—His humility and self-denial were eminently conspicuous in his taking upon him the care and charge of so small and poor a people, and continuing with them to the damage of his own estate, though he had considerable offers elsewhere. His meekness, as it was very visible in all his conversation, it was singularly showed in his bearing and passing by slights and affronts, even from those he had very much obliged, taking off the resentments that his friends had of the injuries of that kind put upon him, by abasing himself, saying, I am an unworthy creature, I deserve no better. His candour every one was certainly made sensible of, who should offer to speak any thing reflectingly about any person behind their backs, for he was sure to vindicate or lenify in this case, as far as he could.

When labours, weakness, and age had worked out his strength of body, there was never any thing appeared so manifestly to trouble him, as being necessitated to desist from constant preaching.—And notwithstanding all temporal discouragements he met with in the course of his ministry, his mind, to the very last, was to have both his sons brought up to it. During the short time of his last illness, when his head appeared somewhat disordered in other things, by the pains that were upon him, it was observable, that he always showed himself sensible in hearing or discoursing about any thing religious; being among other things discoursed with by his brother about the discharge of his ministry, he answered, he hoped he had endeavoured to serve God faithfully, and sincerely, though he had been au unprofitable servant. About five hours before his death, he said, God is my portion; and desired those about him to join with him in prayer, wherein he expressed himself very suitably to his case as a dying man, concluding thus: "Grant that when this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, I may be taken to those mansions not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

As his life was calm and serene, so was his dying, for though throughout his sickness he was all along apprehensive of approaching death, there was no ruffle upon his spirit, of which he himself then gave this account, "I know in whom I have believed."

2. Of Imitation. And as such strokes, when they come, ought to be lamented, they that by such strokes are taken away, ought to be imitated. The example remains; you have the idea left; you know how such a one lived, how he walked, how he conversed with his family, how he conversed with you as he had occasion: that excellent spirit he discovered in all, how much of an imitable example has

it given to all those that are capable of imitating and receiving instruction that way?

3. Of Satisfaction. But it ought also to have the effect of satisfaction in the divine pleasure. When such a blow as this comes, do not repine, peacefully submit, though it carry smartness and severity with it. You ought to feel it, but yet notwithstanding to receive it with submissive silence, to be dumb, and not open your mouths, remembering who hath done it, and that it is the disposal of wisdom that cannot err, as well as of power that cannot be resisted, and of kindness and goodness that has its gratefulness to this departed servant of his. For consider, that notwithstanding his willingness to have stayed longer, if his Lord, whose he was, and whom he served, had thought fit; yet this could not but be his habitual sense, to desire to depart, and to be with him, which was far better. And if Christ be pleased, and he be pleased, why should we be displeased?

This was the will of Christ, declared by his word, as to the thing, John xvii. 24. Father, I will, that those that thou hast given me, be with me where I am, to behold my glory. And declared by the event as to the time. And his will, both because it was Christ's, and because it was best. Who are we that we should oppose our will to so kind a will on Christ's part, and so well-pleased a will on his part? or that a dissatisfaction should remain with us, as to what there is with Christ, and him, so entire satisfaction?

A FUNERAL SERMON,

FOR THAT EXCELLENT MINISTER OF CHRIST, THE TRULY

REV. WILLIAM BATES, D. D.

WHO DECEASED JULY 14TH, 1699.

TO THE

RIGHT NOBLE WILLIAM, DUKE AND EARL OF BEDFORD; MARQUIS OF TAVISTOCK, LORD RUSSEL, BARON RUSSEL OF THORNHAUGH,

LORD LIEUTENANT OF THE COUNTIES OF MIDDLESEX, BEDFORD, AND CAMBRIDGE; KNIGHT OF THE MOST NOBLE ORDER OF THE GARTER, AND ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S MOST HONOURABLE PRIVY COUNCIL.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,

THE peculiar and just respect which your grace has long had for the worthy person, whose much lamented decease occasioned the following discourse, easily induced me to believe, it would not offend your Grace, that your illustrious name is prefixed to it. As it also was the sense of his mournful relict, that it could be no less than your Grace's right, such a memorial should be extant, of the favourable aspects wherewith you have been pleased to honour this her so dear relative. Nor can it be suitable to the noble amplitude of your truly great mind, that it should be told the world you knew how to value true worth, wheresoever you found it. Not confining your respects to any party; or distinguishing men by any, when especially the parties themselves are distinguished by marks, which they who wear them count indifferent, and which, therefore, must be understood to make men neither better nor worse. And if they who wear them not, count otherwise, though they should be mistaken in their judgment, after their having endeavoured to the uttermost, to be rightly informed; their sincerity, accompanied, and evidenced, by great self-denial, must in the account of so equal and candid a judge, as your Grace, far outweigh so light a mistake, in so small matters. Such differences will be easily tolerable, where there is that mutual charity, as neither to think a different judgment to be bribed with dignities, and emoluments, on the one hand; nor to be perverted by humour, and affectation of singularity, on the other.

The reverend Doctor's great candour, and moderation, in reference to the things wherein he hath been constrained to differ from many excellent persons; and his remoteness from any disposition to censure them from whom he differed, have been these many years conspicuous to all that knew him. The apprehension having been deeply inwrought into the temper of his mind, that the things wherein only it could be possible for truly good men to differ, must be but trifles, in comparison of the much greater things, wherein it was impossible for them not to agree. And I no way doubt, but the things for which your Grace most deservedly valued this excellent person, were such as have in them an inherent and immutable goodness; not varying with times, or the changeable posture of secular affairs; but which must be the same in all times. Nor appropriate to persons of this or that denomination, but that may be common to persons sincerely good, of any denomination whatsoever. Whereupon the testimony your Grace hath from time to time given of your value of him, on such an account, must have redounded to yourself; have reflected true honour on your own name; shown your discerning judgment of persons and things; and entitled you to his prayers; which, I hope, have been available to the drawing down of blessings on yourself and your noble family.

Unto whose must his prayers also be added, for the same purposes; who is with greatest sincerity, and under many obligations

Your Grace's most obedient,
and most humble servant,
JOHN HOWE.

It is grievous to me to tell you, in whose room and stead I do now stand in this place this day. Nor do I need; you can tell yourselves, observing the stated courses and alternations held in this lecture, that if the counsels of heaven had agreed with our desires and hopes on earth, this is the day, this is the hour, wherein you had again seen the face, and heard the voice, of that excellent servant of Christ, whom we now lament as lost to us, and dead out of our world. Not absolutely dead; for God who is his God for ever and ever, is not the God of the dead but of the living. Dying out of this world, he was born into the other. But in that sense wherein he is dead to us, and this world of ours, what remains but that we agree to say, Let us die with him? And these are the words, which if God will graciously afford us his help aud presence, we may fruitfully entertain ourselves with, upon this sad occasion at this time: you will find them in—

John xi. 16.

Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

The history to which these words belong, contains so illustrious and instructive an instance of the Redeemer's power over both worlds, and so plainly shows, that he could at his pleasure, translate men out of the one into the other, as might best serve the proper purposes of his redemption, that it can never be unseasonable to us to consider it, who are always subject to the same power. And it is very especially seasonable at this time, when we have reason enough to re-consider his late use of this power, in another kind, less grateful to us, but not less wise or just in itself; not the recalling of one out of the other world into this, but the calling away of one out of this world into the other; the translating of this excellent person from among us, whose longer abode here had been highly desirable, as his removal is most bitterly grievous, and must have been intolerable, were it not that though this is not the same act, it is an act of that same power over lives, which in all its exertions we are always to behold with the same profound adoring silence, and a disposition of mind to receive instruction from it, whether it be pleasing to us, or displeasing. I will make no apology for my recalling your thoughts, so long after, to this sad theme. Our mutual endearedness, his condescending affection to me, and my reverential affection to him, were so generally known to those that knew either of us, that it might be expected I should take some public notice of this severing stroke; and I may suppose my circumstances to be so known, that it is obvious to every one to understand I could do it no sooner.

It will not be unuseful to make some brief reflection upon this miraculous work of our Lord, and thence return to the special subject, which I desire your thoughts may be fixed upon, as mine have been. It was the most memorable of all our Lord's works of this kind, yet not mentioned by the other evangelists; lest, as is supposed, it should revive the Jewish malice against Lazarus; who, as Epiphanius tells us, was reported to have lived thirty years after, within which time the others had all written, whereas this evangelist wrote not, till after his final decease. It was wrought for the same great end, for which all his wonderful works were done and written, generally, for the glory of God, as is intimated, ver. 4, and particularly, as this evangelist tells us, chap. xx. 20, 21. That we might believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name. And though they all had this design: this towards the end of his course, seems meant for the last and conclusive stroke, having a brighter and more conspicuous appearance of the Divine glory in it, for a fuller and more convictive demonstration, that he was the Son of God, and the Messiah, as he gave himself out to be. And all things were designed in the aptest subserviency hereto; that once for all, this long disputed point might be put out of all doubt.

For this end it is ordered, that Lazarus should at this time fall sick. Nothing more appeared to human prospect, but that the disease befell him according to the common course of natural causes: but says our Lord, his sickness is not unto death; *viz.* as the final and permanent event or design of it; but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby, ver. 4. God's counsels lie deep, not obvious to common view. When such a servant of God is fallen sick, we know not what he intends to bring out of it. His glory may, in his own way and time, so much the more brightly shine forth, though we yet distinctly know not when or how. Upon this account, when our Lord not only heard of Lazarus's sickness, but knew he was dead, he yet defers two days, even though he knew him to have been at least two days dead before: so that when he now comes to the place, he finds him to have lain four days in the grave, ver. 17. He resolves to give so much the greater scope, and advantage, to the glory of the Divine power, to display and evidence itself. He defers, till now death and the grave were in full dominion, that his conquest might be the more glorious. He had before raised some from death, none from the grave. The lamenting relatives were now in despair: the thoughts of restitution were quite laid aside. All their hopes were buried with the deceased in the same grave, as may be collected from sundry following verses.

In the like despair, not long after, were the mournful disciples, concerning their not only deceased but entombed Lord, unto whose surprising resurrection, this seems a designed prelude. The bereaved relations, and their comforters, were all abandoned to sorrow, and drenched in tears. And with the rest we are told, ver. 35, that Jesus wept. But why was this? Was it that he knew not his own mind, or distrusted his own power? He had given sufficient intimation of his own purpose, and of the foresight he had of the certain, glorious issue of this gloomy dark providence. 'Tis evident therefore for what he wept not. 'Tis not so obvious to conclude for what he wept. It is most unworthy of him to suppose his was feigned sorrow, or that he shed hypocritical tears. Nor was this the only instance of his weeping: no, no, he was a man of sorrow, acquainted with griefs; and had always in view sufficient cause of real soul-trouble, as this is called, ver. 33. He groaned in spirit and was troubled. It must be, by the contexture of the evangelical history, near the time of his weeping over Jerusalem, when his soul was filled and taken up with sad and mournful themes.

But who can tell what thoughts lay deep in that large and comprehensive mind? We are sure, though he wept with the rest, that 'twas not as they wept, nor from the same motives. His thoughts were not as their thoughts, but as far wider, and higher, as the heavens are than the earth. We have no way to know what his thoughts were; we know what they might be. He saw not Jerusalem only, but all this world, buried in sin and death. He could not, as the second Adam, be the resurrection and the life, as he speaks, ver. 25, without beholding with a compassionate heart, the impurities and miscries, wherewith it was deluged by the first. And he had now enough in view to discompose his pure mind, intent upon high and great things; that when his business into this world was to prepare men for another; and when they were fit, to translate them thither; even they that professed to believe on him, should no more understand him; that his kind and great design should be no more grateful to them, and so slowly enter into their minds and hearts, that when they saw one such translation, it should so much displease them, and they so little relish it, as to be all in tears and lamentations thereupon; and thereby discover such an affixedness of heart and spirit to this present world, and state of things, as to prefer the enjoyment of a friend on earth, before all the glories of the heavenly state; so might their immoderate weeping some way cause his tears. But when he expressed his trouble by groans and tears, he suppressed the causes of it, and goes on to his present intended work. In order hereto, ver. 39, he commands the gravestone to be removed; neglecting the objection, ver. 39. "By this time he stinks."

He observed with a compassionate indulgence, the diffidence which he meant speedily to refute. Nor, because we also are too prone to prescribe limits to the Divine

power, ought we for his indulgence to be the less severe to ourselves. Forgetting the transcendency of that power, we think this or that strange, and scarce possible to be done, because we too highly consider the equal or greater strangeness of what we see is done. We count things easy, that are by use become familiar to our senses, and apprehend we have the notion of them clear, and how they can come to be as they are; not having examined or inquired whether our apprehensions were right and congruous, or not. Things that have not struck our sense, making ourselves and even our sense the measure, we count impossible and unconceivable.

By the course of nature our sense hath told us, a body so long in the grave must be putrid and stink. But who settled that course of nature? If we ascend not to the original cause, the fixation of that course is as admirable and unaccountable; if we do, a departure from it is as easy. What can the wisest philosophers conceive of the difference between an offensive smell and a grateful, but the different disposition or texture of the particles of matter, in relation to the *sensorium*, or the receptive organ? When what the different disposition is, remains altogether unapprehensible, and what no man can tell. We go away well satisfied concerning what we see happens every day, because we never inquire how things came to be as they are; when what we have not known to come to pass, though not more difficult, we say can never be. Otherwise we should think it no more admirable, or difficult to reduce in a moment the parts of matter to such a *situs*, as that they should give no offence to the sense of smelling, though before they did, than it was to the same power so to dispose, that in one sort of location, they should give that offence, in another they should not, and, perhaps, in a third, highly gratify and please. Thousands of like instances might be given, but this comes now in our way.

The world is full of miracles; we are compassed about with such, and are such. There is 'tis true a peculiar notion of them, as necessary as they are themselves; signifying not what is done by a greater power, but less usual. As such, the use and need of them only argues the infirmity of our minds, sunk into earth and sense, and grown somnolent; whence they need to be roused by surprising and uncommon things, and brought to consider, that he only, who could fix and settle the so steady course of nature, could alter it, and make it forsake its wonted tract: which he must always be supposed to do, for some very weighty, important end and reason. So absolute power being ever in strict connexion with the most perfect wisdom, and therefore claiming to be the more earnestly attended to, and considered the more deeply. To that power that could create a man, 'twas equally easy to perfume a grave, or to make a new man spring up out of it, in fresh strength, comeliness, and vigour. To recompose the disordered parts of a body turning to dust, and refit it for the union and use of the returning soul; this he will not do often, but he saw a just and valuable reason for his doing it at this time.

He was now to give and leave behind him a full conclusive demonstration, once for all, of his being the Son of God, by whom the worlds were made; and the Christ, or Messiah, (the great controverted point of that time,) which, *v.* 5. is called glorifying the Son; who for asserting this, was calumniated as an impostor and deceiver of the people. He was to give a specimen of his power, as such, over universal nature, and that he could at pleasure control and countermand the most established laws of it. All things being put under that notion, as he was the Christ, into his hands, and all power given him both in heaven and earth, so as that by him all things must consist.[a] A power he was to use, being gradually, and at last perfectly, to make all things new.[b] He was to make good his own title, I am the resurrection and the life,[c] which he assumes in this context, to let it be seen he was no vain pretender; and that it was no vain faith that should be placed upon him in this respect, but that what he should now do, as to one, he was equally able to do, in the fit season, for every one, when all that are in their graves should hear his voice.[d] He was to show forth a resemblance of that more peculiar act of his most graciously undertaken office, to be a spring of life to souls morally dead, *viz.* in trespasses and sins.[e] To give this divine and most noble kind of life! To do that most merciful and most God-like work! He was to take away all cause or pretence for despair, but that, whereas a death was to pass upon himself, and upon his church on earth, both he himself, and it, with his dead body, should arise.[f] Therefore he utters that mighty commanding voice, at which rocks and mountains tremble and shiver, and which all the powers of nature must obey; "Lazarus, come forth!" and he comes forth. These things we now lightly touched, hoping they may be of further use to us afterwards.[g] We expect not the like thing in our present mournful case; but we expect greater things; for which we are to await our Lord's season.

In the mean time let us return and consider what is overtured in the case the text refers to, when, as to any such remedy, the mourning friends expected as little as we. Here was a worthy good man gone; a friend of Christ, and of his friends. Christianity gives no man a terrestrial immortality; Christians, even the best of them, must die as well as other men. This was a matter taken to heart by Christ himself, as we have seen, in a way becoming and worthy of him. His disciples also are deeply concerned, and they consider and discourse it their way. One of them, Thomas, who also was called Didymus, (wherein is no other mystery, than that his name is first given us in Hebrew, then in Greek, as is not unexampled elsewhere,) proposes, as you have heard; "Let us also go that we may die with him." Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. There was, no doubt, an abounding fulness of sense in this good man's soul, from whence these words did proceed. And it might be two-fold; either—I. Good and commendable, fit for our imitation, and whereto the temper of our spirits should be conformed.—Or, II. Faulty and reprehensible; such, as against which we should arm and fortify ourselves.—Such mixtures are not to be thought strange. It is little to be expected, that in what is hastily said by the best on earth, on an occasion apt to stir passions, there should be nothing but pure breathings of heavenly wisdom and goodness.

I. Under the former head, we shall speak of divers things, which we cannot, indeed, be sure were the explicit, distinct sense of this good man, at this time; but which might be and should be ours on a like occasion. Which well agree with Christian principles, and which his words serve aptly enough to express; as,

(1.) A firm belief of a future state. Did this good man only desire to partake with the other in death, and no more? Did his wish terminate here? Can we apprehend any thing good or desirable in mere death that one would covet to share in with another? or which one would be loath he should engross alone? Nor could Thomas mean this, having heard that Lazarus was already dead. It cannot be thought, that one who had been some years in immediate attendance upon the Son of God, the Lord from heaven, and under his instructions, and who had so much opportunity to observe, that his whole design lay for another world; and that he never encouraged his followers to expect from him any advantages above others, in this world, but forewarned them of troubles and sufferings, to which they would be always liable from it, and that they must be content to wait for their rewards in another state: it is not to be thought that such a one was an infidel in reference to any such state; or that he thought his friend extinct by dying; or that when he wished to be with him, he wished to be no where, or nothing.

(2.) A mind loose and disengaged from this present world. He could be intent upon no great designs for this earth, who with the next that leaves it, was willing to go too.

(3.) Easy, placid thoughts of dying. He looked upon death as no such frightful thing, that could so familiarly, and off-hand, say, when he thought of such a one's dying; Come, let's go and die with him.

a John xii. 3. Matt. xxviii. 18. Col. i. 17. b Rev. xxi. 5.
c Ver 25. d Chap. v. 28 e Eph. ii. f Isa. xxvi. 19.
g Where Lazarus's soul had been in the mean time, was too light a matter to weigh against these mighty things our Lord was intent upon. His concerns were to yield and bow to his Lord and Master's great designs: he could not be unfitter for his own business afterwards, than the apostle in the like case (for ought that he himself knew) was for his. The consideration of this matter did not divert our Lord Christ from what he was intent upon; nor let it divert us, but, as a lighter matter, be left for the exercise of lighter minds.

(4.) A distinguishing judgment concerning the states of men hereafter, remote from thinking it fares with all alike, in the other world; but well informed, that it could only be ill with ill men, and well only with the good. A settled persuasion of a judgment to come. According to the declared rules of which judgment, this present judgment is formed. That they who continue in a course of well-doing, shall have eternal life; evil-doers, indignation and wrath.[h]—This wish could not be thought less cautious than his, who says, with distinction, Let me die the death of the righteous.[i]—It must be far from him to be content, God should gather his soul with sinners.[k] The future state was, no doubt, considered as a state of separation between men and men. He could not covet to be associated with good and bad, promiscuously, and at random.

(5.) A rationally charitable opinion, and estimate, that he was sincerely good and happy, with whom he coveted to be united in death. Such an opinion is all that is here requisite. Faith it cannot be, for the object is not a revealed thing. Knowledge it is not, for we have no medium to know it by. That we have more reason to think this, than the contrary, of such a one, is sufficient, and that this should be implied in this wish, is necessary. Here was an apprehension of a happy state the other was passed into. That saying, *Sit anima mea cum philosophis*, implied that he who said it, thought their state better than some other men's. And Thomas could not but have sufficient reason for his apprehension of Lazarus's sincerity so as not to doubt of his felicity. His house, he observed, was our Lord's resort: here he was received gladly by him and his good sisters. His doctrine, we have cause to think, he entertained as well as himself, and himself for his doctrine's sake. The peculiar affection our Lord had for him, observed by the domestics, that say, He whom thou lovest is sick, ver. 3. noted by the Jews, with a, Behold how he loved him, ver. 36. could leave Thomas no ground of doubt, but he was a sincere believer on the Son of God, and now in a blessed state: so are Christians, visibly such, to esteem of one another, and accordingly to have communion with one another in grace, and hope and wish for it in glory. A temper, now, very alien from too many that go under that name; who make not the great substantials of Christianity the measure of their present and hoped communion, but devised additions of their own: or rather, not what they add to, but substitute in the stead of, faith, mercy, and the love of God; and license themselves to ascend the throne, usurp the seat of judgment, and boldly damn all them who are not of their own complexion and party; and that cannot so far conform to their humours, passions, prejudices, and interested inclinations, as to say and act in every thing just as they do.

(6.) A most ardent and most generous love to such good men upon that just and reasonable apprehension of them. For, what love can be greater? How can one more highly express love to any man, than by a declared willingness to live and die with him; and simply to die, when he can no longer live with him? Love raised to this pitch is stronger than death. Heathen story is not without such instances of some, whom no dread of death could sever from each other; but that they have been willing, as the case should require, to die with, or to die for, another. To be either each other's companions or substitutes in death. The tyrant Dionysius having sentenced to death one of that admirable pair, Damon and Pythias, and fixed the day of execution, the condemned person petitioned for leave to be absent upon important occasions; in that interval his friend offering himself, as his sponsor, to die for him, if he returned not by the appointed day. He returning punctually with all diligence, knowing his friend's life to be otherwise in hazard; the tyrant, in great admiration of their mutual love and fidelity, pardons the condemned, and requests of them both, that they would admit him, as a third person, into the society of their friendship.[l]

What they tell us of divers others I mention not, whom no death could sever; whom dangers did more closely unite. Such as are conjoined in the same common cause, their mutual love mutually animates them even to face death; because each finds the other will not flinch, or leave him in danger alone. Many waxed bold by the apostle's bonds,[m] when they could not but be thought bonds of death; no doubt, because he was dear to them. So that they were willing even to run into the same bonds, because he was bound by them. Even in this sense love casts out fear. And what could more either express his own love, or tend to inflame other men's, than when that great apostle bespeaks the Christian's of that time, as having his life bound up in theirs? I live if ye stand fast[n]—that he was ready to impart with the Gospel, even his own soul to them, because they were dear to him.[o] And that they were in his heart to live and die with them.[p] There seemed to be but one life common to him and them. When there are such unions, that each is to the other an *alter ego*, *another self*; and another's soul is to a man as half his own,[q] as he pathetically phrases it; here is the height of affection! And that affection mutually heightens each other's courage, and is a continual and reciprocated source of a generous magnanimity springing from the one into the other's breast; while they perceive in one another a mutual vying, who shall the more adventurously rush upon death for, or in conjunction with, the other.

This seems not alien from the temper of Thomas's mind in his uttering of these words. For when our Lord proposed going into Judea, other of the disciples objecting that the Jews had there lately sought to kill him; he, when he understood Lazarus was dead, whom he knew to be a friend to that cause, though he died not for it; Come, says he, let us now fear no death, let us rush, in *media arma*, throw ourselves into the midst of death, and there breathe forth our souls, full of love to God, and Christ, and him, and one another; even upon the same spot where this friend of our Lord, and our common cause and interest, breathed forth his. These noble principles, fortitude and love, might have made two distinct heads of discourse; but they are so complicated and interwoven with one another, that they were scarce to be considered apart. And this complication these words more than intimate—That their hearts may be comforted, (or incited, and stirred up as the word there used signifies,) being knit together in love.[r]

(7.) A lively apprehension of the large, abounding diffusion of the Divine fulness: sufficiently able to replenish and satisfy all that shall be prepared to partake in it. That this good man's eye was upon somewhat else than mere death, and that he coveted not to die for dying sake, must be out of doubt with us. He certainly aimed at a blessed state after death. And who can suppose his mind void of that so common notion, that the blessedness of souls must lie in God? But this could not be all. The faint, spiritless notion, of a felicity to be enjoyed in God, could signify little to the present purpose. Here must be a lively, gustful apprehension of it too; for here is intervening death to be gone through. And he expresses himself willing to attempt this difficult pass. Let us go—that we may die—How few do you know, or converse with, that are without this notion, that God is the blessedness of souls! or that assent not to it as soon as they hear it! Yet how few do you know, that are willing to die to enjoy him! No, no; they are generally willing, rather to eat the dust of the earth, and feed upon ashes, thousands of years, than go to God for a better portion! Notwithstanding their dead, spiritless, inefficacious notion of a divine heavenly felicity, they had rather want it. A blessedness not to be had on earth, or that must come by dying! they bless themselves from such a blessedness! 'Tis plain then, there must be more than a dead notion to overcome their aversion to dying. And what can that be more? 'Tis as plain, it must be a vivid apprehension of such a blessedness in God after death. And that imports two things.

[1.] A divine faith of it. It must be the apprehension of faith, and of a divine faith. Almost every one pretends to believe it; but it is generally with a human faith only; because their parents, or preachers, or the common voice of the country, hath told them so. A divine faith is full of divine life and vigour; the substance and evidence of what is believed. The soul being overpowered into this

h Rom. ii. 7, 8. i Numb. xxiii. 10. k Psalm xxvi. 9.
l Related by Cicero, de Offic. lib. 3. and divers others.
m Phil. i. 14. n 1 Thess. iii. 8. o Chap. ii. 8.
p 2 Cor. vii. 3. q Hor. r Col. ii. 2.

belief by the majesty and authority of the great God revealing it, and the awfulness of his testimony; the word of God revealing this, as other portions of sacred truth, works effectually in them that so believe it; *i. e.* that receive it not as the word of man, but as the word of God.[s] They that live in the hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised,[t] would break through a thousand deaths to obtain it. This is more than a spiritless notion. And,

[2.] Such a lively apprehension hath in it somewhat of a present sense, and foretaste of that blessedness; a heaven begun, which is of the same kind with their future heaven. They have the kingdom of God in them, which stands in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.[u] Such an earnest speaks their own right, while they are yet sensible of the great imperfection of their present state. They are therefore willing to die, that they may be made perfect. They now know by taste what it is to enjoy God. O taste and see that God is good![w]—A mere notion informs us not enough, so as to actuate our minds what that means. Notwithstanding it, the carnal mind can frame no distinct heart-moving thought of felicity, other, or more grateful, than the relishes of meat and drink, or the satisfaction of some or other mean or carnalized appetite. They that have tasted somewhat of a higher kind, long for more, and most of all, that most perfect fruition which they must pass through death to attain.

We will not suppose this good man to have been destitute of such a faith, and of such tastes, of the heavenly felicity. And as hereby he was not without a lively apprehension of the kind and nature of it, so we must suppose him to have a like apprehension of the large, copious, abounding, and diffusive fulness of it, whereof his words give some intimation; "Let us go and die with him." He doubted not of a sufficiently extensive communion in this blessedness, *q. d.* There is enough for him and us all. And such apprehension we all ought to have of the blessedness of the heavenly state, into which we are to be intromitted by death, that it is enough for all that can be in any possibility to partake in it. So that the abounding plenitude of no one's portion can be any diminution to another's. The kind and nature of material, sensible good, hath a remarkable and most agreeable affinity to what is said, and what, upon very strict inquiry, one knows not how not to say, of matter itself, that it is perpetually divisible; but so, as that every part and particle is still less and less. Whereupon it cannot but be, that whatsoever any enjoy of terrene good, so much is detracted from the rest. Of intellectual, spiritual good, knowledge, wisdom, grace, glory, the case is quite different. Let any possess never so much, it nothing diminishes another's possession in the same kind. If another man be never so wise, good, or happy, it takes nothing from me; I may be as wise, good, and happy. At least, that hinders not, but I may.

How pleasant a contemplation is this! that in the vast and numberless regions of light, bliss, and glory, the blessed inhabitants are all drawing from the same fountain; solacing themselves in that fulness of joy, drinking in from those rivers of pleasure that flow from the Divine presence for evermore! All deriving, unto satiety, from that fulness that filleth all in all.

(8.) Preference of the society with holy ones in the heavenly state, above any to be enjoyed on earth. The words, as to their most obvious sense, seem to be full of this; With whom I would live, with him I would die. Is not this our common sense? Not that we can apprehend any thing in the very act or article of dying, that can make dying with one more desirable than with another; but it must be meant of what is to follow. We would not have death to part us. We would enjoy one another after death, but so as we did not before. 'Tis very probable our Lord and his disciples had formerly enjoyed pleasant hours with Lazarus, in his own house. But why doth Thomas, therefore, desire they might die to be with him? Excepting him, he might still have enjoyed the same society on earth, and of many other Christian friends besides. But we see his proposal concerned not himself only. 'Tis, Let us go die with him. He reckoned they should die, and be with him together. And that the state they should then be in, would have, in point of society and conversation, such advantages, above what their present state afforded, as were worth dying for.

And how can we but apprehend the vast difference? Whatever delight good men on earth have had in one another's society, they must then be better company than ever. How hard is it now to communicate our sentiments! We know not what our ways of converse shall hereafter be, but we know that such words as we now use are very slow, defective media, of conveying our minds and sense to one another. What a difficulty do we now find if we apprehend a thing clearly ourselves, to make another master of our notion! What circumlocutions do we need! What explications, to make another understand our meaning! And then those explications need further explication, and so we run ourselves into new difficulties, and entangle one another more and more. Most of our controversies arise from our mistaking one another's sense, though too often those mistakes are wilful with them who love strife more than truth; and it is industriously endeavoured to pervert each other's words, and put senses upon them quite besides, or against, our true intent. But if we speak and hear with the greatest candour and sincerity that is possible, we are frequently not understood aright, either through the unskilfulness of him that speaks, to choose the aptest words and forms of speech, or unattentiveness, incapacity, and dulness, in them that hear; frequently from both together. Hence is the conversation of Christians so little edifying, though they discourse of useful subjects, which, God knows, there is little of amongst us! Though much more than is commonly apprehended, proceeds from want of love, that should let us into one another's minds and hearts.

Our very sermons, when we study to make important things as plain as we can, are lost upon the most. Though here we see the advantage of a people's having a love to their minister, which is a mighty orator within themselves, and will make them endeavour to take in his heart and soul; as on his part, his love to them will make him willing, as we heard from the apostle, to impart, with the Gospel, his own soul.[x] But as to Christian converse in this our present state, besides the difficulty of understanding one another, all even of them who have great treasures of knowledge in them, are not alike conversable and communicative, nor any, at all times. The dearest friends often find one another indisposed, otherwise busy, morose, sour, and out of humour; apt to take, and perhaps to give, offence, on one hand, and the other. And whereas we should most intimately converse with ourselves; upon the mentioned accounts, we are now very often the worst company that can be to ourselves; through the darkness, confusion, intricacy, and incoherence of our own thoughts; the fervour and tumultuation of ill affections, and the sluggishness, and drowsy torpor of good. And in what case are we to please others by our converse, that have so much cause to be always, in a very great degree, displeased with ourselves?

When death shall have disencumbered, and set us free from all sorts of distempers, and brought us into the state of perfect and perfected spirits, how delectable will that society be! when all shall be full of divine light, life, love, and joy, and freely communicate, as they have received freely! How pleasant will it be, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God! To converse with angels! those wise, kind creatures, so full of profound knowledge and benignity; instructed by long, uninterrupted experience and observation of the methods of the divine government, and dispensation; highly pleased with our accession to the general assembly, that rejoiced in the conversion of a sinner, whereby but one was hereafter in due time to be added, much more in the glorification of so many, that are now actually added to them! What delightful communings will there be of the mysteries of nature! of the methods of providence! of the wonders of grace! of the deep and hidden counsels of God! In what part it shall be agreeable to his wisdom and good pleasure, to let them appear and stand in view.

The conferences at the transfiguration made the transported disciples say, 'tis good to be here; when the glory which, while it oppressed, pleased them. Though this

s 1 Thess. ii. 13. t Tit. i. 2. u Rom. xiv. 17. w Psal. xxxiv. 8. x 1 Thess. ii. 8.

was but a transient view. But above all that is conceivable in that other state, how delectable will their society be in worship! In their unanimous adoration of the everblessed God, Father, Son, and Spirit! In how pleasant eternal raptures of delight and praise will all those excellent creatures be, that inhabit and replenish the vast realms of light and bliss: when all behold how the several kinds of being, light, life, excellency, and perfection, by a perpetual efflux, spring from the first, the Fountain of all being, the Parent of so glorious and so numerous a progeny, all God-like, and bearing the bright image of their Father! O the inexpressible pleasure of this consociation in worship, perpetually tendered with so absolute a plenitude of satisfaction in the dueness of it! and the gustful apprehension of what those words import, Worthy art thou, O Lord! each one relishing his own act, with just self-approbation and high delight: heightened by their apprehended perfect unanimity, and that there is among them no dissenting vote. Whence it cannot be but to worship God in spirit and truth must be to enjoy him. And that he is under no other notion, the more satisfying object of our enjoyment, than as he is the object of our worship. What room or pretence is there now left for unwillingness to die, on the account of relatives we have been wont to converse with in this world; when such an exchange as this is to be made by dying! But,

II. We are also to consider, There might be an intermixture in the temper of this good man's spirit, when he uttered these words, of somewhat faulty and blameable; which we are to be cautioned against.

(1.) There might be too little consideration had of the dignity and value of human life; of which the great God takes so particular care to guard and sustain it, both by law and providence. And of this creature man, so noble a part of divine workmanship, and whom he set over all the works of his hands, in this lower world. To propound throwing away at once so many such lives, seems somewhat too precipitant.

(2.) The words seem not to savour enough of that deference which is due to the God of our lives; whose prerogative it is to kill and to make alive; to measure our time, and number our days. It might have been said, at least, If God will, &c.

(3.) There might be in them too little gratitude for the mercies of life, or patience of the difficulties of it; somewhat like that of Jonah, Take now, I beseech thee, my life from me.

(4.) Too little regard to the business of life. It might have been more at leisure considered, Is the business done I was born for? Their special business, who were to be the apostles of our Lord, already called, (Matt. x. 1, &c.) and instructed in great part of the work of their calling, was apparently too little considered, especially how or for what his Lord was to die himself, so far as either from his own words, or from the prophets, might have been collected.

(5.) Nor, perhaps, enough, how awful a thing it was to die, to change states, and pass into eternity! This might, upon this account, be too hastily said. Good old Simeon seemed to have considered the matter more, when he said, Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, &c.

(6.) And there is reason to apprehend, in these words, too much displicency at the providence of God, in taking away such a man now at such a time; with some appearance of despondency concerning the Christian interest. This Lazarus is thought to have been a wealthy man, though he in the parable is represented otherwise. Christianity was, as yet, a little thing in the world. Our Lord had signalized himself by his wonderful works, and drawn many eyes upon him, that were at a gaze; but his heavenly doctrine, and the true design of his coming, had entered into the minds of but a few, and they of the meaner sort. Had any of the rulers believed ou him? It was yet a dubious twilight, the dawning of the morning. The Spirit that was to convince the world, was not yet given, for Jesus was not yet glorified.[y] Nicodemus, a rabbi, came to him, but by night. This cause, as still, according to human estimate, depended much on reputation. Men loved (till an overpowering influence bore down all before it) the praise of men more than the praise of God;[z] and believed not, because they sought honour one of another.[a]

It was, now, a mighty loss to have one such man drop, that lived so near Jerusalem, where our Lord's great work did much lie, but where he chose not to lodge: this was in Bethany, but two miles off, a convenient retreat. The master of the house is himself dislodged; and whereas though the foxes had holes, and the birds nests, the Son of man had not where to lay his head;[b] this disciple might probably think, Where shall be our next resort? Where is there a considerable person to be found, that will hereafter give us harbour and countenance? He might hence be induced even to utter his *conclamatum est*; and to this purpose say, now he is dead, Let us all go die with him. Their Lord and Master had before told them, of his being ere long to be taken from them; and, that his followers must count upon taking up their cross daily. And what, might he think, is to become of us, upon whom, left desolate, the stress is to lie of the Christian cause! What storms will be raised against us, whose province it must be, to plant and propagate a new religion in the world! the tenderest concern in all the world, and about which men are most apt to be enraged at any attempt of innovation! And by us, unlearned, uninterested, obscure, and contemptible men! By what he here says, he seems not afraid to die; but he seems afraid to live, and face the storm, and contend with the difficulties of that even hopeless undertaking, which he perceived himself and his companions designed unto. Rather than this, he seems to apbend a present death was to be chosen.

And I, now, no way doubt, but any serious person, that shall be at the pains to commune with himself, will judge, there may be such quick turns of thoughts this way; and that, as those opposite senses of this passage do import, the variety and contrariety of principles that are in us, in this imperfect state, makes it no impossible thing, but that, amidst the various agitations of a musing mind, somewhat of grace and somewhat of sin, yea much of a holy and heavenly temper, with some degree of incogitancy, haste, and faulty distemper, might be vented together in such an expression.

And now for the use of it, we must have distinct respect to both these sorts of sense, which the words may admit of. And,

1. For whatsoever of good sense they have in them, let us endeavour to have it deeply impressed, and inwrought into our souls. So far as, upon good and self-justifying accounts, one may wish to die with another eminently holy and good, let us labour to be in that temper of spirit, that with all reverential submission to the wise, holy, and sovereign will of God, we may ever be ready to go with the first; a good man should need only leave to die. Consider, are we so loose from all worldly enjoyments and designs, as to be capable, when a holy man dies, of adopting these words, Let me die with him? Will they fit our spirits? Can we so far comport with them, as to avow it with a heart not reproaching us, that it is only obedience to the Supreme Ruler, not terrene inclination, that makes us willing to survive such as we see going off this stage before us? that if he, in whose hands our breath is, will have us still live, we can submit with patience; if he signify his mind we shall die, we can comply with gladness? But,

Do we find it otherwise? Doth the bent of our own spirits urge and press us downward, and fix us to the earth? Are we so within its magnetism? We have a worse evil to fear than bodily death. To be so carnally minded is death, in a far more horrid sense. This temper of mind, to prefer an earthly abode before the purity and bliss of the heavenly society, is so repugnant to the most constituent principles of a living Christian, his faith of the unseen world, his delight in God, his love of the Divine presence, and converse with the Father and Son in glory, his hatred of sin, and desire of perfect holiness, that he should rather take another name, than wear that of a Christian, in conjunction with the allowance of so unchristian a spirit; a temper that tends to subvert whole Christianity, and puts a man into a posture of hostility against the cross of Christ, and the very design of his dying. For in contradistinction

y John vii. 39. chap. xvi. 8. z Chap. xii. 43. a Chap. v. 44. b Luke ix. 58.

to them, whose conversation is in heaven, and from whence they look for the Saviour, are they become the declared enemies of his cross, who mind earthly things;[c] preferring an earthly before the heavenly state. And the apostle tells such (weeping, as he wrote) that their end will be destruction. This I must therefore say, and testify in the Lord, that if any will indulge themselves in such a temper of spirit; and whosoever goes, even of the most excellent of God's saints and ministers, they would (because they love the present world more) stay with the last; as to such, our preaching is vain, and their faith is vain. But if there have been any within the compass of your knowledge and acquaintance, of whom dying, or lately dead, you could say, Let me die with him, or die to be with him, of whom would you rather say it, than of the excellent Dr. Bates.

But do you expect I should give you a distinct and full account of him? Many of you know, or may easily apprehend, I have not been in circumstances by which it could be so much as possible to me. The surprising, overwhelming tidings of his death, with the signification of my being expected to do this part, first reached me, by just estimate, at about two hundred miles' distance. Nor did any thing to that purpose, from such as were concerned, come to my hands till a fortnight after his decease. At my return, towards the end of the week preceding this sad solemnity, I had my own charge, from which I had been long absent, to provide for against the Lord's day; after which only one day intervened, wherein thoughts that accompanied me in my way, were to be reduced into some order. But had I had never so much time and leisure, I cannot but reflect on what was said of that famous Roman, to give the just praises of Cicero, *Cicerone laudatore opus fuerit :*[d] *There was need of Cicero himself to be the encomiast.* No man knows how to speak becomingly of the excellencies of Dr. Bates, that hath not the eloquence of Dr. Bates! He did that office most laudably for divers others, for those reverend and truly great men, Dr. Manton, Mr. Clarkson, Dr. Jacomb, and the admirable Mr. Baxter. But now there is no man left to do it suitably for him, *i. e.* that both is fit and willing. So that this part comes to be devolved upon the unfittest among many.

Yet thus, while others have declined it, out of a modest opinion of its being above them, whose abilities, and conveniencies for the performance, did much more concur: this looks like an art and contrivance of Providence, to greaten him the more, that every one reckons him too great for their commendation: and that, consequently, he is to pass out of our world as one too big for our praises, with no encomium, or that which is next to none.

Though I first had the opportunity and great pleasure of his acquaintance above forty years ago, yet I have no present way while I am writing this, of knowing, or recollecting, with certainty, any thing of the earlier days of his life. As therefore the case is, the little I shall say of him, shall be, not by way of history, but of character. Nor in giving somewhat of that, can one well omit—

First, To take notice of, what must with every one come first in view, *viz.* his self-recommending aspect, composed of gravity and pleasantness, with the graceful mien and comeliness of his person. That was said upon no slight consideration of the nature of man, from unbribed common estimate, that whatever a man's virtuous endowment be, it is the more taking and acceptable, as coming—*e pulchro corpore, from a handsome well-framed body.* God had designed him to circumstances, and a station, not obscure in the world, and had accordingly formed him with advantage; so that his exterior, and first aspectable part, might draw respect. And though the treasure to be lodged there, was to be put into an earthen vessel yet even that was wrought, *meliore luto*, of finer or more accurately figured and better turned clay. He was to stand before kings;[e] you know in what relation he stood to one, as long as was convenient for some purposes; and how frequent occasion he had of appearing (never unacceptably) before another. His concern lay not only with mean men,[f] though he could tell also how to condescend to the meanest. His aspect and deportment was not austere, but both decently grave and amiable, such as might command at once both reverence and love; and was herein not a lying but a true picture of his mind.

I may (to this purpose) borrow his own words (and whose I could more rightfully borrow, or to so much advantage?) concerning that excellent person, Alderman Ashurst, whose fragrant memory will long survive the age he lived in. And, O that his example might govern in London as long as his name lasts! Of him the Doctor says,[g] A constant serenity reigned in his countenance, the visible sign of the divine calm in his breast; the peace of God that passes all understanding! And who could have said this but Doctor Bates! or so appositely have applied what had a higher author! So expressively! so fully! so truly! and justly was it spoken! But also, of whom could this have been more fitly said, than, *mutato nomine*, of Dr. Bates! How rarely should we see a countenance so constant and so faithful an index of an undisturbed, composed mind! Through that, if we look into this, how rich furniture of the inner man should we soon perceive and admire!

His natural endowments and abilities appeared to every observer, great, much beyond the common rate. His apprehension quick and clear. His reasoning faculty acute, prompt, and expert: so as readily and aptly to produce, and urge closely, the stronger and more pregnant arguments, when he was to use them; and soon to discern the strength of arguments, if he was to answer them. His judgment penetrating and solid, stable and firm. His wit never vain or light, but most facetious and pleasant, by the ministry of a fancy, both very vigorous and lively; and most obedient to his reason; always remote both from meanness and enormity. His memory was admirable, and never failed, that any one could observe, not impaired by his great age of seventy-four: insomuch, that speeches made upon solemn occasions, of no inelegant composition, (some whereof the world hath seen, though extorted from him with great difficulty, and by much importunity) he could afterwards repeat to a word, when he had not penned one word of them before. And his sermons, wherein nothing could be more remote from ramble, he constantly delivered from his memory. And hath sometime told me, with an amicable freedom, that he partly did it to teach some that were younger, to preach without notes. His learning, and acquired knowledge of things, usually reckoned to lie within that compass, was a vast treasure. He had lived a long, studious life; an earnest gatherer, and (as the phrase is) [h] devourer of books. With which he had so great an acquaintance, and they that were acquainted with him so well knew it, that one, who was for the dignity of his station, and the eminency of his endowments, as great a pillar and as excellent an ornament of the church, as any it hath had for many an age, hath been known to say, that were he to collect a library, he would as soon consult Doctor Bates, as any man he knew He was, indeed, himself a living one.

He knew how to choose, and was curious in his choice, Whatsoever belonged to the finer, and more polite sort of literature, was most grateful to him, when it fell into a conjunction with what was also most useful. Nothing mean was welcome into his library, or detained there, much less thought fit to be entertained and laid up in the more private repository of his mind. To speak of the particular parts of his learning wherein he excelled, were to trifle, when there are so many visible effects extant, that enough inform the world. His divine knowledge, and the abundant grace of God in him, have been eminently conspicuous the same way, in great part; but otherwise also. For his private conversation was so instructive, so quickening, in reference to what lay within the confines of religion and godliness, that no man of ordinary capacity could hear his usual and most familiar discourses, but either with great negligence, or great advantage.

When he hath been to consider a case of conscience, I have sometimes had opportunity to observe, with what wisdom, what caution, what tenderness, he hath spoken to it, and with what compass of thought; turning it round this way and that; most strictly regarding our sacred rule, and weighing all circumstances that concerned the case: but withal, taking occasion from thence (when the persons

c Phil. iii. 18, 19, 20.
e Prov. xxii. 29.
d Livius.
f Ibid.
g Epistle to the Funeral Sermon for Mr. Benjamin Ashurst, dedicated to Sir Henry.
h Helluo.

concerned have not been present) to magnify and adore the grace of God; which he would do most pathetically, and with great affection; for keeping us out of the way of temptation; which he thought was too little considered by Christians; and thereby saving us from the entanglements and perplexities of spirit, as well as from the scandals that befel many. I never knew any more frequent and affectionate in the admiration of Divine grace, upon all occasions, than he was; or who had a deeper sense of the impotency and pravity of human nature.

His discourses were usually (as our rule directs) savoury, as seasoned with salt, and such as might minister grace to the hearers. He was frequently visited by persons of higher rank, and that made no mean figure in the world. Of whom, some have acknowledged, that going abroad upon hazardous employments, they have received from him such wise and pious counsels, as have stuck by them, and they have been the better for afterwards. Though in his communing with the many friends, whom he irresistibly constrained to covet his most desirable society, he did not exclude the things that were of common human concernment, he still discovered a temper of mind most intent upon divine things. He did not look with a slight or careless eye upon the affairs of the public; but consider, and speak of them as a man of prospect, and large thought, with much prudence and temper; not curiously prying into the arcana of government, or reasons of state, which it was necessary should be under a veil; much less rudely censuring what it was not fit should be understood: but what was open to common view, he was wont to discourse of instructively, both as lying under the direction of Providence, and as relating to the interest of religion.

Nor was he wont to banish out of his conversation the pleasantness that fitly belonged to it; for which his large acquaintance with a most delightful variety of story, both ancient and modern, gave him advantage beyond most; his judicious memory being a copious promptuary of what was profitable and facetious, and disdaining to be the receptacle of useless trash. To place religion in a morose sourness was remote from his practice, his judgment, and his temper. But his discourses, taking in often things of a different nature, were interwoven with religion, and centred in it; especially such things as were most intimate and vital to it; of those things he was wont to speak with that savour and relish, as plainly showed he spake not forcedly, or with affectation, as acting a part; but from the settled temper and habit of his soul. Into what transports of admiration of the love of God, have I seen him break forth! when some things foreign, or not immediately relating to practical godliness, had taken up a good part of our time. How easy a step did he make of it from earth to heaven! Such as have been wont, in a more stated course, to resort to him, can tell, whether, when other occasions did fall in, and claim their part in the discourses of that season, he did not usually send them away with somewhat that tended to better their spirits, and quicken them in their way heaven-ward? With how high flights of thought and affection was he wont to speak of the heavenly state! Even like a man much more of kin to that other world than to this! And for his ministerial qualifications and labours, do I need to say any thing to themselves, who had the benefit thereof? Either them, who have so many years lived under his most fruitful, enlightening, quickening, edifying ministry? Whether week by week, as his beloved, peculiarly privileged charge at Hackney, that mournful, desolate people! who have been fed with the heavenly, hidden manna, and with the fruits of the tree of life that grows in the midst of the paradise of God; so prepared, and presented to them, and made pleasant to their taste, as few besides have ever had: but now sit in sorrow, hopeless of full, or any equal relief, but by transportation into that paradise itself, whence all their refections were wont to come! Or do I need to inform such inhabitants of London, as in a doubled three monthly course, have for many years, in throng-assembly, been wont to hang upon his lips? To whose, if to any one's in our days, the characters belonged, of thei wise, and the righteous man's lips, which are said to disperse knowledge; and (which is therefore most agreeable) to feed many. Or can it be needful to acquaint the world, who have volumes of his discourses or sermons in their hands? Or tell them of their singular excellencies, who can as well tell me? I can speak to none of his great worth and accomplishments, as a richly furnished, and most skilful dispenser of divine knowledge, and of the mysteries of the Gospel of Christ, an instructed scribe, able to bring forth of his treasury things new and old; but who may say to me, as those Samaritan Christians, We believe him to be such, not because of thy saying, for we have heard (or read) him ourselves. And they may say so with judgment upon this proof, that shall consider both the select, choice, and most important matter of his tractates and sermons, published or unpublished. And the peculiar way and manner of his tractation thereof.

For the former: the choice of subjects; and of such materials of discourse as are to be reduced and gathered into them, discovers as much of the judgment, spirit, and design of the compiler, as any thing we can think of. When we consider what sort of things a man's mind hath been exercised and taken up about, through so long a course and tract of time; we may see what things he counted great, important, necessary to be insisted on, and most conducing to the ends, which one of his calling and station ought to design and aim at. And are thereupon to appeal to ourselves, whether he did not judge and design aright, and as he ought? As what could be of greater importance, than to discover the harmony of God's attributes, in the work of saving sinners? the final happiness of man? the four last things, &c.? What more important than that of spiritual perfection? Which last he dropped, as Elijah his mantle, when he was to ascend into that state, most perfectly perfect; wherein that which he had been discoursing of finally terminates. Read it, and invocate the Lord God of Elijah, saying, Where is he? Nor were his discourses of less consequence, that, in his stated course, he delivered to his constant hearers. They were always much allied to the lamp, and did not need to fear the brightest light. His last sermon in this place (who of us thought it the last! hearing it delivered with so much life and spirit?) challenges our re-consideration over and over. 'Twas about sins against knowledge, from Luke xii. 47. A warning to the age, uttered (though not faintly) as with his dying breath. O that it could have reached ears and hearts, as far as the concern of it doth reach! The sins of our days, of professors, and of others, are more generally sins against knowledge, than heretofore, and may make us expect and dread the more stripes that text speaks of.

As for his manner and way of handling what he undertook, we may use the words which he recites from the incomparable Bishop Wilkins concerning Mr. Baxter; which, no doubt, if there had then been the occasion, he would have judged not unapplicable here also: That he cultivated every subject he handled, and had he lived in an age of the fathers, he would have been one. His method, in all his discourses, might be exposed to the most critical censurer. What could be more accurate! And for his style, it was even inimitably polite, and fine; but to him so natural, that it was more uneasy to have used a coarser style, than, to others, so neat a one as his was. Nor is it to be thought strange, that there should be in this a peculiarity; style being to any man, as appropriate upon the matter, as his visage or voice: and as immediately depending on the temper of the mind, in conjunction with fancy, as that is, more or less, brisk, lively, and vigorous; as the other do on the complexion of the body, or the disposition of the organs of speech. They that would in this case attempt to force nature, would, I suspect, be very awkward at it, would bungle scurvily, and soon find, they had better be content to creep on all four, than aim to fly and soar with borrowed wings, or stolen feathers. If God with a man's nature gives a disposition of this kind, it may, in his younger years, admit of innocent improvement: but that which is most peculiar to any, in this respect, is what one insensibly slides into, with no more design than one hath to walk after this or that manner; by which yet many persons are known, and distinguishable from other men.

But I doubt not, that excellency in any such kind, as hath been anciently observed of poetry and oratory, must

i Prov. xv. 7. chap. x. 7.

have its foundation in nature; and they that will strive against that stream, will soon perceive, that such proverbial sayings were grounded upon prudent observation and long experience, That a Mercury is not to be made of every log; and that Nothing is to be attempted *invita Minerva, or against one's genius*, and natural inclination. Therefore that monition, *Lege historiam, ne fias historia*, one may vary and say, *Cave, &c. Take heed of a proverb, lest thou become a proverb.* That is easy and pleasant which is natural.[k] And now when the grace of God supervenes, and doth exalt and sublimate nature, it makes that mean beginning, and its progress into use and custom, which is said to be a second nature, subservient to very high and excellent purposes; as is eminently conspicuous in the Doctor's peculiar way of preaching and writing: especially in his frequent most apt similitudes and allusions, to be attributed to a brisk and vivid fancy, regulated by judgment, and sanctified by divine grace, so as greatly to serve his pious purpose; to illustrate the truth he designed to recommend, and give it the greatest advantage of entering into the mind with light and pleasure; and at once both to instruct and delight his reader or hearer. And so much more grateful have his illustrations been, by how much the more they have been surprising, and remote from any forethought in them that read, or heard. And I may here freely put his most constant attentive hearers upon recollecting, whether he have not usually pleased them, by surprising them? (For I know there are surprisals ungrateful enough.) And in most sermons, whether they did not meet with what they did not expect from him; and might in vain have expected from any body else.

Some, it is possible, may find fault with that in this kind, to which they can do nothing like themselves; who yet, I hope, may admit of conviction of their own fault herein, by gentler means, than by being put in mind of the fable. They might upon the matter as well find fault, that God had made him a taller man than the most, perhaps than themselves; or of a more comely complexion, or that all were not of one stature, size, or feature. If any do, 'tis most probably such, to whom one may truly say, they blame what they could not mend, nor he help; at least, without much pain to himself, and to no purpose. One may venture to say, that in that fine way of expressing himself, which was become habitual to him, he much more pleased others than himself. For in the excellent Mr. Baxter he highly commends much another way, saying of him, "He had a marvellous felicity and copiousness in speaking. There was a noble negligence in his style: for his great mind could not stoop to the affected eloquence of words."[l] Very excellent men excel in different ways: the most radiant stones may differ in colour, when they do not in value.

His judgment in ecclesiastical matters was to be known by his practice; and it was such, that he needed not care who knew it. He was for entire union of all visible Christians, (or saints, or believers, which in Scripture are equivalent terms,) meaning by Christianity what is essential thereto, whether doctrinal, or practical; as by humanity we mean what is essential to man, severing accidents, as not being of the essence; and by visibility, the probable appearance thereof: and for free communion of all such, of whatsoever persuasion, in extra-essential matters, if they pleased. And this design he vigorously pursued, as long as there was any hope; desisting when it appeared hopeless, and resolving to wait till God should give a spirit suitable hereto; from an apprehension that when principles on all hands were so easily accommodable, and yet that there was with too many a remaining insuperable reluctancy to the thing itself, God must work the cure, and not man. Accounting also, in the mean time, that notwithstanding misrepresentations, it was better to cast a mantle over the failings of brethren, than be concerned to detect and expose them: knowing that if we be principally solicitous for the name of God, he will in his own way and time take care of ours. And in this sentiment he was not alone.

But now is this great luminary, this burning and shining light, (not extinct, but,) gone out of our horizon. We for a season rejoiced in this light, and are we not to mourn for its disappearance? Yet not without hope. O! the unconceivable loss of his domestical relatives! who in respect of his most private capacity and conversation, are deprived of such a head, father, and guide! Yet in this lies their advantage, that since nothing that is mortal can fill up his room, they are under a necessity to betake themselves thither, where the surest and fullest relief is to be had. Having in the mean time among mortals a far greater number of fellow-sufferers, and fellow-mourners, to bear a part with them in their sorrows, and ready to afford them all suitable consolation, than most in this world can be capable of expecting in such a case. Let those of his own peculiar charge, let those that were wont, though not so often, in a stated course, to hear him in this place, with all other his more occasional hearers, mourn, that they are to hear no more his weighty sentences, his sweet honey-dropping words: let them mourn that never heard to purpose, that were never allured, never won, that were always deaf to this charmer, though charming so wisely. Let those that have got good by him mourn, that in this way they are to get no more; those that have got none, that they have lost so much of their day; that they are to be addressed by this persuasive advocate for Christ and their own souls no more. Let his brethren, all of us, mourn, that we have lost so prudent, so humble, so instructive, so encouraging a guide, so bright an ornament from among us.

But let none of us mourn without hope. God will be a husband to the widow trusting in him, and the father of the fatherless, taking God in Christ for their father and their God. He hath not forgot the titles he hath assumed. He can also find or make for his widowed church, a pastor after his own heart: and the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, that gave his life for the sheep, though he was dead, is alive, and lives for evermore. All his hearers, though they are no more to hear his pleasant human voice sounding in their ears, if they attend and listen, may hear a divine voice crying after them, This is the way, walk in it. And let them know that the Gospel he preached is immortal, and never dies, though all flesh is grass; and his own books, though he is dead, yet speak. We his brethren were to follow him, as he followed Christ; who will himself be with us always to the end. The work wherein he was engaged was common to him and us. Herein if we follow him, though not with equal steps, faithfully endeavouring to turn many to righteousness, we shall shine as he doth, like the stars in the firmament, we need not be solicitous, though not with equal lustre; as one star differs from another in glory.[m]

The cause wherein he was engaged unto his death, and from which no offered emoluments or dignities could ever draw him, was not that of a party; for he was of none, and was of too large a mind to be of any, but that noble cause of union and communion with all Christians that hold the head. That cause is not dead with him. Now that he is dead, we are to say, as that is the voice of the Christian faith, of divine and brotherly love, Let us die with him, but not as it is the voice of despondency or despair. Let us covet to be with him in that blessed state; the reality whereof we believe, and of which our faith is to be to us the substance and evidence.

I know no good man that knowing him would not say, Let me die with him. I very well know who would: and if breasts could be laid open to inspection as by a glass, do know in whose breast this sense would be found, engraven as with the point of a diamond: O! that my soul were in his soul's stead; or if the Supreme Disposer had thought fit, or seen an equal fitness for translation, that I had died with him. But, knowing his much greater usefulness in this world, O! that I had died for him. For since 'tis expressly said, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren,[n] a life that could regularly and effectually have redeemed his, had been laid down for many, in that one of holy, prudent, heavenly Dr. Bates. This is the sense of one not weary, blessed be God, of the business of life, and that enjoys as much of the comforts of life as any man can reasonably wish, scarce any one more. But it

k Παν φυσικον ηδυ.

l In his Funeral Sermon, page 90.

m 1 Cor. xv. 41.

n 1 John iii. 16.

must be confessed, as this world was not worthy of this servant of Christ, 'tis become far less worthy now so excellent a person hath left it. His love, his converse, was pleasant beyond what can be expressed! 'Tis now a grievance not to have a part with the silent mourners, when lamentations could freely have been poured forth, without noise or interruption! As the case is, necessity lays a restraint, and leaves it an easier thing to die than weep out; otherwise can one be shy, in a way that can admit it, to tell the world, that to live in it, now he is dead out of it, much less deserves the name of life! It can be felt, that those words, among the many divine raptures of that holy man,[o] have a most perceptible meaning; "When I got health, thou tookest away my life; and more, for my friends die." If one may innocently borrow words from so impure a mouth, they are very expressive; I scarce count myself a man, when without Jamblichus.[p]

Here were two souls knit together as the soul of one man! What there is of present separation shall be but for a little while. And by how much the separation is more grievous, the re-union will be with the stronger propension, and the more delightful everlasting cohesion. As also separation from this terrene clog will be much the easier: one great weight is added above, to pully up what ought to ascend thither. How can that but be a blessed state, into which he that is essential love hath caught up such a man! One in so great part transformed before into the same likeness, and fitted to dwell in love! And accordingly God took him, even kissed away his soul, as hath been said of those great favourites of heaven; did let him die without being sick; vouchsafed him that great privilege, which a good man would choose before many, not to outlive serviceableness. To live till one be weary of the world, not till the world be weary of him! Thus he prayed wisely, thus God answered graciously.

But be it far from us to say, Let us die with him, as despairing of our cause; if our cause be not that of any self-distinguished party, but truly that common Christian cause, of which you have heard. While it is the Divine pleasure to continue us here, let us be content and submit to live and own it, to live and serve it, to our uttermost. If ever God design good days to the Christian church on earth, this is the cause that must prevail, and triumph in a glorious conquest over death. But I must freely tell you my apprehensions, which I have often hinted, that I fear it must die first; I mean a temporary death; I fear it, for it hath been long gradually dying already; and spiritual diseases which have this tendency, are both sinful and penal. Lazarus's death and resurrection I think to have been meant, not only for a sort of prolusion to the death and resurrection of Christ, both personal, but mystical. I only say this for illustration, not for proof. That sickness and death of his, was not in order to a permanent death, but for the glory of God, that when the case was deplorate and hopeless, and he four days buried, he might surprisingly spring up again alive. I know not but the sickness and death of this our incomparably worthy friend, and (for ought I know of many more of us) may be appointed the same way to be for the glory of God; that is, as tending to introduce that death which is to pass upon our common cause; which such men help to keep alive, by their earnest strugglings, though in a languishing, fainting condition every hour.

o Herbert.

Think me not so vain as to reckon exclusively the cause of dissenters the cause I now speak of; no, no, I speak of the common cause of all serious, sober-minded Christians, within the common rule or without it. I neither think any one party to include all sobriety of mind, or to exclude all insobriety. But I apprehend converting work to be much at a stand, within the pales that men have set up, severing one party from another, and without them. Few are any where brought home to God through Christ. And God knows too few design it, otherwise than to make proselytes to their several parties: and this is thought a glorious conversion. Serious piety and Christianity languishes every where. Many that have a name to live are dead, and putrified, already stink! Common justice and righteousness are fled from among us. Sincerely good and pious men die away in the natural sense apace. You know if deaths and burials should, in the weekly bills, exceed births, and other accessions to the city, whither this tends. When so many great lights are withdrawn, both such as were within the national church constitution, and such as were without it; is there no danger God should also remove the candlestick?

Our obduration and inseosible stupidity portends a deadly darkness to be drawing on. And must such lives go, to make a way for God's anger? and lead on a more general and more dreadful approaching death? Oh! that God would rend the heavens and come down! He may yet melt our hearts, and make them flow at his presence, notwithstanding their mountainous, rocky height and hardness. This may be the means of saving some souls, and of deferring the common calamity. A great thing it would be to have it deferred. What a privilege would many servants of Christ count it, not to live to the day when the Spirit of the living God shall be generally retired and gone; and atheism, scepticism, infidelity, worldliness, and formality, have quite swallowed up our religion! While such men as we have lost lived, they did, and such do, as instruments, keep somewhat of serious religion alive, under our several forms, but as ready to expire. But though it should seem generally to have expired, let us believe it shall revive. When our confidences and vain boasts cease, The temple of the Lord! the temple of the Lord! Lo, here is Christ, and there is Christ; and one sort ceaseś to magnify this church, and another that, and a universal death is come upon us; then (and, I am afraid, not till then,) is to be expected a glorious resurrection, not of this or that party; for living, powerful religion, when it recovers, will disdain the limits of a party. Nor is it to be thought that religion, modified by the devised distinctions of this or that party, will ever be the religion of the world. But the same power that makes us return into a state of life, will bring us into a state of unity, in divine light and love. Then will all the scandalous marks and means of division among Christians vanish; and nothing remain as a test or boundary of Christian communion, but what hath its foundation, as such, in plain reason, or express revelation. Then as there is one body and one Spirit, will that Almighty Spirit so animate and form this body, as to make it every where amiable, self-recommending, and capable of spreading and propagating itself, and to increase with the increase of God. Then shall the Lord be one, and his name one, in all the earth.

p Julian Epist. ad Jambl.—αν—μη συνω.

A FUNERAL SERMON,

FOR THAT VERY REVEREND AND MOST LABORIOUS SERVANT OF CHRIST IN THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY,

MR. MATTHEW MEAD,

WHO DECEASED OCTOBER 16, 1699.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE JOHN AND FRANCES, THE LORD AND LADY HAVERSHAM.

May it please your Honours,

The request of the mournful widow, and other relatives of the worthy person deceased, concurring with my own inclination, left with me no room to deliberate concerning this inscription. I easily apprehend how quick and deep a sense you both have of the loss of such another valuable person from off this earth; having so lately borne your part, in lamenting the decease of one you much valued also. Upon which account I put into your hands a discourse on those words, John xi. 16. Let us also go, that we may die with him.

Such persons leave this world so fast, that it grows a more difficult choice with whom to live, than with whom to die. When on that sad occasion I did set myself to consider that passage of Holy Scripture, I had seen some expositors that made it a doubt whether that were meant of Lazarus, or of our Lord himself. Some of good note thought the latter: for which, was plausibly to be alleged what we find *v.* 8. and that in this verse 16. the words were spoken not to Christ, but to the fellow-disciples. That doubt was not to have been moved in an assembly, where was neither time nor a fit season to discuss it. And though I might more conveniently, I shall not say much to it now; only I judge, that without necessity the present coherence was not to be torn. When by the series of discourse the same *him* seems plainly to be referred to, in the close of the 15th verse, and of this 16th—Lazarus is dead, *v.* 14—nevertheless, let us go to *him*, *v.* 15.—Let us also go, that we may die with *him*. It was little needful to say to Christ, Let us go, whose mind appeared set upon going already; but to the disciples who drew back. Besides, that reverence might restrain from saying this to our Lord, when what was to be proposed was matter of hortation, not of inquiry. Though sometimes they feared even to ask him a question also; as Luke ix. 45. And they might the rather be now under a present awe, from the rebuke, or expostulatory answer, he had given them, for their objecting against going into Judea. Especially, so as not to signify a remaining fear, which he had so newly checked. Therefore Thomas's speech, directed to his fellow-disciples, but not out of Christ's hearing, (for we have no reason to suppose that he separated them from him, that he might say this to them apart,) is so ordered, as not to import fear of death, but love to the deceased.

If any should object, that Thomas could not mean dying *with* Lazarus, when he was told he was already dead. That scarce deserves answer to any one that understands the latitude of the particle rendered with, especially, that it frequently signifies after, and not always with. And very often notes nothing of time at all. And therefore may here mean no more, than let us go that we may die too, or die as well as he. All this I say, not that I have heard any person in our days object against, or plead for, this or that sense of these words; but knowing they have been differently understood, and this being the first opportunity I had to take public notice of the difference, I am not ill pleased that I have now this occasion of representing it to so competent judges, partly to prevent objection, or at least to show with what temper of mind any such different apprehensions, in matters of no greater moment, ought to be looked upon. Nor shall I here vie authorities of commentators that have gone this way, or that, in this matter. Therefore I name none: only some, of as great name as any, have judged this the more probable opinion, which I have followed.

Many instances might be given, wherein, when matters extra-essential to the sum of our religion, are delivered, one sense must be pitched upon, though another, very divers (of which there cannot be two) is not to be demonstrated impossible. In which case, I must prefer a tacit following that which one chooses, before a conceited confidence, and crying down of the other. For confident clamour neither admits light, nor tends to enlighten any body.

In the present case, it makes no difference to any disadvantage. For if we desire to be united in death, or in that state to which it introduces, with this or that holy man; to be with our blessed Lord in that state, must be much more desirable. But the departure of the excellent ones of the earth from it, leaves us less here of present attractive, and gives us a very threatening prospect and presage of what we are to expect for the future.

Your lordship's great respect to this servant of Christ, was even hereditary, and descended to him, by you, from your family; as I have often heard him acknowledge, with great sense of obligation. And, Madam, your ladyship's great value of him, though it might take its first rise from so near and judicious a relative, could not but receive a great increase from his known worth, and your own discerning judgment. I pray, not doubting it, that with whatsoever kindness you have received any prophet, or other servant of Christ, in that name, you may have a proportionable reward; and am, my most honoured lord and lady,

Your most obliged, humble servant,
in the work of the Gospel,
JOHN HOWE.

I Tim. iv. 16.

—Thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

THESE words I principally design to insist upon at this time, and on this sad and mournful occasion; but not without retrospection to the foregoing verse, and the former part of this; which runs thus: verse 15. Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. Ver. 16. Take heed to thyself, and thy doctrine; continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee. This whole foregoing context contains precepts, which, reduced to practice, afford an eminent example and pattern of a true Gospel preacher, or, as the words are, ver. 6. Of a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine. As these last words show the blessed end and issue of such a one's ministry, *i. e.* that he shall save himself; which must be looked upon as certain: and them that hear him; *i. e.* as much as in him lies, he shall herein do his part, and what is incumbent upon him, to the saving of his hearers. These latter words hold forth the double end which a minister of Christ is to pursue, the saving his own and his people's souls. The foregoing words, considered in reference to these, contain the *proper means* he is to use in order to this two-fold end. *i. e.* He is to meditate much on the great things of the Gospel. He is to be wholly *in* them,[a] as the words literally import which we read. He is to give himself wholly *to* them. He is to be continually increasing in the knowledge of God, and that so as not to know only to himself, but so as to make known what he knows. He is especially (though that be the common duty of Christians) to turn all to the use of edifying, Eph. iv. 29. that his profiting may appear to all. For though Timothy was at this time a young man, yet the most grown did always need to be still growing. None have here attained their *ne plus ultra*, but may still write for their motto, *plus ultra*, all their days; even Paul the aged, as he writes himself to Philemon, tells the Philippians, (both those epistles being dated from Rome, and supposed to be written about the some time, when he was first there,) that he had not yet attained, in point of the transforming knowledge of Christ, chap. iii. 10, 11. And unto what pitch soever he grew, it was still in order to communication. He writes to the Corinthians, that he determined to know nothing among them;[b] which is so to know, as to make known, nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. And to the Ephesians, that he would have them understand his knowledge in the mystery of Christ;[c] no doubt that their salvation might be promoted thereby. And hereupon, in great part, depends a minister's own salvation; as hereafter will further appear. But besides, he is to take heed to himself, and see to the good state of his own soul; he is to take heed to his doctrine, not to corrupt, or handle deceitfully the word of God, but represent it sincerely, and as the truth is in Jesus. He is to continue in them; *i. e.* in the things he before exhorts him to meditate on, and be wholly in them; to continue in the faith of what was to be believed; and the practice of what was to be done, and in pressing and insisting on both. And all for the mentioned ends, that he might both save himself and those that hear him. And it is this two-fold end of a minister's care and labour, that will take us up at this time. This is that therefore, which, as God shall help, I am to evince and apply, *viz.* That a minister of Christ is to make it his business, both to save himself and his hearers.—I am, as the text directs, to speak of these two ends conjunctly.—And here I shall not spend time, or use a liberty beyond what is obvious and useful, in inquiring into the counsel of God, why he makes use of such in order to the saving of others, as need to be saved themselves also. But shall principally insist, that since it appears to be God's pleasure to make use of such, they should therefore most earnestly concern themselves, and be very intent upon carrying on this design, *viz.* of their own, conjunctly with that of their hearer's salvation. Yet as to the former of these,

1. Somewhat it may be requisite to say, concerning this course and method, which we find the wisdom and good pleasure of God have pitched upon, for the carrying on a saving design in this world; to make use of such for the saving of others as do need to endeavour the saving of themselves. And here I shall briefly show—1. How it is to be understood;—2. How the fitness of this course may be evinced.

As to the former, we shall briefly note; that we must be cautious to understand aright, how, and in what sense, any one can be said to save himself, or another. Therefore,

(1.) It must be understood so, as to keep at a remote and awful distance from intrenching upon a divine prerogative. It being most expressly said, Isa. xliii. 11. I, even I, am the Lord, and besides me there is no Saviour; and chap. xlv. 21, 22. There is no God beside me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none beside me. Look to me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. Which plainly signifies, that in the highest sense, to save, is most appropriate to Deity, especially with an everlasting salvation, as 'tis expressed, ver. 17. of this chap. xlv. Israel shall be saved, in or by the Lord, with an everlasting salvation. And that to be so a Saviour, is equally incommunicable, as to be God. How gloriously doth he triumph in this excellent peculiarity of the Godhead, in his expostulations with Job, chap. xl. 9. Hast thou an arm like God? *q. d.* "Come, let us compare; stretch out that weak, withered, ulcerous arm of thine. Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency, array thyself with glory and beauty; try if thou canst make thyself shine in God-like splendour; cast abroad the rage of thy wrath; behold every one that is proud and abase him. Try thy power upon thy fellow-mortals. See if thou canst crush all the haughty ones of this world, bring them down, and bind their faces in the dust of the grave. And (to recall thee to the greater things mentioned before) try if thou canst form me such another earth as this, establish its foundations, lay its corner-stone. If thou canst countermand the motions, bind up the influences, of the stars in the heavens;" then will I confess unto thee, that thy own right hand can save thee, ver. 14. It is, it seems, as much above created power to be a Saviour, as to be the Creator or Ruler of the world. And how should we dread to think of usurping the title and office of the great Immanuel, the Saviour, who is therefore called Jesus, because he was to save his people from their sins, Matt. i. 21.

(2.) Yet there is a true sense wherein the saving act and power are otherwise and very variously ascribed. Sometimes to faith, Luke vii. 50. Thy faith hath saved thee. Sometimes to hope; We are saved by hope, Rom. viii. 24. Sometimes to baptism, 1 Pet. iii. 21. Baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, &c. Sometimes to husbands and wives in reference to one another, 1 Cor. vii. 16. So is the Gospel called the Gospel of our salvation, Eph. i. 13. And to you is the word of this salvation sent, Acts xiii. 26. So are we exhorted to save ourselves, Acts ii. 40. And others, Jude 23. Others save with fear. Thus in lower matters, is the act of writing, for instance, ascribed to the pen, to the hand that uses it, and to the writer himself, that moves both, and we have no difficulty to understand those different forms of speech: nor is there a greater difficulty in the present case, so to ascribe to the creature the low subordinate agency, which in distinct capacities may belong to it, as in the mean time to reserve to God and Christ the supreme agency, which is most peculiar and appropriate to divine power and grace, 1 Pet. i. 5. Eph. ii. 8.

2. We now come next to show, that it was very manifestly agreeable to the most accurate wisdom of God, to employ such in the design and work of saving others, as were themselves concerned, and needed to be saved too, that were to be upon the same bottom themselves with the rest; and to venture their own souls, and their everlasting concernments, the same way, and into the same hands. And this we shall labour to clear and make evident by degrees.

(1.) It was fit, since creatures were to be employed in this work, to make use of intelligent creatures, such as could understand their own errand, and act with design in pursuance of it.

(2.) Mankind was universally lost, so as all do need being saved themselves.

[a] Ἐν τουτοις ισθι. In a better than the Poet's sense, scire tuum nihil est.

[b] 1 Cor. ii. 2. [c] Eph. iii. 4.

(3.) Therefore no intelligent creatures else could he employed herein, but the unfallen angels.

(4.) We may adventure to say after God, and when he hath so determined the matter himself, though it was not fit for us to have said it before him, as if we would direct the Spirit of the Lord, or as his counsellors would instruct him, Isa. xl. Rom. xi. that it was more suitable to make use to this purpose of sinful men, than of sinless angels. Let us sever and lay aside herein, what may at first sight seem specious, but is really not considerable in this matter, as that men, in the same miserable circumstances with those whom they are to persuade, that they may save them, will be so much the more earnest and importunate, use so much the more pressing arguments, as having been upon the brink of hell and the borders of destruction, for we suppose such as are most likely to promote the salvation of others, to have been made sensible of their own undone, lost state, and to be in a way of recovery themselves. But hereupon it may also be supposed, they will therefore so much the more pathetically plead with sinners. Their knowledge of the terrors of the Lord will urge them to persuade men, 2 Cor. v. 11. and make them eloquent at it. But what? more than angels? When the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. supposes one speaking with the tongue of men and angels, doth he not intend a gradation, and signify the latter far to excel? And are we to suppose that the benignity of their own natures, their kindness to man, and their perfect conformity, and obediential compliance and subjection, to the will of their sovereign Lord, would not have obliged them to do their uttermost, if he had sent them upon such errands? We cannot doubt it. But,

[1.] It is apparent that what the blessed God doth in pursuance of this saving design, he doth to the praise of the glory of his grace, and that it might appear the more conspicuous, in the whole conduct of this affair.

[2.] That it is not within the compass of any created, no, not of angelical, power, to change the hearts of men, and turn them to God. If angels were the constant preachers in all our assemblies, they could not with all their heavenly eloquence convert one sinner, if the immediate divine power did not exert itself. The people are willing in the day of his power, who was God-man, as Psal. cx. 3. The Jews at mount Sinai received the law by the dispensation of angels, yet kept it not, Acts vii. 53.

[3.] Yet if God should put forth his own power, by such a ministration; if angels should appear in glorious array among us, and speak to men with greater advantage, and more persuasive eloquence, than we can conceive; and marvellous effects by divine concurrence should ensue; those great effects among a sort of creatures led by sense, and who judge by the sight of the eye, would all be ascribed to the visibly glorious instrument, not to the supreme Agent, who is invisible and out of sight; even as in effects of another kind, the invisible power and Godhead that do all, are little regarded by stupid man, whose dull eye stays and rests in the visible outside, and fixes his mind there too.

[4.] Therefore the rich treasures of the Gospel are put into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be, *i. e.* might appear to be, of God, and not of the inferior instrument, 2 Cor. iv. 7.

[5.] In this way of dispensation, wherein God speaks to men liable to the same passions with themselves, he accommodates himself to their frail state, who cannot bear glorious appearances; and to their own option and desires, who say to Moses, (Exod. xx. 19.) Speak thou to us and we will hear, but let not God speak to us lest we die. When they had heard the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words, accompanied with thunders and lightnings, they entreated that they might hear no more, Heb. xii. 19. The celestial glory, while our mould and frame is dust, doth more astonish than instruct. Those soft and pleasant words, This is my beloved Son,—hear him, spoken by a voice from the excellent glory in the transfiguration, made the disciples that heard them sore afraid, and fall on their faces, Matt. xvii. How would it unhinge the world, and discompose the whole state of civil affairs, if all conversions were to be as Saul's was, when he became Paul, with such concomitant effects, not only on himself but all others present, especially being wrought (as most conversions may be) in numerous assemblies, the convert struck blind for some days, and all that were in the place speechless! Perhaps we have one such instance to let us see how inconvenient it were such instances should be common, or that this should be God's ordinary way of converting and saving sinners.

[6.] The holding of men in this world under the ministry of men, not of angels, in reference to the affairs of their salvation, is certainly more suitable to the condition of probationers for eternity, and another world; and more aptly subservient to the business of the judgment day, when all the talents men were intrusted with, their natural endowments and faculties, as well as additional advantages, are to be accounted for. We shall hereafter understand better, but may, in good measure, conjecture now, why there is so fixed a gulf by the wisdom and counsel of God, between the two worlds, the visible and the invisible, and so little commerce between them.

And whereas in the Old Testament the apparition of angels was more frequent, that passage, The world to come being said not to be put in subjection to angels, seems to signify, the time after the Messiah's appearing should be more entirely left to the conduct of a Gospel ministry, as the connexion, Heb. ii. ver. 4, 5. intimates.

[7.] And though the compassions of men, who have been in danger to perish themselves, cannot be supposed more powerfully to influence them, unto an earnest endeavour of saving them that are in the like danger, than the kindness and benignity of angels would do, if they were so employed; yet their concern to save others, who are also to be saved themselves the same way, is likely, more easily, more generally, more sensibly, to be apprehended by those others, to whom they are to apply themselves upon this account. They have kinder thoughts of one another than they are like so have of a superior order of creatures. Their own flesh and blood is nearer akin to them; yea, they are more apt to love one another (and consequently to apprehend one another's love) than the blessed God himself. Which is more than intimated in that of that holy apostle, 1 John iv. 20. He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen? Things affect us not merely as they are, but as they are understood. Ministers cannot be kinder to men's souls than the blessed angels, among whom there is a joy for the conversion of a sinner, much more pure, exalted, and sublime, than a human breast is capable of; and, in proportion, more fervent desire of such conversions: but their propensions towards us, though they should be expressed by counsels and precepts that tend to our good, would be less apprehended by most men; they carrying a severity with them, which makes them need such insinuative recommendations, as slide more easily into their minds from creatures of their own order.

[8.] Our Lord himself was so concerned for the saving of souls, as who could be besides? But though before the flood he is said to have preached to the old world, 'twas by his Spirit in the ministry of Noah, a man like themselves, to whom he preached. But when he thought fit to preach immediately himself, he put on flesh, and dwelt, or did tabernacle, among men as one of them, John i. 14. So Moses foretold: A prophet like to me shall God raise up, him shall you hear.[d] So his terror was not to make us afraid. And though his compassionateness towards us is argued from his being tempted, and compassed with infirmities,[e] as we are, that cannot be understood as if hereby he became more gracious and merciful towards us in himself, but his being so, was the more apprehensible to us.

[9.] The steadiness of the course God hath taken in this matter, shows what his judgment was of the fitness of it; who doth all things according to the counsel of his own will, Eph. i. 11. 'Tis observable, that when our Lord was now about to ascend, he fixes a ministry that he promises his presence unto, always, or every day, unto the end of the world, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Ascending on high he gave (among other) these gifts to men, (even to the rebellious, Psal. lxviii.) apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, Eph. iv. 8—11. And that he might put an

d Acts iii. 22. from Deut. xviii.

e Heb. iv. 15.

honour upon this ministry, when he designed the Gospel to be preached to Cornelius, and his relatives; though he prepares Peter by a vision, and sends an angel to Cornelius, 'twas not to preach to him, but to direct him to send for Peter to preach to him and his; who tells him, when he fell at his feet, I also am a man, Acts x. We are human preachers, though from a Divine Master and Lord; and of a divine word.

II. But now the mind and counsel of God being sufficiently evident in this matter, both in the fact and in the fitness of it, to make use of such, for promoting the common salvation, as do need themselves to partake therein; we come now to show, that the ministers of the Gospel of Christ ought to be very intent upon the business of their own salvation, conjunctly with that of them that hear them; and of theirs with their own. There is a double obligation meeting upon a minister of the Gospel; that of the law of nature, and of the law of his office; he is to comply with both. Nature obliges him to intend his own salvation; his office, theirs that hear him. The same authority lays him under the one obligation and the other. For he that is the author of nature, is the author of his office too.

1. He ought so to mind the concern of his people's salvation, as not to neglect his own. This is so evident in itself, that it would be superfluous to speak to it, were it not that we, as well as they to whom we preach, do need to be put in remembrance of very important things, though we know them, 2 Pet. i. 12. To know and to consider, we not only may distinguish, but do too often separate. And there are divers things to be considered to this purpose.

(1.) That the royal law, as 'tis called, James ii. 8. which requires us to love our neighbour as oneself, makes love to ourselves, *i. e.* not merely which we bear, but which we owe to ourselves, the measure of that which we ought to have for our neighbour. And that which ought to be the measure in any kind, should be the most perfect in that kind; and must oblige us to love first our most noble self, our own souls.

(2.) 'Tis gross hypocrisy to seem earnestly intent upon saving other men, and to be neglectful of one's own salvation. 'Tis sin only which endangers both; meant by the mote and the beam, Matt. vii. 3, 4, 5. And our Saviour, we see there, stigmatizes such a one with the brand of a hypocrite, that is officious to take out the mote from his brother's eye, but never concerns himself to cast out the beam from his own eye.

(3.) 'Tis a scandalous and an ignominious absurdity, as the apostle's sharp expostulations imply, Rom. ii. 19—22. to take upon oneself to be a guide to the blind, a light to them that are in darkness, to take up with having a form of knowledge and of the truth in the law; and to teach others, and not to teach oneself! Preachest thou (as he adds) a man should not steal, and dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? thou that makest thy boast of the law, by breaking the law dishonourest thou God? This is that which makes the name of God be blasphemed among the Gentiles; as he tells us 'tis written, referring to some texts in the Old Testament, Ezek. xvi. 47—52. chap. xxxvi. 22. 'Tis a blackening thing when it can be said, I was keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept, Cant. i. 6. Our Lord speaks of it as a reproachful proverb, which he, knowing the hearts of men, observed some were apt to misapply to him, Luke iv. (noted to have been in use among the Greeks, and which with that empire had reached Judea,) Physician, heal thyself. It would be very opprobrious to us who are in the ministry, if it conld be truly said to us, we seem concerned at the diseasedness that appears in our flocks, but overlook the diseases and distempers of our own souls. That was meant for a bitter reproach to our Lord dying upon the cross, He saved others, himself he cannot save. To us, if it might be truly said, it must be a just reproach as well as bitter; our saving ourselves being our duty enjoined us, and tending to the saving of others; whereas our Lord's saving himself, in the sense intended by those scoffers, was against the law he was then under; and against his own design, tending to overthrow it, and leave them to perish, whom he was dying to save.

(4.) The observable neglect of the design to save our own souls, would defeat and destroy the other design of saving theirs that hear us. For who can think us serious in our preaching, or that we believe ourselves in what we say, if we manifestly decline ourselves that way of salvation which we propose to others? We tempt men to infidelity if we live like infidels.

It was a cutting repartee made by an atheistical person, to one, that leading an ill life, yet professed to wonder that the other, the argument for a Deity being so plain and cogent, did not own there was a God; the other replied, he much more wondered, that he who did own him, should yet live as he did! This tends to overthrow all our preaching. Though our Saviour directs to do as they said, who sat in Moses' chair, not as they did; because they said and did not; yet he did not thereby justify those self-repugnant teachers; for his reflection upon them is sufficiently severe. And we are to consider in the case, not merely what man's duty is, but what their dispositions are. Not what they ought, but what they are apt to do. If they think we do but act a part, when we speak never so movingly to them, they will be little moved by all that we can say. They will be more apt to conclude, that we who have studied and searched into the matters of religion more than they have done, have found some flaw at the bottom, and perceive the very foundations of it to be infirm; and therefore practice not according to the doctrines and rules of it. But that for our gain, because it was the calling we were bred to, and we know not how else to live, we are content, and some way constrained, to keep up the forms we found in use; and maintain them that they may maintain us.

(5.) Yet when it shall be found, as upon strict inquiry it cannot but be, that the foundations of religion are more firm than those of heaven and earth, how dismal will it be to have preached to others, and ourselves to be cast away! I Cor. ix. 27. For as by loose, licentious walking, we hazard other men's souls, which we should endeavour to save; so we more certainly lose our own. God may save them some other way, and by other, more apt instruments; but we have little reason to expect that we shall save our own, either while we design it not, (as if we were to be saved by chance,) or, much less, if we counteract any such design. Which we may, most destructively by that single instance, which the apostle, in that last-mentioned place, refers to; an indulgent intemperance; or not keeping our bodies in subjection; in servitude, or in a serviceable temper, as the word δουλαγωγεῖν imports, to subdue them into the state of servants; wherein rather than fail, one would use the severity which this other word ὑπωπιάζειν there signifies. It is plain, that if we live after the flesh we must die, Rom. viii. 13. There is one law for ministers and people. And it is only by the Spirit we are so to mortify the deeds of the flesh that we may live. How dismal when a minister's own breath poisons him! when the very Gospel which he preaches is a deadly odour to himself! How horrid when a shepherd is the leader of the Epicurean herd!

(6.) But if by neglecting visibly the Gospel way of saving himself, he not only hazard but actually destroy other men's souls, together with his own, he then perishes under a much heavier load of guilt, than another man can, that was not under his obligations. As his obligation was double, so is his guilt. When sinful, vicious inclination hath depraved his mind, put out the eye of his practical understanding, so that the blind leads the blind, both fall into the ditch; but he falls much the deeper, having the other's destruction charged upon him, together with his own. Such teachers as bind heavy burdens for others, which they will not touch, fall under an aggravated wo. And the case is the same with them that prepare and set before their hearers the most nutritive and delectable fare, which they will not taste. And for that reason, perhaps, the people will not feed on them, because the preachers themselves too evidently appear to have no taste or relish of them.

† 2 Cor. ii. 16. οσμη.

2. The ministers of Christ ought to conjoin the serious design and earnest endeavour of saving them that hear them, with the design and endeavour of saving themselves. They are not to be so bound up within themselves, as only to mind their own things, though of this most noble kind.

(1.) The law of nature obliges them to it, which extends its obligation as far as human nature extends. And must therefore include them with the rest of mankind under the same common notion, *viz.* them who are ministers, not as they are such, for nature hath not made them ministers, but as they are men. Whom the royal law, mentioned before, requires to love their neighbour as themselves; and therefore to seek another's felicity, not before, but as their own. We are taught to count it an unnatural barbarity, when we see any pressed and pinched by bodily wants and miseries, to hide ourselves from our own flesh, Isa. lviii. 7. How much more, if we see immortal souls in danger to be lost and perish, that are of the same make and capacity with our own!

(2.) The law of Christ, as such, obliges Christians to the same thing. Which is not, in this instance, therefore a diverse law, but hath a different stamp and impress, as being the law of the kingdom of God in Christ. We are to bear one another's burdens, so fulfilling the law of Christ, Gal. vi. 2. What so weighty a burden can there be upon any man as this, the importance of his eternal salvation? And which is plainly here referred to, when we are required to endeavour the restoring of such as have been overtaken, and lapsed into sin, by which the precious soul is hurt and endangered; should they be left to sink under such a burden. Christians are elsewhere required to have compassion on such as they see in such danger, to save them with fear, and pull them as firebrands out of the fire, Jude 23. These are obligations common to ministers with others. But,

(3.) The law of their own office lays upon them an obligation peculiar, as such, to themselves. What serves their office for, but this, as the principal end and design of it? What is it meant for, but to gather in souls to Christ, and confirm them in him? Because there is salvation in no other; nor is there any other name given among men, by which any can be saved, Acts iv. They are the messengers of the glad tidings of peace. Their business is so well known, even in hell itself, that a spirit from thence speaks it out, These are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation, *i. e.* to human creatures, of whom the possessed person was one, Acts xvi. 17.

(4.) They are obliged by the example of their blessed Master, our Lord Jesus himself, the primary Saviour by office; whom they are both to imitate, and to serve in this merciful design. Christians are so far to imitate them, as they do Christ, (1 Cor. xi. 1.) which implies their obligation to imitate him, as the word *μιμηταὶ*, there used, signifies. The great salvation, which none that neglect, can escape vengeance, began to be spoken by the Lord himself, then by them that heard him, and so on, by others that succeed in the same office. This is following Christ in the way of imitation, as in the mentioned place. And we are required to have the same mind in us, which was in Christ, Phil. ii. 5. and are told wherein, ver. 6, 7, 8. which read over at leisure, and consider, what was that deep humiliation and suffering for, but the salvation of souls. And consider that this is said, as to the saints at Philippi, so particularly to the bishops and deacons there; which shows their common and their special obligation both together. And now, can we behold with what compassions and in what agonies, even unto blood, our blessed Lord pursued this design, and not feel a constraint in our spirits, in our lower sphere, and capacity, to serve it also to our uttermost?

(5.) They are obliged by the peculiar advantages they have for this work, and those they expect by it.

[1.] They have special advantages for it from their very calling, being separated to the Gospel; taken off from other business, to give themselves (as in this context) wholly to this. They are supposed therefore to know more of the concernments of souls, of the terrors of the Lord, (2 Cor. v. 11.) whence, therefore, they are to persuade men; of the nature of sin, and how it entangles men's spirits; of the wiles of Satan, and how he waits for advantages to destroy them; of the foundations of religion, and by what arts they are endeavoured to be subverted and shaken, and by what means and methods they are to be demonstrated or established; of the mysteries of the Gospel of Christ, and how they are to be unfolded; to have more special assistances from heaven in their work, according as they faithfully mind it: Christ's promised presents therein, even to the end. These are talents, with others, tending to the obtaining of these, which they are to be accountable for. And hereby they are strongly obliged, with their own, to intend earnestly the salvation of other men's souls.

[2.] They expect great advantages by it: that since nothing is more grateful to our Lord Christ, than the progress of this saving work, he will bountifully reward them that faithfully serve him in it: that if they be steadfast and immovable, abounding in this work of the Lord, (as he hath not a greater, now in doing, in this world,) their labour in him shall not be in vain. They shall hear from him, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord. If they turn many to righteousness (or endeavour it with sincere minds) they shall shine as stars in the firmament. And in the mean time, the honour and the pleasure of serving that mighty Redeemer, and lover of souls, in so glorious a design, have in them a very excellent reward; and which cannot but be esteemed such by a right mind.

(6.) They are obliged by the exigency of their own case. They cannot, as that is stated, neglect the design of saving other men's souls, without forfeiting their own. If they warn them not, over whom, as watchmen, they are set, they perish, but their blood will be required at their hands. It is a mighty trust they stand charged with, which if they discharge not, they are liable to accusation and condemnation, as false and faithless servants; perfidious to the souls of men; traitorous to the King of kings—whose interest they will have betrayed, being his agents and ministers in his kingdom of grace; about the prosperous state of which kingdom, with the successful progress of the affairs of it, he is most deeply concerned.

And now from this conjunct consideration of these two great ends, which a minister of Christ is to propound to himself, I might proceed to consider them severally, and apart; but this the case doth not require, it being easy to sever what hath been said to the one and the other; nor do our limits allow it.

We therefore go on to the more necessary use of the whole. To this purpose we collect,

1. That this world is universally in a very miserable state. For it is the business of Christ's ministers, to endeavour both the salvation of them that hear them, and their own.

(1.) The salvation of them that hear them. This is very indefinite; let who will be the hearers, they are supposed to be such as need to be saved. The object of their ministry is all nations, and every creature, *viz.* that is or shall be capable of being taught the way of salvation. Therefore all nations are deluged by the destructive evils, from which they are to be saved; and the world is every where inhabited by miserable creatures. We are told, that sin and death have passed upon all men, (Rom. v. 12.) and all the ends of the earth are invited to look unto God in Christ, (as the application of this context, Phil. ii. shows,) that they may be saved, Isa. xlv. 22. Whereas wherefore the ministers of the Gospel of salvation, wheresover they can obtain to be heard, are to endeavour the salvation of their hearers; it shows they can speak to none who stand not in need of saving mercy.

(2.) And that they are also to save themselves as well as them that hear them, more fully shows the absolute universality of the ruin that hath befallen this world; that there are among men none to be found that may be employed in saving others, but who are of the lost themselves, and so far drowned in the common deluge of perdition and destruction, as to need his help, as well as the rest, who came to seek and save them who are lost; and to stretch out to him craving hands, with that crying voice, Lord, save us, we perish.

2. The common stupidity of this wretched world, is hereupon most observable and amazing, that so few such cries are sent up to heaven! Men are involved in a common ruin, overtures are made to them of a common salvation,

but they are in reference hereto destitute of common sense, *i. e.* of such sense as is common in less important cases. Their misery lies in their having lost God; but little do they apprehend this loss. Amidst their other miseries, they cry out when some that are mightier oppress others, but none says, Where is God my Maker? Job xxxv. 9, 10. The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if any will understand, and seek after God; but they are every one gone back, or are in an averse posture; none doth this good, no, not one, Psal. xiv. and liii. None, till he give an effectual touch to their drowsy spirits; and say, inwardly and vitally, to their hearts, Seek ye my face, so as to make their hearts answer, Thy face, Lord, will we seek, Psal. xxvii. 8. Preventing grace doth this, otherwise they feel no need of God, they miss him not, are content to be without him in the world; yea, say to him, Depart from us. Distance from him is chosen and desired; from him whose offspring we are, who is the Father of spirits, their parent, their life, their blessedness; of whom they are, and to whom if they tend not, they cannot but be miserable. It is the salvation of the soul that is the end of faith, (I Pet. i. 9.) that faith by which we are to come to God, believing that he is, and will be, the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; being redeemed to God by the blood of his Son, (Rev. v. 9.) and who suffered once, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, (1 Pet. iii. 18.) and who upon his suffering intercedes for the same purpose; and is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him, because he ever lives to make intercession for them. But this salvation of the soul, this coming to God, or redemption by Christ, and his intercession thereupon, who looks after? Neither the end, the salvation of their souls, coming back to God, nor his method for attaining this end, are regarded, or so much as thought on. To have this flesh saved from any thing that is grievous to it, every one covets, and endeavours in vain; it must, however, rot in the dust, and be, in the mean time, a prey to worms. Its own father, mother, and sister, will devour it, Job xvii. 14. The Father of their spirits would save and satisfy them, but him they shun, and will not know.

Who that observes how men spend their days, even under the Gospel, which makes their time a day of grace, wherein they should be working out their salvation, can think they have any concern to be saved? Their life is continual trifling, some pass their days in mirth and jollity; doth this signify any sense of misery, or fear of perishing, and that destruction from the Almighty is a terror to them? These are not more idle, than others are idly busy to get estates, and a name on earth; but what is this to their being saved? They are liable to the common more sensible miseries of life, and they are without God; but this is no misery with them. This misery is their element, and burdens them not. Were their present case, and future danger, in this respect, apprehended and felt, how full of outcries would this world be; O we are lost and perishing! Such cries would ring through the earth, and pierce heaven! But the same carnality that is death, (Rom. viii. 6.) and makes them miserable, makes them stupid too, and insensible of their misery. And are these reasonable souls, intelligent, immortal minds and spirits, that are thus stupified! turned into such clods and stones! O deplorable case! Methinks such an office set up in the world, of men that are to save their own and other men's souls, should make them consider, and bethink themselves, What is it for? It must have had an original, and so it hath a divine aspect, a taste of heaven upon it; and must have an end suitable to the wisdom and grace of Heaven, which claims to be entertained otherwise than with neglect and contempt! And indeed this leads to take notice more expressly, in a further inference,

3. That there is a saving design on foot in the world; set on foot by the blessed God himself. Otherwise in so great a ruin as is come upon this wretched world, what could it signify, for any man to offer at saving either himself or others? How vain an attempt were it for any man, out of so deep and horrid a gulf of impurity, misery, darkness, and death, to think of lifting up himself, and of plucking up others, as high as heaven! This intimation carries hope with it. It is a voice from heaven to such as are so employed, as Timothy was, O save thyself, and as many as thou canst besides. It takes away all pretence for despair; God puts not men upon vain attempts. A lively hope ought to spring from hence. And we are saved by hope, (Rom. viii. 24.) as without hope no man would ever design for salvation, or any thing else. Hope is the engine that moves the world, keeps the intelligent part of it in action every where. No man could rationally stir in pursuit of any design, whereof he despaired. But as to other designs, men's hopes are commonly self-sprung, and end in shame. But when one can say, Lord, thy word hath caused me to hope; thou hast put me upon aiming to be saved, and to save others, it speaks this to be a just and a hopeful undertaking. I will therefore set about working out my own salvation, (and with my own, other men's, as far as is within my compass,) expecting he will graciously set in with me, and work in order hereto, to will and to do of his own good pleasure, without which all mine will be lost labour.

4. We further collect, That the blessed God is most intent upon this design. That which this supposes, and that which it imports, speaks him intent. It supposes he hath appointed a sovereign Saviour set over this work; otherwise there could be none subordinate. It imports he hath settled an office on purpose; made it some men's special business, to intend (as every one ought) his own salvation, and withal to give himself up to this great work, the saving all he can. An office set up for the saving of souls ought to be a great thing in our eyes; and is a standing testimony for God, how willing he is men should come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved.

5. They that bear this office should be highly honoured for their work's sake. For how glorious an employment is it to be instrumental to salvation! to be in any kind saviours! I could tell you of some great princes in the pagan world, that to their other splendid titles have had the addition of *Soter, a Saviour;* as to some others, the Destroyer of Cities hath been given as a name of reproach. And you do know who hath the name of Apollyon, or Abaddon, Rev. ix. 11.

6. It highly magnifies the wisdom, power, and sovereignty of God, that he can and will make use of so mean instruments, for so high and glorious a purpose. For what end and purpose can be greater than the recovery and salvation of souls, so deformed, miserable, and lost, as the souls of men universally were? And what instruments could be meaner, or more vile, than such as needed to be saved themselves, with the same salvation? That God should make use of them who were darkness, (Eph. v. 8.) to enlighten the world, (Matt. v. 14.) of such as were but sinful flesh, (John iii. 6.) to be able ministers of the Spirit, (2 Cor. iii. 6.) of such as had minds that were enmity against God, (Rom. viii. 7.) to reconcile men to himself, (2 Cor. v. 20.) these are some of the wonders he works among the children of men. When he hath converted some to use them (first for the converting of others, and then) for the strenghening of their converted brethren.

7. The ministers of Christ are to be examples to them over whom they are set. They are to be so in the beginning of their course, in their first turn to God, though then in a more passive sense, That I might be a pattern, &c. saith the apostle, I Tim. i. 16. and in their after course, as in this context, ver. 12. Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, &c. They must be leaders in the whole way of salvation, from first to last.

8. Pride in the ministers of the Gospel, and in them that live under a Gospel ministry, is a most monstrous absurdity: for what are we, all of us, but a company of wretched creatures, just perishing, and only (at the best) but in the way of being saved! What have such to be proud of?

9. Both Christ's ministers, and their flocks, are under the greatest obligation imaginable unto union. For their case is one and the same, their miseries were the same, their dangers the same. They must all have the same Saviour, the same way of salvation, and the same end; the same state of salvation, which all the nations of the saved are to be brought to at last, Rev. xxi. 24.

10. 'Tis an unquestionable thing, that salvation is to be designed for by all sorts. Ministers must aim to save

themselves and their hearers. And is the minister to design his people's salvation, and not they their own? They have mean thoughts of salvation that stumble here, as if they were only to be saved from hell-flames! But to be saved from sin that makes us unlike God! to have his image and his love perfected in us, to be with the rest of the elect partakers of salvation, with eternal glory, is that mean? 2 Tim. ii. 10.

11. The ministers of the Gospel must, some time or other, be taken away from their work. It is time, a limited duration, within which their work and business lie, for the saving themselves and those that hear them. They are to save themselves. This end they are to pursue; and it must some time be attained. They are not always to labour, and never rest: some time they are to receive the fruit of this their labour, and the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls. As more time passes, their salvation draws nearer than when they believed; they are not always to be in saving, and never saved. In mercy to them, God will translate them; and may it not be in judgment to many, whom they earnestly laboured to save, but who rejected their counsels, and strove against their own salvation! That they may not always labour in vain for themselves, and because they have laboured in vain for many others, they must be withdrawn from their hard and toilsome labour, and enter into rest.

12. The loss is great, and grievous beyond all expression, above all our lamentation, when such are taken away as have made it their business to save themselves and those that heard them. In their endeavour to save themselves they have been great examples. In their endeavour to save others, they may have been great instruments of much saving good to many a soul. How few are they that drive such designs! How fast doth their number decrease! How fitly may we take up that of the Psalmist, when the godly man ceases, and the faithful fail from among the children of men! And what could be said with greater pathos, Psal. xii. 1. Help, Lord, as in a common ruin: Help, help, for God's sake, help, Lord, help! My friends you are not sensible you have lost such a one, even while you are not yet saved! while you yet need to be working out your salvation! The effectually called, 'tis true, are saved, 2 Tim. i. 9. Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling.—And (which is in substance the same thing) the regenerate are saved: Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. iii. 5. But if this were the case of you all, how much yet remains to be done, in order to your full and consummate salvation! You have yet mighty difficulties to overcome; a body of death, which you are not yet delivered from. For are not these some of your groans, in reference to it, O who shall deliver us? A world full of troubles and snares; your adversary the devil, that goes about seeking whom he may devour; all the principalities and powers of the kingdom of darkness, that you are to contend with, and with whom you are to dispute every step of your way to heaven. And do you not need such a leader in that way? And if any are fallen into drowsy slumbers, do you not need his awakening ministry? If dead, how often hath the blessed Spirit breathed life into you, by his quickening ministry! How often hath God used him to enlighten you, when you have been in the dark; to clear up the great doctrines of the Gospel, when you have not distinctly understood them; to establish you in the faith, when you have wavered; to resolve you in matters of practice, when you have been in doubt; to encourage you in your fears and faintings, to comfort you in your sadness and sorrows! I wonder not that there are many weeping eyes, and should much wonder if there be not many aching, trembling hearts among you, for what you have lost, and from an apprehension how hard and almost hopeless it is, your loss should be soon or equally supplied.

He was long in preparing and forming to be what he was, when you lost him. His station among you in this neighbourhood, when first he undertook the pastoral charge of this church, over which the Holy Ghost made him overseer, required a man of as much wisdom and grace as any such station could well be supposed to do; considering how numerous, how intelligent, and well instructed a people, he was to take the care of. I well remember, that about three or four and forty years ago, being desired to give some help, on a Lord's day, to that eminent servant of Christ Mr. Greenhill, whose praise is still in all the churches, I then first heard him preach: and (if my memory fail not) he had about that time in hand some part of that excellent discourse of the Almost Christian: I had then the opportunity of beginning an acquaintance with him. His excellent good natural parts, his ingenuous education, his industry, his early labours in preaching the Gospel of Christ in his native country, in the city, and in this place; his conjunction and society, for some years, with that excellent servant of God before named; above all, the gracious assistances he had from heaven; gave him great advantages to be a minister of Christ, approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. And his multiplied years, unto the seventieth, with the continual addition thereby to the rich treasury of his experiences, still improved him more and more: so that there being no decay of his natural endowments, and a continual increase of his supernatural, you had the best of him at last: whereby indeed, your loss was the greater, but your obligation was also the greater, that God continued to you the enjoyment of him so long; and that in a serviceable state. But when he could be no longer serviceable in his stated, delightful work, it was by the decay not of the inward, but the outward man; so that when he could preach to you and converse with you no longer, he could earnestly and fervently pray for you to the end. And God did not afflict you, by leaving long among you only the shadow, the outside of the man, and of such a man!

He took little pleasure in embroiling himself or his hearers in needless and fruitless controversies. The great, substantial doctrines of the Gospel, were his principal study and delight; such as lay nearest the vitals, and the very heart of religion and godliness; and most directly tending to the saving them that heard him. The subjects which he chose to insist upon, from time to time, in the course of his ministry, showed as to this, his spirit and design. Having formed from the Holy Scriptures that scheme of thoughts which satisfied him, and gave him a clear ground, whereupon to preach the Gospel with an unrecoiling heart, he loved not to discompose it. His judgment in things which had that reference, being constantly moderate, and unexceptionably sound; remote from rigorous and indefensible extremities, on the one hand and the other. Hereupon he drove at his mark without diversion; not so much aiming to proselyte souls to a party as to Christ. And to engage men, as much as in him lay, to be sound and thorough Christians. Hitherto tended his sermons from year to year. The great subject he had in hand, and which he left unfinished, when God took him off from his public work, was manifestly pointed this way; *viz.* of the covenant of God in Christ. And his annual course of preaching a sermon on May day, to young men, had the same manifest scope and aim, with which his public labours were concluded. God so ordering it, that his last sermon was this year on that day.

His judgment in reference to matters of church order, was for union and communion of all visible Christians, *viz.* of such as did visibly hold the head, as to the principal *credenda* and *agenda* of Christianity, the great things belonging to the faith and practice of a Christian; so as nothing be made necessary to Christian communion but what Christ hath made necessary; or what is indeed necessary to one's being a Christian. What he publicly assayed to this purpose the world knows: and many more private endeavours and strugglings of his for such a union, I have not been unacquainted with: the unsuccessfulness of which endeavours, he said, not long before his last confinement, he thought would break his heart. He having openly, among divers persons, and with great earnestness, some time before expressed his consent to some proposals, which if the parties concerned had agreed in the desire of the thing itself, must unavoidably have inferred such a union, without prejudice to their principles; and on such terms, as must have extended it much further; else it had signified little. But this must be effected, as is too apparent, not by mere human endeavour, but by an Almighty

Spirit poured forth, which (after we have suffered awhile) shall καταρτίσαι, put us into joint, and make every joint know its place in the body, (I Pet. v. 10.) shall conquer private interests and inclinations, and over-awe men's hearts by the authority of the divine law; which now, how express soever it is, little availeth, against such prepossessions. Till then Christianity will be (among us) a languishing, withering thing. When the season comes of such an effusion of the Spirit from on high, there will be no parties. And amidst the wilderness desolation that cannot but be, till that season comes, it matters little, and signifies to me scarce one straw, what party of us is uppermost: the most righteous (as they may be voguced) will be but as briers, and scratching thorns; and it is better to suffer by such, than be of them. In the mean time, it is a mark of God's heavy displeasure, when persons of so healing spirits are taken away. And if it awaken any of us, that will tend to prepare us for the effects of it; which preparation seems a thing more to be hoped than prevention.

But this worthy servant of Christ sees not the woful day, whatever of it he might foresee. His removal makes to many, indeed, a woful day, and that all about him did long foresee. He was long languishing, and even dying daily: but amidst surrounding death, as a relation told me, there was no appearance of any the least cloud upon his spirit, that obscured the evidences of his title to a blessed eternity. Being asked how he did, he said, Going home, as every honest man ought, when his work is done. He was much in admiring God's mercies under his afflicting hand, saying, Every thing on this side hell is mercy: that the mercies he received were greater than his burdens, though in themselves grievous: that he rested upon that promise, that his Father would lay no more upon him than he would enable him to bear: that he expected to be saved only by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him. Though he well understood, as I had sufficient reason to know, that Christ's righteousness is never imputed to any, but where, if the subject be capable, there is an inherent righteousness also; that is no cause of our salvation, but the character of the saved. And having before precautioned some as were about him not to be surprised if he went away suddenly, he repeated the ejaculation, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; and renewing the former caution, by saying, Remember what I said before, as he sat in his chair, with all possible composure he bowed his head, and without sigh, or motion, expired in a moment. The sighing part he left to others, that stay behind: and I do even feel the sorrows of his most afflicted family, his mournful widow, his sorrowing sons and daughters, his destitute church; with all others that got good, or might have done, by his quickening, spiritful, piercing ministry; or had the advantage and satisfaction of his acquaintance and converse.

Your grief cannot but be measured by your love; and your love by his in the several kinds and objects of it: his conjugal, paternal, pastoral, friendly love, as he was an affectionate husband, a tender father, a vigilant pastor, and a pleasant friend. But withal, let your consolations be measured by the proper grounds thereof. It is a most improper, irrational, unchristian way of being comforted in such a case, only to let time wear away our sorrows. It is but a negative, a heathenish, yea a worse than heathenish method of receiving comfort. For I have observed it to be animadverted on, as an intolerable absurdity, by some among the heathens, that time should work that cure of grief and sorrow, which reason and prudence work not. And thus 'tis plain we shall be relieved, not by holy thoughts, but by not thinking. So it may in time be forgotten, that ever such a man as Mr. Mead was minister in Stepney! And what is this to Christian consolation?

But we need not wander from the text for a positive and a solid ground of comfort. Remember it was his business to save himself, and those that heard him. As you have no doubt of his salvation, which I believe none of you have, make sure of your own. Put on, with the breastplate of faith and love, that helmet, the hope of salvation. You are of the day, watch and be sober, as those that are not appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ, 1 Thess. v. 7, 8, 9. And then consider (as I doubt not many a soul will bless God for him for ever) how glorious a sight it will be to see him one day appear in the head of a numerous company of saved ones; and say, (as a subordinate parent in the apostle's sense, I Cor. iv. 15.) Lord, here am I, and the children thou hast given me.

In conclusion. For you of his dear and beloved flock, this may be directive to you as well as consolatory. Would you have a pastor after God's heart? Put yourselves under the conduct, as much as in you is, of such a pastor as you apprehend will be intent, in all his ministrations, upon this double end, to save himself and them that hear him. And labour to be perfect, be of one mind, and live in peace, so the God of love and peace shall be with you, 2 Cor. xiii. 11. And remember him as one that hath had the rule over you, and hath spoken to you the word of the Lord; and follow the faith of such, considering the end of their conversation; and that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. As you change pastors you will not need to change Christs, so as to have one yesterday, another to-day, and a third to-morrow. Pastors under the Gospel, as well as priests under the law, were many, because of death; but our blessed Lord, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood, Heb. vii. 24. Therefore do you never think of another Christ, as their doubt was, (Matt. xi. 3.) but cleave to this your great Lord with purpose of heart, till he give you at last an abundant entrance into his everlasting kingdom.

Let his mournful relatives, and all of you to whom he was dear, consider what our Lord offered as matter of consolation, in the most trying case of this kind that ever could occur to poor mortals; *i. e.* when he himself was to be taken away from his sorrowing family, and followers. It is but a little while; *q. d.* my words have a plain meaning: a little while, and you shall not see me, and again a little while, and you shall see me; and because I go to my Father. Ye now have sorrow, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy, and your joy no man taketh from you, John xvi. 20.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will: working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

A FUNERAL SERMON

FOR THAT FAITHFUL, LEARNED, AND MOST WORTHY MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL,

THE REV. PETER VINK, B. D.

WHO DECEASED SEPTEMBER 6, 1702.

TO THE

TRULY PIOUS MRS. MARY VINK, RELICT OF THE DECEASED.

My dear and honoured Sister,

The relation I stand in to you, by that union which some years since the good providence of God hath brought about between our families, obliges me, besides what I owe you upon the common Christian account, to partake with you in your sorrows, for this late afflicting loss; as I have, according to my measure, in the satisfaction of enjoying so pleasant and delectable a relative and friend. And I would not only bear my own much lighter part of this burden, but (if I knew how) ease and lighten your part. It ought to do much towards it (by helping you to poise and balance your burden) to put you in mind, that you have a greater and nearer relation left. Your Maker is your husband: God all-sufficient, in whom is immense fulness: who can be always present, and most intimately converse with your spirit; who never dies, and to whom your relation is eternal. Which are all, things not agreeable, or possible, to any earthly relative. This God is to be your God for ever and ever, and your guide unto the death; even in this wilderness, on this side death, where we most need a guide. Nor hath your most tender deceased consort otherwise left you alone. He hath left you with an observant son and his yoke-fellow, with a dear and only brother, that, it is to be hoped, will severally be found full of dutiful and brotherly affection towards you. And you have genuine relatives and branches remaining to you, daughter and daughter's children, that through God's goodness may be continuing and growing comforts to you.

And this season of your separation from so pleasant a companion and guide of your life, will be of no long continuance. It should occasion you to intermingle thanksgivings with lamentations, that your union and enjoyment continued so long; and for what remains the time is short. Therefore, they that lose such relations, are to weep as if they wept not—remembering that the fashion of this world passes away. Especially it ought to be considered, that such a sad parting will be recompensed by the most joyful meeting; when they that have slept in Jesus, God will bring with him; and the survivors, at that day, be caught up into the clouds, to meet their Redeemer (and, no doubt, the redeemed) in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord. Therefore let us comfort ourselves and each other with these words; which have a fulness in them richly sufficient for you, and for,

My dear sister,
Your sincerely affectionate, and
very respectful brother,
JOHN HOWE.

ACTS V. 20.

GO, STAND AND SPEAK IN THE TEMPLE TO THE PEOPLE ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LIFE.

The present speaker in this text is an angel of God; one of those blessed spirits from among the principalities and powers in heavenly places, who greatly delight, as you have lately heard,[a] and I hope are, God willing, further to hear, to be concerned about the affairs of God's church on earth. So that we depart not much from our former subject in diverting to this. But whereas the speaker was an immortal angel, and the subject spoken of words of life; these, you may think, are things very remote from the design of a funeral discourse: yet you are withal to consider, that the persons spoken unto were mortal men, Peter, with the rest of the apostles, whose lives were in jeopardy every hour. That they are so mentioned in this history, Peter, and the rest of the apostles; and what we find expressly recorded of him besides, that it was endeavoured the diseased might be put under his shadow passing by; and that he afterwards in this chapter is only named, with the addition, the other apostles, making their defence, being convened before the council, (ver. 29.) shows that Peter was more eminently active, vigorous, forward, and zealous in the work of Christ: but far from the affectation of principality over the rest. Quite another consideration may well be understood to have urged him; and which our Lord seems to refer to, when he said, Go, tell my disciples, and Peter. But he, with the rest, we are sure, were all mortals alike. And they were also, from time to time,

a Having a discourse in hand about this time, on Eph. iii. 10. To the intent that now unto the principalities, &c.

assemblies of mortals that they were directed to speak unto the words of life.

And, my friends, the very name of life cannot but have a grateful pleasant sound to them that dwell in the midst of deaths; to them that find the dark and dismal shadow of death continually spread over the whole region which they inhabit. When they find that death, in all its more gloomy appearances, hath so general a power over ministers and people, preachers and them that were to be preached unto; how pleasant is the mention of life, and such a life, as surmounts, as exceeds the sphere where any death can come; a sphere by itself all full of vitality, and in which death, or any shadow of death, can never find place! To be told of such a life, amidst surrounding deaths, cannot but be a pleasant and grateful thing to them that have sense enough, in reference to their present case, and any faith in reference to the future. Indeed the power of death appears so much the more absolute, and its commission is seen to be of so much the greater amplitude and extensiveness, that it equally reaches to preachers and hearers; must equally reach such men, as these apostles were, and all the people they were to speak to the words of this life. But so much the higher and more glorious are the triumphs of that life, the words whereof are here mentioned. For 'tis evident these words do mean and intend a life, into which every thing of death and mortality is to be swallowed up. And therefore though death do stop the breath of preachers, and the ears of hearers, it can never prevail against that word in which this life is wont to breathe. For though all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass; the grass withereth and the flower hereof falleth away; yet the word of the Lord endureth for ever, that word which by the Gospel is preached unto us, I Pet. i. 24, 25.

This indeed was an ancient and very eminent minister of the word of life, whose decease and death occasions this solemnity, and this discourse, now at this time. And it ought to please us so much the more, that while we are now to consider and lament the death of such a preacher, the word he was wont to preach shall never die. And that we are to consider at the same time, the life which such words do both concern and cause, is finally victorious over death in all the kinds and forms of it; a life hid with Christ in God; whereof he is the root and original, who avowed himself to be the resurrection and the life; and hath assured the partakers of this life, (whether preachers or hearers,) that when he who is their life shall appear, they shall also appear with him in glory, Col. iii. 3, 4 But so vain were the opposers of the preaching the words of this life, the obdurate, infidel Jews, that they thought to shut it up, and the preachers of it, within the walls of a prison; for that was the case here. A sort of men full of malignity and bitterness, especially as you read in the context, those of the sect of the Sadducees, who were the prevailing party at that time in their Sanhedrim, who believed nothing of a life to come, and had drawn in the high priest to be on their side; and who, as we read in the foregoing chap. ver. 1, 2. with the high priest, were grieved (pained as the word signifies) that they (*viz.* Peter and John, though the former was orator) preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead. These are (as they were before) the active, industrious instruments to restrain the preachers, and suppress the preaching the words of this life: they, as is said above, filled with indignation, laid hands on the apostles, threw them into the common prison, and there they think them and their word securely enclosed, and shut up together, that the world should never hear more of them. And did ever malice more befool itself! Could spite ever act or attempt a part more ridiculously absurd! Did they think to imprison celestial light! to bury immortal life! Heaven derides their attempt, and exposes them to be derided. For as we are next told, the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, (why made they not him their prisoner too?) and brought them forth, and said as follows in the text, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. These two things are here very plain,

First, That by this life is meant a peculiar sort of life; this life, της ζωης ταυτης, *this same life*, that was so highly predicated, and cried up at that time, so that no one could be in doubt what kind of life it was. It is true, out of those circumstances, when we use the phrase of this life, we ordinarily refer to the common affairs of this present life. But that it cannot be so understood here is most evident: the whole business under present consideration had quite another reference. The apostles had no controversy with the rulers of the Jews, about the affairs of this world, or of the best way of living a few days on earth; but what was the surest way of living for ever; and whether believing on Christ as the Messiah, he that was to come, were not that way. Their only contest with the people was (as his own was, while he was yet among them) that they would not come to him that they might have life. So here the angel of the Lord commanding these servants and apostles of his to preach the words of this life, using the demonstrative term ταυτης, this same life, this way of living, or obtaining life, now so much disputed, and which began to make so great a noise in the world; cried up by some, decried by others: this sufficiently distinguished it. There were more obscure notices of it before, but now it was more clearly revealed, and more loudly to be spoken out. The manner of expression signifies it to be a peculiar and more excellent sort of life, very diverse from, and far transcending, what is common to men; nor leaves us in any doubt of the angel's meaning.

Secondly, That the words of this life must necessarily mean the Gospel, *viz.* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whereof these were the ministers and apostles, bound by special office to diffuse to their uttermost this life and the words of it. Whence, therefore, for our own instruction, we may take up this two-fold observation:—I. That the Gospel contains, or is composed and made up of, words of a peculiar, and most excellent, and noble kind of life.—II. That it is the part of the ministers of this Gospel, even by angelical suffrage and determination, as they have opportunity, to publish such words, *i. e.* to preach this Gospel. In speaking to these two conjunctly, I shall particularly insist on these four heads, *viz.*

1. To show how peculiar and how excellent a sort of life this is.

2. To show you how usually and fitly the Gospel is so paraphrased, by the word or words of life, and of such a life.

3. To show you, that it cannot but be the part of the ministers of this Gospel, to preach the words of this life.

4. We shall also take the incidental occasion of observing to you, and insisting briefly on it, that they have the very suffrage of the angels of God to that purpose, that it is their part and business to preach the words of this life. And so shall make use of all.

1. We are to show the peculiar excellency of this life. That it is a peculiar sort of life, we have already noted from the angel's speaking so distinctively of it, calling it this life, this same life, that is now every where so much spoken of; that is the matter of present discourse, and of inquiry at this time. And that it is a most excellent, a most noble kind of life, the expression itself also doth not obscurely point out to us. That it is called *this life*, κατ' ἐξοχήν, life in the highest and most eminent sense. Never talk of this shadow, this dream of life, we are now passing through, but speak to the people the words of this life; this is a life worth speaking of. And the excellencies of it will appear in these several respects; as,

(1.) That it is most manifestly divine life; and not at the common rate, as all life is from God; but as it not only proceeds from God, but resembles him, bears his peculiar impress upon it; upon which account it is called the life of God, the divine life, in Eph. iv. 18. where the apostle, lamenting the sad and dismal state of the Gentile world, saith, that they were alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, and the blindness of their hearts. It is, in a very special sense, a God-breathed life; not as the natural life and soul of man were breathed at first from God; but as there was a peculiar divinity in this life, not only as coming from him, but as having in it a chosen dependence on him, and tendency towards him, by its own very essence, which the life of the soul of man, at first, had not. For if a voluntary dependence on God, and tendency towards him, had been essential to the natural life of a man's soul, it had been

impossible they should ever have been lost. Such a posture God-ward was agreeable, and connatural, not essential. But it now is proper and peculiar to this life; though still not essential, as it never was, but more deeply fixed in the soul by grace, than it was at first by nature, to tend to God, as it is by faith derived from him, as is expressed, Hab. ii. 4. Heb. x. 38. The just shall live by faith; and Rom. vi. 11. Alive to God; as by love it works towards him, Gal. v. 6. and Gal. ii. 19. I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. The soul was never otherwise dead, than it was dead towards God; and now, while in the present sense it lives, it lives by and to him. It being the steady, habitual determination of the soul God-ward, as its first and last, both in itself, and in the design of its implantation. And so is the imprinted image of the life of God himself, so far as the condition of a creature can admit, *i. e.* that as God lives of and to himself, the soul, by this life, lives not in a merely natural, (which is common to all creatures,) but in an apprehended and designed dependence on God, and subordination to him.

(2.) It is a Christian, as well as a divine life; a life that comes from God, not as Creator only, as all life, and as the life of our soul particularly at first did, with its very being, which involves life in itself; but a life that comes from Christ, as our Redeemer, as God-man, and Mediator betwixt God and man, whereof he is the immediate Author, and which he procured by his own death, and by his resurrection from the dead, wherein we partake with him, when we live this life. I am crucified with Christ, saith the apostle, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, Gal. ii. 20. To me to live is Christ, Phil. i. 21. He is the Author and Fountain, as well as the end of this life. 'Tis a life owing to the Redeemer dying, I Pet. ii. 24. He bare our sins, that we might live to righteousness. And we are taught, upon his dying, mentioned before, (Rom. vi. 11.) to reckon ourselves dead to sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And he is therefore said to be the immediate Donor of this life, John iv. 14. And I am come, saith he, that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly, John x. 10. The beginning, and improvements of this life to perfect plenitude, are all from him; and 'tis therefore said to be a life hid with Christ in God, Col. iii. 3. He is said to be their life, *v.* 4. by all which Christ is signified to be the Author and Giver of this life. And he is as expressly said to be the end of it. His love in dying for us, constraining us no more to live to ourselves, but to him who died for us, and rose again. To which purpose are the words, Rom. xiv. 7, 8, 9. Again,

(3.) It is a pure and holy life, such as, wheresoever it is, cannot suffer a man's soul customarily to mingle with the impurities and pollutions of this world. It is a life that carries up the soul into a purer region, where it draws purer breath. If you live in the Spirit, walk also in the Spirit, Gal. v. 25.

(4.) It is an active, a laborious, and fruitful life. They that live this life, live it by union with Christ; and they that are united with him, abiding in him, bring forth much fruit, John xv. 5. when without him they could do nothing, as it there follows. They that live this life come thereupon, their love abounding more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment, or spiritual sense, (as the word αἰσθησις there used may most fitly be rendered,) discerning the things that differ, or approving or preferring the things that are more excellent, to be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God, Phil. i. 9, 10, 11. This is the tendency of this life. It is a principle, in those in whom it is, tending to usefulness, and common good; and in order thereto, to growth and self-improvement. Again,

(5.) It is a most generous sort of life, that disdains mean things; cannot feed upon earth and ashes. Such communications it must have, as are suitable to the life of a man's spirit. Herein stands the life of the spirit, in receiving and drawing in communications from God. They that live this life, do hunger and thirst after righteousness, that they may be filled, Matt. v. 6. They seek honour, and glory, and immortality, that they may finally attain eternal life, Rom. ii. 7. This is a noble sort of life, that cannot be maintained, as it was not attained, by common means; that cannot live upon low, mean, and base things. They that are of the earth can live upon things that spring from the earth; but heaven-born ones must be continually maintained by heavenly communications, beams of light accompanied with vigorous influence that descend from thence.

(6.) It is a devoted life, sacred to God in Christ Jesus, I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live to God, Gal. ii. 19. For as in the principle, 'tis an habitual determination of the soul towards God, through Christ; so, in the exercise, it is a continual, or often repeated, self-devoting or dedicating of ourselves accordingly. A yielding ourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, Rom. vi. 13. And so Rom. xiv. 7, 8, 9. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself: for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord, be Owner, and so Ruler, both of dead and living. Then to whom should we live, but to him?

(7.) It is finally immortal, eternal life. It is so in its tendency, and it is so in its complete and perfect issue, in its mature state, eternal life, such in the plenitude thereof every thing of mortality is to be swallowed up, 2 Cor. v. 4. This is that which the aspirations and groans of renewed souls aim at, not barely to be unclothed, that were a mean thing, only to lay down this flesh that thereby we may escape the troubles, that, being in it, we are exposed to; that would go but a little way; but to be clothed upon with the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, furnished and enriched with all the delights and glories of the Divine presence. Therefore our Saviour says of this life, they that have the beginnings of it, They that drink of this water, it shall be in them a well of water springing up into life eternal, John iv. 14. The spiritual life that renewed souls now live, will be eternal life. They differ not in kind; but the one will grow up into the other. Therefore saith our Saviour, I give my sheep eternal life. John x. 28. I shall never have done giving, till I have improved the life I have given to eternal life, in which there will be no ebbings and flowings; but where life shall be perfectly pure, and in its full, mature state, without any mixture of death, or deadliness. As any thing is said to be pure, that is full of itself, without the mixture of the least thing that is alien or disagreeable thereto. Every thing of mortality shall be swallowed up in this life.

2. We are to note to you, according to the order proposed, the frequency and aptitude of this paraphrase of the Gospel, (words of life,) or of what is equivalent thereto. For that the Gospel is meant by it, is out of question. It is all one as if the angel had said, Go, preach the Gospel. That some such phrase is usual to signify the Gospel they can well tell, that are not strangers to the Bible. Sometimes this phrase is used to this purpose in the singular number, as Phil. ii. 16. Holding forth the word of life. Sometimes in the plural, as in the 6th of John's Gospel, ver. 68. Thou hast the words of eternal life. And sometimes instead of life is put salvation, which is the same thing. To be saved and to live this life is all one, whether you consider salvation begun, or salvation consummate: salvation begun, is but this life begun, He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, 2 Tim. i. 9. When he regenerates any, he is said to save them. He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Titus iii. 5. And that complete, consummate salvation, should be signified by this life consummate and complete, is obvious and familiar, the phrases salvation and eternal life being so promiscuously used in Scripture to signify the same thing, that many places, need not be quoted; Acts xiii. 26. To you is the word of this salvation sent; Eph. i. 13. The word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation. And not perishing, or being saved, is expounded by having eternal, or everlasting life, John iii. 15, 16, 17. And for the aptness of it, or that the words that compose and make up the Gospel, are fitly called the words of life, will appear upon several accounts: as,

(1.) Inasmuch as this word is the means of begetting this life, James i. 18. Of his own will begat he us, with

the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. In regeneration is infused the first principle of this life. And our Saviour prays for his disciples, John xvii. 17. Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth. And sanctification, in the rise and beginning of it, is nothing else but regeneration.

(2.) Inasmuch as this word improves this life, or is the means of improving it, and carrying it on towards its perfect state, 1 Pet. ii. 2. As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. It is the means of our spiritual growth.

(3.) Inasmuch as this word carries in it the promise of this life in the most perfect state of it. 1 John ii. 25. This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. Chap. v. 11, 12. This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son, hath not life. This is a recorded thing, and is the final and terminative promise of the Gospel. All the promises of it run into this.

(4.) The Gospel is the rule of that judgment, by which all that shall partake therein are finally adjudged to eternal life, to this life in perfection, Matt. xxv. 46. Those that are absolved by our Lord Jesus Christ from the condemning sentence, and have the saving sentence past upon them, of them it is said, They, *viz.* the righteous, go into life eternal, just immediately from the tribunal of their judge; which sentence, and judgment, is according to this Gospel. God will judge the secrets of all hearts, according to my Gospel. Wherever that impress is to be found, Gospel righteousness, it distinguishes them that belong to Christ, and marks them out for eternal life. These things fall under the former observation; the other two, which are to succeed, belong to the latter.

3. That it is the part of the ministers of the Gospel, as they can have opportunity, to preach the words of this life. For the making out of this, I shall speak to these two things:—(1.) To show, that it ought to be their design, and end, to help souls into this state of life:—(2.) That they ought to preach the Gospel, or the words of this life, in order hereunto.—That ought to be their end; and this their work, in order to this end.

(1.) It ought to be their end, to help souls into this state of life. For,

[1.] It is the end of their office, therefore it ought to be their end. It would be unaccountable, that they should design a diverse end from the proper end of their office, or that they should not design that. Now the Gospel is, by its designation, to be the ministration of spirit and life unto souls, 2 Cor. iii. 6.

[2.] They ought to design the bringing of souls to Christ, to get them into Christ, who is the Fountain of this life. You will not come to me, that you might have life, saith our Saviour, John v. 40. And sure it is the business, and ought to be the design, of the ministers of the Gospel, as much as in them is, to bring souls to Christ, and to counterwork the disinclination that is in men thereto. You will not come: but we will do all that in us lies to persuade you to come, and to come for this end, that you may live.

[3.] It undoubtedly ought to be their end, to have souls under their ministry regenerated and born again. This they ought to design, and this is the very beginning of that state of life; and they are therefore entitled fathers, in reference to this their great design and business. If you have had ten thousand instructers, yet you have not had many fathers; for I have begotten you to Christ, saith the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 15. You were regenerated by my ministry. And this ought to be every minister's design, that souls be regenerated by their ministry. So the same apostle speaks of that servant of Philemon's, and his own son, Onesimus; I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Phil. 10.

[4.] They ought to design the perfecting of souls unto eternal life. For this end was the ministry given, in all the degrees and kinds of it; *viz.* for the perfecting of the body of Christ, as you find, Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. And he gave some apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. And then is this new man perfect, when this new life is mature in him, and grown up to its fulness.

(2.) As that ought to be their end, so this ought to be their work, in order to that end, to preach this word of life, as they can have opportunity. This will appear several ways; as,

[1.] They are commanded so to do. Christ commands it, Go teach all nations, &c. Matt. xxviii. 19. His apostle gives it in charge, even before God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, to preach the word, to be instant in season and out of season, 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. And in the former epistle, having before given the same charge, to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, 1 Tim. iv. 13. He afterwards, in reference to this, and many other precepts, urges his charge before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, adding, and the elect angels, to observe these things, &c. And here there is a command from God by an angel, Go, and speak to the people in the temple, the words of this life. The obligation by this precept, given the apostles with circumstances, lies in substance upon all that are ministers of the Gospel of Christ.

[2.] They are directed how to do it, as well as commanded to do it. The great God instructs his prophet Ezekiel, say to them, As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Words are put into his servants' mouths, even these words of life.

[3.] They are threatened if they neglect to do it; as in the 8th verse of that 33d of Ezekiel, If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

[4.] There are encouraging promises of great reward, (though that reward is all of grace,) to them that succeed in this work. They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as stars, Dan. xii. 3.

[5.] They have special assistance, according as they depend and seek it from the blessed God, in this work. He abets them in it. Hereupon they strive according to his power that works in them mightily, Col. i. ult. Though all have not assistance equally, yet all have what is suitable to the pleasure of the free Donor, when they faithfully engage and persist in this blessed and glorious work.

[6.] They are assured of acceptance in it, though they succeed not. So pleasing is this work to the blessed God, the endeavouring to bring souls into this state of life; Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, Isa. xlix. 5. This, indeed, is spoken principally of Christ himself; but subordinately of all that serve him in this work. So saith the apostle Paul, 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. We are unto God a sweet savour (or odour rather, as the word *ὀσμὴ* more properly signifies) of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the odour of death unto death; to the other the odour of life unto life. And this lay with a mighty weight upon his spirit. O that ever we should be the savour of death unto death to any! Who is sufficient for these things! But whether of life or death, we are a sweet odour to God in Christ, as to both; when he sees the sincerity of our hearts, and how fain we would fetch souls out of the state of death into this life. So grateful and pleasant to him is the work effected of saving souls, that the attempt and desire of it is not ungrateful.

4. We are further to show, that this is the part of the ministers of the Gospel, to preach the words of this life, even by angelical suffrage and declaration. We have the concurrence in one, of that whole most excellent order; for among them can be no disagreeing votes or sentiments, to put us out of all doubt that this is our business. And that is a great additional enforcement of it upon us. But here it is requisite to do these two things:—(1.) To show how far only the angels can be concerned in a matter of this nature; and—(2.) That though they are concerned not further, yet we have here sufficient evidence of their suffrage, and complacential approbation.

(1.) How far only they can be concerned in matters of this nature.

[1.] Not so far as to do this work themselves. They are not to be the preachers of the Gospel; God did not think that fit. If that had been the known and stated course, the apostles might have replied, upon their being sent to preach this Gospel: You that are an immortal angel, whom no violence can touch or hurt, go you and preach this Gospel. No, they were to do no such work; by the counsel of heaven this work is committed to men. In that marvellous conversion of the apostle Paul in his way to Damascus, he is sent to Ananias in the city, to be told by him what he was to do, Acts ix. 6. And when there was that special regard had to Cornelius's prayers and alms, that God was resolved he should not want the express discovery of the Gospel of Christ; he sends an angel to him, not to instruct him himself; but to direct him to send for Peter, as you find, Acts x. and the following chapter, who was to speak to him words, by which he and his house were to be saved, as appears by comparing those two chapters together. So that they are not to do this work themselves. Nor,

[2.] Are they so far concerned, as to confer the office. The office of a preacher doth not come from an angel. When the angel saith this to these apostles, they were apostles and ministers of Christ before, he doth not make them such; nor is that God's way of conveying the office. No, it comes from Christ himself originally; he gave the first commission, Go, and teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. So that the same office comes from Christ, to the end of the world. Though the persons that first received the commission were to continue but their own short time; yet the commission is continued to such as should, in several ages, succeed them, and still from Christ; but by other appointed means, which he hath settled, and which remain stated in his church: those that are in that office of preachers or ministers themselves, conveying it to others, who shall, according to fixed Gospel rules, be found qualified for it. But the business of angels, wherein God hath been pleased to employ them, in reference to these affairs of the church, is only sometimes to determine circumstances, as the angel here to these apostles; now is the time, Go forthwith to the temple, and preach to the people the words of this life. The obligation to the thing did not come from the angel, but the determination of the season, and place, for that time. So we find as to other circumstances. The apostle Paul is directed by an angel appearing in the likeness of a man of Macedonia, to go and preach to the Macedonians, saying to him, Come over, and help us, Acts xvi. 9. Thus God does when he thinks fit; but we are not warranted to expect the signification of his mind this way; he having appointed other means that are sufficient. But yet,

(2.) Notwithstanding that angels are concerned no further than you have heard; yet that they may be concerned, and have been concerned so far, is an evidence of their complacential approbation of the thing. And this will appear partly by the consideration of the nature and temper of those excellent creatures; and partly, by the consideration of several concurrent things, of which the Holy Scripture gives us notice.

[1.] Consider their very nature, unto whom their sanctity and their benignity is this very nature, in this their confirmed state. We are not to think that this angel, this messenger sent from God, conveyed his message, as if it passed through a dead trunk, that could be no way affected therewith; but as one highly savouring his message, taking great complacency in it. It was pleasant to him in the delivery, thus to direct these apostles of our Lord, Go to the temple, preach to the people the words of this life; your immediate call is from the prison to the temple, to teach the people how they may be set at liberty from the bonds of death, worse bonds than yours. So much we may collect from their habitual sanctity and devotedness to God, the dutiful, ready compliance, and conformity of their will to the good and acceptable will of their Maker and Lord, and the peculiar benignity of their nature that they were glad to be thus employed; it was welcome work to any one of them that carried this message.

[2.] Several other things concur, mentioned in the Holy Scripture, to make us apprehend their complacential approbation of so grateful an errand, as,

1. The solemn jubilee that they held upon our Lord's descent into this world upon this saving design. Then an innumerable multitude of the heavenly host are brought in triumphing together, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men, Luke ii. 14. This appears to have been their common sense, and so, no doubt, was the sense of this angel at this time. They all celebrate the descent of our Lord, upon this saving design coming down into this world, to be the light of men, as it is expressed, John i. 4. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. A luminous life it was, that he came to bless this world with. And when the angels did celebrate this descent of his, with so much joy and jubilation, it was in pursuance of a proclamation that had before passed through all the spacious heavens, when he brought his first-begotten Son into the world, it was said, And let all the angels of God worship him, Heb. i. 6. They were all to adore the Redeemer, as such, because he vouchsafed to be a Redeemer to such as we were, buried and lost in death.

2. Consider the ordinary stated course of their ministration; what that is, and whither it tends, you find expressed, Heb. i. 14. Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? Heirs of salvation, and heirs of eternal life, are the same, as hath been noted before. This they in their stated course pursue; this is the design of their ministry, to be helpful to those who are to be the heirs of salvation.

3. We may collect it from the joy that they express for the success of the Gospel of this kind. Where they observe it to succeed, if in the conversion but of one sinner, Luke xv. 10. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, if but one sinner repenteth. The heavens are hereupon filled with joy, the angels rejoice that one is now added to their happy number gained from under the power of death, and Satan, the great destroyer of souls.

4. The prospect they have, that all that partake of this life, here in the beginnings of it, shall partake with them in the eternal life and blessedness of the future state. All that are here converted, and regenerated, they are by degrees coming to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 22, 23. All this is plain evidence that there is a complacential concurrence and suffrage of angels to the ministers of Christ, doing their work, preaching the words of this life, according as they have opportunity.

The use of this you may easily apprehend might be vastly copious, but we must be within necessary limits.

1. We may learn hence, that such as the Gospel is, such ought our attendance to it to be. There ought to be a correspondence between what the Gospel in itself is, and our manner of attending the dispensation of it. Doth it consist of words of life? then so ought it to be attended to, as containing the words of life, the words of this life, this noble and most excellent sort of life. Methinks this should strike the consciences of some: I wonder if it do not of any! How few do attend the dispensation of this Gospel, as apprehending it to contain the words of such a life! In what agonies of spirit should we attend upon the dispensation of this Gospel, if we understood the matter so! They are the words of the most excellent kind of life that we hear, when we hear the Gospel of Christ truly preached. This ought to carry a sting and pungency with it to the hearts of such as, upon inquiry, (when did I attend upon the Gospel, as containing the words of life?) cannot give to their own hearts and consciences any satisfying account. Let the inquiry proceed further, Have I got life by it? Did it ever enter into my heart, as the word of life? Did I ever so much as design, expect, or wish that it should? What shall be said to such, that if they answer truly, must give it against themselves?

2. We may learn hence, that when God is pleased to put such a dignity upon poor mean men, as to speak to men by them, and about so great concerns, the affairs of this life; things so high and sublime as the words of this life import; we ought hereupon both to acknowledge God's wisdom and compassion towards us; and be sensible

of our obligation highly to esteem them for their work's sake.

(1.) We ought to acknowledge the wisdom and compassion of God, that he hath chosen this way to treat with men; that he doth not always, as he did once, speak to the Israelites, by thunder and lightning, and a terrible tempest, and a voice of words, which voice they that heard, entreated they might never hear it any more; and thereupon desired Moses that he would speak to them from God, for they could not hear such a voice, but they must die for it. No, God speaks to men by men like themselves, who have the same nature and the same interest, that are to be upon the same bottom with them, and preach the same Gospel of salvation, by which they are to be saved themselves. And,

(2.) We are to honour such, as he puts this honour upon, for their work's sake; to esteem them highly in love on this account, 1 Thess. v. 13. How beautiful are the feet of them, that bring glad tidings! Rom. x. 15. How welcome their approaching steps! How graceful is their motion towards us! They that labour in the word and doctrine, are upon that account worthy of double honour, 1 Tim. v. 17. And all this not for their own sake, but for their work's sake. For the greatest instruments that ever were in the world, employed in this work, what are they? That great apostle Paul counts himself as nothing; though not behind the chiefest apostles, yet a mere nothing; so he nullifies himself, diminishes himself to a thing of nought, a perfect nullity. Elsewhere, I laboured more abundantly than they all, saith he, yet not I! 1 Cor. xv. 10. Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? 1 Cor. iii. 5. Who is Paul? As if he would say, it cannot be told; too little a thing to be seen or known! or that any notice should be taken of him. We cannot, indeed, have too mean thoughts of ourselves; so little we are, compared with the greatness of our work: and none can have so mean thoughts of us, as we ought to have of ourselves, who should know ourselves best, and better understand our own little value, than any others can. But when any esteem the ministers of Christ for their work's sake, they only express a respect to him that sends them, to the message they bring, and to their own souls, that are in such a way so tenderly cared for.

3. We may learn hence, how peculiarly spiritual and intellectual this life is, which such words do so nearly concern. Do you know any life besides, that is produced by words, and by words maintained and improved? No words can otherwise affect us, than as they convey a sense into our minds so as to be understood, and into our hearts and spirits, being inwardly received and believed there. This must be an intellectual and most pure sort of life, that depends upon words, that can be begotten by words, and improved by words, and perfected by words. It shows it to be a sort of life far above the sphere of this bodily life; this bodily life is not to be begotten or maintained by words. You cannot by words recover life into a dead finger, much less into a dead corpse. And again, what admirable words are those that can make us live! transmit life into the very centre, and make our hearts live! It is true, it is not the mere words, but divine breath animating those words, that begets this life: but that still proves it to be a spiritual life. The divine word hath a peculiarity with it: that, indeed, through the efficacy of a divine blessing accompanying it, makes the ordinary means available, for the sustaining of our natural life; man lives not by bread only, but by the word that proceeds our of God's mouth; much more is his vital word necessary to the production aod maintenance of the life of our souls.

4. Hence we may collect how dismal and sad their case is, that sit from time to time with dead souls under the words of life! Year after year there are words of life spoken and breathed forth, in those assemblies where they are hearers; yet when the truth of the matter comes to be told, must say, I feel nothing of this life in my soul; my heart is dead still, is still a stone or a clod! No words that I have heard, have awakened, quickened, melted, purified my heart, warmed and inflamed my heart! Dead I was in trespasses and sins, and so I remain notwithstanding all the words of this life which I have heard! This is a dismal case; when it was God's chosen way to make his word the ministration of spirit and life to souls, if it do not breathe in these words, wherein can it be expected to breathe?

5. We may collect hence, that if, by angelical suffrage, it ought to be the business of ministers to preach the words of this life; then, undoubtedly, by angelical suffrage, the words of this life are words worth the hearing; worth attending and listening to. An angel would have been loth to have been the messenger to these great worthies, the apostles of our Lord, charging them to go and preach in the temple to the people a jargon of impertinent, idle stories. No; but when he saith, Go, and preach to the people the words of this life, that leaves the matter out of all doubt, that here was a ready concurrence both in judgment and complacence of the angel hereto; and that in full effect, he pronounced these things worth listening to. Though we cannot suppose him so assuming, as to think he could by his approbation add any thing real to his authority who sent him; yet as to the reputation of the message, with us, it is not without its weight: as it makes a great difference, whether a prince signify his mind, in this or that affair, by a person of honour, or by a foot-boy. Therefore when any of you have heard the words of this life, with neglect and disregard, you have set your judgment against the judgment, at once, of the great God, and of the glorious angels of God: it signifies as if you thought yourselves wiser than God, and than any angel in heaven. They esteem these words worthy the most serious attention and regard; but you look upon them as trifles, not worth the regarding. Worms of this earth, mushrooms lately sprung up, mean abjects, but beginning to crawl, set their mouth and heart against heaven; oppose their rash, presumptuous judgments to the judgment of the supreme Lord, and of those wise sages, the blessed and holy angels, that stand always in the presence of God, and hear his wisdom! The vanities of this world are thought worth the regarding; but the words of eternal life are counted unworthy to be regarded, or listened to! What absurd insolence is this? to persist in a practical judgment, so directly contrary to the judgment of the wise and holy angels; and, as is evident, of God himself, who sent this message! When such men do meet, is not all their talk vanity? running upon the things only of the earth and time, mere impertinency at best to such as have souls to save! But also are not bold, profane jests, about things most sacred, usual ingredients in their conversation? *viz.* what is most opposite to such a design! These things, they reckon, sound well in a coffee-house, or a tavern; but how do they sound in heavenly places, whither the report presently flies up, as may be collected from Eph. iii. 10. To the principalities and powers in the heavenly places is made known by the church (*i. e.* in or about the affairs of the church) the manifold wisdom of God. Which cannot but imply their animadversion upon the follies of men, counterworking that wisdom. Nor can the censure of so excellent creatures, and of so bright understandings, be lightly esteemed by any, but most stupid minds. And if such an addition signify nothing, why doth the apostle, having given a charge before God, and before Jesus Christ, add, and before the elect angels?

6. Learn farther, that if any servants of Christ have faithfully, in a continued course, to the end of their time, been intent upon this business, preaching the words of this life, their memory ought to be very precious to us when they are gone: they who have been employed in this work, called to it by God, it is all one whether his mind were signified to them by an angel, or any other way. For it was not an angel that gave the authority, but only conveyed this particular command, as hath been noted. When God in his ordinary method hath called forth a servant of his to preach the words of this life, and he hath laboured in it faithfully to the uttermost, the memory of such a one ought to be very dear and precious to all to whom he was known, and that have had opportunity of hearing from him the words of eternal life, or that shall receive a faithful account of him. We are so directed and taught, Heb. xiii. 7, 8. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day,

and for ever. And he still as much requires the same thing as ever he did.

And truly such a servant of Christ was this my dear and worthy brother, the very reverend Mr. Vink, whom God hath lately taken from among us. He was the son of a noted citizen of Norwich: nor will equal judges of his true worth think it a despicable degree of lustre added to that city, that such a man was born there. His ancestors were early protestants, when the Reformation was struggling for a birth in Flanders. Where, when the persecution against that profession began to rage, the zeal and fervour of their religion not admitting to be concealed, or suffering them to temporize, Providence ordered their seasonable transportation to that city of refuge, which became native to their following posterity, and among them to this worthy man; who hath often been heard to say, He reckoned it a greater honour to have descended from so pious ancestors, than if he could have derived his pedigree from the greatest princes. He was, indeed, designed for multiplying the offspring of the everlasting Father; and seemed formed for this work from his entrance upon the stage of this world: so were those things very early interwoven in the frame and temper of his soul, that were to be the elements of great future usefulness in this kind of service. For, in his very tender years there appeared very early religion, great seriousness, an habitual awe and reverence of the Divine Majesty; insomuch that none could observe when he first began to be a fearer of God. Which pious disposition of mind was in conjunction with so great a propensity and addictedness to books, with desire of learning, as was very unusual at that age, even in his childhood.

And very early was his preparatory endeavour for that noble employment to which he afterwards betook himself. For as nature and grace appeared to have betimes combined to frame him as an instrument for such service; it was soon very evident, that in the former, God had inlaid a deeper foundation, enduring him with singular parts, above the common rate; which as they came gradually to shine out, in the great improvements he had made, under instruction, in a little time; there appeared such quickness of apprehension, solidity of judgment, strength of memory, quickness of fancy, without exorbitancy, as are seldom found to meet together: and these were accompanied with so spontaneous diligence beyond what the usual methods of education obliged him to, that in his tender years, while yet under the eye of his parents, they have thought it requisite sometimes to hide his books, lest he should injure himself by over-intent and close study. So that he was ripe for a university much younger than others ordinarily are. Accordingly he was sent up in his fourteenth year to Cambridge, where he remained many years a fellow and great ornament of Pembroke-Hall, even beyond the time of his taking the degree of bachelor of divinity; in which time he had treasured up a large stock of all useful learning, and might be fitly styled a universal scholar. But religion governing the whole course of his studies, kept him steady to his great end; and made him most intent upon such things as might render him most useful for his designed work. The original languages, with such rational learning as was subservient to theology; and then theology, and the study of the Holy Scriptures themselves.

For diversion he was no stranger to history, *viz.* civil, which was fundamental but more diverting; as well as ecclesiastical, which was more immediately necessary to his purpose. And among his other accomplishments, his skill and accuracy in the Latin tongue was, as I have been otherwise informed, much remarked in the university; so that the professor in the chair, when he took the abovementioned degree, (as was reported by an eye and ear-witness,) disputing *pro formâ* with him, after he had somewhat longer than ordinary opposed him, he still answering in neat and elegant Latin, said, Mr. Vink, I only so long continued my opposition to you, to give you opportunity to entertain the auditory with that judgment and eloquence, which have appeared in your answers. And that to express himself politely in that tongue was become habitual and familiar to him, appeared in that writing, in that language, a weekly account of the more remarkable things that occurred to him in the course of his life; which since his death hath come to my view: though in such a case a man only writes to himself; yet I have observed therein such strictures of elegancy, both of style and phrase, as signified it was become impossible to him, if he writ any thing, not to write handsomely, and as might become both a Christian and a scholar.

This narrative was continued until his growing infirmities put a period to it, some months sooner than to his life itself. The mention of it here you see, was occasional, and somewhat digressive. Therefore, to return, when he had passed through the long course of his academical studies and employment, London, whither his fame had now reached, could not long want such a man. Hither he was called; and here he shone a bright light in two churches of this city successively, *viz.* Saint Michael's in Cornhill, which he easily quitted upon another's claim; more from an indisposition to contend, which was little suitable to his calm temper, than from defect of title, could his friends, that so highly valued him, have prevailed with him to admit of its being disputed; but they had the less reason to be urgent upon him, for that he was so immediately chosen to a neighbour church, where he continued preaching the words of this life, till August 24, 1662, when not satisfied with some things in the act that then took place, he calmly quitted his station, but not his ministry; which he never refused to exercise, when desired, in distinct assemblies, when they had only the favour of a connivance. But his more ordinary course was, after he was deprived of his former public liberty, to preach for many years, as the apostle Paul did, in his own hired house; whither his great abilities, and most lively vigorous ministry, drew an assembly not inconsiderable; whereto he both dispensed the word, and (to such as were qualified, and desirous) the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at certain seasons. And this course he continued, especially that of preaching in his house, till bodily disability made it impossible to him; which then he deeply lamented. Yet did he not decline all communion with the established church. Whereupon he had experience of the haughty, supercilious temper of some men's spirits, on the one hand, and the other; who assume to themselves an interdicted, unhallowed liberty of sitting in judgment upon other men's consciences; and adventure to censure them, as men of no conscience, that abandon not their own, to follow theirs; taking notice, sometimes with just regret, that he incurred the anger of two sorts of men; of some, that he went no further; of others, that he went so far.

Looking into his memoirs, I found that rich vein of religion and godliness, running throughout the whole, that I think no serious man could read them without being very deeply affected therewith. Week after week, whatsoever was more remarkable, relating to himself, his family, or the church of God, is punctually set down, and intermixed with most pious ejaculations, "My God, and my All." If any trouble occurred, "yet God is mine, and I am his." You every where discern the breathings of a holy devout soul. Ejaculatory supplications are very frequent for his relatives, and domestics, "The Lord sanctify them, the Lord wash them, the Lord protect them, lead them by the truth and counsels." On all occasions that spirit of prayer and universal godliness discovers itself all along, mixed with the greatest tenderness and compassion that I have any where met with. If any one were sick in his family, his dear consort, his son, daughter, or daughter-in-law, his most beloved brother, or if a servant, male or female, 'tis noted down, with his *suspiria*, the breathings forth of earnest supplications on their behalf. And afterwards upon their recovery, most solemn thanksgivings. But if any one died, then such self-humiliation, such lying low before the Lord, such yielding compliance with the Divine pleasure, with the design of spiritual improvement thereby, as I believe hath been seldom seen. And in whatsoever case, there are expressions of a steady trust in God, in reference to all his affairs, both of this world and that which is to come. If any difficulties came in view, upon the mention thereof, he presently subjoins, "But I will trust in God; he will show me the plain and the right way, wherein he would have me to go." His charity to the distressed was always flowing, and very exemplary; but much more the pity which wrought in his heart towards such,

whose miseries and necessities were such, as it was never possible for him to relieve proportionably to the largeness of his soul. He in the mean time suffered the calamity of every one whose case came to his notice. His humility was such, as did shine through all his other excellencies. He was, indeed, a great man in every one's eyes but his own. No one ever thought meanly of him, that knew him, but himself. His love of solitude and retirement was peculiarly remarkable. No man had more opportunity, in his circumstances, to multiply friends and acquaintance; but I never knew any one who minded and studied it less; yet where once he was acquainted, there could not be a more pleasant and delectable friend. It was remote from him to seek acquaintance, nor did he need; it was enough for him to receive those, that were so kind to themselves as to seek his. And 'tis evident, that love of solitude is peculiar to those, who, through the grace of God, and especially a sort of self-benignity, have been capable of becoming good company to themselves. For empty persons, or such as are only full of malignity, men of ill minds, and conscious to themselves of ill design, for such I do not wonder, that of all things, they care not to be alone. They can never be grateful company to themselves. But he had laid up such a treasure of human and divine knowledge, that I know not where he could find pleasanter company than his own. And his special gratitude for divine mercies was very observable. I have found, in his memorials, he was much in admiring God, that he had done so much for him and his, and more especially for the helps he had from heaven in the performance of his ministerial work. Blessed be God for the assistance he gave me such a day. And very particularly at the Lord's supper. Blessed be God for what hath past between him and me at his table; blessed be God that his bonds have taken hold of my soul!

Though his temper, and the chosen circumstances of his life, kept off from him in great part, more frequent occasions of communicating to the world the rich treasures wherewith his mind was stored, yet when such occasions have occurred, he neglected them not. But while, through his own continuing dissatisfaction, he remained excluded from a public station; besides his constant ministerial labours, in a private way, he embraced other occasions that Providence offered, of doing such work as became much more public; and wherein he did more than speak from a pulpit to a single congregation of hearers, speaking from the press to the world, as any should think fit to be his readers. Divers of his excellent sermons have been long extant to common view, wherein, being dead, he yet speaketh. An account of which, though elsewhere given,[b] it is not unfit here to repeat. As, before his ejection, he had one sermon in the first volume of the Morning Exercises, preached in the church of Saint Giles, upon Original Sin; so after it, he had another, in that against popery, upon the Grounds of the Protestants' Separation from the Church of Rome. Another, upon the Worth of the Soul, in the continuation of the Morning Exercise Questions, with another, on Gospel Grace the best Motive to Holiness, vol. 4. And to these I must add that valuable performance of his on the Acts of the Holy Apostles, in the supplement to Mr. Pool's Annotations on the Bible, (by mistake ascribed to another worthy person, who hath to me disclaimed it, and assured me it was Mr. Vink's.) And it is a satisfaction to me, that I have his concurring judgment in the interpretation of this text. Who writing upon it, when he could little apprehend his own funeral sermon was, so many years after, to be preached from it, tells us, that though some admit of an hypallage in the expression, "the words of this life," and join the pronoun to the other substantive, reading it, These words of life.—Because by this life is ordinarily understood the present temporary life, as in 1 Cor. xv. 19. Yet he says, there needs not this translatious sense; by this life the angel might very well understand, eternal life, and salvation, for that was it which the Sadducees denied, and for the preaching of which life the apostles were imprisoned. To which purpose also the learned Doctor Hammond speaks in his annotations on the same place.

The words of this life he preached to the last, and lived it, in its initial state, as he now lives it (being in the kind, the same life) in its perfect, eternal state. And we may now put in him with those holy men (as he speaks in the argument, which he prefixes to this book) who having lived answerably to their profession and hope, do when we read these things, seem to speak unto us, and tell us, (what they say was inscribed upon the statue of some deified hero,) *Si feceritis sicut nos, eritis sicut nos; If ye shall live as we have done, and suffer as we have suffered, then shall you be* (glorious and happy) *as we are.* And yet such a life as this must end, a life transacted at such a rate! Whither should this carry and direct all our thoughts and aspirings? I bless God we have such instances of many, of whom we must say, it is impossible but that such men are got into a good state. A great confirmation of the truth of our religion. We must be assured such a one cannot be lost in a grave; his works must follow him into a higher region. But I add,

7. That, since they who do preach the words of life, do yet themselves die, let us attend upon their ministry accordingly. We have such and such to preach to us the words of life; but they are mortal men, and must not preach to us always. Therefore let such a thought take place; take we heed that we do not lose them, while we have them: O let the words of life, which they preach, be entertained as such. Our Saviour saith of John the Baptist, he was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. You can rejoice in no such light but for a season. You may say, if such and such that are now preachiog to us the word of life do drop, God can raise up others in their room to preach the same word: and I hope he will, that when such a one as I drop, he will raise up some other to preach to you at another rate, with more warmth, and vigour, and success, than ever I have done. But yet you are to consider that you are mortal too, as well as we. And admit you have those who shall far exceed them that have gone before; yet you know not how short your time may be under them. Therefore whatever your hand finds out to do in this kind, do it with all your might. Labour to catch at the words of this life, as once one in distress did at words of a much inferior concern, and when a meaner life hung in doubt. We are continually hovering between life and death! How fast are we dropping away from one another! Every one that dies from among us, doth, even dying, utter such a voice. Amidst so many deaths, admit, draw in, as vital breath, the words of this life. Dread, as the most frightful of all deaths, that the very words of this life should be to you the savour of death unto death.

b In Mr. Calamy's Abridgment, &c.

A FUNERAL SERMON,

FOR

MRS. ESTHER SAMPSON.

TO MY WORTHY FRIEND DR. HENRY SAMPSON.

Sir,

I have perused the papers which you sent me, and find, as far as I can recollect, they contain in them the substance of what was delivered; with no more mistakes than is usual in writing from the mouth of one who is not of the slowest speakers.

Some things besides, which the limits of the time allowed not to be spoken, (having some short memorials of them by me,) I have added, conceiving they might also contribute towards the good end you proposed to yourself, in so earnestly desiring this publication, the assisting of their patience, and their good and placid thoughts of God, who are exercised under long and languishing distempers. The observations which your profession hath occasioned you to make, in the cases of many others, hath I doubt not let you see the need of somewhat to this purpose; otherwise the example you have had so long before your eyes of so calm and composed a temper, in this excellent relative of yours, might have made you less apprehensive how great an addition a fretful inquiet spirit is, both to the sin and the affliction of a sickly state. I am sensible your own affliction is great, in the loss you now sustain; the relief will be great, and suitable, which the forethoughts of that state will afford, where they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God, in heaven.

I am, Sir,
In much sincerity and affection, yours
to serve you in the work and labour of the Gospel,
J. H.

LUKE XIII. 16.

AND OUGHT NOT THIS WOMAN, BEING A DAUGHTER OF ABRAHAM, WHOM SATAN HATH BOUND, LO, THESE EIGHTEEN YEARS, BE LOOSED FROM THIS BOND ON THE SABBATH DAY?

You will soon see the occasion and connexion of these words, by viewing over the whole paragraph to which they belong. Ver. 10. And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. (11.) And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. (12.) When Jesus saw her, he said to her Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. (13.) And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. (14.) And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work; in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day. (15.) The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite! doth not each of you on the sabbath loose his ox and his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? (16.) And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day? (17.) And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Inasmuch as our blessed Lord spake these words, and did the thing which occasioned them, upon that which was, with the Jews, their sabbath-day; it cannot be unfit for us to consider them upon ours, they so fitly leading us to consider also another release, wrought for a daughter of Abraham too, on our sabbath-day. It was formerly told you upon what occasion, and I doubt not but you generally know upon whose account, we were to divert from our usual course and subject at this time. Nor could any thing have been more suitable to the present occasion, for not only was this daughter of Abraham released from her infirmity upon the sabbath-day; but the time wherein it remained upon her, in a great and manifold complication, was (as her surviving consort hath acquainted me, and who therefore recommended this subject) precisely about eighteen years.

There are, 'tis true, disagreements between our case and that case in the text, which do not therefore render both together less instructive to us, but the more. And, to make way to what may be so, you must here take notice, that these words are part of our Lord's defence of what he had done in performing this work of mercy, wherein what he says is justly severe, and very clearly convictive. It is very deserved and just severity, that he called him, who cavilled in the case, by his own true name, Thou hypocrite. He, under pretence of great sanctity, discovers the highest enmity, even against our blessed Lord himself, who came (being sent) upon the holiest and kindest design into this world. The zeal which he pretends for the observation of the sabbath, could not be the thing that he did really mean, or that acted him in this case; for it was not likely he could be ignorant of what was a known adjudged case among the Jews, (as some of their own Rabbies[a] inform us,) he violated not the sabbath so much as their own canons allowed. See his Works, vol. 2.

a Vid Maimon. constitut. de fundam. c. 5, 9. cum Abrav. N. 13, 14. And, as our own Dr Lightfoot says upon that question of our Lord's, Is it lawful to heal upon the sabbath-day? (quoting divers more of theirs tu that purpose,)

that all needful endeavours ought to be used for the cure of the sick upon the sabbath-day. So as that he very well knew, no rule could be broken in this case. But this he reckons was somewhat plausible, and he pleases himself in it, that he could tell how to vent his spite against Christ and Christianity, under a mock-show of great sanctimony. And our Lord justly calls him what indeed he was, when he would thus seem what he was not. It was not that he cared for religion, or for any thing of real sanctity, of which a due and just observation of the sabbath was a real part; but that he had a mind, as far as conveniently he could, to express his displeasure at that evidence and lustre, wherewith the glorious works our Lord wrought evinced him to be the Messiah; while yet he was struck with that awe of him, that he adventures not to direct his reproof to him, but the people.

It is here by the way to be noted, that they were not thus disaffected to our Lord, and the religion he was about to introduce; no, but this ceremonious bigot, a ruler of the synagogue, was the ill-pleased disaffected person.

I shall not trouble you with the discussion what sort of power it was that belonged to that office. Some, well acquainted with the Jewish writings, say that the ruler of the synagogue was not wont himself to officiate, as minister *in sacris*; but his business was *circa sacra*, to regulate the administration. We consider not his power, but his ill-will and enmity against Christ and true religion. The people, in the mean time, thronged after him in multitudes, and beheld the great works he wrought with joy, and glorified God. Only where was more power, and probably more knowledge, there was more too of a peevish spite and envy, that the interest of our Lord was, by so proper means, growing in the world. A sad (and not a new) thing! that religion should have most opposition, whence it should have most of countenance, and advantage to dilate and spread itself. Do any of the rulers believe on him? But the people (whom they despised, and pronounced accursed for that reason) were more apt and forward to receive the Gospel, John vii. 48, 49. The more there is of light, unaccompanied with a pious inclination, the higher, the more intense and fervent, the finer and more subtle is the venom and malice against Christ, and real Christianity.

But our Lord was not diverted from his kind and compassionate design, by any such obstructions as these. His love triumphs over them, and he makes that discovery of his compassion which could not but carry the clearest conviction with it; as his reproof carried the brightest justice. Why what, saith he, Do not any of you loose an ox or an ass from the stall on the sabbath-day? and shall not I loose a daughter of Abraham? 'Tis like she was a daughter of Abraham, not only as being a Jewess, but as being a believer, as being, according to Scripture language, of Abraham's seed in the spiritual sense, as well as the natural, and he was the more peculiarly compassionate upon that account; and yet more, because her ail proceeded from the malignant influence of the devil. Shall not I loose such a one whom Satan hath bound, that great enemy of mankind? Why should not I show myself so much the more a friend, by how much the more he appears an enemy, and give the earliest relief the matter can admit?

'Tis very true indeed, his compassion was never to incline him to do unfit and unseasonable things, or things that were no way subservient to his principal end; but such a subserviency being supposed, his relief must be with the earliest, to-day before morrow, though it were the sabbath-day. And so now you have the ground of discourse plainly in view before you. That the devil cannot be more maliciously intent to afflict those that relate to God (even, when it is in his power, with bodily distempers) than our Lord Jesus is compassionately willing to relieve them, without distinction of time, when it shall be consistent with, and subservient to, his higher and greater purposes. In speaking to this, I shall,

I. Touch briefly upon what is here expressed in the text, the hand that Satan may have in the afflictions, yea and in the bodily distempers, of men, and even of them that belong to God among them.

II. What hand our Lord Jesus has in their relief and releasement

III. How far we may understand, or may reasonably expect, his compassion to influence him, in such cases.

IV. I shall show that however the release be wrought, it is done very mercifully towards them that belong peculiarly to God. And so make use of all.

I. Somewhat briefly as to that first query: What hand it is supposable the devil may have in the afflictions of men, and more particularly of them that belong to God; as that woman being a daughter of Abraham, was to be considered as one within the compass of God's covenant, and not improbably as one that, in the strictest sense, was in covenant with God.

1. It is plain, in the text, the devil had a direct hand in her distemper, called a spirit of infirmity. There were more evident and more frequent instances of this kind in that time, the devil then setting himself more openly to contend against the incarnate Son of God, upon his more open appearance to rescue and recover an apostate world from under his dominion and tyranny. But as to more ordinary cases we may further consider,

2. That the devil is a constant enemy to mankind, apt and inclined, as far as God permits him, to do men all the mischief he can.

3. That as he first introduced sin into the world, so he hath, by consequence, all the calamities that afflict it.

There had been no death, sickness, or distemper upon the bodies of men, but from hence. Consider the devil, therefore, as the prince and leader of the apostacy, who first drew man into transgression, and thereby rendered him liable to the justice of his Maker, turned his paradise into a desert, and a region of immortal undecaying life into a valley of sickly languishings and death itself. So may he be said to have had a (remoter) hand, in binding not only this daughter of Abraham, but every child of Adam, in all the afflictions, maladies, and distempers which befall them here; and finally in the bonds of death too whereof he is said to have had the power, Heb. ii. 14, 15 Though the children of the second Adam (with whom, for this purpose, he was partaker of flesh and blood, and became with them a son of Abraham, and of his seed) are, by being so bound, released and made free, both from death, and the bondage of fearing it, to which they were otherwise subject all their days; as we shall further see anon.

4. Though God do not ordinarily allow him more power, yet we may well suppose him to have more malice against these children of Abraham, (who thereby pass into the account of his own children also.) being more intent upon vexing and afflicting whom he apprehends or suspects he shall never be able to destroy; and always apt to use all the power shall be allowed him, to this mischievous purpose. We find that the afflictions of the people of God, in other kinds, and even in this kind, are expressly often, attributed to the devil. In other kinds: Satan shall cast some of you into prison, Rev. ii. 10. And divers think that thorn in the flesh, which the apostle suffered, (2 Cor. xii.) was some acute bodily pain; and he says expressly, It was a messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him. He, 'tis said, smote Job with the tormenting biles that afflicted him so grievously, and so long, and brought the other calamities upon him, that you read of in his story.

5. And again it is further to be considered, that whereas in all diseases the morbific matter, whether immediate in men's bodies, or remoter in the encompassing air, differs not from other matter, otherwise than only in the various disposition, figuration, and motion of parts and particles, whereof it is made up; inasmuch as the devil is called the prince of the power of the air, we know nothing to the contrary, but that he may frequently so modify that, as that it shall have most pernicious influences upon the bodies of men; and upon those especially, so far as God permits, that he has any greater malice against.

6. And again (supposing this) it is not a stranger thing that God should permit him to afflict the bodies of them that belong to him, than to disturb their minds. Sure their bodies are not more sacred. If we should suppose that he may some way or other perniciously agitate the humours in human bodies, 'tis no harder a supposition than that he should so variously form the images in the fancy, by which he tempts; for herein surely he comes nearer us, and is more inward to us.

7. Nor is it less supposable that God should, in some instances, permit the devils to follow their inclinations in afflicting his people, than wicked men to follow theirs, which, in the general, carry them to the same thing; when he knows how to turn the one to after-advantage, as well as the other. But we have no ground to think, notwithstanding all this, that the wisdom and goodness of Providence will ordinarily permit that this agency of the devil, in the mentioned cases, shall be altogether in a contra-natural way; but only, by so moving and acting with natural causes, that he may be also obviated, through the ordinary blessing of God, by natural means and causes too. Much less is it reasonable that diseases should be themselves reckoned very devils, as was the opinion of the gnostics of old, wherein they much concurred with the manichees; and whom, together with them, the more honest-minded pagan Plotinus so copiously confutes (though that was more anciently a common opinion, the Septuagint's rendering the word that signifies *plague* by the word δαιμόνιον, in several places of Scripture, seems to intimate. But the commonness of such an opinion, in a dark time, signifies nothing to sway ours this way or that.) But whatsoever hand the devil may be supposed to have in their afflictions or sicknesses that belong to God, we are,

II. Sure that our Lord Jesus has a most kind hand (whensoever it is) in their release; which though it were here in a more extraordinary and immediate way, and beside the course of nature, the disparity in this case signifies nothing to the lessening of the favour, towards those whom he vouchsafes to relieve in other cases; for the influence that he has in ordinary cases is as truly divine. If the cure of a diseased person be wrought, by his blessing upon ordinary natural means; his co-operating with nature is less amazing, but not less effectual, or less kind: as also the efflux from God is (for his own part) as real, when he works with second causes, as without them, and as immediately reaches the effect, in both the senses of immediateness, whereof so much noise is made in the schools.

And we must further know our Lord Christ is now the universal Regent of all nature, even as he is the Christ, the world being devolved into his hands, and all power being given to him both in heaven and earth. He is Lord of all. When therefore any of you are sick, it is by his disposal if you are recovered out of that sickness. Nor is his agency less or lower, whether it be by blessing a medicine, or working a miracle; his power and love are the same either way. And know there is an honour and acknowledgment due from Christians to their great crucified Lord, who hath founded a dominion over this world in his blood, who died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord of living and dead. Therefore you are to reckon you are beholden to Christ for all your recoveries, and all your refreshings that you meet with, amidst the many infirmities and frailties of this your present mortal state.

And if the release be by death, as the case is which we now have specially to do with, that universal power of his, over all lives, must be understood immediately to reach to that case too. It is he that measures lives, that lengthens them out, and cuts them shorter at his own pleasure. And as to those that are more peculiarly his own, it is a more peculiar and favourable superintendency that he has over that affair, even of their very dying. Their death is precious in his sight. He with a most gentle tender hand unties the knot of man, releases and receives the dislodging soul: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit, as dying Stephen speaks. But,

III. We are to consider how far our Lord Jesus his compassion concerns him in such cases, or wherein that may move him to interpose in them, so as in this case he did.—And here two things are to be asserted—1. That his compassion has not supreme and principal influence in this case;—2. That yet it hath real influence.

1. That it hath not supreme or principal influence in such cases. And this doth really require to be more principally insisted on, as of greater importance to narrow, terrene minds, that are apt to measure all things by themselves, and in reference to their own little sphere and compass; and to themselves only in their present state, as they are inhabitants of this minute spot of earth; as if all things ought to bend and yield to their present convenience and accommodation here. Whereupon they wonder when they are sick, and in pain, God doth not presently relieve and ease them; and think they should do so for any friend, or neighbour, if it were in their power.

Know, therefore, 'twas not from compassion, as the solitary or as the chief inducement, that our Lord did work this release for this daughter of Abraham. That cannot be supposed, for he can never be understood to make a creature, and the advantages of a creature, his supreme end. That would have been to invert the order of things, to dethrone God, and deify man, and had been itself a real sort of that idolatry, which was one among the many horrid evils which he purposely came to redress and give remedy to in this apostate, degenerate world. He had a greater inducement, *i. e.* that he might diffuse the glory of God among the children of men; and that he might give evidence thereby to the truth of his own mission, and prove most convincingly that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, the very person that was anointed, and sent about that great undertaking, to recover God's rights in this lapsed world, to bring about a reconciliation between God and men. And upon this account, when he wrought cures upon men's bodies, it was out of a higher compassion to their souls. And though even this itself, of saving men's souls, was not his highest design, but the glory of God, (as we shall see further by and by,) yet it being truly designed by him, and more principally than their bodily ease and relief, this was an apt means to this his lower end. For whereas, in order to this, he was to manifest himself a Divine Saviour; 'twas requisite he should give a joint and an equal demonstration of the two things which his being so implies, his God-like power, and love. The former alone it did not serve his purpose to show, which he might have shown as much by inflicting plagues on men's bodies, as working cures; by striking them with blindness, lameness, &c. as by giving them sight and soundness. But it was necessary to his end his miracles should be beneficent, and that he should (as it is elsewhere said in the evangelical story he did) go about doing good, and not make men afraid of him, by showing the power of a God in destructive strokes and judgments; but (which became a Saviour) express a divine good-will towards men, and thereby make his way into their hearts, bring them to understand and own a Saviour; and as such to fall in and comply with his kind design towards them. And this, as it served to exalt God in the world, chiefly induced him to work this present cure. If his compassion towards a poor afflicted woman, labouring under bodily infirmity, were his principal inducement; if, therefore, she must be presently cured out of hand, even on the sabbath-day, because she had been now bound eighteen years; why, I pray you, was she to have been bound eighteen years? or why bound at all? His divine knowledge of the case, and power to have redressed or prevented it, had as well served his compassionate inclination long before. Or why was not such a course formerly set on foot, and continued in the world, that men might be cured of blindness, deafness, lameness, fevers, dropsies, or whatsoever other maladies, easily, and by speaking a word, in any former time? Why was it deferred to this time? Or why hath not such a course been kept a-foot ever since his ascension? Hath heaven rendered him less merciful and compassionate? Is it so unkind and ill-natured a place? 'Tis true that his apology for the cure he now wrought, to this ruler of the synagogue, seems to have no higher reference; nor was he bound, unseasonably, to declare his utmost end and design, to a prejudiced, malicious enemy. That was to speak itself, to shine by its own light, and by such means and methods as these, gradually to make its own way into less obstructed minds, insensibly sliding in upon them; which might better be done (time being given at leisure to consider things) by the real evidence which his works carried with them, than by industrious and often-repeated verbal commentaries and expositions.

He sometimes spake it out expressly, as he thought fit, to competent and more prepared hearers, that his great design was to make himself and his errand to be understood; who he was, and what he came into the world for; that he was the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and that his business was to save them that were lost; and to

restore God's interest in an apostate lost world whose rights were to be cared for, in the first place. He redeemed us to God by his blood, Rev. v. 9. Or for the glory of God, as he summed it up in the case of Lazarus, when he was told of his being sick, John xi. 4. This sickness is not unto death, *i. e.* it was not to terminate in a continuing death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of man might be glorified; the same account which this evangelist gives of all these his great works, and why they were recorded, that we might believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, &c. chap. xx. 30. And otherwise was it so considerable a thing, that a man well got out of this fearful gulf, as Lazarus now was, should be fetched back again! that so mighty a wonder should be wrought! that the enclosure of the grave should be torn open! and the released soul should be again drawn down, as a bird escaped, caught back into its former confinement, to converse a while longer amidst the impurities of a world lying in wickedness, and with shadows, in a world the fashion whereof passes away!

No, miracles were not so cheap things. We may observe the great and wise God hath, for great and weighty reasons, been always very sparing in making very observable innovations upon nature, or any considerable changes in the ordinary course and method of natural causes, and their operations, as a thing less suitable to a state of probation, wherein men were to be held in this world. And hath only been wont to do it, where the inconvenience was to be balanced by preponderating greater reasons; which might as much require that he should depart from the fixed rule sometimes, as other reasons might, that he should not do it often. It was equally necessary that miracles should not be common, as that there should be any wrought at all; and in great part for the same reason. For if they were common, they must lose the only design for which they could be at all useful. If God should do, in this kind, what is not necessary, he should the less effect by it that which is; inasmuch as they are only useful as they are strange, and, in the natural way, unaccountable. But there is nothing so great in this kind, but ceases to be thought strange if it be common; otherwise, is not the forming of the eye, in itself, as great a thing as to give sight to the blind? or the framing such a world as this as great a thing, as the most stupendous miracle that ever was wrought in it?

It was indeed necessary somewhat extraordinary should at first be done, to demonstrate that man, Jesus of Nazareth, to be the Son of God; which it was impossible should otherwise be known. When that was fully done, it was not necessary there should still be a repetition of miracles from age to age, to prove the former were wrought, or the truth of the narratives which reported them. That was sufficiently to be known in the ordinary way, as other matters of fact are, or other history, about which there is no doubt made among men. And the history of these things has greater advantages to recommend it to the certain belief of after-time, than most that ever were writ besides, upon many accounts. It was indeed most becoming the majesty, wisdom, and goodness of God (taken together) to do what might answer the real necessities of men, whom he was designing to save; but not to indulge their curiosity, nor their unaccountable dulness, sloth, or prejudice, whereby they may be unapt to inquire about or receive plain things.

Therefore miracles were to be done as rarities, sometimes, not at all times; and at such a time, and upon such an occasion, most of all to notify and signalize the Redeemer, at his first appearance, to draw men's eyes upon him, that they might take notice of him, and demean themselves towards him accordingly. This was to be done sufficiently once for all. And the great stupidity of the world made a matter, which needed some supernatural evidence, need so much in that kind. Except you see signs and wonders you will not believe. And if he did so far comply with the necessity of degenerate humanity, as to give once some signal convictive evidence that he was the Christ; the Divine wisdom would take care it should not be so often done, as to become trivial, and insignificant to its proper end; the importance whereof was such, as that it ought to transcend any regard to the welfare of men's bodies, but not to exclude it. Which we now come briefly to show, in the next place, *viz.*

2. That though compassion towards an infirm creature, under bodily distemper, was not the principal inducement unto this cure; it was a real one. Our Lord doth really compassionate the frailties of those that relate to him while they dwell in mortal flesh. He himself bears our sicknesses. He has a tenderness towards them, even while he doth not think it fit actually to release and set them free; which makes way to what was proposed, in the last place, to be insisted on, as preparatory to the intended use.

IV. That in what way soever our Lord Jesus works a release for them that are most specially his own, from their bodily distempers, he doth it in mercy to them. He lets their affliction continue upon them in mercy, greater mercy, indeed, than would be in an unseasonable deliverance. But when he sees it a fit season to give them a release, that is an unquestionable mercy too; though it be not in such a way, as appears such to vulgar eyes.

It is more easily apprehensible to be from compassion, if he relieves a poor, pained, weak, languishing, sickly creature, by giving renewed strength, and ease, and health in this world. But when the release is by death, as in the case we have under our further present consideration, it is hard to persuade that this is done in mercy, that there is compassion in this case. There is, 'tis true, in this a manifest disparity, but not a disadvantageous one. Is it a less thing to release a holy soul from the body, than from bodily distempers? It can only be so in the opinion of such blind moles of the earth, as the children of men are now generally become. But let the case be considered according to its true and real import. Why! a recovery from sickness is but an adjournment of death, 'tis but death deferred a while. When there is a release wrought in such a way as this in which hers was wrought, whom God hath lately taken from amongst us; here is a cure, not only of one bodily distemper, but of all; not only of actual diseasedness, but of the possibility of ever being diseased more: here is a cure wrought, not only of infirmity, but of death, for the saints conquer death by suffering it; yea, a cure, not of death only, but of mortality, of any liableness to death, so as it can never touch them more; yea further, not only of bodily diseases, but of spiritual too, far worse and more grievous than all bodily diseases whatsoever; a cure of blindness of mind, deadness, and hardness of heart, of all indispositions towards God, his ways, and presence, towards the most spiritual duties, and the best and most excellent of our enjoyments. The body of sin and the mortal body are both put off together. The imprisoned soul is set free, and enters upon a state of everlasting liberty; is released from the bands of death, of whatsoever kind, and in the highest, fullest sense, shall reign in life, through Jesus Christ. What is the decease of a saint, but a translation out of a valley of death, a golgotha, a place of skulls, a region where death reigns, into the region of perfect and everlasting life? It is not to be called death simply or absolutely, but with diminution; 'tis death only in a certain respect, when to a higher and much more considerable respect, it is a birth rather, a dying out of one world, and a being born at the same time into another, a much more lightsome, a purer, and more glorious world. The soul is cured in a moment, of whatsoever was grievous or afflicting to it; and the body put into a certain way of cure, of being made from an earthly, mean, mortal thing, heavenly, spiritual, incorruptible, and immortal; from a vile, a glorious body, like Christ's own, and by that power, by which he can subdue all things to himself, Phil. iii. 21.

And now for use.

1. Learn that there is no inconsistency in the case, that the same person should be at once the subject of long-continued bodily affliction, and of divine compassion. These are reconcileable things; sickly languishings, under which one may be ready to fail; and compassions, that fail not. This is a common theme, but the due consideration of it is too little common. Let it now be considered, with impartial equity, and with deep seriousness. Do you think the all-comprehending mind of the Son of God now first began to pity this daughter of Abraham? While he was not yet ascended, this attribution is given him; otherwise, no doubt, than as a false compliment; Lord, thou knowest all things.

—Since his ascension, we are assured he hath a feeling of our infirmities, so as to be touched with them, a continuing sympathy, remembering the inconveniences of that state he had passed through, (as she once, *non ignara mali, &c.*) and is always ready, therefore, to do the part of a faithful and merciful high priest. Before his descent, we must, with equal reason, suppose him to have an entire prospect of the sad case of wretched mortals, in this miserable world of ours. What else made him descend? And after that he was descended, this mark could not but lie still before the eye of his Divine mind, to which all his works were known from the beginning of the world. Yet the cure is deferred, the release is not given till the appointed season. When it is the case of any of you to be afflicted with long sickness, and to feel the tediousness of a lingering disease, (count upon it that it may be so, as 'tis like it hath been, with divers of you,) do not then permit the matter to the censure of an incompetent, partial judge. If you consult flesh and blood, if sense be to pronounce in the case and give judgment, how hard will it be to persuade that you are not neglected in your languishings, that your groans and faintings are unpitied; though you are so plainly told, that whom the Lord loves, he chastens? Are you not ready to say, How can this stand with being, at the same time, the object of divine pity? If he pity me, would he let me lie and languish thus, in so miserable a plight, day after day, and year after year? Yes, these things very well agree, and I would fain shortly evince to you that they do.

(1.) His compassion may sufficiently be evidenced in another kind and by another sort of instances. Sure it will speak compassion, if he frequently visit his frail infirm creatures, and by his visitation preserve their spirits, if he support them, if he refresh them, this is grace. My grace shall be sufficient for thee, saith he to the great apostle, when he refused to release him from that thorn in the flesh, that messenger of Satan that did buffet him.

(2.) Besides, compassion may appear by this kind of dispensation itself. It may not only carry that with it, but in it, which may show good-will. If long-continued affliction may be supposed to proceed from compassion, it doth much more consist with it. It may proceed from compassion, and bear the relation to it of an effect to the cause. We find it expressly so said in Scripture, and who can so truly speak God's mind as himself? He afflicts in very faithfulness, and as many as the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives, Prov. iii. 12. quoted Heb. xii. 5, 6. Rev. iii. 19. Affliction must be the effect of his real, and most sincere good-will, and compassion, though of long continuance, if it be apt, and intended to do you good, in higher and in greater regards than those wherein you suffer. Or if the good your affliction does you, or is fitly designed to do you, be of a nobler and more excellent kind, than that whereof it deprives you; it must be understood, not only to be consistent with kindness and good-will, but to be produced of it. For the same principle that intends the end, must also intend the proper means that serve to effect it. Now the kind of this good is thus to be estimated. You read, Psal. ciii. 13. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him. As a father. The relation he is in to them, is that of a father to his children. But we must understand under what notion he is related; and we are told, Heb. xii. 9, 10. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not then much rather be in subjection to the Father of our spirits and live? For they, verily, for a few days, chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. We have here an account where the relation terminates, and see both the object of his more special kindness and good-will, which accompany the relation, and the end of it. He is the Father of their spirits; whence, therefore, we may collect, the object of that love, which goes with the relation, must be their spirits also; the end of it is their spiritual advantage, to make them partakers of his own holiness. His holiness is a lofty word, and carries the matter high. Understanding it soberly, (as we may be sure it was meant,) it must signify the holiness which he hath himself impressed, and the impression whereof is the lively resemblance and image of his own. And is not this a good, of a nobler and more excellent kind, than we can lose by a sickness? better than the ease of this vile flesh, that was made out of dust, and tends thither? The object is their spirits, for there the kindness, that belongs to the relation, must terminate, where the relation terminates. How much more shall we not be subject to the Father of our spirits, and live? The Father of our spirits is there contradistinguished from the fathers of our flesh. God is not the Father of our flesh, but the Father of our spirits; he is the Creator of our flesh, too; our flesh is his creature, but not his offspring. There must be a similitude and likeness of nature between a father, and a child, which there is not necessarily between a maker and the thing made. In respect of our spiritual part, we are his offspring; and he is so a Father to us, both as the souls of men in common bear his natural image, and, if they be regenerate, as they bear his holy image too. And the case may be so, that the suffering of our flesh is necessary for the advantage of our spirits. Our flesh may suffer so, as that the spirit shall be the better for it; and then pity itself, compassion itself, must not only permit, but cause and produce such a course of dispensation, as whereby that end shall be attained, the making us partakers of his holiness. So the apostle speaks of his own case; Though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day, 2 Cor. iv. 16. Though our outward man perish. We are compassed about with deaths, that are continually beating down the walls of this outward man, they are beating upon it, and are likely to infer its perishing; and if it perish, let it perish, I am not solicitous (*q. d.*) about that. If it must come down, let it come down; in the midst of all these outward assaults, our inward man is renewed day by day, gathers a fresh and increasing strength and vigour, whilst this outward man is tending to dissolution and dust. And several ways such continued afflictions, upon the outward man, may make for the advantage of the inward man, in the best kind.

[1.] As they withdraw, and take off the mind and heart from this world, a debasing and defiling thing; and which transforms the soul, that converses too much with it, into a dunghill, fills it with ill savour. But what doth all this world signify to a sickly, pained person?

[2.] As it engages them to be much in prayer. Nothing is more suitable, than that an afflicted life be a life of much prayer. Is any man afflicted, let him pray, Jam. v. 13. Much affliction hath a natural aptitude to incline men this way. In their affliction they will seek me early, Hos. v. 15. It is a dictate of nature, even when grace, as yet, hath no possession; but which through God's blessing, may, by this means, help to introduce it. For it urges the soul Godward, who is the God of all grace; obliges it to converse with him, whereby somewhat better may be gained than is sought. In their afflictions they will be submissive and lie at my feet, saith God: they will seek me early, from whom, otherwise, I should never hear, it may be, all their life long. Oh! that you would understand the matter so, when God afflicts in such kinds, so as his hand touches your very bone and flesh; this is the design of it, to make you pray, to bring you upon your knees, to put you into a supplicating posture; if he can, upon any terms, hear from you, though you seek him but for bodily ease and refreshing, it may be a means of the greatest advantage to you, ere God have done with you, when once he has brought you, by this means, to treat; when he has got you into a more tractable disposition, there is hope in the case. If thus he open your ear to discipline, and be to you an interpreter, one of a thousand, to show you his righteousness; he may seal instruction to you, and save your soul from going down to the pit, having found a ransom for you, Job xxxiii. 15, &c.

But for those that have a real interest in God, and union with Christ, that which occasions much prayer, is likely to be the means of much spiritual improvement and advantage to them.

[3.] It puts several suitable graces upon exercise, and by being exercised, they grow. It tries their faith, and improves it. Faith is, in such a case as this, necessarily called forth into act, if there be the principle; and as it acts, it grows, and becomes more and more strong, and lively. Their patience is exercised by it, and perfected; and that has a great influence upon their universal perfection. Let

patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect, Jam. i. 2, 3, 4. There will be a universal languor (as if he should have said) upon your spirits, if you be impatient; if you cannot suffer, (as patience is an ability for suffering,) if you can by no means endure, without tempestuous agitations, or sullen despondencies of spirit. But if patience have its perfect work, that will infer a universal healthfulness and good habit into your whole soul.

Their love to God is, in such a case, eminently tried, and improved. Blessed is the man that endures temptation, (tentative affliction is there meant, as above, verse 2.) for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him, (Jam. i. 12.) which implies, their love to him is the great thing put upon trial, in that case. And it is a great trial of love to God, a very improvable opportunity of discerning its sincerity, when, upon a long affliction, you can appeal to God, and say: Thou knowest I love thee; though thou smite and kill, I will still love thee. No discontentful motion, no repining thought, shall ever be allowed a place in my breast; there may be sighs, but no murmurings, gruans, but no tumults, nothing of displeasure against thy holy pleasure.

[4.] It occasions such to live much upon the borders of eternity. Under affliction we look not to the things that are seen and temporal; but to the things that are unseen, and eternal; which make us count our affliction, though long, but momentary, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. And those souls will prosper and flourish that have so unspeakably more to do with the other world, than with this. 'Tis in this way that the afflictions of this present state do work for us the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, (ver. 17.) as they direct our eye forward, while we look, (verse 18.) not to the things which are seen, which are but temporal; but to the things which are unseen, and eternal. Life and spirit, strength and vigour enter (*q. d.*) at our eye, which is prompted by the horror of frightful spectacles in this scene of things, to look to another, where all things appear lightsome, pleasant, and glorious.

There are other considerations, whereby you might argue to yourselves not only the consistency, but the suitableness, of an afflicted state in this world, with God's favour, kindness, and compassion towards you. As that when he is more highly provoked, he threatens not to afflict, as the beaviest of penalties. Why should they be smitten any more? Isa. i. 5. I will no more punish your daughters, &c. Hos. iv. 14. Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone, ver. 17. That his covenant obliges him to it, as to them who are, on stricter terms, in covenant with him, Christ's own seed being signified by David's; as by David is manifestly Christ himself, Psal. lxxxix. Where you may see how, and after what tenor, his covenant runs, ver. 30—34. According whereto he himself elsewhere acknowledges, that in very faithfulness God hath afflicted him, Psal. cxix. 75. That, in experience, we are apt to grow remiss, secure, and negligent, when all things are externally well with us. And let us but appeal to ourselves, how much a wakeful temper of spirit, under affliction, is better than carelessness, and vanity of mind, accompanied with fleshly ease and pleasure; that we can ourselves easily apprehend, that it may not only consist with the tenderness of a parent to have the wound of a child searched, though with much pain; but proceed from it; that in heaven our judgment of things will be right and incorrupt, where we shall apprehend no cause for complaint, that through many sicknesses, diseases, and death itself, our way was made for us thither. And if that shall then be a true judgment, the thing itself must be as true now. But these I hastily hint, and pass to some further use.

2. We may next collect, that since it is out of doubt the devil may have some hand in our outward affliction; we are concerned to take so much the more care, that he may not have his end upon us by it. A hand he may have, and we cannot determine how far; but whether it be more or less, great care we are concerned to take how to frustrate his design. He has the most mischievous ends that can be, and designs worse things to us than the affliction, which is the means, whatsoever that be. He would fain engage us in a controversy with God, would have us contend with him, murmur, fret, blaspheme, and curse God; and therewith send out our last and dying breath. That was his design upon Job. Let us labour to frustrate it, as he did. Divers of the ancients (Justin Martyr, Jerome, Cyprian, and Austin) speak much to this purpose, how great a design the devil drives in being the author of sicknesses and diseases to men, that he might make them apply themselves to him, and divert from God; as that wicked prince did, whom by the prophet we find so sharply reproved for it, as if there were no God in Israel, that he went to the god of Ekron (some demon or other, as we have reason to think.) The last mentioned of those authors speaks of it as just matter of excommunication, when those that bear the name of Christians shall, in such cases, use means bearing no natural proportion or accommodateness to the end, charms, spells, &c. for ease, or cure of maladies; wherein no relief could reasonably be expected, but from the devil's agency, who may be officious enough, if especially he have first hurt, to heal too, that by practising upon their bodies, he may entangle their souls; and (according to his wont of running counter to God, who wounds that he may the more effectually heal and save) by a present temporary cure, wound mortally, and finally destroy.

He hath not left the world (no not the Christian world) quite ignorant of his methods in these kinds, of training men, by gradual steps, into things, first, that seem innocent, and then into such familiarities, (whether their real distress, or their curiosity, were the first handle he took hold of them by, or the engine by which he drew them,) till, at length, it comes to express covenanting. If the matter come not so far, 'tis rare to come off from the least tamperings without a scratch. He that is born of God, keeps himself, that the evil one may not touch him, (1 John v. 18.) as knowing he designs to touch mortally, and if he touch, to kill. If it proceed so far as a solemn league, how tragical consequences doth story abound with! That of Count Matiscon, (plucked away by the devil from among divers persons of quality, whom he was entertaining, and at noonday whirled in the air three times about the city, in open view of the people, to whom he in vain cried for help,) reported by some historians; and that of an infamous magician of Saltzburg, and divers others, are instances both very extraordinary and very monitory. But as to a future ruin, which he finally aims to involve men in, with himself; he hath not faster hold of any than those that have learnt to ridicule every thing of this kind, and who have put so much sadducism into their creed, (consisting of so many negatives, or things they believe not, that they scarce leave enough positive to admit that name,) as to think there is no such creature, perhaps as being conscious there can be no worse than themselves. But how near is he to them that think him out of the universe!

3. Since it is possible the devil may bind even those that belong to God, with some kind of bodily affliction or other; it is the more to be apprehended, how much worse bonds they are, in which he binds those that do not belong to him. Oh! that you would be serious here! How many such sad cases are there, amongst even them as may be feared that are called Christians, concerning which it may be said, here is a soul that Satan hath bound, not eighteen, but it may be, thirty, forty, fifty years! Oh! when shall this soul be released, that Satan hath so long bound!

4. As from the devil's malice to the bodies of men, we may collect his greater malice to their souls; so we may judge proportionably of Christ's compassions, that as they incline him to give them all suitable relief in their bodily afflictions, as far as can consist with those measures which infinite wisdom hath pitched upon for the government of this present world, and as shall fall in with the design of his office of a Redeemer and Saviour to us; so they much more incline him to relieve embondaged souls. For this doth most directly fall in with his design, and is the proper business of his office; the other may be only collateral to it, and as it were to be done on the by. He came not into this world to procure that men might not be sick, or pained, or be presently restored to health, and ease; but he came and died, that souls might live; to procure for them pardon, reconciliation with God, all needful assisting influences of grace, and eternal life. Of these therefore they

may be most assured, if they duly apply themselves. And some encouragement to expect so much they may draw, even from this instance. This infirm woman, in order to bodily cure, did apply herself to him, she came after him, as others did, for this purpose, and did, in a sort, put herself in the way of his healing influence. Now if any of you find your souls are yet held by the devil, in worse bonds; apply yourselves to the merciful compassionate Jesus, there is hope in the case. Oh! will you not say so much to him for a soul in bondage! Lord, loose this poor soul of mine, that Satan hath bound for so many sad years. Do but labour to know you are bound, to feel your bonds. Whatsoever there is of prevailing sin in you, it is a bond, by which the devil holds your souls. The wicked are held in the cords of their own iniquities, Prov. v. 22. And sins are said to be the works of Satan, from which it is the design of the Redeemer to loose us. The Son of God was for this purpose manifested, that he might destroy (we read, it is that he might dissolve) the works of the devil, *q. d.* that he might release, and unbind souls, that the devil as yet holds in fast bonds. And you may find you are so bound, when upon self-reflection you take notice, you are ordinarily restrained from what you should do, against the light and conviction of your own minds and judgments; *i. e.* you find, if you reflect, a conviction hath taken place in your consciences that you ought to love God, but there is with you no such motion of soul, no inclination towards him; you ought in a stated course, to pray, and pour out your soul to him, but you are bound, you cannot offer at it, you have no liberty for it, your terrene inclination, or love to vanity, plucks you back: you ought to walk in the ways of God, but you are fettered, you cannot move a foot; you ought to do the works of God, but you are manacled, you cannot stir a hand. Are you so bound, and will you not know it? What! never feel your bonds; when once they are felt, you will soon begin to cry, and supplicate. And if once you shall be brought seriously and incessantly to supplicate, it may be hoped the release will follow. Was our Lord so compassionate towards infirm bodies, in the days of his flesh in this world; and do we think he, above, is less compassionate to souls? Can it be thought heaven hath altered him to your disadvantage? Is he less kind, benign, and less apt to do good, now he is enthroned in glory? Why should you not believe he will give release unto your captived, embondaged souls, if you implore his help and mercy, with seriousness, and insist upon it, and do not give him over? Say to him, Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me; for do you not know it is his office? The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and opening of prisons to them that are bound, Isa. lxi. 1. What! will you be bound all your days, and never lift up a cry to the great Redeemer and Saviour of souls, to give you release? How deservedly should these bonds end with you in the chains, wherein the devils themselves shall for ever be bound with you?

5. We may collect, there is an awful regard due to the sabbath-day. When our Lord justifies the cure now wrought on their sabbath, only on this account, that it was an act of mercy towards a daughter of Abraham; by the exception of such a case he strengthens the general rule, and intimates so holy a day should not, upon light occasions, be otherwise employed, than for the proper end of its appointment. Though our day be not the same, the business of it, in great part, is; by the reason given in the fourth commandment, which being placed among the rest of those ten words, so many ways remarkably distinguished from the other laws given the Jews, and signifying that these were intended not to them alone, but to mankind, and given upon a reason common to man; the words also not necessarily signifying more, than there should be a seventh day kept as sacred to God, reserving it to after-significations of his pleasure to mark out and signalize this or that day, as he should see fit. And our Saviour having told us expressly, The sabbath was made for man (*i. e.* as men, not for Jews, as Jews.) These considerations taken together, with many more, (not fit to be here mentioned,) do challenge a very great regard to the day, which we have cause to think it is the will of God we should keep as our sabbath.

6. That there is somewhat of privilege due, by gracious vouchsafement and grant, to the children of Abraham, to Abraham's seed, *i. e.* to speak by analogy, to the children of covenanted parents. Abraham is considerable here, as being, under that notion, a father; whosoever of you, therefore, are the children of such, as were of the faith of Abraham, and you are now come to that adult state, wherein you are capable of transacting with God for yourselves, and wherein the *transitus* is made from minority to maturity; if now you own the God of your fathers, if you will now say, My fathers' God shall be my God; he keeps mercy for thousands of them that love him, and keep his commandments, *i. e.* if there were a thousand generations of such, (generations being spoken of so immediately before, *viz.* that he would visit iniquity upon them that hate him, to the third and fourth generation; but show mercy to them that love him, and keep his commandments, unto a thousand generations, *i. e.* to never so many,) if you will not, when now grown up, disavow your fathers' God, if you will avow and own him, and devote yourselves to him; he will be your God, as well as theirs. Here is now the privilege due to Abraham's children, or to the children of covenanted parents. God has an early preventive interest in them, upon which they may lay their claim to him, as their God; if they will but now give up themselves to him, and stand to his covenant. But if you will not do so, but slight and reject the God of your fathers, then your birth-privilege can signify nothing to you; then think not to say with yourselves, We have Abraham to our father, in that third of Matthew's Gospel; for God will never want children, he is able of stones to raise up children to Abraham, *q. d.* rather stones than you. And then, indeed, upon a true account, Abraham is none of your father, as our Lord Jesus tells the Jews, If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. You do so and so, thus did not Abraham, John viii. 39, 40. Pray consider what Abraham was, and how he lived on earth, like an inhabitant of heaven, as an heir of the heavenly country: his business was to seek the better country, that is, the heavenly; wherefore God was not ashamed to be called his God; as in that eleventh to the Heb. ver. 16. But if you will go from day to day grovelling in the dust of the earth, this did not Abraham. If you will spend your lives in the pursuit of vanity and trifles, this did not Abraham. There is a great privilege belonging by Gospel grant unto the children of covenanted parents, if they do not forfeit it, by neglecting and practically disavowing their fathers' God.

7. But I further infer hence, that since this compassion has a real, though not a principal, hand in the release that is given to them that belong to God, in whatsoever way they are released, from all their infirmities, and ails, and afflictions in this world; it very much becomes, and much concerns, all the children of Abraham patiently to wait for it, in God's own way. Patiently, I say, in God's own way wait for it. The children of Abraham shall be loosened sooner or later, and in one way or other, though very long, though so many years bound by such and such afflicting distempers. You have a great instance of this kind in that daughter of Abraham, whom God hath called away from us. In all that long exercise, the main thing she was ever wont to insist upon, was, that in all this affliction she might gain patience, submission, and instruction. And in her later time, when she drew nearer to eternity, was more in view of it, that was the great subject wherewith she entertained herself, and was conversant much with somewhat more lately written upon that subject, as by Mr. Shower, (now known to most of you,) and by another author. And her last entertainment, as I have been told, (as to helps from creatures in any such kind,) was the repetition of what some of you have heard concerning the Immanuel, wherewith she formerly pleased herself, as being, it is likely, much habituated in the temper of her spirit to the thoughts of him: that having, by agreement with her pious consort, been their motto, [b] at their first coming together, Immanuel, God with us.

8. I shall only add one instruction more, to shut up all, that since our Lord Jesus hath such an agency, and even with compassion, in the release of those that do belong to him, from their afflicting infirmities; we should all of us labour with a due and right frame, and disposition of spirit,

[b] The posy on their wedding ring.

to behold any such releasement. It is a great matter to be able to behold instances of that kind, with a right frame of mind and spirit. If one be released by recovery into ease, health, and strength in this world; 'tis easily and readily made matter of joy. Is one recovered out of a long and languishing sickness? Friends and relations behold it with great complacency and gladness of heart. But if a godly friend be released by dying, truly we can hardly make ourselves believe that this is a release, or so valuable a release; so much are we under the government of sense, so little doth that faith signify with us, or do its part, that is the substance of what we hope for, and the evidence of what we see not. No! This is to go with us for no release. We look only upon the sensible, *i.e.* upon the gloomy, part of such a dispensation, when such a one is gone, released, set at liberty, (as a bird out of the cage, or the snare,) we can hardly tell how to consider it as a release, we will not be induced to apprehend it so. There are no dispositions, no deportments commonly that suit such an apprehension. And oh! how unbecoming and incongruous a thing, when Christ is, in that way, about releasing such a one, to have a holy soul just upon the confines of a glorious blessed eternity, compassed about with sighs, sobs, tears, and lamentations. How great an incongruity! I have many times thought with myself, the love and kindness of friends and relations is very pleasant in life, but grievous at death. It is, indeed, in some respects, a very desirable thing (if God shall vouchsafe it) to die with one's friends about one. It may be, one may need some little bodily relief in those last hours; besides that, some proper thoughts may be suggested by them, to mingle with one's own. And, if God afford the use of reason, and speech, and the supply of his own Spirit, one may possibly, in this last juncture, be a means of some good to them. One may possibly say that that may abide with them, and be of future advantage to them. But in other respects, if the related friendly by-standers cannot duly temper themselves, if they are apter to receive or do more hurt than good, if Christians do not labour to show a truly Christian spirit, in such a case; their presence has very little eligible in it. And, indeed, the deportment even of those that profess Christianity, about their deceasing godly friends, is such for the most part, as if the foundations of all religion were shaken with them, and as if they had a design to shake them too, if possible, in such with whom they are now to part; as if it were to be called in question, whether what God hath said concerning another world, and the blessed state of the innumerable and holy assembly above, be true or no, or were not doubted to be false, and a solemn fiction, invented to delude mortals here on earth.

It is little considered how opposite such a temper of spirit, as commonly appears in us, is to the very design of all Christianity. For doth not the whole of Christianity terminate upon eternity, and upon another state and world? Now do but consider the inconsistencies that are to be found in this case, between the carriage and temper of many that profess Christianity, and their very profession itself. They acknowledge, they own that the design of Christ's appearing here in this world, and of his dying upon the cross, was to bring us to God, to bring the many sons to glory. They grant that this is not to be done all at once, not all in a day; but it is to be done by degrees. Here he takes up one, and there another; leaving others still to transmit religion, and continue it on to the end of time. So far they agree with our common Lord, and seem to approve the divine determinations, in all these steps of his procedure. But yet for all this, if they might have their own will, Christ should not have one to ascend to him, of those for whom he died, and himself ascended to open heaven for them, and to prepare a place for their reception, as their fore-runner, there. I say, not one to ascend after him! for they take up with a general approving of this design of his. Very well! say they, it is fitly ordered, his method is wise, and just, and kind, and let him take them that belong to him, when he thinks fit, only let him excuse my family; let him take whom he will, only let him touch no relation of mine, not my husband, wife, child, brother, sister; take whom he will, but let all mine alone. I agree to all he shall do well enough, only let him allow me my exception. But if every one be of this temper and resolution, for themselves and theirs, according to this tendency and course of things, he shall have none at all to ascend; none to bring with him, when he returns. Those that are dead in Jesus, he is to bring with him. No, he should be solitary and unattended for all them. They, and all their relations, would be immortal upon earth. How ill doth this agree and accord with the Christian scheme and model of things?

But you will say, What! would I persuade you to be indifferent, and not to love and care for your relatives, or be unwilling to part with them? No. All that I persuade to is, that there be a mixture in your temper, and such a mixture, as that the prevailing ingredient therein may agree with the stronger and weightier reason. 'Tis not that I would have love extinguished among relatives, but I would have it moderated and subdued, to that degree as to admit of being governed by superior, greater, and nobler considerations. Do you think Christ did expect or design that his disciples should not love him? And yet he tells them, John xiv. 28. If you love me, you would rejoice that I say I go to my Father. And who in all this world could ever have such a loss, as they of him, dwelling in flesh among them? Yet, says he, if you loved me, you would rejoice that I say I go to my Father. And when the apostle, visibly tending towards death, by the prediction given concerning him, (Acts xxi. 13.) said to the disciples round about him, What mean you to weep, and to break my heart? I am ready, not only to be bound, but to die for the name of Jesus; if there had not been a faulty excess in the affection they expressed, certainly he would not have rebuked it, he would not have blamed what he thought not blame-worthy.

In short, it were desirable (if God see good) to die amidst the pleasant friends and relatives, who were not ill-pleased that we lived; that living, and dying, breath might mingle, and ascend together in prayers and praises to the blessed Lord of heaven and earth, the God of our lives; if then we could part with consent, a rational and a joyful consent.

Otherwise, to die with ceremony, to die amongst the fashionable bemoanings and lamentations, as if we despaired of futurity! One would say, (with humble submission to the Divine pleasure,) Lord! let me rather die alone! in perfect solitude! in some unfrequented wood, or on the top of some far remote mountain! where none might interrupt the solemn transactions between thy glorious blessed self, and my joyfully departing, self-resigning soul!

But in all this we must refer ourselves to God's holy pleasure, who will dispose of us, living and dying, in the best, the wisest, and the kindest way.

A DISCOURSE

RELATING TO THE MUCH LAMENTED DEATH AND SOLEMN FUNERAL

OF QUEEN MARY.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE RACHEL, LADY RUSSEL.

Madam,

I can be at no loss for inducements to prefix your Ladyship's name to this discourse. I know the subject is grateful to you, and if I only give you the occasion hereby of revolving in your mind this sublime context, you will entertain yourself from it, with more enlarged and exalted thoughts, than this discourse, especially confined within so narrow limits, can suggest.

And your Ladyship knows so much of the incomparable queen, that you can the more easily believe the rest. I reckon you, Madam, a great frequenter of that assembly above, to which she is now adjoined. You have, besides the greater attractives that are common to all serious Christians, a very peculiar one, to draw your mind often thither. A joint-root with you is there by transplantation, and a noble branch, from you both, and in whom two illustrious families meet, is, under your care, shooting upwards also. All indeed that have true honour for him, will earnestly covet he may be long serviceable to the most valuable purposes, in this world; and that, by the blessing of heaven upon his approaching nuptials, (with one from whom may be expected all that so sweet and tender a bud, now beginning to open, can promise,) he may, in due time, spread forth many branches, that may flourish here; but it is to be hoped he will be found to have a greater mind, than can be confined to so low and little a thing as this earth is.

The thought may much the better be digested, that terrestrial nuptials will some time end in funerals; if once, by God's prescribed methods, it can be made certain to us also, that those funerals shall end in celestial triumphs.

Your Ladyship's eyes (which better serve for heaven than earth) being observedly much directed upward, will give aim and direction to theirs, who depend upon you, to look the same way; and withal draw down from thence continual blessings upon yourself, and them. Which is the serious desire, and hope of,

Madam,

Your Ladyship's most obedient,
and obliged humble servant,

J. H.

HEBREWS XII. 23.

—AND TO THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN MADE PERFECT.

Let me invite back your eye to the foregoing words, that are in nearer connexion with these. Ver. 22. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, (ver. 23.) to the general assembly, and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

We have had this last week a public solemnity, that was becomingly great and magnificent, upon a sad and mournful occasion, the last act of a doleful scene that hath lasted many weeks. You know I have taken notice to you (my usual hearers) of the first, and saddest, the leading part in this tragedy, once and again; nor would I have this last to pass us, without some instructive observation and remark. It will the more instruct us, the less it detains us; or if only taking a due (not, I mean, a slight and too hasty, but yet a transient) notice of it, we be prompted by it to look forward, from what was in its own kind most deservedly great, to what is incomparably greater, in a more excellent kind.

In such a funeral solemnity, for so great and excellent a personage, there is what may most fitly entertain awhile; there is not that which ought finally to terminate a wise and a judicious eye. Honours done to the memory of great persons deceased have, by the wisdom of all nations, been counted decencies, and even debts; when especially the deceased have been sometime, and might have been much longer, public blessings: then indeed it is that such rites are most fitly (as they are usually) called *justa*. But we are too prone to be taken only with the mere pomp of such spectacles, and, which is the infirmity of our too degenerate spirits, to be wholly possessed with fanciful ideas; Acts xxv. 23. as those were intimated to be, which were from a spectacle of the same common kind, though on a very diverse occasion, by that elegant expression, *μετὰ πολλῆς φαντασίας*, such as do but amuse our imagination awhile, but must of course vanish, and cannot stay long with us. But we need that somewhat greater, and too latent to strike our eye, should another way enter, and teach our mind; making such impressions there, as may claim an abode, and that ought to remain, and dwell with us. You read of a very solemn funeral, Gen. l. The whole country into which the march was made, was amused at the state and greatness of that mournful cavalcade, wherein 'tis said, ver. 9. there were chariots, and horsemen, even a very great company. That which you have many of you so lately seen, and no doubt all of you heard of,

was a most august funeral solemnity; such as whereof less concerned foreign spectators might say, as the Canaanites by mistake did of that, ver. 11. This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians.

They were indeed anciently the most celebrated mourners, for such as died from amongst them, in all the world, in respect of their funeral rites, and of their monuments for the dead,[a] of which they are said to have taken more care than of the habitations of the living; accounting these they were to inhabit only a short time, but those they reckoned their ἀϊδίους οἴκους, their *eternal habitations*. An imagination, which how wild soever it were, of the habitations of souls, (which only could be supposed capable of being pleased with them,) yet implied their belief of their immortality, whereof some have, groundlessly, thought them the first assertors.[b] But the Canaanites were, as was intimated, mistaken in apprehending that to be chiefly an Egyptian mourning. The true Israelites (those that were such indeed) were the true, concerned mourners. The father of Israel was dead, as now with us, the mother. A political, though not a natural, nor merely an economical one: a mother, not in the narrower and more minute, but in the larger and most noble sense; not of a single family only, but of nations. The Egyptians assisted to make up the show in that mourning, but were probably the prepared (as their posterity were the active) instruments of the slavery and misery of that people; with whom they were now seeming sharers in lamentation.

Ours was a mourning not less grievous than theirs, nor more grievous than just to the English nation, *i. e.* to whom the soil and the genius are together native, that are not of an Egyptian spirit. Unto which, as things happen, (to its power, or to its impotency,) there is a radical innate disposition, either to make slaves, or to be such. There is a sort of people (as was once said) born to slavery, to whom it is a birthright. They have it in their natures, and no other state, as he most aptly spake, is agreeable or becoming to them; [c]*Quos non decet esse nisi servos*. They know not what to do with liberty, any more than that silly creature that used to haunt the dunghill, with the pearl. Therefore they can but suitably value the restorers and assertors of it. No irons can be heavier, or less tolerable to them, than a generous and a Christian state of freedom. Therefore if none else will do them the kind office to put them into gentler shackles, they grow so unnaturally cruel, as to shackle themselves, in the ignoblest sort of bondage. Prov. v. 22. They are held in the cords of their own sins, and make the chain, whereby they are to be dragged.[d] Brutish appetites and inclinations are to them severer taskmasters, than it can ever be in their power to become to others. They can themselves, at the utmost, but domineer over other men's externals; but these have subdued their wills, and tyrannize in their very minds.

Thus 'tis with them in relation to their governing, and their being governed; and their policy and religion come both out of the same mint. To them this season of sorrow is a time of festivity and laughter, who, when they have suffered a more monstrous transformation themselves, can easily turn the house of mourning into that of mirth, Eccl. vii. 4. The wise man tells us what sort of people they are, whose heart is in this latter house; and what is to be thought of such mirth and laughter, chap. ii. 2. And indeed without a serious repentance (by which men do *resipiscere*, or *become wise*) theirs is like to prove the Sardonic laughter, a certain prelude to death and ruin.

But 'tis to be hoped, this sort of men do dwindle into a not much regardable paucity. The current of the nation runs against them, which must turn and constrain them to fall in with it. For, we had upon the late sad occasion a *panegyris*. We find that word in the introductive part of the text, and though it is more commonly applied to a multitude, gathered on other occasions, it disagrees not to that orderly great concourse on that mournful occasion, a general assembly, that is, a national one, met then on purpose to mourn; a nation assembled, and mourning in their representative. It was decent it should be so, a loss so national, so general a sorrow were with no congruity otherwise to be represented and expressed. Our mourning was therefore by all the estates of the kingdom, the head only mourning, with greater and more decent majesty in retirement, or being (as is usual in solemn mournings) hid and covered on that day. So was the whole legislature concerned in that sorrow, as if it were ordained by statute, or as if our mourning were as that for an excellent prince also (2 Chron. xxxv. 25.) by an ordinance in our Israel; and as if our tears and lamentations were, as before they were by merit, to be also made due by law! Death marched in state and triumph that day, the king of terrors took the throne, and filled that part which it had made vacant, having plucked away from thence not only so bright an ornament, but so glorious an instrument, in our government; and all the orders of the realm, as captives, attended the chariot of the conqueror. England had lost its delight, its pleasant comeliness, and even half its soul. Nothing could correspond to such a case, but a national groan, as of a half-expiring kingdom, ready almost to breathe its last, and give up the ghost.

It must be confessed, our just tribute to the memory of our admirable queen can never be said to be fully paid; nor can this discourse leave out occasional reflections that may be of this import. But my present design is to endeavour our minds may be drawn upwards, and to make that improvement of this most instructive providence, unto which this chosen text will direct. Not to entertain you with her character, and praises (for it is the same thing to characterize, and to praise her:) that part is performed in divers excellent discourses, which I have read, as I believe many of you have, and I hope with fruit as well as approbation; and (as there is cause) with great admiration of the Divine goodness, that so illustriously shone forth in her, and that vouchsafed, so long, to intrust the people of England with so rare a jewel, whose lustre was yet exceeded by its real virtues. By which also we may make our estimate of the displeasure wherewith it is so soon withdrawn, and caught away from us, so as to entertain the age (as our divine Herbert) with—*a mirth but opened, and shut up again*—a burning and a shining light, (for so she also was in a true sense, and in her proper sphere,) in the light whereof we rejoiced but a season.

But every such providence hath its dark side and its bright. View it downward as it looks upon us who remain beneath, and we behold blackness, and darkness, and a horrible tempest. Such a state of things we may fear our queen hath left unto us who stay below, while we do so. But look we upon it upwards, whither she is ascended, and whither we are professedly tending, and are in some sort come, if we be followers of them who through faith and patience have inherited the promises; and we find 'tis to mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. And hither (that we may fetch instruction out of terror, out of the eater meat, and life out of death) let us bend and apply ourselves.

We have had a mournful sad solemnity and assembly, though decently pompous and great; England's glory clad in sables, and glittering in a cloud. But now let us lift up our eye, and endeavour it may penetrate through this darkness, and behold the glorious spectacle which this context presents us with. Funeral solemnities, even for pious and holy persons, and that were of greatest use in the world, are dull and gloomy spectacles, if they are only considered in their retrospection, without prospect; or if they only solemnize their exit out of this world of ours, but be understood to have no reference to their ascent and entrance into the regions of immortality and bliss above. And, without this, we see ourselves outdone by the Egyptians themselves, with whom their funeral apparatus had reference to a subsequent immortality.

These words are allusive, and promiscuously refer, partly to things known and famous among the Greeks, but are more principally accommodated to these Christian Israelites, or Hebrews, to whom they are writ (and in a scheme of speech, familiar and well known to them) have respect to their passage out of Egypt (as the 3d and 4th chapters of this epistle also have) towards the land of their promised

a Diod. Sic. i. 1. b Herod. Euterp. c Plin. Paneg. d Sen. Trag.

inheritance, whereof the remains of their venerable ancestor and head, holy Jacob, or Israel, had by divine instinct and direction, in that mentioned solemn funeral procession, been conveyed before, to take a sort of typical and prophetical prepossession of it for them. They are in the whole a figure, an allegory, which is expounded, Gal. iii. In their way to their terrestrial Canaan, this people come to mount Sinai. The emblem of their Jewish church state, under rigorous severities, which they were to pass from; and so shall we. The text expresses what they were come and were tending to, the representation whereof hath a double reference, intermediate to the state and constitution of the Christian church, and final to the heavenly state; the former being both a resemblance and some degree of the latter.

Ye are come (saith he) to mount Sion, the seat of the sacred temple, the shechinah, the habitation of the Divine presence, not ambulatory, as the tabernacle was, while they were journeying through the wilderness, but the fixed residence of the eternal King, where the order of worship was to be continued, to the fulness of time; as afterwards in the Christian church it was to be permanent and unchanged to the end of time; and in the heavenly state unalterable and eternal. And here, in opposition to the case at mount Sinai, where the people were to stay beneath the mount,[e] (whereas they were to go up to the house of God, on mount Sion,) they are now to ascend, *and be higher than heaven*, as their glorious Head and Lord is said to be, Heb. vii. 26. to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to signify the vicinity wherein God will have his people be to him, as Jerusalem was to Sion, their houses and dwellings being near to his own, the city to the temple.[f] And this passage may also look back upon their former state; whereas they had heretofore nothing but wilderness, they had now a city. To which that also agrees, Heb. x. 16. Their earlier progenitors were wanderers and strangers even in Canaan itself, but now God had prepared for them a city in the heavenly Canaan, as before he did in the earthly. But lest their minds should stay in the external sign, he lets them know he means the heavenly Jerusalem, *i. e.* the Christian church, which was the kingdom of heaven begun; and heaven itself, as being that kingdom, in its final and consummate state. To an innumerable company of angels, *μυριάσι*, which, though in the singular it signifies a definite number, being here put plurally, may well be understood to signify indefinitely a numberless multitude: or whereas some selected squadrons might only attend the solemnity of giving the law at mount Sinai, here is the whole heavenly host, whose stated office it is to guard the church below, and worship the Majesty of heaven above. To the general assembly, the *πανήγυρις* the glorious *consessus* of all orders of blessed spirits; which as it may be supposed constant, at all times, so is as supposable to be more frequented and solemn at some, and whither any may resort, as quick as the glance of an eye or a thought; and perhaps do at appointed seasons, so as to make more solemn appearances before the throne of God, as the laws and usages of that blessed world shall require. And we may well understand here an allusion to the appointed times, at which there was a resort from all parts of Judea to Jerusalem; and as in the Christian church are, at set seasons, more numerous and solemn assemblies. Here may also be an allusion to the *Panathenaica*, the more general conventions of all the people of Athens, upon some solemn occasions, which were wont to be called *πανήγυρεις*. These can be referred to but as faint resemblances and shadows (whether they were the Jewish or the Grecian assemblies) of this universal convention, that fills the vast expanse of heaven; in comparison whereof not only this little earth of ours, but the whole *vortice* to which it belongs, can be considered but as a very minute spot or point. The inhabitants that people those immense, pure, and bright regions, in their grand, stated, solemn assembly, make the term to which holy souls, ascending from among us, are continually coming. And here with what ineffable pleasure must these pure celestial intelligences, all filled with light, wisdom, life, benignity, love, and joy, converse with one another; behold, reverence, love, worship, and enjoy their sovereign Lord, displaying his glory perpetually before them, and making his rich immense goodness diffuse itself, and flow in rivers of pleasure most copiously among them!

The church of the first-born written in heaven. These all constitute but one church, of whatsoever orders those blessed spirits are. And they are all said to be first-born, the church here meant consisting only of such, in whom the divine life, or the holy living image of God, hath place; they having all the privileges which did belong to the first-born, the inheritance, the principality, and the priesthood: for all God's sons are also heirs, Rom. viii. 17. And they are all made kings and priests, (Rev. i. 6.) having all their crowns, which they often cast down before the supreme King; and their employment being perpetual oblation of praise, adoration, and all possible acknowledgments to him. They are all of excellent dignity, and every one enrolled so that none have a place there, by oversight, casualty, or intrusion. We must here understand an allusion to what citizens need not be told, the known custom of registering such as were *civitate donati*, or *made free*.

And to God the Judge of all. This may have reference to that office of the judge in the olympic concertations, to whom it belonged to determine who were victors, and to whom the garlands or crowns were justly due. Here the privilege is, that they whose cause is to be tried, are sure of righteous judgment, and that they may approach the enthroned Majesty of heaven itself. None of them are denied liberty of access to the throne of glory above, as in the Christian church none are to the throne of grace below.

And to the spirits of just men made perfect. This shows they all make but one church, even such spirits as have dwelt in flesh, being received into the communion of those whose dwelling never was with flesh. And, in the mean time, those that yet continue in these low earthly stations, as soon as the principles of the divine life have place in them, belong, and are related, to that glorious community; for they are said to be already come thereto, and all together compose but one family. For there is but one *paterfamilias*, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is said to be named, Ephes. iii. 15. Now for the encouragement of Christians unto a faithful perseverance, through all the difficulties of this their present conflicting, imperfect state, is this glorious representation made of the blessed issue their labours and sufferings shall have at last. Whither they shall be gathered at the finishing of their course, and how God-like, how worthy of himself, the end shall be, into which he will run up all things, when the state of probation and preparation is over with his intelligent creatures, and the stable, permanent, eternal state comes to take place; which, because it is final, can admit no more changes, and because it is perfect, can no more need any. Hither Christians are to come, and in some sense the sincere are said to be come already. And now upon this part of the term of their access, *viz.* that they are come to "the spirits of the just made perfect," we are to stay awhile, and shall consider,

I. The perfection the spirits of the just do finally arrive to, in their future state.

II. In what sense sincere Christians, in their present state, can be said to be come to them, who are so made perfect.

I. For the former of these, we may easily admit this being made perfect to be an agonistical phrase, as some of great note and worth have expounded it; and unto which that in the beginning of this chapter, of running the race set before us, (*q. d.* the way laid out between the lines on each hand,) doth plainly lead us. But it should hereupon be remote from us to think, that a mere relative dignity, or any external honours, are the things we must principally understand to be conferred, or which these *adepti* must be now thought to have obtained. 'Tis a real, inward, subjective perfection, by which they all become most excellent creatures, that must be chiefly meant. Perfection, taken in the moral sense, doth, in the language of the Holy Scriptures, contain a threefold gradation.

First, At the lowest, sincerity; as when our Saviour proposes to that querist, Matt. xix. 21. If he would be perfect, to sell all he had, and give to the poor, following him, with the expectation of no other recompense but of a trea-

e Ἀνωτεροι του ουρανου. Chrys. in loc.

f Ἐνει ερημος συνανθα πολις. Id. ibid.

sure in heaven. If a man's soul be not in a disposition to comport with such terms, upon a sufficient signification of our Lord's pleasure, that he shall now do so; or if at any time this be the case, that he must either forego all this world, and even life itself, or else renounce Christ and Christianity; he is not yet in a right posture toward his last end. He hath not taken the Lord for his God, and best good; his heart more strongly adheres to this present world. But if he have arrived hither, which is his first step, resolving upon his true and right end, which he will supremely pursue, against whatsoever competition of less valuable things; he is now, in the lowest sense, perfect, *i. e.* a resolved, thorough Christian.

Secondly, An eminent improvement, greater maturity in divine knowledge, and all other Christian virtues. As when the apostle, blaming the slower progress of the Christian Hebrews, chap. v. 13, 14, that they were yet so unskilful in the word of righteousness, and only capable of milk, not the strong meat fit for persons come to a more grown age, nor had their senses as yet well exercised, &c. he exhorts them, chap. vi. 1. leaving the first principles of the Christian doctrine, to go on to perfection.

The third is the consummate state of a Christian; so is a perfect man expounded by being come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. That state, to which all gifts given by our ascended, conquering, crowned Redeemer; the whole Gospel, the apostolate, the entire ministry, the whole frame and constitution of the Christian church, all evangelical truths and institutions, with whatsoever illuminations and influences we can suppose superadded to all these, have ultimate and final reference. And the state to which all shall come, (Eph. iv. 8—13.) is this most perfect state, in respect whereof the apostle says of himself, that he had not yet attained, nor was already perfect, Phil. iii. 12. I do not reckon the mere natural perfection, either of the inner or outer man, to be here necessarily excluded; but that the moral is chiefly intended, and of that the ultimate consummative degrees, still reserving room for such additions as will follow the final judgment.

And I doubt 'tis not enough considered, how much the felicity of the future state depends upon such perfection of the subject of it. Concerning the object of felicity, we are agreed it can be no other than the blessed God himself, the all-comprehending good, fully adequate to the highest and most enlarged reasonable desires. But the contemperation of our faculties to the holy, blissful object, is so necessary to our satisfying fruition, that without that we are no more capable thereof, than a brute of the festivities of a quaint oration, or a stone of the relishes of the most pleasant meats and drinks. That meetness, which the apostle speaks of, Col. i. 12. To be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; is of no small importance to our participation itself.

We are too apt to fill our minds with ideas of a heaven made up of external, out-side glories, forgetting we must have the kiogdom of God within us, hereafter, in its perfect, as well as here, in its initial state; a kingdom that consists in righteousness, first, a universal holy rectitude of all our powers; then consequently in peace, and joy. The perfect cure of all the distempers of our spirits, and a confirmed most perfectly happy temper, is of most absolute necessity to the blessedness of the heavenly state; and without it any imagined external glory will signify no more to our satisfaction, than rich and gorgeous apparel can give the desired content and ease to an ulcerous diseased body; or (as the moralist speaks) a diadem to an aching head, a gay slipper to a pained foot, or a gold ring to a sore finger.

Let a soul be supposed actually adjoined to that glorious assembly and church above, that is yet unacquainted with God, strange, and disaffected to him, alienated from the divine life, still carnally minded, loving most, and looking back with a lingering eye toward, this present world and state of things, full of pride, haughtiness, and self-magnifying thoughts, of envy, wrath, hatred, contentiousness, deceit, guilefulness, and dissimulation, filled with ravenous lusts, and inordinate, insatiable desires after impossible things; such a soul will only seem to have mistaken its way, place, state, and company, and can only be a fit associate for devils, and infernal spirits. Its condition would

g Plutar.

be equally uneasy to itself, and all about it; the outrage of its own lusts and passions would create to it a hell, in the midst of heaven, and be to it as a thousand devils, both for wickedness, and for torment.

But to give you a summary of this internal perfection of the spirits of just men, in their most perfect state, I cannot give you a fuller and more comprehensive one than is expressed in those few words, 1 John iii. 3. We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Where are two things conjoined, that together express the perfect state of these blessed spirits—likeness to God, and the vision of him.

And these two are so connected, as to admit of a twofold reference each to other; either that this likeness to God be considered as preparative for the vision of him, and so that the latter words be considered as an argument of the former, *viz.* that because it is designed we shall live in the perpetual vision of God, it is therefore necessary we should be like him, without which we can be no way capable of such a sight, or of beholding so bright a glory. Or else, that the vision of God be perpetually productive of this likeness to him; and so that the latter words be understood not only to contain an argument, whence we may conclude this likeness must be, but also to express the immediate cause by which it is. As the form of expression will admit either of these references, so I doubt not the nature of the thing will require that we take them in both. There could be no such vision of God as is here meant, if there were not some previous likeness to him, in our former state. And when, in our final state, we are first admitted to that beatific glorious vision, by that means, we may reasonably understand will ensue the perfection of that likeness. Whereof also it is to be considered, that vision (which spoken of the mind is knowledge) must not only be taken for a cause, but a part; for the image of God is at first renewed (and with equal reason must be supposed at last perfected) in knowledge, Col. iii. 10.

This image or likeness of God therefore, if we consider the natural order of working upon an intelligent subject, must, as to that part of it which hath its seat in the mind or understanding faculty, be caused by the immediate irradiation of the divine light and glory upon that, and be the cause of the rest. But both together are the inherent subjective perfection of these blessed spirits of the just, and comprehend all that belongs to this their moral perfection; the latter being itself also virtually comprehended in the former.

The vision of God therefore, or their perfect knowledge of him, with whom they must ever have most of all to do, as the principal object of their fruition and enjoyment, must be the primary and the leading thing in this their perfection, for no doubt it is that perfection which directly concerns their ultimate satisfaction and blessedness, which is here intended, with which their eternal employment is most conjunct and complicated, as we shall after see. They enjoy and adore the same blessed object at once, and in doing the one, do the other. And besides the knowledge of him there must be by his beams, and in his light, (Psalm xxxvi. 9.) the perfect knowledge of all that it is needful or requisite they should know; without which, since all their enjoyments in the heavenly state must be in their first rise intellectual, 'twould be impossible they should ever perfectly enjoy any thing at all. And that this perfection of just men's spirits is intended to be summarily comprehended in the perfection of their knowledge, is more than intimated, by that series of discourse which we find, 1 Cor. xiii. 9—12. The apostle, comparing the imperfection of our present, with the perfection of our future state, sums up all in this, That we know now but in part, and that then we shall know as we are known. But the perfection of this knowledge he seems more to state in the manner of knowing, than in the extent and compass of the things known. That in this latter respect it may admit of increase, they cannot doubt who consider the finite capacity of a created mind, and the mighty advantages we shall have for continual improvement, both from the clear discovery of things, in that bright and glorious light, and from the receptiveness of our enlarged and most apprehensive minds. But that state can admit of no culpable ignorance, nor of any that shall more infer infelicity, than include sin.

Therefore now to speak more distinctly, We take this perfection of the spirits of the just to be principally meant of their moral perfection, such as excludes all sin, and all misery; as morality comprehends and connects together sanctity, the goodness of the means, and felicity, the goodness of the end; the former most directly, but most certainly, inferring the latter. If therefore we say this is their sinless perfection, we say all that the case requires. In that it is said to be the perfection of spirits, it must indeed suppose all that natural perfection which belongs to such a sort of creatures, as such, in their own kind. But inasmuch as the specification is added, (of the just,) 'tis their moral perfection, or most perfectly holy rectitude, from which their blessedness is inseparable, that seems ultimately intended. But now whereas this their ultimate perfection hath been said to be virtually contained and summed up in knowledge, we are hereupon to consider how this may appear to be a complete summary of all such perfection. And nothing can more evidently appear, if you join together—the true matter or object, and right manner or nature, of this knowledge.

1. The true and proper object of it must be, not *omne scibile*, but whatsoever they can be obliged or concerned to know, or that is requisite to their duty and felicity; all that lies within their compass, as they are creatures, that in such a distinct sphere, or in their own proper order, are to correspond to the ends of their creation, *i. e.* to glorify the Author of their beings, and be happy in him. Infinite knowledge belongs not to them, is not competent to their nature, nor necessary either to their employment, or to their blessedness, in the heavenly state. Whatsoever knowledge is requisite to these ends, will be included in this their final perfection.

It is, by the way, to be observed how this matter is expressed, made perfect, which signifies our arriving to this perfection out of an imperfect state. We were created with an original perfection, sufficient to a state of probation. By our apostacy we became sinfully imperfect, all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, Rom. iii. 23. We have been put upon a new trial by our Redeemer. Their perfection, who have run out their course, is, by the grace of God, and by his methods, restored, and improved to its just pitch. They are now, their trial being over, set in a consummate rectitude towards the ends of their creation; and herein are endowed with all the knowledge they need, *viz.* of such things as, in reference to those ends, they can any way be concerned with.

With the blessed God himself they are most of all concerned, for him they are eternally to adore and enjoy. Therefore that their perfection should be virtually included in divine knowledge, is congruous to the state of their case, and to the language of the Holy Scriptures; which expresses their most perfect state by the vision of God, in the mentioned 1 John iii. 2. and Matt. v. 8. Heb. xii. 14, &c. Which phrase is not borrowed from the sight of the eye, and transferred to that of the mind, at random, or without (most probable) design. It most aptly signifies the great facility of this knowledge, that it is not toilsome, there is little labour in it, 'tis not such as requires great pains; it is but intuition, not a cautious, wary ratiocination, wherein we use to be very solicitous, lest we draw any irregular or untrue consequences. We do very easily, and on the sudden, without suspicion, or fear of error, only behold what is offered to our view. This is a great perfection of mind with these blessed spirits, to be capable of knowing the greatest things so easily and so soon, to know by seeing. And their aptness hereto is a moral perfection, for the clearness of the discovery infers their greater obligation to attend, and not to divert from what shall cost them so little. The blessed God's manifestation of himself, in that brightest and most glorious light, is not only evidently supposed, for in his light only can we see light, (Psal. xxxvi. 9.) but it is emphatically expressed in the before-mentioned text, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. of seeing face to face; which signifies, on his part, gracious vouchsafement, his offering his blessed face to view, that he hides it not, nor turns it away, as here sometimes he doth, in just displeasure. And his face means even his most conspicuous glory, such as, in this state of mortality, 'twould be mortal to us to behold; for no man, not so divine a man as Moses himself, could see his face and live. And it signifies, on their part who are thus made perfect, their applying and turning their face towards his, *viz.* that they see not casually, or by fortuitous glances, but eye to eye, by direct and most voluntary intuition; which therefore, on their part, implies moral perfection, the will directing and commanding the eye, and upon unexpressible relishes of joy and pleasure forbidding its diversion, holds it steady and intent. Here our ignorance of God is culpable, being voluntary, not liking to retain him in our knowledge, Rom. i. 28. There our knowledge is inculpable and sinless, being chosen, purposed, and always, principally, for its most proper ends, the perfect adoration and fruition of the blessed object we so fixedly behold, and so earnestly covet to know.

'Tis also fit to be noted, that the very fruition of the blessed God itself, which the Holy Scripture includes in our vision of him, is not only our very blessedness itself, but it is our duty too. It is a thing enjoined us, and comprehended in that first and great commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and might, and mind; which who can perfectly do, without a complacential acquiescence, and final rest of their will in him, as the best, the most perfect, and all-comprehending good? And hereupon, though we are wont to distinguish our glorifying God, and enjoying him; they are most manifestly coincident, and but notionally distinct. For in this our fruitive acquiescence of will in him stands our highest veneration, our most practical, most significant acknowledgment and testimony concerning him, as the highest, the most complete, and most absolutely perfect good; in that we seek no further, but take up our final rest in him. This is to give him the proper glory of his Godhead, to glorify him as God. And therefore this being the fullest sense of that great and summary command, it is only a commanding us to be happy. As, on the other hand, the misery of the intelligent creature is his greatest and most injurious iniquity, an aversion of will from the blessed God, a testimony against him as none of the best good, and the greatest indignity which created nature can put upon him, who is goodness itself. Thus then is the knowledge or vision of God, even as it is fruitive, a moral perfection. But the divine knowledge, more at large, of these holy spirits, though it be principally conversant about God, as its noblest object, excludes not their applying their minds to other objects too, according to their concernment with them. And yet,

2. How aptly this perfection is included in such knowledge, will further appear, if you consider the manner of knowing, or the special nature and kind of this vision or knowledge, *viz.* that it is not that slight, ineffectual, merely notional, insipid knowledge, which unregenerate minds are now wont to have of the most evident truths; *viz.* that, for instance, that God is the most excellent, the most perfect, the most desirable, as well as the most adorable good; which knowledge, because it answers not the true end of divine knowledge, is called ignorance; whereupon they are said to be alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, Ephes. iv. 18. But that ignorance is paraphrased by blindness of heart, *i. e.* a most perfectly voluntary and chosen ignorance, founded in aversion of will. And elsewhere, (Jer. ix. 3—6.) by a refusing to know God, a saying to him, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways, Job xxi. 14. Whereupon the light that is in such is said to be very darkness, and then how great is that darkness! Matt. vi. 23.

This knowledge, or vision, now in perfection, is most deeply and inwardly penetrative, efficacious, and transforming, admits a light which spreads and transfuses itself through the whole soul. So it is, at first, in every truly regenerate spirit; whereby such a one is begotten into the Divine likeness, his image is impressed upon it, which, as hath been noted, is said to be renewed in knowledge, Col. iii. 10. So that, as by solemn message to the sons of men, God is declared to be pure light, 1 John i. 5. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare to you, that God is light, and with him is no darkness at all. And as he is the original, the paternal light, the Father of lights, (James i. 17.) so they that are born of him are said to be light itself, and the children of light. Ye

Knowledge of God means of perfection

were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light, Eph. v. 8. And they are therefore said, as the sons of God, to shine as lights, (Phil. ii. 15.) or required to do so; for the words bear either form. This so energetical, efficacious light, is, in the mentioned texts, manifestly intended to connote holiness; as it doth also, Rom. xiii. 12. which the antithesis there shows, works of darkness, and armour of light; and in many other places.

Accordingly the whole, even of practical religion and godliness, is in the Holy Scriptures expressed by the knowledge of God, 2 Chron. xxx. 22. 'Tis signified to be in its own nature sanctifying, and inconsistent with prevailing sin, (1 Cor. xv. 34.) in which they that live are therefore said to be destitute of it, who are also upon the same account said not to have had any sight of God; 3 John, ver. 11. He that sinneth (the word is, ὁ κακοποιῶν, a doer, or worker, of sin) hath not seen God. The light which this vision of God receives, must much more, in the perfected spirits of the just, be supposed so prevalent and victorious, as quite to have chased away and expelled all remainders of this impure darkness. Every such spirit is therefore become as it were an orb of purest, most operative, and lively light, an intellectual and self-actuating sun, full of fervour and motive power, besides mere light. Whereupon whatsoever this light and knowledge discovers it is fit for such a soul to be, it is; and fit for it to do, it can never fail to do it.

Therefore the making of such spirits perfect must be understood, in greatest part, to consist in restoring the order of their faculties towards each other; which was broken by the apostacy to that degree, and they so debilitated and become so languid, so impotent and enfeebled, that neither could the one faculty lead, nor the other follow. Whence light, even about the most practical and the most important matters imaginable, true notions, right sentiments, signified no more to command, to govern, to form and direct the inclinations and motions of the soul; than if, as to all its sentiments about these matters, you did put false instead of true, wrong instead of right, most absurd, most impossible, instead of most congruous, most necessary. Take, for instance, the idea of God, let it be supposed to comprehend (as every one grants it doth, whether he acknowledge his existence or no) all conceivable, all possible excellencies; that it means an infinite, eternal, ever-living, self-subsisting being, most perfectly intelligent, wise, true, holy, righteous, powerful, and blessed, the original of life, being, and blessedness to the creation, according to the several kinds, natures, and capacities of his creatures, the supreme and sovereign Lord of all, to whom it belongs to govern and dispose of what he hath made, of most immense and abounding goodness and benignity, most bountiful to the indigent, compassionate to the miserable, reconcilable to the guilty, propitious to the penitent, most complacentially kind, with highest delight, to the holy and the good, severe only to the obstinately impenitent and implacable, that will by no means or methods be reclaimed.

Take we, again, from hence the measures by which we are to judge what ought to be the dispositions and deportments of his reasonable creatures towards him; that they be entirely composed and made up of love, reverence, humility, dependance, devotedness, subjection, gratitude, and adoration. And suppose we that, in the theory, this be, as it generally is, admitted and acknowledged as the just and most regular consequence of the former. And let us again suppose, that we being made after his image, which in the natural part remains, and is still common to mankind; and as to the moral part, is restored in all that are regenerate and born of God. And that therefore we ought to love universally all mankind, to wish and do well to them, as to ourselves; and no more to injure any man, than we would destroy, pull in pieces, or offer violence to our own life and being. And that we ought, with a more peculiar delectation, to embrace and love all holy and good men, without other distinction, than as any appear more to excel in goodness.

Our light about these things is so clear, they are so little disputable, and so difficult it is to form any argument to the contrary; that few ever set themselves, by any explicit or formed thoughts, to oppose or contend against them. It is not (at least, not generally) so much as attempted to disprove them, or assert contrary principles in opposition to them. Therefore that the dispositions and common practice of men do so little agree with these principles, is not that their notions are herein doubtful, but spiritless; their light is not uncertain, but weak and impotent. And hereupon their knowledge signifies as little to its proper end, as if their apprehensions touching these things were none at all, or quite contrary to what they are.

They as much neglect and slight the blessed God, or decline to be concerned with him, as if they denied all the things of him which his idea contains; or as if they affirmed all the things of him, which it most directly excludes. They shun, they fly from him, as if they thought him the worst of beings, while they acknowledge him the best and most excellent good; disobey, and affront him, as if they thought he had no right to rule them, while they confess him the sovereign Lord of all the world. And steer their course both towards him, and one another, in as direct repugnancy to his rules, as if they thought them all transversed; and that the most opposite system of laws and precepts were given them, by some undoubted authority, to regulate all their practice.

It would amaze a thinking man that all this should be so! that intelligent creatures, that the reasonable, living, immortal spirits of men, should be sunk to so low a pitch of degeneracy and vileness! But much more, that it being so apparently thus, it should be so seldom reflected on! that men are not afraid of themselves! that they appear not as so many frightful monsters, each in their own eyes! That they consider not, What are these faculties for? Why have I such notions of truth in my mind? why have I a will whereby to choose, resolve, act, and be accordingly? What a distorted misshapen creature is this soul of mine; every thing in me running counter to right and fit! Whatever hath thus fatally perverted all their powers, hath stupified them too; so as not only not to find fault, but to applaud and be well pleased with themselves for all this.

But now shall we take our advantage from hence, to conceive and be enamoured of the rectitude, the amiableness of this most excellent state of the perfected spirits of the just! Now doth comely order succeed, instead of the most horrid deformity; distorted limbs are set right, the ligaments and connexion of the disjointed faculties to each other are restored; and whatsoever the enlightened mind suggests as fit and due, presently obtains. No complaint remains of seeing what is better, and doing what is worse; or that when good should be done, evil is present. There is nothing but perfect regularity, harmony, and agreement. All things move smoothly, and with constant equability and decorum. Right dictates of the leading faculty, and ready compliance of such as are to follow, make with them a perpetual, even, and uninterrupted course.

Likeness to God, therefore, in every other just respect, certainly ensues, upon such preceding knowledge of him; for the kind and nature of that knowledge being, as it ought to be, powerful, vigorous, transforming of the whole soul, and the will ductile and compliant; agreeable impressions do most certainly take place. As now, beholding——, we are changed, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Much more in that state where the injected divine beams are so strong and vivid, and the receptive disposition so prompt, free, apt, and facile. Therefore to be made like God, is to be made perfect according to the ultimate intendment of these words. The vision, or knowledge of God, in the heavenly state, being never intended for idle, ineffectual speculation; as this perfection is not otherwise to be understood, than with reference to the ends we were made for; that we may be immediately capable of and apt for everlasting adoration, and fruition of the blessed God, in a joint and most full consent and communion with the general assembly, the whole community of all the blessed spirits besides, whose eternal work and delight this will be.

This likeness to God must yet be understood with exception to the divine peculiarities, as hath been elsewhere shown (whither we now refer only to save the labour of

transcribing.) In respect of which peculiarities, also, there must be, on our part, a correspondency, *i. e.* a likeness with allowance for necessary disagreement; as between a seal and the impression, where what is convex in the one, is hollow in the other, and yet otherwise like, *i. e.* correspondent to each other too. So the case is between the blessed God's all-sufficient fulness, and our receptive emptiness; between his supremacy, and our subjection. In respect to other things, common to him and us, with the rest of those happy spirits that inhabit the regions of light and bliss, spirituality itself, life and vigour, knowledge, wisdom, holiness, love, serenity, benignity, mercy, peace, and joy, there is a nearer resemblance; these things passing under the same name with him, and with us, but with the infinite inequality still of God and creature.

Now let us here give ourselves leave to pause awhile, and contemplate those innumerable multitudes of pure and happy creatures, perfected, or ever perfect spirits, that inhabit and replenish those ample spacious regions above, the vast, (and to us, or to any thought of ours,) immense, and endless tracts of light and glory. Consider them every one composed and made up of lively light, and love, as we are told God is light, 1 John i. 5. and God is love, *ch.* iv. *v.* 16. Consider them all as most intelligent and knowing creatures, even of the most profound and hidden mysteries, that here were wont to perplex and puzzle the most inquisitive mind; ignorant of nothing, or apt to comprehend any thing, needful and pleasant to be known, or lawful to be inquired into; curious to know nothing useless, or unlawful; most perfectly wise creatures, prudent sages, endowed with a self-governing wisdom, so as easily, without a vexatious solicitude and anxiety, but with a noble freedom, to order and command all their thoughts, appetitions, actions, and deportments towards God, themselves, and one another, so as never to be guilty of mistake or error, in any motion of mind or will; never to omit any thing in its season, or do any thing out of season. Consider them whether in solemn assembly, (which may be stated and perpetual, by successively appointed numbers for ought we know,) or diverting and retiring, or faring to and fro, as inclination, with allowance, or command, may direct. Yet all every where full of God, continually receiving the vital, satisfying, glorious communications of the every-where present, self-manifesting Deity; all full of reverence and most dutiful love to the eternal Father of spirits, his eternal Son and Spirit; all formed into perpetual, lowliest, and most grateful adoration, with highest delight and pleasure; all apprehensive of their depending state, and that they owe their all to that fulness which filleth all in all. Every one in his own eyes a self-nothing, having no separate divided interest, sentiment, will, or inclination. Every one continually self-consistent, agreeing with himself, ever free of all self-displeasure, never finding any cause, or shadow of a cause, for any angry self-reflection upon any undue thought or wish in that their present, perfect state; though not unmindful what they were, or might have been, and ascribing their present state and stability to the grace of God, and dedicating their all to the praise and glory of that most free and unaccountable grace; all well assured, and unsuspiciously conscious, with unexpressible satisfaction, of their acceptance with God, and placing with the fullest sense and relish their very life in his favour. All full of the most complacential benignity towards one another, counting each one's felicity his own, and every one's enjoyments being accordingly multiplied so many thousand-fold, as he apprehends every one as perfectly pleased and happy as himself.

Let but any one recount these things with himself, as he easily may, with far greater enlargement of thoughts, many more such things as these; and he needs not be at a loss for a notion of this perfect state of the spirits of the just. And for further confirmation, as well as for a somewhat more distinct and explicit conception hereof, let it be moreover considered, What was the undertaking and design of our Redeemer, to whom the next words direct our eye: And to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, &c. He was to be the restorer of these once lost, apostate spirits, and besides reconciling them to God by his blood, that speaks better things than that of Abel, was to impart his own Spirit to them; and by the tenor of that new testament, or covenant, whereof he was Mediator, was not only to procure that their sins and iniquities should be remembered no more; but that the divine laws should be put in their minds, and written in their hearts, *ch.* viii. 10, 12. They are therefore, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, to be made perfect, (*ch.* xiii. 20, 21.) in every good work to do his will, having all that wrought in them which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Christ Jesus. Now when shall he be said to have accomplished his design? Not till every one be presented perfect (Col. i. 28.) and faultless, in the presence of the Divine glory, Jude 24. Do but consider what was a design worthy of so great an undertaker, the Son of God; and of his being engaged so deeply, of his being so earnestly intent upon it, as to become first a man, then a sacrifice, to effect it.

Consider his death, and resurrection, wherein he will have all that belong to him to have a *consortium*, a participation with him, and conformity to him; as is largely discoursed, Phil. iii. and hence we are to make our estimate what is the mark and prize of the high calling of God in Christ, *v.* 12, 14. This can be no other than final consummate Christianity, the Christian's high calling in *termino;* and which they that are inchoatively perfect or sincere, must be so minded, as to design it for themselves, *v.* 15. Therefore let me but tell any man, so that he can understand me, what true Christianity now is, and he can tell me what heaven is. Let me tell him what it is to be a sincere Christian, in this present state; and he can tell me what it is to be perfect, in the heavenly state. The writing God's law in the heart truly, and perfectly, goes far towards both.

The two great commandments impressed, that are both fulfilled in love, are of vast compass to this purpose, and with the certain *connexa*, comprehend all: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, &c. And——— thy neighbour as thyself, &c. What a heaven upon earth would these two create, reduced to practice! and when the impression is perfect, what needs there more? But God knows, men too commonly measure their heaven by their Christianity, on the wrong hand; a Christianity, and a heaven, both external and foreign to them. God deliver me from this so palpable and destructive a delusion of a Christianity, and a heaven, foreign to my soul! A religion and a felicity that touch not our minds, that never impress our inner man; what can we be the better for them? What to be imposed upon by so absurd a misconceit, and so repugnant to Scripture? which so expressly tells us, that glory, we are finally to expect, is a glory whereby we are to be glorified, made glorious, and to be revealed in us, and wherein we are to partake with Christ, Rom. viii. 17, 18. Or did the Son of God put on man, and suffer so deeply for us, with a design upon us less than this? But now my work is done (nor do my limits allow me to enlarge) in reference to the

II. Head of discourse proposed: In what sense sincere Christians may be said to be already come to the spirits of the just made perfect. Enough may be collected from what hath been said. 'Tis to be understood,

1. In a relative sense, they are come, they already belong, to that general assembly, that church which the myriads of angels, and the perfected spirits of the just, are of. A local coming none can pretend in this case to dream of, they are said to be come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Such were truly said to be come into the constitution of the Roman polity, that were *civitate donati*, admitted freemen, though they lived a thousand miles off.

2. In a real sense, by a gradual but true participation of the *primordia, the first* and most constituent principles, and perfections of the heavenly state.

And now, if that were the thing designed, there is a most adequate ground-work laid for a true and the most ample encomium of that rare person, our never too deeply lamented, nor too highly renowned queen, whose funerals drew my thoughts to this theme. View the perfections of the spirits of the just, as they were growing, and more eminently grown, towards their highest pitch; and here is our ground. Do not wonder it is laid as high as heaven, for thence they begin, as well as end there. By

most benign influences from thence, though the plant was set on earth, they had an early bud, in concealment; but we have seen them blossom in open view, still aspiring thitherward, as there they are fully blown. Her otherwise royal parentage, was thus incomparably more royal. The lustre of her excellent virtues had all the advantage which they could have by dwelling well; as the endowments (what they were) of a great prince heretofore, were noted to have had the contrary disadvantage. It was common sense, not the poet's authority, that could make the apprehension take place, That virtue is more grateful, exerted from a comely body. So illustrious an instance would give more countenance, than the most argumentative philosophy, to the opinion, that souls have a great, subordinate agency in forming their own mansions; which the more one apprehends, the less credulons he would be of their original equality. It must be a very pecullar genius, that could stamp so inimitable and undeceiving signatures, as appears in her majesty's most graceful countenance, in her comely mien and looks, and all her deportments. Whosoever should behold the fabric she inhabited, made up of pulchritude and state, must conclude some very lovely and venerable inhabitant dwelt there. But nearer approaches discovered such excellencies of the indwelling mind, that quickness of apprehension, that clearness and strength of reason, that solidity of judgment, that complectionate goodness, the *ἐυφυία* which that noble philosopher speaks of, as the seed-plot of virtues; that must soon beget, not conviction only, but admiration.

Such were the bounties of nature in the forming a rare and excellent person, but how munificent were the largesses of grace! That reverence of the Divine Majesty that appeared in her whole course, a life transacted under the government of religion; her constant care to avoid what she thought sinful, and readiness to do what she judged might be serviceable to the interest of God; her detestation of the profligate wickedness, that she knew to be dishonourable and offensive to him, and of all the principles that any way tended thereto. Her continued conversation with God, in the constant practice of religious duties, and in all the exercises of godliness that belonged to her (most beloved and frequented) closet, the family, or more solemn assembly; her most composed seriousness in attendance upon the worship of God, in the way which she chose (and which that she chose no one could think strange) the natural and most unaffected appearance hereof, the remotest from ostentation, but which could not quite be hid, nor ought, when in religious assemblies we are to testify we all worship the same God, and that all our applications, and addresses, have one centre above, and are all to be directed to one and the same glorious object (unless one would have the religion of the church be allowed the retiredness of a closet, or reduce joint social worship, wherein all are, some way or other, to express their unanimity and consent, unto that which is merely solitary and single.) Her assiduity in her religious course, the seasons, order, and constancy whereof seemed to be governed by the ordinances of Heaven, that ascertain the succession of day and night; so that what was said so long ago of that famed person's justice (and which equally may of hers) might have a noble application to her religion, That one might as soon divert the course of the sun, as turn her from her daily course in religious duties: this argued a steady principle, and of the highest excellency, that of divine love. Any other would have its more frequent qualms and inequalities. The remark was wise and weighty, concerning the insincere man, Job xxvii. 10. Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God? That course is never like to be even, uniform, and continued, that springs not from love; or is not sweetened by delight and pleasure. All these are to us great indications of a copious communication of divine grace, and that she received not the grace of God in vain. I cannot here omit her reverential regard for the Lord's day, which at the Hague I had a very particular occasion to take notice of. On a Saturday, a vessel (the pacquet-boat) was stranded not far from thence, which lying very near the shore, I viewed, (happening to be thereabouts at that time,) till the last passengers were brought (as all were) safe off. Multitudes went to see it, and her highness being informed of it, said she was willing to see it too, but thought she should not, for it was then too late for that evening, and she reckoned by Monday it would be shivered to pieces; (though it remaining entire till then, she was pleased to view it that day;) but she resolved, she added, she would not give so ill an example, as to go see it on the Lord's day.

Next to her exemplary piety towards God, shone with a second lustre her most amiable benignity towards men; and peculiarly towards them whom she judged pious, of whatsoever persuasion, in respect of the circumstances of religion. She opened not her mouth but with wisdom, and in her tongue was the law of kindness. She hath divers times expressed her acceptance, value, and desire of their prayers, whom she knew in some modes of worship to differ from her; as one that well understood, that the kingdom of God stands not in lesser things, but in righteousness, peace, &c. and that they who in these things serve Christ, are acceptable to God, and are to be approved of men. She was not inaccessible to such of her subjects, whose dissentient judgments, in some such things, put them into lower circumstances. Great she was in all valuable excellencies, nor greater in any, than in her most condescending goodness. Her singular humility adorned all the rest. Speaking once of a good thing, which she intended, she added, But of myself I can do nothing; and somewhat being by one (of two more only) then present interposed, she answered: she hoped God would help her. She is, as the text speaks, gone to mount Sion, in the highest sense of that phrase. And to sum up all, he that will read the character, Psal. xv. and xxiv. of an inhabitant of that holy hill, will there read her true and most just character. Wherein I cannot omit to take notice, how sacred she reckoned her word. I know with whom she hath sometimes conferred, whether having given a promise of such a seeming import, she could consistently therewith do so or so; saying, that whatever prejudice it were to her, she would never depart from her word.

These rich endowments every way accomplished her for all the duties that belonged to her, whether in her Christian, conjugal, or political capacity. Which if we consider together, the world cannot give an instance, for many by-past ages, of so much lost out of it, in one person. When did Christianity lose so conspicuous an ornament? a king so delectable and helpful a consort? a kingdom so venerable and beloved a sovereign? For our king how are we concerned to pray, Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions! And we are to hope he hath some such sincere purposes, and vows deeply infixed in his heart, as those subjoined in that Psalm cxxxii. which will engage the Divine presence with him, by which, neither shall his pressures be intolerable, nor his difficulties insuperable; but his bow shall abide in strength, and the arm of his hands be made strong, by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, Gen. xlix. But England, England! how deplorable is thy case! In what agonies should every concerned heart be for thee, O England! In the latter days (and God grant they be not too late) thou mayst consider, that after many former, defeated methods, thou hadst a prince (yea, princes) studiously intent upon making thee a reformed, happy people. Is there now no cause to fear, lest it be determined; Let him that is filthy, be filthy still; and him that is unjust, be unjust still.——

Few can be ignorant of the endeavours of our most gracious queen, to that purpose. And I am persuaded nothing did more recommend our deceased, excellent archbishop to her Majesty, than that she knew his heart to be as hers, in that design, *viz.* of a general reformation of manners, that must have concerned all parties; and without which, (leading and preparing us thereto,) union, and the cessation of parties, was little to have been hoped for. And so far as I could understand, the attempt of it was as little intended; being otherwise not likely to meet with either a blessing from God, or any sufficient disposition to it with men. Great dispositions must, with much gratitude to God, be acknowledged in those who hold that supreme, and this subordinate station. But such a work is not likely to succeed, till (by whatsoever mean) minds be brought to that temper, that it will even do itself. And that two such persons should be removed out of them, within not much more than a month's time, is an awful

umbrage to us of a divine determination, that less gentle methods are fitter for us. And God's holy will be done!

It is now obvious to any considering person, that many very useful reflections might be made upon the text and the occasion together. I shall shut up this present discourse with these that follow.

1. It ought to be most remote from us to confine, in our narrow thoughts, sincere religion and godliness to a party, distinguished by little things and most extra-essential thereto. Take we that great apostle's document, I perceive God is no respecter of persons; and what he said of nations, may not we as aptly say that of all such parties? They that fear God, and work righteousness, are accepted of him, Acts x.

Let us once learn to reckon substantial godliness a greater thing, than the using or not using this or that ceremony. And account that faith, mercy, judgment, and the love of God, are not to be past over for as little things, as the tithing of mint, annise, and cummin. I believe there are few in the world, if they cast their eyes about them, but might truly say (what I thank God, I have often thought) that all of our parties that hold the substantials of religion, I have know some of far greater value than myself. Let the being a good Christian, signify more with us than to belong to a so———or so———shaped, or ———figured church.

A noted writer,[i] among the ancients, brings in one, saying, by way of exprobration to Christians, There is Socrates, the prince of wisdom, if any among you be so great, let them imitate him, if they can. What persuasion among us can produce a greater example, than we have been now considering; or more worthy the imitation even of private Christians?

2. The spirits of the just on earth are in a great propinquity and have a near alliance to heaven. They are not there to have the first foundations laid of their blessed state, but are only to be made perfect. They have in them here the first principles, the elements of their final blessedness; heaven in little, as the acorn contains the tree, or the embryo the man.

3. The just in this world are of the church in heaven. They are come to the general assembly, the church of the first-born, &c. All sincere Christians, whether in heaven or earth, (as hath been noted,) make but one family, Eph. iii. 15. Good God! can our little differences, here, set us at greater distance than heaven and earth! The observation is worth considering of that wise and noble person;[k] "It will be found a matter of great moment and use, to define what, and of what latitude, those points are, which discorporate men from the body of the church———And if any think this hath been done, now long ago, let them seriously consider with what sincerity and moderation the same hath been performed," &c. And if it had not been done with due sincerity, and moderation in his days, it is much to be doubted whether it have since. In the mean time it is to be considered, that what differenceth any thing, constitutes it; and if a church (of whatsoever denomination) be constituted in its superstructure (though its foundation be good) of hay, and stubble, of things that can belong to no church, as a church, it must some time or other suffer loss: and though the builders be saved, it must be by a more penetrative, than an imagined, purgatory-fire.

4. Angels must have kind propensions towards men, especially good men, in this world, knowing these are of the same society and church with them; though the Divine wisdom hath not judged it suitable to our present state of probation, there should be an open and common intercourse between them and us. 'Tis however a great incongruity we should have strange, uncouth, shy, frightful, or unfrequent thoughts of them in the mean time.

i Min. Fel.

5. When we find any excellent persons, in our world, attain far and high towards the perfection of the heavenly state; it ought to be a great encouragement to us, and is an obligation to aspire to some light pitch. We see it is not an impossible, or an impracticable thing; and should disdain to crawl now as worms, when we are to soar as angels.

6. We ought hereupon to acknowledge and adore the munificence and power of Divine grace, that it should design the making of such abjects as we, fit to be associated with such an assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect; and will not fail to effect it, if we comply with the apt methods appointed for that blessed purpose.

7. When such ascend, and are taken up from us, that God had eminently prepared for translation, we should take great care lest we unduly regret it. That we do not envy heaven its own, to which they are more akin than to our earth; and which had a greater right in them, than we could pretend.

8. We should look upon funeral solemnities for such, with more prospect than retrospect, and consider them as directing our eye less downward to our own forsaken world, than upwards to the celestial regions and inhabitants. To such, to die is to be born; they die only out of our mean world, and are born into a most glorious one. Their funerals should be celebrations of their ascent, and an exulting joy should therefore, in that case, not be quite banished from funeral sorrows, but be allowed to mingle therewith, as sunbeams glittering in a cloud. When the greatest person was leaving this world, that ever lived in it, he says, If you loved me, you would rejoice that I say, I go to the Father. We should bear our part in the joys of heaven, upon this occasion, if we relate to it. And when we are told, there is joy there, among the angels of God, for the conversion of such, who are thereby but prepared to come to their assembly; we may conclude there is much more for their glorification, when they are fully come, and joined to it. Funeral solemnities are very dull melancholy shows, without such references forwards, and upwards. With how different a temper of mind would two persons have been the spectators of Jacob's funeral, the one of whom should have looked no further than the Canaanites or Egyptians did, who would only say, Some great person is dead; but the other, by divine illumination, is enabled to apprehend, This dust here mingles with the earth of this land, to presignify this people, of whom he was the head, must possess it. Yea, moreover, here the great God will fix his residence and throne; upon such a mount shall be the palace of the supreme King. Here, after great mutations and revolutions, and great destructions both of the Egyptians and Canaanites, shall this people have a long succession of princes and rulers that shall be of themselves. And all this but as representing a King and kingdom that shall rule, and spread over all the earth, and reach up at length into heaven. Canaan shall be a holy land. Unto Sion's King shall tributary princes bring their gifts, out of Egypt, and Ethiopia stretch out her hands; and all nations serve him. His empire shall confine with the universe, and all power be given him both in heaven and earth. With what a large and raised mind would such a one have beheld this funeral! What better Canaan, than we now behold, we shall have in this world, God knows! And we should be the less solicitous to know intermediate things, when we are so fully ascertained of the glorious end of all things. And let us reflect upon the solemn pomp of that late mournful assembly, that lamented our queen's departure out of our world, comparing it with the transcended magnificence of that triumph assembly, into which she is received above.

k Lord Viscount Verul. Adv. of Learn. lib. 9.

THE GOOD MAN'S DESIRE

OF BEING ABSENT FROM THE BODY, AND PRESENT WITH THE LORD:

A FUNERAL SERMON,

ON THE DEATH OF

MRS. MARGARET BAXTER.

TO THE VERY REVEREND MR. RICHARD BAXTER.

Sir,

When you assigned unto me that part, not of forming a memorial for your excellent deceased consort, (which is reserved to the fittest hand,) but of instructing the people upon the occasion of her decease; this text of Scripture occurring also to my thoughts, (which I reckoned might sufficiently agree with the design you generally recommended to me, though I am sensible how little the prosecution did so,) it put me upon considering with how great disadvantage we set ourselves, at any time, to reason against bodily inclination; the great antagonist we have to contend against, in all our ministerial labours! An attempt which, if a higher power set not in with us, looks like the opposing of our faint breath to the steady course of a mighty river!

I have often thought of Cicero's wonder, "That since we consist of a mind, and a body, the skill of curing and preserving the body is so admired, as to have been thought a divine invention; that which refers to the mind is neither so desired, before it be found out, nor so cultivated afterwards, nor is approved and acceptable to so many: yea is even to the most, suspected, and hateful!"

Even the tyrant Phalaris tells one, in an epistle, (though by way of menace,) that whereas a good physician may cure a distempered body, death is the only physician for a distempered mind. It works not indeed a universal cure. But of such on whom it may, how few are there that count not the remedy worse than the disease! Yet how many thousands are there, that for greater hoped bodily advantages, afterwards, endure much more pain and trouble than there is in dying!

We are a mysterious sort of creatures! Yet I acknowledge the wisdom of God is great and admirable, in planting in our natures so strong a love of this bodily life, without which the best would be more impatient of living on earth, so long as God thinks it requisite they should; and to the worst, death would not be a sufficiently formidable punishment; and consequently human laws and justice would be, in great part, eluded.

And the same Divine wisdom is not less admirable, in providing there should so generally be so much of mutual love, as doth obtain among near friends and relatives; for thereby their cohabitation and mutual offices towards each other are made mure pleasant and easy; which is a great compensation for the concomitant evil, that by the same love their parting with one another cannot but be rendered grievous.

But for you, who live so much upon the borders, and in the pleasant view of the other state: the one separation is, I doubt not, much easier to your sense, and the other to your fore-thoughts, than they are with the most. A perfect indifferency towards this present bodily state and life, is, in mine eyes, a most covetable thing, and my daily aim; wherein I entreat your prayers may assist

Your most respectful, though most unworthy
fellow-servant, and expectant in the work
and hope of the Gospel,
J. H.

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2 CORINTHIANS V. 8.

WE ARE CONFIDENT, I SAY, AND WILLING RATHER TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY, AND TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD.

The solemn face of this assembly seems to tell me, that you already know the present, special occasion of it; and that I scarce need to tell any of you, that our worthy, honoured friend, Mrs. Baxter, is dead. You have ('tis like most of you) often met her in this place, when her pleased looks were wont to show what delight she took to have many share in those great advantages, wherein she had a more peculiar interest; you are now to meet her here no more, but are met yourselves to lament together, that our world hath lost so desirable an inhabitant; and to learn (as I hope you design) what so instructive an occasion shall (of itself, or as it may be improved) serve to teach us.

It doth of itself most obviously teach the common document, that we, who are of the same make and mould, must all die too. And our own prudence should hereupon advance one step further, and apprehend it a most covetable thing, that the temper of our minds might comply with this unalterable state of our case; and that we be in a disposition, since we must die, to die willingly, and with our own consent. Nothing can be more irrational, or un-

happy, than to be engaged in a continual quarrel with necessity, which will prevail, and be too hard for us at last. No course is so wise in itself, or good for us, as to be reconciled to what we cannot avoid; to bear a facile yielding mind towards a determination, which admits of no repeal.

And the subject, now to be insisted on, may help us to improve the sad occasion to this very important purpose; and show us that dying, which cannot be willed for itself, may be joined with somewhat else which may, and ought to be so; and in that conjunction become the object of a rational and most complacential willingness. A subject recommended to me (though not the special text) by one, than whom I know no man that was better able to make a fit choice; as (in the present case) none could have that right to choose. I cannot stay to discuss and open the most fruitful, pleasant series of discourse, in the foregoing verses, though there will be occasion to reflect somewhat upon it by and by; but, in the text, the apostle asserts two things concerning the temper of his spirit, in reference to death: His confidence, and complacency, θαρροῦμεν, καὶ εὐδοκοῦμεν.

First, His confidence, or his courage and fortitude, "We are confident, I say." He had said it before, ver. 6. We are always confident; and assigned the cause, Knowing that while we are present in the body we are absent from the Lord. And declared the kind of that knowledge, (*viz.* which he had of that presence of the Lord, whereof he was deprived, by being present in the body,) that is, that it was the knowledge of faith, not of sight, ver. 7. Now here he adds, We are confident, I say. It notes a deliberate courage, and the fixedness of it; that it was not a sudden fit, a passion soon over. He had said above, θαρροῦντες πάντοτε, We are confident at all times; it was his habitual temper. And here the ingemination signifies increase, as if he had said, We grow more and more bold, and adventurous, while we consider the state of our case, and what we suffer by our presence in the body. Sense of injury or damage heightens, and adds an edge unto true valour. We would venture upon a thousand deaths, if the matter were left entirely to our own option, rather than be thus withheld any longer from the presence of our blessed Lord; a thing whereof nothing but duty to him could make us patient. We are not destitute of the fortitude to enable us even to rush upon death, without more ado, if he did say the word; but as yet he bids us stay, and his supreme and holy will must in all things determine ours. Therefore 'tis immediately subjoined, in the midst of this high transport, ver. 9. Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we might be accepted of him, or well-pleasing to him (ἐναρεστοι αὐτῷ εἶναι.) We less mind the pleasing ourselves, than him. We are indifferent to life or death, being in the body, or out of it, in comparison of that; his pleasure is more to us than either. Here the highest fortitude yields and submits itself, otherwise, and for his own part, and as to what concerned his own inclination singly, and in the divided sense, the apostle to his confidence doth,

Secondly, Add complacency. We are better pleased (εὐδοκοῦμεν μᾶλλον.) This is a distinct thing, (a valiant man will venture upon wounds and death, but is not pleased with them,) but in reference to so excellent an object, and occasion, they must mingle, and the latter runs into the former. We are willing rather (as we read it) to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. The word which we read willing, signifies to approve or like well, not a merely judicious, but complacential approbation; the word, whence comes the εὐδοκία often ascribed to God in Scripture, which signifies the high satisfaction he takes in all his purposes and determinations. The εὐδοκία θελήματος, Ephes. i. 5. is certainly no tautology, but speaks how perfectly and pleasingly he agrees, and (as it were) consents with himself, in all that ever he had resolved on. This rather, says the apostle, is our εὐδοκία, the thing that would please us best, and wherein we should most highly satisfy ourselves. It would not be the matter of our submission only, or whereto we could yield, when we cannot help it; but of our highest joy and pleasure. According as we find it was with the Psalmist, (Psalm xvi.) in the same case, (which though it had a further meaning in reference to Christ, had a true meaning as to himself also,) Therefore my heart is glad, my glory rejoices, my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in *sheol*, the state of the dead, nor suffer thine Holy One to see corruption, but wilt show me the path of life; and no matter though it lie through the dark shady vale, it leads however into that blessed presence of thine (the same with that in the text) where is fulness of joy; and unto that right-hand (that high and honourable station) where are pleasures for evermore. Both these, the apostle's courage and fortitude, and his complacency or well-pleasedness, have express reference to the state of death, or of being absent from the body. The one respects it as a formidable (but superable) evil, the other as a desirable and most delectable good. But both have reference to it in its concomitancy, or tendency, *viz.* as absence from the body should be accompanied (or be immediately followed) with being present with the Lord. The sense therefore of the whole verse may be fitly expressed thus:—That it is the genuine temper of holy souls, not only to venture with confidence upon the state of absence, or separation from the body; but to choose it with great complacency and gladness, that they may be present with the Lord.

Body, we are not here to understand so generally, as if he affected, or counted upon a perpetual final state of separation from any body at all. No, the temper of his spirit had nothing in it so undutiful, or unnatural; no such reluctation, or disposition to contend against the common lot of man, the law of human nature, and the comely order which the Author of our beings, and of all nature, hath settled in the universe; that whereas one sort of creatures, that have life, should be wholly confined to terrestrial bodies; another, quite exempt from them; ours should be a middle nature, between the angelical and the brutal. So as we should, with the former, partake of intellectual, immortal spirit; and a mortal body made up and organized of earthly materials, with the latter: which yet we might also depose, and reassume, changed and refined from terrene dross. The apostle's temper hath in it nothing of rebellion, or regret against this most apt and congruous order and constitution; he had no impatient proud resentment of that gradual debasement and inferiority that, in this respect, we are made a little lower than the angels. When Porphyry tells us, in the life of Plotinus, that he blushed as often as he thought of his being a body, it was agreeable enough to his notion of the pre-existence of the soul; *i. e.* if it were true, that the original state of human spirits was the same with that of angels, (which this is no fit season to dispute against,) and that by their own fault, some way or other, they lapsed and slid down into grosser matter, and were caught into vital union with it, there was just cause of shame indeed. Apuleius's transformation (which many of you know what it means) if it had been real, was not more ignominious.

But it appears the apostle affected not a state, wherein he should be simply naked, or unclothed of any body at all; for he longs to be clothed upon with his heavenly house, ver. 2. And whereas he tells us, ver. 4. that which he groaned for, was not to be unclothed, but clothed upon; that being unclothed, doth not mean the act, but the state, *i. e.* that he did not covet or aspire to a perpetual final state of being naked, or without any body at all. For so he speaks, ver. 3. If so be (as we read) that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. The particle εἴγε admits to be read, since that, inasmuch as, for truly; and so the 2d and 3d verses will be connected thus; In this, (ver. 2.) *i. e.* for this, *viz.* for this cause, as ἐν often signifies casualty (not in this house, for τούτῳ and οἰκία will not agree,) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, *i. e.* of heaven, or suitable to heaven (ἐξ denotes here, as often, the matter whereof a thing is formed and made,) a body made up of a heavenly material; or (which is all one) an earthly body refined, and transformed into such an one. And then he subjoins the reason why his desire is so conditioned, and limited, or runs only in this particular current, to have not no body at all, but only not such a body. He wishes to have a body made more habile, and commodious, and fitter for the uses of a glorified soul; (which hath its own more inward clothing peculiar to itself, in respect whereof that of such a body would be an additional one, a superinvestiture,

as the word ἐπενδύσασθαι imports;) his desire is thus limited and modified for this reason. Inasmuch as, being thus clothed, we shall not be found naked, ver. 3. or without any body at all; which the law of our creation admits us not to effect, or aspire unto. And therefore in qualifying our desire thus, we shall contain ourselves within our own bounds, and not offer any thing whereof humanity is, by the Creator's pleasure and constitution, incapable. Therefore he inculcates the same thing over again. We groan not to be unclothed, but only to be clothed upon; ver. 4. where that unclothed (the thing he desired not) must signify the state and not the act only, is evident; in that being clothed (the thing which he did desire) must plainly be so understood. For was it only an entrance into glory he desired, and not continuance in a glorified state? Nor can this being unclothed much less refer as an act to the present clothing of this earthly body, as if it were our being divested of that which he intended in this 4th verse, as the thing he desired not, for then the 4th verse would contradict this 8th, where he tells us he did desire it. The meaning then is, that he did not desire to be exempted from wearing a body, or to be without any at all; he did only covet to be absent from this body (gross and terrene as now it was) that he might be present with the Lord; with which he found being in such a body, and in the several accompanying circumstances of this bodily state, to be inconsistent. Wherefore it was a terrestrial body (the earthly house of this tabernacle, as 'tis ver. 1.) which he was now better pleased to quit upon this account.

And I say it is the genuine temper of a holy soul to be like-minded, not their constant, explicit, discernible sense. We must allow for accidents, (as we shall note afterwards,) but when they are themselves and in their right mind, and so far as the holy divine life doth prevail in them, this is their temper.

And now, that I may more fully open this matter to you, I shall,

I. Endeavour to unfold, somewhat more distinctly, the state of the case, in reference whereto good and holy souls are thus affected.

II. Shall show you what is their true and genuine temper, or how it is that they stand affected, in reference to that case.

III. Shall discover how agreeable this temper is to the general frame and complexion of a holy soul.

And then make such reflections upon the whole, as may be more especially useful to ourselves.

I. We are to take, as much as we can, a distinct view and state of the case. We see the apostle speaks by way of comparison, εὐδοκοῦμεν μᾶλλον, we are willing rather. We are therefore to consider (that we may comprehend clearly the true state of this case) what the things are which he compares; and between which his mind might be supposed, as it were, to have been before (at least in order of nature before) in some suspense, till at last it come so complacentially to incline, and be determined this one way. Take the account of the whole case in these particulars.

1. There are here two principal terms, between which the motion and inclination of such a mind lies, from the one to the other. The Lord, and the body. Both do as it were attract and draw (or are apt to do) two several ways. The Lord strongly draws on the one hand, and the body hangs on, and holds, and draws in as strongly to itself as it can, on the other. The body as having us present in it. And how? not locally only, but in the way of vital union and communion with it. And that shows how we are to understand being present with the Lord too, not by a mere local presence, but of a more intimate vital union and commerce. Where, as in the union between the soul and body, the more excellent communicates life, the other receives it; so it must be here. Though now the Lord is present thus, in some measure, (which this attraction supposes,) yet speaking comparatively, that presence is absence, in respect to what we are to look for hereafter. Both these unions are very mysterious, and both infer very strong and powerful drawing, or holding together of the things so united.

There is no greater mystery in nature, than the union between the soul and the body. That a mind and spirit should be so tied and linked with a clod of clay, that, while that remains in a due temper, it cannot by any art or power free itself! It can by any act of the will move a hand, or foot, or the whole body; but cannot move from it one inch. If it move hither and thither, or by a leap upward to ascend a little, the body still follows; it cannot shake or throw it off. We cannot take ourselves out; by any allowable means we cannot, nor by any at all (that are at least within mere human power) as long as the temperament lasts. While that remains, we cannot go; if that fail, we cannot stay; though there be so many open avenues, (could we suppose any material bounds to hem in, or exclude a spirit,) we cannot go out or in at pleasure. A wonderful thing! and I wonder we no more wonder at our own make and frame in this respect, that we do not, with reverent submissive adoration, discern and confess how far we are outwitted and overpowered by our wise and great Creator; that we not only cannot undo his work upon us in this respect, but that we cannot so much as understand it. What so much akin are a mind and a piece of earth, a clod and a thought, that they should be thus affixed to one another; or that there should be such a thing in nature as thinking clay! But hereupon, what advantage hath this body upon the soul and spirit! In the natural union is grounded a moral one, of love and affection; which (on the soul's part) draws and binds it down with mighty efficacy.

Again, how mysterious and ineffable is the union of the Lord and the soul; and how more highly venerable, as this is a sacred mystery! And who would not admire at their proud disdainful folly, that while they cannot explain the union between the soul and body, are ready to jeer at their just, humble, and modest ignorance, that call this other a mystical union? or, because they know not what to make of it, would make nothing, and will not allow there should be any such thing, or would have it be next to nothing. Have those words no sense belonging to them, or not a great sense, (1 Cor. vi. 17.) But he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit? And, upon this supernatural union also (be it what it will) methinks the binding and drawing power of love should not be less!

2. We must conceive in our minds as distinctly as we can, the peculiar adjuncts of each of these more principal terms; *i. e.* on the part of the body first, we are to consider a sensible, a grossly corporeal world, to which this body doth connaturalize us, and whereto we are attempered by our being in the body, and living this bodily life. This body, while we live in it, is the *terminus uniens*, the medium, the unitive bond between us and it. In this world we find ourselves encompassed with objects that are suitable, grateful, and entertaining to our bodily senses, and the several principles, perceptions, and appetites that belong to the bodily life: and these things familiarize and habituate us to this world, and make us, as it were, one with it. There is, particularly, a bodily people, as is intimated in the text, that we are associated with by our being in the body. The words ἐνδημῆσαι and ἐκδημῆσαι, in this verse, (and the same are used verse the 6th and 9th,) signify there is such a people of which we are, and from which we would be dissociated; ἔνδημος is *civis*, *incola*, or *indigena*, an inhabitant, or native, among this or that people; as ἔκδημος is *peregrinus*, one that lives abroad and is severed from the people he belonged unto. The apostle considers himself, while in the body, as living among such a sort of people as dwell in bodies, a like sort of people to himself; and would be no longer a home-dweller with these, but travel away from them, to join and be a dweller with another people.

For also, on the other hand, he considers, with the Lord, an invisible world, where he resides; and an incorporeal people, he presides over. So that the case here is, are we willing to be dispeopled from this bodily sort of people, and peopled with that incorporeal sort, the world, and community of spirits?

3. It is further to be considered in this case, that we are related both ways, related to the body, and related to the Lord; to the one people, and the other, the one claims an interest in us, and so doth the other. We have many earthly alliances, 'tis true, and we have many heavenly; we are related to both worlds, and have affairs lying in both. And now what mighty pleadings might the case admit, on the

one hand, and the other? Were the body, apart, capable of pleading for itself, to this effect it must bespeak the soul: "I am thy body, I was made and formed for thee, and, someway, by thee. Thou hast so long inhabited and dwelt with me, and in me. Thou art my soul, my life, my strength; if thou be absent, I am a carcase and fall to dirt; and thou wilt be a maimed thing, and scarce thy whole self." But though it cannot dictate, and do not utter such words, nature doth itself plead more strongly than words can.

And again, how much more potently, might the Lord plead for his having the soul more closely united and intimately conversant with himself! "Thou art one of the souls I have loved and chosen, which were given to me, and for which I offered up my own soul. I have visited thee in thy low and abject state; said to thee in thy blood, Live; have inspired thee with a heavenly, sacred, divine life, the root and seminal principle of a perfect, glorious, eternal life. Let this body drop, which hath been long thy burden! let it fall and die, it matters not! Yet since thou lovest it, I will restore it thee again, pure and glorious, like mine own. I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, John xi. 25. Never fear to venture thyself with me, nor to commit thy body to my after-care."

And now all the question will be, Which alleges the more considerable things? and the matter will be estimated, as the temper of the soul is. An earthly, sordid soul, when the overture is made to it of such a translation, will be ready to say, as the Shunamite (2 Kings iv.) did to the prophet, when he offered to speak for her to the king, (perhaps that her husband might be called to court, and made a great man,) I dwell among my own people, (an answer that in her case well expressed the true greatness of a contented mind, but in this case nothing more mean,) I am well where I am, and dwell among a people like myself. So saith the degenerate abject soul, sunk into a deep oblivion of its own country; Here I dwell a fixed inhabitant of this world, among a corporeal people, where I make one. And we find how it is with this sort of people, each one charms another, and they grow familiar, have mutual ties one upon another, and there is a loathsomeness to part. Especially as here, in this lower world, we are variously disposed, and cast into several mutual relations to one another; husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, all dwelling in bodies alike, cohabiting, eating and drinking daily, and conversing together. These are great and sensible endearments, by which the minds of men become as it were knit, and united to one another. How are men's spirits fixed to their own countries! *Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine*——'tis by an inexpressible pleasure and sweetness, that the people of one country are as it were linked and held together.

But would not a heavenly, new-born soul say, No, this is none of my country, I seek a better, and am here but a pilgrim and stranger; this is none of my people? So it was with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that conversed in the earthly Canaan, but as in a strange country; their mind being gone towards that other, which they sought. And accordingly you find it said of each of them, in their story, when they quite left this world, (as also of Moses and Aaron, afterwards,) that they were gathered to their people; a people that were more their own. And surely, as God (who was not ashamed to be called their God) is not the God of the dead, but of the living; we must understand this was not the congregation of the dead, to which these were gathered, otherwise than in a low, relative sense, as to us only and our world. Holy men, as they die out of one world, are born into another, to associate with them that dwell in light; and be joined to a glorious community above, the general assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; where all love and adore, praise and triumph together.

4. It is again to be taken into the state of this case, that we have, one way or other, actual present notices of both the states, which both sorts of objects, that stand in this competition belong unto. Of the one, by sense and experience; we so know what it is to live in the body, and in a sensible world, and among a corporeal people: of the other, by faith; by believing as we are told by one that we are sure can have no design or inclination to deceive us. There are many mansions, saith he, in my Father's house, as good accommodations, as suitable society (and sufficiently numerous, which the many mansions implies) to be sure as any you have met with here. Faith is, in this case, to serve us instead of eyes, it is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of the things not seen; (Heb. xi. 1.) as we have the notion of a country where we have not been, by the description of a person whom we can trust, and that we think intends not to abuse us by forgeries, and false representations. In reference to this country, we walk and guide ourselves by sight, in our converses, and affairs wherein we have to do with it; as to that other, by faith; as, ver. 7. 'tis implied.

5. Yet further it is to be considered, that this body, and this bodily people and world, have the present possession of us. And though the spiritualized mind do as it were step forth, and place itself between both, when it is to make its choice; yet the objects of the one sort are much nearer, the other are far distant, and much more remote.

6. That it cannot but be apprehended, that though the one sort of things hath the faster hold, the other sort are things of greater value; the one hath the more entire present possession of us, the other, the better right. Thus we see the case stated.

II. We are next to show what the temper is of a holy soul (*i. e.* its proper and most genuine temper) in reference to this supposed state of the case. We are willing rather, or have a more complacential inclination to be unpeopled from the body, and this bodily sort of people; and to be peopled with the Lord, and that sort of incorporeal people, over which he more immediately presides in the upper world. He speaks comparatively, as the case requires, and because all comparison is founded in somewhat absolute; therefore a simple disposition, both ways, is supposed. Whence then,

1. This temper is not to despise and hate the body, it imports no disdainful aversion to it, or to this present state.

2. Nor is it an impetuous precipitant tendency towards the Lord, impatient of delay, mutinous against the divine disposal; or that declines present duty, and catches at the *βραβεῖον*, the crown and prize, before the prescribed race be run out. A holy man is at once dutiful and wise: as a servant he refuses not the obedience of life, and as a wise man,[a] embraces the gain of death.

3. But it is considerate, the effect of much foregoing deliberation, and of a thorough perspection of the case; *εἰδότες*, ver. 6. knowing, or considering, that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. This choice is not made blindly and in the dark.

4. It is very determinate and full, being made up of the mixture of fortitude and complacency, as was said; the one whereof copes with the evil, of being severed from the body; the other entertains the good of being present with the Lord. Therefore this is the sense of a pious soul in the present case: *q. d.* "I do indeed love this body well, and reckon it a grievous thing to be severed from it, if that part of the case be singly considered, and alone by itself; but considering it in comparison with the other part, what is this body to me? What is it as an object of love, in comparison of being with the Lord? What is death to me as an object of fear, in comparison of being absent from the Lord? which is a death many thousand times more deadly than the other.

III. The agreeableness of this temper to the general frame and complexion of a holy soul as such. Which will appear if we consider—1. What sort of frame or impression, in the general, that is that doth distinguish a sincerely pious person from another man.—2. The more eminent principles in particular that are constituent of it, and do as it were compose and make it up.

1. The general frame of a holy soul, as such is natural to it. 'Tis not an artificial thing, a piece of mechanism, a lifeless engine, nor a superficial, an external form, an evanid impression. It is the effect of a creation, (as Scripture often speaks,) by which the man become a new creature, and hath a nature peculiar to him, as other creatures have; or of regeneration, by which he is said to be born anew. Which forms of speech, whatever they have of dif-

[a] Ambros. de bono mortis.

ferent signification, do agree in this, that they signify a certain nature to be the thing produced. This nature is said to be divine, (2 Pet. i. 4.) somewhat born of God, as it is expressed, 1 John v. 4. and in many places more. And it is an intellectual nature, or the restored rectitude of such a being. Now who can think but what is so peculiarly from God, a touch and impress from him upon an intelligent subject, should with design, choice, and complacency, tend to him, and make the soul do so? especially, when it is so purposely designed for remedy of the apostacy, wherein men are revolted and gone off from him? Will he suffer himself to be defeated in a design, upon which he is so industriously intent? Or is it supposable the all-wise God should so mistake himself, as to do such a work upon the spirit of man, on set purpose for an end which it is no way apt to serve: yea, and when he now takes him in hand, a second time? Nor can it be but this impression of God upon the soul must have principal reference to our final state. It is a kind of nature, and must therefore tend to what is most perfect in its own kind. But we need not reason, in a matter wherein the word of God so plainly unfolds the scope and the success of this his own work. By it we are said to be alive to God, through Jesus Christ, (Rom. vi. 11.) to turn, and move, and act towards him, as many Scriptures speak. And towards him as he is most perfectly to be served, and enjoyed, in the most perfect state of life.

We are said to be begotten again to a lively hope, (1 Pet. i. 3. where hope is taken objectively, as the following words show,) to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. And when, elsewhere, it hath been said, Every one that doth righteousness is born of him, I John ii. ult. there is immediately subjoined, chap. iii. 1, 2. a description of the future blessedness; whereto 'tis presently added, ver. 3. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure; implying the hope of that blessed state to be connate, implanted as a vital principle of the new and divine nature. And all hope, we know, involves desire in it; which is here intimated to be so powerful and prevailing, as to shape and form a man's whole course to an agreeable tenor; which it could not do, if hope were not superadded to desire; for no man pursues an end whereof he despairs. And what else is living religion, but a tendency to blessedness? a seeking honour, glory, and immortality, by a patient continuance in well doing, Rom. ii. 7. Nor need we look further than this context, for evidence that this divine impression upon the soul hath this reference; for when, ver. 4. the apostle had avowed the fervour of his desire after that state wherein mortality should be swallowed up of life, he immediately adds, ver. 5. Now he that hath wrought us for this self-same thing, is God, &c. And indeed, after that transforming touch, the great business of such a soul, in this world, is but a dressing itself for the Divine presence, a preparation for that state, wherein we are for ever to be with the Lord. And 'tis not only an incongruity, but an inconsistency; not only that which is not fit, but not possible, that a man should ever design that as his end, which he cares not ever to attain; or that for his last end, which he doth not supremely desire.

2. If we consider particular principles that belong to this holy divine nature, the more noble and eminent are faith and love. The former is the perceptive, visive principle; the other the motive, and fruitive. And these, though they have their other manifold references, have yet, both, their final to that state of absence from this body, and presence with the Lord; the one eyeing, the other coveting it, as that wherein the soul is to take up its final rest. Here some consideration should be had of objections, that some may be apt to make use of, to shift off the urgency of this truth, and excuse the unsuitable temper of their spirits to it.

(1.) That they are unassured about their states Godward; and how can they be willing to die, and be absent from the body, or not be afraid of the Lord's presence, whom they may, for aught they know, find an angry vindictive Judge when they appear before him?

Answer. This, which is the most considerable objection that the matter admits of, if it were directly pointed against this truth, as it hath been laid down, would answer itself. For it is not dying simply that is the object of this inclination, but dying conjunctly with being with the Lord, in his blessed joyous presence. Do not therefore divide the object, and that objection is no objection. You are unwilling to die, and be banished the Divine presence; but are you unwilling to die, and enjoy it? or, upon supposition you should, are you willing? This is all that we make characteristical, and distinguishing. Where there is only an aversion to leave this bodily life and state, upon a fear we shall not be admitted into that blessed presence; there is only an accidental obstruction to the more explicit, distinct, and discernible exertions of desire this way; which obstruction, if it be removed, the soul would then follow the course which the divine and holy principle in it doth naturally incline to: but the mortal token is, when there is no such doubt, and yet there is still a prevailing aversion; when men make no question, if they die they shall go to God, and yet they are not willing to go. In the former case, there is a supreme desire of being with God, only suspended; take off that suspension, and that desire runs its natural course. In the other case, there is no desire at all. And the difference is, as between a living man that would fain go to such a place, but he is held, and therefore goes not; and one that is not held, but is dead, and cannot stir at all. For the life of the soul towards God is love, aversion therefore is (not an absolute, but) respective death, or *quoad hoc*, a death towards him; or, as to this thing, *viz.* being with him.

(2.) As for the objection of being more serviceable to children, friends, relations, or the glory of God in the world, and his church in it; upon which last account this apostle, (Phil. i. 22, 23, 24.) though he express a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, yet is in a strait, and seems also very well pleased to abide in the flesh a longer time: he can himself best judge of our serviceableness. The meaning is not that we should be willing to leave the body before he would have us, but that we should not be unwilling then. And because we know not when his time will be, and it may be presently for aught we know; we should be always willing and desirous, upon that supposition. Our desire herein should not be absolute, and peremptory, but subordinate, and apt to be determined by his will; which can determine nothing but what will be most for his own glory, and for their best good who belong to him.

But as to this instance of the apostle, we must consider what there was peculiar in the apostle's case, and what is common, or ought to be, to all serious Christians. There is no doubt there was this more peculiar to him, (and to persons in such a capacity and station as his was,) *viz.* as he was an apostle, he was one that had seen the Lord, which was a qualification for the more special work of that office; whereupon he was an eye-witness, to testify of his resurrection; upon which so great a stress lay, in asserting the truth of the Christian religion, and propagating it with the greater assurance in the world. To testify as an apostle, therefore, could not be done by one of a following age. And 'tis very probable when he expresses, to the Philippians, (ver. 25.) his knowledge he should abide and continue yet longer with them all, *i. e.* with the Christian church in the world, (for we cannot suppose he was to continue at Philippi,) for the furtherance of the common cause of the Christian faith, which was their common joy, (and which would no doubt be increased intensively and extensively at once,) he had some secret intimation, that all his work in this kind was not yet over. Nor were such monitions and advertisements unfrequent with the apostles, that specially related to the circumstances of their work. And so entirely was he devoted to the Christian interest, that wherein he saw he might be so peculiarly serviceable to it, he expresses a well-pleasedness to be so, as well as a confidence that he should; as we all ought to do, in reference to any such significations of the Divine will concerning us, if they were afforded to us. But as to what there is, in this instance, that is common and imitable to the generality of Christians, it is no other than what we press from the text we have in hand: a desire to depart, and be with Christ, as that which is far better for us; submitted to the regulation of the Divine will, as to the time of our departure, and accompanied with a cheer-

ful willingness to serve him here to our uttermost in the mean time. But we have withal little reason to think we can do God greater service, or glorify him more here, than above. There is indeed other service to be done below, which is necessary in its own kind, and must, and shall, be done by some or other. But is our service fit, in point of excellency and value, to be compared with that of glorified spirits in the upper regions? We serve God by doing his will, which is, surely, most perfectly done above. And our glorifying him, is to acknowledge and adore his glorious excellencies: not to add the glory to him which he hath not; but to celebrate and magnify that which he hath: whereof certainly the large minds of glorified creatures are far more capable. He never needs hands for any work he hath to do, but can form instruments as he pleases. And what is our little point of earth, or any service that can be performed by us here, in comparison of the spacious heavens, and the noble employments of those glorious orders of creatures above, which all bear their parts in the great affairs of the vast and widely-extended heavenly kingdom? We might as well suppose, that because there is, in a prince's family, employment below stairs for cooks, and butlers, or such like underlings; that therefore their service is more considerable than that of great officers, and ministers of state.

3. And for what may be thought, by some, that this seems an unnatural inclination; we must understand what we say, and what our own nature is, when we talk of what is natural or unnatural to us. Ours is a compounded nature, that is not simply unnatural, that is contrary to an inferior nature, and agreeable to a superior. The most deeply fundamental law, of the intellectual nature in us, was to be most addicted to the supreme good. The apostacy of this world from God, and its lapse into carnality, is its most unnatural state. To have an inclination to the body is natural, but to be more addicted to it than to God, is most contrary to the sincere dictates of original, pure, and primitive nature.

There are now, for our use, many things to be inferred.

1. We see here, from the immediate connexion between being absent from the body, and present with the Lord, there is no place for the intervening sleep of the separate soul. Can such a presence with the Lord, as is here meant, consist with sleeping? or is sleeping more desirable than the converse with him our present state admits? But of this, much is said elsewhere.

2. Death is not so formidable a thing as we commonly fancy. We are confident and willing rather. There is a fortitude that can oppose the terrors of death, and overcome. How many have we known die triumphing!

3. We see that men of spiritual minds have another notion of that which we call self, or personality, than is vulgar and common. For who are the *we* that speak of being absent from the body, and present with the Lord? The body seems excluded that notion, which we know cannot be absent from itself. How like in sound is this to *Animus cujusque in quisque!* or, *That the soul is the man!* I would not indeed drive this so high as some Platonists are wont to do, as if the man were nothing else but a soul, sometimes using a body. Nor do therefore think the body is no more to him, than our clothes to the body, because the apostle in this context uses that similitude; for that is not to be conceived otherwise, than (as is usual in such illustrations) with dissimilitude. A vital union must be acknowledged; only neither is it agreeable with their self-debasing thoughts, that seem to make the body the more considerable part of themselves, that measure good and evil by it, as if what were grateful to the body were simply good for them, and that which offends the body simply evil; that speak or think of themselves, as if they were all body, forget that there is belonging to them an ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος, as well as an ὁ ἔξω, an *inner man*, and an *outer*; that the latter may be decaying, when the other is renewed day by day; (2 Cor. iv. 16.) that the Father of our spirits may often see cause to let our flesh suffer (and, at last, perish) for the advantage of our spirits, Heb. xii. 9, 10. So distinct are their interests and gratifications, and sometimes inconsistent. When men make therefore this bodily brutal self their centre and end, how sordid and unchristian is their temper! and how reprovable by some more noble-minded pagans, that had better learned the precept inculcated by some of them, of reverencing themselves! Of whom we find one [b] speaking, with a sort of disdain, Is this body I? Another [c] saying, he might be killed and not hurt; and upbraiding to his friends their ignorance, when they inquired how he would be buried; as if he could be buried, who, he said, should be gone far enough out of their hands. Another [d] that the tyrant that made him to be beaten to death with iron mallets, might break that vessel of his, but himself he could not touch.

4. We learn, that when God removes any of our dear godly friends and relatives out of the body, though he displease us, he highly pleases them; for 'tis that they desire rather. And we are sure he pleases himself; for what can induce him, or make it possible to him, to do any thing against his own pleasure? We are too apt to consider our own interest and satisfaction apart from theirs and God's, in such cases. And hence is that too vulgar and practical error, among very many serious Christians; that when such as are dear to them are taken away, they reckon their thoughts to be principally employed, in considering such a thing as afflictive or punitive to them. 'Tis true that the affliction of that, as well as of any other kind, should put us upon very serious inquiry and search what the sin is, that may more especially have deserved it. But that ought upon all occasions to be principally considered, in any case, that is principal. As God did not make such a creature principally to please me, so nor doth he take away such a one principally to displease me. God's interest is supreme, their own next, mine comes after both the other. Therefore when the stream of thoughts and affections hath run principally, in such a case, upon our own affliction, 'tis time to check it, and begin to consider, with some pleasure, how the Lord and that translated soul are now pleased in one another! He hath his end upon his own creature, and it hath its end and rest in him.

5. We see the admirable power of divine grace, that it prevails against even the natural love of this bodily life; not where discontent and weariness of life contribute; but even where there is a willingness to live too, upon a valuable consideration, as this apostle doth elsewhere express himself, *viz.* in the place before noted: and how easily the Divine pleasure could reconcile him to life, notwithstanding what is said in the text, is sufficiently signified in the words immediately following it. And the effect is permanent, not a sudden transport (wherein many are induced to throw away their lives upon much lower motives:) this appears to be an habitual inclination. At distant times, we find the apostle in the same temper. That is not surely from the power of nature, that is so much against it, as the stream of nature now runs, *i. e.* that a man should be willing to be plucked in pieces, and severed from himself! And we see, (ver. 5.) whereto it is expressly ascribed: He that hath wrought us to the self-same thing, is God.

6. How black is their character, and how sad their state, that are more addicted to the body, and this bodily life, than to the Lord, and that holy blessed life we are to partake in with him! Their character is black and horrid, as it is diverse from that which truly belongs to all the people of God, that ever lived on earth; and so doth distinguish them from such, and place them among another sort of men that belong not to him; such as have their portion in this life, their good things here, and who are to expect nothing hereafter, but wo and wailing. And who would not be affrighted, that finds a mark upon him that severs him from the whole assembly of the just, and the blessed! Their state is also therefore sad and dismal, inasmuch as what they place their highest felicity in (their abode in the body) they know will continue but a little while. Who could ever, by their love of this bodily life, procure it to be perpetuated? or by their dread of mortality, make themselves immortal? Have not others, in all former ages, loved the body and this world as much? and what is become of them? Hath not death still swept the stage from generation to generation? and taken all away, willing or unwilling? To have all my good bound up in what I cannot keep! and to be in a continual dread of what I cannot avoid! what can be more disconsolate? How grievous

[b] Epict. [c] Socrat. [d] Anaxarch.

will it be to be torn out of the body! not to resign the soul, but have it drawn forth as a rusty sword out of the sheath; a thing which our utmost unwillingness will make the more painful, but cannot defer! No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, nor hath he power in death, Eccles. viii. 8. How uncomfortable, when the Lord's presence, the common joy of all good souls, is to me a dread! By the same degrees, by which an abode in the body is over-desired, is that presence dreadful and disaffected. And how deplorate is the case, when this body is the best shelter I have from that presence! Would I lurk in the body and lie hid from the presence of the Lord? How easily and how soon will my fortress be beaten down and laid in the dust! and I be left naked and exposed! and then how fearful things do ensue! But what now, doth this fearful case admit of no remedy? It can admit but of this only one, which therefore I would now recommend and press, the serious effectual endeavour of being, to a just degree, alienated from the body, and of having the undue love repressed and wrought down, of this bodily life. Mistake not, I go not about to persuade all promiscuously, out of hand and without more ado, to desire death, or absence from the body. The desires of reasonable creatures should be reasonable, the product of valuable considerations and rational inducements. The present case of too many, the Lord knows, admits not they should be willing to die; who are they that they should desire the day of the Lord? a day of such gloominess and darkness, as it is likely, should it now dawn, to prove to them? No, but let all endeavour to get into that state, and have their affairs in such a posture, that they may be, upon good terms, reconciled to the grave; and that separation from the body may be the matter, with them, of a rational and truly Christian choice. And since, as hath been said, there are two terms between which the inclination and motion of our souls, in this case, must lie, from the one to the other, *viz.* the body, and the Lord, life in the body, and with the Lord; let such things be considered on both hands, as may justly tend to diminish and lessen our inclination and love to the one, and increase it towards the other. So as that, all things being considered, and upon the whole, this may be the reasonable and self-justifying result, to be well pleased rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. And,

(1.) On the part of the body and this bodily life, consider, how costly it is to you! You lay out upon it (the most do) most of your time, thoughts, cares; the greater part, most, or even all, of your estates. All the calliogs you can think of in the world, and which all help to maintain at no little expense, are wholly for the body; what costly attendants must it have of cooks, bakers, brewers, mercers, physicians, lawyers, and what not! one only excepted that refers to the soul. And again, when all is done, how little serviceable is it! when you would employ it, sometimes it is sick, sometimes lame, sometimes lames the mind and intellect too, that it cannot do its office, merely through the distemper of bodily organs; is at all times dull, sluggish, indisposed; the spirit is willing, but the flesh weak.

Yea moreover how disserviceable! hinders you doing good, prompts to the doing much evil. What a world of mischief is done among men, merely by bodily lusts, and to serve fleshly appetite; these fill the world with confusion, and miseries of all sorts. All catch from others what they can, for the service of the body; hence is competition of interests and designs; no man's portion is enough for him to serve the body, (or the mind, as it is depraved by bodily inclinations,) and so the world is torn by its inhabitants, countries wasted and laid desolate; religion itself made subservient to fleshly interest, and thence is the occasion of many a bloody contest, of oppressions, persecutions, and violences; whereby many times it so falls out, that such as are most vigorously engaged in the design of serving the body, destroy it, their own as well as other men's. And (which is most dreadful) souls are numerously lost and perish in the scuffle, yea, and very oft upon the account or pretence of religion, whose only design it is to save souls! And how many, to save their bodies, destroy even their own souls! Not having learned that instruction of our Saviour's, not to fear them that can only kill the body; or being unable to suffer some lesser bodily inconveniences, apostatize, and abandon their religion, whereby that, and their souls too, become sacrifices to the safety and accommodation of an idolized lump of clay! And how certainly (if a seasonable repentance do not intervene) do they, who only thus tempt the souls of other men, destroy their own! nor can it be doubted at this time of day, and after the experience of so many ages, wherein Christianity hath been so visibly and grossly carnalized, but that it is a religion perverted to the support of the bodily and animal interest, that hath thus embroiled the Christian world. How plain is it, that they who desire to make a fair show in the flesh, to strut in pomp, to glitter in secular grandeur and splendour, to live in unrebuked sensual ease and fulness, are the men that would constrain others to their carnal observances! men that serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies. Who can think it is pure love to souls, and zeal for the true ends of the holy, peaceable religion of our blessed Jesus, that makes them so vexatious and troublesome to all, whom their fleshly arm can reach and ruin, and whom their spirit and way cannot allure and win? Who that understands religion, and the true design of it, and the blessed end wherein it will shortly terminate, would not be glad to be rescued out of this large diffusive unquiet empire of the body, that extends itself over all things, mingling its odious impurities, even with what is most sacred! Who would not long to be from under this reign of the beast, if he might have a fair way for escape! And where religion is not in the case, what multitudes of terrene creatures, earthly-minded men, are stupidly going down to perdition daily, and destroying their souls by mere neglect, while they are driving designs for the body! Which yet, in the mean time, is at the best but a prison to the best of souls. O how could they love God, admire and praise him, were they once out of this body! But it is not enough to a subject, wherein love is implanted and is a part of its nature, to have only the prospect of what is unlovely, or be told only what is not to be loved. There must be somewhat to invite and draw, as well as to repel and drive off. Therefore,

(2.) Consider also, on the other part, the Lord, and that life you are to transact and live with him. Little can now be said; you are not ignorant where much is, and your own thoughts may, upon much conversing with the holy oracles, suggest yet more. And you have need to use your thoughts here, the more largely, where your sense doth not instruct you, as on the other part it doth. Consider the description which you are copiously furnished with, both of him and of the state in which you are to be present with him. Recount his glorious excellencies, his immense and all-sufficient fulness, his wisdom, power, holiness, and love in absolute perfection. Consider his high, equal, comely, amiable regency over the blessed community above, that spiritual incorporeal people, the blessed joyful inhabitants of the celestial regions. And that he rules over them and communicates himself universally to them, in a state of perfect light, purity, peace, love, and pleasure, that is also immutable, and never to know end. There is nothing capable of attracting an intellectual nature, which is not here!

But on both parts, suffer yourselves to be directed also.

[1.] Take heed of over-indulging the body, keep it in subjection, use it, and serve it not. Primitive nature, and the Creator's wise and holy pleasure, ordained it to serve. Lose not yourselves in it, take heed you be not buried where you should but dwell, and that you make not your mansion your grave. Mansion, do I say? Call it as this apostle doth, and another, (2 Pet. i.) your tabernacle only, a tent pitched for you, but for a little while. Every day look upon it, and without fond pity, as destined to rottenness and corruption; and as that which, when it ceases to be your clothing, must be worms meat. Labour to make the thoughts easy and familiar to yourselves of leaving it, think it not an uncouth thing. How doth that part of the creation, that is inferior to you, abound with like instances! of fruits springing up out of this earth, and growing to ripeness and maturity, with husks, shells, or other integuments, which then fall off; such as never ripen, they and their enfoldings rot together. Esteem it your perfection, when your shell will fall off easily, and cleaves not so close,

as to put you to pain when it is to be severed from you.

Endeavour the holy and heavenly nature may grow more and more mature in you; so death will be the more also an unregretted thing to your thoughts. By all means labour to overcome the fear of it; which that you might, our Lord also took a body. Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage, Heb. ii. 14, 15. Reckon not much of that fear, which is only the mere regret of sensitive nature, purely involuntary; and that can no more obey the empire of the mind, or be regulated by it, than you can make straight a crooked leg by a mere act of your will, or make your body not feel pain: a fear, from which the perfection of our nature, in our blessed Lord himself, was not exempt. But it is one thing to extinguish even that fear, another to overcome it; the former is impossible to you, the latter necessary. It is overcome, when a superior principle governs you and your resolutions and course, as it did our Lord; he did not, because of it, spare himself and decline dying. You may feel perhaps somewhat of such a fear (a secret shrng) when you are to be let blood, or have a wound searched. It governs not in such a less important case, when, being convinced it is requisite, you omit not the thing notwithstanding. Labour herein to be hardy, and merciless to this flesh, upon the fore-thoughts of the time when God will allow you to step forth, and go out of the body; and say to it, with an obdured mind, For all thy craving, and shrinking, thou shalt be thrown off.

Labour it may not only not be the matter of your prevailing fear, but be the matter of your hope. Look towards the approaching season, with pleasant cheerful expectation; aspire (as it belongs to you to do, who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, that blessed Spirit of adoption) and groan for the adoption, (the season of your being more solemnly owned for sons,) *viz.* the redemption of the body, Rom. viii. 23. Which though it ultimately refer to the resurrection, may be allowed to have an incomplete meaning, in reference to death too; for I see not but ἀπολύτρωσις τοῦ σώματος, may admit such a construction, as ἀπολύτρωσις τῶν παραβάσεων, Heb. ix. 15. *i. e.* that redemption of the body may mean redemption from it, wherein it is burdensome, a grievance and penalty, here, as well as there. The redemption of transgressions doth truly mean liberation from the penalty of them; from which penal evil of and by the body, so materially, at least, it is, we are not perfectly freed, as our blessedness is not perfect, till mortality be swallowed up of life, and all the adopted, the many sons, be all brought to glory together.

How happy in the mean time is your case, when death becomes the matter of your rational, well-grounded hope! You have many hopes, wherein you are liable to disappointment; you will then have one sure hope, and that will be worth them all; none can prevent you of this hope. Many other things you justly hope for, are hindered by ill-minded men of their accomplishment; but all the wit and power of your most spiteful enemies can never hinder you from dying. And how are you fenced against all the intervening troubles of life! *Nihil metuit qui optat mori, You have nothing to fear, if you desire to die;* nothing but what, at least, death will shortly put an end to. Make this your aim, to have life for the matter of your patience, and death of your desire.

[2.] On the other part also, labour to be upon good terms with the Lord, secure it that he be yours. Your way to that is short and expedite, the same by which we become his, Ezek. xvi. 8. I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine. Solemnly and unfeignedly accept him, and surrender yourselves; without this who can expect but to hear from him at last, Depart from me, I know you not? Know of yourselves, demand an account, are you sincerely willing to be his? and to take him for yours without limitation or reserves? Matters are then agreed between him and you, and who can break or disannul the agreement? Who can come between him and you? I often think of the high transport wherewith those words are uttered, The excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, Phil. iii. 8. This is Christian religion, not in a system, but as it is a vital principle and habit in the soul, inclining us, making us propense, towards our blessed Lord, addicting and subduing us to him, uniting us with him, whereby we come to know by inward sensations, to feel the transfusions of his spiritual light and influence, and our souls thereby caught, and bound up in the bundle of life. So we have Christ formed within, his holy truth, doctrines, precepts, promises, inwrought into the temper of our spirits. And, as it follows in that context, Phil. iii. to have him, according to the states wherein he successively was, by correspondent impressions represented in us; so as that we come to bear the image of him, crucified and dying, first; then, reviving and rising; and afterwards, ascending and glorified. To know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; if, by any means, we might attain unto the resurrection of the dead, ver. 10, 11.

Let us not be at rest till we find it thus, in some measure, with us. If we feel ourselves, after this manner, internally and initially conformed to him, this will be both a preparative, and a pledge of our future perfect conformity, both internal, and external. It will fit us to be ever with the Lord, and assure us we shall and can be no where else; that he and we shall not to eternity dwell asunder. We shall neither fear to be externally conformed to him in his death, to quit and lay down the body as he did; nor despair of attaining with him the resurrection from the dead, and of being present with him in glory. Or, that he shall recover for us, out of the dust, our vile abject bodies, (the τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν,) the body of our humiliation, wherein we were humbled, as he was in his, (as it follows in that, Phil. iii. ver. 21.) and make it like his own glorious body, (σύμμορφον, conform, and agreeable,) by that power, by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself. In the mean time, as this present state admits, converse much with him every day; be not strangers to him, often recognise and renew your engagements to him. Revolve in your thoughts his interest in you, and yours in him; and the nearer relation there is between him and you, than that between you and this body. Recount with yourselves the permanency and lastingness of that relation; that whereas this body, as now it is a terrestrial body, will not be yours long; he is to be your God for ever and ever; that though death must shortly separate you from this body, neither life nor death, principalities nor powers, things present nor things to come, shall ever separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. While this body is a body of death to you, he is your life, your hope, and your exceeding joy, your better, more laudable, and more excellent self, more intimate to you than you can be to yourself, as hath been anciently and often said, and for the obtaining whose presence, absence from the body is a very small matter.

A great prince,[e] in an epistle to that philosopher, tells him: I seem to myself not to be a man, as the saying is, while I am absent from Iamblicus, or while I am not conversant (ὁν συνῶ) with him. That we can better endure our Lord's absence, is surely a thing itself not to be endured; we should labour, that our acquaintance with him (such as is fit to be between so great a majesty and such mean creatures as we) should grow daily. Yea, and endeavour to make the thoughts more familiar to ourselves of spiritual beings in the general; for we are to serve and converse with him in a glorious community of such creatures, An innumerable company of angels, the general assembly, and the church of the first-born, and the spirits of just men made perfect, (Heb. xii. 23.) in a region where an earthly body, remaining such, can have no place. Why do we make the thoughts of a spirit, out of a body, so strange to ourselves? We meet with hundreds of spirits in bodies, and moving bodies to and fro in the streets every day, and are not startled at it. Is a body so much nearer akin to us than a spirit, that we must have so mean a thing to come between, to mediate and reconcile us to it? Why are we afraid of what we are so nearly allied unto? Can we not endure to see or think of a man at liberty (suppose it were

e Julian Ep. ad Iamblic.

a friend, or a brother) if we ourselves were in prison? The more easy you make the apprehension to yourselves of a disembodied spirit, *i. e.* free, I mean, of any terrestrial body, the better we shall relish the thoughts of him who is the head of that glorious society you are to be gathered unto; for the Lord is that Spirit, the eminent, almighty, and all-governing Spirit, (to be ever beheld too in his glorified body, as an eternal monument of his undertaking for us, and an assuring endearment of his relation to us;) the better your minds will comply with the preconceived idea we are to entertain ourselves with, of the constitution, order, employment, and delights of that vast collection of heavenly associates we shall dwell with for ever. And the more will you still incline to be absent from this body, that (among them) you may be ever present with the Lord.

And if you thus cherish this pleasant inclination, think how grateful it will be, when it comes to be satisfied! How natural is that rest that ends in the centre, to which a thing is carried by a natural motion! How pleasantly doth the departed soul of that good gentlewoman, whose decease we lament, solace itself in the presence of her glorious Lord! I shall say little concerning her; you will have her just memorial more at large ere long. I had indeed the opportunity, by an occasional abode some days under the same roof, (several years before she came into that relation wherein she finished her course,) to observe her strangely vivid and great wit, and very sober conversation. But the turn and bent of her spirit towards God and heaven more remarkably appeared a considerable time after; which when it did, she showed how much more she studied the interest of her soul than the body; and how much more she valued mental and spiritual excellencies than worldly advantages, in the choice of her consort, whom she accepted to be the companion and guide of her life.

She gave proof herein of the real greatness of her spirit, and how much she disdained to be guided by their vulgar measures that have not wit, and reason, and religion enough to value the accomplishments of the mind, and inner man; and to understand that knowledge, holiness, a heavenly heart, entire devotedness to the Redeemer, a willingness to spend and be spent in the service of God, are better and more valuable things, than so many hundreds or thousands a year. And that no external circumstances can so far dignify a drunkard, an atheist, a profane wretch, as that (compared with one that bears such character) he should deserve to be simply reckoned the better man. And that mere sober carnality and ungodliness suffice not to cast the balance; or that have so little of these qualifications for the making a true judgment, as to think that calling dishonourable and a diminution to a man, that refers immediately to the soul, and the unseen world, and that relates and sets him nearest to God.

She knew how to make her estimate of the honour of a family, and a pedigree, as things valuable in their kind; without allowing herself so much vanity, as to reckon they were things of the most excellent kind, and to which nothing personal could be equal. And well understood, of the personal endowments of the body, and the mind, which were to have the preference. Her life might teach all those, especially of her own sex, that a life's time in the body, is for some other purposes than to indulge, and trim, and adorn the body; which is most minded by them, who (as that shows) have, in the mean time, most neglected, and, God knows, most depraved and deformed souls. I hope her example, more fully and publicly represented, will more generally teach: in the mean time, this instance of our common mortality should teach us all. We see this state of life in the body is not that we were finally made for; yet how few seriously look beyond it! And it is amazing to think how little the deaths of others signify, to the making us mind our own. We behave ourselves as if death were a thing only to be undergone by some few persons, here and there; and that the most should escape, and as if we took it for granted we should be of the exempted number. How soon are impressions, from such occasions, talked, and trifled, and laughed, and jested away! Shall we now learn more to study and understand our own natures? to contemplate ourselves, and our duty thereupon? that we are a mortal, immortal sort of creatures? that we are sojourners only in a body, which we must shortly leave to dust and worms? that we are creatures united with bodies, but separable from them? Let each of us think, "I am one that can live in a body, and can live out of a body. While I live in one, that body is not mine, I dwell not in mine own:" that the body must be for the Lord, as he will then be for the body: that we shall dwell comfortless and miserable in the body, if we dwell in it solitary and alone, and have not with us a better inhabitant: that our bodies are to be mansions for a Deity, houses for religion, temples of the Holy Ghost. O the venerable thoughts we should have of these bodies upon this account! how careful should we be not to debase them, not to alienate them! If any man corrupt the temple of God, him will he destroy, 1 Cor. iii. 16. Will a man rob God? break and violate his house? How horrid a burglary! Shall we agree to resign these bodies, and this bodily life? Our meeting will have been to good purpose, might this be the united sense of this dissolving assembly: "Lord, here we surrender and disclaim (otherwise than for and under thee) all right and title to these bodies and lives of ours. We present our bodies holy, acceptable, living sacrifices, as our reasonable service." Let us do so, and remember we are hereafter not to live to ourselves, nor to die, at length, to ourselves, but living and dying to be the Lord's.

A FUNERAL SERMON

ON THE DEATH OF

MRS. JUDITH HAMMOND.

TO THE REV. MR. HAMMOND.

My offering this discourse to the eye of the world, together with your own, shows how great power our ancient friendship hath given you over me; whereof I have the less unpleasant sense, believing you will understand it so; who, in great part, know how difficult my circumstances made it to me to comply with your desire herein. Your opinion of the fitness of publishing so uncomposed a thing, discovers how far you were subject also to the same power; whose judgment I am a little apt to distrust, where it meets not with this bias.

It will be a joy to me, if it help to mitigate your sorrow, which is in great part justified by the greatness of your loss, in being separated, after so long conversation, from so excellent a consort, that lived in this world so much above it.

I reckon it an evidence of the real greatness of her spirit, that she thought that so little a thing, wherein others place greatness; and that in almost forty years' acquaintance with you both, I should never hear of her nearness to a noble family, till, occasionally, since her death. It seems the blood that filled her veins, did not swell her mind. And her heavenly birth and relation to the house and family of God, made her forget her earthly kindred, and parents' house.

Sir, though whom God hath joined together no man might put asunder; yet when he that made the union, makes the separation, there is no saying to him, What dost thou? We must awhile tug with the difficulties of our state, and work; wherein the hope of helping some (as God shall graciously help us) to gain this victory over death, and of being at length, through his grace, victors ourselves, will be a constant relief and support to you, and

Your very respectful brother,
and fellow-servant in the labours of the Gospel,
J. H.

I CORINTHIANS XV. 54.

—DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.

The foregoing words signify this saying to have been before written elsewhere. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up, &c. And we find it before written, (Isa. xxv. 8.) in express words, and (Hos. xiii. 14.) in such as are equivalent. What their dependance or meaning is, in either of those places, cannot be discussed within our present narrow limits. Only it is sufficiently manifest, that sundry passages in the Holy Scriptures are said to be brought to pass, over and over, once and again; as that of Rachel's weeping for her children; and of God's bringing his Son out of Egypt; with divers others. This great saying may have had some partial and gradual accomplishment, within the current of time, when in reference to a people more specially related to God, and in some more notable delinquency and defection from him, he may have given a just, but limited commission to death, to make great ravage and destructions among them; so that it hath even rode in triumph, made a huge carnage, strewed their country with carcasses, turned their rich land, more enriched with human blood, into an Aceldama, and thereupon, but into a place of sepulture and of graves; and yet, when it hath gone as far as his designed limits, and executed all his pleasure, he may have stopped it in its career, and said, Hither thou shalt come, and no further, now, cease and give over, (as Hos. xiii. 14.) and so may have ransomed the residue from the power of the grave, and been the destruction of their destroyers, plaguing them who were their plagues. This, in the next intention hereof, may respect the people of the Jews, who being returned from their (now foreseen) captivity, might in the prophetic style he spoken of as a people risen from the dead, and newly sprung up out of the grave; but might have a further reference to the yet future state of the Christian church, as Isa. xxv. 6, 7, 8. seems to carry it; when so great a death as hath long been upon it, as well as the rest of the world, it may be hoped shall be swallowed up in a very glorious victory! But this saying is introduced here, as having its final and ultimate completion, in conjunction with what is mentioned besides, in this context, *viz.* when in the close and shutting up of time the trumpet shall sound, as we are told elsewhere it shall at the coming of our Lord, and the dead (those that died in him first, 1 Thess. iv. 16.) be raised, the living changed, so as to bear his, the heavenly Adam's, image; when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality; then shall be brought to pass this saying, (whatever preludes thereto, as was written, there may have been before,) Death is swallowed up in victory.

And according to this its fullest sense, is this saying to be the subject of our present consideration. The expression is highly rhetorical; but there is a most rational, solid sense intended under it; for which no words can be too big or of too great a sound. Our business must be to explain, and apply this saying. And,

I. For explication of its rational import, we shall show, —1. The import,—2. The reasonableness, of it.

1. It imports, in general, God's determination to put a perpetual end to death, to make it cease *in perpetuum*, as a noted expositor expresses it,[a] showing that the parallel Hebrew phrase is usually rendered, for ever, 2 Sam. ii. 26. Jer. iii. 5. and in divers other places. But that we may

[a] Grot. in loc. לנצח εις νεικος

give a more distinct account of its meaning, several things are to be noted:

(1.) That death, as it is here spoken of, supposes a certain limited subject. Its being mentioned in this chapter, and elsewhere, as if it were itself a *suppositum* and an intelligent designing one, is an elegant and a usual figure. The Holy Scriptures and common speech abound with this sort of *prosopopœia;* and it hath its special usefulness, when (as in the present case) what we are more to remark, and consider with greater intention of mind, is so represented, *i. e.* when to things of minute, or of no entity, but of great concernment, (such mere privations as death, or sin,) a sort of personality is ascribed, attended with terrible aspects and appearances; it tends more effectually to rouse our minds, and engage our attention, whether we are to consider and magnify our danger by them, or our deliverance, and to behold them as attempting upon us, or as overcome. But speaking strictly, we must take things as in themselves they are. Death therefore must be considered in reference to some subject or other. Abstractly considered, 'tis but a notion. As it actually hath taken place, it must be the death of this or that person. And as it is finally to be overcome, and have an end, it must have a limited subject, and not be understood of all, absolutely and universally; for then there would be no such thing as eternal death, which hath no end. And how the subject, here supposed, is to be limited; the series of discourse, through the chapter, shows they are such as are Christ's, (ver. 23.) and to whom he is peculiarly the first-fruits, (ibid.) such as shall bear his heavenly image, (ver. 49.) and, as elsewhere, whose vile bodies shall be made like his glorious one, (Phil. iii. 21.) such as shall have spiritual, incorruptible, immortal bodies like his, and with him inherit the kingdom of God, and through him obtain this victory, ver. 50—57.

(2.) This limitation of death to be overcome, to such a subject only, connotes the extent of it to the whole of that subject, as that is composed of an inner and an outer man, 2 Cor. iv. 16. It were frigid and comfortless to suppose, if it were supposable, that this glorious conquest of death should extend no further than the giving us a fair specious outside; and that our mind and spirit should not partake, or be nothing the better for it. 'Tis plain the apostle's scope through this chapter is more to assert the future subsistence of the soul, than the recomposure of the body, as his arguments show; though what was necessary to be said concerning the future state of that also, is not neglected. But what he is now saying, in this part of the chapter, concerns not what is common to men, but what is peculiar to good and holy men. And therefore, as it respects their nobler part, must intend more than its mere subsistence in another state, which is common to good and bad, and signify the perfection of the holy divine life, which shall be at last entirely victorious, and swallow up death, in its utmost extent, and specially as it was opposite to that life. Death, I mean, as it was so heavily incumbent upon the minds and spirits of good men themselves, and was their most intolerable burden: extorting from them such groans as that, Rom. vii. 24. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death! Nor indeed is this death sensible or grievous, or ever felt, but where the opposite life hath some place. Total death knows no grievances, makes no complaints. They that lie buried in the earth, are in their own element, where no such thing weighs upon them; a terrene carnal mind is no burden to such souls, as are quite dead in trespasses and sins. I hope I need not tell you, that though the souls of men are universally immortal in the natural sense, they are not so in the moral. Morality comprehends the means and end, virtue and felicity; or in terms more agreeable to our Christian ethics, or that are oftener heard by them that live under the Gospel, holiness and blessedness. These are signified by spiritual life, or life in the spiritually moral sense; and so are sin and misery, by the opposite death. And no man hath reason to think it strange, that life and death are estimated by such measures; or that a temper of spirit, habitually and fixedly good or evil, should be signified by being alive, or dead, if we consider how perfect an equivalency there is between them in the moral sense, and being naturally alive or dead. For wherein do we usually state the notion of natural life, but in a self-moving power? Now let any ordinary understanding be appealed to in the case, and who would not say it were as good not to be able to move at all, as to move in so perpetual disorder, as never to attain any end such motion should serve for. The ends of a reasonable creature's motions must be duty to its Maker, and felicity to itself. If all its motions be such as import constant hostility towards God, infelicity and torment to itself; this is to be dead, not simply and naturally, 'tis true, but respectively, and not in some by, and less considerable respect, but in respect of the principal and most important purposes of life. So that in full equivalency, such a one is as dead, to all valuable intents and purposes whatsoever. Therefore such are only said to be alive in a true and the most proper sense, that are alive to God through Jesus Christ, (Rom. vi. 11.) or that do yield themselves to God as those that are alive from the dead, (ver. 13.) it being the proper business of their life to serve God, and enjoy him. Others that only live in sinful pleasure, are dead while they live, 1 Tim. v. 6. Nor hath such a notion of life and death been altogether strange, even among heathens, when we find it said by one of no mean note, "That a wicked man is dead, as a soul may be said to die[b] and to it, 'tis a death, when 'tis (too deeply)[c] plunged, immersed into the body, so as to be sunk down into matter, and replete with it." (Besides much more that might be produced from others of like import.) And how agreeable is this passage to that, Rom. viii. 6. To be carnally minded is death.

Upon the whole, I cannot indeed conceive, that since death is often taken, and that most reasonably, in so great a latitude, as to admit of comprehending this sense; and since, in these latter verses, the apostle is speaking of a final deliverance from it, as the special privilege of such as are in union with Christ, not of what is common to all men, but that victory over death in this respect, as it imports aversion from God, or indisposition towards him, must be within his meaning, and that he was far from confining it to bodily death only, or from intending, in reference to the soul, the mere natural immortality of that alone: but that death, in its utmost latitude, was now, in reference to this sort of men whom his present discourse intends, to be entirely swallowed up in victory, or in a perfect plenitude of victorious life, as 2 Cor. v. 4. So much, which was more requisite to be insisted on, being clear, we shall less need to enlarge upon what follows. As that,

(3.) This victory supposes a war; or that life and death were before in a continued struggle. So we find the case is, even this lower world is full of vitality. Yet death hath spread itself through it, and cast over it a dark and dismal shadow every where, according as sin, which introduced it, is diffused and spread. Death is therefore mentioned as an enemy, ver 26. And so we understand it; natural death as an enemy to nature; spiritual, to grace. In the body, numerous maladies, and round about it, multitudes of adverse rencounters, are striving to infer death. In and about the mind and spirit, worse diseases and temptations have the like tendency. Temptations, I say, the mention whereof was not to be omitted, as pointing at the tempter, the wicked one, who first brought sin and death into this world of ours. And who is (though the concealed) the first and most proper seat of the enmity, which gives death the denomination of an enemy; which is so called indefinitely, the last enemy, that we might not understand it to be our enemy only, but more an enemy against God than us, from whom the spiteful apostate aimed and gloried to pluck away, and bury in death and ruin, the whole race of human creatures. In the mean time nature in all, and grace in the regenerate, are counter-striving. In the former, the self-preserving principle is more sensibly vigorous, but less successful: but they who are born of God, are better assisted by their Divine keeper, in subordination to whom they are enabled effectually to keep themselves, that the wicked one (mortally) touches them not, (1 John v. 18.) but, as must be supposed, not without continual watching and striving, as in war is usual.

(4.) Where such a war and striving end not in victory on the one side, they end in victory on the other. This is

b Ως αν ψυχη θανοι.

c Βεβαπτισμενη. Plotin. Enn. 1.

consequent upon what hath been said, of the limited subject here spoken of. Death is not universally overcome, with some it is left to be conceived therefore as a conqueror. We see how it is with the two hemispheres of our globe, when in the one, the light is chasing the darkness of the foregoing night, and we behold the morning gradually spreading itself upon the mountains, and it shines brighter and brighter unto perfect day; so in the other a feebler light doth more and more retire and yield, till at length it be quite swallowed up in the victorious darkness of a black and horrid midnight. 'Tis much after the same rate here, with this difference, that vicissitudes and alternations cease; and whether darkness and the shadow of death, or the light of life, be finally victorious, they are so, as hath been said, for ever. With the one sort, *i. e.* with the righteous, a vital light arises in the midst of darkness; a type of their spiritual, and a prelude to their eternal, state. They have a quickening light within, under all clouds of present ignominy and trouble, and an eternal day awaits them. Now death worketh in them, and surrounds them on every side, for awhile, and gains a temporary victory over their bodily life; which while it is doing, and their outward man is perishing, their inward man is renewed day by day. But at length even that vanquished life revives, and that more noble life, which is hid with Christ in God, (Col. iii. 3.) and of which he says, That whosoever lives, and believes in him, shall never die, (John xi. 26.) becomes perfect, for it is pure life; as that is said to be pure, which is *plenum sui, et minimum habet alieni, full of itself, without mixture of any thing alien from it;* having quite swallowed up whatsoever was opposite or disagreeable. So doth life, in the several kinds and degrees of it, flourish with them in a permanent, perpetual, and most consistent state. And as regal power is often founded in just conquest, they do even reign in life, by Jesus Christ, Rom. v. 17—21. But for the other sort, that sorry, pitiful, dying life they have, wherein they are even dead while they live, will be swallowed up in a victorious, eternal death; in which there remains to them a perpetual night, and the blackness of darkness for ever. We are next to consider,

2. The reasonableness of the divine determination, which this saying imports. And that is to be collected, by reminding who it is that hath so determined, he that can effect all his determinations, and do all his pleasure. The reason of his intendments, and performances, must be fetched from himself, and the perfection of his own nature; unto which nothing can be more agreeable. When death, let in by sin, hath been reigning, doing the part of a king, as Rom. v. 17. over so great a part of God's creation, it can be little suitable to him, who doth all things after the counsel of his will, (Eph. i. 11.) to let it reign for ever. Sometime it must be swallowed up in victory. Otherwise,—1. His own glory would suffer a perpetual eclipse,—2. The felicity of his redeemed should never be complete. Neither of which, as we are taught to apprehend the state of things, can consist with the absolute perfection of his being.

(1.) Can we think it agreeable to him, to suffer such a perpetual solecism or incongruity within his dominion, that when death, by means of a most criminal apostacy, had made so great an inroad into the nobler part of his creation, *i. e.* had broken in amongst creatures capable of immortality, (who indeed otherwise had not been capable of sin,) and thereby darkened the glory which shone more brightly in such an order of creatures; it should be so always? *i. e.* that such a sort of creatures should be perpetually continued, to be born, and sin, and die. Sometime we must think this course of things should have an end, and not by yielding an everlasting conquest to an enemy. We can well conceive it most worthy of God, when he had made such creatures, unto whom liberty was as agreeable as holiness and felicity, to leave them to themselves awhile, as probationers and candidates for that state of immortal life, whereof they were not incapable. It well became a self-sufficient Being, and an absolute Sovereign, to let them understand dependance, and subjection; and that their state was precarious, not his; to let them feel the cost of ungovernableness, and self-will, and the disagreeableness thereof to their condition who were not self-subsistent, and had not their good in their own hands; if, being put upon this trial, they would transgress, and open a way for death to come in upon them, the real loss could only be their own, and none of his. He had no reason therefore to prevent it, by so unseasonable an interposition, as should prevent the orderly connexion between duty and felicity; *i. e.* the precedency of the former to the other. All this was a most unexceptionable procedure. But then, when being left to themselves, they as men, or as Adam, had transgressed, (Hos. vi. 7.) and done like themselves, *i. e.* like frail, mutable creatures, in their lapse into sin and death; how opportune was it for him, now, to do more illustriously like himself, *i. e.* by so surprising, unthought of methods, as the Gospel reveals, to recover to himself this glory out of the cloud, and make it shine more brightly than ever, in this final victory over death, and him that had the power of it! So that it shall at last retain no dominion over any, but such as by their own choice, during a new state of trial, remained in an inviolable union with that prince of darkness and death. How glorious will the triumphs of this victory be over the grand apostate! And how unsupposable is it, that he should have occasion left him to glory in an eternal conquest! And,

(2.) It is not a light thing to him, whose nature is love, that without this final victory the felicity of the redeemed should never be fully accomplished. Antecedently to the Gospel revelation, it would seem more agreeable to the nature of God, that some should be rescued from the power of death, than that all should lie under it for ever. But we, to whom that revelation is vouchsafed, cannot now but think it the most unlikely thing in the world, that the design of Almighty love should finally be defeated; and that such as are in vital union with the Redeemer, should either be overcome at last by death, or remain in an eternal struggle with it. Whence nothing can be conceived, in this case, but that, as to them, death must be swallowed up in this glorious everlasting victory.

Whereupon how admirable a display will there herein be of sundry the most known attributes and excellencies of the Divine nature, as his wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, justice, and truth, in the whole conduct, and in this final issue of things! as might be distinctly shown of each, if we were not within limits. He at first dealt with them very suitably to their natures, at length he deals with them according to his own; that it may be the theme of eternal contemplation to themselves, and the whole intelligent world, how far his ways are above their ways, and his thoughts above their thoughts, Isa. lv. And that as, at first, he thought it not fit to hinder them from doing as too little became such creatures, nothing should at last hinder him from doing as became a God.

II. But come we now to the use. And,

1. Do we find this saying, in the sacred word of God, that death is to be swallowed up in victory? then we are not to doubt, but so it shall be. A plenary assent is to be given to it. But what sort of assent? Not that which arises from the sight of our eye. If that were to be our only informer, we see no such thing; but quite the contrary. That represents death to us as the only conqueror, it visibly swallows up all in victory, wheresoever it makes a seizure. Nothing stands before it! we behold it turning every where living men and women, like ourselves, into breathless lumps of earth! It irresistibly introduces itself, and life is fled, and gone! Such as conversed with us, walked to and fro amongst us, reasoned, discoursed with us, managed business, pursued designs, delighted themselves with us, and gave us delight, become death's captives before our eyes, are bound in its bands, and we cannot redeem them, nor save ourselves. Where then is this swallowing up of death in victory? which is itself so constantly victorious! Our reason may tell us it shall not be always and universally so, but it flutters, and hallucinates. 'Tis the divine word that must at last put the matter out of doubt; and our faith therein, which is the substance of what we hope for, and the evidence of what we do not see. If faith be to assure our hearts in this matter, it must be as it relies upon his word, who can do this, and hath said he will. If we believe his power, that renders it possible to us; if his word, that makes it certain. Hath he said it? who then shall gainsay it? 'Tis one of the true and faithful sayings of God.

2. If this be a credible saying, 'tis certainly a very comfortable one. If we can but make that first step, and perceive this not to be a hard or incredible saying; it is very obvious to make a second, and acknowledge it to be a very consolatory saying; and that both in reference to—the past death of our friends and relatives, even such as were nearest, and most dear to us;—and in reference to our own most certainly future and expected death. In the one case, and the other, we are to look upon it as a comfortable saying, that this mighty raging enemy shall have all his power lost, and swallowed up, in so glorious a victory, one day.

(1.) It is surely a very comfortable saying, in the former of these cases, the case of our losing friends and relations very dear unto us. And there only needs this to make it most deliciously pleasant, that is, to have a comfortable persuasion concerning such, that they are part of Christ's seed, they are some of them, in reference to whom Christ is, in the most peculiar sense, the first-fruits, so as that they have a pre-assurance of victory in his conquest and victory over death and the grave. And we have great reason to be so persuaded concerning that worthy gentlewoman, whose late decease is the more special occasion of this solemn assembly at this time. She was one who (as such as had most opportunity to observe, and best ability to judge, did reckon) had given abundant evidence of the work of God's saving grace upon her own spirit, and who thereupon did long walk with God in a very continued course; so indeed, as that though her comforts were observed not to be rapturous, yet they were steady and even; so as that she was rarely troubled with doubts, to give obstruction or hinderance to her in her Christian course; if any such doubt did arise, it soon vanished, and she quickly, through the mercy of God, received satisfaction, and so went cheerfully on in her way. She was abundant in reading, especially of the Holy Book; that was her business and delight. She very little cared to concern herself in reading writings that were merely notional, or polemical and disputative; but the most practical one she was most of all taken with, such as treated of the other state, and of the duties of Christians in the mean time in reference thereto; future felicity, and present spiritual-mindedness, that has so certain connexion therewith, and so direct a tendency thereto, were, with her, the delightful subjects, which she chose to read of, and meditate upon.

Her temper was observed to be even, betwixt a freeness and reservedness. She was not melancholy, though much inclined to solitariness; and would frequently lament, that so much of her precious time was passed away, either in necessary business or civil conversation, that was not to be avoided. It was observed that her disposition was most highly charitable, very apt to give, even to her uttermost, as occasions did occur.

In reference to her children, her care was most tender. Much of her time was spent in instructing them, while under her instruction, and within her reach; teaching them their catechism, with the proofs at large, and how to apply the proofs to the answer, so as to bring them to a distinct understanding thereof. And in this way and course she passed through the world. Her last sickness did very little alter the temper of her spirit, it was calm and sedate all along. Only so much does deserve a remark, that she was prepossessed with an apprehension that she should die suddenly; so much of God's secret he was pleased to impart to her, as he sometimes does to more inward friends; that discovery he vouchsafed to her, as to a favourite, to let her have some kind of pre-signification, that her passage out of this world should be very quick, whensoever it came: and so it was, that sitting in her chair, amidst familiar discourse, in a demidiated sentence, she made a full stop, and life was ended, before that could have an end.

Now certainly the decease of such a one ought not to be lamented with that bitter sorrow, as if there were no such thing as this, that death were certainly to be swallowed up in victory, in an entire and complete victory, with reference to such a one. It seems indeed, in such cases, as was said to you before, unto the judgment of our sense, that death only overcomes, we see not beyond that; it turns a living creature into a dead clod, and so it is laid among such, it is buried in the grave, our sight goes no further. But when we are persuaded, by the word of the Lord, that this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible, incorruption, and death be swallowed up in such a victory, as you have heard; certainly this takes away the cause of all bitter and reliefless sorrow.

I am not unapprehensive that reverend brother, whom this stroke touches more nearly, is much fitter to administer this consolation, than receive it from such a one as I. But as we may any of us put in for our share, as our case may require and can admit, in what is so generally spoken with reference to Christians dying in the Lord, and their surviving fellow-Christians, that as yet live in him, 1 Thess. iv. from verse 13 onward to the end; so, we are directed to comfort one another therewith. Be patient, I pray you, while I present to you this most suitable portion of Scripture. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." We shall be in a great promptitude and disposition of spirit to do so, if these words be looked upon as divine sayings, as the words of the living and immortal God. My friends, do you not find there is spirit in these words? Is there not strong consolation in them? How can we but think so, unless our whole religion be with us but a fable? This concerns us all upon the common Christian account, who are but a residue, a remnant, escaped, and exempted awhile from being part of the spoils and triumphs of death; which hath slaughtered, and thrown into the dust, probably a much greater number of our friends and relatives, than we ourselves do make, who are left behind. And 'tis likely we have been most of us divers times mourners, upon such occasions. This shows upon what account, and in what case, we may intermingle very reviving consolations with our sorrows, and that we ought freely, as the occasion recurs, to apply it to ourselves, and one another.

But I withal think there may be somewhat of more special import, tending to repress intemperate sorrow, on such an occasion, in that of Ezek. xxiv. 16. I think there may be somewhat, I say, collected, besides what was more peculiar and appropriate by way of signal to the prophet himself, that may reach the last mentioned case. It was a thing enjoined upon him, that he should not mourn nor weep, nor should his tears run down, when God should take away from him the desire of his eyes with a stroke. I reckon that, as we have seen, Christians should not mourn like other men; so the Lord's prophets are not to mourn altogether like others of his people, but somewhat more of restraint they are to put upon themselves, that they may discover a higher excellency, or somewhat a greater measure of that spirit of faith ruling in them, that gives a great allay to present things, whether good or evil, as it begets clearer and more vivid apprehensions of things yet future and out of sight. And that as all believers should endeavour, in things of common concernment to all, to be exemplary to one another, and to other men; so they who are so much nearer to God, in office and relation, should be examples to believers in conversation, spirit, faith, 1 Tim. iv. 12.

(2.) This should be very comfortable too unto them that are in union with Christ, in reference to their own future death, which they are continually to expect. Death is often saying to us repeatedly, and very sensibly, to our very bone and our flesh, You shall be my prey shortly; at least, sooner or later. It is ready to make its seizure upon us; when, we do not know; but we are sure some time it will.

But, my friends, it does not become Christians to look upon this thing, called death, as so formidable a thing, as it is commonly reckoned: it is ignominious to our pro-

fession, not to be endured amongst them that have life and immortality brought to light, and set in view before their eyes in the Gospel; such as profess to be united with Christ, who hath life in himself, and imparts it to all that are so united, such a life, bid with Christ in God; and hope that when he who is their life shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory. It becomes not such to die continually, by the fear of dying, or that the very thoughts of death should be deadly to them.

This is remote from what was much observed to be the temper and character of primitive Christians. A heathen prince,[d] who thoroughly understood them not, censures them too hardly, as being in the other extreme, (though he at length became kinder to them,) as if they rashly threw themselves upon death. Whereas he says, the soul should rationally and becomingly be in readiness to be loosed from the body, Ἀλογιαμένως, καὶ σεμνῶς. But how come we to lose our character, and our glory? How degenerated a thing is the Christianity of our age! To die without regret, is counted an attainment; it should be with gladness, (Psal. xvi. 9—11.) and upon the considerations there mentioned, as being now upon the confines of that world of perfect purity, bliss, and joy; and having so great an assurance that the intermediate death, we are to go through, is no sooner suffered, than overcome!

We should deal closely with ourselves in this. Do we think this saying a fable, or a trifle? Have these words no meaning? We should labour to come to a point, and say, if we have no reason to disbelieve them, we will believe them absolutely; and live as having gained our point, and overcome already; *i. e.* who are as sure of victory, as of death. Some overcome by dying, as others are overcome by it. There are who are not hurt by the second death. If death strike once, it thereby puts it out of its own power ever to strike a second time, or hurt them more. Let us once bring our case to that state as to live in continual defiance of death, let it strike when it will. Dependence, only on the grace and Spirit of Christ, must give us this confidence; not an opinion that we are ourselves strong enough to act separately, but that knowing our relation to him, we are through him that loved us more than conquerors, or as that ὑπερνικῶμεν, Rom. viii. 37. may be understood to signify, we are a glorious triumphant sort of conquerors. We not only conquer, but triumph too, through him that loved us, being persuaded that neither death, nor life—shall separate us from his love—So a noted expositor understands that word, observing how great a delight this apostle takes, when he would heighten a matter, in the use of that particle ὑπὲρ.

It is elsewhere said, (Col. iii. 3.) Ye are dead, but your life, &c. We are dead, *i. e.* in ourselves, we are a sort of dead or dying creatures, death hath almost got the possession of us already, has partly seized, and partly sentenced us to die, and irreversibly. This the apostle intimates, where he adds what you have heard: Ye have a life hid with Christ in God, that life is safe, and out of the reach of death, no death can touch that life. They that are born of God, have in reference to this life (though the other must be given up) a self-preserving principle and power in them, 1 John v. 18. They keep themselves, that the evil one toucheth them not; that is, not mortally, or with any deadly touch. In having a new, holy, divine life; they have an assuring pledge also of the permanency, perpetuity, and everlastingness of it. If a man have once drank of that water which Christ gives, it shall be in him a perpetual fountain, a well of water springing up into everlasting life, John iv. 14.

Are we Christians, and with the springings of this life do we not feel a lively joy springing, and exulting in our hearts? Add vital Christianity to the rational nature, and lothness to die is a repugnancy, and a reproach to both. Christianity so plainly stating our case, reason should judge upon it; and suitable affections arise in us thereupon, as they would if our Christianity were vital, and the product of the Divine Spirit. Then, how should we bless God that we are mortal! and that it is not in the power of all this world to keep us from dying out of it, when we know in how glorious a victory that death will be swallowed up! But it may be said by some. "We should very little fear death, if we did know our interest in Christ, if we were not in great uncertainty, and had not our hearts hanging in doubt within us, about this thing. And therefore,

3. This saying should be monitory to us, (as it is credible, as it is comfortable, so it is a monitory saying also,) Death shall be swallowed up in victory. This said, in reference to some (which cannot be meant as to all) so great a thing, spoken with restriction, ought to make them of whom it is not meant look about them. With what solicitude should we concern ourselves, to be at a certainty! Am I one of them, in reference to whom death shall be swallowed up in such a victory? It should awaken us to consider, Have we made our interest sure in our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Prince and Lord of life? He that hath the Son hath life. It is eternal life that is spoken of in that context, 1 John v. 11, 12. This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life; and this life is in his Son; that is, this eternal life. He that hath the Son, hath this life; he that hath not the Son, hath not this life. Spiritual life and eternal life are all one, all of a piece, the same in nature and kind; the one will grow up into the other.

That life only is here meant, that will be eternal life. To the same sense is that, He that believeth in me, shall never die, John xi. 26. These are plain words. He hath a life in him that is immortal, sacred, and not liable to be touched. It was before said, They that believe in him, if dead, shall live, ver. 25. But not only that, but 'tis further added, They that believe in him shall never die.[e] If dead, they shall live; if they live, they shall never die. What means this? That they have a life, besides this bodily one; which is continued through death. Of this line or thread, death makes no intercision. But we can never justify it to God, or our own understandings, to rest in a dubious uncertainty about a matter of so vast consequence as this. Uncertainty about a matter of so vast consequence as this. Unconcernedness here is the most unaccountable thing in the whole world; *i. e.* whether we have only that life in us which will end in the darkness and rottenness of a grave, and a horrid hell; or that which runs into eternal life? Things will come to this issue very shortly with us, that either death must, as to us, be swallowed up in victory, or we be swallowed up of victorious death; nor have we any ways to ascertain our own state, but, as was said, by uniting with the Prince of life; *i. e.* by receiving him in all the capacities wherein we are to be concerned with him; and by resigning ourselves entirely to him. For if we must have him that we may have life, how can we otherwise have him but by receiving him? The Gospel, under which we live, can only be a savour of life to us as it disposes us hereunto. Recollect yourselves then, how do your Lord's days, and other seasons of attending this Gospel, pass over with you? Have you long expected life, and (which is less likely) do you meet with continual and total disappointments? And doth it cause with you no qualmish thoughts? But 'tis infinitely a sadder case, if you never feel yourselves begin to live, and yet are never disappointed; because you never attend upon the gospel-dispensation with any such design or hope. Is the matter thus, that if you speak the truth of your case, you must say, "I have a soul dead to all the actions, motions, sensations, enjoyments, of a divine and spiritual life." And shall it be always thus, by our own consent, with any of us? We have however the rational, intellectual life, and can think; do we think 'tis fit for us to rest satisfied and secure in such a state? What, satisfied in the midst of death? such a death? while we are capable of apprehending at once the horror, the danger, and the remediableness of our case? What will this come to? It can only be holy, divine life that must be victorious over death, as the warring, opposite principle: if there be nothing to oppose it, what shall conquer? Death is in that case total, and upon such terms, till life begin to spring in thy soul, thou must reckon it likely to be eternal. Yet let none so mistake as to imagine this life an enthusiastical thing, that must discover itself in rapturous ecstatical motions, or go for nothing. It perfects our faculties, therefore destroys them not; and chiefly consists in a rational judgment, choice, and love of what is most worthy of us; what is fittest to be done by us, and what is with fullest satisfac-

[d] Marc. Antonin. de Vit. Sua. lib. 11.

[e] Vid. Ham. in loc.

tion to be enjoyed; with a steadfast, most resolved adherence thereunto.

4. This saying ought to be instructive to us, in reference especially to this one thing, *i. e.* that we abstain from rash censures of providence, that God lets death be *regnant* in so great a part of his creation, so long a time. It shall be swallowed up in victory; let that solve with us the phenomenon. It seems indeed an untoward one, and might, at first be an amazing spectacle, even to the blessed angels themselves, to behold so great a revolt in heaven; and afterwards to take notice of an intelligent world, of creatures beneath them, successively, through one first delinquent, drawn in as accomplices, into a like defection; and death hereby spreading its horrid shadow, and extending its power, over so great and so noble a part of the universe! committing such wastes, making such desolations, from age to age, in so great a part of the creation of God! But there are many alleviating considerations, that should compose our spirits to a rational quietude, and be satisfying and pacifying to our minds with reference to this thing. Let me but name some few to you, which I shall leave with you for this purpose.

(1.) Do but consider how minute a part of the creation of God this globe, this point, this punctilio rather, of our earth is, where death has reigned, and so long had place.

(2.) Consider how much of life there is in and about this little world of ours. When upon one single mole-hill you see the brisk motions and efforts of so many hundred lives, you have reason to apprehend there is a great deal of vitality about this little spot of earth.

(3.) Consider and collect how probable it is, that as we go higher and higher, the nobler and finer parts of God's creation must be much more replenished with a nobler and more excellent sort of life. It is very unreasonable to think, that this clod of earth should be so full of life; and that in higher and purer regions there should not be a richer plenitude of life, or of such inhabitants as live nobler and more excellent lives than we. And,

(4.) For ought we know, death never reaches higher than this earth of ours, and what is in a nearer vicinity to it. And that, therefore, there be vast and ample regions, incomparably beyond the range of our eye, or thought, where now no death ever comes; after the detrusion of the first revolters, from those bright regions. When we are told, Eph. iv. 10. our Lord Jesus Christ is ascended far above all heavens, as it were a fond attempt to pretend to count them, so it were rash philosophizing, to go about to describe them. But can we suppose them spacious, wild wastes? or not suppose them replenished with numberless numbers of excellent creatures that, in their confirmed state, fear no death; and continually pay a willing, joyful homage to their great Preserver? For every knee must bow to him, of things in heaven, Phil. ii. 10. And when we are told, Eph. i. 20, 21. God hath set him at his own right hand, in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name, &c. And 1 Pet. iii. 22. That he is on the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject to him. Though we cannot form distinct thoughts what those dynasties, principalities, and dominions are; yet we cannot but suppose those unconceivably vast and ample regions fully peopled with immortal inhabitants, that reign in life, in a more excellent sense. For it being said our Lord ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things, (Eph. iv. 10.) this must suppose suitable recipients. And if his influences reach down in such plenty to our minute earth, (as ver. 11, 12, 13.) how copious are they here!

(5.) Consider that here, where death has made its inroad, though the apostate spirits surround us, and encompass this earth of ours, and go to and fro throwing death among us every where; yet even here is a glorious offspring continually arising, the Redeemer's seed, in whom a divine life is gradually springing up from age to age. So that, at length, they make a great multitude, which no man can number, standing before the throne, clothed with white robes, and, as ensigns of victory, having palms in their hands, Rev. vii. 9. Here is life then disseminated through all this death, that inwraps our world, which, for ought we know, is the centre of death; it may be here, for ought we can tell, and no where else, (here, or hereabouts,) and yet even here, a holy divine life is insinuating and spreading itself, even among us, over whom death has reigned; and there are great numbers, that having received abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ, Rom. v. 17. Here is supposed a kingdom, with a counter-kingdom, and one head against another; one that brought in death and condemnation upon the world, but another that brings in righteousness and life. And that here, even in this lower region, the Redeemer should have so large a portion, (we know not how large,) this very much narrows the confines of death. And let it be further considered,

(6.) That where death shall be perpetual, it is there but self-procured. They only lie under death, that loved it. All they that hate me, love death, Prov. viii. 36. They inwrap themselves in death, they make a covenant with it. That sin, which is death, which carries death and hell in itself, that they loved: 'twas so, 'tis true, with the rest, that finally perish not; but it was not always so. The grace of God made a difference, not to be quarrelled at, when striving with many, it is victorious with some. But of those with whom it is not so, it must be said, as their final, never-altered sense, even to the last, they would not be plucked out of the gulf, that deadly gulf, where they therefore lie, as in their most agreeable element. And let it further be considered,

(7.) That for the death that shall be perpetual, 'tis to be confined, and go no further. Before, it was diffused, and continually more and more diffusing itself. But in the future state of things, when time has run to its period, and the affairs of it are shut up by the final judgment, death and hell are now to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death, Rev. xx. 14. All death is now to be gathered into death, hell into hell. It shall be contracted, gathered into itself. It's true, it will be therefore consummate, finished, perfect in its kind, or full of itself, as that which is without mixture cannot but be, (as was noted before,) here will be pure death, without mixture, and which therefore will have no allay. But then, whereas formerly it ranged to and fro uncontrolled, now it is confined to its own narrower circle, and can have no new subject; and shall therefore give no further trouble or disturbance to the rest of God's creation. Moreover, consider,

Lastly, That this victory will not be gradual only, but total and entire. Every thing of mortality, that was hanging about these glorious victors, shall be swallowed up in perfect and in endless life. Death is unstung first, disarmed, and then easily overcome. Its sting is said to be sin, the deadliest thing in death. A plain further proof, by the way, the apostle intended death also in the moral sense. And the insulting inquiry, "Where is it?" implies 'tis not any where to be found, and signifies a total abolition of it; and, by consequence, must infer that every thing of death besides must, as to them, for ever cease and be no more. Which also the phrase of swallowing up doth with great emphasis express. And this completes the vindication of Providence, *i. e.* in this whole affair; and not only vindicates but magnifies the conduct of the Supreme Disposer of all things. For by this means, as his wisdom, power, and goodness are most highly illustrated; so the trial of his people's faith (the great instrument of this their victory, as well as of that over the world, 1 John v. 4.) is found unto praise, honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. i. 7. And they find, what, by patient continuance in well-doing, they were enjoined to seek, which shows they were not vainly put upon so noble a pursuit, honour, glory, immortality, to their actual attainment of eternal life, Rom. ii. 7.

Now therefore shall this saying be made good, in its fullest sense; and if there shall be such a victory, so glorious a one, won at last, surely we should be tuning our instruments, and labouring to get our hearts into a frame to sing the ἐπινίκιον, the triumphant song, ver. 55, 56. and conclude it, as ver. 57. Thanks be to God, that giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

LETTERS.

TO A FRIEND ON THE LOSS OF AN EXCELLENT WIFE.

I SERIOUSLY lament your new affliction, whereof I lately had the surprising account. And I should be the more concerned for it, if I did not consider it hath befallen one, who can with judgment estimate and suffer it. He hath enough to relieve him against the ungrateful events which our present state is liable to, who is serious in the belief of God's universal government over this world, and that there is another. The former of these is a principle much abused by some; which no more proves it false than the Gospel, out of which some have the mischievous skill to extract a deadly savour. It is our great privilege, for which we ought to be thankful, that by such arguments whereby we can most certainly demonstrate to ourselves, that there is a God, we can as certainly prove that he is not an Epicurean God; unto which imaginary idol only that could belong, to be disturbed by being concerned about human affairs. But if he knew the true nature of God better, who came forth from him into our world, on purpose to make him known, we are sufficiently assured, not a hair can fall from our head without him, much less so considerable a part of ourselves.

This is not the state wherein things are to be unexceptionably well. But we have cause, as things are, to acknowledge and adore the wisdom and goodness of Providence, that the wickedness of the world hath not in so many thousand years quite confounded families and all human society long ago: but that as wise counsel did first settle the institution of those lesser societies, God hath from age to age renewed the impression of that part among others of the law of nature, by which men are prompted as by instinct to preserve them; besides the positive precept he hath given, setting out to each relative the duty whereby order is to be preserved in them. And when we know his government extends so low, how gladly ought we to submit ourselves to it, and allow him to determine how long we should enjoy such relatives, as well as that there should be any such. For we know that they were appointed but for this temporary estate, not for that wherein we are to be as the angels of God in heaven, where each one hath a subordinate self-sufficiency, and needs not the meet helps which the exigency of this state makes so useful. And therefore the reason as well as the authority of such precepts, is most entirely to be subscribed to, that because the time is short, they that have wives be as though they had none; they that rejoice (in having them) as if they rejoiced not; they that weep (in losing them) as though they wept not. So our affections will correspond to the objects, which are of the same make: for the fashion of the world passeth away. And it were a gloomy thought to consider all as passing and vanishing, if we did not seriously believe, that it vanishes to make way for another, that shall never vanish, and that shall shortly enter in its perfect glory, and fill up the whole stage. Scaffolds are taken down, when the eternal building is finished.

TO A GENTLEWOMAN, ON THE LOSS OF A BELOVED DAUGHTER.

DEAR AND HONOURED MADAM,

DID you think two or three months ago, such a trial was so near? Such sad futurities God, in mercy to us, hides from us, that we may not afflict ourselves before he afflicts us; and that when he intends we should suffer that particular affliction but once, namely, when it comes, we may not impose so hardly upon ourselves, as to suffer it a thousand times over before it comes. Sufficient is the day, &c. If he should have made us all prophets, in reference to all the events of our time, we should bring all the evils of every future day into every former day; as if the evil of the day were not enough for the day.

But though he gives us not certain predictions of such evils, lest he should torment us, he gives forewarnings, lest he should surprise us. He hath told us we must all once die, and not when; that life is a vapour; that all flesh is grass; that the beauty or glory of it is but as the flower of grass; withering things! He hath asserted his own dominion over lives, and over the spirits of all flesh, as the God of them, to lodge and dislodge them, where and as he pleases. And who are we, that we should grudge him that dominion; or so much as wish we could have wrested that part of his empire out of his hands? But when he afflicts, it is good to consider what it is for. It comes not out of the dust, though it may reduce us or ours thither. And if our utmost search cannot find out a particular cause, (wherein we should take heed of being too indulgent and partial to ourselves, but should beg that what we know not he would teach us,) yet we should however more earnestly endeavour to improve the affliction to the general end, which we may be sure he aims at; to withdraw our minds from this present world, and state of things; to take heed of being peremptory in laying any designs that must be measured by time, and be subject to the uncertainties of it; to determine nothing but with that reserve, If God will, we shall do this or that, (James iv. 15.) to have our minds ingulphed and swallowed up, not of the stream of time, but of the ocean of eternity; to be easily taken off from any purpose, the scene whereof must be laid on this earth or lower world; to have our hearts more entirely and more strongly set upon God, so as to be able to say, Whom have I in heaven or earth besides thee? that the true end may be gain, though such a comfort be lost, and the particular offending cause cannot be found.

We may err, in thinking some such particular offence must be fastened upon. If it clearly can, it ought; if not, it is better forbear judging than misjudge. Possibly chastening for a particular sin may not be in God's design: it is not always. We may be sure it never is his principal design in taking away one relative from another. He made all things (principally) for himself; he made us but secondarily for one another. If his principal design in making such a creature was not to please me, his principal design in taking it away was not to displease or afflict me. He hath his own greater and higher end concerning his own creature, to glorify himself upon it, and by it, in a greater world than this. Many afflictions are for trial; and that in such a case is an awful thought.

The jealous God hath me now under trial, how I can bear, how I can submit, how I can reverence his hand, how I can behave myself towards him when he afflicts; whether I will venture to contend with him, or be sullen and morose towards him; because he hath bereaved me of a child I delighted in, whether I better loved him or my child. The trial may be manifold; of my faith, of my patience, of my fear of him, of my love to him: and I may add, it may be intended for a trial of gratitude, and a

mighty trial that is. We are required, in every thing to give thanks. And Job did it, and said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord," when with all his substance he took away all his children at once: The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken. The injunction, "In every thing give thanks," signifies there is in every thing some matter of praise. I know not so immediately what was in this case; but if there was what I have heard, great indications of early piety, if there were grounds to hope there was a work of regeneration wrought, there is infinitely more matter of thanksgiving than complaint. What had the life of a child been worth without this? when better never to have been born! It is a far greater thing if he have taken her as his own child, than if he had left her to you, only as yours. If you have faith to look into the unseen world, and behold her taken into the society of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, how much more hath God done for her and you, than if he had left her to your care and provision in this wretched world? We are told there is joy in heaven for the conversion of a sinner: much more for the glorification of a convert! That joy ought to swallow up in very great part your sorrow. The good Lord frame your spirit suitably to these things, in whom I am,

Your truly respectful servant, (very sensible of your case,)

Love Lane, Aldermanbury,
London, Sept. 29, 1694. J. HOWE.

THE TWO FOLLOWING ARE TO A NEW MARRIED COUPLE.

(Who were persons of distinction,) that were written on the same sheet of paper, that was directed to the Lady with whom Mr. Howe had been long acquainted.

Most honoured Sir,

I thankfully acknowledge the favour of your welcome lines, which ought to be most entirely so, both upon the account of the author, and the matter of them. For though my opportunity for so desirable an acquaintance hath been but little as to the circumstance, it hath been much as to the substance of what I know of you, in ways that gave me greatest assurance, before I had the happiness of oral converse with you. Nor could any thing be more grateful to me, than to read you from your own hand so related, and so well pleased (as I doubt not you will be daily more and more) with your relation, and the other accessory correlates, with whom God hath cast your lot.

I believe you have much reason to bless God, (who orders all things to the best advantage to such as sincerely give themselves up to his conduct,) that he led you not into such a condition and state of life as he now at length hath brought you into, before you were well acquainted with the rules and duties of it, better than to need help from such a one as I. But among the many other precepts that concern that case, I dare adventure to recommend those of 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. and pursuantly thereto, to offer to your thoughts, that this can be but a partial temporary felicity, and so far only so at all, as it is enjoyed only as mediate, and subservient to the full and final felicity which we are professedly seeking and waiting for: so far ought it to be, to oppose it, or let it be an obstruction thereto. Which is the nature of all good things that have only the goodness of the means, and not of the end, that their goodness is variable, and by misapplication may degenerate into a hurtful evil. Within the compass of such things is the truth of those words to be confined; *Nil prodest, quod non lædere possit idem.* It is beyond the measure of any created good to be universally so. That therefore which in its own place is a real good, applied to the particular purpose which it is capable of serving, out of that place, and being trusted, valued, and delighted in beyond the measure which God and the nature of the thing have stated and set, may become a hurt to us.

But there can be no greater or more endearing obligation to use any mercy for God, than an habitual fixed sense of its having been received from him, and a deeply radicated and often repeated agnition of his sovereign hand in ordering it to be our lot, with all the circumstances that have had any reference thereto. For what ingenuous heart can endure to oppose to him, or employ against him, the (apprehended) fruit of his own favour and kindness? a pledge of his paternal love and care so understood! And therefore the greater the gift is (still considered under that strict notion) the stronger is the inducement to honour and serve the giver with it, and to enjoy according to prescription, what we enjoy not but by his vouchsafement.

If to all this I should add a request to you to be exceeding kind to my most dear and honoured friend, it were the greatest impertinence in all the world. For she having such a temper to work upon, will make you so whether you will or no: and I might as well use arguments to persuade a fragrant flower to send forth its grateful odours, when a most benign orient sun is plying it with its cherishing morning beams. Such may you long be, both of you mutually (sun and flower) to each other, shining and flourishing with all the influence, and under the continual blessing, of Heaven. So shall you communicate a part of that joy, which I most sincerely wish you, to

Sir,
Your very faithful and affectionate humble servant,
J. HOWE.

Whatsoever leisure (most dear and honoured Madam) you may suppose me to have, I had little reason to suppose —— and yourself to have much, from the reading of one another, to cast your eyes upon any thing I could write. But if after this paper shall have lain one quarter of a year somewhere near your dressing-box, you find it not unseasonable to bestow a glance upon it, you will then at length find your disappointment. For it will tell you nothing but what you well knew, or might easily guess before; that having a constant most affectionate respect and honour for you, I cannot but be highly pleased, that you are so.

And methinks it should not much surprise you, if I further say, I would have you somewhat to alter (or make your exception to) your own rule, and not show the less kindness to ——— for that he is a married man. This will not be strange to you, if you remember some of your last winter lines.

After this hath made you smile a little, as that of yours did me, then think that this novelty in your condition will neither make nor allow you to smile always, though I hope it will add a great deal to the comfort and pleasantness of your days.——And you may sometime have occasion to think seriously together, of the sense of those words, Luke xiv. 26. And always remember the subordination that all creature-love must be in, to that of the supreme object of our love. How pleasant a thing will it be to have hearts united and consenting in the resolution of loving him perpetually above all, to whom we owe our all, and who is altogether lovely! to consult and conspire together, how most to promote his interest, and improve in acquaintance with him, and conformity to him. This I believe your heart to be much formed to before-hand. The great care must be, that such resolutions do not gradually languish. We find many are apt by unobserved degrees to starve the good affections and inclinations which they would abhor to assassinate by a sudden violence. I write securely, that such an intimation will by so great a kindness as yours, be very well taken, from

Your Ladyship's
Most affectionate humble servant,
J. HOWE.

THE FOLLOWING WAS WRITTEN UPON OCCASION OF THE DECEASE OF BOTH THE PARENTS OF THE LADY AFORESAID, WITHIN ABOUT EIGHT MONTHS OF EACH OTHER.

Most honoured dear Madam,

When I heard of your former great loss, I was confined by distemper to my bed: and I received information of the other, when I was going a great journey to accompany my wife and daughter to the Bath, from whence they are not returned as yet, and I came home from my journeyings

but last week. I have not in the mean time forgot your Ladyship's affliction, nor been without the apprehension how tender a sense your loss of two such parents must be accompanied with. Nor should I now mention it, did I not apprehend it may yet be reflected on to better purpose, than only to renew your sorrow. And that it may, I pray you, let it be remembered in the first place, with serious gratitude, (for we are required in every thing to give thanks,) that God continued to you the comfort of such relations so long, and for the many mercies he made them instrumental of to you, in your tender years; that he vouchsafed to you the blessing of so excellent an education by their means; that you were thereby brought to know him and his Christ; that by their care you were so comfortably settled in the world, and in a station wherein he hath given you the opportunity of being so serviceable in building up a family for him, and of contributing to the planting and propagating religion in it; and that you see so much of a blessing from heaven upon the plantation. Your part is that of a mother, and you have had a great example before your eyes. That may still live (and I doubt not will) in your mind and heart, while the person that gave it still lives in a higher region, whither, following such steps, you also will be translated in the fittest season.

I pray for the welfare, in all valuable respects, of your Ladyship, and all yours; being, in great sincerity, your Ladyship's

Most respectful, and most faithful, humble servant,

Love Lane, Aldermanbury,
London, Sept. 5, 1695. J. HOWE.

THE FOLLOWING WAS TO THE SAME ON THE DEATH OF A MOST PROMISING SON.

MOST WORTHY AND HONOURED SIR, WITH
MY DEAREST AND MOST HONOURED LADY,

IT would be incomparably more grievous to me at this time to write to you, if I were under a necessity of writing nothing but were mournful and sad. The same thing, if we turn it round, will be found to have a double aspect. That dispensation that represents you deprived of an earthly son, speaks you the parents of a glorified child, more highly dignified than it was possible he could have been on earth. This post brings you greater news than if it had informed you, your son is created emperor of Germany, or king of France or Spain. Let us speak and think of things as we believe, and profess to believe. Indeed if our apprehensions of their state in the unseen world, who were true lovers of God, have nothing of solace and pleasure in them, it is mere useless empty profession they are all to be resolved into, and not faith.

My heart bleeds for you, and with you both, but it can do you no good to tell you so. I believe your lovely son unfeignedly loved God; and then read the rest, 1 Cor. ii. 9. James i. 10, 12. Of how great use might he have been in this world! But are those glorious creatures above, to whom he is now joined, inactive or unemployed? And are not their employments more noble and sublime, according to the more enlarged capacity of their faculties, and the higher dignity of their state? He was born to very considerable things as your heir; but he was begotten again to a more glorious inheritance, and the lively hope of it, 1 Peter i. 3. They that were about him, before it was possible for me to see him, told me he was insensible, as he was before I heard of his illness; but at my coming to him, he knew me at first sight, and seemed to have the use of his understanding for nothing but religion. He then spake not one misplaced word; said, he doubted not God was his Father, and that his present affliction was from the hand of that Father, not of an enemy. He desired me to pray with him, and seemed understandingly and affectionately to concur. This was on the Lord's day, and the next was the day of his glorious translation, near noon, before I could reach him a second time.

Mr. C— came to me presently after, to advise with me about disposal of the body; who could give no advice but in the general, to have it prepared for interment in a way that might be decent, and not profusely expensive; not doubting but that there might be more particular direction from yourself, before actual interment, sent to Mr. C—, &c. who is willing to take the care upon him of seeing instructions fulfilled.

The Lord support you both, and abundantly bless the rest of yours.

I am, most honoured Sir and Madam, your most affectionately sympathizing servant in Christ our Lord,

St. John's Street,
London, Jan. 14, 1689. JOHN HOWE.

THE TWO FOLLOWING WERE WRITTEN BY MR. HOWE, TO HIS DEAR AND INTIMATE FRIEND, MR. SPILSBURY.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

How hard a matter is it to keep up converse at this rate! when all that is pleasant and gainful in it lies on one side only. I read thy lines with fruit and delight; but have nothing to return of any value. And if a conscience is to be exercised in this sort of traffic, or indeed but a tolerable ingenuity, it cannot but occasion some regret, to barter away things of no worth for good commodities. If I tell thee I live, what doth that signify? when life itself is so little worth, how despicable is the notice of it! If I tell thee I love thee, thou knowest it before as to the *quod sit*; but for the *quid sit*, no words can express it; therefore the offer at it is vain. When, when shall we meet above! That will make us pure good company, when dulness and sluggishness are shaken off and gone, and we shall be all spirit and life! yet we shall be doing our Lord some service here, or that he will accept as such, if we be sincere. Thou wilt be visited by a worthy person ere long, that is gone first to Kidderminster, and means after he hath seen the son, to come to the father.

Cordial salutations from me and mine, to thee and thine. Farewell in our dear Lord: and still remember,

Thy entirely affectionate,

St. John Street,
Jan. 25, 1698. J. HOWE.

MAY I once more hope to salute my dear brother in this world! whether I shall or not, I must leave to him to whom greater, and all things must be left. Thou mayest have taken thy flight before this reach thee, but the soul and spirit from whence it comes may in due time, through the infinite riches of freest grace, and the atoning blood of that sacrifice which once for all was offered up. We come to the general assembly, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, but as we come to Jesus the Mediator of the new testament, and to the blood of sprinkling. By his own blood he is entered into the holy of holies, as the forerunner, and for us. Upon such terms may sinful unprofitable servants hope to enter, and be received under the notion of faithful, and as those that are graciously counted such, into the joy of their Lord. Thou art ready to enter, and wilt shortly be adoring before the throne: Oh with what complacency! receiving the end of thy faith, having fought the good fight of it! And must thy poor brethren left behind, sigh and groan still? amidst their drowsy hearers, and too drowsy fruitless labours? But I envy thee not; and those that are dearest and nearest to thee, owe thee so much as to rejoice in thy joy, while they cannot as yet in their own, John xiv. 28. Thou art upon my heart, if God saw it good, to live and die with thee. This day se'nnight thy worthy brother B. and my brother F. dined with me, when thou wast most affectionately remembered; but art no day forgotten, by thy sincere lover, and of all thine, hoping and aiming (though faintly) to be thy follower,

J. HOWE.

If there be joy in heaven for a converted sinner, shall there not for a glorified saint! and the leader and teacher of many such! some that are in glory, and others that shortly shall be! O the triumph at thy abundant entrance!

Worthy Mr. Spilsbury, to whom this letter was written, died the 10th of July following.

FRAGMENT OF A SERMON.

The fragment out of Mr. Howe's notes, about a particular faith in prayer, contains only brief hints, which he enlarged on in discourse: but I thought it worth preserving; and I believe there will be several of my mind. It is very concise; and the writing being a mixture of long-hand and short-hand, and the ink in some places almost worn out, it is a very difficult thing to read it; but having got what assistance I could in order to the right reading it, I shall here subjoin it. Dr. Calamy.

James v. 15. *And the prayer of faith shall save the sick; and the Lord shall raise him up.*

It is to be inquired how this is to be understood and applied.

1. How to be understood. Where in the general we must know, it is not to be looked upon as a universal maxim, admitting of no restriction or limitation; for then prayer might make a man immortal, if in every case wherein life were in hazard, any could be procured to employ their faith in prayer on his behalf. Unless we should say, that wherever the desired effect follows not, the faith was wanting, which ought to have been exercised in the case. To say that every prayer that has faith in it shall save the sick, is false; but that every prayer that has this special faith in it shall save the sick, is true.

That therefore we may speak the more distinctly, we must understand,

1. That there was somewhat in this matter extraordinary, and appropriate to that time.

2. Somewhat ordinary, and common to all times. We are to distinguish the one and the other.

1. There was somewhat extraordinary in this matter, and appropriate to that time; and that both as to the faith to be exercised, and the effect thereupon.

I. As to the faith to be exercised. The prayer of faith shall save the sick: that is, in those days, when the state of things did to the Divine wisdom make it necessary, that frequent miracles should be wrought for the confirmation of Christianity, faith was necessary to be exerted in prayer, that should, according to the tenor of the promise made in reference to those times, engage Omnipotency, in reference to the thing prayed for: the promise then was, Whatsoever ye pray, believing, ye shall receive; or it shall be done.

2. As to the effect,—that also was supernatural.

Quest. But it may be said, What! universally? What work might the disciples have made in that case!

Answ. The Divine power did go forth two ways.

1. In working the faith to be exercised: and,

2. In effecting the thing. So that the matter was always in God's own hand. The Spirit of God could be the author of no vain or imprudent faith, or consequent of it.

This faith of miracles was such a fiducial recumbence on the Divine power, in reference to this or that particular work, as whereby that was by his rule engaged to go forth, in saving the sick. This and common faith differ, in respect of the end, and the nature of the influence:—not holy, but physical.

2. There was here also somewhat that was ordinary. The instance of Elias is mentioned, who, ver. 17, 18. it is said, Was a man subject to like passions as we are, and yet he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought her fruit. There is somewhat from that extraordinary case to be learnt for common use, namely, that what the promise says to us now, we ought as confidently to believe, as they then, what is said to them.

Therefore take some propositions, concerning the nature and operation of the faith to be exercised in such a case, and the way wherein prayer ought to be managed and guided, so as that it may be expected to have influence in reference thereto.

1. Prayer is a great and indispensable duty. (There is here some reference in the manuscript; but after the utmost search, I know not what to make of it.)

2. That therefore we must conclude, whatsoever tends to render it an impertinence, must either be false, or misapplied. For it is most plainly a great part of our duty; and it could not consist either with the wisdom or truth of God, to have us enjoined such a duty, and have put energy incessant into the nature of it in vain. We must therefore resolve what is doubtful by what is plain. It is more plain that prayer is a duty, and more known, than what changes the nature of God can admit.

3. The argument from God's unchangeableness, would conclude as well against the usefulness of any other duty, that never so directly concerns our salvation.

4. Prayer is to be considered, not only as a means to obtain from God what we would have, but as a becoming homage of an intelligent creature.

5. Whatsoever unchangeableness we can suppose in the nature of God, (here there is something added in the manuscript which I can make nothing of; and then it follows) and it is unreasonable he should lose his right, by his perfection.

6. Yet also it is to be considered as a means to obtain good things, Job xxi. 15. (by which, I suppose, it was intended to be intimated, that it would be very wicked language in any, to offer to say with those whom Job speaks of in the text cited; What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?)

7. We are not to think prayer, though never so qualified, hath any proper efficacy, to move God this way or that: not so much as instrumental.

8. It is only a condition, upon which it seems good to God to put forth his power.

9. It is a condition that hath not always equally certain connexion with the thing we pray for, or other than the promise hath made.

10. The promises of God are or must be understood, proportionally to the nature of the things promised: which may be either of such a nature, as, &c. (Here the sense is incomplete. I suppose that which may be meant is, that the things which God has promised, may either admit or exclude a change. And then it is added "make men immortal." That is, I suppose, as to this present life.) And then the manuscript goes on, Things of a variable goodness cannot be the matter of a universal absolute promise. Miracles, &c.

11. Prayer may yet be the prayer of faith that God will do what is best. We should not make light of this more valuable object of faith. Suppose two children, which is the most privileged. (This I apprehend refers to the case of Esau and Jacob, so often taken notice of in Scripture.)

12. If God will do the thing, prayer in reference to it is not vain. For perhaps he hath wisely and rightly determined, that he will not do it but upon trust of his being acknowledged. This is a great piece of his sovereignty: his dominion and power over lives. I kill, and make alive, as though he had said, God of every life: universal cause.

13. It is very absurd to think, it were vain to pray, unless we were certain it contradicts the nature of prayer. For that supposes the thing in the power of them to whom we pray, and implies a referring it to their pleasure.

14. It must be submitted to him to judge what is most honourable for himself. It argues base thoughts of the invisible world, to think, &c. (that is, I suppose, to think we should be able to keep people from thence at our pleasure.)

15. What if he had said, Pray not. (I take this to be designed for an intimation, that had intercourse between an all-sufficient God and us, by prayer, been prohibited, we should have been left in a very helpless and hopeless, miserable and destitute, condition.)

A SERMON,

ON THE OCCASION OF THE JUSTLY LAMENTED DEATH OF THE TRULY REVEREND

MR. JOHN HOWE,

DECEASED APRIL THE 2ND.

PREACHED TO HIS CONGREGATION, APRIL 8, 1705. AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST.

BY JOHN SPADEMAN, MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

WE ARE YOUR REJOICING, EVEN AS YOU ALSO ARE OURS IN THE DAY OF THE LORD JESUS. 2 COR. I. 14.

TO MY SINCERELY HONOURED FRIENDS,

MRS. MARGARET HOWE, DR. GEORGE HOWE, MR. JOHN HOWE, MRS. PHILIPPE COLLET, MR. JAMES HOWE, WITH OTHER NEAR RELATIVES OF THE DECEASED.

MY WORTHY FRIENDS,

IF either the desire of him, whom the all-wise Disposer hath translated, or yours, (differing in this single matter from his,) had invited me to preach a funeral sermon for your excellent relative, I should have found a real unwillingness to such a service; and have judged it more eligible to have been wholly silent, than have spoken so few things as are mentioned in this practical discourse concerning him. He, indeed, received from the Father of lights so great a variety of both natural and Christian perfections, that he was not only a shining light, and ornament of his age, but an inviting example of universal goodness. The exercises whereof, towards men, did strongly recommend him to the esteem of those from whom his judgment in some things disagreed. So that (though he was most remote from seeking honour on this earth) he had that principal recompense of piety, in this life, a good name; which must preserve him from oblivion, though all his near relatives and acquaintance should studiously conceal his just praises. Nor can he want a monument to make him live in following ages, whose excellent writings have gained the approving suffrage of those who are capable judges; and they will be valued, while a relish of good sense and genuine piety is found among men.

All this speaks your loss, and of his church, yea, and of the nation, to be the greater; and I persuade myself, very few of his order have been so generally lamented; which is a tribute due to his real worth. But the obedience and resignation of your faith, have been the more grateful to him who hath called you to make such an offering, and whose mighty hand alone is able to bind up this wound, and both sustain and guide you in your progress to the same happiness which he now possesseth: if this plain discourse may contribute unto this blessed design, this will induce you to excuse the publishing of it, and the defects which are very obvious in

Your affectionate faithful Servant,
In our common Lord,
J. SPADEMAN.

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2 TIMOTHY III. 14.

BUT CONTINUE THOU IN THE THINGS WHICH THOU HAST LEARNED AND HAST BEEN ASSURED OF, KNOWING OF WHOM THOU HAST LEARNED THEM.

'TIS reasonably supposed that the mantle which fell from the prophet Elijah, as he was taken up into heaven, was highly valued and carefully preserved by his disciple Elisha; especially when he experienced a miraculous virtue annexed to it: the waters of Jordan, being divided when this garment was applied to 'em; as we read 2 Kings ii. 14. Indeed, when your late most worthy pastor (who may justly be styled an Elijah of this age) was translated by death, he left no garment which has any virtue to recommend it; but (which is far more important) before his translation, he let fall such holy instructions and heavenly counsels, as, through divine assistance, are able to dry up the waters of excessive grief, and open a passage into the celestial Canaan, into which himself hath entered. It is not necessary, nor is it my design, to open fresh springs of sorrow for so very grievous a breach as the hand of God hath made, by representing the exceeding loss which his family and relatives, this society, yea, the whole city and nation, have sustained. There is the justest reason, with heart-affecting sorrow, to repeat Elisha's words, used on the occasion now mentioned, (2 Kings ii. 12.) My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, (England,) and the horsemen thereof. The death of one Elijah, who had the spirit of prayer, whereby to open heaven, and bring down refreshing showers of blessings on a whole people; the death, I say, of one such, must be a public and common loss never enough to be deplored.

The attiring of this place, and of many assembled in it, speaks it to be a house of mourning; but our concernment here is not to indulge a fruitless sorrow, which can neither bring him back to us, or assist our happy ascent to him, which is far more covetable, and will certainly be attained,

by continuing in those things which we have learned, knowing and considering of whom we have learned them. This excellent advice, given by the apostle Paul to his disciple Timothy, I have judged a more proper subject of your meditation on this occasion, than an encomium of your deceased pastor, whose truly humble mind made him discover an averseness to any funeral solemnities, or discourses, which had a tendency to magnify him, and gain public applause; he hated the sounding a trumpet before him, living and dying. I am not appointed to perform such a service, (though but a reasonable tribute to his memory,) only the sense of my own duty has induced me to discourse something from the scripture that hath been read, which will (through the divine blessing) assist you to improve this severe dispensation, and comply with the apparent design of his office and ministrations. 'Tis evident, that such a providence loudly proclaims the vanity of human life, the unalterable law of mortality, which must be executed on the very best inhabitants of this world; so that neither the brightest virtues, or greatest serviceableness, neither the use of the most promising means, or the most ardent and united supplications for the prolonging of life, can exempt any from the end of all the living; which therefore ought to be laid to heart; but I judge it most useful, that our meditations correspond with the character which was eminently peculiar to him, whom God hath taken away from us; and whose long excellent ministry bespeaks every one of us, in the language of the text, But continue thou in the things, &c. knowing of whom thou hast learned 'em.

'Tis generally agreed by interpreters, that the apostle, in the latter part of the verse, intends himself, and that, not only, or principally, as invested with the apostolic office, but as distinguished by something in his temper, conduct, and condition, which did strongly oblige his disciples to continue in the things they had learned, and being duly considered, would effectually engage 'em unto this practice.

The preceding context leads us to this explication, where, without once mentioning his apostolic commission, or the miraculous gifts by which he confirmed his doctrine, he only represents to Timothy, verse 10, 11. Thou hast fully known (or for a long time hast fully observed) my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me: plainly intimating, that the life and practice, the sufferings and afflictions, of one who teacheth the Gospel of Christ, carry a most cogent argument and strong efficacy to engage them who are taught, to a firm persevering in the truth and duties of the Christian religion; which were (without all doubt) the things which Timothy had learned of this apostle, whose office and design led him to teach the holy doctrine and rules of the Gospel.

The text thus cleared offers to our consideration a two-fold important instruction.

I. The possibility and danger of departing from the truth, and rule of the Gospel, is supposed.

II. A suitable and (in its own nature) effectual preservative against this evil is provided, *viz.* the actual knowing and due considering of the character of him of whom they have been learned. As to the former,

1. The possibility, and danger, of forsaking the truth, and rule of the Gospel; the supposing of such a thing (in the text) might seem to carry an affront to one of Timothy's excellent piety. Him, this apostle calls his own (or legitimate) son in the faith, 1 Tim. i. 2. And his dearly beloved son, 2 Tim. i. 2. Yea, (as some learned men with great probability conclude,) the pillar and ground of the truth, 1 Tim. iii. 15. For there is no necessity of giving this character, either to a particular church, or even the universal. However that be, 'tis unquestionable that Timothy was not only a sincere, but a very eminent believer, who had made an uncommon proficiency under the teaching and institution of the apostle Paul; who thereupon did give him the office of an evangelist, (far more considerable than that of a bishop, or even a metropolitan, which hath been assigned to him without ground,) yet, notwithstanding, this exhortation to him carrieth a plain supposition, that it was (considering the case abstractly from the divine purpose possible, even for him, not to continue in the things which he had learned of such a teacher as the apostle Paul; who therefore judged it necessary to fortify him, by this earnest advice and suitable direction. And we shall perceive just reason to extend this supposition unto all, who have learned, even of the best instructors, the sacred truths and duties of the Gospel, if we reflect on the various causes of departing from them: As,

1. The native vicious inconstancy and instability of human minds. None are, by renewing grace, made perfect and delivered from all remaining defects as to the Christian state; if we are not kept and guarded by Divine power, we are in continual danger of departing from the living God. Who would have suspected any mutableness in those Israelites, who heard the majestic terrible voice of God promulgating his law on mount Sinai? (whom some [a] Jewish authors have magnified, as if they had all been advanced above the ministering angels;) on which occasion, they most solemnly obliged themselves to hear and do all that the Lord their God should speak, Deut. v. 27. And yet so unstable were their hearts, that they quickly (within less than forty days) turned aside out of the way which God had commanded them, Exod. xxxii. 8. Yea, when the Son of God, the great prophet, was raised up, and sent to the same people, among whom he was approved of God by the most stupendous miracles, (such as none other had ever wrought,) one of which, *viz.* the multiplying of the loaves, (by which many thousands were fed,) carried such convictive evidence, that the spectators professed, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world, John vi. 14. Yet the very next day, many of these very persons, who were Christ's disciples, departed from him, and walked no more with him, verse 66. On this supposition of our vicious instability, the apostle grounds the earnest advice, Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall, 1 Cor. x. 12.

2. The strong delusive workings of remaining unbelief. This root of apostacy is not totally killed and destroyed, even in those who have the spirit of faith. Hence we find the apostle cautioning them, whom he styles holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, (Heb. iii. 1.) to take heed, lest there be in them an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God, verse 12. How apt are we to admit into our minds a suspicion, lest the Gospel revelation should be a cunningly devised fable, a mere invention of deceivers, who for their own interest have framed this doctrine; especially, when any are observed to pretend a zeal for it, while they deny it in their works, and turn it into an engine of advancing secular power and advantage; like those, whom the apostle describeth by this infamous character, (1 Tim. vi. 5.) counting religion to be an income, or gainful business, as that passage ought to be rendered.

3. The various discouragements which attend a constant belief and practice of the Gospel; which the apostle had his eye upon in the immediately preceding context; where he mentioneth the persecutions and afflictions, which still followed him in the discharging of his office, and subjoins, verse 12. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, by the reviling tongues, or (when God permits) by the oppressive hands of evil men: these lions, in the way of our duty, have terrified many out of it, who have been ashamed or afraid to continue in that course, which (though most unjustly) hath the reproachful name of a sect, and is every where spoken against, Acts xxviii. 22. The experience of all places and times, informs us how strong and dangerous impressions have been made, by the reproach and contempt, the cross and sufferings, which attend the faithful service of Christ; even while the memory of our Redeemer was recent, his blood, as it were, yet warm, and his apostles alive, and shining as lights in the world, there was cause of a sorrowful complaint of this kind, 2 Tim. i. 15. Thou knowest how that all they which are in Asia be turned from me. The true reason of this inexcusable deserting may be discovered in the following part of the chapter, *viz.* they were ashamed of the apostle's chain, they judged it both dishonourable and hazardous to persist in the communion of one, who gained nothing among men but disgracing bonds and distressing torments.

[a] Pirko R. Elies, C. 47.

4. The strong impressions made by worldly allurements. There is not a more dangerous enemy to our souls, and which so powerfully dissuadeth from continuing in the things they have learned, (of the most excellent teachers,) than the love of this world. Wherever this prevails, it stifleth all the convictions of reason and conscience, it baffleth the force of all the arguments which demonstrate the divine original of the Gospel, and the unspeakable importance of the truths and counsels contained in it. There have been and will be many, to whom the account given of Demas is justly applicable, 2 Tim. iv. 10. Demas hath forsaken me, (and consequently, the things he had learned of me,) having loved this present world. And never, I think, was there greater danger from this snare, than in the age wherein we live: in which a paganish esteem and admiration of riches and greatness renders all the vast concerns of the other world despicable, and without force. 'Tis most amazing, that Christians should be so blinded, as not to discern, what the pagan Cicero has complained of, *corrupti mores depravatique sunt admiratione divitiarum: the manners of men are corrupted and depraved, by the admiring of riches.*

5th, And last cause of this danger is the seduction and enticement of wicked men, which the apostle remarks in the verse immediately preceding. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, &c. 'Tis a sad reflection, that too many good men seem contented only to save their own souls, without seeking to allure and draw others into the path of life; but evil men set themselves to infect others, and engage them in the same pernicious courses: those who want learning to dispute and reason against truth and holiness, fail not to employ the little wit they have, in ridiculing the most sacred things, like the scoffers predicted by the apostle Peter, 2 Epist. iii. 3. Ungodly men, walking after their own lusts, who supply the want of argument by profane jests and raillery on the Gospel, and those who seriously and heartily believe it. To which they often add the enticing baits of liberty, pleasure, and gain, which carry a mighty force, especially with younger persons, whose age makes them unsuspicious and inconsiderate. Hence, so many in their youth quite cast off all the bands of a pious education, whilst they guard not against the dangerous enticements of sinners, which is earnestly enjoined by the royal preacher, Prov. i. 10. whose notorious defection from the worship of God is assigned unto this cause, 1 Kings xi. 5, 6.

Having thus represented the danger of not continuing in the things which have been learned of those who have instructed us in our holy religion: we proceed,

II. To consider the preservative against this danger, laid down in the latter part of the text, knowing (or considering) of whom thou hast learned them, *q. d.* I apprehend thou wilt be strongly tempted to desert the doctrine and practice which have been delivered to thee; but if thou duly rememberest my character and conduct, how I have demeaned myself, in my whole course, this will be an apt and suitable means to establish thy resolution of adhering to the things thou hast learned of me. In discoursing on this apostolic prescription, we shall,—1. State the proper efficacy of the preservative in its general nature.—2. Lay down the particular characters of a teacher, which most directly contribute unto the preserving from the danger mentioned. The former is necessary to prevent mistake, the latter to engage and animate our holy purpose of continuing in the truth and duty of the Gospel. As to,

1. The stating and explaining the proper efficacy of what is described, to preserve us from the danger above related, it will be useful to observe the following particulars.

(1.) That this is not to be understood, as if the bare authority of any ordinary teacher were a sufficient ground of obligation to continue in the things we have learned of him. This can't be supposed, without a most dangerous altering the very nature of faith, which is always to be built on a divine testimony, as the apostle asserts, Rom. x. 17. So then faith cometh by hearing, (or testimony,) and hearing by the word of God. We ought not to give this deference to even an angel from heaven, much less to the most excellent teachers, that their single authority should oblige us. We are commanded by our Lord, in this sense, to call no man our father upon earth, (Matt. xxiii. 9.) *i. e.* not to admit any one whomsoever (who acts in his own name) to have a dominion over our faith: only the supreme original truth, the blessed God speaking by his Son, and those whom he commissioneth, is absolutely to be relied on. The Bereans are dignified with the title of noble, or high-born persons, because when the apostle Paul first preached to 'em, they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so, Acts xvii. 11. Much more is it our duty to examine all that we learn of our ministers, by the same infallible rule, that we may not be the real disciples of any other master besides him whose name is put on us in our baptism. Our faith, and persevering obedience to the Gospel, must not stand in the wisdom (or authority) of men, but in the power (and veracity) of God, 1 Cor. ii. 5.

(2.) This is to be understood in subordination to the internal effectual agency of the Divine Spirit, by whom, as the principal efficient, God doth stablish all believers in Christ, as the apostle asserts, 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. The sealing and impressing of our minds and hearts by the heavenly signet, is absolutely needful unto our continuing in the things we have learned; all our own efforts and endeavours will never preserve us from defection and drawing back unto perdition, without the powerful working of the Holy Spirit, who alone can fix our wavering minds, and furnish with strength to resist and overcome the most dangerous assaults that we can be exposed to: therefore the apostle, besides this seasonable counsel to Timothy, earnestly prayeth for him, last verse of this epistle, The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit; as knowing, that without the inward vital presence of the Redeemer, all other helps will be insufficient and unsuccessful; and we are obliged to add unto our use of the means here prescribed, fervent and continued supplication, for obtaining the mighty aid of the Divine Spirit, whom God hath graciously promised to give to those who ask him, Luke xi. 13. But,

(3.) The efficacy of such a knowing and considering of him of whom we have learned, deriveth (in the usual method of Providence) from the native prevalent force of example: when the practice of a minister agreeth with his doctrine, this doth strongly recommend and impress the things that are taught by him; whereas a practice that is contrary to the most holy rules and instructions, shuts up and bars the hearts of those who observe this disagreement. Hence the blessed God, while he spake by prophets, called none to the prophetic office but holy persons, as we read, Luke i. 70. 2 Pet. i. 21. And 'tis well known, that where the qualifications of officers in Christian churches are described, the principal stress is laid upon a holy and unblamable life, 1 Tim. iii. Tit. i. On this design, that the example of those who teach others, might powerfully convey their doctrine into the very hearts and consciences of men. And this consideration gives a sad occasion of observing, how great a judgment and tremendous plague a vicious ungodly ministry is to a people, which usually are much more influenced by the manners of their teachers, than by all the arguments and counsels which are proposed by them: one straying guide, who himself leads the way in a course of sin, draws many after him into the same destructive path. This provoked the terrible displeasure of God against the Jewish priests, against whom he draws a most severe charge, Mal. ii. 8. But ye have departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law. Not the greatest learning or moving eloquence, not the most accurate observing of external forms, can compensate for a defect as to holiness of conversation; which leads to the

(4.) And last reflection, *viz.* That the knowing and considering of the Christian practice of a teacher, is a most apt means to prevent or remove prejudices against the things which have been learned. Constant experience attests the truth of this. Many have acknowledged that it was their observing the justice and temperance, the patience and humility of those who suffered as evil-doers, which convinced them of the divine authority of the Christian doctrine. Therefore the glorious Founder of the Christian church did not only furnish the first publishers of the Gospel with the prophetic spirit, and miraculous gifts, of the Holy Ghost, but replenished them with all the

fruits of righteousness and universal goodness. They could make a just and safe appeal to all who had opportunity of observing in the apostle's language, I Thess. ii. 10. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe. 'Tis a very memorable passage which I have met with in a learned and judicious author, [b] "If the Gospel (saith he) were now to be planted again, all the miracles in the world, I think, would not make it take, while our morals are as they are. A miracle may strike a little wonderment at first, but good morality, (*i. e.* a holy conversation,) it sinks, it soaks to the heart. Perverseness may say a miracle is from the devil; but who can say that good morality is from the devil?" This will be sufficient, I hope, to prevent mistake, concerning the nature and kind of that efficacy which belongs to the means here directed to. I now proceed in the

2. Place, to lay down the particular characters of a teacher, which most directly recommend and impress the things which have been learned of him; which will bring the discourse to the sorrowful circumstances of our present state: where (as I have before signified) I shall not attempt to draw a full description of him, whose decease we justly lament, (which is always a considerable part of a funeral discourse,) but confine myself to some short memorials of him, which agree with my present design; which will be of far greater advantage to you, than to hear his just praises set forth by the tongues of men and of angels: this latter could only yield an evanid delight, which can no ways contribute to our chief interest, I mean the salvation of our souls, which, through divine assistance, will be furthered by the following account of those special characters which are most apt to engage unto a continuing in the things that we have learned: As,

(1.) Knowledge in the mystery of Christ, a clear understanding of the counsel of God, that relates to the salvation of lost sinners. Without this, an honest mind may deceive others, because itself is liable to be deceived. This our apostle appeals unto, in the first place, where he makes a description of himself, ver. 10. Thou hast fully known my doctrine; (*i. e.* how consonant to the Scriptures;) and puts the Ephesians in mind, that he was furnished with this sacred knowledge, by which he was rendered a wise master-builder in the house of God, Eph. iii. 3. I shall not flatter your late teacher, when I affirm, that God had given him an uncommon skill in the word of righteousness, from whence he always drew all that he taught. He had peculiar advantages for understanding the oracles of God, a large fund of natural endowments, improved by superadded preparatives unto the study of the Scriptures; a rich treasure of human learning; (despised by none but the ignorant;) particularly, a thorough knowledge of pagan theology, by which he was enabled to descry the shortness and mistakes of human reason; which faculty he very well understood to use, in subordination unto Christian faith, whose mysteries he was able to free from the objections of cavillers.

But that which most of all assisted his searching and right understanding of the Scriptures, was his very early and growing exemplary piety, which hath the promise of divine teaching and illumination. He took care to wash the vessel, that it might be receptive of divine communications. To all these, he added unwearied diligence, humility, and prayer, which was the delight and solace of his whole life. In such a course, he was safe from the illusions of fancy, and the specious errors that many great wits have been entangled with. His very excellent useful writings are a public testimony of this thing; most justly might he use the apology made by the apostle Paul, when he was censured and reproached with being mad; I am not mad, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness, Acts xxvi. 25. This wisdom enabled him to confirm the truths of the Gospel with proper and most convincing evidence, and represent the Christian scheme in its native unexceptionable comeliness. And should we not continue in the things we have learned of such a scribe, instructed unto the kingdom of heaven?

b Garbutt.

c F. Paul relateth that pope Adrian (one of the honestest of his order) charged Luther, and his followers, with hypocrisy, and acting against conscience, in which they were persuaded of the certain truth of the Romish tenets, but dissembled their sentiments—in sua conscientia teenessero per indubitate l' opinione Romane fingendo altrimente: E pero essere cosa facillima estinguere quella dotcrina, che non era fondata, salvo che sopra gl' interessi. Istoria del Concilio de Trento. L. 1.—That pope hath not been singular in his censure, than which nothing could be more unjust.

d Chillingworth.

(2.) A second character, which has a peculiar aptness to recommend and impress divine things, is godly sincerity, with which all the first publishers of the Gospel were adorned, and it did most eminently shine in the conduct of the apostle Paul, who takes frequent occasion to mention it, because some, either from ignorance or malice, taxed him with the want of it, as if he had acted according to worldly politics, 2 Cor. i. 12. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom,—we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. And he more largely insists on this qualification of those who have the office of instructing others, I Thess. ii. 3, 4, 5, 6. I know the imputation of insincerity, and hypocrisy, hath been very frequent, against the most upright excellent servants of God; thus when the accuser could not fasten a charge on the life of holy Job, he taxed him with a mercenary and insincere disposition of mind, Job i. Doth Job serve God for nought?

[c] The wise counsel of God permits these unrighteous and very uneasy accusations, to exercise and demonstrate the reality and truth of his servants' love and devotedness to him; of which your deceased pastor gave most convictive evidences throughout the whole course of his ministry, by a noble and generous contemning of the world, and secular advantages, and a steady aiming at the honour of God, in all his conduct and ministrations; so that the character given of a learned and excellent defender of the [d] protestant cause, doth truly belong to him, *viz.* Many excellencies there were in him, for which his memory remains; but above all was his crown, that he unfeignedly sought God's glory, and the good of men's souls; and nothing doth so strongly recommend the things that we have learned, as an assurance of the holy sincerity of the teacher, who can have no design to corrupt the word of God, for the sake of the greatest worldly advantage. Vid. 2 Cor. ii. 17. For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ. We have known few in our age, to whom this solemn protestation of the apostle is more truly applicable than to him, of whom you have learned; and what can justify the not continuing in the things taught by him?

(3.) A third character, which directly contributes to this purpose, is an ardent affection unto them who are taught. Nothing doth so certainly open and captivate the hearts of men, as love when 'tis apprehended. Very eminent were the apostle Paul, and his fellow-labourers, for this disposition, I Thess. ii. 8. Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to impart to you not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, (*i. e.* lives) because ye were dear to us. Nothing could rise higher than what we read, Rom. ix. 3. For I could wish that myself were accursed for my brethren; where 'tis not to be supposed, that the apostle, a most sincere and fervent lover of Christ, could intend an eternal separation from Christ, which is all one with damnation; but he only meant a bodily destruction for the sake of Christ, such as they suffered who were accursed or devoted unto death. Vid. Lev. xxvii. 29. Numb. xxi. 2, 3. I can truly profess, that I have not known any one, who hath so nearly resembled this pattern as he whom we lament. How naturally, and with inward solicitude, did he care for your estate! How oft hath he ministered in this place, when his infirmities made such a service hazardous to his life! Which he did not count dear to himself, that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry he had received for the saving of souls; for which he had the most tender regard, to the disregarding of all other and lower interests. We may justly apply to him the account given by this apostle of Epaphroditus, Phil. ii. 30. For the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life. I might mention various instances of this most tender and fervent love to souls; as his impartial and faithful reproving of sin, without respect of persons; his easiness of access, his condescending to the lowest, and indeed becoming all things to all, that he might gain the more. But I must not omit that bright evidence of his divine love

to men, I mean his readiness to assist all the necessitons and distressed, that he had opportunity of doing good unto. Very few have been so governed as he, by the apophthegm of our Lord, It is more blessed to give than to receive, Acts xx. 35. His charity was not a narrow spring, limited and confined to a small spot, but, like an ocean, sent forth refreshing streams without distinction. How often have the bowels of our persecuted brethren in a neighbouring kingdom, those generous confessors of the faith, been refreshed by his concern for them! When it is the reproachful character of our age, that all seek their own things, are intent on building their own houses, and raising their families, he was intent on building up living temples unto God, in all the ways which might contribute to the present and everlasting happiness of men. In this course he not only laid up for himself an undecaying treasure in heaven, but used the best method to entail a divine blessing on all his offspring. Surely the instructions, the counsels, and exhortations of such a one, ought never to be forgotten or slighted, when they could proceed from no other principle than a most unfeigned love to God, and affection to those among whom he laboured.

(4.) A fourth recommending character of a minister of the Gospel, is Christian patience under afflictions and sufferings. When any suffer death for the truth of Christ, they gain the glorious titles of martyrs, or witnesses of Christ, whose doctrine they seal with their blood. The Divine Providence hath taken care that the Christian faith should not want this evidence, both at its first planting, and at the time when it was rescued from antichristian corruptions. The apostle in the preceding context lays great stress on this thing, verse 10, 11. Thou hast fully known my—long-suffering, patience—persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me,—what persecutions I endured, *i. e.* was not a mere compelled patient, but underwent them with becoming submission and fortitude. Indeed, God was not pleased to call forth his servant (lately withdrawn from us) unto the fiery trial, but he was furnished with patience, and fortitude of mind, able to encounter the most grievous sufferings. 'Tis reasonable to conclude, that the afflicting hand of God did so long and variously chasten him, not so much for his own profit, as that he might be an eminent example of a truly Christian patience, under very sharp afflictions. All the violent pains he endured, all the tedious hours he passed in his former and last sickness, did not draw one impatient expression from him, but even then, his adoring praises of God did instruct and confirm others. This was a seal which he affixed to the doctrine taught by him, which therefore we ought to continue in.

(5.) A fifth and last character, which strongly recommends the things which we have been taught, is a final joyful perseverance in the Christian course. It was on this design that the apostle giveth this account of himself; chap. iv. of this epistle, verse 7. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. The very same language did agree to your excellent pastor. If he had fainted, or retracted at last, this must have much weakened the force of the things he taught, and your obligation to continue in them. But the Divine grace enabled him to finish his course with uncommon joy. As he had always exercised an inviolable reverence for his own conscience, whose purity and peace he preferred above the most tempting advantages, so few ever more experienced a divine peace, and serenity of mind, at the nearest approaches of death: the sentence of it, when he received it in himself, did not dismay him: he needed no consolations from men; but, as aged holy Simeon, (Luke ii. 29.) only leave from his Lord to depart, and be admitted into his immediate presence, who hath now openly approved this good and faithful servant, and caused him to enter into his own joy.

Let us now, in the fear of God, lay these considerations to heart, that such excellent labours as we have enjoyed may not be lost, or turn into accusing witnesses against us another day. Our continuing in the things we have learned of him, will be the best improvement of our unspeakable loss, and hereby shall we show the truest respect to his memory, that he may not only live in his offspring and useful writings, but in the truly Christian conversation of those who were related to him, or had opportunity of learning of him. In order to which, I shall subjoin a few persuasive considerations. As,

1. It ought to have great weight in your minds, that the things you learned of him are the most important and uncontroverted truths of the Gospel; he did not entertain you with doubtful disputations, or debates concerning external forms and modes of religion. His great soul could not descend to these little things. He hath expressed himself fully on this subject, in the dedication of Delighting in God, and preface to the Carnality of Religious Contention; which latter breathes so heavenly a charity and concern for the truly Christian interest, that a very eminent divine of the established church, did profess a willingness to lay down his own life, if such a state of things, as is there described, might obtain among Christians. God is witness, and you with many others also, that his public ministrations were wholly taken up in opening and applying the principles of the Oracles of God, (which he did with inimitable clearness and judiciousness,) and in describing and pressing the unquestionable duties of men and Christians; such as love to God and our neighbour, repentance, faith, Christian vigilance, prayer, humility, and holy fear, with which our salvation is to be wrought out, still inculcating the absolute necessity of Christ's mediation, and the renewing, assisting influence of the Holy Spirit, which he showed to be consistent with, yea, obligatory unto, our earnest endeavours after conversion, and eternal life. Which last he largely pressed in many discourses on Rom. ii. 7. Very frequently he cautioned against those three dangerous rocks, (that prove fatal to many souls,) *viz.* a sensual life, formality in religion, and unfruitfulness in the Christian profession. And is there any of all these, which you ought to be ashamed or unwilling to continue in? Can the reason or judgment of men frame a just objection against such a course? Nay, will not that man stand self-condemned, who having once learned such important, undoubted truths, departs from them, through any temptations whatsoever? Add to this, in the

2nd place, The convincing demonstration he produced to satisfy reason and conscience. He was an avowed enemy to a blind implicit faith, as also to a blind devotion. And none had a better skill to set in the best light the rational evidences, which confirm the principles and duties, both of natural and revealed religion, of which his published writings are a convincing witness; and his ordinary discourses, though clothed with familiar language, were not inferior as to strength of reasoning. So that it could not be charged on him, that he preached to the fancy, or only aimed to move the affections; for he always first addressed to the judgment and conscience; so that if the Gospel which was taught by him remains hid, to any who attended his ministry, it is hid to those who are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not—because by manifestation of the truth he commended (or approved) himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God; as the apostle speaks of himself and his fellow-labourers, 2 Cor. iv. 2, 3, 4. Again,

3dly, Reflect on the very manner of his teaching, how earnest, how moving, how pungent, how persuasive was his language and expression? It might plainly be discerned, that he spake from his very heart; not as pleasing the ear or imagination, (which his rare wit and eloquence enabled him to do,) but as seeking the eternal happiness of souls. What is said concerning the famed tract of a [e] Stoic philosopher, that it was so moving and operative, that if any were not wrought on, he could only be reformed by the tribunals of the other world, (the author speaks according to the [f] Platonic hypothesis,) is applicable in this case. It may almost be despaired, that those who refused and rejected the message brought by him, but retained hard and obdurate hearts, should be persuaded to repentance, and holiness, by any other ministry.

4. It ought further to be considered, that the things learned of him, were a most precious trust or *depositum* committed to those who have learned them. The original term [g] ἐπιστεύθης, which is translated, *hast been assured*, in some Greek copies, by a small variation is changed into a verb that signifieth to commit or intrust; and this reading

e Epictetus. f Simplicius. g επιςευθης, 22. v. Latin, French.

hath been preferred by some translations. This can't be questioned, that divine truths, and instructions, have the character of a sacred trust, which is to be preserved with utmost care and fidelity. The very light of nature, the dictates of reason, discover this obligation; so that all agree in condemning the base injustice of him, who betrays a trust, and is negligent in preserving that which is deposited with him, and the crime is judged the more heinous and inexcusable, but how much the *depositum*, the thing committed to another, is more precious and valuable. Who but a blinded infidel, will deny the incomparable value of sacred and divine truths, which are of a heavenly original, and are a principal treasure committed to the church. How solemn a charge was given to Timothy, 1 Tim. vi. 20. O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust. And it is repeated, 2 Tim. i. 14. That good thing which was committed to thee, keep; *q. d.* give all diligence to guard the excellent *depositum* of the Gospel, which thou hast been intrusted with. The same obligation is laid on us, who learned the same Gospel, which must deserve a far more solicitous concern than any of the precious and admired treasures of this earth, which are guarded with greatest care. But if we continue not in the things we have learned, we are guilty of the worst injustice, and unfaithfulness to others, and of greatest unkindness to ourselves; for the things we have learned, are not made our property, to do with 'em as we please; but we are obliged to transmit them to others of the succeeding age, that they who rise up after us may enjoy the same blessed advantages, Psal. lxxviii. 5, 6. How great is the crime of a parent, who having received a fair patrimony, or honour, doth waste the estate, and forfeit the honour, which he ought to transmit to those who are to succeed him. If those of this generation should betray the civil rights and liberties of the nation, which have been transmitted by their ancestors, and entail poverty and slavery on the succeeding generations; how unpardonable would such a conduct be judged! But the depriving of posterity of the light and efficacy of Gospel truth, is an injury, an injustice unspeakably greater: because the former only affects the temporal and lesser interests of men, but the latter endangers their souls, and eternal felicity: and who would not tremble at the thought of such guilt, if he really believes, and expects a future judgment, in which a severe account must be given of this sacred talent, that hath been intrusted with him? What answer shall he give in the day of accounts, who was very solicitous and diligent to guard every other trust, to transmit with great fidelity, houses, lands, trade, and such low matters, but was unfaithful to his principal charge, and (as much as lay in him) by not continuing in the things himself had learned, suffered the Gospel to fail and be lost out of this world? In the

5th and last place, Without continuing in the things you have learned of your deceased pastor, you cannot come where he now is. The present separation is matter of just sorrow, that we shall see his face (on earth) no more: but what must an everlasting separation be? To behold him shining as the sun in the kingdom of his Father, and yourselves cast into outer darkness: to see him crowned with never-fading life and glory, and yourselves shut up in the place of torment: what heart can bear the very thought? But nothing is more unquestionable, than that there is but one passage, one path to heaven, where he had never come, if he had not continued himself in the things which he first learned, and afterwards taught. Nay, if you should depart from the holy truth and duty, in which you have been instructed by him; notwithstanding the tender love he bore to you, he must stand forth as a witness and accuser, to aggravate your guilt, and greaten your condemnation. I shall conclude with the advice of the apostle, to his dearly beloved Philippians, applied to the present subject, Phil. iv. 9. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in him, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

THE PRINCIPLES OF

THE ORACLES OF GOD.

IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.

CONTAINING

I. AN INTRODUCTION, PROVING THE NECESSITY OF THEIR BEING TAUGHT, IN TWO LECTURES, ON HEB. V .12.
TH
II. THE EXISTENCE OF GOD, MANIFEST FROM THE CREATION, IN FOUR LECTURES, ON ROMANS I. 20.

III. THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES, IN FOUR LECTURES, ON 2 TIMOTHY III. 16.

IV. THE UNITY OF THE GODHEAD, IN TWO LECTURES, ON JAMES II. 19.

V. THE TRINTY OF PERSONS IN THE DIVINE ESSENCE, IN FOUR LECTURES, ON JOHN V. 7.

VI. THE ATTRIBUTES AND PERFECTIONS OF THE DIVINE BEING, IN NINE LECTURES, ON MATTHEW V. 48.

THE PRINCIPLES OF

THE ORACLES OF GOD.

PART I.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The following important discourses on "The Principles of the Oracles of God," were first published in 1814, by the Rev. John Hunt, from the original manuscripts preserved in Dr. Williams's library; and their appearance in the present edition of the Works of Howe will without doubt be generally acceptable.

In many instances posthumous publications have added little to the celebrity of their authors, and sometimes they have been most injurious to their reputation. But there are no grounds for apprehension, that the well-deserved fame of John Howe will be disparaged, by the publication of writings, which had not the advantages of his own careful preparation for the press. In these, as well as in his other discourses, being dead he yet speaks. The same originality of thought, depth of piety, and fervent glow of expression are here discernible. The serious and judicious reader still finds himself contemplating the truths upon which the Temple of God is raised, and still feasting upon the Blessedness of the Righteous; nor can he retire from the survey of these intellectual treasures without the deepest impression of the grandeur of that mind, and the goodness of that heart, which collected these stores, and poured them forth to bless generations yet unborn.

The publishers of the present complete edition of the Works of Howe are therefore fully satisfied, that in adding these discourses to this volume, they are meeting the wishes and gratifying the expectations of the religious public, while at the same time the honour of the esteemed author is untarnished.

LECTURE I.*

Hebrews v. 12.

YE HAVE NEED THAT ONE TEACH YOU AGAIN, WHICH BE THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE ORACLES OF GOD.

My design is to open unto you the principles of Christian religion, and for an introduction hereunto, I have pitched on this passage, without any intention to accuse (much less to upbraid) any in particular, with ignorance of those principles; but only in the general, and indefinitely, to show the necessity of their being taught. And considering the matter abstractly, without reference to this or that people, or to this or that age, whether they be Jewish or Hebrew Christians that did need to be so taught; or whether they be English or London Christians in particular; my design is only in general to assert, the necessity of being taught such principles: that some time or other they be taught, and we be instructed in them. And if they have been taught, that they be taught again, (as the apostle's expression here is,) that you be taught again, taught over and over, for these are things that we cannot too thoroughly have learned, or be too much versed in.

For the expressions here used,—"the oracles of God," and "the first principles" of those oracles—there is not much of obscurity in them. The word rendered *oracles*, doth by universal consent (as well in pagan as Christian and sacred writers) signify divine revelations. It was the word among pagans by which it was usual for them to express the responses of their gods, or those they took to be such. It generally signifies what is divinely revealed, or understood, or taken to be so, nor is therefore the addition "of God," needless or useless. Such pleonasms are ornative of speech, especially when they render the same thing more emphatically so, than if there were not that pleonastical addition. And besides, inasmuch as there are many (as the apostle speaks) that are called gods, and are worshipped as gods, the oracles of God are taken to be from God. And when he saith "the oracles of God," (as the article may be well held, and often is to be understood emphatically,) it may be understood, the oracles of *the* God; he that is really so called, or to be called. And so it is an expression of latitude enough to take in what is of natural revelation, and what is of supernatural revelation; for what is of natural revelation is as truly from God as the other. All truth is from the first truth, there is no beam of light but what proceeds from the Father of lights in whatsoever way it comes.

And then for the word here rendered *principles*, that is wont to be mentioned in as great latitude as can be supposed; it signifies all sorts of principles, whether of nature, or of art, or science whatsoever: and whereas, the apostle speaks here (as we render it) of the *first* principles; literally, it is the principles of the *beginning*, and that imports to us, that he did intend those principles in a very great latitude, all from first to last that can come under that notion, or within that compass. There is a chain or subordination of principles, even in principles themselves, as we shall have occasion, more hereafter, to take notice of: there are former, and there are latter principles. First principles do suppose within this compass, that there may be latter and last principles, but plain it is, that the apostle doth here intend principles of religion, and chiefly of Christian religion, but not solely. That is, principles of

* Preached November 7th, 1690.

Christian religion, partly whereof it doth consist, and that are peculiar and appropriate to it; and partly, such as it doth suppose, such as it doth necessarily pre-suppose, that may be common with it, either to the Jewish religion while it was to stand, and that still (as being common to that religion with Christianity) are to stand; as whatsoever is common with the Jewish religion, with Christianity must be perpetual; or which is common with natural religion, which we must understand in nature to be before Jewish or Christian. And even in time too, as to positive instructions, that which was natural did precede the other.

That therefore which I intend to ground upon this passage, you may take briefly thus—That there are principles of religion that need to be taught. And in pursuance of this I shall here,

I. Say somewhat more generally of these principles.

II. Show the necessity of their being taught.

III. Speak something of the way of teaching them: and then,

IV. Make application.

I. Of these principles themselves: I shall show there are such—and what they are—and of what kind.

1. That there are such, is a thing without all doubt. There is nothing, no created thing, but hath its principles: principles of being there are belonging to it. Every complete substance that exists in the world, and is a created one, must be supposed to have such principles, and hath such generative and effective principles, and constructive principles: the principles from which it did proceed, and the principles of which it doth exist. There are also principles of knowledge as well as being. There is no piece of knowledge, no sort of science, but hath its principles, as you all know. And therefore religion, Christian religion, theology, Christian theology, must have its principles too. It is a science, a practical one, and of most absolute and universal necessity, and its principles must therefore be supposed of the most absolute and universal necessity too. Every piece of knowledge is not every one's business; but this is every one's business, to know God, to know how he may be saved, how it may be well with him to eternity.

2. But what are these principles? It is my present business to tell you of what sort they are. What they are particularly, that we must do by degrees as we come to them. Now you may judge of what sort they are by what the apostle mentioneth in this context; and by the reference this passage, in the beginning of the 6th chapter, hath to that we are upon, we must suppose him to be still speaking of the first principles of the oracles of God. It may be thought strange that he should mention here things so small in their own nature as baptisms (not baptism but baptisms) and the laying on of hands, as if they were to come into the number of the first principles; not of principles only, but of the first principles.

To this I shall only say, I cannot think that was at all meant by the apostle, that they should be so taken for any of those principles. You are to consider to whom the apostle writes this epistle, namely, to the Jews. These two, baptisms and the laying on of hands, were anciently and (as we know) originally Jewish rites, transferred into the Christian church afterwards. And so the meaning of the apostle is only this; "I will not stand to lay again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, especially not to you who have been instructed in these things all along so distinctly, they being nothing else but the doctrine of baptisms, and the laying on of hands:" and then goes on to the other two; that baptisms and laying on of hands did continually instruct them (as usages that did obtain among themselves) as to repentance from dead works and faith towards God, as it is here expressed. And so these words are very fitly to be rendered by way of parenthetical opposition to those that do immediately go before, that is, "not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith towards God, (being the doctrines of baptisms and laying on of hands, or the things which baptisms and the laying on of hands, heretofore so frequently used among you, did signify,) or the resurrection of the dead or of eternal judgment." So there are but four mentioned of the first principles of the oracles of God. Against this way of reading this passage I meet but with one objection, and that is, the want of the Greek article before doctrine here; but that is so little an objection, if we consider how many greater ellipses there are, that are frequent in Scripture, that it seems too light to be put into the balance against the weighty reason that is to be given for the other reading.

But it may be said then, What! are there but four principles, as such, which have reference to the whole business of Christianity, which the apostle's discourse here must have final and determinate reference unto? "Repentance from dead works, faith towards God, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment;" are there no more than these?

Yes, undoubtedly there are, but it was none of the apostle's design to give an enumeration of those principles, but to give an instance of such as he did not now intend to insist upon, but to waive and pass by. He only tells us this was not his principal business and design to deliver such principles, and he tells at the same time, what he thought fit to waive, while his discourse is moving forward to the information he would give them concerning the Melchisidekian priesthood of Christ; to which (after some warm discourse in the greater part of the 5th chapter) he comes in the close of that, and pursues in the seventh chapter.

3. But that I may show more distinctly what kind of principles the apostle here hath reference to, take these considerations:

(1.) It is plain that they must be meant of doctrinal principles, principles of doctrine that are to be received into the mind and understanding. There are those that are doctrinal, and there are those that are practical principles. It is true indeed, all principles of the Christian religion are remotely practical, because the main end of Christianity is practice. But the difference between a doctrinal principle and a practical, lies here, that supposing a doctrinal principle to have reference to practice, to serve towards it at a distance, yet a practical principle is that from which action doth immediately proceed. As now, if we speak to the very heads themselves that the apostle speaks of, "repentance from dead works, and faith towards God," the doctrine concerning these makes one sort of principle, and the habit another; the habit of faith, and the habit of repentance, that is a principle in the soul from which the acts of these immediately proceed. But the more essential doctrine concerning both these, must make the doctrinal principle concerning them; as there may be doctrinal principles about the most practical things, and those are the doctrinal principles, as such, that are here intended, and which are to be the matter of teaching: which are to be taught, as the apostle speaks. It is very true that the papists do very industriously make it their business to overthrow that distinction of fundamental and extra-fundamental doctrines; of those that are essential and those that are extra-essential; such as are of absolute necessity, and such as are not necessary, or not so necessary. And they mightily insist and urge to have a catalogue particularly of those which we would have to go under the notion of fundamentals: because they think they could cavil and contend about any such catalogue that should be given, and look upon it as impossible there should be any so unexceptionably given, that nothing should be said against it, why this or that is taken in, or why such and such things should be left out. Therefore they would conclude there ought to be no such distinction; which is the most absurd thing that can be imagined; for to take away the distinction of fundamental and extra-fundamental is to suppose one of these two things. Either it must suppose that there is nothing necessary in Christian religion, which is a very strange supposition that there should be any such religion wherein nothing should be necessary; or it must suppose all things equally necessary, all necessary alike: and so that it were equally necessary that we know Salathiel to be the son of Neri, as to know that Jesus is the Son of God. But there needs no more to be said at present to this, than that whatsoever is necessary in point of doctrine to the soul's acting of "repentance from dead works, and faith towards God;" (for the two things that follow are no matter of our exercise. The raising of the dead and the eternal judgment are no part of our duty; but our duty is summed up in these two, repentance and

faith;) whatsoever, I say, is necessary in point of doctrine to the soul's being exercised in one or other of these with the understanding and judgment of a reasonable creature, so much is necessary to make a doctrinal principle; whatever leads the soul into the exercise of repentance and faith, so much must be necessary under the head of doctrinal principles concerning our duty. It is true we must know the other things too as motives to it, but these are to have the immediate influence upon things to be done. And I might more shortly say, whatever is necessary to bring the soul into union with God through Christ, all that knowledge that is necessarily antecedent to this, so much comes within the compass of what is fundamental in our religion; and indeed nothing comes within that compass but what is one way or other reducible to this, that must not one way or other have influence upon repentance and faith. And I add,

(2.) That as concerning these, some may be more deeply fundamental than others are, even of those that are of equal necessity. That is, there are principles that in reference to things depending on them have that notion of principles, and are to be so considered, that yet may be consequential to other things on which they do depend. As in the building of a house (which is the metaphor the apostle, in this context, makes use of) there may be some parts that may be both fundamental to what is upon them, and superstructive in reference to what lies under them. And,

(3.) These principles may be partly of natural and partly of supernatural revelation. Of natural, that there is a God. Of supernatural, that Jesus is the Son of God. Though what is of natural revelation doth not comprehend what is of supernatural, yet all that is of supernatural takes in and includes all that is natural too. The same thing may be supernaturally revealed, and naturally; as the same conclusion may be both believed and known. And again,

(4.) They are generally the plainest things that are to go for such principles. God hath so graciously ordered it, that that which is most necessary should be most plain. Indeed some may object themselves here, the doctrine of the Trinity; but as concerning that, I hope, when we come to it, it will appear that what God hath said about that is very plain; though what men have said and devised about it, is obscure and intricate enough, even what they mean for the explication of it. And I only add this, for the present, concerning these principles,

(5.) They must be supposed to be but few. The first principles, or the great principles of religion, do lie in a very little compass: as that which goes amongst us in the name of the apostles' creed (you know) is very short; and (if antiquity deceive us not) was much shorter than it is. Though it is true that the variety of apprehensions and sentiments, and the great dissensions and manifold errors, that have in after-times sprung up in the Christian church, have occasioned the enlargements of creeds and multiplying of articles of faith; varying them this way or that, to meet with this or that wrong sentiment as they have been apprehended; yet the things that are in themselves necessary, must needs be but few. And if the Christian religion ever return to itself, and be what at first it was, simple, pure, plain, unmixed, undoubtedly the sum and substance of it will be found to lie in very little compass. It hath sadly degenerated in point of efficacy, and vigour, and power, as it hath been increased and augmented in point of necessary doctrines; men rendering such doctrines necessary, or bestowing that notion upon them arbitrarily as they have thought fit. And indeed the state of Christian religion hath never been flourishing since (as one very accurately observes in the last age) it became *res ingeniosa fore Christianum; a thing of wit to be a Christian.* So much at present for the kinds and sorts of these principles. But now,

II. For the necessity of their being taught; as to that, little needs to be said.

1. That the things themselves are necessary is out of question. If any religion be necessary, its principles must be much so, especially if first principles. And more,

2. This doth plainly infer therefore the necessity of their being taught; else how should we come by them? And though there is somewhat pre-supposed to our religion that is natural, it is but pre-supposed as fundamental to all that was necessary to be superadded, for there is not enough within the compass of nature to lead men to blessedness, if there be not great super-additions. And what we have not by nature, how should we come by it, if we are not taught it? if we do not learn it? We read of great promises in Scripture of being taught of God. "Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me," as it is in that, John vi. 45. quoted from the prophet Isaiah, liv. 13. "Thy children shall be all taught of the Lord." And "It is written in the prophets, they shall be taught of God:" and then it followeth, "Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." And so we read Jeremiah xxxi. 34. as that which is foretold to be the great blessing of a time then future, (and for ought I see, yet future,) that there should be no saying, "Know the Lord." They should not need to teach one another, saying, "Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least to the greatest;" quoted by the apostle, Heb. viii. 11. But even such teaching is teaching still. He is the great Teacher; and who teacheth like him? But as to subordinate teaching or human teaching, there is nothing in all these promises that can exclude it. And when it is said, "They shall all be taught of God," and that they shall not need any to teach them, the meaning is, that there shall be a greater inclination in men's spirits to learn. Not that they shall know it without teaching, but that an aptitude to learn, shall be given them more generally than had been given, and (so far as we can observe) than is yet given. Men shall not need to be urged and pressed to know the Lord. No, there shall be a greater promptitude in men's minds to learn, and to use, and improve the means of knowing him, than had been before. But that there shall always, to the end of time, be use of human teaching, our Lord's own words just before his ascension plainly enough speak, Matt. xxviii. and the close; "I am with you to the end of the world." In this work it must be, "to assist you in this teaching through all successions of time to the very end of the world." But if there should be any such time or state of things on earth, wherein men should no way at all need to be taught the knowledge of God, supervening and coming; that is not yet come, we are sure we see no such time; and if any such time should come, and we should see it, I verily believe there are none of those that now are intent upon the business of teaching, but would be glad in those times to resign their office. And in the mean time nothing is plainer than so it is, and indeed nothing is plainer than so it will be to the end of the world; that there is and will be need and use of human subordinate teachers, to teach and instruct men in the principles, even the first principles of faith in Christ. But,

III. I would say somewhat concerning the way of this teaching. And there be several ways about which we might distinguish and speak to you in distinct heads; there is private teaching and public teaching; and teaching from house to house, and teaching in public assemblies; there is teaching by continued discourse, and teaching in a way of interlocution, by way of question and answer, that to which the name of catechising is now generally appropriated, though indeed without ground from the word itself, or the proper significancy of the word. And this is indeed, in the account of many, a very formidable and frightful work, the work of catechising. I do not know why it should be so formidable a thing for one person to converse with another, to put questions and return answers; for is not this the usual way of common conversation? And why should it be more formidable to us to converse thus about the things of God, than about other things that we count necessary, and about many things that we cannot so much as count so? But there can be surely nothing more necessary than religion and the things that concern it. I am for my part very far from that imperious and terrifying way of managing such a work as this, to affright people and make them afraid of it. And indeed were I engaged in such work, I should as leave they should catechise me as I them, if questions could be so judiciously put as to draw forth a full explication of the matter proposed. It would be all one to me, who were the questionist and who the answerer, supposing the question be aptly put so as to draw forth the explication most fully. I should like well it should be said, Pray how is

such a thing understood, or what help may be given to understand that point more distinctly and more clearly?

And some considerations I shall give you, at present, about this way of teaching by familiar interlocution; and which indeed the exigency of the case doth require to be in a public assembly, where many meet and are convened together for that very purpose and upon that account. I would not insist upon the word, though it is a very significant word, that serves the purpose for which it is used well enough, but we find divers passages in Scripture where this word is used that fully refers to that way of teaching. And,

1. Let that be considered, Gal. vi. 6. "Let him that is tanght in the word, communicate to him that teacheth." The word there is catechised. Let him that is catechised in the word communicate to him that catechiseth; this implies it to be a stated business, that there must be continued catechising, and being catechised. The apostle, in 1 Cor. xiv. 19. useth the same word when he tells us, "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I may teach others also, (the word is catechised, and he speaks of doing it in the church,) than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

2. That though another sort of word be used in that other language, when Abraham is so highly commended for instructing his household, (in Genesis xviii.) yet we are to consider what his household was, an household out of which he could draw forth (as we find upon occasion) three hundred fighting men. How vastly numerous must that family be! And when they met together for the worship of God, that must be a greater assembly than our's usually are; and his instructing was so that they should be all brought to know God and the principles of religion; which must be supposed and (as the thing speaks) must mostly be when he had them together, though there might be occasion for private instruction and admonition too.

3. There ought certainly to be a very great deference given to usages in the Christian church in the purer and primitive times of it, when Christianity was most of all itself; and we find very ancient records, even of teaching by this way of interlocution, and in public too. Origen lived very early, and it is matter notorious that he was eminent under the notion of a catechist in his time, whose business it was to teach and instruct in a catechetical way; and we are informed of divers catechists that they had in the church of Alexandria at the same time, that being, it is true, a numerous, great church, and requiring the help of many to that purpose. And all along, in the best times of the Christian church, (before popery was born into it,) we find hereupon that there were these two distinct orders of Christians, the *catechumeni* and the *fideles:* those that were catechetically instructed, and those that having been for a competent time so instructed, were found fit to be admitted into full communion; and hereupon there were particular places appointed them in the assemblies, wherein they were to stand apart by themselves in a sort of enclosure, but in the view of the rest of the assembly. And the nature of the thing doth speak, that there must always be these two orders within the compass of the Christian church, those that are under instruction are *catechumeni*, and those that, as they are fit, are taken out of them and received into full communion. A thing that nature and common prudence will so much dictate, that long before the Christian name was ever heard of in the world, we read that Pythagoras's school had the same orders, where the business was principally to teach and instruct in virtue. There were those that were Extra-syndonem and those that were Intra-syndonem; there was a *septum* or enclosure that did receive those that were looked upon to be thoroughly virtuous. His school indeed was like a church, upon that account, and commonly there were kept seven years expectants without the enclosure, not to be received (as it were) into full communion till they were very well confirmed in virtue and goodness. And thereupon, if any of those that had been received within the enclosure should afterwards degenerate and be guilty of any crimes, there was as solemn an excommunication of them as we read of any among Christians, and a funeral besides held for such a person; that is, a coffin was brought into the *auditorium*, and lamentation made over it as over one dead, dead from among them; and so such were to be humbled that way and wrought upon. And there can be no such thing as the continuance of Christianity in the world, on other terms than that there must be two such orders. And I add,

4. That it is very apparent that our Saviour's way of teaching when he was here on earth was very much in a way of interlocution, and that often in great public assemblies, as it is obvious for yourselves to take notice in evangelical history. And,

5. That Christians generally are under an express charge to be ready to give an account of the reason of their hope and faith, to any one that shall ask it, with meekness and fear; as in that, 1 Pet. iii. 15. And if they were to do it (as that direction hath more especial reference) even to enemies, to persecutors, and when it was to cost them their lives, much more to instructors and teachers, when they desire it only in order to their own help, and to the promoting and furtherance of knowledge among men. And,

6. It is very plain that they who by office are to make it their work and business to instruct others, are obliged to use all the most apt and likely means that may be most profitable and most conducing to that end and purpose. How solemn a charge is that the apostle lays on Timothy! 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. "I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." With all doctrine (as it is referred undoubtedly to both the things that go before and that follow the long-suffering) must in all reason intend, not merely the matter of doctrine, but the manner also, for there may be matters of doctrine materially to be considered, that are not so necessary to be so very much inculcated and urged. But that same all-doctrine is every way a teaching that is likely, or by which it may be more probable, that good may be done; and if there be such an obligation upon teachers, there is a correspondent obligation upon hearers, to attend thereto; yea, and that not only implied, but expressly required; "Obey them that have the rule over you," Heb. xiii. 17. Hereupon no doubt they are obliged to comply with, and to concur to set on foot, all such means and methods of instruction as may be most conducible to this end. And that this is a means proper to this end may be manifest upon several considerations. As,

(1.) That it most evidently tends to engage the minds of them that are immediately dealt with in this way, to be intent on the matter in hand; as when a question is put to me I am bound under a kind of necessity to consider it, that I may know how to make one answer or another as it is particularly and personally directed to me. There are many things that pass us by in a continued and transient discourse, that a wandering mind takes little notice of, gives little heed to; but when it is called by a particular question to this particular point, it cannot but make the mind intent upon it. As when the apostle, in the midst of his apologetical discourse before king Agrippa, applied particularly to him with that question, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?" the king thought himself obliged to consider his question, and you see what kind of answer he gives, so as he never else would have thought, if that question had not been directed to himself. Such an impression did that question make on his mind.

(2.) It tends manifestly very much to engage the attention of all that hear, at such an exercise as that we are now speaking of. Every body presently gives his ear when there is a question put, "Come, what will be answered to this question?" and if it need explication, "What will be said in this case?" It makes men exert their minds, and engage their spirits a great deal more, as every one's reason and experience must tell him.

(3.) It tends very much to fix things and make them continue with those that hear and do attend on such a kind of exercise, for that very reason, because it hath set the animadversive faculties so much the more on work; and if the matter be considered, nothing is plainer, than that people do many times blame their memories very causelessly, when it is really the animadversive faculty is not used; for things that once are earnestly attended to are much more likely to be remembered, but people find fault with their

memories because they do not mind what they hear at first. If they earnestly minded what they heard, and considered things, and took them to heart, it would contribute a great deal towards the fixing of them in their memories, towards their retention of them. I believe, for the much greater part, when the badness of the memory is complained of, the fault lies elsewhere, that they did not seriously attend at the first, for things will be retained longer that have been well considered at first.

(4.) Hereupon, through the blessing of God, much more may be done towards the conversion of souls by the Gospel dispensation, when the things needful to be understood in order hereto, are *well* understood for it; for while they are not so, we speak in the dark, and people hear in the dark, and what we say to them hath an uncertain sound, as the apostle speaks, I Cor. xiv. 17. They cannot tell what we mean when we speak of the weightiest and most important things belonging to the kingdom of God, but if such things be well understood at first, (as it is to be hoped they will be in this way,) then there is one great step made, one main difficulty is got over; and so it obtains in discourses that have more directly that design, to make men intend this business, and impress things upon men's hearts to the utmost, which had passed through their minds before, or were received clearly and distinctly there before. Again,

(5.) It is likewise, by consequence, likely to be the means of introducing a much more fruitful Christianity among us, for undoubtedly, religion is more lively by how much the more it is well grounded: they that do believe this or that doctrine without a ground, they commonly believe it too without fruit. If it have not a good ground it is proportionably inefficacious, and a languid thing; as seed that is sown, and hath no depth of earth, (as our Saviour speaks,) brings not forth fruit unto perfection. Therefore is that charge given unto the Colossian Christians: "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him," Col. ii. 6. One notion under which we are said to receive him is as a teacher, and to receive him (though that be not all) is to receive his truths, his doctrines. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." And therefore, so rationally doth the apostle pray for them in that chapter, that they might be "fruitful in every good work, increasing in the knowledge of God." And in Phil. i. 9, 10, 11. those Christians are there prayed for after the same method, that they might abound in judgment and in all knowledge, (that they might become knowing and judicious Christians,) and then, that they might abound in all the fruits of righteousness that would be, through Christ, to the praise and glory of God. And,

(6.) This would be a very great and likely means to bring Christians generally to a great deal more of seriousness in the temper of their minds and spirits, that is, to exclude and shut out vanity, replenishing their minds with great and weighty things, things that deeply concern them: for in this way, undoubtedly, such things would come to be more inwrought into their hearts, and to have a more settled abode and residence there. Then it would be as ordinary a thing when Christians did meet, to catechise one another about the things of God, and about the eternal kingdoms, (if I may use that phrase,) as to catechise one another about news, or about the state of the times; what is doing now in the country, or in the court, or in this or in any other nation or kingdom: the kingdom of heaven surely would look as great as any earthly kingdom or country, or greater, if we were more taken up about the things that relate thereunto. And so might the ancient Christianity come to be restored in some measure among us, wherein (as antiquity tells us) it was so ordinary a thing when Christians did meet, presently to fall upon the matters of their religion: and it was usual in their families, even all the day long, when people were about their affairs, either in the shop or at the distaff, to mention the great things of the Christian religion, from morning to night mingling discourses of that kind with all their affairs, as they could admit of their being mingled. This was primitive Christianity, and it was in these early days that this course that I now speak of did obtain, even when such familiar interlocutions for the instruction of candidates to Christianity were carried on in their assemblies. And,

(7.) It were much to be hoped that by this means that faulty shyness would be overcome, which doth appear too generally, of discoursing at all about the things of God and the matters of religion, and what men find in their own spirits of savour and impression of such things. It is very strange and unaccountable that there should be so peculiar a shyness in reference to the matters of religion, to take discourse of them, especially as to one's own sentiments about them, what one apprehends and what one feels in himself, in one's own breast. There is not such a shyness in reference to things of any other concerns besides, as there is in reference to those concernments that relate to men's souls and their state God-ward and for eternity. Nobody is shy to speak of his own or other's ails, for the most part; nobody is shy to speak of an aching head, or an aching tooth; but what a shyness is there to speak of spiritual maladies, a bad heart, a blind mind, and the like! If discourses were in this way more frequently introduced, so as to become familiar, this shyness would be gradually overcome. We find in public assemblies it is usual to give an account of things that are of another concernment, of a most inferior concernment; as in courts of judicature, where persons of the meanest capacity are called frequently to speak their knowledge, to tell what they know about such and such a matter that doth concern *meum* and *tuum*, this or that man's right; or concerning a question depending between the government and any particular person concerning a criminal matter. Nothing more ordinary than to have persons catechised about such things as these in public assemblies, and it is not thought strange. And why should there be a particular shyness, strangeness, and aversion to give an account of things relating to the kingdom of God? As if it were a criminal thing to have one's mind engaged and taken up about matters of that nature, or as if persons were afraid to be thought guilty of religion, as if it were a dreadful thing, a thing to be dreaded to be thought guilty of minding God, and the concernments of another world. And,

(8.) It would surely be a very likely means to prevent apostacy, especially in a difficult and trying time: indeed there is continual danger of apostacy; there is much danger from daily conversation with this world, there is much danger especially in a prosperous state and condition in it, lest there should be heart apostacy, a heart secretly departing from the love of God; and there is great danger in times of persecution for religion's sake, for Christ's sake, and for the Gospel's sake. But there is nothing (in point of means and in subordination to the grace and Spirit of Christ) likely to be a better security against it, than in such a way as this, to be once thoroughly instructed in the great "principles of the oracles of God," to have them well inlaid. They that are so instructed at first are not like to be as "children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine," or entangled by the cunning craftiness of them that lie in wait to deceive. Some are withdrawn by seduction, some by persecution: there will be the same fence against both in such a way as this. "Nay," will such a one say, "I have (through the goodness of God) understood the grounds of my religion well; I did not trifle when I took up this profession;" as the apostle speaks concerning his trust in God, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him until that day." So for a Christian to say, "I know what I have believed, and I mean to abide by it through the grace of God," this will preserve him under sufferiog. It is a very uncomfortable thing in point of suffering to be called to suffer for that I never understood, and which I never savoured or relished. To suffer for what I never had any clear understanding of, and to suffer for what I never had any taste or relish of in my own soul, though it is possible to suffer upon such an account, yet it is uncomfortable. A man may "give his body to be burned" without love, but it is very uncomfortable so to suffer. And the one of these things is the way to the other; I am likely to savour what I understand in those things that have a real bottom, and are in themselves substantial. There are some things indeed that have so little in them, that the more I understand them the less I

shall mind them; the more I understand them the more I shall despise them; but it is not so in the great things of God, and that do relate to his kingdom. And,

(9.) It is that which will certainly be a great ornament to the Christian church, and an honour to it, when there is a succession coming up, a rising generation, of them that do understand themselves, and appear to do so, make it evident that they do understand themselves in the great things of religion; that they receive them and take them in. As it was the reproach of the Christian church (as it was still called) when that barbarous age was upon it, and so great and gross darkness and ignorance did cover the face of it, so will the contrary be its honour. And when times of greater knowledge do come, then in one sense (though these words have more meaning than that) it may be said to Zion, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come; and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee," Isaiah lx. 1. Light signifies holiness too, and a prosperous state, but it signifies knowledge as that which is inchoative of all the rest. And,

(10.) Lastly. It is one of the most comfortable presages that can be, when once the spirits of those that are to be learners (as it were) in the school of Christ, come to be engaged and intent upon getting in the knowledge of Christ, and have their souls impressed thereunto. I say, it is one of the most comfortable presages of the approach of that time and that season drawing on, when one shall say to another, and even people to people, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will show us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths," Micah iv. 2. It is a comfortable pre-signification of the approach of that time when "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased:" when there shall be very much of inquiry and concern to know God and the things of God, then the time will be drawing on, when the knowledge of the Lord shall abound and cover the earth as the waters cover the seas, Isaiah xi. 9.

IV. But to make some brief use of all this. There are principles of religion, or of the oracles of God, which are needful to be taught. Then here,

1. Let us consider and adore the goodness of God towards a wicked and apostate world. How strange a sound should such a word carry with it to us, "The oracles of God!" How transporting a sound, for the oracles of God to be mentioned and spoken in such a world as ours is! when it would be thought that its so universal revolt from God, should everlastingly have cut off all intercourse between him and it, that he should never have regard for this world any more; not more than for the angels that fell and kept not their first station. Do we hear of any oracles of God sent down into those infernal regions? Oh! how great thing then is it, that there should be among us the oracles of God! Indeed, it argues very great stupidity, if there be not a mighty sense of this upon our spirits. Pagans have had the most grateful sense that could be imagined but of a mock pretence hereunto: the very notion of oracles carries a sacredoess and venerableness in it; any thing that is divine, any thing that is of heavenly descent; and so such things, though but feignedly such, have been reckoned of among pagans! Oh! what veneration had those poor Ephesian idolaters for that thing (we read it *image*, but there is no such thing in the Greek) that dropped down from Jupiter! how mighty a zeal was there among that people, so as that the city is said to be a whole *neochoron*; "All Ephesus is a worshipper;" so it is expressed, as if that mighty city were but one worshipper of the great goddess Diana! So great was their zeal, so high their veneration, for a thing that their deluding priests made them believe dropped down from heaven. And we know how high their value was, of how much they did magnify themselves, for the diabolical oracles they had among them in former days before Christ's time; and how mighty a concern there was among them when these were silent at his coming. So as that some of their wisest men (Plutarch for instance) was fain to write discourse upon discourse to qualify their minds thereupon. Two treatises we read of, written by that author; one why they ceased, which he wrote in verse; the other why they did so totally cease as upon the matter they did.

And when the privilege of having the oracles of God was a more confined and limited thing, oh! how did the Jews (to whom they were so great a treasure) magnify themselves upon them, how did they glory in it! And it was acknowledged that they had a mighty advantage. "What advantage had the Jews? Much every way, chiefly as that to them were committed the oracles of God," Rom. iii. beginning. Oh! we do not enough consider the kindness of Heaven towards our world! that there should be any beams of divine light (whether by natural or supernatural revelation) shining in it. We do not enough consider that we are quite cut off from God. He doth hereby show he hath yet a desire to the work of his own hands, in that he will have his oracles known to men upon earth; as elsewhere it is said of his tabernacle, "The tabernacles of God are with men:" and in what a transport doth Solomon break forth (1 Kings viii.) in that seraphical triumph of joy, "Will God indeed dwell upon earth?" Oh! that there should be any abode of the Divine presence upon earth! And these are some of the most expressive tokens of such a visible presence vouchsafed; his placing these oracles among us, and diffusing the most impressive light that reveals him, and that reveals the great things that relate to his kingdom. And,

2. We may collect hence, that it is a very apt method, and accommodated unto intelligent creatures, that God doth make use of, in conveying to them the necessary knowledge of the doctrine of Christ; for there are principles that are to be begun with; (first principles as you see;) you had need to be taught which are the first principles of the oracles of God. There are the oracles of God, there are principles of these oracles, and the first of those principles. God doth apply himself to us suitable to our nature, he aims to draw us by the "cords of a man and by the bands of love," to make reason and love engineers by which he would take hold of us, sanctify the one principle and the other, that we may be brought nigh to him and held in with him.

And it ought deeply to be considered, that there are (as you see) principles wherewith we are to begin, and by which we are to be led on (as the apostle's expression here is) towards perfection. Principles of truth, principles of doctrine, such as a "form of sound words," wholesome words may be expressive of. Though (by the way) I am against being tied to a form of words; in matters of this nature I would have words used for helps, not for bonds. And if I were to inquire how any have profited in the things of God, even in this very respect; in respect of their knowledge relating thereto, if they could express a sound and good understanding about these things, in their own words, in words of their own choosing, and not which they found in this or that book, I should like it a great deal better. It would argue them so much the more understanding and knowing Christians, and likely to prove more stable ones. As I said before, I would have you to make use of other men's words (as you may any good book you read or sermon you hear) for helps, but not for bonds; to help your understandings, not to limit them. Again,

3. This lets us see the presumptuous and preposterous rashness of such persons as do at random, at all adventures, take up the Christian profession, when they never as yet understood the principles of Christianity, and so they really profess they know not what; as if the name Christian were a name of nothing, a name that had no signification, a name that did import no real thing. Those that can give no account of their knowledge of principles, and yet will be Christians, call themselves Christians, what a usurpation is this! How groundlessly and presumptuously do they usurp a glorious name! a title that carries with it a great deal of glory! and I would have you understand it so. A Christian is a glorious title, and they will be made to understand it to be so another day, who have usurped it they know not why, who have profaned it, and could never justify the pretence. It is a far greater presumption than for any man to call himself king or emperor, who is a mean peasant, an ordinary fellow, and can have no such pretence. "I will bring them to worship at thy feet (it is spoken to the Philadelphian church, Rev. iii. 9.) who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie." For a man to take up a profession that is a mere lie, what a presumption

is it! a man to call himself a Christian! But he lies, and must do so upon one account, if he live in the continual violation of the Christian precepts, and upon another, if he understand nothing of the Christian principles. It is a lie; it is to suppose that *Christian* is a name without a meaning, a name that means nothing. And,

4. We may collect hence, that it is very stupid folly for men to live all their days under this profession, without ever concerning themselves to understand the principles of Christianity. It is very presumptuous rashness to take up that profession, when a man will commence Christian all of a sudden without ever having understood its principles. But it is far more stupid folly if a man will, all his days, live under the Christian profession in continued ignorance of the principles of the Christian religion. How ridiculous doth that man make himself that will all his time go under the name of a merchant, and yet never understand any thing of merchandise! or if a man will be called a philosopher, when every one that knows him, knows that he understands not any of the principles of philosophy! But,

5. It is of so great importance to understand well the principles of Christian religion, that they need to be taught. Is there so great weight laid upon the teaching of them? are they hereby represented to us to be matters of absolute necessity? then by the importance of the principles judge of the excellency of the end of the Christian religion. And so consider, Hath God thus brought it about that we should be all of us in one degree or other under the Christian institution? What is it for? That which hath so very important principles must have a proportionable end. Then let us see what that is. Religion is a thing that terminates upon eternity, that runs into another world: they therefore that are under the Christian institution (as we all are to be in the church of God while we are here in the world) are to look upon themselves as so many candidates for the blessed eternity. Here in this world we are training up for heaven, for everlasting glory; and hereupon are the principles of religion, of the oracles of God, represented as the most important things, that have their final and determinate reference to another world, the glories of the heavenly and eternal state. This were a great thought for us to carry about with us, whensoever we are under Gospel teaching, to think that God hath provided and taken care that I should be trained up for heaven and fitted for the eternal kingdom, and for an everlasting abode in that blessed glorious state. And when you are training up your child, oh! how great a thing is it to be training it up in the knowledge of God! for there are some steps that must be taken with it, to make it meet for partaking "of the inheritance of the saints in light." You know there is great care taken about the education of great heirs. The very children of the church are God's children. He calls them so, (Ezekiel xvi. 20, 21.) "Is this a small matter that thou hast slain my children?" speaking of Jewish parents making their children pass through the fire to Moloch. In the degenerate state of that church and people, he calls them his children. Now I say, great care is wont to be taken in the education of great heirs. Those that are the children of God and are really so, if children they are also heirs; and they are begotten to a lively hope, to an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled. And they are, by "the sincere milk of the word" which they receive from time to time, to grow up to a fitness and capacity to partake of that inheritance. We should never think of the principles of the Christian religion, but it should put us in mind of the end of it, and what it refers to. And yet again,

6. We may further learn from hence, that since there is such need that such principles should be taught, men should take heed of neglecting, and much more of opposing, any fit methods wherein they may be taught. And why do they so? Why, they think themselves too wise to learn, they understand too much already to need being taught. But while they account themselves so very wise, see how the Spirit of God counts them, what notion they pass under with him; "Fools despise instruction," Prov. i. 7. And that is certainly a very ill character, that the contempt of instruction brings upon persons: they think themselves wise, and God thinks them fools; and certainly his judgment is the most discerning and true: and as it draws on a bad character, so it is very likely to draw on a bad end and issue. To hate instruction is to hate knowledge; and he is said to love knowledge that loves instruction, Prov. xii. 1. But to be brought in under the notion of a hater of knowledge, divine knowledge, oh! how dreadful a thing is that! "They shall call but I will not answer, they shall seek me early but they shall not find me." Why, what is the matter? what is all that resolved into which you read to that purpose in the 1st chapter of Proverbs? Why in the 29th verse it is said, Because they hated knowledge and would not choose the fear of the Lord; therefore he would be deaf to all their cries and importunities, when destruction was coming upon them as a whirlwind. Why is God so inexorable towards them? Because they hated knowledge, they would not endeavour to learn. And,

7. Lastly, If there be so absolute a necessity of being taught such principles of religion, or such "Oracles of God," there surely ought to be a very peculiar temper and disposition of spirit in order to learning. And that I would have you to take an account of in a few heads which I shall only name. We are all to be learners here in this world, we must learn as long as we live. And if it be of so absolute necessity that we learn such things, we should,

(1.) Apply ourselves to them with very great reverence, for they are "the oracles of God" that we have to do with; it is something sacred and divine, that we are conversant and taken up about. When any thing of these oracles was to be first given in writing, though it was but a little, to a peculiar and select people of his, we see what an awful business was made of it. God comes down; manifests his glorious presence in the mountain that he had selected for that purpose; the people are there assembled and cast about the foot of the mountain; the mountain is enclosed, and they are forbidden, on pain of death, to approach the borders; "Touch not the borders; for whosoever toucheth them shall die," Exod. xix. 20, 21. In that assembly of that people, on purpose to hear the divine oracles that were to be preached among them, there was a glorious revelation that came from heaven. And do we think the Gospel revelation that we have is less glorious? No, saith the apostle, "The glory wherewith the law was given upon mount Sinai, was no glory in comparison with this glory that so much excels." Oh! we should be learners with the greatest reverence imaginable, as having from time to time the divine oracles to be opened among us. Here is the most glorious appearance of God. When there was comparatively an unspeakably less appearance even than that on mount Sinai, that is, when some of the Divine glory shone in one bush, it is charged upon Moses (to strike his mind with a due awe) presently to put off his shoes. This was to be significant to us, with what great and profound reverence we are to have our souls impressed and possessed upon an appearance of God; and these are the brightest and most glorious appearances, in the kind, that we know above any besides.

(2.) We should apply ourselves to learn the things of the kingdom of God with very deep humility; with a most humble sense of our own ignorance, and that we know so little. "He that thinks he knows any thing, knows nothing as he ought to know," saith the apostle. And nothing was a more ignominious brand upon a sort of men that did start up early in the Christian church, that affected to be called by the name of gnostic, than that they so much valued themselves upon that knowledge to which they pretended, and but pretended; as that name did signify. Whether they were so soon called by that name, as some imagine, is a matter of doubt, but the genius and spirit of the men undoubtedly appeared early; and many passages in the epistles of the apostles have a direct reference thereunto, as particularly that, (1 Cor. viii. 2.) "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth." But (I say) it was the ignominy and reproach of that sort of men, that they did so highly glory in an airy kind of knowledge, that they were never the better for, nay, that made them undoubtedly upon the whole matter much worse men: it doth always so where there is not great humility, which doth accompany and go with knowledge. That is, they who are learners, ought to consider themselves as such, as we must all of us always be while we are here in this world, such as "know but in part." Here we are to have very self-diminishing thoughts of our own knowledge. Surely it is but

little that we know, as we find Agur speaks concerning himself; "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man." And so the Psalmist speaks of himself, (Psal. lxxiii.) "So foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee." Such diminishing thoughts it becomes us to have of ourselves, as to look upon ourselves under such a self-despising notion, (as I may so speak,) that while we are here we are but in a state of learners, and must be so as long as we are in this earthly state. But then,

(3.) We should be learners still with fervent desire of learning more and more; and this agrees well with an humble sense of our yet knowing so very little. It hath always been mentioned concerning one eminent heathen, as an honourable character he went under, that he was known by that motto, "*Hoc tantum scio, me nihil scire:*" *this only I know, that I know nothing:* though he was one of the greatest and most learned men of his age. If there be a sincere desire of increasing knowledge, nothing better agrees with it than such a sense as this, Alas! it is little I know, and I am to be still aiming to know more and more, in reference to things wherein I am so much concerned. "I opened my mouth and panted," saith the Psalmist, "for I longed for thy commandments," Psal. cxix. 131. We are to be continually desiring that which is to be the means of our growth in knowledge. "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby:" and these principles are called "milk," as you see in the close of this 5th chap. of the epistle to the Hebrews, where the text is.

(4.) It ought to be with a continued pleasant savour and relish of divine knowledge, that we should be driving the design to increase; to increase and grow in it. "Grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" labour to have a continual intermixture of grace with knowledge that may give it a pleasant savour. There is very little delight in dry notions that never influence a man's heart. "When wisdom enters into the heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto the soul," (saith the wise man,) "then understanding shall preserve thee, discretion shall lead thee." Knowledge doth its office effectually, to guide and lead us in our way, when once it becomes of a grateful taste and relish to our souls; if it be taken and digested, and we relish a sweetness and pleasantness in it, then it will have power to do its work, that is, to be our guide and director in our way and course, as you have it, Prov. ii. 10. And then,

(5.) It ought to be with continual gratitude, adoring and blessing God that he makes any of his light to shine in this dark world; especially that it should shine to any of us; that we have this "sure word of prophecy" put into our hands that makes up the "Oracles of God" in an eminent sense; "till the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts." And,

(6.) Lastly, It must be (or else we do nothing) with a serious design of getting a holy impression in our hearts by the truth we know, or else all is lost. There are too many, (the Lord knows,) that if they take pleasure in knowing, and increasing knowledge, they do yet know but for the knowledge' sake, and aim no further. It is a fine thing to know much, to understand more than one's neighbour, more than such and such; and so be able superciliously to look down upon them as comparatively very ignorant. But to know on purpose that I may be accordingly and do accordingly, is the true end of Christian knowledge. "I desire to know more that I may have a better heart, and that I may be able to love God more; that I may be more like God, more fitted to serve him, and walk with him in this world and enjoy him in the next:" if this be not the design we drive at, in aiming to know, in all our desire of knowing much of the things of God and Christian religion, we do but labour for the wind, and shall at length reap the whirlwind. In what a transport is the apostle (in that Phil. iii.) in the thoughts and estimates that he expresseth there of the knowledge of Christ, "I count all things loss and dross and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord!" Well, but what sort of knowledge was it he aimed at? See what it was in what follows, such a knowledge as by which he might be transformed into his likeness, whereby he might be conformable to his death and to his resurrection, such a knowledge as to have the image impressed by it of a crucified and glorified Jesus. And no other knowledge would serve his turn, "I count all things but loss and dross and dung in comparison of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord," so to "know him" as to "be found in him," as to have "the fellowship of his sufferings and the power of his death," and to attain with him the resurrection from the dead.

And I desire in the close of this discourse to leave this with you. It is a dreadful thing to trifle with sacred matters. If at any time we open this book, or any thing out of it be opened to us, and we have not that serious design before our eyes and upon our hearts, that we would know more of divine things, that we may be made more like God, and be more fitted for his service and communion both here and hereafter, we shall be found guilty of trifling with that which is sacred: and though in this world the punishment may not be so visibly severe, yet the guilt is undoubtedly great with (and indeed incomparably greater than) what Uzzah lay under when he rashly laid hold on the ark, and the Bethshemites, when they opened and would be curiously prying into it. And what, do we therefore make light of God, and the sacred things of God, because in the Gospel days there are not so terrible examples set in view before our eyes? But if we look into the great mysteries of the Divine kingdom, with a slight mind and a vain heart, without any serious design of the same thing that these discoveries, these truths, these doctrines that are brought to our knowledge are designed for, we are all that while deserving that, which will be worse in the issue and end, than to have the name put upon the place "*Perez-Uzzah, the breach that Uzzah made,*" and it will be a more dreadful thing than if he did signalize the place by a terrible stroke from heaven upon us. When a man meddleth with the great things of God, and can give no account for what, but only to satisfy his own curiosity, and the idle fancy of a vain mind; this will have the sad issue. But let it be for this, and my heart bear me record that it is for this, that I may become a serious, holy, knowing Christian, a useful Christian; that I may live up to Christianity through the whole of my course while I am here upon earth, and then shall I be fitted at length for the heavenly inheritance with the saints in light, who shall possess that glorious inheritance.

Our next great work will be to fall upon the first principle, the very first of these principles, that which is the principal of principles; and that is concerning the Deity; the deepest foundation of all our religion.

LECTURE III.*

Romans i. 20.

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

OUR business (as we have proposed, you know) is, with God's gracious assistance, to open to you the principles of religion. Christian religion (which we finally intend) is founded in natural; and the principles of the former must be understood, therefore, to comprehend the latter, as things at least necessarily pre-supposed unto the doctrine of Christ. Now it being our design, in the general, to open to you the principles that do any way belong to that doctrine, we chose (as it is most fit) to begin with HIM who is the beginning of all, the principle that is most firstly first, *primo primum*, as they use to speak. Such is the Deity, whether we speak of principles of being or of knowledge; for there is no being that depends not upon the Divine

* Preached December 5th, 1690.—The preceding discourse was, doubtless, preached in two Lectures, but the division, and the time when the second was delivered, are not noticed in the manuscript. Edit.

Being, and no knowledge, rightly so called, which some way or other depends not upon divine knowledge. He is not only the first being, but the first and primary known, the *primum esse* and the *primum cognoscibile*, as he is justly to be reckoned.

Now this text shows us the true method of arriving to the knowledge of him, the unmade Being, by the things that are made; and not only to the certainty of his existeace, but of the excellency of his nature; both discoverable by the same light, by the same evidencing mediums, which that you may see, let us view the contents of this text briefly. We have in it,

First, What is revealed concerning God, expressed *first* of all more indefinitely, "the invisible things of him." This must not be understood distinctively, as if some things of God were visible and some invisible; that is, of things belonging to the Divine nature; but it must be understood adversatively, that is, though they are invisible, and notwithstanding their invisibility, they are yet clearly demonstrable by the things that are made. And then, *secondly*, they are declared to us more expressly, first, in one great instance of his eternal power, the effects whereof we see (as is here said) in the things that are made. But the cause itself is still invisible. And this is most fitly instanced in reference to the creature and the creation, which is said to be demonstrative thereof. All this vast creation, with that great variety of creatures that do compose and make it up, having lain in that, as in the pregnant womb thereof, from all eternity; out of which it is at length produced by it as its mighty creative cause. And then, secondly, besides this instance of one peculiar excellency of the Divine Being, (his eternal power,) to save a long and a particular enumeration, all the rest of the divine excelleacies are summed up in that one expression, "Godhead:" his eternal power and Godhead, comprehending all his other excellencies and perfections besides. This is the first thing we have to note to you from the text—what is revealed concerning God, even the invisible things of him, particularly his eternal power, the immediate cause of all things, and his Godhead, which comprehends all his excellencies together. And,

Secondly, We have to consider here the revelation hereof, these things "are clearly seen," seen, and *clearly* seen. This indeed looks like a riddle; invisible things seen! and clearly seen! things are seen that are invisible, or that cannot be seen! But the next words solve it, "being understood by the things that are made." Seen! How are they seen? Not occularly, but intellectually; they are seen as being understood. They are seen by the eye of the mind, though they cannot be seen by the bodily eye. God, and every thing belonging to the nature of God, being in that respect by the excellency thereof invisible. But it may be said, How are they so seen and clearly seen by the minds and understandiags of men? when the complaint is concerning men generally, even in the very context, "their foolish hearts are darkened," and "the light shineth in darkaess, and the darkness comprehendeth it not;" as it is in the beginning of John's Gospel. How then are they intellectually seen? Why nothing is more usual than to express a matter of right (where that right is most evideat) by matter of fact, and by such forms of speech as signify the fact. "No man liveth to himself;" that is, no man should. It is so plain a case that no man should live to himself, that when the design is to speak the reason of the thing, this is the expression of it, "no man liveth to himself," that is, is allowed to do so; and indeed in common language it is usual to express the passive future by the present or the preterit, as we say, *vir spectatus*, for *vir spectabilis*, or *spectandus; one that is very much regarded*, for one that *ought to be or deserves to be so*. And a thing that we say is *indubitate fidei*, or *undoubted* faith and certainty; we mean by it *indubitante*, that *ought not* to be doubted, or that there is no reason why it should be doubted. So "clearly seen" here, is clearly to be seen and understood, that is, such as might be understood, that ought to be understood, and there is no reason why they are not understood, but because men will not understand; shut their eyes and are willingly blind and ignorant, "not liking" (as it is afterwards expressed in the context) "to retain God in their knowledge." Or, there are here things so clearly to be understood, that they are manifestly left (as the close of this verse is) without all excuse who understand them not. And upon that account, in the words presently following, "that which may be known," (so we read it,) the expression is, that which *is* known of God; but the meaning is, that which may be known of God, as we translate it. Thea,

Thirdly, We are to consider the evidencing medium in the text, "by the things that are made;" the made things that are visible, are clearly demonstrative of their unmade Cause, of the excellency of the power and Godhead of that invisible Being who is the unmade Maker of them. And,

Fourthly, You have the constancy and continuedness of this concealment and revelation, "from the creation of the world." It is not ἐκ, *out of*, but ἀπο, *from;* and notes the term of time and not casually, which is expressed in the other phrase of speech we noted to you before, "the things that are made." But all along, ever since the world begaa, ever since there was a world in being, the invisible thiugs of God, his eternal power and Godhead, they have been concealed and revealed; concealed in one respect, that is, they have been invisible to mortal eyes; and revealed in another respect, that is, have been visible to mortal minds. And then you have,

Fifthly, In the last place, (which will be fit to be considered as the use of all,) the inexcusableness of those that receive not this revelation; so that they are without excuse, that do not acknowledge and adore the invisible Godhead, so demonstrating himself by the things that are made.

As to what we intend, you may take the ground of the whole discourse from this scripture thus.

That the sundry excellencies of the Divine Being, allcomprehending Godhead, are clearly demonstrable by the things that are made. And you may take in (as that which gives the greater lustre to the truth) that which is put adversatively, if you please, notwithstanding their invisibility in themselves.

In speaking to this, these two things are principally to be insisted on:

I. They show you what the Godhead comprehends, as far as is needful or possible unto us, or what are the excellencies that belong to the nature of God. And then,

II. To show how these are demonstrable of him by the thiags that are made.

I shall not dispute the reasonableness of that method in speaking to other subjects, first to inquire about the *an sit*, and then about the *quod sit*, or rather the *quid sit;* to inquire first whether such a thing be, and then to inquire what it is. There may, indeed, as to some confused knowledge of a thing, be an inquiry concerning its existence, and afterwards a descent made to inquire more particularly into its precise nature. But simply speaking, it would be the most absurd thing in the world to inquire first whether this or that be, before there is any apprehension at all what it is; for then we inquire about a shadow; and neither he that demonstrates, nor he to whom the demonstration is made, can do other than beat the air; the one understands not himself, nor can the other understand what he goes about. But it would be much more absurd in this case, to follow such a method as that, because, by universal consent, the Divine nature includes existence in it, which some therefore rely upon as sufficient demonstration of the existence of God, that is, that his very idea doth include existence, so that it is impossible to conceive of the Divine Being, but we must conceive of it as existing, inasmuch as the very idea and notion of it is inclusive of all perfections, whereof existence cannot be but one, and a very fundamental one, too, to all the rest. And therefore it must be a manifest contradiction, so much as but to suppose, that the most perfect Being must not exist, because a possibility of not existing is a very great and manifest imperfection.

But that is not the method of demonstration which I choose, but that which the text lays before us, that is, to demonstrate by that which is made, both the certainty of God's existence, and the excellency of his nature. But the latter we must have some understanding of first, otherwise neither do I nor you know what we are doing, if we have no apprehension among us, who or what a one he is, whose existence we speak of.

I. This therefore comes to be considered and inquired into, what excellencies we must suppose the Godhead or Divine nature (which is all one) doth comprehend. And here it must be acknowledged, we enter into a vast and most profound abyss; and you and I have all of us great reason to apprehend our need of much forgiveness, that after so great opportunity as we have had to learn better, we understand and know little yet of what we are to speak and hear of; and we have great need to supplicate and look up, that we may be enabled to speak and hear worthily concerning the blessed and eternal God, and to speak things of him fit to be spoken, and to hear them as it is fit to hear such things.

Why, in general it is certain the name of God doth import a being absolutely perfect, a Being comprehensive of all perfections.

And now here it may be said, This throws us into a sort of despair; for certainly a Being comprehensive of all perfections, must be to us altogether incomprehensible; we can never comprehend what doth itself comprehend all things.

I answer, Very true indeed: and yet there is a knowledge of this incomprehensible and all-comprehending Being, which is necessary as our first step, not only in what we are now about, but in reference to whatsoever else we have to go about to do, or to enjoy in all time, or in all eternity. But to relieve our thoughts here a little, you must know that we are not to treat of this incomprehensible and all-comprehending Being, in the way of metaphysicians and philosophers, who must have notions of things, ideas of them, (it is that which they profess and pretend to,) adequate to the things themselves whereof they treat; but our business is to speak of this ever-blessed Being as persons professing religion; not as philosophers, but as religionists; and so we are to consider him as the object of our religion, the first thing to be considered in all religion; and so the name of our inquiry comes to this, Have we an object for our religion, yea or no? And if we cannot reach to comprehend (as it is impossible we should) all that doth belong to the Godhead, if yet we can reach to apprehend so much as will represent and recommend him to us, as a worthy, deserving object of our religion, our business is done: that is what we design, and we may know so much concerning him as to know him to be a fit object, or worthy of religion, without knowing all of him, which is impossible; and if it were possible it would undeify him. He could not be God if we could comprehend him. He could not be a Deity if a finite mind were comprehensive of him.

And that you may a little understand the reasonableness of what I now say, do but consider what knowledge of man it is necessary for you to have in order to your conversing with men. Is it not possible for one man to converse with another, without having a full and entire koowledge of the full and entire guidity (as I may so speak) of human nature? must a man know all the properties and attributes of human nature, or he cannot converse with men? I hope there are many men converse one with another besides philosophers. And so, I say, it is equally possible for you to converse with God, without knowing every thing belonging to his nature. It is enough in order hereunto, and that so you may be in a possibility of conversing with him by religion, as the great object of your religion: the only object of your religion, that you know him to be more perfect than any thing else, or all things else, though you do not fully know how excellent or perfect he is, or ever can. But this our conception of him in the general, that he is a Being absolutely perfect, or universally perfect, must comprehend all that can be thought, and all that can be said, concerning him. Yet, in the mean time, this is too general to denote to us the object of our religion. We must have more particular and more distinct thoughts of him whom we are to worship, to whom we are to pay all duty, and from whom we are to expect all felicity, than only this one general notion doth furnish us with. That is, that he is one that is universally or absolutely perfect; we must necessarily descend and come down to particulars; and think what particulars are necessary to constitute and make up for us the object of our worship and religion. And so you may take this more particular (though yet short) account.

When we inquire, What doth the idea or notion of God include? what are we to conceive of the nature of God, as he is the object of our religion? we must have such a representation of him as this in our minds; that he is an eternal, self-subsisting Being, himself unmade, and the intelligent and free Author and Original of every thing that is made. Conceive him so, and you have before you the object of your worship, the object of religion, one that claims by a natural right that you fall down and adore him. This is some answer to the former of these inquiries,—What we are to conceive by that name of God as represented and held forth to us under that name, or what is it that the Godhead doth comprehend, so far as is answerable to our purpose, that is, of stating before you an object of religion.

II. And now the second thing we have to do, is to demonstrate all this concerning God, by the things that are made: which is that method of demonstration that the text furnishes us with, and directs us unto. If such a Being as this doth exist in reality, have actual existence in such a being, or he doth exist such and as such, then we can be in no further doubt, whether we have an object of worship, an object of religion, yea or no. But now the demonstration of the existence of such a Being, by things that are made, must be done by parts, according as there are parts that this representation of the object of religion is made up of; and so we shall proceed gradually part by part. As,

1. We have this to demonstrate to you, that there is existing an ETERNAL BEING, that was of itself, depending upon nothing for its being or existence; and this we have to demonstrate to you by the things that are made; that is thus: though that eternal Being is invisible; you see him not with your eyes; it is a being of too high an excellency ever to be seen of mortal eyes, or by the eyes of the flesh, or by external sense; yet there are things in being that are visible, and of the existence whereof you can be sure. You are sure that yourselves are, and that you are some of the things that are made; for you very well know, that you began to be, that you have not been always, and that you have been but a little while: then, I say, from that which you may be sure of, that it is a being, you may be likewise sure, there is an eternal Being that was from everlasting of itself. And I would not have you herein to debase your own minds and understandings, as if they could not be at a certainty about such a thing as this, though the matter falls not under the sight of the eye. As to what is to be inferred, to be collected and concluded, it would be too great a debasement of human nature, and the mind and spirit of a man, to suppose or imagine that this mind and spirit cannot be as certain of its object, as external sense can be of its object. You think you are very sure of what you see with your eyes, and you have reason to think you are so: and you are so. But I would have you to apprehend too, that you may be as sure of something that you only know with your mind as you can be of any thing that you see with your eyes: and you wrong your own understandings if you will not think the one sort of things to be as certain as the other sort. You think (for instance) we are all very sure that we see one another, and are here present together at this time: you see me and I see you. No man but will think this a very absolute certainty of what falls under sight. But let me appeal to you now, whether you cannot be certain of something that only falls under the view of your mind, and not under your sight at all. Are you not as sure that two and two make four, as you are that you and I see one another? the one as an object of the mind only, the other as an object of sense. And pray is not the one of these as certain as the other? Am I not as certain that two and two make four, as that we see one another? Have you not as much satisfaction of the truth of the one as of the truth of the other? Well, that being now laid, I doubt not but if you will use your understandings, you will see and confess that you are as certain, that an eternal Being is, which you see not, as you are that any being is, that you do see.

Why! how can we be as certain? you will say.

Why, plainly and shortly thus, from this consequence, If any thing is, something hath always been. Do but consider and weigh in your own minds the clearness of this

consequence. If you can be sure that something now is, you may be as sure that something hath ever been, been from eternity, or (which is all one) that there is an eternal Being. Well, but how will this consequence be made out? Why, plainly, by taking the reverse of it. Do but suppose with yourselves nothing more is; then the manifest consequence will be, that to eternity nothing can ever be, and of this (if you will think) you may be as sure, as you can of this, that two and two make four. That is, do but lay down this, and suppose it: there is nothing now in being no where, or any where; whatsoever there was, there is now nothing of one sort or another in being; you then may be sure, that to all eternity nothing can ever happen to be: for nothing can spring or start up out of nothing into being of itself. Can you be surer of any thing than of this, that if you could suppose the whole universe of being not to be, or that from eternity it was not, to all eternity it would never be, it could never be. Then how plain a consequence is this, if something now is, something hath always been; if there be any being, there is an eternal Being. For if there had been any time, or any moment, in all conceivable eternity, wherein there was nothing in being, nothing had ever come into being, or could possibly have done so. This then is the first step, there is an ETERNAL BEING, and nothing can be plainer. But now,

LECTURE IV.*

2. WE come in the next place to prove to you the *self-existence* of such a Being. There is such a Being first, and now secondly, that eternal Being must be of itself, could no other way be, but of and from itself. Now here you must conjoin these two things in your own thoughts, that so (as you will see in the sequel) every thing that is thus proved, may be found to be proved of one and the same being. Now then it is evident, that this eternal Being is the first of all beings, there can be nothing before it, and therefore it cannot have its existence from another, there being nothing before it, from whence it could have its existence, and therefore it must have its existence from itself; not by once beginning to exist, for we have shown already, it is impossible, that if there were nothing in being, any thing should of itself rise up out of nothing into being. And therefore this is such a Being, as must be understood by the excellency of its own nature, to have been always in being without beginning, and so it will appear to be an eternal Being and to be a self-existing Being both at once; or (which is all one) a necessary Being, a Being that doth not depend upon will and pleasure, as all made things do. All made things depend upon will and pleasure; "for thy pleasure they are, and were created. But the unmade Being must needs be self-existent, no way depending upon the pleasure of another, there being nothing before it, and so (which is the same thing) itself necessarily existing, as that excellency, that peculiar excellency of its own nature, to which it was simply repugnant not to exist. And so for the same reason, if there have been an eternal self-subsisting Being, there must be still an eternal self-subsisting Being, for it is upon these terms, and for that reason, for which it was impossible to it ever not to be. And so that nature which he is pleased to assume to himself is most admirably expressive of this peculiarity of his nature, "I AM THAT I AM," or simply "I AM," Exod. iii. 14. All beings besides being but (as it were) shadows of being in comparison of this. And

3. We are further to conceive and to prove concerning this Being, its causation of all things else: this is an attribute of the Divine Being, as it is itself without cause, so to be the Cause of every thing. Itself unmade, but the Maker of all things that are made. A thing the blessed God doth justly and often glory in, in sundry parts of Scripture: "The Maker of heaven and earth." The first as well as the last. He of whom and from whom all things are; and we are told again and again how, in the beginning of Genesis and the beginning of the Gospel of John, and elsewhere, to wit, by a word's speaking. He spake and they were made. He commanded and they stood forth. That there are made things is a proof to us that he was their Maker. A made thing and a maker are relatives one to another, and there can be no maker of that which was of itself. Whence should that which was made not of itself come, but from that being that was of itself?

4. We must conceive and may clearly prove from what is made, the vast *power* of the Eternal Being. The things that are made prove that he is a Being of the greatest conceivable power, the greatest that we can conceive, and indeed unspeakably greater than we can conceive. This appears in that, first, he hath made all things out of nothing: as nothing can of itself arise out of nothing, so it is the greatest power that is conceivable to bring any thing out of nothing: if all the contrivances and all the power of this world were put together to bring the least thing out of nothing, you would easily apprehend it impossible to all. If all the force that is in the whole earth, and even in the whole creation, should be exerted together to bring a grain of sand out of nothing, you would easily apprehend it would never be, and therefore how vast is that power of this Eternal Being! he to whom the eternal Godhead belongs, (as the text speaks,) to bring things into being that were not; that were nothing immediately before. But then, secondly, consider also the vastness of the creation. To bring the least thing out of nothing must require the greatest power, but to bring so great a creation as this out of nothing, is that which doth render the power of the Creator both perspicuous and admirable at once. To have such a frame of things as we behold with our eyes from day to day made to rise up out of nothing, and only by a word speaking, how perspicuous and admirable doth it evidence his infinite power! But,

5. We are to apprehend and may prove, the admirable *beneficence* of him that made them. If we cast our eye through the universe, and consider, that the first order of creatures that have life are made capable of pleasure; some kind of satisfaction to themselves, that is, that are capable of the meaner life, the sensitive life; and that the creatures beneath them are made to afford the matter of that pleasure; when it was very easily possible for a Being of vast, immense power to have made creatures only for self-torment; upon this account it appears that the whole earth, the whole creation, is full of his goodness. So that rising a little from the meanest sort and order of creatures, you immediately ascend to such a sort and order of creatures as hath, every one, its suitable delectation. That all the repasts of that life that are given to the several orders of creatures, are mingled and sweetened with so much delight, speaks all to be full of his goodness. Whatsoever is necessary for the support of it, is generally taken in with delight and complacency. If this Being who is the Author and Spring of all other beings, were not a being of admirable goodness and beneficence, it had been as easy a thing to him, that what should have been necessary for the support of inferior beings should always have been accompanied with torture as well as pleasure. That whereas we and the creatures beneath us find it needful in order to the support of life to eat and drink, he might have ordered it so that there never should have been eating and drinking without torment: now we find it is with continued pleasure, for the greater part, with all sorts of creatures whose case doth require it. And again,

6. We must understand from the things that are made, this Eternal Being to have been their *intelligent* and *designing* Maker. We are to prove this intellectuality from the things that are made; that he is an intellectual Being, that he did not give rise to this creation by an effort of vast and resistless power alone; but by a power that was guided and governed by wisdom, so as to know and design all his work throughout. And (as I have told you) it being our business in speaking to this head, to evince and make out to you an object of religion, to give you a plain and satisfactory answer to this first question, Have we an object of religion, yea or no? this is most absolutely necessary to the resolution of it. We have not an object of religion without this, that is, without the supposition of an intellectual designing Maker of all things. If we should suppose

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only an Almighty Maker of things, who made them without wisdom, without design, intending no such thing; if the effort of such a power as we could not resist, and it could not of itself withhold, had thrown up such a creation as this is, out of nothing into what it is, if that had been possible, here had been no object of worship, no object of religion, that is, there would have been nothing that would either deserve or could receive religious homage from us: nothing that could deserve it, because the thing was altogether (upon this supposition) without design. If a mighty violent storm had thrown in upon the coast some vessel full of rich treasure, and I was passing by it, and (it being without an owner, no one laying claim to it) it were thrown into my lap, would I fall down and worship the storm? though I might him that guided and directed it. Nor indeed as an undesigning cause of all things could not deserve religious homage, so neither could he receive it. It would be an absurd thing to pay a religious homage where there could be no reception of it, where no notice could be taken of it. But nothing is more evident from the things that are made, than that the Maker of them hath done all with most profound and wise counsel; he hath therein displayed an infinite understanding, and thereby made known that his understanding is infinite. By wisdom are the heavens stretched forth and the earth established and founded. Which appears several ways:

(1.) In the order which is every way observable in the creation of God. Wisdom only is the parent of order, and order the product of wisdom. It cannot be, that there should be accurate and continued order by chance. When the letters of the alphabet are put into such an order as to express such and such sense, will any man say this was by chance, and this was without design? especially when this is continued, when they are repeated over and over again, in such order as to make a volume; the very thing (I remember) that the pagan Cicero takes notice of and urgeth for the proving of a Deity, the creating of the world by a wise and designing cause, against the Epicureans, who would have it arise only out of the fortuitous jumble of several particles of matter, called atoms. "You might as well (saith he) suppose that the letters of the alphabet in great numbers shaken together in confusion, and thrown out, should fall into the order of Ennius's poems, so as of themselves without design to compose such a history as his, all in verse." When we consider the order that is between things and things, how exact a course and motion the sun, moon, and planets, and other stars, do hold, so as that a man of weak understanding can tell you at what hour, in such a month and in such a day of the month, the sun will rise and set, and so of the moon; and so (those that do observe them) of the planets, and other stars besides; and then to see the constant succession of summer and winter, spring and autumn, day and night, amongst us: whence comes all this order? What! from no designing cause? And again,

(2.) Consider the aptitude of things to their end, the several ends they are appointed to serve for; as, who can comprehend that such a thing as our eye was made for any thing else but to see with, and our foot but to walk with, and our hand but to work with, and such a thing as the ear was made for any thing else but to hear with? Who can comprehend that there should be that strange and exact aptitude in every thing for the ends and purposes that they do serve for, without a design that they should serve those purposes? And this would be a great deal more convictive, if it were so obvious to every one to take notice of and observe many things that are more latent, and lie out of common view: to think how the several veins and arteries do receive and distribute and return back again the blood from its fountain, the heart, so as continually to renew strength and vigour in the body, as the matter doth require: to think of the admirable variety and suitableness of those things that we have in our bodies, called muscles, and all the several sorts of motion that are to be performed; about six (as is observed) belonging to the eye itself, without which it were impossible it should move in the several ways it doth: and about four hundred and thirty of these in one human body. If any man did by chance see a watch, who had never seen one before; but he finds upon observation, what uses and purposes it serves for in the general, and what purposes the several parts it was composed of do serve for, in order to that general end; will he not with the greatest confidence imaginable pronounce, "this was made with a design?" or would a man blame him for his confidence? Or if a man take upon him to pretend to such an excessive measure of wit as to say, "these things serve to such a purpose, for this general end, the measuring of time: and the several parts serve for several ends, this and that motion by which the whole is made useful to that common end; but this was never made by any human art or with a design, but the several parts of which it is composed being agitated variously by the wind, or motion of the air, were thrown by mere chance into this figure, and so there resulted out of the whole such a little engine as this, that now you see serves these purposes;" who would not think that man, with his pretences to wit, a madman that should give such an account as this, how a watch came to be made, when he sees what it serves for, and what its several parts do serve for, in subserviency and reference to the common end? And which way would you judge and pronounce with confidence that such a thing was made with a design, but by having so manifest characters upon it of a designing cause? so as that every one but a madman would presently say, this was done with a design and for such a purpose. But there is no one that hath given himself but to look a little into the composition of a human body, but could see a hundred times more curiosity in so many hundred of things that go to the composition of it. As I have told you, in each several muscle of a human body there is as much curiosity as can be taken notice of in a watch, and much more in the fabric and structure of the eye and of the ear. So that nothing can be imagined a greater absurdity than to suppose such things as those that we see are made, were made without design, or otherwise than with design, and by a wise cause that was first productive of them, and continues to be productive of them in the stated way that he hath set for them. And,

(3.) We may conclude an intellectual designing cause of the things that are made, from very many of the things themselves, that not only have characters of a design upon them, and so thence appear to be made with design, but are made capable of design themselves; that is, the whole order of intelligent reasonable creatures. We are all of us convinced that we are not of ourselves, that we are made things, that our minds and spirits which we carry about with us, are made things by one unmade. It is but a little while ago that they were not. But besides, they are things themselves capable of design: you know we lay our designs this way and that, we have our contrivance what we will do to-day and to-morrow and (it may be) the third day. And whence should a designing effect proceed but from a designing cause? If there be such a thing as wisdom among the things that are made, there must certainly be a wise maker; otherwise that wisdom being itself a made thing, was made by that which had nothing in it, out of which it could arise. But (as I told you before) it is altogether impossible for something to arise out of nothing itself. Therefore wisdom being somewhat and a made thing, it doth not arise of itself out of nothing, or that is of late beginning. A little while ago they were not, how comes wisdom into such a kind of created being? Why it shows the wisdom of an uncreated Being from whence it came. And,

7. We may further hence collect the *spirituality* of this Being, that this Being is a Spirit, an eternal Spirit, an eternal mind; otherwise it were not capable of design. There are but two sorts of beings in general that we can so much as conceive of. These are mind and matter. Since we have proved to you, this Being is a designing Being, a wise intelligent Being, that proves it to be a mind and spiritual Being, because matter is capable of no such thing as design; some indeed may apprehend, that though gross matter cannot design, (a clod of clay we know can design nothing,) yet perhaps some finer sort of matter, pure and defected matter, may. But I would have it considered what nearer approach to wisdom and reason there is in a flame of fire, than in a clod of clay. Can any man conceive that there is any greater disposition to reason or the exercise of wisdom in a blast of wind or a flame of fire than in a piece of dirt? Therefore we are here to attribute to the Deity that, that God is pleased to attribute to himself; to

wit, that he is a Spirit, which further represents him to us as the Object of worship, and of suitable worship, forasmuch as he is to be worshipped, and worshipped in spirit and in truth, John iv. 24. And indeed, otherwise it had been altogether impossible that this world should be made by a cause that were not purely mental, in its own being a mental and spiritual thing; for most manifest it is, matter as such is altogether inactive; and if you could suppose never so vast a collection of mere matter, it would always remain a mere dead lump, as even the light of more intelligent and considering heathens could dictate to them: *Mens agitat molem;* it is the mind that doth actuate, and did at first, this mighty *moles* of matter, so as to bring things out of it, appearing in such an order as we do behold. And that we may not go on further in particular enumerations, which we see the apostle, in the text, cuts much shorter, summing up all in the word Godhead,

8. In the last place we may collect from the things that are made that this Being is absolutely *perfect*, or such as wherein all excellencies do concur in their highest perfection, whether they be natural, intellectual, or moral, or those that we may conceive under these distinct notions.

(1.) Natural, as life, original self-sprung life in the highest perfection of it, as it imports both a self-active and self-fruitive principle. And again, pure simplicity and uncompoundedness; the necessary exclusion of all composition that may import any thing of diminution or debasement, to that Being we are speaking of. And again, most absolute immutability and unchangeableness, as that mentioned name, "I AM THAT I AM," imports. And again, immensity, unconfinedness to any space whatsoever; so that "heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain" this Being. These are natural perfections that we must understand do belong to him. And then,

(2.) All sorts of intellectual perfection that are truly such; as perfect knowledge of all things, even of minds and spirits themselves; and of future things, that no eye can look into but the Divine eye. Most exact wisdom in all things else, as well as what appears in the making of this world, there is also requisite what doth appear in the continual government of it, in changing the times and seasons, ordering things so as that they shall hit into their proper juncture, and meet in all their necessary circumstances that were needful to concur for such and such purposes. And then,

(3.) Those that are called moral excellencies, such as truth, and righteousness, and holiness, and the like; these must be understood, upon the same grounds, all of them to meet and concur in their highest perfection in this Being. And the demonstration whereof is still too from the things that are made, because there are ideas, images, vestiges of these things to be found up and down in the creation among the things that are made. We find that some things are more fickle than others, and some things more steady. And we find (as I said before) there is such a thing as wisdom, as knowledge, as holiness, as righteousness, to be found among the creatures; and this shows all these things must be in the highest perfection in the unmade Being.

And I might add hereupon, (as that which will be most necessarily consequent,) that this Being must be *infinite* in all these perfections, because there is nothing in being, and nothing supposable ever to come into being, that doth not result and proceed from it. And that which comprehends all being, and all perfection, and all excellency, actual and possible, cannot be less than infinite; for there can be nothing more than all; but it is altogether impossible that there should be any thing, either that is in actual being now, or that can hereafter come into being, that comes not from this radical Being. This Being therefore, which must virtually comprehend all that is actual and all that is possible, within the compass of its own power, cannot be less than infinite, because there can be nothing more than all, nothing beyond all.

And for the same reason it will be most evident that this Being can be but *one*. But that I shall not now insist upon; it will fall into the discourse most suitably when we come to show, though it be essentially but *one*, it is personally *three*, and that is only to be shown from the Scripture. The *unity* of the Deity is indeed demonstrable from reason, but that there should be a *trinity* in it, is only to be known from his saying so who best knows his own nature. As "the things of a man" are only to be known by "the spirit of a man that is in him," so the things of God, and what is in his holy nature, (otherwise not revealed,) can only be known by the Spirit of God, as he shall think fit to reveal and make it known to us. But first, it will be needful to lay the foundation thereof in revealed religion, which is the great superstructure that is raised upon natural religion, or the natural notices of God, to wit, to evince to you that the Scriptures are of divine revelation, which will be the next work we have to do.

LECTURE V.*

BEFORE we come to evince to you the authority of the Scriptures, I reckon nothing can be of greater importance than to enlarge somewhat in the USE of that we have been upon; for if we let what God is pleased to make known concerning himself, his own nature and existence, slightly pass without improvement, and lose that, we lose all. All our time is lost, and all our labour is lost, if we can let so great a thing slide away without some proportionable improvement and impression: and herein lies the proper improvement of it. The state of things is sad among us, upon this account, that there is so little knowledge of God in the land; for this it hath cause to mourn, and I doubt will be made to do so; but if we had ten thousand times more of the knowledge of God than we have, if it be not a lively and impressed knowledge, it is all to no purpose; the increase of our knowledge would be but the increase of our sorrow, as it is said upon another account. You have heard from this scripture, that the existence and nature of God (though invisible) are clearly demonstrated by the things he hath made. The improvement I desire you to make of it, will be partly by way of information in some particular truths that may be deduced from it; partly by way of expostulation, touching sins repugnant hereunto; and partly by way of exhortation to agreeable duties.

I. For truths that may be collected and *inferred* hence for our information, you may take such as these:

1. That the mind of man is capable of arriving by way *of* argument unto the knowledge of God; it is capable of attaining in a way of argumentation to the knowledge of God's existence, and in great measure, of his nature too. For we are told, the eternal power and Godhead are to be clearly seen by the things that are made. Things in themselves invisible, and while they are in themselves invisible, if we are to come to the knowledge of them by the things that are made, how can that be but by way of argument? In themselves they are said to be invisible: those visible things that are beheld are not the eternal power and Godhead themselves, therefore we can come to the knowledge of the former by the latter no way but by intervening arguments, not immediately, for the things that are made are the medium. Therefore it is by way of argumentation formed from this medium, that we come to this knowledge of God's eternal power and Godhead; and this is that which concerns us very deeply to consider, that if in such a way as this we are to arrive at the knowledge of God, then it is of much importance to us to make a reflection upon ourselves, and understand that from hence much is to be learned of our own nature. If in this way we are to understand any thing of God's nature, we must by consequence understand so much of our own nature: that is, that it is a reasonable nature, that it is an intelligent nature, that it is a nature capable of improving itself in point of knowledge, by ratiocination and discourse; and even of knowledge concerning the highest and greatest, and first knowable, that is God and the very nature of God. Indeed here the foundation lies of all obligation that can be upon us to be religious, to be obedient, to be subject to the common Ruler of this world; that is, that God hath given us a nature capable of knowing him, and of arriving to this knowledge of him by this way of ratiocination, as the text

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imples: that is, to collect that there is an eternal power, and an essential Deity, from things that are made and extant to view. If we are to come by it, so we are to come by it in a reasoning way; and it is impossible for us to receive conviction concerning our own duty towards God, if we have not a right apprehension of our own natures, and what they are susceptible and capable of. God will deal with us at the last day, according to the nature that he hath given us; and therefore we ought to consider ourselves too according to that nature. There will be a judgment-day for men, when there will not for brutes; and if God will difference us in the final judgment, and doth difference us in the way of his present government, from inferior brute creatures, it concerns us to understand the difference too, and to know that we have natures capable of being so dealt with, and as God will finally deal with us; that he doth not deal with us unsuitably to the natures he hath first given us. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty hath given him understanding." And if so, then he is to be dealt with accordingly; not like a stock or a stone, or a brute creature. It is a great signification to us of the capacity of the nature of man, that it should be said here, to all those that will use their understandings, the eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen by the things he hath made. And that is one thing we have therefore to collect and infer for our own information, that the mind and understanding are capable of arriving by ratiocination and arguments to the knowledge of God. Indeed it would be a strange kind of perverseness to hesitate at the reception of this, because it is plain, that even lower things than our mental capacity are subservient to our reception of divine knowledge; for faith (that hath to do with the same kind of objects) comes by hearing: and if external sense is to be subservient to our reception of the knowledge of divine things, then certainly much more our understanding, which is a thing far nobler than our external sense, and therefore it is a higher and greater talent that we are to be accountable for. We are to be accountable for all our faculties, as so many talents that God hath intrusted us with; the faculty of seeing, the faculty of hearing, the faculty of remembering, and the like. And what, do we think, among the rest, the faculty of understanding in so plain and important a case as this, is to be exempted and left out? that God should have distinguished us by this in so great a measure from the beasts that perish, and we take no notice of the difference, and not think ourselves accountable for it? No, if we are in this way capable of coming to the knowledge of God's eternal power and Godhead, certainly this ability of coming this way to this knowledge, is that which must be strictly accounted for another day; that we have such a power and use it not, such a capacity and endowment belonging to our natures and never use it, let it lie asleep, never exert and put it forth to so high and to so great a purpose as this is. But,

2. We may further learn hence, that none who have the use of their understandings can ever be innocently ignorant of God. No, saith the text, there is so clear a representation of the eternal power and Godhead in the things that are made, that if men will not yet know God they are left without excuse, without apology, the case admits of no apology. That there should be so clear a representation to an apprehensive creature, and he will not know God; there is nothing to be said for it. There is nothing to be said why they do not know him, why they do not live in the eternal adoration of him. The matter will be resolved entirely and only into this at the last, they have not known, because they have not liked to retain God in their knowledge, as it follows after, in the 20th verse; and into that which we see in that of Ephes. iv. 18. that men are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them and the blindness of their hearts." Pray what kind of blindness is the blindness of the heart? That can be no blindness but voluntary blindness, affected blindness, chosen blindness; that men are blind because they will be blind, because they will not see. A blindness of the mere speculative understanding is quite another thing, but such a blindness as is referred to the heart, as having its seat and subject there, must mean a blindness that men voluntarily do continue themselves in, as he that stiffly and resolvedly winks that he may not see the light.

3. We may further infer hence, that the clearest rational knowledge of God is by no means so acquiesced in, as if that would serve the turn, and be answerable to the saving purposes and necessities of our souls. The rational knowledge of God; it may be had and it must be had, but it must not be rested in; for even this knowledge that doth in the means, the objective representation, lie so fairly compassable, (for the discovery is clear,) is supposed to be clear; the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen, clearly to be seen, and there may be a reception in some measure, and proportionable to the representation of the object. Besides the objective representation, there may be a subjective reception; it is a supposable thing, and it is frequent, (though not universal,) that these things here spoken of under the notion of invisibles, are not only clearly to be seen, but seen: and yet, though this knowledge do lie so fairly compassable, and may be actually obtained and received, men, for all that, may be left without excuse, for the reason referred to in the verse next but one foregoing, that is, that the truth that is received is held in unrighteousness. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." And by this truth (it is plain by what follows) is principally and chiefly meant the truth concerning the existence and nature of God, "that which may be known of God" (so it immediately follows) "is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them:" for the invisible things, such truths as these, may not only be represented but received; and being so, yet held in unrighteousness, defeated of their proper design; so that such are left without excuse; it not attaining the end that such a representation doth finally aim at. Indeed God would never be angry without a cause; therefore if they be under wrath, if the wrath of God be revealed from heaven, and flame against a wicked, atheistical world, it is plain they are without excuse.

But now, will that knowledge of God serve our turn that will only leave us inexcusable? will that answer the purposes and necessities of our souls? It is a supposable thing that the clearest merely rational knowledge of God, may but leave men without excuse, therefore somewhat more is necessary, another sort of knowledge. That which is rational, may be had and ought to be had, and we shall most dearly answer for it, if we have it not: but then when we have it, that is not enough, it is necessary, but not sufficient.

But then it may be said, What more is there wanting than to know clearly the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead? Why I shall tell you in one word: To have that clear knowledge made vital. It is not the mere clearness, but the vitality, of the knowledge of God that must do the needful work in our souls, in order to our present serving of God, and walking and conversing with him in this world, and our final felicity and blessedness with him in the other world. Light there must be, but it must be the light of life, otherwise we shall never be the better for it. A light that is not vital will serve to condemn, but only a light that is vital will serve to save. There is, it is true, a light universally shining in every intelligent mind, in every conscience of man, but it is a light so little profitable to the necessity of an immortal soul, that that light is said to be but darkness, as in that Matt. vi. 23. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" That is, serves for the advantage of souls (if they do acquiesce and take up their rest there) no more than mere darkness would have done. It is but equal to darkness, as to any thing of fruit, emolument, and profit to them. And therefore, that light which is truly salutary and finally saving, is the light of life, such is the light which comes by Christ: "He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life," John viii. 12.

But you will say, What is the difference? One man knows God, that is, he is well assured, and able rationally to prove and demonstrate to another man, the existence of God and many particular things concerning his nature; and perhaps can speak more rationally to such a purpose

than many another man that carries the reputation of a pious man, whilst perhaps this man is not so: pray what is the difference?

Why truly, this is a thing (because I must not insist in such a course as I am in, upon particulars) that may (I should think) be easily understood by any one. One, he knows the kind or nature of this or that food, or this or that drink, he is able to discourse rationally of it, and give an accurate description of the kind and properties of this or that sort of meat, or drink; another, he eats and drinks of it. Let the former discourse as long as he will, and never so understandingly and knowingly, and not eat or drink, he will be famished for all his knowledge: the other, he knows this is good meat, and this is good drink; and he eats and drinks heartily and is refreshed, and lives by it. Is not here a plain difference? Why here is the very difference as to the knowledge of God. One, he can discourse rationally and learnedly about many invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, but he never closeth with him, his soul never inwardly unites with him as his best good, never subjects to him as his highest Lord, never fears him, never loves him, never trusts in him, nor delights in him as the other doth. Do you not begin to apprehend here is a vast difference between knowledge and knowledge; one sort of the knowledge of God and another? How plain is it that with many men, the clearest and truest notions of God are only dead notions; lie dead in their minds, operate nothing there, make them no other sort of men than they would be, if they knew no such thing; or if they thought or believed quite the contrary! Take out all those notions of God which some men have in their minds, and put in the room of them quite contrary notions, a scheme of mere atheism, and the men are found not at all to differ. That man whose head before was full of atheism, is just the same man as when his head was full of atheism. There is knowledge, but no vitality; all his notions of God lie dead, and so are as if they were not. But here is the great difference, when the light of life concerning God and the invisible things of God comes into the soul of a man, when these vital beams strike into the very centre of a man's heart, that the man not only hath light, about these things, but is light. A wicked man hath light, but it is said of a good man, a regenerate man, he is light. "Ye were darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord:" it hath quite altered his temper, begot a new frame and habit in his soul: that is, the knowledge of God hath begot an impression of godliness; and this is that you are to be driving at, and not to take up with any knowledge of God short of this. "He hath given us an understanding to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true," 1 John v. 20. We know him, and by that knowledge are wrought into a vital union. "We are in him, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

But it may be said, If such a further superadded knowledge of God be so necessary, what is the former rational knowledge worth? what doth it signify? and what doth it serve for?

Why let me bring you back to the former illustration that I gave you before, about the knowledge of meat and drink. You see a plain difference between barely knowing that this is good and useful food, that would be proper and suitable drink; and knowing the same thing by taste and reception in order to nutrition: there is a very plain difference. But what! is the former knowledge therefore useless? that is, to know that this is good meat and drink, is it useless? Is it not a very necessary knowledge that a man should know what is fit to be eaten and drank and what not? If you had not so much knowledge of the former sort as to be able to say, "this is good food which, being duly received, may do me good; and that is poison; if I meddle with it, it will destroy me;" you could not distinguish bread and a stone; you could make no distinction. In what a case were that man in, that did not know bread and a stone asunder! So here, without such a rational knowledge of God, you cannot understand why one ought to be worshipped more than another, why more to be trusted, more to be loved than another. If you had not that former knowledge of God, you would not be able to distinguish between a proper object of adoration. But what can be plainer than this, that many things may be necessary for such and such a purpose, that yet are not sufficient for that purpose? We must distinguish between necessity and sufficiency. A rational knowledge of God is necessary; it doth not therefore follow that it is sufficient. If one of you did design, in coming hither, to come to the seat where you use to sit, it is necessary that in order to your coming to the seat, that you come to the door. But is therefore coming to the door sufficient? No, you cannot come to your seat unless you come to the door, but it doth not therefore follow that you had nothing more to do, when you came hither to hear a sermon, than only just to come to the door. Pray apprehend this, that many things are necessary that are not enough. It is necessary that you have this rational knowledge of God as the door, as an intermission into that vital unitive knowledge of him which is also necessary and which only is sufficient. And if the former of these be aimed at, with a design for the latter, with an humble dependence and sense of our own nothingness, blessing God that he is pleased, in that natural way, to reveal so much of himself, but also humbly craving, "Lord, do not leave me here, let this vital light shine into my dark soul;" where his further communications are not despised, they will be had; where they are valued, where they are sought, an inquiring soul will not be left destitute. If indeed you think that your case is well already, and that you need no more of God, and that all is well enough, you may sit still and perish till you sink into perdition. But know that the benignity of his nature, and the methods he hath set on foot for the recovery and saving of lost sinners, will not let him throw away any soul that doth cry after him; will not hide himself from them that value the vital, efficacious, transforming knowledge of him as life itself, and beyond this natural life, which is the true sense of every sincere soul.

4. We may collect hence, that the objection against the acknowledgment of a Deity, from his invisibility, must be most absurd, and contemptibly weak and silly. Nothing can be more so; "for the invisible things of him are clearly seen by the things that are made." Therefore, nothing can be more foolish than for one to say, "I will believe there is no God, because I see him not: I see not the brightness of the appearance of his glory that should make me apprehend such a Being perfect, superior to, and more excellent than, all other that I have had the knowledge of:" nothing can be more childish than this, for it is very plain that if God could be seen, he could not be God. The thing carries a repugnancy in itself; so mean a nature as can be visible cannot be the Divine nature. As a heathen said, we are not to ascribe unto God body, or colour, or quantity, or any such thing that belongs to objects that fall under our sense. "If we know (saith he) that there is a corporeal nature, and if we know that there is an incorporeal nature, in which of these shall we place the Divine Being? Certainly (saith he) in the incorporeal nature, which is higher and more excellent than to be seen with eyes, or to be heard with ears, or felt with hands, or expressed with human voice." It was the saying of Maximus Tyrius, the heathen philosopher. And I pray you, Why should we be so averse to the entertainment and reception of invisibles in our minds? For which is nearer akin to our minds, invisible things, or visible? Are not our minds invisible? He thinks with himself, "I am not to acknowledge a Deity unless I see him." Pray what is it in you that thinks so, that is so sensible; and capable of thinking at all? Did you ever see your own souls? Did you ever see your own minds? Are not we, as to the most noble and excellent part of ourselves, rather to be accounted ourselves among invisibles than among visibles? It was the saying of a poor pagan, when the season of his dying approached, and his friends about him were discoursing of his burial: "Bury me," saith he, "do you talk of burying me? what do you think this body is to me? Do with it when I am gone what you please: if you can catch me, bury me, but you shall never do that, for do you think this body is me?" And pray will you think so basely of yourselves as that this body is you? If it be not, it is a mind, a spirit, a soul in you, that is you: and is not that nearer of kin, to invisible things than visible? That there

should be an averseness and shyness to entertain in our minds invisible things because they are invisible, when our minds themselves are invisible, nothing can be more unaccountable and unreasonable than this. It shows us to be very low sunk, that the minds and spirits of men are become strangely degenerate things, when any thing because it is invisible is therefore reckoned unsuitable to them, for a reason for which they should be reckoned most of all suitable. And alas! how little things are we capable of comprehending by our sight, in comparison of the things that we cannot see! Is our sight fit to be the measure of all realities? How small a part of this universe can we measure with our eye! and must all the rest, because we see it not, go for just nothing? Surely there are unspeakably greater things which we see not, than there are that we see. Therefore a thing should not be reckoned less real, or less considerable, or less excellent, because it is invisible to us, that is, to the eye of our flesh; but unspeakably the more excellent and great for that very reason, for its not being seen.

5. We may hence learn the unjust and mad presumption that is in sin. When the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen in the things that are made, that is, they are clearly to be seen by the things that are made, that they have an invisible Maker, and the eternal power and Godhead of this their Maker is clearly to be seen, then how unjust and mad a presumption is it to sin! For is not that an affront to thy Maker? What doth sin signify but ungovernableness to him that hath power to govern me? And who hath a right to govern you, if not he that made you out of nothing? Are not you one of the things that were made? and who therefore shows the eternal power and Godhead of your Maker? How unjust a presumption then is it to sin! But how mad a presumption is it besides! That is, to consider a world of sinful creatures in an apostacy from God and a rebellion against him: from whom have they revolted? against whom have they rebelled? They are things that are made, that have rebelled against him that made them. An amazing thing, to consider the inhabitants of this world, the intelligent inhabitants of it! They are a company of made things, and this world that they inhabit is a made thing. A made thing! what doth that signify? Why a thing depending upon will and pleasure; a thing that may be, or not be; a thing that may continue in being or be thrown into nothing, thrown into destruction the next moment. Why here is a company of creatures, that have taken upon them to revolt from their Maker, to rebel against him that made them. A strange thing! they have not (as the expression is) a footing for their feet; they are made things, and this world a made thing; all which may be swept away with a breath. For men to take upon them to rise up against the authority of him that made them, when they cannot command a breath, not so much as a breath: for that which hath been made, how presently can he unmake it! That which hath been made by him can be unmade by him in a moment: all this world gone in a moment: how easily may that be done by him! Therefore sin, considered in its general nature, is the most unjust and mad presumption that ever could enter into the mind of a rational creature; unjust towards God, and mad as to ourselves. Oh! think whither we are sunk, and what a sort of creatures we are become, and how admirable the Divine patience is, that lets such a sort of creatures as we are live in this world; a world which we did not furnish, which we did not make, and which he can in a breath blow away into nothing, as he raised it up out of nothing, by a breath the other way.

6. See here the admirable greatness of God. Oh! how we should hence apprehend and adore the Divine greatness! The things that are made clearly demonstrate his invisible power and Godhead: and do but consider these two things—the greatness of the things that are made, and —how little they yet represent God. And then see what cause we have from hence to admire his most adorable greatness.

(1.) How great the things are that are made. Alas, what a spot, a point, is this earth of ours in comparison of the universe! If our thoughts should go no further than our own vortex, in which the sun, and moon, and planets have their course, how much more unmeasureable to our thoughts is that vortex than this earth of ours! This earth, in comparison of that vortex, is no more than a spot to the universe. It is a far less considerable point to the whole universe than this earth is to our vortex, or that circle that doth immediately encompass it. And then to think of the vastness of this universe; all which, and all that it contains, are but things that are made. How mighty a One then is their Maker, their invisible Maker! The greatness of the creation gives us a great representation of the greatness of the Creator. But it adds unspeakably more if,

(2.) We consider, that yet all which creation can represent unto us of the Divine Being, is a mere nothing in comparison of what it represents not: for there is a whole infinitude of being besides, that was from eternity, everlasting of itself. And it is but a minute effort of the Divine eternal power that is seen in this universe; for all the universe is but a finite thing, as great as it can be supposed to be, it is still but a finite thing: but then, there is an infinity of being besides, that is from all eternity, the being of the invisible God. Take this whole created universe, and it is but a shadow in comparison of "I AM." That Being that claims to itself the name of "I AM," and there is nothing besides ME; nothing fit to be called being besides my own: for all made being is but at will and pleasure, raised up by a breath, and capable of being reduced to nothing by a breath. The whole creation, the whole universe, but a bubble created by the breath of the Almighty; and may be let to sink again, if he please, by the retraction or withdrawing of that breath. If then the things made clearly demonstrate the invisible things; even the eternal power and Godhead of their Maker, how great a one is HE, first, that could make so great a world as this, and yet, secondly, when that is done, it can represent so little of him! There is yet an infinitude of being appropriate to himself. Besides, how little a portion do we take up of him, as it is said, Job xxvi. 5—14. when we view his ways, take notice of such and such things in the course of nature, (as he here speaks of,) how "hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering;" how "he stretcheth the north over the empty place," how "he collects the waters into the clouds, and the clouds are not rent under them: these (saith he) are part of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him?" Oh! how great a thing were it, if we did but once learn to apprehend the difference between beings unmade and made, between made beings and the eternal unmade Being. And again,

7. We may learn hence the impudency of the temper, the deceiver and the destroyer (as much as in him lies) of the souls of men; that he should ever go about to make any one believe that there is not a God. How strange impudency is it, that he should ever presume he can make an intelligent mind apprehend that there is not a God, when the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, are so clearly seen in the things that are made! Think of this if any of you are vexed at any time (as perhaps many of you may) with malicious injections from that wicked one, that would fain make you believe there is no God; why turn upon him with disdain: "Thou impudent liar, wouldst thou make me believe against my own eyes, against the clear apprehensions of my own mind? What, doth not every thing I see, doth not every thing I hear, proclaim the Godhead to me? could there be any thing of being, any thing of motion, any thing of life through this whole creation, if there were not an original Author of all this? Doth not every being speak a first being, and all wisdom speak the first wisdom, and all love the first love, and all goodness speak the first goodness? Can any thing of itself come out of nothing? Nothing is more obvious to a considering mind (as hath been urged before) than that we can be surer of nothing than we are of this—that suppose nothing at all were in being, to eternity nothing could ever be in being. But something is in being now: and if that be the account that is to be given, how there comes to be any thing in being; that is, that there hath been something eternally in being, then that which was eternally in being is the cause of all things that are in being. The cause that was eternally in being, must bear proportion to the effect. If wisdom and goodness are to be found amongst made things, they are not

nothing; you cannot say that wisdom is nothing, and knowledge nothing, justice nothing, for then there would be no difference between a wise man and a fool. If they are something, they could not of themselves come out of nothing; therefore there must have been eternal goodness, wisdom, and life; that that in itself lived, and lives to all eternity: for you see there are such things as these among what is made. Why then, it is fit to retort upon the tempter with disdain, "Dost thou go about to make me believe, against the clear light of my own mind, that there is not a God, when it is clearly seen from the things that are made?" If there were nothing else, this proves the eternal Being, that there must be an eternal Cause that hath in it something proportionable to the visible effects that are to be seen, impressed even upon the things that are made. Characters appearing in the effect must have something correspondent to them in their cause, otherwise something must come of itself out of nothing, which is simply the most impossible thing that can be thought. I would only add this in the last place,

8. Whosoever they are that do terminate their thoughts upon this visible world, and look no further, they resist, nay (as much as in them is) defeat and destroy the very design of the creation. Why hath God made such a world as this, and set such creatures as we in it? It is, that this world may be an extant, continual standing representation to us, an evidence, a proof of his invisible eternal power and Godhead who made it. We have our concerns and business lying here, within this visible world, from day to day; here we are too apt to take up our thoughts, our desires, our designs; they terminate upon this visible world. If we let them do so, if we tolerate ourselves in such a course as this, it is (as much as in us is) to defeat and destroy the design of the creation. God hath designed this visible frame of things to be to us a continual monument and representation of himself; but we look to the things that are made, and there we let our eyes stay and terminate, and never look through them to that which is unmade. This would be a like case, as if one should have a very curious perspective put into his hands, that was very much adorned and beautified with every thing of external ornature that art could confer upon it, and holds it in his hand, turns it this way and that, and views it on every side for a long time together, and then lays it aside, never looks through it; he would see a vast country that now appears to him nothing else but a dark shadow: just so men deal with this visible creation and frame of things; they look upon it, take notice of the variety of creatures that are in it, they look on every side of this visible world, as it doth apply itself to them, and as they have opportunity to view the things therein; but whereas it was intended as a perspective, that they might look through it into the invisible power and Godhead of him that made all, this never comes into their minds. How preposterous a course is this! It is little apprehended how guilty we make ourselves in this kind, every day, when we let our minds stay upon any creature of God, this or that man or woman, or house or star, (if we should go so high,) and never think of God; while they are all made things, that tend to represent to us their Maker. Oh! how little is the end answered and considered, why we have such a frame of things set in view and kept in view continually before us, that we might look through them and adore, look up and adore, that we might through all view and behold the great Author of all, and bow our heads before him. When we eat and drink, and never think of God, commend the food and drink, and never think of God; here we take up with the creature, the made thing, and never consider the unmade Maker of it and of us. The end is defeated and lost, for which this world was made and we placed in it, while we look not through things visible and made, unto him that is invisible and unmade.

LECTURE VI.*

II. There are hereupon most apparent and very blamable things, about which it is needful that we should be *expostulated* with, and that we do expostulate with ourselves concerning them: otherwise it would be in vain that another should reprove us, if we be not brought by it to reprove ourselves; or that another should expostulate with our own souls. And this we should do upon that which hath been opened and improved in respect of such things as these: as,

1. Why are we yet so much in doubt concerning what is so clearly demonstrable? the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, which are things so clearly seen (though they are in themselves invisible) by visible effects, by things that are made. Why are our minds yet pendulous and in suspense about so very plain and demonstrable things? For what, can it enter into our minds to think this world rose up out of itself, without a Maker, out of nothing? Who of us can endure (if he consider) the gross absurdity of such a thought? And since we may so easily be at a certainty, why are we not at certainty in so plain a case? why do not our minds come to a settlement? why are they so off and on? why do we hover and halt between two opinions, as we did not know whether God be God, yea or no? or whether he were to be stuck to as such? as the prophet deals with that people so much divided in opinion between God and Baal. But indeed ours would be a worse division and more absurd, for if we are divided in our own minds in this case, it must be between a God and no God. There was no question among them, but there was and must be some God or other, but only the question was, whether that God the people owned, or another, were the God; that was all the doubt, but this is a much wider case, when the question is between a God and no God; and nothing can be more evident than the things that are made, must have had some maker and author. It is a comfortable thing to ourselves to feel the ground firm under us as to this first and deepest fundamental; a very comfortable thing for us to feel that it shakes not. But know withal, it is a very dutiful thing towards our Maker to be at a point, and not to be always disputing, or to have perpetual disceptations within ourselves, about that which is prerequisite to our duty; for that suspends all duty, and lays a restraint upon every thing of duty towards him; while we waver and hover in our spirits about so plain a thing as this. Let us be all at a certainty, when we may be so easily at a certainty; as certain (as I have urged to you) about this as we can be of any thing whatsoever; for we cannot be more certain of any thing than we can be of this, that we ourselves are made things; for whatsoever is unmade must have been from everlasting, inasmuch as nothing that is made but it hath received a beginning of being. Whatsoever is unmade must have no beginning of being, must have been from everlasting. But can you be surer of any thing than that you have not been from everlasting? You know you have not been from everlasting, therefore you are made things. And again; you cannot be surer of any thing than you are of this, that you are such a sort of made things as can think, as have a power of thought; you are not more sure that you can see, than you are that you can think, and therefore you do know and are sure, that you have minds and spirits about you; for you are sure that flesh and blood and bones cannot think; you cannot be surer of any thing than you are of this, that this bulk of a body of yours cannot exercise a thought. Well then, if you be a made sort of thing, and you find you have a power of thought belonging to you, and therefore that you have a mind and spirit belonging to you, you must then have proceeded from an unmade mind and Spirit, an unmade self-subsisting mind and Spirit; and this is God, and can be nothing but God. This is all as plain as any thing is that we see with our eyes, therefore do not pretend to be uncertain in a matter wherein it is so easy to you to be at a certainty, when so much also doth depend upon it. And blame yourselves for this, if you have been pendulous in so plain a case hitherto. Why am I in doubt when I should have been loving, serving, fearing, and adoring this invisible Deity all this while? Why have I suffered doubts to hang on my mind in so plain a case? And,

2. Let us expostulate with ourselves about this, that our apprehensions of the eternal God are so feeble and languid

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and ineffectual as they have been hitherto, and for the most part (the Lord knows) yet are; that our minds have not only been in a dubious uncertainty, but that the apprehensions we have had, have had so little of vitality and efficacy and power in them, to form our spirits and govern our way and course agreeably thereunto. For, (as was told you by way of inference,) there needs not only clear knowledge, but vital knowledge of the Deity. And now let me a little further insist upon it, that is, that there is something more requisite than certainty, somewhat besides a certainty of apprehension and knowledge about it. Such things as there are to be superadded thereto; that is, efficacy, energy, and operative power. I may be certain of those things that do concern me God-ward, or that do concern me in reference to my soul, and yet feel little of efficacy and power in the most certain and undoubting thoughts that I can have about such things; that is, though I may have as great a certainty about the objects of my mind as I can have about the objects of sense; yet the objects of sense do always strike with more efficacy than the objects of the mind do. Experience speaks this plainly, and I need but appeal to every one's experience about it. I might illustrate it to you by a very plain and obvious instance or two, how much more the things that fall under present sense do affect us, than the things do that fall not under sense. Though we are not more certain about the one than we are about the other. As in reference to these bodies of ours, we are not more certain that we do at present feel any thing, whether it be grateful or ungrateful to our sense, than we are certain that at one time or other we shall die. But is there any one that doth sensibly fear death, and set himself thereupon to prepare for it, as he doth feel pain when that is upon him? Therefore I say, we do need something to be superadded to our certainty to enliven our apprehensions, a power and energy is needful to be superadded to them. As I told you before, we are as certain we can think, as we are certain we can see; we are not more sure we can see with our eye, than we are sure that we can think with our minds; yet the things we do see with our eyes, do affect us more than the things we only apprehend with our minds; therefore do we need to have a great deal of efficacy and power superadded to the apprehensions of our minds concerning the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead. And since it is plain we do need it, that is, that such apprehensions often lie in our minds, and work nothing; but the case is with us as if we had them not, as if our minds were vacant of such apprehensions: surely we should not lie still patient in such a case as this; when these apprehensions of God are the most important that can have place in our minds. Why are we so pleased with ourselves, and so much at ease concerning this thing, that our apprehensions of the Godhead should have so little efficacy with them as they have to command our spirits? It is a relievable case, as well as there is a necessity there should be a relief sought and had in it. If he is pleased to shine into our minds himself, then there will be efficacy go with our certainty; when he is pleased to strike through the consistent darkness that doth inwrap our hearts, and to shine into our hearts by giving us the light of the knowledge of his own glory, then there will be power in our apprehensions of the invisible God, and then in his light we shall see light, as in that Psalm xxxvi. 9. Therefore, for this should we supplicate every day more earnestly than we do for daily bread; "I need thy delivering influence, O Lord, to quicken dead notions of things that lie in my mind, that they may have power and be operative in me, as much as I need daily bread, and momently breath." This should be our sense, and with waiting and craving eyes should we be looking up daily and continually; for it is dutiful, that this should be the posture of made spirits towards the unmade Spirit, of produced spirits towards their great Parent, the original universal Spirit that is the Parent of all; that they may be continually maintained and held in life by vital communications from himself: this he would take well; it is childlike, it is filial deportment towards the supreme, original, eternal Spirit, whose offspring their spirits are. A parent is pleased to have a child express and own his dependance upon him. When we cut off these spirits of ours from the unmade eternal Spirit, this is apostacy, disloyalty; this is to set up ourselves and for ourselves, and no wonder if we languish and perish by it. And,

3. We should expostulate with ourselves about our so frequent unmindfulness of the invisible eternal God, when we have so much occasion to mind him every hour; for that things that are made, reveal him to us continually; we cannot open our eyes, but we must see something or other the should put us in mind of God: we shall behold some of the made things, that should be still putting us in mind of their Maker, theirs and ours. And,

4. Why are we so little conversant with God, so unconversable towards him, when he is continually surrounding us, compassing us about before and behind, in all the made things which do encompass us? God is in them, or they are all in him, all living, and moving, and having their being in him. This conversableness with God, or a disposition of spirit to converse with him, it imports more than bare minding of him, thinking of him; it carries in it an application of faith towards him. It is a thing that involves complacency in the nature of it, as you can any of you easily apprehend. I converse electively with whom or what I converse with, out of choice, and for a complacential inclination of my own mind. Oh! why is there no more of this with us towards God, the unmade and eternal Being, while he continually besets us in the things that are made, and who is nearer to us than we are to ourselves! He is in us if we would but look in, and meet with him, and apply ourselves to him. It was first the saying of a heathen, (taken up since and improved by many in the Christian church, both ancient and modern writers,) "God is more inward to us, than we are to ourselves, and yet we will not converse with him." It was Plato's saying first. But will we not converse with him? How inexcusable a thing is this, his own creature to be a stranger to him; a creature that he made! "I that have made thee, (may he say,) and made thee as thou art, given thee a reasonable, intelligent, apprehensive, immortal mind and spirit, and wilt thou not know me? wilt thou not converse with me? wilt thou not acquaint thyself with me? wilt thou not lead thy life with me?" What have we to say to this?

5. Why do we not more frequently do him homage, when we dwell in a world that is all his? Every thing that we can use and enjoy in it, are all made things, and made by him, and this world that contains and inwraps them all, itself a made thing, and we are made things; why are we not more frequently doing him homage? We can take up nothing, we can use nothing, we can enjoy nothing in all this whole world but what he hath made. And what! not do him homage, deep, inward, profound homage? how inexcusable is this! We know we did not make or furnish this world; we were brought into it, placed in it, and we find ourselves supplied with all things necessary for our support and for our accommodation, suitable to that sort of being that God hath given us. And shall we not do him frequent homage? Suppose a man should rush into one of your houses and set himself by your fire-side, and make use of such and such provisions of your house, as he can lay his hands on, and take no notice of you, would you long bear so barbarous a usage as this? And is not this the very case? You come here into this world that God hath made, and not you; and every thing is his that you can lay your hands upon, or make any use of; and to take up and use this and the other thing, and never look up, or not often look up to him: or not look up with a more delightful sense of your obligation to him, than (God knows) is too common with us; how can we defend ourselves against our own thoughts, against our own reasonings, in this case? And further,

6. Why do we drive designs here in this world, apart from him, without reference to him? This, and that, and the other thing I do to please myself, or to advance myself, without any thoughts of God, without any referring to him. I lay my designs without him; I will go to such and such a place, I will abide there so long, I will there do so and so, I will "buy and sell and get gain," when we "ought to say, If the Lord will, I will do so and so." He that is the Author and Lord of all this made world, what! do you think to move to and fro in it without reference to him, and drive designs for yourselves apart from him? Sure, the forming of a design should always be accompanied

with an act of worship, there should still be a dedicating of our designs to him, as well as of ourselves: for what is plainer, than that he that is the Alpha must be the Omega too? Hath he not made himself known to us by those conjunct titles, the first and the last? "Of him, and by him, and to him are all things," that he alone might have the glory. There should be a tribute of glory paid him, in every thing we design, and more especially in reference to his design. When we come to take notice of that great design of his, oh! how it might make our hearts shake within us, to think what sort of acknowledgments God hath in this world, even in that part of the world that is called Christian, in reference to some of the great things, and even the greatest thing that ever was done since there was such a world in being. That is, that extraordinary descent of God into the world, in the person of his own Son, taking upon him human flesh, becoming the Emmanuel, the Divine nature, the invisible Godhead, in the second person, uniting itself with the manhood. Here are acknowledgments of this made amongst us; but it might make our hearts shake within us, to think of what kind. That is, according to the usage of too many, the descent of our blessed Lord, the eternal Word, in human flesh, they seem to think (that their practice expresseth) that the nativity of our Lord is not to be celebrated fitly but by a debauch; they cannot fitly celebrate the nativity of Christ, but by being drunk. Monstrous wickedness! To think that the great God is to be worshipped so unsuitably to himself; when he is to be made the end of all things. The Former of all things; how is he made the end, otherwise than as he is glorified? But to glorify him, to pretend to glorify him, by breaking his laws, by violating his known and most sacred precepts! By breaking the law, dishonourest thou God? Rom. ii. 23. That was bad enough; but it is much worse, by breaking the law, to dishonour God under the pretence of doing him honour, to think that I honour him by so palpably dishonouring him. And,

7. Why are we so prone to blame and censure the methods of his government over this world, which he hath made, and when by it, and the things in it that he hath made, he is proclaiming to us his eternal power and Godhead? Is he not able wisely and well to govern his own creation? Could he bring such a world as this out of nothing into being, and doth he not know what to do with it, now he hath made it, and how to order the concerns of it? Oh! how little is God reverenced as the Creator and Former of all things, when we take upon us to censure, and blame, and tax his doings? Why do we strive with him, when he gives not account of any of his matters? Job xxxiii. 13. He is far above it. And like it is that, xl. 2. "Shall he that contends with the Almighty, instruct him? He that reproves God, let him answer it." What! for man to take upon him to reprove God, to say he might have ordered things better, so and so, things might have been brought about in a fitter season, might have been done sooner, they might have been compassed by fitter methods, by more suitable instruments, and the like. Sure we forget ourselves when we consider not, that "the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead," are all testified by the things that are made. And what! cannot "the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead," guide and manage things more wisely than we? "Wo to him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth," Isaiah xlv. 9. Let them choose their match. And those many expressions we have from himself in the latter end of the book of Job; "Canst thou do so and so?" doth intimate this all along to them and to us, that unless we could do such and such things; unless we could lay the foundation of such a world as this; unless we could stretch out such another heaven, and form and establish such another earth; unless we could span the heavens with our hands, and measure the dust of the earth, and gather the winds in our fists, and set bounds and limits to the sea as we please: "You are not my match (saith God) unless you can do such and such things. And if you are not my match, why will you strive with me? why will you contend with me? why should your wisdom vie with mine, and your will with mine, and your interest with mine?" And again,

8. Why do we so little covet him for our portion, who is plainly proved by the things that are made to comprehend in himself, virtually, all the perfections of this world, and formally, infinitely more? For there must be infinitely more in himself than is laid out on creation. Do you think he did exhaust himself in making such a world as this? The world when all is done is but a finite thing, all that is made is but finite, but that which is unmade is still infinite. He that comprehends in himself all excellency, all goodness, all perfection, created and uncreated, must certainly be a sufficient portion for us. The absolutely perfect Being, or (which is all one in Scripture) God all-sufficient, must be a competent satisfying portion (one would think) for any one. Why then do we not covet him more for our portion? why is this not more the sense of our souls, "Whom have I heaven but thee? and who is there on earth, that can come in comparison with thee?" "When heaven and earth are all made things and made by thee, there must be in thee infinitely more than in both." But when we take up with so mean and little things in our thoughts, (inasmuch as we know it belongs to the Deity to be the portion and blessedness of a soul,) let us hereupon think with ourselves, what an affront we put upon the infinite eternal Godhead, to think it possible for any creature to fill up his room. It is a most insolent affront to the infinite eternal God, to think that any creature can be to you instead of God: an affront that you can never expiate with your blood. This is to undeify him. Him, whom in all your thoughts you should deify, you nullify; for make him any thing less than God, and you make him nothing. And,

9. Why do we no more fear him as an enemy, when he hath demonstrated his eternal power and Godhead by the things that are made? and all the invisible things that belong to his nature besides, are all demonstrated by the things that are made? Why do we not more fear to have such a one for our enemy? "Fear ye not me, (saith the Lord,) who hath bounded the sea that it cannot pass; and though the waves thereof toss themselves they cannot go over?" giving that one instance, when he could have given thousands as great, in that 5th Jeremiah:) "what stupid creatures are you that you will not fear me, when ye have such an instance as this and thousands more always in view before you, of my invisible eternal Godhead, that hath in time displayed and showed itself forth! And,

10. Lastly, Why are we so prone to fear men, the creatures of God, while we so little fear and stand in awe of him? It is still a wrong to our Maker, a wrong done to God, considered under the notion of Creator. Look to that, Isa. li. 12. "Who art thou, that art afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man that shall be as grass? and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, who stretched forth the heavens?" inasmuch as he is the Maker and Lord of all. This shows that it is an insolency against him and the rights of his Godhead, to place your supreme fear on any thing besides him. Therefore the form of speech there is very remarkable, "Who art thou, that art afraid of a man?" The form of speech is reprehensive and expostulatory, "Who art thou?" When people find themselves seized with any immoderate fears, they are wont to pity themselves, and to look upon it as an infelicity: but they forget it is a crime; and those words represent it as a crime, "Who art thou that art afraid—who art thou?" What doth that signify? Why, it signifies thus much, Thou takest too much upon thee, while thou thinkest thou art only to be pitied; thou dost little consider how faulty thou art, thou dost transpose the government, thou deposest the Lord thy Maker, and settest up a mortal thing upon his throne. Who art thou that takest upon thee at this rate, to undeify God and deify the creature, a mortal worm? Who art thou that turnest all things upside down, to depress the Maker and to exalt a little piece of animated clay into his place? This is very deeply to be considered, that to have our spirits more liable to be awed by a man, a mortal thing, than by the eternal immortal God, is a doing violence and a wrong to, and encroaching upon the rights of the eternal Godhead. Well now, about such things as these we should expostulate with ourselves.

III. I shall shut up all with some particulars of most apparent duty, to which we need to be exhorted in reference to what hath been hitherto said. As,

I. Since "the invisible things of God, his eternal power

and Godhead," are so clearly demonstrable by the things that are made, let us learn more to contemplate these invisible things of God, in the visible things that we have before our eyes: and know that it is an argument of very great spirituality so to do. Let the examples we have in Scripture engage our minds more this way. To look over such Psalms as Psalm the 8th, the 104th, and the 148th, all full of admiration of the works of God: and a great many more, with multitudes of passages of Scripture besides in other places; showing how much the spirits of the saints of old have been exercised and taken up in admiring God upon those conspicuous appearances, that have been of his glory in the creation. I doubt there is altogether a fault among us that we so little apply our minds this way. But know it is our duty to be exercised in it, to take times on purpose to contemplate God in the creature, to behold and view the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, in the things that are made. And,

2. Hereupon joyfully acknowledge this God for your God; considering the case of the blinded besotted pagans, who worship stocks and stones for deities, or the sun, moon, and stars; who pray to a god that cannot save: the generality of the more besotted of them; though it be true, indeed, among pagans there have been those that have been much wiser and of more refined minds. But since it hath pleased God more expressly to manifest himself to you, joyfully acknowledge it, as his people of old have been wont to do. "Their gods are idols, the works of men's hands; but our God made the heavens." And as it is in that Jer. x. 11. "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens." When there are such multitudes of fictitious deities under a doom to perish, all the idols of this world, and this world itself, that great idol, that is most set up and exalted against God; oh! do you joyfully acknowledge this God for your God, that you are sure is the only living and true God. Our God that made the heavens; own your relation to him, walk in his name, as "all people will do, every one in the name of his God."

3. Resign and devote yourselves absolutely to him, for you are made things, and he is your Maker. And can one have a greater right in any thing than that which he hath made, and made out of nothing? not given it an external accidental form only, but given it its whole being. And so is the matter between him and you. Wherefore it is to God you must give yourselves: give him your whole being, body and soul and all that you have; for it is all but made, and it is the right and property of him that made you.

4. Trust in him with all your hearts, commit yourselves entirely and cheerfully to him. Who would scruple to do so to so kind and benign a Maker? for was it not in his choice and power once, whether he would have made you or not? was it not determinate by him, by his pleasure, whether you should be or not be? If you have devoted yourselves to him, so as to be his by choice and consent, as well as by natural right, know then that you have all the encouragement in the world to intrust and commit yourselves to him as to a faithful Creator; as the expression is 1 Pet. iv. 19. This is a thing not enough understood, the obligation that lies upon us to own God more frequently and solemnly, under the notion of our Creator. We think the notion wherein we should own him, more to be that of a Father, and as in Christ he hath been a Redeemer to us; but these things are not to exclude one another by any means. It is very true indeed, that all the interest we had in him as Creator, was lost and forfeited by the apostacy: but that matter being, by the Redeemer, made up between him and all those that, in the Redeemer, accept him and take him for their God, we are not now to think his Creatorship is to be absorbed and swallowed up in any other supervening notion, by any means. We are now, by redeeming grace and mercy, brought to that state and pass, that we may own him comfortably as a Creator again. So that whereas we had lost all right and interest in him as such, by our apostacy; a restitution being made, now we are to commit ourselves to him, as a faithful Creator. Faithfulness hath reference to a promise, and a covenant. We are to commit ourselves now to him as a Creator, under obligation. There was a covenant made at first, between himself and his innocent creature; that covenant was broken by the apostacy; so that he could be challenged upon faithfulness no longer. But now, that matter being composed and made up by the Redeemer, by a Mediator, there is a new covenant made, and now faithfulness hath place in reference to him as a Creator, and we are to own him as such, and trust in him, and commit ourselves to him as such. And,

5. You should hereupon cease from solicitude about the issue of things in reference to yourselves, or in reference to the whole community that you profess to be of, even that people that he hath in this world. Solicitude should cease about private and more public concerns; you should reckon that yourselves and all things are in the best hands in which they could lie, or into which they could be put. In reference to things that relate to yourselves, you have committed yourselves to him, devoted yourselves, intrusted yourselves to him upon invitation; not presumptuously, but as being warranted and encouraged by himself. Then it is a wrong to him to be anxious what he will do with you. What! will he not show mercy to the soul he hath made? Indeed, his having made it, if there be no expiation of sin, would have availed nothing; for there is a case when "he that made them would not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour," Isa. xxvii. 11.

That is, when they are in rebellion against him and will not be reconciled to him; but when a reconciliation is brought about, and you have surrendered to him the soul that he hath made, it is a great iniquity and wrong to him to suppose, that he will not now deal with you as a faithful Creator. Therefore, though now you know your soul is lodged in flesh, and within a little while this mortal frame must drop in pieces and fall into the dust, yet never be solicitous what he will do with your soul, or what will become of it after all: you do betrust, you have committed it to him, who is the most absolutely perfect God, and the most absolutely perfect Being. All things that he hath made demonstrate him to be so; and who would be afraid to let his soul rest in the midst of infinite, immense goodness? "His soul shall dwell at ease;" as it is said of one that fears God, but very faintly, and beneath the significancy of that expression, it is rendered, Psalm xxv. 13. "His soul shall dwell in goodness (that is the expression) who feareth God," shall take up its rest, sweet and pleasant rest, as men are wont to do at night. Who would be solicitous when he is to commit and put his soul into the midst of immense and boundless goodness, as his must be who is the Author of all made things? for they all spring from goodness, goodness that would diffuse itself and flow arbitrarily and freely in such a creation as this. And,

6. Live more adoring lives. Let us labour to habituate ourselves, our spirits, more to adoration, seeing the invisible things of God, his eternal power and Godhead, are continually seen in things that are made. Let that sentence be engraven as a motto upon each of our hearts, and inwrought into our souls; "Come, let us worship and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker." Let every thing that serves to put us in mind of him, prompt us immediately to worship and bow down the head before him, upon such apprehensions of God, such demonstrations of his love, of his power, and goodness, and greatness, as offer themselves to our view. Let us presently bow and worship, take notice and adore.

7. Let us subject ourselves most absolutely to his government, both legal and providential. Doth it not belong to him to give laws to his creatures that are capable of government by law, that have been entirely and wholly made by him? Should not he give laws, even to our minds and to our spirits, and lay them under the obligation of his laws? This is sure the most reasonable thing in the world. Why should he not prescribe to my mind, who is himself an unmade mind, while mine is but a made mind? Why should not he prescribe to me how my spirit should work this way or that, while he is an eternal Spirit and Mind? My spirit that sprung from him, why should not he direct it, even by a law, how to think, how to dispose of my thoughts this way and that, when he hath given me a power to think? Why should I not use my apprehensive

power and knowledge for him from whom I received it? He that knows my mould and frame, and hath given me that intelligent spirit that I have, shall I not keep it in perpetual subjection to him, receive laws from his mouth, never think myself at liberty, and in an indifferency to use my thoughts as I will, and let out my affections as I will; but all under his law? And then, as to his providential government, shall not he do what he will with his creatures, with the thing that he hath made? How reasonable is it, how just towards him and how good for itself to be subject to him! Then I am quiet if I can live under his government, to be disposed of by him as he pleaseth; otherwise there is a continual war between him and me and so a continual war between me and myself; affection against conscience, passion against judgment; for there will always be something in me as long as I live, as long as I have a reasonable intelligent being, that will take the part of God against unreasonable rebellious passions, and I shall be a self-judged creature before him in his sight. And,

8. Lastly, Let us always propound him to ourselves as the object of our religion; and take pleasure in the thought of this, that we have found out an object of religion, which we have revealed to us, that he hath himself revealed to us himself as the great and only object of religion; the one indisputable One, so as no controversy remains now concerning it. And whereas, it is the business of all religion, to pay all duty to God, and expect and seek all relief and felicity from him, let us demean ourselves towards him accordingly. And consider with ourselves, that in making his mind known to us, giving us to know himself, he hath given us to know ourselves also, so as to understand that being creatures, made things, we are made for another. That which cannot be by itself, must not be for itself; what more reasonable thing in all the world? Therefore, our business must be with him as the final, ultimate, animative object of our religion; and that designing duty to him and felicity to ourselves, we have to do with him as the object of religion under that twofold notion, as one that we are to glorify, and as one whom we are to enjoy for ever. And this now shows us much of ourselves. That is, showing us what our nature and state are, it shows us what our end of business must be, and that it is a very great thing. And this is, we must understand, what we were made for. And this being the first head of Christian religion, (indeed of all religion,) it resolves the first question that every one is concerned to make to himself: What was I made for? What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and to enjoy him; to pay all duty to him, and to expect all felicity and blessedness from him; and to seek it. It is thus only that you can come to know what you are here in this world for; and it were a lamentable case, to know the several powers and faculties that belong to our natures, and not to know what all these are for. To know I am such a creature, of such a mould and frame, and not to know what these are made for! This would be a very sad consideration to a serious and considering mind, if it were not to be collected and found out what they were made for. As if one that never saw a watch in his life before he finds it by casualty and chance, and sees a great deal of curiosity in the workmanship, yet cannot imagine what it is intended for, what it was made for; it stands still, and he knows not how to set it going, or if he did, he doth not understand the use of it. Here is the case with an intelligent creature, a man if he should contemplate himself, and not contemplate his Maker, his end. Here I have a strange kind of being, I have a body, and I have a soul inhabiting that body; but I do not know why such a creature as I came to have a place in the world, why I have such a being, what I am to do, and what I was made for. But now by this you come to know what it is you were made for. If you know you have a Maker, you must know you were made for him, to glorify him and to enjoy him for ever: and it is a great thing to have made this step; when we have taken notice of our own faculties and powers, and what our structure and frame are. Now to know whose we are, what satisfaction is it to the mind of man! to know this, that I am made to glorify and enjoy him that made me. But when you come to be at a loss, (as all in the fallen state are,) "what course shall I take to glorify and enjoy God?" Why, we that are here wandering in such a wilderness as we are in, and so benighted, so bemisted as we are; if we have no instruction, no guidance, no rule, we are at a sad loss. Therefore it is the greatest joy in the world to a considering mind to have it plainly evidenced to him, that there is a discovery come forth from God, suitable to the forlorn state of the creature, a word from heaven, a written word that he himself hath delivered down to us, to teach us how we are to glorify him, and how we are to enjoy him—which will be the next thing we shall come unto.

* Preached January 9th, 1691.

LECTURE VII.*

2 Tim. iii. 16.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

You have had an Object of religion, the only competent and deserving Object, (I hope,) with some efficacy presented to you; an absolute perfect Being, an eternal infinite Mind or Spirit, self-existing and unmade; demonstrating himself to be so, by the things that are made. And now the business of that religion that is to be exercised towards such an Object, (the glorious and blessed God,) is continually to render to him a due homage, and to expect from him blessedness for our own souls. Religion stands in serious endeavours, (as the learners among us are taught to speak and understand,) "to glorify God and enjoy him for ever." Under this twofold notion, we are to go and act towards him as our chief end; as one to whom we owe all the duty we are capable of performing, and by performing whereof we glorify him; and from whom only we must expect all the felicity we are capable of partaking of, and in the participation whereof we enjoy him; so we are to consider and move towards God as our end, in such a motion of heart and spirit. This is present religion, that is, the religion of our present state. The religion of the way, (as it is called,) or the religion of *viatores*; those that are travelling, and yet short of their final perfection. And therefore is the whole of that religion, to wit, the religion of the present state, in contra-distinction to that of the eternal state, expressed by a term that denotes continual motion; that is, a coming to God. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." We are to be continually in this motion all the while we are in this world; coming to God. In order whereto that great fundamental is to be forelaid—the belief that God is; as that which is prerequisite, upon which we have been insisting already. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." But now, whosoever have it in design thus to come to God, and move towards him, they will find that they need a rule to guide those motions by which they may direct and steer their course: there is no coming to God but as he is pleased to render himself accessible, but as he will be approached; and therefore our religion, which consists in this motion, in this coming to God, cannot be a self-devised thing, or an invention of our own: we cannot come to God as we please, but as he pleases, as he will have us come: we can never glorify him, but by doing his will, nor can we ever come to enjoy him but by compliance therewith. Therefore, this must of course be the next inquiry, with any considering person, any one that doth seriously design to do any thing in the business of religion; "What course shall I take to know God's will, concerning my approach, my coming, my tending towards him through the whole course of my life in this world?" It is a very rational inquiry, and that which the exigency of the case must urge every one to, that doth intend seriously and in good earnest to be religious. For admit, that there be internal principles, from the very reason and nature of things, truth and falsehood, good and evil, right and wrong, yet besides that such as are needful are taken into the constitution, or among

the determinations, of the Divine will, so there are other things superadded with respect to the varied state of our case: and it is the Divine will that doth determine and constitute what we shall do in this cause of our motion towards him, and consequently what shall be required of us to believe and know that we may so do: and so we do need a signification of his will concerning our faith, and concerning our practice. Though it is true, that the determinations of his will are not (as to the most principal things that do concern us) arbitrary, but they are determinations of his will, according to most excellent wisdom, most perfect judgment, and counsel, for he "worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will;" and so doth will such things concerning us, and in reference to us, as the state of our case doth require and need, and without which there could be no commerce restored, and brought about between him and us. And now, whatsoever will express and signify to us the Divine will about such things as will be our fit and useful rule to guide our motion towards God as our end, we are to seek after. And concerning this, the inquiry must needs be made by every serious person; "What is there that I may look upon, as such a sufficient signification to me, of the Divine will touching my great concernments with him?" Now we have a book among us, that calls itself, and is commonly styled, The Word of God. This very book, if it be not the word of God, truly, to call it so, and to attempt and endeavour to spread it as such, is one of the boldest cheats that ever was attempted to be put upon the sons of men. But if really and truly it be so, then it doth our business: you find it doth so, by looking into it; for this is the business it doth profess, and the intent which it doth own and avow, to acquaint us with the Divine will and pleasure in order to our serving and glorifying him, and being finally happy and blessed with him. If it be his will indeed, it will most undoubtedly serve for this end and purpose; that being all the end that professedly it hath to serve. Nothing can so well serve this purpose as his word, if there be such a word: for who can so well tell us what God's will is, as he himself? Sure he best knows his own mind, and what judgment he hath made of things, and which (after him) he will have us to make, in order to our practice.

I might (indeed) have driven the inquiry a great deal further into the principles of religion, upon a merely rational ground, or according to the ducture of natural light; as it was necessary to be done, upon what hath been done already, in representing and evidencing to you an object of religion: which was necessary first to be proved, before we could with any colour of reason go about to assert the divine authority of this book. It would have been a very absurd thing to go about to prove from this book, the authority of it, that there was such a thing, when he which should give that authority, and from whom that authority should be derived, should be unknown to us; or it should be a matter of doubt with any, whether there was such a one, yea or no. But that being once proved and out of question, now it comes in the proper and natural method, and next of course, to be considered: Is there such a revelation from this God, as this book doth pretend to? hath it really that divine stamp upon it from him, which by those who do profess and own themselves Christians, it is apprehended to have? And if that can be found, it supersedes any need of following the line of natural light (as such) further; because there is nothing more now to be discovered that way, which is not more clearly and fully contained in this book. And therefore all other things that might be referred thither, I shall rather satisfy myself to deduce and insist upon as they come in our way from thence. In order whereto, our first business must be to assert the authority of them. And for that purpose it is I have pitched upon this passage of Scripture, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." All Scripture is θεοπνευστος. It is only that one word that is said of it, *God-breathed*. All Scripture is (as it were) the breath of God. That indeed is the very literal sense of the word here used, *breathed from God*.

And so the words are a formed proposition to our hands, we need not vary them in any other phrase, but take them as they lie. Our business must be to assert, from them,—The Divine Authority of the Scriptures. In order whereto, I shall premise,

First, That I design not herein to meddle with divers lesser collateral questions, as touching the Hebrew points, and Hebrew translations, the various readings, etymological and other differences, which are things much fitter for the schools than for the pulpit. And therefore,

Secondly, My main design must be to evince to you, that this book doth contain in it a sufficient revelation of the Divine mind and will, touching what we are to believe and do in order to our glorifying God as our supreme Lord, and our enjoying him, and being happy in him, as our best and only satisfying good. And in order hereunto, the course that will be fittest to take, will in short be this—To state the subject to you that is spoken of under the name of Scriptures, with its universality, "*all* Scripture:" and then—To prove to you from that subject, the thing affirmed of it, that it is God-breathed, that it is inspired from God, or (which is all one) that it is of divine authority, and that God is the author of it.

I. For the stating of the subject here spoken of, Scripture, with a universal term, "*all* Scripture;" that universal term cannot be absolutely universal, (as you may be sure,) cannot signify all writing. Every writing cannot be pretended to be God-breathed, or of divine inspiration; therefore the limitation of this universal term is to be taken from the immediately foregoing words, "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures." It is therefore holy Scripture that is here spoken of. All holy Scripture, the whole of that which is called holy Scripture; it is of divine inspiration. Well, what is that, that is here called holy Scripture? Undoubtedly it must be that which in those days was immediately known by the name of the Scripture, and many times the Scriptures; nothing was more familiar with our Saviour, when he was conversant here on earth, than to speak of this book by the name of Scripture, and sometimes the Scriptures, as being so in the most famous and eminent sense, according to the account that went of that part of them, among the Jews, of whom he was one, and among whom he conversed. Every one knew none could be ignorant what was meant by the Scriptures at that time, or in those days: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life," (saith our Saviour, John v. 39.) And this and that was done (as you often find in the evangelist historians) that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And the Scripture cannot be broken, saith our Lord, in one of his contests with the Jews, John x. 35. Now it is very evident here,

1. Therefore, by the Scriptures, that is, holy Scriptures, (as the apostle's words in this place do expound themselves,) must be meant the books of the Old Testament. That (I say) in the first place must be meant by it, which then by universal consent among that people, went under the name or notion of the Scriptures. That is, those books of the Old Testament which go with us at this day under that notion, and come into that censure and account, without the apocryphal books which never came into that account among the Jews, and therefore are justly left out of that account with us. They never took them. The ancient Christians did not take them into that account at all, nor the Jews before our Saviour's time, or at any time: they were not written in the Hebrew tongue (unless some little parts) as the books of the Old Testament were; and have many things very fabulous in them, that show them to have proceeded from human authority; though divers of them (some of those books at least) proceeded from very pious writers. After that, the full compute of these books of the Old Testament was gathered up and digested by Ezra since the captivity. It was very plain the Jews never took any writing into the account of canonical Scriptures from the time they took in the prophecy of Malachi; never after that, did they add any thing to the sacred canon, and so much we find Josephus against Apion most expressly to tell us. And therefore the apocryphal writings could be none of the books that went under the name of the Scriptures here, when the apostle saith, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God:" nor indeed, did they come into that account in the Christian church in the purest times. The account that is given us of the Scriptures by Origen and Athanasius leaves these books quite excluded: though

we have an account too in ancient records of some use made of them as certain ecclesiastical books, but not as the holy Scriptures; they were not accounted the holy books. That then is part of this subject here to be spoken of, when it is said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," that is, the books of the Old Testament, which was the Scripture in the eminent sense at that time. But,

2. There comes within the compass of this subject too, the books of the New Testament. For we must consider, about what time this was written by the apostle to Timothy: this was the second epistle you see; and that was most certainly written a considerable time after the greatest part of the New Testament was written. You may take notice in the next chapter, (2 Tim. iv. 6.) that he speaks of the time of his departure being near at hand. He had once appeared before Nero already, and we are told that this was written near about the time of his appearance before Nero the second time: so we have it in the conclusion of this epistle, that is, in the adjunct to it. And though those subjoined adjuncts to the epistles are not always of unquestionable authority, yet the matter of this epistle leading so much thereto, it puts this thing out of doubt that this was written very near the close of the apostle's life; "I am ready to be offered," saith he, "and the time of my departure is at hand." Now it is evident that all the Gospels were written a considerable time before this. The last of them, undoubtedly, was the Gospel of John, and that he is supposed to have wrote about the eighth year of Nero, whereas the apostle suffered (as we are told by history) in the last year of Nero, about seven years afterwards. So that in all likelihood this was the last, or the last save one, that he wrote of his epistles; Paul here speaking of the time of his departure as near at hand: and we find that what was written by him, is elsewhere referred to, under the name of Scripture: as by the apostle Peter, (2 Pet. iii. 15, 16.) where he speaks of his "beloved brother Paul" who had "many things in him hard to be understood, which," saith he, "ignorant and unstable minds wrest, as they do other scriptures, to their own destruction:" and we find the apostle James, in his 4th chap. 5th ver. refers, under the name of Scripture, to another passage of his, "The spirit in us" (as saith the Scripture) "lusteth to envy." You find nothing any where to answer this but that Gal. v. 17. There, having spoken of envy, particularly before, he addeth, "the flesh lusteth against the spirit." And whatsoever was to come within that character and sacred stamp must come within the compass of this subject too. The book of the revelation plainly shows it was written by the apostle John when he was in Patmos: and after his return from thence, history informs us, that upon the request of the Asiatic churches, he did collect and gather together and put into order all the books of the New Testament, and so (as it were) did seal up the canon. And a considerable time after that, we are informed of his taking a journey to ——[a] on purpose to collect the Sacred Writings he found among the churches there, with whom he conversed: and he there found the books punctually as we have them, and in the same order wherein they now stand in our Bibles. And in the fourth century, they were all recognized by the council of the Laodiceans. Therefore at this time, when this epistle to Timothy was written, there must be understood to be a reference had to all the books of the New Testament already written, and any to be written by inspiration of the same Spirit. And so this makes up together the subject here spoken of, when it is said, "All Scripture," all holy Scripture, "is given by inspiration of God." All God-breathed, (as it were,) breathed from heaven, the issue of divine breath, for those great and glorious purposes that it was to serve in this world. And now,

II. We come to prove the thing affirmed concerning this subject—that these Scriptures were inspired from heaven, by God himself, or are of divine authority; which is the import of this assertion, as to the way of God's communicating his mind to those that delivered them. The expression is large and extensive enough to comprehend any, wherein there might be a certain signification of the Divine will; whether he did communicate it by voice, (as he did divers things we find upon record in Scripture,) or whether it was by dream, or by vision, to the penman, that is, asleep or waking; or whether it were (as the Jews distinguish) by immediate irradiation of the intellect, the understanding faculty; or whether it were by impression or signature upon the imagination or fancy, as a thing intervening between the Divine mind and the intellect: which way soever it was, the expression will reach it. It was of divine authority; it proceeded from him, be it one or the other of these ways. And in order to the evincing of this by argumentation, I shall briefly say somewhat to justify the undertaking, of proving the divine authority of these Scriptures by that argumentative way; and then shall proceed to the proof thereof, in that way which the case itself doth best admit of.

1. Something may be needful to be said to justify the undertaking to prove the divine authority of these writings, in a way of argumentation. In order to it, do but note these two things.

(1.) That undoubtedly there can be no effectual believing of the things contained in the Scriptures unto salvation, without the special operation of the Divine Spirit. It is only the Spirit that makes the sanctifying impression of these Scriptures upon the soul. The apostle expresses his great thankfulness to God, on the behalf of the Thessalonian churches, (2 Thess. ii. 13.) that "God had chosen them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." There is no sanctifying belief of that truth but by the Divine Spirit; that is out of all question: "Sanctify them by the truth, thy word is truth," John xvii. 17. "Do thou sanctify them by it: the sanctifying them by this truth, or by the truth of this word of thine, must be thine own work." There is that vicious prejudice in the minds of men, against the design and tendency of all sacred truth and that power of corrupt inclination to comply and comport therewith, that it must be a great power that must overcome; and none is great enough that is inferior to the power of the Almighty Spirit. It is by a certain spirit of faith in the soul that men do believe to the saving of their souls. "We, having the same spirit of faith, believe and therefore speak." There is none can arrive to this belief, a divine belief of the Scriptures, without the operation of that Spirit. This very notion, in general, that the Scriptures are the word of God, is a dead, and insipid, and ineffectual thing: as all other notions of truth comprehended in that general are also. But,

(2.) I must add, that the operations of the Divine Spirit are not necessary to bring men under an obligation, or to make it become their duty to believe the Scriptures to be God's word, or of divine authority: which therefore certainly doth infer, that there is a way of proving this by argument, that these Scriptures are of divine authority, so as to hold men under an obligation to believe them to be God's word; that it becomes their duty to believe them so, so that they are culpable if they do not, if that light that may shine into them that way about this matter be not received and comported with accordingly. And to evidence this briefly to you, do but consider these things:

[1.] If there be not enough to be said by way of argument to prove the divine authority of this sacred book, without the special immediate operation of the Divine Spirit, then every one that hath not the operation of the Divine Spirit, would be innocently an unbeliever under the Gospel. Then it would be an innocent thing to be an infidel under the Gospel, notwithstanding the clearest light that can be supposed to shine amongst us, supposing only the absence of the special influence of the Divine Spirit: and then the mere retraction or withholding of that influence, would be enough to justify the infidel, and to make him therefore not guilty of a crime in his infidelity, barely because he hath not that Spirit; than which, nothing can be supposed more absurd or more prejudicial to the Christian cause and interest.

[2.] This is to be considered too, (to the same purpose,) that if the special operations of the Spirit were necessary to make it become a man's duty to believe these Scrip-

[a] This is blank in the manuscript: and after examining every document to which he could gain access, the editor has not been able to ascertain the place alluded to, nor the authority on which the author states this circumstance. The fact, it must be admitted, is extremely doubtful.

tures to be the word of God, then they must be necessary in reference to every particular thing which he shall be bound to believe. But you know, the whole is made up of all the parts: and when we speak especially of the necessary parts, it is plain, that if the operation of the Holy Ghost be necessary to make it a man's duty to believe these Scriptures, it must be necessary in order to his believing every more principal part, every sentence that doth more immediately and directly concern the salvation of his soul; and then upon that supposition, every person that should be under an obligation to believe these Scriptures to be the word of God, must himself be an inspired person or a prophet. And then, this would be the consequence, that these Scriptures would be of no use at all, one way or another; not to them that have the Spirit of faith to enable them to believe them; because every thing that is contained in them, and necessary for the end for which they are written, must be supposed to be suggested and dictated to them by that Spirit, and therefore the believer would have no need of the Scripture; and to the unbeliever they would be of no use at all, because while the Spirit doth not give his influence to make them believe, they (upon this supposition) never could believe. And therefore, consequently, the Scriptures would be of no use, do no good, either to believer or unbeliever. And therefore, as I have asserted in the first place, that there can be no effectual believing of these Scriptures unto salvation, without the sanctifying influence of the Divine Spirit, so I further do assert, that such an influence of the Divine Spirit, is not necessary to make it become a man's duty to believe these Scriptures; but it will be his duty to believe them upon such light about this matter, as may in an argumentative way be supplied and furnished unto any that will make it their business attentively to consider. And now,

2. In the second place, I shall proceed to tell you in what way this proof must be attempted and undertaken, that is, inasmuch as the subject here, Scripture, all Scripture, is so complete as you have heard; that is, is made up of the books of the Old Testament and the New. The method that is reasonable to be taken, is to endeavour to evince these two things to you,—that there were Scriptures in our Saviour's and the apostles' time, and many of them a great while before, which were certainly of divine authority: and—that the books which we now have among us, in our time and in our hands, are the self-same books, in substance, (without any material corruption or alteration,) that those were, which went for the holy Scriptures, of divine authority at that time. These are the two things that are to be evinced and made out to you, and with such evidence as may leave little ground or pretence of cavil to the understanding and honest Christian: which I doubt not (through the blessing of God) may be done.

LECTURE VIII.*

(1.) Now to prove that these books in the days of our Saviour and his apostles, even unto the last of them, went into the account of those Scriptures that were of divine authority; and within this compass must come the books of the Old and New Testament; we shall give some considerations in reference to this; and shall afterwards, in the close of all, (having spoken to the latter proposition too,) give you some additional considerations concerning this book as now we find it.

[1.] For the divine authority of the books of the Old Testament, I shall not trouble you here with the various divisions that the Jews made of these books. And here whereas they reckon no more of them than there were letters of their alphabet, two and twenty, which most apparently excludes the apocryphal books. It would be tedious and trifling to trouble you with the account how they did severally refer all those to the several letters; only it is plain that the minor prophets they made all but one book. But this division only will serve our turn, (though they did not strictly hold to it, but varied from it commonly, making a third member which we find no mention made of in the evangelists, or the writings of the New Testament,) that is, the division of the books of the Old Testament into those of Moses and the prophets. The Jews indeed made the Hagiographia, or third class, that is, accounting none prophetic, but those which were sent by special mission from God. And so all those books (besides the five books of Moses, and those written by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the minor prophets) they called Hagiographia, that is, other holy writings, sacred writings; such as the historical parts of Scripture, the books of Job, Proverbs, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and the like. But our Saviour comprehends all under the name of the law and the prophets, or sometimes, Moses and the prophets; (Matt. xxii. 40.) "On these two hang all the law and the prophets:" and that other place, (Luke xvi. 29.) "They have Moses and the prophets." Now take here the books of Moses first, and there can be no doubt at all but he was an inspired person, and that his books were written by very peculiar inspiration. If you do but admit the truth of the historical relation, as to him, and that people he had the conduct of, I say, supposing that there can be no doubt of his having written those books by special inspiration of God, for (admitting the truth of the history) you find how familiarly conversant he was with God, from time to time; that he did nothing of any concernment in reference to that people, but always by divine monition. Nothing then is more unsupposable than that he should do so great a thing as this, digest such records, and stamp them with the name of sacred and divine, and call them the word of the Lord, and the law of the Lord; and all this, without special instinct from God. Do but think how manifest and observable and adorable a Divine presence showed himself to that person. How peculiarly God took him nigh to himself, sustained him forty days and forty nights together, (whether once or twice I will not here dispute,) in the sacred mount, by miracle; supporting him by his own glory, speaking to him from time to time, giving him free recourse to him, directing him to consult him, and take his responses from him, upon all occasions. And that the history that relates to him, as to the matter of fact, must be true beyond all exception, is evident if you consider such things as these;

First, The very honourable mention that is made of this Moses, and some of the most remarkable things relating to that people (the Jews) whom he had the conduct of, by some of the most ancient and celebrated pagan writers, magnifying him as a most wise and prudent legislator, and a very great man; and remarking very considerable things with reference to this people. I need not trouble you with them; it is known to scholars, what of this kind is written by Diodorus Siculus and others. And,

Secondly, That which is above all demonstration: it is notorious to all the world that the people of the Jews were under the government of a Theocracy for several centuries of years successively, which puts the matter out of all doubt, that the history of that fact must be unquestionable upon which they became so. They were continually directed by God himself; their laws were made by God himself. He appointed the means of being consulted in every place, and it was through a long-continued series of time; and so these records in all that time were known to be sacred things, having a divine stamp all along upon them. And again,

Thirdly, It is to be considered that the very matter of the history itself (considered in its circumstances) doth speak its own truth; considered, I say, in its circumstances, that is, the bringing of the people of Israel out of Egypt, and bringing them out by so strong a hand, inflicting so many miraculous plagues upon that Egyptian people, and their prince, till they were forced to a manumission of them; the dividing of the Red Sea, the most stupendous way of giving the law upon mount Sinai, which (with the additional precepts that were given to Moses in the mount itself) make up (you know) the most considerable parts of the Pentateuch. The very matter of itself speaks, (if you consider it clothed with its circumstances,) that there could be no fiction as to these things!

* Preached January 16th, 1691.

for there is nobody but must grant, upon an ordinary view and judgment of those characters that do appear of Moses, that he was a prudent man at least, a very prudent man. But certainly he must needs be a madman that would report a fiction of things said to be done by, and before, six hundred thousand men. When men do feign and forge things, they do it with the greatest privacy imaginable. As the portentous stories about Mahomet, there are no witnesses quoted, but all goes upon the credit of his word. It is not said, there were such and such thousands that saw such and such things, for then, if it were false, it were the easiest thing in the world to be disproved. Now when the law is said to be given from such a mount, clothed with so terrible and august a glory at that time, and the voice heard uttering these ten words, as they are called, by six hundred thousand men, at once, besides women and children, (for these words are said to be heard spoken from the mount, by all the people; whereupon they could not bear that God should speak to them any longer. "We die," say they to Moses, "if God speak to us any more, but do thou speak and we will hear,") no man that hath but the ordinary understanding of a man, can think, that one of common prudence would inform of things that he saith were done in view of so many thousands of witnesses, if they were not done; if there were any design in saying so, that design were presently blasted, and lost out of hand; especially if it be considered that among those ten words there are so express precepts against idolatry; and that people had so marvellous propensions to idolatry, as their frequent relapses into it, and their running into it, even in Moses' absence, when God ceased to speak with an audible voice, do testify. It had given them the most gladsome opportunity they could have wished for, could they have detected a fraud in the case. When it is said there were such and such, and so many thousand witnesses, they could have said, there was no such thing. Could not this have been transmitted to posterity for a notorious cheat, by a people so prone to idolatry as they were? And when they were urged by the prophets (in a time of great degeneracy) with the authority of the divine law, how easily could they have replied, "No, there was no such law, it was a fiction; and what is said to be given by God's voice, and our fathers are said to be quoted as witnesses to, they all renounced it, said there was no such thing!" And then,

Fourthly, That holy men succeeding this time, (and unto whose inspiration it hath been sufficiently attested, as we shall see afterwards,) did attest unto Moses, still calling that law written by him, the law of the Lord, and the word of the Lord, and the testimonies and statutes of the Lord. With what reverence and with what delight and complacency do you find them so mentioned in the book of Psalms, in multitudes of places, when there was little else of Scripture yet extant, besides those books of Moses! Would such a man as David with adoration have called these writings, the law of the Lord, and the word, and statutes, and judgments, and testimonies of the Lord, if they had not been most certainly so? And would he have expressed so high delight in them, and veneration for them as such, counting them more precious than thousands of gold and silver, and expressing the heart-breakings and longings of his soul after them from time to time upon all occasions? And then, for what was written by him (David) and other holy men, (besides the prophets,) though it is not known who wrote every book, yet there is no doubt but all may (as our Saviour did design they should) be comprehended under the name of the prophets; Moses and the prophets. And for the prophets, that they were reckoned prophets speaks their inspiration; the distinguishing character of true prophets and false, being so well known among that people. And for the things themselves that they prophesied, the accomplished events did from time to time prove the inspiration of the prophets.

But then take the whole Old Testament together, and that hath received its confirmation abundantly from the New? so that if the New can be proved to be of divine authority, all our business is done, the matter is out of question. The whole Old Testament, it is most expressly owned and proved by the New. For,

What is the New Testament, but a commentary upon the Old: it is an application of the religion of the Old Testament. The Old was nothing but a veiled Gospel. The New is nothing else but the same Gospel unveiled. And again,

It is plain, that our Lord himself doth frequently and expressly confirm to us the whole Old Testament, taken together under the name of Scripture, or the Scriptures, Moses and the prophets, and the law and the prophets. As when he saith, "I am not come to destroy the law; no, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil;" (Matt. v. 17.) and in the next verse, "Heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or one tittle of the law pass"—so that he hath confirmed the whole Old Testament to a tittle, to a very tittle, not one tittle but is sacred, it cannot be lost, cannot pass away, it is a more stable thing than heaven itself, and therefore now,

[2.] We pass to the books of the New Testament. And how will it appear that there were such books written by divine inspiration, so as we ought to reckon the authority of them is stampt thereon by God himself? Why,

First, Much of what we find in these writings was delivered by our Lord himself. The most material things contained in the Gospels, that is, the doctrinal parts, were his own words still from time to time, upon all occasions.

Secondly, It is very plain that he did inspire his apostles, that were to be witnesses of him, and whose business it must be to be planters and propagators of the Christian faith afterwards in the world. He did purposely inspire and direct and authorize them to publish those very things that make up the substance of those books; and therefore, no doubt, did direct them to write those very books themselves; for who can suppose, he having a design that the Christian religion should obtain and take place in all succeeding times to the end of time, but that he should intend that it should be wrote, it should be put into writing; and therefore when he laid that charge upon his apostles, upon whom he breathed at parting, or a little before, saying "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," and to whom he gave this charge, "Go and teach all nations this doctrine;" certainly within the compass of that charge must be comprehended the charge of writing these things, as one means of publishing them to all nations, and so necessary a means, as that all besides (as to succeeding ages) must be ineffectual. And then,

Thirdly, For the authority of what was contained in these books, or the divinity thereof, he did endow those he made use of, as his apostles and first planters of the Christian faith after him, (even their very inspiration itself, their very mission, as well as the several parts of that message upon which they were sent,) with a power of working stupendous miraculous works; that it might be seen by all men, that a Divine power did attest to divine truth, as it was published by those men. And upon this you find that mighty stress laid, that these first propagators of the Christian faith "preached the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." And the same Holy Ghost that did assist in preaching, did prompt too, to write the whole New Testament. And that it was the Holy Ghost that did actuate them in all this, was shown by that power of working miraculous works, which God gave at the same time; because the Holy Ghost is entitled to those works by our Saviour himself, saying, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come unto you," then is that religion true, and it is the kingdom of God that I am here setting up among you, and hereupon is that great weight laid upon this matter, (Heb. ii. 2, 3, 4.) "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation: which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" This was the divine seal, the seal of heaven affixed to these writings and what was contained in them; that is, that when men should come abroad upon such an errand, into strange countries and other nations besides their own, and speak

things that such and such people had never heard of before, hereupon, suppose it should be inquired of them, "What shall induce us to believe, that what you say is true and comes from God?" Why, immediately they do such and such works that could only be done by Divine power, and so they testify to men, that this was a divine truth that they uttered to them. They preached such a Gospel, and at the same time they healed the sick, by the speaking of a word, and sometimes raised the dead to life; as our Saviour himself did, who had so confirmed the truth before, by that and other most wonderful things that referred to his own person, by his death especially, and by his resurrection. Here was the greatest question among the Jews; he gave himself out to be the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God; all the question was, "Is this the Christ, or is he a deceiver or impostor?" He must be one of the two; either the Christ as he said he was, or one of the most notorious impostors that ever was upon the face of the earth: all the dispute rested upon this one thing; "Whereas, he gave himself out to be the Son of God, is he the Son of God or no?" The means by which many were wrought upon before his death, to believe in him, were his most miraculous works; but I say they were but the means; and to bring any effectually to believe in Christ, there must be something more than external means. When he preached to the multitude, he confirmed his word, sometimes by feeding thousands by very unproportionable means; by healing the sick, by opening the ears of the deaf and the eyes of the blind, loosening the tongues of the dumb, and raising up the dead to life and the like; and when at length he came to die, you know with what circumstances his death was accompanied; all the powers of heaven and earth were shaken, the sun withdrew his head, the veil of the temple was rent, the dead arose; and a poor pagan centurion, (who was appointed to guard the execution,) upon the sight of these things gives up the cause; "Verily this was the Son of God, I see he was in the right, the Jews persecuted him wrongfully," (for here was the question between them, Was he the Son of God or no?) "They crucified him for a blasphemer, in saying he was the Son of God, which they denied him to be, but now I see he was the Son of God." And he was afterwards "declared to be the Son of God with power, by the Spirit of holiness by which he was raised from the dead." Now his apostles going forth, in the authority of this Divine person, to testify nothing but what they saw with their eyes, and what they heard with their ears, and being appointed by him to be witnesses of what they saw and heard, and to preach the doctrine which he had preached and delivered to them before; and they themselves working so miraculous works to prove the truth of what he did assert; this proves the matter out of all question, that what was written concerning all this, must be by divine inspiration. And further too,

Fourthly, It manifestly appears how the prophecies of the Old Testament (the greatest and most important of them) did receive their confirmation that they were divine, by the events that fell out in the time wherein the books of the New Testament were written, and which came to be reflected on afterwards, by the wisest and most considering, the ablest and most competent, judges the world had in those days. Many of them were hereupon converted to the Christian faith; and some others that were not so, merely as wanting that opportunity to be informed of matters of fact which the others had had, who yet did acknowledge the convictiveness of the Mediator; as for instance, those prophecies concerning Christ, and that one express one, among the rest, of Daniel, about the seventy weeks; that great pagan, (and one of the most considerable enemies for reason and learning that ever the Christian cause had in the world) Porphyry, having opportunity to view over this prophecy, said it must needs have been written after the event, it was so very punctual. So that he only wanted an opportunity to know, that this prophecy had been written above five hundred years before his time, and was four hundred and twenty years before its accomplishment in the hands of the Jews, and kept so safe that it was impossible to be a fallacious thing. And therefore, that being his case, (he being a heathen and not a Jew, and not having opportunity to know,) that must (by his own confession) be the only reason of his not being a believer, upon that one single prophecy, so punctually accomplished by the coming of our Lord; and his being cut off at such a time as the prophecy did say concerning the coming of the Messiah, the Prince, and that he was to be cut off at such a time. Well, upon all this there is little doubt to be made as to the *first proposition*, that is,—that those books that went under the name of Scripture, or the Scriptures, in our Saviour's and the apostles' time, to the last survivor of them, were certainly of divine authority.

(2.) But now to the second proposition—that this book that we have now in our hands, containing such and such writings in it, is the same, or those Scriptures are the very same that were so owned and acknowledged for the Scripture, in those days. It may be said, and no doubt will be, by any that shall consider, that if this be out of question, the whole business is out of question; for nobody can think, if all that hath been said be true, about these books of the Old and New Testament, (said to be extant together at least within the time of the evangelist John,) as to matter of fact, as was reported, but these books must unquestionably be of divine authority. But how should we do to know that we have the matter of fact rightly deduced and drawn down to us, and so that we have reason to believe the books that we now have are the same? If we could be sure they are the same, it would be unquestionable; now as to that, there is one thing that I must premise to you, and it carries its own evidence with it. That is, that that knowledge that men may have of any thing by ordinary means, we are never to expect should be given us by extraordinary. Pray do but take this, and weigh it well, as a thing needful here to be forelaid. Whatsoever may be sufficiently evidenced by ordinary means, it is very unreasonable to expect, that God should afford extraordinary means for the evidencing of that thing. If you do but observe the constancy of his methods of government, over this world, how sparing he hath been of doing extraordinary things, that ought to come by just account into the class of miracles, of miraculous works, you would see, that the Divine wisdom and power have been always very sparing of doing such things, unless where the exigency of the case did require it, and where the end was not otherwise attainable. But it is foolish, to think that the wisdom of God and the power of God should be exerted upon no necessity. What is it for? only to please curiosity? That which is done not to answer necessity, can only be supposed to be done to please and gratify curiosity. Now to think that the wisdom of God should make infinite power, ever and anon, to stoop to do miraculous works, only to please and gratify a vain and curious humour, without any heed, this were the most unworthy of God of any thing we could suppose: and therefore, this is never to be looked for. If then there be sufficient ordinary means to beget a certainty concerning this, it would be a very foolish thing to expect that miracles should be wrought to prove it to us at this day, that these books we now have are, for substance, the same that those were which were owned for divine in Christ's and the apostles' days. For if any one would assert, that it was needful a miracle should be wrought to this purpose, to assure us that these books were the same they were in former times; I would know who it is that should have opportunity of seeing this miracle? Must every one that should be obliged to believe these books to be the same, see such a miracle wrought himself? That were to make miracles more necessary than ever they were; for even in Christ's and his apostles' days, it was never thought necessary that every person should have the sight of a miracle himself, but it was enough that it was notoriously known that such and such miracles were done. But if it were not thought necessary in Christ's and his apostles' days, that miracles should be wrought in the sight of every person, that every one for his own satisfaction should have the sight of such a miracle himself, then the testimony of such persons must be relied upon in this case, as it would be supposed could have no inclination or design to deceive others, by misrepresenting things to them: and that is such a testimony as upon which all matters among men do depend. "It is said in your law, (saith our Saviour to the Jews,) the testimony of two witnesses is true;" that is, is credible, is not to be doubted: the whole frame of government depends upon witnesses.

There would be no law, no justice, no society kept on foot in the world, if the testimony of credible witnesses were not to be respected and attended to. Now if, in this way, there must be reliance on credible witnesses some where, that is, if some few should in our own time see a miracle done, and they make report of it, and their testimony is to be believed, why may we not believe as well the credible testimony of former times, as believe the credible testimony of persons in our own time? If the sober reason of men be yielded to in this case, no man can imagine what reason of difference is assignable, but that we may as well rely upon the testimony of our forefathers, concerning matters of fact, as upon the testimony of those that live in the same age with us; but have seen with their own eyes, what we have not seen with ours. And do not we know that most of the estates in which persons do claim property, do depend upon the testimony of witnesses that are dead a hundred years ago? Certainly, men would have very bad titles to their estates, if the testimony of witnesses dead many scores of years or some hundreds of years ago, were not to be relied on even now. This is plain, that we have the same rational way and method of knowing these books to be the same they were, that is, by such testimony as is the very means of setting on foot all property, and all the administration of law and justice, in civilized nations, all the world over. And we have the same means to know this, as by which we come to know, that any other writings are theirs whose names they bear: such as the writings of Seneca, Aristotle, and the like. We have the same means to know this by, as we have for other things that are of greatest importance to mankind in this world, and by which we come to know, other men's works that we have now in our hands, are the same which were written so many hundred years ago. And if so, then it were the most unreasonable thing, that miracles should now be reckoned necessary to be wrought to prove this thing to us, and if a miracle were now to be wrought, there must be a relying upon present witnesses, upon the testimony of this present age; and why might we not as well rely upon witnesses of the former age, as on witnesses of the present age? No reason can be assigned. Therefore, it would be absurd to expect God should extraordinarily prove this to us, when it could be sufficiently proved otherwise. That is the first thing to be forelaid.

And being forelaid, this one general consideration will prove, that these books are the same that they were in Christ's and his apostles' time, and cannot be otherwise; that is, that material alterations of them were altogether impossible. When I say material alterations, I only mean this, that there may have been some very minute undesigned alteration in transcribing of copies; a word may have been mistaken, or a letter may have been mistaken, somewhat here or there left out. But this can be no material or hurtful alteration, because they had always other copies to correct such mistakes by, that there could be no material alteration with design, that is the thing I deny to be possible, and assert to be impossible. There could be no designed alteration either of the books of the Old Testament, or of the books of the New Testament, since the time of Christ and his apostles. And,

[1.] Not of the books of the Old Testament.

First, It is impossible they can have been altered, since it is plain they were preserved before, and for a considerable time afterwards, with the greatest care imaginable. And that it is one of the great wonders of providence that God, for the preservation of these books, should make use of that scrupulous, and I might say, almost superstitious, care that was among those Jews, whose office it was to keep the books of the Old Testament. As,

It was known they used to count all the letters of the Old Testament, that they might be sure never to miss a letter. Again,

In transcribing copies, (which was frequent,) every copy was always examined by an appointed number of their wise men, as they termed them. Further,

If any copy should have been found, upon examination, to have four or five faults in it, in one copy of the whole Old Testament, that book was presently adjudged to be buried in the grave of one or other of their wise men. And lastly,

For those books that, upon examination, were found to be punctually true, it was very plain from the history of those times, that there was the greatest reverence paid to them imaginable. They never used to touch those perfect copies (taking them into their hands) without kissing them solemnly; nor to lay them down again without solemn kissing of them. They were never used to sit upon the place where one of those books were wont to be laid. If one of them by casualty fell to the ground, they appointed a solemn fast to be kept for it, as an ill-boding thing, that such a thing should happen. So that it is most plain that these keepers of the books of the Old Testament could never have it in design to corrupt any of them; but it was that which they did abhor above all things. And it was a principle (as Philo tells us, and Josephus much to the same purpose) instilled into the youth of that nation, and even those of the best quality, that they should run the utmost hazard and incur a thousand deaths, rather than they should suffer, to the utmost of their power, any alteration or diminution of any of those books; or that any of them should be lost any other way. And then, besides all this scrupulous care of the keepers of the books of the Old Testament, (with which a design of corruption would no way consist,) we may add,

Secondly, That the thing itself was afterwards impossible, simply impossible. If they would before, when it was in their own hands, they could; but afterwards, if they would, they could not; because that in Christ's and his apostles' days, a great number of them were (you know) converted to the Christian faith, who knew all the books of the Old Testament as well as themselves. Therefore, it was impossible now, for the infidel Jews, those that were not converted, to make any alteration, but it must be presently spied and exclaimed against: therefore it was a vain thing for any to attempt it, after so many were converted to the Christian religion. And thereupon we may further add,

Thirdly, That the testimonies that were contained in these books against themselves, and with which contained in them they are transmitted to us, do show that they never went about to corrupt them. The many testimonies against idolatry, contained in these books, whereby their forefathers from age to age, for many ages, were witnessed against, would have induced them to expunge all things that were therein contained against idolatry, (so tender were they of their reputation,) if there had not been a great awe upon their minds, never to attempt the corruption or the alteration of any thing in those books. The wickedness of their forefathers was, in these books, so highly remonstrated against, in respect of the testimonies they so often give against their idolatry, and yet these books we find in their own hands, with these testimonies in them, against the Jews and their forefathers, for many foregoing ages through sundry times and divers intervals; though we do not find after the second temple that people relapsed into that crime. And then, there is the fullest testimony against their infidelity in these books that can be. Who would not wonder that these books should come out of the hands of the Jews, with these testimonies, in the great controversy between the Christians and them? that is, of Christ being the Messiah, in which you have so punctual assertions against them, that nothing can be more. Those many testimonies that do concern the Messiah, particularly that famous prophecy, that the sceptre should not depart from Judah till Shiloh should come: and those numerous presages in many of the latter prophets, (Isaiah especially and sundry others,) make it one of the greatest wonders of providence, that such a book should come, with these things in it, out of these men's hands, against whom they are a continual remonstrance. But however, this proves that they did never design any alteration: either they saw it impossible for one while, and before that, they had no inclination or inducement that would be prevailing with them to go about it, that is, that there should be an alteration with design. And then,

[2.] For the books of the New Testament; that they cannot have been corrupted is most evident too. It is impossible they can, for you must consider in what time they were written: they must be written in Christ's time and the apostles'; now within the compass of that time, things

were brought to that state, that such a corruption was impossible upon two accounts, upon account of the distance of places into which the Gospel was spread, and upon account of the divisions that were so early fallen out among Christians.

First, Upon account of the distance of places whereinto, in the first century of years, the Gospel was spread. That is, into a vast part of Asia, and some considerable parts of Africa and Europe; some think into Britain itself, into our land. There are not very improbable grounds of conjecture, that it was so, even within the compass of Paul's own age. That made it impossible there could be any designed corruption or alteration in the writings of the New Testament; so considerable a number of men at such a distance from one another, could not agree to make such an alteration; and if they could not agree in it, one part must remonstrate against the other. And,

Secondly, The divisions that so early appeared in the Christian church made it likewise impossible. That passage of the apostle, (it may be,) is not greatly enough pondered according to the weightiness of the expressioo, that there must be heresies, there should be heresies, there must be heresies. This great use that hath been of the divisions in Christian churches is not (it may be) considered as it should be by many. But nothing can carry a clearer evidence and demonstration with it, than that, because of those divisions, any depravation of the said records, (that is, any material, general, successful, continued depravation,) is altogether impossible: because the one party would be continually declaiming and crying out against the other; and then how soon would it be espied? So for that particular instance, 1 John v. 7. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." It is true it hath been found to be wanting in some few copies; and what an outcry was against it in the Christian church? So that if that alteration was made by the design of the Arians, (and if it were by any design at all, it must be by their design,) the very supposal of it brings the greatest blot upon them and their cause, that could be imagined; it being very plain that it was to be found in equally ancient copies. But it seems more likely, it was never left out by design at all. But because the matter at the beginning of the 8th verse was just the same with that of the beginning of the 7th verse, a more negligent transcriber, having his eye on the beginning of the 8th verse, might write on, and slip over, merely casually, the whole 7th verse. This being more likely that a verse, beginning as the following verse does, and ending like it, should be left out, than that a verse more than ought should be put in. And thus the design of making such an alteration would be defeated upon the attempt; so that upon that consideration it is altogether impossible that there should be any alteration at all. And therefore that this be stuck to, that there is no designed alteration in these books, and so can have been no material alteration in them.

It is true that in translations, persons have laboured to serve their own purposes, by translating this way and that, as they thought fit. But for alteration of copies, that is what never entered into the mind of any body to attempt; which is a thing so easily spied out, that nothing is more so; and so must needs blast and disserve the cause and interest of that party it was designed to serve, and therefore could never be. And the impossibility of any such alteration, it is easy for any man that useth his understanding, to apprehend from a familiar instance. And thus, do but take any one people that are under the same government, and that have their laws by which they are governed digested into some system or other; as for instance, our statute book; why suppose any ill-minded men in the nation should have a design to corrupt and alter the statute book; every one would see it to be impossible. Which way should they go to work to impose a false statute book upon a nation, wherein every man's right and property is concerned? And if any such should have such a design, they would soon give it up, as finding it impossible, and a thing not to be done, and therefore a vain thing to attempt. But the difficulty is a thousand times greater, of making any designed alteration of these sacred books and records, that are spread so unspeakably further than a nation, and wherein the concernments of all that have them in their hands are recorded, not temporal only, but eternal. Here is their all for eternity, and another world: so that it must be altogether impossible that there could have been such a thing effected; and therefore it is the most unlikely thing, that such a matter should ever be attempted. And then, I say, if there be that plain evidence, that for that reason, these books must be the same, that they cannot have been altered with design, and consequently not materially, then it were the most unreasonable thing in all the world, to expect, that God should confirm it to us otherwise than he hath done, or that the nature of the thing doth admit of: because otherwise, there must have been miracles wrought for every one to see, and take notice of: nay, that would altogether lose the usefulness and significancy of miracles themselves, because it would make miracles so common in such a case. If every man must have a miracle to prove to him, this is God's book, it would take off that particular thing for which they are only significant with men, that is, because they are rare and extraordinary things; and then they would cease to be so. It might as well be expected that every man should have a Bible reached him down by an invisible hand from heaven, as that there should be a miracle wrought to prove to him, that this was the same book that was so and so confirmed and sealed in our Saviour's and his apostles' time. And therefore I reckon, that upon the grounds that have been laid, it is very plain, both that these books that were extant under the name of Scripture, in our Saviour's and his apostles' time, were of divine authority; and that the books that we now have in our hands, are the same with those books, and therefore are of divine authority.

Preached January 23rd, 1691

LECTURE IX.*

Now what we shall further say, as to the two things laid down before, will be to answer an *objection* which possibly may arise in the minds of some: to wit,

That this way of being ascertained of the divinity first, and then, secondly, concerning the identity and sameness still of these books, doth seem to resolve our faith, at length, into a human testimony, and so, at length, to make only a human faith. That is, that all rests upon this—that we have been truly told, and by such as lived before us in the world, that there were such books in their time, and we are led by testimony in following ages, to collect that these are the same books. Is not this (may some say) to resolve our faith into a human testimony, and so to make it only a human faith? In answer to this I have several things to say,

1. That it is very plain, that a human testimony must be depended upon *aliquatenus, some way or other*, in reference to all the concernments of religion. That is a point out of doubt, some dependance there must be upon human testimony. Suppose a preacher came among a company of illiterate men, men that could never so much as read; or if any of them were so, (which is a thing not unusual in Christian congregations,) and he takes a text, and produces (it may be) many more parallel ones out of the Bible for the doctrines which he preacheth; how can these men know that this is a Bible he preacheth out of, but by a human testimony? And even for those that can read, they must depend upon a human testimony, that what they read is a true translation: supposing them not to be learned themselves in, or not having opportunity to consult, the originals, they must depend upon the testimony of the learned, who have viewed those books in the original, such as lexicographers and the like, for the true signification and translation of the words they read. This therefore is plain and out of question, that some use there must be of a human

testimony in reference to the concernments of religion. And I add,

2. It is no more strange that God should state our case, so as to oblige us to some dependence upon human testimony, than that he should state it so as we must have a necessary dependence upon our own sense. We are told that "faith comes by hearing;" we can have no ordinary way to come to the knowledge of the things contained in these books, but by the use of our eyes, and the use of our ears. And I could fain know why there should be a greater sacredness in these organs of our own, than in those of other men. Why should mine eye or ear be thought a more sacred thing than the voice or tongue of another man? And again,

3. It is one thing to use a human testimony, in a case wherein God hath ordained and appointed to do it, and another thing to do it besides or against his ordination and appointment. Here we are to distinguish between matters of fact and matters of right. We are to make use of the testimony of men, even by God's own appointment, in reference to matters of fact; to inform us only of mere matter of fact. This is an institution of God. "It is written in your law (saith our Saviour) that the testimony of two or three witnesses is true." "I come unto you in the mouth of two or more witnesses," saith the apostle, "and in the mouth of two or three witnesses, shall every word be established." This is a divine ordination: it is not an arbitrary thing taken up by men at random, and of their own choice and pleasure; but it is God's stated medium and way, wherein he hath appointed, that persons are to be informed concerning matters of fact, which they are concerned to know, and of which they have not the immediate knowledge themselves. "It is written in your law (saith Christ to the Jews) that the testimony of two men is true." What law was that? It was the divine law. God hath enacted, that the testimony of a competent number of witnesses should be relied upon, to assure us of the truth of those matters of fact, that they do testify; and you do well know, that upon this ground (so material a thing this is) depends all the administration of justice throughout the world. Otherwise, no judge would determine in reference to any case, which came not under the sight of his own eye, or whereof he was an ear-witness. And so this would subvert the very foundations of all human society. There could be no such thing as human society in the world upon these terms; and therefore we must look upon this as a holy, wise constitution of the great Ruler of this world, who hath ordained and appointed, that in reference to such matters of fact, as we are concerned to have the knowledge of, and have not the immediate knowledge of ourselves, we are to depend upon the testimony of others. And this is not an arbitrary thing that we take up of ourselves, but a thing that the wisdom of Heaven hath constituted and set for the preserving of common order here, among men in this world. And,

4. The difference is unspeakably great, between relying upon men's testimony, as to mere matters of fact; and relying upon it, as to matters of right. We may have a difference upon the authority of one or two credible witnesses, reporting to us such matters of fact, when as to which is right and wrong, we will have no dependence upon them at all. As now suppose any of you receive a letter from some person of very great authority and quality, and for whom you have great deference and duty, this letter comes to you by the hands of a footman; do you pay a deference to the man, in believing what is contained in the letter? No, all the belief of what is contained in the letter, is resolved into the authority of him that wrote it, and from whom it comes. Only you may look upon this as a fit medium to convey it to you; and you rely (if there be occasion to do so much) no more upon the footman, as to matter of fact, but that he received this letter from his lord or master to deliver to you; but his testimony hath no influence upon the contents of this letter, one way or other.

And this therefore leads you sufficiently to understand how to answer yourselves, if any should further inquire—Pray how doth this differ from the notion that runs among them of the Romish church, that is, that we are beholden to their tradition for the Scriptures we have, and for our Christianity, and for all that we have any knowledge of in the things of God and religion?—Why, it differs the most that can be. For,

(1.) The papists do not only claim to be witnesses in the case, but they claim to be the only witnesses: which they most pretencelessly and injuriously assume to themselves: for we do not rely upon them as the sole witnesses, nor as witnesses at all, but only as they join and fall in with the concurrent testimony of the rest of the Christian churches, that have the same books among them that we have. We are no more beholden to them, than we are to other Christians. Nor,

(2.) Do we rely barely upon the testimony of Christian churches, as to the matters of fact contained in these books, but we rely upon the concurrent testimony of the rest of the world, Jews and pagans themselves, as to the truth of matters of fact, which we need to be informed about, in the matters of our religion. The papists do engross to themselves to be the only witnesses, most falsely, and without the least colour of pretence. But we reckon the testimony of an enemy, an avowed, professed enemy, is of the greatest strength in such a case imaginable. That is the testimony we have from the Jews, and the testimony we have from the pagans, of matters of fact, when the matter of fact is against, plainly against them. This we think we have a great deal of reason to lay much stress and weight upon. Now it is very plain as to mere matters of fact, pagans themselves have owned the truth of those matters of fact, upon which the Christian doth depend: to wit, the wonderful works wrought by our Saviour and his apostles to prove the doctrines that they preached, and that are contained in these books. Pagans do not deny these matters of fact, we have them in divers of their own writings. For as to those miracles wrought by Christ, in his own time, to prove the truth of Christianity, (which was done on purpose that they might know that Jesus was the Son of God; that men might believe this, and that by believing it, might have life through his name,) Celsus, that great enemy of the Christian religion, never goes about to deny the matter of fact: he knew that would be vain; all the world knew the truth of the matter of fact; only he takes a great deal of pains to show how it was possible that such things might be done by other invisible powers. Just the same conceit that the Jews had among themselves, when they tell our Saviour, that he cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. That is, they did suppose the devil to have fallen out with himself, and that all his business was industriously to destroy his own kingdom. Indeed, the greatest and most momentous matters of fact, by which Christianity was confirmed at first, are freely granted by the most considerable pagans. We find in their writings, an acknowledgment of those things that filled the world with so much wonder, and they labour partly to turn off all by referring the great wonders to other causes and agents; and partly by pretending, that as strange things have been wrought by their own hands: as the setting up of Apollonius Tyanæus, that great magician; whereas, the disparity is so great that nothing is more so, nor can be to any, who consider, that those tricks wrought by him, were easily detected of fraud and imposture, and were pretended to be wrought to no considerable purpose. But the others were frequent and often repeated, and in common sight, and without any design of hiding; so as that when men that have been concerned have canvassed and searched as much as possible, to know whether they were true or no, the light hath shone into their faces, and they have been forced to yield and owu that a great and notable work hath been done, "and we cannot deny it." And with great dread and consternation they beheld the world running after Christ and his apostles, these works carrying so great a light in them, that were wrought for that design. And,

(3.) There is this difference besides, in what the papists do arrogate to themselves about this matter of testifying, from what we admit and assert; that is, that they assume to themselves the making of doctrines that shall be of equal authority with these books. And one of their greatest men among them, is known to have used that blasphemous saying, that this book hath no more of authority, than Æsop's fables, other than what it hath derived from their

church. And if it were not for the authority it fetcheth from their church, it were no more to be regarded than Æsop's fables: which is so great an insolence, that indeed one would wonder (but that Divine patience will magnify itself till the time of taking vengeance upon that apostate church come) that a thunderbolt from heaven should not have vindicated such a blasphemy, with all things else that are of the same piece among them, and carry the same import and signification: for we know they take upon them to say and unsay, to do and undo, to maim and mangle this book, and set up contrary institutions to it; as is particularly known in that great ordinance of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. And then,

(4.) As to the business of being mere witnesses of matter of fact, there they have proved themselves false and unfaithful; that is, in foisting in the apocryphal books into the canon of the Scripture, against the authority both of the Jewish church and the ancient church, as the world may judge at this day that read them.

So that there is no parity at all in these two cases, the relying by God's institution and appointment upon a human testimony, but as a medium to convey and transmit to us our knowledge of bare matter of fact, and their assuming to themselves to be the only one to be relied upon, not only as to matter of fact, but as to the authority by which right and wrong, and the truth and falsehood of doctrine, are to be finally decided and judged of. And thus far then we think, that the way of proving the sameness of these books with those that bore the character of sacred books, or books of divine authority, is altogether unexceptionable, and so strong, as that there can lie nothing against it to the common reason and understanding of men, when we have such a way of being assured of this matter, as must be convictive to any that do allow themselves the liberty and use of their understandings. And it would be a very foolish expectation, to think that God should gratify the fanciful curiosities of men, by working wonders among them continually and repeatedly to no purpose.

Upon all this I shall supcradd some considerations that may give strength to all that hath been said before. As,

1. By common consent of all mankind, some divine revelation or other is necessary to the ends of religion, besides mere natural light. We do not find or read of any sort of people under heaven that have pretended to any thing of religion, but have likewise also pretended to somewhat or other of divine revelation, besides what was natural and common to men as men, as necessary for the conduct of the affairs of religion, or for which such a thing as religion was to be kept on foot in the world. Look back amongst any sort of people, as to the most ancient accounts we have in the world of any thing of religion, and we shall find it so: as for instance, if we go to the Egyptians of old, the Phœnicians, the Assyrians, the Persians, the Grecians, the Romans, the ancient Gauls and Britons; nay, if we carry it as far as China, for such accounts as we have of their religion and what it hath been for some hundreds of years past, nay, and some thousands of years backwards. All these people have pretended to somewhat of divine revelation, over and besides natural light; none of them but have had those among them whom they always took to be inspired persons. I am not considering now, whether their pretensions be right or wrong, true or false, but all have agreed in this sentiment, that there did need some other revelation besides the light of nature, in order to the ends and purposes of religion. They always had some sacred persons among them. Their priests, their magi, gymnosophists, their brahmins, their bards, their druids, whom they always took for inspired persons; and received dictates and directions from them still in reference to matters of religion; yea, and in reference to other matters too, as so many inspired persons: thus still by their own confession, owning mere natural light insufficient for the purposes of religion. Famous it is, (besides all that hath been intimated before,) concerning those several sorts of sacred persons, that the several nations had amongst them, that when Numa began to settle religion at Rome, in the first forming of that people he pretended to have all his directions from his goddess Egeria, whom he conversed and met with in the woods, and consulted of those affairs from time to time. And the people of the Chinese are reckoned to have all their methods of religion and all their notions of it from that Confucius, for whom they have the greatest veneration, that ever any people could be supposed to have of one as an inspired person; so as that deference was never paid by the Turks to their Mahomet, which is paid by these Chinese to their Confucius, whom they had their religion from, at least one thousand years before ever the other was known in the world.

Now this, to me, is a very great thing, that by the common consent of mankind in all the known and noted nations of which we have any record or notices among us, they should pretend constantly to somewhat or other of divine revelation, in reference to the affairs of religion; thereby giving us, as the common sentiment of mankind, that mere natural light was not enough, but some divine revelation was further to be superadded, for the conduct and management of the affairs of religion in the world. And to that is to be added,

2. That as this would be *argumentum ad hominem*, (it being the common sentiment of mankind,) so it is very apparent from the nature of the thing, that really and truly it is a matter of plain necessity in itself, that there be some superadded revelation to the mere light of nature. For notwithstanding the pretence of it, (that pretence of it to be sure, can never do the business or answer the end for which the thing itself is necessary,) yet it is plain, that the very thing, that is, a real and divine revelation, is necessary over and besides mere natural light, as that lies now so much corrupted, depraved, and obscured, among the sons of men, if you do but consider into how miserable delusions men have generally fallen, where such a real divine revelation was wanting, in reference to the greatest and most important things of religion. As what can we suppose greater or of more importance to religion than these two, the object of it, and the end of it? The object of it is the God we are to worship, and the end of it is the felicity that we are to design and aim at in all the exercises of that worship, and in the whole course of our religion. Where there is not a real divine revelation, what monstrous conceits have been taken up concerning the object of religion! The polytheism of the gentile and pagan world, is a plain and pregnant proof what a necessity there was that over and besides the mere light of nature, God should reveal himself as the peculiar and sole object of religion according to what he is in himself. For though it be true indeed, that many of the wisest philosophers among the pagans have had right sentiments of the one Deity, the supreme *Numen, God*; yet for the generality of the people, how much otherwise hath it been! And with whom these wiser men have been forced to comply and fall in, temporizing with them whose own wicked and gross conceptions have led them to worship for deities, the sun, moon, and stars; or heroes, the souls of men departed from among them; and sometimes to come so low as to worship dogs and cats, weasels, apes, serpents, onions, leeks and garlic, fountains and rivers, and the like, for gods. So apparent need was there for a divine revelation to inform men about the object of their worship, above that light that is common to men as men. And then as concerning the end of religion, felicity, the great diversity of opinions among the pagans, (and even the wiser of them,) no less than two hundred eighty and eight, about the *summum bonum, chief good*, shows how great need there is of a particular divine direction, as to what that is which we are to design for ourselves as our final and eternal felicity. To these I add,

3. That supposing the necessity of a divine revelation about matters that relate to religion and our future blessedness, it must some time or other have become necessary that it should be a written revelation, put into writing upon record. Some time I say, I do not say always, necessary. It is plain it must be less necessary in former ages of the world, when by reason of the vast longevity and length of life, about three or four persons might see through two thousand years and upwards, and so give an account but by three or four hands, of the most material and important things, that were of common concernment for men, as such, to know about the beginning of the world and the like. And no doubt there was great care taken to preserve the memory of what was necessary to be known, by monu-

ments and the like, as Seth's pillars were, of which Josephus gives a particular account in his time. But I suppose there were only oral traditions, for that time, passing from hand to hand; and that of things of so apparent common importance and necessity, that none can imagine but if the persons were persons of tolerable prudence, (and we have no reason but to apprehend they were persons of great prudence, some at least that were more especially concerned, as Adam himself, Enoch, Noah, and Shem,) there could not but have been very distinct accounts transmitted from such hands, of what was necessary to be known concerning the original of the world, and what the pleasure of him that made it was, concerning the affairs of his worship in those days. And we may easily apprehend ourselves if, in any family among us, any thing of great concernment to the nation, (much more to all mankind,) should have come to the notice of an ancestor of ours; as, suppose any of you could say, "My grandfather or my great-grandfather had certain notices, some way or other, conveyed to him of such and such matters of fact, of the greatest importance imaginable to the whole nation;" do you think that that would be forgotten in three or four ages in that family? And as little supposable is it that in three or four ages of so long a duration, all that concerned the original of the world, and revealed will of its Creator, how men ought to live, and order their course in the world, would be forgotten.

But afterwards, when the lives of men grew shorter, it is most apparent, there was a necessity that such things as were most requisite to be known, and were of most common use, should be digested into records in writing. And so we find first, the books of Moses written; and afterwards, there was an addition of more and more made, as God thought fit, in following ages, till the fulness of time, when we have the clearest light of an entire Gospel revelation handed to us from our Lord himself, who came from the bosom of his Father to reveal and make him known, and his whole mind and will to men. And indeed, for them that would substitute tradition, and particularly that of oral tradition, in the room of this sacred written rule, they do it with the greatest absurdity that can be imagined: and indeed with the greatest immodesty, in them that now-a-days pretend to it. It is true, we read the apostle did take order with Timothy that some particular things which he had seen and taken notice of, and heard from him, he should commit to faithful men that might be able to teach and instruct others. There were many useful things that were not presently put into writing. But as for these men, under the notion of faithful witnesses, they have the least reason of any men in the world to lay claim to that office and dignity, of being the conveyancers to us of the things that concern us, in reference to our salvation and our eternal well-being: for when they take upon them to be authors, they cannot be looked upon to have done the part of faithful witnesses. How strangely have they innovated upon that religion which they boast to have been the conveyers of to us! How much another thing have they made it, to what it was, in doctrinals and worship, and even in reference to the affairs of common conversation itself! So that we may see, even by the insolency of this pretence of theirs, enough to assure us of the necessity of such a written rule to resort unto. And indeed, in what case had the Christian religion been at this day, and the professors of it in the world, if we had not had this written rule in our hands, to correct and discover plainly wherein they have prevaricated and corrupted the Christian religion? So that we may seek Christianity in the Christian world, as was said of old concerning the city of Samium, it was so altered that Samium was to be sought in Samium itself; so we would still be to seek Christianity among Christians, if we had not these records to set us right, and let us know what Christian religion was at first.

And upon the whole matter, as to those that would so officiously substitute their traditions in the room of the clear light of this written word, it is much a like case as if any of you should fall in with one travelling on the way, and he offers himself to be your companion and guide, and tells you that you have eyes that you make use of in choosing your way, but these eyes are only troublesome to you, they represent to you diversities of objects that draw this way and that, so that you cannot mind your path. "And pray (saith he) let me put out those eyes of yours, and submit yourself to my conduct," and all that he may guide you into a pit. Or a like case it would be, as if you should have writings in your hands, any of you, that were ancient, and did concern the title to an estate of yours from ages past, and one should say to you, "These writings have a great deal of obscurity in them, pray let me have these writings and dispose of them as I see good, and you need not doubt but that there will be witnesses enough to prove your title if there be occasion; and you do not need to question but I will take care to defend you and make out your title;" and to think to rob you of them by such a fraudulent artifice. Just thus would they deal with us about the sacred records, in which our all for eternal life do lie. But very plain it is upon all these grounds, that it was necessary there should be somewhat of divine revelation superadded to mere natural light; and was also necessary, some time, that it should be a written one.

4. Supposing this, that it is necessary there should be a written revelation of the mind of God, about matters that do concern our present religion and future felicity, then we have none at all extant in the world that can come in any plausible competition with this book, unless you will bring the Mahometan Alcoran into competition with it. Nothing else doth pretend to be a rule of faith and light to men. And for that Alcoran, (besides what it hath borrowed, or stolen, rather, from the Bible,) it is a book full of so gross absurdities, that they who have but common sense, would soon discern the difference between them; and how little of pretence there could be to bring that into competition with this, much less to carry it against this upon such a comparison. There are things in it so manifestly contrary to the common light and reason of men, as there would be ground enough for a most contemptuous rejection of it upon that score: such as its asserting the corporeity of the Divine nature; and that the felicity of the future state in the other world doth consist only in bodily pleasures and the like; things manifestly refutable by common natural light. And besides the contradiction that there is to the common reason of men in so great things as these, it is made up of contradictions and repugnancies to itself. For it doth say even that concerning him, upon whom, you know, our great hopes depend, which it doth, in the most substantial things, afterwards gainsay and contradict; for it owns him to be a great and a holy prophet, sent by God into this world. But if their religion should be true, he must be the falsest prophet (one of them) that ever was upon the face of the earth, or that ever pretended to prophecy; for did not he avow and give himself out to be the Son of God? If he were a true prophet he did truly say this, that he was the Son of God, and that he and his Father were one: and if he were a true prophet he did truly say this also, that the religion he taught, and the professors of it, should continue, and he with them, to the end of the world; and then the Mahometan religion was never to subvert and root out the Christian.

It is plain therefore, that nothing under the name of a divine revelation can with any the least plausibleness be brought into competition with this book. And therefore, if a divine revelation were necessary, and a written revelation were necessary, this must be it, and there can be no other. It is true indeed, some enthusiastical persons have pretended to inspiration as to this or that particular thing; but none have undertaken to pretend, that they are so inspired of God as to give a full, particular, perfect system and model, of all that is to be believed and done, in reference to worship and religion. So that this book hath really no plausible pretender or competitor against it.

5. Whereas, it doth pretend and avow itself to be divine, and of divine original; it hath those inimitable characters of divinity upon it, which most plainly justify that pretence; I shall, before I instance, only forelay this—That we must consider, when we would make a judgment upon this thing, whether this thing be a God-like thing, yea or no, and carries visible characters of divinity stamped upon it, we are, in making our judgment about this matter, to consider, not barely what is spoken or contained in this book, but also to whom such things are spoken, whose use this book was designed to serve and what use it was

intended for. We are not to consider, in this case, how God should speak if he were to publish an edict, or make an oration from the throne of glory to the innumerable company of angels, those glorious creatures that surround him above. That is none of the case that we are to consider. But we are to consider how we would expect him to speak, or how he would direct things to be written, that were intended for all sorts of men, here in this world, from the highest to the lowest, of all capacities and of all conditions, that have any exercise of reason and understanding. We are not to expect that one sort of Bible should have been written for learned men, and another for unlearned; or that one sort of Bible was written for citizens and another for country people; but we are to suppose that there was to be a book written that should suit the capacities of all sorts of persons from the highest to the lowest. And what could have been more God-like, more suitable to his wisdom and goodness, and more agreeable to the capacity and necessity of men in general, than what we have here in this book? And consider the use that it was to serve, what it was indeed to be written for. It was for the saving of miserable creatures that were in a lost, perishing state. It was never intended that such a book should be written, only to please men's fancies, or gratify their humours, or tickle their ears. It was intended for saving lost, miserable souls from perishing for ever; and those of all sorts, of all capacities, from the highest to the lowest; and so nothing could have been imagined more worthy of God, than the composure of this Book, for such persons and for such uses. And now to particularize a little, as to such divine characters which are conspicuous in it, and which I call inimitable, that could have proceeded from none but a divine Author,—As,

(1.) The majesty of the style: How great, how august and God-like it is! in the whole of it; take it entirely in the whole frame, and nothing could appear, in respect to the style, more majestic or more worthy of God. Though the case must be considered with a diversity, that is, that he did make use of human penmen, and it is never to be supposed, that he should direct every word and every phrase by an extraordinary immediate inspiration: for then it were impossible there should have been a diversity of style, but all the parts must have been in one and the same style. But there was that influx of the Divine Spirit that did most certainly guide the writers, as to all the substance of what was to be written and recorded by them; which did attemper itself to the natural genius of those that were made use of as the penmen, so that the communication of the Holy Ghost, received by such and such men, of such and such a constitution, temper, and genius, comes to be diversified in that manner, as if one comes to pour a quantity of water into such and such a particular vessel, the water in its form will resemble the figure of the vessel; if the vessel be round, the water falls into a round figure; if the vessel be square, the water is formed into that figure unavoidably. And so the same communication of the Holy Ghost, being poured into such a vessel as this or that man was, comes to be accordingly diversified. That very communication to such a one as Isaiah, for instance, receives one sort of figure there, and a communication to such a one as Micah, receives another figure there; when yet all these communications are from one and the same Fountain, and serve for one and the same common purpose. And indeed, upon the whole, it doth appear, that the greatness of the way of speaking it, doth so suit the majesty of God as nothing could do more, when men have come forth and spoken and written in the name of the Lord; and have from time to time pronounced, "Thus saith the Lord;" and when they have been directed to personate God, "I am the Lord; do so, and so. I am the Lord;" this is so becoming the greatness, the grandeur of the Author of this book, that it is not a supposable thing that there should be any, that would assume the confidence, in reference to things of this nature, to take upon them at such a rate; that is, comparing the confidence of such a pretence with the matter that is spoken of; and nothing is more evident than that this is agreeable to God only, or to one immediately directed by God only, and none else. And upon what was noted to you concerning the difference of styles, for such parts of this book wherein God is represented to be the immediate Speaker, himself making this use of man, it is evident in such cases, when he hath appeared more immediately as the Author of what was said, nothing beneath God can be supposed to have spoken like him. As now to instance, there is that song called the song of Moses in the 32nd of Deuteronomy; God doth give immediate directions to publish the words of such a song to this people, and to keep it as a record among them. It seems most likely that every word there was dictated immediately by God himself. And who did ever read any thing so great and so august as the words of that song are? And so when we find God immediately speaking to Job, in some of the latter chapters of that book, Who can imitate the majesty of what is said? which is there spoken unto him, when God speaketh to him himself out of the whirlwind. And,

(2.) Consider the sublimity of the matter: How mighty, great things are contained in this book! As in that Hosea viii. 12. "I have written unto them the great things of my law." To take such a summary as that, 1 Tim. iii. 16. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." How mighty things are these, of how sublime a nature! And these make the principal contents of this book. And then,

(3.) Do but consider again, the comprehensiveness of this sacred volume, of how vast extent it is. And what mind, but the mind of God, could have comprehended and collected together so great a variety of things as we find in this book? So as that nothing can be pretended to be wanting; not one thing can be so much as alleged is wanting that is requisite to be put into such a book, to serve the end it pretends to serve, and that it avows itself to be designed for. Things that suit all states of men from the highest to the lowest, all ages and each sex. Things we have that make up the system of what we are to believe, and things that compose and make up the system of what we are to do, and what makes up the system for us of what we are to desire. Do but look to the *credenda*, and the *agenda*, and the *petenda* or *speranda*; where we may have the collected *digesta* of the one kind and the other; and who can pretend any thing to be wanting here? The comprehensiveness of this book speaks the divinity of it, having that in it which suits every case and every purpose for which such a book can be desirable, or can be pretended to be so. And then,

(4.) Consider too, its correspondency to the spirit of man, which it was designed to rectify and set right, and be a measure unto, if you look upon the spirit of man under a threefold capacity. That is, look upon it as merely rational, or look upon it as corrupt and depraved, or look upon it as regenerate and renewed; and the contents of this book do most admirably suit it every way. Look upon it as merely rational, and nothing so adequate to the mind and reason of a man; so as that, though things in it there are indeed, that the reason of man could not have found out; there is nothing in it which the reason of man would not approve, being represented and laid before it. If we consider the condition of man as corrupt, what delineations have we of the corrupt frame and temper of the spirit of man in this state! And nothing, to me, is a greater argument of the truth of our religion in general, than to find such exact descriptions of the state of man, suiting the temper in which he is now to be found upon the original depravation in all his conditions in this world. So that just such a thing as a carnal man was, and was represented to have been, five thousand years ago, just such a one he is now; all the imaginations of the thoughts of the heart of man are evil, and continually so. And when God looks down from heaven upon man, to understand who it is that seeks after God, there is none that is found doing good, no not one; none seeking after God; for that good must be chiefly meant: as if all the world did agree in that one common sense, to say unto God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways: let not God molest or disturb us in our course." Just so is the degenerate spirit and temper of man represented, and how true a representation is it! And then look upon the spirit of man as renewed, and how lively a description is there of the

regenerate man, the renewed man! just so desiring after God, the living God, as this book doth express; there placing its sole felicity and highest delight, there reposing its treasure, there placing the study of the heart, to be sincere and upright in his sight; who but God could have made such a representation of man? And that I take to be a further consideration which shows the divinity of this book, even those most inimitable characters of its divine Author that are most conspicuous to every discerning eye. But I add,

(5.) The wonderful efficacy this word hath had upon the souls of men, from age to age. It hath shown itself to be "the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." What multitudes has it subdued! This sword of the Spirit, and arrows taken from hence, how "sharp have they been in the hearts of the King's enemies," by which multitudes have been thrown down and made subject! what conquests hath it made! Though indeed there have been sad dark intervals: but no more but what have been foretold long ago, wherein the progress of the Christian interest and religion should be slow and little; no other was to be expected, according to what was long ago foretold of. But if you consider the vast increases that were within the first and second centuries, so that some of the ancients have taken notice, and one particularly, by way of apology, to the emperor that then was, "we grow so numerous," (saith he,) "that were it not for the peaceableness of our spirits and principles, you could not subsist in opposition to us. It were easy for us to overturn the empire: and were it possible for us to retire and draw from the world, the world would wonder at its own emptiness." And Pliny writing to Trajan, another of their emperors, tells him, that rigorous and severe practices against the Christians were now altogether impracticable and might be dangerous: for he tells him, every where the way to the temples was overgrown with grass, and there were none to buy up their sacrifices, and there was no way in the world to keep peace in the empire, but to be very benign to the Christians. And he did procure, by that epistle, a great suspension of the rage, and cessation of the persecution, that was at that time. And then, all this was done, not by the power of arms, (as the Mahometan religion hath spread itself in the world,) but only by the power of this very word, the doctrine of Christ; whereby it appears to be "the wisdom of God and the power of God." I have discoursed to you at large before, of the strong and irrefragable evidence that is given to the truth of this book by the prophecies, and by the miracles we find recorded in it; the punctual predictions of the former, and the obsignations given to divine truth, given by divine power, in the latter. But this seal, set upon the souls of men by the sanctifying Spirit, (whereof this word hath been continually the instrument,) carries to seeing and discerning persons the greatest evidence imaginable in it. It was the saying of Plato, that "the world is God's epistle to men; the characters of his invisible power and goodness being so visible upon it." And how raised would his thoughts have been, and how much transported would he have been beyond the transport in which he was on this occasion, if he had but known and viewed this divine and sacred book! But then, to find it again, copied out and transcribed in men's hearts! "You are," saith the apostle, "the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart," 2 Cor. iii. 3. What a demonstration is here of the Divine Author that hath made work, even by his word, upon the hearts and souls of men? So as that the same apostle speaks in that, 2 Cor. xiii. 3. "Do you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but mighty in you?" "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith," "Do you seek a proof of Christ speaking by me?" See him in this book, and look into yourselves, such of you as have been converted and turned by my ministry; see if you be not Christ's epistle. See if he hath not written out the greatest and most necessary things about him and his religion, out of this book into your own hearts. And I add,

(6.) That the high complacency that the best men take in this book, must needs prove it to be divine to their own sense. It is true, that there wants not rational evidence to demonstrate the divine authority or divinity of this book, to any that shall at leisure impartially consider the thing. But it is a far more lively proof that any one hath of this in himself and in his own soul, when he is made to taste, in the word, how gracious the Lord is, when he hath the pleasant relish of it in his own spirit: when he can say by his own experience, "Oh, how sweet are thy words to my mouth, yea sweeter than honey to my taste!" when it is to him a recreation to retire and set himself to think, and consider, and study upon these great and deep things of God; when once he comes to experience this, that the law of God is his delight, and that therein he can exercise himself night and day. So it was, when much less was written of this book than what we now have. If David had seen all the writings of the New Testament, and of the prophets that succeeded himself, and had had the complete, entire volume in his hands that we have, with what transports would he have spoken of the ravishing pleasures of this book! how delectable a study must it have been to his soul! I hope (though it is much to be lamented indeed that there are no more) there are many at this day that find it thus: "We approve it ourselves, in our own hearts; this must be, this cannot but be the divine word, it is so delectable, so refreshing to our souls." And,

(7.) Lastly, Take this by way of addition, the plain and manifest design it hath to make men holy and good, and consequently to make them blessed and happy at length, proves it to be divine. It hath manifestly this design, and can have no other. This is a thing that speaks itself to every conscience of man that doth consider, that is, that this book in the general composure of it hath a design to make men good and holy; and consequently to make them blessed and happy; and can have no other design. Every one must suppose that such a book as this came not by chance into the world; if not by chance, then it came by design; and if it came by design, then something or other must be designed in it. It doth serve this end manifestly, aims at this, to make men holy and pure, and fit them for heaven and a blessed eternity; and it hath no other design, it aims at nothing else. This then must be of God; this must either have been a divine revelation from God himself, (as it avows itself to be,) or it must be one of the most horrid forgeries that ever was contrived under heaven, ever since the creation of the world. But I would appeal to any man's conscience, whether it is likely any one would be guilty of so audacious a wickedness, to entitle the holy God to be the Author of an imposture, for no other end than to make men holy and good? would men be so wicked as this, for no other end but to make the world good? Their own fact would fly in their faces. Here is a design to make the world holy and happy; and if the world were thus, as this book would make it, if it were suitable to it and the contents of it, if there were that love to God and Christ and our neighbours, that holiness, that righteousness upon earth that are expressed in, and designed to be promoted by, this book, what a blessed world were this! The very image and idea of heaven itself. But to think that men should be guilty of the greatest wickedness that ever was done under the sun, with so good a design, is the most inconsistent and unimaginable thing that can be.

These considerations, superadded to what was largely spoken to before, I reckon will prove the matter out of doubt, (with all that impartially consider and weigh things,) that these Scriptures are of divine authority.

LECTURE X.*

THAT which we have further yet to do upon this subject, is only to say somewhat by way of answer to an objection or two; and then to conclude and shut up all in some use.

Objection 1. Some such thought may possibly arise in the minds of some, that if these books be indeed of divine revelation in order to the salvation of souls, as you have

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heard they are, it may seem strange that they have been confined to so little a part of the world, to so small a portion of mankind. As for the books of the Old Testament, while they only were in being, that they should be shut up in so narrow limits as Palestine, a very little, inconsiderable spot, compared with the rest of the world. In Judah, it was said, God was known, as being unknown to the rest of the world, Psalm lxxvi. 1. And he gave his word to Jacob, and his statutes and judgments to Israel; and did not so to any nation, Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20. To the Jews were committed the oracles of God, as the apostle speaks, Rom. iii. 2. And afterwards, when Christianity came, in the fulness of time, to obtain in the world, how little a way, in comparison, did the Christian records reach, or have reached hitherto! According to common computation, the world being divided into thirty parts, nineteen do yet remain totally paganish in the grossest sense, and the other eleven between Mahometans and Christians, and not above a sixth part of the world that are so much as Christians in name, and of them how great a part have the Bible reserved and locked up from them, they not being permitted the use and knowledge of it! All this may seem very strange, if we consider these Scriptures as a divine revelation purposely vouchsafed in order to the salvation of the souls of men.

Why in reference to this I shall offer you some considerations that I hope may not be unuseful. As,

1. Suppose that there had been no saving design at all set on foot in reference to the apostate sons of men, but that they had been left uoder the same remediless condition with the apostate angels, what wrong had there been done? who could have had whereof to accuse the righteous Lord and sovereign Ruler of all this world? Why might not he have left all to sink without remedy or hope, into so deserved, yea, and a self-procured ruin? It is therefore apparently not a matter of right, but of free favour, if God afford any apt and suitable means in order to the saving of any. And what is not matter of right may surely be withheld without wrong. But,

2. When upon the fall of Adam it pleased God so graciously to reveal to him his saving design and the means of it by that eminent seed of the woman, whereof (though those words do carry but an obscure intimation, yet) undoubtedly, he did not leave Adam ignorant of the meaning and intendment of them. And it is as little to be doubted but that Adam did transmit the knowledge of what he knew himself, in so important a matter, to his more immediate posterity. If then they had not been wanting to themselves and their posterity, it must necessarily have been, that there would have been some sufficient knowledge of a Saviour diffused all the world over, wheresoever his posterity had spread itself. But if men have herein been wanting to themselves, is the holy merciful God to be charged with this? If some very bountiful person should confer some great estate, and settle it upon some particular family, and they embezzle and lose it, is this to be charged upon the bountiful benefactor? And again,

3. Men did not only by their voluntary neglect lose the notices that were first thus given to Adam, concerning a Saviour, but they lost the very notions of God himself. So that by their own negligence and malignity, they gradually and universally sunk even into the grossest idolatry; and so by this means, not only lost the opportunity that they had of knowing somewhat how man might have been saved out of his lost and lapsed estate, but they provoked Divine displeasure against them in the highest degree. And so their negligence herein is not only the natural means of their being without such knowledge as they otherwise would have had, but the provoking cause of God's deserting the world in so great a measure, and so generally, as he hath deserted it. And thus doth the apostle plainly state the case, that because they have not been true to that light that was natural and common to them, did not follow the conduct, even of the notices of God that they had, therefore they have been abandoned and given up: "The wrath of God hath been revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." What truth was that? or what men were these? It was natural truth, the natural knowledge of God, that men had as men; and this was the pagan world that was here chiefly spoken of. And for that very reason, because that which was to be known of God in them was so manifest to them, even the invisible things of God from the creation of the world, his eternal power and Godhead, sufficiently to leave them without excuse; yet (as it after follows) they liking not to retain God in their knowledge, therefore he gave them up; as we see, Rom. i. 18, 28. Here is nothing but *Nemesis, just punishment*, and so no cause at all to complain of any injury done to men. But,

4. When yet it pleased God, in order to the revival of the lost state of religion in the world, to form a peculiar people to himself, and there to set up an eminent light (as it were) upon a candlestick, to vouchsafe an express revelation of himself to that people, and to commit to them his oracles, they were so committed to them, not to be confined and hid, but preserved and kept; and that thence, light might be transmitted all round about, which accordingly must of course (if men had not been wanting to themselves) have spread further and further. It was not from any divine appointment, but from the ill spirit that ruled amongst that ill people, and from the prejudice and negligence of their neighbours, that the light they had did not spread and extend further and further, and still further and further, to circulate from nation to nation. It proceeded (I say) from the ill spirit that was among the Jews, who did envy to the rest of the world the knowledge of God, which now, for the present, was peculiar to them; and to the negligence and prejudice of the rest, that they looked after no such things. Of that ill spirit that ruled among the Jews, that is a sad instance, (which I have upon some other occasion told you of,) that when there was one translation of the Old Testament by the seventy elders, enjoined to be made by Ptolemy, and they could not tell how to hinder it, they appointed a solemn fast universally wherever they had any thing at all to do, to lament that the knowledge of God should be so diffused amongst others; and go beyond their own bounds. Wherein, as they were guilty, no doubt, so the rest of the world were accessary too, by their negligence and disaffection to the true knowledge of God, to their own continuing ignorance. And further,

5. That when the Christian records, the books of the New Testament, came to be added to those of the Old, how should it come to pass but only through the general ill temper of men, that Christian knowledge might not be as far extended as commerce was between nation and nation, kingdom and kingdom? Why might not that commodity have been carried as far as gold and silver and precious stones? the price whereof is far above all these, "more precious than rubies," or thousands of gold and silver. And (as I told you formerly) it was never to be expected God should do that by extraordinary means, that might have been done by ordinary. And this being the case, it is little to be expected that God (when men might so easily have transmitted such notices from nation to nation, and those that were of a greater distance, and might have heard more obscurely, of such and such things, might have inquired and sent and laboured to inform themselves) should give remedy to such an evil as this, by an extraordinary course; and when in an ordinary way such knowledge might have been conveyed from country to country, he should have sent an angel from kingdom to kingdom, and from nation to nation, to carry them Bibles. It might have been as well expected that, in Christian countries, where the Bible is come, but a great many persons being illiterate, and can make no use of it, an angel should be sent from house to house to teach their children to read. Again,

6. Where there hath been both a loss of that Christian knowledge that once did obtain, and those very records do (it may be) cease from some parts of the world where they have been, this is still to be imputed to the same cause, the carelessness and negligence of men about their own concernments, even about their greatest concernments, as we are told. It is true, that of latter days, in some parts of the world, where there have been thirty Christians for one pagan, there are now nearly thirty Mahometans for one Christian. Whence is this, but from the wilful degeneracy and revolt of those, amongst whom the Christian name was sometime professed? It would not have been imposed upon any, whether they would or no, to forego their religion,

and to let these sacred records cease from among them, and substitute a fetid, fulsome, ridiculous Alcoran in the room of them. We are not to charge upon God these gross negligences and wickednesses of men. And again,

7. Where these holy books are shut up from people, (as they are generally in the Romish church,) to what is that to be imputed, but to their own carelessness and indifferency and coldness in the concerns of their own souls and of the future state? This is a punishment, a just punishment upon stupid besotted princes and people, that they would be so imposed upon; so absurdly and without pretence; that their priests must lock up all from them, that so they might have the leading of them, the blind leading the blind into the ditch. We are to consider a penal hand in this, as is expressed, 2 Thess. ii. 11. that where the truth is not received in the love of it, there God, in judgment, should "send strong delusions that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned." This is righteous and holy displeasure, and the act and effort of punitive justice for very gross and most provoking wickedness, that a greater value hath not been had and expressed of things so sacred, so precious, and of such concernment to men's souls; that the greater part of the Christian world should suffer itself to be so grossly imposed upon, and cheated out of the very things wherein their very salvation is concerned. Their wickedness in this, did punish itself. And God hath most righteously permitted it to be so. And then,

8. That according to human measures, and even amongst ourselves, the government is not concerned when laws are made, to provide that every particular person should have the particular knowledge of them. Such laws as are of common concernment men are obliged, under penalties, to observe; they are to look after them themselves. The government is not to take care that every particular person, or family, or parish, or town, or country hath this or that particular act of parliament sent to them, or a statute book lodged in every such place. That is not their care, but it is expected, people should so far concern themselves and mind their interests as to acquaint themselves with things, upon which the safety of their lives as well as the common peace doth depend. And yet further,

9. Where ignorance of those great things that are contained in the Holy Scriptures is altogether invincible; and where it was impossible, in a natural way, that such knowledge should come, undoubtedly God will deal with men accordingly. He will only proceed with them according to that light they had; he will never punish them for not having that light which they never had, nor could have. "As many as sin without the law shall perish without the law; and as many as have sinned with the law shall perish by the law:" as Rom. ii. 12. And,

10. In the last place, if any such were any where to be found that did to their utmost improve the light and means of knowledge which they had, (supposing them never to have had what we have from these holy writings,) we do not know what God would have done for their further help in that case. But I doubt instances will not be found of such as have improved the light they had to the uttermost. How far we are from improving as we should and might, that greater light which we have! But God hath his ways open to him. We do not know how he did convey light of old to those that had it before the Scriptures were written: how Job came by his knowledge, and how his friends came by theirs, we do not know. But this is undoubtedly the ordinary, stated means of knowledge where it is vouchsafed; where God doth afford it. If God doth not afford it, he proceeds then by other measures of his own which we know nothing of. But certainly he will always walk punctually according to that rule, that "whosoever hath, to them shall be given, and they shall have more abundantly;" that is, whosoever hath so as to improve what he hath, that useth and enjoys what he hath, and God is pleased to trust him with, God will never be wanting to such. He will always be beforehand with them, as he is never behind-hand with any, according to that known and generally approved saying of that ancient: *Homini facienti quod in se est, Deus non deest: God is never wanting to them that do improve what they possess.* Though he owes them nothing, and whatsoever he doth for them is of grace, he is never wanting to those that with serious diligence trade with and improve their present talents. And I think more needs not be said to that objection.

Objection 2. And it is of less concernment, what might be further objected in the second place. That is, it may seem somewhat more desirable (at least) that these Scriptures had contained things that are of necessity to salvation in a more distinct method, that we might have had (as it were) all the several heads belonging to religion, reduced as in a common place book, to such and such distinct topics, that every one might know whither to go presently for all things that do belong to such and such a head. But,

I. I answer; It is enough to those that consider things modestly, and with that subjection and resignation of spirit that we ought to have, to take notice only that God hath thought another course fitter. And that is surely best which he thinks best. So submissive and resigned ought our minds and understandings to be to the Divine mind. But,

2. Supposing the most accurate method that could be imagined were used in all things, as was suggested, yet however, there would have been a continual use and need of a stated office, to be continued through all the successions of time, purposely for the explaining and for the enforcing of things upon the dull and sluggish minds of men. The state of this apostate world doth most manifestly require it, yea and even with the best, those that are upon recovery, who are in some measure restored out of the common apostacy, they do still need to be continually administered unto. And that being supposed, it is the business of them who are invested with such an office, to be continually searching for others, and labouring diligently to explain things to them, and to lay things together, and to apply them to particular uses and purposes as the variety of cases should need and require. And to add no more,

3. Whereas the bounty and goodness of God hath provided for the inhabitants of this earth, that the bowels of it should be replenished with things of very great usefulness and very great value, as gold, silver, precious stones, and the like, that are dug out of the earth, it might as reasonably be said, Why did not God so order the matter, that upon turning up of the earth, one might have found vessels of gold, flagons and dishes of silver, ready made and formed? and why have we not our rubies and diamonds ready cut and polished, as they are taken out of the earth? These Scriptures do contain all needful truths in the ore, from whence they are to be beaten out. And what! is nothing to be left to the industry and diligence of those that are to be employed here a life-time, in reference to the concernments of their salvation and the affairs of another world? must every one expect that food of this kind should drop into his mouth when, even in reference to the support of this perishing life, it seemed a just and equal law to the universal Lawgiver, that he that would not labour should not eat?

And therefore, now to make some brief *Use* of what hath been said upon this subject. It may be improved several ways.

1. It may very reasonably put us upon *reflection*, what our temper and what our practice hath been and is, in reference to these sacred writings. And,

(1.) Let us reflect, and bethink ourselves: Are they used, are they perused, as so sacred, so important, and necessary things do require to be? Pray let us reflect, Are they much in our hands in our closets? do we lay it as a charge upon ourselves to search the Scriptures? You see it is given as a charge by our Lord himself, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life," John v. 39. Is the reading of them in our families a common practice? You do best know. There is such a thing as family instruction charged upon family masters. They are to be accountable for those under their charge in this very thing. And certainly they that do but use a very ordinary understanding, would soon and easily apprehend, that I who am to maintain the lives of so many persons in my family under my care, by providing food for them for their natural lives, that I who am not to suffer a child or a servant to starve under my roof, must not surely let their souls starve: I must not

let the necessary means of spiritual and eternal life be withheld from them. Let it be considered, Is such a course kept up? If there must be family instruction, this word must be the ground of it, it must be all fetched from hence. And how sad, how unaccountable a case is it, when it shall be more ordinary and familiar to have a news-book (not to say a play-book) in men's hands, and under their eye, than this holy book! But we are to inquire too,

(2.) Not only concerning the reading and perusing of these writings, but concerning the gust, the savour and relish wherewith we do it. With what complacency do we look into and resolve in our hearts those great and deep things of God that are contained and unfolded to us in this book? I would fain know, who of us can assign a reason why David should have a pleasanter relish of the word of God than we? Is it not of as great importance to us, as it could have been to any saint heretofore, to take these sacred truths and doctrines that are contained in this book for our meat and drink? "I found thy words and did eat them," saith the prophet, "and they were to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." We have it given us as the common character of a good man, a fearer of the Lord, of old, that the law of God was his delight, and therein he did meditate day and night, Psal. i. 2. Let us but consider, if there be a failure and decay generally among us as to one thing, that is, the want of a savouring and relishing the word of God, the things contained in the sacred writings, whether there be not a matter of threatening abode and import to us in it; for then all our religion is proportionably languishing, and the languishment of it is a continual tendency to its being lost, and continual sickness and languishing is a tendency to death: and in such reflections as these, we should compare present time with former time, so far as it any way comes within the compass of our knowledge, either of what we could either of us have observed ourselves, or what is recorded to us by others. Sure the time was, that the word of God hath been a thing of much higher esteem (I doubt) than at present. I am very apt to think, and do pretty certainly know, that the reading of the Bible in London was a much more common usage than now it is in families and closets. And truly, if there be symptoms of decay upon us in respect of so very important a thing as this is, it looks very threateningly: we may be sure if our esteem grow less of this book, God's esteem doth not grow less of it: he doth not measure by us: and if he have the same estimate and value for it that ever he had, we may fear that he will sometime or other (and we know not how soon) very terribly vindicate the neglect, contempt, and disregard of these sacred records. If he do come to plead his own cause, in this regard, with an untoward generation, I fear it will be a very terrible day: I know not who will live when God doth this. But,

2. This should *exhort* us to several things. As,

(1.) That we do with serious gratitude acknowledge and adore the goodness of God, in intrusting us with such a treasure as these Oracles of his are. I am afraid this is a thing wherein there is a very general neglect and defect. We do not often enough put it into our express thanksgivings, that God hath vouchsafed the great blessing of a Bible among us. I doubt we do not explicitly enough take notice of this, as a matter of gratitude to God, nor so often as we should, that he hath put this book into our hands. And,

(2.) It should exhort us to more frequent and diligent reading of the Scriptures. For what have we them for? And indeed we do but mock God when we give thanks for them, if we use them not. It should be more a business with us; time should be chosen and reserved for it on purpose. We should contrive how to spare time from our common affairs for the perusal of this book. I am afraid that partly between the over-much business of the shop and the exchange, and partly through the no business of the coffee-house and tavern, little or no time is allowed for this important work, the reading and perusing diligently these holy writings.

(3.) And we should be exhorted next, to endeavour to get them written over again in our hearts: that this word may be to us an ingrafted word: that we may have this word of Christ dwelling richly in us: that we may be the epistles of Christ, written not with ink on paper, but with the Spirit of the living God on the fleshly tables of our hearts: otherwise this word cannot but be a witness against us. If there be not a correspondent word within, if there be not an internal correspondent word, the external word must be a standing witness against the frame of our spirits and against our habitual inclination. We then have the word of Christ dwelling richly in us, when it transforms and changes us, and when we are like it, when there is something within us answerable to it, as face answers to face in the water. And,

(4.) It ought, in order to this, further to exhort us to endeavour distinctly to understand it; especially in those great things that do concern the vitals and essentials of religion. And this knowledge will be easy to them that concern themselves to understand. Wisdom is easy to him that hath understanding, that is, that sets his mind to understand, that doth aim at understanding. It must be a design driven and pursued accordingly, that we may get our minds enriched with that knowledge that is wrapt up in these holy writings. And we have greater advantages in order to it, yea much greater, than our forefathers have had, though they have expressed that love to this book, which I am afraid is too little common in our time. How dear was a leaf of the Bible to some of the poor suffering martyrs! But, I say, we have much greater advantage to help us to a distinct understanding of it. How many very useful commentaries upon the Bible are there published among us in the English tongue, which were not in the former time? As particularly the Dutch annotations, and Diodati's annotations, and those that are called the Assembly's annotations and Mr. Poole's, in two volumes, and that lesser and very useful one of Mr. Clarke, single. So that they must owe it to their own great neglect and unconcernedness, who are not furnished with help at hand whereby they may in some measure understand the Bible distinctly as they read it, and know how to refer things to their use from day to day as they go on in that course. And then,

(5.) Lastly, apply it to the several uses it was written for and was designed to serve. You see here in the context, what uses it was intended to serve, and it is said to be profitable for: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:" use it to these several purposes, as the case doth from time to time require. And we may add hereunto, what we find in another place, (Rom. xv. 4.) that the things that were written, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Oh! how many a sweet cordial is there in this book! Certainly they cannot be in an uncomfortable state, without a fault, that have such matter of consolation just at hand, and take no notice of it. They that go from day to day in darkness, and complain of their own doubts and fears; and will not be at the pains to consider what there is in this book suitable to the state of their case, and which by faithful application would undoubtedly in time satisfy all unreasonable doubts, and dismiss all causeless fears and make them vanish, must needs be wanting to their own comfort and peace. It is in that respect a light, not only upon account of its instructiveness, but upon account of the pleasantness and consolations thereof. The Scriptures were written that we through patience and comfort of them might have hope. We that are following the conduct of God, and the ducture of that light which shines in this sacred word of his, towards an eternal state of glory, with what erect and raised hearts, with hearts how lifted up in the ways of God, should we hold on our course, as the redeemed ones of him, having that life and immortality in view which are brought to light before our eyes in this Gospel.

And a little to enforce all this, it may not be altogether useless, nay, I think it may be worth our while to tell you a short passage which was not long ago told me by a person, (whose name is well known in London, and I hope savory in it yet, Doctor Thomas Goodwin,) at such time as he was president of Magdalen college in Oxford: there I had the passage from him. He told me that being himself in the time of his youth a student at Cambridge, and having heard much of Mr. Rogers of Dedham in Essex, purposely he took a journey from Cambridge to Dedham,

to hear him preach on his lecture day, a lecture then so strangely thronged and frequented, that to those that came not very early there was no possibility of getting room in that very spacious large church. Mr. Rogers was (as he told me) at that time he heard him, on the subject of discourse which hath been for some time the subject of mine, the Scriptures. And in that sermon he falls into an expostulation with the people about their neglect of the Bible: (I am afraid it is more neglected in our days:) he personates God to the people, telling them, "Well, I have trusted you so long with my Bible: you have slighted it, it lies in such and such houses all covered with dust and cobwebs: you care not to look into it. Do you use my Bible so? well, you shall have my Bible no longer." And he takes up the Bible from his cushion, and seemed as if he were going away with it and carrying it from them; but immediately turns again and personates the people to God, falls down on his knees, crys and pleads most earnestly, "Lord, whatsoever thou dost to us, take not thy Bible from us: kill our children, burn our houses, destroy our goods; only spare us thy Bible, only take not away thy Bible." And then he personates God again to the people; "Say you so? well, I will try you a while longer; and here is my Bible for you, I will see how you will use it, whether you will love it more, whether you will value it more, whether you will observe it more, whether you will practise it more, and live more according to it." But by these actions (as the doctor told me) he put all the congregation into so strange a posture that he never saw any congregation in his life; the place was a mere Bochim, the people generally (as it were) deluged with their own tears: and he told me that he himself, when he got out and was to take horse again to be gone, he was fain to hang a quarter of an hour upon the neck of his horse weeping, before he had power to mount; so strange an impression was there upon him, and generally upon the people, upon having been thus expostulated with for the neglect of the Bible.

And sure, if our neglect of it in our days have not been less, it is a very sad case, if our affliction and resentment of such an evil as this should be apparently and discernibly less.

And nothing will signify our regardlessness of this holy book more, than if we do not strictly regulate ourselves by it as to our thoughts, and as to all our deportment. For pray, under what notion do we own this book, but as a rule to guide us to our end? how to glorify God and how to enjoy him for ever? It will be a plain testimony against us that this book hath not the esteem which is due to it, when it hath not the use made of it that it was purposely designed for. And oh! let that be but considered, its use is to be a rule for us. Bethink we ourselves thereupon, whether we do really regulate our thoughts, our hearts, our affections, and our passions by it. "I dare not allow such and such thoughts, I dare not allow such and such motions of spirit within myself, for the Bible is against them." Let us but consider, whether we use to lay this rule to our minds and spirits, and to our walkings and actions, so as to conform all to it. If not, it is impossible we can value it according to its true worth, for it is valuable but under the notion as it is a rule, and it can never regulate our external conversation as it should, if it do not regulate our spirit first. We must consider that is the great difference between the government of God and any human government whatsoever. His government is primarily mental, it is a government first exercised about minds; and this word is the instrument of his government as to them. This word of his "is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." And if we do not labour to get our spirits, our inward man, habitually subjected to the governing power of this word, it doth nothing upon us to any purpose; it is lost upon us, as to all the great purposes for which it should serve us. But is not this too apparently our common case, that if there be a strong inclination to this or that thing or way, or if there be a passion up that we have a mind to indulge, this shall signify more with us, to carry us this way or that, than a thousand texts of Scripture? You may as well, many times, oppose your breath to the Thames to turn the course of it, as to oppose the word of God to these inclinations. But is this to make use of the Scripture as our rule, when the plain design of it lies against such and such habitual inclination, or against indulgence to such and such a passion, and we never apply it to such a purpose? If we did but get the authority of the great God (whose word this is) to be (as it were) enthroned within us, so as that our souls might stand in continual awe of him, the remembrance of a text of Scripture would presently allay passion, govern appetite, and check inclination, and so would come, with ease and pleasure, to be to us a governing rule of all the affairs and actions of our lives.

And so I have done, as to this great subject of the Scriptures, which was proper next, after we had asserted to you the existence of a Deity, that is, of an intelligent Ruler and Maker of this world, to whom such a word as this might certainly be ascribed as his word; that then we might come from this word of his to have more distinct apprehensions concerning him. It was necessary, first, to know that there was one intelligent, perfect, all-comprehending, eternal Mind, the original and Author of all things, without which it would have been a vain thing to speak of the word of God. We must know first, whence such a word was to proceed, and that being once understood and known, then we may look back again upon him, and such things through the light of the word come more clearly to be revealed to us concerning him, than we can otherwise, by mere light of nature, search or find out. And so to such things we shall go on, in our intended course, as the Lord shall enable and direct.

LECTURE XI.*

James ii. 19.

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

In pursuance of that design we have had in hand, of explaining and asserting to you the principal heads and doctrines of our religion, we have (you know) already been discoursing to you about the object of it, the eternal, ever-blessed God; and concerning the measure and rule of it, the holy Scriptures, which we have proved to be the word of God: and that method it was necessary to follow, of evincing the being or existence of God to you first, before we could reasonably go about to prove the Scriptures to be his word. For of nothing there are no predicates; nothing can be affirmed of nothing. It were vain to allege the authority of this or that prince's edict to one that should not believe that there was ever such a prince: but having evinced to you the existence of God, and that these Scriptures are his word, purposely written to reveal him more fully to us, his nature, and his mind and will concerning what we are to believe and practice, in order to our pleasing and our enjoying of him; it is now highly reasonable to expect from these Scriptures, the discovery of such things further, concerning him, and our duty towards him and expectations from him, as we could not otherwise have known, as whereof we could not by other means have had as to some things; and as to other things, not so distinct or certain knowledge: for otherwise these Scriptures should not answer their avowed end, and must indeed be supposed to be written in vain. There are things that do concern even God himself, which is of great importance to us to be acquainted with, that either we should have had no knowledge at all of, without these Scriptures, or should not have known so clearly or not so easily; some of us (it may be) not at all: such as were less capable, or less inclined, or less willing to use their own reason in thought, and to discern a train of consequences, and the force of them, and how to make things that are in themselves evidenceable, evident to ourselves in an argumentative way. It is a great matter of

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advantage to have more of necessary things made known to us, and to have those things which it is necessary we should know, made known in an easy and less laborious way, without our more toilsome search: or to have it said, on the authority of the great God, this and this you are to believe, and this and this you are to do; to have that which is to be the food of our souls, not to be hunted for, but even brought to our hands; this is a very great advantage.

Now among some of those things that do concern God himself, and which it is of absolute necessity to be acquainted with, and in order whereto we are to have a clear light, and, for the most, their whole light, from the Scriptures, there are especially two which I shall instance in and insist upon. That is,—the unity of the Godhead, and —the trinity therein. And for the former of these, the unity of the Godhead, we may very fitly insist upon that, as far as is needful, from this Scripture. In which there are two parts. The first, approving and justifying the believing of this great truth, that God is but ONE: "Thou believest there is one God, thou doest well:" the other, reproving and condemning the ineffectual belief of it: "the devils also believe and tremble."

I. I shall insist on the former of these—That the Godhead is but ONE, or there is but ONE GOD. "This (saith the apostle) thou believest, thou doest well in it. Thou believest truly and as the matter is." I do not propound this to you as a Scripture doctrine, upon that account, as if it were not at all demonstrable in a rational way; but shall first let you see how very expressly the Scripture doth testify to us this truth touching the unity of the Godhead. And then secondly, shall show what rational evidence it admits of besides.

1. As to the Scripture testimony about this, it could be in nothing more express. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord:" (Deut. vi. 4.) a passage quoted in the Gospel as you find, Mark xii. in several verses of that chapter, in which it is enlarged upon. One of the scribes (verse 28.) came to our Lord, and perceiving there were reasonings between him and some others, he asks, "Which is the first commandment?" Jesus answered him, "The first commandment is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord thy God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." The scribe said unto him, "Well, master, thou hast said the truth, for there is but one God, and there is none other but he; and to love him with all the heart, with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, like a man that had a mind, (as the word signifies,) had a presentness of mind, an understanding, a good sound understanding, about him, he highly approves of what he said, and saith, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." There are many expressions very great and august, spoken like a God about this matter, in the prophecy of Isaiah, in several chapters of it. If you look to the 43rd chapter, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servants whom I have chosen, that ye may know and believe me, and that ye may understand that I am he; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I am the Lord; and besides me there is no Saviour," verses 10, 11. And in the 44th chap. ver. 8. "Fear ye not, neither be afraid; have I not told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are my witnesses, is there a God besides me? yea, there is no God, I know not any." "I that can transmit the beams of mine eye through this vast and boundless inane, and look round about me every where, can see nothing like another God in view; I know no such, and I know you cannot know more than I." So you have the same thing inculcated in the 45th chapter, in sundry verses of it: "I am God, and there is none else; and the Saviour, and there is none beside me:" most pleasantly conjoining the notion of God and Saviour together, over and over, that when we know this one God, we may know him too under the pleasant notion of a Saviour. No discovery of him could be more suitable or more grateful to poor creatures sunk and lost in misery as we are. And so, you know, the apostle puts both these together, the "one God and one Mediator," revealing to us this truth —the unity of the Godhead in conjunction with what is most opposite and suitable with the state of our case, in that I Cor. viii. 6. "To us there is but one God, the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ." And I Tim. ii. 5. "There is one God and one mediator, the man Christ Jesus." And that place is famous, I John v. 7. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." That oneness can mean nothing there, but in the Deity, in the Godhead.

2. But this matter is very capable of very clear rational evidence too; which, because it is not obvious to every one at first sight, I would only help you herein a little, not doubting but you will apprehend things to be very plain to you, when you hear them, which might have been out of your thoughts or sight before: both what hath been already proved, and what is otherwise evident concerning God, will prove to us the unity of the Godhead, and also what is obvious to our common notice concerning the state of the creation. It is by the creation we come to have the first notices of the Creator, as you have heard. That is, of the invisible power and Godhead by the things that are made. Now whether you look to the Maker, the Creator of all made things, or whether you look to the state of those things themselves, you will find clear rational evidence that the Godhead is but *one*, or that God can be but *one*.

(1.) Consider what hath been made plain, or is otherwise evident, concerning God himself, the very notion of God: thence it will appear, that the Deity admits not of multiplication, or that there can be more Gods than one. As,

[1.] It hath been proved, and is in itself evident, that God is a self-original, a self-existing Being. He is such a Being as that he doth not owe it to another, that he is, but only to himself. He only is in being, because such is the peculiar excellency of his being, as to which it is altogether repugnant and impossible ever not to be. He exists, necessarily of and from himself only. Now necessary self-existing, uncaused being can be but one, for whatsoever is uncaused is unlimited, all limitation proceeding from a cause; and of unlimited being there can be no more than one, for if there were two, one must limit the other, and so neither would be unlimited. And,

[2.] It belongs to the notion of God, considered in reference to other things, to be the very first in himself. He is uncaused towards the creature: he is the first Cause. Now nothing is plainer than that there can be but one first.

[3.] To whom it belongs to be the first of all things, to him it belongs also to be the last, and it is as evident there can be but one last: and as to these things that are so plain, I do not need to insist, but just lay them before you. Therefore,

[4.] It belongs to the notion of God, as he is God, to be the best of all beings. But there can be but one best good, in the eminent and transcendent sense; and so there can be but one God, as the matter is in itself obvious, and is taken up by our Saviour, in that Luke xviii. 19. "None is good but one, that is God," or saving God. Again,

[5.] It belongs to the very being of God to be omnipotent, almighty, and it is most evident, that there can be but one omnipotent; for supposing another omnipotent, that could do all things, then he could cause that other not to be able to do any thing, otherwise he were not omnipotent. And if he could do that, then the former were not omnipotent, but plainly impotent, absolutely impotent; that is, not able to do any thing.

[6.] And lastly, that which sums up all; it belongs to the notion of God to be the absolutely universal, perfect Being; to comprehend in himself all perfection: that is, either formally, that which is his own, or appropriate to his own being; or eminently, that which is to be found any where throughout the creation. Now universal perfection, or all perfection, can have but one seat. For there can be but one all; there cannot be more than all; and all perfection is comprised in the Divine Being. The very notion of God imports all perfection, signifies him to be the Fountain of whatsoever can come under the notion of perfection; and which is perpetually springing from himself, and (when it is his pleasure to communicate) communicating from himself thereof to his creatures. And,

(2.) If you look upon the state of things in the creation, you will find that most plainly to signify to us the unity of the Godhead. As,

[1.] In the natural world; the order that is every where to be observed and seen; that speaks the unity, oneness, and oneliness of the Agent, that had the forming and continual management of the affairs of all this creation. It was impossible there could be that order which is every where to be observed in the natural world, the heaven and earth, sun, moon, and stars, with the constant succession of day and night, summer and winter; and that variety of creatures, with the due order still preserved in that great variety even here upon earth. I say it is impossible this could be, if that mighty Agent that made, and that overrules all, were not one, and *only* one: as the Psalmist takes notice, Psal. cxix. 9. Having spoken of heaven and earth before, he saith, "They continue to this day according to thy ordinance, for all are thy servants." "They are all in a stated subserviency to thee, as the only one that dost moderate, and dispose, and order all things, according to thine own pleasure; and so they remain steadfast and settled for ever." And,

[2.] Even in the intellectual world, the intelligent world: consider the state of things there. Indeed there there might be an objection, or from thence; which objection will be easily improved into an argument to the purpose I am speaking to: that is, that in the intellectual world, there is so great disorder, as we see, such confusions among men, and proceeding from that which we find to have been in a higher order of intelligent creatures, the angels that fell. But this, I say, is improvable into an argument, in that they fell, and are in a fallen state, those angels and the generality of men, it shows, that all this disorder and confusion hath come from their receding from the *one God*. They therefore came into that disorder and confusion, (which is the sad object of our daily contemplation, whenever we use our thoughts about such a thing,) having broken off themselves from the one God: from thence doth this disorder proceed; and, considering these two sorts of intelligent creatures, that lie under our notice, (to confine our eyes to the children of men,) they are either such as are in a state of apostacy still, or they are such as are in their return, and upon recovery, coming back to God in Christ. For those that are in a state of apostacy still, as they remain apostate and off from God, they make this world that they inhabit a hell of confusion to themselves, which shows, that the disorder is by their breaking themselves from the one God, the centre of all virtue, and of all order thereupon. But for those that are returning, that are coming back to God, under the conduct of Christ, that are in the exercise of repentance towards God, according as their minds are changed, according as that great work of renovation obtains, and takes place in them, so it becomes more and more their habitual sense, to own, even from their very hearts and souls, the ONE GOD. Then this is their sense, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord." To dwell with God as my only one, (as in that, Psalm xxvii. 4. And as in Psalm lxxiii. 25.) "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and whom on earth do I desire besides thee?" It is very true indeed, that in the apostate part of the world, very great multitudes are quite wrong in their notions about this thing, as the polytheism of the pagan world, (of the most ignorant and sottish part of it, though the wiser part, even of that too, have always acknowledged one supreme God, looking upon the rest as so many ministering gods, meaning, no doubt, the same thing that we do by angels,) doth show. But where once the light and grace of the Gospel do obtain, in conjunction, there is not only a rectitude of motion about this matter, but there is a correspondent sense of heart. "One thing have I desired; I can dwell no where but with God, with any content: and whom have I in heaven, but thee?" All renewed senses do presently return to this one, all are gathered back to one centre in one, in this one they all meet; they no sooner begin to live, but all their desires, and all their aims, and all their tendencies are directed the same way, to this one centre. And therefore now to make some *Use* of this.

1. We learn from it, the insupportable misery of those that have no relation to, nor interest in, this one God. God is but one. "Oh! then," may every such wretched soul say, "what shall become of me, who have no part in him, no portion in him?" There is but one God to save thee, and thou hast nothing to do with him; but one God to satisfy thee, and thou hast nothing to do with him; but one to save thee, and if he will destroy thee, who will save thee? If there be but one, and he be set against thee, if he be thine enemy; if this be the state of thy case, that thou liest open to the destructive wrath of this one God, who shall save thee? There is but one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: (as it comes in after, James iv. 12.) and there is but one to satisfy thee; thou wast lost for want of being satisfied by a suitable good, if thou wert never so safe from any external, any vindictive evil. There is but one good, that is God; no proportionable good, nor adequate good besides, no good that can fill up the capacity of the soul. How may such a creature go bemoaning itself in so sad a state of its case! "There is but one good throughout the whole universe of being, and I have nothing to do with that one; I have no part there."

2. As the misery of such is insupportable, so truly, their sin is as inexcusable; for there is but one God that claims obedience and duty from thee. The case is in this easy way to be understood. Let it be considered, you have not one to command, and another to countermand; one to bid, and another to forbid. There is one God; you know there is but one; you believe there is but one. No man (it is true) can serve two masters, who should both lay claim to supreme power over him. No one can serve two, but sure one may serve one, when there is but one, and his mind is express and plain; therefore the sin of such is altogether inexcusable. Thou hast but one God to worship; and what! not worship him. But one God to love, but one to fear, but one to trust; but one object for thy adoration, one object for thy expectation; and thou art to do him homage every day, in both together; both in adoring him and expecting from him. And what! to rob this one God of the glory, the service which he claims, and which thou mightest pay and render to him! There is no exception against it, no counter-claim against this claim of his.

3. We further learn hence, how high and great is the privilege of those, that do belong to God, in that he is but one; they do not need to be divided among many, and to have their hearts distracted within them, "Whither shall I go? to whom shall I betake myself?" Their privilege is great, upon this account, with respect both to their knowledge of this one God, and their application to him, the former whereof leads to the latter.

(1.) In respect to their knowledge of him; it is a very great privilege, that the eye of their mind and soul is called to one, directed to one; here is eternal life summed up (as it were) in one glance. "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent;" to know him as he is revealed, and as he is to be conversed with, through his Son; and in what a transport do we find the disciples, upon this account, it being the great business and design of our blessed Lord to reveal the Father to poor souls. "Show us the Father and it sufficeth," say they. Saith he, "You do know the Father, in that you have known me," in that 14th John. Then saith one of them, Judas, not Iscariot, (no not he I warrant you, he had not a heart to savour any such thing,) "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?" Oh! how lamentable is it to think (as if they had said) of the sad state of the blinded world, how little they know, how obscure and dark their notices are, and how corrupted and depraved, about the one Godhead. But Christ tells them that in manifesting himself he manifested the Father too. And "Oh! (say they,) whence is this to us, that we should have this manifestation when it is not afforded to the world, is not made common to the universality of men?" And,

(2.) In respect of application to him; oh, how great is the privilege not to be put to worship stocks and stones for deities, and to pray to a god that cannot save. When we think of the inanimate, senseless gods which the blind nations do trust in and worship, we have then just cause to think with ourselves, "Oh, how unlike to them is the portion of Jacob! He is the Former of all things. Our God

hath made the heavens, and doth whatsoever he will, there above and here below."

4. We hence see what obligation is upon us to singleness of heart. The Deity wherewith we have most of all to do, finally, terminatively to do, is single, is but one. How to be abhorred a thing, hereupon, must a double heart be, a heart—and a heart! For a single God, how suitable is a single heart! There is not for us a God—and a God. And what should we do then for a heart—and a heart? The whole must go to the whole, one to one. When our Saviour had been telling us, (Matt. vi. 24.) "No man can serve two masters," he points us back to what we find there in the same context; that if the eye be single, the whole body will be full of light. But if the eye be evil, (which implies that a double heart is an evil heart,) then all is in darkness. And saith he, "If the very light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" When our eye looks with one direct and undivided view towards the one God, here the soul is all replenished with light, clear and vital light, that is transfused through it. But multiplicity and darkness come all to one. If we do not look with a single eye to that one single Being, where all glory and all blessedness for poor souls reside; but are looking to other things, and departing from this one, we are presently lost in multiplicity, and see many things under that notion, as if our good lay here, or as if the prime duty lay here; it is all one as seeing nothing, as good to know nothing of any God at all, as to know many gods, or to consider many under that notion. And again,

5. We see hereupon how possible the most entire and intimate union with God is with sincere souls. To those that are sincere, if he be but one, how entire and intimate may the union be between one and one? When we bring to him a single soul, a soul full of simplicity, uprightness, and sincerity, which points only at him as the one God, he being but one, and we but one in the intention and aim of our souls, how entire and intimate may this union be! That which some pagans have expressed by that nearest and closest and most intimate touch of the centre; centre to centre; so (have some of them said) are souls to apply themselves inwardly to God; the one God joining centre with them. And it is a mighty solace to think of it; that whereas the felicity of a soul doth so absolutely depend upon the most near and intimate union with God, that which is so necessary is so possible. It is necessary to me, in order to my happiness and well-being, that I be most intimately and entirely united with God; and since he is but one, if I be one in the intent and bent of my soul towards him, it is not more necessary than possible. For observe how the scribe, that puts that question to our Lord in that forementioned Mark xii. understands this conjunction, when our Lord answered him, what was the first and great commandment; namely, "the first and great commandment is, that God is but one, and that there is none other God but he, and that therefore we should love him with all the heart," he replies, "Master, thou hast said well, for there is but one God;" and our Lord, it is said, observed, that he answered like a man of sense, like a man of understanding, like an intelligent man. There lies the connexion, "therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, because the Lord our God is one God, and there is none other but he." And,

6. We may hence collect the mighty obligation there is upon Christians, to unity with one another; to be united one with another. Those several unities you read of Ephes. iv. are all directed to this one purpose, and this is the prime and most fundamental of all the rest, "There is but one God;" and therefore are all those related to him, and that bear his name, to be but one. It cannot be said, one Christian hath one God, and another hath another God; but all have but one God; so that it is impossible there can be any so great reasons for disunion among Christians, those that are sincere, that have vital union with God in Christ, as there are for their union. Whatsoever pretence there can be for disunion, or for distinct communion, the reason is unspeakably greater for union. By how much doth God outweigh all things else, infinite reason is there for oneness in communion throughout, as he, with whom they have all a common union is infinite. But the things wherein they differ from one another, are most minutely finite, and even as nothing, in comparison of this one thing, wherein they must all (whether they will or not) agree. And thereupon indeed, there cannot be a greater iniquity in the Christian church (which is the community of living Christians) than when they do usually make distinct communions. This, I must tell you, is the very heart and centre of all antichristianism, the first remarkable thing in the apostacy of the Christian church, when it began to degenerate, that is, the making of distinct communions, or making of other terms of communion, than Christ had made by the evangelical law. This was the very heart of all antichristianity, when men would take upon them to make distinct boundaries and terms of communion, which should be larger than Christ would have made, or narrower than Christ had made; to admit men upon such terms as his rules would admit none; and exclude men on such terms as his rules would exclude none; this is the first thing, the summary and most comprehensive thing, in all antichristianity. Then the Christian church first began to be antichristian, when it came to this, to make other terms of communion than Christ had made by his own law. And indeed, the iniquity of it is intolerable, if it be considered; for under what notion are any to be received into the community of Christians, but under the notion of persons visibly united to God in Christ, and so instated into the blessings of the Gospel, and so entitled to everlasting blessedness in God, procured for them by the general Redeemer? Whereupon, to make new terms of communion, larger or narrower than Christ made, is to make a new covenant, to make a new Gospel; it is to make new terms of everlasting life and death; and so to overturn and overthrow all things, that are most essential to a Christian church, or to the Christian religion, or any thing of religion in the world. It would strike at all, if men may shape their communion, according to their own fancy, when they are to shape it according to the evangelical law. Those that we believe to have vital union with God in Christ, or whom we ought to believe have so; we that, with a sincere mind, look upon persons by Gospel measures, and consider them as those who have visible characters of true vivid Christianity upon them, ought to run into communion with them as such, and only such. This is Christ's measure, and Christ's rule, and so communion can be but one, and to offer to make it diverse and distinct, is to make a new gospel, and a new Christ, and a new religion throughout. Indeed it is a bold thing; for it is to make new terms of life and death. It is presumptuous enough to put the divine stamp upon this or that truth of ours, or this or that duty (as we count it) of our own; it is a great presumption: but unspeakably greater, to make new terms of life and death; for every truth, or every duty, are not parts of the terms of life and death. There is many a truth that is not necessary for a man to believe, under pain of damnation; and many a duty a man may be ignorant of, and so not bound to do, upon pain of damnation. But the terms upon which Christians are to hold communion one with another, are such to which we are bound under that penalty, or which are to be looked upon as entitling them to be interested in salvation, or exempted from damnation; and so to make new terms of communion, is to make new terms of life and death. But blessed be God, though this hath been too little considered for above forty years past, God is awakening his people, to consider it now. And I look upon that to be the first step towards the restitution of the Christian church, and the recovering of it out of the terrible apostacy in which it hath lain for a thousand years, and upwards. This, I say, is the first step towards it, to make those the terms of union and communion in the Christian church, which God in Christ hath made. And when that once comes to obtain generally, then we shall find the spirit of the body (for there is but one body and one spirit) diffusing and influencing itself through the body, and making it lively, a kind of resurrection from the dead. It may further,

7. Be collected, that our encouragement is great, as to what expectation we may have, concerning the issue of things, since God is but one. That is, concerning the issue which things shall drive to here in this world, and concerning their ultimate and final issue in the other world, it cannot but be good and happy; for God is but one, who in his Christ is the universal and only Ruler of all

this world. If the kingdom of God in Christ were divided, it would come to nothing; but it is not divided, it is all in one hand, who hath the ordering and disposing of the times and seasons, as seems good to him, and he doth every thing with that profound wisdom that cannot err, and that mighty power that cannot be withstood. And since the most perfect wisdom, and most absolute power, do belong to that one, and all affairs do lie in one hand, the issue will certainly be good. I cannot say it will be good to us, according to our fancy and our sense of things, but it must be, in itself, good. The kingdom is not divided, there is but one God, and one Christ, who governs this apostate world by his own right, as God, and by a right that he hath devolved upon him, as the Mediator. And therefore, never doubt concerning the issue of things, let them look never so horribly, and with never so confused an aspect; all will do well, for all is in the hand of one God.

And then, as to the final state, what transports should we be in, to think, when all that belongs to this one God shall meet in this one God, the many sons brought to glory together, when God shall be all in all, one in all, one diffusing a vital, satisfying, beautifying influence through all, through the whole community, that relates to him, and is united to him, all (as it were) losing themselves in the one God, not in the natural sense, but in the moral; as morality comprehends duty and felicity both together, and the very Scripture expressions that speak of God's being all in all, doth imply this distinction, for otherwise he could not be all in all, if there were not a created all which he replenisheth with his own fulness. "All in all," is not as if all being were to be reserved and swallowed up again into the fountain Being, and that the blessed should lose their individuality; no, no such thing, the very words and the nature of the thing are repugnant to that, but when that all of holy ones shall be gathered about the central good, and be replenished continually, perpetually, fully and everlastingly from thence, oh! how satisfying then shall we experience the truth and sweetness of this thing, —that the Godhead is but *one*.

And this is enough as to the first thing which we have to consider in the text, "thou believest there is one God, thou doest well." The belief of this is approved and justified.

LECTURE XII.*

II. But then the ineffectual believing of it is reproved and condemned; to believe it with such a kind of notional faith as the devils believe it with. The former was the main thing for which I pitched upon this Scripture, but this latter I shall not overlook; it having so great an aptitude with it to help and enforce the right improvement of the former. That is,—the *ineffectual* belief of the Unity of the Godhead, which the apostle doth, in this expression, designedly animadvert upon, may be easily collected from this present scope, which is to show what kind of faith that is which must justify us; not a notional dead faith, such as lets the soul wherein it is remain unchanged, such as works not within, such as leaves the soul just as it was. You may see this scope fully represented to this purpose in the 14th verse, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" can that idle faith, that unworking faith that effects nothing, can that save him? "I appeal to you, (as if he had said,) whether it can." He doth not say it cannot, but he doth appeal to them whether it can or no; and it is true, that manner of interrogation doth deny that it can, more pungently: that is always the intent of questions or interrogatories, put in the room of affirmations or negations, to deny or affirm more smartly or with more pungency than a bare affirmation or negation would have done. It is an appeal to the common light and conscience of the person spoken to. Can such a faith save? And then he comes at length, in prosecution of this scope, to this particular truth. I may not now run over with you the whole thread of this discourse; but immediately before the words of the text, he urgeth this, "A man may say, Thou hast faith and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works;" that is, if thou canst show me any thing that is worth that name. But I for my part "will show thee my faith by my works," as knowing it can never significantly or to purpose be shown otherwise. And then he comes to this particular case, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble." If thou hast no other faith, in this point of the one God's existence, but the devils' faith; nay, if thine fall short of such a faith; dost thou think it will save thee? This is the meaning pursuantly to the present scope. His great question is, what faith will finally save; and for resolving of it, his great business is to evince and make out, that there must be some intervening effects in order to that final salvation, for which the faith that will save must have a proportionable efficacy. If it did not work those intervening immediate effects, it would not bring about the end, salvation. And so the truth that now remains, to be spoken to from this latter part of the verse, you have it plainly in view thus—That the ineffectual belief of the one God's existence, or such a belief of it as doth not beget in the soul proportionable dispositions towards God, will no more save a stupid man than a trembling devil.—And to speak briefly and usefully (as much as is possible) to this, it will be requisite to show—what effects or dispositions our faith of the one God's existence should work in men—to open to you what it doth work in the devils, and—to show, that if it do not its proper work upon men, it will no more save men than devils.

1. What it ought to work, what impressions the faith of the one God's existence should make upon men. The impressions it ought to make upon men, must be measured and judged of by the state of their case, wherein it is different, and represented to them as different, from that of the devils. That is, that though they have been in an apostacy from God, their sovereign and rightful Lord, as the devils have been, yet he is reconcileable to men, when he is not to the devils: and where the Gospel comes, it shows distinctly how, and in what way, and upon what terms, he is reconcileable. The belief then of the one God's existence, you may easily apprehend what it effects upon this supposal of the case. There is but one to whom I owe obedience as my Sovereign; to him I must subject myself. There is but one, from whom I can expect blessedness; a portion and interest in him I must seek. I have hitherto been in an apostacy from him, I have hereby violated the bounds of my duty to him, and forfeited all interest in him; but I find there is a remedy to be given to this case, and through the Redeemer, God is reconcileable; he recalls me to my duty, he offers to restore me to my interest. It is plain then, what impressions should be made, to wit, of "repentance towards God, and (upon discovery made of him) faith in our Lord Jesus Christ:" a disposition to come back to God, through Christ, with a heart full of wonder, full of gratitude, full of love, ready to be devoted, and subject again: and so to do all that can be done on our part, or to comply with all that is required from us, in order to the reinstating of things between God and us, and setting all right again. But,

2. What impression is there made on devils, by the belief of the one God's existence? That one word "tremble" tells us most significantly. They "believe and tremble." Their belief strikes them so, that they are shaken by it: just as the sea with a violent wind, that tosses the waves this way and that. The *fremitus maris* is that which this word doth express, the tumultuation of the sea, as tossed by violent winds. Such an impression doth the belief of the one God's existence make and leave upon devils: that is, it stirs those violent passions in them, which we must suppose the view of the one God, in his terrible majesty and glory, is apt to raise in his creatures, in their state who are apostatized, and revolted from him, and know there is no redeemer for them, that God will not be reconciled to them, and they themselves have no disposition to seek reconciliation with him. That is, such passions as these: the passion of hatred: every view they have of the one God

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in his majesty and glory, stirs up their enmity, and the oftener they view it, the more they hate it, and especially considered under the notion of just and holy. It cannot but stir the passion of envy, looking on him under the notion of happy: it cannot but move their dread and horror concerning him, under the notion of almighty, not to be resisted, not to be withstood. And then it stirs up the passion of despair too, considering themselves as none of his match, and that they are never to expect that he will yield to them, as they know they can never conquer him. But,

3. Why is a stupid man no more to expect salvation from the ineffectual faith of the one God's existence, than a forlorn trembling devil? That men have been in an apostacy from God, as well as devils, is plain to us all. That death, that is, eternal death, is the proper wages of that sin by which they have apostatized, that is plain to us all too; why should not an apostate man therefore lie under the just wrath of God, as well as an apostate devil? All that can be said in the case is, that Christ hath died for men and not for devils: here is all that can be alleged. And so we need do no more for the clearing of this matter further, than only to consider what alteration this makes in the case; and in order thereto, I will lay down sundry things that I reckon very plain, and such as do carry their own evidence with them.

(1.) As, that there is no natural connexion between the death of Christ and the salvation of a sinner. These two things are not naturally connected, the death of Christ and the salvation of a sinful man. It is plain and obvious in itself, that there is no natural connexion; these things do not naturally touch one another.

(2.) Therefore there can be no connexion at all between them but such as shall be ordinate or made, there cannot be any connexion, without its being made, between the death of Christ and the salvation of any man.

(3.) There can be no pretence of any such made connexion, but such as the Gospel constitution makes, that is, made between the death of Christ and the salvation of any man, but what the Gospel hath made by its constitution.

(4.) The Gospel doth make no connexion between the death of Christ and the salvation of any sinner, without intervening faith. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Gospel makes no other connexion between that death to which he gave up his own Son, and our having, any of us, everlasting life, but upon the supposal of an intervening faith.

(5.) That faith which the Gospel requires for this purpose, it describes and tells us what it is; it describes it by distinguishing characters; it tells us, it is such a faith as overcomes the world, 1 John v. 4. It tells us it is such a faith as by which the hearts of men are turned to the Lord; "Many believed and turned to the Lord," Acts xi. 21. It tells us, it is such a faith, as "is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" (Heb. xi. 1.) that faith that conquers one world, and reveals another. That faith (I say) which the Gospel requires for this purpose, to wit, of the salvation of sinners, by the Redeemer, it doth also describe, and tells us what it is. Whereupon,

(6.) Not to have that faith which the Gospel doth so describe is, in the Gospel estimate, to have no faith. He that hath not this faith is an unbeliever, still an unbeliever. As when we speak of having any thing (whatsoever it be) that is necessary for this or that end or purpose, it is not the name of that thing, the misapplied name of that thing, that will serve the end or purpose, but it is plain, only the thing itself will do it. It is true, you may call painted bread by the name of bread; you may call the picture of a loaf, a loaf, but it is not painted bread that will nourish you, nor is it the notion of Gospel faith, or the name of that faith misapplied, that will save you. They who have not the faith which the Gospel requires, have no faith *quoad hoc*, that will serve *this* purpose, because that faith which is so and so described, it requires as necessary for this purpose of saving. And therefore,

(7.) Lastly; They which have not this faith, being thereupon still unbelievers; that is, they are unbelievers in reference to this faith; they have none of that faith that the Gospel requires in order to salvation; they must accordingly have the unbeliever's portion, and the portion of unbelievers and devils is all one. Compare Luke xii. 46. with Matt. xxv. 41. In the first it is, "Let such a one have his portion with unbelievers:" and then consider that they who fall under such a doom and condemnation at last, are condemned to that "fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels," as it is in the latter place. So that let a man believe never so much this one thing, (which among the rest it is needful he should believe in order to salvation,) to wit, the one God's existence; but it doth not work upon his soul, impresseth him not, altereth him not; it can no more save him than it will save the devil.

Yea, and it might be added, that the Gospel constitution, in this case, making such a faith necessary, doth not only speak the pleasure of the Legislator, but it speaks most consentaneously to the reason of the thing, and with the greatest advantage. Here is reconciliation offered to sinful men; but there is none offered to the devil; in this respect then (though I do not say absolutely in all respects) their guilt is greatest. That one who is no way suitably affected with that discovery which is made to him of God, considered with reference to the state of his case, and the Gospel dispensation under which he is; such a one as doth in this respect remain unchanged, his heart unaltered, not won, not turned to God; lies under greater guilt than the devils themselves do lie.

Therefore now to make some brief *Use* of this. Hence,

1. We learn, that it is a supposable thing, that persons living under the Gospel, professed Christians, (for the apostle speaks to such here,) may be no more duly and suitably affected with the discovery that is made to them of the one God, than the very devils. This is not an unsupposable thing, that man may have the representation of God which the Gospel affords, superadded to all that is natural, and be no more suitably affected therewith than a mere devil, this is a truly supposable case. And that it is a case to be supposed, a thing that may be, should strike all our hearts with just solicitude hereupon. May it be? And what! Is it not so with me? Have I not lived all this while amidst that light that reveals the one God, unaltered, unchanged, unimpressed, just as I should have been, if there had been no such light, no such discovery? And again,

2. We may infer, that persons may be in a very great measure like the devil that do very seldom think of him; nay, (it may be,) do think there is no such creature. It is very likely that this sort of persons whom the apostle here speaks to, with such smartness and acrimony, might very little think of the devil till they met with this epistle, till they were so put in mind. This may very well be. Persons may be very much akin to the devil in the temper and complexion of their minds, when they very little think of him, or of any such matter. And they are most of all like him that are most positive in their disbelief of any such sort of creatures as devils are. That piece of revived modern Sadduceism goes now, with many, for a great piece of wit and learning. And a very strange thing it is, that we should have had among us a clearer light than the greatest part of the world have had, to make us more ignorant and unapprehensive of things that are of very great concern to us; clearer than the pagan world have had; and yet how many things do we find discoursed concerning the devil, among their poets and philosophers, that there are such a sort of middle creatures between the gods (the supreme God at least) and men, and that these are distinguished into two orders, of good and bad. Nothing more frequent in the writings of pagans, than that there are the good *genii* and *cacodæmones:* some of them seem not to have been ignorant, however they came by the knowledge, of the apostacy of the devils, and of their being thrown down from their happy state above, into very great darkness and misery. But it seems, our having of clearer light, and more express discoveries of things relating to an invisible world, than pagans had, hath served only to make a great many of us a great deal more ignorant, and less apprehensive of these things, and more insolent in the belief of them, than they. But it is strange that they who are so very like the

devil, should be of all others most unapt to own or apprehend that there are any such creatures, or any such sort of creatures. But,

3. We may infer, that it is not strange, when the cause is so very like between men and devils, that their doom should be so like also; that we cannot think it strange, that we should remain and be left under that doom and condemnation which sin did in itself subject them to; who when God hath made overtures to them, to distinguish them from these evil spirits, will not be distinguished, but rather choose to sort themselves with devils than with returning souls, souls that are willing to return to God through Christ.

We see the terrible estate of devils, that they cannot own the one God's existence without trembling. A frightful thought it is to them, to have the eternal Being always in view, that is, what he is necessarily, without variableness or shadow of turning: they cannot nullify his being, they cannot shake his throne, they cannot alter his nature; the glorious, bright, majestic object is always in view, and they can never look towards it without dread and astonishment. Whatsoever little respite they may have, which those words imply, "Art thou come to torment us before our time?" it doth yet signify, that any thought of God was dreadful to them, as importing that state of torment that was approaching, was drawing on, wherein it will be let forth on them, wherein wrath will come upon them (as it must upon unreconciled men) to the uttermost. But,

5. How wonderful is the grace of God towards poor sinful men, that their case doth admit, and may admit, of their owning and believing the one God's existence, with another sort of impression than the case of the devils doth admit of. For that is plainly implied here, and therefore I make this inference and collection,—that it is expected that men should be otherwise impressed by this belief of the one God's existence than the devils may or can. It is expected the faith of this should make other kind of work in the heart of a man that entertains this belief, than it can do in the heart of a devil. And that very intimation signifies peculiar favour and special good-will; special, if compared with them, though it be yet more special, if you compare men with one another. Such good-will is the import of those words, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men." "He took not on him the nature of angels," or (as those words may admit to be read) "he took not hold of angels to save them; but took on him the seed of Abraham." His design herein spoke itself, (as in that Heb. ii. 14.) "Inasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself did partake of the same." Saith he, "Those that I came to save, are such as have flesh and blood in them, not devils." And because they had flesh and blood in them, he likewise took flesh and blood that he might save such; that is, that he might die, that he might have somewhat mortal about him, somewhat that could die, that was capable of dying, and that dying he might overcome "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

6. We may learn hence, that there is not too great a stress to be laid upon the mere business of orthodoxy, or a rectitude of notions and sentiments, though about the greatest and most important things, things never so great: and you may suppose none greater than this, the existence of the one God, the certain existence of the unity of the Godhead. But yet, I say, a rectitude of notions or sentiments, even about so great things, or that which we generally call orthodoxy, ought not to have too great a stress laid upon them. I doubt not but that there is entire orthodoxy in hell, there is very little error in hell, very little of untrue notions, the truth of things is very clearly apprehended there, even the most terrible things; false doctrine doth not obtain there about such matters as this, to be sure; and therefore, let no man value himself too much upon this, that he understands aright, that he thinks right thoughts, doth believe that there is one God, one, and but one. He may do no more in this than the devils do, they may be as orthodox as he; and he may therein know no more truth than they know. But we may yet further infer,

7. That it is a very dismal thing, and ought accordingly to be deplored much, that such things as we have revealed to us, concerning God, should be from time to time propounded and explained, and inculcated, and yet have no more effect upon us than upon devils. How many a man is there, that lives under the Gospel of Christ, unreconciled to God all his days! Oh, if there be any such a one in this assembly, how often hast thou been striven with to turn and live! how often invited back to God in Christ! But it hath signified as little to preach to thee all this while, as if one had preached to a devil. Oh, wretched creature, that thou wilt make thyself a devil, when God doth not make thee such! that thou wilt sort with the devils, when God would deal with thee on very distinct terms from them! He would have thee come to him; he doth not invite devils back; he saith to thee, "Return, return;" he saith not so to them. Here is the blood of a Redeemer spilt for thee, it was not for them. And if we consider this matter generally; oh, how dismal it is to think, that the revelation of the doctrine of the very one God's existence, should have made no more impression than it hath, to advantage the world of mankind; that the state of things should be so very much upon earth as it is in hell! as if there were no difference in the cases of men and devils; that there should be such enmity against God amongst men upon earth, such rage, such contempt, such blasphemy against this one existing Deity. And indeed, in this, men are worse than the devils, for the devils do hate God, but they do not despise him; here on earth he is hated and despised too; the devils hate him, but they cannot contemn him; men hate and contemn him both together. "Wherefore do the wicked contemn God?" Psal. x. 13. But lastly,

8. We further learn hence, what this doctrine is likely to effect, if ever it come generally and to purpose to be believed in the world, even this faith of the one God's existence. What a blessed change will that infer and make generally among men; when the one God shall be represented, and understood, and known with effect generally! if ever there shall be such a time. That is, there shall be a world of reasonable creatures, all centring in this one, all conspiring in the adoration and love of this one God; all bowing to him and kneeling before him: and no contention amongst men but who shall express most of love and duty to their universal, sovereign Maker and Lord. And therefore, men are only miserable in the mean time by not having real truth impressed and inwrought into the temper of their spirits; they are only by this miserable, that they are fallen from the one God, and apprehend him not, apprehend not the unity of the Godhead in whom they all are to unite. If men were all united in God, in the fear of him, in the love of him, in subjectedness and devotedness to him, this could not but infer universal order, peace, and felicity, all the world over. Men are only miserable, only unhappy, by holding the truth in unrighteousness, and such truth; for the apostle speaks of such. This is the true ground, on which "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, because that which may be known of God, is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them," Rom. i. 17, 18. But I shall not insist further upon this.

The next thing that comes in course to be handled, will be the doctrine of the Trinity. Having opened the Unity of the Godhead, a Trinity therein also will next come under our consideration.

LECTURE XIII.*

1 John v. 7.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

I INTEND no long discourse upon this subject, nor longer than may consist with the design of going over the several heads of religion, in as plain a manner, and in as short a way, as I can. It would very ill agree with such a design,

* Preached March 27th, 1691.

to insist upon and discourse upon all the several texts of Scripture arguments and objections this way and that, which are wont to be ventilated upon this point. All that can be expected, according to the course I have proposed to use, will be barely to represent that which I take, and which (I hope) we generally agree, to be the truth in this matter, in as few and as plain words as is possible. If one should take the large course, which some (it may be) would expect, it would be to make one particular subject the business of a long life's time, and would be to turn this place into a theatre of contentious disputations rather than serious instructions, tending only to gratify vain minds, rather than to edify the sober mind.

I shall not need to stay at all upon the particular controversy about this text, the authenticity of it, which, it is true, is disputed; but upon that account only, that some copies have been found not to have it. But for such as are in doubt thereupon concerning it, I need do no more than recommend them (amongst others) to what hath been most judiciously, and, indeed, very charitably, written as to that matter by Dr. Hammond, in his annotations on the New Testament; where he hath, with equal judgment and charity, represented how it is very easily supposable that in the transcribing of some copy or another, two verses coming here together, this seventh and eighth that do begin and end, both of them, somewhat alike, the eye of the transcriber might fall upon the latter, and so write without looking back to the former. A very obvious supposition, and a great deal more probable, (as it is a great deal more charitable,) than to suppose that either side, in the time of the Arian controversy, did design a corruption of the scripture text: I say, it is a great deal more rational, (as it is more charitable,) because indeed it had been a very foolish thing, merely out of favour to one side, to have corrupted the Scripture in that one particular place, leaving other Scriptures to stand as they were that speak so fully the same thing; as that Matt. xxviii. 18, 19. and that John x. 30. "I and my Father are one." It is not likely there should be a designed corruption, where the loss of reputation would be so very great, and the gain and advantage so very little; but we have reason enough to be satisfied that the most ancient copies have it as we here find.

And for the way of managing the discourse upon this subject, I shall not offer at that which some have done, the demonstrating a trinity in the Godhead in a rational way, as that which some have supposed sufficiently evident by rational light; and which some have made it their business to evince, (both Poiret and others before him,) and with no contemptible endeavour. But whether such do demonstrate their point, yea or no, it is to me a very strong demonstration of the strange imbecility of the human mind, that some should think it rationally demonstrable that that cannot but be, which others take to be rationally demonstrable cannot be. This, I say, it is a great demonstration to me of; and I do believe that they who do read the other writings of Poiret and others, who think the trinity rationally demonstrable, and read the writings of Socinus and others, his followers, who think the contrary, will apprehend, in other matters, Poiret to be as rational a man as ever Socinus was, or any that followed him. Compare the writings of the one and the other, in other matters; and then I say, it is a strong demonstration, and that which doth require our very serious thoughts, of the imbecility of the minds of men, and how little the confident pretences to rational demonstrations, by interested persons, engaged and dipped in a party this way and that, are to be relied upon, when some very highly rational men shall undertake to demonstrate, that it is impossible this should be; when others as rational as they, shall undertake to demonstrate it is impossible not to be. That is, that there could have been no such thing as creation, nor indeed any action in the Deity, and consequently, no Deity at all if there were not a trinity in it. That is, if there were not an eternal Mind which, when there was nothing else, should like an intellectual sun turn its beams inward upon itself, and so by consequence, beget an eternal action, its own eternal image, and that there must be an eternal love between that mind begetting, and the mind begotten: and there you have the trinity in the Deity.

But this I insist not on; only that it may appear that it is not impossible: and I hope that all pretence that it is, will in due time and easily vanish. It is so plainly revealed in Scripture, that there is a trinity in the Godhead, that we may very well take it upon the word of him that reports it to us, and who best (we may be sure) understands his own nature. Take it, I say, amongst those things of God, which are only to be known by the Spirit of God; as there are things of a man, that are only known by the spirit of a man that is in him; (as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. ii. 14.) and if the mind and spirit of every particular man have its own particularities known only to itself, till the man is pleased to reveal and make them known, sure it is very little strange that the Divine Being should have his peculiarities too, not otherwise knowable than as he is pleased to reveal them. And if he plainly reveal to us, that there is a trinity in the unity of his nature, then surely, to sober inquirers and learners, the business is done.

As to the latter part of the verse, I shall not need to insist upon it, "these three are one," having, I hope, sufficiently evinced to you the unity of the Godhead from another text. And I chose to do it from another text rather, that had that expression in it which this hath not. For this doth not expressly say, these three are one God, but it doth say, these three are one. But having already proved to you that the Godhead is but one, it leads us with so much the more clearness (having asserted the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead to be true) to apprehend, that it must be the truth of this place, and so shall have occasion but to repeat concerning that which we have already proved, but not to prove it any more. And therefore, the plain contents of this scripture you may take thus—that there is a trinity in the Deity, or, if you will, a little more largely —that there are three which we cannot more fitly express or conceive of, than by the name of persons, in the only one Godhead. And,

I. I shall evince the *truth* of this doctrine.

And now to let you see that this is reasonably given you, as the sense and meaning of this place, I shall proceed by some gradual steps: and,

I. To prepare my way, let you see that this is spoken here in this place; it is the doctrine of this place. So that if it can be made appear to be in itself true, we shall have all the reason in the world to conclude, that it is fitly represented as the doctrine held forth in this text. And for the truth of the thing, we shall come to consider from other places afterwards. And,

(1.) It seems very reasonable, inasmuch as we otherwise ascertained that there is but one God, that the one thing wherein the three persons mentioned are said to be united, is the Godhead. "These three are one." One what? It is most reasonable to understand the meaning is, that they are one God, though this be not expressed in the text. For it is very plain, from what hath been already said, that the Godhead can be but one. And when it is said, there are three in heaven that are all one, that one thing which they are said to be must needs be God, or the Godhead wherein they are said to unite; especially the Father being said to be one of the three, concerning whose Godhead there is no doubt.

(2.) It is very plain, (upon supposition that the three mentioned in the text do unite, or are united in the Godhead,) the meaning must be, that they are one God and no more; that is, that the one God which they are said to be, is but one, is one God and no more. There can be no reason imagined why it should be said they are one, if the intendment were not that they were only one; or that that thing which they are said to be, is but one. To say the Godhead is one, it must always mean one exclusively, that is, that there is no other God but that, that one. And so, that is the thing that these three do unite, or are united in: not one witness, it is not a being united in their end: that cannot be meant here: for it is manifest that the apostle doth vary the form of expression in the following verse, where it is said, "These three agree in one;" all to one purpose, all to one design, all giving one and the same testimony concerning Christ, concerning that Jesus who was descended and come down into this world. But here it is said in the text, they are one, are one thing, not one person; and therefore, it doth signify that they do agree, or do unite and meet in that wherein it is never intended to

say or intimate that they differ: that is, in essence they are united, but not in personality. If it had been a person that was spoken of, then it would have been proper enough to have spoken of it under the notion of things. But inasmuch as it is the essence, and not the person, that is here intended, therefore it is said, one thing: if we would read the words literally, it is, "these three are one thing," that is the meaning of them, and so they should be rendered.

(3.) Hereupon it is very rational to conclude, that when it is said, there are three that are united in this one thing, that it must also be understood, they are three and no more, as by one is meant only one, so by three is meant only three. Whereupon,

(4.) It must with equal reason be concluded, that these three which are three, and no more, must needs be some eminent three, and of some very eminent order. And do but pause here a little, and see if light do not spring into your minds about this matter: when it is said there are three (it being by parity of reason to be understood, three and no more) in heaven, Pray what three in heaven can there be, that are three, and no more, of one eminent order, but they must be three divine persons? Bethink yourselves of it a little: it cannot be three angels, for then it cannot be said, there are three and no more in heaven: and you have not heard of any higher creatures than angels, any superior order of creatures above angels, of which there are three and no more: and it cannot be three Gods, because the Godhead is but one; there is but one God and no more. Then I beseech you, What is there left? It is not three angels, it is not three of any sort of creatures superior to angels, of whom there are three and no more. And the Father is here mentioned as one of them, of whose Godhead there can be no doubt: and then pray consider, What can these three be? Not three creatures, not three Gods; therefore, they can be nothing but three persons, three substances in the Godhead. Thus then you are gradually led on to see, that this is the plain doctrine of the text; and if you can be convinced that there is in it, *veritas rei, the truth of the thing*, there will be no doubt at all but that it is *veritas loci, the truth of this place*.

2. And that is it I now come to, that is, to evince to you *veritatem rei, the truth of the thing*, that there is a trinity in the Godhead, that there are three that are all of them this one God. And, I shall (with all possible brevity) labour to prove it to you positively, from other scriptures and scripture-considerations, and then—show you the unreasonableness of what is pretended against it, how irrational the pretence is against such a thing. That is, that there should be three who in some one respect are truly to be said and called three, and in some other respect are as truly to be called, or said to be, but one. But,

(1.) I come to the positive proof. And because, concerning the personality and deity of the Father there is no question, there is none that will contend with us about that matter, therefore our business will relate to the other two. And concerning them, that is, the Word (as he is here called) and the Holy Ghost, I shall endeavour to evince to you these two things—that they are persons, and—that they are divine persons.

[1.] That they are persons. And here (as I have told you) we have not a fitter notion under which to conceive of them, nor a fitter word in our tongue by which to express or speak of them. Not that we can think, that person being afterwards to be clothed with the notion of divine, can be the same thing with God as with us; because it is impossible any thing can have one common notion to him and to us. That would be altogether incousistent with the perfection, the universal perfection of the divine Being, to suppose that any notion could be common to him and the creature. For then, he should not comprehend all entity in himself, if there were a notion common to him and to us; for that must import something superior to both, and that were comprehensive of both, and so it would make God but a part of being. Therefore, the word person, as any other word whatsoever, that is wont to be applied to and spoken of God and of us, must be spoken of us but analogically, not univocally, not as if it signified the same thing when it is spoken of him and when it is spoken of us. And therefore, we are not to judge of a divine person by a human person, or by a created person. The difference is infinite, and the distance is infinite, between God and any creature. So any thing that is spoken of him must infinitely differ from whatsoever may be spoken of us under the same name. Therefore, when we speak of a person, among creatures, as signifying an intelligent *suppositum, being*, neither *suppositum* nor intelligent can be the same with him and with us. His intellect and ours differ infinitely: and it is so little known how individuations are made among creatures, that it is infinitely more impossible how they are made with God. But that being premised, that these two, the Word and the Holy Ghost, are so spoken of in Scripture, as that we have no other way of conceiving otherwise than that they must be spoken of as persons; this I shall endeavour to evince.

First, As concerning the Word, I only premise that which is in itself evident, that by the Word here, and the Son of God elsewhere, must be meant the same thing. As is plain in the first of St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word:" that which is called the Word there, is called the Son of God presently after, in the same chapter: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." The Word and the Son are all one. Then, what is there and elsewhere called the Word sometimes, and sometimes Son, or the Son of God, that must needs mean what we can conceive of no otherwise than under the notion of a person. That is, we find the action from time to time ascribed to this Word, or this Son, of an intelligent agent, of one that did act understandingly and with design. And we can have no better signification of a person, no clearer notion of one, than that is. He is constantly spoken of as an intelligent agent; and concerning that, there can be no difficnlty, nor indeed is there any controversy between us and our antagonists, concerning his personality; only they will have him to be but a human person, which we shall in its own place consider by and by. And,

Secondly, Concerning the Holy Ghost, that he also is a person, or such a one as we can conceive of under no other notion than that of a person; that is, as acting intelligently and with design: even so is he most apparently spoken of from time to time in Scripture. Hereupon it is said, He bears witness in heaven; as he did in heaven, and from thence, testify concerning Christ, that he was the Son of God, to be heard, and obeyed, and submitted to as such; and as a dove, descended in visible glory upon him from the heavens. This speaks the act of an intelligent, designing cause on his part, as to what he did in testifying, and so he is very frequently spoken of, as coming for such and such a purpose. "When he is come he shall convince the world," John xvi. 7, 8. And (which is most observable) in several parts of these chapters, of the 14th, 15th, and 16th of that Gospel, even there, where he had been spoken of under the name of the Spirit before, when one would expect, in correspondence to that name Spirit, it would have been said, *it*; it being neutral, a word of the neuter gender, it is said *he*; when *he* is come, not when *it* is come, he shall convince the world of sin: yea, and even the very laws of grammar and syntax are waived, as if it were on purpose to hold out this one thing to us, that the Holy Ghost was a person, an intelligent Being, working and acting with design: for when we have the word Spirit, presently *he* doth follow upon it; and at a very great distance, in one place, (several verses being interposed,) from any other antecedent but spirit. Indeed, in the 14th and 15th chapters, there was the Comforter as well as the Spirit, to which *he* might have reference; but still, Spirit was the nearer antecedent. But you will find, in the 16th chapter, the 13th and 14th verses, that there is no antecedent for many verses together, besides Spirit, and afterwards immediately subjoined *he*, and not *it*, on purpose to signify (and we cannot imagine what it should be to signify besides) the personality of the Holy Ghost. And it is a very unreasonable supposal, that in the form of baptism which we have, Matt. xxviii. 19. "Go ye, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" that the two first should be persons, (as they are confessed on all hands to be,) and that there should be put in the same order with them a quality, as our antagonists would teach us to conceive, concerning the Holy Ghost;

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and what? of a quality, in the third place. That is, that when the design manifestly was there to state the object of all practical religion, of the whole of our Christianity, into the believing whereof we are to be baptized, there should be a transient quality put into conjunction with those two great persons, the Father and the Son. Surely, it needs but to stay and to pause here a little, to have light irresistibly strike into the mind of any one that will do so, that will consider how unreasonable it is to imagine, when the design is manifestly to represent and state the entire object of whole Christianity, that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that the two first of these are persons, and the third but a quality. Therefore, that being very plain,

[2.] The second thing that needs to be evinced is, that they are Divine persons, and much is done towards that already. It appearing they are persons, they cannot be created persons, they cannot be angels, of which it can be said there are three and no more. But we hear of no intervening order of creatures, above angels and below God. And then what should they be, since they are persons, (as is plain,) but Divine persons, that do subsist in the Godhead? And to evince this a little more distinctly, but very briefly,

First, Concerning the Word, or the Son, (which you see are both of them names of the same person,) how expressly is he often said to be God! In that mentioned first of John, nothing can be spoken more openly nor in plainer words. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And Psal. xlv. 6. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," which the author to the Hebrews (chap. i. 8.) allegeth to be plainly said to the Son; "And to the Son, he said, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." So Rom. ix. 5. "Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." And that, I John v. 20. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life:" most fitly spoken of the Son, who was to be the spring of life to us, according to what had been said a little above in the same chapter, "This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life."

It is, I know, alleged with a great deal of triumph by some of the adversaries, that he is excluded in another place from being the true God, and that that should not be said of him, when we are told, (John xvii. 3.) "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." If the Father only be true God, then the Son is not. But the inconsequence of this will easily appear to them that shall but consider, how the word *only* is placed. It is placed so as to assert the predicate, and not the subject in the latter proposition. It is not said, Thou only art the true God, and so that doth not exclude the Son at all. The Father is the only true God, and the Son is the only true God, and the Holy Ghost is the only true God. But it cannot be said that either the Father only is the true God, or the Son only is the true God, or the Holy Ghost only is the true God; but they are each of them that God which is the only true one, and of which there is but one and no more. Do but observe that the word *only* affects not the subject spoken of, but the thing affirmed, or spoken of that subject. The case is but like this, as if I should use these words, "This is the only London." It may be true for ought we know, that there is no London, but this which is famously called so by that name; but if one should say, "This only is London," that is, this place where we are, and there the *only* should limit the subject, that were false; for there are thousands of places in London as well as this; there are a great many assemblies in London, a great many places of worship and societies besides this: but we may say, "This is the only London;" so the difference is plain to any that will consider it.

I might insist much more largely (but it is not needful to say every thing that might be said in a plain case) concerning the Son, to prove his divine personality by most manifest attributes of Deity, given him over and over in Scripture, as "The first and the last:" creating power, as "Him by whom the world was made, and by whom he made the world," which is over and over said of him. Col. i. 15. Heb. i. 3. John i. beginning. And universal knowledge, omniscience, heart knowledge; "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." But then,

Secondly, Concerning the divine person of the Holy Ghost, that he also is God; that doth sure carry convictive light with it to any that do consider, that when the form of baptism is given (as was said) with design to state the whole object of our religion, "The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost" are mentioned together; and there can be no object of religion but God, none but a divine person, and we find the Holy Ghost frequently mentioned, upon the same account, as one of those eminent three. How many places are there (it were endless to name them) where these three are brought in together, as it were purposely to signify that they were *ejusdem ordinis, of the same order*; and that we are to conceive of each of them under the same notion, that is, that of Deity, of the Godhead in God. Look but to that I Pet. i. 2. Rom. i. 4, 5. 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. and a great many places besides, where these three are brought in still together. As if it were purposely to signify of their being of one order, and as having, in distinct respects, a concern in our great affairs; those that relate to our salvation and blessedness. Besides, that it must be a great prevarication, to understand that place otherwise than as the expressing the Holy Ghost to be God; Acts v. 3, 4. "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost?—thou hast not lied unto man, but unto God." And certainly if he were not God, it were the most dangerous thing in all the world, to have him represented to us as if he were; and so tempt men to pay the homage of divine worship to a creature. It is never to be imagined, that there would have been such a snare laid before us, to lead us into so dangerous a mistake as that; things would have been spoken more cautiously, if he had not been God, than, when it was just said before, "Why dost thou lie against the Holy Ghost?" so immediately to say, "Thou didst not lie to man but unto God." It is not to be thought, (the thing being so full of danger,) to place the notion or homage of the Deity upon any thing to which it doth not belong, that there should have been such incautiousness used, or so little caution, as directly to lead and train persons into so perilous a mistake. But besides all this, to put the matter out of all doubt; whereas, they that will have the Holy Ghost not to be God, being urged, "What is he then?" do say, "He is the mighty power of God, a certain mighty *vis emissa*, a divine *power* that *issues from* God for the working of such effects." As for this conceit, pray do but consider the matter thus: Is the Holy Ghost indeed not God, but the power of God? Why this power which it is said to be, is either a created power, or an uncreated one. If it be an uncreated power, he is God, for every thing that is uncreated is God; if he be then a created power, the created power of God, or the power of God, but created, then it seems God did, without power, create this power, and was without power till he had created it; so that he did the act of creation (which is an act of omnipotency) when he was impotent. It supposes, first, an impotent God, and then supposeth him, when he was impotent, to create his own power; that is, when he was without all power, he did that act which requires an infiniteness of power, to wit, to create. I know nothing that carries clearer evidence with it, than this doth, that the Holy Ghost cannot be that created power which these persons pretend to; or cannot be divine power distinct from God, from the very essence of God. Every thing of God is God, and cannot be otherwise. If he were the power of God and not God, he must have been created power, by God; that is to say, God did create omnipotent power, being before impotent; for this it plainly comes to.

Thus far, I think, it is with some competent clearness evident, that these three, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, (concerning the first, as you have heard, there is no question,) are persons; they are that which we cannot conceive of otherwise than under the notion of persons; and they are divine persons, so that there are three divine persons that do subsist in the Godhead, that is but one.

So you have this, as the doctrinal truth of this place, and as the real truth in itself, positively evidenced to you.

What is to be said by way of objection against it, we shall next come to. Only upon the whole matter, it seems to me, that there needs a great deal more of humility, and reverence, and seriousness, and fear of the Lord, overawing the spirits of men, to apprehend this to be the plain doctrine of Scripture, than of further argument in the case. And that will more appear by considering how irrational the pretence is, that this is a thing rationally impossible, that there should be such three, that are but one God. Nothing indeed would be plainer than that the same cannot be three and one, in one and the same respect; but, that they may be three in one respect, and but one in another respect, we may make appear to be no impossible thing, and that there is nothing of harshness in it, nay, whereof we have parallel instances, (as far as there can be a parity between God and creatures,) that occur to us every day. So that one would wonder how men can stumble in so plain a way, and when there is nothing indeed in view that should occasion it, besides their having indulged themselves, I fear, too much liberty to prevaricate in their own minds and reasonings before, and then they think it reasonable to justify error by erring always, by never retracting, or by endeavouring to make men believe, that things suggested to them as true, are impossible to be true.

LECTURE XIV.*

3. But now to come to the third part of the proposed work to vindicate the truth of this doctrine laid down, in the proposition, as to what is objected and alleged against it, which summarily and generally is but this one thing, into which all results; That it is contrary to the common reason of men, and such as doth in itself imply a contradiction, that three should be but one. And thereupon it is determined by the leader of them, Socinus himself, that if any thing do appear to be never so plainly contained in Scripture, if yet also it do appear to imply a contradiction, or to be contrary to natural reason, any, whatsoever violence, ought rather to be put upon the Scriptures than to admit it. And this goes therefore, with the men of that way, for a principle, that whatsoever seems to be repugnant to their reason, or to imply a contradiction, ought to be rejected, though never so plainly expressed in Scripture, or contained therein.

Now, first, I shall say here somewhat to this principle in the general, by which these men do steer themselves in this, and all matters of religion besides. And then, secondly, I shall say somewhat in the particular application of it in this case, and show how very untruly it is alleged here, that this is a doctrine repugnant to the common reason of man, and which doth carry a contradiction in itself.

(1.) As to the principle in general, I shall in short say these things to it.

[1.] That if we can be certain, that any thing is repugnant to the reason of man, as it is such and doth in itself imply a contradiction, it ought to be rejected even in duty to God, and as a piece of homage to him. We do owe that homage to our Maker, as the God of truth, to reject every thing that we are sure is contrary to the common reason of man, which he hath put into him, which is truly and purely reason, and which belongs to the Spirit, unto which by the inspiration of the Almighty God that understanding is given, which distinguishes him from the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field. We do owe it as a homage to the Author of our nature, to reject whatsoever is manifestly contrary to that reason, and which is in itself a contradiction. First, because he is most confessedly the *primum verum, the first truth*. And as all the beams of the sun, in whatsoever way they do shine to us, whether directly, or by never so various refraction, we are sure are all from the sun; so whatsoever rational dictate, that we are most certain, or can be sure is such, which we find arrive to us, we cannot but be sure that it is from the Father of lights, from whom can issue nothing but light; nothing opposite to light or truth. And secondly, that it is impossible we can in duty, or as a homage to God, believe a contradiction, any thing that carries a contradiction in itself, because the highest and primary reason upon which I am to admit any thing for truth, is as it is a production of the first truth, as hath been told you. But I am certain, the same thing cannot be true and false; and therefore, as a deference to God, I cannot have greater reason to believe it, than I have to disbelieve it. If it carry a contradiction in it, and is pretended to be from God, I cannot believe it for any reason, but for the same reason I am bound to disbelieve it. There is not more weight in one end of the scale than there is in the other; and so it cannot be believed in that case, as a piece of duty unto God: and thereupon, we are as ready to reject every thing we are sure is contradictory and repugnant to a manifest dictate of reason, as they can be. But,

[2.] If any thing be plainly contained and expressed in the word of God, that seems repugnant to our reason, we are then certain that the seemingness and semblance is false, because we cannot be surer of any thing than that God is true, and that he can never be deceived himself, nor deceive us; that both verity and veracity are most essential to him; and that it is repugnant to his nature, either to be ignorant of any thing, or to lie unto us in any thing. And therefore,

[3.] When there is this competition between any plain words of Scripture and a seeming dictate of reason, we are to censure the latter by the former, and not the former by the latter; we are to measure the rational dictate by the divine word, and not the divine word by the seeming rational dictate. And especially,

[4.] When that thing is spoken often in Scripture, in the divine word, and in varied forms of speech, which have all the same manifest sense and meaning, and are not, without the most notorious violence, capable of another. And (which will be the ground of this last-mentioned assertion) when,

[5.] That word being professedly and declaredly given us as a rate to measure our sentiments as well as our practices by. If therefore, we should oppose that which seems to us a rational dictate, to the plain expressions of that word, we make that which is to be ruled, the rule; we do in that case regulate our rule, and do not admit that the rule should regulate us. We judge the law, (as the apostle James's expression is, in a case that hath reference to practice, and the case is the same in reference to sentiments, and our judgments of things,) which is certainly very great insolency: that when God, in compassion to the darkness and blindness of our minds, gives us such a rule, a light shining in a dark place, unto which we are told we should do well to take heed, we should reject this rule, and say, we can do better without it, reject this light, and say, we can see better without it. As if one should, out of mere good will, offer himself as a guide to a bewildered traveller that knows nothing of his way, and this traveller should at all turns be controverting with his guide, and say, I know the way and how to steer my course better than you; which would be as well the highest insolency as ingratitude, supposing that guide to be very highly superior, and very kindly condescending to do that office in such a case. And again,

[6.] There is yet the more ground for this, when there is among men, and even among wise, and learned, and rational men, a very great division about what is a rational dictate in this case, and what is not. This makes the determination which I have given to be so much the more reasonable, and makes the pretence on the other hand so much the more absurd, that that should be given for a dictate of common reason wherein most rational men do disagree, at least, therein, as rational men as these pretenders, are of a quite contrary mind: and that cannot be so clear a dictate of common reason, wherein even the most rational men do disagree, and sure then, in that case, one would be glad to be determined by a divine word. And I add,

[7.] That the reason of man, in this our present state, even in things of much inferior concernment, is very dubious and uncertain, in matters wherein religion is not con-

* Preached April 10th, 1690.

cerned, and so wherein the minds of men are not apt to be perverted by ill inclination, as in the matters of religion they are. For though it be very true, that it is natural for men to be of some religion, yet it is as true and as evident, that there is an aversion and antipathy in the minds and spirits of men against true religion, against sincere, living religion. And if the reason of man be a very dubious uncertain thing, even when there is nothing to bias one this way or that, as it is in thousands of instances that might be given most apparently; much more cause have we in matters of religion, and of this nature, not to over-attribute unto it. In philosophical matters, wherein men's minds cannot, through prejudice, be swayed this way or that, and wherein it is no one's interest that this side be true rather than that side, yet there are the greatest difficulties imaginable in determining what is reason and what not, what is true and what not, as all the controversies in philosophy do show: and some, wherein it is the hardest matter imaginable, even to the greatest wits that have ever been in the world, to free themselves from the appearance of contradiction, which side soever they had in the controversy. As it is most notorious, to any that know any thing in philosophy, about the *compositum continuum*, whether the *continuum*, that is, a body, doth consist of parts always divisible, or of indivisible parts; so that bring it to the minutest thing imaginable, even if it be to the breadth of a hair, whether it be still perpetually divisible or indivisible. It is plain, take one side or the other in that question, and hitherto all the wits in the world have not found how, freely and clearly, to disentangle themselves from contradiction in saying this is always divisible, or it is sometimes impossible to be divided any further; and the apprehension of that doth (I must acknowledge) greatly lower my reverence to that which goes under the notion of a rational dictate, when in such a case as that of any, the minutest thing you can imagine, even the breadth of a hair, no man shall be able to assert either it is always divisible or sometime indivisible, without entangling himself in such appearances of contradiction, as from which the greatest wits that have ever been have not been able to show us the way of being extricated. And when there is such a division, even among the masters of reason, the highest pretenders to it; this is a rational dictate, saith the one side, the quite contrary is a rational dictate, saith the other side, even in this very business of the Trinity itself; whilst some with loud clamour cry out against it as impossible to be, others, on the other hand, take upon them to demonstrate it to be utterly impossible that it should not be; that there could be no creation, no Creator, if there were not a Trinity.

These things being said in reference to that principle in the general, I now come,

(2.) To the application of it to this objection; that is, that this is a doctrine, (say some,) to common and rational principles, contradictious in itself, that three should be one.

That we may speak to this with the more clearness, we shall—consider what it is, from Scripture, we assert concerning this matter, and then—show how unreasonably this is pretended to be repugnant to reason, or to imply any thing of a contradiction.

[1.] What it is we do from Scripture assert in this matter, and what we do not. For we must distinguish here, between plain Scripture doctrine and the bold determinations of some schoolmen. We do not think we are obliged to justify every determination of a confident and presuming schoolman, as if it were divine writ. But what from Scripture we do affirm is, That there are three in the God-head, that these three are some way distinguished from one another, otherwise they could not be three, there were no pretence to call them three. We find they have distinct names; that is plain—the Father, the Word or Son, and the Spirit or the Holy Ghost, over and over. But there must be somewhat of distinction among themselves, otherwise there were no pretence to call them three, if they were no way distinguishable.

Again, we do affirm they are so far distinguished from one another as, that can be said concerning one which cannot be said concerning the other. As when we say, "The Word was made flesh," (which you know the Scripture speaks,) the meaning is, not that the Father was made flesh, or the Spirit was made flesh, but that the Son was made flesh. When it is said, (as it often is,) that the Spirit or the Holy Ghost is sent by the Father, or the Son, the meaning is, not that the Father sends himself, or that the Son sends himself. Therefore, they are so far distinct from one another as, that is said of the one which cannot be said of the other. But then, how much greater the distinction is, we pretend not to say, because the Scripture doth not say it. Only this we do say, We can think of no notion by which they are so fitly distinguishable as that of personality, as that of their being distinct persons; that we do find plainly said concerning one of them, the Father, (who is so called in that Heb. i. 3.) that the Son is the express image of his person. So we render the word *hypostasis* fitly and aptly enough. And they being so frequently mentioned together, as we find they are, it doth naturally suggest to us, that there should be a suppositality. And concerning the personality of the Son too, there is no question; but as concerning the Holy Ghost, he being so frequently spoken of under the notion He, and (as was noted to you) the gender varied on purpose, contrary to strict grammar, we ought also to conceive of him under the notion of a person: though at the same time (we have told you) it is impossible that the notion of a person should be the same with God and amongst men, and that for the reason which hath been mentioned to you. Only, we have nothing by which more fitly to conceive it, than by this notion. Then, so much as this being what we do affirm and assert to be the doctrine of the Scriptures, and to be Scripture in this case, then, I say,

[2.] This is very unreasonable and pretenceless, to affirm that this is contradictious in itself, or any way opposite or contrary to the plain dictates of reason. For where should the contradiction lie? It is only pretended to lie in this, that the same thing cannot be three and one. And it is easily admitted, that the same thing cannot be three and one, in the same respect wherein they are but one. But nothing hinders, but that the same may be, in different respects, that is, in those respects wherein they are three, they are not only one: in that respect wherein they are but one, they cannot be three. But, that in divers respects; the same thing may be three and one, or that there may be a trinity, a triad, in one and the same thing, the instances are so many, so plain, and so notorious in other inferior things, that it is absurd and unreasonable to pretend this to be contradictious, or contrary to the dictate of nature. Let us go to the most obvious thing that can be thought of. If I should go no further but only to give you an instance of this book which I have here in my hand, it hath its breadth, its length, and its thickness, as you all easily see and apprehend; but its breadth is not its length, nor is its length its thickness, neither of these are one another, yet all the same book: that is, this thing which is so long, so broad, and so thick, is this book. If we speak of a man, he is a very vegetative creature, and he is a sensitive creature, and he is a rational and intelligent creature, and yet, it is most plain, vegetation is not sensation, nor sensation intellection. The sun, it hath belonging to it light, and heat, and motion: that luminous body is the sun, that califective body is the sun, and that moving body is the sun. These three are all but one sun; and yet there are three in it, as is evident. The world is full of instances of the like nature. We can hardly think of any sort of things wherein this may not be exemplified. And whereas, the greatest quarrel is about personality, there is nothing more plain than that one and the same man may sustain three persons, the person of a father, the person of a son, and the person of a magistrate, and the like. Many persons may be sustained by one and the same man; the notion of person, in the strict and common sense, being only taken for the circumstances of their state and condition who are spoken of, and not as denoting this or that particular essence; and so to be a man, and this or that person, is not all one: and so to be God, and this or that person in the Godhead, is not all one. The same man may endure, and may *sustentare*, may put on, and may bear, several persons: and so it is no repugnancy to reason at all that the same God do so too. And therefore, this pretence of the irrationality or contradictiousness of this doctrine, doth itself want a pretence; there can be really no ground for

it. And so much hath been so far said, by some of the late zealous contenders in this case the other way, that they are brought to say and publish, that truly he must be a madman that will say there cannot be three persons in the same God. That we find published not long ago: so far doth that pretence vanish, that this doctrine must be rejected as being irrational and contradictory. And if we would take the notion of person and personality, in the most strict and scholastic sense, it would be with very great arrogance that they must pretend this doctrine (taken even in that sense) to be contrary to a common, rational dictate, when as it is so very well known first, that the very notion of individuation or personality, suppositality, or more generally personality, in reference to rational beings, is one of the most disputed things in the world. And how absurd is it to say, that this or that is opposite to a common rational dictate, about which (as was said before) the most learned men, and the highest pretenders to reason, have constantly disagreed. There must first, before this can be said, some one common notion of personality, and individuation be fixed, which all men must assent to, as soon as ever they hear it, that must command assent to it in every man's mind. But about these things there is the greatest disagreement, and hath constantly been, ever since the name of a schoolman or metaphysician hath been known in the world. And then, secondly, besides that, there is so great a disagreement among schoolmen and metaphysicians, about the notions of suppositality, personality, and individuality, that they who will conclude this to be against a rational dictate, must be able to evince, that the notion of personality must be the same with us and with God, which it will be impossible for them ever to evince, and the contrary whereof (as hath been said) is demonstrable. That is, were it ever so certain that there cannot be three finite persons partaking the same finite nature, it will be hence no consequence, that there cannot be three infinite persons partaking the same infinite nature, or communicating in the same infinite nature: no reason, for a parallel cannot be drawn so much as with a plausible pretence, between what is finite and what is infinite, in this case.

But to shut up all that I intend, as to the polemical part of this discourse, I shall only leave these few things, which will plainly represent to us that this doctrine may be conceived, and hath not that difficulty in it which commonly hath been thought. As,

First, It is out of all question that God is but one, can be but one. And,

Secondly, That whatsoever is necessarily, is God. Whatsoever is in being, from a necessity in nature, is God; than which no principle can be plainer. And,

Thirdly, That whatsoever is by dependence on the Divine will, is creature; whatsoever is not of necessity, but by mere dependence on the Divine will, that is all creature. "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Fourthly, If, therefore, we do suppose the Son and the Holy Ghost to be from the Father, by a necessity of nature, an eternal necessity of nature, and not by dependence upon his will, they will not be creatures, because nothing is creature but what depends upon the will and pleasure of the Creator. And if they be not creatures, what are they then? Then they must be God, and yet both of them from the Father too: for all that do assert the Trinity, do acknowledge the Father to be *fons trinitatis, the fountain of the Trinity:* and if from this fountain, the Son be one way, and the Holy Ghost be another way, both from the Father: that is, the Son from the Father immediately, and the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, and this, not by choice, but by an eternal necessity of nature, here is this doctrine as easily conceivable as any that I know of whatsoever, that lies not within the compass of our manifest demonstration. And my business is not now to demonstrate to you that thus it is, but that it is very easily conceivable that thus it may be. That is, that the Son and the Holy Ghost may be from the Father, and that we are sure they are from him by an eternal necessity of nature, and not by choice. It is not by his pleasure they are and were, but by eternal necessity of nature they are from him as he is originally from himself. That is, they are always and eternally in that nature which is self-originate. And here is no contradiction, nor the least appearance or shadow of it, in all this.

And thus far now hath our labour been taken up as to this subject, about the truth of it; that is, to prove and to vindicate it. Our next business, which only remains, will be about the importance of it, the great usefulness of it, and the mighty weight and stress that lie upon it. At present I leave this with you, that I know nothing more needful to clear our apprehensions, and make our minds very calm and serene, in deference to this doctrine of the Trinity, than, first, high, adoring thoughts of God, and secondly, mean thoughts of ourselves. If we can but think highly enough of God, and meanly enough of ourselves, and how unmeet and incompetent such moles and worms of the earth as we are, must needs be to make an estimate of his nature, and how things are with him, otherwise than he is pleased graciously and freely to declare to us concerning himself, there will be nothing then in all this doctrine that we shall stumble at, nothing that we shall receive with difficulty, and nothing but what we may receive with great use and advantage to ourselves.

LECTURE XV.*

THEREFORE now for the *importance* and *use* of this doctrine, much may be conceived of that, if it be considered how the stamp and impression of a Trinity doth run through the world. A noted writer, of our time, hath said very much to that purpose, of which I shall say but little. Take the whole universe of created beings and you have every where a Trinity instamped. It is observable enough in that great triad, the several things conceivable under each member, of nature, morality, and religion. But it is with religion that we are concerned, and wherein the practice of it doth principally appear, and is most considerable. Our religion you do know, objectively considered, is made up of doctrines to be believed, and of duties to be done, and of benefits to be sought, and these are comprised in those three noted summaries, the creed, the decalogue, and the Lord's prayer. In these three, there is some impression and resemblance of the trinity in the divine nature. That is, of that power, and of that wisdom and knowledge, and of that benignity and love, which are the three great most noted principles we have to conceive of, and that we cannot but distinctively conceive of, we cannot otherwise conceive of, than as distinct in the simple union of the Godhead; and which may probably enough correspond to, and be the very notion of, Father, Son, and Spirit.

Why now, if we consider doctrinals in the first place, the doctrines that do make up the first and most noble part of the scheme of religion, you know how they all depend upon, and are reduced to, the notions that are given us of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; upon these three heads hangs the frame of Christian doctrine. That is, of the Father considered as God Creator; and of the Son considered as God Redeemer; and of the Holy Ghost considered as God Sanctifier. Which three great works of God, though it be true that they do each of them owe themselves to the concurrence of each of the persons according to that known maxim, *opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*;[a] which is undoubtedly a true and clear one; yet each of these is appropriated to each of the persons severally, not exclusively, but eminently. And that we may understand that aright, when it is said, the Father creates, it is to be understood eminently, not exclusively, of the Son and the Holy Ghost: and so as to the rest. When we profess to believe in God as the creator of heaven and earth, that is, in God the Father, as he is the first Fountain of all being, uncreated and created too; why though that be plainly said, yet it is as plainly said, that without the Word was nothing made; and that by him, that is, the Word, even he—who is said to be "the bright-

* Preached April 17th, 1691.

a The Holy Trinity, in external operations, is not divided.

ness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person," the worlds were made: and that they were made by the Spirit of his mouth; and that the Spirit did move upon the waters, that is, upon the fluctuating chaos, which we must suppose to have been first made, before things were made out of it: and that it was first made is the most demonstrable thing in all the world; otherwise, it were, itself, a necessary and self-original being, and so God; the notion of God would not be all-comprehending, or there would be something *præter Deum, besides God*, originally and naturally, and of itself. So again, as to the work of redemption, that was designed by the Father, but wrought by the Son, and applied by the Holy Ghost. These are plain things and abundantly evident in Scripture, as, if I should turn from text to text, you would see. But I must suppose you to understand it already. You cannot then but see the mighty importance of this doctrine of the trinity in our religion. We shall have occasion to press that further by and by. But now hereupon, I shall, for putting a period to the discourse on this subject, subjoin several instructions in reference hereto. As,

1. That we should all learn to adore the wonderful Divine condescension, that he should so far unveil himself, and make known so much of the things of his own nature and being, to such despicable beings as we. We can never wonder enough at this. Indeed, I have many times considered, it is a very instructive thing, that so many of the pagans should discover so very reverential thoughts of God, upon this account, and under this notion, as they apprehend his Being to be inscrutable, unsearchable, as that inscription on one of their temples doth import, "I am he that was, and he that is, and he that shall be, and no one hath ever unfolded my veil." Such reverential apprehensions had they (however they came by them) of the inscrutableness and occultness of the Divine Being, that there were such arcana, such secrets veiled from all eyes, that could never possibly be looked into. Now that God should take such poor creatures as any of us are, and let us see so far into the veil, that whereof we could have had no certain apprehensions if he had not told us, how wonderful is it! Though some have made it very much their business, (after they had got the hint from Scripture concerning the trinity,) to show how rational it was; not only to show how consistent it was with reason, (which is a very justifiable undertaking and a great piece of right done to our religion,) some carry the matter higher, (as I told you,) and undertake to demonstrate it to be necessary, and that we cannot conceive of the nature of God, and of that great work of his, the creation of the world, in reference to one another, otherwise. But this is to strain beyond what the exigency of the case doth require. It may however, (by that improvement I have already made of it too,) serve somewhat to rebuke the proud confidence of that sort of men, who represent this doctrine as contrary to a common, rational dictate, the common sense and reason of mankind. That is most insolently pretended when, as (unless they will assume to themselves that there can be no such thing as a rational dictate, that is not stamped at their mint) I say, unless they would assume that to themselves, it must appear very incongruous to pretend that such a thing is impossible to be, when others at the same time, (who may for ought I know lay as good a claim to that of being the men, and that wisdom shall die with them, as they can,) should say with so much confidence, it is impossible not to be; and that there could be no such thing as a Creator and a creation, if it were not so.

But waving this disquisition, since it is most certainly not impossible in itself, it is very adorable that God should come, and so graciously discover to us that so it is; when we see how useful it is, and how expedite a frame of religion it lays open before us: that he should discourse to such children, such weaklings, as we, at that rate concerning his own nature; "I will tell you how things are with me: now in the Godhead these are co-existent from all eternity, Father, Son, and Spirit: and this I would not have hid from you; I would have you to be possessed with right notions and apprehensions of my nature thus far, that thus it is with me, and in me." You would wonder that a great and wise prince should take upon him to discourse his arcana with a peasant, a mean, ignorant peasant. But we do not enough wonder at this condescension of God, upon this ground, that we do not enough set ourselves to consider the distance between God and creatures, and what mere nothings we are to him; and that when we have the most exalted thoughts that our minds are capable of, concerning any created being whatsoever, and then descending to the meanest sort of creatures we can think of, the distance is not only greater, but it is still infinitely greater, between the great God and us. What then have we left to do, but to fall down and wonder, fall down and adore, and cry out, "Whence is it to us that thou shouldest let us know so much of thyself?" that whereas, the things of God are never to be known distinctly, otherwise than as the Spirit of God doth reveal them, that Spirit of God should be the Author to us of such a revelation as this, which we have contained in the Bible, concerning this great and most important mystery.

2. Let us learn this too, not to think it a small matter, now that we are informed that there is in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit; that all three should so far concern themselves as we find they do, and be so constantly concerned as they are, about our affairs. If all the potentates on earth should concern themselves about the life of one single fly, it were not so strange a thing, it were not so great a stoop. We should consider with ourselves over and over, What am I? what am I, and what is my life, that the eternal Father, and the eternal Son, and the eternal Spirit, should all concern themselves from eternity about me? And again,

3. It should further instruct us into this, to fasten the apprehension deep in our souls, of the great concernment of the doctrine, that it may lie with weight upon us, as a seal that doth not make impression unless it be pressed on; that we should endeavour and intend more to press on this doctrine, this truth, upon our own souls, that it may make the proper, due impression, that we may be delivered up into the mould and form of it: as the expression is, Rom. vi. 17. And to that purpose, let us bethink ourselves, how miserably (where this doctrine is not entertained) the scheme of Christianity, and the Christian religion, are scattered and torn by the want or by the denial of it. This apprehension should urge us so as that the doctrine should lie with greater weight and pressure upon our spirits, because where it is not received, away go the great limbs of the Christian religion. The Deity of the Son of God, that is abandoned and cashiered: well, and what then becomes of our religion? Do you not think yourselves concerned in this matter? What! Are you willing to venture your souls otherwise than in the hands of a Divine Saviour, when you know yourselves to be sinners, to be guilty creatures? Do you think it will answer the exigency of your case, to have an atonement made for you of no greater value than if one mere man were made a sacrifice for another? And if that would do, suppose one man were as good as another; why inasmuch as all are sinners, when he goes to satisfy another's sin, who shall satisfy for his sin? Or how shall he satisfy for his own? And suppose an innocent man should be made on purpose (as it is supposed in this present case) to be a sacrifice; that is still but man for man. It is true, he hath no sin of his own to satisfy for, but suppose he could satisfy for the sin of another man, there must then be as many innocent men created as there are guilty men, at that rate. But would not you be loath to hazard your souls upon such conceits as these? and to quit your hold of a mighty God for your Saviour? of this assurance, that he who is to be your Saviour is known by the name of "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace?" Would you be content to abandon this, that he is to be your Saviour who is God blessed for ever; who before the worlds were made was with God; and in time was made flesh, and dwelt among us; that Word that was with God, and that was God, and by which all things were made, without which nothing was made that was made, was made flesh? An amazing thing it is to me, how men that pretend to believe the divine authority of the Bible, can disentangle themselves from such a place as this, "The Word was made flesh." They that will have Jesus Christ never to have been, no such person ever to have been, before he was born of the Virgin Mary, I would then know of them, "What was that that was made flesh?" It was the Word

that was made flesh; there was somewhat before this flesh was made, or it was nothing that was made flesh. And every one that understands the ordinary use of this expression, (flesh,) knows it doth not signify the person of a man, but the whole of a man, not the body only: for when it is said, "in his sight there shall no flesh be justified," what is the meaning of that? That the bodies of men shall not be justified? Surely not. But thus, from not believing this doctrine, proceeds the denial of that great and noble propitiation, once for all made for the sins of men, under the proper notion of a propitiation or an expiatory sacrifice to atone for sin, and take away guilt. Again hereupon,

The eternal priesthood of the Son of God is evacuated and reduced to a nullity; and all upon this, that an alterity cannot be conceived in the Godhead. Not that there is therein, *aliud et aliud, one diverse from another*, but that there is there *personæ altera et altera, one person distinct from another*. But because this is not apprehended, nor will be apprehended, therefore, say they, There can be no such thing as a propitiatory sacrifice, such as we, such as the Scripture, such as the Gospel, doth most expressly speak of, that is, of him who was God offered up unto God. For, say they, there is but one person in the Godhead; and a satisfier and a satisfied must be two persons, there must be in such a case an alterity of persons, *personæ altera et altera*, and so they truly reason. He that doth satisfy and he that is satisfied must be two persons: this is most certain, but they, not admitting the alterity of persons, therefore exclude the whole doctrine. And then,

That mighty power that is to go forth from the Divine Spirit, for the breaking of the bands of iron, and the rescuing of captive souls out of the devil's power; to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, all that is reduced to nothing too. And so there is no other Christianity left in the world but a certain sort of self-sprung religion; no power but that which I can be the author of to myself, what I have of mine own: or else if they will have more, they do speak altogether unintelligibly and contrary to the plain sense of things: that is, they will not have the Holy Ghost to be a distinct person in the Godhead, but (as they call it) the power of God, meaning a quality. But I take what hath been said against that, to be truly as plain demonstration as can be used in any case whatsoever. The Holy Ghost is called the divine power. Comply with them so far, then say I, This divine power is either created power or uncreated. If this divine power be created, then they must suppose God, while he was without power, to create power; that is, that God being first impotent, created power and became omnipotent. But if they will say, It is an uncreated power, then they say what we say: then it is God: the Holy Ghost is God. But he is God so as he is capable of being sent, and sent of the Father, and so that he must be a distinct person in the Godhead. But the stress of all that mighty affair which is to be wrought in the souls of men, when they are sanctified; of children of the devil, and friends of hell, to be made children of God, and meet to be partakers of an inheritance with them that are sanctified, with the saints in light: all that mighty work that is to be done by an Almighty Spirit, must be proportionally diminished as the cause is diminished, as the agent is diminished and reduced, by their doctrine, to a mere creature. Therefore, I say, labour to apprehend deeply the mighty importance of this doctrine, and to fix the apprehensions of it, and to have it wrought in your souls, that so such a truth may no more be capable of being torn away from thence than one faculty of your souls can be torn from another. And,

4. Labour to savour and relish such truth, this truth, this doctrine, labour to get the savour and relish of it into your souls; that is, to receive this truth in the love of it. It is a matter of dangerous importance, when truth of this kind, which concerns the vitals of religion, is received merely as an airy notion, and is not digested, doth not enter and sink deep into our hearts; and that which must entertain and admit there, even into the very centre of our souls, must be the love of it. "They received not the truth in the love of it, that they might be saved," 2 Thess. ii. 10. And what became of that matter? When they did so lightly adhere to divine truth as one doth to a thing that he doth not love, or that is not united to his soul by love, they easily suffered their souls to be cheated of it: and then, for their not loving this truth, (it being a thing most highly criminal not to love divine truth, not to love so great and sacred a thing,) God gave them up to strong delusions, to believe lies, that they all might be damned who received not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Such truth they could take no pleasure in, but they could take pleasure in unrighteousness. "Let them go," saith God, "the way that the inclinations of their own wicked hearts carry them to." There is that kindred, that alliance between the soul and truth, that there is a violence done to both if they be severed, and if the soul do not inwardly love truth, as that which is most nearly allied to it. They that are after the Spirit do savour the things of the Spirit, as they that are after the flesh do savour the things of the flesh. And this is the way to become most stable Christians, when souls and truth come to be united and knit together in love, meeting in one and the same common centre, and even in this as the centre; as you may see in that place which I will recommend to your present perusal, and future serious thoughts. Colos. ii. 2. Saith the apostle, "I would, that ye knew what great conflict I have had for you, (as he introduceth it to them by what he saith in the foregoing verse,) that your hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God." And what is comprehended in this mystery of God, that is, of the Father and of Christ? it is generally expressed first, "the mystery of God," and then particularly, "of the Father and of Christ." The former *and* is not copulative but exegetical; "To the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and," that is, even, or to wit, "of the Father and of Christ." That is, the mystery of God doth comprehend these two. The Holy Ghost is not always mentioned, being expressly enough so in many other texts. But here is the very sum of our religion in this mystery, "the mystery of God," to wit, "of the Father and of Christ;" two particular expressions including the general one, from both which, (as other scriptures sufficiently instruct us,) the Holy Ghost issues forth, as the great and mighty Agent to accomplish all the great things, which by Christian religion are to be effected in the world. And this was the apostle's deep concern on the behalf of these Christians. "You cannot imagine," saith he, "what conflict I have about these things; that you might be strong Christians;" and how? "That you may be knit together in love, unto the riches of the full assurance of understanding," all loving together, all agreeing together to love the same truths, the same doctrines, and thereby to have it incorporated, inwrought into you, that you may be able to say, "I can as soon suffer limb to be torn from limb, as suffer such truth as this to be torn away from my soul:" that that is to be bought and never to be sold, never to be parted with on any terms, "What! part with that? or be indifferent towards that? or let my mind hover or be in suspense? why it is my very life, my life lies here; shall I in the midst of a tempestuous sea, being safely brought to a firm and stable rock, quit my rock and go to floating again amidst the raging waves?" So will any man reckon in this matter, that hath any care or concern for his soul. Again,

5. You may hence learn, how we are to eye God in our transacting the great business of covenanting with him; that is, as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; which that initial seal of the covenant doth plainly enough dictate, when we are required to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. When I enter into covenant with God to take him for my God, if I am first solemnly to do it yet; or if I am with solemnity, from time to time, to renew my covenant, we must consider how we are to do it; we must not think of taking God abstractly or taking one person alone; but we must take God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost for our God. Do not think your baptism signifies nothing, when it is directed to be administered in that order, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. So you are to consider with yourselves, "I am to be a devoted one, I am a devoted one, and must continue so, to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost." A wonderful thing, that we should be a congregation of

such persons dwelling on earth, who have these names named upon us, that such a claim should be laid from heaven to us, I claim every one of you for mine, for mine, saith the Father, you were baptized in my name; and so the rest. Why should we not walk up and down this world with this sense on our minds, with this thought often renewed, often impressed upon us?

LECTURE XVI.*

6. IT lets us see how we are to understand the relation that results from such a covenant between God and us, whereby we become related to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, and they become related to us; you have heard under what distinct notions, principally, but not exclusively, each of the persons is related to us. The Father as Creator, not excluding the Son and Spirit; the Son as Redeemer, not excluding the Father and Spirit; the Spirit as Sanctifier, not excluding the Father and Son. We have shown you concerning each of these, that creative power (according as the Scripture teacheth us to conceive) is from the Father, as the Fountain; through the Son as the way of its conveyance; (in respect whereof some speak of a natural mediatorship belonging unto the Son of God before the ordinate one) and by the agency of the Holy Ghost, who is represented as the immediate Agent in all the operations of God towards the creature, whether in the sphere of nature or of grace. And we are to look upon the Son as under the notion of the Redeemer, but so as to understand that this redemption was designed by the Father, and is applied by the Holy Ghost; and upon the Holy Ghost as the Sanctifier, and yet still to understand that this his sanctifying work was predetermined by the Father, procured by the Son, and effected by himself. When therefore we are to consider God as related to us as our God, ("this God is our God, he will be our guide even unto death,") we must take in and bring together each of these notions and conceptions concerning him; we must take in the conceptions of each of the persons, "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost is my God." Somewhat agreeable to what the ancient philosopher saith, concerning relatives, *Relata sunt quorum totum esse est ad aliud*; that is, *relatives are such things, the whole of which appertains to another*. Why so? All that is conceivable in the Divine Being is, in this case, all to us. The fulness of God is to be considered with relation to us so far as is needful, so far as we are capable; he doth not reserve himself from us in any thing of it. How admirable a thing is this! How great and high thoughts ought we to have concerning the privilege state of our ease! Indeed, there is nothing that we have to consider of this God, or to look after the knowledge of, to answer the curiosity of a vain mind; but every thing or any thing that may answer the necessity of a perishing soul, of a soul that must otherwise be miserable and lost. Whatsoever is requisite to our real felicity and blessedness, we may look to all that is in God as determined by a special relation unto us. "As I am such (saith God) I am such entirely yours, all for you, wholly yours." Therefore did the everlasting covenant that comprehends and conveys all this, yield such solace to the soul of dying David, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. "Thou hast made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my salvation and all my desire." 'I care for nothing beyond this.' The great thing that the covenant doth convey, is God; and by it it is, that God the Father, Son, and Spirit, do become related to us as ours, if once we do take hold of the covenant, if once we put in our claim, and do but lay the ground by that act of our own interest: our claimable interest doth depend upon that; that very act of taking, accepting, "laying hold," as the expression is in that Isa. lvi. for the encouragement of poor strangers that might possibly apprehend they were quite cut off from God. "No, let the sons of the strangers that take hold of my covenant encourage themselves; that makes me theirs: I am theirs, if they do but lay hold; it is but take and have:" as afterwards, in this chapter where the text is, it is said concerning the Son especially, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." And he hath him who hath once taken him. Again,

7. This serves specially to instruct us concerning our application to God in prayer. That is, that we must still comprehend in our thoughts, Father, Son, and Spirit together; the Father, Word, and Holy Ghost, as it is expressed in the text. I know and have particularly understood from some, that they have been full of dubions, perplexing thoughts, how to steer aright in their applications to God, making their solemn addresses so as to run into neither of those things which they have pretended to have been, both of them, their fear and confusion, on the one hand, by not ascribing distinctly to each of the persons what they should; or blasphemy on the other hand, by ascribing what was not due, what was not to be ascribed. But our way is very plain, if we do but consider what the Scriptures say concerning these three substances in the Godhead, and what copies it sets us of applying ourselves hereupon. That is, to the eternal Father, through the eternal Son, by the eternal Spirit: so we ought to apply ourselves, and here is nothing to lead us into confusion or indistinction of thoughts in so doing. It is plain we have the Father always represented as the original Foundation of all light, all life, all being, all excellency, all perfection, whether created or uncreated. He is then a most adequate terminative Object of our worship in such application and supplication. We go properly to the Fountain of all good. Whither should we go else? But he is (especially to those that have been in delinquency and transgression) inaccessible; we need a mediator; there could no mediator answer the exigency of our case, that was not God as well as man: we need a Divine Mediator, a God Mediator, we cannot expect that God should do any thing for us but for the sake of God, or for his sake who was God; so we are always taught to apply ourselves, to direct our addresses; and so we are to expect the answers of them; that is, that prayer must ascend through Christ, and that blessings are to descend through him. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places," through him, Eph. i. 3. And we are to suppose that whatever is done for us, in answer to our prayers, when they are accepted, it must be by the agency of the Holy Ghost. The state of our case is such, as to require an infinite almighty Agent to work in us, and to work for us, the things that are necessary to our present support, and to our final blessedness. And we are hereupon taught by our Lord himself, in respect to the final and terminative Object of such worship, (that of prayer for instance,) to pray unto the Father; "Our Father which art in heaven"—so we are taught to pray. "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," Ephes. iii. 14. Yea, and so our Lord Jesus Christ did pray himself; "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter," John xiv. 16. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," Luke xxiii. 24. And to him he renders solemn acknowledgment by way of thanksgiving. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," Matt. xi. 25. And when he did so, (as we find his was a very praying life, in the days of his flesh, here in this world,) it is very vainly and foolishly alleged that then he must, according to our doctrine and notion, be supposed to pray to himself; it is a very vain and idle pretence. And so I find indeed, that the arguments of that sort of adversary, that is, they that do impugn the divinity of the Son of God, tend to prove, generally, nothing but that which we never deny, that is, that Christ was man. This is the thing that by many arguments they set themselves most industriously to prove, which none of us deny, that Christ was man. Who doth doubt it? But they would thence conclude that because he is man, therefore he could not be God; which is their absurd and foolish consequence, when we know it was so plainly, so very plainly said, that the Word which, in that text, is said to be with God, is also said to be God; and the same Word is said to be made flesh, to be incarnate, to have assumed and taken on flesh; that is, not as if it did, in becoming flesh, cease to be what it was before, but did only add an assumed nature to a divine;

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and therefore, there being two natures now meeting together in that one person, it was no way unintelligible, but that he should do that in the one nature which was impossible he should do in or by the other. That is, as man he did grow, and as man he did die, and as man he did pray, when as God he could do none of these. But he that was God did do these things, though not as he was God. He that was God, did lay down his life, as in that 3rd chapter of this epistle, v. 16. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he" (that same he that was God) "laid down his life for us." And so he that was God shed his blood for us, Acts xx. 28. "Feed the flock of God (his church) which he hath purchased with his own blood;" his own, who was God; though, as God, we know he could neither bleed nor have blood. But whereas, the Son of God, as he was the Son of God and God, did pray, and praying, apply himself to the Father, so are we to do, to pray, and in praying, apply ourselves to the Father as we are led by that great example. But then, we being nothing but creatures, we have the whole Deity in view as the Object of our worship and addresses. But not the Deity, abstractly considered, but the Deity as subsisting in these three persons. The Deity abstractly considered, in the case of our Lord himself, was neither the Object, nor the subject of prayer; God, as God, did neither pray nor was prayed unto by him; did not pray, for it was the man, the man Christ that prayed; nor abstractly, nor merely as God, was he the Object of prayer; but as the Godhead did subsist in the person of the Father, so did the man Christ apply himself to him, and so could in no sort be said to pray to himself, in praying to him. But now, I say, we who are nothing but creatures, we have the entire Godhead, not abstractly, but as subsisting in three persons, to apply ourselves unto, and those persons conceived of according to the order they are represented to stand towards one another, and to be related one to another. As we told you already, when we pray to the Father, as the final and terminative Object of our prayers, we are at the same time to conceive the Son as through whom the prayer is to be transmitted, together with the answer, the good we are to expect and pray for; and the Holy Ghost, as by whose power to pray, and by whose power the answer of prayer is to be effected too. And so it is God that our prayers must respect, God to whom, God through whom, and God by whom. Pray to God, through God and from God, and so our prayer hath every way to do with God. Our prayer, as it is to be through the mediation of Christ, so both it and its answer are to be wrought by the Holy Ghost; we are in that great and sacred work of praying, to deliver up ourselves to the conduct of the Holy Ghost, and so we are to do in the whole of our course. "As many as are the sons of God they are led," *oracled* (as that word signifies, Rom. viii. 14.) "by the Spirit of God." Which Spirit is a Spirit of adoption, (as it afterwards follows,) the Spirit that belongs to the state of worship, as they are sons, that teaches them to cry, "Abba Father." And because they are sons, he hath sent the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, as it is said in that parallel place, Gal. iv. 6. And we are required to pray alway in the Spirit, Ephes. vi. 18. And in the Holy Ghost; 20th verse of the epistle to Jude. "Praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

Put all this together and then every prayer of ours ought to respect each person in the Godhead. That is, it ought to be to God, through God, and from God: even as the answer, it is to be in the same order, originally God's answer, through Christ, and by the Holy Ghost. And so we run into no confusion, when we suffer ourselves to be governed by Scripture light. And we can be in no danger of incurring the guilt of blasphemy; for we do not ascribe to any of these persons more than the Scripture doth plainly teach us to ascribe. And as our Saviour saith concerning himself, so may we concerning each of these persons: when the Scripture saith so and so, and doth attribute such and such things to them, will any one say, that he blasphemes that saith, that the eternal Father is God, or the eternal Son is God, or the eternal Spirit is God? Scripture most expressly saying these things as words can speak them. And again,

8. This should further teach us how to steer our whole course in this world: our business here on earth, ought to be (in the main of it) religion; we ought to make religion our business. The business of religion, while we are in this imperfect state, is only a motion God-ward. The religion of the way, is coming to God. So that any one who is sincerely religious and godly, will be able to make answer to this question, What is the main business of your life? This true answer he can make, "My main business is to make towards God; I am aiming at God, tending towards God, as one that hath been removed and set at a distance from him, and so am to be brought back to him." It was this Christ died for, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Now this being the state of our case, we are distant from him, in nearness to whom consists our duty and felicity. When we are to take and direct our course God-ward, we must have a final term for our motion: "Whither are you going?" "Why, my course is tending and directed God-ward." This motion must have for its ultimate term, God the Father. This is the sense and language of an inquiring soul, when once it comes to understand what the Scripture doth so plainly reveal; that there are in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Their sense, I say, is what we find expressed, John xiv. 8. "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us:" "do but show us the Father, and we have enough: our great inquiry is after the Father, the Fountain and Original of all things, in whom is our life and our only hope." "Well," saith our Saviour, (meeting that genius and sense of such an inquirer,) "I know where you would be, and who you are seeking: and have you so long known me, and are ignorant of the Father? Come, I will be your Conductor, I will be your Guide, no man cometh to the Father but by me." And therefore, as there must be a final term of this motion, so there must be a way leading thereto. "Why, I am the way, the truth, and the life; (John xvi. 6.) no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." What is considerable in all motion, is especially considerable in this. In every motion there must be a final term, and there must be a way to move in. The Father, he is the final term—the Son, he tells us, he is the way. But then there must be a third thing, there must be an acting, moving principle besides, and that must be the Holy Ghost, and can be no other. It is by that one Spirit that all who shall approach to God must have access to him, even to him the Father, considered under the notion of the Father. Jews and Gentiles have been wont (as that was the noted distinction) to divide the world. Now we find both spoken of in the same context, Ephes. ii. His business was to make them nigh who were afar off. The Gentiles were afar off, the Jews were comparatively nigh: now Christ was to make them nigh too, and both of them were to have access by one and the same Spirit to the Father: from the 13th to the 18th verse. Whoever have a mind to return, to come back to God, (from whom, in the common apostacy, all have made a defection and cut themselves off,) here is the course and method of their procedure, they must propound to themselves God the Father, (the Fountain of all life and blessedness,) to whom they must come, to whom they must be bending and directing their course, and to whom they must guide their course in the way he hath prescribed, and that is, by his own Son: "No man cometh to the Father (saith our Saviour) but by me." And they must be acted on in this way towards that final term and end, by the power of the Holy Ghost. There can be no motion without the concurrence of such a third, unto which there is a correspondency here. That is, no man can move, but he moves somewhither towards some term, nor can he move, but it must be in some way. Nor again, can he move but it must be from some motive principle, that carries him through this way to that end. And so you may easily represent to yourselves the business of your lives here in this world. My business is from day to day, to tend towards the eternal Father, by the eternal Son, and under the conduct and influence of the eternal Spirit. These are obvious and useful instructions in reference to the doctrine that hath been opened to you from the text, that do more directly concern and relate to the subject we have thus far been upon.

But there is somewhat else, in reference to the present

purpose, upon this subject, which is collateral, and will be of use to us, however, to take notice of too. Our great design upon this text, was to observe to you, that there are such a three in the Godhead; three and no more, as we have observed and insisted, of one certain order, Father, Son, and Spirit, that do subsist in the Godhead, which is but one. But the apostle doth here not only take notice what they are, that are thus in heaven, but what also they do, how they are employed, amidst the glory of the heavenly state. And he tells us they "bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." You see who the witnesses are, in the words of the text, and may see, a little lower, what is the matter of their testimony, (as I was hinting to you but now,) that is, in sum, the truth of the Christian religion or the whole constitution of the Mediator. This is the record, (as it is presently subjoined,) that God hath given us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son. He hath an infinite fulness of life to convey, to communicate, and to diffuse through a desolate world, a world lost in death and darkness. And how is it to be conveyed? in what way is it to be communicated? Why it is all treasured up in his Son, he hath constituted and appointed a Mediator, that in him it might be deposited, and that by him and through him it might be transmitted and made to diffuse itself, and flow amongst lost and perishing souls. This was the matter of this testimony. Why let us take so much of instruction from hence,

That since those three glorious Three that are in heaven, are bearing record to the truth of our religion, of Christianity, that is, that God hath a design to communicate life to lost and perishing souls, and hath treasured up that life in order to this communication in his Son: since this is their record, their testimony, I pray let us take care that we duly receive it. Be afraid of slighting that testimony, the matter whereof is of so great importance to ourselves, and the Authors whereof, are the three glorious Persons in the Godhead, so venerable and so great Ones. When they are said to bear record in heaven, or to testify in heaven, the meaning is, not that their testimony is performed in heaven terminative, but originaliter, that is, these witnesses do testify from heaven, concerning this matter which is of so great importance to the sons of men on earth. And pray see that we receive their testimony, as after it follows: If the testimony of a man (who is of any credit) ought not to be slighted; the testimony of God is greater. We have the testimony of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, concerning this one thing, that there is a design of saving sinners, and giving life to them through his Son, and that this life is only in this way to be communicated and conveyed to perishing and undone souls: what an aweshould this lay upon our souls that are perishing! And it is to us, that this salvation is offered. They are dead themselves, as the apostle's expression is, "You are dead, but your life is hid with Christ in God." This being the state of our case, tremble at the thought of slighting such a record, such a testimony, that proceeds from these three great Witnesses that do bear record in heaven. That is, the Father testifies concerning his Son, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased:" The Son, that eternal Word, testifying concerning the man to whom he united himself, replenishing that man with a divine glory, so as that glory descending from heaven, and accompanying him in his descent from heaven, shone visibly in him as the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. For he, at the same time when, after his descent, he had united himself with flesh, is said to be the Son of Man, who came down from, and who is in heaven, John iii. 13. He was therefore testifying from heaven, and was actually in heaven, when also he was actually united with this man on earth. And the Holy Ghost, he testifying from heaven, by descending on this same man, in visible glory like a dove, and lighting upon him. Thus, here was God the Father, testifying from heaven, and the eternal Word testifying, and the ever blessed Spirit testifying, from heaven, and their testimony meeting all in one point, namely, that Christ the Mediator is he by whom life is to be conveyed from the God of all grace unto undone, perishing, lost souls.

And consider in reference to this further, that as this is a testimony to us, it is our concernment, and is incumbent on us, so to comport ourselves as that it may finally prove a testimony for us, and not a testimony against us. This testimony is directly to us, that is, that this is God's appointed way for saving lost souls, and bringing of them to life and blessedness; and consequently, according as the design of this testimony is comported with or not, it will be either for us or against us. For us, if it can be recorded at last concerning us, such and such have had the Gospel preached unto them, Christ hath been offered, God hath been offering himself in Christ; and they have obeyed the Gospel, they have complied with the call, they have received the Son of God. Oh! how great a thing would it be to have a record in heaven for that! How did Job solace himself in this, "My record is in heaven." When you can appeal to the records in heaven touching transactions between God and you, and you can say, "Lord, thou didst make an offer to me of thy Son, thou didst require me to receive him as my Lord and Saviour: I have done so, I appeal to thee whether it be not recorded above; let the records of heaven be searched, see whether I be not recorded a believer, one that hath resigned up my soul to God in Christ by the power of the eternal Spirit, to be entirely and absolutely his for ever. O! how blessed a thing will it be to have such a record in heaven concerning you and for you? He that knows all things knows that such a one hath received Christ in truth, such a one hath truly believed, such a one loves the Lord Jesus in sincerity."

And how fearful, by consequence, will it be to have it recorded in heaven against you, "So long, so many days, so many years hath such a one lived under the Gospel,—so often hath a Christ been tendered to him, and been refused by him, and there he stands in the records of heaven, a refuser of the grace of God, refuser of his Christ, despiser of the great salvation, that hath been published and proclaimed, and "begun to be spoken by the Lord himself, and was confirmed by them that heard him, God bearing them witness by divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost."

And besides, that we are thus to take notice of what is doing above, how these Three employ themselves, their bearing record in heaven, consider too (and therewith I shall shut up all) where it is that this work is doing, that these Three are bearing this record in heaven. Let us consider a little, and take this instruction from it, that it very ill becomes us to alienate ourselves from heaven, and disregard the affairs and concerns of heaven. For we find that our affairs and concernments who dwell on earth are minded in heaven. In heaven there is a concern about such poor wretched creatures as we upon earth. It is very unworthy dealing if we live here upon earth, grovelling in the dust of it, and very seldom think any thought of heaven. When in heaven, by that glorious Triad above, we see our concernments while we are upon earth are not forgotten, are not disregarded. These great and glorious Ones in heaven, are taken up about our affairs. Sure it should provoke us to look upwards much and often, adoringly. It should suggest from time to time this thought to us, that the intercourse between heaven and earth is not cut off. Still (as abject creatures as we are in this our low estate) these glorious persons above are concerned about us. Certainly, it should be often considered by us, that we have mighty attractives to draw our minds and thoughts upwards, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost still bearing a record from heaven to us about things that are of the greatest and highest concernments for us to mind.

And it should, in fine, provoke us to have aspirings upwards towards the blessedness and perfection of the heavenly state. In heaven, these three bear record, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. Who can think of this, and not say, "O that I were there! O that I were there? Then will this glorious mystery of the Trinity lie open to my view." It is in that seat of the Divine glory that these Three are performing this kind office towards the poor children of men, even amidst the light and glory of the heavenly state. The time will come that we may hope to ascend, and be caught up into this region of light, and in that light to see light, so that as whatsoever is dark, and obscure, and un-

known, and unrevealed, concerning this glorious Three and One, will be done away. When once we ascend and get up thither into the regions of light and bliss, where the glory of the Eternal Being doth display itself, we shall then know as we are known: we cannot know now but in part, and see but in part, but we shall then know perfectly and fully, and as we are known; so far as the capacity of created nature can admit. O! how pleasant should our aspiring upward to these Three be, where they do thus testify and bear record. How often should we be directing our thoughts and spirits, and the longing of our souls, towards these regions of light and bliss, saying within ourselves, "When shall a period be put to the time of my converse with bats and moles in this base earth? when shall I hear the Divine voice from the throne of glory that shall say to me, Ascend and come up hither, and see the things whereof thou hast hitherto but heard by the hearing of the ear?

LECTURE XVII.*

Matt. v. 48.

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

NEXT to the doctrine of the Trinity, comes (according to proper theological order) that of the Divine Attributes or Perfections, most fitly to be considered. After the discourse of the trinity which we have showed you subsists in the Godhead, we have chosen this text, both as it serves to confirm, and as it serves to regulate, that foregoing doctrine.

First, As it serves to confirm it. For when we are so plainly told that "there are three that bear record in heaven;" and that the great Object of our religion, and whereto we are most solemnly to be devoted, is represented to us as three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; supposing such a triad as you see in the Godhead, you can suppose it under no other notion than that of a very great and high perfection belonging thereunto. And that, therefore, it must greatly intrench upon the perfection of the Godhead, and unspeakably diminish it, if there should be any attempt or offer made to diminish and detract from that sacred number. It could not but be a horrid maim to the very Object of our religion; and against any such disposition thereunto, or to do any thing, or to admit of any thought into our minds, that may have that tendency, it would fortify us greatly, to have the belief well fixed in our minds of the perfection of the Godhead. And,

Secondly, it serves to regulate that doctrine of the trinity too: that is, to direct us to understand it so as may consist with the other perfections of the Godhead; where we are sure it is impossible there can be any war, or that there should not be the highest and most perfect agreement. We must so conceive of the trinity in the Godhead, and the perfections that we are here and elsewhere taught to ascribe unto it, as that these may manifestly accord with one another. And for that purpose, we must conceive of the Divine perfections as the Scripture doth direct us, according as God himself speaks of them; allowing his word to be our measure, in making our estimate and judgment concerning them. They that take another course, and pretend to discover to us the incomprehensible nature of God, by methods and measures of theirs secluding this, and opposing it in any kind, truly we have a great deal more reason to be astonished at their confidence than we have to admire their knowledge; as if they could make a better discovery and a clearer representation of God to us than he himself. But if we do understand the Divine perfections according to those plain and express measures which he hath given us in his word, or which he enables us to collect, as we are reasonable creatures, from what he hath said in his word concerning himself and them, it would then withhold us from any such exorbitant conceptions concerning the trinity of persons in the Godhead, as shall not be easily reconcileable with the doctrine of his perfections, according as he hath represented and stated it himself.

And upon that account, shall we apply ourselves to consider so much concerning the perfections of the Godhead, as this Scripture will give us a general ground for. Indeed to speak of the several perfections and attributes that do belong to the Divine nature, distinctly and at large, would be the work of a life's time; and very little agree with what I have designed, the expounding and opening to you the principles of religion, in as short a time as I can. Therefore, I have pitched upon this text, designing to sum up all under it, which I think requisite to say concerning the excellencies and perfections of the Divine Being, which we commonly speak of under the name, his attributes. You may take the ground of discourse thus,

That all the excellencies which are requisite to make up the most absolute perfection, belong as attributes to the nature of God; or as so many attributes to be ascribed to God. This some may possibly apprehend, will be but to do what hath been done already, and to do it over again. That is, when in proving to you the existence of the Deity, we showed that we are to conceive of him under the notion of a Being absolutely perfect. It is true, it was impossible to demonstrate his existence without forelaying that notion of God. And that is suitable to what the laws of method do require, in treating of any subject whatsoever. That is, if there be occasion to put the question *an sit*, whether such a thing be or not, and to prove the existence of it, first, and before we come to that inquiry, to inquire *quid sit*, and what it is. To open the nature of such a thing, there must be first some general notion assigned and laid down of that whose existence we would prove, and about which the first inquiry was made *an sit*, whether it be, yea or nay. Otherwise, in attempting to prove that, we may as well prove any thing else, if we do not give such a notion of it as will distinguish it from another thing.

But now after we have done so, it comes properly of course then to proceed to a more narrow inspection into the nature of such a thing. And so the order of tractation did require it should be in this present case. That is, when we were to inquire concerning the existence of the Deity, first to put you in mind, what you and all must be supposed to apprehend concerning the thing we inquired about, that is, a Being of absolute perfection in the general; and we can have no other notion of God but as a being absolutely perfect. That being done, and it having been evinced to you that there is such a Fountain-Being from whence whatsoever perfections we do behold, and come under our notice among the creatures, must have descended and been derived, inasmuch as whatsover we behold, and take notice of, that comes under any notion of perfection with us at all, is not nothing, and therefore could not come from nothing, and therefore must be first in a fountain from whence it came. When by this means, I say, we have plainly evinced, that there is one Being which hath all perfection originally in itself; and thereupon shown that Being to be a fit object for religion, and to be worshipped by us, and to whom duties and exercises of religion ought to be performed, and that this can be done acceptably no way but agreeable to his own will; thereupon we were put upon an inquiry, how that will of his might be understood and known; and having found that it was discovered (with that design and to that purpose that he might be duly and acceptably worshipped) in that word that bears his name, thence we come, regularly and of course, to speak of things particularly and more expressly concerning him, (whereof we have had some general notions before,) which are contained in this Book, and which this word will help us to a more distinct knowledge of. And therefore now, in speaking to the proposition laid down, we are to consider the subject of it, "your heavenly Father;" and then we are to consider the thing affirmed concerning this subject, He "is perfect."

I. For the former, the subject of this affirmation, we must consider in what sense (as there will be occasion to take notice of by and by) he can be spoken of under the name of a subject. Scholars know how to distinguish be-

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tween a subject of predication, and a subject of inhæsion. He can be no subject of inhæsion, as you will see presently. But a subject concerning which this or that may be affirmed or spoken, that is the only thing which we can truly and properly mean when we speak of God under that name or term. But whereas he is here mentioned as our "Father which is in heaven," (as our Saviour directs he should be prayed unto, in that comprehensive system of petitions that he himself was pleased to give his disciples, "Our Father which art in heaven,") we must distinguish between Christ's calling him Father himself and his teaching us to call him so, or his speaking of him as our Father. When Christ himself calls him "Our Father," he calls him so as he was; and so he doth speak himself, when he speaks of his having come from, his having descended from, the Father. He could mean by the term "Father," nothing else but the first person in the Trinity. But when he speaks of him as our Father, and directs us to speak of him, or to speak to him, we do not need so to limit that term "Father," in reference to us, for we may fitly enough consider the whole God in the paternal relation to ourselves. Concerning the Father there is no doubt, for so our Saviour hath taught us to conceive and speak, "I go to my Father and your Father, my God and your God," John xx. 17. And even the Son is spoken of as our "everlasting Father," Isaiah ix. 6. And all the children of God are said to be born of his Spirit, and to be begotten thereby, John iii. 1. And suppose we should look upon Father, here, strictly as a personal name or title, yet so we must consider the Divine nature as subsisting *fontaliter*, or as in a *fountain*, in that person: and it is that person as having that nature eminently and originally and firstly in him; even that same nature that is common to each of the persons. And so it is not in the person as the person, but as having the Divine nature in it, which is the subject here spoken of. "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The Godhead, or the nature of God, subsisting as in the Fountain, in the Father; and that same nature which is also common with him to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. But then,

II. For that which is affirmed or spoken of this subject, He "is perfect." How are we at a loss when we come to speak of this divine perfection! "I have seen an end" (saith the Psalmist) "of all perfection, but thy commandments are, or thy commandment is, exceedingly broad." Even so much of divine perfection as is expressed that one way, (in the divine word) is of so exceeding vast a latitude, as to represent itself as the matter of the highest wonder to a very enlarged and comprehensive mind, that had exceeded the bounds of all other perfection, and already gone beyond them all. I have seen an end of all perfection, but how vast a perfection beyond all that do I perceive in thy divine word, wherein there are yet but some sunbeams, some glimmerings of the perfection of the Divine nature! Indeed when we go about to speak of such a subject as this, or to think of it, we may even fear to meet with such a rebuke as that, Job xxxviii. 2. "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" Can we think by searching to find out God? Can we find out the Almighty unto perfection? Job xi. 7. Somewhat the case requires should be said, of what we can say and conceive but little of. Something the exigency of our case doth require; that we labour, all of us, to be informed concerning one with whom we have so much to do, and in whose hands all our great concerns do lie.

For the word that is used here, "*perfect*," and the words in the learned languages that we are referred to by these penmen, they do (as all words must do) fall most inconceivably short of the thing. Words cannot but be poor, and labour under a penury, when they are expressive of any thing of God. Alas! they can go but a little way in it.

The words that we have here to do with more immediately, do carry in them a kind of diminishing and lessening intimation of coming to a state, or having come to a state, that is higher and more excellent, from a state that was meaner and lower; in which the subject spoken of is (as it were) supposed to have been before, according to the general and indefinite use of such words. As the Greek word τελειος that is here used, refers to a word that signifies *an end*, and so carries an intimation with it, as one had but then attained an end which he was aiming at, and tending towards before, which implies such a diminution as can by no means be admitted concerning God. As when any one doth then suppose himself to have arrived at an eternal sort of perfection, when he hath compassed an end that he was about. "I work this day, and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfect;" finish a work I was engaged in, which is but an external sort of perfection. The word (for want of being more expressive) is borrowed and employed here, in a case of very transcendent height above that. And so for the Latin word *perfectio*, or *perfectus*, it carries an intimation with it as if the thing spoken of were, now at length, thoroughly made that which before it was not. Such expressions do (through the natural poverty of speech and language) lessen and diminish greatly the thing that should be represented and set forth by them.

But to consider the thing itself, (as we may be capable to open to you somewhat of the divine perfections,) there are two things to be done in reference hereto. We shall note to you some things more generally that do concern the Divine perfections indefinitely considered: and then shall (though briefly) come to consider some of the particular perfections themselves, which we are more specially concerned to take notice of, that are comprehended under those generals.

1. There are some things more generally to be laid down concerning the Divine perfections, or excellencies, or attributes; you may call them which of these you will, fitly enough. And,

(1.) There is this to be considered concerning them, that there are of these divine excellencies or perfections, which we are taught to attribute to God, some that are altogether incommunicable ones. There are some that are incommunicable; that is, that have not so much as a name common to him, and to us, by which they are to be signified and spoken of. As there is his self-subsistence, his all-sufficiency, his eternity, and his immensity. These are attributes or perfections of the Divine nature, that are not so much as common in name to him and to us; so appropriate to him, that there is nothing known by the same name that can be said of us. And there are some of his attributes and perfections that are communicable, that is, which under one and the same name, may be spoken of him and of us, of him and of the creature. As his wisdom; there is also such a thing among men: and his power; they have some power: and his goodness; they have some goodness: and so his justice, his holiness, and his truth: these are divine perfections that are spoken of under one and the same name, concerning him and concerning some of his creatures. That is one thing that you have in general to note; as concerning the incommunicable attributes of God, they have not so much as the same name with him and with us; for there is nothing in us, to which such names do agree: all-sufficiency, immensity, eternity, omnipotency, self-existence, and the like. But the other (as was said) are signified by words applicable to somewhat in us, as to be wise, to be good, to be just, to be powerful, and the like. And,

(2.) In the next place, you must note, that for those divine attributes and perfections which are communicable, it is only the name that is common to that thing in him, and that thing in us, which is expressed thereby. It is true that there is the same name but not the same nature. There is a likeness, a similitude, but not an identity, or a sameness. Take heed of apprehending or imagining any such thing between the divine wisdom, or the divine power, or the divine goodness, that are uncreated, and that which is created; and so of his holiness, his justice, and the like. We are not to think there is a sameness of nature, though there be the same names used in such perfections as these, as they are found to be in God, and as they are found to be in us, or in the creature: for it is impossible that the nature which is infinite and the natures which are finite can be the same. An infinite nature and a finite nature must needs differ infinitely, and therefore can by no means be the same nature. Wherefore, all that is said in this case, in reference to us, when God is pleased to derive and communicate from himself unto those whom

he regenerates, that which is called the divine nature; it is only said of it,—that it is his image, and his likeness, that is conveyed or communicated: it is only somewhat like God, or the image of God, that is impressed upon and wrought into the soul. We must take heed of thinking that it is the same nature, as they have thought and blasphemously spoken, who have talked of being godded in God; as if the very nature of God was, under such a name as this, transmitted into the creature. And again,

(3.) We must understand these perfections or excellencies of the Divine nature, to be his very nature itself, and not to be any accidental thing superadded thereunto. We must not conceive that such divine perfections as wisdom, and power, and goodness, and the like, are additions to the nature of God; but they are his very nature itself. There can be no such thing as an accidental supervention to the Divine nature; but every thing that is in God must be conceived to be God. He is essential wisdom, and goodness, and truth, and is not these things by accident, as men may be, so as to have those things separable from their nature; no, nor can his nature, indeed, be so much as conceived without them. We are not to look upon them as accidents, either as separable or inseparable from his nature, but as being essentially included in it. And this is most evident, upon the account we have showed you; and the thing speaks itself in demonstrating to you the existence of the Godhead, that that Being whose existence we were to demonstrate, is self-existent, existing always by and from itself, without depending, without being beholden to any thing from whence it was. Now what is so self-existent is existent necessarily; that is, it owes its own existence to that peculiar excellency of its own nature, to which it is repugnant and impossible not to exist. Now, whatsoever doth exist necessarily, so that its non-existence should be altogether impossible, (which is the peculiar manner of the Divine existence,) that must needs be unalterable. What is necessary, must be eternally or invariably necessary, and without any mutation: and nothing can be superadded to another but must infer a mutation: any addition would make an alteration. Therefore, none of these perfections are additions to God; for then they would make a change; but that which is necessarily what it is, never admits of any change, neither by addition nor subtraction any ways.

(4.) You must take this general note further, that it is hence consequential, that the excellencies and perfections of the Divine nature are in him, in perfect simplicity. That is, if none of them do differ from the Divine nature, then it is impossible they should differ from one another; they cannot really differ one from another in themselves. It is true, indeed, that by our imperfect way of conceiving things, through the narrowness and incomprehensiveness of our minds, which cannot take in all things at once, we are fain to admit distinct notions which are wont to be called inadequate notions concerning the Deity. We can conceive of such and such excellencies but by parts, but by little and little. It is but a small portion we can take up of him in the whole, and but very little after all. And therefore, all we are fain (looking upon the glorious and ever-blessed Deity) to conceive, is an unknown wisdom in him, and an unknown goodness, and an unknown holiness, and the like. Not as if these things did more really differ in him than one and the same face (as one aptly expresseth it) doth really differ in itself because a great many glasses are placed against it, that do themselves differ from one another, and are variously figured and cut, do seem to represent divers faces. There is, I say, no more of real difference in these perfections from one another, as they are in God, than there would be in that case of so many real things that are reflected by so many glasses, where the difference of the reflected image doth proceed from the glasses, and not from the original, which is one and the same to them all. And that we may preserve the notion entire of the Divine simplicity, it is easy to be demonstrated to them that shall consider—that if there be not a most perfect simplicity in the Divine nature, so as that the several excellencies belonging thereto be really in him, one and the same thing, then these excellencies could not meet there but by composition; they would make a composition in the Divine nature if they were there with real difference. But such a composition in the Divine nature is altogether impossible, upon these two accounts. First, If there were such a composition there must be supposed a causation: if the Divine nature were compounded, it would be inferred it were caused; and so God were not the first Cause of the first being: and, Secondly, (though one would think that nothing should need to be added after that, it being plain, nothing can be prior to God.) If there were a composition there would also be a limitation, and so these perfections of the Divine Being would not be infinite, and consequently they must be perfections altogether disagreeable, no way agreeing to the Divine nature. It cannot but be that he must be infinitely wise, infinitely good, infinitely powerful, and the like. But he should not be so, if these things did really differ in him from one another; for whatsoever doth really differ from one another, doth limit that other from which it differs. If there be an infiniteness in goodness, or an infiniteness in power, or an infiniteness in knowledge, we cannot suppose many infinites; there cannot be more infinites than one; and therefore it is but one and the same thing that is all these. Whatsoever you do design to the one, you must detract from the other. And if you should suppose two infinites, you do thereby suppose neither to be infinite, but both to be finite. That therefore you must fixedly retain, as a general rule, that the several excellencies and perfections of the Divine nature, are in him in most perfect simplicity, and so do not differ in him, as one thing differs from another. Only the Divine nature and being itself, as it hath all excellency and perfection in it, doth when it comes to cast an aspect upon us and upon our minds, appear as various, though in itself it is most simply one. And again,

(5.) You must further note this, that the negative attributes of the Divine Being do always imply somewhat positive. There are some things ascribed to God in negative terms, which must be understood to have a positive sense and meaning under those terms. As when it is said of God, he is immortal, which is a negative term, it implies the most infinite and undecaying fulness of life. And so when it is said of God, that he is invisible, though that be a negative term, such a being as cannot be seen, the meaning is, that his being is of that high and glorious excellency as not to be liable and subject to so mean a thing as the sight of our eye; it is too fine, too bright and glorious, for so mean and low a faculty to reach unto. And,

(6.) You must note this, that any particular excellency that men attribute or ascribe to God, it must always be understood to be ascribed to him in the highest pitch of perfection, and not with that diminution wherewith we behold the shadow of such things to be accompanied in the creature. And therefore, we must take heed of debasing the excellencies of the Divine nature, by confining, concerning them, to that which only gives some faint representation of them among us. We speak of several things that are real excellencies among the creatures; as quickness of sense, to be able presently to feel whatsoever is noxious and hurtful: this sense of pain is in the creature a perfection; but we are not to conceive any such thing in God; but we are to conceive that which is transcendent in him, that comprehends in itself the power of giving such and such perfections to the creature; so as that those things are eminently, constantly, only in him which, speaking of this and that particular perfection, is in a distinct, formal notion in the creature. We must not say, that this or that we behold in the creature is in him, but some transcendent excellency that doth virtually and eminently comprehend it; as when the Psalmist tells us, "He that planted the eye, doth he not see? and he that formed the ear, doth not he hear? and he that teacheth man knowledge, doth not he know?" we are not to think that there is such seeing, or such hearing with God, or any kind of sensation as is with us; but there is that transcendent excellency in him, that doth eminently contain all these in a far more glorious manner than we can conceive. These things it is fit we should note generally, concerning the Divine attributes, or perfections, as a ground for somewhat more distinctly, though very briefly, concerning these attributes or perfections of God, particularly considered.

But before we pass from this discourse, of what is of

more general import concerning them, give me leave to suggest somewhat to you that may be of present use, and that may influence practice, and tend to better the hearts and spirits of us, who are now called to hear about such a subject; "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect." So our Lord, who was a teacher come forth from God, on one of his great errands, doth direct us to conceive concerning him. I pray let our thoughts stay here a little, and meditate, and pause awhile; both on this Subject here spoken of, and that which is affirmed concerning this Subject.

[1.] The Subject spoken of, "Your Father which is in heaven." This NAME, "your Father," should carry a very attractive sound with it to every ear, and to every heart among us. It is very unfit that we should, any of us, sleep and slumber under the mention of this name, this title given to God, "your Father." Let us bethink ourselves: Can we call God Father? It is a thing to be thought on—with much caution; and then, if that hath produced any effect, and reached any good issue with us it ought to be thought on—with high consolation.

First, With great caution. "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect:" when we find that some are addressed by our blessed Lord, with the supposed capacity of bespeaking God as their Father, would it not strike cold to any man's heart, that should have cause to think, "Am not I excluded? Am not I one of them that may not dare to take such a name into my mouth and apply it to him, to call him my Father? Doth not my own heart smite me, that I assume so much to myself as to say, God is my Father?" There were those that briskly and boldly pretended to it in our Lord's time. "We are not born of fornication, we have all one Father, even God," say some of these petulant hearers, John viii. 44. It ought to be seriously considered, "What godlike thing have I in me to bespeak me his child, or that may give me the confidence to call him my Father? What childlike dispositions do I find in me towards him? Is there that trust that becomes a child, that love, that dutifulness, that study to please him?" Let us consider whether we can call him Father, and our hearts not smite us, and tell us inwardly, this is a title that belongs not to thee to give. But if we can find it doth, it is a thing to be considered as with great caution.

Secondly, With high consolation afterwards. Can I indeed say, that he is my Father? What then can I have to complain of? what have I to fear? what have I to desire? what have I to crave beyond what this contains, and carries in it? And pray take heed of diminishing so great a thing to yourselves. Have you, upon a strict inquiry, reason to look upon yourselves as one of that regenerate seed which is peculiar and appropriate to God? carries his signature, his stamp, his image? It is then a very unworthy thing to your Father, to let your spirits sink. It should greaten your minds, it should make you to say within yourself, "Then am I to live far above the world. It is base for the children of such a Father to live mean, and lie low, and to grovel in the dust; and to let his own heart despond and sink within him, upon the less grateful aspect and appearances of things from this world. For alas! what is this world to me, if God be my Father?" And, "Your Father, which is in heaven is perfect." You must consider how this our Father is in heaven; not as confined there, not as if heaven did confine him, whom the "heaven of heavens cannot contain." And we should thereupon consider, that truly if heaven do not confine him, this earth ought not to confine me. If he be my Father, there should be no exclusive limits between him and me. If he be my Father so in heaven, as that though he hath his throne, the theatre of his glory, his court, and his retinue there above, yet he doth also diffuse a vital and essential presence throughout the creation, so as that this earth itself is not excluded, "Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there; if I traverse the seas, wherever I come, there thou art," Psal. cxxxix. 7. I say, if heaven doth not contain him, but that he reacheth this earth too, I should thereupon think this earth should not so confine me, But I will reach him, and apply myself to him, and converse and lead my life with him. And since heaven is represented as the seat of his most glorious residence, we should always think ourselves to have concerns lying there above. I am not to be limited then to this base low earth, if I have a Father in heaven. It is intolerable hereupon, that we should live here upon earth, if we had renounced and quitted all claim to heaven, never looking up thither. What! Do we forget that our Father is there? There he dwells in glory, there he beholds the dwellers upon earth, and looks into the very inmost motions of our thoughts, and workings of our spirits, from day to day, and from moment to moment; if he see a mind carried after vanity all the day long, will he not say, "What! is such a one one of the offspring of heaven, but hath no business there, who never minds any thing but this base earth?" Shall he have cause to observe this concerning us, and thus to judge and censure us from day to day? "These are the children of the earth, sons of the earth, they have nothing to do in heaven, they never look up thither." Such words standing here in the Bible, "Your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" methinks they should make strange impressions upon our spirits when we come to look on them and seriously consider them.

[2.] And then what is affirmed concerning this Subject, (though I must not spend time upon that now,) he is perfect, every way perfect. We may yet, by the way, see what ground of reproof there is here for us, that we so little adore, and so little imitate this perfection. That God is not greater in our eyes when we are beholding him, and considering, that whatsoever our minds can conceive of excellency, we find it in him in the highest perfection, and yet we adore him not, we take no notice of that glorious One, how sad is the case when even this itself is a continual increase of guilt upon us, that we know so much of God, that a poor creature should have cause to say, "I should have been far more innocent if I had known less, and been less capable of knowing God. I might have been an innocent creature, in comparison, if I had not known so much." To know him to be so perfectly holy and not imitate him, to know him to be so good and not to trust him, to love him, to depend upon him, and to seek union with him; to know him to be so perfect, and content myself with my own imperfection, when according to this rule of our Lord we should be "perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Preached May 15th, 1691.

LECTURE XVIII.*

2. But I come now to give, in the second place, some more distinct account of some, at least, of the more eminent of the attributes of God. And I shall begin with that which must be understood as comprehensive of all the rest, and that is, of the DIVINE ALL-SUFFICIENCY. This is the summary perfection of God; his all-sufficiency. And as the verse where the text lies, saith, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect," so elsewhere, is the Divine all-sufficiency represented to us as the ground and pattern of that perfection which is required in us, Gen. xvii. 1. "I am God all-sufficient: walk before me and be thou perfect." The word there used is, in some translations rendered all-mighty, in others, all-sufficient, *El-Shaddai*. They indeed seem to me to give the more congruous account of the etymology of that word that do read it all-sufficient, deriving it not from *Shadda*, that signifies to destroy, to lay waste, which yet is comprehended no doubt (that is the power of doing so) in the notion of almightiness, but rather deriving it from a word that signifies sufficiency with the pronominal particle he: He that is sufficient, God that is sufficient, *El-Shaddai* or that is self-sufficient. And he is so self-sufficient, either understanding it to be a sufficiency arising from himself or a sufficiency serving for himself. Either way he is self-sufficient; by a sufficiency that speaks him to be all to himself, a sufficiency arising and springing up within

himself, or a sufficiency to himself, as having enough in himself to enjoy without being beholden, without depending upon any thing without himself. And such all-sufficiency spoken of God must needs mean, He that is of himself, sufficient for himself, must needs be sufficient for all the creation besides. If of himself there be a sufficiency in him for all his own perfections, there must be a sufficiency for all that communication that the creature can any way stand in need of. This is that attribute, that comprehensive one, that we shall in the first place say somewhat to.

And I shall say the more of this, because it is so vastly comprehensive as hath been said, and as the matter is plain in itself that it is. It is the same thing that is meant by that fulness that we find again and again, in Scripture, attributed to God, that πληρωμα του Θεου, "That you may be filled with all the fulness of God," Eph. iii. 19. Not that there needs any great fulness to fill us. A very little thing will do it; and it signifies nothing to the vastness of the plentitude of the ocean, that a nut-shell or a minute vessel may be filled; but it is the greatness of the expression that I here note, "the fulness of God;" how vast, how immense, how profound an abyss must that be! In Eph. i. 23. we read of the "fulness of him that filleth all in all;" that filling fulness: it is another fulness that is meant there in that form of expression where, most condescendingly, the church of Christ in this world is spoken of as his fulness. But whose fulness is it? The "fulness of him that filleth all in all." Even he, notwithstanding his vast and boundless self-fulness, doth yet vouchsafe to be filled in respect of that union that he is pleased to take a people out of this world into with his own blessed self. We read (Col. ii. 9.) of "all the fulness of the Godhead" dwelling in flesh, as it were, embodied in flesh, which we must understand still is the same fulness, when it is deposited, when it is, as it were, so disposed for communication. It is not another fulness from the original Divine fulness, but the same under a new relation wherewith it now comes to be clothed. As when also, in that Col. i. 19. it is said, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," fulness and all fulness, that it should dwell in him. It did dwell indeed in him originally and naturally in the person of the Son, but now it dwells in the Mediator, that being so lodged and settled, (as it were,) it now lies ready for communication to indigent creatures, necessitous creatures, empty creatures; such as we are, empty of every thing that is good, and of the desert of every thing that is so; and only designed and fitted by natural designation as so many "vessels of wrath" to be filled with wrath. Now all the fulness of God comes to be posited and clothed with that relation, to put on that aspect, with reference to us, that according to our need, measure, and capacity it is all for us. "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," with such a design that he might fill the sacrifice first, that was offered up, as you find the context speaks,—(Col. i. 19, 21.) "that he might make peace by the blood of his cross, and reconcile all things to himself:" and then, that he might fill the souls which that sacrifice had been accepted for, in the virtue of it, opening its own way to flow in to us. And another expression you have of this same perfection, (the all-sufficiency and plenitude of the Godhead,) to wit, that of his being "All in all." A most God-like phrase, wherein God doth in his own word speak so of himself, speaks like himself, at the rate of a God, with divine greatness and majestic sense. It is used with reference to the divine operations, 1 Cor. xii. 5. "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." But it is also spoken of the Divine Being with reference to his existence; He is All in all; or as in the mentioned place, (Ephes. i. 23.) "filleth all in all." In the final state, when all the great designs of God are compassed and brought about, then is he more entirely, fully, and immediately to be All in all. He will be more conspicuously so then: he is now so indeed, as it hath not escaped the notice of heathens themselves, who tell us, that whatsoever we see is Jupiter, and whatsoever we are moved by is Jupiter: that one universal mind doth work through all the universe, and mingles itself with the vast body of the creation. So is Christ, in whom is all the fulness of God, (as was told before,) he is said to be "All in all." Here is an All in an all, a comprehending All and comprehended all; that is, an uncreated All, and a created: the latter contained in the former, the former containing the latter, in-wrapping it, infolding it, diffusing itself any where throughout it, and in all, and over all, and through all. And indeed, that created all is a little, most contemptible little all, in comparison of the all-comprehending, uncreated fulness, that involves the other in as great a disproportion as you may suppose an atom, a little mote or particle of dust comprehended in the whole earth, or a minute drop in the vast ocean, that swallows it up and runs through it and through it; so is the all of this creation (as great as it may appear to our little narrow minds and thoughts) swallowed up in the uncreated All, so as that in comparison of that, it is nothing. All nations come under this notion, but "as the drop of a bucket, and the small dust of the balance, and lighter than nothing," as confessing it impossible to speak diminishingly enough of the littleness of the creature, in comparison of the Divine All, "less than nothing." Indeed, simple nothing cannot vie with all fulness, with the immense plenitude of substantial beings. But that that seems to be newly stept forth out of nothing, that, it may be, will pretend to vie, and therefore that is so much the more despicable, even more despicable than mere nothing: mere nothing hath no competition with it to that vast plenitude and fulness of Being; but there may seem somewhat of competition in that which is just stept forth out of nothing: and therefore, that is despised as less than nothing; for mere nothing is not so despicable as that which is just risen out of nothing when it is brought into any kind of compare with the infinite, immense All.

But to speak yet a little more particularly and distinctly concerning this most perfect all-sufficiency and fulness of God, (as it can be possible to us to speak and hear of so great a thing,) I shall speak somewhat to the nature of it, what sort of fulness or plenitude this all-sufficient, perfect fulness is. And then—speak somewhat of the purposes which it answers and is most to apt to answer.

1. Somewhat of the nature of it. And for that, our best way of opening and unfolding it will be to consider these two things, namely, what it contains, and—after what peculiar it doth contain what it must be understood to carry in it: that is, the contents and the properties of this fulness; what it contains, and with what peculiar and distinguishing characters it doth contain it.

(1.) For the contents of this most absolute and perfect fulness of God, all-sufficient fulness; it contains all that we can think, and indeed all that we cannot think. It contains all being, and all life, all motive and active power, all knowledge and all wisdom, and all goodness; every thing that is excellent, valuable, and desirable in all the kinds, and in all the degrees of perfection conceivable, in reference thereunto. I shall not speak more distinctly now, in reference to that head, because under other heads that we are afterwards to speak a little (though but a little) particularly to, there will be more occasion to discourse of these severally. But we come,

(2.) To consider of the characters of this fulness, the properties of it, whereunto it must be understood to contain what it doth contain. And so,

[1.] It is a self-original fulness, a fulness that ariseth from itself. It is the highest fountain itself, and not fed from any higher, which is the signification of that title, or that name by which God was pleased to make himself known to Moses, "I Am," and a little more largely "I Am that I am." A name so expressive of this plenitude and fulness of being and all-perfection of God; so aptly and naturally expressive thereof, that it hath obtained naturally easily in the pagan world, as that inscription testifies in the temple, which I formerly named, "I am that which I was, and that which is, and that which shall be, and let any man at his peril disclose my veil." And we are told by some of the ancients in the Christian church, that the notions which Plato doth so abound with, he learnt in Egypt, and came by them, it is most probable, and as they think, as having been communicated from some of the Israelites to some of the Egyptian priests with whom he afterwards conversed, that is, with those of them to whom those traditions came some centuries of years afterwards. And that this fulness is self-original, or self-originate, they must always appre-

hend, who do apprehend that any such thing as Deity could only be of itself, from itself. A Being of that sort and kind, as unto which not to be, was always repugnant; and so that it owes whatsoever it is, or whatsoever it hath in itself, to that peculiar excellency of its own nature, which was always necessary to it, to be what it is; can receive nothing *aliunde*, from without, and can lose nothing, or suffer no detraction of what it is, or hath already belonging to it. This is "I am," the stable and permanent Being that is by itself what it is. That, then, is the character under which we are to conceive of this divine fulness, of this perfect all-sufficiency; that it is self-originate: he being the perpetual, everlasting Spring and Fountain of it to himself. "With thee is the fountain of life," Psal. xxxvi. 9. There, being is in its first Fountain, and life is in its first Fountain. To that, all things else that be and live, and that have any thing of motive and active power, they participate all from hence; "In him we live and move and have our being," as the apostle expresseth it, Acts xvii. 28. For which he there quotes a pagan poet; and likewise for that in the adjoining words, "we are all his offspring."

[2.] We are to conceive concerning this Divine fulness, that it is immense as well as self-originate. He is infinite, unbounded: and that it must needs be for the same reason, because it is self-originate: for causation speaks limitation, whatsoever causeth another, limits it; and that which is uncaused must be unlimited, *omnis limitatis est causota*; that which doth impart and communicate to another doth measure and bound its own communication; and from whence any thing hath that which it doth derive from another, thence it hath the bounds and limits of that which is derived. The limits of the derivation proceed from the original. Therefore it is plain whatever is uncaused must be unlimited, and so this fulness of God being self-originate without any superior cause, must needs be immense and infinite without bounds and limits. There is nothing to bound and limit, but he existing necessarily, when all things else do exist contingently, and by dependance upon his will and pleasure, it could not be but that he must engross all being, all life, and all perfection in himself, because there was nothing else existing besides or before that which did exist necessarily, that is himself, by which what was in him could not be any way limited. Therefore, so we are to conceive of the Divine fulness—that it is immense. It is then a perfection here spoken of God, which is not particular of this or that special kind, but which is most properly absolute and universal, to wit, of all kinds taken together, with all the several degrees that can come within the compass of each several kind. So metaphysicians are wont to distinguish of perfection, into that which is simple or absolute, and that which is *sui generis* of its own particular kind, that which hath all that belongs to that kind in it, may be said to be perfect in its own kind. That which hath the essence and properties of gold may be said to be perfect gold, and especially if it be pure from dross, and doth exclude every thing that is alien from it, if it be pure. That is the notion of pure· *purum est quod est plenum sui, that is pure that is full of itself*, and hath no admixture of any thing alien from it. So may a thing be said to be perfect in its own particular kind, when it is full of itself, and when it is free from admixture of any thing else. But the Divine nature (as is evident) is infinite and immense; is not perfect of this or that particular kind, but of all kinds whatsoever; that is, of all that is excellent and valuable; yea, every thing of all being, being included and comprehended in it. Not formally, for that would make God and the creature all one, but eminently and transcendently, that is, it being in the Divine power to determine whether any thing besides should be extant, or not extant. And so he is the Root of being to every thing that is, and the Spring of life to every thing that lives, and the Fountain of all excellency to every thing that can partake of it. And therefore, his perfections or fulness is not of this or that particular kind; if it were so, it were a limited fulness, a bounded fulness; but it is a fulness that compreaends all kinds together eminently and transcendently in itself. As the root of the tree doth comprehend all the branches, that is, virtually, it comprehends that virtue in it, and transmits that which extends to all the branches, and as the very seed did virtually contain the whole tree once in itself; so all the creation was contained in God, before it, by his appointment and command, stood forth into actual being. And,

[3.] It is hereupon an immutable fulness. This Divine fulness admits of no alteration, either by augmentation or diminution. It can neither be made more nor less than it is; either would make a change, and no change can have place in that Being which is necessary. The Divine Being, and all that plenitude and fulness that belongs to it, being self-original, it must be necessary: it could spring from no other, therefore it must be of itself what it is; and no other imaginable reason can be assigned why such a Being doth exist, but only that peculiar excellency of its own nature, to which it was repugnant not to exist. Hereupon therefore, this is the only necessary Being, and that which is necessarily what it is, can never be other than what it is, can never vary, and therefore that "Father of lights (as the blessed God is mentioned under that names James i. 17.) is without variableness or shadow of turning." Without so much as the umbrage of a change, there is not the shadow of variation with him. But before the creation was, he was the same, and through all the successions of time when that creation is in being, he is still the same; and if the creation should drop back again into nothing, he were the same. Unto that which is necessarily what it was first, nothing can supervene, because it hath its whole being necessarily, so that there can be no addition to it; and then there can be no detraction from it, no diminution, because it hath what it hath necessarily; it is essential to be what it is. And therefore,

[4.] This plenitude of God must be everlasting, this all-sufficiency, this perfection, must be eternal. For if there can be no variation in any, the least degree, much less is it conceivable there should be a cessation of the whole Being. A variation in any, the least degree, is altogether impossible to that which is necessarily what it is; and thereupon the eternal permanency of it in the same state must needs be consequent. Hence those amazing expressions about the Divine Being, "from everlasting to everlasting thou art God," Psalm xc. 2. Set yourselves to contemplate God; you must needs yield yourselves to be lost and swallowed up in your minds upon the contemplations of that which is "from everlasting to everlasting." And so that most emphatical expression, of his inhabiting eternity; "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, I dwell in the high and holy place," Isaiah lvii. 15. But before that, he was his own place, and indeed all the creation is rather vested in him, than he in any thing. Before time was, or any creature was, he had nothing to inhabit but his own eternity, that is, his own eternal self; for eternity and the eternal One are the same thing.

Thus you have some account of the nature of the all-sufficient, perfect fulness of God, both from the contents and properties or perfections thereof; what it contains, to wit, all being, all life, all motive power, all wisdom, all knowledge, and whatsoever excellency besides you can conceive, or all that is conceivable, and indeed, all that is unconceivable by any created mind. And then, under what characters, as it is a self-originate fulness, an immense fulness, an unalterable fulness, incapable of any augmentation or diminution, and as it is an everlasting fulness.

2. The next thing is to show you what purposes this perfect, all-sufficient fulness of God may answer. And indeed, it answers all that is any way desirable should be answered, or that it were to be wished should be answered. For,

(1.) It answers the corresponding purpose of its own felicity, to be an everlasting felicity to himself, where there is the only correspondency, that it is any way possible it should otherwise be; should any way be found between the fruitive faculty and the object. Here is an immense and boundless object for an immense fruitive faculty: nothing could satisfy God but God: there is a capacity not otherwise to be filled up. It was to be answered by nothing but himself, and therefore we must not suppose that there are any additions any way to that felicity from any thing without himself. He only enjoys himself and takes pleasure in his own designs. When he hath designs upon such

poor creatures as we, he only pleaseth himself in himself, in his bountifulness, the benignity and the kindness of his own design. When he did (he must be supposed to have done) even in the days and ages of eternity always retain with himself a design, "I will raise up such and such creatures;" such in particular as any of us; "I will in their proper time and season raise them up out of nothing, on purpose to take them into a communion and participation with me in my own felicity, my own blessedness." What is it he was pleased with? was it that he loved us or delighted in us? He was self-pleased with the kindness and benignity of his own design: not that any thing in us could draw his eye, his love, or his delight, but his kindness and goodness therein was its own reason. He showeth mercy because he will show mercy. It was not that one was better than another, but from that goodness of his that is invariable, and can never be better than himself, the complacency that it was always apt to take in its own designments. From hence it is, that he hath any such thing as delectation in a creature, only as he hath freely placed a design and made it terminate upon such a one, and so is pleased in that kindness and goodness which he hath in himself, and not in any delectableness that was previously in the object. For as to that, there was no more in one than another, and if it were for that reason as such, then it must have followed that all would have a like participation in the felicity of the Divine Being. But this is the eminent great purpose that the Divine all-sufficient fulness serves for even for his own eternal and invariable felicity. Whence he hath so frequently the title and name of "the ever-blessed God;" his own blessedness being his very essence, or essential to himself; so that he was never to be known under another name, or conceived of under another notion, than as the blessed One, the Fountain of all blessedness; "The glorious Gospel of the blessed God," saith the apostle, 1 Tim. i. 11. And "the blessed and only Potentate," 1 Tim. vi. 15. And "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore," 2 Cor. xi. 31. And so of Christ as he is God, he is said to be "over all, God blessed for ever," Rom. ix. 5. "Blessed for ever," that is, only in himself as the only correspondent and adequate object of his own fruition. And,

(2.) His most perfect divine fulness, appears to have been sufficient for the creation of this world: and (which is but doing the same thing continually) preserving it ever since it was created, even until now; not only bringing it into being a rude mass of being; but settling and conserving of order in it, and that variety and distinction of creatures, which we behold, and which indeed we must suppose to be the only effect of the all-sufficient perfection of a God. The very being of such a world speaks his power; but the order that is in it, and the variety of creatures wherewith it is replenished, and the continual preservation of those distinct kinds and species through so many successive ages; so that what this or that plant is, or at least was, so many thousand years ago, it continues to be the same, a thing of the same kind, in the same rank or class of being still as it was. All this is by the all-sufficient, perfect fulness of a Deity that could answer such a purpose as this, to make such a mass of created beings exist and arise out of nothing; and that so much of order and distinction of kinds should obtain and be preserved even in this natural world, through so many successive ages unto this day. It was this that the perfect all-sufficiency of God did, and doth continually serve for. And,

(3.) For the government of the intelligent world; so that wheresoever he hath intelligent creatures, he can, by bare touches upon the mind, steer them and act them this way and that at his own pleasure; make great numbers of people at once to agree in one and the same design, all of them; as God did touch their minds in making Saul king. And that is one instance that shows what is done throughout all the world, and all other ages, where all minds lie under the agency and influence of one supreme, universal Mind. And otherwise, how were it possible that all should conspire and agree to serve the same purpose and to do the same thing. And again,

(4.) This perfect, all-sufficient fulness serves for the defeating of the designs of his enemies; so that he can with the greatest facility and ease, consume adversaries with a fire not blown, and make them "perish like their own dung;" and blow upon them with the breath of his nostrils, and make every thing of opposition vanish when he will. And therenpon, as being perfectly Master of his own designs, and having every thing in his own power, with the times and seasons and ways of doing them, he lets enemies run on, foreseeing still at a distance their day that is coming. He knows their day is coming, and in the mean time sits in heaven and laughs at them, "the Most High hath them in derision;" them who say, "Come, let us break their bands asunder, and let us cast away their cords from us:" as it is in the 2nd Psalm.

(5.) It answers the purpose of sustaining and preserving his own, the people that he hath collected and chosen out of this world to be peculiar to himself, the whole community of them, and every particular soul belonging to that community, so as to lose none of them. He bears them up and carries them through all the temptations and conflicts and trials and exercises that they meet with here, in a sojourning state and in a warfaring state, so as that they are kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. And then,

(6.) And lastly, this perfect and all-sufficient fulness serves for their final satisfaction and blessedness, when they shall be brought into that region, into his "presence, where there is fulness of joy, and to his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore," Psalm xvi. 11. And that which is felicity enough for himself, will surely be enough for them too.

LECTURE XIX.*

But now, in the next place, I shall speak further to you of some of the most eminent and noted of those attributes and perfections of God which are comprehended in this general one, and concerning the order of speaking to them, I shall not be much solicitous. Some distinguish them into negative and positive. But that distinction I reckon less material; because that those they call negative ones are so only verbally, there being somewhat most really positive, that is comprehended under such negative terms, as infinite, and immortal, and immense, and the like. They are usually distinguished into communicable and incommunicable, as hath been occasionally told you already; the former whereof, being those attributes of God of which there is some image and resemblance under the same name among the creatures.

The Incommunicable Attributes are those whereof there is no direct resemblance among the creatures, nor the very name thereof justly or properly to be given to any among them, or to any thing that is to be found among them. And for this distinction of the Divine attributes, they speak very properly and congruous to the nature of the thing, who tell us, that in the description of God, the former sort of these attributes (the communicable ones) do serve to express his nature more generally, or serve to supply the room of a *genenus* in a definition. And that the incommunicable attributes serve to supply the place of a *difference* in a definition restraining (as it is in the business of a difference to do) that general nature, that is presupposed.

And others again distinguish these several ways, that is, some do call every thing a divine attribute, which may be any way affirmed concerning God. When some others of them do only mean by a divine attribute, that which is affirmed concerning him, (as the logicians are wont to speak,) "*Loquitur quid*," not "*in quo*;" as when it is said, "God is a Spirit," that they do not reckon a divine attribute which is only to answer the question, What he is? But those things only are to be called attributes, or divine perfections, that do speak more distinguishably concerning his nature, to show what a one he is, or what a peculiar sort or kind of being he is. And so for one class of divine

* Preached June 12th, 1691.

attributes some reckon his natural properties, which do some way specify his nature.

And then for the second kind, the faculties which (according to our way of conceiving things) we must attribute to him. And then for a third sort, the exercises that do reside in those several faculties, and for a fourth, those that do imitate the affections that are in us belonging to the rational nature, as it is to be found with us, such as love, anger, desire, delight, or the like.

I do not think fit indeed that we should tie ourselves to any such distribution. What I mentioned before, of communicable attributes and incommunicable, carries its own evident reason with it, and its own light to every one that observes things. There are some divine excellencies whereof there is an image and resemblance in the creatures fitly mentioned, under the same name in him and in them, though they do not signify the same thing in them as they do in him, but only the image or resemblance of such a thing. And then there are those that are *incommunicable*, and which neither in name nor in likeness can agree to the creature. This is a very plain distinction, obvious to any one that considers.

For his *incommunicable attributes*, they are such as these, and I shall but only mention them. As,

1. His SIMPLICITY, absolute uncompoundedness, all excellencies and perfections meeting and being united in him, in the absolute unity of his own nature, without division, without composition, and without mixture.

2. His IMMUTABILITY, by which he is always invariably eternally what he is. "I Am what I Am," without "shadow of turning," (as the apostle James's emphatical expression is,) there being not so much as the show of a change.

3. His SELF-EXISTENCE, or (which is all one) his necessary existence, or the necessity of his existence. That perfection of the Divine nature, by which he is so, as that it is simply impossible for him not to be, or ever not to have been, his essence involving existence in it, so as it is not with any thing besides: for as to any created being, it may be or it may not be; it may exist or not exist. But it is peculiar to the Divine Being to exist necessarily, so as that it cannot but exist: that is the same thing with self-existence, not existing from another, but existing only from himself. And,

4. His INFINITENESS, which comprehends divers things in it; for the infinity of the Divine Being, it is either extrinsical or intrinsical, extrinsical as it imparts some kind of relation to somewhat *ad extra*, or without; and so the extrinsical infiniteness of God is two-fold, that which respects time and that which respects space. That which respects time is eternity, and that infinitely exceeds all the measures of time. Consider God's duration in reference to time, and his duration is eternal, which is founded in his self-existence, or his necessary existence, was told you before. His being is of that peculiar kind, or hath that peculiar excellency belonging to it, that could never not be; and therefore must exist from eternity, and must be to eternity. This is his extrinsical infiniteness in reference to time. And there is his infiniteness in reference to space, which is extrinsical too. It is somewhat supposed without, or besides himself; though but supposed or but imagined. All that space which the Divine being doth occupy and possess; and this is his immensity. In reference to time, his infiniteness speaks eternity; in reference to space, his infiniteness speaks immensity, that which some understand to be his omnipresence. And indeed, it is mostly so, but not wholly, for omnipresence even as presence is a relative term, and refers to somewhat with which it may be said to be present, and so the Divine presence can refer to nothing besides himself, without the compass of the created universe, for there is nothing without that, that he can be present to. But his immensity hath an infinitely further reference, that is, to all the boundless, imaginable space (only imaginable) through which the Divine Being diffuseth itself. For not only is it truly said concerning him, he fills heaven and earth, "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord," Jer. xxiii. 24. But also, "the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain him," as it is said in that seraphical prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, "Will God indeed dwell with men on the earth, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain?" And so his infiniteness in reference to space, it doth, without any limits, go beyond and transcend this vast created universe, be that as vast as it can be supposed to be; and it must be supposed to be very vast indeed, by all that do set themselves to consider what is by human indication or inquiry to be found most considerable, and who allow themselves the liberty ever to think of that vast extent of created being, in comparison whereof not only our earth is but a point, but even that vortex that covers this part of the world to which the earth belongs, is but a mere point, that which contains our sun, and the other planets; all that is but a mere point in comparison of the rest of the universe. Consider that, and the vast extent thereof, and you must yet consider, all this is but a mere point in comparison of the vast amplitude of the Divine Being, concerning which we are to conceive there is not any point of conceivable space any where, but there the Divine Being is, and still infinitely beyond it. And indeed, it is fit we should give great scope to our thoughts, that we may as far as possible conceive in this respect worthily and greatly concerning that God whom we serve, and whose name we bear, and to whom we profess to be devoted ones.

But then there is his intrinsical infiniteness besides, that is, his infiniteness considered not with reference to any thing without him, but in reference to what he is in himself. And so it signifies the unfathomable profundity and depth of his essence, including all being itself, in all the kinds, in all the degrees, and in all the perfections thereof; so as that there is no being of any kind, or of any sort, which his being doth not some way or other comprehend, virtually at least: his being the radical Being from which all other beings spring.

Concerning these incommunicable attributes, or perfections of the Divine Being, I shall say no more to you than only to give you this summary and short account that I have given, because in our demonstrating the existence of a God it was impossible not to speak to these things: that was a thing not to be done without mentioning such things as these, even somewhat too in a way of demonstration, that demonstrating of them we might give some account of the Being whose existence we are to demonstrate. But now there are sundry other divine attributes that I shall speak a little more distinctly to, and which lie under that other head of

Communicable Attributes, and which therefore are more familiar, and ought to be so to ourselves, as having some image, some resemblance of them, under the same names, in us; all either have, or ought to have; some indeed have and cannot but have a resemblance in every intelligent creature, yea (and further than so) in every animate creature. And for those that fall under a moral consideration, they are such as ought to be in us, though they be not. These perfections of God are distinguished into natural, intellectual, and moral; or of his nature, mind, and will.

First, I shall consider his natural perfections: and,

1. I shall begin with that perfection of the Divine nature whereof there is in us some kind (and ought to be in other kinds) a resemblance or image under the same name. And that is, the DIVINE LIFE, the life of God. I do not mean it now in that sense wherein it is a thing either derived to us, or prescribed to us. As in the one or the other, or both of these senses, that expression must be used and understood, (Eph. iv. 18.) "being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, and because of the blindness of their hearts," speaking of the Gentile world, and those Ephesians themselves, while as yet they were in a state of Gentilism. I do not, I say, speak of that life now which God requires us to live, and which he makes his own children to live. But I speak of that life which he lives himself; and in respect whereof he is so frequently in Scripture called "the Living God," that excellency of his Being, which he many times attests, to add weight and solemnity and emphasis unto his protestations to men, to assure them that this is so or not so, or that this or that he doth or doth not, or will do or will not do. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." And so, upon sundry

like occasions, that form of protestation is used by him: "As I live I will do so or so, or it is so and so;" which intimates this to be a most glorious excellency of the Divine Being, and that which he lays a mighty stress upon himself, and would have us to do so too. It is that which should highly raise our thoughts and apprehensions of the Divine Being, to consider him as the living God: and therefore the properties of that life by which he lives, (after the general conception of life itself,) would be worth our while a little to stay upon. We can have no other general conception of life, but that it is a self-active principle. It speaks a sort of self-activeness in the subject wherein it is: and so, being spoken of God, it attributes that to him in the highest perfection that can be thought, and indeed doth suppose it to be in him, in a perfection infinitely beyond what we can conceive: that is, that he is by the excellency of his own Being, a perpetual fountain of life to himself. It is that which is included in the notion of a spirit, though it is not expressive of all that is signified by that notion. It is but an inadequate conception of what is carried in the notion of a spirit. A spirit, it is, as such, (though that be not all,) a self-active being, a being of self-actuating vigour, that can move itself within itself. And that is the most full and distinct conception of what we have of life. But taking that for the general conception, there are peculiar excellencies of the Divine Life, that distinguish it from life any where else. As,

(1.) His is absolutely self-originate. No other life is so; but his is absolutely self-originate. All other life is derived, participated; even such creatures to which life is essential, yet their life is but participated; for admit life is essential, (as it is to all created spirits as such,) yet inasmuch as their being is participated and derived, so is their life too; and their being, being a spiritual being, (though a created being,) life is so essential to it, for if it ceaseth to live it ceaseth to be, and so its life and being are not separable things. It is not so with that life which our bodies do partake of; even in ourselves, our bodies and our souls have two very distinct sorts of life, our bodies have but a borrowed life, a united life which they borrow from the soul that is within them, and unto which they are united. That soul may retire and part, and then the body dies, and yet it is the same body that it was before; so that if it cease to live, it doth not thereby cease to be. These bodies of ours may cease to live, though not cease to be, because their life is a borrowed life from another: they have it from the soul. But the soul, that hath life in itself, essential to it; so that it cannot cease to live, but it must cease to be. But though it be so, yet its essence and life are but derived from that great Original Life, and from that great Original Being whose life we now speak of. He is the well-spring of life, (Psal. xxxvi. 9.) "With thee is the fountain of life." It is equally impossible, as was said before, for him either to cease to live, or cease to be; whereas to us this impossibility is only supposed, it is only a suppositive impossibility. If we should cease to live, we should cease to be too, in reference to these souls of ours. But it is positive as to God, that he can neither cease to live nor cease to be. His is therefore an absolute self-original life. He hath life in himself, or by himself, as that expression is, John v. 26. "As the Father (who we are told is our Father) which is in heaven is perfect," perfect in this respect, hath life in himself, a perpetual spring of life within himself; so hath the Son life in himself, as he is God, and as he is God-man; life to communicate and derive from himself to quicken whom he will, as it is in that context. And then,

(2.) This life of God, as it is a self-original, so it is a self-communicative life; it is a self-communicating life. Not in the same kind, but it doth contain in itself eminently that life which it makes others to live, which it imparts unto creatures. Indeed they cannot live that same life, for life being essential unto him in whom it originally is, to communicate his life were to communicate his essence, and so we make the creature God, which is impossible. But he contains eminently in himself that life by which, formally, he makes the creature live. And so in that respect, the Divine Life is self-communicative, casual, efficient, making those to live to whom he doth impart it. With him is the well-spring of life. Now these two things are carried in the notion of a fountain: 1st, That there be a perpetual spring in it, and 2nd, that there be a communication and efflux, a deriving of streams from that spring. These two things are carried in the very notion of a fountain. And so as he is the well-spring of life it imports,

[1.] That life that is in him to be self-original, he is the perpetual Spring of it, in himself and to himself. And then,

[2.] Self-communicative, continually deriving streams issuing and flowing out to the creatures, so as to quicken whom he will, as it is said, "the Son doth, in that," John v. 20. And,

[3.] This life of God is an indeficient life; a life that cannot decay, a life that cannot fail, a life that cannot languish, life always in the highest perfection, every thing in God being God, and therefore no more capable of diminution or decay, than the being of God is, which, as you have heard, is a necessary being, and therefore can never be otherwise than as he is, never more perfect, nor ever less perfect. And,

[4.] It is universal life. The life which belongs to the Divine Being, is universal; that is, it carries all kind of life eminently in it, not formally but eminently. You know that there is a great variety of the kinds of life among the creatures; but all comes from one Fountain; and therefore that life which doth belong to the blessed God himself, it must be a universal sort of life, a universality of life, all kinds of life are summed up there, not formally but eminently, there being no kind of life that is lived by any creature, from the most excellent to the most mean and abject, but the power of giving it, the power of imparting it, being in himself who is the Original of life: he hath it within his own power to make that creature live this or that sort of life suitable to the capacity of its own nature, and it is observable to this purpose, that in that passage, Psal. xlii. 8. where the Psalmist saith, "my prayer shall be to the God of my life;" in the Hebrew it is plural, to the God of my lives. And you know, a man (and more may be said in this kind concerning a holy man, a saint) lives several sorts of lives, as he lives a vegetative life, first the life of a plant, and then the sensitive life; the life of an animal, and then the rational life; the life of a man, and then, if he be a saint, as you know the Psalmist was, a holy life. Now all these lives are comprehended together in this one Fountain. "My prayer shall be to the God of my lives." It is he that makes me live all these several ways that I do live. As I live the life of a plant, I have it from him; as I live the life of an animal, I partake that life from him; as I live the life of a man, a rational creature, I still partake that life from him; and as I live the life of a saint, a holy man, I partake that life from him too, which carries the nearest resemblance with it of his own life.

And thus we are to conceive of our Father which is in heaven, to be perfect in respect of this high and glorious excellency of life; self-original life, self-communicative life, indeficient life, and universal life, that contains all sorts and kinds of life eminently in itself.

And now to make some *Use* of this subject of the *life of God*, how highly should this raise our thoughts concerning that God whose name we bear, concerning our Father that is in heaven. It must highly serve to recommend him to us,

1. As the Object of our worship. What a glorious object of worship have we! How may our souls solace themselves every time we go to worship in the contemplation of this, "I am going to worship the living God!" So he is pleased to distinguish himself from the false gods, by this same epithet of the living One. Therefore, we have living and true put together distinctly concerning him, 1 Thess. i. 9. "To serve the living and true God." And it is with reference to the consideration of him as the glorious Object of our worship, that the apostle speaks of him, in Acts xiv. 15. when those ignorant barbarians, among whom he was, would have done worship unto him and Barnabas, he runs in among them and saith, "Sirs, why do you these things? We also are men of like passions with yourselves, and preach to you that you should turn from these vanities to the living God, who made heaven and earth and all things therein. Our business is to bespeak you to be worship-

pers of the living God alone." Thus doth the word magnify him above the inanimate, senseless deities of the pagan world, who were wont to worship stocks and stones and the works of their own hands, and bow down and pray to a god that could not save. And how should we magnify to ourselves the Object of our worship, under this notion, and admire and bless God that he hath revealed himself to us, so as we are not left altogether ignorant whom we are to worship, that we do not worship altogether we know not what. We know the Object of our worship carries in it the reason of its own being worshipped, which renders it a rational worship. He is the living and so the true God whom we worship.

2. How highly should it recommend him to us as the Object of our trust. "Therefore we labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe," I Tim. iv. 10. and chap. vi. 17. "Charge them which be rich in this world that they trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." How heart-satisfying an object of trust have we in this respect, considering God as the living God, the Fountain of an indeficient, never-failing, self-original, and universal life, in all the excellencies and perfections of life.

3. What an object of fear have we even in this conception of God, or from this divine attribute. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. x. 31. A man may be angry with me, and he dies, and then his anger dies with him; but it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands who never dies, the hands of the everlasting God. Who would not value his favour as that wherein stands life? It should mightily raise our apprehensions concerning God to conceive of him so. And,

4. It highly recommends him to us as the Object of our imitation. For this is one of the divine excellencies or perfections, whereof there is a *minesis*, a resemblance under the same name in us. We do all of us live (as was said) several sorts of lives wherein we do resemble God. But we should most of all resemble him in a holy life, such of us who are raised from death to life, or shall be so. And herein it is the duty of every believer to resemble him. This is matter of precept, a thing capable of being put into a command. It is no matter of duty to us to imitate him in the other kinds of life, but in this kind of life it is matter of duty to imitate him in it, that is, in the perfection of that life which is therefore called the life of God, because it is prescribed us by God, enjoined us by God, and it is that wherein we are to imitate God. And therefore it is called, even as it is in us, "the life of God," Ephes. iv. 18. Others not yet reconciled to God, not brought home, but remain in their natural, unconverted state, they are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their hearts." We are to consider God, the living God, as the Object of our imitation; and therefore, should reflect with just severity upon ourselves; "Do we pretend a relation with the living God, and say he is our God? O! then, what mean our dead prayers, our dead duties, our dead hearts! that we let them be dead, and do not strive and wrestle and contend with them, to get them up to this raised perfection of life wherein we are to resemble God, and to express a visible conformity to him!" It is a severe rebuke which is put upon the Sardian church, "Thou hast a name to live and art dead." It is plain, he doth not speak of a total death, or as if there was nothing of spiritual life among them, for in the next words he saith, "be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain which are ready to die." There were great degrees of deadness, but strengthen (saith he) the remains of life, "the things that remain that are ready to die;" and see how it is enforced, "for I have not seen thy works perfect before God." Your heavenly Father is in this respect perfect, as he is the living God, as life is in him in the highest pitch of perfection and excellency; "but I have not found your works perfect before me, as your heavenly Father is perfect;" therefore "strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die;" that your life may shine in lustre and glory more suitably and conformably unto the divine life, unto the life of God himself. But now,

* Preached June 26th, 1691.

LECTURE XX.

2. In the next place I shall go on to speak somewhat concerning the POWER OF GOD, which is another natural perfection in him, and is next of kin to the life of God. Once have I heard this, twice hath it been spoken, that power belongeth unto God, as in that Psal. lxii. 11. It is in him as in its native seat and subject. It belongs unto him. Nothing is more appropriate, more peculiar to God than power: and it so belongs to him as it can to no other. If we speak of strength, lo, he is strong, (as the expression is in Job,) implying all created power is not to be spoken of in comparison with him. All other power is not to be named power, nor worthy to bear that name. "Your heavenly Father is perfect" in this, as well as other respects; power is with him in perfection; the perfection of power belongs to him.

And here, concerning the power of God, I shall give you some instances and some properties of it.

(1.) Some instances of it. As,

[1.] That it hath been the sole, productive cause of this great creation. Consider all this vast creation as resolved back again into nothing; and then consider it all springing up out of nothing (as it were) at once. How vast a power is this! Whatsoever in all the whole universe of created things you see or hear of, or can think of; all this is raised up out of nothing by the divine power. To bring any thing out of nothing, how vast a power would it require! how far surpassing any human, any created power! If you could but suppose all the powers in all the world, if the whole creation were to be combined and united together only for this one single purpose, to make one single atom, the least that can be thought to be raised out of nothing, you would easily apprehend it would never be. If all the world were assembled to contrive and unite their power to make a grain of dust out of nothing, they must all confess it infinitely above them. Then to have so vast a creation as this made to arise out of nothing, at once from nothing come to being, how should it overwhelm us to think of it; all that we now behold in being, and so far beyond, so inconceivably beyond what we can behold it to be. This earth of ours, as spacious as it is, is but a mere point, compared with our own vortex; but a part, but a little corner, of the creation, and that but a mere point in comparison with the rest of the universe; and all this spoken out of nothing into being by the great Creator; the word of Divine power but saying, "Let it be," and it was. Lift up your eyes on high, as the prophet's direction is, Isa. xlix. 18. and think who hath created all this; when you behold the sun, and moon, and stars, the vast expanse of the heavens, and all the ornature thereof. And again,

[2.] There is the continual sustentation of this world, once created and made, which is the same momently expense of power; for all created being, if not continually sustained, must, by its own natural mutability, every moment be dropping into nothing. So that here is the same power put forth as if a new world were created every moment. And then,

[3.] That all the motion that is any where to be found, throughout the whole universe, continually proceeds so from it, that the divine power is the continual spring of it. A wonderful thing to think of! We are apt to have our thoughts soon excited and awakened concerning the divine power when we see some wonderful instance of it fall out, besides the ordinary course. When we behold the effects of some violent wind and impetuous tempest; if we see trees torn up by the roots, houses shattered down all to pieces, mountains torn asunder, the bowels of the earth ript open, we straightway think these to be great instances of a mighty power. But the power is incomparably greater that works continually and every moment in all the motion that is any where through the universe, in the most still, and silent, and steady, and composed way. The power that continually, but silently, turns about the mighty orbs of heaven, and the great luminaries that are in it, and, as some think, this very earth itself, in that still,

unobserved way that we can take no notice of, which if it be, is incomparably less than that the so inconceivably greater body of the sun should be moved in so inconceivably greater a space, so much larger in circuit, so vastly large, with that celerity that must answer what we expect and see every day. What must that power be that goes forth in this? Such motion of the heavenly bodies that we find move the sun, and moon, and other planets, besides all the innumerable stars, multitudes whereof are so unspeakably greater than the body of the sun, and that so vastly greater than this earth of ours; and all these continually turned about by a motive power; which because it is steady and constant we are therefore so stupid as not to take notice of it, or adore what is doing by it every moment, without failure, without stop, even for one moment. We are to blame that we do not more use our thoughts this way, to aggrandize to ourselves the greatness of him that made all things, and us little inconsiderable parts of them all. And again,

[4.] That this power doth work constantly and steadily with nature in a natural way, and extraordinarily, whensoever he will to whom it belongs, against nature. Here is what doth demonstrate it to be the exceeding greatness of his power, it is vastly great, as it co-operates with nature, as it works with nature. And how vastly great doth it appear as it counterworks nature in several respects, and at his pleasure whose power it is. It was great power that could make such a thing as fire to burn, to seize and prey upon other matter, and devour and consume it. But how much greater power doth it require to make fire not to burn, to bind up the natural tendency of it, as in the instance of the three children! It was a great power to make that great element of water to flow along every where as he hath assigned its receptacles and channels; and greater again when he pleaseth to make it not to flow, to congeal, as it were, and to stand up the mighty waves on a heap. And again,

[5.] If we look a little into another sort of species, what a weighty instance of this power was it to support the manhood of Christ under those sufferings of his, which he, as to satisfaction for the sins of men, and in which capacity only he was capable of suffering; to wit, as he was man, for he could not suffer as he was God. That that man should be able to bear the weight and load of all that guilt, which he undertook to expiate by his blood, which blood was necessary to expiate it, and to laya foundation for the preaching of the Gospel, which saith, "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life:" that he did not sink under that weight and load of guilt, and under the power of divine wrath, when all our iniquities did meet on him: that he, one single man, should be sustained and borne up, when so vast a load and weight of guilt lay upon him: here was the power of the Godhead sustaining that one man. It was because he was Immanuel, "God with us," God in our nature. That that nature did not fail, did not sink under that mighty load; that that man should stand as the fellow of God, when the sword was drawn to strike that man his fellow; that he should stand against him and not be destroyed, and not be overcome, is a great power. And again, hereupon,

[6.] What an instance of the divine power was the resurrection of that man? Smitten he was, and smitten down unto death, into the grave. And yet out from thence he springs up anew, by a divine power, "and was declared to be the Son of God, with power, by the Spirit of holiness, by which he was raised from the dead." It was an exceeding greatness of power, as you read, Ephes. i. 19. which he wrought in him, or exerted, or put forth in him, when he raised him from the dead. And again,

[7.] What an instance is it of the power of God, when he changes the heart of a sinner, when he reneweth and reduceth a lapsed, fallen, apostate, degenerate creature; that is, especially when he changeth his will, the primary, main seat of that mighty change. "Thy people shall be a willing people in the day of thy power." Here is the perfection of divine power to be seen in this: for most plain it is, as I said before about creation, that if all the power of all this world were combined together for this one effect, to alter the will of one single man, it could never be done; you know how to crush, how to tear him into a thousand pieces, but no man knows which way to change the will of a man, not in any instance whatsoever, unless God change it himself. In instances of common concernment, nobody hath power over another man's will; all the power of all this earth is not able to change my will if I have set it this way or that. But his people shall be a willing people in the day of his power: your heavenly Father is perfect, perfect in power, in that he knows, without doing violence to his creature, without offering any thing that shall be unsuitable or repugnant to its nature, to change its will. He knows how to govern his creatures according to their natures: though he knows how to rule and govern them, yea, to overrule them, contrary to their nature when he will, yet he chooses to govern his rational, intelligent creatures according to their nature, and so agreeably changes the hearts of men, according to that natural way wherein the human faculties are wont to work; a thing that all the powers of the whole world could never do besides. And again,

[8.] What an instance is it of his power to uphold the life of a regenerate soul, during its course through this world! A great instance this is, that their heavenly Father is perfect in power. For most certain it is, as soon as any one production of this kind appears, if there be a child born, a son of God born from above, all the powers of hell and darkness are presently at work, if it might be, to destroy this new, this divine production. But it is enabled to overcome. "He that is born of God keepeth himself, that the evil onc toucheth him not;" and "he that is born of God overcometh the world." This is by a divine power annexing itself to, and working in, and with, this new creature. The apostle speaking of one weak in the faith, (Rom. xiv. 1.) weary in the faith, as the original signifies, shows that such a one might be received, but not to doubtful disputations: for God (saith he) is able to make him stand. This poor weakling, one that is weak in the faith, receive him, (saith he,) for God (as despicable a thing as he appears) is able to make him stand. Every new-born child is weak, and we must conceive so concerning every regenerate soul: he is at first weak, and they are always too weak, (God knows,) as long as they remain here in this world. They have distempers, weakening distempers, always about them. But concerning such a weakling, that it should be said, "God is able to make him stand," makes it to be an instance of a divine enabling power that ever he should be made to stand. And it is the like case where such are spoken of under the notion of bruised reeds, to make a bruised reed stand against all the shocks of hell, when all the infernal powers are engaged to overthrow it: God shows that he is able to make it stand. And thus it is with such a poor creature all the time of his abode upon earth, hell is engaged in a continual conflict against his precious life, and purposely and with a design to destroy that. But God is able to make it stand, it lives as a spark amidst the raging ocean, and is never extinct but always lives. What an instance of the Divine power is this! And again,

[9.] Restraining the wrath of man combined with the power of hell against his church in this world. He hath built this church upon a Rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. The design hath been always driven and the attempt continually renewed from age to age. One age hath been industriously at it to root religion out of the world, to extinguish the divine seed, but they could make nothing of it: another age rises up after them, "Come,(say they,)let us handle the matter far more wisely, and take better methods, and carry it more secretly, that we may do our business more seenrely, and see what we can do to extinguish and root out religion:" and so the age after that, and then the next after that, and so from age to age until this age, and yet the thing is not done: yet this church remains, and is still in being, and is yet propagating itself. This is owing to the perfection of divine power. Their Father which is in heaven is perfect, perfect in this power of his, by which he conquers all the powers which are engaged against his poor church in this world, he triumphs over the feeble and impotent attempts of men and devils. "He that sits in the heavens laughs, the Most High has them in derision." The wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder thereof will he restrain, Psa. lxxvi.

10. The wrath of man he turns to his praise; he makes matter of praise and triumph to himself that the wrath of man goes forth; pleasing himself with this, "How shall these wretched creatures see themselves foiled and baffled within a little while!" He raiseth trophies and triumphs to the greatness of his power, from all the wrath of man that goes forth. And that which shall not belong to his praise, all that he will restrain. He can let it go forth as he pleaseth, and restrain the remainder thereof as he pleaseth. What he lets go forth, creates to himself a name upon its going forth, and he suppresseth the rest. And though I might thus multiply instances, I shall add but this one more: and that is,

[10.] The power he shows in forbearing and sparing a sinful world, and (upon his own prescribed terms) here and there, as he pleaseth, pardoning and forgiving particular sinners. This is a power which in some respects surmounts all the rest, or an instance of power that surpasseth all other instances. In other instances, his power shows itself in mastering of a creature, or outdoing all created power, but herein he useth a certain sort of power over himself, restraining his own great wrath, omnipotent wrath, that it break not forth to consume a world, and turn it into flames, as it righteously might have done many ages ago. "Let the power of my Lord be great according as thou hast said. The Lord is gracious and merciful, and of great forbearance, forgiving iniquities, transgression, and sin." Let the power of my Lord be great. O! how great is his power over this world! But how much greater is his power over himself, when he withholds his anger, and lets not his fury go forth to consume and make an end of sinners, as he easily could in a moment. But,

(2.) I shall in the next place, after these instances, give you some properties of this divine power. It is,

[1.] Original, as must be said of all divine attributes. All other power is derived, secondary, borrowed, participated from another; but the divine power God is beholden to none for; it is self-sprung, self-original. "This have I heard," saith the Psalmist, "once and again, that power belongeth unto God." It is in him, as in its native subject. His is the first power, the very beginning of power. It is in him as in the root and fountain: and so he is of himself, the mighty One. "If we speak of strength, he is strong," Job ix. 19. As if it had been said, All other strength is not worth the speaking of. If we speak of strength, meaning a strength fit to be spoken of, or mentioned under that name, that is divine strength. The divine is self-originate, it is in him as in its first original. And again,

[2.] It is irresistible, or invincible, not to be resisted if he pleaseth, and not to be overcome however. He will work and none shall let it. His work shall go on, of whatsoever kind it be; if he have designed it once, resolved it once, it shall be done through all, whatsoever opposition. Saith that man of God, Moses, that great man, (Deut. xxxii. 3. designing there to give an account of God,) "Because I will publish the name of the Lord, ascribe ye greatness unto our God: He is the rock, his work is perfect." It is spoken concerning him and his work as a stated, settled character, that whatsoever work he resolves upon, he will make thorough work of it; and so his work shall bear the heavenly image upon it. Your heavenly Father is perfect, and his work is perfect, carried on irresistibly, whatsoever it is upon which he sets his great heart, against all opposition. And again,

[3.] It is a self-moderating power; a power that can moderate itself. Indeed, the power of all intelligent beings is more or less so. It belongs only to brute agents to act, *ad ultimum*. Intelligent ones can govern their own power. But such is the divine power in perfection, a self-governing power, that doth not go forth *ad ultimum*. He can temper it as he pleaseth, and there is a most observable indication of the peculiar excellency of his power in this respect continually, though men observe it not, though men take no notice of it, that it is self-moderating; as was said before, there could be no such thing as motion any where throughout this great creation of God, but through a motive power from him, even his own motive power, he being the first mover; no hand turns, no creature moves, but by a participation of a power from him, the great Fountain of all power. But now supposing without the creation, apart from the creation, so vast a power (as the divine appears to be) to go forth, without moderation, without restraint, if once there were such a consistent thing, and this world, by any means formed and connected together, I say by any means formed and connected together, that divine power, not self-moderated power, must needs shatter this consistent world all in pieces in a moment. If that power were not self-moderated, so that things are guided and moved in a steady, orderly course, it must be so. How easily doth a great wind throw down a house! Then so vast a power going forth from the Creator of this world, supposing it compacted, congested, brought to a consistent thing already, must needs shatter it all in pieces if that power were not self-moderated that goes forth upon it. And again,

[4.] An infinite power; that is a further property of it. How often is the great God, our God, our heavenly Father, celebrated as the Almighty. "I know that thou canst do all things," saith humbled, convinced Job, when God puzzled him with so often repeated, "Canst thou? canst thou do this? and canst thou do that thou seest done? and where wast thou when I did so and so? when I laid the foundations of the earth? where wast thou when the morning stars sang together? who ever thought of thee in that age?" When God had thus argued with him and brought him down to the dust, (chap. xlii.) he saith, "I know thou canst do all things and that no thought can be withheld from thee." That is, "Whatsoever thou thinkest to do, nothing can withhold thy thought from proceeding to execution, from coming into fact, if thou wilt do it. Thou hast an unbounded power without limits." But this must be duly understood. It is to be noted here,

First, Concerning the infiniteness of the divine power, its omnipotency, its almightiness, that it can never exemplify itself by an infinite effect. As it doth not follow, because divine power is infinite therefore the world created by that power is or could be infinite; or, that it was possible for God to make an infinite one; you would think that strange perhaps. Cannot an infinite power produce an infinite effect? Can it produce an effect contrary to itself? No, but yet the other is impossible; and the reason is so plain, that I think when you consider it, every one will understand it. That is, if you should suppose the infinite power of God to have made an infinite effect, this infinite effect can be made no better, no greater than it is; for nothing can be added to what is infinite; and if so, then that infinite power could do nothing more. So that it is a contradiction for an infinite cause to produce an infinite effect, for an infinite cause would be exhausted by producing an infinite effect; but an infinite cause can never be exhausted, therefore an infinite effect can never be produced by it. That is, it can never be said concerning an infinite cause, that it can do no more. But if it should have produced an infinite effect it could do no more, for nothing can be added to what is infinite. And,

Secondly, This is to be further noted, that this infinite power, omnipotence, almightiness, it cannot do impossible things, neither things naturally impossible, nor things morally impossible.

i. Not things naturally impossible. It can give being to nothing that carries self-repugnance in it, that should imply a contradiction if such a thing should be. Whatsoever implies a contradiction is no object of omnipotency. As for instance, to make that not to be; that is, while it is to make a thing to be and not to be at the same time; or to make a thing that hath been not to have been. This implies a contradiction, this is naturally impossible, and so, by consequence, is not an object of almightiness. And,

ii. Any thing that carries in it a moral impossibility is no object of divine power. To do an unjust thing, to lie, is impossible with God, impossible to his nature; and therefore, when we speak of the infiniteness of divine power, the perfection, the absolute perfection of it, we are to consider this as it is conjoined with other divine perfections, and so we are not to measure our notion or conception of the divine power by what it, abstractedly considered, can do, but as it is the power of a being in all other respects absolutely perfect. It is one thing therefore to inquire and determine what almighty power, considered apart by itself, can do, and another thing to consider what

almighty power in conjunction with all other divine perfections can do, as it is in conjunction with holiness, justice, mercy, and wisdom. And it can never work but as it is in conjunction with these, as it is joined with all these together. Though God be almighty, omnipotent, he cannot do any unjust thing, an inept thing, a foolish thing. This were impotency, not omnipotency. It would speak him impotent, not omnipotent: it were an imperfection of power, not a perfection of it. We must consider him as perfect in power, and it would be an imperfection of power to suppose him enabled to do any thing that were unfit to be done. And then,

[5.] In the last place, his is eternal power. His eternal power and Godhead go together, "Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." A perpetual, never-failing spring he is in this, as he is in all the attributes and excellencies of his being: "I am that I Am. What I am, I am without variableness, or without shadow of turning." That continual expense of power that hath been ever since the creation first arose out of nothing, hath not made that power suffer any diminution, nor can it suffer any. He is still the same, without variableness, without mutation, without so much as the shadow of a turn, of a decay, of any failure.

Let us make some *Use* of this.

1. Labour deeply to apprehend this perfection of the Divine Being: fix the apprehension of it: let all our hearts say within us, "Lord, we subscribe, we agree, we yield to the light and evidence of divine truth concerning thy Divine power." It is a lamentable case that the clearest notion of divine truth should be with us, as if we held the quite contrary, so as that with reference to effects, and impressions upon our spirits, it were all one to us, to believe that God were omnipotent, and had all power, infinite power, and to believe he had no power. It is a reproach to us, that our notions of truth, when they are never so plain, are so insignificant, so void of effect, and of their proper correspondent impression upon us.

2. Take heed of admitting disputations against the divine power. Let the foundation be once firmly laid with you, that power belongs to him in its highest perfection; and then admit no disputations against it. We are too prone to do so, to misimpute things, to impute things wrong that we take notice of, and that come under our observation, and make that a cause which is not a cause; we think that things do go in this world many times very irregularly, and so as we wish they might not, or they did not do, and secret atheism unobservedly slides in and insinuates itself. "If there be a perfect One, perfect in power as he is in all his other attributes, why are things thus? why do they go thus? why is not what is amiss redressed, and presently redressed?" But, as was said before, we are not to judge of what the Divine power *can* do, but to consider it in conjunction with other attributes: consider it in conjunction with perfect wisdom, as we shall have occasion afterwards to speak; consider it in conjunction with perfect liberty and absolute sovereignty. If we did consider things thus, "We are not to imagine that the Divine power is to be exerted according to our will, but according to his will," dispute would cease, the matter would drop; we should presently say, "I yield the cause, he knows better how to use his own power than I can direct him." "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, and who, being his counsellor, hath instructed him?" And,

3. That it may be so, let us labour to get our spirits into an adoring frame and disposition towards him under this notion, as our heavenly Father, who is perfect in power, as the perfection of power is in him. Let him be always great and admirable in our eyes under that notion, and so consider. And further,

4. Let us glory in him upon that account: let our hearts exult in the thoughts that our heavenly Father is perfect in this respect. Walk accordingly in his name, glory in it, make your boast of him all the day long. This hath been the temper and genius that hath governed among a people related to him heretofore. "Our God is in heaven, and he hath done whatsoever pleased him." When all people are wont to walk each one in the name of his god, why should not we walk in the name of the Lord our God? Their gods that are no gods, they please themselves with and take a kind of pride in owning them. O how warrantable a matter of gloriation have we, to go with hearts lifted up in the name of our God! Our God is in the heavens, and doth whatsoever pleaseth him; and can with the greatest facility carry every cause that he is engaged in. He cannot fail finally to own and right all that are brought to him, and adhere to him, whatsoever their present excuses for awhile may be. Learn hence again,

5. To value an interest in him, and covet it, and labour to make it sure and clear. Who can but think it the most desirable thing in all the world, to have him who is so infinitely perfect in this, as in all other respects, for their God? How secure would it make a man's heart, how quiet, and rationally quiet, to think, that power, all power, is in the hands of my Father! My Father can do whatsoever he will, he hath all power in his hand. And then,

6. When you have made it your business to secure an interest in him upon this account, and under this notion, then trust in him under the same notion. Exercise a daily, vital trust upon him. "Trust in the Lord for ever, for with the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength," Isa. xxvi. 4. See how things correspond there, "Trust in the Lord:" "Why," might the soul say, "I have need of a God, and a strong one to trust in." In the Lord Jehovah is strength; trust in him. "But I have need of strength for *ever*, being made to live for ever." In him is *everlasting* strength; so that you have as much reason to trust in him to-day as you had yesterday, and will have to-morrow as you had to-day: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength, strength that will never fail; and it is trust that must keep you from falling. "He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength;" and "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength," Isa. xl. 29, 31. And,

7. Lastly, Dread to have him for an enemy. O! consider the fearful case of such as are engaged in a contest with him! Consider their folly, their madness, their misery, and labour to keep at the remotest distance from their state: fly from that sort of men as a dreadful spectacle; you fly from among them by ceasing to be of them. That is, by seeking reconciliation with God, and an interest in him, and striking a covenant with him, then you are delivered from being of them; but think in the mean while with pity and compassion, what mad creatures they are, that are engaged in a contest against omnipotency. "Wo to him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth." But what! shall a potsherd of the earth strive with all the powers of heaven? How unequal a match, how mad a choice is this! And from thence takes your measure of what is like to become of all the contestations in this world against God, and against his interest. We are not prescribe to him concerning the times and seasons and methods: but do you see a sort, a generation of men set against God and godliness? it is easy to judge the event; you may easily foresee the effects in the power of their productive cause.

And thus I have gone through those attributes which we call his natural perfections.

LECTURE XXI.*

Secondly, I shall now come to speak of those perfections of God that are to be considered under the head of *intellectual* ones, and there we have these two to consider and speak of, as more eminent perfections, the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, and his WISDOM. These are great perfections of the Divine Mind, wherein we must understand our heavenly Father to be perfect, as the text styles him. I shall speak to these both together, they being congenerous, and of one sort and kind, though they are to be conceived of by us with some distinction. And,

1. For HIS KNOWLEDGE: our heavenly Father is perfect in this respect; or his knowledge is most perfect

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knowledge, it appears to be so, both in respect of the peculiar nature of it, and respect of its extent, with reference to the objects about which it is conversant.

(1.) In respect to the peculiarity of its nature; it is knowledge of such a kind as is appropriate to God only; that is, upon this account principally, that it is entirely intuitive, nor discursive. It is not such a sort of knowledge as that by which we proceed, as we do from the knowledge of plainer and more obvious things to the knowledge of those that are darker and more obscure. But his knowledge of all he knows is simultaneous, that is, he knows all things at once, all at one view. We come to know some things by the knowledge of others which we foreknew, and so are fain to lead on our minds from step to step, and from point to point. The case is not so with him. All things are at once naked and manifest to his view, so as that, though he doth see the connexion of things, and knows them to be connected, yet he doth not know them or any of them because they are so connected; that is, because he knows such things, therefore knows such other things as are connected therewith, as it is with us, while we proceed by rotation from the knowledge of some things to the knowledge of more. His is in this respect most perfect knowledge. And,

(2.) It is so in respect of its extent, in reference to the objects known. And we must,

[1.] Suppose the extent of this knowledge so vast as to reach simply unto all things; that is, not only all things that do exist, but all things that are even possible to do so. In this respect, with reference to the objects of divine knowledge, it is aptly wont to be distinguished into that which they call *Simplicis intelligentia et puræ visionis*. It is no matter for opening to you those terms; but the thing intended to be signified by the one and the other is briefly this—that God doth not only know all those things that shall certainly be, but all those things that are possible to be. And so in that respect the object of his knowledge is equal to his power. There is nothing possible but what he can do, but what he can effect. Every thing is possible to him because he can make it to be. And so vast as that *ambitus, circle* of his omnipotence, so vast also is the object of his knowledge or omniscience; that is, he knows whatsoever he can do, he knows the utmost extent of his own power, though he never intends to do actually all he can. But then,

[2.] The perfection of this knowledge, in reference to the object of it, is most especially conspicuous in two things, namely,—that he knows all futurities, and—that he knows all the most sacred thoughts and purposes of men, or generally, of his intelligent creatures.

First, That he knows all contingent futurities. It is needful you should understand me right here, not only bare futurities, that is, things that shall certainly come to pass. There are many men can certainly foretell many future things; that is, natural futurities, and such as do depend upon certain and settled causes; as when it is morning, the night will come, when the sun is risen, that it will set, when the sea has ebbed, that it will flow, and the like; but contingent futurities mean quite another thing, that is, such futurities as do depend upon free causes, such as do depend upon the will and pleasure of such creatures as have a certain sort of liberty belonging to their nature. And thence comes that miracle of prophesying; that God should be able to tell so distinctly and with such certainty, for many ages yet to come, that such and such things men will do. Nor are we to think so debasingly of this knowledge of God, as to suppose it depends only upon this his purpose to make a man do whatsoever he knows he will do; which indeed were to debase it into the very dirt, and to make him accessary to all the impurities and wickedness in the creation, by men or devils. And it is to narrow it as much as to debase it; that is, to suppose that he could not know that men would do so and so unless he would make them do the very things that he forbids them, in the very circumstances wherein he forbids them. And this indeed were to subvert the whole entire notion of divine forbearance and permissive providence. As when we are told, (Rom. iii. 25.) "That God set forth his Son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." To suppose that sin should be past, through the forbearance of God, that is, that he forbearing men, they sin, were a subverting the notion of forbearance, if he made them do (by a positive effective influence) all that they do in a way of sin, though the thing be never so apparently evil in itself, most intrinsically evil, as the very act of hating himself. To suppose that he should only so know this or that, that he should be ignorant who should hate him and who should not, among the children of men, unless he should make them hate him, and determine to make them do so that he might know what they would do; this were not only to debase, but infinitely to narrow, this knowledge of God. To suppose that he cannot know but upon such and such terms, or in the same way wherein the devil hath some certain foreknowledge of what he intends to his uttermost to make men do, must infinitely debase and narrow his knowledge. He is not an idle or unconcerned supervisor of the affairs of this world, and doth not only foreknow whatsoever one will do, but he knows too how to limit their actions, and how to restrain, and how to convert and turn to good, what they do with the most evil and mischievous intentions and designs, but upon this it is that he doth demonstrate his Godhead, that he is able to declare future things long before they come to pass, and did so; that he hath given such predictions of what should be, long before it was. In many places of the prophet Isaiah he doth, as it were, magnify his own Deity in opposition to the paganish gods, by this, that he hath declared the end from the beginning, even what shall be in all aftertimes. As in the 41st, 44th, and 48th, chapters of that prophecy we have many passages of that import. And in that 41st chapter, verse 22, 23. he doth (as it were) provoke and challenge the heathen deities to demonstrate their godhead this way. "Produce your cause," (saith he,) "let them declare things to come, that we may know that they are gods;" as if he had said, "Let them never talk of being gods, or that there is any such thing as deity belonging to such despicable idols, unless they can foretell things to come." And this is the true import of that great Scripture, Rev. xix. 10. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy;" that is, that which should demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion, or prove against all contradiction that Jesus was the Christ, was the spirit of prophecy so long before, that he should come at such a time and in such circumstances into the world as eventually he did. And,

Secondly, This perfection of divine knowledge is most eminently conspicuous in this too, his knowledge of the hearts of men; that he knows the most secret thoughts and purposes of men's hearts, and looks into them with an eye that injects fiery beams. He hath an eye as a flame of fire, that searcheth hearts and tries reins; so as that when there is (as it were) a challenge given to all this world, "Who can know the heart of man?" It "is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" (Jer. xvii. 9.) here comes one, that answers the challenge, "I the Lord search the heart and try the reins." And this is one of the great things that both demonstrates and magnifies his Godhead. Amos iv. 13. "He that formed the mountains and created the wind, and that declares to man what is his thought, the Lord, the God of hosts is his name."

I shall not further insist on this, but pass on to the other intellectual perfection, in respect whereof we also ought to conceive our heavenly Father is perfect; that is,

2. His wisdom. He is perfect in being perfectly wise, all-wise as well as all-knowing. I told you we were to speak of these perfections of the Divine nature, and conceive of them, according to what analogy they have to such things as go under the same names with us; and so wisdom and knowledge are two distinct things. Many know much who are not wise: but so we are to conceive of the perfections of our heavenly Father, that he is not only most perfectly knowing, but most perfectly wise also. Wisdom, you know, is commonly distinguished into speculative and practical; sapience and prudence. Indeed, the former doth not greatly differ from knowledge, but somewhat it doth. It is not needful for me to stay to explain to you the distinct notions of intelligence, sapience and science. The first whereof is the knowledge of principles, the last of conclusions, and the middle comprehends both together.

But besides what hath been said concerning the knowledge of God, it will be of more concernment to us to consider his wisdom, as it corresponds to that which with men is called prudence, as the expression is Prov. viii. 12. for both are most conjunct with them. "I wisdom dwell with prudence." And so this wisdom lies in always proposing to himself the best and most valuable end; and choosing the aptest and most suitable measures and means for computing it. According as any one doth more perfectly both these, he ought to be accounted more perfectly wise. Now his end is known to every one that knows any thing of God, he cannot but be his own end. As he is the Author so he must be the End of all things for himself. He hath made all things for himself, by the clearest and most indisputable right. There could never have been any thing but by him, and it is not to be supposed that he should make a creature to be his own end. It would not consist with the wisdom of a God, that he should do so: it were indeed to make a creature to be a god to itself, or that he should upon such terms make a creature to ungod himself. And whereas, the just display of his own glory is the means to his end, his doing that, is most conspicuous in such things as these, to wit, in the creation of the world, in his providential government of his creatures, in the mighty work of redemption, wherein he hath abounded in all wisdom and prudence; and in the conduct of his redeemed through all the difficulties of time to their eternal state.

These are the means; or his actual displaying or diffusing of the beams of his glory in all these ways, is that by which he doth effect his own glory, make it to shine, as that he is thereupon the most worthy and becoming Object unto all eternity, of all the adoration and praise of his intelligent creatures; the most worthy and deserving Object, whatsoever is done, or not done by any of them. My limits will not allow me to insist, at least not largely, on these things.

(1.) The creation of the world. What a display of wisdom was there in that! If we take but the two great and comprehensive parts of it, heaven and earth, "He hath established the earth by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his understanding," or discretion, Jer. x. 12. And if you should look into the one or the other of these more comprehensive parts, it would not be conviction only, but transport and admiration, that we ought to be put into every hour, or as often as we make any such reflection. But I must not go into particulars, as I might. And then,

(2.) For the providence by which he governs this created world, and all the variety of creatures in it, so as that all things in their own particular places and stations do most directly subserve the purposes for which they were visibly made; they are sustained that they may do so; they are guided, and governed, and ordered in all their natural tendencies and motions, that they may do so. And,

(3.) For what wonderful work of redemption, the apostle gives us this note about it, that he hath therein abounded in all wisdom and prudence, Ephes. i. 7, 8. Herein did the perfection of wisdom and prudence shine forth, to reconcile the mighty, amazing difficulties, and seeming contrarieties, real contrarieties indeed, if he had not some way intervened to order the course of things, such as the conflict between justice and mercy; that the one must be satisfied in such a way as the other might be gratified; which could never have had its pleasing, grateful exercise without being reconciled to the former. And that this should be brought about by such an expedient, that there should be no complaint on the one hand nor on the other, herein hath the wisdom of a crucified Redeemer, that is, whereof the crucified Redeemer or Saviour was the effected Object, triumphed over all the imaginations of men, and all the contrivances, even of devils and hell itself; for they undoubtedly were so secure upon no account as this, that they saw our Lord die. Satan filled the heart of Judas to bring it about that he might die; animated the whole design: this was the devil's contrivance, "If he that is turning the world upside down, doing such wonders every where, all men running after him, be but dead, if we can bring him to his end, we shall certainly make an end of his religion, we shall certainly make an end of his design." But even by that death of his, by which the devil contrived the last defeat, the complete destruction of the whole design of his coming into the world, even by that very means it is brought about so as to fill hell with horror, and heaven and earth with wonder. And then,

(4.) The conduct of the redeemed through this world, notwithstanding all the obstacles, discouragements, and difficulties that lie in their way, what a display, a glorious display of the Divine wisdom is there in this! I shall not speak to particulars distinctly, but only give some general account. As,

[1.] That it hath never yet made any wrong step; that amidst all these wonderful varieties of actings and dispensations wherein it hath been engaged ever since there was a creation, there should never be any one wrong step made, nothing amiss done, nothing ever done out of time, or otherwise than it should. And,

[2.] That it is never at a stand, never puzzled, hath always its way open to it, every thing forelaid: "Known to God are all his works from the beginning," as that sage speech is of the apostle James, at the famous council of Jerusalem, Acts xv. He can never meet with a difficulty that can put him to a stand; for his way is always plain and open before him. And,

[3.] That he never loses his design, never misseth any end that he proposes to himself: The counsel of the Lord always stands, and the thoughts of his heart take place through all generations, Psalm xxxiii. 11. And,

[4.] That he doth so frequently disappoint and bring to nothing the designs of the wisest and most contriving men, turns their wiles upon their own heads, "takes the wise in their own craftiness," drives their way headlong, precipitates their counsels into confusion and abortion: as the expressions are in that 5th Job, 12, 13. and in the 33rd Psalm, 9, 10. And many more we have in Scripture, of the like import. And then,

[5.] That he frequently surpriseth the most apprehensive and sagacious among men; doth things that it was never thought he would do; wondrous things, terrible things that we looked not for, Isaiah lxiv. 3. Sometimes they are fearful surprises that he brings upon men, and sometimes grateful ones. Indeed, the same dispensation may be at the same time most terrible and most grateful, most terrible to one sort and most grateful to another, as they must be understood to be that are mentioned in Isaiah lxiv. 3. "Terrible things that we looked not for, the mountains flowed down at thy presence." That is, the most mountainous oppositions, the loftiest and most aspiring spirits brought down and made to stoop, and all their pride laid in the dust: so it hath often been beyond all expectation, he still showing his ways to be as much above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts, as the heaven is high above the earth, and as the east is far removed from the west. So it hath been when he hath gone beyond any fear or foresight of his enemies, and above all the hopes and desires and prayers of his people, done beyond what they could ask or think. What wonderful conspicuous beamings forth of the divine wisdom have there been in such ways as these!

I shall not discourse to you further doctrinally concerning these things. Something I would say by way of *Use*, before I pass from them. Thus our heavenly Father is perfect. Why these are very clear notices of God, which we soon hear; we have heard them now within the compass of a little time; and we as soon assent to them as we hear them. But pray let us look into ourselves and consider, what impression have they hitherto made upon our hearts? Have our hearts been all this while leaping and springing within us, and saying, "This God is our God; our heavenly Father is thus perfect?" Hath that been the lively sense of our souls within us all this while? And consider, these notices of God are not new to us. Did we never hear before that the living and true God is all-knowing and all-wise? When were we without these apprehensions? Such a conception of God as this we have had ever since we had the use of our understanding, and heard or knew any thing of God at all. But pray consider, What suitable, permanent, and abiding impression have we borne about the world with us hitherto? and what is he so far manifested and made known to us for? Is it not that

our spirits might be formed by the discovery, and our minds thereby governed agreeably thereunto? How comes it to pass that such things as these should have had all this while no more influence to beget a correspondent heart and spirit in us towards God? Is it that these things are of little weight, that they sink no more into our hearts and souls? Or is it a matter of small concernment to us, what a one he is whom we take for our God, or profess to have so taken? Is that a matter of small concernment to us? Do we know what the name of God imports? To be a God to us, is to be our "All in all," to be such a one to us every way, in point of good to be enjoyed, in point of power and authority to be obeyed and submitted to. Can it be a little matter in our eyes, what a one our God is, he that we have to do with continually as our God? And by how much the more easily we assent to such things concerning him when we hear them, it argues that they are so much the plainer, and therefore that the guilt must be unspeakably the greater and unspeakably the heavier, if our hearts and spirits be not in some measure proportionably framed and steered and conducted according to the import and tendency of so plain things. These are not dark things that need much explication to us, nor doubtful things that need proof or demonstration. We are satisfied already, that he could not be God, who is not infinitely knowing, and infinitely wise, and perfectly both. So that we have nothing at all to do but to comport in the frame and temper of our spirits, and in the course of our walking, with these most evident things. And by how much the greater they are, and the more sacred they are, (and things that we profess to believe and apprehend concerning God must be such, for a greater one cannot be concerned than he,) the greater profaneness must it be to abuse such notices as these are, or not to use them, not to improve them to their proper purpose and end. We know such things concerning God; and have we nothing to do with the things of God, but to trifle with them, or to let them lie by as neglected, useless things, when they are to run through our lives, and to have a continual influence upon us through our whole course from day to day? Are these things right in our minds and understandings, and our hearts in the mean time only as a *rasa tabula, a mere blank?* There are such notices in our minds, but look into our hearts and see what corresponds there. Alas! there is nothing, a mere vacuity: what a sad case is this! and yet the discovery of these things breathes no other design but only to form our hearts and spirits, and that our lives may be proportionably governed. It is a dreadful thing to have the knowledge of God lie dead in our souls, as if that were to go for nothing. Here I might show you what impressions this discovery of the divine perfections should make upon our hearts, and might thence proceed to show you in many instances that it doth not make that impression which it should. But I must not take that course. I will briefly hint a little at the former, the latter you will recollect yourselves: *rectum est index sui et obliqui:* If it doth appear once what we should be and do, correspondently to the apprehension of the divine perfection in these respects, it will be easy to us to animadvert on ourselves, and see wherein we are not what we should be, and do not what we should do correspondently hereunto. It is plain,

1. That such a discovery of God, in these perfections of his, should conduce greatly to the forming and composing of our spirits to adoration, to make adoration of him to be very much the business of our lives. How grateful should it be to us to think we have such an Object for worship and adoration, the all-knowing and the all-wise God! How vastly different in this respect is our case from theirs that worship stocks and stones for deities, senseless and inanimate things! that worship woods and trees, and rivers and fountains, and beasts and creeping things, and the like! What hath God done for us that he hath made himself known to us in these great perfections, as the Object of our worship! that when we pray we know we pray to an intelligent Being, that knows all things, and an all-wise God, that judgeth what is best and most suitable to be done in reference to what we supplicate him about, and when and how to do all that he judgeth fit to be done. There ought not only to be an adoring frame in solemn worship hereupon, but an adoring frame we should carry about with us through this world, often looking up to him, and considering that we have always an eye to meet our eye, and are to apply mind to mind, (what a satisfaction is that!) understanding to understanding, our imperfect understanding to his perfect one. With what adoring souls should we go through this world every day upon this account! But do we do so? Consider how far short we come in so plain a case as this is. And again,

2. Should it not make us stand much in awe? The matter is plain: great knowledge and wisdom in a man, great prudence, creates great reverence, especially if it be in conjunction with things that we know are in the highest conjunction here, if in conjunction with authority, power, and dignity. But even apart they do much in this kind; when a man hath the repute of a wise man, of a knowing person, it would strike us with so much awe as not to trifle, not to play the fool in the presence of such a one. Is there any thing proportionable with us in our frame and deportment towards the all-knowing God? Our heavenly Father is perfectly knowing, perfectly wise; in what awe should we stand of him continually upon these accounts! And again,

3. It should fill us with shame to think what he knows by us. He is all eye, as one said truly of him. With what confusion should it fill us to think he should know so much by us every day! Every vain thought, every light motion of our mind, all our fooleries, all our triflings, all our impurities that lodge and lurk in our hearts, are known to him. This thought made a great impression upon a heathen, (Seneca, as he testifieth himself,) *Omnia sec ago, tanquam in conspectu, I do every thing as in sight,* as having an eye that doth *rimari, pry* into my breast. O! what a shame is it that we should need a heathen instructor in such a matter as this! and how confounded should we be before the Lord to think what he knows by us continually, that we should be ashamed that men should know such things concerning us, as we are not ashamed he should know. The ingenuity of grace is wanting, it works not, shows not itself. It hath wrought like itself heretofore, "I blush, I am ashamed to lift up mine eyes to heaven," saith good Ezra, and that, when he speaks not so much neither concerning his own sins as the sins of the people.

4. How should it make us study to be sincere. Nothing in us so answers perfect wisdom and knowledge in God, as sincerity. Every thought of my heart thou hast known long before; and it follows in the same Psalm, cxxxix. "Search me, O Lord, and try me, and show me if there be any evil way" (any painful way, as the Hebrew admits to be read) "in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Again,

5. It should possess us with great complacency, (those that can reflect upon their own sincerity,) that they are continually in view to God. It should be a complacential thought, to think that he who is so perfectly knowing, and so perfectly wise, knows their sincerity, and knows, too, all their infirmities. That he knows their sincerity, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," John xxi. 17. And that he knows their infirmities, and will consider them with indulgence and compassion. "He knows our frame and remembers that we are but dust," Psal. ciii. 14. And,

6. It ought to possess us with trust, habitual trust, that should run through our lives. Is not such a one fit to be trusted? doth it not highly recommend him to us as the Object of our trust, that we know him to be perfectly knowing and perfectly wise? You can easily apprehend, an ignorant fool is not to be trusted. One that is ignorant and a fool is no fit object of trust. Is not he therefore that is perfectly knowing and perfectly wise, a fit Object? How cheerfully therefore should you trust him with all your concernments, how cheerfully should you intrust him with the concerns of this world, and your part and share therein? considering in what hand your affairs and all affairs do lie, even in his who will make "all things work together for good." So he hath engaged to do, and he is most knowing and most wise that hath so engaged. Imprudent persons promise rashly what is not in their power, but he that is perfectly knowing and wise can never do so. Though I might mention divers other things I will shut up all with this,

7. It should make us study conformity to him in these respects. Have we this discovery of the perfections of our heavenly Father, that he is perfectly knowing and perfectly wise? It should make us endeavour after conformity to him in knowledge and wisdom; for these are some of his communicable excellencies, that is, his imitable ones. We should think with ourselves, "Is it for me to pretend to him as a child, to call him Father, to say, my Father which is in heaven is perfectly knowing and perfectly wise, when I am nothing else but an ignorant fool?" Wisdom expects to be justified of her children. Are we the children of wisdom, are we the children of him that is perfectly wise and perfectly knowing? Certainly it concerns us to be like our Father in these respects; this is a great part of his image, even of his image to be renewed in us. "Put on (saith the apostle) the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him," Col. iii. 10. Is it for the glory of the all-wise and all-knowing God to have a company of fools for his children, ignorant creatures that know nothing, and labour not to know much, of the things that most concerns them to know, in reference to him, and what lies between him and them? We should, upon these accounts, labour to value and covet, most of all, mental excellencies such as these. But such is not the common guise of this world. And it is an amazing thing, to think so many intelligent creatures' minds and spirits (though lodged in flesh) should be so lost as to all apprehension of true excellency, or of what is truly valuable, as to value a little glitter, a little exterior pomp and splendour, before these mental excellencies of knowledge and wisdom, that are most peculiar to God, and wherein we, if we are possessed of them, shall most resemble him. What fools are the men of this world! They esteem men according as they have most of worldly pelf, as they have collected together most of thick clay, but they never think of valuing themselves or any one else by the mental excellencies of knowledge and wisdom in which they resemble God. What base erroneous thoughts must these be supposed to have of God! What do such make of God? As the apostle speaks to these Athenians, but speaks as knowing and understanding them and himself to be of a mind as to this, he argues with them from a principle, and *ex concessis*, "What! do you think the Godhead is like silver and gold, or corruptible things?" As if he had said, "I cannot but know as well as if I were within you, that you are of my mind perfectly in this matter, that is, that the Godhead is not like to silver or gold or corruptible things; but he is a Spirit, and you, as you are spiritual beings, or as you have such in you, are his offspring." Certainly it is to be governed by the judgment of a fool in my choice, in my desires, in my estimation of things, to think that earthly things are the most valuable things, that carnal things (as the apostle calls them) are the most honourable things. No, without doubt those are the most honourable and most valuable things that are most God-like, and by which I shall most resemble God. How was he taken with Solomon for his judgment and choice when he bids him ask what he would have! He was not such a fool as to go and ask riches, honour, long life, or the necks of his enemies, but begs for wisdom and understanding. This was most God-like; and you see how God was pleased with his choice, how high an approbation he gives of it in that 1 Kings iii. 10, 11. And we should labour to govern our own judgment in these matters accordingly.

And pray consider this with yourselves, and labour to feel the weight of it in your own spirits, if we do not covet and desire that God should create us according to his image and likeness, we shall certainly be apt to create to ourselves a god after our own image and likeness. That is, if we do not make it our business to have ourselves made like unto him, we shall be industrious to make him like to ourselves. As it is in the Psalmist, "Thou thought-est that I was altogether such a one as thyself." A thing that will lead and plunge us into the deplorable estate of all sin and misery unavoidably.

* Preached October 16th, 1691.

LECTURE XXII.*

Thirdly, It remains now that we go on to the third head of the communicable perfections of God, to wit, those of the Divine will, or which we may otherwise call his *moral perfections*; and the most principal of them which I shall (but briefly too) speak of, are these four, to wit, his holiness, his justice, his faithfulness, and his goodness. And before I speak to them severally, I shall give you some general considerations concerning them, and which will also partly respect some of those that have been spoken to already under the former heads. As,

1. That when we distinguish the divine perfections into natural, intellectual, and moral, the meaning is not as if those that were intellectual and moral were not also natural. But the first member in this distinction is larger and more comprehensive than the rest. All that are intellectual and moral are also natural perfections in the Divine nature, but all that are natural are not intellectual and moral. And,

2. We are to consider this concerning them, that the divine perfections which are spoken of under the notion of attributes, they do suppose their subject to be such, as to which they can and they must agree: we speak now only of a subject of denomination, not of a subject of inhæsion in a proper sense. But they do all suppose their subject, that is, of predication, to be a spiritual Being, or they do suppose God to be a Spirit, and might, all of them, be brought as proofs and demonstrations (if it were needful) that he is so. He could not be intelligent if he were not a Spirit, nor righteous, nor holy, nor just, nor true, for all these do suppose such a subject of predication as to which such attributes or attributed perfections can and must agree. And therefore (as hath been intimated formerly) when we speak of the attributes and perfections of God, this doth not come among them, but is pre-supposed, and necessarily pre-supposed. Those that are properly called attributes are spoken of in *quale quid*, not in *quid*, as schoolmen do fitly enough say, though I do not need to trouble you with the explication of those terms.

3. You are to note this concerning them, that as they do suppose their suitable subject, so several of them do suppose others of them. As wisdom doth suppose knowledge, and holiness doth suppose wisdom; and justice, holiness, and faithfulness, justice, and so on. And again,

4. We are to consider that our conception of God and his nature, and the properties belonging thereunto, cannot possibly take up things otherwise than by parts; and so all our conceptions of him must be inadequate, and when we have taken up as much as is possible, it is but a small portion that we have taken up, or can admit into our minds. And therefore, we are to conceive concerning all these perfections of God, that though it be unavoidable to us to apprehend diversely, yet we must apprehend them as all falling into one most simple nature and being; whence it is not to be thought strange that we find a coincidence in very great part indiversive of these perfections, that do (as it were) fall and run into one another. As there will be more occasion to take notice in those particulars that are mentioned. And,

5. You are to consider further, that our notices of God must needs be in a great measure by reflection on ourselves. He hath been pleased to let us know that he created man at first after his own image. That is, after his natural image, with the addition of his moral or holy image. And that he doth again regenerate and renew men after his own image, that is, his holy image, supposing the natural one, that being still supposed remaining, as the subject both of the corruption and of the restitution. This being so, we have the advantage of discerning much concerning the excellencies and perfections of the Divine nature by reflecting upon ourselves. What we see by that reflection, we see as in a glass darkly, and indeed, when we are the glass we are a very dark one. But some resemblance, some image there is to be found; even with all there is the natural image of God, and with the regenerate there is the holy image renewed, though very imperfectly renewed.

whereupon when we are to conceive of holiness, faithfulness, justice, and goodness in God, our conception is much to be helped by these notions that we cannot but have of such things among men, these being (as you have heard) of his communicable attributes, that have the same name in him and in men and the image and likeness of the same things. And,

6. Though there be somewhat of the divine image or likeness in men, yet this similitude is not to be considered without very great dissimilitude. It is true indeed, *omne simile est dissimile*, every like is also unlike, but there must be most of all when we are to compare things in God and in us. Though there be some similitude, the dissimilitude must be vastly great which we are to take along with us in speaking of each of those mentioned perfections of the divine will, and so we come to the particulars. And,

I. As to the HOLINESS OF GOD. That very term, as it is applied to God, is of various significancy. And indeed, it is so as the term comes thence transferred unto creatures. Sometimes it signifies august, venerable, great, majestic. And the reason of the use of that phrase to such a purpose, that is, holy, to signify august and venerable, is obvious: for as things that were holy were not to be violated, were not to be touched (as it were) by impure hands, not to be arrogated, not to be meddled with by any but those to whom they were appropriate, (in which respect, majesty hath been wont to be accounted a sacred thing that was not to be meddled with by any other, and the person a sacred person that was clothed therewith, not by any means in the world to be violated,) so, with no very remote translation, holy or holiness being spoken of God doth signify the awfulness, the venerableness, of the divine nature. But yet, this is somewhat alien from holiness as it is a moral perfection, or as it is a perfection of the divine will. And, therefore, as such we must consider it under its own proper and peculiar notion. It sometimes also signifies firm, sure, unalterable. The *sure* mercies of David, (Isa. lv.) the Septuagint renders it sacred, holy. But if we speak of holiness in the proper sense, as it is a perfection of the divine will, so it must needs, in the general notion, signify the rectitude of that will in all things, and so it must have two parts, a negative, and a positive part.

(1.) A negative; and so the divine holiness stands in purity, in being most perfectly free from any taint or defilement, from any thing of moral turpitude, in any kind or any degree. And that purity, the negative rectitude of the divine will which is carried in his holiness, comprehends two things, first, an enmity from all irrectitude, any taint, any turpitude; and secondly, an abhorrence and detestation thereof. Not only that the nature and will of God hath nothing impure, or that is not right, adhering to it; but doth also detest and abhor to have. It signifies the aversion of the divine will, its perpetual, inflexible aversion, from every thing that is evil, unworthy of it, unbecoming to it. And so, whereas holiness is spoken of in Scripture under the notion of light, that light is said to be without darkness, in the first place, (1 John i. 5.) "God is light, and with him is no darkness at all." This is made the matter of solemn message to the sons of men: "And this is the message that we have from him, and which we declare to you:" God hath sent this message to the world, this account of himself, that he is light, and without any darkness at all, without the least mixture of any thing that is impure, or foul, or unworthy of him. But then, as it is said in that place, speaking of the divine holiness under the notion of light, that it is without darkness; so it is, secondly, elsewhere, represented under the same notion as expulsive of it, declining it, hating it, as having with it a most inflexible and eternal aversion from every thing that is signified under the notion of darkness, unholiness being there signified by it. "What communion hath light with darkness?" It is drawn down to signify that there can be no communion between God and unholiness, the temple of God and idols, 2 Cor. vi. 16. And,

(2.) This holiness hath also its positive part, which must comprehend two, the like things that have been mentioned concerning the negative part. That is, first, the actual, perpetual rectitude of all his volitions, and all the works and actions that are consequent hereupon; and, secondly, an eternal propension thereunto, a love thereof, by which it is altogether impossible to that will, that it should ever vary from itself in this, as it cannot in any other respect. That the determinations of that will are right in themselves, is out of question; and that his word (and he best understands his own nature) testifies over and over. And then his propension, his eternal, unalterable propension of will to that which is right and good, that we find spoken of as a thing we must conceive too, as belonging to his holiness also; "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright," Psal. xi. 7. And so you have his hatred of all iniquity, and his love of universal rectitude, both mentioned together in one and the same breath, as it were; "Because thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity," (it is spoken of Christ, it is true, but spoken of him as God, (Psal. xlv. 7.) having said immediately before, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,") therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee." He is the image of God, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person. But here it may be said, when we place (as we cannot but do) the notion of holiness generally in rectitude, every thing of rectitude must have some measure or another, or some rule to which it is to be referred, and which it is to be judged by. What is then the measure and will of divine rectitude wherein holiness stands? This is the thing that hath been very variously discussed, and with a great deal more perplexity than there was cause for. These things you may take about it, that are all plain in themselves, and will be as much as will need to be, or can, in sum and substance, be said to it. As,

First, That the divine rectitude cannot be measured by any law, that refers to him properly so taken. A law properly taken, is the signification of the will of a superior concerning an inferior. But it is out of question, God can have no superior, and so nothing can in a proper sense be a law to him. And a measure, it is prior to the thing measured, must be before it, but there can be nothing prior to God. Yet,

Secondly, In the borrowed sense, very plain it is that God is a law to himself; and it is the only conception concerning this matter that it can admit of; nor is that to be thought at all strange, when those parcels and fragments of right notion that are left in the ruined nature of man, do yet leave him a law to himself, where he hath no other law, no written law, extant before him: much more, when the notions of rectitude are most perfect, they may supply the place of a rule or measure by which the divine rectitude is to be measured. But,

Thirdly, His mere will, abstractly considered, cannot be this measure, as if the divine will might have made that which is right to be wrong, or that which is wrong to be right: this is altogether unconceivable and impossible, that that will, abstractly considered, should be to him the measure of right or wrong, or of good and evil. That is, as if one could suppose that an act of the will might alter the obligation that is upon an intelligent creature to love the best good; or could make it lawful or a duty to hate the highest and most perfect pulchritude and beauty. This cannot be: as we are told, it is impossible for God to lie. He cannot lie, as it is impossible to him to be unholy, as it is to be untrue. And, therefore, that there are eternal reasons of moral good and evil is a most indubitable thing; that that which is right could not in its own nature, in the greatest instances, but be so; and that, thereupon, that the distinction must be admitted necessarily, of things that are good because God wills them, and of things that he wills because they are good. And so natural laws and positive, they come to have their distinction and diverse consideration. And then in the last place,

Fourthly, That it is equally absurd to suppose that the ideas of right and wrong, or of moral good and evil, as they are a measure to God, should have place any where but in him; that is, in his will, not abstractly considered, but in his will as it is everlastingly conformed to a wise mind. There cannot but be an everlasting conformity between the rectitude of the divine will and the divine word. And whatsoever he doth, he doth all things, not because he will, but according to the counsel of his will, Eph. i. 11. And, indeed, the contrary apprehension were to resolve all the divine perfections into nothing but sove-

reignty. It is the divine will that is the measure of good and evil, yet not abstractly considered, but as it doth agree with most perfect wisdom, and that unalterably thereupon, it is as impossible to him ever to will that which is not wise, as it is impossible to him ever to speak that which is not true. And so far, having given some account of the divine holiness, wherein it lies, you may collect in great part from what hath been said, this double property of it, not to mention more:

i. That his holiness is primary, all other holiness is but derivative, imparted. This is the fountain holiness, the primary holiness. And,

ii. His holiness is essential. It agrees to him not primarily only, but essentially too, as being altogether inseparable from his nature. Holiness in any creature was always to it an extra-essential thing. We have had instances of it even in the higher orders of God's creatures. Man was created holy, but fell. Among the angels that were universally holy, many fell. So the holiness of the best of creatures is a thing in itself separable from its essence. But the divine holiness is most perfectly inseparable. I shall say no more upon this, (the course that I am upon did oblige me to great brevity in speaking to this head,) but only by way of *Use*.

1. To recommend it to you, that we may live in the adoration of God, considered under this notion: "Who is like thee among the gods, glorious in holiness?" Exod. xv. 11. "There is none holy as the Lord," as Hannah speaks in that admirable song of hers, I Sam. ii. 2. How should we rejoice in the thoughts of this, that we have such an object of worship, so perfectly, unexceptionably holy. And,

2. We ought to study the imitation of him herein, as the adoration of him upon this account, understanding the text as saying that to you, "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" in holiness: "Be ye holy, for I am holy," 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. referred (for so it is written, as the apostle speaks) to that Levit. xi. 44. and in divers other places.

3. Consider with what great gratitude the condescending goodness ought to be owned, that he should have a design to make such as we like himself in this respect: we ought to acknowledge great kindness even in such a commandment, "Be ye holy, for I am holy. I would fain have you like myself." It speaks great love and good-will to us, that he would have us imitate him. And,

4. It should make us willingly submit to any methods that he thinks fit to use, to bring us to that conformity to him in this respect; that we be gradually perfected herein, as he is most perfect. The state of our case requires that his methods should be sometimes rough and severe for this purpose. We have a great deal of dross about us. The fathers of our flesh, indeed, they correct (saith the apostle, Heb. xii. 9.) "after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." A great word and work, (and which we ought to consider accordingly,) that we might be partakers of his holiness! that is, that he might transform us into his image and likeness. What difficulties, what furnaces, what fires, what deaths would we not go through for this, that we might be made partakers of his holiness, to be in this respect, as he is, perfect.

2. The next that I have mentioned of these four perfections of the divine will, is his JUSTICE. And justice is wont to be distinguished into universal and particular. But then,

(1.) As universal righteousness or justice doth comprehend particular justice in it, so it superadds somewhat distinguishing, as you shall see by and by. Therefore,

(2.) For particular justice, that is two-fold. It is either commutative or distributive: for commutative justice, with God it can have no place, because he hath no equal; or there are none of the same order with him, that can make exchanges with him, or that can transfer rights to him for any rights transferred from him; he can be debtor to none of his creatures. "Who hath given him any thing, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" as Rom. xi. 35. It is a challenge to all the world. But it is that part of particular justice, which is wont to be called distributive justice, that properly agrees to him, that is, rectoral justice, magistratical justice, the justice of a governor, ruler, of a superior towards an inferior. And that useth to be divided into these two parts, præmiative and puniative; præmiative, that confers rewards, and puniative, that dispenseth punishments. For the former of these, whatsoever rewards God dispenseth must be all of grace, not at all of debt. He cannot be antecedently a debtor to his creatures, otherwise than by promise, and so his justice runs into his faithfulness, as you will see by and by. And supposing him to have bound himself by promise, then it is a piece of justice with him to make good his promise, and thereupon, the notion of righteousness doth obtain and take place, even in conferring benefits. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love," Heb. vi. 10. And "it is a righteous thing with God," not only to "recompense tribulation" to the troublers of his people, but also, those that are troubled rest with him, 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. And "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." There is a piece of justice in it. It is, upon one account, the highest act of mercy imaginable, considering with what liberty and freedom the course and method were settled, wherein sins come to be pardoned: and it is an act of justice also, inasmuch as it is the observation of a method to which he had tied himself, and from which afterwards, therefore, he cannot depart, cannot vary.

And then for punitive justice, this is most distinguishing of the justice of God, from his holiness abstractly considered. By his holiness he hates sin, and by justice he punisheth it. The one makes him hate it, the other obligeth him to animadvert upon it in a way of punishment, or inclines him to do so. And this he doth as a debtor to himself. Justice among creatures is conversant about the rights of other men; but in God it must be conversant about his own rights; because he is himself the Fountain of all rights. And there could be no such thing as right throughout the whole universe, if it had not its first fountain in God himself; and therefore his justice must be the faithful guardian of the rights of his sovereignty and government. And thereupon, this justice doth not only allow him but oblige him to award to every transgression a just recompense of reward as the Scripture speaks.

But of this I shall say no more, save only this word or two by way of *Use*; that is,

1. Let us have our souls so possessed with this apprehension of the divine justice as to dread it, and stand in great awe of it, knowing that we have to do with a God that will not be mocked or trifled with by any; and who never confers favours upon any, so as to forget his just right; nor doth so exercise his mercy towards any as to depress and lose his sovereignty; of which sovereignty of his, as hath been said, his justice must always be a faithful guardian, and therefore, those that are nearest to him must know, that if they transgress his justice must have an exercise about them, even as punitive. There is such a thing as economical, punitive, family justice, by which, even where God is pleased to be related as a Father, he animadverts upon, and chastises and punishes, the faults and follies of his own children, even those that are of his own household. Though you must distinguish of punishments, between those that are corrective and those that are vindictive. Vindictive punishments shall not have place there upon those that are, and have, a stated being in the family, that are of it and in it. But corrective punishment shall have place even there. And then,

2. Not only dread divine justice, but labour to engage it to be on your side. What a great blessing is that, to have even justice itself plead for us, and the state of our case brought to that pass that it may. If we confess our sins, that is, with a truly evangelical frame of spirit, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. But I pass on,

3. To say somewhat of his FAITHFULNESS. And that also doth in a great part run into justice, as justice doth in some part run into holiness. But so far as to superadd somewhat peculiar and distinguishing. The faithfulness of God is his veracity, or his truth as it relates to his word, the conformity that is between his word and his mind. And whereas his word, as his faithfulness that refers to it, is two-fold, assertory and promissory; so accordingly must his faithfulness be understood. It stands either in declaring to us truly how things are, or how they shall be. It relates to his *assertory* word; that is, that he doth make a

true representation to us of all things that are to be received by us as doctrines. Whereas, he is in no possibility of being deceived himself herein, so neither can he deceive us; God cannot lie. It is impossible to God to lie. So much the light of a pagan could discern of God, even Balaam; "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." All the declarations that he hath made to us by way of assertion of things that we are to conceive are so and so, we are to look upon his truth and faithfulness as engaged herein. That is, he doth make a representation to us of things just as they are, and no otherwise, in what he saith to us of himself, in what he saith to us of Christ, in what he saith to us of his Spirit, and in what he saith to us of the way and course of duty wherein we are to walk, and the like. And whereas our Lord Jesus Christ is the Revealer, the first Revealer of God and his mind to men, he is thereupon called the faithful witness, as representing and testifying things just to be as they are, and no otherwise. It comes in among his glorious titles, "Jesus Christ, the first-begotten from the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth, the faithful witness:" that falls in among the rest, Rev. i. 5. God's name is in him, that is, the same nature is in him whereof the divine name is expressive. And therefore, in the whole Gospel revelation we must conceive the highest faithfulness to be engaged. That which sums it up "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," the apostle calls it, "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," (1 Tim. i. 15.) most worthy to be received and believed. And then,

The word of God, to which this faithfulness hath reference, is not only assertory but *promissory*; not only declaratory how things are, but how also they shall be. It is true, we may take in his threatenings too, unto which his faithfulness hath reference as well as his promises. But chiefly and principally, his faithfulness hath reference to his covenant. "He is the faithful God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for ever," Deut. vii. 9. And "he will not alter the covenant that is gone out of his mouth, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail," Psalm lxxxix. 33, 34.

And therefore, concerning this also, take so much of present *Use*. Is God perfect in this respect, most perfectly true and faithful, true to his word, his mind always agreeing most accurately with it? Then,

1. Trust this faithfulness of his. The object of trust is faithfulness most properly, the most immediate object. That which answers to faithfulness is faith. If he be faithful, he is to be believed, trusted in, and relied upon. In that passage of the apostle's prayer that he might be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men, for all men have not faith; the most probable meaning of that, is, that have not faithfulness, (faith being there taken objectively,) that are not fit to be trusted; wicked and unreasonable men, upon whom we can place no trust, that are not fit to be believed. But we are never to admit a thought so diminishing or debasing concerning him whom we have taken to be our God, as if he were not fit to be trusted, as if his faithfulness could fail any whit. Our heavenly Father is perfect in this respect; therefore trust him perfectly, without vacillation, without wavering or suspenseful hearts. He cannot deny himself, he abides most faithful, and therefore most securely to be relied upon by those that are, through his grace, enabled to give up themselves to him. He desires nomore: give up yourselves to him, and you are safe on his part: rely upon him, for he is faithful; he will keep what you commit to him. And,

2. Imitate his faithfulness as well as trust it. Do you labour to be perfect herein? I pray let us all labour to be perfect in this as our heavenly father is perfect, to wit, in faithfulness, both towards him and towards men.

(1.) Towards him. O! how can we think it tolerable to break with him who is never apt to break with us! His faithfulness can never fail; why should ours so often fail? When we promise, when we engage, when we vow to live in his love, in his fear, in his communion; what shame should it cover our faces with, to be unfaithful towards him, who is constantly faithful towards us! And,

(2.) Towards men; imitate him there too: this would be the glory of our religion. It is the intolerable reproach of it, that there is so much falsehood among men, and even among them that profess the Christian name, among them who pretend to God as their God: saying he is their God who is the faithful God, most perfectly faithful. This makes a most deplorable state of things. "Help, Lord," (saith the Psalmist,) "for the faithful man faileth," Psalm xii. 1. It makes the state of things so very dismal, that all who understand themselves think they have reason to cry to heaven, "Help, help, in such a sad case as this." Help, Lord, the godly man fails, there is no faithfulness left in the world. We are undone in this case if God do not help, if we have no help from heaven. But what an ornament is it to the Christian name and profession, when the very words of such and such as do profess it, are reckoned stable as a pillar of brass. "I would no more distrust such a man's word, than I would fear the falling of the heavens over me, or the sinking of the earth under me:" this would be the glory of our religion. O! then, let us labour to be perfect in this respect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

LECTURE XXIII.*

HAVING discoursed from this text, of many of the divine perfections, under the distinct heads of the perfections of the divine nature, of the divine mind, and of the divine will; and as for those of this last rank, having discoursed to you of several others, it remains to say something yet,

4. Of the DIVINE GOODNESS; where, by goodness, I do not mean the goodness of being merely, or the goodness of this or that thing in its own particular kind; nor moral goodness in the utmost extent and latitude of it, for that would comprehend the several other perfections of the divine will, that have been spoken to already: but one branch thereof only, which commonly goes under the name of benignity; a benign inclination of will, which we are to consider, both with respect of what it excludes, and in respect of what it includes.

(1.) In respect of what it excludes; it excludes what is opposite to it, whether it be contrarily opposite, or contradictory. That which is contrarily opposite is an aptness to do hurt, a mischievous disposition to have a mind or will prone to the doing of mischief; which it most certainly excludes; and then, that which is contradictorily opposite is, not to be willing to do good, an unaptness to do good.

(2.) And so, accordingly, it doth include a general propensity to benefaction, to acts of beneficence, and so we are to consider the goodness of God analogically to what we can find of any like specimen among men; for indeed much of our way of knowing God is by reflection, there being somewhat of God yet left and remaining in man, fragments, broken relics of that image first instamped upon the soul of man in his creation. And by them it is, that we form the general notion, even of those perfections which we do ascribe to God. We see the several features of that image, by reflection, as in a glass, on which we bestow such and such names. Though in the mean time we must know, (as hath been told you upon other occasions over and over,) that whatsoever there is that goes under the same name with God and with us, (as all his communicable attributes do,) yet the things must be infinitely diverse, as his being and ours cannot but be. It is but some shadow, some faint resemblance, of the divine perfections that are discernible in us. But upon those things we bestow these names, still apprehending, that under the same name somewhat infinitely more perfect hath its place and being in God.

And now, as to this perfection, (the divine benignity,) I purposely reserved that to the last place, because it is most in the eye and design of this text, as is very manifest if you look back but to the two more immediate paragraphs, which do more directly refer hither, the former of them more expressly signifying that vacancy that should be in us, (in conformity to the divine pattern and example,) of all inclination to do evil, and the latter, positively expressing and holding forth the inclination that should be in us, after the same example to do good. Of the former of

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these paragraphs you may look downwards from ver. 38, and see how the design of that runs against a mischievous temper and disposition of spirit, an aptness to do evil, yea, though provoked; that there must be no disposition to retaliate, to requite evil with evil, wrong with wrong, injury with injury; but rather than do so, suffer oneself to be injured more, as the several expressions in that paragraph do signify, which it is not needful here to consider.

And then for the latter paragraph, concerning the disposition to do good, the discourse of that runs from ver. 43. to this conclusion and close of the chapter; all under the name of love; so extensive and large in reference to its object, as not to exclude enemies themselves; those that do with the most bitter hate pursue and persecute us. "You have heard it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy;" such undue limits have been wont to be put and assigned to your love; that you acquit yourselves well enough if you do love them that love you, and if you do good turns to them that do such to you, if you carry it courteously and affably in your salutations to such as will salute you. But this is a mean and narrow spirit, unworthy of a Christian, and unworthy of the name and design of Christianity, that being intended to restore man to man, to restore man to himself, to make man what he was, and what he should be. There are no such limitations as those to be made to our love; it must reach enemies, enemies themselves. "I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you;" and all this, that you may be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect; (for so he doth;) "that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good, and sends his rain upon the just and upon the unjust;" animadverting upon it as a mean thing, and an argument of a base and narrow spirit, to have our love and kindness confined to those wonted limits, wherein men, otherwise taught by their own corrupt inclinations, are wont to confine theirs. This is, therefore, the main and more principal design of this text, as it refers to the context, to commend to us the divine benignity, to represent that, and to set it before us as a pattern to which we are to be conformed. Be in this respect perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

And indeed, it is the fittest to consider this divine perfection in the last place; for it is (as it were) the perfecting perfection; it crowns and consummates all the rest. All the excellencies of the Divine Being, they are to be considered not abstractly, each by itself, but as they refer to one another, and as all together they do make one admirable temperament; as with reverence we may speak. Indeed, of those that are abstractly considered, that are wont to go under the notion with us of very great exercise, should be all separated from this, they lose themselves, lose their very name; wisdom, apart from goodness, it were only an ability to contrive; power, apart from goodness, were only an ability to execute ill purposes and designs. But divine wisdom, that is in conjunction with most perfect goodness; and divine power, that is in conjunction with the most perfect goodness; and so this is (as I may say) the perfecting perfection, consummating of all the rest. How admirable a thing is that wisdom that is continually prompted by goodness! and that power that is continually set on work by goodness, in all the efforts and exertions of it!

And now, in speaking to this, the divine benignity and goodness, I shall briefly point out unto you the various diversifications of it, and then lay before you some of the more observable exemplifications of it. I shall show you how it is diversified, and wherein it is exemplified.

[1.] How it is diversified. It admits, in sundry respects, (which I shall mention to you,) of sundry considerations and notions that may be put upon it, which yet do all run into this one thing, goodness. First, as it imports a propension unto any thing of suitableness, according as the estimate of divine wisdom and liberty doth determine it, and so it goes under the name of love. Love, is nothing else but a propension towards this or that object. The objects towards which divine goodness is propense, they are estimated by his wisdom and liberty, or sovereignty in conjunction, in respect of their capacities to receive these his propensions, or to be the passive subjects thereof. Secondly, as it refers to offenders, guilty creatures, so this goodness is his clemency; thirdly, as it refers to repeated offences, so it is patience; fourthly, as it refers to long continued and often repeated provocations, so it is long-suffering, forbearance; fifthly, as it refers to a miserable object, so it is pity and compassion; sixthly, as it refers to an amiable object, so it is complacency and delight; seventhly, as it refers to an indigent object, and speaks large benefactions towards it, so it is bounty; and lastly, as it refers to the principle of liberty and spontaneity from whence it proceeds, so it is called grace, *ευδοκια*, the very expression that is used to signify the goodness of the will, when, without any kind of inducement, good is done for goodness' sake. "Thou art good and doest good." When there is nothing to oblige, nothing to requite, nothing to remunerate, nothing to invite, this is the graciousness of goodness. These are sundry diversifications, (as they may fitly enough be called,) and one and the same excellency, divine goodness and benignity, raised according as such and such respects (as have been mentioned) do clothe it. But then,

[2.] We come to give you exemplifications of it, in instances and evidences that do recommend and show it forth unto us. And,

First, The most obvious and most comprehensive one is, this very creation itself which we behold, and whereof we ourselves are a little, inconsiderable part. What else can be supposed to have been the inducement to an infinite, self-sufficient, all-sufficient Being to make such a creation as this stand forth out of nothing, but an immense goodness, a benignity not to be prescribed unto, and was only its own reason to itself, of what it would design and do? The creation could add nothing to him; for it being produced out of nothing, it could have nothing in it, but what was of him and from him; and so there is nothing of being in it, nothing of excellency and perfection in it, but what was originally and eminently in himself before; for nothing could give that which it had not; and all that is in this world, is given out from God himself, and therefore, it is resolvable into nothing else but mere goodness, that we are, or that any thing else besides is. As in Rev. iv. 11. "For thy pleasure all things are and were created." For thy pleasure; it was a pleasure to him to have that immense and boundless goodness of his issue and flow forth in such a creation: and among the rest of creatures, in giving being to such as might be capable of knowing who made them, and of contemplating the glorious excellencies of their Maker, and of partaking a felicity in him, as well as a being from him. Indeed, that there should be so vast a creation, (though all that is nothing compared with him, vast as it is,) that is owing to his power; that there should so ornate, and amiable, and orderly a frame of things be created, that is owing to his wisdom. But that there should be any creation at all, that is owing to nothing else but his mere goodness. He would have creatures that should be capable of knowing and enjoying the excellencies and perfections that make up his being to himself, according to their measure and capacities; and he would have other creatures of inferior ranks and orders to minister unto them. And though this be an obvious thing, and we hear of it often, it is often in our minds, yet I am afraid it is not often enough in our hearts. It doth not sink and pierce deep into our souls, to think what we, by mere nature, are, by mere untainted, uncorrupt nature; all that we are by divine benignity, that it did eternally depend upon his mere pleasure whether I should be something or nothing. And what a rebuke would this carry in it to a vain mind, if it might be seriously and often thought of! "Was I created to indulge and pursue vanity, to indulge a vain mind, and pursue vain things?" How great an awe would it hold our spirits under! It would teach us to fear the Lord and his goodness, to think, "I only am, and have a place in this world, because he thought it good, and he saw it good to have it so." But,

Secondly, The universal sustentation that he affords to all created beings, generally considered: that is all nothing but mere goodness; for as he had no need of a creation at first, he hath still no need of it, and he that hath raised it up into being out of nothing one moment, might have suffered all to slip and lapse into nothing the next moment again, without injury to what he hath made, or without

loss to himself. His tender mercy is over all his works. He lets all this great variety of creatures that replenish this world, continually draw from him. The eyes of all things look towards him. Nature hath (as it were) set an eye in every thing that is made, only to look up with craving looks to the great Author of all things, and all are sustained suitably as their indigent states require, when all are still useless to him, and advantage him nothing. But,

Thirdly, His continual sparing offending creatures; how constant a testimony and evidence is this of the immense goodness of God! That when he hath those that offend him continually in his power and at his mercy, and he may right himself for what hath been done in a moment, or prevent doing any thing more to his displeasure, and to his dishonour, yet he spares: how admirable goodness is this! It is not oscitancy and neglect, as if he took no notice of what men did. On purpose to obviate such an expression, Moses useth that emphatical expression, (interceding for offending Israel,) "Let the power of my God be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering and slow to anger." Let the power of my God be great. It is not from oscitancy, but power, that guilty creatures are spared, that an offending world is not turned into flames and ashes long ago; that a vindictive fire hath not been preying on it, and vindicating the wrong done to the offended Maker and Lord of all. It is not oscitancy but power, that is, power over himself, the greatest of all powers. Creating power is less; the sustentative power, by which the world is bore up, is less. By the exertion of his power towards his creatures he can easily conquer them; but by this exercise of his power he doth (as it were) conquer himself; withholding himself from those more sudden eruptions of displeasure and wrath, which would argue that these were a predominant thing with him. But he will let the world know it is not so. There is the power of goodness that doth predominate and is governing. It is admirable in itself, and ought to be so in our estimate, that this world which hath, for so many thousand years, been inhabited and possessed by rebels against the crown and throne and dignity of the Eternal King, is yet spared, and they let propagate their kind, and transmit their nature, though they do, with it, transmit the poison and malignity of an inveterate hate and enmity against the Author of their being. How admirable is the divine goodness, that shows itself in this patience and long-suffering towards a guilty world! We are taught so to account; "Despisest thou the riches of his forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Rom. ii. 4. And again.

Fourthly, We are to consider as a further instance and evidence of this immense goodness of God, that he is pleased to take such care of the children of men, in their several successive ages and generations, as we find he continually doth; not only sparing them but providing for them; which is a plain and most constantly positive instance and exemplification of this goodness whereof we speak. Two ways he doth more especially take care of the offending creatures that do possess and inhabit this earth of ours; partly by laws, and partly by providence.

i. By Laws. How much of the goodness of God is seen by those very laws which he hath taken care shall have place in this world, and by which any thing of common order is preserved? How admirable is it that he should so concern himself for the tranquillity and peace and welfare of those that are in a confederacy and combination against him, and have been so from one generation to another! How wonderful is it! It is owing, partly, to the impressions he hath made and left upon the minds and nature of men, that there are any such laws as go under the name of the laws of nature, which have this tendency and design, to keep the world in a peaceful and quiet state; and do so, as far as they obtain and prevail. And indeed, there is none that do any thing to the disturbance and disquiet of the world, but they abandon the law of their nature in what they do, and offer violence to themselves. But any such law of nature we must understand to have proceeded from the Author of nature, and we must understand it to have been preserved and kept alive among men, by him that doth preserve the nature of man, and doth take care that there should be successions of such creatures in this world. Consider how tender he is of the life of man, that he hath provided, that there should be such a law, even in man's nature, against murder, of which the municipal laws of several countries are all transcripts, and all owing to the general Legislator. Whatsoever laws of this or that country do agree with the natural law, they are all from the supreme Legislator, and are but discoveries of the care and concern that the common Ruler of this world hath to preserve such a creature as man on earth, from violence and wrong. And so likewise, the laws that do obtain any where for the preservation of property, and for the preservation of chastity, and for the preservation of fame and reputation among men, and the like; that men may not be injured in such respects: they are all so many instances and exemplifications of the great and general benignity of the common Lord and Author of all things, towards his poor creatures in this world, though he beheld his nature poisoned with enmity and malignity against himself, and though that creature takes no notice of him in all this. And then,

ii. The case is seen, not only in the provision he hath made by laws, but which he continually makes by providence, for the sustentation of these, his offending creatures. So you see the text refers us to these very instances, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:" that you may represent and show forth the divine nature in yourselves, that you may show yourselves born of God, with such a nature as God hath; give some proofs and discoveries of the divine nature in you, because he doth thus; loves his enemies, doth good to them that hate him, feeds them with breath, with bread, with all the necessary supports of life, in a continual course from day to day. And again,

Fifthly, It doth further evidence and exemplify divine goodness, and how perfect he is therein, that there is any derivation hereof to be found any where among men, that there is any such thing among men as goodness towards one another, in any degree of it. Wheresoever there is to be found more or less of that which we call good nature, if there be any thing of humanity, of an aptness to do good to others, or an unaptness to do them hurt, or to take pleasure in their infelicities or miseries, these are so many specimens of goodness that are derived, and their very derivation speaks a fountain from whence they come. There can be no borrowed or participated goodness but must suppose, and imply, a first goodness whence it proceeds. If there be any the least goodness, in any creature, this refers us to God, prompts us to look towards him with adoring eyes. This is a little rivulet from an immense ocean, a beam, a ray from that Sun of love and goodness, from that Nature that is all goodness and all love itself, in the very essence of it. This we ought to consider, if we meet with any kindness in this world, if we see any efforts, any discoveries of pity, of compassion and mercifulness in one towards another, this is all goodness from the First Goodness. All this shows there is one Immense Goodness, whence all such little parcels of goodness do proceed and come. Even in this apostate and fallen world we see some such appearances of the divine image (as was said) yet left. We see man hath love in his nature, something of goodness in his nature, a proneness to do acts of goodness and beneficence to some or other, as they come in his way: this should presently make us fall adoring the Supreme Goodness in all this. But then,

Sixthly, The design of recovering apostate, fallen man, is, beyond all things, a most admirable discovery of divine goodness; that ever he should have formed such a design. Here is such a creature, such an order of creatures, such a sort of creatures, fallen, sunk, lost, become miserable, and miserable by their own delinquency, by their own apostacy, that is, by their own choice: they have chosen the way that leads down to the chambers of death and eternal ruin. Now, that in this case he should form a design with himself, "I will yet settle a course wherein such creatures as these may be recovered and saved, even from a self-procured ruin." If there were not, I say, a goodness whereof no other account could be given, but that it is divine, but that it is of itself, as the Deity is, as the Godhead is; who would ever have imagined but that such creatures having

offended, and by their offensive nature and course, put themselves into a way of perishing, must have been let perish. Nothing more was needful than to let them perish. Why should they not be let perish, when they chose it, when they loved it, and affected the way to it? "They that hate me love death." They that hated wisdom, the Supreme Wisdom, they loved death. And why might they not be left to their own choice, to take the things they love? No, this was God-like, this speaks the goodness of a God, that he will prevent the perishing of self-destroying creatures. "Their destruction is of themselves, but they shall find that in me is their help;" as by the prophet he speaks his own mind and heart. Partly, the design itself, of saving and recovering such creatures, and partly, the strange and most surprising methods for bringing about such a design, may not only beget conviction, but the highest admiration also, of the goodness of God. We should not only acknowledge it, but fall a wondering, and even lose ourselves in wonder. How unaccountable a goodness was this, that rather than such creatures as we should finally and remedilessly perish, God should put on man, become man: that man, a man of sorrows; that man of sorrows, at last a sacrifice on a cross, to bring about a reconciliation between an offended Majesty and offending creatures? What manner of love was this! what a transporting discovery of divine goodness! "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. But then, if we add in the next place, to all this,

Seventhly, The various means that he useth to draw and gather in souls, to comply with the terms upon which pardon and reconciliation, and eternal salvation are offered to us. There are his ensigns displayed, there is a Gospel published, there is an office set on foot, which is to last through all ages to the end of time, on purpose to draw and gather in souls; and all these to be looked upon still under the notion of enemies, they whose hearts were full of enmity and hate against him. For whom indeed he hath been doing good, in common kinds, long before: but they never thanked him for all the actings of his patience and sparing mercy. But such things are continually done towards the unthankful and the evil; yea, these he is so intent upon saving from a deserved ruin, and bringing them to partake, even in a blessedness with himself, to unite them with his Son, make them one with him, to possess them with his Spirit; and to one of the greatest wonders of the divine goodness that can be thought of. When he hath given his Son to be a sacrifice for poor sinners, then to give his Spirit to enter into them, and to inhabit and possess them, and dwell in them; that holy, pure Spirit, that Spirit of all goodness and purity, that Spirit of holiness, as he is called, that he should make his entrance into unholy souls, souls that are so many cells of impurity and filthiness, of every thing that is hateful and noisome and loathsome, how admirable a discovery is this of the divine goodness!

LECTURE XXIV.*

AND having thus *demonstrated* the divine goodness, my design is to *vindicate* it. And that is, indeed, of so great importance, that I cannot think it fit to leave off from this subject without placing some endeavour that way. It is of the greatest consequence to us, in all the world, to have our souls habitually possessed with a believing, admiring sense of the goodness of God. We should therefore watch with greater jealousy over our souls, in no one point more than this, lest any thought should arise, or lest any injection should fix and have place in our souls, that should any way tend to infer with us a diminution of the goodness of God, that the glory of it should be sullied in our eyes, or that it should be obscured or darkened in any kind: for how much may a thought do of prejudice to that genuine, holy, spiritual affection that should be working back again in ourselves towards a good God! How may that affection be stifled by a thought, if it be not duly and seasonably obviated!

And indeed, there are but these two great objections that can, with any plausibleness, offer themselves against the goodness of God; partly, the eternal miseries that do befall the greater part of mankind; and partly, the temporal calamities that do befall the better part. These two ways, men may object to themselves against the divine goodness, wherein God is here represented as so perfect, that the most should miserably perish, and the best should undergo many hard and grievous things, even in this world. Both these we shall take into consideration, that so, this most necessary part of the idea of the divine perfections may obtain, without any kind of obstruction or objection lying against it in our minds or hearts; so as we may yield ourselves to be entirely swallowed up of the divine goodness.

The former of these is more frequent. And to show how little pretence there can be from thence, how little colour of objection against the divine goodness, I shall lay before you these many considerations:

1. That no such goodness can be as a perfection in God, that shall exclude or diminish any of his other perfections. No such goodness can belong to the nature of God, as any perfection due to it, that shall be exclusive or diminishing of any other perfection. You should not praise a man, but reproach him, if you should give this of him as his character, that he is so very good-natured, as never to make any difference between civilities and affronts.

2. Punitive justice is most certainly a perfection belonging to the nature of God, both as he is a Being universally perfect, and as he is the Ruler of the world, to be exercised in such cases, wherein there is occasion it should have place. This is plain in itself, punitive justice to be exercised where it ought to have place, it is a perfection belonging to the nature of God as he is a Being of universal perfection, and the Ruler of the world: as indeed, the Original Being, the First of Beings, must include all perfection eminently in itself. For there is no perfection that is not somewhat, and there is no something that can come from nothing, and therefore, the First Being must have all perfection in it. And if this be a perfection, (as every man's judgment will tell him it is,) that is, punitive justice, to be exercised upon proper occasions, it cannot but have place in the Divine nature, as he is a Being of universal perfection, and as it necessarily belongs to him, supposing a world, to be the Governor of it. It could be from no other but him; and therefore, can be under no government but his.

3. There can be no place for the exercise of punitive justice, but in reference to creatures governable by a law. Punitive justice can never have place, but towards such creatures as do admit of being governed by a law. Punishment is, properly, nothing else but due animadversion upon an offender against the law to which he is obliged, and which he is put under. This also is plain in itself, and only leads to what I add farther,

4. That no creature can be capable of government by a law, but such a one as is endowed with the natural faculties of an understanding and a will. There is no place for a legal government, and so nor, consequently, for the exercise of punitive justice, but toward a creature that is endowed with the natural faculties of an understanding and will, supposing that such a creature be guilty of violating the laws by which he ought to be governed.

5. It can be no reflection upon the nature of God to have made such a creature as man. For that which is the very first instance of divine goodness, it would be very strange that that should be a reflection upon it, cloud it, or obscure it. It evidenceth it most highly, that when it was in the choice of God, and a thing merely depending upon his pleasure, to make such a sort and order of creatures stand up out of nothing into being. This is, I say, the first evidence of his goodness, and speaks nothing to the disparagement of it: "for thy pleasure all things are and were created." And that which ought, from the very reason of the thing, to be matter of highest and most grateful acknowledgment and adoration, must thereupon, necessarily, be an instance of goodness in him to whom such grateful acknowledgments are due, and by whom they are claimed. And it is a saying that carries its own light and reason in

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it, of that ancient, that "If I were capable (saith he) of making an intelligent creature stand up out of nothing, with a present power of using and understanding, the first thing I should expect from him should be, that he fall down and worship me, and make acknowledgment to me, for having been the author of being, and of such a being to him." And then, for the kind of this being which divine goodness hath allotted to it, it makes it a high instance of his goodness itself. So far is it from being a diminution to it, that is, that he hath given us such a sort of being that is merely imitative and resembling of his own, wherein could there have been a greater signification of kindness and goodness, than to form a creature after his own image, with a spiritual, intelligent nature like his own? And,

6. The things that render any creature capable of felicity, do also render it capable of government by a law: that is, reason and will, an intellective and elective faculty; these make a people capable of government by a law, and make them capable of felicity too. As hath been told you, if man had not had a nature endowed with an understanding and a will, he could have been no capable subject of being governed by a law: but then, if he had been destitute of such faculties as these, he could not have been capable of felicity neither. If he had not understanding to apprehend wherein it lies, and a will to unite with it, choose it, and take solace in it, he would be incapable of being a happy creature. And what! can it be any argument against the divine goodness that he hath made man with such a nature as renders him capable of felicity? If he were not capable of government, he could not be capable of felicity; the same things making him capable of the one, and of the other.

7. It must have been a very great blemish upon the divine government, if creatures capable of government by law, should generally offend against the most righteous and equal ones, (as his laws cannot but be,) and there should be no course taken for the punishing of such transgressors. This must be a manifest blemish upon a government. Suppose we, in any government whatsoever, that there should be any such edict and proclamation published, that let the subjects under such a government do what they please, no man shall be animadverted upon, all shall do what is good in their own eyes, and no one be ever called to any account; would this be a commendation of a government? Such a thing is altogether insupposable in the administration of the best and most excellent government that ever was, or ever can be. Consider it in the whole course of it, not the temporal administration abstractly from the future state of things, but the course and the end of it altogether; and it must finally appear the best and most perfect and excellent government that ever was, or ever can be. But how insupposable is it, (I say,) that the best and most perfect government, should ever be liable to such a blemish as this, that let men be never so wicked, it shall fare as well with them as if they were never so dutiful and obedient. The thing speaks itself, and Scripture speaks it, but it speaks not as a notion which it suggests anew, but only that which it takes up and observes, as a thing common to men before. "Shall not the Judge of all the world do right?" And see what immediately proceeds, "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee; Shall not the judge of all the world do right?" Gen. xviii. 23, 25. Supposing this as a great fundamental, a principle that did always shine with its own light, and that did evidence itself, that it must belong to the Judge of all the earth to do right: and so put a difference between the righteous and the wicked, that they are not to fare all alike. And again,

8. The very nature of the law, that was original and natural to man, is itself a high evidence and instance of divine goodness. The law of nature, that law (I say) which was original and natural to man, and so inwrought into himself at first, that he was even constituted as a law to himself, because that that was enjoined in it summarily, did carry his own reason in it, had in itself recommending evidence to that conscience wherewith he was created, that God did rule upon those terms that he was to rule himself upon; and so must judge him upon such terms, as upon which he must judge himself. For do but consider, how this law is afterwards summed up all in one word, love. This was the fulfilling of the law, the loving of God above all: the most equal thing in all the world, that the highest and best love should be placed upon the highest and best good. This was that which his law required, that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might. Our Saviour gives this, as the summary and principal part of the law that was natural and original to man: and then, the second part is like the former, loving our neighbour as ourselves. How greatly evidential was this divine goodness, that when he had made a creature capable of government by a law, he should give him such a law as this, and impress it upon his mind, so as it might be said, God was not more to govern him by it, than he was to govern himself: and so finally was to judge him by it, as he must needs judge himself! "He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah vi. 8. Walk in that dutiful subjection to God, which must be the necessary and easy product of supreme and sovereign love to him; and then, carry it justly and mercifully towards men. And, certainly, that must needs be an instance and evidence of the greatest goodness in God, that should be the cause of the greatest good in man. Now, do but suppose the world conformed to this law of God, in these two most noble and constituent parts of it; that is, that all the inhabitants of this world did live in the continual love of God, adoring him most gratefully as the great Author of their being, and in a universal and mutual love to one another, each man seeking another's felicity as his own, and having no more design of hurt or mischief against another than he hath against his own life, his own heart; what a happy world were this! And that which tends to happiness, must be from goodness: nothing is plainer. Now, when so admirable a law as this, every part agreeing with the whole, no branch but what is naturally included in this summary, this compendium; I say, when such a law as this was given to man, it is most natural to add, that the same goodness that did enjoin upon man such a law, must also adjoin a penalty to it, a threatening or due punishment for the violation of it; otherwise, the divine government had been ludicrous, if there should have been such a law which is without annexing any penalty. And the better the law, and more unexceptionable, the more clearly righteous and equal is a very severe penalty to be annexed to it; and the annexing it thereunto, is not only what divine goodness must allow, and doth allow, but what it did require. This was a thing not only consistent with divine goodness, but the effect of it, that there should be such intermination added unto such a law. For, if the adding of that sanction to the law, was the aptest means to procure the continual obedience of it, and the law itself had a tendency to the good of the community for whom it was made, then the very addition of the sanction or threatening to the precept of the law, must not only consist with the goodness of it, but proceed from it. Any prince that doth really study the welfare of the governed community, must be understood to adjoin due and proper penalties to good laws, for the good of the people to be governed by them: that the awe of the adjoined threatening may procure obedience, and that obedience, felicity to them that are so governed; so as that such a law being once made, goodness did not only admit of it, but did require, that there should be a penalty annexed to it, to enforce obedience. And again,

9. It was never to be expected, that when God made such a creature, he should create him in that which was to be his final state. It could never be looked for from the divine goodness, that making such a creature as man, he should settle him in a final good and happy estate the first day he made him. It can he no way inconsistent with the goodness of God, that having made such a creature as man, he should order him a state of trial, of probation, through which he was to pass into that state which was to be final, and perpetually felicitating. For a final state is a state of retribution, a state of reward. The Scripture so speaks of it, frequently, as you cannot but know. Now I beseech you, what was it to be the reward of? It must be the reward of a foregoing obedience. And therefore, it could never have been expected from the divine goodness, that when God first made man, he should have made it

impossible for him ever to have offended; or when he made any intelligent creature that he should have made it so. Those two great orders of intelligent creatures, angels and men, it is plain enough God made neither of them incapable of offending. And it was not reasonable to expect that he should. But as to ourselves, (for we are more obliged to mind our own concernments,) this is the account we have given us, (Eccles. vii. 29.) "God made man upright; but he hath sought out many inventions." God made him upright, put him into a good state, if he would have liked it, but he must needs fall to his own inventions, to mend it, and try if he could not make to himself a better state than God had made for him. It was never to be expected from the divine goodness, that he should, by almighty, extraordinary power, have prevented this. For the creature that was designed to be rewarded with eternal felicity, for a present temporal obedience, he must be left to the trial of his ingenuity and dutifulness towards his bountiful Creator. Otherwise, there would have been no place, no room for reward. And if there had been no place for punishment, in case of disobedience, there could have been no place of reward, in case of obedience and duty. Therefore I add hereupon,

10. That inasmuch as it was necessary there should be such a law, and the threatening annexed to it, or punishment proportionable to any offence committed against it, the execution, according to the tenor of the threatening, became accordingly and consequently necessary, supposing once the violation of such a law. I speak of that law which was natural and original to man; for that little instance of obedience wherein God did put man at first upon, there could not have been transgression in that, without it had been a violating of the most natural law, in the most noble and essential part of it. Now, if a threatening were necessary to be annexed to a law, the execution of it, in case of a violation of that law, was consequently necessary; yea, and if the threatening did immediately proceed from divine goodness, the execution of the threatening must immediately proceed from it; but not without the intervention of the divine veracity. The goodness of God did lead him to add a due and proportionable threatening to his law: and this law being violated and broken, so as that the threatened punishment became due, it must be executed. That which was ordained from the divine goodness, it comes to be the immediate effects of divine justice, which is not contrary to goodness: it is only in our conception diverse, but far from being contrary. If there had not been such a constitution, the divine goodness had not shone forth with that lustre and evidence that now it doth. And there being such a constitution, his truth and legal justice oblige him, in some way or other, to keep to it, either in kind or equivalency: he must do himself and his own law that right, as to preserve the honour, reputation, and dignity of it, and of his own government concerned therein. Therefore, the execution of such a law, by inflicting the incurred penalty one way or other, was necessarily and unavoidably consequent: so necessary, that one attribute could not in this case have had its sole exercise without injury to some other, which our first consideration was directed against. But then I yet further add,

11. That whatsoever penalty comes to be inflicted upon unreconcileable sinners, in the final and eternal estate, it must be acknowledged that much of divine goodness was exercised and demonstrated towards them before. Suppose an offending creature whose heart was implacable towards God, and so violently addicted to sensual lusts, that he had the authority of his Maker in continual contempt; and his whole life was a defiance to the authority of his justice and government, and the goodness and kindness of the offers he hath made to him; suppose (I say) such a creature incurs never so severe a penalty, he cannot but acknowledge that much of the divine goodness had its exercise and demonstration towards him before. For otherwise, what room or place were there for that expostulation of the apostle, even with them whom he supposeth finally to fall under wrath in the day of God's wrath, and revelation of his righteous judgment; "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and long-suffering, and forbearance? not knowing that the goodness of God should lead thee to repentance?" Despisest thou his goodness! This same despising had no object, if there had been no exercise of goodness towards such a one before, and it would suppose this expostulation to be a great impertinency. Despise goodness; it were to despise nothing, if there had been no goodness, and so there could have been no such thing as despising: the thing the apostle chargeth upon such a one; for there can be no act where there is no object. There could be no goodness to be despised, if there had not been the exercise of goodness towards such a one in a former state. Therefore I add,

12. That the general and special goodness of God are things no way inconsistent with one another. These two things do very fairly accord, God's general goodness towards all, and his special goodness towards some. And it argues a very great debility of mind, and shortness of discourse, when any do set these against one another, as if special goodness must destroy the notion of general goodness, or as if general goodness must destroy the notion of special. The matter would be more easily apprehensible, if we would bring it to a case relating to a human government, and suppose the best that is supposable in this world. Would you suppose that the clemency, kindness, and goodness of the best prince that ever was, (or of whom you can form any idea in your own minds,) must oblige him to deal alike with all his subjects, that is, that all persons that are of equal parts, of equal understandings, must be equally preferred, equally dignified? Would the goodness of any prince oblige him to this, that if he find a necessity to have some persons of good parts and understanding to be of a privy council to him, that he must have all to be of that privy council that are of as good parts as they? And shall such a prince not be thought to be good, or his government not to be equal, unless it were so? The best idea that we can form of any government is, that things be equally carried towards all, and yet special favour be towards objects that are not altogether incompetent, at the choice of the ruler. This is the best idea we can form. Bring then the matter to the divine government; we must distinguish between matters of right and matters of favour. For matters of right, we are to expect from it, that God do right to all men universally without exception; but for matters of mere favour, in reference whereunto he is not so much as a debtor by promise, (and he can be a debtor to none by nature,) he can owe nothing to his creature. It is possible for a subject in a human government to oblige his ruler, but no creature can oblige God. A subject in a human government may really deserve favour and kindness at the hands of his rulers, for he can benefit them, it is in his power to profit them, they can really be the better for him; but God can be the better for none of us; therefore, he can be a debtor to none but by promise: we are therefore only to expect from the divine goodness that where he hath promised, there he will be as good as his word; but for unpromised favour, to which the creature can have no title, that there he do dispense arbitrarily as seemeth good to him. And therefore, upon this ground his general goodness towards all, and special goodness towards some, are no inconsistencies one with another. And if he do generally show that goodness in the course of his dispensations to all his creatures, and especially to all the children of men, that every one that considers must acknowledge, then it is no detraction from the goodness that he doth show to all, that he doth somewhat more of mere special favour for others, yea, though it be never so much, or though it be never so greatly more. There is no cause or pretence why any man's eye should be evil because his is good. For free and unpromised favours, (and all are unmerited, but such as are not only unmerited but unpromised too,) that he dispense out these arbitrarily, is certainly no repugnancy to the highest and most perfect goodness. I further add,

13. That instances of the general goodness of God towards men are most numerous and undeniable. For besides that he hath given them being, (when it was in his choice and pleasure whether he would or no,) here he entertains them in a world, to the making whereof, none of them did ever contribute any thing; he watches over them by an indulgent providence, supplies them with breath every moment; keeps off, for an appointed time, destructive evils; affords them out of that common bounty of his,

the good things that are necessary for the continuance and comfort of life. How rich is this earth in its productions for offending creatures! I cannot but think of it, many times, with wonder, that considering that this inferior part of God's creation, so soon after it was made, fell under his just displeasure and righteous curse, there yet should be so great variety of productions, every where in this earth, for the entertainment of rebels, or those that for the most part never give thanks for what they enjoy, never look up, although they have a capacity and disposition in their nature (originally) so to do, to adore, to pay reverence to the first and eternal Being. That which some think to be more the difference of a man from a brute than reason is, a natural religion, which some take a great deal of pains with themselves to erase and tear by the roots out of their own souls. Let us consider that which the text refers to, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father, who doth good to the evil and the good, makes his sun to shine and his rain to fall on one and the other;" do so, that you may represent your Father; herein lies his perfection. This whole earth that men fill with their wickedness, he fills with his goodness, "The whole earth is full of the goodness of the Lord," Psalm xxxiii. 5. "The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works," Psalm cxlv. 9. "He hath not left himself without witness, in that he doeth good, and gives fruitful seasons, and fills men's hearts with food and gladness," Acts xiv. 17. And I further add,

14. That even those instances of divine goodness that are of an inferior kind, have a tendency and aptitude in them to make way for the exercise of his goodness to them, in a higher and nobler kind. The goodness which God exerciseth towards men in the concernments of this natural life of theirs, they have a tendency and aptitude to affect their minds, and to beget good impressions there, and to make them consider and bethink themselves, "Whence is all this? and how comes it to pass that such provision should be made for one, and for creatures generally, of that order to which I belong?" This is the tendency, even of external mercies. Whereupon, it is spoken of with such resentment, "They say unto God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways—yet he filled their houses with good things: but the counsel of the wicked be far from me," Job xxi. 14, 15. And the same you have resumed afterwards, in the next chapter, implying that the tendency of things did run quite otherwise; that is, to allure and draw the minds and hearts of men towards God; and make them consider and bethink themselves, and say, Why should we not covet to know our great Benefactor, and him from whom all our good comes? But they say unto him, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;"—"though he filled their houses with good things;" and therefore is there such a resentment afterwards expressed; "but the counsel of the wicked be far from me;" representing them as a monstrous sort of creatures, a sort of prodigies in the world, that there should be such a disaffection in rebellious and obdurate hearts against the Author of all goodness and kindness and mercy, that is in so continued a course exercised towards them. The counsel of the wicked be far from me; as if any serious and considering man must, and ought to be startled and affrighted at beholding such a speciacle as this, a reasonable, intelligent soul shunning and fleeing away from him who is daily loading it with his benefits, and seeking, by kindness and goodness, to insinuate himself into it, and so make room and place for himself, in the love and kindness of such a one. But that these dispensations have this tendency in them, the Scripture is full of it; "Knowest thou not that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" hath a leadingness thereto, in that mentioned Rom. ii. 4. "And count, (saith the apostle Peter in his 2 Epis. ch. iii. 15.) that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation;" (he would not have us make a false count, I hope;) reckon that he is aiming at the saving of your souls, while he is doing good to you in external respects. If he feed you with bread, if he feed you with breath day by day, and moment by moment, what is it for? Is it only to support such a despicable thing as this frail body of yours is, which must shortly become a carcass? Is that the utmost of his design? No, he is leading thee to repentance, and would have thee account that both his bounty and his patience towards thee have salvation in design. Count the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation, that is, it is the design of the thing; it is that which the thing itself doth naturally aim at, and lead unto. And hereupon, we are told in that, Acts xiv. 16, 17, 18. that God aimed at the turning men from the vanities that their hearts did doat on as the objects of their worship, to the living God; he did aim at this in giving them fruitful seasons, as you may see, if you take notice of the connexion between the 15th and 17th verses of that chapter. So, Acts xvii. he gives them being, breath, and all things, that they might seek after him who is not far from every one of us; in whom we live and move and have our being. And then,

15. Lastly, The terms upon which he offers peace and pardon and eternal life to offending creatures, are the highest proofs and evidences imaginable of the wonderful goodness of God, notwithstanding that so great multitudes do, finally, refuse them and perish. And to this purpose, it should be considered, that the apostle speaks of this as matter of transport more than doubt, and that it did need more to be admired than evinced. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. The silence that is there used is more speaking than any speech could be. He so loved the world, at so stupendous a rate. It is a very speaking silence that he doth not tell us how great that love is; he leaves us to understand it to be altogether inexpressible, that he should give his only Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish—and whereas, men have an impotency to the exercise of that faith that is requisite to their attaining salvation, what is that impotency? It stands only in an affected blindness and obduracy of will; that which they call moral impotency. Now moral impotency doth not excuse, but aggravate the faultiness. No man takes moral impotency to be an excuse, but a high aggravation. As if a man is guilty of murder, and he brings this to excuse him,—"I could not but kill that man because I hated him, I did so violently hate him that I could not but do this unto him." That moral impotency (his extreme hatred) aggravates the crime, that that made it to be done, made it so highly faulty, and so much the more heinous, that it is done. He is not less guilty, but the more, by how much the more his hatred was predominant and prevalent in the case. Why, so this disaffection to God and to Christ and to holiness, (which is impotency,) is an impotency seated in the will, and the ignorance hath its root, it ariseth and proceeds from thence, that is, that men are "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, and because of the blindness of their hearts." A blindness which they love, a blindness which they choose, as it is, Ephes. iv. 18. Whereupon, all their misery is self-created. The miseries wherein men are involved in this world, which make it another hell to them, (a hell on this side hell,) and the miseries of the final and eternal state, they are all self-created; that is, they do arise from a fixed, inveterate malignity against the Author of their being, and that very nature itself, whereof their own, at first, was an imitation. An amazing thing, but it were impossible, if men did love God, to be miserable. Loving him is enjoying him, and enjoying him is felicity, if any thing be, or can be. The image of men's future miseries you have in their present state. What is it that makes the world such a hell as it is, but men's hatred of God and of one another? For (as was said) if there were no contention at all among men on earth, but who should love God best, and one another best, and who should do most for him, and for one another, what a heavenly life should we live here, a heaven on this side heaven: but the hell on this side hell, is only this, that men's hearts are filled with enmity against God, and one another; and from this malignity proceeds their infidelity, that they do not unite to God in Christ when they are called to it; which is no excuse, but an aggravation. But, in the mean time, that is the most wonderful goodness that can be thought, that such overtures should be made to men, God having given his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

LECTURE XXV.*

AND this may suffice to be said, in answer to that first objection against the divine goodness, the eternal miseries of the most. And, indeed, the sum of all that can be said upon that account, doth amount to this, as if it were a thing inconsistent with the goodness of God, that he hath made such a creature as man, given him so excellent a being, made him after his own image, that is, endowed him with a reason and a will, in his very creation; and that, having made him such, he did not alterably fix him in a good and happy state the first day, but that he thought fit to pass him through a state of probation into his final state; and upon this lapse and degeneracy he did not do for every one in order to their recovery as he hath done for some. In answer whereto, you have these considerations laid before you.

But we pass on to the other objection; the temporal afflictions of good men. Some may be prone to impeach the divine goodness upon this account, and object against what hath been said on that subject. But here, such as find themselves disposed so to object, should reflect upon themselves, and consider what they themselves are. Are they good men that do thus object? Or are they such as are afraid to be so on this account, and are thereupon so very officious as to object this on the behalf of others, while they themselves are loth thereupon to become good, apprehending they shall not serve a good master, and are therefore willing to waive and decline his service? If they be men of this latter stamp and character, that do so object, it seems that their sense must be this, that they will never be good themselves, unless God will hire them to it by temporal rewards and emoluments, by indulging them to live a life of ease and pleasure and opulency in the world. And for them whose sense this is, I have but these things briefly to say to them:

1. That true goodness can never be so mercenary. They are never like to become good upon these terms, if God should give them their own terms.

2. I would have them consider what other choice they can have. If they will not serve God, and devote themselves to him, and admit to be such as he requires, (that is, truly good,) but upon these terms, what else will they do? What other master, or service, or way have they to make choice of? Can they, by their not being willingly subject to the governing power of God, exempt themselves from an unwilling subjection to his vindictive power? Whither will they betake themselves? will they leave God's dominion's? will they go beyond the bounds of his territories? whither will they fly? Neither earth, nor heaven, nor hell, can keep them out of his reach; as the Psalmist at large speaks it in that 139th Psalm, and the prophet Jeremiah in the 23rd chap. of his prophecy. "Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off? Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Is it to be a disputed thing between him and you, whether you shall serve him and comply with his good and acceptable will? And,

3. If God should give such men their terms, whereas they appear to be in the temper of their spirits bad enough already, they have a great deal of reason to think that would make them a great deal worse. It needs abundance of previous and preventing grace not to be the worse for a good condition, here in this world, as all experience shows. And,

4. Lastly, I would appeal to such, whether God is not, in such respects, abundantly good to them already. Hath he not given you breath, and being, and all things that you enjoy? How great are the favours that you partake of, in common with the rest of men! To instance in what the context mentions; "He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain on the just and on the unjust." What a case were you in, if God should put out the sun, and if he should turn the fruitful land in which you dwell, into universal barrenness, by continual withholding his rain? If he should turn your present health into continual sickly languishings, and your ease into tormenting pains, and your plenty into pinching wants and straits? And more than all this, if he should turn his invitations to you to pray and supplicate for higher, and those that may tend to eternal mercies, into prohibitions; and say to you, "Never pray, never supplicate, never look up, I will receive no addresses from you?" If his invitations to you to surrender yourselves, and become his, and take him for yours, should be turned into protestations against it, "I will never be your God, and you shall never be my people?" Think, while this is not the case, if God be not abundantly good to you already, so that upon your own account you have very little reason to contest the matter with him.

But, if good men do object this, as possibly against their more habitual frame, under the power of some temptation, they may be apt to do, as we find it was with the Psalmist in the 73rd Psalm; and the like offence and scandal good men are represented as, sometimes, apt to take at their own afflicted condition, compared with the prosperous state of worse men, against which much of that 37th Psalm is directed, and that 21st of Job; and the beginning of the 12th chap. of Jeremiah's prophecy; let such but go into the sanctuary, as the Psalmist did, (in that 73rd Psalm,) retire themselves, consider the thing in the secret Divine presence, and commune with God about the matter, and not with their own souls, nor consult with flesh and blood, and let them but consider such things as these, briefly,

(1.) Whether this matter of fact be ordinarily and generally true, that the case of good men is worse than that of wicked men in external respects. It is a matter that deserves to be considered and inquired wisely about; and certainly, upon inquiry, it will rather be found otherwise; that is, except in the paroxysm of persecution against instituted religion; (for it is very rare that men should be persecuted for natural; but) "if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus," he must expect to "suffer persecution." I say, except in some such paroxysm of persecution upon such an account, for Christianity itself, as to those that live among pagans, or for this or that institution of them that live among Christians, that case being excepted which is not constant; ordinarily, it appears evident that the better men are, the better their state and condition are in this world. Their religion obligeth them to that temperance, sobriety, and diligence in their callings, prudent and discreet management of their affairs, that in ordinary cases it is most plain and manifest, that there are much fewer who are ruined by their religion, than that are ruined by their wickedness, by their riot, and by their debauchery; more persons, more estates, and more families are ruined that way, if there be but a survey taken of the state of things in this world: and the apostle offers this very consideration, (in that I Cor. x. 13. even to the very suffering Christians of that time,) "There hath no temptation" (that is tentative affliction) "befallen you but what is common to men," but what is human. It is true, the account is not common, but the matter of the affliction or the afflictions materially considered, are common to men. Are good men thrown into jails, and sometimes put to death for their religion? Truly, so are bad men for their wickedness, as frequently, and, if we should make a general computation, much more frequently. They suffer the same things very commonly, upon a less comfortable account. And,

(2.) Where this is really the very case, that the condition of God and holy men is, in this world, much worse than that of the worst men, as many times it is so, they are to consider the vastly different value of spiritual and temporal good things; and this is the great business of a Christian, to labour to have that spiritual sense in exercise, by which to be able to discern between good and evil, and to prefer the things that are more excellent; as those two scriptures compared together speak, Heb. v. 14. and Phil. iii. 8. They ought to have their naked, unvitiated senses by which to discern between good and evil, and to abound in that judgment and sense, in all sense, by which they may distinguish the things that differ, and prefer (as that expression admits to be read) the things that are more excellent. And then, how much greater is the value of a sound and well tempered mind and spirit, above that of all earthly and worldly accommodations and enjoyments ima-

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ginable, which are but the gratifications of our flesh and external sense, at best. And,

(3.) Such are to consider what is the experience of Christians of all times, concerning the aptitude and useful subserviency of external afflictions to inward and spiritual advantage; they say, when they are in their calmer and more considering frames, that it is good for them that they were afflicted, and, that God hath done it in very faithfulness to them. And,

(4.) Lastly, It is God's own declared end, in the temporal afflictions he lets befall his, and therefore, would have them count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations, that is, tentative afflictions, James i. 2. Count it all joy, because it made greatly for their perfection. The trial of your faith worketh patience, therefore count it all joy; implying, there is more of real good in that one single excellency of patience, than can be of evil in all the external afflictions, absolutely resigned and submitted to the divine pleasure. Here is so much of an inchoate heaven, such a heaven as our present state admits of, this one thing hath, as is not only enough to make us patient, but joyful, under the various temptations and trials of this kind, that we are apt to fall into, or lie under. And hereupon, where this sense hath been impressed upon the hearts of good men, they have thought the sufferings of the present time were not worthy to be compared with the end of them, which was to be wrought out thereby, as in that Rom. viii. 18. "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." This is my arithmetic, so I account, or this is my logic, so I reason; the word may be rendered either way, this is the rational estimate I make of this case, having turned it round, and viewed it on every side, and balanced things with things, that the sufferings of the present time, this *now* of time, this very point of time, are not worthy to be compared (alas, it is not to be named the same day,) to the glory that is to be revealed. It is as nothing in the account, as if we should weigh a feather against a mountain. This is my rational estimate and judgment in this case. And, that God doth design the afflictions of this present state, as a preparation for the future and eternal state, we have most expressly laid down in that 2 Cor. iv. 17. "The light afflictions which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." It is a *metathesis* which is not usual in Scripture; do work for us, that is, indeed, do work us for it. And it is to be understood, principally, of subjective glory, not objective; for that can never be more or less to any: it is essentially the same in itself with divine glory, but subjective glory, not objective. It is essentially the same in itself with divine glory; but subjective glory to be impressed, that is, more or less, according to the capacity and disposition of the subject. And we grow more capable, and are larger vessels, receptive of greater glory, as our temper is; and our temper is better, and made more receptive of larger and more glorious communications, even by the sufferings of this present time. By the light afflictions which are but for a moment, we are so much the more apt for the eternal weight of glory, which is to ensue; which we are not barely to be told, but to bear, answerable to the notion of weight. We are not only to be mere spectators of the glory there spoken of, but the subjects of it. And then, if this be all that God doth design by the afflictions that he lets befall good men here in this world, to refine them, to make them more partakers of his own holiness, and consequently of fuller glory, greater and higher measures of glory, is this any ground of taking up diminishing thoughts concerning his goodness? Yea, I might add,

It is that which his very relation doth oblige him to, even as he is our Father: your heavenly Father is perfect. For what a Father is he to us? or in what sense is he Father to his own? He is the Father of their spirits; so his word speaks contradistinguishingly of him to the fathers of our flesh. Of the flesh we have other fathers, Heb. xii. 9. He is not the Father of our flesh; he is the Creator of it; but of our spirits he is the Father. He is the Father of them, both upon a natural and supernatural account; as they have his natural image, being intelligent and spiritual beings like his own; and as his regenerate children have his holy image renewed in them. Now the very relation doth oblige him (if he be a Father to us, that is, to our spirits) more principally to mind the advantage of our spirits. That very relation doth not only admit, but require, that he should let us suffer in our flesh, if it may be for the advantage of our spirits; and that this outward man should be beaten and shattered day by day, even unto perishing, if, while this is a doing and suffering, the inward man may be renewed day by day. He must take the principal care about that to which he is a Father. Affection must follow the relation; the relation is to our spirits, and the affection must be, principally, to our spirits.

But I shall insist no further on that part. It remains only to make somewhat of *Use* of what hath been said, especially touching this divine perfection of the goodness of God. And,

1. Be hereupon encouraged to cherish this apprehension concerning God, take heed that nothing ever shake your fixed belief and apprehension of this. And whatsoever reasonings do arise in your minds at any time, forelay this always, let it be always a thing forelaid in you. Yet God is good to Israel, as the Psalmist begins that 73rd Psalm. Nothing can be of greater importance, either to the liveliness and vigour, or even to the very substance and being, of religion, than a fixed, stable apprehension of the divine goodness: that religion is nothing, the soul whereof is not love. If love be not the very soul of your religion, your religion is a carcass, an empty nothing. But that love may be the soul of it, there must be a constant apprehension of the loveliness of the object. Labour then to have your souls possessed always with a deep and fixed apprehension of the divine goodness. Contemplate it in every thing that you behold, in every thing that you enjoy, yea, even in the lessening and qualifying of those evils that you suffer. Go up and down this world with hearts full of this thought; "the whole earth is full of his goodness." Collect all the instances you can of the goodness of God, and keep by that means such an apprehension alive and in vigour concerning him. What a mighty spring would this be of cheerful, and joyful, and pleasant religion! Let no thought arise, but let it meet with a seasonable check, if it tend to any diminution of divine goodness. And,

2. Preserve a worshipping, adoring frame of spirit Godward upon this very account, having your hearts full of this apprehension and sense; labour always to be in a posture of adoration, apt and ready always to look up, carrying that as a motto engraven on your hearts, "I am less than the least of all thy mercies." And again,

3. Endeavour as much as in you is, accordingly to look upon that immediate promanation of the divine goodness, his law; that which issues, which proceeds so directly from the goodness of God. Esteem it to be what really it is, the product and image of the divine goodness. Look upon him as absolutely, universally perfect, and consider the reasonableness of what is said concerning this law, in correspondency thereunto. "The law of the Lord is perfect," Psalm xix. 7. And considering this one single perfection of the Divine Being, his goodness, make a proportionable judgment concerning his law, in reference to that; that is, that it is an expression of his good and acceptable will: and labour, more and more, to prove that by a vital sense, by an experimental relish in your own spirits. O! how good is it to be what he would have me to be! what that most perfect rule of his doth require and oblige me to be! And,

4. Accordingly judge concerning the course of his providential dispensations. His law prescribes to us the way in which we are to walk; his providences make the way in which he walks; labour to apprehend goodness therein too. All his ways are mercy and truth. That is, you are to judge according to the series of his providences complexly taken, and as together they do make up one entire frame. And so, indeed, we are to make up our judgment concerning his law. Not by this or that particular precept, for it would be a very hard imposition upon the mind of a man, to judge and pronounce concerning the goodness of that command to pluck out the right eye, or cut off the right hand, or the right foot, abstractly taken, without reference to the conjunct precepts, and without reference to

the end, to which, altogether, they refer. And so, if you look upon providence, you are not to pronounce concerning this or that, separately and apart, considered by itself. As you would not make a judgment of the goodness of a piece of arras by looking on it folded up, where you can only discern a piece of a leg, or a piece of an arm, it may be, or the limb of a tree, but look upon it unfolded, and there see the entire frame of it all at once. So consider the providences of God, in reference one to another, and in reference to their end in which all things shall finally issue, and into which they shall result, and you must say as the Psalmist doth, "All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth." And as Moses, in that triumphant song of his, in the 33nd Deut. where he tells us in the beginning, his design was to publish the name of the Lord, that is, to represent the glory of his attributes; "Because (saith he) I will publish the name of the Lord, ascribe ye greatness to our God: He is the rock, his work is perfect." Take all together, you will see it will be perfect work at length, entire, all of a piece; and that nothing could have been spared out of that series and chain of providence that compose and make up the whole course. And then,

5. Endeavour that your knowledge of God may be practical, vital, unitive, and transforming, as touching this very thing, the divine goodness. O! how much to be lamented is it, that we should have such a notion of God in our minds to no purpose! the notion of so great a thing, a Being absolutely perfect and infinite, even in this perfection, goodness itself, immense goodness, lying in our minds, idle, dead, useless, and in vain; so that our hearts are in reference hereunto but a mere *rasa tabula*; there is a notion in our minds, but nothing correspondent impressed upon our hearts. Such an apprehension of God as this, if it were vital, lively, and operative, would transform us, make us aim continually to be such as he is, which I shall further press by and by. It would powerfully attract and draw us into union with him. What! shall I live at a distance from the Fountain of all goodness, immense goodness, goodness itself, love itself? God is love. He that believes the love of God, is hereupon drawn to dwell in God as he is love, considered under that notion, and so to have God to dwell in him: as the apostle expresseth it, I John iv. 16. What mighty influence would this have upon our whole course, if we did go with lively, operative apprehensions up and down the world of the divine goodness! How should we disburden our sonls of care! With what cheerfulness should we serve him! How little doubt should we have concerning the issue of things! of that glorious reward which a course of obedience, service, and fidelity to him, a little will be followed with at last. But that our knowledge of God, as to so great a thing as this, should be like no knowledge, as if we knew nothing, or as if we thonght the quite contrary concerning him; methinks, this we should look upon as an insufferable thing, as a thing not to be endured, and so take up resolutions, dependent upon his grace, never to be at rest till our hearts were like this apprehension of God, that he is perfect in goodness. And herenpon further,

6. Make sure of your relation to him as your God, as your Father; and consider and contemplate his goodness with that very design, that you may be indeed stirred up to him at coming, without more ado, into that relation. We do not much concern ourselves so seriously to inquire touching the character of a person with whom we are never to have to do, with whom we have no concern, nor ever expect to have any. If we hear of any such as an excellent person, we hear such a thing of him with more indifferency of mind, "I do not know him, and I am like never to know him; and, be as good and as excellent as he will, I am never like to be the better for him." But when I receive an account of one, as a most excellent person, who designs to adopt me at the same time for his son, and overtnres are made to me for that purpose, I think myself highly concerned to inquire into the character of a person to whom I am to be related. And so should we consider the characters that we meet with of God; for we must either have him as our Father, or we must be children of a worse father or of the worst of fathers. Therefore, this should be hearkened nnto, your heavenly Father is perfect, perfectly good, perfect in goodness, upon this account, that overtures are made to me in order to my becoming one of his children: I am to come into his family; this is the thing that is proposed to me. And should not I labour to know what a one he is, and to contemplate the representation that is made to me of him, upon this account? And,

7. Consider with highest admiration and gratitude, the greatness, the privilege, that you are or may be so related. As the case is stated, if this be not, there is nothing wanting but your own willing and joyous acceptance of the overture, falling in with it, resigning and giving up yourselves most absolutely and entirely to him; and taking his Christ for yours; with him goes the sonship, that is, with the acceptance of his own eternal Son. John i. 12. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed in his name." And then, consider the greatness of the privilege, that you are, or may be, thus related to the Most High God as a Father, to the best, most perfect, and most excellent of beings. You may have him for your Father, and perhaps you have him so already. How great a privilege is this! To have him for your Father is to have all. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son, Rev. xxi. 7. "And it children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." God is to be your portion and inheritance, that if we suffer together with him (which is but a trifle not to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed) we may be also glorified together, Rom. viii. 17, 18. Methinks, this should run in our minds every day; we are either related to this blessed One as our Father, or we may be; we are invited and called by the Gospel (and it is the great design of this Gospel) into this blessed state. Methinks it should run in our minds all the day long, that that glorious and most excellent One should look down from heaven upon such an abject worm as I, and say to me, "Call me Father, take me for thy Father." A heart that were full of the sense of this, would soon grow too big for all this world. What a trifle would this world be to that soul which were full of that sense; "God is become my Father, I have a Father in heaven, that doth whatsoever he will in heaven and in earth, and there is no withstanding him." He can do what he will, and he will do nothing but what is kind and good to them willingly consent to come into this comfortable relation to him. You see how distinguishly such a case is spoken of in the next chapter, Matt. vi. in the latter end. Do not you so and so like the gentiles. Do not torture yourselves with cares and thoughts, "what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and what you shall put on," and what shall become of your affairs and concerns in the world, and the like: the gentiles do so; after these things do the gentiles seek; but your heavenly Father knows what you need; you have a Father in heaven that knows all your concernments, and that minds all of them, with all wisdom, and all the tenderness and kindness imaginable: I would not have you be as if you had no Father, to put yourselves into the same condition with pagans and outcasts, and those that are without God in the world. And then,

8. Lastly, Imitate God in his imitable perfections, and especially in this his goodness. I say, imitate him with all the goodness that is possible, in all his perfections: "Be ye perfect, for your heavenly Father is perfect." So I would shut up, bringing the exhortation in the text, and inferring reason together. And pray drive it to this one particular thing, to which the context draws and claims it, that is, unto love; and even unto such love as shall reach enemies themselves. You very well know, that God could have shown no love at all to any in all this world, but he must show it to an enemy: all were in enmity and rebellion against him. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." And this world was only possessed with such inhabitants, all sunk in carnality and earthliness, and deep oblivion of God, and full of anger and displeasure, upon being put in mind that there is One that claims a right over them, and that would have all their thoughts and their love: this they cannot endure; this carnalized race of creatures cannot bear this. "For the carnal mind is enmity against God." And he could never have been kind to men but he must be kind to enemies. For all were become his enemies, affected liberty, and could not endure

the thought that there should be a power and a Lord to prescribe to them. I pray, let us labour to imitate this great perfection of the divine goodness, even in this very application of it to enemies. This is the beauty and the glory of the Christian religion, the thing wherein it excels the precepts of the most refined paganism, and of that which was higher, (as it was grown,) Judaism itself. "You have heard that it was said of old time, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy;" (as it is in the context;) "but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." I never expect the Christian religion to flourish much in this world, till this appear and be exercised as the common temper of Christians. They are to be such a sort of men, as that all the world may be the better for. If you express never so much of unkindness towards them, if you use them hardly, they will bless you, they will pray for you, they will do you all the good they can, all the good and kind offices in their power. When this spirit comes to be revived among men, it will make the Christian religion (as I may say) *grassari*, mightily to prevail and grow upon the world. The world must fall before such a sort of men as this. But that it will never do while, in this respect, Christians are just like other men, as wrathful, as vindictive, as full of rage, and as full of revenge, as any body else. Christian religion must grow upon the world, by things that will strike the sense, that incur the most sensible observation of men. Every one can tell and sees it when one is kind to them, and when they have good returned for evil. But there are two things most directly opposite to this temper, which Christians are wont too frequently to overlook, never to animadvert upon: the one is,

(1.) When they let their hearts tumultuate with too great fervour and anger against men, upon account of their profaneness and irreligiousness; and they think themselves warranted so to do: such a one is a wicked man, an open, visible enemy against God and Christ, a rebel against heaven. And so they allow themselves to let wrath have its vent and liberty towards such men, and upon such occasions. It was a great deal of zeal for Christ that the disciples discovered, when they would have had fire to fall down from heaven to vindicate his cause upon those Samaritans that would not receive him into their town. But, saith Christ, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of." This is quite another thing from that spirit which I intend to introduce into the world, and which must breathe in, and animate, the religion that I am setting on foot among men. The other is,

(2.) Their confining their kindness and respects to men of such and such a character, to this or that party. It is a temper more grossly remote, more vastly different from what is enjoined upon us here; and the thing that our Saviour animadverts upon in this context, as that wherein we do not only not exceed the Pharisees as such, but even publicans themselves, ver. 20. We are told, that except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God; not even into the initial kingdom. As if he had said, "Ye are not fit for the Christian state, you do not come within the confines of Christianity, real Christianity, if your righteousness do not exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. But when men do confine their respects and the kindness of their hearts to a party, this is not only to outdo the Pharisees, but even publicans and sinners, for they do so; if you love and salute them that love and salute you, if you are kind to them that are kind to you, what do you more than others? do not even the publicans and sinners the same? But "be ye perfect,"—(that is the contexture of this discourse,) "even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

And so I have done with what I designed upon this subject, of the divine perfections or attributes: the next we come in course to, will be that of the divine decrees and purposes of God; and more especially concerning men, and with reference to them.

THE PRINCIPLES OF

THE ORACLES OF GOD.

IN TWO PARTS.

PART II.

CONTAINING

I. THE DECREES, OR COUNSELS OF GOD, IN EIGHT LECTURES, ON EPHES. I. 11.

II. GOD'S WORK OF CREATION IN SEVEN LECTURES, ON HEB. XI. 3.

III. GOD'S CREATION OF MAN, IN FIVE LECTURES, ON GEN. I. 27.

IV. THE FALL OF THE FIRST MAN, AND THE FALLEN STATE OF MAN, WITH THE DEATH AND MISERY CONSEQUENT ON EACH OF THEM, IN FOURTEEN LECTURES, ON ROMANS V. 12.

V. THE JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD VINDICATED, AS TO ALL MEN'S COMING INTO THE WORLD WITH DEPRAVED NATURES, IN EIGHT LECTURES, ON PSALM LI. 4, 5.

VI. THE GENERAL AND SPECIAL GRACE OF GOD, IN ORDER TO THE RECOVERY OF APOSTATE SOULS, IN THREE LECTURES, ON LUKE II. 14.

LECTURE I.*

EPHESIANS I. 11.

IN WHOM ALSO WE HAVE OBTAINED AN INHERITANCE, BEING PREDESTINATED ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF HIM WHO WORKETH ALL THINGS AFTER THE COUNSEL OF HIS OWN WILL.

HAVING discoursed to you, what I thought requisite, concerning the attributes and perfections of the Divine Being, we now come, according to the order of discourse, to speak to you of the DIVINE DECREES. I choose to call them by that name, because, by divines, they are usually so called; though according to the more ordinary use of that word in Scripture, it more frequently signifies public laws or edicts, whether human or divine, than private and secret purposes. And so in common speech too, and other writings, nothing is more usual than to call the constitutions of states and princes, *decreta*. But however the word being so explained, to signify a secret purpose, antecedent to any manifestation, it may then fitly enough be so used; and in that sense it is generally understood by divines, treating on the head of religion.

And upon this subject, my design is not to speak to every thing that is disputed in the schools about it; but only what may be requisite and sufficient unto the common faith and practice of Christians. Nor shall I need to lay down any other doctrine, than the very words of the text, that—God "worketh all things, according to the counsel of his own will,"—wherein you do see, there are several particulars to be considered. There is,

1. The final term of all God's works, that wherein they do directly terminate, *All things*.

2. There is his workings itself, tending towards that term, he *worketh* all things.

3. There is his purpose and volition of all that he worketh, called his *will*. And

4. There is the supreme measure of all those volitions or acts of his will, and so of his subsequent actions, and that of his counsel. He worketh all things according to the *counsel* of his own will.

I shall speak briefly to each of these, but most largely to that which is our most proper subject, with reference to the purpose for which we have chosen to insist upon these words, that is, the will of God; not merely the faculty, but the acts of his will. But we shall briefly go over the several particulars already mentioned.

1. For the things wherein the acts willed by him do finally terminate, which we are told are *all things*, and that universality may be understood two ways, either relatively, in reference to those works that do terminate in these things; as if he said, all things that he works, he works according to the counsel of his will. Or else, also, it may be understood absolutely and simply, there being simply nothing at all unto which his agency, one way or other, extends not; though not to every thing in the same way; as there will be occasion to show hereafter.

2. For his working that terminates in these things, that is, in all things; it is emphatically expressed in the text: the word is ενεργουντος, in-acting, or in-working all things. It shows the peculiar kind of the divine agency, such as nothing can exclude, and nothing can disappoint. And then,

* Preached December 25th, 1691.

3. There is his will itself, which must be looked upon as the immediate source of all these operations of his. And that we shall consider, not only as it is the measure of all his actions, but as it is self-measured by that counsel, that lies in his eternal and all-comprehending mind, which is the fourth particular in order that we have briefly to consider. And touching that,

4. We must know that it cannot be understood in the same sense with God, and with men, as indeed nothing can that comes under the same name with him and with us; for nothing can be absolutely common between God and the creature, or have precisely the same common notion: there cannot but be infinite difference, always, between whatsoever is finite, and that which is infinite. Counsel with men imports imperfection; it signifies that we have not suddenly a perspection of the reason and aptitudes of things, what it is fit for us to resolve, and not to resolve; and do, or not to do. And thereupon, we deliberate, and arrive more slowly and by degrees from a more indistinct perception of the reason of things, to a clearer and more distinct perception of them. With God, it cannot be so, before whose all-seeing eye, all things lie in their aptitudes and correspondencies at one view; so as he doth not see things because they are connected with one another, so as to proceed from the knowledge of things that are more clear, to the knowledge of things that are more obscure; all things being equally clear and equally present, to his eye and to his view. But by way of analogy, that which is effected by counsel among men in the way of consultation, debate of things with themselves, continued discourse, reasonings and arguings of matters in their own minds to and fro, that, which with men hereupon is called judgment, counsel, hath the same name given it with him also. Not that it signifies the same, but that most perfect judgment of things, which is indeed the highest and most exquisite wisdom, which he hath eternally and all at once, when we do arrive to the like by steps. And so according to that perfect perception that he hath of the reason of things, and their aptitudes and correspondencies to one another, and to his creatures, and to him, so accordingly he wills, and accordingly he doth.

And this counsel of his, it may be taken two ways, either, 1st, As it is internal, lying only in his own mind: or else, 2nd, As it hath an after-manifestation, as many of those things which lay from eternity, and through many successions of ages of time, secret in his own mind have, and do come to be revealed and made manifest more or less, and in such degrees as to him hath seemed fit. In that latter sense, counsel is taken frequently in Scripture even when it is spoken of God as these phrases do plainly signify: "If they had stood in my counsel. They despised all my counsel, and set at nought my reproofs. I have declared to you the whole counsel of God," Jer. xxiii. 22. Prov. i. 30. Acts xx. 27.

But here, it must be understood to signify counsel as it is secret, as lying in his own eternal mind, and as it is, thereupon, the measure of all the purposes of his will, and of all he subsequently doth, and hath done, in the creation and continual government of this world. In that latter sense, counsel is, even among men, correspondently in that acceptation of it with God, put for certain, established laws, and constitutions, and even as decrees are. Thus, with the Romans, many constitutions of theirs are known to go under the name of *senatus consulta*, that is, *things consulted of*, and agreed upon, by the governing power among them. But this is not the sense that it is to be taken in here, for notwithstanding much of the counsel of God be manifested, we are to consider it now as antecedent to any such manifestations: and thereupon, to return to that which is our more principal subject, *his will*, according to such counsel, "He works all things after the counsel of his own will;" according to that counsel which doth (as it were) guide and measure all the determinations and purposes of his just and holy will. We are not to understand, that the divine will here signifies the faculty of will, abstractly and precisely, but as comprehending the acts, the volition, the determinations and purposes of the divine will, that which is commonly meant by the word decrees. And so, concerning the will of God and the purposes thereof, I shall first give you some *distinctions*, and then, secondly, lay down what I conceive necessary to be said concerning this subject in certain *propositions*.

First, There are sundry *distinctions* of the divine will, which it may be fit to take some notice of: and some of them will be of great use to us.

1. There are, who distinguish the will of God into antecedent and consequent. But I know no ground for that distinction, there being no first or last with him, or former or latter, as we shall have occasion further to show.

2. Again, some distinguish it into absolute and conditional; but certainly, it is over-bold to feign any such distinction as that, of the divine will, properly so called: it is indeed agreed on all hands that there are conditions of the things willed, but there can be none of the will itself concerning those things; the faculty and act of the will not being distinguishable in God, as they are in us; for he is a pure act: and to suppose there can be a condition of the will itself in God, is to suppose a conditional Deity, and so, consequently, a contingent one, and so, consequently, none at all.

3. Again, some do more truly distinguish the divine will into that which is *bene placite*, and that which is *signi*. And for the former member of that distinction, it is most unexceptionable and scriptural: good pleasure, and the *good pleasure of his will*, we read of again and again in this very context, as well as many times besides in Scripture. But for the other member of the description, it is too obscure for common use; and will require more explication than is proper for this place.

4. It is again distinguishable into his objective and active will, or his will objectively taken and actively taken, so the thing willed is often called the will of God: as when we pray, "Thy will be done," that is, the thing that thou hast willed. And so that of the apostle, in the Acts, "The will of the Lord be done;" and that of our Saviour, "he that doeth the will of my Father," and the like. This is the will of God taken objectively, or for the thing willed. But then, it is taken also actively, as it signifies his volition itself, the purpose and determination of his will; and so it must be taken here.

5. It is again distinguishable into secret and revealed; a very useful and necessary distinction. His will, as it lies concealed within himself, and the same will, in many things made at length known and extant to the world, subjected to the common notice of men; that is, in such things as it concerns them to know and be acquainted with.

6. Others distinguish it into decretive and legislative, which is a very proper distinction too, if we take decretive in the fore-explained sense; otherwise, it falls in with the legislative, and is the same thing.

7. Others distinguish it into the will of purpose and the will of precept, which is a true distinction too. Only, that latter member is not extensive enough; for there are many things which, in the compass of God's revealed will, are necessary for us to know, and even within the compass of his legislative will, besides bare precept; but not in all respects. His will concerns what he will do himself, and it also concerns what he will have us to do. But it is his will concerning his own actions, concerning his own works, of which the text speaks: "He worketh all things," that is his own works, "after the counsel of his own will." And as it doth concern his own works it may concern them diversely: that is, either such works of his as he designs to do immediately, and apart from us, or such works of his as have reference to work of ours, wherein he is to work with us, or wherein he is to work (as in some instances) after us; that is, in those great instances of rewarding and punishing. These works of his come after ours, though the will of them is eternal before. Again,

8. His will is to be distinguished into effective and permissive: his will to effect whatsoever he thinks fit for him to effect; and his will to permit whatsoever he thinks fit to permit, or not to hinder, while what he so wills, or determines so to permit, he intends also to regulate, and not to behold as an idle unconcerned spectator, but to dispose all those *permissa* unto wise and great ends of his own.

These useful distinctions (as there are divers of them) being given, I shall now proceed,

Secondly, To lay down, in divers *propositions*, what is

requisite for us to understand and believe, concerning this matter, of God's purpose, by his counsel, in reference to the things which he works among his creatures, and some of these propositions will be more *general*, and fundamental unto some others, which shall be (God willing) more *particular*. But for the more *general propositions* you may take such as these:

1. That all the purposes of the divine will are co-eternal. There can be no such thing as a new will in God; for there is nothing in God, that is not God; and nothing of God can begin *de novo:* for that were to suppose a new Deity. And hereupon, there can be no place for dispute about the priority or posteriority of this or that purpose of God; they must be all simultaneous, all at once, in one and the same eternal view, according to that clear, and distinct, and all-comprehending prospect that he hath of all things, eternally before his eyes. And though it be true, indeed, that we are constrained to conceive of things, (because we cannot conceive them all at once as he doth,) by first and second, former and latter, and to consider of a natural priority and posteriority, where there is no such thing in real existence; I say, though we are constrained so to do, (which is a thing owing to the imperfection of our minds,) yet, we must take heed of building upon our own foundation schemes and models of the divine decrees, as a great many have perplexed themselves in doing; and wherein we can determine nothing, but with the greatest uncertainty imaginable, nor, indeed, without too great presumption, bringing down the Deity to our human measures and models, and forms of conception. Again,

2. We must take this proposition concerning the will and purposes of God, that they do always connect together means and ends: that is, supposing he hath willed and determined such an end, we must, accordingly, suppose he hath determined with himself the way or means, by which he will bring that end about; supposing it to be a thing to be done immediately: as those things are to be done, and in the same way wherein they are to be brought about, in the same way we must understand he hath determined to bring them about. As when he did intend to preserve David at Keilah, he did also determine he should not stay there, knowing that if he did, the inhabitants would have given him up to Saul, as you may read it was determined, upon David's inquiry, 1 Sam. xxiii. So when he determined to save the life of Paul, and all his companions and fellow-passengers in the ship, where they were in so much jeopardy and danger, he did also determine that the mariners should not go away; for the apostle saith expressly, "If these go away we cannot be saved," after he had expressly, from God, told them, that not a hair of any of their heads should fall to the ground. And therefore, we are not to suppose that he doth determine an end to be brought about by means, but he doth also determine and ascertain the means by which it shall be brought about: so that if he intend any of us to live to such a term of time, he never intends that, and intends at the same time to let us, several years before, starve ourselves, poison or stab ourselves. But determining the end, he also determines those means by which he intends to bring about that end: he intends to bring it about in such a way; that is, in a mediate way.

3. The purposes of God and his foreknowledge are in some sort commensurate: taking foreknowledge in the proper sense, foreknowledge doth refer to futurity, as knowledge, more abstractly taken, doth to all beings actual and possible: all possibilities come within the compass of divine knowledge; but of his foreknowledge, only futurities, or what shall be. And as to these, his purpose and foreknowledge are some way commensurate, that is, whatsoever he foreknows shall be, he either purposeth to effect, or he purposeth not to hinder it. And again,

4. Whatsoever God doth actually bring to pass, that we may conclude he did purpose to bring to pass. Whatsoever he doth, he did purpose to do; for he doth nothing against his will, or without his will: and he can have no new will, as was told you before, and as it is plain in itself. Therefore, whatsoever he actually doth, he did always eternally purpose to do.

5. Whatsoever he actually permits, he did never purpose to hinder. There must be a correspondency between his purpose as to *permissa*, things that are permitted by him, and the things permitted, as there is with reference to *effecta;* between his purpose, and the thing that he effects. Again, further,

6. Whatsoever God might, righteously and consistently with all the other attributes and perfections of his being, effect and do, or permit and suffer, that he might righteously resolve and purpose to do, and resolve and purpose to permit and not to hinder. Whatsoever it is that is consistent with his wisdom, holiness, and goodness, actually to do, it is equally consistent with his wisdom, and with his righteousness, and with his goodness, to purpose to do, even from eternity. And whatsoever was consistent with his wisdom, and righteousness, and goodness to permit it and not to hinder, it is equally consistent with his wisdom, righteousness, and goodness, to purpose not to hinder it; and so, to have a permissive decree concerning it, if he saw meet and fit to do it. And,

7. Whatsoever, in respect to God's actions and purposes, would imply any thing of imperfection, we must sever and remove from him; whatsoever would imply perfection, we must assert and ascribe to him. Hereupon, if it would be a plain, manifest imperfection to act incogitantly, unadvisedly, or to do unintended things, as it were casually and at random, without a foregoing intention or purpose; if that, I say, would be an imperfection, we ought most carefully to sever it from God, and never think it possible for him to act so; that is, incogitantly, unadvisedly, without any foregoing intention or purpose; and if it be a perfection, to act according to wisdom, and counsel, and judgment, and steady purpose, we must by all means assert it concerning God, and ascribe it to him in reference to all his purposes and actions.

These are general propositions that do lay some foundation for more particular ones, which are to follow. And herein, though it is very true that God hath his purposes and decrees concerning all things: "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will," yet, we shall more especially consider his purposes concerning men. You know that must be our business: and therein too, though he hath purposes and decrees concerning all the actions of men, whether personally considered, or considered as members of a community, lesser or larger, civil or ecclesiastical, concerning churches, concerning states and kingdoms, their successions, their rises, their continuance, their periods; though he have, I say, purposes concerning all these, and all within the compass of the text, "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," yet, I shall chiefly keep my discourse to those purposes that concern our spiritual and eternal state. And so shall lay down briefly the other and *particular* propositions. As,

1. That God did, undoubtedly, purpose to make such a world as this, for we find he hath made it; and he doth nothing that he did not purpose to do.

2. He did purpose to make such a creature as man, and place him here; for we also find, so he hath done.

3. He did purpose to create man in an innocent state, and proportionably good and happy unto the innocency and purity in which he did create him. For his word tells us, that he did create him so. He "made man upright." And it gives us an account of the circumstances of his condition when he made him, though briefly, yet as far as was necessary. And,

4. He did not purpose to confirm him at first in that good state wherein he made him, so as to make it impossible for him to fall; for we find he did fall, and is in a lapsed state: therefore, it was purposed that his fall should not be prevented, that it should not be hindered; though none doubt, but that he that made man could have made him as well impeccable, without any possibility of sinning, as he did make him sinless at present, without any thing of depravedness by sin.

5. It is evident, God did not purpose to leave fallen man to perish universally in his apostate, fallen state: for we hear of, and know, the methods and appointed means for the recovery and salvation of fallen creatures, of fallen men, which are offered to our view in the word of God.

6. He did decree or purpose to send his own Son to be a Redeemer and Saviour unto lost and perishing creatures, to be born, to live in this world, to die in pursuance of that reconciling design, and to overcome death; and in his

resurrection and conquest over death, to erect a kingdom into which he would collect, as the voluntary subjects of it, all those that should resign and yield themselves to him, put themselves under his governing power, and submit themselves to his saving mercy, at once. And the substance of this we have given us as the matter of a divine decree, in that Psalm ii. 7. "I will declare the decree. The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Very true it is, that that is not directly meant of the nativity of our Lord: we find the apostle expounds it otherwise, (Acts xiii. 33.) "We declare to you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made to our fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the 2d Psalm," (the most express quotation in the New Testament out of the Old,) "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee: and as concerning that he raised him from the dead *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David." It was in pursuance of a divine, eternal purpose and decree, that this was said, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee:" that is, when he raised him from the dead, when he begot him again out of the grave, and by that glorious regeneration, he did then put upon him that high and excellent title, (that was fundamental to the other glorious one that did ensue thereupon,) "The first-begotten from the dead: the Prince of the kings of the earth," Rev. i. 5. But yet, though that be not the thing directly there spoken of, as the matter of the divine decree, God's first bringing him into this world, yet, that being the matter of a divine decree, (to wit,) his dying, and his conquering death, and being begotten (as it were) a second time, or I may say a third time, out of the grave, out of the womb, as his goings forth from eternity in respect of his Deity, and as he was, as man, at first brought out of the womb of the virgin, yet, even that earlier parturition must be supposed here to have been the matter of a divine purpose and decree too. And so other scriptures do speak of the whole complex of this matter, as falling under a divine purpose. "That he verily was foreordained," (as Acts ii. 23.—1 Pet. i. 20. and onwards,) foreordained to every thing he did, and foreordained to every thing he suffered, in pursuance of that great saving design and errand upon which it was determined he should come into this world. And this is that which the context here doth more specially lead us to insist upon. For when the apostle speaks of God doing all things according to the counsel of his own will, he tells us more distinctly what that counsel of his will did concern, and that is in the foregoing verse: "That, in the dispensation of the fulness of time, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in him." This was the great thing that lay, as the substratum in the divine counsel, to collect and gather all things in Christ, to constitute him as supreme and universal Head to this creation. And whereas, all things were shattered and broken in the apostacy, there was now to be a recapitulation, and gathering all things under one head again, as you see in the close of the chapter. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." And this, that was primarily here designed in this context, is that which God hath done according to the counsel of his will. "He doth all things after the counsel of his own will;" but this peculiarly, the sending of his Son into this world, and the establishing of him as the Prince of those reduced from the state of apostacy. As the great destroyer of souls was the prince of the apostacy, the head of the apostate world, upon which account he is called "the god of this world," (2 Cor. iv. 4.) and "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience," so was our blessed Lord to be the head of that community that should be collected and gathered out of this world. And this was the great mystery of his will, which he purposed in himself, as the foregoing context is, "In the dispensation of the fulness of time" (by the Christian economy, that is the word there used for dispensation) to collect and gather all under this one glorious head, to recover a people, and raise up a glorious structure, a church, out of a ruining and perishing world, by the Son and eternal God, who was made, in pursuance of this design, the universal Head, also Head over all things, but with special reference to his church. And so was this the matter of divine pleasure; to do this thing in the fulness of time, according as we find in Gal. iv. 4. "In the fulness of time, God sent his Son, born of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law: that we might receive the adoption of sons." And as this is the most undoubted matter of divine purpose and decree, so it ought to be the matter of the highest joy and rejoicing; greater than can be expressed by an annual solemnity; such as should run through our lives, and be the matter of every day's rejoicing with us, according to what the first report of this glorious work was, when the womb of divine counsel did teem, and bring forth this glorious birth; when he brought forth the first-begotten into the world, he saith, "Let all the angels of God worship him:" and they did publish the joyful proclamation of it from heaven, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace good will towards men:" the greatest indication of divine good will, and the most significant that ever was known, or ever could be thought, that is, that when men had severed themselves from God, cut themselves off from him; and the world was sunk into a universal oblivion of him, destitute of all inclination towards him, and all interest in him, unapt to make any inquiries after him, or to say, "Where is our God, our Maker?" that they should be so surprisingly told of Emmanual, God with us: that God should so strangely descend, put on man, be manifested in the flesh, there was the greatest mystery of godliness, that ought to fill heaven and earth with joy and with wonder. For when something like this was apprehended, but upon mistake, in what transports were these pagans! "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men," Acts xiv. 11. And presently they offer at sacrificing. What matter of joy and wonder then, that the glorious, eternal Son of God, should make that descent, that kind descent, into this world of ours! Because we were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself likewise takes part with us of the same: (Heb. ii. 14.) and because we dwelt in fleshly tabernacles, he himself resolved to erect a tabernacle like one of ours: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" (John i. 14.) did tabernacle among us in the expression: this being, as it were, his very sense in this vouchsafement and undertaking: "There is a company of poor creatures that dwell in flesh, or buried in it, rather than do dwell in it, and their flesh is more their grave than their mansion; well! because they are partakers of flesh and blood, and have tabernacles made of flesh, "I will go and set my tabernacle by theirs: they dwell in fleshly tents, and I will go and dwell in such a tent among them." The Son of God was made flesh, did dwell and tabernacle among us in such flesh as we inhabit, excepting the impurity and sinfulness of it. O! what matter of glory and exultation is this! How full of triumph should it fill the souls of men, that such a hope should arise to them, even as a resurrection from the dead! Now we see that God's kindness towards the children of men, is not shut up in everlasting oblivion; it is not suspended from any further exercise for ever; what a glorious instance of it is here!

But as this is matter of highest joy, it ought to be matter of purest joy too. And there is not a little caution requisite in this case. The numerous appearance here this day signifies to me, that there is a great propension to keep on foot an annual solemnity upon this account: and as this is expressive of a disposition to rejoice, or to somewhat of rejoicing, I pray take these cautions in reference to it,—that it be not ignorant rejoicing, that it be not carnal rejoicing, and above all, that it be not wicked rejoicing, more grossly and more sensually wicked.

(1.) Let it not be ignorant rejoicing. Rejoice we may, and must, in such a thing, that according to divine purpose and decree, Christ came into the world, and the Son of God became man, that he might become a sacrifice, and that thereupon he might become a glorious King. To rejoice in this abstractly, that Christ was once born into this world, without understanding or ever desiring to understand what he was thus born for, what was the end of this manifestation and appearance of him in human flesh; this

doth unbecome men, and much more doth it unbecome Christians, it being to rejoice for they know not what. For what is it to us, if we abstract from the ends of the incarnation of the Son of God? if we subject not to the proper ends of it? What is it to us that Christ lived here on earth, somewhat above sixteen hundred years ago, and to rejoice in that he did so, without considering and understanding what it was for, upon what account it was, and with what design? This, I say, is but the joy of a fool: to rejoice in that, the true reason whereof our own gross and voluntary ignorance hides from us; to rejoice when we hear that he came as a Saviour, without considering what he was to save us from, (though we are told at the same time,) when we hear of his being called Emmanuel, God with us, of his being called Jesus, (Matt. i. latter end,) because he should save his people from their sins; to rejoice in Christ, even as an incarnate Saviour, without any thoughts of this, that I am to be saved by him, from that which made the distance, and continues the distance, between God and me; I am to be saved by him from the impurities of my own heart and nature; I am to be saved by him from the vile carnality that hath depressed and sunk my soul, so as never to mind God, never to desire after him, never to delight in him, to have inclinations to pray to him: I say, to rejoice ignorantly in these respects, is to rejoice presumptuously, for we know not what, and over-confidently, against the direction and instruction given to us in that second Psalm. Because God hath declared the decree concerning him, "Thou art my Son," and hath set him as his King upon his holy hill of Zion; and hath resolved to subdue the nations under him, and give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, therefore to serve this mighty King with fear, and rejoice before him with trembling, that is the instruction that is given us. There is a pure and holy Deity hath become incarnate, the Son of God became, here, a God among us, with that resolution, not to bear with the wickedness of the world, and let men run on in their old and wonted course; but to revive God's memorial and the awe and fear of him in the hearts of men; and not to let men live prayerless lives, as they did, and without God in the world, as they did; here was his great design. But now to rejoice in Christ's having been born into the world, without ever considering the design of it; this is not only mean and brutish, but insolent and presumptuous, to rejoice in the thoughts of so sacred and great a thing as this, without having hearts touched and impressed with the apprehension of the pure and holy end of it. And,

(2.) Take heed of rejoicing carnally, with such a kind of joy as shall be exclusive of, or that shall exclude, that spiritual sense we ought to have of so high and mighty an undertaking and intendment as this. How vain and how grossly incongruous and absurd is it to say, that because the Son of God came into this world upon such a design as you have heard, "Therefore, let us eat and drink and be merry; therefore, let us pamper and adorn this flesh;" forgetting that it is inhabited (even this mortal flesh) by an immortal spirit; and forgetting that even this flesh of ours is claimed and challenged to be a temple for the Holy Ghost, and therein made conformed to the flesh of Christ, which is itself such a Temple, and the model according to which all Christian temples, that is, a temple in a temple, in every Christian, ought to be formed. "Know ye not," saith the apostle, "that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" (1 Cor. vi. 19.) and they are to be indulged and cared for accordingly. Christ speaks it of his own body, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days!" As he was, even in his human nature, and in his body, a Temple of the living God, so is every Christian to be; and therefore are these bodies of ours to be cared for in subserviency to this design. This body of mine, it is to be the living, animated temple of the Divine, Living Spirit. And what! is it then to be indulged, to be pampered, to be adorned with a fine dress, and is this all that I am to design concerning it? I am to design in it conformity to the great Original Temple, the Son of God. But to rejoice with such a sort of festivity as is only grateful to carnal and fleshly inclination, without any thought of being recovered and brought back to God by this Christ, of having my soul refined, and body and soul made meet to glorify the great God whose they both are; to joy without any thought of this, (I say,) looks more like a pagan than a Christian; and is much more suitable to the paganish than the Christian state. It ought to be considered, Christ took our flesh to make us partakers of his Spirit; he took our nature to make us partakers of his divine nature, escaping the corruptions that are in this world through lust; and to please ourselves in the thoughts of Christ having been born, without any thought of this, is such a carnality as affronts the very pretence that we make of rejoicing in the thoughts of it, that the Son of God did descend and come down to associate himself, and dwell among the sons of men in this world, and to suffer for them, and so to prepare them to dwell with God in the other world.

(3.) But lastly, Take heed of such a kind of rejoicing as is more grossly and sensually wicked, even in itself and in its own nature: that is, to make the season when we, uncertainly, apprehend Christ to have been born into this world, the season of letting loose to all manner of looseness and debauchery, in direct contradiction to, and defiance of, the design of his coming: that is, when we know the Son of God was manifest to take away sin, and to destroy the works of the devil, as the expressions are, (1 John iii. 5, 8.) that we should make it our business to indulge and fulfil those very lusts which he came to destroy and dissolve, and make cease out of the world: what an affront is this to him whose memorial we pretend to celebrate! That is to make that which we imagine to be the day of his birth, to be the day of his most ignominious death, by crucifying afresh to ourselves the Son of God, and putting him to open shame; as if we would proclaim to the world that the design of the Son of God's descent into it, was to give men the liberty of being safely wicked, that they might throw off all restraint, and without any fear or dread of what should follow, abandon themselves to all manner of wickedness, to fulfil the impure lusts of a corrupt, depraved nature, till sin, being finished, should end in eternal death: and so make the Christian religion an inconsistency with itself, and to represent the matter, as if Christ came into the world, not to make men Christians, but to exempt them from being so; and not to destroy sin out of the world, but to exclude and shut out Christianity. As if he came into the world that there might never be any such thing as Christianity in it, that he might bring it about, that men might, with safety and impunity, live in the highest rebellion against the very laws of that Christ by whom they pretend to expect salvation.

But this is one great thing which we see lies under divine purpose and decree, according to the counsel of his will, the sending of his Son into the world to be a Redeemer and Saviour of sinners, by living among them, dying for them, conquering death, ascending to heaven, and erecting that kingdom by which he is to govern the redeemed community unto everlasting life. And by how much the more apparently this was matter of divine purpose according to eternal counsel, so much the higher and more dreadful wickedness must it needs be, to indulge in ourselves such a disposition of spirit, or so to shape our course, that both shall lie counter to the divine counsels in all this. That is, when Christ did not come into the world by accident, but by design and by purpose, according to the wisest counsel, and eternal and most stable counsel, we should set ourselves, as much as in us is, to overturn the whole frame of that divine and eternal counsel of heaven; that is, that it shall never take place with me, "I will never be subject to him, I will never know him, never come into union with him, never resign up myself unto him; I will be mine own still, and live still at the utmost distance from God and defiance of him." By how much the more apparent this was the product of the divine will according to counsel, so more fearful and horrid must be the wickedness that stands in direct opposition thereto.

LECTURE II.*

BUT now to go on with other particular propositions about the decrees of God.

7. That those terms of life and death for sinners, which God hath actually settled and published in his Gospel, those we may be sure he did intend and purpose should be the terms of life and death unto us. Whatsoever (as you have heard in the general propositions) God actually doth, we may be sure he intended and purposed to do. What he doth, he doth willingly when he doth it. No force can be put upon him; he never doth any thing against his will, and what he once willed he doth always will, for there can be with him no new will. Therefore, whereas he hath enacted and published such things as these to the world, as the terms of life and death to sinners; that whosoever believes shall be saved, but whosoever believeth not shall be damned; that he gave his only-begotten Son with that design, that they who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; that they that believed not, are condemned already: they that believe, have everlasting life; they that believe not, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on them: that sinners are to repent, that their sins may be blotted out; that they that repent shall not all alike perish; (Luke xiii. 3.) that the things that eye hath not seen, that the ear hath not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man to conceive, are all prepared for them that love God: (I Cor. ii. 9.) but, they that love him not, that love not the Lord Jesus, are so many *anathema, accursed*, till he come; (I Cor. xvi. 22.) that Christ shall be the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him; (Heb. v. 9.) but, that he shall come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of his Son; (2 Thess. i. 8.) these, I say, being the declared terms of life and death to sinners, enacted and actually published to the world as such, these you may be sure God did intend and purpose should be such. His purpose was eternal, and a decree, as that word was explained. This is out of all question, that such terms of life or death to sinners as have been mentioned, are the matter of divine, eternal decree; he did always intend they should be so. Whence it is obvious to collect, that he can have no contrary decree, no contrary purpose. That is, wheresoever his pleasure is published and made known, so as to be capable to be understood about these matters, God will never deal with men upon other terms. There can be no repugnant purpose to any such purpose as this; that is to say, that he will save any whether they believe or no, or though they finally persist in obstinate infidelity and impenitency and rebellion against him to the last. It is never to be supposed, that he will do such a thing without decreeing it, so that he should have ever decreed it against such a decree as this. And so, on the other hand, that he will ever finally condemn, or hath ever decreed or purposed finally to condemn, any that shall believe, that shall repent, that shall love him above all, and finally subject themselves to his government, whensoever they are brought to do so in Christ: therefore, it is vain and unscriptural, without foundation any way, for men to embolden themselves on the one hand, "Let me be never so wicked, or never so careless, I may be saved at last for all that; I do not know but God hath decreed to save me." Or, that any should torment themselves on the other hand with afflicting thoughts, "Let me do what I will, if I never so earnestly set myself, and seek help from heaven, that I may believe, that I may repent, that I may have my heart changed, renewed, and brought to love God, and subject myself to him in Christ, yet, there may be a decree against me, and I may perish for all this." There is no reason, no foundation on the one hand or on the other, for any such imagined decree of God, against these plain declared decrees of his; they are (as to what is compendious and comprehensive of all) final believers who lie under the decree or purpose of salvation; and final infidels who lie under the decree or purpose of condemnation.

So much, in general, is most certainly decreed, that they who believe shall be saved, and they that believe not, shall perish. But I further add,

8. God hath not purposed this in the general, that he will save such as are wrought up to a compliance with his declared known terms of salvation; but whensoever he doth actually enable any to believe and repent, we may conclude that he did eternally intend so to do. And whosoever he doth actually conserve in a safe state, that is, enables them continually to believe, (it is enough to instance in this one thing, with which the rest are so essentially connected, that they are all implied, if this one be actually to be found, and even in the very mention of this one,) if he actually enable any to believe to the saving of their souls unto their final salvation, he did always from eternity intend so to enable them. And so, he hath not only decreed, or intended certain indefinite and undeterminate species to life and salvation, but particular persons, as is most evident many ways.

(1.) Scripture is most express in it; if you look to the foregoing verses, divers of them in this same chapter, you will find it In what a transport, towards the beginning, do you find the apostle blessing God. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed *us* with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, (or things) in Christ. According as he hath chosen *us* in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unblamable before him in love; having predestinated *us* to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself; according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made *us* accepted in the beloved." And in this same 11th verse, where the text lies, "in whom also *we* have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." And nothing, again, can be plainer, than that known and famous text, Rom. viii. 30. "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." This is a chain that can never be broken; and equally expresseth that in the 2 Thess. ii. 13. where the apostle gives solemn thanks, even for them, that God had chosen *them* unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. And in that, 1 Pet. i. 2. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus." These (as it is observable, and was told you before, in those more general propositions) do manifestly connect means and end together. But they do ascertain both, concerning some, and not leave the matter indefinite and undetermined, as if he did in the dark make and form purposes with himself, without discerning, at the same time, who should comply with his pleasure, as to such terms of life, and who should not. And besides so express scriptures, the matter is,

(2.) Evident in itself, that whomsoever he doth actually enable to comply with such terms of life and salvation, he did purpose and decree to enable. For when he doth so, when he gives a man faith, when he gives him repentance, which are most expressly said to be the gift of God: to you it is given to believe and suffer; (Phil. i. 29.) and Christ is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, Acts v. 31. I say, when he doth actually give these gifts, doth he give them with his will, or against his will? Is it to be supposed, that he should give them, and not will to give them? What could so impose upon him that he should give what he was not willing to give? But, if once he was willing, and if then he was willing to give such a gift, he was always willing; for there cannot be with him a new will, and therefore he was from eternity willing. And again,

(3.) That matter might be further argued, from what Scripture speaketh most expressly too, that as to that great and most comprehensive instance of faith in the Son of God; whosoever do receive Christ and believe in his name, when God enables them so to do, he regenerates them; "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name," John i. 12. And then, it is immediately subjoined in the 13th verse, "Who were born not

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of flesh nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God." But if he do regenerate any, he doth it most willingly: "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth," James i. 18. Agreeable to the expression in the text, "He doth all things according to the counsel of his own will." He did with counsel will to regenerate whomsoever he regenerates. And,

(4.) It is altogether unimaginable, that God should do a thing so far exceeding all expectation, and even all wonder, as the sending of his own Son; he that was the brightness of his own glory, and the express image of his person, the Heir of all things, by whom he made the worlds; to be incarnate, to put on man, and to die upon a tree, so ignominiously, a spectacle to angels and men; and to leave it an undetermined thing whether any should be the better for it, yea, or no; or rather, to leave it certain that none ever should be the better for it. For most certain it is, that as to those great terms of life and salvation, none can ever be the better, if he do not, by his overpowering grace, influence minds and hearts, and work them up to a compliance with those terms, and work and effect them in them. The case is vastly different in respect to spiritual good, and in reference to the opposite evil; where, as to wicked actions, and a continued course of them, or any particular act in such and such circumstances, men will always determine themselves; they are apt and prone enough to do so. If they can, in such circumstances, they will do wickedly; but in reference to any spiritual action that is good and holy, and of a saving tendency, there is not so much of an indifferency, but a most fixed aversion, which nothing but the power of divine grace can conquer and overcome. Nothing but the almighty power of grace can make an enemy-heart become friendly towards God and towards his Christ, can vanquish the malignity of an obstinate infidelity, can mollify an obdurate, hard heart, and make it dissolve and melt as in repentance it must. This is, therefore, altogether an unimaginable thing, that God should do what did so far exceed all expectation, and even all wonder, as to send his own eternal Son, to die upon a cross, and leave it uncertain whether any should ever be the better for it, or rather, certain that none ever should. And it is again,

(5.) Very unreasonable to think that the great God should have among men no objects of special favour; and it were foolish to suppose that it should be a reflection upon him to have it so. As it was formerly told you, it belongs only to a good governor, and even to the best that can be supposed, to deal equally with all, and kindly and favourably where he pleaseth. We are to distinguish matters of right, and matters of peculiar favour. Matters of right will be dispensed and administered with an equal hand, matters of special favour according to good pleasure, as it is expressed again and again, in the context. And plain it is, that there can be no natural right, which any creature can claim at the hand of God. Whatsoever becomes matter of right, from him to them, must only be by grace, by promise. He cannot be a debtor to his creature, till he makes himself so: and the promises by which he makes himself so, they "are all yea and amen in Christ;" (2 Cor. i. 20.) only upon his account, only for his sake. Whatsoever there is that comes within the compass of a promise, for the encouragement of sinners to return and come to God, it will all be made good to a tittle upon his account that is worthy, all promises being "yea and amen" in him. But whatsoever is above promise, more than promise, is all from mere εὐδοκια, the *good pleasure* of his goodness. It can be resolved into nothing else, turn we the matter in our thoughts never so long. He will make good all that was promised to every one to a tittle; all unpromised, peculiar favour, that is dispensed according to the good pleasure of his goodness; even as his promises themselves at first were. And,

(6.) Lastly, It is very evident, that as to communications of grace and favour, God doth dispense very differently; and therefore, must be understood to intend so to do, and to have always intended it. As in the parable of the talents, (though parabolical scriptures do not give ground of argument as to every thing in them, yet they do as to their main scope,) he gives to one ten talents, to another five, to another one, as he pleaseth; he dispenseth as he pleaseth, wherein he hath not particularly obliged himself. But further,

9. If yet he do actually, in a way of common grace, superadd more, wheresoever he hath given any thing of it, upon the due improvement of that, then we may conclude he hath always intended so to do; this was his pleasure, and his eternal purpose. If that be actually his rule, "to him that hath shall be given," (you know how *hath* is to be taken here, that hath so as to improve what he hath,) he shall still have more; if this be actually the rule and measure of his proceedings, it was always his purpose it should be so. And so it must be understood to have been his purpose, even in them that do finally perish, yet still to give them more of gracious communications in the way of common grace, upon the improvement of what they had; and they perish as not improving what was vouchsafed and afforded them, according to the tenor of that rule. They do not finally perish, as never having received any thing from the hands of God, in a way of grace, that had a tendency and leadingness in it to their better state, but they finally perish as neglecting and resisting such overtures as have been made to them. What the case was with the old world, before the flood, we must still suppose to be the common case among men. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," Gen. vi. 3. It had been striving, and it is generally striving more or less; and especially where God doth afford the more peculiar manifestations of himself, as he did to that people whom he severed from the rest of the world, to be more appropriate to him. We have many passages that speak of the presence and of the operations of the Divine Spirit, among that people. The Spirit of the Lord caused them to rest: He gave his Spirit to instruct them, Isaiah lxiii. 14. They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore, he turned to be their enemy, and fought against them: ver. 10. and that of dying Stephen, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and life, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do ye," Acts vii. 51. Now, there cannot be a resistance where there is no striving, and there can be no striving where there is not a counter-striving. When the Spirit, in its more common operation, is resisted, it retires in displeasure, often and most righteously, and gives to men, yields to them, that victory that shall be in the end fatal to them, undoing to them; many such victories undo them at last, and they perish by them. If he be actually working in men to will and to do of his own good pleasure, when he is ever so at work in any, he injects thoughts into their hearts, smites their minds with convictions, and their hearts many times with terrors; or if there be any more placid affections raised in them in any degree towards himself, or towards any divine thing, and the matter go no further than a loseable taste, that may vanish and pass away, it is plain he so far went of good pleasure; and if he did that which he did of good pleasure, then it was before his good pleasure, and always his good pleasure, and eternally his good pleasure, to proceed so far with such and such; so as in this case there can be no pretence to say, if he go no higher, that wrong is done to them with whom he went no higher. It must be justly said, "Friend, I do thee no wrong," even to the most careless neglecter and the most contemptuous abuser of the grace of God, "Friend, I do thee no wrong." If he do proceed higher, and to less vincible workings with some, there is no cause any man's eye should be evil, because his eye is good. He is Lord of his own grace, he may do what he will with his own. What he hath to dispense and dispose of, is his, and they to whom he is to dispose so and so are his, and there is no pretence of wrong to any, that more is not done for them, for whom more was done than they could lay any original claim to; for it was all of mercy that there was any offer or overture made at all, or that the case was so stated before, as that it might have been possible, if it had not been through their own wicked neglect, that they that perish might have advanced in the way of salvation, according to his method, still further and further, so as not to make their own final salvation a thing impossible upon any other terms, than their own wilful neglect and final refusal. But I again further add,

10. That such as live quite without the sound of the Gospel, and to whom every thing of supernatural revela-

tion hath never been vouchsafed or any thing of it, how God hath determined to deal with them, and the infants of such, he hath not yet declared further his pleasure to us expressly, than it was needful for us to know and understand. And therefore, it would be either vain or over-bold curiosity to determine positively in their case, and it is very unreasonable and foolish, over-solicitously to inquire about it. It is enough for us to understand and know upon what terms God will deal with us, according to those circumstances wherein he hath placed and set us; he hath placed us under the dispensation of his Gospel, wherein all things are made plain and evident to us, that concern us in reference to our present and eternal state, and will deal with us according to those known and published terms, which stand in so clear a light before our eyes; and with all others according to those measures they have had. It is enough for us to understand and know what we may, as our case is stated, expect from God, and what God doth expect from us. And it would be very unreasonable, and uncharitable, for us to trouble ourselves with further inquiries, and it would be very bold to venture on rash determinations, in those more obscure things, and wherein we are so little concerned. These are to pass among the arcana, that secret things belong to God, when revealed things belong to us, and our children after us, as they shall come to be revealed to them, Deut. xxix. 29. A passage placed, as it were, on purpose to caution and warn too busy and bold inquirers, and that, even in matters of unspeakably less concernment than the eternal salvation of souls. As suppose, that the people, for that is the case there supposed and referred to, who had been so peculiar to God, taken nigh to him, above, and from, all other people and nations under heaven, should apostatize and revolt from him, and draw down vindictive judgments, and destructive ones, upon themselves, and inquiry be made how it comes to pass, that such a people, so near to God, should be so treated and dealt withal, their land laid waste and made a wilderness, and nothing to be found but marks of divine vengeance, where such a people, so favoured by heaven, did dwell, what is the meaning of all this? Why, they forsook the Lord their God! But that might have been prevented. Why did he not hold them to him? "Secret things belong unto God, but revealed things to us and our children." So is that sad and dismal state concluded and shut up at last, with that seal upon it! That, therefore, I would leave with you, as all I think needful to say, with reference to their case who lie without the compass of superadded divine revelation. Again I further add,

11. That whereas faith and its concomitants are ever to be found in that, which appears to be at length the subject of God's purpose of saving souls; and final infidelity, with its concomitants, are the characters of the subjects of the contrary purpose, a purpose to condemn with everlasting destruction; these must very differently be understood to be so. Faith, for instance, and so of the rest of its concomitants, are never looked upon by God as any causes, or conditions, or inducements, any way, of his purpose to save any. These are by his grace to be found in the subjects, in those that he will save; but they are no inducements to pass any such determination concerning them. It is honourable to him to save such: and, even in the nature of the thing, they only are capable of final salvation and blessedness, in whom such characters are to be found: for they can never be happy in union with the eternal truth and goodness, who are habitually averse in their temper, and opposite to the one and the other. If happiness result from such a union, then they, in whom there is a prevailing final aversion to eternal truth and goodness, are incapable of any such felicity, as is to result from a union with these. But it is no motive or inducement to God, to intend to save such a one, because he will be a believer, or he will be a penitent person. That he is a believer, that he is a penitent person, that he is a lover of him, and that he is obedient to his Son, these are the effects of his grace, and of his good pleasure, and so he is moved in this case by nothing without himself. But the case must be understood to be otherwise, as to those that he intends finally to punish, and to punish with everlasting destruction. That is, he doth resolve to deal with them suitably to the state of things between him and them, and with himself. If any require, why there should be a difference, why he should be moved to purpose so and so, in reference to them that perish, (which purpose we are not to consider abstractly as it lies in God alone, for so it is not a distinct thing from his own essence, of which there can be no cause; but we are to consider it with a reference to the effects and to the objects, and of that relation there is really a cause, and so there is a just cause, for the condemnation of them that perish, even from the creature; but there can be no cause from the creature, of them that are saved,) I say, if you will have the reasons assigned of the difference, they are obvious and plain, especially these two.

(1.) That there is no natural connexion between the imperfect faith and holiness of the saints, and their eternal felicity; no natural connexion, I say, at all between them. But there is a most natural connexion between the infidelity, enmity against God, and reigning wickedness, and eternal ruin and everlasting misery. No man can say that these two are naturally connected, an imperfect faith in God, through Christ, and imperfect holiness, and final felicity and blessedness. These are not so naturally connected that the one must arrive to the other. But there is a most plain, natural connexion between infidelity and disbelief of divine truth, enmity against divine goodness, repudiation and refusal of the offers and tenders thereof, and eternal misery; so as that the one of them cannot but be the other. Wickedness must be misery, sin persisted in to the last must be destruction, it cannot be otherwise; sin when it is finished can be nothing but death. "To be carnally minded is death:" it is indeed said, "to be spiritually minded is life and peace;" but that is by an intervening divine constitution. And though there be a constitution in the other case too, yet there is a most natural connexion between total prevailing wickedness, reigning iniquity, and misery; to which the supervening constitution is added to an indication of the righteous judgment of God, that he doth but let the thing be with such as it is. They love death; and he only lets them have what they love, and what they choose: he doth only not interpose in their case to break the connexion. And,

(2.) There is this manifest difference too; that as there is a natural connexion between wickedness and misery, whereas there is none between imperfect faith and holiness and eternal felicity, otherwise than what God hath graciously made; so there is in final, reigning, persevering wickedness, the highest desert of eternal misery; whereas, there is in imperfect faith and holiness no desert of eternal life and blessedness. And none that consider, will think this strange, that when a man can never deserve (much less by what is merely gratuitously wrought in him) life and blessedness; yet, by continuing, persevering wickedness, he may deserve to perish. That imperfect good that is wrought in him, and which he owes not to himself, can never deserve life and blessedness, for him. But total wickedness, yea, or any wickedness, can deserve death, can deserve for a man's being left to be finally miserable, and his falling under divine *vindicta, vengeance:* this is a divine nemesis, what is fit and righteous, what is fit the righteous Judge of all the earth should do; even animadvert upon the wickedness, and testify his own just abhorrence and detestation of it, so that there is a vast difference between these two: that though faith and holiness be in those that shall be saved, and so are ever to be found in the subject of God's purpose to save, as characteristical of the subject, but are not inducements, or causes or motives thereof unto God; yet, wheresoever God hath purposed to condemn, their wickedness is a just motive of that purpose, so terminated, so related to the creature, that is, to suffer, and to the suffering that he is to undergo. There is something justly causative in this; and there is nothing more strange in all this, than what God hath himself, in his word, so plainly told us, that men's destruction is of themselves, but their help in order to salvation should be found in him alone, Hos. xiii. 9. It is no unsuitable or strange thing, that God should be eyed as the Author of all life, and all grace, and all blessedness, and of life and of felicity for ever. And, that sinners should be looked upon as the fountains of all evil, and all darkness, and all impurity, and all misery to themselves only. God

must determine men only to that good by which they are to be led on gradually to a blessed, safe, and happy state. But to that evil that tends to ruin and final destruction, men have it in themselves to determine themselves. More is yet to be added to illustrate this.

LECTURE III.*

But before I proceed further, I think fit to premonish thus much, and declare to you, that I would not, as to these matters, be understood to deny every thing that I do not assert about them, nor to assert whatsoever I do not deny; for my design is only to propose to you what is plain, and what is useable and may be improved unto the common purposes of Christianity. There are a great many things besides, that many have concerned themselves to dispute to and fro, which I think it not at all needful or useful to be brought into such discourse.

But now, that the matter last insisted on may yet be clearer and more plain. If we speak of this natural bodily life, you can very easily understand that that is in any man's power, it is within the compass of human power that ordinarily men have, for a man to give himself a mortal wound, but, having done so, it is not within the compass of human power to heal him again; and that, in reference to the natural connexion between the one of those forementioned things and the other, and in reference to the moral and legal connexion that is asserted between them; we may again illustrate it by resemblance of it to the concernments of this natural bodily life. It is in the power of any one that dares venture to be so far criminal, to deserve death at the hands of the prince and the law, whereas, it may be no way in his power, when he hath done so, to deserve the prince's pardon, and to have his forfeited life given him again. These are things, in themselves, plain to any understanding. And now, whereas the text hath plainly told us, that God works all things after the counsel of his own will, this doth manifestly imply, that the determinations must be correspondent to the aptitudes of things, and most especially to the apt agreement which they shall hold with the universal perfection of his own nature. Now it is no blemish to the perfection of the Divine nature, when things are so and so connected in themselves, naturally and morally, to let things in many instances stand just as in themselves they are. This is no reflection on the divine perfection; that is, where there is a real connexion between wickedness and misery, both natural and moral or legal, it is no reflection upon the perfection of the Divine nature, in many instances to let that connexion be as it is. And whereas, there is no connexion between imperfect faith and holiness, and perfect felicity and blessedness, (there is, in reality, no connexion between these,) it is no blemish to the divine perfection (if there be really, and if there be in nature, and as yet any other way between these two, no connexion) to make one by grace, in what instances he pleaseth; that being done (as the Gospel tells us) upon the Redeemer's account, who it was predetermined should so order the course of his management, even to dying itself, and in dying, that no divine perfection should reluctate or reclaim against such a connexion as this; a connexion to be made by grace when before it was not, when really it was not, between that imperfect faith and holiness that some should be enabled to in this world, and their future felicity and blessedness in the other world. All comes to this sum, that is, that we can both effect and deserve our own death and misery; but we can neither effect nor deserve life and blessedness: that must be owing to divine favour and grace. And the case (as hath been often said) is vastly different in dispensing of punishments and free favours. It being no reflection upon the best government that can be supposed, either to inflict deserved punishments, or to dispense undeserved favours. Neither of these can reflect on the best and most perfect government that can be thought. I now go on, and add further,

12. That the assertion of a decree of reprobation, antecedent to a decree of condemnation for infidelity and wickedness persisted in to the last, is that which may seem agreeable to the imperfect mind of man; but we cannot be so sure that it will be any way agreeable unto the most perfect mind of God, in which there can be no such thing as first and second, and unto which all things lie open at once, even unto one entire and eternal view. We are very plainly told in Scripture, of some men's being ordained of old unto condemnation, in that 4th verse of the epistle of Jude; and in the same place we have the characters given us of them that are so: "ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, denying the only Lord God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." We are sure of such a decree as doth doom such, continuing such unto the last, unto condemnation and eternal perdition: but that there should be any decree concerning such, prior to this, that must suppose priority and posteriority *in eternum*. But *eternum non patitur novum, there can be no such thing as novity, newness, in eternity.* And therefore, being sure there is such a decree as this, and that this decree is eternal, we may be equally sure there can be no decree pre-existent to it; because every thing in God is co-eternal to him, and so this decree must be co-eternal unto God himself; and there can be nothing before God. And though it be very true, indeed, that many have taken much pains and given great exercise to their thoughts to assign and fix some certain order of former and latter, to the divine decrees, yet that doth only proceed from the imperfection of their minds; but we are sure it is impossible there can be any such thing as priority and posteriority in the Divine Mind; all things lying open to him at one eternal and entire view at once: so that whensoever he beholds and looks upon the subjects of final misery, he sees their character at the same time, and it cannot be otherwise. And again, I add,

13. That will, or decree, or purpose of God, by which he doth determine the salvation of any, it is, in the proper time and season, effective of whatsoever is pre-requisite thereunto: that is, if he have decreed he will save such and such, that same will of his is, in the proper season, effective of that faith, of that repentance, of that holiness, and of that perseverance which is requisite to their final salvation. But, on the other hand, God's will to punish any with future misery is not effective of what concurs to that, neither as naturally causing or deserving it. That is sin that doth both as you have heard; it doth both naturally cause it and deserve it too. And, if you ask here, "what is the reason of the difference; or is there not a parity of reason in both cases, that if his will doth effect what is necessary to the salvation of the one, his will should also effect what is necessary or doth any ways previously concur to the destruction of the other? The reason of the difference is most manifest upon these two accounts.

(1.) That sin is properly, as such, no effect, but a defect, and therefore, it doth not need an effective cause, but a defective only. But we will impute nothing of defectiveness to God; that can be found no where but in the creature. And,

(2.) That we can (sure any one may) apprehend it a great deal more congruous and suitable to the nature and honour of God, to make men believing and holy than to make them unbelieving and wicked. We can easily apprehend how well it agrees to the nature of God, and how subservient it is to the glory of God, to make men believing and holy; but no man can ever apprehend it agreeable to his nature, or subservient to his honour, to make men disbelieving and wicked. And therefore, as we make the difference, I cannot but apprehend you see reason enough why we should. And then further, take this,

14. That for these distinct states of blessedness and misery, unto which the will of God doth determine some, and leave others, they are the only states of men hereafter, and there is not a middle state between these two, though there be great intermediate degrees between the highest pitch of felicity and the lowest of misery. There are, I say, very great intermediate degrees, but not a middle state. This proposition hath two parts:—that there is no middle state, and yet—that there are great intermediate degrees, both of blessedness and misery.

* Preached January 15th, 1692.

(1.) As to the former part, that there is no intermediate or middle state between these two: it cannot, without very great absurdity, be so much as conceived there should be; besides that it is against the most express tenor of Scripture. I need not go about to quote texts to you. Look to the judgment of the great day, Matt. xxv. Men are judged but to two distinct states; all go one of these two ways. And it is unconceivable in itself that there should be a distinct intermediate state: for it would be to suppose that there can be such a thing as an intelligent, reasonable creature, having the use of his faculties, (which death, we have a great deal more reason to apprehend, doth promote rather than hinder,) and neither happy nor miserable. This is an unconceivable thing, equally unconceivable as it would be that there should be such a creature under a law, under government, (as reasonable creatures even as such, either possitive or natural at least,) that should be neither good nor bad, that should neither be obedient nor disobedient, holy nor wicked, and this you know to be an impossible thing. And that is enough as to the former part of the proposition. But then,

(2.) As to the latter part, that there are great intermediate degrees both of happiness and misery, that is plain from most express Scriptures. It is less needful to insist upon the degrees of blessedness in the other state, about which the Scripture is plain enough. There will be such a difference as there appears to be of one star differing from another star in glory, 1 Cor. xv. 41. But chiefly as to the differing degrees of misery; nothing is plainer from such passages in Scripture:—"They that know their master's will, and do it not, shall be beaten with many stripes; they that do it not, not knowing it, with fewer," Luke xii. 47, 48. "It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, than for Capernaum and Bethsaida, where so much Gospel light shone, and where so glorious works were done, to evidence and demonstrate the truth of the Gospel," Matt. xi. 22. And there is a sort among them that do perish, which do perish more dreadfully. Such and such, it is said, shall have their portion with hypocrites, (Matt. xxiv. 51.) which must be supposed the most fiery, in the worst and hottest hell. God will not lay upon men more than is right, that any should enter into judgment with him, as the expression in Job is. And therefore, we must suppose the case to be vastly different between them that live under the Gospel and them that do not. "They that sin without law, shall perish without law;" (Rom. ii. 12.) but with a gentler kind of perdition. But they that sin under the law, that is, under the divine revelation, for that is the meaning of the law there, supernatural, divine revelation, they shall be judged by it: not by that light which they have not, or those means of light which they never had, but by those which they have. But whereas, there will be very great degrees of difference in the states of the miserable hereafter, how great that difference will be, that we know not. It is enough that we know it will be very great; and therefore, among them that are miserable, none will be punished unsuitably to the demerit of their own sins. And this ought to have its weight with us, in order to the repressing of undue and hard thoughts concerning the divine proceedings with men in the final judgment: and so, concerning his purposes and determinations before, and from, eternity.

But I think it not necessary to say more to you by way of position; yet, there are sundry things that I shall add by way of *caution*. As,

1. That we should take heed of being too positive about any of these things, beyond the measure of divine revelation, or too curious in inquiring, or too contentious in disputing about such matters. Let us labour to lay a restraint upon our spirits as to these things. The matter requires it, and the divine word requires it.

2. Never depart from, nor doubt of, what God hath expressly revealed: in reference to what he hath expressly revealed, let us neither deviate nor doubt; but take heed lest we do. And,

3. Take heed that we do not oppose the secret and revealed will of God to one another, or allow ourselves so much as to imagine an opposition, or contrariety between them. And that ground being once firmly laid and stuck to, as it is impossible that there can be a will against a will in God, or that he can be divided from himself, or against himself, or that he should reveal any thing to us as his will that is not his will, (it being a thing inconsistent with his nature, and impossible to him to lie,) that being, I say, firmly laid, (as nothing can be firmer or surer than that,) then measure all your conceptions of the secret will of God, by his revealed will, about which you may be sure. But never measure your conceptions of his revealed will by his secret will; that is, by what you may imagine concerning that. For you can but imagine while it is secret, and so far as it is unrevealed.

4. Take heed of exalting any one divine perfection to the depressing of another, which men are too prone to do in their more fervent disputes about these matters. Great heat and zeal appear to vindicate such a particular divine perfection, without attending, that at the same time they intrench upon some other. It were very easy to give instances. Some on the one hand are so much for the magnifying of the goodness of God, his love and his justice, (as they think,) that they quite overlook his sovereignty, make nothing of that, but guide their thoughts by such measures, as if they thought that God was obliged by his goodness, or even by his justice, to do so with his own creatures, whom he hath so freely produced and brought forth into being out of nothing, as they may do with their fellow-creatures. As if God were bound to observe the same measures as they do, and had no more power and dominion over the works of his own hands, than they have over one another, who cannot give one another so much as a moment's breath. And on the other hand, some are so over-apt to exalt and magnify the divine sovereignty, that they quite forget to consider him as a wise, and righteous, and holy, and good God; in all these, the best and most perfect of beings. This is quite forgot, and scarce any other notion doth actually obtain; though otherwise these are not denied, are only not denied; but in the mean time they are overlooked; and so hardly any other notion is brought in view, or upon the stage, concerning God, than as of an almighty will; quite against the manifest scope and current of the Scripture every where, which makes all excellencies to be in him, and magnifies his wisdom, and his righteousness, and his love and goodness, at so high a rate, as you know. But to suppose the Divine nature to consist but in an omnipotent will, not guided by wisdom and counsel, as the text speaks, "He doth all things according to the counsel of his own will," is the strangest and most unshapen notion of God; and, in the tendency of it, most destructive to religion that can be conceived. It tends, indeed, to ingenerate in the minds of men a certain dread and horror: but is that the affection that is to influence religion, and to animate our worship? There can be no worship that doth not proceed from a dutiful reverential love; and agreeable hereunto must be still our notions of God. Heathens themselves, that speak at so high a rate (some of them) of the divine excellencies, and particularly of his goodness, exalting that far above his power, and above his knowledge, and above his wisdom; yet they, at the same time, say of him, "He is an impartial law;" and they comprehend in that, both goodness and righteousness, according to the strict measures whereof he manageth the whole course of his dispensation towards his creatures, and cannot but do so. He is a law that equally inclines every way, an impartial law he is to himself in all his dispensations. And indeed, such love and goodness in a ruler, as should include in it an insensibleness of injuries, and indignities, and affronts, it were stupidity; it were inconsistent with the proper governing qualifications which are requisite in any ruler whatsoever. And again,

5. Take this further by way of caution: Let us take very great heed that we do not, in reference to these things, so magnify human perfection as to depress divine; for that, in this affair, too many are apt to do; that is, to ascribe so much to the reason and will of man, as to detract most injuriously from the counsel of the will of God. Some think they know not how to solve the difficulties in these affairs, without ascribing greatly and highly to the reason and will of man. And all ought to be ascribed thereunto that is due; that is, so much as doth render a

man a governable creature, capable of being bound by a law, and of being dealt with in the way of moral government. So much must be ascribed and ought to be so. It would be otherwise as fit and congruous to have given laws, and assigned rewards and punishments, to beasts and trees, as men, if we do not preserve the apprehension of man's capacity to be the subject of government, by reason and will, wherewith God hath endowed his nature. But to think that the reason and will of man are, of themselves, enough to enable him to all that is requisite to his future felicity, is to make a god of him, instead of a man, and to put him into his Maker's throne, to give him a self-sufficiency, as if he had enough in himself to do all things. And this, indeed, is so to magnify the reason and will of man, as upon the matter to nullify the council of the divine will in reference unto him; by which we find the methods are described and set, in which he is to expect continual aids and assistances, as being of himself, without them, able to do nothing. And,

6. Take heed, hereupon, of being tempted to take up with a spiritless religion, that shall be only a human product, the effect only of a man's own power. Take heed of taking up such a repentance, and such a faith, and such an obedience as the power of man is sufficient for: that will certainly lurch men at last. That repentance, and that faith, and that holiness, (if any other were to have the names,) which is not produced by the Divine Spirit, but is short of that, must needs leave men short of heaven and eternal glory; unless you would suppose it possible to a man to be his own Saviour out of such a gulf of sin and misery as men are sunk into.

7. Take heed of admitting any distrustful thoughts, that God will not be always ready to afford his communicated, superadded light and influence to those that see and acknowledge their own impotency and nothingness. Such as see themselves lost, and unable to help themselves, and that, from a sense of indigency and want, cry for his Spirit (even as for bread) to enlighten them and empower them, and enable them to do his will, to comply with his call, and come up to his terms of life and blessedness: take heed of ever admitting a distrustful thought concerning his readiness to impart and communicate to such. He will give his Spirit to them that ask him; when he is considerately asked and sought to; not formally, not slightly, not in words of course; but as feeling our own blindness, and darkness, and deadness, and impotency: or where there is not, as yet, the light of a saint, there is that of a man, and that is to be improved and made use of, in order to our higher light, and if there be that self-reflection to which God hath given to every man a natural ability, much more may he known than usually is. It belongs to the nature of man to turn his eyes inwards. The mind of a man, (like the sun, can only project its beams and cast them about this way and that, and every way,) the mind of a man, I say, as an intellectual sun, can turn its beams inward upon itself, and take cognizance of what is done within him, and what dispositions and indispositions are within. Men can reflect and consider this with themselves: "Have not I an aversion towards God? have not worldly concernments and affairs, by the natural inclination of my own mind, a greater room and place there than heaven and the things of heaven? are not other thoughts more grateful? and have they not a more pleasant relish with me than the thoughts of God?" Men, I say, are capable of using such reflections as these. And thereupon, of considering, "This can never be well with me: if there remain with me an habitual aversion to God, who must be my best and eternal good, I cannot but be eternally miserable: if I cannot think of him and converse with him with inclination and pleasure, I am lost. If my blessedness lie above, in another world, and my mind is carried continually downward towards this world, I must have a heart attempered to heaven, or I can never come there. Well then, let me try if I can change the habit of my own mind, make the attempt, make the trial." The more you attempt and try, the more you will find that of yourselves you cannot; you can do nothing of yourselves, you do but lift at a heavy log, you attempt to move a mountain upwards, when you would lift at your own terrene hearts. Then is this consideration obvious, "I must have help from heaven, or I shall never come there." Therefore fall a seeking, fall a supplicating, as one that apprehends himself in danger to perish and be lost, if he have not another heart, a believing heart, a holy heart, a heavenly heart. God will in this case give his Spirit; and of that, you are not to despair by any means. Take heed therefore of setting the imagination of a secret will of God not to give his Spirit, against his plain and most expressly revealed will, that he will give his Spirit to them that ask it, that is, that do considerately ask it, as apprehending the state of their case; not ask it slightly and in mockery, so as that the manner of their asking to have the Divine Spirit given should imply a contempt of the gift at the same time.

* Preached January 22nd, 1692.

LECTURE IV.*

AND I will add, further, to this caution, that we take very great heed that we do not remit either our diligence, or our hope, in reference to the affairs of our salvation, upon the supposition of any divine council or purpose lying against us; and to enforce this, (than which nothing is more necessary to be enforced,) I might reason two ways, partly *ad hominem*, partly *ad rem*.

(1.) *Ad hominem*. That is, from the common apprehension and practice of men in reference to other cases. It is very plain that all the other concernments of men are as much determined by divine counsel and decree, as the affairs and concerns of their souls and future estate. But it is as plain that men are not wont to suspend their actions, in common cases, upon mere supposition of such purposes and councils of God, that may, for aught they know, lie against them in such cases. It would make very strange work in the world if they should; if men should suspend their actions in reference to common affairs of human life, merely upon the supposition that a decree may be against them. What a condition would it reduce things to among men on earth! The whole world would be at a stand, or would be sitting still, and would sit still in very uneasy postures too. The husbandman must never plough nor sow, for he might say, "I do not know but there is a decree against me, that all will come to nothing, I shall have no crop, I shall lose all my labour and expense." The merchant should never send or go to sea; no man should ever make a meal, because he doth not know but that it may be determined that it shall poison and not nourish him, choke him and not refresh him. Men should not walk the streets, for they do not know but that there may be some decree or other that a tile shall fall and strike them dead, or they may meet with a stab in their walk: nor should they sit still in the house neither, for they do not know but that there may be such a decree that the house may fall and bury them in the ruins. Plain it is, men do not in common cases suspend their actions upon such suppositions; but then it argues very great insincerity, and a very ill temper of mind, that men should only pick out their weightiest and most important concerns, and do nothing in reference to them, merely upon such an imagination that there may be some purpose, or something in the divine council, lying against them. It argues, I say, a very ill mind; that there is some peculiar disaffection to God, and to the way of holiness and to religion as such, that men should only lay themselves under restraint in reference to those great concernments of religion, when they have as much cause, and the same pretence, in reference to all things as they have in reference to this. And again,

(2.) We may argue *ad rem*, or from the true, real state of the case itself; that is, that there is no supposable divine purpose but what is guided by counsel, and that no one hath any reason to fear that the divine counsel can be any way prejudicial to him, even to an honest affair or undertaking, that belongs to the human life itself. For they are always to be considered as the counsels of an absolutely, infinitely perfect Being, whose nature is incapable of any thing of malignity towards his creatures; (for it is the most

perfect benignity and goodness itself, "God is love;") and therefore, that any supposable counsel of the divine will, in reference to our common affairs themselves, are a great deal more encouraging than they can be discouraging; yea, unspeakably more, in reference to these affairs, supposing we will but take up due thoughts of God, about them, and have correspondent, due dispositions of heart and spirit towards him: for we are pre-assured by his own express word, that all things shall work together for good to those that love God; which love will be the evidence of a man's being called according to his purpose, as these things lie connected in that Rom. viii. 28. There is no son or servant of common understanding and ingenuity, but it will be a very great encouragement and satisfaction to him to act in all things under the conduct and direction of a parent or master, that he knows to be a man of counsel, as well as of the greatest goodness; it will certainly be most satisfying and encouraging to any such one. And how unspeakably more will it be to any, to think, that whatsoever affairs that lie within the compass of human life, I have to manage, I am to manage and order them all under the conduct and direction of the wise counsel of a good, and gracious, and holy God; whence I may be sure he will never hinder me in any such enterprise and undertaking of mine, unless it appear to his infinite wisdom, that it will be to my hurt, that it will turn to my prejudice. If it shall be for the best for me, it shall succeed, if it shall not succeed, it would be to my disadvantage if it should. The tendency of all this is to compose men's spirits to the greatest quietude and tranquillity imaginable, in reference even to the common affairs of human life. This word is firmer and more stable than the foundations of heaven and earth, that all things shall work together for good to them that love God: nothing can come amiss to a lover of God, to one, who by the Divine Spirit working in him, is contempered in the habitual frame of his spirit to the divine pleasure. And the disposition of all things cannot but work together for good to such a one.

But whereas it may be said, "What if I do not love God? what if I find not that disposition in my heart and soul to him, what shall I do then?" Why,

[1.] I would appeal to such a one, How perverse a notion must you needs have of God, if you think him to be such a one that he should equally take care, that all things should work together for good to men, whether they love him or love him not! that he should as much gratify them that hate him, as them that love him! You must suppose, in this case, somewhat in its own nature impossible: for it is simply impossible that any thing can succeed well with a man that loves not God. He must be the son of peace, or good cannot come to him; it can take no place in him. But what I have further to say is this, which in the second place I designed to say in arguing this matter *ad rem*. That is,

[2.] That supposing a man be not a lover of God, an habitual lover of him, so he can discern this to be the predominant governing principle in him; yet he hath greater encouragement in reference to the affairs of his soul, (supposing them to lie in this state,) that he can have in reference to his external estate in this world. For do we ever find any such promises in the word of God, that whosoever labours to be rich shall be rich; or that he that takes care of his health shall be always healthy; as we have, that he that labours to be saved shall have help from heaven in order thereunto? "Work out you own salvation with fear and trembling, for God worketh in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure," Phil. ii. 12, 13. He is working: (for so the word signifies:) what he doth herein, he doth according to good pleasure, and he is still doing and working in you. Therefore, there can be no purpose or counsel in the divine will, lying against this plain word of his. So that none can have any pretence to be less laborious, less diligent in reference to the affairs of their souls, than they have in reference to their common affairs. Yea, there is a great deal of reason why they should be much more, and that they should conjoin hope with their diligence in reference thereunto; which I mention in this conjunction, because we find them so conjoined in Scripture; and they are conjoined in the nature of the thing. We find them conjoined, Heb. vi. 11. "That ye show the same diligence unto the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience have inherited the promises." And in the nature of the thing, there can be no diligence where there is no hope; where there is much of hope, there will be much of diligence. There is no reason that either should languish; there is the greatest reason why both should be lively and vigorous, and make each other so, even upon the supposition of what lies in the mind and purpose of God, in reference to the affairs of souls. And then, I further add, by way of caution,

8. That we do not overlook the advantages that may be made of agreements among them that do controvert this same thing. That is, the purposes and counsels of God touching the salvation of men, or touching the punishment of them who shall be found the fit subjects of his punitive justice in another state. Let us not overlook the advantage that may be made of what is in this matter agreed on all hands; that is, it is on all hands agreed, that no good man shall ever perish. This is a thing wherein all do consent and agree. And truly, what there is of difference, it is so very notional and little, in comparison of this, that here we have what should quiet our minds, yea, and it is further agreed, that for them that are wicked, they have always still means for making them better, more than ever they improve or make use of; and that God doth afford no such means to any unwillingly; therefore, always according to his will, and the counsel of his will; and consequently, that this must be found the case at last, that none do finally perish but such as have refused and rejected the overtures, or misimproved, or not improved, the means that they had in order to their being saved. Though they have not all at once what was necessary to the saving of them, they had always reason to apprehend, that if they had used what they had, they should have had still more. And such agreements as these are by no means to be overlooked. We should labour to make the greatest advantage of them that the matter admits of. Yea, and it is further agreed, that this world is very wicked; and it cannot but be agreed, that God could make it generally better if he would, and therefore, it ought to be as generally agreed, that he hath something in his wise counsel whence it doth appear to him less fit to exert his almightiness to this purpose. Or, if any should expect he should do so, or wonder he doth not so, they have as much reason to wonder why he did not, by almightiness, shut sin out of the world at first, and why he did not, by his almighty power, (as he might,) prevent the apostacy or fall, either of the angels that fell, or of the universality of men that fell all at once, and are all in a fallen state ever since.

I shall not further insist as to matter of useful caution which in these several particulars hath been given you, But I shall add to these, some *alleviating considerations*, that may help to make things sit more easily on our minds, relating to this great and important subject. As,

1. Consider this, that all the purposes or determinations of the divine will, they are the products of counsel. That the text assures us, that whatsoever he doth, he doth according to the counsel of his own will, whereupon, as to the secret purposes and determinations of the divine will, which therefore we know not, because they are secret, we have all the reason imaginable to think, that they must be most unexceptionable, from that we do know, that they are all purposes guided by most unerring counsel, and which, whilst we know not in particular what they are, we have nothing to do but reverentially to adore, as the apostle doth in Rom. xi. 33. "O! the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." That part remains, to adore, with a dutiful adoration, what we do not distinctly and particularly understand, and, indeed, cannot understand. There is no government but hath its arcana; and it would be very inept and foolish for us to imagine, that there should be no secrets belonging to the divine government. But admit that there be, inasmuch as they do belong to the divine government, the government of God; that name is a name that comprehends all perfection, and excludes all imperfection; contains nothing in it but what is most excellent and perfect in all respects; and therefore, of this, in the general, we may rest most assured, that there

can be nothing exceptionable in those purposes of his will which we do not particularly know. And,

2. Let us but consider, that for his known and public counsels, they carry their own recommendableness in them to every mind, understanding, and conscience of man, that shall consider. Do but bethink yourselves, what is given us as the summary of the whole counsel of God which is published and declared to apostate, fallen man. The apostle tells the Ephesians, (Acts xx. 21.) that he had made it his business to testify to them "repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." And in having done so, he tells them (ver. 27.) that he had made known to them the whole counsel of God. Now, I beseech you, what could have been more suitable to the state of apostate, fallen creatures, than to say, it is the counsel of God, they should repent, that they should turn to him. And since it was impossible they should return and be accepted, but upon the account of a Mediator and Redeemer who was to bring them to God, and reconcile them to him, what could be more suitable, than that this should be stood upon, wheresoever he is revealed and made known, that men should believe in him; that is, absolutely resign and subject themselves to his saving mercy, and to his governing power? Here is the whole counsel of God, here it is summed up. And what hath any man to say to this? why, being an apostate creature, he should not turn and repent? and why, not being able to satisfy divine justice by himself, but having one revealed to him that hath fully done it, (so as to leave that none of his part,) why he should not intrust his soul with him, and cast it upon him, and subject it to his conduct and gorernment, by known and prescribed and most unexceptionable rules? And whereas, men cannot turn of themselves, (it is true,) they have not at present sufficient power in their own hand, it is all one, whether they have it, or may have it, if they do apply themselves. This is a part of the counsel of God too, that he is always ready to assist a returning soul: "Turn yet at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit upon you," Prov. i. 21. This is part of his counsel: for they that do not so, are, in the next verse, said to have set at nought his counsel: "But they have set at nought my counsel and despised all my reproof." How unexceptionable are the counsels that are made known, and that are published and declared to us! And,

3. Consider, that if this be the declared, published counsel of God, which you have heard, that he would have apostate creatures return, and is intent upon it that they should do so, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. xviii.) and is always assisting to their return,—"Turn ye at my reproof, apply yourselves, set about it, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you;" I say, if this be his declared, published counsel, we are sure there can by no repugnant, contrary secret counsel. There can be no contrariety between his declared and his secret counsel. It were monstrous idolatry, that we should form in our own minds, instead of a Deity, an apprehension that he is made up of repugnancies and inconsistencies with himself. And again,

4. Let us but consider, how things would lie under God's present view, supposing that we did not recur and run back into a foregoing eternity, supposing things to lie as they are in their present state, under the present and immediate view of God, only, without conceiving an eternal counsel and an eternal purpose concerning any such thing, and consider with yourselves how matters should lie then; that is, but thus, that whereas God hath such an order of creatures, intelligent creatures, inhabiting this world, who have all apostatized, fallen, and gone off from him, and by the natural tendency of their course, are universally running themselves into misery, and sinking lower and lower, ready to be ingulfed of endless and eternal misery; he beholds these from the throne of his glory above; he sends forth plain, general significations of the pity and compassion he hath towards his creatures; directs his invitations to all the ends of the earth to look to him that they may be saved: if the express revelation do not reach all, it is they themselves, through their own wickedness, that do obstruct and hinder the diffusion of it, otherwise the Gospel had spread and flown like lightning from one quarter and end of the world to another, many an age ago, and still from age to age; but yet, plain significations that God is not irreconcileable to his fallen creatures, are more or less afforded every where; he doth not leave himself without witness in that he doth men good; he is kind to them; doth not treat them as an implacable God; makes his sun to shine and his rain to fall upon the evil and the good, as in that context we so lately discoursed of to you. He is secretly striving with them, as his Spirit strove with the old world before the flood. "My Spirit (saith God) shall not always strive with man:" implying, that it had been striving, even with that wicked world, before. And after the same rate he is dealing with men still. They despise the riches of his patience and goodness and long-suffering, many of them: suppose they do so more generally, he yet, by a merciful and more powerful hand, takes hold of some, and saith, (as it were,) "Though you are inclined and disposed all to perish alike, I will have a relict from among you out of the hand and power of the destroyer:" and he hath finally a numerous remnant; more than any tongue can number, as we find the matter represented how it will be in the close and period of things; we do not know how vastly numerous they may yet be, or have been in former ages and successions of time. But they that perish, perish by their own wilful refusal of offered mercy, whether more expressly, or whether by more tacit, yet intelligible inclinations. Let but things be considered now as lying before God, obvious to one present view, who hath any thing to say against God's method of procedure in this case? Who hath not cause to adore his grace and goodness and clemency in all this, though so great numbers finally perish? And then, how easy is the step further; if things to one present view do lie so very unexceptionably, what is there more of exception, supposing this view to have been eternal? If things be very fair thus, under one present view, will they lie worse, if it were a day earlier, or a month or a year earlier, or an age, or from eternity? What is itself right and well, is eternally so, and was eternally so, and can never have been otherwise. And therefore, it is very vain and foolish for men to amuse their minds, and affright themselves with the thoughts of future and eternal counsels, that may have lain this way or that; if things look well to a present view, how can they look worse to an eternal one? And again, consider,

5. That things should lie thus open to the eternal view of God, all at once, in all their dependencies and connexions and references to one another, certainly it is owing only to his perfections, that they should do so, and that they do so. Is it not a greater perfection to foresee and to foreknow all things, and to have forelaid all ones's designs, than to foreknow nothing before-hand? and to do nothing without foregoing, previous design? How unreasonable is it for us to think the worse of God for that he is more perfect! It is very unreasonable to suppose that he should not foreknow what will become of you and me in our eternal state; that he should not foreknow what the condition of that creature he hath made shall be to eternity. And whatsoever he doth actually make it to be, in point of felicity, by his own grace, or whatsoever he lets it be, in point of misery, by its own demerit, and the depraved inclination of its own nature, it is certainly his perfection to know the one and the other; and to do whatsoever he doth willingly and with design, not unwillingly, or as if he could be imposed upon, or forced in any thing. Do but seriously consider how unreasonable it is to think the worse, or have the blacker thoughts, of God, for that which is nothing else but his perfection. It would certainly be an imperfection to be nescient, and not to know what will become of things, and what will become of men; and so, to act incogitantly and without previous design, were a great imperfection. Is he then less fit to govern us, and to dispose of us and his creatures, for his being more perfect? And again,

6. Consider how things will lie in the judgment of the great day. We know the rule of his final procedure in that day, which is called "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God," that he will give "eternal life to them that by patient continuance in well-doing seek for honour and glory and immortality; and indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to those that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness," Rom. ii. 5, 6. To none

but perverse and persevering evil-doers, none but such as refused to obey the truth and were contentious against it, and did obey unrighteousness, did give themselves up to the judgment of an unrighteous spirit and principle, ruling and working in them, to none else but these, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." If things will be very unexceptionable in the judgment of the great day, (as who can have any thing to say against this rule or this method of procedure,) he will then, in the judgment of the great day, both do as he purposed before, and his purpose will no way be found to have differed from the measure of his final procedure. And again consider,

7. That there cannot but a conviction go with the final issue of things, in the very souls and consciences of them that perish. They do foreknow the righteous judgment of God, that they that do such and such things are worthy of death, are worthy of misery. Pagans themselves do so, for to them the apostle speaks and refers in that Rom. i. in the close of the chapter. And what convictions will be upon the consciences of men in the final issue of thing, is sufficiently intimated in that, their principal sting is plainly enough and sufficiently intimated to be from their own consciences. There is the worm that never dies. And it were impossible this hold could be taken on the consciences of men, if it did not appear to them that they were finally guilty of their own ruin. All such imaginations must vanish and fly away of course, that it was impossible things should ever be otherwise with them than they are; that they were doomed unavoidably into that state into which they are come. Whatsoever might be a fence to keep off the stroke from their consciences, you must be sure will all vanish and be gone, and therefore, can have no place. And then lastly,

8. Consider the high and everlasting approbation that all God's methods will have with the most clarified, refined minds of angels and saints, in all that vast general assembly made up of "the innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect;" all agreeing in admiring and applauding the most unexceptionable righteousness of all God's dispensations; whereof the counsel of his will were the measure: "Just and true are thy ways, marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty." And here will be no dark mind, no clouded understanding, no erroneous thought, no vitiating prejudice. If, therefore, we are sure all things will to eternity lie well and right to the most perfect minds and understandings, then they are righteous in themselves; and being in themselves right, they ought to be so estimated and judged of by us. Certainly, these things cannot be mistaken, cannot be mis-understood and mis-apprehended, by those pure and glorious creatures in the other state; those bright and unclouded minds, that will see nothing but loveliness and beauty, and what is most highly praiseworthy and admirable in the eternal view that they shall have of them. Therefore, to shut up all for the present, let me but leave these two words of direction.

(1.) Labour to cherish the love of God in your souls. That will commend to you all his counsels and all his methods. Love will never think amiss. And,

(2.) Form your apprehensions concerning him agreeably, that so you may have nothing in your minds to damp your love; nothing may disaffect you unto him. The understanding and the will (such is the constitution of the human nature) do interchangeably work upon one another: the more we love God, the better we shall think of him, and the better we think of him, the better we shall love him. These things circulate between one another. And nothing can be of higher and greater consequence: for if we do otherwise we shall cramp religion in ourselves: and so far as we propagate the ill sentiment, we shall hinder the propagating and diffusing of religion among others. And do but take this deeply to heart, (perhaps I may have more reason to speak to it hereafter,) that in the latter days wherein, it is said, religion must flourish in the world, (Hosea iii. 5.) men are to "fear the Lord and his goodness." Most certain it is, in those days, (if there are such days yet to come better than we have seen,) thus it must be, there must be a universal diffusion of good thoughts concerning God. This is that knowledge of God that must replenish the world, and fill the earth, and transform the minds of men, and overcome their fierce, savage humours and dispositions, their disaffection towards God and their barbarities towards one another; make them "beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks." The revealed and acknowledged will of God, and goodness of God, prevailing against the evil of the mind and hearts of men. "They shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." Their thoughts and apprehensions of God will be so persuasive to their own hearts, and they will look upon him according to that kind and amiable and lovely representation of himself that shall captivate all minds and hearts; and make men hate nothing but themselves, and that they have not sooner and more loved God.

LECTURE V.*

THUS we have fully spoken to these words as they concern the spiritual and eternal state of men, which is the apostle's principal scope, as you may see, in the foregoing part of the chapter, and of the same verse; "having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," verse 5. And here, "according to the purpose of him that worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." But you see, that from that special consideration of the counsel or purpose of his own will, or the good pleasure thereof, the apostle makes a very easy, natural transition unto this more general proposition, which comprehends all that could be said, including the former in it, and much more. And therefore, having spoken to the more limited object already, of the counsel of the divine will, I shall proceed to speak somewhat of the counsel of God's will concerning the other affairs of men, besides those of their souls or of their eternal state.

And though it be very true that God's agency about all these outward concernments of men, do belong to another head of theology, that is, his providence; yet, the counsel of his will, according whereunto that agency is directed about these affairs, as well as those others that we have already spoken to, comes properly under our consideration here. And therefore, to that I shall speak somewhat briefly; to wit, the counsel of the divine will respecting the present concernments of men in the world, so far as it may be needful and useful to us; that so we may detract nothing from God, that doth truly and rightfully belong to him, and that we may not lose the advantage of the pleasant sentiments and relishes which we may have ourselves, and in our own spirits, from the right stating of this matter, which we shall, therefore, endeavour as much as in us is. And shall in speaking of it do these four things—speak of the extent of the object about which the counsel of the divine will is said to be conversant—of the counsel of the divine will itself, its nature and significancy in reference to that object or sort of objects that we are now to consider—give you briefly the reasons why we are to ascribe such a thing to God as counsel and purpose touching these affairs of ours, and—labour to show you, that no ill consequence can reasonably and justly be drawn from hence.

1. The extent of the object: sure we are not otherwise to circumscribe it than the letter of the text; WHO WORKETH ALL THINGS. For that special sort of object, the souls of men, and their spiritual and eternal state, we have spoken to already, which falls within the compass and comprehension, you plainly enough see, in the general expression in the text. And having spoken to that, even all other concernments besides we must understand to be within the compass of the object too: and therefore, that the counsel of the divine will is conversant about them; that is, whatsoever he hath any agency about, about that also the counsel of his will hath place, for "he worketh *all* things according to the counsel of his will." He doth nothing unwillingly, he wills nothing unadvisedly: there-

* Preached January 29th, 1692

fore, whereas all things lie under his agency, all things lie under the counsel of his will.

More especially, whatsoever he hath made any law about; in reference to whatsoever he hath given us rules and precepts, these are called counsels often, and often in Scripture: they are the counsels and mandates of his will These all lie under the counsel of his will.

There is no state or condition that men can be in, in this world, but there are regulations and precepts given in reference thereto. Whatsoever is matter of threatening or of promise, the sanctions annexed to his precepts, (as there are many things of threatening and promise that are of temporal concernments,) these still must be considered as being within the same compass. Whatsoever may be matter of affliction or of comfort, whatsoever may have in it any thing of blessing, or any thing of cursing, (as there are temporal blessings and temporal curses besides the eternal ones,) all these we must understand to be consulted of, in the sense we formerly opened unto you, excluding all the imperfections, and including all the perfection that can be any way conceived or signified by it.

Moreover, all the private concernments of men, personal and domestic; the concernments of the world, of kingdoms and nations, political concernments; the concernments of the church of God in the world, which may be considered under the measure of time; they are all to be considered within the object of divine purpose and counsel.

The more private, personal, or domestic concernments of men; they belong to this object, and cannot be excluded. The time of every one's coming into this world, and the time of his going out of it; the "time to be born, and the time to die;" they lie under the determination of the divine counsel, directive of his will: even touching them, there is a time for every purpose under the sun. These, among the rest, "a time to be born and a time to die," Eccles. iii. 2. Skipping over (as it were) the intervening time, as if that were little worth the notice: yet only not noting it there, but in the mean time not excluding it neither, as is evincible enough from many other texts. But it is to be observed, (if you compare that with another passage in the same book, chap. viii. 6.) as to every purpose there belongs a season, so to every season there belongs judgment; to every purpose there is time and judgment. That must, undoubtedly, primarily, mean divine judgment, which is the perfection of counsel; that which with men is the result of counsel, and which therefore must signify somewhat analogous with God: there is the judgment of wisdom and counsel, that is determinative of every season, every time, for whatsoever purpose or occurrence that falls out to any of the sons of men. And the time between these two times, the time of their being born, and the time when they are to die; that lies under the same determination. His days and months and years are all set and appointed; as it is fully expressed in Job xiv. 6.

And so the conditions of men, while they are here in this world, whether they shall be high or low; whether they shall be rich or poor; every one hath his dimension, his allowance ordered for him; and no doubt therefore preordained. Whatsoever portion any man hath of the things of this life, whether it be more, or whether it be less, it is all given. Even what the ravens have, the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, it is all given; and much more what every man hath, is by the divine allowance and vouchsafement. To every living thing he gives what is convenient and suitable for the support of that life which he had given it before. But what he gives, he gives willingly, not against his will. And what he did once will, (as you formerly heard,) he could not but ever will, and there can be no new one with him.

And how particular persons do branch into families; this all lies under the particular direction even of divine counsel and purpose. And so, what allotments such and such families shall have; and those as they multiply and do increase, "even unto nations and kingdoms," as you see, Acts xvii. 26. As God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth; so he hath determined the times of all, and appointed the very bounds of their habitations; assigned to every one his place where he shall be. It hath been the matter of the counsel of the divine will, even concerning us, that our lot should fall in such and such a part of the world; that we should dwell so much of our time in such a place; that our lot should be cast in England, or for so long a time in London; and in what circumstances and with what advantages one way or other. All these things, as they have been ordered by the great Lord of all, so they are not ordered by him incogitantly, but according to the eternal counsel and purpose that are understood to have passed concerning us. The very meanest things that can any way belong to us, or belong to this world, being expressly mentioned to come under the divine cognizance and care; it is plain such concernments as these cannot be excluded. As when we are told, all the hairs of our heads are numbered; and that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without our heavenly Father. And that is our Saviour's reasoning from hence, "Are not ye of more value than they, then many sparrows?" Now, if these things be the matter of the very care and agency of providence, they must have been the matter of an eternal purpose and counsel, for the reason again and again repeated before, that nothing can be new with God; no new thought, no new counsel or purpose.

And to consider to what particularities the divine eye and purpose do reach; what we find recorded and comes under our notice by way of history, that therefore must suppose there hath been an eternal view, even of the same things, and a purpose concerning them. As for instance, that which appears to be the most barren part of the Bible, that large account that we have of genealogy in Scripture; how should Moses possibly come to know through the successions of so many hundreds of years, even two thousand years before him, what children such and such men had, all those that are reckoned up, and how many years they lived? And it was thought fit that should be put down: and how such families were ranked, and what nations sprang from them; all these must needs have been matter of divine revelation, and therefore, were matter of divine knowledge, and therefore, were eternally so; all things being in the same order, under the divine eye, wherein they actually come to pass in the world.

So all the removes of men to and fro, here upon earth. "Thou tellest my wanderings," saith David; there is not a step taken this way or that, but all is under the divine direction and provision and purpose, that so and so it shall be.

And if you enlarge your thoughts further, to the concernments of former nations and kingdoms, collective bodies, they must be understood also to be within the compass of this object. The alterations in kingdoms; the seasons and intervals of rests and disturbances; of peace and of war, of plenty and of scarcity; of a prosperous and of an adverse posture of affairs, in respect of any, whatsoever, favourable providences or judgments that come upon these; these all lie under the counsel of the divine will. The revolutions of governments, when they are past, when they pass from form to form; God hath been pleased to give some more extraordinary proof and demonstration of his regency in these kingdoms, on purpose that it may be known (as Nebuchadnezzar, that great prince, was forced to confess) that God rules over the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whom he pleaseth, Dan. iv. 32. The Most High rules in the kingdom of men. It is not said kingdoms, importing this whole world to be one kingdom to him, one great monarchy; all lying under his imperial power. And all this must be understood to be according to counsel, and according to purposes that were with him eternally. For (as hath been said before) his being is so; *Et eternum non patitur novum; no new thing can fall out in eternity.*

And so, for the state of his church in general, or of particular churches upon earth; all their concernments, as they are such, they fall under the counsel of the divine will, which orders all their circumstances in reference to them; sometimes making their condition more prosperous and favourable, and sometimes more adverse, for trial and needful exercises of their graces, in these kinds wherein it is requisite such graces should have their exercises, which he hath adapted to such special purposes. So large (and for our thoughts, let them go as large and far as they

will or can) is the object about which the counsel of the divine will is conversant. But,

2. Something is to be said concerning the nature of such counsel and will, as it respects such an object; or this more special sort of object which I most intend in the present discourse. Why,

(1.) This is always to be held concerning the counsel of the divine will, that it is most perfectly wise; all things being in view to him at once, open to one eternal view in all their connexions, references, and dependancies; he having a thorough and everlasting perspection, even of all at once, of the things themselves and of their connexion with one another, even as they are connected, not because they are so, so as to pass from one connected thing to another, as we in our more imperfect way of knowing things are constrained to do. And,

(2.) The counsel of his will must therefore, hereupon, be immutable: being most perfectly wise, there can be no imaginable reason of any change. He never needs alter his measures: "Known to him are all his works from the beginning of the world," was that grave saying of the apostle James, in that synod at Jerusalem, Acts xv. 18. Whatsoever he hath to do, or doth do, that he designed to do; for he acts nothing casually: and what he did design to do, he did consult about, so far as consulting can have place with him: we explained the sense of it before, that is, that he hath perfect perspection of all that is requisite and fit to be done, and so did purpose according thereto, and then doth according to that purpose. And therefore, to consider, besides the nature of such a divine purpose and counsel, its reference and significancy to human affairs. I say,

(3.) This same counsel of the divine will, it is a measure to himself of all his own agency; what he will do, and what he will not do; how far he will exert his influence, and wherein he will suspend it; how he will direct it this way and that, and how he will limit it. And,

(4.) By consequence, it must needs be a measure of all events; because nothing can eventually fall out, but according to his will, either effecting or permitting; and there being no determination of his will which is not still under the direction of divine counsel. And all this we must understand to be constantly transacting with him, with the greatest clearness and with the greatest facility imaginable. You do observe among men vastly different tempers and complexions of minds; some seem to be almost constantly calm and sedate, composed and serene, there appears nothing torpid or unequal in their frame or habit. Now, if we can conceive among human minds what is more perfect, and what is less, sure it should not be difficult to us to take our assent, and conceive concerning the Divine Mind, that it must be most absolutely perfect, never liable to any cloud, to any discomposure, all things lying in a most perfect clearness, and having their eternal formation or form there, with the greatest imaginable facility; and infinitely more than we can imagine. So as there is no cause for any thought concerning a *plenus negotii Deus*, as the epicurean objecteth, concerning such a Deity as should be engaged and taken up about making and about governing such a world as this, that this must give too much business to such a Being, as we are not to conceive of otherwise than as perfectly happy, it not consisting (as they foolishly imagine) with the felicity and happiness of such a Being. But when we can conceive in some men, with how very great composure of mind they go through a great variety of business, their minds being always clear and serene, can we not consider concerning God, that his understanding is infinite, as reason and Scripture do most plainly speak; and so that nothing could ever be excluded it, or lie without it? as the various images of things are represented in a clear glass, detected there, without giving any toil or labour to the glass, or inferring upon it any charge. And so the schools have been wont to speak of God's eternal knowledge of things, that he beholds them all as in an everlasting and eternal *speculum*, there being that perpetual and eternal clearness in the Divine Mind, that things lie there without any discomposure to him, without any disorder, in the same state and frame, wherein they do actually fall out; so as when they do actually fall out, whatsoever disturbance there is of one thing with another, and among the things themselves variously interfering, yet all these things are beheld without disturbance to him; as the various motions and agitations of many persons in a room, all represented in a clear glass, make no disturbance or discomposure in it at all, whatsoever there is in the things represented. Therefore I pass,

3. To the reasons why we are to ascribe to God such a concern about human affairs, so as to employ the counsel of his will, even from eternity, about them. I will shortly name to you these two plain and obvious things, as the reasons thereof, besides what Scripture doth, in many more places than those that I have named, expressly assert about it: 1st, The most absolute perfection of his nature cannot but infer it: and 2d, The supremacy, the universality, and accurateness of his government.

(1.) The perfection of his nature, that cannot but infer it. He being every way perfect, absolutely perfect, (which he must be, if he be God; we have no other notion of a Deity but of a being absolutely and universally perfect,) he must be omniscient; and must know all things; and if so, he must always have known them; for if ever he did not know them, there will be some addition to his knowledge when he comes to do so. But that knowledge to which there can be an addition is imperfect; and therefore, the divine knowledge could never admit of any addition, but all things (as was said before) must have lain open everlastingly with him to one eternal view. And,

(2.) The supremacy, universality, and exactness of his government, doth necessarily infer it. Inasmuch as he is Lord over all, and is Most High, there can be none above him that should be director of such affairs. And inasmuch as he is universal Governor, if any affairs lie not under his government, they can lie under none. It is not a supposable thing, that one part of the creation should be governed, and another ungoverned; part under a ruler, and the other part under no ruler at all. And then, the exactness of his government, not considered absolutely, but respectively, that is, with respect to the state of the governed creatures, the governed communities that lie under the management and dominion of his kingdom. We are to consider this world as in a state of apostacy; and we are not to expect that he should deal with this world, as if men were in a perfect state, for their frame and temper are far from perfect. He deals with them as suitable to the state of apostates, as those that have been and are in rebellion against him generally. And admirable it is that the methods of his government should be so mild and propitious; and that so much of common order should be preserved among them thereby, as we find there is, this being considered. But to such government, eternal provision and purpose are always necessary, and could not but be necessary. There must be eternal foresight of all that was to be done, and eternal purpose and counsel thereupon. We thence come,

4. To consider, that there can be nothing of ill consequence, justly and reasonably, drawn from hence. What is most supposable in this case, and of this kind, that is, which may present itself to a first view under the notion of an ill or inconvenient consequence, which chiefly lies under one of these two heads: 1st, That this hypothesis will preclude the use of human prudence; and 2nd, That it will shut our prayer. These are two things that carry a first and more obvious appearance of an ill consequence upon the supposition of what we have been hitherto asserting. But I shall labour to evince, that neither of these consequences can, with any reasonable colour, be thought to ensue. As,

(1.) That here there should be no place nor use for human prudence. Thus some may too hastily think and pronounce, If there be a divine counsel and purpose about every thing that a man can do, or about every thing that shall occur to him, that he may either enjoy or suffer, to what purpose is it for men to consult and determine, or contrive this or that? as not knowing but that they may, in the very thing they design and go about, run counter to the counsels of the divine will; and so all will be in vain, and to no purpose. We shall give you some considerations to show the inconsequence, that it follows not, that there is no pretence that the use of human prudence should hereby be excluded. As,

[1.] That all things are determined by God to fall out in the way wherein they do fall out. I told you at first, when I entered upon this subject, we are not to conceive any such thing concerning him, as that he doth decree and determine things abstractly, without reference to the *media* by which they are to be brought about. We are to impute no such thing to God, with reference to the eternal states of men, as we spake then; that whatsoever a man doth he shall be damned, be he never so good, never so strict, never so pious; or that whatsoever such a man doth, he shall be saved, let him be never so wicked, never so irreligious or profane, never so strongly persist and persevere in such a course. We are to impute no such thing, no such counsel, to the wise and holy God. Neither his word, nor the reason of the thing, leads us to any such thought concerning him. And so, in reference to these lower affairs, we are never to think any such thing concerning him, as if he laid down purposes and decrees concerning this or that end, without connecting in his own eternal mind and view, the whole scheme of all the ways and methods and means by which such ends are to be compassed and brought about. And therefore,

[2.] Those things which, according to the counsel of his will, are to be brought about by the intervention and exercise of human prudence; these things are actually so brought about; whatsoever is effected, whatsoever is done by the exercise of the prudence of a man, it lay in the divine mind and counsel, as a thing not only to be brought about, but to be brought about so, and in that way, by that very means, by the deliberation, and by the prudent contrivances, of such and such of his creatures, that should serve his purpose in such a way. And therefore,

[3.] In this case, and in reference to all such events, the very objection is an argument. The objection, the possible use, or advantageous use, of human prudence, is a proof and demonstration of it: for, according to divine counsel and purpose, such a thing as doth actually occur and come to pass by human prudence, was determined so to come to pass, by the intervention of human prudence. And again,

[4.] It is the much more common course, in the way of God's dispensation towards his creatures, to let things go on according to the posture and aptitude of the second causes by which they are effected and brought about; it is much the more common and usual course. He who is supreme Ruler and Lord of all, is not to be supposed but he may at pleasure lay on a restrictive or regulating hand, as he sees meet, to alter the natural course and tendency of things. But ordinarily he doth not so, but things do run on according to the aptitude, and disposition, and posture of the second causes, by the ministry whereof they are effected and brought about. And even as to voluntary and rational agents, whereas, the men of this world (who are such agents) are generally wicked, God generally, and for the most part, doth not hinder the ill purposes they have formed and contrived, and set themselves to execute. That, the Psalmist supposeth to be the common case, when, in that Psal. xxxvii. 7. he gives so weighty counsel in reference to that case, not fretting, nor letting our hearts tumultuate, and arise and swell within us, because of evil men that bring their wicked devices to pass, implying this to be the more ordinary case, that wicked men do bring their wicked devices to pass. God doth not lay that restraint, for great and holy ends and reasons, which will appear in their lustre and glory one day; but lets things run on in their own course according as the inclinations and aptitudes of other second causes do lead. And this being observably so, it is the most unreasonable thing in the world, to suppose that in rarer instances wherein the purposes of men are disappointed and frustrated by some signal hand from God, therefore the natural operations that do belong to men should be concluded to be generally or universally useless, or to be precluded; or that the principles were useless which were suited to such operations or ends as those. But,

[5.] We are further to consider, that if God doth more extraordinarily interpose, so as to disappoint the evil purposes of men, contrived by their subtilty and craft, (which they are apt enough themselves to misname prudence,) he doth it in no such way as offers violence to the rational nature. He doth it by letting men befool themselves, or by letting them befool one another, or sometimes by letting the devil befool them. He sometimes lets one man befool another; as when that counsel of Hushai proved to be the means by which God turned (as David prayed he would) Ahitophel's counsel into foolishness. Sometimes he lets the devil befool men, acting according to his own inclinations, which he restrains not. He lets him loose, as he did to deceive Ahab, being a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets, unto Ahab's destruction. He would not, himself, infuse a lie into the mind of Ahab, (which was a thing his nature was most abhorrent from, being the God of truth,) neither would he let a good angel go and tell a lie to him, as unbeseeming and, indeed, impossible to one that had the divine image in perfection in his nature. But there being a proneness in the wicked spirit (as the matter is parabolically and dramatically represented) to go and deceive Ahab, in his prophets, to his destruction, he lets him go. But there is no violence offered to the rational nature of man in all this. He acts by judgment, (such as it is,) that is, by a mistaken judgment; not by none, or against judgment, against a practical judgment, which indeed to the nature of man were impossible. And those that are under such deceptions as these, when they do indeed play the fool: as Ahitophel's counsel was turned into foolishness and they all became fools that followed it, yet they thought themselves wise in so doing: and so, those that were reckoned or did reckon themselves wise, were taken in their own craftiness, and their counsels driven headlong, as in Job v. 13. the expression is. And what they do in such kinds, under such deception, they do freely and with complacency, pleasing themselves in their own way; so as there is no violence offered to the nature of man, considering him as a rational and as a voluntary agent in what he doth, even then, when his purposes are inverted and disappointed. But then,

[6.] If men do take up such purposes as it seems meet to the great and holy God to frustrate and disappoint, (which by extraordinary interposition, as hath been said, he doth very rarely; he is sparing in instances of that kind,) yet, that men are to blame themselves for; either, that they did propose to themselves unlawful designs; or, that they did pursue and prosecute lawful ones unlawfully; whence it hath seemed meet to that wisdom which governs the world, either to cross and defeat their designs, or to check and rebuke them, that they may reflect on and understand their own folly in so mishaping in their own course, as they are often wont to do when they take up wicked purposes, and form wicked designs which prove abortive. And how should it be otherwise, if they take counsel against the Lord and his anointed one, his Christ? Do you think it strange that that should be in vain? "Wherefore do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Why is it a vain thing that they imagine and devise? It is counsel against the Lord and his Messiah. And if there be an inverture of the counsel and purposes of men which do lie cross to the divine counsel and purpose, and that they clash with one another, what wonder is that? Nay, whose will is it fit should rule and oversway in such a case? Is God to quit the sovereignty, and yield up his throne and sceptre, and say unto vain creatures, "Be it according to your mind, and according to your will," when they will nothing but mischief, wrong to him, and ruin to all that are better than themselves? And sometimes they pursue the most lawful things unlawfully; and then it is meet that God should some way or other give a check to them. As in such an instance as the apostle James mentioneth, (chap. iv. 13.) of such as say, in the power of their own self-conceit, and self-will, and self-confidence, "We will go to such and such a city, and will tarry there a year, and we will buy and sell and get gain;" and forget all this while that they live under the divine dominion and government; that they ought to say, "If the Lord will, we will do so and so." It is very fit, that in such cases, God should put them in mind they have a Lord over them, and that he should give a check to such insolencies. And if they meet with rebukes because they will not carry themselves like those that like under the dominion and government of a Ruler who is superior to them, they will not walk in that light which before hath been

made to shine in their minds and consciences, and God takes a severe method with them, to make them know themselves and him; there is nothing unfit done in the case. He doth but what he owes to himself to do, that he may do himself right, that he may not lose the honour and acknowledgment that are due to him, as he is Lord of all. But now, upon such a supposition as this, it is no more reasonable to say, that the understanding, or reason, or wisdom, or prudence which any man hath, is given him in vain, than it would be to say, that because such and such a man is a very prudent, wise man, it is altogether in vain that he should have a prudent servant. And yet, there is no man so wise, but if he have occasion for a servant, he will have an understanding man to be his servant, and not a fool; a prudent one, and not one that is rash and foolish, and would do things precipitately and to disadvantage. But how unreasonable would it be to say, that because such a wise master will not let even this wise servant do his business his own way, but will check and control him, and exercise the authority of a master over him, therefore, such a man hath a prudent servant in vain? Who would be so foolish as to say, the prudence of such a servant is to no purpose unless he may be master, and carry every thing his own way, according to his own mind and fancy? Or suppose a man had a watch that ordinarily goes well as he would have it, but sometimes he finds it to err, and then he rectifies it with his finger; would the owner of this watch, taking upon him to rectify it with his finger, say, "To what purpose are all the contrivances of this watch, and to what purpose are the several wheels and movements in it, if a man shall move it with his finger?" There is as little reason to pretend, that prudence and wisdom are given to any man in vain, because God will overrule him and show himself to be supreme in sundry such instances as may occur. I say, there is as little reason to say and allege this, as there would be to say, that all the articles in a watch are in vain, because it may need sometimes to be rectified and corrected by a wise finger.

LECTURE VI.*

I shall only add to all that hath been said on this head, that the counsels of the divine will do very well admit of the use of human prudence, in subordination thereto, and it hath its great significancy in such subordination, but in opposition thereunto, it can signify nothing. And nobody is to think this strange, in subordination to the counsels of the divine will. Human prudence signifies much, all that is covetable that it should signify. Many times God designs to bring about such and such events by the ministry of human prudence, and then the counsel of the divine will is so far from excluding it, that it doth necessarily include it, and take it in; cannot but do so. But most plain it is, that human prudence can signify nothing in opposition to the divine will. And would you have it? would any one wish it should? That human prudence should take place against the divine will, is that a thing to be wished? Or are we to be fond of human prudence in opposition to the divine counsel, as if we thought the world would be better governed by men than by God? That, sure, is never to be regretted, that there is no wisdom, no counsel, no understanding, against the Lord. Sure, that should trouble none of us, but please all. And to think, hereupon, that human prudence must needs be a useless thing, because God doth not put all into the hands of men, and leave them to do in the world whatsoever they please, as so many ungoverned creatures, (as was formerly hinted,) it might as well be said, To what purpose is it for a man to have a prudent servant, unless the servant's will and pleasure may take place in every thing against his master's.

(2.) But I come in the second place to that other supposed ill consequence, to wit, that the assertion of such a counsel of the divine will must exclude the great duty of prayer. And I think it is very material and of great importance to discourse to you somewhat largely upon this head; because, I know how common it lies in the minds of many men, as an objection against that great duty; or else, they make use of the objection of that great duty, as an objection against the divine counsel and purpose, and the hand which they are to have in all human affairs. Now, that this seeming difficulty may be cleared, I will give you sundry considerations. As,

[1.] That the primary or more principal notion that we are to have of prayer, is to conceive of it as an act of worship, that is, as a homage due and claimed to be paid to the great sovereign Lord of all. That is the principal and prime notion that we are to have of prayer; that is, that it is such an act of duty as wherein we are to own and acknowledge God: it is due to him, as he is God, to be supplicated, sought to; that there be a dependance upon him, professed and avowed by his reasonable creatures. Now this being the first and primary notion of prayer, an acknowledging of God, and avowing our dependance upon him, and of his superiority over us, as that adjunct expression of it, bowing the knee before him, doth import, I would fain know whether he be the less adorable, for that he is infinitely wise? And if he be infinitely wise, then his wisdom and counsel must extend to all things. But doth his infinite wisdom render him a less adorable Object? Doth he less deserve to be worshipped, or have his due homage paid him by his creatures, for that he is infinitely wise? The counsel of his own will extending to all things doth import so much; he is wise without limit, so as that the exercise of his wisdom cannot be excluded or shut out in any case. If it could be excluded in any case, it were not infinite; but because it is infinite, is it therefore a less excellency for being infinite? And so, doth he less deserve to be adored and honoured, and to have homage paid unto him as such? And,

[2.] Whereas, when we do pray, we do also express inclinations and desires of our own, that we would have this or that brought about, when we foreknow the event to be determined by the divine will: prayer is so far from being excluded by that, that we pray with so much the more vigour and cheerfulness and alacrity; and our hearts and souls are so much the more enlarged and engaged and drawn forth in prayer, even when we know the things we pray about are determined by the counsel of the divine will. As in that memorable case of Daniel's foreknowing by books, by Jeremiah's prophecies, that the approaching period and end of the seventy years, determined for the continued captivity of his people; when he understood this book, and discerned the approach of the time, he sets himself with so much the more vigour to pray: (as you see Dan. ix. 1, 2.) finding out that the matter was near, and towards a period, he doth not therefore think prayer excluded, but sets himself to pray with so much the more earnestness and vigour hereupon. As, indeed, if any do consider the nature of man's constitution, and the frame of the human soul, it is evident that desire and hope do influence one another. It is a mighty damp to all rational desire to have no hope. And if the thing be looked upon as desirable in itself; so much the more of hope, so much more of desire; and by how much the more hope doth rise towards confidence, desires grow so much the more fervent. As simple despair of any thing which we have an inclination to desire, damps desire; when we see that the thing is altogether to be despaired of, reason itself dictates to us to withdraw our minds, and turn them another way. Daniel understood the time drew on, when this sad calamitous state of his people was to find its period and be determined; then he sets himself with mighty vigour and fervour of spirit to prayer. And,

[3.] When we do not foreknow the event, as not having any discovery made to us what the counsels of the divine will concerning it are, yet, even then, the business of prayer is to refer ourselves, with reference to any such concernments, to the divine disposal. A thing most suitable to him and to us; to him, as he is the wise and sovereign Lord of all; and to us, as we are depending creatures, subject to his government, and are disposed of, in reference to all our concernments, or whatsoever we have any concern about, as he sees good. And therefore,

[4.] In reference to such things, wherein we are ignorant of the event and what God will do, the proper design of

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prayer is, to endeavour to obtain at his hands a disposition of spirit complying with his pleasure, so as there may be no contest between him and us; that whenever the event falls out, if it do prove agreeable to our inclinations, we may rejoice in it with so much the more raised and sincere gratitude; if it do not, that we may submit to him, without engaging in a contest with one who giveth no account of any of his matters; and with whom, none can contend and prosper. They must always have the worst of it, they must be worsted in it if they engage in a contest with him. Therefore, the business we must design in such prayer, or in prayer about such things, (the issue whereof we do not foreknow,) is not to bring the divine will to ours, but to bring our will to his. As the matter is aptly enough illustrated by some, suppose one comes down a rapid stream in a boat, and hath the opportunity to throw an anchor or hook on the shore, there he pulls, as though he would draw the shore to the boat, and yet, all that he can be rationally supposed to intend, is to draw the boat to the shore. So are we to design in prayer, that plucking ourselves unto God, the drawing of our souls to a compliance with him, that our wills may be brought to unite with his; not that we can imagine to change his will by any thing we can say, more than in the narrative of our prayer we do suppose to ourselves the informing him of any thing whereof we suppose him before ignorant. "He is of one mind, and who can turn him?" Job xxiii. 13. And therefore,

[5.] The availableness of prayer, considered in reference to the counsels of the divine will, is to be estimated by the tenor of our prayers: according as our prayer is modelled, so it will be available or unavailable. This is the confidence we ought to have in prayer, "that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us," I John v. 14. And therefore, further,

[6.] We must make it our great business, in all our addresses to him in prayer, and especially in reference to temporal concernments, (about which we have no express signification of his will, as we have about spiritual and eternal ones,) to have our prayers so formed as that they may agree with the court of heaven, (as I may speak,) whither they are to be addressed. As if any man on earth is to petition a human judicature, he must endeavour to know the style and phrase of the court, and that his petition may be right in point of form; and especially so are we concerned to do in this case, when we are to address the great God. There must be a becomingness of God observed, that we address to him as God is to be addressed to, and one that is absolutely supreme, and perfectly wise and good, who (according to that observable saying which I remember in the great Jew Philo, who gives us this notion of himself) hath given us that discovery, that we have always a ground of so fixed and formed an apprehension of him as one that can do all things, and will do that which is best. Such a conception of God, if our prayers do but carry with them a conformity to that conception, that is, that we have this fixed confidence concerning him, that he can do what he will, and that he will always do what is best, we can never think that such prayers can ever be unavailable. But this doth so highly agree with this apprehension, that he doth all that he doth do according to the counsel of his own will, that it not only is not prejudiced thereby, but we are greatly confirmed in it, that if he doth all things according to the counsel of his own will, he will never do any thing that is wrong, he will never do any thing that we ought to have so much as a wish that it be otherwise than as he will do it; for as he can do whatsoever he will, so he will always do whatsoever is best. And,

[7.] Therefore we ought to form our addresses and petions to God, according as his word hath given us direction. As there are rules, some way or other to be known in any prince's court, or in any court of judicature, how they are to be addressed to: some way or other, it is to be understood. And we may understand by his plain word, how he is to be addressed to. As to all those things that are of principal concernment and necessity to us, we find directions in his word to pray for such things, with promises they shall be granted upon serious and sincere prayer. We know his will so far about our principal concernments, as that they who repent shall be forgiven, they who ask his Spirit shall have it, to them that improve what they have, he will give more, that if we set ourselves to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, he will work in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. About these, our greatest concernments, we are at a certainty. He hath told us in his most plain and express word, what he will always do in such cases. But we are always left uncertain about such things as are less considerable, and about things too, that are of a mutable goodness, that is, that are sometimes good and sometimes evil. The things of the mind are invariably good, always good; what is the goodness of the mind is always so. That the mind be knowing, intelligent; that it be holy, pure, subject unto God; these are things always good, invariably good. But it cannot be said so concerning the *bona corporis, the good things of the body*, or the *bona fortunæ, the good things of fortune*, that they are always goods, for their goodness is to be measured according to their suitableness and conformity or subserviency to some greater good. For we are to consider that as we have bodies so we have minds too; and that which would be good for my body, if hurtful to my mind, it loseth the nature of goodness; and therefore, is that goodness mutable, according as circumstances will render such and such things more and more subservient to a higher good, to a nobler kind of good that we are more to be concerned about. And therefore, for those things which are of a mutable goodness, they cannot be the matter of an absolute promise, that shall be concluding and determinative concerning them universally, and at all times; because at some times that which would be a good, it may at another time degenerate into evil, by the variation of circumstances. But an evil cannot be the matter of a promise; it would be the matter of a threatening at such a time when it ceaseth to be good. If it should stand in the promise under the notion of a good, but by this and that circumstance loseth its aptitude and suitableness to the end wherein this goodness lies, then doth that good turn into an evil, and so cannot be the matter of a promise. You cannot say, you promise any one that which is evil, or which would be a hurt to him; therefore the promises of God, in reference to things of this nature, are always suitable to the nature of the things. We have as express promises concerning temporal good things as the nature of the things will bear, or our circumstances admit, and therefore, God hath done more suitably to himself and us, in reference to such things, in telling us "all things shall work together for good to them that love God and that are the called according to his purpose," Rom. viii. 28. Indeed, a person that is a sincere lover of God, cannot but be the better by whatsoever event occurs to him in external respects; for that love is an active principle in him, that co-operates to the making good of the promise. It thinks no evil, it makes a man construe well all the divine dispensations, it forms his spirit to a compliance with the divine pleasure, and so, good will come out of it to such a one, to a so qualified subject, whatsoever the event be. And therefore, all the business of prayer that it may be significant and available, is to have it formed and modelled according to the tenor of the divine will as God hath expressed that will to us in his word, and to pray for things agreeably to the discovery we have thereof: that is, with a peremptory confidence, in reference to those things that are expressly promised; and with submission, in reference to all other things: satisfying ourselves with this, that he who is the most perfectly absolute, supreme God, nothing of evil can proceed from him, but as an ill affected subject turns things into evil to itself. And so the Gospel becomes "the savour of death unto death," to an ill disposed mind; not from what it hath in itself, or as it proceeds from God, but only from the disaffected state and condition of the subject. And then again,

(8.) We are to consider this, that the interests of men in this world in reference to their temporal concernments, do so generally interfere and cross with one another and oppose one another, that it is impossible all prayers should be granted. For there are many times prayers against prayers. One man or this sort of men prays for this event, and another sort, for the quite contrary event. Therefore, it is most absolutely necessary that the divine counsel should moderate, and have its agency, not only in bringing about events, but even in forming the spirits of men.

When interests do so clash, and desires and prayers so contradict one another, (as they many times do,) with what confusion would it fill the world, if every irregular desire should be granted! And indeed, if the wills of men were to regulate the will of God, and their prayers were to prescribe, it would make fearful work in the world: if we had such a kind of *fatuum numen, a silly deity*, to be the object of our addresses and prayers, that were to use no counsel, no wisdom in judging what is fit to be done, and what is not, but every human desire should engage the divine power, and employ the divine hand, with what ruin and desolation would men's prayers fill the world! And so this world would be made a desolate wilderness, at that rate, if the prayers of men, without the interposition of the counsel of the divine will, were to prescribe finally what were to be done for them. And therefore, again,

(9.) It ought to be considered, that wherever there is any such thing as right prayer, there is a divine Agent to be employed, in reference to the whole business of prayer. As we have an Advocate and Intercessor without us at the right hand of God above, so, all that do belong to God have an Advocate and Intercessor within them. All the children of God, because they are such, because they are sons, God sends the Spirit of his Son into their hearts to teach them to cry, Abba, Father; as Gal. iv. 6. compared with Rom. viii. 15. And it is therefore called the Spirit of adoption, because it belongs to the adopted ones, to those that are taken into that state and condition of sons; because they are sons, the Spirit is given. It is an intolerable injury, and absurdity, that among us who are called Christians, with whom it is an article of our creed, that we believe in the Holy Ghost, we should so little consider what hand and part he is to have in this matter. It is an idle vanity to think, that he is to dictate words to us, and that there ought not to be prayer, but what the Spirit ought to indite the very words of. No, that is not the business of his office; but to possess the soul with such a living, internal sense to which words will correspond; that soul that is filled with such a sense, will not want suitable words, (at least between God and itself,) in which to utter that sense to him. And so is the work of the Holy Ghost, in this matter, expressed in that Rom. viii. 27. That when we know not what to pray for of ourselves, that Spirit makes intercession in us according to the will of God; (so we read it and do interpose in the translation more than is in the text;) it makes intercession according to God, (so it is in the original,) not barely according to his will, but in subserviency to his interest; and to his great one, which (it is true) his will must always respect too, as we cannot doubt. And therefore, if he is to be applied unto, and relied upon, that great Agent of God: and we are to refer it to him (as it were) to mind our petitions, that they may be right in form, this is the great business of that Spirit; he is thus far (as it were) the Master of requests, and we are to resign ourselves to him, to put our spirits under his formation, under the dominion of the Divine Spirit. "I do not know whether my mind may agree with the Divine Mind, yea or no, but O! do thou make it agree, and conform it thereunto." And lastly,

(10.) We have, upon the whole, this to consider, that all prayers once so rectified and put into the right form and tenor, they do ever obtain their principal answer. According to the great platform and model of prayer that is given us, we pray with principal reference to the divine honour, if we pray aright, that the name of God may be hallowed; we pray that the governing power of his kingdom may obtain and take place all the world over: we pray that his will may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. We have particular inclinations and desires of our own; these we are never to express but with this reserve, "Lord, if these desires of mine agree with thy will; if they agree not with that, I renounce them, I disclaim them." So every good man is then answered, if he be denied: if he be denied in one respect, he is answered and his petition granted in higher and more principal respects; for the principal thing he aims at is, that God may be glorified, "Hallowed be thy name;" and that in order and subserviency thereunto the governing power of his kingdom may take place, and that his will may be done. These are the great and principal petitions; and all things else are to be petitioned for but as they subserve these.

And therefore, now to sum up all. Prayer, it may be from two sorts of persons, either from a devoted or from an apostate creature. Prayer, proceeding from a devoted soul, can never fail of its principal answer: for every such prayer is influenced by supreme love to God; his interests comprehend all our true interests: so that all doth but come to this, whether I love God more than myself, then that love will always dictate such prayers as can never miss of their answer. That is, if I pray as a devoted creature, and to be a devoted creature is to pray, is to love God more than myself. But if I pray as an apostate creature, that is, as one that is gone off from God, and keeps off from God, and hath a separate interest from God, and will not come to him and return to him again; then my prayers always run after this tenor, "Lord, I pray that my will may be done, that my interest may take place and be served, whatsoever becomes of all or any concernments besides." But what! would we have the counsels of the divine will to give place to such insolent requests as these? that were, in effect, to pray, "Lord, do thou descend and come down from thy throne, and resign it to me, and let me set up for myself; I would be a god to myself, and I desire to make no other use of divine power, (finding my own impotency in many things,) but only to serve my own purposes and ends."

Therefore, there is all imaginable encouragement to sincere prayer, from this doctrine, that God doth all things according to the counsel of his own will. And, this, surely, we are greatly concerned to consider in such a juncture of time as we are now cast upon; nothing can be more opportune. We have a dubious prospect before us; we know not how things may issue. Now to pray with hearts possessed with the sense that God doth all things after the counsel of his own will, is the best preparation for prayer, in reference to the present concernments of this season, that can be thought. That is, it is such a disposition of spirit that will, in this duty of prayer, be both most honourable to God, and most comfortable to ourselves.

Most honourable to God; nothing could reflect on him more than to pray with a contrary notion concerning him; that is, that he doth not do things after the counsel of his own will, but as poor foolish creatures here in this world, shall prescribe and dictate to him; they make him do any thing, draw him to this or that by the importunity of their requests and desires. You cannot give a notion of God more injurious to him or more repugnant to his very nature. For then we must suppose him a Being of mere power, absolute, almighty power, which any fool may command when he pleaseth. What a strange sort of Deity do we worship! particularly if we pray with such a notion of God as this. But nothing can be more comfortable to ourselves, than to supplicate him, according to this true notion of him, that he doth all things after the counsel of his own will. With what quiet minds may we pray; and acquiesce in all the issues of things! Things lie in the best hands they can lie. We have this to satisfy our hearts in; and though we pray as men, we are to expect he should answer as God. We can pray but with the wisdom and foresight of poor fallible creatures; but then we are to expect him to answer according to the wisdom of an all-comprehending Deity. And as this is most highly honourable to him; so it will be most highly satisfying and comfortable to ourselves, and upon the best terms from which a reasonable mind can receive any satisfaction.

LECTURE VII.*

IT only remains to make some *Use* of all that hath hitherto been spoken. And so comprehensive a truth as this, you will apprehend to be of very large and copious usefulness. I shall contract as much as the matter admits. It serves,

I. To show us, how we are to form our notion of God.

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And if any have a mistaken one, how they may rectify and reform it. It lets us see we are to conceive of God to be a Being of infinite wisdom, for according to our notion of counsel, it is the immediate product of wisdom. Only, when we apply it to God we must do it so as to sever all that it imports of imperfection, and to include all that it imports of highest perfection. We find it needful with us, to consult and advise with our friends sometimes; however, with ourselves, and our more deliberate thoughts; but no such thing can be said of God, with whom all things lie open, in one infinite, eternal, and all-comprehending view at once. That is not the meaning of counsel with him, as it is with us, as though being uncertain and doubtful, we did need to be counselled and advised; but that of perfection, which we mean by counsel and most perfect judgment of things, that we are to ascribe to him; and so, as that is the result of wisdom, it is with him in the highest perfection without consideration, so, that we can have no notion of wisdom, that doth not imply counsel; nor of divine counsel, that doth not imply the most perfect, most exact, and most accurate wisdom. We see he doth all things according to the counsel of his will, so as never to err in any thing; never to make one wrong step. For how often is he celebrated by expressions, that do import so much, God who is wise. What glorious ascriptions are there to him as such. "To God only wise, be honour and glory," Rom. xvi. 27. And so that of 1 Tim. i. 17. You have the same kind of doxology even in the same terms. And so in the epistle of Jude, the concluding words of that epistle; "To God only wise, be honour, and glory, and dominion, for ever and ever." This appropriate term, *only*, only wise, speaks that there is no wisdom that is not from him, nor in him; that he is primary wisdom, the original sent of wisdom. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally. He can do so, he hath it in all its fulness, in its most absolute plenitude, in himself, James i. 5. And therefore is he said to be the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, every congenerous gift; we must understand it agreeable to so exuberant a Fountain: and hereby, we are to rectify our thoughts of God, if we have taken up wrong ones; for we must conceive of the several attributes of the Divine Being, agreeably to this, as they are complicated with this most perfect wisdom, as that is most especially conjunct therewith. If any should think of God's power, as only an act of boisterous omnipotency, working at random, not guided by wisdom and counsel; if they should conceive of his will, as if it were a stiff, inflexible resolvedness of doing things without judgment or wisdom; if they should conceive of his wrath, as an all-consuming flame, burning up all before it, without distinction, without discrimination; if any should think of his love as a fond inclination to this or that person, or thing, without being directed by wisdom or counsel; all this is infinitely to wrong God; it is indeed to create to ourselves a God like ourselves. But this is infinitely injurious, to represent him by ourselves, as a being of mere power, and of mere will, without considering that he is a Being of infinite wisdom, and so doth all things according to the counsel of his own will. And again,

2. We are further to learn, how we are to conceive of God's works; for every thing works as it is: and as he is a Being of wisdom, we are to reckon, that there must be characters of wisdom and counsel upon all that he doth. There is, eminently so, upon the works of his creation. He hath established the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion, Jer. x. 12. Wisdom is the parent of order, wheresoever there is any thing of order that surely must be attributed to wisdom as the directive cause of it; it must be found, if not in second causes, yet in the First. The stable ordinances of day and night, the certain returns of summer and winter, the regular motions of sun, moon, and stars, and the like; in all these we are to behold the wisdom of God, who hath settled things by so accurate counsel, according whereunto he doth all that he doth. And so we are to conceive concerning the works of his providence too, that there are counsel and wisdom which conduct them all, which regulate human affairs wherein men have themselves but a subordinate agency, under the supreme and sovereign Ruler of all. We are to reckon nothing falls out casually, nothing undetermined, either to be wrought or effected by him, or at least to be permitted, for greater and more preponderating reasons, against the restraints that might have been laid upon the second causes, by which they are wrought. And again,

3. We are further to learn hence, the extensiveness and universality of God's powerful and governing influence. He worketh all things, he hath an agency about all that is done. It is true, the words are capable of being thus understood, He worketh whatsoever he worketh according to the counsel of his own will. But there cannot a hand be lift up, nor a foot stir, not a power or faculty of any creature be exerted, but he hath a working agency one way or other in reference thereto; not so much as a sparrow falls to the ground, but it is within the compass of that agency of his, which doth all things after the counsel of his own will. Not so much as a hair drops from any head without him; all things, as they refer to him, are done with number, weight, and measure; and so, wisdom and counsel have a universal exercise, in reference to all things that are done under the sun, even the meaner concernments of men in this world. If you go to the business of agriculture or husbandry in the general; the several methods of husbandmen in ploughing, sowing, threshing, and the like, are all said to be from the Lord, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working, Isaiah xxviii. 29. And therefore, we are hereupon to acknowledge, and own with adoration, the universal extensiveness of his governing influence; as was formerly noted in the opening of the words, in working all things; that is the expression, an energy that is most intrinsic, intimate, inward to every inferior agent, still exerting and putting forth itself, in whatsoever is wrought or done under the sun. And he is even more intimate to us (as paganish light itself doth more anciently observe) than we are to ourselves. That phrase is fetched from more refined paganism, into the schools of Christians, that he is more inward to us than we are to ourselves, so as that there is a divine energy working and stirring in every created agent whatsoever. And,

4. We may next learn hence, the reasonableness and congruity of all his public constitutions and laws, which he hath made for the government of his reasonable creatures. Legislation is a great act of sovereignty, indeed the prime and most principal. If God do all things according to the counsel of his own will, it is according to the counsel of his will that he hath made laws for those who are capable of government by law, as only the reasonable creature is. Laws are frequently spoken of under the name of counsels. Your human laws are commonly called *consulta*, as among the Romans, those that went under the name of *senatus consulta*; such things as were advised upon, and, as it were, weighed in balances. Are they fit, or are they not? Will this be a useful constitution, yea or no? And so is the frame of divine laws spoken of, under the name of the counsel of God. The Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, Luke vii. 30. It is spoken in opposition to Christ and his teachings. Those that were doctors of the law among the Jews, they rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Indeed, the whole revelation of God's mind, about the salvation of men, it bears that name, which included the preceptive as a very noble part of it. I have not shunned, saith the apostle, to declare unto you the whole counsel of God, Acts xx. 27. In all this, therefore, we ought to acknowledge and adore a divine wisdom, and especially in that which is the standing constitution, for the governing of men, in reference to their salvation and final blessedness, since the apostacy, and you find God most highly celebrated and magnified, upon that account, in that Rom. xvi. latter end: the apostle there speaking of the Gospel constitution, under the name of a mystery, concludes all thus, "Now to him that is of power to establish you, according to my Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ," (ver. 25.) according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations, for the obedience of faith, "to God only wise, be glory, through Jesus Christ for ever." His wisdom is conspicuous in this established constitution of his,

which is to last through all the ages of time, and which is the constitution of that kingdom, which is never to be shaken. That is called the kingdom not to be taken down, Heb. xii. latter end. The compages whereof are so firm and strong, as to suit a designed perpetuity. Whereupon, they that live under the Gospel, are warned concerning their deportment under it. Now that we have received a "kingdom, that cannot be shaken, let us have grace to serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." He will not now be dallied with by men, whom he hath put under the dispensations of the Gospel; as that epistle to the Hebrews begins. There were some temporary constitutions wherein God did deal with men, and speak to them in various and variable methods. But now, he hath spoken to us by his Son: and this is such a state of things as shall last as long as the world lasts, and those that do not comport with this method or law of grace, in order to being saved, shall never be saved! Therefore, let us seek grace to serve him acceptably. The last efforts of divine wisdom are seen in this constitution.

5. It thereupon, therefore, further, let us see the impudence of sinners, who confront their own imaginations, and their own lusts, to the wisdom and counsel of the divine constitutions; for that is indeed the case, and the very state of the controversy between God and a guilty creature that hath been in an apostacy from him, and doth yet refuse to return. This is the very sum of the controversy between God and them, Who is wiser, who is best capable of prescribing and giving laws? for wisdom is the most conspicuous thing (as was said) in legislation. Authority is supposed, it is true; but if there be never so unquestionable authority, if there be not wisdom to use it, it would be strange work that one destitute of wisdom would make of governing authority; strange laws, strange edicts there would be, where there was uncontrollable power without wisdom. But (as was told you) when laws are to be made, here is the great exercise of governing wisdom, such as doth befit the state of a ruler, to consider how the exigency of the case may be answered, what laws will be more suitable for such and such, or for a people in such circumstances. Now, when the counsels of heaven are opened (as it were) into a result, in such a constitution; here is the law of that kingdom that is erected and set up for them that are to be saved. And here comes an insolent creature and contends against the Lawgiver, and disputes the matter with him that gave him breath; what impudency is here! That law of grace, it saith, wheresoever it is promulgated, to them that come under this government of grace, or will be the disciples of grace, grace doth teach them that live under it, "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, godly, and righteous in the world." But here is an impure, obstinate sinner, to whom notices are given of the good and acceptable will of God to this purpose, that the Gospel that is preached to him, the law of the Redeemer's kingdom, it saith at the very first, Repent, now the kingdom is come among you, repent, turn. The divine wisdom saith to the sinner, "Turn, turn or die, turn or thou art lost." But he saith, It is wiser to go on, to persist in my own course; it is a wiser thing to live a stranger from God still, and as without God in the world. Divine wisdom saith to men, "God hath a mind and design to save you, deny you all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and subject yourselves to God." "No, it is wiser (saith the sinner) to live an ungodly life still; it is a wiser thing to lay the reins on my own lusts, and do whatsoever is good in my own eyes; it is wiser to please my own flesh than the God that made me; it is wiser to indulge sensual inclination and follow the imagination of my own heart." For men, I say, to confront their own imaginations and lusts to the divine counsel, it speaks the height of impudency in sinners, that they do not turn, that they will not be brought back to God. And,

6. It further lets us see how sad and forlorn the case of unreconciled and impenitent sinners is. God hath done all things according to the counsel of his own will, therefore, the constitution that he hath made and settled, is uncapable of change. There is an immutability stamped upon the divine counsel, and what is likely, then, to become of such men as run counter to all the wisdom and counsel that is conspicuous in the divine constitutions? Because of their perfection they cannot be changed, and because of the sinner's wickedness, he will not. God cannot change, and men will not. What is then like to become of things between him and them? But,

7. We may further learn hence, how hopeful and comfortable their state is, whose minds and hearts are brought to a liking of the methods of God, for the saving of sinners, to a compliance and agreement with them. O! happy man! The unerring and therefore unalterable counsels of heaven, have determined well concerning thee, and concerning thy state. You see in this same chapter where the text lies, that the Gospel constitution carries (as it were) this inscription upon it, "To the praise of the glory of his grace." Look upon the whole frame of divine constitutions, that refer to the saving of sinners, and you may see (as it were) in golden letters written upon this noble fabric, "To the praise of the glory of his grace." Thus the Gospel constitutions stand (as it were) dedicated, "To the praise and glory of divine grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." And observe then what follows in the next verse, "In whom we have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." This is the mystery of God; he hath made known to us the mystery of his will; it is a most mysterious thing that ever he should have such a will towards me. But he doth all things according to the counsel of his own will; and thereupon, there is an immutability and unchangeableness upon the determination of it, as you see in that Heb. vi. 17. Wherein, God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, he hath confirmed it by his oath, added to his word; that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, the heirs of promise might receive that strong, that steady, that unshaken consolation. It is to be attributed to want and deficiency of wisdom and foresight, that the constitutions and determinations of men need so often to be altered. Such and such an inconveoience was not foreseen; such a law was made, and it may be, a little trial and experience show it to be very inconvenient, and so, it is fain to be reversed, repealed, or needs some explanatory additions, or the like. It is reckoned a piece of meanness, and disparagement, to be put to alter edicts; and because the Medes and Persians were a proud and haughty nation, therefore where their laws and statutes irreversible, never to be changed; so that they did assume to themselves infallibility, and beyond what could agree to the condition and capacity of creatures, of men, in an imperfect state. But the divine counsel being all upon foresight, all the determinations thereof being made and settled upon one comprehensive view, here is no place for the supposition of a change. And therefore is this most highly consolatory to all that feel their hearts comply with the Gospel terms, with the evangelical constitutions: "I find my heart is wrought to a closure with that, and I am never to fear a change." It is the effect of his counsel, his immutable counsel which he hath shown, that such as we might have strong consolation, who fall in with and comply with his terms.

8. It further serves to let us see the vanity of their confidence, who have any separate interest, and drive any opposite design from, and to, this of the great God himself. His counsels must stand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations; whereas the counsels of the froward are turned headlong: as the expression is, Job v. 13. How unequal is the contest, when there comes to be a competition between the design of a mortal man, though never so insolent, and that of the immortal God! Some of themselves have thought it insolent for creatures so to assume. Rabshakeh thought it were an imaginary thing, and very wrongly charged upon Hezekiah, yet seems to look upon it as a great piece of pride, "Thou sayest, I have counsel and strength for war," thinking it to be an unbecoming thing: yet, though he only speaks of the counsel and might of Hezekiah as opposed to his own, or that of his master Sennacherib; but he never thought how insolent it was to oppose that, his counsel to that of heaven. "I have counsel and strength for war," but how soon are all those counsels and strength blown upon,

blasted, and brought to nothing when God hath any work of his to do, whereunto that counsel and might are opposed. And to conclude, I add,

9. That since God doth all things according to the counsel of his own will, the times and seasons for doing any great work that he intends, are always chosen by him with most accurate wisdom. They are most fitly chosen; therefore, whereas we are apt to blame the divine methods because he doth not take our time and our way, how unreasonable is it, since it is plain, that all the things he hath to do are affixed to particular seasons, which lie under divine determinations! "Unto every thing there is a season and a time, to every purpose under the sun," Eccles. iii. 1. And if you will look a little further in that book, you will see there, that as there is a time for every purpose, every event, so there is also judgment for every time; there is judgment, which is the effect of counsel, or that whereunto counsel results. For every thing there is a time and judgment. And so thereupon, there comes to be a critical nick of time into which such and such things must fall, and into no other. And therefore, it is said, that "the misery of man is great upon the earth," Eccles. viii. 6. Because there is time and judgment to every purpose, therefore, that is, because time and judgment are not considered, are not understood by men, therefore, their misery is great. And so they are taken, many times, in an evil time, without foresight; they do not know the time; not because they are ignorant of the time, but because they are unready, unprepared, for what is to be done and suffered in such or such a juncture of time. And so you see their case is represented still, upon that account, miserable. But the wise, they do consider time and judgment: Happy men! therefore, happy men! as those two verses fall in together, Eccles. viii. 5, 6. This ought to be considered, and it makes a man a happy man that considers it. Therefore, how quiet and calm may all men's minds be; and the minds of the wise will be, that do equally consider things. We find things were determined most punctually, relating to the great concernments of that people God had in the world heretofore, when they were yet an unconformed people. Four hundred and thirty years must pass, just so many from the time of his capitulating with their head, Abraham, striking a covenant with him. And so much time there must be, because the sins of the Amorites were not yet full, and Canaan could not be ready for the reception of them, and there did four hundred and thirty years pass upon this account. When they were in captivity in Babylon, seventy years was determined for that. When the woman is in the wilderness, there is a set time; forty and two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days. And we are not to think that the determinations of divine wisdom and counsel are less certain because they are less known to us, and we only see by the event what was determined. Twenty years have elapsed since the haughty French tyrant hath been the terror and scourge of Europe, and especially of reformed Christendum; for it is so long (in the year 1672) that he first attempted on our neighbours and brethren of Holland. Many might have been apt to think, why hath not God animadverted on him sooner, put upon him an earlier rebuke? Why was it not the last year? Why was not his fleet scattered and his army broken then, as they have been, in several parts, this year? Or why was it not the year before that? Why, it is a foolish thing for us to contend and dispute with the counsel of heaven, and we are to refer it to the determination of divine counsel, to choose the fittest time to begin to animadvert on so insolent an enemy, and the aptest means how first to let him know that he is a mortal, and that they in whom he trusts have a mortality upon them; that they are liable to defeatments, to disappointments; that their strength is not brass or iron, or such as cannot be broken when he will. He can make so weak and mutable a thing as the wind to serve his purpose against so haughty a one. We are to consider that these things fall out according to the counsel of the divine will: he is not to give us a reason why no such thing was, so many years ago, why he did not raise up such and such, who might have abated his pride, and brought a blast upon him, long before now.

Hitherto, we have by way of use, from the doctrine of this text, let you see so many *inferences*, and recommended so many *truths* from it, which, according to the aptitude that it hath in it, may help to rectify and regulate our thoughts, apprehensions, and notions in many things.

LECTURE VIII.*

THE further use which remains, is to direct *our practice*; for in many respects, it hath in it a great aptitude, and suitableness too. In order to this, it is requisite,

1. That we take up the several sorts of the considerations which may be had of the counsels of the divine will. And then,

2. That we reflect upon our own distemper, and the faultiness of our spirits and practice, in reference hereunto. And accommodately, then, to consider both of the counsels of the divine will, and of our own miscarriages, and so recommend to you sundry heads of instruction, in reference to our future practice. We are,

1. Variously to consider the counsels of the divine will. They may be either considered indefinitely; or else, they may be considered with some distinction, according to the various references they may bear towards us, and our concernments and affairs, whether they may be eternal or temporal; and these, whether they be private or public.

And again, whether they be known to us, or unknown; so variously may the counsels of the divine will be considered. And then, for his precepts, which are the result too of the counsel of his will. They expressly declare what it is the counsel of his will we should do, though therein, also, we are to expect his co-operation; he working and in-working also therein, according to the counsel of his will. And many times the counsels of his will are known to us only by the event. We never know what God would do, in this or that instance, till the event shows us. And so in such and such things, because the event hath not shown the counsels of the divine will in many things, they are yet altogether unknown to us.

2. Now, according to these various considerations of the counsels of the divine will, we shall find ourselves, many ways, to be faulty in reference thereunto.

As in reference to the counsels of God indefinitely considered, that either we ourselves do not firmly enough believe the great doctrine of this text, that he really doth all things according to the counsel of his own will; or that we deeply enough consider it not, and carry not an habitual sense in our souls correspondent thereunto: that we have not high and great thoughts as we ought hereupon: that we are so prone to dispute matters with him: that there is no more of dutiful compliance with the counsels of his will, even then, when they are known: that many are so apt to cherish in themselves a perpetual dread about their eternal concernments, which lie most certainly under the disposition of his own eternal will: that they are so distrustful of so wise and mighty an Agent, that doth all things according to the counsel of his own will: that there is no more of quietude, tranquillity, and rest of spirit in him, so considered, as one that doth what he pleaseth, and always according to wise counsel.

Now, according to these various considerations, which we ought to have, both of God and ourselves, of his counsels, and of our own miscarriages and distempers, are these *instructions* to be, which I am now to recommend to you. And,

(1.) I pray, Let us charge this upon ourselves, more thoroughly to establish the belief of this truth in our own souls, that God, in very deed, doth work all things after the counsel of his own will. Let not our minds waver and hover, in reference hereunto, as if this were a doubtful matter, as if possibly it might be otherwise, as if either he were ignorant or oscitant, and unconcerned about the affairs of his creature, as if any thing might possibly fall out without his advertency. For we should consider with ourselves, being once at a certainty about the existence of God, about which if we be not at a certainty, we

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can be certain of nothing; if (I say) we be at a certainty concerning this, and we may be as sure of it as that we are, and that this world is, and that there is any such thing as wisdom, and power, and goodness any where to be observed and taken notice of in the world; we, and this world, and whatsoever there is of excellency and perfection in it, must all have some original; they are not nothing, and therefore could not come out of nothing. If we be (I say again) at a certainty about this, that is, in short, that there is a God, we may be at equal certainty about this, that he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. For I beseech you, reflect and consider how well would it agree with your own minds, and with the natural notions and conceptions that are placed and fixed there, to conceive of an ignorant God, or of an impotent God, or of an oscitant, neglectful God. Do but consider, how well any such conception or apprehension can agree with the natural notices you have in your minds already, and may take notice of, if you reflect. And thereupon, let disputes be at an end with you, and fix and establish the belief of it in your own souls, that in very deed he worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. And,

(2.) That hereupon (this being once thoroughly believed) it may be more deeply considered: and that we would labour to carry an habitual sense of it about us, from day to day, through this world. For to any one that considers, these things are very distinguishable; dead notions, and living sense, even in reference to the same truth. I have such a truth in my mind, but how have I it? If I have it as a dead notion, then it is all one to me as if I had it not. Let it not, therefore, satisfy us to have so mighty, important a truth as this lie in our minds as a dead notion; but let us labour to have it there as living sense, that we may resort to upon all occasions, and draw forth into present use as the matter shall, from time to time, require. And,

(3.) Labour to live adoring lives towards the glorious God, so considered, as one that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. How should we, hereupon, be composed of adoration towards the blessed God, so as that wherever any actual present instance occurs and appears to us, wherein that agency of his shows itself, we be always in a disposition to bow our heads and worship! Here is a manifest effort of Deity, as the power and wisdom of God, that doth all things after the counsel of his own will. We should especially labour to maintain an adoring frame and disposition of spirit, with reference to these two great excellencies of the Divine Being which appear and shine forth in view, in this truth held forth to us in this text: "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:" that is, almighty power and infinite wisdom. Two things, than which nothing can be supposed to make an object more adorable, to make any thing a fitter object of adoration. Almightiness—he worketh all things. Is not he almighty that can do all things? And infinite wisdom—for he doth all things after the counsel of his own will. So that wheresoever there is an exertion of his power, there is an exertion of his wisdom too, guiding that efficacious exertion of his will, that he doth not act in any thing by a boisterous and extravagant exertion of power, without judgment, or without wisdom, or without counsel: that all things that are done, are done by him, one way or other he hath an agency in every thing; and that nothing is done by him but by the direction of that wisdom that can mistake in nothing: all things consulted, and done after the counsels of his own will. A man of great might, and of great celebrated wisdom too, how venerable a person is he in the account of all? But to have these two things in conjunction, to wit, almighty power, with infinite, unlimited wisdom, sets a very adorable Object before our eyes. And it is a reproach to us, if we, thereupon, do not carry an adoring frame of spirit, every day, about this world with us.

(4.) Another instruction, hereupon, will be, that we never contend against him. What! against him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will? Is he a fit Object for our contention? Will we undertake to dispute matters with him? Think with yourselves, both how foolish and how wicked that must be. He that can do all things, whatsoever he will, it must be a very foolish thing to contend with him. What shall we get by it? He that contends with God, can he hope to be a gainer? He that strives with his Maker, wo to him: all that we can gain by it is but to infer a wo upon ourselves, Isa. xlv. 9. Therefore, it is a very foolish thing to enter into a contest which we are to despair beforehand of ever getting any thing by. And then, how wicked a thing is it! For certainly, the sovereignty must belong to him who worketh all things, and that after the counsel of his own will. It must, upon all accounts, belong to him. He will certainly carry the matter, and have the sovereignty. He worketh all things: almighty and resistless power is lodged in him; and he ought to have the sovereignty. For to whom should it so fitly appertain, as to him that doth all things according to counsel, never any thing rashly, nothing unfit in itself, nothing unseasonable, whensoever it is done? Therefore, (as the expression is there,) he that contends with God, let him answer it; let him try if he can; for to be sure he never can, he never will be able to answer it, to enter into a contest with God, who is One that so wisely, and according to so stable and so steady counsel and judgment, doth all things. Again,

(5.) Labour dutifully to comport with him as he is such a One that "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," and according to such considerations, (as hath been hinted to you,) as we may severally have of these counsels of the will of God. There are counsels of his will that are made known and signified by his express precepts. As was told you, the last time, legislation, making of laws, is one of the prime acts of wisdom, wherein above all things that excellency is to be conspicuous and show forth itself. Now we shall dutifully comport with the counsels of his will, made known by his precepts and laws, when we do obey them. That when once we find that charge laid upon us to do so and so, by express divine precept, we immediately labour to get our spirits formed to an obedient compliance, saying within ourselves, "I have nothing to do, in reference to such and such a thing, but to obey." "Mortify such a lust," saith the command: "Lord, I yield, and will endeavour to obey." "Love me with all the heart and soul and mind and strength:" "Lord, I will to my uttermost." It is a law founded in counsel: there could never have been a wiser law, nor a more merciful one, from a good God, towards an indigent, depending creature, than that I should place my love, my desire, my delight on himself. If, considering me as a wandering creature, I find his word saith to me, "Repent;" a wise counsel is spoken to me according to the counsel of his will. I will persist in sin no longer; I will turn that I may live. If he have made known his counsels concerning such and such things that he will do, that he will put an end to this world, that the wickedness of the wicked shall come to an end; that his Son shall appear in the end of time, and shall be the final Judge; it is then dutiful to comply with such counsels of the divine will, to be always in an expecting posture; to say, "O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, according as thou hast determined; we approve of the counsel of the divine will, and will patiently wait till it come. And as for that appearance and coming of our Lord, we will wait and long for it; looking for it as the reviving, heart-gladdening hope of our souls." Whereinsoever the divine will is made known to us, or which way soever the counsels of it are known, let them be dutifully comported with. Such things are only known to us by the event, let us dutifully own and acknowledge them. I know it was the divine will, according to counsel, that such and such things should be either effected by himself, or permitted to be effected by those in whom he saw such a disposition, or from whom he did not withhold power to effect it. Again,

(6.) Take heed of slavish dread, in reference to your own eternal concernments. Most certain it is, that there are counsels of the divine will conversant about the eternal concernments of every one of us; but take we heed of slavish dread in reference hereto. There is no cause for it. It is an ungospel-like spirit to live in a slavish dread, even about our eternal concernments, under a Gospel of grace which deals with us principally about them, and whose special, particular, and great design, is to advise and direct us, even touching them.

But it may be here said, How is it possible for one in an uncertainty not to be in a dread about his everlasting concernments, about those concernments of his, which however they lie, will never alter, will always be the same? One that finds himself to have been, hitherto, under the power of some reigning lust or other, have not I reason to be in a continual dread, what shall become of me for ever?

That was a thing we find represented as not suitable to the state of a very Cain. Suppose thy state to be as bad, suppose thyself a very Cain for wickedness, you see how God bespeaks him, when there was some present token that he was not so acceptable as Abel was. Cain might perceive it, hereupon his countenance falls, and God reasons the matter with him: "Why is thy countenance fallen? If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted? If thou persist still to do evil, it is true, sin, that is, vengeance, the consequent of sin, lies at the door. But if thou dost well, shalt not thou be accepted?" So he bespeaks even a Cain; so you must understand him to bespeak you. In the worst, that you can suppose of your case, this is the counsel of the divine will even concerning thee. Hereupon, then, God ought to be the Object of thy reverence; not the Object of thy dread. Thou oughtest to reverence him, not to dread him, as one that doth all things after the counsel of his own will. But you will say again, "Where lies the difference?"

The difference is great, and most manifest, between reverence and dread. Reverence carries love in it; dread carries hatred. And am I now to dispute the matter with you, whether any man ought to hate God? Ought you to hate him, think you? Ought he to be the object of your hate? No, place all your reverence upon him, which certainly carries love in it. For reverence hath goodness for its object; the most excellent good is the object of my reverence. By how much the more there is of goodness in any one, by so much the more is he the object of my reverence. But it is evil, destructive, pernicious evil, that is the object of my hate, and consequently of my dread. But you are no more to think that God can be the Object of a man's dread, than you can think that a fit notion, or a self-consistent notion, an evil God. Can there be any such thing as an evil God? There can be no such thing as the affection of dread (involving essentially hatred in it) duly placed upon God, unless you would suppose an evil God, which is a contradiction even in the very notion. Therefore, turn all your hate (let the case be the worst that can be supposed) upon yourself, and all your love upon God. Think of him with reverence that carries love in it. And think of yourselves with that dread (as you are yet wicked creatures) which carries hate in it. And this is a true Gospel frame, to hate oneself, loathe oneself, fall out with oneself, judge oneself, condemn oneself; but all the while to reverence God; let him be ever amiable in your eyes.

Aye, but you will say, "How can this be but matter of dread to me, when I find myself a wicked creature, and whom, therefore, the wrath of God must pursue? for his wrath is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; and I find myself such a one, a wicked creature, an ungodly, an unrighteous creature."

Do but consider here, the objection carries its own answer in it. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven." Against what? Against ungodliness, against unrighteousness: and you are such a one. But what, is it necessary always to continue such? The wrath of God can never be directed against any creature but as he is wicked. But then his word saith, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," Isaiah lv. 7.

But you may perhaps say, "I am a wicked creature, and this is the thing I dread, that I shall be always so; I cannot alter the state of my own case, I cannot mend myself; this is that therefore which makes me stand in dread."

Why, to that I shall shortly say, either you desire to be other than you are, or you do not; either you desire, of a wicked creature, to be made holy, godly, and righteous, or you do not desire this. If you do desire it, and you say, this is the object of your dread, that you shall never be other than a wicked creature, because you cannot mend yourself; why dread, (as I told you,) carries hatred in the nature of it, and hatred of wickedness. If you dread this continuance in wickedness, you hate it. But I would fain know, if it be possible to desire and hate the same thing. Do you desire and choose to be always wicked, and yet hate and dread to be so? These are inconsistent; what you say now, overthrows itself. It is impossible for you to desire to be always what you are, if you really dread, that is, hate, that state of wickedness wherein you are. If that be the matter of your dread, (as it ought to be,) then you do hate to be what you are, and you desire to be what you are not. Then pursue this apprehension further, a little, "I am a wicked creature, and I desire to be otherwise than I am, I dread myself, I hate myself as I am such; then I do desire to be such as God would have me to be, that is, a holy creature, and one conformed to his holy nature and will;" and if this be the posture of your soul in reference to yourself, and your own state Godward, you very well know what he hath declared of his readiness to accept such. When we confess our sins, with self-loathing, self-indignation, self-judging, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." And when we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged. He never condemns that man that condemns himself, not notionally, but inwardly, with a concomitant hatred and loathing, which is somewhat else than the notion of the state and frame wherein you find yourself. But now, if you suppose that God will have no mercy upon such a one, that is to make a supposition to yourself of somewhat in the notion of God that is repugnant to the known notions of him; that is, as he is the God of all grace, as he is love itself, and as he hath told us this to be his name, "The Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." But if you have such notions of him, that he will abandon and throw away a self-loathing and self-judging creature, and one that desires nothing in all this world so much as to please him, this is to create to yourself a formidable idol, instead of the true and living God: there is no such God as you imagine to yourselves. As an idol is nothing in the world, so is this nothing but your own idol, which is a nullity. There is no such God; but you create to yourselves such a formidable idol, and then hate him. You call that God, which is but of your own making, your own creature. But take God as he is in himself, and as he hath revealed and reported himself to be, the God of all grace, whose name this is, (and his name doth express his nature,) the name that he hath made himself known by, "The Lord, the Lord God, gracious:" take this true notion of God, and set it before your eyes, and consider, "though I be an object of hate, sure I have now before mine eyes an object of the highest love." Is not this an object of love, a fit object, the most deserving object, the most amiable object that can be thought? Conceive of him so; and let that be your apprehensions of him, till you find his love gradually work itself into your souls, and transforming and changing you. And if you come once to this perceiving and believing this love, you have a love begotten and wrought in you, then God and you are happily met. Love and love cannot but unite and dwell together, and will everlastingly cohabit and dwell together. But if you say, you are a wicked creature, and you desire to be always what you are; if wickedness and you are inseparable, as they can only be by the union of your will with wickedness; then are misery and you united too, and can only be so by your adherence in heart and will to wickedness; and so you will be your own hell, and an everlasting fountain of misery to yourself; but God and his throne will be guiltless for ever, for he never hates a creature as a creature; his wrath can never reach you, but as you are one that continues in a will to be wicked.

But if you can truly say, "I would be otherwise, only I fear God will not help me." Why! hath he not said, he will give his Spirit to them that ask him? You are to take heed of forming a notion of God against his word; for he can have no will against his word; it is impossible he should. There can be no counsel of the divine will that contradicts his plain word. Therefore take heed of imagining any such thing to yourselves.

And so, upon the whole matter, there is place for that counsel, as what we are to resolve to live and die by, that is, never to entertain a slavish dread concerning our own eternal concernments. But, consider how the distinguishing characters are given in Scripture, between them that are saved, and them that finally perish. And if you find the present characters upon you that mark you out for hell and damnation, only say, "I am such and such now, but it is not necessary that I should always be what I am." Sin is not you, and you are not sin; they are separable, the are partable things: and only implore that grace and help of the Divine Spirit that is offered, suitable to the estate of lost and apostate creatures. And never entertain any despairing thought but that that Spirit shall be given when it is seriously asked and sought after, and desired by you: the state of no man's case can exclude such considerations as these, for while there is any thing of sense about a man's eternal concernments, though it be from common grace, it is from the Spirit of grace, for all grace is from that Spirit, and that common grace may be gradually leading on to special grace, if it be duly complied with.

So that there is still no cause for a slavish dread: that soul is not quite abandoned and given up by God, in which remains any concern about its future state, and about its case God-ward. You are not, indeed, to ascribe it to your own nature, if you are so solicitous about the divine favour, if you are not so swallowed up in this world, and immersed in sensuality, as to have all thoughts excluded about your soul-affairs, and your everlasting concernments. You are not to arrogate this to yourself; for we are not sufficient of ourselves to think a good thought: and there is a good tendency in those thoughts; and therefore, all this ought to be ascribed to the Divine Spirit that is now, some way or other, at work with you; and those workings of his, have a leadingness and tendency in them to move to further and higher workings, which accordingly you are to expect with hope, and so to lay aside a slavish dread accompanied with despair, with utter despair that ever things shall be better with you.

(7.) And then, as to all your other concernments, intrust them freely and cheerfully to this God. He that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, how complete an object of trust is he! Whose heart would misgive him, who trusteth him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will? Can the counsel of his own will, can the counsel of that will which is guided by unerring wisdom, ever hurt any body? Will any body be the worse for lying under the determination of that will, which is guided by unerring counsel? Never fear to trust him in all things, who bears this character; a cheerful trust, a delightful trust, is most suitable to this representation of God. Never fret, never tumultuate, never admit of any distrustful thought; but at the same time, (as the direction is, Psalm xxxvii., beginning,) "trust in the Lord and do good," and place your delight in the Lord, and not fret at any thing we see fall out in the world; never fret, but trust; never fret, but do good; never fret, but delight thyself in the Lord. And therefore,

(8.) Lastly; The direction that is most suitable to this apprehension of God, is to preserve a continual quietude and tranquillity in our own spirits. The proper effect of such trust is quietness: "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." And, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is staved on thee; because he trusteth in thee," Isaiah xxvi. 3. There is no room nor place for rational disquiet hereupon, in reference to any thing he hath done, or in reference to any thing we may apprehend he will do. Let there be such a constant calmness and tranquillity of spirit maintained, in opposition to vexation about past events, and to solicitude about future events: for these two things, we are apt to disquiet ourselves; about past events with vexation and future events with solicitude; and so we live uncomfortable lives. But there will be no place left, either for the one or the other, if we will but carry this apprehension about us, that God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. What cause, then, can there be for solicitude? God will not change his nature, he will be still the same. He will as much govern the world by counsel in all future times, and all the particular concernments of his creatures, and especially our own concernments, in respect of which we are apt to be solicitous. He will do as much as ever he did. For this is his essential character, and therefore can never cease to be so, that he doth all things after the counsels of his own will.

But you may say, "He may permit wicked men to do so and so, injuriously."

If he do so, he wisely permits it, and according to the counsel of his own will. And who would be afraid of the counsel of such a will? If he permit ill things to be done and fall out in the world, it is either for the exercise of their graces who belong to him in the world, and who are the called according to his purpose; it is that their faith, and their love to him, and their patience, and their subjection, and their heavenly mindedness, and the raisedness of their spirits above the world, may be more tried, and may further appear; or, it may be, for the correction and chastisement of his own offending people. And then, there is no place for fretting and inquietude of spirit, but calmly to accept the punishment of sin, lying down under it with a calm and submissive patience. Or it may be in reference to the future more illustrious display of his own glory, that he lets wicked men prosper and triumph for a time, and flourish like the green grass, when it is that they may be destroyed for ever. And never doubt but that he doth all things after the counsel of his own will, he will make all things finally to result into such an end as shall be suitable to so glorious an Agent, worthy of himself, so that angels and saints shall confess to all eternity, that all his ways and works were marvellous, just, righteous, and great; and worthy of himself, taken altogether. It cannot but be so, that the issue of things must be such as is most agreeable to him "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

LECTURE IX.*

Heb. xi. 3.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

In that order of discourse, (wherein we have made some progress,) of treating of the several more principal heads of that religion which we all profess, we have spoken at large (as the last subject we insisted upon in this course) of the counsels of the divine will, or (which is all one) his purposes and decrees, according to which he is said to work all things, in that Ephes. i. 11.

And now, the next thing that comes in order to be spoken of, is that great WORK OF CREATION, which is part, and the first part, the beginning of the execution of his external counsels or purposes of his will. This is the first of his external acts that terminate upon somewhat without himself. His decrees, though they have their term within him, and so come into the account, not of his transient, but of his eminent acts, and yet do differ, too, from all these internal acts of the divine Hypostasis toward one another; for they have their very objects in the Divine Being. But the decrees of God, though they have their term within the Divine Being, that is, they do, while they are but decrees, effect nothing *extra Deum, without God*, yet they have their object without him; that is, they refer, some way or other, to the creature. Now, in contradistinction to those internal acts of God that have reference to the creature, we consider his external acts, whereof this of creation is the first, and is leading and fundamental to all other subsequent and external acts of his, towards, or upon, the creature, as now existing, till some act or other hath preceded, by which it might exist.

This is, therefore, such an act as makes its object, and doth not suppose it; as all following acts of God towards

* Preached January 17th, 1693.

the creature do suppose the object, and not make it; suppose it pre-existent, and then are concerned and conversant about it, as already existent; to wit, to sustain it, to regulate it, improve it, perfect it; or any ways alter it as he sees good.

And whereas this is the first step that God takes in executing the counsels of his will; that is, that being ascribed to him, to do all things according to the counsel of his will, he doth this great work of creation according to that counsel of his will. This will put an end to the great dispute about the original of all things: whether this world, and all that it contains, came of itself, or by fate, or by chance; or whether it were all entirely owing to some wise and designing intelligent Agent. If, I say, the authority of divine revelation may decide the matter, and so far obtain in the mind of men, there is an end of that dispute; that is, that since whatsoever is done by that great and almighty Agent, was done according to the counsels of his own will; then this world came not into being of itself, or by any fatality or casualty; but by wise counsel designing the thing, and the time, and whatsoever circumstances might refer thereunto.

And indeed, those that have not a divine revelation to guide their apprehension in this matter, and have but allowed themselves (as many have) a liberty of thought, have discerned those characters of divine wisdom and design, in the whole frame and contrivance of things in this great creation, as not only to acknowledge, but to adore, the wise Creator that hath given being to all. Every thing of order being the product of wisdom; wisdom and order have most certain relation one to another, as the productive principle, and the object produced. If there be such a thing as order produced, wisdom and counsel must have been the productive principle.

We, formerly, in the beginning of this series of discourse, had occasion to speak of the creation, from Romans i. 20. The invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen in things that he hath made. It was upon another account that we discoursed of the creation then, not making that the terminative subject of our discourse, but considered it only as evidential of the Deity; we are now to consider it as effected by that almighty divine power; we now consider it as a matter of faith. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." And it was of absolute necessity that there should be that rational consideration of the creation, first, in order to the evincing of an object of faith, before we came to speak any thing of faith, or what was to be matter of faith; for no one can believe any thing, by the proper assent of faith, till he understands who he is to believe, and why. And it is the formal object of faith that we were to evince to you, in order to our showing the ground why we were to believe any material object that comes within the compass of divine revelation.

Therefore, having first evinced to you the existence and being of God; and then evidenced to you, that that revelation which we have in the Book of Scripture is from God; and thence having more distinctly considered the nature and perfections of God, as they are held forth in that revelation, together with the distinct Hypostases which that revelation assures us are in the Deity; we now come to consider the creation too, as a matter of faith also.

And it ought not to seem strange to us, that when we have heard the creation spoken of, as tending to evince to us the being of God, we should come now to discourse of it as a matter of faith; for most plain it is, that he same conclusion may be assented to on different grounds, and the one doth strengthen the other, and not detract from it. It is no prejudice at all to our receiving the doctrine of the creation, as a matter of faith, that it is also demonstrable in a rational way, any more than it doth detract from, or lessen the credit of, a human testimony, that many do concur and say the same thing; which detracts nothing from the validity of that person's testimony, but instead of that, adds thereto.

And we are to reckon it a great discovery of the divine favour and indulgence to us, when one and the same thing may be the matter, both of fiducial assent upon a divine testimony, and of rational demonstration also. God condescends to us, and is so much the more favourable, that he is pleased to make the same thing evident more ways than one, according as the occurrence of several *media* for the evidencing of any thing, doth beget a stronger and firmer impression of the thing itself, upon our minds. This is referred unto, allusively, to set forth the great assurance wherewith the Gospel revelation was given, 1 John i. 1, 3. "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life—that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you."

It is very true, indeed, that the creation generally considered, and more abstractedly, is very demonstrable by reason; not only to be rendered probable, or a likely thing, but certain and more demonstrable. That is, as I said, when we have in view so many sorts of things that we are sure were not always; and therefore, could not be of themselves; (for whatsoever is of itself must be always, must be from eternity;) then we are sure every such thing must have had some maker or other. And so, nothing can be more demonstrable, than that there hath been, and must be, a creation, even unto reason, and by reason.

But though reason may clearly apprehend and evince, in general, that there hath been a creation, it can never evince the way and manner, the method and order, wherein things have been created. All this must be owing to divine revelation, and to faith thereupon, if we understand, (as here it is said,) "through faith, the worlds were framed, by the word of God." By reason, we may know that the world or worlds were some time or other made; but we can only know by faith that they were made in six days, and that such and such was the order of making them, as the divine history doth report the matter to us. And therefore doth this text inform us, not only of this as an apprehensible thing, that the worlds were made, but it lets us see how we are to apprehend it. We are not only to understand this, but we are to understand it by faith, that the worlds were framed by the word of God.

We have, in the text, two distinct propositions, which are of two divers kinds: the first is dogmatical, or more expressly assertory, and the second is explicatory of the former.

The former, I say, is mere dogmatical. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." It is a thing to be understood by faith, that the worlds were framed by the word of God. And this I shall make the main subject of my discourse which I intend upon this scripture.

The latter is explicatory of the former, so that things which are seen, were not made of things that do appear, or were made, (which is the truer reading of the text,) of things which do not appear, or were made of not appearing things, not pre-existing things, that had stood forth into being before.

First. And for the first of these: you see it contains two parts—what it is we are to understand; and—how we are to understand it.—The thing to be understood, that the worlds were framed by the word of God, and—how we are to understand it, by faith, or through faith. It is faith that lets in the notion more distinctly into our minds. We have this notion by faith, as the word in the Greek signifies, the forming of a notion, begetting it in our minds. We have the notion begot in our minds by faith, that the worlds were so framed by the word of God.

1. We have first, and more principally, to consider the former of these, the thing to be understood. We shall consider the manner afterwards. And for the thing to be understood, that the worlds were framed by the word of God, we have here three heads of discourse more distinctly to be considered and spoken to—the object of this act, the worlds—the Agent whose this act or work is, that is, God, exerting his power by his word, and—the act of creation itself, what kind of act that is. It is here rendered, "framed." We shall speak to the emphasis of that expression hereafter, in its proper place, when we come to give you an account of the nature of the act, creating, which though that word doth not primarily and directly signify, yet supposeth, as we shall in a proper time come to show you.

(1.) We are to consider the object of creation, as it is

here expressed by this comprehensive term, the worlds, "The worlds were framed by the word of God." The word here so rendered, doth signify sometimes eternity, especially being plurally used. But sometimes also it signifies time, and sometimes an age, and in the plural, ages. But it doth also signify, in the narrower sense, time: not only time, in itself, abstractly and nakedly considered, but the things that lie within time: not the *mensura* but the *mensurata*, not only that duration, which is the measure of such and such things, but the things themselves that are measured thereby. And that is the sense wherein it must be taken here. Therefore, it is not the naked thing, time, that is spoken of here, (though the word, sometimes, hath that signification as the object of this creative act,) but all things that come under temporary mensuration, all that are measured by time, which is fitly enough expressed in our translation by this term, "the worlds."

And whereas it is not said, world, but worlds, that shows, that the *continens* is more than one: and if the propriety of the Greek be considered, it also signifies them to be more than two; for the word is not a dual but a plural, and so it is more than one, and more than two worlds that are signified by this expression. And indeed, the matter is less indefinite; and it being impossible to us to know how many are the several circles of things that are above us, that are all made things, things altogether without our knowledge or comprehension, (as we have had occasion to tell you on another account, of our Lord's being ascended, and gone up far above all heavens,) we are left in a just uncertainty, (which belongs to us, and is proper to our state,) how many those heavens are, or those orbs of things which are replenished with creatures, (parts of the universe,) that altogether make the entire object of this creation, and this great creative act.

And taking that phrase, "the worlds," to signify whatsoever lies under the measure of time, so we are not barely to consider such orbs, but we are to take in all the *contenta*, as well as the *continens*, all the things contained, as well as the things containing. And so, it is the whole universe of created beings that comes under our present consideration: which, therefore, in speaking to us of the object of the creation, or what it is that is created, it is not to be imagined that we should speak of it in the singular, nor of all the particular kinds; but only under some general heads, into which the universe of created things may be distributed.

[1.] The first and most general and obvious distribution of the created universe, is into the more substantial things, and the modifications thereof; what is in itself a substantial thing, and what doth only some way or other modify such a being. And it is the former of these that is the proper object; creation more strictly and properly taken. Creation is, in the strictest sense, *suppositorium* of *supposita*, of things that do subsist not of themselves, in reference to any efficient cause: for so no created thing doth exist, by itself, in opposition to what doth inhere, so as to be a subject of things that do reside in it. And so, the modification of things are not properly created, in the strictest sense of creation; but are educed and brought forth out of those substantial beings that were themselves created, or made out of nothing; and so they, that is, substantial things, are the most proper objects of creation, that have a proper subsistence of their own, though with dependance on the efficient cause that gave them being. And after this distribution, comes,

[2.] The distribution of such created things, that is, substantial beings, in which all the diversifying *modi* do reside and have their place. And we are to consider what may be the more general distribution of substantial things, that are themselves created. And we can consider none more general, than this one, to wit, of all those created substances, into these two heads, matter and mind. If the inquiry be, What doth this universe of created beings contain? or what are the great spheres of being that lie within the compass of the created universe? Why, speaking of substantial things themselves, that are the subjects of divers distinct *modi* or modifications, they can be but these two, all will fall under these two heads, to wit, matter and mind. And this is that distribution of created things which the Scripture gives us a ground express enough for: Col. i. 16. "By him were all things made that are in heaven or that are in earth, visible and invisible." We may well enough suppose all matter to be, some way or other, visible, though there be indeed a finer sort of matter than is visible to us. But then, there is the other head of things, in that Col. i. 16. things that are simply invisible, altogether invisible, as it is altogether impossible that any sense, any external sense, can perceive a mind, or a thought, which is the immediate product of that mind. So, that every distribution of created things into visible and invisible, I take it, sufficiently corresponds with this that I now mention, that is, matter and mind.

And otherwise, we have the creation distinguished as to the object of it, or eation, passively taken, into heaven and earth, as we find in that history of the beginning of the creation, Gen. i. 1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Some, indeed, that go to the cabalistical way, will have, by heavens, all intellectual beings that are created to be comprehended and meant: and by earth, all matter whatsoever. We shall not dispute the propriety of that conjecture, or what probably it hath, or hath not; but take what is more obvious to ourselves in common understanding. And if we take that as a distribution of created things, heaven and earth, as was intimated before, we must comprehend together both the *continens* and the *contenta*. And so, by heaven, must be understood and meant, not only all the several superior orbs, but all their inhabitants that do reside and dwell in them, and wherewith they are replenished, and unto which our very minds and spirits, (though now they are clothed with terrestrial vehicles and dwell in flesh,) do originally appertain and belong, as being nearer of kin, and more allied to the world of spirits, than they are allied to this world of flesh and earth, this terrestrial world. For, if we take the mind and spirit in us, to be the nobler and more excellent part of ourselves, taking our denomination from that which is more noble and excellent, we have greater affinity, according to our primitive and original state, with heaven, than we have with earth, which affinity is not to be judged by the place of residence, but by the nature of the thing. Mind and spirit are more akin to heavenly inhabitants, and they are to any thing that is made merely of earth.

And so, taking the things contained, with all the heavenly orbs, you have great diversifications, in that mentioned place, Col. i. 16. And there, indeed, the Spirit of God runs out more than it doth in the distribution of things that fall under that other head, that is, the visible things of this earth. For we are told, under the head of invisible things, (and which also in very great part, indeed, are the things which do belong to the heavens,) of thrones and dominions, and principalities and powers; which are very reasonably thought to mean so many several orders of celestial creatures that do inhabit the other world or worlds, for how many of them there are, we do not know, nor can know, as we formerly told you.

And then, if we speak of the things contained in this lower orb, signified here by earth, they do more generally fall under a common notice, and are more obvious to every one's apprehension. This world, you know, is replenished with very numerous sorts of creatures that live one way or other, or with one or another sort of lives; either, that do live an intellectual life, or live from an intelligent soul, as we do all live; or else, that live a merely sensitive life, as all the brute creatures do, of that next order below; or else, things that do live a merely vegetable life, as all the several sorts of plants that have some kind of life, though it be of a meaner and lower kind.

And then, there are all your inanimate things that have no proper life at all; that is, have no self-moving or self-acting principle within them, or peculiar to them, from whence they do act or order themselves, or are capable of being moved, as from any internal *vis* in this kind or that.

Of such extent is this created universe; it takes in all these several sorts of things. And to descend to the enumeration of more particular kinds would be an endless work, and not proper for us. But, in the mean time, we have very great amplitude in the object of our present thought and consideration, when we are to look upon the universe of created beings, that is, of created substances, look upon

all those that come under the notion of matter, and that, as such, is inanimate: matter, as matter, has no self-moving principle in it. Look upon all those things that live some kind of life or another; whether they be things of this earth of ours, or whether they be things of the superior or refined orbs and parts of the universe: these come in all the orders of angelical creatures, of which we have only that general and more indistinct account which that Colossians i. and some other passages of Scripture give us. What their diversifications are, we know not; but some or other they are, and such as do import superiority and inferiority among themselves. And then, go to that other head, of things destitute of life, and that more properly come under the notion of matter before mentioned: and so, descending downwards from the more noble and excellent creatures, to the meaner and lesser ones, what a vast scale of created being is this! descending from the highest to the lowest, or ascending from the lowest to the highest, and all within the compass of the created universe, and all this signified by that one expression in the text, "the worlds."

Indeed, all this being summed up into this one expression, of the universe of the world, taken singularly and in the largest sense of which it doth admit, we have, even within the compass of created beings, that which far exceeds any of our thoughts. And it hath been a question much agitated amongst philosophical men, whether the created universe have any created limits at all, yea or no. It hath been agitated by some with a very ill design: and some have made it their business, in moving the controversy, to hide their design. And with a strange mixture of fraud and folly, in discussing that question, Whether the created universe were infinite or no? they have gone about to disguise the matter, and told us, they would not, indeed, say it was infinite, but it was indefinite; to wit, the extent of the created universe: and by the extent of it, the meaning could not be the mere local extent, but the real; not barely what space it took up, but what of essence and real being it did comprehend and contain; and that, some of them have told us, was not infinite, but indefinite only.

But there hath been a very great mixture (as I say) of fraud and of folly: of fraud, that they have disguised their meaning, and laboured to hide it; and of folly, that in their very attempt of hiding it, they have unawares discovered a very ill meaning. And it could not but be so; for when the terms are distinguished of infinite and indefinite, I would fain know what they mean by the latter. If, by indefinite, they mean that which hath in itself no certain limits, then they plainly say, it is infinite, the created universe is infinite, because it hath no certain limits. But if they mean by it only, that it hath no known limits to us, that every one readily acknowledgeth; we can never know the limits of it; and so that is but to say it is finite, if they mean only so. And indeed, it is a very dubitable thing, whether any finite understanding can measure the created universe, or is capable of comprehending the extent of it. Very willing I am to aggrandize that as much as I can, in consistency, still, with owning it to be but a created thing; because still, the more we magnify that, the more we magnify the Creator. But to pretend it to be an indefinite thing in that sense, that is, that it hath no certain limits in itself, that is to make it an infinite thing.

And if it here be inquired, What is the inconvenience of that, to make it to be so, or how can we prove it not to be so? Why truly, to the former of the questions, there would be this to say, that to say it were infinite, or could be infinite, were to say that it were not a creation; for most certain it is, whatsoever is infinite is God. Infinity is the proper predicate or attribute of Deity. And so, the inconvenience would be, the taking away all the foundations of religion; for it would be the confounding of God and the creature, the taking away the difference between them. And it would be equally impossible, that there should be any room or place for religion, if you take away the subject of it, as much as if you take away the object of it. If the creature were infinite, there could be no subject of religion: and there can be no place for religion, if there be no subject of it, any more than if there were no object of it.

And as to the question, How can it be proved that the created universe is not infinite, and cannot be infinite? It is very clearly to be proved by what hath been said, in very great part: that is, whatsoever is infinite is God. Therefore, to say that the created universe is infinite, is to say, that it is not created. But besides, it may be easily evinced, that not only this universe of created beings is not infinite, but that it is impossible that it ever should be, or could be. And as the plain reason of the thing doth lie against that imagination; so, the most pernicious and destructive tendency of that philosophy that would impose upon us the imagination of an infinite universe, is most studiously to be disclaimed and abhorred, as taking away all place and room for religion. For it would confound created being and uncreated, and deify the creature; and so, leave no subject of worship, as the more avowed atheism leaves no object of it.

I shall not say more to you about the object of this said act. We are further to consider the great Agent, the Creator; and the nature of the act of creation. But let us make some stand and pause here, and consider what improvement is to be made of what hath been thus far discoursed to you. It is of very vast extent, what we are to consider under the notion of the created universe. But when all this is done, it is still but a creation; make it as great a thing as you will, magnify it as much as possible, consistently with its being a creation, and when all this is done, then say within yourselves, "All this is but as a drop, a drop of a bucket, a dust in a balance, a mere nothing, yea, lighter than nothing and vanity, compared with that Being which is of itself; that Being which owes itself to none; that Being to which it was impossible not to be;" for all this vast creation doth but depend on will and pleasure; "For thy pleasure they are and were created." It was determinable, merely upon good pleasure, whether there should be any creation, or no creation: so that one *nutus*, one *nod* (as I may speak) of the Divine Mind, either makes this vast thing, the whole created universe, to be something or nothing. "If I please, it shall be something; if I please, it shall be nothing."

It should lead us into adoration of the great self-subsisting Being, that owes it to none that he is, is beholden to none, but is by the excellency of his own eternal nature, to which it was repugnant not to be, and which comprehends all plenitude and fulness of being in itself, even an infinitude of being.

Consider this then, and when it hath prompted and led you into admiration and adoration, looking up to the great Creator, it should prompt and lead us into the greatest detestation of the insolency of creatures, even such creatures as (if they would use their minds) are capable of apprehending this, and yet take upon them as if they were absolute. They started up out of being but the other day, and at the fiat, and by the pleasure, of the great Creator; and now, they look upon themselves in this world as if it were all theirs, and as if they might do in it what they pleased. He that is the Creator of heaven and earth is also, we know, in Scripture, styled the Possessor of heaven and earth. And for a company of upstart creatures sprung up into being but the other day, to take upon them, as if they were possessors (as much as is possible for them to grasp) of this creation, and to do in it what they will; what a detestable insolency is this! It is but a dependent, borrowed right that any one hath in whatsoever he calls his own. And yet, men are apt to hug themselves in conceit of propriety, saying, "This is my own land, these are my own goods, this is my own house: and it is so by the best title a man can have." Now suppose a stranger enter your door and come into your house, and take no notice of any thing as yours, but useth all things as he pleaseth, and saith he will do what he lists in this house of yours; or (without saying so) doth what he lists, takes and uses what he will, and as he will; would you not take yourself to be highly injured, and would you not right yourself, if it lay in your power, upon so injurious an intruder as this? Why, at this rate is the great God treated and dealt with, by his apostate, revolted creatures, inhabiting this lower world, though it be even the meaner and baser parts of his creation! Creatures sprung up into being here by indulgence of divine favour, take upon them as if they were their own lords and owners, and as if every thing they lay

their hands on were their own, without ever taking notice of God; He that gave them breath and being and all things, that they might seek after him; and consider, "Whence come I? and all things that I use and enjoy, whence are they?" No such thing enters into their minds from day to day, but a life's time is run out in these bodies, wherein they should love, and serve, and adore, their great Creator, without taking notice of him.

But a more copious use of this yet remains, when we shall have opened other things that yet are to be doctrinally opened unto you.

LECTURE X.*

(2.) WE are now, in the second place, to consider the Agent in this great and mighty work, and that is, (as the text expresseth it,) God himself, that great, all-comprehending Name. There will be occasion to take notice of the way of his agency (by his word) by and by. The Creator of all things, of heaven and earth, can be no other than he who comprehends and contains all things, virtually, in his own power. But whereas, we have heretofore shown to you at large, that there is in the Deity a threefold subsistence, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, they are each of them to be comprehended under the notion of Creator here. It is a plain and self-evident truth, commonly given us as a maxim, *Opera Trinitatis, ad extra, sunt indivisa, vel communicabilia;* that the works of the three persons in the Godhead towards the creature are undivided, and communicable to each of the persons: so as that we must understand them to be conjunct, in every such act as they do exert without themselves, or towards any thing that is not God. Their distinguishing actions are towards one another; but the actings that they exert towards any thing without them, these are common to them all. So that the Father creates, the Son creates, and the Holy Ghost creates. This action which, as we have told you, makes its object, and doth not suppose it, as other acts, *ad extra*, do, it is the common act of each of these. And so you find that the creation is usually ascribed to God, under that name of God (that name, being essentially taken) which comprehends all the three persons. And so we must understand that in the beginning of Genesis, where God is said to have created the heavens and the earth. And that observation is not to be slighted, that Elohim, a plural noun, is conjoined with a verb of the singular number; Barah Elohim. As if it were said, God created the heaven and the earth; that is, it is an expression to note that there is a plurality in the Deity; that is, of persons, each of which is God. But it being conjoined with a verb in the singular number, it shows that these three were but one; did agree in Deity, as well as in this creative act. And this is that which that learned man Zanchy, in his treatise, "De tribus Elohim," doth prove profitably and at large. But more particularly, when the name of God is taken,

[1.] Personally, as divers times also it is, then it signifies, eminently, God the Father: and that very term doth sufficiently express him to be the Original of all things, of all beings, both created and uncreated. He is usually, and fitly enough, said to be *Fons Deitatis et fons Trinitatis.* The Deity is first in the Father, and all created beings first and originally from him, as the matter is plainly expressed in the 1 Cor. viii. 6. To us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things. Him we are taught to adore as the great Original, from whom all being hath its rise. And yet,

[2.] We have the creation, very frequently, ascribed to the Son, speaking him conjunct with the Father in this great creative act. And even in that last mentioned place, (1 Cor. viii.) where it is said, "To us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him," it is added, "and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. And so, in that Col. i. 15, 16. his agency in the creation is most expressly asserted. He who is there said to be "the image of the invisible God, and the first-born," (as we read it, but it may as properly be read, according to grammar, with only the alteration of an accent, the first-begotten of every creature,) "by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and for him." There is his concurrence and conjunction with the Father, both as the efficient and final Cause of all things. So that Heb. i. 2. "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed the heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." He that is "the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person," by him the worlds were made. And so we have it, most expressly, in the beginning of John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, (a known name and title of Christ, God's eternal Son and consubstantial Word,) that Word was in the beginning with God, and that Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." He is spoken of under a title of like import, frequently, in other scriptures, and most expressly in Proverbs viii. That is, by the name of the wisdom of God, and, under that name, is asserted to be with him, even throughout the whole work of this creation. Not with him in an idle concomitancy; which no man can understand, either according to the reason of the thing, or the plain import of the other scriptures that have been named, and many more that are to be named. He was with him, when the Lord laid the foundations of the earth, when he stretched out the heavens, when he did all that was done in the work of creation. And then,

[3.] The creation is ascribed to the Eternal Spirit, to the Holy Ghost, as you find expressly in that Gen. i. when we had been told, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and that the earth was without form and void; the Spirit of God is said to have moved upon the face of the waters;" that is, upon the fluid matter of the yet unformed chaos, that profound abyss; that Tohu and Bohu, as it is expressed; upon that fluid and yet unformed matter that was fluctuating, even as waters do: upon that, the Spirit of God did move to collect and form things out of it, according to divine pleasure.

Thus, it is plain, each person in the Godhead hath his hand and part in this great work of creation. What hand and part each hath, some are very curious in describing. But so far as the Scriptures expressly do lead us, so far we may allow our conceptions to be formed concerning their distinct agency. And it is plain,

First, That the name Father doth signify him to be the Original of all things, the first Fountain Being, the Fountain of all being, created and uncreated. The Divine Being itself is first and originally in Him, as the name Father signifies: and that comprehends the fulness of all being in itself, all excellency, all perfection, whether conceivable by us, or unconceivable. So from him the creation must have taken its rise as the Head of all things. And then,

Secondly, The Scripture speaks of the Son under the name of the eternal consubstantial word of God, or his essential wisdom, which must needs be understood to contain in itself the first idea of all things. All being originally contained and comprehended in God the Father as such, he is now said to be the visage of the invisible God, and in him do all the glories of the Deity shine, as in their first image. All things being to be created and produced into actual being according to that image which lay in the Divine Mind, which he is. As there is no one goes about to make any thing, but hath the image and idea in his own mind, first, of what he intends to make. He that intends to make a book, or to make a house, or a garment, hath the idea in his own mind, first, of what he intends to make, and according to that idea all things are made. All things that were to be created, the eternal wisdom of the Father comprehending them all in himself, he is the rule or *norma*, according to which the creation is at last produced into actual being. And then,

Thirdly, The agency of the Holy Ghost may be con-

* Preached January 24th, 1693.

ceived according to that light the Scripture gives concerning the distinguishing characters of that person. From the actuous love, between the Father and the Son, for an eternal production of the divine image by the Father in the Son, there cannot but be an everlasting spiration of love between the Father and this his consubstantial Image: an actuous love, and that image, containing in itself the ideas of all the things that were to be produced. This mighty power of actuous love, it goes forth to produce all things, according to this image, with the highest delectation and complacency, according to which, God pronounced concerning all things which he had made—that it was very good, and so a derivative object of divine love; all things being produced according to that excellency of his own image that was the Original Root of all thiogs. And hereupon do other Scriptures speak of the agency of the Holy Ghost in this matter; that is, that by his Spirit he garnished the heavens; one part of the creation there spoken of. "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit and they are created," Psalm civ. 30. And so you see, that Father, Son, and Spirit, have their parts and agencies in this great work of creation. But then,

(3.) We have here to consider the act itself. You have seen the object, the worlds; and you have seen the Agent, God himself, Father, Son, and Spirit. We are now next, according to the order proposed, to consider the act that is expressed here in the text by a word, which is, fitly enough, rendered, "framed;" but we must note unto you, that that word doth *express* one sort of act, and *supposeth* another. It expresseth one sort of act, that is, the framing of things; framing (as it is fitly enough translated here) when there was somewhat now brought into being, out of which they should be so and so diversely framed, especially as to the material part of the world. That is the act here expressed. But then, it supposeth a former act, a foregoing act, and that is, the making all out of nothing, out of which any thing was after-framed. We shall speak of the act the word expresseth, first; and then shall speak of the act that word supposeth.

[1.] The word in the text is very fitly expressive of the former act, that the worlds are said to be framed. It comes of a word that signifies perfect and entire, and it seems to come from that we commonly denote by art; or, as some would have, the relation of this word to *artus*, which signifies our limbs, the limbs of any creature that is endued with life. And so they would borrow the illustration of this word from chirurgic art, that doth aptly place the bones which have been dislocated, and puts them into joint again. So the worlds were framed (as it were) by the most curious and exquisite chirurgic art; or else, that which is precedent to that, the locking and joining things into one another through the whole creation.

And in this respect, the framing of the worlds was more immediately the work of the divine wisdom, which may be meant by the expression here, that they were created by the word of God, which I told you we should take notice of in its proper place. Which may be meant not of the word spoken out, but of the internal word, agreeable to what we are wont to call *verbum mentis*; as there is no one that speaks, (if he speak sense,) but he hath in his own mind first that which he afterwards expresseth and speaks out. But herein was the wisdom of the Creator principally conspicuous; in that beautiful order and frame of things that appeared every where throughout this great universe; that there is that order that we behold daily among the heavenly bodies, in reference to one another and in reference to us; that which, in the 8th Psalm, you find the Psalmist in so high and holy an adoration of: "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained." It is a great argument of a holy heart, to be much in contemplating the divine wisdom that hath settled every thing of that order which is any where to be found in the whole creation.

If you look into this lower world, and consider that, as to what falls under our notice, there is every where that correspondency of actives to passives, of faculties to objects, as every one that will use thoughts may easily discern, the wisdom of the Creator is greatly to be adored in it. For think we with ourselves, how great a piece of vanity this creation had been, if it had not been so; if there had been objects upon which there had been no faculties to exercise; or if there were faculties to be exercised that had no objects; as if there were visible things, and no eye to see them; if there were audible things, and no ear to hear them. And so, back again, if there were eyes, and nothing to be seen; and a faculty of hearing, and no such thing as sound. But herein is the admirable contrivance of the divine wisdom in this creation manifest, that here is such a correspondency throughout, of objects to faculties, of active powers and principles to passives.

And then, in that order that is settled amongst things, therein we have the great display of the divine wisdom, there being (as hath been often said) that relation between wisdom and order, as between cause and effect. Wheresoever there is any of stated, settled order, we may be sure there was wisdom to contrive and design it. Stated and settled order cannot be a casualty. When we see the contrivance and order that are in such a thing as a watch or a clock, and the like, we are presently sure that such a thing was not made by chance. And to think that such a mighty agency, a mighty power of motion, as was once exerted in this creation, should produce things in that orderly frame wherein we behold them, without design, without wisdom, is as absurd an imagination, as if we should imagine a thousand men, by violent strokes with axes and hammers, upon brass or iron, or the like, without any design, should produce so many watches, clocks, or any such like engines; meaning no such thing.

Therefore, nothing is more to be wondered at, nor a greater argument of the degeneracy of man, or how low his mind is sunk, than that there should be any who should go into the account of the more thinking sort of men, that yet should make it their business to exclude the power of final causes out of the world; as if there were no such thing as a final cause, or an end designed, that had any influence at all upon this great creation. Whereas, if we consider the several orders and sorts of being, how useful the meanest creature, even the inanimate part of the creation, is, to very great and necessary purposes and ends; and when we consider, among those things that have life, how aptly they serve for their own purposes, and how aptly every thing in them serves their own purpose, that is, to beget and maintain that life, we cannot but see the absurdity of that conceit. To look upon the lowest sort of living creatures, the mere vegetable creatures; Why are they made with roots? but to take hold of the earth from whence by them their nutriment is drawn; that those little fibres, without which a leaf could not be nourished, should be dispersed every where throughout the whole, with so fine a texture as they are? Very well doth Cicero, a heathen, speak of nature under the name of the divine art, the art of God. And whereas, "*Boni artificis est celare artem;*" *it is the part of a good artist to conceal his art*, truly, if the divine art were not, in great part, concealed, one would think all the actions of intelligent creatures should be swallowed up in wonder, to behold the divine agency running through all things, and so variously exerting itself for the production of things as we find them, and contriving the several kinds of things in the same rank and station in the creation, into which at first they were set.

If we should look to that admirable, rare contrivance, that appears in the forming of our own bodies, upon which you find the Psalmist in that transport, "Marvellous are thy works, fearfully I am made," that is, wonderfully; "and that my soul knoweth right well," Psalm cxxxix. 14. That is, "This is a beaten subject to me, a thing that my thoughts are much used to, it is a thing about which my mind is accustomed, I know it right well:" as we know the path that we have often trod.

And not only is the divine wisdom conspicuous in this framing of things, but his goodness too. How adorable is the goodness of God, even in that frame and disposure of things that we find in the creation; that things are so framed and adapted, as to answer and correspond to one another. Here is a great appearance of the divine goodness, that whereas he hath put into such sorts and orders of his creatures, a desiring faculty, there is still somewhat in that creation to answer that faculty of desire. Every thing is, by natural instinct, taught to desire that which is good for it; that is, that which is convenient and suitable

to it. So we have the Psalmist (Psalm cxlv. 15.) admiring God upon this account, that the eyes of all things were up unto him, and that he gave them their meat in due season; a continual argument and testimony of the divine goodness. He hath not left himself, in this, without witness: the whole earth is full of his goodness, even that which the inhabitants of it replenish and fill with their wickedness and malignity against him. He doth good to all, even to the evil and the good. He hears the ravens when they cry, and they seek their meat from God; Psalm civ. which Psalm is full of expressions to this purpose. This is the munificence of the great Creator, that when he did design to replenish such and such parts of the created universe, with such and such inhabitants, creatures able to receive and entertain some correspondent and suitable good, he hath also stored the world with that good which shall answer every appetite throughout all this creation of God; so that none can be miserable, amongst even those that are rendered, by their own natures, capable of government by a law, but such as make themselves so by aversion and disaffection to their proper and suitable good. They only have it not, because they refuse it, because they are disaffected thereunto.

But then, we should come, in the next place, to speak of the second act which this expression in the text doth suppose. That which the word in the text is most expressive of, is only that sort of act by which things are adapted and suited to one another; but this supposeth a former act, by which those things, out of which things are thus framed, were themselves at first produced and brought forth out of nothing; which is creation in the strictest and most proper sense; though, indeed, there is not a word that doth exclusively signify that act in any of the learned languages. But the nature of the thing doth plainly evidence that there must be such an act. That is, look upon all uncreated being, the being of God himself, and then that which is created and made being, must have been made out of nothing; which they that will not apprehend, run into various and most manifest absurdities; one sort, thinking there must be such a thing as eternal, necessary matter; another sort, thinking that things must be made out of God as so many parts of the Deity. But I shall, on the next occasion, labour to evince to you the absurdity of any such imaginations as these.

And in the mean time, pray let us make so much of present reflection upon this great work of God's creation; that is, that he who hath made such a world as this, cannot but have both right and ability to rule it, and all things in it, to the best and most valuable purposes. And truly, I fear we do not, on this account, enough study the creation, and the attributes of the Divine Being that are exerted and put forth in that creation. There is his wisdom and his goodness to be seen in that first sort of act already spoken to.

And his power is most visible, and especially to be seen in the latter sort of act, as we shall show when we come to speak to it. But to any that would give themselves liberty of their own thoughts, one would think, they should not part, for all the world, with the consolation, that this one thing should afford us; that is, that all this vast frame of things should be produced by divine wisdom, goodness, and power, into that exquisite order in which we now behold them; and that, hereupon, he that could tell how to make such a world as this, replenished with such variety of inhabitants, knows how to govern and dispose every thing he hath made. And, as there hath been that display of those glorious excellencies, in the Divine Nature, in the frame and contexture of this whole creation, we ought hereupon always to expect, that he will, with the same wisdom, power, and goodness, regulate, govern, and dispose of what he hath so made. All these things will appear, and show themselves in the most proper seasons, without our distracting and self-tormenting cares. Let us be desirous, principally and finally, of nothing but that he who made such a world as this, for himself, and for his own glory, may, in his own way and time, have that glory out of it which he seeks and designs for himself. Yea, let us be content, that he should have it in such a way as may possibly be conjunct with our suffering many inconveniences; things that may be grievous to us, to our flesh and blood, and external sense. Should not he have his glory out of his own creation, his own way? This world was not made for us, but it was made for him, by whom it was made.

Preached July 1st, 1692.

LECTURE XI.*

[2.] BUT then, as I have told you, in the second place, we are now to consider, that as the expression, here in the text, doth more directly signify that one act of putting things into order, which is the native import of the word; so there is another act necessarily supposed; and that is, the bringing of things out of nothing, which are the proper, the truly proper, matter of production, or whatsoever is *extra Deum*, whatsoever is a diverse thing from the being of the Deity itself. This word, "frame," doth not signify directly this act, but it doth necessarily suppose it. Order doth suppose a subject, the things in being that are brought into that order. And as the two great attributes before mentioned, divine wisdom and goodness, do shine forth in that former act, the putting of things into order; so his power doth most eminently appear in this latter act, the bringing of the things which he so puts into order, out of nothing.

As we do not pretend to assert this act, from the import of this word that is used in the text, abstractly considered, so neither do we pretend to assert, from the native, proper force and significancy of any one word at all, that we must think appropriate to this purpose, as only to signify this act and nothing else. We do readily grant, the Hebrew and the Greek words thus rendered, are frequently used with more latitude than barely to signify the bringing of things out of nothing. And so, this act is not to be concluded from the force and import of such words, abstractly considered by themselves. Words that are of a more indefinite signification, that may signify more things than one, they are always determined to some one particular sense or other, by the circumstances of the place where they are used. There is not any one word at all, that is to be confined and limited to one certain sense by its own native import; or, at least, there are very few words that are capable of that confinement and restriction by constant and unvaried use. But what they mean in this or that saying, is to be judged by the circumstances of the discourses wherein they lie.

What of the creation is *de fide*, a matter of faith merely, we have hinted to you already, and shall further have occasion to show you, when we come to speak of that second head, how we are to come to this understanding. But, in the mean time, it is very evident, when it is said, that we are to understand this by faith, that the worlds were so and so framed, we are not to understand it exclusively as if the meaning of the text were, to shut out every thing of argument or ratiocination in the matter. One and the same thing may be assented to, from divers different premises, as was hinted to you before. It is enough for our purpose, and even to make this which I am now speaking of a matter of faith, to wit, the producing of created things out of nothing, if it shall evidently appear, that in some texts of Scripture this must be ultimately intended and meant; and that no other thing can be, so as to exclude the necessary pre-supposition of this; and there are, undoubtedly, some texts that must be so understood, that there hath been somewhat produced out of nothing, out of which other things at length were made to arise.

As to that first text of Scripture, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Created must necessarily have this sense, at least, by an unavoidable necessity; for this making heaven and earth, being said to be in the beginning, when things took their beginning, had their first rise, it must suppose that heaven and earth were not only brought into order, but that of which they were made, was made of itself to exist, not having existed before. Otherwise, how was that the beginning of things? How was that the head of things? as the Hebrew word Resch, from whence the word Bershith, in the beginning, signifies. Otherwise, this word must assert a contradiction, that

things were begun, and not begun, at that time when God created heaven and earth.

And so, if you go forward to that first of John's Gospel, ver. 2, 3. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were created by him, (that is, God,) and without him was nothing made that was made;" every thing that was not God, was then made; all things. And, therefore, to suppose that all these made things were made out of pre-existent matter, is to suppose, that that pre-existent matter was not a thing, for all things were said to be made by him. All things beside himself were then made, therefore, matter itself was then made, out of which other things were made; unless it shall be said that matter is nothing, and, if so, we have what we seek, that is, that there are some things made out of nothing; but if it were a thing, and were not the Divine Being, as it is impossible to be, it was a self-made thing, and then made out of nothing.

And to this purpose must the explicatory proposition in the text be necessarily adapted, so that the things that are seen, were not made of things that did appear. The phenomena, (that is the word there,) things not then appearing, when the worlds were thus framed by the word of God; that is, things not before existing, for there is nothing at all that can be supposed to exist, but doth appear to some faculty or other, either divine or created. But they were things simply not appearing at all, and, therefore, not existing at all, out of which these worlds were made.

And lexicographers do take notice of that among the other senses of the word φαινομενων, that it signifies to exist. And, therefore, the worlds are said to be framed out of that which once did not exist, till it was made to exist by the divine creative power. And therefore, they foolishly think who would put a difficulty upon God in this case, such as was put upon the Israelites in Egypt, to make brick without straw; as if omnipotency could be posed, or meet with any obstruction to its designed acts, for want of matter to work upon. It was all one to him, (who calls things that are not, and makes them be as if they were, as the expression Rom. iv. 17.) whether there were the pre-existent matter to work upon or no; and the non-pre-existence can never nonplus omnipotency.

And therewith should we obviate the vain and idle question, when we hear of the worlds being framed by the word of God; "Aye, but of what were they made? made they were, but what did he make them of?" They must have, originally, been made out of what before was not, seeing it was his pleasure that they should be; for his pleasure all things are and were created, Rev. v. 9. And so, (as was said before,) if you take matter within the compass of being, it must itself be a made thing.

Now, concerning this act, the bringing of all things out of nothing, take this two-fold assertion, which we shall evince to you, and according whereunto we are to conceive of it—that it is possible to no created agent; and—that it is possible to God.

First, To all created agents, it was impossible to bring something out of nothing. It is impossible to all the power of nature, unto the power of whatsoever creature, or unto all the creatures uniting their power. I shall not trouble you with the reasonings of the schools to this purpose, by which they plainly enough demonstrate creation (that is, bringing something out of nothing) to be impossible to any creature. It is, indeed, a much disputed thing among them, whether God cannot impart his power, whether it cannot be communicated to a creature, so as that he may not make use of a creature in creation; but it is little material how that goes.

But that a creature cannot, by all its own strength, be able to bring any thing out of nothing, nor all created power put together, needs no other conviction, but an appeal even to common understanding. Nor can you conceive it any way possible for you. And if you say, "No, I cannot do it alone; but if I take in the advice, or superadded helps of such and such things, possibly we may together." Why, suppose all the power and force of all men in the world, and of all created agents besides, were to be united in one act, you cannot so much as conceive that they could produce so much as one single atom into being out of nothing. As it is equally impossible to all created power to annihilate, as to create, to reduce something back again into nothing, as to produce something out of nothing; so also is it equally possible for the divine, uncreated power to bring all things out of nothing. And then, therefore,

Secondly: We are to conceive concerning this act, as it is impossible to any created agent, so it is possible to God, and to the divine agency. For it is plain, it implies nothing of contradiction in the thing itself; that that which did not exist, should exist, as it is evident that many things do exist which did not exist. Therefore, there is no contradiction in that, what did not exist, should exist, as is is evident that many things do exist. And, therefore, to suppose it impossible to God to make that exist, which did not exist, is itself to assert a contradiction. For the notion of God doth carry infiniteness in it; you cannot form a notion of God, but it must include infiniteness. But to say that he is infinite, infinite in being, in his perfections, in his power too, and yet, that he cannot do that which implies no contradiction to be done, is to deny God to be God. It is to say, God is but a finite being, or of finite power; to say, that which you call God is not God, which is a contradiction, when you say that he cannot do that which implies no contradiction that it should be done; that is, that that which did not exist, should exist.

But admit this, perhaps you will object, that it is possible to divine agency to make something out of nothing, that doth not, however, prove that God hath now done so. There are many things possible to be done, which are not actually done. And it is no argument, from the affirmation of the power to assert the act.

To this, I only say, It is not alleged to that purpose; we do not assert the possibility of creating something out of nothing, to prove that something hath been created out of nothing; but only by way of answer to them, that would thereby prove, that something was never created out of nothing, because it is an *enunciato* affirmation, that which is impossible to be done is never actually done, though it doth not follow, that because the thing is possible to be done, therefore it is actually done. And, therefore, this is alleged only in answer to them, that do say it is simply impossible. But we prove it not to be impossible, for many things exist that did not always do so.

But we otherwise prove, that it hath actually been so, that is, that he hath made something out of nothing; that is, that we have proved it from those plain texts, that cannot but be understood in that sense. And we shall now prove it, from the gross and manifold absurdities, that they are unavoidably cast upon, who disallow something to be made out of nothing. That is, such absurdities as these; first, they must suppose this world to have been eternally, of itself, as it is; or, secondly, they must affirm there hath been necessarily self-subsisting matter from eternity; or, thirdly, they must assert, that God hath made all things out of himself, that whatsoever is made, is part of himself. But these are all of them the most manifest and gross absurdities that can be thought.

i. That this world should have been eternally as it is, without beginning. They that will pretend to say so, must first throw away all divine revelation about this matter, which manifestly asserts it never to have been eternal, but hath begun to be. But besides that, they do assert, here, repugnancies in the very nature of the thing, for they must assert the world to be as new now, as it was several thousands of years ago; that it was as old the first year, as now it is; that is, the first year in our account. Besides what is wont to be alleged by them who are for that second horrid opinion, that matter was necessarily self-subsisting from eternity; they think themselves concerned to prove the world's being from eternity, as it is; and they do so from that consideration, that then it is most unconceivably strange, that we should have no records of things, (as one of those Epicureans speaks,) elder or of a more ancient date than the times of the Trojan war, and the like But,

ii. That which is more plausibly, and more usually, taken up in these latter times, (though it was an ancient by-gone absurdity too,) is, that there must be such a thing as eternal matter, out of which many things were brought into this frame, in which now they are: and some that will not pretend to atheism do think, that only that matter

did pre-exist, and things could not have been produced into that order and state wherein they do now appear, but by a divine agency; that is, by a divine power and wisdom running through all things, and modelling them into that form in which we do find they do now appear, and are now cast; but nothing is more obvious to them that do consider, than the gross absurdity of that opinion, that there must be such a thing as eternal, self-subsisting matter, out of which God made the worlds. For,

(i.) That would ascribe to the matter, the most fundamental attributes of the Divine Being; that is, self-subsisting or necessary existence. Nothing can be imagined more grossly absurd, than that the highest and most radical and most fundamental attribute of the Deity should be ascribed to dull and senseless matter, that is, to exist of itself, and that it should be possible to him, if he would, to reduce it to nothing: and that this prerogative should belong to every particle of matter, and that all matter being reduced into minute particles, even in our conception, then each minute particle must be in itself an independent thing, existing of itself without dependance on any thing else. Which, if it be acknowledged, then shall you have as many deities as there are minute particles of matter throughout the universe.

(ii.) This will further confute that gross conceit, that there must be any self-subsisting matter from eternity. And if there were such, it were altogether impossible that this world should be made out of it. And so it is asserted not only impiously but vainly: impiously, as it doth intrench upon a peculiar and most fundamental attribute of the Divine Being, to wit, self-subsistence; and vainly, because it were impossible this world should be made of such matter, if there were any such; for whatsoever is necessarily self-subsisting is unchangeable; that which is necessarily what it is, can never be other than it is. And it is altogether impossible that a world could be made of it, without its undergoing various changes. If it be necessarily such, of and from itself, which now it is; that which is necessarily what it is, is eternally what it is. And therefore, can never be liable to any change, not so much as that intrinsic change of motion. For suppose any minute particle of matter to be of itself necessarily, it must be some where; and if it be necessarily any where, it can by no succeeding change be any where else: and so must be simply unmovable. And then, this world could never be made of it, that is, of unmoving matter: and it must be unmoving matter, and incapable of motion, if it be of itself what it is. For if it be of itself, it must be necessarily somewhere; and if it be some where necessarily, it must be some where eternally, and can never change its place. And again,

(iii.) That opinion of eternal, necessary, self-subsisting matter, the absurdity of it is enough to be evinced from hence, that is, that the ground upon which it is asserted equally serves for the asserting of a manifest falsehood; that is, that nothing else is made out of nothing. We may as well suppose matter to be made out of nothing, as any thing else to be made out of nothing; but something else must be acknowledged to be made out of nothing. We told you, at first, speaking of the object of creation, that the universal distinction that created things are capable of, is into two heads, of mind and matter. Now, they must acknowledge minds to be made of nothing, that they are not eternally self-subsisting. And if a mind can be made out of nothing, why may not matter as well as mind? and it is plain, that (speaking of the mind of a creature) that must be made out of nothing; for it could never be made out of matter, matter being incapable of thought; and thought is the most essential thing we can conceive of in the notion of a mind. This can never, upon any terms, agree to matter; that is a material thing; as such it is impossible that that should be capable of thought, or of the power of thinking.

There is no part of matter to which that can agree, for you can conceive nothing of matter, or of the several particles of matter, but either its size, that is, being bigger or lesser; or its figure, that is, being so shaped; or its situation, that is, being in this place or that, in reference to other parts or particles of matter; or its motion to one part or another. Now, none of these can make the power of thought to be any way at all compatible to matter; for it must be grossly absurd to imagine, that if matter be of such a size, such a bigness, now it is true, being of such a size, it cannot think; but if it were a little bigger, or a little less, it could think. And then, again, if you speak of the figure of it, if it be round, it cannot think; but if it were square, or triangular, it would; how absurd is such a conception or imagination as this! So likewise, to think that motion should endow it with a power of thought is most absurd; that, being here, it could not think, but carry it there, and then it can think. Or to think that situation could give it that capacity. And you cannot think or conceive any thing of matter but one of these. Now if any of these cannot contribute to make it have a power of thought, to make a mind of it, I say, since there were minds that were not of themselves from all eternity, and could not be made out of matter, then those minds were made out of nothing. And if minds were made out of nothing, why not matter as well as minds? And that is a third consideration to evince the absurdity of that imagination of self-subsisting matter, from eternity, out of which the world must be supposed to be made. And,

(iv.) It will be further proved from hence, not only to be absurd, but blasphemous; that is, that it would make God to be a finite being. That was intimated another way before, but it will also appear this way that is now offered to your consideration. That is the only reason that is pretended, why there must be self-subsisting matter, because God cannot make something out of nothing; and so that he had not power in himself of creating matter; and then he cannot be understood to have in himself infinite power, or to be himself, virtually, the all-comprehending Being. But most certain it is, that the name God doth comprehend all; as even the significancy of that title Pan, given to the god among the pagans, did import, that he was virtually all things; that is, that there is virtually nothing which is not comprehended in the most perfect excellency of his being. And therefore, if matter be something, if it be a real something, then it must be comprehended within the virtual power of the Divine power; otherwise, that is not all-comprehending; and that it should not be so, is repugnant to the very notion of God, a Being of infinite perfection in himself. If he be such, then he comprehends this perfection in himself, the power of making matter, as it is a greater perfection, sure, to be able to do this, than to be, as to this, impotent. And then,

iii. A third absurdity, which is conjunct with no less blasphemy too, which they are cast upon who deny the creation at first, to have been out of nothing, and that is the conceit of many of the stoics of old, and which hath been taken up by some more lately, is, that God made things out of himself. Not meaning, nor referring as the efficient, as the agent, (as we all do,) but to himself as the *subjectum ex quo, the subject out of which* things were made. So that all the creation, and the greatest sorts of creatures, they are several parts of God, so and so diversified. But to this, nothing more needs to be said than,

(i.) That the Divine Being is simple, impartible, uncapable of division into parts: it is inconsistent with the perfection of God, that it should be otherwise: and,

(ii.) The Divine Being is the most perfectly spiritual Being, the most purely and perfectly spiritual; and therefore material things were never made out of it. For it is altogether as impossible to turn a spirit into matter, as it is to turn matter into spirit.

Something I would say by way of *Use*, before I go off from this head, and proceed to the other, the manner, here, as ascertained how we come by this notion of the creation; that is, faith. Pray make this reflection, upon what hath been already said: If this creation could originally come out of nothing, then let no doubt, I beseech you, trouble your minds about a new creation. Did God, at first, make heaven and earth, or make the worlds out of nothing? Sure he can as easily make a new world out of that ill state of things in which we now behold them, as he did the whole world, as now it is, out of nothing. If you will say, There are no appearances looking that way: if there shall be a new heaven, and a new earth, how can we admit that thought, when there are no appearances tending thereunto? Why, this world was first made out of things that did not

appear. There were no appearances as to the creation of this world before it was made: what if there be no appearance, nay if there be contrary appearances, if things look quite another way, and with a quite contrary face and aspect? What is all that to Him who, at first, made heaven and earth with a word? It would greatly facilitate our faith, if we did this, if we did but consider these two things: first of all, the greatness, and secondly, the facility, of this work of God. The greatness of it, so vast a thing and so great a thing as this world is; and the facility of his doing: he spake and it was done; as the Psalmist expresses it; *Dictum factum*, as soon as it could be spoken, Let such a thing be! and it was; "Let there be light, and there was light;" Let there be heaven and earth, and they were. So to make a new heaven, and a new earth, when the season thereof comes, is equally easy, as all things are equally easy to Him that can do all things.

LECTURE XII.*

BEFORE we proceed to the next head, it remains only to consider somewhat that is wont to be *objected*, by such as too much indulge a litigious temper and disposition of spirit, against the one and the other of these acts; the putting things into this order wherein we find them, and the bringing of things into being that were nothing before.

1. There are that do *object* against that act, which is here expressed in our English, by the name of framing of worlds, the putting things in them into the order which we now behold. That is, it is objected, that if this order which we see in the universe, were the effect of divine wisdom and design, it would be certainly much more accurate than we find it; things would be done with more exactness, there would not be so many defects as we see in the universe. It seems not to be congruous (such do imagine) to the wisdom of God, that he should undertake the setting of an order in this creation, and that it should, in such respects as have been mentioned, and many other, be liable to so much exception. And to this, there are several things to be said. As,

(1.) That it is very true, indeed, the order of things would be more exact and accurate than it is, if it had been God's design to make every creature, and the whole frame of things, as perfect as he could have made it. But we have no reason to imagine that that was any thing of his design. He did not make it to answer our purpose, but his own, all being to run into an eternal state of things at last, and this temporary state to be of short continuance. And therefore, let such as do think there should have been greater exactness and accuracy in this frame of things, (if this will not satisfy them,) sit down and wonder, that when it was intended, one time of another, such creatures as they should be raised up into being in the world, that God did not put things into better order for their entertainment, that he did not make every thing more exactly to answer their fancies, appetites, and humours. But,

(2.) It is enough to the purpose here asserted, that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, by the Eternal Logos, that did predetermine the order of things, and by a powerfully exerted word, in the time and season, when things were to exist and come forth into being. I say, it sufficiently answers what is here asserted, if it doth appear that all things were done with design, and so as that they could not be done by any wisdom or power less than divine. This is enough for our purpose, that there are characters of design upon the whole frame of things; but that such a design as this could never have been laid, nor could ever have been effected by any created wisdom or power whatsoever, for the wisdom we see in the contexture of the things which we behold, is no where, in the creature, accompanied with power capable of doing such things. Not to speak of things in particular, if you do but consider these two properties of things that are framed and made, either first, the magnitude of some, or the parvitude of others; (only to instance in those two;) as it is manifest there was a design, so it is equally manifest that no created agent could have done any thing like either of these. Either,

[1.] As to magnitude: the magnitude of the universe, what created agent could have made so vast a fabric as heaven and earth, as "the worlds?" which is the expression in the text. All created agency must confess itself outdone. Nothing is left us upon that account to consider, when we ask the question, How came there to be such worlds? It is resolvable by nothing else, but that the worlds were framed by the word of God. And then,

[2.] On the other hand, if you do but consider the parvitude of things, the many multitudes of things that have life: no created agent can contrive or do any such thing. Multitudes of little creatures, in the kinds of them, too little to be seen by our naked eye, but that by instruments may be seen to have their respective motive powers. And those that are capable of dissection, that there should be as many parts observable, for the several functions of life, in some of the minutest insects, as are to be found in an elephant. It is plain, that a wise design there was in the framing of things as they are made, and that it is altogether impossible it should be done by any other but a Divine agent, whether you consider the magnitude or the parvitude of things that are made. And again,

(3.) There is this further to be considered as to this objection, that in looking upon, and taking notice of, the works of God, we are not to consider them abstractly and severally, but we are to consider them as parts of one entire whole, and in their reference to that. As a heathen philosopher, among the Greeks, tells us, "If we should make a judgment of the whole work of creation by this or that less comely part of it, it were the same thing as if one would give an account what sort of creature man is, and take for instance and example, such a one as Thersites, or one of the most deformed of all men, and so give an account of the structure of the human body by such a one, that there would be as little cause of cavil, as he would have with a picture drawer, who should find great fault with him that he put not bright colours every where, that there are, any where, dark shadows to be found." This, and much more to this purpose, is discoursed by a heathen, for the vindication of God as to this thing, that there should be any thing of defect, or not the most absolute perfection, to be found in every creature that we can look upon. And again,

(4.) It is further to be considered to this purpose, that we are to consider the time and texture of things in this universe, not barely as now it is, but as at first it was, and to consider this inferior part of the creation, which was made for the use and service of man, was in its original state, when he was in his original state: that man for whom all this lower world appears to have been made, is become a degenerate creature, an apostate creature. And that, as he is gone very far from his original, things are very far gone from their original, in which they were made for him. The frame of this world is not like what it was. What changes there were in it for the sin of man, before the flood, we know not. But that must have inferred a universal change in all this earth. And we find, as to the point of longevity, things have altered apace, and did gradually alter in that respect. So as in a short compass of time, in comparison, lives of seven or eight hundred years, or more, were come to sixty or eighty years, a very great, and hardly a tolerable age, all labour and sorrow. That sickness and mortality are come into this world, it is true; but who brought them in? They were sinners that introduced them. It is sin that hath so slurred the creation of God, as to that noble creature, and as to the subservient creature, proportionally. And,

(5.) It is further to be considered too, that God hath since the first creation of things, settled an ordinary course of nature in the world, which ordinarily he doth not invert or alter, but for some very great purposes. As when, now and then, a miracle is to be wrought; otherwise, usually, he doth not interpose to change the course of nature, but lets things run on according to the tendency and current of second causes.

(6.) In the last place, as to this objection, this is further

* Preached July 8th, 1692.

to be considered, that this is more an argument, that the order we find in things should proceed from God, that there is not such an accuracy in every punctilio to be beheld, than if it were so: that is, it is more suitable to the divine greatness. There is this, among men, to be observed, that according as they are of greater minds and spirits, they do less concern themselves about light and trivial matters. And they reckon a kind of rational neglect to be greater, to have more in it of majesty, more that doth beseem a great man and a great mind. They are little minds that do minutely concern themselves about trifles and small matters.

2. But again, there lies matter of *objection*, with some, against the other of these acts. The former, his putting things into order, the latter, his putting things into being. And with this, the objection that lies with divers, and hath done in latter and former ages, is the authority of that maxim, *Ex nihilo, nihil fit*, that nothing can come out of nothing, and therefore, there can have been no such thing as a mere creation; which (as I told you) the act supposed, the act of framing of things; the order of things doth suppose the being of them. But this, say they, could never be, that that which was nothing should become something; for common reason doth allege, that out of nothing nothing can be made, nothing will be nothing still, everlastingly.

But to them, I have only two things to *answer*—that herein they do mistake the maxim that they rely upon, and—that they contradict themselves

(1.) That they mistake the maxim, upon the authority whereof they pretend to rely, that nothing can come out of nothing; for it can only imply these two things—that it is impossible for any thing to come out of nothing by itself, and—that it is impossible that any thing should come out of nothing by a created agent. In both these senses, the maxim is most certainly true.

[1.] That it is impossible, that any thing should come out of nothing of itself: that is evident to every understanding that reflects and considers. If we should but, in our own supposition, imagine, that there were nothing now at all in being of one kind or another, it is certain that to all eternity there would never be any thing in being; as we have had occasion to argue to you heretofore. We find that somewhat now is, and therefore, we are sure that something hath always been: for if there were any time when there was nothing, to all eternity there would be nothing. Because it is impossible that something should ever itself arise out of nothing. In that sense, the maxim is most indubitable; that it is impossible that something should arise out of nothing. And,

[2.] It is equally indubitable in this sense too, that a created agency, or all created agency put together, if it were all to be exerted into one act, could never raise something out of nothing. But to bring the authority of this maxim against the omnipotent agency of the supreme and sovereign Cause, is the most absurd collection that can be thought. As if we could measure the divine agency by that of the creatures. It might every whit as well be said, that because a child newly born, cannot build a house or a city, that therefore, it can never be done, no agency could ever do it: and the difference is infinitely greater between God's agency and any creature, than between that of the meanest and weakest creature, and that of the mightiest that can be supposed. This is to circumscribe omnipotency, and to deny omnipotency to be omnipotent, which is a contradiction. What greater contradiction can there be, than to deny a thing of itself, to say there is any thing that is not what it is? But it is no contradiction, that that which was not, should be made to be, that that which did not exist, should exist, and so to bring something out of nothing; for that is within the compass of the object of Almighty power. And then, I *answer*,

(2.) As they that do so object, do most manifestly contradict the truth, so it is equally evident that they contradict themselves, in giving the account they do give of the original of things, such as it is. There are two sorts of them.

[1.] There are some, first, that will have all substance to be one, (such as Spinosa and his followers,) and so to be uncreated, and that there is nothing created but the modifications of things. But as to them, I inquire whether these modifications were in that substance before, yea or no? If they were before, then they were not produced, and so nothing is produced. But if they were not in that substance before, (which they imagine,) and yet be something, (as they cannot pretend them to be nothing,) then this something is throughout of nothing: and they cannot but be compelled to own so much. And we find it actually to be, for we find things are modified so and so. And then,

[2.] There is a second sort, who do not make all substance to be self-existent and eternal, but only matter, as the passive subject, which the eternal, unmade mind doth work upon.

But even they also must be constrained to contradict themselves. And it will appear most evident, that they do so, the matter being pursued: for a mind is not made of matter; there is no kind of cognation between a particle of matter and a thought, and so between the whole of matter and of mind. A mind can never be made of matter, or out of matter. But there are minds that are made; our own, theirs, if there were any that were not always; and then, they must be made out of nothing, for out of matter they cannot be made. And so, as to that objection, the objectors are manifestly found, both to contradict the truth, and to contradict themselves; and we need concern ourselves no further with them.[a]

LECTURE XIII.*

Secondly. The second general head we now come to is, how or by what principle we are to understand all this. And for that, the text tells us, it is by "faith" that we are to understand it. How come we to know that this vast universe, these worlds, (which how many they are we cannot tell,) did all spring up into being by the word of God? How come we to be informed, or how are we informed, of all this? Why, it is by faith. Here, it is requisite to show how this is to be taken, that we are by faith to understand the worlds to have been created by the word of God. Why,

It is not to be taken exclusively, as if it were to be understood no way but by faith. It is plain, and hath been made plain, that it may be understood by reason too. And there is no prejudice at all in it, that the same conclusion should be capable of being proved by more arguments than one; and by more sorts of arguments than by one sort. Nothing is more ordinary, than to bring many arguments of one sort, of those we call artificial arguments, to prove the same conclusion: many such arguments may be useful to serve one and the same purpose: and it is no more inconvenient, and incongruous, that there should be arguments of more sorts than one, to prove the same thing, than that there should be many arguments used of one sort. Therefore, this is not to be understood exclusively, that we are to have the notice of the worlds being made by the word of God no way at all but by faith; or that we are to understand this by faith only: that the text doth not say, and we are not to take it so. But,

We are to take it thus, that is, that we are to understand this by faith more advantageously; not exclusively, but with much more advantage than by any other way alone. My meaning is, that having plain, rational evidence of the creation, (as indeed we have such as is irrefragable, and as no mind which considers can withstand,) then, it is a great superadded advantage, to understand the same thing by divine revelation too. It adds a great deal, to have the matter so stated, that I may also understand this by faith, that the worlds were made by the word of God.

And, I shall now show wherein this great superadded advantage lies; and wherein, if we compare the two ways

[a] Several things, by way of use, were at this time inferred: but the enlargement thereof, being on the entire use made on this act of God; what was now said is to be found in the Lecture preached December 26th, 1690. Vide page 1065.

* Preached November 25th, 1693.

of understanding this by reason, and of understanding it by faith, this latter way hath the advantage, even of the other. For, first, we understand more of it by faith, than we can by reason; and, secondly, what we understand by faith, we understand better.

1. We understand more of it by faith, than by mere rational indagatioo or search we could understand. We have a more circumstantial account of very important, considerable circumstances of this creation, as faith represents the matter to us, out of God's own revelation, than by rational disquisition we could have had. We understand within what limits of time, and we understand in what order, this work of creation was performed, by faith. Reason could never have informed us of either of these.

(1.) We understand within what limits of time this work was done, that is, that all was absolved within the space of six days: no reason could ever have informed us of that. But it signifies much towards the liveliness of any representation, that the matter be represented in its circumstances. Reason, in the gross, could only have informed us generally, that all these things which do appear, are not of themselves, and were, some time or other, raised up out of nothing, by an almighty, creative power; but it could never have informed us within what limits of time such a mighty work as this was done. But our faith in the divine revelation informs us of that too. And then,

(2.) It informs us of the order in which things were produced, which no reason could ever have informed us of, or found out; that is, that on the first day, there being nothing at all but a disorderly chaos, (which must have been supposed first raised out of its primitive nothing,) that God causeth a glorious light to spring out of that horrid darkness, that had every where spread itself over this chaos, this vast confused heap. He did but say the word, "Let there be light, and it was so."

And then, it informs us, that on the second day, God ordereth a firmament, dividing the waters, or the fluid matter that was superior, made up of finer particles, from that which was inferior and more gross: the one, being designed for a nobler kind of use, and the other, for meaner services and purposes.

And then, we are informed, again, that on the third day, God made, in this inferior world of ours, dry land and sea to appear, severally divided, and separate one from another, and distinct. And, that, as to the dry land, God doth implant in it the seminal principles of all sorts of vegetation, to make it capable of serving its after uses and purposes.

And then, on the fourth day, all these glorious lights are made to appear, and shine forth in the firmament, that are ever since observable and conspicuous in the world.

And then, on the fifth day, he replenisheth this earth with all those sorts of sensible animals that we find it inhabited with, and by which they are so much the more to be fitted for the habitation and use of man.

And then, on the sixth day, he makes man, and brings him forth into this orderly and so well prepared world; all things being fitted and accommodated to his use and purpose, as was most suitable and congruous? and gives him dominion over all; as the matter is so copiously, and with admiration of God, represented to us in that 8th Psalm.

And then, that having thus, in six days, absolved and finished all this great and glorious work, he now sanctifies, and hallows, and blesses the seventh day. The Lord himself, (as it were,) resting with complacency in the view of his own work, finding it to be good, and answering to the complete, eternal idea which lay in his own all-comprehending mind. He beholds, with complacency, all that he had done, and so takes up that satisfying rest that was suitable to a God, in the contemplation of his own work. He did it with delight and pleasure; and now beholds it with delight and pleasure done. And so, takes man (the creature, here in this lower world, which he had made capable thereof) into communion and participation with him, in this blessed rest of his; upon which is founded the law of the sabbath.

Now, all these things that could not otherwise have been known to us, but by divine revelation, and our faith therein, God, telling us that things were so, and so, and we believing him, and relying on the truth of his word therein, he did graciously provide that those things should be made manifest; that they should be made known to the children of men, in succeeding times, by casting all into sacred records. Though that, indeed, were not done till a considerable time after this beginning of all things; yet, till it was done, the knowledge of these things was more easily transmitted or conveyed; three or four men, having seen all from the beginning of the world, and so were capable of telling one another, until the time when these things were capable of being transmitted into sacred records; these records themselves giving an account of those particulars that were transmitted, from hand to hand, by three or four of those that lived, successively, nearest to the beginning of time, who seeing and knowing, might tell one another.

And we have these notices, all of us, from God, that thus these worlds began. And, indeed, if such a notification of these things did but now first arrive to us; if there were but one such manuscript in being, that should give this account of the first rise and production of all things, and it were sufficiently attested and proved to be divine, of how great value and account would it be? Your great antiquaries, that have been so highly pleased in searching into the ancientest original of things, what would not one of them have given for such a monument of antiquity as this, informing us distinctly, from point to point, how all things came into being, and in that order wherein they now lie to our notice and view? The price thereof would be above that of rubies, and all that could be desired would not be compared therewith.

That is one thing, whereby this understanding, by faith, the creation of the world, hath its advantage over any other way of coming to the knowledge or notice of it: that is, that we know more of it, by faith, than we could do any other way. And,

2. What we do know, we know better. It is a better way of knowledge, or we may know better this way, to speak of the one and the other, comparatively, in several respects. As,

(1.) It is an easier way of knowledge, than that of rational search and disquisition. There must, in order to that, to know things so, be usually a laborious inquiry into the reference of one thing to another. There must be an adaption of a frame and series of consequences and deductions; some whereof may be more obscure, but leads us gradually into clearer light, step by step. This is a more painful way of understanding things: it requires a very great exercise of mind to know many things by the deduction of a long series of consequences, one following upon another; and which the minds of men, gencrally, are less apt for, in this low and lapsed state of man. But how easy a thing is it, to have such a matter told us, by One who, we are sure, will not deceive us, and cannot deceive us! and then, to believe it, and take his word that so it is! This brings us to a satisfaction about this matter presently, and with the greatest facility. It is true, indeed, that as to this particular point of the creation, the matter is most plainly demonstrable, and very soon, to any capable and apprehensive mind: but if men were left to themselves, though they may he capable of discerning things represented to them in their dependencies one upon another, they would not so easily find it out of themselves; and, therefore, as this is far the more easy way of knowing, so,

(2.) It is a way, too, by which the thing may be more commonly known: so far as the divine revelation doth obtain and extend, it may be more commonly known. Very true, as I told you, it may be demonstrable, most plainly, to an intelligent, apprehensive, unprejudiced person, that this world was raised up out of nothing, by divine power. But as there are few that have ever made it their business, so far to cultivate their minds, as to be capable of demonstrating this to themselves; so there are few, that have opportunity of consulting with those, who will take the pains, (having acquired so much knowledge themselves,) as to make such a demonstration to them; so as that, with the most, it goes but as a matter of opinion. But few, if they were put to it, are able to prove that this world had its rise thus, at first. But now, if it be to be believed, as a matter of divine revelation, so far as that divine revelation doth obtain, every one may presently be informed; and so this knowledge would become as much more com-

mon, as it is much more easy:—every one can read, or hear this read, to wit, the account that Scripture gives concerning the original of things: and so this knowledge, by this means, shall not be confined to a few, as it would be confined to a few, if none could come to the knowledge but those whose minds are sufficiently cultivated, so as to be capable of demonstrating this to themselves, or of apprehending well the demonstration made of it by others. And again,

(3.) It is a much clearer and more satisfying way, as well as it is more easy and more common. When the understanding of this matter is grounded this way, it is more satisfying to the mind; it makes things much more clear. They are but dark, and confused, and indistinct notices that we could have had in a rational way, of the beginning of things. But to be told this, from point to point, how all things were produced at first, and brought forth into that being, and order, wherein we behold them; what a satisfaction is it to an inquiring mind, to have such notices of these things!

How much hath the matter been otherwise, with those that have been destitute of divine revelation, in this matter, and who could not discern the state of this affair by faith! How conjectural have their apprehensions been, and how wild and exorbitant their conjectures, even concerning their own beginning! Man is nearest to himself: and if one would inquire concerning the beginning of things, one would inquire first of all, and chiefly, How did we begin? How came it first to be, that there should be such a creature as man here in this world? Those that have not had the help of divine revelation, so as to be capable of understanding the matter by faith, as their apprehensions have been conjectural, so their conjectures have been the most strangely disorderly, inordinate, that could be thought; some imagining, that men were thrust out, at first, in little bags out of this earth, having been formed there; others have apprehended, that they were begotten in the bellies of fishes, (these were the conjectures of the great philosophers in the former ages of the world,) and by those fishes exposed and thrown out upon the earth. But to have an account given us, by the word of God, so plainly, how satisfying it is to the mind of an inquiring man! All dubious hallucinations about this matter, come now to be decisively and plainly represented, so as here is no more place left for dubious and uncertain conjecture in the case. But this was the determination of heaven; and according to the determination of heaven, the thing was done. "Let us now make man;" and so God made man: "In his own image male and female created them." Here is an expedite, clear, and satisfying account how we had our beginning. And then,

(4.) This way of understanding, by faith, the beginning of things, the creation of all things, is much more impressive; which is the greatest and most important thing of all the rest. It is more easy; it is more common; (where divine revelation obtains;) it is more satisfying; and, lastly, more impressive; more apt to make deep, and suitable, and useful impressions upon our mind and heart. By faith, we understand, that is, to make the thing enter into our souls. That notice of such a thing, of so great importance to us, which is by faith, transforms the subject; moulds it into a suitable frame towards the Creator, towards itself, and towards its fellow-creatures, especially those of the same order and kind. Here will be corresponding impressions made by faith: whereas, mere rational knowledge of the same things, makes very little, or that that is, at best, but faint and languid.

And the matter is very plain, that till faith comes, it is but an empty, notional knowledge, which people have of God's Creatorship and of their own creatureship; of God, as their Creator, and of themselves as his creatures. It is but a slight, superficial knowledge that any have of these things, till faith comes: that carries a transforming power with it, so as to work the truth revealed, and believed, into the very inwards of our souls. And it is more impressive, the knowledge and understanding even of this matter, which comes by faith, upon several accounts.

[1.] Because the ground of this my faith, is distinctly and immediately divine. I believe such a thing, as God reveals it, because it is reported to me upon the authority of God, which carries a mighty awe with it upon the soul, and so makes the thing revealed and believed the more impressive. I attend to God in the matter, the authority of God. If I believe such a thing, with a divine faith, it strikes my soul, and carries the matter to my heart. And again,

[2.] The notice that I have by faith, of these things, is very agreeable to an apprehensive mind; and so it enters in the more. Look to the matter really, as it is revealed, and the substance of the divine revelation, concerning this matter, is congruous, and suitable to the mind and spirit of a man. There lie no unanswerable exceptions against it. The knowledge that comes by rational inquiry, and search, admits of objections; when the matter is to be wrought out by mere ratiocination, there will be reasons *pro* and *con*; arguments on the one hand, and arguments on the other hand; and many things that may seem reasonable to one, will not seem reasonable to another. But, as to what we are here required to believe about this matter, or what is matter of faith in this case, there is nothing in it but what is very congenerous to an apprehensive and unprejudiced mind, that is willing to know the truth of things. It may be, there is what should never have been found out, or known, if it had not been told: but to a considering mind, the thing appears to be just as it is told it is. I should not have thought of it before; but now I am told of it, it is very agreeable it should be so. And things do impress the more, accordingly as they are more suitable to them, they are the more easily received, there is less of obstruction lies against them. And,

[3.] The notice we have of such things by faith, is the most impressive, for that this very faith itself is a divine principle, immediately divine, implanted, inwrought into the heart by the Divine Spirit. We find faith reckoned among the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22. And we read of such a thing as the spirit of faith, 2 Cor. iv. 13. The Divine Spirit, when it comes to new-create, to raise the new creation, amongst all the necessary principles of the divine life that are now to be implanted in this new creature of God, there is faith, that great receptive principle by which it is to take in all light and gracious influences from him. The very principle itself is from God; and therefore, the discoveries that are made by it, must needs be so much the more deeply impressive upon the soul, because, that faith by which the impression is made, is immediately a divine thing. And then,

[4.] If you look to the act of faith, or its more immediate and connatural effect, it must be more impressive: faith, being described by its most appropriate act, or by its immediate effect, is called, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen:" expressions that represent faith to us as looking forward and backward, as what goes so immediately before the text in this same chapter. Hope, that always refers to somewhat future, is that by which we have the prospect of futurities; faith is the substance of those hoped for things, those futurities; that is one expression of the work of faith, to substantiate future things that we do but hope for. And, then, there is another work of it, or its work is otherwise expressed: it is, "the evidence of things not seen:" and that is larger and more extensive, and represents faith to us as a principle that can look backward as well as forward. We do not see how this world was raised out of nothing: no matter for that, we can believe it; faith will be to us the evidence of that we never saw, or have not seen: faith will (as it were) place us upon the verge of this world; and let us see, as if we had stood by, when God did, in this orderly way, raise up this creation, part by part, out of a disorderly chaos, and heap of confusion, wherein all things lay. If we have that obedient subjection to the divine authority, revealing things, (which subjection faith doth involve and carry in it,) this faith serves us instead of eyes; doth the same thing (being the evidence to us of things not seen, or of what we never saw) as if we had been by as spectators, when God was doing this great and mighty and noble work; one thing rising up after another into view before our eyes. Faith shows all this with evidence, and, therefore, is much the more impressive; so that, after the hearing of such a discourse as this, if it be entertained by faith, we should go

away with hearts deeply impressed, having God in all the glorious excellencies of a Creator in view before our eyes; and our own spirits formed as dutiful, loyal, dependent, subject creatures, all full of adoration and praise; so as continually to behold him, and his fulness, filling all in all, which way soever we look or cast our eye: and that is the general use indeed which is to be made of all this.

LECTURE XIV.*

AND now, it is the particular *Use* of the whole which we are next to come to. And you see the heads of discourse, hitherto, have been two; and so we shall have two things to improve by way of use, that is, first, that we are to understand the worlds to have been made by the word of God; and, secondly, that we are to have this understanding by faith. Each of these do claim their distinct improvement. And,

1. For the former. This is a matter to be understood, that these worlds were made, created; that this great universe which comprehends all the worlds, (we do not know how many the text means; but we noted to you, that it is not the dual number that is used here, but the plural,) is, most undoubtedly, a made thing. That the worlds were made, this we do understand. And we learn from thence,

(1.) That the world was not eternal, that it had a beginning. This hath, on the by, been hinted before, and we have formerly proved this to you in itself; and, I think, sufficiently. We now consider it as an inference, that, because it hath been created, therefore, it was not eternal; therefore, it some time began. Indeed, this inference hath been doubted, and disputed by philosophers, whether it were good and strong, yea or no, that, because the world hath been created, therefore, it cannot have been eternal, but must have begun. Some have imagined, that it might be dependently eternal, notwithstanding its being a created thing. Some such as grant it to be a creature, have yet imagined also, that it might be, in a way of dependance, eternal. But in truth, the question would only need to be distinguished, and then it would be soon and easily answered: for that supposed dependance upon a cause, might be understood to be, either upon a necessary cause, necessarily acting and producing such an effect, or upon an arbitrary cause. If we should suppose this world to have been from God, as the necessary producer of it, that would make this world itself to be a necessary being, and would be simply inconsistent with its being a creature. All necessary being must be divine, must be God; whatsoever is necessarily, can be no other than God. But if it be meant of dependance on God as an arbitrary cause, considering an act of the divine will to intervene; that is, that it was his perfect choice whether the world should be, or not be; so it is impossible it can have been eternal, dependently eternal, if the matter were determinable by divine pleasure. Shall this be, or not be? that supposeth it some time not to have been. It supposeth a *transitus* from not being to being; but that it is impossible it should be eternal; for there can be no change in eternity. That of which eternity is spoken, must have been always what it is, and as it is. Therefore, nothing can be more manifest, than that this world began: its being depended upon the divine word, upon his pleasure: for that is the notion that the Scripture gives of the creation; "for thy pleasure all things are and were created," Rev. iv. 11.

And that should be a measure to us, how we are to conceive of this universe of things. Be it, or they, (the things contained in it,) as great as we can imagine; let our thoughts be enlarged and raised as much as is fit, or they are capable of, upon such a subject,—the greatness and vastness of this universe; yet presently think, once this was all nothing, raised up out of nothing, sprang from nothing. It is a mighty disgrace upon created being, once to have been nothing. This is a disgrace upon created being, which it is fit it should bear; all shrinking into nothing before him who is the *All*. Magnify it to yourselves as much as you will or can, yet presently think it back into nothing; great it is indeed; but once it was nothing; mere nothing. It began to be, and therefore there was a vast immense duration wherein it was not, wherein there was no such thing.

And, moreover, the worlds, in that frame wherein we behold them, cannot have been eternal; for it would be the most absurd contradiction, and nonsense, imagioable, to say, that in this changeable state, wherein things are, they could be from eternity. It is a manifest contradiction to the understanding of any body, that would use his thoughts, that there should be eternal changes. And pray consider it. It may seem a little dark and obscure to you at first hearing, but stay a little upon it in your thoughts, and there is not any here of so mean capacity, but if they would use their thoughts a little, they may easily apprehend it impossible that there can be such a thing as an eternal change. Now there is in this world a continual succession, and a succession of changes. As to things that have life, to instance, there we see a continual succession of living and dying amongst all things that have life, and come under our view from day to day. But it is altogether impossible that there can have been such changes from eternity; for there can be no death, but there must have been life before: nothing can be said to die, that did not live. But to suppose any such change from eternity, an eternal change from life to death, it is a contradiction in itself; one must be first in its place; life must be first; and if life were eternal, it could never die; what lies under the measure of eternity must be always as it is. *Eternum non patitur novum*, there can be nothing new in eternity. And again,

(2.) As it is manifest, that this universe, these worlds, were not eternal, but began to be; so it is also manifest, that it did not begin to be by any kind of chance or fate. Some, who have admitted this world not to have been always what it is, in that order we behold it, yet thought, that it came by a sort of casualty into this state we now see it. That matter having always been of itself, (as they absurdly imagine,) they have thought that the eternal motion of this matter, the various rollings to and fro, of it, have at last produced this strange and orderly frame of things which we behold. But nothing is more plain, than as this world is a late thing, in comparison; for there was a vast, immense duration wherein it was not; and in comparison of which it is but lately come into being: so that, when it did come into being, it was brought forth, into that being, by a designing cause.

The word, in the text, is emphatically enough expressive of that; it was brought into that exact and accurate order, wherein we see things lie, designedly, as the Greek word here used implies; as the several parts and limbs of a body are joined together, so as to consummate and make up one orderly frame. Order is the effect of design; wisdom is the parent of order. To behold that orderly frame of things which is observable to every eye in this universe of created beings, doth sufficiently show, that it was not chance, but most profound wisdom, that hath brought things into this state wherein they are.

That is most plain; that is, if the worlds were made, they are not eternal, but did begin; so that they did not begin without design. The wisdom of him that did design this orderly frame of things, ought to be discerned, acknowledged, and adored; and a continual disposition of heart to adore it ought to be habitual to us, and often going forth into actual exercise. It hath been the constant frame of holy ones of old, and we should take heed of letting it be an alien thing to us, "Lift up thine eyes on high, and consider; Who hath made all these things," that we behold, in so much lustre, and beauty, and glory, over our heads? who hath made them, and produced all the hosts of heaven, and called them by name? "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands," (saith the Psalmist,) when I do, (it implies he did it often, that it was his wont,) then, I say, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" Look to such places as I relate to, that Isaiah xl. 26. and Psalm viii. throughout, and many more. It should be more our business to contemplate and admire the unsearchable wisdom of God, in the creation of this world. The

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great exercise and argument, it is of a holy heart, that wherein it doth exercise itself, and by which it discovers itself to be such. Again,

(3.) We may learn hence, the meanness and poverty of all creature-being, even upon the account of its being such; created and made. The worlds were made. As that doth argue them all, once, not to have been, so it argues them still to be next to nothing, continually depending. What was not of itself, cannot continue to be by itself; that which was drawn forth out of nothing, by an almighty power, still needs the continual exercise of the same power, to keep it from a relapsing, and sliding back into nothing again; which otherwise it must soon do. Sin being come into the creation, there needed a mediator for this purpose, that all might not be thrown back into nothing again; "By him all things consist," Col. i. 17. It is he that upholds and bears up the pillars of a tottering world; even where it was not obnoxious to justice, to a divine *nemesis*; yet, as being created, the mere liability, its dependableness, (which is proper to all created beings as such,) must have rendered it continually liable to relapse into nothing, if not continually upheld.

You see hence, therefore, by the way, what an ungodly creature hath to trust in; what he hath for the final object of his trust, to wit, that which is every moment ready to *mutare*, to drop into nothing, to go out of being, that is only sustained momentarily by him that made it. This is all that a wretched soul, that is off from God, hath to rely upon, to trust in; nothing but creature; nothing but that which itself is next to nothing; all such a one's dependance is upon that which doth itself, too, depend. He that hath not a God to trust, to rely upon, what doth he depend upon? Let him but name it to you; be it what it will, God it is not. Alas! mistaken man! thou dependest upon that which depends itself; and how miserable a case art thou in! Indeed, the vanity of creature dependance, is obvious to every man's thoughts, that will but allow himself to think. But the wickedness of it is but a little thought of; few think of that. Any man may apprehend how vain a thing it is to place confidence in a creature that is next to nothing; but it enters into the minds of but few to consider how wicked a thing it is. You must know, that to be the final Object, is the divine peculiarity of the Deity; and one of the highest, and most appropriate; a glory that he will not impart. As to be prayed to, to be invocated, that is but secondary to this of his being trusted in; we trust first, and then invocate. This is a glory that he will not give to another. It is a homage due to Deity, which belongs to God alone, to be, I say, the final object of trust; he, into whom my trust doth ultimately resolve. I know there may be a subordination; you may trust in a friend, in a relation; but for the final, supreme Object of trust, it is the highest, supreme worship of the Deity, to be laced only upon him.

And therefore, it doth not only infer misery by disappointment, when a man trusts in a creature; but it infers a curse by revenge. It is not only an infelicity, that doth befall a man in such a case, when he doth expect that which is not to be had, from that which affords it not; but it is a wickedness that is followed with a divine curse, with a just *vindicta*, for a wrong and injury done to him: that is, that I place upon a creature that which is peculiar and belongs to him alone; and so, I do not only punish myself as a foolish, mistaken creature; but God punisheth me as a sinful, guilty creature, upon this account; "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm," Jer. xvii. 5. But, alas! how many do place their trust in ignobler creatures than man is, in things beneath man! So much the meaner and baser is the temper of their spirits herein, to place a reliance upon that which is meaner than themselves. To neglect and forsake, to avert and turn off, from God; and then sink beneath themselves, creep to an inferior creature; this calls for the blast of heaven upon such a one that hath "forsaken God, the Fountain of living waters, to dig to himself broken cisterns, that can hold no water." For which the prophet (Jer. ii. 12, 13.) doth call heaven and earth to behold, with astonishment, as witnesses of such folly and wickedness as this; especially as being found in a people pretending to God. "My people, they that call themselves my people, have committed these two evils, to forsake me the Fountain of living waters, and dig unto themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water." When a man lets his heart unite, by trust, in that which hath nothing in it, forsaking the All for that which is of itself nothing, and which in itself cannot be a moment, what folly and wickedness is this!

This is the snare that carnal, worldly-minded men run themselves into, and do not consider it as a deadly one: it is a snare of death; "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they trust not in uncertain riches, (the lubrious things, the uncertain things of riches, as the words admit to be read, I Tim. vi. 17.) but in the living God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy." That trust which is not reposed on the living God, it is not only the greatest folly, but the highest iniquity; folly lies in it, that they place Deity upon a nullity, a mere nullity. That which thou makest the final object of thy trust, is thy god; and then, likewise, that trust is idolatry. God will be jealous in this case, when his rival is set up in his place; when a creature is made his rival; and the little minute things in this creation are made to fill up his room, and to be to thee instead of God.

Naturally, every one affects to be happy, and when this is the natural tendency of a man's spirit, that it is now quiet, in some measure quiet, either in the possession of what he hath got, or in the probable hope of getting more; and of having within one's compass that which one doth desire and covet, and reckon most suitable; here is my felicity, and I am so far quiet, because I think here I have enough. As he is brought in, in the parable of the wicked fool, saying, "Soul, take thy rest, thou hast goods laid up for many years." That which he had in his barns, that was his god; and now he thought his soul should rest, as thinking to have enough no where but there. Alas! thou fool, thy soul will be gone from thee this night; and then what will become of thee, and all these? What folly it is to set a man's heart upon such things; as the heart is set by trusting upon any thing. Trust fixeth it, as in its own place, as is spoken concerning trust in God; "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Trust is that which fixeth a man's heart. But thou dost fix thy heart like a fool, who fixeth it upon any thing unfixed itself; for then what becomes of thee and thy trust, when that is gone? So do they who trust in uncertain riches; "for riches make themselves wings and fly away, as an eagle to heaven."—A strangely emphatical expression! It may be the soul would say to itself, "Shall my wealth and my riches be gone? why, I intend they shall have no wings." Alas! they make themselves wings; they will not be beholden to you for wings; they will be gone of themselves, though you would never so fain they would stay. And there is an expression that is likewise strangely emphatical, and which is very proper to our present purpose, of setting the heart upon that which is not. All created being is so poor a dependant being, that it is next to nothing, and is rather fit to be called a mere nullity, a mere nothing; and that so despicable a thing should be put into the place of God; should supply the room of Deity; O! what an indignity is this to the Majesty of heaven; and how severely to be reproved! Because there is nothing else stable besides God; when the soul is once off from him, it offers to fix, but cannot be fixed, because its object is not fixed. Therefore, heathen light hath seen this, and a most significant expression was it of a heathen, "That a soul off from God, is like a cylinder upon a plain, that moves necessarily and perpetually, cannot be fixed, but continually rolls and moves this way and that; and cannot be otherwise, for it hath nothing to fix upon." And again,

This lets us see the absolute independency of the Divine Being; for what is there without himself for him to depend upon? These worlds are all that can be thought of *extra Deum*, without God; and they were all made by him. Can he depend upon that which he himself made? The worlds were created by the word of God; therefore, his being must be absolutely independent. And herein we should give our thought scope, it is pity we do not do it oftener, and more designedly, to consider the difference between that which is of itself, and which is not of itself. We might even lose ourselves and be swallowed up in the contemplation, to think of a Being, that, by its own peculiar

excellency, could never not be, to which it was impossible not to be; which was not beholden to any thing; for all things were beholden to it.

How is the great God magnified before our eyes, upon this account, in that 40th chap. of Isaiah, in several verses of it together, from the twelfth verse and onwards. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hands, and meted out the heavens with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" Who is he that hath done all this? The "who is he?" there, is not an expression of doubt; but of admiration and wonder. O! what a One is he! How glorious a One that hath done so! "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him, in the path of judgment? Who had he to commune with, besides what was himself, in going about this mighty work of creation? Who prompted him, who suggested it to him? "Come now, make a world, give being to a creation." No! all was *propria motu*. Who instructed this spirit of God, as to this great affair of the creation, or any thing else that he doth? "Who doth all things after the counsel of his own will! Behold the nations are as the drop of a bucket, and are accounted as the small dust of the balance: behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing, and Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are accounted to him less than nothing and vanity. To whom then will you liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?"

So should we upon this account, greaten to ourselves the Divine Being, and heighten and raise our own thoughts and apprehensions concerning him; that when all things else, of this vast universe of beings, are so absolutely and purely dependant every moment upon him, he, in the mean time, depends upon nothing. All that he is, he is in, of, and by, and for, himself. He can have no dependance upon the creature, either for the support of his being, or for any other addition to his felicity; but is his own All. And how convictively doth the apostle reason with those philosophers at Athens, to this purpose, Acts xvii. 24, 25, "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, nor is he worshipped with men's hands as though he needed any thing, inasmuch as he hath given to all, life and breath and all things." And what can you add to this? What support can he have from you? what improvement of his felicity any way from you, or from any thing else, since all things are his own creatures? And further,

(5.) You may learn, hence, the divine all-sufficiency; and how vast an amplitude of being there is in him, when all this great creation sprang from him; and yet, nothing could be detracted from him by it neither. How vast an amplitude of being must that be, when all this great creation is gone out from him, sprang from him, and yet his being not diminished, nothing the less! O! consider this, and think how great and desirable a thing it is to have him for a portion; the All; he that comprehends in himself the all of the creature, and who formally possesseth his own All still: that is, is simply All. What can he want that hath him for his portion, who is All? All his own creation, it was virtually in him before, and is still virtually in him, depending still upon that power of his for its sustentation, that gave it being at first. And there is his own infinite All too. O! happy that soul that can say, "The Lord is my portion." How rich, how full, how satisfying a portion! And,

(6.) We may further learn hence, the absoluteness of God's dominion over all his creatures. Will you not allow him to do whatsoever he will in heaven and earth, who made both by his own word? Shall he not do what he will with his own? We are apt, most unreasonably and peevishly, to regret it when there is a disposal of creatures, or any little minute part of this creation of God, this way or that, any otherwise than we would. But how absurd it is to repine at God's disposition of his own! He gives more of this world to such a one, and less of it to me. What then? What he gives to me, and what he gives to the other, was it not all made by himself? And may he not dispose, as he pleaseth, with what he had made?

How doth he plead the matter with Job, to exalt his own dominion upon the ground of his creation? Job thought it hard that he who was so rich a man, so healthy a man, should be bereaved of all so suddenly, and of his health and comforts of his life besides: "Why," says God to him, "where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding. Did I consult thee when I made this, and that, and the other creature? And may I not dispose of the creatures I have made, my own way, and as I will?" And,

(7.) We may further learn, that if these worlds thus began, that is, were thus framed by the word of God; if they had such a beginning, even at his pleasure, then at his pleasure, too, we must reckon they will have an end. That which began to be at some time or other, it began to be what it is. Such and such things began to be at the pleasure of the great Creator; and at the pleasure of the great Creator they must cease to be what they are. And we ought not to think it strange, that there should be such an end determined for this world, as the Scripture informs us there is: that is, a time will come, at length, when, the purposes of the great Creator having been sufficiently served upon it, these visible heavens, which we behold, "shall be rolled up as a scroll; pass away with a great noise; and the elements melt with fervent heat; and the earth, and all things therein, be consumed and burnt up," as 2 Pet. iii. 10, and we are not to think it strange. And it is only upon this ground, that it hath been thought strange, that this should be the end of this world, because the beginning of it was not understood, as we may see, looking in the same chapter, at the 3d and 4th verses: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts; and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" "It is talked of that he will come, and then an end will be put to time, and all the successions of time. But all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation to this day. And therefore, we cannot imagine that there should be any such end." But (saith the apostle) "this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of the Lord the heavens were of old;" and because they are willingly ignorant of this, therefore, they are wilfully ignorant of that end which is determined concerning this world. They will not believe it, because they believe not its framing at first: "that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing in the water, and out of the water." Because they do not believe the beginning of things, therefore, they will not believe that which is told them expressly, too, concerning the end of them.

There are a great many things more, that we might learn hence, but they will more immediately belong to the consideration of our own creatureship, than of the world: they do not so immediately result from the consideration of God's having made the world, as the consideration, more particularly, of his having made us; and therefore, I shall not insist on them till I come more particularly to speak to the creation of man from another text

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LECTURE XV.*

2. I shall, therefore, now proceed to make application of that second general head of discourse; that the more principal and advantageous way of our coming to understand the creation, is by faith. And it is a very manifold use that may be made of this. As,

(1.) We may learn from it, the excellency of faith; how soul-enabling a thing it is. It hath a certain power, with very great light, to help a man's understanding, and to clear his intellectuals. By faith we understand. It hath, in great part, its seat in the understanding; there it is originally, though it is not finally there; thence it descends, too, into the heart. But it hath a great work in the minds of men. Faith doth supply minds with notions; so it is

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if we would read the words literally to you. It doth furnish us with notions, which we should otherwise never have. It is true, if it be faith indeed, it will not let them always remain mere notions; it will inspirit them; it will make them vital, and powerful, and operative. But notions they must be first, and faith makes them so. By faith we have notions of things, that otherwise we never should have had. But this, I say, speaks faith to be a soul-enabling thing. It nobilitates the mind and spirit of a man; acquaints it with things from God, (for that is the business of faith,) unto which it would otherwise be a stranger.

This should raise and heighten our apprehension of faith, that despised thing; that little understood thing. That by which we are to understand; men do not understand.

Whatsoever it is that divine revelation doth, in order to the informing us of needful and useful things, that faith doth. And take we the compass of divine revelation, and consider all the great and glorious things that are contained and brought to light in it, and by it, and thence you are to collect the excellencies of faith. Because, without that, the divine revelation signifies nothing to us; no more that light doth to a blind man. The divine revelation and faith must both concur to the same effect, to wit, our understanding of things; as light and the eye do both concur to the same effect, our seeing of a thing. We cannot see by light without an eye; nor will an eye enable us to see without light, but both together. The divine revelation, that is light to us; faith is the thing by which we discern things in that light. And so, if we do apprehend an excellency in the divine revelation, which brings so many great and important things into view before us, we are proportionally to apprehend the excellency of faith too; without which all that divine revelation could signify nothing to us. And,

(2.) We may further learn, hence, how wonderfully kind and gracious God's condescension is to us, that he should make such a discovery, and offer it to our faith, of things, in reference to which we should be at so great a loss, and understand so very little of; as for instance, this creation of God: what we do owe to the bounty of heaven for this, that it should condescend, so distinctly, to tell us how things came at first to begin. Faith in that discovery which God makes to us of this matter, supplies the room and place of sight; and so it is the same thing in effect, as if he had let us see him making the world; for faith is the evidence, to us, of things we have not seen. We were not present, we were not by, when this mighty glorious work was done. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" Where wast thou? saith God to Job, chap. xxxviii. 4. But now, God having vouchsafed to us such a revelation and discovery of this mighty work of his; if he also gives us faith by which we believe this discovery, it is as if he had set us by him while all this was doing; so, we have (as it were) the idea, the representation, the landscape of the rising creation; as if God should before that time have created one of us, and have taken us, and set us up, spectators of his whole work.

Whereas, yet, there was nothing but horrid darkness spread every where, then for God to have taken one of us, made us stand up out of nothing, and said to such a one —"Come, cast about thine eye, there is nothing but vacuity, emptiness, and darkness every where; come see me make light out of this darkness." He that calls things where they were not, and makes them be, or as if they were, saying, "Light, where art thou; come out of that dark, profound abyss; and immediately it springs forth; what an amazing light were that! Why, faith in God's discovery gives to you this light: by faith we come to be so intelligible, to have so much understanding about us, as to know how this world did rise out of nothing, eternal nothing, into that state in which now it is. And what vouchsafement is this to such as we, to do, in effect, the same thing, as if he had set us by him at making of the world. "Come, see me collect a mass of grosser matter; see me (as it were) spin out of it that fine texture of the vast and spacious firmament, those heavens that do encircle this little habitable world in which we dwell; see me adorn it with sun, moon, and stars; see arising on this earth, plants, and trees and woods, and springs, and rivers; all lately nothing, and now begin to be; see me replenishing this world with living creatures, in their several varieties and kinds," O! what condescension is this, that God should vouchsafe to tell us all this over again, and give us the representation so distinctly, of what, in so many successive days, he did and wrought in this kind. But, again,

(3.) We may further learn, hence, how inexcusable it is, that they who pretend to faith in this matter, should use it so little. If we falsely pretend, it is a most unjust usurpation of a name, to call ourselves believers; and that, of such things, when we are not. But if we pretend truly and justly to the faith of these things, then we are most inexcusable to use that faith no more hereabouts; to live so long, in such a world as this, and so seldom to consider how it began. A strange and inexcusable stupidity. That this world should be replenished with intelligent creatures, reasonable creatures; and that it should come into the minds of so few, and into any minds so seldom, to consider, How did all things begin? Sure we are there, where multitudes of things are existing, that must have had a beginning, that are not self-existent, or unto which existence is not essential, so, as that they could but be and exist. It is amazing to think that intelligent creatures should not more frequently consider with themselves, how things first began to be, beholding such a world as this, which they are sure was not always, but had a beginning; and not consider how it began. That men can behold such varieties of creatures, and use such varieties, and enjoy such varieties, and never consider whence they are, whence came they, how came there to be such things in the world, and how came there to be such a world? It is most inexcusable and strange stupidity, and dotishness of mind, in any reasonable creature; but most of all in them that do pretend to believe and know by faith, that the worlds were created by the word of God. And,

(4.) We may, again, learn hence, that what is commonly called faith, about this matter, is really and indeed not faith; that is, the apprehension of such a thing as this, is without effect, and that impresseth nothing upon the soul. It hath been very justly and fitly told you, that we have the notions of things by faith, many things which we should otherwise have no notion of. But though faith first begets such notions, yet it will not let them continue mere notions long, if it be faith; that is a mighty, lively, operative principle, powerfully working in the soul, to form that suitably to the thing believed. But while there is so little of suitable impression upon the souls of men, in reference to this thing, what they call faith about it, is not faith, but must be something else.

For the most part, it is not any thing else but a negative faith, which men are wont to call faith in this and many other such cases. It is, I say, but a mere negative faith upon which they place that great name; that is, a not believing the contrary, not having formed explicit belief of the contrary, that they call faith. They have not yet (it may be) laid down in their minds any formed conclusions to this purpose, that the worlds were not made by the word of God; and their not disbelieving it, they call believing it: whereas, faith is a most positive thing, a thing of great reality, and a thing of great efficacy and power, wherever it is. And, therefore, for such as never yet found their souls impressed by their apprehensions of the world's creation, I would admonish them no more to call that apprehension of theirs by the name of faith, but call it something else,—call it by its true name,—call it a floating uncontradicted opinion; and that is the best they can make of it, while it is an apprehension that hath no power; and while it doth not represent God in his excellent glory, as the great Creator and Lord of all, so as to form the soul to adoration and subjection to him thereupon. Never say till then, that you do believe, or that you have faith concerning the creation of the worlds. Alas! how many that have it often in their mouths—"I believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth"—yet do but usurp the words, "I believe," and their heart, and their practice, contradict their tongue, and tell them they believe it not. Believe it! yea, as much as a known romance, while they live in affront of the Creator, and take upon them as if they were lords of the creation; and as if they had made the worlds and not He.

These things we may, by way of just inference, collect from hence; that it is a thing to be understood by faith, that the worlds were made by the word of God. But we shall thence proceed to some further *Use;* that is, to counsel and exhort those that have faith in this matter, to use it more; to have their faith more in exercise upon this great and noble subject, the creation of the worlds by the word of God. And it is to many great purposes, that faith upon this important subject may be employed and used. As,

1. To engage us in the more frequent and serious meditations on the beginning of things. To engage us, I say, in the more frequent, more serious, more affectionate, and more fruitful meditation of this matter. If we believe it indeed, let us think of it often. Our faith is an apprehension that it is true: and if it be once owned to be true, it cannot but be deemed to be a very important truth; a very considerable truth; a truth that requires, and challenges, great attention of mind, and application of heart and soul to it. Think and judge it an unreasonable thing, to live from day to day, in this world, and never consider whence it came, and how it began. And let your faith be set on work in frequent and most affectionate meditations of the beginning of the worlds.

2. Let your faith, hereupon, form your souls into adoration of the great Creator. Go up and down this world with adoring souls; let every thing you behold, from time to time, put you in mind of him, and make you bow your head, and worship. Admire that fulness of his, that fills all in all; and those variable displays of his wisdom, and power, and goodness, which are conspicuous every where, more or less, in all sorts of creatures. We are but nominal believers and Christians, if there be not many, if there be not much of this about us; and if we are not aiming and endeavouring that there may be more and more.

3. Let our faith instruct us unto the grateful and reverential use of the creatures of God, as remembering they are made things; and that we have the use of them by divine vouchsafement and allowance. There ought to be a mixture, a temperature of reverence and gratitude in the habitual frames of our spirits hereupon: and if we have a real and true faith in us about this matter, it will make it to be so; it will impress our spirits; it will fill us (as it ought to do) with a wondering gratitude, that such creatures as we should be so accommodated by such a world as this, so suitably ordered for us. If we use faith in this matter, it will make us sit down and wonder; look upon it as it is, an admirable thing, that the great God should have raised up such a creation, such a world as this is, out of nothing, by the word of his power. That it being designed, "I, in time, coming to have a place and being in it, should want nothing while I am there; such and such creatures, made out of nothing to supply me, to furnish me. What is it that I eat? What is it that I drink? What is it that I wear? Are they not all the creatures of God? What is it that refreshes me? What is it that delights me? Are they not God's creatures?" How full of reverential gratitude should our hearts continually be, on this account! To think such and such parts of the creation were made on purpose that I might not be in distress, that I might not feel necessity; and to think how this world generally accommodates its inhabitants; and to wonder with all, that their apostacy was foreseen! O! how should it replenish our souls with wondering gratitude, to think that there should be such a provision made with design, and upon foresight, for the entertainment of rebels and apostates! This whole world replenished and filled with the divine goodness, all sorts of creatures made for the unthankful and the evil. A design laid through so many successions of ages, "My goodness shall diffuse itself, and flow in such and such a part of my creation, (as this world is but a little, a very little part of it,) for the supply and support of those that will never give me thanks, (though they have natures capable of doing so,) even for the unthankful and for the evil."

4. Our faith, upon this subject, should instruct and enable us to contend with difficulties in reference to whatsoever God hath encouraged us to expect, or told us he means to do. What can pose that faith which believes the creation of the world? He that could make such worlds as these are, out of nothing, by his word; what cannot he do? what is there to be expected greater than this, that should be the matter of any present solicitude, thoughtfulness, concern, and care? If very perplexing thoughts of heart do arise about the ill state of things in this world, he that made heaven and earth, and all the worlds, by his word, cannot he make new heavens and a new earth when he will, and when the time and season of it comes? How frequently may we observe it to be, in Scripture, for the people of God, to animate and raise their own hearts unto the belief and expectation of great things from God, upon this ground, that he hath made heaven and earth, that he is the Creator of all things. "Our God hath made the heavens." When those vain creatures that dislike the divine government, and oppose themselves to it, taking counsel against the Lord, and against his Anointed, when, I say, they have nothing to trust to, in the designs of this kind they are forming and driving continually; nothing but stocks and stones, the work of men's hands; "Our God hath made the heavens;" (so you have it expressed, Psalm cxv. 3, 4.) made the worlds; given being to all these worlds: and what cannot he do, when his time and season for it are come? And things will come to their full issue in the fittest time. Our God it is, who hath power enough to do the things we expect, and wisdom enough to order the times and seasons for them. Again,

5. Our faith ought to have exercise with us, upon this subject, in order to the keeping of our minds quiet and composed, amidst the various expressions and instances that we behold of the divine dominion and sovereignty, doing what he will in the disposal of affairs in this world. It may be, some we find him exalting, and it pleaseth us; we find him depressing, and it displeaseth us; we have a little share and portion in this world, and we regret it; others have a great and large portion of it, and that we envy. But we should consider whose this world is, who made it. May not he dispose of what he hath made as he pleaseth? This (as we noted to you before) is a just inference from the very thing itself, abstractly considered, that is, to form our spirits agreeably, and to make us content, and well pleased, that God does dispose of what he hath made as seemeth good to him.

6. We should further learn, hence, to behold, with great complacency, what appearances there are of divine glory in this world, which he hath made by his word. And to behold, with just regret, the dishonour that he meets with in it; or that these appearances of his are so little taken notice of; and that such glory shines unregarded as to the most. These are but dutiful dispositions and affections towards the Creator and Maker of these worlds; and faith should furnish our souls with such dutiful affections; otherwise it is a fruitless faith, a lifeless faith, if it doth not do this. Do I believe that God made these worlds by his word? how can it then but please me to behold his glory shining in such and such aspects and appearances of God? and how can it but fill my soul with such dutiful wishes? "O! may thy glory, more and more, be exalted above the heavens, and shine through all the earth." And how can it but fill our souls with resentments, that there should be such glory shining, and not regarded? The great Maker and Lord of this world, excluded out of his own creation, as if the All in all did signify nothing! men taking upon them, every where, as if they were absolute, as if they had been self-created, and using the creatures of God at their own pleasure, and in affront to him that made them. If faith would do the part in our souls which belongs to it, it could not but fill them with regret, and with a dutiful concern, that the great Lord and Maker of this world should be so little acknowledged, and taken notice of in it. Again,

7. The faith of the creation of the worlds, should engage our hearts in an earnest desire and endeavour to have a sure and clear interest in Him who created and made all. What doth this world signify to me, to behold it, to be in it, to be of it, a part of it, but to have nothing to do with him that made it? The faith of this would make a soul restless, till it can say, "The Lord of heaven and earth is my Lord." Were these worlds created by the word of God? then he shall be my God. He that could make such worlds as these, by his word, is it not a covetable

thing to have an interest in him? Is it not desirable? Can I satisfy myself till I have it? especially, when I find it is matter of hope, a thing not to be despaired of; when there are such notifications of his pleasure (that he is inviting and teaching men to take him, and choose him) published and proclaimed in his Gospel to the world, declaring now the terms by which he offers himself to be our God, and invites us to take and accept him for ours? The serious belief of this thing, that these worlds were made by the word of God, would certainly put us upon a most industrious inquiry, "How shall I do to know him, and to be acquainted with him, and to be interested in him, by whose word these worlds were made? And, I cannot satisfy myself not to know him that made them, and not to have him for mine, since I find there is a possibility of the thing; that it is a thing not to be despaired of, and it is no unjust or presumptuous aspiring, for me to seek an interest in him." My faith of the thing ought to make my soul restless in this case.

And if one consider, cast one's eye round about, and behold this world in the extent of it, (as far as our dim and short-sighted eyes can go,) and behold the great variety of creatures in it, methinks the thought should presently arise, "Amongst all these things, there is nothing suitable to me, to my spirit; nothing in which I can be satisfied, and in which I could take rest, unless I could find out him that made these worlds by the power of his own word;" till then, methinks, one should always look very wisely about one, and behold the amplitude of this world; and then, presently to think, likewise, "Sure it is a sad, melancholy thing, to be in this world as without God in the world; what an empty cipher is it, if God be out of my sight, if I cannot find out the Maker of all, so as to know him, and have him as mine." And then,

8. If one can do so, how should our faith fill our souls with high gloriations in that God? I have him, that made the worlds, for my God. "All people will walk every one in the name of their God." And we should say, And we will walk in the name of our God; and see where there is such another God to be found, that hath made these worlds, (how many soever they be, and how great soever they be,) and all by his word: I have him for my God. And again,

9. It should, by a little further recollection, make us apprehend, too, the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ, upon whom the business lay of redeeming and saving lost creatures in this world; and must lie, of making a new world; of repairing a ruined and languishing creation. For you had to consider, that he had his part, he concurred, he was Creator even of this world. Look to the 1st chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews; He is styled "the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person; he that upholds all things by the word of his power—the heir of all things, and by whom he made the worlds. "By him he made all things, visible and invisible," Col. i. 16. and John i. 1, 3. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. By him were all things made; and without him was not any thing made that was made." And I will not undertake to exclude that from the signification and meaning of the text, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God," the essential Word, the divine Logos. Though I would not lay a stress upon a thing that is not plainly and manifestly intended; yet, to take it in, is very suitable to the current of other texts of Scripture. The eternal Word had its hand and part in the creation; and it was by it that these worlds were made. And thereupon, by a right of creation as natural, as well as by the acquired right of a Redeemer of a lost world, by the effusion of his blood, and the sacrifice of himself, he comes to have a governing power over all this world; being ascended and gone up far above all heavens, he hath all power given into his hands, both in heaven and in earth.

I would only improve the consideration hereof, to this purpose, to greaten your thoughts concerning your Redeemer. We are fain in very important cases, from time to time, to be beholden to our senses, even in the most important cases that can be thought. Our sense tells us something of the greatness and amplitude of the world; though it cannot tell us much, yet it tells us something; and by that, make your estimate (for we need such helps) how great a Redeemer we have; him that made these worlds. They were made by the word of God: he was the eternal Word; and as such, we are sure, having the eternal idea in him, according to which the worlds were to be made; by him, at length, they came to stand forth into being. Think this with yourself, "This is my Redeemer; he that had so mighty a hand in the formation of all these worlds; and in whose hand the government of them now lies. It is with him I am to trust my soul. It is to him that I am to subject and devote my soul. Have I not reason to do so? Have I not encouragement enough to trust him, that made this soul, and all these worlds, and to obey him who hath so great and universal a power over these worlds?"

10. Our faith in this matter should, more and more, release our spirits from mean and vile confinement to this one world only; for by faith we understand that there were more; therefore, our faith should release our spirits from a base confinement to one world, when it tells us of more. It tells us, there were worlds created by the word of God; therefore, it speaks an abject mind, a mean and base spirit, and so much the more if we have faith, (as we pretend to have,) to be confined in our thoughts, in our desires, in our designs, in our expectations and hopes, to this one world. Tell a believer, "Your all lies in this one world." "No, (he will say,) my faith hath got ken of more, notice of more." By faith I understand that there were worlds, framed by the word of God; therefore, it is a base thing to be tied to the present; "Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world." A believing soul would look upon that with disdain, (there is such a generosity in faith,) and would say, "I scorn so base a confinement as that, to be limited to one world, when I know there were worlds created by the word of God." Though we are not told how many there were, yet we are sure they are more than one; and we have a very distinct account of one more, in which our principle concerns do lie, and are signified to be. And blessed be God for that, that we know so much, that there is one more, with which we have more to do than we have with this world, or can have, even where our principal interest lies, and where our Lord and our Head is. O! how should we bless God for this! that since there are more worlds, he hath told us so, and hath let us know it. To be limited, in our spirits, to this one world, this present world, is to run counter to the design of our Lord's dying; "He gave himself for our sins, to deliver us from this present evil world." He gave himself for our sins; what doth that signify, in conjunction with the latter words? but that they are our sins that chain us in our present dungeon. And by how much the more we can be released from these chains of our sins, so much the more shall we get out of this confinement, and get above this present evil world. O! if we have many things that we dislike in this world, let us bless God that we know of more worlds. And in the last place,

11. We may further learn, that our faith concerning the creation and being of this world, should very much facilitate our faith concerning the end of it. If we can believe, that these worlds were made by the word of God, we may easily believe what he hath told us concerning the unmaking of them. And particularly, the unmaking of this, the dissolution of it as to its present frame. We may argue from the one to the other, that since the one hath been, the other is not harder to be; if one be a thing to be believed, the other is as believable as that, when we are told it will be so.

It is very true, indeed, that believing is not formally arguing; but as faith doth rest upon the strongest argument in all the world, so it may supply matter of further arguing, though it be not in itself formal arguing, it rests upon the strongest argument that ever was; that is, that because there is a Being infinitely perfect, therefore, he cannot but be true, therefore, it is impossible for him to lie; therefore, it is inconsistent with his nature to impose upon his creatures: heaven and earth cannot have a surer foundation than this which my faith hath upon this matter, and upon this ground. And then, resting upon the strongest argument imaginable, it can easily supply matter of

further argument; that is, if my faith hath once believed this, that these worlds were made by the word of God, because God hath told us so, if also, he hath told us he will put an end to the present world, and how he will put an end to it, as he hath told us how it began; if I can believe the one, I can believe the other, too, with the same faith: and so am to live in the suitable expectation of such a time, when these visible heavens "shall be rolled up as a scroll, and pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and all that is therein, be consumed and burnt up."

And, if I believe this, then how entertaining must the belief be! How pleasant the belief of the other world (as was said before) that is to come afterwards, that pure, and peaceful, and orderly, and blissful world! that lasting, permanent, and everlasting world! that when this world and all the lusts thereof are past away and gone, shall abide for ever, and all they that do the will of God: as that expression is I John ii. 17. "The world passeth away and all the lusts thereof." Love it not, nor the things of it. If you love it, the love of the Father is not in you: and it is passing away. God is not so unkind to you as to place your love upon vanishing things, upon shadows. This world, I tell you, and all the lusts thereof, are vanishing, passing away, will shortly be gone; the show will be over: but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever in that blissful world, which it is his will and pleasure shall abide for ever.

LECTURE XVI.*

Gen. i. 27.

So God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he him.

WE have discoursed to you, more generally, concerning the creation. We now come (as we are more especially concerned) to consider the creation of man. It is true, that there is a nobler order of creatures, that were before him in dignity and excellency (at least) in the creation. But because that of their creation we have not so particular an account, and because our concernment lies less there, I shall immediately fall upon the consideration of what this text puts under our notice, to wit, our own creation, the creation of that creature called man.

The connexed particle here, that refers these words to what goes before, "So God created man," invites us to call back our eye a little. It is said in the 26th verse, "And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." And then, the text tells us, "So God created man in his own image." This connexion shows us, that (as you have heard at large) God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. So he did particularly this great work according to forelaid counsels. "Let us do so; let us make man, and make him such a one, even like God." And so accordingly he did. This may be understood as an allusion to human methods; that is, that men, intending this or that work, they do use somewhat of self-excitation; in order thereunto, they do *accingere se*, they do apply themselves to the action which they intend, and, as it were, recollect their strength, that is now to be exerted and put forth. So is God introduced speaking —"Come now, let us go to work afresh, and make that creature man, even the resemblance of ourselves."

And it may also be understood to carry with it an intimation of that great mysterious doctrine of the Trinity. "Let us make man;" that conjunction of the pronoun of the plural number, with a verb singular, (as we have formerly noted to you,) being probably enough to give some intimation of the glorious subsistencies of the Deity; and who (as you have formerly had noted to you) are to be considered jointly under the notion of Creator.

* Preached December 23d, 1693.

And it speaks the perfect spontaneity of this work, or (if that may import any thing higher) the perfect intellective liberty wherewith it was done. "Let us make man;" there being no foreign inducement before the creation, there could be nothing *extra Deum*, nothing without God himself, but *proprio motu*, from the inward propension of his own mind, and that vast and boundless abyss of goodness, the fulness whereof was in him, now flowing forth, by free choice and consent, into a creation; and into the creation of such a creature as this. "Let us now make man; it is our mere pleasure to do so:" according to that in Rev. iv. 11. "For his pleasure all things are and were created." He only pleased himself, and took a delight in such an effusion of his own glorious power and goodness, breaking forth into such a creation.

In the words themselves, we have two things distinctly to be considered,—the work itself, of God's making man —"God made man;" and—the *norma* or the pattern according to which he made him—"he made him after his own image," made him the designed representation of himself: we shall consider these severally.

I. Consider the work itself, or the making of man—"God made man." And therein, we are yet more distinctly to consider—the product—man; and—the productive act—God made him.

1. For the former of these, the creature now made, and signified by that name of "man," that we are to consider and contemplate awhile; that is, that we are to turn our eyes inward, and contemplate ourselves, and consider what sort of creatures we are. We hear it often, that man is a microcosm, this whole world in little, an epitome of the universe; the two great classes of being meeting in him; *viz.* mind and matter, the invisible world, and the visible touching one another, and having (as it were) a *nexus* with one another in his nature. He hath a mind belonging to the invisible world, and a matter belonging to the visible, in his composition and frame. And so is set a middle creature between the angels and brutes, having the intelligent nature with the one, and the sensitive and inferior nature with the other.

We need to be put in mind of what is so obvious to us; for of all things in the world that we are so prone to overlook and forget, we are most of all apt to forget ourselves: though it were a precept of so high and great importance, and so obvious to a reasonable mind, that it did proceed from the mouth of a pagan, *Nosce teipsum, first know thyself*, yet it was reckoned too great and important a thing, to be primarily attributed to such a one. And therefore, it was said of it, *e cælo descendit;* surely *it came down from heaven:* no mortal could assume to himself the honour to be the author of so great a saying as this. But though it be a matter of so great an importance, and the obligation thereunto, men perpetually do lie under; and though it be so obvious to a reasonable mind, yet, generally, look upon all the world, and you may say, "Men are the least part or study to themselves, they least of all consider themselves, to know their own natures, and what sort of creatures they are."

But that we may a little more distinctly consider this subject, plain it is, that man is a two-fold creature; he hath a double nature in him; he is a man and a man: or there belongs to his constitution and frame, an inner and an outward man: as the apostle elegantly enough distinguishes them, in 2 Cor. iv. 16. "An outward man," that is, a perishable and perishing thing; and "an inward man," which, while that outward man is perishing, is yet capable of being "renewed day by day," as he there speaks.

Indeed, while we turn our eyes upon ourselves, we are least of all apt to consider what is most considerable in our own frame. A people related to God of old, and even the strictest sort, or sect of them, (the Pharisees themselves,) our Saviour justly upbraids them with this stupidity, this piece of inconsideration: he speaks to them as a company of besotted fools: "Ye fools, hath not he that made the outward, made the inward too," in that Luke xi. 40. "He that made that which is without, did not he make that which is within also?" But both of these parts of man, or each of this two-fold man, we are distinctly and severally to consider, for both have that in them which claim and

challenge the deepest intention of our thoughts. There is the outward man which the Scripture speaks of, but under the notion of a tabernacle, the outward case or frame of man, (as I may so speak,) a thing whereof he is capable of being divested, and which may be laid aside. "I must shortly put off this tabernacle," saith the apostle, 2 Pet. i. 14. He speaks of a going forth, an exodus, as out of his house, out of his dwelling—"the earthly house of this tabernacle." So it is called 2 Cor. v. 1. "For we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" therefore called a tabernacle, because it is designed but for a temporary and very short abode and residence that we are to have in it; in comparison whereof, the future residence of holy and good souls, is spoken of under the name of a "mansion," in John xiv. and in Luke xvi. "everlasting habitations;" these are but very temporary ones. But though they are so, yet their present frame and structure doth challenge a very serious, and reverent, and adoring contemplation; whether we look upon the grosser or more bulky part of this structure or frame, or whether we consider that which is more latent, less obvious unto common notice. If we consider the grosser part of this structure, or tabernacle, either in the whole of it, or by parts, how admirable a thing is the composition of a man, even of the outward man, this exterior part of man! Such, as claims to have such things said of it, as we find, Job x. 10, 11. "Hast thou not poured me out like milk, and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews. Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." All being prefaced with this, "Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about, yet thou dost destroy me;" he then seeming as if he were all of a sudden about to ruin, and throw back into dust again, his own excellent and so curious work: and of how great excellency is it, according to the account that these words give us, and according to that too which we have Psalm cxxxix. 13, 14. "Thou hast possessed my reins, and covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect, when all lay yet in a rough creation; and in thy book were all my members written, (or in the idea of the Divine Mind,) which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." They were all fixedly formed in the mind of God, while as yet there was nothing brought forth into actual being, so that this was the effect of the wisdom of a God, this exterior frame of man, so contrived with so exquisite order, every thing belonging to it, in so apt subserviency to the several uses and purposes for which it was originally designed. Here is that which a pagan calls *ars dei, a divine art*, the art of God himself, in this structure or frame, a fabric composed and made up all of miracles; if we consider the elegancy and curiosity of the whole, and if we consider how the several parts were equally made to serve, both for use and comeliness: so that of all the wonders in the world, I know no greater wonder than this, that man himself, a creature so capable of consideration and thought, should ever have thought it possible, any of them, that there should be such a production as this without design; as if it were a casual, an unintended thing, that there should be so many severals in this composition and frame of man, but never intended for the uses and purposes for which they so manifestly and peculiarly serve. How stupid a creature is man become, that he is willing to admit even the greatest absurdity, rather than to admit God into his thoughts.

If we look into this frame, (though I can but touch upon things, and it is hard to know where to touch upon so great a multitude of things both observable and admirable at once,) if we should consider the aptness of the several parts that are in common use for the several offices and functions which they perform; if we consider what is external; if we consider what is internal; if we consider what is ornamental in our frame; how full of the highest and clearest judications of the greatest wisdom that can be conceived! There are, belonging to this frame of ours, the organs of the several senses, which do give so many advantages to such a creature as man is: every sense, or sort of sense, it hath its censorium inlaid in this frame; the things that are necessary unto feeling, and necessary unto touch, and necessary unto smell, and necessary unto hearing, and necessary unto sight. All these organs do belong to the outward man; though the sentient be somewhat diverse and distinct, from this outward and external frame: for it is not the eye itself that sees, but the soul in the eye; nor the ear itself that hears, but the same soul in the ear; and so as to all the rest of the senses too; which we all know, if that soul were dislodged, and retired, and gone, could no more see, or hear, or touch, or taste, than a stone: but the aptness of these several organs for their several uses and purposes, such a curious contrivance as that of the eye for the sight, and that of the ear for the hearing, it would require volumes to unfold and open these to you.

And then, if we consider that which is more latent, even in the outward man itself, not obvious to the notice of any of our senses, and that is the more spirituous part, in this frame of man, or the several sorts of spirits. I do not now speak of his purposes, and without which it were impossible that any of these operations could be performed, which do belong to the nature of man in this present state. There are the elementary spirits that are to be found in it, and that are common to it with the inanimate part of the world. As there is no sort of body conceivable, in which we may not also conceive somewhat or other of that which they call elementary spirit. And then, there is a higher sort of spirit, which serves for vegetation; and a higher than that, which serves for sensation; and all these, no doubt, some way or other distinguished, though we are not capable of assigning their differences, otherwise than from their effects; but all meeting in the frame of a living man: one sort of these spirits finer than another; another, again, finer than that; but undistinguishable by us by any other way, than only by such indications as the things effected do speak and hold forth to us. All these things we use continually; and we could do nothing without them; nor be what we are without them, in this present state. But seldom or rarely doth it occur to any thought, what they are, or that there are such things belonging to us, when without them there could be no motion: they are not things that are self-moving, (as no matter can,) yet they are things by which that which hath the power of motion in itself, doth perform such and such kinds of motions as are necessary in this frame of ours.

If we should consider the several things which are thus used; as all the muscles in the body of a man, reckoned to be about four hundred and thirty, without which, and without the spirits that do move them, the man were a mere trunk, a dead trunk; so many several sorts of muscles to turn that one member of ours, the eye, this way and that way, and the several agitations of spirits that must be the continual spring of all these motions. How quickly do we turn our eye this way, that way, upward, downward, and never consider what turns it about us, without which no such motion could be performed.

If we think of all this, what cause have we to break out often into those same raptures, that we find the Psalmist, herein, in that last mentioned place: "How fearfully and wonderfully am I made: thy works are marvellous, and that my soul knoweth right well." And it is a mighty emphasis that these words carry in them, "and that my soul knoweth right well:" that is, it signifies this to have been with him a wonted study, that his mind used to be fixed on the contemplation of it—"my soul knows it right well;" these are with me beaten tracks, they are not uncouth or unusual thoughts; these are things that I think of, over and over again, from day to day." Indeed, when any one comes to consider the works of God, and particularly this work of composing this fabric of our outward man, they are wondrous; and we must consider them so. If we do but glance but one single thought upon this work of God, we cannot but say, "they are wondrous." But how few of us can say, "and this my soul knoweth right well:" that it is a thing to which my thoughts are used, and which is my continual work; I do, from day to day,

employ them and keep them in exercise upon such a thing and subject as this.

But time, and my own design of speaking as succinctly as is possible unto the several heads which I am to discourse of, allow me not further to insist on this same outward man.

We are to look yet further: and when we have taken some view of the habitation, to consider the inhabitant, that thing in man called mind and spirit; spirit in a higher and nobler sense than we used that application before. According to the exterior part of man, that you have heard of, he is called Adam, a composition of earth, of red earth, as that word signifies, or out of the dust of the ground; that earth pulverized, reduced to the finest particles, according as, more or less, so they were capable of being wrought into that curious contexture which their great Maker did design: hereupon man is said to be thus made. He hath the denomination there, first, from his outward, more visible, and observable part; this is the creature which appeared first to come under notice and view, upon this stage of this lower world. There was nothing perceivable of him, but this exterior frame that was called man: he hath that denomination *Quoad apparentiam*, in respect to what he did appear, and was obvious to common notice, or that might be in such creatures obvious to the notice of one another, the first notice. It could only, in that respect, be said, that God made man of the clay or dust of the ground; that is, what of man was capable of being made out of matter, was made out of such, or out of that matter.

But you have, afterwards, a further account of this creature, in the 2nd chap. of Genesis and at the 7th verse; that "God did breathe into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul." The outward man carried the name of man before; but now we are given to understand there was a nobler thing belonging to this frame and composition of man, which admits that he should be called "a living soul," from that breath of life, which it is said God breathed into him, that breath of life. It is as significant an expression as we could have in words, or that words could furnish us with, of vital spirit, a living spirit, that is the principal thing in man. And so, now, he hath the denomination, *Quoad rem*, as he had it *Quoad apparentiam* before. Before, he was denominated according to his appearance; so man was said to be made of the dust of the ground: now he hath his denomination according to what he is in reality; a living soul being breathed into him, as vital breath, from God himself, most immediately.

And here we are to stay our thoughts a little, and consider what this is. It is to be known, (as all essences are,) but by certain properties that do speak themselves in such and such peculiar effects, and so tell us what the cause must be from whence such effects do proceed. It is plain, that this same soul of man must be a substantial being; otherwise, it were never capable of such actions and effects as we manifestly find do belong to us, and are wrought by us. Now if we do consider them severally,

1. That which is fundamental of all other, is, that is manifestly appears to be a vital thing; the spirit of man is distinguished by vitality, by being essentially vital. It is very true indeed, that these bodies of ours, as long as the soul inhabits them, live too, have life in them: but I pray consider, what is so very obvious, the difference of that life, from what we must understand and conceive to be the life of our spirits. We know the body of man so lives, as that it doth not constantly live, it doth not always live; and so life doth not belong to it essentially; life is separable from it. The body of man, it can be killed; it is capable of losing its life; and so its life is but a derived and a borrowed thing from somewhat else. Spirit hath life radically in itself. For we must conceive the spirit of a man, this breath of life, (as the learned languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, have no word for spirit but that which signifies breath,) I say this spirit, or breath of life, is, in itself, vital, so as that unto it, to be, and to live, is all one. The body may be, and not live; (as I told you;) life is separable from it; but the spirit, the soul, while it is, it always lives, its being and its life are not capable of being parted from one another, as it is in the life of the body. And so it is from that life, that the life which is in the outward man is derived, and transmitted in all the several parts of that body, that do partake of life. And then,

2. Next to life, (which is fundamental, and indeed of larger extent, and not so distinguishing,) there is intellect; there is a power of understanding that belongs to the spirit of a man, by which his spirit is a thing capable of thought, or doth consist in a thinking power, a continual source or spring of thoughts: so that if we never so continually attend ourselves, we cannot find ourselves not thinking: there is a perpetual forge of thought from whence they fly, and spring up, as sparks from this or that fiery substance, and never cease to do so. And within that compass of intellect, lies not only power of forming thoughts but of connecting thoughts; of affirming one thing that we think of another thing that we think; and the power of deducing thoughts from other thoughts, of inferring some thoughts from former thoughts; that is, that because I think so and so, therefore, I consequently think so and so too; some thoughts having a dependance upon other foregoing thoughts: and a power of ranging thoughts, of methodizing thoughts, of putting thoughts into a frame and order, according to that relation which they mutually bear to one another.

And this shows this same thing called spirit or mind in man to be, not only a substance, but a substance quite of another kind from this outward man of ours, that is made up of matter, though there be things belonging to this frame never so fine, and did require never so high purity of matter; yet plain it is, that the spirit, that is in man, must be somewhat of a quite different nature; inasmuch as there is nothing of matter, whether gross or never so fine, that is capable of a thinking power: for you can no more discern a tendency of a power of thinking in a flame of fire, than you do in a piece of clay; a flame of fire is nothing more rational, nothing more capable of understanding, than a log or a stone; and therefore, whatsoever hath the power of thought belonging to it, must be a being of quite another nature and kind, from any thing of matter, be it never so fine, never so pure; there being no property at all belonging to matter, that hath any possibility of contributing to such a thing as thought—neither figure, nor the size, nor the motion, nor the connexion of parts one to another. It is altogether an unimaginable thing, that a piece of matter, be it never so small, should be more capable of thought for being of such a figure, or less capable of thought for being of such a one: that if it be square it can think; if it be round, then it cannot think; if it be of a less particle, then it can think; if it be a greater, then it cannot think: if such and such particles be separated one from another, then they cannot think; if they be put together, they can. No reasonable understanding can imagine any contribution in these things unto the act of thinking. And the motion of so many parts can contribute as little and no more than so. A heap of sand lying still, can be capable of no thought; and if it be agitated never so much, it will be as little capable: therefore, nothing is plainer than, that this property of the mind or spirit of man, that is, intellect or the power of thought, or thinking, doth speak this spirit, or mind of man, to be quite a diverse thing from all the matter that belongs to the outward man; even from every thing of the outward man; that the inward and the outward man must be quite diverse or different things. And then,

3. There is the power of will or choice belonging to this inward man, the mind and spirit within us, by which we are capable of determining concerning our own actions; of choosing or refusing, of resolving to do so and so; of resolving not to do so; or resolving to do to the contrary: a strange power, and of vast extend, that doth distinguish and belong to the spirit of man, and through which this soul and spirit of man come to have that double capacity, to wit, of duty and felicity. I were capable of neither of these, if it were not for that elective power, and consequently upon the intellective, by which I am capable of choosing my own actions, and the objects upon which they are to be employed. I speak now of the original capacity belonging to the spirit and mind of man, not considering, at present, the impairment or diminution thereof, by the apostacy: of which there may be occasion to speak in the proper place, and season, when it may come in our way.

But it is the same faculty or property of the mind or spirit of man, to wit, the power of election and choice, that makes him the subject both of duty and felicity. He were never capable of duty, if it were not for this; nor capable of felicity, otherwise than by this; as he is a creature obliged by the law of duty, and capable of being rewarded and remunerated by felicity. This is the thing inferred by the power and faculty in man, the power of volition, depending upon that understanding or cogitative power, which you have heard of before; though some take that term of cogitation to extend so far as to take this in too. But we are not considering of words now. And then,

4. There is the executive power, by which we reduce into act these purposes and intendments of ours; a strange sort of power; that is, being directly under the dominion and government of that former power, the power of choosing; that is, because we will do so and so; and so choose we to go to such a place; or we stay and move not: we move this and that member, or we restrain that motion. If we will we can move our whole frame with very great facility; or else if we will not, it is very difficult to move it. That I can by the notice, by the command of my will, make my whole bodily frame so easily move to this or that place, which without that empire or commanding act of my will, it would give so much difficulty and trouble to others to do. And I move it myself *nullo conatu, nullo negotio*, upon the matter, I make nothing of it, I do it with ease. This is a power that we continually use; but we very seldom reflect upon it, that we have such an ability belonging to our natures, and even to the very nature of our spirits, the soul within, by which to move to and fro these members of our body, as from time to time we do. And,

5. There is belonging, as very peculiar, (and some think it is most of all peculiar,) to the mind and spirit of man, the capacity of religion, of which the brute creature is altogether incapable: some think this more differencing of man than reason itself. It is a very dubitable and disputable matter, whether there be not that very thing in many creatures, that are reckoned brutes only, that we call reason. But concerning this, religion, the matter is out of all question and doubt, that it belongs, most peculiarly, to the mind and spirit of man; that is, the capacity of acknowledging a Divine Being, the Author of our being, and of reverencing and adoring that Being accordingly; that power by which I do *suspiccre numen*, by which I consider a Being above me, the Author of my being, and of all beings, and of any disposition in me to pay a reverence and adoration to that sovereign and supreme Being thereupon. And,

6. Lastly, there is belonging to this spirit of man, (as peculiar and distinguishing too,) the power of governing the inferior faculties; the power of governing the sensitive appetites and passions; and even, in very great part, the acts of the exterior senses: I say, in very great part—there will be some involuntary actions; but how far the natural power of man did herein originally extend, we are not in this state of apostacy capable of knowing now. But undoubtedly, when man was himself in his innocent and instituted state, and where the inferior nature was held in direct subordination to the superior, as there were then no undue thoughts so neither were there any undue motions of an inferior nature itself, but what were certainly commandable and kept within due limits. And this empire did belong to the mind and spirit of man, to govern and conduct all the inferior appetitions and affections, and all the external actions, so as they should move or not move, be done or not be done, as to that governing wisdom seated on the throne, in the mind of man, did seem meet.

Of this there will be more occasion to speak when we come to the latter particular in the text; to wit, "that in the image of God made he man;" when we come to treat of the *norma* and pattern of this great divine work. But upon what hath been said, thus far, concerning the product, the thing produced, man; surely our thoughts cannot but reproach us: that they are so seldom employed upon so important a subject, and that lies so very near us; for what can be so near us as ourselves. That we can have our eyes round about us, like the eyes of the fool in the end of the earth, and so seldom find time and room for any such thing as self contemplation.

LECTURE XVII.*

WHEREAS, in the former discourse, we told you, that it is impossible that the spirit of a man, this inward man, can have been made of matter, so neither can it be made of spirit, for spirit is not a partible thing. If any should suppose it to be made of created spirit, it is as good to suppose it made immediately out of nothing, as any former created spirit for the necessity will recur of referring this production at length, to that special kind, to wit, of making a thing out of nothing. But for its being made of the uncreated spirit, God himself, that would be to make the Divine Essence a divisible thing, a partible thing, as if there were parts capable of being severed from parts belonging to the same essence of God. And therefore, though, among some of your heathens, (your stoics particularly,) there have been those high hyperbolical expressions of men's being parts and members of the Godhead, *Dei partes sumus et membra*, as Seneca's expression is: and that celebrated stoic speaks softly enough indeed of the soul's being *divinæ particula auræ*, the soul should be a *particle of divine breath*; these are expressions allowable enough as high rhetorical strains, but not as expressions of rigid truth, by any means. If, therefore, the spirit of man were neither made of matter, nor of spirit, it must have been made out of nothing. And so in reference to this part of the product, the effect, the thing produced, man, that must needs be by most immediate creation in the strictest and most proper sense.

As for the question, "Whether that these souls were made at once, or whether made successively just then, when put into a state of union with these bodies?" is a thing altogether unfit for us to concern ourselves about; it being indeed such a thing as divine revelation hath given no determination to; and such a thing as no human investigation can ever be able to make a determination of, one way or other; we must be content to be ignorant where God hath drawn a veil over things, and not brought them into any kind of light that we can discern them by.

And then, for the completing of this production or productive act, we are to consider, (as comprehended in it,) the union that is brought about them between these two parts, the outward man and the inward man, without which there could not be one product considerable in the case; for when we speak of God's making man, (as this text doth,) the meaning cannot be barely, that he made a body for him out of the earth, and that he made a soul for him out of nothing; the production of these two parts will not amount to the making of a man, unless these two parts be united and brought together, so that of both to compass and make one thing; a man is not created till then, not made till then. And most plain it is, that this union, it was made, at first, by God himself immediately, without the co-operation of any second cause. But it is in the after-productions, brought about in a settled way and course of nature, in which, yet, we cannot say that man's being produced, doth consist in the making of his body, or the making of his soul; but in the union of the one with the other. There is not a man produced till then; till these two parts, being produced, are brought together. But they are not brought together in union in the same way as they were at first; for at first it was by God's own immediate operation; but he hath now settled the course of nature wherein all following productions are brought about. But yet, still it is his work; otherwise, man which was God's creature at first, would cease to be God's creature, if he were not still the Maker. Now concerning this union we have this to say,

* Preached January 6th, 1694.

I. That it doth not confound the parts united, one with another; for the body is a body still, and not a spirit; and the spirit is a spirit still, and not a body. These parts do remain distinct in the union; there is no confusion of them in the case, nor identification; as if the nature of the one were lost and swallowed up in the nature of the other. But the body continues to have all the properties of a body; and the spirit continues to have all the properties of a spirit; the properties of the one are not communicated to the other. It is not the body that thinks, nor the spirit that grows, or the like; but these particular distinguishing actions proceed, that are proper to the one and the other, they remain unto each. But,

2. We have further to say, concerning this union, that, though under it the parts remain distinct, and are not confounded one with another, yet they are most intimately united; though it does not identify them, nor confound them, yet is this union a most close union, a most inward union, so as not to be ordinarily separable by any means that shall not discompose the recipient herein, that it shall be no longer naturally capable of being; so the soul cannot but stay there; and when it ceaseth to be capable of being the apt recipient of the soul, the soul can no longer stay: it is, therefore, a most intimate union; and a most marvellous one; and one of the greatest mysteries in all the creation of God; considering the vast difference that there is between these two natures, a piece of clay, and a mind; that these two should be so united together, that so long as the one remains naturally susceptible of the other, they can by no means be parted, they cannot be separated, while the crasis of the body remains entire. It is one of the greatest miracles in all the great creation of God; that is, that when this mind of mine, this spirit, is loose from all matter besides, I can move myself from this place, or that, as I will; I cannot yet, by any means, from this body of mine; to this piece of matter I am tied and fixed: and though this soul of mine be an elective and voluntary agent, and I do things electively, and at choice, I cannot at my own choice take myself out of this body of mine, to separate it from my soul; but whither ever I have a mind to go, it follows me, and goes with me, and cleaves with me; I cannot shake it off while the crasis lasts. This is a thing whereon the wisdom of the Creator hath infinitely outwitted us, and gone beyond us. We know not what hath tied this knot, this knot of man, made of these two parts, that are so little of kin, as dust and spirit are to one another, yet so to adhere to one another, as that they cannot be severed by any art, or any power, as long as the crasis or whole constitution lasts, so as this mind or spirit can go out and come in at pleasure. Let it be considered, for it is one of the deepest mysteries of Divine wisdom in all the creation of God. A great wonder it is in itself; and really, it is not a less wonder that it should be so little considered, that man, that hath such a thing as this belonging to his nature, a union of two such, so disagreeable parts, should so seldom reflect upon it, so seldom allow himself to contemplate and look into the mystery of his own composition.

But now, to go on to the *Use* of this former part—God made man; here are but a few words. But it is a vast improvement that they are capable of, if we would give our thoughts scope; and if it might please the Divine spirit to concur and fall in with his own word. Here lies before us the foundation, laid bare and open to view, of the whole law of nature; that which we call the law of nature herein, it hath its foundation even in this—God made man. It results but from the nature of God, and the nature of man compared together, or with one another; the nature of the Creator and the nature of the creature, this creature, such a creature. Inferior creatures are not governable by a law; it is an intelligent, voluntary subject that alone is capable of being so governed. And inasmuch as God is the most perfect intellectual Being, and our Creator, and we are intellectual beings too, and his creatures, hence results upon us the obligation of that law which is called "the law of nature;" and may justly be so called, or which otherwise may be called "the law of our creation." Take that in the general. But to be here a little more particular, there are these several things to be learned even from hence—that God made man. As,

1. Is God indeed our Maker? Then certainly there ought to be in us a most thirsty, longing desire to know him, as far as our minds are capable of knowing him. For what! can I be content to be ignorant who it is that made me? Indeed, there cannot be a higher and more notorious violation of the law of our nature, or creation, to be willingly ignorant of that God that made me, and gave me being. But how dismal a thing is it, that we should so generally need to be taught how to answer the very first question that we are wont to ask our children; "Who made you?" I hope you are wont to do it; God knows how it is; but I hope it is your wont and use to ask your children, "Who made you?" But pray let us consider, Do we not need to be taught ourselves, what we pretend to teach our children, "who made us?" When you would teach your children so much, do you mean that they should repeat the words and no more? Is it not your meaning, that you would have them understand who made them? Is it not your meaning that they should have some notion in their minds of him that made them? If we had so, and a true, right, correspondent notion, O! how mightily impressive would that very thought be upon our souls! how would it strike through all our powers, for ourselves to answer that question, "Who made us?" He that is infinitely beyond all thought, beyond all conception, declare his name, or his Son's name, if thou canst tell: as it is said unto Ithiel and Ucal, Prov. xxx. 4. Into what an amazement should it put us to consider, what answer we should put to this question, "Who made us?" Into how profound thinking should it cast our minds! Into how deep thoughts! Out of how vast and immense a fulness and plenitude of life, and being, and power, we did spring! That vast plenitude, that abyss of being, that answers the question, "Who made me?" He made me, that is the infinite fulness of all being, and of all life, and of all excellency, and of all perfection; and shall not I covet to know him? At the same time that I acknowledge him incomprehensible, I must look upon the knowledge of him as most desirable, the most desirable of all knowledge.

And therefore, it speaks a most horrid degeneracy (as there will be occasion more directly to take notice of hereafter) of this thinking part of man, his mind and spirit, that it can think of so many thousands of things, and covet to know them, affect to know them, but not affect to know the Author of its own being, of its own life, and of all those great powers and faculties that he hath furnished the reasonable, intelligent nature with; "They liked not to retain God in their knowledge," Rom. i. 28. They did not approve of it; that is the import of the word: a strange thing that this matter being proposed to God's own creature, and a creature capable of thought and understanding. Hast thou a mind to know God, to understand him that gave thee being? No, I do not approve of it. They approved not to retain God in their knowledge; there was a secret dislike and disaffection; "an alienation from the life of God," as it is expressed, Ephes. iv. 18. "And this they are willingly ignorant of," (saith the apostle Peter, 2 Epis. iii. 5.) "that the world was made at first by the word of God, the earth standing out of the water and in the water. Of this they were willingly ignorant." This matter, it lay hid from them, being very willing that it should: that is the import of the expression the Spirit of God makes use of there. It lies hid from them, being willing of it. What lies hid? That this world had a creation; of this they are willing to be ignorant; and so, consequently, that they had a creation. They desire not the knowledge of it: they say to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thee," Job xxi. 14. Here is divine light and glory shining every where through this world; but we choose rather to dwell in the dark as to this thing. "The light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not;" receives it not, would exclude and shut out that light: a voluntary darkness; as if that darkness should entertain thoughts and communings with itself; as if there should be an agreement among the several clouds of that darkness: "Come, let us collect and gather together thick about such and such minds, to fence them against the beams of such light;" this mind is self-collecting, and gathering these clouds, drawing them in, inwrapping itself in them; "O! let us not know God,

though he made us: God made me, and yet I will not know him." O! unnatural thing; most monstrously unnatural.

Even so it is with men in their distresses, when nature itself would dictate to them, "O cry to him to give thee help who hath given thee being." Do but observe that, Job xxxv. 10. "They cry by reason of oppression of the mighty; but none saith, Where is God my Maker." An amazing thing, that men in their distress will many times cry to rocks and stones, but not say, "Where is God my Maker?" Cry to rocks and mountains, (as they will at last,) but lift up no cry to heaven, "Lord, I would fain know thee, manifest thyself to me in this my distress." No, men will perish under their burdens rather than do it; such is the disaffected temper of men's minds towards God. Indeed, for ease and relief they will cry, but not for God, or say, "I want to know God;" that is none of their sense. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?" Nothing more remote from the minds and hearts of men than this sense. And yet, it is not understood what they are incurring of guilt and misery, by this neglect of getting their minds furnished and enriched with the knowledge of him that made them. It is not considered what lies upon it. "It is eternal life to know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And if these two be necessary, (as we find in that John xvii. 3.) if both these, I say, be necessary, how fearful a case is it, if we cannot get men over the first, or to the first, which is more natural. But the knowledge of the true God, that lies within the compass of the sphere of nature, that belongs to natural religion. And a compliance with the divine pleasure in this, to wit, seeking to know him, belongs to the law of nature, by the first and primary obligation of that law upon us. At what a distance are their souls then from blessedness and eternal life, that when it is "eternal life to know the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent," we cannot get men to the first. No, they are content to be all their days ignorant of God; yea, though he be a Father to them.

O! strange prodigy of unnaturalness! So you would account it, if that were the temper of any child, that he did disaffect to converse with, or take any knowledge of, his own father. But this is the peculiar relation between God and men. He is a Father to them, a Father upon a natural account; as he hath been the immediate Creator of their spirits. And therefore, when Christ's line is run up to the highest, you find it run up to Adam—"Who was the Son of Adam;" and then by Adam it is run up to God—"Who was the Son of God," Luke iii. 38. and upon that account it is that we are said to be "his offspring," in that Acts xvii. 28. An expression that the apostle borrows from a celebrated poet of their own, a certain astronomical poet, who was highly in vogue with that people, or with the philosophers of that place; that university at that time. One of your own poets tells us "we are his offspring." Man is the creature of God; but with very great peculiarity. He hath many creatures besides. All the inferior universe are his creatures too; but among all man only is the son; that is, there is none below him to whom that title is ever given of being his son. "And shall we not be subject to the Father of Spirits and live?"

Besides this supernatural ground of this relation of Father and Son between God and the spirits of men, I say, besides the supernatural ground of it in regeneration, it hath its natural ground. And you will see more of it when we come to consider the Second Part—Man's being created after God's image: for if we speak of human productions, a man makes many things himself, yet what things he makes they are of a different nature from himself; but whatsoever he begets is of the same nature, of a like nature with his own. Human nature can make many things, make houses, make garments, but they have nothing of a similitude or agreement of nature with the maker. But it is this peculiar sort of production that gives foundation to the relation of father and son, even that which makes the product to be of the same nature and kind, or of an agreeable nature to the productive cause. If man be the son of God, then he must be an intelligent being, as He is. And this is the state of things between God and men; and yet they do not know it, and choose not to know it, are willingly ignorant of it. The matter is upon account plain, that their ignorance of God is voluntary; for that it is evident, it is not necessary: that is, they do not live ignorant of God because he cannot be known; for his glory shines every where. There is not the meanest creature but proclaims Deity to every one who will attend; there is not the most despicable pile of grass, or grain of sand, or any such thing, that will not make an argument to us of Deity, that cannot fail but be most cogent and unanswerable. For take but one single pile of grass, one single grain of sand, and here is a real something; that is plain. But is it a thing that came into being of itself? Is this pile of grass, or grain of sand, a self-subsisting thing? No, by no means; no reasonable thought can imagine that, that it can be a self-subsisting thing: for then it would have more perfection in it than all the world hath besides, that did not make itself, or come into being of itself: then it owes itself to a maker, and so we are unavoidably led to God. If you but so much as set yourselves to contemplate a grain of sand, or a pile of grass, follow the train of your own thoughts but a little way, and you are led to God, whether you will or no. This is either something or nothing; I find it to be a real something. Well, but what is it? a thing that subsisted of itself? No, by no means; for then it would have all the perfections, all the excellencies of the universe in it; and infinitely more: this grain of sand, and pile of grass, would have more excellency in it than all the world; for it is plain, that this world did not make itself: why then we must refer it to the maker: and so you are led to God, whether you will or no, by so mean a thing.

Therefore, I say, men's ignorance of God is not necessary, because they cannot know him; it must, therefore, be voluntary, because they are willingly ignorant of him. And the more plainly so, because, whereas they have a sufficient demonstration of the being of a God, even in the meanest creature, they have a more abundant demonstration in themselves, and from themselves. If a grain of sand, or pile of grass, will prove a creature and a Deity to me, how much more must I myself, who know I did not make myself. I know I came into being so many years ago; so that this work of giving an answer to this question, "Who made you?" doth not lie remote: I do not need to fly up into heaven, or go down into the depth of the earth, or to cross the seas, for an answer to it; but only look into myself. The word is nigh me, in my mind, and in my mouth; if I will allow that to speak my mind: I have in me these powers, these faculties, that nature, that most expressly represent God to me. I find myself a creature that can use thoughts; I find I have a power in me of laying designs, of forming projects, of foreseeing things, of comparing thought with thought, of inferring and deducing one thought from another. How manifestly doth all this lead me to God, the perfectly intellectual Being!

Therefore, it is the most amazing thing that our thoughts can reflect upon, that there should be such an indisposition and averseness in us to know him that made us. God made man; but man will not know God, though he be not a Creator, at large, only to him, but a Father; and man, in respect of his soul and spirit, his very offspring, he being the Father of spirits: upon the account whereof, pagans themselves have been wont to speak of God, as the paternal Mind, Father of all minds, and of all spirits, as some of them by the light that shone, even to them, could not avoid to see and say.

There is but one thing that leads to many more parts of the law of nature, and our condition which results in all the several parts of it, from the collation and putting together these two things—God and man: man being considered as the thing made, and God as his Maker; God made man. Sure, I say, in the first place, nothing can be more reasonable and suitable to this state of the case, than that man should have a mighty thirst to know God, to know him that made him. One would think it should be an uneasy state of the spirit of man, to be in any such ignorance of God as should proceed from neglect: to be ignorant of God by neglect, by not caring to know him, by not concerning oneself to have that knowledge, that

should be the uneasiest thing in all the world to the spirit; to be capable to have that said to him, "So many years thou hast lived in the world, lived in the flesh, a tabernacle that thy Creator and Maker hath framed for thee, and put thee into it, and all this while thou hast not cared to know him, nor concerned thyself to get any acquaintance with him." It very much becomes and concerns us to covet to know him. It is a very unnatural thing to be content to be ignorant of him that made us; but not to be willing to know him, that is much worse. But now,

LECTURE XVIII.*

2. We may hence collect, that our constant, grateful adoration of God, is a most reasonable duty incumbent upon all of us. Nothing is more deeply fundamental in the law of our creation, than the law of worship. "Let us come and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker." It is a joyful homage that is claimed unto him on this account, the most complacential adoration. "Let us come before him with thanksgiving; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves." Indeed, nothing can be more reasonable hereupon, than those two great parts of natural worship, to wit, supplication and thanksgiving. Supplication; should not a people seek unto their God? Did he make us; did he give us being; from whom else are we to expect all the good we need? He that hath given us being, all the accessories of being are to be looked for only from him. And thanksgiving; these two parts of natural worship, are complicated in one another; in the institution of them, as they are in the reason of them, and root of them. "Let your requests and supplications be always made to him, with thanksgiving," as in divers texts of Scripture, which I might refer you to, and even upon that account, that he hath given us our very being itself, which is the fundamental unto all other good that we are any way capable of, that he hath given us being of such a kind. So God made man.

We should consider what is involved in the nature of man, and so bethink ourselves what we have to bless God for; that is, the primitive nature which God gave man at first, or wherewith he made him, every thing that he made was good, and so was that more excellently good. It is storied concerning Plato, a heathen, that dying, he gave God solemn thanks for three things: "That he made him a man, and not a brute; that he had made him a Grecian, and not a barbarian, (there being much more light among them in his time; than with the rest of the world, to wit, the light of philosophy and cultivated reason;) and the third was, because he had ordered it so that he should live in Socrates' days, who was reckoned so great a luminary in that part of the world among them, while yet they were overspread with paganism." O! how awfully should we adore God that he hath given us a being; that he hath given us rational, intelligent natures, capable of knowing and enjoying so great things! that he hath assigned us our station in such a part of the world, and where we have opportunity to know a greater One than Socrates was! that he hath ordered our creation in such circumstances as he hath done, in such a time and such a part of the world! Nothing is a more equal law that can be upon us, than that we should have an habitual, adoring gratitude possessing our souls upon such accounts.

And, upon the whole, adoration! how correspondent a thing is it to creation! adoration on our part, unto creation on his part. How convictive a saying was that celebrated one of Anstin? "If I (saith he) were capable of making a reasonable creature to stand forth out of nothing, endowed with the power of reason and understanding, the first thing sure that I should expect from him would be, that he should fall down and worship me." In what an unnatural state, then, is this world upon this account, that being inhabited by so many reasonable creatures, it is inhabited by so few worshippers! Again,

* Preached January 13th, 1694.

3. Another practical deduction from hence, is, that we ought to live in a continual dependance on him that made us. So God made man. Hath he made us, and will not we depend upon him? trust in him? This is most essential homage due to our Maker, to place upon him, and exercise toward him, a continual, vital trust. This is a glory which he will not impart, but concerning which he is jealous. And, indeed, as to purely internal worship, this is the first and most radical of it, trust in God: and so very natural to an intelligent creature, that I remember Philo Judæus hath this expression concerning is; "That he is not fit to be called a man, that hath not in him hope towards God." He seems to mean it of what is most natural to man, that he is not to be reckoned a man that doth not trust in God, and doth not place a hope in him.

Natural dependance is reckoned, consequentively, essential to a creature; and it is so. A creature is naturally a depending thing; an explicit dependance, that doth as properly belong to an intelligent creature, as natural dependance doth to all other creatures. A creature, as such, taken at large, is a mere dependant upon him that made it. This whole creation is nothing else but a thing dependant upon God, upon divine power and upon divine pleasure; according to which it was determinable, whether it should be, or not be; and according to which it is continually determinable, whether it should continue to be another moment, yea or no. And so suitable as natural dependance is to a creature, as a creature, so suitable is intellectual dependance to a reasonable creature, as such; that is, that it should consider its dependant state, and often recount with itself, How came I to be what I am from moment to moment, when I cannot promise myself a moment's breath or being? This is so appropriate a glory to the Deity, that when trust is supremely placed any where else, there is a curse pronounced upon it; "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man;" (Jer. xvii. 5.) for this is to rob God of his peculiarity; to place a homage on the creature, that is most appropriate and peculiar to the Creator.

But it may be said, In our state of apostacy from God, what room or place is there left for trust in him?

To that I answer, very certain it is, men are in an apostacy from God. But are they, therefore, always to continue so? especially when he is so intent upon a design for their recovery and reducement; and he insists still upon the right that he hath in his own creature. Because his creature is revolted and apostatized, and run away from him, hath he, therefore, lost his right in it? If there be an obligation upon an apostate creature to return, (and if it were a wicked thing to apostatize at first, it must needs be an increase of the wickedness, to continue in that state of apostacy and not to return,) then, wherein stood our revolt, therein must stand our return. The revolt of a creature from God in his apostacy, lay in departing from him through "an evil heart of unbelief;" that it could not trust in him, did not trust in him; trusted the temper and destroyer of souls, against him, and in opposition to him. And to come out of a state of apostacy must be by trust, if the going into the state of apostacy was by distrust. But this must be in God's own prescribed and appointed way and method. When once it hath pleased him to signify the way in which he is pleased to admit of sinners' return unto him, wherein he hath made the constitution of a Redeemer known, there must be a return in and through him, and trust in God through him: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," John xiv. 1. Where this way of returning to God, so as to make him the supreme Object of our trust, is not known, there the state of a sinner is less capable of remedy. But where it is known, it admits of so much the greater and deeper guilt, if yet there be no thoughts of returning, and returning in this very act, by placing again our supreme and vital trust upon him who was the first great and commanding Object of it; that did most rightfully command it, and challenge it, for himself; Shall I have a creature that shall not trust in me? not make me its all in all? Therefore, to have our interest in God restored by Jesus Christ, that must be our great business, who live under the Gospel of Christ.

And then, we are to trust in God under that very notion of the Author of our being, knowing, that because we are

apostate creatures, therefore, that he will never for our sakes, but he will for Christ's sake, do the part of a kind, benign Creator to us. Our interest in him as Creator being now renewed; not lost and swallowed up, but renewed and restored: and therefore is the charge laid upon Christians, (1 Peter iv. 19.) to "commit themselves to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." His interest in us, as our Creator, was never lost; our interest in him, as such, was; but being now restored, upon this restitution we are continually to trust in him, and commit ourselves unto him under the same notion of Creator, still. To commit ourselves unto him as a faithful Creator, that is, he did put himself, at first, under obligation (implicitly at least) to his reasonable creatures: "Obey and thou shalt live," shalt be happy; he freely putting himself under this obligation. But the creature, upon his revolt, forfeited all his interest in him, and all right to that promised felicity, which, as an obedient creature, he might have expected; by Christ this right is restored; and so God is to be considered now, by such as through Christ have returned to him, not merely according to the benignity of a Creator, but according to his fidelity also: "commit yourselves to him as a faithful Creator," he having resumed the obligation upon himself to treat such kindly; and he doth do it, not merely from unobliged goodness, but obliged, which the notion of faithfulness doth imply. He will be to you a faithful Creator, if you commit yourselves to him accordingly as such. And again,

4. Another piece of practice that we may induce, and should learn, hence, is a constant and most profound humility. What! am I a creature? So God made man: there had never been any such a thing as man if God had not freely made him. Oh! then how deep an impression of humility should this fix upon our souls! What am I? A creature depending upon will and pleasure; it was lately in the power of another, whether I should be, or not be. A proud creature is a monster in the creation of God; the most horrid monster in the creation. What have I to be proud of, who am of myself nothing, and should never have been any thing, but by vouchsafement, by the good-will of another? It is to that only that I owe it that I am any thing.

If one creature have more, or do think he hath more, of real excellency than another, that, with the whole of his being, is all but a made thing. Thy whole being, whatsoever excellencies belong to it, either as common to that sort of creatures to which thou art annumerated, or more special and peculiar to itself; if it be any thing, (if it be not merely a concealed thing,) it is a made thing, as thou art: thou wast made, and it was made, and it was made to be thine; but all depending upon will and pleasure: therefore is pride a most monstrous thing in the creation of God. The continual sense of all creatures, of any intellectual sense, should be this, "We are all nothing but what it pleased our Creator we should be. We have nothing but by his pleasure; our being is a borrowed being: and the additions, and all the ornaments that have occurred to it, are all made things, all borrowed things." Should any one be proud of that which he hath borrowed? To wear ornaments that every one knows were borrowed, and to be proud of them, what a madness is that? Our very being is a borrowed thing, and all that belongs to it.

When God would humble a creature down into nothing, thereby to make it the capable receptacle of a Deity, a cohabiting Deity, that with such a one he might dwell, how doth he magnify himself the higher! "Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool, Isa. lxvi. 1. All these things have I made, they are all the works of my own hands. Now, if I can find a creature sensible of this, to such a one will I look, that is of a poor and contrite spirit, that humbles himself into the dust before so mighty and glorious a Creator; with such a one will I dwell; he shall be my temple, the habitation of a Deity;" for the Deity will suffer no diminution in uniting with such a one; because that will still be looked upon as the All in all, while he still looks upon himself as nothing. And,

5. We further learn, hence, the great equity of the law of self-denial; it is a most deeply natural law; and when it is made fundamental in Christianity, that is but the revival and re-inforcement of a natural law: "Except a man deny himself he cannot be Christ's disciple." Why so, why cannot he be Christ's disciple? Pray consider what was Christ's business, when he was to collect to himself disciples. His business, as a Redeemer, was to recover apostates back again to God; and their discipleship to him, was only to put themselves under his conduct; that under the direction thereof, and through his mediation, they might return to God and be accepted. The very design for which a mediator was appointed, shows the necessity of his insisting upon this law as fundamental to the whole frame of Christianity. As if he had said, "My business as a Redeemer, as Mediator, is to recover and bring back apostate souls to their God again. Wherein were they apostates? In that they did set up themselves apart from God, and in opposition unto God. None can come to me and own me for their Head, and for their Lord, and Intercessor, and Mediator with God, but it must be under this notion; that is, that they look upon me as the only One by whom they are to be restored, and brought back into their primitive state, reduced to God, the great Author, and consequently the end of all things. And therefore did Christ, in dying, "redeem us to God by his blood," Rev. v. 9.

We are not to think, that we were, ourselves, the principal end of Christ's redemption: that would be an injurious and absurd imagination, to think that the creature was Christ's chief end; it were a horrid conception. God must be the chief end of all things; therefore, the design of Christ's dying was to redeem us to God; to restore back such and such creatures to God, that the end for which they were made, might be served upon them. Our interest in him is a secondary thing; but his interest and right in us was the primary thing. Therefore, it was impossible to be otherwise, but that Christ's designing the redemption and reduction of sinners to God back again, must lay this law as fundamental, at the bottom of all that religion he was to set up in the world; that is, self-denial. "You have lived in a separate state, apart from God. If you are weary of that life, and will come off from yourselves, then you are for me, then you come under my conduct; I will make your peace; I will buy it out for you, (and he hath bought it out,) and procure your acceptance with God, upon your return." But this can never be, if you have a mind to live separate still, to stand upon your own bottom, and make self your first and last. No, God must be your first and last; and he really is the first and the last. And therefore, "unless any one be willing to deny himself, he cannot be my disciple," saith Christ; he cannot be a Christian under any other notion than as one that is now willing that God, in all his authority, and greatness, and excellency, and glory, shall entirely fill up that room which, before, self had usurped. And therefore,

6. We further learn, hence, how reasonable and necessary a thing it is to man, as he is a creature, a created thing, to seek an interest in, and union with, God, as his highest and best good; for of himself he is nothing. That he is any thing (as hath been said) did depend upon divine pleasure. Such a one, if he do recollect and use thoughts, must needs state his case thus: "Not only am I incapable of doing any thing towards my own felicity, but I cannot preserve myself in being one moment. What good have I then, but what I must expect from him that made me? I have been severed from God, cut off from God, the great Author of my life and being; I have not, in this my separate state, my good in my own hand; I have not enough in me to make me a happy creature; a creature I am, but I still need to be a happy creature. And when my very being is not my own, what shall I be able to command for myself, or procure for myself, or raise up to myself, within me, that shall be able to be a felicity or satisfaction to me?" He that is nothing of himself, it is the most reasonable and necessary thing to such a one to seek a union with him who is All. I am in myself nothing; there ought, therefore, to be in me a propension towards him who is my All. My soul ought to incline towards him, to adhere to him, as its supreme and best good; "Whom have I in heaven but thee? who can I desire on earth in comparison of thee?" And,

7. A life of the most absolute devotedness to God, is the only righteous way of living; no man lives a righteous

life that doth not live a devoted life. And what are we to deny ourselves for, as neither being able to procure a felicitating good to ourselves, nor as being allowed to design a supply for ourselves by any interest of our own? And why are we to deny ourselves in these respects, but that what we take off from ourselves, may be immediately placed upon God who is our All? As we are to seek a union with God for our real, present support, and for our final satisfaction, so are we to devote and addict ourselves to him in order to this service. When we adhere to him, (according to what was expressed in the foregoing head,) that refers to our support and satisfaction; when we devote ourselves to him, that refers to his services; that we may serve and glorify him: for that we are to devote ourselves to him.

And that hath its reason in this too, that we are his creatures, he hath made us: and what did he make us for? Did he ever make a creature to be its own end? He hath made all things for himself: "Of him, and to him, and through him, are all things, that he alone might have the glory." Therefore is our own created being, (as it is such,) our very being itself, a perpetual, standing testimony against us as long as it lasts: if we live not devoted lives; if he who hath been the Author of our being, be not the end of it, this very being of mine is a testimony against me. For what sort of being is it? Not a self-sprung being, but a created being: So God made man. I am a made being; therefore is my being a testimony against me (the kind and nature of it being considered.) I am a continual testimony against myself, as I stand a created thing, depending upon will and pleasure, if I live not a devoted life, so as my own heart can bear me record, in the sight of God, that I do live to God. Being to ask myself the question, (and it is a shame to us if we do not often ask ourselves the question,) "What do I live for?" what is my business here in this world? If I cannot answer it with a sincere conscience, "Lord, thou that knowest all things, thou knowest that I principally design to live to thee, and that I reckon my life, and my being, a vain and a lost thing, otherwise than as it is sacred unto thee: I continually testify against myself; I should think it living in vain, to please myself, and to serve an interest of mine own, when I have not a moment to command, but depend upon the pleasure of another for every moment's sustentation in the being that I have." Who can answer it to himself, to live that sacrilegious and ungodly life? that is, not to live devoted to him by whom we live?

8. We may again learn, hence, what reason there is why we should love God more than ourselves: you cannot but know, this is a thing most strictly charged upon us, and wherein we are upon no terms to be dispensed with; namely, that we are to love him above all. We owe unspeakably more to him than we can do to ourselves. We do not owe to ourselves that we are any thing. "He made us, and not we ourselves." If there be any thing of real goodness in the being that we have, there is infinitely more in the Author of that being; and if goodness, as such, be the object of love, the greatest goodness must be the object of the greatest love, and the highest goodness, of the highest love. And therefore do not think that we are hardly imposed upon, when the law of our creation doth require and claim this from us, that we love God more than ourselves. And therefore, when our Lord Jesus Christ takes upon him the great business of our redemption, and reconciliation unto God, (which it was impossible for him ever to have effected, if he had not been God as well as man, upon the account of the Deity that was united in the same person with his humanity,) he claims so much for himself from us, that is, he doth tell us, that if any man do love father, or mother, or wife, or child, or his own life, more than him, he cannot be his disciple. We are to consider that there is Deity in his person, the fulness of the Godhead; and so that he is, as such, the supreme Object of our love, to wit, the Deity, which is in him common to the Father and Spirit, must be the supreme Object of our love. It is as if he should have said, "I come, in kindness, to redeem and save you as lost creatures: you are not to think, in doing so, I have laid aside my Deity; for then I could not have been a Redeemer and a Saviour to you: and therefore, having that Godhead united with my humanity, in my own person I require this of you, that is, that you love me more than your very being: and you cannot be my disciples upon any other terms." He was Creator, in conjunction with the Father, and the Spirit; for "by him were all things made, visible and invisible; and without him, nothing was made that was made." And therefore, we are not to think it a hard or an unreasonable imposition upon us, that we are to love God, and to love Christ, more than ourselves; more than this natural life or being of ours, so as that all must be a sacrifice to his pleasure, if he once say the word, or signify his will to that purpose.

And that is the way, having lost ourselves, to find ourselves again, by loving him above ourselves. "If any man loves his life," (that is supremely,) "he shall lose it; but if he will lose his life for my sake, he shall find it." We find life, and all, in God through Christ, when we are lovers so as to make him the supreme Object of our love, as in that John xii. 25. No man can really be a loser by so abandoning himself, as to place that love which he unjustly placed upon himself before, (that is, his supreme love,) now upon God, and upon Christ. No man can be a loser, but he finds himself again in this case. He had lost himself before; but now he is restored to himself and to his God both at once. Then,

9. We may further learn, hence, how reasonable a thing it is, that man should be under government. Is he a creature? then he ought to be a governed thing. The most reasonable thing in all the world it is, that he that hath given us being, should give us law. Hath he been the Author of being to us? and shall he not rule his own creature? shall that be allowed to have a will against his will? To have been raised up out of the dust, but the other day, out of nothing, and now to dispute whose will shall be superior, mine or his that made me, what an insolency is it! We may again learn,

10. How foolish a thing is self-designing, when men lay their designs apart from God; forming their projects, as the apostle James speaks, chap. iv. 15, 16. "I will go to such a city, and buy and sell and get gain. And I will reside there for such a time." This all proceeds from our forgetting that we are creatures, made things. God hath made us; so that our breath is in his hands. How great an absurdity is it, as well as an injury, that I should talk of forming projects, and laying designs, when I am but a made thing, and there is an arbitrary hand underneath me, which sustains me; but that may let me drop and sink, in the next moment, if it be withdrawn. We ought to say, "If God will, we will do so and so?" If your being depend upon his will, certainly your actions and affairs depend upon his will too. But for men to design so and so, without consulting God, or referring themselves to God, is to take upon them as if they were not creatures. And,

11. We may hence learn, further, (as that which is fundamental to all the rest,) how indispensable an obligation there lies upon us to preserve a continual, awful remembrance of God upon our minds and hearts, from time to time, all the day long. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." I pray, let us but use our own understanding in considering this. When it is said, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," (Eccles. xii. 1.) is the meaning of it, that we are only when we are young to remember him, and forget him all our days afterwards? No, the meaning is, that those days of our youth are not to be exempted, we are not at liberty to forget him even then, but that he claims an early and first interest in our time and thoughts, and in the truth and vigour of our spirits, and that we are to begin then, when we are young, as we are to continue all our days afterwards. And how is he to be remembered? Why under the very notion of Creator: that suggests to us the very reason why we are to remember him; because he is our Creator, and our breath is continually in his hands. What! do we think a man can subsist without God, any better when he is grown up, or when he is grown old, than he could when he was young? No, the reason upon which the obligation rests, is still the same upon us all our days; that, therefore, it is a most monstrous thing, to consider how men come to dispense with themselves in this fundamental duty, that virtually comprehends all the rest. All is lost and gone, if we

do not so much as remember God. How can we dispense with ourselves to rise up in the morning, without a serious thought of God, and run after our common affairs all the day long, and still forget him? And lie down at night (it may be) without any serious remembrances of him? and yet lie down with the apprehension that we are innocent in all this; we have passed over this day well if we have succeeded in our business, if there hath been no disaster that hath befallen us, all hath been well; though there hath been no serious thought of God, no minding of God at all; that is to live in a downright rebellion against God, through a whole day; and also from day to day, through a whole life's time hitherto; for it must be entire and universal rebellion, inasmuch as all duty towards him depends upon remembering him; we can do nothing besides if we do not do that. Therefore, is that given us as the character and diagnostic of wicked men, of men that are designed for hell, and allotted to hell for their final and eternal inheritance and residence. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God," Psalm ix. 17. And they, accordingly, are characterized as such, who more peculiarly belong to God, and as those whom he owns for his own and counts his jewels: "In the day that I make up my jewels, saith God, they shall be mine." Who? why "They that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name," Mal. iii. 16, 17. "And the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." This is the profession of his holy ones, Isa. xxvi. 8. And again, we may add,

12. Since God made man, you see how easy it is for him to prevent all the evil designs of ill men, if he see good; for they are all his creatures; and hath he made a creature that he cannot govern? If then we see wicked men, at any time, bring their wicked devices to pass, it is not because God cannot rule them; but because he hath deeper designs that they understand not, and we understand not. And therefore, their insolency, and good men's despondency, upon that account, are equally unreasonable. They triumph; and good men are dejected; their hearts sink, and they hang down their heads; and why? because wicked men prevail, and prosper in their way, many times, ages together; and, it may be, in many parts of the world. But,

(1.) Their confidence, on the one hand, is so unreasonable as to be even ridiculous. "He that sitteth in the heavens laughs, the Most High hath them in derision." "A company of bubbles of being, that I can let drop into nothing in a moment, if I please; and yet they please themselves in the hopes and imaginations of succeeding in such and such designs as they have laid." "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh" at them. He knows how soon he can let such bubbles drop into nothing; and he sees that their day is coming. And,

(2.) Good men's despondency is, upon this account, equally unreasonable. "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding," Isa. xl. 28. Thou dost not know the counsels of God, what that all-comprehending mind and understanding of his doth design, in letting creatures awhile run such a course. But we are to be assured, he hath his own creatures in his own hand and power, both men and devils, and can govern them as he pleaseth. He hath a hook in their nostrils, that they themselves are unapprehensible of. He knows their coming in, and their going out, (as he said of that proud Assyrian,) and even all the rage which they have against him. But, I say, he hath a hook in their nostrils, and can turn them as he pleaseth, and when he will. We shall have done a great thing towards the whole business of our religion if we can but get this truth impressed upon, and deeply wrought into, our souls; *So God made man;* if we will but learn to look upon ourselves as made things, and look upon all men as made things, continually in the hands, and at the command, of their great Creator.

* Preached January 20th, 1694.

LECTURE XIX.*

Gen. i. 27.

So God created man in his own image.

We have treated of the first thing, to wit, this creation itself. So God made, or created man. And now,

II. We come to speak of the *norma* or pattern of this work of his; or the estate wherein man was created; in his own image, which is mentioned with a reduplication; "in the image of God created he him;" and this we shall speak to briefly, by way of explication and application.

I. In the explication, our great business must be, to inquire, and show, wherein stood this image of God, wherein man was created. Theirs was a strange and absurd dream, (that of the anthropomorphites,) that is, they who did ascribe to God a corporeal shape, and supposed man to be made like to God in that respect. We know, indeed, that in tract of time, our Lord Jesus Christ did assume a human body; but that gives no pretence at all to this imagination; for therein he was made like unto us, man being the pre-existent pattern, and not we like to him, man being made long before. And to ascribe to Deity itself a corporeal shape, must needs speak very mean and base thoughts of God, founded in gross ignorance, and rising up into a mental blasphemy; and indeed, very vile thoughts even of ourselves, as if we were but to imitate God in somewhat corporeal.

Some of the more refined pagans have disclaimed, and declaimed against such gross thoughts of God, warning us to take heed of ascribing any thing corporeal to him; as one, inquiring how we are to conceive of God, according to the doctrine of Plato, (I mean Maximus Tyrius,) he tells us, "we must be very shy, and it ought to be most remote from us, to ascribe any thing at all corporeal to him, neither shape, nor colour, nor magnitude, nor any kind of figure whatsoever; but somewhat of that high excellency as neither to be seen with eyes, nor felt with hands, nor expressed by any words." In some such things we are to understand the excellency of the Divine Nature and Being to consist. And accordingly, the apostle, discoursing to those Athenian philosophers, (Acts xvii.) supposeth them very capable of understanding so much as this; he quotes one of their own poets for it, that "we are God's offspring." "And forasmuch," saith he, "as we are the offspring of God, we cannot conceive the Godhead to be like any corporeal thing of never so great excellency;" as silver or gold, of which some corporeal shape or resemblance may be made, or stands never so curiously graven by the art or device of man: we must understand our resemblance to him, as we are his offspring, to lie in some higher, more noble, and more excellent thing, of which there can be no figure; as, who can tell how to give the figure or image of a thought, or the mind or thinking power? This image, therefore, must principally lie in some mental thing, and is to be only mentally understood: that is, it must have its seat and subject in the soul and spirit of man itself: and so we must know this image of God in man, wherein he was made, to be two-fold; natural and moral.

(1.) Natural, standing in such things as wherein the very nature and essence of man's soul and spirit doth consist and lie. As,

[1.] In spirituality: the soul of man is a spirit, as God himself is a Spirit. He, the paternal Spirit, (as a heathen very aptly speaks,) the fatherly Mind; and agreeably to that, we are his offspring, he being the Father of spirits.

[2.] And in life; essential life. We have bodies that live a borrowed life. Our spirits are, themselves, living things in their own nature and essence; so that life is inseparable from them, as it is not inseparable from our bodies; for our bodies can die; but our souls cannot. If it be, it lives: being and life are the self-same thing. As the blessed God is so frequently spoken of in Scripture, "the living God," the original well-spring of life; so making a creature like himself, and in his own image, he makes him

to be such as to whom life should be essential, though it be dependent upon him, (as all being must be,) yet life being made so much of the essence of man's soul that it can never be severed from it, therein its life is like the divine life; that is, it is an immortal life. It is true, "he only hath immortality;" that is, he only hath an original, independent immortality. But the souls of men, and all created spirits, have a dependent immortality, together with their dependent being, and not separable from it. And,

[3.] In the power of understanding; therein doth the soul of man bear the image of God naturally, as it is an intelligent thing, a thing that hath a power to understand and know the impress of God is upon the spirit of man in this. "He that teacheth men knowledge, shall not he know?" Psalm xciv. 10. And he that declareth unto man his thoughts, (as having given him the thinking and the knowing power,) are we not to suppose, he should know his own work? And,

[4.] In liberty, or the power of willing this or that; of acting or suspending its own acts, and of acting this way or that, accordingly as it shall choose: a dominion it hath over its own act, a self-determining power, or self dominion; but subordinate to the divine dominion; for he never made a creature that he was not to govern. These are things that I now mention, but which being included in the nature and essence of man, when I gave you an account of this creature man, which God is said to have made.

I shall only add two things more generally concerning this natural image of God in man.

First, That it is permanent and lasts always, as long as man lasts, as it cannot but do, it being essential to him, or his very nature; for his very nature did resemble the divine, "the image and glory of God," as he is called, 1 Cor. xi. 7. It must, therefore, be permanent, and can never be severed from man; this is an image that could not be lost. Man could not lose this image; his soul must be a spirit still; a living thing still; and an understanding thing still; a spontaneous, free thing still, subject only to the divine government. And therefore, considering man, even in his estate of apostacy, we find this image of God still remaining, as the perpetual reason of that law of preserving the life of man in this body, as in the 9th Gen. 6. "Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man." If the reason of the law were lost, the law were lost, and would cease; but plain it is, the law was made with reference to man, already fallen: fallen man, apostate man, still bears, in that respect, the image of God; therefore, he will not have his life to be touched. He is a God-like creature, and he that strikes at the life of man, strikes at the image of God! A very awful thought, to consider that man, even as he is man, while he was in innocency, or in apostacy, is still the image of God, and therefore must be inviolable, not to be touched beyond his rules, who reserves to himself still the dominion over lives, as being the God of our lives, so as to kill or to make alive, either immediately, or mediately, by his own authority in men, but not otherwise. And,

Secondly, There is this to be said in general, too, concerning the natural image of God in man; as it is permanent, so it is fundamental unto the other image, and the contraries thereunto; that is, if man had not the natural image of God upon him, he were never capable of having a moral image, could never be a holy creature, nor unholy, if he were not naturally such a creature. And he could never be happy or miserable, if he were not such a creature: that is, if he had not a soul that were a spirit, and that were a living thing, and that were intelligent, and that were capable of acting voluntarily and by choice. And therefore, this image must still be presupposed unto the other.

(2.) Which other we now go on to speak of, that is, the moral image of God in man, founded on the former. And so man doth bear, and did originally bear, the image of God, in the moral sense, in these two respects—first, in purity—secondly, in felicity. He did at first resemble God as a holy and as a happy being. In reference to both these, the natural image of God was fundamental to the moral; this was the very foundation in him of all duty and of all felicity; and of the contraries thereunto, that is, of sins and of misery; as contraries must always have the same subject in which they take place, successively, or in a remiss degree.

[1.] This image of God in man, which we call *moral*, superadded to his natural image, stood in this, to wit, in the sanctity and holiness of this creature in his original state; the rectitude of his natural powers and faculties with reference to his rule and end. But this is to be understood with *caution*. We are to take heed of asserting either too much, or too little, concerning the holiness of man's original state. We must take heed of asserting too much concerning it, to wit, so much as would not consist with the possibility of his falling; or too little, to wit, what would not consist with the possibility of his standing. But, in general, this sanctity or holiness wherewith man was made, and wherein he did originally resemble God, it stood in these two things:

First, In innocency; that is, that he was made perfectly innocent, and it was impossible that it should not be so; for it could not consist with the holiness, and the other perfections of the Divine Being, to make him a sinner. He could not come out of the hand of God at first, an impure and unholy thing. Wherein stood the image of God, but in that he was originally holy, as God is holy? to wit, in some similitude to the holiness of God: he was created in this, as part of the image of him that created him, as that Col. iii. 10. and Ephes. iv. 24. do plainly imply: for the image of God restored and renewed must be the image that was lost. It could not be a specifically different thing: therefore, when the soul is renewed after this image, it is plain, that he was created in it; that is, was created an innocent and sinless creature: not barely in the negative sense; for so is a stone or a brute innocent. I say, not in that sense only; but as being free from all taint and impurity, when he was a capable subject of being both pure and impure; which a stone or other unintelligent creature was not. And then,

Secondly, This holiness, wherein man was created, as it did include innocency, freedom from any taint of sin; so it did include a possibility of continuing so; that is, that there was no depraved inclination in his nature, as it was made or created by God, to determine him unto sin; unto any sinful thought, or to any sinful act. It is true, he was not made impeccable, or with an impossibility of sinning, yet he was made with a possibility of not sinning; that is, with an intrinsical possibility thereof; for we must distinguish here, between possibility and futurity. It is true, that his fall was future; but his standing, for all that, was possible; we mean only by it, a simple possibility, not compounded with any consideration of God's foreknowledge. It is true, God did foreknow what would become of man; but that did not infer a necessity upon his nature; that could have no influence to make him fall; that is, that God foresaw, that being left to himself he would fall; but he saw at the same time, that though he would fall, yet that he had done that for him by which it was possible for him to have stood, if he had followed the law of his own nature. And therefore, though we call this image moral, in contradistinction to natural, yet we are not to think that it was in no sense natural: for it was con-natural. It was not natural, as that signifies essential; for then it could not have been lost; but as it signifies somewhat agreeable to the nature of man: and nothing could be more agreeable to his nature, than to have continued still an obedient creature to God, and consequently happy in him; so that it was not at all to be ascribed to man's nature that he fell; for that were to resolve the cause of his fall into the Author of his nature; and so, to cast all upon God at length; whereas, man's destruction is only of himself, he is the fountain of whatsoever is evil, and God the only fountain of all good.

But then, we are to consider the holiness wherewith man was created, more particularly. And so, it stood in the confirmation, or the conforming of the faculties of his soul unto the rule and order wherein God did at first set them; that is, as for the mind and understanding, it did agree with the divine mind; and for his will, it did agree with the divine will; and so, the faculties of the human soul, those two great leading faculties, the mind and the

will, did each of them bear the stamp and impress of God upon them. And therefore, whereas we find God spoken of under that two-fold notion in Scripture, and by one and the same penman of the Holy Scripture, the evangelist John, in his 1st epistle, that "God is light," and that "God is love;" the one in the 1st chap. verse 5, and the other in the 4th chap. the 8th and 16th verses. Such a creature was man in his mind, and in his will, conformed to the Divine mind and will.

i. "God is light," saith the apostle, "and with him is no darkness at all; and he that walks in darkness, and saith, he hath fellowship with God, lies;" there can be no fellowship between light and darkness. We are not to understand light there to mean merely speculative knowledge; but we are to understand it as signifying practical principles, lodged in the mind, and which are most connatural to holiness in the will and heart. They are the ideas contained in the one, which are exemplified in the other. So, "God is light," essential light itself; and so was the spirit of man, "the inspiration of the Almighty having given it understanding:" that is, that it was,

(i.) A knowing thing; not only had a power to know, but did actually know all that concerned him to know, or that it was his duty to know. And as such, this part of the divine image is referred to morality; for there are some things which it is our duty to know, and to be ignorant of them is a sin. But we are not to suppose man to be destitute of any knowledge, that he ought to have had, in the state of his primitive innocency; though it must be far from us to think that he had universal knowledge, that he knew all things; for that would still be proper to God as an incommunicable attribute of the Divine nature. And therefore, his knowledge must have been a growing thing in that state wherein he was made. But he did know all that did belong to him to know, for the state wherein he was. And so are we to conceive of that knowledge, as the moral additament to the faculty or power of knowing, which is natural. And then,

(ii.) Besides his actual knowledge we must understand, in his mind, a docility, or an aptitude to learn, or know more; and still more, according as the Creator should vouchsafe to reveal more to him, or as he should give him opportunity (as he had given him a natural ability) to reason himself from the knowledge of some things into the knowledge of more.

ii. For his will, that must have been the seat, too, of the holiness wherein the image of God stood, and wherein he did resemble God; and there is the seat of God's law impressed; for we must know, that man was made at first with the law of God written in his heart. Besides the positive precept which he transgressed, there was the whole frame of that whole law in him, which was to be the permanent rule of his practice and obedience; for the apostle speaking of man in his fallen state, (Rom. ii. 15.) tells us, "that even pagans themselves," (where there are the greatest ruins of the human nature to be seen,) "even they have the law written on their hearts." And if it be so with fallen man, what an entire impression must there have been of the divine law upon the mind of man yet in his integrity. A law written in his heart, of which some pagans speak, calling it the *non scripta, sed nata lex*, not a law written, (that is, in any external scripture,) but an engraven law, an innate law, that was impressed on man on his creation, or that he was made with.

And so, as this law which is, in itself, of universal and everlasting obligation, is all summed up in *love*, which is the fulfilling of the law; why, therein we must understand this creature to have at first resembled God; that is, as God is said to be "light," so he was in respect of his mind; and as God is said to be "love," so he was in respect of his will or heart: a creature made up of love, which sums up all duty; for "love is the fulfilling of the law." And therefore, when men are renewed and brought back to God, and his image restored in them, they are created after God in this respect, so as to be capable of dwelling in *love*, as in a proper element and region connatural to them. This was the great principle that did conform men to both parts of the law; that part which was to respect God himself, and that part which was to respect men towards one another; for these were the two great natural and moral precepts; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." O! what an excellent state was this! when the impression of this law, whereof this was the summary, was entire and perfect; not the least inclination to violate it in any part, or in any point, either towards God, or towards a fellow creature.

And we may yet further, and more distinctly, consider this rectitude of the faculties of man's soul to stand in this —first, that the superior faculties of his mind and will, were more directly and exactly conformed to the divine mind and will—and secondly, that the inferior faculties were subject to the superior; this being the law of man's nature at first; that is, that though he had inferior faculties, as well as superior, suitable to his compounded nature, (being made up of an inward man and of an outward man, or of an intellectual and of a sensitive nature,) yet, these inferior faculties belonging to the sensitive nature, they were made so as to be obedient and subject to the superior; that is, to an enlightened mind, and to a holy will; so as to have no appetitions that were irregular or disorderly, of an inferior kind, or belonging to the sphere of sense, but what reason, governing the will, could prescribe to: no violent passions or appetitions in one kind or other, so as to love, or desire, or fear, or hope, or joy, or sorrow, or be angry inordinately, but according as a right mind should dictate, and as a right mind should command. And then,

[2.] As this moral image, superadded to the natural, and founded thereon, stood in holiness, (which we have thus far explained,) so it stood in happiness too, in sanctity and felicity; that is, as God is the blessed God for ever, so did this creature imitate him in his blessedness; bear the image of that upon him too. We must understand that he had a present inchoate blessedness; a present blessedness begun in a satisfaction to all his faculties, in having what was proportionable and accommodate to all the powers of his nature.

First, As to his superior faculties: herein stood the blessedness of this creature, that he had a mind capable of knowing God, and a will capable of enjoying him; and which did know God, and which did actually enjoy him: and it could not but be so; for here was no culpable darkness or cloud upon this mind; there was no corrupt or depraved inclination in this will: and God was pleased to exhibit himself, and manifest himself, to make himself known, and to offer himself to be his portion and God, according to the tenor of that covenant, that law of works, and that law of his creation, under which he was made. Therefore, there was nothing to hinder his present happiness: there was no aversion from God, no disinclination to him; but, a steady propension towards him. There was no guilt upon him, to make him afraid of approaching God; as it was with him soon after he fell, when he ran and hid himself. Vain creature! thinking there would be some darkness wherein he could hide himself from the Divine Majesty. But while he remained yet in his integrity, as there was no faulty darkness in his mind, so there was no depraved inclination in his will: but knowing God to be the best and highest good, most absolutely perfect, all-comprehending and every way suitable to him, his will could not but be propense towards him accordingly, so as then it must have been his sense in perfection, (though not unalterably,) which comes to be the sense again of the renewed soul: "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and whom can I desire on earth besides thee?" When he had the beauties of a new-made creation all in view, a heaven that was then new, and an earth that was then new; yet "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and what is there upon earth that I desire besides thee?"

As to his inferior faculties, there was what was most grateful to them too. Man was created in a paradise, full of pleasantness, and of pleasant good things, which it was then lawful for him to enjoy without restraint, except that one forbidden tree. And he not only had the perception of all, all grateful, sensible good, but an interest in, and a power over, all. And you see, that God estates him in a dominion, sets him over all the works of his hands, in this inferior, lower world, and doth so immediately upon his having created him. "God blessed them, and said unto

them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every thing that moveth upon the earth."

What a glorious prince was man then! and into how great a principality did God put him as soon as he made him! Whatsoever was most suitable, and most delectable, for his enjoyment, in that kind of inferior and sensible good, was all put into his power; so as what innocent, well-tempered nature would choose, as most grateful to it, that he might choose, one thing excepted; which very exception, (as all exceptions do *firmare regulas*) was but a confirmation of his dominion over all the rest; and did but more fully speak his right and title to enjoy what he would beside. All this as to his inchoate happiness. But,

Secondly, Besides this, we must understand him to have had a title to continuing, and increasing, and, at length, perfect felicity. We are not to suppose him made in that state, which, if it had stood, should have been eternal, without change or alteration. But most rational it was, that God having newly created an intelligent creature, should create him in a state of probation, upon which was to follow a state of retribution; as it is most natural, that duty go before felicity; that there must be obedience before recompense. His full and final recompense was yet to come.

And the reason of the thing plainly speaks it. We cannot suppose, that God made man in a better condition than he made the angels; (a superior sort of creatures;) but it is plain, that he created them in a state of probation; otherwise it had been impossible that some of them should have fallen, and left their first station, forsaken it, and thereupon, to be "bound in chains of darkness, and reserved for the judgment of the great day." And it is plain, further, upon this account too; as to this earth, supposing man to have stood, (though God foresaw that he would not, that he would fall,) yet we must suppose his constitution to be such, as agree with the supposition of his standing too. It had been altogether impossible that, in the succession of many ages, this world would have contained all the men, if they had been innocent; and so, consequently, all immortal. But we must necessarily suppose, though not death, (for that was only introduced by sin,) yet some such kind of translation unto higher and more glorious regions; as from perfect, arbitrary good pleasure, Enoch and Elijah found at the hand of God.

And so, besides the actual felicity he had, there was a title to future felicity, supposing he had stood. For when the divine constitution runs in this tenor, "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them," do but consider what the reverse of that must be: "Blessed is he that continueth in all things written in the book of the law to do them." If not continuing in all things written in God's law, to do them, must infer a curse, then to have continued must infer a blessing: and as that curse did put him into a worse estate, that blessing must have put him into a better estate; otherwise, it had not been a state of retribution suitable to a foregoing state of probation.

Thus far, you have now the explication of this state, wherein God is said at first to have made man; that is, made him in his own image, the image that was natural and essential to man; and that image that was mortal and superadded. And can we look upon this as a useless doctrine? Of what importance is it to us to look back, and consider the original of this creature! what it was; and what it is! What man was in that perfect rectitude, of which we have had some account; and what he is in that forlorn and abject state into which he is now sunk and fallen. It is this that must make redeeming mercy, and our recovery by a Mediator, grateful. It was a noble expression of a heathen; *Nemo improbe conatur unde descenderat ascendere;* (speaking to this very case, the depraved condition of man as he now generally is, and what his state before was, of which they had hallucinations, though not distinct conceptions;) *no man blamably endeavours to ascend from whence he did descend. Capax est noster animus dei, atque eo fertur, nisi vitia deprimant: we have minds capable of God; and towards him they would be carried if vice did not depress and sink them.* But nobody doth unwarrantably aim to ascend thither, whence he did descend; if he did descend, sink from so excellent a state, there must be some aim upwards, some aspiring to get up to that state again, or to somewhat agreeable thereto, by which the natural appetite in man to blessedness and felicity should be excited and stirred and put into action, and kept in action, even by the very law of his own nature.

LECTURE XX.*

THE more distinct *Use* and *application* of this subject, and such as may most aptly and properly be made, we shall now proceed to. And it will afford us a very various and a very copious use, if we seriously apply our minds to consider it. God created man in his own image. Why there are,

I. Sundry inferences of truth that we may collect and deduce. As, that man was, at first, a creature of great excellency, (whatsoever he is now become,) a noble and a glorious creature; the image of God being entire could not, sure, but be a very glorious thing. As it is blurred and defaced in a great measure, yet in respect of that remainder, or that mere ground of it, man is now said to be "the image and glory of God," 1 Cor. xi. 7. The image and glory of God, he is still, notwithstanding he hath diminished and disguised himself, as an intelligent being, a living thing: he hath a soul that is essentially life, or to which life is essential; that cannot cease to live; that hath a self-determining power belonging to its nature; that acts not under the laws of a fatal necessity, but according to reason and liberty, in the common affairs and actions of life.

Take man as he was at first, when those powers that belonged to his nature were unvitiated and pure, what a glorious creature was this creature! Dei-formed, made after the likeness of God. The world replenished with such creatures, what a delectable habitation had it been! to have so many God-like creatures inhabiting this world of ours, all representing God to one another, so many visible representations of divine knowledge, and divine light, and divine love, and divine purity! O! what an excellent creature was man in his original state!

(2.) We may further be informed, hence, of the more peculiar excellency of our souls; for we must consider them as the primary seat of the Divine image; "So God made man after his own image." Wherein stood that? Where lay this image, or where was it seated? What! in our bodily frame and structure? (as the anthropomorphites did formerly dream.) Was it a piece of clay that was made so like God in us? And therefore, if man be to be looked upon as an excellent sort of creature, we must understand wherein his true value lies, and whereupon men are to value themselves.

A great many are apt to value themselves because they have laden themselves with a great deal of thick clay; because they have a sort of propriety in much of this earth. Some highly value themselves upon an airy title; "I am such and such a dignified thing, among those with whom I dwell." Some are more vain to value themselves upon gay apparel, or because they have so and so trimmed and adorned those carcasses: but it is in respect of our mind and spirit, that we are the offspring of God, and bear the image of God; and if ever we have any thing truly valuable or excellent about us, there it must lie; a mind and spirit must be the seat and subject of it. Again,

(3.) We may learn, hence, that there is much of God to be understood by ourselves; for we were made after God's own image; and we may discern much of another thing by that which is really like it. Indeed, to direct the intention of our minds immediately towards God, is that which we are not so well capable of in this present state. The intuition of his glory our weak minds cannot admit of; "No man can see my face and live," saith God to Moses. But we can see our own faces; that is, the face of our own souls; we can take a view of them, and consi-

* Preached February 10th, 1694.

der what naturally, and in themselves, they are; that is, according to what there remains of true primitive nature in us; and so may discern and understand much of God, as his glory is reflected on ourselves.

Though we know not how to face the sun when it shines in its strength and glory, yet we can sustain it to behold its image in the water, and look upon it there. So we cannot bear it, to behold the immediate radiations of divine glory directly shining forth, but reflected; and as it hath produced its image in ourselves, so we may be capable of beholding it. And by what we see in ourselves, when we understand that we are made after God's image, that there is a thing called mind in ourselves, then God must be a mind; there is a spirit in man, and we are his offspring; then he, sure, must be a Spirit too; but an infinite, purer, and more perfect Spirit. If we find such a thing as love in our own natures, we may be sure that it is infinitely higher, and greater, and larger, and more perfect, every way, in God. But again,

(4.) We may further learn, hence, that upon the account of our being made after God's image, we have much the less reason to hesitate at the receiving of that most mysterious doctrine of the trinity in the Godhead; for if we seriously consider, we may discern the image and impress thereof in ourselves; and we find that we are made after God's image. There is none that doth so seriously contemplate himself, his own soul, but he may and must discern and acknowledge a trinity there; those primary principles which, considered in their conjunction, do carry a most manifest and express representation of God in this respect; to wit, active power, intellect, and love, those three great primalities in God, his word (who best knows his own nature) doth, upon all occasions, repeatedly express and inculcate to us. And the very like hereof we find in ourselves, considering these things in ourselves; not severed, but conjunct; that is, a power to act, and to act according to understanding; and so act towards things that we love, and towards which there is a propension from a suitableness in ourselves to the things that we act towards.

Any one that will make himself his own study, must discern and acknowledge such things in himself as do make a real trinity; one and the same soul having active power belonging to it, understanding belonging to it, and love belonging to it, which, though all meet and unite in one and the same soul, are yet diverse and distinct from one another: for my power is not my understanding, and my understanding is not love; but all these do meet together in one and the same soul. So that considering man made after the image of God, the doctrine of the Trinity claims to be received with so much the more facility and agreeableness; we finding, so manifestly, the impress thereof upon our own souls. And so we may upon many things in the created universe besides; yea, and we may find running through all things, but most manifestly and discernibly in ourselves, concerning whom it is most eminently said, that "we were made after God's image." Again,

(5.) We may further learn hence, that since man was made after the image of God, (so excellent and noble a creature as this image impressed upon him must speak him and make him,) then sure, God did, in making this creature, design him for higher and greater things than can be compassed within this temporary state. He never did design, in making such a creature as man, to confine him to time and to this lower world. For as he is a creature made after the image of God, he is made with capacities of far higher and greater things than this world can contain, or than time can measure.

If we look upon the present inhabitants of this world, so many minds and spirits inhabiting flesh, and cast about our eyes this way and that way, how thick is this same material world! how thick is it set with minds, with spirits, as so many diamonds sparkling in mud! Any one would say, "This is not their proper place; here are so many diamonds scattered here and there in dirt; surely they are not always to be there! Spiritual and immortal minds inhabiting flesh, and only casting their present rays upon low and sensible things; surely it will not always be thus." Did God make such creatures, did he make man, after his own likeness, for so mean and so low ends and purposes, as they are every where intent upon in this their present state? Did he make man after his own image, only to support and animate a little portion of breathing clay? Did he make him only to take this flesh to keep it awhile from turning into a putrid, stinking carcass. Was this all that a spiritual, immortal mind was made for?

Men should understand, by reflecting upon their original state, what the capacity of their nature was; and that they must be made for some other state, and for higher and greater things, than they commonly apply themselves to mind while they are here. You have so many minds dwelling in flesh; and many, but for a very little while. But suppose it, as long as men do more ordinarily live upon earth, why to have a mind, a spirit, created and put into flesh to inhabit that, suppose twenty, or thirty, or forty, or fifty, or sixty years, or to the utmost pitch that the lives of men do commonly reach to; and then that creature disappears and is gone. That flesh which that mind inhabiteth, turns to dust; the soul is fled and gone; here is no more appearance of this creature, this particular creature, upon this particular stage: what are we to conclude upon this, then? but that sure these have their parts to act in another state, upon an eternal stage, that shall never be taken down. Here are so many God-like creatures brought into this world, and put in flesh, only to abide here such a certain number of years, and there is an end of them. This can never be thought, that God did make so many creatures after his own image, for so mean and ungodlike ends and purposes. And again,

(6.) We many further learn, hence, that an abode in the flesh, is not inconsistent with a very excellent state of life; for God did at first make man after his own image, of whose creation, as to the outward man, (of which I spake to you distinctly,) we are told, he was only made (as his name Adam doth import) out of the earth; but God breathed into him the breath of life, that intellectual vital life: he placed that spirit in him, by the inspiration whereof he came to be an understanding creature; and therein to resemble him that made him. Though this mind and spirit was to dwell in flesh, yet a very excellent state of life might be transacted here in this state: for admit that a mind and spirit be united with such flesh as we now inhabit and dwell in, yet here it hath the image of God entire and undepraved in it: not only a capacity of understanding, and of willing, and of acting, this way and that, but of doing all these aright, with a due rectitude adhering to each faculty; not remotely, not inseparably, as the sad events have shown; but really and truly, so as that they might have remained in the state wherein they were made. O! then, how excellent a life might have been lived here, on these terms, in this world!

Though our likeness to God did not consist in this fleshly part of ours, or had not that for its seat and subject, yet it might very well consist with our having such a fleshly part about us, when there was pure and incorrupt integrity in all the powers and faculties of the soul of man: to have his soul replenished with the knowledge of God; possessed with a holy and adoring disposition, in a continual aptitude to look to, and a continual inclination to delight in, God, and in his converse; together with a universal love to one another, under that notion of being made after the image of God, as they should behold God's resemblance in one another. And O! what a happy world were this, and how pleasantly, and with what delight, might time have been transacted here: a very pleasant, happy, excellent state of life might consist with dwelling in flesh.

Such, in whom the image of God, to wit, his moral image, hath been (though less perfectly) restored, yet how pleasantly have they lived here in this world, amidst all the abounding wickedness of it: such a man as Noah; such a one as Enoch, who walked with God so many hundred years in this world. This is not to live an unhappy life, to walk with God every day, to live in his fear, and live in his communion. Is this to live unhappily?

Men are apt to transfer all the causes of their complaint to other things, and set them at a remote distance from themselves. Some, when they do evil, or evil befall them, accuse their stars or external circumstances. But we have

nothing to accuse but our own ill inclinations. If we live evil lives, bad and sinful lives, or miserable lives, in this world, it is our own fault; for mere dwelling in flesh imposeth no necessity upon us, of being either sinful or miserable creatures. And that we might be convinced of this, we have the exemplification of such a life in our blessed Lord living in flesh (after all flesh had corrupted their ways) without taint. Therefore, being in flesh, as such, doth necessitate none, either to live wicked or miserable lives in this world; the mind and spirit of man being stamped with the image of God.

(7.) If man were at first made after God's own image, he must now, sure, be a very degenerate creature; the degeneracy of man must needs be exceeding great: how ungodlike a creature is he become! How unlike to God do men generally live and act, here in this world! This ought to be considered with deep and bitter regret. It is true that the natural likeness still remains, as it cannot but do, because it is natural, because it is the very nature of man himself. As his mind and spirit (being the immediate seal of the divine image) is a living thing, an understanding thing, a voluntary, active thing, this way and that, the natural image cannot but remain as long as man is man. But the degeneracy is with reference to the moral, superadded image; for that was at first superadded, and is *still due;* a thing concerning which we must say, it is a *Debitum esse;* and which, in reference to the natural image, is as the more curious lines of a picture are to the first rude draught. It is true, that first rude draught, consisting of maimed strokes, doth show the true symmetry and proportion of the parts, in such a picture, to one another; but while every thing is yet wanting that tends to make up the comeliness and beauty, it is a very ungrateful spectacle that a man hath before his eyes in looking upon such a thing.

The natural powers that do belong to the soul of a man, show his original capacity, what he was capable of; then all these capacities are to be filled up, as the rude draught of a picture should be, with what would add beauty, and the appearance of comeliness and vigour to it, as far as the pencil can express that. Here is a capacity in the very nature of man, of knowing much; but look upon that understanding power divested and destitute of all true knowledge. Here is a will capable of choosing, and of enjoying with highest complacency, the best and most delectable good; but totally divested of any such propension and inclination. And, here is a soul that is a spiritually active being; but it is active now any way but towards God, by whom it was made. Why in these very ruins of human nature, you may discern what originally it was.

Take the walls of some noble palace, yet standing: we will suppose all rooms to remain distinct from one another as they were, but it is totally unfurnished. It was inhabited, it may be, by some excellent person; but he is gone and hath left it: there was an honourable family that lived in splendour there; but they are removed, and now there is nothing to be beheld but bare walls: there be the rooms, the several apartments, as they were; but inhabited by nothing but owls and vultures; a habitation of dragons and serpents. And such is the soul of man, destitute of the divine, moral image, and of that holy rectitude which was the furniture and ornament of each several faculty and power.

We may here see what man was in his original state; and hence see and collect how great his present degeneracy is. O! how art thou fallen! what art thou fallen to, thou Lucifer, son of the morning! A God-like creature, one made after God's image, a little lower than the angels, that did so perfectly resemble him; and now sunk into so low a degree of darkness, and impurity, and misery, and death: of which also we were not capable, if the natural image did not remain, if he had not an understanding still, and a will still, and an active power still. And then,

(8.) You may further learn, hence, what the work of regeneration is to perform in the souls of men; and of how absolute necessity such a work is to be effected and brought about there. So God made man after his own image. That plainly tells us what regeneration hath to do; that is, to restore that image wherein it was defect ve and lost. That must be the business of regeneration; considering together what the original state of man was, made after God's image, and considering what his present state is, his degenerate state, it is easy to collect what his regenerate state must be; a renovation, a state of renovation after the same image that man was impressed with at first, consisting of knowledge, (not only in a capacity to know, but in knowledge,) and in righteousness and true holiness. Not only in having the faculties that are capable of these, but in having these things themselves impressed into these faculties; this regeneration must do: or the restoring us to ourselves, or repairing the image of God that was lost; that must be the business of regeneration. As man was made after the image of God at first, in his first creation; in his second creation, when he is made a new creature, he must be created again after God. The new man must be put on, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." And this image is renewed in knowledge, as those two texts speak, Ephes. iv. 24. and Col. iii. 10. compared. Thus, is this part of the doctrine of the text improvable to the learning of several truths that do depend upon it, and that lie in connexion with it. Again,

2. It may be improved too, and very largely, in representing, and reprehending, several sinful evils that this wretched world abounds with; by which it appears how much men, by sin, have fallen short of the glory of God; such characters of his glory having been impressed at first upon them. Why, to consider such things as these, that too evidently and too commonly appear in the temper of men's minds, and in the course of their practice, here in this world: for instance,

To consider how low designs men do generally drive. What! is this God-like? Is this becoming a God-like sort of creatures, such as man was at first, when they wear out their days here in this world, and make it their business to serve divers lusts and pleasures? What a base kind of servitude is this! Is this the creature made after God's image? men to spend their days in the pursuit of shadows and trifles? Is there any resemblance of God in this? Is this like a creature that had in his own original and primitive state, a representation of divine in it, which was to conduct his whole course? And again, consider not only what men do pursue, that their minds and hearts are set upon; but (which carries more of horror in it) what they decline, and what their minds and hearts are set against. Men made after the image of God, and yet transacting their course in continual ungodliness. What! thou made after the image of God, and yet an ungodly creature, and yet live an ungodly life in this world, when thou hast a soul about thee that can know God, that hath a capacity of knowing God, and of choosing him, and of loving him, and of delighting in him? That there should be in such a creature, stamped at first with the divine image and likeness, a disaffection to God; not only no inclination, but disinclination. What! disinclination to thine own true Pattern? disaffection to thine own Original? Thou wast made like God; why dost thou shun him? why dost thou fly from him? Thou carriest the natural characters of his image upon thee whithersoever thou goest. And what! art thou running away from God with his image on thee, in the remainders of it? The remainders of it thou hast upon thy soul; a mind that can understand, a spirit that can and must live; and thou art running away from God with his own image upon thee. What a monstrous thing is that! And again,

3. It might, in the third place, instruct us in several duties that are also very congruous and connatural to this part of the doctrine of this text. As,

(1.) More frequently to look back to our original estate. Such a truth as this made known, published to us, standing upon record in the sacred volumes, doth continually and repeatedly call upon us to look back, to consider and bethink ourselves what we were in our original state, made after God's own image, a God-like sort of creatures.

(2.) It will be our duty, hence, to be now ashamed of ourselves in our present degenerate state. It is no shame to a mean creature that was always so, to be now so: no shame to a worm that it is a worm, to a toad that it is a toad. But that man should become an impure and a poisonous worm, part of the serpent's seed, this is a most shameful thing, and ought to be considered with the most

confounding shame. We should even be startled at ourselves to think what, from such a conformity to God, we are now come to. And,

(3.) It should put us upon inquiring and listening after any means or ways of recovery. It would become a thinking creature, (as man naturally is,) apprehending as even the pagans, (the more refined of them generally have,) that men are not now what they were at first. And it would put such upon considering, "Is there no way of recovery?" And it hath put even pagans themselves (destitute of all revealed light) upon many considerations of that kind, insomuch as that we find several of them to have written treatises concerning the purgative and ornative virtues. It shows us to have a great deal more of stupidity among us, than was among pagans themselves, if we have no thoughts about restitution, about being restored, about being recovered out of so low a state as we find ourselves relapsed into, compared with that which we know was original to us. It should make our minds full of thoughts from day to day. "Is there no way to become again what once we were?" to have minds, and wills, and inclinations, and affections, so rectified as we find, and must apprehend to have been, in our first state? Is there no way to get into that conformity to God and acquaintance with him, as to be able to lead my life with God, which was the thing most agreeable to my first state? And one that would use the understanding of a man, when he hears of a better state, that was original to him, would certainly be upon his inquiries—"Is there no way of recovering, no way of getting back into such an estate again?" And again,

(4.) It should render the Gospel very dear to us, that doth so expressly reveal to us such a way, wherein the image of God is recoverable; and thereupon, converse with him, and a continual intercourse with him, are become possible to us. At present where there is no likeness, there can be no converse, no disposition, no agreeableness or suitableness. How dear then should that Gospel be, that is not only God's revelation, but his way and method to bring this about. To this end he hath revealed his Christ to us, his first Image, his primary Image. He that is said to be "the Image of the invisible God, the first-born before all the creation;" in whom his glory shines as "the glory of the only-begotten of the Father;" the archetypal image, according to which the image is to be renewed again in us. That Gospel that reveals this to us, and which is designed to be God's instrument for the making of the impression afresh on our souls, how precious should it be to us! For his glory shines through it, as through a glass; that, "beholding this glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." Since this, I say, is the design of that very Gospel under which we live, O! how dear should that very Gospel be to us! By this, the image of God may be restored, which hath, in so great a measure, been defaced and lost out of our souls. And it again shows it to be our duty,

(5.) To aspire to the highest pitch of that perfection, in conformity to God, that these souls of ours are any way capable of; especially, that we should be continually aspiring unto the perfection of that state from whence we are fallen. Take the forementioned instruction of a pagan to that purpose. Whereas some might be apt to imagine, and their thoughts might suggest to them, "It is a presumptuous thing for me to think of being made like God, to be holy as God is holy, and to be blessed as God is blessed," and the like; we should consider what we are, that as that heathen said; "It is no fault, no blameable thing in any one to endeavour to ascend to that state or pitch, from which he did descend; we have a mind capable of God; and it would be carried towards him if vice did not depress and sink it. It is therefore matter of duty, from the consideration that we are to aim and aspire after such a state. I do not aim to be what I was, and what I ought to be, in duty towards him that made me, as well as consulting any interest of my own, in the first place: for I am first his, before I can consider myself as my own: and therefore, in duty towards him, the Author of my being, I ought to be aspiring and aiming at this, to have his image renewed in me, and to be restored in this respect to what I was.

* Preached February 17th, 169⅘.

LECTURE XXI.*

Rom. v. 12.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

You know we have, of late, been treating at large of the creation, and particularly and more especially, of the creation of man, and his original state, as he was created after God's image; not only his natural, but his moral image, so as to resemble him, both in holiness and blessedness. We come now, from these words, to consider the lapsed, degenerate state of man, now grown most unlike to God in both these respects; to wit, of purity, and of felicity; sunk into a state of sin, and into a state of misery; become a most deplorable, forlorn creature.

An amazing change! And indeed, it might amaze us, that it doth amaze us no more; that we can consider so astonishing a thing as this, with so little concern: when it is not a thing remote from us, but incurs our observation and sense, unavoidably, every day; whether we look about us, or whether we look into ourselves. And it doth so much the more need that such a subject should be insisted upon, the lapse of man, and the lapsed state into which he is come, and in which he is.

It is true, indeed, that usually, immediately upon considering that subject of the creation, providence useth and is wont to be treated in the next place. And that is a method rational enough in some respects. But it being my design to speak of the heads of religion as practically as God shall enable me; and the providence of God, (when we shall come to consider that,) being for this purpose, is chiefly to be considered as it doth respect man; and the course of his providence towards man, having been for almost six thousand years backward conversant about fallen man, lapsed man, whereas it was conversant about innocent man but a very little while; it seems to me more reasonable, with reference to the design in hand, to consider God's providence (especially when we are to consider it in reference to man) rather, first, as conversant about fallen man. And so, first, to consider his fall, and that state into which he was fallen, rather than to bring in the whole head of a discourse about providence, with reference to the very little inch of time wherein he stood in innocency.

And further, too, because the lapsed world of mankind is, as such, thereupon, manifestly put into the hands and under the government of the Redeemer, who died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord of the living and dead; yea, and not only the lapsed world of mankind, but even the whole creation, as a surplusage of remunerative dignity and glory, for that free and voluntary susception and undertaking of his, it will be, thereupon, most suitable to my design, to bring in the consideration of providence, under the mediatory kingdom of our Lord, and as it belongs to that vicegerency of his which he holds now, not only over this lapsed world, but over the whole creation, as by whom all things consist and are held together. And so, the discourse of the fall, in reference to this design of mine, very fitly intervening, I have chosen to pitch it on this place, from this text of Scripture now read.

In which we may take notice, that there is that which is called a *protasis*, the former part of a sentence, without an *apodosis*, or latter part in form, answering thereunto. Through that rich abundance of divine sense wherewith the apostle's mind and understanding did abound, and was replenished, it was not so well capable of being comprehended and limited by rules of art, or within artificial limits. But yet we may take notice too, that in the following verses there is that *apodosis*, the latter part of the intended sentence in substance, most fully and most copiously represented; the design of the whole paragraph being, in short, this only, to show that as Adam, the first man, was to be a root and fountain of sin and death unto all his seed; so the second Adam would be, of righteousness and life to all his seed, there being a resemblance in

the former of the latter, according to what is elsewhere said, that "the first Adam was a figure of him that was to come," of the second that was to follow; though there is not, it is true, an absolute and exact parallel or parity, as is never to be expected, in such cases, throughout.

My business will only be with what we call the *protasis*, the former of these parts, and that abstractly and by itself considered, without present reference to what follows in the succeeding verses. And so we are to show you, that whereas, according to the tenor of the last discourse, man was created after God's image, not only his natural but his moral image, made like him in respect of sanctity and felicity; he is now fallen into a state wherein he is most unlike God in these two things; to wit, into a state of sin, and into a state of misery. Both these the text expressly represents and lays before us; "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."

Here was the state of the one, the first apostate; he sins first, and thereby becomes miserable. He did represent and resemble God in holiness, purity, and sanctity; now he is become a sinner. He did represent and resemble God in felicity and blessedness, in perfection and fulness of life; (not absolute perfection, it is true, not consummate perfection, but a perfection suitable to his present state;) and now he is become a creature lost in death; death immediately pursued the sin into which he lapsed and fell.

And thus it was, not only with the first sinner personally considered, but with all that were virtually comprehended in him; the whole offspring, the whole progeny; and the same two things have ensued upon them all; that is, sin, by that one being introduced, hath spread itself over all; and death, that way introduced, hath also diffused itself, and equally spread over all; all lost in death, inasmuch as all have sinned.

Very plain it is, that general notices of these things have obtained in the pagan world; and some of the more instructed and refined pagans have spoken strangely about this; magnifying the original and primitive state of man at first; as that it was a state wherein they did partake of a divine portion; and wherein they lived in that converse with God; and there was among them that righteousness, and that mutual love towards one another, as made this world a pleasant region, and most delectable habitation. We have large discourses in Plato to this purpose; and divers do speak as largely concerning the degenerate state of man;—that he is not the creature that he at first was. And they speak it with a great and most affectionate lamentation, that there should be such a change.

But yet, they having nothing in reference to these matters to guide them, but either dark or dubious conjectures, or false traditions, they could not but remain very ignorant of much: that is, how long that innocent state did continue; and, wanting divine revelation to guide them herein, some have drawn forth that state to a vast tract of time, speaking of it under the term of the "golden age;" and though it be generally acknowledged among them that there is a degeneracy in man, yet, how he came to fall, and wherein his fall at first stood, and how the dismal effects came to ensue so generally upon mankind, in reference to these things, they speak (as it could not but be) as men quite in the dark.

But here we have a most express and punctual account, and as comprehensive as we can have, in one text of Scripture, in these words of this text; that is, both of the fall of the first man; and then of the fallen state of all men; and both these in the mentioned respects, sin and death, transgression and the consequent doom.

And here are, in reference hereto, these three general heads that require to be distinctly spoken to—the fall of the first transgressor, this one that first sinned; and—the sinful and miserable state of all the whole race of men hereupon; and—the consecution of the latter of these upon the former, that by one that sinned there should be such a diffusion of sin, and consequently of death, upon the whole race of men: how from the one man's sin, whereby it first entered into the world, and by which death entered with it, there should be such a transfusion with it of sin and death too, through the world. These are the three general heads of discourse to be insisted upon. We begin with the first,

I. The fall of the first man. And in reference thereto, we have these four things more distinctly to be spoken to—wherein his sin stood by which he fell—how it came to pass that he (an innocent creature, made upright, as in that Eccl. vii. 29.) should thus transgress—what the death was that was threatened and did ensue hereupon; and—the dueness of this death upon his having once so sinned.

I. We are to consider his sin in itself, wherein that stood; and it is plain,

(1.) That it stood in the breach of a positive precept, which had said to him, that he must by all means abstain from the fruit of such a tree; as you see, Gen. ii. 16, 17. "Of all the trees of the garden," wherein God had placed and set him, he might freely eat; but of that one, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he must by no means eat; in the day wherein he did eat of it he must die, fall under death, become mortal. There are here some that would fain imagine another way of understanding this whole history of man's fall, whom I shall meet with upon a more particular occasion by and by. But this is the first step by which man departed from God; to wit, his making bold in an interdict, in reference whereto he had a positive expression of the divine pleasure, in that signification which God gave him by his mind relating to that matter. He having both a liberty given him, and a limitation: a liberty—"thou mayest freely eat of all the trees of the garden;" and a limitation—"of this one thou mayest not eat;" and that interdict enforced by that tremendous sanction, "Eat and die; if thou eatest it will be mortal to thee;" it was a breach of this positive law. Take that, (as we shall have occasion to note to you more distinctly anon,) I say, take that act of eating in conjunction with all the concurrents whatsoever it did lead to, or whatsoever was concomitant of that transgressive act. Herein, I say, it first stood, the breach of a positive law. But,

(2.) It did not stand in that alone, but in the violation of the whole law of nature too. This positive law would never have been understood or known, if it had not been, some way or other, expressly signified. But we must understand a law of nature, besides, to have been given to Adam; to wit, by impression upon his heart; for the remains of such a law are still to be found in the nature of man, as the apostle in that 2d Rom. takes notice: "Men do show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences either accusing *or* excusing," or accusing *and* excusing, *alternatim*, by turns; sometimes accusing, and sometimes excusing, as they did comport or not comport with the dictates of their own conscience, which is appointed to be the conservatory of the precepts of that law.

And of this, there are divers celebrated passages among heathens themselves, who have called it not a written but a "horn law," the *non scripta, sed nata lex;* so Cicero, and divers others, speak much to the same purpose. This same law of nature was transgressed in the transgression of this positive law, this particular interdictive precept or negative command. For that particular precept had its foundation in the universal natural law; that is, this one comprehensive law must contain in it all the laws, that could be supposed; that whatsoever our great Creator should signify to be his mind and pleasure, that, his intelligent, reasonable creature should be obliged to comply with him in. This sums up the whole law of nature, and so cannot but virtually comprehend all positive laws too; when once, by any such law, there is a signification given of the divine pleasure, and mind, and will, of him that made me: I ought to obey, when I know his mind; I ought to be ruled and governed by that expression thereof, which he is pleased to afford. This law of nature (comprehensive of all laws) was broken in this transgression; and sundry great breaches of it, which strike deep into the very foundation, must be contained in this transgression. As for instance,

Here was contempt of the highest and most indisputable authority. God said. "Do not this thing:" the creature saith, "Aye, but I will do it." God saith, "If thou doest it thou diest:" he saith, "I will do it though I die for it." Here was no fearfulness of his displeasure, and of his punitive justice, the very sword whereof was drawn, and did glitter before his eyes, in the commination and threatening wherewith God fenced his law. Here was disbelief of

the first eternal truth. Here was believing of a creature against the Creator. Whether that were an innocent creature, or a fallen creature, though he could not tell, yet he could tell it was a creature that spake to him and tempted him; and yet, this creature is believed against God; and here was an interpretative, constructive saying, "God is a liar: this creature speaks more truly than he." Here was vain curiosity, an affectation of knowing more than God yet thought fit for his estate. Here was impatiency, of waiting for God's further most seasonable and opportune discovery. Here was discontent with that excellent state in which God had set him. Here was pride and ambition; he must be some greater thing than God had made him; "Ye shall be as gods." This is contained in it. So that we are not to think that the bare act of eating the forbidden fruit did constitute all the sin of man. But there are all these horrid things complicated and meeting together in it, which made it a sin most exceedingly sinful; especially for him that was hitherto in a right mind; upon whom clear light shone; no cloud upon his understanding; no perverseness hitherto in his will; a power to master the appetite, and keep under the otherwise mutinous inclinations of sensitive nature. Take all together, and we find, here was not only a transgression of the positive precept, but here was also a most manifest breach of the natural law, in the greatest and deepest foundations thereof. Now, herein stood this sin, which was the first thing to be spoken to about that first more general head. But,

2. We are to consider, next, how this should come to pass, that a creature perfectly intelligent, and perfectly holy, yet in his integrity should come to be guilty of so horrid a violation of the divine law as this. It is an astonishing thing, to think of, or speak to; but an account is to be given of it so far as God hath been pleased to give it us. And so, to the inquiry, "How came this sin into the world by this one man?" we must answer, "It came so as the divine history do inform us." The law given him, you have in the 2d chapter of Gen. 16, 17 verses: the violation of it, in the 3d chapter, at large, as distinctly as the divine wisdom did think needful for us. And so you find several things to concur, and must be understood so to have done, to the bringing of this matter about, or that there should be such a thing as sin thus entering into the world. As,

(1.) We are to consider herein the divine permission. Most certain it is, that God did permit, or otherwise it could not have been. And it is easy and obvious to us all to apprehend, that if he had pleased, he could easily have hindered it. The event shows that he did permit; for it did evince it did come to pass, and he could easily have prevented so dismal an issue, if he had thought fit. But concerning that permission; it is true we are to refer it to the divine permission, in very great part, to whom it did belong to prescribe, but not to be prescribed unto; that he might do what he pleased with his own; give more or less of a gracious influence as he saw fit. But we are not to ascribe it to his sovereignty alone, or to the absoluteness of his power, but to that power of his, guided by the supreme wisdom, that discerns all the reasons of things.

We have, you know, discoursed largely upon that text, "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." All things that he doth and permits; all things that he suffers and lets his people do; all do fall under the determination of the wisest, and deepest, and most righteous counsels: nothing is done rashly; nothing incogitantly done, or permitted to be done. That therefore, is to be considered in the first place, how it came to pass, that there should be such a transgression of the divine law, both positive and natural together—God permitted it. And,

(2.) This is further to be considered, that the apostate angels (who made a defection from God) were manifestly apostatized, and had made that defection before. They were gone off from God, had made a schism in heaven, and forsook their first station. And,

(3.) Nothing was, hereupon, more obvious, than that they should affect to draw this new-made creature (man) into a combination and confederacy with them, against the rightful, sovereign Lord of all. And,

(4.) It is plain, that as they were inclined to it, (and easy it was to suppose that they would be inclined to it,) so we find that they did actually attempt it. It is likely, one of their number, and, most probably, their prince, the arch-devil; it was he that made this attempt. The matter is put into his hands to make trial, whether he can draw off this new-made creature from his loyalty, and involve him in the same guilt and misery with himself and his companions; and bring him under the displeasure and curse of his and their Maker, as they were.

It is very plain, that it was the devil that tempted in, and by, the serpent. The Scripture doth expressly call him "the old serpent, the devil, and Satan," as you see, Rev. xii. 9. That puts the matter out of all doubt. And that he might not fright Adam, (who possibly might hitherto be ignorant of a superior order of creatures,) by appearing to him (as it were) in some angelic form; and Adam very well knowing, that there were not any other men besides himself; therefore, the devil slides into the body of the serpent to tempt. I know no reason we have to suppose or imagine that the devil did form, of condensed air, another body like that of a serpent, (though that might be no impossible thing to do, as there are frequent instances in following times and ages,) but there being such a creature already formed, it is a great deal more probable, that he should insinuate and slide into the body of that: and how often hath he possessed human bodies, even when they have been alive, and sometimes when they have been dead! Histories give us many instances of it; and it is, therefore, not at all strange that he should possess the body of the serpent for such a purpose as this, and some way or other speak in, or by it. He hath spoken in the bodies of men, many times, (the stories themselves that we have of that sort importing plainly so much,) not making use of their organs of speech, but speaking more deeply in them than their organs of speech did lie. And so it is not strange, that though such a creature was not naturally furnished with the power of speech, yet that he might speak in it, and by it.

And now here it is true, there are those who are so overwise above, and beyond, what is written, that they think it a mean thing to understand the history of the creation, and then, of the fall of man, according to the true literal meaning and import of the words wherein it is given. And as they are too wise (I hope) to be our instructors in such a case, so I hope we shall not be foolish enough to be instructed and taught by them. The apostle himself, if it were mean and low to understand that history in the literal sense, was content to be of that low form, when he told us "the serpent beguiled Eve," and "he was afraid lest they should be beguiled, as the serpent by his subtlety beguiled Eve," 2 Cor. xi. 3. Pray let us content ourselves to be of that lower form with the apostle; that is, modestly understand this history just as it lies.

For the history of the creation, some are sick of it, because they cannot tell how to reconcile the literal account thereof, in the beginning of Genesis, with the philosophy of their Descartes: as if his reputation were a thing more studiously to be preserved than that of Moses; though, yet, more might be said than hath been, to reconcile with rational principles, even the whole history of the creation: and it might be discerned even by themselves, if there were not more ill will, and an affectation to slur Scripture in the case, than the love of reason. Most plain it is, that it is a very ill compliment which they put upon Moses, when they would have him to have written the story of the creation, and of the fall of man, in that form wherein we find it, only to amuse the people over whom he was set: some account or other must be given; and such a one as this, would serve their turn, and help to awe them, and render them more governable.

This is the account that some presume to give of this part of the divine revelation: and therein, they express a great deal less reverence for and esteem of Moses, than some heathens have done: Diodorus Siculus, in particular, who magnifies him as one of the wisest men that the world hath had. But certainly, as these persons do take off all that can be imagined, from the integrity of any honest historian, so they did it without any respect to the reputation of his wisdom too. For if it were to be supposed that the fidelity of an historiographer were to be dispensed and laid

aside: and if Moses could have obtained of himself to have done that, surely he might easily have contrived a more plausible romance than this that is supposed to be feigned by him: so as that no man can imagine what should induce him to give such a narrative, but only the known revealed truth of the things themselves. If one would have deviated from that, it might have been with a great deal more speciousness than this hath been.

And it is, likewise, a very ill compliment that such, too, put upon the people of the Jews; yea, and upon all mankind; to suppose that they would be capable of being so imposed upon, if there be not evidence in the things themselves related to them and reported.

But it is the greatest slur of all the rest, which they put upon divine revelation, that when that appears and is so manifestly allowed to have been written for the instructing of men, it should yet be supposed to be written for the cheating of them. It is, therefore, plain and out of question, that the devil did tempt this new-made creature man, in the serpent, into which he insinuated himself to this purpose, unto this transgression. And that is the fourth thing we are to consider about the manner of this sin coming to pass.

(5.) And that the devil applied himself to Eve apart (as it is apparent) from er husband, when there was not an opportunity of consulting with him, she being, though (it may be) not of less clear, yet of less strong intellectuals; and in that respect the weaker vessel: her he attempts; for Adam was not deceived, but Eve; that is, not first, but she first; and so was made use of as an instrument to deceive him, as the apostle tells us, 1 Tim. ii. 14.

And because time doth allow me to go no further now, let me only close what hath been now said with a caution to that sex; and especially those that are in the conjugal relation. Let them consider what God hath appointed that relation for. He gave Eve to Adam as a help meet. We see what a help she proved; a help to destroy him; a help to undo him, and his whole race and progeny; pervertiag the very end for which God appointed that relation. O! let such consider and look to it, that are apt to tempt their husbands into sin, because of their relation; because of the affection that they bear to them; because of the constant opportunity they have to insinuate into them, when their pride, and their vanity, and their vindictiveness, very often, must be all employed and set on work to draw their relative into sinful combinations with them against God, when he appointed them to be helps in the relation and capacity wherein they are set. They should be helps to duty; helps God-ward; helps heaven-ward; joint helps, walking in the way to life. It lies in my way to note this; and let it be seriously considered and noted, according to the import and concernment of it.

LECTURE XXII.*

But we are to consider in the next place, and that as the main thing more immediately to be considered in this case.

(6.) The primitive state of human nature, in respect of the morality which was founded there, and wherein, or wherewith, man was at first created. You may remember, that speaking of that former great head, the state of man by creation, from that text which tells us of "God's having made him after his own image," and in speaking of the moral image of God upon man in his creation, comprehending both sanctity and felicity, that there we told you we were neither to lay the matter too low, nor too high: not so low as to make it thence apprehensible, that the sin of man was intrinsically necessary, however it might be extrinsically, with reference to divine foresight; that it should be thought intrinsically necessary would be of horrid consequence to admit; for that would be to make the Author of his being the Author of his sin. Therefore, great care was to be taken, not to lay the matter so low as to exclude the intrinsic possibility of man's standing: nor again, was it to be laid so high as to exclude the possibility of his falling; which the sad event doth show.

The matter, therefore, of his fall, is principally to be resolved into the estate wherein, upon the account of his morals, he was created; that is, that he was made innocent, but not impeccable; he was made a sinless creature, but not with an impossibility of sinning: and in particular, his mind, it was made apprehensive, very capable of true and right notions of things, but not incapable of wrong: it was made without error, but not indeceptible, under no present deception as it was made, and yet, not under an impossibility of being deceived and imposed upon by false representations and colours. And so as to his will, it was created without any determination to good; it was made in that state of liberty as to be in a certain sort of equipoise, according as things should be truly or falsely represented, by the leading faculty, to the mind and understanding. And so hereupon, according to this original state of human nature, there was a possibility remaining of what, no doubt, did ensue. As,

[1.] Faulty omission in several respects. As,

First, Of prayer, in the instant and article of temptation. It had been a creaturely part in that instant, presently to have looked up; "Lord, I am thy creature, the work of thine hands, leave me not to err in such a critical season as this." And again,

Secondly, Of dependance. The creature, as such, was by the law of his creation obliged to depend; that is, a reasonable creature, capable of being governed by a law, was obliged to an intelligent, voluntary dependance, as all creatures, as creatures, have a natural dependance: and it cannot be otherwise with any of them. There should, by such a dependance, have been a derivation and drawing in a sustaining, strengthening influence, *de novo*, as the exigency of such a case did require.

Thirdly, And of consideration. There was, no doubt, an omission of that; that he did not use the understanding power and faculty that God had endued his nature with, to ponder, and weigh, and balance things in that juncture of time. He being essentially, as to his mind and spirit, a thinking creature, should have used thoughts with more equity; that is, have balanced things on the one hand and the other. And this, it is plain, was not done. And there was no doubt,

Fourthly, An omission of the exercise of the great principle of love, which could not but be most connatural to such a creature: love to God, love to himself, love to his posterity. This principle was not excited and drawn forth into act and exercise, as it ought, in such an exigency, to have been. And this as easily made way for,

[2.] Faulty commissions even in the inward man, mental and cordial ones in the mind, and in the heart. As,

First, The allowing himself to aim at greater measures of knowledge, than God had yet thought fit for him; whereas, he should have been content with a state in which God had set him in this respect, and have waited for his further manifestations to him, of what it was fit and convenient for him to know. It is plain, the temptation was specious unto the cognitive power of man; "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;" a very plausible temptation to a creature made capable of knowing much, and therefore, could not but have a desire (suitable to such a capacity) of knowing more than he yet did. He might easily apprehend that this his state, in this respect, was not so perfect, though it was not sinfully imperfect. He was guilty of no culpable and blameable ignorance before; but not endued with so much knowledge, but that he could easily apprehend it might grow. But it was to have grown in a regular way; partly by his own improvement of his reasoning power; and partly by a patient expectation of God's further manifestations and discoveries to him. But he complies with the temptation that thus is given to his cognitive faculty, catching at a sudden power of knowing, beyond what belonged to his compass, and was within his reach, by ordinary and allowable methods and means. And then there was no doubt,

Secondly, A sinful cherishing of sensitive appetite, which it belongs to a reasonable creature to have governed, and

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kept within limits. He was of a compound nature; intellectual, and sensible; and the sensitive nature is permitted to aspire and set up for the government, and it is yielded. A great violation of the law of his nature, and that order that God had settled, at first, of superiority and inferiority between his natural powers. The object, no doubt, was very tempting, fair to the eye, and it is likely might carry a fragrancy and odoriferousness with it to the smell; and, in conjunction with the other methods of temptation, this might signify much. But, in the mean time, the cherishing and indulging sensitive appetite against the law of the mind and rational nature, could not but be a very faulty commission in this respect.

And so, altogether comes to discover the difference between paradise and heaven, the paradisiacal state and the heavenly state. There was at first, in paradise, sinlessness; thus far, there was a *posse non peccare*, a *possibility of not sinning*; but in the heavenly state a *non posse peccare*, *an impossibility of sinning*. This difference was soon to be understood; that is, it is now to be collected from what did soon and early appear in view. Man was not made in a state of *comprehensor*, in that which was to be his ultimate and consummate state; but in a state of probation, made a probationer, in order to some further state, which upon his approving himself he was to be introduced into. And such a defectibility, a possibility of understanding things wrong, and choosing wrong, it was most suitable to the primitive state of man. According to all that we can apprehend of the wisdom of God, there must be a state of probation, before a state of retribution; before punishment or reward, there must be an obediential state, wherein a man shall, as he acquits himself, be capable of, or liable to, the one or to the other. Nothing could be more congruous unto the perfection of that Supreme Being who was the Author of our being, than, that this should be the state of things between him and man, at the first.

And now, before we pass from this head there are sundry instructive corollaries or inferences, that we may take up from it.

1. One we have mentioned already, (as it the last time came in our way,) that is, of what concernment it is to the female sex to take heed of comporting duly with, or lest they should violate or pervert the intent of, their being made what they are; and that they, coming into the conjugal estate, should be helpers to them with whom they are conjoined in that state. "Let us make for man a help meet for him;" we see how the design of that very institution was perverted and lost at first. A help! such a help as helped to destroy him, and ruin the world with him. It was not he that was deceived; (as the apostle to Timothy notes;) that is, not first deceived, but she, a woman that God had given him. And it is not without apparent need, but most agreeable to the ducture of Scripture in this case, that such a remark as this should be made; and that they whom it concerns, should receive instructions by it; for history is full of many dreadful instances, what tragedies, feminine subtleties, and pride, and lust, and envy, and vindictiveness, hath brought about in this wretched world. But,

2. We may further learn from the whole, that it is of equal concern to that sex to which God hath given the priority, that they keep up to the law of their state; which is to be leaders and guiders in the state of marriage when they come thereinto; and that they dwell with the other relative, according to knowledge; (as the apostle Peter's expression is, 1 Pet. iii. 7,) that they comport with the obligation that the original institution hath laid upon them as to this. For we are not to think that Adam could, therefore, be excused because Eve solicited him, having offended first; no more than, afterwards, Ahab was excused for being a wicked man above all others, (upon the matter there was none like him for wickedness,) because that Jezebel his wife stirred him up, as it is, 1 Kings xxi. 25. He was not, therefore, a more innocent person; no, he was wicked, even beyond parallel, though Jezebel his wife stirred him up; for Adam ought to have done the business of his station. He that is first in such a relation, and that hath the higher dignity, ought to comport with the obligation of the law of his state, and to exercise that more confirmed judgment which is supposed did belong to him. That he did not so, this made him guilty before the Supreme Judge. "Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife;" (Gen. iii. 17.) therefore, the malediction of the doom comes upon him, which hath been so generally transmitted as we know. Again,

3. We learn, hence, that the grace of God, not as it is eminent in himself, but as it is transient, doth issue forth, and is communicated and imparted here and there, doth admit of degrees; there may be more, or there may be less given forth, according to the mere pleasure of the Free-giver. A contemplation that tends highly and justly to exalt and magnify the grace of God, and the God of all grace, in the absoluteness of that liberty which maketh it what it is, that is, "grace." It could not be grace if it were not most free. And being so, then he might dispense more, or he might dispense less, as to him seemeth good. We are not to think there was nothing of grace, nothing of dignation, nothing of vouchsafement, in God's first treatment of Adam; that he would make him such a creature, that he would give him such endowments as he did, it was all of good pleasure. But so absolute liberty, as doth belong to grace, might issue forth in higher or in lower degrees, as should seem meet to the Free-giver; he might give so much of his own influence, as by which it was intrinsically possible (as was said before) not to have sinned; while he was under no obligation to give forth so much as to make it impossible to sin. Again,

4. We may further learn, hence, that by the same steps and degrees by which man did at first depart from God, God did depart from man; forsook not but being forsaken; so that the measure which he gave long after, was at first observed strictly; (as it still is every where in the world;) God is with you while you are with him: so it ever was, so it ever will be, between him and his intelligent creatures. As the creatures goes off from him, he righteously recedes and goes from the creature. Not, that on the part of favour he puts himself under any negative tie, that is not to be thought or imagined, but he is pleased to put himself under a positive one; that is, he hath put himself under no obligation to do more than according to this rule. For that he most frequently doth; and (in the state of apostacy) without it, who could be saved? None could, if God did not draw nigh to men; or took up a thought so to do. That rule is no negative tie upon God: but he hath been pleased to put himself under a positive tie; that is, such as are in the state of grace now, God will be with them while they are with him. As to Adam, who was in a state of grace of another kind at first, God would most certainly be with him as long as he was with God. And so it is still, with any that are in a state of grace, any that God takes to be his peculiar people: "I will be with you while you are with me;" he will never do less than that. He may, many times, do more, incomparably more, unspeakably more: he may prevent, and he beforehand; or he may follow men in their wanderings, even as he did Adam himself when he was wandered and gone off. But he would never go off from Adam first; he only did go off and depart from him by such steps as by which Adam did depart from God: and not being tied to the contrary, he might do so, and for wise and holy ends did. But again,

5. We may further learn, hence, that such a liberty of will as stands in a mere indifferency to good or evil, is no perfection unalterably and immutably belonging to the nature of man: nothing can be more apparent, such a liberty as that, is most unfit to be magnified and made such an idol of as it hath by many within the Christian world. For it is plain, and nothing can be plainer, that it did not belong as a perfection, immutably, to the nature of man. It was very suitable to that less perfect state in which man was created and made. But it is not to be found agreeing to it immutably, and without variation, at any time since, or ever will again. It just served for that state wherein he was at first made, such a liberty as stood with an indifferency to good and evil, (whether that good or evil should lie in doing or not doing, or whether it should lie in doing this or doing that,) it never belonged to man, but only in that first juncture, as being very suitable to the state in which man, as a probationer, was made and set at first. But it is not found to be with man ever

since, or is ever like to be again: for in the unregenerate state, there is a liberty only unto evil, so as "all the imaginations of men's hearts are only evil, and that continually." There is no liberty as to any spiritual good, saving good. And again, even the regenerate state, though there be a liberty to good through grace, yet it is very imperfect. And then, look to the consummate state of saints in glory, and there is only liberty to good; no liberty of sinning: nay, no liberty to good or evil, (consider the matter morally,) not at all. So that so magnified an idol of liberty of will, as if it were an inseparable perfection of the nature of man, was never known to agree to it, but in its first state: and no more was ever found belonging to it since, nor ever will be.

It may be said, it is only the moral good and evil, which is superadded to the nature of man, that alters the case with him: and that doth not change his nature; but that his nature will still be the same. And it is very true, his nature is the same that at first it was; otherwise, he could not be the same creature that did offend, and comes to be punished; or that shall, by grace, be made to comply with the terms of God's gracious covenant; and that shall afterwards come to be, through grace, rewarded. He would not be the same creature, if there were a change, quite, of his nature, and the essentials of his being: man would not be man, he would be another thing. But then, as moral good superadded hereunto, the one or the other of them may be without making his nature another thing. It cannot, therefore, be said, that this liberty of will is altogether inseparable from his nature. And if, in the heavenly state, (which is most plain and evident,) confirmation in good doth nothing spoil a man's liberty, then, the efficacy of his grace in his present state doth not spoil a man's liberty neither: nay, it doth much less; for if it should be supposed to do so, then a man would be less a man for being a glorified man; it would be a diminution to the dignity of man, and he would be the worse for going to heaven; because there, his liberty ceaseth, a liberty to good or evil. What an unimaginable thing is that, that it should be a depression, a diminution, to a man, to glorify him! that that should be a maim of his nature! But if the glory of heaven do not diminish a man, or be a maim to him, because it takes away the possibility of sinning in the heavenly state; then, the efficacy of grace, in the present state, is no diminution, nor blemish, nor maim to the nature of man now neither. Again,

6. We may further learn, hence, what cause we have to apprehend and dread the destructive designs of the devil. For what! do we apprehend that he is less an enemy to God, or less an enemy to man, now, than he was at first? Do you think the devil is grown kinder, more good-natured, less intent upon the destruction of souls, and less malicious against heaven? It is a most intolerable, most inexcusable thing, that we who pretend to believe the revelation of God about these things, and do hereby know the devil to have been a "murderer from the beginning," and may collect, that he is still going about, that he may destroy and devour as a roaring lion; I say, the Lord have mercy upon us, that notwithstanding we pretend to know and believe all this, we should live so secure as we do, without any thought of any such thing. And,

7. It may give us to understand the madness of self-confidence, that we should be so little afraid of sin; that we should be so little afraid of temptation; that we should be so apt to trust our own strength: and when that perfect state wherein Adam was made in paradise, was not enough to secure him, that we should live such independent lives, so seldom look up; that we have not the sense of that petition more deeply wrought into our souls, "that we may not be led into temptation." Divers other things there are that might be hinted, but I shall only add this, for the present,

8. We may further learn, that there is no need that there should be any new invented account of the first apostacy of man, so as therein to depart from the plainness and simplicity of the letter of that history, which God hath given us of it; there is no need of any such thing. The matter, as Scripture represents it, and as we have (though less perfectly) represented it from Scripture, as it lies, is rational and congruous enough; and such as we need not be ashamed to own and avow to the world. There are those that are so over-officious in these matters, as to trouble the world with their fine notions and accounts thereof, altogether alien from the letter of the history, that so they may (as is pretended) make things look a little more plausibly than the letter of history doth represent them; when indeed, if the matter be searched into, the design seems to be, not to make them look plausible, but ridiculous; and their business is not to expound Scripture, but to expose it, and the whole of our religion. But I shall say no more to them now neither.

[*] Preached March 10th, 1694.

LECTURE XXIII.*

So far we have gone in our course of treating, in some order, of the several heads of religion, as to enter upon this doctrine of the apostacy, which we proposed to consider and speak to from this text, *Sin entered into the world, and death by sin*, and therein to treat of these three general heads.

I. Of the fall of the first man.

II. Of the fallen state of man. And,

III. Of the consecution of the latter of these upon the former.

And for the First of these generals, the Fall of the First Man, we proposed, therein, to consider and speak to these four more special heads: I. The sin by which he fell; 2. The way how he fell into and by this sin; 3. The death that did ensue; and, 4. The dueness of that death upon this sin: and we have spoken to the two first of these.

3. We come now to the third, the death that did ensue as to this first man. And here the inquiry may be, whether that the death contained in the commination or threatening, be principally meant, or the death that is in other terms expressed in the consequent sentence? The first of these, you read Gen. ii. 17. and the latter you read, Gen. iii. from the 17th to the 19th ver. I say, whether the death expressed in the commination—"In the day that thou eatest thereof; thou shalt surely die," or that which is in other words expressed (not by the word death) in the sentence, "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return," be the same, yea or no; it is plain, that there is a real difference betwixt the commination (formally considered) that contains the one, and the sentence that expresses the other.

By the former, the commination or threatening, is established (as far as the comminatory sanction could go) that law or covenant of works, which was to concern all mankind. By the latter, to wit, the sentence, there was a particular application of this law, now transgressed, unto this particular case of transgressing Adam; as that is the proper business of a sentence, to apply the law according to which it must be understood to pass to the particular case of offenders, when they come to be judged by that law.

But it is here more distinctly to be considered, whether that the sentence do not carry with it some moderation as to the evil or penalty contained in the threatening of commination: in reference whereto, these particulars are worthy your consideration.

(I.) That the terms, wherein the one and the other are to be delivered, are not the same; for the terms of the commination, by which the law or covenant of works, that was to concern all mankind, is established, as by a solemn sanction, goes in these express terms: "In case thou eatest, thou shalt (as we read it) surely die:" thou shalt die the death, or, dying, thou shalt die. But the sentence hath not the word "death" in it; but it speaks of sundry miseries that should attend this life, and that should end, at length, in the dissolution of the compound, and especially, of the earthly part: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Having worn out a sad life amidst many sorrows here on earth, thou shalt go to the dust at last, as thou art dust. And,

(2.) It is to be considered, that these different terms are not apt, fully, to express the same thing: for whereas, it is said in the commination, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die the death," these are expressions very fitly accommodated to signify death in the utmost extent, in all the latitude of it, "thou shalt die the death:" all the fulness of death seems to be comprised therein without limitation. But in the sentence, when the great day comes to pass judgment upon the delinquents, (the law being now violated and broken,) you have not, in his application to either of the human offenders, any so terrible expressions as this, only they are doomed to manifest sorrows and miseries: and it is told to Adam, (in whom the woman must be comprehended as being taken out of the man,) that "dust they are, and unto dust they shall return;" therefore, there seems to be much less in the sentence than in the commination. And,

(3.) It is to be considered, that between these two, the Gospel did intervene; that is, between the commination and the sentence: the commination was given with the law to man yet innocent: when he was now fallen and had transgressed, then cometh the sentence; but it so comes as that the Gospel steps in between, being tacitly insinuated in reference to them, in what was directly said to the serpent; that which was a curse to him, was a blessing to them: "I will put enmity between seed and seed, between thy seed and the woman's seed; and that seed shall break thy head, though thou shalt bruise his heel." And this, the grace of God might, for ought we know, apply and bring home to the case of Adam, as it was applied to all the more special seed of the woman, that should come to be united with him who was most eminently the woman's seed. And therefore, it might very well be, that though all the fulness and horrors of death, taken in its utmost latitude and comprehension, were included in the commination, there might, in pronouncing the sentence upon Adam, be as great a mitigation, as the variation of the terms doth import.

But our inquiry here must be concerning the death contained in the commination, where we have the term of "death," double death, or dying the death, most expressly made use of. And it is by that, that the dying of this death is to be measured; to wit, by the commination, as it did concern Adam, and it must concern Adam's posterity. And admit that there was a real mitigation upon the intervening of the Gospel, and the exercise of the grace of God, applying it in Adam's case, yet we are still to consider the death that was contained in the commination, as due to Adam; due, to wit, in a former instance, before there could be a mitigation in a latter, in a following instance: for supposing there were then so quick and speedy a remission in so great part, yet, the penalty remitted must be due, before it could be remitted. It must be a debt, before it could be a remitted debt. And so concerning the death that was due, which offending Adam and his posterity became subject and liable to; I say, concerning that it is we have to inquire, as his dueness is measured by the commination; though indeed, we are not yet according to the series and order of discourse, to consider this death in the extensiveness of it to Adam's posterity; for that comes in, under the next general head, the fallen state of man; whereas, we have only now to consider the fall of the first man, and what did concern the case of Adam himself. And so, our inquiry is, What death it was that was threatened to him, upon the supposition that he should transgress? And of this matter, I shall give you an account in several particulars.

[1.] Most plain it is, that corporeal death was included in the meaning of the commination; for that he did actually incur. You read, in the short history that we have of him, that death, at length, finished his course. He lived so long, and he died. And it could not be, that he should incur that which was not due. And if it were due, it must be so upon the commination; as the dueness of any such punishment, upon any delinquent, is first measured by the law; the sentence is to proceed according to law; that is, so far as not to go beyond it: it is possible there may be mitigations, but the extent of the law cannot be exceeded. That is therefore plain, that corporeal death was included. And,

[2.] It is very evident too, that much more was included than corporeal death: for Adam did actually suffer more, (as is manifest) than mere corporeal death; as the labours, and hardships, and sorrows of life, and whatsoever else besides, about which we shall further inquire anon. And,

[3.] That more beyond corporeal death could not mean annihilation, or an extinction of his being. For,

First, We do not find that either he, or any one else, was ever annihilated, or that any creature ever was. No such thing appears, that either he, or any man, or any thing, was actually reduced to nothing. Nor again,

Secondly, Could death be a proper expression of annihilation, for annihilation is not adequately opposite to life. There is no adequate opposition between life and annihilation: if there were, then life and non-annihilation, or continuing such a thing in being, must be equivalent terms, if the other be adequately opposite terms. But it is plain, they are not so; because it is manifest, there are many things in being, and which are somewhat, and yet do not live. Therefore, to suppose that annihilation should be the thing meant by death, here, as is threatened to Adam, and so to offending man in him, is a dream without a pretence or ground, neither to be found, or any shadows of it, in Scripture; nor at all agreeing to the reason of the thing.

To reduce a thing to nothing, is no apt kind of punishment. There is no other thing, indeed, but a reasonable creature, that is capable of punishment, properly so called. But the reduction of any thing to nothing, is to put it absolutely out of any capacity of apprehending itself under divine displeasure; or, that it is self-fallen, under the animadversion of justice: and therefore, is a most unsuitable thing to be designed for the punishment of a reasonable creature, if it were to be called a creature. But the very notion is most unsuitable to it. And therefore,

[4.] There is no doubt, but spiritual death is included. "Thou shalt surely die," thou shalt die the death: here must be included spiritual death; the death of the soul: not naturally understood, but morally; for naturally, the soul is immortal, and can never die. But death, in reference to the soul, being taken morally, that is, as inclusive both of sin and misery, so the soul is liable to death, and became no doubt the subject of it, in this very case, antecedently to the restitution, and recovery, and the actual supervention of the divine grace. And when we say that death, in this sense, that is, the moral sense, doth include both sin and misery, it must do so, even by the same reason, by which life, in the moral sense, doth include both sanctity and felicity. And it is manifest, it doth include both.

But then, we must further know, that sin being included in this death, it must be in a two-fold notion, which we must understand in our minds concerning sin; that is, sin is to be considered, either as it is an evil against God; or it is to be considered, also, as an evil to ourselves. As an evil against God, so it could be a wrong to him, though it cannot be a hurt. And in that sense, or according to that notion, we are not to take sin here, for so we considered it under the former head. Very true it is, we must add,

[5.] That there is a necessary complication of sin and misery with one another, as there is of sanctity and felicity with one another: they are complicated, and cannot but be so, even in their own natures. But though they cannot be severed, they may be considered distinctly. Severed they cannot be, neither of these two pairs—neither sin and misery, nor holiness and blessedness. Neither of the pairs can be disjoined or severed: the love of God, that comprehends in it all our duty, and all our felicity, virtually, as being the great active principle, and the great fruitive; that principle, from whence I am to do all the good I do; and that principle by which I am to enjoy all the good that I enjoy, or am capable of enjoying. Both of these two things, summed up together in one virtual principle of love, can never be disjoined or severed, any more than a thing can be torn and severed from itself. And so the case is, as to the opposite pair; sin and misery, they can never be disjoined or severed, for they are virtually comprehended in one and the same principle; to wit, enmity to God; upon the account whereof, while it prevails, it is impossible either to obey God or enjoy him. These two, therefore, cannot but be inseparable. But while they are inseparable, yet they are distinct too. As to this latter pair, wherein we are now concerned, to wit, sin and misery; "To be carnally

minded is death." And as it is misery, and so a hurt and ruin to us, so it is to be considered here as it comes under the notion of the threatened death, and so doth make a part of the threatened penalty; that is, sin carrying a self-punitive malignancy in it. God having been once offended, he leaves the sinner (till grace doth work the reparation) under the self-punishment. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee." And so, in this sense it is that spiritual death must comprehend in that death contained in the commination: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die the death." It must comprehend spiritual death; and that spiritual death doth also comprehend in it several things, of which I shall give you a very brief account. As,

First, The retraction of God's Spirit. That it contains, as the first and most fundamental thing, in this threatened spiritual death, the retraction of God's Spirit. When Adam had abused, or not duly used, the power which his Creator gave him, of obeying and complying with the divine pleasure, the Spirit retired; and now, we must consider the difference (as hath been intimated before) between the spiritual influence which was vouchsafed to Adam, while he yet remained innocent, and that which is afforded to the regenerate, in their present state, to preserve that state; that is, as to Adam in innocence, that influence was enabling, but not determining. It was such as by which (as hath been told you) he had a possibility of not falling, but not an impossibility of falling; he had a possibility of standing, not an impossibility not to stand; that he had not that influence of the Spirit which he had, being suitable to his state of probation wherein he was made, that is now justly withheld, the Spirit retires, leaves him to himself.

This we do not say *gratis dictum*; for do but consider that plain text, (Gal. iii. 13.) "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us Gentiles, the promise of the Spirit (or the promised Spirit) through faith." If the remission of the curse do carry with it the conferring of the grace of the Spirit, then the curse, while it did continue, could not but include, carry in it, the privation and suspension of the Spirit. This was part of the curse upon apostate Adam, the loss of God's Spirit. For that which the grace of Christ and redemption by him, removing, inferred the communication of the Spirit, that must include the suspension and withholding of the Spirit. And,

Secondly, Hereupon, it could not but ensue, (which is a further thing contained in this spiritual death,) that the holy image of God must be erased, vanished; and, antecedently to the restitution, it could not but be so. And,

Thirdly, There must be included in this spiritual death, an aversion from God, the turning off of the apostate soul from God: that whereas it minded him before, with a complacential adoration, now it is quite alienated; here is no inclination in him towards God. The thing speaks itself; and it was apparent in Adam's case. As soon as he becomes guilty, he hides himself, vainly attempts to hide himself from the doom. That which was before the most grateful thing of all things, to have God nigh him, is now quite otherwise; he cannot endure that God should approach him. If it were possible to keep himself from God, (but that he vainly attempts,) his sense would be, "Let me have no more to do with God." And,

Fourthly, There must be further contained in it, hereupon, a cessation of that intercourse and communion that was between God and him. For the Spirit of God was retired on his part, and man was become averse and disaffected to God on his own part. The image of God that rendered him propense towards God, and meet for his communion, being vanished and gone, nothing can ensue more necessarily and certainly than a cessation of communion: God refuseth to converse with him, and he refuseth to converse with God. And,

Fifthly, There could not also but be included as consequent hereupon, regrets of conscience: not penitential but tormenting; not penitential as yet, or not penitential first; but first tormenting, before they could be penitential, while grace was not yet applied. How soon it might be we know not. It is very likely it might be very soon, by the account that short history gives us. But in the mean time, there could be only tormenting regrets of conscience: "Very lately I was an innocent creature; now I am a fallen creature: I then stood right in the acceptance and favour of God; now there is war between him and me." Penitential regrets, indeed, could not be a part of the penalty; they are a part and degree of the sinner's restoration and recovery; but the preceding tormenting regrets, they are included in the death. It is a deadly thing to be stung with the sense of the one's having offended him whom we can never propitiate to ourselves again. And hereupon, also,

Sixthly, Very black and gloomy thoughts must ensue; amazing thoughts! He that was in the eye of the innocent, unoffending soul, his highest delight, now he is all inwrapt in a cloud; or the mind is inwrapt in a cloud, that it cannot behold him; such a cloud as it can by no means penetrate. God could be conceived of under no other notion than that of an enemy and avenger. And,

Seventhly, There must be, hereupon, most astonishing fears; for it is obvious that a reasonable, intelligent mind would consider, "He who did so lately fetch me and all this creation out of nothing, is almighty, and it is impossible for me to fence against his power. That power that could create a world so easily, what can I do to protect myself against it, when it is set on work by just displeasure?" And then,

Eighthly. It must include despair: for the first covenant gave no hope of forgiveness, and therefore, gave no room or place for repentance till grace came, till an inspired Gospel came to be actually applied and brought home in this case. And therefore, there must be the epitome and sum of hell, in the state of this case; God offended and never to be reconciled, and against whose displeasure, armed with power, I can have no defence, no protection. All this more, all this surplusage, must be contained in this death; that is, spiritual death, the present death of the soul in the moral sense, in all this latitude and extensiveness of it. And then, further,

[6.] There is in this surplusage, too, these many external miseries of life that we find to be contained, also, in the very sentence; for though the sentence may contain less than the commination, yet it could not contain more. Therefore, all these being found in the sentence, must be in the commination too; all the external miseries of life that a delinquent creature could be liable to. And then, in the last place,

[7.] This death must carry in it, too, death eternal, as the sum of the penalty, or the consummation thereof, as the evil threatened and contained in that. And though many would speak very distinguishingly of this matter, and labour to do so when they can, yet let but plain Scripture be considered in the case, and you will see how it speaks. Do but follow this very context unto the shutting up of this chapter, and you will see what kind of reign it is that sin hath in the world. It now began its reign even in this first apostacy, or in the apostacy of the first man. Sin, we are told, it reigns unto death, verse 21. "As sin hath reigned unto death, so grace might reign through righteousness unto life." What life? "Unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." You see how these two stand in their antithesis, in their opposition to one another. Here is death set in opposition to eternal life. What death is that that stands in opposition to eternal life? Surely, it must be eternal death. So in the conclusion of the next chapter; "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." "The wages of sin is death." It is not said of this or that sin, some greater sin; but "The wages of sin," as sin, "is death." And what death the opposition shows us; it is put in opposition to eternal life; therefore, it must be eternal death that is the wages of sin, of sin as sin; and therefore, if Adam's transgression was sin, such a death must be the wages of it.

And that is the *third* particular, belonging to this first general head that we were to treat of, to wit, to show what the death was that did ensue, and was designed to ensue, by force of the divine law; or the commination added thereto, upon this first sin of the first man. Now,

4. The fourth of these heads is the dueness of this death upon this sin; and upon that I shall not insist, it being enough to touch it, things being obvious of themselves.

The heinousness of the sin, and the too naturalness of the punishment taken together, will evince the dueness of this event upon this sin.

(1.) Consider the heinousness of the sin. We have opened that unto you in many particulars formerly, to which I shall only add the consideration of these four circumstances. As that,

[1.] The first man should so soon transgress. But just now made; (upon the matter it being generally thought to be but a little time; most think the same day;) just now made by God, a reasonable, immortal creature, and so soon made by himself, a sinner, transgressor, and a rebel.

[2.] Consider that he sinned with open eyes, having, before, no cloud upon his mind, but all things in clear light before him.

[3.] And while his nature was antecedently untainted, no vicious inclination in him. And,

[4.] That there was nothing which could be matter of complaint in his state, his condition so entirely good, and yet did not please him. Think, I say, of the heinousness of the sin, in these and other respects, and then the incurred death cannot be thought unproportionable, or undue, though you take it in the extent that hath been mentioned. But,

(2.) Consider, too, the con-naturalness of the punishment to the sin, this death to his transgression. He turns from God to the creature; God turns away (in just displeasure, upon being offended) from him. Hence, all these things ensue and follow of themselves. And there was no preventing it by any ordinary methods, unless God would annihilate him, unless he would throw his creature back again into nothing. But that became not the wisdom and greatness of God to do. It had been too much trifling to raise his creature into being, and put him under such an equitable and so righteous a law, and, he offending, presently to nullify his own work. That had not been becoming God, not suitable to the divine wisdom and greatness.

And therefore, now to give some brief notes of *Use* upon the two last mentioned heads.

1. You may learn, hence, that the act of eating the forbidden fruit, is not to be considered too abstractly, as the first sin of man; that is the thing wherein the most do foolishly impose upon themselves, and so speak and think diminishingly of this whole matter. What! was it so great a matter? was it so great a thing to eat the fruit of a tree that was forbidden? This, abstractly considered, was not the first sin. Not abstractly considered; take it comprehensively, and take it in all that was belonging to it, and it was the first sin. But the act of eating alone, considered by itself, was not the first; there were a great many mental evils (as we have shown in opening the sin) which did precede the act of eating, and that altogether make it a most horrid wickedness; distrust of the truth of God's word, and trusting a creature that he might easily apprehend to be an apostate, fallen creature, by opposing the word of God; trusting him against him that made him, and gave him breath. He trusted against God, one, he knew not whom; but he might suppose it one that was not in his original integrity, that was fallen and gone off from God; otherwise he could never have counselled against God. There was great ingratitude for goodness shown and exhibited; for mercy received: mercy, indeed, as yet it could not properly be called, he not being as yet a miserable creature, or in a miserable state. There was opposing his will to the supreme will. There was exalting the sensitive nature against the rational, against the law of the mind: and so confounding the order of things, in that part of God's creation; to wit, himself breaking the order and dependance of the faculties in reference to one another, with many more.

2. And you may further learn, hence, how nearly sin and misery, sin and death, do border upon one another. They are things very near to each other. These two spheres of life and death; that lightsome, glorious sphere, all full of vitality, pleasure, and bliss, and that sphere of darkness and death, that comprehended every thing of horror in it, you see how nearly they do touch, and how nearly they did touch; so that we might suppose but even a moment between one and the other. This moment, an innocent creature, standing in delight, and favour, and acceptance; and the next moment, an accomplice of hell, associated with apostate spirits against God. How nearly do the spheres of light, and life, and bliss; and of death, and horror, and hell, touch! How near did they touch one another! How immediate was the *transitus*, the passage from the one to the other! And,

3. You see, not only the nearness in point of time, but the natural connexion that is between sin and misery; that the one doth in so great a measure involve the other, as I have shown they do. Sin carries death in it; "To be carnally minded is death." And we may further see,

4. What occasion we should take hence, to admire the grace of the Gospel, that it should so soon intervene; and when it so doth, here is place for repentance by the constitution of a new covenant, the evangelical one, which the covenant and law of works could not give upon any terms; for it could represent God no otherwise than an unappeasable enemy. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them."

LECTURE XXIV.*

Rom. v. 12.

And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

FROM the former part of this scripture, we have insisted upon the fall of the first man; "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" his fall, by sin, into death. And so you have seen the entrance of both these, sin and death, into the world, in the fall of that one man. Now we come in the next place:

II. To speak, from the latter words, of the fallen state of man, generally considered. And you see the ground of that, too, lies as fully in the latter words of the text, that "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." I read the words according to our translation, though some would have them to be otherwise read, and the letter of the text doth admit of another reading; instead of "for that" they read "in whom," all have sinned. But of that there will be more occasion to speak hereafter.

In the mean while we are to consider the fallen state of men in general, according as these expressions do represent and hold forth to us. And they do represent his state to be a state of sin and death; these two complicated with one another. "Death hath passed upon all, for that all have sinned." And, according to that reading of the words, and the nature of the thing, that which is here last mentioned, requires to be considered first, though these are complicated with one another; sin and death run into one another, are most inseparably conjunct; yet, they are all some way distinct. And so far as they do admit of being distinguished, we shall consider and speak to them distinctly. And so,

1. Of the sinful state of men in general. Now, in speaking to this, as the letter of the text leads us, we shall —consider the nature, and—the universality, chiefly, of this sin that is thus spread through the world. We are,

(1.) To consider the nature of it. The general nature of sin is plainly expressed, 1 John iii. 4. "Sin is the transgression of the law." And therefore, that we may show you more distinctly the nature of that sin which hath so generally diffused itself among men, (as we shall afterwards show,) it will be needful to inquire, What it is that we must take for the measure of such sin? inasmuch as the following words here do plainly tell us, in the latter part of the 13th verse, that "sin is not imputed where there is no law:" wherever any sin is, some law must be supposed to be. And what is that law, against which it can be understood that men might so generally sin?

You have heard, by what law the first sin of man was to be measured: that was partly a positive law, a particu-

* Preached March 17th, 1694.

lar precept, a law made by a spiritual revelation to him: but much more principally a natural law, which was violated in the violation of that positive one, inasmuch as that positive law had its immediate root and foundation in the natural one: nothing being more apparently natural, than that the reasonable creature ought to comply with the will of his Maker being once known. But though it were very apparent what law that first sin did transgress, yet it is not so apparent what law it is that the common sin of mankind doth now transgress. And so that needs to be inquired into.

In the general, it may be said, that the law that doth obtain in the world now, and from age to age, doth consist of two parts, as the law at first did which was given to Adam, even in his innocency; to wit, that it is partly natural, and partly by superadded revelation. So it was at first, so it is still; but with great and remarkable difference. That whereas, at first, the natural law was full, perfect, entire, most comprehensive, and large, even in the discernible impressions of it; and the superadded law by special revelation narrow, lying in a very little compass (one particular interdict only with its penalty establishing it) that we read or are informed of. But now the case is very diverse and opposite: that is, the natural is diminished, not in the obligation of it, but in the impression, the discernible or discerned impression, that frame in the heart or mind of man broken into fragments, many parts very obscure and illegible, and divers, with many of the inhabitants of this earth, (as it were,) lost through inadvertency, and their not reflecting upon themselves so as to discern and find out the sculpture of what remains engraven upon their hearts. And the revealed law, (where that obtains,) that is so much the more large, and comprehensive, and full, and perfect, so as to discover every false way; and every true and right way; one and the same rule being the same measure, *recti et obliqui*, of that which is right and that which is wrong too.

And the exigency of the case did require that it should be so: that is, by how much the more that the natural law was erased, broken into fragments and parcels, and many of them (as to their discernibleness) lost with many; so much the more requisite was it, that the superadded law (which was to be by revelation) should be entire and complete, that there should be another impression of that original law, that should collect and gather up all that was lost of it, and rendered it obscure, from the prevailing corruption of the world. And so thus, in short, did these two cases stand in opposition to one another. At first, the natural law was most entire and full, and large and comprehensive; and the revealed law narrow, and lying within a very little compass. But now the natural law, to wit, in the discernibleness of its impression, is greatly diminished; and the law that is by revelation so much the more large, comprehensive, entire, and full.

At first, that revealed law after the apostacy, must, for several successive ages, be easily transmitted (by reason of the great longevity that remained before and after the flood) from hand to hand by a certain tradition. But afterwards, God provided that it should be collected and gathered up into sacred records, though not all written at once, but successively, according as supreme wisdom had determined concerning the different states in the future church, in point of light. And so, what we have of it now, lies entirely and fully in the sacred volumes, of which we have discoursed to you largely heretofore; but that doth actually obtain but in a small part of the world in comparison; but a very small part. That it doth obtain no further, is owing to the wickedness of the world itself, which obstructs the diffusion of it. God, in his holy wisdom, not obtruding, not by extraordinary means and methods making way for it, as it were easy for him to do, if it were so agreeable to the counsel of his own wisdom, the results whereof we now see, in fact; and the reasons whereof may be better understood in the appointed season. But we are not to think this wicked world innocent in its having no more of revealed light than it hath; that light shines in darkness, but the darkness doth not comprehend it, strives against it, otherwise there must have been a diffusion, even of most evangelical knowledge many an age ago. Men fence against it and keep it off, and will not let it spread; and God doth not exert the greatness of his power as yet (for ends and purposes best known to himself) for the gaining of a victory over that contumacious darkness.

Yet, in the mean time, where there are no notices of that revealed law, or that law by revelation, we are not to think that the world is without law: do but observe to this purpose what follows the text, "Until the law (verse 13.) sin was in the world;" until the law. Until what law? It is certain, here, "law" must be taken in a restrained and limited sense, otherwise the expressions in the following part of that verse would contradict those in the former: "Sin is not imputed where there is no law:" then there could have been no such thing as sin, from Adam to Moses, if there had been no law at all in all that interval. When therefore it is said, "Until the law sin was in the world;" that is, until the written law, or until the law that was given on Mount Sinai; it is not the law simply, but respectively only, that is there meant; not in an absolute and general, but in a particular and limited sense.

It is true, there was a time (that time that is there mentioned, from Adam to Moses) when there was no such law as came afterwards to be in the time of Moses. Not that there was then no law at all; for then there could be no sin; but it is expressly told us, that "sin was in the world" for all that time; and therefore, there was some law; there was a law by which men might be reckoned sinners: for there was such a law according to which they were punished, as the following words show; "Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses;" there was such a law as made men still liable to death; and therefore, such a law against which men might still sin, even in the long interval from Adam to Moses. "Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression."

I pray consider that expression, "that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." How was that? That is, that did not sin against a particular and express law, with its annexed sanction, as Adam did. Some would understand that of infants; and, it is true, it must include them. But I see no cause at all for such a restriction; but most manifestly the contrary: for infants were not the only ones that did die; death reigned over all, in that interval from Adam to Moses; and so, the sin must be as general as the death. But herein was the great dissimilitude, that, whereas Adam did sin against a framed, express precept, with its annexed penalty in the commination, the generality of men from Adam to Moses did not so sin; but they sinned against such a law as they had; that is, the relics and fragments of the law of nature, first impressed upon the heart of man, or put into his very nature.

This is agreeable to what we have in this same epistle, chap. ii. 12. "As many as have sinned without the law," (that is, without a written law,) "shall perish without law;" to wit, without that written law. Some law or other they were still under; they must be supposed to sin against some law; otherwise they could perish by none. But a written law they had not. "As they that are under the law, (as it there follows,) they are to be judged by the law." And afterwards, in the 14th and 15th verses of the same chapter; "When the Gentiles who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, they are a law unto themselves, which show the works of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts in the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." So we read it, and I think very defectively, "accusing and excusing:" it is in the Greek, "by turns;" not "one another;" but, "sometimes accusing, and sometimes excusing." Not as if their thoughts did accuse one another, or excuse one another; but the expression may admit to be read, I say, "sometimes accusing, and sometimes excusing," according to the discernible evidence of the case.

And so you may now easily collect, how, in this general sinful state of the apostate world, men do every where transgress against a law. Those that have a written law, or might more easily have it, they sin against that; to wit, the revelation that God hath given of his own mind concerning their duty, and in order to their felicity. They that have it, or might more easily have it, I say, sin against it. They that have it not, or from whom it lies more remote,

they yet sin against the dictates of the law which they have in themselves, or which they are to themselves. They that have no other law, being a law to themselves, they having some measures, though broken and imperfect ones, of right and wrong in their own minds and natural consciences.

And now, the measure being stated by which this general sinfulness of the world is to be estimated, the natural law, and, generally, that law that is by revelation in the word of God, so far as it doth obtain, or might more easily obtain; it will be our further business, in the next place, to open to you the sinfulness of men in reference to this law, of which you have this account. And it is, in the general, the sinfulness of their inclination, or of their nature, that we are obliged, by the design of our present subject, to consider and speak to: "For that all have sinned."

Here is not, it is true, actual sin: that the expression doth literally signify. But that must be understood as supposing a sinful nature, which is more principally to be considered; or it is to be considered in the first place; that which is the *peccatum peccans*, as it is significantly enough called by some. That evil heart, that nature, not as it is nature, but as it is depraved, it is now transmitted every where from age to age, and from generation to generation, among men: the fountain from whence all those streams of wickedness flow that have deluged the world, and made a raging ocean, "the waves whereof continually cast forth mire and dirt," as the prophet expresseth it, Isa. lvii. 20. That nature of man, which as it is degenerate and corrupt, is become a seminary, a seed-plot of all kinds of wickedness.

This is for *peccatum originale originatum*; as we formerly discoursed to you of the *peccatum originale originans*, as some do choose to express those things. It is, in the general, a sinful inclination which lies opposite to the law of God, natural or revealed: for we are not to suppose that the love of God doth only provide against sinful acts, or sinful omissions; no, this is the very peculiar excellency of the divine government, in contradistinction to any other; that it determines first, what men ought to be, and then, consequently and dependently, what they ought to do. Human laws and goveroments do not respect the former of these, otherwise than consequentially. They only take notice of actions, and those, external ones too. But internal inclinations they make little provision about, and do not otherwise take notice of (as indeed the nature of the thing doth not admit they should) but by consequence, as a man's habit and internal inclination may be collected and gathered from the series and course of his actions. But it is quite contrary as to the divine government, and the laws that belong thereunto; that is, that God having an immediate inspection into the minds of men, and his government laying its first obligation there, its laws do first provide what men should be, and then, consequentially, what they should do. They should be so and so; be holy, be righteous; and then, all is to correspond hereunto.

Therefore, we must underctand that an evil ioclination, or a depraved or corrupted nature, is that which doth first violate the law of God, lies first against it: and so, that it is not infelicity only, to be ill inclined, but it is sin—sin in the highest and most eminent sense thereof. It is the habitual frame and bent of the soul, that the law of God doth in the first place direct; and then, it doth direct that men should act correspondently thereunto. So that now that empoisoned nature of man, the malignity of the heart and soul, or inner man, is that which makes the first and principal breach upon the law of God, which is in its own nature holy, just, and good: whatsoever there is of this law left, it is all holy, just, and good, even as it doth obtain to be called "the law of nature." What is truly such, is holy, just, and good, still, as much as ever it was, and as expressive of the mind of God.

Now concerniog that corrupt inclioation in the minds and souls of men, that doth first violate the law, it is to be understood agreeably to the law itself. The law itself is partly preceptive and partly prohibitive. It consists of these two parts. And these two things are accordingly to be considered in the corrupted state of human nature: to wit, first, that there is a disinclination to all that is truly good; and, secondly, that there is a propensity, a perverse inclination, to all that is sinful and wicked.

[1.] The first of these, that is, which is signified by the want of original righteousness, that rectitude which did first belong to the nature of man, the absence, and not the mere absence, but the want and privation, of that, is the first thing we have to consider in the corruption of man's nature; that now it wants the inclination that there ought to be in it according to its primitive state, and the first obligation of the divine law upon man. This is the loss of God's image; not by his taking it away, which we must carefully abstain from thinking even so much as one thought to that purpose; that is, that God took away his image from man, to wit, his image in respect whereof man was to resemble him in point of holiness; that would be to devolve the sinfulness of man's nature upon God himself. But God did righteously, upon the first apostacy, withhold his Spirit, whereupon his image, being a created thing, and not capable of self-subsistence, must vanish; and so, as that in effect to erase the holy image of God out of his soul. He (man) hath expunged and blotted it out; provoked the Spirit of God to retire; cherished and indulged corrupt inclinations against it, and in opposition to it. And, God finally still retiring, that image falleth and vanisheth; not being withdrawn by him, (speaking of the effect,) but being expelled; not withdrawn, but drawn away; not by violence (as it were) obliterated out of the soul. That which was, indeed, God's workmanship at first, is defaced by our wicked workmanship: the work of our hands hath so far destroyed the work of his.

There is, therefore, in the corrupt nature of man, a disinclination to all that which it ought to be inclined to; that is, both the objects and acts that it ought to be inclined to. We are principally to consider the objects; the acts will of course most obviously ensue. The objects wherewith man was to have to do, were God himself, his fellow-creatures, (those especially of his own order,) and himself.

There was, upon God's having made man, the direct relation first between Creator and creature; and then, hereupon, (there being divers such of the same order,) there follows, of course, a collateral relation between one such creature and another. In the first respect, man being a reasonable creature by his nature, a creature and a reasonable one, he comes under obligation to God most directly; and then, collaterally, (from God still,) he comes to be under obligation to his fellow-creatures of his own order; and inasmuch as he is capable of bearing a relation to himself, so he comes to owe duty to himself also.

To God in the first place. There is an aversion from God, to be considered in this fallen state of man, not of one single faculty of the soul alone, but even of the whole soul, and of all the faculties of it. But according to the natural order wherein they lie towards one another, the whole soul is gone off from God; mind, and will, and affections, and executive powers, altogether turned off from God. So is the account given of the fallen state of man in that 14th and 53d Psalm, from which texts, and from others, you have so many quotations taken in the 3d chapter of his epistle to the Romans, all summed in this, that "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." This, then, is the great thing that, in the first place, is held forth in this text; to wit, that the state of man is a state of apostacy and recess from God; he hath withdrawn himself, and stands now in his whole soul in a quite averse posture from God, towards whom he was originally and naturally most propense.

But then, whereas God, the Object of this aversion, is to be considered two ways, as our Supreme and Sovereign Lord, and as our Supreme and Sovereign Good, the soul of man is averse to him under both these notions; refuseth to take him as his Supreme Lord, or for his Supreme Good; that is, it will neither obey him, nor be happy in him. And whereas, under this two-fold notion, we are to consider God the object of this aversion, it is under the former of these notions that we are to consider it now, while we are speaking of the sinful state of man, or the sin of man. It will be under the latter of these notions that we are to consider it, when we speak of the death that hath passed over all men, as that whereunto it doth more peculiarly and properly belong.

But consider God as the Supreme Lord, and the sinfulness of man's nature, in this respect, lies in this that he is,

under this notion, averse to, and turned off from, him, and declines obedience to him. And the whole is, under this notion, averse; that is, the mind is averse, not only doth not know him, but declines knowing him; labours under not a mere nescience of God, but an affected and chosen ignorance; desires not to know him. So is the representation made to us of the opposite state and condition of man in those mentioned Psalms, the 53d, most fully, 2, 3 verses; that is, "That God looking down from heaven upon the children of men to see who would inquire, who would seek after God, he finds them all gone back;" (the Hebrew word signifies a perverse retrocision, waywardly gone back;) no, here is no inclination to inquire after God; according to that, Job xxi. 14. "They say unto God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," of thy concerns, and of thy methods. Those ways of intercourse that thou wouldst have to be between thee and us, these ways of thine we do not desire to know; we do not desire there should be any intermeddling, any intercourse between thee and us. And according to that Rom. i. 28. "They liked not to retain God in their knowledge." They did not only or barely not know him, but disliked to know, refused to know him. "Through deceit they refused to know me," saith the Lord, Jer. ix. 6. The same corrupt nature remaining, even under a professed relation to him, with the generality of that wicked people.

And so, in this respect, the state of man is a state of darkness; to wit, of affected darkness. "There is no darkness of shadow of death where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves." It speaks the inclination of men's minds that they would fain hide themselves in some darkness or shadow of death if they could; but they can find none, none that hides them from him, though they can easily so inwrap themselves in darkness, as not to behold him. Their darkness is a fence against themselves; but not against him. They make it so thick that they cannot penetrate it; but he most easily can. They would fain have such a darkness as that he might not see them; but there is none, they cannot find any; "There is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves." But, in the mean time, that speaks the inclinations of their minds; "Oh! that we could be hid from God, and that there might be nothing at all to do between him and us." "Ye were darkness," (here is the common state of the unconverted, unregenerate world,) Ephes. v. 8. "Ye were darkness," not merely in the dark, but darkness itself. "The light that is in them is darkness," as our Saviour speaks, Mat. vi. 23. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." This, I say, speaks an aversion of mind from God; they care not to know him; they desire not to know him.

And hereupon it becomes so unaccustomed a thing to think of him. Thence is the character of a wicked, unregenerate man, "A forgetter of God." It is his usual paraphrase in Scripture, "A wicked man;" and that lies, as such, under doom, is under such a character as this, one that is "a forgetter of God;" "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God," Psalm ix. And in opposition hereunto, a regenerate man, a holy man, a renewed man, is characterized by one that remembers God, that thinks of God; "A book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name." Whereas, it is said of the wicked man, "God is not in all his thoughts." Compare these two places together, Psalm x. 4. Mal. iii. 16. A good man is such a one as thinks much of the name of God, hath God's name impressed on his mind; so as every actual thought of God, it is only reading the letters that do (as it were) compose that name, and that are impressed on his own mind; to wit, his actual thinking of God. Now a book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and thought of his name. As if it had been said; "Well, is there so much kindness towards me yet to be found in this revolted world, that they will remember me? I will have a book of remembrance for them; there shall be remembrance for remembrance. Do they think of me? I will think of them too; have they kind thoughts of me? I will have much kinder thoughts of them; I will book it up. Every kind thought that is taken up concerning me, in this general apostacy and revoltedness of the world from me, I will set it down, I will have a book of remembrance for every one that has any thoughts of me, in this forlorn state of things."

And then, as this aversion hath place in the minds of men, it hath so, more formally, in their wills; they will not have this Lord to be their God; he shall not reign over them; they refuse his empire, throw off the reins; "Let us cast away his cords, and break his bands off from us." So, in the apostate world, do the princes and people combine together against the divine government; and those that lead others consent to be led themselves in this case. "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us;" (Psalm ii.) those of God, and of his Anointed, the Redeemer, the Messiah, as that word signifies.

And then, likewise, there is a consequent averse or transverse posture in the affections of the soul, whereof, indeed, the will is the seat and subject; desires, fears, hopes, delights, anger, sorrow, all transversed in a quite contrary course and being to what they should be; and so it is proportionably towards men, so far as men are concerned with men; and so it is towards ourselves. We should have discoursed of these distinctly, but cannot now.

It is, in the mean time, strange, (and let us consider that with ourselves,) that this being so apparently the common case, it should be so little considered; that men take such complacency in themselves; that it comes so seldom into the thoughts of any to think, "I either am, or have been, an apostate creature, quite turned off from God." It is to be admired, that men's own thoughts are not painful to them upon this account. Certain it is, that I, and the rest of the world, have been all in an apostacy from God. This hath been my state; it is my present state. I am either an apostate creature, or a returned creature: either still apostate, or renewed towards him, altered in my habitual frame and inclination. How is it with me? am I one of the *reduces?* one that the mighty hand and power of the Redeemer (he that died, "the just for the unjust to bring us to God") hath reduced and fetched back to God.

Or is this the case of none of us? That whereas we were all off from God, in an averse posture to him, are we not striving against the design of the merciful Redeemer, who is still striving to bring us back, and who strove herein unto blood, resisting against the wicked inclinations of degenerate, apostate men? "He resisted to blood striving against sin." That is the thing plainly implied in that of the apostle to the Hebrews, chap. xii. 4. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin;" whereas, he had been, immediately before, bespeaking them to "run with patience the race that was set before them, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of the faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." But why did he endure that cross and shame which we find him to have despised? The following words show, he had been striving against sin. But that is none of your case; it was his. He suffered that cross, and fell under all that opprobrium, ignominy, and shame, in this striving against sin even unto blood; that sin by which men are held off from God, continued in a state of apostacy from him.

Now let us bethink ourselves what the Son of God hath been striving unto blood against; to wit, "sin;" which hath turned us off from God, and kept us off from God: and are we striving against him, will not be reduced, will not be brought back? Strangers to God we have been, and so we will be still; go from day to day, from morning to night, and will have no concern with God; we will not pray to him; we will not think of his name; we will entertain no converse with him.

But the further *Use* is referred to be spoken to, after a further explication of the sinful state of mankind.

LECTURE XXV.*

IT hath been showed, that the ill inclination of men towards God, effects the whole soul. The mind knows him

* Preached March 24th 1694.

not, thinks not of him, is habitually forgetful of him; and, more formally, this aversion is in the will: that doth not choose the Lord for his God; wills him not, even where a people do profess his name. If yet the work of renovation have not taken place, his own Israel will have none of him: "Israel," saith God, "would have none of me." Corrupt nature is the same, even in such a people, whatsoever the external profession, and garb, and appearance, and show, may be. A corrupt heart is still the same thing, indisposed, disaffected to God; "alienated from the life of God." And conscience is stupified, doth not do its office, or, sometimes, is outrageous and over-does it, the affections and passions are all as so many furies; original rectitude being gone, and the soul destitute of that holy image which originally it bore.

But there is, also, an evil inclination towards fellow-creatures of their own order. That love is wanting which is "the fulfilling of the law;" and that sums up all that rectitude of heart and soul towards fellow-creatures of our own order. All is summed up in this; "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and therefore is love the fulfilling of the law.

And then, also, towards ourselves. Our love to our neighbour is to be measured by that to ourselves; as that great fundamental precept which our Saviour calls the "second," next to that; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy might; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" in opposition whereunto, stands that aversion to God, in the first part. And as to the second great commandment, it is a measured thing; and the measure is love to ourselves.

But now, in this state of apostacy, men want even that, they do not love themselves: to wit, if they did know themselves; and that they do not affect, to gain a true knowledge of themselves; and therefore, do not love themselves, their more noble self, their more excellent self. The soul, which is the man, that they do not love; they care not for it; care not how they prostitute it; how they enslave, how they hazard it from day to day. Yea, and,

[2.] In all these respects, there is not only an aversion, an ill inclination, to that which is good, a want of original righteousness, or of the holy image of God as such; but there is, likewise, propensions to all manner of evil; there are violent propensions towards forbidden objects. God being forsaken and left, and the soul of man being conscious to itself that it is not enough for itself, it must adjoin itself to somewhat else, when it is off from God: and so, by the same steps by which it recedes from him, it turns to the creature, to this vain and impure world, which is God's rival and competitor for the minds and hearts of men.

But here, it is to be considered, that when the soul is off from God, and therefore must seek for somewhat else to supply his room, it finds itself under a necessity to make a false and adscititious deity, a divided thing, as if it were under a secret consciousness that no one thing could fill up the room of God. And therefore, the new deity is divided between these two; to wit, between this world and a man's own self; that is, his meaner or baser self, his ignoble self. And all of you know (if you recollect a little) what God is to be to us, namely, our Sovereign Lord, our Sovereign Good; him we are to serve, and him we are to enjoy.

The soul being off from him, and being now to fill up his room as it can, it doth (as it can) attempt to fill it up by these two things—self and the world: self supplies the room of God, as he is to be served by us; and the world supplies the room of God, as God is to be enjoyed by us. And here are the propensions, now, of the apostate soul, continning so, and yet unrenewed towards self, as the only one to be served, obeyed, and pleased, instead of serving, obeying, and pleasing God. And this is one of the greatest idols that is set up in the apostate world, even—a man's self.

But then remember it is his baser, meaner, and more ignoble self; when it is become the vilest thing that it was possible a reasonable, immortal soul could become; when it is besotted, carnalized, brutified; when it is, in short, become a brute, when it would be a god. While it was itself, it must abhor any such thought, with the highest measures and greatest pitch of indignation. But now it is brutified into the vilest and most degenerate thing, become even as the beast that perish, now it must be a god. "I will have none to serve but this self."

But then, finding (as that is obvious to every one) that it hath not its own good in its own hand, (as, alas! what have I in me to make me happier; and though that is more to be considered under the other head of death, yet there is sin in it too, as it underwent a direct interdict,) it finds it must forage, it must go abroad; it finds it hath not enough in itself to satisfy it. And therefore, now in this kind, and under this notion, the world is the other idol that is to supply the room of God. "Love not the world, nor the things of the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." That shows, however, in the unrenewed state, the propensions of the soul are, by love, carried towards this vain and wretched world. All the good that it designs for itself it seeks from it. And so, these are the two idols that are set up in this apostate world against the living and true God; self, as the god that is to be served, and the world, as the god that is to be enjoyed.

But then, we must observe, by the way, that as there is towards these two substituted objects a violent propension; so it is forbidden only under that notion wherein it is excessive. It is no unlawful thing for a man to love himself, and even his meaner self; but to love himself with that love wherewith he should love God, that is sinful. It is no unlawful thing to love inferior creatures, things of this world, which God made all very good; but to love them with that love wherewith we should love God, as our supreme and highest good, herein stands the sinfulness of this propension. These are to be in the room of God; not to serve ourselves under God, but above him and against him; not to enjoy and please ourselves in this world, in subserviency and obedience to God, but in direct opposition.

And so there is, upon this account, not only no inclination towards God, (which was considered under the former head,) but there is direct enmity. Not only, in this case, doth the soul not love him with all the heart, mind, and might; but it hates him. And this is the character of the apostate world. Look to that Rom. i. 28. "They liked not to retain God in their knowledge." And a little lower, they are called "God-haters." The word signifies, they hate him with a stygian hatred, they hate him as one would hate hell; that is the signification of the word "God-haters," which sums up the malignity of this corrupted nature of man, that is made out in so many particulars in all that latter part of that 1st chapter to the Romans.

So likewise, in reference to their fellow-creatures, when this love is wanting, which they should bear to them, and which is the radical principle that comprehends in it all duty of that kind, (that is, doth virtually comprehend it all,) the want of that due disposition is supplied by a contrary principle; that is, by one contrary thereunto, which is that of "being hateful and hating one another," mentioned Romans i. 30, 31. and Titus iii. 3. And it is, too, upon this account, that "self" is one of the two substituted idols, as you have heard. And because the interest of this "self" interferes, and there are now as many deities to be served as there are men; hereupon it is, that jealousy works into hatred. And it partly proceeds, too, from the narrowness and minuteness of this world, which is the other idol that men set up in the room and stead of God. This world is too little for men; (it cannot but be so;) too little for immortal souls. It is a thing in its own nature unsuitable to them; but yet, men being deceived, think to have their all out of it: and so they are all pulling and tearing one from another, every one for himself, to make his own portion out of this world as great and considerable as he can, still imagining he shall repair his loss of God out of this world. And all being under the power of this delusion, they do not consider, that "there is a lie in their right hand;" that they are seeking that in this world which it can never afford them.

But hereupon, instead of that love which should be "the fulfilling of the law" of the second table, spoken of

Rom. xiii. there is that enmity, that mutual hatred of one another, that hath for so many ages made this world an *aceldama*, a field of blood; and comprehends and sums up all those lusts, from whence come wars and fightings among men: among men, I say, who lay under the obligation of so equal a law, and so kind a law of love, which so directly tended to the welfare of mankind; and so would have made this world a heaven upon earth, every one loving one another as himself, and seeking another's good as his own: whereas, all make it now their business to tear this world out of one another's hands as much as they can, and to pluck it in pieces, and so to worry and destroy one another for it.

And in reference to men themselves too. In the room of a right disposition towards themselves, there are substituted wicked propensions: they do affect themselves wickedly, sinfully, illegally, against the direction of the divine rule: and this is the root of all the insincerity that is to be found any where in the world, that is, that the superior powers do not govern the inferior, do rebel and disobey. The mind and judgment that should govern the will, and its determinations, and purposes, this way and that, neglect their office; so that in the mind, now, is blindness; not generally a not seeing, but refusing to see, a willing blindness; that which the Scriptures express by "blindness of heart." There is error, self-deception, about the most important and most practical matters; the calling of good, evil, and evil, good. There is somnolency and drowsy slumber upon the minds of men; a supine negligence, that they cannot consider nor care how things go within them, or what is uppermost.

Then again, there is, in the inferior soul, the imaginations, the appetites, the affections or passions, a continual mutiny and disorder, a rebellion against what doth remain of the law in the mind; so that what remains is very imperfect, much obscured, shattered, and broken: yet, there is a continual mutiny and insurrection against these relics of that law. And this, indeed, constitutes a man, within himself, the continual seat of a war; he is in a state of war with himself: for he hath some light in his mind; but there are these mutinous and rebellious appetitions and passions working in continual opposition thereunto; so that he cannot raze out those notions he hath in his mind: "This I should do, and that I should do so;" nor will his inferior faculties be induced to any kind of compliance therewith. It is not such a war as in the regenerate, to wit, in one and the same faculty, and especially in the heart and will, where there is an imperfect inclination to that which is good, but yet victorious. But the war lies here, between that which should be the governing faculty, the mind, the practical judgment, the conscience, and the mutinous dispositions of a rebellious heart, that are entire, and in their full strength, in the unregenerate; whereas, in the regenerate, they are subdued and brought under; not quite expelled, but yet conquered.

Thus, we have the true state of the case, how it is with men with respect to the sinfulness of their nature, which lies spread through all the several powers and faculties of the soul, and shows itself with reference to the several objects wherewith men can be any way concerned. But we are to consider,

(2.) The universality of this revolt; that is, that all men are in it, they are all gone back; all men, and the all of every man. All men are in it. And it is, therefore, on the whole matter, not strange that this corruption of the nature of man should be represented with such rhetoric as we find in divers passages of Scripture: as in the 14th and 53d Psalms, and Romans iii. where you have divers passages quoted out of the Old Testament, especially out of the book of Psalms, of that same import, to signify, how general a consent there is in this matter of man's rebellion; that as men have agreed herein with infernal spirits, so they do generally agree with one another: "Come, let us cast off his cords, and throw away his bands from off us." All, from the highest to the lowest, agree in such a design as this.

If you would take a brief view of the state of the case, that 3d of the Romans will give it you very shortly and succinctly, and yet, withal, very copiously and fully. The apostle tells us, that he had proved (as indeed he had done in the 1st and 2nd chapters of that epistle) that "Jews and Gentiles were under sin." Those two distributing terms, Jew and Gentile, taking up the whole of the world, and was then the known distribution of the world of mankind. And he had not only said it, but proved it, that they were all under sin; even the very Jews themselves, as well as Gentiles, though a select people, a people that had the oracles of God, the peculiar tokens of his presence and favour, (where grace was not victorious,) yet, as great an enemy appears among them against God, as in the pagan world and nations of the earth.

And if you look into the 1st Romans, and the latter end, you see, that men having expelled and driven God out of their minds and thoughts, as not liking to retain him in their knowledge, what becomes of them hereupon? Why, God gives them up, leaves them to themselves: they become now to be under the dominion and power of exorbitant and unruly affections and passions. "God gave them up to vile affections; and as they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them over to a reprobate mind;" and hereupon, they are filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters; and (that which is central of all the rest, which was noted before) haters of God; despiteful, proud, boasters, inventers of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.

Here is a representation of the apostate world, of that wickedness which all proceeds from the corrupt fountain which every man hath in himself. And then, in the 3rd chapter, he goes on to add, from the Psalmist: "There is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no not one." "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," both as it was to be their end, and as it was to be their transforming pattern. Thus it is, as to all men.

And so, the all of every man; which divers expressions in that 3d Romans do most emphatically represent and hold forth to us. "Their throats is an open sepulchre, with their mouths they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips: their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known." Even the several parts of the outward man are made use of, as so many engines and machines for wickedness. And for the inward man, the source and fountain of it, we are elsewhere told, that "all the imaginations of the thoughts of the heart are only evil; and continually" so; Gen. vi. 5. So early had that universal contagion spread itself among *all men*, and through the *all of every man*.

And hence it is that they are so frequently spoken of (even notwithstanding a profession of God's own name, if they remain in the unrenewed state) as "a generation of vipers, and as a seed of evil doers;" yea, (as was said before,) as the seed of the devil, that old serpent. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye will do." And hence it is, that all wickedness do proceed, which we have any where seen perpetrated and done, upon the stage of this world. So that when the renewing work comes to take place, there is need that it should pervade, should pass through, the whole man. "The God of peace sanctify you throughout in your whole spirit, soul, and body." You see, every part of man needs a sanctifying influence; and therefore, all is corrupt and impure.

Before we go on, let us make somewhat of present useful reflection to ourselves. And consider, Is it not, hereupon, wonderful that there should be among men so general a self-complacency? How strange is it, that this being the state of the case with men in this world, there should be among them, I say, so general a self-complacency! that they all should seem to be so well pleased with themselves! look with a kind eye upon themselves! that it doth not come into men's minds to think, antecedently to their recovery, to their regeneration, "I am a fallen creature, an apostate creature, one separate and cut off from God, by mine own revolt; one fallen in with the devil against God;

that am in league with him to do his will, and to disobey *him* who gave me breath; who is the Father of my spirit, and the author of my whole being."

Are not these true thoughts that a man might think of himself, being yet unregenerate, unrenewed? And is it not strange, when they are things that lie so much in view, they yet should so seldom come into men's minds? Can we think it possible, if they did come oftener, that they should be so well pleased with themselves? Yet this they are generally prone to be. It is the character of the wicked man, that is, one that continues yet in a state of apostacy, that "he flatters himself in his own eyes, (Psal. xxxvi. 2.) until his iniquity be found to be hateful." He still looks upon himself with a self-flattering eye. If there be any thing which, abstractly considered, may be looked upon as amiable, this is singly looked upon: but it is seldom, in the mean time, thought, but generally forgot, what is a man's state.

O! how few are there that cry out, "What is the state of my case? If I have strength, if I have wit, if I have any thing of comeliness, I can presently strut and think, What a fine creature am I! But, in the mean time, that I am a rebel against heaven; I am an accomplice with the devil against God; I am an apostate from my rightful, sovereign Lord." This would surely turn all men's self-complacency into horror and consternation, that a man would be afraid of himself, and wish he could run away from himself; and wonder how the earth comes to bear such a creature. O! this monster of an apostate soul that is off from God, and without a disposition or inclination to return to him, carries so much of horror and prodigy with it, that it is strange all are not filled with fright and amazement, till they find some manifest proof of a regenerating, transforming grace upon their spirits: it is strange that, till then, they are not a continual terror to themselves.

LECTURE XXVI.*

But that which doth yet give us a fuller and more dreadful account of this state of the case, is, besides the consideration we are to have what man is in himself, and in his faculties and powers, precisely considered, which do make up the sinfulness of his state, and which might be mentioned under this head, is,

(3.) The aggravations of man's sinfulness.

[1.] We are to bethink ourselves, therefore, with whom there is a coincidency, and into what society and combination he falls, in this his corrupt state: and so, take the state of the case briefly and summarily thus; that he is, in all this, an accomplice with those apostate, disloyal, infernal spirits, that had revolted, and were fallen from God before: an amazing consideration! In all this, he is in confederation and combination with devils, with the powers of hell and darkness, against his rightful and sovereign Lord. And so doth the Scripture most expressly speak in divers places; so far as that the devil comes thereupon to be styled, "The god of this world," who "hath blinded the minds of them which believe not," 2 Cor. iv. 4.

And O! that we could consider this, according to what it doth import and carry in it of horror and detestableness. It is a thing that we do not yet believe, that a world inhabited by reasonable creatures, God's own offspring, are universally fallen into a confederacy and combination with another god, with an enemy-god, an adversary-god, against the living and true God. Men have changed their God. And what a fearful choice have they made! fallen into a league with those wicked creatures that were weary of his government before, and that were, thereupon, thrown down into an abyss of darkness, and bound up in the chains thereof, unto the judgment of the great day. But both the Scripture say this in vain? or hath it not a meaning, when it calls the devil, "The god of this world?" O! with what amazement should it strike our hearts, to think that so it is; that the whole order of creatures is gone off from God, and fallen into a confederacy with the devil and his angels, against their rightful, sovereign Lord.

It is not a thing spoken (as it were) once on the bye; but the Scripture doth industriously represent this as the settled state of the case with men. Look to the Ephes. ii. 1. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins:—wherein we all had our conversation in times past, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." And under whose regimen is this? Why, "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that *now* worketh in the children of disobedience." They live subject to the government of that prince: and that is a long-continued *now*, referring to the whole time and state of the apostacy. It speaks the fixed state of this case, that as long as men do remain dead in trespasses and sins, as it is in the 1st verse of that chapter; and all the while that that death lies upon the world, which, as we are told in the text, "hath passed upon all;" all that time, during that long-continued *now*, all their actions, all their motions, all their designs, are "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." They are led captive by him at his will, 2 Tim. ii. 26. He hath his will of them. "The lusts of your father ye will do," John viii. 44. That "will" is not a sign of the tense, but a distinct word, "you will;" you will to do the lusts of your father; you have a proneness, a propension of will, or it is grateful to your will, to do the lusts of your father: the devil is become even a father and a god to this apostate world: they are the serpent's seed; he hath (as it were) impregnated them with all the principles of malignity and disloyalty, against their rightful, sovereign Lord.

Methinks, this should make us afraid of ourselves, and even of one another, till there be some appearance of a change in the state of our case. We look upon it as a very terrible thing, to have the body of a man possessed with a devil; but how much more dreadful is it, to have his soul under that possession; acted upon by Satan in all his designs through the whole of his course, led captive by the devil at his will! Waiting if God will give repentance; that is represented as the great business of the Gospel ministry, and of a Gospel minister, as in 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. to wait with patience, and endeavour with gentleness, that they may be brought to repentance, and enabled to recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are led captive by him at his will. See what his part then is, as a god over this world; he makes them do what he will, he hath his will upon them. "My will is, that you forget God; and they do; that you may live in a continual contempt of God; and so they do: that you mind nothing but the affairs of this world, and how to please and gratify your flesh and sense, mind nothing but what shall, or shall not, profit your external part, or insnare and hurt you, and undo you; and they do just as he would have them do, throughout the whole of their course. So that, in this state of the apostacy, they are in a continual confederation as accomplices with devils, those apostate spirits, that were gone off from God before.

[2.] It is a further aggravating consideration of this sinfulness, that the understandings of men do all this while remain with them; they have their understandings yet about them. Man is still an intelligent creature. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty hath given him understanding," (Job xxxii. 8.) to distinguish him from a brute. It is very true, indeed, if sin had totally unmanned men, it had brought them into an utter incapacity of sinning any more. If the leading faculty were destroyed quite, he were then no more capable of sin than a log. But this makes the matter beyond all imagination wonderful, that a man should have his understanding remaining, and become such a monster as this; and yet apprehend nothing of it: an understanding that he can use about other matters; he can discourse, reason, project, lay designs, form methods in reference to all things that are of an inferior concernment. We find that in that great transformation of that haughty prince Nebuchadnezzar, (whom God turned to graze among the wild beasts of the field,) a transformation, not of his body, (as we have no reason to think that it was,) but of his mind; and we

* Preached April 7th, 1694.

are told, that at the end of so much time, his understanding returned to him. But in this common case men's understandings do remain with them all the while they are under this monstrous transformation; that is, while a reasonable, immortal spirit disaffects his Maker, the Father of spirits; joins itself with clods, the base things of this earth; yea, joins itself to devils, apostate, impure spirits, and falls into confederacy with them against God: and yet men are not aware of their case.

And this makes that transformation which sin hath wrought in the very nature of man, in the soul of man, his reasonable soul, so horrid a thing. If he had been transformed into any other bodily shape, (though never so monstrous,) it had been incomparably a less monstrous translation than this: to make a reasonable, understanding creature, engage in a contest against him that gave him breath, the Author and Parent of his life and being, nothing could be a more monstrous thing. If all these metamorphoses which poets feign, had generally taken place and effect every where among men; if they had been transformed into trunks of trees and the like, (as hath been feigned concerning divers,) it had been a less strange, a less fearful transformation than this; a reasonable, intelligent, immortal spirit, turned against his Maker, and intent upon razing out every thing of his holy image out of itself.

Now this understanding still remaining, the persisting in a way and course of sin, is a running counter to that light and knowledge which every man hath, in a degree, remaining in him, though it is but a dubious kind of twilight; light that doth rather admit to be called "darkness." "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!" that is, it is ineffectual to answer the proper purposes of a directive, practical light; yet what doth remain thereof, doth serve most highly to aggravate the wickedness of them in whom it is.

This is that which is more than intimated, when men are required to show themselves men; as it is in Isaiah xlvi. 8. You have the proper principles of humanity yet about you, and the great distinguishing principle of reason, that exalts you above inferior creatures; you have it in you, but you do not use it; you are men, but you do not show it: "Show yourselves men, ye transgressors." And again, Psalm liii. 4. "Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?" It is implied that they have it, but they will not use it; the interrogation is a more forcible affirmation: men have knowledge in them, yet transgress; and so keep up a contest and a war against God, and against themselves. And again,

[3.] It is a further most aggravating consideration, that as, in general, they have understanding about them, and still remaining with them, they have also some natural notions of God, all the while they are thus at war with him, and in this defiance against him. Still they have the natural impress of God upon their minds that they cannot raze out; so that they do not fight against him altogether in the dark; "Light shines in the midst of that darkness which comprehends it not." That light by which God reveals himself, not only round about them, but in them; there is that which might be known of God in every man, as in that Rom. i. 19. That which might be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath revealed it to them.

And there is hereupon, such a thing as natural religion; for while they have a notion of God in their minds, it is not as of a being irrelative to them, but it is as an Object of worship; an object of trust, so as that commonly men, in their last necessities, untaught and uninstructed, do pray to him. As I remember that ancient, (Minutius Fœlix,) in opposition to paganism, asserting the oneness of the Deity, and that God whom the Christians serve, speaks thus: "You yourselves (saith he) when any thing ails you and are in distress, do not you use to lift up your eyes and hands to heaven? *vulgi isti naturalis est sermo*, this is as a natural kind of prayer, which your own nature doth even constrain you to, whether you will or no: there is a natural susceptibleness of religion. Men are instructed by nature itself, to dread a superior Being, and to place some kind of dependance upon it, and to have some kind of expectation from it, of help and relief in their necessities and distresses, and yet remain, all this while, in an apostacy, in war and rebellion.

This makes this monster of an apostate creature to be so much the more monstrous, beyond comparison; even beyond all that can be thought. The case being thus with them, that such sentiments of God as they have about them, they cannot erase, and yet, cannot obey; they can never get them out of them, nor comply with them: this is their case. So monstrous a thing is an unregenerate creature that remains yet in the apostate state. They carry about a notion of God with them in their minds wherever they go; and so have not only reason left them, but somewhat of religion; which some take to be a more distinguishing property in man than reason itself, it being less disputable whether it do peculiarly belong to man: to inferior creatures it manifestly doth not; and in great measure it is evident that it doth belong to all men. For those that have been the most diligent inquirers into the state of the world, in former ages, among the pagans themselves, have taken notice that it was even an impossible thing to hear of a man any where that had not somewhat of religion or some sense of a Deity in him. As, I remember, Plutarch saith; "It is not impossible to find cities without walls, without government, without coin;" but to find a city without religion, he thought to be altogether impossible. "And it were (saith he) as easy a thing to build a city without a foundation, without ground to set it on, as to form a society of men without religion." This was the apprehension of such knowing men as he and others, even among heathens themselves, in former times.

And this is the general matter of God's controversy with the world, when we are told in that Rom. i. 18. that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." What that truth is, we are to collect from what follows in the 19th ver. before mentioned; for that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath revealed it to them. He hath so inwrought his name, his own idea, into the spirits of men, that there it remains as an indelible impress, not quite to be razed out. And therefore they who have been more avowed atheists, have been so, more in endeavour than in fact; endeavouring to extinguish those notions of God out of their minds, which yet they could never rid themselves of. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." He hath said it in his heart; not with his mouth, not in his mind, but in his heart; which implies it rather a wish than an assertion. And so, the Hebrew text doth lead us to understand: for there is not the copula to make it an assertion: The fool hath said in his heart, "no God;" not that there is none, that is not in the text, but—"no God;" let there be none; or, O! that there were none; I wish there were none. It is rather a wish than an assertion with these fools. And these fools, they are the generality of the apostate world.

But that men should carry that notion in their minds about them, up and down the world; have (as it were) God so much in view, (if they will but look into themselves and commune with their own minds,) and yet should be continually warring and fighting against him, when they could not but at the same time conceive him to be God, but conceive him too, to be the very Author of their life and being; "He in whom (as the apostle quotes a heathen poet saying) they live and move and have their being;" and another saying, "Whose offspring they are;" his very offspring; and yet in a continual, general rebellion against him; this aggravates the matter beyond all measure. And again,

[4.] They have in them also the practical principles of right and wrong, in reference to one another. In this state of apostacy from God, they have, I say, practical principles; that is, principles that ought to govern practice, telling them what is right, and what is wrong, in reference to one another, as well as in reference to God; and yet there is nothing else but aversion, hating of one another, and designing against one another, and every one labouring to tear the world in pieces, that they may grasp into their own hands what yet lies in other men's. They do so far know what is right and wrong in reference to one another, that they can no sooner hear of the general measures of right and wrong among them, but their minds do inwardly consent to the reasonableness of such a constitution. As that great maxim of our Saviour; "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye so to them," as

being that which sums up the law and the prophets. A saying so taken, even among heathens themselves, that it is known, that the emperor Alexander Severus caused it to be inscribed on the gates of his palace, as if it were the most suitable, agreeable thing to the minds of men, and to the necessities of human society, that could be thought. And,

[5.] Yet further, they have all this while a most connatural desire of their own felicity. This is a further aggravation, that every man naturally desires to be happy, when yet he is continually engaged in a way and course of sin, against his sovereign, rightful Lord, which so directly tends to involve him in all misery; and so, is doing perpetual violence to himself, and even to the law of his own nature; for there cannot be a more radical principle in any man, or even in the nature of man, generally considered, than to desire to be happy. "Who will show us any good?" is the common vogue, according to that of the Psalmist in the 4th Psalm. All the world is full of craving desires after felicity, after a happy state, and yet running on in a continued course directly counter hereunto; fighting every where against the desire of their own hearts.

[6.] It is a further aggravating consideration too, that, in all this time, they have some apprehension with them generally of a future state in another world, the soul of man having a secret consciousness of its own immortality inwrought into it. So that (as you have heard) mere irreligion hath been a thing very rarely to be known in the world, and never but as men have pretended and endeavoured to erase and root out the principles of religion out of their own souls; but without total effect. So there hath been no sort of religion in the world that hath not proceeded upon the supposition of a future immortality. Not only Christians and Jews, but Mahometans and the grosser pagans, have all agreed in this one sentiment, that "there is a life to come," and a state after this. And yet, they are continually taking the way that takes hold of hell, and leads down to the chambers of death; though that sentiment is not more natural, more common, that there is another state, another world, a life to come, than the sentiment is, of the connexion between goodness and blessedness, and between wickedness and misery. They have generally apprehended so, as the apostle, in the close of the first chapter of this epistle, (referring to the Gentile world,) saith; "They did know the righteous judgment of God, and that they who did those things were worthy of death, and yet, not only did the same, but took pleasure in them." They did apprehend a connexion between wickedness and death, between sin and misery, and yet run the course which corrupt inclination carried them unto, without resistance. And again,

[7.] There is in them all this while a self-reflecting power, by which they are capable of taking knowledge of themselves, of looking in upon their own minds. "The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching into the innermost parts of the belly;" that is, searchiog into his most inward *penetralia*, into all the secret recesses of itself, even to the very centre. It is such a kind of light as can invert its beams, and turn them inward upon itself; being therein a nobler sort of eye than this external bodily one is. For this exterior bodily eye of ours that sees all other things, cannot see itself; but the mind, the intellectual eye, cannot only see other things, but can see itself too, is capable of contemplating itself. That conscience that is in man, that natural conscience, it is not only the conservatory of natural principles, the seat of them that show what men are to do, and what they are not to do, (as was told you before, under the former head,) but it is also a self-reflecting principle, that which is called properly and more strictly, συνειδησις, by which a person is conscious to himself what he is, and what he doth; what his dispositions are, and what the series and tendency of his actions are.

And yet, this principle is rarely used; rarely, in reflecting upon actions, and in reflecting upon their states; scarcely ever in reflecting upon their actions, very rarely; so that, among a people professing the name of God, he may long hearken, and hear none saying, What have I done? "I hearkened and heard; no man spake aright; no man said, What have I done?" Jer. viii. 6. Though they have that self-reflective principle in them, by which they are capable of taking cognizance of their own actions, they never do it, never allow themselves to say, What have I done? in a long tract of time. But every following day passeth as former days have done; and seldom, from morning till night, is there a self-reflecting thought.

Indeed, where natural light hath been improved, eve among some heathens, they tell us it should be otherwise · *Vir bonus et sapiens; a good, a wise man*, will not go to bed at night, will not compose himself to rest, before he hath revolved with himself the actions of the day. So we are taught by a heathen instructor. But, though there have been some such instances, they are very rare, of those that allow themselves to reflect upon their actions; but much more rare, of those that reflect upon their state, that bethink themselves, or say, "In what state am I? How do things stand between God and me, whose creature I am, and under whose government I live?" And yet again,

[8.] It doth more highly aggravate all this wickedness, to consider, how inflexible men are, and averse to compliance with any means and methods for their reduction, whether they that are without the Gospel, or they that live under it. For those that are without it, that have no Gospel, no verbal Gospel, among them, such an aversion to all the methods of recovery doth very sufficiently appear: for, otherwise, if that were not the common temper of the world, even where the Gospel is not yet come, it would soon be among them, and nothing could have hindered it from spreading over all the world many ages ago, but an indisposition and opposition in the minds and spirits of men to the progress and diffusion of it. For there hath been no nation where the Gospel was, but they that were hitherto destitute of the Gospel, some or other of them, must have lain next to that nation where the Gospel was, so that it was impossible for them not to have heard the sound thereof; and, if there were not an indisposition in them, even in the minds of men, and a contrariety and disaffection, they would, at least, have been inquisitive; they would have examined—"Is such a declaration from God, or is it not?" which, if they had, it carries with it such undeniable characters of divinity, that inquiring minds could not long have been ignorant; but prejudice and disaffection have kept off the inquiry; which, if it had taken effect in one country, it would soon have reached another, and so another, till the world had been leavened with the Gospel long ago. Therefore, such aversion and disaffection to the Gospel appears even where there hath no Gospel yet come.

Besides that, even there, though there be no verbal Gospel, there is somewhat of a real one, that God shows himself placable, or no implacable, no inflexible, no irreconcileable enemy. He doth not carry it with men generally as one seeking their destruction, leaves not himself without witness, in that he doth good, and gives them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness, as in Acts xiv. 17. So the apostle speaks of God, in reference to his dispensations towards the pagan world; and he saith it unto pagans; "He makes the sun to shine on the just and on the unjust:" and requires of us, upon that very ground, to love our enemies, because he shows so very much philanthropy and good will towards men. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father, which is in heaven;" (Matt. v. 44, 45.) that you may appear such, that you may represent herein a God-like nature; for God doth so, making his goodness diffuse and spread itself through the world: so that "the whole earth is full of his goodness;" though it be so full of men's wickedness. And, Romans ii. 4. "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" As we have copiously shown from that text, that there is a manifest, discernible leadingness and ducture in the continued exercise of God's goodness, and particularly of his patience and forbearance, unto repentance.

But where the Gospel is, there this disaffection and prejudice doth most apparently and conspicuously show itself. Not only were the pagans of old accused to be "God-haters," (Rom. i. 30.) where he speaks of the Gentile world, but the very Jews too, where God's light did

shine, and where his grace and saving design did appear, and were most expressly testified; even of them our Saviour saith, "Ye have both seen and hated me and my Father," John v. 24. And hence came these complaints, even where the Gospel is: "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought and in vain," Isaiah xlix. 4. And, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Isaiah liii. 1. quoted by the apostle, Rom. x. 16. "Have they all obeyed the Gospel?" —No; far from that; for Isaiah saith, "Who hath believed our report?" And in the close of that chapter, "All the day long have I spread forth my hands to a gainsaying and rebellious people."

The experienced unsuccessfulness of the Gospel, which we generally so much see cause to complain of and bemoan, speaks this continually. What representations have we of God, in Christ, intent upon a reconciling design! But how few are won! How few hearts touched! So that men are gone off from God, and there they affect to abide; they have chosen distance from God, and seem resolved to continue it, say we to them what we will or can. We speak to them in the name of the Lord, but they will not hear; and for the sake of their own souls, but they regard it not. And, which is still,

[9.] More aggravating, that is, it is a further addition to the load of aggravations, and adds unspeakably to it; men are all this while certain they must die; they are in no doubt concerning that; they know the things they are fallen in with, in opposition to God, can be enjoyed by them but a little while; they see not only that the fashion of this world passeth away, but they find themselves passing away; changes are upon them. It is a thing concerning which they can be in no doubt; they have no instance of any one that escaped death. And yet here is generally no consideration what shall become of them hereafter. They find they are not happy here, they are still crying and seeking to be happy, but obtain it not; and yet they have no concern to be happy hereafter; though they know they must be gone, and their places on earth will, in a little while, know them no more. They have continual instances before their eyes, of other wicked ones like themselves driven away in their wickedness, torn up by the roots, plucked from their dwelling-place and gone; they know it must shortly be so with them too; and yet have chosen a state of distance from God; they never look after him, till (it may be) their last vain dying breath is uttered in some such unreasonable desire as this, "Lord, have mercy upon me:" when they can live and sin no longer, then they cry to God for mercy.

These are all most fearful aggravations of this common wickedness that prevails in every one; and serves further to represent to us the sinfulness of man in his fallen state. I should next come to speak of the death that hereupon passeth over all men, as we have spoken of death as it befell that one, as it stood in the commination, and as it stood in the sentence. It requiring a further, and somewhat a distinct consideration, with reference to the universality of man, whose case doth (though not substantially, yet in very great and important circumstances) differ from him who was the first transgressor. But before I come to that, some use of this representation which hath been made of the sinfulness of man's state, should intervene.

LECTURE XXVII.*

AND there are many things which it is obvious to us to take notice of, for our instruction and use, from hence. As,

I. We may see, hereupon, how altered a creature man is; how little he is himself; or what that one man, by whom sin and death entered, at first was. You have lately heard in what estate God did at first create man: "So God made man after his own image," a God-like creature. Such a thing was man at first; thence called the son of God. "Who was the son of Seth, who was the son of Adam, who was the son of God," Luke iii. 38. A glorious pedigree run up backward, in its ascent, as high as heaven: "who was the son of God." And it is not supposable that God should raise up a son immediately from himself, unlike himself. Therefore, it was very suitable unto the state of things, that it should be so expressly told us, "God made man in his own image," which you have heard was to be understood not only of his natural image, as man hath a spirit in him that was naturally, essentially vital, intelligent, free, and immortal; but it was also, and more principally, to be understood of the moral image, comprehending both sanctity and felicity, and, according to which, man was made a happy and a holy creature, pure and blessed.

How unlike himself is he now become! Let none of us think that this concerns not us. Are we not also of the posterity of Adam, degenerate creatures, fallen from the original excellency of our own nature, and especially in respect of that conformity and inclination which were in our nature towards God, our great and common Parent? If any of you had a son that was newly gone forth from you, and you met him by and by, and he doth not know you; you tell him, "I am your father;" he replies, "No, it is no such thing, you are no father of mine;" would it not cut your heart? Who would not look upon it as a deplorable case? This is the common case; men are sunk into such deep ignorance and oblivion of God, the Author of their being, that now they retain no knowledge, no remembrance of him, no conformity to him, no inclination toward their ancient Original.

It is an amazing thing that it should be so! It is much more amazing that it should be so little considered, that this earth should be peopled with such inhabitants, every one having in him (that is, all that are of human race) an intelligent, immortal spirit, a mind capable of thought, capable of just thought, capable of duty, and capable of blessedness. But so miserably sunk into carnality and earthliness, that this body in which it should but dwell, therein it rots, therein it putrifies. And that which (as hath been said) was designed to be its mansion, is become its dormitory, and its grave. A living soul carnalized! A most horrid creature! And, as it is said, Adam was at first a living soul; ("so God breathed into him the breath of life, (that pure, divine, and heavenly breath) and he became a living soul,") so, then to have asked the question, "What is man?" must have been to receive the answer, "He is a living soul; he is all soul, and that soul all life." But now is this living soul buried in flesh, a lost thing to all the true, and great, and noble ends and purposes of that life which was at first given it.

It is true, indeed, that this is a thing much less than what is said of the second Adam, in that 1 Cor. xv. 45. "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the second man Adam was a quickening spirit." This latter is a great deal more. A living soul signified him to live himself; but a quickening spirit signifies a power to make others live. That, the first Adam could not do: the more excellent kind of life which he had, (for there was a complication of lives in the first creation of this man,) he could not lose: but he could not give. He could not lose it from himself; but he could never have given it by any power or immediate efficiency of his own to another. Here, the second Adam, the constitution of the second Adam, was far above that of the first, in that he could quicken others; a quickening spirit, not only quickened passively, but quickened actively, such a spirit as could give spirit, and diffuse life.

But take this matter as it was—"The first man Adam was a living soul," with all that life in him in all the kinds thereof, which was the highest and most noble that could belong to a reasonable, intelligent soul: such a one he was; and now we have this living soul entombed. It is naturally a living soul, and naturally immortal still; but as unapt to serve and answer the proper purposes of that life which was at first given it, as if it were quite dead, dead towards God. It was principally alive towards him: that holy life which did belong to Adam's soul at first, could have none but God as its highest and noblest term: upon him it was terminated. Therefore, where there is a

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restitution and recovery, this is the immediate effect, persons do "become dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ," Rom. vi. 11. And here is now a living soul alive to sin, but dead towards God; dead towards the prime and most glorious Object; and dead to all the noble operations, for which it was originally and first made a living soul. And this is the state of man: like the living God in this respect he was; but now, towards him he is become a dead thing, putrid, and noisome, and offensive, even as a carcass. He is dead in that respect, wherein a soul may be said to be dead, which cannot be in a natural sense, as you have heard, and as is plain in itself; but only in a moral sense. In that sense wherein it can be said to be dead, in that sense it must be the most fearful alteration which hath passed upon it, that could be passed upon a creature: that is, it was alive towards God; and is become dead towards him, cut off from him by a self-separation. Therein lies the sinfulness of this death that we are considering, and which belongs to the present subject we have in hand to consider. That God hath hereupon retired from him; that is the punitive notion of this death. But the sinful notion of it lies in its severing, retiring, and withdrawing itself from God; plucking itself away from him, as it hath done in the apostacy; and as it every where doth as long as the state of apostacy is continued in.

Now it is become a most unlike creature to God, and most unlike unto its original self, that could be thought. It was a knowing, intelligent creature; and especially knowing God. This image of God, that was at first impressed upon it, stood in knowledge; now it is become ignorant of God, "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in it, and the blindness of the heart," Ephes. iv. 18. It was like him in knowledge; but now it is become most stupidly ignorant of what it is most concerned in. Is this God-like? It was a holy, pure creature; but now delighting to wallow in the impurest sensualities. Is this like God? It was a most orderly, regular creature; but now all confusion; its powers engaged in war against one another; the whole frame of man disorganized, the whole dependance of will and affections upon, what should lead them, an intelligent mind and judgment; but these shattered all to pieces. The whole frame is discomposed. Is this like the God of order? O! how unlike to God is man now become! And therein unlike himself, and unlike what he at first was. But,

2. We may further learn hence, that this world cannot, hereupon, but lie under divine displeasure. And it is most just and righteous that it should do so. This the law gives sufficient intimation of, wheresoever it comes: "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God," Romans iii. 19. Impleadable at law, that is the import of the word there used, to signify God's having a just and legal controversy with all this world. He hath, in point of law, what to be said against it, which can never be answered; which admits of no apology, no defence. But again,

3. We may yet further learn, hence, that the sinfulness which hath spread itself among men in this world, cannot but be in a true sense natural, such as hath poisoned the very nature of man with an enmity and malignity against God; for you see it is universal. Nothing can be supposed to be common, but what must be understood to have some common cause, a cause that is common. But the text tells us, that "all have sinned." And whereas, (as was noted to you formerly,) it is said in the 3d chapter of this epistle, ver. 9. "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles to be all under sin;" (which Jews and Gentiles did divide the world;) and "There is none righteous, no not one," as the same apostle quotes from Psalm the 14th and 53d. This plainly speaks this contagion to have infected the nature of man, and to run with his propagated nature every where, from age to age, and from generation to generation.

It appears to be so, for that when, upon the general defection and revolt of this world from God, he was pleased yet, (in order to his asserting and preserving some interest therein,) to select to himself one people, one people to be peculiar to him; all the endearing favours of Providence, all the peculiar manifestations of light from heaven, all the intercourse that, in a more external way, God vouchsafed to hold with this people, (unless he did here and there powerfully transform their hearts,) still left them evidently as full of malignity, and of the enmity of wickedness against God, as if they had been the merest strangers to him in all the world. And, therefore, is he sometimes represented as calling heaven and earth as astonished witnesses against them: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me," Isaiah i. 2. "My people would not hearken to my voice, Israel would have none of me," Psalm lxxxi. 11. "He came to his own, but they received him not," John i. 11. What can this signify, but a deep depravedness of nature? Sin hath inwrought itself even into the very nature of man.

We have the same instances multiplied in the days of the Gospel. God hath shown more peculiar favours, vouchsafed distinguishing privileges of the highest external kind, unto sundry nations into which the light of the Gospel hath spread itself. But where is there greater wickedness in all the world, than in the Christian world? where greater than in reformed Christendom, as it is called? Where is there more avowed atheism? where is there higher insolency against heaven? more direct and open rebellion, tearing all the constitutions and laws, which they themselves pretend to own for divine and Christian? A deep depravedness this must argue.

You may see, in the continual springing up of one generation after another, that, even from infancy, sin still springs up with reason, and the improvements of the natural faculties. So that as soon as any do begin to act rationally, they begin to act wickedly. Heathens have observed it, and speak of it with regret, and take notice how a child neglected grows monstrously vicious: common experience tells us this. Education, indeed, (which therefore ought to be practised with a great deal more care and diligence than it is,) doth somewhat repress, but it doth not change and alter nature. You see that the corruption of it proceeds, even with the nature itself, from the immediate fountain. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me;" so the penitent Psalmist confesseth concerning himself, Psal. li. 5. And it is generally spoken concerning the wicked, (as all the world doth naturally appear to be,) that "they are estranged from the womb, and go astray as soon as they are born," Psal. lviii. 3.

This was a notion that did obtain so much among the Jews, that you see with what severity some of the worst of them fall upon the blind man: (John ix. 34.) "Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?" implying, that he who would take upon him, in an extraordinary way, (not being called,) to be a teacher and instructor to others, must be some very extraordinary person, must be born a sinless man. A testimony that they give against themselves unawares; for they had such a Teacher among them, but regarded him not; a Teacher that came forth from God, and that was not born in sin. "Thou art altogether born in sin, no better than any other man, and dost thou take upon thee to teach us?" And again,

4. We may further learn hence how little reason men have to think it strange, that the state of things in the world is not so constantly favourable, or so benign to them, as they could wish, or are apt to expect; that they meet with many things so ungrateful; that men find themselves subject to pain, sicknesses, crosses, in the course of providence; that they meet with disappointments so often; that so many are reduced to straits, and wants, and distresses; pinching poverty and the like; that there is so much of confusion, and disorder, and violence in the world, the inhabitants of it ready to tear one another and the world in pieces. Why, all have sinned. This gives an easy, ready account. O! how little is it considered when people are so full of complaints of their own particular ails and evils. "Nobody's case is like mine. How am I injured and wronged by some or other that are stronger and mightier than I! My right is withheld from me;" and the like. Alas! poor creature, dost thou so little consider how thou hast wronged God, and withheld from him his right in thyself, in thy life and soul, and all thy powers? Saith another, "I have a child sprung up in my family, I have a son that is undutiful and rebellious, a perpetual vexation to me." How little is it considered that thou

nast carried it with much more undutifulness towards God, who was the original Author and Parent of thy very life and being. You think, when you are sick, you suffer a very great hardship; you do not consider what it is to have been a sinner, to have torn the constitutions and laws of heaven, and violated the government of the supreme and rightful Lord of all. "Why doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?" Lam. iii. 39. "Let us search and try our ways;" let us once but take a clear view of our own ways, and that will stop the complaint. Consider what a vile creature I have been; so many years of my time gone, and I have never minded God; never paid him a duty; never thought of him with any reverence; never designed him any service; never resolved on living to him, but to myself. And yet, now, a little affliction that grates upon the flesh, makes us cry out, "O! how hardly are we dealt with." Again,

5. Have all sinned? Then instead of complaining, wonder at the divine patience, that things are no worse with the inhabitants of this world than they are; that men are allowed a being in it; that this world is not turned into flames over the offender's ears; that they are not continually pursued with divine terrors; that he is not, with more dreadful severity, exacting his right from his own creatures whom he made, (as their own understandings can tell them,) not for themselves, but for himself; and nobody minds him, when they so generally behave themselves with such insolency in this world, as if they had been the creators of it, as if they had made the heavens and the earth, sun, moon, and stars, and all things, the help and influence whereof they any way enjoy.

How admirable, I say, is the divine patience, that bears with offending creatures, lets them propagate and transmit their like from age to age, and from generation to generation, through that vast tract of time as hath hitherto past, since the apostacy! With what wonderment should we consider this power of divine patience! Who that hath it in his hands to right himself for such indignities and wrongs, would refrain? When we think how quickly, how easily, he can do himself right; can frown or wink such a world as this into destruction in a moment; that as it sprung up by his fiat, "Let it be," how easily could he frown it into nothing! yet he lets men live, lets them live neglecting him, when they have natures capable of adoration. But again, we have,

6. Much more reason to admire the divine bounty towards such creatures; not only that he spares and lets them live, but that he maintains them, and keeps them in life and being, each one for his measured time, and so provided that there should be a transmission of life from age to age, in so continued a course. How admirable should the divine bounty and munificence be in our eyes, upon this account! He doth good to the unthankful and evil! to those that never thank him for it. If you did but feed a brute creature, it would be brought by degrees, and in time, to take some kind of notice of you, with gratitude. "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people will not consider." Men will not know their Owner, though the ox knows his. It is your Owner that cares for you; as who provides for the ox and the ass, but the owner? So God, as the Owner of you and of all the inhabitants of this world, all the children of men, (for I speak of these inhabitants,) he doth his part towards you and them. He provides for them, he maintains them, and affords them all that is suitable and needful for their support; but they will not take that notice of their Owner, which an ox or an ass takes of his. How wonderful a thing is this on God's part! how horrid a thing on man's!

I have thought of it many times, and it would be a thing not unworthy of your thoughts and serious contemplations, that we should, in so continued a course, find the earth so productive as it is of all things, not only necessary for the support of the life of man, but so grateful too; such pleasant, delicious fruits in their season. And for whom is all this entertainment? For a world of rebels, offending creatures; those that never look up: we enjoy all, as if it were our own, and never consider, we have a Lord over us, the free Donor of all. Again,

7. Since there are so many sinners in this world, (all have sinned,) it is very strange there are so few self-accusers; when the same light, and the same rational powers, by which men are capable of sinning, they are also capable of understanding themselves to be sinners. There is, indeed, a natural conscience in men, and it hath its exercise sometimes, and a very impartial exercise, in reference to some cases, but how little is there of conscience towards God! "Herein," saith the apostle, "do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men." So it is, where once regenerating grace comes to restore an entire divine image in the soul again, to do an entire work, to produce a general rectitude in the soul, there will be conscience towards God, as well as towards men. Towards men: there is among men some conscience, though too often violated when interest sways: many do not care whom they injure, to advantage themselves; but yet, while they do wrong, they cannot be altogether without reflection that they do wrong: and upon such accounts, chiefly, they have consciences "accusing, or excusing, by turns," Rom. ii. 15. But towards God, generally, no conscience at all; they live in the world as without him, and their hearts never smite them; spend days, and months, and years in vanity; throw away their lifetime, so as they are useful for nothing they were made for; and never say—"God, have mercy upon us;" never think a serious, reflecting thought. So it is with the most; they live at that rate, till in a moment they go down into the grave, and never consider what they have thrown away; a lifetime in the world, without ever minding the proper business of life. But,

8. We may also learn, hence, to take notice, with wonder, that there is so much self-complacency in the world, as one of the most incongruous things, the most monstrous incongruity in all the world, that men should generally be so well pleased with themselves. If things, in external respects especially, be well with them; if they find themselves to be in health; if they have any thing of natural strength and vigour about them; especially if they can take notice, they have wit above the common rate: if they have wealth; if they have reputation and esteem among men; if they have any thing of human dignity or grandeur; O! how well pleased are they with themselves, what self-admirers are men generally upon such accounts, without even considering, (and what a dash would one such thought be to all this,) "I am a fallen creature, an apostate creature, a sinner, one with whom Heaven hath a controversy, a rebel still, if not yet reconciled." Strange! that men should be pleased with themselves, and their little external circumstances, and forget this, "I am a lapsed creature, and under the displeasure of Heaven." But again,

9. We may take notice, hence, of the reason whence it is that there is so much displeasure and wrath against any, in this world, who look towards God and heaven. All have sinned, all are generally in a state of sin. It is by wonderful and peculiar grace if there be so much as an inclining thought God-ward, a thought of returning, if any frame their doings (as the prophet's expression is) "to turn to the Lord," this presently comes under observation: if men's doings be framed that way, if a man's way and course be shaped so as to look God-ward and heaven-ward again, then all that behold it, (and with whom there is not the same disposition of mind and spirit,) they are under a judgment, under a doom. Noah condemned the world. And as the righteous soul of Lot was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, among whom he lived; so, no doubt, he also vexed them only by their observation of his better ways. And yet, further,

10. We have great reason, hereupon, to admire a divine hand and power in it, that there hath been any thing of religion preserved and kept alive in the world, through the several successions of time, unto this day. A world where all have sinned, all have been in apostacy and revolt from God, and war against heaven; it is from a mighty divine hand that there is any such thing as serious religion. Natural religion there is, and an ineffectual thing it is, every where, almost. But for serious religion, vital religion, such as shall speak itself to be such by a self-demonstrative evidence, that such religion hath been kept alive in such a world as this, from age to age, is one of

the greatest miracles that hath been wrought in the world since there was one! And further,

11. This serves to let us see how mighty a work regeneration is, or which the regenerating grace and Spirit, the Spirit of repentance, have to affect and work upon the soul. It cannot be a slight, superficial change that is to be made, where the depravation is so universal, and so total. The corruption of human nature, it hath not reached so little a way as the surface of the man only; it hath gone deep into the *penetralia*, into the inmost centre, into the very spirit of the mind: even that needs a renovation too. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind," Rom. xii. 2. And the like expression in Eph. iv. 22, 23. "Put off the old man that is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be ye renewed in the spirit of your minds." O! do not think slightly of regeneration and repentance! think that they must have a mighty work to do; and that it must be a very deep change which is to be effected thereby, which must reach through a man, into the very inwards of his soul, and go as deep as corrupt nature hath done. And, in the last place,

12. How solicitous, hereupon, should we be, whether any such change hath been wrought in us, yea or no? Thus stating our case to ourselves: "Once, for certain, I was in apostacy from God, an accomplice of hell, with infernal powers, against the sovereign, rightful Lord of heaven and earth. Do I feel myself under a recovering influence? Am I upon a return? Is there any thing done, or doing in me, towards a renovation and effectual change?" If I be not changed, I am the same apostate creature still; that is the state wherein I persist, it carries this import with it; as if I should put it into these plain express words: "I have apostatized from God, and I will stand by it." This is the sense of many a soul, and that which words would truly express, if they were used to that effect. But many have the sense in their hearts, and yet do not consider that such horrid words as these would only serve to express that sense of theirs. "I am an apostate creature, and I will stand by it:" this is your sense while you do not turn, all the while you have no aim at turning, do design of turning. "I have rebelled from God, I have rebelled against him, and this is that which I will abide by; I will live and die by it." O! what a horrid thing is an impenitent soul! especially under a Gospel that makes so many overtures to men, of reducing apostates, and of reconciling afresh to God.

LECTURE XXVIII.*

2. Now it remains to speak of what is consequent upon this sinful state, to wit, *death passing upon all*; that which ensues upon this universal diffusion, and is, in great part, (as you will hear by and by,) complicated therewith. Now in speaking to this death that is said "to have passed through all, or over all," it must be in substance the same with that death which we have spoken to in the former part of the verse, that which befell that one first man. I shall therefore speak, first, of what is common under this notion of death; and then, secondly, come to consider the gradual differences afterwards.

(1.) For what this death signifies here in common, the larger discourse whereof I referred to this place. Why,

[1.] We must consider in it, that bodily death which (in common experience) all do undergo according to divine appointment. "It is appointed to all men once to die." There is a statute law in the case, that hath not been repealed, and that admits of no repeal; this lies upon the world: in the virtue of that law it is, that death hath reigned. As the strength of sin, so the power of death, even of this death, is in the law; that is, in the sentence of it, or in the commination annexed by way of sanction thereunto. If there were no law first, no man should die. And most plain it is, that this same bodily death, unto which all are subjected, it must be within the meaning of this death. "Death hath passed over all." For,

First, We find it to be, most expressly, in the sentence itself that was laid upon Adam, and as a comment upon the commination, that was at first given. The commination was before his fall; "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," die the death: the sentence was after his fall; and this death is fully enough signified by the sentence—"Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." It cannot but be meant, as being so expressly mentioned, both in the commination and in the sentence. And,

Secondly, The actual execution shows it to be meant, to be meant as one part of the penalty unto which transgressors are adjudged under the name of death. For though it be very true, that, abstractly considered, it may be looked upon only as a misery, or as a physical evil, yet, considering that God hath vouchsafed to govern his reasonable creatures by a law, and according to the tenor of a covenant, he would never lay any thing of afflictive evil upon them, which was not legally due. He will herein not go above the legal constitution, by laying any more than was due by law, though he might go as much below it as he would.

A righteous ruler will never exceed the law in punishing, though he may exceed it, without any injury, in showing favour. And the difference in these two cases is manifest, because that these promises of favour make those, to whom such promises are made, creditors, and make the promiser a debtor. But in the inflicting of punishments, the person to be punished is the debtor, and he that is injured and wronged, being the sovereign ruler, is the creditor *pœnæ*, which also the common phrase signifies, and shows it to be agreeable to the reason of mankind to look upon the ruler as the creditor *pœnæ*, and the offender as the debtor *pœnæ*; to wit, that phrase of *Dare pœnæ*. It is the person that is to be punished, who gives satisfaction to law and justice, and so, thereupon, is said to owe it; and it is the government that is the creditor he owes it to.

There would be, then, no such thing as this bodily death in the world, if the violation of the law of God had not made it a debt to divine justice, and to the divine government, as the proper wages of sin. God will not lay upon man more than is right, (more than is just and due according to law,) that he should enter into judgment with God, Job xxxiv. 23. Whereupon, the execution, (of which all the world hath experience from age to age; for we see the world hath been continually and actually under death, and we still daily behold death round about us,) this actual execution, I say, shows that this must be part of the designed penalty signified here by "death."

And unto this head we may very well refer all those corporeal evils and miseries that men in this world are liable to, and lie under, which are so many tendencies unto death, or which we may look upon as death begun; so much of a man's time as is past over with him, so much death hath eaten up; as the heathen moralist expresseth it: *Quicquid nostræ ætatis retro est mors habet; death hath devoured all that of our age which is already past*; so that men may be said to have begun to die as soon as they begin to live, which makes it seem congruous enough, or less strange, that Ecclesiastes the preacher, speaking of the events or purposes for which there is a season, unto every one a time, he speaks of a time to be born, and a time to die, without any mention of the intervening time of life; and fitly enough, or it is not strange, because, indeed, men do begin to die as soon as they begin to live.

Death is wrought with the very *primordia* of our sensitive nature; so that well might that prince say, upon the loss of his son; *Novi me genuisse mortalem; I begot him and mortality in him, both together.* I begot him a mortal thing. Death is working in us, (as the apostle's phrase is,) all our days, all our time, between our birth and the grave, still working in us. And so the longer any man lives in this world, he is but so much the longer a dying. Death did for a great while work more gradually and slowly, where a man's life extended to some hundreds of years. It hath since come to work a quicker despatch with men; but still they are dying, tending towards the grave, even from their first entrance into the world; and this is part of what is signified by death here. But yet it is, in comparison, but a small part, though it be a real one, a true part. Therefore,

* Preached April 8th, 1694.

[2.] Spiritual death is, without doubt, more principally intended, as it is in itself a far more principal evil; that is, all those miseries which do now in this present state infest the spirits of men. And this needs a little more to be insisted on. Herein, therefore, I intend (as God shall enable) these two things; first, to show you that such spiritual evils as these, are very fitly comprehended as part of the penalty under the name of death; and then, secondly, I shall show you, what this death doth comprehend in it: namely, spiritual death.

First, That the spiritual evils to which the souls of men are generally subject, are very fitly comprehended under the name of death here. That death that is said to "have passed over all," is a real and great part, even the more principal part, of the penalty under which they lie; and this doth need some explication, the rather for this, that this spiritual death is in itself a sinful evil, and, therefore, that it should be a punitive one, may seem strange to some. I shall explain the whole matter to you, therefore, in some distinct heads and particulars. As,

i. We are to consider, that though sin be principally an injurious evil against God, yet it is also by consequence, and collaterally, a mischievous evil to the sinner. And thereupon are we said to be "dead in trespasses and sins," Ephes. ii. 1. Death is certainly a horrid and afflicting evil to him that must suffer it. But such a death as this, to wit, to be dead in sin, it is primarily an injurious evil against God. For we are to consider what sin is. It is a transgression of the law: therefore, considered in strict propriety, it must be chiefly and principally against the Lawmaker, a transgression against him that made the law; to wit, as a wrong to him. But yet, for all that, it is a hurt to ourselves. It lies both against the Object and the subject. Against the Object; "Against thee, thee only have I sinned," have I offended. It works upward even against heaven; but that it cannot reach, to do any real hurt there; but a wrong is done against heaven. "I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight." But then it works downward so as to hurt and do mischief; that is, as it works in its subject, corrodes and envenoms, and poisons that, and so carries a self-punishing malignity in it. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee." Again,

ii. Consider, for the clearing of this matter, that that life unto which this death is opposite (as it is in us, or as it is in an intelligent subject) is, both a principle of action, and perception. I pray mark this, for it is obvious in the meaning of it to every one's understanding and experience. By that life that we generally live, we are enabled to act what we do act, and we are enabled to enjoy what we do enjoy. It is both a motive and active; and it is both a perceptive and fruitive principle. Now consider this life, as it is an active principle, so it makes us the subjects of duty, of all duty which we owe to him who made us, and gave us breath and being; but as it is also a perceptive and fruitive principle, so it makes us capable of enjoying what is good for ourselves. And again,

iii. This being plain in itself, we are to consider, that both our duty, which we owe to God, and our felicity, which we enjoy in ourselves, they are substantially and radically the same thing, and do only differ in distinguishing respects; they meet in one and the same root, and which is the principal thing in the moral life, (that life we are now speaking of); and it is death in the moral sense, and not in the natural sense, that we are now speaking of too; for in the natural sense, the soul cannot die,) I say, that moral life doth carry, as the principal thing in it, both our duty and our felicity, in the same common root; to wit, love to God; that is, both radically and virtually, all our duty, and all our felicity too. And it is the main thing to be considered in moral and spiritual life.

There love of God, I say, comprehends both these in it. It comprehends duty; "If ye love me, keep my commandments." We can never do that which he will interpret obedience, but from a principle of love. It is no obedience to him, if it do not proceed from love. And again, the same love, our love to God, is that by which we enjoy him, as well as that by which we obey him. We can enjoy what we love; but what we love not we can never enjoy. And so that life to which this death stands opposed, carries in it that one principle of love, which sums up our duty and our felicity both together, and is radically both of them; upon which account they are in substance the same thing.

But they differ only in the different respects that love hath, as it respects God, the Ruler of all this world, (and so whom we ought to obey and be subject to as our Ruler,) so this love is the principle of duty: but then, as it respects ourselves, so it is the principle of enjoyment; that is, it eyes God, pitches and terminates upon him, but with a reference to ourselves. And,

iv. These acts, proceeding from this principle of love, which have a more direct tendency unto God, do yet involve and carry in them a gainfulness and gratefulness to ourselves, so as that our felicity and duty will still be complicated in those consequential acts. As, for instance, where our felicity is most complete in the heavenly state, the eternal adoration of God, which is the immediate and perpetual product of the highest and most perfect love to him, it cannot but infer perpetual pleasure to them that do so adore. And though that act be carried directly towards God, yet it infers a delight, a pleasure, (as it cannot but do,) to perfectly right minds, to them who are everlastingly so employed and taken up. And I can apprehend nothing higher than that, in the pleasure of the heavenly state; to wit, the felt congruity of everlasting worship, the soul apprehending and feeling within itself, and relishing, with delight, its own act in adoring and worshipping God for ever, and finding how congruous a thing it is, how comely a thing. And so that which is a right to God, is also a satisfaction and delight to the soul itself, that renders it, and is continually paying that homage.

And again, too, in this our present state, wherein felicity can be but begun; and if you look to the very beginning of that, the first turn of the soul towards God by repentance, which enters it into a holy and happy state. It is called "repentance towards God," it directly terminates upon him; but when once it comes to be true, genuine, evangelical, vital, even that itself cannot but carry a sweetness and pleasure in it to the penitent soul. For it is not a forced thing, but an act that flows freely from a vital, connatural principle; the soul pleaseth itself in abasing itself, in humbling itself, before him, in pouring out itself in free confessions and acknowledgements to him. And then, consider further,

v. That for such acts as do more directly respect ourselves, they do involve and carry still in them, homage and duty to God too, though they do more directly respect ourselves: as trust and joy in God, they have a manifest reference to our own safety, and a direct reference thereunto. By trust in him, it is, that we secure ourselves, and, by which, we become safe from wrath and ruin. Joy, or delight in God, it is that by which we entertain, and receive into our own souls, positive good, by which we are to be happy and satisfied. As by the other, (trust,) we decline and avoid the evil by which we were otherwise to have been miserable, these have a direct reference to ourselves; but, they have a consequential reference, too, unto God, or, a conjunct reference, as carrying in them a homage to him, while, at the same time, they carry in them an advantage to us.

For we cannot render to God higher homage than that trust. It is vital trust, by which the soul unites with him, comes into union, enters into a state of union with him. By that trust, we give him the highest glory creatures are capable of giving him; we, thereupon, acknowledge him to be the first truth. We give him the glory of that great attribute of his faithfulness; we acknowledge him to be a God that cannot lie, with whose nature it is inconsistent not to be true; we honour him, and advantage ourselves, at once, in that very act. And so, delight and joy in him, there the case is the same: it is we that are satisfied by our delight in God; but it is God that is glorified: for thereby we acknowledge him to be an all-sufficient Good, an all-comprehending Good, when our souls do centre and rest in him as such; which is the true notion of delight; *Quies appetitus in appetibile*, the rest of the desiring faculties in the object desired: it is the rest of our love; that by which our love doth move towards its object, till it attain and possess it. And then,

vi. It is hereupon most plain, that the death which is

opposite to this life, (that I have so far opened to you,) while it is an injury to God, it is also a hurt to yourselves: for the same reason that life doth involve these two things in it, even in all the several acts of it; by the same reason, it must needs be so, on the opposite hand; to wit, that death must comprehend in it opposite things; and that the same evils that are sinful against God, cannot but be hurtful, and pernicious, and mischievous to ourselves. And,

vii. Those evils, that are so said to be signified by this name, are very fitly signified by it, very aptly: for, though such a death of the soul be not death in the absolute sense; for, if it were death in the absolute sense, then would the soul be said naturally to die, which would not consist with the doctrine of its immortality; but, it is death in a respective sense only;—yet it is, however, properly, death, inasmuch as that respective sense must needs mean the principal respect, that such a thing is capable, or can any way admit of; to wit, a respect to the end. A respect to the end is always the most principal respect of any thing whatsoever, though it be clothed with various respects besides its own simple nature: its respect that it bears towards its proper adequate end, is always to be reckoned its principal respect. Now, look upon man, principally as to his soul or spirit, (which is the subject of our present discourse, and the subject of this death, which we are now speaking of, spiritual death,) and it is to be considered this is a created being. He that made it, made it for somewhat. What is the end of such a being as the spirit of man? What was it made for? It is a mind, an intellective thing, an intelligent being, unto which belongs the power of thought, and that of vast compass, extending to multitudes, even to all sorts of objects, and to the very highest of all objects; for, God hath made us capable, even of thinking of himself, of having an idea of him, a notion of him, which all have, more or less, in their minds. Now it is to be considered, I say, What hath God made such a creature as this for? this mind, or spirit of man? Why, principally, to converse with himself. For he hath made all things for himself; and the spirit of man more immediately for himself, as he is said to have fashioned the spirit of man within him. That must be with design that it should be employed immediately upon him, as the principal and most noble end for which it was made: but, to this end, it is become useless; the spirit of fallen man, apostate man, unconverted man, yet remaining in the state of apostacy, not regenerate, not renewed in the spirit of his mind, (the great seat and subject of that regenerating work,) it is altogether unapt for the end that it was made for, nothing can be plainer.

Therefore, though it be not simply dead, yet, it is dead *quoad hoc*, it is dead to this purpose, it is dead in this respect; and that is the principal respect that such a thing is capable of: for the principal respect is, the respect it bears to its end, its great and ultimate end, the end that it was made for. Any man that will understand himself to be God's creature, especially that he hath a mind and spirit in him that God hath, himself, fashioned immediately, he must needs presently apprehend this mind, this spirit, was made for some more principal purpose, than only to mind the things of this earth, than only to serve a brutal flesh for a few days, that must, at last, rot in the dust: no man, that communes with himself, and considers his own nature, that hath such a thing as a mind and spirit about him, but must presently apprehend, "Sure this mind and spirit of mine, which is impressed with the natural image of God, and which immediately proceeds from him, (who is, therefore, called the Father of spirits,) must be made principally to converse with him, to employ itself principally upon him, by acts of love, and trust, and adoration, and subjection, and the like."

But, most plain it is, that the spirits of men are become altogether *inhabile*, unapt, to serve this end, for which they are made, and so are truly said to be dead in this respect; that is, dead to the principal use and end for which such a being is said to be made. And, therefore, when once the great regenerating turn, and change, comes to be made upon the souls of men, this is the effect of it,—they are "dead to sin, but alive to God, through Jesus Christ," as Rom. vi. 11. intimating, that before they were only alive to sin, but dead towards God and Christ. And what! Do we think that God ever made an intelligent and immortal mind and spirit, only to live to sin? they are only alive to sin before; but, when this change comes to be made, then they are alive to God: before, quite dead to God; and, so they are dead, in reference to their principal end and the proper design of their creation, that they were made for.

And so, it is a death in equivalence, it is an equivalent death; it is the same thing in reference to the end they were made for, as if they were not. As, if we speak of a human maker of any thing; if an artist have made such a thing as a clock or watch, he considers the end of it, that which it is to serve for; it is to measure time, to let me know the hour of the day, as it passeth. Why, suppose such an instrument as this made, and elaborated by a curious hand; what hath this in it? it hath in it motion, and the regularity of that motion. Motion alone would not make it serve this end, if that motion had not a regularity belonging to it. There is, in that instrument, (a watch,) such a thing as a balance, wheels that regulate that motion, so as that it shall not move at random; if it move at random, the design is lost, the use of it frustrated, though it should retain motion, and there were still a motive power in it; if its motion were nothing else but an uncertain hurry, you could never know how the time passeth by it. And, therefore, it were all one, though the thing remain, and though the motion remain; it were, I say, all one in reference to its end, as if there were no such thing, or as if it had no motion at all.

Take the needle of a compass—it has a mobility, it is put in such a posture as it may be easily moveable; but then, with all, it hath a verticity, that is, an aptness to turn and stand directly towards the north. If it retaineth never so much its mobility, and loseth its verticity, it serves not its end, it is unuseful so, and useless, as the needle of a compass; and it were all one as if it were not.

Suppose these instruments, that are mechanical, were some way vital; suppose a watch were a vital thing, and its motion vital; as it is but mechanical, when it hath lost all kind of the regularity of the motion, the motion itself remaining, it were all one as if it were dead; if it had been a living thing, it would no more serve its purpose now, than as if it were dead.

And so it is with reference to the spirits of men; if they do not serve the principal design for which they were made, then it is all one as if they were dead. God may say of them, "I have no more service from them than if they were dead, no more of love, no more of adoration, no more of dutiful observance are paid me by them, than as if there were no such things." It is to be considered, therefore, that that which makes the name of death, in this case, proper, is, that that life that doth remain to the spirits of men, that is, by which they live naturally, it no more serves the end and purposes for which such a mind and spirit were created and made, than if such a thing were quite extinct, and there were no such thing. And, thereupon,

viii. Though this, in itself, be a sinful thing, as an offence to God, it is never a whit the less a punishing thing to them that do offend, a punishment upon them, that is, they are left to punish themselves, because that they do injure God by that violation which they have made even of their own frame and natures; and so the same thing may very well be a sin, and a punishment too. And it is most reasonably so; for, do but consider the parity of the case, to what is obvious to our notice in human governments. If a man be a self-murderer, a *felo de se;* this is the very case, as a man cannot be dead in trespasses and sins, (sin being his own act,) but he must be a self-destroyer. In human governments, he that doth destroy himself, it is very true, he suffers this evil first, immediately, directly; he is the person that is killed, and hath lost his life; but here is, in the mean time, a wrong done to the prince, a wrong done to the community; the prince hath lost a subject, the community hath lost a member; and this is the case with every self-destroying sinner, in reference to God. And, he is liable thus to be impleaded: "Thou hast destroyed my creature." This interest of God, in all, is superior to any interest we have in ourselves; and this the sinner is to be accountable for. "Why hast thou undone my creature?

Why hast thou made my creature a miserable creature, that was capable of being a happy one?" Yea, the whole heavenly community have a just plea against any such one that perisheth, and so is eternally cut off from them by his own iniquity. "Duly, and by original right, you ought to have been a partaker with us; you ought to have been of our chorus, in worshipping, adoring, in loving and enjoying God eternally. But, you have cut yourselves off from God, and us." Therefore, it is no strange thing that this same death which carries in it the greatest hurt and mischief that we are capable of suffering in ourselves, should yet be also complicated with sin, as it is an offence against God, and an offence against the rest of his creatures,—especially those of the sinner's own order in the creation. So fitly is all that doth concern us, the whole of man, summed up in the fearing of God, and keeping of his commandments, as in that 12th of Ecclesiastes. This is the whole of man; the fear of God is nothing else but reverential love, carries love in it; that is the principle from whence we keep the commandments of God; these commandments are all summed up in love to God, and love to ourselves, and to our neighbours as ourselves. Where sin, therefore, comes to obtain, and take place, and be in power, there must be, at the same time, an injury done to God, an injury done to ourselves, and an injury done to the whole community to which we belong; so as that death, even spiritual death, is nothing the less capable of being intended here as a penalty and punishment, for that it is also complicated with sin: for, in the very nature of the thing, it cannot but be so, even in the very nature of the things themselves.

More is yet to be said in reference to what we further promised to show, that this is a real part of the penalty here meant, by the name of death, spiritual death, as it is the hurt and evil that does mischief to ourselves, to our own souls, to show that it must lie in the compass of that penalty, which, under the name of death, is here said to pass over all. And then, for the extent and comprehension of that, the several things that this spiritua death doth involve in it, that we are to speak of afterwards. But, in the mean time, from what hath been hinted of these two things—corporeal death, and spiritual death, it should entertain our thoughts with, and a little fix them upon, the prospect we have before our eyes. Now, by way of *Use*,

1. It is a doleful state that this world lies under, as it lies under that which is fitly to be called death; men, in a continual succession, lately sprung up here in this world, swept away presently from it, sooner or later, but soon all; one generation coming, and another going, but the earth abides. For persons that are capable of using thoughts, to behold themselves in this plight, and to look round about them, and to behold this to be the common case; "Here we are, lately sprung up into being in this world, and we know we are to stay but a little while; dust we are, and unto dust we shall return." A most melancholy theme for a man's thoughts, if he have not somewhat beyond all this to support his spirit, and to afford light, and lustre, and sweetness, and pleasure, to it; "life and immortality brought to light in the Gospel" of Christ.

Alas! it is strange, amazing stupidity that is upon the spirits of men, that this common case is so commonly slighted and made so little of. If death did make quicker despatches, (though we are certain of it, it can make no surer, for it reaches to every one sooner or later, but if it did make quicker despatches,) it would set towns and counties presently upon a lament, upon bemoaning themselves, and put them into a panic dread and fear. If the plague were (as sometimes it hath been in this city) sweeping away thousands in a week, in what a consternation would the minds of men generally be! You cannot have forgot, (many of you,) how it was. But let this matter be rationally considered, and whether it be so many thousands or so many hundreds, it is the same; persons are still mortal, and must as certainly die; it is, therefore, an irrational stupidity to be so little apprehensive of this.

When the plague came upon the people of Israel, (in that of Numbers xxxvi.) see what an outcry is raised among them! "Behold we die, we all die. How are we consumed with dying!" What a fright were they in! And yet, this case is no way different at all from the common case of all mortals, more than only this—dying a little sooner, or dying more together, more numerously. It is strange there should be a dying world always in view, and we should find death working in us, and yet we live so unmindful of it from day to day, and are so little apprehensive, that, in this respect, death hath passed, and is passing, over all. We do not speak to one another at such a time as this; we do not hear; we do not look upon one another's faces as so many mortal creatures; sure there is not an apprehension suitable to the state of such a case, in this respect, that we are all subject to corporeal death. And then,

2. For the other part of our prospect, sure we should stay a little upon it, in our deepest reflections; that is, thus, in sum, that the soul of an unregenerate man is a most miserable creature; dead, dead to the principal purposes for which such life was given, any such creature made. It were as good never to have lived; better, (upon many accounts better,) to have been an untimely birth, and never have seen the sun, than not to live to God; than to have a total indisposition in my soul towards him, to think of him, to love him, to delight in him, to make him my life and my all. This is strange, that it should be the common case, and so little understood, and so little considered, so little taken to heart. O! the restless thoughts that would continually possess such a breast if the matter were but understood, till the regenerating work come to obtain, and take place: "I am one that lives to as little purpose, as if I had never lived, as if no such creature had ever been."

As if we should consider the matter in reference to an inferior thing, belonging to our nature, to wit, the power of speech. Suppose a man should retain the power of speech, but hath quite lost his reason, which should govern his speech, so that he can speak still, but to no purpose; the use of speech were lost; for the design of speech was to convey the sense of one man's mind to another; but, when the reason is gone, which should form that sense in the man's mind, speech serves for nothing. It is just so with the souls of men, in reference to the principal end and purpose for which God hath made such a creature They can think, they have a power of thought belonging to them, but not to no purpose! thought is internal speech, the speech of the mind within itself; there they can speak; that is, they can form thoughts, connect thoughts, but all to no purpose: for religion, that which should govern the motion of the mind, that is wanting, there is no such thing; this makes the soul of man a most miserable thing: it can move, it hath a principle of motion in it, which is essential to it; but it hath no principle of rest, no inclination towards God, the true rest of the soul. Do but illustrate that to yourselves, by the case of a bodily motion. Suppose your bodies had the power of bodily motion in them, without the power of rest: O! what a miserable thing were man, in respect of his bodily frame and constitution! to be in an everlasting hurry: he can move, and he must move, perpetually; but he cannot *sistere se*, cannot stop his motion, he can never take any rest. It is just so with the unregenerate soul. God is the true rest of the soul. It is in perpetual motion, in continual desires, in everlasting cravings; but hath nothing by which it can satisfy itself. It never comes into its mind, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." Such a creature, one would think, made for torment, that can everlastingly move, must be perpetually in motion, but can never rest, can never take up any rest in any thing that is agreeable and suitable to it, that can satisfy it.

LECTURE XXIX.*

It remains now, in the next place, to show,

Secondly, What those several evils and miseries are; and, so, what the spiritual death that is now upon the world, and hath passed over all, doth comprehend, and contain it it. It comprehends,

* Preached May 19th, 1694.

i. The loss of God. A mighty thing! the very thought whereof might set all our souls a trembling; and that, whether we consider it as our present case, or, as having been our case. The loss of God two ways: first, as men have lost all their interest in him; and secondly, as they have lost all inclinations towards him. A loss, that stands at once in God's aversion from them, and their aversion from God. A mutual aversion between God and them. But, because that, in every thing that belongs to our misery, we are first, as in every thing that belongs to our felicity, God is first, it is more proper to consider,

(i.) Our aversion from God, or, men's having lost God, through their own disinclination towards him: this is represented as the common case of the unconverted, or yet apostate world of men, yet remaining in the state of apostacy, that they are atheists in the world, Ephes. ii. 12. "Without God in the world;" so we truly enough render it. "Alienated from the life of God," Ephes. iv. 18. Alienated from the divine life, from a life of commerce with God; they are strangers to God, as men of another country: that is the significancy of the expression; so they carry it to God, (as it is elsewhere expressed,) like foreigners. He is none of our country; we are not of that country of which he is; we have nothing to do with him. At that rate men live, and bear themselves, generally, towards God.

And this aversion of the souls of men from God, is total, of the whole soul; the mind, the judgment, the will, the affections, they are all wholly off from God. So that, when he looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see who will inquire, who will seek after God; lo! they are all gone back; (all in a revolt, all flying away from him, to the utmost distance that they can;) there is none that doeth good, (not this good, it must be specially meant,) no, not one: as in the 14th and 53d Psalms, which are both to the same purpose; as divers passages quoted from them in the 3d of Romans. They are without God, and very well pleased with themselves that they are so. They know him not, and they all affect not to know him. They are "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, and the blindness of their hearts." That blindness of heart is a voluntary blindness; they are blind towards God, because they will not behold him, nor take notice of his majesty, though his hand he lifted up, though the appearance of him be never so bright and glorious. They forget him, he is not in all their thoughts. It is the usual character of a wicked, unconverted man, that he forgets God: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God;" the one expression being exegetical, or expository of the other, Psalm ix. 16. They refuse him, they are unwilling of him. If persons do remain in an unconverted state, though related to him as Israel was, (for yet of them it is said, "Israel would none of me," Psalm lxxxi. 11. "My people would not hearken to my voice, Israel would none of me,") they will not God. We will not have him to be our God. It is a disaffecting of him; the affections that should be placed on him are quite off: in the room of pious affections, there is nothing else but enmity: "The earnal mind is enmity against God."

And, touching this aversion from God, it was formerly intimated, that, as love doth comprehend together, (as the radical virtual principle,) all our duty, and all our felicity; so doth this aversion from God, (which stands in opposition thereto,) all sin, and all misery. That this aversion is the radical principle of all sin; we spake to that formerly; and so we must understand it now, as it is the radical principle of misery, God being to be considered by us under a two-fold notion—as he is to be obeyed, and as he is to be enjoyed; as the Sovereign Authority, and as he is the Sovereign Good. It is the aversion from God, as he is the Sovereign Good, that we are now to consider, having, under the former head, of the sinfulness of man, spoken of it as an aversion to him under the notion of the Supreme Ruler, and, as the Highest Authority. But, yet, we have also told you, that there is a complication of these things with one another: for men do really sin against God in their declining the enjoyment of him, in their declining him as their best and highest Good; the constitution of the divine laws being such, that there are obligations upon us to be happy. So that, a man cannot but be miserable, as he cannot be happy without obeying him, even in this very enjoying of the best and highest Good, because God hath made this our duty, to place our supreme delight in him.

And so, God hath a just ground upon which to implead the ungodly, wicked world; for that, thereby, they make themselves miserable: "Why have you thus used my creatures, the souls that I have made? Why have you cut and torn them off from me, they which are the works of my hands? Why have you used and dealt with them so?" As was told you, he that is *felo de se*, is criminal by human constitution; for though he thereby doth afflict himself, destroy himself, yet he doth also injure the prince, and injure the community to which he belongs; for he destroys a subject and member of the commonwealth. And those who, by the law of their creation, should have joined with the rest of the creatures of their own order, in the eternal adoration and praises of God, have by sin, as much as in them lay, defrauded him, and maimed the community unto which they did originally and naturally appertain. But then, this misery, as it stands in the loss of God, includes, too,

(ii.) His just and righteous aversion from them. "God is not a God that takes pleasure in wickedness, neither can evil dwell with him." There can be no fellowship between light and darkness, between righteousness and unrighteousness. He did owe it to himself, to retire from an apostate, rebellious world: it was but to do himself right, to express a just detestation of the wickedness of a lapsed, degenerate world; to hide himself, to withhold his light and grace, which were shut up from men by the bar of an everlasting curse, till such time as that should be counterwrought, in reference to any; Christ having been made a curse for us, upon that account, that the blessing might come upon us, even us, Gentiles, as it did before upon the Jews, those of them that did belong to the election of grace: thereupon it is called "the blessing of Abraham;" that that might become a more diffusive thing, to reach the Gentiles too; to wit, receiving the Spirit, the promised Spirit, through faith, Gal. iii. 13, 14. Therefore, where this curse is not removed, it still lies as a bar against all gracious communications of light and influence from God to men. And so he is righteously averse from them, as they were most unrighteously averse to him; and thus they have lost God.

O! the lamentations that this world would be filled with every where, if this case were but understood! What girding with sackcloth would there be all the world over! God is gone! God is departed! This would be the common cry in town and country, in all parts and places—God is departed; that is the amazing thing! Heaven would resound with shrieks and cries from the miserable inhabitants of this earth. But, I say, that is the amazing thing, (as there will be occasion to take notice hereafter,) that such a matter as this is so patiently borne, so little resented; that men can so quietly wear away their days here in this world, without God, and think themselves to stand in no need of him. They can rise in the morning without God; and walk about all the day long without God; and lie down at night without God; and yet, all is well.

ii. This spiritual misery contains in it, too, a wretched conversion of soul to the creature. Where God is lost, they design to repair that loss. And O! the miserable case of the inhabitants of this world upon this account; that they can think or imagine, when they want God, that any thing can fill up his room, and be to them instead of him! that it doth not come into their minds to consider, "How shall we recover God again?" but, "How shall we repair our loss another way?" imagining that something or other can be found, and may serve them, and be to them, instead of God! that is, that he, (in comparison of whom the whole creation is but "as the drop of a bucket, and the dust of the balance, lighter than nothing, and vanity itself,") that he can (I say) have his equivalent; that there may be somewhat found out of equivalent advantage and use to them. This is the highest reproach to the Deity, as it is the greatest misery to themselves, and both comprehended in one thought; to wit, that there may be an equivalent to make up the loss of God; that very thought, I say, carries in it the highest blasphemy against

the Deity, to think that any thing can fill up his room, and be as good as he is; as well as the greatest misery unto wretched souls themselves, that they should be under so fearful and pernicious a mistake.

But this is the common case when God is gone, and men are gone off from him, then they turn themselves to the creature: "Let us make the best of that we can." So is the project laid all the world over. Not, Let us consider how we may regain God; how we may get God back again to us; but, How we may supply his absence out of inferior things: and this is the general posture of mankind. Look on them, and in reference to God, they are in an averse posture; in reference to the creature, in a propense posture.

And what sort of creatures? That we may understand this to go somewhat towards the consummating of the state of misery man is fallen into, do but consider, I say, what is the kind of that good which they design for themselves, when God is no longer eyed by them as the Good that they should enjoy, and design for. And consider, too, in what circumstances they may expect to have what enjoyments they can have of that substituted good.

For the kind of it, we are to consider in the vast universe of creatures, what it is that the apostate world do seek to repair this loss of God to themselves out of. It is not out of the nobler parts of the creation; they do not look as high as the heavens, they are too remote; they are not the angelic being, that their thoughts fly upon; with any design of repairing the loss from among them. But the whole bent of their soul is directed towards this lower world, and sensible things, things meaner than themselves, meaner than their own minds. They think an intelligent, immortal mind must have its enjoyments, even unto felicity, in things of so vastly inferior dignity to a mind and spirit; that these minds are to be fed upon earth, upon ashes, upon the basest and most despicable things within the creation of God! What a misery is that! Unto such things it is that all this world is turned, being turned off from God, sensible things, earthly things, things that can please appetite, things common to them with the beasts that perish, only they have ways and arts to refine them, but they are of the same nature. As clay will be but clay still, be it figured never so curiously. "They mind earthly things;" this is the character of the insincere, those that are afar off from God, not turned to him; they mind earthly things; their whole souls are let out upon that which is in istelf vain, and a lie; that is, which promiseth fair, but never makes good, and so lies to them.

And consider, under what circumstances men apply themselves to enjoy the things by which they would repair to themselves the loss of God; especially consider these two most important circumstances; that is, that they are things that lie, first, under an interdict; and, secondly, under a curse, in reference to them, and in reference to what they design, and seek to themselves by them; to wit, a felicity; or with respect to the notion under which they do covet and would enjoy them; that is, as their best good, so they lie under an interdict and under a curse.

(i.) Under an interdict: "Love not the world, nor the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 5. What a misery is this, that the poor souls, revolted and gone off from God, are now universally seeking a felicity for themselves in things that, under that notion, lie under an interdict, are forbidden to them, and cannot but be forbidden, under that notion; because, under that notion, they are made rivals unto the Deity. In subordination to God, men might comfortably have enjoyed the things of this world; not in competition, nor in opposition; for now this world is made his rival, and therefore, is the love of it idolatry, and is the setting up of another god, in opposition to the true and living God; and by taking this licence, men think to repair themselves for their having lost God. And,

(ii.) They are things that lie, not only under an interdict, but under a curse, a malediction,—apostate souls, gone from God, they can have no enjoyment of this world, but under a curse, nothing is blest to them; they can have no blessed enjoyment of them, or any thing they enjoy;—for sin turns all into gall and wormwood, bitterness and death. How dismal is the case with fallen man, upon this account! "Cursed in the basket, and cursed in the store; cursed in the city, and cursed in the field; cursed in the coming in, and cursed in the going out;" as the matter is largely and most emphatically represented in the 28th of Deut. A people, though related to God, when they go off from him, and so put themselves into the common state with the rest of the pagan world; a curse lies upon them in every thing that they do, in every thing that they enjoy; they perpetually live under a curse. It is with strange rhetoric that this matter is represented in the 109th Psalm: a curse that they are girt with perpetually, and that is as a garment that they are clothed with, and that flows or insinuates itself as oil into their bones, and as water into their bowels. So, they are under a divine curse, in reference to every thing that they enjoy. And that is a second part of this misery which fallen man lies under, even in reference to his spirit; to wit, that that is off from God, and is turned to a vain world, which is to him an interdicted and an accursed thing.

iii. This misery further includes in it, a continual unsatisfactoriness with whatsoever they do or can enjoy. And, as the essence of blessedness and felicity doth lie in satisfaction; so, on the other hand, must misery consist in continual unsatisfiedness, which results from these two things together; first, perpetual craving desires, and secondly, the want of any suitable and adequate object by which they may be satisfied.

(i.) In continual craving desires. And that is the common case with all men in the fallen state. Why, they have put themselves into an utter impossibility, whilst things are just with them as they are, to be happy; and yet they have a desire to be happy all this while, nothing being more deeply natural, than these two opposite things; a dread of misery, and a desire of felicity: and hy how much the larger men's desires are, so much the greater is their misery in this case. Desires enlarged even as hell, and that could even swallow up a creation and more; for a creation was never to satisfy them. It was not a created, but an uncreated Good, that was the object designed for the satisfaction of the souls of men: "Who will show us any good?" There is the character of an unrenewed mind and spirit, in that Psalm iv. 6. But it never comes into their minds to think, what that Good is that could be adequate to them. "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us:" they never think of that, but still cry out, "Who will show us any good?" Roving, uncertain desires, which, with all, find that they can meet with nothing that is suitable and adequate for the satisfaction of them: these desires must turn to torment, when there is not an object for such desires to feed upon; they prey upon their subject, turn inward; and so men's desires are their tormentors, and make them miserable, in that they continually desire and crave that which they cannot reach. For,

(ii.) The other thing that concerns, and falls in, to make this a miserable case, or to render it a real misery, is, the want of a correspondent good for so vast and large an appetite; and that, upon a double account: to wit, that what would satisfy them they cannot desire; and, that which they do desire, cannot satisfy them. That which would satisfy, they cannot desire: God would satisfy them, he were an adequate, correspondent Good, to the most enlarged desire of the soul. Aye, but him they care not for; towards him they have no motion; towards him there is nothing but aversion and disinclination and disaffection, as you have heard before; so that, as the carnal mind cannot please him, so it cannot be pleased with him. And, that which they most of all desire, that cannot please them, as you have likewise heard.

And so, in reference thereunto, they lie always in the same restless posture. As, I remember, a heathen saith, concerning a soul loose from God: (it is the saying of Hierocles:) "That such a soul being loose from God, is like a cylinder upon a plain, that can never lie still; it is always in perpetual motion." The state of a soul that is off from God, is just such, circled all within itself, capable of setting upon no basis. There is nothing that can give a firm posture, or a posture of rest to it: for all things, beneath it, and beside it, are unsuitable, inadequate; and, therefore, nothing can ensue but perpetual unsatisfiedness. A miserable case! To have so capacious a thing, as the soul of man is, capable of so high and great enjoyments, and to

be under continual dissatisfaction, because that which would satisfy, it cannot desire; and that which it doth desire, cannot satisfy. And,

iv. This misery hath this further in it, a continual delusion, which the souls of men lie under, in reference to the objects of their enjoyment; a being continually imposed upon by the false and delusive appearances of things, so as, hereupon, they meet with disappointments, both in reference to what they attain, and in reference to what they attain not. Herein stands their perpetual delusion; that is, they are cheated into the expectation of meeting with that rest and satisfaction for themselves, which they can never find, and that, whether they do attain the things they seek, or attain them not.

The case is generally with men, in this respect, as with some weak, half-witted persons, who, looking about them here and there, they see some rising ground, such or such a hill, or mountain, and they think, if they were on the top of that mountain, they should reach heaven, for heaven seems to touch that; when, if they should be at the pains to travel to the top of that mountain, they should find themselves at the same distance they were before. So it is with the men of this world, with reference to what they expect from it, of good and rest to themselves: "O! I should be in a very heaven, if I were in a condition so high." Some men's states and conditions carry their appearance with them of very high lofty mountains, that do even over-top heaven, or touch heaven. "If I were but so high as such a man, or such a man, I were a happy man." Alas! they are deluded and disappointed, both these ways: first, that the most can never reach that which they do expect and design, in point of worldly advantage; and, secondly, that if they do, they are much what they were, as far from felicity as before:—nay, it may be, sunk by that very means, by which they thought to be raised, into deeper misery than before. This is a very dismal, yet it is the common, case! Men spend their days, wear away a wretched life-time, here, in this world, in pursuit of such an outward good state, or condition; and most of them always die short of what they designed, of what they projected in any such kind. And, if any have compassed this or that great design or project for this world; why, they are still, when they have compassed it, nothing the nearer. In a like case with that great prince, of whom we read, who, discoursing with one of his courtiers about several great designs that he had for this world, told him, he would move his arms against such a country, and such a country, and take in such a town and such a city: "Then," saith the courtier, "what will you do after that?" "Why, then I will carry my arms such and such a way." "And what then?" "Why, then I will labour to accomplish such a thing after that." "And what then, after that?" "Then I will sit still, and be quiet." "Why, sir," saith he, "you may as well do so now." Men might as well now sit still, and be quiet, when God hath given them some tolerable competency. And now, let me be thinking of and caring for a soul, and providing for an eternal well-being. But men think not of this, but let their lives run to waste, in a continual pursuit of shadows, and are in a continual delusion, with reference to what they attain, and what they attain not. In reference to what they do not attain; for that it would not satisfy: and, then, with reference to what they do attain; for they thought they should be much better for it, when, it may be, they are much the worse.

LECTURE XXX.*

Our business hath lately been, and still is, to represent the common miseries of man, which are all comprehended under the name of "death," very fitly, and very usually, not only in sacred language, but in other authors. Several particulars have been instanced in. And now, the next in order, which I designed to be more largely insisted on, is,

v. This misery stands in slavery, in that base and ignoble servitude, which the generality of men, in the state of apostacy, are subject to: a thing which will but slowly enter into the minds of those who have not been instructed, and considered well the matter afresh; that is, that the generality of men, in their state of apostacy from God, are become the meanest and basest sort of slaves; and, that is fully enough called—"death;" (as I have told you, death must be taken here, not formally, but, in a large and comprehensive sense;) men of more ingenuous minds, rather choosing death than slavery; as it hath been with all those more noble-spirited men, who thought their lives laudably sacrificed for the liberty of their country, to redeem it from slavery; and, thereby, showed themselves, that they did scorn to live as slaves, with the rest; they thought death a more eligible thing; and so, could say as he did, dying, (though nothing else was effected,) "I have done this one noble thing; that I have chosen to die, rather than live as a slave." It is a misery much worse than that which goes commonly among us under the name of death, to be a slave.

But, if the matter be narrowly inspected, and looked into, every one that understands himself, and what the nature of man is, especially as to that part of man which, more deservedly, bears that name, (the mind is the man,) he cannot, upon reflection, but consider the state of slavery as the common state,—the life, and strength, and faculties, and powers of a reasonable, intelligent mind and spirit, being generally subject to things beneath and below the dignity of their nature; this is to be very basely servile. But this is that which they will very hardly think to be so, who do consider that they live according to their own wills, which, indeed, is the vulgar notion of liberty. He is a freeman: *Liber est qui vivit vult*—He lives as he affects to live, as he chooseth to live. Why, sure it cannot be that this man chooseth to be a slave.

But, there cannot be a more mistaken notion than this; or, that will more easily (if the matter be considered) prove itself false. For by how much the more the will of a man is inclined and led to choose things that are mean, and base, and unworthy of a man, so much the worse slave he is; when he is cheated into a consent unto that which debaseth him, and makes him mean; when he is fraudulently imposed upon, against all rational dictates and sentiments. And, undoubtedly, it was but that vulgar mistake, (not peculiar to the Jews, but common to sinners, as such, unto the world of mankind, yet in a state of apostacy, or not recovered out of it,) that our Lord animadverts upon, in that John viii. in several verses, where he is dealing with that people, who were his immediate auditors, upon this very topic; that is, he promiseth them liberty: "If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed." But they tell him, with disdain, "We were never in bondage to any man; we are Abraham's seed." He replies upon them, "Whosoever commits sin, is the servant of sin;" and, being the servant of sin, is the slave of the devil too; and so much more miserably, and so much the worse he is so, by how much the more naturally, and according to inclination, he is so: for, when that is the case, when such appear to be the devil's own seed, his offspring, considering themselves not naturally, but morally, according to their inclination, with reference to the practice of duty, and with reference to consequent or connexed felicity; they are so far acted upon by that impure, apostate spirit, as that they do appear to be his very progeny, begotten of him. And so is this whole world divided into those two great families—the children of God, and the children of the devil. "Herein are the children of God, and the children of the devil, manifest," as the same apostle, in his 3d chapter of his 1st epistle, tells us. And so our Saviour speaks correspondently hereunto, to these his present hearers, in the 44th verse of that John viii. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye will do." And, therefore, is that very suitable to this purpose, (which I have taken notice of formerly,) what Austin observed out of a heathen moralist: "That it is a far more miserable thing to will that which is unjust, than not to obtain that which one willeth." It is so in the very reason of the thing. If men could make themselves masters of all that they covet, during their abode in this lower world; if they

* Preached May 26th, 1694.

could have every thing in their possession and power that they cast a fond eye upon, or place an irrational wish upon, they were a great deal more miserable, even in being left so to wish, so to desire, so ineptly, so foolishly. And, therefore, that kind of liberty, which stands only in gratifying inordinate and enormous desires, it is no other kind of liberty than that which God threatens the Jews with; a liberty to perish; a liberty for the sword, and famine, and pestilence: "I thus manumit you; I give you that sort of freedom, to run on in those ways, which shall infer upon you the most miserable end; that shall lead you into tragedies and death, which way soever you tread your foot, or cast your eyes."

And, therefore, what a noted author among the pagans saith, concerning one particular people, may be said concerning mankind, while they remain in the state of apostacy, and, antecedently to their recovery, that they are such as, *Quos decuit esse servos*, a state of servitude is so suitable to them, that it befits them to be nothing else but slaves. And so much the rather because it is that which they themselves choose. And do not think Scripture speaks ineptly, or unsuitably to the case, when it bids them that are recovered out of the common misery, that lay upon the world, to consider what they were before: "Ye were sometimes foolish, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures," Titus iii. 3. It is that which men, recovered to a right mind, would look upon with the greatest disdain imaginable; to wit, that a reasonable, intelligent spirit should only employ itself, its noble faculties and powers, from day to day, in pursuing a design, how to serve and gratify a thing no better, or no worthier of a high state and station in the creation of God, than a brute creature. Nay, not so worthy; because those creatures are what they are by no degeneracy. They were never better, never higher: but, if a man be in the condition of a brute, he comes to be so by a lapse, by a fall, by a depravation; he is sunk beneath himself, he hath lost a good that he was capable of, and a perfection belonging to his own nature, that was the glory thereof; and, this he hath exchanged for the basest and vilest sort of slavery. The apostle Peter, 2 Epist. ii. 19. tells us, "That while men promise themselves liberty, they themselves become servants of corruption;" for, of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage; and to be in bondage to corruption, is the vilest kind of servitude that can be thought. We can form no idea in our minds of so base a vassalage as this,—to be servants to brutal and unreasonable appetitions and desires.

Man being by the constitution of his own nature a reasonable creature, to have that very reason of his depressed into a subserviency to what is unreasonable, is, in itself, a real misery, whatever the common estimate concerning it may be; and whatsoever that is now, undoubtedly it will, within a very little while, cease to be what it is. They that glory in their fetters, that please themselves in being such slaves, in being "led captive by Satan at his will," they will shortly, very soon, (though not soon enough it may be,) change their minds. It is much to be feared that many may not change soon enough; but it will be very soon however: for how soon is the life of a man run out! and then the vain dream ends in the horror of an awakened soul; then it sees what it feels, and what estate it hath, by its own wilful choice, declined, and what it did addict itself unto, against the common sentiments and dictates which were not alien from them all that while, but only were not attended to. They were not at leisure to commune with themselves, and to consider what their own thoughts would suggest; and their misery is not the less for their having been under mistakes concerning this whole business all this while, when that mistake will be so soon detected, and they cannot be of that false opinion always. Indeed, we might admit, that happiness and misery stood always in opinion, if that opinion would always last: but when we are sure it will not, but that men will quickly alter their minds, as soon as their course is run out, then that will be found to be real misery before, which becomes now to be only misery apprehended. But again,

vi. A further thing wherein this misery lies, even that of men's minds, is the continual infatuation under which man, in his state of apostacy, is every where: and it is this that betrays him into that slavery which we have been now discoursing of. He is a slave, because he is a fool: he is fooled into the slavery which he so patiently undergoes. So you find these things connected in that Titus iii. 3. "We were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures." And (as I have heretofore had occasion to note) that Greek word which we render "foolish," as if it signified only the being without a right mind, it signifies more; it signifies being put out of a right mind. It is not being without a mind, for so is a stock and a stone, which were never capable of any such thing; but that word signifies being disminded, or having lost one's mind in the use of it: "I have a mind, but I have been never the better for it, I have not known how to employ it:" and this comes in immediate connexion with serving divers lusts and pleasures; men having been so mean and so base servants and slaves, because they were fools before; foolish, deceived, easily suffering themselves to be imposed upon; mocked, shamed into foolish expectations of felicity, where there is no such thing: so that in the very pursuit they still sink themselves lower and lower in miseries and death.

And hence it is, that that language is so usual in Scripture, of signifying a wicked man by the name of "a fool," as nothing is more familiar in the whole book of Proverbs, and sundry texts besides. Nor, indeed, is that sort of expression peculiar to the Scripture. Nothing hath been more usual among some of your more noted pagan moralists, than by the name of *sapiens*, a wise man, to denote a virtuous man, a good man. A good man is dignified with the name of a wise man; then the opposite hereto is obvious, that every evil man, every vicious man, is a fool: for it is not said of this or that person, more signally stupid or wicked, that he hath said in his heart, (as a fool,) "There is no God." But that, (as you see in the 14th and 53d Psalms, which are congenerous, and have almost the same passages in the former verses of the one and the other,) by that name is meant apostate man, in his state of apostacy. And so it is the general character of all men, yet remaining in that estate, and antecedently to their reduction and recovery out of it: "The fool hath said in his heart," not that there is no God, that is not the text, but—"no God," reckoning it to be rather the matter of their wish, than their assertion: it is capable of being understood in the optative, not in the indicative form; not as if they did say, "There is no God:" but, "O! that there were none;" the fool hath said in his heart, "Would there were no God."

And who those fools are, you see in what follows: God looks down from heaven on the children of men to see if there were any that did good, any that did seek after God; but they are all gone out of the way, all gone back, all in a universal revolt; none doing this good; to wit, not inquiring, not seeking after God, but all agreeing in the same wish: "O! that there were none; O! that there were no Ruler, no Lord over us; none to concern himself in any of our affairs; none to animadvert on our way and course, and to call us to account." Whereupon, nothing is more manifest than that according to the import of this scripture, the universality of apostate mankind lies under this character of folly. And somewhat it doth suppose, and somewhat it more formally includes. That which it supposeth is ignorance, the want of right notions of things; those men have in their minds, are generally false: but somewhat it more formally includes, and that is, the inefficacy of those notions which they have. And this is folly more formally, and which stands in an immediate connexion with misery, or rather, more naturally ioclusive of it.

In reference to things of principal concernment to men, they are not so generally ignorant as they are foolish; ignorance consisting in the not having of right notions, but folly consisting in the inefficacy of those that are right, in opposition to governing wisdom; that practical wisdom by which a man must steer his course, and walk agreeably and consistently unto that light and knowledge which he hath. And herein lies the common prevailing folly of this world; that in things wherein men have knowledge, they corrupt themselves, and their "foolish heart is darkened," as the expression is, Rom. i. 21. upon account whereof it is that God doth give them up, for their contending against

the light and knowledge which they have, unto those brutish sensualities, as that they should do things that are not convenient, things very disagreeable to the nature of man, to the dignity of a human, reasonable creature.

And so, also, the light which men have, is called "darkness," by equivalence; that is, it signifies no more to the proper purpose of light, to steer and conduct a man's way and course, than if it were real darkness. And so, if you will allow our blessed Lord to be a Judge and Master to us of such propriety of speech, you must acknowledge that to be a very proper expression, that the light that is in man's unconverted mind, is darkness. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Matt. vi. 23. That is, it answers no purpose of light, it serves for no such purpose as light is designed for, to guide a man in his way: they have such and such notions; but they do in their constant course run counter to them; and this is not ignorance, but folly, that they prevaricate with their own light, that they should know they ought to do so and so, and so and so they ought to choose; but they do choose and do quite the contrary.

And hence it is (which is the very *acme* of a man's misery; that is, the misery of his mind and spirit) his misery in this respect, that he is, by this means, made a bundle of contradictions and inconsistencies. And so hath nothing but confusion within him; or is in a continual war with himself; and there is no accord, no agreement, between his most rational sentiments and resolutions, and his consequent way and course: for if a man did sit down and deliberate but in the morning of any day, "How ought I to spend this day? ought I to employ it in following the inclinations of the man, or of the brute?" Certainly, he would think it more worthy of him to act like the man this day, than to employ the day, or his thinking, manly powers, only in pursuing the inclination of the brute. But then, if in fact he do run counter to any such sentiments as these, it is not because he is ignorant, but because he plays the fool. He hath not that wisdom that he ought, to govern his way, and to act suitably unto the clearest and most rational apprehensions of things. And so he is made up of nothing but inconsistencies with himself, or incoherencies, which show him to be a miserable creature. For what! do we think, did God make him such, (with such a mind that equals him with the angels of God,) to be employed in serving such desires, and pursuing such designs, as puts him below a brute?

vii. And a further thing in this state of misery, is the ignominy that men are hereby drawing upon themselves. And there is no man that considers, but will acknowledge that just ignominy is a misery, ignominy truly and justly so accounted. "Sin (we are told) is the reproach of any people." And then it must be as much the reproach of any person: as in that Prov. xiv. 24. every one accounts him a miserable man who is universally despised by every one, especially by the wisest and best of men. And suppose all mankind were, without a recovery, in that state of misery together, so that none must be found wiser or better than another, that could not at all mend the matter, with any of the individuals; as if it were not misery, because amongst men, none thought this to be misery, or none thought it to be truly ignominious. For we are to consider that we have other spectators, besides men, that are more capable of judging.

It signifies little to any man, what he thinks of himself, or what others think of him, in comparison of what is thought of him by him who is wisdom itself, and whose judgment of things never erreth. It is not what man thinks of himself, or commends himself for, but what the Lord commends, that is approved. And our Lord Jesus Christ is peculiarly called by the name of "wisdom;" it is his common style and character. And we must suppose him greatly to concern himself about the affairs of a world, whereof he is the immediate Creator. "All things were made by him, and without him was nothing made that was made." And therefore, that he hath a continual inspection (if he had not taken the Redeemer's part) upon this world. He is said to be "the image of the invisible God, and the first begetter of all creatures," and that fitly enough (as that title fitly enough admits to be read) for "by him were all things made, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers."

And then, we consider ourselves in this lower world under the continual view and inspection of those nobler creatures, that are intended by those names, they cannot but apprehend our apostacy, and much more the continuance of it, to be very ignominious and reproachful unto this whole order of creatures, fallen from their rightful Lord, because accomplices with the other apostate spirits of their own order, who were fallen before. How might it cut and wound a man's heart, to think what the resentments of these wise, holy, and kind, and benign creatures (the glorious angels of God) are, concerning our common state here in this world! We having had the same Author and Parent of our being with them; he being "the Father of spirits." An appellation equally agreeing to them, and to us, and not more to them than to us. To think that a world of such creatures, the progeny and offspring of the same Father, (the Father of spirits,) should be fallen to such a low pitch of misery and wretchedness, as they generally are; why sure they cannot but look upon our state and case to be most miserably ignominious and reproachful.

And therefore, they that continue in the apostacy, and are never recovered in this world, when they come to rise from the dead, they are said to "rise to shame and everlasting contempt," Dan. xii. 2. One that was an apostate from God, and would never be recovered, he cannot but be had in everlasting contempt. And unto an ingenuous mind, and one that God hath recovered to his wits, in some measure, nothing hath a sharper pungency upon the mind than shame. And then, to be under everlasting shame, everlasting contempt, by those wise and holy creatures that were so full of kindness and benignity in their complexion towards men, and the spirits of men, upon account of their near affinity, being in so great a measure of one kind and nature with us, must be a great misery.

They that are recovered are called "angels," fellow-associates with God. That they should be the devil's fellows, followers of those wicked angels that were in rebellion against their rightful, sovereign Lord; and that, too, when they might have made a better association; overtures being made to them for their recovery and return; overtures being made to them of the most kind reception, though they were prodigals and rebels against their Father: this must leave them under everlasting shame and contempt: and every one looks upon them now (that is, every good angel doth) to be infamous, being sunk to so low a state of shame and misery; and any wise and good man would scorn to keep such a one company, think it a reproach to him to reckon any such among his associates: and this will be the common case of apostate creatures, ever eternally, to wit, such as are not recovered, that is, that they are abandoned to shame and everlasting contempt. And their own reflection, hereupon, must needs be the most sharp and tormenting thing that can be thought, to think what they are, and what they might have been, if they had not declined and refused to comply with so apt and suitable methods for their recovery. But further,

viii. It is another ingredient in the misery of the state of man in the apostate world, that they have such continual sharp resentments in their minds of the external evils that befall them here. They live in a world wherein they are continually liable to those evils which do first affect their sense; but not only of external evils, they become internal, and fill their minds and spirits with torment. Herein lies much of their misery, they comfort themselves in such and such present enjoyments, that are variable, mutable, and uncertain, which they have this hour, and are gone the next. They have this hour a delightful and joyful dwelling, and it is of a sudden turned into flames. They had the other day a rich and plentiful estate; it hath all of a sudden taken wings and is gone. Health turned into wasting sickness, ease into tormenting pain, all on a sudden. All these are very considerable as they terminate in the external sense: but as they enter into the mind, so they become inward evils, their minds are continually liable to anguish and torment by such events, and upon such accounts. And then,

ix. When it is so, they have no relief from God; for they

have not before known the way of addressing to him. Good men in their external calamities, have this refuge always ready. David, when he had lost his all at Ziklag, yet comforted himself in the Lord his God. His wives and family were all led captive by the Amalekites; his goods rifled; his house and city burnt with fire; that place that was left him for retirement, all rendered uninhabitable, on a sudden, by consuming flames; the people themselves, (the companions of his flight,) spake of stoning him: thus was he in the most deplorable case that could be; "But he encouraged himself (it is said) in the Lord his God." But men, in their apostacy from him, have none of this comfort, none of this relief; they have obstructed and shut up the way of address to God against their own souls; they know not how to apply themselves to him.

Such a case as that you have represented, Hab. iii. 17, 18. It was a very forlorn and distressed state, and a case, he supposeth, that "the fig tree did not blossom; that no fruit was in the vine; the labour of the olive did fail; the field did yield no fruit; and the flocks were cut off from the stall;" nothing but perishings: "yet," saith he, "I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation." A most deplorable case it is, when, amidst whatsoever distresses a man hath, he hath no God to betake himself to, nor inclination to betake himself to God. Think of the distresses of Saul, (Sam. xxviii. 15.) as there he laments his own case: "The Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and giveth me no answer;" he could have no relief from God. It hath been the privilege of souls, that are returned to God, and come back to him, that when they are cast down under affliction, they could apprehend themselves not cast off: "They were in tribulation, but not in distress, afflicted, but not forsaken;" as 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9. But men, in an apostacy from God, have no relief, they know not where nor how to betake themselves: "They cry out because of the oppression of the mighty: but none saith, Where is God my Maker?" Job xxxv. 10. No, instead of that, they count him an enemy; and, there is really too much ground for it, while they persist, and go on in their wickedness.

And, these are heads that might further be insisted on, together with that general stupefaction, fitly called "death," or signified by the name of death, that possesseth the souls of the most in this present state; that, while in the midst of such miseries, they are so ingulphed, they feel them not, apprehend them not, or, at least, the worst, and most formidable part of that by which they are the most miserable;" the anger of the Lord preys upon them, as a consuming fire, and they know it not; it hath burnt them, yet they lay it not to heart," as the prophet expresseth it, Isa. xlii. 25. And that, indeed, is a most calamitous case, and calls for deep lamentation; the inhabitants of this earth, generally, as in the suburbs of hell, (as we have no other notion of this world, than as a portal and introduction into the eternal state of blessedness, or misery,) and, that men should be so near perishing, having wrath to the uttermost coming upon them, and yet, so generally unconcerned. This is a like case to that of a lethargic body, that may be tossed and rolled hither and thither; you may, perhaps, cut it and wound it, but it feels not. As little sensible are the minds or spirits of men of this state of their case, of those miseries, by which they are now wretchedly miserable, and are in danger of being finally and eternally so.

With what lamentations might we bewail the case of apostate men, upon this account, would we but admit the thoughts of the common case to enter and sink into our minds and hearts. Men are so strangely habituated to misery, that it is now become their element, and natural to them: they can see themselves gradually sinking lower and lower into death, and might apprehend that consummate death was at hand, but they are not startled and amazed; no amazing thought has place in the minds of men, to awaken them, and make them bethink themselves, while it would be seasonable, and while any thing might be done towards their escape from the wrath which is to come: but they remain, generally, in that dead sleep, which binds up all their powers, and are like so to do, (if wonderful mercy prevent not,) till flames awaken them out of their pleasant dream. And now I add, further,

LECTURE XXXI.*

X. THE consequent discomposure of the whole frame of man, I mean of the inward man, as the apostle distinguisheth of man, making him double, a man and a man; an outward man and an inward man, 2 Cor. iv. 16. Now for this inward man, there is a universal discomposure of the whole frame. They that will look upon what we insisted on before, but as a reputative evil, to wit, ignominy, must reckon this a most real one; that is, that that noble piece of workmanship, the inward man, is so marred, and spoiled, and discomposed throughout, and become a far more monstrous thing than any dislocations, or transpositions of the parts of these bodies of ours, can make them: though it would be easy to suppose it possible that men might be, as to the outward man, a most monstrous sort of creature, by the mere transposition of parts; yet, let any the most horrid metamorphosis of that kind you can think of be supposed, and, it is nothing to that discomposure of the frame of the inward man, that is to be found and observed in every yet apostate son of Adam, not converted, not returned to God, out of that state of apostacy.

For, as to what we have insisted on already, (that infatuation that is upon the minds of men every where,) consider, what must hereupon be consequent; that conductive governing light, that should lead men in the whole of their course, it is extinct, it is darkness, as our Saviour speaks in Matt. vi. 23. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" It is not said, concerning an unregenerate man, that he hath darkness, in him; but, that he himself is darkness, Eph. v. 8. "Ye were sometimes darkness;" their governing light was lost and gone, and then, what must become of the man? What is the state and frame of the inward man hereupon? Why you are to consider, (that light being supposed,) what was to be under its direction and government, in man, to wit, the inward man. There was his will, which was to be guided by that directing principle, but it is gone. And, there were all the passions of the soul, that were to have been moderated thereby, but, that being gone, the will is under no such guidance, the passions under no such moderation. What a horrid creature is man, hereupon, become, in the complexion of his soul, and inward man!

For his will, that is naturally wont to be called *cæca potentia*, an unseeing faculty: why, admit that it were properly to be so called, according to the natural constitution and frame in man, it was yet to be guided by a faculty that could see, by a seeing mind; but now, when an unseeing will is to be guided also by an unseeing mind, the blind is to lead the blind, (to allude to that of our Saviour,) what will become of this, but a being plunged into the ditch? This is the common case with man; that will of his, which is the commanding faculty in the soul of man, comes to be itself under the conduct of no reason, an unreasonable will. O! what a fearful case is this, when, yet, it is most manifestly the common case.

For, do but ask, What is the object of that faculty, that we call the *will*, in man? It is primarily his end, that is the object of it; that is, good; for good and end are wont to be taken for convertible terms; the means are only good by the goodness of the end. Now, when a man wills his end unreasonably, without the ducture or guidance of any seeing, discerning principle; and, to think of a man acting accordingly, shaping his course accordingly, and, to think of all men doing so, what a monstrous deformity is this of that noble creature; though it be true, indeed, that many are found to act rationally; that is, indeed, wilily and subtlely enough in the pursuit of such and such ends that they do design; but yet, it is plain, they do, universally, mistake their end itself, and so the whole life of man can be nothing else but a continual error: "They do always err in their hearts, not having known my ways." What doth

* Preached June 9th, 1694.

it signify, that a man can pursue such and such ends, with courage and dexterity; but these ends themselves, either he may gain them, or he may gain them not? Many times he never gains them; but, if he doth gain them, they are worth nothing. Why, here is a life lost, thrown away by the very complexion of the inward man; this he is inclined to do, to take such a course, as by which his whole life is lost, and thrown away.

A thing that that pagan moralist most aptly animadverts upon, when he saith, "Men are very shy of destroying their lives all at once, losing their lives altogether; but they make no difficulty of losing them all by parts;" that is, this day of my life I pursue an end, that is worth nothing; and I do so to-morrow, and the next day, and so from year to year, as long as my life lasts. Here is a life quite thrown away; and a man is led to it by the inward complexion and temper of his soul, as he hath mis-made himself, mis-shaped himself; for he was made upright, but he would be trying inventions, and this it hath come to. This is plain and evident concerning all the world of apostate, unrenewed men; that whereas their will is the commanding, governing principle of their lives, it doth command *nulla ratione*, it universally commands without reason, and so must signify as much of misery to a man, as if his eyes were out, and he among pits and precipices, where he canuot do so much as set a foot, without danger of perishing presently.

It is plain, the minds of men, as they lie under the direction of such a misguided will, they are conducted by no rational principle at all, upon this ground, that it is the end which is the principal object of every one's will. But they are universally out as to their end, running a quite counter-course to what they should, through the whole course of their time; so that, in this respect, the apostate, unregenerate man, is *natas ad miseriam*, he is wholly framed unto misery; and to nothing else but to misery. It is true, men have generally some practical notions of truth, that is, notions of truth about practical matters, that should be the principal things. They have generally some apprehensions of God, some apprehensions of a future state, some apprehensions of the immortality of their souls; but these notions are too weak and debile to do the office of principles. They do not do the office of principles, in that nobody steers his course, (antecedently to regenerating grace,) pursuant to any such principles. And if you would reduce the determination of men's wills to any principles at all, they can agree to no other principles than such as these; (though they should more generally disclaim and disavow them, yet they are apt to be governed by them, and no other;) that is, that a man is made for himself; that he is his own end; that he that hath made him, hath no right to rule him; that from him, from whom he hath received his being, he is not to expect blessedness; but that he is to seek it in inferior things, things inferior to himself; that time is far more considerable and valuable than eternity; that mortal flesh is far more valuable than the immortal spirit. The actual resolutions and determinations of men's wills which do govern their course, and according to which they lead their lives, do only square with such principles as these; though, when they are made explicit, they would be ashamed of them, and say they own no such principles; yet they own them most expressly as they can, as emphatically as they can. For a whole course of actions is a far more speaking thing than words can be: words do only express a man's present sense, the present sense of mind; but a series and course of actions do speak his constant and continued sense.

And O! what a miserable creature is man, upon this account, when the habitual complexion of his soul leads him through his whole course, all his days, all his lifetime, but to pursue shadows and lying vanities; and at length to lie down in sorrow, hopeless, endless sorrow.

And as the will is the so misguided thing, so the principle is wanting, too, that should moderate the passions.

And what a hell do they create in every man to himself, or make him to himself. Every one, if he would but consider and reflect, might be so far a preacher to himself upon this theme, as to save me or any man the labour of representing this case—"What a miserable condition the soul of man must be in, being the seat of so many passions, all left destitute of the conduct and government of any rational principles that should conduct them aright." Unreasonable desires, what a hell must they make! desires either after that which cannot be had, or which is not worth the having; either what is unattainable, or will do me no good; or I shall be never the better if I do attain them. To have any soul the continual seat and subject of such desires, and of no better, what a fearful case is this!

His delights, themselves, (though that may seem a paradox,) they are most fatal to him, and contribute as much (nay it may be more) to his misery, as his desires; because they detain him, they put a stop to him; they divert his course. Delight is the *quies appetitus in appetibili*, it is that by which the soul takes up its end, and is at a stop: but in what? in the enjoyment of wind and vanity, that is unsatisfying, very unsatisfactory. It is detained and diverted, it is withheld, by these, from pursuing what would do it any good, or contribute to its true felicity; "The woman that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth." Do you think it is not as true in the other sex? whoever lives immersed in sensual delights and pleasures, they are dead while they live. It is but a dying life that they live.

And their very hopes make them miserable; they are miserable by their own hopes, continually reaching out after that they can never compass; or if they do, still they do but fill themselves with the east wind. Hope is the spring of endeavours; for no man will endeavour for what he is hopeless of. But they do but labour for the wind in all that they endeavour, and possess and reap the east wind; that is all that they can reach to.

Their good things will often run cross to them; and then how doth that passion of anger corrode and tear them! what a rack is there in the soul upon this account especially when it works up as high as malice against men! men that they do an injury to, if it arise to envy, that most unreasonable passion; that I would rather be miserable because another appears nearer to happiness, in my apprehension, than I; he enjoyeth what is better, or he is better than myself, therefore I will be miserable; that is, I will be envious.

Add to this, the meditation and study of revenge, whether for real or apprehended wrong done to me. It is the most cutting, wounding revenge, that every man takes upon himself. "Such a one, I think, hath hurt me, done me harm, I will revenge it upon myself:" for it is the person himself that feels it most of all; (if he have any sense left in him;) it makes him a continual hell in himself. It makes him a devil to himself, as he would be to another man. It may be he misseth that; but as to himself he doth not miss it.

And as to his griefs, unreasonable griefs, what a deluge of misery are they! when men lament and mourn about things unreasonably, beyond proportion, (as every unrenewed man is apt to do,) he doth deluge himself with those sorrows: and his fears, by which he is continually prophesying dismal things to himself, what a miserable creature do they make him!

And all now upon this one account, all the things of this kind, do meet in this one juncture, in this one point; to wit, that there is no right mind to lead a man: that principle that was originally to have been conductive of his course, is gone, and it can never be supplied but by the Spirit of wisdom and holiness from above: while that is yet withheld and wanting to him, what is it that doth govern in the man? It is the spirit of this world, as it is called: "We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God." Every unregenerate man, he is in his spirit under the government of the spirit of this world, one common genius which adapts and attempers men in their habitual frame into this world, unto this lower sphere. "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." The contest lies between spirit and spirit; as to what part God hath in this world, and as to what part the devil hath in this world. If the spirit of this world doth govern in any one, and be the ruling principle in him, that unites him with this world; and upon that, all his appetitions, and all the various motions and passions of his soul, are determined, and confined to this present world, this sensible world; he is linked to that in spirit, he hath

a spiritual, vital union only with this world, and so feels all the pangs, all the paroxysms, that, in this lower region, he is subject to: he is always shaken with this shaking world, and tossed and hurried, hither and thither, as that is.

What a miserable creature must apostate man be, upon this account! This world being become such a region of death and of misery, the spirit of this world plungeth and ingulfs him in all that misery, makes him a continual partaker in it, as that wherewith he only hath a vital union. That Spirit that is of God, would unite him with the other world, and attemper him to that which the power of that Spirit (when this world is grievous and troublesome to him) might ascend and go up, and have his way above, (as the way of the wise is,) to depart from hell beneath; but, the spirit of this world entangles him, insnares him, fixeth him in that gulf, that he cannot ascend; can be carried out of this world by no thought, no vivid desire, no hopes upwards; his all lies here.

And that which is yet more tremendous in this case, is, his continual unwillingness, and dread of leaving this world; that fear, to wit, the fear of death. What a miserable creature must that make him, to be under the continual expectation of what he knows is inevitable, and he cannot escape; so that his only remedy in this is not to think of it! His relief must be to unteach himself, his own nature; that is, whereas he is naturally a thinking thing, be is to stifle such thoughts as are proper and suitable to the state of his case. All his care must be to make himself not think of that, than which no thought can be more proper and suitable to him. For, when I do certainly know that I am, as to this present world, this present state, a mortal creature, I should, therefore, bethink myself, with all the seriousness and concern imaginable, What shall come next? I dwell in an earthly tabernacle, which I know must come down, but I do not know, when I shall dislodge, where to have another habitation. I cannot say, "I have a building with God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens:"—no; the spirit that governs me is the spirit of this world, and that confines me only to this world.

A man, in this case, is miserable among all his enjoyments, when he thinks it goes never so well with him; "I have what heart can wish for," as well as that fool in the Gospel propounded to himself, to have it with him, "I will say to my soul, Take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years;" upon this account he is pronounced a fool: "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be taken from thee." And whereas, that is spoken with peculiar reference to a rich man, yet you must not confine it so; for our Saviour saith in the next words, "So it is with every man that layeth up treasure for himself, (designs treasures to himself on earth, as every man doth one way or other,) and is not rich towards God." "This night shall thy soul be required of thee." O! dreadful word, to a man that hath his all here! O the torture that such a man must be subjected to, (if he thinks, if he considers,) that hath his all lying in this world, and yet, he knows he cannot stay here long: "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness."

This is so great a thing, that it is made one part of the design of the mediation of Christ, and his redemption, for which he became a man, and for which he took upon him flesh and blood, that he might be so: "that he might, by death, destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, (undo him as to his design and purpose,) and deliver those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." To be under this unreasonable fear, what a dreadful thing is this! In this respect, it is to be called unreasonable, because, when a man finds that the thing is necessary and unavoidable, that he is afraid of, all wisdom would direct him to reconcile himself to necessity, and never to be at rest in his own spirit, till he finds that as he is to think of death with certainty, so he may think of it with complacency too; till, I say, he may upon good terms so do. And again,

xi. We are to consider, as to what is contained in this misery of man, that as (which I formerly told you) they have in all this no relief from God, so God hath a real displeasure towards this wretched creature in his present state; and if in his favour he life, in his disfavour is death: which way soever he turns, or what way soever he thinks of comforting himself, he is still under a *nemesis;* divine displeasure hangs over his head. "God is angry with the wicked every day. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. On the wicked he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of their cup." While they continue wicked, and as such, that relates them to the divine wrath, constitutes them the proper subjects of it, upon which it preys as fire doth upon suitable fuel. And,

xii. They are not without some apprehensions hereof: misgiving they have in their own minds: there is a kind of gloominess and a dark shadow, that is cast by guilt over the soul and spirit of a man. He is not without some secret surmises, as men cannot rid themselves of all notions of God. A person that is habitually wicked, under the power of sin as a governing principle in him, cannot but apprehend him as an offended God; though his apprehensions be not so distinct, so formed, so explicit, yet such secret gnawings and corroding thoughts there will be, conscience accusing as well as excusing by turns, as it ought to be read: self-accusing thoughts do take turns in the soul. The writings of heathens are full of expressions, what the gnawings and tortures are of a guilty, misgiving conscience, of a self-accusing conscience. But, in the last place, which was mentioned the last time,

xiii. That which is the more common case, and is more fitly signified by the name of death, is, the stupefaction that more generally, and more ordinarily, takes place in the minds of men; that they are without feeling. Wrath is upon them, and they do not know it. Some more unformed thoughts they have, but not explicit and distinct ones such as might affect their hearts, and enter into their ver souls: more generally their disease is a lethargy, without sense, and without feeling. And you know how sad the case may be in that respect, with the diseased body of a man. We do not reckon it the better when it can feel no pain, while the matter of the disease is present, and all the morbific matter remains. If it do not only endanger, but stupify, it is so much the more dangerous in common apprehension: and that is the case of the soul of an unrenewed, unregenerate man, that he can be tossed, and hurried, and torn, even by himself, by his own passions within him, this way and that way, and yet, he doth not reflect and think with himself, "I am a miserable creature;" but misery is become his element: where things do not *gravitare*, they do not lie with pressure, as nothing is pressed by being in its element. And misery is become so connatural to men, in this their present state, that misery is round about them, and they feel it not; the anger of God is preying upon them, consuming their souls, but they lay it not to heart, as in Isa. xlii. latter end, the expression is; divine anger is kindling upon this world, but they know it not; and destroying and consuming it, but they take it not to heart.

This is that death that is passed over all, as to the spiritual import of the expression, or, as it denotes the spiritual evils that do now infest the souls of men. But I would, before I had gone off from this head, have said somewhat by way of *Use* to this particular. And though I am prevented of saying much, yet, plain it is,

That whereas man, in this state of apostacy, is now a miserable creature, it may be gathered, from all that hath been said upon this head, that he generally mistakes the cause of his misery, and so, is as much likely to mistake the way and method of his cure. He little thinks his misery is a self-sprung thing, and, that he hath the fountain of it in himself. This will not enter into the minds of men. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways," Prov. xiv. 14. That word, because it is rendered "backslider," may strike a wrong notion into the minds of many, as if, thereby, were meant an hypocritical pretender to religion, who hath apostatized, and made a defection: but, the word carries no notation at all of any other apostacy, than the common apostacy. And it is plain, that by "the backslider in heart" there, is meant the wicked man, in general, a sinner, in opposition to a righteous and good man, as, generally, the two parts of several verses up and down in this book, do distribute men into

good and bad, by one appellation or another. And, that is a proper expression, by which the bad is distinguished from the good man, in that verse: the word signifies perverse, froward; a fit character for a wicked man, an unconverted man; such a one "shall be filled with his own ways," as the good man is so satisfied from himself. The good man is not the first fountain of happiness to himself, but a subordinate one a good man is, and so is satisfied from himself. But the wicked man is the prime and first fountain of all misery to himself: and, therefore, when these wicked ones have any sense at all of their own miseries, they do create to every man a hell within himself.

But this is a thing least of all apprehended: men generally say, "What is the matter with me? what aileth me? I cannot be well, I cannot be quiet;" and, they would have this or that thing rectified, in their external circumstances, and they think that will do their business; but, alas! that will not do. They talk of flying from their misery, but that they cannot do, unless they could fly from themselves. I remember the moralist saith, "Go whither thou wilt, that intolerable companion (thyself) will go with thee, wheresoever thou flyest, and layest down thine head." Till thou art new-made, thou art self-made, for misery. God must new-make thee, if ever thou art happy. And, therefore, an amazing wonder it is, that men should so much mind things that are foreign to them, and never cast their eye upon themselves, or think how it is within. They are greatly concerned how affairs go in France, in Flanders, in Germany; but never think how it goes within. O! what a miserable world will it be, (it may be often said by such,) if that side prevail over the other side! What a miserable world will this be then! But men do thus think altogether amiss, and besides the purpose: what good will it do to me if so good men, and never so good a cause, prevail and prosper in the world, when I have my own hell within myself? I shall be a miserable creature still, till all be rectified within. It is not a new world, but being a new man, that can ease me, relieve me, and make me a happy creature.

It doth not lie in the power of all the world to make me a happy or miserable man. You may think, if such and such a party of men prevail, we are all undone, we shall be very miserable. But, I tell you, it will be in their power only to make you miserable, in whose power it is to make you ill men. If it be not in the power of any in all the world to make you ill men, they can never make you miserable men. If it were in the power of men, to pluck you off from God, to disaffect you to him, that you take no complacency in him, that you cannot love him, nor pour out your soul to him, this would make you miserable. But, it is not in the power of all this world to make any man miserable, that doth not make and keep himself wicked.

"And so death passed over all men."

LECTURE XXXII.*

You know our business upon these latter words hath been, more lately, to give an account of that death, which is said to have passed over all. And, therein, we proposed to consider it,

(1.) In its nature, in which respect it is common to all. And,

(2.) In its degrees, in respect whereof it admits of great difference, according to the several circumstances of men's states. We have been hitherto speaking to it upon the former account, and labouring to show you its ambitus and extent, of how vast a comprehension it is, what a mighty sum of misery it carries in it. That misery, we showed, must involve,

[1.] Bodily death, with all the tendencies and appurtenances (as I may say) thereunto. And then, we have more largely insisted,

[2.] In showing that here must be included in it, death spiritual, such as the souls of men are liable to, and susceptible of; death, not in the natural, but in the moral sense. In the former sense, souls cannot die, as is an agreed thing among all: and, in the moral sense, because morality doth comprehend both men's duty, and their felicity, we are not, (as was told you,) here, to consider it in opposition to the former of these; for so we spake to this death, as it falls under the head of sin, in that other clause of the verse; but, as it stands in opposition to felicity, and to the real blessedness of the souls of men. Or, (as was told you,) that aversion from God, which sums up all in point of evil; as a right propension towards him, or love to him, sums up all in point of good. That aversion from God, it may be either from him as the Sovereign Authority, and so it stands in opposition to our duty; or, as it is an aversion from him as the Sovereign Good, and, so it stands in opposition to our felicity. And so we considered spiritual death. And, it is called death (as hath been noted to you) in an equivalent sense, as that which serves not the end it was designed for, and so is all one as if it were not. When the souls of men will not serve the natural end to which such beings were originally designed, it is all one as if they were not. They are lost as to their proper end, both as they were to be serviceable to God, and as they were capable subjects of felicity for themselves; for, that double end was to be designed by them, though the one in subordination to the other.

Now, I go on in the next place,

[3.] To note further to you, that, under the name of "death," we may also understand that condemnation, which the whole apostate world lies under. This is a thing that, fitly enough, is to be conceived under the notion of this death, that is said to be "passed upon all." Whatsoever there is of present death upon this world, it lies under a doom to more, to that which I may say is more deadly, and more dreadful.

And I need not insist, in opening to you so obvious and so plain a thing to any one's understanding, how properly a condemned man may be said to be a dead man. A world under a doom unto a future misery, (besides all that is actually incumbent on it,) how properly, in that respect, death may be said to have passed over all! One that is under condemnation is dead in law; he hath no longer a legal title to his life. The law doth not further protect his life, is no longer a guardian to it; yea, and it doth not only withhold its protection, but doth direct its sword against such a one's life, and cut it off.

This is the common state of this world; it lies under a doom: besides all the actual miseries that are upon it, it is doomed to worse; "death hath passed over all;" but that death is in a continual tendency, (as being yet but begun,) to a consummate state of death. Death finished, is approaching; and men are, by the righteous judgment of God, led on, hurried on, towards the consummate state of misery or death, that is most righteously determined upon them. And this, the context can by no means allow us to overlook. It is inculcated again and again, in the 16th and 18th verses of this chapter, "that judgment is come upon all men to condemnation." This whole apostate world stands condemned by the righteous judgment of God. And so, as justification is, in a relative and respective sense, the life of the soul; so is condemnation the death of it. That passage, in the same context—"the justification of life," it carries that manifest import; and condemnation doth as truly carry death in it, as justification doth life.

Antecedently to that change which God makes in the state of men, condemnation is a thing belonging to them, as when such a change is made, in the state of any that are brought into union with Christ: "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Romans viii. 1. But that tells us what the common state and case of the rest is; there is condemnation to them, they lie under a universal condemnation; they are, (as the apostle's most apt and emphatical expression is,) ὑπόδικος, we render it, become guilty; the meaning is, impleadable before God, liable to be impleaded by law, in *jus vocari*, to be called to account. And, as the course that men have held, according to natural corrupt inclination, is unaccountable, so they are liable to be brought under judgment before the Lord.

* Preached June 23d, 1694.

This condemnation is to be understood to be as its opposite justification, either (as some fitly enough express the matter under those terms) constitutive, or sentential: either they are, by the constitution of the law, condemned, and that is to be condemned virtually, by that sentence which is written in the law, by which they are to be judged; or sententially, which is that condemnation that is to be pronounced upon them at the last by the mouth of their Judge. Justification is taken the same, two ways. A person may be said to be justified, either when the law doth constitute him just, or else there is a final justification, when he is pronounced or declared so, from the judgment-seat, by the mouth of the Supreme and Universal Judge.

It is in the former sense that the world lies under condemnation. As a person that hath violated and broken the law, by the commission of some capital crime, though he be not formally condemned, by the mouth of the judge, yet the law condemns him beforehand. And there must be the less difference in this case, *in foro divino*, than would be *in foro humano*; because the judgment of God will always, at last, pass according to the mind and intendment of the law, when many things may prevent its doing so in human judicatures: this is one sense wherein death is further said to have passed over all. All are under a general doom; their lives are actually forfeited; the forfeiture may be taken whenever God will. Men are at mercy, respited from the utmost of death, and by patience, (without promise,) as a condemned person may be executed whenever the prince pleaseth; there is no moment of time given to him; he can claim no addition to his life. Thus it is with all men. "So death hath passed over all." And lastly,

[4.] We are to consider within the compass and extent of this death, that eternal death itself, unto which this doom, this judgment, makes men liable and subject: and that hath actually passed upon as many as have died impenitent, and not reduced, not brought back to God, through the several thousands of years that are revolved and gone over this world already. And as to what remains of human generation, death may be said to have passed in that respect, even over all of them too, it being as sure that they will come into the depth of that death, as if they were plunged into it already,—supposing their continuing not reconciled, not reduced, not recovered, out of the common state of apostacy. Concerning that death, it doth more properly belong to another topic or place in theology; and therefore I shall not discourse of it here; only hint thus much concerning it, that it cannot differ in kind, and in the main substance, from that spiritual death, which we have spoken of already. As spiritual life doth not differ substantially from eternal life; so nor doth this spiritual death differ in substance from eternal death, any more than a child newly born doth differ in nature, or specifically, from a grown man. Spiritual life will grow up into eternal life. Spiritual death will grow up into death eternal. It will, hereafter, consist and lie in separation from God, and in subjection to his wrath; even as now it doth; the difference hercin is only as to the degree, and as to duration and continuance. There is now a loss of God, as our best and most satisfying Good; and so there will be to all eternity. There is now a subjection to his displeasure, and various manifold impressions therefrom; there will be higher and fuller degrees hereafter. Both that which is called *pœna damni*, the *punishment of loss*, and that which is called *pœna sensus*, the *punishment of sense*, will have unspeakable, unconceivable additions hereafter. But there is the same thing in reality now, with every ungodly man, every one that is not reconciled to God. Though, by the way, I could never satisfy myself concerning the fulness of these terms, *pœni damni*, and *pœna sensus*, the punishment of loss, and the punishment of sense; for, undoubtedly, the former, the punishment of loss, is as sensible as the other, every whit; we do not know but that it may be more so. Souls will be eternally stung with their loss, as much as with any positive suffering: as a man may be as sensibly pained by hunger, as he may be by a dagger, that strikes him to the heart. But that only by the by.

These are the great things, that this same *death* in the text, which is said to "have passed over all," must be understood to comprehend and contain within the extent of it. And so far we have considered it but in its kind, wherein it is common to all. But if,

(2.) We should also consider it in its degrees, so there will be found to be great differences. It will not be in degree the same to all, but differ and vary, according to the very various circumstances of men's states, whether we consider the matter with reference to the natural tendency of things, or whether we consider it, with reference to the righteous judgment of God: both in nature and divine judgment, there must needs be great differences between the miseries of some, and of others. There is, in this present state, and there will be, no doubt, in the future state too, where all the subjects of wrath are called "vessels of wrath;" but those vessels are not all of the same capacity; some vessels will hold more than others do; and their capacity and measure hereafter, will be much according to what is here in this present state.

And, I shall only here hint, at some of the more obvious things that must difference the state of men, in point of that misery which hath deluged, and will deluge for ever, the apostate world. It hath different degrees of depth, as the ocean hath; which, though in some places we may suppose it a hundred fathom deep, and in other places not above two or three, yet, it is deep enough to drown all. So is this deluge of misery upon fallen mankind; though as to some deeper than it is as to others, yet, it is deep enough to drown all in misery and destruction. As the apostle's expression is, 1 Tim. vi. 9. But to name to you some things that more obviously do appear to difference the case of men's states, in point of misery, or that death which here is said to have passed over all. As,

[1.] There must needs be some difference, from the better or worse complexion of nature, that is to be found with some and with others; of which some heathens do fitly enough speak. There is such a thing as good nature in this world, obvious enough to the observation of every one, as there is ill nature, observable enough in others. These must make very great differences in the state of men's case, if we consider the matter according to the tincture and tendency of mere nature. So that, whereas the natures of some do render them less propense to vice, it is also possible, that, as they are less vicious, this will be one of the measures that they will hereafter be less miserable, but miserable still; and notwithstanding not being reconciled to God, being turned, renewed, changed, never made partakers of the divine nature.

But, if you consider the case morally, than the better natured any are, supposing that they do violence to that nature, they spoil that nature, and make it much worse; —then, I say, the better natured the more miserable; for they are undoubtedly the more guilty. Many well-tempered persons, of much ingenuity, of good disposition, that are not inclined to do ill things to other men; but they are continually propense to all acts of injustice towards God; him they will not know; from him they are habitually alienated; never look after reconciliation with him. It may be, when they were not naturally inclined, yet, they have taught themselves to be more grossly and sensibly vicious; and so have that way, and in that respect, spoiled a good nature; done, in that respect, continual violence to themselves; learned to be wicked, even beyond what they were inclined; here must be so much the deeper condemnation.

A thing, I am afraid, very little considered by parents, in reference to the children of their womb and loins, branches of themselves, whose tempers they make it their business to cultivate as they grow up. But, many parents have not only neglected this, but have made it their business to instil (as much as in them lay) vicious inclinations into them; or they have so managed matters towards them as to make them craspish, peevish, and froward, to imbitter their tempers, and to lay foundations betimes, both of present and everlasting misery, in their very tempers, in their spoiled, or not improved, tempers. Many parents might more mercifully, with more kindness, pluck out their children's eyes, and cut off their limbs, than indulge the vicious humours which appear in them betimes; and wherein is a foundation laid for their misery in this world.

as well as for future and eternal misery, when their tempers are so spoiled, as to be cross, peevish, froward, discontented, quarrelsome. Alas! much of this might have been qualified, and prevented, betimes. But in the mean time, that there is such a thing as better and worse nature, which may, in different respects, make present and future misery, more or less, is out of all question. But,

[2.] That which is more considerable, is, that they must be plunged deeper into this death, who live in sin to the last, unconverted to God, and unreduced under the Gospel, than they that never enjoyed a Gospel; this must make a vast difference in the states of men. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness more than light," John iii. 19. When the Gospel itself becomes deadly to men, that is a most terrible sort of death;—to die by a Gospel plague, is a most terrible way of dying! Death passed upon all, but it triumphs more, and with greater terror, over that part of the world where Gospel light shines, but is wickedly resisted, opposed, sinned against, and the design of it counterwrought; that is, as in that mentioned place it is expressed, "Men love darkness more than light;" the darkness better pleaseth them, is more grateful to them, as it gives them opportunity of being wicked still. The light offends men; they cannot endure (as it is in that context) to have their deeds brought to the light; resolved they are upon a course of wickedness. Where there is an honest, sincere mind, he affects light, runs into the light, that it may appear that his works are wrought in God, that the divine tincture and impress that is upon his works, may show itself, and appear. There is that in them, which is very agreeable and congruous to the light. But, when men have a resolution of being wicked, then they are for a corner. "There is no darkness, or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves:" that implies what they affect; they would have a shadow of death wherein to hide themselves; that which they covet is, "Where shall we be hid?" It is a night they seek, and a cloud; *nocte peccatur*. When there is a course of dispensation kept on foot towards men all their time, to keep them within the light, to hold them within the region and verge of Gospel light; this is that which they could wish extinct; "O! that this light were out." As they are brought speaking in that Isa. xxx. 1. "Cause the holy One of Israel to cease from before us. His bright and glorious appearances, they are ungrateful and unwelcome to us. O! who will take away God, and that divine light, that shines so much to our disturbance and annoyance; we wish it gone."

But more tolerable will it be to Sodom and Gomorrah, to Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, than to Capernaum and Bethsaida, (as our Saviour inculcates in the 11th Matt. 22. and onwards, when he upbraids those cities, where his wonderful works were done,) where there were so bright and glorious appearances of divine power, attesting and bearing witness to that truth which he came to publish to the world. O! wo, wo to them, among whom there have been such glorious appearances of God, but counter-striven and resisted. Though there will be one common hell to all in time, yet, the hell of Sodom and Gomorrah will be a more tolerable hell than theirs. And again,

The case must, in point of misery, be worse with them who, living under the Gospel, had a better parentage, were born of godly parents, than with others with whom it was not so. And that upon a double account;—because that such would certainly devote them to God; and—as they would be more intent upon educating them for God. Here come in very great differences in the case of such, from the more common case.

First, I say, they that were born of religious parents, those parents would, by conscience of duty, be obliged and urged to devote them to God; to take care that those great and venerable names, the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Ghost, should, according to divine appointment, be early named upon them, to signify whose they were, and to whom they did belong. But they afterwards, when they are grown up, refuse to stand to that covenant, according to the tenor whereof so early a dedication was made of them. "We will not have our parents' God to be our God." Thy friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not. A horrid thing that were: but how horrid to forsake our God, and our father's God! When man's case shall, in this respect, be brought into judgment at the last day—Thou wast born of such and such parents, that recognised God's right of thee betimes; for it is only a recognition of God's right. It is not the creation of any right to him, nothing can be given him that was not his before, but only a recognising his right, and this hath been done with solemnity. "But thou, when thou wast grown up, wouldst not stand to the covenant of thy father; thy father's God should not be thy God." How much more dreadful must be the case of such, than that of pagans, in the grossest darkness! And again,

Secondly, Such parents must be supposed to have educated them for God, pursuantly to their having devoted them to him. But, alas! many in our days have counted it a glory to have broken loose out of the fetters of a pious education; to have thrown them off, torn their bonds, as Samson did his withes and cords: and therein they think they have showed themselves mighty men; that this was a great piece of fortitude and courage, to outface God and heaven; and to bend themselves to a course of wickedness, in opposition to whatsoever of good principles were endeavoured to be implanted; that is, principles of truth, which were laboured to be infused and inlaid into their minds; and of practical truth, such as might have a tendency to form and govern their practice. Their godly parents did, no doubt, charge their own consciences with duty, in this kind, to teach their children the train of their ways betimes, that "when they were old they might not depart from them." But as for such as have formed their way, and broken loose, undoubtedly the child of a pagan, though it perish, yet perisheth under less guilt than such. And,

[4.] There cannot but be great differences, too, according as among those that live under the Gospel; some have lived under a more powerful ministry than others: where the same Gospel for substance is preached, it cannot but be acknowledged, that it is preached by some more convictively, with more pungency, and with greater aptitude to do good, than others: many are more closely urged, and dealt withal, from time to time, in the ministry of the word, than others are. And, according as men's case may differ in this respect, so will this death, that passeth on them, have more or less of deadliness in it. And (as was said) when the Gospel is "a savour of death," so as that men die of a Gospel plague, it is a fearful way of dying. But the savour of the Gospel, or the odour, rather, (as that word should be read,) is stronger, as it is diffused by some than by others. But if it prove deadly, by how much the stronger, by how much the more of efficacy, so much the more, may it be said, doth the death that ensueth partake of the horror of death. And again,

[5.] There cannot but be great difference, too, according as some do sin against greater convictions of conscience than others. Having more of internal light let into their minds, and which, therefore, they are put to have a closer contest and grapple; the case cannot but be so much the worse, unto how much the more of conviction men do oppose themselves in a wicked course; convinced, but yet, go on: convinced that they should turn to God, but never turn; that they should break off such wicked ways, but they persist in them; that they should engage in such and such ways of duty, but they decline them. That conscience which doth not govern, it doth judge, it doth doom, and doom so much the more heavily, by how much the more of resistance its tendency to govern meets with. And,

[6.] There must be deeper degrees of this misery and death, according as there have been stronger strivings of the Spirit of God; God still resisted and striven against. Where his Gospel is, there his Spirit will more or less, and in one kind or other, be at work; but it works at liberty. God works in you "to will and to do of his own good pleasure." And I doubt the emphasis of that Scripture is not noted as it should be, and the correspondence of part to part in it, Phil. ii. 12, 13. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh (or is working) in you, to will and to do of his good pleasure." Work because he worketh. There is the sub-

stance of the precept enforced by that which we are to consider as substantial in the motive. Do you work, because he worketh. But then, there is a circumstance in the precept, unto which a circumstance in the motive doth also correspond: work you with fear and trembling. Why? because God works at will and pleasure, under no obligation, but may desist, may give off, when he will. Now then, he being at perfect liberty, under no bonds or tie, he may strive longer with some, than he doth with others: and, according as he doth longer continue to strive, or as he doth more earnestly plead, (but yet in a way short of victorious, all-conquering grace, which bears all down before it,) so, the guilt cannot but be the greater, that is incurred by continual resistance; and, they must needs sink themselves so much the deeper into misery and death: they that have some taste of the good word of God, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and the powers of the world to come, and yet sin themselves into such a state, as that their repentance becomes finally impossible. Perhaps, it may admit of a gentler meaning as to some; but that such an expression is used as admits of a latitude, there appears so much the more of divine wisdom in it. But it is plain, that many never do repent. By how much the more of vigorous efforts have been put forth upon them, without effect, so much the more, undoubtedly, must they finally incur of this misery, or sink the deeper into this death.

There is a sorer punishment, that is incurred by sinning against that Gospel, wherein that Spirit breathes, than could be by sinning against the law of Moses; as in that Heb. x. 28. and onward. "If he that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unclean thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" There lies the *acme* and height of the wickedness that appears in this case: that is, that Spirit is a Spirit of grace, that they have been contending and striving against; that Spirit of all goodness, and love, and kindness, and benignity: to have striven against that Spirit, to the last breath, of how much sorer punishment shall such be thought worthy? The sinning against one's own conscience, it is doing a violence to oneself, and to what God hath made superior and governing in us, did appoint it to be so. But this is a more immediate and direct affront to Heaven, when resistance is made to the Spirit of God himself, who insinuates, slides into the mind, repeats and inculcates from time to time; and still in vain. It is a fearful thing when men do engage in a continual war with their own consciences,—it is unnatural; and it is a great offence against God too. Heathens have thought so; as particularly Marcus Antoninus: "that warned men, if they would live well, they must live with God, and keep up a conversation with God, and that (saith he) we shall do, if we do not offer violence to and tear that vicarious God that is in us, which God hath set over every man to be the guide of his life." But when an affront is offered to God himself, the Supreme Good, (as I may say,) not to that vicarious God, but to the very Divine Throne: this is a fearful thing to do so. And so it is when men are continually fighting against that Spirit, that breathes in the Gospel. And,

[7.] I might add that, undoubtedly, men's guilt and misery must be greater and deeper, according as they do arrive to great pitches of sin. As such come more explicitly to hate every thing of goodness, to deride and scorn it, according to the gradations that are observable in the beginning of the first Psalm, they at length seat themselves in the scorner's chair; they that make it their business to ridicule religion or godliness; or they that sink themselves into deeper degrees of sensuality, why, according as the wickedness in which they wallow is fouler and grosser, so it cannot be but their misery must be the greater in which they involve themselves. And,

[8.] They must needs be in the worst case, in point of misery, that are more instrumental in spreading wickedness in the world; whose wickedness is more diffusive; who are mere partakers of other men's sins. There can be no such thing as supererogation, in point of merit, by good works; but, no doubt, there may be in point of demerit, by wicked works, according as men do draw in more accomplices, and do more join in a conspiracy against God and heaven. So much the more guilt, so much the more miserable must they be. And again,

[9.] Such as are wicked in public stations, they must proportionably be more guilty and more miserable; wicked magistrates and wicked ministers, according to the greater hurt that they do, or the less good that they do, being intrusted with such talents, or having such power, such opportunities improvable for good, put into their hands.

And lastly, *cæteris paribus*—They that live longer in sin, must sink deeper into death, supposing all things concur equally, the longer the worse. The sinner of a hundred years old, he is the more deeply and dreadfully accursed. As in that Isaiah lxv. 20. So we see there cannot but be different gradations, or graduate differences, in that death, which, in the kind and nature of it, is common to all.

This doth claim somewhat of general use, which I cannot insist on now; no subject can claim it more than this doth, to which we can apply, or turn ourselves, as you may hear afterwards.

LECTURE XXXIII.*

Use. We therefore come, in the last place, to improve what hath been said of this death, by way of application.

1. And we may learn, hence, inasmuch as death is said to have passed over all, for that all have sinned; that God is not unobservant of the ways of men in this world, nor indifferent how they demean themselves. Have all sinned? Death passed over all. They that think God hath forsaken the earth, concerns not himself in human affairs; why do they think so? It is true, the judgment-day and the state of retribution are not yet come. But, in the mean time, are there no tokens and indications upon men, of divine displeasure? Is there nothing to signify that he is not well pleased with a wicked world? Indeed, because his judgments are not executed with greater terror, therefore, many times, men's hearts are set in them to do evil. And if things run long on with them, after one manner, because they have no changes, they fear not God. But if they would use their understandings, which can go a greater compass than sense; and if they would look about, and not consider merely and abstractly what they themselves do now at present feel, but what appearances there may be perceived of divine displeasure towards this world in general, they may see by tokens express enough, that God is not well pleased with the state of things in this world, and with the course and carriage of men in it. They may see that his wrath "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; for how constantly is death every where following sin, death passing upon all men, for that all have sinned. When death is making, in a more sensible way, such spoils and havoc in this world, trumbling men into the dust every where, and none escapes—what! have men reason yet to think, that God is indifferent how they carry themselves? that he takes no notice whether men obey him, or disobey him? But again,

2. Since this is the very state of the case, death past upon all, or men are generally in a miserable state; we may collect, hence, that God's deportment towards men is very becoming of him, and most suitable to the state of their case. "Death hath passed over all, for that all have sinned." Nothing could be more worthy of God, than to let it be as it is with men, in this respect; that is, to let death pass over all; that it should spread its dark and horrid shadow over this world, as we find it every where doth. Nothing could, I say, be more worthy of God, or more suitable to the state and condition wherein sin hath constituted the sons of men. And this will appear yet more distinctly, whether we consider God's dispensation towards men, in this respect, for the present; or whether you consider again his determination concerning them for the future.

* Preached October 8th, 1694.

(1.) If we consider his dispensation towards them, for the present, nothing could be more becoming, more worthy of God, or more suitable to such a creature as man, now in his lapsed and apostate state. For, as to his present dispensation, you may find a concurrence of two things: first, such a severity, as wherein God doth most becomingly animadvert upon the sinfulness of the world, and show himself displeased; and secondly, such lenity, as by which he yet signifies himself placable and willing to be reconciled. Nothing could be more suitable, more becoming God, considering the present state of lapsed man, with respect to the tenor of his present dispensation towards him, than that there should be such a mixture as this of God's conduct towards this world: that is, severity, to show that he is not well pleased; lenity, to signify that he is yet placable. What could be more becoming God? Both these are interwoven in the whole course of God's dealings with men; as hath been told you. There have been tokens of severity, that men might understand and know that God doth not like their ways and manners. Death is every where playing its part, and rolling men into the grave before one another's eyes. And men may every where perceive the effects of a malediction upon themselves, and upon their concernments and affairs in this world. But yet, notwithstanding, there are significations, too, of God's placableness, his willingness to be reconciled, even where there is no Gospel, but much more where there is: where there is no Gospel, God leaves not himself without witness, in that he doth good, giving men rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and filling their hearts with food and gladness. And even his patience, and forbearance, and long-suffering, they have a leadingness, (as we have had occasion at large to show you,) unto repentance. And me will have a fearful account one day to make of it, that have not been led thereunto, nor understood that design.

But where the Gospel comes, there (you know) God shows himself as he is in Christ, "reconciling the world to himself, that sin might not be imputed," 2 Cor. v. 19. What can be more suitable than this to a Being of most absolute perfection, in whom the perfections of wisdom, and justice, and holiness, are in conjunction with the perfections of kindness, goodness, love, and favourable propensions towards his creatures: nor could any be more suitable to men in this their present state, (it being a state of probation,) a state of trial, of leading, and precedaneous to another state.

And, according to all the measures of wisdom and equity, this is always reckoned most suitable where there is guilt that appears chargeable, and that it may be charged; and that, while as yet a public judgment is not given, and hath not had its effect. If we do but consider, (and, indeed, we can but judge as men of things, and use the best understanding, as such, that we have,) we see how men do commonly judge in such and the like cases. That is, suppose one be vehemently suspected of some flagitious crime among men, but the matter is not yet brought to judgment; such a person is neither to be treated as an innocent person nor as a convicted one. You know that so the wisdom of human governments doth determine every where. And the case speaks itself, that these are apt, and fit, and suitable methods; they carry their own reason in them. Such persons, before the solemn public judgment, and the consequent execution upon that judgment, are neither, I say, treated as innocent, nor as convicted; but there is a mixture in the treatment, which they generally find and meet with: some kind of severity they do undergo, even before their trial and judgment, which may be looked upon as some way penal; and in some degree it is so. Nor is there any thing of severity used towards such, but upon some proof, upon some evidence, as such persons are convened and accused before a magistrate, convicted in some way, though they have not a full conviction: they are brought before them, committed by them, held under restraint, that justice may not be eluded; but that they may be in safe custody. But yet, for all that, there is no formal judgment passed upon them, nor execution consequent unto such judgment, till there have been a very formal trial, and a full conviction.

Much at the same rate, is the state of the case here between God and men, though not for the same reasons, not in all respects for the same; not that the delinquents may be in safe custody, and so finally not escape his justice; for he knows well where to have them at any time, and any where. Nor is any thing of lenity used towards them, upon the account that they are not convicted, nor fully convicted. For every man's case lies perfectly open to the divine view; but there is severity used towards them, partly for warning to others, and partly for monition and excitation to themselves; because God intends a treaty, and deals with them in order to pardon and forgiveness, which is not the usual design of human governments. And for the same reason is lenity used towards them; not because they are not convicted: for their matter hath, to the Divine eye, a thorough perspection, and the whole state of their case at last is seen through and through. But, as was said, that by such gentleness they may be more treatable, and capable of being applied to, in order to their conversion and final salvation. But upon the whole, nothing could be more becoming of God, than that there should be such a mixture as we find of severity and lenity in this present dispensation, antecedent to the future judgment that is to pass upon them. And then,

(2.) Nothing could be more becoming of God, than the determination that he settles concerning man for the future; that is, that this death, in all the fulness of it, shall finally be inflicted upon them that are finally impenitent; those that persevere in enmity and rebellion to the last, and never consort with, never hearken to, the terms and overtures of reconciliation; for what else should be done in such a case as this? Do but consider the nature of man. He hath a mortal part about him. It is not reasonable to think, that God should make that mortal part immortal, only that men might continue sinning against him, on earth, uninterruptedly and everlastingly. Was that to be expected that it should be so? And he hath an immortal part, a mind and spirit that is immortal. What should be done in such a case, with such a creature as man? was he to annihilate that immortal part? That was as little to be expected, that God should have made such a creatures with such a nature, and then seem to repent that he had made him such, and so that he should immortalize that which was mortal; or, as I may say, mortalize that which was immortal.

But, I say, that he should do either the one or the other, was for no reason in the world to have been expected from God, the great Lord and Maker of all. He deals with the creatures that he hath made, suitable to the natures that he hath given them. It could not be any blemish to the divine perfections, that he made man at the first with such a nature. If his mortal part always hanged about him, it should have made him capable of no higher felicity than this earth did afford; and sure that had been a diminution of the divine goodness. If he had not made him with an immortal mind and spirit, he had not been capable of felicity, as he had not, it is true, been liable to endless misery. But then, he had not been capable of future felicity. Therefore, consider the matter how you will; look upon all men as having sinned, and consider death hereupon to have passed over all, nothing could, in this case, be more becoming of God, than his deportment towards men; whether you consider his present dispensations towards him, or whether you consider his determinations for the future. But then,

3. We have this further to collect, that men's deportment, in this case, is most unsuitable, most unbecoming of them, and most unanswerable to the state of their own case. Death hath passed over all. Do men carry it suitable hereunto? We might, in many instances, show you how far they are from doing so, from carrying it suitable to this state of their case; that is, their being under a universal death.

(1.) Very plain it is, that many never think any such thought,—"I am under a doom." It is true, they cannot escape thinking themselves mortal, and that sometime or other they must die; but that this is a doom, a sentence upon them from an offended Creator; how many are there that pass away their days, and never think such a thought! "I am a sinful creature; and God hath been offended; and, therefore, I must die; and, therefore, I am, in many other respects, miserable in the mean time." How many that never think one such thought, that never consider the

state of their case as it relates to God. The miseries that befall men here under the sun, they seem to apprehend as if they sprung out of the dust, but apprehend nothing of a *nemesis*, of a *vindicta*, of divine displeasure therein.

Indeed, if there were a correspondency in the temper of men's souls, unto the state of their case, in this respect, wherein soever God testifies his resentment, they would have a resentment. By all these efforts of present divine justice, upon an apostate world, God is expressing this his resentment; "I am ill used by my own creatures;" that is the language of every such providence. "The creatures that I have made, carry it insolently, injuriously, undutifully to me." Providences are vocal and articulate, do not only carry a voice with them many times, but a voice that is expressive of a meaning, which is interpretable; the Lord's voice cries many times to the city, and, in general, it speaks this sense every where; where his providences are afflictive, and reach men's bones, and their flesh, or touch them in any other sensible effect, God is angry, these are the breakings forth of his just displeasure towards a wicked world, against sinful revolted creatures. But with the most, there is nothing of this kind thought of; and therefore, they are full of lamentations for the evils that do befall them, accounting them infelicities; but never look upon them as penalties; which, if they did, that would carry a signification with it of their own guiltiness; that these things befall me as a sinner, and as an offending creature. And,

(2.) Where there are any such thoughts, how rarely do they stay in the minds of men, and how seldom do they dwell upon the contemplation of any such thing? Whereas, if matters were with men as they should be, in these respects, these should be their thoughts lying down and rising up, and from day to day, all the day long, as while men do yet remain in an impenitent and unreconciled state. God speaks his mind in reference to such, that he "is angry with the wicked every day;" so then it should be thought of every day. And it would make men's spirits most restless and uneasy with them. O! what an insupportable thing is it to be under the displeasure of him that made me! and that he should be angry with me every day; that his displeasure should be upon me, even while I am eating, as was said concerning the people in the wilderness; "his wrath came upon them while they were eating, while the meat was yet in their mouths." Sure it would make a man never eat with pleasure, when this should be understood to be the state of his case. And again,

(3.) Men do not meditate an escape. How little is there to be seen of any such thing, in this world, as flying from the wrath to come! as John the Baptist's auditors are said to be doing in a kind of fright—"Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" How little is it, that looks like this, in this wretched world! There would be consultations, if men were aware of this state of their case, and their spirits were impressed any way suitable to it. There would be counsel held: "We are under divine displeasure; what course shall we take to avert it? to appease that anger which we cannot bear; which will consume and burn up all before it, if it continue unappeased?" And again,

(4.) For the most part, men are taken up about alien things, things most alien and remote from any thing of this kind, or what the exigency of their case requires and calls for; even though they are warned and told of it, and called upon from time to time. This is no new or strange doctrine among us, who live under the Gospel; that the state of man is a state of sin and misery; to tell men, you are by nature children of wrath, you are under guilt, you are sinners, and "the wages of sin is death;" this is not strange to the ears of men. You cannot have lived years together under this Gospel, but you must have heard of these things often; and surely the generality of them who were wont to hear the Gospel, do hear these things frequently inculcated. But what are the workings of their minds and thoughts? Do they bear any correspondency to such things as these, so often urged upon them? "You are a guilty creature," saith the word of God unto them; "you are under death. What will you do in this case? what course will you take?" "Why, I will clothe myself as decently as I can; I will go in a modish dress; I will try the relishes of this or that, or the other sort of wine." "Why, you are an undone creature; you lie under death: what do you wish in this case?" "I wish I had as neat and as well-furnished a house as my neighbour; I wish that such a commodity would fall, that I might have the better time to buy; or that such a commodity would rise, that I might have the better time to sell." With things so altogether alien from this business, are men taken up in a continual course. "What is all this to the state of your case? You are under death, man! do you understand that? You are under guilt; and by being under guilt, lie under death." And,

(5.) They seek relief against the miseries of their present state, by such things as not only do not afford it, but make their case worse, or they have that constant tendency to make them worse. "Death that hath passed upon all, hath passed upon you:" they are repeatedly told so. "Well, what do you think of it?" They have the presumptuous appearances of death continually in view; but the inward sense of their heart is such as this: "O, that I were a rich man; that I had a great estate; that I had but opportunity enough to live a voluptuous life!" or, "Such a one hath wronged me; I wish I knew how to be revenged of him!" Men think to relieve themselves against what annoys them, and is a part of the misery of their present state, by things that would not only be no relief, but make their case far worse. For do you think it would mend your case, or would you be happier men, and safer from eternal death, and from Divine justice, that threatens you, or presseth you, if you were rich? If you were never so rich, could you thereby redeem your souls, and expiate your guilt, and make satisfaction to the justice of an offended God? If you could live immersed and swallowed up in pleasure and voluptuousness, would that better your case? Would it not make it far worse? If you had the revenges you would seek; if you could gratify the enmity of your own heart, (which is part of your misery, and a great part too,) by making another man miserable also, would that mend your case? Nay, would it not increase the guilt? Would it not strengthen your bonds, and lay you yet more open to divine displeasure? Again, in the last place, though one might multiply instances of this kind much further,

(6.) They are, for the most part, (so far as their external circumstances will admit of it,) jocund and merry, and very well pleased with their state. How little suitable to this apprehension, "Death has passed over all." We dwell in a world deluged with misery, and through which men are generally making way, and sinking deeper and deeper into eternal misery, and into that state wherein death is to be consummate, and in its fulness. To have the opportunity (as there are none but have very frequently) to hear discourses of men, in whom there yet never appeared the least sign or token of repentance or reconciliation with God, how jolly and frolicsome they can be, (if, I say, their external circumstances can admit it,) would you think these men considered themselves as under death, as under a doom from the God against whom they have sinned?

Is it not wondered at, if a condemned crew in chains, and only expecting the hour of execution, should be entertaining themselves with music and dancing, and pleasant stories? How amazing a thing is this! would you not say of such "laughter, it is madness?" and of such "mirth, what doeth it?" as the wise man saith, Eccl. ii. 2. Why such deportments as these, are they like men perishing, going down to perdition? To be pleasant and merry, and not to be reconciled, not yet to be at peace with God, to have no security from the wrath to come; to have death hanging over a man's head, not as the way to glory, but as a doom and curse upon him; and to be jovial and frolicsome under all this, would amaze any man that were serious, to consider that it can be so! And,

4. We may further collect, hence, how little it is that principles do signify, generally, with men. Though those principles be never so common, and never so certain, and evident, yet how little do they signify! That the state of man is a sinful and miserable state, is a common principle; it is a principle that doth obtain, not only among Christians, but among pagans; their writings and books are full of it. Most pathetical complaints and lamentations, we frequently meet with, in their books, upon this account, speaking of the degenerate state of man, and that he is not the creature

that at first he was; and speaking of his miserable state, and even in a way of *nemesis*, and as the effect of his displeasure, who made him, and hath been offended by him. But among Christians, it is so common a principle, that every child that hath learned any thing of his catechism, (as I hope you generally do catechise your children,) if you but ask them, What is the state of man by nature? they will answer, It is a state of sin and misery:—just the very meaning of the text: "Death hath passed over all, for that all have sinned."

But how strange is it now, that so common a principle should signify so little! and again, that so evident and so certain a principle should have so little signification and efficacy with it as a principle! that, though the state of man is a miserable state, and that he lies under death, is matter of fact, it should have no more effect! Indeed, as to the most tremendous part of this death, that is out of sight with many; but, for the more sensible part, that lies open to every one's view. It can be a doubt with no man, whether he shall die or no. Death passeth over all. But how wonderful a thing is it, that a principle, a common principle, a most evident principle, and that carries the greatest certainty with it imaginable, (as to what at least doth highly deserve our consideration,) should be so ineffectual!

And as to the other part, it is generally professed, and they who make it their business, as much as they can, to disbelieve that more dreadful part, that remaining and unseen part of this miserable state, yet have not conquered the fear of it; if they have conquered the belief of it, yet it is plain, they have not conquered the apprehension of it: there is *formido opposito*, and cannot but be; for at least they know nothing to the contrary; they can never prove the contrary, that there is no hell, no judgment to come. And, in a matter of this nature, men that would but act according to the common reason of men, would think that the matter did need demonstration, that there is no such thing, and not run a mad hazard and adventure; when there is nothing lost in the course, to which the truth, in this case, (supposing it to be truth,) would lead; and when, by following the contrary course, the misery and mischief that must ensue, are both unsupportable, and will shortly be irretrievable.

LECTURE XXXIV.*

The remaining *Use* that I intend, will be only directive,

I. To such as yet abide in this death, that have passed over all: and we have reason to apprehend that to be the case of some: and, 2. To those that have, through the grace of God, in good measure, escaped out of it.

I. To the first sort, I have a few things to recommend by way of direction. I cannot tell how to apply things to persons particularly: that you must do yourselves, as you find it to be with you. But if that be the case of any among you, that they have reason to judge so, that they abide in this death that has passed upon all, then I would have such,

(1.) To apprehend that this is the common case, and may probably be their own; as to that which is most dismal and horrid in this death, that hath hitherto passed over this world. It is (as I told you the last time) one thing to entertain a truth, as a mere notion in the mind, against which we have nothing to say, and to give but a faint negative assent to it; to wit, not to dissent or disagree to it: and another thing to receive it as a vital and practical principle, that influenceth a man's heart, forms his spirit, and governs his course accordingly thereunto. And so is this very little apprehended to be the common case, that "death hath passed over all." But labour you feelingly to apprehend it, as to what is most obvious every way; that is, that we are all subject to bodily distempers and diseases, which are tendencies to, and will end in, death: why, about this, we can none of us be in any doubt. We are sensibly told it, even in our flesh and bones, from day to day. But the worst part of this death is what our flesh cannot feel; that is, a death upon our spirits; that our minds and hearts are disaffected to God, dead towards God, in direct opposition to what the case is with the regenerate, and which they ought to be judged and reckoned, as to themselves. "Reckon yourselves (saith the apostle, Rom. vi. 11.) dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God." The death that stands in opposition to this life, is the worst and most horrid part of the death that hath passed over this world.

Labour to apprehend this to be the common case; and then consider, whether it be not your own. If the matter do look with a dubious aspect, it ought to be considered with so much the more attentiveness, and with so much the deeper thoughts. And a slight hope that there is an alteration, should not satisfy; and, indeed, you cannot reasonably think this to be a little thing, or that it should not be greatly considerable. For is it a small matter to have passed from death to life? This death passed over all; and an escape out of it, is not so little a thing, when you compare those two expressions, I John iii. 14. "Abiding in death;" and, having "passed from death to life:" it must be a most close and pungent question—"Which is my case? Either I have passed from death to life; or I continue still in death." And, therefore, it ought to be considered over and over, "How stands my case towards God? I have a natural life in me, in which I am capable of natural actions; but I have a holy life in me, by which I am capable of the actions that are suitable and proper to that? by which I can act and move towards God, not *simpliciter* or absolute, but *quoad hoc*; to that one end and principle it was made; for there is a deadness, no propension towards God, as regeneration would make it alive towards God. "How is it with me in this respect?" That ought to be deeply considered. "Is not this, the horrid, dismal death that hath passed upon all, still upon me?" And,

(2.) There is this further, that will be suitable by way of direction to that former case, to mind those things principally that are most pertinent to it, and to be less concerned about lesser things. And pray let such take in this direction: Have you reason to apprehend this to be your case, (and a fearful case it is,) that that death, even the worst of it, that hath passed over all, remains upon you? Why, then, think of those things that are most pertinent to that case; and consider less the lesser things. As to whatsoever you have to complain of besides, say with yourselves, "Aye, but all this is nothing to the death that is upon my soul:" and it looks like distraction, when men's minds are wholly engaged and taken up about lesser things; but, about this greater and more important thing, they have no consideration at all. As if one should seem concerned that he hath a scratched finger, when he hath a mortal wound in his breast that he is unconcerned for; or, that he should have lost a pin, when his house is on fire; or, that a man's head should lie easy upon the block, when the fatal stroke is just going to be given. For, do but consider what this will come to at length; this death will be eternal death. The disinclination and deadness of man's spirit towards God, can have no other issue, finally, but "Depart from me," if it continue. You are departing from God; you will be continually departing: why, Depart from me for ever. This sort of death upon the souls of men, it is not a distinct thing from the state of hell; it is the same thing begun; there is no further difference than between death inchoate, and death consummate. And, indeed, every thing that a man doth, and every thing that a man saith, is all idle impertinency, while this great is neglected. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," is the advice of our Saviour. You are seeking many other things; but have you observed the order, to seek that in the first place? Otherwise you have mistaken the order. What other things you may lawfully seek, you are then to seek, when you have begun, duly and regularly, with the first. And, therefore, if another should tell you of such and such things that are not so well in the state of your case externally; such a man hath failed, that owes you money, or the like; you may answer him; "Alas! do not tell me of these things, I am dead towards God, what do you tell me of this or that?

* Preached Oct. 13th, 1694.

I am like to be lost for ever, if grace do not give a speedy help to the sad state of my case." And again,

(3.) Look upon this case of yours as being, though very sad, yet not remediless, yet not uncurable; look upon it as a remediable case. For it is, indeed, all one as to any thing of real gain and advantage, not to apprehend your case to be sad, and not to consider it as capable of a remedy. Upon the former supposition, there will be no care at all exercised about it; and upon the latter supposition there will be no hope. But there must be a setting of both these on foot: you must have a care about the state of your souls; and you must have hope about it too; or else nothing will be done in you, or by you, that will be of any value. You should, therefore, consider and bethink yourselves, that there is a way of escaping out of so great a death; that many have escaped you know; and they can think of it with pleasure, and take delight in their knowing of God, and conversing with him. Divers that have (it may be) spoken to you of such things of God, as you have not found in yourselves. But that which hath been, may be; that which you see by frequent experience wrought in others, may be wrought in you. God, that hath been so rich in mercy to others, why may he not be God rich in mercy to you also?

Thus you should consider the matter as capable of a remedy. There is a word of life sent forth; and there is a Divine Spirit breathing in this world, even upon this world that is lost in death; and it hath reached many with mighty influences. This is that which ought to be a mighty spring of hope to such as will not abandon themselves to despair. Do not say concerning yourselves, "There is a death abiding upon my soul, and therefore, it must be always so;" for that is to suppose there is no difference between earth and hell; between the state of men under the Gospel, and the state of devils under an eternal doom, in the full execution of it.

I pray consider, our business is not to instruct the inhabitants of hell, but to speak to the living on this side of the grave. We are teaching men, and not devils. And none should put themselves into their state and case, as if they had nothing at all to do, but merely to wait till the fulness of death should come upon them, and swallow them up. Our Lord saith, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." And when such a voice as this hath come into this miserable earth, no man ought but to look upon himself as concerned therein, as well as others: and not to say, "God doth not mean me; he intend no such kindness to me:" but rather, on the other hand, to say, "If a vital savour hath been diffused with that voice, with that invitation of grace, in and by the word, and its vital influences have reached many, it may also reach me." There ought to be an expectation raised in us, that it may; and many are ruined for not expecting it, not waiting at the posts of wisdom's door. Prov. viii. 34, 35. "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watcheth daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my door. For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." This, men ought to set before their eyes, in all their attendances upon God, in his ordinances; so that they may be able to give this account, if any should ask them, What are you going for? "Why, I am going to find life; wisdom saith, They that find me, find life. Here I go to seek life for my soul."

The very order of the divine precept in this thing, is, "Hear and your souls live;" which shows with what design men should hear and wait upon ordinances. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price, hear and your souls shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you." "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, (were David's own dying words,) ordered in all things and sure; and although my house be not so with God, as to domestical concernments things are not so well, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant; and this is all my salvation, and all my desire." Now saith the prophet, in that Isaiah lv. 3. "Do you but incline your ear, and hear with expectation that your souls may live, and they shall live; and this will tend to bring you into an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David." And yet, again,

(4.) Let me further recommend this to you, to hasten your designed escape, without deliberating and pausing long upon the matter. We are to look upon this world as deluged by death and wrath, which have overspread it, as that sulphureous flood did the valleys wherein Sodom and Gomorrah stood; and when Lot was to be saved out of that ruin, in mercy to him, for this the angel hastens him, and cries out to him, "Escape for thy life." So should you consider the exigency of your case not to be less; nay, it is incomparably greater. It is not a little valley, but it is the world, that is deluged with this sulphureous flood. Here is a complication of sin and death overflowing the world; and which hath made the world a far worse region than that plain was. Now it is said to you, God doth by the voice of his word, and of his ministers, say to you, "You are to make haste and escape for your life." How many did the fiery flood of Sodom overtake quite! Therefore, this case doth not admit of any delay; for how soon this flood may overtake you, you know not. It may, so as to overwhelm you quite; and so as to make a hopeful case a desperate one. And, therefore, consider from hence, in the next place,

(5.) Of how great importance it is for you to apply yourselves to, and gain an interest in, the favour of God. Make from hence an estimate of the divine favour, and of the necessity and value of it: for if this be your case—Death hath passed over all; if any man thinks of an escape, from thence it must come: "What can I do for my soul? How can I fetch my soul from that death that is within me; that my soul is ingulphed in?" Why, "in his favour is life." There is no hope in life but in his favour. Look which way you will, and there is death overwhelming of all; and you are no more capable of getting out of this death of yourselves, than of touching the heavens with your hand, or seating yourselves among the stars in the firmament: therefore, it must be an all-favourable, and all-powerful hand, and that, too, stretched out from heaven, that must save in so distressed a case as this.

Now how should this recommend to us the favour of God, as that wherein our life doth stand, when death hath thus passed over all. If you should speak to a neighbour, to a father, to any one that hath the dearest affection to you, "O! my soul is in a state of death; how shall I get it out of it?" They must all answer, as Jacob did to his wife, "Am I in the stead of God, to give thee children? Can I inspire life into thy dead soul? No; I cannot do it for thee." This you ought to inculcate to yourselves, over and over, that your life stand in the divine favour. It is he that breathes into you the breath of spiritual life, to make yours become a living soul. They are his kind looks that carry life in them. If he will breathe upon your soul, it shall live. As that hath been his way, when souls have been wallowing in their blood, to look upon them with a kind look, and say unto them—"Live:" his look doth carry life in it. He looks life into the soul that is dead. As in that 16th Ezekiel, in the beginning, and towards the latter end of that chapter you will find how the matter ends: "I entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine." He looked upon them in their blood, and said unto them—"Live;" and enclosed them in the happy bonds of that covenant, that are vital bonds; their souls being bound up in the bundle of life. And, therefore,

(6.) That I may shut up what I shall say to this sort of persons concerning that death which hath passed over all, it ought to prepare them for the reception of the Gospel, wherein are discoveries of the divine favour, and the way wherein it reveals itself for the saving and renewing of souls lost in death: what a preparative for the Gospel should this be! To have this inwrought into my soul, that death hath passed over all, so, amongst the rest, it hath passed over me, involved me also. Then how pleasant a sound should the Gospel be to lost souls! "The Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost." The forlorn and distressed estate of this world, hath been compassionately considered by the great Lord of heaven and earth; and God hath given him life, that he might give eternal life to as many as he hath given him. And when men are once prevailed upon to give themselves to him, as the great Prince and Lord of life, who only can deliver

them out of death, then, it is without question, that God hath given them unto him, and it is with that design, that he may give them eternal life. But then,

2. As to those who, through grace, have in a good measure made an escape out of that death that hath passed over all, it is obvious to yourselves, to understand wherein that death stands, which hath passed over all, and which you have made your escape from. You know, that part of it concerns the outward man; there is no escaping that which is equivalent, and more than equivalent. There is an escaping out of it; not that such shall not die, but they shall rise again: "their corruptible part, (as the apostle saith) shall put on incorruption; and their mortal part shall put on immortality; and their vile bodies shall be changed and transformed into the likeness of Christ's most glorious body." There must be a conformity between the Head and the members, so that by him they escape not from it, but out of it; emerge, get out of that state, that must sooner or later seize upon these mortal bodies.

But then, for that spiritual death that is, in this present state, naturally upon all men's souls, that you have been actually in, that you have escaped, that there must be an escape from eternal death. Now let me ask you, Have you, through grace, been enabled to escape, in good measure, out of the worst of this death, that, in the present state, men are liable to; to wit, death towards God? Then, if the matter be so, there are several things I would recommend to you, and so put an end to this discourse.

(1.) Be much in grateful acknowledgment of God's wonderful mercy; make that much the great business of your lives, for it is a great thing God hath done for you, in that he hath delivered you from so great a death! Think what the state and posture of your souls once was God-ward. "Why, let me have heard never so much of the most glorious, the most excellent of all Beings, in which all the excellencies of all beings did meet together, infinite love, and light, and life, and purity, and holiness; yet, alas! I had no inclination towards him; no desire after him; no complacency in him; my soul was as a stone, or stick, or a log, without sense, without motion God-ward. I have heard (it may be) of his name often; but it never carried a pleasant sound to me. It was no pleasure to me, to go and shut up myself in a closet, and pour out my soul unto him. As for taking complacency in him as my best Good, so as to account him my exceeding great Joy, alas! I knew not what this meant. It was a soul that might have been a stone, as well as a soul, as to any inclination it had God-ward. But, O! blessed be God, that it is otherwise! When I hear of that very Sacred Name, it transports my soul, to think that All of being, and blessedness, and wisdom, and purity, and light, and love, is mine. And if all the world should frown on me, and he give me but one smile, it is as life to my soul. Now, the very seasons of my converse with him, are as my repasts. What pleasure do I take when the sabbath is come; when the light of that holy day doth dawn upon me! Formerly, I knew not what to design for God. Now my end is the glory of God: if I can but speak a good word for his honour and interest, it falls in with the inclination of my spirit."

Why sure, if this be the case with you, it is the most inexcusable thing in all the world, that there should be no more of gratitude for so great a change wrought in you. Consider that God, in so altering the case, hath done that for you which all the world could not have done. Lay all the powers of men on earth, and of all the angels in heaven together, they could never have made your hearts to love God, or desire after him, or delight in him. But he hath touched your hearts with a vital touch, and made them love him, and live to him.

When the difference is so vast (as I was saying to you lately) between abiding in death, and having passed from death to life, (and, whereas, every one must be in one of these two states; so that every one must say, either "I do abide in death," "I have passed from death to life,") if we, by gracious vouchsafement, are passed from death to life, if this be our case, and we are not much in thanksgiving; O! how inexcusable is this! And, Christians, I would have you to consider this, that this it is which starves religion, and is the reason why, where it is, it languisheth; for want of this exercise of thanksgiving. And know, that where such praises are ascending to heaven, benedictions will be also descending from heaven. Were there more of these acknowledgments, how would blessings descend! O! we should be more in blessing of God for heavenly things in Christ Jesus; that we should have that opportunity, from day to day, of beholding death spreading abroad its dark shadows over all the intellectual world, to wit, over the minds and spirits of men, and, I was myself a sad instance thereof; but God hath delivered me out of this miserable state; O! not to be much in thanksgiving, is the most inexcusable temper that can be! But again,

(2.) You ought, hereupon, more to pity the miserable world that is yet in death, over which death hath passed, and in which it abides. There is altogether a fault among us upon this account; we want bowels, we have not compassions, as we ought to have within us, towards perishing creatures. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." It is a great evidence of our having obtained mercy, our being merciful in this kind. But to be destitute of compassion for the sad case of dead souls, is a sad symptom. To say, I have a husband, a wife, a child, that are under the power of death, have nothing of the life of God, no favour of God, no fear of God, in them; nothing that looks like the grace of God; why, not to compassionate them, sure, such a frame as this hath in it no indication of divine life springing in us: we see them, and converse with them, but seldom have a regretting thought that toucheth our hearts: this is, sure, altogether a fault, and knows no excuse, admits of none. It argues, at least, a very great languor of the divine life in us, when we have so little a sense of so horrid a death, as lies upon the generality of the world. Those, in whom this divine life doth take place, they are regenerated after God's own image; and that must intimate to them to be like-minded with him. God hath showed mercy unto us, and therefore, mercy was his nature, it is in the highest perfection in him. If I am transformed after his image, I must imitate him in this. If I have nothing of the divine offspring in me, how am I his child? And, if I have, why should it not operate in me in this kind, in reference to those that were in the same case with me, before I obtained mercy. And again,

(3.) If you have, through the grace of God, in a good degree, escaped out of that fearful state of death, which abides generally upon the world, make little reckoning in comparison of what you suffer in lower kinds, and in lesser respects, whatsoever you have to complain of upon other accounts. Let not the sense of lesser evils enter deep into your souls. He hath saved you from the greater evils: he delivered you out of that so great a death, which overwhelmed you and all the world. It is, then, very disingenuous to complain of lesser and smaller things, when, from the greatest evils of all, he hath saved us. As the apostle saith, 2 Tim. i. 9. "Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling." Saved already in a degree, and, by saving us in that degree, hath made eternal salvation as sure as if we were in heaven already. And therefore, I say, reckon little of these lesser evils that may befall you in this present state. And, in the last place,

(4.) It is very suitable to such, further to consider, that the rest of the evils of the world ought not to be considered as strange, when it is to be remembered, that a universal death hath passed over all men. That such and such evils should befall in this world, should not be thought strange, since this death hath passed over all. We hear of a great mortality (it may be) in such a country, and of a great many lives cut off in a battle, in another country. There ought to be bowels of compassion upon that account; otherwise we have put off humanity. But it is a great madness that we should make a greater matter of these things, and, at the same time, make nothing of that universal death that hath passed over all. Where are our minds, that we do not weigh the difference of things?

I have one thing more, before I pass to the doctrine of a Mediator, and God's method of saving souls. And I desire to speak to it from another text. And that is, to

vindicate the justice of God as to this sad and calamitous state, that is universal upon mankind, by reason of the fall.

LECTURE XXXV.*

Psalm li. 4, 5.

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

HAVING discoursed to you at large from that Rom. v. 12. concerning the fall of the first man, and the entrance of sin and death into the world, thereupon, I told you in the conclusion of the last discourse on that subject, my further intention was to say something for the clearing of the Divine Justice, in reference hereunto: and it is a debt, a right that we owe to the Supreme Ruler and Lord of all, not only to confess his righteousness, but, as occasion serves and requires, to vindicate it too. We cannot be just ourselves, if we do not, to our utmost, in all things justify him.

My design is not, from this scripture, to speak absolutely of the corruption and depravedness of the human nature, which I did before, from that mentioned scripture. But to speak of it relatively and comparatively, in reference to the righteousness of God, or so far as that may appear any way concerned in the matter. And indeed, it might be thought, there lay before a very unexceptionable state of the case between God and man, in that scripture that I last, and so long, insisted on; which makes death only to have followed sin into the world. And what can be more natural than the connexion of sin and death, or the consecution of the latter upon the former, that death should only be said to have entered into the world, and to have passed over all, inasmuch as all have sinned.

But men's curiosity doth not rest here, while they will not pretend to deny the actual consecution of death upon sin; they make a great deal of difficulty to understand how sin should follow upon innocency. And here the difficulty is not so great neither, concerning the lapse of the first man, and the death following upon that as to him; as also the case hath no appearance of difficulty concerning the angels that fell, when (as the case was with the first man) every one offended in his own person, and so was in his own person to answer for the offence. But that that makes the difficulty is, that men should be generally involved in sin and ruin, upon the lapse and fall of one, (their common parent,) when they could not help it that they were his children, or that they were born of such progenitors, that all should be undone by a fault which they could not prevent, and unto which they had no accession.

This difficulty hath cast divers men upon distressing thoughts. Some have thereupon denied the corruption and depravity of human nature; and they might as well deny that there are men upon earth. Some would have the souls of men (the only capable subjects of sin) to be propagated as the bodily part is, which would hazard the doctrine of their immortality. Others have had their other conjectures, which I shall not mention.

But, upon the whole, we ought not only to censure with indulgence, but to commend and praise, the spirit and practice of such, in reference to this matter, as have, with sincere and unbiassed minds, set their understandings on work, how best to maintain high and honourable thoughts of God; that have been studious to find out, or apt to entertain, any hypothesis that might be more suitable unto that. This (I say) is not only to be censured indulgently, but to be commended very highly, provided that men do not, herein, run counter to express divine revelation and unto uncontrollable experience. And that they be not so over-officious as to affix characters upon the blessed God, under the name of perfections belonging to his nature, which do not truly or really so belong, and which he never owned or claimed as such.

It is very plain, that this holy Psalmist had seen through this difficulty; he saw with better eyes than the most, more sincere, less malevolent; and had digested the matter in his thoughts; otherwise he would never have laid down these two things thus together as we find, "That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." He, at least, thought these things very agreeable with one another, if rather, he did not bring in the latter as a proof and demonstration of the former, which the demonstrative particle prefixed (behold) would lead one to think.

But let us, first, view the words a little in themselves, and we shall discern the schesis and reference to one another, a little better thereby, afterwards. That which is here, in this place, rendered actively, is in the 3d chapter to the Romans rendered passively, "that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and overcome when thou judgest;" there it is, "when thou art judged," as we read it, the Septuagint being followed (as frequently it is) by the apostle. But I cannot apprehend (as some do note) any need of a different reading in the letter of either text, as some critics take notice; the Hebrew affix being set as there it is, may indifferently be read, either actively or passively. And so may the Greek word, as is most evident; and so we may render either place either way, and all will come to one and the same sense: that God may appear just, that his justice may be triumphant and victorious, whether it be when he judgeth; or when men judge and censure him, and his proceedings.

And so the current of this discourse of the Psalmist will be plain and clear: "I acknowledge mine iniquity, and my sin is ever before me; against thee only have I sinned: that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest" —that is, referring to the 3d verse, "I acknowledge," (as here I do,) then the acknowledgment follows, "that thou mayest be justified." "I make my acknowledgments so and so, that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, or mayest overcome when thou judgest, or when men presume or take upon them to censure thy proceedings towards me; though thou shouldest proceed with all the severity that thou hast threatened by the prophet sent unto me: for not only have I done this particular evil against thee, and in thy sight, but I have been an impure creature, even from my own original: thou hast much against me, not only for this single instance, but as I came a sinful polluted creature into the world: I was shapen in iniquity, formed, turned therein; as soon as I grew warm in the womb, (as the word signifies,) so soon sin did insinuate into my very *præmordia*, into the very *principles* of my being."

And to the same purpose is this passage quoted by the apostle, in that mentioned Rom. iii. 4. for when he had been charging sin, before, upon all the world, on the gentiles, in the first chapter, and on the Jews, in the second, he only puts a question in the beginning of the third chapter, "What advantage then hath the Jew, if all be found equally under sin?" And he only admits them to have an advantage in order to their recovery, but none at all as to their degeneracy. In reference to their recovery they had a great advantage, inasmuch, as to them were committed the oracles of God, the discovery of his counsel and way for the reconciling and saving lost sinners. But he considers nothing, in reference to what he had asserted, of their part and share in the common depravation and apostacy; they were as bad as the best.

Then he immediately lays down what is quoted from the Psalmist, and makes that his scope and mark in all the rest of the chapter, that is, to justify God; that he might be justified, and overcome in all his pleadings and judgings: or when man should implead or take upon him to censure God, that still his justice might be victorious and triumphant. This is the mark that he aims at manifestly, in all his following discourse; showing at large, the universal depravation and corruption of human nature every where; having proved (as he saith at the 9th verse)

* Preached October 20th, 1694.

concerning both Jews and gentiles (which did then divide the world) that they were all under sin.

Indeed, the immediate subjoining of this unto the mention of the design in this psalm, seems to carry this aspect with it, that the Psalmist intended to speak or introduce the mention of this depravedness and corruption of human nature, (even as it was in himself,) as a proof and evidence of the divine justice, as that which might tend to clear it so much the more. But at least it must be collected from his subjoining the mention of the latter to the former, that he looked upon them as very consistent and very reconcileable things, as things that carried no repugnancy in them to one another. And even this will serve my present purpose and design. So that all which I shall observe from this context, and the connexion of these two, herein, shall be this,—

That it is very consistent with the justice of God, and very reconcileable to it, most reconcileable to it, that men, born of human parentage, do universally come into this world impure and polluted creatures, even from the womb.

The Psalmist did not so much as imagine (you may see) an inconsistency between the corruption of nature in man, and the justice of God, in that he so lays them down by one another. Surely (thinks he) these cannot quarrel, no man can reasonably think they will; they are to be looked upon, and ought to be looked upon, as sociable truths, that can agree well together, even these two, that man from the womb is an impure, sinful creature, and God is everlastingly and immutably a holy and righteous God.

Now in speaking to this, I shall reduce all that I intend unto a Four-fold Conclusion. And shall gather up all, under these four: As,

I. There can be no real opposition between truth and truth. And so, that whatsoever we are convinced of is truth, another truth that we are equally as certain of, cannot be opposite thereunto. If there be any such appearance, it is but a false appearance, it is only a seemingness of opposition and contrariety, but really there can be no such thing. And,

II. That we may be most certain that many things are, when how they are, or come to be as they are, is by us unexplicable and unaccountable. And,

III. That it would be very unreasonable to oppose and object dubious and uncertain things, against what is sure and plain, and most certain. And,

IV. That it will be, especially, most unreasonable to oppose uncertain to certain things, when there are many considerations capable of being alleged that will break the force of such objections. But nothing can be alleged to shake the certainty and firmness of the foresaid truths. Then it will be most of all unreasonable.

Unto these *four conclusions* I shall reduce what I intend, and what I think reasonable to be said to this matter.

I. That truth can never be opposite to truth; and that therefore, what things we are most certain of as true, they can lie in no opposition to one another. But whatsoever of such appearance there may be, must be a false appearance. I instance, here, in these two things, that we are concerned to reconcile,—the perfection of the Divine Nature, (comprehending his justice, and,—this sinful imperfection and pravity of the human nature. These are both most certain truths; and, therefore, it is impossible they can be really opposite to one another.

I. The absolute perfection of the Divine Nature, comprehending his justice, which must be one great perfection belonging thereunto. It is that, indeed, which, by the ducture of the text, we are principally concerned to vindicate, and so we are, indeed, any divine perfection against which the doctrine afterwards asserted may seem to militate. Every one will grant, that acknowledgeth a God, that justice must be a perfection belonging to his nature. And we may, these two ways, be most absolutely ascertained hereof.

(1.) That whatsoever doth belong to God, belongs to him essentially; his nature can receive no additions nor diminutions, and consequently is immutably so; can no more cease to be so, than he can lie, or do any ill thing; nor this, more than he can cease to be; because all perfection (and that of justice among the rest) belongs unto him essentially. So that he can no more cease to be just, than cease to be God. And,

(2.) Of this we may be ascertained further, thus, that whereas justice is a virtue inclining a person to give to every one his due, that which is owing to him, rightly belongs to him, God cannot be a debtor to his creature, otherwise than by voluntary obligation that he takes upon himself. No one can be a debtor to another, but one of these two ways; either naturally, or by some other sort of contract. He is, indeed, naturally a debtor who is possessed of somewhat that doth belong to another, that was originally his, and to which he retains a right: a man is in this case naturally a debtor to such a one by the immediate law of nature, to give him his own, or a full equivalent that he shall be satisfied is so. But so it is altogether impossible that God can be a debtor to his creature, who (as the apostle speaks, upon another account, Acts xvii.) hath given to all life, and breath, and all things. They can be proprietors of nothing, in opposition to him or against him, that are not masters of themselves, or of their own being. They owe him their all; to them there can be owing nothing; that is, not from him, to whom they themselves owe their very all. It is a just challenge, therefore, that is given to all the world by the apostle, Rom. xi. 35. "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" Produce me the man that can say, "God is a debtor, that he hath given him this or that, for which he is owing to him, let any man produce his claim, and it shall be recompensed to him again." So that naturally, God cannot be a debtor to his creatures.

And then, if we speak of the second way of his being a debtor, God hath never obliged himself to keep sin out of the creation, so as that he should break with his creatures, and do them wrong, in not doing all that was possible to omnipotency to make them impenable. Show the obligation, produce the bond, where is it? If this were to be alleged, He broke with his reasonable creatures at first, in making them free, in infecting liberty into their natures; why he never laid himself under any obligation against this. And therefore, it is every way most evident, that God must be immutably and unalterably just in all his dispensations; and particularly in this, in not hindering that sin should come into the world, and draw death after it, and spread itself through the world, (as we find it hath done,) still drawing on, and attracting death. And,

2. On the other hand, it is a most clear and certain truth, that as the nature of God is most absolutely and unalterably perfect, including all perfection, and that of justice unalterably among the rest; so, the nature of man is, in this present state, and from the very original of individual persons, sinfully imperfect; and they come into the world impure and polluted creatures from the womb. The justice of God is not to be solved that way, by denying that there is such a corruption and depravity of nature, transmitted even with the nature of man itself from age to age; as therein is comprehended both a negative part, a disinclination to all good; and a positive, an inclination to all evil. And that this also may be in our minds as a certain truth, I shall insist a little, and but a little, upon it. It not being my design (as I said) to do what hath been already done, to insist purposely upon the corruption of human nature absolutely, but only relatively and comparatively, according to what reference this matter may bear to the righteousness of God's dealings with men. And to evince this,

(1.) It is the most plain and express language of the Scripture. And what ought to determine in such a case? what could determine us but that? There is not another tolerable sense to be put on these words, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." It is most unreasonable and absurd, to pretend this to be only a particular acknowledgment of David concerning himself; as if he had the most unhappy procreation of all mankind; as if there were more corruption, or another way to convey corruption to him from his parents, than was with all the rest of men. It can carry no meaning, but that he doth involve his own in the common case, that it was only with him, in this respect, as it is with all others, that they are (as the expression is in John ix. 34.) altogether born in sin, all unclean. And it was, therefore, impossible that

any thing clean should come out of them. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one?" And you have the same thing more expressly asserted in general terms, in the 58th Psalm; "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." And sure, every man is wicked till he is converted, till he be regenerate and turn to God. Therefore, it must be an affirmation concerning all mankind, that they are estranged from the very womb, averse and disaffected to every thing that is good, and propense to that which is evil; as the following words signify: they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies; made up of falsehood, even from their original. And,

(2.) The Scripture doth, in multitude of places, speak of the universal actual sinfulness of the world. And whence should that come? In that 3d chapter of Romans, how often it is inculcated! I have proved (saith the apostle) Jews and Gentiles to be all under sin; and they were all the world. And all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; (afterwards in the same chapter, 19.) and that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Now, this being plainly asserted in the word of truth, how should this actual sinfulness begin with every one, so as to be universal? If it were only by imitation and example, it is strange that all should imitate the sin, but none follow the better examples, which, when renewing grace hath done its work, do come to be extant and appear in view, so as that many do carry it (through the grace of God) without visible scandalous enormities. But that which is so universally common, must have some common cause. The reason of the thing speaks itself; when there is not an instance to be found of any one that hath lived without sin, how should this be, but that it hath and must have spruug up with them? must have come with their nature, their very nature itself? for it is as common as their nature. And we may,

(3.) Argue from experience, that such a corruption and pravity as this, doth spring up with men and all human creatures, that come into this world, the ordinary way; that is, we cannot name the time when such are capable of acting electively or rationally, but they are of acting sinfully as soon. Doth not every one's experience tell him so? That there are disinclinations to that which is good, and inclinations to that which is evil, appearing most early; peevishness, crossness, pride, strife, falsehood, a disposition to lie, to be revengeful and vindictive; nothing is plainer; so that to deny the pravity of nature, even from men's *primordia*, is all one as to say there are not such natures in being. And then,

(4.) We may argue, too, from the manifest subjection and liableness of infants, even in their infancy, unto punitive strokes; sickness, pain, and death itself. Wherein is this, that the infant age is not exempt, if it be innocent, if it hath nothing of impurity and pravity adhering to it? If here it be said by way of reply to this, that "we find the inferior creatures, brute creatures, are liable to the same thing; sickness, and pain, and death, but that doth not prove them to be sinful, or that they have any sinfulness adhering to them;" why the case is so manifestly different, that it is an easy matter for the objector, if he please, (whosoever he be,) to answer himself. It is plain, death was never a threatening to them; it is plain that the brute creatures, as they grow up, do not come to sin at last, they never sin, nor are ever capable of it. And if, therefore, it should be said, that such infirmities, ails, maladies, and mortality itself, are afflictions only, and not penalties. I would fain know whether that do not equally reflect upon the divine justice, (of which such do seem to be so tender,) and a great deal more, to afflict a creature which is at the same time asserted to be innocent, every way innocent; doth not carry a worse face, a worse aspect with it, than to assert this creature to be innocent? And to say, these things are not punitive, but afflictive, is but a notional difference; and the notion doth neither do them good nor harm; neither makes the affliction less or more. But sure, it is more honourable for God to say, that, observing the impure and depraved state of human nature, even from its very original, he animadverts upon that impurity. As why should not the holy God express a displeasancy with every impurity wherever he finds it? And no man accuseth another of any injustice if he do destroy a creature as soon as it begins to live, that is known to be noxious, hurtful, and mischievous; as the crushing of serpents in the very egg; when this is so apparent, that there are so noxious qualities, which there is nothing but want of opportunity and time that hinders their exertion in noxious and hurtful acts. To express a displeasancy towards the innate disposition, can be no way unworthy of God. But that we shall have occasion to speak of more hereafter.

In the mean time, this is the First head proposed—that truth cannot be opposite to truth.—And, therefore, we being ascertained of this two-fold truth, that God is most perfectly and unalterably just, and that man is sinfully imperfect and impure, from his original, that is, the original of the individuals, these two cannot be opposite to one another; one truth cannot destroy another truth, or impart any repugnancy thereunto. And therefore, if there be any appearance of contrariety between these two, it must be but a false appearance. For of these things we are most certain; they are undoubted truths. Therefore, to solve the phenomenon, we must look another way, and there will be opportunity for that, in speaking to the following conclusions. In the mean time, let these two things be inlaid deeply in our souls, that God is absolutely and every way perfect, so as that that perfection of his must include the most unalterable eternal righteousness and justice; but that we for our parts are, from our original, impure and polluted creatures; that there may be, accordingly, suitable dispositions in us to acknowledge and adore his righteousness, and to own and abhor our own impurities; to walk humbly in the sense of them as long as we live, and to have so much the more disposition to admire that grace, which hath its exercise towards such creatures as we, when in point of justice there was enough against us to have produced, for ever, all the exercise of such grace.

LECTURE XXXVI.*

II. Now I go on to the next *conclusion*, which is the second in order, namely—That we may be most certain that many things really are, when the manner how they are, or how they came to be, is not understood by the most, or may be of very difficult explication unto any.—And to accommodate this to the present purpose I shall proceed by steps.

1. It is very plain that there is a cloud and darkness generally setting upon, or a veil is generally drawn over, the inceptions of things of whatsoever kind, as to how things of any sort do take their first beginnings. It is observable that, usually, a veil is drawn over those things. Look into all the productions of nature, how things do take their first rise, it is generally very inexplicable, and very unconceivable, at least as to the generality. For such substantial beings as are most sensible to us, as we see with our eyes, or touch with our hands; so that there can be no place or room for any doubt, but that such things are; yet how they came to be, who can give an account? We can none of us be in doubt but there are really these heavens over our heads, which our eyes see from day to day; and this earth underneath us, which we may touch when we please. But if God had not given us a general account of the Genesis, of the beginning of the heavens and the earth, at what a loss would men have been every where! And at what a loss generally are they, how man himself began to be in this world, where they have not the ducture of revelation in the case, to assist and help them! To think what ridiculous accounts, some of the wise and learned philosophers of this world have given of the very inception of mankind, it shows there is a veil, especially over the beginnings of things, when of the things themselves there is the greatest certainty imaginable. As who can make any man doubt whether there be such heavens as we behold, or such an earth as we walk upon, though we should never have known, if God had not told us, how they began. And to go a little further,

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2. We are most certain of many acts; and abilities and dispositions thereunto; which actions, how they are performed, very few can give an account; and where the dispositions thereunto did arise, they can as little tell. We know that we can see with our eyes, and that we can hear with our ears; and that such actions are performed by those very organs that are used for these purposes. But how few can tell how this act of vision is performed, or can give an account of the structure of that organ of the eye by which it is performed! and so, how the action of hearing is done, and of the aptitude of the organ of the ear thereunto! But we certainly know that we see, and that we hear; and that we see with our eyes, and not with our hands; and hear with our ears, and not with our feet.

And so, for acts of understanding; we know that we do know; we know, and are certain that we do exert acts of reason, that we use thoughts; but who can tell how a thought arises in a man's mind, and how men come to have the seeing, and hearing, and speaking, and reasoning power and faculty transmitted from age to age, and from generation to generation? That there should arise still from age to age such a sort of creatures as have these faculties and powers belonging to them, of that we can give as little account, as how grass, and herbs, and flowers do spring up of their proper seeds upon this earth, from year to year. But of the things themselves, we have the greatest certainty that may be. And to proceed further,

3. Concerning *sinful* acts and dispositions, we can be in as little doubt that such things there really are, though there be here a greater difficulty how they came to be. It is true, that this question vexed some of the wisest, and most learned, and most considering of mankind, before Christianity took place among them; since there was nothing but what was good at first, how should there come to be any such thing as evil in the world? And indeed, the counsel given was wise and wholesome, rather to consider how sin may be got out of the world, than how it came into it. But there is a necessity upon us, to endeavour, to our utmost, the maintaining and keeping up high and honourable thoughts of God, as that upon which all religion depends, and without which men will have a pretence to let it vanish out of the world; yea, and endeavour to make it so to do.

But whatsoever difficulty we may suppose in this case, the matter of fact is plain and evident; that is, we do find that there is such a generation of creatures, that do spring up in the world, from age to age, that are together both reasonable and sinful, as they could not be the latter without being the former. This is plain matter of fact, that a sort of creatures, which do exercise reason, do also sin from age to age, and universally: and that this, their disposition to sin, and their actual sinning, must have a beginning; and it cannot have beginning, but from some common and universal cause, being itself universal; so as that there are no instances to be found where (if there be an opportunity) a disposition to sin doth not betray itself; so as that men are not more inclined to act rationally, than they are to act irregularly. They act rationally in many instances, they act irregularly in greater instances, and more important, and that constantly, in all times, and all parts of the world. This is plain matter of fact; and men do, therefore, fill their own souls, and fill the world, with confusion and miseries.

This (I say) is all plain matter of fact. We cannot be more certain of any thing, than we are of this; that is, that men have so much reason still remaining, and belonging to their nature, as by which they are capable of knowing they were not self-made, not self-originate, that they came from another, that they owe their all to an infinitely perfect Being; that must have all perfection in itself, and all being originally in itself, and that their interests are some way or other involved within one another. And they are, thereupon, capable of understanding their own obligation to love God above all; and to love one another as themselves. Very plain it is, if men did but act pursuantly to such apprehensions, whereof it is most apparent their nature is capable, they would pass their days, here in this world, in very great tranquillity and felicity, within themselves, and towards one another; and, that it is impossible that those miseries, and those evils and confusions which fill men's spirits, and fill the world, should arise from any thing else but the inclination that is in them to do otherwise; not to love God with a supreme love, and not to love one another with co-ordinate love. So that this is as plain matter of fact, as that there is a world, or that there are reasonable creatures in it. This hath always been a difficulty, how (as to some particular persons especially) sin should have its beginning, when that it hath its continual being in the world proves itself to every one's sad experience and observation, that doth but take notice of himself and the world. But yet,

4. Though, how sin is transmitted to particular and individual persons, from generation to generation, it cannot be so easily told, yet it may most certainly be determined how it is not, (which most concerns us with reference to our present purpose, to vindicate the righteousness of God,) that is, that it is man's creature, and not God's. It is not he that hath infused any thing of evil or malignity into the nature of man, which was originally pure and perfect as it sprang from him, the Author of all nature. This is out of question, that he made man upright, but they have sought and found many inventions, Eccl. vii. 29. This appears, by what that great man Moses saith to the people, over whom God hath made him a leader and a head, when he was now shortly to take his leave of them; in that much celebrated song which he begins with this, as the design of publishing the name of the Lord, "Because I will publish the name of the Lord, ascribe ye greatness unto our God;" (that, we may take up and accommodate very fully to our own, that is, to the common case:) "He is the rock (this is a part of that name of his which he designed to publish in that 32d Deut.) his work is perfect, and all his ways are judgment, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." But "they have corrupted themselves;" (as in the 4th and 5th verses of that chapter and onward:) a self-corrupted generation of creatures they are. And concerning this, we may assure our hearts; and ought to do so.

When we are in this case to apologize for God, it is indeed an awful thing that is undertaken; but with the profoundest reverence, and with the greatest veneration, and with a deep resentment of the necessity that men should be so prone to arraign the Almighty; and he be (as it were) put to plead his cause at his own creatures' bar; as the apostle's reading of the words doth imply; and as the former part, even of that clause in the 4th verse of this Psalm, is understood to signify too: That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest; when thou speakest by way of apology for thyself. It ought to be done with a sincere design, and with a joyful confidence, that he will always overcome and triumph when he judgeth himself; and when men presume to judge him, and pass their censures upon his ways and methods towards the world.

But it is a thing must be done, because there is a proneness in men's minds to admit of, and to have thoughts arise and spring up in them, which have a reflecting aspect and look upon the most high and most righteous God. As you see, the apostle, in the place where he quotes this text, (Rom. iii. 4, 5.) objects this; "Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance?" when he was, in the foregoing and following chapters, proving Jew and Gentile to be all under sin. "Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance? I speak as a man," *humano more, after the manner of men*, which implies, so men are apt to speak; that is, to raise questions and doubts in their minds, "How will this or that stand with the unrighteousness of God?" Therefore, the apostle thought himself concerned to vindicate God's righteousness; and he doth it largely, even there in that mentioned chapter, and afterwards in several others of that epistle; and it ought to be done with a pleasant confidence that there will be a universal applause to the righteousness of God at last, by all his intelligent creatures; that all shall agree and conspire together, in saying, "Holy and true art thou, O Lord; just and righteous art thou, Lord God Almighty, thou King of nations and of saints."

This I thought fit to say, by way of introduction to what I have further to say to this last mentioned head, that while we may be in some difficulty, how corrupt nature comes to be propagated from man to man, and from age to age,

we are yet at a certainty how it is not done; that is, that sin is none of God's creature, and that he never infuses a sinning disposition into any creature whatsoever. The belief of this we ought to establish and settle in our own hearts, as that by which we shall but give God his due, and consult our own peace, and more flourishing and prosperous state of religion in our own souls; that it may have no damps there, or nothing that may tend to extinguish or deaden it in us. And therefore, this I shall evince to you, by some plain considerations; though one would think, indeed, the thing needed no eviction. As,

(1.) That the purity of God's nature cannot but abhor it: it is impossible that a thing so repugnant as sin is to the pure and holy nature of God, can spring from that pure and holy nature. Nothing but what is good can come from the first, the original, the essential, the most perfect good. And,

(2.) That which he hath forbidden, it is impossible that he should cause or procure; that would be such a contradiction as we could never suspect an honest man of, that he should forbid and procure the same thing.

(3.) Much less is it possible that he should cause that which he punisheth, and punisheth with so terrible severity; the proper wages of sin being no less than eternal death. And,

(4.) It is impossible he should cause that which he hates; "Do not the abominable thing which I hate, which my soul hateth." Of that he can never be the author and the cause. And,

(5.) It can never be, that he should be the cause or author of that, which is so highly injurious to him, which doth him the greatest injury imaginable. For though, from the perfection of his own nature, it is impossible it should do him any real harm; yet it doth him the greatest wrong. What a disorder hath it introduced into the creation of God! how hath it spoiled his workmanship, in a great masterpiece of his creation, the mind and soul of man made after his image! What deformity hath it introduced in the room of so much beauty and glory! How manifest an attempt is it against his throne, even in the very nature of it! What a violation of the sacred constitution of his government! It is sin that hath set his own creature against him, disaffected it to him: that is, in itself, in its rooted aversion from God, and hatred of God. It is the most unconceivable thing in the word, that God should make his own nature hate himself, disaffect himself. It is sin that hath actually torn away so great and noble a part of his creation from him, and plucked it from his obedience and subjection; even all the generations of men from age to age, and so great a part of the heavenly host, and turned them all into rebels against their Maker and rightful Lord. It cannot be that he should cause so mischievous a thing.

And it is too faint a vindication of God, in this case, to say, that therefore he cannot cause, because it is a defect, and so not a causable thing, or capable of any other but a deficient cause. This is very true indeed, but very short, for that is no more than to say, God caused it not, than to say, another caused it not; as a thing that cannot be caused, cannot indeed admit of positive causation. That is very true, but we do not do God right if we do not assert also, that he could not bring it about, that it should be any agency of his; not in respect of the object, as being an uncausable thing, but in respect of his own nature, as being repugnant to his holiness, and to his sovereignty, and to the sacredness of his government. And as that which he could not but abhor from, and hate, and hate with utmost detestation. And I add to all this,

(6.) To evince that this transmission of sin cannot be by any direct hand that God hath in it, in that he hath provided so costly a remedy against it, that he should cause that which his own Son came down into our world and died to destroy. That so wonderful a thing should be, as his descent into this world of ours, "who was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and who upholds all things by the word of his power, and by whom he made the worlds;" that he should come down and appear once before the end of time, (or upon the declining of time from its fulness,) to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; (Heb. ix. 25.) that he who sent his own Son to put away sin upon so very expensive terms, by the sacrifice of himself, to throw it out of the world, should have a hand in bringing it into the world, is the most inconceivable thing that can be.

And it is that which all agree in, that however sin came into the world, God was not the author of it. Every one abhors that thought, men of all sorts, of all persuasions and religions: pagans themselves, in all the descriptions we find in their writings concerning original evil, all agree in this, that God is not the original of it: all agree to discharge God in the case, though they are put (some of them) upon most absurd imaginations and devices to assoile the matter in themselves; and to avoid one difficulty, run themselves into as great or greater. Some talking, they know not what, of a certain ancient nature, from whence evil must come: some positively asserting two principles, as Manes and his Mantcheans did, an evil principle and a good. But this, all have agreed in, by common consent, that God could not be the Author of the sinful evils that have, in so great measure, confounded the world, and spoiled and corrupted the nature of man.

And that being so far clear, we may reckon that a good step is taken towards the mark that we are aiming at, the vindicating of God's righteousness in reference to this thing. There is the greatest certainty imaginable of the thing itself, while we are uncertain of the manner how sin comes to be transmitted from age to age, or to take its beginning in particular persons in a continual succession. Though there be (I say) a difficulty as to that, there is no difficulty as to the thing; and there is no difficulty as to this, how it did not, though it remain still a difficulty, how it is. It is not from God, sin is none of this creature.

Then I should here subjoin, in the third place, that next conclusion which I design to speak to, namely,

III. That it is the most unreasonable thing that can be, to object uncertainty against certainty. It being certain, that God is immutably holy and righteous, and that his nature is absolutely perfect; it being certain that man's nature is now become sinfully imperfect; and it being again plain, that we may be certain of very many things, when how they come to be is doubtful, and perhaps to many, or the most, inexplicable: but as to this particular thing, we do not know how the corruption of particular persons began, but we know how it began not; that is, that it is impossible to be any way imputable to God: we thence proceed to show, how unreasonable a thing it is, to object to the things about which we are uncertain, against the things that are most certain, that carry the greatest and plainest evidence with them. And of this we may give you instances enough.

If we should argue against the existence of this world, because we have not a particular, distinct account how it took its beginning, how absurd were it! If we may be capable of being puzzled with such questions as these, the great God put to Job. (chap. xxxviii. in several verses of it.) If he should bid us gird up our loins like men, and say he would demand of us, to answer, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth! declare, if you have understanding, Who hath laid the measures thereof, if ye know? or who hath stretched out the line upon them?" If he should expostulate with us, touching our knowledge of the way how the sea is shut up as within bars and doors; or how ice, and snow, and rain are generated; and would put us upon giving an account of these things; would it not be the absurdest thing in all the world to deny their being, because we cannot give a distinct account of them? If we cannot give a distinct account, (or it may be,) a satisfactory one to themselves, how matter was moved yet in the unformed chaos, and when the measuring line was stretched forth of this world, and the foundations laid of this mighty work; if we cannot give an account, how light and darkness were severed, which was the parting place, the utmost boundary of light and darkness; if we cannot give an account how the waters of the sea came to be collected and gathered into one place, and to be confined and shut up there, so as not to return and overflow the earth; if we cannot give an account how the rain was generated by its father: "Hath the rain a father?" (as it follows here;) how ice and snow came to be condensed into these several substances, wherein we find them;

therefore, to say that none of these things are; to oppose the uncertainties about the production of these things, to the manifest, undoubted certainty of their existence, is certainly such an absurdity as we could never prevail upon ourselves to be guilty of.

But (as hath been told you before) we cannot be more certain of any thing that we see with our eyes, or of any faculty or power that belongs to ourselves, than we are, that there is a continual transmission of sin in this world. We cannot be more certain that man is a seeing creature, that he is a hearing creature, that he is a reasoning creature, than we can, that he is a living creature. And it would therefore be the most absurd thing imaginable, to oppose and object that which is uncertain, against that which is so plainly and fully certain.

And I might tell you here, of a great many uncertainties, which they must suppose and take for granted to be very great certainties, who should form a disputation in this case, concerning the production of the corrupt and sinful nature in man. But that would be too large a theme to enter upon now. Yet, all will resolve into this in general, that as to what difficulty men do imagine in this case, it is only from their opposing philosophical uncertainty to theological verity; and till philosophers be agreed in other matters, we have very little reason to regard problems, doubtful problems, that may refer to this particular case; of which I may instance at another time, but shall not now. But (I say) let them come to a certainty in other matters first, before they expect to be much regarded in reference to determinate, theological truth, which, we reckon, stands unshaken as the foundations of heaven and earth. When they have brought themselves and the world to a certainty about such things as the ebbing and flowing of the sea, the causes of the very centre of our world, the powers of the loadstone; whether it be the sun or the earth, and which it is of these, that moves the other about; when they have brought such things as these, and a hundred more that might be mentioned, to a certainty, then they may, with more pretence, expect to be listened to, as to their determinations which may more directly respect this case.

LECTURE XXXVII.*

Under the opening of the third conclusion, proposed to be spoken to, for the clearing of what I intended in the choice of the text we are upon, namely,—that it is most unreasonable and absurd, to oppose and object dark, and doubtful, and uncertain things, against that which is most evident and certain;—we showed that there are many uncertainties, that men of philosophical minds, and geniuses, do commendably enough employ their thoughts about, while they do not attempt or offer at such a thing, as to oppose them to manifest, revealed truths. But if they will do so, it is in all reason to be expected, that they should come to a more general certainty than they do, or are ever like to do, about philosophical matters in general. I instanced in several, and told you, I would instance in four more which do more directly concern this case, about which here lies the objected difficulty.

That the human soul cannot be propagated: to suppose it can, would be to expose the doctrine of its immortality to manifest hazard. It must be supposed, that being immediately created by God himself, it comes pure and sinless out of his hands. The body itself, without the soul, cannot be the seat and subject of sin, as no irrational thing can, which is most evident. Therefore, many think there can be no such thing as propagation of sin from age to age; for how should it be? It cannot be at first found in the soul, which comes pure out of the hand of God. It cannot be seated or subjected in the body, which is not a subject capable of sin, or any mortality, abstractly considered. Here (I say) men do but oppose uncertainty to a certainty; a great many uncertainties to one plain and absolute certainty; that is, that sin doth really descend from age to age; and it is manifest, and in view with every one that observes that men do not sooner begin to act rationally, than they do begin to act irregularly. But to oppose uncertainties to this plain and evident certainty, is a most unreasonable thing; equally unreasonable as that sophistical reasoning was of the philosopher that would undertake to prove, that there could be no such thing as a local motion; and another undertook to refute him, by walking up and down before his eyes. There are too plain and sad proofs, in the walkings of men from age to age, that as soon as ever they begin to move or act as men, they do act sinfully; and so that corruption doth descend and is transmitted. This is certain and evident. But to make this a difficulty, there are a great many uncertainties supposed and taken for granted, about which it concerns ignorant creatures (as we all are) to pronounce nothing one way or other.

It is uncertain when or what time human souls were created, or were not created; whether all at once and at first, or whether at some distance of time, before they become to be united to human bodies. Not that the truth needs a determination of these matters, that way that would seem more favourable to it, as if it be not otherwise defended. But, in the mean time, we ought not to make difficulties greater than they really are, by supposing and taking for granted, that those things are certain, which really are not so.

It is, again, altogether uncertain by what sort of divine agency a human soul comes to be united to a human body, or whether they come into that union elective, yea or no; or whether by a certain sort of fatal necessity; these are uncertainties, and we are not to pronounce concerning them as if they were certain.

We do not know; philosophy cannot, with certainty, determine the strict, precise, limitative bounds, between the sensitive nature and the rational. We can be at no certainty, what dispositions there may be in the sensitive nature unto sin, though there can be no such thing as formal sin in it, abstractedly considered; so that whensoever a reasonable, intelligeat spirit shall come to be united therewith, it will thereupon certainly sin: if it act, it will not act more rationally, than disorderly and irregularly. As if never so skilful a hand do play upon an instrument out of tune, if it sound it will sound amiss; if never so skilful a horseman ride a lame horse, if he move he will halt. We are altogether uncertain what of sensitive nature may be propagated with such and such dispositions in it, before the supervention of the reasonable soul.

We are uncertain what orders there are of created spirits, so little do we know, and we ought not to pretend to know, of the affairs of the invisible world; so that we ought, in justice, to profess ignorance of such things as these, whether there be any common spirit of nature endowed with a plastic power, that may be immediately concerned about the union of human bodies and human souls with one another.

These are things, though contraries, whereunto for the most part men take upon them to determine as certainties; and so make objections against the most certain and unquestionable truths. And the most of the difficulties in this matter do but arise from opposing doubtful philosophical problems to unquestionable theological verities. And whereas, there is a very great uncertainty in most parts of philosophy, in natural philosophy more than in any other part, therefore, the presumptuous determinations of men, about these things, are very unfit to be brought into any competition with the most certain divine truths; that is, to oppose things that are doubtful, that can never be proved one way or other, unto things that are either most evidently proved, or are in themselves so evident, as to need no proof. And this is the case as to the most of what appears difficult in this affair. But then,

IV. The last conclusion that I am to insist upon is this, that it is most of all unreasonable and absurd, to oppose such uncertainties to certainties, to object what is doubtful and dark, against what is plain and evident, when (as hath been evinced already) there is nothing can shake the asserted truth; but there are many considerations may be brought to break the force of such objections, as are raised

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against it; then, it is most specially absurd. And under this head it was that I designed to produce and lay before you, the many considerations which tend to break the force of any thing that can be objected against the consistency and agreeableness of the righteous and universal perfection of the Divine Nature, with the continual transmission of the sinful imperfections of the human nature.

The difficulty I need not remind you of, only, that it may lie the more distinctly in your thoughts, it is reducible to two heads; partly somewhat on the part of God, and partly somewhat on the part of man. On man's part first; because he is first to be considered in every thing that is evil, whether it be evil of sin, or evil of misery. And from what hath been said it appears difficult to be conceived, how man can be capable of propagating a sinful soul to another, when the soul, as such, is not propagated; and sin must reside there, inasmuch (as hath been said) as the body cannot be the seat or subject of sin, abstractly considered, and without the soul. On God's part, how it should stand with his righteousness and other perfections, continually to co-operate with second causes in the transmission of a sinful nature from age to age among men; so as thereby to make this world a seed-plot of wickedness and misery, to all its inhabitants, from one generation to another; upon which, many have thought themselves necessitated to deny any such thing as the propagation of a corrupted nature, from generation to generation; and so to ascribe the whole business of the continuance of sin from age to age, in the world, only to imitation; one generation learning to be wicked, from another wicked generation, that did precede. But now, I say, as nothing can shake the truths that have been asserted concerning God's righteousness, and man's unrighteousness continually descending, and transmitted from age to age; so there are many things to be alleged, to break the force of any such objections as these. And,

I shall offer this to consideration, that in reference to God's concern in this matter, (about whose name and honour all our souls ought to be most tenderly and deeply concerned,) there is nothing to be said or thought but this, it were easy for him to have prevented such a descent of sinfulness, from age to age, in this world, by which also misery is continually entailed upon the inhabitants of it. But now (I say) consider these things in reference hereunto.

1. Suppose that men should, hereupon, ascribe the whole business of the continued sinfulness of the world, from age to age, to imitation only, this would no more solve the difficulty, than what is ordinarily asserted; for, even that also, how easy were it for him, the great God, (as we may think,) to have prevented this; that is, to have prevented the descent of sin, from age to age, by imitation! How easily might he have annihilated this world, or annihilated his creature man, either by exerting his power to this purpose, or, indeed, by only withholding it! for then all must drop. Or, how easy had it been to him, to have made all perfectly good, and that they should have continued such, from age to age! and then there would have been no bad example for any one's imitation. And we do not know, but that the Divine Agency (such as it may be for ought we can tell) may be as little concerned in transmitting human nature in its corruption, from age to age, as it would be, in sustaining sinful creatures that are corrupted, in co-operating in sinful actions. And without the co-operating influence of the First Cause, we are sure nothing can be done by a sufficient influence; that is, not done by an efficacious and necessitating one. And therefore, it is in vain to allege that, for the solving and expediting this difficulty, which doth itself carry as much of difficulty in it. And again,

2. This is next to be considered, that it is very unreasonable to have been expected from God, that he should annihilate an intelligent creature, upon the account of its having offended him, or upon the account of its being likely to transmit its likeness to those that shall proceed and spring from such a progenitor. It was a most unreasonable thing (I say) that God should, hereupon, annihilate or reduce to nothing such a piece of the work of his own hands; that had neither been suitable to the wisdom of God, nor his goodness: not to his wisdom, for there had been a direct regression, that he should undo and destroy his own work; because such a creature, the subject and effect of his productive and creating influence, had transgressed the law and rule of its own creation; it was unreasonable that he should, thereupon, reduce it to nothing. And it had been (I say) very disagreeable to his wisdom, as if he were surprised by the fall and lapse of his creature, as if he had not foreseen, as if he had not sagacity enough to apprehend, such and such consequences. It hath been always (as we find by the course God hath held) reckoned by him, most worthy of him, and most God-like, to turn ill events to good; but not to go back. And we shall, in time, come to show you, how he hath done it in this case, to his own most transcendent glory, and to the advantage of his creatures, such as do not, by their own faulty opposition, stand in the way of his kind and gracious method towards them. But, that he should annihilate or bring a creature to nothing, that was capable of obeying and serving him, because he did disobey him, and because he is likely to transmit sinful inclinations to those that come of him, or come after him, this is never to be expected from the blessed God; it is a thing disagreeable to his wisdom, that he should do and undo. When he is said to have repented that he made man, as when he brought the flood upon the world; (Gen. vi.) that, as is plain in itself, and, all do agree, is spoken *more humano*. And though he did (that he might give one proof of his just displeasancy at the apostacy of the world) bring on that deluge, yet you see he would not destroy the kind, but resolved to continue that, in subserviency to his further great and glorious designs.

And indeed, it could much less have consisted with his goodness, to destroy the capacity which was in that order of creatures, of so high and great things as he designed them to, which should spring up of the human race. That he should prevent himself of that wonderful exercise of his mercy, grace, and good-will towards men, of which we shall have occasion to discourse in its proper place, and as the series of things shall lead on. Therefore that I would have to be considered, that it was a most unreasonable thing to expect that God should, upon the transgression of his reasonable creatures, and lest sin should be transmitted from age to age, annihilate the kind, and reduce all to nothing. And,

3. It was as little to be expected, that God should at first make all immutably good; that he should have made all his intelligent creatures immutably good at first, both angels in heaven, and men on earth; and so have provided and taken a course that sin should always be kept out of his creation; and that it should be impossible, where there is a nature propagated from age to age, there should be any thing of taint capable of falling into that nature: I say, that God should have done this, was as little to be expected from him.

We may judge of things safely by the event; for that is judging after God; that is judging that to be becoming of God, which he hath done; that course to be most suitable to him, most God-like, which he hath chosen. And so far as we can discern the reasonableness of the course which he hath taken, we are to take notice of it, and avow it upon all occasions. Now, from the course he hath taken, it appears most suitable to the excellencies of the Divine Being, every way, that he should have made intelligent creatures at first mutable; not to make them immutably good and happy, which was to be their final state; but that there should be a preparatory, subservient state, introductive to that final state. This appears, upon all accounts, to have been most agreeable to the Supreme Wisdom and Goodness, that his creatures should not arrive to the highest perfection that they were capable of all at once, and at the very first, but that they should undergo a trial; and in that case, (if they must do so,) they must be left to their liberty at first; and being left so, there would be still a possibility that sin should be; and being once, that it should go on and be transmitted from age to age. And therefore, I add,

4. That God's omnipotency, or what his absolute power can do, is not the only measure (abstractly considered) according to which it can be said God can do this or that. It is not fit or proper to say, that he can do whatsoever omnipotency, abstractly considered and alone, could do; because he is not a Being of power alone: power alone

gives us but an inadequate conception of God; it doth not give us an entire conception of him, as if he were nothing else but power; for he is wisdom, and goodness, and holiness, and righteousness, and truth, as well as power. And therefore, that only is, in a true sense, possible to God, which is suitable to all his glorious excellencies to do, conjunctly considered; and not what is suitable to his power alone, and separately considered from the rest. When it is said, God cannot lie, and God cannot deny himself, and the like, the meaning is not as if there were a want of mere power to do any such natural act, considered as a natural act; but it is impossible to the divine perfection, (consider him as a Being of universal perfection, wherein all perfections do meet,) to do things so unlike himself, so unworthy of himself.

Therefore, it was never to have been expected from divine power, or because he is omnipotent, that, therefore, he should do all things which that, abstractedly considered, could do; as to have put an end to the generations of men lest they should sin on; or to have made all perfectly good at first, so as it should be an impossibility that any such thing as sin should be in the world, which only the possibility of its continuing in the world could, in an ordinary course, be prevented. This (I say) was never to be expected from the infinitely, absolutely, and universally perfect Being, who hath other perfections belonging to his nature besides that of power. But those things are only possible to him, which (all things considered) are most worthy of him, and most suitable to him. And again,

5. We are further to consider, that the course of nature in the universe, it is most observably fixed and settled; so as (unless it be now and then in single instances) not to admit of change; that is, not to admit of change in an ordinary course. We may observe, that the course of nature is very rarely ever altered. But it were very unreasonable to expect, that it should be statedly or often altered. We find alterations in single instances; as in reference to that great order of day and night, when the sun stood still so long one time, and when it went back so many degrees at another time. And so when the sea did not hold its own course, or do agreeably to its property, as a fluid thing, to overflow all that came within the compass of it, but was bound up as to the Israelites that passed through it. And the fire, it acted not, according to its natural property, to consume and burn what is combustible, in the case of the three children, who were in the fiery furnace unharmed and unhurt.

But we are never to think that the course of nature should be ordinarily or often altered. And that it is not, even because it is not, we ought in great reverence and humility to apprehend there are mighty occult reasons for this. And it should lay an awe upon our spirits, to behold the Author of nature, the God of nature, acting it on, in so stated and unaltered a course, from age to age, through the succession of many ages. If we understood no reason why it should be so, yet our minds should be struck with great reverence when we find, that ordinarily it is so. But we may apprehend very great reason for it too, in reference to the stated course of natural causes, as to what doth concern ourselves. What confusion would it make in the world, if, ordinarily, the sun should vary its course, that no man could tell when it would rise, or when it would set, or when to undertake such or such a business? If God's obstructing that course in a single instance or two, should have been often repeated, so as to hold men's minds in a continual suspense, the sad and dismal consequences that would have ensued to this world (though this be but a very minute, inconsiderable part of the universe, the whole creation of God) are obvious to every one's view that considers.

And as to the transmitting of the species of things, and the preserving of the species of all sorts of things, in the world, besides the decorum of it, and that admirable proof that there is of divine wisdom and providence therein, the usefulness thereof to ourselves is most apparent to any one's notice and view, that through so many thousands of years there should be a preservation of the kinds of things. Go through the several orders of things: the ranks of things that come under our own notice, is an admirable discovery of God's wisdom and providence, and too little considered and reflected on; that the species of things should be unaltered, that what we find was the property of this or that herb, or plant, or tree, continues so. These things have still the same properties that they had. Look to the animals beneath us; we find the same properties the horse to be described by, so many ages ago, are in the same creature still. There is an admirable discovery of the power and wisdom of Providence in this, which we ought to contemplate with great admiration, and great reverence, and have our spirits so much the more disposed to acknowledge and adore God the Maker of this world, and the great Author of universal nature. It would do more to preserve a religious impression upon our spirits Godward, than is commonly apprehended, if we did, now and then, allow our thoughts to fix in these contemplations, that whereas there is such a collision in this natural world, there are such antipathies and contrarieties in the natures of things, that yet their natures are continued, preserved entire, from being confounded; though there is such a vast multiplicity, yet all preserved entire, through so many thousands of years. But then, consider further,

6. That it is most evident, that the course of nature is as settled and constant, in reference to the production of men from age to age, as of any other creature. This is obvious, to wit, that there do spring up, from age to age, creatures of this species, and of the same kind, as there do of any other creatures of any other kind or species. And that, hereupon, we must apprehend a fixedness in the course of nature, not to be altered for a continuance, though it may in single instances, here and there, in reference to this thing, as well as in reference to any thing else that falls under the regulation and measure of the law of nature. And,

7. It is a mighty confirmation of the natural descent of sin with the nature of man, in the ordinary way, that when God designed the incarnation of his own Son, to avoid that corruption of nature descending to him, he there steps out of the ordinary course; a consideration that hath that weight with it, that if any one allow himself to think, it must overbear his mind in that matter, that sure there is some secret, profound reason in the counsel of God, (whether obvious to our view, or not obvious,) that the descent of corrupt nature was in the ordinary way unavoidable: that when God had a design to incarnate his own Son, when it was intended God should be manifested in the flesh, to avoid that contagion and corruption which, in the ordinary course, is transmitted, he doth in this single instance recede and go off from the ordinary natural course: and so the production is by the Holy Ghost, separating the very matter of the human body which itself, indeed, was not a capable subject of sin, as hath been said, and is plain in itself. But because the human nature had been corrupted, if it had descended in the ordinary way, (and that was inconsistent with the design on which a Redeemer was to come down from heaven into the world,) therefore, the ordinary course of procreation is declined and avoided: a most pregnant demonstration, that, in the ordinary course, sin is always naturally transmitted, in that this must be done on purpose to avoid that taint and contagion that otherwise would have been. But I add, in the next place, and shall go no further now,

8. That men do make the difficulty in this matter greater than they need, by not apprehending and considering aright, wherein the production of a human creature lies. It is plain it doth not lie, though a human creature be a creature of a compounded nature, that hath a terrestrial and celestial part, yet, I say, it doth not lie in the production of either of the parts, but only in the uniting of them substantially with one another. It neither lies in the production of the soul, nor doth it lie in the production of the matter of the body, for all matter is generally apprehended to be ingenerable and incorruptible. But it lies (as I said) in the beginning of these into a substantial union with one another. And do but consider to this purpose, "Wherein doth death lie? wherein doth the death of a man consist?" His death, you will easily apprehend, must stand in direct opposition to his procreation and production. But death doth not lie either in the destruction of the soul, or of the body; but as it is a matter of faith, that the one remains, so it is a matter of sense, that the other remains after death. The soul is gone, but not reduced to nothing; the body

remains, and will continue a considerable time the same entire frame that it was, even when the soul is gone. Death, therefore, doth neither lie in the destruction of the soul, nor in the destruction of the body; but in their disunion. So the procreation doth not lie, either in the production of the soul, or in the production of the body; (otherwise than being so and so modified;) but in the union of those two parts, bringing it about, that they should be substantially united with one another.

And if that be duly considered, there is a great deal of room and scope left to apprehend how such a thing may be very possible, (as we find it actual,) the continual descent of sin, and yet the holiness, and purity, and universal rectitude of the Divine Nature, not having any concern unbecoming itself, unsuitable to itself, herein.

There are many more considerations behind, that will not be without weight in this matter: only, now, let us consider and bethink ourselves (as our assembly dissolves) of this one thing; how much more considerable a theme and subject we have for our thoughts, in that which is common to all ages, that can occur to us in what is peculiar to our own time! We are so amused and taken up about the little affairs (in comparison) of our own time, that we do not allow ourselves to consider and look, as we should do, with just intention of mind, upon those things that are great, and of common concern to all time. And we wonder there should be any miscarriage in the conduct of human affairs, and that the perversity of men, here and there, breaks out in this or that instance, forgetting there is a corrupt, human nature still descending from age to age, and from generation to generation, which naturally makes this world a region of impurity, and consequent misery, and gloominess and darkness. And we do not enough reflect upon the intestine cause of all our evils. Every one would be a great deal more ready to fall to self-accusation, than to the accusing of other men. "I have a corrupt nature in myself, out of which nature spring all the confusions and disorders in the world; all the dismal, tragical things that are any where to be found and observed in it." It is very unreasonable to let our minds be confined to the present, when we have such a vast prospect before us, looking forward, looking backward, looking inward, looking on this and that hand; to bind our thoughts when we have so vast a compass of things to look into, this is neither suitable to the reason of a man, nor so suitable as it should be to the more large and concerned mind of a Christian, about the great things wherein the Christian interest is, itself, concerned.

LECTURE XXXVIII.*

Now we shall go on to add further considerations for showing this *fourth conclusion*. And, thereupon, in the next place,

9. We may further consider, that it is never thought a blemish to the justice of any government whatsoever, that children should inherit the poverty and rags of their parents that were either poor or profligate, or that had squandered or forfeited all that they had. This was never thought to have been a blemish to the government under which such persons may live, that children are born poor, when their parents had nothing to leave them; and so they have rags and beggary for their patrimony. This doth not use to be, or can be, with any equity, imputed to the government under which such live, as if that were to be blamed. And much less is it imputable in this case; because human governors are debtors to the communities which they govern, and do owe to them their utmost care and providence for them. But God (as hath been formerly showed you) can be no debtor to any of his creatures, whether considered singly, or in communities, any otherwise than as he hath by any promise made himself debtor. But he never promised, never obliged himself by any promise, to keep sin out of the world, from hurting creatures that can only hurt themselves by it; or from preventing it to descend or presently to throw it out of the world; though that he will do fully in his own time, and in his own way. And again,

10. There can be no more obligation on the blessed God, to prevent moral defects among his creatures, than natural ones. If he be not obliged to prevent natural defects, he is as little obliged to prevent moral; because moral perfection must be founded in natural; as all morality hath its foundation in the nature of the creatures who are the capable subjects thereof. But plain it is, he can be under no obligation to prevent natural defects, or that his creatures should be naturally perfect: for in what sense will we suppose it requisite that he should make them so? Not with an absolute perfection, perfection in *omni genere*; for that is above the condition of a creature; no creature is capable of being *universally perfect*. That is the peculiar privilege and prerogative of the Original and Uncreated Being, to be absolutely and universally perfect. And therefore, to suppose him obliged to make all his creatures every way perfect, it were to suppose him obliged to have made them all gods; or we must suppose him not obliged to make any thing at all; because it is impossible that a made thing can be absolutely perfect. Or, should we suppose him under an obligation to have made things perfect in any kind above their own? That cannot be thought neither; for that must suppose, then, that there should have been no creatures of any inferior kind, or that all must have been of equal perfection, that every fly or worm must have been a cherubim or seraphim. Indeed, it is a most accurate discourse that I have taken notice of to this purpose, in a pagan writer, (as it is more generally reckoned,) Plotinus, who saith, that "to find fault with the Author of nature because of such and such defects, in such and such sorts of creatures, or in particular creatures, it were to find fault that he hath made the world an harmonious thing; that there are such orders and gradations in it; that he hath made some inanimate things, and endowed some with a life of sense, and some below them with a life of vegetation, and some above them with a life of reason, and some above them with an angelical nature, and the like." All the comely orders of things should not have been, but all must have been of one order and kind. "And, (as he saith,) it were the same thing as to blame a limner, that he hath not in every thing drawn light colours without any foil; or a comedian, (the author of a comedy,) that he hath not made every person that is to act a part, a king, or a hero; that there should be any that doth sustain the part of mean and inferior persons."

It is plain, and out of doubt, that God is not obliged to make his creatures all either absolutely perfect, or to give them higher perfections than do belong to their own kind; or (we may add) to give to every one of them those perfections that that kind is capable of. For we find that there are some of greater health, some of less; some of greater strength, some of less, in that order of creatures wherein they are. And we find that there are such things as hereditary diseases, that do descend, and generally are found every where through the human race. But (I say) God can no more be under obligation to prevent moral than natural defects, among his creatures. And again,

11. We are to consider further, that though the descent and transmission of a sinful pravity with the nature of man may appear to have a difficulty with it, yet it is not altogether unacconntable, if we do but consider things as they are, with that compass of thought which we ought. Nay, it is not ordinarily conceivable, how it should be otherwise, if we do but admit into our thoughts, what a concurrence there is of several things to this purpose. As,

(1.) The retirement of the Holy, Divine Spirit from man, having once sinned. And it is certain, that he did retire thereupon, that he hath retired, otherwise than as according to the Redeemer's method he is returned. There was an antecedent retirement and withdrawing, and that, upon the sin of man, upon sin's entering into the world: for do but observe that Gal. iii. 14, 15. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us; for cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles." (That, which was the blessing of Abraham

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upon that account, might now be a more diffused blessing, and reach the Gentiles too.) For what? That they might receive the promise of the Spirit (or the promised Spirit) through faith. Now consider what the blessing is, and measure the opposite curse by that: the blessing, you see, is the gift of the Spirit; what is the curse then, but the debasing of the Spirit? And certainly then, that was the curse of the law, the curse of the violated law. As soon as the law was broken, the Divine, Holy Spirit was cursed away from the nature of man; or, man was cursed, so as that thereby this Spirit should be withheld, should be kept off, otherwise than as upon the Redeemer's account, and according to his methods, it should be restored. And then,

(2.) Consider, hereupon, the nature and kind of that corruption that is conveyed and doth descend, and how the Scripture speaks of it, generally under the notion of carnality. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, John iii. 6. That is, now, where there is no divine birth, where nothing is born of the Spirit or where the work of regeneration hath not taken place, the production is nothing else but flesh, the mere human nature; to wit, the denomination is taken from that which governs; though a man be not all flesh, the denomination is taken from that which prevails. What is the thing produced when a human creature is born? A piece of flesh: as that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, whenever that birth comes to obtain and take place with any soul. That which is born of the flesh is but flesh; not as if the nature of man were nothing but flesh, but because carnality is the prevailing thing in the lapsed state of man, that carries the name, and now he is called nothing but flesh. And,

(3.) This is to be considered, to facilitate our apprehension of this matter, that the sensitive nature, (which only is capable of being propagated,) though it cannot itself be the seat and subject of sin, yet it may be in very great disposition thereunto; or things may be there, in that inferior region, in that disposition, that there cannot but be sinfulness as soon as the intelligent mind and spirit supervene. All things will lie in the sensitive nature, as it is transmitted and conveyed in that state, that when the reasonable and intelligent spirit supervenes, though the sensitive nature (as such) is not capable of sin, yet supervening and coming into union, there cannot but a sinfulness ensue. And,

(4.) We have further to consider to this purpose, how manifest the power of imagination is, every where through the world. And so, how supposable it is, that the power of parental imagination may be great. And we find it is so, very frequently, to make an impression upon the grosser corporeal bulk. There are signatures upon the fœtus, as many unquestionable histories do inform us, that speak of parental imaginations. But much more may it be strong on the more fine sort of vehicles, in which we have very little reason to doubt, the reasonable soul is lodged, and invested with, whenever it comes into union with a terrestrial body. And it cannot be difficult, to apprehend what signatures parental imagination may make there, when the soul comes to act in a body so and so formed. I do not merely, now, speak of this corporeal external bulk, but that finer indument, that is, that immediate inwrapping of the soul in the body: and which, in all likelihood, it carries away with it out of the body whensoever it leaves it. What signatures may be there easily made by parental imagination, it is not hard for us to apprehend, if we let our thoughts work upon that subject, especially considering what impressions have been made upon the grosser or more corporeal hulk itself. And then consider,

(5.) The natural activity of the intelligent mind and spirit when it comes into union and supervenes, especially with respect to its cogitativeness, its thinkingness, its power to think; which how soon it doth exert, and put forth its power into act, we do not know: but, to be sure, as soon as its organs are capable, and as soon as it becomes, in its own nature, a cogitative or a thinking thing, nothing is more essential to it than a power of thought; so that as soon as it can use thought, it must; especially the organs that it depends upon, and is to act by, being so and so disposed before, it cannot be but there will be thinking amiss. And according to this course, as the power of using thought grows riper, it will be more and more irregular.

And here are the first ebullitions of corrupt nature. The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. As soon as he thinks, he will think vainly; he will think vanity, Psalm xciv. 11.—"And God saw that the imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil, and that continually," in that corrupt state of the world, Genesis vi. 5. And, "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." Where there is a corrupt heart, the first ebullitions of it are in impure thoughts, vain thoughts, sinful thoughts; that is, that such things, such kind of phantasies; are impressed, as do take their rise only from a sensible world; towards an unknown God who is invisible, there are no signatures that can have any power, because they are buried and overwhelmed by such a supervening cloud of sensitive images or imaginations, thereupon, there must be aversion from God, disaffection to him, disinclination towards him, as an unknown, and an unsuitable, and an undesirable Object. And so, here is the very root of all evil. So that he may easily see how it comes to have place, even in the corrupt nature of lapsed man. And then, again,

(6.) We are further to consider how industrious we must needs suppose the prince of the apostacy to be, for the continuation of that sin in the world, which he introduced into it. And that is a thing less considered in this matter than I think it should be, and doth claim to be. Plain it is, that the whole order of apostate men became apostate, by being accomplices with this great prince of the air. And so sinful men are more universally accomplices with hell, with the apostate prince of the darkness of this world. Nothing is plainer: and do but consider, hereupon, what the parentage of a sinner is, as a sinner; "Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye will do," John viii. 44. They are the words of him who is truth itself, and who, therefore, cannot deceive us. Now in what respects do we think that the devil is called the father of sinners? Not in respect of their mere nature, not in respect of their naturals, the substance either of their souls, or of their bodies, but only in respect of their morals, the sinfulness, the corruption, the impurity of them. But is he a father in respect of this? Then, certainly, it must owe its beginnings, in individuals, to him too; as children do owe their beginning, wherein they are children, to their parents.

And let but that context be observed, I John v. 18, 19. "He that is born of God, keepeth himself, that the wicked one toucheth him not." Therefore, this is a divine birth; there is a self-preserving principle conveyed with that divine nature which is new born, that the wicked one shall not touch him; that is, mortally to touch him; not touch him so as to kill him; but he hath touched mortally all the rest. And, therefore, the apostle adds in the very next words, "we are of God," to wit, new-born of God; an elliptical expression: the word *being born*, having been before used, it was enough to say, we are of God; born of God. But how is the case with the rest of the world? They "all lie in wickedness," we read it; in all likelihood it should be read, "in that wicked one," spoken of before, in that foregoing word; that is, in the wicked one, who can only touch those that are born of God; but doth mortally touch the rest.

And thereupon, we find that the common course of the unregenerate and unconverted world, it is said to be after "the power of the prince of the air, that works in the children of disobedience," Ephes. ii. 2. Whereupon, in the very next words, they are said to be children of wrath too, by nature. Observe how things lie connected; "and are by nature children of wrath." By nature, how so? Inasmuch as there is a corrupt and depraved nature continually descending and transmitted; wherein we are not to suppose him to be without his advantage, or without his agency, who is "the prince of the darkness of this world," and who is also called "the God of this world," 2 Cor. iv. 4.

And it is not, therefore, strange, that men should be, as to all their concerns, so much subject to the diabolical power, because they have been accomplices with him from the beginning, even the first apostacy; when nobody can suppose (that considers matters equally) but that he must be

continually intent to keep his ground in this world; and doth all that in him lies, to transmit impurity from age to age. And his advantage, in order hereunto, upon the sensitive nature, cannot but be great. Though he cannot immediately touch the mind and spirit itself, without its own consent, without its own betraying itself; yet, that power variously actuates the sensitive nature; and thereby, the inferior appetite, and whatsoever is in the lower region of the soul; (this is no unapprehensible thing;) to wit, to cherish sin, and to foment and cherish it the same way, by the mediation of sense by which he first introduced it. And, by sense, we are not to understand only the external sense, but we are to understand, under that notion, whatsoever lies within the compass of sensitive nature, imagination and appetite, as well as the external sense. And what signatures he may make upon it, is more easy for us to apprehend as possible, than to conclude as certain; but very likely it is, that his power may go very far; and we are not to doubt but his malice will go as far as his power. And then, I add upon all this,

12. That there being such a sinful pravity conveyed and descending down with our nature, from age to age, this must, in the beginning thereof, be matter of just displeasancy to the blessed God. It cannot be, but there must be aversion in his holy and pure nature, to a nature impure and unholy. And let us but consider this, that we are said to be, (as was taken notice of before,) "by nature, the children of wrath," lying under the divine displeasure, under a *vindicta*, even by nature, Ephes. ii. 2, 3. And pray, let the reason of the thing be a little discussed and looked into. Consider whether that various inclination and disposition, before actual sin, be not in itself a hateful thing. And that nothing which is asserted, among those that have inquired into and do profess the truth in this matter, may appear harsh and hard, let us but consider how such matters used to be judged of by human measures, by men; sure, in things wherein they will not censure men, we may think God more uncensurable. If men will allow themselves the liberty of free thought, they cannot deny it. But whereas, there is such a thing as human justice, pray do but consider how it useth to have its exercise in matter of punishment, and upon what ground. And whereas, all men have some natural notions remaining with them of right and wrong, and they have aversion or propension, according to such notions, more or less, do but consider how these do work among men, considered as men. Let me but set your thoughts on work on the latter of these first; that is, take a virtuous person, one that goes under that common estimate, by all that know him, as a person of strict virtue. Will he not, as such, disaffect an ill man, a vicious and wicked man? And you will say, he instinctively doth so; that is, the wickedness he sees in him. But then, I would inquire, What is it that such a one disaffects, in such another? Is it, I say, any abstract act he doth? That can never be; for that, abstracted or prescinded from an evil inclination, is not the thing that he hates or can hate; that any man can reasonably hate, for an act, an external act, that falls under the notice of another, take it off from an evil inclination, it is but a casual thing; and it is morally neither good nor evil; and therefore, can be no object of a rational hatred. Therefore, whatsoever there is of just hatred in the vilest and most profligate person's course, what is the object of that just hatefulness? Not the external acts, abstractly considered, from a vicious inclination; but as they proceed thence, or as they are supposed to proceed thence. So that it is an ill habit of mind, of a vicious mind, that is the object of hatred, every where, with virtuous men.

And then, consider, what it is that human laws do punish, in the next place. Who do they punish? Do they punish the external action abstractly from the evil inclination or intention? Never at all; for if it doth appear that there was an action done against the rule of the law, that doth not proceed from an ill inclination or intention, it is looked upon as a casual thing, and not punishable. Therefore, the thing that is punishable, is the ill intention and disposition, only discovering itself by such and such external acts. This is plain in itself.

But now, whereas, we have no way to know the inclinations of men's minds, but by external *indicia*, the disposition and habitude of every one lie immediately open to the divine inspection; there is all the difference. If then, there be a just and reasonable ground to hate an ill disposition, an ill inclination, because it doth discover itself by external acts to us, why is there not the same reason that it should be hated, or that it should be matter of displeasure, whenever it appears, unto him by whom things are immediately seen in themselves, and as they lie without external discovery? And therefore, a sinful generation is called "a generation of vipers." You have poison, you have malignity in your natures. This he can see, that sees all things, and knows all things, before it doth *se prodere*, before it discovers itself in sinful actions, before it appears to our view, before it can be discerned by us. And therefore, consider further,

13. Which will be a further proof of the former, and contribute further towards our common end, the clearing of difficulties in this matter, that it is plain, that infants, as soon as they come to partake of the human nature, they do need a Redeemer, as much as others; for I hope there is none among us that is such a *durus infantum pater*, so hard and harsh a father of infants, but to admit, that many infants may be saved, may become blessed creatures hereafter. Well, but how shall they come to be so without a Redeemer, without a Christ? Is not he said to be "the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world?" Whatsoever sins of the world that are taken away, they are taken away by him. But what! are infants no part of the world? They are said to compose the kingdom of God in this world; that is, concur to the composition. "Suffer little children to be brought unto me, for of such is the kingdom of God." Those that were brought in arms, that were carried, of them it is said, "of such is the kingdom of God;" that kingdom whereof our Lord Jesus Christ is the immediate King. He takes them into his kingdom. They come under the government of the Redeemer; then they did need a Redeemer, and to be dealt with in a way of grace, and not merely upon a natural point. They are a part of that body which he gave himself to purchase and sanctify, Ephes. v. 25, 26. And it is plain,

14. That they do need to be regenerated; they need regeneration as well as redemption; and which, indeed, hath its foundation in redemption; "for that which is born of the flesh is but flesh," and no more; but "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," and that Spirit is the Spirit of Christ: and if we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his. And therefore, I would subjoin to all these considerations, in the last place,

15. That whatsoever God thought fit not to do, by way of prevention of the coming of sin into the world, and of its being transmitted in it, he hath done with more unspeakably glorious advantage, by way of remedy. And the remedy for setting things right, where things were out of course, in the apostate world, it is two ways. The one whereof doth more directly respect us, and the other himself; that is, by redemption, and the penal judgment. These two things will set all things right. I cannot now enlarge as I would; but very true it is indeed, that it must mightily pose, nonplus all our understandings, if there were to be continual descent of our sinful generation one after another in this world eternally. If things were to run on thus to all eternity, it were the most unaccountable thing imaginable. But we find this is not to be; there will be a period put to this course within awhile. This world, and the wickedness of it, must come to an end; and while sin is running on, from age to age, grace hath its exercise too, which runs a parallel, from age to age. And therefore, there is a far more glorious display of all the divine perfections in the appointed means of remedy, than there would have been in the prevention of those great disorders that have been in the world, by sin's once entering into it, and continuing a course in it so long.

LECTURE XXXIX.*

My design (as you have heard) in choosing the text I have been upon for some time, was not to speak of the corruption of human nature abstractly, and in itself, but to consider it here as it stands in connexion with the acknowledged justice and righteousness of God; and so to make that my business, to vindicate God's justice in reference to this case,—a continual transmission of a corrupt nature, in this world, from age to age, that draws death and misery after it, and which God permits to run on in such a course; though (as hath been told you) if we did consider omnipotency abstractly, and absolutely, it might be supposed easy for him to have hindered it. To this I have spoken at large, and will repeat nothing more, than only to take notice of so much, as the sum of all, that whatsoever is, with the most plausibleness, wont to be alleged against the righteousness of the divine procedure in this matter, doth lie, for the most part, in men's taking such and such things for granted, as if they were certainly so; which are most uncertain, and whereof (whereas all men do all they can) they must be, in a great measure, ignorant; if such had but the modesty to confess the ignorance which they cannot cure or remedy, the justice of God, in permitting all men to come into the world with sinful natures, would appear in glorious light and lustre before their eyes, darkened with no cloud; nor would these dash in the dark one against another, but be easily conceived in their minds, without the least appearance of repugnancy to one another. As we see lie in the Psalmist's, who, in almost the same breath, confesseth the triumphant justice and righteousness of God, and the corruption of that nature that did descend to him, and doth descend from man to man, and from age to age.

But now, it only remains to make *Use* of what hath been said upon this very important subject. And herein, considering one of the things considered and asserted, by itself, to wit, the corruption of the nature, which is conveyed and transmitted down from parents to children. The first use that I shall hereupon make will be this—To show how greatly they are concerned, who are parents, or who may be so, to their uttermost to strive against this radical evil that is descending and running down, from age to age, in this world which we inhabit, and whereof we are the sinful inhabitants. This is a thing which, in the notion, we generally acknowledge, that there is such a descent of corruption and sinfulness, from age to age, in this world. But even where this truth is admitted, it is a truth hid and shut up in unrighteousness, while the hearts of very few are in any measure suitably affected and influenced to take that course, pursuant and agreeable to so plain and so confessed a truth as this is. It is that which, where it is understood and acknowledged, and were it understood and acknowledged all the world over it ought universally to have the same effect, ought to startle the world, to awaken men every where, as if there were a universal plague spread over all towns, cities, countries, and kingdoms, at once. And if that were the case, that any poor creature could not tell whither to go, or where to set his foot, secure and free from the danger of meeting such a shaft or arrow that should immediately pierce his very heart, in what a condition were this world, if thus it were with every one! But there is a thousand-fold worse mischief to be feared; and they that think of flying from it, carry it about them, and can no more fly from it than they can fly from themselves, or run away from their own nature. It is not considered, that they carry sin, and death and hell, about them, even from their very original; things complicated with their natures. Who would pretend to believe so horrid a truth, a truth of so horrid and tremendous import, and not be filled with horror about it? Yet, every one goes on unconcerned, as if there were no fear, no danger, no harm, about them, or before them. But, I say,

First, All should understand, hence, that are, or may be, parents, of how unspeakable concernment it is to them, to counterstrive to the uttermost against this great mischief which they are, or are like to be, instruments of; transmitting sin in this world, and conveying it yet further down from this to another generation in it. And this I take to be a head, upon this occasion, fit to be enlarged upon; and therefore, I shall spend this hour upon it. And therein shall show you—Wherein such as are, or may be, parents, should use their endeavour to counterwork this radical evil; and then—Upon what considerations they should be awakened and engaged effectually hereunto.

I. Wherein they should endeavour against it, who are, or may be, parents. Why,

(1.) By endeavouring, out of hand, to become seriously godly themselves; so that if ever God call them, or order things so in reference to themselves, and that they become parents, as a corrupt seed will more or less spring from them, they may be the means, also, of raising up a godly seed in this world. The thing which God hath designed even in the first founding of families upon this earth: that whereas, a corrupt nature, if ever they come to be parents, will descend from them, without their design, they may be also instruments, in the hand of God, of conveying his image, his light, his grace, with their own design, in subordination (as all instruments must be) to the Supreme Agent, that alone can make them capable of being effectual ones to such a blessed end.

That, I say, must be their first care in order hereunto; that is, out of hand, to endeavour to become godly themselves: to do what is possible for them to do in order thereunto: not content themselves that they have an empty, spiritless form of godliness about them, that is never likely to be active to such a purpose: but that there be the life and power of godliness, which will be active to the uttermost it is capable of, in pursuance of so high and great a design. As, naturally, men are generally the devil's instruments, to promote his dark and impure kingdom in this world; so, if ever God call me to the state and condition of a parent, I will, through his grace, be his instrument, as much as in me, to promote that holy kingdom, which he hath formed, and is intent to promote and propagate in this world, as a counter-kingdom, against the power of that wicked kingdom.

In order hereunto, under that manifestation God is pleased to make of himself through Christ in the Gospel, they ought to surrender and give up themselves to God in Christ: herein becoming godly doth first begin when, under the convictive and operative light of influence and grace transmitted in the Gospel, persons do make a surrender of themselves to God through Christ. "Yield yourselves unto God," as the expression is, Rom. vi. 13. It is but a practical answer to God's claim and challenge—"Yield yourselves to God." He demands his right; he insists upon his interest in you, as you are his creatures, and the work of his hands. And what! will you not yield, not yield him his own? Will you withhold from him what is his? what he hath so indisputably a title to, and interest in? Or, can you ever have a design of helping to raise up a godly seed in this world, if you will never be godly yourself? but remain a continual fighter against God, and a striver against him, under that Gospel of peace and grace, wherein he is continually bespeaking you to be his? And then,

(2.) Let such as may be parents of children, lay the more immediate foundation of such an endeavour, as I have been speaking of, in marrying after a godly sort: in marrying holily, whensoever any are called thereunto; that is, with a design for God. He that is the Author, is to be the End of all things. And whereas that same state is his institution and appointment, it is a most insolent absurdity, for any to take upon them, as if they were to please themselves, or to gratify an inclination, or serve an interest of their own, with neglect of God's great interest. They that enter, or think of entering, into that state, are required to do it in the Lord, as an only thing, I Cor. vii. 39. And it is a great deal of pity, that discourses about such matters, and relating to this affair, are so generally confined to a corner only, and that opportunity is not given of speaking to assemblies upon so important a matter as this is; that any undertaking or design, in this kind, is to be done in the Lord, and that as an only thing. Marry they may, only in the Lord. But when they neg-

* Preached November 24th, 1694.

lect this, they leave out the only thing that can make a blessed marriage; which certainly must argue a very profane mind, when men and women dare venture, and rush upon a matter of so great importance as that, and leave out the very only thing that concerns them in it. This doing of such a thing in the Lord must import,

[1.] A doing it for him, with a design for him, to wit, as one's principal end. And let it be considered how great an aberration here is from the proper scope, generally, in the world, and even in the Christian world, as to this thing: that the first thing commonly thought of, is some such mean matter as this, in comparison mean, I say, in comparison; "I design to change my condition; well, let me think, then, how I can please my fancy; let me contrive how I can best satisfy my sensual inclination; and how I can best serve my worldly interest and advantage; where to have a great fortune; and what may set me up into, and promote me in, the most advantageous way of trade, and the like."

What the evangelist says, in another case of our Lord's animadversion upon the scribes and Pharisees, that their religion stood in the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, neglecting the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God; to wit, that those other things they might and ought to have done, but not to have left the other undone: the like may be said in this case. There is no blame in looking after one suitable, in respect of comeliness, or in respect of fortune, or the like. This may well enough be done; but not to leave the great and most weighty matter and importance: that is, Where shall I have a suitable help to promote religion in the world, and to plant religion in a family, if it shall please God to make us the founders of a family? one that may help to bear a part with me in maintaining and keeping up the interest of godliness, in opposition to the common corruption of human nature, which is still descending from age to age in this world? How little is thought of amongst us, so as hereby to design the business of marriage for this in the Lord is the principal thing? When that is not made the principal thing, the very act is idolatry. To be the end of all things is appropriate to Deity: and he must be your Supreme End, even in this thing, or you make yourselves so; and if so, you are an idol of jealousy, set up against God; as if this world were made for you, and you were made for yourself; and as if you might take upon yourself to do what you please here, without reference to the Supreme Ruler and Lord of all. Therefore it is, without question, that he and his interest, in this affair, must be designed in the first place.

[2.] That in subserviency to it, whosoever designs to enter into that state, they must give themselves up by solemn covenant to God in Christ first. That is to do this thing in the Lord, which we are told is the only thing in this matter. And that is a most unaccountable piece of presumption, that people will take upon them to dispose of themselves, give themselves to one another, before they have ever given themselves to God through Christ, which is the first and most fundamental relation. You all ought to know you are not your own; you have nothing to do with yourselves, you have not yourselves to dispose of otherwise, but from, and by, and under, God. And therefore, give to him your own persons; give yourself to the Lord, in the first place, before you think of giving yourself to another. You have not power over yourselves, nor can dispose of yourselves. None have so much power over themselves, as that they ought to think of giving him or herself away without God; but for God: and therefore, the gift must be made to himself first; and that union with him be made fundamental, to that other subsequent and inferior union, much inferior.

But here it may be said, What, then, may only godly persons marry? or those only that are in covenant with God in Christ?

To that I will only say in short, and the business will then be clear enough. It is a question that will answer itself. You ought to give up yourselves to God through Christ, every one, the first thing you do, out of hand, without a moment's delay. For till this be done, you are in a state of rebellion against him; he lays his claim to us all upon a natural right, and upon the Redeemer's acquisition too, who died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord, Owner, and Ruler, of the living and dead; to wit, of all most absolutely.

Therefore, this is a thing not to be deferred a moment. So as if the question be, Hath a man sinned then, if he hath married while he was yet ungodly? I say, his sin doth not lie in what he hath done, but it lies in what he hath not done. It doth not lie in this, that you have married; but it lies in this, that you have not taken God for your God, and given up yourselves to God through Christ, to be his: here lies the sin. Marrying, abstractly and alone, is not a sin; nay, it is, in many cases, a duty: but then, there is a prior duty, a superior duty: therefore, none sin by marrying, barely, but his sin lies in not giving up himself to God, which he is under continual, momentary obligation to do. So that you are in a rebellion every moment you defer it; you keep from God his own right, his own treasure, that he hath made, and that he should be served by, as his own. And that is the case, which neither deserves nor needs any further answer. But,

(3.) The design of religion to be, to our uttermost, kept up, from age to age, in this world, is to be served, as much as is possible, by those that have the prospect of being parents in their agreed resolution with themselves, whenever God shall give them posterity, to temper and qualify their complacency herein, with that grief, sorrow, and concern, and fear, which the case itself challengeth, lest there should be a transmitting of corrupt and sinful nature, without a due subsequent endeavour to remedy what they could not prevent. There ought to be, I say, a joint agreement and resolution between such, if ever God give them posterity, to qualify and temper the complacency commonly taken herein, with that just mixture of concern, grief, and fear; that since there is a corrupt nature conveyed, lest it should go alone, or remain alone; and a holy divine nature not be communicated, too, through any neglect on their part, when God doth give them opportunity of treating and dealing with such, who shall have sprung from them, in order to this end. There ought to be a great and deep concern of mind and spirit to this purpose; that whereas, commonly, when a child is born, all that is considered in such a case, is, that now such a family is likely to be built up; and they take great complacency in it, that there is an offspring arisen to them: but this complacency is without that mixture and qualification, which the state of the case, as it is in itself, doth challenge. For it ought to be considered, We have been the instruments of bringing into the world a sinful creature, an impure creature, a guilty creature; one that is a child of wrath by nature. The complacency that is taken in having posterity, should not drown or swallow up such just considerations as these are, which, being entertained, may have their due effect, and proper influence, to excite to that subsequent duty which will be incumbent upon such parents. And,

(4.) Such parents ought to endeavour a most entire agreement in, and understanding of, a solemn and early dedication and devoting of such, their issue, to God. This ought to be done understandingly, solemnly, and early. And the parents ought to agree to give God his right in their child; that as it is by nature a child of wrath, it may be, by grace, an heir of mercy; they doing what in them is incumbent in order thereunto; they taking hold of God's covenant, which is not a nullity; and it is profane to think it so. And indeed, nothing doth more betray the interest of God, and Christ, and godliness, and Christianity, in the world, than the slight and trifling management of the important affairs of baptism; that it is so little understood; and that men play with it as they do; and as they do also with that of marriage; as if it were matter of sport, when it is one of the things of the greatest importance in all the world. But it ought to be considered, here is a creature corrupt and impure, it is true, but in which God hath the first and proper right; it belongs to him, and he can make this impure creature a holy creature. And I offer it to him upon his own claim, and challenge, and the engagement of his word, in order thereunto, that he may do so. Herein parents should agree: "We dedicate to thee what thou hast given us, more thine than ours. We have had our contribution to the impurity of it: we can only hope

to have it made a pure and holy creature by thy holy, gracious, and vital influences, in thine own way and time imparted and communicated to it." And it is upon this account that parents are sanctified to one another; though but one should be a believer, that what springs from them should be holy; that is, by a federal holiness, related to God, and capable of being devoted to him, I Cor. vii. II. And then,

(5.) Pursuantly to such a devoting of their little ones to God, it ought to be a joint agreement between parents, that their first care should be taken about their minds. "Now, here is a little one to be brought up, to be educated:" this should be said as a fundamental resolution, by agreement, and consent of parents. "Our first care should be about the mind of this little one, if it live to be a capable subject of our education and instruction; that is it we will first be chiefly concerned about. For this is an intelligent and immortal part; this is the seat of God's holy image, if ever it shall be produced; and it is itself his natural image: for as it is a mind, or hath a mind, so it is a spiritual and intelligent being, and is like God naturally, and his very offspring, upon this account, who is pleased to style himself, 'the Father of spirits, and the God of the spirits of all flesh;' of those spirits that dwell so meanly as in flesh. And therefore, that ought to be the agreed and resolved first care; that our principal concernment be about the minds of our little ones." The care that is commonly most of all taken, is about the outward man, and the external concernments of our posterity: they love to see them fair, comely, beautiful, healthful, strong, vigorous; wish to see them have straight limbs, and the like; but do not care how crooked dispositions they have. This is unaccountable, and detestable, that it should be thus with a reasonable creature; those that are capable of understanding the differences of things; and of how much greater importance one thing is than another. But this, I say, ought to be the first care, and should be the agreement between parents, (with dependance upon the grace of God,) about the minds of our little ones. And,

(6.) In order hereunto, there ought to be a very diligent observation made of them, to see what their natural temper is, or is like to prove, which will discover itself to an observing eye, by early indications, one way or other: that is, whether my child is likely to prove dull or docile; whether it is likely to prove mild and meek, or froward and peevish; whether it is likely to prove tractable or intractable; whether it is likely to prove mean and low spirited, or great and high spirited. These different dispositions will soon and early appear to observing eyes. Such notices should be taken by prudent parents, and must be by conscientious ones, who have a design for the good of their families, that they may know how to acquit themselves in after-times accordingly. Some children will discover more of a natural timorousness; others will discover more boldness and venturousness, and that very early. And careful observation should be made of the temper as it doth more early *prodere se, discover itself*, offer itself to view and observation, that there may be suitable measures taken, for prudent applications afterwards, as the case shall require. And then, again.

(7.) Resolutions ought to be taken between parents, and especially the mothers, (whose part will be more about the child in its more tender years,) to watch against any sinful inclinations, one way or other, as they shall discover themselves. If there be any appearance of falsehood, of wrathfulness, of envy or revengefulness, of pride or haughtiness, in children, to animadvert upon these betimes. And especially if immoderate desires after any thing; only it ought to be distinguished, whether it be the desire of that which is necessary for it, or a desire only of that which curiosity may prompt to desire. That which is necessary for it must be had; but not upon its first signification of a desire; that it may be made to understand betimes, dependance and subjection. And that the less it hath of understanding of its own, the more it is to be managed by the parent's understanding; and the having, even of necessary things, is not to be the reward of demanding them, or asking for them.

But for unlawful inclinations, they are to be checked, with all the care and industry imaginable very early; any such as I have instanced in, or whatsoever besides can be instanced in; repress the beginnings of these things, as you would the beginnings of a disease that would prove mortal to your child. And it is this neglect (especially in mothers) that ripens such evils as these, thus radicated in the very natures of children, till they are incurable; till they be past cure. And that makes so many bills, as in a desperate case, to be sent in to us. It is a far easier thing to send in a bill to a minister, when a child is spoiled and ruined in its tender years, than it is constantly to watch over them, and repress their ill inclinations betimes, and make them understand government, and subjection, and dependance, in their early days. But where the will of the child is the law of the family, and must govern all, no wonder if plagues and mischiefs, of this kind, are introduced and brought into families by this means.

Divine wisdom hath taught us in such cases how to understand the matter aright. "He that spares the rod hates his son:" fond parents think it love; but divine wisdom calls it hatred. And therefore, is the advice, in that same book, Proverbs xix. 18. "Let not thy soul spare for his crying." What! because he cries will you throw him into hell, will you abandon him to destruction? Not that there needs much of frequent severity, where there is a due prudence used in reference to such cases. I have known children brought up to men and women's estate, that never had a blow in their lives; nor was it needful. It would not be needful, if there were a steady awfulness in the deportment of parents towards them, so that they might, upon any thing that were really a miscarriage, understand a frown, a rebuke, a strange look. If there were that prudence used, that might be used, there would be little need of harshness and severity, unless upon very ill temper indeed; and they must be dealt with accordingly.

But where all the care is to indulge a humour, and please the child; and where there is a disposition in parents, many times, to be proud of the ill dispositions of their children, as they appear in them, how many ill tempers are made worse! And how many good tempers are spoiled by this means! And the guilt and future miseries of the children will cry against their parents, not only in this world, but, perhaps, in the other too. And the truth is, parents would show a great deal more mercy in that which is commonly reckoned harshness and severity: nay, I say, they would not be reckoned so cruel in breaking their children's limbs, in tearing their flesh, in pulling out their eyes, as they commonly are, in indulging their vicious, sinful dispositions and inclinations in them, without a timely endeavour of cure, wherein the seed of those miseries are sown, and spring up so in this world, and in the other too. Again,

(8.) They ought, in pursuance of the mentioned end, to instil the principles of religion betimes. Teach them betimes who made them, that great Supreme Being who is the Maker and Author of all things; teach them reverence and subjection to him: speak awfully before them, so as never to take that great name in vain; so as that your fear, your own fear, of the great God, whose name you bear, may be exemplary to them: as Jacob sware by the fear of his father, Isaac, when the important solemnity of the occasion called for an oath. Jacob had observed what Isaac's reverence of God was, and so called him "my father's fear." O teach your children to know God as their parents' fear. And so the other great principles of religion besides, which they are capable of understanding (if there be a due and diligent application) earlier than is thought; earlier than is commonly thought, at least; but the sooner the better: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Labour to season him betimes: so the wickedness of a corrupt nature is to be counterwrought. And then,

(9.) Pray much for them. You that are, or may be, parents, as you are so, or upon that prospect, let this be a matter of great concern between God and you. Pour out your souls in your closets, upon this account; especially such of you to whom God hath given children. And be sure,

(10.) To set up and keep up family worship, family religion. Let this be an agreed thing between you; that as holy, good Joshua resolved, "I and my house will serve the Lord, whatever others do, we will serve the Lord." As

a corrupt nature comes by birth, and wickedness springs up so, so it is nourished and cherished, in great part, by the ungodliness of parents. In families where there is no calling on the name of the Lord, O how doth it thrive! That wickedness that is natural, how doth it grow and improve in an irreligious family, a profane family! So doth the wickedness of this world grow, the wickedness of England, the wickedness of London. And the misery thereof is growing *pari passu, with an equal pace*. And if dreadful calamities are coming upon us, coming upon the land, coming upon this city, we have reason to apprehend here is the very source of all the mischief, even family profaneness. God is banished out of the families of the most: and what will this come to?

I desire to bless God for it, that the ministers of this city, such as are united, and are wont to meet weekly, about the common concernments of their congregations, are awakened into a sense of this great and growing evil; and they have resolved to use their utmost endeavours to awaken the people of their several charges and congregations, about this very thing. And (God willing) you will have more of it ere it be long; that I believe there will be such a joint, agreed, common cry in London, against the wicked neglect of the worship of God in families, as hath not been for many an age past. I hope there will. And know, it is an agreed thing, that there shall, at some one time, and, as near as may be, all about the same time. And so will, I hope, the faithful servants of Christ (at least) deliver their own souls. Yea, I hope God will bless this to be a means of great reformation in this city.

For the evil as is feared (at least it is said to be matter of observation with some, for my part, I know it not, but it is matter of fear with many) is, that a great many professors of religion make no conscience at all of any such thing as family duty; but prodigally throw away that time otherwise, which should be spent in the solemn worship of God in their families, with those of whom he hath committed the care and charge to them. And if what is designed happen, and do not produce a thorough and general reformation among us, it will produce a vindication of that justice, of that severity, which we are to expect. For God will not be dallied with always; and, I doubt, not much longer. That which hath been a seat of religion eminently in the world, in the eye of the past times, that religion, should languish and dwindle in it, as it doth by the neglect of family government, even by persons professing godliliness, and who would be counted a godly sort of people, is a very sad consideration.

LECTURE XL.*

Secondly, I would now add some considerations to enforce what I have been pleading with you about. And,

1. That which is obvious in the text—"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Parents, they have transmitted a corrupt nature to their children. Into what agonies of spirit should it put us, to think with ourselves, "I have been an instrument in producing an heir of wrath, and of a divine curse. O! shall I use no endeavour to draw it under a blessing, and make it the subject of blessedness, now that we live under that Gospel, in which we are called to blessedness?" But that call must be pursued; and God expects it should be so, in apt and suitable methods and applications, by such as he makes use of as instruments, one way or another. whether in private or more public stations, in order thereunto. And,

2. Consider God's original, supreme, and sovereign interest in families, as he is the Founder of them, and as they are his plantation. "He sets the solitary in families," Psalm lxviii. 6. Consider this, together with the design of his forming of them; to wit, that he might have a godly seed still arising, from age to age, as you may see in that Malachi ii. 15. It was the very end and design of that fundamental relation in families, and unto families, the conjugal relation: "Wherefore did he make but one, when he had the residue of the Spirit? Why, that he might seek a godly seed." As if it had been said, These plantations are mine. This the constitution of families (in which the conjugal relation is the fundamental relation) speaks, upon the first design of settling such a constitution as this. There lay open (as we must but be sure) to the foresight of the divine eye, what a general apostacy and defection there would be; and that a corrupt nature would be transmitted, from age to age, from generation to generation. But God did determine with himself not, therefore, to abandon all to one common ruin; as if he should have said, "I will have an interest in this world, notwithstanding." And therefore, as this was the original design of the constitution of families, that he might have a godly seed, though the apostacy had intervened, he will not quit his design; for his interest is still the same in its own nature. And therefore, this we must understand him continually to insist upon, as a sacred right to himself; that he will have this design pursued by all that will be subject to him, that will return into their state of subjection, and be willing to serve him in the several stations that he hath set them. He will have all endeavours used for transmitting of religion, as well as corrupt and sinful nature is transmitted, from age to age; though the one is done by a natural, the other is done by instituted means, followed with a blessing, and by influence from above: he will have this latter design carried on by the mutual and joint endeavours of parents, under the influence of his grace; as well as the former course is carried on unavoidably. But when no care or concern is had about this, the foundations of families are laid in a curse. And then,

3. Consider, that it cannot but concern parents, such as are such, or may be so, to express a natural affection, and to endeavour to have that improved, by having it spiritualized, and improved to a spiritual purpose, as well as they are the means by which a natural corruption is conveyed, and transmitted to their posterity. "They have natural corruption from me; (they ought to think;) and shall there be nothing of natural affection? And shall I not labour to have that natural affection sublimated, and spiritualized, and improved, so as to aim at their spiritual and supernatural good? Shall they have nothing from me, but sin and death? or nothing besides the human nature which they have from me; nothing but what shall corrupt and spoil, make it the subject and seed-plot of sin against God, and misery to themselves?" If there be any thing of natural affection working downward with the descent of natural corruption, that natural affection should aim at the true good of them whom nature hath so much endeared; and should, upon that account, take in the *auxilia*, draw in the aids and helps from heaven, by which that natural affection will become spiritualized; and so the more sincerely and entirely aim at, and the more fervently pursue, a design for the spiritual and eternal good of those who descended and sprung from us. And,

4. It is to be considered, what an honour this doth derive upon the persons themselves, that shall be instrumental in this design. A glorious thing it is, to be a servant to God in so great a work as this; to recover out of the state of apostacy those that come into that state by our means; to be an instrument, in the hand of God, to promote his kingdom in this world, in opposition to the dark kingdom of the infernal powers. How glorious a thing is it, to carry on a designed opposition against the work of the devil in this world! that when we know the aim and purpose of the great God is to have, in all successions of time, a people for his name, I should be instrumental in promoting it! It is an honourable thing, a thing that draws a glory upon the persons, and upon the families, where religion doth thus come to take place, to take root, and is planted, and doth flourish. And again,

5. It speaks an agreement and sameness, in a great measure, of mind and design, with the Redeemer. For he is to have his seed in this world, from which his word and Spirit are never to depart; Isaiah lix. latter end. And the matter is settled, by everlasting covenant, as you find it there: "This is my covenant, (saith the Lord,) My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put

* Preached Dec. 8th, 1694.

in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever." And so we know it hath been an agreed thing, as the matter is stated, (Isaiah liii. 11.) between the Father and him, that he shall see his seed, and the travail of his soul, and be satisfied therein: and that, as a recompense for his having undertaken the work of redemption, and accomplishing it, upon terms so painful, so expensive, so dolorous, so ignominious to himself. As if the Father had said to him, "Thou shalt have all this, this reward; thou shalt see thy seed, and the travail of thy soul, and be satisfied therein." Upon this, our Lord Jesus Christ cannot but be most intent, to see a continual seed spring up to him, out of a seed of evil-doers, out of an apostate race of men. Now, if we be intent upon this thing, it bespeaks a sameness of mind and design, between the Redeemer and us: which, how pleasant, how delightful, how comfortable, should it be to our reflecting thoughts! And again,

6. It is further to be considered, that if there be no such design to promote godliness in families, that that may be transmitted from age to age, (though in a distinct and diverse way,) as the corrupt and sinful nature is transmitted, then, we cannot but be doing our part to the promoting of ungodliness in the world ourselves. We shall do that, and nothing besides, nothing in opposition thereunto. For do but consider, as the case stands between God and man, there can be no medium between being for godliness and being for ungodliness; we cannot be in an indifferency. If we are not, according to the uttermost of our power and capacity, for transmitting and continuing of godliness in the world, we must be for the continuing of ungodliness. A horrid and fearful thought, if any would but allow it to take place! They can only be in an indifferency, in reference to any case whatsoever, that have no real concern therein, one way or other. But here every one is concerned; and he must take a part: he must be for the promoting of godliness, or promoting its contrary. And therefore,

7. According to this state of things in the world, they that do aim to contribute nothing to the transmitting of religion and godliness in the world, in opposition to the corruption of nature, which is so generally spreading through it, they are continually providing that there may be a war and rebellion continued and kept on foot, against heaven, from age to age, and from generation to generation. "He that is not with me is against me," saith the Lord. If you will not take God's side in this matter, you are fighting against him, and labour to do all that you can, that the rebellion against him may not cease; but that there may be still a succession of new rebels, new enemies, from one age to another. And,

8. You will herein, too, be constant accomplices and confederates with the prince of the apostacy; he that first fell from God, and that made it his design to involve all the world in the transgression, and in the consequent ruin; you will be continual accomplices with him. And this is, indeed, the state of every one's case, in these matters. Whoever will but consider with himself, if he be come to the use of his understanding, and hath some prospect (though uncertain) of a life's time to be run out in this world, he will find the world divided between two great lords, two great masters, two great fathers: that is, the true and rightful Lord of all, he that made all, and to whom all belong; and that usurping prince of darkness, who is called, "the god of this world," and whose children and seed wicked men (as such) are said to be. Why, every man, upon the prospect of entering upon the scene, the stage of this world, is to think with himself, "I must, in this case, either be with God or against God. If I be not with God, if I be against him, I am with that horrid usurped power, that is set up in opposition to him, with this world: and I fall in with that common destroyer, against the common Maker and Preserver of all things." This will be the state of your case, if you be not intent upon a design of counterworking this common corruption, which is descending in this world; you will be looked upon under no other notion but as an accomplice of hell against heaven. And,

9. You will herein falsify with God, after you have solemnly vowed and covenanted by your Christian parents. You have ordinarily been devoted and dedicated to God in baptism. To deal falsely and treacherously with a man, against the tenor of a covenant, is a horrid thing; but to break faith with God is much more horrid!

But you will say, You made no such vow; and what your parents did for you, how should that bind you? Why,

(1.) It is very great ignorance to think that parents cannot bind their children to any thing. Those that have the nearest natural interest in you, and whose understandings and wills are to be employed for you, when you have no understanding and will to use of your own, do you think they from whom you sprang have not a natural interest in you? How unreasonable and absurd a thought is that! In reference to all other concerns besides, have parents no disposal of their children? And may they dispose of them, or do for or with them otherwise, and may they not dispose of them for their spiritual good? And again,

(2.) It is every where counted a very horrid and barbarous thing, to endeavour to rescind the lawful act of a parent, if it were in my power, if I could do it. If I could alienate, or alter, what he hath so and so disposed; and if he have righteously disposed of it for me, to come after and labour to rescind and undo all that he hath done—this is barbarous and infamous, in common estimate, among men. And,

(3.) It must needs be much more so as to God, or if he be concerned in the matter. As now for instance, Suppose a pious person, with an honest mind and design, hath dedicated such a part or portion of his estate to a pious use; suppose it be not mere charity, but a pious charity, that is, not designed for a superstitious use, but for a use truly pious, and to serve the interest of God and religion in the world; and a son comes after, and he labours to undo all this; you that would think it horrid, to alienate a piece of earth, dedicated to God by your parents, ought you not to think it horrid, to alienate a soul from God, which hath, as much as in them was, been dedicated to God by them too; I would not alienate a piece of earth, dedicated to God; but I would alienate myself, my soul, my body, dedicated to him. This no man should (if he had power) alienate. What was dedicated and sacred to a use truly pious, may not be alienated; and if not a portion of his estate, much less himself so dedicated, and given to God. But yet, further,

(4.) It is to be said, that as this was not to be done, if it were in his power, so he cannot have such a thing in his power, to wit, in his rightful power; for every one was a debtor of his whole life and being, his soul and body, and his all to God, antecedently to any such dedication. And therefore, when such a tender is made to God, it was but to tender and devote to him what was his own by a more early title. "All souls are mine;" so he lays his claim universally to all the souls of men; and therein to the whole of them; for what are they besides a soul? what that is valuable or considerable besides? "All souls are mine, as well as the soul of the father, as the soul of the son," Ezekiel xviii. 4. He hath a nearer interest in them than a parent could have, before any such dedication; for a parent was not the parent of their spirit. They are the fathers of our flesh; but he himself is the Father of spirits; the principal and most considerable thing that we have about us, or that belongs to our being. And therefore, when such a dedication was made, there was only a tender made to God, of what was his before; of what he claims an interest in originally. He is the Father of them, and they are his offspring. And again, further,

(5.) This, in answer to that, is to be considered, that though inclination to good do not descend, yet obligation to it doth descend, from fathers to children, and from the predecessors in a family unto their successors. Not only obligations of justice and common right, but obligations of kindness and friendship. As, how ordinary is it for friendships and amities to descend from father to son, in families. And it is looked upon as a rude kind of thing, to be uncivil to my father's friend. And on which side, between families, among whom hath been a friendship, it first begins to fail, it always lies as an imputation upon that side. Great amity there was between such and such

families; but now it is at an end, since such and such successors are sprung up there. On whose side the failure is, there commonly lies a very ill character. And it is a thing contrary to the dictates of common wisdom,—yea, and of the divine wisdom. "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not," Prov. xxvii. 10. But how much less then, thy God, and thy father's God! If it be an indecency, and uncomeliness, and a very unfit thing, that is, contrary to the precept of studying whatsoever is lovely, and thinking of those things, to forsake my friend, and my father's friend, how much more horrid must it be to forsake my God, and my father's God! "My father's God shall not be my God!"

And therefore it is not so light a matter, as is commonly thought, to have the weight of that early dedication, lying upon one's score as a violated thing; as having dealt falsely in that covenant of God. Indeed, it is not only an evidence, but a cause of the languishment of religion in our days, that this is a thing so little thought of among Christians; "I was devoted to God early, given up to him with great solemnity; having these venerable names,—the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Ghost, named upon me, at my setting forth into the world." It speaks an apprehension of that thing itself, as if it were trivially done at first, if we make a trifle of it all our days afterwards: as if such a solemn transaction between the great Lord of heaven and earth, and his own dust, his own creatures, the works of his hands, were to be so lightly made of. Therefore, take we the weight of this upon our spirits. If we do not do, in our several stations and capacities, our uttermost to counterwork this descending evil in the world, we do falsify the sacred covenant of God, in which we were early and preventingly bound to him, by the vow of parents concerning us. And then,

10. It is the way, certainly, for us to lose all the comfort of domestical relations, when we are not driving on this design in our several stations; we lose by it all the comforts of family relations. For what comfort can I take in having such and such relations, in a family, when in the mean time, there is a contrariety, and a war, maintained and kept up between God and me? So that I can never eat or drink in peace, or converse in peace, or rise up or lay down in peace; but still I have wrath from heaven upon me? This will infuse gall and gravel into all my enjoyments whatsoever. I am not serving God's design, for the promoting of godliness, in opposition to this growing and descending wickedness in the world; I do nothing towards it. This very reflection is enough to imbitter all my comforts. And what are such and such relations to me, but confederates against God? They agree to sin together, and to carry on an interest against God together. For there can be no neutrality in such cases, as was said before. And then,

11. This is but an ill provision for a day of accounting, which will come, whether we sleep, or whether we wake; whether we forget all such considerations, or whether we consider them. "Judgment lingereth not; and destruction slumbereth not." If I eat on, and drink on, and sleep on, judgment comes on with never a whit the slower foot. O! the seriousness of that interwoven counsel, in the discourse of the apostle, even with reference to this business of the matrimonial state, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as if they had none; and they that weep, as if they wept not: and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as if they possessed not; and those that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

The time is short. That may have reference to families, and the world: families that were spoken of before and after; and the world, in the whole, which is spoken of there in express terms. The fundamental relation in families, it is measured by a short time; by a very short time. Where there hath been such a union lately contracted, it will shortly be broken; time measures it: and that time will have run to its period very speedily. The time is short: it remains therefore, that they that have wives be as if they had none; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not. They rejoice in having newly contracted such a relation: it is reasonable to understand it so, considering it the subject of the apostle's foregoing discourse: that joy will be as if it had not been, in respect of the grounds; and it ought to be so, in the mean time, in respect of the degree. That rejoicing, in having entered into such a relation, will soon be turned into weeping, as having lost it, or it having lost you, which comes all to one. And it is but a short time that measures all this.

And do you think it strange, that that time would be counted short, which measures the time of a family, as it is made up of such and such persons now coexistent; or that measures the relation of two such conjugal relatives? Do you think it strange, that that should be spoken of, and counted a short time, when it is but a short time that measures the whole, and measures the duration of the whole—the fashion of the world passing away? As persons vanish, and families vanish, so is the world vanishing, all will be gone ere long. As the apostle John speaks in the like place, 1 John ii. 1. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Now while it is time, and but a short time, that measures all our affairs, and all our enjoyments, and all our designs, under the sun; time that will be soon done, and which will end in a general dissolution of all this world; a day, a time, "when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat; and the earth, and all things therein, be burnt up and destroyed." I say, sure if this is certain to be the last catastrophe and end of all things, of what concernment is it to us, to consider how we may make a comfortable account when time expires, and when it is to be received, and with it, what I have been, and what I have done, in such or such a state and relation, in which I was placed in this world! There ought to be an account made daily: How can I lay down in peace at night, and not be capable of giving some good account that I have been doing somewhat for God, and for the interest of God, and religion, and godliness, in my station that day? But how shall I lie down in the grave, when a life-time is wasted, and spent, and thrown away, and nothing done for God? I have rather served the interest of ungodliness, than religion, all my time in this world; and how shall I think of appearing before the tribunal of the Supreme Judge, when the end of all things cometh; and when I am beset with all the terrors of that day,—the heavens rolling up, and all the powers of them shaken; the earth all on fire, the elements all flaming round about me? And I have a life's time to review and look back upon, spent away in sin and vanity, with no design for God, and for the Redeemer; though I know that he had his design set on foot here in this world, with which I cooperated not, to which I was not subservient—nay, to which I have lived opposite in a stated course.

Let all these things be weighed and put together; and sure we have a great deal to enforce this first instruction; that since corrupt nature is to lie certainly and constantly descending in this world, we would, as we ought, in our several stations and capacities, do our uttermost to counterwork that descending evil.

LECTURE XLI.*

But now I shall carry the matter a little further; and as I have been hitherto showing what those that are, or shortly may be, parents, ought to do themselves, in reference to their next descendants, that is, those that shall more immediately spring from themselves; so, I will show you too, what may and should be done, in order to a further descent, by those that may have the authority to dispose of their children in the conjugal state, with the expectation of a continual descent of human nature by them further and further,—that so, that corruption and pravity which cannot be prevented, to descend with it, may be, as

* Preached December 15th, 1694.

much as is possible, corrected, and redressed in such an after-descent.

This that I am now to speak to, will especially concern such as have children to dispose of in the conjugal relation, who are judged meet for that state. And, indeed, it will equally concern such as are loco-parents, that have the parental trust devolved upon them, by the prudence of others, and their own undertaking.

And as to such, I must still insist, that they are to observe the same measures that have been given in reference to persons who are, themselves, now entering the conjugal state, with the prospect of an offspring, to which human nature, when it descends, will go accompanied with a sinful pravity. And here, indeed, as to the case I am now to speak to, there are on each side two parties ordinarily to concur, or two persons in each party. There are the persons to be disposed of; and there are the persons that dispose of them. And I shall speak to the part of these that are to be the disposers, parents or loco-parents, guardians, trustees, who are to take care of settling such in the world in the conjugal state. In reference whereto, the things designed, in general, usually are, that mankind may be continued upon the face of the earth; and more especially, more particularly, that such and such families therein, or those that they are concerned or intrusted for, may be built and preserved; and (as the Psalmist speaks) "their houses may endure for ever; and their lands (if possible) still called after their own names;" as in that Psalm xlix. 11. And this is a thing that may prudently and justly be designed, in its due subordination. If it be substituted in the room of the true and great design of heaven, or carried on without reference to God, and religion, and the transmissions of a godly seed here, upon earth, then you see the censure of the Holy Ghost, upon this design, in the same context: "This their way is their folly, though their posterity approve their sayings." Sayings are doings here; the sayings of their minds and designs, together with acting conformably and correspondently thereunto. This their way is their folly; yet one age approves the former herein, and they that come after, run the same course.

Here I must, in reference to this, insist, that their measures ought to be with consideration, that, with human nature, a sinful pravity will descend, and that this may be (as much as is possible) repressed; and so, as that God's design may be carried on concurrently, which he had from the beginning, in settling the conjugal state, and in planting families here on earth; that is, that he might seek a godly seed. Wherefore one, when he might have made many, having the residue of the Spirit, but that he might seek a godly seed? Mal. ii. 15. And this design he hath no more quitted, than he hath disclaimed his interest in this whole lower world, or saith, "It ceaseth to be a part of my creation, or I cease to be the Lord and Owner of it." But inasmuch as there lies under our present consideration the duty of such as have children to dispose of, with a prospect that they will have children, and that so a care ought to be extended as far as lies ordinarily within the compass of human endeavour; there ought, indeed, a care extending so far as the desire reacheth, and the main intention of the mind, a great deal further. But so much as I speak to, comes commonly within the compass of actual endeavour. It is ordinary for parents to survive unto the disposal of their children into the conjugal state, with expectation of children from them; and, therefore, it is the duty of such that I am now generally to speak to.

And I will tell you, in general, what it is; to wit, that as much as in them is, to endeavour that religion be transmitted and descend, and go down in their families, and in the families for which they are concerned and intrusted. It is true, it cannot descend the same way as human nature, and the sinful pravity doth; that is, not by propagation; but it is to descend by pious education, as the means that God must be supplicated to co-operate with, and bless, for the implantation of a better principle, than could be propagated by nature. This sinful pravity, it comes by nature; this superadded principle must come by grace. But then, there are means of grace in order to the obtaining of that grace; and this is the first and the readiest means; to wit, a pious education. And therefore, it ought to be the care of such as have children to be disposed of in the conjugal state. To speak a little more particularly,

1. To endeavour, as much as is possible, that they may see them godly before they be married. As much, I say, as is possible to endeavour that. It can be very little satisfaction to the heart of a parent, (if it be so tender as the grace of God in it should make it,) to dispose of a child into such a relation, to a human creature, when, as yet, there is no appearance that it is come into a relation to God. "My child hath now a husband, or hath a wife, gotten for it; but hath not a God, not a Christ. This is a sad thought! I have taken care that it might have what is so unspeakably less necessary; but of that which is most necessary, I have taken no care; that is, to see that my child, my son or daughter, was married to Christ; to see, that before the conjugal covenant, there was the evangelical covenant settled and established between God in Christ, and this poor child of mine." And,

2. Their further care hereon ought to be, finding that there are some good appearances of pious inclinations, they do choose out such for them as will fall in with them, in the design of transmitting piety to their posterity; that I may have one for my son, or my daughter, that I believe, in my conscience, will make it their study and business, to educate their children in the knowledge and fear of God; that religion may run on in the family, and that corrupt nature may not descend alone.

It is a very sad case when this is the very last part of the concern in such a matter as this; when the first thing thought of is, "Where shall I get a great fortune for my son? or how shall I marry my daughter into a great estate?" When this is the first care, is it like that precept of our Lord Christ—"Seek first the kingdom of God?" Matt. vi. 33. This is looked upon as the *unam necessarium*, the one thing necessary; a great fortune, an ample estate, a plentiful income; and as for religion and sobriety, if that be considered, it is considered on the by, collaterally, as if it were but a trifle in comparison. And so, accordingly, are bargains driven on, as formal contracts, as for beasts in Smithfield; even for the very souls of young persons that have not judgment to choose for themselves, and that (it may be) have a great deal of reverence for those that are their guides, and have the disposal of them. They think they must trust their care and judgment, and do so. And they concern themselves only, how they may do well in the world, without considering, at all, what shall become of their souls; or how they may be exposed and given up for a prey; or what shall become of those that shall descend from them.

This is so intolerable an evil under the sun, that we have reason to wonder at the divine patience, that it hath not, by vindictive flames, animadverted on such wickedness long ago. But we are to expect it will. And as it is the wickedness of the world, which that final conflagration must animadvert upon, and will, it can be upon no one thing more than this; this way and means by which wickedness hath been propagated in the world, from age to age, without any care or concern, by those that should have driven on a counter-design, in duty to the great Lord and Maker of this world; as if he had given it up to men only to sin in, and to indulge their sinful lusts in, for a short life's time; and then go down into the dust and die. This is a thing so contrary to the reason of mankind, (if that were attended to, and if men would commune with themselves,) that we cannot but wonder that vengeance hath suffered men to live so long upon the face of this earth, at such a rate; and we have no reason to wonder that such a determination is set, that this world shall end, as we are told it shall, by vindictive flames, consuming the inhabitants of this earth from off it.

But I shall here, first, answer a question which may arise about this matter I have been speaking to, and then proceed to enforce that charge or duty which, I have said, doth belong to such whose case and concern I have been speaking of. The question is this; "Why suppose I that am a parent, or a guardian, do not discern in my child, (son or daughter,) now grown up, and of whom I have some thoughts of disposing into the conjugal state; suppose I do not see in them any thing of a pious inclination, am I to endeavour to settle them, in that relation, with such a one that is judged sincerely pious. And to this I must say,

I. That none ought to be rash and hasty in their judgments concerning others, who are pious, and who are not; at least, there ought to be a very careful abstaining from a positive judgment concerning any, that they are ungodly. What judgment we do pass, it is better, and safer, to err on the most favourable side. But we have a most express rule from our Lord himself not to judge; which is not to be understood, neither, in a simple, but comparative sense. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." We must not judge hastily, not judge rashly, not judge positively, and concludingly, without very clear and full evidence, that such a one is an ungodly man. But we are told afterwards, in the same chapter, Matt. vii. 16. that men are known by their fruits; so that, as we are to be slow and sparing in our judgment concerning others, especially on the severer part, that they are ungodly; so we ought to have, when we do judge, that which may be very clearly evidential: and then (as we do judge that there may be such evidence, as upon which we cannot but conclude so) it is out of question; otherwise, we should not know how to carry it towards such as are put under that mark, according as we are obliged to make distinction; and distinction even between them that have the form of godliness, but appear not to have the power of it; that we may turn away from them. And if there are many other things, mentioned in that context, that are inconsistent with the power of godliness, but do very well agree only with the form, the external form, we are to take our measures from thence, and thereby to endeavour to guide ourselves, as to our carriage and deportment, towards such; "Turn away from them," as the apostle there directeth. And therefore, I say, if matters do evidently appear, such and such do discover, by an habitual stated course and practice, that there is not only no serious godliness, but there is an enmity, a contrariety, an opposition, to it, they cannot comply with rules and ordinary duties that do belong to it; then, upon that, upon that supposition, I say,

2. That they, with whom any such are concerned in such a treaty, will (as they ought to have) have such a design as you ought to have, and therefore will decline you. They will not have such a one for their son, or for their daughter; (if they be such as make conscience of what they do;) and so your question is answered. They will answer for you; "No, I will not have such a one come into my family, or for my son, or daughter, that appears an enemy to godliness, a rebel against Christ; that hath a fixed, habitual aversion to all serious religion. But,

3. If they should not do so, not make that choice, for those whom they are concerned for, which they ought to make, you, for your parts, ought to do as you would be done unto; according to that general rule of our Lord, which carries so much of equity so visibly in the face of it, that even some pagans have been fond of it; and one of the pagan emperors would have had Christ owned for a God, purposely upon that account, for that rule: *Quod tibi non vis fieri, alter ne facias—what you would not that another should do to you, that do not to him.* Carefully observe that rule in this case; "I would be loath my family, being a godly family, to admit an enemy to God and Christ into it; why then should I endeavour to thrust such a one deceitfully, and when the danger appears not to them, as it doth to me, into a godly family?"

It is true, that if such were married to one another, in that case, this were not a thing that immediately concerns that relation, it not lying against the essential *vinculum*; as the apostle hath determined between Christians and avowed infidels: the nuptial bond holds, if it have been entered; but if it be to be made, it ought not to be made; for those that enter into that relation, are to enter it with a design of being "fellow-partakers of the grace of Christ, and helpers of one another heaven-ward;" and such as can comfortably join in prayer, and who are to carry matters so, as that their prayers may not be hindered, and the like. And if I am not to eat with a person visibly ungodly, much less am I to fall into so near a union, and converse with them: that is out of all doubt. And therefore, as I cannot in duty and in prudence, for the good of such as I am concerned for, suffer myself to be imposed upon, in such a case; so I am not to impose upon another. I would be loath to be so imposed upon, to have an enemy to God and godliness brought into my family, or united with my child; and I ought not to obtrude such a mischief as that upon another person, and another family. But when any thing in that kind is done, there must be so much the more serious, subsequent endeavours for redress; there must be the more earnest praying; and so much the more pressing advice given; and so much the more solicitude and care used, that such a one may be plucked out of the snare which, by too much unwariness, they have been betrayed into.

And thus, having answered that question, I will lay before you some considerations that may be given to enforce all this. And pray consider,

I. How little is to be alleged against it, against the carrying on this professed and avowed design, in the disposal of those I am concerned for, whether one's own children, or others that are intrusted to our care; I say, to avow this, as our design, to promote and transmit religion, and the interest of godliness in the world, consider how little is to be said against it. All that can be pretended against it is, that the custom and usage of the world is to look after a suitable match in point of estate, in the first place. It is very true, it is so. And so it is the custom of this world to forget God, and to carry it towards him as if he were not the Lord of this world; and to cast his fear behind men's back; and to trample upon his interest; and to count religion, (which is the main concern of all men,) instead of their interest, their reproach and dishonour. This is the custom of this world. But let such things as these be put in the balance; and so the other considerations, which I intended, will fall in. As this, in the next place,

2. That God doth manifestly insist upon this design still, of propagating religion in the world. You find that he doth provide that such a design should go on through all the successions of time. Our Lord Jesus Christ hath undertaken to be with them that shall be engaged in carrying on this design, to the end of the world. He hath set up an office on purpose; and therefore, the design is not laid aside, nor ever will be laid aside, of transmitting religion in the world. And how dutiful a thing, and how glorious a thing, is it, to offer oneself as an instrument within the compass of one's own sphere, to serve such a design as this!

For let but conscience be appealed to in the case, Do we not find, that God hath a design to keep religion in the world, from age to age? What doth he continue this world for? Is it only that it may continue in rebellion against him, from generation to generation, when it is impossible it should subsist an age, or a moment, without his sustaining influence, when we have so much assurance given us, that it is upon the account of Christ's interest, that this world is kept from dissolution all this while? It is by him that all things do subsist, and consist. Therefore, undoubtedly, God hath this design still. What serves that Gospel for, that we live under, and the ministry and ordinances of it? And when we know that God hath such a design, shall not that which is his design, be our principal design? or shall we presume to disagree with him about our principal end?

Indeed, it is very true, if he had made a declaration from heaven—"I will have no more to do with this world; I will save no more souls in it; I will leave all to follow the inclination of their own hearts, and to walk and live in that darkness which they love, and will have no more concern with them:" if there had been, I say, such a declaration, then all thoughts and care of this kind, that I am speaking of, would have been superseded. For it is impossible for any to act rationally, with despair. Where there is no hope, there can be no design. But when we know that that is none of the case, but God hath a design to continue religion and godliness in this world, from age to age, I am a wretch, if I will not make his design my principal design; or if any thing shall be greater in mine eyes than that. And again, consider,

3. That if I do not do my utmost, within my sphere and capacity, for the serving this design of God, I do certainly make myself a party against him; for if there be a continual descent of human nature, without a prospect of any means to cultivate it, and correct the exorbitancies of it, in its further descent, this continuation of the rebellion against

God; when there is only a provision made, that a rebellious nature may descend, and no more; nothing with it, no corrective with it.

But what a monstrous thing is this! when such care is taken to correct the exorbitancies of nature in inferior kinds; vegetative nature, sensitive nature. Men take care of their gardens, of their flowers, of their trees; and (as the divine poet, Herbert, saith) let weeds choke their sun. How monstrous is this! Into what a wilderness doth uncultivated and uncorrected nature grow! You find it in inferior kinds. If nature be not regulated, rectified, even vegetative nature, it will all be overrun with weeds, and better plants grow wild. The profusions of nature, if no way regulated, they become very ungrateful and uncomely. And when we find how the case is, as to rational nature, what cultivation that needs, that it may be susceptible of the implantation of such a better principle that shall be governing, man becoming, without it, "as a wild ass's colt," as the Scriptures speak; O! who can endure the thought, that so it should be with what descends from me; that what descends, shall have descending with it seeds of enmity, and rebellion, against the Majesty of heaven only, but nothing concomitant towards the cure and the remedy of so horrid an evil.

To have a nature poisoned with enmity, an envenomed nature, even against heaven, running on, if I do not use my utmost care and concern, that as there shall be a continual descent of human nature, so that the correctives may accompany it, and go along with it, I do make myself a party against God and godliness. For I am sure that the uncultivated and impure corrupt nature will be continually carrying on that war, and tumultuating in fresh rebellions against heaven. And so that makes me, by neglect, a party; I betray the interests of God in that matter. And,

4. Let it be considered, too, what horrid cruelty this is towards our own bowels, or such as I have otherwise undertaken the care of, visibly to throw away their souls: to seem not to care what becomes of them; whether they shall have any helps God-ward, or heaven-ward, yea or no. No concern that whatever they shall bring forth, in all probability, and according to visible appearance, is only brought forth for the destroyer; all children of perdition only in view. And it is, in the last place, to be added,

5. That if any such persons would allow themselves to consider, that have such a concern upon them, or who are so intrusted with the disposal of young ones, either their own, or others committed to them, that will finally be found most of all cruel to their own souls. For how shall such, at last, lie down in peace, when they come to make up their accounts with God? "Such and such opportunities I had to serve the God of my life in this world, which I have lost; and I have thrown away such, whose souls I was concerned for, to have taken care of, even as my own." For we are to love our neighbours as ourselves; and much more those that are nearly related. O! the wounds and gall, and the terrors of spirit, wherewith (if the matter be reflected on) such must lie down at last. And the case is worse if it be not reflected on.

But then, there is somewhat to be said, too, to the other sort of persons that are concerned in this same case; and that is, the persons to be disposed of. All that I have said hitherto, refers to the disposers. But for them that are disposed of, it is not fit they should come into such a relation as that, till they can use some thoughts of their own, and so be capable of understanding what their duty is in such a case. And,

1. It is manifestly their duty to be very flexible towards parents and guardians, when they see they have a visible design of their spiritual and eternal welfare, in the first place; and that which they are chiefly concerned for. And,

2. It is their duty to be inflexible, if they find that such as are concerned for them, have a design to throw them away; that they do not care as to what concerns their souls, and their spiritual estate, so as they may marry into an opulent condition in this world. In that case, I say, they ought to be inflexible; but dutifully and submissively, still. They ought to carry it with decorum, and not to be insolent in their refusal of those offers that are made them by parental authority, or in opposition thereunto; but, with modesty and humility, still to dissent, still to disagree; "I will not so venture my soul upon an ungodly person; or where there is no hope I shall have help God-ward, or heaven-ward."

LECTURE XLII.*

Thirdly, It may be of use to us, to let us see how reasonable and righteous it is, that the conceptions and births of human creatures should be ordinarily attended, from age to age, with such dolours as we find they are. It is not to be repined at, that when such conceptions and births are in sin and iniquity, they should be also accompanied with terrors, with such pangs and agonies, as are commonly experienced. For it ought to be considered, what the productions are. What are the productions when a human creature is brought forth into this world? Why, a thing shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin. And abstractly considered, and antecedently to supervening grace, it is a monstrous production. Any such production, it is a monstrous thing. A reasonable, intelligent creature produced into being, with a radical enmity against the infinite and supreme Good, the Fountain of all excellency and perfection. Consider it, I say, antecedently to supervening grace, and every human product is a monstrous one. As reason is yet but radical and seminal, so is corruption, so is malignity against God. "Estranged from the very womb," as that expression is, Psalm lviii. 3.

Therefore, this lot is to be submitted to, with so much the more equal mind, remembering that this was part of the first sentence, when sin did first spring in the world, that conception and production should be in sorrow. That such sickness, such pangs, such agonies, should so constantly attend human conception and birth; we are not to repine at it, as if it were an unreasonable, an unrighteous thing; but we are to consider the reason of this and that; God will have a continual memorandum kept on for the putting us in mind, from age to age, what the nature is, that is descending and running down in this world, from age to age.

And that this should be the harder lot of that sex upon which it falls, the apostle gives this account—that that was the first deceived sex, first in the transgression, I Tim. ii. latter end. And the indulgence that is superadded, ought to be so much the more gratefully acknowledged; to wit, that there is so particular discovery of grace with reference to that sex; "She shall be saved in child-bearing, if she continue in faith, in holiness, in purity, in sobriety," and in love, the immediate product of that faith; a heart united with God, by that "faith which works by love." We read it, "charity," which commonly is understood to carry a reference especially unto a fellow-creature. But there is no reason for that restriction in the native signification of the word itself. If she continue in faith, and love, with holiness and sobriety, she is in a safe state, notwithstanding all the pangs, and dolour, and agonies, which, according to the original unreversed sentence, must be expected to be in the way. But again,

Fourthly, We may further learn, hence, by way of use, with what patience, and meekness, and wisdom; and with what considering minds, parents should observe and bear the sickness and death (when that case comes) of their children in their younger and more tender age. It requires much grace, much wisdom, a very serious and considering mind, to carry it equally and aright, in reference to such cases when they fall out; that a poor child that hath lately peeped into this world, is presently struck with some distemper or another, as soon as it breathes it languishes, and, it may be, dies; which is, you know, a very common case; the far greater part being hardly thought to outlive infancy, who are born into this world. These languishings end in death more commonly, than in recovery and consistency in health. What is the reason of all this?

* Preached December 23d, 1694.

Why humanly, indeed, they are apt to think it very strange, who are short-sighted creatures, and measure all things by the short line of time, and confine all those thoughts and apprehensions of things to this present world. But we are to consider, that when such a creature appears first upon the stage, it appears a creature tainted with sin; so it brings death with it, even from its very birth, into this world. "Death passeth over all men, inasmuch as all have sinned:" and sure, infants must be included in that all: and so they must be understood to be sinful creatures; to wit, that this radical evil hath tainted their natures, as soon as they have the human nature.

This is a case, therefore, about which we are not to contend, but which we ought to set ourselves to improve, and turn to gain. Is such a creature, as soon as it is born, a sinful, impure creature? Why, we must consider, that sin refers to eternity. I pray mind, that every thing of sin against God, it implies a reference to eternity, and to another world. Sin never reacheth its end and term here in this world. They that sin in this world, they are to give an account in the other: and that obey and do comply, and fall in with the terms of the Gospel, (the only prescription and relief in the case of having sinned,) they are to have their reward in another world. Sin, if it lie upon the sinner, turns to a miserable eternity in another world. Sin done away by expiation and by satisfaction, turns to a blessed eternity in another world. Do not think, therefore, that such creatures were finally made for this world. It would be an accountable riddle, that infants should but look into this world, and presently fall sick, and (as commonly it doth) that sickness end in death, if human nature were made for this world only. But this is to be considered, when such a creature comes into being, here is a production never to cease; a thing lately come into being, never to go out of being more: and that this world is only a *vestibulum*, an introduction into another world, which never dissolves, and whercin, whether our state be good or bad, they never change.

It ought hereupon to be considered, further, (that so such a case as this may be improved unto advantage,) it is improved to great advantage, if we consider what such a creature was made for; and considering it as a fallen creature, or sinner, what this sin it hath about it hath reference to. It hath reference to eternity. All sin hath that reference.

But it will be of further improvement, if it be also considered by parents, in such cases, as to what tenderness they usually have towards their children, when they are sick, and with what solicitude and fear they used to be vexing and disquieting their minds, lest they should die; yet they ought to be instructed, hence, to have a tenderness in reference to their spiritual maladies, and a like concern and dread of their dying eternally. Here would be a great improvement. "O! what a tenderness have I for my child when it is sick. Why, this distemper doth but attack the flesh, frail, mortal flesh, that was formed out of the dust so newly; and must, sooner or later, return to it again: but my child hath an immortal spirit in it too; and that is tainted with sin: it hath its worst and most dangerous distemper within. O! what cries, what supplications, should I send up to the Father of spirits, and Father of mercies, that he would cure these spiritual maladies!" And whereas, you are afraid that your child will die; you are to be more afraid lest it should die eternally.

And labour to consider aright, the grounds you have of reasonable hope, in reference to this case. It is a case that parents ought not to consider with despair. Those that are themselves in covenant with God through Christ, the promise is to them, and to their seed: and they have a great deal more reason to hope, than they have to despair. And for ought I see, as great reason to hope concerning their children dying in infancy as they have to hope concerning themselves. The covenant of God in Christ doth not signify nothing. And whereas, that age is incapable of covenanting for itself, if such a one, growing to maturity, do not disclaim, but stand to the covenant of his or her parents, it holds firm and unalterable. And, in the mean time, while there is no capacity or possibility of disclaimer, we have no reason to think there can be any failure on the other part, but, according to the tenor and constitution of God's covenant, the infant, during its infant state, is considered as a branch in the root; and, before it be capable of treating and transacting for itself with God, it is treated for acceptably and successfully by a holy and believing parent. And therefore, such a case, when it falls out unto godly parents to have their children languishing, even in their infancy, many times even unto death, they should consider what an admirable, strange thing it is: "This creature, as it came from me, came into this world an impure thing, a polluted thing, a child of wrath by nature; now, how is it numbered among the children of the Most High, and adjoined to the general assembly, (when it is gone from hence,) to the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect! What a change is this! So impure a creature as it came from me, is become now, all of a sudden, so glorious a creature!"

And it is further to that purpose, to be considered, What did God make such a creature for? Why, what, do you think he made it on purpose to please me? If I be the parent, the pleasure I take in it is but a collateral and secondary thing. But do we yet need to be taught that God made all things for himself? And that it may be good indeed, when such strokes do befall families, children lopt off, one branch after another, (it may be the single one,) to consider whatsoever a providence may specially animadvert upon, and if there be any thing evident in view, it ought to be considered; it ought to be well considered and taken to heart. Yet, it is possible there may be a vulgar error incurred in this matter too: that is, in thinking that the principal design of any such dispensation was, or must be, the affliction and punishment of the holy parent. That ought to be considered, where there is no notorious delinquency to be reflected upon. I say, it ought to be considered as some end, but not as that principal end, of such a dispensation: for as the principal end of God's making such a creature was not to please me; so the principal end of his taking such a creature out of this world, was not to displease me; but to glorify himself: and that end cannot be in this world, for which he hath made such a creature.

And it ought to be considered, that his right in it, is more than mine, infinitely. If any of you should put a child to nurse, and it grows up under the nurse's care, and she is pleased with it, takes complacency in it: and because she doth do so, when you call for your child home, she will not part with it, because it pleaseth her; surely, you would think that your right and interest in the child are superior to hers; and hers (whatever it is) is not to be considered in competition with yours; and yours is far less to be considered in competition with God's; yours is far more inferior. And therefore, there ought to be a grateful resentment, not without sense, not with stupidity; but with serious and apprehensive minds, and having the state of the case lying in view before you as it is. And therefore, I add,

Fifthly, That the miseries of this world ought not to amaze us. We are not to think it a strange thing, that this lower region should be a region of so much wretchedness and carnality, as it is found to be, from age to age: for is not every one that is born into it, born a sinner? And whereas, none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, who can hope to bring a quiet thing out of an unclean? Purity and peace, pollution and disturbance, go together. Every one brings into this world, not only that which is troublesome to himself, but that which is troublesome to others, too, with whom he hath to do. They bring that with them into this world, which must make it an unquiet, stormy region to them. Our greatest troubles (with every one) are born with us. And this is the common case, and cannot be otherwise, when we consider that sin, which every one brings with him into this world, doth dissolve the union between God and the soul, and breaks it off from God. A sinner, as such, is loose from God. And therefore, this would bring, from age to age, in a state of apostacy and separation from God, that which we see to be the consequent thereof, a universal confusion of our very nature within itself, and of all men (as they fall into any kind of conversation with one another) towards one another too. This cannot but be, hereupon, a heap of confusion, a mere chaos.

How can it be otherwise with creatures fallen from God? If man that is born of a woman be an unclean thing, (as Job xiv. 4.) then, (as the 14th chapter begins,) it is not at all strange, that man that is born of a woman should be of few days, and full of trouble. So many such creatures as are produced, and brought forth into being in this world, so many fountains of misery and wretchedness are produced. Think of the vast numbers of the inhabitants of this earth, and every one, even from his very infancy, is a fountain both of impurity and misery. And therefore, it is not strange that so many fountains should deluge this world, from age to age, both with wickedness, so as that it may well be said to lie therein, and (as that which is most connatural thereunto) with misery also.

And it is, hereupon, to be the result of our thoughts, when we consider with ourselves, what a miserable region this world is: this ought, I say, to be the result of our thoughts: it is all natural, it is all most genuine; if we see early discords in families, when a family is planted, young plants springing up in it; if there are quarrellings, janglings, fallings out, perpetual animosities, even among those nearer relatives in families; as the poet observed long ago—*Fratrum concordia rara*, seldom is there any agreement among brethren; those that are branches of the same root. If we look further into larger societies, cities, kingdoms, or nations, they are all continually full of confusion, from age to age; and it is from hence, that the wretchedness of this world, which springs up from as many fountains as there are men and women upon earth, and these fountains, from their very infancy, are "like the troubled sea, whose waters cast forth mire and dirt," as the prophet speaks: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." That wickedness which overflows the world, cannot but make it an unquiet and gloomy region. And therefore, again,

Sixthly, We may further learn, how unreasonable and unaccountable a thing it is, that men should be in love with this present world. It is indeed stupendous to think, that our minds should so cleave to so horrid a thing as this world is; should be set upon it, that they will not run from it; that here we think of taking up our rest! O! think, what we ourselves were, and what the rest of mankind is; "a generation of vipers," poisonous creatures, of an envenomed, malignant nature. If we find that we have a design, any desire, any hope or prospect of a better state, methinks, we should not affect to live among such creatures, and continue ourselves when a cure is to be hoped for; when we understand the design of grace, that it will make such as comply with its methods, pure, and holy, and glorious creatures ere it be long: but not here, but inchoatively and imperfectly only. When I consider this, methinks we should be quite out of love with this world, and say with ourselves, "This cannot be our rest, for it is polluted," as in that Micah ii. 10. O! let us be up and begone as soon as we can have a fair exit; and make it our business while we must stay here, as much as is possible for us, to keep from the corruptions that are in this world, and to get, as much as in us lies, this impure fountain of sin dried up; and to be waiting with earnest and most desirous expectation, for a translation into that place where there shall be no more sin, but perfect purity: nothing to interrupt and hinder the closest union, and sweetest pleasures, and most delightful intercourse, between God and us. "He that hath this hope purifieth himself as God is pure:" the hope of being like God, and seeing him as he is, 1 John iii. 3. referred to the immediately foregoing verse. Which being made like God, and seeing him as he is, we know this present state admits not of.

Seventhly, We may further learn, hence, to admire the divine patience towards this wretched world, that he hath spared it so long, is so indulgent to it; while wickedness is so continually propagating an enmity, rebellion, and war against himself, from one generation to another. We ought to consider the divine patience in this, both as great and as wise. As great; to look upon it abstractly, it is wonderful patience, that God should bear with such a world, that is transmitting continual wickedness and enmity against himself from age to age, when he hath it so perfectly in his power to put a stop and period to all this, at his own pleasure. It is great patience. It is a very great thing.

But we ought also to consider it, too, that it is the patience of a God; and then it must be wise as well as great. Wise with reference to somewhat else, as well as great in itself. It cannot be, but that the reference of this patience must be to somewhat else, to some God-like design; otherwise, would he sustain a sinful world, and let sinners beget sinners, and propagate a rebellion and war against himself, from age to age, if he had not some great meaning in all this? Why, there will be glorious results out of it, which, by how much the less our understandings are capable of comprehending it, with so much the more patience, and resignation, we should wait for it. It will be found at last a thing worthy of God, to have borne, with so much patience, the wickedness of this world so long. But then,

Eighthly, We are from hence to reckon, too, that this state of things must not last always, when this is the constant course and common case that, from age to age, impure creatures are begotten of impure creatures, conceived in sin, shapen in iniquity, we may conclude upon it, that this course will have an end. And we are not to think it strange, if it should have such an end as the Scriptures of truth tell us it will have; that is, that a day will come, "when the heavens shall be rolled up as a scroll, and the elements melt with fervent heat; and all things therein shall be consumed and burnt up," as it is in that 2 Peter iii. at large. We are not to think this strange or unworthy of God, that he should design such a way, to put a period at last to the generations of men on earth, when they are so continually, so long as they last, handing down and transmitting wickedness and war against heaven, from generation to generation. It is never to be thought, that this can last always. Therefore, how much the more wicked we observe the world to be, with so much the more awe, trembling, and dread we should consider what is coming—that day of the perdition and of the destruction of ungodly men; this world being reserved unto fire against that day. But again,

Ninthly, We are further to learn, how admirable a thing it is, that in the mean time, God should be raising up to himself a divine offspring, out of an impure race of creatures; (Be they as they are, and as they, from age to age, are born in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, yet, saith God, "I will have my part and share among them;") that he should have assigned to a Redeemer his seed, ("He shall see his seed," Isaiah liii. 10.) even out of this corrupt seed, this seed of evil-doers. And whereas, according to the natural state af the case, (as it is stated before,) man in his first apostacy being an accomplice with the devil, this world is entirely become the devil's family: "You are of your father the devil," John viii. 44. So men, morally considered, are. In respect of their naturals, (it is true,) God is the Father of their spirits; but in respect of their morals, lapsed, corrupted man, is the devil's seed, and so, antecedently to grace, this world was become the devil's family: but now, that God should raise up to himself a family out of this family; that there should be a diverse and contrary seed springing up, even amidst the other, and out of it, opposite to the other, and having its particular and distinct character, this is admirable! As the apostle tells us, "Herein the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest." There is a manifest, discernible difference between them. There is no doubt they must needs differ, beyond all that can be thought, who are of so vastly different parents.

But here is the wonder,—that God should design to raise up to himself such a seed, out of such a world, out of such a race! that he did not rather choose to abandon this (one) when he was gone off from him; and when he could, by a word, have raised up another pure, holy, innocent creature throughout. No; but this design was to defeat the device and contrivance of the devil: he thought to have this seed, and all this race of creatures entirely off from God: No, this shall not be; he was resolved he would herein deceive the deceiver; and (as to this design of his) destroy the destroyer;—destroy him that had the power of death, and make a fool of him.

This (as I noted in the opening of the text to you) was a course most eligible to the Supreme Wisdom, not to

make a direct regression of any of his works, by meeting with opposition and a design driven on against him. But he resolves to proceed in the natural course that was laid out at first, and to counterwork that arch-enemy, the first, the grand apostate; and to carry on his own design, against his design; and to turn all to honour and glory at last; even into matter of the highest triumph over the defeated and disappointed destroyer of souls. And this is that which we should consider, with wonder and reverence, that God should have such a design as this in hand, and continually kept on foot, to raise to himself a pure, and holy, and divine seed, (which shall at length be perfectly so,) out of such an apostate degenerate race. And,

Tenthly, This lets us see the necessity of regeneration. Is man such an impure creature, even from his very original, from his conception and birth? Then he must be new made. If any thing shall be made of him to good purpose he must be made over again. This shows us of how absolute necessity it is, that there should be not only in discourse, but in fact, that great mystery of regeneration, belonging to our religion. Is man now, from the beginning, such an impure thing? (the great God beholding this,) there is nothing to be made of this creature, unless he be new made. Is he born such a thing? he must be new born. Born he is, of earthly parentage; but "he must be born from above," as that word admits to be rendered, John iii. 5. But yet,

Eleventhly, It also shows the kindness, as well as the necessity, of this regenerating work; by how much the more necessary, by so much the more kind. How admirable grace is there in it; that when the exigency of the case required that this creature should be made and born over again; I say, when the case required such a thing, God should so graciously vouchsafe it! This is admirable grace! "We were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures;" slaves in our birth; born slaves. "But when the kindness and love of God appeared, not by works of righteousness which we had done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Lord," Tit. iii 4, 5. Consider the grace of regeneration, how gracious a work it is, that God, who had no need of such creatures, creatures that could add nothing to him, should condescend to such a thing, to let that holy and pure Spirit of his come, amidst all their impurities, with his own holy light and influence, upon creatures that he might have abhorred to touch with: that the holy and pure Spirit should shed his light and influences, (so pure things amidst so much impurity,) there to regenerate, there to renew, there to form, there to reform—O what grace is this! And, lastly,

Twelfthly, We may further collect, hence, how glorious a work regeneration or renovation must be when that shall take effect. "Behold, I make all things new," Rev. xxi. 5. Who would expect that such a state of things as this should come out of such a state as this world was degenerated into, when every particular creature that inhabits it was a fountain of impurity and misery to itself, and to the rest? That there should be such a thing laid in the divine counsel—"Well, I will new make this world; there shall be such a thing as new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell:" with what wonder and transport should we think of this, that God will have so glorious a world, out of a world so lost and sunk in impurity and death as this world is!

But thus far, we have been considering the state of the apostate children of men—THE FALL OF THE FIRST MAN—THE FALLEN STATE OF MEN, and—THE EQUITY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE DIVINE PROCEDURE IN ALL THIS. It remains, in the next place, to come now to that which I last observed, by way of use, will lead us more directly to consider; and that is, WHAT HATH BEEN DESIGNED, AND WHAT IS DONE AND IS DOING, IN ORDER TO THE RECOVERY OF THIS IMPURE, THIS LOST AND LAPSED CREATURE.

* Preached December 29th, 1694.

LECTURE XLIII.*

Luke ii. 14.

Good will towards men.

[*The whole verse runs thus,—Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men.*]

You know we have been largely, and very lately, discoursing to you of the apostacy, the fall of the first man, and the fallen state of men, with the continual descent of a corrupt nature through all the generations of men hereupon. It now follows, of course, (and according to the natural order of things as they lie,) to speak of man's recovery. And in order thereunto, in the first place, of God's kind propension towards men; which is to be considered as that which leads on the whole of any design or endeavour to that purpose; His good-will, the original, the source, the fountain, the well-head, of the glorious design which he hath set on foot for the recovery of such a lost and lapsed creature. This is more especially held forth to us in the close of this verse now read; and not more distinctly and fully any where else in Scripture. But it is in conjunction (as we shall come more particularly to take notice of by and by) with other things which we shall not overlook, though that which I design to fasten upon, is this particular only—"Good will towards men."

And if, with reference to what we have heard, we do but consider the summary import of these words, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men," it might fill us with amazement and wonder. And sure it would do so, if these things were now altogether new to us, or did now come at this time to our notice and hearing. Upon what hath been so largely discoursed concerning the fall, and the degenerate state of fallen creatures; how sin and death have spread themselves through this world; how an impure and poisoned nature was continually descending, and transmitting, from age to age, a nature envenomed with enmity against the best of beings, the sovereign, rightful Lord of all: and that by this continual descent and transmitting of such a nature, (which, as you have heard it, did not seem meet to the divine wisdom to hinder by preternatural means,) here was, hereupon, a continual war maintained and kept up on earth against heaven; and this war carried on in an open hostility from age to age. Upon the discovery (I say) of all this the true representation (however defective and short of the full) of the state of the case between God and man; if we did not live under the Gospel, or had no notice, no intimation or hint, of any such thing before, as now comes to be laid in open view before our eyes, we should be the most transported creatures that ever God made; the children of men would generally be so. And certainly, upon the supposition already made, two things we would have expected. And two things we would little ever have expected or thought of. We would,

1. Sure, have expected that there should have been an efficacious revelation of wrath from heaven. There hath been a verbal one, and a real one in degree; we would sure have expected it to have been most efficacious and total. We would wonder that it hath not been long ago; that it hath not turned this world into flames and ashes, many a day since; and in that way put a period to the propagation of a wicked nature, and the continuation of a war and hostility against heaven, and the Lord of heaven and earth. And we would have expected,

2. That, whereas men have been accomplices with the devil, in this apostacy from God, and in the continuation of this rebellion and war against him, from age to age; (accomplices with a sort of creatures of a higher order, a great part of the heavenly host that first made a defection from God, and drew in man with them into the same apostacy;) I say, we would sure have expected that none should have been more ready executioners of the just wrath of God upon those disingenuous, apostate, ungrateful generations and race of creatures, than those angels that

retained their integrity, that left not their first estate. We would have expected that they should have been the most prepared, expedite instruments of God's vengeance upon such a generation of creatures as we were, and have been most willing to have come upon that errand, to vindicate their rightful Sovereign Lord from all indignities and dishonours that have been done him, by the creatures of their own order first, who had drawn into a confederation with them a whole race of creatures of an inferior nature and order. One would think that love to God, and a zeal for his honour and interest, should so universally have inspired them, the glorious inhabitants of heaven, that no errand would have been more grateful to them, than to be sent as the quick executioners of the divine revenge upon such a wicked world as this.

And again, upon the forementioned supposition, there are two things that we should as little ever have expected, to wit:

1. That there should ever have been a thought of favour and kindness in heaven, and with the God of heaven, towards such creatures as we. That we would little have looked for, that ever the sound of such a voice should have been heard from heaven towards such an apostate degenerate race of creatures, as "peace on earth, and good-will towards men." Who would ever have looked for it? That when they were breathing nothing but war, and enmity, and hostility, against heaven, there should be a proclamation from thence, of peace towards men on earth, proceeding from (as it could proceed from nothing else but) good will. And again,

2. We would as little have expected, that the angels of God should be the messengers of such tidings to this world, whose dutiful and loyal breasts we must conceive filled with indignation against apostate creatures, that had left, and put themselves off from so kind, so benign, so gracious, and so rightful a Lord. One would little have thought, that they should have come upon such an errand; that when they would rather have been waiting for a commission to execute the just wrath of God upon this wretched world, they should be sent to proclaim *peace*, and to signify the divine good-will towards men. Though, indeed, for the same reason for which they would have been executioners of the divine revenge upon this wretched world, they would also be messengers of such glad tidings; to wit, because they were obsequious, dutiful, and loyal, and had but one will with him, whose creatures and servants they were. His will, so far as it is notified and made known, is always perfectly complied with in heaven, as we are to desire it should be here on earth. But that was the case here; the angels are sent upon this errand first, to bespeak "glory to God in the highest," and to speak out "peace upon earth, and good-will towards men."

And now finding ourselves outdone every way, that what we would most of all have expected, we find not; but what we would never have expected, that we find: that as to the most dismal and dreadful things that we would have looked for, we meet with a grateful disappointment; but as to such things that we would never have looked for, we meet with a most grateful surprise. When we find (I say) the matter to be so, then would our narrow minds begin to fall a wondering at somewhat else; to wit, that since wrath did not break forth upon this world, to put a sudden end and period to it; and that God having so many mighty and powerful agents to employ as instruments therein, prest and ready at his command, they were not yet employed in that work; but, on the contrary, grace breathes from heaven upon this forlorn world, and the angels of God are here made the first of ministers (as it were) thereof, to publish it and make it known; we would, then, wonder why was not this much earlier? Why was it not many ages before? Why did not that gracious, kind design break forth sooner, so as to have mollified the world, to have assuaged and conquered down that enmity, and to have prevented the insolencies of wickedness, which, through a succession of many ages, for almost four thousand years together, had prevailed, and been acted on the stage of this rebellious world.

But we see that in all respects, "God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts; but as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts," Isa. lv. 7. What was, with deepest and most profound wisdom, forelaid with him in the eternal counsel of his will, it was to have a gradual, and a very gradual, discovery and revelation to this world; and not to have its fulness of accomplishment till the fulness of time set for it. Every part of that method, which he had laid with himself, every juncture in it being, by divine counsel, affixed to so many parts, and points of time, so as that every thing belonging to that glorious design must fall into that very season which was fore-determined for it, and then receive its punctual accomplishment: according to that of the apostle James, that sage saying of his, Acts xv. 18. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Not only known that they shall be, but known when every thing shall be, in what time, with what dependencies upon other things, with what references unto things that are to follow and ensue; according to that scheme and model which lay in the all-comprehending Divine Mind; the thoughts and purposes of that mind being not hitherto unformed, but only unrevealed; hid in God, (as the expression is Eph. i. 19.) folded up in mystery, and so concealed from ages and generations by-past; in a mystery that was (as it were) inwrapt in rich glory, or in the riches of glory, as Eph. i. 22. This mysterious design, with the method of it, was not to come into view, but in the determinate season; all things being left by the supreme wisdom, in the dependance of one thing upon another, and with a particular reference to such and such seasons, that all things must have in the course and current of time.

Long it was, therefore, that this world was let sleep on in sin and darkness, unapprehensive generally, that there were any such kind thoughts in heaven towards them. Little was that thought of; and, indeed, for the most part, it was as little desired, as expected, that ever God should have given such relief or redress, to the sad, forlorn state of things in the world. It was, I say, as little desired as it was expected or hoped; for, as the most deplorable things in this our calamitous state, such as distance from God, ignorance of him, unacquaintance with him, the presence of the sensible, and the debasement of the intellectual nature. These were not men's more real misery than they were their imagined felicity; things that they were generally very well pleased with: that which was their doom, was their choice. It was in every man's heart to say unto God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; we had rather live alone apart from God." If any scattered beam of divine light shone here and there, it shone amidst the darkness which refused to comprehend it; a malignant darkness, that was naturally bent to exclude and shut it out. So that it might be truly said, The wretchedness of this world was become connatural to it—its very element; and men did enjoy their misery: those viperous lusts, that, as so many serpents, were inwrapped and preying upon the hearts and vitals of men, they were hugged as their only delectable darlings; and all their business, every were, was to make provision for these lusts, and to satisfy, to the utmost, what was insatiable, and could not be satisfied. So that there was not less need of divine power, to apply a remedy in such a case, than there was of wisdom to contrive, or kindness to design it.

And thereupon, as men did all this while generally (as it were) enjoy (as we said) their own misery, enjoy it to themselves; so God did all this while enjoy his own love to himself; pleased himself in this design of his, which yet, for the most part, was concealed and hid in God, as was before noted to you; and he might do so, the whole method of that design, in all the parts and junctures of it, being so surely and firmly laid, and one thing so connected with another, that it was altogether undisappointable; he being Master of the design, having it perfectly in his power, and it being impossible any thing should intervene the accomplishment of whatsoever he had determined, and purposed within himself. He enjoyed his own love, this good will of his towards men, as it was a fountain of that designed good, which they should enjoy, and which, through the several successions of some ages of time, they did, in some measure, enjoy. And that also was an ever springing fountain to himself; for nothing can satisfy God but

God: an everlasting complacency, therefore, he must be supposed to take in his own benignity, in the goodness of his own will, with all the other perfections thereof.

But now, at length, in the fulness of time, this design of his breaks forth unto men too; not till time was come to its fulness, its parturient fulness, and was to be disburthened of that birth, the greatest and most glorious that ever lay in the womb of time, or was possible so to do. When the Son of God was to appear here upon this stage, and to be brought forth into this world, then it was not fit that so glorious a work as that, the manifestation of the Son of God in human flesh, should come forth without a previous knowledge. When he was come, it was fit it should be known what he was come for: and so Christ and a Gospel, they do, in this world, commence both together: that is, now doth the Sun of Righteousness arise and shed his beams upon this world. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself was that Sun; the Gospel was the beams of it, the radiations of that Sun.

And this beaming out of the light and grace of the Gospel, it was, at first, in a way as extraordinary as the thing itself was. How extraordinary was the thing, that God should descend, be manifested in human flesh, put on man, take the name of "Emmanuel, God with us:" a God among men, how extraordinary was that thing! And the way of its discovery, it was suitably, it was correspondently, extraordinary, too: that is, by an embassy of angels, this should be first made known to the world. They were not to be the ordinary ambassadors of those glad tidings among men, but they were ambassadors extraordinary. So you find this matter is represented in this context. First, one angel appears to a company of shepherds, and tells them, (as soon as they were recovered out of their sudden affright,) that he was come to publish to them glad tidings of great joy, that should be to all people—and by and by there is a numberless host, a vast chorus, a choir of angels; a multitude of the heavenly host, who all come together upon the same errand, to publish what we have here contained in the Scripture: "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men."

So that look upon Christ as the Sun of Righteousness; look upon the Gospel as the beaming forth, the irradiation of that Sun; and you may look upon this text as the epitome, or that which hath in it the contracted beams of all that irradiation: for a sum of the Gospel it is. Look into the particulars of it, and it is made up especially of these parts.

1. The final issue and effect of this great and glorious undertaking of the Son of God, in descending and coming down into this world, putting on human flesh, and being manifested therein. And that is two-fold—supreme and subordinate.

(1.) Supreme: "Glory to God in the highest." That is the thing in which this whole dispensation shall finally result; all shall terminate in the highest glory to God above; to God that inhabits those highest and most glorious regions, that is there enthroned: all shall have a final resultancy into his highest glory, who inhabiteth those highest and most glorious regions of the universe. And then,

(2.) There is the subordinate effect, or final issue, out of which that glory is to result unto God: "Peace on earth." There is a peace-making design yet on foot. It shall not be abortive. It shall have its effect, and take place. God will, upon certain terms, be reconciled unto men. Men shall be brought first or last (many of them, multitudes of them) to comply and fall in with those terms. And so where there was nothing else but war, there shall be peace: the Prince of Peace is now arrived into this world, and it shall not be without effect: his kingdom is a kingdom of peace, a peaceful kingdom. That peace is principally, and, in the first place, to be between the offended God, and his offending creatures here below. Other peace will proportionally, and in due time, ensue.

This is the final issue and effect of this undertaking of our Lord: that is, the ultimate effect—"Glory to God in the highest;" and the subordinate effect—"peace on earth." And that is the first part that we have considerable here of the words made up of these two. And,

2. The principal, the original, the source and fountain of that whole undertaking of our Lord, and of this two-fold effect, which is to result from it: and that is God's good will towards men. From this fountain shall spring forth both peace on earth, and glory to God; the former more immediately, and the latter ultimately: the former being subordinate to the latter, as the supreme and last end of that. And so as to this matter, the same account is here given of the whole Gospel constitution, as we find given in that Ephes. i. 4, 5, 6. "According as he hath chosen us in him, that we might be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us to the adoption of children, according to the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus, to the praise and the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." So that take the whole scheme of the Gospel revelation together, and it bears this inscription: It is a frame of things finally and ultimately dedicated to God, as all things must be to him, as well as from him. He that is the author is the end of all. He can do nothing but for himself. How or in what sense he doth so, to wit, doth things for his own glory, we shall have occasion to open more distinctly hereafter. But this being now the first thing that we have in view here; and which I design to touch upon as previous to that which comes last in the text, and is the main I intend to insist upon. Something, I say, I shall speak in reference to this—"Glory to God in the highest."

This you see is the final effect and issue of this mighty undertaking of a Redeemer. The Son of God descending and coming down into the world. Why, what shall be effected hereby? What shall be brought about? Why, "Glory to God in the highest." That should not fail to be effected. God would, it is true, have been glorified in the destruction of this world altogether: if it had been all laid in ruin; if it had been turned into one heap, he would have had his glory. He might have continued that as an everlasting trophy of his power and justice; of his justice by his power.

But that was not the way chosen; and he will not lose by it, as to all revenue that it is possible can be added to the divine treasure. Nothing can be really added. Glory can be added, to wit, *reputation*, (as the word signifies,) which, therefore, must be supposed to have its place in the intelligent and apprehensive minds of men. For the word made use of here, comes from a word that signifies esteem, or to judge. There must be some that are capable of judging of what is honourable and glorious; God himself is the Supreme Judge: and, indeed, there is no competent judge besides. As it is altogether impossible that any should be his peer, or capable of making an estimate of what will be fully and adequately answerable to him in point of honour and glory. And as the matter doth relate to him, and as he is to be himself the judge of honour, of what is becoming of God, what will be an honour to himself; so it is here considered,

(1.) Objectively, as the glory that could only be the thing designed by himself, to himself; to wit, the complacency that he takes in himself, which must bear some proportion to the excellency of his nature and being. And that cannot lie in the mere opinion that he hath in the minds of his creatures, (be those minds never so right, and never so comprehensive,) but the satisfaction that he receives to himself, in himself. This is an end worthy of God, and suitable unto God. Nothing can be an adequate satisfaction unto him, but what is in himself. Now there is an objective glory in himself—the glory of all his excellencies, of all his perfections; and this is the object in which he satisfies himself, and takes his own complacency there. There are, indeed, beamings forth of that excellency into the minds of creatures, but this cannot be his end; to wit, to be well thought of, or well spoken of, by his creatures; they are inconsiderable unto him. The whole creation is even as the dust of the balance, or the drop of the bucket; lighter than nothing, and vanity, in comparison with him.

But there is, I say, to be considered, first, an objective glory, the excellency, the becomingness of the order of things, as they lie in God, which only comes under the notion of creatures, as he is pleased to make the discovery; and when he so doth, that shines into their enlightened minds, which was, indeed, before; to wit, the order of things, that harmony, that comely dependance and refer-

ence of one thing to another, as it lies in the counsel of God's wisdom from eternity. Here is that glory which he beholds first in himself, and so he satisfies himself on the rectitude and perfection of all that is in him, and all that immediately proceeds from him, as it doth more immediately proceed. This only can be God's end. Indeed, the creature's end must be the display of his glory, when once it doth shine forth and come under their notice; then they are to reflect it from one to another, and to diffuse it among one another; so that there must be very different notions of the divine glory as it is his end, and as it is the creature's end. And that this matter may be the more distinctly explicated withal, consider two things here; first, the form, and secondly, the matter, of this saying of the angels in this part of it. "Glory to God in the highest," which is the principal part of the effect or end of this undertaking, the Redeemer's descent into this world; it was to produce glory to God in the highest, as it should produce, in due time, peace on earth, a reconciliation between God and man. I say, the former of this speech is to be inquired into. What doth it mean, that it should be here said, "Glory to God in the highest?" And then, the matter of it, and what is signified under it, we shall come more distinctly to inquire into afterwards.

(1.) For the form of this speech, that it may be rightly understood, we must consider from what mouth it comes, or who are the speakers, who they are that utter it: they are a heavenly host; a most numerous heavenly host; a host of angels that descend upon this account, in this juncture of time, (as it were,) upon a visit, upon a kind visit unto our earth, and to pay a dutiful homage unto the Son of God, whose descent they wait upon at his first arrival into this world of ours. The form of expression will very much be collected by considering the speakers. And nothing, indeed, could be more decorous, more becoming, than that they should be first employed upon such an errand as this, who are the speakers and mouth by whom this first summary of the Gospel is communicated amongst men, here in our world. It was fit there should be such messengers employed and sent; to wit, to celebrate his arrival into our world, who was so great a one, and who came upon so great an errand.

Let us but take notice, by the way, (before we come to collect from hence what the form of this saying must import,) why it should be said by such speakers, a multitude, a choir of angels, who were employed to utter it. Why, that was not all their business, to utter this saying here to a company of shepherds; that falls in with it, and that very aptly; but their great business is to wait upon the first arrival of the Son of God into this world, as a due honour to him. Upon which account we are told, (Heb. i. 6.) "That when he brought his first-born into the world, all the angels of God were to worship him," or to pay a homage to him. When he brought this his first-born into the world, this was (as it were) a decree then published in heaven; "Now let all the angels of God worship him." The thing also refers to 1 Tim. iii. 6. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels." Seen! How seen? Not barely looked upon as by a company of gazers, or of idle, unconcerned spectators; but seen, beheld with an adoring eye; every one seeing and adoring at once.

It was a suitable dignity and honour to them; and it was very suitable from them, considering what a state the Son of God was now coming into. A state that was to be "a little lower than the angels," as Heb. ii. 7. quoted from the 8th Psalm, or "lower for a little while." So the word admits to be read. That inasmuch as this humiliation of his was spontaneous and voluntary, he might not lose their homage by it; and undoubtedly they tendered it him. That self-depression was elective, not necessitated; therefore, he was not to lose by it; he descends, goes down into a state a little lower than the angels; therefore, the justice of heaven determined thus concerning him, and the justice of their minds could not but so consent and fall in with it. "You shall pay your homage to the descending Son of God; he shall lose nothing that is due from you (*cælites*) the inhabitants of heaven, for this self-debasement." Therefore, though this descent of his was to look with a dark side towards this our earth, because here he was to appear in obscurity; the ends of his coming down here among men would never have been composed and brought about, if he had been to shine as an illustrious person, in bright celestial glory, visibly and openly attended with guards of angels; his work would never have been done; he could never, on those terms, have arrived to the cross, which was finally the thing he had in his eye and design. Therefore, I say, this descent of his most look with a dark side here towards us here below. But yet, care was taken that it should look with a bright side in heaven above, that the glorious inhabitants there might be kept in a dutiful, adhering posture towards him, as understanding their own subserviency and subjection to him; and that he was their Lord still, though he did voluntarily go down into a state a little lower than theirs; lower for a little while. Therefore, upon occasion, their subserviency to him is plainly signified, when he was at the lowest, in his last agonies, angels came and ministered unto him. And so his descent looks with a bright side towards heaven, and those vaster numbers of intelligent minds, that do inhabit those regions; all was lightsome thitherwards, and must be, though it was necessary it should look with a dark kind of gloominess and obscurity towards men on earth, that the design might be accomplished, and not frustrated, for which he did descend and come down into this world.

And so much being premised, it is now obvious to collect what the form is of this same diction, this same saying, by these excellent, dutiful creatures. It must carry with it,

[1.] The form of an acclamation, giving glory to God; proclaiming the divine glory, upon this wonderful product of his wisdom and love, that began now to appear, and obtain, and take place in this world. It was an acknowledgment that he was worthy to receive all honour, and glory, upon this account. And,

[2.] It must bear, too, the form of an appreciation, that is, wishing he might continually do so; that all glory and honour might be continually given to God in the highest. And,

[3.] It might carry in it, too, the form of a narration, there being no verb in the sentence; and therefore, is to be understood as much as if it had been said, "Glory is to God in the highest;" that is, it is a representation how well the glorious inhabitants of the upper world were at that time employed, to wit, in celebrating the divine glory, and giving glory to him. This is the business of heaven: and upon this account, that the Son of God is now descended and come down upon this earth, it is their business on earth to be all giving glory to God in the highest. Or,

[4.] It may be also an invitation to angels above, and men below, so to do. All the glorious inhabitants of heaven, who behold and see; and so, likewise, all the men, and wretched and miserable inhabitants of this earth, who are concerned in all that is now done, join in this, giving glory to God in the highest. And,

[5.] It may be a demand or claim of glory to God in the highest; not only a mere invitation, but a challenge: "Let God have his due glory; withhold not his glory from him. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord," Psal. cl. last. Let the universe praise him, upon account of this marvellous undertaking, that his own Son is come down in glory, veiled and obscured into this world. And it may, in the last place,

[6.] Carry with it the form of a prediction; Glory shall be to God in the highest. As heaven is now full of this thing, earth shall be full of it; God will have his glory, even to the full, out of this wonderful thing, a thing infinitely more wonderful than the creation of this world was; even the extraction of such a universe out of nothing: that God should come down, and be manifest in such flesh as the children of men do wear, and carry about them here upon earth. We do all predict glory to God in the highest hereupon. So great a thing can never be, but there must be a production of glory to God in the highest, some time or another, as far proportionable hereunto, as the capacity of such creatures can admit. He will not lose his glory. We foretell he shall have his glory, even from all the ends of the earth, directed to him in the highest, arising and springing up from this very thing. But then,

(2.) The matter expressed and signified under this various form, that will also require some further explication too, which now I shall not enter into: but, in the mean time, let us consider,

[*Use.*] Doth heaven appear to have been so full of this thing, the descent of the Son of God into this world, when we were the persons concerned? What amazing stupidity is it, that our souls should not be more taken up about it! It was, indeed, partly duty to God, and to the Son of God, that these blessed angels should be in such a transport upon this occasion; but it was also benignity and kindness, and wonderful kindness towards us. When they saw what was designed to us, they give glory to God in the highest, upon the prospect they had of peace springing up towards us on earth, and of the view they had by retrospection upon the divine good will: finding now that anciently, and heretofore, his delights must have been with the children of men; (as miserable as their state and condition was;) not upon the account of what they now were, but upon the account of what he would one day make them. He would yet one day make them a delectable sort of creatures. The angels of God are full of this; and heaven was full of it. And we are not to think it was only so seventeen hundred years ago; that the thoughts and apprehensions of the glorious inhabitants of heaven are lower about these matters now: no; there is the same occasion, and the same sense. They are in the same joyous and dutiful raptures, upon account of what was doing and designing here upon earth, for producing of peace to men, and glory to himself.

What an amazing stupidity is it, that all this should signify so little with us! That when we are the persons chiefly concerned; when hell may be designing upon us from beneath, heaven is designing upon us from above; yet we are in a deep sleep all this while, neither feel the drawings of hell downward, nor the drawings of heaven upward. Hell is working upon us, and heaven is working upon us, and we seem insensible of the designs of either; the destructive designs of the one, or the kind designs of the other: but vanity fills our minds, and we wear out a few days here upon this earth, without considering what we are here for, or what the Son of God did one day come hither for! What awakenings do we need! And before God shall have his glory, and the earth its peace, what wonderful changes are there yet to be wrought in the minds and spirits of men! And surely if God have any kindness for us, there will be great change wrought upon us.

LECTURE XLIV.*

But now to go on to the second thing, the material import of these words; that is, that whereas, by universal consent, the glory of God is the end of all things, it must be very differently understood as it is his end, and as it is the creature's end. It cannot be understood in reference to both the same way.

In reference to the creature, it ought to be their design (to wit, the design of all reasonable creatures) to glorify God, by owning and by diffusing his glory to the uttermost. Their glorifying God consists in these two things; the first whereof is fundamental to the second, the agnition of his glory, and the manifestation of his glory. The acknowledgment of it in their own minds and souls, owning him to be the most glorious one. They add no glory to him; it is not possible they can; but they only acknowledge and take notice of, and adore, that which is; confess him to be what he is, and what he should be. And the manifestation of his glory; the spreading and propagating of it, as much as is possible, from one to another, through the world, even to their uttermost, at least, in the wish and desire of their own hearts. "Be thou exalted above the heavens, and thy glory over all the earth," as it is again and again found in Psal. lvii. and in multitudes of like passages of Scripture. "So is our light to shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven," Matt. v. 16. That his glory may be transmitted by some to others, and by them to others, and so spread to our uttermost universally unto all.

But the matter is quite otherwise to be understood, when we speak of God's glory, as his own end. And it is very needful that we should state this matter to ourselves aright, lest we otherwise take up thoughts very unsuitable, and very dishonourable, and very injurious, to the great and blessed God. That design which hath been already mentioned, upon our first acknowledgment in our own minds and hearts, the excellent glory of the Divine Being, then to diffuse and spread it, is a most worthy and becoming end for creatures, nothing more. It ought to be their very terminative end; the end of ends with them; to wit, the end that must terminate all that they do. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God," is that great practical maxim, 1 Cor. x. 31. Whatsoever we do, must be done, must be all consecrated unto this end, have a stamp of holiness put upon it, by a dedication "to the glory of God." That is (as it were) to be the inscription upon every design, and upon every action, in pursuance of any of our designs. What can be expressed with larger and fuller universality. Whatsoever ye do (eating and drinking not excepted) is to have and be levelled at this end, the glory of God, as being most suitable to the creature. But this is no end worthy of God, the matter being understood and taken so. Indeed, it is suitable enough for any one to design the praise of another; but it is not suitable to any one to design his own praise as his end. It would be thought unworthy of a wise and good man, to do such and such good actions for this as his principal end, that he may be well thought of, and may be well spoken of by others. But the goodness, and suitableness, and agreeableness, of good actions in themselves to his own spirit, is his great inducement to any one that doth partake of the image of God, and that is so far become God-like.

But when we speak of God's having his own glory for his end, (whereas his glory as it is our end, doth but signify our agnition of it, or our manifestation of it, which is not his essential glory,) it is God's essential glory that must be his end; for he can have no end but himself. He is his own first and last; his own Alpha and Omega; and so his glory is, then, his essential glory, which is the lustre of all the excellencies of his being, shining to his own eye, which is his end. For only wisdom can be a competent judge of infinite excellency. And glory doth import and carry in the notion of it a reference to a judicative principle, as the word from whence *esteem* doth come, plainly enough imports. He only is capable of judging what is worthy of himself; and so it is the rectitude of his own designs, as they lie in his own eternal mind, that lies before him under the notion of his end.

But it must be understood, too, that this is not his end neither, to be pursued by a desiderative will, but only by a fruitive; not by a desiderative will, as if there were any thing wanting to him: with us, indeed, all our end is always looked upon by us, as a thing to be attained; and that is suitable to the state of a creature, to act for an end to be obtained, and which we are yet short of. But all things are always present to him, to his all-comprehending mind, and especially that which belongs only to his own being, to which there can be no addition. He doth will himself; not with a desiderative will, but with a fruitive, a complacential will; and so doth act within himself, not from indigency, (as creatures do,) but from a superabundant, all-sufficient self-sufficient fulness: He enjoys himself in himself.

And this is obvious enough to every one that will use his understanding to consider, as well as it is a philosophical maxim, in which all sorts of considering and studious men have agreed. And, I say, it is apprehensible enough to others when it is considered, that one's end and one's good are convertible terms, and signify the same thing. *Finis et bonus, convertuntur*, philosophers use to say; to wit, that which is any one's ultimate end, which is so *de jure*, is his highest and chiefest good. Now nothing is plainer than that there is no good adequate to God, but himself; so that he cannot have his ultimate, final complacency in

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any thing besides himself. And his glory, his essential glory; the lustre of all the excellencies of his being, is his end; not that which he covets and proposes as distant and unattained; but which he enjoyeth, and acquieseeth in, and which he cannot but have always in his own possession, as he cannot but be in the entire, uninterrupted, everlasting possession of the excellencies of his own being.

And it ought seriously to be considered, that so we may not in our own thoughts debase the eternal, most excellent, and most blessed Being, by supposing that he proposeth it to himself as his end, to aim at that which would be thought unworthy of a wise and good man to aim at; that is, only to be well thought of, and applauded. This is a thing that is consequent, and which ought to be, and which we ought to propose to ourselves as our end. But it is too low and mean an end for God. We may design that for another man, to wit, his praise, which no other man, who is wise and good, will design for himself; but take pleasure in the rectitude of his design, and that goodness of his own actions; and enjoy them, as every good man doth, in bearing the image of God upon him. And therefore, this is a God-like thing; and so must be in the highest perfection in the ever-blessed God himself, and in the excellency of his own being, and in the correspondent rectitude of all his own designs. But this is that which must consequently, and secondarily, come under the common notice of his intelligent and apprehensive creatures, whereupon it is their business, and indispensable duty, to own, and adore, and honour him, for the good that is in him; to wit, to think well and honourably of him, and speak well and honourably of him, upon this account, even as goodness in men, and amongst men, is a thing that claims and challenges acknowledgment and praises from them within whose notice it comes. And then,

2. That being the primary thing here spoken of, which is to result out of this great design, "Glory to God in the highest," all capable and apprehensive creatures being obliged, to their uttermost, to celebrate and glorify him, upon the account of what he was now doing in reference to this wretched world; that being, I say, the first result of this undertaking, upon which our Lord Jesus Christ was now descending and coming down into this world, the second is—"Peace on earth." And that former was to spring out of this latter, as the whole economy of grace in that mentioned 4th chapter to the Ephesians, a design for the glory of God's grace; to wit, it is to be designed by all the subjects, and all the observers thereof.

And now concerning this peace on earth, I shall speak but very briefly to it, in my way to the third thing which I most principally intended, in my pitching upon this scripture; to wit, the original and fountain of all the good will after mentioned. This peace upon earth must be understood to design, first, somewhat more primarily; and then, secondly, somewhat more secondarily, and dependent upon the former.

The primary intendment of it must be peace between God and man, the inhabitants of this earth, its principal and more noble inhabitants, in relation to the state of war and hostility that was between him and them, they having revolted from him, agreed and combined in a rebellion against him; not only with one another, but with the other apostate creatures, who had made a defection before, the angels that fell, and so drew man in as their accomplices in that horrid revolt. And this must be observed as spoken too with discrimination, as we shall have hereafter occasion to note to you; "Peace on earth"—not with hell; there is no proclamation of peace reaching that place. Those kind, benign creatures, this glorious host of angels, this celestial chorus, though it is like enough it might have been suitable to their inclinations (if that had been the design and counsel of Heaven) to have carried tidings, and a message of peace, to their fellow-creatures, of their own order and rank, in the creation of God; yet while it appears this had no place in the divine counsel, and they being so perfectly resigned creatures, and having the same will (objectively considered) with the divine, that is, not willing a different sort of objects from what he willed; they joyfully come on this errand to men on earth.

The will of God is perfectly complied with in heaven; that will which our desires, while we are here on earth, are to be guided by; in our measure we are to desire God's will may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. It is perfectly complied with in heaven: they cannot have a dissentient will from their Maker; and, therefore, must be understood to have been contentedly employed upon this errand, to proclaim peace, peace to the inhabitants of this earth, when they had none to proclaim for the inhabitants of that other horrid region; knowing that they, who were their brethren, and of their own order, in the creation of God, were bound up in the chains of everlasting darkness, without remedy or mercy, and reserved unto the judgment of the great day, they willingly come upon this errand, to proclaim peace to the inhabitants of this earth, and are made use of as heralds in this proclamation.

And as this peace must principally be between God and man, so it must be understood to be mutual in the intendment of it between both, that God should be reconciled to them, and that they should be reconciled unto God. And, indeed, there can be no such thing as peace between God and man upon other terms: for if he were willing upon other terms to be reconciled to man, it would be altogether insignificant, and to no purpose. He would be reconciled to an unreconciled irreconcilable man, whose heart should still remain filled with enmity, poisoned with malignity and venom against God. It would be to no purpose to him, for man would be no nearer felicity; and it is impossible for me to be happy in what I hate; and it is also impossible for the children of men to be happy in any thing but God.

Now supposing this peace to be mutual between God and man; to wit, he is reconciled to them, and they are reconciled to him, the prosecution of his justice doth cease, and their enmity towards him ceaseth; there is no longer a contest kept up between his justice and their injustice; then this mutual peace must carry in it two things, agreeable to what is carried in the notion of peace between one nation, or sort of people, and another that have been mutually at war with one another; that is, there is somewhat privative, and somewhat positive, carried in such cases in the notion of peace;—1st, a cessation of hostility, and 2ndly freedom of commerce.

1. A cessation of hostility. They no longer war with one another; God doth no longer pursue them with revenge, with hostile acts in that kind; that is, if once a peace be brought about, whenever this peace obtains, and hath its effect, he doth no longer follow them with acts of vengeance. And they do no longer rise up against him in acts of hatred and aversion; they no longer say to him, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" they are no longer fighting against the righteousness and equity of his holy precepts, as the carnal mind is "enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be." All this ceaseth; that is, it cannot be now in any prevalency, in a prevailing degree. And thereupon,

2. That which is positive doth ensue. As it was between nation and nation, which were at war, there is not only a cessation of hostilities, but there is a setting on foot a commerce, an amicable commerce, a free commerce; so it is between God and man now: there is not only no war, but there is a communion, there is a friendly intercourse: God freely flows in upon them in acts of grace, kindness, and goodness. His Spirit was under a restraint before, (according to the doom and judgment past—"My Spirit shall no longer strive,") is now at liberty, set at liberty, from under these restraints. It now freely breathes upon those souls, emits its light, lets it shine in upon them, pours in the influence of the Sun of Righteousness, the vital, sanative influences of that Sun, who is said to "arise with healing in his wings," or beams. These vital, healing beams are, by the Spirit of Christ, freely transmitted, let into the very hearts and souls of such creatures, as were at utmost distance from God before.

Alas! there was nothing to do between God and them, in a way of kindness or friendliness: his Spirit was a stranger to them; no beams of holy light ever shone upon them; no influence of grace; they went with barren and desolate souls, wrapt up in darkness and death: but now the way is open and free; there is no law against it, no

bar, but the communications of the Holy Ghost may be without obstruction. And, thereupon, their spirits are set at liberty towards God, and his Spirit is at liberty towards them and not withheld. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. Their soul was under restraint and clouds before, a prisoner under the divine wrath and justice. They could no act, could not move, could not stir, God-ward; not so much as breathe, nor direct a breath towards God; no holy desires, no holy motions. But now, when commerce is restored, as the Divine Spirit freely breathes on them, it enables them freely to breathe after God, to send forth desires, and take up their highest delight in him, so as to enable them to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, or whom can I desire on earth in comparison of thee?" Psal. lxxiii. 25. This is the primary intendment of this peace, proclaimed by this glorious host of angels: this is the thing primarily intended to be brought about, and which shall have its effect, more or less, and more largely, before the world ends. But then, there is.

2. That which is consequential thereunto, to be considered, and that is—peace upon earth, among the inhabitants of it towards one another. This is not the primary design, but it is the secondary, consequential aim and effect of the great Peace-maker's undertaking, whereof there was a precedent and a leading case in the reconciliation that was first to be brought about between Jew and gentile. "He is our peace, having made both one," Eph. ii. 13. so as that the highest enmities and animosities that ever were between one sort of people and another, were to be taken up between these Jews and gentiles. How contumeliously were the Jews wont to speak of the gentiles; and how ignominiously did they again speak of them. And the fraction was yet more fierce between the Jews and the Samaritans, that were all Israelites, all of one house; insomuch that common courtesies could not pass between them, as appears by that in the 4th chapter of John. "How dost thou," (saith the Samaritan woman to Christ,) "being a Jew, ask water of me, that am a Samaritan? How strange is it! how can you expect that I, being a Samaritan, should give drink to you that are a Jew?" And so great was the distance between the Jews and other nations, that pagan writers have taken much notice of it. *Non monstrare vias* (saith a pagan poet) *eadem insi sacra volenti; that a few would not so much as show the way to one that was not of their own religion*; no, not that common courtesy to tell a traveller his way. Why, he is our peace, he that brings it about, that shall finally, sooner or later, bring about a universal peace, not only between Jew and gentile, (which was a precedent, a ruling case,) but among the several nations of the earth,

"He is our peace when the Assyrian is in our land," and it is to be a universal thing foretold and prophesied; to wit, that "swords are to be beaten into plow-shares, and spears into pruning-hooks, and that men should learn war no more," when once the peaceful tendency of the kingdom of the Messiah doth reach its final and full effect; when it hath effect according to its tendency, so that, at the same time that the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the seas, then is there to be that universal peace on earth too, among men towards one another; not only no more hurting or destroying in all the mountain of his holiness, but nation shall not lift up sword or hand against nation, and men shall be untaught that fierceness of nature, which a continued enmity against God had inferred on them: for when the union was once broken between God and man, it must appear, they must be made to understand and know to their cost, that that was central. And that union being dissolved, all union was dissolved besides, that they can never be at peace one with another, when they have broken with God, and the breach remains between him and them. According to what was emblematically held forth in reference to God, and the people of Israel and Judah; that is, by the two staves of Beauty and of Bands; the staff of Beauty signifying the union between him and them; and the staff of Bands the union between them with one another. But when one of these staves is broken, the other is shivered and shaken all to pieces.

Why, this is the import of what is here proclaimed, the final and ultimate import of it—"Glory to God in the highest," and then, "peace on earth." This is the double effect of this great undertaking, upon which our Lord did now descend and come down into this world. But here comes next to be considered,

The principle, the well-spring, the eternal well-spring of this glorious and kind design; a design so glorious to God, and so kind to man, what is the fountain and well-spring of all? Nothing else but his own good will. And this is the thing I mainly intended to insist upon from this Scripture. That having so largely discoursed to you of the apostacy, the fall of the first man, and then of the fallen state of man; and of the way wherein man hath been continued in this fallen state, from age to age, and from generation to generation; I might afterwards come to speak of his designed restitution and recovery. And being so to do, (as the order of discourse should lead,) I shall tell you briefly what the scheme of our discourse now must be; to wit,

I. To speak of the original and fountain of this designed restitution of such fallen and lasped creatures. And,

II. Of the constitution of a Redeemer and a Mediator in order hereunto. And,

III. To show what sort of person this Redeemer or Mediator must be; to wit, to treat of his person, of his nature, of his offices, and of his performances. And then,

IV. To lay before you the doctrine of the covenant of God in Christ. And,

V. The office and operations of the Holy Ghost in the dispensation, and pursuantly to the design of the covenant. And then,

VI. The effects wrought in all that shall actually appertain and belong to God, and be brought home to him, in and by Christ, this Great Head of the *reducees*, of returning souls. And then,

VII. The way and course of such as shall be thus savingly wrought upon, that holy work in which they are thereupon to be engaged, and wherein they are to persist, till they reach the end of that way. And then, lastly,

VIII. The end of all things, with the several things that shall be coincident thereunto.

The first thing in the course and order of discourse comes naturally to be insisted upon, (when we are to consider this business of the restitution of man,) is the original of such a design. Whence sprung it? What is the fountain, the well-head and spring of this great design? Why, good will towards men. This is the summary account that the matter admits of. It can be from nothing else but mere good will towards men. And in speaking to this, I have a two-fold subject of discourse: to wit, first, God's general good will; and, 2ndly, his special good will. His good will wherein it doth appear and is expressed towards men generally and indefinitely considered; and his good will in its more peculiar expressions, and exertions of itself towards a select sort of men. And so two things to be evinced.

1. That God's good will, it hath some reference unto all. But,

2. That it hath not equal reference to all alike. There will be that two-fold subject of discourse distinctly to be pursued. And the former of these I chiefly intend from this scripture; the latter I intend from another more suitable scripture,

But, in the mean time, pray well inlay this in your own minds, that there are two such distinct sorts of divine good will, or benignity, respecting men generally, and respecting some men especially; and that these two are by no means in the world opposed to one another. The doing of which, as it is a most unreasonable thing in itself, so it is a thing of the worst consequences that can be supposed; that is, it tends to confound the whole Christian economy, to break the frame of Christianity, and make it an unintelligible scheme, as incoherent with itself; and this without any pretence, or shadow of a pretence. For these two things—general good will, and special good will; or, as the generality of divines are wont to distinguish, common and special grace; these two, I say, are as distinguishable things, and as capable of being distinctly

apprehended, as the general and special natures of any thing else that we can think of.

Now nothing could be more absurd to pretend, that because I have the notion of such and such a general nature, therefore, I must not admit the notion of a special nature, that *is* narrower than that; and superadds distinguishing to the former. As if when a person hath understood that God hath made such a sort of creatures as we are wont to call animals, living creatures, (that being the notion of a living creature at large,) that therefore, I should pretend there should be a difficulty of understanding the nature of man, one particular under that general; because I have the notion of a living creature taken at large, to wit, a creature that useth sense, that can see, and hear, and exerciseth spontaneous motion, can move this way and that, this, therefore, should be an hinderance to me in conceiving the special nature of man, a nobler sort of creature, that can do all this and something else; to wit, can reason and understand, and lay designs and pursue them, and is a subject susceptible of religion too, as well as ratiocination; would any man of ordinary understanding pretend an inconsistency between these two; or that I cannot fitly conceive the one sort of nature, because I do conceive the other? Because I do conceive the general notion of a living creature, an animal taken at large, therefore, I can the less conceive or take in the special notion of a particular sort of living creatures, that can do more than an ordinary living creature, taken at large.

And the difficulty is not greater if we carry the matter higher or further, and consider that man, as man, having the natural image of God upon him, as such, may be conceived accordingly. And so that object, God's natural image remaining in him, terminates a general divine benignity. And consider, also, the same sort of creatures having likewise somewhat beyond and superadded to the mere natural image of God, to wit, his holy image; this is the effect, (wherever it is, as the case of man is now become,) and can be the effect of nothing else, but special grace: but this I only lay before you by the way to that which we are to insist upon particularly.

LECTURE XLV.*

Luke ii. 14.

Good will towards men.

The former branches of this verse, wherein these angels proclaim, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace," have been opened, and something hath been said about this good will towards men, both as it is general and special.

Now as to this general good will of God to men, I shall,

1. Labour to evince it to you in an absolute consideration. And then, shall,

2. Speak in comparison of the way of his dealing with another sort of offending creatures, of a higher and nobler order than men. Now,

1. To evince this general good will to men, according to the absolute consideration that is to be had of it, I shall make use of two sorts of mediums or arguments to that purpose.

(1.) Of such as are antecedent to a more express Gospel revelation; and which will therefore respect them that have not the Gospel, or that never had it. And,

(2.) Such as may be taken from the Gospel itself, of which you have a summary, an epitome, in this same angelical proclamation from heaven; it seeming suitable to the majesty of God, to make his angels, though not the ordinary ambassadors, yet the extraordinary ones, of this gracious declaration of his mind and counsel towards men.

But as to both these sorts of arguments, I have this to advertise you, that the main thing I shall propose to myself in alleging them, will not be so much the evincing of the truth in this matter: for that is clear in itself, shines in its own light; and indeed as to this part of God's general good will to men, or that which is usually called common grace, I can have no adversary, we have none to oppose us in this thing, except atheists. It is true indeed, as to the other part, (his special grace,) there we have very subtle adversaries; and when we come to that part, I do hope, through God's assistance, we shall be enabled to maintain the truth against them. But here my more principal design is, to let you see, by the arguments I shall allege, (which will clear the truth too,) the mighty importance of what we are now asserting, and to what purpose it is that we ought to assert this general good will of God to men. Indeed, that we shall have occasion more distinctly to show, when we come to the use. But I shall hint some of the more eminent purposes now, that it may the more engage the attention of all our minds unto what is to be insisted on to this purpose.

It will be of most direct use to convince, and (if it will seem good to God so far as to bless his word) to mollify the hearts of hardened sinners that have yet nothing of special grace appearing to them, or in them, so as to make way for that, it being God's course to work methodically; and to make things, which have an aptitude thereto, subservient unto other things, that are to be consequent thereupon. It would certainly induce any, that would use their thoughts, to look upon it as a black and horrid thing to be, in the course of my life, with an obstinate, obdurate heart fighting continually against goodness itself, and against kindness and good will.

And it is of mighty importance, too, for the relieving of awakened and doubting souls, that may be hurried with terrors and temptations about their state God-wards; and who, though (it may be) special grace hath taken place in them, yet think it hath not; so as to let them see what relief is yet in their case, (as black as it looks to be,) while they are under the dispensation of more general and common grace, as hath a leadingness and tendency in it unto special.

And there is that too, which will be of general import to all of us, every day, to wit, that we may be brought more to value, and to savour, and relish those mercies which commonly go into the account, and under the *census* of common mercies, of which (God knows) we have too little sense. It is a most unaccountable absurdity, (that I have often reflected on in my own thoughts,) that very generally mercies should be thought less valuable, for that very reason for which they are the more valuable. And so it is commonly in reference to those that are called common mercies: they are less valued for the self-same reason for which they should be more valued; that is, because they come in an ordinary and in a constant course. As health, because it is constant, or is more ordinary, with the most, it may be, it is for that very reason less valued: but every body that considers, knows, that for that very reason it is the more valuable. It is better sure to have continual health, than health intermitted. So the use of our senses, our sight, (for instance,) the noblest of all the rest, because it is a common mercy, therefore it is cheap, and of less account with the most. How great a thing would it be thought, if a man should see but one hour in the day! How would the return of that hour be longed for! Or if but one day in the year; O when will that day come! We need to have the value enhanced more with us of such things as are indications of God's good will towards men in general, that they may have their due weight with us, and that grateful savour and relish in our spirits which they challenge. And let us, therefore,

1. Upon such considerations go on to take notice of those arguments of the first rank, those which lie without the compass of the Gospel revelation, that were antecedent to that more explicit revelation of it, and do fill a larger sphere and region than that whither the Gospel light diffuses and extends itself: for though it be true that the text hath a special reference to that glorious revelation which was now to commence, we are not to think that this good will was then first to commence, as if God did then but begin more distinctly and explicitly to own it, and speak it out; but there were *not* obscure indications of it before

* Preached January 19th, 1695.

and which did commonly obtain all the world over, even there where Gospel light obtained not.

I shall therefore, in speaking to that head of arguments, show what it is that men might collect (if they would use their thoughts and understandings aright) from such appearances of divine favour towards them. And because that the reasonings of men may be looked upon as having an uncertainty in them, a sort of lubricity, and that we cannot with so much clearness conclude from mere arguings that are to be fetched from principles that lie without the compass of Scripture; lest any one should think him infirm upon that account, I shall show you, as we go along, how Scripture doth strengthen the same sort of arguments; and how we are directed and prompted even by Scripture itself, to make use of them to the same purposes. And that which I shall insist on, is,

1. The very nature of God, whereof all men that have the use of their understandings, have or are capable of having some notion or other. For he hath stamped more or less of his nature upon the very nature of man, upon the human nature that carries in it a signature of God. There is somewhat that may be known of God in men generally. But there is no notion of God that is more obvious unto any that do apprehend the existence of a Deity at large, than that he is the best of beings, the first seat of all goodness, kindness, and benignity. And this revelation of God, though it be natural, it is from himself, who is the author of all nature, and of this very nature in special; the immediate author, the author so as to be the exemplar of it to the human nature; that is a God-like nature in its first origination. And we are confirmed in it, that is not a false conception of God which we find to have obtained generally in the pagan world, *Optimus Maximus*, that hath been the common heathen language concerning him. But this is an impression from himself upon the mind of man, by which he is taught and instructed, even by nature itself, so to conceive of him.

And he speaks agreeably hereunto of himself, when he tells us his name. There is this sculpture, this signature of his name upon the minds of men every where, till men have studiously and industriously abolished and razed it out, which yet totally they cannot do neither; not so, but that the remainders of such a notion as this, cleaving to their minds, do fill their souls with so much the more horror by intervals, that they have been lately engaged in a course of wickedness, and in an hostility even against the best of beings, against Goodness itself. Those pangs which such do find at such times in their own spirits from a secret and remaining suspicion, that when they have done all they can to think God out of being, they have been but rolling a returning stone; they have been but labouring for the wind; they can effect nothing when the thoughts return upon them, when in spite of them they must be yet constrained to conceive with a certain *formido*, that God is, though it may have been the wish of their hearts, O that he were not! then the main engine of their torture must be the apprehended goodness of God. For,

Do but consider if indeed he is, (whom we would fain think into nothing if it were possible,) then it cannot be but he must excel in goodness; the first thing conceptible in his nature, must be goodness. Mere philosophy hath taught men so to think of God, to think of the God, as a notion antecedent unto that of power and might. They place that in the very summitude of all that excellency, which they ascribe to the Divine Being. And so when God himself will expressly tell us his name, the Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; though he will in no wise clear the guilty—a thing most consistent with the most excellent goodness; for that goodness were fatuity, were stolidity, that were unaccompanied with such a severity, that were unexpressive of it. So he speaks of himself, who best knows his own nature, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7, 8. And the Scripture is full of it elsewhere. That there is such a natural notion as this generally obtaining in the minds of men, is above all demonstration,—that it cannot but be so, that it must be so; for what is universal, must proceed from a universal cause; but there is no universal cause, but God alone. And then,

2. This good will of God towards men, is to be further argued from his continuing of man (though apostate, though revolted from him) in possession of those original excellencies of his nature, that were most essential to it, through the several successions of time so long. That is, as to such excellencies as are essential to the nature of man, these he is pleased to continue man in the possession of from age to age, and from generation to generation, though he be a revolted apostate creature. He might have transformed him into another thing. Men might have produced monsters from one generation to another, and that as a mark of divine severity, for that once they did apostatize. Into what a horrid thing might man have been turned upon the first transgression; and so this habitable world be inhabited only by creatures that should be terrors to themselves, and one to another!

It may be said, that they are turned into worse than monsters by sin; and it is very true, they are so. But that is their own production, and not God's; so they have made themselves, that is true: they are in a moral sense monsters; but so they are their miscreants; they might have been so in a natural sense, and that could have been no injury or reflection upon the Author of their nature. Merely natural evil is justly punitive of, and doth animadvert upon, that which is moral.

But that it is not so; that man should be still, as to his naturals, the same intelligent creature that he was; that he should from age to age appear upon the stage of this earth, with a mind and understanding capable of comprehending so great things; that this understanding power should be so many ways improvable; that the soul to which it belongs should be so commodiously lodged in a tabernacle so curiously wrought by divine art, with God's own hand, and all the parts and members thereof written in his book: a contemplation that put the Psalmist into a transport, "Fearfully and wonderfully was I made, and that my soul knoweth right well. And how precious are thy thoughts to me, O God!" They were these thoughts that he was reflecting on, concerning the very frame, and make, and nature of man, in that 139th Psalm, and which he considers in so high a rapture of spirit.

We are encompassed with wonders, and we take no notice of them; that such creatures as we should spring up in a succession, a noble sort of creatures, God-like—bearing the natural image of God upon us. Thus it is with man; though revolted, yet God lets him live upon this earth, and propagate, and continue his kind. Let him (saith he) wear my image, to put him in mind, and that they may put one another in mind, whence they were, and who was the original of life and being to him, and of that nature which they have: a strange indulgence, and a most emphatical argument of the divine benignity, that he will let such creatures go up and down in this world, with his image upon them, though they have fallen from him, and are universally engaged in a war and hostility against him!

You have heard, heretofore, (and I hope generally have not forgotten, at least cannot be ignorant,) of the necessary distinction of the natural image of God and the moral. And this is the wonder, that where the moral image of God is gone, men have put it away and blotted it out, that yet the natural remains. And God lets it be so, and let such a sort of creatures still descend, and possess, and inhabit this world; minds, spirits, so commodiously lodged in so aptly figured tabernacles of flesh, where they have so many organs for the use and improvement of the reasonable and immortal mind, that is put into those tabernacles as the inhabitant; by which it can exercise sense, and take in all the light, and lustre, and glory of this world, and enjoy the sensitive objects wherewith it is so variously replenished. A continual argument of God's benignity and good will towards men; but especially that he continues him an intelligent understanding creature upon this earth. A thing that pagans have been apprehensive of with gratitude; and it is a shame that we should not consider it more. It is that which history hath transmitted to us, concerning that noble pagan, Plato, that when he lay a dying, he solemnly gave God thanks that he had made him a man, and not a beast; and that he had made him a Grecian, and not a barbarian; and that he had made him to live in the time

wherein Socrates lived, who was so great a luminary in his time.

But how great things have we to recount as additional to the human nature. The human nature itself is that which I am now principally pointing at, as an argument to us of God's good will towards men, that he lets men continue, as to their natural being, what they were through so many ages wherein they have been in an apostacy from him, and rebellion against him; especially when we consider that it is improvable; for religion hath its ground, its foundation in humanity, in the human nature; otherwise, a brute or a stone might be a capable subject of religion. But inasmuch as God doth continue the human nature, and make that descend, he doth thereby continue capable subjects of religion, and capable subjects of blessedness; since religion and felicity are the two most connatural things to one another in all the world. And thus Scripture doth also teach us to recount with ourselves; to consider, to deduce, and make our collections from it; when it tells us of the spirit that is in man, and that the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding, to make him wiser than the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field. And when we are elsewhere told that the spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching into the inward parts of the belly; to wit, into the most abstruse and hidden things, those that are most recondite within a man's self. And, again,

3. This is a further argument of God's good will towards men generally considered, that they are taught and prompted even by nature itself, to consider and look upon God as some way related to them; to look upon him as, upon a natural account, a father to them. For this is a true account. It is true, also, that there is a more special notion under which he is so to some, as we shall have occasion hereafter to show; but he is so in a common notion too. So natural light hath taught men to account and reckon when they have spoken of God as the paternal mind. They have considered themselves as all having minds, and they have conceived of the divine mind as the paternal mind, the Father of all those minds. They have spoken of themselves as God's offspring, and you see the scripture quotes that from one of their writers, and approves and justifies the notion, Acts xvii. 28. "We are all his offspring, as one of your own poets hath affirmed." The thing is true, (saith he,) your own poets have spoken thus concerning men, that they are the offspring of God: and they have apprehended the matter aright; they are so, he is upon a natural account a Father to them: as Adam is said to be the son of God on the same account.

And it is a conception that carries a gleam of light with it, that God should style himself the Father of spirits, but more particularly the God of the spirits of all flesh, as in that Numbers xxvii. 16. It is true, that he is in a more particular way and sense the God of some. But they are his own words, to call himself also the God of all, of all spirits that inhabit and dwell in flesh. He doth not call himself the God of another sort of spirits, that inhabit not flesh, that have sinned against him, that are apostate spirits; (as the spirits of men also are;) but he calls himself the God of the spirits of all flesh, implying, that he hath not universally abandoned the spirits of men. As if he should have said, "I do not renounce, I do not quit all claim to them, I have affairs to transact with them, as I have not with those other spirits, that are thrown out of my sight, and bound up in chains of darkness, and reserved to the judgment of the great day;" as I shall have occasion more directly to speak, when I come to speak of God's good will to men, considered comparatively with the course of his dispensation towards that other order of apostate creatures. And,

4. The constant exercise of God's patience is a great argument of his good will towards men. This is that whereof they not only have a notion in their minds, comprehended and included in that common notion of his benignity and goodness, but they have experience of it in fact; and it is from that I am now arguing: and it is a mighty cogent and convictive argument of God's good will, if it be but considered what men have to argue from, in reference hereunto, especially these two topics, their own guilt and God's power.

Their own guilt; whereof, since man hath been a sinner, he hath had some natural conscience of guilt always accompanying him. And more or less men have consciences accusing and excusing, by turns, as the matter lies in view before us, Romans ii. 15. Now let recourse be had to that topic of men's own guiltiness, that hath deserved ill at the hands of God; this is a common notion with men. Many of your heathens, though they do not know how the apostacy came about, have generally granted that man was in a state of apostacy; that he is not in the state that he was at first made in, but in a degenerate sinful state; and it is spoken of as a thing common to men, what I noted to you but now, out of Romans ii. 15. that they carry accusing consciences about with them. I say, then, do but consider that topic, and from hence go to the other, that of the divine power: and nothing is more obvious to men, (if they will use their thoughts,) than to consider this, that he that made such a world as this, can easily right himself upon such creatures as we are in a moment, at his pleasure. Then lay but these two things together, (which are obvious to common apprehension,) that we are guilty creatures, and he is omnipotent God; we have deserved that he should severely animadvert upon us, and he can do it at pleasure; hath it in his power to do it when he will; and yet we are spared. What doth all this signify, but a continual miracle of divine patience? And what is that to be resolved into, but divine goodness? "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God should lead thee to repentance?"

When we argue from hence to persuade sinners to turn unto God, do we argue from a feigned thing? Is it not a great reality from which we are thus directed to argue, when the Scripture itself gives us the direction? It teaches men so to consider the matter themselves, as in that 2 Peter iii. 9, 10. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but he is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish; but that they may come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved." And we are to account the long-suffering of the Lord salvation. What doth he bear with an offending creature for, in so continued a course, when he hath so many advantages against him so many thunderbolts in command at a moment? Why doth he spare, when the creature is guilty, and he is mighty? And yet he spares: what judgment is to be made of all this? Why, the apostle tells you: Count the long-suffering of the Lord salvation; to wit, that he doth use this method as an apt medium, as a proper means to bring men to consider: and if they will not consider, they are loading themselves with guilt; so much the more, when they will not consider what is so obvious, what lies so much in view before them. And I might add, again, this further argument from,

5. The common exercise of God's bounty towards the children of men; that is, that he doth not only spare, but sustain them; not only withhold and keep off from them destructive evils, but supply them needful good things. That he should preserve this world in so much consistency, for the use and entertainment of offending and rebellious creatures, those that seldom or never take notice of him, and rarely ever give him thanks. That this earth should be so strangely fertile, through all the successions of time, and productive of so delicious things, so pleasant things; not only such things as are necessary for the support of human life, but such things as are delectable too, yielding a pleasing entertainment to man during his residence and abode here. Oh, the riches of the divine goodness towards apostate, degenerate, fallen creatures! These very things have a ducture, a leadingness with them. When God doth immediately please and gratify sense, there is an aptitude in this to instruct minds to reach the understandings of men, to oblige and prompt men to consider whence all this is, and upon what terms, and for what ends and purposes.

There are divers other things congenerous to these, which I cannot go through with now, as the continual care that he takes of men's lives, that he hath put a self-preserving principle into men. It is true, that is natural, but how came it to be so? It is from the Author of all nature, he could have made (if he had pleased) the contrary as natu-

ral; that he hath prompted men to live in societies for common mutual defence; that he hath so severely threatened the sin of homicide, of killing or destroying a man; and for that very reason, because he bears his image. "This creature of mine I will not have touched, for he carries my image upon him: I will not have any violence offered to my image." That he did take so particular a care even of that wicked Cain himself; put his mark upon him, lest any finding him should slay him. It speaks a strange tendency of man, (though now an apostate,) that there is a peculiar sacredness put upon the life of man, beyond all other creatures that do inhabit this earth; because this is an improvable life; this is a thing that may be grafted upon; noble grafts may be inserted here into a human life; therefore, that I will have counted precious, and preserved as such; so as, that if any man shall make a breach upon the human life, he shall break through my law, which I set as a boundary and guard, to preserve so valuable and so precious a thing.

And then he takes such care for the keeping up of common order in this world, that he hath appointed magistracy, government, and laws, in order hereunto, that all may not run into confusion. They must break his laws before they can break one another's peace; that he hath obliged men to the mutual love of one another, wherein, if it were observed and complied with, what a calm, peaceful region would this world be! So that men might have an opportunity to consider, at leisure, the greater concernments of another world. He hath, as to this, done several things most highly becoming the goodness and benignity of a God towards such creatures as we were become.

And then the obligation that he holds men under unto natural religion, and the several exercises of it. Here is a mighty demonstration of his good will towards men, that he will not dispense with them as to this thing; but as common as human nature is, so common is his law running in that nature, obliging men to some religion or other; in general to be religious, obliging them unto the several principles and duties of natural religion; to trust in God, and to love him as their supreme good, with all their heart, and soul, and might, and mind, which is a natural law; to pray to him, to praise him, and give him thanks. And that, whereas he is pleased to have a house, a dwelling here on earth, that house is called the house of prayer to all nations, and he will have all flesh come to him; and complains that they do not come to him, *nor will come*. When looking down upon the children of men, to see who inquires and seeks after God, he finds all gone out of the way, that they will not do this; that they will not say, Where is God my Maker? This he complains of.

All this carries a mighty argument in it, that there is still a good will in heaven towards men on earth, as neglectful of God and themselves as the children of men are generally become. And it is necessary that men should understand, and now that when they are charged, when God doth so highly charge them with sinning against his goodness, it is not a nullity that they are charged to offend against, in all their neglects of God: and, in justice to him, we are obliged to heighten and magnify his goodness to men; that so such as will never be won and overcome by this goodness of his, may be so much the more glorious trophies to that justice which will vindicate the wrong upon them at last.

THE END.

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